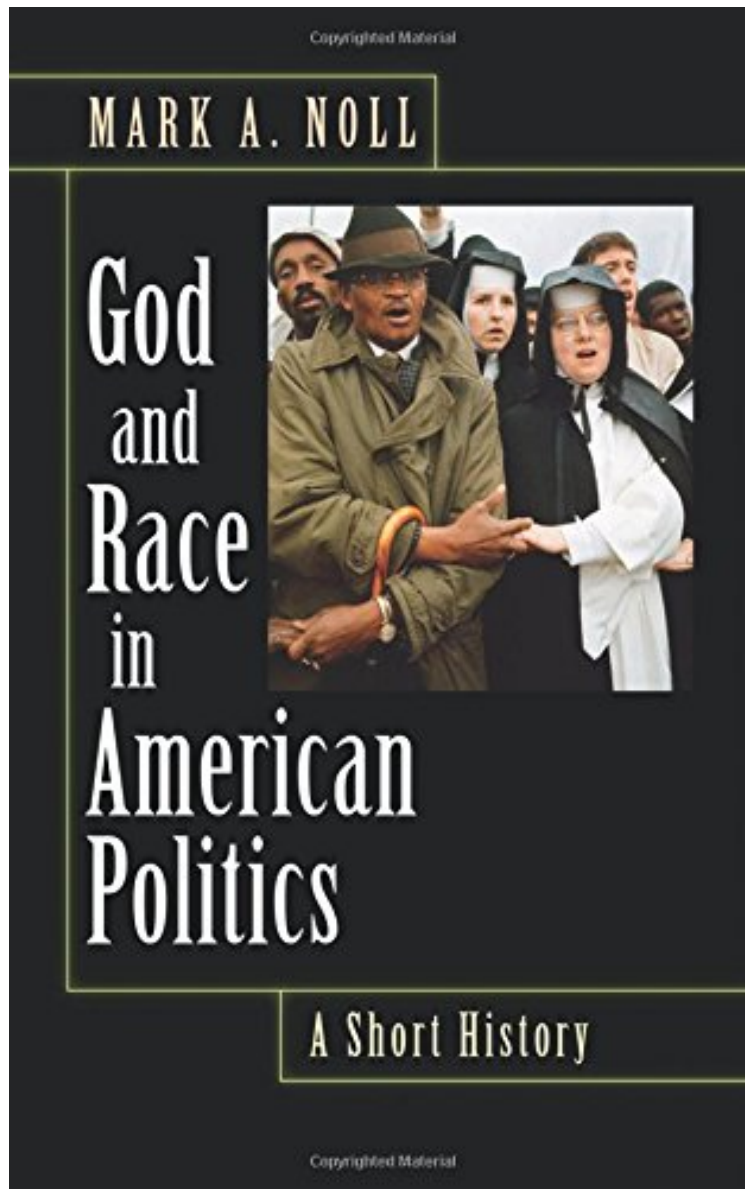


God and Race in American Politics: A Short History

Mark A. Noll

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#389814 in Books Mark A Noll 2010-04-04 2010-04-04Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.10 x .57 x 5.10l, .60 #File Name: 0691146292224 pagesGod and Race in American Politics A Short History | File size: 57.Mb

Mark A. Noll : God and Race in American Politics: A Short History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised God and Race in American Politics: A Short History:

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Race, Religion, and PoliticsBy Robert W. KellemenAuthor Mark

Noll is one of the preeminent historians of religion in American history. That designation is sure to grow with his timely release of "God and Race in American Politics: A Short History." Could there possibly be a better time for the release of this work than weeks before our nation elected its first African American President? Race, religion, and politics in American history have always alternated between great triumphs and shameful failure. Noll outlines this contradictory history and provides theological and cultural insights into the reasons. As the sub-title suggests, Noll writes a short history (200 pages). That is not to be confused with an incomplete history. Noll moves through the issues of race, religion, and politics from the origins of American slavery, to the start of the Black Church Movement, to the Jim Crow years, through the Civil Rights years, and onto the present. In doing so, he provides a panoramic view of what he accurately describes as "spectacular liberation alongside spectacular oppression." And he does so not in a dry-as-dust historical style, but in an engaging, appealing, captivating narrative style. Surely this is one of the most important books on religion, race, and politics written to date.

Reviewer: Robert W. Kellemen, Ph.D., is the author of *Beyond the Suffering: Embracing the Legacy of African American Soul Care and Spiritual Direction*. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The story of American Politics, without God or Race is an incomplete history. By Adam Shields I very much respect Mark Noll's work as a historian. So after re-reading *The Civil War as Theological Crisis* I found *God and Race in American Politics*. Noll is primarily known as a historian of North American Evangelicalism. But this is a natural followup to his *Civil War as Theological Crisis*. Instead of looking at the theological response to issues of race and slavery (as he did in *Civil War*), Noll expands his view to take a quick survey at how Race and Religion interacted over the history of the US until the 2004 Presidential Election. As you might expect a good historian to say, the reality is much more complicated than the traditional story that is told in your 4th grade US history class. But Noll does a very good job surveying those complications in less than 200 pages. His first chapter covers a lot of similar ground as the *Civil War as theological crisis*. Essentially, the common reading of the bible prior to the Civil War was that slavery was a biblical practice, and calling for the end of slavery as a theological statement for most people meant that they had to reject the common reading of scripture and be accused of rejecting orthodox Christianity. And many abolitionists did explicitly reject Christianity (or at least the more orthodox forms of Christianity). But here, Noll spends a good bit of time observing that it was not slavery, but racially based slavery that was the real issue. The widespread belief in white racial superiority meant that Christians were able to accept the plain reading of scripture that said that slavery was acceptable, but not the plain reading of scripture that said that Blacks were of one faith with Whites. This became even more pronounced in the post-civil war era. Because many of those abolitionists were more focused on the restraining the institutions of government than on solving the problems of integrating former slaves into the political and social system of the US. The rise of the independent African American church was important to the racial identity of African Americans. This is a more widely understood narrative, and the shortest section of Noll's book. But it is still important. Modern complaints about racially divided church, often ignore or gloss over the reasons for a racially divided church. It is when Noll starts talking about the rise of Jim Crow and then moves into the Civil Rights era that I think the book really starts being important. Traditional history if it talks about religion and Jim Crow or Civil Rights tends to paint a fairly straight forward picture. Noll suggests that while religion is important (and he believes that it is), it is important to different sides for different reasons. Noll suggests that post Civil War, the segregationist impulses of the Christian church still used religious language and revivalist methodology, but there was a shift and by the Civil Rights era, defense of segregation was mostly using very little scriptural support. Similarly, prior to the Civil War, almost no abolitionist pointed to scripture to defend the equality of Black humanity (because there was a wide spread belief that Blacks were literally a separate and a sub-human species.) But as African American churches became independent and started mining the depths of scripture for themselves, a new story emerged that a racially insensitive White majority slowly became aware of. Noll points out that the institutions of Christianity may not have been supportive of Civil Rights, but they were also not supportive of segregation either. There was very real problems of socially integrating White and Black culture that had been separate. And so Noll suggests that the modern political history needs to be viewed through the Civil Rights movement to properly understand it. It is not as much that the separation between the Republican White Evangelicals and the Democratic African Americans are theologically separate, but politically separate as a response to the movements of the Civil Rights era. And while the Civil Rights era cannot be properly told without the African American church, the continued separation is not primarily theological, but historical. This is a VERY brief retelling of Noll's own brief book. So I really skimmed over most of Noll's argument. At the end of the book, Noll has a brief theological response. And I think that Noll is both hopeful, but has strong words for the church, and government, about how the role of how race influences both theology and political leanings. Ignoring that influence continues to keep Christians separate. I don't think this is Noll's best book. He is clearly moving outside some of comfort zones and he is a bit uncomfortable with the brevity of his argument. But it is a good introduction to areas that are often skimmed over or not given sufficient weight. The Story of the United States cannot be told without the Christian Church. And the story of the United States cannot be told without the very mixed role that race has played. More often than not, there was a combination of Race and Religion that was really at the root of the US story.

0 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Eh? By Smith Curry Not the most interesting written book on the topic, but it isn't always

boring. It doesn't get my full recommendation, but it also doesn't get my full damnation

Religion has been a powerful political force throughout American history. When race enters the mix the results have been some of our greatest triumphs as a nation--and some of our most shameful failures. In this important book, Mark Noll, one of the most influential historians of American religion writing today, traces the explosive political effects of the religious intermingling with race. Noll demonstrates how supporters and opponents of slavery and segregation drew equally on the Bible to justify the morality of their positions. He shows how a common evangelical heritage supported Jim Crow discrimination and contributed powerfully to the black theology of liberation preached by Martin Luther King Jr. In probing such connections, Noll takes readers from the 1830 slave revolt of Nat Turner through Reconstruction and the long Jim Crow era, from the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s to "values" voting in recent presidential elections. He argues that the greatest transformations in American political history, from the Civil War through the civil rights revolution and beyond, constitute an interconnected narrative in which opposing appeals to Biblical truth gave rise to often-contradictory religious and moral complexities. And he shows how this heritage remains alive today in controversies surrounding stem-cell research and abortion as well as civil rights reform. *God and Race in American Politics* is a panoramic history that reveals the profound role of religion in American political history and in American discourse on race and social justice.

Winner of the 2009 Award of Merit in History/Biography, *Christianity Today* "Mark A. Noll is one of our leading historians of religion. . . . [God and Race in American Politics] tells us a lot about how we talk about God in politics, yesterday and today. As he does so often, Noll here writes serenely about volatile subjects."--Martin E. Marty, *Chronicle of Higher Education* "[Noll] has produced yet another admirable synthesis of a huge body of American history and historiography. . . . [T]houghtful Christian readers will find this work indispensable in understanding the big picture of race, religion, and politics in American history."--Paul Harvey, *Christianity Today* "Noll's incisive history offers a significant introduction to the tangled relationship of race, religion, and politics in America."--Henry L. Carrigan, Jr., Foreword "[T]his work is just the sort of introduction that those unfamiliar with the contours of politics, race and religion need. . . . Concerning the struggle for civil rights, Noll makes a powerful argument. While acknowledging the importance of the courts and community organizing, he aptly points out that religion was the indispensable foundation of the civil rights movement. The conviction that God was on the side of the black freedom struggle was powerful."--Randall J. Stephens, *Christian Century* "[Noll's] work will be a must read for scholars of U.S. religious and political history."--Choice "With the self-assurance of a skilled painter, Noll applies a series of brushstrokes that define five political alignments, each influenced by the comparative strength of the state, the market, and religion. . . . Noll's is a tragic vision but one that nevertheless brings welcome clarity to the nation's primary moral dilemma."--Andrew Rojecki, *Journal of Church History* "God and Race in American Politics offers an in-depth view of the way religion has influenced politics and discourse on race and social justice throughout U.S. history. Based on a series of lectures he gave at Princeton in 2006, Noll supports his thesis with a very large body of relevant work and deftly elucidates the notion that opposing appeals to Biblical truth have created complex and, in some cases, contradictory religious and moral ideas."--Peter Lamal, *The Humanist* "In this important book, Mark Noll, one of the most influential historians of American religion writing today, traces the explosive political effects of the religious intermingling with race."--Spartacus "God and Race in American Politics contributes an enlightening historical analysis. . . . It is written with forceful yet well-balanced argument fully achieving its main objective. . . . It serves as a generous, informative guide for a wide readership, finding an audience in the general public as well as culture and religion historians and political scientists."--Adriana Neagu, *American, British and Canadian Studies* "Noll's book is . . . a useful and astutely informed reading of foundational issues and themes that are essential to understanding historic and contemporary race and politics in American religion."--Sylvester A. Johnson, *Journal of American History* "Mark Noll's brief but incredibly insightful survey of God and Race in American Politics offers one of the most significant analyses of race and religion in American political history. . . . Knoll's analysis of these most complicated issues in American history reveals a narrative of often contradicting religious and moral complexities. He wrestles with his subject, not shying away from this difficult assignment, with moral dexterity, skillful analysis, and solid historic research. Knoll has provided much food for thought."--Trevor O'Reggio, *Andrew's University Seminary Studies* "The book succeeds admirably as a study of the parallels between religious opinions, electoral strategies, and orientations to state power. Its successes invite further consideration of the messy, embodied modes by which religio-racial identities are enacted and destabilized, and of the role of churches as counterpublics. . . . To acknowledge this is not to overlook the book's power as historical narrative. Rather, that Noll's book gives rise to such questions is an indication of its suggestiveness."--Jason C. Bivins, *Journal of Religion* "From the Inside Flap" "God and Race in American Politics is a magisterial account of the interplay of race and religion in America from slavery to today. The account is balanced, neither an indictment nor an apologia. As Noll puts it himself, it is a story of 'spectacular liberation alongside spectacular oppression.'"--Peter L. Berger, author of *The Sacred Canopy* "Noll writes well and tells an engaging story, challenging the reader to think about the connections he posits. This work will appeal to a broad array of readers

interested in questions of race, religion, and politics in America's past and present. I know of no other books that address these issues in precisely this way."--Daniel W. Stowell, author of *Rebuilding Zion*"This book eloquently speaks to what is surely one of the most bedeviling issues in American history: the tragic problem of race and its complicated entanglement with religion. With his usual sharp eye for historical detail and an unflinching focus on the unforeseen ironies and paradoxes of America's racial history, Noll tells a compelling story of sin and grace."--R. Marie Griffith, Princeton University

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