



## All Is Forgiven: The Secular Message in American Protestantism

By Marsha Witten

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In recent years mail deliveries have included a new kind of invitation to Protestant Christianity: slick brochures enumerating the social and psychological advantages of church attendance--with no mention whatsoever of spiritual striving, suffering, or faith in God. Does this kind of secularity prevail not only in direct-mail Christianity but also in mainline Protestant churches? Finding the sermon to be the centerpiece of Protestant worship, Marsha Witten looks for the answer to this question in an in-depth analysis of preaching on an important New Testament text: the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

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## All Is Forgiven: The Secular Message in American Protestantism By Marsha Witten Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #655627 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Princeton Univ Pr
- Published on: 1993-12-19
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 6.25" w x .75" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 196 pages



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### Editorial Review

#### From Library Journal

In attempting to understand the effects of modern secular culture on contemporary American Protestantism, Witten (sociology, Franklin and Marshall Coll.) explores the sermon--the centerpiece of Protestant worship. She focuses on pastors' use of language in preaching the parable of the Prodigal Son, looking specifically at how they discuss the character of God, the social conduct of a believing Christian, and the nature of sin. Although her approach is relatively new, she offers clear arguments that seemingly validate her chosen course of action. She also includes a wonderful bibliography of secondary sources that will aid scholars, though she fails to provide the scholar with more than a few snippets from the original primary sources. Witten's work gives a fresh and needed view into the issue. For academic libraries.

- *John B. Wright, Brigham Young Univ., Provo, Utah*

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#### Review

"This very revealing slice of sermonic Protestantism confirms the hypotheses and findings of many sociologists of religion: the market has forced or lured many preachers to refashion God and gospel to make them palatable to potential, struggling and complacent listeners."--*Christian Century*

#### From the Back Cover

"This may be the best book ever published on the week-in, week-out content of ordinary sermons. The heart of *All Is Forgiven*--a splendid close reading of forty-seven sermons on the Prodigal Son by Baptist and Presbyterian ministers--tells us more about ordinary religious speech in Protestant churches than any previous study."--**Mark Noll, Wheaton College**

"Marsha Witten has written a stunning analysis of what contemporary Christians hear when they go to church. She shows the power and the complexity of religious speech but also how it succumbs to the secular society. This is a major achievement."--**Robert Wuthnow, Princeton University**

### Users Review

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#### Kathleen Owens:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in each and every way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make them survives, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice by simply surrounding. One thing that occasionally many people have underestimated this for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a guide your ability to survive improve then having chance to remain than other is high. In your case who want to start reading the book, we give you this specific All Is Forgiven:

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**Bill Flores:**

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**Keith Dunn:**

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