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EVANGELICAL CIVIL WAR

Mark Galli, Christianity Today And Donald Trump

Edited by JAMES A. BEVERLEY

& ANNETTE JOHNSON

Foreword by DR. MICHAEL L. BROWN

ETB

EVANGELICAL CIVIL WAR:

MARK GALLI, CHRISTIANITY TODAY AND DONALD TRUMP

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Opening Gambits

“Whether Mr. Trump should be removed from office by the Senate or by popular vote next election—that is a matter of prudential judgment. That he should be removed, we believe, is not a matter of partisan loyalties but loyalty to the Creator of the Ten Commandments.”

Mark Galli, editorial, *Christianity Today* magazine, December 19, 2019, 3:27 p.m.

“A heavy hearted bravo to CT! Well said on so many levels. I believe my grandfather would have had a similar perspective. Thank you.”

Boz Tchividjian, grandson of Billy Graham, December 19, 2019, 6:29 p.m.

“Honestly my mouth dropped open when this hit the internet...”

Sarah Pulliam Bailey, *Washington Post* reporter, December 19, 2019, 7:39 p.m.

“CT unmasked!”

Jerry Falwell Jr. President, Liberty University, December 19, 2019, 11:41 p.m.

“My father knew Donald Trump, he believed in Donald Trump, and he voted for Donald Trump. He believed that Donald J. Trump was the man for this hour in history for our nation. For Christianity Today to side with the Democrat Party in a totally partisan attack on the President of the United States is unfathomable.”

Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, December 20, 2020, 1:39 a.m.

“A far left magazine, or very “progressive,” as some would call it, which has been doing poorly and hasn’t been involved with the Billy Graham family for many years, Christianity Today, knows nothing about reading a perfect transcript of a routine phone call and would rather have a Radical Left nonbeliever, who wants to take your religion & your guns, than Donald Trump as your President.”

Donald Trump, December 20, 2020, 7:12 a.m.

The division and polarization in American politics runs through American evangelicalism as well. Nothing shows this better than the firestorm that erupted when *Christianity Today* magazine released an editorial by Mark Galli calling for the removal of President Trump from office.

This volume provides the opinion pieces and news reports created by the Galli bombshell.

James A. Beverley is Research Professor at Tyndale University in Toronto, Canada, and Associate Director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion in Woodway, Texas.

Annette Johnson is a researcher and businesswoman based in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Foreword by Michael L. Brown

It was a watershed event when the editor in chief at *Christianity Today*, Mark Galli, called for the removal of President Donald Trump. How could this be? *Christianity Today* was a flagship evangelical publication, and it was evangelicals, in particular white evangelicals, who helped elect Trump as president. Now this venerable publication was calling for his removal?

Galli's editorial created a firestorm, reportedly receiving more attention than anything in the history of the magazine. I too wrote a response to Galli, following up with a second response after the president of *Christianity Today* affirmed Galli's position. And within days, nearly 200 evangelical leaders wrote a joint editorial, slamming the Galli editorial. This was news. Big news.

That's why I decided to devote a chapter in my book *Evangelicals at the Crossroads: Will We Pass the Trump Test?* to the controversy surrounding this editorial. My plan was to look up the main responses, assuming there was perhaps a dozen or so, and then interact with them in my book. Then I found about *this* book, and to my amazement, I learned that were scores and scores of responses to Galli, literally hundreds of pages of responses.

But who has the time and energy to search online and track down every serious response? Who has the focus and discipline to put them together in

Foreword by Michael L. Brown

readable order, with judicious editing in the cases where only excerpts were allowed? The answer is Dr. James Beverley and Annette Johnson, his research assistant. They are meticulous and detailed in their documentation, as this volume shows. And they are both deeply interested in the relationship between evangelicals and Donald Trump.

Professor Beverley had already produced a remarkable book documenting all the relevant prophecies about Donald Trump being president, along with many responses to those prophecies. (It is titled *God's Man in the White House: Donald Trump in Modern Christian Prophecy*, published in March 2020.) That book helped me immensely when writing *Evangelicals at the Crossroads*, since James is a compiler *par excellence*, one of those scholars who turns over every rock to make sure he has not missed anything of importance. (For the record, Professor Beverley has worked for decades at Tyndale University in Toronto and is also Associate Director at the Institute for the Study of American Religion, based in Woodway, Texas, working with the famous scholar J. Gordon Melton, the Institute founder.)

And now, with this important book, Johnson and Professor Beverley have helped present to the Body of Christ the key documents surrounding one of the greatest controversies in the evangelical Church today: how should we respond to the Trump presidency? I have already been blessed and helped by this labor of love, and now I present it to you.

You can read this cover to cover or you can read each article as it interests you. The key thing to realize is that, in a real sense, you are getting both the bird's eye and worm's eye view of a tremendously important issue, one that will be reviewed and analyzed for years to come. And when religious scholars and journalists and interested believers want to review the Galli editorial controversy, this will be the book they pick up.

The documents in *Evangelical Civil War* reveal the deep angst within evangelicalism. Despite this troubling reality, may we learn to love, respect and learn from each other in the midst of heated divisions. The world is watching.

Dr. Michael L. Brown, host of the Line of Fire radio broadcast and author of *Evangelicals at the Crossroads: Will We Pass the Trump Test?*

Notes On Format

Readers will note that most of the hundreds of entries in this volume are offered in chronological order, by day, hour and even minute. Unfortunately, it was impossible to tell exactly when some entries were released. In those cases, we put them at the end of the relevant day's collection.

To improve revisions, we would be grateful to get exact timing of the release of an opinion piece, editorial, blog, etc. Send these details or points about other format matters to Annette Johnson at annette@jcje.org.

We are grateful to all those who granted permission to include full pieces in this collection. We took the liberty to avoid the tedium of putting copyright in front of all pieces.

Since President Donald Trump is the centre piece of this collection, we have reference below to his Twitter account and archive, as well as to two White House websites. Likewise, for obvious reasons, we have put in the central access points for *Christianity Today* magazine and Mark Galli, the former editor in chief. For data on the authors in this volume, readers can note the hundreds of links in the collection as well as a comprehensive list of contributors at the end of the volume.

As the introduction states, as co-editors we have kept our own perspectives out of the volume. We hope our readers will see this as a sign of our desire to be fair to all parties. We did give Mark Galli the chance to answer some final questions after he was granted access to this collection. We thought this was reasonable considering the threats and verbal abuse he received over his controversial editorial. This also provides the contributors to this volume and others a chance to note the ways Mark has changed his mind since his missive was sent on December 19, 2019.

James A. Beverley

Annette Johnson

The White House

White House page on President Trump

Donald Trump Twitter

Trump Twitter Archive

Christianity Today organization website

Christianity Today magazine website

Christianity Today Facebook

Christianity Today Twitter

Mark Galli website

Introduction

At 3.27 pm on Thursday, December 19, 2019 Mark Galli released a bombshell in the annals of evangelical Christian faith. As the retiring editor of *Christianity Today* magazine, he called for the removal of Donald Trump from the Oval Office. Response to his editorial was instant on twitter, blogs, in emails, and phone calls to the magazine's office in Wheaton, Illinois. The traffic was so busy on CT servers that they crashed within hours of the posting.

Before midnight on December 19th, Galli's views were covered by *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*, among other mainstream publications. That was only the beginning of the interest, the firestorm, and the debates pro and con. All in all, Galli's missive created the biggest controversy in the history of CT and has invoked the reaction of many of the most significant leaders in evangelical Christian faith.

Evangelical Civil War: Mark Galli, Christianity Today and Donald Trump is a record of the battle among evangelicals over Galli's call. This work includes the famous Twitter response from President Trump, plus news reports, opinion pieces, and other analysis from all over the world. Thankfully, many writers gave permission to include full copies of their pieces. We

Introduction

declined to pay sources for inclusion, so some entries are given only an excerpt.

This introduction is brief for several reasons. First, the entries speak for themselves. They are arranged chronologically so readers can see the arguments and views building as writers or podcasters enter the fray. Second, as editors we thought it prudent to keep our views out of the collection. If we came out for or against the editorial, then readers might think we are pre-judging what others think.

We have worked hard to track down views from across the spectrum, without including obscene or other kinds of material not worthy of civil discussion. Since the literature about Trump and evangelical Christian faith is vast, we only chose pieces that spoke directly to the Galli editorial. As the timeline shows, the reactions to Galli remained high from December 19 through February 2020 and then analysis dropped off.

On a personal note, readers should know that Professor Beverley has written frequently for *Christianity Today* over many decades. Among other things, he reported in its pages on his private interview with the Dalai Lama, assessed the controversy about The Toronto Blessing, and wrote the cover story about Islam just after 9/11. Beyond this, in addition to writing under Mark's direction at various times, Professor Beverley and Galli are friends. However, neither his connection with the magazine or friendship with Galli should be used to imagine that we automatically side with him or with CT's other editorials.

We do want to help readers on one item about challenges to Mark Galli's credibility. The suggestion that he deliberately waited until the end of his tenure at CT to write his controversial piece is a claim without merit. The implicit charge of cowardice is inconsistent with his record at the magazine and his interactions with the wider Christian and secular world. We urge readers to set aside this ad hominem approach and focus instead on the substantive issues arising from Galli's call about the president.

Professor Beverley's interest in Galli's editorial and the subsequent battles is rooted in his prior research on Donald Trump. He followed Trump's run for the Republican nomination, campaign for the November 2016 election, and his subsequent victory over Hillary Clinton. He has continued to follow the

Trump presidency. His research has led to several pieces in his *Religion Watch* column for *Faith Today* magazine, a *Christianity Today* podcast on Paula White and Pentecostal support for Trump, and the publication in March 2020 of his book *God's Man in the White House: Donald Trump in Modern Christian Prophecy*, a collection of material largely devoted to charismatic and Pentecostal prophets. As the main title suggests, most of these figures are staunchly pro-Trump.

Regardless of views on Trump, for both of us the idea of a civil war among evangelical Christians is distressing. However, denial or avoidance of the intense disagreements is unhelpful and so this volume seeks to lay out the important arguments at the heart of the Galli controversy. Thankfully, on the positive side, the intense disputes are proof that evangelicals care about the Gospel and its social, political, and moral implications. This volume is proof as well that evangelical Christians are not a monolith.

We trust that this collection will be a useful resource to all who follow evangelical Christianity, the presidency of Donald Trump, and the issues that arise in the controversies over both.

James A. Beverley

Annette Johnson

August 15, 2020

"Trump Should Be Removed From Office"

MARK GALLI

Christianity Today

December 19, 2019 3:27 p.m.

At the time of the editorial Galli was editor in chief, at *Christianity Today*, due to retire at the end of 2019.

"In our founding documents, Billy Graham explains that *Christianity Today* will help evangelical Christians interpret the news in a manner that reflects their faith. The impeachment of Donald Trump is a significant event in the story of our republic. It requires comment.

The typical CT approach is to stay above the fray and allow Christians with different political convictions to make their arguments in the public square, to encourage all to pursue justice according to their convictions and treat their political opposition as charitably as possible. We want CT to be a place that welcomes Christians from across the political spectrum, and reminds everyone that politics is not the end and purpose of our being. We take pride in the fact, for instance, that politics does not dominate our homepage.

That said, we do feel it necessary from time to time to make our own opinions on political matters clear—always, as Graham encouraged us, doing so with both conviction and love. We love and pray for our president, as we love and pray for leaders (as well as ordinary citizens) on both sides of the political aisle.

Let's grant this to the president: The Democrats have had it out for him from day one, and therefore nearly everything they do is under a cloud of partisan suspicion. This has led many to suspect not only motives but facts in these recent impeachment hearings. And, no, Mr. Trump did not have a serious opportunity to offer his side of the story in the House hearings on impeachment.

But the facts in this instance are unambiguous: The president of the United States attempted to use his political power to coerce a foreign leader to harass and discredit one of the president's political opponents. That is not only a violation of the Constitution; more importantly, it is profoundly immoral.

The reason many are not shocked about this is that this president has dumbed down the idea of morality in his administration. He has hired and fired a number of people who are now convicted criminals. He himself has admitted to immoral actions in business and his relationship with women, about which he remains proud. His Twitter feed alone—with its habitual string of mischaracterizations, lies, and slanders—is a near perfect example of a human being who is morally lost and confused.

Trump's evangelical supporters have pointed to 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. We believe the impeachment hearings have made it absolutely clear, in a way the Mueller investigation did not, that President Trump has abused his authority for personal gain and betrayed his constitutional oath. 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. None of the president's positives can balance the moral and political danger we face under a leader of such grossly immoral character.

This concern for the character of our national leader is not new in CT. In 1998, we wrote this:

The President's failure to tell the truth—even when cornered—rips at the fabric of the nation. This is not a private affair. For above all, social intercourse is built on a presumption of trust: trust that the milk your grocer sells you is wholesome and pure; trust that the money you put in your bank can be taken out of the bank; trust that your babysitter, firefighters, clergy, and ambulance drivers will all do their best. And while politicians are notorious for breaking campaign promises, while in office they have a fundamental obligation to uphold our trust in them and to live by the law.

And this:

Unsavoury 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. Whether Mr. Trump should be removed from office by the Senate or by popular vote next election—that is a matter of prudential judgment. That he should be removed, we believe, is not a matter of partisan loyalties but loyalty to the Creator of the Ten Commandments.

To the many evangelicals who continue to support Mr. Trump in spite of his blackened moral record, we might say this: 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? Can we say with a straight face that abortion is a great evil that cannot be tolerated and, with the same straight face, say that the bent and broken character of our nation's leader doesn't really matter in the end?

We have reserved judgment on Mr. Trump for years now. Some have criticized us for our reserve. But when it comes to condemning the behavior of another, patient charity must come first. So we have done our best to give

evangelical Trump supporters their due, to try to understand their point of view, to see the prudential nature of so many political decisions they have made regarding Mr. Trump. To use an old cliché, it's time to call a spade a spade, to say that no matter how many hands we win in this political poker game, we are playing with a stacked deck of gross immorality and ethical incompetence. And just when we think it's time to push all our chips to the center of the table, that's when the whole game will come crashing down. It will crash down on the reputation of evangelical religion and on the world's understanding of the gospel. And it will come crashing down on a nation of men and women whose welfare is also our concern.