

American Protestant schools of thought but entertains European and Catholic viewpoints. To build “substance of soul,” tolerance, spiritual resilience, deepen appreciation of the 1960’s civil rights movement, and foster civility in face of ongoing ethical dilemmas, UMTs would benefit from studying this work. Specific value for chaplains and chaplain assistants includes:

Tolerance and humility. In analyzing various biblical interpretive schemes, Noll deals with the intellectual rigor and emotional passion in which viewpoints were held. A critical issue brought up in the book details “How...are Bible believers...supposed to act in harmony when interpretations of the Bible seem to fly nearly everywhere?” In our era, where people of faith differ, often with clashing discord, on positions of ethical and cultural practice, we can be humble agents for change. Acknowledging God “whose ways are not our own” and tolerance in respecting other points of view is beneficial.

Corporate and individual. In hearing from a wide body of theological interpretations, the author encourages us to deepen our own individual understandings of Scripture and Biblical interpretation. Engaging larger, corporate bodies of faith with a critical but open mind can develop appreciation for nuance, historical and cultural context, and differing points of view. Greater precision, accuracy and recognition of the wide bounds of God’s Kingdom can result.

Theological analysis. Noll’s disciplined, careful, precise treatment of one of our Nation’s most divisive historical issues is an incentive for us to treat controversies of our day with similar rigor and care. Whether medical ethics, human rights, environmental perplexities, or issues addressing combat realities, we can aspire to provide depth and fairness to our Armed Forces leadership and personnel in these challenging yet fulfilling days.

This is not a light read. Taken in small, intentional steps with a fresh mind, readers will be well rewarded with depth of understanding and insight, applicable to these often uncertain times.

*Reviewed by Chaplain (COL) Kenneth Sampson,
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The Civil War as a Theological Crisis

Mark A. Noll

University of North Carolina Press, 2006

This compact, highly footnoted yet readable text can benefit Unit Ministry Teams in both our understanding of historical theology and application to current ethical quandaries. Based on the Steven and Janice Brose lectures at Penn State University in April 2003, the work analyzes issues of slavery and race immediately prior to and during the Civil War. The author, Wheaton College (IL) professor Mark Noll, treats not only