

The Marrow Controversy and Seceder Tradition

Marrow Theology in the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod Secession Churches of
Scotland (1733-1799)

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**The Marrow Controversy and Seceder Tradition:
Marrow Theology in the Associate Presbytery and Associate
Synod Secession Churches of Scotland (1733-1799)**

A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Church
History at the University of Aberdeen

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AD 2009

I, William VanDoodewaard, confirm that I composed the thesis, that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree, that the work is my own, and that all quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

William VanDoodewaard

June 6, 2009

Abstract

Edward Fisher's *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, first published in 1645 in England, was republished in Scotland in 1718 by Church of Scotland minister James Hog, quickly becoming the focal point of what would be known as the Marrow controversy. Rival parties developed within the Church of Scotland, the smaller of which were the supporters of *The Marrow*, or the Marrow brethren. In the context of the controversy over the book they formulated a defense of it, with particular reference to the doctrines of the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer: this was the Scottish expression of Marrow theology. Leading figures among the Marrow brethren included Thomas Boston, Robert Riccaltoun, and Ebenezer Erskine. In 1733, little more than a decade later, Ebenezer Erskine and several other Church of Scotland ministers separated from the church over the issue of patronage, forming the Associate Presbytery, the beginning of a new Scottish Presbyterian and Reformed denomination. Historians and theologians, particularly in the 20th century, have suggested that Marrow theology was characteristic of the Secession church movement; however, no thorough examination and analysis of existing historical evidence (ecclesiastical documents and the published sermons and theological writings of Secession ministers and theologians) supporting or challenging this claim have been made. This dissertation, based on research conducted through the years 2006-2009, argues there is evidence for both a general or thematic continuity of Marrow theology as expressed in the context of the Scottish Marrow controversy, and, at points, for direct historical dependence on the published works and distinctive theology and language used by the Marrow brethren. This dissertation also argues that towards the end of the 18th century and into the 19th century the Associate stream of the Secession churches manifested an increasing theological diversity and a declension from what was an initially dominant Marrow theology.

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William VanDoodewaard

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many in Reformed and Presbyterian communities continue to view the Marrow controversy in the Church of Scotland (1718-1726), with its contentious debate over the gospel and its proclamation, as a critical juncture in church history and theology. David Lachman notes “[the Marrow controversy] involved issues at the heart of Reformed theology... particularly the great emphasis laid on God’s gracious dealing with men in Christ”.¹ He goes on to state that the gospel view of the Marrow men gained “a considerable popularity in the country at large and helped create a ready constituency for the Secession”.² Donald Beaton, in an article on the Marrow controversy, argues “the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* and the ‘Marrow Controversy’...stand for much that is vital in the religious life in Scotland... because of the influence [the Marrow of Modern Divinity] exercised over such men as Fraser of Brea, Boston, the Erskines, Whitefield, Hervey and Chalmers, apart from the fact that it was the cause of one of the greatest controversies in the Scottish Church”.³ J.B. Torrance states, “‘The Marrow Controversy’... in itself is from beginning to end a most revealing commentary on Scottish theology”.⁴ William Philip concurs, stating “the issues [the controversy] raised touch the very heart of the Reformed faith, to the extent that what was at stake was not the merit of one mere human publication,

1 David C. Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1988), 6, 485.

2 Lachman, 485.

3 Donald Beaton, “The ‘Marrow of Modern Divinity’ and the Marrow Controversy”, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, I (1926): 112-113.

4 J.B. Torrance, “Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970): 59.

The Marrow of Modern Divinity, but the very nature of the gospel and the free grace of God itself”.⁵

A survey of existing literature on *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* reveals little scholarly examination of the work in its initial context: David McIntyre’s brief 1938 article, and David Como’s recent volume on English antinomianism both contribute some helpful insights into the authorship and English context of *The Marrow*, but do not provide a thorough examination and assessment of authorship, content and context.⁶ Substantial scholarship exists on the Marrow controversy in Scotland itself, particularly in the work of church historian David Lachman. His comprehensive historical and theological assessment remains the definitive work on the Marrow controversy; other work is limited to either short articles, or discursive reference in survey texts on Scottish church history and theology.⁷ Related scholarship, such as the dissertations of Charles Moffat and Donald Bruggink, is focused on individual figures such as James Hog or Thomas Boston, and does not purport to “examine the theology of the Marrow controversy”.⁸ The more recently

5 William J.U. Philip, “The Marrow and the Dry Bones: Ossified Orthodoxy and the Battle for the Gospel in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Calvinism”, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15 (Spring 1997) 1:27.

6 David R. Como, *Blown By The Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil War England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); David McIntyre, “First Strictures on the ‘The Marrow of Modern Divinity’”, *Evangelical Quarterly* (January, 1938) 10:61-70.

7 Donald Beaton, “The ‘Marrow of Modern Divinity’ and the Marrow Controversy”, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, I (1926): 112-134; William J.U. Philip, “The Marrow and the Dry Bones: Ossified Orthodoxy and the Battle for the Gospel in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Calvinism”, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15 (Spring 1997) 1:27-37; John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: The Publications Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, 1943), 139-188; Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John MacLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 224-229.

8 Donald J. Bruggink, *The Theology of Thomas Boston, 1676-1734* (University of Edinburgh: PhD Thesis, 1956), vii. Charles L. Moffat, Jr., *James Hog of Carnock (1658-1734) Leader in the Evangelical Party in Early Eighteenth Century Scotland* (University of Edinburgh: PhD Thesis, 1960).

published dissertations of Andrew McGowan and Philip Ryken focus on analysis and discussion of the theology of Thomas Boston.⁹

Appraisals of Marrow theology, particularly when describing the influence of the theology of the supporters of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, depict a revival of a biblical gospel theology and spirituality with lasting impacts. Contenders for continuities of Marrow theology in Scotland point to the 1733 Secession from the Church of Scotland and the ensuing Secession churches as the primary stream of continuity of Marrow theology. John MacLeod describes the early Secession church as attached “to the ‘Marrow’ teaching”, and provides a running commentary on several Secession ministers and writers, but lacks specific references and analysis.¹⁰ David Lachman, James Torrance, Andrew McGowan, and Joel Beeke all posit Marrow theology as definitive for the Secession churches, but give little to no substantiating evidence to support the claim.¹¹ P.H. van Harten’s Dutch language dissertation argues that the sermons of two Seceders, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, reflect aspects of Marrow theology, but his limited assessment references primarily Ralph Erskine’s early sermons.¹² No comprehensive comparative study of historical and theological continuities between the Marrow controversy and

9 A.T.B. McGowan, *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1997); Philip Graham Ryken, *Thomas Boston as Preacher of the Fourfold State* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1999).

10 McLeod, 167-168.

11 James B. Torrance, “Covenant or Contract” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970), 60; David Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy*, 485; David Lachman, “Marrow Controversy” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 547; Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 249; McGowan, 45-46.

12 Pieter Hendrick van Harten, *De Prediking van Ebenezer an Ralph Erskine: Evangeliever-kondiging in het spanningsveld van verkeizing en belofte* (Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1986), 1-313.

successive Scottish Reformed church history and theology exists. In fact, the absence of substantive support, particularly in light of the atonement controversy in the United Secession church in the 1840's, raises the legitimate question whether such statements of the enduring influence of Marrow theology are more a 20th and early 21st century retrospective legitimization of tendencies in Reformed theology and spirituality rather than a historical reality. While the complete answer to this question lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, it offers a substantial beginning by carefully assessing evidence for the continuity of Marrow theology in the Secession church stream of the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod Churches of Scotland between 1733 and 1799.

Pursuit of an assessment of the influence or continuity of Marrow theology requires a careful methodology. This dissertation first introduces *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in its original context in England, and then moves to its Scottish context, seeking to define the contours and essence of Marrow theology as formulated by supporters of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in the context of the Marrow controversy. The key areas of recurring debate during the Marrow controversy were the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer, with the controversy's focal point being the nature of gospel proclamation. While David Lachman deals with the history of this controversy comprehensively, providing a chronologically ordered assessment of ecclesiastical meetings, theological writings, and the multitude of figures and influences involved, the density, rapidity and sheer volume of his work lacks the summative clarity, precision, and depth necessary to provide the basis for a comparative assessment of Scottish Marrow theology with later Secession theology. A fresh and succinct examination of each of these doctrinal areas, as presented in representative ecclesiastical and individual published works of both Marrow supporters and opponents, will enable a determination of the characteristic content and formulations of these doctrines, as stated by the supporters of *The Marrow of*

Modern Divinity situated within the context of the Marrow controversy in the Church of Scotland.

Secondly, this thesis searches for continuities of this Marrow theology, as defined in the context of Scottish controversy, by examining relevant historiographical, theological, and sermon publications of the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod Churches of Scotland between 1733 and 1799, including both ecclesiastical publications and individual works by ordained ministers of these bodies.¹³ This includes an assessment of the importance of Marrow theology and the history of the Marrow controversy in Secession historiography, as well as a comparative assessment of the Seceder theology of the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod Churches to the Marrow theology of the supporters of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*.

The comparative theological analysis involves both the search for direct references to and quotations of Marrow theology in published works, as well as evaluation of theological consistency with, and continuity of the characteristic content and formulations of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and gospel offer, as stated by those men supporting *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* during the controversy of 1718 to 1726. A potential pitfall in this examination of sources for direct references to Marrow writings, as well as theological consistency with or continuity of Marrow theology, is that the endeavor may tend to a selective interpretation of sources which fails to fully and accurately represent the authors. I have attempted to anticipate and allay this potential weakness through an extensive and careful reading of all relevant source materials, as well as by providing numerous references to and quotations of the sources, the latter at times extensive in order to better provide the contextual setting. At points the evidence is limited

13 Due to the vast body of theological literature published by Secession pastors and theologians this study will be limited to the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod stream of the Secession churches.

or inconclusive, and is noted as such. This careful methodology allows for an assessment of the extent of thematic continuity of Marrow theology among the Seceders, while also searching for evidences of direct historical dependence on Marrow theology as embodied in both *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and the writings of the supporters of Marrow theology during the Scottish Marrow controversy. It also provides an apparatus fully enabling the critical reader to return to and comparatively examine the sources as referenced in this dissertation.

Finally, this thesis concludes by assessing the answers provided by this research to the question of whether there was a continuity of Marrow theology in the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod churches of the Secession movement. If so, assessment will be made whether the evidence supports a general thematic continuity, or even a direct historical dependence. Suggestions for potential future research related to both Marrow theology and the largely neglected field of the history and historical theology of the Secession churches are also provided.¹⁴

14 Existing scholarly works on the history and theology of the Secession churches include John L. Carson, *The Doctrine of the Church in the Secession* (PhD dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1987); Ian Hamilton, *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy: Seceders and Subscription in Scottish Presbyterianism* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990); Jack Whytock, *“An Educated Clergy”: Scottish Theological Education and Training in Kirk and Secession, 1560-1850* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007). While Hamilton briefly mentions Marrow theology in relation to the atonement controversy of the early 1840’s (see Hamilton, 64-65), none of these works provides a focused assessment of the influence of Marrow theology on the Secession churches.

PART ONE

Views of the Gospel and Its Proclamation During the Marrow Controversy

CHAPTER 2

THE MARROW OF MODERN DIVINITY AND THE MARROW CONTROVERSY

The Marrow of Modern Divinity

In considering the influence of Marrow theology on the Secession church, an introduction to the origin, theology, and historical context of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* forms a necessary preface to understanding the Marrow controversy in Scotland, and the ensuing definition of Marrow theology in its Scottish context. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* first appeared in print during the long days of early summer in 1645 in London, England. Joseph Caryl, a leading Independent preacher appointed by the Parliament as imprimatur, or official censor, for theological literature, praised the work's clarity, moderation, and helpfulness in "endeavouring to reconcile and heal those unhappy differences which have lately broken out afresh amongst us".¹ Caryl penned his preface on May 10, a little less than a month before the bloody Battle of Naseby, a decisive military victory marking the gradual ascendancy of the New Model Army against the Royalist forces of King Charles I. New found liberties that allowed for gatherings like the Westminster Assembly, also led to new tensions in the face of the fading religious-political yoke of Charles I and the late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. Though by the 1640's most Puritans and Parliamentarians shared a common dislike for the policies of Charles and Laud, including heavy taxation, imprisonment without trial, and the direction of the Church of England, they were not immune to fractious controversy, with its attendant varieties of mediating spirits.

¹ E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London: Printed by R.W. for G. Calvert, at the Black-Spread Eagle near Pauls, 1645), 1. This first edition copy of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* is found in the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge University.

The author of *The Marrow* sought to mediate in a controversy over the theology and life of the church. “I, by the grace of God”, he stated, “endeavoured in this ensuing Dialogue to walk... as a middle man” between “the Strict Professor according to the Law, and the loose Professor according to the Gospel” – to elucidate a biblical middle way between the errors of legalism and antinomianism.² Written in a popular dialogue form, the work features three individuals, Nomista, a legalist, Antinomista, an antinomian, and Neophytus, a young Christian, being counseled by a minister, Evangelista, towards a biblical understanding of law and gospel. The discussion, directed by Evangelista, explained the nature and role of the law or covenant of works, the nature of saving faith, the covenant of grace in Christ, the gospel offer, and the role of the law of Christ in the life of the believer. As David Lachman notes in his exploration of the theology and theological context of *The Marrow*, the author “reflected Reformed theology of the earlier [Reformation and post-Reformation] period, endorsing commonly received opinions rather than doctrines newly propounded”.³ From both its content and marginal notes it is clear *The Marrow* sources a wide range of Reformation and Reformed works ranging from the writings of Luther and Calvin, to those of contemporaries such as John Preston and Thomas Goodwin.⁴

2 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 13.

3 Lachman, 12. Lachman provides a substantial exploration of the theology and broad theological context of *The Marrow* in the seventeenth century (see Lachman, 9-73), but minimal examination of the work in the immediate context of its authorship. As such this introduction provides a concise summary of the leading theological tenets of *The Marrow*, set within a more thorough exploration of the theological motivations of the author.

4 In his later editions the author appended, following his preface to the reader, “a catalogue of those writer’s names, out of whom I have collected much of the matter contained in this ensuing dialogue”. E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London: Printed by R. Leybourn, for Giles Calvert, 1646).

The Marrow's federal theology described the covenant of grace as being absolute, arguing against those who held to a neonomian conditionality of the covenant of grace tied to repentance or obedience. It saw this as a confusion of justification and sanctification, or a confusion of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. As such *The Marrow* stressed that the covenant of grace “terminates itself only on Christ and his righteousness; God will have none to have a hand in the justification and salvation of a sinner, but Christ only... Jesus Christ will either be a whole Saviour, or no Saviour”.⁵ Fulfilling the complete obligation and penalty of the covenant of works in the place of the elect by his substitutionary atonement, the covenant of grace was made complete in Christ.⁶ This covenant of grace in Christ, is published, proclaimed and offered to all in the gospel “deed of gift and grant”.⁷ In applying the biblical warrant to “go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven” the author of *The Marrow* expounded “that is, go and tell every man without exception, that here is good news for him, Christ is dead for him, and if he will take him and accept of his righteousness, he shall have it”.⁸ Saving faith, itself a sovereign gift of grace, was the sole instrument or means by which the believer freely

5 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 87.

6 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 36.

7 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 101.

8 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 101. Lachman notes that some, such as Richard Baxter would claim that this statement, cited from John Preston's *The Breastplate of Faith and Love* (London: W.I. for Nicolas Bourne, 1632), 8, was indicative of an Amyraldian covenant theology. Lachman argues that neither Preston, nor Ezekiel Culverwell, who coined the language of “deed of gift and grant”, provide evidence of holding to Amyraldian doctrine, but rather used this language only in relation to the gospel offer. Lachman, 22-36. Jonathan Moore's recent work, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), argues that while Preston was not Amyraldian, he did hold to a form of “hypothetical universalism”. Moore, however, notes that in the Scottish context of the Marrow controversy, Boston and the other Marrow brethren argued that Preston, as cited by *The Marrow*, “was a consistent particular redemptionist”. Moore, 117-121, 217-229.

receives the gift of complete salvation in Christ, enters into, and is preserved in this covenant of grace in him. Yet, at the same time *The Marrow* was both careful and thorough in warning against those “in this city” who are “antinomians” citing the apostle Paul’s warning in the second epistle to Timothy that the “there is a form of godliness without the power of godliness”.⁹ Sanctification is the necessary result of justification. Faith brings with it other graces, the necessary fruits of faith, as “the Spirit of Christ writes the lively law of love in his [the believer’s] heart, so that he is ready to do every good work, the love of Christ constraining him... he seeks to do the will of God... [in] true sincere obedience”.¹⁰

Despite the commendation of Joseph Caryl, in his dedication of his work to Member of Parliament, John Downes, Esq., the author of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* revealed little more than the initials of his identity in print: E.F.¹¹ Why? Perhaps it was a spirit of modesty; perhaps he knew his position was one certain to evoke religious criticism – the specter of Laudian oppression and still ongoing Civil War were reminders that public address was a potentially costly venture, even with the imprimatur of Joseph Caryl; perhaps it was another concern. However, the Westminster Assembly and many of its constituents were living and writing publicly, without anonymity. So who was E.F.?

In his dedication to John Downes, the author notes, “[I have] by mine own experience, and by the confession, and observation of others, found out our aptness to tread in one of these erroneous paths [legalism or antinomianism]”.¹² E.F. had personally wrestled with the issues in the midst of “hot contentions” in the churches “about some 18

9 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 90.

10 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 141.

11 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), A3, 14.

12 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 12-13.

or 20 years ago, and now within these three or four years last past”.¹³ This means that E.F. must have been living as an adult during the early years of the reign of Charles I (r.1625-1649) and his attempts with Archbishop Laud to move the Church of England away from the toleration and partial support for Calvinist, Puritan influences manifest under King James I (r.1603-1625) and Archbishop George Abbott.¹⁴ In the first few years of Charles’ reign there was an “uneasy coalition” between some of the Puritan minded and the Laudian regime; both were briefly united in civil and ecclesiastical action against what they viewed as antinomian threats to truth and order.¹⁵ Evidence from the latter 1620’s indicates a variety of antinomian fringe movements which proclaimed that law was irrelevant for those in a state of grace.¹⁶ There were also those among the Puritans who noted concern over both antinomian and legal tendencies among their own. Laudian leadership in the Church of England was perceived by critics as stressing law, or moral righteousness, at the expense of gospel grace, allied with their movement towards a high church, sacramental theology. As Laudian ruling policy quickly evolved beyond anti-antinomianism to repression and persecution of Puritanism, the initial, tentative unity

13 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 13.

14 King James I and Archbishop George Abbott had taken keen interest in the Remonstrant – Contra-Remonstrant controversy in the United Provinces of the Netherlands, sending a delegation to the Synod of Dort which took part in the deliberations and eventual framing of the Canons of Dort. With the ascension of Charles I to the throne the leadership of church and nation moved towards a high church or ‘Romish’ Anglicanism.

15 David R. Como, *Blown By The Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil War England* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 91. Como’s fresh historical study provides helpful insights relevant to the origins of *The Marrow*. However, his descriptive language and, at points, questionable analysis of historical and theological evidence, tends to a sensationalized and fractured portrait of the era.

16 Como, 91.

quickly dissipated.¹⁷ Decades later, with Laud's removal to the Tower of London (1640) and his beheading (1645), the author of *The Marrow* had both freedom to publish, and a readership willing to peruse and purchase his volume.

Republished numerous times during the years following 1645, *The Marrow* must have met demand and interest. A second edition, substantially revised, came out in early 1646. It included the appended "Patrick's Places", a series of propositions written by the early Scottish Reformer Patrick Hamilton on the relation of law and grace in justification by faith and in Christian living. The publisher, Giles Calvert, was a Londoner with wide religious connections who eventually embraced Quakerism.¹⁸ The new notice on the title page stated that the work was "corrected, amended, and much enlarged by the author, E.F... [and now included] the commendatory epistles of divers divines of great esteem in the citie of London".¹⁹ Bearing the same commendatory imprimatur of Joseph Caryl, the second edition also included commendations by Jeremiah Burroughs and William Strong, men respected for their theological acumen as Westminster divines. As Independents, Burroughs and Strong pushed for Congregational church government, though in this they manifested a spirit of moderation towards their Presbyterian brethren at the Assembly. Along with these commendations, E.F. also gained the commendation of Joshua Sprigge, a popular London Independent preacher who served as a chaplain to Lord Fairfax and the New Model Army.²⁰ These connections suggest that E.F., either by virtue of his person or writings, was gaining the respect of notable Reformed theologians and popular preachers

17 Como, 91-92.

18 Como, 455.

19 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, Second edition (London: Printed by R. Leybourn, for Giles Calvert..., 1646), 1.

20 Sprigge would later hold to a unorthodox view of the second coming of Christ as a present inward experience. Ian J. Gentles, "Sprigg [Sprigge], Joshua" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-7).

of his day. A commendation by a less prominent divine, Samuel Prettie, gives what appears to be a tantalizing hint about E.F.'s identity. Prettie states "God has endowed his *Fisher* with the net of a trying understanding, discerning judgment, and discretion".²¹ In light of Puritan love for allegory and word play it seems a legitimate possibility that E.F. may be E. Fisher, a lead opening up at least two further lines of evidence toward further discovering the author and context of *The Marrow*.

Historical evidence points to the existence of at least two E.F.s who authored religious works during the time of *The Marrow*'s early editions. One was Edward Fisher, Esq., the son of Sir Edward Fisher of Mickleton. This E.F., Esq., who studied at Brasenose College, Oxford, gaining accolades for his scholarly ability, received a Bachelor of Arts in April 1630. In the first Scottish reprint of *The Marrow*, James Hog of Carnock cited Anthony Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses* as giving an account of this E.F. as the author of *The Marrow*.²² It is undisputed that this Edward Fisher did author numerous works, including *The Feast of Feasts, or, The Celebration of Sacred Nativity*, defending the observance of holy days such as Christmas, and *A Christian Caveat to the Old and New Sabbatarians*, in which he argued "the morality and divine institution of the Lord's Day are mere fictions".²³ A man with royalist inclinations during the Civil War, Fisher's writings indicate a sympathy for the Laudian order of high church Anglicanism. Despite the fact that he would be the Fisher popularly attributed with the authorship of *The Marrow* by Scottish publishers following the historiography of Anthony Wood, there are several

21 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, Second edition (1646), 28-29.

22 Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxoniensis: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops who have had their Education in the Most Famous and Ancient University of Oxford* (London: Printed for Thomas Bennet at the Half-Moon in S. Pauls Churchyard, 1691), 1, 132.

23 Edward Fisher, Esq., *A Christian Caveat to the Old and New Sabbatarians, Or a Vindication of Gospel Festivals* (London : Printed for E. Blackmore, at the Angel in St. Pauls Church-yard, 1650), 1.

reasons why it seems unlikely. The theology expressed in works that are clearly written by Edward Fisher, Esq., does not conform with what would be expected of the author of *The Marrow*. While *The Marrow* was published in Welsh in 1651, and Edward Fisher Esq., did spend time in Wales, the Welsh publication of *The Marrow* predates his arrival by some five years.²⁴ Finally, all the works which are clearly attributable to Edward Fisher, Esq., bear either his full name and title on the front page, or E.F., Esq. The stated title “esquire” seems to suggest a self-distinction from the other E.F., who wrote and published at the same time and was a commoner.

E. Fisher, author of *The Marrow*, while gaining numerous commendations for the second edition of 1646, also made substantial editorial and content changes to the work. He toned down bold language; he clarified vague statements. Expanding discussions of the covenant of works and of grace, and enlarging the final section on “the heart’s happiness, or soul’s rest”, Fisher improved his level of theological and pastoral discourse.²⁵ Perhaps most interesting, and helpful in confirming his full identity, were the changes made in the preface to the reader between the first and second editions. In the second edition Fisher mentions by name “Master Dod” in his discussion of his own former legalism and “Master Thomas Hooker” as the one who counseled him toward his conversion, making him aware of his hypocrisy and bringing to him an understanding of the free riches of Christ’s grace.²⁶ Dod and Hooker were both respected among Puritans, Hooker suffering

24 Records indicate that he became deeply indebted, selling his father’s estate in 1656, fleeing creditors to teach in Wales before fleeing again, this time to Ireland where he died.

25 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, Second edition (1646), 240-245.

26 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, Second edition (1646), 14-15. The diversity of concerns among the broad Puritan movement of the 17th century is exemplified in Thomas Goodwin’s concerns about Thomas Hooker’s theological tendency towards a legal spirit. Como notes that in one letter written to Samuel Hartlib he criticized Hooker’s “preparationist notions”, stating he was ““a severe and Cruel Man like John Baptist, [who] urges too much and too farre the Worke of Humiliation.”” Sheffield

persecution, and fleeing to exile in the Netherlands, where he continued to face danger from Laud's agents.²⁷ Like the commenders of *The Marrow*, Hooker held to a Congregational view of church polity. This second edition indicated that Fisher was well connected in Independent circles. Perhaps most fascinating was a hint, erased in the second edition, that after his conversion and movement away from spiritual legalism, Fisher's affections for the free grace of the gospel led to a feeling of sympathy and respect for those within Puritan circles who were considered as leaning to antinomianism. Did he evidence a weakness common to many in church history – a greater sympathy towards those beyond his theological position, than those from whose ranks he had come?

Fisher deliberately removed the statement, "I have endeavoured to imitate the laborious Bee, who out of divers flowers gathers honey and waxe, and thereof makes one combe... yet I hope it will not be distasteful to any" from the second edition.²⁸ A marginal reference beside the original text cited Henry Burton, a bold Puritan Independent who preached and wrote in fiery opposition to antinomianism, and specifically to one John Eaton, in London. Due to his bold Puritan preaching, Burton had suffered the punishment of having his ears cut off under Archbishop Laud's persecutions. Fisher's juxtaposition of his bee analogy with his concern of offense and mention of Burton's writings raise an intriguing question. Was his allusion to the work of the bee a veiled reference to the work *The Honey-Combe of Free Justification* written by Eaton in 1630-31, and first published posthumously by supporters in 1642 in London?²⁹ Despite being in the mainstream of

University Library, Hartlib Papers, MS. 29/2/61B. *The Hartlib Papers: A Complete Text and Image Database of the Papers of Samuel Hartlib (c.1600-1662) held in Sheffield University Library*. 2d ed. (Sheffield: Humanities Research Online, 2002), as cited in Como, 450.

27 Hooker eventually emigrated to Boston, Massachusetts in 1633.

28 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 14.

29 See "John Eaton, the Eatonists, and the 'Imputative' Strain of English Antinomianism"

Reformed thought in most respects of his writing, Eaton developed an emphasis in *The Honey-Combe* on what he viewed as the implication of Christ's imputed righteousness: free justification meant the abolishment of "all the filthy nakedness of our sins out of God's sight".³⁰ He appears to have stressed this to "the conclusion that justification utterly banished the sins of believers from God's sight".³¹ Burton, and other leading figures in London churches, saw Eaton as heading dangerously near antinomianism, a perspective only reinforced by Eaton's bold attacks against what he saw as legalism and phariseism among fellow Puritans.³² The picture seems clear – Fisher was sympathetic to Eaton's work *The Honey-Combe of Free Justification*, but did not want to offend men like Burton. He wanted to carefully "walk as a middle man in this ensuing dialogue".³³ Why was this removed for the second edition? The work had already received Caryl's approval. One possibility may be that either Jeremiah Burroughs, or William Strong, men noted for theological precision and moderation, suggested its removal prior to its second publication. Whatever the case, these changes did not prevent published criticism of the work from surfacing that year, shortly after the publication of the third edition of *The Marrow*.³⁴

in Como, 176-218.

30 John Eaton, *The honey-combe of free justification by Christ alone collected out of the meere authorities of Scripture and common and unanimous consent of the faithful interpreters and dispensers of Gods mysteries upon the same, especially as they expresse the excellency of free justification / preached and delivered by Iohn Eaton ...*, (London : Printed by R.B. at the charge of Robert Lancaster, 1642), B2v.

31 Como, 183.

32 Eaton's repute included a somewhat dubious past: in 1619, under a Church of England which had just taken part by delegation in the Synod of Dort, Eaton was disciplined, tried by the High Commission for teaching "errors and false opinions", and deprived of his pulpit in Suffolk. After a period of study he was allowed to re-enter the ministry as a curate, and appears to have spent substantial time in London prior to his death in the 1630's. Como, 179.

33 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 13.

34 The first published opposition to *The Marrow* criticized it particularly on the grounds

There is further evidence toward uncovering the full identity of E. Fisher, and the context of his theological writing. Prettie's commendation, the connection to John Eaton, numerous London Independent connections and his publisher, all indicate that the author of *The Marrow* was either a Londoner, or had strong ties in the city. London's civil and ecclesiastical records provide further evidence toward filling in the gaps in the search for the E. Fisher of *The Marrow*.

Through much of history tax officials have shown meticulous skill in keeping tabs on citizen income and property. Seventeenth century poll tax records for companies of the city of London are no exception, and they provide a compelling possibility for solving the identity mystery of *The Marrow's* author. Stephen Wright notes that "on 14 November 1626, an Edward Fisher was made free of his master Richard Marshalsey of the Company of Barber-Surgeons, and this was certainly the Edward Fisher who appears in the poll tax returns for 1641, as a barber and member of that company, and resident in the parish of St. Sepulchre. This was the only person so named recorded among all the members of the London companies in the returns of that year".³⁵ What appears to strongly confirm this as

that it argued "true and evangelical repentance is a fruit of faith, and cannot be before faith in Christ". The concerned author went on to state "I will show you the contrary... that it is not a fruit of justifying faith, but a work of the Spirit, to prepare the heart to the believing of the promise... God doth always work repentance in them whom he hath a purpose to save forever, before he bestows on them that faith which doth justify or assure them of the pardon of their sins in the blood of Jesus Christ... I do not say that repentance is the condition required in our parts to our justification, as being our own work, but yet I affirm that it is the way which God doth always take... For Christ calls none but such [poor penitents] unto him, neither ought any minister to apply the promises of mercy to any other but such as are weary, heavy laden, mourn, and earnestly desire mercy and pardon of sin". J.A., *A manifest and brief discovery of some of the errours contained in a dialogue called the Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London: Printed by T.W. for Joshua Kirton, 1646.), 8-13. Some believe the critic J.A. may have been John Angel of Grantham "a man mighty in word and doctrine among the Puritans, but one harassed by much soul-distress". Other critics of *The Marrow* in the late 1640's and early 1650's included John Trapp, Richard Baxter, and Thomas Blake. David Martin McIntyre, "First strictures on 'The Marrow of Modern Divinity'" in *Evangelical Quarterly* 10:1 (Jan 1938), 66-67.

35 Stephen Wright, "Fisher, Edward" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

relevant to our author are references made in statements by the former antinomian Giles Creech before the Laudian High Commission in 1638. In naming various antinomian sects, underground libertine movements and other connected individuals, all while fearing the judgment of the Commission against him, Creech referred to a part-time bookseller and barber-surgeon named Edward Fisher.³⁶ Creech's testimony was part of the ongoing effort during the 1630's by the Laudian Commission to impose high church uniformity and quell dissent. Previous records indicate that "in 1632, John Eaton's widow, sought in the aftermath of her husband's death... to publish 'The Honey-Combe of Free Justification'... and she too was dragged before the High Commission... [and] received a four-month stint at Newgate [prison]".³⁷ In 1633, the same year Fisher's early mentor Thomas Hooker escaped Laud's agents in the Netherlands by heading to New England, an Edward Fisher was called to appear before the Court of the High Commission, which recorded his occupation as "barber" and manuscript dealer, and charged him with failing to comply "with the Court in not giving his personal Answers to the Articles objected against him".³⁸ He was ordered to prison until he accommodated the court's requests. These records compellingly suggest that E.F. was indeed this Edward Fisher. Fisher's further publications in the years following 1646 only help solidify the case for Edward Fisher, the London barber-surgeon, as the author of *The Marrow*.

Despite some initial criticism, it appears *The Marrow's* popularity steadily continued. A fourth edition came to print in 1646, a fifth in 1647, and a sixth in 1648. In

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-7). Both Lachman and McIntyre view this record as conclusive evidence in establishing the identity of E.F. Lachman, 5; McIntyre, 66-67.

36 Como, 51.

37 Como, 99.

38 Como, 99.

late 1647, Edward Fisher wrote and, with the aid of a new publisher, published a work on qualifications for participation in the Lord's Supper, which also received Caryl's imprimatur.³⁹ Like *The Marrow*, Fisher wrote it in the form of a pastoral dialogue "betwixt a minister of the Gospel, Zacheus a worthy communicant, and Simon an unworthy communicant".⁴⁰ Interestingly, Simon was a morally upright, self-righteous church member, and Zacheus, one who had sinned visibly, but who repented and rested in Christ alone for forgiveness. The lessons of the work were clearly in harmony with the heart of the teaching of *The Marrow* – the covenant of grace in Christ, the free gospel offer, proclaimed all-sufficient grace, both for justification and sanctification.

The following year Fisher published a second dialogue on the role of office bearers in examining those who sought to participate in the Lord's Supper titled *London's Gate to the Lord's Table* (1648).⁴¹ For the first time his work bore the imprimatur's commendation of Edmund Calamy, a Presbyterian Westminster divine. As a preacher to the House of Commons in 1642 Calamy addressed the necessity of following a scriptural path that turned neither to Arminian moralism, nor to antinomianism. While serving as a leading Presbyterian in the Westminster Assembly, Calamy engaged in pamphlet warfare with the Henry Burton who had been opposed to John Eaton's antinomian tendencies. Calamy-Burton tensions arose after Burton began advocating Congregationalism in Calamy's parish, leading to Calamy giving orders to have Burton locked out of the church

39 E.F., *A touch-stone for a communicant. Serving for the trial of a man's fitness or unfitness to come to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper* (London: Printed for John Wright at the King's Head in the Old Bayley, 1647). It appears that from this point onwards Edward Fisher choose to work with a new publisher for his new publications, though Giles Calvert would continue to republish the first part of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*.

40 E.F., *A touch-stone for a communicant*, 1.

41 E.F., *London's Gate to the Lord's Table* (London: Printed for John Wright at the King's Head in the Old Bayley, 1648), 1.

buildings.⁴² Their debate, however, was over Independent versus Presbyterian church polity, rather than legalism versus antinomianism.

Evidence from church records suggests that by this point Edward Fisher was a member of a Presbyterian congregation. The content of *London's Gate to the Lord's Table* corresponds with this. In it, Fisher proposes the "Presbyterial way in the case of examination of communicants... so that our dissenting brethren... may be moved thereby to come in amongst us".⁴³ He also notes what appears to be a new state of church membership for himself in his dedication to Sir Henry Rolle, a chief justice and a ruling elder "chosen, in that congregation whereof you have been pleased to admit me a member".⁴⁴ The preface to the reader states that this E.F. is the same one who has written *A touch-stone for a communicant*, and who prays for "increase either of sound knowledge or sweet feeling in the mysteries of Christ... as blessed by God (I have been informed) my *Marrow of Modern Divinity* hath done to many".⁴⁵

In 1648, Fisher wrote what would be published in 1649 as *The Marrow of Modern Divinity. The Second Part. Touching the most plain, pithy, and spiritual exposition of the Ten Commandments... in a dialogue*.⁴⁶ Joseph Caryl, commending this addition to *The Marrow* wrote "The Marrow of the second bone is like that of the first, sweet and good. The Commandments of God are Marrow to the Saints as well as the promises, and they

42 Sharon Achinstein, "Calamy, Edmund" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-7).

43 E.F., *London's Gate to the Lord's Table*, 5.

44 E.F., *London's Gate to the Lord's Table*, 4-5.

45 E.F., *London's Gate to the Lord's Table*, 19-20.

46 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity. The second part. Touching the most plain, pithy, and spiritual exposition of the Ten Commandments... in a dialogue... whereunto is added the difference betwixt the Law and the Gospel. By E.F. Author of the first part* (London: Printed for John Wright at the King's Head in the Old Bayley, 1649).

shall never taste the Marrow of the promise who distaste the Commandments”.⁴⁷ One of the commenders of this addition was the Independent Ralph Venning, a respected Puritan preacher and theologian who was appointed to the prominent chaplaincy of the Tower of London in 1648; he also served under the Westminster Assembly as examiner for all naval chaplains.⁴⁸ Other commendations of the work came from Samuel Moore and John Cradocot.⁴⁹ Moore’s praise of Fisher’s new publication intriguingly echoed the preface of Fisher’s first edition of the Marrow: “Reader... bless God for this Author, who hath like the Bee, painefully fetched this honey out of various flowers, and at last brought it into this hive”.⁵⁰ Was this simply the analogy that came to Moore’s mind at the moment, or did it recall a mutual respect for John Eaton’s writing? And, if Fisher had become convinced of Presbyterian principles, why was it that the second part *The Marrow* again appeared to predominantly have the publication support of Independents?

Fisher’s final work may provide some insight into this intriguing combination of strong Independent ties and support for Presbyterianism. Published in 1650, the manuscript was entitled *Faith in five fundamental principles, strongly fortified against the diabolical, atheistical, blasphemous batteries of these times. Serving for the conviction of opposers, the satisfaction of doubters, and the confirmation of believers. In a conference*

47 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity. The second part*, A1. Caryl’s commendation is dated 6 Septemb. 1648, and the other commendations are dated later in the same month indicating the work must have been near completion prior to 1649.

48 Stephen Wright, “Venning, Ralph” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-7).

49 Samuel Moore, *An heavenly wonder, or, A Christian cloath'd with Christ purposely penned to comfort Christs sin-sick-spouse / by Sam. Moore, minister of the gospel of God sometimes at Brides in Fleetstreete, London.*, (London : Printed by Matthew Simmons, 1650). Samuel Moore, a London minister, published three works between 1647 and 1650, the last bearing some similarity in emphasis to John Eaton’s *Honey-Combe*.

50 Moore in E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity. The second part.*, 13.

which a godly independent minister and a godly Presbyterian minister had with a doubting Christian.⁵¹ Fisher had in these last years of his life sought to encourage a correct path between legalism and antinomianism, seeking what he viewed as the biblical path of moderation. The publication of *The Marrow's* second part clearly explicated and applied the law to the lives of both believers and unbelievers. Now in the midst of an intensifying Presbyterian – Independent controversy, Fisher wrote a defense of some essentials of the faith in a dialogue form with two godly counselors “a moderate Independent Minister” and “a moderate Presbyterian Minister” and “a tempted doubting Christian”.⁵² For one final time his pen exhibited his layman’s pastoral heart, mediating spirit, and, above all, his love for the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ. That same year a London obituary noted the death of “Mr. Fisher, bookseller and barber in the Old Bailey”.⁵³

An Introduction to the Marrow Controversy in Scotland

While an understanding of the English origin, content and context of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* gives essential background to its Scottish history, a survey of the historical context of the Marrow controversy is also necessary in understanding the views of the gospel expressed during the controversy which would become known as Marrow theology. Prior to the beginning of the Marrow controversy in Scotland, there were a number of occurrences and developments which helped set the stage for it. With the reestablishment of Presbyterian polity in 1690, the times of persecution of the Covenanters

51 E.F., *Faith in five fundamental principles, strongly fortified against the diabolical, atheistical, blasphemous batteries of these times. Serving for the conviction of opposers, the satisfaction of doubters, and the confirmation of believers. In a conference which a godly independent minister and a godly Presbyterian minister had with a doubting Christian.* (London: Printed for John Wright at the King’s Head in the Old Bailey, 1650), 1.

52 E.F., *Faith in five fundamental principles*, A3.

53 See David Martin McIntyre’s “First strictures on ‘The Marrow of Modern Divinity’” in *Evangelical Quarterly* 10:1 (Jan 1938), 61-70.

ended. The Church of Scotland firmly established the Westminster Confessions and Catechisms as its doctrinal standards, and there was a clear desire to “preserve the purity of doctrine” and to prevent “any doctrines not agreeable to our Confession of Faith and Catechisms”.⁵⁴ Presbyterianism and Reformed theology were once again placed in a dominant role in the nation, though dissension over patronage issues would remain, as well as the “imposition of oaths by the government, as a qualification to sit in church courts”.⁵⁵

It is generally agreed (as would be evidenced in the Marrow controversy) that the dominant stream of theology in the Church of Scotland, particularly in relation to the gospel offer, bore certain legalistic and hyper-Calvinistic tendencies.⁵⁶ William Blaikie states, “it was not... so much that the old Calvinistic creed was formally attacked, as that the doctrines of grace were discredited, and in some degree neutralised by the introduction of a spirit of legality”.⁵⁷ J.M. MacLeod asserts that “the hyper-Calvinistic brethren held that there is no world-wide call of Christ sent out to all sinners... they maintained that

54 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Held and Begun in the year 1717...* in *Register of the General Assembly annes 1712, 1713, 1714, 1715, and 1717* (MSS 232, Special Libraries and Archives, King’s College, Aberdeen), 830.

55 John M’Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church* (Glasgow: A. Fullarton and Co., 1841), 4-5.

56 While this is agreed to, there is disagreement on what actually constitutes hyper-Calvinism: some such as Donald Bruggink, M.C. Bell, T.F. Torrance, and J.B. Torrance argue that hyper-Calvinism is essentially inherent in the federal theology of the Westminster Confession in its positing both predestination and limited atonement; others such as J.M. MacLeod, David Lachman, A.T.B. McGowan, William J. U. Philip, and Philip Ryken see hyper-Calvinism as a distortion of federal theology, which particularly impacts the preaching of the gospel so that “a therapeutic type of preaching doles out the Gospel to those only who are alive to their ruined plight... with this restricted presentation of Christ as Saviour, the sinner has no end of questionings as to whether or not he is so truly convinced of his sin as to have a warrant to stretch out his hand to take off the Gospel table the Bread of Life as his own”. J.M. MacLeod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1974), 142.

57 William Garden Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland – from the Sixth to the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888), 189.

Christ is held forth or offered as Saviour to those only whom God effectually calls... the eye of the hearer was directed to the hidden man of the heart to the obscuring of the call to look out and away from self to Saviour”.⁵⁸ At the same time, in the ongoing case of John Simson (Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, 1708-1739), the majority of the Church of Scotland leadership evidenced a tendency toward leniency in dealing with inroads of Enlightenment philosophy into Reformed theology in its divinity schools.⁵⁹

In terms of ecclesiastical controversy, the event immediately prior to, and leading directly to the Marrow controversy itself, was the action of the Presbytery of Auchterarder, including the denominational response to it. In 1716 the Presbytery of Auchterarder set out a series of propositions which ministerial candidates were required to assent to prior to the granting of license or ordination. One of these propositions was intended to guard against the preaching of the necessity of preparation for grace. The candidate was to agree that “I believe 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 to God”.⁶⁰ One student, William Craig, was rejected by the Presbytery for his refusal to assent to this proposition; he appealed to the General Assembly, which ruled in his favor. The Assembly of 1717 rejected the legitimacy of subscriptions to any formula “but such as is or shall be agreed to and approved by the Assemblies of this Church”.⁶¹ They continued by declaring their “abhorrence of the foresaid proposition, as unsound and most detestable”, arguing it would lead to spiritual sloth and unholiness, and requested a commission further investigate and

58 MacLeod, 143.

59 J.H.S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 287-291.

60 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland... 1717*, 839-840.

61 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland... 1717*, 840.

report back to the following Assembly.⁶² While the commission in its report to the 1718 Assembly found that the Presbytery was sound and orthodox in its meaning, it found “they had expressed it in words very unwarrantable and exceptionable” and the Presbytery was admonished not to use them again.⁶³ This event set the stage for the Marrow controversy.

A Chronology of the Marrow Controversy

The Marrow controversy itself began in 1718. In this year, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, the work of popular divinity written in England by Edward Fisher during or prior to 1645,⁶⁴ was republished in Scotland, with a recommendatory preface by a Church of Scotland minister, James Hog of Carnock in Fife.⁶⁵ James Hog read *The Marrow* on recommendation by Thomas Boston, who came across the work during a pastoral visit and read it with profit “by the latter end of the year 1700” in his parish at Simprin.⁶⁶ Boston had struggled with his personal understanding of the gospel, due to the influences of legalism and hyper-Calvinism, and as a result had also wrestled with these issues in regard to gospel proclamation.⁶⁷ In his *Memoirs*, Boston describes the direct link between the

62 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland... 1717*, 840.

63 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Held and begun in the year 1718...* in *Register of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland annes 1718, 19, 20, & 1721* (MSS 233, Special Libraries and Archives, King’s College, Aberdeen), 154.

64 E[dward] F[isher], *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London: Printed by R.W. for G. Calvert, at the Black Spread-Eagle neer Pauls, 1645), 1.

65 E[dward] F[isher], *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, with a recommendatory preface by James Hog. The Ninth Edition Corrected. Edinburgh: John Mosman and William Brown, 1718.

66 Thomas Boston, *Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Boston...* in *The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M’Millan, Vol. VII. (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 154-156.

67 See Boston, *Memoirs*, 94-95.

1717 Assembly decision on Auchterarder and the republication of *The Marrow of Modern*

Divinity:

...here, namely, in the condemnation of that proposition, was the beginning of the torrent, that for several years after ran, in the public actings of this church, against the doctrine of grace, under the name of Antinomianism; and is unto this day overflowing. Meanwhile, at the same sitting in the assembly house, and conversing with Mr. John Drummond, minister of Crief, one of the brethren of that presbytery above mentioned, I happened to give him my sense of the gospel-offer; Isa. lv. 1; Matt. xi. 28, with the reason thereof; and withal to tell him of the Marrow of Modern Divinity. Hereupon he, having inquired in the shops for the said book, at length got it; and from him Mr. James Webster getting it, was taken therewith; and afterward, Mr. Drummond himself being hardly allowed time to read it through, it came into the hands of Mr. James Hog, minister of Carnock; and in end was reprinted in the year 1718, with a preface by the said Mr. Hog, dated at Carnock, Dec. 3, 1717.⁶⁸

Immediately after publication, controversy about the book ensued, with James Hog defending *The Marrow* against rumours and attacks. This in turn quickly developed into pamphlet warfare, primarily between James Hog and Principal James Hadow of St. Andrews College in Fife. Hadow's opposition to *The Marrow* and Hog's defence of it led to the former preaching a sermon against it at the opening of the Synod of Fife on April 7, 1719.⁶⁹ A formal complaint was brought against *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* to the General Assembly that same year; the assembly consequently gave the standing Commission for Purity of Doctrine the task of examining the matter.⁷⁰

68 Boston, *Memoirs*, 291-292. It is interesting to note that according to the attendance roll a number of the leading figures involved in the Marrow controversy were present at the General Assembly of 1717 decision on Auchterarder. These included the following: James Hog, minister of Carnock, Thomas Boston, minister of Ettrick, James Hadow, Principal of St. Andrew's College, and Thomas Blackwell, Professor of Divinity at Marischal College, Aberdeen. *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland... 1717*, 657-662.

69 Boston, *Memoirs*, 317. See also: James Hadow, *The Record of God and Duty of Faith Therein Required* (Edinburgh: John Mosman and Company for John Paton, 1719).

70 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Held and begun in the year 1719...* in *Register of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland annes 1718, 19, 20, & 1721*. (MSS 233, Special Libraries and Archives, King's College, Aberdeen), 177-342.

The Commission for Purity of Doctrine's report the following year was not favorable for the cause of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. The 1720 General Assembly, seeing the developing Marrow controversy as a substantial issue, delayed official discussion and decision making on it until late in the Assembly meetings to allow members time to read excerpted statements from, and doctrinal complaints against, the work, as well as allowing the Committee for Overtures time to investigate further.⁷¹ Following the charges made by Hadow and the Committees, the resulting Act of Assembly stated that the theological expressions in the Marrow were "exceptionable" and "exceedingly harsh and offensive".⁷² The Assembly in its Act did "strictly prohibit and discharge" all ministers

either by preaching, writing, or printing to recommend the said book, or, in discourse, to say anything in favour of it; but, on the contrary they are hereby enjoined and required to warn and exhort their people, in whose hands the said book is, or may come, not to read or use the same.⁷³

This Act of the 1720 Assembly drew national attention to this previously obscure book, serving to stimulate the promoters and supporters of *The Marrow* in their attempt to rectify the wrong done to the "truth of the gospel, the doctrine of free grace".⁷⁴ Acting without success at the Presbytery level, they drafted a complaint, their *Representation and Petition*, to the 1721 Assembly.⁷⁵ In it they argued that the condemning of *The Marrow* was a

71 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Held and begun in the year 1720...* in *Register of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland annes 1718, 19, 20, & 1721*. (MSS 233, Special Libraries and Archives, King's College, Aberdeen), 404-405, 407, 422, 427.

72 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 432.

73 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 432-433.

74 Boston, *Memoirs*, 319.

75 *The Representation and Petition of us under subscribing Ministers of the Gospel*. (Edinburgh: 1721).

condemnation of gospel truth. After answering the charges of the Assembly against the work, the petitioners requested that

the very reverend assembly, seriously and impartially to consider the premises, with the great weight and importance of this affair, in which the Honour of our common Master and Message, the Salvation of our Souls, our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the Covenants National and Solemn League, and the Remains of the Peace of this Church are so much concerned: and laying aside all Considerations of another Kind, to repeal the 5th Act of the late Assembly... And to provide such Remedy, as may remove the Offence, arising from the two above specific clauses, in the 8th Act of the said Assembly, entitled, Act for Preaching Catechetical Doctrine, with Directions Therein: Which will afford Matter of Thanksgiving unto God, in behalf of the Truth, and of your Selves, to many who love the Truth and Peace.⁷⁶

The 1721 Assembly referred the complaint to a commission to be reported on and dealt with at the 1722 Assembly.⁷⁷ The Assembly of 1722 confirmed the decision of the 1720 Assembly including in its Act an more extensive summary and refutation of doctrine found in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. This was undoubtedly in response to not only the *Representation and Petition*, but also to the continuing determined defense of *The Marrow* and its doctrine in discussions, sermons, tracts, and pamphlets.⁷⁸ The Assembly also acted to rebuke and admonish the Representers, but stopped short of requiring subscription to the Assembly's decision in order to try to preserve the church from what "would certainly have meant a split in the national Church".⁷⁹ However, it was restated that continued promotion of *The Marrow* and its doctrine was not to be tolerated.

⁷⁶ *The Representation and Petition*, 42.

⁷⁷ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Held and begun in the year 1721...* in *Register of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland annes 1718, 19, 20, & 1721*. (MSS 233, Special Libraries and Archives, King's College, Aberdeen), 587-588.

⁷⁸ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Held and begun in the year 1722...* in *Register of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland annes 1722, 23, 24, & 1725*. (MSS 233, Special Libraries and Archives, King's College, Aberdeen), 149-180.

⁷⁹ Lachman, 418.

While the Assembly Act of 1722 was the final statement by the Assembly on the Marrow controversy, pamphleteering continued for several years. The last, and most substantial, written work of the controversy was a new edition of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in the year 1726, which included extensive explanatory notes by Thomas Boston.⁸⁰ Controversy and dissension would continue at local levels, with some of the Marrow brethren charged with doctrinal error, and others kept from moving to more important parishes. These realities of theological division would become an influence leading to the Secession Church movement in the early 1730's.

80 E[dward] F[isher], *The Marrow of Modern Divinity... with notes* in *The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M'Millan. Vol. VII. (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 143-489.

CHAPTER 3

IEWS OF THE GOSPEL AND ITS PROCLAMATION: OPPONENTS OF *THE MARROW*

The time of the controversy was one of publication frenzy relating to the topic of the gospel. In order to present the predominant views of the gospel offer and other key areas of Marrow theology, and to describe the contours and content of Marrow theology in its Scottish context, during the period of controversy, representative figures and key documents of both the opponents and supporters of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* have been selected for examination. For the purpose of this thesis representative figures are defined as those who made substantial contributions, in terms of both volume and content, to discussion of the gospel offer; key documents are those of this era which represent or directly contribute to the two main streams of thought regarding the gospel and its proclamation in the Church of Scotland at the time. Among those opposed to *The Marrow*, the Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, along with the writings and sermons of James Hadow, Thomas Blackwell, and John Willison are considered. Their theology and criticism formed the context for the positive statements of Scottish Marrow theology.

The Church of Scotland: Acts of Assembly

The Church of Scotland Acts of Assembly, in their decisions on the Marrow controversy, present what can be fairly seen as a view of the gospel and its proclamation representative of the large majority of Church of Scotland ministers during the early 1700's. Their representative nature is evidenced in voter support at the Assemblies. David Lachman, in his dissertation on the Marrow controversy, notes that

...a majority of the ministers... in the Church of Scotland at the time can be quite properly termed opponents of *The Marrow*, each, having given his support to the measures whereby it was condemned... The various decisions in committee, Commission and General Assembly which were either

unanimous or carried by large majorities demonstrate that they were in basic agreement with those who drew up the overtures against the *Marrow*.¹

During the Marrow controversy, the Assembly moved two Acts (1720 and 1722) in direct response to the controversy, along with an Act in 1720 which was seen, at least by the supporters of *The Marrow*, as being a related response to the issues at hand.² The question then is, what do these Acts of Assembly reveal in terms of a view of the gospel, and more particularly, its proclamation?

1. The Atonement

In the area of the doctrine of the atonement the Acts of Assembly reveal an understanding consistent with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, which were believed by the Assembly to be threatened by the teaching of *The Marrow* and the Marrow brethren as its proponents. When the charges of the Committee for Purity of Doctrine were first brought to the Assembly floor, they stated the Marrow teaching appeared “contrair to the Scriptures and Confession of Faith and Catechisms”.³ In the resulting 5th Act of Assembly of 1720 *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* was charged as teaching “universal atonement and pardon”.⁴ The 5th Act of Assembly both cited quotations from *The Marrow* and gave response:

1 Lachman, 157.

2 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 427-435 and *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 149-180, provide the two Acts of Assembly in direct response to the Marrow controversy. *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 492-493, the 8th Act of Assembly, enjoined ministers to preach ‘catechetical doctrine’, and was viewed by the Marrow brethren as being connected to the actions against *The Marrow*.

3 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 404-405.

4 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 429.

Page 108.-“Christ hath taken upon him the sins of all men”. Page 119.-“The Father hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, that whosoever of them all shall believe in his Son shall not perish, &c., (*i.e.* Whosoever believes or is persuaded that Christ is his; for this must be the sense according to the former passages.) Hence it was that Christ said to his disciples, ‘Go and preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven;’-that is, Go and tell every man, without exception, that here is good news for him; Christ is dead for him. Even so, our good King, the Lord of heaven and earth, hath, for the obedience and desert of our good brother, Jesus Christ, pardoned all our sins”. To the same purpose, pages 127 and 128. Here is asserted an universal redemption as to purchase, contrary to John x. 15, 27, 28, 29; and xv. 13 and 17; Titus ii. 14; Confess. Cap. iii. 6; Cap. viii. 8; Larger Catechism, Quest. 59.⁵

The same week, the Assembly passed the 8th “Act Appointing the Preaching of Catechetical Doctrine”, stressing the need to preach “the great and fundamental truths” including “the Eternal Deity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and of the satisfaction of Divine Justice made by him, who is our only propitiation”.⁶

The 1722 Act of Assembly gave affirmation and further exposition to the statements of 1720. Responding to the *Representation and Petition* of the Marrow brethren, it began by summarizing their “foul reproaches” against the 1720 Acts. In reply to the Assembly’s “adducing that passage of the Marrow containing a deed of gift to all mankind... [proved] that its author was for a universal atonement and pardon” the Marrow brethren were quoted as stating “the Assembly hath encroached upon the Divine warrant unto all to receive Christ, and also upon sovereign grace”.⁷ The 1722 Assembly, in response to the Marrow brethren, continued with a positive statement of what it held to be the biblical view of the doctrine of the atonement, placing this in the context of both the federal theology of the covenant of works and of grace, and the application of atonement in

⁵ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 429.

⁶ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 492-493.

⁷ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 150.

free justification.⁸ Their statement “concerning the Mediator, and the extent of his purchase” consisted of direct quotes of the Westminster Confession and Larger Catechism:

“That it pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man. That the Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience, and sacrifice of himself, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given to him. To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same”. - Confess. Chap. viii. 1,5,8. “And they are in time, by the Holy Ghost, enabled to believe in Christ, according to the Gospel”. - Larger Catechism, Quest. 5. “...them whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth... Not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them”. - Confess Chap. xi. & 1; Larger Catechism, Quest. 70.⁹

The Assembly went on to declare,

...it is to be observed, that the Assembly, in the second paragraph of the [5th] Act, concerning universal atonement and pardon, doth censure the book for asserting an universal redemption as to purchase, and to show that this opinion is there taught, several passages of the book are quoted, and particularly page 119, “The Father hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, that whosoever of them all shall believe in his Son, shall not perish,” &c. ...the brethren do not blame the Assembly for condemning the assertion of an universal atonement, but they allege they have condemned that deed of gift and grant extracted out of the Sacred Record... by which, the brethren say, they understand no more but the revelation of the Divine will in the Word, affording a warrant to offer Christ unto all, and a warrant unto all to receive him; which revelation and warrant the Assembly owns. And here the brethren give their gloss upon that text of Scripture, which is not denied by the Assembly, nor to the purpose; but they omit the sense and meaning of the author, which the Assembly evinceth to be an asserting of universal redemption as to purchase...¹⁰

Evidently, from the statements made in 1722, the Assembly held to the doctrine of a particular atonement which was penal and substitutionary in nature, and appeared to

⁸ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 154-156.

⁹ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 155.

¹⁰ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 168-169.

include the active obedience of Christ in fulfilling the law. While they saw that the Marrow brethren were not themselves arguing for a universal atonement, the Assembly continued to hold that *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* did.

2. Saving Faith

The Acts of Assembly of the Church of Scotland also provide insightful content relating to the doctrine of saving faith. The theology of the Acts of Assembly reveals that the understanding of various doctrines impacted the view of saving faith. Part of the debate in the controversy surrounded the doctrinal relationship between saving faith and assurance. The Assembly of 1720 selected quotes from *The Marrow* which were argued in its 5th Act to state “that saving faith commanded in the Gospel a man’s persuasion that Christ is his, and died for him; and that whoever hath not this persuasion or assurance hath not answered the Gospel call, nor is a true believer”.¹¹ The Assembly stated against this perceived error of the Marrow theology that both the Westminster Confession and Catechism “show that assurance is not of the essence of faith”.¹² The emphasis of the Assembly at this point was to maintain the separation of faith and assurance, in both definition and practice. The implication appeared to be that there was little, if any, fiducial element in faith itself. This emphasis continued in the Assembly Act of 1722 which while it was more nuanced in agreeing with the Marrow brethren that faith includes “a cordial accepting of Christ as offered in the Gospel for salvation” with “a belief and persuasion... of Christ’s ability and willingness to save all that come unto him” continued to stress “a true believer is not at all times, even when he is acting faith unto salvation, assured of his

11 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 427.

12 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 427.

present being in a state of grace, and that he shall be saved; but that he may wait long to obtain this assurance”.¹³

The Assembly went on in its 5th Act of 1720 to criticize *The Marrow* for stating that “holiness [is] not necessary to salvation” and that “fear of punishment and hope of reward [are] not allowed to be motives of a believer’s obedience”.¹⁴ The stated concern of the Assembly was that such “doctrine tends to slacken people’s diligence in the study of holiness”.¹⁵ However, the quotations selected and the response to them by the Assembly indicate a theological perspective that tended toward equalising obedience and repentance with faith as instrumental or conditional to salvation, despite at the same time making a strong separation between assurance and faith. This tendency was further evidenced in the 8th Act of Assembly of 1720 encouraging preaching on the themes “of free justification through our blessed Surety the Lord Jesus Christ received by faith alone and of the necessity of a Holy Life, in order to the obtaining of everlasting happiness”.¹⁶ In this case as well, the Assembly Act of 1722 would more carefully respond to the critique of the Marrow brethren noting that “though good works be excluded from the ground of justification, yet they are necessary in the justified, in order to their obtaining the enjoyment of eternal salvation”.¹⁷

13 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 166-167.

14 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 429-430.

15 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 429.

16 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 492-493.

17 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 170.

3. The Gospel Offer

The Church of Scotland Acts of Assembly on the Marrow controversy, while not sermons, do nonetheless give a good understanding of the prevailing Church of Scotland view of the gospel offer itself. The criticism of the Assembly against *The Marrow* in the area of the atonement does not reveal a difference with the view of the doctrine of the atonement held by the Marrow brethren, but rather appears to signify a difference in the view of the gospel offer. In 1717, the Assembly had ruled against the Auchterarder statement “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”.¹⁸ The 1718 Assembly noted that while the intentions of the Auchterarder Presbytery may have been sound, the expressions used were “very unwarrantable and exceptionable”.¹⁹ This condemnation by the Assembly revealed a theological tendency towards arguing for a conditional gospel offer, the condition in this case being repentance. However the tendency revealed was muted by the fact that while the statement itself was condemned “the Commission agreed to accept the sense they [the Auchterarder presbyters] offered”.²⁰

The 5th Act of Assembly of 1720 gives further insight into the Assembly’s tendency to a conditional view of the offer of the gospel. The Assembly stated its opposition to the language of the gospel offer set forth in *The Marrow*, “Go and tell every man, without exception, that here is good news for him; Christ is dead for him”.²¹ The objection of the

18 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1717*, 839.

19 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1718*, 154.

20 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1718*, 154.

21 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 429.

Assembly was that *The Marrow* taught universal redemption, both in the above statement, and in the argument that “the Father hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, that whosoever of them all shall believe in his Son shall not perish”.²² While this was the stated concern, the Assembly’s argument on this point also reflected a tendency among ministers of the Church of Scotland to hedge or qualify the offer of the gospel. The Assembly’s commentary at best appeared to infer that a free offer of a certain salvation should at most be made to those deemed to bear some mark of election, or some evidence of being a recipient of particular redemption, whether this be conviction of sin, repentance, or pursuit of holy obedience. In reply to the Marrow’s gospel statement “Christ is my righteousness, my treasure, and my work. I confess, O Law! That I am neither godly nor righteous; but this yet I am sure of, that He is godly and righteous for me!” their response was “that this doctrine tends to slacken people’s diligence in the study of holiness”.²³

While the tendency to a conditional gospel offer was evident in both the Aucherarder decision and the 1720 Acts of Assembly, the 1722 Act of Assembly appeared to retreat somewhat from its initial charge against the brethren, noting their agreement with the idea of the deed of gift and grant as understood by the brethren to be “the revelation of the Divine will in the Word, affording a warrant to offer Christ unto all, and a warrant unto all to receive him”.²⁴ However, at the same time the Assembly continued to maintain that *The Marrow’s* concept of the deed of gift and grant was rooted in “universal redemption as

22 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 429.

23 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 492-493.

24 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 169.

to purchase”.²⁵ What is evident in the end is that the Assembly was suspicious of, if not outright opposed to, those who laid stress on the freeness or unconditionality of the gospel offer, though in several cases, upon further consideration, the Assembly more carefully restated or qualified its concerns, remaining within the parameters of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

James Hadow

James Hadow (c.1670-1747) was, as David Lachman notes, “the chief opponent of the Marrow brethren”.²⁶ A professor of divinity, and later the principal at St. Andrews, Hadow was known for his efforts in defense of Presbyterian polity and Calvinist orthodoxy. Where the Church of Scotland Assembly had manifested a tendency towards leniency in the Simson case, Hadow had shown active concern. One of his contemporaries, Robert Wodrow, said of him “[he is] firm and sound as far as I know in doctrine, but... dark and grimly in his appearance”.²⁷ Hadow’s influential position and alarm were instrumental in leading the Church of Scotland Assembly to move against *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* as commended by James Hog and the Marrow brethren.

1. The Atonement

James Hadow’s view of the doctrine of the atonement was similar to both that of the Church of Scotland Assembly and the Marrow brethren, despite his misunderstanding and criticism of the latter. In his sermon, *The Record of God and Duty of Faith Therein Required*, Hadow described the atonement in a way that reveals his federal theology,

²⁵ *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1722*, 169.

²⁶ Lachman, 170.

²⁷ As quoted by Lachman, 170. Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences; mostly relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians*. vol. IV (Edinburgh: printed for the Maitland Club, 1843), 486.

particularly by use of the terminology of the first and second Adam: “It is in the Son, and so it is better secured than when entrusted to the first Adam... God the Father hath appointed his Son to be the saviour of the world... the author of eternal salvation. And he is so both by purchase and effectual application”.²⁸ The necessity of the atonement, Hadow states, is found in the reality

[t]hat man by the entry of sin is destitute of eternal life and all claim to it. *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*, Rom. iii.23. All have failed of attaining the glory of eternal life, which God promised in the first covenant, and are in a most miserable estate, dead in trespasses and sins, and children of wrath by nature, Eph. ii. 1,2,3.²⁹

Hadow continues his sermon by more fully describing of the nature of the atonement, stating the substitutionary work of both the passive and active obedience of Christ, who “by his blood, purchased the pardon of sin, and deliverance from wrath... and by his obedience he purchased eternal life, and a right to it... and he purchased all grace whereby his people are made meet for the possession of this life, even the grace of faith itself”.³⁰ The extent of the atonement was limited to the elect, so that Christ “effectually applies and gives out his purchased salvation unto all for whom he hath procured it”.³¹ Hadow’s concern to maintain the doctrine of the atonement against the dangers of universalism is evident in his commentary against the description of warrant of the gospel offer as given in *The Marrow*. Criticizing the gospel offer of the Marrow theology as being built upon “the supposition of an universal redemption”, he also criticizes it as leading “to a more gross universalism, viz. That God by absolute promise hath given eternal life to all

28 James Hadow, *The Record of God and Duty of Faith Therein Required* (Edinburgh: John Mosman and Company for John Paton, 1719), 11-12.

29 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 8.

30 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 12.

31 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 12.

who live under the Gospel”.³² In his ensuing writings, Hadow continued to stress that “the Principal maintains particular redemption”, all the while steadfastly maintaining the Marrow theology necessitated an atonement “larger than the elect world” in its extent.³³

2. Saving Faith

Prior to the Marrow controversy itself, the chief document presenting James Hadow’s view of saving faith was his defense of the doctrine of baptism.³⁴ As David Lachman noted, in this document Hadow refers to the “Covenanted Terms of Salvation” as that “which God requires in order to the salvation of sinners”.³⁵ Responding to Hadow’s listing the terms of “Christ’s mediation, the Spirit’s regeneration, justification by free grace, faith and repentance”, Lachman perceptively comments that “these excerpts show an inclination to think of gospel terms and conditions, including faith, repentance, and a holy life, which a person must ‘obtain’ if he is to be saved”.³⁶

Hadow’s tendency to view saving faith as a condition to be obtained, or requirement to be met, unto salvation, is evidenced in his sermon *The Record of God and Duty of Faith Required Therein*, where he states that in response to the gospel record “our

32 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 27-32.

33 James Hadow, *A Review of a Conference Betwixt Epaphroditus and Epaphras: Wherein the very Reverend Principal Hadow’s Sermon, Preached before the Synod of Fife, April 7th 1719, Is fairly Enquired into* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Mosman and Company, for John Paton Bookseller in the Parliament Close, 1719), 5, 40, 49.

34 James Hadow. *The Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Scotland, anent the Sacrament of Baptism vindicated from the charge of Gross Error exhibited In a Print called, The Practice and Doctrine of the Presbyterian Preachers, about the Sacrament of Baptism, Examined.* Part I, 1704. Part II. (Edinburgh: George Mosman, 1704), 6, 17.

35 Hadow, *The Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Scotland, anent the Sacrament of Baptism*, 6. See also Lachman, 171.

36 Lachman, 171.

duty with respect thereunto [is] believing”.³⁷ Stressing that the gospel provides “the conditional promise; *He that believeth shall be saved* [which] is made to believers only, exclusively of others”,³⁸ Hadow states that, “not believing it, excludes sinners from this eternal life, and leaves them under the wrath of God... Seeing therefore the believing this record of God, concerning eternal life in his Son, is the duty required of us, in order to our justification and salvation; we shall here enquire what this believing is, or what are these acts of faith”.³⁹ This enquiry results in a definition of saving faith as “an assent of the mind unto the truth of this record of God... [and] accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life”.⁴⁰

Saving faith, as Hadow defines it, appears to follow upon the condition of repentance, as “the convinced sinner destitute of all righteousness of his own, must accept, receive, and rest on Christ the Son of God”.⁴¹ Elsewhere Hadow describes faith as the duty of believing the record of God, which occurs when the “convinced sensible sinner... gives his assent to the truth... and further in the exercise of faith, he approves of this way in his heart, he is satisfied with it, and accordingly betakes himself to it”.⁴² The implication appears to be that the state of being “a convinced sensible sinner” occurs temporally prior to the beginnings of faith as seen in giving assent to the truth. Repentance is more clearly posited as a precondition to the fruit of saving faith in Hadow’s *The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected* where he criticizes the fact that “the Marrow

37 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 6.

38 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 11.

39 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 15-16.

40 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 17-18.

41 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 19.

42 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 18.

teacheth that repentance goeth not before justification”.⁴³ He states that the Marrow teaching on the relationship of saving faith and repentance “is of very nigh affinity with the Auchterarder position, which says, That it is not sound to teach, that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ, and being instated in covenant with God”.⁴⁴ Continuing his argument, Hadow asserts

that the evangelical grace and duty of repentance goeth before pardon of sin, in God’s method of bestowing them; and remission of sin is a consequent blessing annexed unto repentance by divine promise; and that therefore ministers in preaching the gospel, may, and ought to call sinners to repent, and forsake their sins, in order unto their obtaining the pardon of them, as well as to believe in Christ for their justification... Repentance is placed before pardon, in the proper order, wherein Christ bestows his purchased benefits... Repentance, or forsaking of sin, hath the promise of pardon annexed unto it, and the duty is enforced from the encouraging promise of this gracious benefit following thereon...⁴⁵

While Hadow seems to view repentance, or at least conviction of sin, as a necessary precondition to saving faith and justification, he also maintains that saving faith is distinct from assurance “whereby a believer is persuaded of his particular interest in Christ and his mediation, that his sins are pardoned for Christ’s sake”.⁴⁶ Assurance “is indeed a fruit and consequent of justifying faith; but we deny that it is absolutely necessary and essential thereto”.⁴⁷ Hadow also noted his disagreement with a recently published pamphlet defending the Marrow view of faith and assurance stating

In a late pamphlet it is answered, 1st. That Mr. Marshal upon sanctification demonstrates very clearly and fully, that somewhat of assurance is an essential

43 James Hadow, *The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected...* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Mosman and Company, and to be sold by John Paton at his Shop in the Parliament Closs, 1721), 36.

44 Hadow, *The Antinomianism of the Marrow...Detected*, 37.

45 Hadow, *The Antinomianism of the Marrow...Detected*, 51-53.

46 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 22.

47 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 23.

ingredient of faith. Here is a plain approbation of Mr. Marshal in that opinion. But I must think his demonstration neither clear nor full...⁴⁸

For James Hadow it was clear that the Westminster Confession of Faith made a distinct and complete separation between faith and assurance, yet he failed to fully elucidate his own definition of assurance, only referring to it as the believer's "full assurance of their own pardon and salvation".⁴⁹

3. The Gospel Offer

The gospel offer, as James Hadow saw it, was framed distinctly in terms of the doctrines of election and limited atonement, along with his view of the promises of Scripture. In his sermon, *The Record of God and the Duty of Faith Required Therein*, Hadow expounds I John 5 verse 11 stating:

*To us, importeth, that this gift of eternal life is not given to all and every one of fallen mankind: For all are not brought into the possession of it, neither have all a right to it by justification and adoption, neither is the absolute promise which is declarative of the eternal purpose of God, made unto all. For tho it be sometimes purposed indefinitely, yet it is to be understood as made to God's elect, whom he hath given unto the Son, and who shall come unto him... and to Christ's sheep, of whom he saith, Joh. x. 27, 28. I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.*⁵⁰

While this passage seems to speak particularly of both the gift and the promise of eternal life as being made to the elect, Hadow's writing repeatedly shows a tendency to view gospel promises as being conditional, and more particularly, conditioned upon election.

He continues by declaring

...as to the conditional promise; *He that believeth shall be saved*, it is made to believers only, exclusively of others. And so the Apostle shews in the following 12th vers. *He that hath not the Son, hath not Life*... Thus [God] hath given his gospel and ministers to publish it; his calls, exhortations,

48 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 24.

49 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 23.

50 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 10.

commands, promises, threatenings, and all gospel ordinances to be the means of conveying it.⁵¹

In an appendix added to the published version of his sermon, Hadow further argued for the conditionality of the gospel offer stating “our Confession of Faith... disowns all Universalism, whether with respect to the decree of election, or the undertaking of the Son as Surety, or his Purchase, or the absolute Promises of saving Grace... these it restricts to a certain number of mankind appointed unto eternal life”.⁵² Hadow’s approach to the gospel offer was perhaps most clearly stated in *A Review of a Conference Betwixt Epaphroditus and Epaphras*:

The Marrow saith, that God of his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant unto them all. You tell us, that, *no more can be understood, than so much as layeth a ground-work for these offers of Christ in the gospel; and that no other deed of gift is understood save that which is necessary to support the eternal truth, viz. Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* Here I can conceive a grant made unto all that hear the gospel; but it is conditional, asserting the connection betwixt faith as the mean and salvation as the end; and promising life to him that believeth; but he that never believeth hath hereby no right or claim to salvation, because he is not within the terms of the promise... if this deed of gift be absolute, making over Christ and all his purchased benefits in an absolute promise... I want to be further informed, whether you hold this absolute promise to be made to the elect only, or to all that hear the gospel? If it be made to the elect only, then it conveys a right to none else, but the elect; neither can they lay claim to it as belonging to them, while they are in an unregenerate state. And if this be your mind you agree with the Principal...⁵³

Hadow’s conditional view of the offer of the gospel left unanswered the dual question of both how the gospel, and what of the gospel, would be proclaimed to the unbeliever; all that is apparent in his extant works is the call to “the duty which this record of God calleth us unto... the receiving it... as it is in truth, the Word of God”.⁵⁴

51 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 11.

52 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 35.

53 Hadow, *A Review of a Conference Betwixt Epaphroditus and Epaphras*, 50-51.

54 Hadow, *The Record of God...*, 15.

Thomas Blackwell

At the time of the Marrow controversy, Thomas Blackwell (1660-1728) was professor of divinity at Marischal College, Aberdeen. Present at the decision on the Auchterarder Presbytery by the Assembly of 1717, he was appointed to the office of Principal at Aberdeen that same year. Blackwell, along with William Carstares and Robert Baille, served as a delegate of the Church of Scotland Assembly at the Parliamentary deliberations in London on the Toleration and Patronage Acts (1711-1712). Along with James Hadow and others, Thomas Blackwell sat on both the Commission of the General Assembly, and the Committee for Purity of Doctrine which was instrumental in the development of the 1722 Act of Assembly reaffirming the condemnation of *The Marrow*.⁵⁵ As such he stands as a leading church figure opposed to *The Marrow*, despite being uninvolved in the pamphlet warfare. Blackwell wrote three works, *Ratio Sacra* (1710), *Schema Sacrum* (1710), and *Methodus Evangelica* (1712), all of which presented a rational approach to Christianity.⁵⁶ The latter, which sought to give “the true scriptural-rational way of preaching the gospel”, stands as the fullest example of the view of gospel proclamation held by an opponent of the Marrow.⁵⁷

55 Lachman, 163.

56 Thomas Blackwell, *Ratio Sacra or an Appeal unto the Rational World about the Reasonableness of Revealed Religion* (Edinburgh: Heirs and Sons of A. Anderson, 1710); *Schema Sacrum or, Sacred Scheme of Natural and Revealed Religion* (Edinburgh: Heirs and Sons of Andrew Anderson, 1710); *Methodus Evangelica or a Modest Essay Upon the True Scriptural-Rational Way of Preaching the Gospel...* (London: Printed for N. Cliff and D. Jackson at the Bible and three Crowns near Mercers Chappel in Cheapside, 1712).

57 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 1.

1. The Atonement

Thomas Blackwell makes his view of the doctrine of the atonement clear in the second and third parts of his *Methodus Evangelica*, which consist of “the right method of preaching” and “holding forth the matter of gospel doctrines”.⁵⁸ As a “motive towards persuading men to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ” Blackwell states

First, The greatness of Christ’s love to sinners would be insisted upon: and as appearing, 1. In his incarnation... his estate of humiliation... 2. In his astonishing submission and obedience unto the cursed, ignomious and torturing death of the cross; in undergoing which, the whole of the wrath and punishment, due to the souls and bodies of the whole of the elect, upon their sins, was inflicted upon him, and born by him, Isa. 53.6.⁵⁹

The extent of this penal and substitutionary atonement having been defined as particular to the elect, Blackwell also explained the necessity of the atoning work “of such a mediator as Christ”.⁶⁰ It lay in the reality of “vindictive justice being essential to God, which therefore necessarily required full and compleat satisfaction... and... from the impossibility of finite man’s satisfying the offended justice of an infinite God”.⁶¹ Blackwell described Christ’s priestly work, which

can reconcile guilty sinners to God, and provide them with a perfect righteousness, in order to their being intituled unto eternal life, is so manifest in his undergoing the curse, and obeying perfectly the precepts of the law in the elect’s name and room... [it is the ground] of the justification of a believing sinner by the imputation of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 5.21.⁶²

58 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 2-3.

59 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 77-78.

60 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 176.

61 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 176.

62 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 79-80.

To Blackwell, Christ's "undergoing the curse" and "obeying perfectly the precepts of the law" were the "virtue of his passive and active obedience" by which he "can reconcile him [the believer] to God, and cloath him with a perfect righteousness".⁶³

Similar to many of the other Scottish divines of his day, Blackwell viewed the doctrine of the atonement in the framework of federal theology, and in a manner consistent with the received Confessions and Catechisms of the Church of Scotland. However, unlike many of his contemporaries during the era of the Marrow controversy, who stressed the covenant of works and of grace, the first and second Adam, Blackwell laid stress on a three covenant view, mentioning primarily the covenant of redemption in relation to doctrine of the atonement and the proclamation of the gospel.⁶⁴ Blackwell described this as Christ's "eternal designation by the Father unto the mediatory office, with the mutual covenant of redemption ensuing thereupon",⁶⁵ but said little more on the topic in his works in terms of

explaining the covenant of redemption betwixt Jehovah and the Mediator; [as] the subject is so plainly and fully revealed in the Scriptures, both as to the parties of the covenant, and the rise of the said transaction, and the mutual stipulations betwixt the said parties, that there is no need of any enlargement.⁶⁶

2. Saving Faith

Thomas Blackwell's view of saving faith (along with the offer of the gospel) is characterized to a large degree by the descriptive title he gave to *Methodus Evangelica*, "the true scriptural-rational way of preaching the gospel".⁶⁷ While some scholars, such as Philip Ryken, have argued that past "interpretations [of the Marrow controversy] suffer

63 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 188.

64 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 172, 175-176.

65 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 175.

66 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 175.

67 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 1.

from a failure to provide much explicit evidence for a connection between early eighteenth-century figures and moderatism proper”, and that “historians have again (mis)-characterized the Marrow controversy as a conflict between evangelicals and Moderates”, Blackwell’s rational approach to both life and doctrine presents intriguing evidence that the roots of Moderatism do indeed lie, at least in part, among the neo-nomian Church of Scotland majority, even prior to the beginning of the Marrow controversy.⁶⁸

Blackwell stressed rational method and order in preaching. The right method of preaching, according to his *Methodus Evangelica*, was a persuasively ordered presentation of gospel doctrine and application, with method shaping content, rather than exposition and application of a Scripture passage. On numerous occasions, Blackwell speaks of series of truths forming “proper topicks for motives” to convince the hearer and goes on to make statements similar to the following:

the reasonableness of these... towards persuading sinners to embrace Christ, will the more appear, if we consider, that before the rational human soul will make a cordial choice of an invisible Christ, man must first have some clear account of the excellency of the object and of the goodwill of the person...⁶⁹

This theme of rational choice and persuasion is prominent in Blackwell’s work. He stresses which considerations he believes have “more of a gaining influence... with the rational soul” and which topics have the greatest “reasonableness”.⁷⁰ The fact that Blackwell sees man as “a rational being, endued with a strong principle of self-

68 Philip G. Ryken, *Thomas Boston as Preacher of the Fourfold State* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1999), 43-49. For further discussion of Moderatism and its development see John R. McIntosh’s work *Church and Theology in Enlightenment Scotland: The Popular Party, 1740-1800* (Phantassie, East Linton, East Lothian: Scottish Historical Review and Tuckwell Press, 1998) along with I.D.L. Clark, *Moderatism and the Moderate Party in the Church of Scotland, 1752-1805* (Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis, 1963). Ryken follows Clark in arguing that “Moderatism proper” was a mid to late eighteenth-century development. Ryken, 43.

69 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 74-75.

70 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 77.

preservation, and an innate desire towards happiness” is foundational to understanding his call to saving faith in Christ, as well as his approach to saving faith itself.⁷¹ Yet, at the same time, he puts substantial emphasis on the spiritual impotency of the unbeliever in developing faith, stressing that there is no ability in man to come to Christ of himself. Blackwell describes “the absolute impotency [man] is under as to recovering himself” and the necessity of declaring “the full import of man’s lapsed condition”.⁷² It is Christ, in his mediatorial office, who “most kindly directs them to acknowledge their impotency, and thereupon to ask his quickening and converting power”.⁷³

The rational method of preaching is ultimately to focus on “holding forth Christ, as the proper object of saving justifying faith”.⁷⁴ Blackwell seeks to further elucidate the nature of saving justifying faith in various ways. In some cases it could simply be a cry from the heart to God for mercy.⁷⁵ Yet more often he describes saving faith in hearers of the gospel as “falling in love with and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ”, and making “the wisest and best choice of all others in the world”.⁷⁶ There must be “an assenting act, by which the person solidly believeth the truth of the gospel report and promise... and so likewise there must be a consenting and embracing act”.⁷⁷ Along with the emphasis on

71 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 75.

72 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 145.

73 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 81.

74 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 172.

75 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 67.

76 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 72-74.

77 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 88.

acts of assent, rational choice, and love, as elements of saving faith, Blackwell often describes saving faith as obedience to the gospel command or duty.⁷⁸ He states,

[the Lord] knowing their inability to answer and obey the gospel, as being absolutely dead in sin, he most kindly directs them to acknowledge their impotency, and thereupon to ask his quickening and converting power, by which they may be enabled to obey the two great gospel commands relative to faith and repentance, Ezek. 36.26,37.⁷⁹

Blackwell's description of saving faith as obedience to the gospel command stood acceptably within the parameters of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms in itself. Yet, the recurrent emphasis on saving faith as obedience, when considered in context with his stress on the necessity of the development of a preparatory experience and acknowledgement of spiritual impotency, prior to a full and free gospel offer, appears to indicate a hyper-Calvinistic, if not a neo-nomian tendency. Blackwell's description of the function of saving faith, and its relationship to other aspects of the application of redemption in the believer, present further insight into his view of saving faith. He often uses the language of the "necessity of faith, repentance, and new obedience, in order to salvation" – phraseology echoed in the 1720 and 1722 Acts of Assembly.⁸⁰ David Lachman, in his dissertation, notes that Blackwell's language of "sincere repentance towards God, sound faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with a sincere universal practical respect unto the divine precepts... as the grand necessary gospel-terms and

78 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 81.

79 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 81-82.

80 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 79-80. The Marrow brethren in their *Representation and Petition* noted their concern with the following statement of the 8th Act of Assembly of 1720: "of free justification, through our blessed Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ, received by faith alone; and of the necessity of a holy life, in order to the obtaining of everlasting happiness". The concern was over the words "in order to" which they saw as being "of very dangerous consequence to the doctrine of free grace" and as giving "shelter to the erroneous doctrine of justification for something wrought in, or done by the sinner, as his righteousness, or keeping of the new and gospel law" especially as a "motion made expressly to the Assembly, for mentioning the righteousness of Christ in that case, was slighted". *Representation and Petition*, 40-41.

prerequisites, in order to the accomplishment of the great salvation'... at very least can be said to be other than that used by the Marrow brethren".⁸¹

According to Blackwell, the convinced and burdened sinner, "making serious essays towards this important gospel-duty", was to be encouraged that God is showing them their "own absolute impotency to turn themselves" and will subsequently "oftentimes greatly enlarge the soul, so that faith, repentance, and new obedience become most pleasant performances unto them".⁸² Blackwell's statements reveal his view of conviction of sin and repentance in "the convinced sinner", or the sinner "truly sensible", as prerequisite to saving faith, and both of these, together with new obedience, as prerequisites to salvation.⁸³

3. The Gospel Offer

In the right method of preaching the gospel, Blackwell argues "that great closeness [will] be studied in the applicatory part of sermons, towards the bringing home of gospel truths unto the conscience".⁸⁴ This means that "the various spiritual conditions of congregations" as well as individuals are considered.⁸⁵ Blackwell goes on to state that "the grand ends and designs of the glorious gospel are three... 1. The conversion; and, 2. The edification of the elect; and, 3. The rendering unbelieving impenitent sinners greatly inexcusable".⁸⁶ In seeking the conversion of the elect by preaching to the unconverted, Blackwell states that both the "Malady and the Remedy, would be most particularly

81 Lachman, 178; Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 10.

82 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 90.

83 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 80-83.

84 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 46.

85 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 46.

86 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 145.

declared... the full import of man's lapsed condition... great sinfulness... depth of misery... and the absolute impotency he is under as to recovering himself".⁸⁷ The goal of declaring "the malady" would be that

there would be an inferring their dead and unconverted state, together with the necessity of regeneration... these things being premised towards the conviction of the sinfulness of nature, there would also be something insisted on, towards the causing the blind unconverted sinners clearly to discern the great sinfulness of their life and conversation... laying open the greatness of the wrath and misery into which sinful man is fallen... it is only the sick (i.e.) the convinced humbled sinner, that will seek for and value the Physician.⁸⁸

Blackwell goes on to state that "after all these considerations towards proclaiming the misery of a natural state... it may be found most proper at the close of such sermons, to take off the several secret reasonings, by which Satan endeavors to elude the force of the most alarming arguments... such as that the wicked greatly prosper".⁸⁹ While to this point it appears that Blackwell does not see the gospel offer as necessary in all sermons, he continues in the following chapter on Christ "as remedy" to state that "the law ought not to be preached without the gospel, lest awakened consciences run to extremes".⁹⁰ Further explaining this cautioning he advises

to give at least some short hints or other of the rich and free grace of the gospel, lest there should be some awaken'd Jaylor or other, who through Satan's devices should be in hazard of running into the greatest extreams, Acts 16. 29,30,31... therefore a wise mixture of law and gospel (tho' fatal in the matter of justification) yet is certainly what promiseth most both towards conviction and conversion.⁹¹

87 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 148-149.

88 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 150-151, 164.

89 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 163.

90 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 174.

91 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 174.

Once sinners are “in some measure instructed and convinced, with respect to their sinful and miserable condition” the preacher is to engage in the “proper method for preaching Christ, as the Saviour of lost sinners”.⁹² Here, Christ is to be declared in his “eternal designation by the Father unto the mediatory office”, his role of fulfilling the covenant of redemption, his “wonderful person and natures”, and “his suitable and all-sufficient offices”.⁹³ Through the “saving illumination” of Christ’s prophetic work, and under the power of his kingly work, his priestly work is savingly displayed to the elect.⁹⁴ Blackwell states this “causeth the soul spiritually to discern the import of gospel truths, so as to receive them with faith and love, and without further delay, fall in with the two great gospel precepts of faith and new obedience”.⁹⁵ While the law to conviction of sin is personally applied and emphasized in Blackwell’s method, the offer of the gospel, even with his emphasis on the love and majesty of Christ, appears primarily in an explanatory form, descriptive of the doctrinal truths in the person and work of Christ. Christ is shown as the perfect rational solution to the sinner’s needs, yet the *Methodus Evangelica* does not advocate a gospel offer of Christ personally directed and applied to the hearers.

John Willison

John Willison (1680-1750) was an evangelical Calvinist who, despite later voicing sympathy for the Marrow brethren, stood among those who sided with the Assembly in its Acts against *The Marrow*.⁹⁶ Born in 1680 near Stirling, Willison was ordained to the

92 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 175.

93 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 175.

94 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 179.

95 Blackwell, *Methodus Evangelica...*, 179.

96 David Lachman states “the high repute of Willison as a leader of the evangelicals who remained in the Church of Scotland in the years following the Secession makes his stance in regard to the Marrow one of considerable significance... his *Fair and*

ministry in 1703 in Brechin, where he served for fifteen years. In 1718 he moved to Dundee, ministering there until his death in 1750.⁹⁷ Willison worked hard to try to prevent the Secession, attempting to reconcile the parties and persuade the seceding brethren to return. During his ministry he wrote and published on numerous occasions between 1712 and 1746, his sermons and other writings becoming widely popular among Scottish Presbyterians.⁹⁸

1. The Atonement

John Willison's view of the doctrine of the atonement is rooted in the federal theology described in detail in his *Sacramental Catechism* (1720) and *Five Sacramental Sermons* (1722). Willison speaks of the covenant of works, covenant of redemption, and covenant of grace.⁹⁹ Willison states that Adam, as federal head, broke the covenant of

Impartial Testimony touches on the Marrow Controversy at two points... The heart of his objection to the Marrow brethren: they had abandoned what to him were the 'old approven' ways of speaking and began using new ones... They recommended a book which, while not without some value, taught various Antinomian errors and was of some danger to the church... These errors of *The Marrow* were rightly condemned by the General Assembly". Lachman goes on to note that later Willison "retracted this praise in respect to the 1722 Assembly's defence of holiness as being necessary to salvation" not having read it at the time, but now coming to see it was not well worded in terms of its inferring causality between the necessity of holiness and salvation. Lachman, 193-195.

97 W.M. Hetherington, "An Essay on the Life and Times of the Rev. John Willison" in *The Practical Works of the Rev. John Willison* (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1844), vii.

98 These included *Queries to the Scots Innovators in Divine Service* (1712), *Treatise concerning the Sanctification of the Lord's Day* (1712), *A Sacramental Directory, or Treatise concerning the Sanctification of a Communion Sabbath* (1716), *An Apology for the Church of Scotland against the accusation of prelatists* (1719), *Sacramental Catechism* (1720), *Five Communion Sermons* (1722), *The Church's Danger* (1733), *Afflicted Man's Companion* (1737), *Example of Plain Catechising* (1737), *The Balm of Gilead* (1742), *A Fair and Impartial Testimony* (1744), and *Popery Another Gospel* (1746). Hetherington, ix-xx.

99 Lachman argues that Willison held to a two-covenant view (covenant of works, covenant of grace). However, this does not appear correct in light of Willison's writings.

works. This meant that while “we by our own fault have lost our strength to obey, yet God doth not thereby lose his just right to demand what belongs to him”.¹⁰⁰ “Every natural man and unbeliever” remains under the full force of the covenant of works, “obliged to perform its condition, viz. perfect obedience, and also to undergo the penalty for breaking it”.¹⁰¹ As a result we “are doomed to wrath and destruction” as “though we by our own fault have lost the strength to obey, yet God doth not thereby lose his just right to demand what belongs to him”.¹⁰² The broken covenant of works creates the necessity of the atonement for man. Willison states the only solution is found “by taking hold of the new covenant, and flying to its Mediator and Surety for the payment of our debt”.¹⁰³

Willison goes on to explain the nature and extent of the atonement in describing the “gracious new covenant” by which “God of his own free-grace, from all eternity, hath elected some to be redeemed and saved”.¹⁰⁴ He states this “gracious new covenant” is two-fold, made of

1. The covenant made from eternity with Christ, in name of the elect, commonly called the covenant of redemption.
2. The covenant of reconciliation, made in time with the elect in Christ, commonly called the covenant of grace.¹⁰⁵

The covenant of redemption is that

...eternal and gracious agreement in the counsel of the glorious Trinity, upon the foresight of man’s fall, for the redemption and recovery of elect sinners:

100 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism* (1720) in *The Practical Works of the Rev. John Willison* (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1844), 448.

101 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 448.

102 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 448.

103 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 448.

104 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 449.

105 Willison buttresses his three covenant view in response to the question: “Doth the word of God give any ground for this distinction?” His reply is “Yes, Psal. lxxxix. 3, &c; Isa. lix. 21”. Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 449.

wherein God the Father, out of his infinite mercy, gave a certain number of fallen mankind to God the Son, as their federal representative and surety, to be by him redeemed and saved: and for this end, demanding of him that he should assume their nature, and in their room satisfy divine justice, by paying their whole debt both of obedience and suffering, the which they were obliged to do by the covenant of works: and also, that he should undertake to gather all the lost elect and bring them unto God.¹⁰⁶

Willison's explanation of the covenant of redemption comprehends Christ's atoning work in its penal substitutionary nature and its particular extent.

Willison further elucidates his understanding of the covenant of redemption and the doctrine of the atonement in his *An Example of Plain Catechising on the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (1737).¹⁰⁷ Here, in his commentary on the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, he explains that the "surety-righteousness of Christ" was made up of "his active and passive obedience".¹⁰⁸ Christ's active obedience is "the perfect obedience he gave to the precepts of the law in his holy life, which is imputed to believers; seeing by the obedience of this one man many are made righteous, Rom. v. 19".¹⁰⁹ The passive obedience of Christ is "his suffering the penalties of the law due to us for our sin, whereby he gave perfect satisfaction to the justice of God".¹¹⁰ These two aspects of the atoning work of Christ are seen by Willison as being essential to a full understanding of the biblical doctrine of the atonement.

In his federal theology Willison views the covenant of redemption as larger than, and encompassing, the covenant of grace. Where the covenant of redemption is made up

106 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 449-450.

107 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising on the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (1737) in *The Practical Works of the Rev. John Willison* (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1844), 593-727.

108 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising*, 644.

109 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising*, 644.

110 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising*, 644.

of those things “required of, and promised to Christ as the elect’s surety and representative”, or the accomplishment of redemption, the covenant of grace is “the things promised to and required of the elect themselves”, and focuses on the application of redemption.¹¹¹ Thus it is the covenant of grace that explains the application of Christ’s atoning work to “elect sinners in Christ”,¹¹² truths which are essential to both Willison’s view of saving faith and the gospel offer.

2. Saving Faith

John Willison’s view of the doctrine of saving faith is clearly stated in both his *A Sacramental Catechism* (1720) and his *An Example of Plain Catechising on the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism* (1737). In the former he states that saving faith is

... a grace, or special gift of God to his elect, wrought in their hearts by the Spirit and word of God: whereby they, being convinced of sin and misery, and of their own inability to recover themselves out of their lost estate, do not only assent to the truth of God’s records concerning Christ in his word, but also receive and rest upon Christ and his righteousness, for pardon of sin and salvation, according as he is offered in the gospel, Eph. i. 12, 13, 19; ii. 8; Acts xvi. 30; x. 43; I John v. 10, 11; John i. 12; Phil. iii. 9.¹¹³

Willison also explains the role of faith in its relationship to other aspects of the application of redemption to man. “Faith is the spring and first motion of all the rest of the sacramental graces, love, repentance, thankfulness, holy desires, and new obedience. It excites them, affords matter to them, and sets them all a-work, Lam. v. 2-4; 2 Pet. i. 5”.¹¹⁴ Faith, Willison argues, comes logically prior to both repentance and new obedience, which

111 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 451.

112 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 450.

113 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 501.

114 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 502. Willison’s view of the relationship of faith to repentance and new obedience is distinctly different from that of Blackwell and Hadow, and arguably stands in conflict with the 1722 Assembly’s statement of holiness being necessary “in order to” salvation, as Willison himself later came to realize. See page 54-55 note 96 for further discussion on this point.

are seen as the fruits of faith. In regard to the relation of faith and assurance, Willison sees “assurance of God’s love” as “a benefit which... accompanies or flows from justification, adoption, and sanctification”.¹¹⁵ This assurance is not essential to faith, though “the command of God enjoins all Christians to seek after it”.¹¹⁶ In speaking of the role of faith Willison is careful to note that while in the covenant of works Adam’s obedience “was a condition in a proper sense, which gave him a right to life”, faith in the covenant of grace is not a condition “in a strict and proper sense”.¹¹⁷ Yet faith may be called a condition if this is understood “in a more general sense” where it is seen as “the only mean or instrument for applying the righteousness of Christ to us”.¹¹⁸

Both faith and its fruits are worked in the soul as it is regenerated by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the gospel, so that faith is “attended with true repentance”, humility, contentment, honouring Christ, obedience, fruitfulness, love, purity, holiness, and prayer.¹¹⁹ Thus, while “faith is an act of the believing soul”, at the same time we cannot “produce faith, or believe of ourselves... scripture makes it God’s gift... and the Spirit’s work”.¹²⁰ All of this in turn flows from the covenant of grace. Willison explains the covenant of grace, and its implications, as

God’s free and gracious paction with elect sinners in Christ, proposed to and made with them in the gospel: wherein, according to his eternal compact with Christ their surety, and for the sake of his mediation and merits, he graciously and immutably promiseth pardon, peace, grace, and glory to them. Particularly, he promiseth, in an absolute manner, to grant them the blessings of vocation, faith, regeneration, and the other means of

115 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising*, 648.

116 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising*, 648.

117 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising*, 623-624.

118 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising*, 624.

119 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 502.

120 Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising*, 640.

salvation... in order to their obtaining of the pardon of sin, the adoption of children, and eternal life (all which blessings are purchased by Christ), he requires of them that they believe “in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ,” and accept of him with all the benefits of this covenant, by a true and lively faith, which they are called to show forth by a sincere repentance, and study of new obedience. All which gracious promises and demands, the elect in due time, upon God’s call, cordially acquiesce in, accept of, and give consent to... through the grace and strength of Christ their surety, according to his eternal engagement for them, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; Heb. viii. 10; John i. 12; iii. 16; Jam. ii. 18, 22; John vi. 37, 44, 45...¹²¹

3. The Gospel Offer

Where the application of redemption is rooted in the covenant of grace as a subset of the covenant of redemption, Willison also views the gospel offer as intimately connected to, and rooted in, the covenant of grace, and ultimately the covenant of redemption. This is evident in his definition of the covenant of grace “as God’s free and gracious paction with elect sinners in Christ, proposed to and made with them in the gospel”.¹²² Willison repeatedly speaks of the covenant of grace “as promulgated to them [the elect] in the gospel”.¹²³ In delineating the difference between the covenant of redemption and covenant of grace, Willison again speaks distinctly of the gospel offer as being the proclamation of the covenant of grace:

Our blessed Redeemer, Christ, graciously placed himself as the elect’s representative in the covenant of redemption, transacted with God the creditor for the payment of their debt, and made a most advantageous bargain for them. But it being without the elect’s knowledge, it was necessary that their consent should be had to this treaty and method of salvation; wherefore God is pleased to cause it to be promulgated and proposed to them in the gospel, for the gaining of their consent. And God’s voice to them in the gospel is to this effect: “Are you content with what Christ my Son hath engaged and done in your name? Are you willing to quit all other methods of salvation, and come to me through a Mediator, and rely wholly upon his righteousness? Are you satisfied with the remedy provided for you in the covenant of redemption?” O, saith the poor soul

121 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 450.

122 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 450.

123 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 451.

(being determined thereto by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is, according to the foresaid formal agreement, to apply the remedy prepared by Christ), “This is a most noble method of salvation; I am well pleased with the eternal treaty and the execution of it, with the Mediator and his righteousness, and the great and precious promises made to me in him: I renounce all other ways of salvation, and rely entirely on Christ to bring me to God”. And this is that which we call the covenant of grace.¹²⁴

Willison continues on to state that “the tenor of the covenant of grace, as proposed to the elect in the gospel, is, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt not perish in thy sins, but have everlasting life,’ Isa. liii. 10; John iii. 16”.¹²⁵

While the content of the gospel offer is what Willison has described as the covenant of grace in Christ, and this offer is one of clear promises and encouragements to come to Christ, his discussion of the covenant of grace and gospel offer is often framed as being made or “proposed to the elect”.¹²⁶ This leads to the question whether Willison’s gospel offer was personally directed to all hearers of the preaching of the Word, or only to those who showed evidences of election, a view held by a number of his contemporaries in the Church of Scotland. The beginnings of the answer are found in his discussion of whether the covenant of grace is universal. Willison states, “No; it is only made and entered into with such as accept the offers and terms of it, and these are none but the elect, Isa. lv. 3; Ezek. xi. 19, 20; Heb. viii. 10; Rom. ix. 4; xi. 5, 7”.¹²⁷ While this might appear as a confirmation of a tendency towards hyper-Calvinism, Willison goes on to clarify by

124 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 451. It is interesting to note that while Willison does state that assurance is not essential to faith, he does nonetheless speak of saving faith as including the understanding that “the great and precious promises” of the gospel “are made to me in him [Christ]”; language akin to that of the supporters of *The Marrow* in their argument that a type of assurance, or fiducial appropriation, was in fact of the essence of faith.

125 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 452.

126 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 452.

127 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 455.

making a distinction between those with whom the covenant of grace is made, and those to whom it is offered. Willison states

Christ and the benefits of this covenant are tendered to all that hear the gospel, without exception: and this is plain from the many general calls and invitations of Christ to lost sinners, with the promises thereto annexed, which we have recorded; together with his preemptory commands, that require every man to come to him, and believe in him, and that under the pain of damnation, Prov. i. 20-23; viii. 1-5; Isaiah xlv. 22; lv. 1; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Acts ii. 38, 39; Rev. Iii. 17, 18; xxii. 17.¹²⁸

Willison further negates any appearance of a hyper-Calvinistic tendency as he goes on to emphasize his commitment to what he sees as the biblical warrant for the universal offer of the gospel, or covenant of grace in his following two questions and answers:

Q. Have all men, even the worst, sufficient warrant from these general calls, commands, and promises to come to Christ, and take hold of this covenant, with all its benefits and promises?

A. Yes; they may do it warrantably, without any fear of presumption, firmly expecting welcome upon their coming. Nay, they heinously sin against God and their own souls, if they neglect to do it, Isa. li. 3-5; John iv. 37; Heb. ii. 3; iv. 1, 2.

Q. Why is this covenant offered and tendered to all the hearers of the gospel indefinitely, seeing it is only made with a certain number of them, viz. the elect?

A. Because it hath so pleased a wise and sovereign God, who doth all things, "according to the counsel of his will," and is not bound to give an account of his matters. Yet, we may adventure to say, that he doth it for these ends; namely that he may proclaim the sufficiency and perfection of Christ's ransom, together with the freeness and fulness of divine grace, as a sufficient foundation for all to believe, and flee to Christ for refuge. And also, that by this method the elect may be gathered out of the multitude, and the refusers of Christ be left without excuse, Eph. ii. 11; Job xxxiii. 13; Matt. xx. 16; Luke xv. 22; Heb. ii. 3; xi. 13, 14.¹²⁹

The freeness and universality of the gospel offer, as shown by Willison to be warranted in Scripture, is also evident in his sermons and other writings. In his *Sacramental Directory* (1716) Willison proclaims that

since the gospel offers Christ to all that hear it, and the call and command to receive and embrace Christ as a Saviour is given to all and every one, even

128 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 455.

129 Willison, *A Sacramental Catechism*, 456.

the vilest of sinners; you have full warrant to lay hold on him for pardon, and flee to him for mercy... O be persuaded then to do the work that is most acceptable to God, and obey his great command of believing upon the name of his Son... consider what an unspeakable mercy and happiness it is to you, to enjoy the free offers of Jesus Christ, and to have God commanding you to receive him... consider how near you are to Christ and mercy. The remedy is prepared, and salvation is brought to your very door... Consider how importunate Christ is in his offers, and how much he presseth you to receive him.¹³⁰

Willison preaches that the “love of a crucified Christ” is like “a banner lifted up and displayed in the gospel for inviting and engaging sinners to come to him”.¹³¹ Whether in exhortation or in encouragement, Willison’s view of the gospel offer is well summed in his sacramental sermon *The Happiness of Being in Covenant with God*:

I here, in my great Lord and Master’s name, make offer of God’s covenant to all of you, be what you will, gospel-slighters, rebels against God, graceless and profane sinners, carnal and earthly-minded souls, hypocrites, formalists, backsliders, weary and heavy laden sinners, doubting and discouraged souls; I exhort and beseech you all to come and take hold of God’s covenant, make choice of God for your God and portion, and Jesus Christ for your Mediator and Peace-maker with God, and resign yourselves freely to God in Christ. O sinners, the covenant is free, the call is pressing, the offer is great, the bargain excellent.¹³²

The writings of John Willison display a pervasive evangelical warmth and passion in freely offering the gospel to all. As such he illustrates that there were some evangelical Calvinists in the early 18th century Church of Scotland, who, despite being theologically similar to the Marrow brethren, numbered themselves among their opponents. This raises the question: why would an individual like Willison side with the condemnation of the Marrow? The reasons for this appear to be a combination of concern over changes in

130 Willison, *A Sacramental Directory* (1716) in *The Practical Works of the Rev. John Willison* (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1844), 179-181.

131 Willison, *Sermon on Cant. ii. 4* (1747) in *The Practical Works of the Rev. John Willison* (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1844), 303.

132 Willison, *The Happiness of Being in Covenant with God* [Sermon II] in *Five Sacramental Sermons* (1722) in *The Practical Works of the Rev. John Willison* (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1844), 316-324.

terminology, fear of antinomianism, a desire to maintain the unity of the church, and at times a failure to adequately consider, or even read, the documents and statements of the controversy.¹³³ Support for David Lachman's similar conclusion is found in Willison's *Fair and Impartial Testimony* (1744), where he briefly gives commentary on the controversy, stating "there were several stumbling and unjustifiable expressions in that book called the *Marrow*".¹³⁴ Though he fails to elucidate further, it is clear that there were supporters of a gracious, free, and universal gospel offer, who expressed concern with at least some of the language used in the *Marrow*.

133 See p. 33 note 127 and p. 36 note 145 for discussion of Willison's stance regarding the Marrow controversy.

134 John Willison, *A Fair and Impartial Testimony* (Pittsburgh: Zadok Cramer, 1808), 88-89.

CHAPTER 4

IEWS OF THE GOSPEL AND ITS PROCLAMATION: SUPPORTERS OF *THE MARROW*

The supporters of *The Marrow*, in their promotion of the work, and response to the decisions of the General Assembly, present what is fairly seen as a view of the gospel and its proclamation representative of the more evangelical minority of Church of Scotland ministers during the early 1700's. In order to gain understanding of their view of the gospel and its proclamation, and define the contours and content of Marrow theology in its Scottish context, this section will examine two representative documents of the Marrow brethren as a whole: *The Representation and Petition*, and *Answers to the Said Queries*. A subsequent examination of select writings of three leading figures among the supporters of *The Marrow*, James Hog, Thomas Boston, and Robert Riccaltoun, will enable a fuller analysis of the view of the gospel and its proclamation, the Marrow theology, held by the Marrow supporters.

The Marrow Brethren: Representation and Answers to Queries

The *Representation and Petition* was the appeal against the 1720 Acts of Assembly put forward by the leading ministers, often referred to as the Marrow brethren, who supported the publication of *The Marrow*. The twelve subscribers to the *Representation and Petition* were James Hog, Thomas Boston, John Bonar, John Williamson, James Kid, Gabriel Wilson, Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, James Wardlaw, Henry Davidson, James Bathgate, and William Hunter.¹ Their response to the 1720 Acts of Assembly was rooted in the conviction that “by their act... gospel truth has suffered, and it is likely will suffer more in the rising and succeeding generations, unless a remedy be timely

¹ *The Representation and Petition of us under-subscribing, Ministers of the Gospel* (Edinburgh: 1721), 42.

provided”.² The continuing ecclesiastical debate led to the twelve being summoned to respond to twelve queries put to them by the Assembly. Their response was *The Answers to the Said Queries*, signed by eleven of the twelve.³ While there were other Marrow supporters, such as Robert Riccaltoun, who did not actively take part in the formation of these documents, they stand as representative of the Marrow brethren and their supporters.

1. The Atonement

The Marrow brethren were quick to respond to the assertion of the Assembly that the offer of the gospel, as presented in *The Marrow*, clearly implied or necessitated “an universal redemption as to purchase”.⁴ In their *Representation and Petition* they argued that “so far as we can find, there are several of these quotations which seem to us to contain nothing of what is charged upon them, as particularly... upon the head of universal atonement, pages 127, 128”.⁵ The same is evident in *The Answers to Said Queries* where the brethren respond to the charge that the language of “the Father’s making a deed of gift and grant of Christ unto all mankind” is one which requires and implies an atonement which is universal in its extent. The brethren state

...by the deed of gift and grant to all mankind, we understand no more than the revelation of the divine will in the word, affording warrant to offer Christ to all, and a warrant to all to receive him: For although we believe the purchase and application of redemption to be peculiar to the elect, who were given by the Father to Christ in the counsel of peace; yet the warrant to receive him is common to all.⁶

2 *The Representation and Petition...*, 24.

3 John Bonar being ill and unable to take part. *Queries, Agreed unto by the Commission of the General Assembly; ...Together with the Answers... to The said Queries* (Edinburgh: 1722), 84-86.

4 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland...1720*, 429.

5 *The Representation and Petition...*, 37.

6 *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 73-74.

Thus the argument for a full and free gospel offer was presented in harmony with, and holding to, the doctrine of particular atonement.

In regard to the nature of the atonement, the Marrow brethren also viewed this doctrine in the terms of federal theology. Where the first man, Adam, had broken the covenant of works, could no longer fulfill it, and remained under its penalty, the second Man, Christ, fulfilled the “twofold demand” of “the law or covenant of works” in fulfilling both the “demand of satisfaction to justice for sin” and “the demand of obedience”.⁷ Thus, the atoning work of Christ placed the believer under the covenant of grace, rather than works: “This is the believer’s plea, viz. Christ’s most perfect obedience to the law for him, in answer unto its demand of good works for obtaining salvation, according to the tenor of the first covenant”.⁸ Christ’s fulfillment of “the demand of obedience” in his atoning work was seen as fundamental by the Marrow brethren, and particularly so as the prevailing approach to holiness and obedience in the Church of Scotland, as stated by the Assembly, saw believers as remaining under the law as a covenant of life, “declaring that distinction of the law as it is the law of works, and as it is the law of Christ, as the author applies it, pages 198, 199, to be altogether groundless”.⁹ To the Marrow brethren, this approach, with its threatenings of hell and motivations of heaven to the believer, negated the “believer’s safety and comfort” as found in the active obedience of Christ.¹⁰ The obedience of Christ meant

that the guilt of believer’s sins, is not such as the guilt of their sins who are under the covenant of works; - that God doth not look upon the sins of believers after their union with Christ, as breaches of the covenant of

⁷ *Representation and Petition...*, 28-29.

⁸ *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 37-38.

⁹ *Representation and Petition...*, 26.

¹⁰ *Representation and Petition...*, 27.

works... when in his anger against them for their sins, he smites them, yet he doth not proceed against them in the way of that covenant, and that in their confessions, and addresses for pardon, fastings, mournings, and humiliations, they ought to eye him as their Father in Jesus Christ, and not as their wrathful judge... believers being united to Christ, this their plea is sustained in the court of heaven, as the plea of the Surety's having paid the debt for them, whereby the demand which the law makes upon them for works, if they will obtain salvation, is cut off, they being appointed to obtain salvation another way, namely, by our Lord Jesus Christ...¹¹

Thus, the Marrow brethren argued, because the believer could assert “the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Surety” he could also assert that “Christ is my righteousness, my treasure, and my work. I confess, O law! That I am neither godly, nor righteous; but this I am sure of, that he is godly and righteous for me”.¹²

2. Saving Faith

The charges brought against the Marrow brethren led them to elucidate the doctrine of saving faith, particularly in its relation to assurance and obedience.¹³ The brethren argued that the criticisms by the Assembly in its 1720 Act regarding the doctrine of faith expressed in *The Marrow* meant that “thereby that act of faith...is in effect excluded from

11 *Representation and Petition...*, 28.

12 *Representation and Petition...*, 28.

13 David Lachman, in his dissertation on the Marrow Controversy, argues that the Westminster Confession and Catechisms purposely left room for disagreement on the relation of faith and assurance, allowing both a Reformation view which tended to inseparability of faith and assurance, and a view tending to a separation of faith and assurance found more increasingly during the Westminster Assembly and the latter part of the 17th century. Lachman also argues that the Marrow brethren marked a return to this reformational view of faith and assurance. However this argument in regard to the Marrow brethren runs counter to the perspective held by the Marrow brethren themselves, who while they acknowledged developments in approach to the doctrine of faith and assurance as stated in the Westminster Assembly, presented the argument that these were to be seen and interpreted in harmony and continuity with previously accepted Reformed teaching on the doctrine of faith and assurance. Lachman, 486. For further discussion on this point see: A.T.B. McGowan, *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1997), 194-202; William J.U. Philip, “The Marrow and the Dry Bones: Ossified Orthodoxy and the Battle for the Gospel in Eighteenth Century Scottish Calvinism,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15 (Spring 1997) 1: 33-35.

the nature of faith, which... is thereby turned into that general and doubtful faith abjured in our national covenant".¹⁴ In regard to the relationship of assurance to saving faith, the Marrow brethren argued that the church should view the Westminster Confession and Catechisms as standing in harmony with earlier Reformed Confessions as accepted by the Church of Scotland:¹⁵

...although we freely own, that in latter times saving faith has been well described, especially in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the manner of speaking on that head is much altered from what some time was in use, yet we doubt not but the substance of the doctrine in that point is still the same, as will appear by comparing the above mentioned Confession and Catechisms, with the three Acts of Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1647 and 1648, receiving and approving the Westminster Confession and Catechisms; in which it is expressly declared, 'That the said Confessions and Catechisms are in nothing contrary to the received doctrine of this Church;' which they would not have said, if they had not thought, that receiving and resting in Christ for salvation did imply that assurance, whereby they ordinarily described before that time, and by which they understood, the fiducial act, or appropriating persuasion of faith; and not that assurance treated of in the Westminster Confession, which is a complex one, full and clear, containing not only the assurance included in the direct act of faith, but also that which ariseth from spiritual sensation, and rational argumentation.¹⁶

This historical reality of an unchanged view of faith, which included an aspect of assurance, "the fiducial act, or appropriating persuasion", in its essence, led the brethren to declare,

we are fully persuaded, that the late Assembly [of 1720] had done more acceptable services to God, to this and other reformed churches, had they discovered the real agreement between the more ancient and more modern way of describing faith, than to condemn the former as erroneous; whereby a heavy charge is laid upon our reformers, this and other reformed churches, who generally have defined faith by assurance.¹⁷

14 *Representation and Petition...*, 29.

15 The brethren here mention the Confession of 1560, the Helvetian Confession (with exception to holy days), Calvin's Catechism, and John Davidson's Catechism. *Representation and Petition...*, 30.

16 *Representation and Petition...*, 30.

17 *Representation and Petition...*, 30-31.

The stance of the Marrow brethren on the nature of saving faith in relation to assurance was further elucidated in their answer to the Assembly's query "Is knowledge, belief, and persuasion that Christ died for me, and that he is mine, and that whatever he did and suffered, he did and suffered for me, the direct act of faith, whereby a sinner is united to Christ...? Or, is that knowledge of persuasion included in the very essence of faith?"¹⁸ Their response began by explaining the teaching of *The Marrow* which they saw as defining saving faith as "a real persuasion... an appropriating persuasion, or a persuasion with application to a person's self, that Christ is his... that you shall have life and salvation by him, namely, the life of holiness, as well as of happiness; salvation from sin as well as from wrath... that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you".¹⁹ Noting the definition of faith in the Shorter Catechism as, "A receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel", the Marrow brethren went on to list Reformed theologians from the days of the Reformation to the Synod of Dort, arguing "all of them, stand for their special *fiducia*, confidence, or appropriating persuasion of faith spoke of in the condemned passages of the Marrow".²⁰ Because of this, and despite the fact that "the way of speaking on this head is come to be somewhat altered", they stated "we cannot, we dare not consent unto the condemnation of that point of doctrine... and by so doing, yield up to Socinians, Arminians, and Papists, what all of them have a mortal aversion to, namely, the special *fiducia*, or appropriating persuasion of faith".²¹

18 *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 49.

19 *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 50-53.

20 *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 53-54.

21 *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 55.

The Marrow brethren also argued that the Scriptures themselves, in the words used “for expressing faith and believing, do import the confidence or persuasion in question”.²²

As a result, they stated,

we cannot but think, that confidence, or trust in Jesus Christ, as our Saviour, and the free grace and mercy of God in him as crucified, offered to us in the gospel for salvation... upon the ground and security of the divine faithfulness, plighted in the gospel promise... or... a persuasion of life and salvation, from the free love and mercy of God, in and through Jesus Christ; a crucified Saviour offered to us upon the security and warrant aforesaid, is the very direct, uniting, justifying and appropriating act of faith, whereby the convinced sinner becomes possessed of Christ and his saving benefits. ...This confidence, persuasion, or whatever other name it may be called by, we take to be the very same with what our Confession and Catechism call accepting, receiving, and resting on Christ offered in the gospel for salvation; and with what polemic and practical divines call *fiducia specialis misericordiae*, fiducial application, fiducial apprehension, fiducial adherence, recumbrance, affiance, fiducial acquiescence, appropriating persuasion, &c.²³

While the Marrow brethren clearly argued for an assurance, a *fiducia* or appropriating persuasion, belonging to the essence of saving faith, they sought to distinguish this from “a full persuasion and assurance, by reflection, spiritual argumentation, or inward sensation, which we are far from holding to be of the essence of faith... being mediate, and collected by inference”.²⁴ From their commentary it appears that their distinction of the two kinds of assurance was two-fold. The assurance belonging to faith was one which was rooted in the promises of the gospel, in Christ, and included personal appropriation and application of those promises. This assurance was essential to saving faith, always being present in some degree. In distinction from this, the full persuasion or full assurance which was not essential to saving faith, and could range from being minimally existent to abundantly present, was not only founded in the promises, but

22 *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 57.

23 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 58-62.

24 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 69.

also, and more particularly, in reflection on, and sensation of, the evidences of the promises as applied by the Spirit of God in the life of the believer. Thus while there was distinct difference, and certain similarity in the kinds of assurance, a primary difference between these two kinds of assurance was one of degree.

A second area elucidated by the Marrow brethren in their collective writing was the relationship between saving faith and holy obedience. The Assembly, in its *Queries*, asked

If a sinner, being justified, has all things at once that are necessary for salvation? And if personal holiness, and progress in holy obedience, is not necessary to a justified person's possession of glory, in case of his continuing in life after his justification?²⁵

The reply of the Marrow brethren began with a quote from Martin Luther, stating "in Christ I have all things at once; neither need I anything more that is necessary unto salvation".²⁶ They continued stating that the security, hope, and salvation of the believer is found in "Christ's perfect obedience to the law for him, in answer unto its demand of good works for obtaining salvation, according to the tenor of the first covenant".²⁷ Justification by faith alone was made clearly distinct from a life of obedience and holiness to God. This distinction was one which the Marrow brethren believed was threatened by the 1720 Acts of Assembly.²⁸

The brethren continued their reply by strongly affirming "a justified person has in Christ, at once, all things necessary to salvation, though of himself he has nothing" but were careful to note "personal holiness and justification [as] being inseparable in the believer".²⁹ Yet, even as they affirmed this necessity of holiness in the believer, they once

²⁵ *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 37.

²⁶ *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 37.

²⁷ *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 37.

²⁸ *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 37.

²⁹ *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 38.

again stressed the distinction between saving faith and holy obedience by explicitly denying that the necessity of personal holiness to salvation was to be understood in terms of causality: “if the meaning of the query be, of such a necessity of holy obedience, in order to the possession of glory, as imports any kind of causality, we dare not answer in the affirmative; for we cannot look on personal holiness, or good works, as properly federal and conditional means of obtaining the possession of heaven, though we own they are necessary to make us meet for it”.³⁰

3. The Gospel Offer

The Marrow brethren made it clear in the *Representation and Petition* that one of their main motives in responding to the Acts of Assembly was to protect “the purity of gospel-doctrine”.³¹ Their desire was to guard the gospel offer against a wrong understanding of conditions created by the confusion of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, “lest... man frustrate the grace of God, seeking righteousness by the law”.³² As a result they stressed the active obedience of Christ in his atoning work, and the distinction between saving faith and holy obedience in the believer. What was perhaps a unique development among the Marrow brethren was the language used to describe the foundation and extent of the gospel offer, particularly the phrase “the deed of gift and grant”. In the *Representation and Petition* the brethren stated their dismay

That the following passage is condemned, viz. The Father hath made a Deed of Gift and Grant unto all Mankind, That whosoever of them shall believe his Son, shall not perish, is surprising to us: When in the condemned passage it self, extracted forth of the sacred records, we read that Deed of Gift and Grant, by which we understand no more, but the Revelation of the Divine Will in the Word, affording a Warrant, to offer Christ to all, and a

30 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 41.

31 *Representation and Petition*, 2-3.

32 *Representation and Petition*, 3.

Warrant unto all to receive him. This Treatment of the said Passage, seems to inroach upon the Warrants aforesaid, and also upon sovereign Grace, which hath made this Grant, not to Devils, but unto Men, in Terms than which none can be imagined more extensive.³³

This explanation and defense by the Marrow brethren resulted in a query on the part of the Assembly which asked

Whether the revelation of divine will in the word, affording a warrant to offer Christ unto all, and a warrant to all to receive him, can be said to be the Father's making a deed of gift and grant of Christ unto all mankind? Is this grant made to all mankind by sovereign grace? And whether it is absolute or conditional?³⁴

The Assembly in seeking to discern what the brethren meant by stating that the warrant for the free offer of the gospel to all was found in "the Father's making a deed of gift and grant of Christ unto all mankind" appeared to continue to suspect that the brethren were propounding a gospel offer rooted in a theology that lay somewhere between universalism and Amyraldianism. The answer of the brethren evidenced an understanding of the gospel offer bound to a consistent, particularist Calvinism and cogently reflective of their federal theology:

We answer to the first part of the question, that by the deed of gift or grant unto all mankind, we understand no more than the revelation of the divine will in the word, affording warrant to offer Christ to all, and a warrant to all to receive him: For although we believe the purchase and application of redemption to be peculiar to the elect, who were given by the Father to Christ in the counsel of peace; yet the warrant to receive him is common to all: ministers, by virtue of the commission they have received from their great Lord and Master, are authorised and instructed to go to preach the gospel to every creature, i.e. To make a full, free, and unhampered offer of him, his grace, righteousness, and salvation, to every rational soul, to whom they may in providence have access to speak.³⁵

The brethren continued their answer and explanation of the warrant for the gospel offer with an exposition of John 3 stating that

33 *Representation and Peition*, 13-14.

34 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 72.

35 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 73-74.

by the giving of Christ, we understand not only his eternal destination by the Father, to be the Redeemer of an elect world, and his giving him unto the death for them, in the fulness of time; but more especially, a giving of him in the word, unto all, to be received and believed in: The giving here, cannot be a giving in possession, which is peculiar only unto them that actually believe, but it must be such a giving, granting, or offering, as warrants a man to believe or receive the gift; and must therefore be anterior to actual believing. This is evident enough from the text itself: He gave him, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, &c. The context also, to us, puts it beyond controversy; the brazen serpent was given, and lifted up, as a common good to the whole camp of Israel, that whosoever in all the camp, being stung by the fiery serpents, looked thereunto, might not die, but live: So here Christ is given to a lost world, in the word, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, &c. And in this respect, we think, Christ is a common Saviour, and his salvation is a common salvation: and it is glad tidings of great joy unto all people, that unto us (not to angels that fell) this Son is given.³⁶

In describing the warrant in the “deed of gift and grant” of the gospel offer to all, the brethren also presented commentary on I John 5:11, where the text “And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” was argued as not being

a giving in possession, in greater or lesser measure; but a giving by way of grant and offer, whereupon one may warrantably take possession, and the party to whom, is not the election only, but lost mankind: For the record of God here, must be such a thing as warrants all to believe on the Son of God. But it can be no such warrant, to tell, That God hath given eternal life to the elect; for the making of a gift to a certain select company of persons, can never be a warrant for all men to receive or take possession of it. This will be farther evident, if we consider, That the great sin of unbelief lies in not believing this record of God; “he that believes not hath made God a liar,” says the apostle, ver. 10, “because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son;” and then it followeth, ver. 11, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life,” &c. Now, are we to think, that the rejecting of the record of God is a bare disbelieving of this proposition, “That God hath given eternal life to the elect?” No surely... No, [unbelievers] still continue, notwithstanding all of this, to make him a liar, in not believing this record of God, That to lost mankind, and to themselves in particular, God hath given eternal life, by way of grant, so as they, as well as others, are warranted and welcome... By not receiving this gifted and offered remedy, with application and appropriation, they fly in the face of God’s record and testimony... there can be no receiving of salvation where there is not a revelation of Christ in the gospel affording a warrant to receive him, Rom. x. 14, and then, by the effectual operation of the Spirit, persuading

36 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 74-75.

and enabling the sinner to embrace him upon this warrant and offer... Hence Mr. Rutherford, in his *Christ Dying and Drawing*, &c. page 442, says, "That reprobates have as fair warrant to believe as the elect have".³⁷

The brethren concluded their *Answers to the Said Queries* by carefully noting their reply to "whether [this grant of gospel offer] is made by sovereign grace... is it absolute or conditional?" They stated, "This grant made in common to lost mankind, is from sovereign grace only; and it being ministers' warrant to offer Christ unto all, and people's warrant to receive him, it cannot fail to be absolutely free; yet, so as none can be possessed of Christ and his benefits, till by faith they receive him".³⁸ The emphasis and intent of the brethren in the warrant of "the deed of gift and grant" was on a free and unconditional gospel offer to all.³⁹

James Hog

James Hog (1658-1734) was one of the leaders of the Marrow brethren. Ordained as a minister of the Church of Scotland to Dalserf in 1691, he moved to Carnock in Fife in 1699, remaining there for the duration of his life.⁴⁰ James Hog was present with Thomas Boston at the 1717 Assembly which acted against the Auchterarder presbytery. As a result of his and others' concern regarding this action of the Assembly, Hog read *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, recently rediscovered by Boston, and commended it as

37 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 77-78.

38 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 78.

39 John Murray notes in his comments on Thomas Boston, one of the Marrow brethren, that this was rooted in "the Covenant of Grace... conceived of in terms of the inter-Trinitarian counsel and economy" so that "the requirements devolving upon men cannot be construed as conditions of its execution". John Murray, "Covenant Theology" in *Collected Writings of John Murray* Vol.4 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 237-238.

40 David Lachman, "James Hog" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 409-410. See also James Hog, *Memoirs of the public life of Mr. James Hogg: and of the ecclesiastical proceedings of his time...* (Edinburgh: Sold by J. Ogle and J. Guthrie..., 1798), 9-142.

directly relevant to the issues at hand. Hog decided to republish *The Marrow* with his own commendatory preface in 1718. This republication and the response it engendered soon exploded into the Marrow controversy, with James Hog acting as the leading public defender and proponent of Marrow theology, though he was soon joined by others. Together with the other Marrow brethren, Hog contributed to the *Representation and Petition* and *The Answers to Said Queries*.

1. The Atonement

The view of the atonement held by James Hog is closely similar to that found in the representative documents of the Marrow brethren as a whole, and is reflective of the federal theology of his day. In his *Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace* (1718) James Hog speaks of man, in a state of sin, remaining under the force of the covenant of works, so that “the obligation both to the obedience and penal sanction remains inviolable”.⁴¹ In convicting men of sin and the holiness and justice of God, the Spirit of God takes the law, or covenant of works, and pursues the sinner with both “the penalty... and the complete obedience which are assuredly due”.⁴² Elsewhere Hog states that the preaching of the gospel is also used to this end, as “it battereth the presumptuous pride of man’s spirit, clearly discovering that he can act no part in this salvation, thus excluding all boasting, by concluding all under sin, Rom. 3 from 10. to 20. and verse 27”.⁴³ Having explained the necessity for the atonement, Hog describes the continuing work of the Spirit of God as

41 James Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace from the Charge of Antinomianism: Contained in a Letter to a Minister of the Gospel* (Edinburgh: Printed by Robert Brown; and are to be sold at Mr. John Macky’s Shop in the Parliament-Closs, 1718), 8-12.

42 Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace...*, 8-9.

43 James Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation, And the Difference betwixt the Law and the Gospel. Being the Heads of some Family Exercises Upon Galatians, Chap. 3. Vers. 2.* (Edinburgh: Printed by the Heirs and Successors of Andrew Anderson, Printer to the King’s most Excellent Majesty, Anno Dom. 1701), 85.

pointing the sinner to Christ and his atoning work, using the language of covenant theology:

It pleaseth the Lord to inlighten the felt condemned sinners mind, by displays of the Sureties Glory... And I must say unless we own a sufficiency of the Ransomer, and Ransom as exactly suited to Sinners straits just now described, we render it utterly impossible to Administer from the Gospel, the least comfort unto these...⁴⁴

The *Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace* does not differentiate a covenant of redemption and a covenant of grace. This is consistent with his other works, which reveal that Hog held to a two covenant view “of the covenant of works, and of grace”,⁴⁵ often referring to the latter as “the gospel covenant”.⁴⁶

Hog’s understanding of the propitiatory and substitutionary nature of the atonement of Christ receives only brief mention in his earlier writing. In his *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation, And the Difference betwixt the Law and the Gospel* (1701) Hog explains that the “word of the Gospel... discovereth Christ in his Person, Offices, Estates, and whatsoever concerneth the Mystery of Redemption, both in its purchase and application”.⁴⁷ He later comments that the gospel holds forth “what he [Christ] hath done for lost sinners”.⁴⁸

The nature of Christ’s atoning work is more fully elucidated by Hog in his *A Casuistical Essay Upon the Lord’s Prayer* (1705). Describing the atonement as being

44 Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace...*, 10-11, 13.

45 James Hog, *Some Select Notes Towards Detecting a covered mixture of the Covenant of Works, and of Grace; and a few advices for remedying thereof. Contained in a Letter to a Friend Upon that Head.* (Edinburgh: Printed by James Watson on the North-side of the Cross, 1706), 1, 4, 12.

46 James Hog, *A Casuistical Essay Upon the Lord’s Prayer* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Reid Junior, 1705), 219.

47 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 79-80.

48 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 85.

rooted in eternity and purchased in time,⁴⁹ Hog also distinctly presents the concepts of penal substitution and imputation:

He hath made him to be Sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him. Here we have (may I so design it) an astonishing mutual translation, which shall be to the wonder of seraphims, and glorified saints for time and eternity. All our sins are laid over upon him, who though he knew no sin, yet bore them as surety, and gave himself a sacrifice compleatly expiatory; and his righteousness is in the believers by imputation in such a plenitude, and throughness, that he is made the righteousness of God in him.⁵⁰

The *Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace* (1718) gives additional insight into Hog's understanding of the nature of the atonement. Hog here describes Christ as the "Surety" who "according to the Eternal Council did strike in, and satisfied the demands of the Law, or broken Covenant of Works to the full dimensions of the same".⁵¹ Hog's substitutionary, covenantal understanding of the atonement is further expressed as he goes on to say,

The Lord Jesus in the conquest of souls, unto himself, taketh as it were the Law, or Covenant of Works in the one Hand, and carrieth it to all the Ends for which it is destined in this our fallen estate... Hence I represent, that the same Lord Jesus, who is a Prince, and a Saviour exalted to give repentance, & remission of sins, the Lord Jesus I say in subduing sinners to himself is pleased to take the gospel (shall I so express it) in the other Hand: and as it wholly centers in himself, so that he thereby manifesteth in himself who only is the Lord, our Righteousness, and also our Sanctification. Here the two, viz. Law and Gospel do most harmoniously agree...⁵²

One area which does not appear to receive substantial attention in James Hog's writings prior to the Marrow controversy is the extent of the atonement. Despite the paucity of reference to the extent of the atonement in his works up to this point, Hog voiced published assent to limited atonement during the controversy. In his *An Explication*

49 Hog, *A Casuistical Essay Upon the Lord's Prayer*, 217-218.

50 Hog, *A Casuistical Essay Upon the Lord's Prayer*, 218.

51 Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace...*, 11.

52 Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace...*, 13.

of *Passages Excepted Against in the Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1719) Hog defends against the charge of universal atonement:

...the author is not at all chargeable with the sentiments, which give umbrage to many at this time. As to these contested matters, he holds the received opinions, and goeth not off the common road. He is zealous for particular redemption...⁵³

Repeatedly making it clear that neither his nor the author of *The Marrow's* understanding of the universal offer of the gospel is rooted in universal redemption, Hog argues a universal gospel offer is in harmony with particular redemption. He concludes “no orthodox man, I think will quarrel this, besides our author has shewed sufficiently that he is for particular Redemption in divers places of the book”.⁵⁴

2. Saving Faith

In his writings James Hog often speaks of “faith in Jesus Christ”.⁵⁵ He clearly acknowledges that the fall into sin leaves man with “utter inability to arise out of that lost estate”.⁵⁶ Referring to obedience to God’s law Hog states “we had ability in the first Adam before our sin and fall, but now that’s lost utterly, and we continue in a state of death, until united to the last Adam”.⁵⁷ Saving faith as such is a gift of grace, not a work, it is created and made effective “by the Lord’s Spirit working... and carrying forward in a way of believing”.⁵⁸ In order to exercise faith, Hog states “I reckon it beyond all manner

53 James Hog, *An Explication of Passages Excepted Against in the Marrow of Modern Divinity Taken from the Book Itself: Contained in a Letter to a Minister of the Gospel* (Edinburgh: Robert Brown, 1719), 5.

54 Hog, *An Explication of Passages Excepted Against in the Marrow of Modern Divinity...*, 15.

55 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 79, 83.

56 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 80.

57 Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace...*, 12.

58 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 81-82.

of doubt, that a state of ingraftment into him [Christ], is previously required”.⁵⁹ Hog sees both sovereign, Spirit-worked regeneration and union to Christ as necessary prerequisites to saving faith.

Hog defines saving faith “in its nature and actings” as an “enlightenment of the mind in the knowledge of Christ” and a taking hold of “the great and comprehensive promise of the gospel covenant”.⁶⁰ Hog states “it would seem to follow from this, that assurance belongeth almost, if not entirely, to the very essence of faith; and yet a throng of contrary experiences reclaimeth strongly: as it is also manifest in the Word”.⁶¹ Later, when accused of conflating faith and assurance during the Marrow controversy, Hog is more ambiguous. He states that while the author of *The Marrow* “intended not to give a definition of faith” by stating “be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours and that you shall have life and salvation by him”, yet “our Reformers generally defined it by assurance; and Mr. Marshall upon sanctification demonstrates very clearly, and fully, that somewhat of assurance, more or less, is an essential ingredient thereof”.⁶²

James Hog describes faith as the “mother-grace”.⁶³ This aptly suits his understanding of the relationship of faith to “the other graces of the Spirit” which he sees as flowing from faith.⁶⁴ He is careful to note that neither faith, nor the ensuing graces, are to be considered as works or conditions to the new covenant. Hog criticizes “those called

59 Hog, *Some Select Notes Towards Detecting a covered mixture of the Covenant of Works, and of Grace...*, 10.

60 Hog, *A Casuistical Essay Upon the Lord's Prayer*, 217, 219.

61 Hog, *A Casuistical Essay Upon the Lord's Prayer*, 220.

62 Hog, *An Explication of Passages Excepted Against in the Marrow of Modern Divinity...*, 13-14.

63 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 79.

64 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 79.

legalists” for “considering faith in the matter of justification, as a work... contrary to the design of the gospel which excludeth all works, Eph. 2:8,9,10; Rom. 1:5,6”.⁶⁵ Following his defense of faith as the “mother-grace” Hog concludes by explaining that the “legalists” view of faith is rooted in part in what he sees as a crucial confusion of covenant theology:

The making of works any part of our righteousness before God, whether they be the works of the regenerated or the unregenerated, whether by attributing any intrinsic worth to them, or ascribing this to the purchase of Christ, as if they were thus dignified by it, is contrary to the whole design and strain of the gospel as is cleared by our reformed divines at length. Compare Rom. 3:22,23, Gal. 2:16 and 5:4... by assigning, as the fruit of Christ’s death, a new covenant, made with all, but upon more easie terms, yet still of works, which the elect by a good improvement of the more common helps do imbrace and perform; Thus subverting the gospel by a confusion of the two covenants, see Rom. 4:5, and 11:5,6.⁶⁶

3. The Gospel Offer

In his discussions on proclaiming the gospel, Hog presents two important presuppositions. The first is the understanding that congregations are made up of both believers and unbelievers: “Even diverse reputed of the better sort, are in the state of nature, now wholly corrupted by our sin and fall in our first parents... [and] lie under the sentence of the law, the broken Covenant of Works, with all the curse which that breach entaileth upon us”.⁶⁷ The second, closely connected to both the first, and the controversy of the day, is his deep concern for the crucial distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Hog states,

Seeing the two Covenants are directly opposite, and as to the grounds and way of salvation, not only contradistinct, but, with regard to us, so far inconsistent that a mingling the one with the other is, according to its measure, a soul ruining perversion of both. The least tendency this way... must, in a proportioned measure, hurry the poor deluded and unwary soul,

65 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 86-89.

66 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 88-89.

67 Hog, *Some Select Notes Towards Detecting a covered mixture of the Covenant of Works, and of Grace...*, 5-6.

upon the most dangerous rocks... I need not tell you, dear sir, that the gospel is the channel thorow which alone the inlivening breathings of the Spirit of God are conveyed... in so far as relief [from conviction of sin] is sought in legal ways, under whatsoever gospel tinctured pretext, the law hath neither the promise nor administration of the Spirit, and is so far from serving the ends of the gospel, that it is dreadfully abused, in a way contrary to and abusive of it... The fairest legal blossoms come to no fruit of the right kind... you have sufficient warrant for opposing with zeal and vigour these subtile and wicked perversions of the gospel of Christ, which some modern authors do teach, and spread by such moulds of the Gospel, Covenant, Justification, and other highly fundamental articles.⁶⁸

With this dual concern for both believers and unbelievers, many of whom he sees as failing to understand the distinction between works and grace, Hog's presentation of the gospel focuses on Christ, in whom "Law and Gospel do meet together".⁶⁹ He states,

The Gospel exalteth Christ, the whole scope of it, and marrow of what it containeth, is to hold forth the reluctancy of his Glory, in what he hath done for lost Sinners, from the Council of Peace to its revolution through various periods, from the beginning of the World, to the execution of the same in the fulness of time, and the several steps of its application, till Glory crown the work, Zech. 6:10; Gen. 3:15; Jo. 3:16; Heb. 1:1...⁷⁰

Declaring that the gospel "magnifieth the sovereignty of Love and freedom of Mercy" and "is appointed as the means for conveying rest to the soul, Matth. 11:28,29",⁷¹ Hog places great emphasis on the free and gracious nature of the work of Christ in fulfilling the covenant of works for his people, and enabling the covenant of grace, asserting that

The Lord Jesus Christ in the conquest of souls, unto himself, taketh as it were the Law, or Covenant of Works in the one Hand, and carrieth it to all the Ends for which it is destined in this our fallen estate... Hence I represent, that the same Lord Jesus, who is a Prince, and a Saviour exalted to give repentance, & remission of sins, the Lord Jesus I say in subduing sinners to himself is pleased to take the gospel (shall I so express it) in the other Hand: and as it wholly centers in himself, so he thereby manifesteth himself who only is the Lord, our Righteousness, and also our

68 Hog, *Some Select Notes Towards Detecting a covered mixture of the Covenant of Works, and of Grace...*, 10-15.

69 Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace...*, 13.

70 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 85.

71 Hog, *Remarks Concerning the Spirits Operation...*, 85-86.

Sanctification... Beholds the wonders of mercy, the Gospel discovers that Righteousness which the Law so strongly required.⁷²

Thus, in the gospel, Christ comes offering his perfect righteousness, grace, life and peace. Where “the first Adam was indeed a living soul, but conveyed life to none [and] we inherit nothing from him save wrath, and the curse... the last Adam is the Author and Fountain of Life”.⁷³ The proclamation of the last Adam and covenant of grace goes to “every man without exception, whatsoever his sins be... go and tell him these good tidings, that if he will come in, [Christ] will accept of him, his sins shall be forgiven him, and he shall be saved, &c”.⁷⁴ As Charles Moffat notes, “what James Hog was contending for with uncompromising determination was the right to offer Jesus Christ to all men”, an offer rooted in the “sufficiency... of Christ’s death and purchase” and in Scripture’s record “that Christ offers himself freely to all men indiscriminately”.⁷⁵

Thomas Boston

While James Hog was initially the leading public defender of the Marrow theology, Thomas Boston (1676-1732) remains perhaps best remembered of the Marrow brethren for his role in the controversy due to both his republication of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* with copious explanatory notes (1726) and his substantial other theological writings. Together these earned him the enduring reputation of being the theologian of the Marrow brethren.⁷⁶ Boston was born into a devout Presbyterian home in Duns and grew up under

72 Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace...*, 13-14.

73 Hog, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace...*, 14.

74 Hog, *An Explication of Passages Excepted Against in the Marrow of Modern Divinity...*, 15.

75 Charles L. Moffat, Jr., *James Hog of Carnock (1658-1734) Leader in the Evangelical Party in Early Eighteenth Century Scotland* (University of Edinburgh: PhD Thesis, 1960), 321, 324-325.

76 Discussion of Thomas Boston’s theology continues to the present. Recent works

the ministry of Henry Erskine. His father suffered imprisonment for nonconformity, and later continued to play an influential role in Boston's life during his preparation for the ministry.⁷⁷ Ordained to the ministry at Simprin in 1699, Thomas Boston served there for 8 years prior to being translated to Ettrick in 1707 where he ministered until his death in 1732.⁷⁸ Recalling his own struggles with understanding the offer of the gospel, it was Boston who first recommended the reading of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* to those sympathetic with the Auchterarder Presbytery, leading to its initial republication by James Hog of Carnock in 1717.⁷⁹

1. The Atonement

Thomas Boston's view of the atonement, like that held by Hog, is closely similar to that found in the representative documents of the Marrow brethren as a whole. Boston often, though not exclusively, describes the necessity and nature of the atonement in terms

include: A.T.B. McGowan, *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1997); William J.U. Philip, "The Marrow and the Dry Bones: Ossified Orthodoxy and the Battle for the Gospel in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Calvinism" in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15:1 (Spring 1997), 26-37; Philip Graham Ryken, *Thomas Boston as Preacher of the Fourfold State* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1999).

77 Boston in his record of prayer meeting discussions, notes among other commentary, the response of "John Boston my Father" to the question "What may be the marks of true saving faith?" His father responded, "Love to Christ... this love must be to Christ not only for his benefits, but chiefly for himself". Thomas Boston, "Cases of Conscience discoursed on at the weekly meeting for prayer and Christian fellowship... Tuesday January 23, 1700" in *MSS. Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick* (MS 3245, Special Libraries and Archives, King's College, Aberdeen), 77-82.

78 David Lachman, "Thomas Boston" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 88-89; Hew Scott, "Thomas Boston" in *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1917), 174-175.

79 Thomas Boston, *Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Boston...* in *The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M'Millan, Vol. VII (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 154-156, 291-292.

of federal theology.⁸⁰ His first published work referring to the doctrine of the atonement was the sermon *The Everlasting Espousals* (1715).⁸¹ In the sermon Boston describes the atoning work of Christ as the means by which “the lawful impediments of this match [the union between Christ and his elect] are all removed, at the Bridegroom’s expenses and pains”.⁸² In doing so he illustrates the necessity of the atonement in answering the statements of just objectors to this union:

Justice says, The bride is my debtor, and I will not forgive her; and forasmuch as she hath not to pay, she must be sold into the hand of vengeance to satisfy the debt, Matth. xviii. 25. She is my criminal, saith the law, and I will not pardon her; sentence of death is passed upon her, Gal. iii. 10... there must be an execution day before there can be a marriage day. She is my lawful prisoner, says the devil, and I will not give her up... These were lawful impediments indeed, which, unremoved, would have put an effectual stop for ever to the match betwixt Christ and sinners; but his heart was intent upon the match, and therefore he sought to remove them out of the way.⁸³

In his conclusion to the sermon Boston describes the union of the sinner to Christ (the atoning Bridegroom) as the means of his removal of “these lawful impediments”, and as the seal of the covenant of grace, stating, “Ye must be espoused to Christ... there is no other way for sinners to be re-instated in the favour of God... The covenant is drawn with blood, the precious blood of the royal Bridegroom: it is the New Testament in his blood.

80 While the predominant tendency has been to examine Boston’s writing in light of the framework of federal theology, not all of his works are as explicitly and systematically bound to this approach. Philip Ryken in his work *Thomas Boston as Preacher of the Fourfold State* rightly notes “while the doctrine of man’s fourfold state is not incompatible with covenant theology, it is not identical with it. The two covenants of works and grace are not theologically and structurally co-extensive with the four states of the *status quadruplex*”. Ryken, 85.

81 Thomas Boston, *The Everlasting Espousals* in *The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M’Millan, Vol. VII (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 491-519.

82 Boston, *Everlasting Espousals*, 496.

83 Boston, *Everlasting Espousals*, 496.

Behold how he loved his bride, in whom there was nothing lovely!”⁸⁴ While the sermon *The Everlasting Espousals* gives early indications of Boston’s view of the doctrine of the atonement, its place in federal theology, and centrality to the gospel message, A.T.B. McGowan is largely correct when he notes in his work *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston*, that “the first occasion on which Boston dealt seriously with this matter was in the *Fourfold State*”.⁸⁵

Thomas Boston’s *Fourfold State* (1720, 1729) began as a series of sermons preached at Simprin, which he preached for a second time in Ettrick.⁸⁶ In it he outlines and explains four states of man: the state of innocence, the state of nature, the state of grace, and the eternal state. The section on the state of nature is devoted to explaining the condition of man as a result of the fall into sin, and as such provides a distinct summary for his view of the necessity, nature and extent of the atonement. Boston begins by discussing the pervasive sinfulness and misery of man’s natural state, along with his “utter inability to recover himself”.⁸⁷ He refers to the covenant of works, broken by Adam, “the representative of all mankind”, as root and ground for the current realities of the state of nature, though as Philip Ryken notes, in the *Fourfold State* “Boston places greater emphasis on the natural generation of corruption than he does on the federal imputation of

84 Boston, *Everlasting Espousals*, 518.

85 McGowan, 35. The *Fourfold State* was the publication (1720, 1729) of Boston’s sermon series on “the state of innocence”, “the state of nature”, “the state of grace”, and “the eternal state” which he preached twice between the years 1699 and 1709 in the ministerial charges of Simprin and Ettrick. Ryken, 57-61.

86 For a detailed history of the *Fourfold State* see Philip Graham Ryken, *Thomas Boston as Preacher of the Fourfold State* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1999), 57-85.

87 Thomas Boston, *Man’s Fourfold State* in *The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M’Millan, Vol. VIII (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 27, 97, 124.

Adam's sin".⁸⁸ Whether or not Boston's scheme relating to the state of nature in the *Fourfold State* is primarily directed by the scheme of federal theology,⁸⁹ the implications of man's sin, and the broken covenant of works, are that "the state of nature is a state of wrath – everyone in a natural, unregenerate state, is in a state of wrath... wrath has gone as wide as sin ever went... who can fully describe the wrath of an angry God?"⁹⁰ In describing the wrath of God in light of the atonement itself, Boston calls the reader to

Consider how God dealt with his own Son, whom he spared not, Rom. viii. 32. The wrath of God seized on his soul and body both, and brought him into the dust of death. That his sufferings were not eternal, flowed from the quality of the Sufferer, who was infinite; and therefore able to bear, at once, the whole load of wrath; and upon that account his sufferings were of infinite value.⁹¹

This description by Boston of the wrath of God poured out on his Son reinforces both the necessity and penal substitutionary nature of the atoning work of Christ.

While the *Everlasting Espousals* and the *Fourfold State* provide substantial grounds for understanding Boston's view of the doctrine of the atonement, further insight can be gained from his ensuing works. The most substantial of these, Boston's annotated republication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1726), was the fruit of his engagement in the Marrow controversy. The theology expressed in *The Marrow*, and clarified and developed by Boston in his annotations, distinctly follows the paradigm of federal theology whilst commenting on the doctrine of the atonement. Boston states,

88 Ryken, 132-133.

89 Later, in his exposition of the state of grace, Boston engages in lengthy discussion of union with Christ, or the ingrafting of the believer into "the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ", and his cutting off "from the natural stock, the first Adam" following the pattern of federal theology, and repeatedly using covenant terminology. Boston, *Fourfold State*, 188-189.

90 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 99-101.

91 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 111.

Our Lord Jesus Christ became surety for the elect in the second covenant, Heb. viii. 22; and in virtue of that suretyship, whereby he put himself in the room of the principal debtors, he came under the same covenant of works as Adam did; in so far as the fulfilling of that covenant in their stead was the very condition required of him as the second Adam in the second covenant. Gal. iv. 4,5, “God sent forth his Son – made under the law to redeem them that were under the law”. Thus Christ put his neck under the yoke of the law as the covenant of works, to redeem them who were under it as such. Hence he is said to be the “end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” Rom. x. 4; namely the end for consummation, or perfect fulfilling of it by his obedience and death, which presupposeth his coming under it... How then is the second covenant a covenant of grace? In respect of Christ, it was most properly and strictly a covenant of works, in that he made a proper, real, and full satisfaction in behalf of the elect; but in respect of them, it is purely a covenant of the richest grace, in as much as God accepted the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them; provided the surety himself, and gives all to them freely for his sake.⁹²

In these words Boston gives a distinct description of the doctrine of the atonement in the terms of federal theology. Christ, the second Adam, fulfills both the obligation and the penalty of the covenant of works on behalf of the elect, and in doing so fulfills the necessary requirements for the establishment of the covenant of grace. Following the framework of federal theology he lays out the necessity of the atoning work of Christ in redeeming those who are principal debtors under the covenant of works. Boston’s statement also illustrates his understanding that the atonement is limited to the elect in its extent, and is penal and substitutionary in its nature. The latter he states perhaps even more fully as follows:

[Christ] made... satisfaction of God’s justice, by payment of the double debt... namely, the debt of punishment, and the debt of perfect obedience. It was also necessary that provision should be made for the sanctification of the sinner, the repairing of the lost image of God in him. And man being as unable to sanctify himself, as to satisfy justice, (a truth which proud nature cannot digest,) the Saviour behaved, not only to obey and suffer in his stead, but also to have a fulness of the Spirit of holiness in him to

92 Thomas Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in *The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M’Millan, Vol. VII (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 185. Boston presents further description of the atoning work of Christ in terms of federal theology in his works *The Covenant of Grace* and *Covenant of Works* both published after the days of the Marrow controversy itself.

communicate to the sinner, that his nature might be repaired through sanctification of the Spirit...⁹³

Boston here restates the penal, substitutionary nature of the atonement and in doing so notes both the active and passive obedience of Christ in his atoning work. Thomas Boston's view of the atonement stood as consistent with the Marrow brethren as a whole, though in comparison to James Hog he described it not only in terms of covenant theology, but also in the complementary language of union with Christ and the four-fold state of man.⁹⁴

2. Saving Faith

The nature and necessity of saving faith form a vital subject in Thomas Boston's sermons and other writings. Prior to, and during, his early ministry in Simprin (1699-1707) Boston struggled with assurance of salvation. On December 24, 1699, he wrote

I have not assurance of God's love. I thought I had the testimony of conscience, but can never get the testimony of the Spirit to put me quite out of doubt... I pleaded the promise, 'He that loveth me, I will manifest myself to him.' But I feared my love was not of the right sort...⁹⁵

Boston's desire to know the love of God, and the concern to find certainty of that love in his own experience was characteristic of the Reformed piety of his day. In unpublished notes on a prayer meeting taking place just a month later, Boston states that the weekly case for discussion was "what may be the marks of true saving faith?" The answers

93 Boston, *The Marrow*, 184.

94 Some scholars, such as Donald Bruggink, have argued that by describing the atonement and other doctrines in relation to the doctrine of union with Christ, Boston was actually revealing an internal tension, a struggle to move away from the inherent restrictions and artificial limitations of federal theology. However, as David Lachman, A.T.B. McGowan, Philip Ryken, and William Philip have strongly counter-argued, Bruggink *Et al* posit a false dichotomy, where Boston's writings, rather than revealing theological tension, reveal an increasing harmony of understanding. Donald J. Bruggink, *The Theology of Thomas Boston, 1676-1732* (University of Edinburgh: PhD Thesis, 1956), abstract, 251-267.

95 Boston, *Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Boston*, 105.

recorded included “seeing kindness on Christ’s face” and “love... to Christ not only for his benefits, but chiefly for himself”.⁹⁶ In his *Memoirs*, Boston continued to record his struggle and growth in understanding the “doctrine of grace”, and cited the beneficial impact of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in providing further clarity in the work of Christ, the nature of saving faith, and the gospel offer.⁹⁷

In Boston’s work the *Fourfold State*, the spiritual impotence of man in the state of nature, and its implications for saving faith, are examined. In order for man to enter into the state of grace God must act in sovereign love and mercy. Boston states, “We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace... there is, in the unrenewed will, an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in God’s sight”.⁹⁸ He goes on to note that even elect souls attempt to resist “when the Spirit of the Lord is at work, to bring them from the power of Satan unto God”.⁹⁹ As man is “unable to recover himself” saving faith is the direct fruit of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Boston states, “Saving faith is the faith of God’s elect; the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by his Spirit... Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature”.¹⁰⁰ Further expounding the nature of saving faith in relation to regeneration, Boston explains

The mind being savingly enlightened, and the will renewed [by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit], the sinner is thereby determined and enabled to answer the gospel call... His first vital act we may conceive to be an active receiving of Jesus Christ, discerned in his glorious excellencies;

96 Boston, “Cases of Conscience discoursed on at the weekly meeting for prayer and Christian fellowship... Tuesday January 23, 1700” in *MSS. Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick* (MS 3245, Special Libraries and Archives, King’s College, Aberdeen), 77-82.

97 Boston, *Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Boston*, 154-157, 291-292.

98 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 44, 56.

99 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 60.

100 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 130-131.

that is a believing on him, a closing with him, as discerned, offered and exhibited in the word of his grace, the glorious Gospel: the immediate effect of which is union with him... Christ having taken the heart by storm, and triumphantly entered into it, in regeneration, the soul by faith yields itself to him... Thus, this glorious King who came into the heart, by his Spirit, dwells in it by faith.¹⁰¹

Boston's statement not only states the impact of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, but also provides a description of the place and nature of saving faith. Saving faith is the "first vital act" of the regenerated sinner; as such it follows regeneration in the order of salvation. Saving faith is "an active receiving of Jesus Christ", a "believing on him", a "closing with him" as he is made known and offered in the gospel. In his work, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion* (1773), Boston also describes the nature of saving faith, in this case particularly in connection with the doctrine of union with Christ. Boston describes the two parts of "the mystical union betwixt Christ and believers", as begun and sustained by the work of "the Spirit on Christ's part, whereby he apprehendeth, taketh and keepeth hold of us" and the subsequent "faith on the believer's part" whereby "the believer apprehends, takes, and keeps hold of Christ".¹⁰² Boston goes on to state, "This faith is that true one, whereby a sinner rests on Christ for all his salvation... [this] faith is the only mean on our part... a self-emptying and creature-emptying grace... the soul having faith wrought in it by the Spirit actually believes and receives Christ, putting forth the hand of the soul to embrace him".¹⁰³

The moment the soul actually believes and receives Christ is also the moment of justification. Boston states "justification is an act done and passed in an instant in the court

101 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 149. Boston also discusses this at length in "Of the Application of Redemption" in *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion* (1773) in *The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M'Millan, Vol. I (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 529-543.

102 Boston, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion*, 546-547.

103 Boston, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion*, 547.

of heaven, as soon as the believer believes on Christ".¹⁰⁴ Simultaneously with the act of faith, both "pardoning of sin, and accepting of the sinner's person as righteous" occur.¹⁰⁵

Boston goes on to explain

By faith only Christ's righteousness becomes ours... Faith unites us to Christ in the way of the spiritual marriage-covenant, Eph. ii.17. Being united to him, we have a communion with him in all the benefits of his purchase, and so in his righteousness, which is one of the chief of them. He himself is ours by faith... We are justified by faith. Not that faith is our righteousness; for our righteousness is not our faith, but we get it by faith, Phil. iii.9. We are justified by it instrumentally, as we may say one is enriched by marriage, when by it he gets what makes him rich. So that faith is that whereby the soul is married to Christ; and being married to him, has communion with him in his righteousness, which justifies the person before God... God's imputation, whereby he reckons Christ's righteousness to be the believer's in law... is according to the truth of the thing, Christ's righteousness being really the believer's righteousness antecedently to the imputation, namely, by faith.¹⁰⁶

Boston not only elucidates the instrumental nature of faith in its relation to union with Christ, but he also describes the nature of faith in discussing the relationship of faith and assurance. Part of the controversy over *The Marrow* was Edward Fisher's statement that the call to faith is the call to "be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you".¹⁰⁷ While the opponents of the Marrow theology sought to make a complete distinction between faith and assurance, Boston in his notes on this part of *The Marrow* describes faith as including a "appropriating persuasion" by or in which it may be said "assurance is to be of the essence of faith".¹⁰⁸ He carefully delimited this assurance, which belongs to faith, as "nothing else but a fiducial appropriating

104 Boston, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion*, 582.

105 Boston, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion*, 582.

106 Boston, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion*, 597-598.

107 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 255.

108 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 258.

persuasion”.¹⁰⁹ Boston goes on in his discussion of the nature of faith in relation to assurance quoting both the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism. Citing the Confession’s statement “This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; - *growing* in many to the attainment of full assurance” he went on to argue “Now, how faith can grow in any to a full assurance, if there be no assurance in the nature of it, I cannot comprehend”.¹¹⁰ It appears that Boston saw that there was a type of assurance which properly belonged to, or was part of, faith itself. At the same time he was careful to explain the implications of the statement that there was an assurance which was necessarily a part of faith itself:

that there can be no saving faith, no acceptance with God, where there is any doubting, is what can hardly enter the head of any sober Christian... nevertheless, the doubting mixed with faith is sin, and dishonoureth God, and believers have ground to be humbled for it, and ashamed of it, before the Lord; and therefore the full assurance of faith is duty. The Papists indeed contend very earnestly for doubting, and they know very well wherefore they do so; for doubting being removed, and the assurance of faith in the promise of the gospel brought into its room, their market is marred, their gain by indulgences, masses, pilgrimages, &c. is gone, and the fire of purgatory extinguished. But, as Protestant divines prove against them, the Holy Scripture condemns it. Matt. xiv. 31, ‘O thou of little faith! Wherefore didst thou doubt?’ Luke xii. 29, ‘Neither be ye of doubtful mind.’¹¹¹

A final area of importance in relation to Boston’s understanding of the nature or definition of saving faith is found in his discussion of the relationship of faith and repentance. Boston agreed with Fisher’s stance that “evangelical repentance [is] a consequent of faith”.¹¹² Both Boston and Fisher saw this truth as essential against what

109 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 258.

110 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 262.

111 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 267-268.

112 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 278.

they viewed as a key tenet of neonomianism, that true repentance is prerequisite to coming to Christ in faith. Boston comments

True repentance is a turning to God, a coming back to him again; a returning even unto the Lord... But no man can come unto God ‘but by Christ,’ Heb. vii. 25. We must take Christ in our way to the Father, else it is impossible that we guilty creatures can reach unto him. And no man can come unto Christ, but by believing in him, (John vi. 35.) therefore it is impossible that a man can truly repent before he believe in Christ. ‘Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,’ Acts v. 31. One would think this to be a sufficient intimation, that sinners not only may, but ought to go to him for true repentance; and not stand off from him until they get it to bring along with them; especially since repentance, as well as remission of sin, is a part of that salvation, which he as a Saviour is exalted to give, and consequently, which sinners are to receive and rest upon him for...¹¹³

In successive notes in this section of *The Marrow*, Boston continues to defend this argument. He cites Calvin who states “It ought to be out of the question that repentance doth not only immediately follow after faith, but also spring out of it”.¹¹⁴ Along with noting the Westminster Shorter Catechism’s commentary on “repentance unto life” as harmonious with his argument, Boston also cites Samuel Rutherford’s critique of Richard Baxter: “We would beware of Mr. Baxter’s order of setting repentance and works of new obedience before justification, which is indeed a new covenant of works”.¹¹⁵ Boston’s conviction of the nature and role of saving faith as “the first and mother grace of all the others” was also closely bound to his understanding of the proclamation of the gospel.

113 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 279.

114 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 281.

115 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 282. Boston continues by quoting a number of other divines, including Matthew Poole and John Lightfoot, all of whom stress that “faith or believing... [is] the first and mother grace of all the others”. Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 282-284.

3. The Gospel Offer

Thomas Boston's understanding of the gospel offer runs as a recurring theme throughout his written works. In his *Memoirs*, Boston recounts that during the period of his ministry at Simprin, "I wanted to be satisfied in... the doctrine of the grace of God in Christ... the Lord was pleased to give my heart a set toward the preaching of Christ... I had several convictions of legality in my own practice".¹¹⁶ He went on to state,

...after I was let into the knowledge of the doctrine of grace, as to the state and case of believers in Christ, I was still confused, indistinct, and hampered in it, as to the free, open, and unhampered access of sinners unto him.¹¹⁷

Boston's Simprin sermons, in part published as the *Fourfold State*, give early examples of Boston's struggle and growth in understanding the gospel offer. In describing the realities of sin and the misery of man's natural state, Boston called on his hearers to begin by believing and meditating on these realities, to humbly accept them as true, and then to "turn your eyes, O prisoners of hope, towards the Lord Jesus Christ; and embrace him, as he offereth himself in the gospel".¹¹⁸ His concluding words on the state of nature encouraged hearers who had not seen their "absolute need of Christ and his grace" that "a proper sense of your natural impotence, the impotence of depraved human nature, would be a step towards delivery".¹¹⁹ While some of Boston's early statements seemed to promote the need for a preparatory work, or prerequisite repentance, prior to saving faith, his subsequent applications in the *Fourfold State* increasingly centered on the person and work of Christ, encouraging the hearer in looking to and trusting in Christ. In his section

116 Boston, *Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Boston*, 154-155.

117 Boston, *Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Boston*, 155-156.

118 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 121.

119 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 137.

on the state of grace Boston describes the relationship of the law and the gospel, making it clear that both must come to all through the preaching:

The preaching of the law is most necessary. He that would ingraft, must needs use the pruning knife. Sinners have many contrivances to keep them from Christ; many things by which they keep their hold of the natural stock; therefore they have need to be closely pursued, and hunted out of their skulking holes, and refuges of lies. Yet it is the Gospel that crowns the work: 'The law makes nothing perfect.' The law lays open the wound, but it is the Gospel that heals it. The law 'strips a man, wounds him, and leaves him half dead;' the Gospel 'binds up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil,' to heal them. By the law we are broken off, but it is by the Gospel we are taken up and implanted in Christ.¹²⁰

Boston concludes his discussion of the state of grace in the *Fourfold State* by listing the blessings of the state of grace for the believer. In pointing out to unbelievers that they have no present part in any of these benefits, he clearly and directly proclaims the gospel offer

Alas! they [the blessings of union with Christ] are not yours, because you are not Christ's. The sinfulness of an unregenerate state is yours; and the misery of it is yours also: you have neither part nor lot in this matter... you have no saving interest in the great peace-maker... All I can say to you in this matter, is, that the case is not desperate, they may yet be yours, Rev. iii. 20, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' Heaven is proposing a union with earth still; the potter is making suit to his own clay; the gates of the city of refuge are not yet closed. O that we could compel you to come in!¹²¹

One of Boston's earliest published works is the sermon *The Everlasting Espousals* (1715). Describing the covenant of grace as a marriage contract "drawn up already and signed by the Bridegroom, bearing his consent to match with the captive daughter of Zion" Boston goes on to exhort his hearers "the Royal Bridegroom has signed this, and it is incumbent upon you to sign it likewise, consenting to take Christ as he is offered to you in

120 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 200.

121 Boston, *Fourfold State*, 231.

the gospel; and so the espousals are made, Isa. xliv. 5".¹²² He presents the gospel offer universally as he pastorally encourages the hearers to come to Christ:

...it is indorsed and directed to you, and every one of you: therefore ye have a sufficient warrant to sign it for yourselves. What is your name? Wilt thou answer to the name of thirsty sinners? Then read your name, and see how it is directed to you, Isaiah lv. 1. 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money, without price.' Wilt thou answer to the name of willing sinner? Then it is directed to you, Rev. xxii. 17, 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' Art thou called heavy-laden sinner? Arise then, the Master calleth thee, Matth. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Is thy name whorish backslider? 'Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me, saith the Lord,' Jer. iii. 1. Art thou a lost sinner? 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,' Luke xix. 10. Nay, art thou the chief of sinners? Even to thee is the word of this salvation sent; 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,' I Tim. i. 15. But, whatsoever artifice ye may use to disown these, or any of these to be your name; surely ye are men, sons of men; ye cannot deny that to be your name: therefore it is directed to you, and every one of you; 'Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men,' Prov. viii. 4.¹²³

Later in the sermon Boston emphasizes the free nature of this universal gospel offer, calling the hearers to realize

As for those whom he takes up, there is nothing to be got by them; it is of mere grace, absolutely free grace, that he takes notice of them to help them. They have not so much as to cover their nakedness. Observe, that the first covering the Lord casts upon the naked foundling, is the marriage-robe [Ezek. xvi. 8], the robe of his own righteousness. He does not delay the espousals till the bride be brought into a better and more honourable condition than he found her in, but takes her as she is in her miserable condition, and, espousing her, covers her nakedness; 'I spread my skirt over thee, (betrothed thee unto me), and so covered thy nakedness.' O the riches and freedom of grace! ...this offer is made unto you all without exception. Christ is willing to be yours...¹²⁴

While the nature of the gospel offer as both free and universal were evident in Boston's writing prior to the Marrow controversy itself, it is especially in his annotated

122 Boston, *Everlasting Espousals*, 498.

123 Boston, *Everlasting Espousals*, 499.

124 Boston, *Everlasting Espousals*, 516-517.

publication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* that these are recurringly emphasized. Boston stresses the free nature of the gospel offer through the person and work of Christ in relation to the covenants of works and grace:

In respect of Christ, it was most properly and strictly a covenant of works, in that he made a proper, real, and full satisfaction in behalf of the elect; but in respect of them, it is purely a covenant of richest grace, in as much as God accepted the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them; provided the surety himself, and gives all to them freely for his sake.¹²⁵

Boston's explanation of the free nature of the gospel offer also emphasized the complete sufficiency of the person and work of Christ for the hearer. The complete sufficiency of the person and work of Christ as freely and universally offered in the gospel is evident as Boston comments on the much criticized gospel offer in *The Marrow*:¹²⁶

‘That Jesus Christ is yours,’ viz. by the deed of gift and grant made to mankind lost, or (which is the same thing in other words,) by the authentic gospel offer, in the Lord's own word; the which offer is the foundation of faith, and the ground and warrant of the ministerial offer, without which it could avail nothing... By this offer, or deed of gift and grant, Christ is ours before we believe, not that we have a saving interest in him, or are in a state of grace, but that we have a common interest in him and the common salvation, which fallen angels have not, Jude 3; so that it is lawful and warrantable for us, not for them, to take possession of Christ and his salvation. Even as when one presents a piece of gold to a poor man, saying, ‘Take it, it is yours;’ the offer makes the piece really his in the sense and to the effect before declared...¹²⁷

125 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 185.

126 Fisher's gospel offer was stated as follows: “I beseech you to be persuaded that here you are to work nothing, here you are to do nothing, here you are to render nothing to God, but only to receive the treasure, which is Jesus Christ, and apprehend him in your heart by faith, although you never be so great a sinner; and so shall you obtain forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal happiness, not as an agent, but as a patient, not by doing, but by receiving... This then is perfect righteousness... only to know and believe that Jesus Christ is now gone to the Father, and sitteth at his right hand, not as a judge, but is made unto you of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption... be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him; and that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you”. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 255.

127 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 256.

In explaining the warrant or grounds for proclaiming a free and universal gospel offer, Boston, along with the other Marrow brethren in their defense of *The Marrow*, repeatedly used the terminology “the deed of gift and grant”. Carefully delineating the meaning and effect of the phrase “the deed of gift and grant” he notes

This deed of gift and grant, or authentic gospel offer... is expressed in so many words, John iii. 16, ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Where the gospel comes, this grant is published, and the ministerial offer made; and there is no exception of any of all mankind in the grant. If there was, no ministerial offer of Christ could be warrantably made to the party excepted, more than to fallen angels; and without question, the publishing and proclaiming of heaven’s grant to any, by the way of the ministerial offer, presupposeth the grant, in the first place, to be made to them: otherwise it would be of no more value than the crier’s offering the king’s pardon to one who is not comprehended in it. This is the good old way of discovering to sinners their warrant to believe in Christ; and it doth indeed bear the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ for all, and that Christ crucified is the ordinance of God for salvation unto all mankind, in the use-making of which only they can be saved; but not a universal atonement or redemption... Therefore he says not, ‘Tell every man Christ died for him;’ but tell every man ‘Christ is dead for him:’ that is, for him to come to, and believe on; a Saviour is provided for him; there is a crucified Christ for him, the ordinance of salvation for lost man, in the use making of which he may be saved.¹²⁸

Compelled by the very word of God, Boston could do no less than “tell every man... a Saviour is provided for him”.¹²⁹ The gospel offer, the proclamation of the “deed of gift and grant”, the call of the covenant of grace secured in Christ, in all its freeness, universality, and sufficiency, was in full harmony with the particular nature of Christ’s atoning work. Not surprisingly, as Philip Ryken notes, Boston’s life was characterized by this “relentless emphasis on the free offer of the gospel”.¹³⁰ David Lachman concurs: “Boston’s offers of Christ... were presented in terms as full and free, as earnest and

128 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 263-264.

129 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 264.

130 Ryken, *Thomas Boston as Preacher of the Fourfold State*, 306.

pressing, as he could make them”.¹³¹ For Boston as a man, pastor and preacher, the free and universal gospel offer was scriptural necessity and heartfelt reality.

Robert Riccaltoun

Robert Riccaltoun (1691-1769) was an able public defender of the Marrow theology, though he did not join with the Marrow brethren as a signatory to their representative documents.¹³² As such he is best described as a Marrow supporter, rather than one of the Marrow brethren. Educated at the University of Edinburgh, Riccaltoun was licensed in 1717 by the Presbytery of Kelso, serving as an assistant at Bowden prior to being ordained to the ministerial charge at Hobkirk in 1725.¹³³ The year prior to his ordination he married Anne Scott; together they had five children, a son and four daughters.¹³⁴ Despite only being a licentiate during the period of the Marrow controversy, he displayed both literary and theological acumen in his published contributions to the controversy. His first published work, *The Politick Disputant; Choice Instructions for Quashing a Stubborn Adversary* (1722), was a satirical rebuttal of James Hadow, but provided little positive defense of the Marrow theology.¹³⁵ Riccaltoun’s second published work during the controversy, *A Sober Enquiry into the Grounds of the Present Differences*

131 Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy*, 136.

132 Possibly due to the fact that he was not yet an ordained minister in the Church of Scotland at the time of the controversy.

133 Hew Scott, “Robert Riccaltoun” in *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1917), 119. See also David Lachman, “Robert Riccaltoun” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 718.

134 Scott, 119.

135 Robert Riccaltoun, *The Politick Disputant; Choice Instructions for Quashing a Stubborn Adversary* (Edinburgh: 1722). David Lachman discusses the satirical nature of the work as one of the possible reasons for its failure to impact the 1722 General Assembly. Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy*, 366.

in the Church of Scotland (1723) provided careful and thorough analysis of the debate, along with support for the position of the Marrow brethren.¹³⁶ It would stand as the most substantive theological defense of the Marrow theology prior to Thomas Boston's annotated republication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in 1726.

1. The Atonement

Riccaltoun's *A Sober Enquiry* expounds the necessity of the atonement in the chapter "of the tripartite division of the law and particularly of the law of works".¹³⁷ Using the categories of the covenants of works and grace, Riccaltoun states that

Adam, by consenting to the Connection of this Covenant [of works], bound himself never to have Life, unless he persevered in perfect obedience; this same obligation having now, upon the Transgression, actually taken place, it is no more lawful for him to seek life, or so much as to look for it that way, and his breach in this case, is equivalent to formal renunciation ...there are other two obligations, which go to compleat the bondage and misery of these under it, the precept and the curse; which last being formerly conditional, is now become absolute, and binds as strongly even as the precept itself, but the preceptive part of the covenant continues to bind, upon this emergent, by its original authority; I hope I shall not need to prove, since none, I dare say, will be so absurd, as to imagine, that Man's Sin should absolve him from any Obligation he lay under to his Creator... This Bond and Tye however it was easy and pleasant to an innocent creature, yet is now become such an unsupportable bondage unto the sinner, as he is by no means able to acquit himself of it, and thereby becomes a handle for the curse every moment, to lay hold on him anew.

I need not stand here upon that other Obligation which this covenant lays of suffering, in case of any even the least failure, since this is universally owned, upon this supposition, unavoidably to take place; and indeed here the very Reign and Dominion of the Curse lies, and thereby the Misery of Man's present state, which cannot but be very great, hereby being excluded from every degree of Mercy, and withal, exposed to the utmost effects of divine Wrath and Vengeance.¹³⁸

136 Robert Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry into the Grounds of the Present Differences in the Church of Scotland* (n.p.: 1723).

137 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 47.

138 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 84-85.

In his subsequent chapter on the “covenant of grace; and first, of Christ’s undertaking and suretiship”, Riccaltoun notes “how utterly impossible it is for any man to accomplish deliverance for himself, from this bondage and thralldom into which sin has brought him”.¹³⁹ He states “one may easily perceive, how the salvation, promised in the gospel, must be of a larger extent, than the life which was held forth in the covenant of works”.¹⁴⁰ The reality of man’s sin and his remaining obligation under the covenant of works requires “deliverance from the guilt of it, and obligations it laid us under to punishment... deliverance from the stain, filth and pollution of it... together with all that is necessary to put an end to its tyranny and dominion”.¹⁴¹ Through the necessary consequences and realities of man’s state under the broken covenant of works “the necessity of a Mediator between God and Man, is held forth to us”.¹⁴²

Riccaltoun prefaces his discussion of the nature of the atonement with a careful delineation of the framework of a two-covenant federal theology. Beginning with the qualification that “the covenant of grace is primarily and originally concerted and agreed between God and the Mediator, before it came to be published and declared to us... which directs us accordingly unto two very different views of this covenant, as it stands between God and the Mediator, and, as it is proposed unto us, in the gospel, between God and us”¹⁴³ he subsequently warns against “the mistaking of these for two different covenants” noting his apprehension that a three-covenant approach creates “no small tendency toward

139 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 92, 98.

140 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 99.

141 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 99.

142 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 100.

143 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 101.

perplexing the covenant of grace”.¹⁴⁴ “As the Mediator then is the third party in this Covenant” Riccaltoun notes “we must also, if we would come to a right view of this matter, know something of the character he bears there, and what it is he undertakes and performs, in order to the compleating of this Covenant, and the salvation of Elect Sinners therein”.¹⁴⁵

The nature of the covenanted atoning work of Christ includes both his obedience and penal substitution: “our Lord came actually under the law, that he both fulfilled the precept, and bare the curse; and therefore his obedience and sufferings must have been materially the same, with what the elect ought to have done and suffered”.¹⁴⁶ Emphasizing both the substitutionary and penal nature of this atonement, Riccaltoun states

Our Lord Jesus Christ in his gracious undertaking, entred upon that same covenant which Adam broke, and which the persons he represented lay bound under, and fulfilled in their name, every jot and tittle of it... [He] was pleased voluntarily to come under it, and his fulfillment of it, was made the condition, of his people their having life bestowed upon them... our Lord undertook the same penalty which lay upon man to suffer.¹⁴⁷

Riccaltoun clearly sees particular atonement as bound to the nature of the atoning work of Christ. Christ fulfilled and bore “what the elect ought to have done and suffered”.¹⁴⁸ Reaffirming the Westminster Confession, and defending *The Marrow* against charges of “universal redemption as to purchase” he concludes

The covenant of grace was erected primarily and originally with Christ the Mediator, as the elect’s surety and representative, and in this respect the second Adam; and with them no otherwise then as represented by him or his Seed. It is unto him that all the Promises are originally made, and to them in him; unto him also they are all fulfilled and made good; He has all things

144 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 102.

145 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 102.

146 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 106-107.

147 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 115-116.

148 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 107.

actually in his hand, and thus all the promises are yea and amen in him; nor are they any otherwise fulfilled unto any of the elect, than by participation with him.¹⁴⁹

2. Saving Faith

David Lachman, in *The Marrow Controversy*, discusses Riccaltoun's definition of saving faith. Riccaltoun views saving faith in a manner similar to other key doctrines of Scripture: "subjects, which, in themselves plain and easy, have been, by the learned labour of such as have been employed themselves therein, made very intricate".¹⁵⁰ Lachman notes Riccaltoun sees faith as "plain and simple", made up of "a strong and grounded persuasion" in "the whole Word of God".¹⁵¹ This faith is trust and confidence in God "who is faithful and will perform what he has promised, and in Christ, as sufficient for our salvation".¹⁵² Lachman also rightly notes that Riccaltoun's description of the two actings of faith, "the heart's approbation of spiritual things" and "trust, dependence, and relying upon God's faithfulness and power, for making good his promises, and on Christ Jesus as an all sufficient Saviour" are simply attributed to the soul, rather than to the understanding or will.¹⁵³ While noting that Riccaltoun believes "that assurance is of the essence of faith" he misses the distinction made by Riccaltoun between "believing assurance" which is "of the essence of faith" and is rooted in the offer and promise of the gospel, and "the other" assurance "founded upon the experience, sense and feeling of what God hath already wrought in the soul".¹⁵⁴ Lachman's work provides a helpful summary analysis of core

149 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 112.

150 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 129.

151 Lachman, 436. See also Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 165-185.

152 Lachman, 437.

153 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 182-185; Lachman, 438.

154 Lachman, 438; Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 185-187.

aspects of Riccaltoun's view of saving faith, yet a more thorough explication of Riccaltoun's understanding of saving faith requires examination of his discussion of saving faith in relation to the nature of the covenant of grace.

In a chapter entitled "Of the Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the Covenant of Grace between God and Man by the Mediator", Riccaltoun states "we come next to consider this same covenant, as it is managed between the mediator acting in God's name, and representing him; and these elect sinners; whereby this purchased salvation comes to be actually applied, and the covenant blessings, thus lodged in the surety's hand, conveyed and made over to them".¹⁵⁵ Riccaltoun begins discussing the application of redemption in relation to the nature of the covenant of grace, stating

Christ himself, the Savior, Redeemer and Mediator, is the great covenant promise, which comprehends and takes in all the rest... this brings us to consider the order, which God has established for bestowing the blessings of the covenant with their relation one to another, as they lie in the covenant, grant and promise.¹⁵⁶

Included in his consideration of the application of redemption in the covenant of grace is both the nature of saving faith and its relation to other aspects of the order of salvation. Saving faith, an element "of the whole of our religion in this life" is to be looked upon as "part of that salvation conveyed in the covenant, and which therefore goes under the name of grace".¹⁵⁷ As such, saving faith is among those elements that "are barely instrumental means of the other blessings; and so framed both in their nature and use, as to be merely subservient to eternal glory... of this sort I take faith to be the chief".¹⁵⁸ Riccaltoun speaks of union with Christ as the "head of influence", and stresses the necessary regenerating

155 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 129.

156 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 138.

157 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 139.

158 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 139.

work “of his Spirit” in applying these “instrumental means... of our salvation”.¹⁵⁹ Warning against those who incorrectly view instrumental means, he describes those who in speaking of the covenant duty of holiness or of faith fail by “not considering how it is also a grace”, as a result fall into the error of “transform[ing] it into a strict covenant condition; and as such [bringing] it into the matter of righteousness, by which we are judged before God”.¹⁶⁰ Having stressed the instrumental nature of faith, Riccaltoun comes to what he considers as lying at heart of much of the contemporary debate: if saving faith is not to be seen as a “strict covenant condition”, how does it function as condition in the covenant of grace, if at all?

In entering this discussion of saving faith and conditionality Riccaltoun contrasts the gracious nature of the duty of faith with a neonomian view of faith as a legal duty fulfilling a conditional covenant. He states,

there is one particular grace bestowed in this covenant, which falls also to be a duty, and which has such an influence upon all the other benefits, that we find more conditional connections stated upon it, than upon all the rest; whence it is also more improven, than any other grace or duty, to the overthrow of what is plainly contrived, in the infinite wisdom of God, to support and maintain; I mean the grace of God manifested in this covenant. It is the grace of faith; which, as it is designed the great instrumental mean for appropriating and applying Christ himself, with all his benefits; and therefore absolutely necessary in order to one’s interest in, and enjoyment of them, has been more plausibly trumped up into the matter of our evangelical righteousness, as it is our fulfilling of that law of grace, which these gentlemen have made the measure and rule of God’s dealings with lost sinners, instead of God’s covenant of grace, held forth unto us in the gospel. I will not stand here to reason the matter with these men, because, I hope, none of these, who set up for the conditionality of faith among us, will allow of this gross divinity.¹⁶¹

159 Riccaltoun goes on to state “the whole of these covenant blessings depend upon union with Christ”. *A Sober Enquiry*, 139.

160 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 141.

161 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 142.

While Riccaltoun manifests concern to guard the definition of saving faith from neonomianism, he also maintains the reality of the responsibilities and obligations of the covenant of grace. He reminds the reader,

faith is a duty, founded upon, and necessarily flowing from the very frame and constitution of this covenant... the promises given forth by the God of truth, command belief in the most powerful manner. ...When our Lord Jesus Christ is there represented unto us, as the only mediator between God and man, the Savior and Redeemer of lost sinners; and life is held forth in him to all who will rest themselves upon his all-sufficiency, and by faith maintain communion with him, this becomes necessary in order unto anyone's partaking of any of his benefits: so that, when God requires faith of us, he requires no more than was previously necessary to the very nature of the thing, and without which it was impossible to have any part or share in the matter. And thus, the promises, which hold forth any blessing unto believing, are really, and in themselves, no more conditional, than these which promise the same absolutely; unless it is that the one have that expressed in them, which the other have implied, viz. the soul's acceptance, approbation, and application to itself of these promises, with the blessings contained in, and conveyed by them... in reality [it] will amount to no more than this, that, unless one receives, applies and makes use of Christ, and the covenant, both promises and blessings, as they are laid in him, none of these will be his, nor of any benefit or advantage to him... just as if one should give a beggar a crown, on condition he should receive it, and make use of it as his own.¹⁶²

Thus faith is an act of obedience to the command of the gospel, and yet stands simply as a “barely instrumental means”, an element of the covenant of grace, “a gift of God... promised in, and conveyed by this covenant” which is sovereignly administered and applied.¹⁶³

Riccaltoun next examines the “blessings of the covenant” in the development of his definition of the nature of the conditionality of faith in the covenant of grace. He states

if we look through the blessings of the covenant, we will find, indeed, that faith hath a place in all, but a place quite different from that of a federal, or even an antecedent, or suspending condition, as some are pleased rather to term it; and that indeed the after blessings, those, I mean, which are bestowed after faith, are every way as absolutely given, and indeed in the very same manner, that the first grace is; or at least that the difference is no

162 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 143.

163 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 144.

other than that between creation and conservation; it is the same power working by means in the latter, which in the former wrought without them, and produced these very means, which he afterward employs.¹⁶⁴

Riccaltoun goes on to state that “the foundation and ground work of all the other covenant blessings, both real and relative” is union with Christ.¹⁶⁵ As a result

Nothing can be more evident, than that faith is not a prerequisite condition of union with Christ; nor indeed any condition at all, unless it is in a very improper sense, as union is the condition of union; for thus we find it always held forth to us in this relation, as a receiving, apprehending, laying hold of, resting on, applying of, and cleaving to Christ; all of which are proper enough expressions of a uniting instrument; but can with no propriety of speech, be applied to a condition.¹⁶⁶

Anticipating those who might raise objections on the basis of the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and particularly the Larger Catechism with its statement “requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him”,¹⁶⁷ Riccaltoun notes

It is very true, the Assembly speak of faith to interest one in Christ, as a condition (and it is observable, that this is all the conditionality they anywhere attribute to faith in this covenant); but it is as plain, that when they do so, they design it in the large improper sense, as the way and mean which God makes use of for making up this union. And the connection stated between faith and union with Christ, is no other than this; if one, by the power and strength of the Spirit of Christ influencing him (for this is always supposed to faith), receives, applies, and makes use of Christ, he shall be united to him so, as to have him for his Savior, and strength derived from him accordingly. Just as if one should say... a branch is orderly grafted into a vine, it will draw strength and nourishment from it, and grow and bring forth fruit.¹⁶⁸

Having discussed the nature of the conditionality of faith in relation to the doctrine of union with Christ, Riccaltoun moves to examine a second case: the conditionality of faith in relation to the doctrine of justification. He states that justification is “the prime blessing

164 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 145.

165 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 145.

166 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 145-146.

167 Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 32.

168 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 146.

of the covenant, where the bands, which the broken law had laid upon the sinner, are loosed; and a right given him to eternal life, with all the other covenant blessings".¹⁶⁹

Here, he argues

the case is yet more plain... I know no orthodox divine, who calls faith the condition, at least none such will allowed orthodox in Scotland, so long as they make the Westminster Assembly their rule; though all allow it to be the instrument of it; and very justly upon two great accounts. The first is, that it interests one in Christ, and thereby apprehends, applies and appropriates his righteousness, upon which justification must needs follow. The other, that, being itself the evidence of, and what in its very nature gives light to, apprehends, and sets before the soul this unseen blessing; it realizes the whole procedure, and thus lays hold upon, and apprehends the pardon, and title to life, therein conveyed and held forth. And as in all this there is abundant ground for the connection between faith and justification; but none at all for any conditionality... I say there may be means of life, and such is faith in Jesus Christ, by which the soul cleaves to him, lives upon, and is nourished by him, and whose great end and office it is to promote and carry on the work of holiness; but that in a way purely instrumental; and yet even here we find conditional connections, which, we are sure, can imply no more, than that this is the way, in which God communicates his grace in, and through his Son, unto his own people.¹⁷⁰

Throughout his writing it is clear Riccaltoun maintains that saving faith, when rightly understood as a condition of the covenant of grace, must be seen first of all as a condition of God's work of grace. While being a duty required of man in response to the call of the gospel, and an instrumental means of further blessing, saving faith, even in those relations, is part of God's sovereign and gracious work of salvation in Christ.

3. The Gospel Offer

The remaining question is how then does Riccaltoun view and define the gospel offer? In relation to his discussion of the nature of saving faith, and particularly the concept of conditionality, Riccaltoun states mistaken views, namely a neonomian understanding of conditionality, "have given the greatest handle unto that abuse of the

¹⁶⁹ Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 147.

¹⁷⁰ Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 148.

gospel... and this arises upon the frame and constitution of the covenant of grace”.¹⁷¹ He continues

Upon this state of things it must needs follow, that who lays hold upon this way of salvation, and is taken within the bond of the covenant, must be saved: And on the other hand, as this is the only way of life, he that has it not this way, must be damned.¹⁷²

In arguing this is what the neonomian perceives as the offer of the gospel itself, Riccaltoun counters

nothing can be plainer, than that in such declarations as these we have held forth to us, the event, fruits, and consequences of the preaching of the gospel; and that none may mistake them for what they are not, we find the Spirit of God, wherever these kind of connections are laid, has taken pains clearly to distinguish them from the gospel itself, which is preached, or to be so. And thus we find our Lord instructing his disciples to “go preach the gospel to every creature”. It is easy to see, where this is done, some will believe, and some not. And accordingly he declares what will be the lot of each sort, “He that believeth” (that preached gospel) “shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned”. In the same manner, when he is himself preaching the same gospel to the Jews, he gives them the like warning, “If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins”. “He that believeth in him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already”. “He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; he that believeth not, shall not see life”. These are fair warnings given to a careless world, and some of these means which the Spirit of God makes use of, to work up men’s hearts into a compliance with the covenant of grace. But what ground any has from this, to set them off with the title gospel statutes, as we see some have done, and then to palm them upon us for a true state of the covenant of grace, which therefore must justify, and convey all its benefits, in the nature of a law, is not so easy to see.¹⁷³

How then is the gospel offer, the covenant of grace, proclaimed and applied?

Riccaltoun goes on to describe “the method God has taken, and the means he makes use of, for making this gracious conveyance effectual unto his people”.¹⁷⁴ It is through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. Riccaltoun states

171 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 148.

172 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 148.

173 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 149.

174 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 151.

God has not here to do with stocks and stones, or such merely passive matter, which is not capable of any more, than receiving the impressions made upon it by external power; but with rational creatures, so he deals with them as such: And all the methods, which are proper for managing a free agent, are here accordingly applied. Entreaties and invitations intermixed with authoritative commands, and backed with the strongest encouragements, motives and arguments, are here held forth, and presented to us with the greatest advantage. And, as the Christian religion is the most rational thing in the world, when carried, as it is in the dispensation of the gospel, it is impossible one can avoid complying with it, unless he, at the same time, runs directly contrary unto the dictates of sober reason. And hence it is, that, as the gospel is thus proposed unto all, who are so happy, as to live under its dispensation, they must needs be inexcusable, who comply not with the gracious covenant there held forth.

But however fitted these moral means are unto the rational nature, yet, if one considers that bondage which man lies under by the curse of the law, and as he is dead in trespasses and sins, it will be easy to see the necessity of a superior power, to new-mould our frame and constitution, and restore the ruins which sin has made in our abilities, before these can be effectual unto us. And this accordingly we find done, by the sending of the Spirit of Christ along with the word and ordinances, upon this express errand, to apply unto the children of the kingdom, all that fullness which is in Christ, to create them anew, and beget them again unto a lively hope.¹⁷⁵

Riccaltoun's description of the method and means of God in effectually conveying the covenant of grace to his people defends the universality of the gospel offer, or proclamation of the covenant of grace, the gospel being "proposed unto all". Discussion of the universality of the gospel offer leads him to explain "the different views we have of this covenant [of grace], in its internal frame and constitution, and the external administration of it".¹⁷⁶ Understanding the distinction between the internal constitution and external administration in turn enables an understanding of "the true nature of the gospel... which holds forth unto us the covenant of grace, offered to us in Christ the Mediator".¹⁷⁷ Riccaltoun, echoing the language of the Marrow brethren, states

175 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 152-153.

176 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 154.

177 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 159-160.

we may likewise see, how this covenant, as held forth to us in Christ, may justly enough be called, a “deed of gift and grant,” laid out in common unto all the hearers of the gospel, and how it is sufficiently guarded against all imputations of insincerity in God, and abuses from men, without either universal redemption to support the truth of the general offer, or conditional offers to confine the grant to particular persons. However absolute the grant runs, yet it is still only in Christ, and with this assurance too accompanying it, that no man can come unto him, unless the Father draw him; and which assistance he hath reserved in his own hand to bestow where himself pleases; while yet the moral force of this covenant reaches equally to all, and makes it alike reasonable for everyone to believe in an all-sufficient Saviour there held forth: And to make use of all the means which God has appointed, and whereby he is wont to convey his Spirit unto his people, for bringing them into the bond of the covenant. But, in the mean time, as this gift, how free soever, can profit none, unless it is received, and can never be received but by faith, no man has any ground to fancy to himself any real advantage by this offer, any further than this, that this general revelation of God’s will, makes it lawful for him; yea, and is his duty, to look for salvation and eternal life this way; and accordingly, for all who hear the offer, to apply themselves to Christ, and apply him to themselves, and make use of him as a Savior, in all these instances, and for all these purposes, he is held forth and offered for in the gospel.¹⁷⁸

In the gospel offer, Riccaltoun argues “the things themselves be therein really exhibited, and made over unto him who has the offer”.¹⁷⁹ It is “lawful for the person freely... to apply unto his own use, and improve for his best advantage the good things there held forth... Christ Jesus, life and salvation in him, are there freely and without reserve, offered for all the ends and purposes of salvation and eternal life”.¹⁸⁰ The soul who hears this gracious proclamation “confirmed with an oath, and sealed and ratified in the blood of the Son of God... may and ought to be persuaded, that God really gives him, by this offer and promise, all these good things contained in them, and which he may now use as his own”.¹⁸¹ The gospel, the proclamation of God’s covenant of grace, in and through Christ, is universal, full, and free.

178 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 161.

179 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 177.

180 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 177.

181 Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry*, 177.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS ON THE DOCTRINES OF THE ATONEMENT, SAVING FAITH, AND THE GOSPEL OFFER DURING THE MARROW CONTROVERSY

Tracing views of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer, through representative documents of both Marrow opponents and supporters allows analysis of some of the prevailing theological currents of early eighteenth century Scotland, giving context and content for a more concise understanding of the view of the gospel and its proclamation held by the Marrow brethren. The picture that develops requires a careful and nuanced assessment as neither those opposed to the Marrow, nor those in support of it, were monolithic in their view of the doctrines of grace. Sometimes individuals on opposing sides of the Marrow controversy had more in common with one another, than with those of their own, as is particularly evident in the case of John Willison, who as an opponent of the Marrow held views similar to the Marrow in doctrine.

1. The Atonement

A survey of the doctrine of the atonement among the opponents of the Marrow reveals uniformity in holding to particular redemption and penal substitution in the work of Christ. These doctrines are explained using the terminology and framework of federal theology, with a recurring emphasis on Christ's fulfillment of the requirement and penalty of the covenant of works in place of the elect.¹ The limited nature of the atonement is emphasized repeatedly, particularly in the Acts of Assembly and writings of James Hadow. The documents of the Marrow opponents manifest a clear concern that the Marrow brethren were promoting, whether wittingly or not, a universal redemption. This concern was rooted in the assessment by the Marrow opponents that the language and concepts

¹ Within the system of federal theology there was some diversity of expression and understanding, as seen in the promotion of both two covenant and three covenant views, the former being more common, though not exclusive among supporters of the Marrow. Both approaches reveal a conscious, careful, and largely similar articulation of the content of federal theology.

used by the Marrow, particularly in reference to the gospel offer, necessitated universalism. While these concerns were put forward by the opponents of the Marrow, the Marrow brethren in both personal writings and in response to the successive Acts of Assembly, reveal a very similar uniformity in their denial and rejection of universal redemption. They staunchly attest a particular redemption, and delineate and define this using federal framework and theology similar to that of their opponents.² The primary difference in relation to the doctrine of the atonement appears to be a difference in degree of emphasis with the Marrow brethren placing a stronger stress on Christ's fulfillment of the "demand of obedience" under the covenant of works. The perceptible difference in emphasis on the obedience of Christ in his work of atonement may be indicative of more substantial theological divergence, a possibility which becomes more plausible when the views of the Marrow brethren and their opponents are compared in the areas of saving faith and the gospel offer.

2. Saving Faith

At this point in the history of the Church of Scotland it appears that both Marrow supporters and opponents held to the necessity of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the heart to create and enable saving faith. Among leading Assembly opponents of the Marrow, the only apparent case of some ambiguity is found in writing of the Aberdeen divinity professor Thomas Blackwell. At times Blackwell seems to manifest rationalist or Arminian tendencies with a strong emphasis on human rationality, persuasion, and choice, yet he also notes the necessity of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. While the University of Glasgow professor of divinity, John Simson, would be found guilty in 1717

² This survey of controversy related writings indicates a greater diversity of approaches to covenant theology surrounding the doctrine of the atonement on the part of the opponents, than on that of the Marrow brethren, who were more uniformly proponents of a two-covenant approach.

of “adopting hypotheses tending to attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature”,³ no published concerns regarding Blackwell’s *Methodus Evangelica* are extant. The writings of Marrow supporters stand unanimous in their stress on the necessity of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in order to have saving faith in Christ.

A considerable area of difference regarding saving faith was found in the debate over whether faith was a condition to the covenant of grace. The statements of the Church of Scotland Assemblies at the time of the Marrow controversy reveal a marked tendency toward equalising obedience and repentance with faith as conditional to salvation. This tendency was reaffirmed in the writings of James Hadow and Thomas Blackwell. Hadow argued that the gospel, or the proclamation of the covenant of grace, provides a conditional promise, where saving faith is the condition; he went on to posit that repentance was a necessary pre-condition to this condition of faith. Blackwell stressed faith as an act of obedience to the gospel command; seeing repentance and faith as prerequisites to salvation offered on these conditions in the gospel. Where the Acts of Assembly, Hadow, and Blackwell, reveal what the Marrow brethren termed a neo-nomian tendency, John Willison is a marked departure from this trend among the opponents of the Marrow, particularly in his stress on saving faith as a gift of grace, and as the first spring and motion of all the other graces.

In contrast, and with stated concern regarding the above tendency of the Marrow opponents, the Marrow brethren stressed that saving faith was a gift of the grace of God to the elect, created and nurtured in them by the Holy Spirit. Speaking from the conviction that the prevailing language of the covenant conditionality of faith was in essence making the covenant of grace a new law, with faith a new and meritorious act of obedience, the representative documents of the Marrow brethren laid stress on justification by faith alone:

³ David Lachman, “John Simson” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 775.

“A justified person has in Christ, at once, all things necessary to salvation, though of himself he has nothing”.⁴ This response stood in harmony with their emphasis on the active and passive obedience of Christ as part of his complete atonement for the elect.

Concern that the Church of Scotland was promoting a new covenant nomism is also evidenced in the Marrow brethren’s view of the relationship of faith to other elements of the order of salvation. Where the Assembly stressed “the necessity of a Holy Life, in order to the obtaining of everlasting happiness”,⁵ the Marrow brethren explicitly denied that the necessity of either repentance or personal holiness to salvation was to be understood in terms of causality. They stated, “we cannot look on personal holiness, or good works, as properly federal and conditional means of obtaining the possession of heaven, though we own they are necessary to make us meet for it”.⁶

Another area of difference connected to the debate over covenant conditions, or whether the covenant of grace was absolute or conditional, was that of saving faith and assurance. The Church of Scotland majority, in its opposition to the Marrow theology, and especially the statement “that saving faith commanded in the Gospel is a man’s persuasion that Christ is his, and died for him”,⁷ stressed a definitional and practical separation between faith and assurance, to the point of hesitating to acknowledge any fiducial element in faith. In doing so, they saw themselves as adhering to the definitions of saving faith and assurance given by the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, which they stated “show

4 *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 38.

5 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland... 1720*, 492-493.

6 *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 41.

7 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland... 1720*, 44.

that assurance is not of the essence of faith”.⁸ James Hadow was convinced that assurance could only logically be seen as belonging to the essence of faith if one held to a universal atonement. While assurance was seen as not being of the essence of saving faith by the Church of Scotland majority, some like John Willison nonetheless placed a strong emphasis on the command to seek assurance, arguing that assurance in some measure should accompany and flow from justification, adoption and sanctification.

In contrast to the Marrow opponents, the Marrow brethren argued that saving faith included an aspect or type of assurance, “the fiducial act, or appropriating persuasion” in its essence.⁹ Some degree of this type of assurance, the fiducial appropriation of the promises, or confidence in the personal applicability of the free gospel offer of Christ as Savior, “that Christ is his,” had to be present in saving faith. Full assurance, which was non-essential to saving faith, and which the Marrow brethren saw the Westminster Confession describing as “an infallible assurance of faith”¹⁰ was both the increase of that fiducial assurance rooted in gospel promises, which must be present in at least some degree in saving faith, and the reflex, or subjective assurance, rooted in the inward evidences and testimony of the Spirit in the life of the believer. This latter type or part of assurance, could range from being non-existent to abundantly present in the believer. A.T.B. McGowan, Joel Beeke, and others have argued that the Marrow brethren stand in the line of previous theologians in positing two types or aspects of assurance, objective and subjective, or direct and reflex.¹¹ This basic categorization is certainly correct, yet the

8 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland... 1720*, 427.

9 *Representation and Petition...*, 30-31.

10 Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 18.3, “Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation”.

11 See A.T.B. McGowan’s “Thomas Boston’s Doctrine of Assurance” in *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston*, 185-205, and Joel Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 147, 209-212, 231-237.

Marrow brethren appear to manifest a greater complexity in their view and categorization of assurance than that summarized by dual distinctions of objective and subjective, or direct and reflex assurance. They believed the objective or direct assurance which is of the essence of faith, while it must exist in at least seed form in saving faith, in its mature, or healthy and growing state is also a part or aspect, along with the subjective and reflex assurance, of that full assurance “not being of the essence of faith”.¹²

3. The Gospel Offer

The differences between the Marrow supporters and opponents, while perceptible in the doctrine of the atonement, and more substantial in the doctrine of saving faith, are perhaps most plainly evident in the area of the offer of the gospel. The opponents of the Marrow manifest a tendency towards a conditional gospel offer, and a deep suspicion of the language used by the Marrow brethren in their gospel offers. The statements of the 5th Act of Assembly in particular appear to indicate that the free offer of certain salvation should at most be made to those deemed to bear some mark of election, or some evidence of the regenerating work of the Spirit, whether this be conviction of sin, repentance, or the pursuit of holy obedience. James Hadow, as a leading figure among the Marrow opponents, repeatedly evidences a tendency to view gospel promises as being conditional, and particularly as conditioned upon election. He argued that while they might appear in Scripture as “sometimes proposed indefinitely” yet they were “to be understood as made to God’s elect”.¹³ Hadow stressed the “conditional promise” giving the example “he that believeth shall be saved” as a promise made to believers only.¹⁴ Similar tendencies are

12 Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 81.

13 Hadow, *The Record of God*, 23.

14 Hadow, *The Record of God*, 10-11.

evident in the work of Thomas Blackwell, who while he makes direct application of the Scriptures in diligently seeking to bring personal conviction of sin, only speaks in explanatory and descriptive terms in his extant writings on preaching Christ as Saviour.¹⁵

In contrast to their opponents in the controversy, the Marrow brethren emphasized the absolute and unconditional nature of the promises of the gospel, and the conviction that the gospel offer was full, free, and universal; directed to every hearer of the preaching of the Word. In fact, the Marrow supporters argued, the sure nature of the gospel promises was crucial as they provided the warrant or ground for faith, so that “there can be no receiving of salvation where there is not a revelation of Christ in the gospel affording a warrant to receive him, Rom. x. 14, and then, by the effectual operation of the Spirit, persuading and enabling the sinner to embrace him upon this warrant and offer”.¹⁶ Under the conviction these essential truths were in danger, James Hog republished *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. The Marrow brethren rose to meet the storm of criticism over its republication in their pamphlets and addresses to the Church of Scotland Assembly, and Thomas Boston republished it a second time with extensive annotations, all in order to protect “the purity of gospel doctrine”.¹⁷

In their defense of the gospel offer, the supporters repeatedly made use of *The Marrow*'s distinct terminology, particularly the phrase “the deed of gift and grant”.¹⁸

15 John Willison stands as an anomaly regarding the general tendency among Marrow opponents to a conditional or indirect gospel offer. His sermons and writings give repeated warm, personal, and direct offers of a full and free gospel in Christ. In this regard he was much closer to the Marrow brethren than he realized during the Marrow controversy; the reality and awareness of his theological kinship becoming practically evident in later years. For further discussion of the position and theology of John Willison see pages 54-55 and note 96.

16 *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 78.

17 *Representation and Petition*, 2-3.

18 E[dward] F[isher], *The Marrow of Modern Divinity... with notes in The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M'Millan. Vol. VII. (London:

They viewed this phrase as a concise expression of the warrant for the free, unconditional gospel offer in the person and work of Christ, as expressed in Scripture, and as such in harmony with the establishment and purpose of the covenant of grace. Compelled by this understanding, Thomas Boston, along with the other Marrow brethren, could do no less than expound the words of *The Marrow* “Go and tell every man, without exception, that here is good news for him, Christ is dead for him; and if he will take him, and accept of his righteousness, he shall have it; restraint is not; but go and tell every man under heaven... a Saviour is provided for him”.¹⁹ This passion, theology, and use of language in gospel proclamation by the Marrow brethren would continue as a vibrant strand of Scottish theology in the subsequent formation and development of the Secession churches.

William Tegg and Co., 1854), 262-263. For further examples see Thomas Boston’s annotations in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity...*, 262-267; the defense of the Marrow brethren in the *Representation and Petition*, 13-14, and *The Answers...to the Said Queries*, 72; and Robert Riccaltoun’s *Sober Enquiry*, 161-162.

19 Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity...*, 264.

PART TWO

**Views of the Gospel and Its Proclamation
in the Associate Presbytery (1733-1747) and Associate Synod (1747-1799)
Secession Churches in Scotland**

CHAPTER 6

A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SECESSION CHURCHES

The theological roots of the Secession churches, due to its origin in the Church of Scotland, pass through the Marrow controversy of 1718-1726. It is often stated by theologians and historians that the Secession churches were defined and shaped by a continuity of the Marrow understanding of the gospel and its proclamation.¹ As noted in the introduction, this claim has not been supported to date by a comprehensive study of historical and theological evidences for the continuity of Marrow theology into the Secession churches: one does not exist. Later events, such as the atonement controversy of the 1840's, indicate the vast majority of the United Secession church had a theological latitude tolerating universalism, a position contrary to that of Marrow theology. The question remains whether a clear continuity of Marrow theology with direct evidence of historical dependence on *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* and the writings of the Marrow brethren, or even a retention of a general thematic consistency with Marrow theology, can be found within the Secession churches. A search for evidence towards the answer rightly begins in an examination of the events marking the formation of the Secession churches.

On the 5th of December 1733, four ministers of the Church of Scotland, Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, Alexander Moncrieff and William Wilson, met together at Gairney Bridge, where they constituted the Associate Presbytery of the Church of Scotland.² Their

1 See for example John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: The Publications Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, 1943), 167-168; James B. Torrance, "Covenant or Contract?" in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970), 60; David Lachman, "Marrow Controversy" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 547; A.T.B. McGowan, *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1997), 45-46; Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 249.

2 M'Kerrow, 71.

action effectively marked the beginning of the Secession churches in Scotland. What had brought this action about?

The period after the end of the Marrow controversy (1718-1726) saw the continuation of debates, divisions and tensions in the Church of Scotland which were formative in the nascent secession movement. The issues included continued concerns over preaching, ministerial qualifications and appointments, controversy over teaching at divinity schools, and patronage. The last of these provided what historians have referred to as “the immediate ‘occasion’ of the Secession”.³ In 1731, through an overture before the General Assembly, the Church of Scotland undermined its own Act of 1690 by proposing to give absolute rights in the selection of office-bearers for local churches to elders, local heritors, magistrates, and town councils.⁴ The heritors, magistrates, and town councilors were required to be Protestant, but nothing more.⁵ Much to the chagrin of those who held strongly to Presbyterian governance in the Church of Scotland, this meant that those who favored Episcopalian government, or who potentially held any of a possibly wide range of theological convictions, or lack thereof, could now play a key role in the settlement of ministers; at the very least the Act took a substantial step towards an Erastian model of church government. Despite protest within the churches, the overture was enacted as church polity by the General Assembly of 1732.⁶

3 Jack Whytock, *The History and Development of Scottish Theological Education and Training, Kirk and Secession (c.1560-c.1850)* (PhD dissertation, University of Wales, Lampeter, 2001), 204.

4 “Act and Overture concerning the Method of Planting vacant Churches. Edinburgh, May 14th, post merid. Sess. 9”. in *The Principal Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Conveened at Edinburgh the 6th Day of May 1731* (Edinburgh: Printed by Mr. James Davidson and Robert Fleming, Printers to the Church of Scotland..., 1731), 7-8.

5 “Act and Overture concerning the Method of Planting vacant Churches...”, 7. Heritors were gentry with hereditary title to lands within the bounds of the parish.

6 “Act Anent the Method of Planting Vacant Churches. Edinburgh, May 15, 1732, Sess.

Ebenezer Erskine, a Church of Scotland minister in Stirling and one of the supporters of *The Marrow* during the controversy, led public criticism of the Assembly's 1732 decision on patronage. Having brought failed petitions and overtures against the proposal for the Assembly's 1732 decision, Erskine preached against the Act in a sermon at the opening of the October 1732 Synod of Perth and Stirling. His sermon, "The Stone rejected by the builders exalted as the Head-Stone of the corner", presented a New Testament pattern for church governance and selection of ministers, drawing parallels between the refusal of Jewish priests and rulers to accept Christ's authority over the church, and the Church of Scotland's acceptance of patronage.⁷ In regard to the latter, Erskine boldly declared that

the Call of the Church lies in the free choice and election of the Christian people. The promise of conduct and counsel in the choice of men that are to build the church is not made to patrons, heritors, or any other particular set of men, but to the church, the body of Christ, to whom apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are given. As it is the natural privilege of every house or society of men to have the choice of their own servants or officers, so 'tis the privilege of the house of God in a particular manner. What a miserable bondage would it be reckoned for any family to have stewards or servants imposed upon them by strangers or enemies, who might give the children of the family *a stone for bread*, or a *scorpion instead of a fish*, and poison instead of medicine? And shall we suppose, that ever God granted to any set of men, patrons, heritors, elders, or whatever they be, a power to impose servants on his family, without their consent, being the freest society in the world? ... Those Jewish rulers [those who crucified Christ] ruled the Lord's people with rigour, invaded their freedoms and liberties, bound heavy burdens on them... by this means the Lord's people were fettered from the worship of God in their synagogues, as sheep having no shepherd. Hence is that plain dealing, by the prophet Ezekiel xxxiv. from ver. 2 to 6. *Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flocks?*⁸

11". in *The Principal Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Convened at Edinburgh the 4th Day of May 1732* (Edinburgh: Printed by Mr. James Davidson and Robert Fleming, Printers to the Church of Scotland..., 1732), 22-24.

7 Ebenezer Erskine, *The Stone rejected by the Builders, exalted as the Head-Stone of the Corner* (Edinburgh: Printed for David Duncan, 1732), 1-47.

8 Erskine, *The Stone rejected...*, 14-15.

Arguing that the choice of men by the church was God-given and a natural privilege, Erskine went on to preach that

whatever church-authority may be in that act [of the assembly of 1732], yet it wants the authority of the Son of God. All ecclesiastical authority under heaven is derived from him; and therefore any act that wants his authority, has no authority at all. And seeing the reverend synod has put me in this place, where I am in Christ's stead, I must be allowed to say of this act, what I apprehend Christ himself would say of it, were he personally present where I am, and that is, that by this act, the corner-stone is receded from, he is rejected in his poor members, and the rich of this world put in their room; I say, were Christ here present, I think he would say with relation to that act, *In as much as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me.* By this act Christ is rejected in his authority...⁹

The response to Erskine's sermon was immediate. Outraged Synod delegates moved to formally complain against his preaching as soon as the meeting was convened. The Synod appointed a committee to deal with the issue. Calling on Erskine, they asked whether he was aware of the offence he had created and whether he would admit to having done wrong in preaching this sermon. While clarifying some of his statements, Erskine refused to acquiesce to the committee's efforts to persuade him to disavow his words, stating that he was convinced of the truth and necessity of what he had spoken.¹⁰

The majority of the Synod voted to declare Erskine censurable, against the protests of a vocal minority made up of ten ministers and two ruling elders.¹¹ Having declared him censurable, Synod then moved to rebuke and admonish Erskine and to appoint "the Presbytery of Stirling to enquire into his behaviour in time coming, and report".¹² Erskine

⁹ Erskine, *The Stone rejected...*, 40.

¹⁰ *A Narrative of the Procedure of the Judicatories of the Church of Scotland with relation to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine and other Ministers who have seceded from the said Church... Published by Order of the General Assembly of 1739* (Edinburgh: Printed by J. Davidson and R. Fleming, 1739), 1, 8-10.

¹¹ M'Kerrow notes that the Synod of Stirling's decision that Ebenezer Erskine was censurable passed by a majority of six votes. M'Kerrow, 50.

¹² *A Narrative of the Procedure of the Judicatories...*, 12.

appealed the decision to the General Assembly. At the following Synod meeting, in April of 1733, the proceedings against Erskine continued, and he in turn adhered steadfastly to his protest. At the General Assembly of May 1733 in Edinburgh, Ebenezer Erskine, along with “three protesters against the deed of Synod appeared... William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher”.¹³ The Assembly moved to rebuke and admonish Erskine; he rose before the Assembly declaring “that he could not submit in silence” and requested permission to read a formal protest, which included the signed support of Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher.¹⁴ When the Assembly rejected this, Erskine and the other dissenters left, leaving behind their protest.

Sometime after their departure from the Assembly hall a minister picked up the paper and read it; angered by its content, which both echoed and supported Erskine’s sermon, he immediately petitioned the Assembly to “consider the insult which had been offered to them”, the end result being that the Assembly appointed the Commission to call before them the four brethren, and if they did not “show their sorrow for their conduct and misbehavior... [and] retract the same [protest]... the Commission is... empowered and appointed to suspend the said brethren”.¹⁵ The four brethren refused to retract the protest before the Commission in August of 1733. Despite petitions from presbyteries, kirk-sessions, magistrates and town councils in Perth and Stirling, the Commission acted to

13 *Register of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Held and Begun in the Year 1733. In Register of the General Assembly annes 1731, 1732 & 1733* (MSS 237, Special Libraries and Archives, King’s College, Aberdeen), 465-466; see also *A Narrative of the Procedure of the Judicatories...*, 43.

14 M’Kerrow, 52.

15 “Act and Sentence concerning Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and other Ministers adhering to his Protest, for their Contempt of the Authority of the General Assembly. Edinburgh, May 15th, 1733, ante merid”. in *A Narrative of the Procedure of the Judicatories...*, 43-44. See also *Acts of the General Assembly Concerning Some of the Ministers of the Presbytery of Dumfermline &c., And concerning Mr. Ebenezer Erskine and some other Ministers adhering to his Protest* (Edinburgh, 1733), 13.

suspend the men.¹⁶ As the Assembly had called for greater disciplinary action if this failed to bring repentance on the part of the brethren, the Commission on November 16th, 1733, once again convened on the issue, and despite pleas by seven synods to delay the proceedings, moved to “loose the relation” of the brethren from their ministerial charges, and “declare them no longer ministers of this church, and prohibit all ministers of this church to employ them in any ministerial function”.¹⁷ The four brethren in turn read a statement of protest in which they stated their continuing adherence to former protests and that they would continue in communion with all those who desired a “true presbyterian, covenanted Church of Scotland, in her doctrine, worship, government, and discipline”.¹⁸ They also stated that it was the Church of Scotland which was “carrying on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles” obliging the brethren “to make a secession from them... till they see their sins and mistakes, and amend them”.¹⁹ Before the four brethren left Edinburgh they decided to meet at Gairney Bridge, near Kinross, on the 5th of December. At this meeting they formed themselves into the Associate Presbytery, marking the beginning of the Secession church.

While a number of the ministers initially involved in, or later joining the Secession movement had actively supported or sympathized with Marrow theology, there is little evidence suggesting that such theological concerns or convictions played a direct role in

16 *A Narrative of the Procedure of the Judicatories...*, 49-50.

17 *Acts of the General Assembly Concerning Some of the Ministers of the Presbytery of Dumfermline &c., And concerning Mr. Ebenezer Erskine and some other Ministers adhering to his Protest* (Edinburgh, 1733), 13; *A Narrative of the Procedure of the Judicatories...*, 52-54.

18 M’Kerrow, 64; *The Representations of Masters Ebenezer Erskine and James Fisher and of Masters William Wilson and Alexander Moncrieff to the Commission of the Late General Assembly: Containing Their Reasons... Together with The Protestations entred by them...* (Edinburgh: Printed by Thomas Lumsden and John Robertson, 1733), 1-68.

19 M’Kerrow, 64.

the formative moments of the Secession church.²⁰ As this is the case, what possibilities remain towards establishing a continuity of Marrow theology into the Secession church? The remainder of this thesis will consider evidences for the impact of Marrow theology during the rest of the 18th century, looking for direct evidence of historical dependence on *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* and the writings of the Marrow brethren, as well as thematic continuities in understanding of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith and the gospel offer in the published works of pastors and theologians of the Associate Presbytery (1733-1747) and its continuation in the Associate Synod (1747-1799) churches. Occasional reference, as relevant, will be made to the General Associate Synod (1747-1806) churches and its successors as the other stream of Secession church continuity, as well as to the Secession church streams after the turn of the 19th century; however, a full examination of Marrow continuity in these areas extends beyond the scope of this dissertation.

20 Ministers taking part in the Secession movement who were also directly involved in the earlier events of the Marrow controversy include Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, Alexander Moncrieff and William Wilson.

CHAPTER 7

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCES FOR THE CONTINUITY OF MARROW THEOLOGY

Some evidence for the continued influence of Marrow theology can be found in the historical writings produced by pastors and theologians within Secession churches. As a separating body from the Church of Scotland, recounting their new denominational history in part justified their existence. While the record of historical roots often begins with or focuses on the issues of patronage and ecclesiastical order immediate to the Secession, as might be expected, there are recurring references to the Marrow controversy and Marrow theology.

The first Secession histories, written by the four initial Seceders, appeared shortly after the beginnings of the Secession movement. Often polemical or controversial in nature, these initial works prefaced historical narrative with theological argument and rebuttal, or combined both. Some took the form of ecclesiastical testimonies or “declarations issued by the Secession churches... consisting of historical narrative and theological statements applying the principles of subordinate standards to contemporary issues”.¹ These early works appeared to reemphasize the theological concerns of the Marrow supporters during the Marrow controversy in its recounting of the recent history of Secession events. The *Testimony to the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the Church of Scotland*, aimed to publicly defend reasons for Secession, stating the Seceders’ concerns not only with patronage in the Church of Scotland, but also lack of gospel preaching among

many preachers and ministers that have lately entered into the Church... there is as little of Christ to be found in most of their discourses, as in Plato’s or Seneca’s Morals; and, if he be at all preached, he is preached as

1 Sherman Isbell, “Testimonies” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 817.

the pattern, not of gospel-holiness, but of abstracted morality; at best, as the author of a new gospel-law, enjoining faith, repentance, and new obedience, as the conditions of a new covenant, and of a sinner's justification before God. People are generally pressed to the practice of duty, as if their abilities for obedience at the creation were not entirely lost by the fall of Adam. ...yet, how little care is taken to preach the law in its spirituality, extent, and severity, condemning every man to death and the curse, that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, in order to discover the impotency of fallen man to please God by his obedience? How little... laying open the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, that so sinners may be brought off from the covenant of works, unto Him who is the alone foundation that God hath laid in Zion, and who is become the end of this law for righteousness unto every one that believes? ...how little are the duties of obedience... preached in a gospel-way? How little are they enforced from gospel-motives, or pressed for gospel-ends and purposes? How little is the necessity of a vital union with Christ discovered...? How little of free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is taught, or of the gospel-mystery of sanctification, as inseparably connected with justification, and maintained and carried on by a life of faith in the Son of God, who is made of God unto us, not only righteousness, but sanctification?²

While the *Testimony* of 1734 made clear reference to doctrinal concern regarding the preaching of the gospel, thus moving beyond the immediate and decisive issues of patronage, the 1737 *Act, Declaration and Testimony* of the Associate Presbytery stated these historic concerns with greater clarity, placing them directly into the context of the Church of Scotland's leniency in the Simson case and its concurrent Acts of 1720 and 1722 where "many gospel-truths were wounded... particularly by condemning as erroneous the two following propositions, that, as the Law is the Covenant of Works believers are wholly and altogether free from it; and, that believers are set free both from the commanding and condemning power of the Covenant of Works".³ The *Act*,

2 *A testimony to the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the Church of Scotland; or, reasons by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine Minister at Stirling, Mr. William Wilson Minister at Perth, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff Minister at Abernethy, and Mr. James Fisher Minister at Kinclaven, for their Protestation entred before the Commission of the General Assembly, November 1733...* (Edinburgh: Printed by Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1734), 77-78.

3 *Act, Declaration and Testimony for the Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline of the Church of Scotland, Agreeable to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of Scotland...* By some Ministers associate together for the Exercise

Declaration and Testimony not only presented concern regarding the declension of gospel truth in the Church of Scotland, but did so with manifest sympathy towards the doctrine of *The Marrow*.

Following close on the heels of the two Seceder testimonies, both of which he had assisted in authoring, William Wilson wrote *The Defense of Reformation Principles* in 1738. His work outlined the Secession as a movement in harmony with the biblical and historic principles of reformation in church history. Continuing the thread of concern for gospel doctrine, Wilson illustrated a section on the need for the preservation of gospel truth with a more explicit use of the example of the events of the Marrow controversy in the Church of Scotland. He stated

that the reformation testimony is much fallen to the ground... not only in the things that concern the worship, government and discipline of the Lord's house, but also in matters of doctrine, particularly in what concerns the doctrine of justification and salvation by the free grace of God, thro' the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ... if the acts of the several assemblies 1720 and 1722, with respect to some propositions contained in the book called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, as also with respect to the representation of twelve ministers upon the act of assembly 1720; if, I say, the acts and deeds of these several assemblies are duly and seriously considered, it may be found, that a deep wound has been given by the present judicatories to the reformation-testimony, as it has been stated against the church of Rome, for the doctrine of justification and eternal salvation by the free grace of God thro' the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus. I am not here to enquire into the import, or the design and tendency of the acts above-mentioned, but only to observe, that in the last clause of the act 1722, which is said to be explicatory of the act 1720, the assembly 1722 declare, That it is of a pernicious and dangerous tendency to say, *That holy obedience is not properly a federal or conditional mean, nor has any causality, in order to the obtaining of glory*. When the said doctrine is declared to be of a pernicious and dangerous tendency, then it plainly follows, that the assembly 1722 have declared and affirmed, *That holy obedience is properly a federal or conditional mean, and has some kind of causality, in order to the obtaining of glory*; and this proposition it appears to me, to be giving up a considerable branch of the reformed testimony as it was stated against the causality of good works in order to the obtaining of eternal glory, in opposition unto the church of Rome...⁴

of Church Government and Discipline in a Presbyterian Capacity... (Edinburgh: Printed by Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1737), 84-85.

4 William Wilson, *A Defense of the Reformation-Principles of the Church of Scotland*.

Wilson's argument was that part of the legitimacy of secession was found in the fact that the Church of Scotland was moving towards a neonomian understanding of salvation, wounding the cause of the gospel of the free grace of God through the imputed righteousness of Christ. He clearly framed his argument in terms of the historic context of the Marrow controversy; as such his reflective perspective provided what appears to be another step toward a new element in the written history of the Secession churches.

Wilson's statement on the theological declension of the Church of Scotland exemplified in the Marrow controversy, soon became more than a retrospective analysis for the justification of secession. In 1742 the Associate Presbytery enacted its *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, prefaced by "An Introduction Discovering the Rise and Progress of the Opposition to the Doctrine of Grace, and the Reasons of passing and establishing this Act".⁵ The preface explained the reasons for the Act by tracing the history of the doctrine of grace through the Reformation into the Church of Scotland, concluding by noting the urgency of a correct understanding of the doctrines of grace in light of the recent events of the Marrow controversy:

when a worthy minister of this Church recommended the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, a book designed to vindicate the doctrine of grace, in opposition to the antinomian and neonomian extremes, the Assemblies *Annis 1720 and 1722* severely animadverted upon it: But, when a scheme of Arminian and Socinian doctrine is now recommended, the judicatories take no manner of notice of it. Hence it follows... that ministers have been encouraged to entertain their hearers with harangues upon moral subjects, without ever mentioning the peculiar or supernatural truths of Christianity, or shewing the connection that is between the duties of the law and promises of the gospel... the people hear nothing from many of them, but a

With a Continuation of the Same... (Glasgow: Printed by Joseph Galbraith, and Company, 1769), 460-461.

5 "An Introduction Discovering the Rise and Progress of the Opposition to the Doctrine of Grace..." in *Act of the Associate Presbytery Concerning the Doctrine of Grace: Wherein the said Doctrine, As revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and, agreeably thereto, set forth in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Is Asserted, and Vindicated* (Edinburgh: Printed by T.W. and T. Ruddimans, 1744), i-x.

system of heathen philosophy intermixed with Arminian tenets, instead of the mysteries of the gospel...⁶

The introduction and the restatement of Marrow theology in the *Act* were not merely reflective, but formative for the historical self-understanding of the Secession Church. The Marrow controversy, and *The Marrow's* doctrines, had become a part of the official ecclesiastical history of the Secession Church.

The next historical references in Secession history to the Marrow controversy or to Marrow theology came after the tumultuous years of 1745-1748. In 1745, the year after the publication of the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, the growing Associate Presbytery met at Stirling to constitute itself as “The Associate Synod”.⁷ While steady expansion caused the denomination’s growth into three presbyteries under a synod, questions arose within the churches as to whether church members could legitimately take a new civic oath required to gain the status of burgess in certain cities.⁸ As a result of the predominantly Episcopalian Jacobite rebellion, viewed by many Presbyterians as a movement with Roman Catholic tendencies,⁹ citizens in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth who desired to “engage in commerce, belong to a trade guild, or enjoy the privilege of voting” were required to vow

6 “An Introduction Discovering the Rise and Progress of the Opposition to the Doctrine of Grace...”, ix.

7 David Lachman, “Associate Presbytery” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 35-36.

8 M’Kerrow notes the Associate Synod at this point consisted of twenty-six ministers representing the same number of congregations; along with this there were some seventeen vacant congregations; along with growing interest for further congregations both in Scotland and Ireland. M’Kerrow, 196-197.

9 For further discussion of the influence of Roman Catholicism in eighteenth century Scotland, and its relationship to the larger Episcopalian faction in Scotland see Daniel Szechi’s articles, “Defending the True Faith: Kirk, State, and Catholic Missioners in Scotland, 1653-1755” *The Catholic Historical Review* 82 (July 1996) 3: 397-411, and “‘Cam Ye O’er Frae France?’ Exile and the Mind of Scottish Jacobitism, 1716-1727” *The Journal of British Studies* 37 (October 1998) 4: 357-390.

I profess... the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof: I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life's end; renouncing the Roman religion called papistry.¹⁰

While the Secession churches and their members were strongly supportive of King George, often actively joining in or leading militias against Jacobite forces, the issue of the oaths caused concern among members of Secession congregations. The Presbytery of Dumfermline requested in 1745

That the synod take under their consideration, whether or not the burgess oath be agreeable to the word of God, and to the received principles of this church founded thereupon; and particularly to those contained in the Judicial Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery... in the act concerning the renovation of our covenants.¹¹

As the synod deliberated, divisions arose over conflicting interpretations of what the vows meant. Some saw the vows as giving solemn assent to the legitimacy of the Church of Scotland and all its corruptions; others saw the oath as simply binding the individual to support true religion itself, not necessarily the manner in which it was being carried out in the established church. The latter party believed individuals could wholeheartedly make the vow, without assenting to corruptions of true religion in church or state. The debates over the oath within the Associate Synod led to deepening division to the point of a separation into two Secession bodies in 1747: the Associate Synod (Burgher), and the General Associate Synod (Antiburgher), both of which continued as denominations until the turn of the century, when further division occurred.

The two leading historians within these separate streams of the Secession church were John Brown of Haddington and Adam Gib. Brown, an able church historian, published numerous works during the latter part of the 18th century, and also served as

10 Sherman Isbell, "Burgess Oath" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 109-110.

11 M'Kerrow, 210.

theological instructor for the Associate Synod between the years 1767 - 1787.¹² Like Wilson's, Brown's first historical work contained direct reference to the Marrow controversy. Shorter than his later histories, Brown's *Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Secession* focused specifically on the origins and history of the Secession church, including a recounting of the events of the Marrow controversy.¹³ Brown used his account of the Marrow controversy to preface his account of the doctrinal reasons for the Secession, particularly the Church of Scotland's "evident tendency to corrupt the doctrines of truth, contained in their own Confession of Faith... in their permitting or encouraging preachers, to entertain their hearers with dry harangues, of almost mere heathen morality, instead of the gospel of Christ".¹⁴ Concluding his work by giving "a brief character or view of the Seceders", he included a renunciation of the errors of the Church of Scotland Assembly, who "in their rage against the *Marrow of modern divinity*, condemned a variety of precious gospel truths..."¹⁵ While Brown's *Historical Account* positively mentioned Marrow theology, it not only defended the general legitimacy of the Secession, but also vindicated the Associate Synod's acceptance of the Burgess Oath, while opposing "the Antiburghers [who] still continue upon their quarreled constitution of synod in Mr. Gib's house".¹⁶

Brown's second historical work, *A General History of the Christian Church*, covered the first to the eighteenth centuries, concluding in its final chapter with a

12 Whytock, 254-309.

13 John Brown [of Haddington], *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Secession... Fifth edition*. (Glasgow: Printed by William Smith, 1788), 1-75. This work was first published in 1766. M'Kerrow, 858.

14 Brown, *An Historical Account*, 24.

15 Brown, *An Historical Account*, 74.

16 Brown, *An Historical Account*, 60-63

discussion of the impacts of Baxter and Williams' neonomianism as well as the efforts by "Marrow theologians in Scotland, and the renowned Hervey, Venn, and others of late" to refute their doctrine in England and Scotland.¹⁷ Brown substantially expanded this brief reference to the Marrow theologians in his third work on church history, *A Compendious History of the British Churches in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America*.¹⁸ Commenting on the state of the church in England during the eighteenth century, he appeared to reveal sympathy to Marrow theology. Brown said

It is most pleasant to observe, that within these fifty years past, the doctrines of the free grace of God reigning thro' the imputed righteousness of Christ, have, by Hervey and others in the established church, as well as by dissenters of different denominations, been not a little revived, and successfully spread, and are at present preached by hundreds, though too often with a restriction of the gospel offer to sensible sinners.¹⁹

As a historian and commentator on the recent history of the church in Scotland, Brown reflected a deep self-awareness of the importance of Marrow theology to the Secession Churches. Recounting the events of the Presbytery of Auchterarder's attempts to promote "the doctrines of free grace reigning through the righteousness of Christ" by requiring ministerial candidates "to acknowledge it unsound to teach that men must forsake their sins in order to come to Christ", he criticized the Assembly's condemnation and "abhorrence of that proposition... as if men ought only to come to Christ the alone Saviour from sins, after they have got rid of them by repentance".²⁰ Noting the Assembly's condemnation of *The Marrow* and simultaneous leniency towards Simson's Arminianism, Brown's complaint of ecclesiastical injustice and error towards the doctrines of grace

17 John Brown, *A General History of the Christian Church from the Birth of our Saviour to the present Time* (Edinburgh: Printed for Gray & Alston, 1771), 266-267.

18 John Brown, *A Compendious History of the British Churches in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America* (Glasgow: Printed by John Bryce, 1784), 2 vols.

19 Brown, *A Compendious History*, vol. 1, 293-294.

20 Brown, *A Compendious History*, vol. 2, 352-353.

echoed the complaints of the Marrow brethren and those of the 1744 introduction to the *Act of the Associate Presbytery Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*. They also echoed his own earlier commentary in his *Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Secession*. Brown's perspective on *The Marrow* was restated with clarity as he recounted the Marrow controversy itself:

Mr. James Hogg one of the holiest ministers in the kingdom, having published or recommended a celebrated and edifying tract of the Cromwellian age, called the *Marrow of modern divinity*, the Assembly 1720, fell upon it with great fury, as if it had been replete with Antinomian errors, though it is believed, many of these zealots never read it, at least had never perused it, in connection with the 2d part of it, which is wholly taken up in manifesting the obligation, meaning and advantages of observing the law of God. They condemned the offering of Christ as a Saviour to all men, or to sinners as such, - and the doctrine of believers full deliverance from under the law as a broken covenant of works. They asserted men's holiness to be a federal or conditional mean of their obtaining eternal happiness. They condemned these almost express declarations of Scripture, that believers are not under the law; that they do not commit sin; that the Lord sees no sin in them; and cannot be angry with them, - as Antinomian paradoxes, and condemned the distinction of the moral law as a covenant of works, and as a binding rule of duty in the hand of Christ, in order to explain these expressions. Mess. James Hogg, Thomas Boston, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskines, Gabriel Wilson, and seven others remonstrated to the next Assembly against these decisions, as injurious to the doctrine of God's grace; and, in their answers to the Commissions twelve queries, they illustrated these doctrines with no small clearness and evidence...²¹

The result of the Assembly's actions, according to Brown, was that after the controversy "many of the clergy, perhaps fond of avoiding every appearance of good will towards the *Marrow of modern divinity*, seemed more legal and Baxterian in their doctrine than formerly", causing many to seek out those who were willing to preach "gospel truth".²² All the while the issue of patronage, and the forced settlement of unwanted ministers in parishes, led, Brown argued, to the Secession itself. With that he ended his *Compendious History*.

²¹ Brown, *A Compendious History*, vol. 2, 353-355.

²² Brown, *A Compendious History*, vol. 2, 355.

Adam Gib was in some respects the General Associate Synod (Antiburgher) equivalent to John Brown of Haddington as a historian of the Secession church. Theologically educated under William Wilson at the Secession divinity hall, Gib was ordained in 1741 as the minister of the Secession congregation of Bristo Street, Edinburgh.²³ He became a key figure in the Antiburgher movement, which in 1747 developed into the General Associate Synod, meeting as a separate body for the first time in Gib's home in Edinburgh. His primary contribution to historiography on the Secession churches was a two volume work, *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony; in the Three Periods of the Rise, State, and Maintenance of that Testimony*.²⁴ A chronological compilation of the ecclesiastical documents of the Secession church, Gib's *Display of the Secession Testimony* also provided historical narrative and contextual explanation, partly with the intent of enabling a new generation of Seceders to recapture and retain the importance of their roots.²⁵

Gib's history contained not only the story of the struggle against patronage in the Church of Scotland and the ensuing formation of the Associate Presbytery, but also traced the importance of the Secession movement in maintaining an accurate gospel understanding and proclamation. This is particularly clear in his republication of *The Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, which was entirely a summary and defense of *The*

23 Sherman Isbell, "Adam Gib" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 356-357.

24 Adam Gib, *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony; in the Three Periods of the Rise, State, and Maintenance of that Testimony* (Edinburgh: Printed by R. Fleming and A. Neill, 1774), 2 vols.

25 In his preface Gib states "the first generation of Seceders is now mostly off the field: And the new generation is ready to lose sight, in a great measure, of the cause which they possess; partly through want of ready information: it is therefore considered not only as a piece of justice to that cause before the world, (and a necessary information for posterity), - but also as a matter of duty to the friends of it; that such a Display be made thereof, as is now proposed". Gib, *Display of the Secession Testimony*..., vol. 1, vi-vii.

Marrow's theology. In his introductory comments Gib noted that “the Associate Presbytery having had under their consideration, for about two years, - an enlargement of their *Testimony*, with respect to some injuries done to the Doctrine of Grace... *the Act* contains a vindication of the *Doctrine of Grace*, against several injuries done to it, - by the Assemblies 1717, 1720 and 1722; with a view of evangelical subjection and obedience to the moral law”.²⁶ Despite Gib’s offering little other comment on the *Act*, its inclusion in the collection reflected a continuing awareness of the importance of Marrow theology in Secession history, and gave this ecclesiastical statement of Marrow theology a renewed audience in the Secession churches of the 1770’s.

Around the turn of the century both streams of the Secession church once again experienced increasing fragmentation due to the Old Light–New Light controversy;²⁷ however, this in turn was followed by movements of reunion. In the midst of this era of change, in 1817, the eldest son of John Brown of Haddington, John Brown of Whitburn, an ordained minister of the Associate Synod, published *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated*.²⁸ Containing the history and original documents of the Marrow controversy, the work included biographies and extracts from the works of the Marrow brethren, as well

26 Gib, *Display of the Secession Testimony...*, vol. 1, 172-173.

27 The Old Light – New Light controversy in the Secession Churches revolved around the issue of whether there should be national establishments of religion. Those who held to the conviction that national covenants were obligated before God, and who thus supported established religion in principle (though not in its current practice in the Church of Scotland) were termed Old Lights. Those who sought the disestablishment of religion, or who believed that individuals should have liberty within the church regarding their views on the establishment of religion by the state, were termed New Lights. The controversy split both the Associate Synod, and the General Associate Synod into Old and New Light streams. For further discussion of this controversy in the Secession Churches see Sherman Isbell, “New Light” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 625.

28 John Brown [of Whitburn], *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated* (Edinburgh: Ogle, Allardice, & Thomson; David Brown, 1817), 1-376. The work was enlarged and republished in a second edition in 1831. The first American edition was published in Canonsburgh, Pennsylvania by Andrew Munro in 1827.

as an abbreviated form of the 1742 *Act of the Associate Presbytery Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*. Brown's work echoed the intent of the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, both in republishing it and in his stated purpose of giving a "general account of the controversy respecting the doctrine of grace in the church of Scotland"²⁹ His history detailed the struggle between "legal doctrine" and the "doctrine of grace" in the Church of Scotland from the time of the Reformation to the Marrow controversy, and continued by tracing the legacy of the renewal of gospel understanding by the Marrow brethren.³⁰ Brown's work stood as a strong reaffirmation of Marrow theology as a continuing heritage of the Secession Churches. Despite being an ordained minister of the Associate Synod (Burgher), Brown noted that "the Associate Reformed Synod in America, and the General Associate Synod (Antiburgher), also clearly state and illustrate the same important truths".³¹ His ecumenical spirit in noting the shared gospel heritage of the divided Secession churches might well have been indicative of the developing movements toward reconciliation and reunion occurring at the time.

The first reunion among Secession churches occurred three years after Brown's publication of the *Gospel Truth*, forming the United Secession Church in 1820; in 1827 the Original Secession Church formed out of a second reunion movement. These events, perhaps along with the increasing distance from their origins, led to renewed reflection on the Secession churches' heritage of Marrow theology. In 1831, Thomas M'Crie, Sr., an ordained minister of the Original Secession Church and a respected Reformation historian, published a series of articles in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* on the history of the Marrow controversy, his goal being to aid readers "to understand aright the controversy

29 Brown, 9.

30 Brown, 9-11.

31 Brown, 37.

respecting the Marrow of Modern Divinity...”³² The articles presented an extensive account of the controversy, also detailing the continuing difficulties faced by those who supported Marrow theology within the Church of Scotland after the controversy.

While M’Crie’s presentation of the history of the Marrow controversy at times reflected some sympathy towards the Marrow brethren and their successors, he sought to avoid any evaluative commentary, stating it would not “be proper, in a publication of this kind, to discuss the merits of the controversy, or to indulge in reflections on the manner in which it was conducted”.³³ Why he felt it would be improper appears to be at least partly connected with the nature of the publication itself – *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* was “the principal voice of the evangelical party within the Church of Scotland”.³⁴ Nonetheless, he clearly felt the topic was one which should be retained in the memory of both the Secession Churches and the Church of Scotland. M’Crie’s final comments reflected this aim as he stated “enough, it is presumed, has been said to make the reader acquainted with the facts of a dispute... and to put him in possession of the sentiments held by the respective parties”.³⁵

Just as John Brown of Haddington passed on the legacy of Marrow theology to his son in the Associate Synod and United Associate Synod churches, so Thomas M’Crie Sr. passed the legacy to his son, Thomas M’Crie Jr. in the General Associate Synod churches and Original Secession Synod churches. The younger Thomas M’Crie, an ordained

32 Thomas M’Crie, Sr., “Account of the Controversy respecting the Marrow of Modern Divinity” in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* vol. 30 (August 1831) 8: 539.

33 M’Crie, Sr., “Account of the Controversy...” in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* new series, vol. 1 (February 1832) 2:94.

34 John A.H. Dempster, “The Edinburgh Christian Instructor” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 275.

35 M’Crie, Sr., “Account of the Controversy...” in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* new series, vol. 1 (February 1832) 2:94.

minister in the General Associate Synod – Old Light stream of the Secession churches, became professor of theology at the Theological Hall of the Original Secession Church in 1836.³⁶ Near the end of his life he published *The Story of the Scottish Church*, which contained a detailed narrative of the Marrow controversy, along with a historical account of the origins and development of the Secession churches. Regarding the latter, M’Crie stated “although the Marrow controversy cannot be said to have originated the Secession, there can be no doubt that the truths involved in it were uniformly held and faithfully preached in her pulpits...”³⁷ He went on: “there is no part of the Secession testimony on which we dwell with more unmixed satisfaction than on that bearing the unpromising title of “Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace”.”³⁸ M’Crie’s writings, like those of previous Secession historians, provide further evidence that Marrow theology was believed to be a historic and integral component of Secession church doctrine.

The final and perhaps the greatest historian of the Secession churches in Scotland prior to their mergers into the United Presbyterian Church (1847) and the Free Church of Scotland (1852), was John M’Kerrow. Ordained in the Associate Synod after completing his theological studies under George Lawson, M’Kerrow took part in the union movement creating the United Associate Church. He first published the *History of the Secession Church* in 1839, less than a decade prior to the merger of the United Associate Synod with the Relief Church.³⁹ His voluminous study of Secession history soon gained the acclaim of

36 David B. Calhoun, “Thomas M’Crie” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 507.

37 Thomas M’Crie, Jr., *The Story of the Scottish Church* (London: Blackie & Son, 1875), 470.

38 M’Crie, Jr., *The Story of the Scottish Church*, 471.

39 John M’Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1839), 2 vols. The work was revised and enlarged and republished as a single volume edition two years later, dedicated “anew to the service of the Saviour”. M’Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church* (Glasgow: A. Fullarton and Co., 1841), xvi; 1-956.

leading theologians in the United Associate Church, including James Peddie, John Mitchell, John Brown, and Donald Fraser. While it was the best of the Secession histories in terms of its tremendously detailed record of events in the varied streams of Secession churches, it also stood as the last major Secession history, in part because the mainstreams of the Secession Churches in Scotland were by the late 1840's merging with other Presbyterian denominations who did not share their particular origins.

M'Kerrow's history began with a statement of his intent "to trace the rise and progress, to describe the present state, and to dwell upon the future prospects of the Secession Church..."⁴⁰ To do this he took his readers "backward to the beginning of the eighteenth century", giving them an understanding "of some of those circumstances... which operating as so many predisposing causes, paved the way for a rapid, as well as an extensive revolt, so soon as the banner of the Secession was unfurled".⁴¹ M'Kerrow left no uncertainty as to his general sympathy for the Secession as a historian. But to what extent would this latter history of the Secession trace the impact of the doctrines of grace as expressed in Marrow theology? Would he view them as significant to both the history and the doctrinal identity of the Secession churches, as they had been by previous Secession historians?

M'Kerrow's opening chapter followed the well established pattern set by previous Secession historians, outlining the struggles over oaths in the Church of Scotland after the restoration of Presbyterianism in 1690 and the continuing influences of Erastianism upon the ecclesiastical life of the church. From this he turned to describe the leniency evidenced by the Church of Scotland in the case of the "unscriptural opinions" of Professor Simson of the University of Glasgow. The Simson affair served as the context illuminating the

40 M'Kerrow, 1.

41 M'Kerrow, 1.

condition of the Church of Scotland, particularly when contrasted with their harsh response to the Auchterarder Creed, and their actions against *The Marrow*. Here again M’Kerrow’s history followed patterns set in previous histories of the Secession. Like other Secession historians, he believed that the Marrow controversy bore positive fruit in the life of the church:

The result of the controversy was, in some respects, highly beneficial to the interests of religion, inasmuch as the excellent publications which it called forth from the press – relating to the vital doctrines of Christianity – tended to diffuse widely among the people correct views of the gospel, and to lead not a few of them to a more diligent cultivation of practical godliness... the spirit which excited and fostered, had a powerful, and not a very remote, influence in bringing about the Secession.⁴²

M’Kerrow went on to state that the republication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* “was of great service to not a few, in giving them correct views of the doctrines of the gospel”.⁴³

The Assembly’s decisions, he argued, “were viewed by a large class of both ministers and people, as having fixed, under the false charge of antinomianism, the stamp of their reprobation upon some of the most important doctrines of the Christian religion”.⁴⁴ While M’Kerrow’s history of the controversy manifested a clear sympathy to the cause of the Marrow as a revival of gospel understanding, he was nonetheless careful to note

It would be an act of injustice, however, to the memory of many good men, to affirm that all who were united together in condemning the Marrow, were influenced by hostility to the truth. This was far from being the case. There were amongst them many excellent persons, whose piety and orthodoxy were unquestionable, and who, from conscientious motives, opposed the sentiments maintained by the Marrow-men, because they considered them unscriptural, and calculated to injure the interests of sound morality. Though it must be admitted, that the book which gave rise to this controversy, contains in it startling propositions, and unguarded expressions, yet it contains in it also (what the title of it imports) the very *marrow* of gospel truth; and those persons who attempted to fasten upon it,

42 M’Kerrow, 10-11.

43 M’Kerrow, 11.

44 M’Kerrow, 13.

and upon its defenders, the charge of antinomianism, certainly acted under mistaken views, and carried their opposition to an unreasonable length.⁴⁵

M’Kerrow’s reflections on *The Marrow*’s opponents were more generous and sympathetic than those of earlier Secession histories, marking a change in historiographical approach somewhat similar to Thomas M’Crie’s attempts to avoid evaluation of the Marrow controversy in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*. The passionate historiography of earlier writers was tempered by a growing impartiality of spirit – perhaps reflecting a greater historical distance or a degree of decline from the earlier deep commitments to the theological heritage of the early Secession churches. Yet these men still viewed *The Marrow*’s cause as historically beneficial to the church. M’Kerrow’s writing reflected this sentiment throughout his commentary on the Marrow controversy, concluding by noting that through publicity surrounding the controversy

The peculiar doctrines of the gospel were brought prominently forward into notice... they imparted to [the people] clearer and more enlarged views of the gospel system, they tended at the same time, to produce in them a relish for evangelical preaching. The current of popular opinion ran strongly in favour of those ministers who espoused the Marrow doctrines.⁴⁶

After narrating the Marrow controversy, M’Kerrow turned to the growing issues of patronage in the Church of Scotland as the immediate cause of the Secession, at one point noting a connection between the events of the Secession and those surrounding *The Marrow*. In describing events leading to Secession he depicted the prevailing party of the Church of Scotland as deeply prejudiced against Ebenezer Erskine:

Already had he, when a minister in Fife, been accused, first before the Synod, and next before the Commission of the General Assembly, of teaching doctrines inconsistent with the Confession of Faith; by which his accusers meant the obnoxious doctrines of the Marrow.⁴⁷

45 M’Kerrow, 19.

46 M’Kerrow, 19.

47 M’Kerrow, 44.

M’Kerrow argued that this antipathy toward Erksine as one of the “Marrow-men” meant the supporters of patronage “were desirous of an opportunity to check his boldness”.⁴⁸ Erskine’s sermon at the Synod of Perth and Stirling in 1732, he argued, provided the opportunity.

In his discussions of Secession events, M’Kerrow provided no further analysis of connections between the Marrow controversy and the Secession church. His next references to the Marrow came in his account of the 1742 meetings of the Associate Presbytery and the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*. M’Kerrow stated “in this act, the Presbytery entered fully into a vindication of those doctrines taught by the Marrow-men, which the Assembly thought proper, first to misrepresent, and then to condemn”.⁴⁹ Presenting a detailed summary of the doctrinal statement, he indicated its harmony with and connection to the doctrine espoused by the Marrow supporters in the early 1720’s. M’Kerrow’s concluding comments again reflected sympathy toward, though also a certain degree of distance from, the doctrinal fervor of the early Seceders:

Whatever may be the opinion entertained concerning the Marrow doctrines, which are avowedly defended in this document, it is impossible not to admire the zeal which these good men displayed in the vindication of the truth. Tremblingly alive to everything that affected the interests of godliness, and the honour of their Redeemer, the grand object which they kept steadily in view, was maintaining, pure and uncorrupted, the truth as it is in Jesus. *Grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ*, was their darling theme, – a theme which warmed their affections, which employed their pens, which gave life and energy to their preaching, and to the frequent publication of which they were indebted, more than to anything else, for the great success which attended their ministrations among the people.⁵⁰

After his discussion of the events surrounding the passage of the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, M’Kerrow made little further mention of Marrow theology. His

48 M’Kerrow, 44.

49 M’Kerrow, 179.

50 M’Kerrow, 183-184.

account and summary of the overture and eventual Act of the General Associate Synod of 1754 “containing an assertion of some gospel truths, in opposition to Arminian errors”, related theological tenets in harmony with the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, but made no mention of Marrow connections or continuity.⁵¹ The remainder of his work presented a detailed ecclesiastical history, referring at times to the republication of the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace* in the various testimonies of the Secession churches, but making no further direct mention of Marrow theology.

M’Kerrow did often note “gospel preaching” as a distinction of the Secession churches, but there is little ground to argue that in doing so he specifically had a Marrow understanding of the gospel in mind.⁵² One place where again he explicitly referred to the Marrow controversy, or Marrow theology, was in an appendix to the *History of the Secession Church* “containing an account of the literature and authors of the secession”.⁵³ Here M’Kerrow noted the direct impact of “Marrow doctrine” on early Secession ministers including the Erskine brothers, William Wilson, and Alexander Moncrieff.⁵⁴ A final possible reference came in his biography of John Swanston (1720-1767) “[whose] sermons have been very much esteemed by those who set a value on the marrow of the gospel”.⁵⁵ M’Kerrow made no mention of Marrow doctrine in his accounts of Secession ministers and writers after Swanston.

51 M’Kerrow, 261.

52 In his concluding remarks M’Kerrow states “whatever may have been the faults connected with [the Secession church], the sound of a faithful gospel ministry has always been heard in its pulpits. It has held forth, with plainness, affection, and fidelity, the word of life, for the benefit of others”. M’Kerrow, 768.

53 M’Kerrow, 777.

54 M’Kerrow, 813, 818, 820, 828, 837.

55 M’Kerrow, 852.

While M’Kerrow’s *History of the Secession Church* clearly portrayed the significance of the Marrow controversy and theology for the early period of Secession history, his record does not present an awareness of a continuing heritage of Marrow doctrine. This may simply reflect M’Kerrow’s personal understanding of Secession history, or his priorities as an ecclesiastical historian. Perhaps with the passage of time Secession churches continued to maintain an evangelical heritage, but one, by M’Kerrow’s day, no longer cogently framed by the distinct doctrine and terminology espoused in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, the writings of Marrow men, and the restatement of Marrow theology in *The Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*. This understanding, however, seems to conflict with the younger Thomas M’Crie’s assessment that “there can be no doubt that the truths involved in [the Marrow] were uniformly held and faithfully preached” in the Secession churches”.⁵⁶

An assessment of M’Kerrow’s Secession historiography, along with the other histories of the Secession church provides valuable evidence but limited insight into the impact of Marrow theology on the Secession churches. Certainly there is substantial proof for a purposeful historical self-connection and ecclesiastical connection to *The Marrow* by Secession historians. Yet the question remains, to what extent did this stated historical connection reflect actual theological continuity? More particularly, was there a continuity of Marrow doctrine in the understanding of key doctrines of grace such as the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer? A fuller answer to these questions will be found through an examination of the theological works published by the Associate Presbytery (1733-1747) and Associate Synod (1747-1799) of the Secession churches, and their pastors and theologians.

⁵⁶ M’Crie, Jr., *The Story of the Scottish Church*, 471.

CHAPTER 8

THEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES FOR THE CONTINUITY OF MARROW THEOLOGY IN THE ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY (1733-1747)

While there are a few ecclesiastical publications, such as the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, providing material for theological assessment and comparison in light of Marrow doctrine, independent publications by the pastors and theologians of the Secession churches supply the primary source for analysis. Published writings include sermons, essays, and collected theological works, the latter occasionally prefaced by memoirs of the authors. Relevant individuals and their publications are considered chronologically by the date of ordination of the author and categorized by the denominational period of their primary service.

The Associate Presbytery constituted itself on December 5th, 1733, at Gairney Bridge with Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, Alexander Moncrieff, and William Wilson as presbyters. Its origins lay in the patronage controversy, specifically in the Church of Scotland's move to discipline Ebenezer Erskine and his supporters for their public dissent. As noted previously, some historians suggest that the actions of the Church of Scotland synods and Assembly in relation to the four brethren were in part motivated by ongoing frustration with their continuing public adherence to Marrow theology. Whether or not this is the case is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain. The events of 1733, however, culminating in the constituting of the Associate Presbytery, mark the beginning of the Secession church, providing a temporal point at which an examination of theological evidences for the continuity of Marrow doctrine can begin.

Ecclesiastical Publications

While much of the ecclesiastical publication by the fledgling Associate Presbytery addressed the continuing issues of patronage and secession, some also integrated doctrinal

grounds for secession. More importantly for this study, and in part because of an increasing focus on doctrinal grounds for secession, the Associate Presbytery developed distinctive ecclesiastical statements of doctrinal identity. These statements provide direct evidence for the impact of Marrow theology in the areas of atonement, saving faith, and gospel offer.

The earliest ecclesiastical publication was the 1734 *Testimony to the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the Church of Scotland*. It stressed the need for gospel preaching displaying “the necessity of a vital union with Christ, in order to our yielding acceptable obedience to the law”, clearly echoing the concern of the Marrow brethren to guard against a new covenant nomism, by promoting a correct view of the relationship of faith to other elements of the order of salvation.¹ The concern of the early Seceders, in harmony with that of the Marrow brethren, was that justification and sanctification be rightly understood. As a result they voiced their complaint against what they perceived as a continuing neonomian trend in the Church of Scotland:

How little of free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is taught, or of the gospel-mystery of sanctification, and maintained and carried on by a life of faith on the Son of God, who is made of God unto us, not only righteousness, but sanctification?²

Their statement reflected remarkable similarity with previous statements by Marrow brethren on the doctrine of the atonement, particularly in its strong emphasis on Christ’s active and passive obedience imputed to the believer for his justification and as the foundation and source for his sanctification. The *Testimony* also reflected Marrow

1 *A testimony to the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the Church of Scotland; or, reasons by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine Minister at Stirling, Mr. William Wilson Minister at Perth, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff Minister at Abernethy, and Mr. James Fisher Minister at Kinclaven, for their Protestation entred before the Commission of the General Assembly, November 1733...* (Edinburgh: Printed by Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1734), 78.

2 *A testimony to the doctrine, worship, government...*, 78.

theology more broadly by reaffirming the confession and declaration of the Seceders' adherence to the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God and to the "Protestant reformed doctrine... publicly professed in the Church of Scotland, summarily contained in our Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, approved by the Assembly in 1647".³

While the *Testimony* was created with the intent of manifesting an orthodox continuation of the Church of Scotland's doctrinal heritage, the following three years of Church of Scotland Assembly and local synod meetings regarding the protesting Associate Presbytery made it clear that reconciliation was unlikely; at the same time the Seceders grew numerically. In 1737, the Secession church created a revised and expanded testimony. This *Act, Declaration and Testimony* repeated the same concerns of the 1734 *Testimony* towards the Acts of Assembly of the Church of Scotland against *The Marrow*.⁴ Five years after the publication of the 1737 *Testimony*, the Associate Presbytery developed its first doctrinal act espousing and dealing directly with Marrow theology – the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*.

As an ecclesiastical publication, the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace* presents definitive evidence of the influence of Marrow theology on the early Secession church in the areas of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and the offer of the gospel.⁵ The

3 *A testimony to the doctrine, worship, government....*, 98.

4 *Act, Declaration and Testimony for the Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline of the Church of Scotland, Agreeable to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of Scotland... By some Ministers associate together for the Exercise of Church Government and Discipline in a Presbyterian Capacity...* (Edinburgh: Printed by Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1737), 84-85.

5 See pages 133-134 for discussion and assessment of the historical introduction to this act as historiographical evidence for the continuity of Marrow theology. The motive for the Act was a defense of the doctrine of grace in response to the Acts of the Church of Scotland Assemblies of 1720 and 1722 against *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. *Act of the Associate Presbytery Concerning the Doctrine of Grace: Wherein the Said Doctrine, As Revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and agreeably thereto, set forth in our Confession*

link between the Act and the Marrow controversy was so direct that Secession presbyters were careful to preface it by noting

Altho' this Presbytery are far from, putting that book entitled the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, or any other private compoſure, upon a level with our approved Standards of Doctrine; or to vindicate every expression in that book, or any other private writing, as absolutely faultleſs: Yet, in regard the Aſſembly have ſingled out the ſaid book, of all others that have been published, and paſſed ſuch peculiar ſentence againſt it, *ſtrictly prohibiting and diſcharging all the miniſters of this Church to recommend the ſaid book, and requiring them to warn their people not to uſe or read the ſame*; though the difference between the Law and the Goſpel, and between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, as alſo the true way of attaining Goſpel-Holineſs, be therein ſet forth in a very clear light... farther conſidering that, under the colour of condemning the ſaid book, ſeveral important and precious truths are deeply wounded, and the purity of doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechiſms, obſcured and perverted: Therefore... this Presbytery judge it their duty, to endeavour the preſervation of the purity of doctrine, and that the ſame may be faithfully transmitted to ſucceeding generations...⁶

The *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace* unmiſtakably addreſſed the doctrine of the atonement uſing *The Marrow's* language to refute the Aſſembly's judgment that in various places, including its ſtatement "the Father hath made a deed of gift and grant to all mankind, that whoever of them all ſhall believe in his Son, ſhall not periſh", *The Marrow* aſſerted a univerſal redemption as to purchaſe.⁷ The Associate Presbytery replied that

There is nothing in the above paſſages, that in the leaſt countenances univerſal redemption as to purchaſe, a doctrine which the Presbytery rejects and condemns, as contrary to the Scriptures, and places of our Confession and Catechiſms quoted by the Aſſembly. Nor can the author of the Marrow be juſtly cenſured for venting any ſuch error; for he plainly teacheth through the whole of his book, that Chriſt repreſented, and ſuffered for *none but the Elect*... as he expreſſly declares in the firſt ſentence of his Preface, 'Jeſus Chriſt, the ſecond Adam, did, as a common perſon, enter

of Faith and Catechiſms, is Aſſerted and Vindicated From the Errors vented and published in ſome Acts of the Aſſemblies of this Church, paſſed in Prejudice of the ſame. With an Introduction, Diſcovering the Riſe and Progress of the Opposition to the Doctrine of Grace, and the Reason of Paſſing and Publishing this Act, in Vindication of the ſame. (Edinburgh: Printed for David Duncan, 1744), 17.

⁶ *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*..., 18-19.

⁷ *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*..., 20.

into Covenant with God his Father, for all the Elect, that is to say all those that have or shall believe on his Name.⁸

While defensive of the language used by *The Marrow* and the Marrow brethren in describing the gospel announcement of this substitutionary atonement, the Associate Presbytery at the same time stressed that both they and *The Marrow's* author held steadfastly to Christ's atonement as particular in its extent, or limited to the elect. They reiterated the latter on several occasions in the Act, stating "the purchase and application of redemption [are] peculiar to the elect".⁹ Not only did the early Seceders assent to the Marrow's teaching of particular and substitutionary atonement, but they also noted their assent to the penal nature of the atonement by directly quoting of *The Marrow*: "by this means was the justice of God fully satisfied, his wrath appeased, and all true believers acquitted from their sins".¹⁰ Their entire discussion of the doctrine of the atonement was repeatedly set within the framework of federal or covenant theology, with recurring emphasis on Christ's fulfillment of the covenant of works in place of the elect, by which He at the same time enabled the "free and gracious covenant" for life and salvation.¹¹

The view of saving faith presented by the Associate Presbytery's *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace* was also effectively a restatement of the doctrine as presented in Marrow theology. In light of the statements on the nature of faith by the Assemblies of 1720 and 1722, the Presbytery found it "their duty to enquire... into the nature of faith... that a right notion of the nature of faith, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and agreeable thereto, set down in our Standards of Doctrine" be promoted.¹² Asserting the "duty of all,

8 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 20-21.

9 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 23.

10 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 20.

11 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 26.

12 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 27.

upon the revelation of Christ in the gospel... [to] instantly believe in him for salvation, both from sin and wrath” the Presbytery simultaneously stressed the necessity of regenerating work of the Holy Spirit to create and enable saving faith:

It is not possible for any man, of himself, to forsake his sins... or to actually exercise gospel-repentance, until he is determined and enabled by the power of the Spirit of faith, to look or come to Christ, the Prince and Saviour exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.¹³

In detailing the necessity of regeneration by the Spirit, the Presbytery’s *Act* stressed the importance of carefully understanding the relationship of faith to other elements of the order of salvation. True repentance could not be exercised until the individual was regenerated “to look”, or come, to Christ. The stress on faith being logically prerequisite to, while temporally concurrent with evangelical repentance is further emphasized as the Presbytery warned

all under their inspection to be aware of every doctrine that has a tendency to pervert the Gospel-Order in the manner above condemned; or to exalt corrupt nature unto an ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: As the above doctrine, of forsaking sin *in order* to our coming to Christ, manifestly doth; in regard a natural man can no more forsake his sin, or qualify himself for the grace of God, than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, according to the doctrine contained in the aforesaid passages of our Confession, and in our Larger Catechism, Q.32.¹⁴

The *Act* not only clearly spelled out the logical relationship of faith and repentance, but also the relationship of faith and obedience. Substantial portions of the *Act* addressed this topic under the headings of the relationship of holiness to salvation, motives to holiness for the believer and the role of the law for life of the believer. The Associate Presbytery argued that obedience, or holiness in living, was correctly understood as the necessary fruit or consequence of saving faith, all of which were the result of the work of the Holy Spirit, initially by regeneration and then continued in sanctification. Believers were not to be

13 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 17.

14 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 17.

motivated to holy obedience by “slavish fear” or “mercenary servile spirit”, though they would rightly have “a deep sense of the awfulness of [the] Father’s frowns and rods”.¹⁵ Holy fear, an understanding of God’s precepts in the law, and the awareness of the blessedness of the rewards of heaven were to encourage the believer in holiness, yet the heart of their motivation was expressed in the call to

more and more grow in the genuine spirit and disposition of the children of God, so as to have the love of his Father more and more the motive of his obedience, rather than the fear of the rod... the believer ought to have in his eye the depth of that misery he has by grace escaped; and to regard and deeply consider the threatening of that eternal wrath and misery, as they discover what even his sins in themselves deserve; that he may thereby be excited to adore the love of his Redeemer, in delivering him from so great a death, and to thankful obedience to him for the same, according to 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.¹⁶

Love and gratitude were the essential motives to a truly holy obedience, rather than fear of punishment. Just as with the relationship of faith and repentance, closely connected to the motives for obedience, the *Act* stressed “that holy obedience is not properly a federal or conditional mean, nor has any kind of causality, in order to the obtaining of glory”.¹⁷ The Seceders emphasized that salvation, both justification and sanctification, was entirely of grace.

In seeking to establish a correct understanding of the nature of faith in its relation to assurance, the Associate Presbytery argued that the Assembly by

Excluding from the nature of faith the appropriating act... speak[s] of no other assurance in faith, but a persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ’s ability and willingness to save all that come unto him, which is a persuasion that devils and reprobates may have.¹⁸

15 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 47.

16 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 48-49.

17 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 37.

18 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 27.

While this “persuasion of devils and reprobates” might be the extent of the faith promoted by the Church of Scotland, the Associate Presbytery sought to show there was rightly more to faith. Faith included “the assurance which the author of the Marrow advanceth”.¹⁹ This assurance was not the “assurance of sense” which the passages of the Confession and Catechisms quoted by the Assembly spoke of.²⁰ The Presbytery stated

The question is concerning the nature of that faith, which all the hearers of the gospel are called unto, and which the Scripture plainly describes to be a believing in God, and a trusting in his salvation, a receiving of Christ, a believing that record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, that he will be our God, and that we shall be his people; and so calling him our Father, our Husband, our God, upon the warrant of his own Word of grace. Believers indeed may be frequently in the dark as to the reality of their faith, and their present saving possession of eternal life; and there is nothing in the Marrow denying or opposing this, yea on the contrary it is plainly asserted: But there is a great difference between the assurance of our state of grace, which respects the state we are in already, and the assurance of the promise of salvation, or, an assured faith of righteousness and salvation in Christ Jesus.²¹

The Associate Presbytery, opposing what they saw as the Assembly’s mistaken definition of, or distinction between faith and assurance, defended the Marrow doctrine of an assurance in faith as the doctrine of the Secession church. They began by explaining the Marrow view of the assurance in faith by an analogy showing

that, where the testimony to be believed is a promise of good to be communicated, a man’s faith of that testimony necessarily includes his believing the certain accomplishment of that promise to him, and his confidence in the person who has given the promise, that he will do as he has said. And it is no less evident, that when an offer is made in a word of grace, to be received by faith, a person does not by faith receive what is offered, unless he believe it is his, by virtue, or upon the warrant of the offer made of it to him... if a king shall make a proclamation of pardon and indemnity to rebels, and his servants, by warrant from him, shall say to all the rebels in his kingdom, to you is this proclamation of his grace sent; a man must surely either believe the pardon of his own crime of rebellion in particular, or else reject the king’s proclamation of grace. Neither will it

19 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 27.

20 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 27.

21 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 28.

avail that a man believes in general, that there is a pardon proclaimed to rebels in general: this they may believe who need it not, as being loyal subjects; and this they may believe who also reject it and continue in their rebellion. Yet the particular persuasion above-mentioned is that which the Assembly here denies to belong to the nature of the justifying act of faith; and thereby do really turn justifying faith into that popish general faith abjured by our national covenant; or they make it a faith to be built in whole or in part, upon something wrought in, or done by us; whether our act of believing or repenting, or what else...²²

Following this illustration of the assurance, or “appropriating persuasion” belonging to faith, the *Act* went on to present five reasons why justifying faith includes within it “a man’s being persuaded that Christ is his in particular”.²³ The first was that “when a man’s conscience is truly awakened, and convinced by the Spirit of God as a Spirit of Conviction” this man views himself as personally, in particular, bound under the curse, and condemned by the law.²⁴ Faith, as a result, “must appropriate and apply Christ, as made a curse for the sinner in particular, to deliver him from the curse of the law; otherwise the gospel revelation and offer of Christ could not be... suitable to the man’s particular case”.²⁵ Secondly, the Presbytery argued

a man’s being persuaded that Christ is his, is necessary to answer the call or offer of the gospel, according to the deed of gift or grant that God has made of Christ in the Word... salvation is offered to everyone in particular, that hears these glad tidings... therefore it is certain, that faith, which is the answer of the soul to the call of God in the gospel, must lay hold on salvation for the person in particular. The faith of the operation of God, must correspond to the testimony and record of God...: so that when he says unto us as sinners, *I am the Lord thy God* it is our duty to say *This God is ours forever and ever*, or, which is the same thing, to be persuaded that Christ is ours, and God, our God in him.²⁶

22 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 29.

23 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 30.

24 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 30.

25 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 30.

26 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 30-31.

The Presbytery's remaining arguments for the correctness of the Marrow view of faith and assurance were rooted in the name of God, the command of God in the preface to the Ten Commandments, and the covenant relation between Christ and the whole visible church.²⁷ Each stressed the "fiducial act or appropriating persuasion" as necessary to "the defining of faith" and as such evidence a clear continuity of Marrow theology.²⁸

Much of the content of the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace* dealt with the offer of the gospel. The Presbytery warned that the teachings of the Assembly had "a tendency to pervert the gospel-order", and thus the gospel offer.²⁹ They viewed the Assembly's charges "of universal atonement and pardon" against *The Marrow* and the Marrow brethren as rooted in a rejection of a full, free, and universal gospel offer, arguing that

Since then it appears, from the sense and meaning of the author [of *The Marrow*] that the above passages cannot be interpreted, as favouring universal redemption as to purchase, there must be something else intended by the condemnatory sentence of the Assembly... it will be obvious from the tenor and strain of the Assembly's Act, that, under the misapplied title of universal redemption as to purchase, they condemn the universal and unlimited offer of Christ unto mankind sinners, as such... although the Assembly 1722 seems to own, that the revelation of the Divine Will in the Word affords a warrant to offer Christ unto all, and a warrant to all to receive him; yet they can own that warrant, only in a consistency with their

27 These arguments included the following statements: "We cannot but deny [the Lord's] name without his appropriating persuasion, that he is ours; for his name is Jehovah our Righteousness, the Light of the Gentiles. Thus he speaks to the whole visible church, I am the LORD your God: Yea, his name is salvation to the ends of the earth... In the preface to the ten Commandments, God makes over himself to Sinners as their God and Redeemer; And as all the Commandments are directed to everyone in particular, so the first commandment, Thou shalt have no other Gods before me, requires everyone to know and acknowledge the Lord to be his God and Redeemer... according to the Word of God and our received Standards, there can be no trusting in Christ, without faith's persuasion that Christ is ours, the great God and Saviour, Isa. xii. 2". *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 31-34.

28 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 35.

29 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 17.

notion of faith, that is, a warrant only for the elect, or those who are so and so qualified to receive Christ...³⁰

In contrast to what they saw as the Assembly's stance against the free offer of the gospel, the Associate Presbytery took the language and theology of *The Marrow* and presented a biblical and confessional foundation for a universal and free gospel proclamation. They began by arguing that, as stated in John 3:27, receiving Christ necessarily presupposed "a giving of him".³¹ In fact, a person could not receive Christ for salvation, "if there were not a giving of him before; or... a revelation of him in the Word, affording a warrant for sinners, as such, to receive him".³² This "deed of gift or grant made unto all mankind" they argued, was not only foundational to faith, but also stood as

the ground and warrant of the ministerial offer, without which no minister could have authority to preach the gospel to every creature, or to make a full, free and unhampered offer of Christ, his grace, righteousness and salvation, to all mankind to whom they have access in providence.³³

The peculiar terminology of "deed of gift or grant" as well as the general language and arguments used by the Seceders in defending the Marrow's doctrine of grace, was consistent with and often directly rooted in *The Marrow* and the writings of the Marrow brethren.³⁴ As an ecclesiastical publication, the 1742 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, provides compelling evidence that while the origin of the Secession church might not lie in the Marrow controversy, its doctrine was profoundly shaped by it. The *Act* stood as the final ecclesiastical publication dealing with the gospel and its proclamation prior to

30 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 22.

31 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 22.

32 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 22.

33 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...*, 23.

34 E[dward] F[isher], *The Marrow of Modern Divinity... with notes in The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston*, ed. Samuel M'Millan. Vol. VII. (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 262-263.

the rise of the Burgher controversy, and the ensuing division of the Secession Church in 1747 into the Associate and General Associate Synod streams.

Individual Publications

Individual publications of Associate Presbytery theologians and pastors up to 1747 provide further substantiating evidence for a continuing influence of Marrow theology in the areas of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer. In many respects this should be expected, considering the statements of Marrow theology by these pastors and theologians as an ecclesiastical body. It also undoubtedly reflects the fact that the majority of early Seceders had close personal connections to the Marrow brethren. Of the first four Seceders, Ebenezer Erskine was one of the twelve Marrow brethren; Alexander Moncrieff and William Wilson were involved in a broader circle of support for the Marrow brethren. James Fisher, the youngest of the four initial Seceders, was ordained after the period of the Marrow controversy, but spent time as a young man under the ministry of Ebenezer Erskine, marrying one of his daughters.³⁵ While there were others who joined the Secession prior to the division of 1747, including Adam Gib and Thomas Mair, both of whom published works relevant to the doctrines of the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer, they were more notable in their roles in the Secession stream of the General Associate Synod churches after the Burgher controversy, and as such fall outside the scope of this study. Ralph Erskine, however, stands more definitively as a published pastor within the time frame of the early Secession, and is therefore considered with the four brethren under the Associate Presbytery.

³⁵ David Lachman, "James Fisher" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 323.

Ebenezer Erskine

In many respects Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754) was the ‘father’ of the Secession; he preached publicly against the Church of Scotland’s decisions on patronage, as a result of which the process against him and his supporters was set in motion. Ordained in 1703, he was a pastor in his late thirties when the Marrow controversy occurred, in which he also took a leading role as one of the Marrow brethren. Erskine’s primary publications relevant to the doctrines of the atonement, saving faith, gospel offer were his collected sermons, published posthumously by his son-in-law James Fisher in 1761, and his contribution with Fisher to an exposition of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, first published in 1753.

Erskine’s sermons have been the subject of scholarly study, most significantly by Pieter Van Harten in his published dissertation *De Prediking van Ebenezer an Ralph Erskine*.³⁶ Van Harten assesses the Erskines’ preaching in the areas of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and gospel offer. He notes that “as regards the extent of the atonement, they rejected Saumur’s view that Christ died for all” but rather held to a particular atonement, limited to the elect, yet at the same time freely, directly, and sincerely offered to all in the preaching of the gospel.³⁷ The gospel offer, by Van Harten’s assessment, emphasized “the proclamation of the covenant promises... put forth... in all their richness and variety” and their unconditional nature.³⁸ Van Harten describes the Erskines’ view of faith as being a grace, including the elements of knowledge and personal appropriation, “characterized by its acceptance of Christ as He is actually offered in the

36 Pieter Hendrick Van Harten, *De Prediking van Ebenezer an Ralph Erskine: Evangeliever-kondiging in het spanningsveld van verkiezing en belofte* (Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1986), 1-313.

37 Van Harten, 284-285.

38 Van Harten, 284. For further detail see Van Harten’s description of the continuity of the Marrow view of the gospel offer in the preaching of the Erskines as discussed in the section “de prediking van de beloften: onvoorwaardelijk,” and “de prediking van de beloften: welmenend,” Van Harten, 132-140, 140-150.

promises”.³⁹ He also assesses the Erskines’ view of the relationship of faith and assurance.⁴⁰ In each case, Van Harten sees these characteristics as reflective of Marrow theology.

Despite the fact that he predominantly cites Ralph Erskine’s sermons in his dissertation, an assessment of Ebenezer Erskine’s published sermons also supports Van Harten’s conclusions. Erskine’s sermons were preached between the years 1714 and 1752, two years prior to his death.⁴¹ Not surprisingly, particularly considering his role as one of the Marrow brethren, and as a key figure in the drafting of the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, Erskine’s view of the atonement, as stated in his sermons, stands consistent with that of Marrow theology.

In discussing the necessity of the atonement, Erskine speaks of Christ’s work as High Priest “to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”.⁴² By sin, man broke relationship with God. God’s holy justice, expressed in the curse and penalty of sin, necessitated a work of atonement which only the Son could accomplish, because “man, who has broken the law, is utterly incapable to repair its honour, or to satisfy justice”.⁴³ It is only through

39 Van Harten, 285.

40 Van Harten discusses the Erskines’ view of faith and assurance and its consistency with Marrow theology under the headings “de zekerheid van het geloof” (the assurance of faith) and “de zekerheid van het gevoel” (the assurance of sense) indicating “hoe dit in de prediking van de Erskines is uitgewerkt”. Van Harten, 183-190. Joel Beeke also refers to Erskine’s distinction of types of assurance in his study of the doctrine of assurance: *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 88, 235.

41 Ebenezer Erskine, *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) 3 vols.

42 Ebenezer Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith, Opened and Applied. Being the Substance of Several Sermons on Heb. x. 22”. in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 1, 207.

43 Ebenezer Erskine, “The Broken Law Magnified and Made Honourable” in *The Whole*

the death and satisfaction of the Son of God, the way of access to friendship and fellowship with a holy God, both here and hereafter, is made open and patent to every sinner, who by faith comes under the covert of the blood of Jesus... the flaming sword of justice being quenched in the blood of the Surety, the door of access is again wide opened.⁴⁴

In a sermon entitled “The First Promise Accomplished”, Erskine declared “this was done in the death of Christ; justice was satisfied, reconciliation made for iniquity, the sinner redeemed from the curse, he [Christ] being made a curse for us”.⁴⁵ This was a penal and substitutionary atonement, Christ bearing the penalty of the sin, “at the expense of his blood” so that through “the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, sin is condemned and the righteousness of the law”, fulfilled in Christ, is imputed to the believer.⁴⁶

Like the other Marrow brethren, Erskine stressed both the active and passive obedience of Christ in his atoning work, stating “Christ did everything that the law required; he fulfilled all righteousness... in his own person, by an active and passive obedience, and in all his members by imputation”.⁴⁷ Erskine’s comments on the necessity and nature of the atonement also reflected his view of the extent of the atonement as limited, or particular in its extent. It was “upon the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son [that] the Son of God was chosen and sustained as the Surety of the elect

Works of Ebenezer Erskine (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 3, 166.

44 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 207.

45 Ebenezer Erskine, “The First Promise Accomplished; Or, The Head of the Serpent Bruised By the Seed of the Woman. A Sermon Preached... August 12, 1733” in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 2, 184.

46 Erksine, “The Broken Law Magnified...”, 161-64.

47 Erksine, “The Broken Law Magnified...”, 174. Erskine goes on in this sermon to warn against “the error of those who deny Christ’s active obedience to the law to be any part of our justifying righteousness; alleging, that it is only his passive obedience, or his suffering the penalty, that is imputed to us for justification”. Erskine, “The Broken Law Magnified...”, 175. This was a clear rebuttal to the theological view of the leading opponents of Marrow theology.

world... enabling a blessed exchange of places between Christ and his people”.⁴⁸
 Condemnation remained for those who would not come to Christ.⁴⁹

Ebenezer Erskine’s view of saving faith was also consistent with that presented in Marrow theology. With the Marrow brethren, Erskine rejected Arminian theology, asserting the necessity of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit to create and enable faith. In opposition to what he and the Marrow brethren saw as a neo-nomian tendency towards the conditionality of repentance and faith as prerequisites to salvation, Erskine stressed faith as “a saving grace... the free gift of God, bestowed without any antecedent merit, good disposition, or qualification in us”.⁵⁰ To Erskine, the covenant of grace in Christ was to be seen as absolute and complete, providing all that was necessary for sinners to receive life and salvation. Like the other Marrow brethren and *The Marrow* itself, Erskine argued that saving faith necessarily included assurance. He saw this assurance within faith as having two aspects – “an assurance or certainty of assent and application”.⁵¹
 These he described as follows:

There is... in faith an assurance of assent, whereby the man assuredly believes whatever God has said in his word to be true, and that not upon the testimony of men, of ministers, or angels, but upon the testimony and authority of the God of truth... Secondly there is in faith an assurance of

48 Ebenezer Erskine, “The Believer Exalted in Imputed Righteousness. A Sermon Preached... June 4, 1721” in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 1, 99.

49 Erskine, “The First Promise Accomplished...” in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 2, 184. Further evidence for Ebenezer Erskine’s view of the doctrine of the atonement as described is found in his joint publication with Ralph Erskine and James Fisher, *The Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism Explained, By Way of Question and Answer* (Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1765), 95-118.

50 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 212-13.

51 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 223. In a later sermon, Erskine states “faith is a grace that carries a great deal of certainty in the very nature and bosom of it”. Ebenezer Erskine, “Abraham Rejoicing to See Christ’s Day Afar Off” in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 3, 350.

application, or appropriation, expressed frequently in Scripture by a resting, a trusting or confiding in the Lord, and the veracity of his word of grace and promise. By this act of faith, the soul takes home the promise, and embraces it as a good and sufficient security to itself... it has a peculiar satisfaction in these words, my and our... See how sweetly David harps upon this string, Ps. xviii. 1, 2, no less than eight times in a breath does he repeat his appropriating my, “My strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower”. Yea so tenacious is faith in this matter, that it will maintain its my’s in the face of a hiding and frowning God: Ps. xxii. 1, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

... The first [kind of assurance] may be found in great measure, and in some sort, in devils and reprobates; the last is of a distinguishing nature, and peculiar only to the faith of God’s elect, and of his operation...⁵²

Arguing that “there is a great difference betwixt the assurance of faith (which I have now described), and the assurance of sense, which follows upon faith”,⁵³ Erskine described the latter as “the reflex act of the soul” and as the “effect of assurance of faith”.⁵⁴ His description of the assurance of faith and the assurance of sense followed the pattern set in *The Marrow*, as did his argument that the assurance of faith, as an element of faith itself, includes a personal appropriation of the promises of the gospel.

Ebenezer Erskine’s sermons provide numerous examples of an understanding of the nature of the offer of the gospel consistent with Marrow theology.⁵⁵ His sermon on assurance of faith uses *The Marrow*’s distinctive language, stating that “the giving of Christ in the revelation and offer of the gospel is common to all, and warrants all to receive him... by virtue of this deed of gift or grant”.⁵⁶ Reemphasizing the warrant for the gospel

52 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 222-23.

53 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 224.

54 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 224.

55 The following references provide but a few examples from his sermons: Ebenezer Erskine, “The Human Nature Preferred to the Angelical...”, in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 1, 158; “The Broken Law Magnified...” in vol. 1, 174; “The Assurance of Faith” in vol. 1, 216-17; “The Tree of Life Shaking His Fruits...” in vol. 1, 422-23.

56 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 214.

offer with its universal call, Erskine stated that “such a giving of Christ warrants all to receive him... these are good tidings of great joy to all people”.⁵⁷ Not only is the gospel offer universal, but “Christ is freely offered in the gospel... and must be freely received”.⁵⁸ Inextricably linked to the free offer of the gospel was the fullness of this gospel offer; both of these truths flowed from the active and passive obedience of Christ in his atoning work. In a sermon entitled “Gospel Treasure in Earthen Vessels” Erskine sought to describe the fullness of the gospel offer as containing

The rich and valuable things to be found in the treasure of the gospel... life... the redemption of the soul... that light which discovers another world... a treasure of wisdom, whereby the foolish and simple sinner is made wise to salvation... that crown of glory which fell from Adam’s head... the imputed righteousness of Christ... [the] quickening, cleansing, adorning, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost... everything needful, either for life or godliness, for time or eternity... the whole inheritance of glory... sovereign medicines and antidotes against all spiritual and soul diseases... All edifying and saving gifts and graces are committed unto Christ by his Father, as the King, Head, and Lawgiver of his church; he received... and accordingly gives... unto men.⁵⁹

It was with this understanding that Erskine could proclaim “this very name of Christ... the resurrection and the life... invites you to come to him... I affirm he is yours in the revelation... he is yours as he stands in this gospel; and he is yours in the gift and grant made by himself in the word”.⁶⁰ Erskine’s doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and

57 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 214. Erskine notes on the same page “this will not infer a universal redemption; for I do not now speak of the purchase or application of redemption, which, without all doubt, is peculiar to the elect; but of that giving of Christ in the word, which warrants our receiving of him”.

58 Erskine, “The Assurance of Faith...”, 217-219.

59 Ebenezer Erskine, “Gospel Treasure in Earthen Vessels...” in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 3, 441-444.

60 Ebenezer Erskine, “Christ The Resurrection, And The Life... Preached October 1738” in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 2, 504.

gospel offer present a clear and distinctive beginning of the Associate Presbytery's continuity of Marrow theology.

Ralph Erskine

Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), Ebenezer Erskine's younger brother, was also directly involved in the Marrow controversy. Ordained as a minister of the Church of Scotland in Dunfermline in 1711, Ralph Erskine was present at the Gairney Bridge meeting of the first four Seceders in 1733, but did not actively join the Secession until 1737.⁶¹ The majority of his elders and congregation seceded with him from the Church of Scotland; his activity and repute as a popular preacher continued to the end of his life's service in the Associate Synod.⁶² Erskine's published works relevant to an examination of the continuity of Marrow doctrine include a collection of about forty sermons along with his *Gospel Sonnets* and *Scripture Songs*.⁶³ Another work, first published in 1753, was *Job's Hymns*.⁶⁴ He also contributed to the first part of *The Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism Explained* along with Ebenezer Erskine and James Fisher, the latter two completing the second part of the work after his death.

Scholarly study of the continuity of Marrow theology in the published sermons of Ralph Erskine is limited to Pieter Van Harten's work. Van Harten indicates, with

61 M'Kerrow, 838.

62 David Lachman, "Ralph Erskine" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 302.

63 Lachman states "*Scripture Songs* (G, 1754) was an attempt to turn appropriate passages of Scripture into metre for 'the same public use' as the Psalms of David, in accord with the Assembly Act of 1647 and as recommended by the Associate Synod in 1747". Lachman, 302. Erskine gives his own account of this in his "Preface" to *A Short Paraphrase Upon the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Adapted to the Common Tunes...By Ralph Erskine* (Glasgow: John Newlands, 1750), v-vi.

64 Ralph Erskine, *Job's Hymns, or a Book of Songs Upon the Book of Job* (Glasgow: J. Newlands, 1753), 1-157.

substantial evidence, that Erskine's sermons did cohere to the theology expressed in *The Marrow* and by its supporters during the Marrow controversy. Yet, whether this continued to Erskine's last years of preaching, and in specifically in the areas of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith and gospel offer, requires further examination.

The doctrine of the atonement, while explicitly and fully expounded in Erskine's earlier published sermons, such as "The Sword of Justice Awakened Against God's Fellow" and "The rent Vail of the Temple; or, Access to the Holy of Holies by the Death of Christ", does not receive the same depth of attention in his later published sermons. Why this is the case is unclear. The earlier sermons speak extensively of Christ fulfilling the obligations and the penalty of the broken covenant of works for the elect: "he [Christ] met with... that which sin deserves, viz. death and the curse; the hiding of his Father's face... the wrath of God; the awakened sword of the justice of God smiting him... [the] eternal Son bearing the stroke of vengeance in the room of elect sinners".⁶⁵ They also indicate a particular substitutionary atonement, where "all your sin and guilt be laid on him, and... all his merit and righteousness be imputed to you".⁶⁶ Erskine's later sermons do speak of the great exchange which has taken place through the atonement and its imputation, often speaking of Christ "who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him", but tend to do so more generally.⁶⁷ The theology of the

65 Ralph Erskine, "The Sword of Justice Awakened Against God's Fellow" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 1, 9-56; "The Rent Vail of the Temple..." in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 1, 75-109; reprint vols. 1-6, Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books. Erskine, "The Sword of Justice...", 28.

66 Erskine, "The Sword of Justice...", 51.

67 Ralph Erskine, "Christ's Treasures Opened By Himself" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 185-187. See also the same sermon pages 201, 207, 211, 213, as well as the following sermons: "The True Believer's Internal Witness" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 341;

atonement expressed across Erskine's published sermons is certainly consistent with that expressed by *The Marrow* and the Marrow supporters during the controversy; the change in emphasis may in part be due to the limited selection of sermons published.⁶⁸

Erskine's later published sermons frequently discuss the doctrine of saving faith, asserting the necessity of sovereign regeneration and effectual calling unto faith.⁶⁹ He often describes faith in terms that suggest an appropriating assurance, rooted in the promises of God: "faith has its eye upon the holiness and purity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon this ground expects admittance into the presence of God... faith expects to be heard through his purity and holiness... faith expects salvation from God, through Jesus Christ".⁷⁰ Erskine's sermon "The Believer's Internal Witness; Or, The Certain Evidence of True Faith" explicitly describes faith as including assurance, and as bringing a reflexive assurance of sense alongside it, by the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ Van

"Faith's Repose and Rest Under the Tree of Life" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 388-389; "The Object of Prayer – The Father, Through the Son, By the Spirit" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 619-621.

68 While over a hundred and sixty of Ralph Erskine's sermons are published in his collected works, across a span of over thirty years this amounts to only five or six of his sermons per year, on average. His last published sermons distinctively dealing with the doctrine of the atonement are "Redemption by Christ, shewn to be of God, as the first Cause, and to God, as the last End" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 3, 483-504 and "Clean Water; Or Christ's Precious Blood" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 4, 118-144.

69 Ralph Erskine, "The Heights of Sinners Levelled, in the Day of Effectual Vocation" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 445-450.

70 Ralph Erskine, "Faith in Christ, The Surest Way of Relief" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 576.

71 Ralph Erskine, "The Believer's Internal Witness; Or, True Faith's Evidence" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 344-347.

Harten's case for Ralph Erskine's preaching on assurance of faith and assurance of sense as an outworking of Marrow theology finds ample support through a reexamination of Erskine's sermons.

The gospel offer is consistently full, free and universal in Erskine's sermons. Van Harten describes it as "unconditional" and "well-meant" in its appeal to the hearers.⁷² In his sermon, "Christ's Treasures Opened By Himself", Erskine proclaims the free offer of the gospel:

It were dishonourable to a great man to offer money for a free feast to which he invites his guests; how dishonorable to the great God is it to stand upon terms and conditions with him? He stands upon no terms with us who have nothing, when he invites us to come and share of all things freely.⁷³

Later in the same sermon Erskine emphasizes the fullness of this free gospel offer, directly restating the language of *The Marrow* in proclaiming its all sufficiency for every man:

O happy are believers! "All things are yours; for, ye are Christ's and Christ is God's:" you have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and all things in Christ: it is easy with Christ to supply all your needs, and to give you all sufficiency in all things... there is an overflowing ocean of all good in Christ for sinners... Hence we see the duty of all poor and needy sinners, and where they ought to go for supply, and for a share of all things they need: and what a broad foundation for faith is here. God in Christ is the fountain of living waters. God the Father hath all things; but how shall we come at them? Why, says Christ, come to me; for, they are all mine; mine to give out, mine to distribute among poor needy sinners.⁷⁴

Seeing the fullness of the gospel offer as directly connected to its unconditional nature, Erskine argued that it was rooted in the complete atonement of Christ. In the sermon "The

72 Van Harten, 132-157.

73 Ralph Erskine, "Christ's Treasures Opened By Himself" in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 213.

74 Erskine, "Christ's Treasures Opened...", 201. The statement in *The Marrow* which Erskine restates directly is "[Christ] is made unto you of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption". Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 255. James Hog made use of the same language in his *Remarks Concerning the Spirit's Operation...*, 85-86.

Heights of Sinners Levelled”, he criticizes those who offer Christ conditionally – a criticism shared by *The Marrow* and the Marrow brethren.⁷⁵ Calling his hearers to stop thinking they could in some way prepare themselves for Christ, Erskine preached:

...come down to the gospel terms of life and salvation: that is, to the renouncing of all legal terms and conditions, to which you can never come up. You have heard, perhaps, men speak of coming up to the terms of the gospel, saying, You must be so and so qualified, humble and penitent, before you can come to Christ; why this is indeed an ascending up, instead of a coming down. But the call is, “Come down, Zaccheus,” to the terms of the gospel-market; that is, to get all things freely, without money, and without price; all things for nothing, Isa. lv. 1.⁷⁶

This gospel message, full, free and unconditional, was also a universal offer. As Erskine found in Scripture, and *The Marrow* explained, the gospel offer was for all. So he preached: “Our Lord Jesus Christ is such a wonderful Physician, that he has a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady, a cure for every case, that any sinner on earth can possibly be in”.⁷⁷

James Fisher

Before becoming a minister himself, James Fisher (1697-1775) sat under Ebenezer Erskine’s ministry, and married his daughter, Jean.⁷⁸ After studying divinity at Edinburgh, he was ordained a minister of the parish of Kinclaven in 1726. When the Synod of Perth and Stirling took action against his father-in-law, Fisher opposed the motion for censure,

⁷⁵ Van Harten shares in this assessment and notes that Ralph Erskine spoke directly to this in the midst of the Marrow controversy, stating in 1720 “the glorious gospel is much clouded at this day, with legal terms, conditions, and qualifications”. Erskine as quoted in Van Harten, 132-133.

⁷⁶ Ralph Erskine, “The Heights of Sinners Levelled, in the Day of Effectual Vocation” in *The Sermons and Other Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1862), vol. 6, 456.

⁷⁷ Erskine, “The Heights of Sinners Levelled...”, 441.

⁷⁸ M’Kerrow, 832-35; David Lachman, “James Fisher” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 323.

but his vote was disallowed by the Synod. Fisher requested that his protest be recorded, and from that point he was publicly identified with Ebenezer Erskine in the events that led to the Secession. The vast majority of Fisher's parish went with him into the Secession church. He served as a leading figure in the Associate Presbytery, took the Burgher side of the controversy in 1747, and continued his ministerial service in this stream of the Secession church until his death. Fisher also served as professor of theology for the Associate Synod from 1749 to 1764.

Though Fisher published some writings, M'Kerrow points out that they "are neither very numerous nor very bulky".⁷⁹ Works relevant to the examination of the continuity of Marrow theology include sermons published between 1739 and 1755, along with *The Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism Explained by way of Question and Answer* (1753, 1760).⁸⁰ The latter work was in part co-authored with the Erskine brothers. Ralph Erskine's contribution to the first part of the work ended with his death in 1752; Ebenezer Erskine's involvement lasted until 1754. This left Fisher to complete the second part of the work on his own, and to act as the publisher of the work as a whole, causing it to be popularly known as "Fisher's catechism".⁸¹

Fisher's published sermons, like those of the Erskines, along with their catechism, reveal a close affinity with Marrow theology. Fisher commonly spoke of the doctrine of the atonement in the framework of federal or covenant theology. Where the first Adam "as the federal head and representative of all his posterity" had broken the covenant of works, Christ as the second Adam fulfilled its obligations and penalty for "all the elect", making

79 M'Kerrow, 835.

80 James Fisher, Ebenezer Erskine and Ralph Erskine, *The Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism Explained By Way of Question and Answer: Part I and II* (Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1765); reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001.

81 M'Kerrow, 834.

possible the covenant of grace.⁸² This penal substitutionary atoning work of Christ was “absolutely necessary” in order to “shew mercy to mankind-sinners” while upholding “the vindication of the truth and veracity of God... and the satisfaction of vindictive justice, which is essential to God”.⁸³ In a later sermon Fisher states

That Christ is the only doer in this great work [of redemption], will appear from the tenor of the covenant of grace, which was made with him; wherein he, as the Head and Surety, was bound to pay the whole debt, owing by an elect world, in virtue of a broken covenant of works... This he engaged unto in the bond of service which he gave unto his Father, and which was cheerfully accepted...⁸⁴

In the *Shorter Catechism Explained* Fisher further describes the righteousness of Christ, imputed to believers, as consisting of “his active and passive obedience”.⁸⁵ This

82 James Fisher, *Christ Jesus the Lord Considered as The Inexhaustible Matter of Gospel-Preaching in A Sermon At the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. James Mair to be Minister of the Associate Congregation at Lintoun, May 29, 1740*. (Edinburgh: Printed for David Duncan, 1741), 17-19. See also Fisher’s *Shorter Catechism Explained*, 83-113, 133.

83 Fisher, *Christ Jesus the Lord Considered...*, 20. The same themes are emphasized fourteen years later in Fisher’s sermon *The Doors of the Heart Summoned to Open to the King of Glory* where he states that in Christ “all the demands that law and justice had against us were fully answered, and nothing could any more be laid to the charge of God’s elect”. *The Doors of the Heart Summoned to Open to the King of Glory. An Action Sermon Preached, August 30th, 1755*. (Glasgow: Printed for and Sold by James Oliphant, 1755), 16.

84 James Fisher, *Christ the Sole and Wonderful Doer in the Work of Man’s Redemption. An Action Sermon Preached Immediately before dispensing the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, in the Associate Congregation of Glasgow, June 23d. 1745*. (Glasgow: Printed for and Sold by James Oliphant, 1755), 8. Several unpublished sermons of James Fisher exist in manuscript form; they indicate a continuity of the same understanding of the atonement in his preaching. See MS 3245 *Handwritten Volume of Sermons by James Fisher, Ralph Erskine, Ebenezer Erskine, Boston, Swanston, All at Sacramental Occasions* [Special Libraries and Archives, King’s College, Aberdeen] which includes the following sermons: *A Sermon Preached at Dunfermline Sacrament July 10 By Mr. James Fisher minister of the gospel at Glasgow on a Sabbath Day. On Song 6 – 16 Yea he is altogether lovely*, 1-14; *A Sermon at the opening of the Associate Synod, at Dunfermline Septr. 1st 1747 on Isaiah xxi, 11, 12. – Watchman what of the Night?* 1-34; *A Sermon preached at the Sacrament of Dunfermline on Monday July 17th 1749 on Ephes. 1:14 – That Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the earnest of our Inheritance*, 35-48.

85 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part I*, 179.

point, emphasized by the Marrow brethren, was integral to the foundation of the full, free offer of the gospel. Fisher explains Christ's active and passive obedience as follows:

What is his active obedience?

The holiness of his nature and righteousness of his life, in full and perfect conformity to the whole law, without the least failure, either of parts, or degrees of obedience to the end, Matt. v. 17, 18.

What is his passive obedience?

His satisfaction for sin, by enduring the infinite execution of the curse, upon him in his death, Gal. iii. 13, to the full compensation of all the injuries done to the honour of an infinite God, by all the sins of an elect world, Eph. v. 2.⁸⁶

Continuity between Marrow theology and the theology expressed in Fisher's published works is found not only in the area of the doctrine of the atonement, but also, and perhaps more distinctively, in his explanations of saving faith. In his sermons, Fisher often speaks of faith carefully describing it as "the gift of God" who is "the author and finisher of faith".⁸⁷ In the *Shorter Catechism Explained* Fisher reaffirms the necessity of sovereign regeneration, stating that we come to God by this gift of faith "by the Spirit's working it in us... a work that requires almighty power, even the same power which was wrought in Christ when he was raised from the dead".⁸⁸ While clearly stating the necessity of sovereign regeneration, Fisher did not lessen the call to personal responsibility to respond to the gospel by faith. In his sermon *The Inestimable Value of Divine Truth* Fisher proclaimed

Oh then, without further delay, buy the truth; reach forth the hand of faith and take it, and the bargain is made. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not standing

86 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part I*, 179. It should be noted that this understanding of the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers, consisting of both Christ's active and passive obedience, was formulated by Fisher along with Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine who served as co-authors for the first part of the *Shorter Catechism Explained*.

87 Fisher, *Christ Jesus the Lord Considered...*, 19; *Christ the Sole and Wonderful Doer...*, 21.

88 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part I*, 165.

upon terms with you, he knows you have nothing; and therefore he is just now offering himself to you, and all that he is, and has, for nought, in this market of free grace.⁸⁹

Fisher also spoke extensively of both the nature of faith and its relation to other graces in the life of the believer. Describing saving faith as including both “a receiving of the object, and likewise a firm persuasion about it”, he echoed the Marrow teaching that faith includes a personal appropriating assurance.⁹⁰ Preaching on Christ as the Angel of the Lord in Judges 13:19, Fisher declared

What is here presented unto the eye of faith, in the word, is, that the Angel of the Lord hath done all that you were hearing above, and infinitely more than can be told; and that he has done all these things for you; and therefore himself, his righteousness, and salvation is yours, in the grant and offer thereof; and consequently looking on, or believing, in this case, must be a persuasion that it is so, upon the ground of God’s own faithfulness and veracity, speaking in his own word: the ground of the persuasion of faith being infinitely more firm and solid, than the ground of any persuasion we can have arising from our senses, because it is the infallible testimony of a God that cannot lye... Therefore, when it is revealed to us, that God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish but have everlasting life; the language of faith corresponding hereunto, must be, as in Acts xv.11. We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. Hence it easily follows, that this persuasion of faith must take in the particular application, for all intents and purposes for which he is exhibited unto us, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.⁹¹

As stated in this sermon, and clearly reflecting both Marrow theology and language, Fisher viewed faith as containing an element of assurance, which was rooted in the promises of God in Christ, the grant and offer of the gospel, and the fullness and sufficiency of the Christ’s work.⁹² These themes are even more explicitly and thoroughly described in

89 James Fisher, *The Inestimable Value of Divine Truth Considered in A Sermon On Proverbs XXIII. Xxiii. Buy the Truth, and Sell it not. Preached... 23rd of March 1738.* (Printed for Duncan Ferguson, 1739), 44.

90 Fisher, *Christ the Sole and Wonderful Doer...*, 18.

91 Fisher, *Christ the Sole and Wonderful Doer...*, 19.

92 Fisher’s use of Marrow terminology is unmistakable: he speaks of the “grant” of the gospel offer, and also proclaims Christ’s sufficiency as “wisdom, righteousness,

Fisher's *Shorter Catechism Explained* which describes faith "as a believing that Jesus Christ, with his righteousness, and all his salvation is... offered to sinners, and to each of them in particular".⁹³ Distinguishing the assurance of faith from the assurance of sense in his commentary on Westminster Shorter Catechism question and answer thirty-six, Fisher states that "the assurance mentioned in this answer... is the assurance of sense" not the assurance of faith.⁹⁴ He separated the two by stating

The object of the assurance of faith is "Christ in the promise," James ii. 23; but the object of the assurance of sense is "Christ formed in the soul," 2 Tim. ii. 12; or which is the same thing, the assurance of faith is founded upon the infallible word of God, who cannot lie; but the assurance of sense upon the person's present experience of the communications of divine love.⁹⁵

Fisher also carefully delineated faith as an instrument rather than a condition of the covenant of grace, arguing that speaking of it as a condition would "confound the law and gospel; and bring works into the matter and cause of a sinner's justification before God, contrary to Rom. v. 19, and Gal. ii. 16".⁹⁶ He argued similarly regarding the relation of faith and repentance, explaining the Westminster Confession's statement that "repentance is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it" as meaning "that repentance is such an inseparable concomitant of pardon, that no pardoned person continues to be impenitent".⁹⁷ Emphasizing this further, he rejected repentance as a condition of pardon stating "repentance cannot so much as have the least instrumentality in pardon, it can never be the condition of it, nor have the smallest influence in causing it...

sanctification, and redemption" for all who come to him.

93 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained...Part I*, 169.

94 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part I*, 194.

95 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part I*, 194.

96 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part I*, 108, 125.

97 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part I*, 177.

[rather] faith is the sole instrument of receiving Christ and his righteousness".⁹⁸ Faith, produced in the soul by the Holy Spirit's work was "the spring and fountain" of both repentance and new obedience.⁹⁹

Fisher's understanding of the gospel offer, as found in his published sermons and catechism, also reveals a distinct continuity with *The Marrow*. The sermon *The Inestimable Value of the Divine Truth* explains the universal nature of the "grant" of the gospel offer:

...the Person that makes the grant is Jehovah, who was justly offended by our sin, but now well-pleased for Christ's Righteousness sake; the grant itself is Christ and all things with him; the persons to whom the grant is made, are sinners of all sorts, to whom the gospel comes; it is not unto men as they are elect, but unto men as such, that is, unto men as they are sinners, Prov. 8. 4. Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men.¹⁰⁰

The universal nature of the "grant" is also reflected in the "duty of gospel ministers... to preach... to proclaim or publish... that all may hear... to preach Christ... to all nations".¹⁰¹

Fisher's gospel offers also reflects the fullness and freeness that the Marrow brethren proclaimed:

Come to him with all your sins, that they may be pardoned, because he hath paid the ransom: with all your wants, that they may be supplied... Come to him with your doubts, that they may be solved... Come to him for all that you need.¹⁰²

Not only did Fisher preach in a manner continuing and coherent with Marrow theology – he also exhorted others to continue in it. In a sermon entitled "The Character of a Faithful Minister of Christ", preached at James Erskine's ordination as an associate minister in

98 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part I*, 177.

99 Fisher, *Shorter Catechism Explained... Part II*, 31.

100 Fisher, *The Inestimable Value of Divine Truth...*, 43.

101 Fisher, *Christ Jesus the Lord Considered...*, 3, 22.

102 Fisher, *Christ the Sole and Wonderful Doer...*, 22.

1752, Fisher called on his hearers to “contend for the faith” and to stand for the “defence of the gospel”.¹⁰³ He warned against the error of

Those who profess to own all the above truths [of doctrine expressed in the Westminster Standards], who yet so blend the law and the gospel, that they make the covenant of grace little better than another edition of the covenant of works; confound the sinners sanctification with his justification; cry up the necessity of previous good qualifications in order to coming to Christ; and are for leaning on something wrought in them, or done by them, as the ground in less or more of their acceptance before God.¹⁰⁴

Fisher’s published works present considerable substantiation for a continued adherence to Marrow doctrine in the second generation of the Secession Church. Whether this pattern continued among others in the Secession Church remains to be seen.

Alexander Moncrieff

After studying theology both at St. Andrews under James Hadow, and at Leiden under Johannes Marckius, Alexander Moncrieff (1695-1761) was ordained as a Church of Scotland minister in Abernethy in 1720.¹⁰⁵ Moncrieff attended some of the early gatherings of the Marrow brethren during the Marrow controversy, but due to an unknown disagreement did not actively join their protests in the church courts.¹⁰⁶ Despite this mysterious difference he remained on good terms with the Marrow men, and was one of the “four brethren” who founded the Associate Presbytery at Gairney Bridge. Moncrieff’s theological abilities and faithful service led to his appointment as professor of divinity for

103 James Fisher, “The Character of a Faithful Minister of Christ” in *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2004) vol. 3, 459.

104 Fisher, “The Character of a Faithful Minister of Christ”, 459.

105 David Lachman, “Alexander Moncrieff” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 602-603; M’Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, 825-831.

106 M’Kerrow, 827-828. M’Kerrow states “he did not altogether acquiesce in the representation that had been prepared... the nature of the objections which he urged is not stated”.

the Associate Presbytery in 1742, a capacity in which he served until the division in the Associate Synod; from 1747 until his death, he served in the same role for the General Associate Synod.¹⁰⁷

Moncrieff's published writings consist of two volumes of sermons and essays, giving considerable insight into his view of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer.¹⁰⁸ Repeatedly referring to the atonement in his sermons, Moncrieff does so in the framework of federal or covenant theology. The necessity of the atonement is rooted in the fact that "all men sinned in Adam... he was the federal head of his posterity... they are all born in sin... they are children of wrath, and... need... the blood of Christ to justify them".¹⁰⁹ In a sermon entitled "Christ's call to the rising generation", Moncrieff proclaims one aspect of the substitutionary nature of the atonement:

Christ is the only Saviour, for there is no salvation in any other... For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Thus you see, that you and all the posterity of Adam are sinners, by the imputation of Adam's first sin; even as all the redeemed from among men are righteous, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, their Head and Representative in the covenant of promise.¹¹⁰

Later in the same sermon he again uses the framework of covenant theology, describing the atoning work of Christ both in its penal and substitutionary character, and also limited to the elect, stating:

107 M'Kerrow, 830-831.

108 Alexander Moncrieff, *The Practical Works of the Late Alexander Moncrieff... In Two Volumes* (Edinburgh: Printed by Gavin Alston, 1779). The works were collected and published by Alexander Moncrieff's son, William Moncrieff, who also wrote the preface to the collection. Moncrieff, viii.

109 Moncrieff, "The duty of contending for the faith" in *The Practical Works of the Late Alexander Moncrieff... Volume I* (Edinburgh, Printed by Gavin Alston, 1779), 4-5.

110 Moncrieff, "Christ's call to the rising generation" in *The Practical Works of the Late Alexander Moncrieff... Volume I* (Edinburgh, Printed by Gavin Alston, 1779), 133-134.

...the eternal Son of God condescended to be the federal Head and Representative of an elect world, to transact in their name, Is. xlii. 1. Psal. lxxxix. 19. I Cor. xv. 47. The holy One of God represented wretched sinners; the beloved of the Father represented the sinful company. And hence the righteousness of Christ is not imputed to his people represented by him, in its effects only, (which is no proper imputation at all), so as their faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, are therefore accepted, as their evangelical righteousness, on which they are justified; but Christ's righteousness is imputed to them in itself, even as Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity: for Christ obeyed and suffered as a public person, in the room and law-stead of his people represented by him... hence the covenant of grace is absolute, and not conditional to us; for, it being made with Christ as Representative, the condition of it was laid upon him, and fulfilled by him, in his everlasting righteousness.¹¹¹

Moncrieff's statement appears to echo part of the debate of the Marrow controversy: is the covenant of grace absolute, or conditional? Moncrieff, continuing the Marrow tradition, argues that by the very nature of the person and work of Christ, the covenant of grace must be seen as absolute.¹¹²

Moncrieff's understanding of the nature of the atonement and covenant of grace bears implications for his understanding of saving faith. As reflected in the statement quoted above, Moncrieff indicates that "faith, repentance, and sincere obedience" are not to be viewed as the obedience or conditions which fulfill the covenant of grace as a new law.¹¹³ Rather, saving faith is the instrument which receives the all sufficient righteousness of Christ. The nature of the atonement, and the nature of the covenant of grace, leads Moncrieff to argue that faith is not to be seen as a condition to the covenant,

111 Moncrieff, "Christ's call to the rising generation", 205. Moncrieff also discusses the nature of the atonement in his essay "Christ's Supreme Deity proved" where he states that Christ's death was "a satisfaction for sin... God the Son... purchase[d] the church with his own blood" making a "suitable satisfaction... atonement or propitiation" which was required as "the Scriptures set forth God's holiness and vindictive justice as essential... perfections of his nature". Moncrieff, "Christ's Supreme Deity proved" in *The Practical Works of the Late Alexander Moncrieff... Volume II* (Edinburgh, Printed by Gavin Alston, 1779), 175-176.

112 See for example Moncrieff, "Christ's call to the rising generation", 208-209.

113 Moncrieff, "Christ's call to the rising generation", 205.

but rather as an “exercise”, “means”, “way”, or “justifying and uniting act” which receives Christ in the fullness of His person and work.¹¹⁴ This ties to Moncrieff’s conviction that saving faith itself is a gift of grace, given through the sovereign, transformative work of the Holy Spirit:

...they need the Spirit of God to regenerate and cleanse them ...men in a natural state are dead in sins, vassals to their lusts, and slaves to Satan, Eph. ii. 1. 2.; that the things of the Spirit of God, namely, Christ crucified, and the benefits of his death, for the salvation of sinners, are spiritually discerned; and that therefore the natural man, by his carnal reason, neither doth nor can understand them...¹¹⁵

In his sermon series “Christ’s call to the rising generation” Moncrieff reemphasizes the necessity of sovereign regeneration to saving faith, praying for unconverted hearers, “may the Holy Spirit breathe upon them, by his own divine influence, that, through his grace, you may be brought to believe on the Son of God!”¹¹⁶

Moncrieff often speaks in detail of saving faith in his sermons. He describes the nature of saving faith as a personal appropriation of Christ, as He is promised to us in the gospel:

Your coming unto Christ... as the great God your Saviour, and as the Lord your righteousness... your believing on him, and receiving him, as offered to you in the gospel, as your Saviour and Redeemer; it is to believe the report of the gospel, that Christ is the Messiah, the mercy promised to the fathers; that he is the Saviour of the world; and that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and that Christ is given of God to you in the gospel... to be received by you in particular, upon the warrant of the free call, and encouraging promise of the gospel... the application of faith is particular, though it be sometimes accompanied with a small degree of sensible comfort.¹¹⁷

114 Moncrieff, “The desolation of Emmanuel’s land” in *The Practical Works of the Late Alexander Moncrieff... Volume I* (Edinburgh, Printed by Gavin Alston, 1779), 104, 120; “Christ’s call to the rising generation”, 130, 150-151, 164, 195.

115 Moncrieff, “The duty of contending for the faith”, 7.

116 Moncrieff, “Christ’s call to the rising generation”, 129.

117 Moncrieff, “Christ’s call to the rising generation”, 150-151.

Moncrieff's final phrase in this statement harmonizes with the Marrow doctrine of an appropriating assurance belonging to the nature of faith, distinct from the assurance of sense. He describes such faith as "an assured confidence" and says "faith... doth not only realize its object, but believeth with a particular application to the man himself..."¹¹⁸ The same sermon supports this understanding when Moncrieff argues that the opposite of faith is

the sin of unbelief [which] is not your disbelieving that God giveth Christ to the elect, that he giveth Christ to others; but your not believing that God offereth and giveth Christ to you in particular, and that you have a warrant and right to accept of him.¹¹⁹

Moncrieff's descriptions of, and exhortations to saving faith are closely tied to his understanding of the gospel offer. The certainty or sure nature of the gospel offer was rooted in God's promises, which in turn were a reflection of God's very being. Just as "all the congregation of Israel had a good right and warrant from God to look to the serpent lifted up, and be healed; so all that hear the gospel... have the call and command of God to look unto Christ and be saved".¹²⁰ Moncrieff spoke of the gospel offer as particular to "every man, young or old, who hears this everlasting gospel", giving each "a warrant and right to accept of him".¹²¹ Pastorally explaining the relationship of the particular atonement of Christ in its harmony with this universal offer Moncrieff preached that

...though Christ be given in possession only to those that by faith receive him, yet Christ, and life in him, is given to all that hear the gospel, in the offer and right to put in your claim to Christ, and life in him as yours; every

118 Moncrieff, "Christ's call to the rising generation", 195-196.

119 Moncrieff, "Christ's call to the rising generation", 165-166.

120 Moncrieff, "Christ's call to the rising generation", 147. Moncrieff's illustration of the parallel between the "serpent lifted up" and Christ as offered in the gospel is closely similar to the example used by the Marrow brethren in *The Answers... to the Said Queries*, 74-75.

121 Moncrieff, "Christ's call to the rising generation", 166, 177.

one of you is warranted to receive him as yours, and lay claim to him, and all the blessings of his purchase, as your own, in a way of grace.¹²²

Not only was the gospel offer universal, but it was also full and free. Speaking of the covenant of grace as offered in the gospel, Moncrieff said “the blessings of this covenant are free to needy sinners... it is... a full and free indemnity, which God has published through Christ in the gospel”.¹²³

While Moncrieff’s sermons are consistent with Marrow theology, compared to the other early Seceders he appears to have rarely used the distinctive terminology of the Marrow in relation to the gospel offer. The nearest example of the use of such language was in his sermon “Christ’s call to the rising generation” when he spoke of the “grant and disposition of the new covenant”.¹²⁴ Why much of the Marrow language commonly repeated by other early Secession preachers is less evident in Moncrieff’s publications is difficult to discern, though it does raise the intriguing possibility that his lack of continued involvement in the Marrow controversy was perhaps as a result of concern over some of the language of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*.¹²⁵

William Wilson

William Wilson (1690-1741) studied divinity at the University of Glasgow, was licensed to preach in 1713, and ordained a Church of Scotland minister in Perth in 1716.¹²⁶ Somewhat similar to Alexander Moncrieff, Wilson took part in the early meetings of the

122 Moncrieff, “Christ’s call to the rising generation”, 165.

123 Moncrieff, “Christ’s call to the rising generation”, 176, 180. See also Moncrieff’s sermon “The glory of Emmanuel” in *The Practical Works of the Late Alexander Moncrieff... Volume I* (Edinburgh, Printed by Gavin Alston, 1779), 65, 72, 76, 79-80.

124 Moncrieff, “Christ’s call to the rising generation”, 203.

125 See M’Kerrow, 828.

126 M’Kerrow, 819-820; see also David Lachman, “William Wilson” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 875.

Marrow supporters, but “took no further part in the controversy”.¹²⁷ He took a leading role in the Secession movement in 1732 and 1733, and was one of the “four brethren” who met at Gairney Bridge.¹²⁸ M’Kerrow states that “as a minister, he was much beloved on account of his amiable qualities... and... his talents and piety. None of the Seceding brethren enjoyed a greater share of popularity and respect...”¹²⁹ Wilson was instrumental in the formation of the early testimonies and acts of the Associate Presbytery; he also served as the theological instructor of students for the ministry in the early years of the Associate Presbytery, up to his death in 1741.¹³⁰

Wilson’s published writings consist of sermons and essays; chief among the latter was his *A Defence of the Reformation-Principles of the Church of Scotland*, which served as a justification of the Secession movement on the basis of the doctrine of the church in Scottish history.¹³¹ While his essays were primarily devoted to the defense of the Secession on ecclesiastical grounds, Wilson’s sermons provide a substantial evidence for a continuity of the theology of *The Marrow* and the Marrow brethren. Never published in a complete collection, the sermons were published individually, with the exception of a few collated and published posthumously.¹³² Several manuscript sermons also remain extant today.¹³³

127 Lachman goes on to state that this was “due to what his biographer termed ‘unavoidable circumstances.’” Lachman, 875.

128 M’Kerrow, 821-822.

129 M’Kerrow, 824.

130 Lachman, 875.

131 William Wilson, *A Defence of the Reformation-Principles of the Church of Scotland... Wherein the Exceptions that are laid against the Conduct of the Associate Presbytery... by the Rev. Mr. Currie in his Essay on Separation, are examined; and the injurious Reflections cast upon our Reforming Period from 1638 to 1650, in the foresaid Essay, are discovered* (Glasgow: Printed by Joseph Galbraith and Company, 1769), 1.

132 William Wilson, *Sermons by the Reverend and Learned Mr. William Wilson, late*

Wilson's sermon *The Blessedness Lost in the First Adam* described the doctrine of the atonement within the framework of federal theology. He saw the necessity of the atonement as rooted in the fact that Adam, and in him "the whole race of mankind" broke the covenant of works. The result of this covenant breaking is that

The whole race of mankind, by their sin and rebellion against God, are under his curse, and obnoxious to his sin-revenging justice. When sin entered into the world, the curse of the broken law took hold on Adam and al his family... Man by his own sin has lost the blessedness that God gave him, and brought himself under the curse and wrath of a righteous and holy God; this is that miserable estate into which our apostasy and defection from God has brought us; we have forfeited everything that is good, and have made ourselves liable to everything that is evil; we have lost that beautiful and glorious image of God... we have lost the favour and friendship of God... we are everyone born under the curse of the broken law; we are children of wrath by nature; and while we are in the natural state, the wrath of God abideth on us.¹³⁴

Having expressed the necessity for the atonement, Wilson went on to preach on the nature of the atonement itself. Jesus Christ "the Treasure-house of all spiritual and eternal Blessedness unto men" was

designated in the eternal purpose of God to be the second Adam, the Head-representative of a new family, even of a remnant of the sinful and miserable posterity of Adam, who were given him to be redeem'd and saved by him... In the Covenant-transaction with the second Adam there is a sovereign grant of the Father, giving and delivering to his eternal Son, to be redeem'd and saved by him, a certain definite number out of Adam's family... In this transaction the Son is considered as a publick person, standing in their law-place, room and stead, undertaking to do and suffer everything that was necessary to save them from sin and wrath, and to possess them of eternal life... In a word, he undertook to redeem, or buy back, at the price of his own blood, the forfeited blessing, and to deliver by

Minister of the Gospel at Perth (Edinburgh: Printed for David Duncan, 1748).

133 William Wilson, MS3245/4 *Autograph Sermons by William Wilson – July 6, 1731 – July 15, 1736* [Special Libraries and Archives, King's College, Aberdeen].

134 William Wilson, *The Blessedness Lost in the First Adam, To be Found in Christ the Second Adam. Being the Substance of Some Sermons on Psalm lxxii. 17 – And Men shall be blessed in Him* (Edinburgh: Printed for and sold by David Duncan, 1735), 11-12.

the power of his Spirit the lawful captives, and to rescue them, not only from the guilt, but also from the power, filth, and being of sin.¹³⁵

Here, Wilson's language reflected a particular, penal, substitutionary atonement – a theme repeated throughout his sermons, and consistent with Marrow theology.¹³⁶ He viewed this atonement as including both the active and passive obedience of Christ; a point stressed by *The Marrow* and Marrow brethren in their defense of the nature of the covenant of grace as the basis for the full and free offer of the gospel.¹³⁷

Wilson's sermons also provide evidence toward understanding his view of saving faith. He speaks of the necessity of sovereign regeneration of the heart of man by the Holy Spirit, because of the “enmity in the heart naturally against God, which deters the proud heart from submitting to the righteousness of God”.¹³⁸ Through this regenerating work, “the obstinate sinner is meekned [*sic*] by faith's views of the meek Lamb, the worthy Lamb, and so is made to stoop... to the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ”.¹³⁹ Elsewhere, Wilson states that “the Lamb... sends forth his quickening Spirit into their

135 Wilson, *The Blessedness Lost in the First Adam...*, 13.

136 See also the following: Wilson, *The Blessedness Lost in the First Adam...*, 20-21; William Wilson, *The Lamb's Retinue attending him whithersoever he goeth. Being the Substance of Two Sermons, Preached... At the Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Orwell, August 6. 1738* (Edinburgh: Printed for David Duncan, 1747), 8, 10, 13, 27-28; William Wilson, *The Day of a Sinner's Believing in Christ a most remarkable Day. A Sermon Preached in the New Church of Perth... Sept. 20. 1741 from Song iii. 11.* (Edinburgh: Printed for and sold by David Duncan, 1742), 11-12, 20, 31-32.

137 Wilson, *The Day of a Sinner's believing in Christ...*, 23; *A Defence of the Reformation-Principles of the Church of Scotland...*, 85; *The Lamb's Retinue attending him...*, 27-28.

138 Wilson, *The Lamb's Retinue attending him...*, 12.

139 Wilson, *The Lamb's Retinue attending him...*, 12.

hearts, and so, in effectual calling they are made to hear his quickening voice... and so... they are immediately led out to follow the Lamb”.¹⁴⁰

Not only did Wilson speak of the necessity of sovereign regeneration to faith in Christ, but he also described the nature of faith itself. In one sermon he describes faith as

...a sinner’s renouncing of all hope of salvation from the hills and multitudes of mountains, and a cheerful submitting unto salvation by the free grace of God through Christ Jesus: it is just a sinner’s subscribing himself a debtor unto rich and free grace, to the sovereign grace of God venting in Christ Jesus the worthy Lamb.¹⁴¹

Later in the same sermon Wilson speaks of faith as resting on Christ’s “righteousness for their justification, and upon his strength for their sanctification”.¹⁴² In other descriptions of faith Wilson uses the language of *The Marrow*, speaking of faith as including

...a cordial subjection to Christ, a cordial submission to Christ, every person when he believes in Christ, he calls him *Ishi*, my Husband; he acknowledges him as Christ and Lord; as Christ the Anointed and Sent of God, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.¹⁴³

Perhaps most telling in terms of evidence for a continuity of Marrow theology is Wilson’s care in defining the relationship of obedience to faith, along with the relationship of faith and assurance. Regarding the former, Wilson preached “there is no acceptable covenanting, or acceptable engagement unto duty, but that engagement that is a fruit of faith; that engagement that accompanies it is a fruit of faith”.¹⁴⁴ In his explanations of the relationship of faith and assurance, Wilson, like *The Marrow*’s defenders, viewed faith as containing a personal, appropriating assurance:

140 Wilson, *The Lamb’s Retinue attending him...*, 12.

141 Wilson, *The Lamb’s Retinue attending him...*, 36.

142 Wilson, *The Lamb’s Retinue attending him...*, 64.

143 Wilson, *The Day of a Sinner’s believing in Christ...*, 16.

144 Wilson, *The Day of a Sinner’s believing in Christ...*, 16.

The soul in believing gives Christ his name, and, according to the gospel-revelation of him, says, the Lord is my Righteousness; and the soul will utter that saying, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou are my Lord.¹⁴⁵

Later, while preaching on the promises of the gospel, Wilson again speaks of faith as including assurance:

We call upon him in truth, when we call upon him in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, as held forth in the word of promise, the word of a promising God in Christ Jesus; and we have ground for assured faith in the promise.¹⁴⁶

The most definitive evidence for Wilson's view of faith and assurance, however, is in his unpublished sermons. In them Wilson describes the ground of faith, along with the distinction between the assurance belonging to faith, and the assurance of sense in a manner coherent with the teaching of the same doctrines in Marrow theology:

Rest not upon a faith that is short of saving faith. There is a faith called a historical faith, it gives an assent unto the truths of the gospel but never makes particular application of them. This is the faith of devils and demons in hell... study to know the grounds of faith – first of the promises of God – the fullness and freedom of them, Christ and all his grace comes in the word of promise, he reveals himself in his promising words... Let his word dwell in you... the Lord Jesus Christ he is the object of faith, the foundation and ground of faith...

There is an assurance of faith and there is an assurance of sense. The assurance of faith lies in the direct act of the soul. The assurance of sense lies in the reflex act of the soul. The assurance of faith has assent and application in it, it believes what God says in his word and that upon the testimonies and the authority of the God of truth. This is inseparable from divine faith. Again there is particular application of faith this is the resting, trusting, and staying the faith upon God in Christ for the whole of his salvation. This is in some measure likewise in the direct act of saving faith. But again the assurance of sense is the comfortable and sensible persuasion of an interest in Christ and that the good work is begun... the assurance of faith may stand when the assurance of sense falls to the ground... Tho' he slay me yet I will trust in him...¹⁴⁷

145 Wilson, *The Day of a Sinner's believing in Christ...*, 17.

146 Wilson, *The Day of a Sinner's believing in Christ...*, 41.

147 William Wilson, "Sermons on Faith... March 8, 1732" in MS3245/4 *Autograph Sermons by William Wilson – July 6, 1731 – July 15, 1736* [Special Libraries and Archives, King's College, Aberdeen].

The Marrow theology Wilson expresses in his description of faith and assurance also appears to be directly influential in his understanding and proclamation of the gospel offer. In his sermon “The Churches Extremity Christ’s Opportunity” Wilson proclaims the gospel offer universally and freely to his hearers:

...in this everlasting gospel redemption is published, a purchased redemption is published unto you. I publish and proclaim this redemption, this spiritual liberty and freedom through the blood of Christ, to every captive sinner in this vast assembly... Why, we tell you good tidings of great joy, to you is proclaimed liberty and freedom, redemption is proclaimed unto thee. Thus saith the Lord, to you o prisoner, to you, o dark and dead sinner, go forth and shew yourselves, shew yourselves needing a Saviour... to him who is the mighty God, mighty to save you... the arms of the Saviour are stretched out to embrace you, with God’s welcome...¹⁴⁸

Like *The Marrow*, Marrow brethren, and his fellow early Secession preachers, Wilson often referred to Isaiah 55:1-3 and Revelation 22:17 in preaching the free and full offer of the gospel. This is exemplified in his sermon *The Lamb’s Retinue attending him*, where he proclaims

O sirs, the market of grace is a rare market; the wares that are therein proclaimed are all given freely. Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money let him come, and buy wine and milk without money and without price! Whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely. O come and take freely! O come and enjoy! O come and share of the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus, the worthy Lamb!¹⁴⁹

Another clear continuation of Marrow theology in gospel proclamation is displayed in Wilson’s use of the language of the “gift and grant” of the gospel offer, along with the

148 William Wilson, “The Churches Extremity Christ’s Opportunity... Preached 1738 in Abernethy...” in *Sermons by the Reverend and Learned Mr. William Wilson, late Minister of the Gospel at Perth* (Edinburgh: Printed for David Duncan, 1748), 37-38.

149 Wilson, *The Lamb’s Retinue attending him...*, 5; 71-72. For examples of the use of these Scripture passages from *The Marrow* onwards see: Thomas Boston, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 114-115; *Everlasting Espousals*, 498-499; Ebenezer Erskine, *The Assurance of Faith Opened and Applied...*, 217-218; *The Annals of Redeeming Love...*, 374; James Fisher, *Christ Jesus the Lord considered...*, 38; Alexander Moncrieff, *The Glory of Emmanuel...*, 87; *Christ’s call to the rising generation...*, 146.

offer of Christ to all for “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption”.¹⁵⁰ Whatever the reasons may have been for Wilson’s failure to continue meeting with the Marrow brethren regarding the controversy, it seems abundantly evident that it was not rooted in a concern over the language or theology of *The Marrow*. As a minister of the Associate Presbytery he is distinctly a proponent of Marrow theology, both in his personal and ecclesiastical publications.

Conclusions on Marrow Theology in the Associate Presbytery

While its formative moments lay in the patronage controversy in the Church of Scotland, the Associate Presbytery did manifest a remarkable theological uniformity in regard to the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith and gospel offer. Not only was there a general uniformity, this uniformity was a direct continuation of the Marrow theology espoused by *The Marrow*’s supporters during the Marrow controversy. The only possible, and at most, partial, exception to this may be found in Alexander Moncrieff, who, while standing in theological harmony with the Marrow theology, did not express himself in his published sermons with the distinctive use of Marrow language found in the works of other Associate Presbytery ministers. However, even this difference found in the writings of Moncrieff fades with his assent to the ecclesiastical publications of the Associate Presbytery, such as the testimonies, and the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, which both made use of, and defended, the distinctive language of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. The early histories of the Secession also provide support for this in terms of the self-awareness of the early Secession church historians. As such there is substantial ground to support the argument that the Associate Presbytery was not only thematically consistent with Marrow theology in its own theology in a general sense, but was directly

150 Wilson, *The Day of a Sinner’s believing in Christ...*, 12-13, 16.

influenced by and strongly committed to Marrow theology as expressed by *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* and the Marrow brethren during the Marrow controversy.

CHAPTER 9

THE ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY, GEORGE WHITEFIELD, AND THE CAMBUSLANG REVIVAL

While there is substantial evidence for the influence of and commitment to Marrow theology in the Associate Presbytery, some critics of the early Seceders argue that the Associate Presbytery manifested a legalistic spirit belying its professed adherence to the free offer of the gospel expressed in Marrow theology.¹⁵¹ The criticism is not new: common among Church of Scotland ministers opposed to the Secession movement, echoed in part by the nineteenth century Secession church historian John M’Kerrow, it continues to the present, exemplified by the historian David Bebbington, who opines that “the Seceders rated ecclesiastical punctilio above gospel outreach in the manner of the seventeenth century”.¹⁵² This, it is argued, was manifested in two ways. First, in developing ecclesiastical testimonies and polity, which would in part include adherence to the renewal of the Scottish Covenants as a term of ministerial communion. Second, it was evident in the ensuing parting of ways with George Whitefield, and the denunciation of both his itinerant ministry in Scotland and the Cambuslang and Kilsyth Revivals of 1742. While a full examination of these two areas falls outside the scope of this dissertation, an

151 I am indebted to Andrew McGowan and Stewart Brown for raising the challenges leading to the inclusion of this section of the dissertation.

152 David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730’s to the 1980’s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 55. Historian Harry Stout, in his work *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), offers a similar assessment of the Seceder interaction with George Whitefield. The hypothesis, initially popularized by David Bebbington, that the development of evangelical religion was a product of transatlantic revival and the Enlightenment era has come under substantial challenge by a number of scholars who argue that evangelical religion of the eighteenth and following centuries stood in substantial continuity with that of the seventeenth century and the Protestant Reformation era. See Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth Stewart, eds., *The Advent of Evangelicalism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008).

initial assessment of these aspects of early Seceder history provides helpful insight towards an evaluation of their broader coherence or conflict with Marrow theology.

The early Seceders were quick to return to the earlier and more thorough-going Presbyterian ecclesiology of the Church of Scotland, as expressed by the theologian Andrew Melville, the *Second Book of Discipline*, and the National Covenant of 1638. They did so through both individual writings and ecclesiastical statements or “testimonies”. The latter, in addition to the Westminster Standards, were binding statements of church order and ministerial communion, though there was somewhat greater flexibility in subscription or adherence to the testimonies, which were viewed as “an application and declaration of [the] genuine sense and meaning” of the received standards.¹⁵³ The establishment of testimonies arose partly from the very reason for the existence of the Associate Presbytery. After the 1690 restoration of Presbyterianism and Reformed confessional identity, the Church of Scotland failed to fully establish Presbyterian church polity in the area of independence from Erastian interference. This failure was heightened by a further declension from Presbyterian polity due an Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1732, allowing heritors, magistrates, and town councils absolute rights in the selection of church office bearers.¹⁵⁴ Erastian

153 The first of these ecclesiastical statements was the *Testimony to the Doctrine, Worship, Government, and Discipline of the Church of Scotland* (1733), followed by the *Judicial Testimony* (1736) or the *Act, Declaration and Testimony for the Doctrine, Worship, Government, and Discipline of the Church of Scotland*. In 1743 the *Act of the Associate Presbytery, for Renewing the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Nations, in A Way and Manner agreeable to our present Situation, and Circumstances* was adopted as a formal renewal of covenants. These documents in part served to illustrate the departure of the Church of Scotland from its earlier adherence to a more completely Presbyterian ecclesiology, and also articulated the renewed subscription of the Seceders to these doctrines of the church. As such these ecclesiastical statements served both to define the structure and defend the existence of the Associate Presbytery and later Seceder bodies. M’Kerrow, 104.

154 See pages 123-129 for a fuller description of the issues of ecclesiology precipitating the formation of the Associate Presbytery. For a more complete study, John L. Carson’s *The Doctrine of the Church in the Secession* (PhD dissertation, Aberdeen, 1987)

meddling in church affairs, whether in the rejection of ministers desired by congregations, or the imposition of unwanted ministers, and disciplinary actions against those critical of this polity and practice, not only formed, but also contributed to the steady growth of the Associate Presbytery.¹⁵⁵ In light of this, it is not surprising that the ecclesiastical statements of the Associate Presbytery, Associate Synod, and other Seceder denominations manifest a concern for Presbyterian ecclesiology.

In 1743 the Associate Presbytery moved to renew the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant. While this was in part a reflection of the same concerns for Presbyterian ecclesiology, it was more broadly a concern for the shape of church, state and society. Many of the early Seceders were the children or grandchildren of Scottish Presbyterians who had been harshly persecuted under Charles II and James II for their rejection of Episcopacy – a persecution often tied to their continued adherence to these covenants. While the political landscape had changed with the accession of William and Mary to the throne of England and Scotland and even more so with the Act of Union of Scotland and England in 1707, the Seceders felt it incumbent upon them to publicly renew

provides an extensive examination of the Presbyterian ecclesiology of the Secession Church with comparison to that of the Church of Scotland.

155 The Associate Presbytery, initially made up of 4 congregations, numbered some 45 congregations within a few years of its inception; the mainstream of the Secession Church continued steadily in growth through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. By 1854, with the movement of union bringing just over a hundred Relief congregations to join with the United Secession congregations, the newly formed United Presbyterian Church, along with other early Seceder streams numbered over 1100 congregations in Scotland, Ireland, and North America, over a 1000 of these tracing their ecclesiastical roots directly to the Associate Presbytery. Both MacKelvie's *Annals* and John M'Kerrow's *History of the Secession Church* indicate the pervasive nature of the problem of Erastian influence in the calling of ministers to congregations. William MacKelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Glasgow: David Robertson, 1873), 35-41.

and maintain the covenants, upholding the vow to pursue a Reformed and Presbyterian church and nation.¹⁵⁶

In themselves, neither the concern to maintain a clearly articulated Presbyterian ecclesiology, nor the desire to revive a covenanted church and nation stood in opposition to Marrow theology with its passion for the free offer of the gospel. In fact, the *Act, Declaration and Testimony* of 1736 expressed these as harmonious in the light of Scripture, seeing them as the calling

To fulfill that ministry they had received from the Lord, whereby they are bound to teach the observance of all things whatsoever the Lord Christ has commanded them, and that not only doctrinally, but also judicially.¹⁵⁷

The Seceders argued that where the church departed from a faithful judicial testimony, or ecclesiology, it would also lose the ability to freely proclaim the riches of the full, free and universal offer of salvation in Christ.¹⁵⁸ This they saw as abundantly evident in the numerous Erastian and ecclesiastical interferences in church polity within the Church of Scotland: preventing faithful gospel preachers from being installed as ministers of congregations desirous of them, and the forcible settlement of ministers who did not preach the free offer of Christ onto congregations against their will. Seceders contested that the identity of the church as a faithful, corporate gospel witness in the nation was at stake

156 While the Associate Presbytery, and the Societies which had remained outside of the Church of Scotland in 1690 (later becoming the Reformed Presbytery), ecclesiastically renewed their adherence to the National and Solemn League and Covenant, the Church of Scotland did not. However, there also remained within the Church of Scotland those who manifested a sympathy or desire to recapture some, if not all of the aspects of the Covenanting movement. One example of this is found in John Willison's *A Fair and Impartial Testimony* (1744) in *The Practical Works of the Rev. John Willison* (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1844), 879-950.

157 *Act, Declaration and Testimony for the Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline of the Church of Scotland, Agreeable to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of Scotland... By some Ministers associate together for the Exercise of Church Government and Discipline in a Presbyterial Capacity...* (Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1737), ix.

158 *Act, Declaration and Testimony...*, iii-iv, vi, 11-12.

when it failed not only to uphold the preaching of the gospel within its bounds, but also judicially permitted the active suppression of gospel preaching. Not only that, but the gospel was to be preached to every man, not only with the desire for their conversion in view, but also their ingrafting into a faithful, visible church. This was why the Seceders passionately held to both gospel doctrine and ecclesiology. Yet, while the Seceders' "ecclesiastical punctilio" need not and did not stand in inherent opposition to "gospel outreach", undoubtedly there were failures both within and without the Secession Church in its relations with fellow Christians. The occasions of these failures diminished their testimony to the gospel and are particularly clear in the Associate Presbytery's response to George Whitefield and the Cambuslang Revival.

George Whitefield's itinerant ministry in Scotland was initiated through correspondence with Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine. Whitefield, ordained a deacon of the Church of England in 1736, quickly developed a popular ministry of itinerant preaching, both within and beyond the bounds of the Church of England. While an Episcopalian, Whitefield's warm gospel spirit overlooked ecclesiastical differences. In a 1739 letter to a supporter he stated,

I wish all among the saints of God were swallowed up in that one of Christian. I long for professors to leave off placing religion in saying "I am a Churchman", or "I am a Dissenter". My language to such is, "Are you of Christ? If so, I love you with all my heart".¹⁵⁹

Between 1737 and 1741 Whitefield engaged in several preaching tours through England and America, preaching on the invitation of local individuals, pastors, or congregations. Many in both England and America warmly regarded his efforts and success, particularly as an evangelical Calvinist. Evangelical Calvinists in Scotland took note of his growing public ministry, including Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine. Admiring his gospel zeal, the

159 George Whitefield, *A Select Collection of Letters of the Late Reverend George Whitefield, M.A... Written to His Most Intimate Friends and Persons of Distinction in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, From the Year 1734 to 1770*. Vol. 1. (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1772), 115.

Erskine brothers initiated correspondence with Whitefield; he in turn, admiring their own commitment to the gospel and the spiritual reformation of the church, regarded them as kindred spirits.¹⁶⁰ The correspondence between the men reveals the seeds of what led to the parting between the Seceders and Whitefield: while they shared a common gospel doctrine, they had radically different views of the nature and importance of the doctrine of the church. Whitefield was initially concerned that the Seceders might hold to the Cameronian stream of Covenanting. While this fear seemed to be somewhat allayed by their response, his minimalist statement of ecclesiology in reply raised concerns among the Seceders:

For my own part (though I profess myself a minister of the Church of England) I am of catholic spirit; and if I see a man who loves the LORD Jesus in sincerity, I am not very solicitous to what outward communion he belongs. The kingdom of God, I think, does not consist in any such thing.¹⁶¹

Despite the unresolved hesitations on the part of both Whitefield and the Erskines, the Erskines extended and Whitefield accepted their invitation to preach in Scotland, telling Ebenezer Erskine in May, 1741,

I owe you much love. Only want of time prevents me from writing to you oftener. This morning I received a kind letter from your brother Ralph, who thinks it best for me wholly to join the Associate Presbytery, if it should please God to send me into Scotland. This I cannot altogether come into, I come only as an occasional preacher, to preach the simple gospel to all that are willing to hear me, of whatever denomination. It will be wrong in me to join in a reformation as to church government, any further than I have light given me from above. If I am quite neuter as to that in my preaching, I cannot see how it can hinder or retard any design you may have on foot. My business seem to be, to evangelize, to be a Presbyter at large. When I shall be sent into your parts I know not. I write this, that there may not be the least misunderstanding between us. I love and honour the Associate Presbytery in the bowels of Jesus Christ. With this I send them my due respects, and most humbly beg their prayers. But let them not be offended, if in all things I cannot immediately fall in with them. Let them leave me to

160 M'Kerrow, 152; Whitefield, *A Select Collection of Letters...* Vol. 1., 128.

161 Whitefield, *A Select Collection of Letters...* Vol. 1., 139.

God. Whatever light he is please to give me, I hope I shall be faithful to me.¹⁶²

It was mutually agreed to continue the discussions of ecclesiology on his arrival.¹⁶³ The outcome of these conversations revealed that both parties had come with substantially differing expectations. Whitefield, as a deacon of the Church of England, came with no real intent to do anything more than freely itinerate and fellowship with any in Scotland. The Seceders met Whitefield with the hope that he would come to see the need for not only gospel preaching, but also Presbyterian ecclesiology, in order to work for a holistic gospel reformation in Scotland.

Whitefield arrived in the summer of 1741, preaching his first sermon in Ralph Erskine's pulpit in Dumfermline.¹⁶⁴ Immediately afterwards it was proposed that a "conference should take place betwixt him and the members of the Associate Presbytery, with a view to a friendly discussion of the points of issue between them... in reference to the form of church government".¹⁶⁵ The discussions proved to be a failure – Whitefield took the view that one should remain within a church "until they cast him out" irrespective of forms of church government, "which were of no great importance".¹⁶⁶ The Seceders attempted to persuade him of the scriptural basis for Presbyterian church government. Upon the realization of the substantial and enduring nature of their ecclesiastical disagreement with Whitefield, the Associate Presbytery decided not to support him in his desire for an itinerant ministry in Scotland. The decision was understandably consistent with their concern for a complete reformation and revival that included a sound

162 Whitefield, *A Select Collection of Letters...* Vol. 1., 262.

163 Whitefield, *A Select Collection of Letters...* Vol. 1., 262.

164 M'Kerrow, 156-157.

165 M'Kerrow, 156.

166 M'Kerrow, 157.

ecclesiology as a God-ordained means for the protection and maintenance of gospel preaching. The Seceders were culpable, however, in failing to more fully discuss ecclesiology with Whitefield in correspondence or at least intimating in advance that a parting of ways might be a possibility after his arrival in Scotland. Whitefield, on the other hand, should not have declared an open willingness to consider Presbyterian church governance and the ongoing issues in and between the Church of Scotland and Associate Presbytery if he had no real heart to do so.

Whitefield left the Presbytery meetings fuming over the Associate Presbytery's rescinded invitation and rejection of support for his itinerant ministry. In a letter written to a friend in New York two days following the meeting he was both dismissive and critical of the meeting and James Fisher's preaching afterwards, noting that after leaving and preaching on his own, he was asked by a gentlewoman whether "I had told some people that the Associate Presbytery were building a Babel?" Whitefield replied, "Madam, it is quite true; and I believe the Babel will soon fall down about their own ears."¹⁶⁷ He quickly moved to accept the invitations of Church of Scotland ministers to preach for them instead. Writing from Edinburgh Whitefield stated,

I find it best simply to preach the pure gospel, and not to meddle at all with controversy. The present divisions are a sore judgment to Scotland. This is my comfort, Jesus is King. He will either heal or bring good out of them. I have been with several of the Associate Presbytery; but I see no hopes of accommodation. O that the power of religion may revive! Nothing but that can break down the partition wall of bigotry...¹⁶⁸

Whitefield's irritation with and vocal criticism of the Seceders continued both privately and in print, as did his itinerant preaching in Church of Scotland parishes. Evangelical Calvinists remaining within the Church of Scotland, sympathetic to his ecclesiology, were greatly encouraged by his ministry and its results. Strong supporters of Whitefield's

¹⁶⁷ Whitefield, *A Select Collection of Letters...* Vol. 1., 308.

¹⁶⁸ Whitefield, *A Select Collection of Letters...* Vol. 1., 310.

ministry included John Willison, John Gillies, and James Robe, all of whom wrote accounts of the impact of Whitefield's ministry in Scotland, using it in part as a case for criticism of the ecclesiology of the Secession churches.¹⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the personal and ecclesiastical responses of the Seceders to Whitefield after the parting of ways revealed clear failings as well. The Secession church historian John M'Kerrow notes that shortly after the separation George Whitefield came to hear Ebenezer Erskine preach outdoors in Stirling, yet when Whitefield rose to preach following Erskine, Erskine refused to remain and hear him.¹⁷⁰ The Cambuslang Revival proved to be the occasion that was perhaps the darkest blot on the record of the Associate Presbytery. In 1742, on his second itinerant preaching tour of Scotland, Whitefield preached in the parish of Cambuslang where a substantial revival of spirituality was taking place. In the month of August a communion season was held, with George Whitefield, William McCulloch and other Church of Scotland ministers preaching to a crowd estimated to number as many as 30,000. Seceders, already critical of the ministry of Whitefield, took particular note of what they saw as the excesses of the movement: ecstatic utterances, visions, and claims of miraculous events. One woman, Catherine Jackson, an early Cambuslang convert, told her story to James Fisher, declaring she had seen Christ

169 See John Willison's *A Fair and Impartial Testimony* (1744), John Gillies' *Memoirs of the Life of George Whitefield* (Falkirk: T. Johnson, 1798), and James Robe's *Narratives of the Extraordinary Work of the Spirit of God at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, &c., Begun 1742* (Glasgow: David Niven, 1790). This however must be balanced with the reality John M'Kerrow notes: "a large portion of the ministers in the Church of Scotland refused to hold communion with Mr. Whitefield exactly on the same ground [as the Associate Presbytery] and were considerably offended with some of their brethren for admitting him into their pulpits" leading to a motion at the Synod of Glasgow, carried by a large majority, to prevent ministers in the Church of Scotland from employing Whitefield. M'Kerrow, 159.

170 M'Kerrow, 159. While the early Seceders acted in consistency with their ecclesiastical commitments one area of failing appears in their inability to give any recognition to Whitefield as a fellow believer despite differences that precluded formal ecclesiastical fellowship.

“with her bodily eyes” a point quickly taken, along with other narrations, to criticize the entire revival movement.¹⁷¹ Ralph Erskine, James Fisher and Adam Gib were the leading Seceder critics of the Cambuslang events and the Associate Presbytery as a whole declared a day of solemn fasting “on account of the work of delusion that was carrying on”.¹⁷² Adam Gib was most virulent in his criticism, declaring Whitefield to be “a false Christ” and the revival enthusiasm a “Satanic delusion”.¹⁷³ While the ecclesiastical concerns of the Seceders would in part be historically justified through the exodus of many of the Church of Scotland revival supporting Evangelical Calvinists into the Relief Church movement, the very development of the Relief Church was partly due to the bitter spirit which colored the concerns of the Associate Presbytery.¹⁷⁴

These failures of the early Seceders were not so much failures of an excessive ecclesiastical polity or a lack of gospel doctrine, but rather failures of manner and spirit in the application of an ecclesiastical polity. Rising from their hearts in the midst of the intensity of recent, painful separation with the Church of Scotland, and continued disagreement and conflict, the sins of the early Seceders tarnished their witness, indicating their failure to fully live the gospel they preached, a fact of which they were later painfully self-aware. John M’Kerrow notes, Adam Gib “was afterward sorry for the part he took in

171 D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 221-222.

Hindmarsh notes that the tension between the Church of Scotland and Seceders was reflected in ongoing pamphlet controversy and keenly felt by many lay persons during this period.

172 M’Kerrow, 166.

173 Adam Gib, *A Warning Against Countenancing the Ministrations of Mr. George Whitefield... Wherein Are Shown That Mr. Whitefield is no Minister of Jesus Christ...* (Edinburgh: Printed for David Duncan, 1742), 1-65.

174 Both William McCulloch’s congregation and James Robe’s congregation would join the Relief Church after non-evangelical ministers were intruded on the congregations after their deaths. Despite their complaints about Seceder ecclesiology it appears that many of the Cambuslang revival supporters in the end seceded themselves.

this controversy” stating to a friend in reference to his pamphlet against Whitefield “Don’t read it. When I wrote it I was warm-blooded, and it would have been much better if I had not written it”.¹⁷⁵ However, though these and other sins of the early Seceders, and the Marrow brethren before them, legitimately preclude any hagiography, they do not negate or diminish a Marrow theology and gospel message which was very much for sinners, including themselves. As James Fisher proclaimed, it is Christ, and Christ alone, who

Himself [has] removed all legal bars and impediments that were in the way of his access unto the soul. Sin made an infinite moral distance betwixt God and us, and blocked up all communication with heaven; but this he removed, by his obedience unto the death in our room; whereby all the demands that law and justice had against us were fully answered, and nothing could any more be laid to the charge of God's elect.¹⁷⁶

175 M’Kerrow, 165.

176 James Fisher, *The Doors of the Heart Summoned to Open to the King of Glory. An Action Sermon Preached, August 30th, 1755* (Glasgow: Printed for and Sold by James Oliphant, MDCCLV), 16.

CHAPTER 10

THEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES FOR THE CONTINUITY OF MARROW THEOLOGY IN THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD (1748-1799)

Despite the early years of theological unity after the Secession of 1733, the Associate Synod found itself increasingly embroiled in controversy over ecclesiastical polity regarding the burgess oaths. The substantial dissension over the acceptance of burgess oaths led to the division of the Secession Church into the Associate Synod (Burgher) and the General Associate Synod (Antiburgher) in 1747. The division would continue to the turn of the nineteenth century, when parts of both streams pursued reconciliation and reunion. While the influence of Marrow theology was pervasive in the period of the Associate Presbytery and early Associate Synod (1733-1747), prior to the controversy over burgher oaths, the question remains whether this early heritage of Marrow theology would discernibly continue through the Associate Synod (1748-1799) to the turn of the century.

Ecclesiastical Publications

The division of 1747 in the Secession church was over the issue of church-state relations; both the Associate (Burgher) and General Associate Synod (Antiburgher) churches viewed themselves as the legitimate continuation of the previous Associate Synod. As a result there is nothing to be found in the published ecclesiastical documents of the Associate Synod in 1747, or the following years, which reflects Marrow theology. The focus was on the controversy over the burgess oaths.¹ Neither the continued Associate Synod, nor the General Associate Synod, in their published testimonies, questioned the

¹ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod, At Edinburgh, in April, 1747.* (Edinburgh: William Gray, 1747), 1-157.

heritage of Marrow theology as formulated in the 1742 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*; rather, they assumed its continued validity.²

Individual Publications

In considering the individual publications of the Associate Synod (Burgher) stream of the Secession Church it must be noted that a number of the figures listed under the Associate Presbytery up to 1747 continued their ministry and influence into the Associate Synod. These included Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, and James Fisher. While Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine both died in the early 1750's, James Fisher continued serving in ministry, training ministers, and writing until his death in 1775. These three individuals, particularly Fisher, provide evidence that at least during their ministries, there was an evident continuity of Marrow theology in the Associate Synod. However, in order to assess the situation more comprehensively, the other published works of pastors and theologians of this stream of the Secession church need to be examined. They are ordered chronologically by the date of their ordination as ministers in the Associate Synod.

John Swanston

John Swanston (1720-1767), licensed to preach by the Associate Presbytery in 1743, joined with the Burgher side of the division and spent some time in Ireland assisting the fledgling Secession churches there prior to accepting a call to Kinross, Scotland in

² David C. Lachman, "Associate Synod" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 37. See also: *Draught of an overture to the Associate Synod, relative to some historical mistakes alleged to be in the Act, declaration, and testimony; answers, ... to Mr. Nairn's Reasons of dissent; ... Which draught was ordered, by the Synod, to be published, ...* (Glasgow: Printed and Sold by the Booksellers in Town and Country, 1755), 1-88; Adam Gib, *The present truth: a display of the secession-testimony; in the three periods of the rise, state, and maintenance of that testimony. In two volumes ...* (Edinburgh: Printed by R. Fleming and A. Neill, 1774), v.1, 1-404, v.2, 1-422; *A testimony by the Associate Synod, against the legal encouragement lately given to popery: together with an act of the Synod for a public fast* (Edinburgh: Printed by Neill and Company, 1778), 1-18.

1748.³ Serving faithfully in his charge, Swanston was respected as a well-read and gracious minister. During the last three years of his life he also served as the Associate Synod's Professor of Divinity.⁴ Swanston did not publish any writings during his lifetime; a collection of sermons was published six years after his death, his biographer noting "in preaching he did not entertain his hearers with mere airy speculations, but with the substantial truths of the gospel".⁵

The doctrine of the atonement in Swanston's sermons is consistent with Marrow theology. In preaching on "God's great kindness to men in Christ Jesus" he describes the necessity of the atonement stating that "we were children of wrath, as well as others; dead in trespasses and sins, as well as others".⁶ Apart from Christ man stands before "the whole flood of divine vengeance".⁷ Another sermon, "The riches of grace displayed", speaks extensively of the state of man in sin being under the wrath and impending penal justice of God, emphasizing the atonement's necessity by stating that "a sinner shall die, either in his person or his Surety".⁸ Swanston's sermons reveal his view of the nature of the atonement as penal and substitutionary. He speaks of how "God made [Christ] sin by imputation".⁹

3 M'Kerrow, 850. See also Nick Needham "John Swanston" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 807-808.

4 M'Kerrow, 850-851. M'Kerrow states that his favorite authors were "Dr. Owen, Dr. Goodwin, Bishop Reynolds, Messrs. Trail, Boston, &c". M'Kerrow, 850.

5 John Smith "The Preface Containing A Short Account of the Author's Life and Character" in John Swanston, *Sermons on Several Important Subjects. By the Reverend Mr. John Swanston, Late Minister of the Gospel at Kinross* (Glasgow: Printed by William Smith, 1773), vii.

6 Swanston, 11.

7 Swanston, 11.

8 Swanston, 69-71, 113.

9 Swanston, 356.

In the cross of Christ, God's "vindictive justice was executed and manifested".¹⁰ As such, the sufferings and death of Christ manifest "the costliness of grace... [which was] purchased at the highest rate... the blood of His Son".¹¹ Swanston's sermons also speak clearly of the extent of the atonement, doing so particularly within the framework and terminology of covenant theology. He talks of God the Father entering "into a covenant with Christ the second Adam, head of the elect" and of "Christ as the head and representative of an elect company".¹² Swanston held steadfastly to a particular or limited atonement, at the same time emphasizing the full sufficiency of the atonement for the elect, rooted in Christ's active and passive obedience.¹³ His theology of the atonement stands consistent with that of Marrow theology.

While a proponent of the doctrine of election, and a limited atonement, Swanston understood that hearers of the gospel offer were responsible to respond in faith. God has made and revealed the covenant of grace, "our part of it is only to accept the blessings of the covenant, fully purchased by the Savior, and presented to the sinner".¹⁴ Swanston showed that for the sinner to respond to the gospel's call in saving faith "the regeneration of their natures" was necessary.¹⁵ Regeneration was the work of "the Spirit of God" who both "convinces them of sin" and by "means of the gospel, discovers... the remedy".¹⁶ Swanston defined faith as "the mean or instrument of our justification" which "gives

10 Swanston, 173.

11 Swanston, 110.

12 Swanston, 26, 301.

13 Swanston, 307-309.

14 Swanston, 141.

15 Swanston, 33.

16 Swanston, 86-87.

nothing, but receives everything”.¹⁷ Stressing this, particularly in the relation of saving faith to obedience and sanctification, Swanston stated “it is the office of faith to be the instrument of sanctification... faith... doth not justify us as it is an act of obedience... [but rather it] answers a free promise”.¹⁸ Unlike the Marrow brethren and most of his Secession contemporaries Swanston, did not speak clearly of faith as containing an element of assurance in his published sermons. Despite this apparent difference he did pastorally encourage his believers to an assured faith in Christ, as is particularly exemplified in his sermon “Sovereign Antidotes to Slavish Fear”.¹⁹ Here he emphasized “all that God has promised to do” desiring that his hearers would have “assurance of God’s love”.²⁰

While Swanston’s published sermons neither contradict nor reveal a distinctive Marrow approach to faith and assurance, the language of his gospel proclamation verifies the impact of Marrow theology. Using the Marrow language of the “gift and grant” of the gospel, he exhorted fellow preachers to “Go and preach the gospel to every creature... Go and tell everyman, that Christ is offered to him freely, gifted to him by God the Father”.²¹ Swanston argued that because of the gift and grant of the gospel “the warrant to receive Christ [is] common to all that hear the gospel”.²² The nature of Christ’s atoning work, and its presentation in scripture with the promises of God, meant that “the promises of the gospel were the foundation of faith”. These gospel promises were to be offered fully, freely and unconditionally to every hearer: “we may be informed... the offer and

17 Swanston, 80, 118.

18 Swanston, 84.

19 Swanston, 373.

20 Swanston, 409.

21 Swanston, 456, 160.

22 Swanston, 315.

exhibition of salvation is universal, tho' the purpose and purchase be particular".²³ Swanston proclaimed the gospel "freely and absolutely without any condition".²⁴ In characteristic Marrow fashion he urged his hearers to accept the gospel offer: "Come then... you are warranted..."²⁵

Despite the lack of evidence regarding his view of the relation of faith and assurance, Swanston's published sermons provide substantial other evidence in both language and theology for at least an initial continuation of Marrow theology into the Associate Synod churches after the period of the Burgher–Antiburgher controversy. Marrow theology had been asserted as church doctrine by the Associate Presbytery; its impact continued in Swanston as one of the first licentiates and newly ordained ministers of the Associate Synod churches.

John Brown of Haddington

Born into a poor family, John Brown (1722-1787) apparently only received one month of formal education as a youth.²⁶ While working as a shepherd, pedlar, soldier and schoolmaster, he continued to pursue education by personal study and reading. Brown served as a schoolmaster in Gairney Bridge, where he sat under the ministry of Ralph Erskine. Beginning in 1748 he studied divinity, first under Ebenezer Erskine, then under James Fisher. Brown was licensed to preach in the Associate Synod in 1750, and ordained the following year at Haddington. In 1768 he was formally elected Professor of Divinity in the Associate Synod, replacing John Swanston. Brown's academic and literary fruitfulness

23 Swanston, 144.

24 Swanston, 73.

25 Swanston, 206.

26 William Brown, *The Life of John Brown with Select Writings* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004), 7-138. This work was originally published as *Memoir and Select Remains of the Rev. John Brown* (Edinburgh: 1856). See also M'Kerrow, 854-857.

was prodigious. Over time Brown memorized various catechisms, taught himself Latin, Greek and Hebrew, “and in process of time, such were his literary attainments, that he could read and translate the French, Italian, Dutch, German, – also the Arabic, Persic, Syriac, and Ethiopic”.²⁷ In addition to carrying out the work of ministry in his congregation, and training new generations of Secession ministers, Brown published over thirty works ranging from sermons and Bible commentary to church history and theology.²⁸ His influential role in the Associate Synod churches makes Brown a key figure to study in terms of evidence for a continuity of Marrow theology.

The doctrine of the atonement in Brown’s works is perhaps most concisely expressed in his *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible* and most thoroughly discussed in his *A Compendious View of Natural and Revealed Religion*.²⁹ Adam, “as a common public head of all his natural posterity” was party to the covenant of works.³⁰ His “self-obligation” or “condition” was “...perseverance, during his whole time of probation, in the most perfect and unspotted obedience to the whole law of God, written on his heart, and to the positive law of forbearance of the forbidden fruit”.³¹ Adam’s “wanton violation” meant that

The law of the covenant was violated in all its parts, – was fully violated in the sinfulness of man’s nature and act... Adam having sinned as our covenant-head... Scripture plainly represents this sin as imputed to all his natural posterity. All men... are under a sentence of condemnation on account of Adam’s first sin, from which they cannot be delivered but by

27 M’Kerrow, 854-857; David Wright, “John Brown (of Haddington)” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 99-100.

28 M’Kerrow, 856-857.

29 John Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible... The Sixth Genuine Edition* (Edinburgh: Printed and Sold by Murray & Cochrane, 1816); John Brown, *A Compendious View of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1782), reprinted as *The Systematic Theology of John Brown of Haddington* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications and Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2002).

30 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 195.

31 Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*..., 307.

Christ... All men are naturally under the power of spiritual death, in all its ingredients... their soul is formed under the charge of guilt, and a condemning sentence of God on account of it. Adam, in his own and in the name of all his posterity... lost all encouragement to obedience from the covenant promise of eternal life. The promise being altogether undermined by his sin, all prospect or hope of the reward contained in it, and all capacity of earning a claim to it, upon the foot of that promise, were forever utterly lost. The blessings of the covenant being lost, the favour of God forfeited, and eternal life by the works of the law rendered impossible, the curse or condemnatory sentence seized upon the transgressors and bound them over to death... it lay ready in the threatening to seize their posterity in the first moment of their personal existence... Nevertheless, the covenant of works was not utterly abolished. The law of it, with respect to everything moral in itself, still remained unaltered. And the demand of infinite satisfaction for sin, answerable to the threatened penalty, was superadded to the original one of perfect obedience, as the absolutely necessary condition for eternal life.³²

Brown saw that the solution to the necessity of atonement for man's sin, in order to restoration to fellowship with God, was found in Christ. The answer to the problem of sin and the curse lay in Christ's fulfillment of the covenant of works, and his establishment of the covenant of grace. Brown defined the atonement as

A pacification of God's justice, by giving him a ransom to balance the offence done to him by sin. The Hebrew word rendered atonement signifies covering, and intimates that our offences are, by proper atonement, covered from the avenging justice of God. The atonement made by the ceremonial offerings did not really appease the divine justice for offences... but... typified the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, which sufficiently balances our most heinous crimes... and on that account is called the propitiation... as his complete righteousness appeases his Father, and satisfies law and justice for all our transgressions.³³

In his systematic theology Brown further explained the nature of Christ's atonement as consisting of both "Christ's retaining his holiness of nature, and his persevering in this holy obedience which was infinitely difficult, as he all along continued under the curse of God in our stead" and his "full satisfaction to the penalty of the broken law incurred by

32 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 208-210.

33 Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*..., 106, 342.

man's sin, by voluntarily bearing the very same punishment which we deserved".³⁴ Thus, for Brown, the atonement was penal and substitutionary in its nature, and like Marrow theology, included both the active and passive obedience of Christ:

Christ's offering of himself a sacrifice, includes not only his sufferings, but his whole obedience to the broken law, habitual, active, or passive... his fulfilling the whole condition of the covenant of grace.³⁵

This atonement was "a satisfaction so complete to all the demands of the law and justice of God, and a price so full for our eternal redemption, that nothing can be added to it".³⁶

While infinite in its sufficiency, Christ's atonement was also limited in its purchase.

Brown stated

In respect of its intrinsic worth, as the obedience and sufferings of a divine person, Christ's satisfaction is sufficient for the ransom of all mankind, and being fulfilled in human nature, is equally suited to all their necessities. But in respect of his and his Father's intention, it was paid and accepted instead of the elect, and to purchase their eternal happiness. Christ died for those only for whom he undertook, as surety, in the covenant of grace, in order to obtain their eternal salvation.³⁷

This understanding of the atonement as a penal substitution, involving Christ's active and passive obedience in fulfilling the covenant of works, and in establishing the covenant of grace, with its infinite sufficiency, accomplished for the elect of God in Christ as their federal head, is demonstrated throughout Brown's works, and stands in harmony with Marrow doctrine.³⁸

34 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 236.

35 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 289.

36 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 297.

37 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 299.

38 See for example: John Brown, *The Love of God inseparable from his people. A Sermon Preached at the Internment of Mr. William Wallis... October 12, 1757... By John Brown* (London: Printed for the Author and sold by George Keith, 1758), 5, 8, 11, 18-19. Brown's *A Brief Dissertation on Christ's Righteousness Shewing in what Extent and Proportion it is Imputed to us in Justification* (Edinburgh: Printed by E. and J. Robertsons, 1759), 1-21, extensively discusses the importance of the imputation of the

Brown's understanding of the doctrine of saving faith exemplifies not only a consistency with Marrow theology, but also its distinctive influence. In his systematic theology, Brown discusses saving faith first under the topic of the covenant of grace, and then under the topics of union with Christ in effectual calling and justification.³⁹ He states "Christ graciously brings us into the bond of the covenant by uniting himself to us... and we dutifully enter into the bond of it by faith".⁴⁰ The faith which brings believers to enter into the bond of the covenant of grace in Christ "is formed by the Holy Ghost's application of him" which occurs "in the work of effectual calling, in which Christ, by his word and Spirit, invites, drives, and draws them to himself... from a state of sin... to a state of fellowship with Christ and his Father and the blessed Spirit".⁴¹ Saving faith as such is an instrument; it cannot "be imputed to us for our justifying righteousness", but rather is a "gift" which receives the gift of free grace.⁴² Brown further describes saving faith as including "a persuasion of, and assent to the truth".⁴³ Faith, Brown states, is

A belief of the Scripture account of this covenant or testament [of grace], upon God's own authority, – and a cordial consent to it, with respect to our own salvation in particular... it is a receiving and resting upon Christ alone

active obedience of Christ. Other discussions of the nature of the atonement are found in Brown's *Two Short Catechisms Mutually Connected* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Gray and Gavin Alston, 1764), 9-14; *Four Solemn Addresses to Sinners, Young and Old* (Glasgow: Printed by John Bryce, 1784), 56-57, 67, 69, 79; *Harmony of Scripture Prophecies, and History of their Fulfillment* (Glasgow: Printed by John Bryce, 1784), 181-182, 187; and his "Letter on Gospel Preaching" in *The Posthumous Works of the late Rev. Mr. John Brown, Minister of the Gospel at Haddington* (Perth: Printed for R. Morison and Son, 1797), 160-169.

39 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 252-254, 336-340, 374-376.

40 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 252.

41 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 340.

42 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 374.

43 Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*..., 435-436.

for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel, – made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.⁴⁴

Brown’s description of faith followed the distinctive Marrow pattern of viewing a personal appropriating assurance as belonging to the essence of faith. While this was indicated in his previous statement, Brown went on to more explicitly argue that

This faith, by which we take hold of God’s covenant, includes in its very nature a real, though not always a clear, distinct, or strong assurance, or persuasion of the truth of God’s declaration and promises with respect to oneself... such an assurance is included in all the plain or metaphorical descriptions of faith in Scripture... by this assured faith we unite with Christ.⁴⁵

Though convinced that assurance was inherent to the very nature of faith, Brown was careful to note that it was not always “clear” or “strong”, explaining that “doubts and fears are found in true believers, in proportion to the weakness of their faith, and not in their faith itself... and so are more properly opposite to the assurance of sense, than to that of faith”.⁴⁶

Elucidating the relationship of faith and assurance, Brown also discussed the relationship between faith and “true and evangelical repentance”.⁴⁷ In harmony with Marrow theology, he argued that while repentance is “necessary as an obedience to God’s law” it is to be seen “as a fruit of faith”.⁴⁸ Brown emphasized this distinction stating that

Gospel repentance and love to God precede noted intimations of judicial pardon; but they, and all other good works, are fruits, not the condition of [justification before God]... the admission of repentance as the condition or ground of our justification, detracts from the illustrious manifestation of God’s grace in it... if repentance be the condition of judicial pardon, none ought to apply it as offered in the gospel, till they be fully certain that their

44 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 252.

45 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 253-254.

46 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 254.

47 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 376.

48 Brown, *The Systematic Theology*..., 376.

repentance is truly gracious... Faith is not prerequisite as any necessary qualification, but is the very reception or application of the pardon.⁴⁹

Brown's understanding of saving faith and the doctrine of the atonement were closely bound with his view of the gospel offer. Similar to these other areas of doctrine, Brown expressed his understanding of the offer of the gospel in terms congruent with and reflective of Marrow theology. This is evident in his repeated use of Marrow language. Brown proclaimed Christ "as he is offered to us in the gospel, – made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption".⁵⁰ He said that in the proclamation of the gospel, all hearers were called to see that

By this divine grant of [Christ] in the gospel, he and all the benefits of redemption are really ours, not in actual possession, but to be taken into possession, as God's free gift to us.⁵¹

Not only did Brown repeatedly use the language of "the deed of gift and grant", he also repeated the characteristic Marrow phrase of the command of Christ "to preach the gospel or glad tidings to every creature, every sinful man".⁵² These uses of Marrow terminology

49 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 376. For further evidence of Brown's view of the relationship of saving faith and repentance see his *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible...*, 370-371; Brown discusses faith and assurance in the same work on pages 103 and 531. Brown's understanding of the nature of saving faith is also reflected in his *The Love of God inseparable from his people. A Sermon Preached at the Internment of Mr. William Wallis... October 12, 1757... By John Brown* (London: Printed for the Author and sold by George Keith, 1758), 21-23; *An Help for the Ignorant; or, An Essay towards an easy, plain, and extensive Explication of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Gray and Gavin Alston, 1761), 18, 95, 146-147, 149, 151, 161, 167, 179; and *Religious Steadfastness Recommended. A Sermon Preached at Bathgate... August 22, 1768. By John Brown, Minister of the Gospel at Haddington* (Edinburgh: John Gray and Gavin Alston, 1769), 7-10, 17-18.

50 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 252, 253, 345. See also Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, 530, 532-533; *The Fearful Shame and Contempt of Those Professed Christians, Who Neglect to Raise Up Spiritual Children to Jesus Christ. Being the Substance of Two Sermons... By John Brown Late Minister of the Gospel at Haddington... Fifth edition* (Edinburgh: Printed for Alex MacLaren, 1797), 13.

51 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 253. See also pages 243-244, 305, 343-344 for examples of the use of "gift and grant" terminology.

52 John Brown, "Two Letters on Gospel Preaching" in *The Posthumous Works...*, 161.

provide substantial indication of a historical continuity between his understanding of the gospel offer and the understanding found in the theology of *The Marrow* and its supporters during the Marrow controversy. The case becomes stronger when Brown's theology of the gospel offer is compared to that of Marrow theology.

Brown viewed the promises of God in Christ as absolute and foundational to the free grace offered to all in the gospel.⁵³ The promises, as stated in Scripture, were a reflection of the fact that "the covenant of grace is, in many things, administered indefinitely to men in general".⁵⁴ Brown held to a universal gospel offer, stating that

Though Christ effectually save none but his elect, Eph. v. 23, – he is by divine appointment, grant, and office, the Saviour of the world, fit for all sinful men, and to whom they are all warranted by God to apply for salvation... his gospel is grace, which bringeth salvation in offer to all men that hear it. If Christ's administration of the new covenant were not thus general and indefinite, some men would have no more warrant to hear the gospel, or believe in and receive him for their salvation, than devils have...⁵⁵

Not only was the gospel offer made universally: it was also "glad tidings of free and full salvation".⁵⁶ The free and full nature of the gospel offer is a steady refrain throughout Brown's writings.⁵⁷ His concern for the both the complete sufficiency and unconditionality of the grace offered in the gospel led him to warn his students against

...the least neglect to hold forth Christ as God's free gift, and our all in all, in any privilege or duty; or the least recommendation of sincerity, repentance, good purposes, or works, as the ground of our warrant and

53 Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible...*, 337-338.

54 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 243.

55 Brown, *The Systematic Theology...*, 244.

56 Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible...*, 527.

57 Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible...*, 529-534; "Two Letters on Gospel Preaching" in *The Posthumous Works...*, 161-162; *The Love of God inseparable from his people...*, 9-10; *The Systematic Theology...*, 240, 247, 343-345; *Two Short Catechisms Mutually Connected...*, 43.

welcome to receive Jesus Christ as a Saviour; or as a cause or condition of our title to salvation; or a ground of our full possession of it, [which] tends to prevent the glorious gospel.⁵⁸

Brown's theology reflects that of an individual who both received and taught the theology expressed by *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, its supporters during the Marrow controversy, and reaffirmed by the Associate Presbytery in the *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*. His prominent position as Professor of Divinity in the Associate Synod over a period of nearly twenty years, along with the wide popularity of his publications, provides ground to believe that Marrow theology must also have influenced the following generation of pastors.⁵⁹

William McEwen

William McEwen (1735-1762) studied divinity under Ebenezer Erskine and James Fisher.⁶⁰ Licensed to preach in the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline in 1753, McEwen was ordained the following year as a minister in the congregation of Dundee. A popular preacher and capable pastor, he was well-respected in both his congregation and denomination. McEwen's life ended suddenly due to an illness in his ninth year in the ministry. Several volumes of McEwen's sermons and essays were published in the years shortly after his death.⁶¹

58 Brown, "Two Letters on Gospel Preaching" in *The Posthumous Works...*, 167-168.

59 The popularity of many of Brown's works is indicated by numerous occasions of republication, both in Scotland, and in America.

60 M'Kerrow, 868-870; Nick Needham, "William McEwen" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 512-513.

61 William McEwen, *The Great Matter and End of Gospel Preaching. A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of the Revd. Mr. Alexander Dick... Aberdeen... December 7th, 1758* (Aberdeen: Printed by J. Chalmers, 1759); *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical, Upon a Variety of the most important and interesting Subjects in Divinity. In Two Volumes* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Gray and Gavin Alston, 1767); *Grace and Truth; or, the Glory and Fullness of the Redeemer Displayed. In an Attempt to Explain, Illustrate, and Enforce The most Remarkable Types, Figures, and Allegories of the Old*

McEwen's view of the doctrine of the atonement is expressed clearly throughout his published writings. In his work on Old Testament typology, *Grace and Truth*, McEwen compares Christ and Adam, presenting the necessity of the atonement in the context of covenant theology.⁶² Expressing the necessity of the atonement in greater detail in his *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical*, in the context of a discussion of the consequence of sin against God, McEwen states "an expiation was necessary to be made... [for] he will by no means clear the guilty... search ye out of the book of the Lord, and see that every disobedience receives a just recompense of reward".⁶³ He goes on to argue

was [Christ] without necessity exposed to such direful sufferings? Nay: for "God hath set him forth to be "the propitiation, to declare" – his love? True; but to declare also "his righteousness in the remission of sin, and that he may be just".⁶⁴

McEwen's view of the necessity of the atonement is closely linked to his understanding of the nature of the atonement. In his essay "On Christ's dying in the stead of sinners, to make full satisfaction for their transgressions" McEwen argues that Christ's death is to be understood in three ways: "as a price, a punishment, and as a sacrifice".⁶⁵ Christ's death is a price paid, because "we are debtors; we cannot pay unto God what we are owing..."⁶⁶ McEwen writes, "Jesus Christ is the merciful Redeemer, who pays the sum" to God to obtain eternal redemption.⁶⁷ Christ's death is also a punishment, McEwen argues, and as such "it must unavoidably follow, that it was vicarious... for he did no sin,

Testament... Thirteenth Edition (Edinburgh: Printed by T. Ross and Sons, 1798).

62 McEwen, *Grace and Truth... Volume One*, 17-18.

63 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 27-29.

64 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 31.

65 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 33, 34-35.

66 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 35.

67 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 35-36.

neither was guile found in his mouth... he died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God".⁶⁸ Finally, he argues "that Christ died in the room and stead of his people, appears from its being called a sacrifice".⁶⁹ These passages, and their broader context in McEwen's writings, provide evidence that he, in harmony with Marrow theology, held to a penal, substitutionary atonement, by which "[Christ] took the scarlet and crimson colored robes of our imputed sin, that he might clothe us with the robes of his imputed righteousness, whiter than wool, purer than snow".⁷⁰ McEwen's view of the limited extent of this atonement, and its placement in the broader context of federal theology, is seen in his repeated references to the atoning "death of Christ [as] a true and proper satisfaction in the room of his elect".⁷¹

While descriptions of the doctrine of the atonement are found in substantial detail in McEwen's writings, descriptions of the nature of saving faith are limited to his meditative essays "On faith" and "On forgiveness of sin, through faith in Christ's divine blood".⁷² It is clear that McEwen viewed man in his natural state as being dead in sin, requiring sovereign regeneration to be brought to spiritual life and faith in Christ.⁷³ He

68 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 39-40.

69 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 40.

70 McEwen, *Grace and Truth... Volume Two*, 139. While McEwen does not use the distinctive terms of the imputation of the "active" and "passive obedience" of Christ in his writings, he does appear to imply the concepts. See McEwen, *Grace and Truth... Volume Two*, 140, 142, 165, 193-194.

71 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 35. Another example of McEwen's conviction of particular atonement, set in the context of federal theology, is found in his discussion of union with Christ where he states "the elect who are chosen in Christ from all everlasting, even while dead in trespasses and sins, and lying in the grave of the corrupt natural state, are regarded by God as the body to which he was federally united in the counsel of peace". McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 43, 44-46.

72 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 54-76.

73 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 45.

spoke of faith as “that noble gift of God... by [which] the guilty, self-condemned wretch devolves upon the Lord the burden of innumerable sins, and trusts for pardon of them all”.⁷⁴ McEwen was also careful to define faith as “an instrument... the general-receiver of all the blessings of the gospel... we are saved by faith... justified by faith”.⁷⁵ McEwen’s comments indicate that he viewed “evangelical repentance for sin” as a fruit of saving faith in Christ.⁷⁶ This would seem to imply that he also viewed obedience as a fruit of saving faith, a point confirmed in his sermon on *The Great Matter and End of Gospel Preaching*.⁷⁷

McEwen’s view of the relationship of faith and assurance is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain. The only direct references to assurance appear in his essay “On assurance of present and future happiness” which focuses on the blessedness of assurance. McEwen states “the assured Christian is a rare and happy person, whose conscience bears him witness in the Holy Ghost, that his faith is unfeigned; his fear filial; his repentance evangelical”.⁷⁸ His essay appears to be an description of the “assurance of sense”, particularly in light of its placement after an essay on perseverance, and prior to an essay on death; however, it fails to provide any evidence of belief in an “assurance in faith” distinct from an “assurance of sense”. Whether or not McEwen held to the Marrow view of an assurance in faith remains unanswered.

Unlike the vagaries of faith and assurance in McEwen’s writings, his view of the proclamation of the gospel is clear, particularly in his sermon *The Great Matter and End of*

74 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 54, 56.

75 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 57-58.

76 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 79-80.

77 McEwen, *The Great Matter and End of Gospel Preaching...*, 6.

78 McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 203.

Gospel Preaching.⁷⁹ In this ordination sermon, McEwen warned against the “legal” minister who

...is always exhorting his hearers to perform duties, but seldom to believe. He hampers the general gospel call with absurd conditions, and impossible qualifications; and turning the gospel into a new law, that prescribes easier terms of life than the first covenant allowed of (as sincerity, or repentance) he makes the gospel of Christ of none effect...⁸⁰

McEwen’s warning bore clear echoes of the Marrow supporters’ concerns in their struggles against neo-nomianism. It also pointed to McEwen’s concern to defend the unconditional, or free nature of the gospel offer. This latter concern was positively expressed as he continued by declaring that the gospel preacher is one who proclaims

...Christ is All in All. If he insists on a divine attribute, he declares how it shines forth in Christ with the brightest excellence. If on a promise, he explains, how in Christ it is Yea and Amen. If on a command, he inculcates the necessity of obedience, by motives drawn from Jesus Christ; and how impossible it is for us to obey, without first being united to Him as the head of all vital influences. Christ is the Beginning; Christ is the End; Christ is the Middle; Christ is the All... Christ Jesus [is] the end of the law for righteousness... The law may demand righteousness, but the gospel confers it.⁸¹

In proclaiming Christ as “all in all”, McEwen reflected his understanding of the full sufficiency of the gospel offer of Christ. Near the end of his sermon this full, free gospel offer was reiterated to all using language reflecting that in *The Marrow*:

We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, the only all-sufficient Saviour, every way adapted to your need, whosoever you are. Art thou a foolish sinner? We preach to you Christ Jesus the Lord, as made of God, unto you, wisdom. Art thou a guilty sinner? We preach to you Christ Jesus the Lord, as made of God, unto you, righteousness. Art thou an unholy and polluted sinner? We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, as made of God unto you, sanctification. Art thou a miserable and captive sinner? We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, as made of God, unto you, complete redemption... Sinners of every nation of the world; of every station of life; of every sex and age; sinners of every

79 McEwen, *The Great Matter and End of Gospel Preaching...*, 1.

80 McEwen, *The Great Matter and End of Gospel Preaching...*, 5-6.

81 McEwen, *The Great Matter and End of Gospel Preaching...*, 7, 17.

size and temper; we preach Christ Jesus the Lord, as God's great ordinance for your salvation.⁸²

McEwen's presentation of the gospel offer as full, free and universal, and his particular use of the language of "Christ our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption", reveal a marked consistency with the view of gospel proclamation of the Marrow theology and Marrow supporters. Both his *A Set of Select Essays, Doctrinal and Practical* and his *Grace and Truth* lend further support to this.⁸³ McEwen's use of distinct Marrow language is limited, however; his writings make no mention of other phrases like the "deed of gift and grant" in Christ.

To what extent do McEwen's writings provide evidence for a continuity of the heritage of Marrow theology? The preface to McEwen's *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical*, provides an account of his life, along with a description of the Secession Church. While the author, John Patison, cites the formative influences of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, "the judicious Mr. Boston, in his notes on the *Marrow* and *View of the Covenant of Grace*" and Riccaltoun's *A Sober Enquiry* on the Associate Presbytery's *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, he does not refer to any of these works as being directly formative on McEwen's life or writing.⁸⁴ This seems representative of McEwen: despite his theological training under men who were thorough-going supporters of Marrow theology, his writings, while generally consistent with a heritage of Marrow theology, bear only a few distinctive marks. Thus he may present an individual example of an incipient decline in Marrow influence, rather than a vibrant continuity. Whether McEwen's writings signal a broader trend remains to be seen.

82 McEwen, *The Great Matter and End of Gospel Preaching...*, 26-27.

83 See for example: McEwen, *A Set of Select Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, 31-33, 68-77; *Grace and Truth...*, 148-149.

84 John Patison, "A Preface" in McEwen, *A Select Set of Essays, Doctrinal and Practical...*, lxxxii-lxxxiv.

Archibald Hall

The personal influence of both James Fisher and John Brown of Haddington is exemplified in the life of Archibald Hall (1736-1778).⁸⁵ His first school teacher was Brown; under his tutelage Hall learned Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, going on to study mathematics, logic, and philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. After completing his studies at Edinburgh, Hall studied divinity under James Fisher. Ordained in 1758 in a rural Scottish Associate congregation, Hall was translated in 1765 to an Associate congregation in London, England, where he continued in the ministry, “much beloved by his people” until his death thirteen years later.⁸⁶ Hall’s published works as a minister of the Associate Synod included sermons, essays on church government and worship, and a small collection of letters.⁸⁷

Hall’s *Grace and Holiness*, originally preached as two sermons in 1776, then reworked into a book on the accomplishment and application of redemption, is the primary source giving an understanding of his view of the doctrine of the atonement. In this work Hall speaks clearly of the necessity of the atonement, stating that “none of Adam’s race is

85 Nick Needham, “Archibald Hall” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 387; M’Kerrow, 872-874.

86 M’Kerrow, 873.

87 Archibald Hall, *An Appeal to the Public in Four Parts... A Defence of Solemn Covenanting, in opposition to that Preface by the Rev. Mr. Adam Gib...* (Edinburgh: Gavin Alston, 1769), 1-95; *Church Fellowship... An Essay on the Principles, Obligations, and Ends of the Communion of Saints, in the Gospel-Church* (Edinburgh: Printed by and for Gray & Alston, 1770), 1-123; *Gospel-Worship. Being An Attempt to exhibit a scriptural View of the Nature, Obligations, Manner and Ordinances, of the Worship of God in the New Testament. In Two Volumes.* (Edinburgh: Printed by and for Gray & Alston, 1770), 1-407; *Grace and Holiness: Or, Complete Redemption effected by the Son of God. Without the Law; and Believers Death to the Law... Two Discourses Delivered at Wells’s-Street... August 4th and 5th, 1776* (London: Printed for G. Keith..., 1777), 1-106.

righteous before God”.⁸⁸ Despite their “state of sin and misery” they remain “under a necessary and indispensable obligation to obey and serve their Creator”.⁸⁹ At the same time “being sinners they cannot redeem themselves”.⁹⁰ The result is that

the whole world is guilty before God, who pronounces every one accursed, that continueth not in all things written in the book of his holy, spiritual, and perfect law, to do them... The righteous law binds over the sinner to endure God’s wrath, in a state of endless separation from his favour, and under the dominion of sin as a malignant disease... the soul is totally alienated from the life of God... and the righteous Judge will never dishonor himself by clearing the guilty, without inflicting the punishment which the crime deserves.⁹¹

Man is in this state of sin before the just wrath of God, because of Adam’s sin as federal head. Hall stated: “the first Adam... sinned against God; he destroyed himself, and all those he represented” through his violation of “the covenant of works”.⁹² Having explained man’s situation in sin and under the broken covenant of works, Hall described the nature of the atoning work of Christ in the context of covenant theology.

In *Grace and Holiness* Hall defined redemption as “that work which the law could not do for mankind-sinners, but which God (hath done) by sending his own Son in the likeness of our sinful flesh, and for sin, condemning sin in the flesh of his Son”.⁹³ Using the familiar language of *The Marrow*, speaking of “Jesus Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness”, Hall described the nature of the atonement, declaring:

Thanks be to God! The law could admit of the substitution of a Surety to pay our debt, and bear our sin; it could honourably accept the surety’s payment and satisfaction in our behalf... the gospel testifies... that the law

88 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 3.

89 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 6.

90 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 6.

91 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 7.

92 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 8, 13-14.

93 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 12.

has actually admitted the substitution of the Lord from heaven, in the room of the ungodly... it has accepted his righteousness... it cordially approves the pardon and justification, the adoption and salvation, the sanctification and everlasting glory, or every believing sinner, who is made the righteousness of God in Jesus, the surety of the better covenant.⁹⁴

In line with Marrow theology, Hall viewed the atoning work of Christ as a federal work which was penal and substitutionary in nature. Consistent with this he described the imputation of the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ,

... [who] was sent to suffer for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might finish our transgression, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity. He was sent to bring in an everlasting righteousness, to be imputed to the ungodly through faith; that he might restore us to the favour of God, and make us accepted and righteous in his sight.⁹⁵

While Hall did not explicitly use the terms “active” and “passive”, as previous theologians of the Marrow stream had in describing the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, he did follow Marrow teaching on the imputation of the active and passive obedience of Christ. With language and arguments closely echoing that of *The Marrow*, he proclaimed

Believers become dead to the law, through the consideration and faith of the righteousness of Christ, who is the end of the law. In the holy nature, the righteous life, and satisfactory death of God’s own Son... we have a perfect comment upon the precepts and penalties of the law as a covenant of works... the obedience unto death of the Son of God in our nature, is a glass that fully reflects the perfect righteousness of the law... His righteousness is presented in the gospel to us as sinners, that we may therein receive Christ himself as the Lord our righteousness; He having fulfilled all righteousness in our stead, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us. Whenever a sinner believes on the Son of God, the righteousness of Christ, which magnifies the law, and satisfies justice, is imputed or reckoned to him... the person, who is guilty and unrighteous in himself, becomes, through this imputation, the righteousness of God in Christ his Surety.⁹⁶

94 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 18.

95 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 35.

96 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 80-81.

An area where Hall's view of the doctrine of the atonement appears, at least initially, to diverge from consistency with Marrow theology is in his indistinct, and perhaps even universal, comments relating to the extent of the atonement. Hall speaks of Christ as "authorized by special commission, to purchase and apply the benefits of redemption, unto our world lying in wickedness" and refers to "the type of the scapegoat... on the day of universal atonement in Israel" as pointing to Christ's atoning work.⁹⁷ However, this apparent ambiguity is clarified by other statements in which Hall asserts that Christ "undertook for his people... to fulfill the righteousness of the law, and to make the infinitely precious atonement".⁹⁸ It appears that Hall continued to hold to a particular atonement.

Hall's view of saving faith as an instrument or means of receiving God's grace in Christ is well summed in his statement that "our salvation, from first to last, must be received and enjoyed by believing, and not by working".⁹⁹ While Hall did not speak specifically of the necessity of sovereign regeneration by the Spirit unto saving faith, he did clearly state that faith "is the gift of God, and not of works".¹⁰⁰ This did not negate a strong corresponding emphasis on the human responsibility of faith. Hall preached "you are allowed, you are invited, you are encouraged, you are commanded, to trust in his name for righteousness and complete salvation".¹⁰¹ Often defining faith simply as "believing in Christ" or "believing the promises of the gospel" Hall more extensively defined saving faith as believing the testimony of the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God, with a

97 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 36, 42.

98 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 41, 43.

99 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., table of contents.

100 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 61.

101 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 94.

personal appropriation and application of the truths concerning sin, God, and salvation in Christ:

What is your faith? ...do you really believe that you have sinned against God; and transgressed his holy law? ...that you can only be redeemed to God by the mediation of his own Son? That this Mediator is the Most High, and the Only True God? That he had his Father's commission, authorizing him to obey unto death, and thereby to save them that were lost? Do you indeed believe, that he is the Son of God in your own nature, or God manifested in your flesh? That he assumed your nature without any of its sinful pollutions, and yet in the very form and likeness of you sinful flesh? That he was substituted for such sinners as yourselves, and actually bare their sins in his own body on the cross? That God condemned and punished sin in the sufferings of his own Son? That, by this means, the Lord Jesus actually made atonement for sin, and reconciliation for iniquity? And to conclude, do you verily believe, that God freely gives you, as perishing sinners, eternal life in his Son; and that this gift, presented to you in the declarations of the gospel, warrants you to put your trust for all salvation, under the shadow of the wings of the sun of righteousness?¹⁰²

Hall's writings make clear that he held to the Marrow view of an assurance in faith, a personal appropriating persuasion "on the authority of divine testimony that he loved us, and gave himself for us".¹⁰³ He also followed the Marrow pattern of seeing evangelical repentance and new obedience as "the fruits of your faith".¹⁰⁴

While the previously examined areas of Hall's theology provide evidence of Marrow influences, his preaching of the gospel offer does so overwhelmingly. In his *Gospel Worship*, Hall describes the task of gospel preachers as follows:

To propose and recommend Christ to the acceptance of those to whom he is preaching... Their business is, among other things, to make known unto men, that through this Saviour is preached unto them the remission of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things which they could not

102 Hall, *Grace and Holiness...*, 67-69.

103 Hall, *Grace and Holiness...*, 97. Hall at one point in this work correlates doubt and unbelief, and assurance and faith in an extensive discursive footnote, commenting on those "who when the Lord hides his face... frequently suspect his love... [and] question his kindness and care, even though his word has given them the strongest and the most explicit assurances of both". Hall, *Grace and Holiness...*, 51-52.

104 Hall, *Grace and Holiness...*, 69.

be justified by the law of Moses. As ambassadors for Christ, they are sent to beseech sinners to be reconciled unto God.

They are to preach Christ to sinners, setting him forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood; recommending him to them in all his glorious and endearing characters, as the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners; as a Prophet, Priest, and King, indispensably necessary for them, every way suitable to their wants, and altogether worthy of their acceptance; as an able, faithful, and willing Saviour... as bringing in an everlasting and complete salvation from sin and wrath, from all the evils they feel or fear, or are exposed to, and to all the blessedness they are capable of in soul and body for ever and ever. Their commission is to tell sinners to come, for all things are now ready; and to compel them to come in, that the house of God may be filled. They are to testify to all, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ...¹⁰⁵

Hall's own preaching exemplified this description. He proclaimed, in characteristic Marrow fashion, that "a faithful God reveals to sinners, the everlasting righteousness of his own Son, that every one, without exception, may embrace it as a free gift... the gift of God to a guilty world".¹⁰⁶ Consistent with Marrow theology, Hall viewed this free and universal offer of the "gift" of Christ as rooted in "the warrant of that grant which is made of him in the Gospel".¹⁰⁷ Hall viewed the gospel offer more broadly in terms of the framework of federal theology, speaking of the "gift and grant" of the gospel offer as standing on the authority of God in his

... kindly dispensation of the covenant of grace, which promises and conveys eternal life to lost sinners, as the gift of God through Christ Jesus, who is the end of the law for righteousness.¹⁰⁸

Declaring the "all-sufficiency and the universal suitableness of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the character of a Saviour and Redeemer... His Father sent him to fulfill all righteousness", Hall stressed the fullness of the gospel offer in Christ.¹⁰⁹ Every spiritual

105 Hall, *Gospel Worship...*, 92-93.

106 Hall, *Grace and Holiness...*, 2-3.

107 Hall, *Grace and Holiness...*, 17.

108 Hall, *Grace and Holiness...*, 51.

109 Hall, *Grace and Holiness...*, 57.

case, every situation could find its answer in the sufficiency of Christ. In preaching this full, free, and universal gospel offer, Hall also often referred to key passages of Scripture, such as Isaiah 55:1-2 and I Corinthians 1:30, found in *The Marrow*, and the writings of Marrow supporters. He also applied these using Marrow language. Hall proclaimed

... the compassionate Redeemer, who cries, Ho every one that thirsteth! Wishing for happiness from any quarter, or in any object; come ye to the waters, to Christ and his unbounded fullness; and he that hath no money, nothing good or excellent to recommend him; come ye, buy and eat, appropriate the Lord Jesus Christ, and live by the faith of the Son of God; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price; merely as indigent lost sinners, receive and enjoy all salvation freely and fully.¹¹⁰

...the Son of God... as held forth in the gospel, for... wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.¹¹¹

Every sinner that hears the Gospel is sufficiently warranted by the God of heaven, to depend on his own Son, for the righteousness of life... But do you, or some of you, still ask with anxious concern, what special warrant you have to trust in this all-sufficient Saviour, whose offices are perfectly adapted to the exigencies of your condition, as perishing sinners? ... You are allowed by the Son of God himself: Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. He says not, whosoever is worthy, but whosoever will; let him take and enjoy Christ and his everlasting righteousness... You are also invited... hence you find him crying... Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden... You are not only invited, but greatly encouraged... Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out... But still you ask, who are commanded thus to believe in the Son of God? Are we among the number of those whom he allows, whom he invites, whom he encourages, whom he commands to trust in Jesus Christ for eternal life? I answer, You are; all and every one of you are of that number.¹¹²

To a much greater extent than William McEwen's writings, Hall's published works provide compelling evidence for a strong continuity of the influence of Marrow theology in the areas of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer. With the awareness of the theology of contemporaries who both trained and outlived them, to this

110 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 70-71.

111 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 82.

112 Hall, *Grace and Holiness*..., 94-95.

point Marrow theology remained alive and well in the Associate Synod churches. The examination of further pastors and theologians of the Associate Synod will display whether this general pattern continued.

Andrew Moir

Andrew Moir (c.1731-1770) studied divinity under James Fisher.¹¹³ During his time as a student he became noted for his gifts in preaching. Ordained in the Associate congregation of Selkirk in 1758, Moir's preaching at communion seasons often drew large numbers of people, and "even infidels and scoffers were struck with the style of his preaching and manner of address".¹¹⁴ Only a few of his writings were published, including several sermons and essays.¹¹⁵ Of these, only his two sermons published in 1765 as *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God*, provide material for examining the influence of Marrow theology.

Moir viewed the necessity of the atonement as lying in the state of man as "guilty... wretched sinners" before God.¹¹⁶ Man's sin, as disobedience and rebellion to God, "whose majesty they had offended, and whose authority they had despised", required the just consequence of being "forever separated from God, and the glory of his

113 M'Kerrow, 863.

114 M'Kerrow, 864.

115 Andrew Moir, *The Babblers, or the Fate of the faithful ministers of Christ. A Sermon preached... Oct. 15, 1760* (1761); *An Easy Method of Managing Differences in Judgment about Religious Tenets... A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Associate Synod... Oct. 2, 1761*. (Glasgow: Printed for William Smith..., 1763), 1-30; *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God. Illustrated in Two Sermons... at Selkirk, July 29, 1764* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Gray and Gavin Alston, 1765), 1-63; *The Indictment, Trial and Sentence of Mess. T---s K---r, A---w B---n, and R---t M---n, Before the Associate Synod, at the Instance of the Rev. Mr. Adam Gib* (Edinburgh: Printed and sold by W. Gray, 1768), 1-113.

116 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 7.

presence... left to perish eternally”.¹¹⁷ Though Moir did not distinctively speak of the broken covenant of works or of the federal role of Adam in the sermons, his comments on the covenant of grace as “the second covenant” implied a federal understanding of the atonement.¹¹⁸

Moir’s sermons clearly present a penal substitutionary atonement within the framework of covenant theology. Christ bore the punishment

...which justice gave to a dying Saviour, when in his bitter agony he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” What an amazing stroke was that which the glorious Saviour received, when on the cross he reclined his sinking head, and gave up the ghost...¹¹⁹

In his address to the communicants at the table in the same sermon, Moir again focused on the cross sufferings of Christ in his atoning sufferings and death:

What were these groans which came from Christ’s sorrowful heart in the garden? Every groan was grace. What was his bloody sweat, but grace... What were his agonies and anguish on the cross, but grace... in order to deliver you from death? What meant that last sigh? Was it not just grace putting the finishing hand to the glorious work of your redemption? ... God did not break the order of nature, O believing communicants, but what he did was infinitely more, he brake the body of his ever blessed Son for you: surprisingly amazing grace! That the great Jehovah who would rather crush both the heaven and earth into atoms, than break his word of promise, should yet willingly and cheerfully break the body of his uncreated Word for your sakes.¹²⁰

All of this, Moir declared, was so “that he should save them, by giving his ever-blessed Son to die in their stead, and suffer the whole of that avenging wrath, which they had deserved”.¹²¹ In accomplishing this salvation, Christ fulfilled the “covenant betwixt God the Father, and God the Son, as the Surety and Representative of the elect” and established

117 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 60-61.

118 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 61.

119 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 15.

120 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 44-45.

121 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 51.

“the covenant of grace”.¹²² Though he did not explicitly use the terminology of the “active” and “passive” obedience of Christ in his work of atonement, Moir did stress that Christ “fulfilled all righteousness... satisfying the divine law” so that “his elect people had nothing to do but in faith look on”.¹²³ His recurring emphasis on the salvation of the elect in “Christ as their representing head” indicates that he not only saw the atonement as a penal substitution, but also as particular in its extent.¹²⁴ Moir’s view of the doctrine of the atonement, from the limited source material available, stands consistent with Marrow theology, though lacking evidence of distinct influence.

Evidences towards Moir’s view of saving faith are also found in *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God*. Moir viewed faith as the result of the sovereign regenerating work of the Spirit of God. God acts in his “electing love” through “effectual calling, captivating your heart unto the obedience of Christ” and “thus the might all of your salvation is grace: for by grace are ye saved through faith”.¹²⁵ He emphasized the instrumental nature of faith “as the great universal receiver of all [God’s] declarations of mercy” and the means by which “we [are] instated in the covenant of grace... in Christ Jesus”.¹²⁶ Arguing in Marrow fashion that the testimony of Scripture to the instrumental nature of faith shows “the exceeding riches of his grace”, Moir declared

...were it possible for us, by our faith, or anything else, to fulfill the condition of the covenant, then the glory of free grace would be very much, if not entirely eclipsed; in as much as the performance of the condition of a covenant, is (strictly considered) the doing of that, which, when done, sounds a just title to the reward promised in it. But by Christ’s performing the condition of the second covenant, God has effectually provided against

122 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 53-54.

123 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 53-54.

124 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 52, 60-61.

125 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 19.

126 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 35-36.

all the encroachments which human pride might attempt to make upon the honours of sovereign free grace.¹²⁷

Moir went on to state that “faith not only receives the grace of God, but takes its standing in it... [as] upon a rock that shall never fail”, warning believers not to place their confidence in any “other graces... your repentance, your love, and your meekness... if your comfort stands on any of these, they may soon sink under it”.¹²⁸ While Moir does not explicitly state that evangelical repentance is a fruit of saving faith, he does view saving faith as chief and first among the gifts of grace. Other consistencies with Marrow theology also appear in his discussion of faith. Though he does not distinctly speak of the “assurance of faith”, Moir does allude to faith as including an assurance in stating that

God has made a glorious discovery of much grace and mercy in the gospel to poor sinners, and faith is that penetrating eye which takes up all these gracious discoveries, and conveys a believing sense of them to the soul... there is not such a natural meetness in any other grace of the Spirit, for conveying a realizing sense of the grace of God to the soul.¹²⁹

The statement that faith conveys “a realizing sense of the grace of God to the soul” echoes the appropriating assurance of faith so often repeated in *The Marrow* and the writings of Marrow supporters. Moir’s view of saving faith indicates a certain consistency with, if not a distinct influence of Marrow thought.

Moir’s proclamation of the gospel in his sermons strongly emphasizes the free offer of grace. He speaks of grace as “a free unmerited gift”.¹³⁰ “God’s favour” as offered in Christ, Moir preached, is “entirely free”.¹³¹ In describing the gospel offer Moir used the Marrow language of the “grant... of grace” combining it with illustration of a royal grant

127 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 54.

128 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 59-60.

129 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 56-57.

130 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 8.

131 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 8.

of favour in a manner similar to that found in *The Marrow* itself.¹³² He repeatedly emphasized the full sufficiency of the gospel for all, on one occasion proclaiming

...there is in God, not only a sufficiency of grace for saving sinners, but vastly more; and... he is possessed not only of abundance, but of an exuberant, a super-abundant abundance of grace. The apostle Paul seems to have borrowed the boldest figures he could possibly find, in order to express the abundance of the grace of God. The extent of sin was so great, that before the general flood, we are told, the whole earth was full of iniquity; and yet wide as sin had spread her horrid wings, the grace of God reached far much wider, for where sin abounded, says the apostle, grace did much more abound. How refreshing to every guilty sinner may the super-abundance of the grace of God be!¹³³

On another occasion, Moir declared that “to preach the gospel aright, is to declare the free grace of God, and to exhibit this, as a ground of hope to the chief of sinners”.¹³⁴ Not only was the offer of the gospel free and fully sufficient in Moir’s sermons: it was offered universally. Moir preached

...betake yourselves now to the free grace of God revealed to poor sinners in Christ Jesus: Behold we bring you this day tidings of great joy; we proclaim the exceeding riches of the grace of God, as a ground of hope to the vilest of men, and the very worst of sinners; and could we single out the greatest sinner in this numerous assembly, we are warranted to call him up, and assure him, that God is able to make all grace abound to him... That grace... is freely offered to you now. Such is God’s grace, that he offers to receive you freely again into his family.¹³⁵

Free grace the clear anthem, Moir’s sermons reveal a marked consistency with Marrow theology in the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and the gospel offer. Yet distinctive evidences of Marrow influence are few, found primarily in the use of the language of “gift” and “grant” in his preaching of the gospel offer, and his view of an assurance belonging to faith.

132 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 10.

133 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 11.

134 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 29.

135 Moir, *The Exceeding Riches of the Grace of God...*, 36-37.

James Moir

James Moir studied at the Associate Synod Divinity Hall under James Fisher during the session of 1761.¹³⁶ After completing his studies and licensure, the Associate Synod ordained him to the ministry at the congregation of Cumbernauld; he later translated to the congregation at Tarbolton in Ayrshire. M’Kerrow states that Moir had “the reputation of being an excellent divine”.¹³⁷ Moir wrote his chief publication, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption*, as a response to Church of Scotland minister William McGill’s *Practical Essay on the Death of Christ*, which promoted Socinian thought.¹³⁸ Moir’s work was published in 1787, two years prior to a heresy complaint against McGill in the Church of Scotland Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. Proceedings against McGill were hesitant, and ended when he gave an explanation and apology. John McIntosh states that “the Seceders were outraged by the Church of Scotland’s failure to prosecute him effectively and a pamphlet war ensued”.¹³⁹

While the controversy lay outside the bounds of the Associate Synod, Moir’s response to it in *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption* provides substantial ground for analysis of the influence of Marrow theology on his understanding of the doctrine of the

136 William MacKelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh: Oliphant & Company, 1873), 665.

137 M’Kerrow, 923.

138 James Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption By the Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ Stated and Defended; Being an Answer to a Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ, by William M’Gill, D.D. one of the Ministers of Air. In Which Reply The Socinian Errors on that Head are Refuted, and the true Doctrine of the Satisfaction of Christ in our room and place, for the Redemption of Sinners, is Vindicated and Established.* (Glasgow: Printed by Robert Chapman and Alexander Duncan, 1787), 1. See also William McGill, *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ, In Two Parts. Containing, I. The History, II. The Doctrine, of his Death* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Author, by Mundell and Wilson, 1786), 1-550.

139 John R. McIntosh, “William McGill” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 514.

atonement. Moir's preface to his work began by outlining the necessity of the atonement in a manner consistent with that expressed in Marrow theology:

...none are of greater importance, than the doctrines of Christ's equality with the Father, and his complete satisfaction for sin. Without satisfaction for sin, and satisfaction by the shedding of blood, we cannot be saved... whoever would redeem guilty men, must be able to bear infinite wrath. But this is a burden too heavy for any finite being. By none, less than a divine person, can it be sustained. How comfortable, then, that Jesus the Saviour, is, in holy Scripture, so clearly pointed out as a divine person, and, consequently, as one whose obedience to the death was a complete atonement for our sin.¹⁴⁰

In the body of his work, Moir continued describing the necessity of the atonement in terms of "the justice of God demanding sin to be punished", the fact that repentance was "no satisfaction to the law and justice of God for sin", and the fact that the moral law remained in full force regarding sinful man.¹⁴¹ Concluding his explanation of the necessity of the atonement, Moir stated

In the law, God shews that he could not, and in the gospel, that he would not forgive transgression and sin, without a full satisfaction unto his law and justice... all sin is... punished either in hell, or on the cross. ...It now being proved that sin must be punished; it necessarily follows, that Christ, in suffering and dying, made full satisfaction to the law and justice of God for our sins, otherwise they cannot be forgiven.¹⁴²

This same statement marked the beginning of Moir's explanation of the nature of the atonement. Devoting a chapter to the "substitution and satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ in our room and stead" he clearly followed the theology of a penal substitutionary atonement.¹⁴³ Moir described the nature of the atonement within the framework of federal theology, making frequent references to Witsius' *De oeconomia foederum*, a text

140 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, iii.

141 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, xiii; 26-29.

142 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 29.

143 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 56.

influential in the thought of several theologians distinctly impacted by *The Marrow*, including Thomas Boston and John Brown of Haddington.¹⁴⁴ Moir stated

...a gracious God, in his infinite wisdom, found out a mean to preserve the honour of his justice, in the punishment of sin, and to discover the riches of his mercy, in the pardon of the sinner; and this was his providing and accepting of a surety, to fulfill the precept of the law, and to endure all that punishment it denounced against sin and sinners.¹⁴⁵

In harmony with Marrow theology and tradition Moir, plainly described this atonement as particular in its extent. God “was pleased to substitute his own eternal Son in the room of his guilty elect, who had offended him”.¹⁴⁶ He explained this in federal terms:

...there was no alteration, no change, made in the law, either in its precept or penalty; but only a change of persons. God, in infinite sovereignty and condescension, admitted another to do and suffer what his law required of his guilty elect.¹⁴⁷

Moir’s view of the doctrine of the atonement bore further similarity with Marrow theology in its stress on the full sufficiency of the atoning work of Christ for the believer. While he did not directly use the terminology of the active and passive obedience of Christ being imputed to the believer, Moir clearly and repeatedly implied these concepts in his writing. God, Moir stated, accepted “the obedience and death” of Christ “the surety, as a full vindication of his honour and satisfaction to his law”.¹⁴⁸ Explaining further, he noted that

144 Moir also repeatedly refers to the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as well as to the writings of other theologians, particularly John Owen’s *Vindiciae evangelicae; or the Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated and Socinianism Examined*, “to whom”, he states, “I am indebted...”. Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 224. Moir makes no explicit reference to *The Marrow*, nor to the writings of any of the Marrow theologians.

145 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 56. Moir later states that “Christ redeem[ed] us from that curse entailed on us by Adam’s first transgression...” and describes the “federal transactions between the Father and him in the high councils of eternity”. Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 68, 72.

146 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 56.

147 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 56-57.

148 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 56.

By the satisfaction of Christ in our room and place, we understand his taking our sin upon him, and undertaking to do, bear, and suffer, in the place and stead of his people, all that the justice and law of God required in order to their complete pardon, their title to the kingdom of heaven, and their eternal salvation; and his fully accomplishing these by his obedience and death.¹⁴⁹

Moir's understanding of Christ's active and passive obedience was consistent with that of Marrow theology. While he did not explicitly reference *The Marrow* or the writings of Marrow theologians in his discussions of the atonement, his use of the language of "Christ in our room and place" and "Christ in our law room and place" appears to be a direct quote of both *The Marrow's* language, as Edward Fisher states "[Christ] put himself in the room and place of all the faithful" – a statement which Thomas Boston repeats and explains in his annotations on *The Marrow*.¹⁵⁰

While Moir's view of the doctrine of the atonement is expressed extensively in *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption*, it is not surprising that the doctrines of saving faith and the gospel offer receive limited reference, as his aim was to refute McGill and defend a biblical view of the atonement. Moir did, nonetheless, briefly discuss saving faith on several occasions, speaking clearly of the necessity of "the irresistible and efficacious grace of the Holy Ghost, for regenerating us".¹⁵¹ He also described faith as the first among saving graces, and appeared to view faith as including an assurance, both indicating consistency with Marrow theology, declaring that

There can be no repentance unto life, without an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ: none can truly repent of his sin, till he see that God is reconciled towards him in Christ, and is a God ready to pardon. While we view almighty God, as an implacable judge, ready to take vengeance on us

149 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 61.

150 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 59, 61, 62, 70; E[dward] F[isher], *The Marrow of Modern Divinity... with notes by the Rev. Thomas Boston* (Swengel, PA: Reiner Publications, 1978), 101, 105.

151 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 223, 226.

for our crimes, it is impossible we can have the least genuine love to him; for our love to God must spring from the faith of his love to us; Herein is love, says the apostle John, I epist. iv. 10. not that we loved God, but that he loved us; as if he had said, We do not love God first, but he presents us with his love; and our love to him proceeds from his love to us. No man can be persuaded, that ever God will receive him into the bosom of his dearest love, when he repents; nor be properly affected with the discovery of that love, but by faith in the blood of Christ, and the satisfaction he made for us on the cross... faith sees God's justice appeased, and that he is ready to pardon and forgive.¹⁵²

Moir's understanding of the order of the application of redemption, with saving faith as first and primary was further expressed in his Marrow-like refutation of a conditional covenant of grace. He stated

...our practicing righteousness, and repenting of sin, are so far from being conditions of our benefiting by the righteousness of Christ, that none can work righteousness in their practice, or repent of their sins, and turn to God, but those who, by faith, have received this gift of righteousness; they shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn, Zech. xii. 10. It is only a believing view of a broken bleeding Saviour, that can produce a broken bleeding heart in the sinner.¹⁵³

Much like his view of saving faith, Moir's understanding of the gospel offer was bound up with his view of the atonement of Christ. In the introduction of his work he stated

The scripture-doctrine of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of all real Christianity, the most precious treasure of the saints, and the very substance of the glorious gospel.¹⁵⁴

Coming to address the preaching of the gospel towards the end of his work, Moir declared "our doctrine of redemption, by the death of Christ, furnishes us with just views of the gospel of the grace of God".¹⁵⁵ He described the gospel itself as

152 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 36-37.

153 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 138.

154 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 1.

155 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 209.

...glad tidings of what God will do, for Christ's sake, unto sinners. For his sake, he will pardon them that are guilty; the condemned he will acquit; he will justify the ungodly, and sanctify them that are filthy. He will, for his sake, take into his family them that are the children of the devil; and will give them that are worthy of eternal death, eternal life. If there be any mercy, temporal or eternal; that will God give, for Christ's sake, unto sinners. This is the word that by the gospel is preached unto us.¹⁵⁶

Moir stressed the gospel offer as free, full, and universal. The atoning work of Christ, offered in the gospel, was all-sufficient.¹⁵⁷ He strongly criticized McGill's statement "that we may not found any hopes on the merit of atonement by a Saviour exclusive of our own personal obedience; and that the promises of the gospel shall have their full accomplishment on us only when we fulfill the conditions of them..." as a "direct perversion of the gospel of God".¹⁵⁸ While Moir did not use distinctive Marrow phrases or terms in his discussion of the gospel offer, his concluding gospel proclamation to the reader, with its emphasis on gospel promises, clearly echoed the spirit of Marrow theology:

Consider your ways; there is hope concerning you; for this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Jesus Christ himself hath declared, in the most solemn manner, that none shall be rejected who come to him for salvation. There are his words, John vi. 37. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. I will receive him with outstretched arms; I will tenderly embrace and cherish him; and so unite him to myself, that the combined force of hell and earth shall never be able to dissolve the union... After all the contempt you have thrown upon him, he is still willing to save you. Behold, in the gospel-offer, he lays, as it were, his crucified body in your way, to stop you in your self-destroying course. And will you still press onward, and trample under foot the Son of God? ...Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him, Psal. ii. 12.¹⁵⁹

156 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 209.

157 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 56, 61.

158 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 210.

159 Moir, *The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption...*, 216-217.

Despite his limited publication, Moir's work presents evidence for a continuity of the influence of Marrow theology in the doctrine of the atonement, and evidence of consistency with Marrow theology in the areas of saving faith and the gospel offer.

John Fraser

John Fraser (1745-1818) was born and raised in the small village of Bunchrew, near Inverness.¹⁶⁰ After attending grammar school in Inverness, Fraser studied at the Divinity Hall of King's College, Aberdeen. While a student there he began to sit under the preaching of Alexander Dick, the minister of Aberdeen's Associate Synod congregation. Fraser became convicted of the principles of the Secession, and, despite the opposition of family members, entered a period of study in the Associate Divinity Hall under John Swanston at Kinross.¹⁶¹ He was licensed to preach and ordained just over a month later in 1768, in the congregation of Auchtermuchty, where he served for the remainder of his life. An able pastor and scholar, Fraser was remembered as being "eminently a man of prayer".¹⁶² His works include several essays and a number of sermons which were collected and published shortly after his death.¹⁶³

Fraser's sermons provide substantial material toward understanding his view of the necessity, nature and extent of the atonement. He declares the "necessity of an atonement for human guilt" as "every sinner... [is] worthy of death, for his transgressions of the

160 M'Kerrow, 905-907.

161 John Fraser "Memoir of the Author" in *Sermons and Essays by John Fraser, A.M. Late Minister of the Gospel in Auchtermuchty. To which is prefixed a memoir of the author* (Edinburgh: William Aitken, 1820), xii-xiv.

162 M'Kerrow, 906.

163 John Fraser, *Sermons and Essays by John Fraser, A.M. Late Minister of the Gospel in Auchtermuchty. To which is prefixed a memoir of the author* (Edinburgh: William Aitken, 1820), 1-360.

divine law”.¹⁶⁴ Atonement is required in order to secure “a full and abundant pardon... [as] the guilt of any one sin is sufficient to sink down the soul to hell”.¹⁶⁵ Due to the nature of sin against God, the requirement for an atonement “infinitely exceeded the power of [man]”.¹⁶⁶ Knowing that the work required for salvation was “too high for them...”, Fraser states the Father “ordained and called” the Son “to the work of our redemption... as the only Person able for it, and equal to it... our Lord also undertook this mighty service, because he only was sufficient for it”.¹⁶⁷

Fraser saw the necessity of Christ’s redemptive work as directly connected to the actual work of atonement, proclaiming

The gospel exhibits the great atonement which our divine Saviour made upon the cross... he hath by himself purged our sins; that he hath appeared in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that he hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin; that he hath made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; and that his blood cleanseth from all sin... the righteousness of God our Saviour is revealed to guilty men, as a complete atonement for their iniquities, and as a righteousness meritorious of their acceptance with God and eternal life.¹⁶⁸

Fraser made it clear in his preaching that the atonement of Christ was penal and substitutionary in its nature.¹⁶⁹ God the Father sent the Son “to be the propitiation for our sins” and gives to believers “the imputation of his righteousness... whereby they become the righteousness of God in him”.¹⁷⁰ In harmony with Marrow theology, Fraser held that

164 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 7.

165 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 65.

166 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 132.

167 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 132.

168 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 7.

169 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 41, 49, 55, 58, 132-133, 134-135, 153.

170 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 8-9.

this atoning work of Christ, as imputed to believers, included both “Christ’s active and passive obedience, as a complete answer to the demands of the law”.¹⁷¹ He also stood in line with Marrow theology in arguing that while the “infinite merit and efficacy” of the atonement was to be “displayed to the whole world” it was nonetheless limited in its application to those whom the

Father elected... to salvation from all eternity... The divine purpose concerning them was purposed in Christ Jesus; and the grace designed for them, was given them in him before the world began. In love to their persons, the Lord predestinated them to everlasting life; and in love to Christ, he elected them to be his members...¹⁷²

While Fraser did not use the language of covenant theology as pervasively as the earlier Secession theologians had, he did continue to view the doctrine of the atonement within the federal framework of the covenant of works and covenant of grace.¹⁷³

Fraser’s view of man in the state of sin impacted his understanding of what was necessary for man to come to a saving faith. He stated that the preaching of the gospel of Christ comes by

... the Spirit and with power... to all the elect of God... It works effectually in them who believe, converting them to the Lord Jesus, subduing their corruption, and renewing their natures... dead souls are quickened, men sitting in darkness are enlightened, impure creatures are sanctified, gross idolaters are turned to God from idols, and lost sinners are saved.¹⁷⁴

The Holy Spirit’s sovereign, regenerating work was necessary for sinners to come to a saving faith in Christ; saving faith was itself a gift of grace, and was in its nature simply a mean or instrument. Fraser emphasized this, arguing that while “the law is indeed to be preached as a schoolmaster, to bring men to the Lord Jesus, that they may be justified by

171 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 37.

172 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 49, 110.

173 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 180.

174 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 28.

faith... we must not make its duties the foundation of the privileges or promises of the gospel".¹⁷⁵ Rather,

All that is required of us, in order to our acceptance, is to freely receive the gift of righteousness by faith... as a mean of interesting us in the righteousness of Christ, which is the only foundation of those privileges.¹⁷⁶

Fraser stressed the responsibility of the hearers of the gospel to respond in faith, and also further described saving faith as being active in its nature. Believers "by faith receive the gift of righteousness, and embrace the great salvation".¹⁷⁷ Saving faith, as Fraser describes it, includes true knowledge, a changed affection, and belief in, or conviction of the truths of the gospel.¹⁷⁸ Fraser did not explicitly address the relationship between faith and assurance, though he appears to follow the Marrow theology in seeing an element of assurance in faith, calling his hearers to respond to "trust in Christ" as their Mediator by "drawing near... in the full assurance of faith".¹⁷⁹

Fraser's preaching stressed the free and unconditional nature of the gospel offer. He presented the clear implication that faith was chief among the gifts of grace given by the Holy Spirit, and that repentance and new obedience were rightly to be seen as fruits of faith in Jesus Christ. Fraser stated

Ministers are to preach... repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus. ...if we would preach the gospel purely, we must beware... of confounding it with the law... The law is a system of holy precepts; but the gospel is a cluster of precious promises... The law is indeed to be preached as a schoolmaster, to bring men to the Lord Jesus, that they may be justified by faith; but after it hath done its office as a schoolmaster, they are not to be sent back to it for their justification... It is to be preached as a rule of life to the Christian; but... we must not make its duties the foundation of the

175 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 57-58.

176 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 171.

177 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 145.

178 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 45-46, 76-77.

179 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 230-231.

privileges or promises of the gospel; nor make men's repentance or any good in them the foundation of their pardon or of their application to Christ for the remission of their sins and the salvation of their souls. A true preacher of the gospel is not a legal, an Arminian, or Neonomian preacher... He preaches the free grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ to perishing sinners.¹⁸⁰

In preaching the gospel offer Fraser reflected all the characteristics of a Marrow understanding. Not only was the gospel offer "freely given... and freely bestowed", but it was also fully sufficient:

We... need an abundant pardon, and such is the pardon proclaimed in the gospel... With the Lord is a multitude of tender mercies. He is rich in mercy... The goodness and mercy of his nature are immensely rich, and therefore he cannot be unwilling to forgive the most heinous and the most numerous sins. The blood of Christ also has infinite merit; and therefore through it we have plenteous redemption, the forgiveness of great and multiplied sins... You are to trust in Christ for an abundant pardon... The guilt of any one sin is sufficient to sink down the soul to hell; but we have complete forgiveness through the blood of Christ.¹⁸¹

Fraser expressed the universality of this free and full gospel offer in language which distinctively echoed *The Marrow*. He proclaimed:

Our Lord commissioned them to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; to preach repentance and the remission of sins in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.¹⁸²

Though remission is... a particular blessing, it is universal in regard to the promulgation and grant of it in the gospel.¹⁸³

What encouragement have you to seek such a privilege? I answer, you have all the encouragement that God could have given you; for he hath made a Gift of his own Son and of his salvation to you in the gospel... Christ is freely given to you Gentiles, to you Britons, to you Scotsmen in these uttermost parts of the earth; which sufficiently authorises your reception of him by faith, although you were the chief of sinners... Receive him then...¹⁸⁴

180 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 36-38.

181 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 65.

182 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 16.

183 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 64.

184 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 174.

Not only did Fraser present the universal offer of the gospel using the distinctive Marrow language of “gift and grant”, but he also restated Scripture passages often quoted in *The Marrow* and the writings of Marrow theologians, such as Revelation 3:20 and Isaiah 55:1-3.¹⁸⁵ This evidence, along with that considered from his view of the atonement, saving faith, and gospel offer, indicates that the writings of Fraser both adhere to and continue Marrow theology, providing further demonstration of the continuity of Marrow theology within the Associate Synod churches.

George Lawson

George Lawson (1749-1820) studied at Edinburgh University prior to entering the Associate Synod Divinity Hall in 1766.¹⁸⁶ Beginning under the tutelage of John Swanston at Kinross, he completed his studies under John Brown at Haddington. Lawson was licensed in 1769 and ordained in 1771 as the pastor of the Selkirk Associate congregation. Selected by the denomination in 1787 to fill the position of Professor of Divinity vacated by John Brown, he was respected for his teaching and scholarly ability. Lawson’s early biographer, Henry Belfrage, noted the influence of the writings of Thomas Boston and John Brown on his teaching and preaching.¹⁸⁷ As a theological instructor Lawson trained numerous men for the ministry, gaining recognition beyond the Secession churches for his theological acumen, to the point that he was given the honorary title of Doctor in Divinity

185 Fraser, *Sermons and Essays...*, 237, 250, 318, 327.

186 M’Kerrow, 864-868; Nick Needham, “George Lawson” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 474.

187 Henry Belfrage, “A Short Account of Dr. Lawson and His Writings” in George Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David; and on the Introduction of Christianity into Britain* (Berwick: Published by Thomas Melrose, 1833), vii.

from Marischal College, Aberdeen in 1806.¹⁸⁸ Charles Spurgeon “praised his *Lectures on the Book of Ruth, with a few Discourses on the Sovereignty and Efficacy of Grace* as being ‘by a man of great genius. Simple, fresh and gracious’”.¹⁸⁹ Aside from his commentary on Ruth, Lawson’s published works include several other Bible commentaries, sermons, essays, and a work on the history of the church in Britain.

In many ways Lawson represented a transition, training a generation of ministers who would lead the Secession church from the 18th into the 19th century. While he used Brown’s systematic theology as a text in his classes, he also advocated toleration and progress on issues of covenanting and church state relations.¹⁹⁰ As such his sermons and other writings present a valuable source for examining whether the Marrow theology can in his case be described as continuing to have a distinctive impact on the Associate Synod stream of the Secession churches.

Lawson’s writings in both his commentaries and published sermons present evidence towards his understanding of the necessity of the atonement. In his commentary on the life of David, he spoke of David as being aware of the need for atonement from “all the guilt which he had contracted in the course of his life, as well as that which he brought

188 M’Kerrow, 866.

189 Needham, “George Lawson”, 474. Needham also notes “Lawson held progressive views on most subjects. He was a supporter of the missionary movement, an enemy of the slave trade, and an advocate of the use of uninspired hymns in worship. In the Old Light/New Light controversy, he came forward as a leading proponent of New Light...” Needham, “George Lawson”, 474.

190 Jack Whytock, *An Educated Clergy: Scottish Theological Education and Training in the Kirk and Secession, 1560-1850* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 268-269. Whytock goes on to state “he was willing to have more forbearance in the judicatories of the Church than the previous generation, but he was not a Voluntarist nor an Amyraldian on the Atonement”. Whytock, 271.

with him into the world... not only his actual transgressions, but his inherent corruption...”¹⁹¹ He went on to state that

Having contemplated the excellencies and requirements of the divine law, [David] cried out, “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults, keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: so shall I be righteous and innocent from the great transgression.”¹⁹²

Man’s state in sin before a holy God was such that “we could not give unto God a sufficient ransom for our souls to pacify his wrath”.¹⁹³ This meant that “the sufferings of Christ were necessary for our salvation”.¹⁹⁴ Lawson saw testimony to this throughout the Scriptures, but argued that particularly

...in the light of the cross [we see] what it is to sin against God. He would not suffer the least sin to escape unpunished. For all sins that have been, or shall be pardoned, full satisfaction was made by Christ.¹⁹⁵

Lawson’s statement of the necessity of atonement in Christ in order to gain pardon for sin also reflected his understanding of the nature of the atoning work of Christ as a penal substitution. He spoke of David prophetically looking forward to the day that “justice and mercy would meet together in that salvation which God had provided”:

In the fifty-first Psalm we find him saying in one place, “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else I would give it;” and yet in another place he says, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow”. What was that blood sprinkled by hyssop from which he expected purification from his guilt? Not surely the blood of bulls and goats. He knew that the blood of bulls and goats could take away no sin, and that no use was to be made of such blood in the cure of such sins as those that now

191 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 95-96.

192 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 155.

193 George Lawson, “A Discourse on the Condition and Duty of Unconverted Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth: To Which Are Added Discourses...* (Albany: Printed by E. & E. Hosford, 1816), 201.

194 George Lawson, *The History of Joseph* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 46. A reprint of the 1807 first edition of this work.

195 Lawson, *The History of Joseph...*, 36.

excited his chief concern. The blood which he had in view must have been that which the blood of the ancient sacrifices represented... he saw that great atonement represented by which the transgression was to be finished and an end put to sin.¹⁹⁶

It was in this blood atonement fulfilled by Christ that not only the grace and mercy of God was evidenced, but also the “abhorrence in which all sin is held by Him, who spared not His own Son, when He was loaded with the guilt of our iniquities”.¹⁹⁷

While Lawson spoke extensively of the necessity and the nature of the atoning work of Christ, his writings offer few comments towards his understanding of the extent of this atonement. Some of the few that do exist, including “Christ, the Son of God, died for the redemption of all that should be saved” and “For all sins that have been, or shall be pardoned, full satisfaction was made by Christ”, do imply a particular atonement.¹⁹⁸ As such his writings in the area of the atonement are doctrinally consistent with Marrow theology. Yet, it can be argued they are minimally so, as these statements are few in comparison to others which more indefinitely state “that the Son of God was appointed to be God’s salvation to the ends of the earth”.¹⁹⁹ The lack of clarity on the extent of the atonement in Lawson’s writings is echoed in a record of a discussion in one of his divinity classes:

196 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 100-101.

197 Lawson, *The History of Joseph...*, 148.

198 Lawson, “A Discourse on the Sovereignty of Grace in the Conversion of Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 353; Lawson, *The History of Joseph...*, 36.

199 Lawson, *The Joy of Parents in Wise Children* (Edinburgh: Printed for J. Ogle..., 1798), 4. See also Lawson, “A Discourse on the Sovereignty of Grace in the Conversion of Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 264; Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 107. These latter, more indefinite statements are often found in the context of the universal offer of the gospel. The strong Marrow emphasis on the free, full, and universal offer of the gospel, when removed from the context of federal theology, and a clearly stated particular atonement, can be seen as opening the way for a restatement of the extent of the atonement in universal terms.

The subject of one of the students' discussions happened to be Heb. xi. 31. In speaking of the faith of Rahab, he stated, that whatever might be the fate of the heathen, wherever Divine revelation was enjoyed, faith was indispensable to salvation. Upon this, the Professor remarked, that the student might have expressed himself more strongly as to the hopeless state of the heathen; and added, "but it is an awful subject; and perhaps, the young man did right in leaving the point undetermined".²⁰⁰

A further discernable difference from Marrow theology is found in the fact that Lawson did not make use of the framework of covenant or federal theology in his published works describing the atonement.²⁰¹

Lawson's view of saving faith included a strong emphasis on the necessity of sovereign regeneration by the Holy Spirit in order to come to faith. He stated

... the ransom... paid down by our divine Surety... will be of no benefit to us, if we are not made partakers of Christ and his salvation, by the effectual operation of the divine Spirit. We are by nature dead in sin, and cannot make ourselves alive.²⁰²

This emphasis is repeated throughout Lawson's works; saving faith is a "gift" given by "the Spirit of God".²⁰³ However, this did not negate a clear call to the responsibility of the hearers. Lawson discussed the relationship between the sovereign grace and human

200 John MacFarlane, *The Life and Times of George Lawson, D.D., Professor of Theology to the Associate Synod* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Co., 1862), 301.

201 Whytock argues that Lawson's use of John Brown's systematic theology as a text in the Associate Synod Divinity Hall indicate that in his teaching "the traditional features of federal theology were the foundation, together with a marked evangelical piety". Whytock, 270. However, the available evidence in Lawson's published work, while clearly manifesting an evangelical piety, provides little substantive support that Lawson was actively inculcating federal theology.

202 Lawson, "A Discourse on the Duty of Unconverted Sinners" in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 201.

203 Lawson, *The History of Joseph...*, 81; Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 167. See also: George Lawson, *Exposition of the Book of Proverbs. In Two Volumes.* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant..., 1829), 37; George Lawson, *A Sermon Preached Before the Edinburgh Missionary Society, At Their Anniversary Meeting... April 19, 1808* (Edinburgh: Walker and Greig, 1808), 6, 38; George Lawson, *A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Synod of the United Secession Church, September, 1832* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1832), 30-31.

responsibility extensively in his sermon “A Discourse on the Condition and Duty of Unconverted Sinners”, stating that “the sovereignty of God’s grace, and the absolute freeness of his purpose of election, do not interfere with the use of means” and the duty to use the means.²⁰⁴

Lawson’s writings indicate a view of the nature of saving faith which is consistent with Marrow theology. He states that the warrant or ground of faith is found in “the promises” of God.²⁰⁵ Saving faith takes hold of these promises with an appropriating trust, just as David “in the faith of the promise knew and believed the love of God to himself...”²⁰⁶ Lawson states

In the word of God he found a sufficient ground laid, not merely for a general belief that pardon was with God, but for a dependence upon God for pardon to himself, for the remission of all his offences, however great in themselves, however aggravated in their circumstances. He could not have hoped in God’s word for deliverance from those depths into which he was sunk by sin, if it had not emboldened him to trust in God for the pardon of his own offences.²⁰⁷

His description of the nature of faith echoes *The Marrow’s* persuasion of faith including within itself an element or type of assurance. In harmony with this, Lawson warned his hearers:

Beware of mistaking the nature of faith. James cautions you against placing in it a dead assent to the truth, James ii. 14–25. It must correspond to the testimony of God in his word concerning Christ. God testifies, that he hath sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. He offers Christ freely to you in the gospel, and calls upon you not only to believe that salvation is to be found in him, but to trust in him for salvation to yourselves. Your faith is required to those declarations and promises of grace, which give you

204 Lawson, “A Discourse on the Duty of Unconverted Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 221; Lawson “A Discourse on the Sovereignty of Grace in the Conversion of Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 324-325.

205 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 106-108.

206 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 129.

207 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 101.

sufficient warrant to depend upon his blood and grace for your salvation from sin and misery.²⁰⁸

Lawson describes saving faith as a means or instrument by which believing sinners receive “the righteousness of God... imputed to us”.²⁰⁹ Faith, he states in language echoing *The Marrow*,

cleaves to Christ alone... it trusts not in itself, nor in any works that go before, or follow it, but in the work finished by Christ. It buys his gold and fine raiment, his milk and his honey, without money and without price. It brings nothing to him, but receives everything from him, that all the glory of our salvation may be attributed to him along. It heartily assents to the declaration of a promising God.²¹⁰

Lawson carefully distinguished saving faith from repentance and new obedience, which he viewed as its “sanctifying effects”²¹¹ He warned against making “a new covenant of works” rather than trusting “in God who pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin, through an atonement already made”.²¹² Similar to Marrow theology, Lawson first discussed faith, followed by evangelical repentance, a pattern exemplified in his *Discourses on the History of David*. Here he first described David’s faith, before turning to describe his repentance, stating

although by the law is that knowledge of sin which strikes terror into the heart, yet by the Gospel we have the clearest views of that abominable vileness in sin which should inspire us with detestation, and the Gospel only gives us those views of the mercy of God which dispose us to mourn for sin

208 Lawson, “A Discourse on the Duty of Unconverted Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 263-264.

209 George Lawson, *The Joy of Parents in Wise Children*, 5-6.

210 Lawson, “A Discourse on the Sovereignty of Grace in the Conversion of Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 321-322.

211 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 103.

212 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 187. This comment is one of the few hints that can imply Lawson’s retaining a federal theology of the covenant of works and of grace. The overall lack of such references in his writings is a significant departure from the writings of Marrow theologians and early Secession writers whose sermons and essays were saturated with federal theology.

after a godly sort. We know far more clearly than the saints in David's time, or perhaps than David himself, what is the meaning of these words, "there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared".²¹³

Keeping with his view of the doctrine of the atonement and saving faith, Lawson's proclamation of the gospel offer emphasized free grace. Commenting on Proverbs 9:4-5, he stated

The simple and unwise are welcomed to this feast. They are called not only by the servants, but by the master of the feast, to partake of these precious provisions. The poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, they that have no money, and they that have spent all their substance for things that do not profit, are graciously invited to come, and eat and drink abundantly, by receiving Christ and his salvation as they are freely offered in the gospel.²¹⁴

Lawson's comments on this passage from Proverbs echoed the use of Isaiah 55:1-2 in the writings of Marrow theologians. His emphasis on the free, unconditional nature of the gospel offer was reiterated throughout his writings.²¹⁵

In preaching the free offer of the gospel, Lawson also the full sufficiency of Christ in the gospel offer. In his sermon "On the Condition and Duty of Unconverted Sinners" Lawson proclaimed

...in the word of God... we are everywhere taught that our salvation must be the gift of God, the gift of his free and abundant grace. We must not, therefore, imagine, that we are first to forsake our sins, and then come with confidence to Christ, as if he were the Saviour, not of sinners, or not of great sinners, but of the righteous, or of those sinners who have first done something to deliver themselves from sin. Our whole salvation, from the power, as well as from the guilt of sin, must be in Christ.²¹⁶

In this sermon Lawson used the language of the "gift" of God's "free and abundant grace" in characteristic Marrow fashion. This is particularly evident as just a few sentences prior

213 Lawson, *Discourses on the History of David...*, 121.

214 Lawson, *Exposition of the Book of Proverbs...*, 163.

215 Lawson, "'A Discourse on the Duty of Unconverted Sinners" in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 205, 206.

216 Lawson, "A Discourse on the Duty of Unconverted Sinners" in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 269.

he directly called his hearers to a trusting faith in this fully sufficient gospel offer: “if God makes a grant of Christ and salvation to us in his word, shall we not possess that which the Lord our God gives us to possess?”²¹⁷ A few paragraphs further into the same sermon, once again describing the full sufficiency of Christ as freely offered in the gospel, Lawson echoed Marrow language: “Do you not know that Jesus is made of God unto you sanctification, and that sin must reign in you, whatever efforts you make to subdue it, till you are made partakers of his death?”²¹⁸

Lawson also proclaimed the full and free offer of the gospel universally. He declared “that Christ is the all-sufficient and the only Saviour; that he is willing to receive all that come to him”.²¹⁹ In commenting on, and applying Paul’s reply to the Philippian jailor to his own hearers, Lawson noted that Paul did not

...tell him that he must spend some time under conviction of sin before he could have a right to believe on Jesus. These words, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” were a sufficient warrant to him, for they were the words of God by the mouth of his servant, and what was said to the Philippian jailor, is said to all who hear the gospel, who read the Bible. What should hinder you from doing what God commands you to do? From receiving what God gives you to possess?²²⁰

While Lawson’s understanding of the doctrine of the atonement was at most consistent with Marrow theology, not bearing distinct evidences of its influence, his view of saving faith as including an appropriating assurance, and his proclamation of the gospel as full, free, and universal both stood in harmony with that of *The Marrow*, displaying a distinct theological continuity in these areas. Lawson’s published works tended to a more

217 Lawson, “A Discourse on the Duty of Unconverted Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 268-269.

218 Lawson, “A Discourse on the Duty of Unconverted Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 270.

219 Lawson, *The Joy of Parents in Wise Children*, 10.

220 Lawson, “A Discourse on the Duty of Unconverted Sinners” in *Lectures on the Whole Book of Ruth...*, 240.

plain exposition of biblical text, reflecting little of the theological understanding of the grand themes and overarching unity of Scripture as expressed in the federal theology of *The Marrow*, and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and catechisms. This, combined with a lack of substantive published discussion of the atonement in both its extent and its relation to covenant theology, as well as his documented spirit of toleration and openness to change, gives the intriguing possibility that Lawson was a key figure in moving towards a theological latitude that would be instrumental in the atonement controversy of the United Secession Church in the following generation.²²¹ Lawson served as Professor of Divinity for both John Brown and Robert Balmer, later Professors of the United Associate Divinity Hall and key proponents for a theological latitude inclusive of a universal atonement.²²²

Robert Jaffray

Robert Jaffray (1747-1814) entered studies at Glasgow University in 1766, continuing his studies at the Associate Synod Divinity Hall under John Brown of Haddington beginning in 1770.²²³ Ordained as pastor, and called to the Associate Synod congregation of Kilmarnock in 1775, he remained there until his death.²²⁴ Three of his published works remain, including two sermons and an essay defending the continued existence of the Secession Church apart from the Church of Scotland.

221 Lawson's missing unpublished manuscripts would provide valuable further evidence in assessing this possibility. Jack Whytock, citing MacFarlane's *The Life and Times of George Lawson*, notes "he also left a total of eighty volumes of his own manuscript material which were never published... where they may be today is not certain". Whytock, 266.

222 MacKelvie, 671. The list of Lawson's students also includes John M'Kerrow.

223 MacKelvie, 666.

224 Archie McKellar, "Rev. Robert Jaffray, Minister of Gallows Knowe Church, Kilmarnock" in *Ayrshire History*. <http://www.ayrshirehistory.org.uk/Shorts/jaffray.htm> (accessed 9 May 2008).

Evidence towards Jaffray's understanding of the doctrine of the atonement is found primarily in his sermon *The Glory of Christ Displayed in the Abundant Fruits of His Death*, which he preached "at a general meeting of the Missionary Society of this place [Kilmarnock], 31st August, 1797".²²⁵ Jaffray's comments in this sermon indicate his understanding of the necessity of the atonement. He states

By nothing less than the death of Christ could sin be expiated, and the sinner redeemed. "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb slain without blemish and without spot". Uninterested in the atonement, the sinner is under the curse. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse". ...Like a wasting, unabating, storm, this curse produces awful desolation, wherever it directs its course. Now, Christ alone is a hiding place from this storm, a covert from this tempest.²²⁶

Not only did Jaffray explain the necessity of the atonement – he also explained the nature of that atonement. Through penal substitution Jesus Christ "by his death, under the curse... has removed it from all his people".²²⁷ Jaffray's descriptive language and theology on the penal substitutionary nature of the atonement echoed that of *The Marrow* as he went on to state that Christ

With the sins of his people placed to his account, as their surety, by his death in their room, "he finished their transgression, made an end of their sin, made reconciliation for their iniquities, and brought in for them an everlasting righteousness. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". That our sin might be expiated, and that we might enjoy that righteousness, in which alone we can stand accepted in the sight of God, it was necessary that Christ should suffer unto the death.²²⁸

Jaffray's language of Christ as "surety" in the "room" of his people reflected the framework of federal theology which had been a characteristic of Marrow theology. He

225 Robert Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed, in the Abundant Fruits of His Death: A Sermon Preached on Thursday, 31st August, 1797* (Air: Printed by J. & P. Wilson, 1797), 2.

226 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 15-16.

227 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 16.

228 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 16.

also spoke repeatedly of Christ's work as "expiating the sins of his people", indicating an understanding of the atonement which was limited or particular in its extent.²²⁹ Jaffray's writings on the doctrine of the atonement do not reveal whether he followed the Marrow pattern of teaching the imputation of the active and passive obedience of Christ, however, apart from this, and the previously noted statement, they do demonstrate a general consistency with Marrow theology.

Jaffray often referred to the necessity of sovereign regeneration unto saving faith. He spoke of the "irresistible power of God" at work in the conversion of "our barbarous, proud, and cruel fathers" emphasizing that

No more can sinners be brought to God, by the word without the Spirit, than seed sown into the ground can produce fruit, without the heat of the sun, and the rain of heaven.²³⁰

"Faith", Jaffray preached, "stood, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God".²³¹ It was a "gift of God", so that no one could boast.²³² Not only was the heart of the sinner moved to faith through the sovereign regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, but it was ultimately

229 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 15-17. In seeking to encourage support for missionary endeavour, Jaffray urged: "The greater the number of sinners whom Jesus brings to God, the more he manifests himself to be his beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased for his righteousness sake; by consequence, the more must he be glorified... Now, the greater the number of sinners brought to God by this death, the more must its efficacy appear, the more must Christ be glorified". Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 21.

230 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 17. Jaffray also emphasizes this in his essay on the reasons for the continuity of the Secession church, defending "the gracious predestination of men to eternal life, the necessity of divine agency in the conversion of sinners, [and] the imputation of the Saviour's righteousness". Robert Jaffray, *An Essay on the Reasons of Secession from the National Church of Scotland* (Kilmarnock: Printed by H. & S. Crawford, 1805), 49.

231 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 17.

232 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 17-18.

...the fruit of Christ's death, not the result of their own exertions. ...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.²³³

While he strongly proclaimed saving faith as a fruit of the application of Christ's redemptive work by the Holy Spirit, Jaffray saw this as standing in harmony with the call to human responsibility:

Notwithstanding this, however, in things spiritual as well as temporal, the Lord has connected the means with the end. Should not a man be justly counted foolish, who would expect a crop in harvest, without cultivating his fields in spring? Is he more wise, who expects salvation, while living in the habitual neglect of the means appointed by God for its attainment? If we wish Christ to be glorified in our salvation, we must carefully read his word... pray earnestly and frequently, that God may fulfill in us the whole good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. We must also improve, as we have opportunity, the gospel of the grace of God, and every other mean of salvation.²³⁴

Jaffray's sermon goes on to focus on the call to bring the gospel to those apart from Christ, and does not provide material for an examination of his view of the nature of saving faith, or its relation to assurance, repentance or obedience. His other published sermon, *The Scriptural Plan of Treating Private Offences* briefly addresses the nature of saving faith. Here, Jaffray speaks of faith's instrumental nature using Marrow terminology, describing "the exercise of faith upon him [Christ] as the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth".²³⁵ Jaffray further described saving faith as "placing our undivided trust for salvation in Christ alone", a use of language in harmony with the Marrow view of saving faith including within itself an appropriating assurance.²³⁶ He also

233 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 25.

234 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 25.

235 Robert Jaffray, *The Scriptural Plan of Treating Private Offences Explained, and Enforced. A Sermon Preached from Matth. xviii. 15.* (Kilmarnock: Printed by J. Wilson for James Menzies, 1784), 8.

236 Jaffray, *The Scriptural Plan...*, 8.

followed the Marrow pattern of viewing saving faith as the first and fount of all other saving graces.²³⁷ Repentance and obedience were the fruit of

...faith in Christ, as the Saviour of lost sinners, [which] is unquestionably the first, and principle duty to which gospel hearers are called. It is not however, the only one... indeed, genuine faith... must be shown by works. Without these it is dead. A man without good works is also without true faith.²³⁸

Like most of the published ministers of the Associate Synod stream of the Secession church, Jaffray's preaching of the gospel offer reflected a distinct consistency with that of Marrow theology. He proclaimed that Christ by

...the blood of his cross laid a sufficient foundation for exhibiting pardoning mercy to all the sons of men. For, through his blood, remission of sins is preached to all who believe in him. The gospel, which presents, for our acceptance, this remission of sins, is to be preached to every creature.²³⁹

Using Marrow language, Jaffray stressed the universality of the gospel offer – “exhibiting pardoning mercy to all... to be preached to every creature”. He saw the free, universal offer of the gospel as not only rooted in the language of Scripture, but also in the full sufficiency of the atoning work of Christ, as “the forgiveness of sins, and restoration to the favour of God, were procured by the death of Christ”.²⁴⁰ It was on “the foundation of his death alone” that the gospel of salvation was freely, fully, and universally offered.²⁴¹ In light of God's grace in Christ in their own salvation, Jaffray exhorted his hearers to

give all diligence, that others may be brought... that Christ may be glorified in their salvation. Let us pray for them, let us recommend Christ to them, as a Saviour equally full and free.²⁴²

237 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 24-25.

238 Jaffray, *The Scriptural Plan...*, 8-9.

239 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 21.

240 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 21.

241 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 21.

242 Jaffray, *The Glory of Christ Displayed...*, 25.

While Jaffray's proclamation of the gospel was theologically consistent with Marrow theology, even displaying some similarity in language, he did not use the characteristic language of the "deed of gift and grant" or many of the other characteristic phrases or scripture passages often cited in *The Marrow* and the writings of the Marrow supporters. Yet, despite this, and the small sample provided by his publications, the existing similarities and consistencies between Marrow theology and Jaffray's view of the doctrine of the atonement, saving faith, and gospel offer indicate some continuity of Marrow theology.

John Brown of Whitburn

John Brown of Whitburn (1754-1832), was the eldest son of John Brown of Haddington.²⁴³ Educated at Edinburgh University, the younger John Brown studied divinity under his father, was licensed to preach in 1776, and ordained the next year as minister to the Associate congregation of Whitburn.²⁴⁴ Brown spent his life in ministry in Whitburn, but also had a keen interest in missionary and Bible societies, and was personally involved in mission work in the Highlands.²⁴⁵ His published writings were primarily biographical and historical works, some of which he wrote, others of which he collected and edited. The work, *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated* is of particular significance, as it surveyed the history of the Marrow controversy and early Secession church, republishing source documents from both, which Brown then annotated

243 M'Kerrow, 907-910; David Lachman, "John Brown (of Whitburn)" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 100.

244 M'Kerrow, 907-908.

245 M'Kerrow, 908.

and analyzed.²⁴⁶ The *Gospel Truth*, was a significant republication of Marrow theology, reflecting Brown's conviction "that the [Marrow] Controversy... involves in it some of the most important principles of Christian truth, and that there has seldom been displayed a more beautiful example of 'earnestly contending for the faith' in the meek and humble spirit of the gospel".²⁴⁷ He plainly stated that his goal "in preparing and publishing the following collections" was to be "a fellow-labourer with the excellent men to whose memory he is attempting to raise a monument" and whose "general system" of theology, "he, after them, espouses".²⁴⁸

In light of Brown's opening comments in his *Gospel Truth*, it is perhaps not surprising that this volume evidences that his understanding of the doctrine of the atonement was in harmony with that of Marrow theology. Brown's comments indicate that he viewed the doctrine of the atonement within the framework of covenant theology. He explained the necessity of the atonement stating

Sinners are naturally under the law as a covenant of works, and in this form Christ hath completely fulfilled it. Every attempt, therefore, to obey that we may live, is a virtual and criminal neglect of Christ's righteousness, and to pray for divine aid in such endeavors must be sinful.²⁴⁹

He also asserted that not only had Christ fulfilled the broken covenant of works, but he in doing so "our blessed Redeemer completely fulfilled the conditions of the new covenant... and his salvation is freely offered and bestowed".²⁵⁰ While these few statements comprise

246 John Brown (of Whitburn), *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated by The Reverend Messrs. James Hog, Thomas Boston, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and Others, Occasioned by the Republication of the Marrow of Modern Divinity. Collected by John Brown, Minister of the Gospel, Whitburn. First American Edition.* (Canonsburg: Andrew Munro, 1827), 1-375.

247 Brown, *Gospel Truth...*, 3.

248 Brown, *Gospel Truth...*, 4.

249 Brown, *Gospel Truth...*, 352-353.

250 Brown, *Gospel Truth...*, 351.

Brown's direct personal statements on the doctrine of the atonement, he elaborated further in his summary restatements of doctrine gleaned from other writers supportive of Marrow theology. The atoning work of Christ in fulfilling the covenant of works was penal and substitutionary in its nature, as "Christ put himself in our room, and became responsible for all the sins of his people" and also became "a debtor to fulfill all righteousness for them, in order to redeem them from the curse of the law, and to establish their title to eternal life".²⁵¹ Brown's language clearly presented a particular atonement.²⁵² While he did not use the exact terms of the active and passive obedience of Christ in his writing, Brown does infer the concepts. He states

The awful threatenings of the law have been executed on his [the believer's] substitute, the highest demands of the law have been fully satisfied by his representative, and therefore the law demands no personal obedience in order to confirm his title to divine favour, and it expressly assures him, that there is no condemnation to him in Christ Jesus. Thus the believer becomes dead to the law in its covenant form.²⁵³

Brown viewed Christ's active and passive obedience in his atoning work as important to a right understanding of the covenant of grace, and as such to the gospel itself. Commenting on this understanding of the full sufficiency of the work of Christ in relation to the Marrow controversy itself, he states

The doctrine of a conditional covenant of grace made with men was too common with many ministers; and those who taught, agreeably to scripture, that this covenant, in its condition, was made with Christ, and that in its

251 Brown, *Gospel Truth...*, 341.

252 Brown viewed a particular atonement as standing in harmony with the universal offer of the gospel stating "in the making of the covenant of grace, Christ acted as the Surety of it, and it was made in behalf of those who were given him out of the world; but in making his testament, he acted as Administrator of the covenant, and his testament is as extensive as his administration, which extends to all that hear the gospel". Brown, *Gospel Truth...*, 343.

253 Brown, *Gospel Truth...*, 341.

exhibition, an absolute promise and grant were held out to sinful men, were branded as venting new schemes in divinity.²⁵⁴

Clearly, Brown's view of the atonement in the context of federal theology stood fully in line with Marrow theology. His *Gospel Truth* provided a clear restatement of the Marrow doctrine of atonement, both in its republication of key Marrow and early Secession documents, as well as in Brown's own commentary.

Similarly, Brown's view of saving faith stands in harmony with Marrow theology. Brown's collection of republished documents from the Marrow controversy, and his additional commentary, clearly taught the necessity of the Holy Spirit's sovereign regenerating work unto salvation: "the soul must be changed by a work of sovereign grace".²⁵⁵ Consistent with this, Brown argued,

the doctrine of grace [declares] that it is the duty of all, upon the revelation of Christ in the Gospel, and without looking for any previous qualifications, instantly to believe in him for salvation, both from sin and wrath, no way supersedes the convincing work of the Holy Spirit.²⁵⁶

Sovereign grace, effectually applied by the Holy Spirit, did not negate the human responsibility of faith in Christ as a response to the gospel offer.

Brown's comments on the definition or nature of saving faith reaffirm those of Marrow theologians. Brown argued that "Mr. E. Erskine and the other Marrow theologians, shew much zeal in favour of appropriation, as entering the nature of saving faith... [and] they had good reason for it".²⁵⁷ After providing extracts from Ebenezer

254 Brown, *Gospel Truth*..., 11.

255 Brown, 20, 137, 162.

256 Brown, 332.

257 Brown, 253. Brown defends this view of saving faith in a footnote on the *Answers to the Queries* stating, "To any person acquainted with the works of the Representatives, Boston, Erskines, &c. it is evident, they held, that a belief of the promises of the gospel with application to one's self, or a confidence in a crucified Saviour for a man's own salvation, is the essence of justifying faith; this with them, was the assurance of faith, which widely differs from the Antinomian sense of the assurance or persuasion of faith,

Erskine's sermons indicating faith as an instrument, means, or act by which grace is freely received, and arguing for an appropriating assurance belonging to faith, Brown noted

The Christian world are under peculiar obligations to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, for the great pains he has taken, in exhibiting the doctrine of faith in a clear and practical light, in his Sermons on the Assurance of Faith. They deserve several readings.²⁵⁸

Brown not only sought to promote the Marrow view of the nature of saving faith, but also viewed the relation of saving faith to repentance and obedience consistent with Marrow theology. Viewing saving faith as logically prerequisite to other saving graces, Brown argued that "repentance always follows believing in Christ" in contrast to the view of the "anti-Marrowmen" whom he saw as arguing that "true repentance goes before faith".²⁵⁹ Commenting on the understanding of the relationship of faith to repentance and new obedience in the Associate Presbytery's *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, Brown stated

With pleasure the Collector of these papers sees the same sentiments in the Christian Instructor, No. 65. "Evangelical Clergymen firmly believe, that Christ is the only Saviour from the guilt and dominion of sin; that it is through the renewing influences of his Spirit alone, that mankind will either be inclined or enabled to perform duty; and that any obedience they may give, while unconnected with Christ, and unrenewed by his Spirit, will be partial, unsteady, and so extremely defective, as to prove altogether unacceptable in the sight of God. Instead, therefore, of making it their principal primary object to exhort them to forsake sin, and to perform duty, they are labouring to bring them to Christ, and to have them united to him by a living faith. To act otherwise, they consider as no wiser than to rear a building without a foundation, or to make a tree grow and produce fruit, which is not yet planted in the ground. They know that the faith which has personal recourse to Christ as the only Saviour, will purify the heart, overcome the world, work by love, and be productive of all the fruits of righteousness; and that nothing else will do so".²⁶⁰

which is, that Christ and pardon of sins are ours in possession no less before believing, - a sense which the Marrow-men and all evangelical writers disclaim". Brown, 167.

258 Brown, 262.

259 Brown, 330.

260 Brown, 190.

Brown's understanding of the preaching of the gospel was also rooted in Marrow theology with its full, free and universal gospel offer. Brown criticized "the hasty attack" of the Assembly against *The Marrow* and its supporters, stating that in doing so "it condemned the offering of Christ as a Saviour to all men, or to men as sinners, in virtue of the Father's gift".²⁶¹ In a footnote citing the response of one of the Marrow brethren to "legal doctrine", Brown stated

...the gospel-call is to the worst of sinners, to come to Christ immediately, without any previous qualifications, and to cry to him both for mercy, pardon, and sanctification... there was no other way of obtaining pardon of sin, but as a free gift of Christ's righteousness, whereby it is obtained, is freely imputed to the poor sinner, who by grace is enjoined to believe in him.²⁶²

In his "extracts from Boston" on "the gift of Christ to sinners of mankind" Brown extensively defended the use of the language of the "gift and grant of Christ" in the offer of the gospel:

This scriptural, practical, and most comfortable doctrine of the grant of Christ, and salvation through him to sinners, was not a little maltreated at this time, said to impute insincerity to God, and to encourage universal redemption; and some spoke as if, by this doctrine Christ was held forth like a material gift, which cannot be given unless it be given away. The Representers say, "By the deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, we understand no more than the revelation of the divine will in the word, affording warrant to offer Christ to all, and a warrant to all to receive him". We may adopt here the word of the judicious writer of the *Sober Inquiry*: "From what has been said, we may see how this covenant of grace, as held forth to us in Christ, may justly enough be called a deed of gift and grant, laid out in common to all the hearers of the gospel; and how it is sufficiently guarded against all imputations of insincerity in God, and abuses from men, without either universal redemption to support the general offer, or conditional offers to confine the grant to particular persons. However absolute the grant runs, it is still only in Christ, and with this assurance too accompanying it, that no man can come unto him, unless the Father draw him; and which assistance he hath referred in his own hands, to bestow where himself pleaseth, while yet the moral force of this covenant reaches equally to all, and makes it alike reasonable for everyone to believe in the all-sufficient Saviour there held forth, and to make use of the means which

261 Brown, 16.

262 Brown, 20-21.

God has appointed, and whereby he is wont to convey his Spirit unto his people; but in the meantime, as this gift, how free soever, can profit none unless it is received, and can never be received but by faith, no man has any ground to fancy to himself any real advantage by the offer, further than this, (and an unspeakable one it is,) that this general revelation of God's will makes it lawful for him, yea and his duty, to look for salvation in this way, and accordingly for all who hear the offer, to apply themselves to Christ, and apply him themselves, and make use of him as a Saviour. In all these instances, and for all these purposes, he is held forth and offered in the gospel, he still continuing God's Christ..." We add here the following judicious remarks on this subject by the Rev. Mr. Gellatly, America – "Christ and salvation are a deed of gift. 1. This does not put the person in whose favour it is made into actual possession till it be accepted of; so the gospel-offer doth not put any into actual possession till it be accepted by faith. 2. A deed of gift lays such a foundation for claiming possession, that it will not be the sinner's fault, but the person's own, if possession be not taken; so does the gospel promise. 3. A deed of gift may be accepted or rejected. If accepted the donor is obliged in justice to put the acceptor in possession. If rejected, the donor is obligated to nothing, but to resent the affront; the application is easy. 4. A deed of gift is absolutely free, without any proper condition; so is the gospel offer, faith's acceptance being no more in the one case, than seisin [*sic*] or taking possession in the other, which, nevertheless doth not render the deed of gift properly conditional".²⁶³

Brown clearly stood within the heritage of Marrow theology in his understanding of the gospel offer, as he did in his understanding of the doctrine of the atonement and saving faith. His *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated* promoted a renewed understanding of Marrow theology as contained in the writings of the Marrow brethren and early Secession church, presenting incontrovertible evidence for a continuity of influence of Marrow theology to this point in the life of the Associate Synod stream of the Secession church.

Alexander Waugh

Alexander Waugh (1754-1827) studied at Edinburgh University prior to entering divinity studies in 1774 at the Associate Synod Divinity Hall under John Brown of

263 Brown, 201-202.

Haddington.²⁶⁴ After completing his studies there, he pursued further studies at the University of Aberdeen, receiving an M.A. degree.²⁶⁵ Licensed to preach in 1779, he served as a supply preacher in the Wells Street Associate congregation in London, prior to being called and ordained as minister of the small Associate congregation at Newtown in 1780.²⁶⁶ After three calls from the Associate congregation of Wells Street in London, Waugh finally felt the liberty to accept in 1782, and translated to that congregation. He returned to Scotland on numerous occasions, both to preach and take part in ecclesiastical meetings.²⁶⁷ In London he was actively involved in the London Missionary Society from its inception, putting great energy into the promotion of missionary endeavour.²⁶⁸ In 1815 Waugh's ministry and support of missionary endeavor was recognized by an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Marischal College of the University of Aberdeen.²⁶⁹ In 1825, two years prior to his own death, Waugh was predeceased by his son, Alexander, who was also a minister of the Secession Church.²⁷⁰ Several of Waugh's sermons were published during his lifetime, while portions of his other sermons and writings were published posthumously in his memoirs.²⁷¹

264 James Hay and Henry Belfrage, *Memoir of the Rev. Alexander Waugh, D.D. with selections from his epistolary correspondence, pulpit recollections, &c. Third edition.* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Son, 1839), 1-74.

265 Hay and Belfrage, 47.

266 Hay and Belfrage, 57-64.

267 Hay and Belfrage, 74-149.

268 Hay and Belfrage, 149-236.

269 Hay and Belfrage, 102.

270 Alexander Waugh, *Sermons, Expositions and Addresses at the Holy Communion* (London: Thomas and George Underwood, 1825), 1.

271 Alexander Waugh, "Peaceful Endeavours to Enlighten the World" in *Four Sermons Preached in London at the Third General Meeting of the Missionary Society, May 10, 11, 12, 1797* (London: Sold by T. Chapman, Fleet Street, 1797); Alexander Waugh,

Though Waugh's sermons and other writings do not deal extensively with the doctrine of the atonement, they do provide enough evidence to give the contours of his understanding. In his diary he often reflected personally on the necessity of the atoning work of Christ, realizing

The more I look on my nature, the more reason I have to be displeas'd with its prevailing inclinations. There dwells in my heart naturally no good thing; but there dwell in it hordes of carnal, selfish and proud dispositions... Father, forgive what thy pure eyes behold to be base, treacherous, and ungrateful in the past workings of my heart; sanctify me by thy word; preserve me from falling; aid me in the services of tomorrow.²⁷²

Waugh's diary revealed not only his self-awareness, but also his understanding of the atonement in his prayers for grace and mercy through the person and work of Christ:

O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul: thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? ...O merciful Father, keep alive in my heart a becoming sense of my obligation to thine unutterable goodness and love! May I be enabled, by a humble, cautious, and holy conversation, to show forth a due sense of thy grace to my soul. May the blood of Jesus cleanse me from all sin, and the spirit of Jesus redeem my heart from the captivity of corruption.²⁷³

When I look back on the departed year, what guilt darkens it to my view! Son of God, thy blood alone cleanseth from all sin; and surely none ever stood in such need of the sprinkling of this blood as my conscience doth this day.²⁷⁴

Messiah, the Sun of Righteousness: A Sermon Preached at Scots Church, London Wall, May 26th, 1799, Before the Correspondent Board in London of the Society in Scotland... for Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands (London: Printed by T. Gillet, 1800); Alexander Waugh, "Pulpit Recollections" in Hay and Belfrage, 419-464. The pulpit recollections in the memoir of Waugh by Hay and Belfrage is prefaced by the following note: "It is proper to mention, that the following "Recollections" are not derived from Dr. Waugh's written sermons or notes, but from memorands, hastily taken at the time by different individuals, of such passages as particularly struck them in his oral discourses, which, during the latter part of his life, were almost entirely extemporaneous..." Hay and Belfrage, 419.

272 Waugh, "Diary, February 12, 1793" in Hay and Belfrage, 84.

273 Waugh, "Diary, May 1, 1800" in Hay and Belfrage, 89.

274 Waugh, "Diary, January 1, 1803" in Hay and Belfrage, 90.

Waugh's heart understanding of sin and grace, the necessity of the atonement, and its nature as a penal substitution was also reflected in his preaching. In one sermon he proclaimed

“But while we were yet sinners,” neither good nor just, “Christ died for us”. He came to give his life a ransom for many... he endured the wrath of God, which was our due. He descended from the height of his throne of glory... to raise us from our ruined state. His giving himself as an atoning sacrifice for human transgression is such an astonishing act that it cannot be classed with any of his other works.²⁷⁵

In another he declared that

Through the Eternal Spirit, he [Christ] offered himself, without spot, unto God. By this one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. He his ownself bare our sins, in his own body, on the tree; and suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He loved the Church, and gave himself for her, and offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour. He hath washed her from her sins in his own blood.²⁷⁶

Waugh's view of the penal, substitutionary nature of the atonement stood in harmony with the Marrow tradition, as did his understanding of the imputation of the active and passive obedience of Christ's atoning work: “My heart... hath... reposed its entire confidence in the blood and obedience of the Son of God”.²⁷⁷ His understanding of the extent of the atonement, however, does not have the same degree of clarity. At points where it initially appears that Waugh indicates a particular atonement, the context indicates a sovereign, particular application of the work of redemption, rather than a limited atonement.²⁷⁸ In one sermon Waugh states “[Christ] loved the church, and gave himself for her”, but later in the same sermon, in calling for missionary endeavor, describes “the value of the human soul... made after the image of God... bought with the

275 Waugh, “Pulpit Recollections” in Hay and Belfrage, 445-446.

276 Waugh, *Messiah, The Sun of Righteousness...*, 6.

277 Waugh, “Diary, March 1, 1806” in Hay and Belfrage, 94.

278 Waugh, “Pulpit Recollections” in Hay and Belfrage, 461.

blood of God's Son..."²⁷⁹ Presenting the same call for missionary endeavour in another sermon, he exhorted his hearers to preach "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, and who gave himself a ransom for all..."²⁸⁰ While the evidence does not clearly indicate Waugh moving towards a universal atonement, it also fails to state clearly a particular atonement.²⁸¹ Noticeably absent from Waugh's descriptions of the atonement is the use of the framework and language of federal theology.

Waugh's understanding of the atonement was generally consistent with that of Marrow theology, apart from a paucity of clear evidence on his view of the atonement's extent. His view of saving faith, however, was clearly and fully in harmony with that of Marrow theology. Waugh often spoke of the necessity of sovereign regeneration unto saving faith. Preaching to a missionary society he declared

But, alas! Though the true light shine, the darkness comprehendeth it not. Men of corrupt minds resist its entrance, or hold the truth in unrighteous bondage. The Sun of Righteousness doeth not effectually arise on the soul of any man till the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, give unto him the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God, the eyes of his understanding being enlightened to know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to themward who believe.²⁸²

Yet, like the Marrow theologians, Waugh's understanding of the necessity of sovereign regeneration did not diminish the imperative to human responsibility and obedience. He proclaimed

279 Waugh, *Messiah, The Sun of Righteousness...*, 25.

280 Waugh, "Peaceful Endeavours to Enlighten the World" in *Four Sermons Preached in London at the Third General Meeting of the Missionary Society...*, 70.

281 Waugh's keen spirit in defending and promoting the doctrine of the atonement was evident as he both warned against the teachings of those "men who labour to destroy the efficacy of his atoning blood" and exhorted missionary endeavor to bring the gospel to the nations of "strangers to the sacrifice by which alone human guilt is expiated". Waugh, "Peaceful Endeavours to Enlighten the World" in *Four Sermons Preached in London at the Third General Meeting of the Missionary Society...*, 62, 70.

282 Waugh, *Messiah, The Sun of Righteousness...*, 14-15.

Our redemption is of God alone, while our ruin is wholly of ourselves... it is imperative on all men to attend to the duties of religion, looking up to God for his promised blessing, without any regard to his secret purpose... The blind man must wash in the pool of Siloam, because Jesus Christ commanded it. And men must attend the ordinances of God's appointment, if they expect to receive a blessing.²⁸³

Despite the limited available evidence in his published works, it appears Waugh also spoke of the nature or definition of saving faith in terms consistent with those of Marrow theology. He described it as “trusting in the atonement and righteousness of God our Saviour”, pointing to the Jews responding to Peter’s Pentecost sermon in repentance and faith as “they that gladly received his word”.²⁸⁴ While Waugh did not speak of the relationship of faith and assurance explicitly, the use of the term “trust” may reflect a similarity to the Marrow view of an appropriating assurance in faith distinct from the assurance of sense. Waugh seems to echo this view as he states that “being justified by faith”, these new believers received peace of conscience by trusting “in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”.²⁸⁵ His understanding of saving faith also appears to indicate a continuity of the understanding of saving faith as an instrument or means of receiving saving grace.

In his published works, Waugh’s proclamation of the gospel did not make direct use of the characteristic language of the gospel offer found in *The Marrow*, though it appears to bear some echoes of it. His preaching stood consistent with Marrow theology in its emphasis on a universal, free offer of the full sufficiency of Christ for sinners, rooted in the promises of the gospel. In his diary, Waugh reflected on gospel promises, stating “may the humble hope, which the gracious promises of the Lord encourage, of pardon, inspire

283 Waugh, “Pulpit Recollections” in Hay and Belfrage, 433.

284 Hay and Belfrage, 114; Waugh, *Messiah, The Sun of Righteousness...*, 18.

285 Waugh, *Messiah, The Sun of Righteousness...*, 18.

me with deep concern to watch and pray against all manner of iniquity!”²⁸⁶ Unable to preach during a period of illness, he wrote his congregation at the beginning of a new year calling on them to consider the sins of the past year, and exhorting them to turn to and trust in the full-sufficiency of Christ as Saviour: “implore remission through the blood of the Lamb, blood which cleanseth from all sin”.²⁸⁷ Waugh delighted both personally and in preaching “the free, sincere, and most affectionate offers of salvation in the Gospel to sinners”.²⁸⁸ Preaching on the mercy of God displayed in the gospel, Waugh asked his hearers

Have these promises sounded on your heart? “I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee”. “I will forgive thy iniquity, and I will remember thy sin no more”. To men who have received pardon of their sins, all is mercy.²⁸⁹

In his preaching Waugh also repeatedly emphasized the universality of the gospel offer, along with its full sufficiency. He proclaimed

...the voice of the Son of God... says... “and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”. Whatever be his character, whatever be his state, or however late the time of his approach, “I will in no wise cast him out”.²⁹⁰

He is able to save to the uttermost as to guilt, wretchedness and time, them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.²⁹¹

Jesus Christ is willing to heal them that have need of healing, and able as willing. His gracious invitations are, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out”.²⁹²

286 Waugh, “Diary, January 1, 1803” in Hay and Belfrage, 90.

287 Waugh, “First Sabbath Address, 1806” in Hay and Belfrage, 92.

288 Waugh, “Diary, March 1, 1806” in Hay and Belfrage, 94.

289 Waugh, “Pulpit Recollections” in Hay and Belfrage, 438.

290 Waugh, “Pulpit Recollections” in Hay and Belfrage, 442.

291 Waugh, *Messiah, The Sun of Righteousness...*, 6.

292 Waugh, *Messiah, The Sun of Righteousness...*, 21.

Waugh not only emphasized the universality of the proclamation of the gospel by inviting, encouraging his hearers to faith in Christ, but also in declaring the imperative command to a right response to the gospel:

It is the duty of all to believe and embrace the overture of mercy made to us in the Scriptures: it is not at our option. We are not at liberty to embrace or reject the Gospel, as we may please to decide. No! I am no more at liberty to refuse the Gospel than I am to imbrue my hands in my brother's blood; for the same authority which says, thou shalt do no murder, commands all men everywhere to repent and to believe the Gospel.²⁹³

Waugh's repeated use of Christ's gospel call from John 6:37, and his emphasis on the imperative of the gospel to "all men everywhere" echo the theology of *The Marrow*, if not its language. Yet, in other areas of his preaching, such as his understanding of the doctrine of the atonement and saving faith, distinct evidence for Marrow continuities is slight at best. While undoubtedly sharing the evangelical piety and passion of the Marrow theologians, it appears Waugh was losing the comprehensive framework and content of their theology.

John Dick

John Dick (1764-1833) was the son of Alexander Dick, minister of the Associate congregation of Aberdeen.²⁹⁴ He studied at King's College, Aberdeen prior to entering studies at the Associate Synod Divinity Hall under John Brown in 1780. Licensed to preach at the age of twenty-one in 1785, Dick was ordained the following year as minister to the Associate congregation in Slateford, near Edinburgh.²⁹⁵ After ministering there for fifteen years, he was called to Glasgow in 1801, where his gifts and ability as a preacher

293 Waugh, "Pulpit Recollections" in Hay and Belfrage, 444.

294 M'Kerrow, 883-886; J.R. McIntosh, "John Dick" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 242.

295 M'Kerrow, 883.

earned great respect.²⁹⁶ Princeton College (New Jersey) granted him an honorary Doctor of Divinity in 1815; four years later the Associate Synod elected him to succeed George Lawson as professor of divinity, a position in which he continued, also for the United Secession Church, to his death.²⁹⁷ Dick's prominent work, *Lectures on Theology*, was a collection of his Divinity Hall lectures published the year after his death.²⁹⁸ During his lifetime several other works were published including a volume of sermons and a commentary on the book of Acts.²⁹⁹

Dick's view of the doctrine of the atonement is presented clearly in his *Lectures on Theology*. In this work, Dick, like the Marrow theologians, first approached the doctrine of the atonement in the context of covenant theology.³⁰⁰ The parties of the covenant of works were God, and Adam, as the "representative, or federal head, of those who were to spring from his loins".³⁰¹ Dick went on to say "Jesus Christ, who was the Surety of sinners, might

296 M'Kerrow, 885.

297 M'Kerrow, 884-885.

298 John Dick, *Lectures on Theology... with A Preface, Memoir, &c.... In Two Volumes* (Philadelphia: J. Whetham & Son, 1841), I, 3.

299 John Dick, *Sermons* (Glasgow: Printed for Steven & Frazier, 1816), 1-461; John Dick, *Lectures on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857), 1-407; John Dick, *An Essay on the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament... First American Edition* (Boston: Published by Lincoln & Edmands, 1811), 1-206; John Dick, *Confessions of Faith Shown to be Necessary, and the Duty of the Churches with Respect to them Explained, In a Sermon, Preached in the Meeting-house in Bristo-Street, at the Opening of the Associate Synod, April 26th 1796...* (Edinburgh: Printed for William Laing..., 1796), 1-30.

300 William B. Evans describes Dick as a federal theologian with substantial influence in America as a result of his *Lectures on Theology*, a text used in colleges and seminaries ranging from Princeton to Mercersburg in the early 19th century. William B. Evans, *Imputation and Impartation: The Problem of Union With Christ in Nineteenth Century American Reformed Theology* (PhD dissertation, Vanderbilt University), 324-326.

301 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, I, 457-459.

be with propriety called the Second Adam”.³⁰² As federal head and representative of his people, Christ, by his obedience and suffering, fulfilled the precept and penalty of the covenant of works, and established the covenant of grace.³⁰³

Dick carefully explained “the necessity of the priesthood of Christ” which he argued could be “inferred from the justice of God”.³⁰⁴ This was because Scripture testified that “it would have been inconsistent with the purity and rectitude of his nature, to permit sin to pass with impunity”.³⁰⁵ Dick stated

...if it is impossible that God should ever regard sin with favour, it is impossible that he should suffer it to go unpunished; his nature forbids such an act of sovereign, unconditional mercy... It is impossible to maintain that sin might have been pardoned without an atonement, unless we at the same time affirm that punishment was not necessarily due to sin, or that God was not bound to recompense it according to its desert... The inference from the preceding reasoning is, that the priesthood of Jesus Christ was necessary, if God was to pardon sinners, and receive them into favour. It is this hypothetical necessity alone which we assert; as his susception of the office was voluntary, so his investiture with it by his Father was an act of sovereign grace. God was under no obligation to renew the intercourse between himself and man, which had ceased at the fall.³⁰⁶

Describing the nature of the atonement, Dick plainly held “that the Scriptures affirm, in the most express terms, that the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice”.³⁰⁷ Defending the doctrine of penal substitution, Dick stated

Christ having voluntarily engaged to give satisfaction to the Divine justice for us, they were reckoned to him, as a debt is reckoned to a surety when the debtor himself is insolvent, and the creditor looks to the surety for payment. God dealt with him as if he had been the offender. This is what we mean by saying that our sins were imputed to him; he came under an obligation to

302 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, I, 462.

303 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, I, 493-494.

304 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 48.

305 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 47.

306 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 48-49.

307 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 66. See also Dick, *Sermons*, 41-44, 81, 439-440.

bear the penalty... Without sin, he was a sin-offering, bearing the iniquities of those whom he had undertaken to redeem. He owed nothing to justice for himself, but he owed much as the surety of men. His death was accompanied with such circumstances as showed that it was a penal act...³⁰⁸

Not only did Dick see the atoning work of Christ as a penal substitution, through vicarious suffering of the wrath and penalty for the sins of his people, but he also saw that Christ, in his work as the surety of the covenant “came under an obligation to perform the obedience which they owed the law”.³⁰⁹ Dick stated,

To answer these demands, our Redeemer assumed human nature without stain, gave perfect obedience to the precepts of the law, and shed his blood as an atonement for sin... God did not promise eternal life to Adam, because he had a holy nature, but in the event of his obeying the command which he had given him respecting the tree of knowledge. The only condition prescribed to him was obedience, and it is the only condition, therefore which could be prescribed to his Surety.³¹⁰

The “merit” of this “active” obedience, Dick argued, is imputed to the redeemed:

Whatever obedience, therefore, he performed upon earth and in a state of humiliation and trial, was not upon his own account; and hence, according to justice, the benefit of it might be transferred to his people.... His obedience... [was] virtually the obedience of his posterity... [and] accepted on the behalf of his people.³¹¹

Dick’s understanding of Christ’s active and passive obedience in his atoning work, along with the penal substitutionary nature of the atonement reflected a clear consistency with the view of the atonement in Marrow theology. This consistency is verified further by his numerous and clear statements regarding the particular extent of the atonement.³¹²

Describing the significance of Christ’s death outside the city of Jerusalem indicating “that

308 Dick, *Lectures on Theology*..., II, 70-71.

309 Dick, *Lectures on Theology*..., I, 494.

310 Dick, *Lectures on Theology*..., I, 501-502.

311 Dick, *Lectures on Theology*..., I, 502-504. See also volume II, 199-201.

312 Dick, *Lectures on Theology*..., I, 493-494. See also Dick, *Sermons*, 22-23, 72.

he was the Saviour of mankind, and that there was salvation through his cross to those who should turn their eyes to him from the ends of the earth”, Dick continued,

We do not affirm that he died for every individual of the human race. This extent some have assigned to his atonement; but, although it is their design to give a magnificent idea of its efficacy, their doctrine is really derogatory to its excellence. For upon this supposition it will follow, that as every individual is not saved, his sacrifice failed in its end in the case of those who perish in guilt, and his blood has been shed in vain. He died for those whom his Father gave to him; but how great their number is, no man can tell.³¹³

Dick’s understanding of saving faith was not fully consistent with Marrow theology, as revealed in his willingness to criticize some of its characteristic formulations. He did clearly state the necessity of sovereign regeneration by the Holy Spirit unto saving faith, defining regeneration as “a change effected by divine grace in the state of the soul, the supernatural renovation of its faculties, the infusion of the principle of spiritual life”.³¹⁴ Man requires this regeneration, Dick argues, because he “is dead in trespasses and sins... in the same situation with a man who is literally dead, and who, when lying in the grave, cannot contribute in any degree to the restoration of his life”.³¹⁵ Through this work of regeneration

The revelation of the Saviour in his righteousness and grace, accompanied as it is with a heartfelt sense of guilt, wretchedness, and helplessness, gives rise to faith, or that act of the soul by which it receives his offered salvation, trusts in him for acceptance with God, and finds peace, and hope, and joy, in the contemplation of his character and work.³¹⁶

This explanation of the effect of regeneration to saving faith also reflected Dick’s understanding of the nature of saving faith. He saw faith as an instrumental act, or means,

313 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 55.

314 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 158.

315 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 158. See also Dick, *Sermons*, 193-194, 250-251.

316 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 161.

by which man receives the salvation offered in the gospel.³¹⁷ Dick also described faith “as the bond of union to Christ”.³¹⁸ His statement that faith was trust in Christ as Saviour, and the ground of the sinner’s acceptance with God, reflected his understanding that faith included both a “cordial assent”, or persuasion of “the veracity of the testifier”, and a “confidence”, the ground of which “is the infallible testimony on which it depends”.³¹⁹ He also described “confidence” as an “assurance, which is said to belong to faith”, but which might vary in degree with the strength or weakness of a person’s faith.³²⁰ “Faith”, Dick stated, “implies the reliance or dependence of the soul upon Jesus Christ for salvation. The sinner not only assents to the testimony of God concerning his Son as true, but regards it as worthy of all acceptance”.³²¹ Dick stood in harmony with the Marrow tradition in his care to guard against neonomianism by maintaining a clear distinction between justification by faith alone, through grace alone, and repentance and new obedience as necessary fruits of faith, properly considered under sanctification and good works.³²²

While much of Dick’s view of saving faith, and particularly his seeing an aspect of assurance in faith, appears in harmony with Marrow theology, this is challenged by his extensive criticism of the language used by Marrow theologians in formulating the nature of the assurance belonging to faith. Dick explained his concerns as follows:

317 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 208-209.

318 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 173. Dick ordered his lectures on the application of redemption as follows: effectual calling, regeneration, union to Christ, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, good works, conscience, spiritual joy, perseverance, the death of saints, and its consequences, the resurrection of the dead, and the final state of the righteous. Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 144-331.

319 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 176-177, 179.

320 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 177.

321 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 179.

322 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 195-197.

If it [assurance belonging to faith] mean a full persuasion of the truth of the divine testimony, to whatever subject it relates, we answer it is essential to faith. Faith is not a doubting, hesitating assent, but the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”. The Christian is firmly persuaded of every doctrine and fact which God has attested, and of every promise which he has made. He believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners; that his death was an atonement for guilt; that there is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; that he is freely offered to him and others in the Gospel, and that every man who trusts in him shall be saved. But if assurance means an explicit assurance of our own salvation, we deny that it is of the essence of faith.

In opposition to the Papists, who made faith consist in an assent to the truth of the Scriptures in general, and denied that any man could be certain of his final salvation, the Reformers presented it as a firm persuasion, that Christ died for us in particular, and that our sins are forgiven. The founders of our religious society adopted this notion, and in one of their public deeds, have defined faith to be a persuasion on the part of the sinner, that Christ is his; that what he did and suffered, he did and suffered for him, and that he shall have life and salvation by him. It may be questioned whether in avoiding one extreme, they have not run into another; or, at least, have not employed language, which must be explained and qualified, in order to make it accord with the truth. A sinner cannot say, in the first instance, Christ is mine in possession; because this becomes true, only when he has believed, and cannot belong to the nature of faith, as it is a consequence of it. If the words mean only, that Christ is his in the offer of the Gospel, or is offered to him in particular, we allow it, but have the right to complain, that a fact about which there is no dispute, should be expressed in terms which are apt to suggest a quite different sense. The sinner cannot say, till he have believed, that Christ died for him, unless he died for all men without exception; but, consistently with the doctrine of particular redemption, no man can be assured that he was one of the objects of the sacrifice of the cross, unless he first have obtained an interest in it by faith. Neither can every sinner say, in the first moment of faith, that he shall certainly have eternal salvation. He desires salvation no doubt, and his faith implies an expectation of it; but how many believers have been harassed with doubts at first, and during the whole course of their lives have rarely been able to use the language of confidence! This the advocates of this definition are compelled to admit; and it is curious to observe how, in attempting to reconcile it with their system, they shift and shuffle, and almost retract, and involve themselves in perplexity and contradiction, as those must do who are labouring to prove that, although it is a fact that many believers are not assured of their salvation, yet assurance is of the essence of faith. It is manifest that, if assurance is of the essence of faith, it can never be separated from it... But it is nowhere revealed in the Scriptures, that Christ died for any particular person, and that his sins are forgiven. How then, can an assurance of these things belong to the nature of faith? How can it be our duty to believe what is not in the testimony? It is an objection against this definition, that it makes faith consist rather in the belief of something regarding ourselves, than in the belief of the testimony of God; in the belief of the goodness of our state, rather than of the all-sufficiency and willingness of Christ. It may be farther objected that it

confounds the inferences from faith with faith itself; nothing being plainer that these propositions ‘Christ died for me,’ ‘my sins are forgiven,’ are conclusions to which the mind comes, from the previous belief of the doctrines and promises of the Gospel. Farther, it is chargeable with this error, that it defines faith in its highest and most perfect state, and excludes the lower degrees of it, and thus lays a stumbling-block before thousands of the people of God, who, not finding in themselves this assurance, are distressed with the melancholy thought that they are unbelievers. Although adopted by our fathers, it is contrary to the doctrine of our standards, to which only we are bound to conform, and in which it is expressly said, “This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be a partaker of it”.³²³

Dick’s sharp criticisms of the Marrow descriptions of the assurance belonging to faith, as adopted in the “public deeds” of the “founders of our religious society” (the Associate Presbytery’s 1742 *Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*), reflect a conscious departure from the language and the theological emphasis of the Marrow tradition.³²⁴ In certain respects the emphasis revealed in Dick’s concerns paralleled those of the early Church of Scotland opponents of the Marrow theology of faith and assurance, though Dick more clearly retained the fiducial element of a trust or confidence in faith. Interestingly, part of Dick’s stated difficulty was that for a sinner to state “Christ died for him” prior to faith, would necessarily imply a universal atonement. Dick’s worries regarding movement towards, or implication of universal atonement, also arose in his lectures on the gospel offer.

Dick’s understanding of the offer of the gospel was rooted in his view of federal theology. While the Marrow theologians emphasized the unconditional and absolute nature of the covenant of grace in the “deed of gift and grant”, or gospel offer, Dick sought to qualify their language:

In explaining the administration of the covenant of grace, it is remarked by Theological writers, that, in relation to men, it assumes the form of a testament, or a deed by which a person bequeathes his property to his heirs,

323 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 181-182.

324 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 181.

to be enjoyed by them after his decease; or that its blessings are conveyed to us in a testamentary form... One reason that some Divines enlarge upon this view of the covenant is, that, in their opinion, it is calculated to exhibit, to the greatest advantage, the freeness of its administration; for a testament, they say, is a deed of grace, without conditions properly so called. But this is a mistake; for, although men do commonly make a free conveyance of their property in their latter will to their heirs, they sometimes burden it with conditions... It is not therefore, from the testamentary form of the covenant, that the freeness of its administration can be justly inferred, but from other circumstances unconnected with this view of the subject... With respect to the assertion, that the legatees of this testament were sinners in general, I question whether it is perfectly accurate. A legatee of an unconditional testament has an undoubted right to the property bequeathed to him, and nothing but injustice can prevent him from enjoying it. His right is complete by his nomination in the testament; it is not necessary that he should come forward and claim the inheritance; it is the business of the executor to put him in possession of it. Were all men the legatees in the testament of Christ, all men would be entitled to salvation, without any effort on their part to attain it, and would infallibly be saved. But those who call them legatees, mean nothing more than that by this deed salvation is offered to them, and will be bestowed upon all who accept of it; and at the same time they call this an unconditional testament. Their ideas are confused and contradictory; for if none shall obtain the inheritance but those who claim it by faith, it is evident that, in a qualified sense the testament is conditional, and that, in strict language, the only legatees are believers.³²⁵

Dick's concern was that the free offer of the gospel had been rooted in the use of the analogy of the "deed" or "testament" in a manner which created theological difficulties by its implications. He argued that there was a "qualified sense" in which a conditionality was necessary to the analogy, and that if this conditionality was rejected, and the analogy of the testament strictly held, the "deed" or "testament" in its "promissory part" could only be "to whomsoever the promises were made in Christ, to them, and to them alone".³²⁶ The analogy of an unconditional "deed" or "testament" meant that "the promissory part of the covenant respecting the elect was, by a dying Redeemer, turned into a testament".³²⁷ Dick believed that the wrong use of this analogy would logically imply either a restriction of the

325 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, I, 513-514.

326 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, I, 514.

327 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, I, 514.

gospel offer to the elect, or a universal offer which must then be rooted in a universal atonement.

Dick's concerns with the use of language of the "deed" did not negate his promotion of the full, free, and universal offer of the gospel. Describing the administration of the covenant of grace he proclaimed that

The gospel makes known to us the eternal counsel between the Father and the Son, displays the riches and freeness of Divine grace, offers salvation to all who hear it, and comforts believers by its promises of present and future blessings...³²⁸

Further explaining the nature of the gospel as free, full, and universal in his discussion of "the external means of grace", Dick stated

The Gospel... comprehends the great and precious promises... [which are] free in this sense, that nothing is required but that we should embrace them; and that if a certain state of mind must precede the performance of some promises, which in this view may be considered conditional, it is produced in us by the grace which is held out to us in others.

The Gospel... comprehends the free offer of Christ and salvation. As God gave him in his incarnation and mission, so he still gives him to all in the gospel; that is, he exhibits him as a Saviour, and authorizes sinners to believe in him. There is no exception made of persons on account of their country, their parentage, their profession, their rank in society, or even on account of the number and degree of their sins... All are made welcome to Christ, both by himself and his Father... "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". The universality of the offer is proof of its freeness; which is further manifest from the consideration that no conditions are prescribed, no equivalent is demanded, nothing is required, but our acceptance of the gift. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money, without price".

The Gospel... comprehends the earnest and affectionate invitations address to sinners... The Bible is full of them...³²⁹

Despite his rejection of some of the distinctive language of the Marrow, Dick's theology of the gospel offer remained largely consistent with the Marrow theology.³³⁰ His

328 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, I, 518.

329 Dick, *Lectures on Theology...*, II, 336-337.

330 Dick, *Sermons*, 71, 88, 103, 106, 455-456.

use of texts and emphasis also reflected a close similarity to that of the Marrow theologians. Yet, when Dick's extensive criticism of the Marrow view of an assurance belonging to faith is also taken into account, he must either be viewed as making much of minor linguistic differences with Marrow language, or as having substantive differences with real weaknesses in the formulations of Marrow theology. Interestingly, his criticism seems to be motivated in part by concern that the inferences of poorly chosen language, analogies, or weakly articulated theology might lead to acceptance of universal atonement – a motivational possibility which gains merit in the broader context of the theology of his ecclesiastical contemporaries. Regardless of the validity of his complaints, he stands as a conscious critic of certain aspects of Marrow theology, marking a significant change in the theological milieu of the Secession churches of the Associate Synod.

Henry Belfrage

Henry Belfrage (1774-1835) was born in Falkirk to John Belfrage, an Associate minister, and studied at the University of Edinburgh prior to entering studies under George Lawson at the Associate Synod Divinity Hall.³³¹ Ordained in 1794 as successor to his father in Selkirk, Belfrage continued in ministry there for the remainder of his life.³³² Belfrage's writings gained the respect of many evangelicals in Scotland; in 1824 St. Andrews University granted him an honorary Doctor of Divinity.³³³ Belfrage was one of the last ministers of the Associate Synod to be ordained prior to Old Light–New Light division of 1799. Ensuing movements after the turn of the century led towards the formation of the United Secession Church by New Light Seceders in 1820, and the

331 M'Kerrow, 886-890; Nick Needham, "Henry Belfrage" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 68-69.

332 M'Kerrow, 888.

333 Needham, 68.

Original Secession Church by remaining Old Light Seceders in 1842.³³⁴ Belfrage's publications included a *Practical Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, collections of sermons and essays, biographies, and a commentary on Job.³³⁵

In his *Practical Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, Belfrage presents his understanding of the doctrine of the atonement within the framework of covenant theology.³³⁶ Jesus Christ served as the federal representative of his people in fulfilling the

334 Sherman Isbell summarizes the Old Light – New Light controversy in the Associate Synod as follows: “New Light [was] a change of sentiment in the Secession Churches on the question of government support of the church... The Associate (Burgher) Synod in 1799 adopted a preamble to its formula of subscription allowing divergent views with respect to the magistrate’s power in matters of religion and the nature of obligation which national covenants have on posterity. John Dick pleaded that a Church’s views were not to displace the individual’s right to judge for himself what the Scriptures teach. This forbearance was endorsed by George Lawson in his *Considerations on the overture... respecting some Alterations in the Formula* (Edinburgh, 1797). A minority departed and formed the Original Burgher Presbytery, which continued an Old Light testimony until, as the Original Burgher Synod, it united with the Church of Scotland in 1839”. Sherman Isbell, “New Light” in *Scottish Dictionary of Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 625. A similar division occurred within the General Associate (Antiburgher) Synod, leading a minority to form the Constitutional Associate Presbytery in 1806, which by 1842 merged with the minority remnant of the Original Burgher Synod which had rejected merger with the Church of Scotland. Together they formed the Original Secession Church, or the ‘Synod of United Original Seceders.’ Sherman Isbell, “Original Secession Church” in *Scottish Dictionary of Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 637.

335 Henry Belfrage, *A Guide to the Lord’s Table in Catechetical Form* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1824); *The Everlasting Age of Grace and Truth: A Discourse Delivered at the Tabernacle, May 11, 1825, Before The London Missionary Society* (London: Francis Westley, 1825); *Examples and Counsels for the Moral Guidance of Youth* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1827); *A Portrait of Job* (Edinburgh: 1830); *A Practical Exposition of the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism: Exhibiting A System of Theology in a Popular Form, and Particularly Adapted for Family Instruction* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Son, 1834); *Sacramental Addresses and Meditations by the Late Henry Belfrage, D.D., Falkirk. Eighth edition* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1873).

336 While *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* presented a two covenant position, which was supported by both Thomas Boston and James Hog, Robert Riccaltoun argued for a three covenant perspective. Riccaltoun’s view was a minority within the Marrow tradition. Belfrage held to a two covenant view, arguing that the language of the covenant in Scripture “is such as to shew the inutility of the distinction which some have made betwixt the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace. The Scripture speaks of but one covenant formed for the salvation of lost sinners; and what is done by Christ in the fulfillment of it...” Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*,

obligation and penalty of the covenant of works, thereby establishing the covenant of grace as Surety and Mediator.³³⁷ Belfrage often speaks of the necessity of the atonement, particularly in the context of the impact of the broken covenant of works and the justice of God.³³⁸ In one of his *Sacramental Addresses* he asks

But was all this tremendous suffering necessary? Yes, sin could have been expiated by no easier method. His blood must flow, and His heart must be broken. If Providence never demands from us one needless tear, it could not exact from our Surety more than was meet. A stream less copious could not have washed away our guilt, and a stroke less heavy could not have given that stream a sufficient vent from the rock that yields it. The wrath that melted His heart, and crushed Him to the dust of the earth, was that which would have sunk us to the lowest hell, and would have brought on us the vengeance of eternal fire.³³⁹

Belfrage not only viewed the atonement's necessity, but also its nature in a manner consistent with Marrow theology. His *Sacramental Addresses* repeatedly speak of the penal substitutionary nature of the atonement.³⁴⁰ Belfrage declares

‘The redemption of the soul is precious;’ for nought that the universe could offer, would be accepted of as a price for it. The cattle on thousand hills would have bled, and the gold of a thousand treasuries would have been piled up, in vain. The blood of God’s Son was its only price; and for the soul’s redemption this blood was shed.³⁴¹

In his *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism* Belfrage states

The rewards of men are often ill-proportioned, some obtaining more and others less than they claim; but shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Think how he has rewarded the obedience and sufferings of his Son. It was

211.

337 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 163-169; Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 234.

338 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 3-4, 44-45, 49; Belfrage, *The Everlasting Age of Grace...*, 13, 18-19.

339 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 37.

340 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 44-45, 49, 147.

341 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 44.

a most awful display of divine justice, when, as our Surety, he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities...

God's justice is manifested in punishing sin... it is in hell where the justice of God shall be seen, in the vengeance of eternal fire. This doctrine has been reprobated as the sentiment of gloomy and malignant enthusiasm... but this is the cant of a profligate sophistry, which would sacrifice God's honour as a Lawgiver and a Judge, to a weak indulgence and unwise clemency. Were not God to punish, how could he be true to his threatening and just to himself? If the punishment of the sins of the elect was not necessary, why did the sword of justice awake, not to scare but to smite the Surety? And why did he die in darkness and torture?³⁴²

The published writings of Henry Belfrage also manifest consistency with Marrow theology in maintaining both the imputation of the active and passive obedience of Christ. Regarding the law, Belfrage said that Christ "alone fulfilled all its requirements, and he atoned, by his sufferings, for all the violation of it by those whose substitute he was".³⁴³ This latter statement also reflects Belfrage's clear assertion of the particular nature of the substitutionary atonement:

Salvation is not a debt God owes to his rebellious creatures... This choice [election] was the result of his [God's] mere good pleasure. It was not founded on Christ's efforts, nor the fruit of his sollicitation, but arose from the sovereignty of God's grace. Still our Lord has the closest connection with election; the book which records it is called the book of the Lamb; his people were chosen in him as their Head, to the enjoyment of that salvation which he was destined to purchase, and to share in those honours which were appointed to reward his success.³⁴⁴

Elsewhere Belfrage affirms "the rewards God bestows on his people, are not due for their sakes, but on the Lord's account, who hath purchased these for them, and promised them to

342 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 98-99. In his *A Guide to the Lord's Table* Belfrage asks "what is the chief view we ought to take of the death of Christ in this ordinance?" giving the answer "we should consider it as the propitiation for our sins". Belfrage, *A Guide to the Lord's Table...*, 12.

343 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 266.

344 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 205-206.

his followers”.³⁴⁵ Unlike some of his contemporaries in the Associate Synod, Belfrage remained perspicuously definite in his view of a limited atonement.

Belfrage’s view of saving faith appears similar to that of John Dick. Belfrage often spoke of the necessity of sovereign regeneration to faith. In his *Sacramental Addresses* he reflects on sovereign regeneration stating,

To him I owe all the graces of the Spirit: Faith, with all its victories; hope, with all the purity which it produces; love, with all its labours; peace, with all its comforts... It is from the Spirit of Christ that these graces come; to His throne they lead us; and they live and act by Him.³⁴⁶

The same conviction is proclaimed by Belfrage in his sermon *The Everlasting Age of Grace*:

The Saviour whose Cross is its grand theme shall be glorified forever in the new song which it hath taught his redeemed to sing; and that Spirit who made it his chief instrument in the conversion and edification of men, shall be extolled eternally for the wonders of his grace, in praises which he first excited and shall for ever animate.³⁴⁷

This “redemption our Lord purchased” and “applied to us by his Holy Spirit...” is applied “by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling”.³⁴⁸ Like the Marrow theologians, Belfrage did not negate the responsibility of the hearers to come to Christ in faith; his series of sermons on *Examples and Counsels for the Moral Guidance of Youth* urge “let the salvation of your souls be your chief concern... commit them to his care who is a sun and shield, and who will give grace and glory...” exhorting hearers to “seek the Lord while he may be found, and call on him while he is near”.³⁴⁹

345 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 98.

346 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 166.

347 Belfrage, *The Everlasting Age of Grace...*, 21.

348 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 284-285, 287.

349 Belfrage, *Examples and Counsels for the Moral Guidance of Youth*, 24, 68.

Belfrage defines faith as “the instrument” or act “by which the righteousness of Christ is laid hold of”.³⁵⁰ He also describes its nature as including “assent to the truth... understanding... and trusting in Christ”, elsewhere stating that “the faith of the gospel [is] trusting in Christ for salvation”.³⁵¹ While these descriptions of the nature of faith might appear consistent with Marrow theology, like Dick, Belfrage diverges from the Marrow view of faith and assurance. In his discussion on “Assurance of God’s love” in *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism*, Belfrage plainly declares his concerns with the Marrow formulation of the relation of faith and assurance:

There are some misconceptions on this subject, which have brought discredit on the doctrine of assurance. Some have represented it as invariably accompanying the first act of believing, and as required in the calls of the Gospel to sinners; and the following passage from a work of high authority has been quoted as sanctioning this idea: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” that is, says the Marrow of Modern Divinity, “Be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him, and that whatever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you”. But it is obvious that the reference here is to the offer of the Gospel, or to God’s giving his Son to be the Saviour of the world, which warrants our reception of him and his benefits. The Saviour and his blessings are not actually ours till we are united to him by faith; and though some in conversion have rejoiced in God their Saviour, this is not the case with all. The faith which receives him varies in light and strength; and some real believers have not ventured to triumph in Christ as theirs, till by active and patient diligence they have made their calling and election sure.³⁵²

Belfrage argues that assurance is rightly seen as a fruit of faith, rather than seeing an appropriating assurance in faith, or an assurance belonging to faith itself, as distinct from an assurance of sense which is the fruit of faith. Belfrage sees this latter view as resulting from a misunderstanding, or misreading, of the gospel offer in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and voices strong criticism of some of its proponents in his day:

350 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 308.

351 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 229-230; Belfrage, *A Guide to the Lord’s Table...*, 40.

352 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 330-331.

The luscious language in which some have described their impressions of assurance, have excited great disgust... Piety hath its tenderness, but it is solemn and spiritual. Communion with God hath its delights, but these are pure and heavenly.

And I may add, that the pretensions to this assurance which have been advanced by persons who, though sober in their conduct, and scrupulous observers of the forms of godliness, were harsh in their tempers, uncharitable in their judgements, and censorious in their talk, though they tried to veil its malignity under the guise of lamentation has tended very much to lead to unfavourable conclusions as to this privilege in its reality and influence... Assurance is not a gift for the sullen devotee, or the conceited smatterer; but for him who will reflect its brightness on others in the mild light of wisdom and charity.³⁵³

Belfrage's remarks on the relationship of faith and assurance, along with its pastoral implications, do not receive further clarification in his other writings. His *A Guide to the Lord's Table*, published nearly a decade prior to his *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism*, provides some premonition of his rejection of the Marrow doctrine of saving faith in relation to assurance, adding further complexity by proposing a four-fold understanding of assurance, dividing what would be a Marrow definition of the appropriating assurance of, or in, faith, into the assurance of faith and the assurance of hope:

Q. How manifold is the assurance ascribed to the good in Scripture? – A. The assurance of understanding, of faith, of hope, and of sense.

Q. Where is the assurance of understanding spoken of? – A. Col. ii. and 2.

Q. Who hath the assurance of understanding? – A. He who perceives the relation of each portion of the Gospel to the whole, and its use as a part of one great design.

Q. What is the assurance of faith? – A. The conviction that the Gospel is a revelation from God, and that its promises and threatenings shall be fulfilled. Heb x. 22.

Q. What is the assurance of hope? – A. A persuasion that a man is interested in the great salvation, and is sealed to the great day of redemption. Heb. vi. 11.

Q. What is the assurance of sense? – A. Feeling and experience.³⁵⁴

353 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 331-332. Belfrage's remarks leave unanswered questions regarding both the clarity of his own understanding of Marrow theology, as well as his contemporary situation. Evidently he felt pastoral concern over the manner in which some expressed their understanding of the doctrine of assurance.

354 Belfrage, *A Guide to the Lord's Table...*, 50-51.

Belfrage's definitions marked an evident change, shifting the heart of what the Marrow men described as "fiducial assurance" or "appropriating persuasion" away from the assurance of faith, to a new category, the assurance of hope. Despite this difference from Marrow theology in the area of the assurance of faith, Belfrage did view faith as first among saving graces, seeing repentance and new obedience as the fruits of faith.³⁵⁵

Belfrage's proclamation of the gospel was full, free, and universal, and often explicitly connected to his covenant understanding. In his *Sacramental Addresses* he proclaims

The covenant made with you is far more excellent than that one made with Adam. The covenant of works was made immediately with Adam, but the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the Head and Mediator of His people. The promises of the covenant of works were conditional, but those of the covenant of grace are free... the covenant of grace displays the tender mercies of our God... the covenant of works... held out neither comfort nor hope to the guilty... the covenant of grace is a refuge for the miserable... and it provides for the perseverance in holiness of all who are brought within its bond. God will not abandon them, and He will not suffer them to turn away from Him... How delightful have been the views which good men have had of it at the communion table, while they beheld it ratified in the blood of the cross; and it is my earnest wish that you may now be influenced to say of it, 'it is all my salvation, and it is all my desire.'³⁵⁶

Belfrage further emphasizes the gospel offer's full, free and universal nature in his *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism*, declaring,

How admirably are the offers of the Gospel, in their freedom and earnestness, suited to the wretched and desponding case of those to whom they are addressed! In these offers the heart of mercy invites, beseeches, pleads, and expostulates; and by the power which accompanies them, the enslaved are liberated, the stubborn are won, and the lost are brought to their refuge and their home.³⁵⁷

355 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 166.

356 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 235.

357 Belfrage, *A Practical Exposition of the Shorter Catechism...*, 296.

Like the Marrow theology of the gospel offer, Belfrage emphasizes “the exceeding great and precious promises” of the gospel of Jesus Christ.³⁵⁸ Preaching on the text “if any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink” he proclaims

...this invitation... shows us the patience and generosity of our Lord... He had told the Jews that in a little He would go to Him that sent Him. Instead of imploring His continuance, they said with the most virulent scorn, ‘Will He go to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and try to gain them as His party, or will He teach the Gentiles?’ ...how does our Lord answer this insolent taunt? The only reply He makes to it is, to invite them more fully, and to press them more earnestly to receive His salvation...

This invitation was delivered with great boldness...

It was delivered with great earnestness...

It was a most extensive invitation... He excepts not the men who came to seize Him, nor those who are bent on His ruin. The hand of mercy can reach its object in the lowest depth of distress, and in the utmost extremity of guilt... Let him come, though he is the chief of sinners, and though he has grown old in iniquity... Let him approach with enlarged expectations, and let him be assured that he cannot come too frequently. Keep this circumstance in remembrance, to give extension to all your offices of charity, to teach you to resist the error of those who would limit the calls of the Gospel...³⁵⁹

Despite his divergence from the Marrow in his view of faith and assurance, the remainder of his understanding of saving faith, along with his understanding of the doctrine of the atonement and gospel preaching stands consistent with the Marrow tradition, marked by a similar warmth and passion. Belfrage’s exhortation to the London Missionary Society in 1825 provides an apt conclusion. Echoing the use of Scripture in *The Marrow* and Marrow theology, and with the passion of the newly growing missionary movement, he exhorts his listeners, and readers, to self-sacrifice for the sake of the proclamation of the gospel:

...how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they are sent? And how shall they be sent forth unless by the united prayers and efforts of Christians? “Go and preach the Gospel to every creature,” was his farewell charge, and he marks in heaven how we regard it.³⁶⁰

358 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 166.

359 Belfrage, *Sacramental Addresses...*, 223-224.

360 Belfrage, *The Everlasting Age of Grace...*, 36.

Conclusion on the Associate Synod

Published writings of the pastors and theologians ordained in the Associate Synod (1747-1799) reveal considerable evidence for the direct continuity of Marrow theology to the turn of the century. This is abundantly evident in the cases of individuals such as John Swanston, John Brown of Haddington, William McEwen, and Archibald Hall. In other cases, such as those of Andrew and James Moir there is a strong similarity or thematic consistency with Marrow theology, but conclusive proof for direct historical dependence on Marrow theology as elucidated during the Marrow controversy remains largely elusive. As time progresses through this period, particularly in the latter generation, what was initially a denominational uniformity in Marrow theology begins to fracture. By the turn of the century Marrow theology remained influential, but it was no longer unchallenged in its dominance of the Associate Synod.

Among those ministers ordained between the late 1760's and the 1790's in the Associate Synod, three theological streams relevant to the proclamation of the gospel begin to appear. One of these streams or directions can be seen in the published works of George Lawson and Alexander Waugh. While they continued to hold to the Marrow tradition of a free, full, universal gospel offer, there is the appearance of an increasing loss of the framework of federal theology, along with a lack of clarity on the extent of the atonement. The published sermons and writings of John Dick and Henry Belfrage provide evidence of a second theological stream in the Associate Synod during this latter period. Both Dick and Belfrage openly criticized specific aspects of Marrow theology and language. Perhaps noticing the theological trajectory of men like Lawson and Waugh, they argued that some distinctive formulations of Marrow theology were problematic. Dick wrote extensively arguing that the Marrow language of the gospel offer, as adopted by the Associate Presbytery, inherently led to indefinite views of the extent of the atonement. Both Dick and Belfrage manifested concerns that the Marrow formulation of the relationship of faith

and assurance wrongly burdened those weak in faith. Intriguingly, whether wittingly or not, certain aspects of their critiques of Marrow theology are similar to those of the opponents of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* during the Marrow controversy in the Church of Scotland. While critical at points, Dick and Belfrage maintained a clear thematic consistency with Marrow theology in the doctrine of atonement, and continued upholding the free offer of the gospel.

While theological movements away from Marrow theology are evident during this era, there also remains substantial indication of its continuing influence within the Secession tradition of the Associate Synod. John Fraser's *Sermons and Essays* are distinctive in their Marrow theology. Robert Jaffray's writings, while not bearing hard proof of the influence of Marrow theology, do manifest a general consistency with it. John Brown of Whitburn's *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated* stands as explicit proof of the direct continuity of Marrow theology in the late 18th and early 19th century period of Secession church history. Together, these writings indicate a maintenance of Marrow theology within the Associate Synod. The change, however, was that the two were no longer synonymous as they had been during the days of the Associate Presbytery and the early period of the Associate Synod.

CHAPTER 11

DEPARTURES FROM MARROW THEOLOGY AND THE GROWTH OF LATITUDINARIANISM IN THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD

This dissertation sheds light on the incipient development of what would become a substantial theological latitude within the Secession churches. By the end of the 18th century there were signs of a declension of Marrow theology as the dominant theology of the Associate stream of the Secession churches. There was certain continuity of Marrow theology in the writings of theologians like John Fraser and John Brown of Whitburn. Yet others such as George Lawson and Alexander Waugh, appeared to move in a direction ultimately precipitating the atonement controversy of the 1840's, surrounding the teaching of United Secession Divinity Hall professors Robert Balmer and John Brown of Edinburgh, both of whom had studied under Lawson. While Lawson and Waugh were not explicitly Amyraldian or universal, their preaching and writing on the extent of the atonement was vague at best, and cannot be seen as a wholehearted support of a particular or limited atonement. Though they retained the gospel offer of the Marrow, they moved away from the framework of federal theology which surrounded and helped define it. In the midst of this, John Dick, concerned to maintain the doctrine of the atonement and federal theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and suspecting that it was in part the characteristic language of Marrow theology that was opening the door to universalist notions of the extent of the atonement, turned to criticize characteristic statements of Marrow theology.¹

Why did these changes take place? Some clues may be found within the church history surrounding the splintering, formerly dominant Marrow theology of the Associate

¹ Dick's theological stance regarding Marrow theology and the doctrines of the gospel was remarkably similar to that of Church of Scotland minister and theologian John Willison.

Synod. A document providing intriguing background for the context of the doctrinal change from the Associate Synod's uniform adherence to Marrow theology is a letter to the churches from the Synod, penned by John Brown of Haddington as Synod Clerk in 1770.

In it, Synod laments a lack of catechizing in families and churches stating:

They beseech and exhort all under their inspection, to be conscientious and steadfast in their attachments to that system of Reformed Protestant religion, which is founded in the writings of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being himself the chief cornerstone; and is exhibited in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms Larger and Shorter, Directory for Worship, and Presbyterial Form of Church-government. This system has its authority in the Word of God, and therefore ought to be believed with a divine faith; it is compendiously summed up in the foresaid standards... it contains the whole that the Synod contend for, in opposition to a growing apostasy from the truths and ways of Christ... it faithfully exhibits the sense in which the Synod requires a profession of the faith and obedience of all their members and connections...²

The concern regarding theological and spiritual declension in the Associate Synod prefaces what would become a period of theological change. Children of the 1770's became leaders in the 1790's. As Ian Hamilton has ably shown, the 1790's marked the beginning of the Synodical erosion of confessional subscription and Calvinist orthodoxy among Seceders in Scottish Presbyterianism.³ Undoubtedly, the formal ecclesiastical erosion of confessional subscription must have had some roots within families and churches.

While theological and spiritual declension may have been a factor in the changing theological milieu of the Associate Synod, the initial issue of debate over confessional adherence was one which many might regard as minor or peripheral: the necessity of loyalty to the confessional statement on the role of the civil magistrate. Differing views on

² *A Warning Against the Prevalence of Sinful Looseness in Principle and Practice Emittted by the Associate Synod, Met at Edinburgh, August 30, 1770.* (Edinburgh: Printed for Gray and Alston, 1770), 10-12.

³ Ian Hamilton, *Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy: Seceders and Subscription in Scottish Presbyterianism* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990), 11, 16-17.

the application of the Confession on the role of the civil magistrate had led to the bitter division of the Secession church in 1747 into Associate (Burgher) and General Associate (Antiburgher) Synods, a division lamented by men such as George Lawson. A growing desire became manifest in the Associate Synod and General Associate Synod for a reunion of these divided streams of the Secession church, and many viewed the statement on the magistrate as the source of needless division in the past. Parallel to this, the 1790's were marked by a great passion for missionary endeavour among Seceder Presbyterians, both denominationally and by societies, the latter with an increasingly broad ecumenical spirit in their promotion and support. Alexander Waugh's dedicated involvement in creating, nurturing, and preaching on behalf of the London Missionary Society stands as an example of this.

Other influences toward changes within the Secession church may have come from without. Scotland was experiencing a growing economic prosperity, particularly as a result of its union with England. The failures of the Darien scheme were now a distant memory, and the Scots now had access to all the British Empire for an increasingly prosperous trade and manufacturing industry. Technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution further spurred Scotland's economic growth. The British Empire brought opportunity for employment in military service, as well as the opportunity to migrate and potentially establish a more prosperous life. It also served as a vehicle for tremendous missionary endeavour. These developments not only brought men and women to the far flung reaches of the Empire, but also brought these distant lands and cultures home to Scotland, whether by the print of magazines and missionary journals, burgeoning artifact collections and museums, or through the letters and recollections of emigrant family members. While there had long been substantial religious and intellectual contact with the rest of Europe, this also increased with newfound wealth and mobility. These changes and opportunities undoubtedly affected the church, whether as distracting influences for spiritual and

theological declension, or new opportunities for the positive growth of the church and global spread of the gospel.⁴

In the midst of these ecclesiastical and societal contexts, John Dick argued in 1796 before the Associate Synod for a biblical charity, wisdom, and commitment to the maintenance of confessional subscription in response to those divulging a dubiousness towards a fully subscribed confessional theology and church order.⁵ While confessions of faith were necessary to the life of the church and full subscription should be required of her ministers, “there is room for examining and reviewing all human creeds and doctrinal articles” in the light of Scripture, for “it is possible that our Fathers have erred”.⁶ As such a “heartly assent”, or honest initial and continued subscription, required “utmost deliberation and care”.⁷ Dick stated that situations may change in the life and history of the church so that a portion of a confession, while not in error, may be “an unnecessary article... to preserve the purity of the great truths of the gospel, and to maintain order and peace”.⁸ Should such, or similar concerns arise regarding the standards of the church, they ought to be brought before the church and considered. If the concern was in harmony with

4 Many Seceders, particularly emigrants in places like America, or on mission fields, along with a good number of those remaining in an politically and societally changing Scotland came to question the value of, or need for, a continued adherence to the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant. Others avowed that such changes reflected all the more the need for maintenance and renewal of these covenants.

5 Dick, *Confessions of Faith Shown to be Necessary...*, 7-11.

6 Dick, *Confessions of Faith Shown to be Necessary...*, 26.

7 Dick, *Confessions of Faith Shown to be Necessary...*, 23, 25. Dick states that “if when we solemnly subscribe, we disbelieve them, or even doubt of their truth, we deceive the church”. Dick, *Confessions of Faith Shown to be Necessary...*, 23.

8 Dick, *Confessions of Faith Shown to be Necessary...*, 27.

Scripture, the confession of the church must then be revised, amended or expanded, as necessary.⁹

Challenges to and changing views of the role and nature of confessional identity were such that by the 1820 Synod of the United Secession Church, “three ministers, Brown, Balmer, and Harper... criticized the nature of the Church’s relation to the Confession” once again as being too rigid in its expectations.¹⁰ By the 1840’s, Brown and Balmer were embroiled in controversy over the extent of the atonement. The solution of the United Secession Church was to accept a looser adherence to the Confession.¹¹

It was in this context of loosening confessional adherence that the increasing loss of confessional federal theology characteristic of Marrow theology also occurred. Without the carefully articulated understanding of the covenant theology expressed by early Marrow theologians such as Thomas Boston and Ebenezer Erskine in adherence to confessional orthodoxy, the emphasis on a free, full, universal gospel offer lost its theological context. The bold language of Marrow theology, “the deed of gift and grant” of Christ and the proclamation that “Christ is dead for you” as he is offered in the gospel, could now be more comfortably retro-fitted to an Amyraldian or universalist, rather than a particular view of the extent of the atonement.¹²

Marrow theology was now simply one theological stream among others proclaiming the free offer of the gospel. Some had perhaps failed to understand it, some

9 Dick, *Confessions of Faith Shown to be Necessary...*, 6-7, 23-26.

10 Hamilton, 17.

11 Hamilton, 35-84; James Robertson, *A Commentary on the Doctrinal Errors Condemned By the United Associate Synod, May 1842* (Edinburgh: M. Paterson, 1842), 9-24; *Report of the Proceedings of the Trial By Libel of John Brown, D.D... At the Instance of Drs. James Hay and Andrew Marshall, Before the United Associate Synod, July 1845* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Sons, 1845), 1-124.

12 Hamilton, 71.

had lost interest in doing so amidst the excitement of the new spirit of ecumenical missionary endeavour, simply viewing it as a distant, though courageous moment in the history of the Church of Scotland. Yet, despite these changes, Marrow theology remained a vital stream, with others working earnestly to maintain it both within the Associate Synod, and beyond. The continued republication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, along with the works of Marrow theologians, such as Thomas Boston, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, John Brown of Haddington and others, both reflected and ensured its continued influence.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSIONS ON THE CONTINUITY OF MARROW THEOLOGY IN THE ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY AND ASSOCIATE SYNOD SECESSION CHURCHES IN SCOTLAND TO 1799

This dissertation set out to comprehensively examine whether there was a continuity of Marrow theology in the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod (1733-1799) churches of the Secession movement. The result is that a vast array of published sermons, theological and historical works, provide overwhelming evidence that Marrow theology, defined as the theology expressed through the defense and exposition of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* by its supporters during the Marrow controversy in the Church of Scotland, was more than a controversial moment in the early 1700's – it was a significant and enduring stream of Scottish Reformed theology.

In 1718, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* was simply a rare book, rediscovered and admired by a few as a refreshing statement of gospel truths within the framework of federal theology. Republication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* served as a catalyst for the sudden intensity of the Marrow controversy, through which Marrow theology became the expressed theology of an evangelical minority in the Church of Scotland. In many respects Marrow theology was reflective of the wider continuities of confessional Reformed theology, with its emphasis on the gospel in the context of federal theology. At the same time, Marrow theology also bore distinctive theological formulations and language, crystallized through the catalyst of the Marrow controversy. The ongoing patronage conflict and ensuing Secession movement enabled Marrow theology to become foundational doctrine for the Associate Presbytery, retaining an influential place in the life of the Associate Synod churches throughout the 18th century, and into the early 19th century. There is clear and substantial evidence for direct continuity of, and historical dependence on Marrow theology, along with a general consistency with Marrow theology,

or a thematic continuity. As such Marrow theology may well have a greater significance in Scottish church history and the history of Reformed thought than has been assumed previously.

This study has presented substantial evidence for the continuity of Marrow theology in the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod in Scotland during the eighteenth century, filling a significant gap in research in Scottish church history and theology. Yet numerous possibilities exist for the examination of other continuities of Marrow theology. Concurrent eighteenth century Scottish Presbyterian contexts, such as the Secession church stream of the General Associate Synod, the Relief Church, and the Church of Scotland after the Marrow controversy, remain largely untouched. Roy Blackwood's dissertation on the Reformed Presbyterian theologian William Symington notes the strong similarities between Marrow theology and Symington's understanding of federal theology and the gospel offer.¹ Among the varied streams of Scottish Presbyterianism in the nineteenth century, the Original Secession church in particular stands as a strong candidate for a more pervasive continuity of Marrow theology, with its maintenance of the Westminster Standards and Seceder heritage.² Despite, and perhaps because of, the effective disappearance of the Secession Church in Scotland due to the eventual return of much of the Secession Church into the Church of Scotland and the movement of other Seceders into the Free Church of Scotland and Free Presbyterian

1 Roy Blackwood, *William Symington: Churchman and Theologian: Looking through the Eyes of a Church Father at the Doctrines of Atonement, Intercession, and Dominion* (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1963), 167.

2 Both Thomas M'Crie Sr. and Thomas M'Crie Jr., the former a minister of the Original Secession Church, the latter both minister and theological professor for the Theological Hall of the Original Secession Church, were committed to the Secession heritage of Marrow theology. Thomas M'Crie Sr.'s grandson, Charles Greig M'Crie, was a Free Church minister and historian, and served as the editor for a new republication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in Glasgow in 1902. See *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, 506-507.

Church of Scotland, the value of Marrow theology remains recognized and appreciated in Scotland to the twenty-first century within all of these church streams.

Outside of Scotland there are also numerous unexplored avenues for research in the history of Marrow theology. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* was written in England during the era of the Westminster Assembly, and republished on numerous occasions.³ Yet, aside from David Como's recent work, with its limited reference to Fisher and *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, little scholarship exists on Marrow theology in England.⁴ Through migration, colonialism, and missionary endeavour, Scottish Presbyterian churches, including Associate Synod, General Associate Synod, and ensuing Seceder denominations, were increasingly found in Ireland, North America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Australia and the South Pacific.⁵ In many cases Seceder immigrant denominations and missions eventually merged into indigenous Presbyterian churches. In North America and Pakistan Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synods still continue as direct descendants of the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod. The Netherlands also deserves mention as Dutch translations of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and the works of Thomas Boston and Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine became popular within the Dutch Reformed Church, and among the various Dutch Reformed seceder denominations formed during the nineteenth century.⁶ The appreciation of Marrow theology within the Dutch Reformed churches

3 See the bibliography for a listing of republications of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* between 1645 and 1902.

4 David R. Como, *Blown by The Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil War England* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 51, 91-92, 99, 455.

5 John M'Kerrow's *History of the Secession Church*, first published in 1839, provides an excellent source to begin tracing the colonial migration and missionary movements of the Scottish Secession churches. A substantial Seceder presence developed in Ireland and North America by the 1750's. M'Kerrow, 257.

6 P.H. van Harten, in his *De prediking van Ebenezer en Ralph Erskine* (Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1986), devotes a portion of one chapter to an examination of the

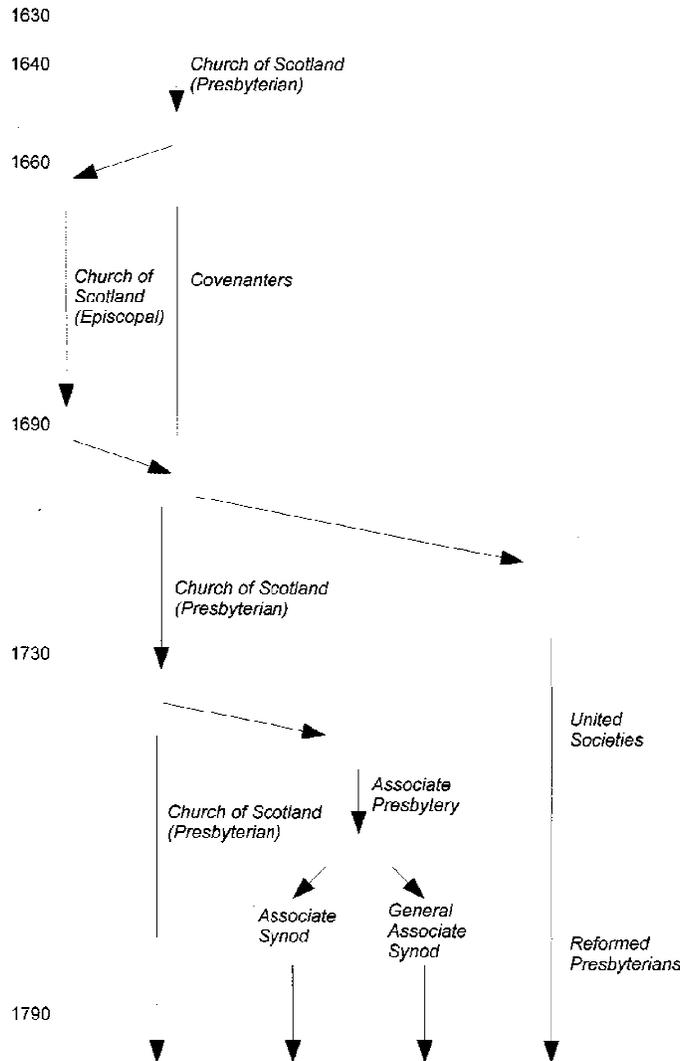
continued through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. These numerous contexts indicate that there is undoubtedly fertile ground for future research, but also reflect a greater reality: the fulfillment of the rich and enduring gospel understanding of Marrow theology, the passionate call of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* and its supporters, repeated through generations, and across nations:

Go and tell every man, without exception, that here is good news for him, Christ is dead for him; and if he will take him, and accept of his righteousness, he shall have it; restraint is not; but go and tell every man under heaven... a Saviour is provided for him.⁷

influence of Marrow theology as expressed in the writings of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine in the Netherlands between 1740 and the twentieth century. Joel Beeke's *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999) has one chapter on Alexander Comrie's view of saving faith and assurance. Comrie sat under the ministry of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and was deeply influenced by the theology of Thomas Boston. Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance*, 215.

⁷ [E]dward [F]isher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity... with notes in The Complete Works of the late Reverend Thomas Boston...*, 264.

1. Outline Chart of Presbyterian Ecclesiastical History in Scotland (1638-1799)



1630's and 1640's: the Covenanter era of the Church of Scotland. The National Covenant (1638), and Solemn League and Covenant adopted (1643); the Westminster Confession is adopted in 1647.

1661: Restoration of Charles II with the ensuing return of the Church of Scotland to episcopacy.

1661-1690: Episcopal domination of Church of Scotland; most Presbyterians outside of the national church, and persecuted, as Covenanters.

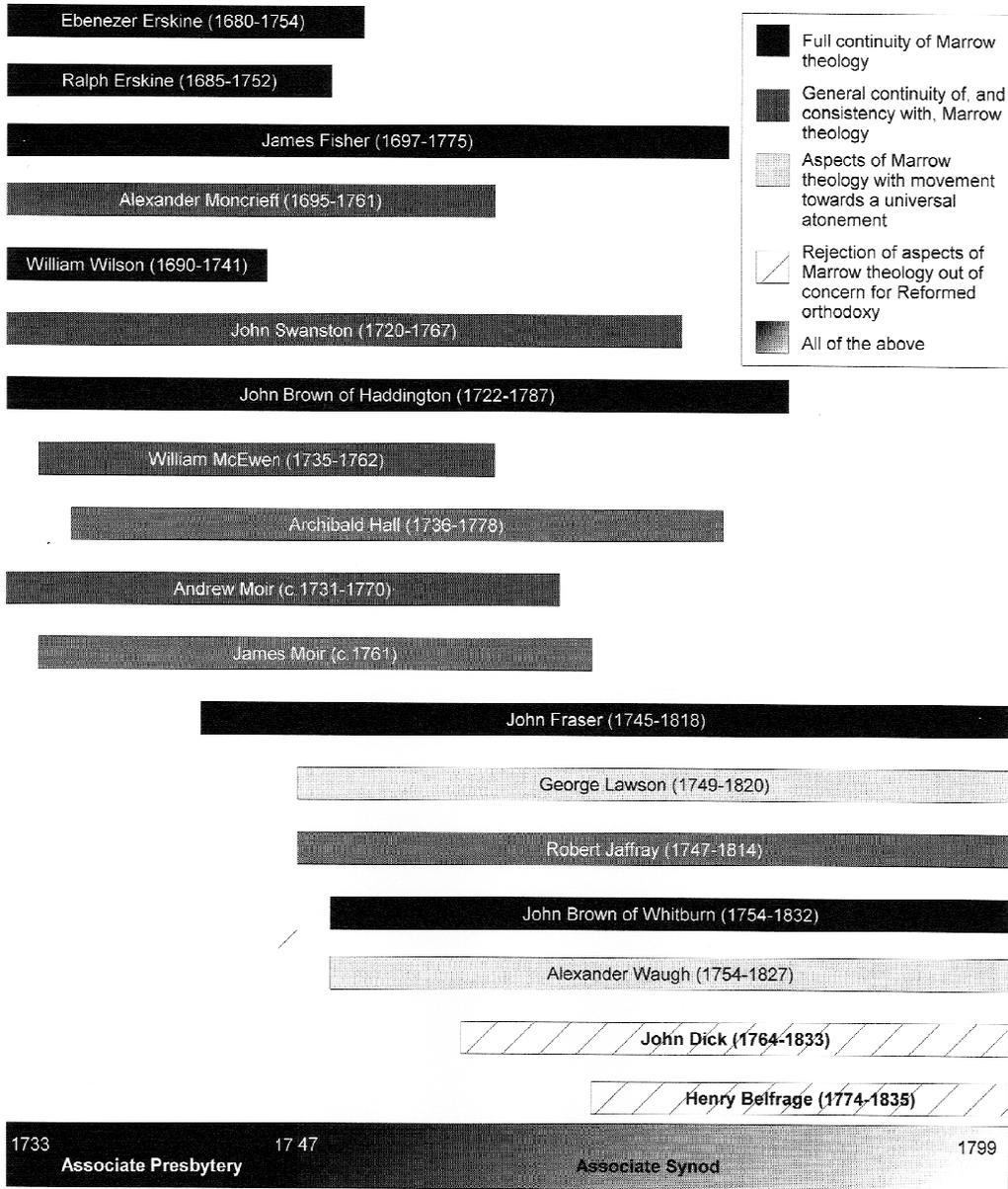
1690: Under the new rule of William (III) of Orange, as king of England and Scotland, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland is restored as adhering to the Westminster Standards. Most Covenanters rejoin; some continue outside.

1718-1726: The Marrow controversy takes place within the Church of Scotland.

1733: The Secession occurs, (over issues of patronage and the call of ministers) with the formation of the Associate Presbytery at Gairney Bridge.

1747: The Associate Synod divides into Associate Synod (Burgher) and General Associate Synod (Anti-Burgher Streams) due to controversy over the Burgess oath.

2. A Visual Chronology of Continuities of Marrow Theology in the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod (1733-1799)



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