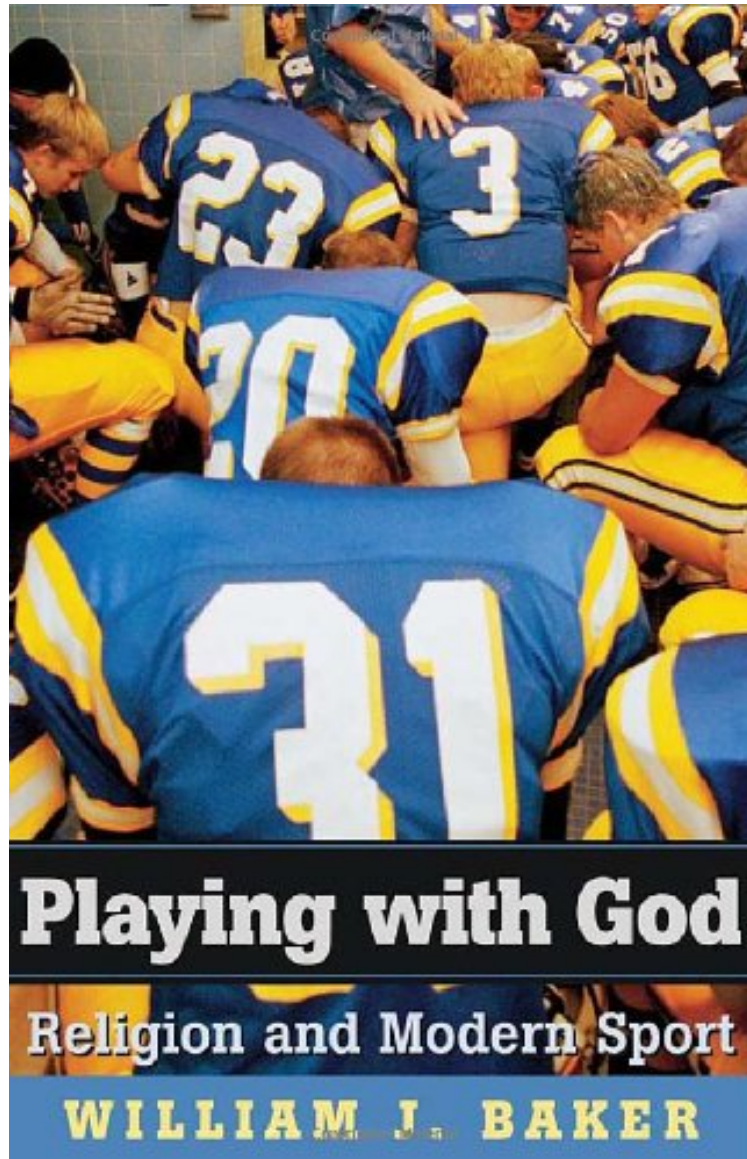


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Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport

William J. Baker

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William J. Baker : Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy AmandaIt looks like a new book, I found nothing wrong with the quality.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A must read for every Coach and Local PastorBy A CustomerThe author does outstanding research on the history of sports and how it has been interwoven

within the structure of religion. I read every word. As a retired minister and pastoral counselor I was astonished as to how much sports and religion are competitive yet are parallel and both are interwoven into our modern faith and belief systems. I have a son who is an Offensive Coordinator in a local high school and I give it to him for his birthday. It's a great gift. I recommended it last Christmas to a friend to give to their father who enjoys sports and has everything. I also recommended it to my attorney to give to his law partner. A great book thank you "Billy" 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellence By George Shriver This is by far the best book on this subject available. No other volume even comes close to the excellence found here.

The spectacle of modern sport displays all the latest commercial and technological innovations, yet age-old religious concerns still thrive at the stadium. Coaches lead pre-game and post-game prayers, athletes give God the credit for home runs and touchdowns, and fans wave signs with biblical quotations and allusions. Like no other nation on earth, Americans eagerly blend their religion and sports. *Playing with God* traces this dynamic relationship from the Puritan condemnation of games as sinful in the seventeenth century to the near deification of athletic contests in our own day. Early religious opposition to competitive sport focused on the immoderate enthusiasm of players and spectators, the betting on scores, and the preference for playing field over church on Sunday. Disapproval gradually gave way to acceptance when "wholesome recreation" for young men in crowded cities and soldiers in faraway fields became a national priority. Protestants led in the readjustment of attitudes toward sport; Catholics, Jews, Mormons, and Muslims followed. The Irish at Notre Dame, outstanding Jews in baseball, Black Muslims in the boxing ring, and born-again athletes at Liberty University represent the numerous negotiations and compromises producing the unique American mixture of religion and sport.

From Booklist A time-traveling Puritan would have gaped in disbelief at the Giants who joined in sideline prayer during the 1991 Super Bowl. But sports historian Baker understands how American religion has come to embrace athletic games in surprising ways. Richly detailed and insightful, this narrative illuminates the circumstances that fused sports with the muscular Christianity of liberal Protestants worried that city life was making boys weak and worldly. And when World War I plunged the entire nation into a fiery trial, patriotism melded with sport and faith to form a new trinity that transcended denominational limits. Thus, Catholics joined liberal Protestants in baptizing sport and elevated Knute Rockne to cultural sainthood. Baker acknowledges that conservative Protestants, Jews, Mormons, and Moslems have approached sports in ways that have sometimes separated them from other devout fans. And he confronts the tawdry realities (gambling scandals, steroid abuse, sexual assaults) that have dismayed the pious. But this compelling mosaic leaves no doubt as to the durability of the American marriage of devotion and sport. Bryce Christensen Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved That old quarterback Bill Baker, once the passing preacher, plays with the old question, Is sports America's true religion?, then scores with this readable and fascinating study of their interlocking history. (Robert Lipsyte, former New York Times sports columnist) William Baker's *Playing with God* is a natural. Baker reveals the countless ways that religious ideas infuse sports, and the complex ways that sports resemble religion. Along the way he tells great stories, and unearths a range of beliefs and practices across time and faiths. This is a fascinating history. (Elliott Gorn, author of *A Brief History of American Sports*) *Playing with God* is sprightly, humorous, fast-paced, and judicious. No other book on modern religion and sport is as expansive, well-researched, or satisfying. Yet another touchdown by a former college quarterback! (Benjamin G. Rader, author of *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*) *Playing with God* surveys the complex and dynamic relationship between sport and religion throughout American history, with a keen eye for the shifting dynamics between these two staples of American life. This is a superb book that invites us to consider even more carefully the relationship between play and piety. (Randall Balmer, Barnard College, Columbia University) In his carefully researched, beautifully written *Playing with God*, Bill Baker demonstrates that athletes and ministers have long worked together, and that the idea of sport as a civic religion is far from being an accident or a turn of phrase. (Randy Roberts, author of *The Rock, the Curse, and the Hub: A Random History of Boston Sports*) Baker has long specialized in sports. In this worthy addition to his works, he again considers sports in America, this time studying the mutual influence of sports and religion... Well written and highly informative. (James F. DeRoche Library Journal 2007-05-01) Baker takes the reader on a fascinating and informative trek through the history of the intimacy between religion and sports in America, and he even includes a chapter on Athletes for Allah. (Mitch Finley Catholic News Service 2007-04-27) It is the best presentation of this interplay [between sports and religion] published to date... This book is must reading for anyone interested in sports and religion. (G. H. Shriver Choice 2007-11-01) A valuable story about the engagement of religion with sports. [Baker] focuses on U.S. history from the time of the Puritans to the present day, pausing at times to delve deeply into the stories of a few prominent figures, such as Knute Rockne, the tough-as-nails football coach of the Notre Dame Fighting Irish and a convert to Catholicism. As a historian and researcher, Baker is exceptional, and his writing is fluid and energetic. (David Nantais Christian Century 2008-01-15) About the Author? William J. Baker is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Maine.