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The Doctrine of Faith, Doubt, and Assurance: A Historical, Philosophical, and Theological Analysis

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Abstract: How do individuals find assurance of their personal standing before God? This article discusses the way different traditions of the Christian faith tried to answer the question—some leaving room for doubt in the process and others demanding absolute certainty from the believer. All fellowships experienced some problems with the issue due to the very nature of the question. Assurance required a reflexive act that turned the eyes of the believer away from the good things of God and the promises of the gospel toward an inspection of one's inner man and motives that were difficult to discern. Those fellowships that emphasized a human condition in the process of salvation or assurance often struggled with their depravity before God and unworthiness to claim the promises of divine grace. This paper particularly focuses upon the struggles of the so-called Calvinists, who were more enamored with the question than the other fellowships and had difficulty developing a coherent or definitive answer, caught as they were between tensions in their theology, between the Christocentric vision of John Calvin that led toward assurance and the synergistic tendences of Theodore Beza and Heinrich Bullinger that led toward doubt. The paper provides some criticism of their theology but sympathizes with their struggle and finds faith and doubt inevitable parts of the Christian life here on earth.

Keywords: faith; doubt; assurance of salvation; Martin Luther; John Calvin; Calvinism; practical syllogism

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1. Introduction

God is invisible. The divine promises are invisible. They provide no concrete empirical evidence to substantiate their truth at present. They await an ultimate manifestation in the future during the revelation of the Son of Man, when the heavens are rolled up like a scroll and the divine reality is revealed once and for all (Rev. 6:14–17, Mtt. 24:30, Zech. 12:10–14). At present, the church is found waiting for the fulfillment of the divine promises through faith, which welcomes things from a distance and concerns the "assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1ff.). This faith has some partial idea of what is coming but awaits perfect knowledge in the future when all becomes clear and manifest with the coming of Christ.[1] In the meantime, believers are left within the imperfect state of their faith and knowledge. This problem is most manifest in a question that has plagued the church since its inception—the question of assurance before God or how people can know about their standing in the kingdom of God before the final day of judgment. The church has wrestled with this question down through the ages and found it difficult to supply a definitive answer. The following article explains the positions of the three basic wings of orthodoxy in the West and hopes to afford some useful analysis of faith, doubt, and assurance to help the faithful along their journey toward ultimate justification.

2. Historical Analysis

2.1. Catholicism

The doctrine of assurance was a part of the sacrament of penance in the development of Catholic teaching. This relationship made it difficult for the church to leave behind

the threat of punishment (*poenitentia*) so endemic to the process of receiving forgiveness and find assurance of one's standing before God. Tertullian provided the early church with the substance of its later teaching on assurance and penance, rejecting any appeal to divine mercy or cheap grace and depicting God as a judge who demands *meritum* and *satisfactio*. He wanted the penitent to express remorse and earn forgiveness through "drooping, wasting, and torturing" oneself "before the feet of the presbyters", adopting a "demeanor calculated to move mercy", and leaving the trembling soul to wonder whether "this compensating exchange" was truly worthy or sufficient to appease divine wrath concerning sin (Tertullian n.d.).[2] Gregory the Great provided the doctrine with its first systematic presentation and found it necessary to extend the process of penance into an afterlife that required more penance or temporal punishment in the fires of purgatory since there was no certainty of fulfilling the sacrament here on earth. There was no certainty in what he thought was essential for a believer to fulfill in completing his or her penance, and so he thought it better to stay vigilant and fear God than presume too much of a depraved and finite soul in the attempt to satisfy justice (Gregorius Magnus n.d.a, 4.26,41–42).[3]

The position of Tertullian and Gregory the Great provided the basic parameters for the Catholic understanding of the subject—at least as it was interpreted through the Thomistic school of thought in Medieval scholasticism. The Council of Trent thought that "no one can know with a certitude of faith" the disposition of God toward an individual, given the weakness of the flesh and error in human judgment that permeated the sacrament. Like Thomas Aquinas, the church found it most difficult for anyone to fulfill the demand for heart-felt contrition and hold it up before God as worthy of esteem (*Canones et Decreta Dogmatica Concilii Tridentini* 1563, sessio sexta, cap. 9, can. 13–14; sessio decimaquarta, cap. 4, 6).[4] The Catholic Church held to this basic Thomistic understanding of the sacrament and its uncertainty, but in doing so, it rejected a tension that developed in its position during the late Medieval period. It dismissed the Scotist side of the debate that afforded more solace to the believer in their understanding of the sacrament as providing too much of a pretext for adopting the Protestant position of absolute certitude. Duns Scotus and his followers emphasized divine mercy in their theology and thought the penitent might know whether he or she was currently in a state of grace as long as the person did "not place an obstacle" in the way of its reception (Scotus 1968–1969, 7/1.471, 8.124–25; 9.30, 42, 82, 92, 300 [III, d.23, q.1, n.17; IV, d.17, q.6, n.10; d.14, q.2, n.13; q.4, n.3–4, 7; d.17, q.1, n.13–14]).

> One is able to know who does not place an obstacle though an intention to sin mortally and accepts the sacrament of absolution, that confers grace ex *opera operato*, and yet does not bring any other intention except not placing an obstacle, which is the cessation from the act and purpose of sinning, as Scotus would have it in IV. (Biel 1977, II, d.27, Q [525–26])

Doubt only comes when one looks at an act of merit or contrition and neglects the grace that God has offered *ex opere operato* through the priest in the sacrament. The one who does not place an obstacle in the way may know that he or she has received absolution and stands assuredly with that grace "through faith" (*Concilium Tridentinum* 1901–1930, 5.404, 410; 10.586–87, 652–53; 12.649, 655–56).[5] Many followed this position at Trent, but its similarity to the Protestant position proved fatal to its adoption as the council proceeded toward the negation of their polemical opponents during these days of orthodoxy rather than ecumenicity and compromise (*Concilium Tridentinum* 1901–1930, 5.632–33; Rückert 1925, p. 207; Stakemeier 1947, pp. 166–67).

2.2. Luther and Lutheranism

Of course, the council was right about the relationship between the Scotist position and Protestantism. Martin Luther and other first-generation Lutherans provide testimony to his adoption of the position. They directly point to a "certain older brother" and John Staupitz, the beloved mentor of Luther and vice-general of the Reformed Augustinian Order, as urging him to follow this understanding of the sacrament. Both taught him to "believe in the remission of sins" and trust the words of absolution spoken by the priest as

personal words from God confirming the forgiveness of his sin (WA 40/2.411–12).[6] Luther accepted their counsel and exhorted his followers to listen and trust the words of comfort in the sacrament and no longer trust the "contrition of the heart, the confession of the mouth, or the satisfaction of works". The priest's words are God's words, his action God's action, and his forgiveness God's forgiveness. When the priest says, "I absolve you", God is speaking directly to you and declaring to you the forgiveness of your sins (WA 30/2.411–14, 497–98); *Dr. Martin Luthers Kleiner und grosser Katechismus* 1852, pp. 17, 158; WA 1.30–31, 323, 540–42; 2.13–14; 4.665; 6.158, 166; 7.119, 374ff.; 38.243–44; 40/2.449ff.; 44.717; 47.334).

This is how Luther became so absolutely certain of his and other believers' standing before God. He followed the Scotist position and thought the sacrament of penance conveyed a personal word of assurance to each believer. This conviction was so overwhelming that he proceeded to make salvation depend upon the certitude of the believer and damn his Catholic opponents for their uncertainty. He made it necessary to believe in one's justification to find justification before God and left no room for even a shadow of a doubt to disturb those who experience the redemptive power of God in truth. If you doubt that you are accepted, then you are simply not a part of God's kingdom (WA 1.330–31, 541–43; 2.13-15; 5.124ff.; 7.53, 733; 8.8; 18.769; 39/1.45; 40/2.342). You simply do not believe in what God has just told you. In all these exhortations, Luther reacted against his polemical opponents much the same way they reacted against him, proceeding to the opposite extreme.

This Scotist position of Luther continued in his church during the days of orthodoxy, even well after the Lutherans dispensed with the sacrament of penance. The orthodox continued to insist that one is "able" and "ought" to deduce one's salvation from the general promises of God to the believer, even without a personal word from God to provide them with the same type of individual assurance as Luther. The Lutherans spent time ridiculing "papist" admonitions to the contrary as calling "God's promises into question" and taught that all doubt is sin (CR 21.185, 754; 27.552; Gerhard 1634–1637, 1.2, p.3, a.23, c.5 [726a, 731a], 1865, III, 1.16, n.82 [369a–b], n.90 [378]; Quenstedt 1715, III, c.8, q.9 [816–16, 820]; Hollaz 1741, III, s.2, c.7, q.9 [1165]; Chemnitz 1578, 1.174b). Sometimes they elevated assurance to a "must" and plagued the conscience of believers with a more disquieting thought than any Catholic concept of fear: that any indication of doubt meant the damnation of the soul (Hollaz 1741, q.22 [1182]),[7] that doubt was not a simple peccadillo—forgivable and understandable as a part of a fallible human condition. In all this, they chose to follow one side of Luther without comprehending the limited context that engendered his belief in the first place or continuing to follow his sacramental understanding. They certainly ignored the multifaceted nature of his real life and teaching, which included the throes and vicissitudes of this world, constant bouts with the devil and the Anti-Christ of Rome, and the inward *Angst* and *Anfechtung* that vexes the soul of every believer (WA 31.557–58; WA 7.287, 789; 37.487; 40/1.576–78; Stakemeier 1947, pp. 52–53; Holl 1977, pp. 53, 74ff.; Oberman 1989, pp. 104–6, 156; Kittleson 1986). This tension was ignored in most of their accounts due to their zeal to profess absolute certainty and negate any validity to the objections of their polemical opponents. It only found some credence among other Protestant groups like the Calvinists who thought of the Christian life as a pilgrimage and provided more room for growth or doubt in the process.

2.3. Calvin and Calvinism

The Calvinists wrestled with the question of assurance and provide a most interesting odyssey to follow and analyze in extricating theological issues. John Calvin provided their most interesting and influential treatment of the subject, making his position and its relation to his disciples worth exploring in some detail. Calvin started out much like other Protestants of the time and followed their new emphasis upon assurance of one's standing before God. He thought of faith as resting upon the knowledge of God's gracious will and favor toward the individual. He defined faith as a "firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us" and found this confidence residing in the promises of God in Christ Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that seals the message of Christ in our

hearts. The Word provides the message of salvation and the Spirit relates the message to the person, providing us with "tranquil hearts" and "confidence" (*Inst.* III, i, 2–ii, 8; ii, 35; Beeke 1999, pp. 60–63; Miller 2020, p. 130).

With this understanding, Calvin joined the rest of Protestantism and thought of faith as "adverse to doubt", but he rejected those who demanded our faith reach absolute perfection in this fallen world. He recognized the "believing mind is mixed with doubt" (*Inst.* III, ii, 38; Beeke 1999, pp. 44ff.; Miller 2020, pp. 124–26). It is "tossed about" within a depraved world that continues to rage in the soul of the believer with its "disturbances", "fears", and "anxieties" (*Inst.* III, ii, 38).[8] This meant that assurance was more of a struggle than what appeared at first with its simple appeal to faith or the outward profession of certitude. Doubt remained a part of the human condition and continued to plague the believer in Calvin's understanding of the Christian life. It certainly plagued his successors as they continued in a world that was filled with perturbations and vicissitudes and struggled with assurance throughout their history and theology.

Much of the difference between Calvin and the Calvinists was in their focus. Calvin found more assurance than many of them by directing the believer to stay fixated on the good things of Christ and the work of the Spirit and avoid dwelling upon the inward or outward fruits of salvation that remain tainted with depravity. He exhorted his followers to remain Christocentric and turn away from works as an uncertain means of consolation. He recognized some place for self-examination but believed our conscience derives more fear than comfort when inspecting the motivations and deeds of the flesh. At best, the signs of grace provide a secondary role or inferior support (*adminiculum inferius*) serving as a mere "conjecture" and must only be interpreted through faith in the mercy of God (*Inst*. III, ii, 18, 38; xiv, 18–20).[9] He exhorted his followers to remain Christocentric and turn away from works to find a solid basis of consolation elsewhere (*Inst.* III, xiv, 18; xxiv, 5; Niesel 1980, pp. 171–72). Here, many of his followers were not so faithful to the admonition and developed a tendency to elevate works or the signs of grace to a more important role in finding assurance than Calvin thought to be edifying.

Calvin is most noteworthy for advancing the idea that one might find a knowledge of the elective purposes of God in this life and rest eternally secure.[10] This meant a believer might obtain a knowledge of his or her ultimate destiny, not just an ephemeral understanding of the present existential condition of his or her soul. Previous theology had left the future open to its uncertainties, but Calvin now offered a way to counter this anxiety through an appeal to the revelation of God in Christ. Calvin referred to Christ as the "mirror of predestination" (*speculum electionis*) and used this concept to unite the will of Christ and the will of the Father together. Those who accepted the call of the gospel and believed in the promises of God in Christ Jesus could rest assured that no secret or hidden decree lay behind what had been revealed to overturn the salvation that was freely offered to them through faith. They could rest assured that they would persevere through the power of God until salvation reached its goal. Christ had revealed to them (a posteriori) what the Father had decreed in the heavens above (a priori) (*Inst*. III, xxiv, 3–5; CO 1.74 [Inst. (1536)]). Through this means, Calvin provided a Christocentric analysis of election and expressed a reverence for the revelation of God that remains unsurpassed in the history of the church, although not many seem to appreciate its brilliance.[11] The Calvinists adopted the doctrine of eternal security, emphasizing the immutable "seed" of divine grace more than the Christocentric matrix of its origin (Bèze 1582, 1.17–18).[12] The Lutherans considered the doctrine mere speculation, showing no real comprehension of its genius in connecting the will of the Son to the Father (Berkouwer 1973, pp. 56, 65).

The Calvinists had a more eclectic view of assurance than Calvin. They often combined the testimony of a good conscience and good works with the emphasis of Calvin on the promises of God's Word and consolation of the Spirit (*Heidelberg Catechism*, QA 1, 21, 86 (Schaff 1977, 3.308, 21, 86); *The Canons of the Synod of Dort*, V, 10 (Schaff 1977, 3.573, 594)).[13] There were two developments in their history and theology that brought a more decided emphasis upon self-examination in the doctrine of assurance. The first was a

synergistic concept of the covenantal relationship between God and the believer that developed in Zurich through the auspices of Heinrich Bullinger. The second was a rational or syllogistic way of deducing salvation that developed after Calvin among some of his disciples—Theodore Beza and Jerome Zanchi in particular.

Heinrich Bullinger was responsible for developing synergistic tendencies within Reformed circles through his concept of the covenant. Early in his career, he was devoted to the radical theology of Luther, Zwingli, and the other early Reformers, who denounced any attempt to impugn divine sovereignty and limit the irreducible place of divine grace in finding salvation through some human component like "free will". Later on, he changed his mind and proceeded toward a more moderate position, even sounding much like Erasmus at times—preferring to strike a balance between free will and grace,[14] refusing to probe into the secrets of predestination (Walser 1957, pp. 111, 121–22, 141, 168–69, 183), speaking of grace in terms of our cooperation with God (CR 14.481–82, 485–86), and threatening the loss of salvation for those who failed to persevere in fulfilling their part of the bargain (Bullinger 1972, I/3, 161, 218–21). This synergistic tendency became embodied in his doctrine of covenant. Zwingli originally designed the doctrine in Zurich to unite the message of the OT and NT together and so justify his comparison of the OT rite of circumcision with the ongoing practice of infant baptism (Strehle 1988, pp. 113–33) although he never recast the NT covenant of grace as a bilateral arrangement or OT doctrine of works. It was Bullinger who recast the covenant in this synergistic direction. He proceeded to think of God and humankind confederated together in a relationship of mutual responsibility. He thought humans have certain "conditions" to fulfill in the covenant of grace if they "expect" to receive what God has promised. He thought they become disinherited or lose their salvation if they fail to fulfill their federal responsibilities (Bullinger 1534, 5b, 8a–9a, 11b, 14b; 1567, 121b). This concept proved significant because it was disseminated to all Reformed Europe through his widely circulated treatise on the subject, *The One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God* (1534). Hereafter, many of its theologians would provide an important place for the covenant in their theology and speak of it as a bilateral compact that united the message of Scripture together, much like Bullinger. They spoke of human conditions in the covenant of grace, even if it produced some tension with other aspects of their theology, if not their basic view of salvation.

> In that covenant there is mutual obligation, both regard to God to be gracious and in regard to man to present his penance. (Sohnius 1609, 1.74, 234)

> [I]t denotes the covenant of God with man, through which God by his goodness promises above all eternal life and he demands from man in turn his service and worship, with certain outward signs which are provided for confirmation. It is said to be two-sided or reciprocal because it consists of the reciprocal obligation of the two members of the covenant: from the side of God, a promise, and from the side of man the demand of a condition. (Turrettini 1688, 8.3.3, 12.1.8)

> The covenant generally speaking is a mutual pact between two parties by which one member binds himself to do, give, or receive something under certain obligations. (Ursinus 1607, 128–29)

> In the covenant of God with man, there is something which God does and another which man does. God by his most eminent right commands or demands from man a service, love of himself, and compliance, and promises life to the one who loves and complies. By agreeing (*astipulando*) man promises to love and be obedient to God who demands and prescribes his duty, and by demanding in return (*restipulando*) from God he claims and expects with confidence life by right of the promise. (Heidegger 1700, 1.9.10)

Most importantly, this concept of the covenant provided a clear impetus to examine the human side of the arrangement and wonder whether the individual was living up to his or her side of the bargain. It made it necessary to examine the human condition and find

out whether the individual had fulfilled his or her federal responsibility and had a right to claim divine promises or possess any personal assurance before God.

Along with Bullinger's doctrine of covenant, the practical syllogism also evolved early in the Reformation, directing the believer toward an inspection of one's faith and works in obtaining the knowledge of salvation. Theodore Beza and Jerome Zanchi provided early expressions of this approach to assurance and inspired its dissemination throughout the Reformed community.[15] The syllogism turned faith and the quest for assurance into a "serious exploration of oneself"—a "reflexive act" to ascertain how one "feels and believes" (Turrettini 1688, 1.4, q.13, 9; 1.25, q.17, 12; Heidegger 1700, 1.24, 93, 109 [418b, 424a]; Mastricht 1715, 2.23 (830a); Maresius 1659, 1.11, 39 [291]). It wanted an individual to deduce his or her election in an Aristotelian manner, which tried to examine one's faith (or whatever inward and outward manifestations of it existed), establish its authenticity, and recognize it as a genuine sign of election. Many of the Reformed combined the practical syllogism with the emphasis upon covenant conditions to make the fruits of election an important feature of determining their status. The Heidelberg catechism says, "[W]e may be assured of our faith by its fruits" (QA 86 (Schaff 1977, 3.338)).[16] The Synod of Dort says the elect attain assurance "by observing in themselves, with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God; such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc." (I, 12 (Schaff 1977, 3.554, 583–84)).

The Puritans became most enamored with the question of assurance and the place of self-reflection in finding an answer. William Perkins, their most famous theologian, thought it was a sacred duty to examine the nature of one's faith and produced a number of treatises on the subject: "A Graine of Mustard Seede", "A Case of Conscience", "A Discourse of Conscience", and "A Treatise tending unto a Declaration, whether a man be in the Estate of Damnation or, in the Estate of Grace", along with other works (Perkins 1608, 1.353–420, 421–28, 510–48, 627–34; Payne 2021a, p. 141; 2021b, p. 324). He particularly wanted his audience to search the affections of the heart and "feele" the truth of the faith within, inspiring many other Puritan thinkers to engage in casuistry or explore "cases of conscience" (Perkins 1608, 1.80, 355, 373–74, 384ff., 391, 406–407, 434).[17] William Ames followed the lead of Perkins and wrote the most influential treatise on the subject, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof* (1643). He exhorted the readers to find certainty by reflecting on the internal motivations of their external works. He provided list upon list of "signes" or indications of genuine love, repentance, obedience, holiness, sincerity, humility, and comfort working within them and attesting to God's grace (Ames 1643, II, 1, 13 [3], 5, 7–10 [10–11], 8, 7ff. [20–21], 99, 4ff. [24], 10, 10 [27], 11 [28–29], 13, 9–12 [32], III, 1, 1ff., 10ff. [45ff.], 3, 6ff. [52ff.], 5 [55–56]). His purpose was to bring "peace of conscience" (Ames 1643, V, 57, 12 (293)), but he and all those who urged this type of psychoanalysis left the believers looking more to the depravity of their own shortcomings than the good things of Christ. Perkins, Ames, and the Puritans produced tomes and tomes of works on the subject that were intended to help bring solace to a troubled conscience but only ended up proving their inability to provide a simple answer and probably left the scrupulous conscience with more doubts than other traditions, which were not so preoccupied with the matter of assurance. The Westminster Confession said it was a "duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure" but admitted "a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be [a] partaker of it" (XVII, 3 (Schaff 1977, 3.638–39)); (Brooks 1980, 2.330ff., 335; Harris [1645] 2011, pp. 236–38; Goodwin 1996, 8.370; Greenbury 2021, pp. 113–16). With this understanding, the Puritans eliminated the more disquieting concept of Lutheranism that practically equated salvation with assurance and left the scrupulous conscience to contemplate its ultimate damnation (Ames [1629] 1983, I, xxvii, 19 (163); Brooks 1980, 2.316-17; Beeke 1993, pp. 5–6). They provided more space for the believer to struggle and presented no simple solution to resolve the problem once and for all. In fact, some of their works probably compounded the anxiety of the faithful through turning the faith away from Christ, developing an obsession with oneself and its certainty, and

accenting the inward cases of the conscience in an attempt to sanitize human depravity as if worthy of esteem.

The overemphasis upon self-examination invited a strong reaction within the Reformed community from those who wanted a return to the original Christocentric vision of the early Reformers. John Eaton founded an English antinomian movement that complained about the many false prophets appearing in "these latter days" with a "legal zeal for works" and turning the focus of the church away from the "wedding garments of Christ" to meditate on the "menstruous cloth" of human righteousness (Eaton 1642a, pp. 206–207, 372, 386, 468; 1642b, preface, pp. 47, 135, 149, 172ff). He found much of his inspiration in the writings of Luther and maintained the same type of Christocentric vision that looked beyond all "reason, sight, sense, and feeling" to the "bare and naked word of God". (Eaton 1642a, pp. 25–26, 115, 178–83, 241, 395).[18] The controversy reached its most fervid pitch in the Massachusetts Bay Colony between October 1636 and March 1638. John Cotton was the most eminent theologian of the movement and disparaged both the practical syllogism and any talk of conditions in the covenant of grace; (Hall 1968, pp. 146, 178–79, 182–83, 186, 232, 240–41; Cotton 1671, pp. 10, 14, 19–21, 28–29, 35–37, 66, 129–30, 213–14, 220; 1654, pp. 14–15, 52–57). He felt Puritanism was losing the original focus of Calvin upon Christ and the witness of the Spirit and producing despair among its people through the overemphasis upon self-examination (Hall 1968, pp. 57–58, 119, 189; Cotton 1671, pp. 39, 84, 43–44, 53, 139, 149–50, 218–20; 1654, pp. 130–31). The controversy only subsided when Cotton and other antinomians were accused of causing a schism and put under duress through the authority of John Winthrop to reconcile their point of view with the rest of the community.

3. Philosophical/Theological Analysis

3.1. Easy Believism

The Antinomians made an important point about the community losing its focus on Christ, but they had more difficulty explaining certain biblical passages that encouraged a critical self-examination. Jesus often challenged those who wished to follow him with a pre-emptive and uncompromising call to discipleship and identified his followers with those who bear "much fruit and so prove to be [his] disciples" (Mk 4:1–20; 8:34–35; 10:17–25, Lk 9:58–62, Jn 4:15–17; 15:1–8; Payne 2021a, p. 152; MacArthur 1988, pp. 59, 79). Paul thought that real union with Christ brings deliverance from a life of sin and a zeal to perform good works through the power of God working within the believer (Rom. 6:1–7:6, Eph. 2:8–10). His views of grace caused him to question the status of a struggling and worldly fellowship like the Corinthians. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, . . . will inherit the kingdom of God"(1 Cor. 9:9–10). He asks them to "examine [to see] whether [they] are in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5). John follows a similar direction in his first letter to the church at Ephesus (?) except he turns the admonition into a more positive message of comfort than Paul's harsh words to the Corinthians. He wants to assure the fellowship of their salvation through an appeal to the outward evidence of God working in their midst (1Jn 5:13) (Payne 2021a, pp. 145–48; Carson 1992, pp. 2, 27; Berkouwer 1972, pp. 296–97). After all, no one can really see the wind blowing or the power of the divine Spirit regenerating those who are born from above and obtain a direct vision of what God is doing (Jn 3:8). Modern behaviorist would say it is impossible to pry into some occult entity within the inner man and discover what motivates a person or oneself. Faith only manifests itself in a holistic manner through certain activities or behaviors; it does not subsist in a separate reality of twinges or feelings that are subject to inspection (Ryle 1984, pp. 46–47, 50–51, 58–59, 87; Wittgenstein 1968, pp. 151 [571], 160ff. [614ff.]). A person who has faith does not subsist in a certain state outside specific acts that come to the forefront under certain conditions. "A person is not a double series of events taking place in two different kinds of stuff" (Ryle 1984, pp. 32, 167–68).

A dichotomy between faith and works developed within Lutheran circles through a misconception of justification by faith. Martin Luther and Philipp Melancthon thought

justification took place through faith apart from the works of the law but never thought of justification as present in the believer's life without the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that remained a part of true salvation. This place of sanctification was lost on many of the laity who preferred to accent the good news of justification through faith alone.[19] They preferred to accept the message of free forgiveness through the simple act of faith and think of works as an option for those who wished to proceed above and beyond salvation and follow Christ in true discipleship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer responded to this perversion of Luther's teaching in his classic work *The Cost of Discipleship* and thought their belief in "cheap grace" was worse than any Catholic doctrine of works. All it did was justify sin in their lives without justifying the sinner before God. It preached "grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate" (Bonhoeffer 1995, pp. 45–46, 59).

"Easy believism" became a particular problem in groups like the Pentecostals, Fundamentalists, Holiness, and some other groups, who were associated early on and developed together out of a similar background. They all grew out of the Keswick Movement and its spiritual revivals that began around 1875 and spread throughout England and America in the subsequent decades (Marsden 1982, pp. 72–73, 77–79, 93ff.). The movement laid the foundation for easy believism to flourish among these groups by conceiving of sanctification as a second work of the Holy Spirit and so dividing Spirit-filled Christians from the average carnal believer (Marsden 1982, pp. 73ff.).[20] The Fundamentalists and later Evangelicals tended to follow this direction but did not relate this second work to a special "second blessing" from on high like some of the other groups. They followed the tradition by distinguishing those who accepted Christ as Lord from those who just accepted him as Savior (Chafer 1974, 3.385ff.; 1981, pp. 19–22; Constable 1982, pp. 207–9; MacArthur 1988, pp. 15–16, 24, 68).

A few decades ago, Evangelicals experienced some conflict in their circles over the type of cheap grace taught by some professors at Dallas Theological Seminary. The leading spokesman of the position was Zane Hodges, a professor who served at the school for 28 years as a New Testament professor. He taught that works were not an inevitable result of salvation, that perseverance was not a condition of salvation, that Christians could overturn their faith and become apostates without losing salvation, and so forth (Hodges 1986, pp. 9, 67–68, 76, 86, 94). Most of his conclusions were based on artificial distinctions in the biblical text that defy any sense of Ockham's razor, particularly his distinction between those passages addressing Christians in general and those addressing disciples.[21] He called "Satanic" and the "Enemy of Souls" anyone who identified Christians with disciples and spoke of works as evidence of faith or a means of assurance (Hodges 1986, pp. 121–22). His extreme rhetoric and bizarre exegesis invited a strong reaction and rebuke from certain members of the community like John MacArthur, a well-known pastor and author in Evangelical circles. He felt Hodges and some other professors at the school had failed to understand the "costly grace" of the gospel. He thought it was time to return to the gospel of Jesus, who had erected barriers in front of those who wanted to follow him and asked them to consider the cost rather than simply accept them in their fallen condition and bestow free forgiveness without repentance. He thought it was time to challenge the easy believism that was prevalent in Evangelical circles and question the salvation of those who failed to display the fruits of salvation or any form of true discipleship whatsoever (MacArthur 1988, pp. 58–59, 79, 159ff.). MacArthur's approach seemed consonant with many biblical passages and proved a necessary correction to the Evangelical desire for "numbers" or welcoming as many as possible into the kingdom of God through bestowing cheap grace.

3.2. Doubt

Security is not a simple matter of claiming Christ's mercy or that free grace applies to you. The NT exhorts the believer to persevere in faith and grow in the knowledge of Christ to "make [one's] calling and election sure" and inherit the kingdom of God (Heb. 6:11, 2

Pet. 1:5–10) (Murray 1990, 2.726). These exhortations assume that the fullness of salvation and assurance is off in the future and not subsisting in the present day as a simple and complete possession. The one who is proceeding toward the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" remains entrapped within the realm of depravity that permeates all things. Jesus seems to share this view of human faith when he says it is much smaller than a mustard seed, suggesting that his followers are filled with unbelief and agnosticism for the most part (Mtt. 17:20).[22] Their faith might have a greater claim on them than all the doubts and fears that permeate their lives, but it undergoes many trials and tribulations along the way before it reaches the goal of perfect knowledge and peace in the eschaton (1 Cor. 13:12, 1 Jn 3:21).[23] Many of the most righteous saints spend their time in prayer wrestling with God and often cross-examine the divine character (Brueggemann 1997, pp. 319–20, 325, 471, 475–76, 560).

> How long, O Lord. Will you ignore me forever?
> How long will you hide your face from me? (Psa. 13:1)
>
> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
> Why are you so far from delivering me,
> So far from the cry of anguish? (Psa. 22:1)
>
> O Lord, how long will you look on,
> Rescue my soul from their onslaught,
> My only life from these lions. (Psa. 35:17)

None of these statements speak from the viewpoint of absolute certainty.

After all, doubt is not always a bad thing. It does not remove a believer from the grace of God. It can even serve as a positive force of salvation or sanctification in a person's life.

First, those who suffer from the absence of God in the midst of sin and guilt often reveal their relationship to the divine presence. In expressing concern over their relationship with God, they reveal the power of the Spirit, who works in their conscience to convict and convince them of sin; they exhibit a longing to find peace of mind and struggle to find the righteousness of the divine presence (Kierkegaard 1968, pp. 397, 400, 407, 473–74; Moltmann 1974, p. 48). Those who wonder about their standing before God do not always demand an answer; their inquiry speaks from the Spirit, who is already at work (Tillich 1976, 3.223).

Second, those who express their doubts often develop a more honest relationship with reason and its inability to defend the faith in all instances. For example, many of the early capitalists like Pierre Bayle and Bernard Mandeville were pious Christians of the Reformed faith but questioned the wisdom of applying biblical standards like altruism to society. They recognized that self-interest and other vices of depraved humanity are sometimes more useful in promoting the welfare of the state than strict fidelity to Christian piety. They expressed some vexation about their finding but preferred to accept the honest results of their reason, recognizing the inability of finite human understanding to penetrate divine mysteries or comprehend how the real world works. Both Bayle and Mandeville divided faith from reason, no longer finding it necessary to use their intellect as a simple apologetic weapon to defend the faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*) (Strehle 2018–2020, 1.28–30, 55–61).[24] They recognized the limits of reason and continued to submit to the revelation of God despite any rational problems that developed here and there in their philosophical musings. This dichotomy became indicative of many intellectuals in the modern world and particularly moved more liberal-minded Protestant fellowships to reject the historical polemic against the Catholic view of assurance and entertain the place of doubt in the Christian faith. Paul Tillich thought of faith as subsisting with the most radical manifestations of non-being or doubt. He thought scientific and historical criticism did not affect the essential truth of divine revelation and must be conducted in a fair and dispassionate manner, promoting a dichotomy between faith and reason that characterized the modern liberal mindset of many modern Protestant theologians on this issue (Tillich 1980, pp. 177–78; 1976, 1.36, 129–30).[25]

Third, doubt provides the basis for a more humble or tolerant disposition that recognizes one's own shortcomings and prevents the condemnation of others. John Locke thought skepticism was necessary in speculative matters like faith and politics to prevent the coercive forces of bigotry from arising and inflicting their dogma or certitude on everyone else as the one and only truth (Locke 1993, pp. 187–88). The communists provide the quintessential example of this type of intolerance that comes from rejecting any modern philosophical concept of subjectivity. They identified their social system with objective science and proceeded to inflict it upon millions of people with oppressive force (Engels 1975, 27.287; Lenin 1927a, 38.419–478–79, 485; 1927b, 13.23, 63, 82, 163, 170, 283, 298, 302, 310).

Fourth, doubt recognizes that one falls short of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It caused Søren Kierkegaard to think he was unworthy of the name of "Christian" in the midst of a Danish culture and Lutheran Church that bestowed cheap grace on everyone (Kierkegaard 1972, pp. 189, 282–84). In his country, no one doubted the salvation that came with a baptismal certificate and demanded no decision to follow or obey the cross of Christ (Kierkegaard 1972, pp. 205–206, 213).

Fifth, doubt allows a person to question one's current understanding and grow and develop new thoughts and ideas. It gives birth to the process of sanctification and has no interest in making "peace between my heart and my head, between my faith and my reason" (Unamuno 1977, p. 132). It needs a God who is disagreeable with the preconceived notions of the present, causing change to transpire in one's way of thinking and allowing the person to obtain greater insight into the complexities of the divine will and nature (Thistleton 2017, vii; Tillich 1948, p. 42).

Sixth, doubt leads to despair or dissatisfaction about the current state of affairs in one's finite existence, making one change the situation and take refuge in the Almighty or whatever truly matters in the end. It forces one to face the vanity of a hedonistic lifestyle and look for the eternal ground of being to provide meaning and purpose in life.[26] Doubt recognizes the futility of human answers; it questions the value of finite possibilities and promotes the venture of faith to find eternal happiness in what transcends reason (Kierkegaard 1968, pp. 15, 33, 53–54, 182, 227, 343, 384, 540). Unamuno says "To believe in God is to long for God . . . to want God to exist" with a passion that proceeds beyond rational necessity (Unamuno 1977, pp. 202–3). It is to recognize that Jesus alone has the "words of eternal life", above and beyond all misgivings and doubts about him (Jn 6:66–68).[27]

Seventh, doubt promotes the zeal for good works to confirm one's standing before God. Rather than resting secure, those who have doubts must make their election sure through exhibiting and inspecting its signs. This concept of assurance led the Calvinists to emphasize hard work in the community and provided the spiritual matrix for capitalism to flourish, according to the famous thesis of Max Weber.[28]

Doubt has these and other benefits in finite existence, but it becomes a particular problem when one directly asks the question of assurance. To ask the question involves the believer in a "reflexive act" to "know that [one] knows" or believe that one believes (Maresius 1659, 1.11, 39 (291); Perkins 1608, 1.529, 542; Heidegger 1700, 1.24, 93, 109 (418b, 424a); Turrettini 1688, 1.4, q.13, 9; 25, q.17, 12; Burgess 1652, pp. 671–72; Hodges 1986, pp. 10, 13). Philosophically, it involves an infinite regression, trying to catch up to the ego and analyze what ever remains a subject and not an object of direct observation.[29] It involves exploring inward psychological states or the mental process behind our simple words and actions—an inward state of affairs that defies the most rigorous philosophical analysis (Rorty 1980, pp. 6–7, 178, 181; Wittgenstein 1968, 308ff. [pp. 103ff.], 329, 332–33 [p. 107]).[30]

Theologically, assurance has a problem with the basic direction of faith, which points the believer outside oneself to find salvation in Christ. The object of faith in justification is Jesus Christ, but the object of faith in assurance is oneself, presenting a tension with the Pauline concept of faith and the basic Protestant doctrine of justification by faith.[31] Paul

says that faith "reveals the righteousness of God" (Rom. 1:17). This means believers no longer speak of their own righteousness and faithfulness but exalt in Christ's righteousness and faithfulness (Phil. 3:7–9). Their ego no longer tries to secure itself within its own being but ek-sists as a relational being to find life and security in the ground of another being (Jüngel 1983, pp. 170, 180–81). This means that those who believe have no claim or right to acceptance as if fulfilling a condition or pointing to their faith for approval as a subjective quality. They trust in the promises and mercies of Christ.[32] They come confessing their impotency, beating their breasts, and directing all energy to glory in what God has done and will do—solely and all alone (Berkouwer 1977, pp. 86, 189).

4. Concluding Remarks

This means that assurance comes from an experience with Christ more than a direct exploration of the inner man. It comes from basking in the righteousness of Christ or living and moving within the love of God. Dostoevsky thinks those who live a Christian life of service for others participate in the love of God and experience the serenity of God's presence that transcends all need for proof (Dostoevsky 1990, pp. 20, 56). William James thinks individual experiences with God are more convincing and precious than "any logic-chopping rationalistic talk" trying to demonstrate what comes from the inner man and its beliefs (James 2004, pp. 74–75, 379). Pascal thinks faith is a "gift of intuition" that God inscribes in the hearts of those who receive the good things of divine grace. "It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason. . .. The heart has its reasons, which reason knows does not know" (Pascal 1958, pp. 73, 79 (248, 279)).[33]

Perhaps, assurance ever remains a problem for those who live between God and the devil in this fallen world (*simul iustus et peccator*). Paul speaks of the struggle in Romans 7 and 8, where he first spends time dwelling on his shortcomings and wretched state before God, finding only evil and condemnation in the members of his body, as long as he sets his mind on the things of the flesh (7:18–24). It is only when he abandons this egocentric perspective and turns to set his mind (*phroneō*) on the good things of the entire godhead Trinity that he finds peace and assurance (8:5): he finds the Spirit of adoption crying "Abba, Father" in our hearts; he finds the elective purposes of the Father working "all things together for the good" and completing the entire process of salvation from beginning to end; he finds the Son interceding as an Advocate at the right hand of God opposing every accusation against us. He finds no pretext to think anything can prevent our salvation "if God is for us" and so ends on a doxological note, confessing that "nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord".

In the end, the Christocentric vision leads him to reduce the pressing importance of an egocentric question like assurance. Paul immediately undermines the significance of his personal salvation in the next chapter, expressing a desire to receive condemnation if it might bring salvation to his brethren (9:3). Here he becomes most like Christ in accepting the curse of God in exchange for the salvation of others (Ex. 32:32). Here the condemnation of the self finds reconciliation with God as it recognizes and participates in the divine sacrifice for others (Gal. 2:20). Paul might continue to live with the doubts and fears of the human condition, but he also continues to find renewal within the presence of the divine life, forsaking whatever is profitable to his own self and laying hold of the righteousness of Christ—the only basis of experiencing assurance within oneself (Phil. 3:7–14).

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Notes

[1] The words for the coming in the Greek NT (*epiphaneia*, *apocalypsis*, and *parousia*) all refer to the same basic idea of manifestation, unveiling, or presence.

[2] For a further, more detailed account of the Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed view of assurance, see (Strehle 1995, chps. 1 and 2).

[3] See (Gregorius Magnus n.d.b, 6.58; 9.34, 54; 16.82; n.d.c, 38.14–16; Dudden 1967, 2.424). Gregory spoke of the parts of the sacrament as *conversio mentis*, *confessio oris*, and *vinicata peccati*. In the Schoolmen, the list became *contritio cordis*, *confessio oris*, and *satisfactio operis*.

[4] See (Schaff 1977, 2.98–99, 131, 144, 152–53, 164–65; Thomas Aquinas 1964–1976, I-II, q.112, a.6; II-II, q.20, a.2). Thomas thought a "conjectural certitude" was possible through examining the signs of divine grace (a delight in God's word, a desire to do God's will, a sorrow for one's sin, and an intention to sin no more (Thomas Aquinas 1964–1976, I-II, q.112, a.5; 1980, IV, d.9, q.1, a.3 [1.467b]).

[5] (*Concilium Tridentinum* 1901–1930, 5.393, 484; 12.656): "Etsi canon ab omnibus recipitur, tamen pars illa, in qua asseritur, quod error sit dicere, iustificatos se certo scire esse in gratia, loquendo de certitudine fidei, generaliter loquendo ad omnibus probator; in aliquo vero casu videtur nonnullis doctoribus, quod quis potest certo scire certitudine fidei, se esse in gratia. Et ideo si hoc velint damnari, cupiunt audiri et discuti. . .. Si ergo Scotus (ut credo) tenuerit ex principiis fidei certudinem hanc, ut patet multis in locis, quae in sola vana fiducia se iactat, exclusis omnibus aliis, quae necessario requiruntur; Scotus vero, si certitudinem teneat, ut arbitror, eam tribuit fidei, dispositionibus praeviis, virtutis operis operati in sacramentis susceptioneque sacramentorum et eidem exterior operi in facto vel in voto, volens quodsi quispiam debet esse certus de gratia, quam habet, opus sit ut se disponat, faciens quantum in se est, et sine fictione credens sacramentum in voto vel facto suscipiat. Magnum ergo discrimen inter certitudem multorum Catholicorum et haereticorum. . .. Alteram viam, quae certa est omnino, declarant esse, qua per sacramentum infallibiliter ex opera operato, id est ex vi sacramenti, remissionem peccatorum et donationem gratiae consequimur. Eo autem certa est haec via, quoniam satis potest quis certus esse de se, quod habeat voluntatem recipiendi sacramentum; certus etiam esse potest, quod minime apponat obicem, quandoquidem esse potest certus se non actu mortaliter peccare et non habere voluntatem seu propositum peccandi in posterum; itaque si hoc modo suscipit saramentum, certus omnino est se se gratiam gratificantem recipere. Opinio igitur Scoti est, nos posse habere certitudinem gratiae sine ulla dubitatione".

[6] See (WA TR 1, nr. 94, 122; 526; 2, nr. 1490, 1890, 2654a; 4, nr. 4362; 5, nr. 6017; CR 6.159; Scheel 1929, pp. 167 [461], 193 [512], 200, 207 [538]; Selneccerus 1592, 2v–3r; Gerhard 1634–1637, 1.2, p.3, a.23, c.5 [&32b–33a]). Gerhard is citing an earlier source. Staupitz exhorts penitents in his writings to disregard their contrition and good works and trust (*Vertrawen*) in the words of absolution (Deutsche Schriften 1867, 1.18, 40, 126–28; Wolf 1971, p. 230).

[7] See (CR 21. 185–86, 189; Chemnitz 1578, 1.383b). Peter Mastricht said that Lutherans, more than any other Protestants, demand personal belief in one's salvation. (Mastricht 1715, 1.6, c.6, 27 (813b)).

[8] See *Commentarius in lib. Psalmorum. Pars I*, 30:6, 90:10 [CO 31.295, 838]; *Commentarius in lib. Isaiae*, 61:2 [CO 37.373]; *Commentarius in epist. Pauli ad Galatas*, 6:7 [CO 50.261]; *Praelectiones in lib. Ieremiae. Pars II*, 20:14–16 [CO 38.354–55]; (Scott 2021, p. 143; Bouwsma 1988, 37).

[9] See *Commentarius in Iohannis Apostolis Epistolam*, 3:14[CO 27.339]; (Miller 2020, pp. 133–34); CD II/2.335; (Niesel 1980, pp. 173–75).

[10] Zwingli's definition of faith suggested this type of doctrine. He spoke of faith as a "sign of election" (Z 2.167 (2); 4.118, 428; 6/1.172, 184, 648). However, Calvin probably developed this teaching in conjunction with Martin Bucer, his confidant. Bucer speaks definitively about uniting the will of Christ and the will of the Father together and so providing security for believers concerning their ultimate perseverance and election (*Metaphrases et narrationes perpetuae epistolarum D. Pauli Apostoli*, [S.1.1536], 359bff., 402–405, 2.240, 347—Bucer (1988); *Calvinus Theologus* (1976, p. 89)).

[11] Karl Barth criticizes Calvin's overall doctrine of predestination for making the *Deus nudus absconditus* the electing God above and beyond the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. He rejects conceiving of Christ as the elected means of a higher "good pleasure" in the Almighty to select only a certain few for salvation and condemn the rest. This concept makes the ultimate reason why God discriminates between humankind a mystery (CD II/2, 65–66, 69–72, 110–11, 156, 159, 338; Venema 2018a, pp. 37–38, 41, 43; cf. Berkouwer 1972, pp. 155–59). Barth's criticism seems to have some merit for those who wish to reconcile the will of God and revelation of Christ together, but it is much too harsh. First, the Bible teaches that humans are finite and will never know all the mysteries of God (Dt. 29:29). Second, Barth fails to appreciate in this context how Calvin's newfangled doctrine of eternal security made great strides in mitigating the dichotomy between the faith of the regenerate in the promises of Christ and the will of God. Third, Barth creates the same type of mystery when he makes the election of Christ and the salvation of the human race a matter of divine free choice. In other words, this choice has no debt to the divine nature or no counterpart in divine revelation. At one point, Barth recognizes the inconsistency and tries to distance his position from the Nominalists view of the Middle Ages that entertained the possibility of something "quite different" transpiring in the work of God through a "sovereign *liberum arbitrium*", but he clearly protests too much (CD IV/1, 195). Jürgen Moltmann is more consistent with the intellectualist tradition and rejects Barth's view of divine freedom. The communication of divine life to others comes from the divine essence, revealing what God is antecedently as Logos. God is love and cannot act in any so-called state of freedom without grace (Moltmann 1981, pp. 52ff., 105ff.). Unlike Moltmann, Barth hesitates to accept the doctrine of universalism, even if it represents the fundamental penchant of

his theology. He hesitates because of his insistence on preserving some sense of divine freedom or the sovereign choice within the godhead to bestow grace on whomever the Father wills (CD IV/3, 477; Berkouwer 1956, pp. 112ff.; Miller 2020, p. 146).

12 See (Wolleb1657, c.32, 1 [214]; Bucan 1625, 26–27 [284ff.]; Til 1704, 169 [12]; Heidegger 1700, 1.24, 94 [4128b]; *Westminster Confession*, XVII, 1–3; XVII, 4 (Schaff, 1977, 3.636–37, 639–40)).

13 See (Beeke 1992, pp. 54–57; 1993, pp. 10–11, 20–21, 61–65; Venema 2018b, pp. 39, 43, 46). Beeke and Venema say the basic Reformed position subordinated the signs of grace to the promises and witness of the Spirit, or, at the very least, the Reformed recognized the need for discernment from the Holy Spirit to even speak of its fruits in their lives. Gaspar Olevian serves as the quintessential representative of the position (Olevian 1585, pp. 257–59). Greenbury finds some Puritans emphasizing the inward testimony of the Spirit and others self-examination although is not always clear between them. Kendall accuses the Calvinists of forsaking Calvin and grounding assurance on the inward and outward fruits of sanctification (Greenbury 2021, pp. 122–23; Kendall 1981, pp. 29–41).

14 CR 8.230–31; 14.486–87.

15 See (Bèze 1582, 1.10, 15–16, 687–90; 1571; Beeke 1991, pp. 82ff.; Kendall 1981, pp. 32ff; Zanchi 1619, 2.506 [*De Natura Dei*, 1577]; 7.230; 8.716–17 [*Miscellanae*, 1566]). Perkins translated parts of Zanchi's *De Natura Dei* on assurance into English and two important treatises of Beza on the subject were also translated in 1570 and 1574. The two had a particular impact on the Puritans, but the practical syllogism became a part of the discussion and treatment of theologians in all Reformed Europe.

16 Zacharias Ursinus and Gaspar Olevian are regarded as the primary composers of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563). Ursinus emphasized the practical syllogism like Zanchi (another Heidelberg theologian) and the covenant as a mutua pactio. Olevian was much closer to Calvin on the doctrine of assurance considering the fruits of salvation secondary to the promises of Christ and the testimony of the Spirit. This was not surprising since Olevian looked to Jeremiah 31 and its emphasis upon grace in understanding the covenant much more than other federal theologians (Ursinus 1607, 128–29; 1584, 138; Olevian 1585, I, i, 1–4, 10–13; Beeke 1992, 56–57, 62–65; CD II/2, 335).

17 Lentham and Beeke speak of a mystical syllogism that finds an early expression in Ursinus and comes to the forefront in the seventeenth century (Lentham 1979, 191 as cited in (Beeke 1992, p. 57)). Perkins emphasizes both the practical syllogism and the bilateral covenant (Payne 2021b, p. 322).

18 See *Abrahams Stepps by Faith* (Eaton 1642b, pp. 176–77, 185). Eaton particularly found Luther's commentary on Galatians (1535) inspiring, citing it no less than 106 times (Graebner 1991, vi, 154, 167, 182; Baker 1985, pp. 118, 120–21, 125). Eaton did not proceed as far as Johann Agricola and disparage the place of the law in our conversion (Graebner 1991, pp. 184–87, 193).

19 See WA 39/I, 82; TR 1.198, Nr. 458; 4.221, Nr. 4331; CR 7.678, 783–84; 15.810–11, 883, 895; 21.304, 421–23, 752; (Althaus 1975, pp. 246–47).

20 John Wesley and the early Methodists taught the possibility of an "entire sanctification" through a dramatic encounter with God outside the initial saving experience and influenced the later Holiness movement. Pentecostals came to view the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" as a special blessing that came after the reception of saving grace and lifted the recipient to a new spiritual plateau (Marsden 1982, pp. 73–74, 93–94; Wesley 1995, pp. 106–11; Peters 1985, passim; Smith 1952, pp. 16–18, 28, 45–47; Berkouwer 1973, pp. 51–52).

21 See Carson 1992, p. 6. For example, he says at one point that not all Christians will be co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom of God (Hodges 1986, pp. 116, 123).

22 No one had enough faith to do something like move a mountain, even in biblical times.

23 The Canons of the Synod of Dort says that "believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they are not always sensible to this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering" (V, xi [Schaff 1977, 3.573, 594]).

24 Both developed Machiavellian government policies that justified questionable acts and institutions like dueling, brothels, etc., considering them immoral but necessary for society to function. Bayle also had intellectual problems with traditional theistic proofs.

25 Tillich creates an extreme caricature of this modern division between faith and reason, claiming that no historical, critical, or scientific theory can favor or dismiss the revelation of God. Here he seems to take away with one hand what he supports with the other. He tends to lose all skepticism about his scientific skepticism. Cf. Augustine (n.d.), *Confessiones*, VI, 4 (PL 32.721), where he recognizes the problem with being dogmatic about his skepticism.

26 See Calvin, *Inst*., I, i, 1; (Kierkegaard 1971, 1.xi, 22–25, 32; 2.197–200; 1973, p. 102).

27 Pascal thinks this wager is worth taking. Tillich thinks faith only exists with the threat of non-being. It must continually choose life in the midst of radical darkness or extinction. Radical faith and absolute doubt belong together in this paradox (Pascal 1958, pp. 53–67 (205–233); Tillich 1980, pp. 177–81).

28 See (Weber 1958, pp. 110–11, 114, 117, 157–60, 166–69, 230–31; Brocker 1995, pp. 505–6). Arminius was certainly wrong to think the Calvinist belief in predestination would zap them from any motivation to do the works of God, as if there was nothing one could do since everything was determined.

[29] The "I" of Descartes' *Cogito* is only postulated to be a "thinking thing" in a reflexive act, not in the pre-reflexive act of thinking. The reflection does not really reflect on the reflecting, or "what is present to me is what is not me". Consciousness is there before it is known (Sartre 1977, ix–xi, pp. 149, 275; Heidegger 1982, 4.107, 113, 116; Copleston 1963, 4.106–107). This means we can only catch up to ourselves in retrospect or after we have already thought or done something (Ryle 1984, pp. 162–63, 166, 193–96). In the end, Ryle prefers not to pry into some occult entity behind what the person thinks and does as a whole (Ryle 1984, pp. 45–46, 50–51).

[30] Wittgenstein thinks that "I know" is just a forceful intonation of frustration and should be replaced with "I believe" as the subjective affirmation of what is unproveable (Wittgenstein 1972, 30, 177–79, 245, 612, 669 [5, 25–26, 33, 81, 88]). Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person, not just the illumination of one aspect that dictates the rest. Socrates (and Plato) thought he possessed the knowledge of what was right and wrong and was able to state it with universal definitions. He equated knowledge and virtue, believing that morality was teachable and that no one willingly chose to do evil. Aristotle disputed this claim and thought humans were moral agents who often chose evil against right insight (Copleston 1962, 1.125–33, 233, 245; Aristotle 1962, III, 3 [150–53]). Some of the early church followed the Socratic tradition by connecting baptism with illumination (*phōtismos*) (Justin Martyr n.d., 61 [PG 6.421–22]; Barnard 1967, p. 141; Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, p. 210; Louth 1989, 58). The Amyraldians followed this tradition in Reformed circles, believing that the mind was the instrument of faith, that the will was subject to it, and that the Spirit need only illuminate the mind to secure salvation in the rest of our being, but most of the Reformed thought of salvation in holistic terms (Amyraut 1652–1660, 1.46–47; 2/2.412; 1658, pp. 122, 132–34).

[31] This is the criticism of Thomas Goodwin (Goodwin 1861–1867, 8.344ff.).

[32] Melanchthon is famous for speaking of *fides* in terms of *fiducia* (trust or assurance). See CR 21.163, 171 [*Loci Communes*] (Melanchthon 1521).

[33] Philosophers like Heidegger and Gadamer speak of humans participating in ultimate reality or prepared in advance to express what is initially a primal aspect of their experience (Heidegger 1962, pp. 199, 208; Gadamer 1990, xxii, xxxi, pp. 133, 159, 488).

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