

“A Response to the Editor of Christianity Today” by Dennis Prager, *Frontpage*, December 27, 2019; “Evangelical Elites are Out of Touch” by Carl R. Trueman, *First Things*, December 20, 2019.

Prager is an Orthodox Jew, a serious scholar, historian, syndicated columnist and a bestselling author of, among other titles, *The Rational Bible*.

Responding to Mark Galli’s *Christianity Today* editorial calling for impeachment of President Trump, Prager wisely observes: “In my view, this editorial only serves to confirm one of the sadder realizations of my life: that religious conviction guarantees neither moral clarity nor common sense.” He sums: “The gist of the editorial — and of most religious and conservative opposition to President Trump — is that any good the president has done is dwarfed by his character defects. This is an amoral view that says more about Galli than it does about the president. He and the people who share his opinion are making the following statement: No matter how much good this president does it is less important than his character flaws.”

Prager sees very well how Galli’s view is missing perspective: “First, because it devalues policies that benefit millions of people. And second, because it is a simplistic view of character.”

Acknowledging that, “I do not know how to assess a person’s character — including my own — outside of how one’s actions affect others,” Prager goes on to admit that, “since I agree with almost all of President Trump’s actions as president and believe they have positively affected millions of people, I have to conclude that as president, Trump thus far has been a man of particularly good character.” He contrasts his own assessment over against Galli’s clumsy terms, *viz*, “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.” Prager exposes this “rhetorical sleight of hand” and rightly notes, it “reflects poorly on Galli’s intellectual and moral honesty. Galli and every other Christian and conservative opponent of the president believe their concerns are moral, and that the president’s Christian and other conservative supporters are political.” But, Prager argues, “This is simply wrong. I and every other supporter of the president I know support him for moral reasons, not to win a ‘political poker game.’ Galli’s view is purely self-serving; he’s saying, ‘We Christian and other conservative opponents of the president think in moral terms, while Christian and other conservative supporters of the president think in political terms.’”

“So”, Prager counters, “permit me to inform Galli and all the other people who consider themselves conservative and/or Christian, that our support for the president is entirely moral. To us, putting pressure on the Iranian regime — one of the most evil and dangerous regimes on Earth — by getting out of the Iran nuclear deal made by former President Barack Obama is a moral issue. Even *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens, who loathes Trump, has written how important the president’s rejection of the Obama-Iran agreement has been.”

Prager continues, “To us, enabling millions of black Americans to find work — resulting in the lowest black unemployment rate ever recorded — is a moral issue. To us, more Americans than ever being employed and almost 4 million Americans freed from reliance on food stamps is a moral issue. To us, appointing more conservative judges than any president in history — over the same period of time — is a moral issue. That whether the courts, including the Supreme Court, are dominated by the left or by

conservatives is dismissed by Galli as ‘political poker’ makes one question not only Galli’s moral thinking but also his moral theology. To us, moving the American embassy to Israel’s capital city, Jerusalem — something promised by almost every presidential candidate — is a moral issue, not to mention profoundly courageous. And courage is a moral virtue. To us, increasing the U.S. military budget — after the severe cuts of the previous eight years — is a moral issue. As conservatives see it, the American military is the world’s greatest guarantor of world peace.”

Yet, says Prager, “none of these things matter to Galli and other misguided Christians and conservatives. What matters more to them is Trump’s occasional crude language and intemperate tweets, what he said about women in a private conversation and his having committed adultery.”

Prager doesn’t mention it, but he could have cited David’s adultery with the wife of Uriah, the army general that David sinned against, who loyally stayed at the battlefield rather than return at David’s evil invitation. So, David saw to it that he was killed. Does Galli think that David and all of his Psalms should have been impeached?

Prager logically concludes: “That the editor of *Christianity Today* thinks the president’s personal flaws, whatever they might be, are more important than all the good he has done for conservatives, for Christians, for Jews, for blacks and for America, tells us a lot about Galli and the decline of Christian moral thought.”

Trueman has taught church history at Westminster Seminary and now teaches at Grove City College. Cambridge and Aberdeen educated, he’s an ordained Orthodox Presbyterian. As a UK citizen in America, he says he addresses Galli’s anti-Trump editorial as a “Green Carder”.

He admits that political thinking is complicated, but that voting is not: “In the voting booth [it’s] one candidate or another — no nuance, no ‘ifs’ or ‘buts’ allowed.” So, though he relates to Galli’s distaste for Trump, he criticizes Galli’s opinion in *pragmatic* terms.

He states: “Every vote cast — perhaps especially those cast by Christians — involves a trade-off, a compromise, a ranking of the importance of moral priorities which, in an ideal world, we would not have to do. ... Yet Galli cuts himself off from such a move. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that he believes the removal of Trump ‘is not a matter of partisan loyalties but loyalties to the Creator of the Ten Commandments.’ This is an astounding claim for the editor of *Christianity Today* to make, for it involves him accusing every Trump voter of heinous sin, however reluctant or conflicted he may be.” Loyalty to God does *not* demand *judgementalism*.

Trueman presumes that, “Galli is not playing some sanctimonious Pharisee, standing in the Temple of Twitter, thanking God that he is not like other evangelicals”. Still, he sees that, “his editorial is symptomatic of the same underlying pathology. Evangelical elites are clearly as out of touch with the populist evangelical base as is the case in society in general. And lambasting populist evangelicals as hypocrites or dimwits will simply perpetuate the divide”. True, man!

