

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.

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