

ior scholars, such as Mark Noll of Notre Dame, whose work has defined the contours of American religious history for decades, with the scholarship of recent recipients of Ph.D.s who are pushing the field forward in new ways, such as Brown assistant professor Linford Fisher.

Some of the essays address specific topics, such as theology or civil religion, and others discuss denominations or movements. Some are historiographical, focusing on the ways in which scholars have addressed a given issue over time. Blum's essay "Religion, Race, and African American Life," for example, illustrates in clear and compelling fashion the complex history that gave rise to different interpretations of African-American religions. Other essays, such as Jane Smith's perceptive "Islam in America," provide a narrative overview of their subjects.

The disciplinary training of the contributors also results in

some clear differences. Those who work primarily in history departments spend less time explaining the theoretical roots at the base of their essays, while those in religious studies, such as Jason Bivins in his essay "Religion and Politics," tend to challenge basic assumptions about what religion is and what it is not.

Each essay is followed by a bibliography that highlights both classics on the topic and some of the newest work. The editors have also included a glossary and a large, comprehensive bibliography compiled by Randall Stephens. What sets this book apart from other reference guides, however, is that it also includes a filmography, a discography and a guide to online resources for further study in American religious history.

Harvey and Blum have done a great service in creating this readable, accessible overview of so many important topics. I may have to carry a reference book to the beach this summer.

ESSENTIAL BOOKS ON Marriage

***A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*, by Richard R. Gaillardetz** (Liguori). If marriage is the place where the majority of us "work out our salvation" before God, then a book on its spirituality is essential. Drawing on his experience as a spouse and parent and on a rich knowledge of the Christian tradition, Catholic theologian Gaillardetz brings Christian ideals of conversion, communion, sexuality and parenting alive as faithful practices of daily life.

***Becoming Married*, by Herbert Anderson and Robert Cotton Fite** (Westminster John Knox). Marriage is a process that happens over time in one's life cycle and in the life cycle of families. Rich with pastoral examples from the authors' ministries, this book explores Christian rituals and beliefs alongside the relational dynamics of attachment and differentiation, which make marriage one of the toughest and yet among the most rewarding endeavors.

***Blessing Same-Sex Unions: The Perils of Queer Romance and the Confusions of Christian Marriage*, by Mark D. Jordan** (University of Chicago Press). A Harvard religion professor takes the controversy over same-sex unions as an opportunity to grapple with what is Christian about marriage, especially considering that *Brides* magazine shapes wedding protocol more than faith does, reducing religious symbols to "good visuals."

***Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage*, by Stephanie Coontz** (Penguin). Social historian and longtime family studies scholar Coontz shows the modern novelty and therefore the radical fragility of contemporary notions of marrying for love. Exploring the landscape from the political marriages of ancient Babylon to the 18th-century emergence of the love match to today's debate over gay marriage, Coontz offers the reader a valuable overview of cultural constructs of marriage.

***Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions*, edited by Don S. Browning, M. Christian Green and John Witte Jr.** (Columbia University Press). Drawing on legal, theological, poetic and liturgical literature whose origins range from early history to very recent times, this edited collection gathers canonical and classical texts from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism and Buddhism. It provides a useful reference for those interested in family-related teachings across religious traditions and for those facing the challenge of interfaith marriages.

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