

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



IVP Rolls Out New Commentary Series from the Age of the Reformation

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April 4, 2011—InterVarsity Press announces the publication of a prestigious new series: the Reformation Commentary on Scripture (RCS). Projected to be a twenty-eight-volume biblical commentary, the series puts the words of the Reformers directly into the hands of the contemporary church.

Andy LePeau, IVP's editorial director and associate publisher, says, "The RCS will be our single largest effort in the coming decade to make resources of the past available for the renewal of the church in the present and the future."

The project brings together a team of world-class Reformation scholars under the leadership of general editor Timothy George and associate general editor Scott M. Manetsch. Each volume will feature a mix of major and minor voices from the era, with many texts appearing for the first time in English.

Following on the heels of IVP Academic's critical success with the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, this new project is an important next step in a church-wide effort of retrieval. "The Reformers saw themselves as standing in fundamental continuity with the early church fathers," says Timothy George. "The RCS seeks to present the Reformers and their engagement with the Bible in the context of the ongoing history of the people of God."

The first volume, *Galatians, Ephesians*, is due out in October 2011 and will be edited by Gerald L. Bray, director of research at Latimer Trust. (450 pages, hardcover, 978-0-8308-2973-6, \$50.00). Subsequent volumes are due out in four month intervals.

Founded in 1947 as an extension of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, InterVarsity Press serves those in the university, the church and the world by publishing thoughtful Christian books that equip and encourage people to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord in all of life. Visit IVP online at ivpress.com.

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Timothy George is the founding dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, and senior adviser at Christianity Today. He is a member of the Southern Baptist-Roman Catholic Conversation Team and has participated in the Evangelicals and Catholics Together initiative.

An Interview with Timothy George, General Editor of the Reformation Commentary on Scripture Series

In October 2011, the first volume of the Reformation Commentary on Scripture series will be published. In expectation of this release, IVP Academic editor Mike Gibson spoke with Reformation Commentary on Scripture (RCS) series General Editor Timothy George.

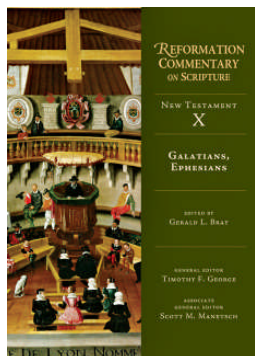
The Reformation Commentary on Scripture series has been in development for several years. Could you describe your role in the series? What are some of the highlights for you as the series General Editor?

When I first heard about IVP's decision to publish the Reformation Commentary on Scripture (RCS), I was delighted that there would be a sequel series to the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS). The Reformers saw themselves as standing in fundamental continuity with the early church fathers and the RCS will demonstrate how this commitment was reflected in their exegetical work. I would mention two highlights from my work thus far as the General Editor for the series. First is the privilege of collaborating on the planning and design of the RCS with some very able helpers including Scott Manetsch, our Associate General Editor, and Joel Scandrett and Mike Gibson from the IVP staff. We have worked together to recruit a superb team of volume editors, including some of the most able Reformation scholars in the field today. This promises a series of high academic quality that will be especially useful to pastors and teachers of the church.

There has been a lot of conversation, more recently even in Protestant circles, of the need to engage in “retrieval,” or, as one author has colorfully stated it, “reading with the dead.” How does the Reformation Commentary on Scripture contribute to the project of retrieval and reclamation of tradition?

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to their biblical studies, the Reformers were also keen to read the Scriptures in the company of the fathers and scholastics who preceded them. The RCS will allow pastors and teachers to compare the writings of the church fathers with the Reformers of the sixteenth century. In doing so, they will be able to assess both the continuity and the dissonance between these two major epochs in biblical interpretation.

Attention is increasingly on the issue of theological interpretation of Scripture; that is, how we, in our ecclesial communities, read Scripture with and through theological lenses. Do you think the Reformation Commentary on Scripture has a part to play in this conversation? What can we learn from the Reformers in this series on this issue?

All who work in the field of Reformation exegesis stand on the shoulders of Professor David C. Steinmetz whose groundbreaking essay, "The Superiority of Pre-critical Exegesis," was published in 1980. David has taught us to reject the "chronological snobbery" of scholarly methods that dismiss Reformation-era studies of the Bible, along with the interpretive traditions that preceded them, as antiquated or regressive. Though the Protestant reformers placed the Bible above the writings of the church fathers, they did not divorce it from them. For the Reformers too, the Bible was the church's book and was meant to be a means of grace, an instrument of communion with God. The theological interpretation of the Bible is part of what Dr. Matthew Levering has called "participatory biblical exegesis," through which the reader enters into the realities taught in the biblical text not only by linear-historical tools (archeology, philology and so forth), but also by doctrines and practices, through prayer and worship, by which the "vertical" presence of the triune God is made real. The monastic habit of *lectio divina* shaped the way in which the Reformers read the Bible and passed it along to others.

A recent book asked the question regarding whether the Reformation is over. The authors suggested that given the changed ecclesial terrain in the late twentieth century, the divisions within Christianity are largely insignificant and certainly surmountable. Does a series like the Reformation Commentary on Scripture rejuvenate the divisions or are there ways in which a series of this kind can facilitate deeper understanding between the traditions?

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I answered the title of the book, *Is the Reformation Over?* in the endorsement I gave. I said that the Reformation was over only to the extent that in some measure it had succeeded. While the RCS focuses primarily on the Protestant tradition, we have included within our scope some of the biblical humanist and early Catholic reformers as well. While we are prone to focus on the Bible as a source of division in the era of the Reformation, we tend to forget that both Catholics and Protestants accepted the Bible as the inspired and authoritative written Word of God. They found in its pages a common source for meditation, prayer, and ethics, as well as theology. Since the early 1990s, I have been a part of a theological project known as Evangelicals and Catholics Together. In each of the topics we have considered, we have approached our work together through prayer and careful reading of the sacred Scriptures. To read the Bible alongside the Reformers, as well as the fathers, can only bring us closer to Christ, and the nearer we come to Christ, the closer we will be to one another.

What do you think will be surprising to readers of this first volume? Of the series?

I think readers of the RCS will be surprised at the passion and insight but also the humor in the writings of the Reformers. Should one decide to read right through one of these volumes from first to last, it will prove an engaging read.

You are also the author of *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, which will debut alongside the first volume of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*. Can you say a little about this book and some of the ways in which it intersects with *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* itself?

Reading Scripture with the Reformers tells the story of the Bible in the age of the Reformation. I examine the advent of printing, the rise of the New Learning, represented especially by Erasmus, and the way in which the Reformers built on these movements in their own engagement with Scripture. One of the themes I pursue in this book is the way common people read and appropriated the Bible in their everyday lives and the impact this had on the course of the Reformation. There is also a chapter on “Reformation Preaching” in which I show how the Reformers came to regard the act of preaching as a sacramental event. I hope that this little book will “prime the pump” for readers to jump feet first into the RCS.