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Frank Lambert. *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003. Pp. 328. \$34.95 (Cloth).

[1] “This book argues that in deciding the place of religion in the new republic, the Founding Fathers, rather than designing a church-state framework of their own, endorsed the emerging free marketplace of religion.” Thus Frank Lambert declares the purpose of his book. He reviews the work of two groups of founders, the Planting Fathers, who established English-speaking colonies in North America, and the Founding Fathers, who set up the constitutional structures that still control the United States. Lambert is eager to demonstrate the evolutionary distance between the two.

[2] Part 1 of Lambert’s book outlines the work of the Planting Fathers. Separate chapters address the English background, and the experience of Massachusetts, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. In each of these chapters, Lambert describes the efforts of a group of Planting Fathers to establish correct religious structures for their colony. Some of the perspectives he provides are useful correctives to traditional stereotypes, such as the notion that Massachusetts was founded by dour and gloomy fundamentalists, while Virginia was the land of tobacco and secular jollity.

[3] Chapter 2 discusses the religious establishment of the Virginia colony, and the role of state religion in its organization. Lambert does a good job of documenting the important role that an established Anglican state religion played in stabilizing a colony that spent a generation at the edge of failure. The Anglican church of Virginia was as omnipresent an institution as the Puritan Church of New England, and for similar reasons - the desire of the persons in charge to ensure order, lawful behavior, and a Christian disposition among all the colonists.

[4] In Massachusetts, however, religious participation was certainly more intense, at least among the landowners. Lambert reviews the efforts of the Puritan elite to maintain control of their church in the hands of proven saints, and the continual struggles of various groups to dispute that control. One gets the impression that John Winthrop was quite a tyrant, which may overstate his power.

[5] The third colonial society reviewed is Pennsylvania, cited by Adam Smith as a place where numerous sects competed freely for the allegiance of the citizens. Lambert describes the rise and fall of William Penn's "Holy Experiment," a colony attempting religious tolerance, but in the end falling into the grip of religious factionalism.

[6] Having established a sense of how the colonies were planted, Lambert then goes on in section two to discuss how they developed. This section is probably the most crucial. It is where Lambert explains how we got from Planting Fathers to Founding Fathers, and where Lambert lays out the crucial factors that separated the two in time and thought. These were the Great Awakening and the spread of Whig ideology.

[7] Lambert's discussion of the Great Awakening of the 1740s is a useful look at how it affected the colonial established churches. The Great Awakening encouraged an individualist religion, one in which each person made their own approach to God as he or she was individually led by the Spirit. The colonies had the choice of either suppressing the Great Awakening, or tolerating its new churches and worship styles. By and large, they chose to be tolerant.

[8] The Whig ideology came on the heels of the Great Awakening. This enlightenment ideology emphasized individual rights and responsibilities. It asserted that reasoning persons could make their own decisions. Authority, custom and tradition were all disparaged by whiggism in favor of reason and personal choice. In Whig thought, an establishment of religion was no longer an ideal to be sought. Rather, it was the death of sincere faith. Whiggism not only supported freedom of religion, it made it possible.

[9] Section three describes how these ingredients contributed to the evolution of religious institutions during the American Revolutionary War. During the war, notably in Jefferson's Virginia, the newly independent states reduced or eliminated their weakened religious establishments.

[10] Following the revolution, during the constitutional convention of 1787, the Founding Fathers wrote a secular "godless constitution" for the new nation. But even then, Lambert goes on to point out, ratification of that constitution did not take place until key states were promised a bill of rights, explicitly forbidding an established religion. This demand did not originate only from Whig ideologues and deists, but was also important to religious minorities across the states, Baptists, Quakers, and independent churches alike.

[11] Lambert's final chapter describes the election of 1800, when Thomas Jefferson, deist, became president. Lambert offers Jefferson's election as an example of how little concerned the country was about being led by someone of dubious orthodoxy.

[12] The general scope and argument of this book provide a helpful contribution to current issues in the "culture wars." Lambert tends to repeat himself between chapters, but in pedagogically useful ways. Lambert's thesis, that the Planters and the Founders were different people, and that this is not a self-evidently Christian nation, stands solidly. He rightly defend this thesis without demonizing the Planting fathers, instead showing how the change in national attitudes was an evolutionary process. Where the book falls slightly short is in its implication that the matter is thus settled. Lambert concludes with this point: "But the Founding Fathers rejected the Puritan model. Instead they ensured the free exchange of

competing faiths without government support of or opposition to any faith. In the early twenty-first century, with religious fundamentalists around the world calling for the establishment of religious republics, Americans continue to enjoy religious freedom in a pluralistic society, a society that is often contentious and even strident, but free". Secularized government was indeed an ideal support to a religious free market in a society of limited government. But one wonders if the religious marketplace functions equally well when a secular government dominates huge segments of the economic and educational systems.

Karl K. Allen, Council Bluffs, IA