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A Tribute to Donald G. Bloesch on the Publication of the Paperback Edition of Christian Foundations

My file folder for Donald Bloesch is itself quite voluminous. Correspondence goes back to May of 1989 when former IVP editor Rodney Clapp reports on his visit with Don in Dubuque regarding the possibility of our publishing a series of volumes of his theological work. The plan called for six volumes originally. Two of the proposed volumes had already



Donald G. Bloesch

gone through more than one draft before the contract was signed. The seven-volume hardback series, *Christian Foundations*, was completed in 2004. I had the privilege of serving as the editor for the last three volumes of the series. As an emblem of its success, we are making

available a handsome paperback version of the entire series. Of course those of you who have yet to complete your hardback series, or who would prefer it, can still get some of the original volumes.

At this milestone we thought it would be appropriate to solicit and include in our *Alert* tributes to Don and his theological work by three who have known him for many years: Gabriel Fackre, Elmer Colyer and David Gill.

—Gary Deddo, Associate Editor for Academic Books

Gabriel Fackre writes:

Don Bloesch and I entered the ministry of the Evangelical and Reformed Church (now part of the United Church of Christ) about the same time in the 1950s. Since then we have been in many of the same church struggles for doctrinal integrity. We have both helped launch confessional groups in the United Church of Christ, drafting some of their key documents, looking on these movements as ways of saying “No!” to “culture-Protestantism.”

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Discussing the Forthcoming Reformed Commentary on Scripture with General Editor Timothy George

Continuing in our tradition of publishing works in the history of exegesis, IVP Academic is eager to inform our readers of a new historical commentary in the works—the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture (RCS)*. This twenty-seven-volume series will feature comments on the Bible from a multitude of Protestant Reformation figures, many of which

have never before been translated into English. The lead volumes for the RCS are scheduled to appear in 2009, and work on the project has begun in earnest under the general editorship of Timothy George, a renowned Reformation scholar and dean of Beeson Divinity School. Scott Manetsch of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School will be serving as associate general editor.

IVP associate editor Joel Scandrett will be serving as in-house editor for the RCS. He recently had an opportunity to ask Timothy George about the series.

Scandrett: Timothy, perhaps you can begin by telling our readers why you think this project is important. What relevance does Reformation-era interpretation of the Bible hold for the contemporary reader?

George: The Reformation of the sixteenth century was a movement of tremendous ecclesial and spiritual vitality, not to say controversy. At the heart of this ferment was the Bible, recently translated into the vernacular languages of Europe and made available for pastors and scholars in the original languages, such as Erasmus's 1516 edition of the Greek New Testament.

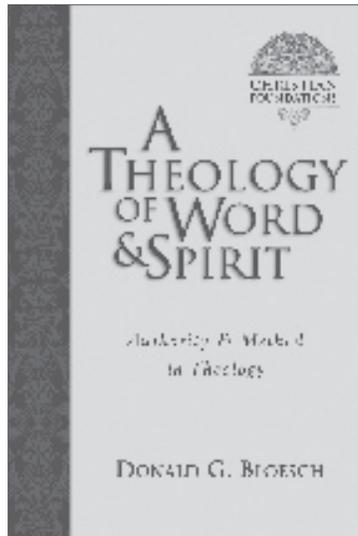
What the computer has become for us, the printing press was for the world of Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers. The revolution in printing made possible the explosion of published commentaries on Scripture, as well as sermons, pamphlets and theological tracts. The RCS will introduce readers to a wealth of Reformation-era commentary on Scripture, much of which is virtually unknown and largely unavailable to a wider audience.

Scandrett: Can you give an example of how the new approach to biblical studies influenced the way exege-

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Donald Bloesch, continued from page 1

In the same year, 1978, we both began long-term projects in the writing of systematic theology series. I stand amazed at what he has accomplished in the pursuit of this goal. And who cannot be, as there is nothing like it in the current world of systematic theology? Not only the original twosome, but now the IVP-published seven-volume series, *Christian Foundations*. (Meanwhile, I am just now stumbling toward working on the third and fourth books of a similar seven-volume goal.) All this while Don



has been writing timely works on the interface of theology and culture. He is a phenomenon in the world of contemporary theology. Surely his loving spouse and coworker, Brenda, has something to do with this achievement!

I have seen the impact of Don's writing on many pastors—not only its ability to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith, but also to render them more aware of the importance of doing solid theological work as background to their preaching and teaching. For pastors in oldline denominations who despair of the ideological direction too often taken by their churches, Don's example of being loyal opposition from within the ranks of the establishment has given them new determination to "hang in" and make their witness.

The lasting contribution of Don's work will be the example he set the church-at-large to take with utter seriousness the "evangelical essentials" as integral to the proclamation of the gospel, but to do it in dialogue with, and appreciation of, the longer and wider "Great Tradition." I include among the defenders of the "evangelical essentials" our Reformation ancestors and their trajectory forward to the pietists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to giants of the twentieth, eminently Karl Barth but also Reinhold Niebuhr, and the diverse but united-at-the-core evangeli-

als of the twenty-first century.

The book that I would recommend to readers not to overlook is the final volume in the *Christian Foundations* series, *The Last Things*. Our Theological Tabletalk group of pastors from mainline denominations that meets weekly on Cape Cod spent three months on it with many eyes opened. We not only gained fresh perspective on the doctrine through Don's own interpretation, but also a new understanding of how an evangelical thinker of Don's breadth and profun-

evangelicals.

The uncompromising scholarship and pastoral insight, the careful theological judgment and deep piety, the irenic bridge building between ecclesial traditions, yet profound commitment to the gospel, all make Bloesch's *Christian Foundations* extraordinarily rich, profitable for scholars, pastors and laypersons alike. I have always appreciated Bloesch's transparent piety that shines through the pages of his work. Reading his theology so often becomes doxologi-

The agenda behind Bloesch's scholarship . . . has been to lead evangelical theology into profound dialogue with the wider church and with evangelical impulses throughout the history of Christian thought.

dity can shatter all the stereotypes that prevent clergy trained in conventional mainline seminaries from engaging evangelical theology.

While Don Bloesch "does it his way," unique in the contemporary field of systematic theology, he is the kind of self-designated "evangelical, Reformed and catholic" thinker the church and the academy today need. I'm proud to have been his friend and collaborator in the theological and ecclesial vineyards for half a century.

—Gabriel Fackre was, until recently, Abbot Professor of Christian Theology Emeritus, Andover Newton Theological School.

Elmer Colyer writes:

Donald G. Bloesch is one of North America's foremost evangelical theologians and certainly the most illustrious theologian in the history of University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, where I teach. His literary productivity has been simply astonishing with over thirty books and three hundred published articles and book reviews to his credit. His systematic theology, *Christian Foundations*, is the most significant multivolume evangelical theology published in the last decade or two. It is the culmination of a lifetime of research and reflection.

Indeed, *Christian Foundations* is vintage Bloesch: evangelical, Reformed and catholic; ecumenical and irenic where possible, prophetic and polemical where ideologies threaten the church's integrity, always judicious; theologically deep, saturated in Scripture and the history of theology, but also profoundly concerned about the practices of the church and pressing issues of the day. On many of these points Bloesch's work is nearly without peer among North American

cal, a form of praise to the Triune God of the gospel, as ought to characterize all true theology but is so often absent from much of academic theology these days.

Bloesch did not originally intend that the research behind the *Christian Foundations* series would end up as a systematic theology. In fact, I believe that it was Rodney Clapp, an editor at InterVarsity Press at the time, who originally suggested to Bloesch that his projected volumes on various theological themes might be combined into a systematic theology.

This fact explains some of the general characteristics of the *Foundations* series. For example, the volumes are more like "studies in theology" than an interconnected architectonically rigorous systematic theology. This is not a criticism, since oversystematized theologies often end up doing violence to aspects of the biblical witness.

Indeed, Bloesch has theological reasons for being uneasy about an overemphasis on architectonics. Bloesch's vision for theology is essentially practical. It is a discipline that illumines the pilgrimage of faith and empowers faithful witness.

I suspect that Bloesch's deep family background in Pietism, with its mistrust of "speculative divinity," also lies behind this focus on practical character of theology.

The agenda behind Bloesch's scholarship, beginning with his two-volume *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, has been to lead evangelical theology into profound dialogue with the wider church and with evangelical impulses throughout the history of Christian thought. This, along with mediating Barth's theology to the evangelical community in North America, is Bloesch's greatest contribution to evangelical theology and the

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sis was done in the Reformation?

George: I think the best example, certainly the most famous one, is the text of Jesus' first sermon as recorded in Matthew 4:17, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Latin text of the New Testament translated Jesus' word "repent" as "penitentiam agite," which could be rendered, "do penance." However, this Latin formulation of the Vulgate did not convey the meaning of the original Greek verb, *metanoieite*. This word means to undergo a change of mind, heart and intention: it focuses not so much on the external act as on a reorientation or transformation from within. We are talking here about conversion, of course, and there is a vast literature on this theme in the sixteenth century. But the point is that Luther, using Erasmus's Greek New Testament, interpreted this text in a way that challenged the traditional understanding of the sacrament of penance and the selling of indulgences that was based upon it. Thus in the first of his famous Ninety-Five Theses, he wrote: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he meant the whole life of the believer to be an act of repentance."

Scandrett: Could you say a little bit about your own background and how you came to be interested in Reformation studies?

George: I grew up in Chattanooga and majored in history as an undergraduate. Following my basic theological studies at Harvard, I decided to pursue doctoral work there with George Huntston Williams, one of the great church historians of the last century. During this time, I also worked closely with Heiko Oberman, another phenomenal scholar who, like Williams, was also deeply committed to the life of the church. Oberman taught me to look closely at texts and contexts; Williams inspired me to think broadly and ecumenically, to see the church as the body of Christ extended throughout time as well as space. Another mentor in Reformation studies was John Haddon Leith, a noted Calvin scholar and Presbyterian theologian. John believed passionately that pastors and scholars needed to listen to one another and to learn from one another, and that same conviction has guided my own work as a minister of the gospel and a theological educator.

Scandrett: Why should contemporary readers be concerned about commentaries from the age of the Reformation?

George: When I was a student at Harvard, one of my teachers said that the two resources necessary for cultivating a contemporary spirituality were the earliest records of the Christian faith—the New Testament—and the most recent, the witness of present-day spiritual guides and

theologians. This is what I call "the heresy of contemporaneity." Such a view ignores the fact that for two thousand years Christian believers of all kinds have prayed, worshiped and practiced the disciplines of Christian faith, including the careful reading and study of the Scriptures. To ignore this heritage is to be willfully ignorant of what the Holy Spirit has been saying to the churches through the centuries. It is to renounce our spiritual patrimony. This in turn leaves us vulnerable to all kinds of errors, mistakes and trends that

Scandrett: What time period will the commentary cover and what sorts of comments and commentators will be included?

George: The RCS will include the giants of the era while also introducing readers to a host of figures whose names are not so familiar, yet who contributed to the Reformation in important ways. So in addition to Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli and Calvin, we will be drawing on exegetical comment by Bullinger, Hubmaier, Musculus, Bucer, Beza, Leo Jud, Peter Martyr

To study the documents of the Reformation, especially the Reformers' exegetical works . . . puts us in touch with a rich vein of Christian reflection that gives us fresh insights into the Bible's meaning for us today.

undermine the faith in our own time. To study the documents of the Reformation, especially the Reformers' exegetical works, helps us to focus on the gospel through the lens of Scripture and puts us in touch with a rich vein of Christian reflection that gives us fresh insights into the Bible's meaning for us today.

Scandrett: If the Reformers had great insights into the faith, haven't their exegetical works been superseded by more recent studies?

George: David Steinmetz, one of my former teachers and also a member of the RCS Editorial Board of Advisors, published an essay twenty-five years ago titled "The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis." In that essay, he challenged the presupposition of your question, that what is recent is best. The older exegesis (whether of the patristic, medieval or Reformation eras) approached Scripture with a sense of its overarching storyline—what we call today a metanarrative—and it assumed that the proper context for understanding the biblical text was the believing community of faith. This is not to say that earlier commentators on Scripture always "got it right." The sheer diversity of views represented in an age such as the Reformation warns against our imposing an anachronistic uniformity on such disparate materials. Nor is this meant to disparage the many wonderful gains we have all received through recent advances in biblical studies. But it is to say that a proper understanding of Scripture requires more than coming to the text with a Bible in one hand and the most recent scholarly works in the other—whether they be the studies of Bultmann, Conzelmann and Käsemann, or those of some of our wonderful evangelical scholars such as Witherington, Hafemann and Thielman!

Vermigli, Francis Lambert, Henry Ainsworth and many others. While the RCS obviously cannot be comprehensive, we want it to be representative of the major Reformation traditions: Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and Anabaptist. We will also seek to include the voices of women, where possible, as well as a number of radical Reformers. In other words, the RCS will demonstrate both the unity and diversity of thought that characterized this vital period in the history of the church.

Scandrett: It sounds like this will be a predominantly Protestant work. Why aren't more Catholic commentators being included?

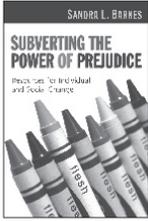
George: *Catholic* and *Protestant* are fluid terms, especially in the early years of the Reformation, and the RCS will include biblical comment from early Catholic Reformation figures, such as John Colet, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Erasmus himself. However, we will not pursue Catholic exegesis after the Council of Trent for two reasons: first, as a way of bringing the enormous amount of material into some manageable scope, and also so as not to rehearse the standard polemical arguments of the Catholic/Protestant debates.

Scandrett: You speak of the enormous amount of historical material to sift through in assembling these commentaries. Is this material readily available?

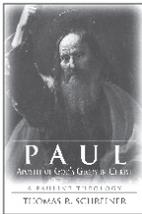
George: There are well-known translations of commentaries by Calvin and Luther, and a few other Reformers as well. However, much of this material is out of print or still untranslated. One of the advantages of living in the computer age is that much of this material is being made available in digitized form. A good example of this is the

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New & Noteworthy



Sandra L. Barnes, who teaches sociology and African American studies at Purdue University, has written a book especially to help undergraduate students recognize, understand and respond to the problem of prejudice. Considered from a Christian perspective and integrated with sociological studies, Barnes's book helps us explore all kinds of debilitating prejudices surrounding age, social status, gender and race. *Subverting the Power of Prejudice* will be of special interest to those at Christian institutions who are looking for a supplementary textbook in sociology on this important but difficult subject.

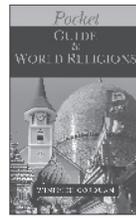


Thomas R. Schreiner's Pauline theology, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ*, has been well received since its publication in 2001. Many have appreciated its attention to the much-neglected missional context and dimension of Paul's theology, and a good number of *Alert* readers have adopted it as a textbook. The new paperback edition delivers the same quality at a lower price, putting it within reach of more readers and more textbook budgets.

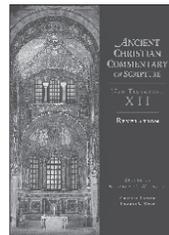


Paul D. Wegner has written a uniquely helpful book in *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible*. While most books on textual criticism focus on either Old Testament or New Testament textual criticism, this book encompasses both disciplines. It covers

the history of the disciplines, the history of the text and the principles of textual criticism. Most students will find the level to be just right, telling them all they need to know. For others it will serve as an entranceway into more technical works. Walter Kaiser comments: "Where others have often made this science sound arcane and obtuse, Paul Wegner has skillfully described textual criticism in plain but ample and interesting ways." Loaded with photos and other visual aids, this is a book that holds your interest while instructing.

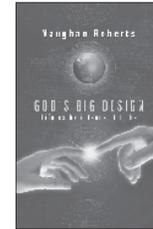


Winfried Corduan, author of the popular and useful textbook on world religions *Neighboring Faiths*, has put together a 144-page concise guide to major world religions. This *Pocket Guide to World Religions* gives brief, objective accounts of twelve world religions from Baha'i to Sikhism, noting with handy icons their names, numbers and distribution, symbols, histories, Scriptures, major beliefs, subgroups, worship practices and religious buildings, plus home practices, diets, and calendars. Even briefer descriptions are given of sixteen new religions from Aleph to Wicca, including three varieties of modern Islam. A separate chapter looks at tribal, or traditional, religions. All in all, a handy reference for students or others needing a quick overview.

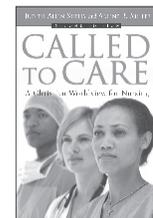


William C. Weinrich from Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, has edited the most recent ACCS volume. His excellent work on Revelation brings the number of volumes that have been released to eighteen in the series, which will number

twenty-nine volumes when complete. Weinrich has contributed considerable original translation to his volume, thus providing much work on Revelation in English for the first time. Tyconius, whose *Book of Rules* was admired by Augustine, Andrew of Caesarea and Apringius of Beja are all new figures to the series whose works are brought to the fore in this volume.



Vaughan Roberts continues to reward his readers with highly readable discussions of highly complex questions. In his first two books with IVP, *Life's Big Questions* and *God's Big Picture*, he brought the themes and the overarching story of the Bible to a concise, readable level. In his latest book, *God's Big Design*, he turns a pastoral eye to the creation account in Genesis 1–2. Work, sex and marriage, environmentalism, human nature, and the character of God—each gets its turn as Roberts helps us understand our place under God in the world around us.



In the newly revised and expanded *Called to Care: A Christian Worldview for Nursing*, Judith Allen Shelly and Arlene B. Miller define nursing for today based on a historically and theologically grounded understanding of the nurse's call. *Called to Care* asserts that nursing is a vocation, giving nurses a framework for understanding their mission and living out their calling: service to God through caring for others. ■

Introducing Formatio: Tradition. Experience. Transformation.


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InterVarsity Press is delighted to introduce our new *formatio* line of spiritual formation books. *Formatio* books bring together the rich heritage of the church and IVP's evangelical publishing tradition as they integrate Scripture and spiritual practices. Here are some of the new *formatio* books.

Learning to Pray Through the Psalms by

James W. Sire reflects his own spiritual journey of learning to pray with both the head and the heart. Sire combines literary analysis and emotions with

lectio divina to produce a fresh guidebook for individual and group prayer.

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun provides great wisdom and practical help in presenting sixty-two spiritual disciplines that can be practiced alone or in community. This is a comprehensive and wonderful resource for anyone leading or pursuing patterns for loving God more fully.

Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation by Ruth Haley Barton gently leads its readers to understand and follow seven founda-

tional rhythms of the spiritual life. This book flows from Ruth's convictions and experience in living life with both boundaries and freedoms that nourish the soul and stimulate authentic spiritual transformation.

M. Robert Mulholland Jr.'s *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self* goes underneath spiritual disciplines and takes the reader into the realm of true spiritual identity in Christ. It is a book of deep insight and help in both discerning the false self and in embracing God's authentic call to himself. ■

Donald Bloesch, continued from page 2

evangelical church.

Throughout his career, Bloesch's goal has been a broader and more dynamic evangelical theology with deeper historical roots and a bold confessional stance that will call the church back to the gospel and to a life of piety and service befitting the God encountered in Christ. Bloesch believes that such a refurbished evangelical theology can provide a credible witness in the postmodern era and a viable alternative to fundamentalism and sectarian evangelicalism on the right, and the latitudinarian and accommodationist tendencies of liberal and neoliberal theologies on the left.

In sum, the erudition, pastoral sensitivity, ecclesial focus and profound piety so evident in Bloesch's *Christian Foundations* are what I have always appreciated the most about Donald G. Bloesch, my professor and mentor, now my colleague and dear friend. We owe Don Bloesch a profound debt of gratitude for combining in his theology of Word and Spirit what ought always be held together everywhere in Christian faith and practice: robust theology and passionate Christian life, the truth of the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit for the renewal of the church and the conversion of the world until Christ comes in final victory.

—Elmer M. Colyer is professor of historical theology and Stanley Professor of Wesley Studies at University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

David Gill writes:

For me there is no real competition: Donald Bloesch is the finest North American systematic theologian of the past fifty years. Because of that, I would love to predict great sales and influence throughout the twenty-first century; I certainly hope and pray that is the case. Regrettably, the things that make Bloesch great may not be what

bring vast sales and "cult figure" status. Would that it were otherwise.

For example, many Christians seem to want their existing theological prejudices and distinctives reinforced. They want Bible translations that don't violate their taste and interpretative preferences; and they want their theologians to repeat and reinforce their opinions. For people like this, Bloesch's grand faith and confidence in

the efforts of even those with whom they disagree, and always critically integrating any new insights into the grand themes of God's self-revelation in Jesus and Scripture.

Bloesch has always been fully accountable to the review and criticism of his peers in the scholarly guild. But his work is in service of the church. Few theologians write as well as Bloesch, and even his big seven-volume systematic theology is

We owe Don Bloesch a profound debt of gratitude for combining in his theology of Word and Spirit what ought always be held together everywhere in Christian faith and practice.

the living God (and his refusal to put God in some idolatrous theological box) feel too risky.

On the other side of the spectrum, some will not value Bloesch because they want only to hear something really edgy and new in theology. Bloesch's respect for the great tradition and for the core faith and experience of centuries and of civilizations will be dismissed as lacking in imagination and stimulation. Still others, preferring a more academic or even cynical tone, may be put off by his love and reverence for God.

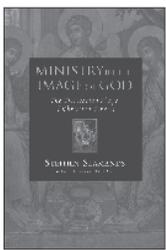
Too bad. Donald Bloesch's writings are precisely the antidote for all of the preceding ailments in the church. He is a superb, broad and deep student of theology. I know of no other writer as good at guiding his readers through the wide range of thinkers and ideas in the theological vineyard (or "wilderness," as is sometimes the case). Bloesch and his band explore without fear. They listen, expecting to learn something, appreciating

an enjoyable and profitable study for virtually any thoughtful reader. While his language and logic are clear, Bloesch's pages are meaty with truth and wisdom.

I have appreciated the wisdom and insight of Bloesch's topical monographs, such as *The Battle for the Trinity: The Debate Over Inclusive God-Language* (Vine Books, 1985), and his contributions to my own field of ethics, such as *Freedom for Obedience: Evangelical Ethics in Contemporary Times* (Harper & Row, 1987). My favorite of all Bloesch's works, however, is the recently completed seven-volume *Christian Foundations* systematic theology. It just doesn't get any better than that.

—David Gill is author of the two-volume introduction to Christian ethics, *Becoming Good: Building Moral Character* (IVP, 2000) and *Doing Right: Practicing Ethical Principles* (IVP, 2004). ■

Books on Ministry: Where Theory and Praxis Meet



One of the hallmarks of InterVarsity Press is the bringing together of theory and praxis, especially in resources for those in pastoral ministry. An outstanding example of this is *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* by Stephen Seamands, professor of Christian doctrine at Asbury Theological Seminary. Seamands plumbs the depths of the recent renaissance in trinitarian theology and

shows how concepts like perichoresis have relevance and application in the life and work of Christian ministry. As William Abraham says, "This is pastoral theology at its very best!"

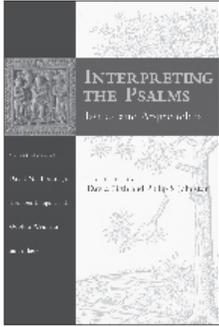
Another book that bridges disciplines is *Renewing the City: Reflections on Community Development and Urban Renewal* by Robert D. Lupton. A pioneering veteran of Christian community development and urban ministry, Lupton places the Old Testament narrative of Nehemiah in juxtaposition with today's urban challenges. Walter Brueggemann lauds, "The book lives precisely at the interface between ancient text and current urban

transformation."

Eddie Gibbs's earlier book *ChurchNext* charted cultural shifts both within and without the contemporary church and has become a helpful roadmap for the emerging church. Now his *LeadershipNext: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* maps out how Christian leadership must change in light of new cultural and global realities.

Also look for *Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture: Bridging Teen Worldviews and Christian Truth* by Walt Mueller, and *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture* by Efreem Smith and Phil Jackson. ■

Issues and Approaches to Interpreting the Psalms



The scholarly study of the Psalms is in the midst of a sea change. A generation ago the dominant tendency was to study psalms individually in relation to their literary form and cultural function. However, in recent years, Psalms studies have increasingly emphasized Hebrew poetry, the structure of the entire Psalter and its development from earlier collections to a unified canonical book.

Edited by David Firth and Philip S. Johnston, with contributions by David M. Howard Jr., Tremper Longman III and Gordon Wenham among others, *Interpreting the Psalms*

explores these and other facets of the Psalms, and seeks to help academic readers understand this sea change while giving them a deeper appreciation of the Psalms.

In doing so, it aims to bridge the gap between general introductions to the study of the Psalms and specialized scholarly literature. Assuming a basic knowledge of Old Testament studies, it guides readers through the more complex current issues and approaches involved in the study of the Psalms.

Written by members and guests of the Tyndale Fellowship Old Testament Study Group, *Interpreting the Psalms* offers the insights of internationally recognized Old Testament scholars into the world of the Psalms. Such a volume will be a treasure to both students and scholars alike. ■

RCS, continued from page 3

Ad Fontes Digital Library of Classic Protestant Texts. This database is fully searchable by text or Scripture reference and will greatly assist our volume editors to locate common commentary material for the RCS. I am delighted that Ad Fontes has agreed to be a partner with us in this work. We recognize, of course, that there are many relevant sources not represented in the Ad Fontes database, but access to this important resource gives us a solid foundation to begin this work. We will also be partnering with various academic institutions and research libraries, such as the Johannes a Lasco Library in Emden, Germany.

Scandrett: Who do you see as the target audience for these commentaries and how do you anticipate they will be used?

George: While the research behind the RCS will use the best scholarly resources available, its primary audience will not be the scholarly guild but the pastor and educated layperson. In the age of the Reformation itself, biblical commentaries were intended to serve the preaching mission of the church, and the RCS has the same goal: the renewal of contemporary preaching and biblical interpretation through exposure to the exegetical and theological insights of the Reformation writers.

Scandrett: This series clearly has a lot in common with IVP's Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. In what ways will it be distinctive?

George: First of all, let me say how much I have appreciated the ACCS, which is truly a landmark publication in the history of exegesis. The RCS will be a companion series to the ACCS, building on its reputation for excellence, originality and usefulness. But there are important differences as well. The sheer amount of published material in the sixteenth century poses special methodological questions of organization and selectivity. Also, Reformation-era exegetes were working from a rich tradition of medieval commentary on Scripture not available to the early church fathers. The Reformation era was also a confessionally contested epoch in a way that was not true of the first Christian centuries, and this means we

will have to pay close attention to matters of historical context and theological development.

Scandrett: Perhaps we can end on a personal note.

What thoughts and sentiments would you like to convey to our readers regarding the RCS and your participation in it?

George: The Bible says that the Word of God is "alive and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12). Scripture is a living document that speaks again and again to the people of God, in fresh, surprising and unsettling ways. A popular commentary series on Scripture is called "The Bible Speaks Today." I believe that we can best hear the Bible speak today when we listen well to how the Bible has spoken in days gone by. The RCS is an invitation to join the exegetical conversation from one of the richest, most provocative and still seminally important moments in the history of the church.

The biblical revolution of the sixteenth century was an explosive event that shook the foundations of the church and called all Christians *ad fontes*—back to the sources! The Reformation Commentary on Scripture brings many of these sources, some for the first time, into the hands of today's preachers and laity. My prayer is that this new series will encourage a fresh engagement with the primary sources of the Christian faith, and that this will result in the kind of God-centered Reformation that shook the world of Luther and Calvin. ■

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