



CONTRIBUTIONS BY

Michael Allen • Matthew Barrett • Gerald Bray • Graham A. Cole • Aaron Clay Deninger • J. V. Fesko • Douglas F. Kelly
Eunjin Kim • Robert Kolb • Robert Letham • Peter A. Lillback • Corey D. Mazs • Donald Macleod • Keith A. Mathison
Michael Reeves • Kim Riddlebarger • Scott R. Swain • Mark D. Thompson • Carl R. Trueman • Cornelis P. Venema

By

Mark McGee

The full title of this new book is *Reformation Theology: A Systematic Summary* (Crossway, 2017). Its publication is certainly timely as we approach the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation this October (October 31, 2017).

I understand Michael Horton's concern about the upcoming anniversary –

“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.” Prologue, p 34

Horton asked an important question in his Prologue that we all need to consider as we approach the eve of the anniversary – “What Are We Celebrating?” I think it’s an important question because many Christians don’t have an answer and don’t know where to get one. We hear about the upcoming 500th anniversary but know little about what was, and is, at stake.

Editor Matthew Barrett goes to the heart of the issue in his Introduction –

“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.” Introduction, p 45

The doctrinal concerns of the “Reformation” were many and are addressed in *Reformation Theology* –

- Doctrine of Salvation
- Doctrine of Church Authority
- Doctrine of Scripture (Sola Scriptura)
- Doctrine of the Holy Trinity
- Doctrine of the Being and Attributes of God
- Doctrine of Predestination and Election
- Doctrine of Creation
- Doctrine of the Person of Christ
- Doctrine of the Work of Christ
- Doctrine of Union with Christ
- Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
- Doctrine of Bondage and Liberation of the Will
- Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone
- Doctrine of Sanctification, Perseverance, and Assurance
- Doctrine of the Church
- Doctrine of Baptism
- Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper
- Doctrine of the Relationship of Church and State
- Doctrine of Eschatology

The editors and contributors to *Reformation Theology* do an excellent job explaining the historical issues surrounding each of these and the part they played in the Reformation.

You may be surprised to learn how many people were involved in the Reformation process – including some who were instrumental years, even centuries, before the official beginning of the Reformation in 1517. The man most identified with the Reformation is Martin Luther –

“The figure of Luther bestrides the popular image of the Reformation like no other. There is good reason for this. His life shaped the future of the Christian church in unique ways. Not only did his early protest against indulgences help to bring into the open the widespread disenchantment with the church, but also his personal approach to various concerns—authority, justification, the Lord’s Supper—shaped the way the theological debates of the day were framed and prosecuted.” Chapter 3, *The Reformers and Their Reformations*, p 112

“When Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, he was not attacking the church’s official doctrine or even the institution of the papacy as such. What he claimed was that the popes had exceeded their jurisdiction by purporting to determine the fate of souls that had departed this life. Who were the popes to say who was in heaven, purgatory, or hell? What right did they have to transfer someone from one of these places to another, which is ultimately what indulgences claimed to be doing? How did they justify doctrines and practices that not only lacked any scriptural warrant but actually contradicted the biblical text?” Chapter 2, Late-Medieval Theology, p 107

What happened when pastors began preaching from the Bible? Here’s an account of what happened in Zurich after Zwingli presented his “Sixty-Seven Articles” during a public disputation –

“Biblical preaching led people to seriously question the place of images, saints, and relics in the church, and even the legitimacy of the Mass. They responded by acts of iconoclasm, destroying church ornaments and tearing down

crucifixes from the streets.” Chapter 3, *The Reformers and Their Reformations*, p 119

Reformation Theology also addresses a modern concern –

“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.” Prologue, p 27

Reformation Theology is one of the best books about the subject you will find available today. In addition to excellent articles written by leading experts in their fields of study, the book also includes a list of Primary and Secondary Sources for each chapter which is a wealth of direction for further research.

The book is lengthy (785 pages), which demonstrates both the volume and detail of material covered. It will be a great resource for you during this anniversary year and for many years to come. I highly recommend it to every Christian.

Publisher: About the Book

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 Michael Horton, Gerald Bray, Michael Reeves, Carl Trueman, Robert Kolb, and many others, this volume stands as a manifesto for the church, exhorting Christians to learn from our spiritual forebears and hold fast to sound doctrine rooted in the Bible and passed on from generation to generation.

Reviews & Endorsements

“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.” 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

“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.” Herman Selderhuis, Director, Refo500; Professor and Director of the Institute for Reformation Research, Theological University Apeldoorn, the Netherlands; author, *Calvin’s Theology of the Psalms*

“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.” Philip Graham Ryken, President, Wheaton College; author, *Loving the Way Jesus Loves*

“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 Officer, Ligonier Ministries; author, *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life*

and Thought and *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World*

“A superb collection of first-rate essays on Reformation theology—one of the best I have seen. A welcome addition to the swell of literature in this year of Reformation remembrance.” 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*.” David F. Wells, Distinguished Senior Research Professor, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; author, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers and Emergents in the Postmodern World*

“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.” David S. Dockery, President, Trinity International University

“Reformation Theology promises to be an influential book indeed. Written by recognized historians and theologians, this volume aims to clearly articulate the teaching of the Reformers according to traditional theological categories. It is a genuine contribution and a great read besides.” Fred G. Zaspel, Pastor, Reformed Baptist Church, Franconia, Pennsylvania; author, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary* and *Warfield on the Christian Life: Living in Light of the Gospel*

“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 widespread 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*

[Review copy received from Crossway]

Reformation Theology: A Systematic Summary, Crossway, 2017, 785 pages

“Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”

Copyright © 1990-2018 GraceLife Ministries