

Voices: Genius founding U.S. upon freedom not Christianity

June 6, 2025

Christian nationalism? Many think it mere patriotism.

Christian nationalism has evolved in the last 20 years into a fight, mostly from the left, where the term is now a pejorative in the fight against a kind of Christian imperialism.

On the far left, the 1619 Project controversially claims a racial root to America's origins.

On the far right, several try to force-feed a false Christian foundation to the United States.

From the left and right, hundreds of nonprofits fight for the victims of persecution from the opposing side. No year passes without several going to the U.S. Supreme Court.

As a Christian Baptist conservative, most of my circle rally around "God, family and country" themes. We believe God blessed America and have no problem with "In God We Trust" as a national motto. Most of the religions of the world, if not all, do not find our motto offensive.

Yet Christianity is far from unified, evangelicals lead Texas politics with a Baptist hegemony, liberals challenge evangelical morals, and too often both use cut-throat tactics.

David Barton's pseudo history

Pseudo-historian David Barton and his nonprofit WallBuilders blast an irony

as he fights against Jefferson's "wall of separation"—a wall builder jackhammering the wall of separation.

Barton's opus *Original Intent* skips rocks over a river he never fishes well as he connives to make the Founders look like 21st-century evangelicals in 1776 from pebbles of religious devotion. No one was an evangelical in 1776 like the Christian nationalists connive.

Washington owned the largest whiskey distillery and did not kneel in his Episcopal services. His language on God was almost totally third-person distant.

Jefferson cut up the New Testament.

Benjamin Franklin—no one knows if he held any religion dear.

No one thought the Potomac was a new Jordon River, but a few did refer to it as the new Tiber, with many more references to Rome than to Jerusalem in 1776.

The Founders were the first to break away from Earth's history and encode an unprecedented infant "freedom" in 1789 that's still growing.

Dominionism

Barton's more vehement predecessor, R.J. Rushdoony, was the first Dominionist who tried to reform the entire U.S. legal system. Rushdoony and Gary North's Chalcedon Foundation forwarded a Calvinist theology that would establish a theocratic empire.

Akin to Barton and Rushdoony is the Seven Mountain Mandate sponsored by preacher Rafael Cruz, father of U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (whom I like), and evangelist Lance Wallnau officed in Keller, oddly just a half hour from Barton in Aledo.

The Seven Mountain Mandate gathered momentum from evangelists Loren Cunningham, Bill Bright and philosopher Francis Schaeffer, who asked Christians to conquer the seven mountains of family, religion, education, media, entertainment, business and government. Translated: They would turn the United States into a Christian empire—avoiding the word “empire.”

Christian nationalism has morphed in subterfuge, avoiding the Seven Mountain Mandate language, as Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has force-fed Christianity into every crevice he can.

Though I love a lot of President Trump’s work, especially on the border, tapping Patrick to lead a commission on religious freedom is bad news. Patrick has no expertise nor any true interest in religious freedom, except to further dominate Texas evangelicals.

The root of this force-feeding is the false belief the United States was founded as a Christian nation—hence, “Christian nationalism.”

Dumbing down the Founders

Few tenured Christian university professors defend a Christian founding. Those few who do founder under the heavy weight of a horde of real historians, like conservative Prof. John J. Dilulio’s *Godly Republic: A Centrist Blueprint for America’s Faith-Based Future* and Dartmouth Prof. Randall Balmer’s *Solemn Reverence: The Separation of Church and State in American Life* with their clear thinking.

The Barton-Patrick Dominionists dance around that omission like it was an oversight, or worse, conniving that the Founders just “assumed” the new country Christian. At worst, their deadly dance leads to jihad or to the Protestant or Catholic persecutions of old.

In 1797, just a few years after the U.S. Constitution was ratified and two years before Washington died at Mount Vernon, Congress unanimously approved the Treaty with Tripoli, stating that the United States “is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion.”

Unanimously.

The Founders were much smarter than Barton, Patrick and Trump’s advisers, who *must* dumb down the Founders to keep their dancing jig going.

Both the 1619 Project and Barton-like Dominionists make stupid the Founders’ masterpieces.

We tire in recalling the U.S. Constitution leaves out God.

The Founders’ genius

The Founders were just two generations removed from the Puritans, who violently persecuted Baptists. Founders knew well why Roger Williams founded Rhode Island in 1638.

As integral to our First Amendment, Jefferson adapted from William’s famous treatise on persecution his “wall of separation between church and state” to the persecuted Danbury Baptists in 1802.

Of all in history, our Founders knew how to establish a Christian nation, and our Declaration of Independence is proof of that—an acid rebuke, a bold in-your-face defiant treatise on independence from the imperial Christian British kingdom. The Founders did not want a Christian kingdom.

Our genius Founders left God out on purpose *after* accessing the best of the historical, philosophical and legal storehouses for their Declaration and Constitution. The four greatest storehouses were the ancient Roman

republic, Judeo-Christian, Enlightenment and Freemasonry principles of freedom and free agency embodied in the inalienable human rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness on one's own terms.

Christianity does not want government help, only freedom and protection from persecution. No good church wants anyone to feel coerced by law or any faith purchased with favor.

The authenticity of faith is best facilitated in a secure freedom.

Michael Maness retired after 20 years as a Texas prison chaplain and is the author of many [articles and books](#), including How We Saved Texas Prison Chaplaincy 2011, Character Counts: Freemasonry Is a National Treasure and a Source of Our Founders' Constitutional Original Intent and When Texas Prison Scams Religion, the latter documenting one of the greatest government religious entanglements in Texas history. This article is adapted from the original published first in the [Beaumont Enterprise](#). The views expressed in this opinion article are those of the author.