

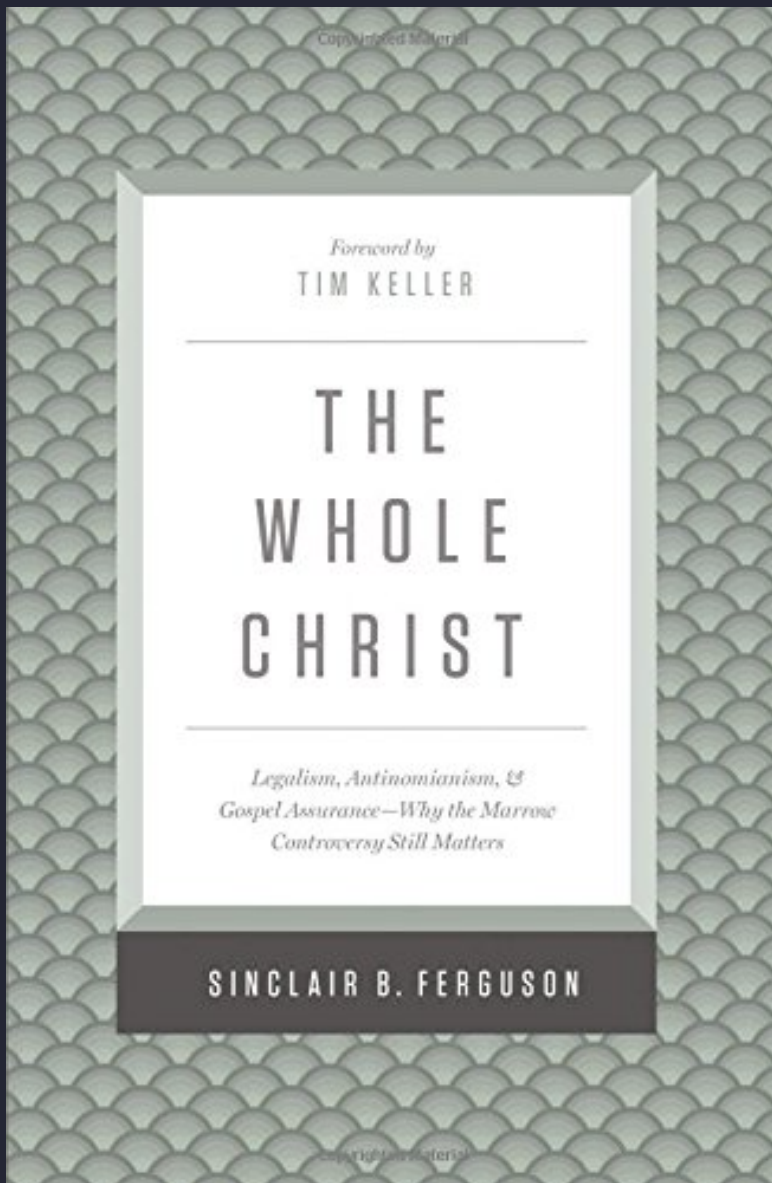
The Marrow Controversy

Christ the King Adult Education

The Whole Christ - Week 1

January 7, 2018

Law and Gospel



- What do we do with Psalm 1:2? Psalm 19? Psalm 119?
- Can we really *delight* in the law? How?
- The remedy for sin isn't neither the observance, nor the removal of the law; the remedy is Christ.
- The Bible speaks of this in emphatic terms: union with Christ, new birth

THE
MARROW
OF
MODERN DIVINITY,
IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

TOUCHING BOTH THE COVENANT OF WORKS AND THE COVENANT OF GRACE; WITH THEIR USE AND END; IN THE TIME OF BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. CLEARLY DESCRIBING THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE BY JESUS CHRIST.

IN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN
Evangelista, a Minister of the Gospel; *Nomista*, a Legalist;
Antinomista, an Antinomian; and *Neophitus*, a young Christian.

BY EDWARD FISHER, A. M.

WITH NOTES, BY THAT EMINENT AND FAITHFUL SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST,
MR. THOMAS BOSTON,
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ETRICK.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE TWELVE QUERIES,
WHICH WERE PROPOSED TO THE TWELVE MARROW-MEN, BY THE COMMISSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, 1721;
WITH THE MARROW-MEN'S ANSWERS TO SAID QUERIES.

2 Cor. 13: 8. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

First American, revised from the eighth Scottish Edition.

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PITTSBURGH:
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM PAXTON.
D. & M. Maclean, printers.

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1830.



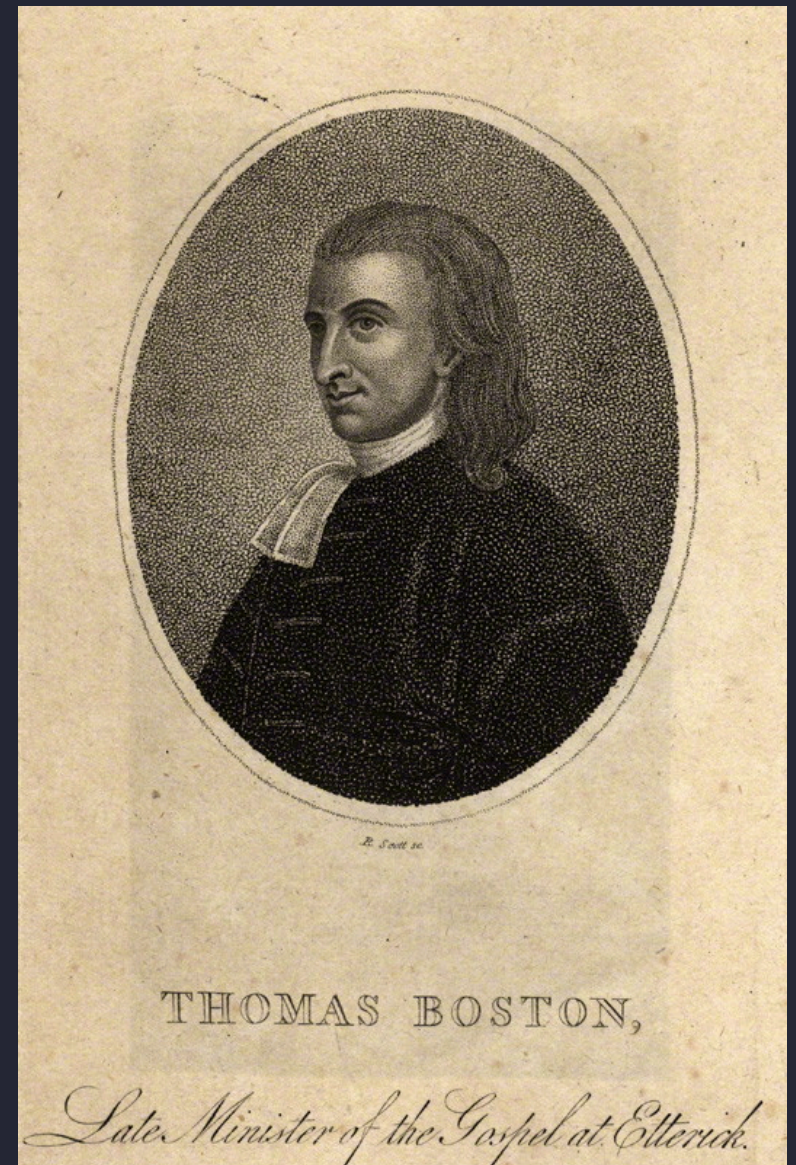
Auchterarder Creed and the Trials of William Craig



- 1717 ordination trials at Auchterarder Presbytery
- “It is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ.”
- How would you answer...?

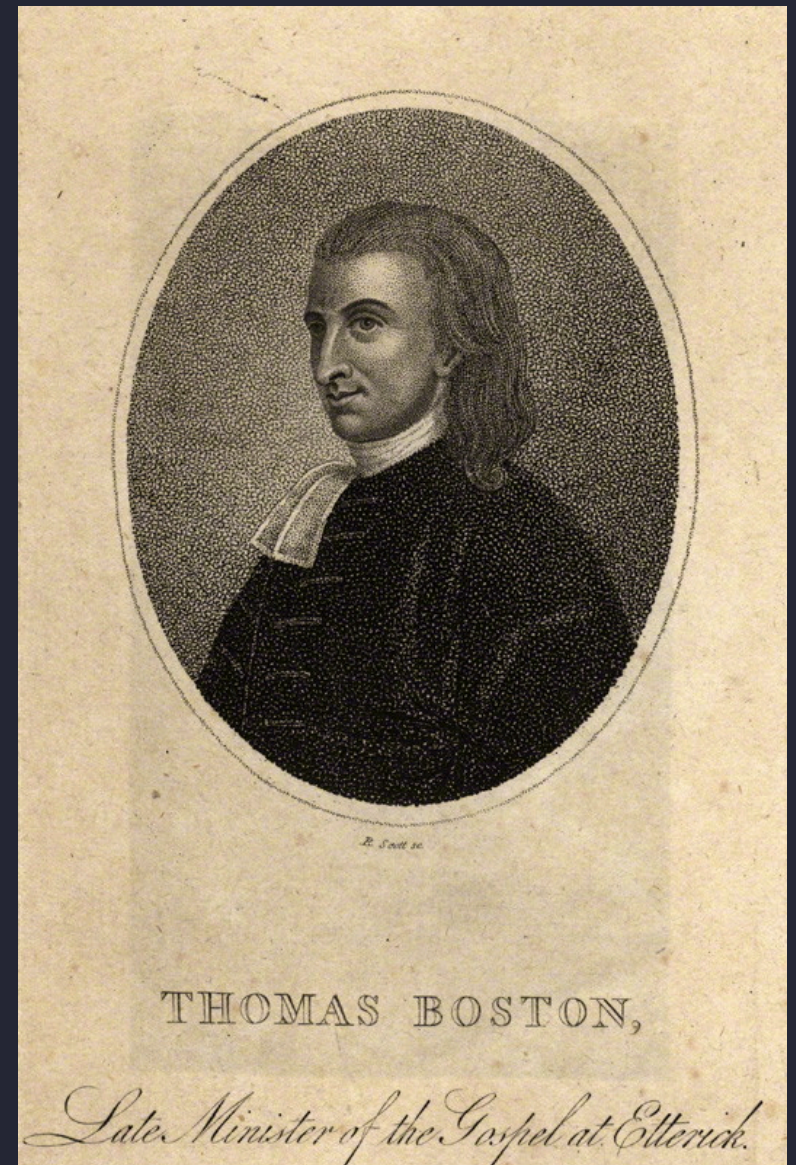
Thomas Boston and the Marrow Men

- Puritan minister in the Church of Scotland
- Borrowed a copy of *The Marrow* in 1700
- Commended it to a fellow minister at the General Assembly in 1717; reprinted in 1718
- Controversy erupted within a year



Thomas Boston and the Marrow Men

- 1719: the existing Committee for Purity of Doctrine instructed to examine *The Marrow*
- Condemned in 1720
- 1721: Boston publishes an annotated version of *The Marrow*; he and twelve others filed a petition in support of it
- 1722: The “Marrow Men” were formally rebuked



What's at stake here?

- “It is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ.”
- The general assembly found that this statement made the error of *antinomianism* - a rejection of the law.
- They held instead to a view known as “neonomianism” - the view that the OT law is replaced by the “new law” of the gospel, requiring faith and repentance before salvation can be offered.
- Boston and the Marrow Men believed that this view was more than a technical error: “the gospel-doctrine has got a root-stroke by the condemning of that book.”

What's at stake here?

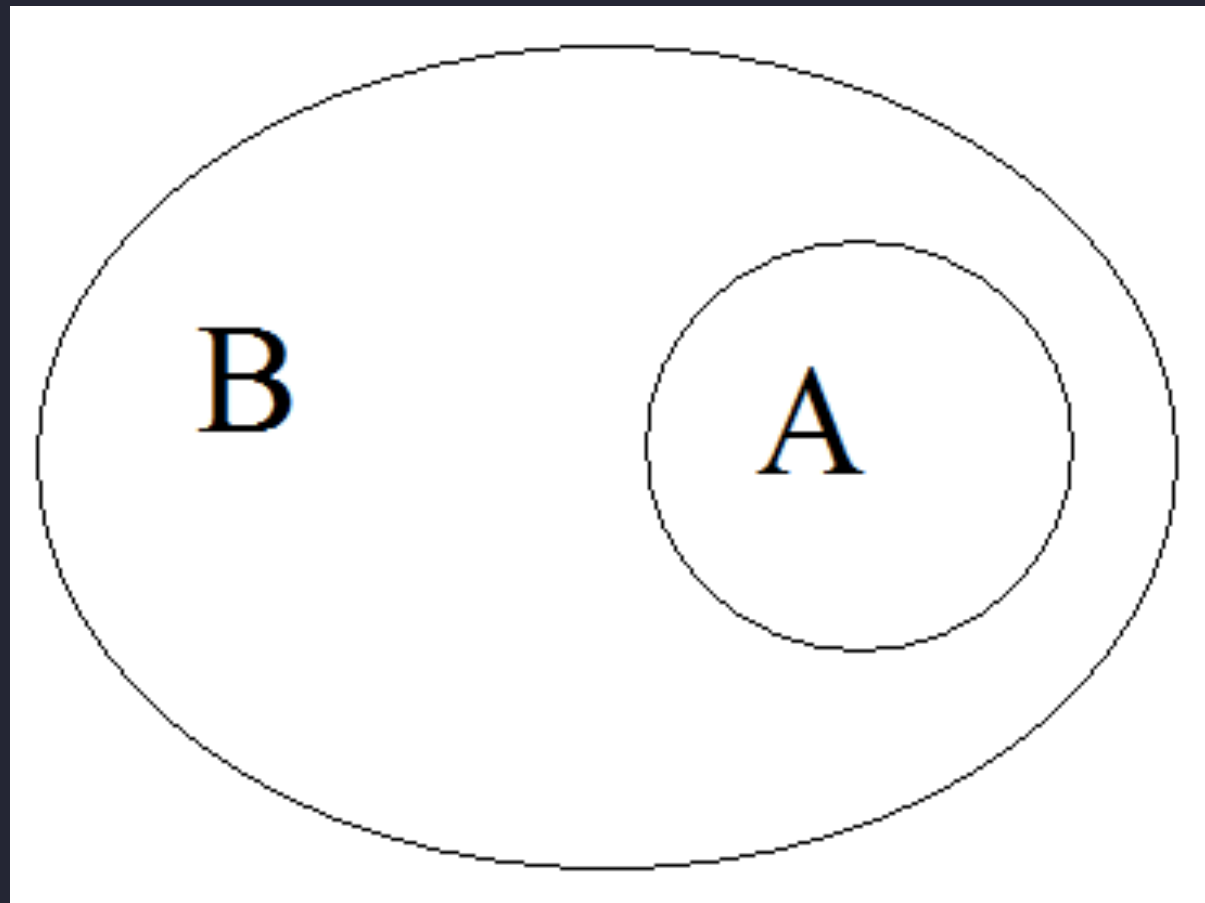
- The question becomes: to whom can the offer of salvation be made? Does John 3:16 mean that the gospel can be proclaimed to ALL the world, or are there limits?
- To be clear, the Marrow Men were NOT teaching
 - Universal atonement (that all are saved)
 - Arminianism (that all can freely choose salvation, and so the ultimate determinant of my salvation is my choice)
- They were insisting that grace is *free* and - more importantly - that salvation is found in Christ, not in Christ's benefits. Both imply that there are *no* preconditions for coming to Christ.

Necessary, not Sufficient!

- The view of the neonomians was something like the following:
 - 1: The grace of God saves the elect.
 - 2: The elect are known by the forsaking of sin.
 - Therefore, grace is given to those who forsake sin.

Necessary, not Sufficient!

- But confuses the *fruit* of salvation with a *condition* for salvation!
- It makes grace less than *free*, and it makes it less than *full*.



Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” - Acts 16:30-31

Five Errors (easy for reformed Christians to make)

- 1. Christ was being separated from his benefits in the preaching of the gospel.
 - The benefits belong to the elect
 - So the benefits must be offered to the elect only
 - And we must know who they are first, by the forsaking of sin.
- What's the remedy? To say – not the benefits of Christ are for you, but Christ is for you, Christ's death is for you.

Five Errors (easy for reformed Christians to make)

- 2. Those opposed by the Marrow Men preached a conditional offer of the gospel.
 - You may know these benefits if you are among the elect.
 - Instead of, you may know Christ, period.
- We can still do this, very subtly - we may make conviction a condition rather than a tool God may use to bring men to Christ – a condition rather than a fruit.
- Or we can teach the “order of salvation” as if it were a 12-step program, rather than relating all of salvation to union with Christ

Five Errors (easy for reformed Christians to make)

- 3. The character of God itself was being distorted
 - “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” - John 3:16-17
 - “...God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ...while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...” - Romans 5:8, 10
 - “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!” - Isaiah 55:1

Five Errors (easy for reformed Christians to make)

- 3. The character of God itself was being distorted
 - To make grace conditional implies that God's heart is being twisted around by our merits, or by the Son.
 - *Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 28: The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it.
 - “Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive. ... Thus Christ says: “For I come not to call the righteous but sinners” [Matt. 9:13]. ... This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good that it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person.”

Five Errors (easy for reformed Christians to make)

- 3. The character of God itself was being distorted
 - Boston even questioned the covenant of redemption because he could not imagine grace being conditional on anything, even on the faithfulness of Christ.
 - God does not love us because Christ has persuaded him – he loves us from first to last, and therefore he sends Christ.
 - *Opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* - Augustine
 - “The love of the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit, to lost sinners is shared, unanimous love. The tritheistic fantasy of a loving Son placating an unloving Father and commandeering an apathetic Holy Spirit in order to save us is a distressing nonsense.” - J.I. Packer

Five Errors (easy for reformed Christians to make)

- 4. Our attitude toward one another is distorted.
 - Legalism and antinomianism are more than doctrinal positions - they reflect the deeper stance of our heart
 - Limits placed on:
 - Hospitality
 - Forgiveness and reconciliation
 - Evangelism

Five Errors (easy for reformed Christians to make)

- 5. Pastoral ministry is distorted.
 - It produces pastors who can only offer grace conditionally.
 - It produces pastors who can only love conditionally.
 - It produces pastors who can only preach the love of God conditionally.
 - Jonah, elder brother

The Marrow of the Matter

- Note that both antinomianism and neonomianism discard the actual law!
- More importantly, both antinomianism and all forms of legalism misunderstand the law in the same way - as a burden, not a delight.
- They aren't opposite ends of a spectrum with a happy medium
- The remedy for antinomianism is not legalism, nor vice versa!
- The remedy for both is simply the gospel, simply Christ, simply the love of God for you in Christ