

**The Truth Project**  
**Lesson 10—Part A**  
**American Experiment: Stepping Stones**

**Introduction**

For this tour we will remain in the southwest sector of the compass long enough to examine a special sub-category of our last topic of discussion: the design of the state. In particular, we want to take a brief look at the question, “What should God’s minister on earth (Romans 13:4) look like? What is a proper form for this agency that is divinely appointed and commissioned to administer justice, punish evil, and encourage goodness among its citizens or subjects?” We will approach this task by considering the American Experiment.

**Themes**

From the beginning, Dr. Tackett lays down three ground rules for this study: first, **we will not seek to deify America**; and second, **we will not seek to deify the Founding Fathers** (the third ground rule will be dealt with at the end of the lesson). Having established these guidelines, he hastens to point out that there are compelling reasons for giving special attention to the subject of this tour. The American Experiment has the potential to prove unusually conducive to a deeper understanding of God’s design for the state precisely because it is unique in the history of the world. Here on these shores, and here alone, people with a strong Christian worldview have been afforded an unparalleled opportunity to create from scratch what they considered an ideal system of government – a system designed in careful conformity with the principles outlined in Lesson 9.

We begin by establishing the biblical character of that worldview. The New England Primer, the second best-selling book (after the Bible) of the colonial era, provides an intriguing window into the attitudes of early Americans. In particular, it reveals an outlook and a way of life powerfully shaped by the teachings of Scripture. The pervasiveness of this outlook is further demonstrated in statements made by America’s early political leaders, legal and social architects, and educational pioneers – people like Benjamin Rush, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams, Charles Carroll, Noah Webster, and the founders of Harvard, Princeton, and Columbia Universities. In spite of the fact that not all of them were practicing Christians, these luminaries agreed with President John Adams that the success of America’s republican form of government would prove directly dependent upon the virtue and morality of her people, and that virtue and morality are necessarily founded upon religion – by which all meant the Christian religion. All of these early thinkers were convinced that the state must be held accountable to the authority of a higher ethical and spiritual standard – the “Natural Law” or the “Law of Nature’s God” – if the human rights abuses they had observed in Europe and throughout history were to be hopefully avoided on this continent.

Tragically, however, America is quickly turning away from these principles. It is hard to put a finger on the exact reasons, but one clear element came as Darwinian evolutionary theory made its influence felt in the field of law. In 1869, Harvard Law School Dean Christopher Langdell advanced the view that law is not based upon the transcendent standard of “Nature’s God,” but is rather a fluid and constantly mutating body of “doctrine,” a set of purely human ideas that inevitably change “by slow degrees.” In other words, law and ethics, like biological species, are continually “evolving.” Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes expanded on this theme by declaring that the law is “simply an embodiment of the ends and purposes of a society at a given point in its history,” thus effectively granting to the state the power to establish society’s ethical norms. John Dewey implemented these ideas in the realm of public education. “There is no God,” said Dewey (nicknamed “The

Architect of Modern Education”), “and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion.”

These statements, says Dr. Tackett, bring us to the present moment. Today, America has largely forgotten God and denied the validity of her biblically based Christian roots. As a result, we see the power of the state expanding in our time. This, too, is a manifestation of the perennial Cosmic Battle, which is always fought most fiercely in the social realm. Ultimately, we must face the fact that the American Experiment is likely to fail altogether if we do not take intentional and deliberate steps to salvage it. This is a task which falls primarily on the shoulders of Christian people. As believers, we need to remember God’s call to prayer and repentance in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. There is nothing to be gained, says Dr. Tackett, by casting blame on non-Christians (this is the third ground rule for our study).

### **Points to Watch For**

This last point should be kept in mind throughout the entire discussion. From beginning to end, Dr. Tackett seeks to communicate the thought that the American Experiment makes sense only when understood as the brainchild of Christians who operated on the basis of a biblical worldview. Just as the experiment was instigated by believers, so it must be carried on by believers – believers who care deeply and passionately about their country – if it is to survive and continue to succeed.

#### **I. (FILL-IN & DISCUSSION) The Essential Elements of the American Experiment**

- a. "For the LORD is our \_\_\_\_\_, the LORD is our \_\_\_\_\_, the LORD is our \_\_\_\_\_; it is He who will save us." (Isaiah 33:22)
- b. What is the significance of these 3 elements in regards to the American Experiment?

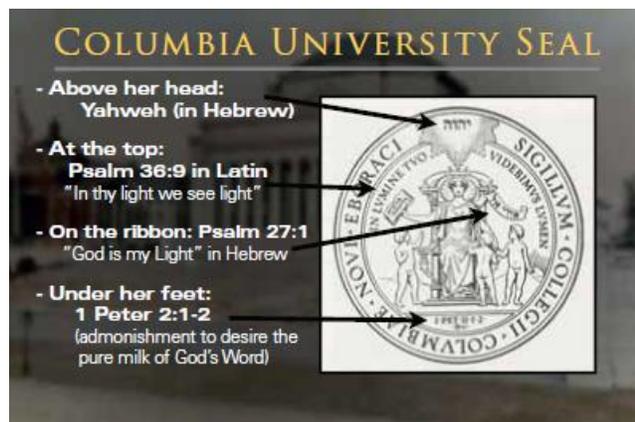
#### **II. (DISCUSSION) America Hating???**

- a. Why is there such a hatred for America among liberal academia?

#### **III. (DISCUSSION & FILL-IN) America Then & Now**

- a. What was the second best-selling book in the American colonies (the Bible was number one)? Five million copies existed in America (there were only four million people in America in 1776).

- b. How do you believe the NEA would respond to the biblical principles of the New-England Primer being taught in schools?
- c. "...faith in the prayer-hearing God is an unproved and outmoded faith. There is no \_\_\_\_\_ and there is no \_\_\_\_\_. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion. With dogma and creed excluded, then immutable truth is also dead and buried. There is no room for fixed, natural law or moral absolutes." (John Dewey, the architect of modern education, including Patrick County)
- i. "Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore lay Christ at the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning." (Harvard's Rules & Precepts, 1636)
  - ii. "Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae" = Truth for Christ and the Church (Now only Veritas [Truth], remains)
  - iii. "Cursed is all learning that is contrary to the Cross of Christ" (Princeton's Founding Statement, 1746)
  - iv.



- v. "Religion is the only solid basis of good morals; therefore education should teach the precepts of religion, and the duties of man towards God." (Gouverneur Morris, was a Founding Father who represented Pennsylvania in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and was also an author of large sections of the Constitution of the United States and one of its signers)

- vi. "Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age, by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, of inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of the Deity...in short of leading them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system." (Samuel Adams, was a Founding Father who helped guide Congress towards issuing the Continental Association in 1774, the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and helped draft the Articles of Confederation and the Massachusetts Constitution)
- vii. "In contemplating the political institutions of the United States, I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes, and take so little pains to prevent them. We profess to be republicans and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government. That is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by the means of the Bible." (Benjamin Rush, was a Founding Father who signed the Declaration of Independence and attended the Continental Congress)
- viii. "In my view, the Christian Religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed...no truth is more evident to my mind than that the \_\_\_\_\_ Religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people." (Noah Webster, has been called the "Father of American Scholarship and Education.")

**IV. (FILL-IN) The Foundations of America: You've Been Lied To!**

- a. *"Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."* (Rev. 2:5)
  - i. R \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. R \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. R \_\_\_\_\_
- b. "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports...In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens..." (George Washington's Farewell Address, September 17, 1796)
- c. "Statesmen, my dear Sir, may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand." (John Adams)
- d. "The only foundation for...a republic is to be laid in Religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments." (Benjamin Rush)

- i. What are the two foundations that these Founding Fathers would say, American Government was founded on?


- e. "...And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion...reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." (George Washington, Farewell Address, September 17, 1796)
- f. "The only foundation for...a republic is to be laid in Religion...Christianity is the only true and perfect religion; and that in proportion as mankind adopt its principles and obey its precepts they will be wise and happy." (Benjamin Rush)
- e. "Without morals, a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion...are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments." (Charles Carroll, who was a Founding Father and signer of the Declaration of Independence)
- f. "Religion and good morals are the only solid foundations of public liberty and happiness." (Samuel Adams)
- g. "The great pillars of all government and of social life [are] virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor...and this alone, that renders us invincible." (Patrick Henry)
- h. The View From an Outsider (Alexis de Tocqueville, "Democracy in America, 1835 & 1840)
  - i. "The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive one without the other."
  - ii. "The religious atmosphere of the country was the first thing that struck me upon my arrival in the U.S. In France, I had seen the spirits of religion and freedom almost always marching in opposite directions, in America, I found them intimately linked together and joined and reigned over the same land..."
  - iii. "Religion should therefore be considered as the first of their political institutions. From the start, politics and religion have \_\_\_\_\_ and have not since ceased to do so."
- i. "...only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." (Benjamin Franklin)

- j. "...the moral principles and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws... All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible." (Noah Webster)
- k. "We have no government armed in power capable of contending in human passions unbridled by morality and religion...Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." (John Adams)
- l. "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 vitiated and corrupt, laws are a nullity and constitutions are waste paper." (Daniel Webster)
- m. The American Experiment:
  - i. Built upon a deep foundation...deeper than the law, deeper than the Constitution.
  - ii. Than what is the foundation of the American Experiment?