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The Reformation as Renewal with Matthew Barrett

September 13, 2023



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Was the Protestant Reformation a repudiation of the church's history? Was it a rejection of Medieval theology? Did the Reformation lead to schism in the church? Kevin talks to Matthew Barrett, professor of Christian theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, about these questions and many more in this episode of LBE. Listen in for some big picture analysis on church history as well as some deep nerdery on Reformation theology.

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Transcript

Greetings and salutations. Welcome to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin Deung, senior pastor at Christ's Covenant Church in Matthew's North Carolina today.

I am joined by my guest Matthew Barrett. We are going to talk about his massive book, *The Reformation as Renewal*, retrieving the one holy Catholic and apostolic church. Matthew is professor of Christian theology at Midwestern Baptist.

Maybe that's reverse seminary in Kansas City. He is a chiefs, royals, et cetera, fan. Also, I read an L.A. Lakers fan because he hails from California.

He's written a number of books on Trinity and other doctrines in history and married four kids. Is that right? That's right. One wife four kids and is doing a lot of impressive theological and historical work.

Matthew, great to have you on L.B.E. Hey, Kevin, thanks for having me. I have to say, you really did your homework. Oh, good.

I mean, that's, most people do not pick up on that, but very, very true. So you're from California. I was actually born in Los Angeles.

Yeah. Yeah. And so, you know, I know it's very annoying to a lot of people.

But being a Laker fan is just you're born with this birth certificate. What can you do? I know. Well, I saw that.

And at first, I thought, yeah, that is annoying. What do you mean? Laker? And then, oh, that's right. He was from California.

So if you come by it, honestly, that's fine. All right. We are talking about the Reformation as renewal.

If you're watching this, this is a big, thick book. It is almost a thousand pages when you get all of the bibliography and all of the indices in there. So my first question, we're going to jump in real quick to what the book is about.

But first, congratulations. This is really impressive. This is well done.

I encourage people to get this published by Zondervin did this. And I read in the acknowledgement. She worked with Ryan Pastor.

Ryan's an old friend of mine. We went to the same college together and we're both in the RCA. So Ryan is doing that.

Oh, that. Yeah. Ryan, I've really enjoyed working with Ryan.

I have for some time now. And he was the encouragement I needed through this long process. Yeah.

So that's what I want to ask you about this process. I've noted to a few people, this looks like the sort of book that someone might give. In their years of retirement as a kind of a magnum opus.

Here's everything I've been thinking about the Reformation. But I think you're even maybe a couple years younger than me. But you come out with this in your 40s.

What was the process like? I'm thinking that this was taken from maybe your doctoral seminar that you do at Midwestern on the Reformation. But tell us where did this come from? What was the process right like to write a 900 page book on history and theology? Yeah. It was a process.

No doubt about it. When Ryan first approached me with Zonervin and said, hey, we could really use a history of the Reformation. I thought, well, I don't know.

I mean, there's lots of good histories of the Reformation out there. But when I started to get into the weeds and then reflect on my own teaching experience with students especially, I thought I think I have something to say. And that's where this book came in.

Because in my experience, teaching students, there's a couple of maybe problems or challenges that come up the first second they set foot into the classroom. And here's just a couple of them. One is they just jump right into the 16th century.

And this is not uncommon even when you read even very good histories of the Reformation. There's very little background or understanding of the theology and the culture and ecclesiastical and political that is then bringing the Reformers to this point. One of the unfortunate consequences is oftentimes students, and I've even preached on the Reformation at churches, similar type of issues come up.

One of the consequences is that they assume, okay, everything before this point was dark ages, especially those middle ages. Now the light has shown and at last the gospel's back, the church's back, it was lost, now it's back. And we finally have an evangelical faith and orthodoxy again, et cetera, et cetera.

Well, this is just a few of the issues that come up. And then another one was just a, I noticed a very disturbing lack of acquaintance or familiarity reading primary sources. And so I thought, well, maybe some of these narratives that get perpetuated in our churches and in our schools, and here I'm speaking to Protestants in particular, could this be in part because we're not actually reading at least a widespread of the primary sources, both medieval and Reformation.

We're kind of just hearing those same soundbites over and over again and kind of sticking with those, rather than going back to each corner of the Reformation and realizing they seem to think that they're up to something quite different. They seem to think that they're actually retrieving and even renewing that which came before, rather than dispensing and abandoning with it all together. Which is a great segue to jumping in.

I'm going to get to the big picture here by actually going toward the end of the book. And I want to read a few different quotations that you give from others. So first, this is 839 counter renewal.

You give a great paragraph from Richard Mueller, very influential theologian historian from Calvin post Reformation reform dogmatics. He's been influential in my own thinking and really reset the understanding, especially of scholasticism and how it relates to post Reformation theology. So let me just read this paragraph listeners, just bear with 30 seconds here.

The Reformation, in spite of its substantial contribution to the history of doctrine and the shock of deliberate theology in the church in the 16th century was not an attack upon the whole of medieval theology or upon Christian tradition. The Reformation assaulted a limited spectrum of doctrinal and practical abuses with the intention of reaffirming the values of the historical church, Catholic small C. Thus the mainstream reformers reconstructed the doctrines of justification and the sacraments and last sentence, the reform of individual doctrines like justification and sacraments occurred within the bounds of a traditional Orthodox and Catholic system, which on the grand scale remains substantively unaltered. That seems to me a great summary for Mueller of your project here.

So where did these misunderstandings come from and what are you doing in the book to try to overturn some of those myths? Well, first of all, let me just say I'm so glad you turned to that quotation from Richard Mueller because in many ways that sums up the book. And Richard Mueller has been at work, especially in what we call the for listeners out there who may not be familiar with this period, the post Reformation reform scholastics. I know that's quite a mouthful, but it's simply referring to the second half of the 16th century forward, especially the 17th century, in which Mueller has been at work to show a continuity between these individuals and the first generation reformers, but also a continuity between all of them and the medieval period before them.

Now, I know that shocks some people, but I think what Mueller is up to is this. He's, he's basically trying to say a few things. First, somehow, somewhere along the way, a very good genuine focus on so tearyology and ecclesiology.

So please don't this hear me. Those two doctrines are incredibly important. I'm not trying to diminish those.

But if what Mueller is saying is if that is our sole focus, then we can risk interpreting the reformers as if reform meant reform across the board in every doctrine. Now, if that's the case, I think the reformers, they're not going to be able to do it. Well, let me just say this.

They would be shocked and quite disturbed to hear that because when you read the reformers, and this is where my book comes in, is I'm trying to show how this takes place from the primary sources. When you read them, they are very direct to say in matters of orthodoxy, for example. We are, we have no problem.

We are affirming with you, the one holy Catholic and an apostolic church and its orthodoxy down through the ages. Now, it's important for them to say that because otherwise, when they get to soteriology and ecclesiology, they might otherwise appear to be novel heretics, which was, would have been just completely thrown everything and doubt before they even began. And that was one of the chief objections that that Catholic Roman Catholic apologists made consistently against the reformers.

Where was your church before Luther? Absolutely. In fact, just to get, if I could give one example, and then there are, there are many, and this is where I spend so many hundreds of pages trying to tease this out. But you think, for example, of the Lutherans, here is a critical moment when they have the opportunity to show what they believe.

Think of the Augsburg Confession. This is one of the most important moments in their history. And when you read it, you might ask, why, why are they so insistent that they are not with these radicals over here on, on the extreme right side of wing of the Reformation? Why are they so insistent that Rome should not confuse them? They seem to be almost obsessed with saying this.

And it's, well, it's, it's quite clear. I mean, Philip Melancon, you think of Luke, one of Luther's closest friends and colleagues, he has a huge part in this confession. And he's very direct.

He, he basically concludes that they have, and I'm just going to quote him here. He says that they have only taught that which is clearly grounded in Holy Scripture. So there's the primacy of the scriptures and had taught nothing that was against nor contrary to the union.

So in the universal church, we could substitute Catholic with a small C there, Catholic universal Christian church, or the writings of the fathers. And keep in mind, when they say the fathers, they don't necessarily have these very tight divisions between, say, you know, Athanasius and Bonaventure and Anselm. For them, the fathers oftentimes span that whole period before them.

Now that is illuminating because if this is their moment to represent what, who they are

as reformers, well, one of their first priorities is to demonstrate their, what we might call their Catholicity. And in case you're thinking, well, this is just a strange, affection of, of, you know, this Lutheran moment, this occurs across the board. You go to Geneva, you see it there at the very beginning of Calvin's Institute.

You go to the Swiss Alps and you're going to see it with not just Zwingli, but also Bollinger after him. You go to England and you're going to see it with Thomas Cranmer and John Jule. They seem to have the same priority agenda and they even think it's their prerogative.

Yeah. I want to walk through some of the historical and theological argument in the book, but sticking towards the back here. One more quotation.

This one on the next page from Michael Horton, seminal theologians such as Vermigli, Misschiles, Zentki, Turretan and Owen were soaked in Aquinas. And it is not exaggerating to say that the intellectual culture of continental and British Calvinism was more Thomistic than most counter-reformation theologians. That's just like scorching everyone.

What does, what does Mike mean there and what's the point he's trying to make for both Protestants and Catholics? And let me just add some context here. I'm so glad Mike Horton was the one to say this, right? I mean, this is, he has published since he was, you know, I don't know how old, very young. Modern mean high school.

Yeah. I mean, basically. And that quote, it comes from his book, his two volumes on justification.

So you can't say, oh, you know, Mike Horton here is having, you know, a Catholic moment. Now, he's actually making a point that's true to history, our Protestant history. And what he is saying is even, even when you look at their polemics, right? So we're not just talking here about the Trinity or Christology and the creeds.

Here we're even referring to justification or ecclesiology and so much more. Mike is zoning in, especially at the Council of Trent to say, in his opinion, Trent looks far more nominalous, whereas many of these reformers and what we might call reforms, Galastics, right after them. He mentioned all kinds of figures there.

They, they actually think they are retrieving and up, appropriating, maybe we could say critically appropriating at times, the Thomism that came before them. And this may be a surprise to the listeners, but we have to remember, you have figures like Vermigli or is early as Martin, who remember, had a huge hand in training and helping Calvin in exile. And all the way forward, we could keep going to John Owen and Francis Terrence in it.

This is a large span of early Protestant history. And Mike is saying they are identifying their heritage in that Augustinian and, yes, believe it or not, to mystic stream. It, it

doesn't mean that they have no disagreements.

You know, they're going to have a disagreement over how exactly righteousness is, is given to us. Is it, is it an infusion or an imputation? Surely. Yes, they're going to have disagreements there.

But what they're noticing is this Augustinian and Thomistic stream has a right understanding of the primacy of grace. And with it, the justice of God, that later scholastics on the eve of the Reformation, Skodas, Akum and Beal, they, they abandoned that heritage. And that's a long story.

But I think to even elaborate on Mike Horton there, it's, it's not even just the Reformed tradition. You look at Luther in 1517. Our eyes are often drawn to his 95 theses, but just before that, he has this disputation on his classic theology.

But what he means by that is he just names them. He says, there's these late comers, Skodas and Akum and Beal. And they, they have actually moved away from that Augustinian and Thomistic tradition that at the very least understood the justice of God and the primacy of grace in that Pauline Roman sense that now we have to, to try to recover altogether as if, as if we're beginning anew.

And that fires Luther up. Right. But after Luther then becomes the, the job of these Reformed authority, how Godly rule protects the vulnerable strengthens communities and promotes human flourishing.

So glad that Jonathan and Crossway have have written this book. We, we know we live in a time where authority, you hear that word. And immediately people think bad.

People who have authority are, are bad. Do bad things. Jonathan saying, well, yes, sadly, in a simple world, that happens, but the answer to bad authority is not no authority, but good authority.

So pick up a copy of this new book by Crossway Jonathan Lehman Authority. So let's go back here to Aquinas because I think for a lot of people who, who dive into this stuff, probably what will be most controversial or conversation producing will not be the second half of the book with the Reformation, though all of that's built on the first half of the book. But I think what people will talk about is this renewal part.

Okay. Matthew's making this argument that you've just stated very well, and succinctly, that the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation, the Reformation. So the Reformation is owning gladly this medieval heritage.

And some of our listeners may know, there is a bit of a debate in reformed circles, often

friendly, and maybe sometimes it gets unfriendly, but I think it can be just a friendly, intellectual, historical difference. And you might put it this way very, very basically, and it has to do with Thomas Aquinas. When we think about Aquinas, is Aquinas basically a bad guy because he was wed to Aristotle.

He subverted the authority of the Bible unintentionally by drawing on human autonomy and reason to build up the superstructure of his doctrine that way. And he is the 13th century medieval Catholic doctor who sets the trajectory for Catholic theology. So one view is Aquinas is mainly a bad guy, but of course we have some things to learn from him because he was influential.

And he, the categories of Aristotle continue in the scholastic forms continue post Reformation. Or another view is, well, of course, as Protestants, we disagree with some things in some significant ways from Aquinas, but he is more on our team than not. And I think that's the way you would say it.

So, so give us, let me ask you this first because I'm going to set you up to, to give an apologetic for Aquinas as Protestants. But let me ask first, what does Aquinas get wrong? Because as Protestants, we think he gets some important things wrong. Where does Aquinas miss the point? Yeah, there's going to be the obvious doctrines that listeners could probably guess, right? And let me just point out a few.

For example, we're going to have as Protestants a different understanding of the church and the papacy than Thomas Aquinas. We will have a strong disagreement with him on related matters, such as, for example, purgatory, or at the Lord's table, transubstantiation. Which was still relatively new doctrine when Aquinas, I mean, just really set in place, 1215, fourth letter and council.

Yeah, keep going. Just don't want us to think in good Protestant fashion in rejecting transubstantiation, we were not rejecting something that the church had taught from its earliest days. Yes, and that's actually one of the key arguments of the Reformers.

When you look at how they are trying to demonstrate their catholicity, they make the very provocative claim that some of these doctrines that the church is saying in the 16th century is so essential and ancient are actually quite recent. From their understanding of Mary to transubstantiation to even the authority of the papacy, which was debated even in the Catholic church's own house up until the 16th century. So, yes, that is a critical point.

But yeah, back to Aquinas. And we would put in there also the specifics of his doctrine of justification. I mentioned that a minute ago, is righteousness infused.

Now, here's the thing though, even there, even with some of these doctrines, it's not as neat and tidy as you might think. It's not the Council of Trent. Yes, I mean, you asked,

well, why could Mike Horton give that quote a minute ago? There's good reason because, yes, even though there's this disagreement on justification as to how we receive the righteous of Christ, and that's a critical one.

I strongly will disagree with Thomas there. There's a world of difference though between that type of view and other Catholics of the centuries that come next, which actually go in a semi-plagian, even Pelagian direction. Right? And so this is where I think sometimes in narratives about Aquinas, I think what's so telling to me is not so much what they say about Aquinas, but what they don't say and don't know about other medieval figures.

So I mentioned a minute ago, Luther, and how Luther is responding in 1517 to certain late medieval classics. Well, that's not Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas is in the high Middle Ages.

He's responding to individuals like Gabriel Beale, who he was born and bred on, who are teaching a very covenant that if you do your best, then God will reward you with the grace for justification. So that original sin does not have the effect that Augustine said it had, but actually you're like a bird. He uses an illustration.

You're like a bird that's just got a bit of a limp wing, but nonetheless can get off the ground if you really try. And if God thinks you've done your best, then he will reward you. Well, Luther is born and bred in this mentality.

And some other reformers are too. It comes out of this late, this late scholastic period just on the eve of the Reformation. And Luther is finding this when he opens the scriptures, he's finding this absolutely disagreeable.

Now what Luther may or may not realize, other reformers begin to realize this because they're trained in some of the older scholastics is that what Luther is returning to. It is an understanding of God's grace and justification that is far more closer to someone like Thomas Aquinas. Now there's some fascinating studies.

The reason Luther doesn't realize this, he's misinformed about Thomas Aquinas because he's just fed Aquinas through someone like Gabriel Beale. As if to make it look like Aquinas is just this semi-plagian or plagian just like Beale is. Well, you could see why then Luther doesn't have a high opinion of Aquinas.

But whether he actually read Aquinas in full, we don't have a lot of evidence showing that he did. Now all that to say it's not as clean and neat and tidy as we sometimes think it is because at the very least Aquinas is far more on our side because his understanding of say predestination to be incredibly anachronistic here is far more Calvinistic. Then, and the primacy of grace with it, then someone like Beale who is far more in that semi-plagian category.

So that's just one example. You can look at other examples even with Mary. There are

some huge differences between Aquinas' understanding of Mary which is far more tame than what you get later with other scholastics where Mary is elevated to a point that would make us process.

But all that said, I think back to your bigger question, what I do not think should be controversial at all. People may not like it, but I don't think there should be any controversy is the history. When you look at the history of the 16th and 17th centuries, reformer after reformer, and here I'm using that term broadly to refer to not just the first generation, but the second and the second.

And the third and fourth generation of these reformers. In all kinds of ways, they are all indebted to Thomas Aquinas. There's just no way around it.

Now, some are a little bit more conscientious careful to acknowledge that debt given the polemics of their day, but some are quite direct. You mentioned a minute ago someone like Peter Martver Migging. We could also throw in there someone like Jerome Zonke.

When you look at their doctrine of God in order to demonstrate their orthodoxy, they are, I mean, Zonke is, I mean, he's practically copying Thomas Aquinas. I don't know how to put it. It's that explicit.

And as you move forward, even as late as someone is such as John Owen, the Puritan, well, there's no way you can read about it. And I think that Owen's treatment against Arminianism or Sassinianism and not see the obvious connections to at least Galaticism, but most definitely Thomas Aquinas himself. It's very conspicuous.

So I like to say to people, regardless of these narratives you hear floating around, I think someone like Richard Mueller and company, you can think of, there's a recent book by David Van Drune in as well, who brings in a team of Reformed theologians. They have demonstrated that the history itself is not controversial. The 16th and 17th century Protestants did rely on Thomas Aquinas.

There's no question about that. The question only then becomes, well, how are we to interpret that for what Protestantism is today and what it should be going forward? Right. Let's just stick with Aquinas for another couple minutes.

So the big knock on Aquinas, and the book is about the Reformation. I don't want people to get wrong. But there are a couple of some really key chapters on Aquinas.

The knock on Aquinas for many quarters would be, well, what's he known for? He's known for the five ways, the five proofs. And you would think by how much play that gets in a typical philosophical curriculum or church issue curriculum, that was like a third of the summa or something when it actually is what a page or two. So maybe, maybe.

So the knock on Aquinas is wedded to Aristotle. He baptized pagan philosophy and he

started from human reason, which is therefore human autonomy to reason his way to God and the whole superstructure is mistaken. I teach when I do SD1, explain why I don't think that's the case, but I'm interviewing you.

So why don't you explain? Why, assuming you agree that that is a misconception of what Thomas is doing with his proofs and how he understands the relationship between faith and reason. Well, Kevin, I would much prefer to hear from you. But since you put the ball back in my court, yeah, I think you're right.

I think it is a very poor historical representation of Thomas Aquinas. I always do this exercise with students because we'll open Aquinas and they're shocked. They get to the five ways or the five proofs to God's existence and they are they start turning the pages.

Where's the rest? Yeah, I thought this was the big thing. Yes. I mean, how many mountains of books have been published on this? And so they're surprised when they open Aquinas and realize, well, first of all, it's very short.

So are we actually judging? Are we putting things in proper perspective or are we making this the center of his thought when actually he spends volumes on virtue and ethics? I was just talking recently to Carl Truman and we were reflecting on how incredibly relevant and ahead of his day, Aquinas was on virtue in a way that could pay off with huge dividends for today, given that the ethical issues were facing. So all I have to say, I think there's that issue that we've kind of put things in the wrong proportion. Unfortunately, with that type of focus has also come this narrative that will Aquinas is a type of rationalist in which he has elevated reason to a point that it makes faith subordinate to a point where scripture is not seen and not taken seriously.

As an authority, I don't. All you have, I feel like when I hear those type of narratives, it's almost the first indicator that the person is not read Aquinas, or at least not read them without a certain filter on, because there's just no way you can read Aquinas and come to those conclusions. He says immediately the exact opposite in terms of his methodology.

He elevates scripture. He considers scripture his authority in final authority in matters of theology. And even then when he turns to reason, he's very careful.

He operates, I think there's a misconception, there's a tendency to read modernism back into Aquinas. But Aquinas is not an enlightenment man. He is operating under that assumption of Anselm before him, that faith seeks understanding that until I believe, I will not understand.

And here they're quoting from the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah. And so that's a very different understanding of Aquinas, who then embarks to explore the Christian faith, but does so with some very specific parameters for what reason can and cannot do. And he's

very clear about those.

So that's another misconception. I guess the other one I would just throw in there is when you look at Aquinas's treatment of faith and reason, when he does give reason, the opportunity, the opportunity to have center stage. He's always doing so with the mindset that reason itself operates under the umbrella of divine revelation.

And here we're not just referring to supernatural revelation, but natural revelation itself in the created order. Well, that matters as well, because Aquinas is not saying that these proofs do everything. And I think that's the other misconception that we almost come to them and say, well, if this proof doesn't demonstrate everything, then Aquinas is thinking too much of reason.

And then these proofs are useless. Aquinas doesn't think that way. He's approaching these proofs as instrumental to confirming and giving us the assurance in the Romans 1 and Psalm 19 sense that the heavens declare the glory of God and what God's divine nature can be clearly perceived ever since the very beginning of creation.

He's operating under that assumption. So then he can say, well, as one who's been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, can I then use reason in an instrumental way to see, as Calvin would say, again, I'm sorry for being anachronistic, but to see the theater of God's glory, that's so clearly perceived as Paul says. And that's where Aquinas says, yes, we actually can.

I think that if I could just mention one other thing, the other misconception here is that when you get to the 16th and 17th centuries, that they somehow fix this perceived problem in Thomas Aquinas, I would actually argue very differently. If you want to see the elevation of reason over faith in an unhealthy way, Aquinas is not your man. You need to go further into the later medieval ages with Skoda's acumen Beale, who actually dispense with not maybe not everything, but key facets of Thomas's philosophy.

It creates quite a stir. Well, again, to mention Richard Mueller here, he's written a fantastic article where he shows that once you get past the first generation reformers and look at these post reformation reformers, they start realizing, okay, we've done the polemics. Now we need to build up the church and actually codify the faith with confessions and catechisms and entire systems of theology.

So they get to work. But as they do that, they realize, well, we need to come back to the subject of philosophy, because if we're going to defeat these cicinians philosophies quite essential, these cicinians are rationalistic. Well, what do they do? They align themselves not with the philosophy of the late medieval ages, but they go back to the Thomistic philosophy with Aquinas and others in that stream to demonstrate that they stand in the stream of what we would call classical realism, as opposed to the nominalism that takes effect in the late medieval period and then we later see that in modernism itself.

Now, maybe some of that is all lost on listeners, and maybe some of those terms are new, but the point is this. When our own Protestant forefathers begin to develop the Christian faith in a positive way, constructing and building things back up after Trent, they are not turning away from the philosophy of Thom's Aquinas. The further things go on, the more they are turning towards it to self-consciously align themselves with it.

That's not to say that everything's perfect. I use the phrase critical appropriation to say, yes, there may be points of tension, but they nonetheless find themselves not as just randomly saying, oh, we'll take this and this, thank you very much. Instead, what they're trying to do is say, we think that this paradigm is generally right and we think as provocative as this may be to Trent, we think we can actually bring it along and renew it even more so for the purpose of Protestantism itself.

It's a great summary. Let's go up to the Reformation and just for our listeners out there who need a quick flyover. So, scholasticism, we've been talking a lot about that.

Matthew does a nice job here of giving some of the keys, but again, Mueller has been influential in showing that scholasticism was a method, not chiefly a certain content. So scholasticism just think a way of thinking and writing, questions and answers, certain key distinctions, some of which go back to Aristotle, and many of those are just almost embedded in the human way of thinking. So people who want to say, don't rely on Aristotle.

Well, good luck trying to talk about anything in Western thought without going back to some kind of essence or form, or it's just the way in which people have talked about ideas for a really long time. So you have scholasticism, and then what Matthew is saying is so right. You have Aquinas, but the Middle Ages isn't just one thing, and we can think that no one would say that the 21st century is one thing theologically, but when we're centuries removed, we can tend to look back and say, well, they're probably all kind of just lump them into one century or one medieval, but Aquinas is a very different sort of theological trend and trajectory than these other people, Matthew's mentioning the law firm of Scotus Occam and Beel.

So those three names and Gabriel Beel just to be clear, that's not the GK Beel that we love, the Greg Beel. That jet G stands for Greg, not Gabriel, so we're not throwing him under the bus. And then we come to the Reformation.

And the Reformation, one of the central arguments in this impressive big book is that it's renewal. It's not reinvention. In fact, it's groups like the Mormons and other, we would say, cults that make the argument the whole, ever since the Apostles, the church has been bankrupt.

The Reformers were steadfastly against that idea. They never wanted to. It was Rome that accused the Reformers of that, and they were constantly saying, no, we are trying

to renew and trying to retrieve what has been here.

Let me bring this up now to the Reformation, because one of, you've talked about a lot of these myths. You outline four of them in the opening chapter that the Reformation was anti-tradition. The Reformation was anti-universal church.

The Reformation was anti-medieval and the Reformation was anti-philosophy. And you've hit on all of those myths. One other myth that Timothy George mentions in his afterwards, that I just want you to comment on, because I thought it was a really good point that he makes.

He says the first myth of the Reformation is the very end, 885. The Reformation divided the church. So, True or False, the Reformation divided the church.

It is true, but not in the sense that people probably think, and it is also quite false. How's that for an answer? Yeah, well, that's good. That's what I'd expect from a theology professor.

Yeah, that's right. Confuse you even more. Let me just see if I can get at what Timothy George is after.

I think what he's trying to say there is there's this narrative. Let's just be honest and take a look at our own house and do some house cleaning for a second here. It's a narrative that is often perpetuated by evangelicals.

And so we're not helping ourselves here, but the narrative goes something like that. It says that to be reformed or to be Protestant is to divide from, to rebel against, to even create division that we celebrate to this day in our denominations. That's what it means.

And so there is a clean break in that sense. Timothy George is, I think, rightly pushing back against that to say that's a myth for a whole lot of reasons. The first one is, and this is important for Protestants to hear, especially in their conversations with maybe Roman Catholic friends of theirs.

We should not let others say that the 16th century is the beginning of division. If you just do, you could pick up most history, any history and most histories of the Middle Ages. And you are going to notice there are debates and divisions taking place on levels that are close to the 16th century.

Or at least had the potential to be as colossal as the 16th century. Just to interject East West schism 1054 Babylonian captivity 14th century Western schism into the 14th century. The lawlords, the Hussites, the Waldencians, the Al-Ambratos and Spain.

So lots of divisions had already been going. Okay, keep going. Yes, and to just add to that, these aren't merely divisions between, say, the Catholic Church and certain

sectarians.

Even on the eve of the Reformation in the two centuries preceding it, they are viciously at each other's throats over where does those authority reside? Is it in the council or is it in a pope? And they're divided. And there are ecclesiastical, even political consequences of this divide. So that's the first thing.

These are just some little examples. You can go back and read in the book. I spend quite a bit of time fleshing out what those were.

But all that to say, we don't have to buy into that narrative. And that's an important thing for Protestants to say, because we sometimes have that stench on us that we're the reason for that the Church is divided to this day. It's not historically accurate.

Now, what do you do when you get to the 16th century? That's the big question. Because there is no question that this is the big divide. There's no point in denying that.

But here's the thing. Let's just take Martin Luther, right? Because Luther is at the very beginning, and he is vocal and ambitious. And can be divisive.

Can be quite divisive. You think of his debates over the Lord's Supper, and there's a dividing line there. So let's take Luther.

Well, when we go back to the 1510s and 1520s, what does Luther think he's doing? He thinks, I am, whether you agree with him or disagree with him, he thinks I am renewing the Church, not trying to separate from it. I am trying to bring about a renewal of the Church Catholic. I'm not, I'm not trying to create a new Church.

He's very adamant about that. In fact, that's part of his defense. Calvin, John Calvin.

If you read the very beginning of the Institutes, 1559, for example, his preface to the King of France, what does Calvin say? Calvin, well, let me put this way. What is he most disturbed about when he thinks of the French and how they are persecuting reformed Christians? Some of which Calvin knows. What is Calvin most upset about? Well, he's upset about the charge of novelty.

And with that division, as if he even says this, as if they're creating a new sect. And Calvin responds and says, first of all, what we are teaching, and keep in mind, this is bold, right? He's talking to the King. Francis the First, he says, I do not at all doubt that the evangelical faith is new to you.

But there's nothing new among us. What we're teaching is in accord with the Church universal, he says. If you want to look for who's causing the division, he goes on to say, look over to the extreme side, to those radicals instead.

But as for us, we're not trying to create division. Now, what does that all mean, since

there certainly was division that resulted from all this? I think what it means is, to go back to Luther, Luther would say, I did not leave the Church Catholic, or to be more specific, I did not leave Rome so much as it excommunicated me. And there's this great line, and other scholars have summed up Luther at this point where he says, and I think I quoted in my conclusion, where Luther basically says, by excommunicating me, you have actually excommunicated the Church Catholic.

If I'm right, then you've actually dispensed with large swaths of the Church before us. Now, that is a key statement because what Luther is trying to say, and Calvin said the same thing in his words to Francis the First, what he's trying to say is this, Rome is not Catholic enough. Now, that's a very, very provocative thing to say to this day.

Why? Because they are defining Catholic to these later novelties in doctrine, whereas we are going back further to define our Catholic in a much broader sense where the Church was United East and West, and then trying to bring about reform based on those that Catholic substance. Now, that's a very provocative narrative, but in the eyes of the Reformers, that's what they think they are doing. If Rome is too narrow in its Catholic, they are able to be broader still because their Catholic is defined first and foremost by God in Christ, matters of orthodoxy, Catholic substances, we might call it, and then how those work their way out through what they then called a Protestant principle.

And say justification and the doctrine of the Church. Right. So with 10 or 15 minutes left, let's zero in a couple more questions on the Reformation.

Before that, I just want to mention second sponsor, last sponsor, desiring God and encourage you to add their new podcast. I just did this in the last couple of weeks, Light Plus Truth. So these are classic sermons from Piper.

They used to be on a different sermon, a day app. They've done away with that one. They have this one.

They're curated and they've, they put them into 20 or 25 minutes. So it's great for a commute or a jog and you can get one of these, I think they're every day or maybe five days a week, but check out these classic sermons from Piper. I know there's lots of good podcasts and you like to listen to people interviewing people.

That's what this is, but Christians out there. Don't neglect when you can listen to good sermons as well. Matthew, I'm wondering kind of a fun question.

Maybe as you look at the Reformation and as you worked on this book and as you teach on this, is there, is there a reformer again broadly defined that you just loved learning something new about or you think is unheralded. So this is like the end of, of Wheel of Fortune. When they put the letters up there, you can't pick RSTS.

R-S-T-L-N or whatever. So you can't, I don't want to hear you say Luther or Calvin or

Zwingli. How about take Bootser and Bollinger off the board? Give us somebody else that you just, you love, you've loved learning about and you think that we need to know more about and most of us haven't heard of him.

Oh wow. Well, we only have a couple minutes, so this is going to be tough. Maybe I can cheat a little bit and mention too.

We'll see you soon. I think first of all, Protestants would be well served by being far more familiar with and connected to those, the second half of the 16th century and 17th century, those Protestant, I could even be more specific and say, reforms, scholastics. This starts early with certain precursor individuals like Peter Marver-Migli, whom you mentioned.

It really starts to blossom by the time you get to Peter Svahn-Mestrich, whose volumes are now coming out in English, praise God. Yeah. Yeah.

I encourage you. Thank you, Todd, for translating those. Yes.

What a gift. I think what we see there, if you just read those, so this is my plea with listeners, please just read these individuals, whether it's Peter Marver-Migli or Jerome Zonke or Maastricht. Junius to be another early one.

Yes, Junius. I use him in my classes when we talk about how to even approach theology. Please read those individuals, that whole era, because so many of the misinformed narratives that we're talking about will be easily corrected just with a glance of their systems of theology.

And then if I can cheat a little bit and just mention one other period or person in there, I would say in the English Reformation, as Protestants, of course, we love to talk about Tyndale. And so do I. However, keep going, keep going, because it's not just Tyndale. When you look at someone like John Jule, you'll notice that just like over in among the Swiss with someone like Heinrich Bollinger, they are writing books with this very thesis of mine in the title.

So it's not just Calvin and his address to Francis. John Jule, for example, just to name one, he writes a book, it's basically what he calls an apology. And he's trying to defend the Church of England, but in a real sense, he's just trying to defend the Protestant Church and show that this idea of Catholicity is not just something Rome has among them.

And then he goes on to prove himself and to show himself. So you don't have to be an Anglican alone to read this book in a sense. This is an apology for Catholicity that I think applies to Protestants at large.

I would read him too, because his book has been, it's in, it has good updated editions

today in English, because you don't have to take my word for all this. Go get it from the horse's mouth and get it from reformers like Kevin, you're saying, besides Luther, Calvin, get it from some of these other reformers, who by the way, in their own day, were sometimes just as big. You think, for example, of Bollinger, or Bollinger, depending on how you want to pronounce his name, he was just as significant, maybe more so than Calvin elicing his day.

And so it's important to listen to them as well. They're very direct about this claim because they believe that the Reformation depends on it. And I think if they're right, then that should actually define what Protestantism is today and how we look back, not just at the past, but what we should be in the future.

Let me ask you about some books here, since this is life books and everything. I'm just thinking, if someone wants to get acclimated to scholasticism and some of the people you're mentioning a good, relatively little volume published by RHB, by Willem Van Asselt, on Introduction to Scholasticism. So that's a good paperback, inexpensive.

He talks about Turrets and Pictet, a number of these post-Reformation guys. Another book, I hope it's still in print, edited by R. Scott Clark and Karl Truman on Scholasticism, has a great collection of essays there. Do you have others that you think of somebody who's listening to this? And of course, they want to get your book, Matthew, but they know it's going to take a while to get through 900 pages.

And they want to know, is there something for the person in the pew that's a couple hundred pages or something? Or even more popular writers that you would say are infused by some of these ideas. I mean, I do think the late R. C. Sproul certainly brought a lot of these distinctions to mind and was certainly a friend, I think I can claim, a friend to these sorts of arguments that we're making and had such a gift to present them in an accessible way. Can you think of others who are either practitioners of these things at a really good lay level or one step higher than that, that are good resources for people to pick up if they want to know more about this central argument you're making? Yeah, I certainly can.

I think if you're looking for like a resource, maybe a level up, I would say that book by David Van Druden, it's called Aquinas Among the Protestants. That's a great exercise because you got like 20 chapters by 20 different Protestants all looking at one area, their own specialty could be ethics, could be Trinity, could be philosophy, and they're trying to connect the dots between scholasticism in the Middle Ages, specifically with Aquinas, and then what they are seeing historically with Protestants in the 16th and 17th century. So that's a great exercise.

Let me just throw this out there. This may not have been what you were looking for, Kevin, but I don't think people need to be as intimidated as we sometimes are by the scholastics. Now, I'm not saying that they're easy to read.

They are operating on a very high intellectual level, which is another good reason why I think every seminary student should be reading scholastics. However, even for like pastors, and sometimes the theologically minded church guard, I often will say, Hey, have you ever thought about picking up Thomas Aquinas's commentary on John? Just open to John chapter one and read it. And here you have a beautiful sophisticated attempt to show how you apply this classic way of thinking to the scriptures in a way that preserves orthodoxy, provides clarity, which is what this classic method was meant to do, and even starts to move you towards doxology.

And so I would just say to listeners, don't be afraid to do that. I give even my beginner students who are coming, you know, right off a church setting, I will give them an sounds little tiny, you know, 15, 20 page book, Prost Loggyon, where he starts to contemplate who is God because he says he wants to know what Heaven is like. Well, there's it's not that there's going to be any hard moments in there where you're like, what is this idea of simplicity? But infused throughout is this love for God, a faith that seeking understanding so that they can actually experience the joy of Heaven itself and seeing God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So I think listeners might be pleasantly surprised just to get in the pool yourself and see that it's not freezing. It's actually it's actually warm. Yeah, that's a great word.

And that could be you know, that was another Reformation slogan. That's more the the humanist in the good sense, the humanist tradition, doctoral, my secondary supervisor, one of the great pieces of advice he gave at the beginning of my program was just that he said, for now skip the secondary sources. Actually, they're they're often harder to read than the primary sources because they have layers and layers of not all but often of tradition and understanding and these guys don't agree with each other.

You go and sometimes they're massive like Turrutin's volumes, but I assign them for ST because of the reason you said, Hey, Turrutin's hard to read. There's no doubt about it. It's it's it's it's a different super structure and language.

But I want them to to read it because then they won't be intimidated by it. It's on their shelf. They can pull it off.

And after you've you've tried Turrutin, even if you only understand a third of it on a first pass, you know it's there and you know how to get it. But a lot of the stuff like you said, these these works by Anselm or others, there's lots of things. They're not massive works.

They're small and you can read them and they're devotional and they didn't have the same discrete categories that we often have devotional, exegetical, philosophical theological. They're all coming together. And I love that that insistence to go and read some of these original sources.

Let me ask you this as we close. I was really intrigued here. You talked at the beginning.

You know, there was you had a little footnote or something. This was pulled from my forthcoming systematic theology. So tell me about that.

Are you doing a volume in a series? Are you doing a whole Matthew Barrett ST? Where's the work at with your own systematic theology? Yeah. Yeah. No, it's the second one.

I'm writing a systematic theology with Baker Academic. It will be one volume. I've already started working on it.

I spent the summer in the weeds of Christology. I thought, why not bite off the one of the hardest parts? And I'm loving it. I'm so excited about it.

I am hoping and praying that this will be a systematic theology that does so much of what we've talked about. But actually does it itself rather than just my book here, the Reformationist Renewals, looking a lot of the history. How do we actually do it then? What does it mean to be Protestant and to do systematic theology in a way that has roots? And so I'm praying it can be really a refreshing volume that gives a classical theology, applies a classical theology mindset towards systematic theology today, which I think is sorely missing from so many of us.

Will this be what you think, eight, nine hundred thousand pages in one volume? Yeah. So I mean, Baker Academic, they published back in the day Millard Erickson, and his was like a thousand, twelve hundred pages. And so they've been, mine is the the the system theology that is coming down the, you know, coming next and the I'm hoping to complete it in the next couple of years, Lord willing.

And so they've been so generous to say, Hey, if we did that with Erickson, we'll give you a thousand to twelve hundred pages too. So as long as we can, you know, physically bind it in one volume, I think I think we're fair game. And will you be trying to, you know, there are one volumes out there that are systematic theologies talking to other theologians, then there are ones that are talking to students and pastors, and then the church and then maybe very beginners.

Where on those, maybe four levels, are you trying to speak? Yeah, I am trying to write a systematic theology, not for, you know, other theologians is, I think that's very profitable and very good. But that's not what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to write it for students, specifically seminary students.

And so the, the plan is to write this one volume for seminary level students. You know, at the beginning of his summa, Thomas Aquinas says he's frustrated. And he's like, there's, there's all these people out there making theology so confusing.

And he says, I want to add clarity. And so I'm going to embark on this classic method to

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