

Steve Longenecker. *Gettysburg Religion: Refinement, Diversity, and Race in the Antebellum and Civil War Border North* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014). Pp. xiv, 264. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$45.00.

In this book, Steve Longenecker explores the social forces that shaped the character and development of religious life in Gettysburg in the antebellum era up through the Civil War. He is particularly interested in tracing how religious life interacted with broader culture. As the subtitle indicates, he finds three dominant forces—refinement, diversity, and race—at play within the town’s religious communities. He argues that these forces not only gave religious life in Gettysburg its vibrancy, but that they also foreshadowed the religious patterns of modern America. For that reason, he finds Gettysburg an intriguing case study. With its geographic location on the border between North and South, its economic ascendancy from rural village to regional center, and its social diversity along ethnic, racial, and religious lines, it provides a representative glimpse of the nation well before the war secured Gettysburg’s place in history.

The six chapters are arranged thematically. The first sketches the history of Gettysburg and provides a profile of the community. The next two focus on the issue of refinement, calling attention to the ways religious communities responded “in theory” and “in practice.” Although some smaller sects resisted refinement’s pressures, Longenecker finds most congregations eager to demonstrate their status and respectability through material improvements. Whatever reservations arose generally had more to do with finance than faith. Put more bluntly, “refinement was expensive” (64). The cost of elaborate buildings, gas lighting, quality music, and educated clergy drove several congregations deeply into debt. One wonders whether such experiences inspired some of the era’s moral critiques of market capitalism and economic speculation.

The book next devotes a chapter each to ethnic and racial diversity. With Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Catholics, and others all living alongside one another, Gettysburg religion was “unusually mixed” (73). The presence of small, nonconforming sects like the Dunkers added even greater complexity, and provides unique points of contrast. Some of the most interesting portions of the book trace the patterns of divergence and convergence between them and the more mainstream denominations over issues like material display and wartime patriotism. A sizeable free black

population further contributed to Gettysburg's religious diversity. Looking at race relations through a religious lens, Longenecker uncovers instances of mutual assistance but finds little interracial contact within the churches. Not surprisingly, conflicted views on slavery arose within and across assemblies.

The final chapter turns its attention to the war's effects on Gettysburg religion. As fighting fell on the town's doorstep, religious routines were interrupted and churches turned their attention to caring for the sick and dying. The war also forced religious communities to reassess their relationship with the nation-state and fostered the rise of a more pronounced strand of "civil religion." Yet by and large, Longenecker argues, the war brought only "moderate change" (5) to Gettysburg religion. While it is important to recognize that the war did not bring radical change to every facet of life, this claim is only partially convincing. It may hold when one looks at congregational life broadly, but is more difficult to accept on the personal level given the realities of suffering and loss. Congregations may have continued about their business as usual, but personal lives and moral outlooks would be profoundly changed.

Interspersed among the chapters are a series of "divertimenti"—short portraits of individuals or families whose personal history illustrates the central theme of the chapter that follows. The first chapter, for instance, is preceded by a profile of Samuel Schmucker, the first professor at the new Lutheran seminary, and his wife, Mary Catherine, the daughter of a prominent local family. Their educational and economic standing placed them firmly among the new antebellum middle class and heralded the growing refinement of the community. These portraits acquaint readers to members of the local community and help convey the personal dimensions of the period's religious and social transformations.

Though moderate in its claims, the book nevertheless challenges some of the prevailing narratives of antebellum religious life. In particular, it raises questions about the dominance of revivalism and the power of upstart religious denominations. Neither one seemed to have hit Gettysburg with the force generally attributed to them. Likewise, anti-Catholic hostility seemed not to plague the community—even though nativist sentiment was echoed in the local press—perhaps because Catholics enjoyed a long-established presence in the region.

Extensively researched, the book draws upon a wealth of local sources, including congregational records, local newspapers (both religious and secular), and family papers. For students of religious history, the book demonstrates the value and usefulness of local church records. As Longenecker's

work reveals, they can tell us much about how religious communities operated and maneuvered. At the same time, however, one must be aware that congregational records can mask as much as they reveal. Church officials may have been reticent to record disagreement or reluctant to admit controversy. Longenecker says little about how Gettysburg religion reacted to antebellum politics or the emergent women's rights movement. Perhaps the sources are silent about these issues, but the silence itself is then telling and needs to be explored.

If there is one weakness to the book, it is that Longenecker's discussion of religion and culture can be somewhat unbalanced. While he offers a detailed discussion of how social conditions influenced the town's religious communities, the book has much less to say about the ways in which their distinct religious beliefs, thoughts, and practices shaped Gettysburg society in return. Longenecker deftly notes how religion contributed to the diversity and refinement of the community, but more could be said about religion's role in education, social reform, and family life.

That criticism aside, the book provides a fine case study of religious development in antebellum north. It provides a foundation for studies that trace religious transformations of the post-Civil War era and adds to a growing literature on the mid-Atlantic as a region whose religious and social diversity prefigured the future path of the nation.

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Carl Smith. *City Water, City Life: Water and the Infrastructure of Ideas in Urbanizing Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Pp. 327. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Hardback, \$35.00.

In *City Water, City Life: Water and the Infrastructure of Ideas in Urbanizing Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago* (2013) Carl Smith sets out to write an intellectual and cultural study of how people conceptualized the development of urban waterworks in nineteenth-century Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia. His analysis rests on the proposition that "cities are built out of ideas as much as they are of timber, bricks, and stone, and that the discussion of city water is a kind of a universal solvent that reveals this in striking ways" (2).