

Foreword

Chris Rodda is in many ways the ideal person to respond to David Barton and his long track record of distorting the history of America's founding so badly that it resembles a Pablo Picasso painting. Unlike Barton, she is an incredibly careful researcher, digging into the details of each and every quote and claim with a clear eye for accuracy rather than ideology. And unlike Barton, she doesn't predetermine the conclusion she reaches before examining the evidence.

One would think that after being caught dissembling on the issue so many times over the years, Barton's credibility and influence would be virtually non-existent at this point. One would be wrong. In an era when most people live inside a bubble that allows in only the information they want and filters out evidence that contradicts the narrative they want to be true, Barton's influence among evangelical Christians and political conservatives remains enormous. No matter how many real historians, even those who are themselves evangelical Christians, like John Fea and Gregg Frazer, document Barton's dishonesty in dealing with the facts, his followers continue to view him as the only one telling the *real story* of religion and the Founding Fathers.

And this is exactly what Barton wants them to believe. He tells them that all those secular historians are covering up the "truth" that America's founders were all conservative Christians, just like them. And when Christian historians take him to task for his many deceitful statements to further that narrative, he simply implies that they have an agenda too. Rarely does he even attempt to engage their criticisms

on the substance, relying instead on the use of logical fallacies to respond. It's a useful strategy given his target audience.

So why is it important that this book be widely read? Because this is not just some sterile academic debate over our long-ago past. The idea that America is a "Christian nation," advocated not only by Barton but by prominent legislators and judges, has a powerful influence on public policy at all levels of government. For instance, as noted in this book, the National Council for Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS) has talked hundreds of schools into using their curriculum, which is packed full of false claims and distorted history.

The historical revisionism offered up by "Christian nation" advocates is used to justify every imaginable breach of Jefferson's wall of separation between church and state. Congressional resolutions intended to celebrate America's "Christian heritage" cite one false claim after another. The lies creep into public school textbooks. And it is used to justify allowing Christians exclusive access to the public square and locking out everyone else.

Combatting this fake history is every bit as important as combatting fake science. We have entire organizations like the National Center for Science Education that have worked very effectively to block the attempts of creationists to insert fake science into our public school classrooms, but we lack such an organization to fight the fake history offered by Barton and his fellow "Christian nation" enthusiasts. One can only hope that this book, and Rodda's earlier work, will be given the attention it so richly deserves.

Ed Brayton