

Legal Assurance

The New Testament, it is clear, does not describe the believer as a ‘wretched man’, but speaks of him as one who has ever-increasing glory, liberty and assurance. And this, of course, should be the lot of every believer today. Many Reformed disagree. They think that Romans 7:14-25 represents the believer at his most spiritual, and that most believers never get full assurance; some even think that most believers don’t deserve it! They also argue vehemently that the believer is under the law of Moses (usually whittled down, without the slightest justification, to the ten commandments) for sanctification. It’s my contention that all this is connected, and explains why so many believers, reared under such a legal system, find themselves in bondage, fear and doubt, often for years, if not decades, if not all their lives. Indeed, many Reformed men preach, teach and write in ways which positively encourage doubt and introspection, fear and lack of assurance. Some even glory in the fact that they make believers anxious! And it’s not only where the law is openly and statedly preached. The teaching of legal assurance – or that which leads to it – casts its shadow far wider than that.

Let me set out what I am talking about.¹

In summary, through his over-reaction to Rome,² Calvin went too far in making assurance the essence of faith. Assurance is the

¹ Although I will talk about ‘the Reformed’, clearly not all Reformed teachers take the same line throughout. Some do not go along with the Confessions they talk so highly of, so I am able to quote them speaking scripturally on this issue.

² Rome denies even the possibility of assurance: ‘No one can know with a certainty of faith... that he has obtained the grace of God’ (‘The Council of Trent’ (documentacatholicaomnia.eu). ‘If anyone says that man is absolved from his sins and justified because he firmly believes that he is absolved and justified, or that no one is truly justified except him who believes himself justified... let him be anathema’. ‘If anyone says that a man who is born again and justified is bound *ex fide* to believe that he is certainly in the number of the predestined, let him be anathema’. ‘If anyone says that he will for certain, with an absolute and infallible

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concomitant of faith, not its essence.³ In so doing, however, he avoided the disastrous consequences which his later-Puritan followers produced. Whether or not in the process he crushed any broken reeds or snuffed out any smoking flax eternity will declare.

Moving on to the Puritans: while the early Puritans largely followed Calvin closely on assurance, the overwhelming majority of later Puritans did not. In one respect – assurance not being the essence of faith – they were right, but in making sanctification the way of assurance they were wrong. The consequences of this mistake have been heavy indeed. They are with us to this day, bringing fear and doubt to so many,⁴ since far more people are influenced by the late-Puritan view of assurance than they realise.⁵ Indeed, some, who would be horrified to be thought Puritan, nevertheless, *are* late-Puritan on assurance (or rather the lack of it) – without an inkling that it is so. Hearing the howls of disbelief, let me make good my case.

I begin with the New England antinomian crisis (1636-1637), the main players being, on the one side, Thomas Hooker and Thomas Shepard, and, on the other, Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelwright. John Cotton tried to steer a middle path between the two – and got away with it, but only by the skin of his teeth – while Henry Vane the Younger, who also played his part, decided to sail back across the Atlantic to England. The story is far more complicated than I can explore here, but in essence Hooker and

certainty, have that great gift of perseverance even to the end, unless he shall have learned this by a special revelation, let him be anathema' (canons 14-16) (ewtn.com).

³ See Appendix 1. Calvin's over-reaction parallels the way his detestation of the Anabaptists blinded him, and drove him even further into infant baptism. See my *Infant*.

⁴ Take full account of Beeke's subtitle: *The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors!*

⁵ It is invidious to give examples – they are legion! – but here are a few. Charles Hodge: *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1963, pp305-306; Robert L.Dabney: *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1967, Vol.1 pp214-228; *Systematic Theology*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1985, pp611,698-713.

Shepard heavily emphasised the law in preparing the sinner for Christ and in sanctifying the saint, and urged tests of sanctification (and therefore, of course, the work of the law) for assurance. Hutchinson and Wheelwright stoutly resisted this, stressing the freeness of grace in Christ in conversion and sanctification, and the inner witness of the Spirit for assurance.⁶ For their pains, they were banished. This controversy spilled over into Old England.

Back in England, the Particular Baptist, William Kiffin, came into doubt through reading Hooker's *The Soul's Preparation for Christ* – a Puritan classic on preparationism, the necessity of preaching the law to prepare sinners for Christ. Kiffin was helped out of his grief by the preaching of John (not to be confused with Thomas) Goodwin who showed him that legal preparationism was wrong. Indeed, Goodwin's preaching, as John Coffey said:

Contrasted sharply with the bleak emphasis on legal preparation... and self-scrutiny that echoed from some Puritan pulpits... His was a message designed to calm the tortured souls who sought counsel from Calvinist pastors.⁷

And so to the Westminster Assembly and its documents – documents which have exerted enormous influence down the centuries, and do so to this very day, some putting them almost on a par with (if not exceeding) the Bible itself! The Westminster documents, as I have noted, are heavy on law. This is no surprise since one of the main purposes in setting up the Assembly was to deal with antinomianism (both real and imagined) in England. The

⁶ Sadly, Cotton believed in eternal justification (Bauckham p45). For the arguments against this hyper-Calvinistic error, see my *Eternal*. But on assurance, Cotton was right. He argued that 'the first, the primary evidence of regeneration [is] not any aspect of sanctification but purely the witness of the Spirit in the heart of the regenerate man... Cotton... held that the primary evidence was the witness of the Spirit enabling a man to receive and hold in faith the unconditional promise of God's free grace to the elect, that in fact saving faith itself was the first and sufficient evidence of regeneration' (Bauckham p45). See Hall *passim*. Remember all this was played out in 'the antinomian crisis' raging at the time.

⁷ Coffey pp52-54. Incidentally, many praise the Puritans as fine physicians of the soul. No doubt they were, but not a few of their patients were diseased though their physicians' own teaching!

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solution it came up with was to put Calvin's law system into full effect. And how!

Now listen to the Westminster Confession on assurance. Take first, assurance as to the Bible being the word of God:

Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.⁸

Excellent! But what about assurance of salvation?

This certainty 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.⁹

And then, for our purposes, the punch line:

This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it.

While I agree that assurance is not the essence, but a concomitant, of faith,¹⁰ it is how the Westminster statement goes on that makes for trouble. Proof texts offered to establish this struggle for assurance are 1 John 5:13; Isaiah 1:10; Mark 9:24; and Psalms 77 and 88. Whether or not those texts really do establish the Assembly's assertions, reader, I leave for you to decide. I know what I think!

Here is a clear parting of the ways with Calvin; in fact, Westminster flatly contradicts the Reformer.¹¹ What is more, the believer who takes Westminster as definitive *can* be assured, but he may have to wait long for it, and the path to it may be fraught with difficulties. Indeed, he must be prepared never to get it! And

⁸ 1 John 2:20,27; John 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; Isa. 59:21.

⁹ Heb. 6:11,17-9; 2 Pet. 1:4-5,10-11; 1 John 2:3; 3:14; 2 Cor. 1:12,21-22; Rom. 8:15-16; Eph.1:13-14; 4:30.

¹⁰ See Appendix 1.

¹¹ Despite the reconciliation attempted by some – see Chrisco.

remember, reader, that millions of believers have taken, and many still do take, the Westminster as authoritative. Millions, therefore, are on the high road to lack of assurance before they start. Since ‘they drank in Puritan divinity with their mothers’ milk’,¹² no wonder they grew up with the consequences. Feed a child on the wrong diet, and the effects may well be permanent. As for Timothy, we know that, under the tutelage of his mother and grandmother, he had been reared on a diet of Scripture, and this led him to salvation (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-17). Is it beyond the realms of possibility to think that somebody reared, from pre-conversion days, on a diet of law, assurance by sanctification and assurance an experience only for the elite, might present symptoms of fear and doubt? The same may be said, of course, of those who are under the 1689 Particular Baptist Confession, one which is almost identical to the Westminster.

John Owen (a man of the Savoy Declaration which depended heavily on the Westminster Confession) went even further than Westminster. Believer, if you want to be kept awake at nights, read Owen on assurance just before you switch out the light! Hear him:

Very few on gospel grounds do attain to [assurance]... It is a great and rare thing to have forgiveness in God discovered [made known] unto a sinful soul.

Owen spoke of someone who testified to twenty years’ struggle with ‘trials, difficulties, temptations, [he had] wrestled with... before [he eventually] obtained it’. Owen: ‘It is the duty of every believer to labour after an assurance of a personal interest in forgiveness’. Clearly, however, he must not expect it to come easily, if at all, since it is rarely attained. Owen himself struggled with it for five years.¹³ He offered three main reasons for this

¹² Calvin on 2 Tim. 1:5, speaking of Timothy: ‘He had been educated from his infancy in such a manner that he might have sucked godliness along with his milk’.

¹³ Owen pp386,413-414,431,508-509, emphasis mine. In his earlier works – two catechisms – Owen had thought of assurance as an integral part of faith. Beeke surmised as to the reason for his change of view. Was it the Westminster documents or his own experience coupled with that of the people to whom he preached? (Beeke: *Quest* p166). Either, it seems to me,

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difficulty: ‘The constant voice of conscience lies against it’; ‘the law lies against this discovery’; ‘inbred notions that are in the heart of man about God’s holiness and vindictive justice’ lie against it.¹⁴ Don’t miss number two!

Thomas Brooks was another Puritan to put a grim prospect before his readers:

Now though this full assurance is earnestly desired, and highly prized, and the want of it much lamented, and the enjoyment of it much endeavoured after by all saints, *yet it is only obtained by a few*. Assurance is a mercy too good for most men’s hearts, it is a crown too weighty for most men’s heads. Assurance is *optimum maximum*, the best and greatest mercy; and therefore God will only give it to his best and dearest friends... Assurance is that ‘tried gold’ (Rev. 3:18)... God only gives to tried friends. Among those few that have a share or portion in the special love and favour of God, there are but a very few that have an assurance of his love. It is one mercy for God to love the soul, and another mercy for God to assure the soul of his love.¹⁵

Not much hope here, then! Hardly any at all! Heaven on earth? Maybe – but only for the few. I wonder where Brooks found the scriptural warrant for telling believers that ‘assurance... [is] only obtained by a few... [it being] too good for most’ believers. Indeed, I ask myself why Brooks wrote his book – a book describing a wonderful experience for believers, but one which the majority of them will never get, even after a life-time of desperate searching for it, since they are not good enough for it! It would seem tantamount to cruelty on Brooks’ part, taunting the overwhelming majority of believers with the golden apple always just out of reach! I wonder why such a book is thought to be worthy of publication today – unless, of course, it is to bolster the Reformed emphasis on law. Do the publishers *want* believers to be miserable? Hardly a recommendation for their law system, is it?

Richard Baxter:

For those doubts of my own salvation, which exercised me many years, the chiefest causes of them were these... because I could not

gives the game away! We must be men of Scripture before men of Confession or experience.

¹⁴ Owen pp387,389,431, emphasis mine.

¹⁵ Brooks p335, emphasis mine.

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distinctly trace the workings of the Spirit upon my heart *in that method which Mr Bolton, Mr Hooker, Mr Rogers, and other divines describe...* I was once [inclined] to meditate on my own heart... I was continually poring either on my sins or wants, or examining my sincerity.¹⁶

A hundred years later, Jonathan Edwards trod the same path. At one stage, he doubted his ‘interest in God’s love and favour... because’, he said, ‘I cannot speak so fully to my experience of that preparatory work, *of which the divines speak...* [and] I do not remember that I experienced regeneration, *exactly in those steps*, in which divines say it is generally wrought’. Later, he felt some relief concerning his ‘trust and affiance in Christ, and with delight committing of my soul to him, *of which our divines used to speak*, and about which I have been somewhat in doubt’. Yet, later again, he still had to wonder: ‘Whether I am now converted or not’. Even so, he vowed to use ‘for helps *some of our old divines*’.¹⁷ In other words, Edwards was in a hole and proceeded to dig deeper, using the same tools as got him into the hole in the first place!

Asahel Nettleton, a man greatly used of God in the Second Great Awakening in New England, was ‘exceedingly cautious in speaking about his belief that he was accepted of God’. So much so, he had a very low opinion of his standing before God: ‘The most that I have ventured to say respecting myself is that I think it possible I may get to heaven’.¹⁸

Then we have John Newton:

*'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?*

*If I love, why am I thus?
Why this dull and lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
Who have never heard his name!*

¹⁶ Baxter pp10,113, emphasis mine.

¹⁷ Edwards: *Diary* xxiv,xxxv,xxxvi, emphasis mine.

¹⁸ Tyler and Bonar p30.

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*Could my heart so hard remain,
Prayer a task and burden prove;
Every trifle give me pain,
If I knew a Saviour's love?*

*When I turn my eyes within,
All is dark, and vain, and wild;
Filled with unbelief and sin,
Can I deem myself a child?*

*If I pray, or hear, or read,
Sin is mixed with all I do;
You that love the Lord indeed,
Tell me: Is it thus with you?*

*Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall;
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all?*

*Could I joy his saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhorred,
Find, at times, the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?*

*Lord, decide the doubtful case!
Thou who art thy people's Sun;
Shine upon thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun.*

*Let me love thee more and more,
If I love at all, I pray;
If I have not loved before,
Help me to begin today.*

Yes, Newton got some sort of relief, and some measure of assurance, but hardly a ringing endorsement of the biblical position, is it?

Lloyd-Jones thought that 'many Christian people have only known this [sealing, assurance] just before their death'.¹⁹

James Sawyer: 'In San Diego in November, 1989, at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting, Dr John MacArthur was asked when a believer could be assured of his

¹⁹ Lloyd-Jones: *God's* p299.

salvation; his reply was that such assurance could be had only after death'.²⁰ There is an element of truth in this, of course, but as it stands it surely misrepresents the New Testament.

I need not labour the point. Do not miss the full implications of the title Beeke chose for his large volume on the subject: *The Quest for Full Assurance*. Reader, if you seek assurance by the Reformed route, you must prepare yourself for a long and arduous search, one which, in all probability, will be in vain. Gird your loins up, grit your teeth: months, maybe years, of nail-biting – if not white-knuckled – doubt and fear lie ahead! If I may accommodate the words of Brutus (according to William Shakespeare): ‘All the voyage of [your] life is [almost certain to be] bound in shallows and in miseries’.

We don’t need further evidence from Confessions, sermons and books. Too many believers can read the signs of this anxiety all too clearly in their own hearts, even though they may not realise where it has all come from. Those locked in this system know only too well that they are in trouble. Many may just be resigned to a life of doubt. Some may even regard their doubt as a mark of the highest spirituality – and so get some kind of relief that way!

Some saints cannot even face it. One Lord’s day morning, I had just started to preach a sermon on Romans 8:33-34, when a lady (a believer, married to a full-time gospel worker) got up and left the meeting. After the service, the local leaders assured me that this was not unexpected since (unknown to me) the lady had long wrestled with lack of assurance. Alas! If only she had remained! She might have been helped – even brought out of her condition. Walking out of a sermon on such a passage was the last thing she should have done.²¹

This case is far from isolated. I know that many believers are in bondage and fear. Liberty and joy ought to be the lot of believers (2 Cor. 3:17-18; Gal. 5:1,13; 1 Pet. 1:8, for instance), but too often, it

²⁰ Sawyer (bible.org).

²¹ For a short address on the passage, see my ‘Christ, Not Law, Banishes Fear’ (David H J Gay Ministry sermonaudio.com). It may also be found as a chapter in my *Grace*.

is not. Hence my book. I hope that what I write here might help some impoverished believers break free of their desperate plight.

What is the thinking behind all this legal assurance?

The doctrine undergirding legal assurance

The common view of assurance today – if it’s thought about at all! – has three steps or levels, each rising in importance. *First*, the believer rests himself upon the bare word of God. The Scriptures promise that if I believe I shall be saved (Acts 16:31); I do believe; therefore I am saved.²² *Secondly*, the believer tests his life by various evidences spelled out in Scripture – in 1 John, for instance. I love the brothers; therefore, I must be saved (1 John 3:14). And, *thirdly*, there is the direct evidence of the inner witness of the Spirit (Rom. 8:16), the sealing of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30), the ‘anointing’ (2 Cor. 1:21-22; 1 John 2:20,27). ‘He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself’ (1 John 5:10). And we have the repeated experience of ‘being filled with the Spirit’ (Luke 1:15,41,67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 6:3,5; 9:17; 11:24; 13:52; Eph. 5:18).

This, I say, is the way most Reformed (evangelical) teachers today speak of assurance – defining it in these three steps, *and in this order*. And they usually place the third step beyond the reach of most believers.²³ Let me prove it.

Take Lloyd-Jones:

²² As I have shown, modern Sandemanians often stop here.

²³ I am glad to record that Erroll Hulse, for one, questioned it. ‘A well-grounded assurance is based firstly on the inward witness of the Holy Spirit testifying to sonship. Secondly, and no less essentially, it is based on a spiritual life which is in harmony with sonship, not one or the other, but both together’ (Hulse: ‘Believer’s’ p121). I would nuance this by changing Hulse’s second ‘based’ to ‘verified’ – especially with regard to others, since a sanctified life is the only way one can be assured about another person. I will come back to this. Again, Hulse had to struggle to get to this position seeing he had started so badly in his chapter: ‘No Genuine Experience Without the Law’ (Hulse pp67-70). Iain H.Murray steered a middle course through the Reformed minefield, while trying hard to defend the standard position (Iain H.Murray pp167-200). He, too, advocated preaching the law to sinners, and to saints for their sanctification (Iain H.Murray pp8-15,23-37,47-54,64,69,91).

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This [that is, the inner witness] is the highest form of assurance possible; there is nothing beyond it. It is the acme, the zenith of assurance and certainty of salvation!

Lloyd-Jones started with the first level:

There is a form of assurance which is derived from deduction from the Scriptures. That is the form of assurance which most Christians seem to have, and many believe it is the only form of assurance.

Lloyd-Jones moved on to the second form of assurance; namely the tests of 1 John:

That takes you a step further than the first one; it is better than the first one. The first was merely believing the bare word of God [Sandemanianism!], but now you have examined your life and you are sure that you are not merely saying these things in a theoretical or intellectual manner; you are really living them.²⁴

And then he reached the peak:

But there is a third step... [Rom. 8:16]. This is entirely the action of the Holy Spirit himself. I do nothing about it; it is entirely 'given'. It is solely and exclusively what he does to me... It is the Spirit himself who does it. We do no deducing here. It is not the result of syllogism [deduction], or of argumentation. It is the Spirit himself doing it to me... This testimony of the Spirit with our spirit [is] this highest possible form of assurance.²⁵

This is typical of the teaching of many today. But what is the biblical ground for this order? None! None whatever! It is pure invention, a template imposed on Scripture. Oh! Many say it (and peer repetition is bewitching – teacher repetition, even more so), but what *scriptural* proof do they offer? As I showed, the New Testament speaks often and repeatedly of every believer having the Spirit and, therefore, having assurance – and all without having to go through the drawn-out process of introspection, probing one's sanctification.

²⁴ I expose the wrongness of this in Appendix 3.

²⁵ Lloyd-Jones: *Sons* pp302-305,309. See also Lloyd-Jones: 'Sandemanianism' pp187-188; *God's* pp262-263. Oddly – since he was so strong against Sandemanianism – Lloyd-Jones, of all people, did not seem to see the connection between the above and Sandemanianism.

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Take just one example: Romans 8. Nobody can question that this chapter speaks of the believer's assurance; notice, the *believer's* assurance, not the apostle's or that of some favoured few. How did the early believers get this assurance? Those at Rome had it long before this chapter, of course, but Paul surely put his finger on it when he declared:

If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ... Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you [believers, all of you] did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry: 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Rom. 8:9,14-17).

We have, of course, covered this ground already, but my point here is this: Where, in Romans, did Paul put any tests to believers so that they might obtain assurance? That is, where in the letter to the Romans, did Paul urge the believers to look at their works to see if they were really converted? Nowhere! There is not a single test for assurance in the entire book of Romans. Is there one in Ephesians? In Thessalonians?

Take that last. There is a place for assurance by works. Oh? Yes! Paul was assured of the Thessalonian believers' election (1 Thess. 1:4), he was convinced of it. How? By the effect the gospel had in their lives; in other words, the apostle argued their election from the evidence of their conversion and sanctification. There is no other way, of course. The Spirit never bears witness with our spirit that someone else is a child of God!

Calvin, commenting on Philippians 1:6:

It is asked, however, whether anyone can be certain as to the salvation of others, for Paul here is not speaking of himself but of the Philippians. I answer, that the assurance which an individual has respecting his own salvation, is very different from what he has as to that of another. For the Spirit of God is a witness to me of my calling, as he is to each of the elect. As to others, we have no testimony, except from the outward efficacy of the Spirit; that is, in so far as the grace of God shows itself in them, so that we come to know it. There is, therefore, a great difference, because the assurance of faith remains

inwardly shut up, and does not extend itself to others. But wherever we see any such tokens of divine election as can be perceived by us, we ought immediately to be stirred up to entertain good hope.

But this is not the real question! Where are we told that the Thessalonians got *their own* assurance by probing their sanctification? Where do we read of them being commanded to search *their* works to discover if *they* were true believers?

Moving on to the ‘sealing of the Spirit’, Lloyd-Jones was unequivocal. He defined ‘sealing’ as ‘authenticity and authority, ownership, and security and safety’.²⁶ ‘It means that we can be authenticated, that it can be established by intelligible signs that we are indeed the children of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’.²⁷ In a word, assured. But do not miss the ‘can’. Much grief lies buried in that small word. He went on: While ‘you cannot be a Christian without receiving the Holy Spirit’, nevertheless ‘one can be a Christian without the sealing of the Spirit’. And though he admitted that he was flying in the face of ‘the prevailing common teaching’,²⁸ Lloyd-Jones was adamant that he was right. One of his arguments (in addition to the support of some Puritans!) was that the translators of the AV ‘deliberately introduced’ – his words – the word ‘after’ in Ephesians 1:13,²⁹ showing that they were convinced sealing was a later experience, after conversion. ‘Are we to seek this sealing? My answer, without any hesitation’, said Lloyd-Jones, ‘is that we should most certainly do so’. But, he warned, this is no easy task or one which is quickly over: ‘Prepare the way... mortify... cleanse yourselves... put into practice the virtues... labour at it... pray for this blessing... be desperate for it’. Alas, however, according to Lloyd-Jones, ‘many Christian people have only known this [sealing, assurance] just before their death’.³⁰

But where are we told this in the New Testament? Where are we told of any New Testament believer who was seeking assurance,

²⁶ Lloyd-Jones: *God’s* p245.

²⁷ Lloyd-Jones: *God’s* p248.

²⁸ I am not so sure – if you include the huge number of believers who never even think about it, and are never taught about it!

²⁹ Quite wrong, as I have explained.

³⁰ Lloyd-Jones: *God’s* pp248-249,266,294-300.

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the witness, sealing or anointing of the Spirit? Where are we told that it is the duty of believers to discover if they are converted and so be assured? In Puritan literature, we find plenty, but where in Scripture?³¹

When preaching through Romans, on reaching Romans 8:15 Lloyd-Jones made a dramatic switch in his application of the apostle's words. Notice how, from, say, verse 9 to verse 14, Paul speaks in terms of 'you' and 'we'. Clearly, he is speaking to and of all believers – as Lloyd-Jones agreed, by applying the words to all believers. Suddenly, however, Lloyd-Jones switched, and started restricting the apostle's 'you' to some special believers:

The 'Spirit of adoption' is not essential to salvation, for a person can be a Christian and yet know little or nothing about this Spirit of adoption.³²

³¹ Despite the extract from Spurgeon which I placed at the start of my book, I do not see this in Ps. 35:1-3: 'O LORD... say to my soul: "I am your salvation"'. David was praying for reassurance in face of bitter attack, even though he had this assurance (Ps. 62:2). In any case, neither verse is in the New Testament, and we are speaking about assurance in the new covenant.

³² Lloyd-Jones: *Sons* p246. Lloyd-Jones admitted he had 'the majority of the... Reformers... Luther and Calvin in particular' against him. In what followed, to justify his claim, Lloyd-Jones offered the Westminster Confession, but no scripture. A significant part of *Sons* is taken up with historical lectures rather than preaching. Again: 'The Reformers were... men who believed in possessing assurance of salvation... Do you believe in assurance of salvation as the Protestant Reformers did?... Those Protestant Reformers said that a man is not truly saved unless he had assurance!... Whenever the church is powerful and mighty and authoritative, her preachers and ministers have always been men who speak out of the full assurance of faith, and know in whom they have believed. It was for this reason that the martyrs could smile... and go gladly to the stake; they knew that from the stake they would wake in heaven and glory and see him [Christ] face to face! And they rejoiced in the assurance of salvation!' (D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *Knowing The Times...*, The Banner Of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1989, pp100-101. Even so, Lloyd-Jones still ploughed on. Incidentally, once again he let the cat out of the bag: his view on assurance was not governed by Scripture but by experience.

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Lloyd-Jones supported his mistaken interpretation of Romans 8:15 by pointing out that if it is true that every believer has the witness of the Spirit, then it follows that professing believers who do not have that witness cannot be converted. And this, of course, could shatter *true* believers. He deduced, therefore, that not every believer has the witness of the Spirit.³³

In reply, I say four things. *First*, Lloyd-Jones was making the bad mistake of allowing experience (if not feelings) govern his interpretation of Scripture. *Secondly*, Lloyd-Jones may well have been right about some professors. Professors can be unbelievers – witness his own and his wife’s testimony.³⁴ *Thirdly*, as I have been careful to explain, true believers can lose their assurance. Just as in Galatians and 1 John, men can be taken into spiritual bondage through wrong teaching, so here; the legal teachers themselves have produced the lack of assurance by their law teaching! A lack of assurance, therefore, does not necessarily indicate an unconverted state. Moreover, there is such a thing as false assurance. And that takes me to the *fourth* thing I want to say by way of reply to Lloyd-Jones. The obverse of his position can only mean that all who say they are assured must be truly converted. But the unregenerate can be quite secure, and there is always the Sandemanian problem! To sum up: we must always start with Scripture, and fix on that, before we turn to experience, feelings or logic.

Getting back to Ephesians, having left the road on ‘the sealing of the Spirit’ (Eph. 1:13-14), it’s no wonder that Lloyd-Jones went even further astray as he moved on to the following verses (Eph. 1:15-23), and asked this question: ‘What is it that [the apostle] has in mind?’ Listen to Lloyd-Jones’ answer! He immediately plunged into ‘tests’:

[Paul]... supplies us with tests which we can [he really meant ‘must’] apply to ourselves. How do we know we are Christians?³⁵... What are our grounds for thanking God that we are Christians?... The mere fact that we think we are Christians is not enough³⁶... There must be some

³³ Lloyd-Jones: *Sons* pp246-247.

³⁴ See my *Infant*.

³⁵ I agree with the next sentence: ‘How can others know we are Christians?’

³⁶ No – but the witness and sealing of the Spirit is no ‘mere fact’.

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test. If we are to have real and solid assurance, then we must have some valid tests to apply; and fortunately for us the apostle provides them for us here.³⁷

He does not! Paul tells the Ephesians that he is praying for them that they might enjoy all that they have in Christ! Lloyd-Jones was doing what so many do today; he was turning the gospel into law! Let Paul speak for himself. See, reader, if you think Paul was setting out a series of tests by which the believer should measure himself in order to get assurance:

You... were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory. For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Eph. 1:13-23).

I fail to see that Paul was here setting out tests whereby believers could and should search themselves as to the reality of their experience.³⁸

John Stott, referring to Lloyd-Jones' exposition of these verses – that it is a special experience reserved for just the elite – rightly stated of that interpretation and assertion:

³⁷ Lloyd-Jones: *God's* p314.

³⁸ See my short address on the passage: 'Trinitarian Experience' (David H J Gay Ministry sermonaudio.com).

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My anxiety is whether the biblical texts have been rightly interpreted. I have the uneasy feeling that it is the experiences which have determined the exposition. For the natural reading of Romans 8:14-17 is surely that *all* believers are ‘led by the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:14), have ‘received a [the] Spirit of adoption’ (Rom. 8:15), and cry ‘Abba, Father’ as the Spirit himself bears witness to them that they are God’s children (Rom. 8:16) and therefore also his heirs (Rom. 8:17). There is no indication in these four verses that a special, distinctive or overwhelming experience is in mind which needs to be sought by all though it is given only to some. On the contrary, the whole paragraph appears to be descriptive of what is, or should be, common to all believers. Though doubtless in differing degrees of intensity, all who have the Spirit’s indwelling (Rom. 8:9) are given the Spirit’s witness too (Rom. 8:15-16).³⁹

Excellent, though I would strengthen Stott’s words. I am sure that Lloyd-Jones did allow experience to govern exposition. Indeed, he said so – pointing out that the ‘natural reading’ means that those who don’t receive such a witness are not true believers. Again, I would stiffen Stott’s use of ‘appears’ in the following: ‘The whole paragraph appears to be descriptive of what is... common to all believers’.⁴⁰ It is – in the New Testament!

And now for Jonathan Edwards. I have already quoted him grieving over his doubt. As you may well imagine, he had the doctrinal thinking behind his lack of assurance well and truly worked out. But just listen to it! Let Edwards’ words sink in! As his editors noted, Edwards, in his sermon: ‘I Know That My Redeemer Lives’, which he preached in October 1740, showed he had departed from George Whitefield⁴¹ on assurance: ‘Edwards

³⁹ Stott p236, emphasis his. Referring to Lloyd-Jones’ heavy dependence on the testimony of those who claimed to have remarkable experiences, Hulse rightly spoke of Lloyd-Jones’ ‘story-telling rather than exposition’ (*Reformation*, no.84, 1985, p13, in Atherstone and Jones pp123-130).

⁴⁰ Notice my omission of ‘or should be’.

⁴¹ See the earlier note on Whitefield’s letter to John Wesley. What about the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists with whom Whitefield was closely associated? Howell Harris, though he lost his sense of assurance for a while, as Evans noted, ‘was adamant that assurance was the essence of saving faith’. This was a mistake – see Appendix 1. He asked Whitefield to write on the subject, promising to translate the work into Welsh. ‘It is much wanting’, he told him. But Whitefield didn’t comply. William

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emphasises that it is only through long-term manifestation and practice of “holy fruits” that the believer can achieve assurance – but never any absolute certainty – of salvation’. As he himself declared: ‘Another thing that is requisite to assurance is frequent and strict self-examination... Christians should be often examining themselves’.⁴²

Six years later, Edwards wrote his *Religious Affections*, in which he spoke about ‘the witness of the Spirit’:

That which many call the witness of the Spirit, is no other than an immediate suggestion and impression of that fact, otherwise secret, that they are made the children of God, and so that their sins are pardoned, and that God has given them a title to heaven.

Do not misread Edwards here: he was being utterly dismissive! Referring to his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, Edwards was pleased to say that though in his younger days Stoddard had believed the above, latterly he had come to see that ‘the Spirit discovers [reveals] the grace of God in Christ, and thereby draws forth special actings of faith and love, which are evidential; but it does not work by way of testimony’. Edwards, analysing the ‘error’, argued that it missed the essential point; namely, *evidence*. In the following, I highlight the relevant words – and glosses:

Williams translated Ralph Erskine’s *The Assurance of Faith*. In the societies, the first question was: ‘Do you know that you believe?’ Evans: ‘It is clear that the Welsh Methodists were being taught that assurance was the Christian’s birthright’. Although Harris and Daniel Rowland had some disagreement over the matter, in a sermon reported by Harris, Rowland ‘showed that all the saints had a witness... and that all [might] doubt for a time, but don’t abide in it. It is a mark of the hypocrite to be easy without testimony’. An anonymous critic noted that Rowland and Whitefield agreed on ‘election... regeneration.. and personal assurance of salvation’. Evans observed that the 1742 rules showed that their ‘hallmark was, unashamedly, assurance of salvation’ (Evans pp89,111-115,12,146,157,184-185,191,252-253). See Lloyd-Jones on Harris’ conversion, quoting Harris himself: ‘I know my sins have been forgiven’: ‘Howell Harris was now converted, he knows that his sins are forgiven, and he has lost his burden’ (Lloyd-Jones: ‘Howell’ p285).

⁴² Kinnach, Minkema and Sweeney xxxii, p160.

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When God sets his seal on a man's heart by his Spirit, there is some holy stamp, some image impressed, and left upon the heart by the Spirit, as by the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp, or impressed image, exhibiting clear *evidence* to the conscience, that the subject of it is the child of God, is the very thing which in Scripture is called 'the seal of the Spirit', and 'the witness' or '*evidence* of the Spirit'. And this mark enstamped by the Spirit on God's children, is his own image. That is the *evidence* by which they are known to be God's children.

This is vital. Edwards has radically shifted the biblical position – the direct witness of the Spirit – to assurance based on evidence; namely, sanctification. He did this by 'correcting' Paul! The apostle said 'witness'; Edwards said 'evidence'. The plain fact is a witness *gives* evidence; it is not *the* evidence! Edwards made his tampering with Paul abundantly plain in his comments on Romans 8:16:

When [the apostle] speaks of the Spirit giving us 'witness' or *evidence* that we are God's children, [he is referring to the Spirit's] dwelling in us, and leading us, as a spirit of adoption, or of a child, disposing us to behave towards God as a father... So that the witness of the Spirit... is far from being any whisper, or immediate suggestion; but is that gracious, holy *effect* of the Spirit of God in the hearts of saints, the disposition and temper [spirit, attitude, frame of mind] of children, appearing in sweet child-like love to God, which casts out fear. It is plain that the apostle speaks of the Spirit... as dwelling in the hearts of saints, as a gracious principle, in opposition to the flesh... It is 'perfect love', or 'strong love' only, which so witnesses or *evidences* that we are children, as to cast out fear, and wholly deliver from the spirit of bondage. The strong and lively *experiences* of evangelical, humble love to God, give clear *evidence* of the soul's relation to God, as his child... The Spirit of God gives the *evidence*, by infusing and shedding abroad the love of God, the spirit of a child, in the heart; and our spirit, or our conscience, receives and declares this *evidence* for our rejoicing. Many mischiefs have arisen from that false and delusive notion of the witness of the Spirit, that it is a kind of inward voice, suggestion, or declaration from God to a man, that he is beloved, pardoned, elected, or the like... It is to be feared that multitudes of souls have been eternally undone by it [ruined by this delusion]⁴³... The 'witness' or seal of the Spirit consists in the *effect* of the Spirit of God in the heart, in the implantation and *exercises* of grace there, and so consists in *experience*... In these *exercises* of grace in practice, God gives witness,

⁴³ Edwards: *Religious* (New York) p128.

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and sets to his seal, in the most conspicuous, eminent, and *evident* manner... And when the apostle speaks of the ‘witness’ of the Spirit, in Rom. 8:15-17, he has a more immediate respect to what the Christians *experienced* in their *exercises* of love to God, while suffering persecution, as is plain by the context.

Is it? Edwards referred to their ‘sufferings’ (Rom. 8:18), calling them ‘persecutions’. I agree that the apostle moves on to persecutions at the end of the chapter, but it stretches the elastic beyond breaking point to read all that back into ‘the witness of the Spirit’. The witness of the Spirit helps believers in their trials and sufferings, but those sufferings, and the believer’s attitude under them, are not part of the Spirit’s witness.

Edwards tackled those who objected to his teaching on the grounds that it is ‘a legal doctrine... [which] magnifies works, and tends to lead men to make too much of their own doings, to the diminution of the glory of free grace’.⁴⁴ But so it is, and so it

⁴⁴ Edwards: *Works* Vol.1 pp1248-1253,1410,1427. See also pp1212,1237-1239,1244,1254,1287,1295,1506,1722,1726; Vol.2 pp97,1041,1229,1234,2310,2398 (hopefaithprayer.com). Edwards did better, but still did not reach the biblical position, when he wrote: ‘Hence we learn, that our experience of the sufficiency of the doctrine of the gospel to give peace of conscience is a rational inward witness to the truth of the gospel. When the mind sees such a fitness in this way of salvation, that it takes off the burden that arises from the sense of its being necessarily bound to punishment... it is a strong argument... not a thing of mere human imagination. When we experience its fitness to answer its end, this is the third of the three that bear witness on earth [1 John 5:6-8]. The Spirit bears witness, by discovering [revealing] the divine glory, and those stamps of divinity that are in the gospel’ (Vol.2 p1567). ‘The filial Spirit, or Spirit of the Son, or Spirit of adoption, is a principle that, so far as it prevails, excludes and renders the saints incapable of fear, or a legal principle, or spirit of bondage (1 John 4:18)... It is in Christians a principle of love, of childlike confidence and hope... It cries: “Abba, Father”. It evidences to them their being the children of God, and begets that trust and assurance that renders them incapable of a legal principle (Rom. 8:15-16)... Being led by the Spirit of the Son of God, as a Spirit of adoption, is inconsistent with a state of bondage, [just] as sonship is inconsistent with servitude: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17)’ (Vol.2 p2105). ‘Christians are the children of God, as partaking with Christ, the only-begotten Son, in his sonship... And Christians, being the children of God,

does!⁴⁵ While I agree that justification by faith leads to sanctification in works – of that there is not the slightest doubt – we are talking, as Paul was talking in Romans 8:15-17, about the witness of the Spirit, not the witness of our works. Clearly, Edwards had fundamentally shifted the focus from the biblical position – the witness of the Spirit – to the witness of evidences of life, the witness of works. And this, of course, leads directly to introspection and lack of assurance – as it did, do not forget, in his own experience! Moreover, as I have shown, Edwards called his hearers and readers to frequent self-searching over the matter.

And what a strange childhood he must have had! Evidently he never knew he was the child of his parents until he could see that he really loved them! What is more, how could he have ever fully accepted that he was indeed his father’s child – was his love for his father ever ‘perfect’ (his own word)? There is truth in all he says as regards secondary evidence when faith is tested,⁴⁶ and in demonstrating the reality of our profession to others, yes, but as for it being a fair representation of the apostle’s words, it is anything but! Try Edwards’ treatment on, say, justification by faith in Romans 3 and 4!

Moving on to A.W.Pink: Pink, in part quoting Baxter, was another to call for self-searching for assurance:

A reliable and satisfactory assurance can only be attained or reached by means of a thorough self-examination.⁴⁷ ‘O therefore, Christians, rest not till you can call this rest your own. Sit not down without assurance. Get alone, and bring your heart to the bar of trial: force it to answer the interrogatories put to it to set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and the qualifications of yourself on the other side, and then judge what resemblance there is between them. You have the same word before you, by which to judge yourself now, as you shall be judged by at the great day. You may there read the very articles upon which you shall be tried; try yourself by these articles now. You may there know beforehand on what terms men shall then be acquitted or condemned.

are honoured of God as such. They are sometimes[!] owned as such by the inward testimony of the Spirit of God... “The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God” (Vol.2 p2311).

⁴⁵ See the New England controversy in the previous century.

⁴⁶ See Appendix 3.

⁴⁷ This denigrates the Spirit’s witness to the edge of blasphemy!

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Try now whether you are possessed of that which will acquit you, or whether you are in the condition of those that will be condemned; and accordingly acquit or condemn yourself. Yet be sure you judge by a true touchstone, and mistake not the Scripture description of a saint, that you neither acquit nor condemn yourself by mistake'.⁴⁸

Here you have it. Introspection and evidence are the keys to assurance!

John Murray kept to the beaten track; he had *five* 'grounds of assurance': 'An intelligent understanding of the nature of salvation... The recognition of the immutability of the gifts and calling of God... Obedience to the commands of God... Self examination... The inward witness of the Holy Spirit'. Note where Murray placed the witness of the Spirit. Furthermore, he was explicit in placing the other 'grounds' between the believer and his assurance: 'The direct witness of the sonship of believers must never be divorced from the other activities of the Spirit in the sanctification of all believers'. Quite right! But – and what a 'but' – Murray showed where, in his opinion, the weight must fall:

This progressive conformity to the image of God's Son is [the] authentic witness to the recognition that their alignments are not with the world that lies in the wicked one, but with the kingdom which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹

In short, Murray was saying that the real ground of assurance is sanctification. A far cry, is it not, from the New Testament?

John Piper did not stray from the Puritan path, listing *twelve* aspects of the way believers get assurance. The third (citing 2 Cor. 13:5): 'Assurance cannot neglect the painful work of self-examination'. The sixth (citing Heb. 10:21-22): 'Repeated focusing on the sufficiency of the cross of Christ is crucial for assurance'. The tenth (citing Ps. 40:1-3): 'We must often wait patiently for the return of assurance'. The eleventh (1 Tim. 6:12): 'Assurance is a fight to the day we die'. And the last (citing Rom. 8:16 and 1 John

⁴⁸ Pink, quoting Baxter's *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*.

⁴⁹ John Murray pp270-274.

5:10-11) – the last, mark you: ‘Assurance is finally a gift of the Spirit’.⁵⁰

I will deal with 2 Corinthians 13:5 and show that Piper got it wrong.⁵¹ As for Psalm 40:1-3, did Piper make a fair application of David’s words? I think it far more likely that David was speaking of his conversion, or delivery from some trial – but I see no suggestion that he was struggling over assurance. As for 1 Timothy 6:12, I fail to see that it justifies Piper’s heading.

And then we come to John Macarthur:

I think it’s fair to say the pulpit is *rightly* the creator of anxious hearts. That’s part of the duty of the preacher – to make the heart anxious. Why? So that, as 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, you examine yourself to see whether you’re in the faith. [It] would be a breach of ministerial responsibility, it would be a forfeiture of the duty we have before God, to let people live comfortably and [have] an illusion about their true spiritual condition... The pulpit is to be a purveyor of a message that creates anxious hearts... Where there is that strong preaching, there will be a battle with assurance. And I’ll tell you something, it’s not bad to have that; it’s good because how else are we drawn to the important issue of self-examination?⁵²

Bear in mind that Macarthur was saying this to believers – not to the ungodly – and doing so in a sermon to give them assurance! Preachers, I agree, must preach so as to awaken and disturb *unbelievers* – but, as I say, Macarthur was here trying to help believers who are afraid and lacking assurance. Fantastic!

I would not be misunderstood. I am not saying that preachers should never disturb believers. Of course not! 2 Timothy 3:16, on its own, is more than sufficient to put a stop to that kind of talk. No! What is more, I define preaching as ‘a confrontation’ (Ezek. 16:2; 20:4; 22:2; 23:36),⁵³ and I deplore the fact that many preachers

⁵⁰ ‘Helping People Have the Assurance of Salvation’ (desiringgod.org). Another on the same website was entitled: ‘The Agonizing Problem of the Assurance of Salvation’. What an uninviting title! Beeke’s ‘Quest’ is bad enough!

⁵¹ See Appendix 4.

⁵² ‘Why Christians Lack Assurance’ (gty.org), emphasis mine. Macarthur said more, of course, but he did say this.

⁵³ But many versions have ‘judge’ instead of confront. Nevertheless, ‘confront’ is the right word. How often the prophets proclaimed *against*

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steer as far away as possible from challenging believers, let alone upsetting or offending them. But, surely, when a man is deliberately setting out to remove a believer's fears over assurance, the last thing he should be doing is making believers harrow themselves, asserting that his job is to make them anxious.

When all this is played out in today's culture of inclusivism at all costs, we might well end up with preachers making saints anxious and, at the same time, lulling the unconverted to sleep! I know what MacArthur was doing, but in rightly trying to disturb 'the carnal Christian', I wonder how many *true and sincere believers* he made – and continues to make – unnecessarily anxious! James Sawyer commented:

people for their sins. The complaint of the people against Jeremiah was that he proclaimed against them (Jer. 1:18; 25:30; 26:11-12,20; 28:8). He was, of course, doing as God himself and as God commanded him (many verses). As for the verses from Ezekiel, Calvin commented: Judging 'embraces within itself all reproaches and threats. On the whole, since they acted deceitfully, and by no means proposed to submit themselves to God, hence he uses this bitterness: "What! are they worthy of your judging them? that is, of your contending with them?" For the prophet's duty is to argue with sinners, to threaten them, and to cite them to God's tribunal. God, therefore, pronounces them unworthy of such disputing, because they are not only deaf, but, hardened by abandoned obstinacy'. Gill: 'Will you not reprove and correct them, judge and condemn them, for their sins and wickedness?... Will you do your work and office as a prophet? Have you courage enough to do it? Will you rebuke and reprove?... Will you examine her [Israel's] case, judge truly, and condemn her, as you ought to do? Have you inclination to take this affair in hand? Then be directed to it, as follows:.. You shall show her all her abominations; lay them before her; convict her of them; show her the evil of them, and the punishment they deserve; every kind of sin she was guilty of. For, as for particular acts, it was impossible to reckon them; those sins that were the most flagrant, and most frequently committed, and which were abominable to the Lord, and rendered her so in his sight, are intended. This you ought to do... Do as follows... declare unto them their abominations, their abominable sins, their murders, adulteries, and idolatries. Set them in a true light before them, in all their aggravated circumstances, that, if it can be, they may be brought to a true sight and sense of them, to repent of them, be ashamed of them, loathe them, confess them, and forsake them'. See my 'Confronting The Cultures' and my 'The True Minister:1' (David H J Gay Ministry sermonaudio.com).

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[MacArthur] contends: ‘When a man obeys God he gives *the only possible evidence* that in his heart he believes God’. Elsewhere, MacArthur notes that since salvation is a work of God, it is God who produces the fruit of salvation in us, noting that any professed salvation which lacks any of the elements of salvation is to be found wanting from a biblical perspective. *The practical effect of such teaching is to suspend assurance of salvation* (not salvation itself) upon performance – works. The net effect is to destroy the confidence that the believer is commanded in Scripture to have before God. The dynamic of assurance espoused by Dr. MacArthur has its roots deep in the tradition of the Puritans and the Scottish Calvinists. The Scots referred to this process as: ‘The Practical Syllogism’. The Puritans called it: ‘The Reflex Action’. By whatever name, the process is the same. The believer is denied direct access to the Saviour for assurance. Instead he must look inside and complete the syllogism: ‘The Scripture tells me that he who believes shall be saved. If upon examining myself I find fruits of righteousness in my life, I may then complete the syllogism But I believe, therefore I shall be saved’. However, such a doctrine lays the ground of assurance solely within ourselves causing the believer to rely more on his own works for assurance, than on the work of Christ on our behalf. The ultimate result of such teaching is uncertainty.⁵⁴

I leave the extracts there. So much for legal assurance. Give me the New Testament variety, every time!

⁵⁴ Sawyer.

