

Outline of
The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology
By Carl R. Trueman

1. Owen in Context

Introduction

The Importance of the Theological Context

The Reformed Orthodox Background

The Polemical Context

Owen and the Western Tradition

Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance roots

Owen's "Aristotelianism" in context

Conclusion

- There was intellectual flux in the seventeenth century, even in the comparatively conservative (from our later perspective) area of English Reformed Orthodoxy.
- The intellectual content of Owen's thought defies simplistic reduction to one or two key themes.

2. The Principles of Theology

Introduction

Fundamental Distinctions

The nature of theology

Theology before the fall

Theology after the fall

The Christological focus of the theological structure

Scripture and Revelation

The Scriptures as revelation of God

Scripture and inspiration

Scripture and Christ: some observations

Interpreting Revelation

The work of the Spirit

The principles of biblical interpretation

The theological limits of reason

The analogy of faith

Conclusion

- While Owen wrote no formal prolegomena to his theology, there is sufficient relevant discussion in his writings to construct a coherent picture of the principles of his theological method.
- Close examination of Owen's various reflections upon the principles of theology reveals a basic Trinitarian orientation to his approach, which he builds in part on the radical distinction which he sees as existing between the infinite and the finite.
- Trinitarianism is determinative of the whole theological task: objectively, it defines the content of revelation, and thus is the hermeneutical key to understanding Scripture; subjectively, it defines the way in which human

beings are themselves brought to understand revelation , thus pointing in practical terms to the need for a close spiritual walk with God while at the same time radically subordinating reason to revelation within theology.

- His method is not predogmatic; it is, in fact, determined by his doctrine of God.

3. The Doctrine of God

Introduction

The Attributes of God

Absolute and relative attributes

The relationship of God's attributes to the nature of salvation

God, Creation, and Providence

The general framework

Providence and trinitarianism

God and Predestination

Predestination and providence

The importance of sin

The Eternal Basis of Redemption

The importance of the Trinity

Christ and the covenant

Baxter on Christ and the covenant: a comparison with Owen

Salvation and God's immutability

The role of the Holy Spirit

Conclusion

- God is carefully distinguished from his creation as cause is from effect.
- Owen's teaching on providence and predestination is neither rigidly deterministic nor wildly speculative.

4. The Person and Work of Christ

Introduction

The Person of Christ

Socinian criticisms of orthodox Christology

Owen's response

Christ and creation

The Work of Christ

Introduction

Patterns of explication

The threefold office

Christ's prophetic office: communication of properties and Spirit-Christology

The office of king

The high-priestly office

Conclusion

- In opposition to heretical positions which sought to deny the orthodox doctrine of Christ's person and work, Owen's Christological reflections represent a restatement of orthodox Christology which stands in

fundamental continuity with the Reformed tradition, particularly in its use of the so-called *extra calvinisticum* and of the threefold office of Christ.

- Nevertheless, Owen's Christology does not simply use the Reformed tradition, but also utilizes numerous concepts, of which the *extra calvinisticum* is in fact one, from the broader Western tradition, such as the anhypostatic nature of Christ's humanity and the importance of the order of Trinitarian procession for establishing various Christological points, from the relationship of Christ to revelation, to Owen's so-called Spirit-Christology.
- What is perhaps more significant from a theological viewpoint, however, is not the sources of Owen's Christology, but the rigorous way in which this is related to its causal foundation in the covenant of redemption.

5. The Nature of Satisfaction

Introduction

The Sufficiency of the Atonement

The Christological context

Owen on sufficiency and atonement

The Nature of Christ's Suffering

The polemical background

Grotius's critique and Owen's response

Baxter's critique and Owen's response

The significance of the debate

Conclusion

- Owen's theology of satisfaction is framed to a large extent in opposition to a number of contemporary positions as defined by, amongst others, the Socinians, Grotius, Baxter, and the Antinomians. As such, in terms of its specific formulation, it cannot be abstracted from its historical context and brought into direct relation to its sixteenth century antecedents.
- The Trinitarian covenant of redemption is decisive in Owen's thinking.

6. The Man Who Wasn't There

Appendix One

The Role of Aristotelian Teleology in Owen's Doctrine of Atonement

Appendix Two

Owen, Baxter, and the Threefold Office