

Christian Conviction and Politics

Rise & Shine, January 12th

Isaiah 31:1-2

Alas for those who go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD! Yet he too is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will rise against the house of the evildoers, and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.

Questions:

1. Should Christians actively support politicians who engage in distinctly un-Christian behavior? What kind of behavior do you consider to be distinctly un-Christian?
2. How does your faith play a role in how you vote on politicians or issues?
3. How do you apply the saying “the end justifies the means” in the case of politics?
4. Can who or what you vote for be considered a moral imperative based on their personal code or the policies they support?

In the News

***Christianity Today* Breaks with Evangelical Christian Leaders; Says Trump Should Be Removed From Office**

The day after the December 18 vote in the U.S. House of Representatives to impeach President Donald Trump, an editorial in *Christianity Today* (CT), a magazine founded by Billy Graham, made clear that not all evangelical Christians support Mr. Trump. The editorial by CT editor-in-chief and former pastor Mark Galli was titled "Trump Should Be Removed from Office."

Whether the editorial is a sign of a change of mind about Mr. Trump by some evangelical Christians or simply evidence of a divide that was already there is unclear.

Christianity Today, which has been a voice for evangelical Christianity since 1956, quickly became the center of a tempest after publication of the editorial,

seeing many subscribers canceling their subscriptions even more signing up. Some 200 evangelical leaders sent a letter to CT's publisher condemning both the editorial and Galli, which was followed by an open letter from a smaller group of evangelical leaders in support of the editorial. The hashtag #ChristiansAgainstTrump also trended.

Billy Graham's son Franklin, a strong Trump supporter, told *Fox News* that his late father would have been "disappointed" by the editorial. But Boz Tchividjian, a grandson of Billy Graham who runs an organization that helps churches prevent and confront sexual abuse disagreed, writing "Well said on so many levels. I believe my grandfather would have had a similar perspective."

President Trump responded with a tweet, branding CT as "A far left magazine."

In his editorial, Galli acknowledged what Mr. Trump's evangelical supporters like about him: "his Supreme Court nominees, his defense of religious liberty, and his stewardship of the economy, among other things, as achievements that justify their support of the president."

But, Galli added, "The impeachment hearings have illuminated the president's moral deficiencies for all to see. This damages the institution of the presidency, damages the reputation of our country, and damages both the spirit and the future of our people."

Galli then quoted from CT's 1998 editorial condemning then President Bill Clinton's behavior that led to his impeachment trial, including these words: "Unsavory dealings and immoral acts by the President and those close to him have rendered this administration morally unable to lead."

"Unfortunately, the words that we applied to Mr. Clinton 20 years ago apply almost perfectly to our current president," Galli said. But that Mr. Trump should be removed from office "is not a matter of partisan loyalties but loyalty to the Creator of the Ten Commandments," Galli said.

Galli offered the following, to "the many evangelicals who continue to support Mr. Trump in spite of his blackened moral record ... Remember who you are and whom you serve. Consider how your justification of Mr. Trump influences your witness to your Lord and Savior. Consider what an unbelieving world

will say if you continue to brush off Mr. Trump's immoral words and behavior in the cause of political expediency. If we don't reverse course now, will anyone take anything we say about justice and righteousness with any seriousness for decades to come?"

In response to the CT editorial, some evangelical media outlets issued countering editorials of their own, asserting that Galli is not only out of touch with the mainstream of the evangelical world, but also wrong in his analysis.

Some have responded that Galli's thinking on the president's personal morality fails to account for the overarching ethical stance of the administration's policies. Their claims insist that whoever institutes policies that reduce abortions, support the human dignity of religious minorities around the world, strengthen working families by boosting employment and promoting paid family leave policies, or reform our criminal justice system are also advancing these ideals in the public square.

Three days after the editorial was published, CT publisher Timothy Dalrymple posted an update in which he acknowledged "countless notes of encouragement" from readers who "no longer feel alone" as a result of the editorial as well as the many "who felt incensed and insulted" by it. He also stated the magazine's evangelical credentials and its political independence.

But Dalrymple supported the editorial, and wrote, "Out of love for Jesus and his church, not for political partisanship or intellectual elitism, ... we feel compelled to say that the alliance of American evangelicalism with this presidency has wrought enormous damage to Christian witness. ... While the Trump administration may be well regarded in some countries, in many more the perception of wholesale evangelical support for the administration has made toxic the reputation of the Bride of Christ."

If nothing else, the controversy reveals that "the perception of wholesale evangelical support" is just that -- a perception. In an opinion piece in *Religion News Service* disagreeing with the CT editorial, Rev. Johnnie Moore, president of The Congress of Christian Leaders and an informal adviser to the Trump administration, wrote "The many millions of evangelicals who support the president do so because of his policies, not his personality, and they see this impeachment exercise as insincere, exclusively partisan, without legal merit and politically motivated."

2 Corinthians 6:14

Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness?

Luke 9:49-50

John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him; for whoever is not against you is for you."

Prayer for the President of the United States and All in Civil Authority

(BCP p.820)

O Lord our Governor, whose glory is in all the world: We commend this nation to *your* merciful care, that, being guided by *your* Providence, we may dwell secure in *your* peace. Grant to the President of the United States, the Governor of this State, and to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do *your* will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, and make them ever mindful of their calling to serve this people in *your* fear; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who *lives* and *reigns* with *you* and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen.*