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.

Jeffrey P. Straub

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), synopsizes 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.

Kyle C. Dunham