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BOOK REVIEWS

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Foster, Marshall (2021) *The American Covenant: The Untold Story.* Nordskog Publishing, Inc. ISBN: 978-0-9903774-0-5, 273 pp., $27.95 (paperback).

Reviewed by *Dennis Pearson*, Austin Peay State University

The American Covenant: The Untold Story by Marshall Foster sets out to illustrate and evaluate the intersection of the role of civil religion, as an economic, political, and social force within the backdrop and context of the founding of the Republic of America. He argues that the time is ripe for Americans to move from "feeling trapped in a slowly sinking ship," to a factual understanding of what God did in the founding of our nation. Utilizing decades of historical research of primary-source documents allowed for the discovery of this truth: the nation, its republic institutions, economic prosperity, and individual liberty are attributed to what Foster lays out is, "the hand of God and the covenant between our Founding Fathers and their Creator."

Foster does a wonderful job laying out the fundamental layers of historical and biblical context in the introduction and first third of the book through layering factual and counter-factual outcomes and values that slowly disappear from the public forum. The second third introduces the author's vision of God's purpose which impacts the Nation, people, and man, for the success of implementing liberty and change. The last third proposes characteristics of Providence, the American Republic, and a strategy for winning. The book consists of 274 pages divided into an introduction, eight well-written chapters, and an extensive five-part appendix with rich historical references; major contributions including America's Christian relevant history for the nation-state (and critique of laws codified in our Pluralistic society or Christian nation), a strong focus on the historical theories and the role of Man and God, a detailed analysis of the individual set free to pursue life, liberty, and property bringing about the prosperity of free enterprise, and addresses the genius and spirit intersecting with a balance biblical outlook concluding with the self-governing individual, family and real hope of challenging us to remember God and reform our world.

Foster's ambitious and passionate book teaches and argues the truths of Providential history, covenantal understanding, and Christian self-government. He further argues that "We as a people have forgotten that our foundations were laid upon the Rock of Ages," and the

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time is ripe for Americans to move from crushing taxation, despotic regulations, shutdowns eating their incomes, and future dreams to a rededication to the American Covenant which is vital for the survival of our republic.

The author notes that “we” as a people have forgotten what our foundations were based upon and as a result, he acknowledges this through a quote by Daniel Webster where Webster addresses the vital importance of what makes the “happiest society”:

> Finally, let us not forget the religious character of our origin. Our fathers were brought hither by their high veneration for the Christian religion. They journeyed by its light and labored in its hope. They sought to incorporate its principles with the elements of their society, and to diffuse its influence through all their institutions, civil, political, or literary. Let us cherish these sentiments and extend this influence still more widely; in the full conviction, that that is the happiest society that partakes in the highest degree of the mild and peaceful spirit of Christianity.

The author defines and illustrates “covenant” as a term not used commonly today but was foundational toward the creation of our republic. A covenant is a solemn agreement between God and an individual, a group, a church, or a nation. Foster continues on with the historical aspect found in the American Covenant as illustrated by the Mayflower Compact as one of America’s first great constitutional documents.

The first third of the book theorizes about the need for historical research of primary-source documents for the search for the truth regarding our nation, its republican institutions, economic prosperity, and individual liberty which can only be attributed to the hand of God and the founding covenants. Highlighted are the topics of why history is so important and a review of historical theories, defining a Providential way and leading to a final reliance on a divine Providence which the founding fathers were keenly aware, and they took care to see that the Declaration of Independence ended with the phrase, “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

In the middle third of American Covenant, Foster turns to the writings of Abraham, William Brewster, John Robinson, William Bradford, and William Penn (Founder of Pennsylvania). Foster argues that these figures comprise a congruence of the relationship between the individual and the lord. Foster further contends that the redemption of capitalism and free enterprise requires a return to the practice of the cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, courage, temperance, and moderation – and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. He then brings to life these virtues with the examples of the lives of Brewster, Robinson, and Bradford as these three men, along with their faithful, persecuted friends and families brought about a perfect storm of Providence. Foster explains that “if John Robinson had not left his powerful position at Cambridge; if William Brewster had not escaped the court of Queen Elizabeth and come back to Scrooby; and if William Bradford had not chosen God of the orgies of Sherwood Forest, there may have never been a United States of American.” Finally, The American Covenant, gives a simple road map based on the Massachusetts Body of Liberties and William Penn. The principle that “life, liberty, or property was not to be invaded except by virtue of express law" was a landmark of American history. This concept of a detailed enumeration of individual rights was to reappear in the first Ten Amendments to our US Constitution. Foster concluded with Penn and his belief that God planted his colony and that HE would "bless and make it the seed of a nation."

These instances of historical content and primary-source documents build to the concluding chapters that create a coherent proposition of property, free enterprise, and the culmination of an established Republic. The author opens with the most important question, "Who owns you and your property, God or Caesar?" He expresses that the founders were very distrustful of government and its tendency to accrue power which is unlike the winds of today's government. Foster cites the example of George Washington's warning, "Government is not reason, it is not eloquence – it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." To apply more clarity in this reading, Foster's idea of capitalism, and free enterprise, appears something akin to a society guided by the organizing principle of free enterprise and markets.

To Foster's credit, he moves from property and pivots to the biblical perspectives of the founding fathers of the republic and the formation of the three pillars of the Constitution. Each pillar is built largely on the principles that the Founders derived their spirit and study from the scriptures. Therefore, the form of government, as we know it, is derived in all its parts from Biblical principles, and without comprehending those principles, there cannot be an understanding of what was intended by the founding fathers.

Further, Foster examines the unique and remarkable governmental structure that was established in America, characterized by the balance of powers between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. He explores how this system was designed to prevent tyranny and promote liberty, drawing on the ideas of John Locke and Montesquieu. Foster argues that this balance of powers was a key factor in creating an environment in which individual freedom could flourish and society could prosper.

Foster also delves into the role of Christianity in shaping American governance. He notes that many of the early American leaders were devout Christians who believed that biblical principles provided a solid foundation for government. Foster cites examples such as the Pilgrims' Mayflower Compact, in which they pledged to "submit ourselves to a civil body politic," and the Declaration of Independence, which declares that all people are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Foster suggests that these documents reflect a belief in God-given freedoms and rights, rather than ones bestowed by the government. Overall, Chapter Seven provides a fascinating look at the origins and philosophy behind America's unique system of government.

The author provides readers with a clear understanding of the genius of the American Republic. Foster highlights the significant role played by Christianity in shaping American governance and the balance of powers established between the three branches of government to prevent tyranny and promote liberty. By exploring the underlying principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Mayflower Compact, he also underscores the importance of individual freedom and God-given rights in the American political tradition. This chapter presents a well-researched and captivating analysis of the foundations of the American Republic and is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding what makes America unique.

In the final chapter, The Strategy for Success, Foster explains the importance of God's role in the success of a nation. Foster believes that America has been blessed with success because of its commitment to God and His laws but warns that if we turn away from this commitment, we will eventually face destruction. Foster further argues that success comes not through worldly power and wealth, but through righteousness and obedience to God.

Foster continues this where he outlines several key strategies for success, including education, free markets, and limited government. Foster believes that education is essential for success because it allows individuals to understand their rights and responsibilities under God's law. Free markets, according to Foster, are essential for success because they allow individuals to pursue their own interests and create prosperity. Finally, Foster argues that limited government is essential because it allows individuals to exercise their God-given rights without interference. Chapter eight concludes with the highlights of the importance of God's role in America's success and provides a blueprint for success based on righteousness, education, free markets, and limited government.

Overall, Marshall Foster's book, *The American Covenant: The Untold Story*, provides a comprehensive and thought-provoking analysis of the foundation of America's identity and how its Covenantal roots have influenced its history. The author presents a unique perspective on the role of Christianity in the formation of the nation, highlighting how the early settlers believed they had a divine mission to establish a society based on biblical principles. The book also explores the broader themes of freedom, individualism, and responsibility that have defined the American identity over the centuries.

In conclusion, *The American Covenant: The Untold Story* is a valuable contribution to the study of American history and provides a compelling argument for the continued relevance of the country's founding principles. The book serves as a reminder that America's Covenantal heritage demands responsible stewardship of liberty and that the maintenance of this covenant requires a commitment to the shared values and beliefs that define the American identity. This book is a must-read not only for economists, historians, and scholars but also for anyone interested in understanding the significance of America's Covenantal heritage and its impact on the development of the nation.

Petrou, Karen (2022) *Engine of Inequality: The Fed and the Future of Wealth in America..* Wiley Publishing: Hoboken, NJ USA. ISBN: 1119726743, 288 pp., $29.95 (hardcover).

Reviewed by *Rolando Santos*, Lakeland Community College, Ohio

In 2008, the financial system collapsed suddenly, and to many regulators and central bankers seemingly without warning. The "great financial crisis" that ensued wrought havoc but by 2010 the financial system stabilized, and stock markets began their upward climb. By 2013, the Federal Reserve was confident that the "Great Recession" that followed the great financial crisis had ended, with financial markets also well on their way to becoming bulletproof thanks to tough new banking rules. But with all the improvements, a tiny percentage of American benefit from the financial markets, underemployment was endemic and anyone who tried to save his or her way to a better life lost ground every day due to ultra-low interest rates.

In 2019, the wealth of the top 10 percent was 19 percent higher than it was before the 2008 financial crisis, even taking stock-price declines in late 2018 into account. While the middle-income family wealth was still below where it was before the financial crisis and lower-income families lost 16 percent of their pre-crisis wealth. Some of the reasons behind major income inequality include fiscal policy. Fiscal policy has a direct impact on economic equality by changing who pays how much in taxes. Tax burdens are also set by state and local standards- for example, states, counties, and cities have higher or lower property and income taxes with larger or smaller equality impacts combined with federal taxes. Other reasons include the Trump tax cuts in which the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. Another reason for such income inequality can be attributed to globalization. One reason for this in the US appears to be the interaction between a drop in manufacturing jobs and a rise in income inequality. A recent study finds that the United States is the lone economy in which workers who lose manufacturing jobs in one sector generally cannot find a job in another sector. Instead, US workers who lose manufacturing jobs migrate to the service sector and make far less than they used to.

Some of the policies suggested in the book to reduce income inequality are the following. It does four things applies like-kind rules to like-kind activities; reduces unnecessary barriers to financial services for underserved or at-risk households; creates special-purpose, regulated charters focused solely on equality finance under rules ensuring that regulatory rewards are obtained only upon providing high-value equality services; and designs a new payment system that includes digital currency crafted with equality objectives kept firmly in mind.

In brief, I liked the way the book explained the meaning of income inequality and the facts and reasons behind it. There are some valid reasons behind it. However, I disagree with the notion that the Federal Reserve is the major reason behind income inequality in the US. The Fed is considered as the lender of last resort and will find ways to keep the economy afloat in bad times just like the recent financial crisis. However, it has some flaws into it. It may not necessarily support the public, but it did help the economy afloat as compared to what happened during the Great Depression. Just remember the difference between the Great Depression and the Great Recession. The reason why the economy went into a tail-spin during the Great Depression is because of no government intervention from the onset in 1929. The Federal Reserve acted swiftly to save the heart and soul of the financial system. It is not perfect but it served its purpose.

Rozenblat, Celine and Neal, Zachary P., (2021) *Handbook of Cities and Networks*, Edward Elgar Publishing Inc, Cheltenham, UK. ISBN 9781788970013, 651 pp., $340 (hardcover).

Reviewed by *Michael Cary*, West Virginia University

This book is an edited volume containing an excellent collection of chapters on many different types of urban networks spanning several broad contexts. Additionally, entire sections of this volume are dedicated to making the reader familiar with the fundamentals of cities and networks, theoretically and mathematically. The chapters are grouped into five categories: Theoretical Conceptions of Cities and Networks; Cities and Networks in History; Methods and Models of City-Network Interactions; Network Processes Within Cities; and

Network Processes Between Cities. This edited volume provides a framework and background for understanding the vast, interdisciplinary topic of cities and networks, and includes a discussion of network theoretic methods and many applications studying various properties of urban networks.

The first section of this book provides background for the topic of cities and networks. Chapter 1, by Céline Rozenblat and Zachary P. Neal, introduces the reader to the idea of modeling socioeconomic processes with networks and discusses the roles of levels of aggregation and geographic scale in defining a network. Levels of aggregation include micro (e.g., individual agents), meso (e.g., institutions in cities), and macro (e.g., cities). Geographic scales can vary from components of a city (e.g., neighborhoods or districts) to cities, to regions (e.g., states), to a global scale. Chapter 2, by Denise Pumain, provides an interdisciplinary discussion centered around the question of 'What is a city?' and eschewing the notion of 'the' city offering agglomeration economies that were put forth by Marshall (1890), a notion commonly underlying economic thought. Pumain uses this to provide a framework explaining the development not of individual cities but of systems of cities, and the role of economic, geographic, social, and cultural processes in shaping this process. Chapter 3, by Luís M.A. Bettencourt, explains how complex networks can model urban processes. This chapter includes discussions of fundamental concepts such as centrality and connectivity and provides some mathematical formalization of certain network processes including individual gains in connectivity over time in a social network and infection in a contagion network.

The second section of this book provides a historical perspective on cities and networks. Chapter 4, by Elizabeth Bogumil and Christopher Chase-Dunn, considers the development of settlement networks, how hierarchies within social networks in individual settlements emerge, and their impact on sociocultural evolution. Chapter 5, by J.W. Hanson, studies the network of cities in the Roman Empire and provides evidence from the structure of this network that cities in the Roman Empire were highly interdependent. This result furthers the existing literature on ancient network structures which shows that while the global market has historically had relatively distinct components, the Mediterranean market has historically been strongly interconnected (Temin, 2012).

The third section of this book presents methods and models for city-network interactions. Chapter 7, by Marc Barthelemy, introduces the reader to fundamental concepts and structures in network theory, including the average degree of a network, degree distributions, shortest paths between locations within the network, the concept of clustering, aggregating from the edge/node level to the network level, planar graphs and potential uses of faces therein, cores of networks, and scaling. Chapter 8, by Juste Raimbault, presents a theoretical model for the co-evolution of cities and networks in which urban growth has been endogenized. Chapter 9, by Meg Bartholomew and Alasdair Jones, introduces the reader to community detection in networks and uses this technique to analyze the network of citations by papers in the field of urban studies. By largely correlating communities to distinct academic disciplines which study urban phenomena, the authors show that the field of urban studies is comprised of what the authors call "intellectual silos." Chapters 10 through 12 provide further discussion of centrality and proximity. While they introduce more nuanced notions of centrality than the reader has seen in previous chapters, no chapter in this section introduces a single global (network-level) measure of distance or connectivity. Measures such as the density, diameter, eccentricity, and radius of a network are ignored, even though most of these will eventually be used in analyses in later chapters. I believe that a less repetitive, more thorough section on common methods and models would have made this book significantly more valuable to readers lacking a background in network theory.

The fourth section of this book consists of chapters exploring network processes within cities. Chapter 16, by Susan A. Burtner and Alan T. Murray, used the California Household Travel Survey, focusing on trips taken by individuals in Los Angeles and Orange counties to study racial disparities in urban mobility. By creating a directed network in which vertices represent neighborhoods and edges indicate the amount of travel (by group) from one county to another, the authors find that compared to Asian, Black, and Hispanic residents, the network for White residents had more vertices and edges, a larger average degree, density, and clustering coefficient, and a smaller diameter, all of which indicate a greater degree of urban mobility for White residents than Asian, Black, or Hispanic residents. Chapter 18, by Sara S. Metcalf, Harvey D. Palmer, Quiyi Zhang, and Mary E. Northridge, proposes an agent-based model for the dissemination of health information across a social network and belief dynamics pertaining to health. The authors validated their model using beliefs regarding dental care among low-income Chinese Americans in New York City. Chapter 19, by Michael Batty, considers the problem of opinion pooling and demonstrate the importance of weighted averaging and Markov processes. Chapter 20, by Darryl A. Pieber and Anabel Quan-Haase, discusses the role of locative media (mobile technologies which use real-time data on user location conditions) in how people experience a city, in particular by denoting the increased emphasis on micro-level network applications in economic decision making.

The fifth and final section of this book consists of chapters exploring network processes between cities. Chapter 22, by César Ducruet, uses the international maritime transport network to study the evolution of the relationship between ports and their cities. Chapter 23, by Neave O'Cleary, Samuel Heroy, François Hulot, and Mariano Beguerisse-Díaz, studied the forces underlying urban industrial agglomeration. To do this, they used community detection to cluster industries based on co-agglomeration tendencies, and used this as an input in a regression model. They found that co-location factors are industry-dependent, with some industries clustered based on labor pooling, and others attributable to input-output linkages. Furthering the analysis, the authors found that industry clusters which show a preference for labor pooling tend to employ workers with more years of education. Finally, in Chapter 26, Ronald Wall and Umakrishnan Kollamparambil studied the relationship between network position and income inequality both across cities and across nations in a network describing FDI flows. Centrality measures were shown to affect the level of income inequality, even after controlling for other relevant city or national level factors. Overall, Handbook of Cities and Networks is a valuable resource which serves two functions. First, readers unfamiliar with the fundamentals of network analyses are given the opportunity to build a substantial skillset of relevant methods and models. Second, perspectives, models, and techniques from throughout the social sciences are brought together into one volume, enabling the reader to learn new approaches to studying urban networks. This, along with the diversity of applications presented in this book, does much to inspire future research on cities and networks across multiple disciplines.

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