

ASSURANCE OF FAITH: PROMISES, INWARD EVIDENCES, AND THE SPIRIT'S WITNESS

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I am grateful to have the opportunity to address you tonight on the cardinal subject of personal assurance of faith, that is to say, personal assurance of one's own salvation in Jesus Christ. This subject has particular bearing upon us since so many believers in our circles struggle with whether or not they possess saving faith. Often true children of God among us are prone to think that assurance is something you either have in full or don't have at all, not realizing that there are various kinds and degrees of assurance that God's people experience throughout their spiritual pilgrimage.

My goals for this evening are straightforward. First, I shall underscore by way of introduction the centrality of faith and the importance of growing in assurance. Second, I wish to set before you our contemporary need for considering the subject of assurance of faith. Third, I will briefly expound some major Puritan teachings about assurance which were established by the 1640s when the classic Puritan symbol, the Westminster Confession of Faith (hereafter: WCF or the Confession), was composed. Fourth, I hope to make use of the Confession, chapter 18, section 2 (WCF 18.2) as a focal point for discussing the Puritan view of three grounds of assurance of faith: God's promises in Christ, inward evidences of grace, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. The Confession's entire eighteenth chapter, and particularly its second paragraph, is the greatest confessional statement ever composed on assurance from the Reformed perspective. Finally, I will seek to draw several conclusions which have direct bearing upon present scholarship and our personal lives.

The Centrality of Saving Faith

In addressing assurance of faith, we must understand in the very first place that its importance is obviously great since it relates intimately to the centrality of saving faith. The doctrine of saving faith is of central importance to the Christian faith for numerous reasons. I will only mention three of these.

First, faith lies at the heart of the believer's relationship to God and to life itself. Its comprehensive nature is summarized by Paul when he speaks of "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Paul affirms that the man of faith wrestles to bring his entire being under the lordship of Christ in order to live wholly to God.

Second, saving faith is essential to the true study of Christian theology. Theology properly undertaken is never divorceable from faith. Faith must not only enter into the presuppositional area of theology; it must also permeate hermeneutics (i.e. the interpretation of Scripture) and filter through the content of every theological field.

Third and most important for our consideration in this address, saving faith is **the seedbed of every kind and degree of personal assurance** of salvation. Assurance that flows from each exercise of faith, applied promises, inward evidences of grace, and the witness of the Spirit enables the believer to live in comfort and peace. Our personal need is to live by assuring faith, as the Reformers were fond of saying, **in coram Deo** (in the face of God), i.e. to live with a daily, consciousness of God that esteems, in the words of John Brown, "the smiles and frowns of God to be of greater value than the smiles and frowns of men." To live victoriously through the power of assuring faith which overcomes the world, we need to trust God and His promises more than ourselves and our vows. And is not that what assurance is all about--to be so assured of the love of God towards us in Christ that we trust the Lord more than ourselves? Assured faith believes with the psalmist, "The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee" (Ps. 139:12b).

Assured faith trusts God in times of intense trials, in times of bearing seemingly unbearable

afflictions, in times when our lives seem to make no sense, when everything seems to be a gnarled mess. Especially then assured faith leans hard on God. It trusts Him as Persian workmen trust a Persian rugmaker who ascends scaffolding to weave his rugs, calling down to the workmen below for a variety of colors of yarn--including dark and black strings which symbolize affliction. In unconditional obedience the workmen hand the rugmaker whatever color of yarn he commands. From underneath they only see a gnarled mess which makes no sense. Nevertheless, they continue to believe that the rugmaker knows what he is doing and will utilize all the dark and black strings to form a balanced and beautiful rug. They believe that each string of yarn has its place and that one day the rugmaker will invite them to ascend the scaffolding to gaze in awe upon the final product. Similarly, assured faith trusts God as divine rugmaker who patterns the life of the believer in such a way that all things--dark and black providences inclusive--shall work together for good to them that love Him (Rom. 8:28). Assured faith testifies, "What God is doing now, I do not know. All appears to be a gnarled mess. But I shall know hereafter. The eternal day is coming when God as rugmaker shall call me to see the finished product of my life. Then I shall confess that He has not used one too many or one too few black strings" (cf. Jn. 13:7).

Assured faith learns to hand God black strings without complaint. Assured faith believes that God makes no mistakes. Assured faith says: "Here am I, do with me what seems good in Thy sight."

Our Reformation and post-Reformation forebears were intimately acquainted with this richness of assuring faith. Particularly John Calvin, the great sixteenth-century Reformer, and his successors, the Calvinists, were acutely aware of the weight their theology placed on the concept of saving faith. No wonder the questions surfaced: Is saving faith sufficient to the task? If the wide calling of faith is rooted in our personal relationship with God, from which we gain strength to implement various aspects of faith's broad mandate for the whole of life, how may we be certain of the solidity of faith? How is faith related to personal assurance of salvation? Is there assurance in faith itself? More practically, is it possible to have faith without assurance? If so, does not faith lose its **vitality** and assurance its **normativity**?

In dealing with these faith/assurance questions, the Reformation and post-Reformation theologians struggled against Roman Catholicism's assertion that no forms of assurance were normative. But they so struggled largely because their supreme goal was allegiance to Scripture and its authority. At root, they were wrestling with biblical data, exegesis, and hermeneutics, for Scripture displays a formidable tension: vital faith and some kind of normative assurance, conjoined with the possibility of lacking assurance.

On the one hand, Scripture describes faith as "the substance [or assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), thereby confirming assurance as belonging to faith. Moreover, the experience of scores of Bible saints (such as David in Psalm 23 or Paul in 2 Timothy 1:12) and biblical exegesis underscore that faith includes an element of assurance.¹

Nevertheless, certain portions of Scripture, and especially the Psalms, indicate that believers occasionally experience an unrelieved absence of the consciousness of divine favor. Scripture portrays an assurance-lacking believer in David in Psalm 38, in Asaph in Psalm 73, in Heman in Psalm 88. Indeed, Psalm 88 expresses a petition for deliverance from death in which the pervasive theme is one of bleak despondency and painful lack of awareness of God's grace. Moreover, by repeated admonitions to aspire after assurance, the New Testament also recognizes the possible lack of assurance in the Christian's life. Peter urges: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). And Paul exhorts saints to press on for development of assurance in Philippians 1:6.

Contemporary Need for Considering Assurance

The centrality of saving faith, the need for personal trust in God, the Reformers' questions, and biblical tensions relative to faith and assurance--all of this and more guarantees that assurance

of faith will ever remain a contemporary subject. It is paramount that we ask ourselves: How can I experience ever greater measures of personal assurance of faith?

Nevertheless, you may ask: What does all this have to do with our needs today? Do we still need to wrestle with scriptural tensions and faith/assurance questions in our secular age? I believe assurance is a more critical doctrine than ever before for at least five reasons.

First, the fruits of genuine assurance are, for the most part, sorely lacking in the contemporary church. The church is crippled with a comparative absence of strong and full assurance and, perhaps worst of all, most of us are scarcely aware of it. We live in a day of minimal, not maximal, assurance. How do we know this? Assurance is known by its fruits: a close life of fellowship with God; a tender, filial relationship with God; a thirsting after God and spiritual exercises that extol Him. Assurance is not a self-given, but a Spirit-applied certainty which moves the believer Godward through Christ. Assurance is the opposite of self-satisfaction and secularization. Assurance is God-centered; it evidences godliness, while not relying on personal righteousness or service for justification. Wherever assurance is vibrant, a concern for God's honor is present. Mission-mindedness prevails. Assured believers view heaven as their home and long for the second advent of Christ and their translation to glory (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Compared to the Reformers and post-Reformers, the church is seriously impoverished in her spiritual exercises. The desire to fellowship with God, the sense of the reality of heaven, and the relish for God's glory, appear to fall short of a former day. Whenever the church's emphasis on earthly good dominates the conviction that she is travelling through this world on her way to God and glory, assurance is at a low ebb (Heb. 11).

Second, assurance of faith is sorely needed today for it is inseparable from genuine revival and conviction of sin. Revival is sorely needed in our day and we ought not forget that every true revival has been connected with the recovery of assuring faith. How true this was, for example, of Martin Luther! Read Luther on Galatians. Did he not burn with indignation for the way the church left people in uncertainty about salvation? Luther teemed with the assurance that flows out of the gospel. Search his writings 475 years later and you still feel the power of what he is saying. In Luther's day there was a great recovery of assurance.

There is, of course, another reason why assurance revives in times of awakening. The first precursor and forerunner of every revival is conviction of sin; sinners become bowed down with the burden of need and guilt. When guilt is a conscious experience, the most precious thing in the world is to be persuaded of forgiveness in Christ. That is why assurance is always brought back to the foreground in the face of real soul-need.

Third, strong assurance is necessary for you as college or university students if you are to be God-honoring students in days like these--days of great secularization and controversy. The gospel has always been difficult to live out in the world. But there are times and seasons when gospel-opposition is especially intense. We are surely living in such a time. We are living in a bruising time. We are called to be lights on the hill in the thick of spiritual battle, while the devil is spearheading apostasy on all sides and especially from within higher education. Through satanic impulse, the world has not only taken over colleges and universities, but is also invading the church. If revival is to dawn, it will almost certainly involve young people--particularly college and university students, as the history of revivals affirms. Let us pray earnestly for revival through the power of Spirit-worked assurance in our hearts.

Fourth, we live in a day when the doctrine of assurance is sorely needed because doctrine itself is largely despised. Few understand Martin Luther's assertion: "Doctrine is heaven." Assurance is the nerve center of doctrine put in "use," as the Puritans would say. Assurance affiliates with the work of the Spirit in relation to the doctrines of faith, repentance, justification, sanctification, conversion, adoption, sealing, perseverance, anointing, witnessing, obedience, sin, grace, atonement, and union with Christ. Assurance is inseparable from the marks and steps of grace. It touches on the issue of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, is intimately

connected with Holy Scripture, and flows out of election, the promises of God, and the covenant of grace. It is fortified by preaching, the sacraments, and prayer. Assurance is broadsweeping in scope, profound in depth, and glorious in height. As Dr. Clair Davis has said, "You could almost write a systematic theology under the theme and framework of assurance."

The contemporary church is undergoing a crisis of confidence and authority, and therefore of assurance. A renewal of assurance is sorely needed. If such assurance were more widely experienced, the church's vitality would be renewed, and she would live more zealously for the kingdom of Christ in all spheres of life.

Finally, our difficulties are compounded in our culture by the powerful emphasis on "feeling." "How we feel" takes predominance over "how we believe." This spirit has infiltrated the church also, which for the most part is bowing before the shrine of human feeling rather than before the living God. This spirit is most notable in what we call "the charismatic or pentecostal movement," which appeals to emotion in protest against a formal, lifeless Christianity. We profit little by reacting against the charismatic movement without understanding why it has such a worldwide appeal. Its appeal is related to the lack of genuine assurance of faith which manifests itself in godly living.

We have a special responsibility in this regard to show a better way. Happily, we do not have to start from scratch. Our scriptural, Reformed, experimental faith properly marries "head" and "heart" knowledge, faith and feeling. It is well-known that numerous post-Reformationⁱⁱ orthodox theologians and Puritanⁱⁱⁱ pastors wrestled in their preaching and writing with ascertaining the precise relationship of the Christian's personal assurance of salvation and his saving faith. Their labor for theological precision in this area gave rise to a fine-tuned technical vocabulary which included such distinctions as assurance of faith and assurance of sense; the direct (**actus directus**) and reflexive (**actus reflectus**) acts of faith; the practical (**sylogismus practicus**) and mystical (**sylogismus mysticus**) syllogisms; the principle (**habitus**) and acts (**actus**) of faith; and the being and well-being of faith. Such terminology was used to elaborate upon addressing assurance with regard to its possibilities, kinds, degrees, foundations, experiences, means, obstacles, and fruits.

The Puritan doctrine of assurance was formally codified by the Westminster Assembly in chapter 18 of the WCF. This chapter contains four sections: 18.1 addresses the possibility of assurance; 18.2, the foundation of assurance; 18.3, the cultivation of assurance; 18.4, the renewal of assurance. For our purposes, we will limit ourselves to a consideration of 18.2, which contains the pith of the WCF's statement on assurance.

Puritan Thought on Assurance by the 1640s

Prior to examining the WCF 18.2 however, it is important to briefly summarize Puritan thought on assurance by the 1640s. At least twenty-five members of the assembly had written treatises pertinent to the doctrines of faith and assurance prior to the assembly's convening.^{iv} By the 1640s English Puritan thought, notwithstanding various emphases, was nearly unanimous on several distinctives with respect to assurance.^v

First, the Puritans taught that **saving faith** and **developed assurance** must be distinguished. Though saving faith inherently contains trust and assurance by definition (as there is no doubt in faith and its exercises), full assurance of personal salvation must be regarded as a **fruit** of faith rather than of faith's **essence**.^{vi}

Since the Puritans did not deny that there was some assurance in every exercise of faith, they could speak at times of all believers possessing assurance.^{vii} More commonly, however, by "assurance" they intended mature, self-conscious faith that is full-grown. In this sense, assurance is not of the essence of faith, but of the "cream of faith."

This dual use of the term assurance helps explain why the Puritans can state simultaneously that "assurance is not of the essence of a Christian" and yet is organically of the essence of faith.

R. M. Hawkes rightly notes, "While the Puritans distinguish full assurance from the initial trust of faith, they will not allow a division between the two, for full assurance grows out of an assurance implicit in the first act of faith."^{viii} Hence they can speak of assurance growing out of faith as well as of faith growing into assurance. Typical is Thomas Brooks' assertion, "Faith, in time, will of its own accord raise and advance itself to assurance."^{ix}

This distinction between faith and assurance had profound doctrinal and pastoral implications for the Puritans. To make justification dependent upon assurance would compel the believer to rely upon his own subjective condition rather than on the sufficiency of a triune God in the order of redemption. Such reliance is not only unsound doctrine, but also bears adverse pastoral effects. God does not require full and perfect faith, but sincere and "unfeigned" faith. Fulfilment of God's promises depends on the matter received, Christ's righteousness, and not upon the degree of assurance exercised in the receiving.^x If salvation depended on the full assurance of faith, John Downname observes, many would despair for then "the palsied hand of faith should not receive Christ."^{xi} Happily, salvation's sureness does not rest on the believer's sureness of his salvation, for "believers do not have the same assurance of grace and favor of God, nor do the same ones have it at all times."^{xii} Pastorally, it is critical to maintain that justifying faith and the experience of doubt often coexist.

Second, the Puritans teach that though personal assurance must never be divorced from a Trinitarian framework, its realization within the believer may be ascribed especially to the **economical work of the Holy Spirit**: (1) through an application of God's promises in Christ which the believer appropriates by faith, (2) through a reflex act of faith inseparable from the so-called syllogisms discussed below, and (3) through the Spirit's direct witness by the Word to the believer's conscience that Christ is **his** Savior and has forgiven **his** sins.^{xiii} Thus, the Spirit enables the believer to reach assurance in varying degrees through a variety of means.^{xiv} Without the Holy Spirit, there can be no authentic assurance.

Third, Puritans assert that this assuring, sealing work of the Spirit is based upon the sure **covenant of grace** and the **saving work of Christ**, which in turn is grounded in God's sovereign good pleasure and love in eternal **election**.^{xv} Assurance flows out of the objective certainty that God cannot and will not disinherit His adopted children. His covenant cannot be broken or annulled, for it is "fixed" in His eternal decree and promises.

Consequently, the believer may plead for the fulfilment of the covenant on the ground that God is obliged to act in accord with His covenant promises. Many Puritans gave the same basic advice for obtaining forgiveness of sins, sanctification, deliverance in afflictions, and virtually every spiritual need: "Plead the covenant hard with God . . . Go to God now, and tell him it is a part of his Covenant to deliver thee, and . . . take no denyall, though the Lord may deferre long, yet he will doe it, he cannot chuse; for it is part of his Covenant. . . and he cannot be a Covenant-breaker."^{xvi} On occasion, they even spoke of "suing God for grace." "The more we urge him with his covenant," Robert Harris wrote, "and hold him to it, the better he likes it and the sooner he inclines to us."^{xvii} Perry Miller emphasizes this dimension of Puritan thinking:

The end of the Covenant of Grace is to give security to the transactions between God and men, for by binding God to the terms, it binds Him to save those who make good the terms.^{xviii}

Miller, however, tends to exaggerate the covenant in Puritan thought as if it weakened or even usurped divine predestination. In fact, election and covenant ride in tandem, reinforcing each other as William Stoeber notes:

Puritan covenant theology offered troubled saints a double source of assurance. It allowed them to plead the covenant with God, importuning him to fulfil his part of the bargain by

performing what he had promised; and it encouraged them to seek comfort in the sufficiency of prevenient grace and in the immutability of God's will in election, which underlay the covenant itself and their own participation in it.^{xix}

God's **absolute promises** in election and covenant are solid pillars for increasing weak faith. They help to convince the believer that even if the exercise or acts of faith are lacking at a given moment, the principle or "habit" of faith "cannot be utterly lost," for faith's roots lie in the electing, covenantal God.^{xx} Consequently, not even sin can break the covenant from God's side.^{xxi}

From the believer's side, however, there is in Puritan thought also a **conditional** dimension of the covenant which plays a critical role in assurance. "The absolute promises are laid before us as the foundation of our salvation . . . and the conditional as the foundation of our assurance."^{xxii} The conditional promises are inseparable from the believer's daily renewal of the covenant by means of prayer, meditation, and worship. Particularly the sacraments serve as important seasons for covenant-renewal.^{xxiii} "To gather up assurance from the conditions of the covenant," wrote Thomas Blake, "is the highest pitch of Christianity."^{xxiv}

Fourth, though assurance is not perfect in this life in degree, being subject to doubt and trial, it must never be regarded lightly, but ought to be diligently sought after through the means of grace.^{xxv} Assurance so gleaned may be considered well-grounded, however, only when it is regarded as a sovereign gift of God and when it evidences the fruits of a new heart and life. These fruits include humiliation, self-denial, "reuerent feare" for God's will, eagerness to serve and please the Lord, a "sincere" love for God and the saints, an intense cleaving to Christ, peace and joy in receiving the Spirit's benefits, and good works.^{xxvi}

For the Puritans, the principle or "habit" of faith is never the whole of faith. A consistently inactive faith is false faith, as John Preston affirms:

A woman many times thinkes she is with childe, but if she finde no motion or stirring, it is an arguement she was deceived: So, when a man thinkes he hath faith in his heart, but yet he finds no life, no motion, no stirring, there is no work proceeding from his faith, it is an argument he was mistaken, hee was deceived in it: for if it be a right faith, it will worke, there will be life and motion in it.^{xxvii}

Though the Puritans deny works-righteousness on the one hand against the "legalist," they also reject the notion of assurance which rests on formal, lifeless doctrine against the cold "professor" of Christianity. Works can never merit salvation but are necessary as fruits of salvation out of grateful obedience and in dependence upon God.

Westminster Confession of Faith, 18.2

Having briefly considered Puritan thought on assurance by the 1640s, we are now in a position to turn to an examination of the WCF, chapter 18.2:

This certainty [i.e., the certainty of personal assurance of faith] is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.^{xxviii}

After the WCF presents in 18.1 a threefold possibility in relation to assurance (false assurance, true assurance, and a lack of true assurance), 18.2 addresses the critical matter of the foundations of assurance. In approaching 18.2, it is imperative to grasp that the foundations of **assurance** (or, if you will, grounds^{xxix}) must not be confused with the foundations of **salvation**.^{xxx}

As John Murray clarifies:

When we speak of the grounds of assurance, we are thinking of the ways in which a believer comes to entertain this assurance, not of the grounds on which his salvation rests. The grounds of salvation are as secure for the person who does not have full assurance as for the person who has.^{xxxix}

In this pointed sense 18.2 presents a "complex"^{xxxix} ground of assurance, which could be categorized into a **primary objective ground** ("divine truth of the promises of salvation") and two **secondary subjective grounds** ("the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made," and "the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits"). When combined, assurance of salvation is affirmed by these three grounds.

Primary Ground: Divine Promises in Christ

In the first place, 18.2 points to "the divine truth of the promises of salvation" as a ground for assurance. This emphasis bears several ramifications.

First, 18.2 affirms from the outset that the believer does not gain assurance by looking at himself or anything he has produced apart from God's promises, but primarily by looking to God's faithfulness in Christ as He is revealed in the promises of the gospel. "This assurance," writes John Owen, "did not arise nor was taken from any thing that was peculiar unto [the believer,] but merely from the consideration of the faithfulness of God himself."^{xxxix} By placing the first ground of assurance in the promises of God, 18.2 underscores that the believer does not qualify himself in any degree for God's gifts or grace. Unworthy sinners find assurance through Spirit-worked faith which believes the gospel, i.e., that God has given His Son to the death of the cross, so that forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life are all free gifts. The same promises of the gospel that lead to salvation are also sufficient to lead to assurance.^{xxxix}

Second, by stressing God's promises, the WCF immediately brings to the fore the Christ-centeredness of personal assurance, for Jesus Christ Himself is the "summe, fountaine, seal, treasury of all the promises."^{xxxix} In Him, the promises of God are "yea and amen" (2 Cor 1:20). As Rutherford states in his **Catechism**:

The new covenant is a masse of promises laying the weight of our salvatione upon a stronger than wee ar, to witt upon Christ, and faith grippeth [i.e., grasps or seizes hold of] promises and maketh us to goe out of ourselves to Christ as being homelie [i.e., familiar] with Christ.^{xxxix}

Thomas Brooks provides this practical conclusion of such Christ-centeredness in assurance: "Let thy eye and heart, first, most, and last, be fixed upon Christ, then will assurance bed and board with thee."^{xxxix}

Third, the assembly's divines emphasized that though subjective phenomena may sometimes **feel** more sure than faith in God's promises, in fact they provide a flimsy foundation by comparison with divine promises that faith apprehends directly. "The promises of God are a Christian's **magna charta**, his chiefest evidences for heaven," quips Brooks, and then proceeds to provide nine marks as to how "a person may know whether he has a real and saving interest in the promises or no."^{xxxix} "A promise once given unto a soul, shall never be reversed or repealed," adds William Bridge, "and have ye not the whole gospel before you [as] a bag of golden promises?"^{xxxix}

The Puritan composers of the WCF were consistent in reminding believers that the **objective** promise embraced by faith (never **apart** from faith) is infallible because it is **God's** all-comprehensive and faithful covenant promise.^{xl} Consequently, **subjective** evidence must always be based upon the promise and be regarded as secondary, for such is often mixed with **human** convictions and feelings even when it gazes upon the work of God. In fact, all exercises of

saving faith apprehend, to some degree, the primary ground of divine promise in Christ.

Such were the convictions of the authors of the Confession. By placing a heavier accent than Calvin and the early Reformers on the secondary, subjective grounds, they did not part from the company of the Reformers. Rather, their varying emphases are related to the somewhat different questions being raised in the early and later Reformation eras. Calvin was concerned largely with the assurance of God's benevolence; the Puritans, with the assurance of personal faith.^{xli} Calvin focussed on the certainty of salvation in Christ; the Puritans dwelt on how the believer could be assured of his own salvation in Christ.^{xlii} It is not surprising that questions raised with different emphases received answers with different emphases. Calvin's teachings surfaced fresh pastoral questions which needed to be answered in subsequent generations. When the throes of the initial Reformation had subsided, a pressing need arose for detailed pastoral guidance with regard to how objective truth is certified in the subjective consciousness.

Consequently, the Puritans utilized God's work to solidify weak believers in their assured grasp of salvation by directing them, in the tradition of Beza and Perkins, to grasp any link of the order of salvation in order to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). As John Downname concludes: "When we are to gather assurance of our election, we are to begin where the Lord endeth, and so ascend from the lowest degree [of sanctification] till wee come to the highest."^{xliii}

Secondary Ground #1: Inward Evidences verified by Syllogisms

The Puritans coveted a life that evidenced Christ's internal presence. Nevertheless, "**Christ within**" became their **seat of assurance** (note: not seat of faith) only on the basis of "**Christ without**." They eschewed two kinds of religion, one that separated subjective experience from the objective Word (both living and written) in an unbiblical form of mysticism (see the WCF, 1.6), and one that presumed salvation on the fallacious grounds of historical or temporary faith. Consequently, the Puritans were convinced that the grace of God within believers serves as an important confirmation for the reality of their faith, and thereby assists in confirming assurance as well: "Hee that doth rightly understand the promise of the covenant, cannot be sure of his salvation, unlesse he perceiv in himselfe true Faith and repentance."^{xliiv} They often viewed this grace of God within believers in terms of syllogisms which utilize the so-called reflex or reflective act of faith.^{xliv} By means of the reflex act of faith, the Holy Spirit sheds light upon His own work in the believer's life, enabling him to conclude that his faith is saving because its exercises or acts partake of a saving character. Anthony Burgess predicates:

There are first the **direct acts** of the soul, whereby it is carried out immediately to some object. And there are secondly **reflex acts**, whereby the soul considers and takes notice of what acts it doth. It's as if the eye were turned inward to see it self. The Apostle John expresses it fully, **We know that we know**, 1 John 2:3. So that when we believe in God, that is a direct act of the soul; when we repent of sin, because God is dishonoured, that is a direct act; but when we know that we do believe, and that we do repent, this is a reflex act.^{xlvi}

The Puritans taught that two closely related, yet distinct, syllogisms should be used to fortify assurance--the "practical syllogism" (**syllogismus practicus**) and the "mystical syllogism" (**syllogismus mysticus**).^{xlvii}

The practical syllogism was based largely on the believer's **sanctification and good works as evidenced in practical, daily life**. It tended to accent the believer's life of new obedience which expressed and confirmed his experience of grace. It went something like this. **Major premise:** According to Scripture, only those who possess saving faith will receive the Spirit's testimony that their lives manifest fruits of sanctification and good works. **Minor premise:** I cannot deny that by the grace of God I have received the Spirit's testimony that I may manifest fruits of sanctification

and good works. **Conclusion:** Consequently, I may be assured that I am a partaker of saving faith.

The mystical syllogism was based largely on the believer's **internal exercises and progress in the steps of grace**. It tended to focus on the inward man and went something like this. **Major premise:** According to Scripture, only those who possess saving faith will experience the Spirit's testimony confirming inward grace and godliness, such that self will decrease and Christ will increase. **Minor premise:** I cannot deny that by the grace of God I may experience the Spirit's testimony confirming inward grace and godliness such that self decreases and Christ increases. **Conclusion:** Consequently, I may be assured that I am a partaker of saving faith.

By the 1640s the **sylogismus mysticus** had reached a degree of acceptability among the Puritans on a par with that of the **sylogismus practicus**.^{xlviii} The practical syllogism is usually related to such texts as 2 Peter 1:5-10 (virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love),^{xlix} and a variety of texts from 1 John stressing the Christian walk. For example, "hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (3:14). "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God" (5:2).

The mystical syllogism is enforced by such inward "evidences of the life of grace," to which William Twisse ascribes "a desire to be free from hypocrisie, to be in a comfortable condition by a true and sincere faith in Christ, . . . [as well as] generall grounds of consolation, such as these: Blessed are they that mourne . . . and that hunger & thirst after righteousness."^l

As might be expected, the Puritans were also aware of possible voluntaristic (i.e. "free will") overtones in the "reflex act," and hence took pains to keep it within the confines of the doctrines of grace. This they sought to do by further analyzing the syllogism.

First, the syllogism itself was regarded as rooted in God and regarded as the work of the Spirit. All believers were forbidden to trust in their **own** trusting (i.e., apart from the Spirit) or the conclusions they drew from it.^{li} Second, the syllogism was regarded as flowing out of the living Word, Jesus Christ,^{lii} and based on the written Word for its very framework.^{liii} The reflex act of faith arises from the believer seeing in himself **Christ's** "special, peculiar, and distinguishing graces"^{liiv} as they conform to the Word of God.^{liv} Third, the Confession's divines qualified the syllogism and reflex act by allowing it only a secondary status.^{lvi} Thomas Goodwin warns of inviting desertion or engendering false assurance if the syllogism is inflated in importance.^{lvii} And William Bridge exhorts:

When a man draws his comfort only from something that he finds within himself; from grace that he finds within, and not from grace without, then his comfort will not hold. . . . Grace without is perpetual, that is to say, Christ's own personal obedience, in the merit of it, is perpetual. But the actings of grace within us are not perpetual, or not perpetually obvious to sight, and therefore cannot perpetually comfort. . . . When therefore, you see the streams of a man's comfort run in this channel, when he draws all his comfort only or principally from . . . the actings of grace within, then you may say: Though the stream be now full, stay but a little, and ere long you will see it dried, and this man will be much discouraged.^{lviii}

Consequently, the Puritans advised their parishioners to "be sure that the first, and far greater part of your time, pains, and care, and inquiries, be for the getting and increasing of your grace, than for the discerning it. . . . See that you ask ten times at least, How should I get or increase my faith, my love to Christ, and to his people? for once that you ask, How shall I know that I believe or love?"^{lix}

Secondary Ground #2: The witnessing testimony of the Spirit

The composers of the WCF knew that the witnessing of the Holy Spirit was the most difficult ground of assurance to comprehend. They freely confessed that vast mysteries surrounded them when they spoke of the leadings of the Spirit and how He dwells in believers. One significant

reason the assembly did not detail more specifically what the Spirit's testimony is in assurance was to allow for the freedom of the Spirit in His assuring witness. A second, interwoven reason was that the assembly desired to allow freedom of conscience to the divines actually present who varied in their opinions concerning some of the finer details of the Spirit's testimony. These may be relegated to three groups.

In the first group are those divines, such as Jeremiah Burroughs,^{lx} Anthony Burgess,^{lxi} and George Gillespie,^{lxii} who view the witnessing testimony of the Holy Spirit in assurance as referring exclusively to His activity within the syllogisms, whereby He brings conscience to unite with His witness that the Christian is a child of God. According to this view the witness of the Holy Spirit is always conjoined with the witness of the believer's spirit; Romans 8:15 and 8:16 are synonymous.^{lxiii}

For these divines, the breakdown of secondary grounds of assurance is really nonexistent, as the inward evidence of grace and the testimony of the Spirit are essentially one. The syllogisms are "full" assurance. In each case, these divines felt this view was important to maintain in opposition to mysticism and Antinomianism which are prone to accent a direct testimony of the Spirit devoid of the necessity of bringing forth practical fruits of faith and repentance.

In the second group are those divines (such as Rutherford, Twisse, Scudder, and Goodwin) who believe that the witness of the Spirit described in Romans 8:15 contains something in addition to that of verse 16.^{lxiv} This group distinguishes the Spirit witnessing with the believer's spirit by syllogism from His witnessing to the believer's spirit by direct applications of the Word. As Meyer points out, the former leaves in its wake the self-conscious conviction, "I am a child of God," and on the basis of such Spirit-worked syllogisms finds freedom to approach God as Father. The latter speaks the Spirit's pronouncement on behalf of the Father, "You are a child of God," and on this basis of hearing of its sonship from God's own Word by the Spirit, proceeds to approach Him with the familiarity of a child.^{lxv}

The third group, which may be regarded as a subset of the second **theologically**, places the event of "immediate" assurance by direct witness of the Holy Spirit on a higher level **practically**.^{lxvi} Some of the Confession's divines, such as William Bridge and Samuel Rutherford, belonging to the second group, believe that such assurance becomes the portion of many Christians before they die.^{lxvii} Others, however, such as Thomas Goodwin, influenced by the Dutch Second Reformation and the Cotton-Preston tradition in Puritanism,^{lxviii} place this experience far above the pale of the ordinary believer. In fact, Goodwin states that the experience of full assurance pronounced by the Spirit "immediately" is so profound that it is comparable to "a new conversion."^{lxix}

In every sense, however, these three groups are united in asserting that the Spirit's testimony is always tied to, and may never contradict, the Word of God. "The Spirit is promised in the Word, and that promise is fulfilled in experience."^{lxx} On the one hand, Antinomianism must be avoided, and on the other, the freedom of the Spirit must be protected.

Conclusion

For the divines of the Westminster assembly, all three grounds of 18.2--faith in God's promises, inward evidences of grace realized through syllogisms, and the witness of the Spirit--must be pursued to obtain as full a measure of assurance as possible by the grace of God. If any of these grounds are unduly emphasized at the expense of others, the whole teaching of assurance becomes imbalanced or even dangerous. No Puritan of the stature of Westminster's assembly of divines would teach that assurance is obtainable by trusting in the promises alone, by inward evidences alone, or by the witness of the Holy Spirit alone. Rather, the Puritans taught that the believer cannot truly trust the promises without the aid of the Holy Spirit, and that he cannot with any degree of safety look upon himself without the enabling enlightenment of the Spirit. Although the Puritanism of the Confession's divines gave the syllogisms a more intrinsic role in assurance and placed greater emphasis upon them than did Calvin,^{lxxi} the promises of God continued to be regarded as the primary ground for assurance.^{lxxii}

At every point in true assurance, the activity of the Spirit is essential. Without the application of the Spirit, the promises of God lead to self-deceit and fruitless lives. Without the enlightening of the Spirit, self-examination tends to introspection, bondage, and legalism. The witness of the Spirit, divorced from the promises of God and from scriptural inward evidences, is prone to reap unbiblical mysticism and excessive emotionalism. For the WCF, these three great strands belong together.

The WCF and its divines fleshed out the doctrine and grounds of assurance with great intensity. The terminology developed, the exposition of entire treatises on assurance, the pastoral overtones of compassion for the weak in faith, the pressing admonitions and invitations to grow in faith--all of this and much more underscore that these divines relished vital union with Christ. The contemporary school of thought, which attributes to the seventeenth-century post-Reformers morbid introspection and man-centeredness has missed the mark. The majority of the Puritans examined personal, spiritual experience microscopically because they were eager to trace the hand of God Triune working in their lives in order to return all glory to the electing Father, redeeming Son, and applying Spirit.^{lxxiii} In doing so, they went beyond Calvin, but had the same goal in mind: **solī Deo gloria**.

Moreover, those who advocate a radical cleavage of the post-Reformers from the Reformers on assurance betray an insensitivity to the unique, historical situation in which the first generation Reformers found themselves--embracing the doctrines of grace with unparalleled zeal and moving forward in a special age with special degrees of assurance.^{lxxiv} It is only to be historically expected that when subsequent generations would emerge, this zeal and love for the truth would cool. Notwithstanding the inherent tensions involved in promoting the syllogisms from the "sideline" they occupied in Calvin's thought to a "mainline" as Graafland asserts, the Puritans were only enlarging for fresh pastoral reasons the "pores" Calvin had already opened in allowing "signs which are sure attestations" of faith.^{lxxv} They aimed with varying degrees of success to lead their flocks by the Spirit into "soundly bottomed assurance," and encouraged them not to rest short of experimental, vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The seeds for the Puritan development of assurance lie in the magisterial Reformers themselves. Calvin and the Puritans find their union in this truth: Assurance is organically united to faith's essence, but it may be possessed without the believer always being conscious of its possession.^{lxxvi}

In sum, the Confession's statements on assurance have as primary goal to lead the believer to make his calling and election sure by being led beyond himself to find everything necessary for time and eternity in the Spirit-applied grace of God in Jesus Christ. As we draw to a close, we need to ask ourselves: Is this also the goal of our lives? Are we experimentally acquainted with saving faith and are we praying for increasing measures of assurance in Christ, despite the fact, as Calvin would say, that "unbelief will not down"?

Let us remember always that our measure of assurance is reflected in our walk of life. Daily we must learn the lessons the Puritans teach us. Our primary grounds of assurance is in the promises of God in Christ. These promises must be applied to our hearts, reap fruits in our lives, and bring us to yearn for the Spirit's corroborating witness with our spirit that we are indeed sons of God. Daily we are called to live fruitful lives, worthy of our measure of assurance, speaking well of our great assuring God, serving by His grace as salt in the earth.

Thus, the bottom-line practical message for the true Christian is simply this: Faith must triumph because it comes from and rests on the triune God and His Word; hence, let us not despair when we do not feel its triumph. Unbelief is of us and rests in us; faith is of Christ and rests in Him.

Let us turn ever more fully to God's promise in Christ, recognizing that our certainty, both objective and subjective, both right and healthy, lies wholly in Christ. As Benjamin B. Warfield's appropriately remarks:

It is not faith that saves, but faith in Jesus Christ. . . . It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but Christ that saves through faith. The saving power resides exclusively,

not in the act of faith or the attitude of faith or the nature of faith, but in the object of faith ...
Christ Himself.^{lxxvii}

It is Christ who shall ultimately win the day in believers through the instrument of faith, for it is He, Calvin wrote, who "wishes to cure the disease [of unbelief] in us, so that among us He may obtain full faith in His promises."^{lxxviii} Let us take courage and seek grace to honor Christ, and through Christ, God Triune. This is what faith and assurance, Calvin and Reformed theology, Scripture and life itself are all about--honoring the triune God through Jesus Christ.

As we move through this world, may our tongues and lives confess of the triune God in Jesus Christ what the great conductor Arturo Toscanini expressed of Beethoven. After brilliantly conducting Beethoven's Ninth Symphony one unforgettable evening, Toscanini received a seemingly endless standing ovation. Toscanini bowed and bowed. He signalled to the orchestra, and its members stood to acknowledge the heartfelt applause. As the applause finally subsided, Toscanini turned, gazed intently at his orchestra, and hoarsely exclaimed: "Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" The musicians leaned forward. Had somebody missed a cue? Had the orchestra flawed the performance?

Finally, Toscanini bared himself: "Gentlemen, I am nothing; gentlemen, you are nothing. But Beethoven--Beethoven is everything... everything!" Oh, may this be the testimony of assurance, by the sovereign grace of God, in every one of us: **the triune God in Jesus Christ is everything... everything... everything!**

i. Cf. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, edited by Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 404ff., especially 428-44.

ii. Post-Reformation is used throughout this article in its more narrow context of largely seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy.

iii. The core of Puritanism has been variously and often broadly defined, but is confined here largely to the composers of the WCF who were pastorally concerned about leading biblical, godly lives within the scope of the Reformed doctrines of grace and who, for the most part, desired to "purify" the church (cf. Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* [New York: Peter Lang, 1991] 129-30n).

iv. John Arrowsmith, William Bridge, Anthony Burgess, Cornelius Burgess, Jeremiah Burroughs, Richard Byfield, Joseph Caryl, Daniel Cawdrey, Thomas Gataker, George Gillespie, Thomas Goodwin, William Gouge, William Greenhill, Robert Harris, John Ley, John Lightfoot, Philip Nye, Edward Reynolds, Samuel Rutherford, Henry Scudder, Obadiah Sedgwick, William Spurstowe, William Twisse, Richard Vines, and Jeremiah Whitaker. Almost all of these authors' treatises pertinent to the doctrine of assurance have been consulted (for bibliography see Beeke, *Assurance of Faith*, 415-49). Deviations among them on assurance are minor, with the exception noted below on the witness of the Spirit.

v. Though a few Puritans who did not attend the Westminster Assembly are utilized in a supportive role in this article since their writings harmonize with the divines of the assembly, the focus is on the WCF and its composers.

The most reliable secondary sources on the Puritan doctrine of assurance are R. H. Hawkes, "The Logic of Assurance in English Puritan Theology," *WTJ* 52 (1990) 247-61; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946) 34-61, 138-41; John von Rohr, "Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism," *CH* 34 (1965) 195-203 and *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 155-91; William K. B. Stoever, "A Fair and Easie Way to Heaven": *Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1978) 119-60.

vi. J. C. Ryle lists numerous extracts from English Puritans "showing that there is a difference between faith and assurance,--that a believer may be justified and accepted with God, and yet not enjoy a comfortable knowledge and persuasion of his own safety,--and that the weakest faith in Christ, if it be true, will save a man as surely as the strongest" (*Assurance* [reprint ed., Houston: Christian Focus, 1989] 125-50).

vii. Robert Harris, *The Way to True Happinesse. Deliuered in xxiv. sermons vpon the beatitudes* (London: I. Bartlett, 1632) 2.51.

viii. "The Logic of Assurance in English Puritan Theology," 250.

ix. *Heaven on Earth* (reprint ed., London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961) 15, 21.

x. John Ball, *A Treatise of Faith* (London: Edward Brewster, 1657) 84-87.

xi. *A Treatise of the True Nature and Definition of Justifying Faith* (Oxford: I. Lichfield for E. Forrest, 1635) 12-13.

xii. William Ames, *Medvlla SS. Theologiae, ex sacris literis, earumque interpretibus, extracts & methodice disposita* (Amstelodami: Joannem Janssonium, 1627) 1.27.19.

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- xiii. Cf. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining or a Treatise of Grace and Assurance* (reprint ed., Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, 1990) 51, 54, 59, 671.
- xiv. Paul Bayne, *A Helpe to trve Happinesse. Or, a briefe and learned exposition of the maine and fundamental points of Christian religion* (London: I. H. for W. Bladen, 1622) 191-92.
- xv. Jeremiah Burroughs, *An Exposition of the Prophecy of Hosea* (reprint ed., Beaver Falls, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1988) 590.
- xvi. John Preston, *The New Covenant or the Saints Portion: A Treatise Unfolding the all-sufficiencie of God, Man's uprightness, and the Covenant of Grace*, 10th ed. (London: I. D. for Nicholas Bourne, 1639) 224-27.
- xvii. *A Treatise of the New Covenant* (London: for Nicholas Bourne, 1632) 2.163.
- xviii. *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939) 389.
- xix. 'A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven,' 147-48.
- xx. Peter Bulkeley, *The Gospel-Covenant; or the Covenant of Grace Opened*, 2nd ed. (London: Matthew Simmons, 1651) 276.
- xxi. Richard Sibbes, *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, ed. with memoir by A. B. Grosart (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1862) 1.220.
- xxii. Bulkeley, *The Gospel-Covenant*, 323-24.
- xxiii. Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought*, 186. Cf. E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) 38-61 for how the Puritans viewed the sacraments as fostering assurance.
- xxiv. *Vindiciae Foederis, or a Treatise of the Covenant of God entered with man-kinde, in the several Kindes and Degrees of it* (London: A. Roper, 1653) 22.
- xxv. William Gouge, *A Learned and very useful Commentary on the whole Epistle to the Hebrews, being the substance of thirty years Wednesdayes lectures at Black-fryers* (repr. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980) 426.
- xxvi. Cf. Cohen, *God's Caress: the Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 101.
- xxvii. *The New Covenant* 2.145.
- xxviii. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper, 1878) 3.638.
- xxix. Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, 75.
- xxx. *Ibid.* 28, contra Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, 204.
- xxxi. *Collected Writings* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980) 2.270.
- xxxii. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification: An Outline of Its History in the Church and of Its Exposition from Scripture* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867) 184.
- xxxiii. *The Works of John Owen* (repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust) 3.367.
- xxxiv. *The Works of William Bridge* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1845) 2.132-33.
- xxxv. Edward Reynolds, *Three Treatises of the Vanity of the Creature. The Sinfulness of Sinne. The Life of Christ* (London: B. B. for Rob Bastocke and George Badger, 1642) 1.365.
- xxxvi. *Catechisms of the Second Reformation*, ed. by Alex. Mitchell (London: James Nisbet, 1886) 176.
- xxxvii. Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*, 307.
- xxxviii. *The Works of Thomas Brooks* 3.254-59.
- xxxix. *The Works of William Bridge* 2.130, 135.
- xl. *Ibid.* 2.130.
- xli. Sinclair Ferguson, "The Westminster Conference, 1976," *Banner of Truth*, no. 168 (1977) 20.
- xlii. Hawkes, "The Logic of Assurance in English Puritan Theology," 251.
- xliii. *The Christian Warfare against the Deuill, World, and Flesh* (London: William Stansby, 1634) 231.

xliv. Ames, *Medvlla* 1.3.22.

xl. John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel* (reprint ed., London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968) 2.330.

xlvi. *Spiritual Refining*, 672.

xlvii. Cornelis Graafland, "Van syllogismus practicus naar syllogismus mysticus," in *Wegen en Gestalten in het Gereformeerd Protestantisme*, ed. W. Balke, C. Graafland, and H. Harkema (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976) 105-122.

xlviii. Graafland asserts that in the Netherlands the mystical syllogism came to the fore after the Synod of Dort. By the eighteenth century, it had superseded the practical syllogism in the Dutch Second Reformation (*ibid.*, 105).

xlix. One of the WCF's two assessors, Cornelius Burgess, affirms in a volume on 2 Peter 1:5-7 that good works are "the way to heaven, not the cause of obtaining it, nor of reigning there; as fruits of faith, proving that it is lively; as effects and evidences of our justification by the righteousness of Christ, not contributing to it in the least degree; as testimonies of real gratitude unto God, and of conformity to the image of Christ" (*A Chain of Graces drawn out at length for a Reformation of Manners. Or, A brief Treatise of Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly kindness, and Charity, so far as they are urged by the Apostle, in 2 Pet. 1. 5, 6, 7* [London, 1622] 32); cited in James Reid, *Memoirs of the Lives and Writings of those Eminent Divines who convened in the famous Assembly at Westminster in the Seventeenth Century* (Paisley: Stephen and Andrew Young, 1811) 1.93-94.

i. *The Doctrine of the Synod of Dort and Arles*, 158.

ii. *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes* 1.220.

iii. *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* 3.321.

liii. WCF, 1.6.

liv. *The Works of Thomas Brooks* 2.316.

lv. John Ball, *A Treatise of Faith*, 95. Cf. Preston, *The New Covenant, or the Saints Portion*, 460-63.

lvi. *Spiritual Refining*, 53, 57.

lvii. *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* 3.293.

lviii. *The Works of William Bridge* 2.32.

lix. Richard Baxter, *Catholic Theologie* 9.138-39, cited in J. I. Packer, "The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter" (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford, 1954) 401.

lx. *The Saints' Happiness, together with the several steps leading thereunto. Delivered in Divers Lectures on the Beatitudes* (reprint ed., Beaver Falls, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1988) 196.

lxi. *Spiritual Refining*, 44.

lxii. *A Treatise of Miscellany Questions*, 105-109.

lxiii. Cf. Burgess's exegesis of Romans 8:15-16, Ephesians 1:13, and 1 John 5:8 in *Spiritual Refining*, 49-50.

lxiv. Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 65-67; Twisse, *The Doctrine of the Synod of Dort and Arles*, 147-49; Scudder, *The Christian's Daily Walk*, 338-42; *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* 6.27; 7.66; 8.351, 363.

lxv. Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to The Epistle of the Romans* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Publishers, 1889) 316. Cf. R. Bolton, *Some General Directions for a Comfortable Walking with God*, 326.

lxvi. This third way to assurance, the direct and immediate, is prudently handled by Iain Murray: "Whatever we say about the direct and immediate witness, it is hard to see that it is the most important for we are called to live daily in the joy of assurance and such continued assurance cannot be made to depend upon very occasional and intermittent experiences" (personal correspondence, February 25, 1989; cf. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *The Fight of Faith* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990] 2.483-92).

lxvii. *The Works of William Bridge* 2.140.

lxviii. In Puritan theology, this third way of assurance by means of the direct and immediate witness of the Holy Spirit is intimately associated with the theological development of the sealing of the Spirit (see Sinclair Ferguson, John Owen on the Christian Life [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987] 116-24). Cf. *The Works of Richard Sibbes* 5.409-415.

lxix. *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* 1.251.

lxx. Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought*, 165-66.

lxxi. Graafland, "Van syllogismus practicus naar syllogismus mysticus," 108, 120.

lxxii. Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, 51.

lxxiii. Cf. J. I. Packer, "The Puritan Idea of Communion with God," in *Press Toward the Mark* (London: n.p., 1962), 7.

lxxiv. This point is not to be exaggerated as Calvin was also dealing with many souls with doubts (cf. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith*, 19-22, 54-72, 365-77).

lxxv. "Waarheid in het Binnenste': Geloofszekeerheid bij Calvin en de Nadere Reformatie," in *Een Vaste Burcht*, ed. K. Exalto (Kampen: Kok, 1989) 69.

lxxvi. Peter Lewis cited in Errol Hulse, *The Believer's Experience* (Haywards Heath, Sussex: Carey, 1977) 128-29.

lxxvii. *Biblical and Theological Studies*, 425.

lxxviii. Inst. 3.2.15.