

BOOK REVIEWS

Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter, by Richard N. Longenecker. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. 490 pp. \$40.00.

Seasoned New Testament scholar Richard Longenecker is now working on a commentary on “Paul’s most famous letter,” the epistle to the Romans. *Introducing Romans* is the prelude to that forthcoming commentary. At 450 pages, it is an exhaustive treatment of the critical issues in the contemporary study of Romans.

Longenecker begins with a discussion of “important matters largely uncontested today”—the author, integrity, occasion, and date of the letter. He argues that the author of Romans was Paul, that Romans 16 (including the doxology) was original to the letter, and that Romans was written from “greater Corinth” in the winter of A.D. 57–58 before Paul set out for Jerusalem. Longenecker next addresses “two pivotal issues”—the addressees and purpose of the letter, issues which I will discuss below. The final three sections of the book deal respectively with rhetorical conventions and Jewish and Christian themes, textual criticism and major issues of interpretation (e.g., the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate), and the structure and argument of the letter. Some highlights: Longenecker argues that the letter should be categorized rhetorically as a type of λόγος προτρεπτικός (“word of exhortation”), but that it was also shaped by, among other things, the Hebrew Bible and early Christian confessions. He argues that the genitive construction πίστις Χριστοῦ in Romans 3:22 and 26 should be read as a subjective genitive (“the faithfulness of Christ”), rather than an objective genitive (“faith in Christ”). And he sees merit in E. P. Sanders’s view that Second Temple Judaism was a religion of grace (the foundation of the New Perspective on Paul), although he tempers this conclusion by noting that some Jewish texts do evidence legalism.

Much of this book simply treats at length the same issues that can be found in the introduction of any major commentary on Romans. But Longenecker makes two distinct contributions. First, he argues that the addressees of the letter to the Romans were Gentile and Jewish believers in Jesus who “considered themselves closely tied to the Jerusalem church” and “thought and expressed themselves in ways congenial to Jewish Christianity” (83). In arguing this, Longenecker seeks to move the discussion beyond the question of merely the ethnic identity of the Roman Christians (Jews, Gentiles, or both?), and to the question of the theological outlook of the Roman Christians. This theological outlook cannot be determined by mirror-reading the letter, for the letter is neither polemic nor apologetic. Instead, it must be determined by external data. Specifically, Longenecker highlights the fourth-century

commentator Ambrosiaster, who tells us that Christianity came to Rome through Jews who believed in Jesus, and the second-century Roman historian Tacitus, who connects Christianity in Rome to Judea. Therefore, Longenecker concludes, the addressees of this letter were Christians with strong ties to the Jerusalem church.

Longenecker's second distinct contribution builds upon the first. Observing that Romans 1:18–4:25 utilizes Jewish and Christian assumptions which Paul's addressees would have held in common with Paul, Longenecker argues that the focus of the letter is actually Romans 5–8: "My proposal, then, is that the materials of 5–8 should be viewed as expressing the focus of what Paul writes in Romans, and particularly the section that contains the 'spiritual gift' that he says he wants to give the Christians at Rome in 1:11 and that he speaks about as being 'my gospel' in 2:16 and 16:25" (373). Romans 5–8 is the essence of the gospel Paul proclaimed in his Gentile mission. In fact, according to Longenecker, explaining this distinct gospel is one of the primary purposes Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. In lieu of being able to visit them, he wrote to give them a "spiritual gift" (Rom 1:11), "which he thought of as something uniquely his (cf. his reference to 'my gospel' in 16:25; also see 2:16)" (158).

In my view, these two theses put too much weight on the brief comments of Ambrosiaster and Tacitus, and Paul's two references to "my gospel" (16:25 and 2:16—should we think of the idea that God will judge the secrets of people through Christ as distinctly Pauline?). But it will be interesting to see how Longenecker develops and defends them further in his forthcoming commentary.

In conclusion, who should read this book? Busy pastors may find that its detail makes it unhelpful to their sermon preparation. Why would they need to know every scholar who has ever disputed the Pauline authorship of Romans, a position which is surely untenable? However, those looking for a one-stop-shop for everything Pauline scholars have said about the introductory issues in Romans will find this book to be an invaluable resource.

Kevin W. McFadden

You Mean I Don't Have to Tithe? A Deconstruction of Tithing and a Reconstruction of Post-Tithe Giving, by David A. Croteau. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010. xvi + 380 pp. \$44.00.

The last several years has seen a surge in materials detailing discontinuities between the Old Testament and New Testament peoples of God. David VanDrunen, Michael Horton, Darryl Hart, and until his recent defection, Joshua Stellman have led the way in explaining how the Christian relates differently to the two kingdoms than did his OT Israelite counterpart, resulting in an ethic sharply different from the prevailing

“already/not-yet” one-kingdom ethic of neo-Calvinism. Jim Hamilton, Alan Cole, and others are affirming discontinuities between the “old covenant” and “new covenant” ministries of the Spirit so thorough that even some dispensationalists are squirming. New Covenant Theology, having emerged from early obscurity as a little-noticed Reformed Baptist anomaly, has earned a substantial hearing for its arguments against tithing and sabbatarianism as unwelcome intruders from an earlier age. And while it disappoints me that such treatments are not coming primarily from the pens of dispensationalists, it is gratifying to see the governing principles of dispensationalism not only surviving, but also contributing to the hope that the century-long grip of neo-Calvinism over the evangelical community will eventually ease.

David Croteau joins this coterie of dissident voices in his recent work *You Mean I Don't Have to Tithe?* This adaptation of the author's 2005 dissertation is the fruit of a 15-year quest to understand the function and purpose of OT tithing, together with an inquiry into the church's historical acceptance of the practice. Croteau expresses concern in his introduction that his work will be received rather coldly in some quarters as something of a backhanded, libertine attack on Christian giving that effectively threatens the financial stability of churches. Indeed, Croteau does not even pacify his critics by invoking the reassuring caveat used by other tithe-doubters that the tithe may still be used to establish God's “minimum standard” for Christian giving. Instead, Croteau does something much better—he offers a robust theology of New Testament giving, a “post-tithing paradigm” that successfully fills the gap left by his careful conclusion that, indeed, “I don't have to tithe.”

Croteau begins by thoroughly reviewing the ecclesiastical history of tithing, even-handedly describing the ebb and flow of the practice through the whole of church history. The study slows to give special attention to the 1876 “rediscovery of the tithe” by Thomas Kane, who, after lamenting that the “law of the tithe was almost universally disobeyed,” revived the practice almost single-handedly. This in turn paved the way for the influential work of Harold Landsell, whose *Sacred Tenth* rendered mandatory tithing a troublingly sacrosanct feature of twentieth-century American church life.

Croteau follows this rather interesting history with two chapters that address exhaustively each pertinent biblical text from both testaments concerning the tithe. In these he convincingly proves that biblical tithes cannot be extracted from the legal and civic structures of the communities by which they were practiced and for which they were prescribed. Consequently, any present obligation of believers to observe them has been suspended in view of Christ's completion of the Mosaic Law and institution of a new community (the church) with its unprecedented bifurcation of ecclesiastical and civic concerns.

In chapters 5 and 6, Croteau analyzes representative positions of dispensationalism, theonomic covenant theology, and non-theonomic covenant theology relative to the tithe. He concludes that dispensationalists are consistent in denying the continued obligation of tithing in the

church and that theologians are consistent in advocating at least a partial tithe today. His chief aim in these chapters, however, is to plead with non-theonomic covenant theologians to join him in rejecting NT tithing, since it perpetuates civil/ceremonial aspects of the law that by common consent have been set aside. In short, he argues for the consistency of the position of new covenant theology without expressly naming it as such.

Croteau completes his study with two chapters urging pastors to excise “traditional” and “pragmatic” appeals to tithing in the church, and to replace them with a robust NT theology of giving—one that is perhaps a bit unnerving for its refusal to legislate giving, but one that ultimately reflects the biblical expectation for our post-tithe era. These chapters alone are worth the price of the book.

While this book will not satisfy all of our dispensational readers at every point, the arguments contained here are well worth reading. Above all, Croteau offers an unobjectionable guide for NT giving that should prove very useful for fearful traditionalists and pragmatists who are looking for a practical way to excise the entrenched but biblically unsustainable practice of tithing from the contemporary church.

Mark A. Snoeberger

Am I Called? The Summons to Pastoral Ministry, by Dave Harvey. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. 221 pp. \$12.99.

The title of this book expresses a question many of us have asked and been asked. It is a good and legitimate question for those considering pastoral ministry and one those of us in local churches should be prepared to help young men answer.

Dave Harvey, the author, serves on the leadership team of Sovereign Grace Ministries as the one responsible for church planting, church care, and international expansion (back cover). In this role, Harvey has spent time with hundreds of young pastors and new church planters and so is well qualified to write such a book.

Harvey divides his book into three main parts. In the first part, “Approaching the Call,” the author addresses the idea of a ministry call and the context in which it takes place. In the second section, “Diagnosing the Call,” Harvey asks a series of six diagnostic questions about a person’s godliness, his home, his giftedness for preaching, his shepherding ability, his heart for evangelism, and the recognition of these things by those around him in the local church. In the third section, Harvey addresses “Waiting,” giving advice on what a young man should do in preparing for ministry and developing his gifts.

Harvey’s work is needed and welcomed in the field of Pastoral Theology. Not since Charles Spurgeon (*Lectures to His Students*, chapter two) or Charles Bridges (*The Christian Ministry*, Parts I and II) has there

been such straightforward, church-based writing on the call to ministry. Much of what has been written in the last generation about the call has tended toward an individualistic approach. Harvey returns the question to a balanced position which takes into account both the work and gifting of the Spirit in the individual's heart and the recognition of the person's giftedness by his local church body. This is a needed perspective in a day when camp, college, and some church ministries urge young people into making decisions about entering ministry independent of a local congregation's guiding hand and involvement. Harvey's assertion that, "the pastoral ministry, and therefore the pastoral call, doesn't exist apart from its expression in a biblically defined local church," (26) was refreshing.

Harvey refers back to well-known historical figures like John Bunyan, Charles Simeon, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and others, giving historical vignettes at the end of most chapters from their lives, and quoting many of them throughout. This places much of his advice in the context of well-known church history. At the same time, his writing style is far from historically dry, as he weaves personal testimony and advice in the vernacular with weighty quotes from the past. One of the real values of this book will be for younger men, as Harvey connects relationally with them and yet also gives them a glimpse of weightier matters.

For pastors who may read through this with young men considering ministry, Harvey's diagnostic questions will provide segues to personal conversations as well. An encouraging factor in how the questions are addressed is that they are directional and purposeful. They will leave the prospective minister with hope and honesty rather than despair, as they are provided in a scriptural and real-life manner, not in checklist form. Harvey's work is not perfect, and some weaknesses should be pointed out. First, while Harvey's writing style is familiar, it is sometimes too informal. Older readers may tire of his phrasing. Second, Harvey sees a plurality of elders as the scriptural norm, and he briefly sets forth the Sovereign Grace model, which includes a plurality of elders with a senior pastor, and flowcharts that change frequently, quipping that "we're not interested in protecting territory or preserving hierarchy. We're building team ministry" (143). Some of his assertions that are specific to their model may need some moderation. Third, though aspects of Sovereign Grace Ministries that our ministry would strongly disagree with are really not a part of this book, readers and mentors both need to exercise some discernment.

Overall, Harvey's work fills a gap in modern evangelical publishing. If you are a pastor, you will want to have a copy, perhaps multiple copies, on your shelf to use in advising young men considering ministry.

Pearson L. Johnson III

Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching, edited by Grenville J. R. Kent, Paul J. Kissling, and Laurence Turner. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010. 256 pp. \$23.00.

Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching (hereafter *Reclaiming the OT*) is a collection of papers that were presented at the Tyndale Fellowship Old Testament Study Group which met at Cambridge in July 2009. These papers combine to form a helpful book on preaching from the Old Testament.

Reclaiming the OT consists of thirteen chapters. Eleven chapters are devoted to specific genres or books of the Old Testament with a view to describing how each could be preached as Christian preaching. Two chapters deal with historical narrative (Laurence Turner on plot and Paul Kissling on characters), and two chapters deal with poetry (Frederico Villaneuva on lament and David Firth on praise). Christopher J. H. Wright writes on Law, Tremper Longman on wisdom literature, Alison Lo on the Minor Prophets, and Ernest Lucas on apocalyptic literature. Three chapters are devoted to single books: Song of Solomon (Grenville Kent), Isaiah (H. G. M. Williamson), and Ezekiel (Daniel Block). The last two chapters are more general in nature: "Preaching from difficult texts" (Gordon J. Wenham) and "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament" (R. W. L. Moberly).

Overall, this book is a helpful pastoral resource. It presents a consistent theme that the Old Testament Scriptures are neither moralistic tales nor irrelevant recountings of historical events. They are rather to be handled in light of the grand metanarrative of Scripture that points ultimately, in some way, to Christ, though rarely does this connection with Christ seem a stretch. Each chapter discusses the topic in a relatively general way (as is expected in a treatment of this length), though for the most part not in a superficial way. Each chapter gives principles for interpreting the text and includes specific examples of the principles in practice. Each chapter (except Wenham's on difficult texts) also closes with a sermon outline chosen by the author to illustrate how a text could be appropriately handled given the ideas and principles espoused, though these outlines are often too brief to be of much help in seeing the principles fleshed out. In fact, some of the sample sermon outlines at the end of each chapter do not even make the connection to Christ explicit. As a whole, the homiletical ideas in this book are well-deserving of careful consideration, though one might quibble with a point here or there.

Among the more helpful chapters, Turner's on narrative plot is useful for those who have not interacted much with the particular challenges of preaching stories. He focuses on plot development (initial situation, complication, transforming action, denouement, and final situation) as the key to preaching narratives, and he rightly cautions against preaching the micro-narratives without references to the larger context of the macro-narrative (e.g., the various episodes in the life of Abraham regarding the land playing out against the overall promise of

the land in Genesis 12:1–3; pp. 23–24). Block’s chapter on Ezekiel is also particularly noteworthy because of its attention to the overall structure and design of Ezekiel. Block includes several different charts that illustrate these structures very clearly and give a framework for how the book could be handled without becoming tedious. Williamson’s chapter on Isaiah does a good job of showing some intratextual connections between the three parts of Isaiah. He says “there are very few extended passages in the book of Isaiah which do not have parallels, citations or allusions elsewhere in the book” (147). This provides a helpful means of preaching from such a long book.

Reclaiming the OT is not without some controversial issues of various significance. For example, Williamson intentionally does not commit himself to a perspective on the authenticity of Isaiah (142–44). Longman argues that Ecclesiastes has two views, Qoheleth and a frame narrator, and the view of Qoheleth is not the message of the book but rather a foil to show that there is no way to find meaning in this world (112). Christopher J. H. Wright’s contribution on “Preaching from the Law” is unconvincing to me, particularly when he concludes that we should “seek the social objective of any given law or sets of laws” (58) and then “in [a] new context, i.e., our own contemporary world, we ask how the objectives of OT laws can be achieved” (59). I am convinced that the OT social objectives and means of achieving them are inseparable from the theocracy and covenant community in which they existed. Moberly’s final chapter on “Preaching Christ in the Old Testament” is less than satisfactory in trying to make a case for how it should be done. Even with these views (and others that would be similarly controversial to one degree or another), these chapters have instructive value for preaching these passages.

Reclaiming the OT is not the final word on preaching from the OT. It is, however, a helpful introduction, and many pastors will find this volume beneficial as they prepare messages from the Old Testament.

Larry Rogier

The Accidental Revolutionary: George Whitefield and the Creation of America, by Jerome Dean Mahaffey. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011. xii + 202 pp. \$24.95.

George Whitefield is a fascinating character by any reckoning. He was a skillful preacher, a tireless evangelist, an ardent fund raiser, by many accounts a theatrical manipulator, and now, according to Mahaffey, a political provocateur. Mahaffey’s thesis is a simple one—George Whitefield became a significant catalyst in the colonial struggle for independence through his public pulpit ministry, albeit unwittingly. In sum, several of the themes of Whitefield’s preaching would so resonate with the citizens of colonial America that many would translate or transfer his views into the political struggle which would engulf the Colonies just a

few years after his death in 1770. To be sure, Whitefield did not intend to be a political radical nor did he see himself as a political agitator, hence the title of the book. In fact, Whitefield himself might have opposed some of the fruit of his preaching had he lived long enough to do so. Yet by his powerful and prodigious American pulpit ministry, carried out up and down America's eastern seaboard from Georgia to New England over the span of thirty years, Whitefield preached some of the seed ideas that others would use to incite the colonials in their growing struggle with the British homeland. "Without George Whitefield...American independence would have come much later, if at all" (xi).

Mahaffey's book is, by his own admission, a more popular summary of his earlier treatment *Preaching and Politics: The Religious Rhetoric of George Whitefield and the Founding of a New Nation* (Baylor, 2007). Hence, the book contains few of the scholarly accoutrements of a more rigorous investigation, such as detailed footnotes or a comprehensive bibliography. So the reader is invited to turn to this fuller work for the documentary evidence for what Mahaffey puts forth. There is virtually no footnoting of the numerous primary source materials that Mahaffey carefully selected to weave into this story. Moreover, the secondary literature referenced is also highly selective. But this paucity of documentation does not keep the book from being an interesting contribution to Whitefield studies. Mahaffey casts the narrative of the firebrand evangelist in a generally sympathetic tone, focusing on his political rhetoric that came to the forefront in his later, less controversial years as a trans-Atlantic preacher.

There is nothing particularly new in Mahaffey's initial conversation on Whitefield and the Great Awakening. Mahaffey's approach is similar to other scholars who accentuate Whitefield's oratorical skills and suggest a varied degree of audience manipulation as he itinerated on both sides of the Atlantic. He discusses Whitefield's famous message on "The Nature and Necessity of Our New Birth in Jesus Christ" (1737) as the quintessential example of Whitefield's theatrical preaching style. "For the full effect, one should read it aloud, slowly and with feeling" (47). Whitefield created quite a stir with his unusual methods and emotional preaching. Controversy surrounded him.

But as the book moves further into Whitefield's life and his public ministry, Whitefield himself became less controversial religiously while at the same time displaying an increasing pulpit rhetoric that could be construed by many to be contentious politically. Mahaffey draws the reader's attention to the political comments that Whitefield began to make as he travelled between the Colonies and the British Isles and as he rubbed shoulders with both the commoner and the cultural elites, especially when in the presence of Lady Selena, Countess of Huntingdon. Whitefield became her personal chaplain, allowing him to preach with some regularity to many of the upper class of Britain. He began to use "republican" language and included the idea of "liberty" in his messages which would reverberate with the colonials who were struggling under the burdens of British rule.

An example of this kind of rhetoric would be Whitefield's sermon "Britain's Mercies and Britain's Duties." In this sermon he considered what life would be like under a Stuart-Catholic monarchy. This led Whitefield to encourage his religious hearers to support the current monarchy. "By blending the religious vocabulary with political terms, Whitefield showed how deeply religious activism was intertwined with American politics" (115). This shift of emphasis had a positive effect for Whitefield—it caused some of the criticism directed against him from earlier days to dissipate.

In the remainder of the book, Mahaffey unpacks this shift in Whitefield's preaching and the growing anti-British sentiments in the Colonies. Eventually, Whitefield would direct his criticism away from Roman Catholicism and toward his own Anglican church (148), which would further contribute to the rise of Revolutionary sentiments. At the same time, he was becoming more convinced that the British government was treating the colonials unfairly with the taxation program initiated by George Grenville. For example, on landing in America in 1763, he published a pamphlet in Boston and Philadelphia attacking Gloucester bishop William Warburton, an antagonist of Methodism; the pamphlet contained as much political rhetoric in it as religious rhetoric. In doing so, he was showing his increasing sympathies with the colonials. In short, "Whitefield, a symbol of the public mind in America, had embraced the cause of the colonists" (161).

Mahaffey contends that Whitefield "encouraged people to adopt political beliefs about arbitrary power and civil liberties" and that in doing so, "he was truly the world's first international pop idol" (175). Perhaps these comments are a bit hyperbolic. Doubtless Whitefield was a man of his times and felt the tensions of the political world in which he found himself. Even if "the similarities between foundational ideas in Whitefield's sermons of 1740s and the political arguments of the 1770s are striking" (186), is this enough to think that Whitefield was a "political man?" Perhaps, but would Whitefield think this a fair representation of himself?

Mahaffey's book is well-written and poses an interesting thesis. It certainly makes one want to read Mahaffey's more academic earlier volume on Whitefield's rhetoric. If Mahaffey's thesis is correct, it should serve as a reminder to ministry men that the effects of one's rhetoric are not always what one intends them to be. It seems doubtful, given Whitefield's passion for the new birth, that politics was really that significant for him. During the treatment of the final days of Whitefield, Mahaffey acknowledges that the themes of Whitefield's preaching were very much in keeping with his preaching during the days of the awakening. Yet at the end of the day, when looking at the flow of Whitefield's ministry, he often found himself addressing topics and using rhetoric that seems to confirm that he had a political side to him, even if this was not his main emphasis.

Jeffrey P. Straub

Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy, by Paul C. Gutjahr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xl + 477 pp. \$39.95.

Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton, by W. Andrew Hoffecker. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011. 460 pp. \$19.99.

In the year 1880, Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823–1886) published the first biography of Charles Hodge (1797–1878), and for over one hundred years, his account of his father's life remained the only biography of the great Presbyterian theologian and statesman available. In 2011 all that changed as the evangelical community welcomed not one, but two full-length treatments of Charles Hodge's life and thought. The publication of these books should rekindle interest in a figure who was instrumental in shaping American Presbyterianism and the early theological direction of Princeton Seminary.

In many ways, the study of Charles Hodge is a study in the dynamic development Christianity has undergone in its American context. Through Hodge we encounter some of the great theological and social issues with which American Christianity has interacted, such as revivalism, Arminianism, Calvinism, the relationship between Christians and government, slavery, the rise of liberal theology, and evolution. A short list of his contemporaries, many of whom Hodge knew personally, illustrates the diverse theological landscape of the 19th century, both in America and abroad. For example, Hodge had personal interactions with the likes of Archibald Alexander (1772–1851), Ashbel Green (1762–1848), Albert Barnes (1798–1870), Edwards Amasa Park (1808–1900), Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Moses Stuart (1780–1852), Nathaniel Taylor (1786–1852), and B. B. Warfield (1851–1921). During his lifetime Hodge was forced to cope with the revivalism of Charles Finney (1792–1875), the German Idealism of the Mercersburg theologians, Roman Catholicism, the Oxford Movement in England, and the evolution of Charles Darwin (1809–1882). Following Gutjahr and Hoffecker through Hodge's interactions and responses to these various challenges will force the reader to evaluate his own approach and thinking on these topics, many of which have re-manifested themselves in contemporary settings or have never totally gone away. In some instances, Hodge's response might surprise those who have a basic familiarity with Hodge's theology. For instance, Hodge defended the validity of Roman Catholic baptism on the grounds that it was consistent with the underlying spirit and practice of biblical baptism and that a belief in the contrary meant that Reformers like Luther and Calvin were never baptized. Also surprising is Hodge's belief that Friedrich Schleiermacher was a genuine Christian. In the social realm Hodge opposed both the temperance movement and the radical abolition movement in his denomination. In both cases Hodge urged moderation rather than complete abandonment. While these examples may provide some surprises, the

main theme that runs through Hodge's life is his never-wavering commitment to the standards of the Westminster Confession. Through his books, articles, teaching, and denominational involvement, Hodge clearly articulated and defended the doctrinal position of this great Reformed confession.

This brief picture of Hodge's life is skillfully captured in one way or another by both Gutjahr and Hoffecker, albeit with much more detail. Naturally, two books on the same subject will have a lot in common, and the student of Hodge will receive an excellent introduction to Hodge's life and thought should he read just one of the two biographies. That said, these books do demonstrate differences in style and emphasis that the prospective reader should take into account when considering these works. From a biographical standpoint, Gutjahr's book seems to be a bit more effective in portraying Hodge as a total person. Not only is the personal side of Hodge enhanced with pictures of Hodge's family, friends, and homestead, Gutjahr's practice of having more chapters of shorter length (than those found in Hoffecker's book) allows him to move back and forth between the home and denomination more often, giving the reader a more rounded picture of Hodge's life. Gutjahr injects a number of chapters on Hodge's home life that present Hodge as a tender husband, a loving father, and a careful farmer. In the political realm, Gutjahr paints Hodge as a staunch Federalist, one who believed that those with the most education and cultural refinement should be the leaders of both country and church (96). In this way, Gutjahr seems to do a better job in setting Hodge's theological endeavors in the larger context of his life. Naturally, Hodge's opposition to more democratic ways of doing ministry, such as voluntary missions societies, are explained as the logical outgrowth of Hodge's social and political presuppositions. The need for a highly educated Presbyterian clergy should also be seen in light of Hodge's Federalist viewpoint. Such examples demonstrate Gutjahr's skill in telling the *story* of Hodge's life. This is not to say that Hoffecker does not communicate Hodge's personal side at all. In chapter 9, Hoffecker effectively conveys the tender relationship Hodge had with his wife through excerpts from their personal correspondence. However, in the main, Hoffecker is more concerned with Hodge's theological and denominational pursuits than he is with his domestic and political affairs. As a result, there are times in Hoffecker's book that the reader loses sight of where he is in the larger context of Hodge's life as the details of theological controversies are recounted. On the other hand, the strength of Hoffecker's book is his heavy inclusion of primary source material in communicating the details of Hodge's theological debates. Hoffecker, far more than Gutjahr, lets the participants make their own cases in their own words. Such an approach exposes the reader to some of Hodge's lesser known works and provides some of the finer points of the discussions that are not present in Gutjahr's treatments of the same subjects. Hoffecker also places more emphasis on Hodge's interaction with European scholarship and its impact on Hodge's educational development. To illustrate the difference one need only see that Gutjahr's

treatment of Hodge's trip to Europe consists of three chapters, whereas Hoffecker dedicates the entirety of Part 2 of his book to the same event. Those readers more concerned with theological matters might find Hoffecker's extended treatment of doctrinal subjects more to their liking than Gutjahr's more cursory, though well-informed, exposition.

While the above comments expose the reader to some of the differences the respective authors reflect in their stories of Hodge's life, it should be noted that the books have more in common than not. Both authors are careful to show Hodge as a theologian who coupled strong doctrinal confessionalism with warm evangelical piety (this is in fact Hoffecker's stated thesis, 32). Both are concerned to trace the development of Hodge's educational philosophy and its impact on the curriculum at Princeton Seminary. Both try to highlight the spiritual, educational, doctrinal legacy Hodge left to Princeton Seminary and Presbyterianism as a whole. Both works also share a minor point of irritation that at least deserves mention, especially as it pertains to Hoffecker's book. As has become somewhat commonplace in recent biographies, both works use endnotes rather than footnotes as the means of citation. This fact would probably not have been mentioned in this review if both authors had followed Gutjahr's practice of limiting the amount of content in the endnotes themselves. However, in Hoffecker's case, the extensive use of content endnotes results in an additional 67 pages of text! The endnotes in Hoffecker's book contain so much excellent information, one wishes that at least some of this information had been incorporated into the main text. This minor irritation should not distract us, however, from the great service both Gutjahr and Hoffecker have rendered us through the publication of their books. The reader of this review might still be wondering which of these books I would recommend he read. Without hesitation, my answer would be simply: "Both."

Timothy Scott

Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction, by John Fea. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011. xxvii + 287 pp. \$30.00.

With the recent national election, many Christian conservatives were hoping for a rightward shift in the political landscape. Some argued that America had badly strayed from its historical roots, that America was once a Christian nation, founded and built on biblical principles, but had, in the twenty-first century, drifted far from its original moorings. It was the hope of many that a more conservative, even overtly Christian statesman would lead America back toward its founding sensibilities. This was driven by the firm commitment that America was originally founded as a Christian nation. But was the United States *really*

birthed as a *Christian* nation?”

John Fea addresses this question in this provocative and well-researched introduction. Fea divides his work into three main sections—the development of the idea of the United States as a Christian nation, an examination of the American Revolution as a Christian event, and the particular beliefs of a select number of Founding Fathers. Initially, Fea challenges the reader to think “historically.” To provide a level playing field for the discussion, Fea rehearses Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke’s “Five Cs of Historical Thinking.” Before historians can begin to draw their own conclusions, they must understand the nature of historical development and interpretation. Historians must see that change occurs over time; that the past must be interpreted in its context; that causality is important; that contingency, or history being dependent on any number of prior conditions, is relevant; and that the past is complex. Rightly understanding these basics will aid the would-be student in carefully weighing the evidence.

In the first section Fea traces the notion of a Christian America from its earliest advocates. The story is filled with ambiguities and conflicting views. In 1797, the United States signed the Treaty of Tripoli with a Muslim nation, expressly denying an American Christian orientation. A few years later, in the election that saw Thomas Jefferson finally defeat John Adams, the Christianity of Jefferson was front and center in the discussion, though Adams was essentially a Unitarian himself. Down through the succeeding years, a wide diversity of ideas, from Christian orthodoxy to theological liberalism, have helped to shape the history and ethos of the United States.

Clearly some of our nation’s early historical roots were deeply grounded in the “Christian” faith. But even with the notion of “Christian,” there comes an important source of confusion. What constitutes the essence of Christian identity? The views of the founders of the United States ran the gamut from old Puritanism to Deism and Unitarianism. Some men were overtly orthodox, while others like Thomas Jefferson denied the supernatural, choosing rather to highlight the morality of Jesus apart from any claims to deity.

Additionally, when did the United States actually begin? Are we talking about the 17th century beginnings at Jamestown and Plymouth Rock or its more formal founding in the late 18th and early 19th centuries? Was it the Declaration of Independence (1776), the adoption of the Constitution (1787), or the final defeat of England in the War of 1812, that established the United States as a free and sovereign nation? Even the founding documents fail to settle the question. While the Declaration of Independence mentions God in passing several times, the Constitution doesn’t even mention God even once, an odd reality for a “Christian” nation.

Fea raises as many questions as he answers. It should come as no surprise that he never actually answers the question which he raises in the title. The reader is left to interpret the data for himself or herself. It is this handling of the historical evidence that makes this work a strong

contribution to the discussion. There is simply no easy answer to this controversial debate. So let the two sides keep talking, but talking carefully and accurately. History is a complex field with many twists and turns in the evidentiary record. One's conclusion depends on so many ancillary factors that it is virtually impossible to reply to the question with a dispassionate response.

At the same time, the evidence that Fea marshals serves as an impressive introduction to the whole discussion. Even his selection of Founding Fathers contributes to the uncertainty. While many have wanted to claim George Washington as a devoted evangelical believer, clear evidence of this is lacking. John Adams, though raised in Puritan orthodoxy, was more inclined toward Unitarianism. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were religious and mildly "Christian" if by the term the broadest latitude is extended, but neither believed in the supernatural. The clearest examples of orthodox Christians offered are John Witherspoon, John Jay, and Samuel Adams. But is this enough evidence to conclusively argue that the United States was intentionally Christian? To be sure, there were some orthodox believers in the mix. But there was also a menagerie of theological diversity. Moreover, the lives of the founders are filled with ambiguities. Many who argued for liberty for "all" were willing to deny that same liberty to their slaves. George Washington only freed his slaves at his death, while Thomas Jefferson freed only a handful of his. How could a Christian nation justify the immoral institution of slavery?

Fea's book deserves a wide reading. It is carefully written, finely researched and cogently argued. At the end of the day, the reader may not agree with the book's underlying and implied conclusion. But the evidence cannot be ignored. Fea is to be thanked for this helpful study.

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Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1–11, by Joseph Blenkinsopp. New York: T. & T. Clark, 2011. xii + 214 pp. \$29.95.

J. Blenkinsopp, the Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Notre Dame, adds to an increasingly polarized debate over the meaning of the biblical creation account and its antediluvian/early postdiluvian narrative with this critical commentary, hailed as the distillation of "a lifetime's study and reflection" (back cover). While most of his published monographs and commentaries over the course of a long career have centered on OT prophecy and wisdom, Blenkinsopp ventures in a fresh direction with this investigation into the primeval history of Genesis.

Blenkinsopp's proposed methodology is to move beyond commonplace linguistic, historical, or cultural explanations in order to focus on

“issues of theological and general human interest” (ix). His starting point for understanding the Genesis record entails that biblical creation signifies more than “just an event at point zero.” It symbolizes rather a “mythic history” which serves to rationalize the incursion of evil into an originally pristine created order. Throughout his study, Blenkinsopp draws upon a wealth of ANE, Hellenic, rabbinical, and contemporary theological material. Rather than a verse-by-verse commentary, the book divides into eight chapters treating the major themes of Genesis 1–11 in summary fashion. Blenkinsopp concludes with an epilogue exploring the viability of OT creation theology within the contours of his critical approach to Genesis, followed by a bibliography (14 pp.), author index, and subject index.

In chapter 1, “Humanity: The First Phase” (1–19) Blenkinsopp provides an overview of structure, sources, and themes. He argues that Genesis 1–11 exhibits literary and structural cohesion with its *toledot* pentad (4). Blenkinsopp posits that this coherence results from the redactor’s skillful re-working of Priestly (P) and Yahwistic (J) materials (6–7). He clarifies his approach to Genesis as that of “mythic history” and suggests that Genesis 1–11 “comprises a series of originally distinct myths about cosmic and human origins” (8). He qualifies that no one should (mis)understand his use of *myth* as denoting “the opposite of factuality or history” but instead as providing a sort of meta-narrative “to add value and resonance to life in the present” (16). For Blenkinsopp the major theme of these chapters is the interplay between good and evil in the outworking of creation. His fundamental formulation is that “there can be no creation, however good, without allowing for the possibility of disorder, deviance, and evil” (18). Through this ongoing struggle the divinely-created order seeks repeatedly to dissipate itself, thereby inducing God to countervail via “re-creation.” This triadic cycle of creation, un-creation, and re-creation serves as the title and framework for Blenkinsopp’s approach.

The second chapter, “In the Beginning” (20–53), analyzes the alleged priest-scribe’s creation account (Gen 1:1–2:3) which Blenkinsopp casts in the form of ANE mythic etiology. Here the author displays an impressive breadth of knowledge of ANE backgrounds, although at times involving questionable comparisons. Chapter 3, “The Story of the Man, the Woman, and the Snake” (54–81), synthesizes the “Eden myth” (Gen 2:4–3:24) as an imaginative explanation for the intrusion of moral perversion into a divinely-sanctioned and benevolent universe. Blenkinsopp makes creative use of literary criticism in assessing the significance of the narrative, although he rejects traditional readings of Genesis 3 with curious glibness. He denies, for example, that the serpent bears any connection to Satan (72, 80), that death results from the couple’s transgression (man is created mortal) (75), or that the episode depicts the entry of original sin (80–81).

Chapter 4, “Cain and Abel: A Murder Mystery” (82–105), expounds the early genealogical record and the Cain/Abel episode (Gen

4:1–26), which together serve to distinguish the civilized-though-degenerate Cainite line from the religious-though-not-Yahwist Sethite line. Chapter 5, “Enoch and His Times” (106–30), investigates the ten-member linear genealogy from Adam to Noah, the “notoriously obscure” sons of God episode, and the brief rationale for the impending deluge (Gen 5:1–6:8). While attempting briefly to trace the genealogical chronology (106–11), he dismisses its historical viability insofar that “contemporary science assures us” the earth is over 4.5 billion years old (106). His development of Enoch as primordial sage in the context of ANE backgrounds offers some insights, but he falls short of shedding much new light on the sons of God pericope. Chapter 6, “The Cataclysm” (131–54), explores the significance of the flood and its aftermath (Gen 6:9–9:29). Blenkinsopp recognizes this as the central and most significant unit in the Gen 1–11 pentad. Chapter 7, “The New Humanity” (155–70), focuses on the so-called Table of Nations record. The author’s chief contribution here is a helpful analysis of the structure of Genesis 10. Chapter 8, “From Shem to Abraham, From Myth to History” (171–75), is by far the shortest chapter, and the observant reader may glean its bent as transitional genealogy from the title. The epilogue, “Towards a Biblical Theology of Creation” (176–90), attempts to correlate his conclusions with their broader bearing on the enterprise of OT theology. He offers few additional insights beyond an attempt to connect his inferences to NT creation theology.

The strengths of Blenkinsopp’s commentary include the following: (1) The author is admirably knowledgeable of ANE backgrounds and offers the discerning reader an abundance of material. (2) The commentary is well-written and enjoyable to read. (3) The author provides a helpful overview of the literary structure within the Genesis 1–11 pentad. Notwithstanding these positive features, however, a number of weaknesses give me decided reservations about the commentary: (1) Blenkinsopp demonstrates heavy dependence on the dubious presuppositions of the documentary hypothesis, which tinges his work from start to finish. (2) His interpretations display a decided bias against traditional, conservative Christian understandings of the texts. He appears often quite willing, indeed, to draw upon any and every source except these understandings. His approach to Genesis as “mythic history” betrays a widening gap between the purported value he places in its primeval history and the actual interpretive use he makes of the Genesis data. This becomes increasingly evident as the commentary unfolds. (3) In that the commentary does not proceed verse by verse, it occasionally passes over portions of the passages in cursory fashion and at times seems to tumble forward rather haphazardly in its themes. Given these concerns, I would not recommend the commentary as a primary resource in studying Genesis 1–11. The serious student or teacher will find, nonetheless, an array of ANE and rabbinical background material for technical studies of these passages.

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