



A SYSTEMATIC SUMMARY

REFORMATION

▶ THEOLOGY ◀

Prologue by Michael Horton

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“Dr. Barrett has gathered a full stable of blue-ribbon theologians for this winning volume. All the essays are carefully contextualized, the Reformers judiciously selected, and the bibliographies thoughtfully assembled. Some chapters are especially notable for the breadth and depth of the author’s research, others for their adroit summaries of complex themes. There is little doubt that *Reformation Theology* will ably serve the church and academy as a textbook for students and a reference work for scholars. It is already reshaping my own teaching on late-medieval and early-modern theology, and I commend it heartily.”

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“This delightful volume is a breath of fresh air in Reformation studies, putting theology back at the center. It shows with crystal clarity how the Reformers expounded the heart of the Christian faith, and why these evangelical doctrines still matter so much.”

Andrew Atherstone, Latimer Research Fellow, Wycliffe Hall, University of
Oxford

“This rich book takes up the challenge to think beyond 2017 and does so in a very stimulating manner. Each of the contributors is an expert in his field and knows that the Reformation is a highly relevant treasure for both the church and theology. They convincingly encourage the readers to think through this treasure and adopt it. Everyone eager not just to look back at five hundred years of reformation but also to look forward finds here the perfect material.”

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“Dr. Matthew Barrett has assembled a first-rate team of pastors and scholars to write an anniversary volume of the Reformation that promises to receive a welcoming readership across a wide spectrum of the evangelical community. At a time when some are suggesting that for all practical purposes the Reformation is ‘over,’ Barrett’s *Reformation Theology* offers a needed corrective by showing the relevance of the Reformation for healthy church ministry and the Christian life today.”

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“This collection of essays is both necessary and appropriate. It’s necessary because the issues addressed mattered then and matter now. It’s appropriate because this is how we best remember our past and honor the Reformers. The Reformation is our pivot point in the past, and the issues it addressed remain the pivot point for church life and discipleship.”

Stephen J. Nichols, President, Reformation Bible College; Chief Academic
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Timothy George, Founding Dean, Beeson Divinity School; General Editor, *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*

“An anniversary is a great moment to do a book like *Reformation Theology*. And with the passing of time, Reformation truths and the importance of the Reformation as a milestone in church history get forgotten—incredible as that sounds. But it is true. Perhaps we should not be surprised. How many times in the Old Testament do we read that the Israelites ‘forgot’? So I am enthusiastic about *Reformation Theology*.”

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“Matthew Barrett is certainly to be congratulated on bringing together this outstanding group of top-tier theologians and Reformation scholars to produce this wonderful resource. Not only are readers given a masterful survey of historical theology illuminating the key reformational themes of the sixteenth century, but also we are provided thoughtful and insightful guidance to wrestle with the important theological issues facing the church in the twenty-first century. I am delighted to recommend this comprehensive work.”

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“Nothing would benefit American evangelicals more than a real rediscovery of the Reformation—not a superficial regurgitation of the familiar talking points but a powerful, experiential encounter with the learned depth, wisdom, humility, piety, and practical know-how of our Reformation forefathers. A volume like the one Dr. Matthew Barrett has put together is a big step in the right direction.”

Greg Forster, Director, Oikonomia Network at the Center for Transformational Churches, Trinity International University; author, *The Joy of Calvinism*

“The lineup of authors in *Reformation Theology* and their respective topics reflect the very best in Reformed evangelical scholarship. The book should be of wide-spread interest. Not only would seminary and college students find the volume profitable in their studies, but all informed Christians would benefit from the essays.”

W. Andrew HOFFECKER, Professor of Church History Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary–Jackson; author, *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton*

“A clear articulation of one’s Reformed faith requires familiarity with the ideas and events in which that faith is rooted. Unfortunately, there are few books on the subject currently in print that are both learned and accessible. Thankfully, this volume offers an outstanding solution to this problem.”

Chris Castaldo, Pastor, New Covenant Church, Naperville, Illinois; author, *Talking with Catholics about the Gospel*; coauthor, *The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants after 500 Years*

Reformation Theology

A Systematic Summary

Edited by Matthew Barrett

Prologue by Michael Horton

Reformation Theology: A Systematic Summary

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This book is dedicated to my father, Michael Barrett. You are always so very proud of me for becoming a theologian. I hope this book makes you all the more proud. Thank you for your love and encouragement from beginning to end.

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Prologue

What Are We Celebrating?

Taking Stock after Five Centuries

Launching the festivities for the celebration of the Reformation's five hundredth anniversary, a joint service is planned for Lund, Sweden, on October 31, 2016, led by Pope Francis and Lutheran World Federation president Bishop Munib Younan. In the run-up to an official commemoration in Wittenberg exactly one year later, an international and ecumenical church convention is scheduled for May, according to a World Council of Churches report, with one hundred thousand attendees expected for the Berlin event. "Reformation means courageously seeking what is new and turning away from old, familiar customs," according to the convention's president, Christina Aus der Au of Switzerland.¹

Comments like this one, already replete in the mainline Protestant world, illustrate the wide variations in interpreting the Reformation and its ongoing significance. Many of these erstwhile heirs of the Reformation have long since moved the creeds and confessions to the "Historical Documents" section of the hymnal. As the mighty river

1. Quoted in Stephen Brown, "Reformation celebrations will be ecumenical and international, says German Protestant leader," World Council of Churches, May 12, 2016, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/reformation-celebrations-will-be-ecumenical-and-international-says-german-protestant-leader>.

has become a virtually dry riverbed, one wonders how such crowds can be mustered to celebrate a movement whose teachings are today less significant to inhabitants of Wittenberg and Geneva than they are to many in Indonesia, Nigeria, and Seoul.

But what of the historical evangelical witness? Arising out of various Protestant revival movements in the eighteenth century, evangelical mission societies were formed in the old Reformation capitol and for a time breathed new life into churches and institutions that, to a large extent, had succumbed to Enlightenment rationalism and doctrinal indifference. In many instances, Lutheran and Reformed theology combined with Pietism to form a creative if sometimes combustible mixture. Although a relatively small but vigorous evangelical party thrives today in the Church of England (and smaller ones in the Episcopal churches of the United States and Canada), the strength of evangelical Anglicanism has shifted to the Global South.

To be sure, there is a substantial presence of continuing churches of the Reformation in the United States, including, for example, over 2 million Missouri Synod Lutherans, 350,000 Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church members, and about the same number who belong to the Presbyterian Church in America. However, these tallies are dwarfed by their Global South partners. To offer only a few examples, the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria numbers 4 million, and the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Christ, centered in the Plateau region, boasts around 1.5 million communicant members. The National Presbyterian Church of Mexico reports 2.8 million members, and there are 10 million Presbyterians in South Korea, most of whom are much more conservative than the mainline Presbyterian Church (USA). It is a similar story throughout the majority world. In many if not most of these instances, the growth has been due to the mixture of confessionalism and pietism that was brought by missionaries and now thrives in the seminaries and churches.

Doctrine: From Minimalism to Indifference²

British and North American evangelicalism has always been a coat of many colors in terms of doctrine and practice. In addition to the

2. This and the following section borrow and adapt material from Michael S. Horton, "To Be or Not to Be: The Uneasy Relationship between Reformed Christianity and American Evangelicalism," *Modern Reformation* 17, no. 6 (2008): 18–21. Used by permission of *Modern Reformation*.

older traditions of the Reformation and Pietism, it has been shaped by revivalism and the massive upheaval in mainline Protestantism that eventually split into modernist and fundamentalist camps. Many confessional Lutherans as well as Presbyterian, Reformed, and Anglican churches found themselves divided from one another. On the one hand, they found allies among those who were willing to take unambiguous stands on the authority of Scripture and salvation by grace alone in Christ alone through faith alone. They stood shoulder to shoulder in their defense and proclamation of Christ's deity, vicarious death for sinners, resurrection, and bodily return. On the other hand, confessional churches found themselves somewhat alienated by fundamentalist obscurantism, legalism, and end-time scenarios. When a united evangelical stand was to be taken, it always seemed that it was the confessional churches rather than those of the more revivalistic orientation that had to suppress confessional distinctives that were for them hardly peripheral matters.

And yet, it seems to be in these broader evangelical circles where renewed interest in the Reformation erupts periodically. The most recent example, at least in the United States, is the enormously successful effort of the Gospel Coalition, founded by Tim Keller and D. A. Carson. Though far from alone, the Gospel Coalition has awakened widespread interest globally in the authority of Scripture, Christ-centered proclamation, and God's grace in justifying and sanctifying sinners. Yet even this promising movement exhibits some of the weaknesses as well as strengths of American evangelicalism. Reading through the Book of Concord, the Three Forms of Unity, the Westminster Standards, and the Thirty-Nine Articles, one appreciates the concern to confess the fullness of the ecumenical, catholic, and evangelical faith rather than to reduce the essentials to a few propositions.

The *strength* of evangelicalism is its minimalism. While sometimes moving peripheral matters to the center and more central convictions to the realm of nonessentials, the focus on Scripture, Christ's person and work, the necessity of the new birth, and Christ's return has afforded not only a wide berth for cooperation but also a laser focus on contested points. The *weakness* of evangelicalism is also its

minimalism. Doctrinal minimalism in one generation can be a way of focusing the fight; in another, the path to doctrinal indifference.

In 1920, a “plan of union for evangelical churches” was put forward. The Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield evaluated the “creed” of this plan as it was being studied by Presbyterians. Warfield observed that the new confession being proposed “contains nothing which is not believed by Evangelicals,” and yet “nothing which is not believed . . . by the adherents of the Church of Rome, for example.” As he summed it up,

There is nothing about justification by faith in this creed. And that means that all the gains obtained in that great religious movement which we call the Reformation are cast out of the window. . . . There is nothing about the atonement in the blood of Christ in this creed. And that means that the whole gain of the long mediaeval search after truth is thrown summarily aside. . . . There is nothing about sin and grace in this creed. . . . We need not confess our sins anymore; we need not recognize the existence of such a thing. We need believe in the Holy Spirit only “as guide and comforter”—do not the Rationalists do the same? And this means that all the gain the whole world has reaped from the great Augustinian conflict goes out of the window with the rest. . . . It is just as true that the gains of the still earlier debates which occupied the first age of the Church’s life, through which we attained to the understanding of the fundamental truths of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ are discarded by this creed also. There is no Trinity in this creed; no Deity of Christ—or of the Holy Spirit.³

Where justification through faith is the heart of the evangel, how can “evangelicals” omit it from their common confession? “Is this the kind of creed,” Warfield continued, “which twentieth-century Presbyterianism will find sufficient as a basis for co-operation in evangelistic activities? Then it can get along in its evangelistic activities without the gospel. For it is precisely the gospel that this creed neglects altogether.” Warfield concluded, “Fellowship is a good word, and a great duty. But

3. B. B. Warfield, “In Behalf of Evangelical Religion,” in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 1:386.

our fellowship, according to Paul, must be in ‘the furtherance of the gospel.’”⁴

The current doctrinal statement of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) at least improves on the “creed” that Warfield criticized. Yet, like that 1921 statement, the NAE basis includes nothing to which a Roman Catholic could not yield assent in good conscience:

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵

There is nothing about the sacraments, of course. We may lament the failure of the Reformers to find unity on the scriptural doctrine, but as J. Gresham Machen observed, all the parties at least thought that the Eucharist was central enough to provoke debate. But the tendency in evangelicalism has been to conclude that whatever is not included in its “statements of faith” is of secondary importance and is “not a gospel issue.”

In contrast with the confessions and catechisms produced by the magisterial Reformation, this NAE statement not only leaves out

4. *Ibid.*, 1:387.

5. “Statement of Faith,” National Association of Evangelicals, accessed June 2, 2016, <http://nae.net/statement-of-faith/>.

entirely the central article of justification (while including the new birth) but fails even to express the *catholic* heart of evangelical faith. It bears the marks of a doctrinal minimalism that has increasingly accommodated a doctrinal indifference in evangelical circles.

For some reason, we acquired the assumption that if we surrendered the confession, we could keep the creed; then, if we surrendered the creed, we could keep a few fundamentals. At the end of the line arrives a generation that does not even know enough of its legacy to be aware when it is straying from or rejecting it. Fundamentalism devolved into a spirit of controversy without its proper coordinates; evangelicalism sought to correct the imbalance but did so by further downplaying the richness of the Reformation confessions—even in their differences.

“Protestantism without the Reformation”

Winding up his lecture tour in the United States before returning to Europe, where he would meet his death in a Nazi concentration camp, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) described America as “Protestantism without the Reformation.”⁶ Although the influence of the Reformation in America’s religious history has been profound (especially prior to the mid-nineteenth century), and remains a counterweight to the dominance of the revivalist heritage, Bonhoeffer’s diagnosis seems justified:

God has granted American Christianity no Reformation. He has given it strong revivalist preachers, churchmen and theologians, but no Reformation of the church of Jesus Christ by the Word of God. . . . American theology and the American church as a whole have never been able to understand the meaning of “criticism” by the Word of God and all that signifies. Right to the last they do not understand that God’s “criticism” touches even religion, the Christianity of the church and the sanctification of Christians, and that God has founded his church beyond religion and beyond ethics. . . . In American theology, Christianity is still essentially religion and ethics. . . . Because of this the person and work of Christ must,

6. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Protestantism without the Reformation,” in *The Collected Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, vol. 1, *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes, 1928–1936*, ed. Edwin H. Robertson, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (London: Collins, 1965), 92–118.

for theology, sink into the background and in the long run remain misunderstood, because it is not recognized as the sole ground of radical judgment and radical forgiveness.⁷

The career of Charles G. Finney (1792–1875) illustrates the extent to which evangelical revivalism can stray from the evangelical convictions of the Reformation. Setting aside the sufficiency of Scripture for the message and methods of outreach, Finney devised new methods based on his conviction that the new birth was as natural as any conversion from one form of behavior to another. Rejecting the doctrines of Christ’s substitutionary atonement as contrary to reason and morality, he called the doctrine of justification by Christ’s imputed righteousness “another gospel.” Referring to the Westminster Confession’s statement on justification, Finney declared, “If this is not antinomianism, I know not what is.” Justification by Christ’s imputed righteousness not only is “absurd” but also undermines all motivation for personal and social holiness. In fact, “full present obedience is a condition of justification.” No one can be justified “while sin, any degree of sin, remains in him.” The teaching that believers are “simultaneously justified and sinful,” he judged, “has slain more souls, I fear, than all the universalism that ever cursed the world.” “Representing the atonement as the ground of the sinner’s justification has been a sad occasion of stumbling to many.”⁸ Finney’s system, with its Pelagian tendencies, went well beyond anything that the Reformers faced from the Council of Trent. If Pelagianism is the natural religion of the fallen heart, it is especially evident in the religious history of a nation devoted to the self-made individual.

American Christianity has not been without its heroic defenders of the faith. In fact, British and American evangelicals have contributed the most energetic efforts on behalf of, as well as detractions from, the *evangel* in the modern age. In the majority world, the torch is carried by Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi of Uganda, Stephen Tong in Indonesia, Nam-Joon Kim in Seoul, Paul Swarup in Delhi, and countless others who—without fanfare and prestige—proclaim Christ as the

7. *Ibid.*, 117–18.

8. All references from Charles G. Finney, *Systematic Theology* (1846; repr., Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1976), 46, 57, 321–22.

only hope of sinners to the nations. Not all “evangelical creeds” are minimalistic like the one evaluated by Warfield.

Yet as we survey the landscape of global Christianity, it would appear that diverse and even contradictory streams weave in and out of each other under the name *evangelical*. I am haunted by John Stott’s warning to me years ago that evangelicalism is “growing, but superficial.” All that I have said in favor of the growth of evangelical Christianity in the Global South must be qualified by Stott’s observation, informed by a long ministry that has contributed in no small part to that success. As the 2010 Lausanne event in Cape Town highlighted, one of the greatest threats to Christianity, especially (but by no means exclusively) in Africa, is the prosperity gospel. In addition, wherever the North Atlantic academies (including some evangelical seminaries) continue their influence, the Global South will be increasingly infected by the trends that have corrupted our own schools and churches.

***Sola*: Should We Still Protest?**

Stirring up dissension, a false teacher has “an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words,” Paul warns (1 Tim. 6:4). But sometimes a word makes all the difference; in fact, as Cardinal Newman observed, the Rubicon between heresy and orthodoxy with respect to the *homoousion* debate was as thin as a single vowel. Similarly, the entire Reformation controversy turned on the qualifier *sola*—“only.”

This too would be just another form of minimalism if the Reformation had reduced its confession to “the five solas.” However, this it did not do. After all, it was not just a movement; it was a continuing Christian tradition—a reformed catholic church, in spite of its own quarrels and dissensions. The evangelical confessions and catechisms that came out of that era incorporated all the great achievements of the patristic consensus, carefully and discerningly included sound insights of medieval theology, and encompassed the essential truths of Scripture reaching from creation to consummation. Thus, the churches of the Reformation were defined not merely by what distinguished them from other professing churches but also by what they shared as a common treasury.

Having said that, *sola* was—and remains—an important word. Of course, all parties at that time agreed that Scripture is God’s infallible revelation. Yet in addition to the scriptural letter, there was the “living voice” of the magisterium that could establish new articles of faith and practice. Of course, everyone believed in the necessity of grace, faith, and Christ. But free will must cooperate with grace, and faith must become love, expressed through good works, in order to be justifying, and to the merits of Christ one must add his or her own merits as well as those of Mary and the saints. To be sure, God receives the glory for making all this possible, but he does not receive *all* the glory because salvation comes “to those who do what lies within them,” as the Counter-Reformation taught.

*SOLO CHRISTO, SOLA FIDE*⁹

Although it had been said in various other ways by the Reformers, it was the early seventeenth-century Reformed theologian Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638) who identified the doctrine of justification as “the article of a standing or falling church.”¹⁰ Many respond today, as they did at the time of the Reformation, by saying that a doctrine that is as widely disputed within Christendom can hardly hold that kind of status. However, the issue can only be settled on the basis of Scripture. After all, the doctrine was already challenged within the churches planted by the apostles, including Paul.

Since the Second Vatican Council, Protestant–Roman Catholic dialogue on justification has opened the door to greater understanding, and this process itself remains vital. It is repeatedly asserted that the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (2000) resolved the central debate of the Reformation.¹¹ Signed by representatives of the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation, the Joint Declaration announced that Trent’s anathemas were no longer binding

9. Brief portions of this section are drawn and adapted from Michael S. Horton, “Does Justification Still Matter?,” *Modern Reformation* 16, no. 5 (2007): 11–17. Used by permission of *Modern Reformation*.

10. Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica* (Hanover: Conradi Eifridi, 1618), 711, cited in Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2:193n3.

11. The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

because they no longer referred to the views held by today's mainline Lutheran partner.

Other initiatives, including (in the United States) the statement "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT), followed by "The Gift of Salvation," have been regarded by many as significant advances not only in understanding but in agreement on the basic message of the gospel.¹² In these common statements, divine acceptance is said to be by God's grace rather than human merit,¹³ although "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" placed this question on the list of continuing disagreement while nevertheless expressing agreement on the gospel.

Perhaps the clearest statement of caution against impatient announcements of success on this point has been offered by the principal theologian on the Roman Catholic side of ECT, Avery Cardinal Dulles. He begins by acknowledging the importance of the doctrine of justification as "a matter of eternal life or death." "If it is not important," he says, "nothing is."¹⁴ Yet the following are differences yet to be resolved:

- 1) Is justification the action of God alone, or do we who receive it cooperate by our response to God's offer of grace? 2) Does God, when He justifies us, simply impute to us the merits of Christ, or does He transform us and make us intrinsically righteous? 3) Do we receive justification by faith alone, or only by a faith enlivened by love and fruitful in good works? 4) Is the reward of heavenly life a free gift of God to believers, or do they merit it by their faithfulness and good works?¹⁵

For all the progress in mutual understanding represented by the Joint Declaration, says Dulles, at least for its part, Rome continues to affirm over against the Reformers the second answer to each of these questions. Dulles observes first that, according to the Council of Trent's "Decree on Justification" (1547), "human cooperation is involved" in justification. "Secondly, it taught that justification consists in an inner renewal brought about by divine grace; thirdly, that justification does

12. These two statements appeared in *First Things*.

13. *Joint Declaration*, par. 15.

14. Avery Cardinal Dulles, "Two Languages of Salvation: The Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration," *First Things* 98 (December 1999): 25.

15. *Ibid.*

not take place by faith without hope, charity, and good works; and finally, that the justified, by performing good works, merit the reward of eternal life.”¹⁶

Nothing in the Joint Declaration may be interpreted as contradicting Trent or any subsequent magisterial teaching. Furthermore, Dulles continues, “Because the Holy See had been heavily involved in the composition” of the Joint Declaration in 1994, “its acceptance was taken for granted.” “But to the surprise of many observers,” Dulles relates, “the Council for Promoting Christian Unity on June 25, 1998, released an ‘Official Response’ expressing a number of severe criticisms and apparently calling into question the consensus expressed by the Joint Declaration.”¹⁷

After acknowledging the more tenable statements of consensus, Dulles points to the reason for the Vatican’s initial disapproval. Among other things, the “Official Response” challenged “its lack of attention to the sacrament of penance, in which justification is restored to those who have lost it.” Dulles continues,

In addition, it contests the Lutheran view that the doctrine of justification is the supreme touchstone of right doctrine. . . . Most importantly for our purposes, the Catholic Response raises the question whether the Lutheran positions as explained in the Joint Declaration really escape the anathemas of the Council of Trent.

Trent clearly denies that we are justified solely on the basis of Christ’s righteousness imputed, Dulles observes. Roman Catholics are thus bound to affirm that believers truly merit everlasting life. Dulles concludes that on these and related issues, “no agreement has been reached.”¹⁸

It is difficult to resist the conclusion, therefore, that the ecumenical conversations that reached their apogee in the Joint Declaration are nothing more than pious advice from the Roman Catholic point of view. For the mainline Lutherans (and the other mainline Protestant bodies that endorsed it), it was quite a different matter. They had in fact

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 26.

18. *Ibid.*, 27–28.

altered their view of justification. According to the Joint Declaration, faith in its reception of justification is the same as love.¹⁹ However, this was the heart of the difference between the Reformers and Rome. It is difficult to know how an evangelical doctrine of justification can be salvaged from such a concession. While *the faith that justifies* is active in love, crucial to the evangelical argument has been the insistence that faith *in the act of justification* is merely a passive receiving. Since love is the fulfillment of the law, justification by love is equivalent to justification by law.

For many across the ecclesiastical spectrum, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, liberal or evangelical, there is a temptation to want to conserve the cultural clout that Christianity has exercised at least nominally in the West. Like an abandoned spouse, churches often go to enormous lengths in order to demonstrate that Christianity is still relevant for our moral, social, economic, and political crises. Thus, the real divide, we are told, is between secularism and faith, immanence and transcendence. At least in the classical Reformation perspective, however, it is unclear what kind of transcendence would be worth believing in if God does not justify the wicked by free grace alone. Even here we recognize the cleavage between synergistic and monergistic theologies, regardless of whether the former is Roman Catholic or Protestant in character. The real divide is therefore not between secularism and spirituality or even between those inside and outside the church but between the gospel of Christ and other gospels. While substantial differences remain in our definition of that gospel, those issues remain, tragically, church dividing.

Justification is not just one doctrine among many. Nor is it an isolated *sola*—one of the “five points” of Protestants. The judgment of Roman Catholic theologian Paul Molnar is exactly right: “For all the supposed agreement of the Joint Declaration, the fact remains that Roman Catholic and Reformed theology are still separated in practice by this most basic way of thinking about our relationship with God.”²⁰ At stake is *solo Christo*—whether we are saved solely by the

19. *Joint Declaration*, par. 25.

20. Paul Molnar, “The Theology of Justification in Dogmatic Context” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark A. Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 238.

merits of Christ or whether, by our grace-empowered cooperation, we can truly merit everlasting life. It is a question about whether God is just and merciful; whether fallen human beings are spiritually dead or only morally weak; whether Christ's obedient life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection are sufficient for the redemption of sinners; and whether the triune God should therefore receive all the praise and thanksgiving for salvation from beginning to end. It is therefore a question, too, about whether the church is the mother of Scripture, able to promulgate new doctrines and forms of worship, or whether the church is the daughter of the Word, rescued and ruled by a Word that it does not and cannot speak to itself.

Yet, as I have proposed above, matters are not so settled in Protestantism either. Yale theologian George Lindbeck has persuasively argued that the disconnect in many minds with respect to justification is more fundamentally an inability to comprehend the meaning of the atonement itself. Referring to the eleventh-century debate between Abelard and Anselm, Lindbeck says that at least in practice, Abelard's view of salvation by following Christ's example (and the cross as the demonstration of God's love that motivates our repentance) now seems to have a clear edge over Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement. "The atonement is not high on the contemporary agendas of either Catholics or Protestants," Lindbeck surmises. "More specifically, the penal-substitutionary versions (and distortions) of Anselm's satisfaction theory that have been dominant on the popular level for hundreds of years are disappearing."²¹

This situation is as true for evangelicals as for liberal Protestants, Lindbeck observes. This is because justification through faith alone (*sola fide*) makes little sense in a system that makes central our subjective conversion (understood in synergistic terms as cooperation with grace), rather than the objective work of Christ:²²

Those who continued to use the *sola fide* language assumed that they agreed with the reformers no matter how much, under the

21. George Lindbeck, "Justification and Atonement: An Ecumenical Trajectory," in *By Faith Alone: Essays on Justification in Honor of Gerhard O. Forde*, ed. Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 205.

22. *Ibid.*, 205–6.

influence of conversionist pietism and revivalism, they turned the faith that saves into a meritorious good work of the free will, a voluntaristic decision to believe that Christ bore the punishment of sins on the cross *pro me*, for each person individually. Improbable as it might seem given the metaphor (and the Johannine passage from which it comes), everyone is thus capable of being “born again” if only he or she tries hard enough. Thus with the loss of the Reformation understanding of the faith that justifies as itself God’s gift, Anselmic atonement theory became culturally associated with a self-righteousness that was both moral and religious and therefore rather nastier, its critics thought, than the primarily moral self-righteousness of the liberal Abelardians. In time, to move on in our story, the liberals increasingly ceased to be even Abelardian.²³

“Our increasingly feel-good therapeutic culture is antithetical to talk of the cross,” and our “consumerist society” has made the doctrine a pariah.²⁴ “A more puzzling feature of this development as it has affected professedly confessional churches,” Lindbeck adds, “is the silence that has surrounded it. There have been few audible protests.”²⁵ Even most contemporary theologies of the cross fit the pattern of Jesus-as-model, but justification itself is rarely described in accordance with the Reformation pattern even by conservative evangelicals, Lindbeck suggests. Most of them, as has already been indicated, are conversionists holding to Arminian versions of the *ordo salutis*, which are further removed from Reformation theology than was the Council of Trent.²⁶ “Where the cross once stood is now a vacuum.”²⁷

All this is significant for ecumenical discussions, says Lindbeck, who has been a leader in mainline Lutheran and Vatican ecumenism. After all, he concludes, even if we might reach some agreement on justification, it seems like a hollow victory if the atonement has slipped from view across the ecclesial divide. “It seems that the withdrawal of the condemnations under these circumstances is not wrong, but vacuous.”²⁸

23. *Ibid.*, 207.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 208.

26. *Ibid.*, 209.

27. *Ibid.*, 211.

28. *Ibid.*, 216.

If the foregoing arguments are close to the truth, it would be premature to conclude that the Reformation is over. On the contrary, its rich and saving truths are as desperately needed today in Protestant as in Roman Catholic and Orthodox circles. It may well be that Protestantism is in its death throes as an identifiable tradition within Christianity. And it would be churlish to preserve a name that means nothing more than “courageously seeking what is new and turning away from old, familiar customs.” If “Protestant” does not refer to a specific set of convictions grounded in God’s revelation, then it is merely an attitude—and not a particularly healthy one—looking for occasions to protest. If this is what Protestantism now means, then it is no more than another schismatic sect, cultural rallying point, self-help group, or political action committee.

*SOLA SCRIPTURA*²⁹

John Calvin complained of being assailed by “two sects”—“the Pope and the Anabaptists.” Obviously quite different from each other, both nevertheless “boast extravagantly of the Spirit” and in so doing “bury the Word of God under their own falsehoods.”³⁰ Both separate the Spirit from the Word by advocating the living voice of God with the inner speech of the church or of the pious individual. Of course, the Bible has its important place, but it is the “letter” that must be made relevant and effective in the world today by Spirit-led popes and prophets.

Radical Anabaptist leader Thomas Müntzer taunted Martin Luther with his claim to superiority through a higher word than that which “merely beats the air.” The Reformers called this “enthusiasm” (lit., “God-within-ism”), because it made the external Word of Scripture subservient to the inner word supposedly spoken by the Spirit today within the individual or the church. In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul’s letter-Spirit contrast refers to the law apart from the gospel as a “ministry of

29. This section is adapted from Michael S. Horton, “The Gospel and the Sufficiency of Scripture: Church of the Word or Word of the Church?,” *Modern Reformation* 19, no. 6 (2010): 25–32. Used by permission of *Modern Reformation*.

30. John Calvin, *Reply by Calvin to Cardinal Sadoleto’s Letter*, in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 1, *On the Reformation of the Church*, trans. Henry Beveridge, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (1844; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958), 36.

death” and the gospel as the Spirit’s means of justifying and regenerating sinners. However, Gnostics, enthusiasts, and mystics throughout the ages have interpreted the apostle’s terms as a contrast between the text of Scripture (“letter”) and inner spiritual knowledge (“spirit”).

Modern “Enthusiasm”

If only it were that easy to identify the “two sects” in our day. Tragically, “enthusiasm” has become one of the dominant ways of undermining the sufficiency of Scripture, and it is evident across the spectrum. Rome has consistently insisted that the letter of Scripture requires the living presence of the Spirit speaking through the magisterium. Radical Protestants have emphasized a supposedly immediate, direct, and spontaneous work of the Spirit in our hearts apart from creaturely means. Enlightenment philosophers and liberal theologians—almost all of whom were reared in Pietism—resurrected the radical Anabaptist interpretation of “letter” versus “spirit.” “Letter” came to mean the Bible (or any external authority), while “spirit” was equivalent not to the Holy Spirit but to our own inner spirit, reason, or experience.

By the mid-twentieth century, the synods and general assemblies even of denominations historically tied to the Reformation began to speak of the Scriptures as an indispensable record of the pious experiences, reflections, rituals, beliefs, and lives of saints in the past, while what we really need in this hour is to “follow the Spirit” wherever he, she, or it may lead us. And we now know where this spirit has led these erstwhile churches, but it is the spirit of the age, not the Spirit of Christ, that has taken them there.

This broad tendency in modern faith and practice has been finely described by William Placher as the “domestication of transcendence.”³¹ In other words, it is not that revelation, inspiration, and authority are denied but that the surprising, disorienting, and external voice of God is finally transformed into the “relevant,” uplifting, and empowering inner voice of our own reason, morality, and experience.

Such domestication of transcendence means that the self—or the “community” (whatever name it goes by)—is protected from the sur-

31. William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

prising, disorienting, and judging speech of our Creator. Yet this also means that we cannot be saved, since faith comes by hearing God speak his word of salvation in his Son (Rom. 10:17). This is not something that bubbles up within us, either as pious individuals or as the holy church, but a Word that comes to us. It is not a familiar Word but a strange and unsettling speech that strips us of our moral pretenses, overturns our most intuitive assumptions, disturbs our activistic programs. Basically, we are told to stop talking to ourselves as if we were hearing the voice of God. Through the lips of other sinful messengers, we are put on the receiving end of our identity. We do not discover our “higher selves” but are told who we really are: treacherous image bearers of God. We do not find our bearings “in Adam” toward a fuller sense of inner peace and security but are driven out of ourselves to Christ, who clothes us in his righteousness.

“Enthusiasm”—the tendency to assimilate God’s external Word to the inner word—is inseparable from the Pelagian tendency to assimilate God’s saving gospel to our own efforts. Conversely, *sola Scriptura* (the sufficiency of Scripture as the final authority for faith and practice) is inseparably bound to *solo Christo*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide* (the gospel of Christ alone by grace alone received through faith alone).

There is a “fundamentalist” approach to *sola Scriptura* that can be reduced to the bumper sticker, “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” In this expression, there is no sense that the *content* of what God said in any way constitutes its authority. A Muslim might use the same phrase in speaking of the Qur’an or a Mormon of the Book of Mormon.

However, a genuinely evangelical approach maintains that Scripture is sufficient not just because it alone is divinely inspired (though that is true) but also because these sixty-six books that form our Christian canon provide everything that God has deemed sufficient for revealing his law and his gospel. Speculation will not help us find God but will only lead us to some idol that we have created in our own image. We may feel more secure in our autonomy when we pretend that our own inner voice of reason, spirituality, or experience is the voice of the Spirit. We may be excited about a new program for updating our churches and transforming our nation, our families, and our lives, but there is no power of God unto salvation in our own agendas and

efforts. We can find all sorts of practical advice for our daily lives outside the Bible.

As with justification, the church today has never been in greater need of recovering the Reformers' sense of being gripped by an external Word "above all earthly pow'rs." And, as with justification, Protestantism generally displays a weaker confidence in the authority of Scripture than the Reformers faced in the medieval church.

In the best-selling *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah and fellow sociologists surveyed religion in the United States. They concluded that it is best described as "Sheilaism," named after one person they interviewed who said that she follows her own little voice. Every American is the founder of his or her own religion, following the dictates of his or her own heart.³²

But two centuries ago Immanuel Kant had already told us that the most certain tenet he knew was "the moral law within." External religions may have different ways of expressing it, each with its own sacred texts and miraculous claims to vindicate its authority, its own forms of worship, and its own creeds. The externals he called "ecclesiastical faiths," contrasted with the "pure religion" of practical morality. The latter needed no external authority or confirmation. We look within ourselves, not only for the law inscribed on our conscience but also for the power to save ourselves—and our world—from whatever evils vie for our allegiance. Kant insisted that we do not need an external gospel because we are not born in original sin, helpless to save ourselves. We do not need to hear the good news of God's rescue operation because we already have everything we need within ourselves to handle the situation just fine.³³

This "enthusiast" legacy has found fertile soil in American religious experience, particularly in the history of revivalism. Writing in the nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that Americans wished "to escape from imposed systems" of any kind, "to seek by themselves and in themselves for the only reason for things, looking to results with-

32. Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, updated ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

33. For citations and interaction with Kant on these points, see Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 62–67.

out getting entangled in the means toward them.” They do not need external guidance to discover truth, “having found it in themselves.”³⁴

Placing human experience at the center was a more general trend in European Romanticism, notes Bernard Reardon, with its “intense egoism and emotionalism.”³⁵ The effect of Pietism (especially culminating in the Great Awakening), as William McLoughlin observes, was to shift the emphasis away from “collective belief, adherence to credal standards and proper observance of traditional forms, to the emphasis on individual religious experience.”³⁶ At the same time, the effect of the Enlightenment was to shift “the ultimate authority in religion” from the church to “the mind of the individual.”³⁷ Romanticism then simply changed the faculty (from mind to heart), while retaining the subject (the self, not an external authority). Even evangelical hymnody was drawn into this Romantic tide, as seen in the familiar line from the Easter song, “You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart.” Yet this inner spark, inner light, inner experience, and inner reason that guides mysticism, rationalism, idealism, and pragmatism in all ages is precisely that autonomous self that, according to the New Testament, must be crucified and buried with Christ in baptism, so that one can be raised with Christ as a denizen of the new age.

The gospel is not something that wells up within us. It is not a dictate of moral conscience or a universal doctrine of reason. As a surprising announcement that in Christ we have passed from death to life and from wrath to grace, however, the gospel is counterintuitive. So if we allow reason and experience—that which is inherent, familiar, and inwardly certain—not only to guide our access to but also to determine reality, we will be left with Kant to “the moral law within.” The good news has to be *told*, and to the extent that it is assimilated to what we think we already know and experience, it will not be good news at all: perhaps pious advice, good instruction, and practical suggestions, but not good news.

34. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer and Max Lerner, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 429.

35. Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism: Studies in Early Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9.

36. William McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977*, Chicago History of American Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 25.

37. Ned Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture, 1680–1760* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 66.

Does salvation come to us from outside ourselves, from above, from heaven, as the triune God acts in history for us? Or does salvation come from our own inner resources, enlightenment, and experience? Does God's Word declare into being a new creation, or give us helpful principles and motivations for our own self-transforming and world-transforming activities? How we answer these questions determines our view not only of the sufficiency of Scripture but also of the nature of the gospel itself.

The root of all "enthusiasm" is hostility to a God outside us, in whose hands the judgment and redemption of our lives are placed. To barricade ourselves from this assault, we try to make the "divine" an echo of ourselves and our communities. The idea of being founded by someone else has been treated in modernity as a legacy of a primitive era. We have come to think that what we experience directly within ourselves is more reliable than what we are told by someone else. Thus, we are always ready for new awareness or new advice but not for new news that can come to us only as a report that is not only told by someone else but is also entirely concerned with the achievement of someone else for us.

New Visions for Evangelical Theology

In evangelical circles today, these "two sects" converge. This is explicit, for example, in the work of Stanley Grenz, who combined his Anabaptist-Pietist heritage with "high church" arguments. Essentially, spirituality takes precedence over doctrine, personal and communal experience over external authority, and inspiration is extended beyond Scripture to include the Spirit's speaking through believers and the community—indeed, even culture today. Reason, tradition, and experience serve alongside Scripture as the four legs of the stool. Nowhere in this account does Grenz locate the origin of faith in an external gospel; rather, faith arises from an inner experience. "Because spirituality is generated from within the individual, inner motivation is crucial"—more important, in fact, than "grand theological statements."³⁸ The Christian life is not defined by God's action through Word and sacra-

38. Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 46.

ment. In fact, “The spiritual life is above all the imitation of Christ.”³⁹ We go to church, he says, not in order to receive “means of grace” but merely for fellowship and “instruction and encouragement.”⁴⁰ Grenz does acknowledge that his interpretation calls into question the confessional Protestant emphasis on “a material and a formal principle”—in other words, *solo Christo* and *sola Scriptura*.⁴¹

This convergence of Pietism and community-romanticism could already be seen in the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), father of modern liberal theology. The individual and the community seem to converge in Grenz’s account (similar to Schleiermacher’s) at the level of common experience. Consequently, a revisioning of evangelical theology entails viewing “theology as the faith community’s reflecting on the faith experience of those who have encountered God through the divine activity in history and therefore now seek to live as the people of God in the contemporary world.”⁴² Scripture is essentially the church’s record of its religious experience.⁴³ “Faith is by nature immediate,” Grenz astonishingly asserts, and Scripture is the record of the faith-community’s encounter with God.⁴⁴

Grenz therefore reverses the Word-faith relationship. Rather than faith being created by the Word of God, the word itself is created by the experiences of the community. Obviously, this requires “a revisioned understanding of the *nature* of the Bible’s authority.”⁴⁵ *Sola Scriptura* has a venerable history in evangelicalism, he acknowledges; “the commitment to contextualization, however, entails an implicit rejection of the older evangelical conception of theology as the construction of truth on the basis of the Bible alone.”⁴⁶ Besides Paul Tillich’s “method of correlation,” Grenz appreciates the growing popularity within evangelical circles of the “Wesleyan quadrangle”—Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition—as shared norms.⁴⁷ The Bible, our heritage, and the contemporary cultural context should be reciprocally rather than hierarchi-

39. *Ibid.*, 48.

40. *Ibid.*, 54.

41. *Ibid.*, 62.

42. *Ibid.*, 76.

43. *Ibid.*, 77.

44. *Ibid.*, 80.

45. *Ibid.*, 88.

46. *Ibid.*, 90.

47. *Ibid.*, 91.

cally related—and even here, he adds, “the Bible *as canonized by the church*,” as if the church authorized rather than received the canon.⁴⁸ “In contrast to the understanding evangelicals often espouse, our Bible is the product of the community of faith that cradled it. . . . This means that our confession of the moving of the Spirit in the Scripture-forming process, commonly known as inspiration, must be extended.”⁴⁹

Not surprisingly, Grenz suggests that this will yield greater convergence between Protestants and Roman Catholics on the relation of Scripture and tradition.⁵⁰ Yet it also incorporates an important charismatic and Pentecostal perspective on continuing revelation: “In this way, paradigmatic events become a continual source of revelation, as each succeeding generation sees itself in terms of the events of the past history of the community.” Such conclusions “chart the way beyond the evangelical tendency to equate in a simple fashion the revelation of God with the Bible—that is, to make a one-to-one correspondence between the words of the Bible and the very Word of God.”⁵¹

I have focused on the formal (*sola Scriptura*) and material (*solo Christo*) principles of the Reformation because both are mutually interdependent and both are under tremendous stress today, as they have always been. Scripture and the gospel stand or fall together.

What’s Next?

Frankly, I’m a bit ambivalent about this anniversary. If it is another occasion for liberals to hail Luther’s “Here I stand!” as the harbinger of modern autonomy, or for conservatives to celebrate Protestant values, or for confessionalists to rewatch the Luther movie and dredge up polemical grudges, then it will be at best a colossal waste of time. If, on the other hand, it is an occasion to allow God’s Word once again to break into our self-enclosed circles with a word of radical judgment and radical grace, then it will be a happy anniversary indeed.

This is a time neither for vague celebration nor for hand wringing but for sober examination, critique, and fresh ways of engaging our own time and place with God’s strange speech. There is too much

48. *Ibid.*, 93. Italics added.

49. *Ibid.*, 121–22.

50. *Ibid.*, 123.

51. *Ibid.*, 130.

evidence of God's faithfulness to his church. With renewed interest in the truths of the Reformation among younger generations not only in the North Atlantic world but also in the global church, there is much to celebrate. But the real reformation of our day is going to happen, as it always has, in the *churches*. And at some point the "young, restless, and Reformed" are going to have to study for themselves to see the greater wisdom of the confessions and catechisms of the churches that have struggled, against mighty odds, not only to "stay alive" but also to reach their neighbors who are increasingly oblivious to the most basic story line, beliefs, and practices of Christianity. We may be entering a new dark ages in the West. But Jesus told disciples on the verge of persecution, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). He still delivers the kingdom to us, as a gift, not through our anxious activism but through his Word and Spirit: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Only confidence in what he has accomplished for us can cheer us for our daunting task: "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

With all these hopes and dreams in mind, I join the reader in exploring the richness of the chapters that unfold in this terrific collection of truly important essays. Many of them stand alone as passionate manifestos for the way forward. Regardless of your own tradition or church experience, give them a willing ear. They are, in the best sense, catholic and evangelical. Go deeper into a tradition that is definitely "not over," as some suggest, even if the evangelical movement itself may ebb and flow. Regardless, any church that seeks to thrive and become part of the kingdom that Christ is building through his Word and Spirit will sing with Martin Luther,

Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also.
The body they may kill,
God's truth abideth still.
God's kingdom is forever!

Pentecost Sunday, 2016
Michael Horton

Abbreviations

- AHR *American Historical Review*
- APSR *American Political Science Review*
- BSELK *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*. Edited by Irene Dingel. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014.
- BSHPF *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français*
- BSRK *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche*. Edited by E. F. K. Müller. Leipzig: Deichert, 1903.
- CCFCT *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss. 4 vols. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.
- CH *Church History*
- CHR *Catholic Historical Review*
- CNTC *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*. Edited by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. 12 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959–1972.
- CO *Joannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*. Edited by Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, and Eduardus Reuss. 59 vols. *Corpus Reformatorum* 29–88. Brunswich and Berlin: Schwetschke, 1863–1900.
- CR *Corpus Reformatorum*. Edited by C. G. Brettschneider. Halle: Schwetschke, 1834–1860.
- CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Edited by Johannes Vahlen et al. Currently housed at the University of Salzburg and published by De Gruyter, Berlin. 1864–.
- CTJ *Calvin Theological Journal*
- CTM *Concordia Theological Monthly*
- CTQ *Concordia Theological Quarterly*

- DH Denzinger, Heinrich. *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*. Revised and enlarged by Helmut Hoping. Edited by Peter Hünemann (original bilingual ed.) and by Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash (American ed.). 43rd ed. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012.
- EILR *Emory International Law Review*
- EvQ *Evangelical Quarterly*
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- Institutes* Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. Library of Christian Classics 20–21. 1559 edition. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960. References to *Institutes* refer to this edition unless otherwise noted.
- Int *Interpretation*
- JChSt *Journal of Church and State*
- JEH *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
- JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
- JR *Journal of Religion*
- LCC Library of Christian Classics. Edited by John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen. 26 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953–1966.
- LQ *Lutheran Quarterly*
- LW *Luther's Works*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. American ed. 82 vols. (projected). Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1955–.
- MAJT *Mid-America Journal of Theology*
- MQR *Menmonite Quarterly Review*
- MS *Mediaeval Studies*
- NPNF Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
- OER *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. Edited by Hans J. Hillerbrand. 4 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- PG J-P Migne, ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*. 161 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857–1886.
- PL J-P Migne, ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*. 221 vols. Paris: Migne, 1841–1864.
- ProEccl* *Pro Ecclesia*
- R&R *Reformation and Revival*
- RRR *Reformation & Renaissance Review*
- SBET *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*
- SCJ *The Sixteenth Century Journal*

- SJT *Scottish Journal of Theology*
- WA *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. 73 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883–2009.
- WABr *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Briefwechsel*. 18 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1930–1983.
- WADB *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Deutsches Bibel*. 12 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1906–1961.
- WATr *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Tischreden*. 6 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1912–1921.
- WCF Westminster Confession of Faith
- WTJ *Westminster Theological Journal*
- ZSW *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke*. Edited by Emil Egli, George Finsler, et al. *Corpus Reformatorum* 88–101. Berlin-Leipzig-Zurich, 1905–1956.

INTRODUCTION

The Crux of Genuine Reform

Matthew Barrett

Here, then, is the sovereign power with which the pastors of the church, by whatever name they be called, ought to be endowed. That is that they may dare boldly to do all things by God's Word; may compel all worldly power, glory, wisdom, and exaltation to yield to and obey his majesty; supported by his power, may command all from the highest even to the last; may build up Christ's household and cast down Satan's; may feed the sheep and drive away the wolves; may instruct and exhort the teachable; may accuse, rebuke, and subdue the rebellious and stubborn; may bind and loose; finally, if need be, may launch thunderbolts and lightnings; but do all things in God's Word.

JOHN CALVIN¹

No other movement of religious protest or reform since antiquity has been so widespread or lasting in its effects, so deep and searching in its criticism of received wisdom, so destructive in what it abolished or so fertile in what it created.

EUAN CAMERON²

1. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8.9.

2. Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1.

Reformation as Rediscovery of the Gospel

Countless historians have gone to great lengths to explain the Reformation through social, political, and economic causes.³ No doubt each of these played a role during the Reformation, and at times a significant role.⁴ Yet most fundamentally, the Reformation was a theological movement, caused by doctrinal concerns.⁵ Though political, social, and economic factors were important, observes Timothy George, “we

3. I have chosen to use the singular *Reformation*. However, others (even in this volume) have used the plural *Reformations* to refer to the diversity and plurality that existed during the sixteenth century and the multiple Reformations that took place throughout Europe. See, e.g., Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). I agree with this observation; we can speak of a plurality of Reformations, each of which differed from one another. Nevertheless, I stick with the traditional language, using the singular, because, as this introduction reveals, a shared theological center characterized all the Reformers. It is not without justification to speak of *the* Reformation as a whole. While there is diversity among the Reformers, there is also unity when it comes to their common cause in restoring the gospel of grace, which is all too apparent in their united attack against Rome.

Additionally, sometimes the motive behind emphasizing a plurality of Reformations is to include the Catholic Reformation. However, from a Protestant perspective of history, it is more appropriate to label Trent a *Counter-Reformation*. It is no surprise that some Catholic scholars want to even get rid of the term *Reformation* since it “goes along too easily with the notion that a bad form of Christianity was being replaced by a good one.” John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 91. But this is exactly what the Reformers believed to be the case—hence the need they saw for reformation. McGrath makes this point by noting Luther’s interpretation of certain forerunners of the Reformation: “For Luther, the reformation of morals and the renewal of spirituality, although of importance in themselves, were of secondary significance in relation to the *reformation of Christian doctrine*. Well aware of the frailty of human nature, Luther criticized both Wycliffe and Huss for confining their attacks on the papacy to its moral shortcomings, where they should have attacked the theology on which the papacy was ultimately based. For Luther, a reformation of morals was secondary to a reformation of doctrine.” Alister E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 26.

4. For example, reading through some of the most recent biographies and treatments of Reformation figures will give one a sense for how such factors coincided with the success or failure of reform. See, e.g., Scott H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015); Jane Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015); Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

5. We must be careful not to swing the pendulum too far to the other side as well. Whitford reminds us that in the sixteenth century, theological beliefs heavily influenced social and political beliefs: “Because the early-modern world was not yet a secular world, the theological affected the social and political just as much and sometimes more than the narrowly defined ecclesiastical.” At the same time, Whitford recognizes that the European Reformation “was primarily a religious event driven by theological concerns.” David M. Whitford, “Studying and Writing about the Reformation,” in *T&T Clark Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David M. Whitford (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 3. Also, McGrath observes that the new trend in social history is to define and interpret the Reformation in economic and social categories, and he notes how such an approach has led some to misinterpret the Reformation, resulting in “embarrassing” conclusions. Nevertheless, he argues, “While such nonsense can now be safely disregarded, it is now beyond dispute that any attempt to make sense of the origins, the popular appeal, and the transmission of Protestantism demands careful study of the structures and institutions of contemporary society.” Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Reformation—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 8.

must recognize that the Reformation was essentially a religious event; its deepest concerns, theological.”⁶ What this means, then, is that we must be “concerned with the theological self-understanding” of the Reformers.⁷

But more can be said. Yes, the Reformation was a “religious event,” and its deepest concern was “theological.” But history is filled with religious and ethical reform movements that considered themselves theological in orientation. What distinguishes the Reformation, however, is that its deepest theological concern was the gospel itself. In other words, the Reformation was a renewed emphasis on right doctrine, and the doctrine that stood center stage was a proper understanding of the grace of God in the gospel of his Son, Christ Jesus. In part, this is what distinguished Luther from the forerunners of the Reformation. As Lindberg notes, referring to one of Luther’s early sermons, the “crux of genuine reform . . . is the proclamation of the gospel of grace alone. This requires the reform of theology and preaching but is ultimately the work of God alone.”⁸ For Luther, explains McGrath, a “reformation of morals was secondary to a reformation of doctrine.”⁹ While forerunners stressed the need for ethical reform in the papacy, Luther recognized that the real problem was a dogmatic one. The great need was theological; the “crux of genuine reform” had to do with the recovery of the gospel itself.

The Reformers believed that this gospel had been lost (or at least corrupted). Luther was convinced that Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism had spread like the plague, at least at a popular level, thanks to the influence of certain strands of medieval Catholicism.¹⁰ As

6. Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman, 1998), 18. McGrath likewise warns against the temptation of treating the ideas of the Reformation as a “purely social phenomenon.” Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), xv, xvi, 1.

7. George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 18.

8. Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 10.

9. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 27.

10. The “essential factor which led to this schism in the first place” was “Luther’s fundamental conviction that the church of his day had lapsed into some form of Pelagianism, thus compromising the gospel, and that the church itself was not prepared to extricate itself from this situation.” Ibid. Some today will contest such a traditional view, believing Luther and Calvin to have been seriously mistaken in their understanding both of the late-medieval period and of the state of Rome in the sixteenth century as theologically and morally corrupt. Furthermore, the argument goes, the Catholic reform responded not to the Protestant Reformers but rather to pre-Reformation criticisms within the Catholic Church. In response, to label as erroneous the view that the late-medieval church was theologically mistaken is itself a theological evaluation, one that goes directly against

Luther's conflict with Rome heated up, eventually erupting like a volcano, it became increasingly clear to Luther that the corruption of the gospel in his own day had resulted in the abandonment of justification *sola gratia* and *sola fide*, and vice versa. The consequences were grave. Luther warned at the start of his 1535 Galatians commentary that "if the doctrine of justification is lost, the whole of Christian doctrine is lost."¹¹ And again, "If it is lost and perishes, the whole knowledge of truth, life, and salvation is lost and perishes at the same time."¹² Nothing less was at stake. Therefore, apart from a rediscovery of doctrines like *sola fide* and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, lasting reform would never take root. That being the case, it was undeniably obvious to Luther that his teaching, preaching, and writing had to revolve around the gospel, specifically its ramifications for justification by faith alone. As Luther wrote to Staupitz, "I teach that people should put their trust in nothing but Jesus Christ alone, not in their prayers, merits, or their own good deeds."¹³ This one sentence, says Scott Hendrix, summarizes "the essence" of Luther's "reforming agenda."¹⁴

Of course, Luther's rediscovery of the gospel—which he called the "treasure of the Church"—was an experience Luther knew firsthand. Recounting his own personal *durchbruch*, or "breakthrough," Luther's testimony is powerful:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add

the evaluation of the Reformers. Additionally, while we do not want to ignore the significance of dissenting voices within the Catholic Church even prior to Luther's protest, to say that Rome was not responding to the attacks of the Protestant Reformers is off the mark, as the Council of Trent's explicit and direct anathemas of Reformation doctrine demonstrate.

11. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), *LW* 26:9.

12. On the other hand, he said, "if it flourishes, everything good flourishes—religion, true worship, the glory of God, and the right knowledge of all things and of all social conditions." *Ibid.*, *LW* 26:3.

13. Martin Luther, "Letter to Johann von Staupitz" (March 31, 1518), *WABr* 1:160.

14. Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, 68.

pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!” Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, “In it the righteousness of God is revealed as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’” There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.¹⁵

In light of Luther’s *durchbruch*, if we were to use but one word to characterize the Reformation, it might be *rediscovery*, that is, a re-discovery of the *evangel*, the gospel. It is right to conclude, then, that the Reformation was an *evangelical* reform at its root.

Nevertheless, even the word *rediscovery* assumes that the Reformers did not think they were inventing something new (contra Rome’s accusation of novelty). Indeed, they were renewing, retrieving, and reviving what they believed had been lost. This lost gospel had been taught by the biblical authors, as well as by the apostles and church fathers.¹⁶ And since they insisted on reform not just in externals but also in doctrine, the Reformers became characterized by the theology behind that slogan *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*—“The church reformed, always reforming,” even if the slogan itself was a much later development.¹⁷

15. Martin Luther, “Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther’s Latin Writings,” *LW* 34:336–37.

16. Such a principle also applies to other Reformation doctrines, such as *sola scriptura*. Lindberg gives an excellent example from Luther: “Thus in the Leipzig debate (1519) over papal authority, Luther stated that papal claims to superiority are relatively recent. ‘Against them stand the history of eleven hundred years, the text of divine Scripture, and the decree of the Council of Nicea [325], the most sacred of all councils’ (*LW* 31:318).” Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 5.

17. From the humanist side of things, this emphasis can be seen in the motto of the Renaissance, *ad fontes*, “to the sources.” Many of the Reformers were influenced by humanism and thus applied this motto to the Scriptures, as well as to the early church fathers. For example, Philipp Melancthon believed that God, in the days of the Reformation, “recalled the church to its origins.” See Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 6.

The Life of the Bible in the Soul of the Church

Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda, however, did not address only soteriological matters (i.e., *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *solus Christus*). Rather, beneath this Reformation motto was the foundation itself, the formal principle of the Reformation, *sola Scriptura*—the belief that *only Scripture, because it is God’s inspired Word, is the inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church*.¹⁸ Nowhere was this formal principle more visible for the common person than in the reorientation of the church around the preached and proclaimed Word.

One of the most shocking statements the Reformers ever made in response to Rome involved the rearranging of furniture in the church. Upon walking into a sanctuary, one could immediately tell the difference between a church still in the clutches of Rome and a church under the influence of the Reformation program. For Rome, the service revolved around the altar, but for the Reformers, the pulpit was given the position of priority.¹⁹ For Rome, the Latin Mass was the central event, but for the Reformers, it was the Word of the living God preached and proclaimed in the vernacular for the salvation and edification of the saints.²⁰ Scott Manetsch provides insight:

Martin Luther’s message that sinners were righteous before God through faith in Christ alone (*sola fide*) not only undermined the Catholic penitential system, but also cut at the root of the medieval priest’s sacral role as a dispenser of salvific grace through the sacraments of the church. The Protestant reformers elevated instead the biblical office of the Christian minister or pastor, whose primary responsibility was to preach the Word of God and supervise the behavior of the spiritual community. . . . That is not to say that late medieval Catholics ignored the ministry of preaching, nor that Protestant life and worship was empty of religious ritual. Historians now recognize a significant revival of preaching the century before the Reformation, most evident in the work of mendicant friars and the creation of municipal preacherships. At the same time, despite

18. For a defense of the formal principle, see Matthew Barrett, *God’s Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).

19. To see this point demonstrated in Calvin’s preaching ministry, see T. H. L. Parker’s *The Oracles of God: An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1947).

20. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 5.

Protestant criticisms of Catholic “ceremonies” and “superstitions,” and despite explosive acts of iconoclasm against Catholic images, the evangelical reformers preserved in modified form traditional rites surrounding the Eucharist, baptism, and reconciliation. Nevertheless, the general pattern still holds true: *for Catholics, the primary role of the clergy remained sacramental and liturgical; for the Protestant reformers, it was to preach the Word of God.*²¹

Two very different theologies were pictured visibly. And they were so apparent that churchgoers no longer asked each other if they had been to Mass but whether they had been to the *prêche* (“the preaching”).²²

In the late-medieval period, the sermon was not typically the focal point of the worship service, though this is not to deny the practice of preaching in the medieval church altogether.²³ Instead, sermons were usually preached at specific points in the liturgical calendar, such as Easter or Christmas, or at specific locations, such as pilgrimage sites dedicated to the veneration of Mary and the saints.²⁴ But normally, one would attend church expecting to listen to Mass being said, not Scripture being proclaimed. To hear a sermon in the late-medieval period sometimes meant leaving the walls of the church and instead traveling to the open field where one might hear a preacher (perhaps in secret). Such was the case with the Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444) and the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), the latter of whom was excommunicated and then executed in 1498, just on the eve of the Reformation.²⁵ The awful fates of forerunners and martyrs like Savonarola were vivid in Luther’s mind as he traveled to Worms, wondering if he would come back alive or not.²⁶

Such a downgrade, however, was not limited to Luther’s Germany;

21. Ibid, italics added.

22. Here I have in mind the French Huguenots specifically. See Timothy George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 238.

23. On preaching in the late-medieval period, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, *The Medieval Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

24. In what follows I will be using George and Manetsch as dialogue partners. I am indebted to their insights. See George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 229–59; Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 5–10.

25. George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 230.

26. Luther even carried a picture of Savonarola with him on his way to Worms. See Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, trans. James L. Schaaf, vol. 1, *His Road to Reformation, 1483–1521* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 448.

England suffered an expository drought as well. Describing life in the church prior to the Reformation, English Reformation historian Philip Hughes explains how “preaching had fallen into such neglect that it had virtually ceased to be a function of the Church.”²⁷ Hughes goes on to explain just how bad the situation had become. Clergy did not show up at their parishes, nor could one assume that a bishop would be personally involved with his diocese. Titles and offices could simply be purchased. Showing up in the flesh to feed the gospel to spiritually hungry churchgoers was unnecessary. Is it any surprise, then, that when real reform took root, the authoritative Word and the expository sermon became inseparable? It was inevitable that “the rediscovery of the Word of God involved the rediscovery of the necessity of preaching.”²⁸ Given the “decay of preaching” in England, Thomas Cranmer led the way by publishing the Books of Homilies, which were “to be read regularly in church by those clergy who were incompetent to preach sermons.”²⁹ Never designed to replace sermons, these homilies, explains Hughes, were a “temporary expedient to tide the Church over until such time as there should be an instructed and spiritual ministry.”³⁰

What was so radical, then, about the Reformation was how the Reformers recovered the sermon by taking it from the obscurity and secrecy of the fields back into the service and liturgy of the church. Such a move was not done in secret but was conspicuous, visibly manifested in the literal elevation of a pulpit in the air, above the people.

For example, consider the well-known painting of a French Protestant church in Lyon by the name of Temple de Paradis.³¹ What catches one’s eye in this painting is the pulpit, which is front and center, lifted

27. “This was due to the widespread ignorance, indolence, and general dissoluteness of the clergy, encouraged by the all too common failure of the bishops to exercise due oversight in the dioceses for which they had accepted responsibility.” Philip E. Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 121. On the absence of sermons in local parish church life, also see Kevin Madigan, *Medieval Christianity: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 87–88, 308–9.

28. Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers*, 121.

29. *Ibid.*, 122.

30. *Ibid.*, 122–23.

31. “The Protestant Church in Lyon, called ‘The Paradise,’” is located at Bibliotheque Publique et Universitaire, Geneva, Switzerland. Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY. Available online: http://www.artres.com/C.aspx?VP3=ViewBox_VPage&VBID=2UN365C1D11XO&IT=ZoomImageTemplate01_VForm&IID=2UNTWAEU1CNQ&PN=1&CT=Search&SF=0.

up so that the preacher is seen and heard by all. The people not only are seated below but are seated throughout in the shape of a circle (or at least a half circle) around the preacher. The pulpit is the centerpiece. Children are also pictured sitting and listening, following along and ready to learn with their catechism books in their laps. The artist even places a dog (!) in the service, sitting as if he too is listening, his head fixed on the preacher. In front of the pulpit is a couple ready to be married, and to the left of the pulpit, “preparations are being made for the baptism of an infant.” The point in these details is that all these people and all these activities centered on and revolved around the proclamation of God’s Word.³² They believed the Bible was God’s message for them and to them, sufficient not only to save but also to guide one in a life of godliness. As the Word from God, therefore, it had to be proclaimed, heard, and obeyed. Indeed, it had to have the final say.

Or consider Saint Pierre’s in Geneva, the church where Calvin preached and ministered, as well as the surrounding churches in that area. Calvin initiated a program that cleansed the church building from Roman distraction and idolatry, seeking to wash clean this sacred space. Statues of saints, relics considered holy, crucifixes, the tabernacle that housed the consecrated host, and the altar where the Mass was conducted were discarded and destroyed.³³ The cleansing of anything that could lead to idolatry was so thorough that even the walls and pillars were whitewashed, hiding iconography that pictured Rome’s unbiblical theology.³⁴ With the church stripped bare, the sacred space

32. This painting is also described by George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 231.

33. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 33. One crucifix did remain: the cross on the top of Saint Pierre’s. However, when it was struck by lightning, the church did not act to replace it. Manetsch also notes how the stained-glass windows were not destroyed but were left in disrepair. Also, the organ was melted down in 1562 and used to make tin plates for the city hospital and Communion vessels for the temples. In other words, nothing was left untouched. One might be tempted to think that Calvin had an aversion to the physical. However, Manetsch corrects such a misconception by drawing our attention to the centrality of the Word in preaching and Calvin’s concern for pure worship: “Calvin’s insistence that the liturgical content and physical space of true worship be ‘bare and simple’ was thus not primarily the result of his personal austerity or an aversion to the material world. Rather, it reflected his conviction that only through pure and simple worship might the beauty of the gospel shine forth resplendent.” And again, “In their aesthetic of worship, Calvin and his pastoral colleagues in Geneva gave priority to the virtues of simplicity, modesty, and gravity so that the Word of God and the message of salvation in Jesus Christ might sound forth in all its clarity and beauty. This was an aesthetic discerned by the sense of hearing rather than of sight.” *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 36. For a fuller portrait of how these “cleansings” took place across the Reformation, see Carlos M. N. Eire, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

34. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 33.

could finally give priority to the preaching of God's Word. A wooden pulpit was crafted and fixed against a pillar at the front of the sacred space. The seats—for men, women, and children—were then situated around it, in front of it, and even behind it.

While the pulpit's centralized position was certainly practical, allowing large crowds to hear, its location was blatantly theological. "The proclamation of Scripture in the middle of the congregation," says Manetsch, "was a potent symbol that Christ, the living Word, continued to speak and dwell among his people."³⁵ For Rome, the service was most fundamentally a visual experience. In contrast, while the Reformers believed that the Eucharist played an essential role in the service as a means of grace (all the while affirming a very different sacramental theology than Rome), nevertheless, the focal point was the gospel inscripturated, and its pages they read, prayed, sung, and expounded. Not only was the Word sung by the congregation via the Psalms, but the Word was also expounded for all to hear, typically by means of the *lectio continua* method. When the congregation gathered in Saint Pierre's, Calvin was convinced that it was through the Word that the Spirit created worship—in spirit and in truth—within the hearts of the listeners (John 4:24): "Through the ministry of the written and proclaimed Word," says Manetsch, "the Spirit solidifies the faith of God's people, calls forth their prayers and praise, purifies their consciences, intensifies their gratitude—in a word, guides them into spiritual worship."³⁶ As Calvin said, "God is only worshiped properly in the certainty of faith, which is necessarily born of the Word of God; and hence it follows that all who forsake the Word fall into idolatry."³⁷ For Calvin, preaching God's Word was a means to true worship and a safeguard against idolatry, specifically the idolatry previously performed under Rome.³⁸

In all this we cannot miss the critical point: preaching was a means of grace, a sacrament, in fact.³⁹ For the medieval church, George ex-

35. *Ibid.*, 33.

36. *Ibid.*, 34–35.

37. John Calvin on John 4:23, in *CNTC* 4:99.

38. "The sine qua non of true Christian worship is the preaching of the Word of God and the congregation's heartfelt response to the divine message. Consequently, the chief adornment of public worship must always be the precious Word of God and the beautiful message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, proclaimed in both sermon and sacraments." Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 36.

39. On Scripture as a means of grace, see J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010); George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 28.

plains, preaching “was attached to the sacrament of penance,” and therefore, preaching “itself was not considered a sacrament, but it was, we might say, a vestibule to the sacrament of penance.”⁴⁰ The job of the preacher was to move his listeners to contrition, confession, absolution, and then to works of satisfaction.⁴¹ As Luther saw in Tetzels fiery sermons on purgatory, at a popular level the oral word was meant to create unbelievable anxiety so that penance would follow.⁴² “Why are you standing there?” asked Tetzels. “Run for the salvation of your souls! . . . Don’t you hear the voice of your wailing dead parents and others who say, ‘Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, because we are in severe punishment and pain. From this you could redeem us with small alms and yet you do not want to do so.’”⁴³ Hearing sermons like this one impelled listeners to quickly and fearfully throw their money into the coffer.

This was the type of anxiety Luther knew all too well prior to his eyes being opened to a God of grace. What was so different in the Reformers’ sermons was not that anxiety in the listener was absent—the Reformers believed in the wrath and judgment of God and the sinner’s need to repent. Rather, what was so different was how the Reformers proclaimed from the pulpit a *gracious* God, one who justifies the ungodly by grace alone (*sola gratia*) through faith alone (*sola fide*). Proclaimed from the pulpit was not only the righteousness of God but also the righteousness *from* God. The Reformers did not leave anxious souls to their own merits (or money bags) but turned their eyes from themselves to the cross and empty tomb. The answer was not penance but a crucified and risen Savior—a Savior, we should remember, whose righteousness was imputed to anyone who trusted in him alone for salvation (*solus Christus*). In contrast to a theology of glory, the Reformers heralded a theology of the cross.

Luther’s stance was perspicuous in his 1519 “Sermon on the Sacrament of Penance.” He was opposed to those who “try to frighten people into going frequently to confession,” and he warned against

40. George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 231.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), 24.

43. “John Tetzels: A Sermon [1517],” in *The Protestant Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 20–21.

questioning, as he once did, whether one's contrition was sufficient: "Rather you should be assured that after all your efforts your contrition is not sufficient. This is why you must cast yourself upon the grace of God, hear his sufficiently sure word in the sacrament, accepted in free and joyful faith, and never doubt that you have come to grace."⁴⁴ This is the message the preacher proclaimed, and it was a message that came from the very lips of God, written down in the Scriptures. With this message of good news from God himself, how could the sermon not stand at the center of worship? To put the sermon at the center was to put Scripture at the center, and to put Scripture at the center was to put God at the center with his gospel of free grace for all who come to his Son in faith. The Reformers preached thousands of sermons because they were convinced that the Word proclaimed was "indispensable" as a "means of grace."⁴⁵

The Scriptures were, as Calvin called them, "spectacles" that the Spirit used to open blind eyes to the gospel.⁴⁶ Bullinger could even say in the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 that the "preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God."⁴⁷ Bullinger did not mean that the preacher's words and thoughts were revelatory, as if the canon was open and ongoing. By this expression Bullinger instead meant to communicate that when the preacher proclaims the true meaning of Scripture, the people of God are fed the Word of God. God is present, talking to his people. Though the preacher is fallible, weak, and unworthy, God's Word is not; it is true, objective, powerful, and sufficient. Transcending the preacher, the Word brings God himself into the room with the good news of his Son to troubled, hell-bound souls held captive by the law.⁴⁸ Calvin contended that the Spirit utilizes the

44. Martin Luther, "Sermon on the Sacrament of Penance," in *LW* 35:9–22. Cf. George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 233.

45. George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 234.

46. See Randall C. Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Heiko A. Oberman, "Preaching and the Word in the Reformation," *Theology Today* 18, no. 1 (1961): 16–29.

47. "The Second Helvetic Confession," chap. 1, in James T. Dennison Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, vol. 2, 1552–1566, (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 811.

48. "The event of preaching, not unlike the Eucharist in medieval Catholic theology, has an utterly objective character that transcends even the weak and sinful status of the preacher. God truly speaks and is truly present in judgment and grace whenever his Word is proclaimed. Despite the deep and divisive differences between Lutheran and Reformed theologies over the Lord's Supper

preached Word (along with the Lord's Supper) to elevate the church into the heavens where Christ sits so that she might enjoy all his saving benefits.⁴⁹ The believer's union with Christ, therefore, is not at all unrelated to the proclamation of God's Word.⁵⁰

A Sacred Trust

Luther would be disturbed (to put it mildly) to see pastors today enter the pulpit nonchalantly. For Luther, the office of preacher was a "sacred trust."⁵¹ "Whoever does not preach the Word," Luther warned emphatically in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, "is no priest at all."⁵² Preaching carried a weightiness—indeed, an authority. To preach Scripture was to preach the very Word of God. The preacher's authority was derivative, springing from the church's supreme authority, the God-breathed Scriptures. *Sola Scriptura*, in other words, was the engine that drove the Reformers' theology of preaching. As Manetsch observes,

The Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*—the conviction that Holy Scripture was the unique, final authority for the Christian community—had important consequences for pastoral ministry. *The scripture principle gave gravitas to the office of preacher* [italics added]. It also made the educational formation of Protestant clergy an urgent priority, especially in those academic disciplines most necessary for biblical exposition such as classic rhetoric, theology, and biblical exegesis. By transferring the locus of authority from the Catholic magisterium to the written Word of God, the reformers enhanced the personal authority of the minister, who was now entrusted with special responsibility to interpret and proclaim the sacred text.⁵³

The authoritative Word, which necessitated proclamation, brought with it not only law but also gospel. *Sola Scriptura* bestowed gifts on

in the sixteenth century, they found common ground in 'the *ex opere operato* presence of God's Word in the preached Word.'" Oberman, "Preaching and the Word in the Reformation," 26, cited in George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 252.

49. John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 1, *On the Reformation of the Church*, trans. Henry Beveridge, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (1844; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958), 186.

50. E.g., Martin Luther, "Sermons on John 4" (1537), *LW* 22:526; Luther, "Sermons on John 15" (1537), *LW* 24:218.

51. Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, *LW* 21:9.

52. Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, *LW* 36:113.

53. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 6.

the people, gifts called *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solus Christus*. Once God's Word was at the center, supreme in its authority and infallibility, it gave birth to the gospel. In the Word one received *the* Word, Jesus the Christ (John 1:1). As Luther memorably said, the Scriptures are the "swaddling clothes in which Christ lies."⁵⁴

It was not enough, therefore, for Scripture to be merely read; it had to be proclaimed. "The ears alone," Luther said, "are the organs of the Christian."⁵⁵ And the "lips are the public reservoirs of the church":

In them alone is kept the Word of God. You see, unless the word is preached publicly, it slips away. The more it is preached, the more firmly it is retained. Reading is not as profitable as hearing it, for the live voice teaches, exhorts, defends, and resists the spirit of error.⁵⁶

Luther concluded this thought with a startling statement: "Satan does not care a hoot for the written Word of God, but he flees at the speaking of the Word."⁵⁷ Satan does not worry about Bibles sitting around on shelves. He begins to worry when those Bibles are picked up and taken into pulpits. He knows that when the Word is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit comes alongside it and penetrates "hearts and leads back those who stray," for "the Word," said Luther, "is the channel through which the Holy Spirit is given."⁵⁸ And when the Holy Spirit is given, souls are made alive, justified, and set on the pathway to glorification.

We see this biblical principle dramatically exemplified in the return of Marian exiles. With the Elizabethan era underway, the Word of God—and with it the true gospel—entered pulpits once more, leaving many Christians overjoyed. Thomas Lever, for example, wrote to Henry Bullinger on August 8, 1559, and reported that they "preached the Gospel in certain parish churches, to which a numerous audience eagerly flocked together." When they "solemnly treated of conversion to Christ by true repentance, many tears from many persons bore witness that the preaching of the Gospel is more effectual to true repentance and wholesome reformation than anything that the whole world

54. Martin Luther, "Prefaces to the Old Testament," *LW* 35:236.

55. Martin Luther, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1517–1518), *LW* 29:224.

56. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Malachi*, *LW* 18:401.

57. *Ibid.*, *LW* 18:401.

58. *Ibid.*, *LW* 18:401.

can either imagine or approve.”⁵⁹ It is fitting that Hugh Latimer, one of the martyrs under “Bloody Mary” (i.e., Queen Mary I of England), could label preaching “God’s instrument of salvation” and conclude that to “take away preaching” is to “take away salvation.”⁶⁰ Given the authority of the Word, as well as its gospel-saving power, the Reformers not only made the pulpit the center but also prescribed and exemplified a certain method of proclamation: expositional preaching. The Reformers expounded the meaning of the biblical text, explaining the biblical author’s intent, only to apply the text to their listeners. The point of the passage became the point of the sermon. However, the Reformers did not necessarily pick texts at random; they preached through books of the Bible, often chapter by chapter and verse by verse.

Calvin, for example, expounded his way through entire books of the Bible. Typically, Sundays were occupied with the New Testament (though he did preach a series on the Psalms on Sunday afternoons), and weekdays were devoted to the Old Testament.⁶¹ Notice the pattern:

1554–1555: 159 sermons on Job
1555–1556: 200 sermons on Deuteronomy
1558–1559: 48 sermons on Ephesians
1560: 65 sermons on the Synoptic Gospels
1561–1563: 194 sermons on 1–2 Samuel⁶²

So important was the *lectio continua* method that when Calvin returned to the pulpit in Geneva in 1541, after years of exile, he started preaching at the exact verse he had left off with before he had been kicked out of town! Why exactly? Because the Reformation was first and foremost about the Word of God, which the people of God needed more than anything else. As George astutely notes,

The Reformation was not about Calvin or any other personality.
Much less was it about the ups and downs of church politics by

59. *The Zurich Letters*, 2nd Series, 30; as quoted in Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers*, 141.

60. Hugh Latimer, *Works*, 1:178, 155, as quoted in Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers*, 130.

61. Calvin preached without notes, having only his Greek or Hebrew text with him. He spent countless hours studying the text of Scripture in preparation each week.

62. George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 241.

which the church is ever beset. No, the Reformation was about the Word of God, which was to be proclaimed faithfully and conscientiously to the people of God. Calvin held himself to a high standard and demanded no less of others called to the office of preaching. The true pastor, he said, must be marked by “ruthless persistence” (*importunitas*). Pastors are not granted the luxury of choosing their own times of service, or suiting their ministry to their own convenience or preaching “sugar stick” sermons removed from their biblical context.⁶³

“Sugar stick” sermons, said Calvin, were those sermons that took Scripture up “at random,” paying no attention to the context; in such cases, it is “no wonder that mistakes arise all over the place.”⁶⁴ Instead, said Calvin, “I have endeavored, both in my sermons and also in my writings and commentaries, to preach the word purely and chastely, and faithfully to interpret His sacred Scriptures.”⁶⁵

The *lectio continua* approach assumed *sola Scriptura* at every turn. Because the Bible was inspired by God, inerrant, clear, and sufficient, every book, every chapter, and every verse mattered. This was God speaking after all. And if his people were to be nurtured, then they had to have the authoritative words of life; nothing else would do.⁶⁶

But it wasn’t just the pulpit that placed Scripture at the center of worship; the entire Protestant service was immersed in Scripture, from beginning to end. The Bible, in other words, became the DNA of the worship time, infiltrating everything from the opening call to worship to the singing of psalms to the closing benediction. For example, consider this sample Sunday morning service that Calvin followed:

63. *Ibid.*, 243.

64. CO 36:277; John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 7:442.

65. John Calvin, “Calvin’s Will and Addresses to the Magistrates and Ministers” (1564), in *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger, American Academy of Religion Aids for the Study of Religion 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1975), 35. Zwingli felt the same, having little patience for those preachers who used “pious chatter” that left people confused and empty. Palmer Wandel, “Switzerland,” in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, ed. Larissa Taylor, New History of the Sermon 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 229.

66. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, *The Age of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 130. Cf. George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, 238.

Liturgy of the Word

Call to worship: Psalm 124:8

Confession of sins

Prayer for pardon

Singing of a psalm

Prayer for illumination

Scripture reading

Sermon

Liturgy of the Upper Room

Collection of offerings

Prayers of intercession and a long paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer

Singing of the Apostles' Creed (while elements of the Lord's Supper are prepared)

Words of institution

Instruction and exhortation

Communion (while a psalm is sung or Scripture is read)

Prayer of thanksgiving

Benediction: Numbers 6:24–26⁶⁷

For Calvin, it was crucial that the Word be the controlling principle, for it is in the Word that God meets his people and his people meet him. As Calvin said, “Wherever the faithful, who worship him purely and in due form, according to the appointment of his word, are assembled together to engage in the solemn acts of religious worship, he is graciously present, and presides in the midst of them.”⁶⁸ In what would become known as “the regulative principle of worship,” Calvin

67. William D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 114. Cf. W. Robert Godfrey, *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 71. Calvin talks about the intention of this order in his *Institutes* (4.17.43). Luther and his followers also saw the Word as central to the liturgy as they followed the practices of the earliest worship services in the Jewish synagogues, which placed Scripture reading at the center of their gatherings. See Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 172. George adds, “As part of their protest against clerical domination of the church, the reformers aimed at full participation in worship. Their reintroduction of the vernacular was jarring to some since it required that divine worship be offered to God in the same language used by businessmen in the marketplace and by husbands and wives in the privacy of their bedchambers. However, the intent of the reformers was not so much to secularize worship as to sanctify common life. For them, the Bible was not merely an object for academic scrutiny in the study or the library; it was meant to be practiced, enacted and embodied as the people of God came together for prayer and praise and proclamation.” George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 387.

68. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 1:122.

taught that God’s Word must regulate the service, so that whatever is not explicitly commanded by the Word must not be incorporated into the worship service.⁶⁹

Calvin would have been horrified by the church’s obsession today with “putting on a show,” driven first and foremost by pragmatic, consumeristic motivations. “For Calvin,” says W. Robert Godfrey,

worship was not a means to an end. Worship was not a means to evangelize or entertain or even educate. Worship was an end in itself. Worship was not to be arranged by pragmatic considerations but was rather to be determined by theological principles derived from the Scriptures. The most basic realities of the Christian life were involved. In worship God meets with his people.⁷⁰

The Word, for Calvin, was not merely at the center of worship; it was the very content of worship, as seen in the liturgy above, for in it Christ himself stoops down to hear the praises of his bride, only to then bring them back up to heaven in the Lord’s Supper.⁷¹ Unlike so many worship services today, Calvin’s were characterized by a noticeable simplicity—no symbols, ceremonies, and rituals, just the preaching, singing, and presence of Word and sacrament. Through the Word, the people had communion with God.

Reformation Today

This lengthy introduction thus far is meant to make one pivotal point: at the center of the Reformation was a return to a gospel-centered, Word-centered church. No question about it, this was the great need in the sixteenth-century church.

In the twenty-first century, the church’s need has not changed. The words of James Montgomery Boice still ring true: while the Puritans sought to carry on the Reformation, today “we barely have one to carry on, and many have even forgotten what that great spiritual revo-

69. The regulative principle, therefore, is no invention of the Puritans, but its seed can be found in Calvin himself. This is not to say, however, that there is total continuity between the two. See Calvin’s “On the Necessity of Reforming the Church,” in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, ed. Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 1:128–29; Godfrey, *John Calvin*, 78n24.

70. Godfrey, *John Calvin*, 80.

71. *Ibid.*, 82–83.

lution was all about.” We “need to go back and start again at the very beginning. We need another Reformation.”⁷²

If Boice is right, and we believe he is, then the Reformation is far from over. In the twenty-first century, not only do important and significant differences remain between Protestants and Catholics, but also a host of doctrinal and ecclesiastical issues challenge a modern reformation. Unlike the sixteenth century, in other words, the issues Protestant evangelicals must address are not limited to the Protestant-Catholic conversation but also include challenges from within evangelicalism itself.⁷³ As a result, not only is the Reformation not over, but also its scope and breadth today may need to be far more extensive than that in the sixteenth century, as we seek to answer objections not only from those outside Protestantism but also from those within. Unfortunately, in our churches, universities, and seminaries, many have never been taught Reformation theology, nor do they have a thorough understanding of who the Reformers were and what their historical context looked like, let alone the lasting legacy they left behind. That is where this book comes into play. This volume brings together outstanding evangelical theologians and historians in order to present to readers a systematic summary of Reformation theology. Our hope is that readers will then apply this theological heritage to issues in our own day.

About This Book

At the start of any book, it is always helpful to know something about the author (or authors), the drive behind the book, and its scope and intention. *Reformation Theology* is written by a group of theologians and historians who are committed to Reformation theology. And that, in and of itself, is quite unique.⁷⁴ Of course, this does not mean that the authors agree with every jot and tittle of what the Reformers taught.

72. James Montgomery Boice, “Preface,” in *Here We Stand: A Call from Confessing Evangelicals*, ed. James Montgomery Boice and Benjamin E. Sasse (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 12.

73. As to what some of these challenges may be, see my review of *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, ed. Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen, The Gospel Coalition, November 30, 2011, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/four_views_on_the_spectrum_of_evangelicalism.

74. Writing history is never a neutral endeavor—and to believe so would be to buy into Enlightenment thinking. As many have pointed out, writing history, even if one seeks to be purely descriptive, is an interpretive task. For several excellent histories of the Reformation, see Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Lindberg, *The European Reformations*; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490–1700* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

Indeed, even the Reformers disagreed among themselves (as attested by their heated debates over the Lord's Supper). But it does mean that the authors of this book are committed to the essence of Reformation theology as that which is faithful to the biblical witness.

The advantage of such an approach is that each author writes with conviction. Rather than studying and observing these old truths as one would an antique artifact in a museum, these authors know these truths firsthand, having not only studied the theology of the Reformers but also applied it in their teaching and pastoral contexts. While many books have been written by historians who do not profess the truths they are analyzing, this book is written by historians and theologians who actually believe these great doctrines and consider themselves heirs of the Reformers. Like the Reformers, the authors you will read are rearticulating the theology of the Reformation because they desire to see reformation in our own day and age.

Additionally, *Reformation Theology* provides a systematic summary of Reformation thought. While not every subject or Reformer can be tackled in great depth in this volume, the book nonetheless covers the major loci of systematic theology.⁷⁵ In short, this volume serves as an introduction to the theology of the Reformers. Also, while approaching the subject biographically has many advantages, taking a systematic approach allows the reader to see what the major Reformers taught about any single doctrine.⁷⁶ Such an approach is advantageous since it allows the reader to see areas of continuity and discontinuity between the Reformers on any particular doctrine.

Moreover, this book is written in such a way that the specialist and

75. It should be acknowledged, of course, that the Reformers did not write systematic theologies as we do today. Melancthon's *Loci Communes* and Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* are perhaps the closest thing one will find to a systematic theology, and even these are not really systematic theologies in the modern sense. Many of the Reformers' writings were occasional, motivated by the polemics of their day, or they arose out of their sermons, since the pulpit was often at the center of the Reformation movement.

76. For works that take a biographical approach, more or less, see George, *Theology of the Reformers*; David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Carter Lindberg, ed., *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002). Some works do take a theological approach, as we will see in this book. Nonetheless, as impressive as they are, they do not necessarily cover the entire scope of theological topics—e.g., Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300–1700)*, vol. 4 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); McGrath, *Reformation Thought*. This book is not intended to replace these fine studies but rather to provide students of the Reformation with an additional angle.

the nonspecialist alike will enjoy it. Academic specialists will find the book helpful because it provides a fresh perspective by approaching Reformation thought within the framework of systematic theology, and it also addresses areas of Reformation thought that have received little attention in the past (e.g., the Trinity, the attributes of God, the image of God, eschatology). Nonspecialists, however, will benefit the most. Each chapter serves as an introduction to the doctrine at hand, explaining what the major Reformers believed, why they believed it, and what impact their beliefs had. At the same time, no chapter is limited to the basics, but rather, they penetrate into the doctrinal details, controversies, and theological distinctions that characterized the Reformers. Naturally, the book has a textbook feel, though we like to think, especially given the topic, that it is without the dryness that too often accompanies such books.

A brief word of qualification is also necessary. A book on Reformation theology could easily have been at least five times the size of this one. But we felt that a massive book would impede its accessibility to nonspecialists and students. So each chapter tries to be as concise as possible. Unfortunately, this means that not every Reformer or reform movement could be discussed. In order to prize accessibility, most chapters limit themselves to the major Reformers known to us today and the major reform hot spots of the sixteenth century, though this is not to say that the book never interacts with lesser-known Reformers. Nevertheless, each author of each chapter has recommended some of the key resources, primary and secondary, to which students of the Reformation can turn for further study. Our hope is that readers will find each chapter to be an entryway into the world of Reformation theology.

May this primer serve to highlight the importance, relevance, and indispensability of Reformation theology, both for understanding the sixteenth century and for thinking through its significance for the twenty-first century.

Five hundred years ago, the Reformers were defending doctrines such as justification by faith alone, the authority of Scripture, and God's grace in salvation—some to the point of death. Many of these same essential doctrines are still being challenged today, and there has never been a more crucial time to hold fast to the enduring truth of Scripture.

In *Reformation Theology*, Matthew Barrett has brought together a team of expert theologians and historians writing on key doctrines taught and defended by the Reformers centuries ago. With contributions from Gerald Bray, Michael Reeves, Carl R. Trueman, Robert Kolb, and many others, this volume stands as a manifesto for the church, exhorting Christians to learn from their spiritual forebears and hold fast to sound doctrine rooted in the Bible and passed on from generation to generation.

“Dr. Barrett has gathered a full stable of blue-ribbon theologians for this winning volume. There is little doubt that *Reformation Theology* will ably serve the church and academy as a textbook for students and a reference work for scholars. It is already reshaping my own teaching on late-medieval and early-modern theology, and I commend it heartily.”

CHAD VAN DIXHOORN, Chancellor's Professor of Historical Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary—Washington, DC

“This delightful volume is a breath of fresh air in Reformation studies, putting theology back at the center. It shows with crystal clarity how the Reformers expounded the heart of the Christian faith, and why these evangelical doctrines still matter so much.”

ANDREW ATHERSTONE, Latimer Research Fellow, Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford

“In this rich book, each of the contributors is an expert in his field and knows that the Reformation is a highly relevant treasure for both the church and theology. Everyone eager not just to look back at five hundred years of reformation but also to look forward finds here the perfect material.”

HERMAN SELDERHUIS, Director, Refo500; Professor and Director, Institute for Reformation Research, Theological University Apeldoorn, the Netherlands; author, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*

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HISTORICAL THEOLOGY / REFORMATION