

Thomas Boston (1676-1732) as Preacher of the
Fourfold State

Philip Graham Ryken
Regent's Park College, University of Oxford
Submitted to the Board of the Faculty of Theology
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Trinity Term, 1995



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Thomas Boston is best known for his pastoral labours in the Scottish border parish of Ettrick, for his defence of the *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* during the Marrow Controversy (1717-1722), and for his collection of sermons entitled *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (1720). The thesis attempts to provide fresh insight into Boston’s work in four ways. First, it satisfies the need for a critical analysis sensitive to the homiletical genre of his writings. It is unified not so much by a single argument about his theology as by a single perspective -- Boston as preacher -- from which his theology should be understood. Second, the structure of the thesis is governed by the structure the *Fourfold State* inherited and developed from Augustine’s distinction between grace *posse non peccare* and *non posse peccare*: innocence, nature, grace, and eternity. Among the more important reasons for selecting the work for this purpose are the centrality of its major themes to Boston’s preaching as a whole and its status as the most frequently published Scottish book of the eighteenth century. Third, it aims to read the *Fourfold State* against the fullest possible background of Boston’s sources, locating the sermons within the continuous theological tradition of international Calvinism and the unified homiletic tradition of English Puritanism and Scottish Presbyterianism. Particular attention is given to the aims and strategies of his preaching on the covenant of works, the faculties of the soul, the free offer of the gospel, preparation for conversion, the new birth, the *sylogismus practicus*, union with Christ, heaven, and hell. Fourth, the thesis has been written with the benefit of original sermon manuscripts rediscovered at King’s College Library, Aberdeen, in July of 1993. The Aberdeen manuscripts have special importance because they are Boston’s first sermons and include the announcement of his intention to preach the sermons which became the *Fourfold State*, thus giving new insight into the way those sermons were the product of his understanding of his calling as a preacher.

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Thomas Boston served as a minister in the Church of Scotland from his ordination in 1699 until his death in 1732. As a pastor, he is best known for his labours in the small border parishes of Simprin and Ettrick, south of Edinburgh. As a churchman, he is best known for defending the Calvinism of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* during the Marrow Controversy (1717-1722), a dispute which focused on the preaching of grace, faith, works, assurance, and the gospel offer in Scotland. As a writer, he is best known for his collection of sermons entitled *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (1720).

‘Thomas Boston (1676-1732) as Preacher of the *Fourfold State*’ attempts to provide fresh insight into the writings of Thomas Boston in four ways. First, it seeks to understand him as a preacher. Whereas previous scholarship has considered Boston as a controversialist, as a systematician, and as a pastor, it has not paid sufficient attention to the fact that nearly all of his published works and manuscripts are in the form of sermons. The thesis satisfies the need for a critical analysis sensitive to the homiletical genre of his writings. It is unified not so much by a single argument about his theology as by a single perspective -- Boston as preacher -- from which his theology should be understood and appreciated. From this perspective a variety of themes emerge, including his methodological inheritance from Scottish Presbyterian and English Puritan homiletics, his appeal to the affections as well as to the intellect, his evangelistic emphasis on the free offer of the gospel, his reliance upon biblical and agricultural metaphors, his constant attention to the varying spiritual conditions of the saints and sinners in his congregation, and his use of simple constructs to teach theology in a rural setting.

Second, the structure of the thesis is governed by the structure of the sermon collection entitled *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*. Among the more important reasons for selecting the *Fourfold State* for this purpose are its status as Boston’s most influential work in the eighteenth century and after, the frequency with which he returned to edit its main text, the centrality of its major themes to his preaching as a whole, and the disproportionately scant attention it has received in critical scholarship.

Third, the thesis aims to place the preaching of the *Fourfold State* against the fullest possible background of Boston’s theological sources, especially in the international tradition of Reformed theology. Previous scholarship has been incomplete in that only a small portion of the sixteenth and seventeenth century works familiar to Boston have been consulted; it has been unsystematic in that a variety of sixteenth and seventeenth century works have been employed as reference points for his theology without any evidence that he had read them. The abundance of precise references he makes to the books he did read makes a thorough and systematic use of his sources possible. The thesis is a reading of Boston’s preaching against the background of his reading.

Fourth, it has been written with the benefit of original sermon manuscripts rediscovered by the present writer at King’s College Library, Aberdeen, in July of 1993. The Aberdeen manuscripts make a fresh and substantial contribution to understanding Thomas Boston as a preacher. Their particular importance lies in the fact that they are Boston’s first sermons, delivered prior to the sermons which appear in his *Works* and even prior to his discovery of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Furthermore, they include the announcement of his intention to preach the sermons which became the *Fourfold State*, and thus give new insight into the way those sermons were the product of his understanding of his calling as a preacher.

The ‘Introduction’ to the thesis (Chapter I) attempts to place Thomas Boston in his pastoral context. A survey of the books he read demonstrates the historical and geographical breadth of his exposure to international Calvinism. His reading in English Puritan sources -- especially members of the Westminster Assembly -- confirmed the text-doctrine-reason-use structure of his preaching. His reading in a large number of

federal theologians prepared the way for his articulation of a mature covenant theology which stands squarely within the federal tradition of Reformed theology. A survey of the parishes in which Boston laboured shows that the dominant milieu of his parishioners was agricultural, with isolation, drought, illness, illiteracy, and widespread immorality among the difficulties he faced. A survey of the parties involved in the Marrow, Auchterarder Creed (1717; on the relationship between faith and repentance) and John Simson (1717-1729; on the Glasgow professor's Arminianism and Arianism) controversies gives the contours of his ecclesiastical landscape. The false accusation that Boston's theology was Antinomian gives evidence of a strain of Neonomian theology within the church. Yet the division between Moderates and Evangelicals later in the century should not be read back into the early eighteenth century and allowed to disguise the substantial consensus of Reformed orthodoxy which the Church of Scotland enjoyed in Boston's day.

The development of the *Fourfold State* through two separate preachings and three independent recensions is traced in Chapter II of the thesis: 'Origins and Composition of the *Fourfold State*'. The idea of the fourfold state of man was implicit in Augustine's *De Correptione et Gratia*, in which Augustine distinguished between two degrees of divine grace: *posse non peccare* and *non posse peccare*. This basic insight was expanded by Peter Lombard into a *status quadruplex*: *ante peccatum*, *post peccatum*, *post reparationem*, and *post confirmationem*. The *status quadruplex* was appropriated by the theologians of later Reformed orthodoxy -- including Zacharius Ursinus, Hieronymus Zanchius, Francis Turretin, and the authors of the Westminster *Confession of Faith* -- as a useful way of describing the freedom and bondage of the human will. Boston's contribution in the *Fourfold State* is to take the fourfold state out of the solitary locus of the doctrine of the will and to expand it into a comprehensive, systematic, historical-theological framework. Furthermore, he translates the fourfold structure into a new genre, using it to *preach* about innocence, nature, grace, and eternity.

The main body of the thesis is structured around Boston's four states of humanity. Chapter III is an exposition of 'The State of Innocence', in which he depicts the absolute perfection of Adam's faculties and the complete integrity of his obedience with respect to the law of God. This perfection has the apologetic purpose of clearing God from any responsibility for man's fall into sin and the evangelistic purpose of reminding sinners of the melancholy of their present estate. Boston's defence of the pre-lapsarian covenant between God and Adam stresses the graciousness of the covenant of works in providing for Adam's greater felicity. This defence denies the contention of more recent scholars that the covenant of works was a legalistic intrusion into his theology.

Boston's sermon 'The State of Nature' (Chapter IV) is characterized by a strong doctrine of total depravity. The fall of Adam has plunged humanity into a miserable state of original and actual sin, resulting in the forfeiture of the *imago Dei* and the universal corruption of the understanding, will, and affections of man. While Boston sometimes inclines toward the faculty intellectualism of many of his Puritan sources -- especially in his insistence that sinners must know the sinfulness and misery of their estate before they will be ready to repent -- he prefers to highlight the disruption of the entire human person by sin. Although he places greater emphasis on the realistic than on the representative relationship between Adam and his posterity, he also defends the justice of the imputation of Adam's sin on the basis of the ongoing validity of the covenant of works. His descriptions of the wrath of God and the bestiality of humanity sometimes threaten to minimize common grace and make the state of nature seem more hellish than fallen.

The exposition of 'The State of Grace' in the *Fourfold State* is divided into two chapters in the thesis. Chapter V reads Boston's account of the stages of conversion against the background of Reformed discussions about the possibility of preparation for conversion. While he opposes the idea that sinful human beings can prepare themselves for conversion, he nevertheless exhorts his parishioners to labour after conversion, an imprecision which may be appropriate to his preaching context. When regeneration does occur, it effects a renewal of the faculties of the soul and a re-investment of the *imago Dei* in man. Boston's repeated exhortations to self-examination reflect the Puritan tradition of the practical syllogism but are immune to many of the standard criticisms of that idea. He is not driven by the doctrine of election, he advocates a *sylogismus*

mysticus rather than a *sylogismus practicus*, he recognizes that an assurance of the accessibility of the work of Christ is inherent in the act of faith, he grounds the practice of self-examination in biblical imperatives, and he recognizes the organic connection between the work of Christ without and within the soul by the Holy Spirit. Boston's insisting on the necessity of the new birth and his issuing of the free offer of the gospel give an evangelical tone to his preaching.

Boston also gives substantial attention to the doctrine of union with Christ, a doctrine which provides the focus for Chapter VI of the thesis. The Aberdeen manuscripts show that union with Christ was a foundational principle for Boston from the outset of his ministry and not, as some have suggested, a late development which marked a departure from federal theology. The idea of the believer's union with Christ and reception of all the blessings of salvation in Christ by faith and the Holy Spirit was already a well-established internal principle of Reformed theology by the end of the seventeenth century. Boston's innovation in the *Fourfold State* is to make the doctrine of union with Christ the explicit organizing principle for his soteriology, allowing it to structure his discussion of the benefits of Christ such as justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. He also employs union with Christ as a principle for pastoral care, using it to direct his preaching on comfort in affliction, providential chastisement for sin, progress in holiness, and the dangers of living a life of hypocrisy outside of Christ.

Chapters VII and VIII discuss two important but often overlooked themes in Boston's preaching: heaven and hell. The inevitable event of death establishes a final and total dichotomy between the righteous and the wicked. In his preaching on heaven, Boston vividly describes the bodily resurrection of believers, the reprobation of the faculties of the soul in the image of God, the glorification of the church in union with Christ, the joyous society of heaven, and the contrast between the kingdom of glory and life in the present world.

Boston shared a strong, literal doctrine of hell with his Reformed predecessors and with all of Western Christendom. The inclusion of hell in the *Fourfold State* is a development beyond the medieval and Reformed *status quadruplex*, which typically included only a *status gloriæ*. Among the prominent features of Boston's preaching on hell are an articulation of the 'abominable fancy' that the saints would rejoice in the damnation of the wicked, a reliance on biblical imagery for hell, a distinction between the punishment of loss (*pæna damni*) and the punishment of sense (*pæna sensus*), a symmetrical view of hell as the antithesis of heaven, a vision of the hellish society of the damned, a defence of the eternity and varied degrees of hell, a rejection of the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, and an imaginative portrayal of the sensory and affective experiences of the damned. This preaching intends to use the absolute dichotomy between the righteous and the wicked to induce either longing or terror, with the benevolent hope that a view of the life to come will drive sinners to Christ.

This exposition of Boston's preaching is followed in the thesis by a short 'Epilogue' tracing the theological and popular influence of the *Fourfold State*. It was the most frequently published Scottish book of the eighteenth century, going through nearly 60 editions by 1800 and over one hundred editions in all. The volume's standing with John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards, and its prominence in the Awakenings of the eighteenth century, confirm its status as an Evangelical book and serve as an index of the affinity between Puritanism and Evangelicalism. The dissemination of the *Fourfold State* to England, Wales, Holland, and America is a reminder of the international flavour of Boston's Calvinism. Yet the book's failure to exercise any independent theological influence indicates that the sermons it contains were best suited to reach Boston's own people in his own time and place in the history of the Scottish Church.

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'Thomas Boston (1676-1732) as Preacher of the *Fourfold State*' is my own work, but I have not done my work alone. Defying convention, I begin with those who contributed most to its completion. Lisa helped by her faith that it was right for us to go to Oxford for further preparation, by her hope that all things would be brought to completion in good time, and by her love in typing the bibliography. Joshua helped by doling out 'working loves' in generous portions and by sensing when my calling as a student threatened to usurp my higher calling as a father.

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Staff at the following libraries were diligent in their commitment both to preserving the books and manuscripts of the past and to making them accessible to the researchers of the present: Bodleian Library, Oxford; British Library, London; Cambridge University Library, Cambridge; King's College Library, Aberdeen; National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; New College Library, Edinburgh; Montgomery Library, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia; Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh. Helpers in the Lower Reading Room and the Duke Humfrey's Library at the Bodleian have been unstinting in their response to my requests for more books.

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I have benefitted from other kindnesses, both great and small, too numerous to mention, although I would be remiss if I did not at least express my gratitude for the camaraderie of Eric Gregory and the other champions of the Oxford University Basketball Club, the cultured enlightenment of the Oxford University C. S. Lewis Society, the fellowship of the Oxford Evangelical Theology Society, and the friendship of our neighbours at Alan Bullock Close, St. Clement's.

This project began with a prayer uttered in the library of Westminster Theological Seminary for the timely provision of a thesis topic relevant to pastoral ministry. The answer was shortly provided. An intimate encounter with the preaching of Thomas Boston, an exposure to valuable examples of the living church, a rediscovery of long-forgotten manuscripts, a family adventure in an alien culture, and an eventual call to Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia were soon to follow. Boston himself would have rightly recognized in all of this not only the evident hand of divine providence, but also many answers to his own prayer for blessing on the *Fourfold State*, 'for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and edification of saints, for the time I am in life, and after I shall be in the dust' (*Works*, XII, 402; cf. 312-13).

The thesis is dedicated to my parents, Leland and Mary Ryken, my first and best teachers in living the life of the mind, the will, and the heart in the state of grace.

Philip Graham Ryken
Regent's Park College
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I. INTRODUCTION

I. THOMAS BOSTON AS PREACHER

Thomas Boston preached his final sermon in Ettrick ‘from a window in the manse, the auditory standing without’.¹ Confined to his house by the illness which would soon prove to be fatal, he preached ‘The Necessity of Self-Examination Considered’ on the first two Sabbaths of April, 1732 (II, 497-510). He was a preacher to his dying day (d. 20 May, 1732). But Thomas Boston (b. 17 March, 1676,² in Duns) was never anything except a preacher. In his *Memoirs*, he recalls the schoolmistress of his earliest days ‘often expressing her hope of seeing me in the pulpit’.³ When he was eleven, Boston accompanied his father to the border parish of Whitsome, where the preaching of the nonconformist Henry Erskine (1624-1696) awakened him and brought him ‘under exercise about [his] soul’s state’ (XII, 11; cf. V, 11-12). Having been ejected from his pulpit by the 1662 Act of Uniformity, Erskine had been among the staunch covenanting ministers who risked reprisals by continuing to preach ‘in the fields’.⁴ Such was the attraction of his preaching to the young Boston that he often waded the Blackadder water and travelled four miles to hear Erskine preach at the meeting house in Rivelaw (XII, 13).

¹ See the editorial postscript in *The Complete Works of the Late Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick*, ed. by Samuel M’Millan, 12 vols (London: Robert Tegg, 1853; repr. Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1980), XII, 447-48. Further references to Boston’s *Works* are given after quotations in the text.

² *The Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 22 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1921-1922), II, 886, incorrectly lists the year of his birth as 1677, an error which has been repeated elsewhere. Most likely, the error arose from an unnecessary attempt to convert the date from Old Style into New, but Scotland had already made the transition to New Style before Boston’s day (see David C. Coull, ‘Time’, in *The Laws of Scotland*, ed. by Thomas Smith and others, Stair Memorial Encyclopaedia, 22 (Edinburgh: Law Society of Scotland, 1987), pp. 329ff, ¶ 806).

³ Boston, *Works*, XII, 10. The *Memoirs* comprise volume XII of Boston’s *Works* and remain the primary source for information about Boston’s life. They represent a collation and abridgment (by Boston’s grandson) of two separate manuscripts which are held by New College Library, Edinburgh (BOS.1-2): ‘A general account of my life’ and ‘Passages of my life’. The former is also available as *A General Account of my Life*, ed. by George D. Low (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908). For further biographical information, see the articles on Thomas Boston in Chambers’ *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen* (London, 1834), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1915-), the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), and *The Dictionary of National Biography*. The uncritical biographies by Jean L. Watson, *The Pastor of Ettrick: Thomas Boston* (Edinburgh, 1883), and Andrew Thomson, *Thomas Boston of Ettrick: His Life and Times* (London, 1895), rely heavily on material already available in the *Memoirs*.

⁴ For accounts of this practice from Boston’s own library, see John Brown (Wamphray), *An Apologeticall Relation, Of the particular sufferings of the Faithful Ministers & professors of the Church of Scotland, since August, 1660* ([Rotterdam], 1665), and Robert Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restauration to the Revolution*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1721), II, 256-57.

Having completed a first degree at Edinburgh in July of 1694, at the age of 18, Boston returned to the school of divinity there for three months in 1695 (XII, 20-21). In keeping with the ecclesiastical practice of the era, the balance of his ministerial training was supervised by ministers in the local presbytery, and he was licensed at Chirnside in 1697 (XII, 31). For several years, his preaching ministry was an itinerant one, unwilling as he was to solicit the aid of a patron in securing a parish (XII, 34). The importance of these years for his ministerial formation is reflected in the short treatise on evangelistic homiletics he wrote during this period entitled *Soliloquie on the Art of Man-fishing*.⁵ Despite his initial reluctance to go to such an apparently inconsequential parish (XII, 75-78), Boston was finally ordained to preach in Simprin in September of 1699 (XII, 87-88), and he began his ministry there in December of the same year (XII, 98). He assumed the pulpit in Ettrick, the parish more often associated with his preaching, in the spring of 1707 (XII, 193). Although an attempt was made in 1716 to woo Boston to the parish of Closeburn, he refused on the grounds that he had not yet had opportunity to enjoy the spiritual fruits of his preaching labours (XII, 282-301). Despite frequent bouts of melancholy and serious illness, he records in 1730 that he was ‘never to this day [. . .] kept from preaching through indisposition’ (XII, 444; cf. 191). His *Memoirs* close with the thanksgiving ‘that ever [God] made me a minister of the gospel’ (XII, 447). From his being licensed at the age of 23 to his deathbed sermon at the age of 56, Thomas Boston was ever a preacher.

This is not to suggest that Boston was unaffected by or uninvolved in the national political and ecclesiastical affairs of his day.⁶ As a young child, he accompanied his father when he was imprisoned as a ‘nonconformist during the time of Prelacy’ (XII, 9-10). The Glorious Revolution of William of Orange in 1688, the resultant abolition of episcopacy in 1689, and the restoration of the Scottish General Assembly in 1690 all occurred during Boston’s adolescence and shaped the ecclesiastical landscape of his adult ministry by officially re-establishing Presbyterian polity and Westminster Calvinism in

⁵ In Boston, *Works*, V, 5-43. The original manuscript of the *Soliloquie* is now available among the ‘MSS of Thomas Boston of Ettrick’, in ‘Sermons and related writings of Thomas Boston, James Fisher, John Brown and other members of the United Free Church in Scotland 1699-1851’, Department of Special Collections and Archives, Aberdeen University Library, King’s College, MS.3245/2, pp. 1-54. Further references to the Aberdeen manuscripts are given after quotations in the text.

⁶ The events mentioned in the following paragraphs are familiar ones; for fuller details, see any of the historical works listed in the bibliography.

Scotland (XII, 15). The epochal union between Scotland and England commenced on the day Boston began his ministry in Ettrick in 1707 (XII, 193). Fearful of episcopal hegemony, he considered the union as an occasion for mourning, since by it 'a nail is sent from Scotland, to fix the Dagon of the English hierarchy in its place in our country' (IV, 465; cf. II, 133; IV, 327). One unanticipated result of this union was Queen Anne's attempt to compel Scottish ministers to swear the 1712 Oath of Abjuration. Primarily because the Oath advocated the preservation of episcopacy rather than presbyterianism in England, Boston became a 'non-juror', hazarding expulsion and a fine of £500 on the one hand and the ire of parishioners who wanted him to break communion with the 'jurors' on the other.⁷ The year 1712 also witnessed official toleration for episcopal ministers and the re-establishment of patronage in Scotland, although the divisive effects of the latter change were slow to materialize. The short-lived Jacobite Rebellion of 1715 aroused even greater anxiety for staunch anti-papists like Boston.⁸

Boston was also intimately involved in the major controversies in the Scottish church during the first third of the eighteenth century. He was present at the General Assembly of 1717 which investigated John Simson (1667-1740), professor of theology at Glasgow, for his Arminian and Rationalist tendencies and censured him, but 'with great softness' (XII, 290). Here Boston also found occasion to speak in favour of the 'Auchterarder Creed', believing its 'proposition to be truth, howbeit not well worded' (XII, 291). The creed was used in ordination examinations by the Auchterarder Presbytery to rule out candidates who taught that repentance must precede faith. It ran as follows:

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. (XII, 291)

At the same Assembly, Boston commended *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* to a colleague as an orthodox defence of the free offer of the gospel and the place of the law in the Christian life.⁹ He had first spotted this work above a Simprin window during a

⁷ Boston, *Works*, XII, 242-52 (cf. IV, 148). Boston also refused to sign a more carefully qualified version of the Oath in 1715 (XII, 310).

⁸ Boston, *Works*, XII, 252, 267-73 (cf. II, 130-38; IX, 228-30). Boston's longest sustained attack on Roman Catholic (and Anglican) ritual is available in a manuscript recently purchased by the National Library of Scotland (Acc 10880): Thomas Boston, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, pp. 103-38 (cf. II, 155n-56n).

⁹ Boston, *Works*, XII, 291. The full text of Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London, 1645), with Boston's annotations (1726), is included in Boston's *Works* (VII, 143-489).

pastoral visit in 1700 (XII, 155); such was its influence upon his own theological development that he attributed to it his ‘distinct uptakings of the doctrine of the gospel’ (VII, 155). His recommendation of the *Marrow* to his colleague resulted in its republication in Scotland and precipitated the Marrow Controversy.¹⁰ Boston was among the twelve ‘Representers’, or ‘Marrow men’, who defended the theology of ‘free grace’ contained in the *Marrow* after the 1720 General Assembly banned the book for its supposed Antinomianism. Ultimately, the Marrow men were ‘admonished and rebuked’ by the 1722 General Assembly for their defence of the *Marrow*, but no further actions were taken against them (XII, 333). Boston’s final appearance on the stage of the national church was in 1729, when John Simson was reprimanded a second time by the Assembly, this time for Arianism. Boston stood alone to protest that the ecclesiastical sentence given to John Simson (suspension rather than deposition) was ‘no just testimony of this church’s indignation against the dishonour done by the said Mr. Simson to our glorious Redeemer’ (XII, 384). Yet he refused to disrupt the harmony of the church by recording his objection, thereby securing his reputation for being equally ‘zealous’ for the purity of the church and ‘studious’ for the peace of the church (XII, 452).

Yet Boston’s involvement in these controversies was a matter more of necessity than design. By his own testimony, he was ‘averse to controversy’, although he was ‘set to go through with it’ when his conscience so demanded (XII, 446). Boston’s participation in ecclesiastical affairs was an extension of his first love and primary calling as a preacher; his days were largely taken up with the preparation and delivery of sermons for the benefit of his local congregation. The proportions of his published works accurately reflect the focus of his energies: ten of the twelve lengthy volumes consist of sermons, the product of a lifetime of pulpit ministry. Like his Puritan and Presbyterian forebears, Thomas Boston was a ‘preacher first and everything else second’.¹¹

¹⁰ The most detailed treatment of the Marrow Controversy and related events is David C. Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy*, Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1988). For shorter summaries, see Thomas M’Crie, ‘Account of the Controversy respecting the Marrow of Modern Divinity’, *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, 30 (1831), 539-51, 687-99, 811-26, and n.s. 1 (1832), 73-94; Donald Beaton, ‘The “Marrow of Modern Divinity” and the Marrow Controversy’, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 1 (1926), 112-34; and M. D. Geuze, ‘Sola Gratia. Een theologische strijd in Schotland in het begin van de achttiende eeuw’, *Theologia Reformata*, 14 (1971), 312-37.

¹¹ Irvonwy Morgan, *Puritan Spirituality* (London: Epworth Press, 1973), p. 7.

Given the dominant place of preaching in his life and writings, it is perhaps surprising that scholarly attention has heretofore failed to focus squarely on Thomas Boston as a preacher. William Addison's largely biographical thesis (1936) was concerned with Boston as a controversialist, placing him in the context of eighteenth-century ecclesiastical disputes.¹² A similar approach has been taken in David C. Lachman's more recent (1988) volume on *The Marrow Controversy* as a whole.¹³ Donald Jay Bruggink (1956) has argued that Boston was striving towards a theology of grace which was incompatible with the legalistic federal theology of the Westminster Standards.¹⁴ M. Charles Bell (1982) reached the same conclusion about Boston in his survey of Scottish Calvinist thought on faith and assurance.¹⁵ Andrew T. B. McGowan (1990) has taken the opposite view, arguing that Boston was a theologian of grace precisely *because* he was a federal Calvinist in the Westminster tradition.¹⁶ In both cases, however, Boston has been treated primarily as a systematic federal theologian. Donald Macleod (1993) has gone so far as to classify Boston among Scotland's 'experts in systematic theology'.¹⁷ His role as a practitioner of pastoral care has been taken more seriously by Stephen Albert Woodruff (1966), but Woodruff discusses the full range of pastoral duties and gives only superficial treatment to the theological content and historical antecedents of Boston's preaching.¹⁸

The present thesis attempts to provide fresh insight into the writings of Thomas Boston in at least four ways. First, it seeks to understand Boston as a preacher. It is concerned with the sources, method, content, and goals of his sermons in their original historical and theological contexts. It is unified not so much by a single argument about his theology as by a single perspective -- Boston as preacher -- from which his theology

¹² William Addison, *The Life and Writings of Thomas Boston of Ettrick* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1936).

¹³ For the theology of Thomas Boston, see especially Lachman, pp. 135-42.

¹⁴ Donald Jay Bruggink, 'The Theology of Thomas Boston, 1676-1732' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1956), pp. 84, 138.

¹⁵ M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 153-61.

¹⁶ Andrew T. B. McGowan, 'The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston (1676-1732)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1990), pp. 250-51, 328-29.

¹⁷ Donald Macleod, 'Systematic Theology', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), pp. 809-12 (p. 810).

¹⁸ Stephen Albert Woodruff, III, 'The Pastoral Ministry in the Church of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, with Special Reference to Thomas Boston, John Willison and John Erskine' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1966).

should be understood and appreciated. From this perspective a variety of themes emerge, including Boston's Augustinian pedigree, his grasp of the historical and geographical scope of international Calvinism, his inheritance from the plain style of Scottish Presbyterian and English Puritan preaching, his reliance upon biblical and agricultural metaphors, his constant attention to the varying spiritual conditions of the saints and sinners in his congregation, his sensitivity to the intellectual and affective faculties of his hearers, his evangelical advocacy of the free offer of the gospel and the new birth, his Trinitarian approach to questions of assurance of faith, his use of the doctrine of union with Christ as a principle for theological organization and pastoral care, and his presentation of strong doctrines of heaven and hell. Yet no single theme is capable of doing justice to Boston's preaching over the long course of his ministry. Since the great majority of his extant writings are in the form of sermons, they are most appropriately considered *as* sermons. And to consider them as sermons is to allow them the degree of richness, complexity, and subtlety they possess, without limiting them to a single theological perspective. This is not to suggest that previous work on the life and theology of Thomas Boston has been wholly misguided. Since he *was* involved in theological controversy, and *was* a proponent of covenant theology, and *was* involved in the full range of pastoral duties, the theses by Addison, Bruggink, Woodruff, Lachman, and McGowan offer valid perspectives on his ministry. Yet the present thesis satisfies the need for a critical analysis of Thomas Boston the preacher, an analysis more sensitive to the homiletical genre of his writings.

Second, the structure of the thesis is governed by the structure of Boston's celebrated collection of sermons, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*. While citations from the rest of his *Works* and manuscripts are abundant, they are primarily used to reinforce what is said about the *Fourfold State*. Among the more important reasons for selecting the *Fourfold State* for this purpose are its status as Boston's most influential and widely-recognized work in the eighteenth century and after, the frequency with which he returned to edit its main text, the centrality of its major themes to his preaching as a whole, and the disproportionately scant attention it has received in critical scholarship.

Third, the thesis aims to place the preaching of the *Fourfold State* against the fullest possible background of Boston's theological sources, especially in the

international tradition of Reformed theology. The bibliographies of previous studies reveal an incomplete and unsystematic use of this material. Previous scholarship has been incomplete in that only a small portion of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century works familiar to Boston have been consulted; it has been unsystematic in that a variety of sixteenth and seventeenth-century works have been employed as reference points for his theology without any evidence that he had read them. Yet the poverty of Boston's personal library (XII, 154-55) and the abundance of precise references he makes to the books he did consult make a thorough and systematic use of his sources possible. This is perhaps the best place to underscore an important methodological point: *all of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century sources referred to in the text and notes of the present thesis are works known to have been read by Thomas Boston.*¹⁹ The present study is a reading of Boston's preaching against the background of his reading.

Fourth, the thesis has been written with the benefit of original sermon manuscripts rediscovered by the present writer at King's College Library, Aberdeen, in July of 1993. The Aberdeen manuscripts make a fresh and substantial contribution to understanding Thomas Boston as a preacher. Their particular importance lies in the fact that they are Boston's first sermons, delivered prior to the sermons which appear in his *Works* and even prior to his discovery of the *Marrow*. Further, the manuscripts include Boston's announcement of his intention to preach the sermons which became the *Fourfold State*, and thus give new insight into the way those sermons were the product of his understanding of his calling as a preacher. Care has been taken to allow the newly-rediscovered Aberdeen manuscripts to contribute to an understanding of Boston as a preacher without giving them disproportionate weight in the thesis as a whole. Nevertheless, their unfamiliarity to most readers necessitates a full introduction to their origin and contents.

Following the merger of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland in 1900, the holdings of the Brown-Lindsay Library of the United Presbyterian College became the property of Christ's College, Aberdeen.²⁰ Thirteen manuscript

¹⁹ Insofar as possible, sources in notes have been listed in chronological order.

²⁰ D. S. Cairns, 'From Union to Union: 1900 to 1929', in *The Church College in Aberdeen* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1936), p. 19.

volumes from this collection were deposited in the University of Aberdeen Library, King's College, in 1986 under the heading: 'Sermons and related writings of Thomas Boston, James Fisher, John Brown and other members of the United Free Church in Scotland 1699-1851'.²¹ Since the later volumes include notes by both John Brown of Haddington (1722-1787) and his grandson, John Brown of Edinburgh (1784-1858), the manuscripts appear to have constituted a family collection prior to their placement at the United Presbyterian College. The absence of any scholarly reference to these manuscripts during most of the present century suggests that they were either unappreciated or overlooked altogether during their sojourn at Christ's College.²²

The first two of these volumes consist of several hundred neatly handwritten pages, nearly four inches by six inches, almost devoid of corrections, bound in leather. The spine of the second volume bears the stamp: 'MSS of Thomas Boston of Etterick'. That the volumes contain Boston's own work is confirmed both by a comparison of the handwriting of these manuscripts with other manuscripts known to be his own and by the agreement of places and dates in the manuscripts with numerous specific references in his *Memoirs*. The first volume is unimportant, at least in the sense that it consists of sermons (1723 to 1725) already available in Boston's *Works* under the title 'The Distinguishing Characters of True Believers'.²³

The second volume, however, consists almost entirely of unpublished material, unavailable in the *Works* or elsewhere.²⁴ The particular importance of this volume is that the notes and sermons it contains were written between 1695 and 1702, predating the rest of Boston's published sermons. These are the first sermons of Thomas Boston, the

²¹ With the exception of Boston's sermons, the manuscripts are all from ministers in the Associate (Burglier) Synod and include notes and sermons from such notables as Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754; MS.3245/3), William Wilson (1690-1741; MS.3245/4), James Fisher (1697-1775; MS.3245/7), Ralph Erskine (1685-1752; MS.3245/7), John Brown of Haddington (1722-1787; MS.3245/9), George Lawson (1749-1820; MS.3245/11) and John Brown (1784-1858; MS.3245/11). The collection promises to provide fertile ground for further research.

²² Low (1908) appears to have had access to these manuscripts at the beginning of the century, referring to them as the '*Brown-Lindsay MSS*' (pp. 105n-106n, 133n, 135n-136n).

²³ Boston, *Works*, v, 92-271. Some of the sermons in this series are present in the *Works* but absent from the manuscript. There are also minor discrepancies between the manuscripts and the published sermons, such as variations in word order, the inclusion of marginal notes as text, the addition of a preliminary outline to the sermon, and the like. An additional sermon preached on the text of Job 16.22 and included as pages 160-64 of the manuscript may be found in Boston's *Works*, iv, 67-71.

²⁴ The lone exception is the text of Boston's 'Soliloquie on the Art of Man-fishing' (v, 5-43), which was written in 1699 and first published in 1773.

sermons of the Boston of Duns and Simprin, not yet the Boston who begins to preach at Ettrick in 1707.

The first 34 pages of the manuscript consist of notes taken by Boston while listening to fifteen sermons preached in various parishes by at least nine different ministers. Although not all of these notes are dated, they can be placed during his probationary period and early ministry, between his departure from the divinity school at Edinburgh in 1695 and his ordination in Simprin at the end of 1699. Of particular interest are notes from sermons by Henry Erskine, who was the ministerial instrument of Boston's conversion (Abdn MS, 8-10; cf. XII, 11-13), and John Dysart of Coldingham, who instructed Boston that if he 'entered on preaching of Christ, [he] would find it very pleasant' (Abdn MS, 1-2; cf. XII, 32).

These sermon notes are followed by 42 pages of Boston's own sermon texts (Abdn MS, 34-75). The seven sermons contained in this portion of the manuscript were occasional sermons preached in parishes near Simprin in the second half of the year following his ordination (1700). Two of the sermons were preached 'coram clero': an 'addition' at Chirnside on Ephesians 1.13 and an unspecified 'exercise' on Ephesians 2.14.²⁵ Boston's own marginal notes denote a Communion Day sermon at Swinton (Abdn MS, 51-56), a Fast Day sermon at Langton (Abdn MS, 57-62), a sermon preached at his birthplace of Duns (Abdn MS, 69-75), and a sermon delivered 'the Sabbath immediately after my marriage' (Abdn MS, 41-45; cf. XII, 145-46). The texts of these and the other manuscript sermons appear to be fairly complete, with carefully numbered paragraphs comprised of full sentences. But Boston's own testimony that he did not begin to write his sermons out in full until 1702 indicates that his delivery prior to that time must have been partly extemporaneous (XII, 153).

The contents of pages 77-82 of the manuscript are described by Boston's own title: 'Cases of Conscience discoursed on at the weekly meeting for prayer and Christian fellowship'. The group, which included his father, began to meet in January of 1700, only a month after his settlement at Simprin. Although the notes were abandoned after

²⁵ Boston, Abdn MS, 46-51, 62-68. For descriptions of how presbyterial exercises were to be conducted, see the Assembly Act of 1705 in *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1638-1842* (Edinburgh, 1843), p. 366, or Walter Steuart, *Collections and Observations Methodiz'd; Concerning the Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1709), p. 30.

only five sessions, the group continued to meet throughout his time in Simprin (XII, 180). The group considered questions such as ‘What may be the marks of true and saving faith?’ or ‘How prayer is to be gone about so as it may be accepted of God?’ (Abdn MS, 82). Boston’s pattern -- including the practice of writing down and initialling the best answers given by group members -- is typically Puritan, following closely the model for Christian discussion groups which he had encountered in Isaac Ambrose’s *Media*.²⁶ Boston’s notes reveal that these discussions were characterized by breadth of scriptural knowledge, depth of spiritual experience, and quality of Christian reflection.

The next section of the manuscript is much longer, containing twelve sermons in 65 pages (Abdn MS, 83-147). Most of these sermons were preached in the first half of 1700; that is to say, these sermons were actually preached earlier than the sermons which precede them in the manuscript. Like the others, these sermons were preached on various occasions in surrounding parishes, including Duns, Edrom, Kelso, Chirnside, and Eyemouth. Of special interest are three sermons preached prior to his settlement in Simprin at the end of 1699. The first of these, delivered on 1 October in his home town of Duns on the theme of setting affections on heavenly things (Colossians 3.2), is the earliest extant sermon of Thomas Boston (Abdn MS, 83-88). In his *Memoirs*, he records that this was also the first occasion of his ‘administering the sacrament of baptism’ (XII, 91).

The latter half of the second volume of manuscripts contains a continuous series of sermons preached over the course of nearly two and a half years (Abdn MS, 155-303). This series was begun on 14 December, 1699, the Thursday following Boston’s induction at Simprin in Berwickshire. He continued to preach each Thursday until he left Simprin for Ettrick in 1707 (XII, 101), although the manuscript comes to an end on 2 April, 1702. The most significant of the sermons rediscovered among the Aberdeen manuscripts was preached near the beginning of this series, just eleven days after Boston began his Simprin ministry (Abdn MS, 155-76). In this sermon, preached from Hosea 4.6 over a period of weeks, he first expresses the ideas which were to become the nucleus of the *Fourfold State* and grounds them in his understanding of his calling as a gospel preacher.

²⁶ Isaac Ambrose, *Prima, Media, & Ultima* (London, 1674), pp. 243ff.

II. THOMAS BOSTON IN HIS STUDY

The sermons in the newly discovered Aberdeen manuscripts, like Thomas Boston's later sermons, are saturated with Scripture. It is difficult to find so much as a paragraph anywhere in his sermons which does not contain one or more scriptural references. As Boston confessed in the 'Memorial' to his 'Essay on Genesis', 'I must own I am much addicted to the Letter of the Sacred Text and Loth to depart from it'.²⁷ The primary source for his preaching and theology was always the Bible. But a recognition of the scriptural basis for his preaching does not diminish the importance of recognizing the ways in which his was influenced by his theological reading. Information about Boston's personal library and other reading comes primarily from three sources. First, some 40 books are mentioned in his autobiographical accounts, often with some indication of the relative importance he attached to them or of the time when they came into his possession. He describes the arrival of several important parcels of books during his time at Simprin (XII, 155), although he indicates that he obtained books more infrequently after his translation to Ettrick (XII, 230). He also makes occasional mention of books that he borrowed from friends (XII, 196). Second, Boston's answers to 'Miscellaneous Questions' are littered with quotations and references to biblical and theological literature (VI, 11-240). Since these essays were written in his relative youth (VI, v), they help establish which books he possessed at the outset of his pastoral ministry. Third, Boston's copious notes to *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* consist largely of quotations from sources which support the theology of the *Marrow* (VII, 143-464). To these may be added a handful of source references from the Aberdeen and other manuscripts. In all, more than 600 specific references or quotations to other sources appear in Boston's *Works*.

These references may not provide an exhaustive list of Boston's reading and some of his citations are attended with a degree of uncertainty.²⁸ Yet the references which he does provide allow the main contours of his theological exposure to emerge with clarity. It is probable that Boston, in one way or another, has made reference to the works which

²⁷ Thomas Boston, 'Essay on the first 20 chapters of Genesis', New College Library, Edinburgh, [1725], BOS.3.

²⁸ See the note in the bibliography to this thesis.

were most important for his theological and pastoral development. If the list of 'Sources Cited by Thomas Boston' in the bibliography to this thesis is not co-extensive with Boston's reading it nevertheless provides an accurate basis for understanding his relationship with his theological predecessors.

What this list of sources primarily reveals is a wide exposure to international Protestantism, especially Reformed Protestantism. Boston's lament about the difficulty of obtaining books owes as much to his thirst for knowledge as it does to the limitations of his library.²⁹ The fact of the matter is that he was familiar with the main currents of Reformed theology during both of the centuries which preceded his own. Among the Reformers, Martin Luther (1483-1546; Wittenberg; *Galatians, Thirtie Foure Special and chosen Sermons*) and John Calvin (1509-1564; Geneva; *Institvionvm, Catechism, Genesis*) held pride of place for Boston.³⁰ Boston's affection for Luther's understanding of law and gospel is confirmed both by the frequency with which he cited Luther and by his defence of strongly Lutheran themes in the *Marrow*.³¹ Boston also read John Knox's (1514-1572) *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, of course, and the *Common Places* of Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563; Berne).

Boston was equally familiar with theologians of post-Reformation continental Reformed orthodoxy. The most prominent of his late sixteenth century sources were Theodore Beza (1519-1605; Geneva; *Confession, Propositions and Principles of Diuinitie*), Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583; Heidelberg; *Catecheticarum Explicationum*), whom Boston 'read over three or four times' before going to divinity school (XII, 20), and Heironymus Zanchius (1516-1590; Heidelberg; *Opera*). The influence of continental theology was perpetuated by orthodox Dutch theologians of the seventeenth century such as the Leyden professors who compiled the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* -- Johannes Polyandrus (1568-1646), Andreas Rivetus (1572-1651), Antonius Walaeus (1573-1639),

²⁹ Boston, *Works*, XII, 102, 154-55. For an indication of the gap between Boston's library and that of a colleague, see the numerous sources cited by his friend Gabriel Wilson in John Brown (Whitburn), *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated*, rev. edn (Glasgow, 1831), pp. 239-61 (cf. XII, 333).

³⁰ For complete bibliographic information, see 'Sources Cited by Thomas Boston' in the bibliography. Less important sources have been omitted from the summary which follows, but appear in the bibliography.

³¹ Boston, *Works*, VII, 248n-50n; XII, 155. Luther's influence on Boston strengthens Hugh Watt's argument for 'The Influence of Martin Luther on Scottish Religion in the 18th Century', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 6 (1938), 147-60, by showing that Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* and *Chosen Sermons* were exerting an influence at the *beginning* of the eighteenth century.

and Antonius Thysius (1603-1665) -- as well as by the canons and decrees of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). Other Dutch systematicians familiar to Boston included the Utrecht theologians Johannes Hoornbeek (1617-1666; *Socinianismi Confutati*), Andreas Essenius (1618-1677; *Compendium*), Leonardus Rijssenius (1636?-1700; *Summa Theologiæ Elencticæ*), and Herman Witsius (1636-1708; Leyden; *Oeconomia fœderum, Symbolum Apostolorum*). During Boston's sojourn at the school of divinity in Edinburgh, Essenius and Rijssenius formed the basis of the theological curriculum (XII, 21). He also valued earlier systematic works by the Swiss theologians Francis Turretin (1623-1687; Geneva; *Institutio*) and Marcus Wendelinus (1584-1652; Zerbst; *Christianæ Theologiæ*).

Although by no means devoid of practical concern, the sophisticated works of Reformed orthodoxy were governed by the formal and material exigencies of systematic theology.³² Among the more important continental late Reformation or post-Reformation commentators for Boston were Benedictus Aretius (1505-1574; Berne), the Danish Lutheran Nicholas Hemmingsen (1513-1600), Johann Piscator (1546-1625; Herborn), and Rivetus.

Boston's more extensive reading in seventeenth century English Puritan writings represents a shift in genre as well as geography.³³ The *Medvlla* of William Ames (1576-1633) was his only English systematic theology, although he was familiar with more narrowly focused theological treatises by Ezekiel Culverwell (1554?-1631; *Treatise of Faith*), William Pemble (1592?-1623; in *Works*), Edward Fisher (fl. 1645; *Marrow of Modern Divinity*), and John Owen (1616-1683; *Πνευματολογία Justification*). Instead, Boston had a wide exposure to English Puritan sermons, an exposure which was as

³² For the most balanced assessment of the place of these theologians in the history of Protestant theology, see especially Richard A. Muller's *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*, ed. by David C. Steinmetz, *Studies in Historical Theology*, 2 (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1986), and his *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987-), both of which provide a helpful corrective to more critical assessments by Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Basil Hall, 'Calvin Against the Calvinists', in *John Calvin*, ed. by G. E. Duffield, *Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology*, 1, pp. 19-37; and many others.

³³ The unavoidable difficulties posed by using the term 'Puritan' are helpfully discussed by Basil Hall, 'Puritanism: the Problem of Definition', ed. by G. J. Cuming, *Studies in Church History*, 2 (London: Nelson, 1965), pp. 283-96, and Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 2nd edn (New York: Schocken, 1967), pp. 13-29. I am using the term to denote several generations of rigorous English Calvinists who attempted to effect a biblical reform of the doctrine and piety of the Anglican church, regardless of their ecclesiological convictions. While this usage blurs distinctions important to the seventeenth century context, it best captures the tenor of Boston's theological and homiletical inheritance from these preachers.

formative as it was extensive. Among the more important Puritan preachers on his shelves were Isaac Ambrose (1604-1663; *Prima, Media, et Ultima*), Samuel Bolton (1606-1654; *Dead Saint Speaking*), William Bridge (1600?-70; *Lifting Up for the Downcast, Christ in Travail*), John Brinsley (1600-1665; *ΜΕΣΙΤΗΣ, Mystical Implantation*), Thomas Brooks (1608-1680; *Golden Key*), Stephen Charnock (1628-1680; *Works*), John Flavel (1630?-1691; *Mystery of Providence, Sacramental Meditations*), Thomas Manton (1620-1677; *Philippians*), John Preston (1587-1628; *New Covenant, Breast-Plate*), Obadiah Sedgwick (1600?-1658; *Bowels of Tender Mercy*), and Thomas Shepard (1604-1649; *Sincere Convert, Sound Beleever, Ten Virgins*). A further collection of Puritan sermons from London, edited by Thomas Case (1598-1682) and entitled *The Morning Exercise Methodized* (1660), appears to have been an especially influential source for Boston's preaching in the *Fourfold State*. While these Puritan sermons were doctrinal in content, and employed similar categories and vocabulary to systematic works from the continent, their participation in the genre 'sermon' gives them particular importance for understanding Boston's preaching. To these volumes of sermons may be added Oliver Bowles' (b. 1577?) *De Pastore Evangelico*, a treatise on pulpit ministry in the Westminster tradition. The English Puritans also provided Boston with the largest proportion of his biblical commentaries. Voluminous quotations in the *Synopsis* of Matthew Poole (1624-1679), Boston's first complete biblical commentary (XII, 230), exposed him to much of the history of Protestant biblical interpretation. He also made use of the English *Annotations* (1645), and of individual commentaries by Paul Bayne (d. 1617), Henry Ainsworth (1577-1622), Jeremiah Burroughes (1599-1646), Edward Leigh (1602-1671), John Lightfoot (1602-1675), and Pemble. The exegetical arguments Boston cites from these sources are often intricate, suggesting that he read his commentaries carefully.

His reading in the literature of the continental and English post-Reformation was supplemented by a heavy dose of Scottish biblical, theological, and homiletical writing. Like the English sources, the Scottish sources were distributed over several different genres. Boston quotes with some regularity early Scottish confessional and catechetical material from Patrick Hamilton (1504?-1528; *Places*), John Craig (c.1512-1600; *Forme of Examination*), John Davidson (c.1549-1604; *Helps for Young Scholars*), and James

Melville (1556-1614; *Spiritvall Propine*). His foremost Scottish systematic work was John Sharp's (c.1572-c.1647) *Cursus Theologicvs*; he also read John Brown of Wamphray's (c.1610-1679) treatise on the *Life of Justification*. The strong statement of federal theology in the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, which was composed by James Durham (1622-1658) and David Dickson (c.1583-1663) and bound with the Westminster Standards, merits separate mention. Both Durham (*On Scandal, Heaven upon Earth*) and Dickson (*Therapeutica Sacra*) also provided Boston with examples of pastoral casuistry in the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, a casuistical tradition closely related to English Puritanism. Among the most important Scottish commentaries for Boston were ones written by Robert Rollock (c.1555-1599), Durham, Dickson, and James Fergusson (1621-1667). He was well-versed in the writings of the prolific Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661; *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners*, *Covenant of Life*, *Due Right of Presbyteries*, *Exercitationes Apologeticæ*, *Influence of the Life of Grace*, *Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist*, *Trial and Triumph*). It is scarcely necessary to mention Boston's familiarity with the documents of the Westminster Assembly (1643-1648), documents which reflect a Scottish contribution as well as an English one. Indeed, the Westminster Standards serve as a reminder not to make too sharp a distinction between Boston's Scottish and English sources, since they represent the nexus between Scottish Presbyterianism and English Puritanism.³⁴ His reading in works written by contemporaries included historical works on the Reformed church in Scotland, polemical works on the Marrow and Simson controversies, and devotional works on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Boston's library included other works which fit into the geography of Reformed theology less easily, or not at all. His own reading among patristic sources appears to have been limited to a brief encounter with Irenaeus (fl. 175-195; *Adversus hæreses*), although quotations in continental works would have given him additional exposure to the Fathers. His direct exposure to theologians he considered heretical was similarly limited. Boston's encounter with the English Antinomian John Saltmarsh (d.1647) was perhaps typical of his approach: he abandoned a copy (unfinished) of *Free Grace; or The Flowing of Christ's Blood Freely to Sinners* because it was a book he 'relished not' (XII,

³⁴ For an overview of these connections, see J. L. Ainslie, 'The Scottish Reformed Church and English Puritanism', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 8 (1944), 75-95.

155). Among the few theologians he considered erroneous that he did read were the Roman Catholic systematician Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621; *Disputationes*), the *Canons and Decrees* of the Council of Trent (1545-1663), the Jesuit Jeremias Drexelius (1581-1638; *De Aeternitate*), the Neonomian Richard Baxter (1615-1691; *Infant Baptism*), the Erastian Francis Fullwood (d.1693; *Visible Church*), the heterodox and enthusiastic Antonia Bourignon (1616-1680), and the Arminian Laurence Womack (1612-1686; *Examination of Tilenus*). Works on the language and history of the Old Testament -- including those by Joseph Athias (d. 1700), Johann Buxtorf (1599-1664), Victorinus Bythner (1605?-1675?), Walter Cross (d. 1701), Johann Forster (1495-1556), Thomas Goodwin (d. 1642), Jacob Gousset (1635-1704), Franciscus Junius (1589-1677) and Immanuel Tremellius (1510-1580), Caspar Ledebuhrius (c. 1590-c. 1650), Leigh, Lightfoot, Augustus Pfeiffer (1640-1698), Franciscus Raphelengius (1539-1597), Matthew Wasmuth (1625-1688), and John Weemse (c. 1579-1636) -- held a special place in Boston's affections, particularly insofar as they related to the inspiration and interpretation of Hebrew vowel points and accents.³⁵

This perusal of the shelves in Boston's study reveals the geographical and chronological breadth of his exposure to Reformed theology. By his familiarity with a substantial cross-section of the history of Reformed doctrine, and in spite of his situation in a remote parish in southern Scotland, Boston became an international Calvinist.³⁶ On most theological issues it proves difficult or impossible to trace his preaching to a particular source. His reading across two centuries of Reformed theology exacerbates this difficulty, since later theologians repeated and developed earlier themes in the complex, contrapuntal harmony of Reformed theology. Yet it is easy to show -- as this

³⁵ Boston regarded this study as the main 'business' of his life (XII, 283; cf. 447). His efforts to understand the Hebrew accentuation culminated in the posthumous publication of *Tractatus Stigmologicus, Hebræo-Biblicus* (Amsterdam, 1738). Boston's primary concern was to demonstrate the utility of the accents for biblical interpretation, although he also argued, with Buxtorf and Weemse, that the accents were of divine origin. For an assessment of the *Tractatus*, see D. M. G. Stalker, 'Boston of Ettrick as Old Testament Scholar', in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 9 (1947), 61-68. The work received little serious attention, although the seminal New Testament textual critic Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) concluded that 'Mr. Boston (of Ettrick) has hit upon the right way of understanding [the Hebrew accents]' (John Christian Frederic Burk, *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of John Albert Bengel*, trans. by Robert Francis Walker (London, 1837), p. 425).

³⁶ I am using 'Reformed' and 'Calvinist' virtually synonymously to refer to those Protestant theologians in the sixteenth century and after who sought to reform their churches along biblical lines, emphasized divine sovereignty, and distinguished themselves from Lutheran Protestantism. It will become clear that I am using 'Calvinist' in the broad sense, neither limiting the Reformed tradition to Calvin's thought alone nor opposing Calvin to his theological descendants.

thesis will have occasion to show -- that he was familiar with arguments on all sides of Reformed disputes on central issues such as the basis and extent of the gospel offer, the possibility of preparation for conversion, the internal relationships of the human faculties, the degree to which assurance was entailed by faith, the number and properties of the covenants, and the place of the law in the Christian life.

When Boston is properly located within the international context of Reformed theology, the limitations of comparing his theology exclusively with either Calvin or the Westminster Standards become readily apparent. Bell, adopting a strategy employed by James B. Torrance and Donald J. Bruggink, asserts that the use of Calvin as the normative standard for Scottish theology 'needs little justification'.³⁷ McGowan's successful demonstration that Boston's theology is consistent with Reformed orthodoxy uses the Westminster *Confession of Faith* as its primary standard for comparison.³⁸ Yet Boston's international Calvinism renders these strategies inadequate for a full understanding of his theological and homiletical milieu. With respect to Calvin, Robert Letham is closest to the mark when he says that the Genevan should be considered '*primus inter pares*' among the Reformed theologians.³⁹ Indeed, if the citations in Boston's writings were the only available evidence, Calvin would scarcely rank that high, so that it is somewhat inaccurate even to speak of Boston as an 'international Calvinist'. With respect to the Westminster Standards, themselves an expression of international Reformed orthodoxy, their status as the official documents of the Church of Scotland gives them a unique place in Scottish theology. Further, Boston's reading in at least a dozen works by Westminster divines -- including Bowles, Burroughes, Edmund Calamy (1600-1666), Caryl, Case, Goodwin, Lightfoot, Rutherford, Sedgwick, and others who contributed to the *Annotations* -- suggests that his Westminster credentials may be even stronger than McGowan has shown. Nevertheless, these observations must be balanced by the recognition that Boston's embrace of international Reformed theology encompassed more than the Westminster Standards to which he subscribed.

³⁷ Bell, p. 8; James B. Torrance, 'The Incarnation and 'Limited Atonement'', *Evangelical Quarterly*, 55 (1983), 83-94; Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 113-14.

³⁸ McGowan, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 9-10, 328.

³⁹ Robert W. A. Letham, 'Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformed Theology: Zwingli to the Synod of Dort', 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1979), I, 2. See also Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), p. 93, and Tony Lane, 'The Quest for the Historical Calvin', *Evangelical Quarterly*, 50 (1983), 95-113.

An awareness of the international scope of Boston's Calvinism is essential for assigning him his proper place late in the development of covenant theology in Britain. A large proportion of his sources (going as far back as Irenaeus) are covenantal in their theological orientation. Covenant theology (or 'federal theology') has long been recognized as an important dimension of the Reformed tradition, but has received unprecedented attention in the past few decades.⁴⁰ Perpetuating an argument that goes back at least to the nineteenth century,⁴¹ many scholars have attempted to rid Calvin of his Calvinist successors by introducing a sharp contrast between two varieties of covenant theology.⁴² The first variety is that of Calvin and Zwingli, in which God establishes one, sovereign, unilateral, unconditional, testamentary, promissory covenant of grace with

⁴⁰ Covenant theology is any theology which gives thematic or structural attention to the covenantal relationship between God and man, including theology which draws a distinction between the covenant of works with Adam and the covenant of grace with the believer in Christ. For comprehensive bibliographies on covenant theology, see David A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Andrew Alexander Woolsey, 'Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1988), 2 vols.

⁴¹ Heinrich Heppe, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformirten Kirche*, Schriften zur reformirten Theologie, 2 (Elberfeld, 1861), pp. 204-31, may be considered the originator of this view.

⁴² For examples, see T. M. Lindsay, 'The Covenant Theology', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, 28 (1879), 521-38; W. Adams Brown, 'Covenant Theology', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings and others, 12 vols (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908-1926), IV, 216-24; Leonard J. Trinterud, 'The Origins of Puritanism', *Church History*, 20 (1951), 37-57; F. W. Dillistone, *The Structure of the Divine Society* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1951), p. 131; Thomas F. Torrance, *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church* (London: Clarke, 1959), pp. lv, lxiii-xv; Donald J. Bruggink, 'Calvin and Federal Theology', *The Reformed Review*, 13 (1959-1960), 15-22; William H. Chalker, 'Calvin and Some Seventeenth Century English Calvinists: A Comparison of Their Thought Through an Examination of Their Doctrines of the Knowledge of God, Faith, and Assurance' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Duke University, 1961), p. 57; Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765* (London: Olive Tree, 1967), pp. 20-22, 26-27; Richard L. Greaves, 'The Origins and Early Development of English Covenant Thought', *Historian*, 31 (1968), 21-35 (pp. 25, 32); Holmes Rolston, III, 'Responsible Man in Reformed Theology: Calvin Versus the Westminster Confession', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 23 (1970), 129-56; James B. Torrance, 'Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 23 (1970), 51-76 (p. 62); Holmes Rolston, III, *John Calvin Versus the Westminster Confession* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1972), pp. 11-13; James B. Torrance, 'The Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 26 (1973), 295-311 (pp. 299-302); R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 27, 38-41, 204-207; Letham, 'Saving Faith', I, 2-4, 112, 362-64; James B. Torrance, 'The Covenant Concept in Scottish Theology and Politics and its Legacy', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 26 (1973), 225-43 (pp. 234-35); Bell, pp. 8-11; Robert Letham, 'The *Foedus Operum*: Some Factors Accounting for its Development', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 14 (1983), 457-67; Donald K. McKim, 'William Perkins and the Theology of the Covenant', in *Studies of the Church in History* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1983), pp. 85-101 (pp. 85-96); Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 55; Stephen Strehle, *Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism: A Study of the Reformed Doctrine of Covenant*, Basler und Berner Studien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie, 58 (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 387-89; Weir, pp. 2, 15-16; Michael McGiffert, 'The Perkinsian Moment of Federal Theology', *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29 (1994), 117-48 (pp. 118, 137); and James B. Torrance, 'The Concept of Federal Theology -- Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?', in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture*, ed. by Wilhelm H. Neuser (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 15-40. Woolsey (I, 101-99) provides a complete history of the main approaches to the development of federal theology.

mankind. Since this covenant is unconditional, faith is simply a passive, intellectual assurance which is grounded in the objective work of God in Christ. The second variety of covenant theology has its roots in the theology of Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) and Musculus, although its primary exponents include Knox, Beza, Ursinus, Rollock, Perkins, Ames, and the Westminster *Confession*.⁴³ ‘The federal theology’, as it is termed, is characterized by a belief in limited atonement and the speculative addition of a covenant of works between God and Adam, an innovation which is often attributed to Ursinus.⁴⁴ The inevitable result of this change is said to be a shift away from the theology of Calvin and towards a bilateral, conditional, legalistic, contractual understanding of the covenant in which faith becomes an obligatory work of the will and assurance is grounded in the subjective evidence of personal obedience (the *sylogismus practicus*). Worse still, the federal theology gives law priority over grace, makes conversion dependent upon prior preparation, and fosters a futile, introspective quest for assurance. When the history of covenant theology is dichotomized in this way, Thomas Boston is often portrayed as a theologian who struggled against the inherent legalism of covenant theology and tried to recapture the unconditional grace of God within Reformed theology, but ultimately failed to break free from federal categories.⁴⁵

Over against this view of the history of federalism, Andrew A. Woolsey has recently attempted to emphasize the substantial continuity of covenant theology throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The insistence on making a ‘rigid and absolute distinction’ between the unilateral (unconditional) and bilateral (conditional) aspects of the covenant has ‘caused much confusion’. As an alternative to the dichotomy

⁴³ Scholars who agree with this general approach often disagree about how individual theologians should be classified. Trinterud, for example, places Beza in the unilateral camp and Zwingli in the bilateral camp. Such disagreement casts doubt on the making of a hard-and-fast distinction in the first place. More recently, Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), has attempted to divide the Puritans into two orthodoxies, pitting the covenantal ‘Amesians’ who favoured ‘an interlocking system of contractual covenants’ against the testamentary ‘Sibbesians’ who advocated ‘a free testament of voluntary bequeathing of grace’ (pp. 3, 31-33, 89-104, 109-29). Knight exaggerates the theological differences among the figures she considers, despite her own caveats about the danger of doing so (pp. 74, 91, 108, 131).

⁴⁴ E.g. Rolston, ‘Responsible Man’, p. 130; Letham, ‘Saving Faith’, I, 235; Kendall, *English Calvinism*, p. 38; Letham, ‘*Foedus Operum*’, pp. 459-63; Weir, pp. 122, 157; Michael McGiffert, ‘From Moses to Adam: The Making of the Covenant of Works’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (1988), 131-55; and J. B. Torrance, ‘Concept of Federal Theology’, pp. 21-23.

⁴⁵ This is the burden of Bruggink’s thesis (e.g. ‘Thomas Boston’, pp. 84, 348). See also J. B. Torrance, ‘Covenant Concept’, p. 239; Bell, pp. 8, 11, 155-56, 160-61, 168, 199; J. B. Torrance, ‘Incarnation’, p. 91; ‘Covenant or Contract?’, p. 63; ‘McLeod Campbell’, pp. 300-301; and T. F. Torrance, *School of Faith*, p. lxv.

he rejects, Woolsey argues that the covenant of grace is both ‘unilateral in its initiation’ and ‘bilateral in its administration’.⁴⁶ Further, he contends that *both* the unilateral and bilateral dimensions of the covenant were recognized by Calvin and by later Calvinists such as Beza and Ursinus.⁴⁷ He concludes:

When the basic ideas of the covenant, rather than the question of terms and structures, are made the standard of judgment in assessing the covenantal value of the theology of the Reformers and their successors, a strong case can be made out for the unity and continuity of the Reformed tradition in this field.⁴⁸

Although McGowan completed his thesis prior to Woolsey, his reading of Boston is sympathetic to this conclusion, stressing the continuity between Boston’s gracious covenant theology and that of the Westminster *Confession of Faith*.⁴⁹

The present thesis is not exclusively concerned with the covenant theology of Thomas Boston. Nevertheless, a careful examination of the *Fourfold State* reveals several dimensions of Boston’s theology which have a direct bearing on the wider debate about federalism. Defenders of the discontinuity position have rightly observed that Boston was critical of some versions of covenant theology, particularly those versions which separated the intra-Trinitarian covenant of redemption from the divine-human covenant of grace and thus designated personal faith as the ‘condition’ of the covenant of grace.⁵⁰ His testimony that he ‘had no great fondness for the doctrine of the

⁴⁶ Woolsey, I, 87-88.

⁴⁷ Woolsey, II, 10, 41, 86, 128, 302.

⁴⁸ Woolsey, II, 304-305 (cf. I, 181; II, 191-93). Among those who generally agree with Woolsey’s conclusion about the continuity of the federal tradition are G. D. Henderson, *The Burning Bush: Studies in Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1957), pp. 61-74; Douglas Andrew Stoute, ‘The Origins and Early Development of the Reformed Idea of the Covenant’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1979), pp. 191, 234, 249; Lyle D. Bierma, ‘Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?’, *Westminster Theological Journal*, 45 (1983), 304-21; Paul Helm, ‘Calvin and the Covenant: Unity and Continuity’, *Evangelical Quarterly*, 55 (1983), 65-81 (pp. 65, 68); Peter Lillback, ‘The Binding of God: Calvin’s Role in the Development of Covenant Theology’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985), pp. 268-86, 446-84, 488-91; John Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought*, American Academy of Religion, Studies in Religion, 45 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), pp. 17, 21, 30-33, 53-54, 80-84, 114-15, 135; Derk Visser, ‘The Covenant in Zacharias Ursinus’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 18 (1987), 531-44; Peter Lillback, ‘The Continuing Conundrum: Calvin and the Conditionality of the Covenant’, *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29 (1994), 42-74; Richard A. Muller, ‘The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus À Brakel’, *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29 (1994), 75-100 (pp. 86-87, 91-93, 100); and John L. Farthing, ‘*Foedus Evangelicum*: Jerome Zanchi on the Covenant’, *Calvin Theological Journal*, 24 (1993), 621-52.

⁴⁹ McGowan, ‘Thomas Boston’, pp. 251, 328-29. Cf. Geuze, pp. 335-37, and Andrew T. B. McGowan, ‘Federal Theology as a Theology of Grace’, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 2 (1984), 41-50.

⁵⁰ Among the more prominent examples of this view within Boston’s sources are David Dickson, *A Brief Exposition of the Evangel of Jesus Christ According to Matthew* (London, 1647), pp. 1-2; David Dickson and James Durham, *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, in *The Confession of Faith* (Inverness: Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1970), pp. 324, 335; David Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra* (Edinburgh, 1664), p. 24; Samuel Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened* (Edinburgh, 1655), pp. 290-311; Thomas Jacombe, ‘The Covenant of Redemption Opened’, in

conditionality of the covenant of grace' is widely cited in this connection (XII, 156).

According to Boston, God the Father made the covenant of grace with the Son, on behalf of his people, obviating the need to distinguish between the covenant of grace and a prior covenant of redemption:

The covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace, are not two distinct covenants, but one and the same covenant.⁵¹

This construction eliminates the need for the believer to attempt the futile task of fulfilling a covenantal condition in his own strength. Since Christ has already made the covenant of grace secure by fulfilling its condition on the believer's behalf, the believer may obtain the benefits of the covenant simply by uniting 'with Christ the head of the covenant by faith' (I, 334; cf. I, 316-17, 330-33; VII, 40-41; VIII, 394-99, 426, 436-39; XII, 156). Bell suggests that this reconciliation of the covenants of redemption and grace is Boston's 'unique contribution to Federal theology'.⁵²

It is agreed, therefore, that Boston attempted to draw together the unilateral and bilateral dimensions of the covenant of grace. The question which remains is this one: Does Boston's two-covenant theology (works, grace) stand in continuity with his three-covenant (works, redemption, grace) predecessors? The present thesis largely accepts the conclusions of both Woolsey and McGowan, and therefore answers in the affirmative. In part, this conclusion is based on Boston's defence of the covenant of works in the *Fourfold State* as a manifestation of divine grace, a defence which pre-empts the argument of Bruggink and the Torrances that his opposition to legalism was really opposition to the covenant of works. More importantly, the continuity position is in close agreement with Boston's *own* understanding of his relationship with international Reformed theology. Rather than admitting a fundamental theological disagreement between himself and the defenders of a three-covenant view, he insists that the difference is one of theological vocabulary:

I know 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. (VIII, 396)

The Morning Exercise Methodized, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 202-17 (p. 204); Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant* (London, 1661), pp. 2-4; and John Willison, 'A Sacramental Catechism', in *The Practical Works*, ed. by W. M. Hetherington (Glasgow, 1852), pp. 442-592 (p. 450).

⁵¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 396 (cf. I, 315-16, 330-34; VII, 39, 527; VI, 297; VIII, 382-85, 394, 397, 426).

⁵² Bell, p. 155.

The expressions used by some of Boston's predecessors differ from his own, but they are also tied to 'different views' which are harmonious with what he considers to be the biblical doctrine of 'free grace'. Thus Bell's argument that Boston attributed legalism and conditionality to the covenant of redemption is misleading.⁵³ He is not opposed to the covenant of redemption *per se*, but only to what he terms 'the ill use some have made of that principle' (I, 333). The answers prepared by the Marrow men for the General Assembly adopted a similar strategy, insisting on the historical consistency of international Calvinism in including assurance within the concept of faith 'however the way of speaking on that head is come to be somewhat altered'.⁵⁴

One example will suffice to show that Boston was right to insist on such continuity, at least with regard to the question of the number of covenants. In his volume of covenant theology, the Westminster divine Obadiah Sedgwick states '*There is a covenant which God makes between himself and all who do believe in Christ*'. In making this statement, Sedgwick is explicitly rejecting a two-covenant view (like Boston's) in which the covenant of grace is made with Christ rather than believers.⁵⁵ Yet he is willing to allow that there is a covenant '*betwixt God and Christ mystically considered*';⁵⁶ that is to say, Sedgwick *shares* Boston's concern to protect the graciousness of the covenant of grace by grounding the believer's acceptance of the covenant in his union with Christ. It is for this reason that Sedgwick proceeds to argue that the '*services, qualities, duties, on our part*' in the covenant of grace are all promised to the believer in Christ, so that 'in this Covenant, God promiseth all, and he undertakes all'.⁵⁷ For his part, Boston is willing to concede that a believer's faith is the 'condition' of the covenant of grace 'in a large and improper sense' (VII, 212n; cf. VIII, 435-39; XI, 190). While he disagrees with Sedgwick about the external structure and terminology of covenant theology, the theology itself is virtually identical. Examples could be adduced from a wide number of sources to demonstrate that defenders of the three-covenant view generally shared Boston's

⁵³ Bell, p. 155.

⁵⁴ '*Queries agreed unto by the commission of the general Assembly, and put to those Ministers who gave in a Representation and Petition against the 5th and 8th Acts of Assembly 1720, with the answers given by these Ministers to the said Queries*', in Boston, *Works*, VII, 466-89 (pp. 480). Cf. [Thomas Boston], *Queries to the Friendly-Adviser, To which is prefix'd a Letter to a Friend, Concerning the Affair of the Marrow, &c.* ([Edinburgh], 1722), pp. 18-19, and *Works*, VII, 255n-62n.

⁵⁵ Sedgwick, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁶ Sedgwick, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Sedgwick, p. 15 (cf. p. 160).

underlying theological concern to show that the efficacy of the covenant of grace does not depend on the believer's effort, but on God's promise.⁵⁸ The covenant theology of Thomas Boston is thus properly understood as the fruition of nearly two centuries of the development of federalism in Reformed theology. Possessing a grasp of the international scope of Reformed theology, he was able to recognize and avoid the dangers of misunderstanding covenant theology without abandoning its essential framework.

III. THOMAS BOSTON IN HIS PULPIT

Thomas Boston emerged from his study and mounted the steps to the Ettrick pulpit with a full sermon manuscript in hand (XII, 153, 451). Each sermon is based on a single verse of biblical text, or even a single phrase within a verse. After announcing his 'text', Boston makes several exegetical observations suggested by the text and its immediate context. These exegetical observations, in turn, provide the logical and theological basis for the 'doctrine' which he expounds in the balance of his sermon. After stating this doctrine in propositional form, he 'prefaces' his exposition by announcing the major points in which he will explain and defend the doctrine (XII, 93-94). Each of these major points is so subdivided that each paragraph of the sermon bears its own number or letter in Boston's outline. Whereas the exegesis which precedes the doctrine is governed by the sermon's biblical text, the exposition which follows tends to be governed by the logic of the sermon's doctrine, allowing the biblical text to recede into the background. Boston invariably concludes his sermons with a generous section of application to the spiritual needs of his hearers, termed the 'Use' or 'Improvement' of the doctrine. The application

⁵⁸ For examples, see John Preston, *The New Covenant* (London, 1629), p. 317; Samuel Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph of Faith* (Glasgow, 1743; repr. Keyser, WV: Odom Publications, n.d.), p. 76; John Brinsley, *MEΣΙΤΗΣ: or, The One and Onely Mediatour Betwixt God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus* (London, 1651), pp. 141, 143; Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist* (London, 1648), II, 39, 130; Thomas Vincent, *An Explicatory Catechism; or, An Explanation of the Assemblies Shorter Catechism* (London, 1675), pp. 50, 71, 73; John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. by William Goold, 16 vols (London, 1850-1853; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), V (*The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*), pp. 113-16, 191-93; Stephen Charnock, *The Complete Works*, 4 vols (London: James Nichol, 1865; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), III, 372-77, 491-93; Francis Turretin, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae*, 3 vols (Geneva, 1688-1689), XII.II.v, XII.III.iii-vii, xi; XVI.VII.v, xiii, xxi; Leonardus Rijssenius, *Summa Theologiae Elencticae* (Edinburgh, 1692), X.IV, X.XVIII, X.XIX; Herman Witsius, *De Oeconomia Foederum Dei Cum Hominibus*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (Utrecht, 1694), III.I.viii-x, xix; John Brown (Wamphray), *The Life of Justification Opened* ([Holland], 1695), p. 233; Alexander Hamilton, *A Short Catechism, Concerning the Three Special Divine Covenants, and Two Gospel Sacraments, with the Scripture Proofs; Calculated especially for the Use of those of Weaker Capacity* (Edinburgh, 1714), Preface, pp. 7-8, 15-16; I, Q & A 1; III, Q & A 3-4, 11-17; Willison, p. 450.

is simultaneously adapted to the biblical text and the pastoral context, and may include such uses as Information, Exhortation, Instruction, Refutation, Reproof, Admonition, Celebration, Lamentation, or Trial, as the text and the context demand. As Boston never tired of reminding his parishioners, ‘Religion is not a matter of mere speculations to satisfy men’s curiosity, but a matter of practice’ (II, 649; cf. I, 76; II, 441, 645; VII, 520; X, 626).

The Aberdeen manuscripts show that this method of preaching was the norm for turn-of-the-century preaching in southern Scotland. The 34 pages of notes Boston took during sermons he attended are unified by a common homiletical structure: a one-verse biblical text, a brief exposition of the text, a statement of a doctrinal proposition, an organized explanation and defence of the doctrine, and the use or uses of the doctrine (Abdn MS, 1-34). The prevalence of this method throughout the Scottish church is confirmed by the 1712 *Methodus Evangelica* of Professor Thomas Blackwell of Marischal College, Aberdeen. In his discourses on the ‘Homiletical, Textual, and Occasional method of Preaching’, Blackwell advocates and carefully explains a five-part sermon structure: introduction, division and explication of text, doctrinal observations, the opening up of the doctrines according to their nature and import, and the application or practical improvement of the doctrine.⁵⁹

The sermon notes in the Aberdeen manuscripts reveal the affinity of the sermons Boston heard with those he preached. The doctrinal proposition around which these sermons are based is often complex. In a sermon based on Acts 2.42 (Abdn MS, 21-26), for example, Alexander Colden of Duns argues:

It is the duty of all who have professed faith and obedience to Christ to evidence that faith and sincerity of your profession by your perseverance in the same; ye must not only begin but continue.

Others doctrines are stated more aphoristically, as in Gabriel Semple’s sermon on 2 Timothy 3.5 (Abdn MS, 13-14): ‘Doc. That a person may have a form of religion and yet be a stranger to the power of godliness’. The precision with which these and other doctrines were expounded may be illustrated from a sermon on Acts 8.39 (Abdn MS, 15-

⁵⁹ Thomas Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica: or, a Modest Essay upon the True Scriptural-Rational Way of Preaching the Gospel* (London, 1712), p. 63. A briefer, nearly identical description of preaching may be found in Boston’s contemporary Walter Steuart, pp. 107-107. See John MacInnes, *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland, 1688 to 1800* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1951), p. 74, for evidence that this homiletical method was also the norm in the Scottish Highlands.

18), in which Colden discriminates between natural joy, sinful joy, and spiritual joy. Spiritual joy, which is Colden's primary concern, is further analysed as a 'heart joy', a 'sure joy', a 'great joy', a 'satisfying joy', a 'heart enlarging joy', a 'heart strengthening joy', and a 'world mortifying joy'. The practical application of the doctrine is capable of receiving similarly precise analysis. John Murray's sermon on Psalm 93.5 (Abdn MS, 30-34) concludes with four categories of 'use' -- 'Instruction', 'Reproof', 'Lamentation', and 'Exhortation' -- which Boston was later to employ.

The affinity between English Puritan preaching and that of Boston and his Scottish colleagues is unmistakable.

The Puritan sermon quotes the text and "opens" it as briefly as possible, expounding circumstances and context, explaining its grammatical meanings, reducing its tropes and schemata to prose, and setting forth its logical implications; the sermon then proclaims in a flat, indicative sentence the "doctrine" contained in the text or logically deduced from it, and proceeds to the first reason or proof. Reason follows reason, with no other transition than a period and a number; after the last proof is stated there follow the uses or applications, also in numbered sequence, and the sermon ends when there is nothing more to be said [. . .] [It] begins with a reading of the text, states the reasons in an order determined by logic, and the uses in an enumeration determined by the kinds of persons in the throng who need to be exhorted or reproofed, and it stops without flourish or resounding climax.⁶⁰

A comparison of Boston's sermons with those of the English Puritans on his bookshelf confirms G. D. Henderson's suggestion that the former bear the 'marks' of Puritanism.⁶¹ They are as reminiscent of the sermons he read as they are of the sermons he heard. His preaching lies squarely within the Puritan and Presbyterian tradition of preaching in England and Scotland. Considered as a theologian, Thomas Boston was an international Calvinist; considered as a preacher, he was a Puritan.

Boston's exposure to Puritan preaching included treatises on homiletical method as well as actual sermons. The Puritan and Presbyterian method was codified in the middle of the seventeenth century in the *Directory for the Publick Worship of God* of the Westminster Assembly. The *Directory* commends a text 'holding forth some principle or head of religion', a 'brief and perspicuous' introduction to the text, a statement of the

⁶⁰ Miller, *Seventeenth Century*, pp. 332-33. On Puritan preaching, see Eugene E. White, *Puritan Rhetoric: The Issue of Emotion in Religion* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), pp. 18-22; Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), pp. 95-107; D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), pp. 381-82; J. I. Packer, *Among God's Giants* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1991), pp. 91-93, 365-82; and Robert M. Norris, 'The Preaching of the Assembly', in *To Glorify and Enjoy God: A Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. by John L. Carson and David W. Hall (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), pp. 63-81 (pp. 67-76).

⁶¹ G. D. Henderson, *Burning Bush*, p. 143.

‘chief heads and grounds of doctrine which [the preacher] is to raise from it’, an expression of the doctrine in ‘plain terms’, a presentation of arguments for and illustrations of the doctrine, and a bringing home to ‘special use, by application’ of the doctrine. Together these characteristics comprise an effective sermon.⁶² The Westminster divine Oliver Bowles offered a similar definition of preaching in his volume on pastoral ministry:

Prædicatio verbi est medium gratiæ divinitus institutum, quo res regni Dei publice & explicantur & applicantur, ad populi salutem & ædificationem.⁶³

Bowles identifies the ‘doctrina’ and the ‘usus’ as the basic building blocks of the evangelical sermon, with the ‘doctrina’ serving as the ‘fundamentum’ for everything else in the sermon. He proceeds to offer careful directions for attending to biblical context, deducing the doctrine from Scripture, stating the main points of the sermon clearly, and applying the doctrine to different kinds of hearers. Bowles isolates four primary categories of application: ‘hortatoria, directoria, prehensoria, consolatoria’.⁶⁴ A similar approach to preaching was described already near the beginning of the seventeenth century by William Ames. For Ames, ‘Doctrina est axioma theologicum, vel in scripturæ verbis positum expresse, vel ex illis per immediatam consequentiam fluens’, which the minister discovers by logical analysis and proceeds to prove and illustrate. He defines ‘Vsvs’ as an ‘axioma Theologicum ex doctrina deductum, utilitatem, bonitatem vel finem ejus ostendens’. Once the doctrine has been sufficiently explained, it should immediately be applied to its use. The items in Ames’ list of the potential uses of doctrine are much the same as the ones Boston later employs: ‘Informatio’, ‘Reformatio’, ‘Institutio’, ‘Correctio’, ‘Consolatio’, ‘Exhortatio’, and ‘Admonitio’.⁶⁵

Ames’ emphases on *doctrina*, *usus*, and ‘analysin Logicam, cui inservit etiam Rhetorica & Grammatica’ are indicative of the influence of the logic and rhetoric of Peter Ramus (1515-1572) on the Puritan preachers and their homiletical descendants.⁶⁶

⁶² *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, in *The Confession of Faith* (Inverness: Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1970), pp. 369-94 (pp. 379-80).

⁶³ Oliver Bowles, *De Pastore Evangelico Tractatus* (London, 1649), II, 1.

⁶⁴ Bowles, II, 3-25.

⁶⁵ William Ames, *Medvlla ss. Theologiæ*, 4th edn (London, 1630), I. XXXV. xvii-liv. See also Irvonwy Morgan, *The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1965), p. 28, on Puritan preaching in the tradition of Ames’ mentor William Perkins.

⁶⁶ Ames, I. XXXV. xxiii. On Ames’ Ramism, see John Dykstra Eusden’s ‘Introduction’ to William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. and ed. by John Dykstra Eusden (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1983), pp. 37-47; Keith L. Sprunger, ‘Ames, Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology’, *Harvard*

Similarly, the title *The Morning Exercise Methodized* echoes the Ramist predilection for pedagogical ‘method’.⁶⁷ Emphasis on *doctrina*, insistence on ‘plain style’, concern for the utility of knowledge, and especially enthusiasm for dichotomous division and subdivision were all hallmarks of Ramism, and they all made a contribution to Puritan preaching.⁶⁸ Yet the extent of Ramist influence is capable of being exaggerated, particularly since Ramist rhetoric incorporated classical logical and rhetorical principles.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Puritans such as William Pemble were Ciceronians rather than Ramists,⁷⁰ and imbibed a concern for clarity of expression, rigor of analysis, and the utility of knowledge from classical rather than Ramist sources.⁷¹ In Boston’s case, the indirect influence of Ramism was counterbalanced by his classical training (XII, 12), which included early immersion in the *Elementa Rhetorica* of the Dutch Ciceronian Gerardus Johannes Vossius (1577-1649).⁷² The homiletic method advocated by Essenius is informed by the canons of Ciceronian rhetoric, yet shares the Ramist concern for simple, textual, doctrinal, practical preaching.⁷³ Like the preaching of the Puritans,⁷⁴ Boston’s preaching had roots in both Ramist and Ciceronian logic and rhetoric.

One further respect in which Boston’s preaching bears the influence of both English Puritanism and Scottish Presbyterianism is in the attention it gives to the differing spiritual conditions of the people in the congregation. The practice of presenting more than one use for a single doctrine arose from the recognition that more than one kind of person sat in the pew. Accordingly, the Westminster *Directory for the Publick Worship*

Theological Review, 59 (1966), 133-51; and Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972), pp. 13-15, 107-110, 133-43.

⁶⁷ Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 454; cf. Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 30, 230, 304.

⁶⁸ These features are discussed in Miller, *Seventeenth Century*, pp. 115-53, 312-62; Howell, *Eighteenth-Century*, p. 454; Ong, pp. 8, 162, 190, 199, 204, 273, 283-84; Jürgen Moltmann, ‘Zur Bedeutung des Petrus Ramus für Philosophie und Theologie im Calvinismus’, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 68 (1957), 295-318 (pp. 301, 303, 317); and John G. Rechtien, ‘Logic in Puritan Sermons in the Late Sixteenth Century and Plain Style’, *Style*, 13 (1979), 237-58 (pp. 239-43).

⁶⁹ Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 207; cf. Howell, *Eighteenth-Century*, p. 16.

⁷⁰ Howell, *Eighteenth-Century*, pp. 80-81.

⁷¹ Ong, p. 176.

⁷² Johannes Vossius, *Elementa Rhetorica* (Cambridge, 1640). See Miller, *Seventeenth Century*, pp. 313-30, for the ways in which Ramus and Vossius differed in their approach.

⁷³ Andreas Essenius, *Compendium Theologiae Dogmaticum*, 2nd edn (Utrecht, 1685), XX.XL-XLIV.

⁷⁴ White, *Puritan Rhetoric*, pp. 14-19, considers classical rhetoric, as well as Ramism, to have exercised a dominant influence on Puritan preaching.

of God speaks of dividing the ‘Word of God aright, to every one his portion’.⁷⁵ Drawing upon the pastoral wisdom of Gregory the Great, Oliver Bowles discusses at length the spiritual, physical, economic (‘divites vel pauperes’), intellectual, emotional (‘lugubria’ or ‘lætiora’), geographic (‘urbani vel rustici’), and generational diversity which the church displays.⁷⁶ The evangelical pastor must be sensitive to this diversity, particularly in the application of doctrine:

Doctrinæ deductæ Accommodatione nihil aliud quam ejusdem particularis applicatio, qua, pro varia hominum conditione in Spiritualibus, usus ad cujusque ædificationem fit.⁷⁷

Ames shares Bowles’ concern for the inward life of the believer, insisting that ‘eorundem applicatio instituatur ad auditorum conscientias, prout illorum conditio postulare videtur’.⁷⁸

Given this concern for the spiritual condition of the parishioner, Boston’s preaching cannot be understood without some knowledge of the people to whom he preached. Unfortunately, detailed information about the people of Simprin and Ettrick in the early eighteenth century is unavailable.⁷⁹ The primary source of information about these parishes is Boston’s own *Memoirs*. Whatever advantages this has in terms of historical immediacy come at the cost of a limited perspective: unavoidably, Simprin and Ettrick must be viewed through Boston’s eyes. Yet several conclusions may be drawn safely. First, both Simprin and Ettrick were rural parishes. The predominant milieu of the *Memoirs* is agricultural; it is a world of sowing and reaping, crops and livestock, especially sheep. Johnstone G. Patrick’s tercentenary tribute to Thomas Boston strikes just the right chord:

Frae Simprin doun tae Ettrick groun’,
Wi’ parritch-pat an’ pock,
Cam wir couthie Thomas Boston
Tae care for kintra-fock;⁸⁰

⁷⁵ *Directory*, p. 378.

⁷⁶ Bowles, I, 132; II, 3-4, 62.

⁷⁷ Bowles, II, 18 (cf. 61-63).

⁷⁸ Ames, LXXXV .xvii.

⁷⁹ The details provided in Sir John Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1791-1799), 20 vols, repr. ed. by Donald J. Withrington and Ian R. Grant, (East Ardsley, Wakefield: EP Publishing, 1979), III, 284-97, 675-78, cohere with the agricultural and population data given below.

⁸⁰ Johnstone G. Patrick, ‘Ae Godlie Ballate O’ Anither Ettrick Shepherd’, *Evangelical Quarterly*, 48 (1976), 132-43 (p. 133): ‘From Simprin doun to Ettrick ground, with porridge-pot and sack, came our kindly Thomas Boston to care for country-folk’.

His salary was paid partly in grain, and ministers of his day were expected to supplement their income by tending the 'glebe', or acreage attached to the manse (XII, 111, 150, 382). When he went out to visit his widely-scattered spiritual flock, Boston did so on horseback, riding from farm to farm (XII, 210). These farms were not over-prosperous. Particularly in the early years of his ministry, Scotland was afflicted with famines, the effects of which were exacerbated by the primitive state of Scottish peasant agriculture and Scotland's failure to establish colonial trade routes.⁸¹ Begging and homelessness were national problems.⁸² By the early eighteenth century Scotland was just beginning to adopt modern methods of farming, but progress was sporadic and is unlikely to have touched Boston's parishes to any great degree during his lifetime.⁸³ Houses were of the rudest sort, most with 'damp, dark, fetid interiors'.⁸⁴ The extreme geographic and cultural remoteness of Simprin and Ettrick must be emphasized, a remoteness which allowed these parishes to remain largely untouched by the cultural exchange between England to the south and Edinburgh to the north.⁸⁵ As Boston writes of his parishioners in his *Memoirs*, 'they lived alone' (XII, 198). Simprin is reputed to have been the least populous parish in Scotland during Boston's tenure, with scarcely 90 'examinable Persons' (age nine and above).⁸⁶ The parish of Ettrick spanned a wider geography, ten miles in every direction, and appears to have had a more typical total population of perhaps one thousand.⁸⁷ The wild remoteness of Ettrick is emphasized by Boston's

⁸¹ See James E. Handley, *Scottish Farming in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), pp. 12-13; Michael Flinn, ed., *Scottish Population History from the 17th Century to the 1930s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 164-66; Ned C. Landsman, *Scotland and Its First American Colony, 1683-1767* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 17-23; T. M. Devine, *The Transformation of Rural Scotland: Social Change and the Agrarian Economy, 1660-1815* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), pp. 2-3. Ministerial concern over the 'dearth' is expressed both by Boston himself (Abdn MS, 39, 99; XII, 381; and Thomas Boston, *A Collection of Sermons, Shewing the Grounds of the Lord's Controversy with this Church and Land* (Edinburgh, 1772), pp. 65, 87) and by the General Assembly (*Acts of the General Assembly*, pp. 290, 305).

⁸² Touching examples of Boston's care for the poor appear frequently in the Simprin Session Minutes, as well as in his correspondence (Letter to Mrs. Shiell, 25 November, 1731, New College Library, Edinburgh, CM/B97) and autobiographical material ('Passages', 16; XII, 441).

⁸³ See John Ramsay (Ochertyre), *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1888), II, 187-288; Handley, p. 111; R. H. Campbell, *Scotland since 1707: The Rise of an Industrial Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), pp. 15-34; Landsman, p. 73.

⁸⁴ Handley, pp. 76-77. Cf. R. H. Campbell, *Scotland since 1707*, pp. 12-13, and Landsman, pp. 18-20.

⁸⁵ Thomas Somerville, *My Own Life and Times, 1741-1814* (Edinburgh, 1861), p. 355, testifies to the difficulty of travel in southern Scotland, and John Watson, *The Scot of the Eighteenth Century: His Religion and his Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), p. 202, relates that there was only one decent road in the region in Boston's day, and no bridges over the rivers (cf. Sinclair, III, 678).

⁸⁶ Alexander Colden, Gabriel Wilson, and H. Davidson, in Thomas Boston, *The Sovereignty and Wisdom of God* (Edinburgh, 1737), Preface, note a (cf. Boston, *Works*, XII, 75, 78, 90).

⁸⁷ Patrick, pp. 141-42.

susceptibility to getting lost in the moors and mosses of his own parish (XII, 217; cf. 276).

Watson understandably writes of 'the brutal coarseness of life in that parish'.⁸⁸

Second, Boston and his parishioners were afforded frequent reminders of human mortality. The most reliable data show that no more than half of the populace in the early eighteenth century survived past their tenth birthday.⁸⁹ In addition to his own chronic maladies and demise at the age of 56 (XII, 18, 36-37, 164-66, 191, 316, 343-44, 350, 363, 388-94, 444-47), Boston himself suffered the hardship of burying six of his ten children in infancy (XII, 146-48, 200, 205-207, 277-78) and the discouragement of his wife's long-standing 'heavy trouble' (XII, 317, 351, 367-69), which was apparently psychological as well as physical. His testimony to God's mercy upon a return from Edinburgh was not an idle one: 'I came home [. . .] and found my family, by the mercy of God, no worse than when I left them' (XII, 388). His *Memoirs* also record the effect which illness, 'extraordinary mortality', and other hardships had on his parishioners.⁹⁰ In the famines at the end of the seventeenth century, ten percent or more of the population perished.⁹¹ Boston's efforts at home medicine -- such as rinsing his eyes with water nightly to preserve his vision (XII, 444; cf. 344, 441-42) -- serve as a reminder of the extent to which the workings of the human body remained a mystery in the eighteenth century.⁹² While human mortality is woven into the fabric of any preacher's context, it was a prominent thread in the ministry of Thomas Boston.

Third, Boston preached to a substantial number of illiterate, as well as literate, parishioners. Although comprehensive education is a well-known legacy of the Scottish Reformation, and although every parish was legally obligated to employ a schoolteacher, it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that Scotland drew close to universal literacy.⁹³ Here the newly discovered Aberdeen manuscripts shed fresh light on Boston's

⁸⁸ Watson, *Scot of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 202.

⁸⁹ R. H. Campbell, *Scotland since 1707*, p. 14.

⁹⁰ Boston, *Works*, XII, 277 (cf. II, 488n; XII, 212, 257, 264-65, 279, 306, 381, 389, 414; *Collection*, 87, 92).

⁹¹ Flinn, p. 181.

⁹² See also Boston's favourite medical text (XII, 350): George Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (London, 1724).

⁹³ R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500-1800* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 42-43; R. A. Houston, 'Scottish Education and Literacy, 1600-1800: an International Perspective', in *Improvement and Enlightenment: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde, 1987-88*, ed. by T. M. Devine (Edinburgh: Donald, 1989), pp. 43-61 (pp. 45-47). T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830*, 2nd edn (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 450-52, speaks more favourably about Scottish education of the day.

context by confirming that Simprin was among the parishes that lagged behind educationally. In an early sermon on the supreme value of knowing God, Boston divides his application according to educational ability. The literate are encouraged to read both 'The Book of Scriptures' and practical Christian literature (Abdn MS, 175-76). Steps were later taken by the Simprin Session to make copies of elementary devotional books available to every family in the parish.⁹⁴ Yet those who object that they are unable to read need not despair, for they may read the 'The book of the creation' and 'The book of Providence' to learn the character of God (cf. VIII, 367). In the same sermon, he encourages the able-minded to learn to read the Scriptures for themselves (Abdn MS, 175; cf. V, 630). The force of this exhortation must have been strengthened by the Session's subsequent provision for the schoolmaster to teach illiterate parishioners in their own homes ('Simprin', 143).

Fourth, Boston laboured in parishes of indifferent spiritual vitality. Although his practice of annual pastoral visitation adds weight to his credibility (XII, 209), it remains impossible to determine the accuracy of his assessment of the spiritual condition of his parishioners. Yet it seems clear that neither Simprin nor Ettrick was remarkable for religious fervor. Boston mentions the 'rarity of the godly' in Simprin as a factor in his deliberations over accepting a call to Simprin (XII, 75, 78). He was not surprised to discover 'great ignorance prevailing' in Simprin once he had accepted the call (XII, 103). The spiritual harmony of community life in Ettrick was hindered by the disruptive presence of Cameronian followers of John MacMillan, who considered the Church of Scotland to be unlawfully constituted since it was no longer established in accordance with the National Covenant.⁹⁵ These 'Old Dissenters' shunned contact with Boston in his ministerial capacity (XII, 197-200, 294-95, 459). He singles out divisiveness (XII, 197, 203, 300, 458), spiritual ignorance (XII, 198, 203, 458), unkindness to strangers (XII, 198), contempt for the gospel ministry (XII, 300, 457; cf. II, 451-52), 'the prevalency of the sin of profane swearing' (XII, 198; cf. IV, 123; V, 132-49; VIII, 63; XII, 458), drunkenness (VI, 408-409), and sexual immorality (XII, 203-204, 208, 459) as the primary moral

⁹⁴ 'Simprim Kirk Session Minutes -- 1699-1714', Scottish Record Office, CH 2/346/1, pp. 115-16. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

⁹⁵ Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters, 1660-1688* (London: Gollancz, 1976), pp. 103-19.

deficiencies of Ettrick. It is little wonder that Boston wrote of the ‘weary task of [his] work in this parish’ (XII, 234; cf. 244), or that he detected a resemblance between his congregation and the one in Corinth ‘in her three grand evils, self-conceit, a divisive temper, and sins of uncleanness’ (XII, 459; cf. 203). His assessment of the spiritual condition of the Scottish nation was similarly pessimistic:

The land is defiled with idolatry, superstition, sinful swearing, Sabbath breaking, unfaithfulness in all relations, murders, uncleanness, dishonesty and fraud, lying, and covetousness.⁹⁶

Even allowing for an element of hyperbole in this alarm, there appears to have been ample need for his ministrations in both Simprin and Ettrick.

With these characteristics clearly in mind, the suitability of two of Boston’s homiletical strategies may be better appreciated. The first of these strategies is simplicity. Just as Christ ‘teacheth plainly and perspicuously’, using metaphors and figures adapted ‘to the low and dull capacities of men’, so ‘he would have his ministers to preach’ (I, 419). Effective biblical preaching should ‘beware of vain ostentation’; it is careful to ‘stoop to the understanding of the meanest, and not to give the people a comment darker than the text’ (I, 420; cf. V, 13). Here again Boston stands in the Puritan and Presbyterian tradition, since simplicity, or ‘a simple and plain speech’, was a notable ideal in the Puritan homiletic.⁹⁷ Puritan preachers ‘eschewed literary and cultivated allusions, classical quotations, scholastic or metaphysical arguments’.⁹⁸ Oliver Bowles warns against the dangers arising from needlessly employing ‘obscurioribus artis terminis’ and multiplying structural divisions within a sermon. The advantage of perspicuous preaching, in which Latin theological vocabulary is kept to a minimum and major points are ‘breviter & concise enunciantur’, is that hearers will be able to remember what they have heard.⁹⁹ Similarly, the Westminster *Directory* commends a ministry which ‘the

⁹⁶ Boston, *Collection*, p. 16 (cf. Abdn MS, 99, 130-31; *Works*, IV, 204; V, 5; IX, 162, 274-85; X, 143, 306, 580). Similar laments appear frequently in the *Acts of the General Assembly* (e.g. p. 280). See also Boston’s preface to *The Great Sin and Chief Guiltiness of Scotland, In the Contempt of the Gospel*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh, 1732), and his instructions to elders on reproofing sins in *The Duty of Ruling Elders to the People* (n.p., n.d.), p. 8.

⁹⁷ Morgan, *Godly Preachers*, p. 28. Cf. William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 133-34; Ong, p. 283; Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 6; Lloyd-Jones, p. 384.

⁹⁸ Morgan, *Godly Preachers*, p. 16. Cf. Ames, I.XXXV.1v; Haller, p. 140; Lloyd-Jones, p. 385.

⁹⁹ Bowles, II, 8, 11-12.

meanest may understand', warning preachers 'neither to burden the memory of the hearers [. . .] nor to trouble their minds with obscure terms of art'.¹⁰⁰

The form of Boston's preaching displays measured sensitivity to the capacities of his hearers. The relative simplicity of the vocabulary in his parish sermons stands in marked contrast to the complexity of his 'Essay on Genesis' or his presbyterial exercises (e.g. IV, 209-18), which are characterized by close exegesis and careful use of the biblical languages. What Boston deemed appropriate for a learned congregation he 'despised, and had a contempt of, as pedantic' for his own flock, to whom he preached in 'their mother tongue' (XII, 153-54). Critics from a later generation singled him out for opprobrium on the grounds that his sermons were too long, claiming that it was 'doubtful whether any brains or hearts south of the Tweed could have stood the strain of such discourses'.¹⁰¹ The Aberdeen manuscripts, however, make it clear that Boston preached from a single text for weeks or even months on end, simply marking his manuscript with an 'X' where the sermon was to be resumed on the following week (e.g. Abdn MS, 159; cf. 'Simprim', 49-63; XII, 102, 406). This practice of using a single text on successive occasions, known as taking an 'ordinary' (XII, 445-46), means that many of his sermons were much shorter and simpler than might appear from his published works.¹⁰² In fact, Boston regularly preached for just half an hour on Sabbath mornings.¹⁰³ His decision to incorporate catechetical instruction into the evening service as well as during mid-week visitation was taken with a view to simplicity (XII, 105). Although he also intended to deliver lectures on the *Confession of Faith*, these were abandoned as soon as he recognized that they were too difficult for the greater part of the congregation (XII, 158). While the preaching of Thomas Boston was not simplistic, it was intended to be simple.

A second aspect of Boston's preaching reflects the mixed spiritual condition of his parishes. He everywhere discriminates between the regenerate and the unregenerate in the application of his doctrine, a practice which may be termed 'dividing the auditory'. In

¹⁰⁰ *Directory*, p. 379.

¹⁰¹ Bishop J. E. C. Weldon, 'The Difficulty of Preaching Sermons', in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 331 (1904), 402-17 (p. 407); cf. Sir Archibald Geikie, *Scottish Reminiscences* (Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1904), p. 79.

¹⁰² See also George D. Low's introduction in Boston's *A General Account of My Life*, pp. xli-xlii.

¹⁰³ Boston, *Works*, II, 374 (cf. 440). If G. D. Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 195, is right that the average length of the seventeenth century Scottish sermon was an hour, than Boston may have preached shorter sermons than some of his contemporaries. He preached at greater length on sacramental occasions (XII, 319).

keeping with the Puritan and Presbyterian tradition of suiting the uses of a doctrine to the differing spiritual needs of the congregants, Boston invariably applies his doctrine to saints *and* to sinners, or to believers *and* to hypocrites, or to the regenerate *and* to the unregenerate, or to those in the state of grace *and* to those yet in the state of nature (e.g. I, 142, 604; II, 341; VIII, 114). In a sermon discovered among the Aberdeen manuscripts, for example, he concludes with an exhortation to believers to make use of their privileged access to God (Abdn MS, 196). But this exhortation is preceded with a use 'of Terrour to you who are in your natural state, who can have no access to God in dutys' (Abdn MS, 195). Of all the possible distinctions that might be drawn between one hearer and another, it was the distinction between belief and unbelief which most concerned Thomas Boston.

IV. THOMAS BOSTON IN THE KIRK

It is widely recognized that three controversies are crucial to understanding the Church of Scotland during Thomas Boston's pastoral ministry (1699-1732). These controversies eventuated in the decisions of the General Assembly to abolish the 'Auchterarder Creed' (1717), to condemn *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1720, 1722), and to discipline Professor John Simson, first censuring him for Arminianism (1717) and later suspending him for Arianism (1729).¹⁰⁴ Assessments of the character of the early eighteenth century church usually centre around these three events.

There is no similar consensus, however, about how these events are inter-related or about how they affect subsequent developments in the eighteenth century church. William Addison supports the actions of the General Assembly and concludes that the Marrow men were guilty of the Antinomianism with which they were charged.¹⁰⁵ Most other historians have taken the opposing theological view, concluding that the charge of Antinomianism was wrongly applied to Boston and the Marrow men. One prevalent view -- a view which echoes Boston's own interpretation of events (XII, 317-18, 333-34, 384-85) -- maintains that the 'severity' with which the *Marrow* and its defenders were treated stands in marked contrast to the 'lenity' of John Simson's sentence. Taken

¹⁰⁴ See the *Acts of the General Assembly* (e.g. pp. 534-36) for the texts of these pronouncements.

¹⁰⁵ Addison, pp. 140-41.

together, it is argued, the Auchterarder, Marrow, and Simson affairs indicate that those who made up the majority in the Church of Scotland were 'more inclined to countenance error than to defend the truth'.¹⁰⁶ This linkage has been challenged by historians who wish to consider each case on its own merits. Charles G. M'Crie has shown that John Simson's sentence was appropriate for his offence,¹⁰⁷ while Lachman has demonstrated that the judicial proceedings against the Marrow men were conducted properly.¹⁰⁸

There are similar disagreements about the relationship between the Marrow Controversy and the rise of Moderatism. The Moderates may be defined as those members of the Church of Scotland who

[. . .] as a rule were more interested in culture than in theological controversy, and in the pulpit dealt largely with manners and morals, assuming a complacent scholastic attitude towards Calvinism.¹⁰⁹

The Moderates tended to avoid doctrinal preaching 'in favour of inculcating moral virtues, primarily on the basis of rational arguments'.¹¹⁰ Properly speaking, they did not constitute a party in the church until 1752.¹¹¹ Yet M'Crie argues that the preaching of Principal Hadow and the majority party who opposed the *Marrow* was not so much 'legal' as it was 'moderate'. Consequently, he concludes that Hadow and his following were 'largely responsible' for the growth of Moderatism in mid-century.¹¹² Although John MacLeod acknowledges that Hadow was 'not by any means like the later Moderates', he suggests that those who shared his viewpoint were 'pioneers of the

¹⁰⁶ John M'Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, rev. edn (Glasgow, 1841), p. 20 (cf. pp. 10, 27). Cf. Brown (Whitburn), p. 10; T. M'Crie, pp. 543-44; Andrew Robertson, *History of the Atonement Controversy, in Connexion with the Secession Church, from its Origin to the Present Time* (Edinburgh, 1846), p. 45; John MacLeod, 'Theology in the Early Days of the Secession', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 8 (1944), 1-15 (p. 2); MacInnes, p. 170; Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 2, 7, 47; Charles L. Moffatt, Jr., 'James Hog of Carnock (1658-1734), Leader in the Evangelical Party in Early Eighteenth Century Scotland' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1960), pp. 245-47, 252; Henry Sefton, 'The Early Development of Moderatism in the Church of Scotland' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1962), pp. 19-20; W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 329.

¹⁰⁷ Charles G. M'Crie, 'Studies in Scottish Ecclesiastical Biography: II. Professor Simson, the Glasgow Heresiarch', *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, 128, n.s. 54 (1884), 254-77 (pp. 264, 267-70).

¹⁰⁸ Lachman, pp. 476-79, 491.

¹⁰⁹ G. D. Henderson, *Burning Bush*, p. 141.

¹¹⁰ Woodruff, pp. 12-13.

¹¹¹ Ian D. L. Clark, 'Moderatism and the Moderate Party in the Church of Scotland, 1752-1805' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1963), pp. 48-54.

¹¹² Charles G. M'Crie, 'Studies in Scottish Ecclesiastical Biography: III. Rev. James Hog of Carnock and Principal Hadow of St. Andrews', *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, 130, n.s. 56 (1884), pp. 716-18. Cf. W. M. Hetherington, *History of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1842), pp. 627; Charles G. M'Crie, *The Confessions of the Church of Scotland: Their Evolution in History* (Edinburgh: Macniven & Wallace, 1907), p. 270; William Ferguson, *Scotland: 1689 to the Present*, ed. by Gordon Donaldson, *The Edinburgh History of Scotland*, 4 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1968), p. 117.

school' which eventuated in Moderatism.¹¹³ James B. Torrance also sees a connection between the majority anti-Marrow party and subsequent Moderatism, but offers a different analysis of the party, suggesting that they were legalists *because* they were federal Calvinists. According to Torrance, anti-Marrow federalism

[. . .] was beginning to throw up its opposite in the form of Moderatism, perhaps not so much as a reaction against federal Calvinism but rather as a development from it.¹¹⁴

Each of these interpretations suffers from a failure to provide much explicit evidence for a connection between early eighteenth century figures and Moderatism proper.

A number of other historians have tried to pre-empt this discussion by viewing the majority party *as* a Moderate party, thereby eliminating the need to account for a subsequent rise of Moderatism. One such approach attributes the rise of Scottish Moderatism to the inclusion of a 'lax moderate party' of former episcopal ministers after 1690.¹¹⁵ Donald J. Bruggink portrays the shrewd Scottish statesman William Carstares (1649-1715) as the progenitor of this party and argues that Moderatism was 'almost perpetually predominant' from 1708 onwards.¹¹⁶ Bruggink also perceives an affinity between Moderatism and Neonomianism, an affinity he anachronistically rests on their common origin in 'the spirit of the age, to which the terms Enlightenment, humanism and rationalism' are all appropriate.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Michael J. Crawford sees a connection between the rationalism of the 'liberal Calvinist' opponents of the *Marrow* and the mid-century Moderates in Scotland.¹¹⁸ Marilyn J. Westerkamp has gone so far as to describe the Marrow Controversy as a conflict between Evangelicals (Marrow men) and

¹¹³ John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History Since the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Publications Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, 1943), pp. 144-45, 155. Cf. Clark, pp. 3, 216-18; Lachman, p. 491.

¹¹⁴ J. B. Torrance, 'Covenant or Contract?', p. 60.

¹¹⁵ Hetherington, *History*, p. 563 (cf. pp. 554, 595, 627). Cf. Watson, *Scot of the Eighteenth*, pp. 153-57; Robertson, p. 1; Gordon Donaldson, *Scotland: Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries* (London: SCM Press, 1960; repr. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1972), pp. 93, 96.

¹¹⁶ Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 45-46 (cf. p. 2). Cf. Robert Herbert Story, *William Carstares: A Character and Career of the Revolutionary Epoch, 1649-1715* (London, 1874), p. 223.

¹¹⁷ Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', p. 51 (cf. p. 57). Cf. M'Kerrow, p. 18; J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 295; Moffatt, pp. 175, 258; Stewart Mechie, 'The Theological Climate in Early Eighteenth Century Scotland', in *Reformation and Revolution*, ed. by Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1967), pp. 258-72 (p. 258). For a more accurate assessment of the relationship between the Enlightenment and the rise of Moderatism, see Jane Rendall, *The Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment* (London: MacMillan, 1978), p. 42.

¹¹⁸ Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in its British Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 59. Cf. W. Wilson Benton, Jr., 'The Ecclesiology of George Hill, 1750-1819' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1969), pp. 123-26.

Moderates (majority party). If the ‘moderate party’ of ‘progressive intellectuals with their moral philosophy’ had a ‘clear majority as early as 1715’, then the advent of mid-century Moderatism has already been explained.¹¹⁹ This lack of consensus makes Henry Sefton’s conclusion as relevant now as it was more than thirty years ago:

On presently available information it does not seem possible to establish what were the origins of Moderatism with any degree of certainty nor even to arrive at a wholly satisfactory definition of the term.¹²⁰

A complete account of the dynamics of the Marrow Controversy and its relationship to Moderatism lies well beyond the scope of this introduction. Nor is such an account strictly necessary, since the theology of Thomas Boston was largely unaffected by the controversies in which he was engaged. This point needs to be emphasized: *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* exercised its influence on Boston’s preaching and theology in 1700, at the very beginning of his pastoral career (XII, 155), nearly two decades before it became a *cause célèbre* in Scotland. Rather than exercising an influence on Boston’s preaching and theology, the Marrow Controversy was the unintended *result* of his endorsement of the theology of the *Marrow*. Yet several historical and theological observations may help to clarify the confusion that still surrounds the parties embroiled in the Marrow Controversy, and thus to situate Boston’s preaching within the wider context of the Scottish church.

In the first place, theological Moderatism was not an important feature of the Scottish church during Boston’s years in Simprin and Ettrick. The fact that several recent historians have again (mis)characterized the Marrow Controversy as a conflict between Evangelicals and Moderates makes this observation necessary. It may well be the case that important connections can be drawn between events during the first third of the eighteenth century and the ascendancy of Moderatism in mid-century. Indeed, tantalizingly, the Aberdeen manuscripts reveal Boston preaching against the

¹¹⁹ Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *The Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 106 (cf. pp. 82, 86). Cf. C. G. M’Crie, *Confessions*, p. 270; Watson, *Scot of the Eighteenth*, pp. 245-26; Watt, pp. 150-51; Moffatt, pp. 2, 117, 379; Ferguson, p. 120; Letham, ‘Saving Faith’, I, 10.

¹²⁰ Sefton, ‘Early Development’, p. 12.

[. . .] way of Carnall pollicy, and indecency in the matters of God, the dreadful plague of this generation that crys down zeal and crys up falsely so called Moderation.¹²¹

Further, there is evidence that by 1725 orthodox Calvinists were exercised by a perceived increase in moralistic preaching, particularly among the younger clergy. Robert Wodrow's reference to 'Neu-lights and Preachers-legall' is especially well known, but his is not the only voice of alarm.¹²² It seems likely that certain elements of the early eighteenth century climate were conducive to the rise of Moderatism. Yet no scholar to date has *demonstrated* precise connections between the early eighteenth century church and Moderatism proper. No one has been able to show conclusively, for example, that the Neonomianism of James Hadow or the heterodoxy of John Simson exercised a noticeable influence on Scottish preaching.¹²³ In short, there has been an anachronistic tendency to begin with the phenomenon of Enlightenment Moderatism and then hunt for precursors of that movement in the early eighteenth century.

Several tangible pieces of evidence resist this approach and serve as a reminder that theological Moderatism did not become a prominent dimension of the Church of Scotland until after Boston's death in 1732: 1) Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), widely recognized as the progenitor of the Scottish Enlightenment, did not become Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow until 1729, and did not exercise a substantial influence on the Edinburgh *literati* in any case.¹²⁴ 2) James Hadow attempted a vigorous defence of his version of Westminster orthodoxy against both the Marrow men and John Simson. Thus, the leader of the majority party in Boston's era was directly *opposed* to Moderatism, which tended to minimize the importance of confessional standards. As

¹²¹ Boston, Abdn MS p. 164. This quotation belongs with those in Sefton's catalogue of the early uses of the term 'moderation' in Scotland ('Early Development', pp. 3-4), and his caveat about the inaccuracy of equating 'moderation' with 'Moderatism' should be applied to it as well as to the others (p. 7).

¹²² Robert Wodrow, *Analecta*, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1842), III, 360 (cf. 238-40). Cf. James Fraser (Brea), *Memoirs of the Life of the very Reverend Mr. James Fraser of Brea, Minister of the Gospel at Culross* (Edinburgh, 1738), p. 305; Thomas Halyburton, *Memoirs of the Life*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1715), p. 199; *A Letter Concerning the Defections, Sins and Backslidings of the Church of Scotland* ([Edinburgh], 1720); Boston, *Works*, II, 448, IX, 202, X, 287, XII, 334; Willison, pp. 824, 881, 923. For a more favourable assessment of Scottish preaching in that period see [James Bannatine], *An Essay upon Gospel and Legal Preaching* (Edinburgh, 1723), pp. 3-5, 10, 48-49, 56, who recognizes the dangers of legalistic preaching but is certain that his ministerial colleagues are careful to avoid them.

¹²³ The assertions of C. G. M'Crie, 'Professor Simson', pp. 270-72; Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 43-45; James K. Cameron, 'Theological Controversy: A Factor in the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment', in *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. by R. H. Campbell and Andrew S. Skinner (Edinburgh: Donald, 1982), pp. 116-30 (pp. 122-23); and Crawford, p. 59, on these points are only hypotheses.

¹²⁴ Sefton, 'Early Development', p. 11. These considerations count against Westerkamp's claims on behalf of Hutcheson (p. 84).

M'Crie points out, this also means that Hadow and Boston were actually *allies* during the Simson affair.¹²⁵ 3) The early eighteenth century Moderates (if that is what they were) were directly opposed to the mid-century Moderates, and therefore cannot be viewed as their theological forebears. As Sefton shows, William Robertson (1721-1793) and the prominent Moderates of the Scottish Enlightenment repeatedly came into conflict with the earlier figures he terms the 'Hamilton Moderates' (William Hamilton, Robert Wallace, William Wishart, Patrick Cuming).¹²⁶ Thus Richard B. Sher is right to warn that continuity between the two groups 'should not be exaggerated' and that the label 'Early Moderates' is a misleading one.¹²⁷ 4) The 'Hamilton Moderates', who were Boston's contemporaries during the latter half of his ministry, were moderate in the sense that they took a conciliatory approach to ecclesiastical conflict, but not in the sense that they opposed the doctrinal standards of the church.¹²⁸ The fact that Boston himself did not consider Hamilton theologically unreliable is proved by the fact that he trusted him to examine his *Tractatus Stigmologicus* for deficiencies with respect to Reformed orthodoxy.¹²⁹

A second general observation also counts against viewing the early eighteenth century church along Moderate-Evangelical lines: the Marrow Controversy conceals a substantial consensus of Reformed orthodoxy within the Church of Scotland. Despite Boston's premonitions of the gospel being 'exchanged for rationalism' (XII, 334), subscription and adherence to the Westminster Standards continued to be nearly universal in the Church of Scotland at least through the first half of the eighteenth century.¹³⁰ Furthermore, there was unanimity about the Bible as the Word of God, the death and resurrection of Christ as the basis of salvation, and the new birth as the entrance into that salvation, all of which came to characterize Evangelicalism in Scotland and elsewhere by

¹²⁵ C. G. M'Crie, 'Professor Simson', p. 274-75.

¹²⁶ Sefton, 'Early Development', pp. 120-21, 168.

¹²⁷ Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), p. 153 (cf. pp. 16-17). Cf. Sefton, 'Early Development', p. 214.

¹²⁸ Sefton, 'Early Development', pp. 10, 35, 215; Cf. Henry Sefton, 'Neu-lights and Preachers Legall': some observations on the beginnings of Moderatism in the Church of Scotland', in *Church, Politics, and Society: Scotland 1408-1929*, ed. by Norman MacDougall (Edinburgh: Donald, 1983), pp. 186-96 (p. 190).

¹²⁹ Boston, *Works*, XII, 380. Sefton, 'Early Development', pp. 36-37, emphasizes this point.

¹³⁰ Ian Hamilton, *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy: Seceders and Subscription in Scottish Presbyterianism* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990), p. 186.

mid-century.¹³¹ The General Assembly's 1736 Act concerning 'evangelical preaching', which expresses virtually all of Boston's homiletical priorities, testifies to a substantial evangelical consensus within the church even after his death.¹³² Most tellingly of all, many of the ministers who agreed with the condemnation of the *Marrow* were in substantial agreement with its theology. As Lachman demonstrates, ministers such as John Willison (1680-1750) and John M'Laren (1667-1750) held views 'virtually identical with those of the Marrow Brethren', despite the fact that they became members of the anti-Marrow party.¹³³ This list could be expanded; as John MacLeod observes, opposition to the *Marrow* was 'not that of unevangelical divines'.¹³⁴ There is a sense in which nearly all of Boston's colleagues were evangelicals, and it was not until the rise of Moderatism that the Evangelical position could even be recognized as such.

If it is true that a substantial proportion of the majority party were in agreement with much of the theology of the *Marrow*, then what accounts for their opposition to the Marrow men? To a degree, the issues at stake in the controversy themselves accounted for this opposition. Yet even a brief survey of pamphlets written during the period reveals that the Marrow Controversy was characterized by theological disputation of the lowest level. Individual statements were frequently lifted from the *Marrow* and other works with a blatant disregard for qualifying statements in the immediate context. As James Hog observed, 'according to that Way of Treating a Book, no Book is safe, no, not the Bible it self'.¹³⁵ The cause of the *Marrow* itself, particularly in the early years of the Controversy, was hindered by the inaccuracies of its supporters as well as its

¹³¹ Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 6. Here I am using the term 'Evangelical' to denote a particular group of Protestants. In the sentence which follows and elsewhere, I use the term 'evangelical' in the more general way that Boston and his contemporaries used it (e.g. VIII, 305), to refer to words or actions redolent of the grace of the gospel.

¹³² *Acts of the General Assembly*, p. 636. Cf. John MacLeod, 'Early Days', p. 5.

¹³³ Lachman, p. 199.

¹³⁴ John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology*, p. 145; cf. C. G. M'Crie, 'Hog and Hadow', p. 715. James Craig, *Sermons Preached on Several Subjects and Occasions*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1732-1738), for example, was scornful of the *Marrow* (III, 83), but his preaching is similar to Boston's in its Reformed evangelicalism.

¹³⁵ [James Hog], *The Controversie concerning the Marrow of Modern Divinity. Considered in several familiar Dialogues. Dialogue I* (Edinburgh, 1721), p. 112. Careless disputation was Robert Riccaltoun's main charge against James Hadow in his pamphlet *The Politick Disputant; or, Choice Instructions for quashing a Stubborn Adversary* (Edinburgh, 1722).

detractors.¹³⁶ The fact that James Hadow, who was among the offending pamphleteers, was Professor of Theology at St. Andrews is a poor advertisement for eighteenth century Scottish universities and the ministers who trained in them.¹³⁷ It is apparent that many of the *Marrow*'s opponents were unfamiliar with its actual contents, having been exposed to them only in unreliable and inaccurate pamphlets. Boston's unfortunate practice of relying on polemical works rather than on first-hand acquaintance with divergent theologies appears to have been widespread. As Lachman concludes, 'a considerable number' who opposed the *Marrow* 'did so out of ignorance'.¹³⁸

A third feature of the Scottish church, in combination with a notable lack of theological acumen, also helps to account for the Marrow Controversy: Anti-Antinomianism. John MacLeod has drawn attention to the way in which the majority party were 'wedded to their own technical nomenclature'.¹³⁹ In contrast to Boston, who seemed to grasp the historical breadth of international Reformed theology, a majority within the Church of Scotland were governed by the concerns of late seventeenth century English Calvinism. Chief among these was a fear of doctrinal Antinomianism. In the Simson affair the General Assembly expressed its opposition to opinions which might 'encourage sloth among Christians, or slacken people's obligation unto gospel holiness'.¹⁴⁰ Antinomianism was also the 'gravamen of the charges' against the *Marrow*.¹⁴¹ Even the title of Principal Hadow's major pamphlet against the *Marrow* (*The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected*) announced his concern to root out the '*slie and refined Antinomian*' author of the *Marrow*.¹⁴² Furthermore, the

¹³⁶ Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 19, 29; McGowan, 'Thomas Boston', p. 287; Lachman, pp. 253, 476, 480. Hugh Watt's statement (p. 151) that the 'theological acumen displayed on both side was prodigious' is fantastic.

¹³⁷ See Alexander Grant, *The Story of the University of Edinburgh During its First Three Hundred Years*, 2 vols (London, 1884), I, 337, on the low academic standards maintained at that institution during this period.

¹³⁸ Lachman, p. 487. Cf. Hog, *Controversie I*, p. 109.

¹³⁹ John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology*, p. 144; cf. Lachman, p. 199. The General Assembly's 1710 'Act for preserving the Purity of Doctrine' (*Acts of the General Assembly*, p. 446) insists on 'avoiding all expressions in matters of faith, contrary to the form of sound words' (cf. p. 555), indicating the importance attached to theological vocabulary during the period.

¹⁴⁰ *The Acts of the General Assembly*, p. 518.

¹⁴¹ Addison, p. 99; cf. Robert Wodrow, *The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow*, ed. by Thomas M'Crie, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842), II, 584; Mechie, p. 267; McGowan, 'Thomas Boston', p. 245. For his part, Boston concluded that the majority party was 'against the doctrine of grace, under the name of Antinomianism' (XII, 291; cf. VII, 306n, 316n-17n, 347n; XII, 318).

¹⁴² [James Hadow], *The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected* (Edinburgh, 1721), p. 6 (cf. pp. 122, 143).

potentially Antinomian overtones of some expressions from the *Marrow* -- such as the statement 'This then is perfect righteousness, to hear nothing, to know nothing, to do nothing of the law of works' (VII, 255; cf. XI, 207) -- have been observed since the time of the controversy itself.

What perhaps has not been fully appreciated is the extent to which the *Marrow* echoed the distinctive vocabulary of English Antinomianism.¹⁴³ This point may be illustrated from the anti-Antinomian writings of Samuel Rutherford which enjoyed a wide circulation in Scotland and were quoted by both Boston and the opponents of the *Marrow* with some frequency. Among the errors Rutherford attributes to the English Antinomians are the following:

[The *Libertines*] teach that *there is no assurance true and right, unlesse it be without fear and doubting.*¹⁴⁴
Saltmarsh tells us that *the new covenant is no covenant properly with us, but with Christ for us.*¹⁴⁵
Antinomians deny all conditions of the covenant of grace, of justification, or of salvation, or that the Gospel hath any conditions at all.¹⁴⁶
Antinomians cry out against Preaching of duties as a Legall way, and destructive to Gospel-preaching of Christ and Faith.¹⁴⁷

These propositions display a superficial *verbal* affinity with aspects of the Marrow theology, and hence with that of Thomas Boston. Boston and the Marrow men were distinguished by preaching that assurance is of the essence of faith, that the covenant of grace was made with Christ rather than with believers, that the covenant therefore cannot properly be considered to require conditions of the believer, and that legalistic preaching is inimical to the gospel (VII, 466-89). Such verbal similarities between Antinomianism and the *Marrow* lend plausibility to the charge that the Marrow men were Antinomians.

¹⁴³ Antinomianism was popularized by seventeenth century English theologians such as John Eaton (1575-1641), Tobias Crisp (1600-1643) and John Saltmarsh (d. 1647). It was a re-arrangement of orthodox Calvinism in which justification was collapsed into election, with the implications that faith was nothing more than an assurance that one had already been justified, and that sanctification was imputed rather than infused. See Ernest F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology* (London: Kingsgate, 1964), especially pp. 22-28.

¹⁴⁴ Samuel Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself* (London, 1647), p. 23 (cf. p. 579). Cf. Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, I, 238-39; II, 49; Mr Gibbon, 'The Nature of Justification Opened', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 374-403 (p. 395).

¹⁴⁵ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 130. For comparison, see John Saltmarsh, *Free Grace: or, The Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to Sinners*, 11th edn (London, 1792), pp. 141-42: 'God agreed to save man, but this agreement was with Christ, and all the conditions were on his part: he stood for us, and articted with God for us, and performed the conditions for life and glory. . . ' (cf. pp. 165-66).

¹⁴⁶ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 39; Cf. Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing*, pp. 261, 264; Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph*, pp. 87, 92; Saltmarsh, pp. 121, 141-42.

¹⁴⁷ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 233; cf. Gibbon, *Morning Exercise*, p. 395.

These verbal similarities do not, however, establish a real *theological* affinity between the Marrow men and Antinomianism.¹⁴⁸ Several considerations demonstrate that Thomas Boston was an *anti*-Antinomian rather than an Antinomian. First, one of the primary purposes of the *Marrow* was to combat Antinomianism. Since the *Marrow* is not against ‘the doing’ of good deeds, but ‘against resting in the doing of them’ (VII, 377), Boston rightly concludes that it holds to a middle path between Antinomianism and Legalism: ‘believers are under the law, as a rule of life, but free from it as it is the covenant of works’ (VII, 292n; cf. 293n, 306n). Second, Boston was in explicit disagreement with many other tenets of the Antinomianism which Rutherford opposed. Rutherford cites perfectionism, the opposition of Law and Spirit, the concept of eternal justification, and the denial of the necessity of repentance or Christian obedience as Antinomian errors, all of which Boston also opposed.¹⁴⁹ Third, Rutherford himself often admitted the validity of Antinomian terminology, when it was properly clarified.¹⁵⁰ So, for example, he agrees that ‘faith is no condition’ of the covenant of grace *if* by ‘condition’ is meant an ‘antecedaneous qualification going before Redemption’.¹⁵¹ Such clarifications show that, terminology aside, Boston is in theological agreement with Rutherford rather than with the Antinomians.¹⁵² This point takes on additional force when it is remembered that Rutherford was a significant member of the Westminster Assembly. Fourth, a number of Rutherford’s statements sound very much like statements made in the *Marrow* and opposed by the majority party on the grounds that they were Antinomian. He argues that the ‘law as a covenant of works’ has been ‘so farre forth abrogated as that we are freed from the necessity of justification, by the Law’.¹⁵³ But this amounts to the same thing as the *Marrow*’s controversial statement that the believer is

¹⁴⁸ Against Addison, pp. 42, 140.

¹⁴⁹ Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 10; *Spirituell Antichrist*, I, 195; II, 24, 42, 65, 130; *Trial and Triumph*, p. 359.

¹⁵⁰ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 233.

¹⁵¹ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 39 (cf. 233); Cf. Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph*, p. 92. David Strickland, ‘Union with Christ in the Theology of Samuel Rutherford: An Examination of his Doctrine of the Holy Spirit’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 67, 76, is helpful on this aspect of Rutherford’s theology.

¹⁵² To take another example, Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 130, concedes that ‘Christ standeth for us, as principall undertaker; who articles, as the *second Adam* for us, yea, for all his seed, to worke the conditions in us [. . .]’ This is effectively the same as Boston’s insistence that the fulfillment of whatever conditions may be attached to the covenant of grace is promised to the believer as he is in Christ (e.g. I, 334; VIII, 435-39; XI, 190).

¹⁵³ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 7.

‘freed from the law, as it is the covenant of works’ (VII, 289; cf. VII, 292-304; ‘Genesis’, 43). There is also a striking similarity between Rutherford’s extended defence of Martin Luther against the charge of Antinomianism and Boston’s defence of controversial quotations from Luther in the *Marrow*.¹⁵⁴ Taken together, this evidence shows that Boston shared Rutherford’s careful opposition to Antinomianism (cf. VI, 44-45, 56-57). That Boston’s theology was misunderstood, therefore, shows how anxieties about unfamiliar nomenclature and moral laxity exacerbated the theological differences at the heart of the Marrow Controversy.

The three characteristics of the Scottish church mentioned to this point -- absence of theological Moderatism, consensus of Reformed orthodoxy, and hostility to Antinomianism -- suggest a substantial homogeneity within the Church of Scotland in the early eighteenth century. If such homogeneity did exist, however, it was largely unknown to Boston. Already isolated in a remote parish, he was further alienated from many of his colleagues by his part in the Marrow Controversy. Although the theological ineptitude and anti-Antinomianism of his opponents played a substantial role in this alienation, they seem insufficient to fully account for the Marrow Controversy. Once it is realized that the Marrow men were not Antinomians, however, then the tendency of the majority towards Neonomianism is exposed.¹⁵⁵ Lachman accurately summarizes the Marrow Controversy as

[. . .] a conflict between the majority in the Church of Scotland who represented in some degree a late seventeenth century tendency toward Legalism, Neonomianism and even Arminianism in Reformed thought and the minority who wished to return to what they considered, perhaps rightly, true Reformed Orthodoxy.¹⁵⁶

The suggestion that the majority party exhibited a strain of seventeenth century Neonomianism, however slight, serves as a reminder of the breadth and depth of Boston’s exposure to Reformed theology. As an international Calvinist, he resisted the attempt of the majority party to narrow or forshorten the Reformed tradition.

¹⁵⁴ Compare Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, I, 86-119, with Boston, *Works*, VII, 240n, 248n-49n, 255n, 272n, 301n-303n, 315n-16n.

¹⁵⁵ In opposition to Antinomianism, the Neonomian theology of Richard Baxter and others tended to make the gospel a new law by including repentance and obedience with faith among the conditions of the covenant of grace. See Kevan, pp. 203-207.

¹⁵⁶ Lachman, 491; cf. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification: An Outline of its History in the Church, and of its Exposition from Scripture* (Edinburgh, 1867), p. 182; Beaton, pp. 122-23; Moffatt, p. 244; Mechie, p. 267; Geuze, p. 329; and McGowan, ‘Thomas Boston’, pp. 244-45, 250-51.

What remains to be emphasized is that the Marrow Controversy was a controversy about how to preach. The theological differences at the heart of the Marrow Controversy did not arise from systematic-theological concerns but from pastoral-theological concerns about the effect of the *preaching* of certain doctrines. Since the initial importance of the *Marrow* for Boston himself was the help it afforded in reconciling certain biblical themes in his preaching (XII, 154-55), it is not surprising that James Hadow's initial attack on its theology came from the pulpit.¹⁵⁷

The primary objections to the *Marrow* have been conveniently summarized by Bell:

The Assembly faulted the *Marrow* for teaching 1. that assurance of salvation is of the essence of faith, 2. universal or unlimited atonement, 3. that holiness is not necessary to salvation, 4. that fear of punishment and hope of reward are not proper motives for Christian obedience, and 5. that believers are not under the law as a rule of life.¹⁵⁸

It is apparent that these objections expose a disagreement about how the Reformed pastor ought to preach. For Hadow and the anti-Marrow party, emphasis falls on ministers reminding the elect of their duties. Since assurance is not of the essence of faith, the elect must be exhorted to labour for assurance. Since holiness is necessary to salvation, the elect must be instructed in the law, with the fear of punishment and the hope of reward used to spur them to obedience. What must be opposed is the kind of preaching which tends to 'cause People make light of Sin' or 'slacken their Diligence in following Holiness'.¹⁵⁹

Boston is no less concerned with 'diligence in the study of holiness', but he disagrees with the anti-Marrow strategy for *preaching* holiness. His anti-Antinomianism leads him to place a strong emphasis on the sanctification of the believer. Yet he insists that Christian obedience is the fruit, neither of the quest for assurance, nor of the fear of punishment, but only of the believer's union with Christ by faith (VIII, 210-19; cf. IV, 79; V, 237; XI, 256-58; XII, 251). Rather than hindering holiness, an emphasis on the free grace of the gospel is the 'true spring of evangelical obedience'.¹⁶⁰ With its identification

¹⁵⁷ See his sermon *The Record of God and Duty of Faith Therein required* (Edinburgh, 1719), pp. 23-34.

¹⁵⁸ Bell, p. 152.

¹⁵⁹ Hadow, *Antinomianism Detected*, p. 129 (cf. pp. 61, 77, 96-99, 104, 113, 138, 171); cf. [Bannatine], pp. 10, 13-17, 54-55.

¹⁶⁰ This phrase is taken from the Marrow men's 'Representation and Petition' in Addison, p. 123 (cf. p. 128). Cf. [Boston], *Queries to the Friendly-Adviser*, p. 14.

of faith with assurance, stress on the universal offer of the gospel, and insistence that the believer is no longer under the law as a means of salvation, Boston's preaching intends to promote godliness by first emphasizing the free grace of God in Christ.

That the Marrow Controversy was, in the main, a dispute about the purpose and effects of Christian preaching explains why Boston came to play such a prominent part in its proceedings. He viewed the Assembly's condemnation of the *Marrow* as an attack upon the doctrines at the heart of his preaching ministry. In the kirk, as in the study and the pulpit, Thomas Boston was a preacher.

II. ORIGINS AND COMPOSITION OF THE *FOURFOLD STATE*

I. THE *FOURFOLD STATE* FROM PULPIT TO PRINTER

Thomas Boston first refers to the ‘doctrine of man’s fourfold state’ in October, 1709. In his *Memoirs* he records that he has finished preaching to his Ettrick congregation the ‘sermons of the Fourfold State’, sermons ‘the same, for substance’ as those with which he had formerly begun his ministry at Simprin (XII, 209). The ‘fourfold state’ to which he refers is a theological construct of noble lineage, sired by Augustine and propagated first to Peter Lombard and his commentators, then ultimately to the theologians of Reformed orthodoxy. ‘Man’s fourfold state’ is the human condition in innocence, nature, grace, and eternity. Yet this conventional fourfold structure was not the point of departure for Boston’s preaching, but its destination. The central themes of the sermons which eventually became the *Fourfold State* arose initially and primarily out of his pastoral context. It was only later and secondarily that these sermons were shaped by the traditional systematic-theological construct of the fourfold state of man. At the same time, Boston’s own theological and pastoral concerns led to significant innovations in his presentation of the idea of the fourfold state.

The dynamic interaction between pastoral setting and theological tradition which culminated in the publication of the *Fourfold State* suggests that the best place to begin an analysis of Boston’s most famous sermons is with his own testimony about their development. The subsequent influence of Augustine and others is best appreciated against the backdrop of the story of the composition of the *Fourfold State*.

Thomas Boston made the decision to preach the state of man by nature several months before he fully assumed his first ministerial charge in Simprin, Berwickshire, in December of 1699. Already in October of that year he writes of his determination to

[. . .] begin with preaching to them the doctrine of man’s natural state; judging the sight and sense thereof to be the foundation of all real religion. And minding to take it in parcels, for the more clear discovery thereof, both in the sinfulness and misery of it, I began my study of it, for that Sabbath, on the guilt of Adam’s first sin, or original sin imputed. (XII, 91)

That he subsequently carried out this proposal is confirmed by his reference to preaching ‘with light, life, and zeal, man’s heart’s fulness of all sin by nature’ on the Sabbath of his

ordination, 10 December, 1699. A week later he records his desire to proceed to preach on 'man's death in sin' (XII, 99, 102).

Two points of significance emerge already in these earliest descriptions of the sermons which became the *Fourfold State*. First, Boston's mention of taking up the doctrine of man's natural state 'in parcels' reveals his predisposition to organize his preaching systematically. At the same time, however, it is clear that he did not begin these sermons with a fully-formed fourfold structure in view. Rather, his starting point was a particular doctrine -- the doctrine of sin -- which he believed to be foundational to the knowledge and practice of his parishioners.

Boston's pastoral purposes in preaching on man's natural state are most clearly expressed in his powerful sermon on Hosea 4.6, preached at the mid-week meeting of 21 December, 1699, just 11 days after he had begun his Simprin ministry. Although he had originally intended to preach from a different text, he found Hosea 4.6 'slipping into [his] mind' and was determined to preach from it (XII, 104). It is in this sermon manuscript, rediscovered by the present writer at King's College, Aberdeen, that Boston first gives public expression to the ideas which were to become *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (Abdn MS, 155-59).

Boston begins the sermon by preaching to himself, developing the doctrine 'That the Ignorance of a people living under a Christian name, occasioned by the carelessness of their teachers, will be laid to the teachers charge as well as to their own'. Insofar as the gospel ignorance of the people of Simprin is due to his own negligence, Boston will bear guilt for their unbelief. The destiny of the minister's own soul is bound together with the destiny of the souls of his parishioners to the extent that 'Ministers by carelessness become the murderers of the souls of their people'. But he has a complementary message for the people of Simprin: 'That Ignorance [. . .] among a people living under the means is a soul-destroying evil'. To the extent that a minister *is* a faithful preacher of the gospel, the people of his parish will bear full guilt for their own ignorance (Abdn MS, 157).

What is of special importance to Boston's subsequent preaching and writing is his discussion of what he means by 'Ignorance': 'gross ignorance', or an 'ignorance of the fundamental points of religion'. When he proceeds to explain what these fundamental points include, Boston gives primary attention to the knowledge of 'mans misery by

nature' and 'the way of his recovery'. Later in the sermon he speaks of the soul's '3 fold Ignorance' of 'its sinfulness by nature', of 'its Misery', and of 'Christ himself' (Abdn MS, 159-60). Although Boston had begun preparing to preach 'the doctrine of man's natural state' several months earlier, it is in this sermon that he announces a preaching programme which will venture beyond the state of nature to the state of grace. It is this basic movement from sin to grace, from nature to begun recovery, that forms the central structural pivot of the *Fourfold State*.

The central themes of the *Fourfold State* engaged Boston's attention throughout the early years of his ministry at Simprin. On the Sabbath following his sermon on Hosea 4.6, he began to preach 'man's ignorance of his wretched state by nature' (XII, 105). He continued to take 'man's natural state' for his 'ordinary' for nearly eight months, until August of 1700. At that point Boston began a series of sermons on 'Christ the remedy for man's misery' which lasted until October, 1701, when he began to preach the 'doctrine of the application of the remedy'. These sermons were continued until February, 1702, and were followed by sermons on the 'ordinary method of the Spirit with sinners in conversion' (XII, 121, 153). Surprisingly, Boston's Session minutes reveal that the text for his sermons on the new birth was John 3.3, rather than 1 Peter 1.23, as it appears in later editions of the *Fourfold State* ('Simprim', 49-63). Less surprisingly, other sermon texts listed in the minutes suggest that he preached on the doctrines which were to form the basis for 'The State of Grace' in the *Fourfold State*: union with Christ, justification by free grace, and adoption ('Simprim', 100-101). Looking back on his time at Simprin, he reminded his congregation that he had preached both 'man's natural state' and 'Christ the remedy' from the beginning of his ministry (IV, 464). In sum, Thomas Boston preached on the states of nature and grace to his Simprin congregation for more than two years, introducing the themes which formed the basis for his *Fourfold State*.

The pastoral importance which Boston attached to the themes of sin and grace was underscored by his catechetical practice. The Scottish General Assembly of 1699 instructed ministers to 'be painful in catechising, frequent in visiting of families, and in private personal conference with those of their charge about the state of their souls'.¹

¹ *Acts of the General Assembly*, p. 280. Boston himself instructs ministers to be watchful 'over their flocks, that being ready to be acquainted with their state and case, they may be in capacity to instruct, comfort, and admonish them, &c. as the case requires' (II, 239).

Boston took this dimension of pastoral ministry seriously, conducting catechetical exercises in the church on Sabbath evenings and visiting every household in his parish annually (XII, 105, 209). He records that his method for visitation was to make ‘a particular application of [his] doctrines in the pulpit to the family’, exhorting them to lay to heart ‘their natural state, and their need of Christ’ (XII, 114). Boston’s personal ministry was thus an extension of his pulpit ministry, so that the very states of sin and grace which he preached in the church were the basis for spiritual examination in the home. At the same time, his interaction with parishioners exercised an influence upon the tenor of his preaching. His persistent emphasis on man’s sinfulness and misery by nature was stimulated by his conference with men and women in Simprin who were unaware of their sin and need of salvation (XII, 103-104; cf. 240). Regular visitation had the additional benefit of allowing Boston to assess the extent to which his preaching on man’s estate was understood and applied by his congregation (XII, 103; cf. 225).

During his time in Simprin Boston had not yet organized his preaching into that fourfold structure which included the states of innocence and eternity. It was not the origin or destiny of man which occupied his attention, but the present dichotomy between the states of nature and grace. It was during his ‘second attempt’ to preach his sermons on sin and grace that Boston organized them into an explicitly fourfold structure. Upon his settlement in Ettrick in 1707, the great aim of his preaching was ‘to impress the people with a sense of their need of Christ, and to bring them to consider the foundations of practical religion’. Towards that end, he began ‘an ordinary, the same, for substance, as in the first years of [his] ministry in Simprin, but prosecuted after another manner’. Boston now refers to the sermons as the ‘sermons of the Fourfold State’ and records that they were preached in Ettrick from May, 1708, until October, 1709 (XII, 209). He later remembers preaching ‘twice on these subjects, though in a different method’, and indicates that the sermons had come to include material on ‘the mystical union, and the eternal state’ (XII, 234). When Boston speaks of prosecuting his ordinary ‘after another manner’ or ‘in a different method’, therefore, he means that he has now organized and expanded his material into the four states of Innocence, Nature, Grace, and Eternity.

Thomas Boston never preached his sermons on the fourfold state again. Yet over the course of the following twenty years his sermon manuscripts went through a series of

revisions, culminating in the publication of a second edition of the *Fourfold State* in 1729. This editorial process began with the suggestion, made to Boston by his friend Dr. Trotter, that Boston print some of his sermons. The manuscripts of his sermons on man's fourfold state were shared with several ministerial colleagues for their advice, on the grounds that they 'seemed most suitable' for this purpose (XII, 233). Despite the encouragement of these counsellors, Boston wrestled for several months with doubts and temptations about the Lord's will in the matter before finally agreeing to edit the sermons for publication.

The *Memoirs* record the reasons that ultimately persuaded Boston to agree to Trotter's proposal (XII, 233-34). In part, he hoped that printed editions of his sermons on the fourfold state would reach members of his own parish who were unable or unwilling (chiefly the Cameronians) to hear him preach in person. This reveals not only the depth of Boston's pastoral concern, but also the degree to which he expected his sermons to have the same spiritual effect in print as they had once had in spoken delivery (cf. XII, 225, 236). Furthermore, Boston was eager to do something useful for the wider church, particularly since he considered himself unsuited for ecclesiastical affairs and found the work in his own parish to be wearisome. The fact that he had felt constrained to write out the full text of the sermons now seemed to him a providential encouragement for publication. He was also persuaded by the words of his friend, Rev. Alexander Colden: 'Let respect to duty, and the salvation of perishing souls sway you':

That word, 'perishing souls,' nailed my heart; and it burst out and answered,
'Then let me be a fool for perishing souls.' And now for perishing souls I dare
not but try that work, come of me what will. (XII, 238)

Even more striking than Boston's evangelistic intent is his testimony, 'with respect the sermons themselves', to the 'universal usefulness of the subjects, not treated of in that method by any that I know' (XII, 234). The phrase 'not treated of in that method' is of special importance for understanding the origins and composition of the *Fourfold State*. Boston cannot mean that he is unacquainted with the fourfold state of man as a theological structure. As we shall see, he had a wide exposure to the idea of the fourfold state. Rather, his meaning lies in the antecedent of 'in that method': 'sermons'. As far as he is aware, no one has ever *preached* the fourfold state of man before. Boston's rationale for publishing the sermons of the *Fourfold State* was not simply their doctrinal utility, but also the particular value he attached to the homiletic proclamation of those doctrines.

Boston's third immersion in the fourfold state commenced in February, 1712, when he began to rewrite his sermons for publication (XII, 239). This revision appears to have been substantial, since he laments 'finding the authentic copy so bare and empty' as to require 'new study' (XII, 240). Yet he had completed his work on the 'states of innocence and nature' by October, when the tumult over the Oath of Abjuration and the threat of a £500 fine for his refusal to sign it forced him to set the manuscript aside (XII, 247). By the time Boston returned to the task of writing, now on the state of grace, he found that he was able to cast his thoughts on the subject 'into a shorter and more natural method' which had never occurred to him before. By December he had 'perfected' the section on the state of grace, and a revision of the entire 'Fourfold State', including heaven, had been completed by 9 March, 1713 (XII, 248-49). In his journal entry for 16 June of that year, Boston writes of praying for the book, of beginning a clean transcription of it, and of 'designing to publish the 3 first States By themselves, in Harvest or winter next' ('Passages', 172).

During the following year Boston's copy of the 'Fourfold State' was 'revised by several ministers', but national events conspired to ensure that his first revision never made it to press. Although he went so far as to take his manuscript to Edinburgh in the summer of 1714 in pursuit of a printer, he was persuaded to 'delay it upon the ground of the fear of the pretender's coming in'. The Jacobite rebellion of 1715 confirmed that these fears were well-founded, and Boston reluctantly returned to his study with his manuscript (XII, 253).

Having found 'no access' to publish the 'Fourfold State' on this occasion, Boston feared that he had missed his opportunity for publication altogether. Perhaps because he was 'afraid of the losing of the copy' during the rebellion, he undertook a second transcription of his manuscript during 1715. His *Memoirs* summarize its editorial effect:

In the transcribing, several things are left out, with a design to shorten it, some few things put in, scripture-texts filled up that were only cited before, a great many expressions altered, and the copy divided into chapters or sections, or what else may be thought meet to call them. (XII, 276)

The complete 'scripture-texts' were added on the grounds that 'God's own word in the scripture' was more likely to have effect than Boston's words (XII, 276). The net effect of these changes was to leave the length of the manuscript unchanged.

The 'Fourfold State' remained unpublished until July, 1718, when Boston again found himself deeply troubled about the possibility of publication. He was 'tossed betwixt

two', divided between 'venturing such a mean piece into the world' and 'the fear of sitting the call of Providence to it' (XII, 306). It was not until 1719 that he finally agreed to publish the 'Fourfold State'. The project was sponsored by John Wightman, an Edinburgh Councillor who agreed to pay the printer James Macewan to print the book and to give Boston 100 copies (XII, 310-11). In the autumn of 1719, Boston proceeded to 'transcribe what remained of the Eternal State', thereby completing the editorial process which had begun in 1715 (XII, 312).

The publication of the 'Fourfold State' was delayed once more, this time as the result of a dispute between Boston and his sponsor. Wightman had already opined that Boston's 'style would be nauseous to the polite world, and that no book had yet been written on the depraved state of man, with true spirit and elegance of expression' (XII, 309). This disagreement reveals Boston's desire to reach a popular, rather than a scholarly audience. From the beginning, he exhibited the plainness, simplicity, and aversion to 'artistic over-elaboration' which John MacInnes has identified as the essential traits of Evangelical preaching in Scotland.² Boston, evangelical in this respect as in others, did not believe that the way of writing which his sponsor was 'so fond of, is the way the Lord has used much to countenance for the advancing of true Christianity' (XII, 309).

When the printer delivered the printed sheets in August, 1720, Boston was aghast to discover that the book was 'pitifully mangled', not only because it was full of typographical errors, but also because 'Mr. Wightman had so altered it in many places, that he had quite marred it' (XII, 319). Despite the fact that most of the original manuscript had been discarded during the printing process, Boston was able to undo most of Wightman's damage by preparing *errata* and by convincing the printer to reprint some of the altered pages with Boston's own corrections. Afterwards, however, he reluctantly gave Wightman 'liberty to smooth some expressions' in the book (XII, 321). Because he later believed that his sponsor had 'extended that liberty' beyond reasonable bounds, Boston elected to publish the first edition of his *Fourfold State* (1720) anonymously.

It is, of course, impossible to determine either the extent to which Wightman disrupted the manuscript or the extent to which Boston (as may be suspected) has exaggerated that disruption. Boston appears to have been able to repair most of

² MacInnes, p. 74.

Wightman's damage. In any case, the alterations about which he complains are entirely stylistic and touch neither the theological structure nor the substance of the *Fourfold State*.

Thomas Boston prepared a fifth, final recension of the *Fourfold State* in 1727. The unwanted editorial corrections by Wightman and the earlier destruction of the 'authentic copy' by the printers cost Boston 'much labour' during this transcription, even though he was assisted by a copy of the sermons 'taken by Mr. Wardrobe' (XII, 362). The second edition of the *Fourfold State* (1729) was entirely Boston's own work. Furthermore, a comparison of the 1720 and 1729 editions reveals that the changes made were minor verbal and grammatical ones. As Wightman himself acknowledged in his explanation of the chief difference between the two editions, the style of the book was

[. . .] now uniform, which formerly was not so, because of the explication of peculiar words and phrases [. . .] which were interspersed throughout the former edition, and introduced by another hand, for the sake of such persons as are not accustomed to them.³

A copy of the second edition of the *Fourfold State* came to Boston's hand in January of 1730, prompting him to pray 'for a blessing to be entailed on it, for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and edification of saints' (XII, 402).

The history of the composition of the *Fourfold State* suggests two important conclusions about how Boston's fourfold sermons ought to be studied. First, the brevity of Boston's descriptions of the *Fourfold State* and the frequency with which the work was revised make it impossible to reconstruct the text of the sermons in the early stages of their composition. The *Fourfold State* can only be studied in its final, published form. Second, Boston's testimony about his work leaves little doubt that his sermons on man's fourfold state retained substantially the same doctrinal content throughout their history, from their first proclamation at Simprin to their ultimate publication in 1729. Even over the course of various abridgments, expansions, and stylistic adjustments to the manuscript, the essential doctrinal contours of man's fourfold state have been preserved. Although the sermons in the final edition of the *Fourfold State* do not contain Boston's *ipsissima verba* from the pulpits of Simprin or Ettrick, they should be regarded -- as he himself regarded them -- as the same sermons.

³ John Wightman, Preface to Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (Edinburgh, 1772), p. viii.

II. THE *STATUS QUADRUPLEX* FROM AUGUSTINE TO TURRETIN

The father of the fourfold state was not Boston of Ettrick, but Augustine of Hippo (354-430). Particularly in *De Correptione et Gratia*,⁴ Augustine makes distinctions among the several conditions of the will which serve as the basis for a division of humanity into four estates. Because God 'hominem fecit cum libero arbitrio' in the state of innocence, 'et non mori et miserum non fieri' were within his power.⁵ The first man received divine grace sufficient to persevere in innocence: 'si homo ille per liberum non deseruisset arbitrium, semper esset bonus: sed deseruit, et desertus est'. Augustine sets the mutable grace given to the first Adam over against the more powerful (*potentior*) grace given in the second Adam, by which man is enabled to perform what is good (XI.31). This greater grace provides the capacity 'non solum posse quod volumus, verum etiam velle quod possumus' (XI.32). The difference between these two measures of divine grace is clarified by a series of opposites: 'posse non peccare, et non posse peccare, posse non mori, et non posse mori, bonum posse non deserere, et bonum non posse deserere':

Prima ergo libertas voluntatis erat, posse non peccare; novissima erit multo major, non posse peccare: prima immortalitas erat, posse non mori; novissima erit multo major, non posse mori: prima erat perseverantiæ potestas, bonum posse non deserere; novissima erit felicitas perseverantiæ, bonum non posse deserere. (XII.33)

Here Augustine has made a transition from the state of grace to the state of glory, in which man in Christ attains both immortality and an indefectible goodness of the will. He returns to the state of grace, however, in order to contrast the freedom which Adam knew in the 'prima conditione' with the greater liberty which the saints on earth experience 'adversus tot et tantas tentationes' unknown to Adam (XII.35). The will of the earthly saint is made strong to overcome such temptations because 'divina gratia indeclinabiliter et inseparabiliter ageretur' (XII.38).

⁴ But see also the fourfold structures in his *De Diversis Quæstionibus LXXXIII*, ed. by J.P. Migne, *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 40 (Paris, 1861), cols 11-99 (cols 62-63): 'prima est actio ante Legem, secunda sub Lege, tertia sub gratia, quarta in pace' (66.3), and in his *Expositio Quarundam Propositionum ex Epistola ad Romanos*, ed. by J.P. Migne, *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 35 (Paris, 1861), cols 2063-88 (col 2065): 'ante Legem, sub Lege, sub gratia, in pace' (Propositions XIII-XVIII). These structures are helpfully discussed by William S. Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394-396)', *Augustinian Studies*, 10 (1979), 55-74 (pp. 59-61), and John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 130-34. See also the more general discussion in John M. Rist, 'Augustine on Free Will and Predestination', *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 20 (1969), 420-47.

⁵ Augustine, *De Correptione et Gratia*, ed. by J.P. Migne, *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 44 (Paris, 1863), cols 915-46 (X.28). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

The four states of the freedom of the will which remain implicit in Augustine are organized and clarified by Peter Lombard (c.1095-1169). In his *Sententiæ*, Lombard attempts a more careful definition of the *liberum arbitrium*, relating the concept both to the human faculty of the will (*voluntas*) and to the *liberum arbitrium* as it is found in God himself.⁶ When Lombard turns to the question of the relationship between sin and free will in man, he uses a quotation from Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* to formulate a distinction between man in innocence and man under grace: 'Sicut prima immortalitas fuit, quam peccando Adam perdidit, posse non mori, ita primum liberum arbitrium posse non peccare; novissimum, non posse peccare' (II.XXV.iii).

Lombard later expands this distinction to describe 'in homine quatuor status liberi arbitrii':

Ante peccatum enim ad bonum nil impediabat, ad malum nil impellebat. [. . .] -- **Post peccatum** vero, ante reparationem gratiæ, premitur a concupiscentia et vincitur; et habet infirmitatem in malo, sed non habet gratiam in bono; et ideo potest peccare et non potest non peccare, etiam damnabiliter -- **Post reparationem** vero, ante confirmationem, premitur a concupiscentia, sed non vincitur; et habet quidem infirmitatem in malo, sed gratiam in bono: ut possit peccare propter libertatem et infirmitatem, et possit non peccare ad mortem propter libertatem et gratiam adiuvantem [. . .] -- **Post confirmationem** vero, infirmitate penitus consumpta et gratia consummata, nec vinci poterit nec premi, et tunc habebit non posse peccare. (II.XXV.vi; emphases mine)

Whereas *De Correptione et Gratia* omitted the human condition that lies between innocence and grace, the *Sententiæ* isolate the *liberum arbitrium post peccatum* and describe it in terms of bondage to sin. Lombard makes use of Augustinian concepts to explain this loss of freedom, particularly the oft-quoted statement from the *Enchiridion* (Cap. XXX) that 'Libero arbitrio male utens homo, et se perdidit et ipsum' (II.XXV.vii). He qualifies this statement by asserting that there is a freedom from *necessitate* which persists even in man's fallen state. In addition to identifying man's second state as the state of inability to refrain from sin, Lombard makes a clearer distinction than Augustine between the state of free will in grace (*post reparationem*) and glory (*post confirmationem*). Here in Lombard's *Sententiæ*, for the first time, is a full expression of the idea of the *status quadruplex*, or fourfold state.

As far as can be determined, Thomas Boston did not have direct contact with the writings of either Augustine or Lombard. Nor was he exposed to Lombard's medieval commentators, such as Bonaventure (1221-1274) or Gabriel Biel (1410-1495), who

⁶ Peter Lombard, *Sententiæ in IV Libris Distinctæ*, Spicilegium Bonaventurianum, IV-V, 3rd edn (Rome, 1971), II.XXV.ii. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

continued to discuss and clarify the *status quadruplex*.⁷ But this fourfold structure was undoubtedly present in Boston's theological consciousness. He would almost certainly have encountered it in 1697 (if not before), when he was asked to present a Latin discourse to the presbytery on the 'common head, *De viribus liberi arbitrii circa bonum spirituale*' (XII, 31). Calvin cites Augustine's *De Correptione et Gratia* in his *Institutio Christianæ Religionis* in order to show the supreme work of divine grace on the will which enables it to be free 'non posse peccare'.⁸ Yet Calvin objects to Lombard's placement of *non posse peccare* in the state of future perfection, arguing that Augustine himself intended the phrase to apply simply to the present state of grace. Something much closer to Lombard's *status quadruplex* appears in the Westminster *Confession of Faith*, under the heading 'Of Free-Will'.⁹ After repeating Lombard's point that the will of man has a natural liberty from necessity in all its states, the *Confession* describes man in his created 'state of innocency', 'fall into a state of sin', translation 'into the state of grace', and final 'state of glory'. The fourfold state is part of the smaller substructure of the *Confession*, even if it is not part of its larger superstructure.

Perhaps partly as a result of the influence of the *Confession*, or perhaps simply because of the ongoing influence of Peter Lombard, the language of the *status quadruplex* is a convention of post-Reformation Reformed theology. Although the doctrinal content of the *status quadruplex* has been reformulated according to Reformed principles, the Scholastic categories persist.¹⁰ Even theologians who do not articulate a doctrine of the fourfold state make passing reference to the states of innocence, nature, grace, and glory, as Boston's sources amply demonstrate. The seventeenth century pastor Isaac Ambrose records the first question of 'Practical Divinity' discussed at his Christian Society: 'What was the happiness of Mans condition in the state of Innocency?'¹¹ The Scottish catechist John Davidson begins his preaching ministry with a sermon on the 'miserable, blind estate

⁷ Bonaventure, *Sententiarum*, in *Opera Theologica Selecta*, 5 vols (Florence, 1938), II.XXV. Gabriel Biel, *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*, ed. by Wilfridus Werbeck and Udo Hofmann, 5 vols (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1973-1984), II.XXV.

⁸ John Calvin, *Institutionvm Christianæ Religionis Libri Quatuor* (Leyden, 1654), II.III.xiii.

⁹ *The Confession of Faith*, in *The Confession of Faith* (Inverness: Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1970), pp. 17-126 (IX.I-V).

¹⁰ On the repristination of Scholasticism in Reformed orthodoxy, see Muller, *Post-Reformation*, I, 13-40.

¹¹ Ambrose, p. 244.

of man by nature'.¹² The English apologist William Nicholls alludes to the 'State of Innocence', the 'State of Nature', and the 'State of Glory'.¹³

That such language finds its ultimate basis in the *status quadruplex* becomes evident when the Christian life is defined in terms of transitions from one state to the next. In the theological text Boston used to study divinity at Edinburgh, Leonardus Rijssenius defines 'vocatio' as 'actio Dei, quo hominem e statu peccati, per prædicationem verbi, & virtutem Sp.S., deducit ad statum gratiæ'.¹⁴ Similarly, Herman Witsius speaks both of the believer's 'actualement transitum ex statu iræ in statum gratiæ' and of his eventual translation to a '*statum beatum & gloriosum*'.¹⁵ David Dickson applies the same categories to cases of conscience, advocating a trial of 'our *estate*, whether we be in the state of nature, under wrath, or not; or whether we be regenerate and in the state of grace through faith in Jesus Christ, or not'.¹⁶ In his *Vindiciæ Gratiæ*, William Pemble moves even further towards the *status quadruplex*, omitting only the state of glory in his description of the divine image and human faculties in 'mans triple estate'.¹⁷ An *implicit* doctrine of the fourfold state stands behind the conventional use of 'estate' vocabulary in orthodox Reformed theology.

Boston was also exposed to more explicit and detailed expositions of the idea of the fourfold state. He gave close attention to the systematic works of Zacharias Ursinus, John Sharp, the Leyden professors, Marcus Wendelinus, Andreas Essenius, Hieronymus Zanchius, and Francis Turretin, all of which use Lombard's fourfold structure as the point of departure for extended theological analyses of the human will. The burden of Ursinus' argument is to demonstrate the compatibility of the freedom of the human will -- at least in the sense that the will is able to follow the 'precedent judgement of the understanding, with free and voluntary motion' -- with the 'government of God'.¹⁸ Although he adopts the Augustinian position on the bondage of the will to sin, Ursinus is also concerned to give a

¹² John Davidson, *Some Helps for Young Scholars in Christianity*, 3rd edn (Edinburgh, 1753), p. 12.

¹³ William Nicholls, *A Conference with a Theist*, 4 vols (London, 1696-1699), I, 211; II, 18, 79. Cf. Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 17-18, 48, 69.

¹⁴ Rijssenius, XII.II. The definition in Mr White, 'Of Effectual Calling', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 330-49 (p. 334), is nearly identical: 'Translation from the state of Nature which is a state of sinne, wrath, death, and damnation, to a state of Grace'.

¹⁵ Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, II.VII.xvi, III.XIV.iv.

¹⁶ Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, p. 3 (cf. p. 215).

¹⁷ William Pemble, *Workes*, 3rd edn (London, 1635), pp. 16-17 (cf. p. 548).

¹⁸ Zacharias Ursinus, *The Summe of Christian Religion*, trans. by Henry Parry (London, 1633), p. 82.

meaningful account of human freedom. Not surprisingly, he structures his argument along the lines of the *status quadruplex*:

[. . .] the degrees of free-will may most fitly be considered and distinguished according to the foure estates of man; namely, *of man not yet fallen into sinne, or fallen, or renewed and restored, or glorified* [. . .]¹⁹

Elsewhere, Ursinus discusses the role of the moral law ‘according to the foure estates of men’.²⁰

John Sharp, the early seventeenth century Scottish systematician, shifts the focus slightly by describing the fourfold ‘*Imagine Dei*’ rather than the fourfold will of man. The image of God has its ‘status, estque quadruplex’: ‘1. Integritatis. 2. Sub peccato. 3. Sub gratia. 4. In gloria’.²¹ However, like Ursinus, Sharp uses this structure to show both the capacities of the *liberum arbitrium* and the freedom from ‘coactione’ or ‘necessitate’ which obtain to the will in each state.²² He also relies on Augustine for his description of the ‘status integritatis’ as the state in which ‘Adam poterat peccare, vel non peccare’.²³ The *Synopsis Purioris Theologiæ* divides its discussion ‘DE LIBERO ARBITRIO’ in the ‘variantis conditionis & status hominis’ into similar categories, although it uses new vocabulary to denote them: ‘in statu *creationis & integritatis*, vel *lapsus & corruptionis*, vel *gratiæ & reparationis*, vel denique *gloriæ & perfectionis*’.²⁴ Wendelinus addresses the same philosophical and theological problem of human freedom more tersely, defining Lombard’s *status quadruplex* as the ‘*status innocentiae*’, ‘*status peccati*’, ‘*status gratiæ*’, and ‘*status gloriæ*’.²⁵ Essenius begins with the ‘Triplex Status’ (‘*Integritatis, Lapsus, & Gratiæ*’), but adds a fourth state as an afterthought: ‘atque item pro futuro, *Status*, vel *Gloriæ*, vel *Cruciatuum æternorum*’.²⁶

It was in the *Opera* of Zanchius and the *Institutio* of Turretin that the Augustinian heritage of the *status quadruplex* was most readily apparent to Boston. In *De Operibvs Dei Intra Spacivm Sex Diervm Creatis*, Zanchius quotes lengthy sections from chapters 10 through 12 of *De Correptione et Gratia*, sections which fully exposed Boston to the

¹⁹ Ursinus, p. 84.

²⁰ Ursinus, p. 617.

²¹ John Sharp, *Cursus Theologicvs*, corr. edn (Geneva, 1628), p. 177 (cf. pp. 185, 263-64, 427).

²² Sharp, pp. 184-85.

²³ Sharp, p. 178 (cf. p. 187).

²⁴ Johannes Polyandrus, Andreas Rivetus, Antonius Walaëus, and Antonius Thysius, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiæ* (Leyden, 1625), XVII.XIV (cf. XVII.XV, XVIII, XXVII, XLIII-XLIV).

²⁵ Marcus Wendelinus, *Christianæ Theologiæ* (Hanover, 1639), p. 523.

²⁶ Essenius, X.I.

substance of Augustine's teaching on the ability of the will to sin or not to sin, according to the divine grace it received.²⁷ Furthermore, Zanchius quotes part of the passage from the *Sententiæ* (II.XXV) in which Peter Lombard writes 'De quatuor statibus liberi arbitrii' (III, 710; cf. VIII, 646). His analysis of the *liberum arbitrium* thus follows Lombard's structure:

Sicvt quatuor sunt hominis status: ante lapsum: post lapsum: sub gratia: & in gloria: sic de libero eius arbitrio quadrariam disputari solet: nempe, quale erat ante lapsum: quale post lapsum: quale sub gratia: & quale in gloria cælesti. (III, 704)

Like Sharp after him, Zanchius uses the fourfold state as a framework for his doctrine of the image of God:

Atque imprimis de imagine Dei, ad quam creatus fuisse dicitur. Est enim quadruplex hominis status: Primus, ante peccatum, felix: in hoc fuerunt Adam tantum Eua. Alter post peccatum, sine gratia Christi, miser & infelix. Ab hoc excludi nemo potest eorum, qui per communem propagationem ex Adamo nascuntur. Tertius, post peccatum, sub gratia Christi, isque partim, felix, propter spiritum, partim infelix propter carnem. Ad hunc electi duntaxat referuntur. Quartus electos sequitur post hanc vitam, in gloriam æterna, felicissimus ac beatissimus: Reprobos vero in sempiterna ignominia, atque pœnis, miserrimus. (III, 677)

What is new in this description of the *status quadruplex* is the addition of the eternal state of the reprobate, undoubtedly prompted by Zanchius' strong doctrine of the divine decrees (e.g. II, 476-580; VII, 213-346).

The discussion of the liberty of man in Turretin's *Institutio* (VIII.I.i) also follows the conventional fourfold outline:

Cum Homo in quadruplici Statu spectari possit, *instituto* naturæ, *destituto* peccati, *restituto* gratiæ, & *præstituto* gloriæ, diversimode etiam *Libertas* ejus considerari debet circa illos.

In addition to using elegant vocabulary to describe the four states of man, Turretin assumes that these states have an ontological significance beyond their usefulness as categories for the human will. It is on the basis that man can be viewed in a fourfold state generally that a fourfold analysis of the particular question of human liberty is legitimate (cf. V.IX.vii). Turretin proceeds to describe that liberty in distinctively Augustinian terms. The liberty of Adam is 'posse non peccare'; the liberty of the sinner is 'non posse non peccare'; the liberty of the believer is 'posse peccare et non peccare'; and the liberty of glory is 'non posse peccare' (VIII.I.ix; cf. XV.XVI.xiv, XX.IX.iv). Turretin makes his debt to Augustine explicit by quoting the explanation from *De Correptione et Gratia* of the

²⁷ Hieronymus Zanchius, *Opera Theologica*, 8 vols ([Geneva], 1605), III, 696-99, 712-14 (cf. VIII, 488-90, 493). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

difference between the Adamic *posse non peccare* and the eschatological *non posse peccare* (VIII.1.ix; cf. XX.IX.v). From Ursinus to Turretin, Boston's Reformed sources remain squarely within the Augustinian and Lombardan tradition of the *status quadruplex*, employing that structure primarily to describe the various states of the will.

III. FROM THE STATUS QUADRUPLEX TO THE FOURFOLD STATE

Thomas Boston's *Fourfold State* is the legitimate heir of the *status quadruplex* in patristic, medieval, and Reformed theology. As he preached and re-preached his sermons on sin and grace, Boston organized his material into the four states of the *status quadruplex*: innocence, nature, grace, and eternity. The breadth of his exposure to these four categories makes it impossible to credit any one source with primary influence, particularly since he made use of Ursinus, Zanchius, Wendelinus, the Westminster *Confession*, Turretin, and Essenius from the outset of his ministry. For Boston, the fourfold state was a theological commonplace.

What the history of the idea of the *status quadruplex* does reveal is the extent to which the *Fourfold State* is a fresh contribution to the tradition. Boston inherits primarily the fourfold structure itself, a structure which he invests with fresh theological content. In the first place, the medieval and Reformed theologians made use of the *status quadruplex* only in their discussions of the *liberum arbitrium* and the *imago Dei*. From Lombard to Essenius, the *status quadruplex* is a framework for describing the ability of the human will in its various spiritual conditions to do good and evil. Boston himself makes occasional use of the *status quadruplex* for this purpose (I, 246; VII, 27). In the *Fourfold State*, however, he has relatively little interest in the freedom and bondage of the will. Instead, Boston radically expands the fourfold state into a comprehensive theological framework. At one point he goes so far as to tell his parishioners that in preaching the fourfold state to them he had preached 'the whole counsel of God, so far as I knew it, and was necessary for you' (IV, 464). Boston uses the fourfold state to organize his preaching on the doctrines of creation, sin, regeneration, union with Christ, justification, sanctification, resurrection, final judgment, glorification, and damnation. The sermons in the *Fourfold State*, therefore, comprise a short systematic theology, arranged in redemptive-historical order, with special emphasis on soteriology and eschatology. Boston has taken the

substructure of one theological locus, the *status quadruplex*, and has enlarged it into a fourfold superstructure for the whole of Christian theology.

In the second place, the *Fourfold State* is innovative in its use of the *status quadruplex* for preaching rather than for academic or disputational theology. The texts which exposed Boston to the idea of the fourfold state were all systematic-theological texts. His comment that the subjects of his sermons had not been ‘treated of in that method by any that I know’ shows that he was conscious of a degree of novelty in his homiletical treatment of the *status quadruplex* (XII, 234). This new approach required changes in content as well as genre. Boston begins each stage of the *Fourfold State* with the exposition of a passage of Scripture rather than with a theological proposition. The text generates a doctrinal proposition, of course, but Boston is more transparently governed by the scriptural text than his predecessors because he is self-consciously *preaching* the fourfold state. Furthermore, in Puritan fashion, each of the sermons in the *Fourfold State* includes a section for the application of the doctrine to the spiritual condition of the hearer. While the Reformed scholastics often included what Essenius entitled the ‘praxim’ of the doctrine (e.g. II.XXV), practical application tended not to receive the attention in systematic works which the preaching context demands. One of Boston’s biographers has offered a helpful summary of the difference between the *Fourfold State* and its theological ancestors:

Those systems were usually too scientific in their structure and style for common readers, being overlaid with learning, deficient in the practical element, and too often also rendered repulsive by distracting and unprofitable controversy about comparative trifles. The aim of the pastor of Ettrick, who was brought into daily contact with the common people and knew their modes of thinking and feelings, was, while presenting Christian truths in systematic form, and in such a manner as to show their mutual relation and dependence, to adapt his language to the general capacity of his readers, and to bring the whole to bear upon men’s greatest wants and their eternal well-being.²⁸

Although this comment may demonstrate an insensitivity to the exigencies of systematic theology, it captures something of the popular style and practical tone which distinguish Boston’s *Fourfold State*.

One way in which Boston brings the *status quadruplex* to bear upon his hearers and readers is by continually exhorting them to locate themselves within man’s fourfold state. The *Fourfold State* sets the story of the hearer within the cosmic narrative of redemption in Christ. The four states are not theological abstractions for Boston, but concrete

²⁸ Thomson, *Boston of Ettrick*, p. 138.

descriptions of what his parishioners once were, now are, and will one day become. They serve as a diagnostic topography of spiritual experience, compelling the listener to identify his or her present spiritual condition. The *Fourfold State* is also a gazetteer for life's pilgrimage, revealing the eternal 'state of continuance', which lies at the end of each spiritual journey (V, 265; cf. III, 27; V, 392). The repeated exhortation to 'try whether you are in the state of grace or not', is the pastoral application of the *status quadruplex* (V, 159).

These two contributions to the tradition of the *status quadruplex* -- the expansion of the structure to encompass a wider range of theological topics and the translation of the structure into a new genre -- are closely related. Because of his pastoral concern over the lack of spiritual knowledge in his parish, Boston needed a framework for theological instruction which was at once simple and comprehensive. The *status quadruplex* suited his purposes perfectly. On the one hand, the fourfold movement from innocence to nature to grace to eternity was so simple that even the most unlettered auditor could understand and remember it, especially when Boston preached within that structure at such great length. On the other hand, he proved that his fourfold structure was flexible enough to encompass sermons on all the doctrines essential for salvation. In the *status quadruplex*, Boston found an ideal structure for clear, evangelistic, doctrinal preaching in a rural parish.

In addition to changing its content and context, Boston follows Zanchius in making one significant change to the actual structure of Lombard's *status quadruplex*. For Lombard, as for most of his theological descendants, the fourth state was identified as the state of glory, and glory alone. Since the states of glory and innocence in *De Correptione et Gratia* arose out of a comparison between two degrees of divine grace, Augustine himself did not discuss the state of damnation, in which the human will is not influenced by grace. This omission is perpetuated by Lombard and by most of the theologians of Reformed orthodoxy, so that the sinner's *liberum arbitrium* is discussed only in this life and not in the next. Boston bifurcates the fourth state, however, so that it is no longer simply a *status gloriæ*. The state of glory has become 'The Eternal State', the state of consummate happiness **or** misery. In keeping with Boston's stress on the absolute distinction between belief and unbelief, the *Fourfold State* gives a substantial place to both heaven and hell.

The theological and pastoral ramifications of this structural alteration to the *status quadruplex* will be more fully explored in the final chapter of this thesis. For the moment, it is sufficient to recognize that the addition of the doctrine of hell may reflect the influence of one further source upon Boston's *Fourfold State: The Morning Exercise Methodized*.²⁹ The *Morning Exercise* consists of 28 doctrinal sermons first preached by London Puritans during the 1650s at the 'Monthly Course of the Morning Exercise at Giles in the Fields'.³⁰ The fact that some of these sermons are quoted in Boston's earliest essays means that he studied a copy of the *Morning Exercise* during his formative period. The sermons contained in the work afforded Boston a model of systematic, doctrinal, practical preaching. Like the *Fourfold State*, the *Morning Exercise* comprises an abbreviated system of theology, proceeding through doctrines such as God, creation, original sin, the misery of man's estate, the covenant of grace, union with Christ, justification, saving faith, holiness, hell, and heaven. These topics are presented in a theological order, albeit not according to the simpler plan of the *status quadruplex*. In contrast to many of his sources, however, they are presented in the form of sermons. And, unlike most of the expositions of the *status quadruplex* with which he was familiar, the *Morning Exercise* gave Boston a theological structure which included a sermon on hell.³¹

The theological and literary influence of the *Morning Exercise* upon Boston's *Fourfold State* -- particularly on the doctrines of the covenants, original sin, regeneration, union with Christ, and hell -- will be noted frequently in subsequent chapters of the present thesis. Although many of the similarities between the two works are striking, the case for the influence of the London sermons upon Boston primarily rests upon the sheer number of similarities of thought and expression. Of greatest importance, perhaps, was the influence upon Boston of the *Morning Exercise* as a corpus of sermons. The pastoral convention in early eighteenth century Scotland was to preach for weeks or months from a single Scripture text. The *Morning Exercise* was Boston's best model of a coherent, long-term strategy for preaching from a series of texts. In his introduction to the *Morning Exercise*,

²⁹ Thomas Case, ed., *The Morning Exercise Methodized* (London, 1660).

³⁰ For a history and description of this exercise, see Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans: or, Protestant Nonconformists; from the Reformation in 1517 to the Revolution in 1688*, 5 vols (London, 1822), II, 506.

³¹ Mr Adams, 'Of Hell', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 576-99.

the Westminster divine Thomas Case argues that the ‘*ignorance and misery* of our times, is not that people are *totally destitute* of the principles of Christian Religion; but that they know them *singly* only, and *apart*’. His purpose in editing the sermons for publication was to present essential biblical truths to the church, each ‘in its *method* and necessary *coherence* with other truths’. Furthermore, Case finds a systematic arrangement of the sermons to be desirable because ‘Such *Patterns and Platforms*, whether of *larger* or of *lesser* compasse *are a great help to memory*’.³² Although the *Fourfold State* surpasses the *Morning Exercise* in simplicity and memorability, the aims of the two sermon collections are nearly identical.

IV. THE *FOURFOLD STATE* AS A WINDOW TO BOSTON’S THEOLOGY

Scholarly work which has been conducted on Thomas Boston to date has paid too little attention to *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*. William Addison’s theological interest in Boston is limited to the theology of the Marrow Controversy.³³ The same may be said of David Lachman’s thesis on the Marrow Controversy, which helps clarify Boston’s position on Marrow issues without making special reference to the *Fourfold State*.³⁴ Stephen Woodruff has written about Boston as a practitioner of pastoral care, but devotes little attention either to the doctrinal emphases of his preaching or to the *Fourfold State*. The two substantive theses on the theology of Thomas Boston -- by Donald Bruggink and Andrew McGowan -- focus on his covenant theology and neglect the *Fourfold State*, except insofar as it propounds federal theology.³⁵

A closer study of Thomas Boston as the preacher of the *Fourfold State* seems warranted. In the first place, the Aberdeen manuscripts shed new light on the origins of the *Fourfold State*, affording an opportunity to reconsider the way in which the doctrinal content of the sermons was bound up with Boston’s understanding of his ministerial calling. Second, the *Fourfold State* was Boston’s most widely published and influential work. While this point will be documented more carefully in the epilogue of the present thesis, it is sufficient here to note that the *Fourfold State* was the most frequently published

³² Thomas Case, ‘Introduction’, in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 1-27 (p. 18).

³³ Addison, pp. 94-146.

³⁴ Lachman, pp. 135-42.

³⁵ Bruggink, ‘Thomas Boston’, p. 76 (cf. p. 247n1); McGowan, ‘Thomas Boston’, p. 324.

Scottish book of the eighteenth century. Neither the religious culture of eighteenth century Scotland nor Boston's stature as a theologian can be fully understood without reference to the *Fourfold State*.

Third, the doctrinal content of the *Fourfold State* was central to the preaching ministry of Thomas Boston. The sermons contained in the book offer broad coverage of Christian doctrine. Furthermore, the work's unusual compositional history -- including two separate preachings and three separate editings of the sermons -- brought him into repeated contact with its main themes. To one degree or another, he was occupied with the *Fourfold State* throughout his thirty years of pastoral ministry. The reconstruction and reapplication of the *status quadruplex* in the *Fourfold State* was a perpetual frame of reference for Boston and his parishioners.

The prominence of man's fourfold state in Boston's thought is confirmed by the frequency with which the language and thought of the four states appear in the rest of his sermons. There are many occasions when he refers to the 'state of sin and misery', or to the 'state of grace', particularly when he is exhorting his parishioners to 'get out of the natural state into the state of grace' (II, 669; cf. I, 142, 279, 604; V, 269, 442, 556; IX, 617; X, 362, 430). Boston expected believing parents to teach their children 'the doctrine of their sinful miserable state by nature, and the remedy provided in Christ' (II, 225; cf. V, 630; VII, 591). Such practical application of the fourfold state is also reflected in his will and testament, in which he describes his own 'ruined state and condition' prior to conversion as 'a state of nature' (XII, 502). Even in his final sermon, preached from his deathbed, Boston insisted on the necessity of self-examination in order to attain 'certain knowledge of our estate, whether we be in the faith or not' (II, 504; cf. Abdn MS, 260-62; III, 45; IV, 550).

It is typical of Boston to use his fourfold structure to analyze a point of doctrine. He discusses the image of God, for example, in terms of Adamic perfection, sinful imperfection, recovery through grace in Christ, and full possession in glory (VII, 20-21). His summary of the relationship between man and the creatures reflects the same structure:

The dominion over the creatures lost by Adam, and purchased again for the saints by Christ, is not fully restored in this life; but it is promised, and shall be restored in the other world. (V, 408)

In his unusual essay ‘Of the Origin, Names, Texture, and Use of Garments’, Boston even explores the theological implications of human clothing, from the ‘garments of innocence’, to the fig-leaves of shame, to the priestly clothes which typify the imputed righteousness of Christ (VI, 233-40; cf. VIII, 319; ‘Genesis’, 24, 37-38). He also explains sanctification with reference to man’s fourfold state:

[. . .] so the unwashed sinner has lost all his primitive spiritual glory: but Christ washing him in the day of grace, he recovers it somewhat; and the washing being perfected in glory, he will be brighter and more glorious than ever. (VI, 565; cf. X, 30)

Towards the end of his ministry, in a sermon on the gathering of the saints at the last day, Boston discusses humanity’s union with Christ in the four states of Adamic union, scattering by sin, gathering in Christ, and final gathering by angels at the world’s end (V, 517). Elsewhere, he uses man’s fourfold state to preach about the goodness of God (I, 119-22), the freedom of the will (I, 246; cf. VII, 27), the history of redemption (I, 379-80), the prophetic ministry of Christ (I, 415-16), reconciliation (I, 460-61; cf. V, 223), perseverance (II, 32), pleasure (III, 316), the Kingdom of God (IV, 219-21; cf. II, 572-74), paradise and wilderness (IV, 277; cf. X, 552-53, 558-60), the believer’s portion (V, 69), truth in the heart (V, 127-28), the human body (V, 427; cf. XI, 310-11), birth and death (V, 491-92), temptation (V, 540), preparation for death (V, 566), Old Testament feasts (VI, 220), the old man and the new man (VI, 322), obedience to the law (VII, 247n), strength (IX, 151), the resurrection of Lazarus (IX, 295), Christ’s appointment as surety of the covenant (IX, 525-26), the gospel offer (IX, 614), spiritual nourishment (X, 89-90), man’s journey through life (X, 313, 360), and access to God in prayer (XI, 92). What these examples show is that the *status quadruplex* continued to operate as a practical and theological reference point throughout his ministry. Even when he was no longer preaching the *Fourfold State*, Thomas Boston remained the preacher of the fourfold state.

To a degree, a consideration of Thomas Boston’s theology from the perspective of the *Fourfold State* may be distinguished from examining him from the standpoint of covenant theology. Bruggink contends that federal theology is the ‘framework within which every doctrine of his theology hangs’, concluding that doctrines or structures which do not fall into covenant categories ‘never find a really valid place’ within Boston’s

‘systematic framework’.³⁶ Furthermore, he dismisses the *Fourfold State* on the grounds that its compositional history makes it ‘completely unreliable as a chronological witness’.³⁷ Whether the *Fourfold State* is subsumed by covenant theology or dismissed altogether, it is not seen to have independent significance for understanding Boston’s preaching.

It is not the purpose of the present thesis to minimize the importance of Thomas Boston’s federalism or to re-evaluate his place within the history of covenant theology. There are important pastoral and theological parallels between his sermons on the covenants and his *Fourfold State*. Indeed, Boston’s introduction to *A View of the Covenant of Grace* echoes the dichotomy between sin and grace which lies at the heart of the *Fourfold State*:

My design is, under the divine conduct, to open up unto you the two covenants of works and grace; and that because in the knowledge and right application of them the work of our salvation lies; the first covenant shewing us our lost state, and the second holding forth the remedy in Jesus Christ; the two things which, for the salvation of souls, I have always thought it necessary chiefly to inculcate. (XI, 178; cf. I, 279; VIII, 115; XI, 252)

Similarly, the use of federal concepts to reconstruct the *status quadruplex* is an important dimension of the *Fourfold State*; covenant theology both penetrates and overlays the *Fourfold State*.

Yet even while the doctrine of man’s fourfold state is not incompatible with federal theology, it is not identical with federal theology. The two covenants of works and grace are not theologically and structurally co-extensive with the four states of the *status quadruplex*. A close study of the *Fourfold State* will reveal that it is sometimes reluctant to develop federal concepts, particularly in its treatment of the imputation of Adam’s sin. At the same time, some themes of pastoral-theological import -- such as heaven and hell -- remain in obscurity when Boston is considered only as a covenant theologian but emerge with clarity when he is reconsidered from the point of view of the *Fourfold State*. A fresh examination of Thomas Boston as the preacher of the *Fourfold State*, therefore, gives promise of new insights into the theology which he preached.

³⁶ Bruggink, ‘Thomas Boston’, p. 83.

³⁷ Bruggink, ‘Thomas Boston’, p. 76 (cf. 247n1).

III. THE STATE OF INNOCENCE

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF INNOCENCE

Thomas Boston's sermon 'The State of Innocence' has the apologetic purpose of teaching that God is not the author of sin (VIII, 9-25; cf. I, 246-54). The sermon, which introduces the *Fourfold State*, begins with the words of the Solomonic Preacher: 'Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions' (Ecclesiastes 7.29). Boston's choice of text, homiletical exposition, and apologetic purpose bear a close relationship to a sermon from the *Morning Exercise*,¹ although there are also echoes of the description of the Adamic condition in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (VII, 173). Boston uses Ecclesiastes 7.29 to draw an initial contrast between 'what man *was* in the state of innocence, as God made him' and 'what he *is* in the state of corrupt nature, as he hath unmade himself' (VIII, 9; cf. I, 246, II, 376; VII, 20-21, 25; VIII, 132; IX, 151; X, 360; XI, 184, 189, 191). By focusing on the biblical contrast between God's making and man's unmaking, he seeks to clear God from the charge that he is responsible for human sin.

Boston finds in the words of his text -- 'God hath made man upright' -- an assertion of the 'state of innocence wherein man was created' (VIII, 9). He rests this assertion on the verbal identity in Hebrew of the 'man' of Ecclesiastes 7.29 with the 'Adam' of Genesis 5.1-2 (VIII, 10). The man made upright in Ecclesiastes is the same as the man made in God's likeness in Genesis. For Boston, 'uprightness' means that man was created 'without any imperfection, corruption, or principle of corruption, in his body or soul', the 'erect figure' of man's body serving as an 'emblem' of the 'straight inclination' of man's soul to point 'towards God as his chief end' (VIII, 10; cf. I, 184; VIII, 16, 20; X, 154). Introducing a metaphor to which he will later return, he describes Adam as 'polished after the similitude of a palace' (VIII, 9). Following both the *Morning Exercise* and the *Marrow*, Boston argues that man was in this pristine state from the very moment of his creation; he was 'made upright':²

¹ Mr How, 'Man's Creation in an Holy, but Mutable Estate', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 95-109 (pp. 95, 97, 101).

² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 10 (cf. I, 183; VII, 225, 225n; XI, 179); How, *Morning Exercise*, p. 101.

Original righteousness was created with him; so that in the same moment he was a man, he was a righteous man, morally good; with the same breath that God breathed into him a living soul, he breathed into him a righteous soul. (VIII, 10; cf. 16)

These exegetical observations lead Boston to propose the doctrine which he will expound in the balance of his sermon: ‘*God made man altogether righteous*’ (VIII, 11). If man was created to conform to the will of God, then he was ‘righteous’, as the biblical text insists he was. If not, then ‘he was a sinner; which is absurd and horrible to imagine’ (VIII, 16).

Boston furthers his apologetic purpose by stressing the human agency of the second half of his text: ‘But they have sought out many inventions’. A series of third person plural pronouns distances God from responsibility for the fall of mankind into sin:

They fell off from their rest in God, and fell upon seeking inventions of **their own**, to mend **their** case; and **they** quite marred it. **Their** ruin was from **their own** proper motion: **they** would not abide as God had made them; but **they** sought out inventions, to deform and undo **themselves**. (VIII, 10, bold emphases mine; cf. I, 254)

If God created man upright, then culpability for the fall into sin rests on man’s shoulders alone. When he later comes to apply his doctrine, Boston returns to his defence of divine righteousness and reasserts that ‘man was, and is, the cause of his own ruin’ (VIII, 22; cf. I, 415).

At no point in the sermon does Boston indicate that there are systematic-theological concerns which necessitate his apology. More explicitly, he is not attempting to reconcile the Reformed doctrine of the divine decrees with God’s permission of Adam’s sin.³ Nor are there many hints that more sophisticated treatments of the relationship between divine intention and human sin by the theologians of Reformed orthodoxy inform his preaching on the state of innocence.⁴ Instead, Boston’s exposition is governed by the simpler biblical-theological parameters of his text, a text chosen because it introduces the states of both innocence and nature. Already in the opening pages of the *Fourfold State*, it is apparent that he is striving for the simplicity which the context of his preaching demands, and that he gravitates towards theological models which foster that simplicity.

³ Weir concludes that ‘the federal theology [. . .] should be seen as an explanation of the working out of the decrees of God, especially with regard to one question: that of God’s sovereignty and Adam’s Fall’ (p. 157; cf. pp. 16, 22). Whatever merits this perspective may have in the context of sixteenth century Reformed theology, it cannot be applied usefully to the *Fourfold State*.

⁴ See Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, I.XV.viii, II.II-V, III.XXIII.vi-ix; Ursinus, pp. 39-40, 46-47, 64, 85; Zanchius, II, 554; Polyandrus, XIV.XIX-XVII; Sharp, p. 210 ff.; Wendelinus, pp. 194-97; *Confession of Faith*, III.I, V.IV; Turretin, III.XII.xxii, IX.VII.i-xviii, IX.IX.xxxv; Essenius, X.XX; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.VIII.x-xxviii.

Having established the fact of man's created innocence, Boston proceeds to describe the condition of innocence. He begins with a strong assertion of the legal basis for 'Man's Original Righteousness'. Because the 'righteousness of God is the supreme rule', therefore 'all created righteousness, whether of men or angels, has respect to a law as its rule'. For Boston, here as elsewhere, the very act of creation entails obligation to the law of God (VIII, 11; I, 231; VII, 25, 309n; XI, 191). The creature is as morally dependent as he is naturally dependent upon the Creator: 'A creature, as a creature, must acknowledge the Creator's will as its supreme law'. Even the words of the sermon text -- 'God made man upright' -- assume such a law, since 'when any thing is made regular, or according to rule, of necessity the rule itself is presupposed' (VIII, 11).

In addition to arguing that man was governed by law from creation, Boston argues that the law of God was revealed to man. He first observes that 'no law obliges, until it is revealed':

And hence it follows, that there was a law, which man, as a rational creature, was subjected to in his creation; and that this law was revealed to him. (VIII, 11; cf. I, 460; II, 60; VII, 7, 25; VIII, 12, 501; XI, 185, 191)

What is left unstated is *why* the fact of revelation follows from the necessity of revelation for obligation. As it stands, Boston's argument is incomplete, although perhaps he considered man's obligation to the law a fact so obvious as not to require explanation. Certainly Adam's obligation to the natural law was a common assumption in his sources, most notably in the *Marrow* (VII, 173-74, 201, 308-309, 440) and the *Morning Exercise*.⁵ Elsewhere Boston himself uses the heart-written law of Romans 2.15 to provide a fuller defence of the revelation of the natural law to Adam (I, 182, 231; XI, 191).

In 'The State of Innocence', Boston proceeds to the question of the *content* of the law revealed to man by virtue of his creation. The law revealed to Adam

[. . .] was no other than the eternal, indispensable law of righteousness, observed in all points by the second Adam, opposed by the carnal mind, and some notions

⁵ How, *Morning Exercise*, p. 98; Mr Merriton, 'Christ's Humiliation', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 261-87 (p. 263). Cf. Calvin, *Institvtionvm*, I.III.i, II.VIII.i, IV.XX.xvi; Theodore Beza, *A briefe and pithie summe of the christian faith made in forme of a confession*, trans. by R. F. (London, 1563), pp. 43-44, 64; Ursinus, pp. 66, 617; Polyandrus, XVIII.xxxviii; *Confession of Faith*, IV.II; *Larger Catechism*, in *The Confession of Faith* (Inverness: Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1970), pp. 127-283 (Q & A 17, 92-93); Dickson and Durham, *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, p. 323; Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, pp. 72-73, 80, 512; Vincent, p. 91; Stephen Charnock, *The Works of the late Learned Divine Stephen Charnock*, 2 vols (London, 1684), 2 vols, I, 608-10; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 342; Turretin, VIII.III.v, VIII.III.xii; Essenius, IX.X, CXVI; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.I.xi, I.III.vii, IV.IV.ii; Willison, p. 447.

of which remain yet among the Pagans [. . .] In a word, this law is the very same which was afterwards summed up in the ten commandments, and promulgated on mount Sinai, to the Israelites, called by us the moral law, and man's righteousness consisted in conformity to this law or rule.⁶

Here the influence of covenant theology on the *Fourfold State* becomes apparent, since the divine revelation of the moral law forms the basis for the covenant of works between God and Adam. The moral law, 'summed up in the ten commandments', is the eternal standard according to which man's uprightness is established.⁷

Boston's explanation of the legal basis of 'Man's Original Righteousness' challenges the contention that the Reformed doctrine of the covenant of works depends upon reading the Sinaitic covenant back into the Edenic dispensation. Holmes Rolston, III, for example, has argued that the idea of the covenant of works, 'educated from the Mosaic law', has been 'pushed back to creation and made the basic relationship between God and man'.⁸ Both James B. Torrance and Stephen A. Woodruff have made this accusation in connection with Boston's theology, arguing that he reads the covenant 'back into creation'.⁹

Boston's argument for Adam's obligation to the law, however, is based primarily on the fact of creation, with the decalogue introduced only secondarily as the substance of that law. As he makes clear elsewhere, the law given at Sinai is a manifestation of the covenant of *grace*, not of works, even though it expresses the substance of the covenant of works (II, 60, 86, 89; VII, 196n-201n). Here Boston is following the example of his federal predecessors, who are careful to discriminate between the covenant of works with Adam and the Mosaic covenant.¹⁰ Obadiah Sedgwick, for example, distinguishes between the 'matter' of the decalogue (equivalent to the covenant of works) and the 'form' of the

⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 11-12 (cf. I, 182, 230; VII, 25, 167n, 170n, 197n, 309n; VIII, 443, 557, 571; XI, 191). As Boston's notes explain, the *Marrow* also identifies the natural law with the moral law given in the decalogue (VII, 198, 201, 305, 308-309).

⁷ In view of this emphasis on the law as the eternal expression of the will of God, Addison's claim (p. 140) that Boston and his colleagues caused the law to be 'divested of its inevitableness' is patently false.

⁸ Rolston, *John Calvin*, p. 16. See also Rolston, 'Responsible Man', p. 133; McGiffert, 'Moses to Adam', pp. 134-35, 146, 152.

⁹ James B. Torrance, 'Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology', in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, ed. by Alasdair I. C. Heron (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982), pp. 40-54 (p. 49); Woodruff, p. 138.

¹⁰ See Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, p. 60; James Fergusson, *A Brief Exposition of the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Edinburgh, 1659), I, 147; James Durham, *A Practical Exposition of the X. Commandments* (Edinburgh, 1675), pp. 4, 15; Turretin, XII.V.xxiii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fœderum*, IV.IV.xliv-lvii. Muller suggests that viewing the Ten Commandments as 'part of the covenant of grace' is 'typical of the Reformed orthodox' (*Post-Reformation*, I, 192).

decatalogue (a manifestation of the covenant of grace).¹¹ Similarly, the *Morning Exercise* asserts that the Israelites were ‘not properly under a Covenant of Works’.¹² The *Marrow* comes closest to making the connection between Eden and Sinai which Rolston assumes to be facile. Yet this is a point which Boston himself both recognizes and criticizes (VII, 201n), and even in the *Marrow* there is a recognition that the Mosaic administration is ‘subservient to the covenant of grace’ (VII, 204). Moreover, Boston finds support for the connection between law and creation in Romans 2, which testifies to the remnants of the law in the mind of the unbeliever (VIII, 11). He finds no reason to hesitate in using the entire canon of Scripture to inform his exposition of the state of innocence, as his selection of a text from Ecclesiastes indicates. According to Boston’s implicit hermeneutic, the Bible is a perfect unity, so that it is as valid to deduce the doctrine of innocence from Exodus or Romans as it is to deduce it from Genesis (cf. I, 21-22, 29).

In the state of innocence, God not only revealed the moral law to man, but enabled him to follow it. A ‘twofold conformity’ to the law was required:

God made man habitually righteous; man was to make himself actually righteous; the former was the stock which God put into his hand; the latter was the improvement he should have made of it. (VIII, 12)

In ‘The State of Innocence’, his concern is with the former, man’s habitual righteousness or the ‘conformity of the powers of his soul to the law’ (VIII, 12). In the act of creation man was given both an obligation to the law and the power to fulfill that obligation.

Boston describes man’s habitual righteousness according to ‘the faculties and powers of his soul [. . .] which man was originally endued with’, namely the understanding, the will, and the affections.¹³ By the seventeenth century the three categories of understanding, will, and affections had become conventional in the faculty psychology of Reformed orthodoxy.¹⁴

¹¹ Sedgwick, pp. 10, 173.

¹² Mr Cooper, ‘The Covenant of Works’, in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 110-35 (p. 118).

¹³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 12 (cf. I, 10-11, 98-99, 181-82, 232, 240; II, 96-103; VII, 20-21; VIII, 84; XI, 184-85, 195, 225, 285).

¹⁴ O. C. Watkins, *Puritan Experience*, p. 6, identifies ‘faculty psychology’ as an important feature of English Puritan preaching (cf. Muller, *Post-Reformation*, I, 227). The most satisfying discussion of faculty psychology appears in Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), where it is suggested that the threefold schema of intellect, will, and passion goes back at least to Plato’s *Phædrus* (p. 148). Among Boston’s sources, see Wolfgang Musculus, *Common Places of Christian Religion*, trans. by John Man (London, 1578), p. 28; Ursinus, pp. 74-85; [James Melville], *A Spiritvall Propine of a Pastour to his People* (Edinburgh, [1598]), p. 91; ‘*Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ*. The Canons of

First, man was created with a righteous understanding, having ‘perfect knowledge of the law’ (VIII, 12). Here Boston employs Calvin’s strategy of defining the image of God in terms of recreation in the image of Christ,¹⁵ with the three faculties of understanding, will, and affections corresponding to the ‘knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness’ which the New Testament identifies with the image of God (VIII, 16; cf. 84). According to Colossians 3.10, ‘The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him’. Since man was created after God’s image, and since knowledge is a part of that image as it is recreated in the state of innocence, man could not lack the knowledge which was ‘necessary to fit him for universal obedience’ (VIII, 12; cf. I, 98, 182; V, 71; VII, 20; X, 255-56; XI, 179, 184-85, 191). Although knowledge of the law was not written upon tables of stone as it was in the Mosaic administration, ‘it was written upon [Adam’s] mind, the knowledge thereof being created with him’. Boston cites the remnants of the law among the heathen (Romans 2.14-15) as proof that God impressed the law upon the soul of Adam. Yet he also establishes the integrity of Adam’s understanding on the basis of his naming the creatures (Genesis 2.19), Adam’s dominion over the creature requiring ‘knowledge of their natures’ (VIII, 12).

Three features in Boston’s explanation of the original righteousness of the understanding deserve comment. First, its apologetic stance is in keeping with his overarching purpose of absolving God from blame for Adam’s sin. Second, Boston’s discussion of the image of God, despite the importance that doctrine will play later in the *Fourfold State*, is incidental to his wider purpose of establishing ‘Man’s Original

the Synod of Dort. A.D. 1618 and 1619’, in *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches*, ed. by Henry B. Smith and Philip Schaff, 3 vols (London, 1877), III, 550-97 (III & IV.1); Thomas Shepard, *The Sincere Convert, Discovering the Paucity of true Believers; and the great Difficultie of Saving Conversion* (London, 1643), pp. 27-28; How, *Morning Exercise*, p. 98; John Owen, *Πνευματολογία; or, A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London, 1674), pp. 185, 206-43; Vincent, p. 31; Turretin, V.X.viii; and Essenius, VII.XXXVI.

¹⁵ See both John Calvin, *A Commentarie of John Calvine, upon the first booke of Moses called Genesis*, trans. by Thomas Tymme (London, 1578), p. 44, and *Institvtionvm*, I.XV.iv, II.I.ix, III.III.ix. This strategy, and especially Calvin’s use of Ephesians 4.24 and Colossians 3.10, was adopted by nearly all of Boston’s sources. According to Turretin, ‘Qualis est imago, quæ in nobis restauratur per gratiam, & quæ perficietur in nobis per gloriam; Talis debuit esse, quæ collata est homini in natura’ (V.X.xi). See also Theodore Beza and Anthonie Faius, *Propositions and Principles of Diuinitie*, n. trans. (Edinburgh, 1591), XV.VII; Zanchius, III, 680, 697-98; *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ*, III & IV, *Rejctio Errorum* II; Polyandrus, XIII.XLII; Ames, I.VIII.lxxiii; Pemble, pp. 16-17, 78; Wendelinus, p. 160; Paul Bayne, *An Entire Commentary upon the Whole Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians* (London, 1642), p. 538; Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, p. 26; *Confession of Faith*, IV.II; *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 10; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 17; Fisher, *Marrow*, VII, 174; Fergusson, II, 294; How, *Morning Exercise*, p. 98; Ambrose, p. 244; Essenius, VII.XXXVIII; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.II.ix; John Edwards, *The Socinian Creed* (London, 1697), p. 75.

Righteousness'. The primary idea he wants to convey is the created righteousness of man, an idea for which man's creation in the image of God serves as a secondary, supporting idea. Third, as we have already seen, his defence of original righteousness rests on passages throughout the biblical canon.

These same features are present as Boston proceeds to argue that the will of man 'in all things was agreeable with the will of God' (VIII, 12; cf. I, 182; XI, 185). Not only was Adam's understanding perfect, but the 'inclinations of the will' were also 'pure and unmixed in upright Adam'. Again Boston's purpose is to show that God made the will righteous, so that the will to sin must come from man himself (cf. I, 246-49). Even an 'inclination to evil' would have been 'inconsistent with that rectitude and uprightness which the text expressly says he was endued with at his creation'. Again he uses the doctrine of the image of God to support his argument. To take part in the divine nature 'can import no less than the inclination of the heart to holiness', for in Adam 'the image of God was perfect'. Again he uses New Testament passages such as Ephesians 4 and Romans 2 as a basis for his description, deducing the features of the state of innocence from the state of grace (cf. XI, 185). Just as the law of God is written on the mind and heart in the new covenant (Hebrews 8.10), so the will of man at creation was 'endued with natural inclinations to every thing commanded by the law' (VIII, 13).

Boston completes his description of the upright soul by teaching that the affections of man were 'orderly, pure, and holy' in his state of innocence (VIII, 13; cf. I, 182). Here again his exposition of 'Man's Original Righteousness' ranges over the entire canon, beginning with his own translation of 2 Thessalonians 3.5: 'The Lord straighten your hearts'. Since the 'heart' is the seat of the affections, and since straightness is equivalent to uprightness, then man's created uprightness must have entailed straightness of his affections. Similarly, the 'holiness' of the new man in Ephesians 4 establishes 'the purity and good order of the affections' of man in his innocence. If the affections of man were not so ordered, he would have been 'made up of contradictions', his righteous will pursuing one chief end while his affections sought after another. In the event, however, the faculties of man's soul were created in absolute harmony, with 'his sensitive motions and inclinations' in subordination and subjection to 'his clear reason, and his holy will' (VIII, 14; cf. I, 182, 232, 248; VII, 27). This mention of the subordination of the affections

is the first hint in the *Fourfold State* that Boston's view on the relationships among the faculties of the soul is a hierarchical one.

In 'The State of Innocence', as elsewhere, Boston's main purpose in discriminating among the faculties is to show the unity of the whole man. To show the righteousness of the understanding, will, and affections is simply to show that original righteousness 'was diffused through the whole man'. Man's original righteousness was universal; there was not so much as one 'wrong pin in the tabernacle of human nature, when God set it up' (VIII, 14). The created innocence of the soul was matched by the created innocence of the body, the members of which were 'consecrated vessels, and instruments of righteousness' (VIII, 15). Boston contrasts his view of the unity of the whole man to any view in which reason and appetite are not in harmony, since such a view would threaten his defence of God's righteousness:

A combat between flesh and spirit, reason and appetite [. . .] was utterly inconsistent with this uprightness in which man was created; and has been invented to veil the corruption of man's nature, and to obscure the grace of God in Jesus Christ; it looks very much like the language of fallen Adam, laying his own sin at his Maker's door [. . .] (VIII, 15; cf. I, 183)

Furthermore, man's original righteousness was 'universal in respect of the object, the holy law'. The reason, will, and affections of man were 'shapen out in length and breadth to the commandment, though exceeding broad'. His innocence was 'not only perfect in its parts, but in degrees' (VIII, 15; cf. I, 182, 231; XI, 194-95). The universal righteousness of man in his innocence ensures that man alone can be held responsible for his defection (VIII, 15).

Although original righteousness was universal, it was also mutable. Original righteousness was 'a righteousness that might be lost, as is manifested by the doleful event' (VIII, 15; cf. I, 182; XI, 217). In particular, it was the freedom of man's will which made his innocence defectible:

His will was not absolutely indifferent to good and evil; God set it towards good only, yet he did not so fix and confirm its inclinations, that it could not alter. (VIII, 15; cf. VII, 27)

Here Boston's sermon strikes a distinctively Augustinian chord, allowing the *status quadruplex* to reverberate in the pages of the *Fourfold State*. In agreement with sections of *De Correptione et Gratia* quoted by Zanchius, Boston asserts that Adam's will was 'moveable to evil', but only by Adam himself, 'God having given him a sufficient power to

stand in this integrity, if he had pleased'.¹⁶ Since Adam was given his righteousness by free gift, there can be no 'quarrel with God's works in this'. In keeping with his apologetic purpose, Boston preaches that not even the mutability of Adam's created will gives occasion to blame God for Adam's sin. Adam had no claim upon 'confirmation in a righteous state' unless he 'stood out the time appointed for probation by the Creator'. He emphasizes this point by appropriating the substance of Augustine's comparison between two degrees of liberty (*'Prima ergo libertas voluntatis, erat posse non peccare: nouissima erit multo maior, non posse peccare'*).¹⁷ In this respect, says Boston, 'believers have the advantage of Adam, that they can never totally nor finally fall away from grace'.¹⁸ The immutable perseverance of the believer in Christ stands in contrast to the mutable righteousness of innocence.

II. THE HAPPINESS OF INNOCENCE

In his primitive estate Adam was happy as well as righteous. Like the *Marrow* (VII, 175-76) and the *Morning Exercise*,¹⁹ Boston describes innocence as a 'holy and happy state'. 'Happiness is the result of holiness; and as this was a holy, so it was a happy state' (VIII, 16; cf. I, 315, 415; II, 622n; VII, 20, 26; XI, 204, 217; 'Genesis', 23). By using holiness and happiness to provide the structure for 'The State of Innocence', he is already anticipating the fall of man into the correlative conditions of sin and misery.

Boston identifies six aspects of man's initial happiness, five of which he mentions only briefly: glory, sovereignty, tranquillity, pleasure, and immortality (VIII, 16-22). First,

¹⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 15. For Augustine, see Zanchius, III, 698 (*'Nec ipsum Deus esse voluit sine sua gratia, quam reliquit in eius libero arbitrio, quoniam liberum arbitrium ad malum sufficit; ad bonum autem parum est, nisi adiuuetur ab omnipotente bono. Quod adiutorium si homo ille per liberum non deseruisset arbitrium, semper esset bonus'*), and III, 713 (*'Posset ergo permanere si vellet quia non deerat adiutorium, per quod posset [. . .] Primo itaque homini, qui in eo bono, quo factus fuerat rectus, acceperat posse non peccare, posse non mori, posse ipsum bonum non deserere: datum est adiutorium perseuerantiæ [. . .]'*).

¹⁷ Augustine's explanation of this distinction is quoted by both Zanchius, III, 714 (cf. 696), and Turretin, VIII.I.ix.

¹⁸ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 15 (cf. I, 185, 233; IV, 194, 251; V, 80; VII, 506; VIII, 484; X, 33; XI, 196, 203-204). Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', p. 147 (cf. p. 150), has criticized Boston's conception of 'confirmation in righteousness' on the grounds that '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'. As we shall see, Boston does *not* envision a confirmed righteousness which is 'independent of God's grace'. Even so, it is worth noting that Bruggink's objection to 'confirmation in righteousness' would apply not simply to Boston, but to Augustine as well.

¹⁹ How, *Morning Exercise*, p. 103. See also Melville, p. 39; Ezekiel Culverwell, *A Treatise of Faith* (London, 1623), p. 6; *Confession of Faith*, IV.II; Vincent, p. 34; and Turretin, V.X.vi, VIII.I.ii, VIII.V.iii, for whom the happiness of innocence is a recurrent theme.

like his maker, Adam was ‘glorious in holiness’ (Exodus 15.11), ‘lightsome and pleasant’ of countenance, with every action ‘but the darting forth of a ray and beam of that glorious unmixed light which God had set up in his soul’ (VIII, 16; cf. IX, 401). With characteristic vividness, Boston announces that it was man’s glory to have ‘no squint look in the eyes, after any unclean thing’ (VIII, 16). Second, man was ‘universal Lord and emperor of the whole earth’, his happy dominion serving as an image of God’s sovereignty. Because the creatures ‘stood astonished, tamely and quietly owning him as their lord and ruler’, the man was ‘crowned with glory and honour’ (Psalm 8.5; VIII, 19; cf. I, 183; VII, 21; IX, 271). Third, man’s happiness consisted in perfect inward and outward tranquillity. Inwardly, ‘his heart had nothing to reproach him with’, and he had no pangs of conscience. Outwardly, Adam and Eve lived in ‘perfect amity’, without shame, injury, disease, pain, toil, weariness, or sweat (VIII, 20; cf. I, 184; XI, 201-202). Fourth, in the happiness of his innocence man led a ‘life of pure delight, and unalloyed pleasure’. He was placed in Eden, ‘a place eminent for pleasantness’, ‘a garden planted by God himself, to be the mansion-house of this his favourite’. There he was ‘provided with everything necessary and delightful’ (VIII, 21; cf. III, 316; IV, 277; IX, 265; X, 89, 552; XI, 202, 226), including the leisure to read the book of God’s works and know God himself with ‘the most refined and exquisite pleasure in the innermost recesses of his heart’ (VIII, 21). Finally, man was immortal, God having both ‘removed all inward causes of death’ and ‘secured him against outward violence’ (VIII, 22; cf. I, 184).

Although these five dimensions of the happiness of innocence are important to Boston, he places stronger emphasis on a sixth: man’s status as ‘the favourite of Heaven’.²⁰ Man ‘shone brightly in the image of God’, and because God ‘cannot but love his own image’, he was God’s favourite. Man was not alone in the world, but had immediate communion and fellowship with his Creator. Happiest of all, because he was God’s favourite, man ‘was advanced to be confederate with heaven in the first covenant, called the covenant of works’ (VIII, 16).

It is at this point that the *Fourfold State* offers a brief, careful defence of the covenant of works. His strategy, modelled after both the *Marrow* and the *Morning*

²⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 16 (cf. I, 99, 233, 415, 460; XI, 202). See also Brinsley, *MEΣΙΤΗΣ*, p. 22.

Exercise, is to show that all of the constituent elements of a covenant are present in the Genesis narrative:

God reduced the law, which he gave in his creation, into the form of a covenant, whereof perfect obedience was the condition: life was the thing promised, and death the penalty.²¹

Since it is governed by a condition, a promise, and a threat, the state of man's innocence is, *de facto*, covenantal. Boston thus anticipates the more modern objection that the covenant of works is a 'fictitious invention which has no Scriptural foundation'.²²

The condition of the covenant of works was the prohibition against 'eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil' (VIII, 17; cf. VII, 24; XI, 179, 192). According to Boston, this prohibition was simply a particular extension of the general principle of natural law that 'man should believe whatsoever God revealed, and should do whatsoever he commanded' (VIII, 17; cf. I, 229, 231; XI, 192). For the one 'who had the natural law written on his heart' these were 'easy terms' (VIII, 17; cf. I, 231, 238). Further, the prohibition was eminently suitable as a test of man's obedience,

[. . .] that which was added being a thing in itself indifferent, where his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, the plainest evidence of true obedience [. . .] (VIII, 17; cf. I, 231, 268; XI, 179, 192-93)

In keeping with his apologetic purpose, Boston defends not only the presence of a condition in Eden, but also the righteousness of God in making the particular condition he did make.

To the covenantal condition God attached the covenantal promise of life. Following the example of the *Marrow* (VII, 173) and others,²³ Boston argues that this promise was 'included in the threatening of death' (Genesis 2.17):

For while God says, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;' it is, in effect, 'If thou do not eat of it, thou shalt surely live'. (VIII, 17; cf. I, 229; VII, 24-25; XI, 178-79, 200)

Boston follows many other covenant theologians, including Calvin, in viewing 'The Tree of Life' as a sacramental confirmation of this promise.²⁴ The life promised was both the

²¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 16-17 (cf. I, 229-30; V, 540; VII, 470-71; XI, 178, 180-81). The *Marrow* is even more direct: 'Though we read not the word 'covenant' betwixt God and man, yet have we there recorded what may amount to as much [. . .]' (VII, 173). See also Cooper, *Morning Exercise*, p. 114; Turretin, VIII.III.vii; John M'Claren, *The New Scheme of Doctrine Contained in the Answers of Mr. John Simson, Professor of Divinity in the Colledge of Glasgow; to Mr. Webster's Libel, Considered and Examined* (Edinburgh, 1717), pp. 171-91; Willison, p. 447.

²² Dillistone, p. 134.

²³ Turretin, VIII.VI.xi; Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 611-612.

²⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 17 (cf. I, 184, 235-36; XI, 179, 182, 215-16). See Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, II.X.i-v, IV.XIV.xviii; Polyandrus, XIII.XLV; Sharp, p. 179; Ames I.X.xxix, xxxi; Durham, X.

continuance of natural life and ‘eternal life in heaven, to have been entered into when he should have passed the time of his trial upon earth’ (VIII, 17; cf. I, 233; VII, 25; XI, 200-206). He infers the promise of eternal life, as he had inferred the promise of natural life, from the threatening:

That eternal life in heaven was promised in this covenant, is plain from this, that the threatening was of eternal death in hell, to which, when man had made himself liable, Christ was promised, by his death to purchase eternal life. (VIII, 18)

For Boston, as for Augustine and Calvin, the state of innocence was never intended to be man’s final estate: if Adam had passed his trial, then the Adamic race would have entered into a state of indefectible bliss.²⁵ He finds confirmation that life is the promised reward for works in Matthew 19.17, where Christ both ‘proposes the condition’ and ‘expounds the promise of the covenant of works’ to the young man who desires to ‘enter into life’ (VIII, 18; cf. I, 234; VII, 25, 197n; XI, 203).

The penalty threatened in the covenant of works was ‘temporal, spiritual, and eternal death’ (VIII, 18; cf. I, 229, 234; VII, 26; XI, 179, 207-15). This penalty was revealed to Adam by God (Genesis 2.17), but he also ‘knew death to be the wages of disobedience’ on the basis of the natural law (VIII, 17). The efficacy of the covenant threatening was confirmed in the event, since Adam’s body received its ‘death-wound’ on the day he sinned. For the sake of his posterity, the execution of this death sentence was stayed by the covenant of grace. But in the moment Adam sinned, death seized his soul, he lost his original righteousness, and he became liable to eternal death (cf. XI, 208;

Commandements, p. 85; Cooper, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 110, 114; Turretin, V.XII.x, VIII.v.i-v; Essenius, IX.CXXI; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.VI.ii. For the senses in which Calvin himself may be considered a covenant theologian, see William Wakefield McKee, ‘The Idea of Covenant in Early English Puritanism (1580-1643)’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1948), pp. 14-19; Anthony A. Hoekema, ‘Calvin’s Doctrine of the Covenant of Grace’, *Reformed Review*, 15 (1962), 1-12; Anthony A. Hoekema, ‘The Covenant of Grace in Calvin’s Teaching’, *Calvin Theological Journal*, 2 (1967), 133-61; Bierma, pp. 313-316; Lillback, ‘Binding of God’, pp. 219-484, 488-97 (see especially pp. 496-97, where Calvin is described as ‘the great architect of the Covenant Theology’); Woolsey, II, 41, 291-93; and Lillback, ‘Continuing Conundrum’, pp. 42-74.

²⁵ Boston, *Works*, I, 232-33; III, 118; V, 539, 558-59; VII, 246-7n; VIII, 513; XI, 195-96, 200, 203-204. Adam’s probation is implicit for Augustine, who envisions a subsequent state in which Adam would be unable to sin (in Zanchius, III, 714), and explicit for Calvin, who suggests that Adam ‘ad æternam vitam & perfectam fœlicitatem fieret transitus’ (*Institvitionvm*, II.VI.i; cf. I.XV.viii). Turretin affirms: ‘Recepta vero apud Orthodoxos sententia est, Promissionem Adamo datam, non fuisse tantum vitæ felicis continuandæ in Paradiso, sed cœlestis & æternæ, ad quam evehendus fuisset Adamus emenso obedientiæ perfectæ & perseverantis curriculo, quod Deus illi præscribere voluisset ad ejus obedientiam explorandam’ (VIII.VI.iii). See also Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, p. 74; Mr Vinke, ‘Of Original sinne Inhering’, in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 137-59 (pp. 153-54); Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, p. 240; and Witsius, who mentions this idea with particular frequency: *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.III.xxi, I.IV.iv, I.IV.ix, I.IV.xx, I.VI.v, I.VI.vii, III.XIII.xxxii.

‘Genesis’, 19). The Mediator who comes to rescue him from this death will find him subject to covenant sanction and ‘bound with the cords of death, as a malefactor ready to be led to execution’ (VIII, 18; cf. I, 234-35).

Since Boston’s defence of the covenant of works in ‘The State of Innocence’ lies within the symbiosis of his covenant theology and his fourfold structure, it is important for the interpretation of the *Fourfold State*. In the first place, the defence is the clearest reminder in the *Fourfold State* that Boston is a covenant theologian, since explicitly federal terminology is less frequent in the sermons which follow. David A. Weir has suggested that the prelapsarian covenant of works is the ‘identifying feature of the federal theology’.²⁶ Weir’s definition is misleading, since it tends to displace the centrality of the covenant of grace among the federal theologians, and since it minimizes the continuity between sixteenth and seventeenth century covenant theology.²⁷ Nevertheless, the covenant of works remains one criterion for establishing a theologian’s federal credentials, and it is a criterion which Boston clearly meets.

His meeting of this criterion must not, however, obscure the fact that the covenant of works finds a secondary place in the *Fourfold State* rather than a primary place. Boston’s purpose in ‘The State of Innocence’ is to demonstrate that God made man holy and happy. He uses the covenant of works simply as one illustration -- among others -- of man’s created happiness. Rather than functioning as an organizing principle in the *Fourfold State*, the covenant of works is introduced as evidence in support of another doctrine; it *informs* but does not govern the *Fourfold State*.

The defence of the covenant of works in ‘The State of Innocence’ also demands a reassessment of Donald Bruggink’s charge that the ‘general exposition of man’s status in the covenant of works is non-gracious’, introducing ‘an alien element within Boston’s total theology’.²⁸ A similar charge has been made by James B. Torrance, who portrays Boston as a theologian trapped by the legalistic intrusion of federalism into Reformed theology.²⁹ According to Torrance, Boston teaches the ‘priority of natural law over grace’, repudiating

²⁶ Weir, p. 22 (cf. pp. 3-4, 99).

²⁷ Peter Alan Lillback, ‘Ursinus’ Development of the Covenant of Creation: A Debt to Melancthon or Calvin?, *Westminster Theological Journal*, 43 (1981), 247-88 (p. 273), is helpful on the latter point.

²⁸ Bruggink, ‘Thomas Boston’, p. 149 (cf. pp. 141, 337). Weir, p. 62, levels the same criticism at federal theology in general.

²⁹ J. B. Torrance, ‘Covenant or Contract?’, p. 63.

the Reformation by returning to a medieval framework in which ‘*grace presupposes nature* and *grace perfects nature*’.³⁰ M. Charles Bell adopts Torrance’s argument wholesale and applies it more specifically to the *Fourfold State*.³¹ Explicit in this critique of federal theology is the desire to liberate Calvin from the theology of subsequent Calvinists, such as Boston, who have ‘moved a long way from Calvin’.³² The critique itself, however, depends on reading Calvin’s soteriological critique of the nature/grace paradigm back into the state of innocence, thereby confusing the *ordo salutis* with the *historia salutis*. Andrew Woolsey has rightly shown that both Bruggink and Torrance are themselves governed at this point by the theological assumptions, not of Calvin, but of Karl Barth, who denies any difference between the covenantal arrangement before the fall and the covenantal arrangement after the fall.³³ The importance of this issue is emphasized by Colin Brown, who identifies the dispute over the number and nature of the covenants as ‘the focal point of conflict between orthodoxy and Barthianism’.³⁴ Furthermore, Boston’s soteriology follows Calvin’s in resisting the temptation to build grace upon nature, since ‘it is impossible that nature should work the soul into a gracious disposition’ (IV, 483; cf. IV, 507; VIII, 213). But our present concern is neither with the systematic-theological question of the proper place of covenant in Christian theology, nor with the historical-theological question of the relationship between Calvin and later Calvinism. Rather, our concern is the narrower question of the place of the covenant in Thomas Boston’s theology: Are Bruggink, Torrance, and others correct to conclude that Boston’s preaching on the covenant of works is fundamentally ‘non-gracious’?

³⁰ J. B. Torrance, ‘Incarnation’, pp. 89-90 (cf. pp. 88n5, 91). See also J. B. Torrance, ‘Covenant or Contract?’, p. 67; ‘McLeod Campbell’, pp. 300-301; ‘Covenant Concept’, pp. 239-40, 242; ‘Strengths and Weaknesses’, p. 49; ‘Concept of Federal Theology’, pp. 30-38; and Letham, ‘Saving Faith’, I, 8. T. F. Torrance, *School of Faith*, pp. li, lv, cxii-xiii, and Rolston, *John Calvin*, pp. 22, 34, 36-37, have made similar arguments with respect to the theology of the Westminster *Confession of Faith*.

³¹ Bell, p. 158 (cf. pp. 9, 105, 157, 161, 168, 199).

³² J. B. Torrance, ‘Incarnation’, p. 91 (cf. J. B. Torrance, ‘Strengths and Weaknesses’, p. 49). See also Bruggink, ‘Thomas Boston’, p. 150, who speaks of the ‘contrast between Boston and Calvin’, and Rolston, *John Calvin*, pp. 33-48, according to whom federal theology ‘reverses much of Calvin’s thought’ (p. 36). The arguments in T. F. Torrance, *School of Faith*, pp. xviii, lxiii-lxv, and Bell, pp. 8-9, 57, 84, 198-200, follow much the same lines.

³³ Woolsey, I, 131-34, 147, 160, 178; cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey Bromiley and others, 4 vols (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1969), IV.1. 22, 27, 58-60, 66.

³⁴ Colin Brown, *Karl Barth and the Christian Message* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1967), p. 139. See also David B. McWilliams, ‘The Covenant Theology of the Westminster *Confession of Faith* and Recent Criticism’, *Westminster Theological Journal*, 53 (1991), 109-24 (pp. 111-17, 122-23).

The newly discovered Aberdeen manuscripts reveal -- against Bruggink and Torrance -- that Boston was concerned to emphasize the gracious dimension of the covenant of works from the beginning of his ministry. Already in his first sermons, Boston argues that God, by virtue of his rights as Creator, 'might have exacted obedience of Adam in innocency, without promising a reward'. But because of his 'Bountifull Nature', because he is a 'liberall God to them that serve him', God offers heaven as a reward of 'Mercy' (Abdn MS, pp. 152-53).

The defence of the covenant of works in the *Fourfold State* represents the full flowering of this emphasis on God's graciousness to Adam. Indeed, Boston's *purpose* in introducing the covenant of works into 'The State of Innocence' is to show how man was 'the favourite of Heaven' (VIII, 16). Of those who doubt God's goodness in the federal arrangement, he demands: 'And does it seem a small thing unto you, that earth was thus confederate with heaven?' For Boston the establishment of the covenant of works is no small thing, but a clear manifestation of divine condescension:

It was an act of **grace**, worthy of the **gracious God** whose favourite he was; for there was **grace and free favour** in the first covenant, though the exceeding riches of grace, as the apostle calls it, Eph. ii. 7, were reserved for the second. It was certainly an act of **grace, favour, and admirable condescension** in God, to enter into a covenant, and such a covenant, with his own creature. (VIII, 18, emphases mine; cf. I, 236, 238; VIII, 189; XI, 189)

Even Boston's cadence at this point -- 'and such a covenant' -- seems to convey a sense of wonder at the graciousness of the covenant of works. Elsewhere he preaches that no other explanation can be given for the covenant of works 'but what must be resolved into the glory of the grace and goodness of God' (I, 236).

For Boston, even the covenant prohibition was evidence of God's grace. Did God begrudge Adam the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

I answer, Nay; but when he had made him thus holy and happy, he **graciously** gave him this restriction, which was in its own nature a prop and stay to keep him from falling. (VIII, 19, emphasis mine; cf. I, 239)

It was 'an act of infinite wisdom, and of grace too, to keep him from one single tree'. That tree was 'proper for man's safety'; it was 'a beacon set up before him, to bid him beware of dashing himself to pieces on the rock of sin' by abusing his free will (VIII, 20; cf. I, 235). The pedagogical effect of the prohibition was a further manifestation of divine favour, for it served as a 'sign of emptiness hung before the door of the creation',

reminding Adam that ‘his happiness lay not in enjoyment of the creatures’, but in God himself.³⁵

Furthermore, the promise of eternal life was a thoroughly gratuitous arrangement. Man was created righteous, so that the righteousness of his innocence was ‘natural’ rather than ‘supernatural’ (VIII, 15; cf. I, 183). But even this did not mean that Adam was resting on his own merits, or that God could properly be placed in man’s debt:

Man was not at his own, but at God’s disposal, nor had he any thing to work with but what he had received from God. (VIII, 18; cf. I, 236, 238; V, 68-69; VII, 25; VIII, 79, 437; XI, 32, 207)

Before the covenant of works, ‘in virtue of his natural dependence on God’, man was obligated to perfect obedience, and ‘death was naturally the wages of sin’ (VIII, 18-19; cf. I, 237; II, 382). And yet, without the covenant, the man had no ground upon which to require ‘eternal life as the reward of his work’:

God was free to have disposed of his creatures as he saw meet: if he had stood in his integrity to the end of time, and there had been no covenant promising eternal life to him upon his obedience, God might have withdrawn his supporting hand at last and so have made him creep back into nothing, whence almighty power had drawn him forth. And, what wrong could have been in this, for God would have only taken back what he freely gave? (VIII, 19; cf. Abdn MS, 152; I, 237-39; VIII, 84, 132; XI, 191-92, 206-207)

The covenant, then, was a gracious provision for Adam’s greater felicity, a provision in which God became ‘debtor to his own faithfulness’ (VIII, 19; cf. I, 237). In the covenant of works, ‘if man will work, he may crave the reward on the ground of the covenant’ (VIII, 19). Yet even this reward was a ‘reward of grace’ (VIII, 15; cf. XI, 206), grounded in God’s covenant rather than in the obedience itself, for there was ‘no proportion between the work and the promised reward’ (VIII, 18; cf. I, 236, 238; VII, 25, 622; XI, 207).

Nor is a description of the covenant of works as a gracious covenant unique to Boston, though the graciousness of the Adamic dispensation may be considered one of his distinctive themes. Andrew Woolsey has shown that the graciousness of the covenant of works was a prevalent theme among the sixteenth and seventeenth century covenant theologians,³⁶ and a thorough examination of the evidence reveals that this is equally true

³⁵ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 20 (cf. III, 118; IX, 193; X, 173; XI, 193). The same argument appears in Turretin, VIII.v.v, and Willison, p. 448.

³⁶ Woolsey, I, 54, 83-86, 346-50; II, 263, 299. See also McWilliams, pp. 110-11, 114, and Muller, ‘Covenant of Works’, pp. 91-93. Mark Walter Karlberg, ‘The Mosaic Covenant and the Concept of Works in Reformed Hermeneutics: A Historical-Critical Analysis with Particular Attention to Early Covenant Eschatology’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1980), pp. 186-87, recognizes the graciousness of the covenant of works in the Westminster Standards,

for Boston's own sources. To be sure, the grace of the covenant of grace is often contrasted to the works of the covenant of works. Samuel Rutherford, for example, allows for 'boasting in some measure' under the Adamic covenant, since Adam would have won his crown by 'good deeds, and by works, and for works, not of grace'.³⁷ Similarly, Obadiah Sedgwick argues that Adam 'stood upon his own bottom, and was left unto his own sufficiency'.³⁸ Yet the federal Calvinists of the seventeenth century are quick to emphasize the graciousness of the Adamic arrangement. The covenant of works is variously described as grace 'in a large sence',³⁹ as a covenant 'contracted in grace',⁴⁰ as an effect of 'mere sovereign grace',⁴¹ as the product of God's 'infinite condescension',⁴² or as a 'gracious agreement'.⁴³ In the covenant of works, Adam was made immortal as a 'conditionis gratiæ',⁴⁴ living as the recipient of 'iustitiæ originalis non tantum naturæ [. . .] sed etiam gratia Dei'.⁴⁵ Moreover, Adam was under an obligation to 'rely upon God for strength and divine influence',⁴⁶ so that he could not be said to properly 'merit' his reward.⁴⁷ According to Rutherford, even if there was no 'Gospel-Grace' in the covenant of works, there was still grace in the sense of 'undeserved goodness', 'undeserved

although he views this grace as an intrusion into the natural order which results in 'a total confusion of thought in the Standards'.

³⁷ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 9 (cf. Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, pp. 181, 196, 215-16). For others who allow Adam to boast in his reward, see Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.I.xv; Brown (Wamphray), *Justification*, p. 483; Rijssenius, X.VIII; and Willison, p. 452. For similar expressions of the contrast between works and grace in the two covenants, see James Durham, *A Commentarie Upon the Book of the Revelation* (Edinburgh, 1658), p. 238; Durham, X. *Commandements*, p. 5; Owen, *Justification*, pp. 275-77; Turretin, VIII.III.iv; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.I.xv. For others who, on at least some occasions, use language which excludes grace from the covenant of works, see Ames, I.XXIV.xvi; Thomas Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins Opened & Applied* (London, 1660), I, 135; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.I.vii.

³⁸ Sedgwick, p. 166 (cf. pp. 9, 15, 154, 168). For similar expressions of the self-sufficiency of Adam, see Ames, I.XXIV.xvi; Bayne, p. 240; Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, p. 71; Mr Cooper, 'The Covenant of Works', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 109-22 (p. 116); Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 173; Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, pp. 241, 543; Thomas Brooks, *A Golden Key to open Hidden Treasures* (London, 1675), p. 354; Turretin, V.X.xxi, VIII.III.v; Charnock, *Works* (1684), II, 1356; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.II.xiii; Willison, p. 452.

³⁹ Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, p. 194.

⁴⁰ Bayne, pp. 238, 240.

⁴¹ Owen, *Justification*, p. 277.

⁴² Turretin, VIII.III.i. It is apparent both here and in citations listed below that Rolston's use (*John Calvin*, p. 16) of Turretin as an example of legalistic federalism depends upon selective use of evidence. For a more balanced assessment, see Stephen R. Spencer, 'Francis Turretin's Concept of the Covenant of Nature', in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. by Fred W. Graham, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 22 (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1994), pp. 71-91.

⁴³ Willison, p. 447.

⁴⁴ Sharp, p. 178.

⁴⁵ Zanchius, III, 697 (cf. 486, 541, 696, 699). Cf. Turretin, V.XI.xvi.

⁴⁶ Samuel Rutherford, *Influences of the Life of Grace* (London, 1659), p. 3. Cf. Zanchius, III, 712; Sedgwick, p. 10; Turretin, VIII.III.i.

⁴⁷ Durham, *Revelation*, p. 238. Cf. Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 10, 119; Turretin, VIII.III.xvi.

condescendings' and 'out breakings of Grace'.⁴⁸ Boston's own use of the word 'condescension' to describe the state of innocence is significant, since it echoes the Westminster *Confession of Faith*'s description of the covenant as a 'voluntary condescension on God's part'.⁴⁹ Boston agrees with his predecessors both in distinguishing between the covenants of works and grace and in characterizing the covenant of works as a manifestation of divine condescension, or favour, or grace.

The foregoing discussion should not be mistaken for an attempt to defend Thomas Boston -- or covenant theology -- against the attacks of Bruggink and Torrance. Rather, it should be understood as an attempt to allow Boston to defend *himself* against such criticisms. If his presentation of the covenant of works has an apologetic tone, it is because, as he indicates elsewhere (XI, 180), the concept of a covenant of works was under attack in his own day from Antinomians, Arminians, and the heterodox John Simson.⁵⁰ Afraid that 'the nature of both these covenants is so much perverted by some, and still like to be more so', Boston would have been quick to recognize an affinity between his modern critics and the critics of his own day (XI, 178; cf. XI, 180, 218).

Because it incorporates federal concepts into a theological structure which is not uniquely covenantal, the *Fourfold State* is a helpful vantage point from which to observe the place that the covenant of works occupies in Boston's preaching as a whole. What it reveals is a Boston directly at odds with the Boston portrayed by Bruggink and Torrance. In his sermon 'The State of Innocence', he is careful to maintain a distinction between the 'grace and free favour' in the first covenant and the 'exceeding riches of grace' in the second covenant.⁵¹ But this distinction does nothing to diminish the 'grace, favour, and

⁴⁸ Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, p. 35. Cf. Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 610-612.

⁴⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 18 (cf. I, 236, 238-40; XI, 181, 184); *Confession of Faith*, VII.1. John H. Leith, *Assembly at Westminster: Reformed Theology in the Making* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1973), p. 92; Helm, 'Calvin and the Covenant', p. 77; and Woolsey, I, 54, 58-59, 83-86, have each noted the importance of this emphasis in the Westminster *Confession*. This is in contrast to Rolston's argument that one 'must read grace into the Westminster Confession's covenant of works' (*John Calvin*, p. 36).

⁵⁰ For the Marrow men's defence of the covenant of works, see their answers to '*Queries*', VII, pp. 470-71. For Simson's attack on the covenant of works, see James Webster, *The Case of Mr. John Simson* (Edinburgh, 1715), pp. 5-6. In his *Examen Doctrinae D. Johannis Simson* (Edinburgh, 1717), much valued by Boston (VII, 195n), John Flint defends the *Confession* against Simson's objections to the covenant of works (pp. 118-49, 168-79).

⁵¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 18. Elsewhere, Boston distinguishes between the two covenants in this way: 'In the first, man's works were to be accepted, and then his person; but in the second, first his person is accepted, and then his works' (I, 593; cf. VII, 471; IX, 134, 183). The covenant of works is not a covenant 'of mercy' (I, 315; VIII, 381); it does not contain 'gospel-grace' (VII, 622-23).

admirable condescension' he sees at work in the Adamic covenant (VIII, 18). Far from using the covenant of works to deny the graciousness of innocence, Boston uses it to *demonstrate* the graciousness of innocence.

This emphasis on the graciousness of innocence also makes the *Fourfold State* a useful vantage point from which to observe the underlying theological connection between Augustine and covenant theology.⁵² Boston both distinguishes between the two covenants and preaches that there was a measure of divine grace appropriate to each (cf. I, 247-48; VIII, 501; XI, 32-33). But this is precisely Augustine's strategy in *De Correptione et Gratia*, a strategy we have seen provide the basic structure for the *Fourfold State*. For Augustine, as Zanchius explains, the difference between Adam and the believer in Christ is the difference between two degrees of divine grace:

Ibi docet, duplicem esse Dei gratiam, vnam, qua possimus, si velimus, non peccare, sed in bono perseuerare: alteram, qua non solum possimus, sed etiam velimus non peccare, sed constanter in bono perseuerare, eoque perseueramus.⁵³

To employ Augustine's own language, the fact that the second Adam establishes a grace which is '*potentior*' does not diminish the fact that there is a '*prima gratia*' for the first Adam in his state of innocence.⁵⁴ Boston's preaching on the happiness of innocence, like the preaching of the *Fourfold State* as a whole, is rooted in the theology of Augustine.

III. THE MELANCHOLY OF INNOCENCE

'The State of Innocence' ends on a note, not of happiness, but of inescapable sadness. Boston concludes his sermon with an image of desolation and an exhortation to melancholy:

Here was a stately building; man carved like a fair palace, but now lying in ashes: let us stand and look on the ruins, and drop a tear. (VIII, 24; cf. I, 184-85, 315, 319; VIII, 379, 381; XI, 186)

The primary application of his doctrine is affective, intended to evoke an emotional response from his hearers and readers: 'This is a lamentation, and shall be for lamentation' (VIII, 24; cf. Abdn MS, 136, 235; I, 184-85). Boston's attention to the affective dimension of the soul in preaching is an indication of the homiletical importance he attached to the unity of the human person. The reason for lamentation in this case -- man's fall into sin --

⁵² Woolsey, I, 211-12, and Lillback, 'Binding of God', pp. 68-75, have noticed similar connections.

⁵³ Zanchius, III, 696.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *De Correptione et Gratia*, in Zanchius, III, 699.

has been in view from the outset of the sermon. Even the text Boston selects, with its contention that man has ‘sought out many inventions’, views innocence from the perspective of experience (VIII, 9).

The length of the first sermon in the *Fourfold State*, comprising a scant twenty pages in a work nearly 400 pages long, emphasizes the vulnerability of the state of innocence. In proportion to the three states which follow, Boston’s first state is merely a prologue. This is because the state of innocence

[. . .] is described in the holy Scripture with a running pen, in comparison of the following states; for it was of no continuance, but passed away as a flying shadow, by man’s abusing the freedom of his will. (VIII, 11)

As Boston preaches on another occasion, ‘Adam broke fair off, but he tripped quickly’ (VII, 630; cf. I, 230, 254, 270; VIII, 443; IX, 289; ‘Genesis’, 23). The brevity of ‘The State of Innocence’, therefore, reflects his belief that Adam sinned the very day he was created. Following an exegetical argument made in the *Marrow* and reinforced elsewhere, he takes Psalm 49.12 (‘Adam in honour could not night; he became like as the beasts, they were alike’) as an assertion that Adam’s happy innocence ended the day it began.⁵⁵ For this reason, he himself will describe the state of innocence ‘with a running pen’, allowing the formal proportions of the *Fourfold State* to mirror its theological content (VIII, 11; cf. I, 230).

The fall and its melancholy effects are mentioned frequently in ‘The State of Innocence’. Already in his introduction to the sermon, Boston speaks of the ‘ruins’ of innocence, and of the way that man has ‘marred’ his estate (VIII, 9-10). The ‘doleful event’ of the fall compels him to end his definition of original righteousness with a concessive: ‘however shattered it is now’ (VIII, 14; cf. 15). Similarly, his description of Adam’s immortality gives way to a reminder that Satan was ‘the door by which death came in’ (VIII, 22). Boston takes special notice of the effects of the fall when he comes to apply the doctrine of the state of innocence. Because Adam was created upright, in the image of God, those who mock righteousness are mocking God himself. The ‘graceless world’ is

⁵⁵ Boston, *Works*, VII, 186-88 (cf. II, 630n; VIII, 538; XI, 226). The argument depends on taking the Hebrew ‘man’ to denote ‘Adam’, a linguistic move which is one of Boston’s standard strategies for Old Testament exegesis (cf. I, 230; XI, 182, 221-22). He amasses evidence for the view that Adam fell the very day he was created in his notes on the *Marrow* (VII, 187n). See also Calvin, *Genesis*, p. 38; Sharp, p. 220; Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations upon the Five Bookes of Moses, the Booke of the Psalmes, and the Song of Songs, or Canticles* (London, 1639), pp. 75-76; Edward Leigh, *Annotations on Five Poetical Books of the Old Testament* (London, 1657), p. 122.

populated with those for whom ‘a broad laughter, an impious jest, a scoffing jeer’ is an ‘unanswerable argument against religion and seriousness’. He also uses Adam to reprove the hypocrite, contrasting Adam’s created innocence to the ‘proud self-conceited professor, who admires himself in a garment of rags which he has patched together’ (VIII, 23). The unhappy knowledge of the state of nature is the constant backdrop for Boston’s description and application of the state of innocence.

The final ‘use’ of doctrine in ‘The State of Innocence’ is lamentation. Boston and his hearers cannot and should not avoid weeping, for they have seen the ‘dismal sight’ of ‘Man fallen as a star from heaven’ (VIII, 24; cf. I, 240; XI, 217). In rapid succession, and with little concern for metaphoric consistency, he compares the catastrophe of fallen man to a ruined palace, a country overrun by enemies, a house afire, the harlotry of a once-faithful city, tarnished silver, wine mixed with water, and a temple turned into a den of thieves. The reason for lamentation is not simply man’s present state, but the knowledge of his former glory:

Had we never been in better case, the matter had been less; but they that were brought up in scarlet, do now embrace dunghills. (VIII, 24)

‘Where is our primitive glory now?’ asks Boston. There was once ‘no darkness in the mind, no rebellion in the will, no disorder in the affections’. But now the name of humanity is ‘Ichabod, for the glory is departed’ (VIII, 24). The tone of his address is dramatically melancholic, even in the printed text:

Happy wast thou, O man! who was like unto thee? no pain nor sickness could affect thee, no death could approach thee, no sigh was heard from thee, till these bitter fruits were plucked from the forbidden tree. Heaven shone upon thee, and earth smiled: thou wast the companion of angels, and the envy of devils. But how low is he now laid, who was created for dominion and made lord of the world! (VIII, 24)

Finally, he exhorts his hearers and readers to join him in assuming the posture of lamentation: ‘Let us then lie down in the dust, let shame and confusion cover us’ (VIII, 25).

‘Nevertheless,’ preaches Boston, ‘there is hope in Israel concerning this thing’ (VIII, 25). Lamentation is neither the final word nor the final emotion in ‘The State of Innocence’. Instead, he quotes the biblical injunction to let one’s ‘eye trickle down, and cease not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven’ (Lamentations 3.49-50; VIII, 25). The lament for what has been lost in Adam is also a cry for redemption. In the end, Boston gives a soteriological and Christological answer to his

own hypothetical question about man's state of innocence: 'What is all this to us, who never tasted of that holy and happy state?' (VIII, 22). As he announced at the outset, the *Fourfold State* has an evangelistic purpose which moves beyond melancholy:

I begin with the first of [the four states], namely, the *State of Innocence*: that beholding man polished after the similitude of a palace, the ruins may the more affect us; we may the more prize that matchless Person whom the Father has appointed the repairer of the breach; and that we may, with fixed resolves, betake ourselves to that way which leadeth to the city that hath immoveable foundations. (VIII, 9)

Boston views the state of innocence, not only from the low vantage point of the state of nature, but also from the lofty vantage point of the state of grace. In keeping with his fourfold structure, he issues the gospel offer to his hearers so that they may abandon the state of nature for the state of grace:

Come then, O sinner, look to Jesus Christ, the second Adam: quit the first Adam and his covenant; come over to the Mediator and Surety of the new and better covenant. (VIII, 25; cf. I, 185)

Boston intends the melancholy of innocence to compel his hearers and readers to come to saving faith in Christ.

IV. THE STATE OF NATURE

I. THE ORTHODOXY OF BOSTON'S DOCTRINE OF SIN

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the doctrine of sin in Thomas Boston's preaching. Indeed, one of the advantages of looking at his theology through the window of the *Fourfold State* is that the work focuses substantial attention on 'The State of Nature'. Whereas previous scholarly work has tended to stress his theology of the application of redemption,¹ the *Fourfold State* gives equal attention to the condition which necessitates redemption. In this respect, the *Fourfold State* exemplifies the doctrinal proportions of Boston's preaching corpus,² in which the doctrine of sin is both a topic for exposition in its own right and a tool for diagnosing the spiritual condition of the hearer. Boston goes so far as to say that the 'sight and sense' of 'man's natural state' is the 'foundation of all real religion' (XII, 91). This is not so much a logical claim about the structure of Reformed soteriology as it is a pastoral assertion of the necessity of recognizing one's sin. Because knowledge of the doctrine of sin is foundational to Christian faith, it is the 'state of nature' which Boston preaches from the outset of his ministry at both Simprin and Ettrick (XII, 91, 209), only later adding the 'state of innocence' to complete his fourfold structure.

Despite the importance of the doctrine of sin in Boston's preaching, it cannot be said that his theology of sin is characterized by a high degree of originality. In the first place, his general division of his subject matter into 'The Sinfulness of Man's Natural State' and 'The Misery of Man's Natural State' is conventional. The same structural device may be found in the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* of the Westminster Assembly, which describe the fallen estate as 'an estate of sin and misery',³ or in the writings of theologians such as John Sharp, who writes 'de statu hominis misero sub peccato'.⁴ Although Boston seems not to have read him, his contemporary Thomas Blackwell is typical in his

¹ Bruggink devotes one chapter to the breach of the covenant of works ('Thomas Boston', pp. 156-72), but limits his attention to the imputation of Adam's sin. McGowan discusses Boston's doctrine of sin incidentally.

² 'The State of Nature' (VIII, 26-137) and 'The State of Grace' (VIII, 138-231) comprise roughly equal quarters of the *Fourfold State*, although the former is some twenty pages longer.

³ *Shorter Catechism*, in *The Confession of Faith* (Inverness: Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1970), pp. 285-319 (Q & A 17-19); *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 23, 25, 27.

⁴ Sharp, p. 204. See also Melville, p. 46; Fergusson, I, 120; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 57, 63; Brown (Wamphray), *Justification*, p. 22.

prescribing '1st. the great Sinfulness, and 2dly, deep Misery of that [lapsed] Estate' as the two main topics to be covered in evangelical preaching about the fallen condition.⁵

Boston's exposition of the fall also stands squarely within the Reformed tradition. Momentarily leaving to one side the question of the nature of the imputation of Adam's sin, in any case it is by the sin of Adam that all have entered the state of nature. The sin of Adam and Eve in eating the forbidden fruit was 'a complication of evils, a total apostasy from God, a violation of the whole law', in which all ten commandments were broken at once (VIII, 85). Boston borrows the details of this ten-fold defection from *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, which explains how the sin of the first parents entailed a violation of each commandment (VII, 178-79). The fall is paradigmatic of human sin. Adam's children give evidence of their parentage when they sin, exhibiting the same sinful curiosity, blindness to temptation, susceptibility to physical desire, wilful disobedience, aptitude for deception, unwillingness to confess sin, and lack of contentment which were true of Adam in the event (VIII, 37-40).

Boston's emphasis on the doctrine of original sin is also devoid of novelty. He uses the terms 'original sin' and 'sin of nature' synonymously to describe the impurity of nature which 'goes through the whole man' and is the 'fountain' of every actual sin (VIII, 94). Although we are accustomed to look on ourselves with confidence because we are in 'no hazard of gross sins', nevertheless God takes notice of 'the sin of our nature' (VIII, 90-91; cf. IX, 359; XI, 364). The sin which Adam's posterity inherits is not simply the absence of original righteousness, but also the presence of unrighteous corruption.⁶ Original sin is therefore the 'mother-sin' (VIII, 91), 'the spawn which the great leviathan has left in the souls of men, from whence comes all the fry of actual sins and abominations' (VIII, 94; cf. 31). Boston views original sin as the true 'reigning sin', arguing that although 'predominant' sins may change during a person's lifetime, original sin is the 'river head' from which each predominant sin derives its force.⁷ This causal grounding of actual sins in original sin is a commonplace in Reformed theology.⁸

⁵ Blackwell, p. 148.

⁶ Cf. the *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 18, and Turretin, IX.XI.vii: 'Primo privationem justitiæ originalis; Secundo positionem contrarii habitus injustitiæ'.

⁷ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 95-96 (cf. V, 264-65). His argument follows Shepard closely at this point (*Ten Virgins*, I, 196-97; II, 18), even down to the various sins which predominate at various stages of life.

⁸ E.g. Calvin, II.I.viii; Zanchius, IV, 14; Polyandrus, XV.IX; Essenius, X.XXV.

Perhaps the most conventionally Reformed aspect of Boston's doctrine of sin is his unremitting stress on the 'total depravity of man's nature' (VIII, 29). Boston gives full weight to the vocabulary of Genesis 6.5: 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually*' (cf. 'Genesis', 69). This description of ante-diluvian corruption is a 'looking-glass to all after generations, wherein they may see their own corruption of heart' (VIII, 28; cf. 34). The perpetual, universal corruption of the sinner's imagination has placed him under the 'dominion of sin' (VIII, 87), making his natural state 'black and doleful' (VIII, 26). The natural state is 'the state of entire depravation' (VIII, 137). The fall has so totally reversed the human condition that 'where, at first, there was nothing evil, now there is nothing good' (VIII, 30; cf. 28). Boston draws upon his rhetorical resources to impress upon his hearers the awful extent of their sin:

Innumerable sins compass thee about: mountains of guilt are lying upon thee; floods of impurities overwhelm thee, living lusts of all sorts roll up and down in the dead sea of thy soul, where no good can breathe, because of the corruption there. (VIII, 88)

Boston rejects the idea that any action in the state of nature can escape the taint of sin: 'How is it possible that thou shouldest be able to do any good, thou whose nature is wholly corrupt?' (VIII, 88; cf. 129, 170). Not only physical and civil actions, but even religious 'duties cannot make thy corrupt soul holy, though they in themselves be good; but thy corrupt heart defiles them, and makes them unclean'.⁹ Physical, civil, and religious actions are sinful inasmuch as natural men are guilty of 'making God the means, and self their end' in doing them (VIII, 79-80). In short, 'not one holy thought can ever be produced by the unholy heart' (VIII, 28; cf. 129).

Boston's belief in the universality of sin in the soul is closely linked to his doctrine of the image of God. He does not view the *imago Dei* as a cluster of essential human faculties or qualities, since it does not persist in each of the four states of man. Instead, in agreement with Reformed orthodoxy, Boston argues that the image of God has been destroyed by the fall. At the outset of 'The State of Nature' he undertakes to analyze man 'as he hath unmade himself' (VIII, 26). In the unmade man, original sin 'defaces' the whole image of God (VIII, 94; cf. VII, 26). The righteousness, holiness, and immortality

⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 88-89. See Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, pp. 58-61, and Rijssenius, IX.XXV, for the same analysis: 'Est autem hæc tota totius corrupti; qua fit ut homo, licet bonum naturale, civile, & ecclesiasticum possit, spirituale tamen, i.e. salutem operari, non possit, 2 Cor. 3.5'.

which comprise the image of God in man have been exchanged for the unrighteousness and mortality of the image of Adam (VIII, 30-31; cf. 37). 'Let us then call fallen Adam, father,' he preaches, 'seeing we bear his image' (VIII, 41). Here Boston is attaching exegetical significance to the fact that Adam bears a son in his own likeness (Genesis 5.3), not in the image of God. He does not show an awareness of the difficulties the obliteration of the *imago Dei* raises for passages such as Genesis 9.6 ('Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man'), which depend on the persistence of the image of God after the fall. He does draw a distinction between the sinful nature and the un sinful essence of the person, a distinction which might give him the theological resources to reconcile his doctrine of the image with the biblical data.¹⁰ But because he defines the image of God in exclusively moral terms, whenever Boston preaches about the image of God in the state of nature, he emphasizes its total destruction by sin.

The idea that man's fall into sin entailed a forfeiture of the divine image is perhaps less familiar than other aspects of Boston's doctrine of sin. Nevertheless, this idea falls within the parameters of Reformed orthodoxy and recurs frequently in sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed commentaries, sermons, and systematic theologies. Most theologians in the tradition are content simply to state that the *imago Dei* has been 'lost',¹¹ or 'defaced',¹² or 'forfeited',¹³ or 'obliterated',¹⁴ or 'withdrawn'¹⁵ as a result of the fall. The idea that Adam's children were born in Adam's image rather than God's image is often expressed.¹⁶ As Boston himself will do (VIII, 142), some Reformed theologians go so far as to suggest that the divine image is replaced by the satanic image after the fall.¹⁷ Paul

¹⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 99. He also refers to the 'very remains of natural abilities, that rational light and strength which are to be found amongst the ruins of mankind' (VIII, 133), without identifying these with the image of God in man. In X, 554, however, Boston does speak of the 'remains of God's image on man in point of dominion' (cf. 'Genesis', 109).

¹¹ Sharp, p. 287; Pemble, p. 17; Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety* (London, 1672), p. 29; Ambrose, p. 89; Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, pp. 333, 366; William Bridge, 'Christ in Travail: Three Sermons on Isaiah LIII.11', in *The Works of the Rev. William Bridge, M.A.*, 5 vols (London, 1845), III, 199-275 (p. 235); Turretin, IX.XII.ix; Charnock, *Works* (1684), II, 1356; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XII.xlix.

¹² Davidson, p. 20; Ames, I.XII.xxxv; Charnock, *Works* (1684), II, 1356.

¹³ 'Confession of Faith', in *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. by William Croft Dickinson, 2 vols (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), II, 257-272 (p. 259); Fergusson, I, 11.

¹⁴ Polyandrus, XV.VI.

¹⁵ Pemble, p. 17.

¹⁶ Beza and Faius, XVIII.v; Charnock, *Works* (1684), II, 1356.

¹⁷ Ursinus, p. 44; Pemble, p. 17; Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 210; II, 175; Sedgwick, p. 555; Turretin, V.X.vii; Bayly, p. 29; Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 49, 231, 547, 552, 591; I 'Supplement', 9; II, 31;

Bayne's commentary on Ephesians rejects the idea that the divine image 'standeth in the essence and faculties of the soule, as memory, reason, will, as *Augustine* took it', since 'wicked men have these'.¹⁸ What is striking is that Bayne *begins* his argument with the assumption that the *imago Dei* has been completely lost in the fall and *then* concludes that the image must consist of purely moral qualities.

Only among the more careful systematians is there the suggestion that the image of God is vitiated without being destroyed by sin. Calvin argues that after the fall the image of God 'sic vitiata & prope deleta, ut nihil ex ruina, nisi confusum, mutilum, labeque infectum supersit', but allows that 'nunc aliqua ex parte conspicitur in electis, quatenus spiritu regeniti sunt'.¹⁹ Wendelinus argues that '[r]eliqua est in lapso homine imago Dei', a remnant located in the faculties of the soul.²⁰ For Ursinus, 'remnants and sparkes of Gods image continued refiant in man after his fall'.²¹ Although Turretin affirms that the image of God is lost in the fall,²² he specifies the remnants which survive the fall, particularly the faculties of the soul and man's dominion over the creation.²³ Adam's posterity retain the image relatively, in 'quoad reliquias quasdam naturales imaginis; sed non absolute, quoad qualitates spirituales & supernaturales, quæ plane sunt amissæ'.²⁴ Boston does not make use of this idea that remnants of the *imago Dei* persist into the state of nature, opting instead for the narrower definition of the image as 'knowledge, righteousness, and holiness'.²⁵ By locating the *imago Dei* in the moral qualities of the soul rather than in its faculties, he makes a strong division between 'The State of Innocence' and 'The State of Nature', perhaps at some cost to the Reformed understanding of human personhood in the state of nature.

Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XII.xvi-xvii. Boston's Marrow colleague James Hog expresses the same idea in his *Letter to a Person Exercised to Godliness, about our Natural Enmity: Wherein also a Singular Opinion about the State of the Devils and Damned in Hell, is Considered and Refuted* (Edinburgh, 1714), p. 4. Most extremely, Watkins' sermon 'The Misery of Mans Estate by Nature', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 160-87, speaks of 'the mind and will of Satan' as 'engraven upon our spirits' (p. 175).

¹⁸ Bayne, p. 538. The argument is repeated, nearly verbatim, in Fergusson, II, 294. Some Reformed theologians do include the faculties of the soul in the divine image; see Beza and Faius, XV.IV-VII; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.II.xi.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, I.XV.iv (cf. *Institvitionvm*, II.II.xii-xvii; *Genesis*, p. 44).

²⁰ Wendelinus, p. 212; cf. Zanchius, III, 680; Essenius, I.XVI.

²¹ Ursinus, p. 44; cf. Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XII.lxviii.

²² Turretin, IX.VIII.i, IX.IX.xiii, IX.XII.xvii.

²³ Turretin, V.X.vii, V.X.xvi, V.X.xxii.

²⁴ Turretin, V.X.xvi; cf. IX.VIII.iii.

²⁵ Cf. *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 10.

II. THE CORRUPTION OF THE FACULTIES

Thomas Boston is not content to describe the destruction of the divine image by sin in general terms. A major portion of the 'State of Nature' in the *Fourfold State* consists of an inquiry into the 'corruption of nature in the several parts thereof' (VIII, 42). By 'several parts' Boston means the faculties of the human soul: understanding, will, affections, conscience, and memory.

Although orthodox Reformed theologians invariably use faculty vocabulary to describe the human soul, there is rather less consensus about the relationships among these faculties in the state of nature. In the first place, opinions vary about precisely which faculties comprise the soul of the human person. Often, as in the *Marrow* (VII, 180, 374), the understanding, will, and affections are considered the three faculties of the soul.²⁶ But it is also common for Reformed theologians to follow Calvin in viewing the understanding and the will as the primary faculties, perhaps making mention of the affections or conscience among the inferior faculties.²⁷ Others list four or five faculties in an effort to be more comprehensive.²⁸ Still others, like Isaac Ambrose, refuse to be tied down to a single psychology and use several sets of faculties to describe the soul.²⁹

More importantly, there are disagreements about which faculty is the 'leading faculty'. Theologians in the Reformed tradition assume -- generally without argument -- that the faculties of the soul can be discriminated from one another. This assumption gives rise to discussions about the relative positions of the faculties in the hierarchy of the soul. William Ames and Samuel Rutherford, for example, are voluntarists, arguing that the

²⁶ See Beza, pp. 6-7; Ursinus, p. 139; Wendelinus, p. 523; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 99; Dickson and Durham, *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, p. 326; Fergusson, I, 294; Rev. Vinke, 'Of Original sinne Inhering', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 137-159 (pp. 146, 148); Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, pp. 243, 279, 566; Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 231; and Witsius, *Oeconomia Fœderum*, III.XII.xviii-xxv.

²⁷ Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, I.XV.vii; Beza and Faius, XV.VI; Sharp, pp. 224, 264; Ames, I.IV.lii; Pemble, p. 17 (cf. p. 112); Wendelinus, pp. 159, 198, 523.

²⁸ Melville, p. 39; John Preston, *An Abridgment of Dr. Preston's Works*, ed. by William Jemmat (London, 1648), pp. 566-73; Rutherford, *Influences*, p. 241; Watkins, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 171-73; Sedgwick, p. 530; Vincent, p. 77.

²⁹ Ambrose, p. 60 (cf. pp. 2, 372, 394). See also Zanchius, IV, 23, VIII, 491, 644; Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, p. 26; Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Beleeve; or, A Treatise of Evangelicall Conversion* (London, 1645), pp. 186-88; Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 396, 632; and Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 171-73, IV, 57. Samuel Bolton, *The Dead Saint Speaking, to Saints, and Sinners Living: In severall Treatises* (London, 1657), notes that such variety of expression is a feature of Reformed orthodoxy (p. 56).

‘corruption of the will must be removed first’ from the human soul.³⁰ Yet most of Boston’s sources may be termed ‘intellectualist’, teaching that ‘Cum enim voluntas sit appetitus rationalis, ea est ejus natura, ut non possit non sequi ultimum intellectus practici judicium’.³¹

Because his psychology has a direct influence upon his preaching, it is important to recognize that Boston himself sometimes inclines towards intellectualism.³² His fundamental view appears to be that all of the faculties have an equal share in the history of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification (e.g. II, 402). Yet in the *Fourfold State* -- as he does in many of his other sermons -- Boston begins his discussion with the understanding, indicating his belief in the priority of the understanding over the will and the other faculties (VIII, 42-56; cf. Abdn MS, 55). He rejects the voluntarism of Ames and Rutherford, pronouncing that the understanding is the ‘leading faculty’ (VIII, 42; cf. I, 564). Boston thus shares the ‘intellectualist bent’ of ‘mainstream Puritan thought’ up to the beginning of the eighteenth century.³³ Although he does not spell out an argument for the priority of mind over will and affection, he operates on the assumption that the understanding governs the faculties of the soul (cf. Abdn MS, 83, 158; I, 9, 182, 568; X, 626; ‘Genesis’, 30).

What Boston teaches about the understanding in the ‘State of Nature’ is that it has been corrupted by sin: ‘The natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things’ (VIII, 47). His primary technique for convincing his hearers of this intellectual corruption is to use metaphors of darkness and blindness. Sin casts a shadow over the eyes of the

³⁰ Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 228. Ames maintains that the ‘primum & proprium Theologiae subjectum esse voluntatem’ (I.I.ix; cf. I.III.ii, xix; I.XXVI.xxiii-xxiv; II.II.vii; II.V.xx).

³¹ Turretin, X.II.vii; cf. X.IV.xiv. Cf. Beza, pp. 6-7, 25-26; Ursinus, pp. 82-83; Zanchius, IV, 146; Culverwell, p. 45; Pemble, p. 75; Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, pp. 186-87; Preston, *Works*, p. 94; Bowles, I, 19; Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 147; Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, p. 13; White, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 334-35; Mr Crofton, ‘Repentance not to be Repented’, in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 453-518 (p. 514); Ambrose, p. 372; Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, pp. 210-11, 236-37; Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 49, 396, 633, I ‘Supplement’, 9; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 184-88, 279-80, 283-84; Essenius, II.XVII, VII.XXXVI; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XII.xxv, xxxv-xxxvi, xxxix, xlv; Halyburton, p. 49.

³² Contra Bell, p. 159.

³³ Von Rohr, p. 71 (cf. p. 145). Fiering, *Moral Philosophy*, has shown that intellectualism ‘was the most common opinion in the seventeenth century and the centuries preceding’ (p. 111), although he identifies several Puritans as exceptions that prove the rule (pp. 126, 140-41). See also Norman S. Fiering, ‘Will and Intellect in the New England Mind’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd s. 29 (1972), 515-58 (pp. 523-26). Jack Bartlett Rogers, *Scripture in the Westminster Confession* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1967), pp. 226-30, has contended that intellectualism was characteristic of Westminster Calvinism. See also the discussions of intellectualism in Miller, *Seventeenth Century*, pp. 281-83, 294; White, *Puritan Rhetoric*, pp. 11-12, 20-21; William K. B. Stoevers, ‘A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven’: *Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), pp. 61-63; Rechtien, p. 250; and Packer, p. 370.

soul, so that '[m]any that are eagle-eyed in the trifles of time, are like owls and bats in the light of life' (VIII, 43). The mind, which God created as the window of revelation to the soul, has been 'overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things'. 'Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness is over all the region: it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness' (VIII, 43). Boston proves this doctrine from Scripture, showing how 'the natural darkness of the mind of man' worked against the revelation of God in every epoch of biblical history (VIII, 44). The importance of this theme is illustrated by the use of the words 'dark' and 'blind' nearly forty times to describe the fallen mind in *'Of the Corruption of the Understanding'*.

This mental corruption does not extend to every use of human reason. Boston is not concerned with the noetic effects of the fall in general. Rather, he teaches that there is 'a natural weakness in the minds of men with respect to spiritual things' (VIII, 42). It is specifically the spiritual things, or the 'divine things', or the 'things which God has revealed', or the 'things of the Spirit of God', which the natural mind is unable to comprehend (VIII, 42, 43, 131). Contrasting worldly knowledge with spiritual knowledge, Boston observes that unbelievers are skilled at managing their business and advancing their personal wealth, 'though they are very stupid and unteachable in the matters of God'. Those who 'in other things are the wisest of men', are often 'the most notorious fools with respect to their soul's interest' (VIII, 43; cf. Abdn MS, 230-35). He is even willing to concede some ground to a 'natural knowledge' of spiritual things, while continuing to maintain that spiritual knowledge of spiritual things is 'above the reach' of the natural man (VIII, 47; cf. 131). Although the 'truths of natural religion' are able to 'force their entry into the minds of natural men', there remains in them an 'evil heart of unbelief' towards revealed religion (VIII, 51; cf. 54, 133). Boston's lament concerning spiritual ignorance summarizes his own frustrations as a minister in a rural parish: 'How hard a task is it to teach many people the common principles of our holy religion, and to make truths so plain as they may understand them?' (VIII, 43).

Boston's preaching on the corruption of the understanding may give the impression that salvation is simply a matter of knowing the principles of religion. He is not, however, a thoroughgoing intellectualist. Because of the corruption of the will, 'mere external revelation' is not sufficient to bring a person out of the state of nature (VIII, 45). Like the

understanding, the will is in a condition of ‘utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God’ (VIII, 56; cf. 59, 89, 124, 133). Even in the case of natural men who have received sufficient light to ‘see the good which they should choose’, the depravity of the will renders them incapable of choosing the good: ‘their corruption so chains them, that they cannot embrace it [. . .] notwithstanding their light’ (VIII, 57; cf. 33, 103). Changing the figure slightly, Boston speaks of the sinful understanding and the sinful will as two doors shut against divine light: ‘Sometimes, by the force of truth, the outer door of the understanding is broken up; but the inner door of the will remains fast bolted’ (VIII, 59). Although the understanding is the ‘leading faculty’, it does not exercise a coercive influence over the will, which he refers to as ‘that commanding faculty’ (VIII, 56). Each of these ‘prime faculties of the soul’ is corrupted by sin in its own right (VIII, 80).

It is Boston’s treatment of the corruption of the will that most clearly reflects the Augustinian lineage of the *Fourfold State*. As we have already noted, the medieval and Reformed discussions of the fourfold state were particularly concerned with the fourfold state of the will. Furthermore, the nature of the will in the fallen state tends to be the crux of the matter: the extent to which the will is vitiated by sin governs the extent to which divine grace is essential to salvation. In keeping with his Reformation inheritance and his opposition to Arminianism, Boston insists on the utter inability of the unregenerate will to perform any spiritual good and consequently on ‘the absolute need of the power of free grace, to remove the bands of wickedness’ (VIII, 56). He uses metaphors from the physical world to illustrate the will’s ‘natural propensity to sin’ (VIII, 62). It is easier to keep a stone in the air or to ‘cause wet wood to take fire’ than it is for the unrenewed will to attain goodness, such is the ‘natural bent of the will to evil’ (VIII, 63). Left to itself, the unrenewed will ‘will choose sin, and reject holiness’ as certainly as water will run down the side of a hill rather than up (VIII, 61). Boston echoes Augustine in calling the will ‘no more free-will, but slavish lust; free to evil, but free from good’.³⁴

Boston’s teaching on the bondage of the will represents a substantial simplification of traditional treatments of the relationship between the corrupt faculties and the free will.

³⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 80. This is nearly a quotation from Turretin (X.II.ix), who notes that he is borrowing from Augustine.

Beza, Ursinus, Zanchius, Sharp, and Turretin all defend the doctrine of the corruption of the will against the charge of determinism.³⁵ The conventional, rather complex strategy is to draw a distinction between the *voluntas* and the *arbitrium*. The *arbitrium* is still a *liberum arbitrium* after the fall because it is not an independent faculty, but a conjoining of the intellectual and voluntary capacities.³⁶ As long as the will is able to act in accordance with the directives of the understanding, it is not constrained, and ‘free arbitrement’ has been preserved.³⁷ Yet Boston is concerned to preach only about the inability of the will to exercise faith, and thus avoids addressing the philosophical ramifications of the bondage of the will to sin and simply treats the ‘will’ and the ‘free-will’ as synonyms (VIII, 56).

The will’s enslavement to sin is exacerbated by its treasonable hostility towards God. ‘There is’, says Boston, ‘a natural contrariety, direct opposition, and enmity, in the will of man, to God himself, and his holy will’ (VIII, 63; cf. 78, 109, 132). The originality of his preaching at this point lies in his description of ‘natural contrariety’ in uniquely doctrinal terms. The sinful will has a specific hatred for each fundamental truth of the Christian faith. Boston begins with the doctrine of God. Like the fool (Psalm 14.1), the natural man rejects the very being of God, wishing that God did not exist. The sinful will also hates the holiness of God, preferring the filthiness of the pagan gods to the unattainable purity of the true God. He proceeds to demonstrate the animosity of natural men to God’s justice, omniscience, omnipotence, veracity, and power, proving that such men are ‘heart enemies to God’ (VIII, 64-66; cf. 78). If it were possible, the sinner would un-God God, so that he ‘would be voted out of the world, and closed up in heaven’ (VIII, 66). The corrupt will is the enemy of the Son of God as well as the Father. Here again, Boston follows a theological structure, teaching that the sinful will is opposed to Christ in his three-fold office as prophet, priest, and king (VIII, 68-71). Giving a glimpse into the habits of his own congregation, he preaches against those who slight their Bibles and consider them as no more than accessories to their Sabbath attire (VIII, 68). He also echoes his earlier theme of light and darkness, speaking of the preached gospel as a shining sun,

³⁵ Beza and Faius, XVI; Ursinus, pp. 74-85; Ames, I.XII.xliv, I.XIII.x; Sharp, pp. 262-63; Turretin X.II, IV.

³⁶ Turretin, X.I.iv, X.II.v, X.IV.iv, X.IV.xiii. Cf. Beza and Faius, XVI.VI; Zanchius, III, 705, IV, 88-95, VIII, 493; Sharp, pp. 262-63; Wendelinus, p. 159.

³⁷ Ursinus, pp. 75-76. Cf. Turretin, X.I.ii, X.III.xi.

from which the creatures of darkness ‘fly like night-owls’ (VIII, 69). Boston completes his exposition of the anti-theology of the natural will by preaching on its resistance to the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit (VIII, 77). The hostility of the unregenerate will to the true God, spurred on by the spiritual ignorance of the understanding, gives the natural man ‘horrible, monstrous, and misshapen thoughts of God, Christ, the glory above, and all spiritual things’ (VIII, 49).

Boston’s presuppositions about the hierarchy of the faculties are further revealed by the brevity of his discussion of the corruption of the affections. He defends this brevity by saying that ‘all must be wrong, and nothing can be right, where the understanding and will are so corrupt’. A familiar classical metaphor explains that the affections of the unrenewed man ‘are as the unruly horse, that either will not receive, or violently runs away with, the rider’. Not only is each faculty of the natural soul corrupted by sin, but the soul is also disrupted and confused within itself because the affections have usurped the authority of the understanding. The result is a ‘spiritual monster’ who has been turned head-over-heels: ‘His heart is, where his feet should be, fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on’ (VIII, 80; cf. 27, 131). The sinful affections play a subordinate role in the state of nature, yet share in the corruption of the mind and will:

Now, here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken; a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says, the man should not stoop; the will, opposite to the will of God, says, he will not; and the corrupt affections, rising against the Lord, in defence of the corrupt will, say, he shall not. (VIII, 81)

The point Boston wishes to stress is the totality of the disruption of the human person by sin (cf. Abdn MS, 83; VIII, 183; XI, 364). This, too, is characteristic of Reformed orthodoxy:

The Protestant orthodox frequently state the problem of priority without solving it definitively; they recognize the interrelationship of intellect and will, but focus on the problem of fallen man.³⁸

That the particulars of faculty psychology are of only secondary importance to Boston is revealed by the varying descriptions of the soul elsewhere in the *Fourfold State*, where he takes the liberty of omitting the memory or the conscience as the situation dictates (VIII, 84, 103). In ‘The State of Nature’, however, he underscores the extent of human corruption

³⁸ Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), p. 330.

by including the conscience and the memory among the corrupt faculties. The conscience of the natural man is 'corrupt and defiled', 'sleepy and inactive', incapable of checking 'the more subtile workings of sin' (VIII, 81). The memory of the natural man shares in this corruption. Although sin sticks 'like glue' to the memory of the natural man, enabling him to remember a grudge or rekindle a lust, it is 'as a sieve' with respect to spiritual things (VIII, 82). Finally, the corruption of the faculties is exacerbated by the body, which both 'leads the soul into snares' and 'is itself a snare to the soul' (VIII, 82-83). Boston concludes with a pungent metaphor, the point of which his rural congregation could scarcely have missed:

As in a dunghill every part contributes to the corruption of the whole, so the natural man, while in this state, grows still worse and worse: the soul is made worse by the body, and the body by the soul: and every faculty of the soul serves to corrupt another more and more. (VIII, 83; cf. V, 346; VIII, 141)

The whole person -- body and soul -- has fallen into the sinful state of nature.

III. THE COVENANT OF WORKS IN THE STATE OF NATURE

Thomas Boston not only preaches that the whole man is in the state of nature, but he also preaches that the whole humanity is in the state of nature. It is at this point in the structure of the *Fourfold State* that a reliance on the concepts of covenant theology to explain how Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity might be anticipated. Boston's explanation of imputation, therefore, is a good place to assess both the importance of the covenants within the *Fourfold State* and the extent to which he uses the *fædus naturæ* to develop the *status quadruplex* in a new direction.

Given Boston's renown as an exponent of federal theology, it is perhaps surprising that the *Fourfold State* describes the imputation of Adam's corruption predominantly in terms of physical propagation. While resisting the urge to speculate about how original sin is conveyed by natural generation, he stresses the realistic rather than the representative relationship between Adam and his descendants. By doing so, Boston stands in continuity with the Reformed theologians who preceded the mature stage of covenant theology.³⁹ He again relies upon Genesis 5.3 ('Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image'), this time to show how the physical action of begetting is the source for human mortality

³⁹ Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, II.I.v-viii; Musculus, p. 35, 38; Beza and Faius, XVIII.II-V; Zanchius, IV, 40, 61, VIII, 491, 640.

and sin: ‘corrupt sinful Adam begat a corrupt sinful son’ (VIII, 31; cf. 90). The physical transmission of sin is stressed in the exposition of Job 14.4 (‘Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?’) which follows. Our sinful uncleanness ‘is natural, being derived from unclean parents’. The choice of the word ‘natural’ is deliberate in this context, emphasizing that the corruption endemic to the state of nature is propagated *by nature*.⁴⁰ Appropriately, Boston employs illustrations from the natural realm to explain the natural relationship between Adam and his posterity: Adam’s sin leavens ‘the whole lump of mankind’; Adam is the poison root by which the ‘branches were envenomed’ (VIII, 83; cf. 100).

The early appearance of sin in young children functions as a compelling empirical argument for the natural transmission of corruption. Echoing a sermon from the *Morning Exercise*,⁴¹ Boston observes that ‘as the circumcised parent begets an uncircumcised child [. . .] so the holiest parent begets unholy children, and cannot communicate their grace to them, as they do their nature’ (VIII, 31). This unholiness goes back to ‘our first being as children of Adam, [. . .] shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin’ (VIII, 99). ‘What a vast deal of little pride, ambition, sinful curiosity, vanity, wilfulness, and averseness to good’ appears in ‘young ones’ (VIII, 33). Even before particular sins are evident in the life of a child, God’s treatment of infants as objects of judgment proves that they have inherited their parents’ sinful nature. The deluge, the first lamentations of the newborn themselves, and the presence of small graves in the churchyard, are tangible evidence of divine wrath against infants (VIII, 29, 33). Borrowing a phrase from the *Morning Exercise*,⁴² he observes that oftentimes ‘the cradle is turned into a coffin’ (VIII, 86), an observation which takes on particular poignancy when it is remembered that Boston himself endured the early death of six children:

The swaddling-bands, wherewith infants are bound hand and foot as soon as they are born, may put us in mind of the cords of wrath, with which they are held prisoners, as children of wrath. (VIII, 112)

Such wrath can only be justified on the grounds that corruption is transmitted to human beings by physical propagation.

⁴⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 31. Similar uses of the word ‘nature’, or ‘natural’, or ‘naturally’, may be found in VIII, 32, 73, 83, 96, 186.

⁴¹ Vinke, *Morning Exercise*, p. 140.

⁴² Mr Wells, ‘The Fall of Man’, in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 123-36 (p. 132).

Federal theology does not, of course, deny the seminal relationship between Adam and his posterity. But covenant theologians do stress federal representation as the *basis* for the imputation of Adam's sin and the subsequent transmission of Adam's corruption. Turretin, to use but one example, is often content to place the '*principium seminale*' and Adam's status as '*caput repræsentativum*' on equal footing.⁴³ Elsewhere, however, he makes it clear that the covenant has priority, that the '*Fundamentum ergo Imputationis non est tantum communio naturalis [. . .] sed præcipue moralis & fæderalis*'.⁴⁴ Turretin cites the '*Necessitas universalis mortis omnibus imposita, etiam infantibus*' as a proof of this immediate federal imputation.⁴⁵ Likewise, the Westminster catechisms place physical descent by 'ordinary generation' in grammatical and conceptual subordination to the covenantal representation of Adam.⁴⁶ There is a tendency among covenant theologians to give primary emphasis to the federal dimension of the imputation of Adam's sin.

Although references to the seminal relationship between Adam and his descendants are more numerous in the *Fourfold State*, Boston also portrays Adam as a covenantal representative (VIII, 83, 182). Preaching about Adam from Romans 5, he says that

[. . .] we were in him representatively, being represented by him as our moral head in the covenant of works: we were in him seminally, as our natural head; hence we fell in him, and by his disobedience were made sinners [. . .] (VIII, 73; cf. I, 230; VIII, 22, 391, 442; XI, 235)

Both the representative principle and the principle of natural generation are present, although the federal principle does not have the prominence at this stage of the *Fourfold State* that might be expected.

The primary theological use of the covenant of works in 'The State of Nature' is the apologetic use of defending God's justice in imputing Adam's sin to his descendants. Boston gives six arguments for the righteousness of God in establishing a covenant with Adam. First, as he has already argued in 'The State of Innocence', the eternal happiness promised to Adam for obedience in the covenant of works was entirely gratuitous.

⁴³ Turretin, VIII.III.xi (cf. IX.IX.xxx). See also John Preston, 'A Treatise of Effectvall Faith', in *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love* (London, 1630), p. 5; Essenius, IX.CXVII; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.II.xiv.

⁴⁴ Turretin, IX.IX.xi (cf. IX.IX.ii, xiii, xxiii-xxv, xli). Other sources who evince the same priority include Wendelinus, pp. 201-202; Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, pp. 234-35; Wells, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 126-29; Brooks, pp. 332-33, 366; Vincent, p. 37; Owen, *Justification*, pp. 169-70, 176-79, 196, 209, 323-24; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.VIII.xxxi; Brown (Wamphray), *Justification*, pp. 217-19, 242; Flint, pp. 139-40, 144-45; and M'Claren, pp. 164, 178, 199, 202, 206.

⁴⁵ Turretin, IX.X.xiv.

⁴⁶ *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 16; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 22.

Second, Adam was as capable of standing the trial as any person could possibly be. Third, Adam had ‘the strongest natural affection to engage him, being our common father’. Fourth, his own self-interest was an incentive for him to obey: ‘His own stock was in the ship, his all lay at stake, as well as ours’. Fifth, if Adam had withstood his trial, then he would have transmitted his pure mind, will, and affections to his descendants so as to make them incapable of falling. It is as reasonable that Adam’s posterity should bear loss for Adam’s defection as that they should have shared glory for his success. Finally, echoing the parallelism of Romans 5, Boston argues that the federal headship of Christ legitimates the federal headship of Adam, ‘for we are no otherwise made sinners by Adam, than we are made righteous by Christ’. He concludes that despite the fact that Adam’s sin has thrust mankind into an estate of sin and misery, the righteousness of God in binding mankind’s fate to Adam’s by covenant cannot be doubted (VIII, 84).

This brief summary of Boston’s preaching on the imputation of Adam’s sin suggests several important conclusions about the theology of the *Fourfold State*. First, the federal dimension of the *Fourfold State* should not be exaggerated. Boston places greater emphasis on the natural generation of corruption than he does on the federal imputation of Adam’s sin, not introducing the federal concept until late in his discussion, and then only for defensive purposes. Neither does he employ the covenant of works as a systematic-theological organizing principle, situating the state of nature within that covenant. This is in contrast to his later articulations of covenant theology, in which the four-state structure is replaced by a two-covenant structure.⁴⁷ At the same time, there is an unmistakable development of the *status quadruplex* along the lines of the *fædus naturæ*. Whereas Augustine tended to view the transmission of sin in primarily natural terms, Boston adds the concept of federal imputation. The fact that Boston is able to make this addition without disrupting the fourfold structure he inherits is evidence in favour of the view that federal theology falls within the legitimate trajectory of Reformed theology.

This is not to say that the covenant of works is unimportant as a principle of practical theology in the *Fourfold State*. Boston’s pastoral use of the covenant of works

⁴⁷ See especially *A View of the Covenant of Works from the Sacred Records* (XI, 171-339), sermons begun in 1721, and *A View of the Covenant of Grace from the Sacred Records* (VIII, 377-604), preached from 1722 to 1724.

begins with the ongoing validity of that covenant in the state of nature. Adam not only brought his posterity into the covenant of works, but left them there, so that they are still bound by its conditions and threatenings (VIII, 73; cf. 22, 108, 115, 129, 185; 'Genesis', 32). While the sinner continues in the state of nature, he 'must stand or fall according to the law, or covenant of works' (VIII, 115). Although Boston does not locate the state of nature inside the covenant of works, he does locate the covenant of works inside the state of nature, allowing the federal principle to be subsumed by the fourfold structure.

The ongoing validity of the covenant of works means that a righteous person could still save himself by keeping its conditions (VIII, 125-26). But this is of no consolation to the sinner, since the efficacy of the covenant rests upon a 'condition impossible to be performed' in the state of nature (VIII, 115; cf. 116). As Boston has already argued, the sinful understanding and will of the natural man make him incapable of the perfect obedience which the covenant of works requires, and there is 'no acceptance of the will for the deed under this covenant' (VIII, 116; cf. 125). Nevertheless -- and this is Boston's pastoral concern -- the natural inclination of the sinner is to seek to be justified by the covenant of works. The corrupt nature is 'bent towards' the covenant of works and seeks 'by doing, to live' (VIII, 73; cf. 92, 130, 191; 'Genesis', 189). The sinner prefers his own inherent righteousness to Christ's gift of imputed righteousness:

None of Adam's children are naturally inclined to receive the blessing in borrowed robes; but would always, according to the spider's motto, 'owe all to themselves:' and so climb up to heaven on a thread spun for themselves. (VIII, 69; cf. Abdn MS, 112)

'Such is the natural propensity of man's heart to the way of the law' that the 'natural man turns the very gospel into law, and transforms the covenant of grace into a covenant of works' (VIII, 75). In typical Marrow fashion, Boston has assimilated Luther's condemnation of the human propensity to use the law as a means of justification and has recast that condemnation in federal terms.⁴⁸ To 'go into oneself for all' is opposed to 'the great design of the gospel', which is 'to exalt grace, to depress nature, and exclude boasting' (VIII, 72; cf. 73-77). Boston's pastoral aim is to expose the futility of the natural

⁴⁸ The theme is prevalent both in Luther's *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535, in *Luther's Works*, ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan, vols. 26-27 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 26: 180 (e.g.), and in his *Thirtie Foure Special and chosen Sermons*, trans. by William Gace (London, 1649), p. 334 (e.g.). Luther's argument had already been placed in a covenantal context for Boston by the *Marrow* (VII, 160, 205, 224, 472, 487) and by Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, pp. 81-84.

man's efforts to 'win heaven as his wages', thereby convincing his hearers to come out of their own works and into the free grace of Christ (VIII, 69).

This emphasis on the status of the covenant of works in the state of nature affords Boston a defence against two standard criticisms of covenant theology. We have already seen that J. B. Torrance rejects federal theology as a perversion of Calvin's theology which substitutes a 'Nature-Grace' paradigm for a 'Grace-Sin-Grace' paradigm.⁴⁹ Now it may be observed that this criticism focuses on the rôle of the covenant of works in the state of *innocence*. However, Boston primarily locates the covenant of works within the state of *nature*, where 'nature' is not the created substratum upon which grace is built in order that nature might be perfected by grace. Rather, it is the state of the unmade man who has lost the image of God and must be totally reconstructed by grace (cf. Abdn MS, 277; V, 447; VIII, 170). Boston thus shares Calvin's twin concerns to view corruption as a natural effect of the fall and to preserve divine grace from human cooperation in salvation.⁵⁰ Unlike Torrance, he is not concerned with nature and grace as abstract theological principles; like the Reformers, he is concerned to view nature and grace in concrete, soteriological terms.

It has also been argued that the covenant of works introduces a legalistic element into Reformed theology.⁵¹ However successful this criticism may be against other theologians, it carries little weight against Boston. His pastoral warnings against striving to gain salvation by means of the old covenant stand in opposition to any form of legalism. Indeed, the very purpose of the covenant of works in the *Fourfold State* is to show the futility of efforts to win salvation by human striving. Boston is thus a federal anti-legalist, using the covenant of works primarily to show why works cannot justify the ungodly.

IV. THE HELLISHNESS OF THE STATE OF NATURE

Thomas Boston's preaching in 'The State of Nature' takes Genesis 6.5 ('And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually') as its launching point. This verse is not merely an anthropological portrait, but also functions as an apology for divine judgment: 'The scope

⁴⁹ J. B. Torrance, 'Incarnation', pp. 89, 91, and 'Strengths and Weaknesses', pp. 49-50.

⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutiovm*, I.I.xi.

⁵¹ E.g. Rolston, *John Calvin*, p. 36.

and design of these words are, to clear God's justice in bringing the flood on the old world' (VIII, 26). Boston's preaching about man's natural condition, therefore, is done in the context of divine wrath against sin. In his sermons on 'The Misery of Man's Natural State', he defends this doctrine: 'The state of nature is a state of wrath' (VIII, 99). This is to say something more than that death is the consequence of sin, although death is a primary manifestation of divine wrath (VIII, 105; cf. 'Genesis', 19). But it is also to say that God's wrath is revealed against humanity prior to death, while still in the state of nature: 'And so all thy sufferings in this world are but an earnest of what thou must suffer in the world to come' (VIII, 128). The natural man is 'under heavy strokes of wrath already, and is liable to more' (VIII, 102).

The extent to which Boston's preaching about the natural state is weighted with the theme of divine judgment is illustrated by his virtual equation of misery with wrath. For his sermons on the misery of the natural state (VIII, 97-124), he preaches from Ephesians 2.3: 'We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others'.⁵² Although he recognizes the self-damaging and others-damaging effects of sin (e.g. VIII, 34), Boston places greater emphasis on the punitive cause of human misery in the state of nature. The reason that the sinful state is a miserable one is that divine wrath follows sin as a matter of course: 'Thus wrath follows the natural man, as his shadow doth his body' (VIII, 104). The continuing validity of the covenant of works in the state of nature means that sinners still lie under the curse which it threatens (VIII, 108, 127; cf. 33, 105). Already, he preaches, '[w]rath is silently sinking into your souls' (VIII, 100; cf. 114).

This connection between wrath and sin has great explanatory power. The doctrine of man's state of wrath by nature is one of the primary elements in Thomas Boston's 'theology of suffering'. Early in the *Fourfold State*, he places the afflictions of his hearers within the doctrinal context which makes those afflictions comprehensible:

Who sees not a flood of miseries overflowing the world? Whither can a man go where he shall not dip his foot, if he go not over head and ears, in it? Every one at home and abroad, in city and country, in palaces and cottages, is groaning under some one thing or other, ungrateful to him. Some are oppressed with

⁵² This text was the basis for a standard catechetical exchange: 'Q. When I shall ask you, then, *What are you by nature?* every one of you shall answer, A. I am the child of wrath, and so subject to eternal condemnation' (Davidson, p. 21). See also the first question in John Craig, 'Ane Forme of Examination Before the Communion', in *A Collection of Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, &c. Of Publick Authority in the Church of Scotland*, ed. by William Dunlop, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1722), II, 363-77.

poverty, some chastened with sickness and pain, some are lamenting their losses, every one has a cross of one sort or another. No man's condition is soft, but there is some thorn of uneasiness in it. At length death, the wages of sin, comes after these its harbingers, and sweeps all away. -- Now, what but sin has opened the sluice of sorrow? (VIII, 33)

'It is the corruption of man's nature', Boston preaches, 'that brings forth all the miseries of human life; in churches, states, and families, and in men's souls and bodies' (VIII, 86).

Taking note of conditions in his own parish and elsewhere, he observes that '[i]t is no wonder that wrath comes [. . .] upon us in this land, and that infants and children smart under it', since '[m]ost of the society are yet children of wrath' (VIII, 114; cf. 90). Here he deals directly with a difficult and relevant case of the problem of suffering, namely, the death of infants. But even here the people of the nation have no legitimate quarrel with God's wrath, since it is their own sin which has brought both them and their children into such a state (VIII, 109). The imputation of Adam's sin undergirds the argument at this point, proving that 'their own sin' functions as 'the ground of the sentence passing on them' (VIII, 90).

In describing the wrath of God against those who are in the state of nature, Boston employs the language of personal divine hostility. Entire depravity makes God the enemy of man as well as man the enemy of God. Boston announces to the natural man: 'Thou art loathsome in the sight of God; for thou art altogether corrupt; thou hast no good in thee' (VIII, 87; cf. 118). To put it more plainly still, God 'hates their persons' (VIII, 102). As a result, the natural man finds himself in an alien world, where '[a]ngels, devils, men, beasts, stones, heaven and earth, are in readiness, on a word of command from the Lord, to ruin him' (VIII, 105; cf. 187). Moreover, the very attributes of God which are a comfort to the regenerate are a threat to the unregenerate. Because of God's infinite knowledge, 'none of thy sins, however secret, can be hid from him'. Then God's infinite justice requires him to punish the sinner, and '[h]ow heavy must the strokes of wrath be, which are laid on by an omnipotent hand!' (VIII, 120). There is wrath in the heart, the word, and the hand of God against the person of the sinner, with even the Bible becoming 'a quiver filled with arrows of wrath against him' (VIII, 102; cf. I, 574).

Boston also preaches that the wrath of God works against the faculties of the soul. The natural corruption of the understanding, will, affections, and conscience is not simply

the result of man's unmaking, but there is a divine, judicial establishment of the soul in its sinful estate:

Hence the soul is left to pine away in its iniquity: the natural darkness of their minds, the averseness to good in their wills, the disorder of their affections, and distemper of their consciences, and all their natural plagues, are left upon them in a penal way; and, being so left increase daily.⁵³

God hardens the hearts of those who 'rebel against the light', so that their 'hearts are deadened; their affections withered; their consciences stupefied; and their whole souls blasted'. Meanwhile, they are 'ripening daily for utter destruction' (VIII, 103). Boston is careful to explain to his parishioners that the divine wrath of this 'angry God' is not a passion or affection, but 'a most pure and undisturbed act of his will, producing dreadful effects against the sinner' (VIII, 101; cf. 108). However, this qualification is hard to reconcile with his subsequent use of affective language to describe God's wrath: 'There is a fire of wrath burns continually against [the natural man] in the heart of God' (VIII, 101; cf. 120). There is a tension between Boston's theological commitment to divine impassibility and his homiletical use of passionate vocabulary for divine wrath, a tension which will recur in his preaching on hell.

Boston's preaching about the wrath of God against the soul is closely related to the bestial imagery which he uses to describe humanity in 'The State of Nature'. If the faculties of the natural man are impotent, and if he has lost the divine image, then he is no longer just 'a little lower than the angels'. Instead, 'we find him likened to the beasts that perish' (VIII, 32; cf. 'Genesis', 37-38). Nebuchadnezzar -- in his beastly state -- is the prototypical natural man. Boston proceeds to cite biblical passages where beasts are presented as examples for human emulation. In the command to the sluggard to consider the industry of the proverbial ant (Proverbs 6.6-8), for example, he finds evidence that the natural man has become sub-animal. Worse yet, 'the Scriptures hold out the natural man, not only as wanting the good qualities of these creatures, but as a compound of the evil qualities of the worst of the creatures' (VIII, 32). Christ himself addresses sinful men as a 'brood of vipers' (Matthew 23.33). Boston does not mention that the force of these

⁵³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 103. Similarly, in the *Morning Exercise*, Watkins describes the specific effects of divine wrath on the mind, memory, conscience, will, and affections (pp. 171-73). See also the *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 28.

biblical metaphors partly depends on the intrinsic *value* of created humanity, even after the fall, perhaps because of his belief that the *imago Dei* has been destroyed by the fall.

Although it may be too much to say that Boston makes the bestiality of fallen man a point of doctrine, it is a persistent motif in the portrayal of fallen humanity in the *Fourfold State*. Natural men are ‘turned lions and wolves to one another, biting and devouring one another’ (VIII, 34). Men are ‘like unruly beasts’, breaking through the hedge of human laws that restrain human lusts (VIII, 35). Or they are ‘as dogs and swine, most abominable creatures in the sight of God’ (VIII, 101; cf. 171). Even when unrenewed men pursue religious duties, they are only ‘wallowing in the mire’ because ‘their swinish nature was not changed’ (VIII, 63; cf. I, 574; VIII, 86). Elsewhere he compares infant children to serpents which have a ‘venomous nature’ (VIII, 90; cf. 109). Strictly speaking, the bestial motif is not an intrusion of the state of damnation into the state of nature, yet it does convey what Boston seeks to teach about the state of nature: that it is a state characterized by degradation, even hellishness.

This hellishness is more clearly portrayed in Boston’s references to the satanic dimension of the fallen condition. Following Luther, he views the bondage of the will as an enslavement to both sin and Satan.⁵⁴ The sinner has been overcome by Satan, ‘so he is his by conquest, his lawful captive’, locked up ‘in the prison of a natural state’ (VIII, 104; cf. 42). To put this bondage in terms of faculty psychology, ‘the prince of darkness reigns’ in the unregenerate understanding (VIII, 44); the ‘natural man’s will is in Satan’s fetters’ (VIII, 56; cf. 60). But he also portrays the soul of the sinner as willingly contracting a friendship with Satan and becoming a co-conspirator with him against the King of glory (VIII, 110; cf. 183). Boston vividly describes the signs of the sinner’s satanic allegiance:

There are some employed, as it were, in coarser work; those bear the devil’s mark on their foreheads, having no form of godliness; but are profane, grossly ignorant, mere moralists [. . .] There are some employed in a more refined sort of service to sin, who carry the devil’s mark in their right hand; which they can and do hide from the eyes of the world. These are close hypocrites [. . .] (VIII, 88; cf. VI, 286; XI, 330)

If natural men are children of the devil (cf. I, 643-53; VIII, 32, 88, 142, 174, 209), then they are ‘by nature heirs of hell’ (VIII, 100; cf. 113). The eternal destiny of the

⁵⁴ E.g. Luther, *Galatians*, 26: 40; cf. Witsius, *Oeconomia Fœderum*, II.I.i, III.X.viii.

unbeliever is never far from Boston's field of vision. Since the sermon text says that the unregenerate are 'children of wrath', then they are among the wicked 'reserved to the day of destruction' (Job 21.30; VIII, 113). Boston depicts the natural man walking on 'the high road to hell' (VIII, 100). This journey began at birth, since '[i]n the first opening of our eyes in the world, we look asquint, hell-ward, not heaven-ward' (VIII, 61). Compressing the distance between temporal and eternal wrath still further, he tells the natural man that 'there is but a step between you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord' (VIII, 97; cf. 115).

Boston allows the eternal state to intrude even further into the natural state by applying the vocabulary of hell to the state of nature. '[A] graceless state', he preaches, 'is hell in the bud, which, if it continue, will come at length to perfection' (VIII, 119; cf. 175). God takes the sins of the unbeliever, 'overlays them with brimstone, and sets them on fire about their ears: so they have a hell within them' (VIII, 104; cf. 122). Since the unbeliever already experiences separation from God, there is a sense in which 'hell is begun already' (VIII, 118; cf. 117). In the *Fourfold State*, following the Westminster Standards,⁵⁵ Boston explicitly rejects the idea that divine wrath is reserved entirely for the eternal state. Although the 'full measure' of the floods of wrath will be meted out against the wicked in hell, there is 'some measure' of wrath in the natural state (VIII, 98; cf. 106). The extent of the present retribution becomes clear in Boston's exegesis of the phrase 'children of wrath' in Ephesians 2.3:

The phrase seems to intimate, that men are, whatever they are in their natural state, under the wrath of God; that they are wholly under wrath: wrath is, as it were, woven into their very nature, and mixes itself with the whole of the man, who is, if I may so speak, a very lump of wrath, a child of hell, as the iron in the fire is all fire. (VIII, 98)

The last part of this sentence serves as a reminder that Boston has introduced a doctrine of hell into the traditional *status quadruplex*, which tended to restrict the eternal state to the state of glory. In his exposition of Ephesians 2.3 he has shifted from speaking of 'children of wrath' to speaking of 'a child of hell', moving imperceptibly from temporal wrath to eternal wrath, so that it is difficult to know where one ends and the other begins (cf. VIII, 106-107, 110-12, 119).

⁵⁵ *Confession of Faith*, VI.VI; *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 84; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 27, 83, 152.

One effect of Boston's emphasis on the hellishness of hell is to minimize the doctrine of common grace. Little attention is given in the *Fourfold State* to the biblical themes of divine benevolence or God's gracious activity (short of saving grace) to humanity in general. This stands in contrast to a Puritan source such as Thomas Shepard, who teaches that while the natural man has 'lost all power to do any thing that is good', there is still a 'common Grace' which enables him to 'act for God, because it came from God'.⁵⁶ According to Shepard, 'the Lord gives a power to act, and live, and move, and to do many spiritual duties, or good duties from themselves', even if these works are not saving works.⁵⁷ Boston, by contrast, goes so far as to say that 'there is not the least glimpse of favour towards [natural men] from heaven' (VIII, 103; cf. 105).

The minimization of common grace is even clearer in the only passage in the *Fourfold State* where Boston comes close to mentioning the doctrine: 'God casts a portion of this world's good to [natural men], more or less, as a bone is thrown to a dog' (VIII, 103). Here the animal motif has returned, serving to deny a personal relationship between God and sinful humanity, even in a commonly gracious way. Although he does not go to the extremes of some of his contemporaries,⁵⁸ Boston's belief that the image of God was utterly destroyed in the fall pushes him in the direction of seeing the natural man as something less than fully human. He may thus be contrasted with other orthodox Reformed theologians, such as John Owen, who are careful to stress the way in which the *imago Dei* is simultaneously defaced and retained:

Though Man by Sin be made like the *Beasts that perish*, being brutish and foolish in his Mind and Affections; yet he is not so absolutely, he retains that *living Soul*, those *intellectual Faculties* which were the Subject of *Original Righteousness*, and are meet to receive again the Renovation of the Image of God by Jesus Christ.⁵⁹

Unlike Boston, Owen does justice both to the persistence of the image of God after the fall and to the biblical imagery that compares the fallen human to beasts.

Boston's preaching on the hellishness of hell raises an important pedagogical question: Has he unnecessarily blurred the boundaries between the four states, disrupting

⁵⁶ Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 28, 30. The theme of common providence is also developed by Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 645-49; Turretin, IV.XVII.vii; X.IV.xxxviii.

⁵⁷ Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 28. Cf. *Confession of Faith*, XVII.VI; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 68.

⁵⁸ James Craig, *Sermons*, I, 39, for example, preaches that sin 'makes a Man worse than a Beast'.

⁵⁹ Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, p. 250 (cf. p. 429). See also Calvin, *Institutionvm*, II.II.xii-xvii, and Turretin, X.IV.iv, who identifies the '*potentia seu facultate naturalis voluntatis*' as a distinguishing feature between man and brute.

the simplicity of the *Fourfold State* by allowing too much of the eternal state of damnation to intrude into the state of nature? Although a more rigid development of the *status quadruplex* might have been easier for his parishioners to comprehend, that comprehension would have come at some cost to the confrontational immediacy of Boston's preaching on the state of nature. Placing 'The State of Nature' against the backdrop of eternal judgment enables him to resist vigorously the sinner's inclination to delay examining his state until another day:

For I testify unto you all, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven, for you, in your natural state: there is but a step between you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord; if the brittle thread of your life, which may break with a touch ere you are aware, be broken while you are in this state, you are ruined for ever, without remedy. (VIII, 97; cf. 115)

This stress on the imminence of divine wrath does not imply that the *Fourfold State* preaches judgment at the expense of grace. Boston takes care to ensure that his teaching about the *severity* of the natural state does not imply the *inevitability* of divine wrath. On the contrary, he argues against the objection that it is impossible for the natural man to be saved, insisting that the very aim of preaching the sin and misery of the natural state is to convince men and women to 'flee out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son' (VIII, 117; cf. 119, 124). The crucial difference between the unregenerate and the damned is that the former still have opportunity to 'become children of the kingdom' (VIII, 98). The blood of Christ has the power to 'quench that fire of wrath which burns against' them (VIII, 121). The threatenings of divine wrath give way to the command to 'come speedily to Jesus Christ' (VIII, 97). The possibility of a 'miracle' of 'regenerating grace' has been in view from the outset of Boston's preaching (VIII, 28), where the judgment of Genesis 6 reminds him of the baptism by which 'a new world of saints arise in regeneration, even as the new world of sinners out of the waters' (VIII, 30). Hellish though it may be, the state of nature is not hell because it is not a permanent state.

V. KNOWING ONE'S STATE BY NATURE

To the extent that Thomas Boston portrays a state of nature which is as hellish as it is fallen, he makes one of his primary pastoral goals more difficult to achieve. This is because he views knowledge of one's sinfulness and misery by nature as necessary to salvation. Part of what makes the unbeliever an unbeliever is that he does not yet 'believe

the sinfulness and misery of a natural state' (VIII, 53). Boston challenges his parishioners on this point, urging them to 'believe the corruption of [their] nature'.⁶⁰ Yet he is not exhorting them to experience the existential truth that they are sinful and miserable as much as he is asking them to assent to the doctrine that they are in a *state* of sin and misery. If his description of the natural state is unduly hellish, then he has widened the gap between personal experience and doctrinal truth and made it more difficult for his hearers to believe that they really are in a state of misery.

The fact that this question even arises from Boston's preaching reflects his underlying tendency in the direction of psychological intellectualism. We have already noted his concern to show both that the understanding and the will are the primary faculties of the soul and that all of the faculties have been corrupted by sin. With respect to theological anthropology, Boston views the person as a complete unity. In his preaching to those who are still in the state of nature, however, he places much less emphasis on other faculties than on the understanding. He does occasionally press for an affective response from his hearers, presenting the doctrine of the corruption of nature as a matter 'for lamentation'. But this application is only for the believer, since Boston explicitly denies that the natural man is able to lament his own corrupt condition: 'because thou art dead, thou canst not lament thy own case' (VIII, 87). More frequently, he appeals to the will in his sermons, pressing his hearers to 'take no rest in this dismal state; but flee to Christ, the only refuge' (VIII, 114; cf. 117, 120). But the potential effectiveness of these appeals is mitigated by the inability of the sinful will to come to God without a prior illumination of the understanding.

What must come first for the unbeliever is neither an affective nor a voluntary response, but an intellectual grounding in the principles of religion. Boston's most vivid expression of the primacy of the intellect appears in his sermons from Hosea 4.6 among the newly rediscovered Aberdeen manuscripts: Ignorance is 'where the Devill ends his work and Christ begins his at'. After the Devill 'locks [sinners] up in darkness, he drives this Wood-nail of Ignorance', but 'Christ begins with this, draws this nail in the first place, convinces the soul of its sin and misery, and then the soul is humbled, sees its need of

⁶⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 97. He also issues this challenge in catechetical visitation, asking 'What state are you in by nature?' (XII, 201).

Christ' (Abdn MS, 159; cf. I, 564; 'Genesis', 35). In order for the sinner to escape the coffin of his natural state, he must first come to *know* that he is in such a state. Indeed, the very reason for preaching the sermons on the fourfold state in the first place was to combat 'ignorance of the fundamental points of religion, such as mans misery by nature' (Abdn MS, 158). Boston's custom of beginning the application section of his sermons with a use of 'information' thus has a highly practical purpose, since it is theological information which brings the sinner to an understanding of his miserable plight (VIII, 85, 112). There is a self-reflexive relationship between Boston's doctrine of the state of nature and the way he preaches that doctrine; the doctrine of the fourfold state governs the preaching of the *Fourfold State*. His doctrine of the state of nature emphasizes the effect of sin on the understanding, while his preaching begins with that fallen understanding in its attempt to reverse the effects of the fall.

Boston's belief in the primacy of the intellectual faculty is reflected both in the length and in the heavily doctrinal emphasis of the sermons on the state of nature in the *Fourfold State*. For nearly every doctrine in 'The State of Nature', he makes a specific claim that the unbeliever must know that doctrine before he can be saved.⁶¹ First, the 'natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things' because he 'knows not what sin is' (VIII, 47; cf. II, 424; VIII, 53, 144). Second, Boston insists on the importance of having a 'special eye upon the corruption and sin of our nature' (VIII, 91; cf. 30, 121, 177). Specific repentance for original sin is a necessary part of saving repentance and 'the best part of the errand which a poor sinner has to the Physician of souls'.⁶² He further instructs the sinner to get 'a view of [his] misery' (VIII, 115; cf. Abdn MS, 36, 55, 117, 123; III, 403; VIII, 177). A 'proper sight of wrath', which is also necessary to salvation, depends upon a prior sense of one's sin (VIII, 121). 'You cannot be in the way to heaven, who never saw yourselves by nature in the high road to hell' (VIII, 100; cf. 53-54). But the natural man must have knowledge not only of his sin and misery, but also of his inability to recover himself from that condition. Here Boston exhibits his psychological intellectualism by subsuming a category of the will (inability) under a category of the understanding

⁶¹ Similar lists of doctrines that must be known prior to saving faith appear in the sermons of Boston's contemporaries James Craig, *Sermons*, II, 62-63, and John Willison, p. 165. The *Larger Catechism* speaks more briefly of the sinner 'being convinced of his sin and misery' (Q & A 72).

⁶² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 93. Cf. Vinke, *Morning Exercise*, p. 156.

(knowledge of inability), with the result that his preaching aims to ‘convince the unregenerate man of this his inability’ (VIII, 124; cf. 125, 136-37; Abdn MS, 36, 117, 124). Taken together, the knowledge of these aspects of the doctrine of sin ought to discover to the natural man the ‘absolute necessity of regeneration’ (VIII, 42; cf. 32, 56). Even many of Boston’s practical exhortations in ‘The State of Nature’ are simply exhortations to ‘believe’ a particular doctrine (VIII, 90, 97, 137).

The appeals to the intellectual faculty reveal Boston’s assumption that he is preaching to a mixed congregation in which there are unbelievers as well as believers. This presupposition lies behind his invariable discrimination between the regenerate and the unregenerate in the application of his doctrine.⁶³ The state of nature is not simply a theological category for Boston, but a description of the spiritual condition of many of those sitting in the pews before him: ‘Thou art the man, whoever thou art, that art yet in thy natural state’ (VIII, 88; cf. 44, 52-54, 56, 64-65, 87-90, 97, 109, 111, 114-21, 125, 137). But many of these unbelievers are unaware of their condition; that is to say, they do not yet *know* that they are in a state of sin and misery. Boston has a particular concern for the ‘close hypocrite’ or ‘formal professor’ in his congregation.⁶⁴ There are many who have the benefits of external revelation because they live in a ‘Christian country’, yet are ‘strangers to the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word’ (VIII, 52). Since he believes that the ‘case of all professors living and dying in their natural state’ is lamentable, he hopes to convince both the hypocrite and the profane man to believe that they are sinful and miserable by nature (VIII, 89; cf. 53). Therefore he holds up the state of nature as a ‘looking-glass, in which [they] may see the total corruption of [their] nature’ (VIII, 30; cf. III, 223; VIII, 28, 86). That Boston conceives of this self-examination as an activity of the understanding is confirmed by his description of the steps by which the natural man may ‘meditate’ and ‘fix [his] thoughts’ upon his sinful nature (VIII, 121). The purpose of ‘The State of Nature’ in the *Fourfold State* is to persuade the sinner that he is sinful and miserable by nature.

⁶³ Woodruff, p. 153, is helpful on this point.

⁶⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 100 (cf. XII, 64). The Aberdeen manuscripts show that Boston had a pronounced concern with hypocrisy in the early months of his ministry (Abdn MS, 53, 106, 116, 120, 131, 135, 140).

The place of the state of nature in the preaching of Thomas Boston raises several potential difficulties. The first concerns the usefulness of the doctrine for believers. The foregoing discussion has emphasized the utility of Boston's preaching on the natural state for convincing unbelievers of their need of salvation. Even without his attestation to the effectiveness of the fourfold sermons in his parish (XII, 103), one could surmise that preaching on sin for months on end had the desired effect of persuading the congregation that they were sinners by nature. But is insisting on the doctrine of sin at such length equally suitable for the edification of the regenerate? Are the sermons of practical benefit for believers as well as unbelievers? It is important to recognize that Boston frequently does apply the doctrine of the natural state to parishioners already in the state of grace. He speaks, for example, of the way in which the doctrine of the corruption of nature fosters humility in the life of the believer and enables him to 'improve' his union with Christ (VIII, 97; cf. 123). In his preaching on the propensity of the natural will to disbelieve the gospel, Boston pauses to give words of consolation to believers who still find themselves plagued by doubts (VIII, 73). Elsewhere he exhorts believers to struggle against the remains of their corruption, to be alert to the temptations of natural sin, to renew their repentance, to take note of original sin in their mortification, to pity those who are still in the state of nature, and to be filled with admiration for the power of the grace which has brought them out of their natural state (VIII, 36, 91-93, 121-123, 136). In short, Boston's constant awareness that he is preaching to a mixed congregation ensures that he preaches as much for the instruction of the saint as he preaches for the conviction of the sinner.

A second set of potential difficulties concerns his tendency towards psychological intellectualism. At the theological level, Boston is well aware that sin has corrupted the whole person, however the human faculties may be described. He preserves this same personal unity in the sinner's flight from the state of nature, where '[r]egeneration makes not only a new head, for knowledge, but a new heart, and new affections, for holiness' (VIII, 86). He also makes it clear that 'mere external revelation' is insufficient to remove the corruption of the natural state (VIII, 45). This theological anthropology notwithstanding, there remains a bias towards the understanding in Boston's homiletical practice. His actual preaching embodies an understanding of the faculties closer to the one articulated by many of his sources, in which the intellect must first be persuaded before it

can influence the will, than to the psychology described in his own sermons. Furthermore, against the backdrop of his doctrine of the corruption of the understanding and *de facto* intellectualism, it is difficult to see how Boston can rely on appeals to experience to demonstrate the truth of the sinfulness and misery of the natural state (VIII, 33-41). Admittedly, he consults the word of God prior to consulting ‘men’s experience and observation’ to confirm the doctrine of the corruption of nature (VIII, 30; cf. 80). Yet the blindness of the understanding by nature would seem to make such an appeal futile, however necessary it might seem to a faculty intellectualist.

A final potential difficulty concerns the relationship between Boston’s preaching on the disability of the will for spiritual things and his preaching on regeneration. One of the primary purposes of ‘The State of Nature’ is to convince the natural man of the necessity of regeneration by the Spirit, a regeneration not premised upon human ability (VIII, 86; cf. 32, 42, 56, 77, 87). Although he frequently pleads with his hearers to believe the misery of their natural state, he also teaches that ‘there is need of the working of mighty power to cause sinners to believe’ (VIII, 73). Is Boston’s doctrine of regeneration constructed in such a way as to avoid a contradiction between the inability of the will and exhortations to the unbeliever to take steps to ‘flee from the wrath to come’? (VIII, 121). It is this question which the *Fourfold State* itself next addresses.

V. REGENERATION INTO THE STATE OF GRACE

I. PREPARATION FOR CONVERSION IN THE *FOURFOLD STATE*?

On the surface of things, Thomas Boston's preaching on regeneration in the *Fourfold State* seems incompatible with what he has already preached about 'Man's Utter Inability to Recover Himself' from the state of nature (VIII, 124-37). He concludes his sermon on regeneration by appealing to the will and affections of the unregenerate, exhorting them to 'eagerly desire' the new birth and instructing them to perform duties which are conducive to 'that fear and sorrow, on account of thy soul's state, which are necessary to prepare and stir thee up to look after a Saviour' (VIII, 176-77). Yet Boston has already defended, as a point of doctrine, the 'utter inability' of the unregenerate man to use his faculties to recover himself from the state of nature: 'Man naturally has nothing wherewithal to improve, for his recovery, the help brought in by the gospel' (VIII, 131). Faith and repentance which spring out of 'natural powers' lack the 'power and efficacy of the grace of Christ' (VIII, 137; cf. 89-90). Because '[b]elieving, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature [. . .] a man cannot be active but passive only, in his own regeneration' (VIII, 131; cf. II, 402; X, 291). Such passivity would seem to undercut the efficacy of exhortations to prepare for conversion, exhortations which Boston nevertheless issues his congregation. Does he adequately reconcile the doctrines of inability and preparation for conversion, or is there an unresolved tension in his preaching on regeneration?

This question can best be answered by placing Boston's preaching in its ecclesiastical and theological context. The extent of the natural man's ability to prepare for conversion was a contested issue in the early eighteenth century Scottish church. The 1717 General Assembly condemned both the radical anti-preparationism of the so-called 'Auchterarder Creed' and the Pelagian preparationism of Professor John Simson. The intent of the 'Auchterarder Creed' -- which required licentiates to affirm that 'it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin, in order to our coming to Christ' -- was to maintain the sovereignty of God in conversion and to deny that repentance functioned as a precondition for salvation.¹ Its advocates were motivated by a desire 'to remove every last

¹ *Acts of the General Assembly*, p. 519.

vestige of preparationism' from the church.² Simson, by contrast, insisted on a necessary '*connexionem inter rectum usum mediorum et Gratiam regenerantem*'.³ The positions represented by the 'Auchterarder Creed', Simson, and the General Assembly show that a discussion of the relationship between divine sovereignty and human effort in conversion was part of Boston's ecclesiastical milieu.

Boston also had extensive exposure to divergent views of conversion through his reading. On the one hand, a number of his sources lean in a decidedly preparationist direction. He was familiar both with the Tridentine position that man 'may dispose and prepare himself to obtain the Grace of Justification',⁴ and with the Remonstrant position that 'God requires our endeavours by way of preparation'.⁵ Yet Boston was equally well-acquainted with Reformed preparationists such as John Preston, David Dickson, and Isaac Ambrose. Preston, who argues that faith will only be effectual if a man has been 'thoroughly prepared for it', uses the evocative expression 'the heart prepared'.⁶ Dickson describes the 'preparatory disposition' of a man, prior to regeneration, as a condition in which the 'naturall man unrenewed' is made 'more capable of regeneration' and is 'brought more near unto regeneration' by the 'use of externall means'. The 'externall means' he has in mind are attendance at sermons, study of the Westminster *Catechisms*, and personal conference with the minister.⁷ Ambrose offers his readers a '[m]ethod, for the man not yet born again, to have his part in the second birth' by having 'so much' of 'humiliations, and other preparative dispositions' as to make him 'sensible of his Spiritual misery'.⁸ Ambrose also quotes Thomas Hooker, perhaps the best-known of the English preparationists, to the effect that '[t]he soul of a sinner must be prepared for *Christ*, before he can entertain him'.⁹

² Donald Macleod, 'Faith as Assurance', *Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1988, 99-101 (p. 100).

³ Flint, p. 152. Flint rejects Simson's position, maintaining the connection between the means of salvation and regenerating grace '*non esse Infallibilem*' (p. 155). See also the *Acts of the General Assembly*, p. 518, and Willison, p. 905.

⁴ 'Of Justification', in *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, n. trans. (London, 1687), Canon IV (p. 28).

⁵ Laurence Womack, *The Examination of Tilenus before the Triers* (London, 1658), p. 193 (cf. pp. 135, 191).

⁶ John Preston, 'Effectvall Faith', p. 30 (cf. pp. 29, 33), and 'Of Love', in *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love* (London, 1630), pp. 1-216 (p. 14). Cf. Ursinus, p. 34.

⁷ Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, pp. 17-18. Cf. Turretin, XV.v.iv; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 78-81.

⁸ Ambrose, pp. 25, 20 (cf. pp. 42-44, 48, 52). See also Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, pp. 96-97, and Boston's contemporary John Willison, p. 454, who speaks of 'antecedent or preparatory conditions'.

⁹ Ambrose, p. 42. For a fuller treatment of Hooker's place in the preparationist tradition, see Kendall, *English Calvinism*, pp. 133-38, and Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966).

Not surprisingly, Ambrose describes a series of ‘steps’ which lead to conversion.¹⁰ The preparationist perspective is summarized by the affirmation, found among the sermons of the *Morning Exercise*, that ‘much Legal and Evangelical preparation ushers in the New Birth’.¹¹

The more dominant position among Boston’s Reformed sources, however, is that the unregenerate are incapable of efficacious, antecedent preparations for regeneration.¹² John Sharp is representative of the consistently anti-preparationist perspective: ‘In primo actu regenerationis ex se liberum arbitrium bonum eligere non potest, sed homo se mere passivae habet, quia nec se praeparare ad gratiam recipiendam [. . .]’.¹³ The impossibility of preparing for conversion is often grounded, as it is by Beza and Faius, in the doctrine of man’s sinfulness by nature:

For we acknowledge as the Scripture teacheth, that wee are nowe, our nature being corrupted, dead in sinne, the children of wrath, and enemies vnto God: and wee say, that we cannot by our owne strength prepare any way for vs to come vnto God, but that if wee will come vnto him, he must draw vs.¹⁴

This is also the position of the Westminster *Confession of Faith*, which declares that the natural man ‘is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto’.¹⁵ What the Reformed theologians particularly oppose is any Catholic or Arminian suggestion that the natural man can perform preparatory works which are the ‘working cause’ of regeneration.¹⁶ It is dangerous to say that preparations are meritorious, or even that there is a ‘certaine & constituted connexion’ between preparatory dispositions and justification.¹⁷ As John Owen makes clear, antecedents to regeneration such as

¹⁰ Ambrose, pp. 14-19, 26-31.

¹¹ Dr Drake, ‘The Believers Dignity & Duty’, in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 404-23 (p. 413). Cf. Thomas Manton, ‘Mans Impotency to Help himself out of that Misery’, in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 188-201 (p. 198).

¹² Both Kendall, *English Calvinism*, p. 198, and Perry Miller, “‘Preparation for Salvation’ in Seventeenth-Century New England”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4 (1943), 253-86 (pp. 261-62), exaggerate the prevalence of preparationism in Puritanism.

¹³ Sharp, p. 264; cf. pp. 266, 428, 465.

¹⁴ Beza and Faius, XVI.IX. Cf. Pemble, p. 56; Sedgwick, p. 111; Owen, *Πνευματολογία* pp. 209-10, 237, 246; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 29-40, 169-88.

¹⁵ *Confession of Faith*, IX.III. On the passivity of the soul in conversion see Beza and Faius, XVI.X; Ursinus, p. 90; Polyandrus, XVII.XXXI; Ames, I.XXVI.xxxv; Sharp, p. 274; Pemble, pp. 58, 84; *Confession of Faith*, X.III; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 188-205; Essenius, XIV.XVII; Turretin, X.IV.xxi; and Rijssenius, XIII.XI.

¹⁶ Pemble, p. 30 (cf. pp. 76, 82). Cf. Sharp, p. 274; Sedgwick, p. 126; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 179.

¹⁷ Brown (Wamphray), *Life of Justification*, p. 21. Cf. Ursinus, p. 510; Owen, *Justification*, p. 75; Owen, *Πνευματολογία* p. 193; Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 730; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 179-81; M’Claren, pp. 252-53.

conviction of sin through the preaching of the Word ‘are *not prescribed* as necessary Duties unto Persons under their Conversions, but only *described* as they usually fall out’.¹⁸ For the anti-preparationists, even the smallest human preparations thwart the Holy Spirit’s intention that ‘homini vires omnes ad bonum adimantur, & soli gratiæ salutis & regenerationis opus in solidum tribuatur’.¹⁹

Boston’s Reformed sources employ at least two strategies for reconciling the doctrine of natural inability with exhortations to prepare for conversion. The first is to describe the use of means as a natural work of the Holy Spirit falling short of regeneration, and so to separate the ‘common works of the Spirit’ from the ‘*Evangelical and saving works of the Spirit*’.²⁰ The repression of natural corruption, the practice of moral virtues, and even the elementary understanding of heavenly truth are all examples of the Spirit’s ‘woorke in the harts of men’, even when such preparations fall short of actual conversion.²¹ David Dickson recognizes that the unregenerate may meet with ‘sundry common operations and effects of Gods Spirit’ in the exercise of the external means of grace, even if God is not constrained to regenerate those with ‘preparatory dispositions’.²² Thomas Shepard uses different terminology to make the same point, arguing that ‘renewing grace’ will not be given to a hypocrite, even if an ‘abundant and plentiful measure of awakening grace’ has been given.²³ Similarly, William Pemble observes that the ‘effects of the ordinary grace of God’ in the use of means ‘are no efficient causes to produce grace of conversion in the heart’.²⁴

A second solution to the dilemma, preferred by Calvin and other opponents of preparationism,²⁵ is to place the entire conversion process under divine control, thereby preserving the graciousness of regeneration. This solution maintains a distinction between ‘*self-preparation*’ and ‘*being prepared*’, where the latter denotes the ‘preparatory, spiritual

¹⁸ Owen, *Πνευματολογία* p. 195 (cf. p. 191; Owen, *Justification*, p. 75).

¹⁹ Turretin, X.IV.xvii. Cf. Calvin, *Institvtionvm*, II.III.ix, and Owen, *Πνευματολογία* p. 262.

²⁰ Sedgwick, p. 592 (cf. p. 508). Cf. Ferguson, II, 234.

²¹ Beza and Faius, XLIX.X. Cf. Owen, *Πνευματολογία* p. 198; Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 28.

²² Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, pp. 17-18. The *Larger Catechism* also refers to the ‘common operations of the Holy Spirit’ (Q & A 68).

²³ Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, II, 63 (cf. I, 135, 182, 191; II, 81).

²⁴ Pemble, pp. 81-82. Cf. Owen, *Πνευματολογία* p. 196.

²⁵ Calvin, *Institvtionvm*, II.II.xxvii, II.III.vi, II.V.v. Cf. *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ*, III & IV.X-XVII.

acts of God upon the soul'.²⁶ After demonstrating that the unbeliever can contribute nothing to his regeneration, Zanchius asks: 'Quomodo igitur homo præparatur ad gratiam?' His answer, taken from Augustine, shifts the agency of preparation from man to God: '*Voluntas præparatur a Domino*'.²⁷ Divine initiative in the regeneration of the elect is also preserved by Ursinus, who insists that even the desire to receive grace indicates that grace is already at work:

[. . .] *to prepare, or to have in readinesse, or to confirme the heart*, is not to doe workes before the conversion, by which God may be invited to bestow the grace of regeneration upon men: but it signifieth that a ready and firme will of obeying God and persevering in true godlinesse, is shewed of those which are already regenerated and converted.²⁸

Wendelinus uses the term '*Præparansgratia*' to describe the activity of God in these first stages of conversion.²⁹ In the words of William Pemble, there are 'many preparations whereby God brings a man to grace'.³⁰ For John Owen the divine accomplishment of regeneration is the particular work of the Holy Spirit, who not only converts the sinner, but also performs the '*Preparatory Actings* making way for the Introduction of the new Spiritual Life into the Soul'.³¹ Thus the preparatory work of conviction of sin by the Law is one part of 'the whole Work of the Spirit of God with respect unto the Regeneration of sinners'.³² Thomas Shepard's solution to the preparationist dilemma is suggested by the subtitle of his book on conversion: '*The work of Christs Spirit, in reconciling of a sinner to God*'.³³ The anti-preparationists place even the natural use of means within the sphere of regenerating grace.

The difficulty many Reformed theologians experienced in coming to a satisfactory account of preparation for conversion is exemplified by the Scottish theologian Samuel

²⁶ Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), pp. 12, 59 (cf. pp. 60-61, 70).

²⁷ Zanchius, IV, 102. Cf. Sedgwick, p. 544; Charnock, *Works* (1684), III, 252; Essenius, VIII.XIII, XIV.XVIII; Turretin, XV.V.iv.

²⁸ Ursinus, p. 89 (cf. pp. 90-91). Cf. Beza and Faius, XVI.X; Pemble, p. 78.

²⁹ Wendelinus, p. 515. Similarly, John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1963; repr. 1991), p. 60, places the 'ordering the occasions, instruments and means of conversion' within the ambit of the Providence of God.

³⁰ Pemble, p. 78 (cf. pp. 58, 82). Cf. Ursinus, p. 618; John Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation: or, The great Gospel Mystery of the Christian's Union, and Communion with, and Conformity to Jesus Christ, both in his Death and Resurrection, Opened and Applied* (London, 1652), p. 199; Flint, p. 166.

³¹ Owen, *Πνευματολογία* p. 198 (cf. pp. 172, 191, 193, 256). Cf. Polyandrus, XVII.XXXII; Ames, I.XXXIII.iii; Preston, 'Effectual Faith', p. 50: '[. . .] the heart is thus prepared by the Holy Spirit [. . .]'; Fisher, *Marrow*, VII, 346; Sedgwick, pp. 544, 583, 598; M'Claren, pp. 284, 294.

³² Owen, *Πνευματολογία* p. 256. Cf. Ursinus, p. 91; Culverwell, p. 45.

³³ See especially Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, pp. 4-6, 88-89, 98, 129, 163, 179.

Rutherford. Rutherford, who wrote almost as much on the subject as the rest of Boston's sources combined, at one point or another adopts each of the positions mentioned in the foregoing discussion. At times he appears to be a thoroughgoing preparationist, as in his analysis of the utility of external ordinances:

[. . .] *the natural man can doe more then he does, and can exercise the natural powers to come within the bosome of the net, though he cannot hale himself to land.* [. . .]³⁴

'Nature and acting of nature must be before the acting of grace', states Rutherford; 'Christ actually calleth and saveth but those who are such and so prepared'.³⁵ Less frequently perhaps, he takes the opposite view and rejects 'preparations moving God to convert this man' and exhorts his readers to 'forget all your preparations'.³⁶ Thus, he holds the ostensibly contradictory positions that a sinner must be 'prepared with some sense of sinne',³⁷ and that a sense of sin 'can be no preparative condition of justification'.³⁸ Even while he is insisting that 'nature cannot more prepare it self for grace, and a gracious state, then a Thistle can change it self into a Vine-tree', Rutherford makes the preparationist claim that 'its good to lie near the fountain for all that', in order to hear the Gospel.³⁹ Perhaps the two strands in his thought on regeneration arise from his desire to deny both the Antinomian emphasis on immediate conversion 'without any foregoing preparations' and the place given to human initiative in the Arminian view of regeneration.⁴⁰ Perhaps also his stress on the priority of divine action in the moment of conversion could have resolved some of these apparent tensions.⁴¹ In any case, Rutherford does not appear to reach a single, coherent account of the status of preparation for conversion in Reformed theology.⁴²

³⁴ Rutherford, *Influences*, pp. 129-30 (cf. pp. 131, 146, 329, 336, 359). Cf. *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 253; *Spirituall Antichrist*, I, 306.

³⁵ Rutherford, *Influences*, p. 342 (cf. p. 358); *Trial and Triumph*, p. 148 (cf. p. 149). Cf. *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 255; *Spirituall Antichrist*, II, 111-12, 144, 147.

³⁶ Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph*, p. 294 (cf. p. 148); *Spirituall Antichrist*, II, 116 (cf. pp. 3, 109, 128). Cf. *Christ Dying and Drawing*, pp. 240, 243, 247, 255, 257; *Influences*, pp. 124, 149, 330-31, 338.

³⁷ Rutherford, *Spirituall Antichrist*, II, 144.

³⁸ Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 245.

³⁹ Rutherford, *Influences*, p. 141. In a similar juxtaposition of preparationist and anti-preparationist tendencies, he simultaneously asserts that there are 'no preparatory dispositions to conversion' and that 'moral walking in the Commandments of God' draws a natural man 'nearer to conversion' (p. 150).

⁴⁰ Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 250 (cf. p. 264). Cf. *Spirituall Antichrist*, II, 2-3; *Influences*, p. 150.

⁴¹ Rutherford, *Influences*, pp. 122, 124, 359, 427.

⁴² Bell's conclusion that Rutherford is a thoroughgoing preparationist is based on a one-sided treatment of the evidence (pp. 77-78). For a more helpful treatment of Rutherford on conversion, see Strickland, pp. 128-29.

This same complexity obtains in the sermons of Thomas Boston. His preaching in the *Fourfold State* on the inability of the natural man to escape from the natural state appears to preclude preparation for conversion:

But when Christ comes and offers help to sinners, cannot they take it? Cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No, the second text tells, they cannot; "No man can come unto me," &c. (VIII, 125; cf. IV, 404; VIII, 131, 133; X, 268-69; XI, 11)

This is because regeneration is 'not so much the curing of a sick man' as it is the resurrection of a dead man who is a 'mere nonentity in grace' (VIII, 156; cf. 185). To use a different image, just as a child is inactive in his own generation, 'so a man cannot be active but passive only, in his own regeneration'.⁴³ Like Rutherford, therefore, Boston rejects the view (held by Simson) that there is a necessary connection between preparation for conversion and conversion itself, or that God has promised to convert 'those who, in the use of means, do what they can towards their own relief' (VIII, 135). There is no paradigmatic conversion experience (cf. X, 377). Even the man who brings himself to the healing pool 'hath no hand in moving the water, no power in performing the cure' (VIII, 157). External changes such as baptism, good education, civility, and the performance of outward duties may only be 'false conceptions' which do not issue forth in new birth (VIII, 139-40). Hypocrites may go so far as to have 'sharp soul-exercises and pangs', 'wonderful moving of the affections', and 'great desires after good things', and yet 'die in the birth' (VIII, 140-41).

These statements about the limits of preparation for conversion accord with the position Boston takes elsewhere that the 'exerting of our natural powers in room of the influences of his Spirit' is inimical to regeneration by divine grace (X, 421). His anti-preparationism also coheres with his defence of the universal offer of the gospel during the Marrow Controversy. Just as he denies the intrinsic efficacy of external means for conversion, he denies that the gospel is to be offered only to those who are 'so and so qualified, as if men behoved to be half cured before they may come to the physician' (III, 263; cf. I, 361; VI, 88; XI, 338). For Boston, the very impossibility of self-conversion is reason for hope, since the gospel is a 'market of free grace' for all such sinners (III, 96).

⁴³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 131 (cf. I, 548; VIII, 156-57, 189). The same image is used by Turretin, XV.V.x.

He is immediately sensitive, however, to the pastoral ramifications of rejecting the efficacy of preparations for conversion. ‘Why do you then preach Christ to us?’ a parishioner might ask, ‘call us to come to him, to believe, repent, and use the means of salvation?’ (VIII, 133; cf. IV, 283). He answers these questions on several levels, asserting that it is simply his duty as a minister to call others to use the means of grace and that such a call will be efficacious for the conversion of the elect. Further, the means of grace restrain the unregenerate from gross sin, serving ‘to embalm many dead souls, which are never quickened by them’.⁴⁴ Like his predecessors,⁴⁵ he accepts that one purpose of his preaching is to render unbelievers inexcusable for their unbelief (VIII, 177; cf. IV, 405).

Yet Boston also responds by defending the validity of external preparations for conversion. The natural man can do ‘many things’ to set him ‘in a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ’, so as ‘not to be far from the kingdom of God’ (VIII, 134; cf. II, 436; VIII, 133). Already at Simprin, he was preaching that sinners must ‘strive to enter in’ at the ‘strait gate of Regeneration’ (Abdn MS, 277; cf. 163, 274; X, 308-97). In the *Fourfold State*, adopting a biblical metaphor used by Rutherford,⁴⁶ the *Morning Exercise*,⁴⁷ and perhaps elsewhere, Boston tells the natural man that even though he cannot cure himself, yet he ‘may come to the pool’ (VIII, 134; cf. Abdn MS, 79, 152-55; II, 398, 503; VIII, 136). Listening to sermons, recognizing and meditating upon one’s state and condition, praying to God, and examining one’s soul are all ‘within the compass of natural abilities, and may be practised where there is no grace’ (VIII, 134-35; cf. II, 398, 417-18, 503; VIII, 140, 176-77, 190-98). In short,

Though you cannot recover yourselves, nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the Gospel; yet even by the power of nature, you may use the outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates the benefit of redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly unable to recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath. (VIII, 134; cf. IV, 282; X, 396)

By such means, an unbeliever ‘may attain the highest pitch of preparation for the grace of God’ (II, 398; cf. VIII, 138).

⁴⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 133-34. The embalming metaphor may be borrowed from Manton, *Morning Exercise*, p. 198.

⁴⁵ Beza and Faius, I.IV; Ursinus, p. 89; Owen, *Πνευματολογία* pp. 193, 196; Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, p. 12.

⁴⁶ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 306.

⁴⁷ Manton, *Morning Exercise*, p. 198.

Moreover -- and this is the point at which Boston's preaching draws nearest to outright preparationism -- if the sinner makes use of such 'outward and ordinary means', 'it is probable this course may succeed'. Borrowing both a metaphor and a preaching strategy straight out of the *Morning Exercise*,⁴⁸ Boston makes probability the basis for exhortation: the good farmers of Ettrick should employ the means of grace, hoping in the probability of salvation, just as they plough and sow, hoping in the probability of a good harvest (VIII, 136; cf. II, 399; IV, 283, 405). He encourages the unregenerate with the prospect of success in this endeavour:

Do what you can; and, it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you cannot.⁴⁹

Here the phrase 'Do what you can' exposes the tension between inability and exhortation in Boston's preaching, since he has already taken great pains to show that there is *nothing* the natural man *can* do to effect his own conversion.

To recognize this tension is not to suggest that Boston's preaching on regeneration is self-contradictory, far less is to suggest that it is impossible to reconcile the Reformed doctrine of natural inability with practical exhortations to employ the means of grace. Perhaps Boston could have used his distinction between 'awakening grace' and 'converting grace' to develop a more comprehensive explanation of the process of conversion.⁵⁰ Perhaps, with Beza, Dickson, Shepard, and others, he could have located the preparatory use of the means of grace within the 'common operations of the divine Spirit' (VIII, 141; cf. 108, 142, 186, 190). These and other passages in the *Fourfold State* suggest that Boston was aware of solutions to the preparationist dilemma proposed by his predecessors. Nevertheless, some questions about preparation for conversion remain unanswered in the *Fourfold State*. As a preacher, Boston deliberately sets aside some systematic concerns in order to stress simultaneously the sinner's utter dependence on the regenerating grace of God and his responsibility to strive for that grace by the means appointed by God.

⁴⁸ Manton, *Morning Exercise*, p. 199.

⁴⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 135 (cf. II, 398; IV, 283, 405; VIII, 136). Boston's language echoes late medieval nominalism at this point, but the connection is probably coincidental.

⁵⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 140 (cf. VI, 532; VIII, 551, 582; IX, 612; X, 300). Cf. Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, II, 63.

II. THE NEW-MAKING OF THE 'UNMADE MAN'

Whatever questions Boston may leave unresolved concerning preparation for conversion, he leaves no doubt as to the significance of conversion when it does occur. Conversion, or regeneration,⁵¹ is a 'supernatural real change' of the sinner, 'bringing him into the state of grace' (VIII, 138). The doctrine of regeneration is therefore the hinge upon which the *Fourfold State* turns from the state of nature to the state of grace.

Regeneration is a 'real, thorough change, whereby the man is made a new creature' (VIII, 141). So thorough is this change that every manifestation of corruption in the state of nature is transformed by regenerating grace. Boston employs a medical metaphor to explain the universal effect of regeneration:

Man is, in respect of his spiritual state, altogether disjointed by the fall; every faculty of the soul is, as it were, dislocated: in regeneration, the Lord loosens every joint, and sets it right again.⁵²

The use of the faculties of the soul to describe the repristination of the elect gives the *Fourfold State* a thematic unity which cuts across the boundaries of the four states. The same faculties which were vitiated by the fall into the state of nature are transformed by regeneration into the state of grace. Regeneration -- in which the 'unmade man' of the state of nature is 'new made' by the Holy Spirit -- is the antithesis of the fall (VIII, 147).

Not surprisingly, regeneration is also 'a change into the likeness of God'.⁵³ The *imago Dei* which was forfeited in the state of nature is recovered in the state of grace. This recovery is illustrated by the analogy between natural generation and spiritual regeneration which informs Boston's preaching on conversion. Just as the natural child bears the image of the natural parent, 'they who are born of God, bear God's image'. In the 'happy change' of regeneration, 'that image of Satan is defaced, and the image of God is restored'. This renewal of the divine image is viewed in distinctively Christological terms, since Christ himself is the 'pattern after which the new creature is made' (VIII, 142).

Boston's emphasis on the corruption of the faculties in the state of nature is balanced by an equal stress on the renewal of those faculties by regeneration. First, 'the

⁵¹ For Boston (I, 557-58; V, 353; VII, 340n; VIII, 340n), 'regeneration' is synonymous both with 'conversion' and with what the *Confession of Faith* terms 'effectual calling' (X.I-III).

⁵² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 141 (cf. Abdn MS, 55, 113, 129; *Works*, I, 26, 564, 568, 655, 658; III, 405; V, 253, 568; VI, 564-65; VII, 88-90, 108-109; VIII, 86-87). Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 26-27, 95-97.

⁵³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 142 (cf. I, 655, 657; II, 350; III, 465; V, 304, 568; VII, 108-109; VIII, 546; X, 255-56, 505).

mind is savingly enlightened'. Here he returns to the imagery of light and darkness which he used to depict the fallen state. Regeneration is like 'light let into the understanding':

The beams of the light of life make their way into the dark dungeon of the heart: then the night is over, and the morning light is come, which will shine more and more unto the perfect day. (VIII, 143; cf. V, 528)

Boston analyses this illumination in exclusively doctrinal terms. By regeneration, the sinner is transformed in his knowledge of God, sin, himself, Jesus Christ, the plan of salvation, and the vanity of the world (VIII, 143-45; cf. 72). This new theological knowledge is not superficial, but intensive. Boston describes the Spirit of the Lord as an instructor who 'catechises' the new believer in such specific points of doctrine as the 'spotless purity of God, his exact justice, his all-sufficiency, and other glorious perfections' (VIII, 143). In his sermons on the covenant of grace, he goes so far as to say that by means of regeneration the whole law of God is 'transcribed into the heart of every one brought into the covenant' (VIII, 575).

What remains unclear is whether or not Boston views the 'supernatural change' of regeneration only as an instantaneous transformation (VIII, 142). If he does, then it is difficult to see how such extensive doctrinal knowledge can be imparted in the moment of regeneration, even if the 'born again' are 'Spirit-learned' (VIII, 146). It seems more likely that he is using the term 'regeneration' to refer both to the instant when the Holy Spirit saves the sinner and to the regenerate life which follows. This would be in keeping with the distinctions he makes elsewhere between 'regeneration taken strictly for the beginning of the new creature' and 'regeneration taken largely', which 'is the same with sanctification' (VII, 106, 340n); and between 'initial sanctification' and 'progressive sanctification, i. e. sanctification distinguished from regeneration' (I, 655; cf. VI, 571-73, 582-83, 593-94; VII, 108-110; VIII, 498). In this case, Boston can be understood to mean that spiritual illumination of the mind occurs *in principle* in regeneration, only to be worked out *in practice* in the subsequent intellectual life of the believer. The light of regenerating grace is 'an overcoming light, determining men to assent to divine truths on the mere testimony of God' (VIII, 146). Because the regenerate mind now submits itself to the authority of Scripture, it has accepted in principle all of the doctrines constitutive of the regenerate mind. The two-fold perspective on regeneration -- regeneration as both instantaneous and persisting -- also undergirds Boston's contention that regeneration is a

‘lasting change, which never goes off [. . .] whatever decays it may fall under’ (VIII, 143). The location of regeneration in such close proximity to sanctification is characteristic of his preaching: ‘In regeneration the elect get a new nature’ which ‘grows up in the gradual advances of sanctification’.⁵⁴

In the second place, regeneration transforms the faculty of the will, powerfully and efficaciously giving the will ‘a new turn’. The repristination of the will, like the repristination of the mind, is an undoing of the damage done by the fall. The gracious reversal of the natural, sinful state of the will begins with a cure of its ‘utter inability to will what is good’. Extending his earlier metaphor of the imprisonment of the will by sin, Boston teaches that ‘the Spirit of God comes and opens the prison door, goes to the prisoner, and, by the power of his grace, makes his chains fall off’ (VIII, 146; cf. 56). The new attitude of the regenerate towards sin is also compared to an unstopped spring of water which washes away corruption and purifies the heart. Because this purification is a gradual process, regeneration is both an instantaneous change and the progressive sanctification of the believer. Once ‘the madman is come to himself’ in regeneration, he will persist in his aversion to sin (VIII, 147).

Regeneration does not simply make the will averse to evil, but it also endows the will with an ‘inclination, bent, and propensity to good’ (VIII, 147; cf. I, 568). It is here that the *Fourfold State* makes most explicit use of the original content of the *status quadruplex*:

When **God made man**, his will, in respect of its intention, was directed towards God, as his chief end; in respect of its choice, it pointed towards that which God willed. When **man unmade himself**, his will was framed to the very reverse hereof: he made himself his chief end, and his own will his law. But when man is **new made, in regeneration**, grace rectifies this disorder in some measure, though not perfectly: because we are but renewed in part, while in this world. (VIII, 147; emphases mine)

This passage, in which the vocabulary of making and unmaking give expression to the traditional four states of the human will, is a microcosm of the *Fourfold State*. The existence of a fourth, glorious state of the will is implicit in Boston’s allowance that the ‘new made’ will remains imperfect in the present life. The very brevity of this treatment of the four states of will indicates the extent to which the *Fourfold State* is a radical expansion of the *status quadruplex*.

⁵⁴ Boston, *Works*, II, 37 (cf. IV, 364; VII, 34; VIII, 455, 575; IX, 308, 612-13; X, 363, 509).

The theological concerns of the *status quadruplex* are also reflected in the insistence that the freedom of the human will is not violated by divine sovereignty. Regenerating grace does not ‘force’ the will, ‘yet powerfully draws it, so that his people are willing in the day of his power’ (VIII, 146). This quotation from Psalm 110.3, so frequent in Boston’s sermons,⁵⁵ expresses both the irresistible efficacy of divine grace and the freedom of the human response it compels. What is striking is that Boston has taken the complex theological discussions of the *liberum arbitrium* in Ursinus, Turretin, and others, and reduced them to a few short sentences. Perhaps because he is preaching to a rural congregation, he is content to assert the compatibility of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in regeneration without offering a systematic defence of his position.

The renewal of both mind and will enables the sinner to answer the gospel call. Now that the ‘outer door of the understanding’ and the ‘inner door of the will’ have been opened by the Holy Spirit, the ‘chief work’ of regeneration is done (VIII, 149; cf. I, 564, 568; III, 104, 106). In the state of grace, unlike the state of nature, the role of the understanding as the leading faculty is implicit rather than explicit. But, as Boston makes clear in his catechetical discourse on ‘Effectual Calling’, ‘as in the first creation, so in the second creation’ God begins his work with the mind (I, 564). By preaching about the doctrinal reorientation of the renewed will he makes the transformation of the understanding logically prior to the transformation of the will. In regeneration, the will is made to conform with the ‘preceptive will’ of God, so that the ‘whole law is impressed on the gracious soul: every part of it is written on the renewed heart’ (VIII, 148). Furthermore, the renewed will is ‘reconciled to the covenant of peace’, having a new satisfaction with its terms and conditions (VIII, 148). Since the volitional dimension of conversion entails a changed *understanding* of the biblical doctrines of law and covenant, Boston’s doctrine of regeneration in the *Fourfold State* is implicitly intellectualist.

In keeping with the work’s persistent focus on personal unity, the new-making of the ‘unmade man’ by regeneration also extends to the lesser faculties of the soul. Boston gives particular attention to the ‘happy change made on the affections’ in regeneration (VIII,

⁵⁵ Thomas Boston, *The Straying State and Condition of Mankind Sinners, Together with the Care of the Chief Shepherd in Returning them; and Curing their Straying Disposition, in Two Sermons, from 1 Pet.ii.25*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, n.d.), p. 11. See also Abdn MS, 47; *Works*, I, 562, 645; III, 103; IV, 11-21; V, 355; VII, 88; VIII, 131, 148, 202, 479.

149). Since ‘grace turns the affections upside down, whenever it comes into the heart’, regeneration rectifies the natural disorder of the affections (VIII, 151). Now that the ‘main stream of his desires is turned to run towards God’, the believer has a new passion for Christ, holiness, grace, glory, eternal life, the ordinances of God, the brethren, and even his enemies (VIII, 149-50). These new desires are accompanied by a hatred towards and fear of sin. Where once the affections were ‘naturally exorbitant’ and apt to ‘overjoy’ or ‘sorrow overmuch’, they are now newly ‘regulated’. Mixing his metaphors liberally, Boston preaches that ‘grace bridles these affections, clips their wings, and keeps them within bounds, that they overflow not all their banks’ (VIII, 150).

Regeneration has the further effect of enlightening the conscience, transforming the memory, and consecrating the body. The candle of the Lord is ‘now snuffed and brightened’ in the conscience, so that

[. . .] it shines, and sends forth its light into the most retired corners of the heart; discovering sins which the soul was not aware of before: and, in a special manner, discovering the corruption or depravity of nature [. . .] (VIII, 151)

Regeneration is the loud voice which awakens the sleeping conscience of the sinful nature and makes it ‘tender, in point of sin and duty’. The ‘renewed conscience drives the sinner to Jesus Christ’, who alone can ‘draw out the sting of guilt’ and ‘purge the conscience from dead works’ (VIII, 152). Likewise, ‘[a]s the memory wanted not its share of depravity, it is also bettered by regenerating grace’. It is simultaneously ‘weakened, with respect to those things that are not worth their room therein’ and ‘strengthened for spiritual things’. Sensitive to educational deficiencies in his parish, Boston views the regeneration of the memory as a particular blessing for those of limited intellectual ability, since grace makes ‘a heart-memory, even where there is no good head-memory’ (VIII, 152). He mentions the regenerative change made on the body more briefly. The eye, the ear, and the tongue have been ‘consecrated to the Lord’ by regeneration. ‘In a word, the whole man is for God, in soul and body, which by this blessed change are made his’ (VIII, 153). In Boston’s ‘new made’ man, every aspect of the human person has been transformed from the state of nature to the state of grace by regeneration.

Rather than simply presenting regeneration as a recapitulation of fallen man, however, Boston goes beyond soul and body to teach that regeneration ‘shines forth in the conversation’ of the believer. Here again, he is using the concept of regeneration to refer

both to the sinner's entrance into the state of grace (conversion) and to the believer's ongoing condition in that state (sanctification). Regeneration makes a change in the believer's company, so that he exchanges 'unnecessary familiarity with wicked men' for the blessed company of the saints. Regeneration makes a similarly gracious change in the performance of his 'relative duties' as a member of family, church, and nation. Furthermore, since the regenerate are 'carrying on a trade with heaven', their hearts are no longer 'swallowed up' in worldly business. Instead, they are sanctified in their 'concern for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world', 'use of lawful comforts', and performance of religious duties (VIII, 153-56).

Boston's inclusion of the 'conversation' alongside the faculties of the soul which are transformed by regenerating grace has pastoral significance. First, the fact that this section of the *Fourfold State* shows the effect of regeneration on 'every part of a man's conversation' is typical of his anti-Antinomian emphasis on Christian obedience (VIII, 153). The spiritual change effected in conversion leads immediately and ineluctably to practical godliness. Second, his preaching about the effect of regeneration upon the believer's 'conversation' illuminates the *corporate* dimension of salvation. Rather than preaching solely about the believer's new relationship with God, Boston stresses the effect of regeneration upon the believer's relationships at home, in the church, and in the world. The corporate dimension of redemption becomes especially clear when he preaches that 'love of the brethren' is a 'mark of regeneration' (VIII, 160; cf. I, 633; II, 495; VIII, 574). The fact that his preaching continually confronts the listener with the necessity of making a personal decision to receive or reject Christ should not obscure the fact that he also preaches about the corporate implications of salvation. The 'new made' man is not conceived of individualistically,⁵⁶ but in relationship to both God and man.

III. 'TRY YOUR STATE BY WHAT HAS BEEN SAID'

Thomas Boston devotes fully half of his sermon 'On Regeneration' in the *Fourfold State* to the *application* of the doctrine of the new birth. In keeping with his pastoral intentions, he invites his hearers to 'try whether [they] are in the state of grace or not' (VIII, 159; cf. III,

⁵⁶ Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', p. 305, views Boston's treatment of the covenant as 'individualistic' and 'non-corporate'.

41-42). Regeneration is the *sine qua non* of salvation, the divine act by which sinners are translated from the state of nature to the state of grace:

If you are brought out of the state of wrath or ruin, into the state of grace or salvation, you are new creatures, you are born again. (VIII, 159)

The application of the doctrine of regeneration, therefore, lies at the structural and pastoral centre of the *Fourfold State*. Because the new birth marks the transition from nature to grace, determining whether or not one has been born again becomes a fundamental spiritual task.

Boston anticipates that his hearers and readers will respond with this question: 'How shall we know whether we are born again, or not?'. He answers first by telling them to look into their own hearts for evidence of grace. Since 'grace is light, and discovers itself', it is as easy to determine if one has been born again as it is to determine if the sun has risen. All a person needs to do is to look for the inward transformation of the faculties of his soul by regenerating grace. If the mind has been 'illuminated in the knowledge of God', if the will has been given a 'new turn', if the affections have been 'rectified', if the conscience has been 'enlightened and awakened', if the memory has been 'sanctified', and the body 'consecrated to the service of God', then the individual has certainly been born again (VIII, 159-60). In short, everything that Boston has already said to define the doctrine of regeneration is now summarized and applied to the hearer as a means of spiritual diagnosis, assisting him in the trial of his state.

The way that Boston frames the question of the knowledge of one's conversion challenges the assumption that Reformed preaching about predestination is responsible for generating doubts about personal salvation. James B. Torrance, for example, speaks disparagingly of the 'introspective tradition of self-examination for evidences of election in Westminster Calvinism'.⁵⁷ Donald Bruggink applies this criticism directly to Boston,

⁵⁷ J. B. Torrance, 'Strengths and Weaknesses', pp. 47-48. Bell puts it like this: 'The obvious questions, which were constantly asked, concerned how one can know if he is one of the elect [. . .]' (p. 10; cf. pp. 83, 97, 103-104, 154). This viewpoint is ubiquitous in scholarship on Reformed and Puritan theology: McKee, p. 176; Barth, II.II. 338-39; Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. by Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1956), pp. 170-71; Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 320-22; Chalker, pp. 60, 67, 198; Woodruff, p. 172; John S. Bray, 'The Value of Works in the Theology of Calvin and Beza', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 4 (1973), 77-86 (pp. 85); John S. Bray, *Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination*, Bibliotheca Humanistica & Reformatorica, XII (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1975), pp. 110-11; Kendall, *English Calvinism*, pp. 1, 4-7, 29-31, 54-55, 59, 66-69; R. T. Kendall, 'The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology', in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. by W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 197-214 (p. 203); Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification: From 1500 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 112-15; Von Rohr, p. 122; Weir, p. 155;

arguing that insofar as his doctrine of assurance directed men to ‘test their works for evidence that they were among the elect, it failed completely to give assurance’.⁵⁸ The implication is that the doctrine of election raises unique questions about one’s destiny. Boston does stand in the strongly predestinarian tradition of Reformed theology.⁵⁹ Accordingly, like Calvin,⁶⁰ he does sometimes address the question of assurance in terms of election, concluding that knowledge of personal election is ‘a secret not to be known by us, until once we believe’ (VIII, 541; cf. I, 313; II, 16; VIII, 405-406, 523; *Straying State*, 14). In the *Fourfold State*, however, Boston is primarily concerned with the *present* spiritual condition of his hearers, whether they are now in the state of wrath or the state of grace. He does not, therefore, express the question of their salvation in terms of the divine decree. He expects his hearers’ anxiety about their eternal state to be generated not genetically, by the doctrine of election (‘How shall we know whether we are among the elect, or not?’), but existentially, by the doctrine of regeneration (‘How shall we know whether we are born again, or not?’).

Boston’s sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed sources reveal that he is not unique in his approach to assurance. His predecessors are as likely to frame the question of assurance in terms of regeneration, faith, salvation, perseverance, or eternal life as they are in terms of election.⁶¹ Turretin simultaneously recognizes the danger of pursuing assurance of election directly and suggests an alternative approach :

Ut fidelis sciat quid ab æterno de se Deus decreverit, vel quid in æternum ab ipso sperare debeat, non debet temere in arcana Dei irrumpere; Sed ex cognitione status præsentis, facile potest & præteritum & futurum colligere [. . .] atque ita certitudo salutis, quæ tria includit, certitudinem electionis præteritæ, gratiæ præsentis, & gloriæ futuræ, non aliunde potest haberi quam ex sensu gratiæ præsentis.⁶²

Michael Jenkins, ‘Theodore Beza: Continuity and Regression in the Reformed Tradition’, *Evangelical Quarterly*, 64 (1992), 131-54 (pp. 149-51). Boston himself would have encountered similar objections in both the Arminian writings of Laurence Womack, p. 74, and the Antinomian writings of John Saltmarsh, p. 117.

⁵⁸ Bruggink, ‘Thomas Boston’, p. 345 (cf. pp. 321-23, 314-23).

⁵⁹ For strong presentations of predestination in Boston’s sources, see especially Zanchius, II, 476-580, VII, 266-74, 279-346; *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ*, I; and Polyandrus, XXV.

⁶⁰ Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, III.XXIV.iii-v.

⁶¹ For examples, see Beza, IV.XIII; *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ*, V.IX; Culverwell, p. 57; Preston, *Works*, p. 688; Dickson and Durham, *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, p. 339; Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, p. 216; Bayly, pp. 84-85; Brooks, pp. 54-59; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 67; Robert Craighead, *Advice to Communicants* (Edinburgh, 1695), pp. 22, 115-16.

⁶² Turretin, IV.XIII.xx (cf. IV.XIII.viii, XV.XVII.vi).

In large measure, the assumption that election dominates pastoral care appears to rest on the prior assumption that the doctrine of the decrees governs Reformed theology and preaching. But for Boston, as for others in the Reformed tradition, the question of one's eternal destiny can be sufficiently answered on the basis of one's present estate, without reference to divine election. As he affirms in one of his early sermons, 'people may know which state they are in whether gracious or graceless' (Abdn MS, 262; cf. V, 301; VII, 119; VIII, 66). Since the divine purpose for the elect includes their regeneration by the Holy Spirit, since the internal evidence of that regeneration is unmistakable, and since the state of grace inevitably gives way to the state of glory, the believer's knowledge of his present spiritual condition necessarily entails knowledge of his past election and future glorification.⁶³ Although Boston adheres to a strong doctrine of election (e.g. I, 301-13, 427), he does not sense a need, either pastorally or theologically, to make the implications of that doctrine explicit at every point in his preaching.

The *Fourfold State* also challenges the assumption that Reformed preaching, particularly in the Puritan tradition, relied on the practical syllogism as the primary means to determine one's spiritual estate.⁶⁴ According to the practical syllogism, or *sylogismus practicus*, certainty of salvation rests upon the external evidence provided by good works. The biblical description of the regenerate life functions as the major premise, evidence that one is living such a life as the minor premise, and personal assurance of salvation as the conclusion. Thomas Boston would have encountered something like a practical syllogism in Beza's *Confession of Faith*, which teaches that 'as much as to knowe certainly this regeneration we must come to y fruits therof'.⁶⁵

One perceived danger of the *sylogismus practicus* is that it might become reversed in the minds of parishioners, fostering hypocrisy and legalism by making external works of obedience the basis of salvation.⁶⁶ In point of fact, Boston's Reformed sources are keenly

⁶³ See Boston, Abdn MS, 262-63; *Works*, I, 308, 553; II, 491; III, 44; IV, 550; V, 309; VII, 119; VIII, 343; X, 51.

⁶⁴ See Kendall, *English Calvinism*, pp. 8-9; Kendall, 'Puritan Modification', pp. 207-208; Bell, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Beza, IV.XIII (cf. IV.XVII). For further examples, see Musculus, pp. 483-85, 510-11, 560; Beza and Faius, XXVII.1; Melville, p. 48; Ursinus, p. 358, 512; Zanchius, II, 507, 509; Culverwell, p. 50; Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 107; Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, pp. 4, 407-408; Gibbon, *Morning Exercise*, p. 393; Ambrose, p. 459; Turretin, IV.XIII.iv; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XI.xxvi-xxxv; Craighead, p. 116.

⁶⁶ See Miller, *Seventeenth Century*, p. 53; Bell, p. 31; and Randall C. Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), pp. 6-7, 222, 246, who fails to give later Calvinists the careful reading he gives to Calvin.

sensitive to this danger, and reject formulations of the *sylogismus practicus* which make external evidence of regeneration the foundation for assurance. Samuel Rutherford denies that Reformed theologians labour ‘*to draw assurance of a good spirituall estate from outward reformation*’. This is because external evidences of salvation ‘are onely land-marks, by which we may the better judge of our state, and not the shoare’.⁶⁷ Recognizing the limitations of external obedience, John Preston turns the practical syllogism on its head:

It is not a good affirmative Argument, if the outside be good, the inside will be good also: but it is a good negative Argument, if the outside be not clean, the inside cannot be clean.⁶⁸

Instead, Preston adopts a form of the *sylogismus mysticus*,⁶⁹ in which assurance of salvation is based on *internal* criteria, such as a heartfelt recognition of ‘the odiousness in sin’, the ‘vanity in the world’, and the ‘vileness in an evil man’.⁷⁰ Similarly, Thomas Shepard emphasizes the ‘*great internal difference between sincere-hearted Virgins and the closest Hypocrites*’.⁷¹ For Herman Witsius, it is the Holy Spirit who proves the facts necessary for assurance, speaking with ‘claritas’, ‘majestas’, and ‘efficacitas’, and ‘*quima & intima cordis virtute insuperabili penetrat*’.⁷²

Thomas Boston is capable of employing syllogistic reasoning in his sermons, as when he makes the Word of God the ‘rule’ according to which a person can tell his state (Abdn MS, 262). Furthermore, by including ‘walking in newness of life’ among the evidences of a gracious state (VIII, 159; cf. X, 51), the *Fourfold State* allows good works to play a role in nurturing the believer’s assurance of salvation. Yet because he is wary of the dangers of hypocrisy, Boston places much greater stress on the internal marks of regeneration: ‘And, would you know if the light be risen in your heart? Look in, and see’. The eyes of the regenerate have been ‘turned inward’ to see their corruption by nature and to discover ‘an aversion to sin, and an inclination to good’ (VIII, 159; cf. 166-67). This

⁶⁷ Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 81, 84.

⁶⁸ Preston, *Works*, p. 692.

⁶⁹ For the distinction between the *sylogismus practicus* and the *sylogismus mysticus*, see G. C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election*, trans. by Hugo Bekker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 286; Letham, ‘Saving Faith’, I, 14; or Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation*, American University Studies, Series VII, Theology and Religion, 89 (London: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 159-62.

⁷⁰ Preston, *Works*, p. 690 (cf. p. 688). For further examples of the *sylogismus mysticus* in Boston’s sources, see Musculus, p. 510; Ursinus, pp. 33, 346; *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ*, I.XII; Culverwell, pp. 45, 57-67; Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, p. 216; Sedgwick, p. 323; Turretin, IV.XIII.iv, XV.VIII.x, XV.XVII.vi-vii, xvii, xxvii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.IV.xxxviii.

⁷¹ Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 116. Cf. Ursinus, p. 346; Sedgwick, pp. 322-23.

⁷² Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XI.xxxviii.

internal basis for assurance in the *Fourfold State* coheres with his insistence elsewhere that the 'difference betwixt the godly and others lies not in externals, but in internals'.⁷³ For Boston, the inward transformation of the dispositions of the soul provides the best evidence that one is in the state of grace, evidence that is impossible for the hypocrite to counterfeit. By emphasizing inward dispositions over external works as the basis for assurance of faith, Boston replaces the *syllogismus practicus* with the *syllogismus mysticus*.

Boston counsels his parishioners to 'improve' these marks of regeneration by using them to come to a sure knowledge of their spiritual state. Towards this end, he suggests that they set apart time to consider their spiritual cases 'deliberately and leisurely' when they are alone in the 'fields and outhouses'. Trial of one's state is to include 'earnest and serious prayer to God for his help', renewed repentance, and exertion of the 'powers of the new nature' to 'comply with every known duty, and watch against every known sin'. The result of this trial in the gracious soul will be the 'comfortable issue' of assurance of salvation. By contrast, the result of this trial for unbelievers will be a 'timely discovery of their own sinfulness'.

The prayer for divine assistance that initiates this process is worth underscoring, since self-examination in the Reformed tradition is often portrayed as an attempt to provide a subjective basis for assurance of salvation. M. Charles Bell has not been alone in arguing that later Calvinists 'turned [man] back on himself to examine himself', replacing Calvin's Christological basis for faith and assurance with a 'subjective base *intra nos* in our own sanctification, and thus one lost the possibility of certainty'.⁷⁴ But this is to misunderstand both Calvin and later Reformed theologians, for whom assurance is based on *divine* activity -- within as well as without the soul -- and not simply on human initiative. The work of Christ *intra nos* is capable of providing subordinate certainty just because it is the

⁷³ Boston, *Works*, IX, 341 (cf. 'Passages', 5; Abdn MS, 228; *Works*, I, 553-55, 572, 633; II, 16-18, 492-95; III, 42-43, 52, 59-64; IV, 536; V, 88-90, 307-309; VI, 303-304; VII, 120, 319n-21n; VIII, 202-203, 568; X, 361, 420-21; XII, 215-16, 398-99).

⁷⁴ Bell, p. 10 (cf. pp. 8, 28-29, 106, 161). For similar arguments, see Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 316-19; Niesel, p. 181; Chalker, pp. 79, 121; Woodruff, pp. 174-75; Bray, *Theodore Beza*, p. 108; R. T. Kendall, 'The Teaching of William Perkins and his Followers', in *Living the Christian Life* (London: The Westminster Conference, 1974), pp. 45-60 (p. 52); Kendall, *English Calvinism*, pp. 25-26, 32-38, 75, 161, 204-208; A. N. S. Lane, 'Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance', *Vox Evangelica*, 11 (1979), 32-54 (pp. 46-48); Letham, 'Saving Faith', I, 367; J. B. Torrance, 'Strengths and Weaknesses', pp. 47-48; Lane, 'Quest', pp. 103-105; and Cohen, pp. 10-11.

fruit of the work of Christ *extra nos*.⁷⁵ For Boston, assurance is grounded not in the soul, but in the application of the objective work of Christ by the Holy Spirit in the soul (cf. III, 42-44, 59; VIII, 52). Rather than the *practice* of self-examination, therefore, it is the 'neglect of self-examination' which

[. . .] leaves most men under sad delusions as to their state, and deprives many saints of the comfortable sight of the grace of God in them. (VIII, 161-62)

Because the primary evidence that one has been regenerated into a state of grace is internal, the trial of estate advocated by Boston is necessarily introspective. Yet his preaching resists morbid introspection by stressing the corporate dimension of regeneration and the objective basis of assurance in the work of Christ.

In a further attempt to help his hearers determine whether or not they are regenerate, Boston considers eight hypothetical 'cases', or conditions of spiritual doubt. Although he also uses exemplary cases elsewhere in his preaching, the *Fourfold State* is his most concentrated attempt to employ casuistry as a homiletical strategy. The strategy itself is one aspect of Boston's inheritance from English Puritanism and Scottish Presbyterianism.⁷⁶ David Dickson's *Therapeutica Sacra* was Boston's most complete model of case divinity, but many of his sources exposed him to the Reformed tradition of pastoral care directed toward spiritual cases.

The cases considered in the *Fourfold State* are intended to help 'true Christians' come to a 'comfortable view of their happy state' (VIII, 162). Boston is particularly alert to dispelling uncomfortable doubts raised by the deceptiveness of hypocrisy. He considers, for example, the case of one who still has strong affections for 'created enjoyments', and therefore fears that

⁷⁵ This connection has been recognized in Calvin and others by Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), pp. 301-303; Strickland, pp. 149-53; Stoecker, pp. 126-27; Lane, 'Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance', pp. 34-36; Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, p. 28; Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, pp. 25-26; R. M. Hawkes, 'The Logic of Assurance in English Puritan Theology', *Westminster Theological Journal*, 52 (1990), 247-61 (p. 250); Beeke, pp. 68, 72-86, 152-53, 156-69, 163-68, 172-73; D. Willis-Watkins, 'The Unio Mystica and the Assurance of Faith According to Calvin', in *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag: Festschrift für Wilhelm Neuser zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Willem van 't Spijker (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), pp. 77-84; Zachman, pp. 211-14, 219-21, 246; and Kwang-Woong Yu, 'Syllogismus practicus bei Calvin', in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture*, ed. by Wilhelm H. Neuser (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 256-69 (p. 263).

⁷⁶ On Puritan casuistry, see Thomas Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity During the Seventeenth Century* (London: SPCK, 1952), Norman Keith Clifford, 'Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism During the Seventeenth Century: Its Origins, Development and Significance' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1957), and Richard A. Muller, 'Covenant and Conscience in English Reformed Theology: Three Variations on a 17th Century Theme', *Westminster Theological Journal*, 42 (1980), 308-34.

[. . .] all the love which I ever had to the Lord has been but a fit and flash of affection, such as hypocrites often have. (VIII, 164)

Another case concerns one who is discouraged by the ‘attainments of hypocrites and apostates’ from having a favourable view of his own ‘marks of grace’ (VIII, 166). It is unclear whether Boston is simply anticipating doubts which his parishioners might have or is using cases actually presented to him during pastoral visitation. In the latter case, his frequent warnings that ‘people may seem to be in the faith and in a gracious estate who are not’ may have prompted the very anxieties he later found it necessary to dispel (Abdn MS, 262). In any case, one of his primary goals in preaching on regeneration is to assure those who have already come into the state of grace that they are truly regenerate.

IV. THE EVANGELICAL THOMAS BOSTON

A second primary goal of Boston’s preaching on regeneration, and of the *Fourfold State* as a whole, is to convince those who are still in the state of nature to come into the state of grace by faith. Because he is conscious that he is preaching to a mixed congregation comprised of both saints and sinners, he invariably divides the application of his sermons into separate ‘uses’ for believers and unbelievers. This discrimination assumes particular urgency in the application of regeneration, which marks the transition from unbelief to belief:

You that are strangers to this new birth, be convinced of the absolute necessity of it. Are all who are in the state of grace born again? then you have neither part nor lot of it, who are not born again. I must tell you in the words of our Lord and Saviour, and O that he would speak them to your hearts! ‘You *must* be born again,’ John iii. 7 (VIII, 170; cf. ‘Simplim’, 49-63; VIII, 42, 87).

Eschewing vague or indiscriminate application, Boston confronts unbelievers with the absolute necessity of regeneration.

Boston’s preaching on the new birth helps to establish his credentials as an evangelical minister. Properly speaking, the rise of Evangelicalism coincided with the Evangelical Awakening and with the rise of Moderatism in Britain in the 1730’s and afterwards.⁷⁷ Since he died before these movements were fully underway, it is somewhat anachronistic to speak of Thomas Boston as an ‘Evangelical’. Nevertheless, ‘evangelical’

⁷⁷ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), p. 1.

remains a helpful descriptive term for his preaching. The recurring invitation to be born again into a new life in Christ distinguishes the *Fourfold State* as an evangelical book. In this respect it retains the distinctively evangelistic flavour of the Puritan sermons of Thomas Shepard, Isaac Ambrose, Stephen Charnock,⁷⁸ and the *Morning Exercise*. For these ministers, the doctrine of the new birth is the ‘A, B, C, of Christian religion’.⁷⁹ In the words of the Scottish Presbyterian James Durham, an evangelical minister

[. . .] is zealous to get His message received; and, in sum, to get them saved: therefore weightily doth He follow it, inviting, exhorting, pressing and protesting as unwilling to be refused. This indeed is a fountain-qualification of a Preacher, to be travelling in birth till Christ be formed in hearers; and so to Preach to them, as hungering and thirsting for their Salvation [. . .]⁸⁰

Such zeal was characteristic of Thomas Boston as he patterned his preaching ministry after Oliver Bowles’ *De Pastore Evangelico*. Since Evangelicalism was itself partly rooted in Puritanism,⁸¹ it is not surprising that Boston’s preaching was as evangelical as it was Puritan.

An awareness of the role of preaching in conversion runs throughout Boston’s *Works*. Already in his 1699 *Soliloquy on the Art of Man-fishing* (V, 5-43), he prays:

But yet seeing I am called out to preach this everlasting gospel, it is my duty to endeavour, and it is my desire to be (Lord, thou knowest) a fisher of men. (V, 6; cf. 11, 27)

It is also here that Boston expresses his desire to emulate Christ’s ‘compassion on the multitude’ and to be ‘much affected’ with the case of the lost (V, 30; cf. XI, 324). In the sermon ‘Gospel-Compulsion’ (VI, 279-93), he expounds the doctrine that ‘[i]t is the great work of ministers to compel sinners, in a gospel-way, to come in to Christ’ (VI, 281; cf. IV, 79). Elsewhere he begins a sermon by reminding his parishioners that the ‘great and main object of the gospel preaching and gospel practice, is a coming to Christ’ (IX, 169; cf. IV, 148; VI, 280, 440). The same concern undergirds his commitment to issuing the free offer of the gospel to all sinners, ‘clogged with no conditions’ (VIII, 73; cf. VI, 287; X, 95, 198). His decision to publish his sermons on the fourfold state was ultimately motivated by his concern for ‘perishing souls’ (XII, 238; cf. 402). By insisting on the necessity of

⁷⁸ Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 7-335.

⁷⁹ Ambrose, p. 1.

⁸⁰ Durham, *Revelation*, p. 265

⁸¹ Bebbington, p. 35. Although Alan Simpson, *Puritanism in Old and New England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), may overstate the case for regeneration as the distinguishing Puritan doctrine, he is at least successful in showing that preaching for conversion is a hallmark of Puritanism (pp. 2, 39, 108). See also Morgan, *Puritan Spirituality*, pp. 12, 26, and Cohen, pp. 2, 5, 23.

regeneration for unbelievers, therefore, the *Fourfold State* exemplifies Boston's understanding of the evangelistic dimension of his preaching ministry.

Boston defends the necessity of regeneration with three propositions that echo the nature-grace-glory structure of the *Fourfold State*. First, regeneration is a prerequisite for performing 'any thing really good and acceptable to God'. Because they are still in the state of nature, the unregenerate are incapable of pleasing God:

While you are not born again, your best works are but glittering sins; for though the matter of them is good, they are quite marred in the performance. (VIII, 170)

Lacking the true faith which comes from regenerating grace, sinners can produce only 'dead works', which Boston compares to the 'unsavoury' breath produced by rotten lungs. Fasting, reformation, prayer, and work done for the cause of God in the world are all 'lost as to divine acceptance' for the unregenerate man, because 'God looks chiefly to the heart' and sees that the 'hidden man' of the unregenerate heart is 'loathsome'. Regeneration is necessary because being 'born again' is the transformation which differentiates gracious actions from natural hypocrisy (VIII, 170-71).

Boston anticipates his preaching on the doctrine of union with Christ by making 'communion with God' a second reason for the necessity of regeneration. The unregenerate are excluded from the society of those who have fellowship with God and Christ; that is to say, they lack the primary blessing of the state of grace: union with Christ. Boston laments the condition of those who are 'employed in religious duties', yet 'have no fellowship with God in them' because they have not been regenerated (VIII, 172).

Finally, '[n]one go to heaven but those who are made meet for it' by regeneration.⁸² Boston thus presents regeneration as a qualification for the state of glory as well as the state of grace. Those who have not been transformed into 'lively stones' by the new birth 'cannot be laid in that glorious building just as they come out of the quarry of depraved nature'. The difficulty is not simply that the unregenerate are ineligible for glory, but that they themselves 'would find fault with heaven on several accounts'. Heaven is a 'strange country' to unrenewed men because it has not become their 'native country' by heavenly rebirth:

⁸² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 172 (cf. Abdn MS, 263; *Works*, v, 97, 105, 253; VIII, 87; X, 320-21).

Regeneration as preparation for heaven is also a strong theme in Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 48-57.

Every corner there is filled with that which of all things they have the least liking for; and that is holiness, true holiness, perfect holiness. (VIII, 173)

The unremitting holiness of heavenly pleasures 'would mar all to the unregenerate'. They would have an equal dislike of the godly company of heaven, the doxological employment of heaven, and the everlasting duration of heaven (VIII, 172-73).

Even if 'carnal men could digest all those things which make heaven so unsuitable for them', however, 'God will never bring them thither'. The reason for this is that such men have not been regenerated. On the basis of John 3.3 ('Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'), Boston proclaims to the unregenerate: 'There is a bill of exclusion against you in the court of heaven, and against all of your sort'. Drawing further attention to the connection between regeneration and sanctification, he explains that unbelievers are excluded from glory because they are unholy. Since there is 'no holiness without regeneration', and 'no heaven without holiness', there can be no heaven without regeneration:

Be not deceived; grace and glory are but two links of one chain, which God has joined, and no man shall put asunder. None are transplanted into the paradise above, but out of the nursery of grace below. (VIII, 174; cf. Abdn MS, 196; V, 98; X, 30)

The effects of regeneration extend into the state of man's consummate glory.

Boston also uses his preaching on regeneration to anticipate hell as the final state of the unregenerate. Because the unregenerate have not been united to Christ, they are 'without Christ', and consequently have no basis for eternal hope. Just as grace and glory are 'but two links of one chain', so there is an 'infallible connexion between a finally unregenerate state and damnation, arising from the nature of the things themselves'. The dispositions which make the depraved unfit for heaven also make them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the damned'. The unbeliever's 'heart of stone' is a 'sinking weight' which already 'tends downward to the bottomless pit'. The present searing of the guilty conscience is a 'sad presage of everlasting burnings'. Likewise, the unfruitfulness of the unregenerate under the means of grace prepares them 'for the axe of God's judgments' (VIII, 175). Because regenerating grace has not yet transformed 'horrid ignorance' into 'spiritual light', Boston describes the unregenerate mind as 'darkness! darkness! darkness! making way for the blackness of darkness for ever!' (VIII, 176). The unregenerate are as well-suited for damnation as they are ill-suited for glory.

Already in his preaching on regeneration, Boston displays his ability to use vivid language and striking metaphors to describe the fate of the reprobate. An unregenerate state is 'eternal destruction in embryo, growing daily'. The inevitability of hell for the unregenerate means that 'death is painted on many a fair face, in this life'. He employs similarly graphic imagery in his direct appeals to unregenerate hearers and readers:

Your being dead in sin, makes you meet to be wrapped in flames of brimstone, as a winding-sheet; and to be buried in the bottomless pit, as in a grave. (VIII, 175)

That such hellish rhetoric has a serious, pastoral intent is evident from the concluding evangelistic appeal:

Thus you see what affinity there is between an unregenerate state, and the state of the damned, the state of absolute and irretrievable misery. Be convinced, then, that you must be born again; put a high value on the new birth, and eagerly desire it. (VIII, 176)

Boston's purpose in portraying the miserable destination of the unregenerate is not simply to elicit terror, but the affective response of desire for the new birth. By looking ahead to the eternal state, Boston returns his hearers to their present necessity of getting out of the state of nature and into the state of grace by being born again.

VI. THE STATE OF GRACE AS UNION WITH CHRIST

I. UNION WITH CHRIST OR UNION WITH ADAM

Thomas Boston's 'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers' is linked thematically and structurally with earlier sermons in the *Fourfold State* (VIII, 177-231). The 'holiness' and 'happiness' which belonged to Adam in the state of innocence were not simply forfeited by his disobedience, but exchanged for the 'sin' and 'misery' of the state of nature. Having preached regeneration as the remedy for the *sin* of nature, Boston preaches union with Christ as the remedy for the *misery* of nature. Union with Christ is a change made on believers 'in opposition to their natural relative state, the state of misery' (VIII, 177; cf. 138).

The text for Boston's sermon is John 15.5 ('I am the vine, ye are the branches'), a text which 'very plainly and fully' teaches the 'doctrine of the saints' union with Christ'.¹ Although points of comparison between Christ and the vine are numerous,

[. . .] that which is chiefly aimed at, in his comparing himself to a vine, is to represent himself as the supporter and nourisher of his people, in whom they live and bring forth fruit. (VIII, 178; cf. *Collection*, 117)

If Christ is the vine, then his disciples are 'branches knit to, and growing on this stock', drawing 'life and sap from it' (VIII, 178; cf. XI, 86). They are not natural to the vine, but

[. . .] ingrafted branches, which are branches cut off from the tree that first gave them life, and put into another, to grow upon it. (VIII, 178)

The conclusion that the branches of John 15 are ingrafted is an exegetical one, resting on the assertion that the word for branch in Greek (κλημα) denotes branches broken off 'from the tree that first gave them life'.²

'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers', since it is governed by the single New Testament metaphor of the vine and the branches, typifies Boston's attention to

¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 177-78 (cf. I, 546; II, 30, 477; IV, 183, 513; VII, 127; IX, 55). For examples of the use of John 15 for the doctrine of union with Christ in Boston's sources, see especially Zanchius, VI, 245, and VII, 504, 508, 530; Culverwell, p. 10; Dickson and Durham, *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, p. 342; Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, pp. 15, 25; Mr Lye, 'The True Believers Union with Christ Jesus', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 350-73 (p. 357); Sedgwick, pp. 185, 189; Owen, *Justification*, p. 179; Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, pp. 363, 456-57, 466; Essenius, XIV.IV; and Craighead, p. 58.

² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 178. Boston's emphasis on ingrafting, along with many other aspects of his doctrine of union with Christ, may have been borrowed from the exposition of Romans 6 in Brinsley's *Mystical Implantation* (pp. 2, 23, 26, 32). See also Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, p. 101.

biblical poetics.³ He presses his governing metaphor as far as it can be pressed, using the vine and the branches to encompass the full breadth of soteriology. Boston was sceptical of illustrations which were more memorable than the doctrinal truths they were intended to illustrate (XII, 99), but his scepticism did not result in unimaginative preaching. His reliance on biblical metaphors simultaneously enhances the imaginative dimension of his preaching and avoids the danger he perceived in illustrations which do not bear an intrinsic relationship to the biblical text. The vine and the branches do not simply *illustrate* the biblical teaching about the union between Christ and believers, they *constitute* the biblical teaching about that union.

The fact that John 15 has ingrafted branches in view -- rather than natural branches -- enables Boston to use the vine and the branches as a symbol for man's fourfold state:

DOCTRINE: They who are in the state of grace, are ingrafted in, and united to, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are taken out of their natural stock, cut off from it; and are now ingrafted into Christ, as the new stock. (VIII, 178; cf. II, 9, 476-77; IV, 296; VIII, 580-81)

Men are 'natural branches of the first Adam, that degenerate vine'. Yet all those who are brought out of the state of nature and into the state of grace must be 'broken off from their natural stock, and ingrafted into Christ, the true vine' (VIII, 178).

Boston identifies six characteristics of union with Christ. First, it is a 'spiritual union', in which Christ and the believer become 'one spirit', bound together by the 'one Spirit of God' which indwells them. Second, it is a 'real union', not an imaginary or fanciful union (VIII, 179; cf. I, 546; VIII, 468). It is only because of our present weakness and propensity to sin that we suspect union with Christ 'to be only a fiction'. But 'nothing is more real than what is spiritual, as approaching nearest to the nature of [. . .] God himself'. Third, it is an 'intimate union', participating in the intra-Trinitarian intimacy of Father and Son described in John 17 (VIII, 179). Fourth, it is a 'union supported by law'. Here Boston introduces covenantal vocabulary, describing Christ as the 'surety' of the believer, designated to satisfy the believer's debt to the law of God (cf. II, 255; VII, 185n, VIII, 426). On the basis of their union with Christ, believers are

³ For other Boston sermons structured around a single metaphor, see 'Worm Jacob Thrashing the Mountains' (VI, 328-40), 'Suitable Improvement of Christ the Apple Tree' (III, 165-79), 'The Crook in the Lot' (III, 497-590), and *Straying State*. The use of scriptural metaphors in preaching had been advocated in Oliver Bowles' *De Pastore Evangelico*, II, 64.

‘reckoned in law’ to have been crucified, buried, ascended, and seated in the heavenly places with Christ (VIII, 179-80). Fifth, it is an ‘indissoluble union’, a union which cannot be broken by Christ, the sinner, or even death:

[. . .] yea, though their souls should be separated from their bodies separated in a thousand pieces, [. . .] yet soul and body shall remain united to the Lord Christ. (VIII, 180; cf. I, 549; III, 604; IX, 487)

Finally, it is a ‘mysterious union’, as mysterious as the ‘substantial union of the three persons in one Godhead’ or ‘the hypostatical union of divine and human natures’ (VIII, 181).

It is at this point in the *Fourfold State* that the Incarnation of Christ comes clearly into focus. The union of divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ is not simply an analogy for the union between Christ and the believer, it is the very foundation of that union. Christ, the ‘supernatural stock’ of the vine, is the Mediator by whom ‘divine life is conveyed from the fountain, unto those who are united to him by faith’. This mediatorial work is carried out by Christ in both his divine and his human nature:

Wherefore Christ, God-man, is the stock, whereof believers are the branches: and they are united to a whole Christ. They are united to him in his human nature, as being ‘members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,’ Eph. v. 30. And they are united to him in his divine nature; for so the apostle speaks of this union, Col. i. 27, ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’. (VIII, 188; cf. I, 546-47; IV, 500; VII, 272n; IX, 209, 491, 520; X, 105)

Drawing on the connection Zanchius makes between the hypostatic union and the mystical union,⁴ Boston concludes that Christ ‘took into a personal union with himself a sinless human nature’, in order that he might ‘receive a fulness of the Spirit, of which he might communicate to his members’ (VIII, 212).

After this basic description of union with Christ, Boston takes his hearers and readers backwards in redemptive history in order to ‘take a view of the stock, which the branches are taken out of’. Although Christ is the ‘supernatural’ stock, he is not the only stock, for the ‘two Adams, that is, Adam and Christ, are the two stocks’.⁵

The first Adam then, is the natural stock: on this stock are the branches found growing at first, which are afterwards cut off, and ingrafted into Christ. (VIII, 181; cf. II, 502; III, 342-43; VIII, 178, 189, 497)

In the history of redemption, union with Adam precedes union with Christ.

⁴ Zanchius, VI, 242, 244; VII, 505. See also Turretin, XV.III.v, and Craighead, p. 62.

⁵ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 181 (cf. VIII, 391-93; XI, 186-88). Union with Adam or Christ as union with a stock is a strong theme in both Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, pp. 23-26, and Zanchius, VI, 234, 249.

The discussion of the two Adams as two stocks is a further example of the covenant motif in the *Fourfold State*. Earlier, in the section on the covenant of works in ‘The State of Nature, the Pauline concept of the ‘two Adams’ was conspicuous by its absence. In ‘Mystical Union between Christ and Believers’, however, both 1 Corinthians 15 (‘The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit’) and Romans 5 (‘By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin’) inform Boston’s preaching. Implicitly, these two Adams are federal representatives, ‘for the Scripture speaks of these two, as if there had been no more men in the world than they’ (VIII, 181; cf. I, 329; VIII, 391, 566; XI, 186, 244). The federal implications of the contrast between the two Adams become explicit when Boston reminds his hearers that the ‘bond which knit us unto the natural stock, was the covenant of works’ (VIII, 181; cf. 190). The relationship between the first Adam and his posterity is described in representative as well as in realistic terms. Adam was not only a ‘natural root’, but a ‘moral root also, bearing all his posterity, as representing them in the covenant of works’ (VIII, 181-82; cf. III, 342; XI, 186). Union with Adam, like union with Christ, is a federal union.⁶

Boston introduces this ‘peculiar relation between that one man and the many’ in order to provide a ‘foundation for imputing his sin to them’. A ‘mere natural bond between him and us’ would be insufficient for imputation, since ‘so we are related to our immediate parents, whose sins are not thereupon imputed to us’. Rather, the imputation of Adam’s sin is founded upon

[. . .] a moral bond between Adam and us: the bond of a covenant, which could be no other than the covenant of works, wherein we are united to him, as branches to a stock. (VIII, 182; cf. VII, 245n; VIII, 398; XI, 183, 235)

In the *Fourfold State* Boston does not take the natural step of establishing a connection between the imputation of Adam’s sin and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. He does make it clear, however, that Christ himself was not united to Adam in the covenant of works (VIII, 182; cf. 181). Here, in relation to the structure of federal theology, the virgin birth of Christ obtains its primary significance in Boston’s theology. The birth of Christ did not come ‘in virtue of the blessing of marriage, which was given before the

⁶ Bell, pp. 8-9, 79, 93, has tried to identify the notion of federal union as a legalistic intrusion into Reformed theology. Here the *Fourfold State* reveals, against Bell, that federal union is fully compatible with mystical union. This compatibility is especially evident in earlier covenant theologians such as Zanchius, V, 42-46, 55, VII, 397; Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, 208; Fergusson, II, 72; Sedgwick, p. 185; Owen, *Justification*, p. 179; and Turretin, XII.III.xiii.

fall', but 'in virtue of a special promise made after the fall', the *protevangelium* of Genesis 3.15.⁷

Boston uses the contrast between the two Adams to stress again the dichotomy between belief and unbelief. Every human being is *either* in union with Adam *or* in union with Christ, since

[. . .] there never were any that were not branches of one of these two; all men being either in the one stock or in the other: for in these two sorts all mankind stand divided [. . .] (VIII, 181; cf. II, 9; IV, 377; VIII, 566; XI, 254; X, 51, 246)

The division of mankind, formerly described as the division between the two states of nature and grace, is now described as the division between union with Christ and union with Adam. Just as it is impossible for a branch to grow in two vines at once, 'so no man can be at one and the same time, both in the first and second Adam'. This absolute distinction is a tool for personal, spiritual diagnosis. If all mankind are 'branches of the first Adam' by nature, then 'all who are not ingrafted in Jesus Christ, are yet branches of the old stock' (VIII, 181-82).

In order to show his parishioners the liability of union with Adam, Boston uses the vine and the branches to recapitulate his preaching on the states of innocence and nature. Originally, Adam 'was a vine of the Lord's planting, a choice vine, a noble vine, wholly good'. Because he was made in the image of God, there was 'sap and juice enough' in the Adamic stock 'to have nourished all the branches, to bring forth fruit unto God'. The metaphor of the vine and the branches is thus pressed back into the state of innocence, where 'Adam was made able perfectly to keep the commandments of God' and procure 'eternal life to himself, and all his posterity' (VIII, 182). But now, in the state of nature, the Adamic stock has become a corrupt stock, 'most unlike to what it was when planted by the Author of all good':

A blast from hell, and a bite with the venomous teeth of the old serpent, have made it a degenerate stock; a dead stock; nay, a killing stock. (VIII, 182; cf. II, 9; III, 380-81; VIII, 186)

Boston takes each of these horticultural calamities in turn. First, Adam 'is a degenerate evil stock', 'quite spoiled', and 'altogether naught'. The faculties of Adam's soul are in

⁷ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 182 (cf. I, 275, 400; XI, 186, 237-38). This idea may be found in Zanchius, IV, 40; Turretin, IX.IX.viii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, II.IV.x, IV.I.xviii; and Essenius, X.XXVII.

‘dreadful disorder’, leaving him ignorant in mind and rebellious in will (VIII, 182-83).

Second, as a result of the curse upon his disobedience, Adam is a ‘dead stock’:

The stroke has gone to the heart, the sap is let out, and the tree is withered. The curse of the first covenant, like a hot thunderbolt from heaven, has lighted on it, and ruined it. (VIII, 185)

Finally, man’s ‘natural stock is a killing stock’. Because the root ‘died in Paradise’ and is ‘poisoned’, all the branches which come from it are infected as well (VIII, 186).

Boston’s concern is not simply with Adam’s corruption, but with the effects of that corruption on the branches united to him. Because Adam is a ‘degenerate stock’, the branches which grow from him produce only ‘grapes of gall’, like the ‘wild grapes of wickedness’ of Isaiah 5.2 or the ‘fruit to themselves’ of Hosea 10.1 (VIII, 183; cf. Abdn MS, 168). Even the best fruits on the Adamic vine are characterized by ‘bitterness’, ‘ill savour’, ‘unripeness’, and ‘lightness’ (VIII, 183-84): ‘In one word, their fruits are fruits of an ill tree, that cannot be accepted in heaven’ (VIII, 185). Other branches united to Adam bear no fruit at all, for although the covenant of works is the ‘bond of our union with the natural stock’, it can no longer convey the sap of gracious influences from vine to branch. The ‘barrenness of many professors’ reveals that they are growing on a ‘dead stock of a tree’ (VIII, 185). These hypocrites may have the ‘leaves of a profession’, but they lack the ‘fruits of a holy practice’ (VIII, 183; cf. 380-81) ‘In vain do men labour to get fruit on the branches’, if they are still in union with Adam, for ‘there is no sap in the root’ (VIII, 185). Boston takes special notice of the inability of preaching to produce fruitful sanctification in those who are still in union with Adam:

The gardener’s pains are lost: ministers lose their labour on the branches of the old stock, while they continue on it. Many sermons are preached to no purpose; because there is no life to give sensation. (VIII, 185)

Worse still, Adam is a ‘killing stock’ as well as a ‘dead stock’, conveying a corrupt nature, an obligation to punishment, a curse, and actual death to all the branches of his posterity (VIII, 186-87).

If such evils are inevitably conveyed to ‘such of them as are not ingrafted in Christ’, then the central spiritual questions for Boston’s auditory become these: ‘Whether am I broken off from the old stock, or not?’ ‘Am I ingrafted in Christ, or not?’ (VIII, 186-87). The subsequent exhortation -- ‘Therefore let us look to our state’ (VIII, 188) -- reminds the hearer that the two ‘stocks’ are simply another way of speaking of the two

‘states’ of nature and grace. Since one is *either* in the state of nature *or* in the state of grace, *either* in union with Adam *or* in union with Christ,

[. . .] is it not absolutely necessary to be broken off from this our natural stock? What will our fair leaves of a profession, or our fruits of duties, avail, if we be still branches of the degenerate, dead, and killing stock? (VIII, 187; cf. 183)

II. CUT OFF FROM ADAM AND INGRAFTED INTO CHRIST

Before explaining *how* branches can be severed from their natural stock, Thomas Boston pauses to consider this question: ‘What branches are taken out of the natural stock, and grafted into this vine?’. His answer is that the elect ‘are grafted into Christ; and consequently none but they are cut off from the killing stock’ (VIII, 189; cf. 178).

Elsewhere, especially in the context of the Marrow Controversy, he argues that Christ has accomplished redemption only for the elect.⁸ Here, in the *Fourfold State*, he preaches that Christ *applies* redemption only to the elect, thereby establishing the closest possible connections between election in Christ, union with Christ, and the benefits of salvation in Christ. If Christ intercedes for the elect alone (John 17.9-23; cf. I, 446, 531; VIII, 562-63), and gives faith to the elect alone (Titus 1.1), then he unites himself to the elect alone (VIII, 189; cf. I, 447; IV, 365).

Boston uses the metaphor of pruning a vine to suggest that these elect are few in number:

The Lord passes by many branches growing on the natural stock, and cuts off only here one, and there one, and grafts them into the true vine, according as free love hath determined. Often does he pitch upon the most unlikely branch, leaving the top boughs [. . .] Yea, he often leaves the fair and smooth, and takes the rugged and knotty.⁹

The cutting off and grafting in of the elect can be attributed to ‘no other reason but because they were chosen in him’. It is sheerly on the basis of divine predestination that the elect are ‘gathered together in Christ, while the rest are left growing on their natural stock’ (VIII, 189).

Since he views divine election as the foundation for union with Christ, it is not surprising that Boston also ascribes cutting off from Adam and ingrafting into Christ to divine agency. How are the branches ‘cut off from the natural stock, the first Adam, and

⁸ See Boston, *Works*, I, 101, 310-11, 447, 531, 597; IV, 189; V, 48, 357; VI, 46, 297, 299; VII, 79, 169n, 240n-42n, 534-35; VIII, 404-405, 562-63; IX, 15, 105; X, 199.

⁹ Boston, *Works*, 189 (cf. III, 393; V, 196, 236, 320; VI, 474; X, 268-69, 274, 287-92, 353, 386-94, 555).

grafted into the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ'? 'Thanks to the Husbandman, not to the branch':

The sinner, in his coming off from the first stock, is passive, and neither can nor will come off from it of his own accord, but clings to it, till almighty power makes him to fall off. ¹⁰

Although the ordinary means of union with Christ is the 'ministry of the word', the 'efficacy thereof' is from God alone, 'whatever the minister's parts or piety be'. Even Christ and his apostles met with mixed success in their preaching, since

[t]he branches may be hacked by the preaching of the word; but the stroke will never go through, till it is carried home by the omnipotent arm. (VIII, 190)

Only the Holy Spirit can sever the sinner from his natural stock and bind him to Christ, the supernatural vine.

Surprisingly, the section of 'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers' which follows seems to teach that the sinner is not passive, but *active* in abandoning union with Adam for union with Christ. Boston describes twelve 'strokes' which progressively weaken and finally destroy the sinner's union with Adam. Before being cut off from the natural stock, the sinner first awakens to his lost condition, then 'forsakes his former profane courses', then 'turns to a positively holy course of life', then promises to watch against repeated sins, then seeks after 'inside religion', then 'falls to work to pacify an offended God' and atone for his sins by doing 'penance for what is past', then 'trusts that God will accept the will for the deed' when he fails to fulfill the law, then looks to Christ to 'make up all his defects' in fulfilling the law, then 'attempts to make a bargain with Christ' and to 'sell himself to the Son of God', then proudly begs at Christ's door for mercy while yet 'standing on his personal worth', and then considers himself as 'unworthy of the favour of God', yet fearfully refuses to 'come to the market of free grace, without money'.¹¹ Finally, poised 'between hope and despair', the sinner 'resolves to go to Christ as he is':

Thus at length he sees, that he can neither help himself by working, nor by believing; and having no more to hang by on the old stock, he therefore falls off. (VIII, 198)

Not until this point is the sinner 'taken up, and ingrafted in the true vine' (VIII, 198).

¹⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 189. Cf. Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, p. 28.

¹¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 190-98 (cf. V, 353-57). For a similar progression in one of Boston's sources, see Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, pp. 228-40.

Boston's lengthy description of how a sinner is cut off from Adam and ingrafted into Christ raises several issues of theological and homiletical importance. First, his preaching on union with Christ is reminiscent of the evangelicalism of his preaching on regeneration. When Boston comes to preach about union with Christ, he might be expected to focus on life within the state of grace, the life which follows the new birth. Instead, he recapitulates his preaching on getting out of the state of nature and into the state of grace, now describing conversion in terms of union with Christ rather than in terms of regeneration. Evangelism remains one of his primary purposes in 'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers'.

Second, because it describes conversion as a process, Boston's preaching on union with Christ again raises the possibility of preparation for conversion. On the one hand, since he preaches the passivity of the sinner in regeneration, he describes the twelve stages by which the sinner is cut 'off from the old stock' as 'the Lord's works on men' (VIII, 190). On the other hand, he portrays the sinner as active in his salvation, forsaking sin, pursuing holiness 'in his outward conversation', seeking pardon for sin, 'doing what he can to fulfil the law', and so forth (VIII, 190-98). At each successive stage the sinner comes closer to final separation from Adam and ingrafting into Christ. There is not really a contradiction here, since Boston makes it clear that the Holy Spirit alone effects union with Christ. At each stage, it is the 'Spirit of the Lord' who does the 'cutting of the branch from the natural stock', or 'comes to deal with a person' (VIII, 190), or 'gives yet a deeper stroke to the branch which is to be cut off' (VIII, 192; cf. 193-95, 198). Although he is active throughout process, the sinner does not make a positive contribution to conversion, but is shown the futility of all his efforts to achieve salvation. He is like the

[. . .] man who held the ship with his hands; and when one hand was cut off, held it with the other; and when both were cut off, held it with his teeth. (VIII, 190)

The Holy Spirit uses the law to carry out a similar work on the sinner until his grip on natural works is finally severed:

The Spirit of God convincingly discovers to the sinner his utter inability to do any thing that is good, and so he dieth. (VIII, 198; cf. I, 361, 565-66; VIII, 551)

Although the sinner is active in each of the twelve stages of conversion, these stages are designed to show, not the ability, but the inability of human activity to accomplish union

with Christ. It is the sinner's 'hope of making himself more fit to come to Christ' itself that must be destroyed (VIII, 198).

Third, there is a difficulty in determining whether Boston's twelve stages of union with Christ are merely descriptive or whether they are intended to be prescriptive as well. Is he explaining how union with Christ *could* happen, how it *does* happen, or how it *must* happen? On an initial reading, he appears to present the twelve stages as a normative morphology of conversion. He preaches indicatively rather than hypothetically about how a sinner *does* come into union with Christ, making no allowance for variety in the Christian's experience of conversion. The twelve stages of conversion are presented as consecutive steps to union with Christ, each a prerequisite for those which follow.

It is not until he has preached about all twelve stages of union with Christ that Boston admits that these are not the only possible stages. 'I would not', he says

[. . .] have this to be looked upon as the sovereign God's stinted method of breaking off sinners from the old stock. But this I maintain as a certain truth, that all who are in Christ have been broken off from all these several confidences; and that they who were never broken off from them, are yet in their natural stock. (VIII, 199; cf. 178)

What are initially presented as consecutive stages by which a sinner is cut off from the Adamic stock are actually designed to make the single point that the sinner cannot be united to Christ until his relationship to Adam is totally severed. The same strategy is often used by the Puritans, and Boston's admission that God does not have a 'stinted method' of regeneration serves as a warning against seeking for a normative 'morphology of conversion' in such preachers.¹² It is only the eventual conversion that matters, for

[. . .] if the house be pulled down, and the old foundation razed, it is much the same whether it was taken down stone by stone, or whether it was undermined, and all fell down together. (VIII, 199)

Boston is not interested so much in the process by which a sinner comes to realize his inability to save himself as he is in the realization itself.

The fact that Boston makes this qualification *after* he has described how union with Christ occurs is crucially important to his preaching strategy. By outlining the stages by which the Holy Spirit cuts the sinner away from the natural stock, he compels his hearers to place themselves within a conversion narrative. The twelve stages of

¹² Stoevers, pp. 124-25, issues a similar caveat; White, *Puritan Rhetoric*, pp. 10-13, is among those who have failed to recognize the difficulty.

conversion are perhaps best understood as twelve different spiritual cases. Since each case seems more promising than the one which precedes it -- for example, striving to get one's 'heart affected in every religious duty' comes closer to genuine Christian spirituality than simply striving to be an 'outward saint' (VIII, 192) -- the effect of the sermon is to heighten the suspense of the hearer. At each stage, he is prompted first to recognize his own spiritual condition and then to condemn it as insufficient for union with Christ. First, for example, he recognizes himself as one who 'forsakes his former profane courses' (VIII, 190). But then he is compelled to agree that such a 'negative holiness is too scanty a covering from the storm of God's wrath' (VIII, 191). By outlining the stages by which the Holy Spirit cuts the sinner away from the natural stock, Boston compels his hearers to place themselves within a conversion narrative and identify their own spiritual condition. It is not until the end of this narrative that he finally reassures them that it is not his design 'to rack or distress tender consciences' (VIII, 198). After all, he has just finished establishing the true grounds for Christian assurance, and he does not want to undermine true assurance of faith. But since his calling is to preach to the unregenerate as well as the regenerate, neither does he wish to give false assurance to those who are not yet united to Christ. Instead, by postponing assurance, Boston seeks to awaken what he describes as a 'sermon-proof generation' (VIII, 199; cf. 185).

In his sermon on union with Christ, as in the sermons of the *Fourfold State* generally, it is those who are still slumbering in hypocrisy whom Boston is especially anxious to awaken. He considers the case of a man who performs religious duties such as prayer, observance of the Lord's day, and attendance at sermons. Such a man is conformed to the law 'in his outward conversation' and is therefore 'admitted by the godly into their society'. Yet this 'step in religion is fatal to many, who never get beyond it' (VIII, 191):

Thus many go on all their days, knowing no other religion, than to perform duties, and to confess, and pray for pardon of that wherein they fail, promising themselves eternal happiness, though they are utter strangers to Christ. (VIII, 192)

A man who comes no closer to Christ than this simply 'cheats himself into persuasion of the goodness of his state' (VIII, 193), for he has not yet come into union with Christ. Even when he

[. . .] makes the strongest efforts to amend what was amiss in his way before: he prays more earnestly than ever, mourns more bitterly, strives against sin in heart and life more vigorously, and watches more diligently, if by any means he may at length be fit to come to Christ [. . .] deep pride lurks under the veil of this seeming humility [. . .] (VIII, 197)

In order to sever those who are still in the state of nature from their Adamic stock, Boston seeks to uncover, layer by layer, even the most subtle forms of hypocrisy.

This concern with hypocrisy may be viewed against the background of the tendency towards Neonomianism which the Marrow Controversy exposed in the Scottish church. A. T. B. McGowan has rightly concluded that Boston's opponents in the Marrow Controversy were moving in the direction of a 'neonomian perversion' of federal theology.¹³ For the Marrow opponent James Hadow of St. Andrews, 'faith, Repentance, the confessing of Christ, a Holy Life, are the Terms of Salvation'.¹⁴ This position was a move away from the theology of seventeenth century figures like James Durham, for whom faith alone is the condition of the covenant of grace.¹⁵ Even when they refer to faith as a 'condition', however, the federal theologians are not suggesting that faith is a meritorious basis for the grace of God.¹⁶ On the contrary, Rutherford explains that

[. . .] the act of faith is not imputed but that which faith layes hold on, it being an instrument, to wit, the Righteousnesse of Christ [. . .]¹⁷

Similarly, Durham himself explains that 'if Faith be the condition', then 'it is Christ who is our Righteousnesse, and not Faith strictly and properly taken'.¹⁸

¹³ McGowan, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 328-29.

¹⁴ James Hadow, *The Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Scotland, anent the Sacrament of Baptism* (Edinburgh, 1704), I, 17.

¹⁵ Durham, *Revelation*, p. 238; cf. 234-35, 242.

¹⁶ John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), IV, 229-34, and Woolsey, II, 302-304, have made this point with reference to the Reformers and their successors. Among Boston's Scottish sources, see Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, pp. 81, 87; Brown (Wamphray), *Justification*, pp. 339ff.; [Bannatine], pp. 63ff.; and especially Boston's contemporary Alexander Hamilton, who carefully discriminates among the several senses of the term 'condition' (Preface, pp. 7-9, 15-16; III, Q & A 11-17; IV, Q & A 48). Such evidence contradicts Bell's unremitting assertion (pp. 8-9, 55, 75-76, 80, 83, 100-102, 198) that the use of the term 'condition' in Scottish federalism constitutes a divergence from Calvin and a capitulation to salvation by works. This thesis rests on a one-sided reading of the sources, in which passages which qualify what the term 'condition' means in federal theology -- and thereby contradict Bell's thesis -- are dismissed as 'confusing' (pp. 76, 102). It is instructive that Boston (VI, 78) attributes his own understanding of the 'instrumentality of faith in our justification' to Rutherford's *Christ Dying and Drawing* and Durham's *Revelation*, both of whom Bell considers central to his thesis. J. B. Torrance, 'Strengths and Weaknesses', evinces much the same misunderstanding when he asserts that the 'Covenant of Grace was also presented in conditional terms, making God's grace to the elect conditional on their faith and repentance and personal holiness' (p. 48; cf. 'Covenant or Contract?', p. 63).

¹⁷ Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, p. 206; cf. Rutherford in *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 77; *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 39-40, 129; *Trial and Triumph*, p. 87. A similar clarification is made by the Westminster divine Obadiah Sedgwick, p. 182, and also by the *Larger Catechism* itself (Q & A 73).

¹⁸ Durham, *Revelation*, p. 246; cf. pp. 231, 234-38, 245. See also Willison, pp. 452, 454.

Boston's ninth stage of separation from union with Adam may be understood as a defence of federal orthodoxy against the neonomian impulse at the level of popular spirituality. He imagines a man

[. . .] solemnly promising and vowing, that he will be a servant to Christ, as long as he lives, if he will save his soul. (VIII, 194)

He makes a 'personal covenant with Christ, resigning himself to him on these terms'. But

[. . .] this kind of covenant is men's own covenant, devised of their own heart; not God's covenant, revealed in the gospel of his grace: and the making of it is nothing else but the making of a covenant of works with Christ, confounding the law and the Gospel; a covenant he will never subscribe to, though we should sign it with our heart's blood. (VIII, 194-95; cf. I, 316, 551; IV, 542; VII, 513; VIII, 431; XI, 207; XII, 156)

Boston cannot be opposing the making of personal covenants *per se*, since he signed such covenants himself (II, 671-74; XII, 206, 255, 396), and encouraged his parishioners to do the same (VIII, 431; X, 85, 111; *Collection*, 46). Far less is he opposing federal theology.¹⁹ What he is opposing is a 'graceless covenant of works', in which works become part of the covenant condition (Abdn MS, 290). Elsewhere he is reluctant even to refer to faith as a 'condition' of the covenant of grace, lest faith itself 'be reckoned a good work done by us'.²⁰ Christ alone performs the condition of the covenant of grace, so that 'it might be a covenant of grace indeed, and not a covenant of works, to sinners themselves'.²¹ The believer's faith is thus 'not in the conditional part of the covenant, but in the promissory part of it'.²² A covenant which depends upon human effort, rather than upon the work of Christ, is a perversion of the covenant of grace, amounting to nothing more than a new law of works, or a 'tottering covenant, never sure, but broken every day' (VIII, 195). Borrowing the vocabulary of James Durham,²³ Boston describes this kind of covenant as a 'servile covenant, giving Christ service for salvation'. Those who make a servile covenant spend their whole lives 'making and breaking such covenants, over and over again', never recognizing the futility of attempting to make

¹⁹ Against Bell, pp. 11, 199, who depicts the Marrow men in a struggle to be liberated from federal theology.

²⁰ Boston, *Works*, VII, 99 (cf. I, 335-39; II, 410; V, 522; VI, 78, 314n, VIII, 75, 425, 431, 436, 580, 584; XI, 190, 377; 'Genesis', 172-73, 181).

²¹ Boston, *Works*, I, 331 (cf. I, 316, 320-21, 334-36, 338-40; V, 511-12, 521; VII, 39-42, 527-29; VIII, 382-85, 394, 398, 436-37, 461, 466, 468-69, 515, 518; IX, 435; XI, 92).

²² Boston, *Works*, I, 339, 350 (cf. VIII, 426, 436-37, 461). He may be borrowing this argument from Rijssenius, who suggests both that Christ is the 'sola conditio fœderis requisita' (X. XIX), and that the covenant is a 'fœdus promissorium' to the believer (X. XIX), although Turretin (XII. I. xi; XII. II. xxix) and Witsius (*Oeconomia Fœderum*, I. I. xv; III. I. vii-xx; III. VIII. xlix-lii) write to much the same effect.

²³ Durham, *Revelation*, p. 238.

themselves righteous (VIII, 194). But the proper covenant of grace is a 'filial covenant, in which the sinner takes Christ' by faith alone (VIII, 195).

Those who are still trusting in their own works can only be delivered from their union with Adam by the double preaching of the law and the gospel.²⁴ Boston's concern to preach the law as a preparation for the gospel retains the flavour of Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*,²⁵ although many of his Reformed sources have a similar emphasis.²⁶ Boston ascribes the twelve steps of separation from Adam not simply to the Holy Spirit, but to the use of the law of God by the Holy Spirit:

The cutting of the branch from the natural stock, is performed by the pruning knife of the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God. (VIII, 190; cf. II, 477; VIII, 186-87, 200, 582; X, 300)

Each step along the way to separation from Adam is 'another stroke with the axe of the law' (VIII, 191; cf. 198). The law pronounces God's curse upon disobedience (VIII, 191), convinces the conscience of 'many actual sins' which have been overlooked or 'not sufficiently mourned over' (VIII, 191; cf. X, 300), takes the sinner 'by the throat' and demands payment (VIII, 192), discovers how the natural man 'sinneth in all he does' and is 'not able to satisfy the demands of the law', teaches that 'wishing to do better will not answer the law's demands' (VIII, 193), and proves to the sinner that he is 'the miserable object of law vengeance' (VIII, 196; cf. X, 301). Finally, the law exercises its 'irritating power' to stimulate corruption in the natural man until he is forced to abandon any hope of fulfilling the law on his own merits (VIII, 197; cf. X, 302).

If the sinner is cut off from Adam by the law, he is united to Christ by the gospel:

And as the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God, was the instrument to cut off the branch from the natural stock; so the Gospel, in the hand of the same Spirit, is the instrument used for ingrafting it into the supernatural stock. (VIII, 199; cf. 200)

²⁴ For more discussions of the double preaching of law and gospel, see Boston, *Works*, I, 361, 565-67; II, 424; III, 54; IV, 79; V, 129, 275; VII, 85-90; VIII, 551, 582-85; IX, 551; X, 32, 287, 300-305, 329, 377, 559; XI, 121, 254. See also his Letter to Mrs. Shiell, 8 August, 1719, National Library of Scotland, MS.3053.9, in which he ingenuously recommends the *Marrow* on this topic.

²⁵ Luther, *Galatians*, XXVI, 315 (cf. 7, 131-32, 309-16, 348): 'It follows, therefore, that the Law with its function does contribute to justification -- not because it justifies, but because it impels one to the promise of grace and makes it sweet and desirable'.

²⁶ See especially Calvin, *Institvionvm*, II.V.vii, II.VII.iii-ix; Ursinus, pp. 34, 128, 504, 616, 618; Polyandrus, XXII. VI, X-XII; Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, p. 96; Bowles, II, 2; Dickson and Durham, *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, pp. 326-29, 340-41; Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, pp. 23-24; Durham, *Revelation*, p. 262; Mr Annesley, 'The Covenant of Grace', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), 218-44 (p. 237); Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, pp. 14-15, 84, 152, 156; Ambrose, p. 17; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 310, IV, 183, 197-209; Owen, *Justification*, pp. 75-76; Rijssenius, XIII.X-XI; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.V.xvi; and [Bannatine], p. 130.

Although ‘the preaching of the law prepares the way of the Lord’, it is only in ‘the word of the Gospel that Christ and a sinner meet’ (VIII, 199). The sinner cannot be ‘driven to Christ by terror’, but must be ‘drawn unto Christ’ with tender words of love (VIII, 202). The Christian takes up residence in the city of refuge, not simply because he has been pursued by the ‘avenger of blood’, but because he is charmed by ‘the beauty of the place’ (VIII, 203; cf. X, 82). In short, ‘[t]he law lays open the wound, but it is the Gospel that heals it’.²⁷

‘Mystical Union between Christ and Believers’ also gives evidence of Boston’s distinctive emphasis on the ‘free offer of the gospel’, defended so strenuously during the course of the Marrow Controversy.²⁸ Significantly, he employs his characteristic phrase for the universal offer of the gospel, preaching that union with Christ is ‘proposed in the gospel to mankind-sinners indefinitely’ (VIII, 200; cf. V, 520; VI, 298; VII, 42; X, 196). In the *Fourfold State*, Boston is concerned not so much to defend the free offer of the gospel as he is to *issue* the free offer of the gospel.²⁹ One index of the importance of the gospel offer in the *Fourfold State* is the frequency with which its sermons close with some form of this offer (VIII, 25, 97, 137, 177, 231, 245, 289, 375).

The gospel produces a spiritual union in which ‘Christ apprehends the sinner, and the sinner, being apprehended of Christ, apprehends him, and so they become one’ (VIII, 199). In agreement with Reformed orthodoxy,³⁰ Boston preaches that the Holy Spirit and faith form a double bond between Christ and the sinner: ‘The bonds, then, of this blessed

²⁷ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 200. It should be noted that this order of Law-Gospel does *not* imply that repentance precedes faith, since Boston agrees with Reformed orthodoxy (e.g. Calvin, *Institvtionvm*, III.III.i) by teaching the logical priority of faith to repentance (III, 404; V, 85; VI, 77-80, 392; VII, 279n, 281n; VIII, 495; XI, 337-38).

²⁸ For the free offer of the gospel in the *Marrow* itself, see Boston, *Works*, VII, 262-78. For the critique of the free offer which precipitated the Marrow Controversy, see Hadow, *Record of God*, pp. 25-28. For the response of the Marrow men, see their answers to ‘*Queries*’, in Boston, *Works*, VII, 485-87.

²⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 364-65. For his defence of the free offer, see especially Abdn MS, 113-14, 124-26; *Works*, III, 96, 102-103, 261, 263; IV, 148-49; V, 520-21; VI, 87-89, 279-300; VII, 83-84, 256n-57n, 262n-67n, 381n, 485, 498-99; VIII, 523-27, 603; IX, 210-13; X, 88, 95-96, 193, 196-200, 538.

³⁰ Obadiah Sedgwick describes the double bond of union with particular clarity: ‘[. . .] as faith makes up the union from us to Christ [. . .] so the Spirit makes the union ’twixt Christ and us [. . .]’ (p. 63; cf. pp. 28-29, 588, 599). See also Zanchius, VI, 246, VIII, 506-507, 522; [Melville], pp. 43-44; Sharp, p. 750; Pemble, p. 21; Wendelinus, p. 561; Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, pp. 110-12; *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 30; Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, p. 17; Fergusson, II, 72; Dickson and Durham, *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, p. 342; Lye, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 355-56; Owen, *Justification*, p. 104; Charnock, *Works* (1684), II, 1339; Essenius, XX.IV-V; Turretin, XVIII.III.vii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, II.VII.viii, III.VII.x, III.XII.lxxi; Herman Witsius, *Exercitationes Sacrae in Symbolum quod Apostolorum dicitur* (Amsterdam, 1697), XXIII.XXXVII, III.X; Craighead, p. 61; Gabriel Wilson, *The Trust* (Hawick, 1785), p. 31.

union are, the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on the believer's part'.³¹ Christ gives the sinner the 'Spirit of faith' (VIII, 198). The Holy Spirit is communicated to the elect by Christ and abides in them as the 'principle of life'.³² It is the Spirit who furnishes the sinner with 'feet to come to Christ, and hands to receive him'. Using words that echo the nature-grace structure of the *Fourfold State*, Boston says of the sinner:

What by **nature** he could not do, by **grace** he can, the Holy Spirit working in him the work of faith with power. (VIII, 199; emphases added)

Having already been apprehended by the Holy Spirit, the sinner 'apprehends Christ by faith, and is one with the blessed stock'.³³ 'It is by faith the believer derives gracious influences from Jesus Christ' (VIII, 214; cf. Abdn MS, 283). To put this in terms of the metaphor of the vine, the dead branch is taken up by Christ and 'by the Spirit of life buds forth in actual believing on Jesus Christ, whereby this union is completed'. To put this in terms of matrimony, faith is 'the soul's consent to the spiritual marriage covenant', in which 'the stock and the graft are united, Christ and the Christian are married'.³⁴

As a result of this double bond the 'union between Christ and his mystical members is firm and indissoluble'. Boston observes that if the 'believer only apprehended Christ', without Christ taking hold of the believer, 'we could promise little as the stability of such a union'. But this is not the case:

Did the child only keep hold of the nurse, it might at length grow weary, and let go its hold, and so fall away: but if she have her arms about the child, it is in no hazard of falling away, even though it be not actually holding by her. So, whatever sinful intermissions may happen in the exercise of faith; yet the union remains sure, by reason of the constant indwelling of the spirit. (VIII, 201; cf. I, 551; VIII, 225-26)

Union with Christ is indissoluble because it is secured by faith and the Holy Spirit.

³¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 200 (cf. I, 15, 547; II, 13, 30, 477; III, 380; V, 225; VI, 78, 584; VII, 83; VIII, 188, 205, 489; IX, 560; X, 305; XI, 256).

³² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 199 (cf. 188, 201, 203, 205, 213-14, 226). See also I, 542, 544-59; III, 595-96, 598, 603-604; IV, 231-35; VI, 584; VII, 80-83; VIII, 149; IX, 497; XI, 42, 168.

³³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 199 (cf. 188-89, 205, 228). See also Abdn MS, 48, 107-108, 283; *Works*, I, 359, 362-64, 547-48, 551, 554; II, 395, 410n; III, 596; IV, 193, 278-79, 377; V, 356-57, 522-23; VI, 78-79; VII, 271n-72n; VIII, 484, 580-81, 584-86; IX, 491, 497; XI, 141, 168; *Collection*, p. 113; 'Genesis', pp. 73, 173, 182; and *Queries to the Friendly-Adviser*, p. 14.

³⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 200. With the possible exception of the vine and the branches, the spiritual marriage between Christ and the believer is Boston's favourite biblical image for the mystical union. See especially Abdn MS, 66, 191; *Works*, I, 554-55; IV, 22-31, 193, 495-96; V, 357; VII, 491-519; VIII, 117, 201-202, 219, 224, 229; X, 576-77; XI, 164, 166; *Collection*, pp. 116, 119. R. Tudur Jones, 'Union with Christ: The Existential Nerve of Puritan Piety', *Tyndale Bulletin*, 41 (1990), 186-208 (pp. 197-99), shows that this image constitutes the 'inner sanctum' of Puritan piety.

III. UNION WITH CHRIST AND THE BENEFITS OF SALVATION

The second half of 'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers' is an exposition of the several benefits 'flowing to true believers from their union with Christ'. Boston uses the concept of union with Christ to encompass ten dimensions of salvation:

The chief of the particular benefits which believers have by [union with Christ], are justification, peace, adoption, sanctification, growth in grace, fruitfulness in good works, acceptance of these works, establishment in the state of grace, support and a special conduct of providence about them.³⁵

This list of benefits is not intended to be exhaustive. Boston has already explained that the resurrection of the body is also 'in virtue of this union' (VIII, 200; cf. I, 552; XI, 315). His point is that all of the benefits of salvation are aspects of the believer's 'communion with Christ', which is 'the great comprehensive blessing necessarily flowing from our union with him' (VIII, 203-204; cf. X, 500). Just as a branch united to a stock 'has communion with the stock in all that is in it', so also the believer united to Christ by the Spirit has communion with Christ and all that is in him (VIII, 203; cf. 205).

The degree to which Boston's use of union with Christ to encompass the benefits of salvation is a theological contribution can be assessed against the background of his sources. Union with Christ is, of course, an important internal principle in the theology of John Calvin.³⁶ Karl Barth describes '*unio cum Christo*' as the 'common denominator under which Calvin tried to range his whole doctrine of the appropriation of the salvation achieved and revealed in Christ', although he suggests that Calvin concealed rather than exploited the doctrine.³⁷ According to Calvin, the Holy Spirit places believers 'in Christi corpus spiritualiter',³⁸ and thereby 'non modo suorum omnium bonorum participes faciat, sed sui quoque ipsius' (III.II.xxiv). This union or sacred wedlock is effected 'solo

³⁵ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 203. For other places where Boston clusters the benefits of salvation under the doctrine of union with Christ, see 'Passages', 5; *Works*, I, 542, 545-46, 549, 551-53, 597-98; II, 395, 410; III, 284, 598, 603; IV, 547; VI, 25, 579, 678; VII, 91, 117-18; VIII, 442, 454, 466-69, 473-76, 489, 512-13; IX, 135, 207-10, 460, 490-99; X, 196; XI, 93, 163-67.

³⁶ The need for a fuller treatment of Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ promises to be answered by Duncan Rankin's forthcoming doctoral thesis, 'Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance' (New College, University of Edinburgh). See also François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, trans. by Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1963), pp. 234-42; Wallace, *Christian Life*, pp. 17-23; Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), pp. 143-74, 199-214; McGrath, pp. 36-39; Willis-Watkins, pp. 77-84; Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994); and Charles Partee, 'Calvin's Central Dogma Again', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 18 (1987), 191-99, although the latter exaggerates the extent to which union with Christ functions as Calvin's central dogma.

³⁷ Barth, IV.III.ii. 552-53.

³⁸ Calvin, *Institutionvm*, II. XIII.ii; cf. III.II.xxx. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Spiritu' (III.I.i-iii; cf. IV.XVII.x), since 'fidem ipsam non aliunde prodire, quam a Spiritu' (III.I.iv). The benefits of salvation are not communicated by virtue of Christ's incarnation, but by virtue of Christ's mystical union with the church, 'ut Christus noster factus, donorum, quibus præditus est, nos faciat consortes' (III.XI.x; cf. II.XII.ii, II.XVI.xix, III.II.xxiv, III.XVI.i, IV.XV.vi, IV.XVII.ii). Calvin places particular emphasis on the union between Christ and the believer in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (IV.XVII.i-v, ix-xii, xxxiii).

In the late sixteenth century, and throughout the seventeenth century, the concept of union with Christ is so widespread as to be the universal property of Reformed theology. Gordon Wakefield has gone so far as to describe it as the 'normative dogma of Reformed Christianity'.³⁹ Boston's sources are virtually unanimous in their support for both of the main principles of his doctrine of union with Christ: that union with Christ is by faith, and that all of the benefits of salvation are communicated to the believer as he is in union with Christ. The sixteenth century systematician Theodore Beza maintains that 'by faith we be united, incorporated, rooted, and grafyd, in Jesus Christ'.⁴⁰ John Preston gives a fuller description of this union:

That is, when there is an vnion made betweene *Christ* and vs, when he comes into the heart, when he dwels in vs, and we in him; when *Christ* is so brought into our hearts, that hee liues there, and when wee are so vnited to him, that we liue in him; when he growes in vs, as the Vine in the branches; and we grown in him, as the branches in the Vine: when faith hath done this, then it is an effectuall faith, when it knits and vnites us to CHRIST [. . .]⁴¹

More importantly, Boston's sources agree with Zanchius that '*Ex unione cum Christo, beneficiorum mortis & resurrectionis eius participationem in nos deriuari*'.⁴² In his

³⁹ Gordon Stevens Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion: Its Place in the Development of Christian Piety* (London: Epworth Press, 1957), p. 5 (cf. pp. 33-36).

⁴⁰ Beza, IV.XII; cf. IV.VII, IV.IX, VII.VIII. For examples of the idea that union with Christ is by faith see Musculus, p. 547; John Craig, 'Ane Forme of Examination', II, 363-77 (Q & A 23-25); Davidson, pp. 24-25, 30-31, 44-45; Zanchius, VIII, 522; Shepard, *Sound Convert*, pp. 178, 201, 213, 252, 331-32; Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, pp. 208-209; Bolton, pp. 62-64, 147; Fergusson, II, 72, 121, 135; Lye, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 356-57; Mr Parson, 'Of Saving Faith', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 424-52 (pp. 436-37); Sedgwick, pp. 29, 63, 114, 185-89; Thomas Manton, *A Fifth Volume of Sermons Preached by the Late Reverend and Learned Thomas Manton, D. D.* (London, 1701), p. 274; Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, 2 vols (London, 1688), II, John 17.21; Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, pp. 363, 388, 401, 494; Owen, *Justification*, p. 218; Charnock, *Works* (1684), I, 395; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 346, 491-92, 521-22, 525; Essenius, II.XI, II.XXII, XI.V, XV.VIII, XX.V, XXV.XXVII; Turretin, XII.III.iii, XV.VII.ii, XV.XVIII.ix, XVI.IX.viii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.VII.vi, III.VIII.lvi; John Brown (Wamphray), *Life of Justification*, p. 391; Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, III.VI; Willison, pp. 455, 502.

⁴¹ John Preston, 'Effectvall Faith', pp. 43-44.

⁴² Zanchius, VIII, 508; cf. 503-507. See John L. Farthing, 'De coniugio spirituali: Jerome Zanchi on Ephesians 5:22-23', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24 (1993), pp. 621-52, for a valuable treatment of Zanchius' doctrine of union with Christ.

commentary on Ephesians, Paul Bayne maintains that ‘by faith we are united with Christ, so that we come to have Communion in all that is Christs’.⁴³ John Brinsley, who provided Boston with his most extensive model for expounding union with Christ, summarizes his discourse on the doctrine by stating that ‘whatever is in [Jesus Christ] it is for the Benefit and advantage of those that are in him’.⁴⁴ The sermon on union with Christ in the *Morning Exercise* is similarly comprehensive: ‘On their *Union* with [Christ], there redounds to [believers] a peculiar *Interest* in his *Person, Properties, Promises, Providences, All*’.⁴⁵ These benefits cannot be separated from one another, or from Christ,

[. . .] because a sinner by receiving of Christ, cometh to have interest in Him, and so consequently in all that is His: for, Christ and His benefits are not separated [. . .]⁴⁶

The unvarying position of the orthodox Reformed theologians is that ‘[b]y Faith we receive Christ himself, and by Faith do we receive all the Benefits of his Mediation’.⁴⁷

Boston’s doctrine of union with Christ, like his theology as a whole, thus stands squarely within the tradition of Reformed orthodoxy. Union with Christ is not a new doctrine. However, the use of union with Christ as an *explicit soteriological organizing principle* can be considered a theological contribution. As we have seen, union with Christ by faith establishes an internal connection between the various benefits of salvation for both Calvin and the Calvinists. Yet Barth observes that there was ‘no systematic outworking or exploitation of *union with Christ* in relation to the whole doctrine of vocation’ in either Calvin or his sixteenth and seventeenth century successors.⁴⁸ What is new in the *Fourfold State* -- at least in comparison with Boston’s sources -- is the extent to which union with Christ governs the external structure of soteriology. In keeping with his pastorally-motivated desire for simplicity of thought and

⁴³ Bayne, p. 509 (cf. 234, 303, 383, 411). For further examples of the doctrine that all the benefits of salvation come to the believer in union with Christ see Ursinus, pp. 131, 234; Beza and Faius, XXII.I; Sharp, pp. 416, 428, 485; Ames, I.XXVI.i-ii; Wendelinus, p. 561; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 58, 65, 66, 69, 79, 83; *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 29; Preston, *Works*, pp. 740-41; Shepard, *Sound Convert*, pp. 198-205, 213, 252; Bowles, p. 81; Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, pp. 34-43, 189-90; Sedgwick, pp. 55, 63, 155, 199; Ambrose, p. 75; Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, pp. 453-59; Owen, *Justification*, p. 208; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 42-43, 520-22; Essenius, XIV.IV-V, XV.VIII, XXII, XVI.I-III, XIX.IV; Turretin, XV.VIII.ix, XVI.III.v-vi, XVI.VI.viii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, II.X.xvi, III.V.iv, III.VIII.xxxi, III.XII.lxxi, III.XIII.xxv; Brown (Wamphray), *Life of Justification*, p. 45; Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, III.XIX, XIX.XLIV-XLV, XXIII.XXXVIII.

⁴⁴ Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Lye, *Morning Exercise*, p. 366 (cf. pp. 353, 358-61).

⁴⁶ Durham, *Revelation*, p. 306.

⁴⁷ Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, p. 388 (cf. pp. 363, 452-54, 458, 466, 494).

⁴⁸ Barth, IV.III.ii. 554 (cf. 553).

expression, Boston unifies the distinct benefits of salvation under the single concept of union with Christ. Union with Christ thus becomes the main theme of redemption, with all of the benefits of salvation finding their theological location under the aegis of union with Christ.

The structural importance of the doctrine of union with Christ to the *Fourfold State* exposes a flaw at the heart of Donald Jay Bruggink's thesis on the theology of Thomas Boston. Bruggink is appreciative of Boston's doctrine of union with Christ, but concludes that it does not become important until the second half of his preaching ministry. It is not until 1717 that his doctrine of union with Christ 'begins to shine with such brightness as to obscure the framework [federal theology] behind it -- thus hiding much of its unsightliness'.⁴⁹

The thesis that union with Christ gradually eclipsed the covenant of works in Boston's theology was dubious from the outset, resting as it did upon a perceived tension between federal theology and the doctrine of union with Christ.⁵⁰ Whatever tensions between federal theology and union with Christ are perceptible from the vantage point of Bruggink's Barthianism,⁵¹ they are invisible to Boston, for whom union with Christ is an integral part of the structure of federal theology.⁵² Furthermore, Bruggink's thesis is constructed in such a way that it is incapable of either verification or falsification. He admits that Boston preached on union with Christ before 1717 and that he preached on the covenant of works after 1717, but believes he can detect a movement from one doctrine towards the other.⁵³ Since both doctrines are admitted to be present throughout Boston's ministry, no single sermon can be cited as evidence against his thesis.⁵⁴ Tellingly, Bruggink excludes the *Fourfold State* from consideration altogether, on the grounds that its lengthy editorial process makes it impossible to determine when union

⁴⁹ Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', p. 84 (cf. pp. 247, 268).

⁵⁰ Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', p. 347. Bell, p. 157, offers a similar misinterpretation of Boston.

⁵¹ See Woolsey's critique of Bruggink: I, 131-34, 147, 160, 178.

⁵² For further examples of the close connection between union with Christ and federal theology in Boston's preaching, see *Works*, I, 333-35, 355, 358-59; II, 477; IV, 278-79; V, 522-23; VIII, 399, 566, 580-81; IX, 560-61. See also *A View of the Covenant of Grace from the Sacred Records* (VIII, 377-604), in which he uses the concept of union with Christ to organize his preaching on eternal life in the covenant of grace (pp. 474-510).

⁵³ Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 250-52, 268.

⁵⁴ Even so, a particularly strong claim about the theological centrality of union with Christ appears in one of Boston's earliest essays, 'Whether or not repentance be necessary in order to the obtaining of the pardon of sin?' (VI, 76-99): 'The first and immediate effect of saving faith, is union with the Lord Jesus Christ [. . .]' (VI, 78).

with Christ enters its structure.⁵⁵ While it is true that the work went through several revisions, it is equally true that the believer's union with Christ is one of the major structuring principles of the *Fourfold State*. Indeed, Boston's testimony about the response his sermons enjoyed reveals that the doctrine of 'mystical union' was prominent already when they were first preached in Ettrick (XII, 234).

The newly discovered Aberdeen manuscripts provide evidence which puts the failure of Bruggink's thesis beyond question. In his first sermons, two decades before the date Bruggink identifies as the moment of theological 'transition', Boston stresses the necessity of union with Christ. He goes so far as to teach that the 'Touchstone' by which one's spiritual state is determined is 'union with Christ not in a common way but in a special way as a man is in his own house, nay more by a reall though spirituall and mysticall union' (Abdn MS, 261; cf. 'Passages', 5; II, 490-91; XII, 39-40). Union with Christ is not simply one benefit of the Christian life among many, but the discriminating characteristic by which Christian life is known to be present at all. Elsewhere in the manuscripts he teaches that 'sinners out of Christ are dead men' (Abdn MS, 107; cf. 263). Since 'Christ is the fountain of life', there must be a 'coming of the WHOLE soul to WHOLE Christ' for life (Abdn MS, 107, 113; cf. 'Passages', 5). The all-important difference between belief and unbelief, between life and death, is the difference between being in Christ and being out of Christ. Therefore, Boston exhorts all his hearers to examine themselves 'as to their state whether they be in Christ or no' (Abdn MS, 263; cf. 225). In his early sermons, he also begins to make use of marital imagery to describe the relationship of union and communion between Christ and the believer (Abdn MS, 66, 191). Although the doctrine of union with Christ rises to greatest structural prominence in the *Fourfold State*, there is continuity in the use of the doctrine throughout Boston's preaching ministry.

The writing of the present thesis does not afford the opportunity for an examination of Boston's ten benefits of union with Christ in detail. Such an examination is largely unnecessary, since McGowan has explicated Boston's doctrine of the Christian life, and since his preaching on such subjects falls within the familiar paths of Reformed

⁵⁵ Bruggink, 'Thomas Boston', p. 76.

orthodoxy. Even so, several features of his preaching on the benefits of union with Christ remain in need of explanation or clarification.

In the first place, Boston retains the Reformers' emphasis on justification by faith (e.g. Calvin, *Institvtionvm*, III. XI-XVII; cf. Owen, *Justification*, pp. 64-70) by making justification the 'first particular benefit that a sinner has by his union with Christ' (VIII, 204; cf. I, 581). Justification is communion with Christ 'in his righteousness', entailing both pardon for sin and acceptance as 'righteous in God's sight' (VIII, 204-205; cf. VII, 115; XI, 131-32). The basis for both pardon and acceptance is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, which, in turn, is founded upon the sinner's union with Christ:

The avenger of blood pursuing the criminal, Christ, as the Saviour of lost sinners, doth by the Spirit apprehend him, and draw him to himself; and he, by faith, lays hold on Christ: so the Lord our righteousness, and the unrighteous creature, unite. From this union with Christ results a communion with him in his unsearchable riches, and consequently in his righteousness [. . .] Thus the righteousness of Christ becomes his [. . .] it is imputed to him; it is reckoned his in the judgment of God [. . .] (VIII, 205)

Justification finds its place *within* the broader concept of union with Christ. If Boston's soteriology differs from that of the Reformers it is because he makes mystical union the source rather than the result of justification (cf. VIII, 481). Yet he allows the doctrine of justification to remain prominent by making it the leading benefit of union with Christ.

Second, sanctification, like justification, finds its place as a benefit of union with Christ. McGowan has emphasized the importance of union with Christ to Boston's doctrine of sanctification.⁵⁶ It is proper to make this connection, since the two dimensions of sanctification -- mortification and vivification -- are both the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer as he is united to Christ (VIII, 211; cf. I, 657; II, 9, 11; IV, 222; VI, 579-97; VIII, 490-94; X, 370-73; XII, 355). However, by placing union with Christ under the heading of sanctification, McGowan gives the potentially misleading impression that Boston's doctrine of union with Christ is uniquely connected to his doctrine of sanctification. This impression is strengthened by the fact that he considers justification as 'determinative' of Boston's other doctrines.⁵⁷ But for Boston, as we have seen, *all* of the benefits of salvation flow to the believer in union with Christ. Union with Christ is as intimately connected with the other benefits of salvation

⁵⁶ McGowan, 'Thomas Boston', pp. 246-54.

⁵⁷ McGowan, 'Thomas Boston', p. 197.

as it is with sanctification. Union with Christ governs the theological location of sanctification, and not the other way around.

Third, it should be noted that the doctrine of perseverance is a lynch-pin in the structure of the *Fourfold State*. The eighth benefit of union with Christ is termed ‘establishment’,⁵⁸ by which Boston means that the ‘Christian cannot fall away, but must persevere unto the end’.⁵⁹ Believers find their security in union with Christ, the true vine: ‘moved they may be, but removed they never can be’ (VIII, 221; cf. IV, 183). To put this in terms of the four states of man, once a sinner has entered the state of grace, he cannot return to the state of nature. By virtue of their union with Christ, the regenerate necessarily persevere from the state of grace into the state of glory. Perseverance in union with Christ maintains the structural integrity of the *Fourfold State*, perpetuating the absolute separation between belief and unbelief into the eternal state.

A final comment concerns the effect of Boston’s preaching on union with Christ, taken as a whole. The *Fourfold State* takes for its subject matter the condition of man in his various spiritual estates. Inevitably, it focuses more on the individual’s appropriation of salvation than on the redemptive-historical basis for salvation. To put this another way, Boston is more concerned with the application of redemption than he is with the accomplishment of redemption. But this does not mean, as Woodruff alleges, that ‘man’s appropriation of salvation outweighed the person and work of Jesus Christ’ for Boston.⁶⁰ It may be recalled that his purpose, when the sermons were first preached, was to ‘exalt Christ, and preach his love’ (XII, 121). As a result, ‘Mystical Union between Christ and Believers’ establishes a thoroughly Christocentric framework for the *Fourfold State*, in which the reception of the benefits of salvation is grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Boston thus invites his hearers and readers to throw themselves upon Christ, in whom alone are found all the benefits of salvation.

⁵⁸ Boston may be borrowing this term from Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, p. 43.

⁵⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 221. Boston frequently grounds perseverance in union with Christ: I, 549, 551; II, 35; VII, 127; VIII, 180, 474, 503-506, 534; IX, 494, 587; XI, 166-67, 196.

⁶⁰ Woodruff, p. 196; cf. Bruggink, ‘Thomas Boston’, p. 196.

IV. UNION WITH CHRIST AND PASTORAL CARE

Boston adds an unexpected, eleventh item to his list of the benefits of union with Christ, an item which emphasizes the role of union with Christ in pastoral nurture:

Therefore, if we were to reckon the cross amongst the benefits flowing to believers from their union with Christ, I judge that we should not reckon amiss.
(VIII, 226)

By 'the cross', he does not primarily intend the historical cross of Jesus, but the 'every day's cross' of the believer's affliction, as the believer is united to Christ in his sufferings (VIII, 226; cf. III, 473-85; VIII, 123). The doctrine of union with Christ gives him occasion to expound his theology of Christian suffering.

Suffering was a matter of existential reality for Boston and his parishioners, and not merely a matter for speculation. Given the sickness, mortality, and 'dearth of victuall' which afflicted early eighteenth century Scottish agricultural communities like Simprin and Ettrick (Abdn MS, 39, 99), it is not surprising that his sermons make frequent mention of the difficulties of life.⁶¹ In 'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers' there are references to times of 'common calamity' (VIII, 210), to the 'stormy wind of trouble and persecution' (VIII, 222), and to the 'weight of outward troubles' (VIII, 223). To these external afflictions may be added 'inward troubles and discouragements' (VIII, 224), such as 'troubled consciences' (VIII, 207), hellish temptations (VIII, 221), the 'weight of guilt', and the 'weight of strong lusts' (VIII, 224).

Whatever the difficulty, the believer's union with Christ provides the basis for pastoral encouragement, since 'those who are united to Christ shall find comfort' (VIII, 224). The comfort of union with Christ is in view from the outset of 'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers', where Boston notices that Jesus' teaching on the vine and the branches is given in response to his disciples' anxiety about being separated from their Master (VIII, 178). As the sermon proceeds, he presses the metaphor of the vine, observing that 'the branch knit to the stock stands fast whatever wind blows' (VIII, 221). Although the believer may be weighed down with many troubles, 'whatever weights hang on the branches, the stock ('Christ the true vine') bears all' (VIII, 223). When the wind of temptation forces the 'top branches to sweep the ground; yet being knit to Christ their stock, they get up again' (VIII, 221; cf. IV, 183). Even a backsliding believer,

⁶¹ See especially *The Crook in the Lot*, III, 495-590.

experiencing a spiritual winter in which the influences of grace seem to have ceased, will be revived ‘when the winter is over’, for there ‘still remains a bond of union between Christ and the soul’.⁶² In every circumstance, the basis for pastoral encouragement is ‘the grace that is in Jesus Christ; which is an ever-flowing fountain’ for the believer in union with him (VIII, 225; cf. 210, 228).

In the *Fourfold State*, as in his other discussions of Christian suffering, Boston’s preaching is shaped by the rhetorical question of Hebrews 12.7: ‘What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?’ (VIII, 210; cf. I, 122, 626; VIII, 519, 559). Those who are still in the state of nature suffer as a result of the curse for Adam’s sin. For the believer, however, suffering is not a curse but a benefit of adoption into the state of grace:

Seasonable correction is likewise their privilege as sons: so they are not suffered to pass with their faults, as others who are not children, but servants of the family, who at length will be turned out of doors for their miscarriages [. . .]⁶³

Suffering is one of the promised *blessings* of union with Christ (VIII, 226), and there is ‘a certain pleasure and sweetness’ in the believer’s cross (VIII, 227; cf. Abdn MS, 217; VI, 318). Here Boston has taken the familiar theme of divine chastisement for sin and placed it within the framework of union with Christ.⁶⁴ Although the believer -- having been justified -- is no longer subject to judicial condemnation, he remains subject to filial correction because of his union with Christ.⁶⁵ The ‘temporal strokes’ a believer receives for sin are ‘fatherly chastisements’, intended for the mortification of remaining sin (VIII, 205; cf. Abdn MS, 206). To return to the governing agricultural metaphor of the sermon, when believers fail to ‘improve their union with Christ’ or ‘make use of him by faith’ the Lord acts as the Husbandman of the vineyard, employing ‘cross or afflictions’ to cut off ‘the luxuriant twigs, that mar the fruitfulness of the branch’ (VIII, 225-26; cf. IV, 183). The result of this divine husbandry is that the ‘Christian improves by his trial’,

⁶² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 214. This image also appears in Brinsley’s *Mystical Implantation*, pp. 60-61.

⁶³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 210 (cf. Abdn MS, 248; *Works*, I, 626; III, 519; VI, 15, 508; VII, 353n, 360n; XI, 298; XII, 98).

⁶⁴ Boston makes a similar point in using federal vocabulary to describe the believer’s affliction as a ‘special benefit of the covenant of grace’ (I, 626; cf. I, 299; VI, 15; VIII, 519, 559; XI, 297-98; XII, 98). The theme of chastisement is common in sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed theology (e.g. Calvin, *Institutionvm*, III.IV .xxxix-xxxv, III. VIII.vi; *Confession of Faith*, V.V, XI.V; and Turretin, XVI.V.xiv).

⁶⁵ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 205 (cf. I, 553; VI, 46; VII, 242n-43n, 332n-33n; VIII, 195, 482, 505; XI, 335). Boston developed this point at length in two essays written near the beginning of his ministry: ‘Whether or not the sins of believers while unrepented of, make them liable to eternal punishment?’ (VI, 11-43) and ‘Whether or not all sins, past, present, and to come, are pardoned together and at once?’ (VI, 44-76).

discovering 'what hold the soul has of Christ, and what hold Christ has of the soul' (VIII, 221). Towards this end, Boston frequently instructs the believer to 'labour to find out the design of providence' (X, 602; cf. Abdn MS, 254-60; III, 533-35; XII, 140-41, 279).

The role of suffering in producing spiritual fruit suggests a further pastoral use of the doctrine of union with Christ: union with Christ as stimulus for godly living. The pervasive ethical emphasis of Boston's preaching is grounded in his doctrine of union with Christ, for the Spirit who unites the believer to Christ is the 'Spirit of holiness':

This sanctified Spirit, communicated by the Lord Jesus to his members, is the spiritual nourishment the branches have from the stock into which they are ingrafted; whereby the life of grace, given them in regeneration, is preserved, continued, and actuated. (VIII, 212; cf. IV, 232; VIII, 77)

Wherever the Spirit is found, there is a 'confluence of all graces', by which 'the Spirit of Christ sanctifies the whole man' (VIII, 210; cf. IV, 232; VIII, 215-16). This holiness extends to the whole law, as well as to the whole man, since the Spirit generates a 'universal respect to the commands of God' (VIII, 211; cf. 217). By the Spirit, the believer grows 'into Christ', 'uniting more closely with him' as the 'spring of all other true Christian growth'. The very reason that souls are united to Christ by faith is 'that they may bring forth fruit unto God'.⁶⁶

Boston gives his hearers and readers practical counsel for producing 'fruit, and much fruit' (VIII, 229). Above all, they are to 'strive to obtain and keep up actual communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ', perpetually 'deriving fresh supplies of grace, from the fountain thereof in him, by faith' (VIII, 228). Because they are branches -- rather than trees -- they are to live 'dependently, depending by faith on Jesus Christ' (VIII, 230; cf. IV, 513; IX, 491; X, 366). Believers are exhorted to struggle against 'unmortified lusts', endeavouring to 'cut off the suckers, as gardeners do' (VIII, 218; cf. VIII, 203; IX, 260). They are also instructed to make use of the ordinances of God, particularly the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which is 'a seal of our union and communion with Christ' and 'strengthens our union with him'.⁶⁷ In all these things believers are

⁶⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 216. It is characteristic of Boston to view good works as the necessary consequence of union with Christ: I, 45, 555; II, 9, 30; IV, 215, 232, 235; V, 110-11, 510-12; VI, 578-84; VII, 163n, 167n, 301n, 329n, 337n; VIII, 178, 455, 490, 497-98; IX, 55, 430; X, 305, 513; XI, 141, 196-97; XII, 355.

⁶⁷ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 218-19. Boston recognizes the importance of union with Christ for sacramental theology (e.g. I, 544-46, 550, 660; II, 476, 487; III, 591-92, 599-600, 604-606; VI, 630, 635-37, 674; VIII, 178, 212; IX, 491-92, 497), but gives this relationship less stress than it receives in, for example,

encouraged in their good conduct by the knowledge that union with Christ secures the 'acceptance of their fruits of holiness before the Lord'. Because they are united to Christ, their works, imperfect as they are, 'savour of Christ the blessed stock' and '[t]heir will is accepted for the deed' (VIII, 219-20). They are to walk, therefore, 'as becomes those that are united to Christ', 'proving' their union with Christ by making obedience 'the great business of life' (VIII, 229; cf. IX, 475).

The stress Boston places on the fruitfulness of union with Christ exposes the error of the charge, made during the Marrow Controversy, that the Marrow men were Antinomians.⁶⁸ Of course Boston denies that good works make a contribution to the believer's justification. Moreover, he is capable of denouncing the legalism of those who 'inculcate moral duties without discovering the necessity of regeneration, and union with Christ, as the source of all true obedience' (I, 45; cf. Abdn MS, 168; II, 448; IX, 202; XII, 355). But once good works have been placed in their proper theological location -- that is to say, once good works have been grounded in the believer's union with Christ -- he is zealous to advocate their importance, even necessity. The believer's entire life is to be characterized by gospel holiness, since he

[. . .] is seeking for Immanuel's land; and is walking in the highway to it, the way which is called the way of holiness. (VIII, 211; cf. 347)

Here Boston is careful to avoid speaking of good works as 'the way to heaven' (cf. VII, 337n, 476-77; X, 365, 376-77), as some of his Marrow opponents were wont to do.⁶⁹ Instead, he echoes the *Marrow* doctrine that good works 'may rather be called a believer's walking in the way of eternal happiness, than the way itself' (VII, 337; cf. I, 15; III, 80, 335; IV, 281, 292; V, 101-105, 412; X, 375-77). The effect of this distinction is to ensure that works do not become the basis for eternal life, which can only properly be grounded in the believer's union with Christ. Although good works are not themselves the basis for salvation, they are the behavioural distinctive of those who have been saved. Because Boston's preaching on union with Christ has such a strong ethical component, it is anti-Antinomian rather than Antinomian.

Calvin. However, it must be remembered that Boston preached many of his sermons at communion seasons, where his preaching would necessarily have been understood within a sacramental context.

⁶⁸ See especially James Hadow, *The Antinomianism of the 'Marrow of Modern Divinity' Detected* (Edinburgh, 1721), pp. 120-29, 169-71. The charge has been reiterated by Addison, pp. 42, 140.

⁶⁹ Hadow, *Antinomianism Detected*, p. 147; [Bannatine], p. 52.

The pastoral utility of union with Christ is not limited to believers, but extends to unbelievers as well. In 'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers', as everywhere else in his preaching, Boston discriminates between belief and unbelief, concluding his sermon with 'a few words, first, to saints, and next to sinners' (VIII, 228; cf. 183). Echoing his central agricultural metaphor once again, he insists that union with Christ has implications for the 'men of the world', who 'are but God's out-field', as well as for the saints who are God's 'vineyard' (VIII, 226; cf. III, 379).

Boston's primary objective in preaching to 'men of the world' is to use union with Christ to expose their hypocrisy. His strategy is to contrast the fruitfulness of the genuine believer in union with Christ with the barrenness of the hypocrite who lacks such union. Fruitless hypocrites 'may be branches in Christ by profession, but not by real implantation' (VIII, 216; cf. 185). They are like the ivy that 'clasps and twists itself about the oak', resting on the tree by 'adhesion' rather than by 'ingrafting':⁷⁰

They stay themselves upon him, but grow upon their own root: they take them to support their hopes, but their delights are elsewhere. (VIII, 201; cf. III, 593; IV, 513)

Because hypocrites lack union with Christ, they are like branches 'put into the stock, which never knit with it' (VIII, 222; cf. VIII, 201, 213; X, 153; *Collection*, 114). '[S]trict professors of Christianity, who yet are not true Christians' lack the 'sanctifying influences' of the Holy Spirit (VIII, 213; cf. IV, 513; VIII, 185). Like rotten branches, they 'will fall away when shaking winds arise' (VIII, 221; cf. 218). Worst of all, fruitlessness has eternal consequences:

A barren tree stands safer in a wood, than in an orchard; and branches in Christ, that bring not forth fruit will be taken away, and cast into the fire. (VIII, 230; cf. III, 379-84; IV, 183)

Union with Christ is the *sine qua non* of the growth in grace which leads to eternal life.

Boston's preaching on hypocrisy, like his preaching throughout 'Mystical Union between Christ and Believers', relies heavily on agricultural illustrations and metaphors. This imagery is of homiletical importance. The biblical metaphor of the vine and the branches itself suggests the themes of fruitfulness, barrenness, pruning, and so forth. But Boston repeatedly presses that biblical metaphor in creative directions, according to the

⁷⁰ See Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, pp. 241-42. Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, pp. 5-13, also describes the difference between adhesion and ingrafting, although he differs by adjudging adhesion a legitimate form of union.

pastoral need of the moment. Two further examples -- the second of which contrasts the revitalization of the believer with the barrenness of the hypocrite -- illustrate this point:

When thou seest, O sinner, a dead stock of a tree, exhausted of all its sap, having branches on it in the same condition, look on it as a lively representation of thy soul's state. (VIII, 185)

Summer and winter are alike to the branches on the dead stock. When others about them are budding, blossoming, and bringing forth fruit, there is no change on them: the dead stock has no growing time at all. Perhaps it may be difficult to know, in the winter, what trees are dead, and what are alive; but the spring plainly discovers it. (VIII, 186; cf. I, 542)

The importance of such agricultural illustrations is that they are ideally suited to a rural preaching context in which the growth and death of plants are part of the fabric of daily life. Boston follows the best canons of Puritan homiletics by relying on biblical metaphors and by using the natural world to illustrate biblical truth.⁷¹ In one of his earliest sermons, he exhorts the illiterate members of his congregation to read 'the book of creation': 'When you Dight it, sow it, plough, harrow, & c. ye may learn much [. . .]'⁷² His preaching on union with Christ demonstrates how such reading might be done.

At the same time that Boston attempts to expose hypocrisy, he uses the doctrine of union with Christ to arouse a salutary jealousy in the sinner. If the benefits of salvation are only available in union with Christ, then the unbeliever possesses neither Christ nor his benefits. Taking each benefit in its turn, the sinner has received neither the 'righteousness of Christ', nor 'peace of conscience', nor 'adoption' into God's family, nor 'the Spirit of sanctification', nor an 'inheritance among them that are sanctified' (VIII, 231; cf. I, 103, 416, 556, 660; IV, 377-78; VI, 281-82; X, 507; XI, 163-64). The 'privileges of those in the state of grace', Boston chides, 'are not yours, because you are not Christ's'. Even so, 'the case is not desperate, they may yet be yours'. In keeping with his reputation as a defender of the 'free offer of the gospel', he closes with an invitation to union with Christ:

Heaven is proposing a union with earth still; the potter is making suit to his own clay; and the gates of the city of refuge are not yet closed. O that we could compel you to come in!⁷³

⁷¹ Bowles, II, 64.

⁷² Boston, Abdn MS, 175 (cf. 239). See also Boston, *Works*, I, 203: 'Every pile of grass is a preacher of the loving-kindness of the Lord'.

⁷³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 231 (cf. I, 556). Evidence that Boston's emphasis on the offer of the gospel was even more pronounced when these sermons were originally preached comes from his editor, who asserts that the rousing evangelistic sermon 'Gospel-Compulsion' (VI, 279-93) was 'originally intended to have been inserted' in the *Fourfold State* here 'at the close of the discourses on "the state of grace, or begun recovery"' (VI, 279n).

VII. THE STATE OF ETERNAL GLORY

I. 'ALL MUST DIE'

Previous scholarship has paid relatively little attention to Thomas Boston's doctrine of the last things. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the structure of covenant theology -- the framework most often used to analyse Boston -- gives less prominence to eschatological themes than does the structure of the *Fourfold State*. Or perhaps this is due to the fact that Reformed eschatology in general lacks historical or controversial interest. As Geoffrey Rowell has observed, the Reformers and their heirs largely accepted the 'Western eschatological synthesis' of the medieval scholastics.¹ Considered from the standpoint of systematic theology, Boston's Reformed doctrine of the last things is bereft of novelty.

When Boston is viewed as a preacher, however, heaven and hell quickly emerge as two of his most important themes. This is especially apparent in his *Fourfold State*, where 'The Eternal State' claims a disproportionate share (two-fifths) of the work as a whole (VIII, 232-375). This imbalance occurs partly because he considers the estates of *both* the wicked and the righteous in eternity, and not simply the righteous, as he had done in his preaching on the state of grace. But the proportions of the *Fourfold State* indicate the importance of eschatological themes throughout his sermons, where the present spiritual condition of the hearer is invariably placed against the backdrop of eternity. As Boston preaches in *A View of This and the Other World* (V, 299-632), 'our main concern lies in the world to come' (V, 390). The attention he devotes to the eternal state also distinguishes him from most of his sources. While somewhat more attention is given to heaven in his predecessors, only Thomas Shepard, the *Morning Exercise*, Isaac Ambrose, Andreas Essenius, and Herman Witsius give sustained attention to hell.² Christian eschatology holds a place of special importance in the preaching of Thomas Boston.

¹ Geoffrey Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 24-25. The doctrine of purgatory was the one major element of this inheritance repudiated by the Reformers.

² Boston makes special mention of Witsius' doctrine of glorification in his *Memoirs* (XII, 113). Boston's preaching on heaven and hell may be compared usefully with his contemporary James Webster's *Select Sermons Preach'd on several Texts, more especially on Romans vi.23* (Edinburgh, 1723), pp. 1-182.

In the *Fourfold State*, Boston preaches six long sermons on eternity: 'Death', 'Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked in their Death', 'Of the Resurrection', 'Of the General Judgment', 'The Kingdom of Heaven', and 'Of Hell'. By the time he preaches his final two sermons on heaven and hell the separation of the elect from the reprobate is complete. Prior to those sermons, however, the fates of saints and sinners are intertwined, as in the 'Doctrine' of his sermon on death: 'All must die' (VIII, 233). The word 'all' in this doctrine signals Boston's return to the fate of mankind in general, saint and sinner alike. If, in the words of the sermon's text, there is a 'house appointed for all living' (Job 30.23), then '[a]ll living must be inhabitants of this house, good and bad, old and young' (VIII, 232; cf. 234). Just as all humanity entered the state of innocence by creation and the state of nature by sin, so all humanity enter the state of eternity by death.

The word 'must' in Boston's doctrine emphasizes the inevitability of death: all men 'must, by death, remove out of this world; they must die' (VIII, 232, cf. II, 669; III, 22; IV, 259; V, 390, 557). All those 'who now live in palaces, must quit them, and go home' to the 'house appointed for all living', that 'darksome, gloomy, solitary house' (VIII, 232). More vividly still, he personifies death as a cold captor:

[. . .] we have no life in this world, but as runaways from death, which stretches out its cold arms, to receive us from the womb; but though we do then narrowly escape its clutches, we cannot escape long [. . .] (VIII, 233)

The certainty of death has been the 'experience of all former generations' since Abel, yet Boston insists that it is 'needful to discourse of the certainty of death, that it may be impressed on the mind, and duly considered' (VIII, 233; cf. I, 526).

In order to convince his hearers that all must die, Boston presents five proofs or confirmations of the doctrine. Three are distinguished by his use of rural metaphors to illustrate them. First, the inevitability of death is proven by the 'unalterable statute of death' in the Bible. 'It is appointed unto men once to die' (Hebrews 9.27); 'we must needs die' (2 Samuel 14.14); 'every man must needs see death' (Psalm 89.48). He compares death to a 'champion all must grapple with: we must enter the lists with it, and it will have the mastery' (VIII, 233; cf. III, 30; IV, 69; V, 390, 559). Second, as his parishioners knew only too well, 'daily observation' confirms death's inevitability (VIII, 233; cf. III, 22, 30-31). In the *Fourfold State* Boston remarks that there is 'room enough

on this earth for us, notwithstanding the multitudes that were upon it before us' (VIII, 233; cf. IV, 249, 297; V, 560). He thus compares the world to a bustling market-place:

This world is like a great fair or market, where some are coming, others are going out; while the assembly that is in it is confusion, and the most part know not wherefore they are come together; or, like a town situated on the road to a great city, through which some travellers have passed, some are passing, while others are only coming in [. . .] (VIII, 233-34; cf. III, 31)

Death is an 'inexorable, irresistible (*sic*) messenger, who cannot be diverted from executing his orders' (VIII, 234; cf. 105). Third, the human body 'consists of perishing materials'. To illustrate, he compares it to the homes in which his parishioners lived:³

The soul is but meanly housed, while in this mortal body, which is not a house of stone, but a house of clay, the mud walls cannot but moulder away; especially seeing the foundation is not on a rock, but in the dust [. . .] (VIII, 234; cf. III, 22-25, 31)

Death has 'many doors' by which it can enter this house of clay, for 'distempers and diseases' are 'death's harbingers, sent 'to tell us at our entry, that we do but come into the world to go out again' (VIII, 234).

The fourth proof of the certainty of death -- that the death of the body follows the sin of the soul -- is more explicitly theological. 'The wicked must die, by virtue of the threatening of the covenant of works'. Here Boston echoes his earlier preaching on the ongoing validity of the law in the state of nature. Although the godly are not liable to the threatening of the covenant of works, they 'must die too, that as death entered by sin, sin may go out by death' (VIII, 234; cf. III, 31).

For his fifth proof of human mortality, Boston draws upon the full range of biblical images of human transience. According to Scripture, man's life is a 'vain and empty thing, short in its continuance, and swift in its passing away' (VIII, 235; cf. IV, 67-71). Job, like Solomon, describes his days as 'vanity' (Job 7.16). Over the next several pages of his sermon, he cites the biblical similitudes of life as sleep (Psalm 90.5), an idle tale (Psalm 90.9), a dream (Job 20.8), a 'vain shew' or 'walking statue' (Psalm 39.6), a shepherd's tent (Isaiah 38.12), a blade of grass or a flower of the field (Isaiah 40.6), a scattered cloud (Job 7.9), a vapour (James 4.14), a gust of wind (Job 7.7), a breath in the nostril (Psalm 88.38), a shadow running along the ground (Job 14.2), a weaver's shuttle (Job 7.6), a foot-post (Job 9.25), and a leisure ship or an eagle (Job 9.26). Even the

³ See Andrew J. Campbell, *Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland, 1707-1929* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1930), p. 12

rapidity with which Boston moves from image to image conveys the brevity of human existence (VIII, 235-38; cf. III, 31; V, 41, 262; VI, 221).

With this final proof Boston returns to his more usual practice of using biblical imagery to present biblical teaching, rather than constructing his own metaphors and illustrations. The effectiveness of this strategy is enhanced by his ability to relate biblical imagery to common experience and by his sensitivity to the nuance of biblical metaphor. He frequently places a biblical image within the world of his parishioners, as when he compares the vanishing vapour of James 4.14 to dark smoke scattering from a chimney (VIII, 237). These comparisons are often vivid:

Have you not observed how swiftly a shadow runs along the ground, in a cloudy and a windy day, suddenly darkening the places beautified before with the beams of the sun, but as suddenly disappearing? Such is the life of man on the earth, for "he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not," Job xiv.2. (VIII, 237)

Boston observes that the eagle of Job 9.26 is not simply an eagle in 'ordinary flight', but an eagle flying upon its prey, 'which is with an extraordinary swiftness' (VIII, 238). The vulnerable flower of Isaiah 40.6 is not a garden flower, carefully tended, but a 'flower of the field, which the foot of every beast may tread down at any time' (VIII, 237). As these examples show, he is careful both to explicate the precise meaning of biblical images and to locate them in the world of his hearers.

Boston also arranges his biblical material for maximum homiletical effect. In preparing his sermon, he has gathered many of the passages which use temporal vocabulary to delimit the length of man's existence. In preaching his sermon, he begins with the longest time span, noting that some biblical lives are 'reckoned by hundreds of years'. But these 'hundreds are brought down to scores' (Psalm 90.10), then to months (Job 14.5), then to days (Job 14.1), then to a single day (Job 14.6), then to a moment (2 Corinthians 4.17), then to nothing at all (Psalm 39.5). This regression makes human existence shrink to seeming nothingness even as Boston preaches, allowing the form of the sermon to reinforce its content (VIII, 236; cf. IV, 67; VII, 562; VIII, 371).

The sermon 'Death' is as concerned with 'improving' as it is with 'proving' the doctrine that 'all must die'. The certainty of death is useful

[. . .] in discerning the vanity of the world; in bearing up, with Christian contentment and patience under all troubles and difficulties in it; in mortifying our lusts; in cleaving unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, at all hazards, and in preparing for death's approach. (VIII, 238; cf. I, 526-28; II, 41)

Each of these is an important theme in Boston's preaching, despite the tendency of such practical themes to be overlooked when he is viewed as a systematic theologian.

First, he preaches against those, either rich or poor, who 'court the bulky vanity' of worldly things (VIII, 238; cf. III, 79). The 'doctrine of death' is a reminder that all earthly possessions 'shall fall off when thou comest to creep into thy hole' (VIII, 238). By lying down in the grass and observing the imprint they leave behind, Boston's hearers may 'see how much of this earth will fall to [their] share at last' (VIII, 238-39). The world will prove to be a false friend, 'who leaves a man in time of greatest need, and flees from him when he has most to do' (VIII, 239; cf. Abdn MS, 225), like a flock of birds that 'take wing' when the fool approaches (VIII, 243). Given the vanity of earthly possessions and the inevitability of death, Boston commends a simple lifestyle:

Yea, the more thou possessest of this world's goods, thy sorrow at death is likely to be the greater; for though one may live more commodiously in a palace than in a cottage, yet he may die more easily in the cottage, where he has very little to make him fond of life. (VIII, 239; cf. XII, 98)

Second, the doctrine of death serves as a 'storehouse for Christian contentment' and 'an excellent remedy against fretting'. This application acquires particular poignancy in the context of Boston's experience with 'worldly losses and crosses' and with his own melancholic disposition, which he considered 'an enemy to gifts and grace, a great friend to unbelief' (XII, 242; cf. 74). A consideration of one's own mortality is a 'notable help' when one's cattle or 'dearest relations' are dying: 'It is always profitable to consider, under affliction, that our case might have been worse than it is' (VIII, 239). Were it viewed only from the existential perspective of man's present estate, this statement would provide little more than grim comfort. But Boston himself is viewing present trials from the teleological vantage point of man's eternal state. Thus he compares human life to a journey in which the destination is all that matters:

You are on the road to eternity; let it not disquiet you that you meet with some hardships in the inn of this world. (VIII, 241; cf. II, 334; V, 268, 442; VIII, 232; IX, 221; X, 572)

Life as pilgrimage is one of Boston's favourite motifs,⁴ and here he presses the image in several directions at once. The griefs and frowns of this world are merely 'a passing

⁴ See Boston, *Works*, III, 24, 78; IV, 252; V, 41, 96, 263-71, 312, 322, 393, 409, 412, 440, 463, 532, 535, 543-44, 547-53, 558-59; VIII, 154; IX, 95, 196, 303, 426-27, 441; X, 128-29, 308-97, 429, 465-88, 550-79, 614-26; XI, 69, 117; XII, 497.

stitch in a man's side' during his journey to his eternal home. The Christian need not be troubled by want of possessions, since both king and beggar 'must dwell in one house, when they come to their journey's end; though their entertainment by the way be very different' (VIII, 240; cf. III, 35; IV, 260; V, 263; VIII, 240). Amending the figure, he compares possessions to servants at an inn who go with the guest only as far as the door and then 'return to wait on other strangers' (VIII, 243; cf. V, 390, 572; VIII, 268, 345-46).

This sermon has been cited as an example of Presbyterian preaching which was antithetical to agricultural improvement in Scotland, since it encouraged passivity in the face of adversity and quelled the desire for material prosperity.⁵ This argument has some merit: Boston was no 'Improver'. On the contrary, he commends the pursuit of 'heavenly things more vigorously when our affairs in this life prosper not' (VIII, 240; cf. V, 584). His sermon on death has overtones of an ascetic resignation not dissimilar from the passivity decried by the proponents of agricultural improvement. 'Why so fond of temporal things?' he asks, 'so anxious to get them [. . .] so mightily touched with the loss of them?' (VIII, 242; cf. 346). He thus exhorts his listeners to live each day as if it were their last, letting the 'mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loose', so that it may be cast aside easily at the day of death (VIII, 268; cf. IV, 287). Later he will commend a 'holy contempt of the world, and of the things of the world'.⁶ Yet what Boston condemns is not material things themselves, but the improper use of them. His attitude is aptly described by Gordon Marshall (following Max Weber) as the 'this-worldly asceticism' of Scottish Calvinism.⁷ This is especially clear in his third application, in which he argues that a 'serious visit made to cold death, and that solitary mansion, the grave', serves as 'a bridle, to curb all manner of lusts, particularly those conversant about the body' (VIII, 241). Here he opposes -- not the body itself-- but 'inordinate care for the body' and 'earthly-mindedness' (VIII, 241-42; cf. V, 267, 441; VI, 659). Elsewhere, Boston goes so far as to instruct his parishioners to '[t]ake care of the house [body] for the sake of the soul' (III, 26; cf. V, 73-75, 578-79).

⁵ Smout, pp. 330.

⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 345 (cf. II, 502; III, 50, 88-90, 353, 462, 467, 566; IV, 164; V, 91, 268, 425-26, 441, 573; VIII, 344; X, 429-30).

⁷ Gordon Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the Development of Capitalism in Scotland, 1560-1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 62 (cf. pp. 103, 107, 260).

Whatever passivity may be detected in Boston's preaching is due to his sober assessment of human mortality. He uses grotesque imagery to describe the 'change which death makes on the fairest face' (VIII, 241):

The ravens of the valley of death, will at length pick out the wanton eye: the obscene filthy tongue will at length be quiet, in the land of silence; and grim death, embracing the body in its cold arms, will effectually allay the heat of all fleshly lusts. (VIII, 242)

Here he was perhaps remembering his own sight of a blackened body in an 'unripe grave', an encounter which helped him 'perceive what a loathsome thing my body must at length become before it be reduced to dust' (XII, 14). In any case, although such preaching may be criticized for its vulgarity, the raw power of Boston's imagery did make it serviceable for his purpose, which was to convince his hearers and readers that 'worldly things are but a fair nothing' (VIII, 242).

Boston closes his sermon by pleading with his hearers and readers to 'prepare for death' and to 'consider what it is to go into another world'. He teaches, of course, that those 'who are found alive at the second coming of Christ, they shall not die', but be suddenly transformed, 'so that their bodies shall become like to those bodies which are raised out of their graves, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52' (VIII, 276; cf. II, 43; VIII, 289). However, rather than presenting the second coming of Christ or a millennial epoch as the focal point of Christian eschatology, he concentrates here on the existential implications of life after death.⁸ The urgency of preparing for death is heightened by the irrevocable nature of one's eternal state:

Your eternal state will be according to the state in which you die: death will open the doors of heaven or hell to you. As the tree falls, so it shall lie through eternity. If the infant be dead born, the whole world cannot raise it to life again: and if one die out of Christ, in an unregenerate state, there is no more hope of him for ever.⁹

⁸ Boston's strategy is similar to that of Calvin, *Institvtionvm*, III.IX.i-vi, in this respect. He thus differs somewhat from Puritans of the preceding generation who nurtured a strong sense of the imminence of Christ's return. See Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought, ed. by Heiko A. Oberman (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1975), pp. 13, 42, 46, 92. For passages from Boston's *Works* which do stress the imminence of Christ's advent, see I, 519-21; V, 556-86; and VIII, 312. Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1971), pp. 113-14, seems to view Boston as a post-millennialist, but his case is based entirely on Boston's sermon on the future conversion of the Jews (III, 354-71), a necessary but not sufficient doctrine for post-millennialism.

⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 244. For images of the finality of the eternal state, see Abdn MS, 296-97; *Works*, I, 601; II, 491; III, 31, 47, 49, 115; IV, 261; V, 269-70, 418, 453, 505, 557, 566, 576; VI, 487; VIII, 253; X, 427, 429.

In this passage Boston not only recapitulates the earlier sermons of the *Fourfold State* on regeneration and union with Christ, but also draws that preaching to the highest pitch of existential intensity. There is an unbreakable bond between one's state at death and one's eternal state. Those who remain in the state of nature, neither regenerated nor united with Christ, are ineluctably cast into eternal hell (VIII, 245; cf. 314). The *Fourfold State* does not allow life's pilgrims to retrace their steps: after death, 'there is no coming back to mend our matters' (VIII, 245; cf. I, 525; III, 31; IV, 275; V, 392, 415, 576; VI, 435; VIII, 241, 252-53). Just as the fall prevents mankind from returning to the state of innocence, so death prevents the unregenerate from returning to the state of nature, let alone from entering the state of grace. Death thus renders the state of glory eternally impenetrable to those who are out of Christ, a danger made all the more urgent by the brevity of the present life, which is 'but a short preface to long eternity' (VIII, 244; cf. III, 31; IV, 259; V, 41, 265, 440). If the unregenerate ask what they must do to prepare to 'die safely', Boston reminds them of the doctrinal pivot of the *Fourfold State*: 'Your nature and state must be changed: you must be united to Jesus Christ by faith' (VIII, 245; cf. II, 669; V, 270, 440, 442).

II. THE HOPEFUL STATE OF THE GODLY IN DEATH

Whereas the theme of Boston's sermon 'Death' is the *certainty* of death, the theme of his sermon 'Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked in their Death' is the *experience* of death. Mirroring the contrast his text draws between the deaths of the wicked and the righteous -- 'The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death' (Proverbs 14.32) -- Boston divides his sermon into two 'Doctrines'. The first of these will be discussed in the following chapter, since it pertains to the fate of the wicked before they are cast into hell. In the second, Boston asserts 'The state of the godly in death is a hopeful state' (VIII, 255; cf. I, 37; V, 499).

The 'happy and hopeful' condition of the godly is confirmed by three features of their deaths. First, they have a 'trusty good Friend before them in the other world' (VIII, 256; cf. V, 414, 489; VI, 677; VIII, 529). Second, they will have 'safe passage to another world' (VIII, 256; cf. X, 104). Third, they will have a 'joyful entrance into the other

world', 'celebrated with rapturous hymns of praise to their glorious Redeemer' (VIII, 258; cf. V, 414).

As he so often does, Boston employs the biblical metaphors of journey and marriage to explain and illustrate these propositions. Just as Joseph sent gifts to Jacob to assure him that he would receive friendship on arriving in Egypt (Genesis 45.27), so also

[. . .] when the Lord calls a godly man out of the world, he sends him such glad tidings, and such a kind invitation into the other world, that, he has faith to believe it, his spirit must revive, when he sees the waggon of death which comes to carry him thither. (VIII, 256; cf. V, 497; VIII, 264)

Although the journey into eternity passes through a 'dark and shady vale', a 'guard of angels' will give the godly 'safe conduct' (VIII, 257; cf. V, 416). The day of death is 'the day in which the heirs of glory return from their travels, to their own country'. To use another biblical figure, the day of death is the 'marriage day' of the godly, when 'the marriage is consummated, and a marriage feast begun, which has no end' (VIII, 259; cf. III, 38-39; IV, 25-26, 29-30; V, 499, 537, 577; X, 553). The angels, therefore, are also 'attendants on their Lord's bride, and will doubtless convey her safe home to his house' (VIII, 257).

The basis for the hopeful death of the godly is their union with Christ. According to Boston, the reason that believers have a 'safe passage' into eternity is that their bodies cannot be separated from the body of Christ:

They continue members of Christ, though in a grave. Their dust is precious dust; laid up in the grave as in their Lord's cabinet. They lie in a grave mellowing, as precious fruit laid up to be brought forth to him at the resurrection.¹⁰

This imagery is made all the more startling by the horrific descriptions of rotting corpses in the previous sermon. So strong is the bond of union between Christ and the believer that, even in decay, the body of the believer is only 'mellowing' for resurrection glory. The 'solid joy and consolation' of the true believer in Christ is that 'the body of death goes off, at the death of the body', preparing him for resurrection (VIII, 259). Thus a 'dying day is a good day to a godly man'.¹¹

¹⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 257 (cf. I, 552; II, 40; III, 573; VII, 131-32; VIII, 512-14). The point that the bodies of the righteous remain united to Christ even in death is made by a number of Boston's sources, including the *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 37; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 86; [Edmund] Calamy, 'Of the Resurrection', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 535-60 (p. 551); Vincent, p. 84.

¹¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 258 (cf. II, 41; V, 463, 483-94; VIII, 313). This conclusion is based upon Boston's interpretation of Ecclesiastes 7.1 ('A good name is better than precious ointment: and the day of death, than the day of one's birth'), an interpretation he may have borrowed from John Careless,

Boston closes his argument for the hopefulness of the death of the righteous on a doxological note:

Glory, glory, glory, blessing and praise to our Redeemer [. . .] by whose death, grim devouring death is made to do such a good office [. . .] (VIII, 259)

Scarcely has this doxology left his lips, however, when he poses an objection from experience which raises afresh the question of assurance of salvation. 'But if the state of the godly in their death be so hopeful', he asks, 'how comes it to pass that many of them, when dying, are full of fears, and have little hope?' (VIII, 259-60).

The admission that some believers experience 'little hope' at death is particularly striking when it is viewed against the background of the Marrow Controversy, in which the Marrow men were accused of making a facile identification of faith with assurance.¹² It is true that Boston and his colleagues considered assurance to be of the essence of faith (VII, 478-85; cf. I, 366-67; III, 44; VII, 363n; VIII, 603; IX, 418, 423; X, 278-84), and that by doing so they were self-consciously echoing the definition of faith they found in Calvin and others in the early stages of Reformed theology.¹³ But here, as in his notes on the *Marrow* and elsewhere (VII, 155n-62n), Boston's pastoral realism allows for doubt and fear in the Christian life. This allowance very likely arose from his own spiritual experience as well as from his extensive experience of pastoral visitation. Its theological basis is the distinction -- also commonly drawn by his Reformed and Puritan predecessors¹⁴ -- between an objective assurance ('faith of adherence') of the suitability of Christ for salvation and a subjective assurance ('faith of evidence') that one has

'Examination and Letters of that Faithful Man of God, John Careless', in *Writings of Rogers, Saunders, Taylor, and Careless* (London, n.d.), pp. 111-205 (p. 120), or from Thomas Manton, *Sermons*, p. 384.

¹² See, for example, James Hadow's *Record of God*, pp. 22-23, 28-31; *Antinomianism Detected*, pp. 20-21, 26-27, 169; and *Review of a Conference betwixt Epaphroditus and Epaphras* (Edinburgh, 1719), p. 5.

¹³ Lachman, pp. 9-22. See especially Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, III.II.vii, xiv-xvi.

¹⁴ Boston himself cites numerous examples from his sources in his notes on the *Marrow* (VII, 258n-62n). Of these, perhaps Essenius, Davidson, Knox, Calvin, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Westminster Standards are the most noteworthy. More generally, see Gordon J. Keddie, "'Unfallible Certenty of the Pardon of Sinne and Life Everlasting": The Doctrine of Assurance in the Theology of William Perkins (1558-1602), *Evangelical Quarterly*, 48 (1976), 230-44 (pp. 237-38); Stoeber, pp. 132-34; Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, pp. 78, 81; Donald Macleod, 'Faith as Assurance', *Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland* (1988), 99-101 (p. 99); and Beeke, p. 143 (cf. pp. 2, 21, 49-50, 60-63, 108-109, 112, 142, 156-59, 174-75, 366): 'Consequently, the Puritans commonly distinguished the faith of adherency to Christ from the faith of assurance (or evidence) in Christ whereby the believer knows that Christ has died particularly for him'. Kendall (*English Calvinism*, pp. 33, 195-96, 200, 203), Letham ('Saving Faith', I, 290, 362-64), and Lane ('Quest', pp. 103-105) are among those who view this distinction as a separation of assurance from faith. It is more properly viewed as a distinction between two kinds of assurance (and between two kinds of faith, for that matter) which, though distinguished, yet remain inseparably connected.

actually received Christ for salvation.¹⁵ In his notes on the *Marrow* (VII, 363n), Boston sanctions Rutherford's explanation of this distinction:

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.¹⁶

While the former is necessarily of the essence of faith, the latter is only necessary for full assurance of salvation. Thus assurance of the efficacy of the work of Christ is neither theologically nor experientially incompatible with doubt concerning one's personal appropriation of that work. Some Christians 'die triumphantly, in a full assurance of faith', beginning to sing 'the songs of Zion, while yet in a strange land'. Others die in 'solid dependence of faith', yet not 'filled with joy in believing'. Still others 'may die under great doubts and fears', as if they are 'pursued by the devouring lion, even to the very gates of the new Jerusalem' (VIII, 260).

The reason that some saints are 'liable to such perplexity in their death' is not because of the doctrine of election, but because they are 'men of like passions with others; and death is a frightful object in itself' (VIII, 260). The saint is also jealous of his own eternal state and recognizes that it is a 'more serious thing to die, than the rest of mankind are aware of'. Further, the saint is more keenly aware of the 'deceits of the heart' and therefore 'may have much to do to keep up hope on a death-bed'. A Christian is particularly likely to be uncomfortable in his death when he is in a 'bad frame of spirit', due to unrepented sin, or backsliding, or an inability to 'produce evidences of his title to heaven' (VIII, 261; cf. III, 55-56).

Yet even in the midst of doubts and apprehensions, the 'state of the saints, in their death, is always in itself hopeful'. By virtue of the fact that he is in 'the state of grace', the saint is 'always habitually prepared for death, and his dying safely is ensured'. In this respect, saints differ from hypocrites, whose 'presumptuous hopes [. . .] cannot make their state hopeful'. Since 'God judgeth according to the truth of the thing', rather than

¹⁵ Boston, *Works*, VII, 258n (cf. II, 16-18; III, 52, 57-58; VI, 91; VII, 121-22, 257n-62n, 363n-64n). See also [Boston], *Queries to the Friendly-Adviser*, pp. 18-19; the 'Representation' of the Marrow men in Addison, pp. 125-27; and the quotations affixed to their answers to 'Queries' in John Brown (Whitburn), *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated*, rev. edn (Glasgow, 1831), pp. 239-61 (pp. 253-54).

¹⁶ Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 111 (cf. 85, 110)

according to the affections of the moment, the saint is never properly devoid of hope (VIII, 261).

Having established that the death of the godly is hopeful, Boston proceeds to offer practical 'comfort to the godly against the fear of death' (VIII, 262). The art of dying well was important to Puritan preachers,¹⁷ although the *ars moriendi* was already a notable theme in popular medieval devotion.¹⁸ Boston's method for preaching on how to die follows the distinctive conventions of the former: he considers ten 'cases' of fears that his parishioners are likely to have as they confront death. From pastoral experience, he anticipates they will be afraid of parting with family and friends, of dying in the midst of 'spiritual decay', of the 'pangs of death' themselves, of dying suddenly, of losing their mental faculties before death, and so forth (VIII, 262-65; cf. VI, 680-82). By dealing openly with such anxieties, he shows that he is sensitive to the emotional dimension of Christian experience and preaches to the affections as well as to the mind and will. Yet his pastoral remedies for these cases evince Boston's intellectualist tendency by appealing largely to the intellect, resting squarely on the doctrine of union with Christ. It is those who are 'in Christ' who have a hope to comfort them 'against all those fears which arise from the consideration of a dying hour' (VIII, 262; cf. V, 268-69, 432; VI, 680). It is an 'inexpressible comfort, that death, come when it will, can never catch [them] out of Christ' (VIII, 264). His advice to the 'naturally timorous' also gives the mind a governing role over the affections: 'make [death] familiar to you by frequent meditations upon it, and you may thereby quiet your fears' (VIII, 265; cf. 268).

At this point Boston digresses from the main argument of his sermon to offer 'additional considerations' on the vanity of human life. Since saints 'ought to be always on good terms with death', excessive fondness for life is to be avoided. They ought rather to loathe life as Job loathed life (7.16). In order to encourage this 'desirable temper', he reminds his hearers and readers of the sinfulness, misery and troubles, and great imperfections which adhere to life in this world (VIII, 265-67; cf. V, 464-65; IX, 96-97). Boston's description of the present life is decidedly pessimistic. The sinfulness of

¹⁷ Wakefield, pp. 143-53. Among Boston's Puritan sources, the sermons of John Flavel, *Mystery of Providence*, pp. 174-78, provide the best example of this theme.

¹⁸ Rowell, pp. 24-25. Boston had direct exposure to this tradition by reading the Jesuit Hieremias Drexelius, *De Aeternitate considerationes* (Cologne, 1631), pp. 117, 189, 198.

humanity makes the present life a ‘pest-house’ in which one must breathe ‘infectious air’. One’s own sins are running sores; the sins of others make this world ‘an unsightly company, a disagreeable crowd, in which the most loathsome are the most numerous’ (VIII, 265). Even the saints are liable to ‘perplexing doubts, confounding fears, short-lived joys, and long-running sorrows’ (VIII, 266). Although Boston’s preaching on the loathsomeness of life is an unexpected excursus, it indirectly contributes to his argument that the death of the godly is a happy death. The happiness of death is partly happiness by privation: death enables the soul to escape from the ‘vile clay’ of the body with all of its imperfections (VIII, 267). At the same time, the loathsomeness of life stimulates in the saints the positive desire ‘to be with Christ, which is best of all’ (VIII, 266).

Boston closes his sermon ‘with a few directions, how to prepare for death, so that we may die comfortably’. By virtue of his regeneration and union with Christ in a ‘gracious state’, the ‘true Christian’ has habitual ‘preparation for death’. But the true Christian also requires ‘actual preparation, or readiness in respect of his particular case, frame, and disposition of mind and spirit’ (VIII, 267; cf. II, 669-70; V, 268-69, 442-43, 557, 566-72; VI, 434-35; X, 132). Such readiness is fostered by the maintenance of a clean conscience:

Wherefore, walk closely with God; be diligent, strict, and exact in your course: beware of loose, careless, and irregular conversation; as you would not lay up for yourselves anguish and bitterness of spirit, in a dying hour. (VIII, 267; cf. VI, 569-71)

The true Christian must watch and wait for death constantly, since the ‘way to die comfortably, is, to die daily’ (VIII, 268; cf. III, 448; IX, 375). Earthly enjoyments ought to ‘hang loose’, that they may be ‘easily dropped, when death comes to carry you away into another world’ (VIII, 268; cf. V, 94). Finally, hinting at the theme of ‘generation-work’ which he develops more fully elsewhere, Boston exhorts his hearers to carry out ‘the work of [their] day and generation with speed and diligence’, so that ‘neglected seasons, and lost opportunities’ will not disquiet them at death (VIII, 270; cf. III, 589; IV, 287; V, 254, 270, 570, 620-21; X, 397-416, 430).

Among these ‘directions’ is an application which deserves further comment, touching as it does upon theological and pastoral questions raised earlier in the *Fourfold State*. Boston instructs his hearers and readers:

Be diligent in gathering and laying up evidences of your title to heaven, for your support and comfort at the hour of death. (VIII, 268)

Self-examination as to one's 'spiritual state' is a 'solemn, serious work' which is to be done frequently (VIII, 268-69). He gives his parishioners further instructions about this work in his sermon 'Rational Evidences for Heaven, Illustrated' (III, 22-66; cf. Abdn MS, 260-66; II, 490-510; IV, 254, 267; VI, 537; XII, 215-16). The purpose of self-examination is to determine whether or not one is a 'real Christian', that is,

[. . .] one who loves God for himself, as well as for his benefits; and that with a supreme love, above all persons, and all things; he has an awful and impartial regard to God's commands; he opposes and wrestles against that sin, which of all others most easily besets him: [. . .] (VIII, 269; cf. III, 43, 59-60; XII, 216)

Every one who discovers these characteristics within his own soul should conclude that he is regenerated and has a 'title to heaven' (VIII, 270).

We have already seen how Boston distinguishes between assurance which is of the essence of faith (objective assurance of the availability of Christ for salvation) and assurance which allows for a measure of doubt in Christian experience (subjective assurance that one has actually received Christ for salvation). Here he teaches that believers ought to labour for the latter. His exhortation to gather evidence for heaven amounts to a syllogism in which evidence of the believer's sanctification is allowed to confirm that his faith in Christ is genuine.

Yet Boston remains invulnerable to conventional criticisms of the *sylogismus practicus*. As we noted in our discussion of regeneration, the 'practical syllogism' in Reformed theology has been criticized for departing from Calvin by compelling the individual to look away from Christ and towards himself in morbid introspection, thereby destroying the true ground for Christian assurance.¹⁹ It is true that Boston considers inward attitudes such as love for God himself, hatred of sin, and desire for holiness to be the best evidences for salvation. In this respect, his syllogism is a *sylogismus mysticus* rather than a *sylogismus practicus*. But the enterprise of self-examination is grounded in

[. . .] earnest prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, for the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby you are enabled to understand his own word, and to discern his own work in your souls [. . .]²⁰

¹⁹ This argument has been recently popularized by Kendall, *English Calvinism*, pp. 33-34, 40-41, 75, 203-204. But see also Niesel, pp. 169-81; Barth, II. II. 335-36; Wendel, pp. 276-77; Chalker, p. 79; Bray, *Theodore Beza*, pp. 107-11; Bell, pp. 8, 80, 98, 128, 198; and Zachman, pp. 6-7.

²⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 269 (cf. II, 16-17; III, 42-44, 52, 61-62; IV, 129; V, 309; VII, 120, 320n-21n; VIII, 270).

It is just *as* the believer examines his inward spiritual life that he looks to Christ, discerning the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit in his soul. Rather than trusting in his own resources, the true Christian

[. . .] sees nothing in himself to trust to, before the Lord; Christ and his fulness are the stay of his soul; his confidence is cut off from all that is not Christ, or in Christ [. . .] (VIII, 269; cf. III, 58, 61)

Like Calvin and the later Calvinists,²¹ Boston recognizes the gracious work of Christ by the Holy Spirit within the human soul as well as without it. He maintains what Joel R. Beeke has termed the ‘*reciprocal relationship between God’s promise in Christ and “the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made”*’.²² Assurance of faith is thus placed within a thoroughly Trinitarian context, in which the work of each person of the Trinity contributes to the believer’s certainty of salvation. Furthermore, his definition of a ‘real Christian’ is preceded by a litany of Scripture texts which let the ‘marks of a regenerate state be fixed from the Lord’s word’ (VIII, 269). For Boston, as for his sources,²³ the practice of seeking evidences for heaven is thus squarely grounded upon biblical imperatives.²⁴ The Scripture is the Holy Spirit’s ‘own word’, and it is the

²¹ Among Boston’s sources, see Calvin, *Institutionvm*, III. II. xxiv, xxxiii, xxxvi, xxxix; III. XIV. xviii-xxi, III. XXIV. v; Calvin, *Genesis*, pp. 320, 508; Knox’s ‘Confession of Faith’, II, 262; Beza, pp. 24-26, 32, 36-37; *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ*, I. XII, V. IX-XI; Culverwell, pp. 497-98; Marrow, VII, 319; Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 89; Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, pp. 407-408; Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 137; Sedgwick, pp. 90, 615; John Flavel, *Sacramental Meditations upon divers Select Places of Scripture*, 4th edn (London, 1700), pp. 47-48; Charnock, *Works* (1986), IV, 491-92; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III. XI. xxxiii-xl; and Turretin IV. XIII. ix-xii, xix (cf. XV. XVII. vi-vii, xvii, xxvii), who cites Augustine on the point. Beza’s comment is particularly striking, since he is often pitted against Calvin on faith and assurance: ‘[. . .] our sanctification from when procedeth good works, is a certaine effect of the faith or rather of Jesus Christ dwelling in us by faith’ (p. 37). These examples support the cases made by Beeke (pp. 48-49, 68-72, 76, 81-86, 113-14, 144, 152-53, 156-73, 265) and Paul R. Schaefer, Jr., ‘The Spiritual Brotherhood on the Habits of the Heart: Cambridge Protestants and the Doctrine of Sanctification from William Perkins to Thomas Shepard’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1994), pp. 118ff, for continuity in the Reformed doctrine of assurance. They therefore count against the imbalanced arguments made for discontinuity by T. F. Torrance, ‘Justification: Its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 13 (1960), 225-46 (p. 237); Chalker, pp. 66, 72-73, 84, 114-15, 140-41, 296; Lynn Baird Tipson, Jr., ‘The Development of a Puritan Understanding of Conversion’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1972), pp. 118-20; Bray, ‘Value of Works’, pp. 85-86; Kendall, *English Calvinism*, pp. 25-26, 32-33, 75, 161, 204-208; Bell, pp. 28-29, 31-32, 127, 198; Michael Schuldiner, *Gifts and Works: The Post-Conversion Paradigm and Spiritual Controversy in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts*, National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Dissertation Series, VIII (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), pp. 40-41, 68-70; and Zachman, pp. 6-7, 222, 246.

²² Beeke, p. 168. See also Barth, II. II. 334-36; Berkouwer, pp. 289-90, 294-95, 303; Keddie, p. 239; Ian McPhee, ‘Conserver or Transformer of Calvin’s Theology? A Study of the Origins and Development of Theodore Beza’s Thought, 1550-1570’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1979), pp. 336-49; Von Rohr, p. 166; and Woolsey, II, 87.

²³ Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing*, p. 77; Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, II, 84; Turretin, IV. XIII. ix-x, xix, XV. XVII. vi-vii, xv, xvii, xxvii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III. IV. xxxviii, III. XI. xxvii; Craighead, p. 22.

²⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 269. Boston invariably views self-examination as a process of ‘spiritual reasoning on scripture grounds’ (V, 307); see Abdn MS, 262; *Works*, II, 16, 491; III, 36, 43-45, 56-60; IV, 130-31; VII, 119-20, 320n, VIII, 52.

‘office’ of the Holy Spirit to use that word to bear witness that the believer is a child of God (VIII, 269-70; cf. III, 43-44; VIII, 52). The *sylogismus mysticus* is as biblical as it is Christological. Rather than the *use* of the practical syllogism, therefore, it is the *neglect* of the practical syllogism which ‘mars the joy and consolation which some Christians might otherwise have at their death’ (VIII, 268; cf. III, 45; VIII, 161-62).

III. ‘THERE SHALL BE A RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD’

In his sermon ‘Death’, Thomas Boston largely assumed that his hearers and readers recognized the inevitability of their own deaths. The purpose of that sermon was not so much to prove the certainty of death as it was to impress that fact on the minds and hearts of his congregation. When he comes to preach on the resurrection, by contrast, Boston senses a need to defend its certainty by rational argument. ‘Of the Resurrection’ is an apologetic for the resurrection of the body.

The case for the resurrection begins with biblical ‘instances of this powerful work of God’. The miracles performed by Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus demonstrate that God ‘can raise the dead’. Yet Boston quickly turns away from the biblical record to argue for the resurrection by analogy. This argumentative strategy, in which ‘Scripture and reason furnish the answer’, is an unusual one for him, since usually he is governed more exclusively by the biblical text. If men can ‘make curious glasses out of ashes’, Boston asks, ‘cannot the great Creator, who made all things of nothing, raise man’s body, after it is reduced into the dust?’ Those who doubt that God can do this are like illiterate men who are ‘great unbelievers as to many chemical experiments’ (VIII, 272). Using an historical example -- also a rarity in Boston’s sermons -- he tells his congregation that the Europeans confounded the Indians with guns which were able to ‘thunder and lightning in a moment, and at pleasure kill men afar off’ (VIII, 273). These examples show how incapable finite humans are of ‘conceiving distinctly of the extent of almighty power, and much more of comprehending its actings, and method of procedure’ (VIII, 272).

In addition to defending the resurrection in general terms, Boston answers a specific objection to the resurrection:

How can men’s bodies be raised up again, after they are reduced to dust, and the ashes of many generations are mingled together? (VIII, 272)

It is not clear if the impetus for the lengthy discussion which follows came from the preacher himself, from a parishioner's question, or from similar discussions in the *Morning Exercise* and elsewhere.²⁵ His answer is that God is infinite in understanding and power, therefore able to 'distinguish between dust and dust', and infinite in power, therefore able to bring particles of dust and 'join them together, in their order'. This argument is strengthened by the observation that human bodies retain their identity even as they fluctuate in size; thus, the complete identity of every particle of matter is 'not essential to the resurrection of the body' (VIII, 274). Confident in his defence of the resurrection, Boston poses the objection a second time, for maximum effect:

Wherefore, let the bodies of men be laid in the grave; let them rot there, and be reduced into the most minute particles: or let them be burnt, and the ashes cast into rivers, or thrown up into the air, to be scattered by the wind: let the dust of a thousand generations be mingled, and the steams of the dead bodies wander to and fro in the air: let birds or wild beasts eat the bodies, or the fishes of the sea devour them, so that the parts of human bodies, thus destroyed, pass into substantial parts of birds, beasts or fishes [. . .] (VIII, 273; cf. II, 43; VII, 132-33; VIII, 271, 278)

Against 'modern Sadducees' who would deny the possibility of resurrection in these circumstances, he answers with the words of Jesus from Matthew 22.29: 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God' (VIII, 273).

The emphasis Boston places on rationality in his defence of the resurrection is unusual within his preaching, and indicates a further point of connection between the *Fourfold State* and the *Morning Exercise*.²⁶ But this rationality is carefully qualified:

We believe God to be omniscient and omnipotent; infinite in knowledge and in power: and hence, agreeably to the dictates of reason, we conclude the possibility of the resurrection, even in the cases supposed. (VIII, 273)

Belief in the resurrection is rational when the power and wisdom of God have already been established on scriptural grounds. Even when Boston makes an occasional foray into philosophy, biblical theology retains its priority for his preaching.

Having established the possibility of resurrection, he proceeds to argue for the *fact* of resurrection. God 'not only can do it, but he certainly will do it, because he has said it'

²⁵ Calamy, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 541-42; Durham, *Revelation*, p. 757; Ambrose, p. 412; Essenius, XIX.XVII; Turretin, XX.I.xxiv-xxv; and Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XXVI.XXII-XXVII. The patristic and medieval (especially Lombard) backgrounds to the question of material continuity are treated by Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in its Medieval and Modern Contexts', *History of Religions*, 30 (1990), 51-85 (pp. 51-57). For the seventeenth century background, see Philip C. Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 131-36.

²⁶ Calamy, *Morning Exercise*, p. 536.

(VIII, 275; cf. II, 43; VII, 133). Here Boston's argument does rest on exclusively biblical grounds, for the resurrection of the dead is 'clearly and frequently taught in sacred Scripture' (VIII, 275). The sermon text itself teaches that 'all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth' (John 5.28). A rehearsal of the biblical testimony for the resurrection reaches its climax with Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 that the resurrection of believers, grounded in the resurrection of Christ, is a 'fundamental article' of the Christian faith (VIII, 276; cf. II, 42-43).

By 'resurrection' Boston means a bodily resurrection. Although he does not say very much about it in the *Fourfold State*, he follows the Christian tradition in teaching that human souls exist between the moment of death and the general resurrection, separated from their bodies, in an intermediate state of either conscious bliss or conscious torment.²⁷ Since the soul returns to God at death (Ecclesiastes 12.7), 'it is the body only which is laid in the grave, and can be properly said to be raised' (VIII, 276-77; cf. I, 552). 'Moreover, it is the same body that dies, which shall rise again'. The 'very notion of a resurrection' implies that the bodies which are raised from the grave will be -- in a phrase borrowed from the Westminster Standards -- 'the self-same bodies'.²⁸ The resurrection of the identical body is also demanded by the 'equity of the divine procedure':

[. . .] as the bodies of the saints now bear a part in glorifying God, and some of them suffer in his cause, so they shall partake of the glory that is to be revealed.²⁹

It would be unjust that 'one body should serve him, and another be glorified' (VIII, 277).

²⁷ See Boston, *Works*, VIII, 342 (cf. I, 578; II, 37-43, 576; III, 23, 29; IV, 282; V, 395, 413-23; VII, 129-31; VIII, 513-14; XI, 309). The intermediate state is discussed by Rowell, pp. 22-26, and Almond, p. 131, but was articulated for Boston in Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, III.XXV.vi; Ames, I.XXX.xxxiv; Polyandrus, L.XXIV; *Confession of Faith* XXXII.1; *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 37; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 86; Dickson and Durham, *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, p. 326; Mr Watson, 'The day of Judgment asserted', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 561-76 (p. 562); Manton, *Sermons*, pp. 385-87; Essenius, XIX.VII-VIII; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xi-xxxiii; and Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XXVI.LXVII-LXXII.

²⁸ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 277 (cf. II, 43-44; V, 424; VII, 132). See the Westminster *Confession of Faith*, XXXII.2, and *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 87. The point that the resurrection body will be the same body is also stressed by Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, III.XXV.vii-viii; Ursinus, p. 372; Zanchius, VIII, 457-610; Polyandrus, LI.XXV-XXX; Manton, *Sermons*, pp. 372-73; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xxxiv; and Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XXVI.IV, XV-XXI.

²⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 277 (cf. I, 109; II, 44; V, 424). Almond, p. 95, notes that this was a standard argument. Among Boston's sources, see Irenaeus, *Divi Irenæi, Græci Scriptoris eruditissimi, Episcopi Lugdunensis, libri quinque Aduersus portentosas hæreses Valentini & aliorum* ([Geneva?] & Paris, 1570), II.XXVI.ii; Polyandrus, LI.XXVI; Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, pp. 182-83; Calamy, *Morning Exercise*, p. 544; Manton, *Sermons*, p. 290; Turretin, XX.I.xv, XX.II.iv; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xxxiv; and Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XXVI.XXI.

The agent of this bodily resurrection will be the ‘same Jesus, who was crucified’ (VIII, 278; cf. II, 44; VIII, 271). At the last day, he shall return with ‘shout, voice, and trumpet’, coming with ‘loud alarm’ as the ‘Judge of the world’, ‘in greater majesty and terror than we can conceive’ (VIII, 278; cf. I, 519-21; VIII, 289, 294-95). To speak of Christ coming in both majesty and terror is again to make an absolute dichotomy between the righteous and the wicked:

Now as there is a great difference between the godly and the wicked, in their life, and in their death; so will there be also in their resurrection. (VIII, 278; cf. 271)

We shall return to Boston’s description of the resurrection of the wicked to damnation in the following chapter. As for the godly, they are raised ‘by virtue of the Spirit of Christ, the blessed bond of their union with him’ (VIII, 278; cf. II, 45). The role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection was similarly emphasized by Puritans such as William Ames, who taught that the resurrection of believers will be ‘perficitur virtute unionis illius quam habent cum Christo’ and the ‘operatione spiritus ejus vivificantis, qui habitat in ipsis’.³⁰ Since Christ, the ‘mystical head’, has ‘got above the waters of death, he cannot but bring forth the members after him’.³¹ Resurrection, like all the other blessings of salvation, comes to the believer as he is united to Christ; *resurrection is in union with Christ*. Within the *Fourfold State*, therefore, the doctrine of union with Christ functions as a theological and thematic link between the states of grace and glory.

For the godly, the resurrection of the body will be an occasion of ‘inexpressible joy’ (VIII, 278; cf. II, 45). By emphasizing the emotional dimension of glory, Boston appeals to the affections of his hearers and readers. The resurrection of the saints will be like the going forth of a bride ‘unto the marriage of the Lamb’, with songs ‘in highest strains’, since the ‘black band of doubts and fears [. . .] is for ever dispersed and driven away’ (VIII, 279; cf. 313). Boston heightens anticipation by personifying the ‘joyful meeting’ of the soul and the body at the resurrection, when they will ‘rejoice in each other, and triumph in their happy meeting again’ (VIII, 279; cf. II, 45). The body will

³⁰ Ames, I.XLI.xviii. See also Calvin, *Institutionvm*, III.XXV.iii; Polyandrus, LI.XIX, XXI; Pemble, pp. 482-83; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 87; Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, pp. 189-90; Lye, *Morning Exercise*, p. 361; Calamy, *Morning Exercise*, p. 548; Manton, *Sermons*, p. 374; Essenius, XIX.XIV-XVI; Turretin, XX.I.xiii, xvi, xxvi, XX.II.vii; and Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XIX.XLV, XXVI.XIII-XIV.

³¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 278 (cf. I, 509, 552; II, 45; III, 573; IV, 322; V, 427; VII, 77, 91, 134, 246n; VIII, 512, 514; IX, 23, 427; X, 127; XI, 313).

bless the soul for making it bend its knees in humiliation, loosen its tongue in prayer and praise, and open its eyes in tears of repentance during the present life (VIII, 279). For its part, the soul will invite the body to share in resurrection joy:

Arise then, my body, and come away! and let these eyes, which were wont to weep over my sins, behold with joy the face of our glorious Redeemer; lo! this is our God, and we have waited for him [. . .] We took part together in the fight, come, let us go together to receive and wear the crown. (VIII, 280)

Although presently in conflict with one another, body and soul shall be united finally and fully in the state of glory (cf. V, 423).

Boston's enumeration of the 'qualities with which the bodies of the saints shall be endowed at the resurrection' is taken directly from 1 Corinthians 15.42-44: they will be 'incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual' (VIII, 282; cf. II, 46; III, 23; V, 428; VII, 134). He begins by contrasting the glorified resurrection body both to the 'loathsome sores and diseases' of the living body and to the offensiveness of the dead body, which must be buried out of sight. Because the resurrection body is 'raised incorruptible', it is 'incapable of the least indisposition, sickness, or sore, and much more, of dying'. One of his strategies for portraying the glory of man's eternal state is the negative strategy of contrasting it with the frailty of man's present estate. The resurrection body has 'everlasting youth and vigour, being no more subject to the decays which age produced in this life' (VIII, 282). The state of glory, therefore, is not simply a continuation of the state of grace, but an altogether new order of existence (cf. V, 393; X, 375)

Boston's other strategy for portraying the full 'splendour and brightness' of the state of glory is to use biblical images of glory to describe it. Like the faces of Moses and Stephen, the faces of the righteous will be 'beautiful and glorious, full of sweet agreeable majesty, when they have put off all corruption, and shine as the sun'. The beauty of the saints 'diffuses itself through their whole bodies', for the whole body is raised in conformity with the body of Christ. Neither will the saints have any deformities in glory: Jacob will not be 'halt', Leah will not be 'tender-eyed', Mephibosheth will not be 'lame of his legs'. Rather, the bodies of the saints will rise from the grave 'in perfect beauty and comely proportion' (VIII, 283; cf. V, 428). Their strength will be 'vastly great', so as to 'bear up under an exceeding and eternal weight of glory' (VIII, 283; cf. II, 46):

How strong must the bodily eyes be, which, to the soul's eternal comfort, shall behold the dazzling glory and splendour of the New Jerusalem; and steadfastly

look at the transcendent glory and brightness of the man Christ [. . .] How strong must their bodies be, who shall not rest night nor day, but be, without intermission, for ever employed in the heavenly temple, to sing and proclaim the praises of God [. . .] (VIII, 284; cf. V, 428; XII, 113)

While not always quoting particular biblical texts, Boston's preaching on the resurrection is saturated with biblical images of the weight and light of the state of glory.

The final characteristic of the resurrection body is that it is a spiritual body. This is not to say that the saints in glory will be 'changed into spirits', but only that their bodies 'shall be spiritual as to their spirit-like qualities and endowments' (VIII, 284; cf. II, 46; V, 428). Unlike the natural body, the resurrection body will be subservient to the resurrection soul, no longer a snare or 'a clog to its activity':

The soul, in this life is so much influenced by the body, that, in Scripture style, it is said to be carnal; but then the body shall be spiritual, readily serving the soul in the business of heaven, and in that only, as if it had no more relation to earth than a spirit. (VIII, 284)

Furthermore, although the resurrection body will be a real body, it will not need 'the now necessary supports of life, namely, food, and raiment, and the like' (VIII, 284; cf. V, 424-25). Perhaps most happily of all to a man of Boston's disposition, '[n]o such thing as melancholy shall be found to make the heart heavy in glory' (VIII, 284-85). More than this he is not willing to say, for 'the day will declare it' (VIII, 285; cf. V, 389, 398).

Boston spends comparatively little time applying his doctrine of the resurrection, perhaps because the practical desirability of entering the state of glory is self-evident. Although the resurrection is a 'terror to all unregenerate men' (VIII, 287), it is a 'spring of consolation and joy' to the people of God in their several circumstances (VIII, 286). Those who are mourning the loss of 'godly relations or friends' may be comforted with the knowledge that they will meet them again:

They are but laid down to rest in their beds for a little while, Isa. lvii.2; but in the morning of the resurrection they will awake again, and come forth out of their graves. (VIII, 286)

This is true even for those, like Boston, who have laid infant children in the grave, since God styles himself 'the God of your seed'. He reminds those who are 'weak and sickly' not to be discouraged, for 'there is a day coming, when [they] shall be entirely whole'. 'Hast thou an uncomely or deformed body?' he asks. The body of the saint 'shall rise a glorious, beautiful, handsome, and well-proportioned body' (VIII, 286). Those who are now 'so desirous to be beautiful and handsome' are thus advised to 'study the heavenly

art of beautifying the body' in order to become 'all glorious within, with the graces of God's Spirit' (VIII, 286-87; cf. II, 46; V, 432). Most comforting of all, although the believer will be laid in the grave with mourning, abandoned there by his friends, he will come up from the grave rejoicing. 'O solid comfort! O glorious hopes!' (VIII, 287).

IV. 'THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN'

The difficulty of portraying heaven is a familiar one. Calvin observed that the 'claritate, gaudio, foelicitate, gloria' of the 'regnum Dei' 'a sensu nostro remotissima & quasi ænigmatibus involuta manent'.³² Boston himself 'found it no easy thing to believe the greatness of that glory which is to be revealed' (XII, 249). On the one hand, heaven tends to seem insubstantial or even insipid on the printed page. One nineteenth century commentator criticized Boston and his school on precisely this score, suggesting that their portrayal of heaven was 'vague and inept'.³³ On the other hand, the sweetness of heaven -- when viewed from the perspective of earth -- can soon become cloying. These difficulties are exacerbated when heaven is written upon at length, as it is in the *Fourfold State*.

Thomas Boston has both a positive and a negative preaching strategy for avoiding the difficulties inherent in describing heaven. Positively, he uses the biblical image of the heavenly kingdom to portray the glories of the eternal state. This is in keeping with the desire he expresses elsewhere to know only what Scripture says about 'the other world' (XII, 380). Negatively, he contrasts the glory of that state with the instability of the state of innocence and the imperfection of the state of grace. In both cases, his focus is not so much on the cosmic scope of redemption as it is on the individual's experience of glory.

The governing metaphor for Boston's sermon 'The Kingdom of Heaven' is the biblical metaphor of the eschatological kingdom. His basis for speaking of heaven in this way is provided by the invitation of his sermon text to 'inherit the kingdom' (Matthew 25.34). In relying on the kingdom metaphor, Boston is conscious of the necessity of

³² Calvin, *Institutionvm*, III.XXV.x.

³³ Henry Grey Graham, *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols (London: Black, 1900), II, 139.

using figurative language to solve the difficulty of preaching about heaven. This strategy imitates divine accommodation to human capacities:

As, by familiar resemblances, parents instruct their little children concerning things of which otherwise they can have no tolerable notion; so our gracious God, in consideration of our weakness, is pleased to represent to us heaven's happiness under similitudes taken from earthly things, glorious in the eyes of men; since discoveries of the heavenly glory, divested of earthly resemblances, would be too bright for our weak eyes, and we should but lose ourselves in them. Wherefore now we can but speak as children of these things, which the day will fully discover. (VIII, 318)

The metaphor of the kingdom is the ideal 'earthly resemblance' for his purpose because the 'greatest number of earthly good things' are concentrated in kingdoms (VIII, 318; cf. I, 483; II, 573; IV, 278; V, 402; VIII, 317; X, 104). In the state of glory, every saint will be invested with 'kingly power and authority', wear a crown and other 'ensigns of royalty', live in a palace in a royal city, walk in a palace garden, possess royal treasures, participate in a royal priesthood, and enjoy royal society (VIII, 318-40; cf. III, 32-33; V, 402). Best of all, the saints will be brought 'into the presence-chamber of the great King' himself, introduced to him by 'the great Secretary of heaven', Jesus Christ (VIII, 341). Boston's positive strategy for preaching heaven is to take biblical images of the apparel, construction, location, employment, and population of heaven and describe them from the point of view of kingdom.

His negative strategy is to contrast man's eternal estate with his present estate.³⁴ The contrast between the states of nature and grace has run right through the *Fourfold State*, but now even the state of grace pales by comparison to the state of glory. Boston heightens the desirability of the heavenly kingdom by showing how certain aspects of the state of grace will become superfluous in glory. He was perhaps stimulated to think along these lines by one of his parishioners, whose dying words '*farewell the Bible*' made a 'great impression' upon him (XII, 212). In the state of glory there will be no public ordinances, no preaching, no sacraments, no temple, no confession of sin, no petition, no mortification, no patient watching, no self-examination:

Many of the saints' duties will then be laid aside, as one gives his staff out of his hand, when he is come to the end of his journey. (VIII, 323; cf. II, 574; V, 427, 540-41; XI, 28)

³⁴ Turretin, XX.VIII.xviii, and Essenius, XIX.XXVIII, also employ this strategy.

Echoing his earlier preaching on the Christian life as a journey, Boston observes that the difference between grace and glory is that 'earth is the place of the saint's pilgrimage', while heaven is the country 'where they find their everlasting rest' (VIII, 325; cf. III, 566; IV, 258; IV, 326; V, 263, 391, 418-19).

This contrast between present and eternal life discloses the heavenliness of Boston's heaven. Perhaps as a result of his fourfold schema, he does not have a strong sense here of realized eschatology, or of the intrusion of the divine kingdom into the state of grace.³⁵ The kingdom is primarily a future rather than a present reality; it is the kingdom of heaven rather than the kingdom of God. Without defending the point, and although he is conscious that he is in disagreement with some theologians,³⁶ Boston preaches that the new Jerusalem will be in heaven rather than on earth (VIII, 324; cf. V, 400). As a heavenly city in a heavenly country, the new Jerusalem is 'better than the best of this world' (VIII, 324; cf. III, 32, 79, 124; IX, 303). It is a city 'blessed with a perpetual spring' and 'eternal sunshine', without clouds, or toil, or locked gates, or night, or scarcity of provision, or any trouble whatsoever (VIII, 324-25). The streets of that royal city are paved with gold, so that the feet of the saints 'shall be set on that which the men of this world set their hearts upon' (VIII, 325; cf. III, 33, 81; VIII, 345). The promise of a 'convenient, spacious, and glorious house, for those whom the King delights to honour' is a special comfort for Boston's parishioners, who may 'dwell in the meanest cottage now, or have not where to lay their heads' (VIII, 325; cf. 327). However -- and this point will take on added significance for his doctrine of hell -- it must be noted that he does not take the biblical descriptions of heaven in a strictly literal sense. When he speaks of the trees of heaven being watered by 'an eternal supply of the Spirit, by Jesus Christ, from his Father', it becomes evident that his description of the heavenly paradise is at least partly metaphoric (VIII, 324; cf. III, 81; VIII, 358).

The paradise of glory can be distinguished not only from the state of grace, but also from the paradise of innocence, for 'what is earth in comparison of heaven?' (VIII, 326; cf. XII, 113). The 'glorified saints are advanced to the heavenly paradise' where

³⁵ Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 178, see this as typical of Reformed eschatology in general. By way of contrast, see Boston, *Works*, III, 37-41; IV, 382; IX, 426-28; X, 128, 614-15.

³⁶ Perhaps Durham, *Revelation*, p. 754.

they will not only see but freely eat from the tree of life (VIII, 326; cf. III, 33). Best of all, they will directly ‘behold the Mediator’s glory, and be satisfied with his goodness’ (VIII, 326): ‘There the saints shall have the cloud of glory, the divine presence, with most intimate, uninterrupted communion with God’ (VIII, 327). The paradise of glory is not simply a return to innocence but an altogether new order of spiritual existence.

Two images of the heavenly kingdom are developed at length and deserve separate comment. The first of these is his use of white robes to show the ‘inconceivable glory of the state of the saints in heaven’ (VIII, 319). The theological significance of clothing in the four estates of man is developed more fully in his essay ‘Of the Origin, Names, Texture, and Use of Garments’ (VI, 233-40). In the *Fourfold State*, he is primarily concerned with the ‘white garments’ of the state of glory, viewed in contrast to earthly garments which are ‘badges of sin and shame’ (VIII, 319). His biblical and historical survey shows that white robes were worn by freed Roman bond-servants, brides, Jewish temple priests, champions in battle, and festival-goers or Sabbath worshippers (VIII, 319-24). The white robes of the saints in glory are thus taken to symbolize liberty, marital purity, holiness, victory, and celebration.

To describe the white garment of the saint as a ‘badge of freedom’ is to return the *Fourfold State* to its Augustinian roots (VIII, 319). Augustine’s distinction between two kinds of grace and two kinds of liberty -- expanded into the *status quadruplex* by Peter Lombard and adopted by the theologians of Reformed orthodoxy -- provided the basic framework for Boston’s fourfold anthropology. In ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ he reminds his hearers and readers that the freedom of glory surpasses the freedom of grace:

If we compare the state of the saints on earth with that of the wicked, it is indeed a state of freedom, whereas the other is a state of slavery: but, in comparison with their state in heaven, it is but a servitude. (VIII, 320)

In glory, the saints will be liberated from the misery of nature, ‘set beyond the possibility of sinning, for they shall be confirmed in goodness’.³⁷ To put this in Augustinian terms, they will receive grace *non posse peccare*.³⁸ ‘It will be the consummate freedom of their will, to be for ever unalterably determined to good’ (VIII, 320; cf. ‘Genesis’, 37).

³⁷ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 320 (cf. I, 246; II, 38, 376; IV, 251; V, 426-27, 539-40; VII, 27, 360n; IX, 295, 325; XI, 203-204).

³⁸ Augustine, *De Correptione et Gratia*, XII.33, in Turretin, VIII.lix, XX.IX.v. Cf. Calvin, *Institutionvm*, II.III.xiii; Ursinus, pp. 98-99; Sharp, pp. 185, 202, 263; Wendelinus, p. 525.

By introducing the human will into his sermon, Boston also brings the faculties of the soul to their eschatological completion. Although he has used his fourfold structure as a vehicle for a wide range of theological topics, he has never strayed very far from the locus of anthropology. Not surprisingly, he preaches the ‘absolute innocence’ of the mind, will, and affections in the state of glory.³⁹ Returning to the imagery of intellectual light and darkness prominent earlier in the *Fourfold State*, he insists that ‘the understanding of every saint, when he is come to his kingdom, will be as a globe of pure and unmixed light’ (VIII, 321; cf. II, 38; VIII, 344). Similarly, the will of the saint will be ‘brought to a perfect conformity to the will of God’ (VIII, 321; cf. II, 38). Nor will the affections of the saints ‘be liable to the least disorder or irregularity’ (VIII, 321), but the saints will be ‘absolute masters over sin’, able to manage ‘all their affections and inclinations’ (VIII, 318).

Boston also uses the image of heavenly robes to imply that Adam’s fall was a *fælix lapsus*, an idea expressed in some of his sources.⁴⁰ The white robes of the saints will be like raiment worn by those who overcome an enemy and enjoy ‘a time of triumph’ (VIII, 322). But Adam would have enjoyed no such triumph, even had he withstood his trial:

The joys arising from the view of past dangers, and of riches and honours gained at the very door of death [. . .] will be an ingredient in the everlasting happiness of the saints, which could have had no place in the heaven of innocent Adam, and his sinless offspring, supposing him to have stood. (VIII, 322; cf. I, 268, 322; XI, 29, 205-206; XII, 113)

Since the ‘remembrance of the cross will sweeten the crown’ (VIII, 323), the state of glory is not only greater than the states of innocence and grace, it is greater than the state of glory Adam might have won.

Finally, if the white garments of the saints are like robes worn on ‘festival days’, then heaven must be ‘an eternal rest, with an uninterrupted joy’. This is the spiritual rest of ‘full enjoyment of God, and uninterrupted communion with him’. Following

³⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 321 (cf. II, 38-39; IV, 322; V, 418, 428-29, 491, 541-42). Among Boston’s sources, the glorification of the soul’s faculties receives most explicit attention in Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xxix-xxx.

⁴⁰ See Musculus, p. 41; Beza, III.VIII; Ursinus, pp. 47, 85-86; Rutherford, *Influences*, p. 41; Sedgwick, p. 168; Brooks, pp. 348, 353-55; Turretin, VIII.v.vii; and Flavel, *Sacramental Meditations*, p. 106. On the greater stability and security of the believer’s eternal state, compared to that of Adam, see Ursinus, p. 98; Jeremiah Burroughes, *An Exposition of the Prophetie of Hosea* (London, 1643), p. 167; Cooper, *Morning Exercise*, p. 116; Vinke, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 153-54; Charnock (1684), I, 367, 534, 614, 625-26, 639-40, II, 1356; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 490.

Augustine, Boston preaches that God is the point 'unto which, till the soul come, it will always be restless: but that point reached, it rests'.⁴¹ Only in God will the soul find 'what is commensurable to its boundless desires'. The 'happy end of all the labours of the saints' will be an eternity where even 'their work is their rest, and continual recreation' (VIII, 324; cf. IV, 251, 303; V, 419, 493).

The 'comfortable society' of the heavenly kingdom is Boston's second master-image for the state of glory. The 'chief part of heaven's happiness lies in the blessed society which the saints shall have' with other saints, with the angels, and with the Lord himself.⁴² This emphasis on the corporate or social dimension of glorification -- also a notable feature of Puritan eschatology⁴³ -- appears already in Boston's earliest sermons (Abdn MS, 269, 302). However lonely the saints may now feel, and however their society is made 'less comfortable' by sinful imperfections, they will be 'all of them together in one place' in glory and 'there they shall be perfect' (VIII, 328; cf. IV, 320-21; V, 430, 489-90; VIII, 298, 325). The company of the blessed will include 'godly friends, relations, and acquaintances' as well those who have been 'most eminent in the Church'. Just as Adam 'knew who and what Eve was, at first sight', so the saints will know one another in glory and be able to converse with one another (VIII, 328). Moreover, an 'innumerable company of angels' will accompany the saints to their eternal kingdom (VIII, 329; cf. V, 430, 490).

Best of all, the saints will have 'society with the Lord himself in heaven, glorious communion with God in Christ, which is the perfection of happiness'.⁴⁴ The heavenly communion between God and the saints enables Boston to reiterate several of his earlier themes. First, glory supersedes grace, since the 'glorious presence' of God in 'inconceivable glory' surpasses the 'gracious presence' of God which the saints now enjoy on earth (VIII, 330; cf. I, 15; VIII, 331, 341). This is like the difference between 'the

⁴¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 324 (cf. Abdn MS, 224; *Works*, II, 50, 342; III, 82, 469; IV, 269, 303; VII, 373; VIII, 331, 343, 355).

⁴² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 327 (cf. II, 39, 573; III, 80-81, 124; V, 410-12, 418-19, 429-31, 436, 488-90, 498; VII, 131; VIII, 298, 355; IX, 338).

⁴³ Ball, pp. 236-27, discusses the Puritan treatment of this theme; McDannell and Lang, pp. 64, 67, trace it back to Augustine. Among Boston's sources, see especially Polyandrus, LII.XXXVIII; Ambrose, p. 464; Mr Woodcock, 'Of Heaven', in *The Morning Exercise Methodized*, ed. by Thomas Case (London, 1660), pp. 600-28 (pp. 610-11); Manton, *Sermons*, pp. 354, 389-90; Bayly, p. 79; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 56; and Essenius, XIX.XXIX.

⁴⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 330 (cf. I, 14-15; III, 81; V, 410, 419, 430, 555; VII, 271n-72n; VIII, 324, 327, 340, 345; IX, 547; X, 104).

sight of a king in his undress, quickly passing by us' and a 'fixed leisurely view of him, sitting on his throne in his royal robes' (VIII, 335; cf. VI, 541). Now God 'converses with his saints through the lattices of ordinances, but then shall they be in the presence chamber with him':

But the saints above shall not need a good report of the King, they shall see him; therefore faith ceaseth: they will behold his own face; therefore ordinances are no more: there is no need of a glass. (VIII, 332; cf. I, 122; II, 50; III, 32; V, 410, 541; VIII, 333, 337; XII, 113)

As a result of this vision, they will be able to 'untie all the hard and knotty questions of divinity' and apprehend the 'beauty of the works of creation and providence', of which they have only an 'imperfect discovery' in the present life.⁴⁵ Glory will also surpass grace in the more 'perfect likeness' to God which the saints shall bear in that happy estate (VIII, 338). Even the joy of glory exceeds the joy of grace, since it is 'unmixed, without any dregs of sorrow' and 'everlasting, without interruption' (VIII, 339; cf. V, 545; VIII, 338).

Second, immediate communion with God brings the faculties of the saints to their consummation. The glorious presence of God in heaven 'must needs raise their graces to perfection, and elevate their capacities' (VIII, 331; cf. V, 430-31; VIII, 335). The saints will know God by both sight and experience, sight satisfying the understanding and experience satisfying the will (VIII, 332; cf. VII, 140-41; VIII, 334-36, 338). Although they will enjoy varying degrees of glory, according to their capacities, 'yet all shall be filled, and have what they can hold':

There will be no want to any of them; all shall be fully satisfied, and perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of divine goodness, according to their enlarged capacities: as when bottles of different sizes are filled, some contain more, others less; yet all of them have what they can contain.⁴⁶

The perfection of the will in its experimental knowledge of God in Christ is a 'participation of the divine goodness in full measure' (VIII, 336; cf. II, 650; VII, 141); 'God will be all in all to the saints' (VIII, 337).

⁴⁵ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 336. Cf. Manton, *Sermons*, p. 390: 'We shall study Divinity in Christ's face; that will be our Bible [. . .]'.

⁴⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 337 (cf. I, 122; II, 50; V, 431; VI, 224; VII, 141; VIII, 305). For a full discussion of the idea of degrees of glory, see Emma Disley, 'Degrees of Glory: Protestant Doctrine and the Concept of Rewards Hereafter', *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 42 (1991), 77-105. Among Boston's sources, see Calvin, *Institutionvm*, III.XXV.x; Sharp, p. 608; Wendelinus, p. 551; Fisher, *Marrow*, VII, 454; Durham, *Revelation*, p. 745; Manton, *Sermons*, p. 305; Essenius, XIX.XXX; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xxxix-xl; and Turretin, XX.X.xxi (cf. XX.X.v-xxv): 'Et Vasorum inæqualium, quæ omnia quidem implenda sint, sed majora quidem plus excipiant, minora minus'.

Third, the dominant emotion of heavenly society is joy. While points of similarity between Herman Witsius' doctrine of glorification and the *Fourfold State* have been noted throughout this chapter, Boston's primary inheritance is the sense of a joy 'plus quam ineffabile, plus quam gloriosum' which permeates Witsius' writing on the last things.⁴⁷ The primary homiletic appeal in 'The Kingdom of Heaven' is similarly directed towards the affections. The sermon expounds the doctrine that the saints shall be made 'completely happy' in the state of glory,⁴⁸ and references to the happiness or joy of the saints are frequent throughout the sermon. 'How joyfully will [the saints] compass the altar evermore, and sing their hosannas' (VIII, 334). The attraction of coming to a 'most clear and distinct understanding of divine truths' in eternity is affective as well as intellectual, since no joy is 'comparable to that which arises from the discovery of truth' (VIII, 336). The glorified saints will be 'the happy ones' (VIII, 337). Their admission to the glorious presence of God will be 'an unspeakable joy' and an 'inexpressible delight' (VIII, 338; cf. 278, 304, 353); they will 'swim for ever in an ocean of joy' (VIII, 339; cf. I, 15; V, 419, 430).

Fourth, the language used to describe the kingdom of heaven is again partially metaphoric rather than strictly literal. The imagery Boston uses to describe immediate communion with God in glory -- which he terms the 'beatific vision'⁴⁹ -- is visual imagery. The glory of God in the Lamb is the 'luminary or luminous body, which gives light to the city' (VIII, 331; cf. V, 426, 436, 629). A 'ravishing beauty' will arise when he shines 'in his meridian brightness on the street of the city paved with pure gold!' (VIII, 331; cf. 333). The saints will behold 'Jesus Christ, God and man with their bodily eyes' (VIII, 332; cf. II, 50; V, 430; VIII, 280, 284; X, 105). But when such visual language is

⁴⁷ Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xxxii; cf. III.XIV.i, iv, xxxiii, xxxviii. The happiness, or 'lætitia', or 'gaudium' of heaven was also a doctrinal proposition in the Reformed scholasticism of Ursinus, pp. 329, 375; Polyandrus, LII.XXXI; Sharp, p. 607; Wendelinus, pp. 548, 551; the Westminster *Shorter Catechism*, Q & A 1, 38; and Turretin, XX.VIII.vi-vii, xvi, xx.

⁴⁸ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 317 (cf. I, 15; III, 33, 35, 82; V, 403-404, 411, 426-27; V, 431-32; VII, 41, 140; VIII, 249, 473, 529; X, 235, 319, 508, 558; XI, 319).

⁴⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 334 (cf. I, 15; II, 50; VIII, 352). The beatific vision, or *visio Dei*, was an important theme in Reformed theology as well as in Christian eschatology more generally. Among Boston's sources, see especially Polyandrus, LII.VIII-XX; Sharp, p. 607; Wendelinus, p. 550; *Confession of Faith*, XXXII.I; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 86; Brinsley, *MEZITHΣ*, p. 240; Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, I, 76; Manton, *Sermons*, pp. 388, 390; Bayly, pp. 68, 76; Ambrose, p. 467; Turretin, XX.VIII.vi-xiv, XX.IX.v, vii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xiii, xxix-xxxi, xxxvi; and Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XXVI.LXXII. See also Boston's contemporary, Webster, *Select Sermons*, pp. 86-93, 107-109.

applied to communion with the Trinity rather than simply with the glorified Christ, it becomes metaphoric:

[The saints] will be happy in seeing the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, not with their bodily eyes, in respect of which God is invisible, 1 Tim.i.17, but with the eyes of their understanding [. . .] (VIII, 334; cf. 335)

The ‘perfection of understanding’ in this vision of God is beyond the full comprehension of even glorified saints (VIII, 334); the divine perfections are like ‘an unbounded field, in which the glorified shall walk eternally, seeing more and more of God’ (VIII, 335).

The theme of the ‘society of heaven’ also enables Boston to give a Christological focus to his preaching on the state of glory. This is not to suggest that the person and work of Christ have been absent to this point, but only that they have not been a dominant concern. When Boston comes to consider the society of heaven, however, he thinks first of the ‘man Christ’, who is ‘the centre of divine glory in heaven’ (VIII, 330; cf. I, 520-21, 525; III, 40, 80; V, 410, 430; VII, 131; VIII, 515-16; XI, 152). The ‘glorious blessed body’ of the incarnate and resurrected Christ ‘will attract the eyes of all the saints’:

There we shall see, with our eyes, that very body which was born of Mary at Bethlehem, and crucified at Jerusalem between two thieves: the blessed head, that was crowned with thorns; the face, that was spit upon; the hands and feet, that were nailed to the cross; all shining with inconceivable glory. (VIII, 333; cf. 295)

The response of the saints to this sight will be one of sheer delight:

Who can conceive the happiness of the saints in the presence chamber of the great King, where he sits in his chair of state, making his glory eminently to appear in the man Christ? (VIII, 331)

All the joys of heaven will ‘spring out’ from the glory of God in Christ (VIII, 333).

The joy of the saints, however, extends beyond contemplation of the glory of Christ to participation in the glory of Christ. Boston reminds his hearers and readers that ‘the union between Christ and the saints is never dissolved, but they continue his members for ever’ (VIII, 333; cf. I, 15). On the basis of this union, the glory of the glorified Christ will be ‘diffused unto all the saints’, making them ‘glorious both in soul and body’.⁵⁰ Union with Christ extends beyond grace and into glory: *glorification is in union with Christ*.⁵¹ Even in the state of glory, the saints will not ‘cast off their dependence on their Head for vital influences’ (VIII, 333).

⁵⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 330-31 (cf. II, 45; III, 39, 125, 573, 594; IV, 322; V, 427-28; VI, 589-90; VII, 77, 130; VIII, 282-83, 339, 516, 530; IX, 17, 23; XI, 206).

⁵¹ Glorification of body and soul in union with Christ is a common theme throughout Reformed theology. See John Craig, ‘Ane Forme of Examination’, Q & A 96; Zanchius, VIII, 562, 759; Polyandrus,

Furthermore, union with Christ in the state of glory is union with the entire divine being, what Essenius termed ‘unionem cum S. S. Trinitate’.⁵² Just as the Holy Spirit is the bond of union between Christ and the believer, so ‘Jesus Christ will remain the everlasting bond of union betwixt God and the saints’ (VIII, 333; cf. I, 15, 483; IV, 78; V, 431; VII, 141; VIII, 341, 343, 356, 565; IX, 497). The effect of this ‘close and intimate union’, this ‘glorious and most perfect union’, is to transform the saints into the image of God.⁵³ The image of God given to man in innocence, forfeited in the fall, and partially recovered in grace, is now completely restored in the state of glory: ‘God will communicate to [the saints] his own image [. . .] and stamp the image of all his own perfections upon them’ (VIII, 338; cf. 344). Glorification is thus a moral and spiritual as well as a physical transformation. This ‘glorious transformation into the likeness of God’ will bring the saints to the ‘full enjoyment of God in heaven [. . .] by sight and full participation of the divine goodness’ (VIII, 338; cf. 344).

The last point Boston makes about heaven is that it shall ‘endure for ever’.⁵⁴ He does not prove this point at length, perhaps because the eternity of heaven is a familiar element in Christian eschatology. The holy Jerusalem is ‘a city that never changes its inhabitants: none of them shall ever be removed out of it’ (VIII, 325). Christ himself will shut the doors of heaven ‘so as the law, death, and hell, can never get them out again’ (VIII, 341). Since everything in heaven is eternal, the saints may have ‘undoubted certainty, and full assurance, of the eternal duration of the same’. For Boston -- who may be borrowing the point from Witsius⁵⁵ -- certainty is a ‘necessary ingredient’ of the perfect happiness of heaven, lest ‘uncertainty as to the continuance’ of heaven produce anxiety in the saints (VIII, 339; cf. V, 420, 431). Such certainty is ultimately grounded in predestination, the preparation of the heavenly kingdom for them ‘in the eternal purpose of God, before they, or any of them, had a being’ (VIII, 342; cf. III, 38; VIII, 317, 341; X,

LII.XXXII; Ames, I.XLI.vi; Sharp, pp. 606-607; Wendelinus, pp. 548-50; *Confession of Faith*, XXXII.III; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 87; Brinsley, *Mystical Implantation*, p. 187; Fergusson, II, 388; Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, II, 125; Bayly, pp. 57, 71; Charnock, *Works* (1684), II, 1105-106; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.i, xxxv, xxxvii; Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XIX.XLV, XXVI.XXXI, LXXII; and A. Hamilton, I, Q & A 25.

⁵² Essenius, XIV.V; cf. Turretin, XIV.XVII.viii.

⁵³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 338 (cf. V, 418, 428; VI, 589-90; VII, 129-30, 134). Cf. Ursinus, p. 375; Sharp, p. 607; Turretin, V.X.xi; Vincent, p. 78.

⁵⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 325 (cf. I, 84, 483; II, 50, 576; III, 35; IV, 250-52, 304; V, 100, 391-92, 403, 409, 537; VII, 141; VIII, 284; X, 195; XI, 339).

⁵⁵ Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xxxviii; *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XXVI.LXXVII-LXXVIII.

127). Although believers now struggle with doubts about salvation, in heaven the saints 'shall all attain the full persuasion, that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God' (VIII, 340; cf. 335-36).

When Boston comes to the 'use' of the happiness of heaven he begins with a caution for 'all who claim a right to this kingdom'. Since there is no 'promiscuous admission into the kingdom of heaven', it is necessary for every individual to examine himself 'according to the laws of the kingdom, contained in the Holy Scriptures'. Self-examination is made all the more urgent by Boston's belief in the fewness of the saved: 'most men' are likely to be 'miserably disappointed' in their hopes of heaven.⁵⁶ How may the hearer know whether he has a right to heaven or not? The answer recapitulates the central doctrines of the *Fourfold State*:

If you are yet in your natural state, you are children of wrath, and not children of this kingdom; for that state, to those who live and die in it, issues in eternal misery. If you be brought into the state of grace, you have a just claim to the state of glory; for grace will certainly issue in glory at length. This kingdom is an inheritance, which none but the children of God can justly claim. Now, we become the children of God by regeneration, and union with Christ his Son [. . .] (VIII, 343; cf. IV, 274; V, 268-69; VIII, 316)

There is an unbreakable connection between one's present and eternal states.

Regeneration into union with Christ is the *sine qua non* of the state of glory as well as of the state of grace (cf. V, 97, 105, 110, 567-68; VII, 475; VIII, 172-75, 316; X, 321, 509).

Just as he did in his sermon on regeneration, Boston frames the question of assurance of salvation not genetically (in terms of God's eternal decree), but existentially (in terms of one's present estate) and teleologically (in terms of the kingdom of heaven).

The applications he makes for those who have a genuine claim to the kingdom are all made in the light of their 'happy prospect into eternity'. This is one of Boston's favourite preaching themes: desiring, or seeking, or hoping for, or looking towards the eternal kingdom.⁵⁷ In a sense, true 'heirs of glory' already have the kingdom of God within them by virtue of their 'regeneration and union with Christ' (VIII, 343). The laws written on their hearts are the 'laws of heaven' and their greatest concern is 'treasures in

⁵⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 343 (cf. I, 303, 447; III, 48; V, 28, 93-94, 100, 266; VIII, 189, 299, 340; IX, 156; X, 308-97; XI, 253). Almond, pp. 72-74, shows that a belief in the fewness of the saints relative to the multitude of the damned was a nearly universal feature of Protestant eschatology. Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, p. 94 (cf. pp. 119-44) puts the odds against salvation at a thousand to one.

⁵⁷ For examples, see Boston, *Works*, IV, 247-61, 268, 271-72, 290; V, 403, 443, 451, 453, 497-98, 535, 546, 552-53, 558, 586; VII, 542; IX, 70, 111, 150, 303-304, 316, 427; X, 429, 468, 483-84, 561, 563-64, 614-15; XI, 79.

heaven' (VIII, 344; cf. III, 466-72; IV, 253; IX, 427-28). Believers are thus exhorted to 'behave themselves suitably to their character and dignity' as heirs of the kingdom, letting their 'conversation be in heaven' (VIII, 345; cf. IV, 272; V, 546; IX, 427; X, 483, 563-64). Returning to the metaphor of pilgrimage, believers are reminded to 'look like the country to which [they] are going' (VIII, 345). Heaven is 'the greatest comfort one is capable of in the world' (VIII, 343), bringing dominion to the oppressed, a throne and crown to the dishonoured, treasure to the impoverished, a house and city to the homeless, a better country to exiles, pleasure to the embittered, liberty to those in spiritual bondage, white robes to the ill-clad, triumph to the embattled, everlasting rest to the laboured, light to those in darkness, and life to the dead. Heaven will 'make up all the saints' losses' (VIII, 345; cf. III, 34; IV, 181; V, 403, 427, 493; VII, 542; VIII, 312; X, 126-29, 572). Far from denying that 'hope of reward' is a legitimate 'motive of a believer's obedience', as the Marrow men were accused of doing,⁵⁸ Boston defends heavenly rewards as rewards of grace.⁵⁹ By doing so, he does not abandon the *Marrow's* opposition to good works done 'merely or chiefly to escape hell and to obtain heaven, and not for the love we bear to God' (VII, 438; cf. VII, 360n-61n; VIII, 305, 454, 573). However, for the genuine believer, oppressed by the hardships of life in early eighteenth century Scotland, Thomas Boston offers a kingdom desirable for 'peace and plenty, profit and pleasure' (VIII, 345-46; cf. III, 81, 468).

The doctrine of the state of glory is not without application for those 'who have no right to the kingdom of heaven' (VIII, 346). At the outset of 'The Kingdom of Heaven' Boston excluded the unregenerate from glory in the strongest possible terms: 'Stand back, O ye profane goats! away all unregenerate souls, not united to Jesus Christ! this is not for you' (VIII, 316). But this exclusion was provisional rather than absolute. He closes with an urgent exhortation to seek the kingdom of heaven 'with all diligence', for '[n]ow is the time, wherein the children of wrath may become heirs of glory' (VIII, 346; cf. 343). The foregoing description of the state of glory thus serves as an incentive to unbelievers to exercise faith in Christ. The honour, riches, and pleasures of the kingdom of heaven

⁵⁸ This criticism appears frequently in the pamphlet literature of the Marrow Controversy. For examples, see Hadow, *Antinomianism Detected*, pp. 94-96, 113, and [Bannatine], p. 91. See also *Acts of the General Assembly*, p. 535 (cf. p. 554).

⁵⁹ See Boston, Abdn MS, 153, 274; *Works*, I, 106-107, 525-26; II, 49; III, 81, 533; IV, 256, 291-92; V, 431; VII, 136, 488, 542; VIII, 305-306; X, 376-77; XI, 274.

should convince them to forsake 'worldly enjoyments' and raise their hearts 'towards the glory that is to be revealed' (VIII, 346). If men desire 'a portion to make them happy through the ages of eternity', they must 'secure an interest in the kingdom of heaven' (VIII, 346-47). The concluding invitation is vintage Boston, framed in terms of the free offer of the gospel and union with Christ:

O! be not despisers of the pleasant land, neither judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life; close with Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel, and you shall inherit all things. (VIII, 347)

VIII. THE ETERNAL STATE OF HELL

I. THE HOPELESS DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED

Thomas Boston's preaching on death is universal in its application. Whereas his preaching on grace concerned only the state of the regenerate, his preaching on eternity returns the *Fourfold State* to the state of mankind in general. The 'all' of his doctrinal proposition 'all men must die' includes the wicked as well as the righteous (VIII, 233; cf. 234). Thus, everything noted in the previous chapter about Boston's preaching on the vanity and brevity of human existence obtains for the wicked as well as the righteous.

Death remains, however, the moment of eschatological dichotomy in the *Fourfold State*. While death itself is indiscriminate, the moment of death discriminates between the righteous and the wicked. A man's eternal state is determined 'according to the state' in which he dies, 'the doors of heaven or hell' being opened to him immediately after death.¹ 'Dying', preaches Boston, 'is a thing we cannot get a trial of' (VIII, 245; cf. V, 415). Since it is 'appointed unto men *once* to die', the moment of death absolutizes the separation between the righteous and the wicked (VIII, 245; cf. XI, 307).

The effects of this eternal separation between the righteous and the wicked are already anticipated in the moment of death. The godly and the ungodly both 'act a very different part in life' and 'in death, have a very different exit' (VIII, 245). As the sermon title suggests, there is 'Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked in their Death' (VIII, 245-70). The difference is that the death of the wicked is utterly hopeless: the wicked are 'driven away in their wickedness, and in a hopeless state' (VIII, 246; cf. V, 411, 414, 450; XI, 305-10).

Boston begins his exposition of this doctrine by clarifying the referent of 'wicked'. This term does not apply merely to the 'avowedly vicious and profane'. Rather, his sermon text 'divides the whole world into two sorts': 'The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death' (Proverbs 14.32). The moral polarity which runs throughout Boston's preaching is here grounded in a biblical

¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 244 (cf. III, 31; V, 269, 399, 413-15, 557; VI, 487; VII, 128; VIII, 105-106, 312; IX, 338; XI, 306-307).

dichotomy, according to which 'if you be not righteous, you are wicked' (VIII, 247). To put this in terms of the theological categories of the *Fourfold State*,

[. . .] if you be yet in your natural state, unregenerated, not united to Christ by faith; however moral and blameless in the eyes of men your conversation may be, you are the wicked who shall be driven away in their wickedness, if death find you in that state. (VIII, 247; cf. 343)

Passages such as this one -- which reiterate important themes such as the states of man, regeneration, and union with Christ -- have by now become familiar to the hearers and readers of the *Fourfold State*. One of Boston's pedagogical strengths is his use of repetition to reinforce the essential structure of his preaching.

The wicked man is 'driven away' by death; he is 'forcibly thrust out of his place in this world' (VIII, 246; cf. IX, 338). His death is therefore distinguished by its suddenness, violence, and irresistibility. Boston uses a collage of illustrations to show how 'unrenewed men' are surprised by death. Death comes upon them 'as a thief, at the window'. The 'old house falls down about their ears' before they have prepared a new one. The soul and body of the wicked man are 'hugging one another in mutual embraces; when death comes like a whirlwind, and separates them'. This 'dismal change' is as violent as it is unexpected. Death drags the wicked away, 'like a malefactor to the execution' (VIII, 247; cf. V, 414; XI, 306).

That place to which they are going is 'the other world, where they must be judged', never again to return to their 'beloved earth'. In his preaching on the eternal state of the righteous, Boston compared grace to glory, to the advantage of the latter. Now he compares the present to the future state of the wicked in order to show how sorrowful they will be to 'have nothing in view so good as that which they leave behind them!' (VIII, 248). Now the wicked enjoy 'the society of the saints on earth', but in the eternal state they will join the unmixed 'society of the damned in hell'. Now they have opportunity to 'improve time for eternity', but 'when time goes, all hope goes with it', since free offers of 'mercy and peace' are 'only made in that place from which they are driven away', not 'in the place to which they are driven'. Now they enjoy 'specious pretences to piety', wearing the 'splendid robes of a fair profession' as stage-players ('hypocrites') who 'personate the children of God'. But death will unmask them, sending them to a place where none 'pretend to be better than they really are' (VIII, 249).

In short, the wicked will be driven away *in* their wickedness, 'in their sinful unconverted state'. They have not progressed within the four estates, 'for none are brought into the eternal state of consummate happiness, but by the way of the state of grace' (VIII, 249). Because the wicked 'can do nothing but sin while they live', death will inevitably drive them away still wearing the 'winding-sheet' of 'the guilt of all their sins' and 'under the absolute power of their wickedness' (VIII, 250; cf. 175). Death allows the 'wickedness of the wicked' to arrive at a sort of perfection, 'for wicked and hellish dispositions, come then to their highest pitch' (VIII, 250).

The death of the unregenerate is as hopeless as it is wicked. Although the 'hopelessness of the state of unrenewed men at death' is a doctrinal proposition, its appeal is largely emotional, directed at the affections of the hearer. To feel the hopelessness of the death of the wicked is to desire the death of the righteous. Four considerations show that the death of the wicked is 'very hopeless'. First, death cuts off any further 'prospects of peace and pleasure' in the present life (VIII, 250); 'death comes like a stormy wind, and shakes off all their fond hopes, like green fruit from off a tree'. Second, the wicked die without 'solid ground to hope for eternal happiness'. Their hopes are illusory because 'they are not founded on God's word', which stipulates 'saving interest in Jesus Christ' as the 'only channel of conveyance, through which mercy flows' (VIII, 251). Third, death roots up 'delusive hopes of eternal happiness'; it is 'that besom of destruction' which will sweep away the 'web woven out of their own bowels' and leave the wicked 'utterly hopeless'. Finally, death 'makes their state absolutely and for ever hopeless'. The wicked will not receive so much as 'one offer of Christ' after death, nor will they have 'access to get their ruined state and condition retrieved' (VIII, 252-53).

Boston's primary 'use' for this eschatological despair is predictable: 'Hasten, O sinners, out of your wickedness, out of your sinful state, and out of your wicked life' (VIII, 254; cf. 287). To all his earlier exhortations to abandon the state of nature for the state of grace, he now adds the 'consideration of so horrid a departure out of this world' (VIII, 255). '[W]hich way soever the unconverted man dies' -- whether resolutely, stupidly, in 'raging despair', in 'sullen despondency', or in dreams of heaven -- he is 'driven away in his wickedness' (VIII, 254-55; cf. V, 437). And however pleasant it may seem to live in wickedness, 'it is bitter to die in it'. The hopeless death of the wicked

should thus move sinners to ‘flee to Jesus Christ, as the all-sufficient Saviour, an almighty Redeemer’ (VIII, 255).

The hopeless death of the wicked is also useful for warning the hearer or reader against false hopes of heaven. Many who expect to be ‘carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom’ will actually be ‘carried by devils into the society of the damned in hell, into the place of torment, and regions of horror’. Thus the fair building of these illusory hopes must be razed before solid hopes can be built on ‘scriptural evidences’, which are the ‘touchstone’ of genuine hope. That which ‘looks bright in the dark, but loses all its lustre when it is set in the light of God’s word’, is not hope but delusion (VIII, 253). True hope of heaven is distinguished by its tendency to ‘prepare and dispose’ the soul for heaven by making it more holy (VIII, 254). To these uses Boston adds an exhortation to the righteous to exercise spiritual concern for family and friends:

O be concerned for others, especially for your relations, that they may not continue in their sinful natural state, but be brought into a state of salvation; lest they be driven away in their wickedness at death. (VIII, 255; cf. I, 374; V, 213; VIII, 122; IX, 442; X, 349)

The evangelical minister preaches with a view to having an evangelistic congregation.

The resurrection of the wicked will be as hopeless as their death. Just as all die, so ‘all the dead, good and bad’ will be raised from the dead (VIII, 271; cf. II, 42; V, 415; VIII, 276). Boston does not feel the need to defend resurrection of the bad as well as the good, since his text plainly asserts that ‘all that are in the graves shall hear his voice’ (John 5.28-29).² There is, however, a ‘great distinction’ between the godly and the wicked in their resurrection (VIII, 271; cf. 278). Whereas ‘the former have a joyful resurrection to life’, ‘the latter have a dreadful resurrection to damnation’ (VIII, 271).

By ‘resurrection’ Boston means a bodily resurrection, a point which will take on particular significance in the strong doctrine of hell which follows. Just as the ‘equity of the divine procedure’ will demand the bodily resurrection of the righteous, so it will demand the bodily resurrection of the wicked:

Shall that body which was the soul’s companion in sin, lie for ever hid in the dust; and another body which did not act any part in sinning, be its companion in torment? No, no; it is that body which now takes up all their thoughts to provide for its back and belly, that shall be raised up, to suffer in hell. (VIII, 277)

The body that sinned shall suffer for sin.

² Cf. *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 87.

The resurrection of the wicked will differ from that of the righteous in cause as well as effect. The wicked -- like the righteous -- will be raised by Christ (VIII, 271). Yet they will not be raised in union with Christ, but 'by the power of Christ, as a just Judge, who is to render vengeance to his enemies'.³ Rather than coming forth with joy, therefore, the wicked 'shall come forth from their graves with unspeakable horror and consternation' (VIII, 280; cf. II, 45). The 'frightful meeting' of wretched bodies with their souls will be a cruel parody of the happy reunion between righteous bodies and souls.⁴ 'Hast thou again found me, O mine enemy, my worst enemy,' the body will ask the soul. 'Cursed be the day that ever we met'. Echoing the bestial imagery of Boston's sermons on the state of nature, the body will wish to have been a toad, or a serpent, or anything except the body of a human soul.⁵ The body will thus rage with recriminations, castigating the soul for making him 'an instrument of unrighteousness' and thus fattening him for the slaughter: 'I must burn for ever, for thy love to thy lusts, thy profanity, thy sensuality, thy unbelief, and hypocrisy' (VIII, 281). The soul will respond in kind:

Must I be knit to thee again, that, being joined together as two dry sticks for the fire, the wrath of God may burn us up? It was by caring for you, that I lost myself. It was your back and your belly, and the gratifying of your senses, which ruined me. How often was I ensnared by your ears! how often betrayed by your eyes! (VIII, 282)

For the resurrection of the wicked -- as he did for the resurrection of the righteous -- Boston uses the device of personification to powerful homiletic effect, although the device takes him beyond strictly biblical imagery for the eternal state.

Boston is conscious of the limits of biblical imagery when he comes to preach on the 'qualities of the bodies of the wicked at the resurrection', finding that 'the Scripture speaks but little of them'. According to Luke 16.24-25 the wicked will not get so much as a 'drop of water to cool their tongues'; according to Revelation 14.11 they will 'bear up, however unwillingly' under the everlasting 'smoke of their torment'; according to Daniel 12.2 they will 'awake to shame and everlasting contempt'; according to Isaiah 66.24 their bodies will be loathsome carcasses, 'an abhorring unto all flesh'. Yet he goes

³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 280 (cf. II, 45; VII, 134; XI, 313). The same distinction is made by Ames, I LXL.viii; Pemble, p. 483; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 87; Lye, *Morning Exercise*, p. 361; and Willison, p. 654.

⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 281 (cf. VIII, 279-80, 287; XI, 213, 310). The same rhetorical strategy is employed by Bayly, p. 43.

⁵ Cf. Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 65.

beyond this biblical language to speculate about the visual effect of the 'resurrection of damnation'. Then the bodies of the wicked will be contemptible to God, 'despicable in the eyes of the saints', and 'loathsome in the eyes of one another':

The greatest beauties, who now pride themselves in their comeliness of body, not regarding their deformed souls, will then appear with a ghastly countenance, a grim and death-like visage. Their looks will be frightful, and they will be horrible spectacles, coming forth from their graves, like infernal furies out of the pit.⁶

These grotesque images are in frightful tension with Boston's commitment to scriptural boundaries for knowledge of the eternal state (cf. XII, 380).

II. 'OF THE GENERAL JUDGMENT'

Resurrection will be followed by judgment. In his sermon based on the 'sheep and the goats' of Matthew 25 and entitled 'Of the General Judgment', Boston preaches eleven 'particulars' concerning the day of judgment (VIII, 289-316). Briefly, the day of judgment is the day

[. . .] in which Christ will come to judgment! the world shall be summoned, by the sound of the last trumpet, to appear before his tribunal. The Judge will sit on his throne, and all nations will be summoned before him; the separation will be made between the godly and the wicked; the books opened, and the dead judged out of them; one party will be adjudged to everlasting life, and the other to everlasting fire, according to their works. (VIII, 313; cf. VII, 134-42; XI, 310)

As Boston describes each stage of the final judgment in detail, he repeats many of the themes and homiletical strategies which appear earlier in the *Fourfold State*. Once again, he makes generous use of a biblical image (here the conventional metaphor of the law court) to give coherence to his sermon.⁷ Once again, he stresses the glory of Christ in his exaltation, sitting on 'a throne glorious beyond expression' (VIII, 295; cf. I, 520-21). Once again, the eternal state is viewed as unalterable, since there can be 'no appeal from [Christ's] tribunal' (VIII, 296; cf. I, 525). Once again, a dichotomous separation is made between the righteous and the wicked, now designated with biblical terminology as 'elect sheep' and 'reprobate goats' (VIII, 297):

Here is now a total separation of two parties, who were always opposite to each other in their principles, aims, and manner of life; who, when together, were a burden the one to the other, under which the one groaned, and the other raged;

⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 285 (cf. V, 434; VIII, 288). This passage is reminiscent of Boston's horrifying adolescent encounter with an exhumed corpse (XII, 14).

⁷ See Boston, *Works*, VIII, 289-90, 292, 296, 315. Significantly, the legal metaphor is employed in much the same way by Watson, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 565-73.

but now they are finally parted, never to come together any more. (VIII, 298; cf. I, 524; V, 425; VIII, 290, 299, 313; XI, 316)

Once again, Boston warns of the dangers of hypocrisy, reminding his hearers that 'there will not be so much as one hypocrite' in the final congregation of the saints (VIII, 298; cf. 301, 313). Once again, the day of death is an eschatological moment, since 'the last day of our life, will determine our state in the last day of the world' (VIII, 312). Once again, union with Christ is the *sine qua non* of spiritual beatitude: it is their 'not being in Christ' which condemns the wicked to participate in the 'tragical and alarming scene' of judgment (VIII, 315; cf. 316). Even the primary applications of doctrine -- 'of comfort to all the saints' and 'of terror to all unbelievers' -- are virtually identical to applications earlier in the *Fourfold State* (VIII, 312-16; cf. 286-89). As might be expected, Boston closes with exhortations to self-examination ('Set up a secret tribunal in your own breasts') and conversion ('Make the Judge your friend in time, by closing with him in the offer of the gospel') (VIII, 315; cf. I, 526-28; IV, 204-205; VI, 678; XI, 307). If these themes by now seem over-familiar, it must be remembered that repetition is a pedagogical virtue, and all the more so in a series of sermons preached over the course of many months.

This repeated material notwithstanding, Boston's preaching on final judgment introduces several important new emphases. The first of these is the identity of Jesus Christ as Judge. The same Christ who raised the dead will also 'mount the tribunal' in glory to judge the world.⁸ Although the entire 'holy blessed Trinity' properly possesses judicial authority, 'the Son incarnate is the Judge, in respect of dispensation, and special exercise of that power' (VIII, 293). It is Christ himself who will pronounce both the 'blessed sentence' on the saints and the 'sentence of damnation' on the ungodly (VIII, 304, 307; cf. V, 415-16; VII, 138; VIII, 561; IX, 14).

The resurrection of Christ thus becomes the 'certain proof' that there will be a final judgment (VIII, 291), since by that resurrection his 'credentials as Judge of the world' are exhibited by God (VIII, 292; cf. I, 521-22; VI, 524). Jesus Christ is perfectly qualified for this task, 'visible to our bodily eyes', having judicial authority granted in the covenant with his Father, wise to 'discern the most intricate cases', perfect in justice and

⁸ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 289 (cf. I, 519-21; V, 440, 501-502, 557; VI, 435-36, 678; VII, 134; VIII, 106, 278, 295; X, 202; XI, 315).

integrity, and omnipotent in his ability to execute his sentence (VIII, 295-96; cf. I, 521, 525; III, 252; VI, 522; VII, 134-35; VIII, 299, 301). Christ's calling as Saviour of the world does not diminish the severity or righteousness of his 'sentence of damnation on all the ungodly multitude'. On the contrary, his double role as Saviour and Judge exacerbates the torments of the ungodly: 'To be condemned by him, who came to save sinners, must be double damnation' (VIII, 307; cf. 304). 'The neglected Saviour will be a severe Judge' (VIII, 314; cf. 251, 315).

Boston goes beyond identifying Christ as Judge to preach that his saints will share in the condemnation of the wicked.⁹ On the basis of passages which speak of the saints participating in divine judgment (e.g. 1 Corinthians 6.2: '[the saints] shall judge the world'), he concludes that the glorified saints 'shall be assessors (*sic*) to Jesus Christ the Judge [. . .] saying *Amen* to the doom pronounced against all the ungodly' (VIII, 306; cf. II, 49-50; V, 16; VIII, 304, 312, 318). Moreover, they will be enthusiastic in corroborating the judgment of Christ. During the present 'time of God's patience', the saints are filled with pity for the ungodly, secretly weeping over their sins. But at the general judgment 'their compassion for the ungodly is swallowed in joy in the Mediator's glory' (VIII, 307):

No pity shall then be shewn [the ungodly] from their nearest relations. The godly wife shall applaud the justice of the Judge, in the condemnation of her ungodly husband: the godly husband shall say *Amen* to the condemnation of her who lay in his bosom: the godly parents shall say *Hallelujah*, at the passing of the sentence against their ungodly child: and the godly child shall, from the bottom of his heart, approve the condemnation of his wicked parents, the father who begat him, and the mother who bore him. (VIII, 307-308; cf. II, 49-50; VIII, 357, 363)

The idea that the bliss of the righteous will be heightened by witnessing the justice of hell -- an idea which F. W. Farrar famously termed an 'abominable fancy'¹⁰ -- had been appropriated by the Reformed theologians from both patristic and medieval Catholic traditions.¹¹ Boston's vision of the extinction of familial affection among the saints gives an early indication that he holds to the traditional, strong Western doctrine of hell.

⁹ Cf. *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 90: 'At the day of judgment, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds [. . .] shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men'; and Essenius, XIX.XX: 'Ipsi autem *fideles* etiam judicabunt cum and sub Christo'. Interestingly, Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XXII.XVIII-XIX, is reluctant to draw the same conclusion.

¹⁰ Frederick W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope* (London, 1885), pp. 66-67. See also Gerald R. Cragg's comment in *The Church and the Age of Reason, 1648-1789*, ed. by Owen Chadwick, rev. edn, The Penguin History of the Church, 4 (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 86: 'This was a terrible theme, even in the hands of a man touched with pity for his fellow-sinners'.

¹¹ Almond (p. 97) cites Augustine, Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas as prominent holders of the view. Among Boston's sources, perhaps only Burroughes, pp. 523-24, expresses this idea as starkly. Perhaps D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (London:

Another new element in Boston's preaching on the general judgment is his defence of the righteousness of such a proceeding. Having cited many of the biblical passages which promise a general judgment, he proceeds to argue that justice and goodness 'require its being well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked' (VIII, 290; cf. VI, 523-24). Experience shows that this is rarely the case in the present life, where the pious are oppressed 'while profanity and irreligion triumph'. But since such inequity is 'inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God', there must be a 'judgment to come'. Thus, the day of judgment will be a day on which 'the tables will be turned', 'the wicked shall be called to an account for all their sins', and 'the pious shall be prosperous'.¹²

Boston's defence of the general judgment is bolstered by his description of the divine procedure for judgment. Men shall be tried, not only for their works, but also for their words and thoughts.¹³ Because the Judge is omniscient, even the secret things 'will be brought to light; and what was hid from the view of the world, shall be laid open':

Then will many actions, commended and applauded of men, as good and just, be discovered to have been evil and abominable in the sight of God; and many works, now condemned by the world, will be approved and commended by the great Judge, as good and just.¹⁴

That this trial will be 'righteous and impartial, accurate and searching, clear and evident' can be inferred from the scriptural figure of the 'opening of the books' (VIII, 301). The 'book of God's remembrance' (Malachi 3.16) is a divine 'day-book' of 'every man's state, thoughts, words, and deeds', serving both as a 'bill of indictment' for the ungodly and 'memorial of the good' for the godly (VIII, 301-302; cf. V, 141; VI, 435, 511, 521; VII, 136; VIII, 300). Although the good works of the godly are not the grounds of their salvation, nevertheless there is a 'necessary connexion between glory and good works' when such works are performed with 'respect to Jesus Christ, and done out of faith in him, and love to him' (VIII, 305; cf. VII, 136; VIII, 315-16; XI, 274). The 'book of conscience' (Romans 2.15) will become 'legible in every point' at the last day, in order to

Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 29-31, is right to suggest that the 'abominable fancy' was becoming unpopular by the end of the seventeenth century.

¹² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 291. The reversal of judgment is one of Boston's favourite themes; see I, 109, 526; V, 395, 406; VIII, 288, 307-309, 312, 314, 354; X, 428, 458-59.

¹³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 299-301 (cf. I, 522-23; VII, 136). The division of judgment into thoughts, words, and deeds echoes the Westminster *Confession of Faith*, XXXIII.1.

¹⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 300 (cf. I, 157, 522-24; V, 345; VI, 436, 521-22; VII, 136; VIII, 191, 296-301 313-16; XI, 316). An interesting example of how Boston thought present mysteries would be revealed at judgment appears in his account of a local suicide in his 'Passages', p. 215.

convict every man of the accuracy and impartiality of God's judgment (VIII, 302; cf. III, 183; V, 521-22; VII, 318; VIII, 292-93, 315). The 'book of the law' will be opened to ascertain the 'reward of men's works', but only for the 'portion of the ungodly', since 'no sentence absolving a sinner could ever be drawn out of it' (VIII, 302-303). Such an absolution may be drawn from the 'book of life' (Revelation 20.12), which contains 'God's gracious and unchangeable purpose, to bring all the elect to eternal life' (VIII, 301-304; cf. VI, 544; VII, 137; VIII, 341; X, 51). The exactitude of these books confirms that the divine procedure will be 'most nice, accurate, just and well grounded, in every step', to the terror of the wicked and the comfort of the righteous (VIII, 301; cf. 297).

The justice of the general judgment is further confirmed by the grounds of its final sentence. The ungodly are condemned for *not* giving meat to the hungry, *not* giving drink to the thirsty, *not* giving hospitality to the stranger, and so forth (Matthew 25.42-43). In other words, the ungodly are condemned simply for the 'omission of works of charity and mercy'. It would have been better for the ungodly man to quit his own bed than to allow a saint to go without lodging. 'O cursed clothing,' he will lament, 'that was in my house, locked up in my chest [. . .] and not brought out to clothe such a one!' (VIII, 308). He goes on to argue, *a fortiori*, that sins of commission will be all the more worthy of judgment, especially those sins which were productive of hunger or thirst or estrangement in the first place (VIII, 308-309). Such sins expose the real ground of the enmity of the wicked: 'enmity against Christ himself' (VIII, 309-10).

Another new element in 'Of the General Judgment' is its vision of Christian unity, a vision made all the more powerful by Boston's own experience of ecclesiastical discord. Acrimonious disputes over patronage, the Auchterarder Creed, John Simson, and the *Marrow* would have confirmed the truth of his assertion that '[s]eldom or never do the saints on earth make such harmony, but there are some jarring strings among them'. In the present 'state of imperfection', it cannot be expected that all who are 'going to one city, should agree as to every step in the way' (VIII, 298; cf. III, 48; V, 517). But the last judgment will be the occasion of this 'wonderful sight': 'All the godly upon one side'. There will be 'no more divisions, no more separate standing amongst those who belonged to Christ' (VIII, 298; cf. III, 48, 233; V, 412, 445; VIII, 328). Boston's corporate vision of glory helps to balance his more usual tendency to emphasize individual destiny.

This united assembly stands facing the ‘most miserable congregation’ where ‘all the wicked ones, from Cain to the last ungodly person’ are gathered on the left hand of Christ (VIII, 298; cf. I, 522-23; V, 445, 502; VI, 524; VIII, 249, 288). Boston imagines what it would be like to hide ‘in some dark cloud’ to witness this final judgment, where wicked kings will be compelled ‘to answer for all their cruelty’, where profane ministers will be ‘pursued with the curses of their ruined people’, and where the learned will be ‘declared before the world, fools and laborious triflers’ (VIII, 314). But the hearers and readers of the *Fourfold State* will be unable to hide on that day. Consequently, they must now locate themselves in one or the other of these eschatological assemblies:

And remember, thou shalt not be a mere spectator, to look at these two such different companies; but must thyself take thy place in one of the two, and shalt share with the company, whatever hand it be on. (VIII, 299; cf. 288)

This process of self-location has been going on throughout the *Fourfold State*, especially in the repeated appeal to abandon the state of nature for the state of grace. Far from being a systematic theology, the *Fourfold State* is a narrative -- *the* cosmic narrative -- within which the story of every man is told. As that narrative nears its conclusion, the act of personal self-location is projected into the future, where ‘all and every one, small and great, of whatever nation, who ever were, are, or shall be’ will stand on either the right or the left hand of Christ (VIII, 290; cf. 297). The existential implications of one’s destiny are made all the more urgent by Boston’s oft-repeated assertion that few will be saved: ‘Many of the right-hand men of this world, will be left-hand men in that day’ (VIII, 299).

The day of general judgment will be brought to a close by ‘the general conflagration; by which these visible heavens, the earth, and sea, shall pass away’.¹⁵ With respect to the righteous, this eschatological fire has the purificatory effect of removing ‘all the effects of sin, and of the curse’ and of renewing the heavens and the earth to make them ‘more glorious and stable’ (VIII, 310). For their enemies, the enflaming of their ‘darling world’ will be a sight of terror, in which ‘the whole fabric of heaven and earth shall at once be dissolved’ (VIII, 311). Worst of all, the ungodly themselves will be driven away in the very midst of this conflagration into the ‘everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’ (VIII, 310).

¹⁵ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 310 (cf. I, 523-24; V, 393, 397, 407, 416, 421-22, 505; VI, 326; VII, 139; VIII, 310-12; X, 426; XI, 316-17).

III. 'THE MISERABLE STATE OF THE DAMNED IN HELL'

In his own generation, Thomas Boston was reprimanded for preaching distinctive Marrow doctrines such as the free offer of the gospel. Since then he has been more frequently censured for his preaching on hell. The virulent Henry Thomas Buckle was perhaps the first historian to include him among the divines who were 'always busy in increasing the general suffering'.¹⁶ The doctrine of hell figures prominently in the Scottish novelist George MacDonald's satiric portrait of the *Fourfold State*.¹⁷ This same preaching also violated the Victorian sensibilities of F. W. Farrar, who used the pulpit of Westminster Abbey to associate Boston with 'setting up in the place of God the Idol of the Tribe or of the Den' and with turning 'God's gospel of plenteous redemption into an anathema of all but universal perdition'.¹⁸ The first piece of twentieth-century scholarship on Boston draws unfavourable comparisons between the author of the *Fourfold State* and other 'master-terrorists' of his era.¹⁹ A more recent textbook of religious history cites him as exemplary of the inhumane, unsympathetic men who preached on hell 'with an ingenuity born of fascinated horror'.²⁰

What is striking about these criticisms is that each of them was written with the *Fourfold State* and its doctrine of hell clearly in mind. While an assessment of the pastoral function of Boston's preaching on hell will be reserved until later in the present chapter, it is already apparent that the proper place to begin that assessment is with the *Fourfold State*. The sermon on hell in the *Fourfold State* is characterized by a strong, literal doctrine of hell, a doctrine which it holds in common with what Geoffrey Rowell has properly identified as the 'Western eschatological synthesis'.²¹ In preaching the hellishness of hell, Boston's theological context is not simply Scottish Presbyterianism, or English Puritanism, or even international Calvinism, but all of Christendom. The breadth

¹⁶ Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, 2 vols (London, 1861), II, 382. Similarly, A. J. Campbell, *Two Centuries*, p. 28, who writes of Boston depicting God 'as an implacable despot, swift to wrath', and John Watson, *Scot of the Eighteenth*, p. 228, who celebrates the passing of Boston's 'ghastly ideas of God'.

¹⁷ George MacDonald, *Robert Falconer*, 3 vols (London, 1868) I, 212-13, 300-302. See also James Brown, *The Life of a Scottish Probationer* (Glasgow, 1878), p. 278.

¹⁸ Farrar, pp. 66-67.

¹⁹ Addison, p. 173.

²⁰ Cragg, p. 86. See also Graham, II, 134, according to whom Boston and others 'positively revelled in descriptions of the woes eternal', exercising a 'wild luxuriance of their imagination in depicting its horrors'.

²¹ Rowell, p. 24. See also Ball, p. 229,

of his background for this *locus* is illustrated by the curious fact that his preaching on hell bears as many similarities to Hieremias Drexelius' *De Aeternitate considerationes*, a Jesuit writing, as it does to a Puritan work such as the *Ultima* of Isaac Ambrose.

At least eight elements of Boston's strong, literal doctrine of hell are held in common with the broader Western church. The first is his reliance on biblical imagery to shape his description of hell. In keeping with his sermon text (Matthew 25.41), as well as with other passages (Matthew 13.30; Luke 16.24; Revelation 20.10, 21.20), Boston most frequently describes hell as a 'prepared' and 'everlasting fire'. In his own words, this fire will be terrible in its 'vehemency and exquisiteness' (VIII, 358; cf. Abdn MS, 172; III, 248-49; VIII, 107, 186-87, 288, 359, 361). Yet since 'what of horror is wanting in one notion of hell, is supplied by another', hell is variously described as a 'second death' (Revelation 20.6), as a 'wine-press of the wrath of God' (Revelation 14.19), as a 'bottomless pit' (Revelation 20.3), and as 'utter darkness' (Matthew 25.30).²² Texts which describe the torment of the damned by 'the worm that dieth not' (Isaiah 66.24; Mark 9.44) are also quoted with regularity.²³ The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus was another important text for Boston (Luke 16.19-31), not only for its description of a conversation between inhabitants of heaven and hell (VIII, 355, 369), but also for its contention that the latter will not receive so much as a 'drop of water to cool his tongue'.²⁴ Philip Almond's recent suggestion that the Western hell was a 'projection of the early modern penal system' notwithstanding,²⁵ Boston's hell -- like the hell of his predecessors²⁶ -- is primarily shaped by biblical vocabulary.

A second and a third feature of the traditional doctrine of hell are provided by the standard scholastic distinction between the punishment of loss and the punishment of

²² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 358-59. For further examples of the variety of biblical texts he employs for his preaching on hell, see III, 248; IV, 304, 405; V, 322, 404-406, 420-21, 433-37, 452-53, 576; VII, 38; VIII, 113, 119, 175-76, 247, 250-52, 285, 297, 358; IX, 105, 599-600; X, 344; XI, 308, 317-18.

²³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 106, 357, 359, 361, 368 (cf. III, 249; IV, 304; V, 287, 326, 405-406; VI, 522-23, 560; VII, 139; X, 350; XI, 309).

²⁴ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 354 (cf. I, 108; II, 460; IV, 304; V, 91, 322, 405, 424-25; VII, 128, 374n; VIII, 106, 281, 288, 363).

²⁵ Almond, p. 84.

²⁶ D. P. Walker, pp. 4, 19, is sensitive to the 'scriptural authority' for the doctrine of hell. Almond's own list (p. 87) of the biblical images used to construct the traditional doctrine of hell is virtually identical to Boston's. For similar imagery of hell in Boston's sources, see especially Knox's 'Confession of Faith', II, 262; Ursinus, p. 103; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 29; Dickson, *Matthew*, pp. 100, 309; Watkins, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 177-78, 183; Adams, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 579; Essenius, XIX.XXV; Turretin, XX.VII.ii, iv, vi, x; and Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, I.V.xvii.

sense. This distinction between the *pæna damni* and the *pæna sensus* was appropriated by the Reformed systematicians and appears frequently in Boston's sources.²⁷ For Boston himself, the eternal punishment of the wicked is twofold:

[. . .] the punishment of loss, in separation from God and Christ, "Depart from me;" and the punishment of sense, in most exquisite and extreme torments, "Depart from me into fire."²⁸

The disparity between hell and heaven constitutes the punishment of loss. Since the wicked are cut off from the 'glorious presence and enjoyment of God', their loss will be as great as the happiness of heaven (VIII, 352). This 'total and final separation from God, is a misery beyond what mortals can conceive', for 'when God goes, all that is good and comfortable goes with him' (VIII, 353-54; cf. I, 299; VIII, 356; XI, 319). It may be deduced from the conversation between the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 that the damned's sense of misery will be exacerbated by their knowledge that 'some are perfectly happy, in the enjoyment of that God from whom they themselves are separated' (VIII, 355; cf. Abdn MS, 302; VIII, 305). Given the emphasis Boston places on union with Christ as the centre of redemptive bliss, it is not surprising that he views the final separation from God in Christ 'to be the very hell of hell'.²⁹

Although Boston's stress falls on the punishment of loss, he also preaches that the inhabitants of hell will suffer the punishment of sense. By 'punishment of sense', he means the exposure of both body and soul to the 'fiery torments' of hell (VIII, 357). This hellish fire will be something 'more vehement, piercing, and tormenting, than any fire ever seen by our eyes', since it 'will not only pierce into the bodies, but directly into the souls of the damned' (VIII, 358-59; cf. VIII, 107; XI, 319-20). Since the damned will 'swim in a lake of fire, burning with brimstone', every part of their bodies will be scorched (VIII, 360). Hell is no 'false alarm' (VIII, 373; cf. IV, 306; V, 29, 438-39, 624; VIII, 53; XI, 309).

²⁷ This distinction is helpfully discussed by both Almond, pp. 91, 94, and Rowell, p. 23. For examples from Boston's sources, see Sharp, pp. 258-62; Polyandrus, XVI.XXV-XXVII, LII.L; Ames, I.XII.xxxiv, I.XVI.xiv; Drexelius, pp. 22, 143; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 29, 89; Johannes Hoornbeek, *Socinianismus Confutatus*, 3 vols (Amsterdam, 1650-1654), pp. 582-85; Watkins, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 177-78; Adams, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 577-81; Bridge, p. 208; Brooks, pp. 177, 186; Owen, *Πνευματολογία*, p. 375; Ambrose, pp. 194-95, 429; Charnock, *Works* (1986), IV, 341; Essenius, X.XIII; Turretin, XX.VII.iv; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fœderum*, I.V.xiv, xvii, xli; and Willison, pp. 621-22.

²⁸ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 348 (cf. I, 101-102, 109, 299-300; II, 391; V, 424, 432-34; VI, 560; VII, 37-38; VIII, 106; IX, 23; XI, 213-14, 309).

²⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 354 (cf. I, 299; V, 269, 432-33, 452; VII, 37-38; VIII, 347-48, 350, 355-57, 369; IX, 31, 34; XI, 318-19).

Philip Almond describes a fourth feature of the traditional Western doctrine of hell as the 'stark symmetry of contrasts between heaven and hell'.³⁰ Boston extends the antithetical equity of demerit and reward beyond resurrection into the punishments of loss and sense in the eternal state (cf. VIII, 277). Even the selection of Matthew 25 as a sermon text pushes him in this direction, since the symmetry of eternal weal and woe is integral to that passage. Since God is the chief good and eternal enjoyment of him is 'the highest pinnacle of happiness', then to be separated from him in hell 'must be the chief evil' and the 'lowest step of misery which the rational creature can be reduced to' (VIII, 353; cf. IV, 169; V, 505; VII, 373n-74n; VIII, 250; X, 345, 429). Just as grace is brought to perfection in heaven, so 'the evil of punishment also arrives at its perfection' in hell (VIII, 358; cf. IV, 92; V, 439; VIII, 349), a symmetry which is rooted in the perfections of God:

God always acts in a peculiar way, becoming his infinite greatness, whether for or against the creature: therefore, as the things he has prepared for them that love him, are great and good beyond expression or conception, so one may conclude, that the things he has prepared against those who hate him, are great and terrible beyond what men can either say or think of them. (VIII, 359; cf. 351)

Hell is as hellish as heaven is heavenly.

A fifth idea Boston appropriates from the traditional Western doctrine of hell is a further example of eschatological symmetry: the antithesis of the vicious society of hell to the blessed society of heaven.³¹ The text for the sermon 'Of Hell' (Matthew 25.41) stipulates that the wicked will be cast into the same everlasting fire 'prepared for the devil and his angels' (VIII, 347; cf. 365). In hell, therefore, 'all the goats shall be shut up together', the wicked joining 'the society of devils', going into the 'same torments, and place of torment, with the devil and his angels'.³² 'O horrible! O frightful association!' (VIII, 365). The damned will receive no pity from that hellish crew 'who delight in the ruin of the children of men', nor will they pity one another 'where every one is weeping and gnashing his teeth, under his own insupportable anguish and pain'. Even 'natural

³⁰ Almond, p. 110 (cf. pp. 91, 97, 146); see also D. P. Walker, p. 65. Boston's Marrow colleague James Hog, in *An Essay to Vindicate some Scripture Truths in Five several Articles, from the Danger of being corrupted at this Time* ([Edinburgh], [1716]), p. 29, writes that 'Heaven and Hell [are] just *Antipodes* to one another'. See also M'Claren, p. 343.

³¹ Examples of this theme among Boston's sources include Zanchius, VIII, 457-61; Sharp, p. 262; Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph*, p. 64; Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, pp. 93-94; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 89; Dickson, *Matthew*, p. 309; Adams, *Morning Exercise*, p. 586; Bayly, p. 45; Ambrose, p. 433; and Essenius, XIX.XXVI.

³² Boston, *Works*, VIII, 348 (cf. Abdn MS, 302; *Works*, I, 574, 617, 644-45; III, 31; V, 322, 350, 411-12, 418, 436, 443-44, 450, 452; VII, 140, 244, 309, 355, 366, 369; VIII, 244, 249, 253, 309; IX, 338).

affection will be extinguished' in hell, as members of the same family will loathe one another and degenerate into bitter recriminations (VIII, 363; cf. 280, 299). Those who presently shun the company of the saints will get as much godless company as they desire 'when they have eternity to pass in the roaring and blaspheming society of devils and reprobates in hell' (VIII, 366; cf. V, 433, 446; IX, 297).

In the sixth place, God himself is the author of the torments of the damned (VIII, 350; cf. I, 108; III, 246; VIII, 106, 120; XI, 308). Hell is the 'full harvest' of divine judgment against the wicked, a judgment which 'shall come upon them to the uttermost'. God himself pronounces the sentence of damnation on the wicked in order to show 'how keenly wrath burns in his heart against them for their sins':

His looks will be most terrible to them; his eyes will cast flames of fire on them; and his words will pierce their hearts, like envenomed arrows. (VIII, 350; cf. V, 406; VIII, 349, 352, 360)

The very fires of hell are 'the product of infinite wisdom, with a particular purpose, to demonstrate the most strict and severe divine justice against sin' (VIII, 359; cf. I, 300; III, 248, 252; V, 435; VIII, 360, 364).

Seventh, hell is part of 'man's eternal state', the 'state of everlasting misery'.³³ The punishments of loss and sense in hell will be uninterrupted, without even momentary intermission (VIII, 362; cf. 363; cf. I, 300; III, 248). As a result, one of Boston's primary homiletical aims is to 'shew what eternity is' by helping his hearers and readers grasp the immensity of eternity. He uses a series of similitudes to show that hell is 'a beginning without a middle, a beginning without an end' (VIII, 366-67; cf. 374), including his own version of an illustration he had encountered in the *Morning Exercise* and elsewhere:³⁴

When you look to a mountain, imagine in your hearts, how long would it be, ere that mountain should be removed, by a little bird coming but once every thousand years, and carrying away but one grain of the dust thereof at once: the mountain would at length be removed that way, and brought to an end; but eternity will never end. (VIII, 367)

According to traditional Western doctrine, the eternity of hell was its chief misery:³⁵ 'It is everlastingness which makes hell to be hell, and heaven to be heaven'.³⁶ Similarly, for

³³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 347. The doctrine of the eternity of hell is also developed in Abdn MS, 172; *Works*, I, 100, 107; III, 248-49; V, 391, 406, 416, 437; VI, 443, 511, 523; VII, 26, 38, 139-40; VIII, 106-108, 366; IX, 31; X, 349; XI, 317-20, 339.

³⁴ Drexelius, p. 69; Adams, *Morning Exercise*, p. 587; Brooks, p. 179.

³⁵ Almond, p. 144.

³⁶ Sedgwick, p. 161.

Boston, the eternal duration of hell puts a 'top-stone' upon the misery of the damned, serving as the 'last aggravation of their torment' (VIII, 348; cf. 357, 363, 369).

The eternity of hell entails the eternity of the damned themselves, who 'will never be substantially destroyed or annihilated' (VIII, 368; cf. I, 115; V, 28, 368, 392, 424, 434; VIII, 285, 369; X, 344, 349). Earlier in the *Fourfold State*, in another vivid image borrowed from the *Morning Exercise*,³⁷ the idea of eternal damnation had been expressed by the anthropomorphic image of a two-armed deity holding sinners 'up with the one hand, through eternity, while they are lashed with the other' (VIII, 120; cf. III, 252; VIII, 106, 285). The defence of a strong, traditional hell on this point may be read against the background of Socinian arguments for the annihilation of the wicked,³⁸ the brevity of this defence perhaps indicating the universal acceptance of the traditional doctrine of hell by Scottish Presbyterians. The arguments Boston employs are exegetical rather than philosophical.³⁹ According to the Bible, the wicked 'shall go away into everlasting punishment' (Matthew 25.46); they shall be 'tormented day and night for ever and ever' (Revelation 20.10). 'To what end is the fire eternal' (Mark 9.43), Boston asks, 'if those who are cast into it be not eternally in it?' Similarly, the 'worm, that dieth not, must have a subject to live in'. If the damned 'shall have no rest, day nor night' (Revelation 14.11), then their 'state of death' will be a perpetual destruction, mirroring eternal life in heaven, in which they will be 'ever dying, but never dead' (VIII, 368; cf. Abdn MS, 114; V, 424, 434; VIII, 108, 473; X, 344). The curse of hell, and the punishment of hell, and the sense of the misery of hell shall be eternal (VIII, 368-70).

Boston defends not only the fact of hell's eternity, but also 'the reasonableness of the eternity of the punishment of the damned' (VIII, 370; cf. I, 161; V, 406). His first line of defence is a scholastic argument repeated frequently by Reformed theologians and others who emphasize the penal dimension of the atonement:⁴⁰ since 'the demerit of sin

³⁷ Watkins, *Morning Exercise*, p. 178; Adams, *Morning Exercise*, p. 595. See also Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, pp. 90-91.

³⁸ Among Boston's sources, see Hoornbeek, pp. 580-618; Edwards, pp. 94-115; Essenius, XIX.XXVII; Turretin, XX.VII.iv; and Witsius, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, XXVI.XXXIV-XLVI. On the Socinian doctrine of annihilation, see D. P. Walker, pp. 73-92.

³⁹ Almond, pp. 145-46, shows that the exegetical approach was typical; see Dickson, *Matthew*, p. 309, and Edwards, p. 112, for examples.

⁴⁰ The argument is discussed by D. P. Walker, p. 26; Rowell, pp. 24, 29-30; and Almond, pp. 154-55. Among Boston's sources, see Ursinus, pp. 101, 103, 116; Beza and Faius, LXXXI.XXI; *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ*, II.I-IV; Polyandrus, XVI.XXVII; Drexelius, pp. 25, 165-66; *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 38; Fisher, *Marrow*, VII, 180, 447; Hoornbeek pp. 594-611; Watkins, *Morning Exercise*, p. 182;

risers according to the dignity and excellence of the person against whom it is committed', a sin committed against a party of infinite dignity 'requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted for the vindication of his honour'. The infinite distance between the creature and the Creator thus makes human sin a 'kind of infinite evil, as it wrongs an infinite God'. Yet since a sinful man is incapable of suffering a punishment infinite in value, the punishment inflicted on him 'must needs be infinite in duration, that is to say, eternal'.⁴¹ Interestingly, Boston here neglects to make the apologetic point that the infinite sufferings of Christ legitimate hell by their equivalence to the sufferings of the damned, although he does make this argument elsewhere (cf. I, 101-102; VI, 436; VII, 620; VIII, 109, 111; IX, 22-23, 464; XI, 214, 318, 321). Nor does he defend hell on the grounds that a display of the severity of God's wrath is a manifestation of divine glory (cf. I, 157, 525-26; V, 396, 437). Yet he does argue for the justice of eternal hell from the fact that the sinner 'would have continued the course of his provocations against God for ever without end' unless he had been prevented from doing so by death. Thus God 'may justly do against sinners, in punishing, as they would have done against him in sinning' (VIII, 370; cf. I, 110). Boston also refutes a point raised by his contemporary, John Simson,⁴² preaching that the damned 'will sin eternally in hell', gnashing their teeth in blasphemous 'rage, envy, and grudge' against God (VIII, 370; cf. II, 181; IV, 92; V, 420, 594; VIII, 112, 361; XI, 310, 319). Since even the misery of the damned cannot excuse such sins, it is just that those 'continuing wicked eternally, do suffer eternally for their wickedness' (VIII, 371; cf. I, 115-16; II, 57; V, 452-53; VI, 523; XI, 214).

A final tenet of Boston's strong doctrine of hell can be readily deduced from 'Of Hell', even if it is not explicitly stated: he rejects the Roman Catholic conception of purgatory. The eternal state contains 'a prison for the wicked, as well as a palace for the saints', but there is no middle state between these two (VIII, 347; cf. Abdn MS, 227; III,

Adams, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 590-93; Sedgwick, pp. 246, 248; Brooks, p. 151; Ambrose, p. 192; Charnock, *Works* (1986), III, 347-48, 423; Turretin, IX.IV.xi, XX.VII.xi; Essenius, XIX.XXV; and Witsius, *Oeconomia Fœderum*, I.V.xl.

⁴¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 370 (cf. I, 114-15; II, 391-92; III, 249; VI, 13; VIII, 111-12, 128; XI, 214-15, 261, 308; XI, 320, 333).

⁴² For Simson's arguments, see Webster, *Case of Mr. John Simson*, pp. 8, 233. Simson provoked a strong response among contemporary pamphleteers; see Flint, *Examen Doctrinæ*, pp. 180-204; M'Claren, pp. 320-53; and three pamphlets by James Hog: *Letter to a Person Exercised to Godliness*, pp. 36-37; *Essay to Vindicate*, p. 28; and *Letter to a Gentleman Detecting the Gangrene of some Errors vented at this Time* (Edinburgh, 1716), pp. 8-9, 45-46.

27; IV, 247; V, 28, 98, 399, 425). In omitting purgatory from the eternal state, Boston follows Calvin and the Calvinists in their most significant departure from Western eschatology.⁴³ One effect of this departure is to eternally absolutize the dichotomy between the wicked and the righteous, what Rowell has termed the 'absolute choice of Protestant eschatology'.⁴⁴ Further, it emphasizes what Boston terms the 'unalterability' of hell.⁴⁵ Since the eternal state is a 'state past remedy' for the wicked, all doors will be shut against them (VIII, 357; cf. VI, 286; VIII, 251). Their loss of fellowship with God is 'irrecoverable', 'never, never to be repaired' (VIII, 356; cf. V, 409).

These eight elements of Boston's hell are not the only signs that he stands in the tradition of the Western eschatological synthesis. He also preaches, for example, that 'there will be degrees of torments in hell', with some sinners burning 'more vehemently than others, according as their sins have been more heinous than those of others'.⁴⁶ Further, Boston follows his predecessors in viewing the miseries of hell as a continuation of extreme earthly misery, using images of penal incarceration,⁴⁷ bodily ailments (VIII, 361, 374; cf. IV, 537), and ritual child sacrifice (VIII, 362; cf. V, 405; IX, 581, 599) to convey the horror of hell.⁴⁸ Perhaps this list of similarities could be extended still further. In any case, it is clear that his preaching on damnation remains unaltered by the innovations which came to characterize preaching on hell later in the eighteenth century and afterwards.⁴⁹ Boston's hell is the traditional hell of Western Christendom.

⁴³ See Calvin, *Institutionvm*, III. V. vi-x; Zanchius, VIII, 558; Polyandrus, XXXIX.I, VI; Sharp, p. 997; Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 507; *Confession of Faith*, XXXII.I; Essenius, XIX.X; and Turretin, XIV.XII.xxvii, XX.VII.v.

⁴⁴ Rowell, pp. 25-26; cf. Almond, pp. 69, 72-74, 79.

⁴⁵ In addition to Boston, Abdn MS, 296; *Works*, V, 269, 322, 407, 418, 460, 505; VI, 379; VIII, 244; X, 429; and XI, 214, 306, 308, 315; see his Manuscript of Sermons on the Ten Commandments, National Library of Scotland, Acc 10880, p. 124. D. P. Walker refers to the unalterability of hell as the 'orthodox doctrine of a morally static afterlife' (pp. 24, 42).

⁴⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 362 (cf. II, 306, 388, 447; V, 326, 436; VI, 522). Almond, p. 90, observes that the proportional punishment of the 'Medieval consensus' was 'generally unquestioned'; cf. Disley, pp. 82-85. For examples from Boston's sources, see Polyandrus, LII.LII; Sharp, p. 261; Ames, I.XVI.iii; Wendelinus, p. 552; Hoornbeek, p. 585; Durham, *Revelation*, p. 745; Adams, *Morning Exercise*, p. 584; Ambrose, p. 429; Essenius, XIX.XXVI; Turretin, XX.VII.ix, XX.X.xvi; and Edwards, p. 110.

⁴⁷ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 247, 309, 362-3, 365, 368, 371 (cf. I, 574; III, 27, 222; V, 405-406, 409-10, 420-21, 452; VI, 282; VIII, 106, 280, 282, 285, 297; XI, 303-304, 311, 313-15).

⁴⁸ Similar portrayals of hellish torments as 'intensifications of suffering on this side of the divide' (Almond, p. 82; cf. 84, 110) appear in Boston's sources. For images of hell as a dungeon of torture, see Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph*, pp. 64, 255; Brooks, p. 184; and Ambrose, pp. 420, 426-27. For images of physical malady, see Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph*, p. 54, and Brooks, p. 176. For images of ritual sacrifice, see Brooks, p. 175, on Tophet and Hinnom in the Old Testament.

⁴⁹ This transition is documented by D. P. Walker in *The Decline of Hell*.

IV. 'IF YOU WOULD BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH TO COME'

The Western doctrine of hell continued to enjoy a high degree of support across theological boundaries in the early eighteenth century. Whatever the features of Boston's doctrine of hell may be, therefore, they are features held largely in common with a diverse group of his contemporaries. Where he differs from his theological context is not so much in his doctrine of hell as in his *preaching* of hell. Since it is precisely Boston's preaching of eternal damnation which has engendered criticism, the important question to ask is this one: What homiletical strategies and pastoral purposes characterize the preaching of hell in the *Fourfold State*?

When viewed against the background of his sources, Boston's decision to end the *Fourfold State* with hell rather than heaven is a surprising one. We have already discovered that most patristic, medieval, and post-Reformation discussions of the *status quadruplex* tend to conclude with heavenly bliss, omitting eternal damnation altogether. Furthermore, the most significant textual model for the *Fourfold State* -- the collection of Puritan sermons in the *Morning Exercise* -- closes with a sermon on the glories of heaven rather than on the terrors of hell.⁵⁰ It might be tempting to attribute the darker conclusion of the *Fourfold State* to Boston's native pessimism, what one earlier critic termed his 'morbid nature'.⁵¹ But a more accurate explanation lies closer to hand. Having decided to preach about the last things from Matthew 25, he was thereby committed to preaching everlasting happiness and everlasting misery 'in the order wherein they lie before us' (VIII, 316). By concluding the *Fourfold State* with the state of damnation, therefore, Boston deliberately follows a biblical model rather than a traditional one. If there were 'no other place of eternal lodging but heaven', he would have been content to omit 'Of Hell' from his preaching on man's eternal state. But since there is an eternal state for the wicked as well as the righteous, 'we must also inquire into that state of everlasting misery' (VIII, 347).

Another distinctive element of Boston's preaching on hell in the *Fourfold State* is his use of sensory imagery to -- in the words of Stephen Woodruff -- sharpen 'mental

⁵⁰ Woodcock, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 600-28.

⁵¹ Graham, II, 80.

impressions of the torments of the damned'.⁵² His images of hell often relate to the auditory faculty, as when he describes the wicked listening to the 'roaring and blaspheming society of devils and reprobates in hell'.⁵³ Other images are visual as well as auditory, such as the depiction of the 'doleful shrieks' which will arise when 'drunkards, who have had many a jovial day together, shall see one another in the face' (VIII, 299; cf. V, 434, 436; VIII, 280, 285-88, 299, 315; XI, 314). Boston also imagines the tactile sensation of swimming in a lake of fire, scorched forever in all the parts of the body, with 'no sound side to turn them to' (VIII, 360; cf. V, 434; VIII, 123, 277). The punishment of sense (*pæna sensus*) was a punishment of the senses:

Their eyes shall be kept in blackness of darkness, without the least comfortable gleam of light; their ears filled with frightful yellings of the infernal crew. They shall taste nothing but the sharpness of God's wrath, the dregs of the cup of his fury. The stench of the burning lake of brimstone will be the smell there; and they shall feel extreme pains for evermore. (VIII, 361; cf. I, 109; VI, 553; VIII, 358)

Boston uses his own vocabulary to describe the 'stench of the foetid damned' and the 'eternal cacophony of misery' in the hell of Western tradition.⁵⁴

This use of sensory rhetoric may be evaluated according to Boston's own homiletical criteria. His *Memoirs* record his desire to look 'in scripture only' for knowledge about the eternal state (XII, 380; cf. V, 398, 404; VI, 676; VIII, 285). He acknowledges that this constraint is especially important for the geography of hell, where preachers must 'leave a large void for the unknown land, which the day will discover' (VIII, 351; cf. V, 389, 397-99). Yet 'Of Hell' appears to go beyond these parameters by using sensory imagery which has no biblical precedent. While the Bible is not devoid of sensory images of hell, it stops well short of describing how hell might smell or taste. One of the virtues of Boston's homiletic -- the use of vivid imagery -- thus threatens to become a liability by overpowering its biblical restraints.

Two considerations help to reduce this disparity between theory and practice in the *Fourfold State*, between Boston's pronouncements about preaching hell and the sermons themselves. First, he does not fall into the speculative excesses of some of his predecessors. Samuel Rutherford imagines the 'yelling, shouting, crying of our young

⁵² Woodruff, p. 150.

⁵³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 366 (cf. I, 101, 108-109; IV, 51; V, 322, 398, 411, 595; VIII, 250, 280-81, 299, 315, 357, 365, 370; XI, 314-15).

⁵⁴ Almond, p. 85.

ones and fathers, blaspheming the spotless justice of God' while they are 'boiling, and leaping for pain, in a dungeon of everlasting brimstone', scourged by the 'long and sharp toothed whips of scorpions'.⁵⁵ Similarly, Isaac Ambrose envisions the reprobates 'pack't and crowded together, like bricks in a fiery furnace', bound to pillars and lashed with fiery whips: 'The flesh shall fry, the blood boil, the veines be scorch't, the sinews rack't'.⁵⁶ Compared with many medieval descriptions of hell,⁵⁷ or his own sources,⁵⁸ or even some of his contemporaries,⁵⁹ Boston's language is restrained.

Second, he allows for some of his strong descriptive language to be understood metaphorically. The 'worm to gnaw and prey' upon the wicked, for example, is actually a figure for the tormented conscience.⁶⁰ Similarly, he expresses some hesitation about whether the fire into which the wicked shall depart will be a 'material fire or not', declining to dispute the point.⁶¹ This agnosticism is not intended to mitigate the severity of hell, however, since even an immaterial fire would pierce 'directly into the souls of the damned' and thus afflict them with an everlasting burning in that 'most lively and tender part of a man' (VIII, 359). Nor is there any question here of Boston denying the punishment of the body in hell, since he has already accepted the scholastic *pæna sensus*. Yet he does tend to emphasize spiritual torments over physical ones, arguing that the soul rather than the body will be 'chief in suffering' (VIII, 360; cf. I, 109-10). The hint that hell-fire might have a metaphoric dimension serves as a warning against an over-literal interpretation of Boston's hell, just as his heaven resists being understood in strictly literal terms. As he was to preach on another occasion, since there is 'a disproportion between our present faculties and the clear and distinct notions of the other world', the Bible must give us 'similitudes taken from things we are acquainted with, as heaven a glorious city, hell a burning lake' (V, 398-99). These qualifications notwithstanding, he

⁵⁵ Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph*, p. 64 (cf. p. 255); cf. Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁶ Ambrose, p. 427 (cf. pp. 195, 197, 420, 426, 433).

⁵⁷ See Piero Camporesi, *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe*, trans. by Lucinda Byatt (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990).

⁵⁸ For further examples of vivid, sensory images of hell in Boston's sources, see Durham, *Revelation*, p. 25; Calamy, *Morning Exercise*, p. 548; Bayly, pp. 42, 46; Brooks, pp. 46, 166, 176-77; and Willison, p. 654.

⁵⁹ E.g. Webster, *Select Sermons*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 361 (cf. V, 345, 420, 435; VI, 282-83, 522; VIII, 349, 372; XI, 309). Almond asserts that this metaphoric interpretation was in the minority (pp. 91-92), but it may at least be found in Calvin, *Institvitionvm*, III.XXV.xii; Sharp, p. 259; Drexelius, p. 143; Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, p. 92; Turretin, XX.VII.v-vii; Witsius, *Oeconomia Fæderum*, III.XIV.xiii; and Willison, p. 621.

⁶¹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 357 (cf. 369). On this issue, see Sharp, p. 262, and Ambrose, p. 432.

remains responsible for the impressions which his sermons convey. Very likely, the effect of the last sermon in the *Fourfold State* was to give its hearers and readers strong aural, visual, tactile, and even nasal impressions of the eternal state of damnation.

Similar difficulties are raised by Boston's imaginative portrayal of the affections of the damned. He gives symmetry to his preaching on the human faculties in their fourfold estate by describing the eternal torments of the mind, will, affections, conscience, and memory of the wicked (VIII, 360-61; cf. V, 418, 420-21, 434-35; VIII, 176). Strongest emphasis is reserved for the affective faculty of the damned and for their 'hatred, fury, and rage against God, themselves, and their fellow-creatures' (VIII, 360-61; cf. I, 110, 115-16; III, 247; V, 406, 421, 435, 437; XI, 214, 309-10). While the misery of such affections can only be known by the 'dreadful experience of the damned', Boston gives his parishioners 'some conception of the horror of it' (VIII, 353):

[The damned] will be sunk in sorrow, racked with anxiety, filled with horror, galled to the heart with fretting, and continually darted with despair [. . .] (VIII, 361)

The closing pages of the *Fourfold State* are thus saturated with the emotive vocabulary of loathing, horror, rage, sorrow, despair, and misery (VIII, 352, 354, 357, 369-70). Although the rhetorical power of Boston's language is again unmistakable, that rhetoric cannot conceal a speculative portrait of the affective experience of the damned in hell.

A much more serious (albeit ill-founded) criticism accuses Boston of taking perverse pleasure in arousing hellish fear among his parishioners. The nineteenth century historian Henry Thomas Buckle numbered him among the Scottish ministers for whom the excitement of the fear of hell was the 'paramount object' of preaching. These barbaric ministers 'revelled and gloated at the prospect' of hell, taking delight in their 'vindictive musings' of judgment, meanwhile 'dead to every emotion of pity and of tenderness'.⁶² Buckle's contemporary Henry Grey Graham took a similar view, concluding from the extensive preaching on wrath in the *Fourfold State* that Boston was a 'most remorseless divine', a preacher who 'positively revelled in descriptions of the woes eternal'.⁶³ Gerald R. Cragg has expressed the same criticism more tersely: 'Hell was a favourite topic'.⁶⁴

⁶² Buckle, II, 371-72, 375; cf. Brown, *Life of a Scottish Probationer*, p. 278.

⁶³ Graham, II, 134 (cf. II, 80, 191).

⁶⁴ Cragg, p. 86.

It is true, of course, that 'terror' is one of the explicit 'uses' of Boston's doctrine of hell.⁶⁵ It is also true that hell receives full attention in the *Fourfold State*, including not only the volume's final sermon (VIII, 347-75), but also a substantial portion of the sermon on the misery of man's natural estate (VIII, 98-121). Yet perhaps the strongest textual evidence in support of the view that Boston's pastoral motivations were sinister is his contention that the damned will 'find no pity from any in heaven' (VIII, 357):

The punishments inflicted on the greatest malefactors on earth, draw forth some compassion from the spectators; but the damned shall have none to pity them. God will not pity them, but laugh at their calamity, Prov. i. 26.⁶⁶

This motif, however, implies neither that Boston himself is devoid of pity for the unrighteous nor that he takes perverse pleasure in preaching about their fate. The *Fourfold State* reveals that his genuine motives are exactly the opposite of these. Divine unpity for the damned in the eternal state actually serves to emphasize, by means of contrast, God's pity for the lost. In their natural estate the wicked are both pitied by God and 'admonished to pity themselves' (VIII, 350; cf. VI, 522; VIII, 357; X, 349). The consequence of this pity -- both divine and pastoral -- is that the free offer of the gospel is issued more frequently and forcefully in 'Of Hell' than anywhere else in the *Fourfold State*, a point of decisive importance for understanding Boston's evangelistic intentions in preaching the doctrine of hell.

He announces from the outset that his reason for preaching the state of everlasting misery is that 'there is yet access to flee from the wrath to come' (VIII, 347; cf. 351, 364, 373). Here he is following the counsel of Oliver Bowles, who reminds the evangelical pastor that the preaching of divine judgment is given '*ad ædificationem, non ad destructionem*'.⁶⁷ For unbelievers, the primary 'use' of the doctrine of the punishment of loss -- especially of banishment from the presence of God -- is to persuade sinners 'to

⁶⁵ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 287, 313 (cf. 60). For similar endorsements of terror as one desired response to the doctrine of hell, see Shepard, *Ten Virgins*, II, 139; Adams, *Morning Exercise*, pp. 596-97; Brooks, p. 186; Ambrose, p. 427; and Essenius, XIX.XXXII.

⁶⁶ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 363 (cf. I, 299; V, 269; VIII, 120, 350; XI, 320). Boston's depiction of God at this point needs to be reconciled with his doctrine of divine impassibility (III, 215, 245, 259; VIII, 101, 108), although he does not attempt such a reconciliation himself. On the image of a laughing God, see also Camporesi, pp. 90-99.

⁶⁷ Bowles, II, 77. Preston, *Works*, p. 582, takes a similar view on preaching hell: 'We preach not damnation, but salvation. We convince you to be in the estate of death, that you may hasten to an estate of life'.

come to God through Jesus Christ, uniting with him through the Mediator' (VIII, 356).

The sermon thus becomes a moment of potentially eternal significance for the hearer:

To-day heaven is opened for those who hitherto have rejected Christ; and yet there is room, if they will come: but that day the doors shall be shut. Now Christ is saying unto you, "Come;" then he will say: "Depart;" seeing you would not come when you were invited. (VIII, 357; cf. 373)

Lest the fear of hell-fire drive men away from Christ rather than towards him, Boston reminds his hearers of the Marrow teaching that salvation is 'freely offered unto all to whom the gospel comes' (VIII, 364; cf. VII, 262-78). This reminder is in keeping with his insistence elsewhere that although fear of divine wrath may play a contributory role in conversion, fear alone is an inadequate basis for either salvation or Christian obedience.⁶⁸ It is against the dark backdrop of divine judgment most of all that the grace of Christ is 'made over to [the sinner] in the free offer of the gospel'.⁶⁹

Accepting the free offer of the gospel is made all the more urgent by the possibility that this offer might be squandered. The mood of Boston's preaching becomes wistful as he imagines the regret which will torment those who reject the gospel. Their sense of loss will be aggravated by the remembrance 'that time was when they might have been made partakers of the blessed company of the saints' (VIII, 355). Once they arrive in hell, however, they will discover that the means of grace are denied to them; their proposed match with Christ 'shall then be broken up for ever'.⁷⁰ Sadly, eternal happiness was once not simply a possibility, but a probability for some, since they had been pressed to accept the gospel and 'the pen was in their hand, as it were, to sign the marriage contract between Christ and their souls'. Yet they dropped the pen and rejected the offer. There is a sense in which despisers of the gospel 'have bolted the door of mercy against themselves, by their unbelief', and thus have chosen their own damnation (VIII, 251; cf. I, 114; III, 47; V, 95; VIII, 109-10, 252, 255-57; IX, 34; X, 159), even if this

⁶⁸ See especially Boston, *Works*, VIII, 202: 'They that are only driven to Christ by terror, will surely leave him again when that terror is gone. Terror may break a heart of stone, but the pieces into which it is broken still continue to be stone: terrors cannot soften it into a heart of flesh. Yet terrors may begin the work which love crowns.' Cf. Boston, *Works*, VI, 280, 303; VII, 331n-36n, 488; VIII, 572-73; IX, 77-84, 352; X, 82; XI, 137, 143, 273-76; XII, 355.

⁶⁹ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 365 (cf. I, 84, 300-301, 645; III, 46-47; V, 29, 53, 440, 458-60; VI, 280, 282-83, 525, 559-60, 678; VII, 620; VIII, 110, 120-21, 176, 254, 288-89, 364, 375; IX, 82, 577, 581; X, 349-50; XI, 339).

⁷⁰ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 352-53. For further examples of the inaccessibility of the means of grace after death, see Abdn MS, 296-97; *Works*, I, 200, 300, 644-45; III, 115; IV, 92; V, 269, 358, 396, 420, 433; VI, 283, 306, 458; VIII, 106, 249, 252-53, 357, 373; IX, 576, 580; X, 427, 458-59; XI, 306.

is a choice they will later lament (VIII, 352). It is perhaps for this reason that Boston prefers to designate the damned as 'unrighteous' or 'wicked' rather than as 'reprobate'. Although he agrees with the Westminster *Confession of Faith* that some men are 'foreordained to everlasting death',⁷¹ he more often preaches that hell is the self-inflicted result of rebellion against God.⁷² Yet it is only in the eternal state that the unrighteous will recognize their folly and 'behold that to their torment, which they will not see now to their salvation' (VIII, 356; cf. Abdn MS, 302; II, 459; III, 47, 99, 384; VIII, 90, 374). Worst of all, rejecting Christ will exacerbate the misery of the eternal state, for the 'gospel offer slighted will make a hot hell'.⁷³ The motif of lost opportunity serves to heighten the necessity of a timely acceptance of the free offer of the gospel.

The reminder that once the opportunity to answer the gospel call has been lost, it 'can never be retrieved' brings the *Fourfold State* to its conclusion (VIII, 374). Boston exhorts his hearers and readers to believe the sinfulness and misery of their natural state and to 'labour to get out of it quickly, fleeing unto Jesus Christ by faith' (VIII, 374-75; cf. 373). This summary of the soteriological core of the *Fourfold State* is followed by one of his favourite texts for the free offer of the gospel, Revelation 22.17: 'And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely' (VIII, 375; cf. III, 262; V, 358; VI, 287, 293; VIII, 364; IX, 579). It is on this basis that Boston invites his hearers and readers to receive Christ 'as he is offered in the gospel':

And the terrors of hell, as well as the joys of heaven, are set before you, to stir you up to a cordial receiving of him, with all his salvation; and to incline you unto the way of faith and holiness, in which alone you can escape the everlasting fire. (VIII, 375; cf. 364)

The eternal state of the wicked is thus an 'awful subject! but necessary' (V, 432). The fear engendered by the preaching of hell is not gratuitous, but gracious, inviting the sinner to unite with Christ by faith unto salvation.

⁷¹ *Confession of Faith*, III. III; cf. *Larger Catechism*, Q & A 13. That Boston agrees with the confessional language may be seen in his *Works*, I, 154-56.

⁷² James Walker, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland Chiefly of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1872), p. 57, has rightly observed that although Boston 'believed in the doctrine of reprobation', he did 'not care to thrust it forward'.

⁷³ Boston, *Works*, VIII, 356. This theme appears frequently in his sermons: Abdn MS, 114; *Works*, II, 447; III, 47, 99, 149, 222, 229, 384; V, 28, 437; VIII, 314-15, 374; IX, 588; X, 202, 265, 350; XI, 315.

IX. EPILOGUE

I. THE INFLUENCE OF THE *FOURFOLD STATE*

While the Marrow Controversy prevented Thomas Boston from obtaining his 'due place of honour' in the kirk,¹ it had precisely the opposite effect among the laity. The Marrow men were popular preachers.² When Boston last administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the remarkable total of 777 tokens were distributed to communicants (XII, 435). This popularity was soon matched by the success of his printed sermons. Already in 1729 he had received a 'comfortable account of the acceptance and usefulness' of the *Fourfold State*'s second edition, and was 'filled with thankfulness' (XII, 392-93).

It is not difficult to find laudatory assessments of the religious impact of the *Fourfold State*. One adoring nineteenth century biographer claimed that in Scotland it was 'literally read by all, and converts were made by the thousands'.³ Response was particularly enthusiastic among the peasantry, the *Fourfold State* appearing 'side by side with the Bible and Bunyan's glorious Dream, on the shelf in every peasant's cottage'.⁴ One humorous anecdote trades on the work's perceived popularity among common folk:

[. . .] in Ettrick a successor of Boston's was a very cold moderate minister, and a half-witted woman passing him one day, and seeing him raking hay in the glebe, exclaimed, "Ay, rake away, but it will be lang or ye rake thegither another 'Fourfold State'".⁵

More boldly still, it has been asserted that one farmer travelled 50 miles each Sabbath to hear the sermons when they were first preached in Ettrick, a story perhaps more credible for having arisen in the farmer's provenance rather than Boston's.⁶ Among serious Calvinists in Scotland, an appetite for Boston was long considered constitutive of the 'pious household'.⁷

¹ Henry F. Henderson, *The Religious Controversies of Scotland* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1905), p. 36.

² M'Kerrow, pp. 19-20.

³ Thomson, *Life and Times*, p. 143 (cf. pp. 10-11). On the work's widespread readership, see also Watson, *Scot of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 209; J. M. Reid, *Kirk and Nation: The Story of the Reformed Church of Scotland* (London: Skeffington, 1960), p. 119; Marcus L. Loane, *Sons of the Covenant* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1963), pp. 56, 70; J. B. Torrance, 'Covenant or Contract?', p. 64.

⁴ Thomson, *Life and Times*, p. 10 (cf. p. 143). This oft-repeated claim was first made by Somerville, p. 350. The standard of comparison is not always Bunyan: for C. G. M'Crie, *Confessions*, p. 123, Boston's companions on the book shelf are Rutherford and Guthrie.

⁵ Thomson, *Life and Times*, p. 141.

⁶ J. Walker, *Theology and Theologians*, p. 186; cf. Graham, II, 134; Addison, p. 161.

⁷ MacInnes, p. 6. Cf. John Brown, *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated*, rev. edn (Glasgow, 1831), pp. 74-75; Watson, *Pastor of Ettrick*, pp. 1-2; W. Scrymgeour, 'Thomas Boston', in *The Evangelical Succession*, 3rd series (Edinburgh, 1884), pp. 73-107 (p. 88); John MacLeod, *Some*

All this adulation notwithstanding, it remains difficult to discover reliable *evidence* of the influence of his published sermons. For this reason, the testimony of writers otherwise hostile to Boston is particularly striking. George MacDonald's sneering reference to how 'the ways of God and man may be seen through a fourfold fog' actually pays grudging tribute to his stature,⁸ as does his account of the exhilarating moment when

[...] Shargar laid his hands on Boston's *Fourfold State*, the torment of his life on the Sunday evenings which it was his turn to spend with Mrs. Falconer, and threw it as an offering to the powers of Hades into the [violin] case [...]⁹

John Watson's *Scot of the Eighteenth Century* is disdainful of the work's style, yet admits that 'there was indeed no pious home without its copy'.¹⁰ Remarkably, the vitriolic Henry Grey Graham concludes that the 'Fourfold state of man' was the pattern of Scottish preaching in the eighteenth century 'without variation or cessation', thereby subsuming an entire century of sermons under Boston's categories.¹¹ For the critics of Thomas Boston, as for his disciples, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* was the quintessence of one style of Scottish Calvinism.

More tangible evidence for the grip of the *Fourfold State* on the Scottish soul comes from the number of its published editions. The comparative figures are startling. Not less than 120 editions of the *Fourfold State* have been published in all.¹² As many as 60 English-language editions had appeared by 1800, more than any other Scottish work of the century. Despite George Whitefield's popularity in Scotland, Boston (150 total Scottish editions) was more frequently published than Whitefield (74), Jonathan Edwards (25), and John Wesley (7) combined.¹³ Surprisingly, there were nearly twice as many Scottish editions of Boston's sermons than there were of Enlightenment works by David

Favourite Books (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988), p. 32. Interestingly, the *Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Scheme of the General Assembly, for promoting Education*, p. 48 (in MacInnes, p. 69), states that the *Fourfold State* was standard issue for Highland school libraries as late as 1832.

⁸ George MacDonald, *David Elginbrod*, 3 vols (London, 1863), I, 157.

⁹ MacDonald, *Falconer*, I, 212 (cf. I, 300). The *Fourfold State* was also an object of ridicule among Edinburgh literati such as David Hume and John Home; see Alexander Carlyle, *The Autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk, 1722-1805* (London: Foulis, 1910), p. 291.

¹⁰ Watson, *Scot of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 17.

¹¹ Graham, II, 28 (cf. II, 80). Astonishingly, this claim is repeated by Gerald R. Cragg (p. 85), whose chapter on 'Covenanters and Moderates in Scotland' in *The Penguin History of the Church* (IV, 81-92) suffers from a liberal appropriation of Graham's fanciful conclusions.

¹² This figure includes individual editions held by the Bodleian Library (Oxford), the British Library, King's College Library (Aberdeen), the National Library of Scotland, and New College Library (Edinburgh), as well as those listed in Low, p. 359, and *The National Union Catalogue: Pre-1956 Imprints*, 754 vols (London: Mansell, 1970).

¹³ These and all subsequent figures come from the *ESTC on CD-ROM: The Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue* (London: British Library, 1992).

Hume (23), Francis Hutcheson (31), Thomas Reid (6), William Robertson (27), and Adam Smith (1). When all British editions are included in the tally, Boston's output (172) lags behind that of Whitefield (444) and Wesley (1199), but still outpaces any figure of the Scottish Enlightenment. Even when it is remembered that he had the advantage of beginning his career at the outset of the century, Boston retains his place as one of the central religious and intellectual figures of eighteenth century Scotland. John MacLeod's claim that the *Fourfold State* 'did more to mould the thought of his countrymen than anything except the Westminster Shorter Catechism' is not far off the mark.¹⁴

Despite the prominence he enjoyed after his death, Boston began to disappear from popular consciousness after the middle of the nineteenth century, when the definitive edition of his works was published in Aberdeen and London. An examination of the *kind* of influence the *Fourfold State* did and did not exercise helps both to explain his decline in stature and to reinforce several of the main themes of the foregoing thesis.

In the first place, the popularity of the *Fourfold State* during the Great Awakening establishes it as an Evangelical book. The Puritanism and Presbyterianism of Boston's homiletic have been recurring themes of this study. That the waning years of his ministry correspond to the decade in which Puritanism lost its impetus in Scotland suggests that he was, in some sense, the last great Puritan in Scotland.¹⁵ Yet Boston may also be viewed as one of the first Scottish Evangelicals. As Susan O'Brien's careful research has shown, the *Fourfold State* was among the dozen or so most frequently recommended works of the Great Awakening.¹⁶ The title given to a pamphlet-length abridgment of the *Fourfold State* published during the Cambuslang Revival (1742) -- *A True Description of Conversion* -- indicates what doctrine made it attractive to revivalists. The work's evangelical emphases on personal spiritual experience and the new birth secured its place in the 'common or shared pool' of revival literature.¹⁷ While claims made about the number of conversions effected by the *Fourfold State* remain unsubstantiated,¹⁸ it was

¹⁴ John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology*, p. 146.

¹⁵ Smout, p. 231 (cf. p. 235).

¹⁶ Susan O'Brien, 'Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks in the First Years of Transatlantic Evangelicalism', in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990*, ed. by Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 38-57 (p. 54n32).

¹⁷ O'Brien, pp. 43-44.

¹⁸ Thomson, *Life and Times*, p. 241 (cf. pp. 11, 143-44), envisions 'whole counties in Scotland' coming 'under its divinely transforming influence'.

certainly the *kind* of book that belonged in the milieu of Evangelical revival. Moreover, Boston evinces each of the characteristics David Bebbington has identified as forming the ‘quadilateral of priorities’ constitutive of Evangelicalism: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism.¹⁹ Particularly striking is his commitment to assurance as ‘the essence’ of Christian faith, a position Bebbington considers unique to post-1730 Evangelicals.²⁰ This suggests either that there is greater continuity between Puritanism and Evangelicalism than Bebbington allows,²¹ or that Boston himself is an important figure in the transition, or both. Similar possibilities are raised when ‘voluntary praying societies’²² or an ‘affective homiletic style’²³ are identified as hallmarks of Evangelicalism. Boston meets these criteria as well, precisely *because of* his Puritan inheritance. Even when the connections between Puritanism and Evangelicalism have been recognized, there remains a case for describing Boston as an ‘early Evangelical’.

One valuable index of Boston’s affinity with Evangelicalism is the warm reception his *Fourfold State* was given by leading figures of the Great Awakening. Jonathan Edwards had misgivings about the federal structure of Boston’s *View of the Covenant of Grace*,²⁴ but liked the *Fourfold State* ‘exceeding well’ and wrote in 1747 that he considered its author ‘a truly great divine’.²⁵ George Whitefield also liked the work ‘exceedingly’, writing to Ralph Erskine that it had been ‘of much service’ to his soul.²⁶ John Wesley went so far as to publish an abridgment of Boston’s sermons on the

¹⁹ Bebbington, p. 3.

²⁰ Bebbington, pp. 7, 45–48.

²¹ Cf. Bebbington, pp. 43–44, 47–48. Furthermore, all the features William Gerald Enright, ‘Preaching and Theology in Scotland in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of the Context and the Content of the Evangelical Sermon’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1968), considers characteristic of Evangelical preaching in the nineteenth century were present both in Boston and in his Puritan and Presbyterian sources (e.g. pp. 232, 239–40, 247, 253–54).

²² Rosalind Mitchison, *Lordship to Patronage: Scotland 1603–1745* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), p. 154.

²³ Crawford, pp. 52, 81. Cf. White, *Puritan Rhetoric*, p. 4.

²⁴ Carl Bogue has attempted to explain what Edwards meant by his enigmatic comment on this subject (‘I confess I do not understand the scheme of thought presented in that book’) in his *Jonathan Edwards and the Covenant of Grace* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack, 1975); he concludes that Edwards found Boston guilty of ‘confounding the two covenants’ (p. 110). This view seems at least partly correct, but runs the risk of obscuring the facts that Boston and Edwards shared a concern to prevent faith from becoming a condition of the covenant in a meritorious sense (cf. Bogue, p. 259), and that Edwards himself was uneasy about a rigid separation between the covenants of redemption and grace (Bogue, pp. 95–96, 106–107). Surprisingly, Bogue views Edwards’ emphasis on union with Christ as distinctive (pp. 125, 239–40), although Edwards could easily have taken this cue from Boston.

²⁵ Letter from Jonathan Edwards to Thomas Gillespie, Carnock, 4 September, 1747, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. by John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957–), II, 489.

²⁶ Letter from George Whitefield to Ralph Erskine, 28 November, 1739, in Donald Fraser, *The Life and Diary of the Reverend Ralph Erskine* (Edinburgh, 1834), p. 317. See also D. Butler, *John Wesley and George Whitefield in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1898), pp. 16–17.

states of innocence and nature in his Puritan library,²⁷ although he was also careful to expurgate any traces of Reformed soteriology.²⁸ The preacher of the *Fourfold State* played a contributory role in the Great Awakening, his collection of sermons serving as one nutrient in the fertile soil which enabled the Evangelical Awakening to flourish.

The geographic spread of the *Fourfold State* confirms that it represented a consensus of international Calvinism. Edwards was not the only American to read the *Fourfold State*. In Hanover, Virginia, a few pages of these sermons were the catalyst for spiritual revival.²⁹ The radical New England Antinomian Andrew Croswell illegitimately equated Boston's theology with his own, but published portions of the *Fourfold State* in 1743 in any case, under the title *The Nature and Necessity of Regeneration*.³⁰ While this was very nearly the work's only American edition in the eighteenth century, at least a dozen editions had been published in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Pittsburgh by 1870. Nor was the book read only by English speakers in America and Britain. Its early popularity in the Scottish highlands, of which Boston himself was aware (XII, 392), was sufficient to warrant its eventual translation into Gaelic.³¹ The *Fourfold State* also enjoyed a favourable reception in Wales, where it lingered long enough after translation to rise to prominence in rural circles.³² Towards the end of Boston's lifetime, copies of the *Fourfold State* had already been forwarded by the Englishman Sir Richard Ellys to Holland (XII, 410), where the work was eventually translated into Dutch.³³ Not

²⁷ [Thomas Boston], *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, ed. by John Wesley (London, 1774). Much of this material had appeared in Wesley's *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (Bristol, 1757), pp. 463-522. On Edwards' and Wesley's defence of Boston's doctrine of depravity against the attacks of John Taylor, see Richard B. Steele, "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue" According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, *Pietist and Wesleyan Studies*, 5 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994), pp. 272-88.

²⁸ See Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage* (London: Epworth Press, 1966), p. 35.

²⁹ William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical* (1850; repr. Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1966), p. 120. Evidence of Boston's ongoing influence in the Virginia revivals appears in Samuel Davies, *Letters from the Rev. Samuel Davies, and Others; Shewing, the State of Religion in Virginia, South Carolina, & c. Particularly Among the Negroes* (London, 1761), p. 4.

³⁰ William Breitenbach, 'Piety and Moralism: Edwards and the New Divinity', in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. by Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 177-204 (p. 200n20). See also Leigh Eric Schmidt, "'A Second and Glorious Reformation': The New Light Extremism of Andrew Croswell", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 43 (1986), 214-44 (pp. 239, 242-43).

³¹ Thomas Boston, *Nadur an Duine, 'na Staid Cheithir-Fillte, air Eadartheanga Chadh*, trans. by G. MacDhonnail (Edinburgh, 1811). For an interesting account of the salutary effect of the Gaelic edition on its translator and his congregation, see J. Wilson, 'The Pastor of Ettrick', *The Sword and the Trowel*, ed. by C. H. Spurgeon, 14 (London, 1878), 24-31, 57-64 (p. 25). On the ongoing popularity of the *Fourfold State* in Gaelic circles, see John MacLeod, *Favourite Books*, p. 37, and MacInnes, p. 6.

³² Thomas Boston, *Pedwar Cyflwr Dyn, Wedi ei Gyfieithu*, trans. by I. Parry (Caerlleon, 1821); cf. Thomson, *Life and Times*, pp. 11-12.

³³ Thomas Boston, *Des menschen natuur in deszelfs vier-voudige staat*, trans. by Abel van Keulen (Leyden, 1742). A second edition appeared in 1768.

surprisingly, the sermons were popular with Scottish ministers in Holland such as Hugh Kennedy, who defended the revival at Nieuwekerk (1749-1752),³⁴ and Alexander Comrie, who translated Boston's *View of the Covenant of Grace*.³⁵ The dissemination of the *Fourfold State* after Boston's death allowed him to become an international Calvinist in pastoral influence as well as in ministerial formation, his readership becoming very nearly as international as his reading had been.

The success of the *Fourfold State* as popular literature indicates that Boston's contribution to the Scottish church was primarily as a preacher rather than as a theologian. While some accounts of the reception of the *Fourfold State* are rendered suspect by hagiographic hyperbole, it is safe to conclude that the sermons were primarily read by common people, a point about which there is unanimous agreement.³⁶ In the words of one biographer, the work 'handled the heads of doctrine in a concrete and homely manner that appealed to the peasantry'.³⁷ Even Henry Grey Graham, himself no Boston enthusiast, identified the *Fourfold State* as the 'gospel of the peasantry', read by farmers around their peat fires and 'shepherds on the solitary silent hills'.³⁸ The success of the sermons among common people was no accident. Boston's gift for simplicity was lauded by his ministerial colleagues, who wrote of his 'peculiar talent for going deep into the mysteries of the gospel, and at the same time for making them plain' (XII, 451). Although he recognized his gift for simple preaching, Boston himself wrote of his perpetual need to depend upon the Lord 'for plainness in treating of gospel-mysteries' (XII, 262; cf. 153-54). The result of this quest for plainness was preaching which employed simple structures to teach theology, avoided protracted disputations, relied on vivid biblical and agricultural imagery, emphasized practical godliness, appealed to all of the human faculties, spoke directly to the various cases of spiritual experience, and faced up to the ultimate realities of this life and the next. The decline in the popularity of the *Fourfold State* in the nineteenth century is actually a silent witness to the effectiveness of

³⁴ Andrew L. Drummond, *The Kirk and the Continent* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1956), p. 156.

³⁵ Thomas Boston, *Eene beschouwing van het verbondt der genade uit de heilige gedenkschriften*, trans. by A. Comrie (Leyden, 1741).

³⁶ Somerville, p. 350; Scrymgeour, p. 88; Watson, *Scot of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 17-18; A. G. Reekie, 'Boston of Ettrick', *Evangelical Quarterly*, 20 (1948), 69-73 (p. 71); G. D. Henderson, *Burning Bush*, p. 142; Smout, pp. 330-31.

³⁷ Addison, p. 169.

³⁸ Graham, II, 80, 134.

Boston's preaching, the manner of which was best suited to its own time and place. The passing of the *Fourfold State* from Scottish consciousness was concomitant with the passing of the culture it had been intended to reach.

The success of the *Fourfold State* at the popular level partly explains its lack of influence at the level of academic theology. 'It was not,' one critic concluded, 'a book for scholars'.³⁹ This had been recognized from the outset by its publisher, who warned that its style would make it 'nauseous to the polite world' (XII, 309). Boston himself was unmoved by this concern, since he considered his own style a 'thousand times better' for practical divinity than the 'modish style' favoured by his sponsor. The irascible Thomas Carlyle later dissented, observing that the *Fourfold State* was written 'with the noblest intent, but in defiance of grammar and philosophy'.⁴⁰ Yet this lack of literary sophistication does not imply that Thomas Boston is an unimportant figure from the standpoint of historical theology. In addition to playing a contributory role in the Great Awakening, he retains an important place at the close of the developmental period of federal theology.⁴¹ Many of the distinctive emphases of Boston's Marrow theology -- especially the free offer of the gospel -- exercised a continuing influence in the Secession churches in Scotland.⁴² The present study has documented his homiletical expansion of the Augustinian *status quadruplex*, his emphasis on the graciousness of the covenant of works, his balanced resolution of Reformed disputes over preparation for conversion and the foundation of assurance of faith, and his innovative use of the doctrine of union with Christ as a soteriological organizing principle. Yet even these examples show that Boston was more a conduit for theological tradition than a fountain of theological insight. That no unique theological development can be traced to the *Fourfold State* is due not only to the plainness of his style, but also to his faithfulness to the doctrinal tradition of international Calvinism. His energies were not directed towards theological innovation, but towards the practical preaching of Reformed theology in his own congregation.

³⁹ Watson, *Scot of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 17 (cf. p. 226).

⁴⁰ Thomas Carlyle, *Essays*, III, 361, in Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Church of Scotland* (London, 1872), p. 85.

⁴¹ McGowan, 'Thomas Boston', p. 329.

⁴² This connection has been observed by H. F. Henderson, *Religious Controversies*, p. 42, and John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology*, p. 167. See especially Ebenezer Erskine, *The Whole Works of the Late Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, Minister of the Gospel at Stirling*, 2 vols (Glasgow, 1785); Ralph Erskine, *The Sermons and other Practical Works*, 7 vols (London, 1863); and Adam Gib, *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession-Testimony*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1774), I, 176-211.

The present study has been content to locate the preaching of Thomas Boston within the Reformed tradition without offering much normative theological evaluation. There are two primary reasons for this. First, a premature concern with polemical theology has the tendency to distort historical-theological judgment. As we have had occasion to see, the *Fourfold State* has not entirely escaped such distortion at the hands of its critics. Yet in order for Thomas Boston to make a contribution to constructive theology, the sources, method, content, and goals of his preaching must be understood in their original context, an understanding which has been the objective of this thesis.

The second reason that dogmatic concerns have been allowed to recede into the background is that many of the virtues of the *Fourfold State* are self-evident, as are some of its weaknesses. The *Dictionary of National Biography* observed nearly a century ago: the influence of Thomas Boston 'is not spent'.⁴³ The observation was confirmed at the time by the inclusion of a portion of the *Fourfold State*'s doctrine of regeneration in *The Fundamentals*, the serial which inaugurated American Fundamentalism.⁴⁴ Nor, a century later, is Boston's influence yet spent. At the writing of this thesis, his *Complete Works* remain in print in twelve volumes, as do individual editions of the *Fourfold State*, *A View of the Covenant of Works*, *A View of the Covenant of Grace*, *The Crook in the Lot*, his *Memoirs*, his discourses on the *Shorter Catechism*, and shorter works on prayer, fasting, the conversion of the Jews, and the unity of the church. This unanticipated revival of interest in Boston does not appear to have a purely antiquarian motive. Rather, it testifies to the enduring value of the strengths of his preaching, strengths such as a reliance on simple theological structures, an imaginative use of biblical metaphor, a relentless emphasis on the free offer of the gospel, an evangelical concern for the new birth, a persuasive appeal to the affections as well as to the mind and will, a passion for the application of Christian doctrine, and a lively concern for the eternal destiny of body and soul. To those for whom Reformed theology remains a living tradition, Thomas Boston continues to be the preacher of the *Fourfold State*.

⁴³ 'Thomas Boston', in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, II, 887.

⁴⁴ Thomas Boston, 'The Nature of Regeneration', in *The Fundamentals*, 12 vols (Chicago: Testimony, n.d.), X, 26-30.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The section of the bibliography entitled 'Sources Cited by Thomas Boston' deserves some explanation. All of the works it includes are cited in Boston's published works or manuscripts. It should be noted that some of his citations -- especially of classical authors and biblical commentators -- are taken second-hand, a fact which he often indicates. These authors do not appear in the 'Sources Cited'. Where possible, the exact editions Boston used have been both listed in the bibliography and cited in the body of the thesis. For the convenience of modern scholars, English translations and modern editions of some works have also been included. Where it is clear that Boston owned a Latin edition, a Latin edition has been cited; otherwise, English has been the language of choice. In a few cases editions which post-date Boston (usually standard editions) have been cited in the thesis, but only if the later edition contains the same text as its predecessors.

Some difficulties and uncertainties remain. In some cases it is clear which author Boston is citing, but not which work is being cited: Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680), Cicero (106-43 b.c.), Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), John Cotton (1599-1673). In other cases it has proven difficult to find sources on the basis of incomplete citations: '[George] Buchanan ad Ad. Otterb [Adam Otterburn]', 'Essenius, Theological Virtues', '[Andrew?] Gray Sermon on Prov. iv.', '[Francis?] Gregory of Oxon', 'Rob. thes. invoc.', '[Cuthbert?] Sydenham, Exerc. on Inf. Bapt.'. Given these omissions, the bibliography of 'Sources Cited' is accurate without being exhaustive.

The present writer is indebted to the Reverend Keith Watkins of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (London), for the discovery that several portions of Boston's catechetical exercises are nearly identical to passages in other works. Some of his material on the Lord's Prayer (*Works*, II, 558-59) also appears in Thomas Ridgley, *A Body of Divinity: Wherein the Doctrines of the Christian Religion are Explained and Defended*, 2 vols (London, 1733), II, 497. Since Ridgley's work was not published until after Boston's demise, Boston can hardly have been borrowing from Ridgley. The editor of the first edition of Boston's work, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, with Respect to Faith and Practice, upon the Plan of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1773), testifies to the work's genuineness, but admits that he was working from manuscripts that had not been prepared for publication and were not as complete as he had hoped (I, xii-xiii). He may have granted himself the liberty to conflate Ridgley with Boston. On the other hand, it is just possible that the literary dependence flowed in the other direction, from Boston to Ridgley. Boston did at least send a copy of his Hebrew tractate to Ridgley (*Works*, XII, 403). Furthermore, the editor of the *Illustration of the Doctrines* indicates that a manuscript of Boston's catechetical exercises was circulated in England (I, xii). On the evidence presently available, it is impossible to make a firm decision about the matter.

The possibility of editorial tampering adds to the complexity of a second case of literary dependency. Several sections of Boston's material on the hypostatic union and prophetic ministry of Christ appear to be taken *verbatim* from John Flavel's *Fountain of Life Opened* (London, 1673): compare Flavel, *Fountain*, 75-78, 119-21, 124-25, and 125-28, with Boston, *Works*, I, 398-99, 411-13, 419-22, and 432-33, respectively. Here Boston is clearly dependent upon Flavel, although it is not certain whether Flavel has been quoted by Boston himself or by Boston's editor. The precision with which Boston usually cites his sources leads one to suspect the work of an editor. If not, then the material from Flavel serves as a reminder that the bibliography of 'Sources Cited by Thomas Boston' is not exhaustive, since Flavel's *Fountain of Life* is not mentioned anywhere else in Boston's *Works* or manuscripts.

A footnote which says 'Perkins' Alicubi' (*Works*, VI, 91) raises unique difficulties. Since the note is not in the text proper, since it is a general reference unattached to a particular work, and since this is the only reference to Perkins in the *Works* or elsewhere, it is possible that the note is the work of Boston's eighteenth century editor (see Thomas Boston, *Sermons and Discourses on Several important Subjects in Divinity*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1753), I, 87). In any case, the citation is not specific enough to indicate which works of Perkins Boston might have read. If Boston did read Perkins, he would have been an important source on topics such as union with Christ (William Perkins, *The Workes of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*, 3 vols (London, 1616-1618), I, 77-78, 299-300), preparation for conversion (I, 468), an intellectualist view of the human faculties (I, 124), and the use of mystical and practical syllogisms for assurance of faith (I, 284-85, 541, 547). For a balanced assessment of Perkins' teaching on these and other topics, see Mark R. Shaw, 'Drama in the Meeting House: The Concept of Conversion in the Theology of William Perkins', *Westminster Theological Journal*, 45 (1983), 41-72. The question of Perkins' influence on Boston is not as troublesome as it might first appear, even allowing for Perkins' stature as a Calvinist theologian. If Boston was not directly exposed to Perkins, he was in any case exposed to a century of English Puritans who were influenced by Perkins, including especially William Ames.

Similar difficulties attend a stray reference (*Works*, VI, 218) to William Fenner, *A Treatise of the Affections; or, The Soules Pulse* (London, 1641). Fenner is a less substantial figure than Perkins, but his sustained emphases on the 'ruling of the affections aright' as the 'main work of grace' (p. 57) and on the use of the affections in preaching (pp. 139-55) would have given Boston a counterbalance to the faculty intellectualism of many of his other Puritan sources. Works by Fenner and Perkins have not been cited in the body of the thesis but do appear in the list of 'Sources Cited', with a '[?]' serving as a reminder that Boston's familiarity with them remains uncertain.

I. PRIMARY LITERATURE

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