Recent research of Puritanism has made two matters increasingly clear. First of all, this movement was a component of international Reformed orthodoxy which, in turn, had the church fathers and medieval theologians as its antecedents. Secondly, John Owen occupied a central place within Puritanism, and this is highlighted by a rapidly growing number of studies focusing on his theology and spirituality. The significant research of Christopher Cleveland is worthy of being noted within this recent revival of Owen-studies. In *Thomism in John Owen*, he assesses an interesting theme by stating that in several ways Owen has been influenced by the important medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and both directly and indirectly by thomistically orientated Roman-Catholic contemporaries such as especially Diego Alvarez (d. 1635) and Dominigo Bañez (1528-1604).

Thomistic influence becomes evident within three areas. First, in regard to the doctrine of God, Owen emphasizes God’s sovereignty and omnipotence, whereby He creates and sustains spiritual life. Secondly, Thomas’ influence can be observed in the area of Christology, where Owen emphasizes Christ’s divine nature as being the secret of his unique personality as well as with respect to the hypostatic unity of his two natures. Cleveland posits furthermore that Thomistic influence is also apparent in Owen’s pneumatology, and particularly in regard to his view on regeneration and sanctification. Aquinas had developed a doctrine of the *habitus*, which he viewed as a human quality forged by repeated activity and expressed in deeds corresponding to this habitus. In addition to there being a natural habitus Thomas also spoke about habitus as being a spiritual quality, given by God as the solid foundation of Christian virtues, such as faith and love. Thomas wanted to emphasize the priority of God’s grace by stating that this habitus is directly infused by God.

Owen improved upon this thomistic emphasis on God’s grace by giving the spiritual habitus a crucial place in his view of regeneration. God bestows this unchangeable inner quality upon man, and this renews him and is also determinative for his Christian life. Upon being spiritually exercised, this habitus will yield the Christian virtues of faith, love, and hope, whereas spiritual negligence will trigger progressive backsliding. It is especially in his practical
works dealing with sin and spiritual warfare that Owen develops these aspects in detail. As one would expect, the one significant difference between Thomas and Owen pertains to justification. Thomas holds to the opinion that the spiritual habitus plays a crucial role in the acquittal of guilt, because justification is only possible on the basis of God’s renewing work in the human soul. Owen, however, wants to distinguish between justification and renewal, for whereas justification occurs by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, the habitus is of crucial significance in regard to the spiritual renewal of man.

Cleveland’s research is important in that it affirms the significant influence of Thomas Aquinas and the thomistic tradition on Reformed orthodoxy. This influence can particularly be observed in Hiëronymus Zanchius (1516-1590) and others, but it is also evident in the case of Owen. The influence of the medieval scholastic tradition on the thinking of Reformed orthodox theologians has thus been impressive. Owen can therefore be viewed as a Puritan theologian deeply entrenched in classic western theological thinking, albeit he has developed this in his own unique way. This confluence of influence and development becomes visible in two ways.

First, it is remarkable how Owen uses the thomistic concept of the habitus in his formulation of the doctrine of regeneration and sanctification, having as his objective to ground spiritual life in God’s grace. He thereby wished to focus upon the heart of Reformed theology in contrast to Arminianism and Socinianism. However, the manner in which Owen handles this thomistic concept theologically is determinative for his spirituality, for positing regeneration to be the beginning of spiritual life becomes crucial, whereas he views sanctification to be a process. Nevertheless, Owen establishes an intrinsic relationship between regeneration, sanctification and union with Christ, doing so mainly in his later writings regarding the person and work of Christ. His doctrine of infused grace is furthermore significant, when considering that in the Netherlands this concept is a prominent component of the theology of Alexander Comrie. Thus the connection between Owen and Comrie regarding this matter as well as the influence of Puritanism upon the Dutch Further Reformation, are interesting subjects for further research.

According to Cleveland, Aquinas’ classic doctrine of the Trinity has helped Owen to formulate his own view of the triune God, for thomistic influence regarding the nature of the Father, the person of Christ and the graces of the Spirit can be traced in his writings. Puritan uniqueness can be observed in Owen’s objective of his detailed discussion of classic theological views, namely, the promotion of knowledge yielding the proper service of God that culminates in worship and obedience. Here we clearly see the Puritan connection between classic Christian theology and affective spirituality.
Cleveland’s detailed study of a substantial medieval source of Owen’s theology constitutes a welcome contribution to the research of Puritanism in general and of Owen in particular.

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John Flavel shares the enviable characteristic with Thomas Watson of being one of the most readable Puritan writers for contemporary readers. Brian Cosby, pastor of Wayside Presbyterian Church on Signal Mountain, Tennessee, has likewise produced a very readable introduction to the life and theology of John Flavel.

This book is arranged into two parts. The first section consists of three chapters that examine Flavel’s life. Cosby places Flavel within his Puritan context (ch. 1), offers a summary of his life and ministry (ch. 2), and concludes this introductory section with a consideration of Flavel’s legacy (ch. 3). Flavel was well known among the early evangelicals of the eighteenth century and read by Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Newton, and William Wilberforce, to name but a few who were influenced by his practical divinity. Unfortunately, there are not any references made to those who shaped Flavel’s own theology except John Calvin.

The second portion of the book, which is essentially twice the size of the opening section, examines Flavel’s theology. Six chapters are devoted to Flavel’s Theological Heritage (ch. 4), The Doctrine and Use of Scripture (ch. 5), Theology Proper (including the Doctrine of God and Christology), Creation and the Fall (ch. 6), Covenant Theology, Election, and Soteriology (ch. 7), The Law of God and the Christian Life (ch. 8) and Church, Sacrament, and Eschatology (ch. 9).

Cosby’s primary thesis is that Flavel’s theology is consistent with both John Calvin and the Westminster Assembly (pp. 50–52, 131, 137n101). Given his desire to confirm this, he correctly refutes the position of those who see a discontinuity between Calvin and the reformed theology of the sixteenth century and that of the Puritans of the next century. While there are shades of uniqueness both between Calvin and the seventeenth century, and among the Puritans, many were consciously and consistently in harmony with the Genevan Reformer.

There are a number of significant strengths to this small book. It is highly engaging and the author often articulates important and even thorny theological