

Why 'Charisma' Is Still 100% Behind Trump Despite All the Hoopla Over Mark Galli's Anti-Trump Op-Ed

When Mark Galli, the soon-to-be retired editor-in-chief of *Christianity Today*, wrote an outrageous op-ed last week saying President Donald Trump should be removed from office, it created a firestorm on Twitter and the internet. The leftist media quickly latched on to the online fury since they finally found a prominent evangelical who bought into their anti-Trump narrative.

I waited a week to respond because I respect Galli as a journalist and because other evangelical leaders such as Franklin Graham, Jerry Falwell, Jim Garlow and David Lane tore apart Galli's op-ed. Others signed a letter blasting *CT*, so I didn't need to pick its editorial apart. Even the online news website Christian Post blasted *CT*'s position as did commentator Dennis Prager, an orthodox Jew.

Besides, for the past four decades, *Christianity Today* has been the main "competitor" to *Charisma* magazine, which covers a different segment of the evangelical community—mainly Pentecostals, charismatics and politically conservative evangelicals. They have never publicly criticized me, and until now, I had no reason to opine about anything *CT* has written.

Since the secular media seems fixated on what evangelicals think about President Trump, I want to go on the record that the "other" evangelical magazine—*Charisma*—is 100% behind the president because even though he is not perfect (no one but Christ is), God has raised him up as president to give America

a reprieve. Not only that, but *Charisma* endorsed Trump in 2016 and put him on the cover, and I have written three books about him, each articulating the spiritual aspect of what is happening in America and why evangelicals and other conservatives must support this controversial president. The newest one releases Jan. 14, 2020, and is called *God, Trump and the 2020 Election: Why He Must Win and What's at Stake for Christians if He Loses*.

When I started *Charisma* as a 24-year-old newspaper reporter in 1975, *Christianity Today* was already a highly respected and influential publication founded 19 years earlier. I've known all the *CT* leaders and editors over these intervening years and have been alarmed to see how liberal they have been becoming, but I've never publicly criticized them. In fact, in the early days, I used *CT* as a model as I grew *Charisma Media* to be a similar-sized organization. In Christian circles, I heard people say *Charisma* was the *CT* for charismatics—and maybe it is.

CT President Timothy Dalrymple has written that *CT* has always been apolitical—and it has been, partly because it is a 501(c)3. Because of the Johnson amendment, they could have lost their tax-exempt status if they had endorsed candidates as *Charisma* has. Every four years since 1984, *Charisma* has endorsed someone for president, including Trump for president in 2016.

Now, let me offer a disclaimer: For nearly 25 years, I was a Democrat until the party went so far left I had no choice but to register as a Republican. The Republican party is less than perfect, but on the big issues, it at least backs the biblical stance on life and marriage. I've criticized the Republicans many times (including in my new book, *God, Trump and the 2020 Election*) as saying Republicans say one thing when they want evangelical votes and forget what they promised when they are in office. Trump, by contrast, has kept his promises regarding who he appointed as judges, how he has supported Israel and

how he has defended religious liberty. In fact, he's become a champion of Bible-believing Christians.

Because *Charisma* is a privately owned for-profit media company, I didn't need to get board approval not only to endorse Trump in 2016 but also to devote nearly the entire issue to the important issues in that election. We also had articles on modern-day prophets in the charismatic community who prophesied Trump would win because God had raised him up like He did King Cyrus to rescue the children of Israel in the Old Testament. *CT* never reported this because they are from a segment of Protestantism that believes the gifts of the Spirit, like prophecy, died with the apostles.

I was invited to the Trump Victory party at the New York Hilton, and I flew up there because I believed the prophets who said that he would win against all odds—and Trump won. A year later, I felt it was important to document the spiritual aspect of his election in *God and Donald Trump*, which became a bestseller and allowed me to tell my story not only on Fox News but also CNN and MSNBC.

Now, thanks to Mark Galli, the “Never-Trump” arm of evangelicalism (less than 20% based on how many evangelicals voted for Trump) is back in the news. I believe it is dangerous and I will write tomorrow about how Galli told me he is not a “Never-Trumper” but that he didn't vote for Trump in 2016 and probably wouldn't in 2020. (I interviewed him in 2018 for my second book, *Trump Aftershock*, to try to understand and explain to my readers how Never-Trump evangelicals think.)

As I write in *God, Trump and the 2020 Election*, I believe the term “Never-Trumper” represents a very dangerous strain in both the Republican Party and among self-described evangelicals who still hold to the feeling that they should vote for anyone but Trump (even if the Democratic challenger is the most extreme leftist in the Democratic Party). However, unlike Galli who seemed to demonize anyone who supports Trump,

I have been careful to never demonize Never-Trumpers, even as I point out how wrong they are. I believe they should have an epiphany like Dr. Richard Land, the respected president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, did.

Land disliked Trump so much in 2016 that he favored any of the other 17 candidates for the Republican nomination. But “when it [came] to a binary choice between Hillary Clinton and President Trump, it took me about one nanosecond to determine that at the very worst, the president was the lesser evil versus Hillary Clinton,” he said. “And frankly, he’s done far better than I thought he would.”

Land believes some evangelicals were so offended by some of the comments Trump has made and his past behavior that they just decided to vote for neither Hillary Clinton nor Donald Trump. “I call that the Pontius Pilate Syndrome, where you ask for a basin of water and you wash your hands and say, ‘I’m not going to get involved in anything as contaminated as politics,’” Land told host Fred Jackson on American Family Radio. “Well, my theology tells me that when I’m confronted with a choice between a bad choice and a worse choice, if I don’t help support the bad choice, then I become morally culpable for helping the worse choice prevail. So I think it’s a combination of a lack of understanding of how the real world works and sort of a desire to be above the fray.”

When Trump won 81% of the white evangelical vote in 2016, he faced the constant demonization and public opposition of the evangelical Never-Trump leaders. When *Christianity Today* did polls on who evangelical leaders were backing in 2016, only one or two said they backed Trump. Robert Jeffress, the pastor of Dallas First Baptist Church and an early Trump supporter, told me, “They missed it, and I think a lot of those [Never-Trump] Christian leaders were miffed that they had so little influence over rank-and-file evangelicals who didn’t listen to them and voted for Trump anyway.”

When I told my friend Dr. Mark Rutland I was writing this op-ed, he said something I thought was worth repeating: "The term 'Never-Trump' is a statement of stubborn pride. Never say never to God. Saying it means 'Not even God can change my mind.' Those married to the term 'Never Trump' can never retreat from it no matter what—because their pride cannot admit they might have misjudged."

In previous elections there were evangelicals who voted for Democrats. Usually those Christians are much more liberal, not just concerning politics but also in social and theological issues. I discussed this with Doug Wead, a longtime friend who was instrumental in helping evangelicals get access to the White House during the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations. He told me that Barack Obama actually got a much higher evangelical vote than Hillary Clinton did. To explain the reason, he pointed to a *Washington Post* op-ed by Michael Wear, director of religious outreach for Obama's 2012 campaign, called "Why Did Obama Win More White Evangelical Votes Than Clinton? He Asked for Them."

There are a certain number of evangelicals who favor gun control and think protecting the environment is important, so they are predisposed to vote for Democrats if the Democratic Party will give them a chance. Wead explained that many of these evangelicals didn't vote for Hillary Clinton because they felt unwanted. For example, the week of the election, a group of celebrities went into a soundstage and recorded a song that ended with the lyrics, "Jesus [expletive] Christ, please vote." If you look it up on YouTube, you'll see there were a half-million hits on this video of celebrities using Jesus' name as profanity to get out the vote for Hillary Clinton. Wead believes many Democratic-leaning evangelicals were probably alienated by this, which is why Clinton garnered fewer evangelical votes than Obama. (She got only 16% in 2016 compared to 26% for Obama in 2008 and 21% in 2012.)

Still, these liberal evangelicals are a factor that can't be

ignored. Franklin Graham recently criticized these members of the "Christian left" in *Decision* magazine.

"Using new terms like 'Progressive Christianity' and the 'Christian left' may sound appealing to some, but God's laws and standards do not change ... (Mal. 3:6)," Graham wrote. "Progressive Christianity is simply another name for theological liberalism and its accompanying permissive lifestyle that ignores God's call to holiness and obedience. There is really nothing progressive about it, other than an increasing slide into sin and disobedience."

Pastor Jeffress agrees. He loves quoting Ronald Reagan as saying, "Status quo ... is a Latin phrase for 'the mess we're in.'"

And that may be the crux of the divide between the 80% of what I call "red evangelicals" and the 20% who tend to be "blue evangelicals." One has to wonder if "the status quo" will be good enough as the country moves further left. Or is a disruptor what we really need to bring a much-needed course correction?

As in 2016, forecasters have presumed that evangelicals who voted for Trump will remain the president's most reliable voting bloc. His economic policies that put America first, Supreme Court nominees and very public pro-life stance have endeared him to much of Protestant Christianity. However, the 2016 Never-Trumpers, Thomas Ertl noted, along with "advocates of the modern social justice movement that has adopted cultural Marxism, are leading a large number of evangelical Millennials into the far-left Democratic camp."

Many of the evangelicals who were skeptical of Trump but ultimately voted for him in 2016 no longer doubt his ability to lead. By all standards, it seems Trump could win upward of 80% or even 90% of the evangelical vote in 2020.

Die-hard Never-Trumpers could become an obstacle to reaching

these levels if they make a concerted effort to suppress evangelical voters for Trump. If the president's evangelical support falls to the low-70 percentiles, he will have a hard time winning in some of the swing states.

However, I wrote *God, Trump and the 2020 Election* to try to wake up the evangelical community. I'll be doing everything I can to get out the word about how important this election is. I believe when evangelicals know what the real issues are and see Trump from a spiritual perspective, they will support the president's re-election in even greater numbers. By the way, as I document in the new book, several prophets also have said he will serve two terms.

For what it's worth, I've created a new podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network called *God, Trump and the 2020 Election* in which I will interview several of the prophets for additional insight and also interview many of the sources I quote in the new book, which has its own website, [. \(Listen to my first episode, where I opine about the CT op-ed, by clicking here.\)](#)

Tomorrow I will write in the "Strang Report" why Galli says some evangelicals oppose Trump, and it basically comes down to style. He told me this more than a year ago, long before he decided to write this caustic op-ed as his parting shot as editor-in-chief of a venerated publication. I hope he's remembered for all the good he did as editor and not for buying in to the left's talking points against this president.