
THE FAMILY TREE OF
REFORMED BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
Geerhardus Vos and John Owen –
Their Methods of and Contributions to the Articulation of
Redemptive History

Richard C. Barcellos, Ph.D.

Reformed Baptist Dissertation Series # 2

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THE FAMILY TREE OF REFORMED BIBLICAL THEOLOGY:
Geerhardus Vos and John Owen – Their Methods of and Contributions
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Richard C. Barcellos, Ph.D.

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For those who love Reformed biblical theology and Reformed systematic theology, this is a satisfying, happy book, providing for us a family tree of continuity from the prince of the Puritans, John Owen, to the father of Reformed biblical theology, Geerhardus Vos. Now, who will add to the branches, and go back to the sixteenth century roots, adding to the fulsomeness and beauty of the Reformed family tree from Calvin and Bullinger to our own day?

Joel R. Beeke, Ph.D.
President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI
Pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids
Author of *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors*

If a good doctoral dissertation fills a critically important gap or corrects a widely held error or changes the academic picture so that future students of an issue have a new and more accurate perspective on an important subject, Richard Barcellos' *The Family Tree of Reformed Biblical Theology* is a great dissertation for it does all of these, while encouraging greater confidence in the biblical character of the confessional standards of the Reformed Churches and stimulating further investigation and creative exposition of the sacred Scripture as the progressive self-revelation of our redeeming God.

First of all, Barcellos demonstrates a greatly underappreciated feature of the theology of John Owen (and other theologians of the era known misleadingly as the period of Protestant Scholasticism): that not only was his covenant or federal theology biblical (as opposed to a construct of Aristotelian logic), but that this biblical theology thoroughly incorporated the knowledge that God's revelation had been progressively given (as opposed to coming from a flat Bible). Secondly, he demonstrates that this hermeneutical development is also a natural progression and not a departure from the earlier biblical and Christocentric hermeneutic of Calvin. Third, he brings to the fore an important conviction of the great redemptive-historical theologian, Geerhardus Vos; namely, that his redemptive-historical, even eschatological, biblical theology supported the same confessional orthodoxy. Fourth, all of these things are so thoroughly supported and interestingly presented that even those who already agree with him will find it a pleasurable and profitable read. Finally, --

By demonstrating the unity which is intrinsically there, Barcellos' book should promote a greater unity among Reformed biblical and systematic theologians, and, so doing, should bless the Church of Christ by encouraging a greater knowledge and deeper love for the Word of God. Here is a book no seminary library should be without and which no department of biblical studies, or historical theology can responsibly ignore. Whether one's great interest is in serious bible study, the history of hermeneutics, or Reformed theology or whether one has a preference for systematic theology or the redemptive-historical approach to biblical interpretation, Richard Barcellos' excellent

treatment of the hermeneutics of two of history's greatest biblical scholars should be on your required reading shelf.

Richard W. Daniels
Ph.D., Westminster Theological Seminary
Author of *The Christology of John Owen*

Congratulations and gratitude are due to Dr. Richard Barcellos for giving us this wide-ranging, detailed study of the history of biblical theology. It serves well as an introduction to the rich biblico-theological heritage of Reformed theology. In addition, it provides a welcome corrective to the muddle-headed assumption that the work of earlier Reformed theologians was essentially system and proof-text driven.

Harvesting the best insights of recent scholarship, *The Family Tree of Reformed Biblical Theology* explores the strong line of continuity that runs from seventeenth century Oxford and the writings of John Owen to twentieth century Princeton and the work of Geerhardus Vos. It argues—surely rightly—that biblical theology in the tradition of Vos is not a novelty but was adumbrated in clear and powerful ways by earlier Reformed writers, and notably by Owen himself. Indeed, the author daringly asserts that Owen was a more Christocentric biblical theologian than Vos.

This is a work of bold and exciting scholarship that merits careful reading and reflection. In addition, however, it is also a work whose lessons working pastors should be encouraged to consider. For it points to resources that exemplify the spiritual power, and fruitful exposition that can arise from a thorough grasp of all the indicatives and imperatives of biblical theology.

With this substantial contribution Dr. Barcellos has put both the academy and the pulpit deeply in his debt.

Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson
Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S.C.
Professor of Systematic Theology
Redeemer Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas
Author of *John Owen on the Christian Life*

Geerhardus Vos has observed that Reformed theology “has from the beginning shown itself possessed of a true historic sense in the apprehension of the progressive character of the deliverance of truth. Its doctrine of the covenants on its historical side represents the first attempt at constructing a history of revelation and may be justly considered the precursor of what is at present called biblical theology.” This is a clear indication of the substantive continuity and harmony he saw between his own biblical-theological work and earlier Reformed theology. In his view the orthodox Reformed confessions with the

theological framework they entail, far from being hostile, are quite hospitable toward, in fact anticipate, giving greater, more methodologically self-conscious attention, as he did, to the redemptive-historical substance of Scripture.

Richard Barcellos, in a thoroughly researched, persuasively argued and clearly written manner, shows the soundness of Vos's self-perception. By means of a large-scale comparison of his work with that of the towering instance of 17th century Reformed orthodoxy, John Owen, Barcellos brings to light undeniable lines of affinity and the deeply rooted compatibility there is between the two. If Vos may be said to be the father of a Reformed biblical theology, then, in the author's words, Owen is "a grandfather (among many others) of a Reformed biblical theology." Those interested in Reformed theology, in particular issues of theological method, are indebted to Barcellos for this most welcome and helpful study.

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., Ph.D.
Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Emeritus
Westminster Theological Seminary

No serious contemporary student of Reformed theology can afford to work without benefit of the contributions of Geerhardus Vos. Likewise, no serious contemporary student of Reformed theology should attempt to work without reference to the insights of John Owen. They are among the giants of the tradition. Vos is well-known for his emphasis on eschatology; Owen for his Christ-centered perspectives. One might suspect that they have much in common--not just in terms of a general commitment to Reformed thinking, but specifically in their historically sensitive treatments of Scripture.

In this book, Richard Barcellos demonstrates that Vos and Owen ought to be read in concert, Owen setting out a foundation and Vos providing the superstructure of the building. John Owen's *Biblical Theology* is in many ways a precursor to Vos's book of the same title. Dr. Barcellos ably explains the significant commonalities shared by them, and in doing so evidences the depth and importance of such a well-formed historical approach to Scripture and theology. This book is of great importance.

James M. Renihan, Ph.D.
Dean, Professor of Historical Theology
Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies

Barcellos' thesis is clearly stated at the beginning of his abstract. "Geerhardus Vos' biblical theology should be viewed as a post-Enlightenment continuation of the pre-critical federal theology of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy." By comparing Vos and John Owen, Barcellos makes his case. Vos' ideas are shown not to be as novel as many have thought. It is good to see a

work of historical theology tying together various strands of Reformed and confessional Christianity. There is much more work to be done to tie together a continuous stream of theological reflection from seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy to the twentieth century. Barcellos uses the metaphor of a family tree to show Vos as the father of Reformed biblical theology and Owen as a more distant patriarch. The historical material sets a context for understanding the influences of enlightened thought on Christianity in general, and Vos in particular. He also demonstrates the influences of Reformed thinkers on Vos, with special reference to Princeton. Owen's learning was vast and immense. His legacy is without equal among English Reformed theologians. This comparative work adds to a growing corpus of important works as regards federal theology. This work will help to correct many misunderstandings. Barcellos is to be thanked for bringing some clarity in this area.

Mike Renihan
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BTO</i>	John Owen, <i>Biblical Theology</i> (Pittsburgh, 1994, English translation of the Latin published in 1661).
<i>BTV</i>	Geerhardus Vos, <i>Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments</i> (Grand Rapids, Reprinted, June 1988).
<i>CTJ</i>	Calvin Theological Journal
<i>DMBI</i>	Donald K. McKim, editor, <i>Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters</i> (Downers Grove, IL, 2007).
<i>ERF</i>	Donald K. McKim, editor, <i>Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith</i> (Louisville, 1992).
<i>JETS</i>	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
<i>PRRD</i>	Richard A. Muller, <i>Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics</i> , Four Volumes (Grand Rapids, 2003).
<i>RBTR</i>	Reformed Baptist Theological Review
<i>RHBI</i>	Geerhardus Vos, <i>Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos</i> , ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1980).
<i>SJT</i>	Scottish Journal of Theology
<i>WCF</i>	<i>Westminster Confession of Faith</i>
<i>Works</i>	John Owen, <i>The Works of John Owen</i> , Twenty-Three Volumes (Edinburgh, various original and reprint dates).
<i>WTJ</i>	Westminster Theological Journal

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This project, though its topic was unconceived at the time, started in the mid 1990s when my fellow elders at the time (James P. Butler and C. Ron Martina) approved a proposal I brought to them for me to pursue a Ph.D. in Historical Theology. Subsequent to that time, Michael D. Crawford, Vince P. Nixon, and Matthew E. Troupe, also fellow elders of mine, supported my efforts in many, many ways. I am thankful to these brothers for their foresight and vision, though I am sure neither of them thought it would take this long. The dear people of Free Grace Church: A Reformed Baptist Congregation, Lancaster, CA, also supported my studies. And, of course, my wife Nan was very supportive and understanding along the way. She is my “good thing” from the Lord. My family has even endured a move from California to Kentucky to complete the dissertation, among other things. We have been the recipients of much kindness from the pastors and members of Heritage Baptist Church, Owensboro, KY. I want to give special thanks to my highly esteemed colleague, Dr. Sam Waldron, for kindly nudging me to “get that dissertation finished.” Thanks also to Pastor David Charles and his dear wife who housed me, without complaint, during “crunch time.” Special thanks also goes to Dr. Kenneth G. Talbot of Whitefield Theological Seminary for his patience with me as I completed post-graduate course work and struggled to finally hone in on a dissertation topic. I want to thank two dear men; Ronald D. Miller for reading my dissertation and offering suggestions which made for a much better presentation and Tim Hoak for the title. Most of all, I thank the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, the devil-conquering Seed of the woman, the last Adam, the First-born from the dead, my wrath-bearing Savior and only hope of righteousness before God, for saving me and preserving me for these many years as I seek to serve him and his glorious cause on the earth and for giving me the distinct privilege of sitting at the feet of giants. One day I shall see him just as he is!

Richard C. Barcellos
Owensboro, KY
September 2009

ABSTRACT

The thesis of this study is that Geerhardus Vos' biblical-theological method should be viewed as a post-Enlightenment continuation of the pre-critical federal theology of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy. Vos wrote in the context of the liberalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His biblical-theological methodology was largely a resuscitation of the federal theology of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy adapted to the times in which it was written. It will be argued, therefore, that Vos should not be viewed as a novelty and/or radical paradigm shift within the Reformed theological tradition. John Owen will be used as a case test in comparing Vos' methodology with that of the seventeenth-century federal theology of Reformed orthodoxy. Two books will be the primary focus of the comparison and analysis of Vos and Owen – *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* by Geerhardus Vos¹ and *Theologoumena pantodapa, sive, De natura, ortu, progressu et studio, verae theologiae (Theological Affirmations of All Sorts, Or, Of the Nature, Rise, Progress, and Study, of True Theology)*² by John Owen. The recently published English translation of Owen's work is entitled *Biblical Theology or The Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth in Six Books*.

The dissertation contains four major sections. The first section (PART I: PROLEGOMENA) provides an overall introduction to the dissertation and a brief and broad survey of the history of the discipline of biblical theology. The introduction poses several questions that will be answered in the course of the dissertation. In the survey of the history of biblical theology special focus will be placed upon Reformed theologians, especially when those of the pre-critical, post-Reformation seventeenth century (Owen's era) and the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Vos' era) are discussed. This survey will be conducted to put federal theology and biblical theology in their respective historical contexts.

¹ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948, reprinted, June 1988), referenced as *BTV* here on out.

² This is J. I. Packer's translation of the Latin title. Cf. John Owen, *Biblical Theology or The Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth in Six Books* (Pittsburgh, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1994), xii, referenced as *BTO* here on out.

The second section (PART II: BIOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL) will discuss Geerhardus Vos and John Owen separately. It is comprised of a brief biography of Vos, and then a discussion of the historical-theological context in which Vos thought, taught, and to which he contributed. The section on Owen does basically the same thing – a brief biography and then a historical-theological discussion placing Owen in his seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox context. This will set the context for PART III, where the analysis of the two books mentioned above will be conducted.

The third section (PART III: ANALYSIS) forms the heart of the dissertation. It follows a linear, redemptive-historical approach, which can be found in both Vos and Owen. Both books mentioned above were studied section by section simultaneously. The outline is, roughly speaking, that of Vos. Each section considers Vos' then Owen's thoughts on the issue(s) at hand. An attempt was made to avoid anachronisms while studying Owen. Since Vos is a well-known commodity as a Reformed biblical theologian, his work forms the basis upon which Owen is compared. Attempt was made to identify elements of biblical theology first in Vos and then seek for similar elements and patterns in Owen. What will be amply observed is that Vos resurrected federal theology and adapted it to his post-Enlightenment context under the rubric of biblical theology.

The fourth section (PART IV: CONCLUSION) will be a discussion in light of our findings. It will compare and contrast, if and when necessary, Vos and Owen. It will offer some suggestions in terms of where and how Vos fits within the history of biblical theology and, especially, how he relates to Owen and the federal theology of the seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox.

The dissertation also contains two appendices: (1) an analytical outline of the dissertation and (2) a discussion on the Decalogue in the thought of key Reformed theologians with special reference to John Owen.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: JOHN OWEN AND GEERHARDUS VOS – REFORMED FEDERAL/BIBLICAL THEOLOGIANS?

Introduction

In Reformed theological circles, the name Geerhardus Vos is immediately associated with the discipline of biblical theology, and rightly so. He has come to be known as “the father of a Reformed biblical theology.”¹ J. I. Packer calls him “an all-time master in the field of Biblical Theology.”² The importance of his writings cannot be disputed in Reformed circles, agree or disagree with his methodology and/or doctrinal formulations. Is it accurate, however, to assume that what has come to be called biblical theology in Reformed circles does not predate Vos in Reformed theology, at least in proleptic form?³ Was Vos’ method a novel and radical paradigm shift in the history and development of Reformed theological interpretation? Was he a pioneer among Reformed theologians to view the Bible as progressive, organic, redemptive revelation centered upon the concepts of covenant and Christ? Was he the first to place eschatology prior to soteriology in the revelational scheme of the Scriptures? In one sense, as far as the nomenclature, ‘biblical theology’, is concerned, Vos can rightly be understood as its father and founder among Reformed theologians. But labels aside, is there a strand of Reformed biblical theology that predates Vos, labeled as it may be? And more specifically, can John Owen be included in the halls of such Reformed biblical theologians?

Though it is true that the title of the *Soli Deo Gloria* translation of Owen’s *Theologoumena pantodapa, sive, De natura, ortu, progressu et studio, verae theologiae* (Theological Affirmations of All Sorts, Or, Of the Nature, Rise, Progress, and Study, of True Theology⁴ [i.e., *Biblical Theology*] is technically and historically anachronistic, can it be substantiated that Owen, a seventeenth-century English Puritan and

¹ It appears that this label was first attached to Vos by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1980), xiv, referenced as *RHBI* here on out.

² Packer in Owen, *BTO*, xi.

³ I am not claiming that Gaffin meant this by his statement referenced above.

⁴ Owen, *BTO*, xii. This is Packer’s translation of the Latin title.

Reformed orthodox theologian, stands within the bounds of a Reformed biblical-theological method, though predating the formal and historical inception of what we know as biblical theology in Protestant circles? Does Reformed theology have to wait until Vos to find adherents to a more redemptive-historical approach to Scripture?

**The Grandfather of Biblical Theology in the Reformed Tradition:
The Federal Theology of the Reformed Orthodox**

If Owen (and others) can be classified as something like protological Reformed biblical theologians,⁵ this would not only demand a qualification when identifying Vos as the father of a Reformed biblical theology, but it would also give us insight into the theological methodology of Vos and Reformed orthodoxy, since Owen fits within that historical-theological school of thought and method. Though it certainly is not the intention of this dissertation to strip Vos of Gaffin's label, if we can prove that what Owen was doing has some essential parallels in what Vos did, that there is a large degree of continuity in their methodology (and theology), several issues will be brought to the table for reassessment and fresh consideration. First, we will be able to assert that Vos resuscitated federal theology⁶ under the rubric of biblical theology as a self-conscious Reformed and confessional theologian. In other words, the grandfather of Reformed biblical theology is the federal theology of the seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox. This brings with it some further questions. Why did Vos have to resuscitate federal theology? Why the gap between Owen and the federal theology of Reformed orthodoxy and Vos and his articulation of biblical theology in the Reformed tradition? If there are links between Vos and the Reformed orthodox (and it will be argued that there are several), why the disconnect of time? What happened between Owen and Vos to retard the development of federalism among the Reformed?

Second, we will be able to call into (further) question the many negative claims terminating upon Reformed orthodox interpretive methodology which pit it against Calvin and the earlier Reformed theologians. This view paints Reformed orthodoxy as a rationalistic, neo-

⁵ Cf. Owen, *BTO*, xiii, where Packer says, "Those with a taste for Owen, or for theology, or (best of all) for both, will read this Puritan *proto-Biblical Theology* with joy, ..." Emphases added.

⁶ We will survey the federal theology of the seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox below.

Aristotelian, devolutionary movement away from Calvin, Christ, and the Scriptures.

Third, we will have to admit that Owenic federal theology and Vosian biblical theology are compatible with Reformed confessionalism. Neither Vos nor Owen repudiated their confessional commitments in light of their theological methodology and formulation. Neither viewed these issues in an either/or fashion – i.e., *either* federal/biblical theology *or* the Confession; *either* Moses, Christ, and Paul *or* Aristotle; *either* Calvin and the early Reformers *or* post-Reformation Reformed orthodoxy. Either (1) they consciously lived with the inconsistencies involved with the antithetical developmental theory of Reformation and post-Reformation Reformed theology or (2) they did not detect any or (3) there were none, at least not antithetically speaking.⁷ For some time, it has been quite fashionable in academic halls to put a wedge between Calvin and the Calvinists, between federal/biblical theology and dogmatic/systematic theology, and between the Bible and the Confession. Some seek to force us to choose between two supposed enemies. Owen and Vos chose both and saw no contradiction in this. In fact, both believed that dogmatic/systematic theology is grounded in the text of Scripture, that federal/biblical theology precedes dogmatics, and that confessional theology (i.e., symbolics) assumes the previous work of exegesis, exegetical synthesis, and dogmatics.

What is Biblical Theology and how does it relate to Federal Theology?

What is biblical theology? This question can be answered both historically and theologically. Historically speaking, it did not appear as an explicit theological discipline until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries during the beginning decades of the critical era. It has undergone development and modification, depending on specific authors and their theological and philosophical presuppositions.⁸

Theologically speaking, biblical theology is a method of interpreting the Bible. For Reformed interpreters, it involves, roughly speaking, the study of the *historia salutis* (i.e., the historical unfolding of salvation as found in the Scriptures). One of the regulating questions of this dissertation is as follows: Does the study of the history of redemption and redemptive-historical formulation predate the historical inception of

⁷ We will argue for this third position below.

⁸ Cf. the section below on the history of biblical theology.

biblical theology as a distinct theological discipline in Reformed theology? Can the essential elements of biblical theology, understood as the study of the history of redemption, be traced back to at least the time of John Owen and Reformed orthodoxy? Our answer will be a resounding yes!

This dissertation seeks to display that Geerhardus Vos, in many senses, is “Owenic” in his approach to the history of redemption. In fact, several contemporaries of Owen displayed a keen respect for the history of salvation and its organic progress from creation, to fall, to redemption in Christ, to the consummation, as we shall see. This makes Owen a somewhat typical federal theologian and gives us further reason to believe that Vos resuscitated federalism under a new name and in a new and unique historical and theological context.

Some influential Evangelicals have claimed that the post-Reformation era did not view Scripture redemptive-historically, but statically. For instance, while tracing the history of New Testament theology, George Eldon Ladd says:

The gains in the historical study of the Bible made by the reformers were soon lost in the post-Reformation period, and the Bible was once again used uncritically and unhistorically to support orthodox doctrine. The Bible was viewed not only as a book free from error and contradiction but also *without development or progress* [italics added]. The entire Bible was looked upon as possessing one level of theological value. History was completely lost in dogma, and philology became a branch of dogmatics.⁹

This dissertation takes issue with Ladd and many others. It does so on several fronts: (1) a favorable assessment of the Muller thesis (i.e., the post-Reformation era was not a betrayal of Calvin and the early reformers [cf. Chapter Six]); (2) evidence to the contrary from the seventeenth century itself; and (3) evidence from Geerhardus Vos which shows that he did not view himself as a novel paradigm shift among Reformed theologians and, in fact, was not. Vos viewed his own work in a broader historical context dating back at least to the post-Reformation era. Though Vos’ contribution to Reformed theology came at a crucial point in the history of Christian thought and, more specifically, in the

⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 2. Cf. also, for example, Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, second edition, 1993).

early history of the biblical theology movement, his basic methodology can be found in Reformed orthodoxy – witness, John Owen and seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox federal theology. Though this can be shown to be true, it must also be admitted that this method did become somewhat dormant in Reformed theology until it was resuscitated and further developed by Vos. This is most likely due to the effects of the Enlightenment.

The Methodological Approach of the Dissertation

A few words about the methodological approach of the dissertation may help at this juncture. We will examine the methodology and redemptive-historical formulations of Geerhardus Vos (late nineteenth century and early twentieth century) first then go back to examine Owen (seventeenth century). There is an obvious danger in this. We run the risk of anachronistic interpretation. In other words, we run the risk of interpreting Owen in light of Vos and imposing Vos' terminology, methodology, and theology upon Owen. Great care will be taken not to do this. This would turn things upside down and be an illustration of a historical-intepretive fallacy.

A justification for this approach is warranted. Why Vos first then Owen? Consider these well-known and agreed upon facts. First, it is generally agreed that Vos is *somewhat* of a paradigm shift among Reformed theologians in the field of biblical theology.

Second, Vos' methodology is universally accepted as biblical-theological/redemptive-historical. As mentioned above, he is known as the father of a Reformed biblical theology. So, why Vos first? Simply because his theological method is a somewhat well-known commodity in the Reformed tradition. No one doubts his credentials as a Reformed biblical theologian.

Third, surveying the histories of biblical theology (as we shall do) we will find that Owen is *not* mentioned as an adherent to the biblical-theological/redemptive-historical method and that seventeenth-century federalism is mentioned only in passing. However, upon examination of Owen's method in his *Biblical Theology* and elsewhere, we find Owen, and many of his contemporaries, fitting within the parameters of what constitutes biblical theology in the Reformed tradition as supremely exemplified by Vos, though of course not historically speaking.

Fourth, it is commonly held that Post-Reformation Reformed orthodoxy tended toward a rationalistic, neo-Aristotelian, hyper-dogmatic theology instead of exegesis and biblical theology. It is argued

that the seventeenth century was a movement away from Calvin and, methodologically speaking, a movement away from the Bible as the foundation of theology, and philosophically speaking, a precursor to the devastating rationalism of the eighteenth century. But if what Vos did was, at the very least in seed form, already done by the Reformed orthodox, then accusations hurled at the Reformed orthodox must also be hurled at Vos. As we shall see, however, *in terms of methodology*, the accusations normally hurled at the Reformed orthodox do not stick. And if they do not stick on the seventeenth-century men, they cannot stick on Vos.

Fifth, John Owen is generally agreed upon as fitting within the era of Reformed orthodoxy. Granting this to be the case (which we will discuss below), one would assume that his method would have other contemporary adherents. If we can identify his method and show that it was contemporaneous with other Reformed orthodox theologians, we would have to admit that at least some within that school utilized what has come to be known as biblical theology, at least to a degree and obviously utilizing the theological nomenclature of that era.

Sixth, both Vos and Owen subscribed to very similar post-Reformation Reformed orthodox symbolic documents – the Savoy Declaration (Owen) and the Westminster Standards (Vos). If the links mentioned above can be established, we would have to conclude that, at least in the minds of Owen and Vos, federal/biblical theology is a handmaid and friend to symbolics and not its undoing.

In one sense, this dissertation attempts to go from the known (i.e., Vos as a Reformed, confessional, biblical theologian) to the relatively unknown (i.e., Owen as a Reformed, confessional, federal theologian). We will attempt to show that just as Vos was fundamentally anchored to the text of Scripture, so was Owen; just as Vos saw no contradiction with his biblical-theological/redemptive-historical methodology and his confessional commitment, neither did Owen. In fact, both saw a natural relationship between what we know as federal/biblical theology and dogmatics/systematic theology. Neither pitted one against the other in an antithetical manner. Both saw one as foundational to the other and the other dependent upon its foundation.

