

Trump Slams Fox News for Disobedience



Last Sunday, Pete Buttigieg participated in a Fox News town hall in New Hampshire – the third installment of FNC’s televised forums featuring Democratic presidential hopefuls. The event was hosted by Chris Wallace and was held in a high school gymnasium where Wallace and members of the audience asked the Buttigieg a variety of questions.

Though the ratings for the broadcast haven’t been reported as of the time of this column, the program is sure to have pulled an impressive number, just as Bernie Sanders’ Fox News town hall did last month. Among that viewing audience was President Trump, who took to Twitter to express disappointment that his favorite news network had granted one of his political opponents a platform, thus doing a great disservice to its viewers:

Hard to believe that @FoxNews is wasting airtime on Mayor Pete, as Chris Wallace likes to call him. Fox is moving more and more to the losing (wrong) side in covering the Dems.

They got dumped from the Democrats boring debates, and they just want in. They forgot the people....

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 19, 2019

Trump even took a personal shot at Chris Wallace for having the gall to pay Buttigieg a compliment, evoking the memory of Wallace's dead father to emphasize his disapproval:

...who got them there. Chris Wallace said, "I actually think, whether you like his opinions or not, that Mayor Pete has a lot of substance...fascinating biography." Gee, he never speaks well of me – I like Mike Wallace better...and Alfred E. Newman will never be President!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 19, 2019

Of course, it's nothing new for our president to use his Twitter account to attack political rivals (along with pretty much anyone of note who says less than flattering things about him), but what Trump does with tweets like these is discredit Fox News in a way that the network's longtime critics could only ever hope to do.

Make no mistake about it. Trump is affirming that the network is in the tank for him, his administration, and his loyal supporters; which is the same case that FNC's most vocal detractors have been making for quite some time. And by offering his political opponents an hour-long, respectful platform (from which to field questions, spread their messages, and criticize him), Trump feels betrayed.

Sadly, it's hard to blame him.

After all, with the exception of a handful of news-driven programs like *Special Report* and *Fox News Sunday*, our president is reliably fawned over and reflexively defended

every single day on FNC. The network's commentary lineup used to offer a diverse range of views and perspectives (albeit most of them center-right) – including from the shows' hosts who felt quite comfortable deviating from partisan talking points. But things have changed.

Today, most hosts and their regular guests act like they've vying for a spot on *The Apprentice*, competing for Trump's approval and affection. And the president has become quite accustomed to the servility.

The weekend shows are even more sycophantic than what airs during the week, so when Trump tunes into the network on a Sunday evening and sees it behaving like a legitimate news institution, he's understandably left with a sense of disappointment... and again, betrayal.

None of this is to say that Fox News doesn't have a strong, credible, well-oiled news division. They do, and Chris Wallace is the cream of the crop. As Brit Hume pointed out, Trump is keenly aware of this:

Say this for Buttigieg. He's willing to be questioned by Chris Wallace, something you've barely done since you've been president. Oh, and covering candidates of both parties is part of the job of a news channel. <https://t.co/D8yQE2kfYF>

– Brit Hume (@brithume) May 20, 2019

The problem however, as Trump plainly illustrates, is that the network is overwhelmingly defined by its commentary shows that take up all but a few hours of each day's programming. And those shows are so embarrassingly beholden to Trump that not even *he* can bring himself to accept the channel as a serious news organization.

People can argue all day long that the other cable news networks are just as embarrassing, and just as in the tank for

partisans, and those people would be absolutely right. But Fox News *used* to be better than the rest... and they no longer are.

Trump's tweets are a painful reminder of that.

Franklin Graham and the Sanctity of Politics



On Wednesday, Christian Evangelical leader Franklin Graham took to Twitter to weigh in on Democratic presidential candidate (and fellow Christian) Pete Buttigieg's recent remark that "God doesn't have a political party."

Mayor Buttigieg, as just about everyone knows by now, is both gay and married.

Mayor Buttigieg says he's a gay Christian. As a Christian I believe the Bible which defines homosexuality as sin, something to be repentant of, not something to be flaunted,

praised or politicized. The Bible says marriage is between a man & a woman—not two men, not two women. 2/3

– Franklin Graham (@Franklin_Graham) April 24, 2019

Unsurprisingly, Graham's tweet drew lots of responses, many of them echoing the same theme:

Cool, do Trump next <https://t.co/AjwYo0ccPW>

– Hannah (@ruthyoest) April 25, 2019

I've been wondering who'd be the first preacher to get Biblical about the apocalyptic threat of a gay couple in the White House. Let the gays in and before you know it, a lying, cheating philanderer will be elected president. Oh wait... <https://t.co/NmSyUrSbhL>

– Larry Sabato (@LarrySabato) April 25, 2019

.@Franklin_Graham is probably not the best person to make this case. He's a relentless promoter/defender of Mr. Trump, including insisting what happened with Stormy Daniels-illegal hush money payments to a porn star after his 3rd wife gave birth to his son-is "nobody's business." <https://t.co/mWl3Wxr8z5>

– Peter Wehner (@Peter_Wehner) April 25, 2019

It's interesting that a few years ago, the main point of contention would have been with Graham's thoughts on homosexuality and marriage (though no one would have been surprised by them). Lots of Christians, after all, believe in and promote the sanctity of marriage, in its traditional and

biblical sense, because of the teachings of their faith. And as Graham stated, the Bible does indeed describe homosexuality as a sin, and marriage as being between a man and a woman.

However, in this country, marriage is a legal institution, administered by the government. The separation of church and state is supposed to, in part, protect citizens from religious imposition by means of the law. And like it or not, the Supreme Court has extended the legal definition of marriage, as a civil right, to include gay marriage.

But again, this isn't what spawned a good chunk of this week's backlash. What drew the ire of a number of people was the glaring hypocrisy it requires for someone like Franklin Graham to publicly pass faith-based moral judgment on a political leader, especially on the topic of marriage.

After all, as Mr. Wehner pointed out, Graham is not only an outspoken supporter of Donald Trump, but also an adamant defender and apologist – including on the issue of our president's numerous high-profile personal assaults on the sanctity of marriage.

For example, here's what Graham said in an interview just last year, when asked about President Trump's tryst with porn-star, Stormy Daniels (while married to his current wife, Melania):

“I don't have concern, in a sense, because these things happened many years ago – and there's such bigger problems in front of us as a nation that we need to be dealing with than other things in his life a long time ago. I think some of these things – that's for him and his wife to deal with. I think when the country went after President Clinton, the Republicans, that was a great mistake that should never have happened. And I think this thing with Stormy Daniels and so forth is nobody's business. And we've got other business at hand that we need to deal with.”

So last year, Graham wasn't terribly concerned with sinful

violations of the sanctity of marriage, nor did he believe such acts required repentance (which Trump admits he has never sought). According to Graham, it was a matter between spouses and was nobody else's business.

Interesting.

That's quite a deviation from what he said about Bill Clinton's infidelity back in the late 90s:

"The private acts of any person are never done in secret. God sees and judges all sin, and while He seeks to restore the offender with love and grace, He does not necessarily remove all the consequences of our sin. As a boy I remember my mother telling me of the consequences of sin. Like a boat, whose wake can capsize other boats, sin leaves a wake. Just look at how many have already been pulled under by the wake of the president's sin: Mr. Clinton's wife and daughter, Ms. Lewinsky, her parents, White House staff members, friends and supporters, public officials and an unwitting American public."

I guess the *Unsinkable Donald Trump* is an entirely different vessel – one that floats high above the consequences of sin. Or could it be that Graham truly does believe it was wrong of he and the Republicans to go after Clinton back then? If that were the case, however, why does he feel comfortable going after Buttigieg on the issue of marriage sanctity now?

Maybe – just maybe – Mr. Graham has one faith-based set of moral standards for the political leaders he aligns with, and a completely different set for the political leaders he doesn't.

He certainly wouldn't be alone on that front.

A number of influential Christian leaders and regular church-going Christians in this country have made breathtaking moral allowances for President Trump, who at times seems to wear his

sinful conduct as a badge of honor. Tony Perkins of the *Family Research Counsel* (who officially endorsed Trump's candidacy back in 2016) has referred to this phenomenon as a "transactional" relationship, in which Trump gets a "mulligan" on his *Christian failings*, as long as he pursues some legislative and cultural gains for the Christian community.

What a deal!

But if that's the agreement, and everything's *transactional*, shouldn't someone like Pete Buttigieg – in the interest of fairness and Christian grace – be afforded the same consideration?

I mean, if you're a Christian who is willing to rationalize and minimize Trump's sins (as identified by the Christian faith) for the sake of other faith-based contributions, why wouldn't you do the same for someone else who brings his own set of Christian contributions to the table – including personal decency, compassion, and the open practice of that faith that goes well beyond holding up a Bible and referencing "two Corinthians"?

But that's not what's happening – at least not in Graham's case. Graham is applying singular teachings of his faith selectively, as a partisan weapon against political opponents.

Is that of service to God? No. It's of service to *politics*, and it should be recognized as such.

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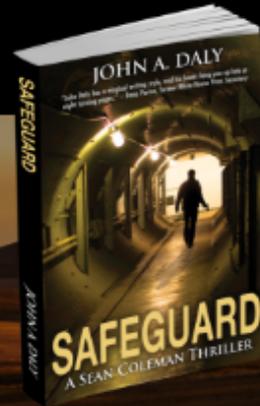
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