to “flourish, free from the restraints” of officially-sanctioned religion. Here, too, brevity may impair understanding.

Unfortunately, the editors’ repeated mention of the substantial Baptist contribution to religious freedom seems to sleight the significant contribution of Presbyterians. Other minor points might be mentioned. All-in-all, however, the book provides interesting perspectives and a welcome invitation to additional study.

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**God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution.**

Thomas Kidd makes an important contribution to the scholarship on religion in the founding era by weighing the cumulative impact of the established colonial churches, insurgent evangelical movements, and rational religious thought on the American Revolution and the new governments that it generated. Although Kidd displays sympathy with the evangelical Christians of the era and seems to share their belief that public virtue depends on religious belief, he judiciously acknowledges the importance of rationalism on politics and civic life. He emphasizes the central role that the idea of “equality by creation” played in the politics of the founding era: rationalists and Christians shared the belief that human rights were God given, and evangelicals and rationalists often cooperated to define and secure rights. Kidd also argues that “Christian republicanism,” a synthesis of Protestant and republican beliefs, played a crucial role in unifying free Americans behind the Patriot cause and behind the creation of republican governments that protected religious freedom and thereby enabled postrevolutionary religious ferment.

Kidd recognizes that both the idea of a formally “Christian nation” (p. 253) and the opposing notion of “government antagonism toward religion or the elimination of religious rhetoric or symbols from the political sphere” (p. 249) misconstrue the history of the founding period. At times, however, there is slippage in Kidd’s application of labels such as “evangelical” and “Christian,” and he does not always make clear distinctions between specifically Christian beliefs (such as biblical millennialism) and broader religious
convictions (such as a general belief in divine providence). The concept of Christian republicanism seems useful, but Kidd perhaps applies it too broadly, making overly sweeping claims, such as the following: “Whether rationalist or evangelical, most Patriots assumed that Christianity would, in some sense, be the cornerstone for the preservation of the new American Republic” (p. 112).

The early eighteenth-century Great Awakening can be seen as a “First American Revolution” (p. 11), in Kidd’s view, because it represented the “first widespread popular uprising against established authority in the history of British colonial America” (p. 23). Although this point seems an exaggeration, given that the revivalism of the early eighteenth century was not directed at political goals, Kidd supports his claim by showing how revivalism laid the groundwork for a “civic spirituality” (p. 33) that played an important role in the coming of the American Revolution. He also contests the commonplace notion that the revolutionary period was essentially a religious dead zone by drawing attention to revivals in the 1770s and 1780s that paved the way for the evangelical expansion of subsequent decades.

Kidd shows that the ecumenical concept of “equality by creation” (p. 131) permeated the revolutionary era. Although this concept was deployed most famously in the Declaration of Independence’s statement that “all men are created equal,” it suffused Patriot rhetoric and was ultimately embedded in various constitutional bills of rights. The widespread application of the idea of human equality both inspired the postrevolutionary debate over slavery and supported religious freedom.

Although Kidd gives good evidence that Christian clergy provided important support for ratification of the U.S. Constitution, he is less convincing when he argues that the creation of the Constitution was inspired primarily by “a crisis of virtue” (p. 209). Madison and others may have been alarmed by the lack of virtue (defined in a rather secular sense as devotion to the public good) among state lawmakers, but they were most interested in addressing a multitude of issues regarding the distribution and exercise of political power.

Kidd rightly argues that “the movement for religious liberty would succeed in America because evangelicals, rationalists, and deists fought for it together” (p. 54), but his suggestion that Jefferson’s and Madison’s commitments to religious liberty developed primarily as a reaction against the persecution of Baptists in Virginia requires more evidence than he provides. Less controversial is his conclusion that the “American model of church and state” entailed “a combination of public religion and religious freedom” (p. 243)—as long as it is clear that most of the time, public religion had only marginal or rhetorical support from governments.
In his epilogue, Kidd draws lessons from his historical analysis. He encourages contemporary “secularists” to “learn from Jefferson’s example,” specifically from his willingness to cooperate politically with evangelical Christians who had very different religious views than his own but shared his dedication to religious liberty (p. 254). Likewise, he suggests that “[b]elievers should not seek to use government to coerce anyone into religious practice” (p. 255).

Kidd substantiates his central contention that “[t]he public spirituality shared by the revolutionary era’s evangelicals, mainstream Christians, liberal rationalists, and deists established many of America’s most cherished freedoms” (p. 10). Sometimes he errs on the side of exaggerating the specifically Christian aspects of this public spirituality, but he is effective nonetheless in making the case that religious belief and practice were integral to the political life of the revolutionary era.

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In this trim, well-written work, W. Jason Wallace offers a theologically informed account of the important role evangelicals played in the antebellum conflicts over slavery and Catholic immigration. Like most other Americans, evangelicals split on sectional lines over slavery. Wallace contends that there was a sectional divide in regards to Catholicism as well, with northern evangelicals seeing Catholicism and slavery as twin threats to the nation. Southern evangelicals were much more favorably disposed to Catholics and often found themselves agreeing more with the Catholics than with their northern brethren.

Wallace notes that Lyman Beecher and many other influential New England evangelicals had moved away from strict Calvinist doctrines by the 1820s and 1830s. As “modified Calvinists,” they emphasized human potential rather than human sinfulness. Since humans were not hopelessly depraved, they were capable of improving themselves and reforming their society. And as America