

Enough With All the Anonymity

It's one thing if you're writing anonymously as a covert agent working within North Korea or an embedded spy in an ISIS enclave. In that case, it makes perfect sense to hide your identity. But to write an op-ed for *The New York Times* as a senior White House official working to "thwart parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations"—that goes entirely beyond the pale. It's time to put a stop to all this anonymity.

If you have the truth, bring it into the light. And that means bringing your identity into the light as well.

Here are four reasons why all this anonymity needs to stop. (To be perfectly clear, I would say the same thing if someone working for President Obama had written an undermining, anonymous op-ed like this.)

1) We cannot fully evaluate an anonymous source. When someone does not disclose their identity, we have no way of evaluating the truthfulness of their accounts. Are they credible? Do they have a proven track record? Are they trustworthy? Do they really have access to the information of which they speak? Do they have an axe to grind? Are they biased in their viewpoints?

I could list a dozen more relevant questions, but the point is more than obvious. If we can't evaluate the source, how can we evaluate the source's claims?

2) Anonymous sources can bring incalculable damage to innocent people. According to (apparently) unidentified sources in the new book by Bob Woodward, Generals John Kelly and James Mattis spoke against President Trump in the most disparaging terms.

Both of them have issued categorical denials, with Kelly calling Woodward's book a "con on the public" and with Mattis calling the claims "fiction."

So, not only do we have the problem again of unverifiable sources. But we have the issue of these sources potentially libeling others.

What if the anti-Trump sources are lying? What if they fabricated or exaggerated or misheard the alleged quotes? And what if the person in question was not the President of the United States, who is more than able to handle himself? What if it was a private citizen who was libeled by an anonymous source? Even years of litigation, followed by public vindication, do not even the score.

Anonymity avoids accountability.

3) There is an integrity problem with an anonymous, undermining source. Fundamentally, whoever wrote the op-ed piece for the *Times* is living a lie. (Telling a lie is bad enough; living a lie is much worse.) We're talking about lying every day of his (or her) life. Of lying to the president's face. Of living a double life. Can such a person be trusted? Would you want someone like that working for you?

In the eyes of the op-ed writer, he is part of a noble cause. He is a real a patriot, joined by other true patriots who are acting courageously on behalf of the nation they love. As he states in the closing words of his piece, "There is a quiet resistance within the administration of people choosing to put country first. But the real difference will be made by everyday citizens rising above politics, reaching across the aisle and resolving to shed the labels in favor of a single one: Americans."

But that is not real courage. Real courage is risking your career or your future by taking an unpopular stand. Real courage is being willing to face the ire of the president by speaking the truth at any cost.

And what if you lose your job for taking a stand? You have done the right thing, and you can continue your battle outside

the White House.

In my forthcoming book, *Donald Trump is Not My Savior: An Evangelical Leader Speaks His Mind About the Man He Supports as President*, I actually call on evangelical leaders who are close to the president to follow the model of Israel's prophets, who functioned as part of "his majesty's loyal opposition."

So, the last thing I'm calling for is a legion of yes-men who will unthinkingly carry out the president's bidding even when they think it's dangerous. But the duplicity of this is anonymous resistance within the White House is inexcusable.

4) These anonymous sources give further credence to the worst conspiracy theories. If you didn't believe in the deep state before, you might believe in it now. If you wondered if there really was a swamp that needed to be drained, you might not wonder anymore. If you weren't that sure fake news existed, you'd be a lot surer now. And if you wanted to give liberal news sources like *The New York Times* a fair shake, you'd be a lot less inclined to do so today.

Not only so, but anonymous writings like this only feed into whatever fears already lurk in the mind of the president. As Ben Shapiro tweeted, "If this is true, is the goal of this op-ed to trigger a massive purge of those restraining Trump? Because that's what will happen. Idiocy."

Two thousand years ago, Jesus said, "For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that it may be revealed that his deeds have been done in God" (John 3:20-21).

It's time to bring everything into the light.