

Reformation Sketches: Insights into Luther, Calvin, and the Confessions by W.Robert Godfrey.
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Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

Digging into history is rarely a waste of time. History can teach powerful lessons. No less than the great Christian statesman Groen van Prinsterer said, "The present is already in the past, and hidden in the present is what will happen in the future." Our heritage, the great 16th century Reformation, is the greatest event in the history of the church in the West. It took place in a time when God, sin, heaven, hell, angels and demons were part of the fabric of life. But do we still know the story of its leaders and the reasons for their break with the Roman Catholic Church?

Judging by the declining attendance of the annual Reformation Day services, there seems to be a waning interest. Are we forgetting the riches of our Reformation heritage? Many seem to think that the story of the Reformation is tediously familiar. But there is little new on the theological horizon. Nearly all the questions we struggle with today were anticipated by the Reformers.

In his *Reformation Sketches*, a collection of essays first published in *The Outlook*, Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, professor of church history and president at Westminster Theological Seminary in California, shows the vital importance for the Reformation for the 21st century church. He notes that the Reformers were the best educated, most godly, and most faithful leaders and preachers the church has ever seen. In a remarkable and exemplary way they combined commitment, learning, and orthodoxy.

Godfrey sketches not only the life and works of the well known and uniquely gifted Reformers John Calvin and Martin Luther but also the lesser known Philip Melancthon and Peter Martyr Vermigli. He reminds us of the importance preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God and of the church herself in the life of the Reformers. He also briefly discusses the confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. And in an age with its stress on action at the expense of doctrine, he explicitly shows that doctrine and the Christian life cannot be separated. They are intertwined.

Godfrey's well-written sketches clearly demonstrate why the Reformation remains so vitally important for today. They also offer comforting truths, wise counsel, and deep spiritual insights. They will be a great blessing to the reader in our troubled and confusing times.