

Saturday "Sermon"

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April 14, 2007

Firm Foundations

In last week's *U.S. News*, Dr. Stephen Prothero, head of the Department of Religion at Boston University, gave Americans an "F" in religion, calling the situation "a major civic problem." Dr. Prothero noted that "Religious literacy and basic literacy used to go hand in hand. The Bible was the first reader of the colonists and early Americans."

Over time, though, many Christians became suspicious of the mind: "Focusing on experience and emotion, they slowly turned Americans away from religious learning. . . . [Christians] started focusing on loving Jesus rather than on listening to him. The Bible slowly became a kind of ornament . . . rather than a book you actually read." Dr. Prothero concluded, "I think we need to have courses about the Bible and world religions in middle schools and high schools, and I think they should be mandatory—with an opt-out provision." That got my attention.

Then I came across a *Christianity Today* interview with Jewish talk-show host Dennis Prager. Prager said that "In public school, Jews don't meet Christians. Christians don't meet Hindus. Everybody meets nothing. That is, as I explain to Jews all the time, why their children so easily inter-marry. Jews don't marry Christians. Non Jewish Jews marry non-Christian Christians. Jews for nothing marry Christians for nothing. They get along great because they both affirm nothing. They have everything in common—nothing." That surprised me, too.

And then I heard a lecture by Dr. Del Tackett, former Director of Technical Plans for the National Security Council, in which he quoted many of our founding fathers. From George Washington: "Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." From John Adams: "It is religion and morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand. . . . Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

From Daniel Webster: "To preserve the government we must also preserve morals. Morality rests on religion; if you destroy the foundation, the superstructure must fall. When the public mind becomes . . . corrupt, laws are a nullity and constitutions are waste paper." That lecture was part of a DVD study series called *The Truth Project*, which many congregations are studying in Bristol right now.

All of this is causing me to seriously rethink my previous conclusions about church-state relations. I encourage you to join a *Truth Project* study so that we can consider together how best to reclaim and reinvigorate the principles our founders put in place.