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) are 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