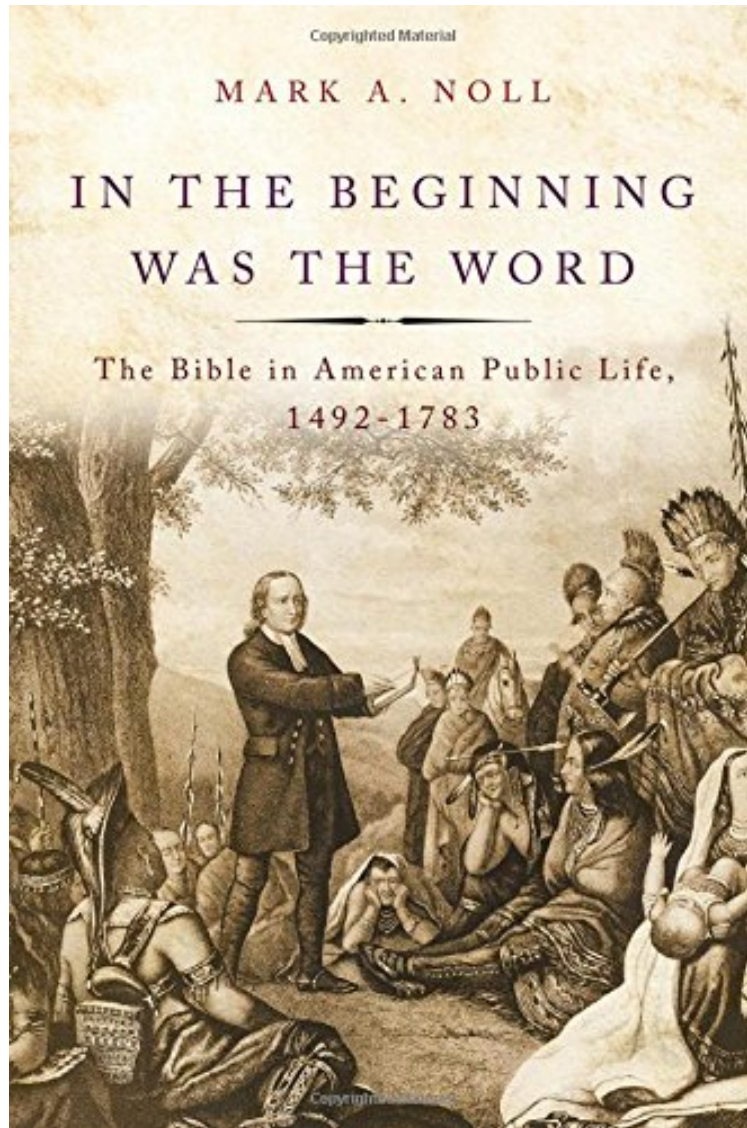


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In the Beginning Was the Word: The Bible in American Public Life, 1492-1783

Mark A. Noll

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Mark A. Noll : In the Beginning Was the Word: The Bible in American Public Life, 1492-1783 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In the Beginning Was the Word: The Bible in American Public Life, 1492-1783:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. This is a fantastic introduction to the bible in early America.By

RJLMark Noll, as he usually does, invites readers into the historical conversation about the way the Bible shaped and was shaped by early America. He adeptly integrates historiography into a clear narrative of the shape of biblicism through the early centuries in North America. He challenges simplistic views of the bible's place in this society as both shaping and being shaped by the powerful cultural forces (slavery, relationships with Native Americans, and the revaluation) I appreciate his capacity to carry a narrative forward while doing significant historical work. I am looking forward to his next installment.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The KJV in Colonial America By No King But Christ A colleague of mine likes to say that in Europe, the [established] Church depended upon the State but in America the State depends upon the Church [the Body of Christ, not an organization]. This is Noll's premise but he phrases it differently: a biblicism that promotes an official Christendom versus a biblicism that challenges and even undermines any notion of an official Christendom. We might say then that America was at least culturally, albeit imperfectly, Christian and that both Church and State were founded upon bedrock biblical principles even if a mature understanding of faith (liberty of conscience) required the separation of Church and State (institutionally and jurisdictionally). In short, this book makes very clear that colonial Americans were a scripture-believing, -loving, and possibly even -obsessed people. Deism was not a significant force on this side of the Atlantic. Now, I am certain that die-hard secularists will meet such an assertion with hostility. However, I do not understand why. Just because America has a Christian origin and heritage does not mean America must remain Christian. In fact, Americans have not had a consistent, comprehensive Christian worldview for decades (maybe even a century). Obama was correct when he said, we are no longer just a Christian nation; we are also a Jewish nation, a Muslim nation, a Buddhist nation, a Hindu nation, and a nation of nonbelievers. In any event, Noll does a fair job tracing the role of scriptures in the development of colonial and republican America. I have a few bones to pick, two major plus two pet peeves.

1. Noll suggests that scriptural teaching was eventually married to Whig political ideology. In other words, scripture was increasingly interpreted to support the ages more secular political theories. May I suggest that Whig political ideology is scriptural but (a) it requires a self-governing people to see it come to fruition and (b) it sometimes takes people outside the Church to enlighten the eyes of the Church to what the scriptures teach.

2. The next bone is related to the first. Noll rightly points out that scripture was enlisted to justify imperialism and to hold Britain up as a New Israel. The problem is that he equates the two. It is one thing to read scripture and conclude that the Whigs have it right, it is another to read scripture and conclude that Britain is the New Israel. Big difference.

3. The first pet peeve. Noll quotes 1 Tim 6:10 as reading money as the root of all evil. I hope this was a matter of editing because Noll has just got to know that the LOVE of money is a root of ALL KINDS of evil. Obviously, money is not inherently evil nor is it the source of all evil.

4. The second pet peeve. Noll twice refers to the so-called Boston Massacre. Yes, Paul Revere and Sam Adams milked the events of March 5, 1770 for all its worth. However, it WAS a massacre. The 1828 definition reads, the murder of an INDIVIDUAL without authority or necessity. By dismissing it as so-called Noll and other Americans prove that (a) they don't know the definition of massacre and/or (b) have become so desensitized that a death toll of five is no longer a big deal. All in all, worth the read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Theory, no practice By J. Moore The thematic concept is interesting (and repeated over and over again). The author uses sermon content to show the conflicting ways the bible was used both to support and challenge Christendom but doesn't show how those opinions were worked out in actions.

In the beginning of American history, the Word was in Spanish, Latin, and native languages like Nahuatl. But while Spanish and Catholic Christianity reached the New World in 1492, it was only with settlements in the seventeenth century that English-language Bibles and Protestant Christendom arrived. The Puritans brought with them intense devotion to Scripture, as well as their ideal of Christendom -- a civilization characterized by a thorough intermingling of the Bible with everything else. That ideal began this country's journey from the Puritan's City on a Hill to the Bible-quoting country the U.S. is today. In the Beginning Was the Word shows how important the Bible remained, even as that Puritan ideal changed considerably through the early stages of American history. Author Mark Noll shows how seventeenth-century Americans received conflicting models of scriptural authority from Europe: the Bible under Christendom (high Anglicanism), the Bible over Christendom (moderate Puritanism), and the Bible against Christendom (Anabaptists, enthusiasts, Quakers). In the eighteenth century, the colonists turned increasingly to the Bible against Christendom, a stance that fueled the Revolution against Anglican Britain and prepared the way for a new country founded on the separation of church and state. One of the foremost scholars of American Christianity, Mark Noll brings a wealth of research and wisdom to *In the Beginning Was the Word*, providing a sweeping, engaging, and insightful survey of the relationship between the Bible and public issues from the beginning of European settlement. A seminal new work from a world-class scholar, this book offers a fresh account of the contested, sometimes ambiguous, but definite biblical roots of American history.

"This work will likely be read by anyone interested in the widely read Bible, Protestant history in America, and early American history." --The Journal of American Studies
"In the Beginning Was the Word offers genuinely fresh insights into the roots of American ideology." --Times Literary Supplement
"Monumental . . . The story told by Noll brims with

ironies and complexities. The first installment of a projected two-volume history of the Bible in American public life, *In the Beginning Was the Word* is the fruit of Noll's many years of deep reflection combined with his proven talent for synthesis." --Peter Thuesen, Books Culture, selected as a Favorite Book of 2015 "[A] rich and deep examination of the place of the bible, both as an object and a source of ideas, in the public life of early America . . . Noll has demonstrated that it is virtually impossible to understand the colonial society without understanding the place, significance, and prominence of scripture in private and public life." --New Books in History "[A] thoughtful book." --William and Mary Quarterly "Noll shows how 17th-century Americans received conflicting models of scriptural authority from Europe: the Bible under Christendom (high Anglicanism), the Bible over Christendom (moderate Puritanism), and the Bible against Christendom (Anabaptists, enthusiasts, Quakers). In the 18th century, the colonists turned increasingly to the Bible against Christendom, fueling the Revolution against Britain and preparing the way for a new country founded on the separation of church and state." --Wichita Eagle, New Notable "A superb study of Early America's most widely read book by one of the nation's leading historians of religion. No one has ever before described and analyzed the role of the Bible in colonial America as thoroughly as Mark Noll has in this important book. *In the Beginning Was the Word* is a landmark work of history." -- Gordon S. Wood, Professor of History Emeritus, Brown University "In the Beginning Was the Word documents the Bible's ubiquity in the nation's formative years. With massive research and lapidary prose, Noll shows how Scripture provided solace for individuals, authority for Protestants, and warrants for Christendom. Lest there be any doubt, the volume secures the author's rank as the dean of active American religious historians." -- Grant Wacker, Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Christian History, Duke Divinity School "Mark Noll has written a learned and wise treatment of the power of the Bible in early American history, sensitive to the ways Scripture was invoked on different sides of many disputes. Noll appropriately roots his account in the Old World background and restores the importance of Puritanism to the course of American History." -- Daniel Walker Howe, Pulitzer-Prize-winning author of *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* "This book is a must-read for all pastors and students of scripture." -Ministry "Noll's work is a significant contribution to literature on colonial American intellectual history in demonstrating how the Bible was often both shaping and being shaped by intellectual currents." --Religious Studies "During the last 50 years, Noll has been one of the principal leaders, along with other evangelical Protestant scholars, who have continued the tradition of superb, critical analysis of the history of Christianity that was begun by the 'church historians' of an earlier generation (Martin Marty, Sydney Ahlstrom and others). This book stands as a monument to his scholarly career, in which he has drawn on the insights of American 'historians of American religion' and many other disciplines, but still adhering to his commitment to write history for the edification of the church. May his work continue, and may his tribe increase." --The Presbyterian Outlook About the Author Mark A. Noll is the Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame and author of numerous books, including *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (OUP 2002) and *Protestantism: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP 2011).