Lambert's "Separation of Church & State: Founding Principle of Religious Liberty" (Book Review)

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Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology,
by David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves and E. Randolph Richards. Downers Grove,

Reviewed by Linda Poston, Dean of Library Services, Nyack College, Nyack, NY

This work is authored by three professors, David Capes (Houston Baptist University), Rodney Reeves (Southwest Baptist University) and E. Randolph Richards (Palm Beach Atlantic University), and is designed as an introductory college textbook covering many facets of the Apostle Paul's life, including his background, the Mediterranean world at that time, and an overview of his theology and ministry as integrated in corporate and personal letters. Special features include highlighted sections entitled “So What?” and “What’s More” peppered throughout the chapters, encouraging readers to understand the significance of various topics and to explore further. The book provides rich insights into Paul's world, clarifying the strong role of honor, shame and purity in the society, providing a context for many of Paul's arguments. For instance, the cultural role of benefactors sheds light on Romans 15:17-30 where the acceptance of the relief offering by the mother church would give approval to Paul’s mission to the Gentiles (p. 30). The chapter “Paul the Letter Writer” provides helpful insights into the use of secretaries and the logistics of writing and sending a letter. Paul’s ministry is presented in three general stages: his conversion and call, his itinerant ministry, and his ministry from prison. The authors present the apostle’s theology as one built on a Jewish foundation and describe it as “Christological monotheism,” or a relationship with God through Christ (p. 272). The book concludes with Paul’s legacy and covers significant research for the earliest manuscripts of Paul’s writings, including Papyrus 46. This document includes a collection of nine of his letters, indicating that the oldest Pauline manuscript was already a collection of his works. This book is unique in that it provides an overarching view to enable the reader to rediscover Paul, his world, and his letters.

Separation of Church & State: Founding Principle of Religious Liberty,
ISBN 9780881464771

Reviewed by Charles Huckaby, Assistant, Technical Services Department,
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Frank Lambert’s Separation of Church & State is a new addition to the voluminous shelf of books discussing the separation of church and state as envisioned (or not) by our Founding Fathers. Lambert is professor of history at Purdue University and has written on this subject before several times over. In fact, Lambert sometimes directs readers, through the footnotes, to reference back to something he has already written.
on the subject. Lambert’s goal in this particular volume is to address problems he sees in the work of people he labels “Christian Right ‘Historians.’” There is much to agree with as well as much to disagree with in Lambert’s book.

I agree with Lambert’s efforts to admonish Christians who have often taken quotes out of context in order to support various claims about the religious beliefs of the Founding Fathers. Lambert discusses a handful of Christians who label themselves historians, but focuses the majority of his disdain on David Barton. Lambert is right to confront any Christian knowingly misrepresenting history in order to prove a point, but Lambert’s reasoning will leave the Christian reader frustrated at times. Because Lambert writes from a non-Christian worldview, he makes statements without realizing that they indict him just as much as the people he writes against. One foundational assertion Lambert makes is that “one who sees the world through a Fundamentalist prism cannot interpret the past as anything but a Christian narrative” (p. 24). Lambert announces this as if he can interpret the past correctly because he is not brainwashed by Christianity. He decries any Christians interpreting history in a manner reflecting “their own values and principles” but has no issue interpreting history in light of his.

Lambert’s work leans toward heavy popular but not quite academic. I would assert that the scholarship would have been enhanced greatly by more citations than presented. Lambert is to be commended in defining terms for people who may be unfamiliar with certain terminology. This volume is certainly not a premier treatise but it would benefit any reader wanting to understand how the non-Christian popular historian presents his case.


Reviewed by Kristin A. Vargas, Assistant Archivist, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX

This humorous collection of essays on virtue was conceived and edited by Jonathan V. Last, conservative commentator for the Weekly Standard, author of What to Expect When No One’s Expecting and numerous articles such as “The Threat to Religious Liberty,” “Virtues, Past and Present,” and “Comic Relief.”

This book is a compilation of 17 different essays, each written by a different author in defense of a virtue, i.e., fortitude, justice, integrity, etc. The book itself is classified under the heading of “humor” but despite the tongue-in-cheek tone used by its