

Food, Farming, and Faith

Gary W. Fick

SUNY Press, Softcover \$14.95 (224pp)
978-0-7914-7384-9

What kind of food will people eat in the future? Will it be healthful? Will there be enough? Who should be growing the food, and where should it be grown? Is there any difference in the food quality and environmental effects of family farming and industrialized agriculture? Do pesticides and genetically modified organisms only enhance the food supply, or do some practices harm the environment and poison the future?

In his probing book, Fick, a professor of agronomy at Cornell, attempts to answer these and a host of other questions. He begins by exploring the ways people eat and then moves into a discussion of agricultural practices that arise out of the choices people make about foods. Weaving various scripture passages into his study, Fick underscores his argument that agricultural sustainability is a holistic practice that involves spiritual and ethical decisions as well as scientific ones. "Agricultural sustainability is like a one-legged stool supported by ecological, social-economic, and spiritual-ethical relationships interwoven into a single supporting leg." Fick concludes his argument for a holistic approach to food and farming by listing fifteen "essentials of agriculture" including, "farming must offer an attractive lifestyle and a means of learning how to farm so that future generations will become farmers," and "there is a religious and ethical component of agriculture that calls for all participants to have food that they can celebrate life."

Fick's thoughtful book adds fresh perspectives to the growing number of books about the centrality of food in American culture. *Henry L. Carrigan, Jr.*

Wilson suggests that all the labels and concepts associated with Jesus be stripped away, and that Jesus be approached as though he were the centerpoint of a circle.

God and Race in American Politics: A Short History

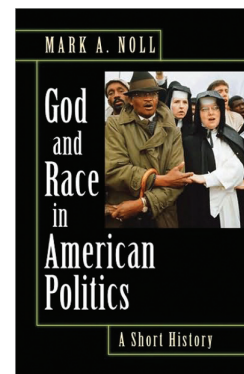
Mark A. Noll

Princeton University Press,
Hardcover \$22.95 (232pp)
978-0-691-12536-7

During the years leading up to the Civil War and in the years immediately following it, various Christian groups used the Bible either to support slavery or to condemn it. One hundred years later during the struggle for Civil Rights, most of the leadership in the Civil Rights movement arose out of religious communities.

Using these two historical periods as bookends, Noll, the dean of American church historians, eloquently though briefly examines the fraught but enduring relationship between race, religion, and politics in the United States. He argues that race has always been among the most influential elements—sometimes the single most influential—in American history, and he contends that religion has been crucial for the workings of race in American politics. Noll concludes that race and religion together comprise one of the nation's deepest and most enduring moral problems but also deeply influence the nation's politics. The author focuses on three major historical periods when race and religion transformed politics. From 1830 to 1860, slavery overshadowed all other political issues; from 1865 to 1900, the nation gave up on the notion of equal rights, leaving African Americans unprotected in the civil sphere; and from 1950 until today, sphere. Between 1950 and the present the battles for civil rights were won, but with sometimes unintended consequences. Because of this relationship between race and religion, Noll can show that during the Civil War, for example, "it was warfare that allowed deep-seated republican scruples to be set aside, but in this case it was warfare defined as work for the armies of the Lord."

Noll's incisive history offers a significant introduction to the tangled relationship of race, religion, and politics in America. *Henry L. Carrigan, Jr.*



Kristine Morris writes regularly for ForeWord. She is also a book review columnist for Spirituality & Health magazine and an ordained minister.

Henry L. Carrigan, Jr. is senior editor at Northwestern University Press. He writes about books for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Charlotte Observer, Orlando Sentinel, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Library Journal, and Publishers Weekly.

Linda Beck has been director of the Indian Valley Public Library in Telford, PA, since 1995. She is married to a Lutheran pastor, and is the mother of three.