

understand the theory of Qur'anic contextuality, at least so claim the moderate, liberal Islamic scholars.

Over all, Kaltner gives a very detailed and thorough analysis of how the Qur'an addresses the topics he chose to include in his volume. Although he presents differing interpretations on controversial issues, he definitely sides with the more liberal, moderate, and humanist scholars. His purpose is to promote good relations—best achieved by downplaying the controversial—but what if the controversial also includes the essentials of faith?

WES HARRISON

Director, Interdisciplinary Studies
Ohio Valley University

David SEHAT. *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 356 pp. \$29.95.

Sehat, Professor of History at Georgia State University, argues that the current disagreements occurring between conservatives and progressives in the political arena revolving around the place of religion in American society are based upon three false historical premises. These three myths, as Sehat calls them, warp all current discourse to the point where only an impasse is possible regarding this important issue. Sehat identifies these three historical untruths: the myth of the separation of church and state, the myth of religious decline, and the myth of exceptional religious liberty. Sehat focuses most of his attention on the ideas of exceptional religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

Sehat divides the volume into four parts. Part one focuses on deconstructing the idea that Madison and Jefferson were immediately successful in their bid to disestablish religion in the United States, and chronicles the development of a “moral establishment” that overtly shaped state and federal laws to coercively enforce Christian moral precepts. Part two showcases how two of the most important and divisive social issues of the 19th century, slavery and women's suffrage, created and subsequently enlarged fissures and opposition to the moral establishment created by conservative Christians. Part three examines the retrenchment of the moral establishment after the Civil War, and argues among other things that the failure of a Northern moral establishment allowed those of the Southern moral establishment to impose many of their ideas on America, including the practice of racial segregation. Sehat also argues in part three that this moral establishment was responsible for slowing the advance of women's

rights, and that the establishment consistently fought against minority religious rights throughout the 19th century. Part four details the eventual decline of power of the moral establishment through the fundamentalist/modernist controversy, and chronicles legal challenges to the establishment that came to a head through the embracing of the concept of the right to privacy, originally championed by attorney and later Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis.

Sehat's writing is highly readable and his arguments are convincing and sound. However, his tone at times is pointedly negative towards Christianity in general and evangelicals in particular. Sehat's inimical tone is often distracting and detracts from this otherwise finely written book. While Sehat indicates in his preface that he is a former evangelical and lacks "animus against religious institutions," it is apparent that his experience and research has left him with a bad taste in his mouth towards conservative Christianity.

While Sehat does an excellent job of describing the moral establishment and opposition to it by freethinkers, atheists, and liberal Christians—and he briefly highlights the tendency of the moral establishment to suppress minority religious rights—he generally misses the opportunity to depict and analyze dissent by more conservative Christian groups. For example, while Sehat briefly mentions Alexander Campbell and his opposition to the moral establishment with regard to creating and sustaining Sabbath laws in the United States, he fails to take notice of the anti-establishmentarianism of David Lipscomb, whose ideas regarding government and the moral establishment clearly echo the thought of William Lloyd Garrison at several key points. Additionally, while Sehat spends several pages on the suppression of Mormon polygamy as an example of the moral establishment's disregard for the religious rights of minority groups, he does not embrace the opportunity to examine the treatment of the Latter Day Saints before the death of Joseph Smith, which could have provided him with additional compelling arguments against the myth of exceptional religious liberty.

In spite of these few limitations, Sehat has provided us with an interesting, well-analyzed, and convincing text that makes important contributions to American Religious History. Anyone with an interest in the current debate about the relationship between church and state should make sure to read this volume.

JOSHUA W. JEFFERY, SR.
B.A. Student in History
Undergraduate Research Fellow
Warner Pacific College

LIST OF BOOKS REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

- Ruth A. Tucker, *Parade of Faith: A Biographical History of the Christian Church* (David Russell Mosley, University of Nottingham)
- James R. Payton Jr., *Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting Some Misunderstandings* (Bob Ritchie, Florida Christian College)
- Ellen T. Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Lee Blackburn, Milligan College)
- Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Ron Highfield, Pepperdine University)
- Steven R. Guthrie, *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human* (Kyle Baker, Soundcrawl)
- John W. Loftus, ed., *The Christian Delusion: Why Faith Fails* (Amos Briscoe, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Walter H. Wagner, *Opening the Qur'an: Introducing Islam's Holy Book* (Wes Harrison, Ohio Valley University)
- John Kaltner, *Introducing the Qur'an for Today's Reader* (Wes Harrison, Ohio Valley University)
- David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (Joshua Jeffrey, Warner Pacific College)
- Luke Bell, *Baptizing Harry Potter: A Christian Reading of J.K. Rowling*. (Carrie Birmingham, Pepperdine University)
- Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, *Shakespeare and Religion: Early Modern and Postmodern Perspectives*. (Steve Gourley, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Gary L. Colledge, *God and Charles Dickens: Discovering the Christian Voice of a Classic Author* (Steve Gourley, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God: And What Still Needs to Be Fixed* (Gavin Baker, Knoxville, TN)
- Ben Witherington, *Is There a Doctor in the House? An Insider's Story and Advice on Becoming a Bible Scholar* (Heather Gorman, Baylor University)
- William D. Henard, and Adam W. Greenway, eds., *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement* (Jason Fikes, A&M Church of Christ)
- Israel Galindo and Marty C. Canaday, *Planning for Christian Education Formation: A Community of Faith Approach* (James Riley Estep, Lincoln Christian University)
- Walter Brueggemann, *The Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann* (Rob O'Lynn, Kentucky Christian University)
- Douglas S. Huffman, ed., *Christian Contours: How a Biblical Worldview Shapes the Mind and Heart*. (Nathan Babcock, Bismarck First Church of Christ)
- Richard Rohr, *A Lever and a Place to Stand: The Contemplative Stance, the Active Prayer* (Shaun Brown, Central Holston Christian Church)
- David Nantais, *Rock-a My Soul: An Invitation to Rock Your Religion* (Kyle Baker, Soundcrawl)
- Elizabeth A. McCabe, ed., *Women in the Biblical World: A Survey of Old and New Testament Perspectives*. Vol. 2 (Robert Hull, Emmanuel Christian Seminary)
- David Lyle Jeffery, ed., *The King James Bible and the World It Made* (Mark Krause, Nebraska Christian College)
- Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Nathan Babcock, Bismarck First Church of Christ)
- Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? (Making Sense of the Old Testament God)* (Douglas Redford, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Joe Sprinkle, Crossroads College)
- William Loader, *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Apocalypses, Testaments, Legends, Wisdom, and Related Literature* (J. Andrew Sowers, Harding School of Theology)
- Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Enberg-Pederson, Ismo Dunderberg, eds., *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Stewart Penwell, Cincinnati, OH)
- Anthony Le Donne, *Historical Jesus: What Can We Know and How Can We Know It?* (Holly Carey, Point University)
- Darrell L. Bock and Robert L. Webb, eds., *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus: A Collaborative Exploration of Context and Coherence* (Rafael Rodriguez, Johnson University)
- Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Greg Linton, Johnson University)
- James W. Thompson, *Moral Formation according to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics* (Tyler Stewart, Lincoln Christian University)
- Eckhard Schnabel, *40 Questions about the End Times* (Les Hardin, Florida Christian College)