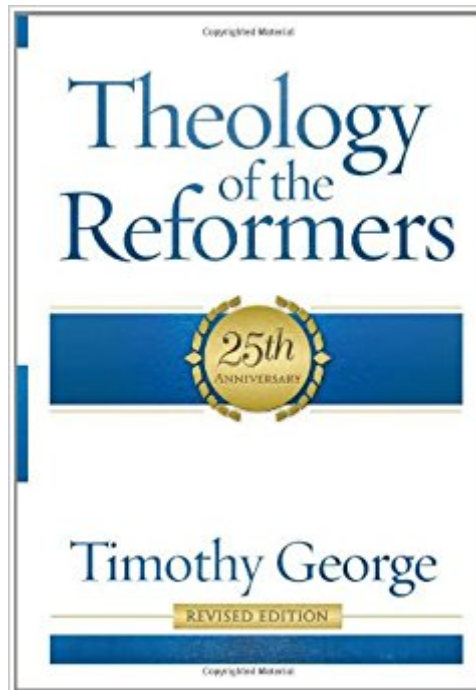




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Theology Of The Reformers



Synopsis

First released in 1988, this 25th Anniversary Edition of Timothy George's *Theology of the Reformers* includes a new chapter and bibliography on William Tyndale, the reformer who courageously stood at the headwaters of the English Reformation. Also included are expanded opening and concluding chapters and updated bibliographies on each reformer. *Theology of the Reformers* articulates the theological self-understanding of five principal figures from the period of the Reformation: Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin, Menno Simons, and William Tyndale. George establishes the context for their work by describing the spiritual climate of their time. Then he profiles each reformer, providing a picture of their theology that does justice to the scope of their involvement in the reforming effort. George details the valuable contributions these men made to issues historically considered pillars of the Christian faith: Scripture, Jesus Christ, salvation, the church, and last things. The intent is not just to document the theology of these reformers, but also to help the church of today better understand and more faithfully live its calling as followers of the one true God. Through and through, George's work provides a truly integrated and comprehensive picture of Christian theology at the time of the Reformation.

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Customer Reviews

'Theology Of The Reformers' will intrigue and inform all those who are concerned both with the church in the time of the Reformation and the church in the modern era.

Timothy George has served as dean of Beeson Divinity School since its inception in 1988. In

addition to his administrative responsibilities, George teaches Church History and Doctrine. He serves as senior theological advisor for Christianity Today and is on the editorial advisory boards of First Things, Harvard Theological Review, and Books & Culture. A prolific author, he has written more than twenty books and regularly contributes to scholarly journals.

This is a short book in comparison to larger historical works on the Reformation, presenting summaries of the theology of some of its key players. It has chapters on pre-Reformation religion, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Simons and Tyndale. The inclusion of Simons and Tyndale as 'reformers' might not be expected as they had niche-roles in the Reformation. But their legacy is still significant today, and so it is useful to have a comparative study of their theologies.

This is a fabulous work from Timothy George. Theology of the Reformers is clear, easy to read, and incredibly scholarly. George overviews the beliefs of five reformers: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Simons, and Tyndale--a daunting task given the multitudes of volumes manufactured by them collectively. Nevertheless George is succinct and summarizes each individual brilliantly. Many today blame the reformation for shattering the universal church of Christ into innumerable factions. Like broken shards of glass, each denomination is severed from the whole and sharp to the touch. This is no doubt an unintended consequence of the reformation. Luther and Zwingli divided over the Eucharist. Calvin detested the Anabaptist schism. And what was originally intended as a correction of the church (from Luther) turned into a full split. Timothy George however addresses the misconception that the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was one perfectly unified body. Curialism (for complete Papal authority), Conciliarism (desiring accountability for church leadership), Spiritual Franciscans, Waldensians, and the movements of Wycliffe and Huss--all represent different factions vying for power inside and amongst the Catholic church prior to the reformation. To say that the reformation alone caused the many schisms we see today would be dishonest; there was already great diversity of belief within the church long before the reformation ever occurred! With that being said, the reformation was a necessary correction back to Scripture. The selling of indulgences, salvation through sacraments, the office of 'the great middle man' the priest, and the centrality of Mary-- had made the church something that it was not. Apostate. These five reformers--though not unified, were unified in these things: Authority of Scripture, Salvation through faith alone, and the belief that God's Word was for laymen. To say such things was revolutionary. For each of the reformers it guaranteed persecution. Tyndale was martyred. Calvin was banished from France. Simons was hunted down his entire life. Yet God's Word was proclaimed and we today

reap the benefits. We are indebted to these men. Each had flaws and George did not shy away from them. Luther, to his great shame, spoke ill against the Jews. Zwingli attempted to blend church and state. Calvin burned Servetus at the stake. It would be foolish to look for perfection in any man especially our heroes. But each man had a conviction to the Word of God and to His conscience. Each man stood against the falsehood and proclaimed the truth--despite great personal cost. "We are like dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants; thanks to them, we see farther than they."

I'm glad that the 25th anniversary edition of this book has appeared. I have just read it with delight and fascination. Timothy George neatly summarizes, with broad brush strokes, the 5 primary voices of the Protestant Reformation: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Simons, and Tyndale. At the same time, he shows precise shades of meaning in the theology of each Reformer by teasing out their unique contributions to the re-visioning of the church and salvation in the 16th century. His final chapter on living out the Reformation in the 21st century challenged me to lift up my head to see with fresh eyes the miracle of the Gospel. George has given us a robust treatment of the theology of the Reformers that both seeks and attains that most elusive theological gift: perspicuity.

This text centers on the ideas of reformers (Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, Menno Simons) who lived some 450-500 years ago. Their world was much different from our own, in many ways that we cannot comprehend. Yet, Timothy George helps us to bridge that gap in this highly illuminating and insightful work. Having read multiple biographies on Luther, as well as various works on Calvin and the Anabaptists, I was surprised by how many new insights *Theology of the Reformers* contains. Not only does Timothy George review some better-known aspects of the Reformation (such as how Luther and Zwingli disagreed on the Lord's Supper), but he helps us understand how and why they arrived at their theological positions. Further, as this work examines two generations of reformers, we learn how the younger reformers sought to respectfully build on the insights of those who preceded them. George also helps to see that the early reformers were far from perfect. Like Christian leaders and thinkers of the modern era, they struggled with various issues in their own lives as well as with what they found in Holy Scripture. We see how the reformers dealt with opposition, sometimes in a way that didn't demonstrate love for one's neighbor. In addition, the perspectives of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli on church and state and Menno Simon's pacifism will likely not be well-received by modern readers. Yet, in spite of their shortcomings, we can learn much from each reformer. They were all very much in love with their Creator, and sought to glorify Him in all their works. It is difficult

to imagine evangelical life today without the Reformation emphases on the grace of God, the sovereignty of God, the Word of God, the priesthood of the believer, and rigorous discipleship (which included holy living). The Reformers, unlike what their opponents claimed, held a high view of local church life, yet wanted it to be experienced to a much fuller degree than the Roman system allowed. There's a lot more that I could write about Theology of the Reformers. For example, the author sprinkles his work with surprising humor and personality observations that lend much to the reading experience. Yet, it's best to just read this book for yourself. Along with the author's Reading Scripture with the Reformers, it's one of the most spiritually and intellectually satisfying works on the 16th century found anywhere.

An excellent book, that I would recommend to anyone interested in five of the main players/influences on the Reformation period. George's work is a well-researched, even-handed in treatment. He is generally sympathetic toward the men he writes about, given their temperaments, motivations, and the context of their times.

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