

S T U D Y G U I D E



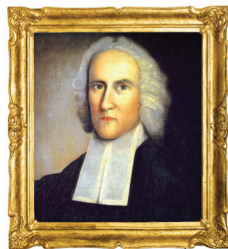
PART 4

ANNO DOMINI
1600-1800

A SURVEY OF

Church History

W. ROBERT GODFREY



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A Survey of Church History

Part 4, AD 1600–1800

W. Robert Godfrey



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Introduction

As the Protestant church carried the Reformation into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it faced numerous challenges from without and from within. Europe was witnessing dramatic changes as the medieval world began to give way to the modern. Having broken with the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants faced the prospect of ever-deepening division among its own members. But despite the numerous threats, the Reformed church pressed forward. In this series, join Dr. Robert Godfrey as he surveys the history of the Reformed church in the English-speaking world. You will study the Puritans from England to New England. You will also meet such notable figures as John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards, all of whom played major roles in the First Great Awakening.

Continuing the Reformation

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Reformation was a turning point in the history of the church. And in its aftermath, Protestants wanted to continue along the trajectory set by the Reformers. They sought to further develop a theology which was reformed according to Scripture, and to continue to purify, discipline, and grow the church. Accordingly, there were many internal challenges facing the fledgling Reformed church. And in addition to these internal challenges, there were many external challenges. In this lesson, Dr. Godfrey will explain the major challenges that faced the Reformed church as it sought to be a faithful witness in an ever-changing world.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 28:16–20; Romans 13:1–7

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the numerous challenges that faced the church after the Reformation
2. To examine how the divisions within the church changed how believers saw one another
3. To see that the fracturing of the church left Western culture without a unifying cultural force

QUOTATION

Protestantism . . . associates the unity of the church first of all with the oneness of the head of the church, with the communion of all believers through one and the same Spirit, with Christ and with each other, and further, with the unity of faith, hope, and love, and of baptism, and so forth. This unity, though primarily spiritual in character, nevertheless exists objectively and really, and it does not remain completely invisible. It manifests itself outwardly—albeit in a very imperfect way—and at least to some degree comes to light in that which all Christian churches have in common. No Christianity

exists above or beneath religious differences, but there is indeed a Christianity present amid religious differences. Because we tend to be most aware of the differences and schisms in Christianity, we constantly run the danger of disregarding this—nevertheless truly existing—unity. That which unites all true Christians is always more than that which separates them.

—Herman Bavinck

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction

- A. This series will examine the development of the Reformed church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
- B. It is a period of expanding diversity—theologically, geographically, and culturally.

II. Continuing the Reformation

- A. The Reformed church sought to take the foundation laid by the Reformers and continue to build on it.
- B. In a quickly changing world, the church faced numerous challenges.

III. Geographical Challenges

- A. Most Europeans did not understand how vast the world really was.
- B. With European expansion into the Americas, Africa, and Asia, it became clear how many people had never heard about Christ.

IV. Political Challenges

- A. By the seventeenth century, individual nations, along with their rulers, grew in importance.
- B. Rulers were limited in power by other nobility and by parliaments.
 - i. A parliament is a gathering of representatives of various peoples from whom a ruler had to get permission.
 - ii. Parliaments had to approve raising taxes and raising armies.
- C. In the seventeenth century, many rulers wanted to get rid of parliaments and rule by divine right, becoming absolute rulers.
- D. This desire for absolute rule created great tension between rulers and other forces in society that wanted to rule a nation.

V. The Challenge of a Divided Church

- A. Until the Reformation, there was essentially one united institutional church.
- B. In addition to the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed churches, numerous Anabaptist churches sprang up, as well as other groups.
- C. Most Christians had thought of the church in terms of true or false.

VI. Cultural Challenges

- A. Religion held European culture together from the beginning.
- B. The Roman Catholic Church provided the cultural backbone for the Western world for over a millennium.
- C. With the division of the church, it was difficult to determine what could hold culture together.
- D. Some thought a basic Christianity could fill this role, but increasingly people turned to natural law and human reason as a potential unifying force.

VII. Theological Challenges

- A. Protestants of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries found themselves challenged by renewal in the Roman Catholic Church.
 - i. Earlier Reformers, like Luther and Calvin, were much better educated than leaders within the Roman Catholic Church.
 - ii. The most prominent Roman Catholic theologian who arose was Robert Bellarmine.
 - 1. He wrote a work called the *Controversies*, which sought to answer Protestant theology.
 - 2. Answering Bellarmine required Protestants to provide a very technical defense of their faith.
- B. The Reformed church was challenged by a renewed Lutheranism.
- C. A new branch of theology called Socinianism developed.
 - i. It doubted the authority of Scripture.
 - ii. It doubted the divinity of Christ.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. Dr. Godfrey thinks that the study of church history gets more difficult as it approaches the present because _____.
 - a. There are too many sources to evaluate
 - b. It begins to show extraordinary diversity
 - c. Historians are more biased about the recent past
 - d. Roman Catholics have dominated the writing of church history
- 2. This series will focus primarily on the Evangelical and Reformed churches.
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 3. In this lesson, we saw how the church was challenged in all of the following ways, except _____.
 - a. Geographically
 - b. Ethnically
 - c. Politically
 - d. Theologically

4. In the seventeenth century, Europe saw many peaceful transitions from monarchy to democracy.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. The most famous Roman Catholic theologian, with whom Protestants had to contend, was _____.
 - a. Ignatius of Loyola
 - b. Robert Bellarmine
 - c. Francis Turretin
 - d. Casper Olevianus

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

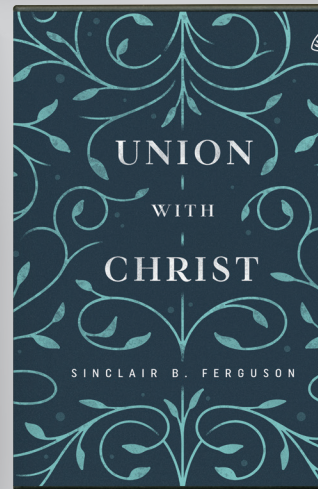
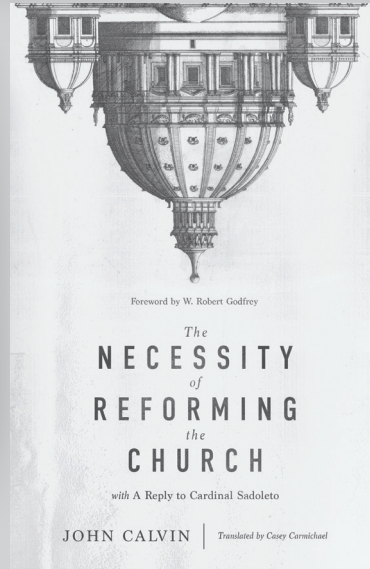
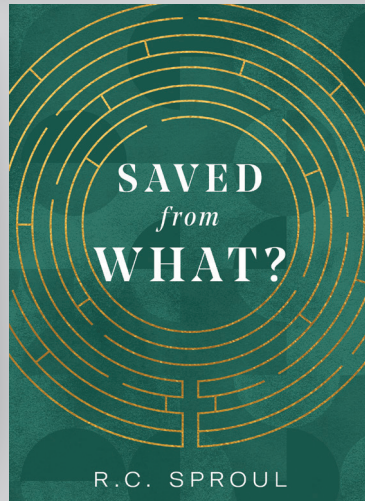
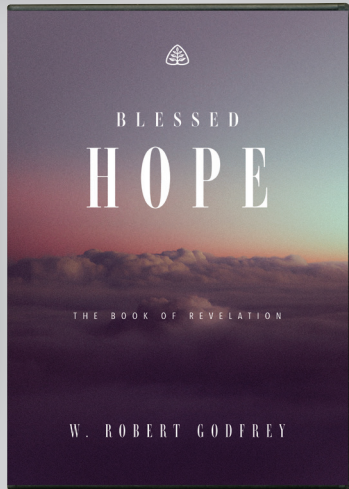
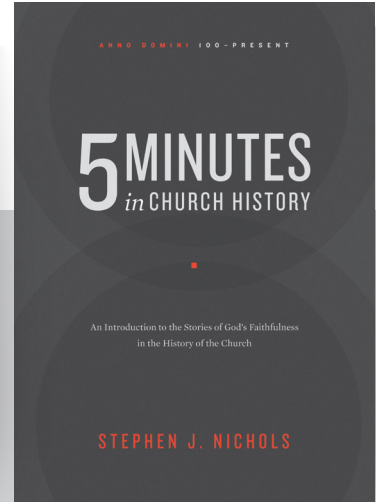
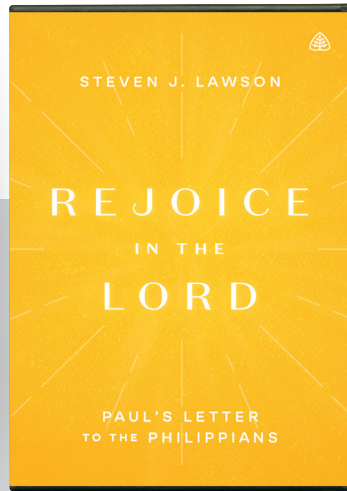
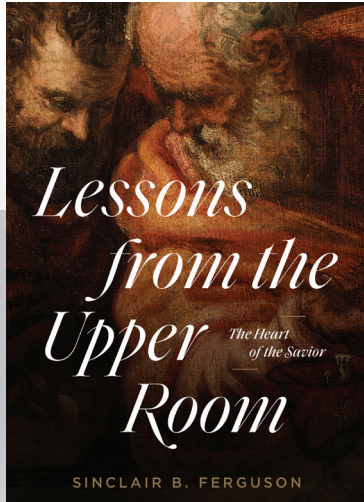
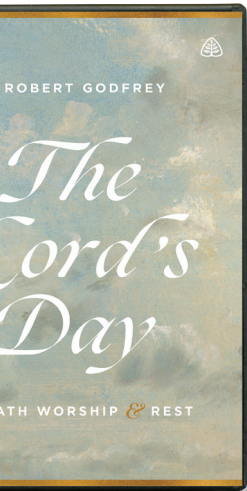
1. With the church's growing understanding of the size of the world, its concern for and participation in missions grew. How should our growing knowledge of other parts of the world, and the ease with which it's learned, inform and impassion our prayers for those who have still not yet heard the gospel?

2. Formalism was a major concern for the Puritans. Have you ever found yourself simply going through the motions, whether at church or with the spiritual disciplines, without engaging your mind and affections? What are some ways to combat this tendency?

3. Following the Reformation, among Protestants there was a shift from thinking of the church in terms of true or false, to a dichotomy of pure/less pure. How can this dichotomy allow churches today to retain their distinctives, while at the same time fostering unity?

4. Christianity was the glue that held European culture together for centuries. This changed with the Enlightenment. What are some modern institutions and cultural practices that stem from a Christian past? Do you think these will persist into the future?

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