

## *Appendix 2*

### *New-Covenant Assurance: Supporting Testimonies*

I do not quote the following to establish my position on assurance, but simply to show that others have said similar things to me. I recognise that some of the following writers may have said different things on other occasions, but at least, as I have quoted them here, they are, in the main, supportive of what I set out in the body of this book. I know that at least some of these writers held to the Reformed view of the law, but all I can say is that they were inconsistent: while mistaken on the law, they were right on assurance by the Spirit, at least in most of what I quote from them here.

James I. Packer spoke of John 16:14 as the key text, setting out the Spirit's 'work of making Jesus Christ, our crucified, risen reigning Saviour, real and glorious to us moment by moment'. He went on:

The Spirit's way of witnessing to the truth that as believers we are sons and heirs of God (Rom. 5:15-17) is first to make us realise that as Christ on earth loved us and died for us, so in glory now he loves us and lives for us as the Mediator whose endless life guarantees us endless glory with him. The Spirit makes us see the love of Christ towards us, as measured by the cross, and to see along with Christ's love the love of the Father who gave his Son up for us (Rom. 8:32)... Then, together with that, the Spirit makes us also see that through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ, we are now God's children; and hereby he leads us, spontaneously and instinctively... to think of God as Father, and so to address him (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6)... To know that God is your Father and that he loves you, his adopted child, no less than he loves his only begotten Son and to know that enjoyment of God's love and glory for all eternity are [*sic*] pledged to you brings inward delight that is sometimes overwhelming; and this also is the Spirit's doing. For the 'joy in the Holy Spirit', in terms of which Paul defines the kingdom of God in Romans 14:17, is the 'rejoicing in God' spoken of in Romans 5:2,11, and it is the Spirit's witness to God's love for us that calls forth this joy...

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Paul speaks of the Spirit's witness in the present tense (... 'testifies'...), implying that it is a continuous operation that imparts permanent confidence in God. Though not always felt as vividly as it is sometimes, and though overshadowed from time to time by feelings of doubt and despair, this confidence remains constant and, in the final analysis, insuperable. The Spirit himself sees to that!

...The Holy Spirit given to us is the 'earnest' of our inheritance in this precise sense: that by enabling us to see the glory of Christ glorified, and to live in fellowship with him as our Mediator, and with his Father as our Father, the Spirit introduces us to the inmost essence of life in heaven... to see God and to be forever with Christ in an experiential deepening of heaven (see Matt. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:6-8; 1 Thess. 4:7; Rev. 22:3-5). And by means of the ministry to us of the indwelling Spirit heaven begins for us here and now, as through Christ and in Christ we are made sharers with Christ of his resurrection life... (Col. 3:3; see Col. 2:11-14; Rom. 6:3-11; Eph. 2:1-7).<sup>1</sup>

Ernest Kevan:

A conviction is born within us that we are the sons of God: this is our own conviction, but it is as well the conviction of the Holy Spirit who is within us. It is this 'joint-witness' of the Holy Spirit and our own spirit. It thus conforms to that rule of sure testimony in Scripture which is by 'two witnesses' (Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16). How this is effected we do not know, any more than we understand the movement of the Spirit in others of his ways within us, for 'the wind blows where it wants, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and where it goes' (John 3:8).

Kevan went on, by reference to 'Abba, Father', in part quoting Alexander Maclaren, to help and encourage those who think they do not enjoy 'the kind of "feelings" which they thought this passage required':

The essence of the conviction which is lodged in the human spirit by the testimony of the Spirit of God 'is not primarily directed to our relation or feelings to God, but to a far grander thing than that – to God's feelings and relation to us... And so the *substance* of the Spirit's evidence is the direct conviction, based on the revelation of God's infinite love and fatherhood in Christ the Son, that God is my Father;

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<sup>1</sup> Packer: *Keep* pp76-79. In light of this, I cannot fathom how Packer could speak so highly of the Puritan view of the witness of the Spirit (Packer: 'The Witness of the Spirit in Puritan Thought' pp235-250).

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from which direct conviction I come to the conclusion, the inference, the second thought: "Then I may trust that I am his son. But why? Because of anything in me? No: because of him"..."

In this 'joint-witness' of the Holy Spirit with our own spirit we have the foundation of the Christian doctrine of assurance... 'Assurance', in the evangelical sense, is not the result of reason but the gift of grace. *It is the fruit, not of argument, but of inward testimony.*<sup>2</sup> Our filial confidence therefore is not a delusion... (1 John 3:24; 4:15)... 'Spirit, breathing from above,/ Thou hast *taught* me it is so'.<sup>3</sup>

Charles Wesley:

*Spirit of faith, come down,  
Reveal the things of God,  
And make to us salvation known,  
And witness with the blood.*

*No man can truly say  
That Jesus is the Lord,  
Unless thou take the veil away,  
And breathe the living word.*

*Then, only then, we feel  
Our interest in his blood,  
And cry with joy unspeakable,  
'Thou art my Lord, my God!'*

*O that the world might know  
The all-atoning Lamb!  
Spirit of faith, descend and show  
The virtue of his name;*

*Inspire the living faith,  
Which whosoe'er receives,  
The witness in himself he has  
And savingly believes.*<sup>4</sup>

George Whitefield:

Christ came not only to save us from the guilt, but from the power of sin. Until he has done this, however... we can have no assurance or well-grounded hope that he has saved us. For it is by receiving his

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<sup>2</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>3</sup> Kevan pp69-71, emphasis original except where stated.

<sup>4</sup> *Gospel Hymns* 363, altered.

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blessed Spirit into our hearts, and feeling him witnessing with our spirits that we are the sons of God, that we can be certified of our being sealed to the day of redemption. This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and the new birth. Marvel not at my asking you what you think of Christ being formed within you... for as in Adam we all have spiritually died, so all that are effectually saved by Christ, must in Christ be made spiritually alive... Examine yourselves therefore... whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves, and think that it is not sufficient to say in your creed: 'I believe in Jesus Christ'. Many say so, who do not believe, who are reprobates, and are still in a state of death. You take God's name in vain when you call him Father, and your prayers are turned into sin, unless you believe in Christ, so as to have your life hid with him in God, and to receive life and nourishment from him, as branches do from the vine.

I know, indeed, the men of this generation deny there is any such thing as feeling Christ within them, but... the apostle prays that the Ephesians may abound in all knowledge and spiritual understanding; or, as it might be rendered, spiritual sensation... For there is a spiritual as well as a corporeal feeling, and though this is not communicated to us in a sensible [externally explained] manner, as outward objects affect our senses, yet it is as real as any sensible or visible sensation, and may be as truly felt and discerned by the soul as any impression from without can be felt by the body. All who are born again of God know that I lie not.

In support of his claim, Whitefield cited Naaman cured of his leprosy, the woman cured of her haemorrhage: they both felt it, did they not? He went on:

So surely you may feel, O believer, when Jesus Christ dwells within your heart. I pray God to make you all know and feel this, ere you depart hence [that is, die]. O... my heart is enlarged towards you. I trust I feel something of that hidden but powerful presence of Christ, while I am preaching to you. Indeed, it is sweet, it is exceedingly comfortable. All the harm I wish you<sup>5</sup> who, without cause, are my enemies is that you felt the like.<sup>6</sup>

In another sermon, Whitefield issued a rebuke which needs to be taken very seriously in our dry day:

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<sup>5</sup> Whitefield was being ironical.

<sup>6</sup> Sermon on 'What do you think of Christ?' (Matt. 22:42) in Whitefield pp291-292.

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We... shall receive the Holy Ghost if we believe on the Lord Jesus with our whole hearts... All who believe in Jesus Christ... are... joined to Jesus Christ by being made partakers of the Holy Spirit. A great noise has been made of late about the word ‘enthusiast’,<sup>7</sup> and it has been cast upon the preachers of the gospel as a term of reproach. But every Christian, in the proper sense of the word, must be an enthusiast – that is, [he] must be inspired [breathed-into] of God, or have God, by his Spirit, in him... Yet, Christians must have their names cast out as evil, and ministers, in particular, must be looked upon as deceivers of the people, for affirming that we must be really united to God by receiving the Holy Ghost!... I will not say [that] all our letter-learned preachers deny this doctrine in express words, but, however, they do, in effect, [deny it], for they talk professedly against inward feelings, and say we may have God’s Spirit without feeling it – which is, in reality, to deny the thing itself. And had I a mind to hinder the progress of the gospel, and to establish the kingdom of darkness, I would go about telling people [that] they might have the Spirit of God and yet not feel it.<sup>8</sup>

Ralph Erskine preached two sermons on the subject of ‘the witness of the Spirit’,<sup>9</sup> in which he said:

It is not a fluctuating opinion, but an internal testimony, and an internal sensation of what God testifies and speaks; namely, peace and salvation, in and through his Son, Jesus Christ... (John 15:26; 16:14; Eph. 1:13; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 1:12)... The Spirit [gives] his own immediate testimony... (Rom. 8:16)... by shedding abroad the love of God upon the heart in a soul-ravishing way... It is not said ‘the Spirit’ but ‘the Spirit himself’... The Spirit himself does it, says Paul... The Spirit applies [promises] to particular souls... The Spirit is promised to take of the things of Christ and show them to his people... Sanctification may lie dark, and yet the Spirit... may witness within. As in a dark day, a man may conclude the sun is up though he cannot see it, so a man, acting [exercising] faith on the blood of Christ, may conclude his sanctity, *though he cannot see his own sanctification; and the not drawing of this conclusion is the occasion of many fears, doubts and disquietments [anxieties] in the souls of believers...* The

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<sup>7</sup> I fear something of the sort is being thought in some circles today.

<sup>8</sup> ‘The Privilege of All Believers’ in Whitefield p433.

<sup>9</sup> ‘The Believer’s Internal Witness: The Certain Evidence of True Faith’, in Erskine pp29-74, a reprint of the volumes edited by Septimus Sears, emphasis mine. Note Erskine’s title. He did not say that sanctification is the evidence of true faith – though it is, of course – but that the witness of the Spirit is *the certain evidence*

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witness that the believer has within himself testifies and depones<sup>10</sup> that the believer has a union to and interest in Christ... (Song 2:16; 6:3)... The witness that the believer has in himself attests and depones that he is a child of God... (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 3:26; John 1:12)... The witness within declares this because it witnesses that the man is a believer that has received Christ... The witness that the believer has in himself attests and depones [declares under oath] that he is free from condemnation... (Rom. 8:1; John 3:18)... The witness that the believer has in himself depones that he shall be saved eternally... The witness that the believer has in himself attests and depones that nothing can be laid to his charge... The witness that the believer has in himself attest and depones that the union between Christ and him is inseparable and indissolvable... Yet this witness does not always speak within him, but when it speaks, its deposition and testimony make one or other of these things as clear as daylight to the believer... There was never such a credible witness in the world as the believer has within him...

He that believes has the witness in himself because outward witnesses cannot clear him with any comfortable evidence; and the Lord wills that believers should have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. But now no means... can clear, or comfortably attests his interest in Christ, his sonship or reconciliation, unless the Spirit of Christ witnesses within him. The white of a wall can as soon make day, as ministers or outward means can give comfort or clearness to a believer, unless the Spirit of the Lord concurs with the means, and witnesses in the man's bosom...

Though faith alone justifies, yet justifying faith is not alone: it has its witness with it, even the witness of the Spirit... namely manifest sanctification as well as justification...<sup>11</sup> Never conclude that you have true faith unless you find, or at least have found, the witness within you giving testimony thereto. If you know nothing more or less of this witness then it is plain you know nothing of true faith,<sup>12</sup> for it is expressly said of all believers, weak or strong: 'He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself'... Hence see what is the true matter of a believer's confidence and assurance. Why, they have the witness in themselves... Hence see that the believer's doubts and fears

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<sup>10</sup> Gives testimony by affidavit or deposition.

<sup>11</sup> While I agree that sanctification is a concomitant and consequence of justification, the witness of the Spirit is first and foremost independent of sanctification, and precedes it.

<sup>12</sup> As I have made clear, I am sure a true believer can be in darkness and doubt. Nevertheless, even though I think Erskine is too strong, I feel we have gone far too far the other way.

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and jealousies [suspicions, doubts] are inexcusable and unwarrantable, for he has the witness in himself, and his unbelieving doubts do nothing but give the lie to God's witness that is in him.<sup>13</sup>

J.N.Darby on 'the witness of the Spirit':

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God... Two things are equally precious: participation in the Spirit, as the power of life by which we are capable of enjoying God, and the relationship of children to him; and the presence and authority of the Spirit to assure us of it.

As to the first:

Our position is that of sons, our proper relationship that of children. The word 'sons' is in contrast with the position under the law, which was that of servants; it is the state of privilege in its widest extent. To say the 'child' of such a one implies the intimacy and reality of the relationship.

Darby spoke of 'two operations of the Spirit':

The communication of assurance of being children with all its glorious consequences; and his work of sympathy and grace in connection with the sorrows and infirmities in which the child is found here below.

As for 'the first point' – 'that the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of the family of God' – in a highly preceptive statement, Darby rightly distinguished the twofold witness within the believer:

The Holy Ghost (acting in us...) has produced the affections of a child, and, by the affections, the consciousness of being a child of God, so he does not separate himself from this, but, by his powerful presence, he bears witness himself that we are children. We have this testimony in our hearts in our relationship with God, but the Holy Ghost himself, as distinct from us, bears this testimony to us in whom he dwells. The true freed Christian knows that his heart recognises God as Father, but he also knows that the Holy Ghost himself bears his testimony to him

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<sup>13</sup> Sears, very much in line with his hesitation over Erskine's freeness in offering Christ to sinners (see my *Septimus*), added notes to strengthen the need for true faith and sanctification. Yes, indeed, but Erskine's freeness when speaking of assurance must not be lost!

[the believer]. That which is founded on the word is realised and verified in the heart.

Darby went on to speak of the way the witness of the Spirit enables the believer to come through the many sorrows and trials which befall him, and to long for the glory to come. I forbear to quote at length, but here is a sample:

The Spirit, who makes us know that we are children and heirs of glory, teaches us by the same means to understand all the misery of the creature... Thus also we wait for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body. For as to possession of the full result, it is in hope [confident expectation – DG] that we are saved; so that meanwhile we groan, as well as understand, according to the Spirit and our new disposition,<sup>14</sup> that all creation groans... Here... also the operation of the Holy Ghost has its place, as well as bearing witness that we are children and heirs of God with Christ.<sup>15</sup>

John Stott, posing the question: ‘Precisely how is the Spirit’s witness borne?’, delineated the answer in four parts. While I do not altogether agree with Stott here, there is enough for me to quote him:

First, the Spirit leads us into holiness (Rom. 8:13-14) ([note] the conjunction ‘because’).<sup>16</sup> Secondly, in our relationship to God he replaces fear with freedom (Rom. 8:15). Thirdly, in our prayers he prompts us to call God ‘Father’ (Rom. 8:15-16). Fourthly, he is the firstfruits of our heavenly inheritance (Rom. 8:17,23). Thus radical holiness, fearless freedom, filial prayerfulness and the hope of glory are four characteristics of the children of God who are indwelt and led

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<sup>14</sup> Darby had ‘nature’.

<sup>15</sup> Darby pp200-204.

<sup>16</sup> This is not what Paul is saying. Rather, a man can only live according to the Spirit if he has the Spirit. It is true, of course, that a man who has the Spirit will not live according to the flesh, but will live according to the Spirit, and that he is obliged to do so, but Paul is here dealing with, and contrasting, the two states of man: flesh and Spirit. Stott was making sanctification a primary aspect of assurance, but this is *not* what the apostle is saying in verses 13-14.



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by the Spirit of God.<sup>17</sup> It is by these evidences that he witnesses to us that we are God's children.<sup>18</sup>

In particular, how does the Spirit bear witness with us? Stott noted the word in question – *symmartyreō* – commenting:

Normally *syn* is translated 'together with', in which case there would be two witnesses here, the Holy Spirit confirming and endorsing our own spirit's consciousness of God's Fatherhood... This would be readily understandable, since the Old Testament required two witnesses to establish a testimony (Deut. 9:15). On the other hand, is it really possible in experience to distinguish between the Holy Spirit and our human spirit? More important, would not these two witnesses be inappropriately matched?... In this case the prefix *syn* is simply intensive, and Paul meant that the Holy Spirit bears a strong inward witness *to* our spirit that we are God's children.

Stott rightly linked this with Romans 5:5.<sup>19</sup>

Terris Neuman, commenting on Galatians 3:1-5:

The Galatian Christians had received the Spirit at the time of their conversion to Christ. This is supported by the use of the participle... 'having started' [Gal. 3:3]... As Dunn says, it 'cannot refer to anything other than the moment of becoming a Christian'.<sup>20</sup> The reception of the Spirit is the beginning of the Christian life. This adverbial participle does not point to anything consequent to the beginning of the believer's new life, 'but rather takes it for granted that the beginning of the Christian life and the reception of the Spirit are coterminous [having the same boundaries or extent in space, time, or meaning]'.<sup>21</sup>

Neuman went on to quote Dunn further:

James Dunn says the distinctive mark of the Christian is experience of the Spirit, but not merely the experience of the Spirit... Rather, 'the

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<sup>17</sup> Which is all believers. Stott was not saying that some believers are indwelt by the Spirit, and others not. See John 14:16-17,23; Rom. 8:9,11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:14; 1 John 4:13.

<sup>18</sup> Stott p230.

<sup>19</sup> Stott p234.

<sup>20</sup> Dunn: *Baptism* p108.

<sup>21</sup> Neuman p60, quoting Longenecker p103.

distinctive mark of the Christian is experience of the Spirit *as the life of Christ*.<sup>22</sup>

Douglas Moo:

If some Christians err in basing their assurance on feelings alone, many others err in basing it on facts and arguments alone. Indeed, what Paul says here [Rom. 8:15] calls into question whether one can have a genuine experience of God's spirit of adoption without its affecting the emotions... The Holy Spirit is not only instrumental in *making* us God's children; he also makes us *aware* that we are God's children.<sup>23</sup>

I would strengthen Moo. Being unaware that one is converted more than 'calls [the experience] into question'. I fail to see how a sinner can be converted and it not 'affect the emotions'. Listen to the retort of the blind man to the carping Pharisees: 'One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!' (John 9:25). I, for one, can feel the emotion in his words. An emotion-less faith is a Sandemanian faith, and, therefore, not saving.

Robert Hawker:

Reader, let you and me learn to rightly value our privileges! Blessed be God, we are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest! Oh, what an awful dispensation, to shadow forth the terror, and dread, with which the broken law of God stood over the alarmed conscience of the trembling, guilty soul! Well might it be called the ministration of death, for it denounced everlasting indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that does evil. Reader, what a mercy is it, that the poor sinner is come not to mount Sinai, but to mount Zion; not to the law to condemn, but to the gospel to save; even to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. Lord, take away every remaining veil, of darkness and unbelief. Cause my soul, with open face, to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord! Cause my soul to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. And... almighty Spirit, grant me freedom of access to the mercy seat of my God in Christ. For where you, Lord, are, there is liberty. Oh, for liberty to pray, to plead, to wrestle with my God in prayer, in the blood, obedience, and death, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>22</sup> Dunn: *Jesus* p323 (Neuman p65, emphasis mine).

<sup>23</sup> Moo pp502-503, emphasis his.

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Give me, Lord, that sweet spirit of adoption, that I may be no longer under a spirit of bondage, but cry: 'Abba, Father'. And, oh,... be an unceasing witness to my spirit that I am a child of God!<sup>24</sup>

Again:

The faith of God's people is supposed by the gospel to be a life of trust, assurance, and confirmation. The prophet, ages before the coming of Christ, declared that the work of righteousness (Christ's righteousness) shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever (Isa. 32:1). And to this purport, the promise runs along with it, and keeps pace together: 'You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you' (Isa. 26:3). If, therefore, there remained any uncertainty in respect to the justified state of a child of God, whom God by sovereign grace has called with an holy calling, those blessed scriptures lose their power. That man cannot be said to have quietness, and assurance for ever, as an effect of his interest in, and dependence upon, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, while the shadow of a doubt remains in his mind, whether [or not] he has received pardon, mercy, and peace, in the blood of the cross, and is justified by faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the groundwork on which the child of God, truly taught of God, rests his full assurance of faith, and which keeps him, as Paul says he was kept from fainting, is the heart-felt conviction that Christ, when he stood forth the Surety of his church and people, truly, as the prophet said of him, finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24). In all that high transaction, Christ acted as his people's Sponsor and Surety; and, therefore, not an atom of guilt, either original or actual, was left un-atoned on his people's conscience. Now then, if I, or you, or any and every child of God, whom God hath effectually called by grace, believe the record,<sup>25</sup> which God hath given of his dear Son – namely, that God hath given eternal life to his whole body the church, in his dear Son, and that, by virtue of the infinite value and preciousness of his righteousness and blood-shedding, they are justified from all things – how is it possible that there can be any suspense, doubt, or misgiving, on this grand assurance of the redeemed child of God's hope? Reader! Do look, again and again, at the blessed frame of mind Paul was in, and which wholly arose from this one cause. And recollect that this high privilege

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<sup>24</sup> Hawker: *Commentary* on 2 Cor. 3 (studylight.org).

<sup>25</sup> Saving faith is more than 'believing the record'; it involves trust in Christ.

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was not Paul's privilege only, but the whole church of God is equally begotten to it, and equally entitled to it, with the apostle, because it arises not from any merit, or services in Paul, but [is] the sole gift of God in Christ... As we have received mercy, we faint not.<sup>26</sup>

Again:

The leadings of the Spirit, and the witnessings of the Spirit, are all manifest in their daily tokens of grace,<sup>27</sup> the sonship and privileges of the regenerate in Christ. It is they, and they only, which have freeness of access to the throne, and to the pardon-office of Christ, and can, and do say: 'Abba, Father'. No servants, no bondsmen, no unregenerate – none but those of the family of God in Christ, who are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ – can so approach, or claim such a relationship. A union with Christ is the only foundation for enjoying communion with the heirship of Christ. It is because you are sons (says the apostle elsewhere) God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: 'Abba, Father' (Gal. 4:6).

Reader! Pause, and contemplate the blessedness of such a state! By virtue of their adoption-character, [believers] are brought into the present enjoyment by faith, of their vast inheritance; and have a full right in Christ to the sanctified use of all temporal blessings, the privilege of all spiritual blessings, and ere long to the complete enjoyment of all eternal blessings, for they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.<sup>28</sup>

Again, putting his thoughts into a hymn:

*'Tis thine, O Lord, in blessing thus,  
To take of Christ's and show to us,  
Of him, and his, impart;  
And thine no less the same to prove,  
And shed abroad the Father's love,  
In each renewèd heart.*

William Tyndale rightly distinguished historical faith (mere assent to the truth) and saving faith, which he called 'feeling faith':

The elect [who have been converted] [are those] in whose hearts God has written his law by his Spirit, and given them a feeling faith of the mercy that is in Christ Jesus our Lord... There are two sorts of faith:

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<sup>26</sup> Hawker: *Commentary* on 2 Cor. 4 (studylight.org).

<sup>27</sup> Excellent – 'daily tokens'.

<sup>28</sup> Hawker: *Commentary* on Rom.8 (studylight.org).

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historical faith, and feeling faith... Of feeling faith, it is written: 'They shall all be taught of God' [John 6:45]; that is, God shall write it in their hearts with his Holy Spirit. And Paul also testifies: 'The Spirit bears record [witness] unto our spirit, that we are the sons of God' [Rom. 8:16]. And this faith is no opinion, but a sure feeling, and therefore is ever fruitful. Neither does it hang on the honesty of the preacher, but of the power of God, and of the Spirit... If I have no other feeling in my faith than because a man says [something or other], then is my faith faithless and fruitless... Christ's elect church is the whole multitude of all repenting sinners that believe in Christ, and put all their trust and confidence in the mercy of God, feeling in their hearts that God for Christ's sake loves them, and will be, or rather is, merciful unto them, and forgives them their sins of which they repent; and that he forgives all the motions unto sin, of which they fear lest they should be drawn into sin again.<sup>29</sup>

Tyndale spoke of those who, believing in Christ, are walking 'in the open light and feeling' and who have the 'inward feeling that the Spirit of God' gives, warning against those who 'believe' without 'feeling the mercy that is in Christ', 'who serve God with works, [and] have no feeling'.<sup>30</sup> And what is 'feeling' if not assurance?

And now C.H. Spurgeon, preaching on Ephesians 1:13. Although he didn't get it all right, Spurgeon said a great many important things, and said them in his usual pithy and telling way:

Many sincerely seeking souls are in great trouble because they have not yet attained to an assurance of their interest in Christ Jesus... And herein they pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Perhaps they will not fall into this error again if they get a right understanding of the text before us... Paul here explains the process by which sealing – the sealing of assurance – is obtained. There are three steps by which the hallowed elevation is reached. The first is hearing – they heard first the preaching of the word. The second is believing. And then, thirdly, 'after that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise'...

Sealing, which is another name for assurance, for the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit – that we are born of God, is evidently distinct from faith. Please observe that – for the text says: 'After that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise'.

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<sup>29</sup> Tyndale pp13,50-52.

<sup>30</sup> Tyndale pp149,69,114,182.

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Believing, then, is not this sealing. And assurance, although it is akin to believing, is not believing. There is a distinction between the two things. I want you to notice the distinction. In faith the mind is active. The text uses verbs which imply action – ‘you trusted’, ‘you believed’. But when it comes to sealing it uses quite another verb – ‘you were sealed’. I am active in believing – I am passive when the Holy Spirit seals me. The witness of the Spirit is something which I receive, but faith is something which I exercise as well as receive. In faith my mind does something – in being sealed my faith receives something. If I may say so, faith writes out the document – there she labours – but the Holy Spirit stamps the seal himself and there is no hand wanted there except his own. He stamps his own impression to make the document valid. Notice the difference between the activeness and the passiveness. Then, again, man is commanded to believe in Scripture in many places – but he never was commanded to be sealed. Faith is a duty as well as a privilege, but assurance a privilege only. I never find any man exhorted to get the sealing of the Spirit...<sup>31</sup> I know of no command. It is a gift, a priceless gift and, unlike faith, it does not constitute a... command. Again, we read in Scripture that men are saved by faith and live by faith, but neither salvation nor living are ever imputed to sealing or to assurance. We are not saved by assurance – we do not even live by assurance. The vital principle is couched in faith. That is the shell which holds the kernel of the inner spiritual life. I may be saved though I never had assurance. But even if I fancied I had assurance, I could not be saved if I had not faith. To faith we say salvation is promised, but to assurance such a promise is not given.

Unfortunately, Spurgeon then built much – far too much – on the unwarranted insertion of ‘after’. Nevertheless, having set out a very important principle – one which I have deliberately omitted, and to which I will return – Spurgeon went on:

This assurance, like faith, is the work of the Spirit of God. ‘You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise’. He does this in various ways. Sometimes we get the seal of the Spirit through experience. We know that God is true because we have proved him. Sometimes this comes through the hearing of the word – as we listen our faith is confirmed. But there is doubtless, besides this, a special and supernatural work of the Holy Spirit whereby men are assured that they are born of God.

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<sup>31</sup> This is one of those places where Spurgeon went beyond Scripture when he said: ‘I believe that every Christian should pray for it and seek it, but I know of no command’. Would: ‘I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!’ (Mark 9:24) justify his claim?

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You will observe in one place the apostle says: ‘The Spirit also bears witness with our spirit, that we are born of God’, so that there are two witnesses – first, our spirit bears witness, that is, by evidences. I look at my faith and see myself depending upon Christ and then I know, because I love the brethren and for other reasons, that I am born of God.

Then there comes over and above the witness of evidence, faith and feeling – the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit.<sup>32</sup> Have you not felt it? I cannot describe this to you, but you who have felt it know it. Did you not the other day feel a heavenly calm as you meditated upon your state and condition in Christ? You wondered where it came from. It was not the result of protracted devotion but it stole over you – you knew not how it was – you were bathed in it as in sunlight and you rejoiced exceedingly. You rejoiced in Christ – that was your basis of confidence, and that confidence came through the Spirit bearing witness with your spirit. This has occurred sometimes in the midst of sharp conflicts just when dark despair seemed ready to overwhelm you. You may have enjoyed this comfort under peculiar trials and losses of friends and you may expect to have it when you come to die. Then, if ever in your life, you should be able to say: ‘I will fear no evil, for you are with me (in a special sense); you are with me’. The Holy Spirit, then, must give it [the witness, the seal] to us..<sup>33</sup> And so to conclude, this is desirable to the highest degree, for it is the earnest of the inheritance. It is a part of heaven on earth to get an assurance worked by the Spirit!

I return to that important section I deliberately omitted:

Observe in the next place... that assurance is to be found where faith was found. Do observe those two words, ‘in whom’ – ‘in whom you also trusted’ – ‘in whom you were sealed’. So that as I get my faith out of Christ, so I must get my assurance out of Christ. The virtual means of my faith is Christ himself and the virtual means of my assurance must be the same. As I think of what he did for me, I believe in him. As I continue to meditate upon that same thing, I have assurance of interest in him. You must feed upon the flesh and blood of Christ if you would grow into strong men in Christ Jesus. A touch of Christ will heal you from all disease – but you must hold him fast if you would enjoy spiritual health perpetually. To believe in Christ will save you

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<sup>32</sup> In saying this, Spurgeon mistakenly put evidences before the witness of the Spirit.

<sup>33</sup> Spurgeon had: ‘And we must wait upon him to set his seal’. I see no biblical justification for this.

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from hell. To be assured of your interest in Christ will give you a heaven upon earth! Do not be content with faith – be thankful for it, rejoice in it – but ask to have more. And when you want to have more, go to Christ for it – the same fountain which first quenched your thirst must be that which shall quench it till you are taken up to drink of the river of life which flows through the midst of paradise – which is no other than the presence of Christ as a refreshment to his people.<sup>34</sup>

Charitie Bancroft:

*Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong, a perfect plea.  
A great High Priest whose name is Love  
Who ever lives and pleads for me.*

*My name is graven on his hands,  
My name is written on his heart.  
I know that, while in heaven he stands,  
No tongue can bid me thence depart.*

***When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upward I look, and see him there  
Who made an end of all my sin.***

*Because the sinless Saviour died  
My sinful soul is counted free;  
For God the just is satisfied  
To look on him and pardon me.*

*Behold him there! the risen Lamb!  
My perfect, spotless righteousness,  
The great unchangeable I AM,  
The King of glory and of grace,*

*One with himself I cannot die.  
My soul is purchased by his blood,  
My life is hid with Christ on high,  
With Christ my Saviour and my God.*

Notice that! When Satan tempts me to despair, I do not look within or at others; I look up to Christ. As Paul thundered:

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<sup>34</sup> Sermon number 592.



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Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (Rom. 8:33-34).<sup>35</sup>

John Newton:

*What think ye of Christ? is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme;  
You cannot be right in the rest,  
Unless you think rightly of him.  
As Jesus appears in your view,  
As he is beloved or not;  
So God is disposed to you,  
And mercy or wrath are your lot.*

*Some take him a creature to be,  
A man, or an angel at most;  
Sure these have not feelings like me,  
Nor know themselves wretched and lost:  
So guilty, so helpless, am I,  
I dare not confide in his blood,  
Nor on his protection rely,  
Unless I were sure he is God.*

*If asked what of Jesus I think?  
Though still my best thoughts are but poor;  
I say, he's my meat and my drink,  
My life, and my strength, and my store,  
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,  
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;  
My hope from beginning to end,  
My Portion, my Lord, and my All.*

And although the poetry is not up to much (even allowing for translation), there's no mistaking Daniel Rowland's theology:

*Come! Praise the King of heaven above.  
His grace to me is sealed!  
He gave his Son, no greater gift;  
I know whom I have trusted.*

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<sup>35</sup> The NIV is excellent here, having not inserted 'It is' before 'Christ'

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*I doubted long his loving grace,  
The gospel<sup>36</sup> I rejected;  
Illumination now has come;  
I know whom I have trusted.*

*Through Christ I'm justified by faith,  
To this his Spirit's witnessed;  
Henceforth who dares condemn my soul?  
I know whom I have trusted.*

*I see by faith that now I live,  
God's earnest has been granted;  
Th'inheritance will duly come;  
I know whom I have trusted.*

*He who began this blessed work  
Its progress also charted,  
Till Canaan's rest is mine for aye;  
I know whom I have trusted.<sup>37</sup>*

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<sup>36</sup> Rowland had 'religion'.

<sup>37</sup> Evans p253.