



*The*  
COMPLETE WORKS  
*of* JOHN OWEN

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The Church • Volume XXVIII

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*The Church, the Scriptures, & the Sacraments*

INTRODUCED & EDITED BY

*Andrew M. Leslie*

*The Complete Works of John Owen*

## The Complete Works of John Owen

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THE CHURCH

VOLUME 28

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and the Sacraments

John Owen

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GENERAL EDITORS

Lee Gatiss and Shawn D. Wright

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## *Works Preface*

JOHN OWEN (1616–1683) is one of the most significant, influential, and prolific theologians that England has ever produced. His work is of such a high caliber that it is no surprise to find it still in demand more than four centuries after his birth. As a son of the Church of England, a Puritan preacher, a statesman, a Reformed theologian and Bible commentator, and later a prominent Nonconformist and advocate of toleration, he is widely read and appreciated by Christians of different types all over the globe, not only for the profundity of his thinking but also for the depth of his spiritual insight.

Owen was born in the year that William Shakespeare died, and in terms of his public influence, he was a rising star in the 1640s and at the height of his power in the 1650s. As chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, dean of Christ Church, and vice-chancellor of Oxford University, he wielded a substantial degree of power and influence within the short-lived English republic. Yet he eventually found himself on the losing side of the epic struggles of the seventeenth century and was ousted from his position of national preeminence. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 effectively barred him from any role in the established church, yet it was in the wilderness of those turbulent post-Restoration years that he wrote many of his most momentous contributions to the world of theological literature, despite being burdened by opposition, persecution, family tragedies, and illness.

There was an abortive endeavor to publish a uniform edition of Owen's works in the early eighteenth century, but this progressed no further than a single folio volume in 1721. A century later (1826), Thomas Russell met with much more success when he produced a collection in twenty-one volumes. The appetite for Owen only grew; more than three hundred people had subscribed to the 1721 and 1826 editions of his works, but almost three thousand subscribed to the twenty-four-volume set produced by William H. Goold



from 1850 onward. That collection, with Goold's learned introductions and notes, became the standard edition. It was given a new lease on life when the Banner of Truth Trust reprinted it several times beginning in 1965, though without some of Owen's Latin works, which had appeared in Goold's edition, or his massive Hebrews commentary, which Banner did eventually reprint in 1991. Goold corrected various errors in the original seventeenth- and eighteenth-century publications, some of which Owen himself had complained of, as well as certain grammatical errors. He thoroughly revised the punctuation, numeration of points, and Scripture references in Owen and presented him in a way acceptable to nineteenth-century readers without taking liberties with the text.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, and especially since the reprinting of Goold's edition in the mid-twentieth century, there has been a great flowering of interest in seventeenth-century Puritanism and Reformed theology. The recent profusion of scholarship in this area has resulted in a huge increase of attention given to Owen and his contribution to these movements. The time has therefore come to attempt another presentation of Owen's body of work for a new century. This new edition is more than a reprint of earlier collections of Owen's writings. As useful as those have been to us and many others, they fail to meet the needs of modern readers who are often familiar with neither the theological context nor the syntax and rhetorical style of seventeenth-century English divinity.

For that reason, we have returned again to the original editions of Owen's texts to ensure the accuracy of their presentation here but have conformed the spelling to modern American standards, modernized older verb endings, reduced the use of italics where they do not clarify meaning, updated some hyphenation forms, modernized capitalization both for select terms in the text and for titles of Owen's works, refreshed the typesetting, set lengthy quotations in block format, and both checked and added Scripture references in a consistent format where necessary. Owen's quotations of others, however, including the various editions of the Bible he used or translated, are kept as they appear in his original. His marginal notes and footnotes have been clearly marked in footnotes as his (with "—Owen" appearing at the end of his content) to distinguish them from editorial comments. Foreign languages such as Greek, Hebrew, and Latin (which Owen knew and used extensively) have been translated into modern English, with the original languages retained in footnotes for scholarly reference (also followed by "—Owen"). If Goold omitted parts of the original text in his edition, we have restored them to their rightful place. Additionally, we have attempted to regularize the numbering

system Owen employed, which was often imprecise and inconsistent; our order is 1, (1), [1], {1}, and 1st. We have also included various features to aid readers' comprehension of Owen's writings, including extensive introductions and outlines by established scholars in the field today, new paragraph breaks marked by a pilcrow (¶), chapter titles and appropriate headings (either entirely new or adapted from Goold), and explanatory footnotes that define archaic or obscure words and point out scriptural and other allusions in the text. When a contents page was not included in the original publication, we have provided one. On the rare occasions when we have added words to the text for readability, we have clearly marked them using square brackets. Having a team of experts involved, along with the benefit of modern online database technology, has also enabled us to make the prodigious effort to identify sources and citations in Owen that Russell and Goold deliberately avoided or were unable to locate for their editions.

Owen did not use only one English translation of the Bible. At various times, he employed the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, or the Authorized Version (KJV), as well as his own paraphrases or translations from the original languages. We have not sought to harmonize his biblical quotations to any single version. Similarly, we have left his Hebrew and Greek quotations exactly as he recorded them, including the unpointed Hebrew text. When it appears that he has misspelled the Hebrew or Greek, we have acknowledged that in a footnote with reference to either *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* or *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

This new edition presents fresh translations of Owen's works that were originally published in Latin, such as his *Θεολογούμενα Παντοδαπά* (1661) and *A Dissertation on Divine Justice* (which Goold published in an amended eighteenth-century translation). It also includes certain shorter works that have never before been collected in one place, such as Owen's prefaces to other people's works and many of his letters, with an extensive index to the whole set.

Our hope and prayer in presenting this new edition of John Owen's complete works is that it will equip and enable new generations of readers to appreciate the spiritual insights he accumulated over the course of his remarkable life. Those with a merely historical interest will find here a testimony to the exceptional labors of one extraordinary figure from a tumultuous age, in a modern and usable critical edition. Those who seek to learn from Owen about the God he worshiped and served will, we trust, find even greater riches in his doctrine of salvation, his passion for evangelism and missions, his Christ-centered vision of all reality, his realistic pursuit of holiness, his belief that theology matters, his concern for right worship and religious freedom,

and his careful exegetical engagement with the text of God's word. We echo the words of the apostle Paul that Owen inscribed on the title page of his book *Χριστολογία* (1679), "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

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# Editor's Introduction

Andrew M. Leslie

## GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE CONTENTS IN THIS PRESENT VOLUME

The two major treatises in this volume, *Of the Divine Original, with the Authority, Self-Evidencing Power, and Light of the Scriptures* and *Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture*, were two of three treatises by Owen on Holy Scripture that were published in 1659. While *Of the Divine Original* and *Of the Integrity* were published together with a single “Epistle Dedicatory,”<sup>1</sup> the third treatise was published separately in Latin, *Pro Sacris Scripturis adversus Huius Temporis Fanaticos Exercitationes Apologeticae Quatuor*.<sup>2</sup>

The remaining content of the present volume consists largely of posthumous collections of sermons that were arranged and published according to a particular theme, as well as several short letters and tracts. As Crawford Gribben notes, the 1721, 1756, and 1760 collections of sermons reproduce material that was initially transcribed in shorthand by John Hartopp and then expanded into a longhand form that is recorded in his notebooks.<sup>3</sup> The

1 John Owen, *Of the Divine Originall, Authority, Self-Evidencing Light, and Power of the Scriptures. With an Answer to That Enquiry, How We Know the Scriptures to Be the Word of God. Also a Vindication of the Purity and Integrity of the Hebrew and Greek Texts of the Old and New Testament; in Some Considerations on the Prolegomena, and Appendix to the Late "Biblia Polyglotta"* (London: Henry Hall for Tho: Robinson, 1659). Note that the title of the published collection as a whole differs slightly from the title of each treatise itself, as drawn from each individual title page within the collection.

2 In *Complete Works of John Owen*, vol. 38.

3 John Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons of the Reverend and Learned John Owen, D.D. Formerly Published: With an Addition of Many Others Never before Printed. Also Several Valuable Tracts, Now First Published from Manuscripts: And Some Others, Which Were Very Scarce.*

Hartopp family was connected to Owen via his friend Charles Fleetwood and Fleetwood's third wife, Mary Hartopp. John Hartopp was Mary's son from her first marriage, and together they formed part of Owen's post-Restoration congregation that met initially in Fleetwood's home.<sup>4</sup> According to Gribben, the material contained in Hartopp's extant notebooks is "detailed and convincing" in its attempt to represent Owen accurately and honest about its limitations where need be.<sup>5</sup>

Two tracts in the present volume, *An Answer unto Two Questions* with its sequel, *Twelve Arguments, against Any Conformity of Members of Separate Churches, to the National Church*, were published by William and Joseph Marshall in 1720.<sup>6</sup> According to the "Booksellers Advertisement" of the two-volume collection in which these two tracts are contained, the collection consisted of material that had been under the possession of the Marshalls and was reprinted for posterity because it had become "very scarce and out of print."<sup>7</sup> Whatever points of correspondence we can identify with Owen's output published within his own lifetime, a question mark is likely to remain over the provenance of some of this posthumous material, despite protestations to the contrary by the respective publishers.

## INTRODUCTION TO OF THE DIVINE ORIGINAL (1659)

Gribben overviews the historical circumstances that led Owen to turn his hand to the subject of biblical authority, not least of which was the gradual appearance of Brian Walton's monumental *Biblia sacra polyglotta* from 1653,

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*To Which Are Added His Latin Orations, Whilst Vicechancellor of Oxford, Taken from His Own Copies. And to the Whole Are Prefix'd Memoirs of His Life: Some Letters Written by Him upon Special Occasions: And His Funeral Sermon, Preach'd by Mr. David Clarkson* (London: John Clark, 1721); John Owen, *Thirteen Sermons Preached on Various Occasions. By the Reverend and Learned John Owen, D.D. Of the Last Age. Never before Printed* (London: For J. Buckland, fold by E. Dilly, 1756); John Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses Suitable to the Lord's Supper, Delivered Just before the Administration of That Sacred Ordinance* (London: J. Buckland, 1760).

4 Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 227.

5 Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 239.

6 John Owen, *Seventeen Sermons Preach'd by the Reverend Dr. John Owen: With the Dedications at Large. Together with the Doctor's Life. In Two Volumes* (London: for William and Joseph Marshall, 1720), 2:377–400. Evidently, an identical version of the tracts was published together separately. See John Owen, *An Answer unto Two Questions: By the Late Judicious John Owen, D.D. With Twelve Arguments, against Any Conformity to Worship, Not of Divine Institution* (London: Joseph Marshall, 1720).

7 Owen, *Seventeen Sermons* (1720), I:\*1 (page numbers with an asterisk refer to unnumbered pages in the original).

and especially the publication of its *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* in 1657.<sup>8</sup> But while Owen makes the odd oblique reference to the London Polyglot Bible in *Of the Divine Original*, there is every reason to believe the decision to publish both treatises together with a single “Epistle Dedicatory” was an alteration to an earlier intention to publish *Of the Divine Original* separately. Indeed, Owen begins to give focused attention to Walton’s production only in the “Epistle Dedicatory” and *Of the Integrity*.

By comparison to *Of the Integrity*, Owen’s tone in *Of the Divine Original* is far more irenic and constructive. Certainly, there is the occasional hint at the contextual forces that will become much more explicit in its sequel. The most notable of these is taken up in chapter 1, where Owen engages with the Sal-murian theologian Louis Cappel (1585–1658) and his controversial opinions regarding emendations to the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament. As we shall see further below in this introduction, Owen is undoubtedly keen to defend the integrity of the extant original copies of Scripture, as a direct corollary of God’s ongoing providential care for his church.<sup>9</sup> Aside from this, however, Owen’s immediate polemical concerns in *Of the Divine Original* are rather muted. As Gribben mentions, it is possible that he is troubled by the proliferation of poor and inadequate translations that had been published of late, and the doubts this might sow in a believer’s mind about the authority and reliability of Scripture.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the major constructive theme in *Of the Divine Original* is Scripture’s self-authentication, or the way in which it continues to manifest its divine authority to the faithful. Moreover, there are certainly suggestions that Owen is particularly alarmed by the way the Catholics had capitalized on any doubts about the authority of Scripture. He explicitly responds to the claim that Scripture’s authority as the word of God is restricted to itself but does not extend to us (*quoad nos*), therein requiring the authentication of the Roman magisterium and its now officially authorized Vulgate translation. Owen’s own recognizably Protestant account of Scripture’s self-authentication, with its customary appeal to the internal work of the Spirit, betrays a marked sensitivity to the typical Catholic charges against it.<sup>11</sup> Appeals to the Spirit had become especially fraught with the rise of sectarianism during the Interregnum.

8 Brian Walton, *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, 6 vols. (London: Thomas Roycroft, 1653–1657). The *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* are in vols. 1 and 6, respectively, of that collection. See Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 182–87.

9 Owen takes up this concern in *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

10 Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 182–87.

11 For a classic statement of this appeal, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.1.7.

In 1654, while vice-chancellor of Oxford University, Owen famously expelled two Quaker prophets for their displays of religious fanaticism. He was obviously sufficiently haunted by this experience over the immediately subsequent years that he explicitly set out to refute their notorious appeals to the Spirit's "inner light" in the third treatise of 1658, *Pro Sacris Scripturis*.<sup>12</sup> That Owen was looking over his shoulder in expectation that any Protestant reliance on the Spirit's internal testimony would be tarred with the brush of "vain enthusiasm" is abundantly clear throughout this treatise, as Gribben readily observes.<sup>13</sup>

There are a couple of features in *Of the Divine Original* that are worthy of our attention. The first is its defense of the so-called plenary inspiration of Scripture. A much more developed and sophisticated account of inspiration may be found in Owen's later *Πνευματολογία: Or, A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit* of 1674;<sup>14</sup> nonetheless an outline of it is already evident in *Of the Divine Original*, where his position on the matter unfolds from what he perceives to be a straightforward exposition of 1 Peter 1:10–12 and various related claims in the New Testament such as Hebrews 1:1 and 2 Timothy 3:16. In particular, where God is said to have spoken "in the prophets" (ἐν τοῖς προφήταις) of old (Heb. 1:1), Owen draws two closely related inferences. The first is that every detail of what they recorded was revealed to them immediately by God so that no detail was left to their independent rational formulation or memory of events. A second inference follows: "They were not themselves enabled by any habitual light, knowledge or conviction of truth, to declare his mind and will, but only acted, as they were immediately moved by him."<sup>15</sup> It is true that Owen presents here a slightly stricter account of inspiration than some of his Protestant brethren.<sup>16</sup> As Richard Muller points out, some early modern Reformed theologians were willing to concede that no special revelation of the Spirit was necessary for matters a writer already knew or could discover from other sources, even if the Spirit still superintended and inspired the actual process of writing to prevent the possibility of error creeping into the text.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See *Complete Works of John Owen*, vol. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 194.

<sup>14</sup> See *Complete Works of John Owen*, vols. 5–6.

<sup>15</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Such a stance was by no means unique. Cf., e.g., the similar statement of the early modern Lutheran Johann Quenstedt in *Theologia didactico-polemica* (Leipzig: Fritsch, 1715), pt. 1, chap. 4, sec. 2, q. 3 (I cc.100–101). Here and in the following, I am repeating my observations in Andrew M. Leslie, *The Light of Grace: John Owen on the Authority of Scripture and Christian Faith* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 209–12.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., John Weemse, *Exercitationes Divinae: Containing Diverse Questions and Solutions for the Right Understanding of the Scriptures* (London: T. Cotes, 1632), 72–73. Cf., Richard A. Muller,

In making the stronger affirmation, Owen may well have been conscious of the way certain Catholic polemicists had adopted the looser approach with undesirable consequences.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the divine inspiration of the writer did not stop with a mental illumination of content, Owen insists, but extended as far as the words chosen, right down to the last “tittle,” so as to ensure that the original autograph of Scripture was infallible and “entirely” from God. Owen should not be caricatured as advancing a highly mechanistic account of inspiration that crudely bypasses the rational processes of the writer. He insists the writers not only made a “diligent inquiry” into what they received (1 Pet. 1:10) but also consciously concurred with the words that were chosen.<sup>19</sup> Once again, it is certainly true that Owen’s commitment to the divine illumination of particular words is stronger than some,<sup>20</sup> but his general account stands in continuity with a broad doctrine of prophetic and biblical inspiration, which, as Muller notes, is ubiquitous in earlier medieval thought and passes over “virtually untouched by revision, into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, Owen’s account of inspiration is unlikely to have been particularly controversial in his day.

What was more controversial, at least from a Catholic perspective, was the appeal to the Spirit’s internal testimony as the means by which the divine authority of Scripture authenticates itself to a believer. Having dismantled the Catholic reliance on ecclesiastical authority and replaced it with an exclusive dependence on the supremacy of Scripture, Protestants quickly found themselves charged with undermining religious certainty and promoting a dangerous individualism in biblical interpretation that had opened the floodgates to the sort of religious fanaticism that was beginning to tear

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*Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:248–50; noting Johannes Cocceius, *Opera omnia theologica, exegetica, didactica, polemica, philologica; divisa in decem volumina*, 3rd ed. (Amsterdam: P and J Blaeu, 1701), 7:146a; Bénédict Pictet, *Theologia Christiana* (Edinburgh: T. Inkersley, 1820), 1.8.3 (24).

18 Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) uses the argument that a writer’s historical recollection may not be inspired (even if the actual writing of their thoughts was) to defend the canonical status of 2 Maccabees, where the author explicitly seeks a “pardon” (*veniam*) for any error in his recollection of events (2 Macc. 15:39 [38]). See Robert Bellarmine, *Opera omnia*, 6 vols. (Naples: Josephum Giuliano, 1856–1862), 1:47a–b.

19 Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

20 E.g., as Muller notes, the Renaissance Spanish exegete Alfonso Tostatus (ca. 1410–1455) would argue that it was enough to insist the Spirit preserves the writer from error without having to claim that the Spirit actively furnishes the writer with particular words. See Alfonso Tostatus, *Opera omnia*, 27 vols. (Venetiis: ex Typographica Balleoniana, 1728), 20:411b. Cf., 18:3a; Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:46–47.

21 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:61.



Europe apart. In this context, the standard Protestant appeal to the internal testimony of the Spirit as the guarantor of biblical authority only made matters worse—so much so that by the second half of the seventeenth century, it was no longer considered doctrinally viable, even among some Protestants.<sup>22</sup>

We have already noted Owen's alertness to a Catholic method of resolving the dilemma of religious certainty that distinguishes between Scripture's authority in itself as the word of God and its authentication "in respect of us" (*quoad nos*) through the testimony of the church.<sup>23</sup> This sort of distinction surfaced in the polemics between Catholics and Protestants in the latter half of the sixteenth century. As someone like Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598) maintained, the appeal to the public testimony of the church was considered the only viable way of sidestepping the specter of "spiritualism" or "enthusiasm," or even some Satanic delusion, which would accompany a "private" spiritual testimony to biblical authority.<sup>24</sup> In responding to this, Protestants were increasingly inclined to accentuate a public dimension to this spiritual testimony through objective evidence or marks that could be formulated into an argument supporting the Bible's authority as the inspired word of God. That way, an ongoing orthodox conviction of the Spirit's necessary internal work at the foundation of Christian faith could be framed in a way that explicitly avoided any suggestion that it amounted to an *afflatus* or private word from God to every individual believer. For however much the Spirit communicates the power and authority of God through Scripture to a believer, he does so in a way that radiates the objective and rational credibility of these marks.<sup>25</sup>

By the time Owen came to write his mature exposition of biblical authority, *The Reason of Faith, or An Answer unto That Enquiry, Wherefore We Believe*

22 For a comprehensive account of the initial polemical developments in the sixteenth century, see Susan E. Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). I have discussed some of the seventeenth-century developments in Andrew M. Leslie, "The Reformation a Century Later: Did the Reformation Get Lost Two Generations Later?" in *Celebrating the Reformation: Its Legacy and Continuing Relevance*, ed. Mark D. Thompson, Colin Bale, and Edward Loane (London: Apollos, 2017), 286–97.

23 Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

24 Thomas Stapleton, *Principiorum fidei doctrinalium demonstratio methodica* (Paris: Michaelis Sonnius, 1579), 336; cf., 329–57.

25 For instance, in his exchange with Stapleton and Bellarmine, the Elizabethan divine William Whitaker would readily acknowledge that the arguments or evidences are incapable of inducing faith on their own, but when the Holy Spirit's internal testimony is "added" to them, the Spirit's testimony "fills our minds with a wonderful plenitude of assurance, confirms them [the arguments], and causes us most gladly to embrace the Scriptures, giving force to the preceding arguments." William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture: Against the Papists, Especially Bellarmine and Stapleton*, trans. William Fitzgerald (Cambridge: University Press, 1849), 295.

*the Scripture to Be the Word of God* in 1677, Protestant convictions about the necessity of the Spirit's internal work had begun to collapse. And here he would explicitly lock horns with some of his post-Restoration contemporaries who had gone as far as to rely almost entirely on the rational credibility of various arguments to defend the authority of Scripture. Owen was resolutely orthodox on this score and believed that without the Spirit's internal work at the foundation of Christian faith, all is lost. Yet *The Reason of Faith* offers what is easily one of the most sophisticated early modern Reformed defenses of the Bible's self-authenticating divine authority, responding to the anxieties of his contemporaries without in any way capitulating to a destructive rationalism.

This polemical context is not yet on the horizon in *Of the Divine Original*; nonetheless, many of the dogmatic foundations for Owen's later response certainly are. Like his orthodox Reformed brethren, Owen sought to articulate the spiritual authority of Scripture in a way that brought together the necessary internal or subjective work within a believer's faculties and its objective or public foundations in Scripture itself. Whatever it is that needs to happen within a believer in bringing them to faith in the authority of Scripture, it is only something the Spirit accomplishes "in and by" Scripture itself. On this score, Owen distinguished between the "subjective" and "objective" "testimony" of the Spirit. The objective testimony is what the Spirit communicates to a believer through Scripture itself. What is most distinctive about Owen's way of framing this objective testimony, however, is the way he disentangles from it any of the traditional marks or rational arguments. The Protestant habit of incorporating the traditional arguments into the Spirit's testimony, evident from as early on as William Whitaker's engagement with Stapleton and Robert Bellarmine, has been met with equivocal reception in secondary literature. Some regard it as a credible, thoroughly orthodox attempt to stave off any excessively fideistic subjectivism within confessional Protestantism, while others consider it to be an early capitulation, however partial, to a rationalizing trajectory that would become prominent within Protestantism by the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Without delving into this debate here, at the very least it suggests a certain lack of dogmatic clarity in the later development, something that Owen successfully managed to circumvent.

26 For the former assessment see, e.g., Jeffrey Mallinson, *Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Theodore Beza, 1519–1605* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); for the latter, see, e.g., Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). A more exaggerated form of the latter appraisal is found in Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

Owen agrees with his brethren that the traditional “artificial” arguments defending the authority of Scripture have a place, but they are subordinate to and, importantly, distinct from the objective and subjective testimony of the Spirit. Indeed, he explicitly walls them off from his discussion of the Spirit’s testimony and mentions only those he considers credible as an afterword in the final chapter of the treatise (even here, Owen is doubtful that some are of much use, such as the traditional appeal to miracles).<sup>27</sup>

The two decisive dimensions of the Spirit’s role in mediating the authority of Scripture to a believer are what Owen identifies as a communication of divine “light” and “power.” These dimensions are “the formal reason of our faith,” or the reason “why and wherefore we do receive and believe the Scripture to be the word of God.”<sup>28</sup> In *Of the Divine Original*, Owen calls them “innate arguments” insofar as they are mediated through what the Spirit has inspired within the text of Scripture. But importantly, they are distinct from other “innate” arguments that have traditionally been used apologetically, like those “artificial arguments” he mentions in chapter 6, such as the nature of the doctrines contained in Scripture or Scripture’s internal harmony and coherence. Rather, his account of Scripture’s self-evidencing light and power gives them a unique theological status with a distinctly metaphysical hue that sets them apart from the other artificial, innate arguments.

In describing Scripture’s self-evidencing light, he situates it within a more general context of what he calls “spiritual, moral, intellectual light, with all its mediums,” a light that ultimately emanates from its origin in God himself through what he has communicated in all his external works. And it is by this light that God is “known.” At a metaphysical level, Owen is clearly assuming the rudiments of the typical late medieval appropriation of the peripatetic cognitive tradition.<sup>29</sup> Here intellectual light is communicated from an object through a transparent medium via a multiplication of its form, or an intelligible species that would result in understanding of the object. Through the impression of an intelligible species of the object, the knower’s mind is said to be formally “adequated” or conformed to the known object. Accordingly, with this metaphysical assumption in place, Owen is making the theological claim that God has communicated “self-evidencing” light, or his own formal likeness in all his external works (obviously in an accommodated

<sup>27</sup> Owen evinces a certain skepticism toward the usefulness of miracles as a testimony at various points. E.g., *Of the Divine Original*, chaps. 3, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 4.

<sup>29</sup> For an extended summary of Owen’s appropriation of this tradition, see Leslie, *Light of Grace*, 257–64.

or analogical fashion), thereby enabling him to be known by the human knower. And within God's economy, Scripture has a special place among all his works, having been inspired to be the unique medium for communicating the divine "light of the [glorious] gospel of Christ," words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians that Owen quotes so frequently throughout his corpus, indicating that he clearly cherishes their profound significance (2 Cor. 4:4). Of course, as Paul indicates in this passage of his letter, and as Owen is quick to add, Scripture might well contain an objective impression of divine light, but sinners are naturally blind to it and therefore unable to recognize it as such. "Light is not eyes," he says, and cannot itself "remove the defect of the visive faculty." But in the case of a spiritually regenerated believer, this light is apprehended as "nothing but the beaming of the majesty, truth, holiness, and authority of God, given unto it, and left upon it, by its author the Holy Ghost." In other words, a believer recognizes the divine authority of Scripture through its self-evidencing reflection of divine light, with its capacity to dive "into the consciences of men, into all the secret recesses of their hearts" (alluding to Heb. 4:12–13).<sup>30</sup>

The question this begs about the authority of Scripture over the resistance of unbelief is resolved by the second dimension of Scripture's self-evidencing authority—namely, its "power." Here Owen cites a plethora of New Testament texts that attest to the sovereign power of God's word, something that is accompanied with "all manner of assurance and full persuasion of itself" (with specific allusions to 1 Cor. 2:4 and 1 Thess. 1:5). Owen is clear that this power is not somehow enclosed within Scripture itself but is always relative to God's creatures as an instrument of his authority. Again, alluding to texts such as John 6:68–69, Acts 20:32, 1 Corinthians 6:15, 15:57, Colossians 1:6, 2 Timothy 3:15, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:21, and so on, it is a power that is capable of conquering rebellion and bringing salvation, "causing men of all sorts, in all times and places, so to fall down before its divine authority, as immediately to renounce all that was dear to them in the world, and to undergo whatever was dreadful, terrible and destructive to nature in all its dearest concernments."<sup>31</sup>

Owen summarizes his discussion of these two "innate," "self-evidencing" "arguments" by concluding that the Scriptures "have that glory of light and power accompanying of them, as wholly distinguishes them by infallible signs and evidences from all words and writings not divine, conveying their

<sup>30</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 4.

truth and power, into the souls and consciences of men, with an infallible certainty."<sup>32</sup> While he does not arrive at the distinction between the "objective" and "subjective" dimensions of the Spirit's "testimony" until chapter 5, it is clear that these two innate self-evidencing arguments exactly correspond to the "testimony of the Spirit, that respects the object, or the word itself."<sup>33</sup> Against Roman Catholic complaints about the Protestant appeal to the Spirit's self-authentication of Scripture, Owen will simply respond that the Spirit's authentication of Scripture is always "in and by" Scripture itself, and therefore thoroughly "public" in nature: "it is the public testimony of the Holy Ghost given unto all, of the word, by and in the word, and its own divine light, efficacy, and power."<sup>34</sup>

In *Of the Divine Original*, Owen has therefore managed to furnish a theological account of Scripture's authority that not only vindicates it as the sole, public, and objective medium of divine authority but also is uncompromisingly supernatural and spiritual in its character. The genius of his argument is the way he situates Scripture within the broader divine economy, in which every created element to varying degrees objectively communicates the truth and authority of God through a kind of analogical participation. At the same time, the uniqueness of Scripture among all God's works, and its distinctive role in the supernatural or salvific economy, remains intact in Owen's account. For now, at least, Scripture's divine authority is properly recognized only among the regenerate, or among those who actually encounter its saving power. Indeed, as an index of Scripture's peculiar role within the redemptive economy, Owen maintains there is still a necessary "subjective" dimension to the Spirit's attestation of its authority, a dimension that is clearly bound up with a believer's spiritual regeneration. First, "illumination," or an effectual communication of Scripture's saving light to overcome our natural, sinful blindness, is required. Second, the Spirit communicates an "effectual persuasion" of the mind, through the provision of spiritual wisdom and understanding, and renewed sensibility to spiritual things (alluding to Heb. 5:14). None of this amounts to some *afflatus* or "internal word." In a sense,

<sup>32</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 5. As he explains, "The Holy Ghost speaking in and by the word, imparting to it virtue, power, efficacy, majesty and authority, affords us the witness, that our faith is resolved unto. And thus whereas there are but two heads, whereunto all grounds of assent do belong, namely authority of testimony, and the self-evidence of truth, they do here both concur in one. In the same word we have both the authority of the testimony of the Spirit, and the self-evidence of the truth spoken by him; yea so, that both these are materially one and the same, though distinguished in their formal conceptions."

<sup>34</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 5.

it should be understood as the impact of the powerful word itself within the subjective domain of the individual's soul, providing the newly regenerate believer with the capacity to discern the divine power and wisdom spiritually at work "in and by" the word itself.

### Thematic Outline

The primary question Owen proposes to address in *Of the Divine Original* is "how we may know assuredly the Scripture to be the word of God," which frames the bulk of the treatise proceeding from where he first poses it at the beginning of chapter 2.

Chapter 1 contains some preliminary observations regarding the divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, which he regards as foundational to the constructive discussion that will follow. He begins this by drawing attention to biblical texts that attest to the Holy Spirit's inspiration of Old Testament prophets (e.g., Heb. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:10–11), followed by the inspiration of the written word (2 Pet. 1:20–21; 2 Tim. 3:16).<sup>35</sup> Something Owen particularly wishes to infer from these scriptural claims is that the original biblical autographs had to have been providentially superintended by the Spirit right down to the very "tittle," not just in their doctrinal content but even in their precise verbal form.<sup>36</sup> In his later treatise, *Πνευματολογία* (1674),<sup>37</sup> Owen discusses the manner of prophetic inspiration more comprehensively. Here he is simply content to insist that however much the prophet's "mind and understanding were used in the choice of words," the words they chose were nonetheless "not their own, but immediately supplied unto them [. . .] from God himself."<sup>38</sup> The significance of this claim extends to not only the inspiration of the original autographs but also the providential preservation of their substance in subsequent copies and translations. Herein lies the reason for Owen's acute concern regarding any critical emendation of the copies, which became a flashpoint within English Protestantism when Walton's London Polyglot began to appear in 1653. Owen flags his concerns about this practice here, and he will take them up more fully in *Of the Integrity*.<sup>39</sup> Having spoken to these issues, he concludes this chapter with a brief statement extending the same principle of divine inspiration to the New as well as Old Testaments.

<sup>35</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Complete Works of John Owen*, vols. 5–6.

<sup>38</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

With this preliminary claim in place, the question that naturally ensues is the basis upon which we can have confidence in its veracity—namely, that the Scriptures are truly the inspired word of God. Chapter 2 begins by outlining this question and stating the answer in summary form. The ultimate foundation or “formal reason” for confidence in the divine origin of Scripture, Owen believes, is no less than the authority of God himself. But a distinctive feature of his approach to this question is his sensitivity to the way this authority is mediated and evidenced directly to a believer through Scripture itself, hence his objection to the typical Catholic claim that Scripture’s authority is self-contained in a way that it has no authority *quoad nos*, “in respect of us.”<sup>40</sup>

Having outlined his answer in summary form, he proceeds to confirm it in the remainder of the treatise under three headings that stretch across the subsequent chapters.<sup>41</sup>

The first of these concludes chapter 2, where Owen defends the claim that each mode of divine revelation—his external “works,” the internal “light of nature,” and especially the “word”—each carry within them sufficient evidence to demonstrate their divine origin.<sup>42</sup>

In chapters 3–5, Owen outlines his second point, which drills down on the precise manner in which that evidence is conveyed in the scriptural word. Chapter 3 begins by observing that there are in general two kinds of arguments or testimonies that confirm the veracity of a thing: “inartificial” and “artificial.” “Inartificial” arguments are immediately conveyed by the thing itself, whereas “artificial” arguments are rational inferences we may legitimately draw about the thing, to corroborate any inartificial testimony it makes about itself. When it comes to Scripture, Owen is particularly concerned with the inartificial testimony it communicates to authenticate its divine origin, and this is the subject of his second major point. People of faith not only are obliged to stand by this testimony, he says, but also will find rest in it alone against the objection of others. By contrast, artificial arguments—as true and valuable as they may be—have the more limited role of responding rationally to opponents of Scripture but do not form the foundation of a believer’s faith.<sup>43</sup>

Owen proceeds by referring to two dimensions of an inartificial testimony to Scripture’s divine origin. There is its own self-declaration as something that is θεόπνευστος or “divinely inspired” (2 Tim. 3:16), which is also accompanied

<sup>40</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 3.

by evidence “ingrafted” within or “innate” to Scripture itself. As he explains at chapter 3, sections 9–11, God does not make any self-declaration of his authority that must be received upon threat of eternal damnation without providing “infallible tokens” (τεκμήρια) or a communication of “divine power” (θεϊον) to accompany and validate the declaration (cf. Jer. 23:29). By the “infallible tokens,” Owen does not intend any miracles that might have accompanied the delivery of the divine word, which do not have the capacity to induce Christian faith, he insists.<sup>44</sup> Rather, he has in mind the kind of evidence “ingrafted” within Scripture itself, which he further outlines in chapter 4. This dimension of Scripture’s inartificial testimony is of particular interest and concern to Owen, as it is by this evidence that the very authority of God is conveyed to provide the “formal reason of our faith.” He breaks this ingrafted and innate evidence up into two categories—namely, God’s very “light” and “power” that he communicates through Scripture as the basis of its authentication.<sup>45</sup>

In chapter 5, Owen seeks to clarify how this inartificial testimony relates to what is commonly referred to as the “testimony of the Spirit” regarding Scripture’s divine authority. Here it is apparent that Owen thinks this inartificial self-testimony makes up the “objective” or “public” dimension of the Spirit’s testimony “in and by” Scripture itself.<sup>46</sup> Against the typical accusation that any talk of the Spirit’s testimony amounts to an appeal to some private afflatus, Owen seeks to differentiate the “subjective” or internal work of the Spirit in restoring the sinner’s faculties from the external or public testimony within Scripture itself. However necessary the subjective dimension is to grasping the authority of Scripture, a Christian’s faith in its divine origin is grounded exclusively in the public dimension of the testimony. Finally, he draws his extended discussion of this point to a close by highlighting the folly of grounding the authority of Scripture in tradition and miracles, concluding that it is simply inconceivable that God would fail to self-authenticate his word, let alone make its authenticity depend on human judgment.<sup>47</sup>

In chapter 6, Owen turns to his third confirmation of the claim by briefly outlining some “artificial” arguments or testimonies. Though falling short

<sup>44</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 5. He writes, “And thus whereas there are but two heads, whereunto all grounds of assent do belong, namely, authority of testimony and the self-evidence of truth, they do here both concur in one. In the same word we have both the authority of the testimony of the Spirit and the self-evidence of the truth spoken by him; yea so, that both these are materially one and the same, though distinguished in their formal conceptions.”

<sup>47</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 5.



of inducing Christian faith, they are nonetheless of “great use,” capable of convincing to the level of “undeniable probability,” and prevailing “irresistibly on the understanding of unprejudiced men.” Without intending to provide a comprehensive list, he expands on two he finds particularly persuasive—namely, the character of various doctrines in Scripture (referring to the atonement, worship, and the Trinity) and Scripture’s overall design. At the beginning of chapter 3, Owen suggested that these arguments may be used against those who oppose the authority of Scripture, and here at the end of chapter 6 he adds that they may be of use in supporting a believer “in trials and temptations, and the like seasons of difficulty.”<sup>48</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION TO *OF THE INTEGRITY* (1659)

In the opening paragraph of *Of the Integrity*, Owen indicates that he set out to write this treatise upon receipt of the recently published *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* to Walton’s London Polyglot. As we noted earlier, Owen quite likely delayed the publication of *Of the Divine Original* until he had completed his response to Walton in *Of the Integrity*. Alarmed by what he now saw in Walton’s *Prolegomena* and *Appendix*, Owen feared they rendered his earlier attempt at defending the integrity of the original biblical autographs somewhat incomplete.<sup>49</sup> *Of the Integrity* is an attempt to settle the score with a detailed response to what he considers the most problematic aspects of Walton’s work.

One chief concern stands out among the “sundry principles” in the *Prolegomena* that Owen regards as “prejudicial to the truth.” Fundamentally, it is the assumption that the extant Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old and New Testaments do not exactly correspond to the inspired original autographs, something that Walton believes licenses careful emendation of the extant texts through comparison with variant readings in other ancient translations. So deleterious is this assumption that Owen considers it to be “the foundation of Mohammedanism, [. . .] the chiefest and principal prop of

<sup>48</sup> Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 6.

<sup>49</sup> “Afterward, considering what I had written, about the providence of God in the preservation of the original copies of the Scripture in the foregoing discourse, fearing least from that great appearance of variations in the original copies, and those of all the translations published with so great care and diligence, there might some unconquerable objections against the truth of what I had asserted, be educed; I judged it necessary to stop the progress of those thoughts, until I could get time to look through the *Appendix*, and the various lections in that great volume exhibited unto us, with the grounds and reasons of them in the *Prolegomena*.” Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 1.

popery, the only pretense of fanatical antiscripturists, and the root of much hidden atheism in the world.”<sup>50</sup>

The magnitude of Owen's worry requires some appreciation of the wider context. In the “Epistle Dedicatory,” Owen refers to the gradual evolution of a controversy between Protestants and Catholics concerning the authenticity of the Hebrew Old Testament text that came to a head in the first half of the seventeenth century, culminating in the publication of the “Paris Polyglot” in 1645.

The first of the four great polyglot Bibles, the so-called Complutensian Polyglot, was published under the patronage of the Spanish Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (known as “Ximenes,” 1436–1517) as early as 1514–1517. A remarkable achievement, the Complutensian set out the Hebrew text alongside the Greek Septuagint with the Latin Vulgate in between, and the Aramaic Targum Onkelos printed at the bottom of the pages of the Pentateuch. In his introduction, Ximenes famously compared this arrangement to the crucifixion of Christ between the two thieves, with the Vulgate placed, as it were, “between the Synagogue and the Eastern Church.”<sup>51</sup> Even still, as Eveline van Staaldouine-Sulman points out, this remark was not so much a reference to the versions themselves but to the interpretive voices associated with the respective texts. Indeed, the Complutensian retains a relatively high view of the Hebrew version, something with which Owen himself readily concurred.<sup>52</sup> While Ximenes regarded the extant Vulgate as the final authority for church doctrine, he nonetheless acknowledged the value of the Hebrew and Aramaic versions for correcting any corruptions that had entered various manuscripts of the Vulgate.<sup>53</sup>

As Owen alludes, however, the relatively sober assessment of the “Hebrew verity” found in the Complutensian, and in other Catholic writings before and after the Council of Trent such as in the noteworthy contributions of Arias Montanus (1527–1598),<sup>54</sup> eventually gave way to the much more negative appraisal exemplified in the Paris Polyglot. Michel Lejay's (1588–1674) Parisian production was championed by a Huguenot convert

<sup>50</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Quotation in Eveline van Staaldouine-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism: Editions and Latin Translations of the Targums from the Complutensian to the London Polyglot Bible (1517–1657)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 20, 22.

<sup>52</sup> Van Staaldouine-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism*, 22. Cf., “Epistle Dedicatory.”

<sup>53</sup> Van Staaldouine-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism*, 22, 35–36.

<sup>54</sup> The Spanish theologian Arias Montanus was most famous for his involvement in the publication of the “Plantin” or “Antwerp Polyglot.” See Arius Montanus, *Biblia sacra Hebraice, Chaldaice, Graece, et Latine* (Antwerp: Christoph. Plantinus, 1569–1572).

to Catholicism, Jean Morin (1591–1659), whose own Samaritan Pentateuch was included within it. In the preface to a new edition of the Septuagint in 1628, Morin had already argued that the Greek and Latin versions of the Bible had equal canonical status and were less susceptible to corruption than the Hebrew text, arguments that he extended in the first part of his famous *Exercitationes biblicae*, published in 1633.<sup>55</sup> And as Peter N. Miller points out, these arguments were essentially reproduced in the anonymous preface to the Paris Polyglot, which Owen believes is likely to have been the work of Morin.<sup>56</sup>

By the first half of the seventeenth century, this polemicizing of the Hebrew text's veracity essentially bound the remarkable flowering in humanist biblical scholarship represented by the polyglots to the ecclesiastical politics between Protestants and Catholics concerning the papacy and its authorized Vulgate edition of the Scriptures.

As one might expect, Owen reserves fairly savage criticism for Morin's agenda, but amid his general cynicism, one issue of particular concern surfaces—namely, the dating of the vowel points in the extant Hebrew text. As Muller points out, there was no particular controversy surrounding the vowel points in the early sixteenth century, with a range of viewpoints among Catholics and Protestants regarding their origin, from the moment Moses received the Law on Sinai through to a much later Masoretic origin.<sup>57</sup> In 1538, the Jewish grammarian Elias Levita (1469–1549) published his commentary on the *Masora* in which he carefully argued that the insertion of the vowel points was the meticulous work of the Masoretes. Levita was well known among the Protestant community, and his work was generally greeted with enthusiasm. By the second half of the sixteenth century, however, influential Catholic polemicists like Robert Bellarmine, and numerous others, were increasingly leveraging the late dating of the vowel points to insist that the

55 See discussion in Nicholas Hardy, *Criticism and Confession: The Bible in the Seventeenth Century Republic of Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 257–74. For the first part of this treatise, see Jean Morin, *Exercitationes biblicae de Hebraei Graecique textus sinceritate: Pars prior* (Paris: Antonius Vitray, 1633). The second edition, which included the second part, was published posthumously in 1660, after the appearance of the Paris Polyglot and the completion of Owen's *Of the Integrity*. See Jean Morin, *Exercitationum biblicarum de Hebraei Graecique textus sinceritate, libri duo* (Paris: Gasparus Meturas, 1660).

56 Peter N. Miller, "Making the Paris Polyglot Bible: Humanism and Orientalism in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *Die europäische Gelehrtenrepublik im Zeitalter des Konfessionalismus / The European Republic of Letters in the Age of Confessionalism*, ed. Herbert Jaumann (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2001), 77. See "Epistle Dedicatory."

57 For this and the following, I have drawn on Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 146–51.

Hebrew Old Testament had been subject to Jewish corruption, necessitating reliance on the papally authorized Vulgate to emend the corrupted text.

Naturally enough, Morin put this polemic to full effect in his advocacy for the Paris Polyglot in the first half of the seventeenth century. By this stage, numerous Protestants had locked horns with their Catholic opponents, and Levita's contribution was no longer met with the enthusiasm it once had received. Most significant among these Protestant voices was the remarkable work of the father and son duo Johann Buxtorf Sr. (1564–1629) and Johann Buxtorf Jr. (1599–1664). In his *Tiberias, sive Commentarius Masorethicus*, published in 1620, Buxtorf Sr. argued that the vowel points were the work of the great synagogue called by Ben Ezra, the so-called Men of the Great Assembly, which is thought to have been held from about 516 to 332 BC.<sup>58</sup> In Buxtorf Sr.'s mind, an early date for the vowel points was considered critical for guarding the spiritual inspiration of an originally perspicuous Old Testament text. For the “vowel points are the souls of the expressions and words, which enliven them. . . . Whence the word written with naked consonants, without the vowel points cannot be read and understood.”<sup>59</sup>

For those inclined to sympathize with Buxtorf Sr.'s doctrinal concerns, matters were made worse by the Protestant contribution of Louis Cappel to the debate in 1624, *Arcanum punctationis revelatum*.<sup>60</sup> Cappel carefully revived Levita's argument concerning the Masoretic origin of the vowel points. Cappel was initially optimistic about the accuracy of the oral tradition in preserving the vocalization of the consonants. However, by the time he published his *Critica sacra* in 1650,<sup>61</sup> he had come to assume that corruption had entered the transmission and that the extant *Textus Receptus* ought to be amended through comparison to ancient translations such as the Chaldee, Syriac, and the Septuagint. As noted already, the immediate trigger for Owen's *Of the Integrity* was the publication of Walton's London Polyglot. But in many ways, it was Cappel's contribution that proved to be the thin end of the wedge. For the first time, a significant Protestant voice was now arguing in favor of making critical amendments to an allegedly corrupted Hebrew original.

58 Johann Buxtorf Sr., *Tiberias, sive Commentarius Masorethicus triplex* (Basel: J. J. Deckeri, 1665), 109–10; cf. 86–88, 96–116.

59 *Vocales sunt animae dictionum & vocum, quae eas vivificant. . . . Unde vox nudis consonis scripta, sine vocalib. legi & intelligi nequit.* Buxtorf Sr., *Tiberias*, 86–87.

60 Louis Cappel [s.n.], *Sôd han-niqqûd han-nigle, hoc est arcanum punctationis revelatum* [. . .] *edita a Thoma Erpenio* (Leiden: Johannes Maire, 1624).

61 Louis Cappel, *Critica sacra, sive De variis quae in sacris Veteris Testamenti libris occurrunt lectionibus* (Paris: S&G Cramoisy, 1650).

The London cleric and later Bishop Brian Walton (1600–1661) hatched the idea of an English polyglot Bible under the patronage of Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645).<sup>62</sup> With the execution of Laud in 1645, the project did not actually begin to materialize until 1652, when the Council of State agreed to endorse it with the support of prominent figures such as Archbishop James Ussher (1581–1656) and the parliamentarian John Selden (1584–1654). Walton then collaborated with several of the most significant Hebraists in England to produce the Polyglot, which gradually appeared from 1653 to 1657.<sup>63</sup> Eventually, six volumes were produced. Four of these contain the various versions set out across the page in up to nine different languages. These core volumes are bookended by Walton's *Prolegomena* and an *Appendix*, the latter of which gathers together a number of collections of variant readings.

Undoubtedly the pinnacle of the four polyglot editions, the London Polyglot remained highly influential till the nineteenth century. In comparison to the Paris Polyglot, or even Cappel's later work, its critical stance is relatively conservative. As Miller points out, Walton generally had a high view of the inspired Hebrew original and its priority over the translations.<sup>64</sup> He rejected any conspiracies about a Jewish corruption of the text and was confident of God's providential preservation of its authenticity over successive generations.<sup>65</sup>

A commitment to the divine providential preservation of the inspired texts was also a central concern of Owen's, a point Owen reiterates in *Of the Divine Original* and *Of the Integrity*.<sup>66</sup> As he puts it in his later *Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God as Revealed in his Word* (1678), Owen is adamant that the protection of the text from any material corruption is a direct function of Christ's spiritual care for his church. To suggest otherwise is "to countenance the atheistical notion that God has no especial regard to his word and worship in the world."<sup>67</sup> In large measure, Walton would agree. Indeed, at times, one may be forgiven for wondering whether

62 For these background historical details, I have drawn on Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 187–95; and Peter N. Miller, "The 'Antiquarianization' of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653–1657)," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001): 463–82.

63 As Gribben notes, from comments he makes in his "Epistle Dedicatory," Owen may have been overly hasty in failing to realize that the likes of Ussher, Edward Pococke (1604–1691), and Seth Ward (1617–1689) were in fact eminent royalist collaborators in Walton's project. See Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 189.

64 Miller, "London Polyglot," 477.

65 See, e.g., the quotation in Theodore Letis, "John Owen Versus Brian Walton: A Reformed Response to the Birth of Text Criticism," in *The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate*, ed. Theodore P. Letis (Grand Rapids, MI: The Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, 1987), 158.

66 Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chaps. 1, 5; Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chaps. 1, 2.

67 See *Complete Works of John Owen*, 7:348.

the substance of any disagreement between Owen and Walton is considerably less significant than the polemical tone that Owen's treatise might otherwise suggest.<sup>68</sup> Certainly, in his rejoinder to Owen, Walton strenuously reiterates his commitment to the divine preservation of the originals and takes great exception to any insinuation to the contrary.<sup>69</sup> It is true that Walton had conceded that "casual" and "involuntary" scribal errors are likely to have touched matters of relative insignificance in the extant copies,<sup>70</sup> even while insisting that anything pertaining to "faith," "obedience," "life," or "salvation" was untouched and remained intact.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps this admission was a step too far for Owen, although even he would agree that in some ancient copies of the New Testament, "diverse readings, in things or words of less importance" do readily exist.<sup>72</sup> And like Walton, Owen believes that differences like this, along with the various scribal marginalia in the Masoretic Text, or the *Qere* and *Ketiv*, can easily be harmonized through appeal to the analogy of faith.<sup>73</sup>

Yet for all Walton and Owen share in common in their attitude to the originals, Owen has a couple of lingering concerns. And to his mind, they are far from insignificant. The first is a question of degree. For all Walton's protestations about the integrity of the originals, Owen is clearly troubled by a contrary impression created by the enormous bulk of "lections" (variant readings) from various ancient copies and translations indiscriminately presented in the *Appendix* to the Polyglot. Here, Owen believes, one will find unnecessary duplication (e.g., of the *Qere* and *Ketiv*), many instances that are too conjectural or insignificant to be considered genuine lections, not to mention supposed variants that arise from translations whose authenticity

68 In this sense, perhaps Letis is right to say that "Walton's formal positions" do in fact "differ little from Owen's." Letis, "John Owen Versus Brian Walton," 157.

69 Brian Walton, *The Considerator Considered: Or, a Brief View of Certain Considerations upon the "Biblia polyglotta," the "Prolegomena" and "Appendix" Thereof* (London: Thomas Roycroft, 1659), 14, 48. Cf., Brian Walton, *In Biblia polyglotta prolegomena*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: J. Smith, 1827–1828), prolegom. 7 (1:358–412). The *Prolegomena* has been published numerous times independently of the London Polyglot, including the nineteenth-century critical edition cited here.

70 E.g., Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 49.

71 Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 40–41, 49, 66, 77–78, 95, 127, 52, 66, 266. Cf. Walton, *Prolegomena*, prolegom. 6, sec. 1 (1:321), where he writes, *Ita tamen invigilavit Providentia Divina Ecclesiaeque diligentia, ut in iis quae ad salutem necessaria sunt, et ad fidem et mores spectant, omnia pura et integra sint* ("Divine Providence and the diligent care of the Church so watched over [the texts] that everything in them that is necessary for salvation and has regard to faith and morals is pure and complete").

72 Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 3. Likewise, Owen, *Of the Divine Original*, chap. 1.

73 Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 7. Cf., e.g., Walton, *Prolegomena*, prolegom. 6, sec. 6 (1:332–33); Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 50.

can easily be set aside. Owen fears that to the unwary eye, such a “bulky collection” all too readily suggests that “gross corruptions” have indeed entered the extant copies of the originals after all.<sup>74</sup> Even he was “startled” at first sight of the volume. In other words, there was enough smoke in Walton’s production to suspect a fire!

A similar concern stems from Walton’s commitment to the late dating of the Hebrew vowel points. In Owen’s mind, the absence of the points clearly casts a shadow over the perspicuity of the text: “vowels are the life of words,” he remarks; “consonants without them are dead and immovable.”<sup>75</sup> Once again, there is a sense in which Walton would readily agree,<sup>76</sup> insisting that under the care of the Holy Spirit, the Masoretic pointing merely made explicit what was already implied in the divinely inspired arrangement of the consonants.<sup>77</sup> Walton insists there is nothing remarkable in this claim: a claim that is furnished with good Protestant pedigree.<sup>78</sup> Even though Owen undoubtedly ties the perspicuity of the Hebrew text more closely to the presence of

<sup>74</sup> E.g., Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8.

<sup>75</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 5.

<sup>76</sup> *Respondemus, verissimum esse nullam linguam vocalibus carere posse, nec vocem ullam sine vocalibus pronunciari* (“We respond that it is certainly true that no language can lack vowels, and that no word can be pronounced without vowels”). Walton, *Prolegomena*, prolegom. 3, sec. 49 (1:223).

<sup>77</sup> *Tandem et hoc est notandum Masorethas, dum puncta invenerunt, non novos vocalium sonos vel prononciationem novam induxisse, sed juxta consuetudinem ipsis traditam Libros Sacros punctasse: ideoque lectionem non ab ipsis pendere, licet ipsi apices excogitarunt, nec ideo veram esse lectionem quia est a Masorethis; sed quia verum Spiritus Sancti sensum exprimit, quem Scriptoribus Sacris dictavit et per eos litteris consignavit, quemque tum Judaei tum Christiani conservarunt. Non enim punctarunt Masorethae Sacros Codices pro arbitrio; sed secundum veram et receptam lectionem, quam diligenter poterant, puncta apposuerunt* (“Finally, this must also be noted: The Masoretes, when they invented the points, did not bring in new vowel sounds or a new punctuation, but they punctuated the Sacred Books according to the custom handed down to them; so the reading does not depend upon them as if they thought up the points themselves; nor indeed is it the true reading because it comes from the Masoretes but because it expresses the true sense of the Holy Spirit that he dictated to the Holy Writers and recorded through them in the letters, and that both Jews and Christians have preserved. For the Masoretes did not punctuate the Holy Texts at will, but they added the points according to the true and received reading as carefully as they could”). Walton, *Prolegomena*, prolegom. 3, sec. 51 (1:235). Cf., Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 201–9.

<sup>78</sup> “One would think . . . that the *Prolegomena* had delivered some strange and dangerous opinion, never heard of before, which overthrows all certainty, and by consequence all authority of Scripture, whereas it is there proved, and shall now be made appear, that the same doctrine of the original points was delivered by the greatest Reformers, the most eminent Protestant divines, both at the beginning of the Reformation, and since, and the best skilled in Eastern learning, which then were, or at this day are in the Christian world, and the greatest patrons of the integrity of the Hebrew text.” Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 199–200.

vowel points than Walton, he too is alert to the distinction that is implied in Walton's position between the spiritual sense of the text and the outward signs through which that sense is represented. With the Buxtorfs, Owen traces the origin of the points to the Men of the Great Assembly rather than the first inspiration of the Hebrew text.<sup>79</sup> Yet to make such an admission, Owen clearly has to commit himself to distinguishing between the initial inspiration of the vowels, as they were implied in the arrangement of the original script, and the later addition of the points that make those vowels outwardly explicit. And sure enough, Owen cites the Italian Jewish Hebraist Azariah de' Rossi (1511–1578) in precise acknowledgement of this fact: "And the same Azarias shows the consistency of the various opinions that were among the Jews about the vowels, ascribing them as to their virtue and force, to Moses, or God on Mount Sinai; as to their figure and character to Ezra; as to the restoration of their use, unto the Masorettes."<sup>80</sup> So once again, one might wonder whether there is anything of substance separating the two on this score, for whatever differences they might have about the exact dating of the points.

For Owen, however, the bigger issue with the late dating of the points is the implication he sees in surrendering responsibility for the text's final form to the work of the non-Christian Masorettes, the "foundation of whose religion," he says, "was infidelity, and . . . an opposition to the gospel."<sup>81</sup> Aside from his incredulity that the vowel sounds could have been preserved through oral tradition when the Hebrew tongue had not been the vulgar tongue for a thousand years,<sup>82</sup> Owen thought it was simply "not tolerable" to countenance that God would have deployed these men as his chosen instrument to inspire the points. Indeed, Owen is so appalled by the prospect that should it be conclusively proven that the punctuation was their work, he would "labor to the utmost to have it utterly taken away out of the Bible."<sup>83</sup> In other words, the intolerable consequence Owen sees lurking beneath the surface here is yet again the possible corruption of the text, this time at the hands of men who simply could not be entrusted with the addition of something as important as the vowel points. It should be noted, of course, that Owen would not see the same difficulty in tracing the punctuation to the Men of the Great Assembly. Unlike the Masorettes, those men actually belonged to the church under its Old

<sup>79</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 5.

<sup>82</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 6.

<sup>83</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 5.



Testament Jewish administration, which, at least as tradition has it, included the postexilic prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

If Owen's first major concern with Walton's Polyglot consists in the shadow it might cast over the integrity of the originals, the second concern is with Walton's approval of the practice of textual emendation. Here too Walton's proposal is relatively modest. Having ruled out the possibility of any substantial doctrinal error in the extant originals, only minor corrections are in view. And with an application of the analogy of faith, the analogy of Scripture, together with a sober preference for the most ancient, and more widely accepted lection in the instance of some variant, he is confident that the text can be improved by the practice.<sup>84</sup> As Miller puts it, "Walton saw the glass as half-full: comparison did not threaten the text but rather allowed for its repair."<sup>85</sup> Owen is most troubled by the appeal to differing ancient translations as arbiters for amending the original. It is "to set up an altar of our own by the altar of God, and to make equal the wisdom, care, skill, and diligence of men, with the wisdom, care, and providence of God himself."<sup>86</sup> Morin's advocacy for the Vulgate is clearly the most flagrant example of this practice, as Owen readily acknowledges. But he also singles out Cappel, and especially his deference to the Septuagint, as a worrying Protestant precedent and wonders whether Walton's proposal is really any different.<sup>87</sup> Walton denies that he ever advocated the use of translations to "correct the original"—explicitly distancing himself from the likes of Morin—so much as an aid to discern whether an error has crept into the original.<sup>88</sup> But for Owen, even this seems to be a step too far. In his mind, the only valid use of translations is as an aid to the exposition of Scripture, and nothing more.<sup>89</sup>

Miller draws attention to what he calls an "antiquarianization" of biblical scholarship in Walton's project. For all of Walton's affirmations concerning the integrity of the originals, there is nonetheless a subtle tendency to elevate

<sup>84</sup> E.g., Walton, *Prolegomena*, prolegom. 6, sec. 6 (1:332–36). Here Walton provides a number of rules for deciding between variants.

<sup>85</sup> Miller, "London Polyglot," 474. Or as Walton himself insists, "To correct an error crept into the original, is not properly to correct the original, but to restore the original to the true reading, for no error is part of the original text." Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 92.

<sup>86</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Owen gives his own account of this development in the "Epistle Dedicatory." See also Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 84–106. As Hardy argues, Walton's stance towards the use of translations and conjectural emendation was generally more circumspect than Cappel's. His most contentious statements were those concerning the accuracy of the *Septuagint*. See Hardy, *Criticism and Confession*, 365–67.

<sup>89</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 8.

the significance of tradition and the judgment of the church in deciding upon the final form of the text. Miller also speaks of a “mitigated skepticism” in Walton’s posture of assuming that minor scribal errors crept into the copies, which at least echoes the much more exaggerated skeptical tone of those advocating for the supremacy of the Vulgate.<sup>90</sup> Nicholas Hardy may be right in questioning whether Walton’s project was as ideologically driven or consciously coherent as this. In reality, it looks more like a hotchpotch, or a “messy and contentious accommodation of different Protestant and Catholic positions.”<sup>91</sup> Even so, couple Walton’s mitigated skepticism about the text with a deference to ancient translations and the consensus of the church in detecting scribal error, and it is perhaps no wonder that a “hotter sort of Protestant” like Owen is rather alarmed by what he sees.

Posterity has not looked favorably on Owen’s argument, especially in regard to the dating of the vowel points.<sup>92</sup> And one may justifiably question Owen’s concern to tie the inherent perspicuity of the Hebrew original closely to the presence of the vowel points, even by the yardstick of classical Protestant precedent. But in assessing Owen’s position by modern standards, the polemics of his own context need to be remembered. Underneath Owen’s position lay an orthodox Protestant devotion to the inherent perspicuity of Scripture, both in the original and in its extant copies, reflecting God’s faithfulness and providential care of his church. And in his mind, the emerging doubts about the integrity of the originals, together with an evolving permissiveness toward critical emendations of the text simply clashed with this commitment and could not be tolerated any more than the Catholic elevation of the Vulgate. Indeed, in some ways Owen’s fears were prescient, at least in regard to the eventual collapse in confidence regarding the integrity and perspicuity of the original biblical text. And in this respect, hindsight also allows one to see that Walton’s convictions regarding the stability of the church’s tradition

<sup>90</sup> Miller, “London Polyglot,” 478. The classic study for the impact of a revived ancient skepticism on early modern debates is Richard Popkin’s *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). See his commentary in relation to the Catholic appeal to the supremacy of the Vulgate in the context of a wider skepticism that was emerging in early modern biblical scholarship. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism*, 219–38. Gribben and Van Staaldue-Sulman also speak of a distinct “Laudian” or “high church” agenda in Walton’s project. See Crawford Gribben, “The Commodification of Scripture, 1640–1660: Politics, Ecclesiology, and the Cultures of Print,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530–1700*, ed. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith, and Rachel Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 233; Van Staaldue-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism*, 206–9, 228–29.

<sup>91</sup> Hardy, *Criticism and Confession*, 368.

<sup>92</sup> In this and the following paragraph, I at points repeat and closely follow my own conclusions elsewhere. See Leslie, *Light of Grace*, 216–17.

and judgment would quickly prove to be rather naive. As Miller puts it, “The collapse of *historica critica* in turn undermined the philology represented in the Polyglot Bibles.”<sup>93</sup>

Owen’s *Of the Integrity* should be recognized as a sophisticated and scholarly attempt to defend the veracity of Scripture in an increasingly complex intellectual environment, proceeding from a settled conviction that God has revealed himself clearly and authoritatively in this text. It is an attempt; and like all attempts, it will be open to objection and disagreement at points. But if the primary intention is to cast judgment, one may fail to see it for what it is on its own terms as it is situated within its own historical context.<sup>94</sup>

### Thematic Outline

Owen begins this treatise with an explanation of its occasion—namely, his receipt of Walton’s *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* to the London Polyglot Bible. As Owen explains, the manuscript of his treatise *Of the Divine Original* was already complete when he received the *Prolegomena* and *Appendix*, but having now engaged with the latter, he feels compelled to compose this treatise as a supplement to *Of the Divine Original*, lest Walton’s work threaten his earlier conclusions about God’s providential preservation of the authentic scriptural text.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, right at the outset, Owen flags his primary concern with what seems to be an underlying presupposition of Walton’s work—namely, that the original text of Scripture has been corrupted, leading to a proliferation of variant readings, and permitting the practice of textual emendation according to the best evidence available. In his mind, this underlying assumption cannot but erode our confidence in Scripture’s divine authority, and is no less than “the foundation of Mohammedanism, . . . the chiefest and principal prop of popery, the only pretense of fanatical antiscripturalists, and the root of much hidden

<sup>93</sup> Miller, “London Polyglot,” 472.

<sup>94</sup> It is worth quoting Hardy’s sagacious assessment: “It may now be possible to reconsider the famous quarrel between Walton and John Owen, which it has been tempting to regard as a moment of clear opposition between a progressive ‘critical’ and a reactionary ‘Reformed’ or ‘scholastic’ view of biblical authority. In fact, Owen was quite up to speed with contemporary biblical scholarship, and not all of his arguments were nakedly theological ones. However credulous Owen’s strong faith in the reliability of the Masoretic vocalization may seem, Owen had coherent scholarly reasons not to take the alternatives presented by Cappel, Morin, and Walton any more seriously—and that was before he contemplated their ecclesiological and confessional consequences.” Hardy, *Criticism and Confession*, 369–70.

<sup>95</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 1.

atheism." By contrast, Owen restates the basic assertion he outlined in *Of the Divine Original* concerning the divinely preserved integrity of the extant scriptural text, which self-evidently manifests its inspired authority right down to "the least iota or syllable." Lest his criticism of the London Polyglot be misunderstood, however, Owen is keen to express his great esteem for the work and acknowledge its considerable value,<sup>96</sup> even if he will take issue with the points he enumerates later in the chapter.

Before outlining his objections to these points in detail, chapter two expands on his key convictions regarding the "purity" of the extant Scriptural text. At the outset Owen readily acknowledges that the inspired autographs are no longer in existence and that the remaining copies are neither inspired nor infallible. Evidently both the Catholic Morin and the Protestant Cappel had caricatured their opponents as maintaining that the extant copies of the Scriptures must be as divinely inspired and infallible as the originals. Even still, Owen remains convinced that the copies preserve the "whole Scripture entire, as given out from God, without any loss." And later in chapter 2, he outlines twelve arguments for this assertion, which include the fundamental theological conviction already mentioned—namely, God's providential care of his word—but which also extend to the great concern demonstrated in the scribal duplication of the text, and the watchful maintenance of the copies by Jews and Christians alike. Accordingly, any variations that do exist in the copies are manifestly of little doctrinal significance.<sup>97</sup>

Subsequent chapters then take up Owen's objections to Walton's *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* in more detail. Although the bulk of his concerns naturally pertain to the Old Testament, Owen is even alarmed at the way the *Appendix* has needlessly "swelled" the number of variant readings for the New Testament. So in chapter 3, he castigates Walton for presenting what are plainly copying errors and the like as alternative readings, concluding with several suggestions for the way this number of variants might be reduced.<sup>98</sup>

Chapter 4 turns to the chief assertions of the *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* concerning the Old Testament. Owen outlines them briefly in chapter 4. Among other things, they include the claims that the present Hebrew characters are Chaldean and not original; that the vowel points are of late origin; that the *Qere* and *Ketiv*, or *Keri* and *Ketib*, as Owen calls them, are late variant

<sup>96</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 3.

readings of the Masoretes and Rabbins; and that early translations may be used to emend the extant Hebrew text.<sup>99</sup> Alarmed that these claims are now being readily accepted by fellow Protestants, Owen is keen to point out that they have already been seized upon by the Catholics to undermine confidence in Scripture and galvanize dependence on an infallible Papacy together with its authorized Vulgate translation.<sup>100</sup>

In Chapters 5 and 6, Owen extensively engages with the argument concerning the late origin of the Hebrew vowel points. Here Walton follows Cappel, who advocated for their addition by the Tiberian Masoretes and Rabbins at least as late as the sixth or seventh century AD. Owen's general response begins by noting the critical importance of the vowel points to the perspicuity of the text, an observation with which various Catholic apologists for the Vulgate were, unsurprisingly, keen to agree. He then turns to the argument itself. The first prong of his response largely seeks to discredit the integrity and, therefore, reliability of the Jewish rabbinical tradition after the destruction of Jerusalem. Whereas the Jewish church faithfully preserved the Scriptures until the coming of Christ, Owen believes the later apostasy of the Jewish community renders them unfit custodians of God's word. At any rate, Owen is keen to note that most Jews hold to the antiquity of the points, and even where they do not (e.g., Levita), they still revere the points as if they were the ancient work of Ezra.<sup>101</sup> As for a more detailed defense of the antiquity of the points, Owen believes the recent work of Buxtorf Jr. remains as yet unanswered,<sup>102</sup> and thus he is content to leave it there. Even still, he finishes the chapter with two additional considerations of his own for their antiquity.<sup>103</sup>

Owen's response to the arguments for the novelty of the vowel points continues in chapter 6. Here he responds to some of the specific arguments for their late addition:

1. He judges the conjecture that the unpointed Samaritan Hebrew characters correspond to the original—rather than the extant, supposedly Chaldean characters—to be highly speculative.

<sup>99</sup> For consistency, I have retained Owen's usual transliteration, *Keri* and *Ketib*, in the headings of chapters but have used the modern convention in transliterating Owen's Hebrew references to the marginalia.

<sup>100</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 4.

<sup>101</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 5.

<sup>102</sup> Cf., Johann Buxtorf Jr., *Tractatus de punctorum vocalium et accentum, in libris Veteris Testamenti Hebraicis, origine, antiquitate, et auctoritate* (Basel: L. König, 1648).

<sup>103</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 5.

2. He responds to the practice of preserving unpointed copies of the Law in the synagogue by noting again that most Jewish scholars still uphold the divine inspiration of the points.
3. He questions the testimony of Levita, noting that there are other ways of accounting for the reception of the vowel points from the Tiberian Masoretes than to suppose they were responsible for their composition.
4. He notes that despite the silence of the Mishnah, Talmud, and Gemara concerning the points, the sense implied in their quotation of Scripture presumes the presence of the points.
5. He contends that the *Qere* and *Ketiv* pertain to the consonants of the text and have no bearing on the antiquity of the points.
6. He rejects the suggestion that the large number of Hebrew vowels necessarily suggests their arbitrary human invention.
7. He similarly denies that the variety in the various ancient translations necessarily suggests the absence of points in the originals.
8. He maintains that Jerome's failure to discuss the points is essentially an argument from silence.
9. Finally, he dismisses as fanciful and mistaken an inference Morin makes from a discourse by Aben Ezra (Abraham ibn Ezra) that the vowel points were the invention of the Jewish grammarians.<sup>104</sup>

In his conclusion to the chapter, Owen is simply incredulous when it comes to Cappel's belief that an oral tradition could maintain the precise pronunciation over a millennium stretching from the time the Hebrew language ceased to be spoken up to that of the Tiberian Masoretes.

In chapter 7, Owen seeks to refute any claim that the *Qere* and *Ketiv* might represent a corruption of the original text. While Owen is somewhat hesitant about their origin, he believes their antiquity is indisputable, mitigating against any suggestion that they might represent later critical amendments to the text. In this respect, he applauds the generally conservative approach of the Polyglot Bible, as compared to Cappel's more radical insinuations regarding their origin. At any rate, the differences they make to the meaning of the original text is immaterial.<sup>105</sup>

The final chapter seeks to address the use of ancient translations vis-à-vis the Hebrew text. In Owen's mind, an appropriate use of translations can aid the exposition of Scripture by providing a kind of commentary on the sense of the

<sup>104</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 6.

<sup>105</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 7.

original. In this respect, he welcomes the accessibility of these translations in the new Polyglot Bible. But he strongly objects to the practice suggested by the *Prolegomena* of using ancient translations to correct any alleged corruptions in the copies of the original. As Owen notes, it is the undeniable variations in the most famous of these, the Septuagint, that is typically advanced as grounds for corruptions within the extant Hebrew text. While he clearly believes this is unwarranted, given the lack of ancient testimony to this effect, and not least the witness of Christ himself to the integrity and authority of the Hebrew text, Owen proceeds to weigh the reliability of the most prominent translations, case by case. While each of those he evaluates—the Arabic, Syriac, Samaritan Pentateuch, Chaldee Paraphrase, Vulgate, and Septuagint—offer varying degrees of utility to the biblical expositor, all of them fall manifestly well short of meeting the standard of guaranteed correspondence to the original that might warrant their deployment in amending the extant Hebrew copies. Much the same can be said for corresponding translations of the New Testament. Owen concludes the chapter with a brief statement rejecting the premise of a corrupted original. Naturally enough, then, he finds the proliferation of variants in the *Appendix*, which include those gathered from other places like Grotius's *Annotations*, redundant, to say the least.<sup>106</sup>

INTRODUCTION AND THEMATIC OUTLINE FOR  
*TWENTY-FIVE DISCOURSES SUITABLE TO THE  
 LORD'S SUPPER* (1760) AND *THREE DISCOURSES  
 DELIVERED AT THE LORD'S TABLE* (1750)

The first of the posthumous collection, and the third major treatise, in this present volume is *Twenty-Five Discourses Suitable to the Lord's Supper, Delivered Just before the Administration of That Sacred Ordinance*. As the published title suggests, this “treatise” consists, in fact, of twenty-five sermons that were delivered between 1669 and 1682 in preparation for the sacrament itself, most likely delivered just before the ordinance in addition to a separate sermon.<sup>107</sup> They were published together in 1760 under the supervision of Richard Winter, an Independent church pastor in London.<sup>108</sup> As Winter's introduction indicates, the sermons were reproduced from one of John Hartopp's notebooks that had been preserved by his granddaughter, a certain Mrs. Cooke of Stoke Newington.

<sup>106</sup> Owen, *Of the Integrity*, chap. 8.

<sup>107</sup> Note too the opening remarks by Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 8, 12, 18, 22, 24.

<sup>108</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*.

The three separate discourses on the Lord's Supper, *Three Discourses Delivered at the Lord's Table*, dated originally to 1673, are brief shorthand reproductions from sermons containing themes that are readily apparent in the larger collection. Evidently, these first appeared in 1750 as a prefix to a tract by John Greene of Chipping Ongers with the title *The Lord's Supper Fully Considered, in a Review of the History of Its Institution*.<sup>109</sup> As with the larger collection, Greene's prefatory comments indicate that the discourses were "taken from Dr. Owen's mouth by one who was a member of the church of which he was a pastor,"<sup>110</sup> most likely referring again to one of Hartopp's notebooks.

Jon D. Payne has provided an extended outline of the development in Owen's thought on the Lord's Supper as an introduction to his own edition of the twenty-five discourses.<sup>111</sup> With an eye to the record of Owen's personal library collection, Payne notices likely points of connection to the sacramentology of magisterial Reformers like John Calvin and Peter Martyr Vermigli, as well as his own contemporaries like Samuel Bolton, Richard Vines, Edward Reynolds, and Philip Goodwin.

### Thematic Outline

The twenty-five discourses, as published, are arranged chronologically<sup>112</sup> and not in a strictly methodical fashion. Even so, it is possible to categorize them thematically. While there are several discourses that give more focused attention to the nature, purpose, and administration of the ordinance itself,<sup>113</sup> the vast majority are devoted to the participants themselves and the way their relationship with God is uniquely enriched through engaging in the ordinance. Throughout the collection, Owen's abiding interest concerns the way the Lord's Supper conveys to the believer a peculiar communion with God that extends beyond what arises from the ministry of the word alone. In this vein, Owen sets out the duties that are necessary to prepare for the Supper,<sup>114</sup> various directions for rightly approaching the Lord's Table and receiving the

<sup>109</sup> John Greene and John Owen, *The Lord's Supper Fully Considered, in a Review of the History of Its Institution. With Meditations and Ejaculations Suited to the Several Parts of the Ordinance. To Which Are Prefixed Three Discourses Delivered at the Lord's Table, by the Reverend and Learned John Owen, D.D. Never before Published: And Some Remarks on the Plain Account of the Sacrament* (London: J. Buckland, 1750).

<sup>110</sup> J. Green, advertisement to the 1750 edition of Owen, *Three Discourses*.

<sup>111</sup> Jon D. Payne, *John Owen on the Lord's Supper* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004), 1–75.

<sup>112</sup> A small number of discourses in the collection are undated.

<sup>113</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 13, 14 17.

<sup>114</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 5, 6.



sacrament,<sup>115</sup> with a particular accent on the special act and object of faith's exercise in the ordinance,<sup>116</sup> and, finally, the benefits and duties that ensue from participating in the Supper.<sup>117</sup>

*Four Fundamental Convictions concerning the Supper Itself*

In terms of the ordinance itself, Owen summarizes four fundamental convictions concerning its nature in discourse 2, and develops them further in other discourses.

1. IT IS COMMEMORATIVE OF CHRIST'S ATONING DEATH

In accord with Christ's own institution (Luke 22:19) and Paul's directions in 1 Corinthians 11:24–25, the ordinance is first of all “commemorative” of Christ's atoning sufferings and death. Discourse 13 expands on this by noting how the Supper recalls the “grace and love of God” in the Father's gift of the Son to die as a sacrifice for sin, as well as the love of Christ himself, who willingly gave himself for our salvation. Behind this gift is its foundation in the eternal, intra-Trinitarian “counsel of peace” or so-called *pactum salutis*, wherein the Son freely consented to “undertake and answer for what we had done,” and the Father agreed to grant “righteousness, life and salvation” to sinners as a result.<sup>118</sup> Most importantly, however, the Supper recalls the suffering of Christ itself. Owen draws attention to the sufferings of Christ's human soul in its privative loss of divine fellowship and its positive infliction with the curse of God's wrath directed against sinners. As he explains in discourse 17, this suffering ensues from the “imputation” of iniquity and guilt to him, fulfilling its typological representation in the Old Testament sacrificial rituals. Alongside this anguish of soul, Christ's bodily suffering is neither to be forgotten nor disproportionately overemphasized, and in passing Owen also mentions the peculiar suffering that resulted from the punitive dissolution of Christ's body and soul in death.

2. IT ENTAILS A PECULIAR PROFESSION OF CHRIST

There is a “peculiar profession” that accompanies the Supper (see 1 Cor. 11:26). Owen develops this in discourse 4. There he speaks of the way Christ's death is represented to the believer in the Supper, in its vivid exhibition of his sufferings, in the promissory offer that accompanies the elements, and

<sup>115</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 20, 21, 22, 24.

<sup>116</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 18, 19. Cf. the separate *Three Discourses*.

<sup>117</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 12, 16, 25.

<sup>118</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 13.

in its reception and incorporation within the believer. Owen is of course keen to distinguish this spiritual representation from a merely physical impression upon the “fancy” or “imagination,” a tendency he condemns in the proliferation of “pictures and images” of Christ among his Catholic adversaries. Such a practice, he adds, epitomizes a decline in faith and a loss of contact with the spiritual reality.<sup>119</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, Owen excludes the “carnal” representation of Christ that he believes is enshrined in the doctrine of transubstantiation. The elements of the Supper cannot in themselves convey the spiritual representation but are arbitrarily instituted by God to express a reality that is received by faith alone. Even so, the Supper also serves to strengthen that spiritual reality in a way that the ministry of the word cannot accomplish on its own. Discourse 14 further explains what Owen means. Through participating in the Supper, faith “rises up” or comes closest to what he calls a “spiritual, sensible experience,” drawing nearest to its object. In other words, the divine institution of the physical elements—bread and wine—is a deliberate and particularly fitting representation of Christ, insofar as “things of sense are chosen to express faith wrought up to an experience.”<sup>120</sup>

There are two dimensions to this spiritual experience, Owen suggests. First, the tangible offer of the elements to be consumed by the believer aligns with a spiritual reality wherein Christ is “more present to the soul” than he would be if were simply “visible” before our bodily eyes.<sup>121</sup> When speaking of the spiritual representation of Christ in his ordinances, one of Owen’s favorite refrains is Paul’s admonishment of the Galatians: “It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” (Gal. 3:1 ESV; with Rom. 3:25). And what the Supper offers a believer is a vivid exhibition of Christ’s suffering that is perhaps the nearest and most evident of all.<sup>122</sup> As he notes on several occasions, whereas the Father offers Christ to the believer in the gospel, there is a sense in which Christ immediately and directly offers himself in the institution of the Supper.<sup>123</sup> Equally as significant as the spiritual offer of Christ in the Supper is, secondly, the tangible receipt of him by the communicant, as represented by the acts of eating and drinking the elements. Through the believer’s active participation in the Supper, “the flesh and blood

<sup>119</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 4.

<sup>120</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 14.

<sup>121</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 14.

<sup>122</sup> “But of all things that belong unto the gospel, he is most evidently crucified before our eyes in this ordinance.” Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 10.

<sup>123</sup> E.g., Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 10.

of Christ as communicated in this ordinance through faith" is "turned and changed . . . into spiritual vital principles," bringing growth, satisfaction, and nourishment to the soul.<sup>124</sup>

Behind these statements is a particular perspective on the sacramental presence of Christ in the ordinance. We have already noted Owen's dismissal of a crudely carnal form of Christ's presence. Aside from the usual complaint that transubstantiation chafes against "every thing that is in sense, reason, and the faith of a man,"<sup>125</sup> Kelly Kacic also draws attention to an interesting pneumatological objection Owen makes. In Owen's mind, a literal transubstantiation of the elements inevitably sidelines Christ's promises concerning the Spirit's distinctive ministry after his bodily ascension (see John 16:7).<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, Owen also resists reducing the Supper to a mere "naked representation" or a purely symbolic remembrance of Christ's passion.<sup>127</sup> It is not some "empty, painted feast," he says: it involves a real, albeit spiritual, exhibition and communication of Christ's body and blood "to feed our souls." In other words, there is a genuine "sacramental relation . . . between the outward elements and the thing signified" that ensures there is no pretense in the Supper's invitation to feast on the body and blood of Christ, together with all its spiritual benefits.<sup>128</sup> Consequently, Owen is able to speak of a "mysterious reception of Christ in this peculiar way of exhibition . . . so as to come to a real substantial incorporation in our souls."<sup>129</sup> While it is a fraught business attempting to categorize various early modern Protestant perspectives on Christ's sacramental presence in the Supper, Kacic, like Payne, is right to identify here substantial continuity between Owen's understanding and the sort of "mediated position" typically associated with Calvin, Vermigli, and the Reformed Confessions.<sup>130</sup>

There is a further sense in which the Supper makes a more public "profession" of Christ, beyond that which is tendered to the individual believer's soul. Every time the ordinance is celebrated, Owen maintains, there is a profession of Christ's shameful death before the open contempt of the world, in opposition to the curse, and in triumph over the power of Satan.

<sup>124</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 14.

<sup>125</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 10.

<sup>126</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 10. Kelly M. Kacic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 224.

<sup>127</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 7; cf. Owen, *Three Discourses*, discourse 1.

<sup>128</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 23.

<sup>129</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 25.

<sup>130</sup> Kacic, *Communion*, 224–25. Cf. Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 177–88; 219–37.

### 3. IT IS PECULIARLY EUCHARISTICAL

Owen's third fundamental conviction about the Supper is that it is "peculiarly eucharistical." Paul speaks of the "cup of blessing" or "thanksgiving" (1 Cor. 10:16). In Owen's words, "It is called 'The cup of blessing,' because of the institution, and prayer for the blessing of God upon it; and it is called 'The cup of thanksgiving,' because we do in a peculiar manner give thanks to God for Christ, and for his love in him."<sup>131</sup>

### 4. IT IS A FEDERAL ORDINANCE CONFIRMING THE COVENANT

Finally, following Christ's own cue in Matthew 26:28, Owen speaks of the Supper as a "federal ordinance, wherein God confirms the covenant unto us, and wherein he calls us to make a recognition of the covenant unto God."<sup>132</sup> Of course, God has no need to renew his gracious covenant every time the ordinance is celebrated: it was sealed once and for all by blood of Christ's sacrifice. But there is a sense in which the ordinance repeatedly testifies to this covenant, and each time it is celebrated, it provides the believer an opportunity to renew their commitment as beneficiaries of this covenant "by a universal giving up ourselves unto God."<sup>133</sup>

#### *Instructions in Preparation for the Ordinance*

Given Owen's emphasis on the Supper as a means of grace that engages a person's faith to the fullest extent, it is not surprising that he devotes a considerable amount of time to instructing believers in preparation for the ordinance, and in the right posture for approaching the table and receiving the sacrament.

In one respect, preparation for the Supper is no different from what is commonly necessary for any divine ordinance.<sup>134</sup> Here Owen identifies a preparation that has reference to God. This involves a careful consideration of his authority in the ordinance's institution and his holy and gracious presence in it as the object of worship. It will also attend to him as the end of the ordinance, both in terms of his glorification by it and in terms of the acceptance and blessing he bestows on the worshiper in Christ. There is also a preparation that respects the believer himself, which involves an appropriately remorseful regard to their own iniquity, an appropriate self-abasement, and the cultivation of "a habitual frame of love in the heart" for the ordinance.

<sup>131</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 2.

<sup>132</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 2.

<sup>133</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 10.

<sup>134</sup> For the following, see Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 5.

Owen also refers to a kind of preparation that is attentive to the proper, divinely authorized instructions for the administration of the ordinance, lest a person risk the kind of disapproval that greeted Uzzah's infamous grasping of the ark in 1 Chronicles 13.

In terms of the Supper itself, Owen suggests that suitable time needs to be set aside to prepare for the ordinance.<sup>135</sup> Scripture clearly allows for considerable liberty on this score, but Owen exhorts believers to be alert to fitting opportunities and circumstances that will enable them to perform the duty effectually.

The preparation itself should entail meditation on a number of "special objects," all centering on Christ's suffering. To begin with, such meditation ought to consider the "horrible guilt and provocation" of sin that is represented in the cross. Second, there is the "purity, the holiness, and the severity of God, that would not pass by sin, when it was charged upon his Son." There is also the "infinite wisdom" and "love of God that found out this way of glorifying his holiness and justice, and dealing with sin according to its demerit." Then there is the "infinite love of Jesus Christ himself," who gave himself that sinners might have their sins washed away in his blood. Finally, a believer should be attentive to the end of Christ's suffering in making "peace and reconciliation." Owen directs believers to be mindful of their own spiritual state as they meditate on these realities, and to be attentive to anything that aids their spirits in this duty, conscious that "most Christians are poor in experience." Beyond meditation, preparation for the Supper should also involve honest self-examination and repentance in light of Christ's cross, supplication, and expectation that God will graciously answer the longings of our hearts.

#### *The Exercise of Faith in Approaching the Table Itself*

When it comes to approaching the table itself, Owen is particularly concerned to direct communicants' attention to the ways in which the ordinance kindles their faith and love for Christ. To a large degree, these directions correspond to the nature of the ordinance itself in its special representation and exhibition of Christ's death to the sinner. But of particular importance to Owen is having clarity about the "special object of faith" in this ordinance. It was commonplace among Reformed orthodox theologians to distinguish between the formal object of faith, in its most general sense as the veracity and authority of God, and the special, material object of justifying faith, which is the particular promise of forgiveness through Christ held out in the gospel

135 For this and the following, see Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 6.

offer. These two aspects of faith are obviously presupposed in a believer's participation in the Supper. But Owen also refers to a more particular and immediate "special object" of faith in this ordinance.

As he outlines it in discourse 2, this special object is in its fullest respect the "human nature of Christ, as the subject wherein mediation and redemption was wrought."<sup>136</sup> Therefore, faith will in an "especial manner" consider the body God prepared for that end (cf. Heb 10:5). Faith then goes further to consider the constituent parts of Christ's human nature: his body and blood, in union to his soul, from whence is "its value and excellency." Faith will also consider the way these parts are distinguished in the Supper, one element representing the body and another the blood. And finally, faith will consider the way in which these parts are violently separated in his suffering: his body bruised and broken, and his blood shed, both represented in the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the cup.

From here, faith should move on to reflect upon the causes that led to the separation of Christ's body and blood. First, there is a "moving cause"—namely, "the eternal love of God in giving Christ in this manner, to have his body bruised, and his blood shed." It is one thing that God sent his Son, Owen says, but it is another that he "spared not his own Son" (Rom. 8:32). When discussing the special object of faith in discourse 18, Owen also refers distinctly to the love of Christ himself, who voluntarily "gave himself" for sinners (cf. Gal. 2:20). Second, there is a "procuring cause"—namely, the sin for which Christ died "to make reconciliation and atonement." Then there is the "efficient cause." The "principal" efficient cause is the justice and righteousness of God wherein Christ was set forth "to be a propitiation" to "declare his righteousness" (Rom. 3:25). The "instrumental" efficient cause is the law of God that pronounced its curse so that Christ was hung "upon the tree" (Gal. 3:13). The "adjuvant" (assisting) efficient cause was "the wrath and malice of men" who conspired in his death. And ultimately faith should consider the "final" cause, which is the glorification of God in Christ's suffering.<sup>137</sup>

Much of Owen's instruction for approaching the table expands on that which will encourage faith's regard for Christ as he is "lifted up" in this ordinance. We have already made reference to Owen's reflections on the way in which Christ's death for sinners is "exhibited" or "set forth" in the ordinance. But in addition to this, the discourses contain rich meditations on the intra-Trinitarian love of God and the particular love of Christ

<sup>136</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 2.

<sup>137</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 2.

toward sinners,<sup>138</sup> the faith and obedience of Christ in his sufferings,<sup>139</sup> the imputation of sin and guilt to Christ,<sup>140</sup> short expositions of pertinent scriptural texts that speak to his suffering,<sup>141</sup> specific directions for recalling Christ's sufferings and exercising faith when approaching the table,<sup>142</sup> as well as pastoral advice targeted at the various spiritual conditions of communicants.<sup>143</sup>

As noted above, communion with Christ in this ordinance will not result without faith actively engaging in the sacrament to receive and appropriate its spiritual object personally, and in a way that will "set love at work."<sup>144</sup> The resulting communion stems from a real incorporation of Christ within the believer that occurs through the sacrament. Owen clearly does not intend to suggest that the ordinance somehow supplants spiritual regeneration as the means by which Christ is initially formed within a believer, so much as it results in "a farther incorporation of Christ in our souls."<sup>145</sup> He speaks of it increasing and "quickening" "vital principles," bringing spiritual growth and satisfaction through "receiving suitable food and nourishment."<sup>146</sup> In particular, when individuals exercise their faith through participating in the ordinance, Owen anticipates that their affections will be kindled by the love of Christ, which has a peculiarly conforming or "constraining" power on the soul (cf., 2 Cor. 5:14).<sup>147</sup> Unremarkably for an early modern Protestant, Owen does not consider love to be the "form" of faith so much as he expects that authentic Christian faith will be the root or foundation of a transformative love and obedience to Christ. In other words, while there are certainly duties that Owen outlines for the Christian to engage their affections through participation in the sacrament,<sup>148</sup> the spiritual strength for this conformity stems from Christ alone. It is only as faith takes in a "view" of Christ "as lifted up," with the "transforming power, property, and efficacy" of his love,<sup>149</sup> that the soul will find itself conformed into his

138 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 20, 21, 22.

139 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 3.

140 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 17.

141 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 11.

142 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 1, 8, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 25.

143 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 9.

144 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 16.

145 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 18.

146 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 14.

147 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 20.

148 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourses 12, 16, 21, 24.

149 Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 20.

image and likeness. Given the specific attention this sacrament gives to the sufferings of Christ, there is a peculiar conformity to Christ's death that ought to ensue, touching a believer's thoughts, conversation, desires, and, not least, attitude toward sin.<sup>150</sup>

## INTRODUCTION TO THE REMAINING CONTENTS OF THE PRESENT VOLUME

### *Several Practical Cases of Conscience Resolved* (1721)

The collection of sermons, dated between 1672–1680<sup>151</sup> and gathered together in 1721 under the title *Several Practical Cases of Conscience Resolved: Delivered in Some Short Discourses at Church Meetings*,<sup>152</sup> evinces the sort of pastoral casuistry that was typical among many Puritan authors. If the dates that are occasionally cited for the *Discourses* in the collection are anything to go by, it appears they may have been delivered at special meetings “for conference,” as Owen puts it in discourse 14, outside the usual gathering on the Lord's Day.

Here we are given an insight into Owen's deep concerns about the religious climate in post-Restoration England. In the third discourse, for instance, Owen decries an “irreligion” and “atheism” among his countryfolk that he believes is virtually unparalleled in any age. In spite of recent providential warnings—“the pestilence, the fire, the sword,” undoubtedly an allusion to the Great Plague and subsequent Great Fire of London, along with other tumultuous events only a few years earlier<sup>153</sup>—the complacent godlessness of the nation had reached giddy heights. Among a number of deplorable sins that deeply trouble him, Owen singles out a general reproach of the Spirit as being perhaps “the peculiar sin of the nation at this day, and that the like has not been known, or heard of, in any nation under the sun.”<sup>154</sup> Indeed, so alarmed by this disdain for the supernatural work of the Spirit, Owen was compelled to write his major contemporaneous treatise, *Πνευματολογία* in 1674, a labor that would extend into several sequel volumes.<sup>155</sup>

Surrounded by a dramatic loss of religious zeal, together with the prospect of a heavy hand of divine providential judgment, Owen's concern throughout this collection of sermons is chiefly pastoral and practical rather

<sup>150</sup> Owen, *Twenty-Five Discourses*, discourse 24; cf. discourse 12.

<sup>151</sup> Not all the sermons are published with dates.

<sup>152</sup> Owen, *Complete Collection of Sermons etc.* (1721), 539–71.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 257.

<sup>154</sup> Owen, *Cases of Conscience*, discourse 3.

<sup>155</sup> *Complete Works of John Owen*, vols. 5–8.



than polemical or even theological, at least in any technical or constructive sense. There is a notable tone of urgency in the sermons. As he exhorts his hearers, "There is more than an ordinary earnestness and fervency of spirit, and wrestling with God required of us at this day, for the cause of Zion, the interest of Christ, and defeating of his adversaries."<sup>156</sup>

In keeping with Owen's convictions about the gracious, Christological foundation of the Christian life, a large proportion of the collection offers practical instructions for a believer to kindle his or her trust in Christ.<sup>157</sup> "The whole of our fruitfulness," he insists, "depends upon our abiding in Christ."<sup>158</sup> Here Owen points his hearers to the usual means of grace, with specific directions for applying our minds, wills, and affections to the contemplation of Christ, as well as exhortations to engage in regular fellowship that intentionally focusses on one another's spiritual state, alongside the ordinances of public worship and, of course, prayer.

A number of sermons address a believer's decays in grace and the case of besetting sin.<sup>159</sup> While Owen is clearly attentive to the dilemma that habitual sin poses for a person's assurance of salvation, here he is more immediately interested in outlining the circumstances that might enflame it, and the ways in which it can be diagnosed and remedied. Owen is confident that the warnings of Scripture and the exhortations to seek relief from Christ will in due course function as means of grace to restore those who are genuinely regenerate from the snare in which they have been caught.

### *Reflections on a Slandorous Libel* (1671, 1721)

Some of the material contained in these posthumous collections was of a more controversial nature, stemming from Owen's sustained advocacy for the Independent cause after the Restoration. One such item of correspondence contained in the present volume was a letter originally published in 1671, in a tract with the title *An Expostulatory Letter to the Author of the Slandorous Libel against Dr. O. With Some Short Reflections Thereon*.<sup>160</sup> In the 1721 collection, it was reprinted with the title, *Reflections on a Slandorous Libel against Dr. Owen, in a Letter to Sir Thomas Overbury*.<sup>161</sup> Here Owen is responding to

<sup>156</sup> Owen, *Cases of Conscience*, discourse 13.

<sup>157</sup> Owen, *Cases of Conscience*, discourses 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10.

<sup>158</sup> Owen, *Cases of Conscience*, discourse 6.

<sup>159</sup> Owen, *Cases of Conscience*, discourses 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

<sup>160</sup> John Owen, "[Reflections]," in *An Expostulatory Letter to the Author of the Slandorous Libel against Dr. O. With Some Short Reflections Thereon* (London: n.p., 1671).

<sup>161</sup> Owen, *Complete Collection of Sermons etc.* (1721), 615–21.

Gloucestershire parson George Vernon, who anonymously leveled a number of serious accusations, including sedition, the violation of lawful promises and oaths, theological heterodoxy, and moral duplicity. Vernon clearly intends to portray Owen as a ringleader of Nonconformist mischief-making. Owen, of course, vehemently denies the charges and seeks to defend his integrity.

*A Letter concerning the Matter of the Present Excommunications* (1683, 1721)

Another letter of polemical tone and also contained in the present volume was first published in 1683, Owen's final year, with the title *A Letter concerning the Matter of the Present Excommunications*.<sup>162</sup> This too is reproduced in the 1721 collection.<sup>163</sup> Little is known about the specific occasion of this letter or its intended recipient, although Owen remarks with some surprise that he had been requested to comment on the effect that the prosecution of the Dissenters might have on their consciences. At any rate, the general circumstances of the letter are readily apparent. Having retired from the Leadenhall Street congregation in 1681, Owen and his fellow Dissenters would continue to chafe against the establishment authorities throughout his final years—encounters that were no doubt exacerbated by the political volatility that lingered after the alleged Popish Plot of 1678–1681.<sup>164</sup>

Throughout this letter, Owen objects to what he believes is an entirely illegitimate abuse of authority in the excommunication of Nonconformists by the Crown's civil prosecutors at Doctors' Commons. It is one thing to render public gatherings illegal, as the 1670 reiteration of the Conventicles Act had done, and to prosecute offenders accordingly. However abhorrent the practice, Owen readily acknowledges that civil and penal statutes can legitimately execute this outcome. But it is an entirely different matter for the Crown, through its lawyers and ecclesiastical officers, to presume for itself what is strictly a spiritual ordinance of Christ.<sup>165</sup> In short, Owen answers his

<sup>162</sup> John Owen, *A Letter concerning the Matter of the Present Excommunications* (London: for Benjamin Alsop, 1683).

<sup>163</sup> Owen, *Complete Collection of Sermons etc.* (1721), 597–604.

<sup>164</sup> Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 257–61.

<sup>165</sup> Speaking of “chancellors, archdeacons, commissaries, officials, with their court attendants,” Owen tartly remarks, “these horrid names, with the reports concerning them, and their power, are enough to terrify poor harmless men, and make them fear some evil from them. But excommunication is that which no man knows on what grounds to fear, from these names, titles, and offices: for that is the name of a divine ordinance instituted by Christ in the gospel, to be administered according to the rule and law thereof; but these names, and those unto whom they do belong, are utterly foreign unto the Scriptures, and as unto this work, to the practice of the

correspondent's query by insisting that any public writ of excommunication issued outside the lawful bounds of Christ's spiritual order as set out in Scripture has no power to bind the conscience of any individual in question, regardless of the impact it might have on their outward circumstances.

*A Discourse concerning the Administration of Church Censures* (1721)

Alongside this letter, and also in the posthumous 1721 collection, are Owen's more constructive observations on the practice of church discipline and excommunication, published under the title *A Discourse concerning the Administration of Church Censures*.<sup>166</sup> Whether or not this had already been published, as Goold postulates, or was first compiled for the 1721 collection from the notebooks of Hartopp, is difficult to know.<sup>167</sup> The tract itself explores the complicated situation where the discipline of a particular congregation might need to be evaluated or vindicated in the face of objection. Consistent with his mature ecclesiological convictions, Owen is adamant that each congregation retains a liberty to govern its own affairs according to the immediate authority of Christ and his word. Accordingly, an individual congregation possesses the right to excommunicate a member according to such Christ-ordained jurisdiction without any external interference. Yet, on the assumption that congregations may occasionally err and make false judgments, Owen appeals to principles of natural justice that impel cases to be weighed by other congregations in a collaborative fashion, according to general biblical guidelines about the way disputes should be resolved.

*An Answer unto Two Questions, and Twelve Arguments, against Any Conformity of Members of Separate Churches, to the National Church* (1720)

Owen's ecclesiological convictions are also clearly on display in *An Answer unto Two Questions*, with its sequel, *Twelve Arguments, against Any Conformity of Members of Separate Churches, to the National Church*, published by William and Joseph Marshall in 1720.<sup>168</sup> Owen's nineteenth-century biographer William Orme indicates that this tract appeared around the time of Owen's death and

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church for a thousand years; what therefore is done by them of this kind, must of necessity be utterly null, seeing that as such, they have no place in the church themselves by the authority of Christ." Owen, *Letter concerning Excommunications*.

<sup>166</sup> Owen, *Complete Collection of Sermons etc.* (1721), 605–14.

<sup>167</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850–1855), 16:222 (hereafter cited as *Works*).

<sup>168</sup> Owen, *Seventeen Sermons* (1720), 379–400.

was quickly refuted by his longtime sparring partner, Richard Baxter.<sup>169</sup> As Owen had maintained elsewhere, his chief contention with the public worship of the established church did not so much concern the theological content of its liturgy, as contained in the Book of Common Prayer, or even in the use of set liturgical forms per se, but with its enforced imposition in public worship. To his mind, such an imposition entailed an illegitimate encroachment upon Christ's immediate authority over the affairs of the church and its public worship, as reflected in the explicit directions of Scripture. Owen's adherence to something like the so-called regulative principle was always driven more by Christological convictions than anything else.<sup>170</sup> And in these two tracts, he insists that it is as illegitimate to participate in the public worship of the established church after having once dissented from it, as it is to impose the liturgy in the first place. Owen readily concedes that a person may freely use set forms of prayer as an aid in personal devotion or even public worship, although he is circumspect about such a prospect, no doubt. But that is not his chief concern here. Rather, what cannot be sanctioned is a Dissenter participating in the public worship of the established church, for that amounts to no less than a tacit and ultimately disingenuous approval of what the individual once denounced.

### *Of Infant Baptism, and Dipping* (1721)

*Of Infant Baptism, and Dipping*, published in the 1721 collection, is actually an assemblage of three shorter tracts, one defending the practice of infant baptism, followed by a refutation of "Mr. Tombs," a cleric known for his opposition to infant baptism, who in doing so appealed to two passages from Irenaeus's *Adversus haereses*. The final tract contains some exegetical notes questioning the biblical precedent typically cited for insisting that baptism must always entail full immersion.<sup>171</sup>

As Gribben notes, the provenance of the collection is uncertain.<sup>172</sup> It is hard to know whether the three tracts were written at the same time, although Lee

169 John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. Thomas Russell (London: Richard Baynes, 1826), 384. Cf. Richard Baxter, *Catholick Communion Defended against Both Extremes: and Unnecessary Division Confuted, by Reasons against Both the Active and Passive Ways of Separation* (London: Tho. Parkhurst, 1684).

170 I have argued this claim more fully elsewhere. See Andrew M. Leslie, "John Owen and the Immediacy of Christ's Authority Over Christian Worship," *Westminster Theological Journal* 80, no. 1 (2018): 25–50.

171 Owen, *Complete Collection of Sermons etc.* (1721), 575–82.

172 Crawford Gribben, "John Owen, Baptism, and the Baptists," in *By Common Confession: Essays in Honor of James M. Renihan*, ed. Ronald S. Baines, Richard C. Barcellos, and James P. Butler (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2015), 53–71.

Gatiss provides a possible reconstruction of the circumstances that date at least the first two tracts soon after the appearance of the third part of John Tombes's *Anti-Paedobaptism* in 1657, which includes his appeal to Irenaeus.<sup>173</sup> Even so, it has been questioned whether the tracts were ever intended to be published or whether the argument contained therein represents Owen's mature thinking on the matter, or whether Owen was indeed their author. Certainly, Owen's views on baptism do show signs of evolution across his corpus,<sup>174</sup> and his distinctive model of the biblical covenants, as outlined in his famous commentary on the book of Hebrews, has captured the attention of particular Baptists from figures as early as Edward Hutchinson, Thomas Delaune, and Nehemiah Coxe.<sup>175</sup> There it is true that Owen occasionally hints at a distinction between the covenant of grace and a "carnal" covenant with Abraham in a way that he does not in this tract.<sup>176</sup> Leaving aside questions of provenance, it is possible to overstate the difference, however. As Samuel Renihan rightly observes, Owen's mature position on the Abrahamic covenant does not neatly separate its carnal and spiritual dimensions, something that is most evident in the fact that he clearly regards circumcision to be a sacrament of the covenant of grace.<sup>177</sup> And aside from this, the arguments in this tract are otherwise consistent with Owen's mature view of infant baptism in the Hebrews commentary.<sup>178</sup> What is noteworthy is the way the tract grounds the practice of infant baptism not only in a continuity within the covenant

<sup>173</sup> Lee Gatiss, *Cornerstones of Salvation: Foundations and Debates in the Reformed Tradition* (Welyn Garden City, UK: Evangelical Press, 2017), 161n7. Cf. John Tombes, *Anti-Paedobaptism: Or the Third Part* (London: E. Alsop, 1657), 760–62.

<sup>174</sup> See Gribben, "Baptism."

<sup>175</sup> See, e.g., Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism* (Vestavia Hills, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013); Samuel D. Renihan, *From Shadow to Substance: The Federal Theology of the English Particular Baptists (1642–1704)* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2018).

<sup>176</sup> Part of the issue might be that Owen is not speaking of a "covenant" with Abraham univocally in every instance. On occasion, he seems to deploy the concept in terms broadly equivalent to the covenant of grace, loosely speaking, of course, since strictly speaking, he believes this covenant existed only in the Old Testament in promissory form before was formally ratified as such by Christ's death. E.g., Owen, *Works*, 18:120; 23:62–63. At other times, Owen suggests an Abrahamic covenant that has a discrete temporal purpose sitting alongside the gracious promise, much as he thinks the Mosaic covenant does. E.g., Owen, *Works*, 23:74.

<sup>177</sup> In the Hebrews commentary, Owen is explicit that circumcision functioned as a sacrament of initiation into Christ just as baptism does. Owen, *Works*, 21:155. Cf. Renihan, *From Shadow to Substance*, 214.

<sup>178</sup> I will leave aside the arguments particular Baptists have made for a compatibility between Owen's model of the covenants in the Hebrews commentary and their own "anti-paedobaptist" position.

of grace but also in a principle of the natural law and justice, or what it calls the “law of the creation of humankind” that binds children to the rights and privileges of their parents.<sup>179</sup>

*Of Marrying after Divorce in Case of Adultery* (1721)

The final short tract in this present volume, also published in 1721, and of unknown origin, is an essay on the question of remarriage after divorce.<sup>180</sup> Here Owen disputes with what he labels a Catholic indissolublist position on divorce and argues that divorce stemming from adultery, malicious desertion, or a renunciation of the Christian faith results in a dissolution of the marriage contract and must result in freedom for the innocent party to remarry. In support of his case, Owen appeals to the famous “Matthean exception” (Matt. 19:9), the apostle Paul’s remarks in 1 Corinthians 7:15, as well as the law of nature with the consent of the nations more generally.

Leaving aside the provenance of this tract, Owen’s position here is consistent with the sixteenth-century Protestant attempt to codify divorce parameters within Church of England canon law in the proposed *Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum* of 1552.<sup>181</sup> This codification was never passed, however, and in the eventual appearance of canon law in 1604, the laws permitting divorce were much more restrictive; and so while marriage was no longer regarded as a sacrament, it remained virtually indissoluble in practice until the nineteenth century.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Owen, *Of Infant Baptism, and Dipping*. Cf., Owen, *Works*, 23:354.

<sup>180</sup> Owen, *Complete Collection of Sermons etc.* (1721), 572–74.

<sup>181</sup> A manuscript copy survives in the British Museum. A published version is dated to 1571, and in subsequent English translations. See James C. Spalding, “The Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum of 1552 and the Furthering of Discipline in England,” *Church History* 39, no. 2 (June 1970): 167.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided* (London: Penguin, 2004), 660–61.



PART 1

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WORKS ON  
SCRIPTURE





OF THE DIVINE  
ORIGINAL, AUTHORITY,  
SELF-EVIDENCING  
LIGHT, AND POWER  
OF THE SCRIPTURES.

With an Answer to That Enquiry, *How We  
Know the Scriptures to Be the Word of God.*

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Also

A Vindication of the Purity and Integrity of the Hebrew and Greek  
Texts of the Old and New Testament; in some Considerations on  
the *Prolegomena, and Appendix to the late Biblia Polyglotta.*

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Whereunto Are Subjoined Some Exercitations about  
the Nature and Perfection of the Scripture, the Right  
of Interpretation, Internal Light, Revelation, Etc.

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By John Owen: D.D.

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Ἐραυνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς. Joh. 5.39.

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Oxford,  
Printed by Henry Hall, Printer  
to the University,  
for Tho: Robinson. 1659.



# *Of the Divine Original*

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The third tract mentioned on the title page above was published separately in Latin in 1658; namely, *Pro Sacris Scripturis*. Chapter titles for this treatise have been added by the volume editor.



# The Epistle Dedicatory

To My Reverend and Worthy Friends  
The Prebends of Christ Church College in Oxford  
With All the Students in Divinity in That Society

THE REASON OF MY INSCRIBING the ensuing pleas for the authority, purity, and perfection of the Scripture, against the pretenses of some to the contrary, in these days, unto you, is because some of you value and study the Scripture as much as any I know, and it is the earnest desire of my heart, that all of you would so do. Now whereas two things offer themselves unto me, to discourse with you by the way of preface, namely the commendation of the Scripture, and an exhortation to the study of it on the one hand, and a discovery of the reproach that is cast upon it, with the various ways and means that are used by some for the lessening and depressing of its authority and excellency on the other; the former being to good purpose, by one or other almost every day performed; I shall insist at present on the latter only; which also is more suited to discover my aim and intention in the ensuing discourses. Now herein as I shall, it may be, seem to exceed that proportion which is due unto a preface to such short discourses as these following; yet I know, I shall be more brief than the nature of so great a matter as that proposed to consideration does require. And therefore ἀνευ προοιμίῳν καὶ παθῶν,<sup>1</sup> I shall fall upon the subject that now lies before me.

Many there have been and are, who, through the craft of Satan, and the prejudice of their own hearts, lying under the power of corrupt and carnal interest, have engaged themselves to decry, and disparage, that excellency of the Scripture which is proper and peculiar unto it. The several sorts of them are too many particularly to be considered, I shall only pass through them in general, and fix upon such instances by the way as may give evidence to the things insisted on.

<sup>1</sup> Gk. “without introduction and solemnity.”

Those who in this business are first to be called to an account, whose filth and abominations given out in gross, others have but parceled among themselves, are they of the synagogue of Rome. These pretend themselves to be the only keepers and preservers of the word of God in the world; the only “ground and pillar of truth.”<sup>2</sup> Let us then a little consider in the first place, how it has discharged this trust; for it is but equal that men should be called to an account upon their own principles; and those who supposing themselves to have a trust reposed in them, do manifest a treacherous mind, would not be one whit<sup>3</sup> better if they had so indeed.

What then have these men done in the discharge of their pretended trust? Nay what has that synagogue left unattempted? Yea what has it left unfinished, that may be needful to convince it of perfidiousness?<sup>4</sup> that says the Scripture was committed to it alone, and would, if it were able, deprive all others of the possession of it or of their lives; what Scripture then was this, or when was this deed of trust made unto them? The oracles of God, they tell us, committed to the Jews under the Old Testament, and all the writings of the New; and that this was done from the first foundation of the church by Peter, and so on to the finishing of the whole canon. What now have they not done in adding, detracting, corrupting, forging, aspersing those Scriptures to falsify their pretended trust? They add more books to them, never indited by the Holy Ghost, as remote from being θεόπνευστα, ὡς οὐρανὸς ἐστ’ ἀπὸ γαίης:<sup>5</sup> so denying the self-evidencing power of that word, which is truly ἐξ οὐρανοῦ,<sup>6</sup> by mixing it with things ἐξ ἀνθρώπων,<sup>7</sup> of a human rise and spring; manifesting themselves to have lost the Spirit of discerning, promised with the word, to abide with the true church of God forever (Isa. 59:21). They have taken from its fullness and perfection, its sufficiency and excellency, by their Masora,<sup>8</sup> their oral law or *verbum* ἄγραφον,<sup>9</sup> their unknown, endless, bottomless, boundless treasure of traditions; that πάνσοφον φάρμακον<sup>10</sup> for

2 1 Tim. 3:15.

3 I.e., a very small part or particle.

4 I.e., the quality of disloyalty or unfaithfulness.

5 Gk. “divinely inspired, ‘as heaven is from earth.’” Owen is alluding to Hesiod’s *Theogony*, line 720. For the original Greek text and an English translation, see Hesiod, *Theogony. Works and Days. Testimonia*, trans. Glenn W. Most, Loeb Classical Library 57 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 60–61.

6 Gk. “from heaven.”

7 Gk. “of human origin.”

8 I.e., the body of scribal annotations on the text of the Hebrew Bible compiled during the first millennium AD.

9 Lat., Gk. “unwritten word” (i.e., oral tradition).

10 Gk. “learned potion.”

all their abominations. The Scripture itself; as they say, committed to them, they plead, to their eternal shame, to be in the original languages corrupted, vitiated, interpolated,<sup>11</sup> so that it is no stable rule to guide us throughout in the knowledge of the will of God. The Jews, they say, did it while they were busy in burning of Christians. Therefore in the room of the originals, they have enthroned a translation that was never committed to them, that came into the world they know neither how, nor when, nor by whom. So that one says of its author, “If anyone were to inquire whether he was a Gaul or Sarmatian, a Jew or Christian, a man or woman, his advocates would find no easy answer.”<sup>12</sup> All this to place themselves in the throne of God, and to make the words of a translation authentic from their stamp upon them, and not from their relation unto, and agreement with, the words spoken by God himself. And yet further, as if all this were not enough to manifest what trustees they have been, they have cast off all subjection to the authority of God in his word, unless it be resolved into their own; denying that any man in the world can know it to be the word of God, unless they tell him so; it is but ink and paper, skin of parchment, a dead letter, a nose of wax, a Lesbian rule,<sup>13</sup> of no authority unto us at all. O faithful trustees! Holy mother church! Infallible chair! Can wickedness yet make any farther progress? Was it ever heard of from the foundation of the world, that men should take so much pains, as these men have done, to prove themselves faithless, and treacherous in a trust committed to them? Is not this the sum and substance of volumes that have even filled the world; the word of God was committed to us alone, and no others; under our keeping it is corrupted, depraved, vitiated; the copies delivered unto us we have rejected, and taken up one of our own choice; nor let any complain of us, it was in our power to do worse. This sacred *depositum*<sup>14</sup> had no κριτήρια,<sup>15</sup> whereby it might be known to be the word of God; but it

11 I.e., corrupted with the insertion of additional material.

12 In the text: *Si quis percontetur Gallus fuerit an Sarmata, Judaeus an Christianus, vir an mulier, nihil habituri sint ejus patroni quod expedite respondeant.*—Owen. Editor’s translation. Owen footnotes the quotation with “Erasmus.” Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) was a Dutch Catholic priest and humanist who is most famous for his Latin and Greek editions of the New Testament, and for his disputations with Martin Luther on the liberty of the human will. The quotation comes from Erasmus’s preface to the fourth and fifth editions of his Greek New Testament, “De duabus postremis aeditionibus quarta et quinta,” in *Novum Testamentum, iam quintum accuratissima cura recognitum à Des. Erasmo Roter* (Basel: Frobenius, 1535), \*4 (page numbers with an asterisk refer to unnumbered pages in the original). Owen has added “*ejus patroni*” to the original quotation.

13 I.e., a lead mason’s tool that was flexible and used for measuring and marking out curves.

14 Lat. “deposit.”

15 Gk. “criteria.”



is upon our credit alone, that it passes in the world, or is believed; we have added to it many books upon our own judgment, and yet think it not sufficient for the guidance of men, in the worship of God, and the obedience they owe unto him: yet do they blush? Are they ashamed as a thief when he is taken? Nay do they not boast themselves in their iniquity? and say, they are sold to work all these abominations? The time is coming, yea it is at hand, wherein it shall repent them forever, that they have lifted up themselves against this sacred grant of the wisdom, care, love, and goodness of God.

Sundry other branches there are of the abominations of these men, besides those enumerated; all which may be reduced to these three corrupt and bloody fountains.

1. That the Scripture at best, as given out from God, and as it is to us continued, was, and is, but a partial revelation of the will of God: the other part of it, which how vast and extensive it is no man knows (for the Jews have given us their δευτερώσει<sup>16</sup> in their Mishnah<sup>17</sup> and Gemara; these kept them locked up in the breast, or chair of their holy Father), being reserved in their magazine of traditions.

2. That the Scripture is not able to evince or manifest itself to be the word of God, so as to enjoy and exercise any authority in his name, over the souls and consciences of men; without an accession of testimony, from that combination of politic, worldly minded men, that call themselves the Church of Rome.

3. That the original copies of the Old and New Testaments are so corrupted (*ex ore tuo, serve nequam*)<sup>18</sup> that they are not a certain standard and measure of all doctrines, or the touchstone of all translations.

Now concerning these things you will find somewhat offered unto your consideration in the ensuing discourses; wherein, I hope, without any great altercation or disputes, to lay down such principles of truth, as that their idol imaginations will be found cast to the ground before the sacred ark of the word of God, and to lie naked without wisdom or power.

It is concerning the last of these only, that at present I shall deliver my thoughts unto you; and that because we begin to have a new concernment therein, wherewith I shall afterward acquaint you. Of all the inventions of Satan to draw off the minds of men from the word of God, this of decrying the authority of the originals seems to me the most pernicious. At the beginning of the Reformation, before the Council of Trent, the Papists did but faintly,

<sup>16</sup> Gk. “second rank.” This is a reference to the Jewish “secondary” literature, or the inscribed oral tradition known as the Mishnah.

<sup>17</sup> “Mishna” in original, updated to modern spelling convention.

<sup>18</sup> Lat. “from your own mouth, O wicked servant” (an allusion to Luke 19:22).

and not without some blushing, defend their Vulgar Latin translation. Some openly preferred the original before it, as Cajetan,<sup>19</sup> Erasmus, Vives,<sup>20</sup> and others. Yea, and after the council also, the same was done by Andradius,<sup>21</sup> Ferrarius,<sup>22</sup> Arias Montanus,<sup>23</sup> Masius,<sup>24</sup> and others. For those who understood nothing but Latin among them, and scarcely that, whose ignorance was provided for in the Council, I suppose it will not be thought meet that in this case we should make any account of them. But the state of things is now altered in the world, and the iniquity, which first wrought in a mystery, being now discovered, casts off its vizard<sup>25</sup> and grows bold; *nihil est audacius istis deprensis*.<sup>26</sup> At first the design was managed in private writings, Melchior Canus,<sup>27</sup> Gulielmus

19 In the margin: Praef. In 5. Lib. Mos.—Owen. See “Praefatio Thomae de Vio Caietani Cardinalis S. Xysti, in Quinque Mosaicos Libros,” in Thomas Cajetan, *Opera omnia quotquot in sacrae Scripturae expositionem reperiuntur [tomus primus]* (Lyon: Iacobus et Petrus Prost, 1639). Thomas Cajetan (1469–1534) was an Italian Dominican Cardinal who is most famous for his highly influential commentary on Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*, and his polemical engagement with Martin Luther.

20 In the margin: In August. *De Civitis Dei* lib. 15. Cap. 13.—Owen. Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540) was a Spanish humanist who had a high regard for the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Owen is here referring to Juan Luis Vives’s edition of Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*, with Vives’s own commentary on Augustine’s text. See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* [ . . . ]; *insuper commentariis per undequo doctiss. virum Ioann. Lodovicum vivem illustrati et recogniti* (Basil: Frobenius, 1555), 830.

21 In the margin: *Defens. Conc. Trid.* lib. 4.—Owen. See Diogo de Paiva de Andrade, *Defensio Tridentinae fidei catholicae et integerrimae quinque libris compraehensa* (Lisbon: Antonius Riberius, 1578), 238r–295v. Diogo de Paiva de Andrade (1528–1575) was a Portuguese theologian most famous for his *Defensio Tridentinae fidei Catholicae* and his contributions to the Council of Trent.

22 In the margin: *Proleg. Biblica*.—Owen. See Nikolaus Serarius, *Prolegomena biblica, et commentaria in omnes epistolas canonicas* (Mainz: Balthasar Lippius, 1612). Nikolaus Serarius (1555–1609) was a French Jesuit biblical commentator who taught ethics, philosophy, and theology in Germany.

23 In the margin: *Praef. In Bibl. in Lat: & passim*.—Owen. See Arius Montanus, *Biblia sacra Hebraice, Chaldaice, Graece, et Latine* (Antwerp: Christoph. Plantinus, 1569–1572). Benedictus Arias Montanus (1527–1598), a Spanish Catholic priest and scholar, is particularly known for his work on the so-called Antwerp Polyglot Bible.

24 In the margin: *Praef. In Comment. In Josh.*—Owen. See Andreas Masius, *Iosuae imperatoris historia* (Antwerp: Christophorus Plantinus, 1574). Andreas Masius (1514–1573) was a Flemish Syriacist who was involved in the production of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible.

25 I.e., a mask.

26 Lat. “nothing is more audacious than those who have been caught in the act.” Owen is alluding to Juvenal’s *Satires* 6, lines 284–85. For the original Latin text and an English translation, see Juvenal, Persius, *Juvenal and Persius*, trans. Susanna Morton Braund, Loeb Classical Library 91 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 258–59.

27 In the margin: *Loc. Com. Lib. 1. Cap. 13.*—Owen. See Melchior Cano, *Opera: In duo volumina distributa* (Madrid: Raymundus Ruiz, 1791–1792), 1:116–30. Owen’s original has “lib. 1,” which

Lindanus,<sup>28</sup> Bellarminus,<sup>29</sup> Gregorius de Valentia,<sup>30</sup> Leo Castrius,<sup>31</sup> Huntlaeus,<sup>32</sup> Hanstelius [*sic*],<sup>33</sup> with innumerable others, some on one account, some on another, have pleaded that the originals were corrupted; some of them with more impudence than others. Leo Castrius, as Pineda observes, raves almost, wherever he falls on the mention of the Hebrew text. “But that author is,” says he, “barely in control of himself when he comes upon such Hebraisms; and although with good intention, nevertheless is carried away beyond the limits of truth and modesty either out of ignorance of certain things or from some more ardent desire; and if we were to appraise that man Leo only from the claws he has shown here, we would not judge him, even on the basis of his other outstanding efforts, to be a mouse, a fox, or a dog, or some other more worthless creature.”<sup>34</sup> Yea, Morinus, who seems to be ashamed of nothing, yet

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appears to be an error. Melchior Cano (1509–1560) was a Spanish Dominican most famous for his posthumously published *De locis theologicis*.

- 28 In the margin: *De opt. Gen. Interpr.* Lib.1.—Owen. See Willem van der Lindt, *De optimo Scripturas interpretandi genere libri iii* (Cologne: Maternus Cholinus, 1558), 15r–60r. Willem van der Lindt (1525–1588) was a Dutch Bishop and Catholic apologist.
- 29 In the margin: Lib. 2. *De verb. Dei.*—Owen. See Robert Bellarmine, *Opera omnia*, 6 vols. (Naples: Josephum Giuliano, 1856–1862), 1:61–95. Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) was an Italian Jesuit Cardinal and polemicist prominent for his contribution to the Counter-Reformation.
- 30 In the margin: Tom. 1. D. 5 Q. 3.—Owen. See Gregorio de Valentia, *Commentariorum theologicorum* (Lyon: Horatio Cardon, 1609), 1:1057–74. Gregorio de Valentia (1550–1603) was a Spanish Jesuit most famous for his *Commentariorum theologicorum* on Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*.
- 31 In the margin: *De Translat. Srae. Cum Comment. In Isa.*—Owen. See León de Castro, *Commentaria in Esaiaem prophetam, ex sacris Scripturis Graecis, et Latinis confecta* (Salamanca: Mathias Gastius, 1570). León de Castro (ca. 1505–1585) was a Spanish Professor of theology at Salamanca, famous for his polemical interaction with Arias Montanus’s use of the Hebrew and Chaldean text in the Antwerp Polyglot Bible.
- 32 In the footnote: *Epito. Controv. Contr.* 1. C. 8.—Owen. See James Gordon, *Controversiarum epitomes [tomus primus]* (Poitiers: Ex praelo Antonii Mesnerii, 1612), 19–25. James Gordon (1543–1620), referred to by Owen as Huntley the Jesuit, was a Scottish-born Jesuit scholar of Hebrew and theology, and also known as a zealous apologist for the Catholic cause.
- 33 In the margin: *Disputio Calum. Casaub.*—Owen. See Pierre Lanssel, “Brevis omnium qua notarum, qua calumniarum quae ab Isaaco Casaubono in Exercitationibus suis adversus Illustr. Cardin. Baronium Iustino Martyri inuruntur, disunctio,” in *Sancti Iustini philosophi et martiris opera* (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1636), 517–39. The published edition incorrectly reads “Hanstelius” in reference to Pierre Lanssel (1579–1632), who was a Jesuit priest, most famous for his edition of the works of Dionysius the Areopagite.
- 34 In the text: *Sed is est author [...] dum in huiusmodi Ebraizationes incidit, vix sui compos; & bono licet zelo, tamen vel ignoracione rerum quarundam, vel vehementiori aliqua affectione, extra fines veritatis & modestiae rapitur: & si ex huiusmodi tantum unguibus Leonem illum estimaremus, non etiam ex aliis praeclaris conatibus, aut murem aut vulpem censeremus, aut canem aut quiddam aliud ignobilis.*—Owen. Editor’s translation. In the footnote: *Pined. Lib. 5. De Reb. Solom. C. 4. S.1.*—Owen. See John de Pineda, *De rebus Salomonis Regis libri octo* (Mainz: Antonius Hieratus,

shrinks a little at this man's impudence and folly. "He wrote" says he, "six very long books, in which he seeks to demonstrate nothing other than the malicious and willful corruptions of the Jews; Castrius indeed wrote with holy zeal, but for such a great task as he has undertaken regarding the Hebrew text, he has been inadequately equipped."<sup>35</sup> In the steps of this Castrius walks Huntley, a subtle Jesuit, who in the treatise above cited,<sup>36</sup> ascribes the corruption of the Hebrew Bible to the good providence of God, for the honor of the Vulgar Latin. But these with their companions have had their mouths stopped by Reynolds,<sup>37</sup> Whitaker,<sup>38</sup> Junius,<sup>39</sup> Lubbertus,<sup>40</sup> Rivetus,<sup>41</sup> Chamierus,<sup>42</sup> Gerardus,<sup>43</sup> Amesius,<sup>44</sup>

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1613), 352. John de Pineda (1558–1637) was a Spanish Jesuit scholar. He was distinguished for his engagement with biblical textual criticism, among other areas.

35 In the text: *Apologetici libros [. . .] sex bene longos scripsit, quibus nihil quam Judaeorum voluntarias & malignas depravationes demonstrare nititur; zelo sanè pio scripsit Castrius, sed libris Hebraicis ad tantum opus quod moliebatur parum erat instructus.*—Owen. In the margin: *Morin. Exercit. De Sincerit. Exerc. 1. C. 2.*—Owen. Editor's translation. See Jean Morin, *Exercitationes biblicae de Hebraei Graecique textus sinceritate: Pars prior* (Paris: Antonius Vitray, 1633), 22. Jean Morin (1591–1659) was a French Catholic priest and scholar most famous for his work on the Samaritan Pentateuch in the Paris Polyglot Bible, and for advocating the theory that the Masoretic Text had been corrupted.

36 In the margin: *cap. 10. Lib. 1.*—Owen. Cf., e.g., *Divina providentia factum esse ut haberemus vulgatam editionem ex Hebraeo textu, ante quam ille depravaretur.* Editor's translation: "Divine providence has enabled us to have the Vulgate edition of the Hebrew text as it was before it was corrupted." See Gordon, *Controversiarum epitomes* 1:46; cf. 35–46.

37 John Rainolds (1549–1607) was an English Puritan scholar, well respected in his time as an advocate of English Protestantism against the Counter-Reformation. He is also particularly remembered for his key role in presenting the need for a new English Bible translation, which resulted in the King James Bible.

38 William Whitaker (1548–1595) was an Elizabethan Protestant scholar and Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, who was well known for his Reformed convictions and as an active opponent of Catholic doctrine.

39 Franciscus Junius, the elder (1545–1602), a student of John Calvin, was a widely influential theologian, pastor, and biblical scholar throughout Europe. His contributions to Reformed theology include work on the Belgic Confession, the Tremellius-Junius Bible translation, and his *De vera theologia*.

40 Sibbrand Lubbert (ca. 1555–1625) was a Dutch Reformed theologian, known for his polemical engagement with Hugo Grotius and Robert Bellarmine, and for his opposition to the Remonstrants and Socinians.

41 André Rivet (1572–1651) was a French Huguenot theologian, known for his opposition to Roman Catholicism and his contribution to the *Synopsis purioris theologiae*.

42 Daniel Chamier (1564–1621) was a French Huguenot theologian who established the Academy of Montpellier and was known for his polemical engagement with Roman Catholicism.

43 Johann Gerhard Sr. (1582–1637) was a German Lutheran theologian, famous for his opposition to Roman Catholicism and his *Loci theologici*.

44 William Ames (1576–1633) was an English Puritan clergyman and scholar, a student of William Perkins, and most famous for his polemical engagement with the Remonstrants as well as his *Medulla theologiae* (or *The Marrow of Theology*).

Glassius,<sup>45</sup> Alstedius,<sup>46</sup> Amama,<sup>47</sup> and others. So that a man would have thought this fire put to the house of God had been sufficiently quenched. But after all the endeavors hitherto used, in the days wherein we live, it breaks out in a greater flame; they now print the original itself and defame it; gathering up translations of all sorts, and setting them up in competition with it. When Ximenes put forth the Complutensian Bible,<sup>48</sup> Vatablus his,<sup>49</sup> and Arias Montanus those of the king of Spain, this cockatrice<sup>50</sup> was not hatched, whose fruit is now growing to a fiery flying serpent. It is now but saying the ancient Hebrew letters are changed from the Samaritan to the Chaldean; the points or vowels, and accents, are but lately invented, of no authority; without their guidance and direction nothing is certain in the knowledge of that tongue; all that we know of it comes from the translation of the LXX;<sup>51</sup> the Jews have corrupted the Old Testament; there are innumerable various lections both of the Old and New; there are other copies differing from those we now enjoy that are utterly lost. So that upon the matter there is nothing left unto men but to choose whether they will be Papists or atheists.

Here that most stupendous fabric that was ever raised by ink and paper, termed well by a learned man, “that most magnificent biblical work (which was ever brought to light since men have arisen),”<sup>52</sup> I mean the Parisian

45 Salomon Glass (1593–1656) was a German Hebraist and theologian. Inhabiting various chairs at universities throughout his career, his most famous work is his *Philologiae sacrae*, through which he made a significant contribution to contemporary biblical criticism.

46 Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638) was a German-born Reformed theologian, most famous as an encyclopedist, for his contributions to Ramist logic, and for his theological opposition to Socinianism.

47 Sixtinus Amama (1593–1629) was a Dutch Reformed scholar who promoted knowledge of the biblical languages as an essential skill for theology.

48 I.e., the so-called Complutensian Polyglot Bible (1587). This was the first of the major Polyglot Bibles of the early modern period, patronized by Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros and published by the Complutense University in the Spanish city Alcalá de Henares. See *Vetus Testamentum multiplici lingua nunc primo impressum*, (Alcalá de Henares: Arnao Guillén de Brocar, 1514–1517). Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros was a Spanish Cardinal and statesman, regent of Spain on two occasions, and most famous for his involvement in the Grand Inquisition, his promotion of the Crusades, and his patronage of the Complutensian Polyglot.

49 Francis Vatablus, or François Vatable (late 1400s–1547) was a French humanist and linguist with notable skill in Hebrew and Greek.

50 I.e., a basilisk, a winged mythical beast that had the power of destroying animals and plants by its gaze or breath.

51 I.e., the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament produced in the second and third centuries BC, and which is attributed in legend to seventy representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel, who independently were said to have produced an identical translation of the Hebrew Bible.

52 In the margin: *Edm. Castel. Praef. Ad Animad: Samar. In Bib. Poly.*—Owen. In the text: *Magnificentissimum illud (quod post homines natos in lucem prodiit unquam) opus biblicum.*—Owen.

Bibles,<sup>53</sup> is prefaced by a discourse of its erector, Michael Le Jay, wherein he denies the Hebrew text, prefers the Vulgar Latin<sup>54</sup> before it, and resolves that we are not left to the word for our rule, but to the Spirit that rules in their church:

Therefore, for certain and without any doubt, the Vulgate edition ought to be before us, as that which contains the true and authentic origin of Holy Scripture in the universal tongue of the Catholic Church; this always ought to be consulted whenever the teachings of the faith are to be recalled; [. . .] moreover, it is reasonable to conclude from this that the true and most certain originals of the Christian faith reside in the Spirit of the church, and are not to be attacked again by the hands of her enemies.

And certainly, whatever kind of holiness they pretend unto, they do not come to Holy Scripture with any piety or sincere veneration when they talk of it [Scripture] alone as the inescapable rule of salvation. Whether it be the chief enemies of the faith, or those less than well disposed toward the church, they have not resolved to search after the true Spirit of the Gospel when they consider the interpretation of contexts and the original sense of the holy books. They rush back with inordinate curiosity to the original autographs from which scarcely anything remains apart from certain things that are exceedingly obscure. That is to say, there is no more convenient way to stray from its [the Vulgate's] royal road, nor can they rest more pleasantly than in the theories of their private opinions, which they have typically determined to chase after as the only rule of their doctrine.

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Editor's translation. Owen is quoting here, with slight alteration, from Edmund Castell's introduction to the collection of variant lections drawn from the *Samaritan Pentateuch* in the *Appendix* to Walton's London Polyglot Bible. See "Praefatio, de animadversionum Samaritarum in totum pentateuchum," in Brian Walton, *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, 6 vols. (London: Thomas Roycroft, 1653–1657), vol. 6, chap. 4, p. 1. Edmund Castell (1606–1685) was an English scholar of Semitic languages, he assisted Brian Walton in the production of the London Polyglot Bible before going on to produce his life's work, the *Lexicon heptaglotton* of 1669, a landmark publication of significant length and scholarship.

<sup>53</sup> I.e., the so-called Paris Polyglot Bible (1645). This is the second to last of the major early modern polyglot Bibles, produced under the supervision of Guy-Michel Lejay. See *Biblia: 1. Hebraica, 2. Samaritana, 3. Chaldaica, 4. Graeca, 5. Syriaca, 6. Latina, 7. Arabica: Quibus textus originales totius scripturae sacrae, quorum pars in editione complutensi* (Paris: Antonius Vitray, 1645). Guy-Michel Lejay was an advocate at the French Parliament and is most famous for his patronage of the Paris Polyglot Bible.

<sup>54</sup> I.e., the Vulgate, Jerome's fourth-century Latin translation of the Bible, which was recognized as the authoritative Latin text by the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent.

Banish the blind fancy of their souls! The letter no longer abides in our instruction but the Spirit of the church; nor should anything be drawn from the sacred texts except what it [the church] desires to be communicated with us.<sup>55</sup>

So he, or Morinus in his name; and if this be indeed the true state of things, I suppose he will very hardly convince men of the least usefulness of this great work and undertaking. To usher those Bibles into the world, Morinus puts forth his *Exercitationes*,<sup>56</sup> entitled *Of the Sincerity of the Hebrew and Greek Texts*,<sup>57</sup> indeed to prove them corrupt and useless. He is now the man among them that undertakes to defend this cause: in whose writings whether there be more of Pyrgopolynices,<sup>58</sup> or Rabshakeh,<sup>59</sup> is uncertain. But dogs that bark

55 In the margin: *Mich. Le Jay Praefat. Ad opus Bibl.*—Owen. In the text: *pro certo igitur atque indubitato apud nos esse debet, vulgatam editionem, quae communi catholicae ecclesiae lingua circumfertur verum esse & genuinum sacrae Scripturae fontem; hanc consulendam ubiq., inde fidei dogmata repetenda; [ . . ] ex quo insuper consentaneum est, vera ac certissima fidei Christianae autographa in Spiritu ecclesiae residere, neque ab ejus hostium manibus repetenda. [ . . ]*

*Et certe quaecumque pietatis speciem praetexunt, non religione quapiam, aut sincera in Scripturam sacram veneratione aguntur, dum eam unicam, quasi ineluctabilem salutis regulam, usurpant, neque spiritus evangelici veritatem investigare decreverunt; dum ad autographa curiosius recurrentes, ex quibus, praeter perplexa quaedam vestigia, vix aliquid superest, vel capitales fidei hostes, vel eos qui ecclesiae minus faverint, de contextuum interpretatione [sic; original has integritate] ac germano sacrorum codicum sensu consulunt. Scilicet non alia est opportunior via a regio illius itinere secedendi, neque in privatarum opinionum placitis blandius possunt acquiescere [sic; original has conquiescere], quas velut unicas doctrinae suae regulas sectari plerumque consueverunt [sic; original has consueuerunt].*

*Apae caecam animorum libidinem, non jam in institutionem nostram subsistit litera, sed ecclesiae spiritus; neque e sacris codicibus hauriendum quidquam, nisi quod illa communicatum esse nobiscum voluerit.*—Owen. Editor's translation. Owen is quoting here, with slight alteration, from Guy-Michel Lejay's introduction to the so-called Paris Polyglot Bible, "Instituti operis ratio," in *Biblia* [Paris Polyglot], 1:\*11–12. More material alterations are noted. While the introduction is written under Lejay's name, Owen suspects it was actually written by Jean Morin, whose own translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch is published in the collection.

56 I.e., technical explorations of a matter in the form of a discourse.

57 See Morin, *Exercitationes pars prior*. This first edition contains the first part of the *Exercitationes*. The second part is only sketched in outline form at the end of this edition. The two parts were eventually published posthumously in 1660. See Jean Morin, *Exercitationum biblicarum de Hebraei Graecique textus sinceritate, libri duo* (Paris: Gasparus Meturas, 1660).

58 I.e., a soldier in a second-century BC Roman play who had an enormous ego and little intellect. For Owen to refer to this character is effectively to describe his target as a loud and proud fool with no real substance.

59 I.e., a title referring to a high official in the Assyrian army. The Rabshakeh was sent by Sennacherib to King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:17–37 (cf. Isa. 36:1–22). Owen may be referring to him here as a type of someone whose words are lofty and threatening but will ultimately amount to nothing.

loud, seldom bite deep; nor do I think many ages have produced a man of more confidence and less judgment; a prudent reader cannot but nauseate at all his leaves, and the man is well laid open by a learned person of his own party.<sup>60</sup> By the way, I cannot but observe, that in the height of his boasting, he falls upon his mother church, and embraces her to death,<sup>61</sup> that he might vaunt himself to be the first and only discoverer of corruptions in the original of the Old Testament, with the causes of them, he falls into a profound contemplation of the guidance of his church, which being ignorant of any such cause of rejecting the originals, as he has now informed her of, yet continued to reject them, and prefer the Vulgar Latin before them. “Here admire, reader,” says he, “the Spirit of God who is closely present to the church, leading it with unhindered foot through matters which are obscure, mysterious and impenetrable; although the wanton neglect of the Rabbis, the monstrous ignorance and filthy corruptions of the Jewish books were unknown, and although heretics were audaciously hurling their opposition to these in a great procession of words, even so, it was not possible for the church to be moved to print again according to the norm and rule of Hebrew text the version that alone had been used for almost eleven hundred years.”<sup>62</sup> But is it so indeed, that their church receives its guidance in a stupid, brutish manner, so as to be fixed obstinately on conclusions, without the least acquaintance with the premises? It seems she loved not the originals, but she knew not why; only she was obstinate in this, that she loved them not. If this be the state with their church, that when she has neither Scripture, nor tradition, nor reason, nor new revelation, she is guided she knows not how, as Socrates was by his demon,<sup>63</sup> or by secret and inexpressible species of pertinacity<sup>64</sup> and stubbornness falling upon her

60 In the margin: *Simeon de Muys. De sens. Sinc. Text. Heb.*—Owen. See Siméon Marotte de Muis, *Assertio hebraicae veritatis altera* (Paris: Ionannes Libert, 1634). Siméon Marotte de Muis (1587–1644) was a French Hebraist who objected to Morin’s preference for the Samaritan Pentateuch over the Masoretic Text and is best known for his defenses of the Hebrew text.

61 In the text: *Exercit. 1, cap. 1. Pag. 11.*—Owen. See Morin, *Exercitationes pars prior*, 11.

62 In the text: *Hic admirare lector [. . .] Dei Spiritum ecclesiae praesentissimum, illam per obscura, perplexa, & in via quaeque, inoffenso pede agentem: quanquam incognita esset Rabbiorum supina negligentia, portentosa ignorantia, foedaque librorum Judaicorum corruptela, & Haeretici contraria his magna verborum pompa audacter jactarent; adduci tamen non potuit ecclesia, ut versio, qua sola per mille fere & centum annos usa fuerit, ad normam & amussim Hebraei textus iterum recederetur.*—Owen. Editor’s translation. See Morin, *Exercitationes pars prior*, 11.

63 Socrates (ca. 470–399 BC) was a Greek philosopher whose words and life have, via his famous student Plato, exercised great influence on philosophical thought from his time to today. His “demon” is a reference to something intangible that prevented him from acting in ways that would be harmful to himself.

64 I.e., a resolute adherence to a particular opinion or intention.



imagination; I suppose it will be in vain to contend with her any longer. For my own part I must confess, that I shall as soon believe a poor deluded fanatical Quaker, pretending to be guided by an infallible Spirit, as their pope with his whole conclave of cardinals, upon the terms here laid down by Morinus.

But to let these men pass for a season; had this leprosy kept itself within that house which is thoroughly infected, it had been of less importance: it is but a farther preparation of it for the fire. But it is now broken forth among Protestants also; with what designs, to what end or purpose, I know not, θεός οἶδε,<sup>65</sup> God knows, and the day will manifest. To declare at large how this is come about, *longa esset historia*;<sup>66</sup> too long for me to dwell upon; some heads of things I shall briefly touch at. It is known to all, that the reformation of religion, and restoration of good learning were begun, and carried on at the same time, and mostly by the same persons. There was indeed a triumvirate among the Papists of men excellently skilled in rabbinical learning before the Reformation. Raymundus Martinus,<sup>67</sup> Porchetus de Sylvaticis,<sup>68</sup> and Petrus Galatinus,<sup>69</sup> are the men; of the which, the last dedicated his book to Maximilian the emperor,<sup>70</sup> after that Zuinglius<sup>71</sup> and Luther<sup>72</sup> had begun to preach.

65 Gk. "God knows." This is a classical tag found, for instance, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, sec. 266b. See Plato, *Lysis. Symposium. Phaedrus*, ed. and trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Loeb Classical Library 166 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 482–83.

66 Lat. "it would be a long story." This is a natural Latin phrase in the context and could be simply Owen's own comment. However, it may be a quotation from Petrarch, who uses this phrase on a couple of occasions, including in his *Epistolae de rebus familiaribus*, bk. 16, ep. 9. *Bibliotheca Oweniana* i.29.157 lists *Fr. Petrarcae Epistolae Familiares, Lugdb. 1601*, which Owen may therefore have had in his possession. For Latin text, see *Francisci Petrarcae epistolae de rebus familiaribus*, ed. Joseph Fracassetti, 3 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1859–1863), 2:392.

67 Raimund Martini (ca. 1220–1284) was Spanish Dominican polemicist who engaged in missionary activity to Jews and Muslims. He was highly competent in Eastern languages and Rabbinic writings and is best known for his anti-Jewish polemic *Pugio fidei*.

68 Porchetus de Salvaticis (d. 1315) was an Italian Carthusian polemicist, whose chief anti-Semitic publication, *Victoria Porcheti adversus impios Hebraeos* (Paris: G. Desplains, 1520), closely followed Martini's arguments in *Pugio fidei*.

69 Pietro Colonna Galatino (1460–1540) was an Italian theologian and anti-Semitic polemicist who had a thorough knowledge of biblical languages. Like Porchetus de Salvaticis, his main polemical work borrowed significantly from that of Raimund Martini, though with more adjustments of his own.

70 Pietro Colonna Galatino, *De arcanis Catholicae veritatis* (Basel: Ioannes Hervagius, 1561). Maximilian I (1459–1519) was the Holy Roman Emperor and member of the Habsburg family. He was a powerful political figure in Europe.

71 Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), formerly a priest and later a Zürich pastor, was responsible for leading the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland.

72 Martin Luther (1483–1546), formerly an Augustinian friar and priest, initiated the Protestant Reformation in Germany. His work has been of foundational significance for the Protestant movement as a whole.

Upon the matter these three are but one: great are the disputes whether Galatinus stole his book from Raymundus or Porchetus; says Morinus, and calls his work “a monstrous theft, nothing comparable to which has ever been done”:<sup>73</sup> from Raymundus, says Scaliger,<sup>74</sup> mistaking Raymundus Martinus for Raymundus Sebon; but giving the first tidings to the world of that book.<sup>75</sup> From Raymundus also, says Josephus de Voysin in his *Prolegomena* to the *Pugio fidei*,<sup>76</sup> and from him Hornbeck in his *Proleg. ad Jud.*<sup>77</sup> I shall not interpose in this matter, the method of Galatinus and his style are peculiar to him, but the coincidences of his quotations too many to be ascribed to common

73 In the text: *Plagium portentosum, cui vix simile unquam factum est: Exerc.* 1. Cap. 2.—Owen. Editor’s translation. See Morin, *Exercitationes pars prior*, 16.

74 In the text: Epist. 2.41 [*sic*: 241].—Owen.

75 Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609) was a French classicist and Protestant convert. He was skilled in numerous languages and is noted for his contribution to the study of chronology. Scaliger discovered the lost *Pugio fidei*, suggesting that it should be attributed to the later Catalan theologian “Raimund Sebon” (confusing him with the earlier Catalan Dominican divine Raimund Martini), and that Pietro Colonna Galatino plagiarized portions of this work in his own *De arcanis Catholicae veritatis* (1561). Here Owen appears to be referring to a letter by Scaliger to Richard Thomson, where he remarks, *Per plurima inepta, futilia & sublesta eiusmodi in illo opera sunt, alioquin in quibusdam utili, addo etiam necessario; sed quod non temere, nec sine delectu tractandum. Est epitome ingentis operis, cui nomen, Pugio fidei adversus Iudaeos, auctore Raimundo Sebon Dominicano [. . .]. Quare ingratus fuit Galatinus iste Franciscanus, qui ne semel quidem nomen Raimundi Sebon memoravit.* Editor’s translation: “There are a great many inept, pointless, and trifling comments of this kind in that work; otherwise it is in certain respects useful and, I would even add, necessary; but it needs to be handled with care and discrimination. It is an abridgement of that remarkable work called *Pugio fidei adversus Iudaeos*, by the Dominican author Raimund Sebon. Wherefore Galatino, that Franciscan, was ungrateful in that he did not once acknowledge the name of Raimund Sebon.” It is likely that Owen is citing from this edition of Scaliger’s letters, where it is numbered “241” (in bk. 3). See Joseph Scaliger, *Epistolae omnes quae reperiri potuerunt, nunc primum collectae ac editae* (Frankfurt: Aubriorius et Clemens Schleichius, 1628), 474.

76 Joseph de Voisin (1610–1685) was a French Hebraist most famous for his *Theologia Iudaeorum*. De Voisin contributed annotations to an edition of the *Pugio fidei*, which also attributes the work to Raimund Martini. Owen may be referring to comments in the *Prolegomena in pugionem fidei* (in this edition), which is attributed to Philippe Jacques de Maussac (Philippus Jacobus Maussacus). E.g., *Raymundum autem Martini verum auctorem. Eumque primum Iudaeos propriis armis confodisse. Galatinum vero quae habet bona, & utilia in Arcanis Catholicae veritatis, deinde ab ipso fuisse suffuratum.* Editor’s translation: “The true author, however, is Raimund Martini. And he was the first to have struck down the Jews with his own weapons. In truth, that which has value and usefulness in *De arcanis Catholicae veritatis*, Galatino afterward stole from him.” See Raimund Martini, *Pugio fidei [. . .] adversus Mauros, et Iudaeos* (Paris: Mathurin Henault).

77 Cf., Johannes Hoornbeeck, *Tešuvah Jehuda, sive, Pro convincendis, et convertendis Iudaeis* (Leiden: Petrus Leffen, 1655), 8–9. Johannes Hoornbeeck (1617–1666) was a Dutch Reformed theologian, a student of Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), and later professor of theology at Utrecht and Leiden.

accident. That Porchetus took his *Victoria adversus impios Judaeos* for the most part from Raymundus, himself confesses in his preface.<sup>78</sup> However certain it is, Galatinus had no small opinion of his own skill, and therefore, according to the usual way of men, who have attained, as they think, to some eminency in any one kind of learning, laying more weight upon it than it is able to bear, he boldly affirms, that the original of the Scripture is corrupted, and not to be restored but by the Talmud; in which one concession he more injures the cause he pleads for against the Jews, than he advantages it by all his books beside. Of his גלי רזייה of Rabbi Hakkadosh there is no more news as yet in the world, than what he is pleased to acquaint us withal.<sup>79</sup> At the same time Erasmus, Reuchlin,<sup>80</sup> Vives, Xantes Pagninus,<sup>81</sup> and others, moved effectually for the restoration of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. But the work principally prospered in the hands of the first Reformers, as they were all of them generally skilled in the Hebrew, so some of them as Capito,<sup>82</sup> Bibliander,<sup>83</sup> Fagius,<sup>84</sup> Munster<sup>85</sup> to that height and usefulness, that they may well be reckoned as the fathers and patriarchs of that learning. At that time lived Elias

78 See Porchetus de Salvaticis, *Victoria Porcheti adversus impios Hebraeos* (Paris: G. Desplains, 1520).

79 In his *De arcanis Catholicae veritatis*, Galatino refers to a Christian Kabbalistic apologetic text, גלי רזייה (“*Gale Razeya*,” as per Galatino’s Latin translation), which he alleges to be the work of Rabbi Hakkadosh or Judah Ha-Nasi (ca. AD 135–217), who is famous for compiling the Mishnah. The text does not actually exist and is likely to be a forgery, a charge which Galatino would emphatically deny. Owen, like others, is clearly doubtful of its authenticity, and in *Of the Integrity* remarks that it should be ignored. Cf. de Maussac’s remarks about it in the *Prolegomena* to de Voisin’s annotated edition of the *Pugio fidei: soli quoque Galatino valde familiarem; credendum est firmiter spurium eum esse, & supposititium nec a vero forte aberrabitur si ab eius inscriptione Arcana fuisse formata dicatur; Gale Razaija, namque revelans Arcana denotat*. Editor’s translation: “It is also intimately known to Galatino alone; [and] it should be firmly judged as spurious and a forgery. Nor would it be wandering far from the truth if it is said to have been inspired from the title of his *Arcana*, i.e., *Gale Razaija*, for it denotes the revealing of a secret.” See Martini, *Pugio fidei* [...] *adversus Mauros, et Iudaeos*, \*7.

80 Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522) was a German humanist and Hebraist who was a notable Catholic advocate for the authenticity of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

81 Santes Pagnino (1470–1541) was an Italian Dominican friar who was a leading philologist, notable for his translation of the Scriptures and his lexical work on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

82 Wolfgang Capito (1478–1541) was an early German Protestant Reformer who settled in Strasbourg.

83 Theodore Bibliander (1509–1564) was a Swiss Reformer and Professor of theology at Basel, most notable for his biblical exegesis and Hebrew grammars.

84 Paul Fagius (1504–1549) was a German Protestant Hebraist who taught Old Testament at Strasbourg and later at Cambridge.

85 Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), a student of Elias Levita, was a German Protestant Hebraist who published an influential edition of the Hebrew Bible with a Latin translation.

Levita,<sup>86</sup> the most learned of the Jews of that age, whose grammatical writings were of huge importance in the studying of that tongue. This man, as he was acquainted with many of the first reformers, so he lived particularly with Paulus Fagius, as I have elsewhere declared.<sup>87</sup> Now in one book, which in those days he published, called *Masoreth Hammasoreth*, he broached a new opinion, not much heard of, at least not at all received among the Jews, nor for aught that yet appears, once mentioned by Christians before, namely that the points or vowels, and accents used in the Hebrew Bible, were invented by some critical Jew or Masorete,<sup>88</sup> living at Tiberias about five or six hundred years after Christ:<sup>89</sup> no doubt the man's aim was to reduce the world of Christians to a dependence on the ancient Rabbins, for the whole sense of the Scripture; *Hinc prima mali labes*,<sup>90</sup> here lies the first breach in this matter. The fraud being not discovered, and this opinion being broached and confirmed by the great and almost only master of the language of that age, some even of the first Reformers embraced his fancy.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps Zuinglius had spoken to it before:

86 Elias Levita (1469–1549) was a famous German Jewish Hebraist. He is known for his commentary on the Masoretic annotations on the Hebrew Bible, the *Massoreth Ha-Massoreth* or, as Owen refers to it here, the *Masoreth Hammasoreth*. Levita had a particular influence on a number of early Protestants, including his student Sebastian Münster, who translated Levita's works into Latin. As Owen goes on to allude, Levita also spent 1540–1542 with Paul Fagius, overseeing the Hebrew printing press at Isny.

87 Owen appears to be referring to his remarks in *Of the Integrity*, chap. 5.

88 The Masorettes (ca. 500–ca. 1000) were a community of Jewish scholars dedicated to meticulously preserving and transmitting both the consonantal text of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Jewish oral tradition of vocalization. The Tiberian Masorettes (ca. 600 onward) were a prominent branch of this movement based in the city of Tiberias, next to the sea of Galilee.

89 A parallel Hebrew and English edition of this work was published in the nineteenth century: Elias Levita, *The Massoreth Ha-Massoreth of Elias Levita*, ed. Christian D. Ginsburg (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867).

90 Lat. "From this comes the first slide toward misfortune." Owen is quoting Virgil's *Aeneid*, bk. 2, line 97. For Latin text and an English translation, see Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1–6*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library 63 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 322–33.

91 As Richard Muller observes, early Reformers such as Luther and Calvin saw no difficulty in affirming the late origin of the vowel points, without mentioning Levita's commentary on the Massora, which was published in 1538. Once published, Levita's theory was quickly disseminated by early Protestant Hebraists like Münster, who was responsible for reprinting his commentary in Basel. One of the first suggestions of controversy over the origin of the points arose in a debate between Bishop John Jewel and the Catholic polemicist Thomas Harding (see his *Answer to M. Harding's Answer*, first published in 1565: John Jewel, *The Works*, 4 vols., ed. John Ayre [Cambridge: The University Press, 1845–1850], 2:678–79), who leveraged their late origin in service of arguing that "the vulgar people" should be prevented from reading Scripture. See Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 146–47.

justly I know not. After a while the poison of this error beginning to operate, the Papists waiting on the mouths of the Reformers, like the servants of Benhadad on Ahab,<sup>92</sup> to catch at every word that might fall from them to their advantage, began to make use of it. Hence Cochlaeus<sup>93</sup> applauds Luther, for saying the Jews had corrupted the Bible with points and distinctions, as well he might, for nothing could be spoken more to the advantage of his cause against him. Wherefore other learned men began to give opposition to this error; so did Munster, Junius, and others, as will be shown in the ensuing discourse. Thus this matter rested for a season. The study of the Hebrew tongue and learning being carried on, it fell at length on him, who undoubtedly has done more real service for the promotion of it, than any one man whatever, Jew or Christian. I mean Buxtorfius the elder;<sup>94</sup> his *Thesaurus grammaticus*,<sup>95</sup> his *Tiberias*, or *Commentarius Masorethicus*,<sup>96</sup> his Lexicons and Concordances,<sup>97</sup> and many other treatises, whereof some are not yet published,<sup>98</sup> evince this to all the world. Even Morinus says that he is the only man among Christians, that ever thoroughly understood the Masora; and Simeon de Muis acknowledges his profiting by him, and learning from him; other Jews who undertake to be teachers, know nothing but what they learn of him. To omit the testimony of all sorts of learned men, giving him the preeminence in this learning, it may suffice that his works praise him. Now this man in his *Tiberias* or

92 Owen is referring to the Syrian king Benhadad's war with the Israelite king Ahab (1 Kings 20) and may have in mind the way the servants of Benhadad sought to take advantage of Ahab's leniency by dressing in rough cloths and placing ropes on their heads.

93 In the text: *lib. De Auth. Scripturae, cap. 5.*—Owen. See Johannes Cochlaeus, *De canonicae Scripturae, et Catholicae Ecclesiae auctoritate* (Rome: D. Hieronymam de Cartulariis, 1543), 32r–v. Johann Cochlaeus (1479–1552) was a German humanist and anti-Lutheran polemicist.

94 Johann Buxtorf Sr. (1564–1629) was a notable German Protestant Hebraist who was famous for his posthumously published *Lexicon Chaldaicum, Talmadicum et rabbinicum* and his *Tiberius, sive Commentarius Masoreticus triplex*, which disputes Levita's late dating on the origin of the Hebrew vowel points in the Old Testament. Buxtorf Sr.'s legacy was continued by his son, Buxtorf Jr.

95 See Johann Buxtorf Sr., *Thesaurus grammaticus linguae sanctae Hebraeae: Duobus libris methodice propositus* (Basel: Conradus Waldkirchus, 1609).

96 See Johann Buxtorf Sr., *Tiberias, sive Commentarius Masorethicus triplex* (Basel: J. J. Deckeri, 1665); first published in 1620.

97 See Johann Buxtorf Sr., *Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum* (Basel: n.p., 1607); Buxtorf Sr., *Lexicon Chaldaicum, Talmudicum et rabbinicum* (Basel: Ludovicus König, 1639) (incomplete and edited by his son, Buxtorf Jr.); Buxtorf Sr., *Concordantiae Bibliorum Hebraicae* (Basel: Ludovicus König, 1632) (also incomplete and edited by his son, Buxtorf Jr.).

98 In *Of the Integrity*, Owen makes reference to Buxtorf Jr.'s note concerning his father's forthcoming treatise, *Babylonia, sive Commentarius criticus in universum Targum, sive paraphrasin bibliorum Chaldaicum* (Universitätsbibliothek Basel, ms F IX 41), which was never published but used by Brian Walton in his comments on the Targums in the London Polyglot Bible.

*Commentarius Masorethicus*,<sup>99</sup> printed with the great Rabbinical Bible of his own correct setting forth at Basil, *anno* 1620,<sup>100</sup> considers at large this whole matter of the points, and discovers the vanity of Elias' pretension about the Tiberian Masorettes. But we must not it seems rest here: within a few years after, to make way for another design, which then he had conceived; Ludovicus Cappellus published a discourse in the defense of the opinion of Elias (at least so far as concerned the rise of the punctuation), under the title of *Arcanum punctationis revelatum*. The book was published by Erpenius without the name of the author.<sup>101</sup> But the person was sufficiently known; and Rivetus not long after took notice of him, and says he was his friend, but concealed his name.<sup>102</sup> This new attempt immediately pleases some. Among others, our learned professor Dr. Prideaux reads a public lecture on the vespers of our Comitia on that subject; wherein though he prefaces his discourse with an observation of the advantage the Papists make of that opinion of the novelty of the points, and the danger of it, yet upon the matter he falls in wholly with Cappellus, though he names him not.<sup>103</sup> Among the large encomiums<sup>104</sup> of himself, and his work, printed by Cappellus in the close of his *Critica sacra*, there are two letters from one Mr. Eyre here in England, in one whereof he tells him, that without doubt the Doctor read on that subject by the help of

99 See Buxtorf Sr., *Tiberias*.

100 Buxtorf Sr.'s Rabbinical Bible actually appeared two years prior to his *Tiberias*, in 1618. See Johann Buxtorf Sr., *Biblia sacra Hebraica et Chaldaica* (Basel: Ludovicus König, 1618).

101 Louis Cappel [s.n.], *Sôd han-niqqûd han-nigle, hoc est arcanum punctationis revelatum* [...] edita a Thoma Erpenio (Leiden: Johannes Maire, 1624). Louis Cappel (1585–1658) was a Huguenot and Hebraist at the Academy of Saumur, most controversial for his late dating of Hebrew vowel points and his *Critica sacra*, which promoted the practice of critical emendation of the Hebrew text, among other things.

102 In the text: *Isag. Ad Scr. 1. Cap. 8.*—Owen. See André Rivet, *Isagoge, seu introductio generalis, ad Scripturam sacram Veteris et Novi Testamenti* (Leiden: I. Commelinus, 1627), 103–4.

103 See “De Punctorum Hebraicorum origine: In Vesperis Comitiorum habita Oxon” (Lectio XII), in John Prideaux, *Opera theologica* (Zurich: Davidis Gesseneri, 1672), 160–76. John Prideaux (1578–1650) was vice-chancellor of Oxford (on several occasions, in fact, prior to Owen), Regius Professor of Divinity, and later bishop of Worcester. Note, for instance, Prideaux's caveat against Bellarmine's agenda in advocating the novelty of the points: *Quicquid sit, ferendum non est, ut Jesuitae insultent nostris litigiis, aut urgeant tandem aliquid, quo deprimaturs fons Hebraicus infra Tridentinam vulgaris Editionis authentiam; aut Papae autoritas tam in corruptis versionibus, quam in Sanctis suis canonizandis postliminio aliquid obtineat*. Editor's translation: “Whatever the case, the Jesuit exploitation of our dispute is not to be tolerated, whether it is in pressing upon us anything by which the original Hebrew might be suppressed beneath the Tridentine authenticity of the Vulgate edition, or that the authority of the pope should gain the right of judgment as much in this matter of allegedly corrupt versions as it has in canonizing their saints.” See Prideaux, *Opera theologica*, 162.

104 I.e., expressions of praise.

his book; as indeed he uses his arguments, and quotes his treatise, under the name of *Sud Hanisebhoth Hanaegalah* [*sic*].<sup>105</sup> But that (I say) which seems to me most admirable in the Doctor's discourse is, that whereas he had prefaced it with the weight of the controversy he had in hand, by the advantage the Papists make of the opinion of the novelty of the points, citing their words to that purpose, himself in the body of his *Exercitations* falls in with them, and speaks the very things which he seemed before to have blamed. And by this means this opinion tending so greatly to the disparagement of the authority of the originals, is crept in among Protestants also. Of the stop put unto its progress by the full and learned answer of Buxtorfius the younger (who alone in this learning, in this age, seems to answer his father's worth) unto Cappelus, in his discourse *De origine et antiquitate punctorum*,<sup>106</sup> I shall speak more afterward. However it is not amiss fallen out that the masters of this new persuasion are not at all agreed among themselves. Cappelus would have it easy to understand the Hebrew text, and every word, though not absolutely by itself, yet as it lies in its contexture, though there were no points at all. Morinus would make the language altogether unintelligible on that account; the one says, that the points are a late invention of the Rabbins, and the other, that without them, the understanding of the Hebrew is ἐκ τῶν ἀδυνάτων,<sup>107</sup> yet though they look diverse ways, there is a firebrand between them. But we have this brand brought yet nearer to the church's bread-corn, in the *Prolegomena* to the *Biblia polyglotta*, lately printed at London.<sup>108</sup> The solemn

<sup>105</sup> Cappel refers to and quotes several letters to him from the English Protestant divine William Eyre (1612–1670). Eyre clearly believes that Cappel is the author of the “Diatribē” edited by Erpenius, which he identifies by the title סוד הניקוד הנגלה (incorrectly transliterated here as *Sud Hanisebhoth Hanaegalah*). In the second letter (dated 1635), Eyre refers to Prideaux's dependence on Cappel's Diatribe. See Louis Cappel, *Critica sacra, sive De variis quae in sacris Veteris Testamenti libris occurrunt lectionibus* (Paris: S&G Cramoisy, 1650), 630; cf. 29–32.

<sup>106</sup> See Johann Buxtorf Jr., *Tractatus de punctorum vocalium et accentum, in libris Veteris Testamenti Hebraicis, origine, antiquitate, et auctoritate* (Basel: L. König, 1648). Johann Buxtorf Jr. (1599–1664) was a Protestant Hebraist and son of Johann Buxtorf Sr. He was involved in the eventual publication of his father's *Concordantiae Bibliorum Hebraicae* and *Lexicon Chaldaicum, Talmudicum et Rabbinicum*. He is well known for his polemical engagement with Louis Cappel over the origin of the Hebrew vowel points, arguing with his father for an early dating that traces their origin to the great synagogue called by Ezra (the so-called Men of the Great Assembly) in the period from around 516 to 332 BC.

<sup>107</sup> Gk. “one of those things that is impossible.”

<sup>108</sup> The *Prolegomena* to the so-called London Polyglot Bible (1657), edited by Brian Walton. See Walton, *Biblia sacra polyglotta*. The London Polyglot Bible is the last and greatest of the early modern polyglot Bibles that remained a landmark in biblical criticism for several centuries. It is Owen's receipt of Walton's *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* that is the occasion of his *Of the Integrity*. In *Of the Integrity*, Owen does not question the immense learning and contribution of

espousal of this opinion of the Hebrew punctuation, in that great work, was one chief occasion of the second discourse,<sup>109</sup> as you will find it at large declared in the entrance of it. I dare not mention the desperate consequences that attend this imagination, being affrighted among other things, by a little treatise lately sent me (upon the occasion of a discourse on this subject) by my worthy and learned friend Dr. Ward, entitled *Fides divina*, wherein its author, whoever he be, from some principles of this nature, and unwary expressions of some learned men among us, labors to eject and cast out as useless the whole Scripture or word of God.<sup>110</sup> I should have immediately returned an answer to that pestilent discourse, but that upon consideration, I found all his objections obviated or answered in the ensuing treatises, which were then wholly finished. And this, as I said, was the first way whereby the poison of undervaluing the originals crept in among Protestants themselves.

Now together with the knowledge of the tongues, the use of that knowledge in critical observations, did also increase. The excellent use of this study and employment, with the fruits of it in the explanation of sundry difficulties, with many other advantages, cannot be easily expressed. But as the best things are apt to be most abused, so in particular it has fallen out with this kind of learning and study. Protestants here also have chiefly managed the business. Beza,<sup>111</sup> Camerarius,<sup>112</sup> Scaliger, Casaubon,<sup>113</sup> Drusius,<sup>114</sup> Gomarus,<sup>115</sup>

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this publication but is chiefly concerned with its advocacy for a late dating of the Hebrew vowel points, and its promotion of a modest critical emendation of the Hebrew text in light of other ancient editions. The *Prolegomena* to the London Polyglot Bible is published in vol. 1 of the collection, and was subsequently published separately in numerous editions (cf. the nineteenth-century edition, Brian Walton, *In Biblia polyglotta prolegomena*, 2 vols. [Cambridge: J. Smith, 1827–1828]). The *Appendix* is a collection of variant readings and is published in vol. 6.

<sup>109</sup> *Of the Integrity*.

<sup>110</sup> Owen is referring to Seth Ward (1617–1689), the Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford and later bishop of Exeter, then Salisbury. The anonymous treatise he mentions here is *Fides divina: The Ground of True Faith Asserted* (London: n.p., 1657). Some of the names associated with these “unwary expressions” include John Goodwin, Daniel Featley, and Richard Baxter.

<sup>111</sup> Theodore Beza (1519–1605) was a French Reformed theologian who famously succeeded John Calvin in Geneva.

<sup>112</sup> Joachim Camerarius (1500–1574) was a German Lutheran and classicist who was involved in seeking reconciliation between Protestant and Catholics.

<sup>113</sup> Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) was a Huguenot classicist and philologist who was consulted during the production of the translation for the King James Version of the Bible.

<sup>114</sup> Johannes van den Driesche (1550–1616) was a Flemish Protestant Hebraist who taught in Oxford, Leiden, and Franeker. Many of his exegetical contributions were included in the famous compilation of Latin biblical commentaries, *Critici sacri, sive Doctissimorum vivorum in ss. Biblia annotationes et tractatus*.

<sup>115</sup> Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641) was a Dutch Reformed theologian, famous for his polemical engagement with Jacobus Arminius and his contribution to the Synod of Dort. His last position was professor of Hebrew at Groningen.



Ussher,<sup>116</sup> Grotius,<sup>117</sup> Heinsius,<sup>118</sup> Fuller,<sup>119</sup> Dieu,<sup>120</sup> Mede,<sup>121</sup> Cameron,<sup>122</sup> Glassius, Cappellus, Amama, with innumerable others, have excelled in this kind. But the mind of man being exceedingly vainglorious,<sup>123</sup> curious, uncertain, after a door to reputation and renown, by this kind of learning was opened in the world, it quickly spread itself over all bounds and limits of sobriety. The manifold inconveniences, if not mischiefs, that have ensued on the boldness and curiosity of some in criticizing the Scripture, I shall not now insist upon; and what it might yet grow unto, I have often heard the great Ussher, expressing his fear. Of the success of Grotius in this way we have a solid account weekly in the lectures of our learned professor, which I hope, he will in due time benefit the public withal. But it is only one or two things that my present design calls upon me to remark.

Among other ways that sundry men have fixed on to exercise their critical abilities, one has been the collecting of various lections both in the Old Testament and New. The first and most honest course fixed on to this purpose, was that of consulting various copies, and comparing them among themselves; wherein yet there were sundry miscarriages, as I shall show in the second treatise. This was the work of Erasmus, Stephen,<sup>124</sup> Beza, Arias Montanus, and some others; some that came after them finding this province possessed, and no other world of the like nature remaining for them to conquer, fixed upon another way,

116 James Ussher (1581–1656) is most famous for his position as Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, but aside from his theological contributions, he was a well-known chronologist, and he also sought to defend the veracity of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

117 Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) was a Dutch statesman, lawyer, and humanist who wrote most influentially on natural law. His other works include his *Annotationes in Vetus Testamentum* (included in the *Appendix* of the London Polyglot Bible) and his defense of the satisfaction of Christ against Faustus Socinus.

118 Daniël Heinsius (1580–1655) was a Dutch classicist and one-time professor of Greek at Leiden.

119 Nicholas Fuller (ca. 1557–1626) was an English Hebraist and philologist most noted for his *Miscellaneorum theologicorum*.

120 Lodewijk de Dieu (1590–1642) was a Dutch Hebraist, biblical exegete, and chronologist who was governor of Walloon College, Leiden.

121 Joseph Mede (1586–1638) was an English Hebraist and biblical exegete, and was a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge.

122 John Cameron (ca. 1579–1625) was a Scottish theologian most famous for his association with the Academy of Saumur and is known for his biblical annotations published as *Myrothecium evangelicum, hoc est, Novi Testamenti loca quamplurima ab eo*.

123 I.e., boastful of one's accomplishments.

124 Robert Estienne (1503–1559), also known as Robertus Stephanus, was a French Protestant classicist and printer who produced editions of the Greek New Testament, including the Textus Receptus (1550), the Vulgate and Erasmus's Latin translation of the New Testament, Pagninus's translation of the Old Testament, and Beza's Latin translation of the New Testament.

substituting to the service of their design, as pernicious a principle, as ever I think was fixed on by any learned man since the foundation of the church of Christ, excepting only those of Rome. Now this principle is that upon many grounds, which some of them are long in recounting: there are sundry corruptions crept into the originals, which by their critical faculty, with the use of sundry engines, those especially of the old translations, are to be discovered and removed. And this also receives countenance from those *Prolegomena* to the *Biblia polyglotta*, as will afterward be shown and discussed. Now this principle being once fixed, and a liberty of criticizing on the Scripture, yea a necessity of it thence evinced, it is inconceivable what springs of corrections and amendments rise up under their hands. Let me not be thought tedious if I recount some of them to you.

1. It is known that there is a double consonancy in the Hebrew consonants among themselves; of some in figure that are unlike in sound, of some in sound that are unlike in figure, of the first sort are ב and כ, נ and ג, י and ו, ו and ז, ז and י, ד and ר, מ and ס,<sup>125</sup> מ and ט, ה and ח, ח and ת, ע and צ; of the latter are כ and ק, א and ע, ס and ש, ו and ב, צ and ז. Now this is one principle of our new critics, that the scribes of the Bible were sometimes mistaken by the likeness of the letters, in respect of figure, sometimes by their likeness in respect of sound; and so remembering the words they wrote, oftentimes put one for another; so that whether they used their eyes, or their memories, they failed on one hand or another; though the Jews deny any copy among them to be written but exactly by pattern, or that it is lawful for a man to write one word in a copy, but by pattern, though he could remember the words of the whole Bible: now whereas the signification of every word is regulated by its radix, it often falls out, that in the formation and inflection of words, by reason of letters that are defective, there remains but one letter of the radix in them, at least that is pronounced: how frequent this is in this tongue, those who have very little skill in it, may guess by only taking a view of Frobenius [in] his Bible, wherein the radical letters are printed in a distinct character, from all the prefixes and affixes in their variations. Now if a man has a mind to criticize and mend the Bible, it is but taking his word, or words, that he will fix upon, and try what they will make by the commutation of the letters that are alike in figure and sound. Let him try what ב will do in the place of כ or on the contrary; which as they are radical, or as they are prefixed, will sufficiently alter the sense; and so of all the rest mentioned. If by this means any new sense that is tolerable, and pleases the critic, does emerge, it is but saying the scribe was mistaken in the likeness of the letters, or in the affinity

<sup>125</sup> The correct Hebrew is “ס and ח.” As per Goold.

of the sound, and then it is no matter, though all the copies in the world agree to the contrary, without the least variation. It is evident that this course has stood Cappellus and Grotius in very good stead. And Simeon de Muis tells us a pretty story of himself to this purpose.<sup>126</sup> Yea this is the most eminent spring of the criticisms on the Old Testament, that these times afford: a thousand instances might be given to this purpose.

2. But in case this course fail, and no relief be afforded this way, then the transposition of letters offers its assistance; those who know anything of this language, know what alteration in the sense of words may be made by such a way of procedure, frequently words of contrary senses, directly opposite consist only of the same letters diversely placed. Every lexicon will supply men with instances, that need not to be here repeated.

3. The points are taken into consideration; and here bold men may even satisfy their curiosity. That word, or those three letters דבר are instanced by Jerome to this purpose:<sup>127</sup> as it may be pointed it will afford eight several senses דְּבַר is *verbum*<sup>128</sup> and דְּבַר is *pestis*<sup>129</sup> as far distant from one another as life and death; those letters in that order may be read with דְּ . . and דְּ . . and דְּ . . and דְּ . . and דְּ . . , the Jews give instances how by this means, men may destroy the world.<sup>130</sup> But

4. Suppose that this ground proves barren also, it is but going to an old translation, the LXX, or Vulgar Latin, and where any word likes us, to consider

126 In the text: *de Heb. Edit. Antiq. & Verit.* S. S.—Owen. Owen is likely referring to the first of the three polemical treatises de Muis composed against Jean Morin. While originally published separately, the three treatises are published under the title *Triplex assertio Hebraicae veritatis adversus exercitationes Ionnis Morini*, in de Muis, *Assertio*, tome II, 129–258.

127 In the text: Hom. 9. 12.—Owen. It is difficult to know precisely what Owen is citing here, although Jerome's comments to this effect may be found, for instance, in his commentary on Hab. 3:5: "What we translated as *death*, in Hebrew three letters are recorded: *dalet* [ד], *bet* [ב], *resh* [ר] with no vowels. If these are read as *dabar* [דְּבַר], they mean 'word' (*verbum*). If they are read as *deber* [דְּבַר], they mean 'plague' [*pestem*]." See Jerome, *Commentaries on the Twelve Prophets*, 2 vols., ed. Thomas P. Scheck, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 1:222. For Latin text, see Jerome, *Commentarii in Prophetas Minores*, ed. Sincero Mantelli, Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina 76–76a (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2018), 65. Jerome (347–420) was a Latin priest, biblical scholar, and historian. Aside from his biblical commentaries, he is known best for his translation of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate) from the original Greek and Hebrew, which was used as the main translation in the West for the subsequent millennium. In the sixteenth century, the Vulgate became the official authoritative translation for the Catholic Church.

128 Lat. "word."

129 Lat. "plague."

130 Owen's point here is that some arrangements of Hebrew consonants, such as דבר, have a wide semantic range, depending on the vowels.

what Hebrew word answers unto it, and if it discover an agreement in any one letter, in figure or sound, with the word in that text, then to say that so they read in that copy; yea rather than fail, be the word as far different from what is read in the Bible as can be imagined, aver it to yield the more convenient sense, and a various lection is found out.

And these are the chief heads and springs of the criticisms on the Old Testament, which with so great a reputation of learning men have boldly obtruded<sup>131</sup> on us of late days. It is not imaginable what prejudice the sacred truth of the Scripture, preserved by the infinite love and care of God, has already suffered hereby, and what it may further suffer, for my part, I cannot but tremble to think. Lay but these two principles together, namely that the points are a late invention of some Judaical Rabbins (on which account there is no reason in the world that we should be bound unto them) and that it is lawful to gather various lections by the help of translations, where there are no diversities in our present copies, which are owned in the *Prolegomena* to the *Biblia polyglotta*, and for my part I must needs cry out  $\delta\delta\varsigma \pi\omicron\upsilon \sigma\tau\tilde{\omega}$ ,<sup>132</sup> as not seeing any means of being delivered from utter uncertainty in and about all sacred truth. Those who have more wisdom and learning, and are able to look through all the digladiations<sup>133</sup> that are likely to ensue on these principles, I hope will rather take pains to instruct me, and such as I am, then be angry or offended with us, that we are not so wise or learned as themselves. In the meantime I desire those who are shaken in mind by any of the specious pretenses of Cappellus and others, to consider the specimen, given us, of reconciling the difficulties, that they lay as the ground of their conjectures in the miscellany notes, or exercitations of the learned Mr. Pococke;<sup>134</sup> as useful and learned a work as is extant in that kind, in so few sheets of paper. The dangerous and causeless attempts of men, to rectify our present copies of the Bible, the reader may there also find discovered and confuted.

<sup>131</sup> I.e., imposed unwelcomely.

<sup>132</sup> Gk. "give [me] a place to stand." This is a quotation of the saying attributed to Archimedes: "Give me a place to stand and with a lever I will move the whole world." The words Owen gives can be found in Pappus of Alexandria, *Synagoge*, bk. 8, sec. 19. For the Greek text, see *Pappi Alexandrini collectio*, vol. 3, ed. Fridericus Hultsch (Berolini: apud Weidmannos, 1878), 1060.

<sup>133</sup> I.e., violent combats.

<sup>134</sup> "Appendix Notarum Miscellanea," in Maimonides, *Porta Mosis, sive, Dissertationes aliquot a R. Mose Maimonide, suis in varias Mishnaioth*, ed. Edward Pococke (Oxford: H. Hall, 1655). Edward Pococke (1604–1691) was an English biblical scholar and orientalist who specialized in Arabic texts. He was a friend of Owen's.

But we have not as yet done; there is a new invention of Cappellus, greatly applauded among the men of these opinions. He tells us: "It is clear that all knowledge of the Hebrew language in the world today is ultimately to be preserved by and to be attributed to the Greek translation of the Holy Bible of the LXX."<sup>135</sup> This is greedily taken up by Morinus (as nothing could be spoken more to his purpose), who also tells us, that the learned prefacer to these *Biblia polyglotta* is of the same judgment.<sup>136</sup> Hereupon he informs us, that in the translation of the Pentateuch he went for the meaning of sundry words unto Jerome, and the translation of the LXX. But it is not unknown to these learned persons, that Jerome, whom one of them makes his rule; tells us over and over, that notwithstanding the translation of the LXX he had his knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, from the Hebrew itself; and the help of such Hebrews as he hired to his assistance. And [as] for Cappellus, is not that the Helena for which he contends, and upon the matter the only foundation of his sacred work of criticizing on the Scripture, that there was a succession of learned men of the Jews at Tiberias until a hundred years after Jerome, who invented the points of the Hebrew Bible, and that not in an arbitrary manner, but according to the tradition they had received from them who spoke that language in its purity? Shall these men be thought to have had the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue from the translation of the LXX; certainly they would not then have hated it so, as he informs us they did. But this thing is plainly ridiculous. The language gives us the knowledge of itself. Considering the helps that by providence have been in all ages, and at all times afforded thereunto, ever since the time wherein Cappellus says, some knew it so well, as to invent and affix the present punctuation, there has been a succession of living or dead masters to further the knowledge of it. And this will not seem strange to them who have given us exact translations of the Persian, and Ethiopic

<sup>135</sup> In the text: lib. 6. c. 10. *Crit. Sacr: Planum est omnem quae hodie est in terrarum orbe linguae Hebraicae cognitionem servandam [sic: revocandum in original] tandem esse & ascribendam Graecae τῶν LXX. Sacrorum Bibliorum translationi.*—Owen. Editor's translation. See Cappel, *Critica sacra*, 432.

<sup>136</sup> In the text: Morin: *Praefat: ad opusc. Haebr: Samarit.*—Owen. Morin quotes Cappel's statement above, then adds, *Quam eius sententiam amplectitur & laudat Brianus Walton istarum quoque rerum peritissimus in erudita Praefatione προδρόμῳ ad editionem Bibliorum πολλαπλῶν, quae Londini magno cum variarum Linguarum apparatu continenter, & festinanter admodum cuduntur.* Editor's translation: "Brian Walton, who is also most expert in these matters, embraces and praises his opinion in the erudite prolegomenous introduction to the polyglot edition of the Bible, which is very speedily being published in London, bound replete with the apparatus of various languages." See "Praefatio" in Jean Morin, *Opuscula Hebraeo-Samaritica* (Paris: Gaspardus Metras, 1657), \*7–8.

pieces of Scripture. In the ἅπαξ λεγόμενα<sup>137</sup> we are a little assisted by the LXX. The chiefest seeming help unto this tongue is from the Arabic. ¶<sup>138</sup>

And thus have I given you a brief account how, by the subtlety of Satan, there are principles crept in, even among Protestants, undermining the authority of the “Hebrew verity,” as it was called of old; wherein Jerusalem has justified Samaria, and cleared the Papists in their reproaching of the word of God. Of the New Testament I shall speak particularly in the second discourse ensuing. Morinus indeed tells us,<sup>139</sup> it is a jocular thing that the heretics in their disputations do grant, that there are corruptions, and various lections in the Greek and Latin copies of the Scripture, but deny it as to the Hebrew: but why, I pray, is this so ridiculous? It is founded on no less stable bottom than this experience, that whereas we evidently find various lections in the Greek copies which we enjoy, and so grant that which ocular inspection evinces to be true; yet although men discover such virulent and bitter spirits against the Hebrew text, as this Morinus does, calling all men fools or knaves that contend for its purity, yet they are none of them able to show out of any copies yet extant in the world, or that they can make appear ever to have been extant, that ever there were any such various lections in the originals of the Old Testament. And is there any reason that we should be esteemed ridiculous, because believing our own eyes, we will not also believe the testimony of some few men of no credit with us, asserting that for truth, which we have abundant cause to believe to be utterly false; but of these men so far.

I thought at the entrance of my discourse to have also insisted on some other ways, whereby Satan in these days assaults the sacred truth of the word of God in its authority, purity, integrity, or perfection; especially in the poor, deluded, fanatical souls among us, commonly called Quakers. For the instruction of the younger sort, against whose abominations I have subjoined the theses in the close of the other treatises. But I am sensible how far I have already exceeded the bounds of a preface unto so small treatises as these ensuing; and therefore giving a brief account of my undertaking in this cause of God and his word, for the vindication of the authority and integrity of it, I shall put a close to this discourse.

It may be some of you have heard me professing my unwillingness to appear any more in the world this way. I have not in some things met with such

<sup>137</sup> Gk. “once said”; i.e., words only appearing once.

<sup>138</sup> The ¶ symbol indicates that a paragraph break has been added to Owen’s original text.

<sup>139</sup> In the text: *de Heb: & Graec: Tex: Sincerit. Exercitat: 1. cap: 1. p. 5.*—Owen. See Morin, *Exercitationes pars prior*, 5.

pleasing entertainment, as to encourage me unto it: where I have been for peace, others have made themselves ready for war. Some of them, especially one<sup>140</sup> of late, neither understanding me, nor the things that he writes about, but his mind for opposition was to be satisfied. This is the manner of not a few in their writings; they measure other men by their own ignorance, and what they know not themselves, they think is hid to others also; hence when any thing presents itself new to their minds; as though they were the first that knew, what they then first know, and which they have only an obscure glimpse of, they rest not until they have published it to their praise. Such are the discourses of that person, partly trivial, partly obviated and rendered utterly useless to his purpose by that treatise, which he ventured weakly to oppose. I wish I could prevail with those, whose interest compels them to choose rather to be ignorant, than to be taught by me, to let my books alone. Another<sup>141</sup> after two or three years' consideration, in answer to a book of near a hundred and forty sheets of paper, returns a scoffing reply to so much of it, as was written in a quarter of an hour. I am therefore still minded to abstain from such engagements. And I think I may say if there were less writing by some, there would be more reading by others, at least to more purpose. Many books full of profound learning lie neglected, while men spend their time on trifles; and many things of great worth are suppressed by their authors, while things of no value are poured out, one on the neck of another. One of yourselves<sup>142</sup> I have often solicited for the publishing of some divinity lectures read at solemn times in the university, which, if I know ought, are, to say no more, worthy of public view. I yet hope a short time will answer my desire and expectation. Of my present undertaking there are three parts. The first is a subject that having preached on, I was by many urged to publish my thoughts upon it, judging it might be useful: I have answered their requests;

<sup>140</sup> The original margin note has initials "M.G.F." referring to Giles Firmin (1614–1697), who, as Goold observes, replied to Owen's treatise *Of Schism: The True Nature of it Discovered and Considered with Reference to the Present Differences in Religion* (1657), with his own *Of Schism, Parochial Congregations, and Ordination by Imposition of Hands; Wherein Dr Owen's Discovery of the True Nature of Schism Is Briefly and Friendly Examined* (1658). Firmin was an advocate of a reformed form of episcopacy, and with Richard Baxter was an opponent of Independents like Owen, regarding them as schismatic.

<sup>141</sup> The original margin note has "Mr. I.G.," referring to John Goodwin, who responded to Owen's treatise, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance Explained and Confirmed* (1654). John Goodwin (1594–1665) was a Nonconformist with Arminian sympathies whose views Owen sought to refute extensively in his *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance*.

<sup>142</sup> In the margin: Dr Henry Wilkinson, Public Reader of Divinity in the University.—Owen. Wilkinson (1616–1690) was principal of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and professor of moral philosophy, and was later ejected from his post as a Nonconformist.

what I have performed through the grace of Christ in the work undertaken, is left to the judgment of the godly learned reader. The second concerns the *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* to the late *Biblia polyglotta*; of this I said often, “I would rather this had been done by anyone other than by me; even so, by me is better than by no one.”<sup>143</sup> The reasons of my engaging in that work are declared at large in the entrance of it. The theses in the close were drawn in by their affinity in subject to the other discourses, and to complete the doctrine of the Scripture concerning the Scripture, I endeavored to comprise in them the whole truth about the word of God, as to name and thing opposed by the poor fanatical Quakers, as also to discover the principles they proceed upon in their confused opposition to that truth.

I have no more to add, but only begging I may have the continuance of your prayers, and assistance in your several stations, for the carrying on the work of our Lord and Master in this place committed unto us, that I may give in my account with joy and not with grief, to him that stands at the door, I commend you to the powerful word of his grace; and remain your fellow laborer and brother in our dear Lord Jesus.

J. O.

FROM MY STUDY,  
SEPTEMBER 22, 1658

<sup>143</sup> In the text: *Ab alio quovis hoc fieri mallet, quam a me, sed a me tamen potius quam a nemine.*—Owen. Editor’s translation.