

ROUSAS JOHN RUSHDOONY



AMERICAN

History

TO

1865

TEACHER'S GUIDE

AMERICAN *History* TO 1865

INTRODUCTION

This audio series by R. J. Rushdoony was recorded in 1973 at Fairfax Christian College. It is the most theologically complete assessment of early American history available, retaining a clarity and vividness of expression that make it ideal for students. Rev. Rushdoony reveals a foundation of American History, describing not just the facts of history, but also highlighting the leading motives and movements in terms of the thinking and philosophies of the day. There can be no understanding of American History without an understanding of the ideas which undergirded its founding and growth. The set includes 36 lectures in an mp3 format, student study guide (questions for thought and discussion), and teacher's guide which provides general answers to the questions from the study guide.* Also included on this disk is a transcript of each individual lecture. This series can be used as a stand alone curriculum or as a supplement to other textbooks and courses in American History.



*Additional copies of the student and teacher's guides can be printed from the PDF files included on the enclosed Document Disc.

Companion materials:

Democracy in America — to be read as directed in the lectures and completed before the course end
By Alexis de Tocqueville

This Independent Republic
By R. J. Rushdoony

The Nature of the American System
By R. J. Rushdoony

The Biblical Philosophy of History
By R. J. Rushdoony

HOW TO USE:

These lectures can be enjoyed together as a family, or assigned to students to be listened to individually. The questions in the study guide can be used as essay questions or used for oral checking and discussion. If the course is being used as a supplement, the teacher (by referring to the contents and subject matter of each lecture) can assign a particular lecture to be listened to either before or after this portion of American History is being covered.

The teacher is encouraged to be creative in visiting museums, watching documentaries or films of the era, and reading primary source materials to give the student a full absorption into the thinking and philosophy of the times and the different points of view available.

Students are also encouraged to visit www.chalcedon.edu for other essays and articles pertinent to their study.



LECTURE 1

MOTIVES OF DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION I

1. Why are the motives of discovery and exploration important?

It is helpful to know the beginning motivations both to understand the actions of that time and to understand current (and future) actions that are based on these same motives.

2. Ideas rule and govern long after those who presented them are gone. What underlies all ideas and subsequent actions?

All ideas are formed based on one's religious presupposition, or faith. And actions are the outworking of that underlying faith.



3. What is the significance of the dream of the Roman poet Horace in the development of the new world?

Horace's Epod 16 speculated about a utopian-style paradise ("Isles of the Blessed") located across the Western ocean as the answer for the gloomy pessimism that was prevalent in his Rome. His poem provided motivation for many, and this humanistic notion of "salvation" by finding/creating the perfect, uncontaminated environment became a strong impetus for exploration of the New World. To this day, it is a common article of faith among statist, radical environmentalists, and social engineers.

4. What is the presupposition that leads to the myth of the Noble Savage?

It is the same humanism of Horace and any of the utopian writers, denying the sinful condition of fallen man in favor of a doctrine that sees man's salvation in removing himself from a corrupted environment to live to his potential in a paradise. Still popular today, it presupposes that corruption comes from Western (and especially Christian) civilization.

5. How is motivation different for the Christian?

Those motivated by the Christian religion, by contrast, understand that society is "saved" through the efforts of regenerated men in obedience to God's Word. They seek to establish and expand God's rule on earth. Many see themselves as placed in their time and circumstances with a special commission in God's kingdom.

6. What was the motivation of Columbus?

Just as we are influenced by popular and prevailing notions, Columbus' motivation, though clearly and overwhelmingly that of a Christian missionary, ("increase and glory of the Christian religion") was influenced by political and economic goals as well. Some historians would have us believe that Columbus was a cruel and greedy contaminator of the pristine paradise. That does not square with his often-stated Christian motives.

7. What about the other explorers?

Ponce de Leon's humanistic motives were certainly evident in his search for the fountain of youth. Pizarro's treachery in Peru was motivated by his greed and ambition. Others, such as Cortez in Mexico, have been vilified by revisionist historians unfairly (and illogically). It is not likely that a few hundred men and a handful of horses could have toppled the mighty Aztec empire without local help. Rather, Cortez's efforts were motivated to a large degree by his Christian faith and his abhorrence of the pagan Aztec religion.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Our own motives are seldom pure and are often confused and mixed. Should we be surprised if historians find grounds to emphasize different motives for the same actions? To what extent is their history written according to THEIR motives/religious presuppositions? By being more purely God-centered in their (our) motivation, how would the history of these Christian explorers (or us) have been differently written? How does one practice purifying his motives?

