

John Davenant and John Owen on the Death of Christ

Dr. Michael J. Lynch, Instructor

Course Description

Perhaps no two names among early modern Reformed orthodoxy better exemplify the diversity of the Reformed tradition on the extent of the atonement than John Davenant and John Owen. Davenant, the Cambridge-trained Bishop in the Church of England and delegate to the Synod of Dordt, taught a version of hypothetical universalism, affirming that Christ died for all people. Owen, the Oxford-trained Congregationalist who served as Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, taught that Christ only died for the elect. These remarkably educated seventeenth-century Reformed Englishmen wrote two of the better-known treatises on the extent of Christ's atonement—Davenant's *On the Death of Christ (De Morte Christi)* and Owen's *Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.

Students will carefully read and examine these works, comparing how they use Scripture and theologize about the person and work of Christ. Special attention will be given to the authors' broader theological context, such as their interlocutors and relation to the broader Reformed tradition and its confessions. Finally, students will consider how these atonement theologies bear upon other issues such as predestination, and vice versa.

Course Format

The format of the course will be predominantly one of guided discussion. The instructor will often be doing most of the talking, but generally to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion, rather than in straight-up lectures. Thus, students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute.

Classes will meet via Zoom for two and a half hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on a private discussion board.

Course Objectives

Objectives for this course include: (1) to get a basic biographical knowledge of each theologian (2) to sketch the theological contours and development of this doctrine in each theologian's corpus (3) to note the various scholastic distinctions employed by each (4) to better understand the historical context in which *The Death of Death* and *De Morte Christi* were written (5) to summarize where Owen and Davenant agree and disagree relative to the death of Christ and

its extent (6) to remark on the various pastoral concerns related to the doctrine of the death of Christ, especially in its relation to the offer of the Gospel.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly readings (due before our meeting each week).
2. Weekly interaction with fellow participants and the instructor in live class sessions.

Additional Course Requirements for Course Credit:

1. Weekly (8) 1-page, typed, single spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, reflections which engage with the assigned readings for that day. These may range from a simple digest of the material to an engagement with and reflection upon a single aspect of the reading.
2. One (1) 12–15-page essay exploring a topic related to the course and approved by the instructor.

Course Text

Both texts are available online.

John Owen, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or the Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. London: W.W., 1648. [This volume is also available through Banner of Truth [here](#) and in volume 10 of *The Works of John Owen*. Discussion will be led from the 1648 edition for reasons to be discussed in class, although you may wish to purchase the modern reprint.]

“*A Dissertation on the Death of Christ, as to Its Extent and Special Benefits: Containing a Short History of Pelagianism, and Shewing the Agreement of the Doctrines of the Church of England on General Redemption, Election, and Predestination, with the Primitive Fathers of the Christian Church, and above All, with the Holy Scriptures.*” In *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians . . . to which is added a translation of Dissertatio de morte Christi, by the same prelate*. Translated, with a life of the author and notes illustrative of the writers and authorities referred to in the work, by Josiah Allport, 2:309–558. 2 vols. London: Hamilton, Adams, 1831–32.

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Discussion Topics	Reading
-------------	--------------	--------------------------	----------------

1	TBD	Introduction and Owen	Owen: Dedication, Blurbs, To the Reader, and Book I
2	TBD	Owen	Owen: Book II
3	TBD	Owen	Owen: Book III
4	TBD	Owen	Owen: Book IV (first half)
5	TBD	Owen	Owen: Book IV (second half)
6	TBD	Davenant	Davenant: Ch. 1
7	TBD	Davenant	Davenant: Chs. 2 & 3
8	TBD	Davenant	Davenant: Ch. 4
9	TBD	Davenant	Davenant: Chs. 5 & 6
10	TBD	Davenant and Concluding Thoughts	Davenant: Ch. 7