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New Light on Dr. John Owen

In the first volume of *The Works of John Owen* (ed. W. H. Goold, 1850) nine letters written by John Owen are to be found.¹ The words printed immediately before seven of the letters read: "the following letters embrace all the Correspondence of Dr. Owen which has been preserved and is of any importance". This was a rather careless statement for the editor to make since in the first volume of *The Works of John Owen* (ed. T. Russell, 1826) far more than nine letters are either printed or referred to in the text or footnotes.

Interest in the life, work and thought of John Owen has been reawakened in the last four years through at least two factors. First, the Goold edition has been reprinted, partly in England and partly in the U.S.A.² Secondly, Dr. Geoffrey F. Nuttall discovered a manuscript containing a transcript of fifteen letters of Owen in the library of New College, London.³ It seemed, therefore, to the present writer that, as a preliminary investigation before he attempted to write a biography of Owen,⁴ he should make a thorough search for all the extant correspondence of this great Puritan. What follows is the result of his search.⁵

The Correspondence of John Owen.

Abbreviations.

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Browne | — | John Browne, <i>History of Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk</i> , 1877. |
| C.R. | — | <i>Calamy Revised</i> , ed. A. G. Matthews. |
| C.S.P.D. | — | <i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</i> . |
| D.N.B. | — | <i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> . |
| Nuttall | — | G. F. Nuttall, <i>Visible Saints</i> , 1957. |
| R.C. | — | "Register of Convocation, 1647-1659", in the Bodleian Library. |

¹ The nine are numbers 60, 67, 71, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81 in the list below.

² Volumes I-XVI by the Banner of Truth Trust, London (but the Latin Orations delivered at Oxford 1652-57 are omitted from Vol. XVI); and Vols. XVIII-XXV by the Sovereign Grace Publishers, U.S.A. Vol. XVII which contains various Latin treatises has not been reprinted.

³ Nuttall "MS Sermons and Letters by Dr. John Owen", *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, Vol. XX, No. 1, May 1965.

⁴ The only serious attempt to write a biography of Owen was by William Orme in 1820. Two studies published in 1904 and 1911 by James Moffatt were based on Orme's work and add very little to it.

⁵ The list cannot claim to be exhaustive. There may be other letters in archives in the U.S.A., U.K. and Europe. If any reader knows of any letter the writer will be very glad to hear from him/her.

	<i>Date</i>	<i>To or From</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Where found</i>
1	July 1650	To John Lisle, <i>D.N.B.</i>	A description of the battle at Musselburgh, Scotland.	<i>Original Memoirs</i> (ed. W. Scott) 1806. pp. 244-5.
Official Correspondence as Dean of Christ Church				
2	2 July 1651	From Irish Commissioners	A request for advice on new rules for Trinity College, Dublin.	R. Dunlop, <i>Ireland and the Commonwealth</i> (1913), I. p. 10. <i>ibid.</i> , II. p. 371.
3	31 Aug. 1653	From Irish Commissioners	A request for help in obtaining ministers	
4	23 Sept. 1653	From Lord Richard Herbert	A promise to pay the commons of his son, Edward. <i>D.N.B.</i>	Bodleian Tanner MS. 52.48.
5	11 Aug. 1654	From Henry Lawrence, <i>D.N.B.</i>	A request that a suitable place be found at Christ Church for Richard Griffiths.	<i>C.S.P.D.</i> (1654) p. 294
6	Aug. 1654	To Oliver Cromwell	A petition from the Dean and Chapter about the rectory at Great Torrington. <i>D.N.B.</i> s.v. John Howe.	<i>C.S.P.D.</i> (1654) p. 345
7	?	To Henry Wilkinson of Christ Church. <i>D.N.B.</i>	Should Thomas Ireland be restored to his studentship at Christ Church?	Tanner MS. 69.182
8	20 Mar. 1655	To John Thurloe, <i>D.N.B.</i>	The defence of Oxford is prepared.	<i>Thurloe State Papers</i> III. p. 281.
9	29 May 1655	To John Thurloe, <i>D.N.B.</i>	Unton Croke of Oxford worthy of promotion <i>D.N.B.</i>	<i>ibid.</i> , III. p. 488.
10	2 Oct. 1655	To O. Cromwell	Croke worthy to be made a judge.	<i>ibid.</i> , IV. p. 55.
11	16 July 1657	From H. Lawrence	Owen to attend meeting about Scottish Church Settlement.	<i>C.S.P.D.</i> (1657/8) p. 30
12	24 Sept. 1659	From Richard Salway, <i>D.N.B.</i>	A request that Owen preach before Council of State.	<i>C.S.P.D.</i> (1659/60) p. 221.
Private Correspondence as Dean of Christ Church				
13	26 Jan. 1658	To Lady Puleston, wife of John P., <i>D.N.B.</i>	Owen intends to visit the Pulestons.	<i>Diaries & Letters of Philip Henry</i> (ed. M. H. Lee) pp. 31ff. <i>ibid.</i>
14	Feb. 1658	From Lady P.	A request that Samuel, son of Edward Thomas of Wrexham, receive care of Owen at Oxford.	
15	24 Feb. 1658	From John Beverley. Nuttall p. 39.	Owen should write a confutation of Daniel Cawdry's recent book on schism.	M. Maurice, <i>Monuments of Mercy</i> , (1729) pp. 10ff.
Official Correspondence as Vice-Chancellor				
16	Sept. 1652	From Lewis Du Moulin, <i>D.N.B.</i>	Dedicatory epistle.	<i>Oratio Auspicalis</i> (1652). R.C.
17	28 Oct. 1652	From O. Cromwell	A recommendation that John Boncle be given the degree of Master of Arts, <i>C.R.</i>	
18	Nov. 1652	From O. Cromwell	A request that Boncle be made a Bedel.	R.C.
19	22 Nov. 1652	To Henry Savage, <i>D.N.B.</i>	Permission granted for James Puresfey to move from Balliol College.	'Register Book of Balliol College'.
20	13 Sept. 1653	To City of London	Convocation congratulates the City on its recent address to Barebones Parliament.	R.C.
21	14 Oct. 1653	From O. Cromwell	A request that Leonard Lichfield be made a Bedel.	R.C.
22	24 Oct. 1653	From O. Cromwell	Nomination of Owen as V.C. for 1653/4.	R.C.
23	28 Dec. 1653	From O. Cromwell	Allowances to Bedels be increased.	R.C.
24	March 1654	From O. Cromwell	A request that John Windebanke be given the degree of Doctor of Medicine. <i>D.N.B.</i> s.v. Sir Francis Windebanke.	R.C.
25	Sept. 1654	From Edward Lowe, <i>D.N.B.</i>	A request that his salary as organist at Christ Church be paid.	<i>C.S.P.D.</i> (1654) p. 425
26	31 Oct. 1654	From O. Cromwell	Nomination of Owen as V.C. for 1654/5.	R.C.
27	1654	To O. Cromwell	Congratulations on achieving peace with the Dutch.	<i>Musarum Oxoniensium</i> (1654)
28	1654	From John Harnmar, <i>D.N.B.</i>	Dedicatory epistle.	<i>Oratio Serenissimi</i> (1654)
29	1654	From John Wallis, <i>D.N.B.</i>	Dedicatory epistle.	<i>Elenchus Geometriae Hobbianae</i> , (1654).
30	1654	From Robert Wickens	Dedicatory epistle.	<i>Complete Concordance</i> (1654).
31	1654	To Continental divines	Commending John Dury and Protestant unity.	Staat-archiv, Marburg & Zurich.
32	22 Aug. 1655	From O. Cromwell	Nomination of Owen as V.C. for 1655/6.	R.C.
33	4 Mar. 1656	From O. Cromwell	A request that Oliver Pocklington be given the degree of Doctor of Medicine.	R.C.
34	25 Mar. 1656	From O. Cromwell	A request that Peter Vashon be given the degree of Bachelor of Medicine.	R.C.
35	Oct. 1656	From O. Cromwell	Nomination of Owen as V.C. for 1656/7.	R.C.
36	1 Apr. 1657	To George Kendall.	Commending his attempt to refute <i>Fur praedestinatus</i> by Henricus Slatius.	<i>Fur pro Tribunali</i> (1657)
37	2 July 1657	From O. Cromwell	Resignation as Chancellor.	R.C.
38	29 July 1657	From Richard Cromwell, <i>D.N.B.</i>	A request that Robert Whitehall be given the degree of Bachelor of Medicine.	R.C.

- 39 9 Sept. 1657 To Henry Cromwell, *D.N.B.* Advice on new statutes for Dublin University. British Museum, Lansdowne MS. 822. f. 179. R.C.
- 40 5 Oct. 1657 From R. Cromwell Nomination of John Conant as V.C. for 1657/8. *D.N.B.*
- Official Correspondence as a member of the Board of Visitors**
- 41 26 Nov. 1655 From H. Lawrence A request that the case of Dr. Michael Roberts of Jesus College be examined. *D.N.B.* C.S.P.D. (1655/6) p. 29
- 42 Jan. 1658 To John Maidstone, cofferer to R. Cromwell. A request that a decision about the disputed elections in All Souls be delayed. C.S.P.D. (1657/8) p. 277.
- Correspondence undertaken together with one or more other Puritans, 1652-1672.**
- 43 1652 To Parliament Help should be given to missionary work in New England. H. Whitfield, *Strengthen the Weaknesse*, 1652. Bodleian Carte MS. 81.
- 44 9 Jan. 1654 To Congregational Churches The Danger of Fifth Monarchy Opinions
- 45 31 Oct. 1659 To General George Monck. A request that he meet delegation from the London Congregational Churches. *Clarke Papers* (ed. ... C. H. Firth, 1901), IV, pp. 81ff.
- 46 23 Nov. 1659 From Monck An answer to no. 45, promising to consider their views.
- 47 13 Dec. 1659 To Monck Division in the armies gives encouragement to the 'common enemy'.
- 48 22 Dec. 1659 From Monck Civil liberties must be restored.
- 49 25 Mar. 1669 To the Governor of Massachusetts. A request that Baptists be given liberty. *Clarke Papers*, IV, pp. 184ff. *ibid.*, IV, 212ff. C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, (1702) Bk. VI, p. 28. S. Palmer, *Nonconformists Memorial*, (1802) I, 170ff. *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, XI, pp. 338ff. T. Hutchinson, *Collection of Papers*, (1769) p. 429.
- 50 8 Mar. 1670 To Hitchin Cong. Church Advice on internal problems.
- 51 21 Aug. 1671 From Massachusetts A request for help to keep open Harvard College.
- 52 5 Feb. 1672 To Massachusetts Reply to No. 51.
- Personal Correspondence, 1659-1683**
- 53 19 Nov. 1659 To Monck Two great evils face the Commonwealth *Clarke Papers*, IV, pp. 121ff. *ibid.*, IV, 151ff.
- 54 29 Nov. 1659 From Monck Desire to see country freed from the 'intolerable slavery of sword government'.
- 55 Jan. 1660 From Thomas Truthsbye (pseudonym) A pseudo-Quaker view of Owen's politics. *A Serious Letter to Dr. Owen* (1660)
- 56 Sept. 1662 To John Thornton, chaplain to Duke of Bedford. A Comment on a Presbyterian Petition to Parliament of late August. Bodleian Rawlinson, MS. 109.
- 57 April 1663 To John Thornton, chaplain to Duke of Bedford. Mrs Mary Owen unable to visit her children at Hanslope in Bucks. *ibid*
- 58 1663 To John Thornton, chaplain to Duke of Bedford. Twenty items of current news. *ibid*
- 59 20 Oct. 1663 From Massachusetts Invitation to become minister at Boston. *Coll. of Mass. Hist. Society*, 2nd series Vol. II, pp. 265ff. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), III, pp. 62ff. *ibid.* Originals in Dr. Williams's Library Owen MS. Letters in New College, London. Mather, *op. cit.*, III p. 178. Bodleian Rawlinson, MS. Lett. 52.64. *ibid.* 52.110.
- 60 25 Jan. 1669 To Richard Baxter Suggestions for agreement on doctrine and church order.
- 61 16 Feb. 1669 From Baxter A reply to no. 60 with many comments.
- 62 10 Nov. 1671 To Mr. Nicholls Illness prevents Owen seeing him.
- 63 1672? To John Eliot Sabbath Observance.
- 64 1673? To Lord Philip Wharton, *D.N.B.* Anne Lee, a possible wife for Thomas Wharton? *D.N.B.* for Lee & Wharton.
- 65 1673? To Lord Philip Wharton, *D.N.B.* Advice on marriage negotiations.
- 66 1673? To Lord Philip Wharton, *D.N.B.* Description of a journey into Warwickshire. *ibid.* 63. fol. 19.62.
- 67 1674? To Lady Hartopp The death of her daughter (Anne?). Owen MS. Letters.
- 68 3 July 1675? To Sir John Hartopp, *D.N.B.* Owen hopes to leave Stadhampton soon. *ibid.*
- 69 21 Aug. 1675? To Sir J. Hartopp *D.N.B.* Owen hopes that Lady H's health will improve. *ibid*

70	2 Sept. 1675?	To Sir J. Hartopp D.N.B.	Owen's conversation with Thomas Cole, C.R.	ibid.
71	16 March 1675?	To Robert Asty (Browne, p. 615)	Advice concerning the call from Norwich Congregational church.	ibid.
72	2 Jan. 1679	To Robert Asty (Browne, p. 615)	Advice concerning differences with John Cromwell, C.R.	ibid.
73	2 Sept. 1679	To Robert Asty (Browne, p. 615)	Further advice.	ibid.
74	1679?	To —	Elders in Congregational churches.	ibid.
75	1679?	To Peter Du Moulin, D.N.B.	An answer to his criticisms of <i>Savoy Declaration</i> (1658).	ibid.
76	8 July?	To Charles Fleetwood, D.N.B.	The need for spiritual revival.	ibid.
77	?	To Mrs Polhill (wife of Edward P. D.N.B.)	The death of her sister.	ibid.
78	?	To the church in Leadenhall Street	How to act as Christians under per- secution.	ibid.
79	29 Oct. 1681	To Thomas Whitaker of Leeds.	God seems to have withdrawn His pre- sence from the churches.	<i>Works of J. Owen</i> (ed. Russell), I, p. 423.
80	6 Aug. 1682	To C. Fleetwood	Comments about David Clarkson. C.R.	Owen MS. Letters.
81	22 Aug. 1683	To C. Fleetwood	Thoughts from his death-bed.	ibid.

This correspondence reveals the wide interests and influence that John Owen exerted from 1650 until his death in 1683. His concern for the extension of the kingdom of God is also revealed in two pamphlets which are neither printed nor listed in any edition of his works. First, he was the person chiefly responsible for the *Humble Proposals for the Propagation of the Gospel* submitted to Parliament in 1652. Secondly, he wrote a short manual for ordinary church members entitled *A Guide to Church Fellowship and Order*, which was published posthumously in 1692. Further, he wrote many prefaces for the books of other men. Since Goold's list of these is incomplete what is hoped is a complete list is given below.

A LIST OF BOOKS WHICH CONTAIN 'PREFACES', 'EPISTLES TO THE READER',
OR 'COMMENDATIONS' BY DR. JOHN OWEN

1.	Henry Whitfield	Strengthene out of Weaknesse	1652
2.	Thomas Taylor	A Collection of the Works of T. Taylor	1653
3.	William Twisse	The Riches of Gods Love	1653
4.	William Eyre	Vindiciae Justificationis Gratuitae	1654
5.	Louis Du Moulin	Paraenesis ad Aedificatores imperii in imperio	1656
6.	Philolaeclerus (pseud)	The Private Christian's Non Ultra	1656
7.	—	Banners of Grace and Love	1657
8.	John Cotton	A Defence of Mr. John Cotton	1658
9.	William Guild	The Throne of David	1659
10.	Patrick Gillespie (?)	Ark of the Testament Opened	1661
11.	James Durham	Clavis Cantici	1669
12.	Theophilus Gale	The True Idea of Jansenisme	1669
13.	Henry Lukin	An Introduction to the Holy Scripture	1669
14.	Mrs. Alleine	The Life and Death of . . . Joseph Alleine	1672
15.	Jean Daillé	Sermons on the Epistle . . . to the Colossians	1672
16.	Joseph Caryl	The Nature and Principles of Love	1673
17.	—	Scottish Metrical Version of Psalms	1673
18.	Edward Polhill	The Divine Will Considered in the eternal decrees	1673
19.	Vavasor Powell	A New and Useful Concordance	1673
20.	Thomas Gouge	The Surest and Safest Way of Thriving	1674
21.	Henry Scudder	The Christian's Daily Walk	1674
22.	Samuel Petto	The Difference between the O and New Covenant	1674
23.	James Durham	The Law Unsealed	1676
24.	Patrick Gillespie	The Ark of the Covenant Opened	1677
25.	Samuel Corbyn	An Awakening Call (in later editions entitled, <i>The Necessity, Seriousness and Sweetness of Practical (2nd. ed) Religion</i>)	1677
26.	Elisha Coles	A Practical Discourse of God's Sovereignty	1678
27.	Stephen Lobb	The Glory of Free Grace	1680
28.	Bartholomew Ashwood	The Best Treasure	1681
29.	Samuel Clark	The Holy Bible with Annotations	1690

Notes.

1. In 1671 a preface signed 'J.O.' appeared in *The Freeness of the Grace and Love of God* by William Bridge. Owen denied that he wrote this in his 'epistle' in *Caryl's Nature . . . of Love* (1673) after Dr. John Echard had launched an attack upon him for writing it.
2. In *The Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey* (1671) there is a poem attributed to 'J.O.' but this is not Dr. John Owen.
3. *Banners of Grace and Love* (1657) seems to be a revised edition of Whitfield's, *Strengthene out of Weaknesse* (1652).