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Born Again with Trump

The Portrayal of Evangelicals in the Media

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Abstract

Since Trump's ascendancy in American politics and his subsequent election, a number of articles have surfaced in the media trying to explain evangelical voters' support of Trump. This paper analyzes common descriptions and conceptions of evangelicals by identifying recurring descriptions of evangelicals in 110 online articles published in a two-and-a-half-year period surrounding Trump's presidential campaign and election. The results indicate that the answer to the question as to why evangelicals support Trump resides not so much in their theology, but in their aspirations for America and assumptions of what America should be like. This paper argues that it is crucial to recognize and address evangelicals' prevailing attributes as perceived and portrayed by members of their own society in order to keep evangelicalism from descending into an insular, invalid expression.

Keywords: evangelicals and conservative politics, politicization of religion, public opinion, sociology of religion, Trump and evangelicals

Introduction

Evangelicals' role in modern U.S. politics has been widely studied (e.g., Brint and Abrutyn; Gushee; Lienesch; Lipset and Raab; Smidt 1988; Wilcox 1986). However, their role received a greater focus in the period surrounding the 2016 U.S. presidential election. With the election of Donald Trump, evangelicals have been placed at the front and center as his key voting bloc in various religious and political discourses. The fact that eighty-one percent of white evangelicals, who self-identified as "born-again Christians," voted for Trump (Smith and

Martinez) and that their support has not waned in the course of his tumultuous presidency (Smith) has baffled many non-supporters and outsiders.

Since Trump's ascendancy in American politics and his subsequent election, a number of articles have surfaced in the media trying to explain evangelical voters' support of Trump, whose morality, lifestyle, and character are at odds with the moral standards they purportedly uphold. Thrice-married, he has been accused of having multiple extramarital affairs and making cover-up efforts before taking office. He was also criticized for making disparaging comments about various groups of people. A plethora of media reports have tried to make sense of the seemingly unsettling irony. Simply skimming through the titles of these articles conveys a clear sense of bewilderment and frustration shared by many: "What's Behind Evangelical Support for Donald Trump" at NBC News (Johnson), "Why Evangelicals Made a Deal with the Devilish Donald Trump" at the *Chicago Tribune* (Page), and "Why Evangelicals Should Rethink the Trump Gospel" at CNN (Brooks). The sense of perplexity has been expressed not only in mainstream U.S. media outlets that are critical of Trump, but also in conservative and foreign media outlets. For instance, Fox News, a conservative media source, published an opinion piece written by Cal Thomas, entitled "Are Today's Evangelicals following Jesus or following Trump?" Foreign media such as BBC and Al Jazeera, as well as non-political outlets such as *People* and *Rolling Stone*, also featured articles trying to help their readers understand why evangelicals support a controversial figure whose life, for many, embodies that of a "celebrated hedonist" (Mansfield: 71).

"Evangelical" is a theological label, whose modern association of being "born-again" Christians evolved in the U.S in the early 20th century (FitzGerald). The phrase, "born-again," was used in conjunction with "evangelical" in various polls on the 2016 presidential election to identify voting behaviors among religious groups. In recent years, "evangelical" has become a shibboleth, which presumably reveals a person's political as well as religious identity. Although frequently used, "evangelical" is a generic label, whose usage is somewhat loose. The core meaning of the label "evangelical" centers upon "evangel," which means "gospel" or "good news." However, since evangelicalism is one of the major constituents in the American religious landscape, and belief in the "good news" of Jesus and the theology of being born again are not exclusive to the evangelical doctrine, voices and views representing so-called born-again Christians in the media could be misconstrued as reflecting those of mainstream Christianity.

There is a plethora of scholarly literature on the history of the development of evangelicalism and evangelicals' involvement in politics (e.g., Balmer; Bean; Brint and Abrutyn; FitzGerald; Gushee; Lienesch; Lipset and Raab; Smidt 1983; Wilcox 1986), and several historians have offered insights into evangelicals' alliance with Trump (e.g., Fea 2018; Mansfield). However, few studies have examined the conceptualization of evangelicals cast in the discourses of popular media. Since digital media is now one of the primary avenues through which people gain access to the world, and the information disseminated through media has a powerful influence, understanding how evangelicals are portrayed in the media holds importance for both evangelicalism and Christianity at large. Despite media's tendency to procreate a dominant set of discourses through ideological framing (e.g., Milford; Ott and Aoki), journalists produce immediate "raw material" that will allow future historians to construct a diachronic perspective (Lavoigne and Motlow: 218). By looking at how

evangelicals are conceptualized in the public discourse, we can identify their most prominent qualities as perceived by their fellow citizens, whom they strive to influence and proselytize. Recognizing and addressing evangelicals' prevailing attributes as perceived and portrayed by members of their own society would be crucial for keeping evangelicalism from descending into an insular, invalid religious expression. Insights gained through a survey of media corpus can shed light on the legitimacy and sustainability of evangelicalism as a Christian movement since they will reveal the volatile façade of evangelicals as portrayed in the current time period.

Scrutinizing evangelicals through the prism of mass media holds additional importance in the current context. As the country grapples with heightened racial tensions, gender inequity, and unfavorable views and treatments of immigrants, it is important to continue to probe and expose why so-called born-again Christians are some of the staunchest supporters of Trump, who has emboldened white supremacists and advances policies that harm sexual orientation minorities, racial minorities, and other vulnerable groups of people. It is an inconvenient truth that many evangelical leaders endorsed, or sometimes “champion[ed] slavery and later segregation – all the while invoking God’s name and quoting the Bible justifying their deeds” (Reed, cited in Prisoek: 309). While the pulpit may not be immediately recognized as a breeding ground for racism, sexism, and other forms of bigotry, those that are entrenched in religion are the most pernicious and hardest to combat. They are mired in the alluring, equivocal language of religion and promoted without guilt and granted immutability. The collective, synchronic views gathered from the media will make explicit what evangelicalism signifies at a given time period and reveal how so-called “born-again” Christians operationalize their faith, in comparison to how they brand themselves. In addition, insights gained from such undertaking can contribute to the scholarly discussions of politicization of Christianity.

This article analyzes 110 online articles from 104 different media outlets to uncover common descriptions and conceptions of evangelicals by identifying recurring descriptions of evangelicals. Published in a two-and-a-half-year period surrounding Trump’s presidential campaign and election (from January 1, 2016, through June 30, 2018), these articles address evangelicals’ identity, behaviors, or characteristics.

The author of this paper is a first-generation Asian immigrant to the U.S. and is affiliated with a Christian denomination, which aligns closely with evangelicalism in some doctrinal beliefs, although there is disagreement among members as to whether or not their denomination should be categorized as evangelical. As an applied linguist, she studies how real-life issues are reflected in discourse and how language mediates the process. The writing of this paper was partly motivated by her own desire to better understand her fellow Christians’ support of Trump. Before presenting recurring conceptualizations of evangelicals identified in the corpus and discussing implications, a brief overview of evangelicalism in America is presented.

Evangelicals in the United States

Evangelicals are part of the Protestant branch of Christianity. As the largest religious classification in the U.S., Protestants consist of two broad groups – mainline Protestants and evangelicals – who share the same root. Mainline Protestants (including Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans among others) embraced modernity and maintain openness to differing theological perspectives, whereas evangelicals (including fundamentalists, Southern

Baptists, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Mennonites, and several others) uphold the inerrancy of the Bible and a clearly defined set of doctrinal views. Evangelicals place emphasis on conversion and make great efforts to proselytize (FitzGerald). Most historians ascribe this bifurcation to the two groups' contrasting responses to modernism (e.g., Fea 2018; FitzGerald; Jones 2016; Sweeney).

Among scholars, the label "evangelicals" refers to disparate Christian groups that share four common characteristics. Namely, believers should: 1) go through a process of conversion (being born again); 2) hold the Bible as the final authority on matters of doctrine; 3) believe that Jesus's death on the cross is the only source of redemption; and 4) make efforts to spread the gospel (proselytize) (Bebbington). The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) based in Washington, D.C., presents four similar statements to which respondents must agree in order to be categorized as evangelical: 1) the Bible is the highest authority for what they believe; 2) make efforts to personally encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior; 3) Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of sin; and 4) only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation (National Association of Evangelicals).

Evangelicalism blossomed in the U.S. South and became a major U.S. religious movement, spurred by the late Billy Graham's crusades that drew large crowds across the country, but scholars trace the root of American evangelicalism to the fundamentalist movement in the early twentieth century that formed in reaction to the growing acceptance of Darwinism and biblical higher criticism among Protestants, which challenged the authority of the Bible as an inerrant word of God (Gloege; Sweeney). Although currently the term "fundamentalist" has a negative connotation, early fundamentalists considered the label as "a badge of honor" (Sweeney: 166) because, for them, being a fundamentalist meant being true and faithful to the fundamental tenets of Christianity. The tensions between modernists who embraced evolution and fundamentalists who upheld the creation story in the Bible as literal truth became publicized through the *State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* case in 1925, also known as the Scopes Monkey Trial, which drew nation-wide attention. It involved a substitute high school teacher, John T. Scopes, who was accused of violating the Butler Act, which prohibited teaching evolution in public schools in Tennessee. Although Scopes lost the case, it dealt a heavy blow to fundamentalists, not to Scopes, as they were caricatured as "country bumpkins" (Sweeney: 170).¹ Soon, a new movement called neo-evangelicalism was formed in the 1940s and 1950s around those who were orthodox but sought intellectual credibility and respectability (Sweeney). During this period, these "new" evangelicals under Billy Graham focused on revival, conversion, and mission.

According to Robert Jones, Mainline Protestantism was culturally and politically dominant until the 1960s in the U.S., and evangelicals' active involvement in public policy and alignment with the Republican Party are a relatively recent phenomenon (2016: 34-35). Their alliance with the Republican Party was shaped by several key court rulings which led them to

¹ According to Sweeney, Scopes was solicited by the American Civil Liberties Union to test the state's new law against teaching evolution in state schools. Scopes was fined one hundred dollars for teaching evolution, but his conviction was later overturned. Sweeney says, "Nothing symbolized the defeat of mainline Protestant fundamentalists like their 'victory' at the Scopes trial" (169).

seek political power to overturn those rulings in the last few decades of the 20th century. Historically, evangelicals have been complicit and at times resistant on issues surrounding immigration and desegregation (Jones 2016: 227). When the 1965 immigration law called the Hart-Cellar Act ended the immigration quotas that gave preference to northern and western Europeans, racial and ethnic diversity dramatically increased in the U.S. (Fea 2018). The desegregation efforts stemming from the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s increased resistance in the South, where many Christian schools continued to enforce policies that discriminated against black students (Fea 2018: 55). When the Supreme Court revoked tax exemptions from universities that discriminated against black students for admission decisions (e.g., *Bob Jones University v. United States*, 1983), white evangelicals in the South galvanized their forces to resist government's interference (Balmer 2016).

Whereas the controversy regarding racially discriminatory admission policies has largely receded,² ending legalized abortion has become one of the major issues for evangelicals. Trump's assurance that he would nominate conservative, pro-life Supreme Court justices if elected president appealed to his evangelical voters. Unlike Catholics who have consistently condemned abortion, most evangelicals maintained a rather positive or neutral stance on abortion until early 1980s (Fea 2018; Jones 2016). In fact, in 1971 the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution calling for legal abortion in a broad range of circumstances that included not just rape and incest, but "damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother" (Jones 2016: 66; Southern Baptist Convention). Abortion became a core issue for evangelicals when some of the key leaders decided to partner with Catholics in order to create synergy in their ongoing efforts to overturn "the rising tides of secularism and liberalism" (Jones 2016: 67). It was in this context that Jerry Falwell, a prominent evangelical pastor, founded a political organization called Moral Majority in 1979. The purpose of the organization was to support Ronald Reagan, the Republican presidential candidate, whom they believed could "turn the White Christian Strategy into a true political force" (Jones 2016: 90). Evangelicals and fundamentalists constituted its main supporters (Wilcox 1989). In the same year, another political organization, Concerned Women of America, was founded by Beverly LaHaye, wife of an evangelical minister, to bring together anti-feminist Christian women to promote conservative Christian ideology in public policy.

In addition to abortion, evangelicals have strongly resisted LGBTQ rights. James Dobson, a child psychologist and one of the most vocal evangelical opponents of same-sex marriage, spearheaded the 2004 "Values Voters" campaign in a fight against gay marriage (Jones 2016: 93), and the fight intensified as increasingly more states legalized same-sex marriage. The political union between the right-wing politicians and evangelical leaders became even stronger during the 2016 presidential campaign. Currently, several prominent evangelical leaders serve on President Trump's evangelical advisory board, interweaving the interests and identities of evangelicals and the right-wing politicians in a more pronounced way. Lydia Bean observes that for U.S. evangelicals, their identity is "implicitly linked to

² A recent lawsuit against Harvard University brought on behalf of Asian-American students suggests that it is not possible to assume that racial discrimination is no longer an issue in the U.S. education system.

partisanship” and their political views take on a “sacred quality because it is woven into the fabric of everyday religious life” (3).

An important note here is that the brief sketch of evangelicals’ involvement in politics presented above centers mostly on white evangelicals. A third of American evangelicals are black (Zylstra), and Asian American and Latin evangelicals constitute about 13 percent of all evangelicals in the U.S. (Wong: 6). Non-white evangelicals’ political attitudes are very different from those of their white counterparts and align with the Democratic Party on immigration and economic policy in particular. Mary Beth Matthews states that throughout history, Christianity has mainly been “defined by the goals and aspirations of white, middle-class, educated Protestants” (6). She feels that the terms “liberal” and “conservative” are too binary to help understand the doctrinal beliefs of black evangelicals, as African Americans were mainly viewed as recipients of mission activities (10).

Also to be noted is that not all white evangelicals share the same political views, and the way in which individual members apply and interpret the Bible is not uniform. Not all evangelicals fit the description of religious-right Republicans who are social and theological conservatives, and some hold diverse views in theology and politics that are distinct from the majority (Rogers and Heltzel). In fact, Sweeney notes that various denominations categorized under evangelical Christianity were “founded in opposition to some of the others” (19). Without a doubt, evangelicals are far from being a monolithic group, and the history of the U.S. is closely interlaced with the stories of people of different ethnicities and faiths. And yet, the historical narrative of evangelicalism has almost exclusively focused on white evangelicals.

The following study offers a snapshot of their portrait in this ongoing narrative, told by others, presented raw and untouched.

Methodology

Data Collection

The study draws from 110 articles published in English on the Internet between January 2016 and June 2018 searched through Google. This time period covers part of Trump’s campaign and one-and-a-half years of his presidency. The articles reflect a range of views surrounding several key junctures, including the moving of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, the Unite the Right Rally (also called a white supremacist rally) in Charlottesville, Virginia, family separation policy, and allegations of Trump’s past extra-marital relationships, among others. To eliminate selection bias, the political leanings, target audiences, and types of articles were not considered as determining factors when selecting articles. Two key words, “evangelical” and “Trump,” were entered into the Google search box in order to extract articles that explicitly focus on evangelicals in relation to Trump. Even though “evangelical” is a broad category, it was adopted as a key word because the purpose of the study was to survey the conceptualizations of so-called born-again Christians and better understand their support of Trump. In order to select those articles that dealt with evangelicals as Trump supporters as the main topic, two selection criteria were established. First, the article should contain “evangelical” or its variants, such as “evangelicals” and “evangelicalism” in the title. Second, the articles should discuss evangelicals in connection with Trump as a central focus. A total of 109 articles satisfied this category. Additionally, one article that used “believers” instead of

“evangelicals” in the title was also added as the journalist used the two terms interchangeably (see the appendix for the full list).

The custom date range was set for January 1, 2016, to June 30, 2018. This time period constituted the most recent window of time as data were collected in July 2018. Nvivo 12 was used to select and store the content of the sources through NCapture. A few articles required special subscription for access and were not included in the data. This exclusion was deemed appropriate because the excluded articles constituted less than ten percent of the total number of articles, and the study intended to find general conceptions of evangelicals as Trump supporters as portrayed in the popular media that are widely accessible to the public. It should be noted that the list of articles is not exhaustive, because, clearly, the topic of evangelical’s support of Trump is not confined to those that contain the two specific key words. Also, there might have been other articles that would meet the selection criteria but did not appear in the search engine while data was being collected. Therefore, the findings presented in this study reflect the views contained in the dataset only.

The articles represent various genres as listed in Table 1. Op-eds and commentaries constitute the majority of the articles. The articles that provide opinions of the writers based on the news stories were categorized as op-eds, and articles that focus more on providing commentaries on the news story and data rather than the opinion of the writer were categorized as commentaries. Articles mainly containing opinions, rather than drawing from actual news stories, were categorized as opinion. Nine articles categorized as news stories were those that focus on the factual information. Eight articles categorized as tabloids were those that appear to be somewhat exaggerative and pejorative. The categorization of “others” included miscellaneous genres, such as profiles, in which the writer analyzes a person, group of people, essays, and letters. The genres, however, should not be seen as a neat categorization, as there is some degree of overlap between these different genres.

Table 1. Types of Writing

| Genre # | Op-ed | Commentary | News Story | Opinion | Tabloid | Survey | Interview | Others ³ | Total |
|---------|-------|------------|------------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|---------------------|-------|
| | 34 | 29 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 110 |

Data Analysis

In order to get a sense of recurring descriptions, I first scanned through the articles. I then established preliminary coding categories, which included prominent evangelical leaders supporting Trump; different labels used to identify evangelicals; evangelicals’ stance on various social/political issues (e.g., abortion, LGBTQ rights, Supreme Court issues, and Israel); how they justify their support of Trump (e.g., finding biblical parallels and invoking God’s divine intervention); criticism from other Christians and religious groups; evangelicals’ political impact; statistics; and historians’ comments.

Next, I identified broader coding categories, based on the research focus of media – portrayals of evangelicals’ identity and characteristics. The first two preliminary categories identified – prominent evangelical leaders and labels--were grouped together to form the first

³ “Others” include profile (3), essay (3), and letter (2).

coding category – *nomenclatures*. Different labels and prominent evangelical leaders were catalogued to understand how they were epitomized. It was often through the statements made by leading evangelicals that journalists constructed their views of evangelicals. In this sense, labels and leaders create pithy but strong consubstantiality (Burke: 21) with the evangelical identity, which is one of the main foci of this research. References to evangelicals' stance on social/political issues, beliefs, justifications for supporting Trump, and their political impact were regrouped under the second coding category, *evangelicals' characteristics*. Characteristics included various descriptions pertaining to evangelicals' beliefs and behaviors. References in this category were further analyzed to identify overarching themes. References to fear, sense of threat, and pursuit of political power, as well as their stance on social/political issues were grouped together under the first sub-category, *pursuit of political power and protection from perceived threats*, as they focus on their active political involvement. References to Israel, God's divine intervention, and parallels drawn between Trump and biblical figures were regrouped under the second sub-category, *belief in America as a Christian nation*. Comments in this category refer to the role of evangelicals' beliefs about end-time prophecy in the move of Israel's capital to Jerusalem and God's intervention in the election of Trump. Interpretations and perceptions concerning evangelicals' responses to Trump's family separation policy and alleged extramarital affairs were categorized as the third sub-category, *political expediency and insensitivity to immorality and harm to others*, which relate to evangelicals' pragmatism and moral insensitivity shown in pursuit of their own agenda. Some of the historians' comments were also melded into these three sub-categories, as they were used in the articles as reference sources. Finally, comments of criticism centering on the disparity between what today's evangelicals exhibit and what "true" Christianity should stand for were grouped together under the third coding category – *voices from the other side*.

More often than not, the dividing line between the coding categories was fused. For instance, criticism inevitably included descriptions of characteristics, and discussions of evangelical leaders often included their political impact, justifications, as well as criticism. Although the overlap posed challenges to coding, it was not considered as a problem because the overlap points to the continuity among the themes that form organic parts in the overarching narrative of evangelicals' alignment with Trump. For instance, descriptions under the first theme, seeking political power, makes sense under the second theme, the belief that America is founded as a Christian nation, because they believe that Christian worldviews should form the basis of domestic and foreign policies in America. In the same vein, the third theme, pragmatic and insensitivity to immorality and harm to others, is explained by the first two in that the previous two themes provide clues for readers as to why evangelicals respond to various social and political issues the way they do. However, they were coded separately since each sub-category highlights and emphasizes different, albeit related, aspects of evangelicals. In case of an overlap, references were coded into all relevant themes. Several references mentioned evangelicals' emphasis on prosperity, associations with business tycoons, and authoritarianism. Although these do deserve thought and discussion, they did not receive focus in this study because they were mentioned relatively infrequently. Various pieces of statistical information were also excluded from the major coding categories because the study focused on identifying the evangelicals' identity and characteristics as told in the media's narrative.

In what follows, findings from each of these categories are presented. The numbers that appear within the brackets refer to specific articles listed in the appendix.

Results

Table 2. Labels for Evangelicals Supporting Trump

| Labels | Number of Sources | Articles ⁴ |
|--|-------------------|--|
| White evangelicals/evangelical white | 35 | 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 19, 22, 27, 28, 45, 48, 50, 51, 57, 65, 66, 67, 69, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 91, 102, 106, 108, 109 |
| Conservative Christians/Christian conservatives/conservative white/conservative evangelicals/religious conservatives | 10 | 3, 10, 25, 45, 60, 62, 67, 68, 70, 94 |
| Far-right/right-wing Christian evangelicals/religious right/Christian right | 7 | 60, 67, 72, 78, 80, 89, 91 |
| Born-again Christians | 6 | 26, 28, 49, 61, 83, 86 |
| White evangelical Protestants | 6 | 23, 30, 69, 83, 27, 62 |
| White Christian evangelicals/white evangelical Christian | 5 | 3, 23, 63, 91, 108 |
| Values voters | 4 | 68, 71, 89, 97 |
| American evangelicals | 3 | 23, 61, 87 |
| Evangelical Christians | 3 | 26, 27, 89 |
| White Protestants | 2 | 25, 68 |
| Trump evangelicals | 2 | 57, 76 |
| Christian evangelicals | 2 | 9, 68 |
| Court evangelicals | 1 | 10 |
| Evangelical Protestants | 1 | 99 |
| Southern evangelicals | 1 | 94 |
| Elite evangelicals | 1 | 20 |
| Believers | 1 | 90 |
| Fundamentalist Christians | 1 | 73 |

Nomenclatures

Examining the labels used for evangelicals reveals that these articles center on white evangelicals, hence racially categorizing them, despite the fact that the titles of the majority of articles refer to them as evangelicals in general. More than a dozen different labels were used to refer to evangelicals in the data, further specifying major attributes, such as “white,” “conservative,” “far-right,” and “American” (see Table 2). The existence of copious labels sampled in the data demonstrates perceived difficulties of defining and understanding who evangelicals are today without considering their political proclivities and race. Only one

⁴ The numbers in this column correspond to those in the appendix.

descriptor – born-again Christians – conveys a theological concept, but it is referred to as a self-descriptor or as a term that distinguishes the group from others, such as Mormons, who consider themselves born-again Christians but are typically excluded from evangelicals [49]. *Christianity Today* states that “Clinton voters [are] 50 percent more likely than Trump voters (9%) to stop identifying as evangelical or born-again Christians” [61], further indicating evangelicals’ conservative political leaning. A similar term, “values voters,” is mentioned as a term that evangelicals use to describe themselves. The rest of the labels indicate evangelicals’ associations with race and right-wing political agendas.

The most frequently used label, “white evangelicals,” indicates a need to distinguish Anglo evangelicals from evangelicals of other races and demonstrates that white evangelicals are widely perceived as possessing distinct political, if not theological, ideologies not shared by those of other ethnic groups. The label “white Protestants” puts emphasis on “white,” while downplaying the unique characteristics of evangelicals as a distinct group. Labels such as “elite evangelicals” and “Southern evangelicals” indicate that additional attributes such as socio-economic status and geography identify various, unique subgroups of evangelicals. Particularly noteworthy are “Christian evangelicals” and “Trump evangelicals.” The former implies that “evangelical” is not an exclusively Christian label. The latter is used to assert that those evangelicals who support and defend Trump are “destroying the evangel,” the good news of Jesus for “the poor, immigrants and refugees, women, and other vulnerable people” [57].

Another recurring pattern is associating evangelicals with specific individuals, whom Fea refers to as “court evangelicals,” also listed in Table 2 (Fea 2018: 115-52). For instance, Richard Land, president of Southern Evangelical Seminary, is quoted saying that a definition of evangelicalism that does not refer to the traditions of the Billy Graham Evangelical Association is “anemic and incomplete” [55]. Over forty different evangelical leaders’ names are mentioned in the data, associating them as key Trump-supporting figures. The most frequently mentioned ones are Jerry Falwell, Jr. (32 times), the current president of Liberty University and son of Jerry Falwell, the founder of Moral Majority; Franklin Graham (22 times), son of the late Billy Graham; Robert Jeffress (18 times), pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas; Tony Perkins (16 times), president of the Family Research Council; James Dobson (10 times); and Pat Robertson (8 times), broadcaster, statesman, and businessman. Only three female evangelicals are mentioned – Paula White (9 times), pastor of New Destiny Christian Center; Penny Nance (5 times), president of Concerned Women of America; and Anne Graham Lotz (1 time), daughter of Billy Graham. Several of these evangelicals mentioned in the articles – such as James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, Jr., Paula White, Richard Land, and Robert Jeffress – purportedly have direct access to, and regular contact with, Trump as they serve on Trump’s evangelical advisory board [87, 101].

Some of the most frequently invoked figures are mentioned for their controversial remarks. For instance, in response to those who promote gun control amid increased gun violence in the country, Jerry Falwell, Jr., said, “If more good people had concealed-carry permits, then we could end those Muslims before they walked in” [41, 107]. Robert Jeffress called other religious groups such as Mormons, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus as heretics and described Catholics as an instrument of Satan [73]. James Dobson is criticized for his silence about allegations of Trump’s extramarital affairs and cover-up efforts when he had lashed out at former U.S. president Bill Clinton’s sexual scandal and had argued that “Character DOES

matter. You can't run a family, let alone a country, without it. How foolish to believe that a person who lacks honesty and moral integrity is qualified to lead a nation and the world!" [68]

The political orientation of Trump-supporting evangelicals has necessitated the creation of labels to describe those who identify themselves as evangelicals but neither share the same political views nor support Trump. In addition to racial categorizations such as "African-American evangelicals," "Latino Evangelicals," and "Asia-Pacific Evangelicals," who generally hold different views on some political issues such as immigration, other labels are used to emphasize those evangelicals' left-leaning political stance, typically associated with the Democratic Party (see Table 3).

Table 3. Labels for Evangelicals Not Supporting Trump

| Labels | Articles ⁵ |
|---|-----------------------|
| Anti-Trumper evangelical | 7 |
| Non-Trump evangelicals | 51 |
| Evangelical left | 64, 99 |
| Anti-Trump left | 90 |
| Freestyle evangelicals | 99 |
| Progressive evangelicals | 100 |
| Left-of-center progressive evangelicals | 100 |

In sum, the abundant labels listed here pinpoint inadequacy of describing today's evangelicals in the U.S. by their theological views. The labels also indicate the complexity involved in defining who they are as a group, as a number of descriptors are used to highlight various salient conceptions by journalists. The association of evangelicalism with white, conservative, right-wing evangelical leaders who exert political influence in the Trump administration suggests that evangelicals are perceived to be consubstantial with influential prominent leaders who are criticized for being crude and holding double-standards. The following three sections examine major themes identified under the coding category "evangelicals' characteristics" (see Table 4).

Pursuit of Political Power and Protection from Perceived Threats. The most frequently recurring theme was evangelicals' desire to seek political power and protection from perceived threats. Fifty-four sources portrayed evangelicals as people who felt marginalized, threatened, and powerless due to the progressive, liberal policies instituted under the two previous Democratic presidents, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. The majority of reports portray evangelicals as those who feel a need for a strong man to fulfill their urgent needs to protect their religious freedom and institute legislation that aligns with Christian principles.⁶ In this category,

⁵ The numbers in this column correspond to those in the appendix.

⁶ The notion of seeking a strongman echoes Sigmund Freud's concept of illusion as discussed in Chapter VI of his book, *The Future of an Illusion*. Freud states that "the terrifying impression of helplessness in childhood" arouses the need for parental protection and love, and the sense of helplessness lasts throughout humans' life, making them cling to a more powerful one, god (30). Religious ideas and beliefs, according to Freud, stem from humans' desire for security and escape from feelings of helplessness.

evangelicals are described as considering themselves “a persecuted minority” [4, 21] and “embattled outsider” [54]. They are “afraid of changes taking place in the culture and reacting with fear” [7]. Sources of threat include legalization of abortion and same-sex marriage, and the Supreme Court’s ruling that prohibits promoting religious beliefs or practices as part of the school curriculum. Tony Perkins explained that evangelicals “were tired of being kicked around by Barack Obama and his leftists” [22, 76, 97]. In Trump, evangelicals have found a fighter and warrior to punch metaphorical bullies who threaten and disdain their Christian values [22, 78, 92, 94, 97, 102, 105]. The sense of perceived threat certainly revolves around various political issues, which, for them, converge into religious ones, as they are convinced that the future of America is at grave risk [100].

Table 4. *The Portrayal of Who Evangelicals Are*

| Characteristics | # of Sources | Sources ⁷ |
|---|--------------|---|
| Pursuit of political power and protection from perceived threats | 54 | 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 47, 48, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 60, 65, 66, 67, 68, 71, 74, 78, 79, 80, 89, 91, 92, 94, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 105, 109, 110 |
| Belief in America as a Christian nation | 36 | 1, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 31, 35, 36, 41, 46, 48, 50, 52, 56, 60, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 72, 73, 74, 78, 80, 85, 91, 93, 95, 98, 100, 104, 108 |
| Political expediency and insensitivity to immorality and harm to others | 33 | 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 18, 23, 29, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 46, 47, 52, 54, 60, 62, 67, 74, 80, 91, 94, 100, 101, 102, 106, 110 |

Concerned Women of America (CWA), a conservative political organization mentioned earlier, is an example that illustrates their sense of threat [36, 60, 103]. Currently spearheaded by Penny Nance, CWA describes itself as “the nation’s largest public policy women’s organization” that aims to “help its members across the country bring Biblical principles into all levels of public policy” (Concerned Women of America). It says it has “established and articulated its concerns with today’s cultural issues and has set forth certain goals to reverse the devastating trends in our society.” The organization’s alignment with the Republican Party seems to be a natural consequence due to the shared conservative stance on social issues, but it is ironic that the organization, which consists entirely of women, is one of the most active organizations that supports Trump, who is frequently labeled by his opponents as a misogynist and philanderer. Concerning Trump’s morality, Nance asserted, “None of us are deluded into thinking [Trump is] a Bible-banging evangelical” [36] and “his family can talk to him about issues of character” [60]. She and other evangelical leaders believe that “airing moral qualms about the president only hurts their cause” [60]. Nance appeals to modern Christian women to be biblical queen Esther: “perhaps we were born ‘for such a time as this’ . . . a time to stand tall and explain to a broken culture who we are and what we believe” [36], echoing the phrase from the Book of Esther, “for such a time as this” (4:14). The group’s alignment with Trump exhibits its willingness to ignore a leader’s moral lapse if doing so would help them win their culture war against liberal policies. Also at play in this curious dynamic could be patriarchy, in

⁷ The numbers in this column correspond to those in the appendix.

which misbehaviors of powerful, authoritative males tend to be overlooked [54], often ignoring complaints of sexual abuse [69].

It is not only the domestic policies, however, that are mentioned as a threat to evangelicals. This sense of threat is perceived to be a driving force for white evangelicals whose identity largely resides in their whiteness [17, 34, 44, 48, 65, 79, 91, 102, 107]. Several articles specifically portray white evangelicals as being threatened by what they perceive as rather lenient immigration policy that was instituted in previous years, and they are portrayed as being attracted to Trump because they believe his anti-immigration stance will help create a white Christian nation [4, 23, 30, 32, 45, 91, 101]. The centrality of 'white' is further evidenced in the results of a word-frequency query through NVivo; the three most frequently used words in the corpus are Trump, evangelical(s) and white, in that order.

Trump's zero-tolerance border policy, which involved family separation, was justified by Jeff Sessions, the former U.S. Attorney General, by citing the New Testament. Sessions argued:

Illegal entry into the United States is a crime – as it should be. Persons who violate the law of our nation are subject to prosecution. I would cite you to the Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13, to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained them for the purpose of order [15].

Cultural change resulting from what they perceive as anti-Christian legislations and the influx of immigrants is viewed as a threat to white evangelicals, and their anxiety serves as a galvanizing force among them. They have found escape from helplessness in aggressive and feisty Trump, who they believe can help fix the "broken" culture to "make America great again."

America: A Christian Nation under God's Divine Control. The second most salient theme reflects evangelicals' belief that the U.S. is a Christian nation under God's divine control. Under this theme, evangelicals are portrayed as those who believe that the United States was founded as a Christian nation, and therefore, the country's policies and laws should conform to Christian values [46, 73, 78, 100, 107, 108]. For them, policies are religious values codified (Mansfield: 15). Political turmoil, such as the one in which America finds itself currently under Trump, can be an energizing factor, as it can hasten the end times [108]. Trump's unconventional and controversial moves are purportedly understood by evangelicals as paving the way for the much-anticipated end-time events preceding Jesus's second coming. Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocate the U.S. embassy there, in particular, was hailed with enthusiasm and is considered as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy [9, 13, 14, 35, 63, 68, 70, 72, 73, 93] based on the evangelical eschatology.

For this reason, evangelicals believe that Trump's election was part of God's divine plan [1, 12, 48, 64]. Franklin Graham, attributing Trump's election to God's divine intervention [12, 34], said that God showed up on election day because people were praying all over America. While the notion of God's intervention to have Trump elected as a leader of this country to rebuild their Christian nation is puzzling to many, it is coherent with evangelicals' beliefs because evangelicals are seen as radical Christians who are drawn to miracles and extra-

ordinary turn of events [64]. One journalist notes that the election of a seemingly unlikely candidate fits the Christian narrative of dramatic deliverance and mysterious workings of God among his own people told in many biblical stories [66]. Franklin Graham's remark to *The Atlantic's* Emma Green about Trump effectively showcases this sentiment:

He [Trump] did everything wrong, politically. He offended gays. He offended women. He offended the military. He offended black people. He offended the Hispanic people. He offended everybody! And he became president of the United States. Only God could do that [66].

Several articles show how evangelicals use the Bible to support their political views [11, 13, 15, 74, 85, 90, 104, 106]. For instance, in Romans 13:4, Paul says that God installs all governing authorities and "they are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" [74]. Trump-supporting evangelicals point out that throughout biblical history, God has used ungodly people to fulfill his will [34, 64]. For instance, some evangelical leaders, such as Mike Evans, compare Trump to King Cyrus, an ungodly Persian king in the book of Ezra who freed Jews and helped them return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple. After the announcement that the U.S. would move its embassy to Jerusalem, evangelical leaders praised Trump as the contemporary embodiment of Cyrus [8, 14, 31, 35, 104]. According to Johnnie Moore, who is part of the evangelical advisory group for Trump, the status of Jerusalem was "second only to concerns about the judiciary among the president's core evangelical supporters" [95] and "evangelicals made it clear to the White House that it was a priority of theirs and they wanted action soon" [56]. Jerry Falwell, Jr., is grateful for Trump because, "I do not believe that any president in our lifetime has done so much that has benefited the Christian community in such a short time span than Donald Trump" [67].

In the evangelical narrative of divine, mysterious workings of God, Trump is just another example showcasing that God can use flawed individuals to accomplish his will [46, 90, 104], and God is on their side in their fight to bring back lost Christian values to their nation and fulfill biblical prophecy.

Political Expediency and Insensitivity to Immorality and Harm to Others. The third theme reveals how evangelicals' beliefs identified in the two previous categories are perceived by others. The descriptions of evangelicals identified in this section portray them as being guided by expediency rather than principle, people for whom end justifies the means [70]. As long as policies protect them from the above-mentioned threats or hasten biblical prophecy, they are willing to set aside issues of morality, as pointed out in the case of CWA. Tony Perkins's statement that as long as Trump nominates conservative Supreme Court justices and fights for anti-abortion legislation, Trump can do whatever he likes [107] can be understood within this context. The following phrases exemplify how evangelicals' expediency is perceived:

"sold their souls for the sake of worldly power" [10];

"selling their souls for 30 pieces of silver, which in American politics, is a seat at the table" [67];

"sold their souls just to be in good with the politically powerful in Washington" [100];

“washed down by the smooth pragmatic consequentialism that has placed its principles on the altar of urgency” [5];

“would rather be on the side of power versus morality to get what they want accomplished” [47].

In fact, the above phrases find their origin in Johnnie Moore’s remark: “You only make a difference if you have a seat at the table” (Fea 2018: 121). Evangelicals are portrayed as being willing to bypass racism, sexism, and various forms of bigotry as long as the government appoints conservative Supreme Court justices who will uphold “Christian” values [3, 79, 89, 92]. Under this theme, journalists call out evangelicals’ callousness in playing a central role in the move of Israel’s capital to Jerusalem, which resulted in violent demonstration with dozens of fatalities as well as deepening political unrest in the region [95]. According to Butler Bass, “The issue of whether the Jerusalem move is a provocation that could harm the cause of peace is meaningless, since peace in this world doesn’t matter” [9].

This perceived insensitivity to immorality and harm to others seems to find justification in a statement made by Robert Jeffress on the controversy involving Stormy Daniels, an adult film actress who allegedly had an affair with Trump while he was married to Melania Trump. When asked if the accusation would negatively affect evangelicals’ support of Trump, Jeffress said:

Evangelicals still believe in the commandment “thou shalt not have sex with a porn star” . . . However, whether this president violated that commandment or not is totally irrelevant to our support of him. Evangelicals knew they weren’t voting for an altar boy when they voted for Donald Trump [58, 109].

Tony Perkins’s remark that Trump gets a mulligan (a second chance) on his immoral past [39, 41, 57, 91, 96, 97, 107, 109] and James Dobson’s remark that Trump is a baby Christian [14] who is in the process of learning are seen as an indication of how evangelicals bend their moral rules for Trump as long as his policies help achieve their agenda [96].

As can be seen, evangelicals’ political expediency and compromise are seen as salient characteristics of evangelicals. On the surface, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and moving the American embassy there is described as a political move to send “a powerful message that America will stand by our friends and allies” and to further “the chances of peace in the Middle East by demonstrating that America’s support for Israel is unconditional” (Cruz). However, this alluring language of “peace” is seen as a smokescreen used to shroud evangelicals’ end-time theology.

Voices from the Other Side

As mentioned earlier, not all evangelicals share the same political views, and some even argue that Christians should avoid engaging in partisan politics by all means [100]. These concerned evangelical leaders fear that their image has been tarnished by the association of evangelicals as Trump supporters. This section focuses on the third category, “criticism,” which includes concerns raised by those, including non-Trump-supporting evangelicals and other Christians, who fear that there is a serious discrepancy between what today’s evangelicals exhibit and what they believe “true” Christianity stands for.

A number of articles criticize evangelicals for not holding Trump accountable for lacking compassion and for condoning his racial bigotry, immoral behaviors, and lying [1, 3, 10, 34, 47, 48, 57, 68, 76, 87, 96, 100, 102, 101, 106]. Despite his character shortfalls, Jerry Falwell, Jr., called Trump a “dream president . . . who lives a life of loving and helping others as Jesus taught in the great commandment,” and defended his sexual misconduct by saying, “we are equally bad, we are all sinners” [68]. Phrases such as “brazen hypocrisy” [48], “hypocrites of the highest order” [87], and “scaled the heights of hypocrisy to the summit” [76] convey a strong sense of repugnancy shared among critics.

Others criticize that the “evangel,” the good news of Christ, has been forgotten, or ignored, by many white evangelicals today [55, 57, 78, 79]. For instance, Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, tries to dissuade his fellow evangelicals from elevating politics above faith and laments that today’s evangelicals “waved away some of the most repugnant aspects of immorality” [48]. They are accused of showing tribalism [3, 39] and being far more political than spiritual [15, 44, 47, 48, 57, 74, 100, 106]. Cal Thomas criticizes evangelicals for being misguided as he says, “There is a conceit among some conservative Christians that God is only at work when a person they voted for is elected and that the rest of the time He must be attending to other countries” [12].

Others urge Trump-supporting evangelical peers to be true to the teachings of Jesus, who challenged his followers to love their neighbor as themselves [1, 57]. Anglo evangelicals should be sensitive to the needs of African-American and Latino evangelicals and reject bigotry and racial prejudice in any form [51, 106]. At the core of evangelicalism, they argue, is unselfish love, compassion, humility, and sensitivity to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, including immigrants, refugees, women, and racial, sexual orientation, and religious minorities [2, 16, 17, 20, 34, 47, 57, 71, 85, 91, 98, 107]. They argue that the scope of the term “pro-life” should be broadened to include supporting the lives of these vulnerable people [57], not just protecting the unborn fetus. They argue that racial justice and reconciliation is at the core of the message of Jesus, and racial bigotry and the “America first” mentality underlying much of Trump’s policies are incompatible with Jesus’s teaching [57, 98, 101].

Those evangelicals who criticize Trump-supporting peers plead with their fellow evangelicals to go back to core Christian values such as compassion, love, and the liberating message of Jesus for the poor and the vulnerable [2]. They believe that the Bible instructs God’s people to show compassion and love for the foreigners who reside among them. They fear that politicization of evangelical leaders would harm their religion, if not politics [100].

The prevailing idea conveyed in various criticisms presented here has paramount importance as it directly hits the legitimacy of evangelicalism as a Christian religion. Evangelicals are criticized for having lost “discernment and common sense” [31] and “doing fake news” [78] of the gospel. As they pursue political power and promote legislation that hurts the most vulnerable people, critics are urging evangelicals to make *their religion* great again.

Discussion

The descriptions given above reflect perspectives, interpretations, and commentaries presented in the media. Not all readers may agree on the validity of various views presented above, and there may be some differences between the perspectives presented here and those

of the general public. Nevertheless, the findings of this study do offer some insights to understanding evangelicals' alignment with Trump. Those who identify themselves as evangelicals, as well as others who do not consider themselves as evangelicals while sharing their doctrinal beliefs, may find the media's portrayal of evangelicals – as misguided, panic-stricken political actors who bear no semblance to whom they claim to follow – rather disconcerting or unfair because such depiction would have a bandwagon effect by essentializing the complex identity of evangelicals in a set of ostensible traits. The consistency among news reports highlighting similar properties could be a product of traditional journalistic routines and practices, reflecting ideology of journalism (Ott and Aoki: 498). Although we should be wary of the reductionistic tendencies of popular discourses, the media's portrayal does matter because these observations offer the first reading of evangelicals in Trumpian America for future historians.

The most salient trait of evangelicals that appear in the recurring descriptions of these articles is that of white Christians, who are purportedly driven by fear that the country is in desperate need of a strong man to help save their country from being ruined by policies that are perceived to contradict their version of Christian worldview. For them, religion and politics are fused because they believe that America is founded as a Christian nation, and therefore, the country's laws and policies should align with so-called "Christian worldviews." This view, however, is doubly problematic. First, it is impossible, if not irrelevant, to determine how Christian worldviews translate into decisions in a complex modern society on issues such as immigration, abortion, and same-sex marriage because a wide range of views are shared among Christians. After all, those Democratic leaders such as Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton, whose policies they strongly denounce, are also Christians, which renders much of evangelicals' efforts to regain political power and control "intra-family feuding" (Jones 2016: 40) to outsiders. Second, determining whether the U.S. is a Christian country is equally complex, as it needs to take into consideration the nation's history (see Fea 2011; Green; Kruse), as well as ongoing shifts in people's perceptions, including Christians, as to whether they believe America is a Christian nation. In the early 1950s, Eisenhower signed a statement drafted by the NAE stating that "the United States of America had been founded on the principle of the Holy Bible" (Kruse: 91). However, the Supreme Court moved in the opposite direction, separating church and states (Fea 2018: 48; Williams: 62). According to Piacenza and Jones (2017), increasingly more people across religious groups – including white mainline Protestants, evangelicals, and Catholics – see that America's days as Christian nation are behind them, while there may be others who do not believe those days ever existed. It seems reasonable to predict that evangelicals' outcry that America's public policies should align with Christian principles is likely to have less currency in the future.

The prospect of evangelicalism's sustainability in the U.S. seems bleak when its beliefs and traits, as seen through the eyes of media, are juxtaposed with those of their potential "market" pool. White Christians' median age is among the highest for religious groups in the country (Piacenza and Jones 2016). A new religious typology presented by the Pew Research Center (2018b) provides a new framework for grouping people not according to traditional categories of religion and race, but according to general religious practice and spiritual beliefs. Based on the typology, those who are conservative and attend church regularly are a mere 17 percent. Other studies also point to a deepening chasm between white evangelicals and the

rest of the society. More people now believe that immigrants strengthen the country (Pew Research Center 2018a), and more than 70 percent of Millennials approve same-sex marriage (Pew Research Center 2017). Furthermore, only a quarter of young people (15-24 year olds) have a favorable opinion of President Trump, and the majority of Millennials are liberal and Democratic (Pew Research Center 2018a). All these findings seem to suggest that odds are stacked against white evangelicals as their stance on social issues and alignment with Trump or the Republican Party would further alienate those whom they try to proselytize, which will inevitably stunt the growth of their branch of Christianity.

The most problematic aspect of their portrait is that white evangelicals are now seen, by many, as being far more political than spiritual, whose actions do not match the gospel they preach. The harshest criticism is being voiced by other Christians, including evangelicals. In this study, evangelicals are portrayed as believing that despite his moral failings, Trump is well-suited to help them win the culture war against the growing forces of liberals dominating the country. The dramatic increase in the number of white evangelicals who downplay the importance of personal character in a political leader – from 30 percent in 2011 to 72 percent in 2016 with Trump (Jones 2017) – is rather alarming. The voices from the media are condemning of white evangelicals' pragmatic alliance with a controversial political figure, as they sideline compassion, love, and integration that were at the core of Jesus's teaching. They are criticized for having heaped compassion and love on Trump, while they are much less cordial towards immigrants. Devaluing core principles of character, morality, and compassion in exchange for gaining political influence would be shortsighted, however, because it seriously undermines the validity and legitimacy of their expression of Christianity.

It is also troubling that evangelicals' strong emphasis on ending legal abortion and the nomination of conservative Supreme Court justices makes it seem as though terminating pregnancy is one of the most abominable sins according to the Bible. As noted earlier, evangelicals' stance on abortion dramatically shifted, and the shift was political, rather than theological. It goes without saying that the idea of using the Bible as the basis of the Supreme Court decisions is simply untenable; in fact, the Bible says that divorce is not permissible unless a partner was involved in adultery (Matthew 5:32), and adulterers should be put to death (Deuteronomy 22:22; Leviticus 20:10). It is somewhat puzzling that while the Bible makes no mention of abortion, many evangelicals consider their stance on abortion as sacred as their religious doctrine.

Critics note that Trump, who has had multiple extra-marital affairs, is a hero and savior for moral-touting evangelicals, because he has checked all the right boxes in the evangelicals' political playbook – opposition to abortion and LGBTQ rights and his promise to restore lost religious freedom and recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, among others (Balmer; Fea 2018; Jones 2016).

Conclusion

This study sought to identify prevailing media descriptions of evangelicals by examining how they are defined, characterized, and criticized. The results indicate that the answer to the question as to why evangelicals support Trump resides not so much in their theology, but in their aspirations for America and assumptions of what America should be like. While they see in Trump a modern-day King Cyrus, who can help rebuild their Christian nation, others are

seeing in evangelicals a modern-day Judas Iscariot, a religious pariah, who, through a clandestine arrangement with powerful authority, pursued his own gain. To be sure, there is grave risk involved in homogenizing evangelicals; as mentioned earlier, “evangelical” is a generic label, which defies a neat definition and categorization. Nor is it proper to scapegoat them for the current social and political maladies. However, it is difficult not to be perturbed by the remarks of evangelical leaders who reportedly exert powerful influence on the Trump administration. Although all religious views held by different faith communities deserve respect, when their religious beliefs spill into the political arena to the extent that the leaders demand that the country’s policies and laws conform to their own beliefs, there are great dangers involved. In fact, a yearning for the bygone days of purity and ardent zeal for restoring lost values in the country are not unique to the fundamentalist or evangelical Christianity. Seeking “political action with an ardent desire to discover the blueprint of a pious community” based on “ideological principles” is what characterizes Islamic fundamentalism (Choueiri: 1), and we all know full well the culminating points when it is driven by an insistence on purifying the country of “pagan customs and foreign accretions” (24) while denying “the validity of all other systems and values, and dictates an apparent restitution of a normative set of beliefs untainted by historical change” (157).⁸ It seems ironic that the U.S. government, which denounces fundamentalist ideologies of other faith communities, is being co-opted by a group of prominent evangelical leaders who exhibit similar views and behaviors.

Being born again is considered to be a marker of modern evangelicals. Undoubtedly, the term refers to spiritual rebirth, which draws from Jesus’s saying in John 3:3: “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (NIV). A decade ago, Rogers and Heltzel argued that “the political power of the Religious Right that animated an older generation of evangelical leaders is in rapid decline” (414). However, for white evangelicals who are portrayed here, their political power seems to be being renewed with the 2016 election, as they are “born-again” with Trump as “agents of wrath” (Romans 13:4, NIV). Their symbiotic relationship with the Republican Party, bolstered by their sense of urgency and perceived threat under Democratic presidents, has undoubtedly become solidified in the current administration. As Bean stated, “disentangling evangelicalism from the Republican Party will take as much time, ingenuity, and internal conflict as it took to build this relationship in the first place” (19). But it seems that such efforts would be needed if evangelicals want to influence outsiders, as well as keep their own group intact. Gushee observed that “battles over evangelical involvement with politics are merging into the broader ‘culture wars’ environment that is tearing our country apart” (105). His insight seems even more pertinent today than a decade ago.

This study shows that the society’s perceptions of evangelicals are being filtered largely through the actions and words of key evangelical leaders, who are portrayed as seeking to achieve their political/religious agenda by aligning with a controversial figure whom they see as God’s divine appointment, but who largely embodies attributes opposite to the ones they promote. However, their achievement would be a Pyrrhic victory because doing so mars the credibility and legitimacy of their religious expression while harming the nation. If the leaders do not exercise critical acumen by aligning their actions with the gospel they preach, the

⁸ Choueiri uses this last set of definition for what he calls “Islamic radicalism.”

current evangelicalism may face a similar blow dealt to the fundamentalists by the Scopes Monkey Trial; as they alienate others whom they try to proselytize by labeling them as “evildoers” and wage wars against society by aligning with a “deeply flawed” president, they risk becoming a laughing stock to outsiders.

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Appendix: List of Articles

| # | Title and URL | Type | Date | Source |
|---|---|------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1 | 5 Most Sickening Parts of Trump's Meeting With Evangelical Leaders (http://thefederalist.com/2016/06/23/5-most-sickening-parts-of-trumps-meeting-with-evangelical-leaders/) | OE | 6/23/2016 | The Federalist |
| 2 | A Declaration by American Evangelicals Concerning Donald Trump (https://www.change.org/p/donald-trump-a-declaration-by-american-evangelicals-concerning-donald-trump) | L | 10/6/2016 | Change.org |
| 3 | About that Michael Gerson Think Piece: Why (Many) Evangelicals got Hooked by Donald Trump (https://www.getreligion.org/getreligion/2018/3/17/that-michael-gerson-think-piece-how-many-evangelicals-got-hooked-by-donald-trump) | OE | 3/18/2018 | Get Religion |
| 4 | After Alignment with Trump, Some Evangelicals are Questioning Movement's Leaders (https://www.npr.org/2018/03/14/593609881/after-alignment-with-trump-some-evangelicals-are-questioning-movements-leaders) | I | 3/14/2018 | NPR |
| 5 | Against Donald Trump: Why Evangelicals Must Not Support Trump (https://mereorthodoxy.com/against-donald-trump-evangelicals/) | OE | 2/29/2016 | Mere Orthodoxy |
| 6 | Among White Evangelicals, Regular Churchgoers are the Most Supportive of Trump (http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/26/among-white-evangelicals-regular-churchgoers-are-the-most-supportive-of-trump/) | S | 4/26/2017 | Pew Research Center |
| 7 | An Anti-Trumper Evangelical Weighs in on Trump's True Believers (https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/religion/article/76493-an-anti-trumper-evangelical-weighs-in-on-trump-s-true-believers.html) | I | 4/11/2018 | Publisher's Weekly |

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| 8 | Answering the Question “Why Do Any Evangelicals Still Support Trump?” (https://stream.org/why-do-any-evangelicals-still-support-trump/) | OE | 4/3/2018 | The Stream |
| 9 | Armageddon? Bring It On: The Evangelical Force Behind Trump’s Jerusalem Speech (https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-armageddon-bring-it-on-the-evangelical-force-behind-trump-s-jerusalem-speech-1.5628081) | C | 12/11/2017 | Haaretz |
| 10 | “Believe Me”: Author on Why White Evangelicals Got Behind Donald Trump (https://www.pennlive.com/news/2018/06/believe_me_author_explains_why.html) | I | 6/29/2018 | pennlive.com |
| 11 | Border Separations Open Rift between Trump and Evangelicals (https://www.politico.com/story/2018/06/19/family-separations-evangelicals-ralph-reed-654094) | C | 6/19/2018 | Politico |
| 12 | Are Today’s Evangelicals Following Jesus or Following Trump? (https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/cal-thomas-are-todays-evangelicals-following-jesus-or-following-trump) | OE | 4/24/2018 | Fox News |
| 13 | Can Evangelicalism Survive Donald Trump and Roy Moore? (https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/can-evangelicalism-survive-donald-trump-and-roy-moore) | OE | 12/19/2017 | The New Yorker |
| 14 | Can Evangelicalism Survive in the Age of Trump? (https://www.premierchristianity.com/Blog/Can-evangelicalism-survive-in-the-age-of-Trump) | C | 2/27/2018 | Premier Christianity |
| 15 | Christian Group Calls Out Fellow Evangelicals Who Have Embraced Trump (https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2018/06/15/evangelicals-trump-red-letter-christians) | I | 6/15/2018 | WBUR |
| 16 | Christian Host: Evangelicals Back Trump Because His Oval Office is Scandal-Free (https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2018/04/10/christian-host-evangelicals-back-trump-because-his-oval-office-is-scandal-free/) | T | 4/10/2018 | Friendly Atheist |
| 17 | The Racial Demons that Help Explain Evangelical Support for Trump (https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2018/4/30/17301282/race-evangelicals-trump-support-gerson-atlantic-sexism-segregation-south) | C | 4/30/2018 | Vox |
| 18 | Divisions over Donald Trump Rift among US evangelical Christians (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-evangelicals-christians-donald-trump-divided-politics-religious-right-muslims-support-a7679421.html) | S | 4/12/2017 | Independent |
| 19 | Dollar and Cross: Why Evangelical Support For Donald Trump is Unsurprising (http://www.brownpoliticalreview.org/2017/05/evangelical-support-trump/) | O | 5/26/2017 | Brown Political Review |
| 20 | Donald Trump and the Evangelical “Crisis” (https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/01/donald-trump-and-the-evangelical-crisis) | E | 1/5/2018 | First Things |
| 21 | Donald Trump is no Saint, but I Know Why Evangelicals Love Him (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/05/donald-trump-why-do-evangelicals-support-him) | OE | 9/5/2017 | The Guardian |
| 22 | Evangelical Leader Says Trump Gets ‘a Mulligan’ on Alleged Affair with Porn Star (https://people.com/politics/evangelical-trump-mulligan-porn-star-affair/) | T | 1/24/2018 | People |
| 23 | Evangelical Support for Trump as a Moral Project: Description and Critique (https://voices.uchicago.edu/religionculture/2018/01/16/evangelical-support-for-trump-as-a-moral-project-description-and-critique/) | E | 1/16/2018 | Religion & Culture Forum |
| 24 | Evangelical White Support of Trump (https://jewishjournal.com/blogs/232632/evangelical-white-support-trump/) | OE | 4/3/2018 | Jewish Journal |
| 25 | Evangelicals and Trump (https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/232283/evangelicals-trump.aspx) | S | 4/10/2018 | Gallup |
| 26 | Evangelicals are Souring on Trump, Poll Shows (https://nypost.com/2017/09/15/evangelicals-are-souring-on-trump-poll-shows/) | C | 9/15/2017 | New York Post |

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| 27 | Evangelicals Are Trump's Rock-Solid Base. So Who Are They? (https://www.newsy.com/stories/evangelicals-are-consistent-republican-voters-who-are-they/) | C | 5/4/2018 | Newsy |
| 28 | Evangelicals Back Donald Trump in Record Numbers, Despite Earlier Doubts (https://www.wsj.com/articles/evangelicals-back-donald-trump-in-record-numbers-despite-earlier-doubts-1478689372) | C | 11/9/2016 | The Wall Street Journal |
| 29 | Evangelicals Pimping For Trump – Literally! (https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/evangelicals-pimping-for-trump-literally/) | T | 6/26/2018 | The American Conservative |
| 30 | Evangelicals Rally to Trump, Religious 'Nones' Back Clinton (http://www.pewforum.org/2016/07/13/evangelicals-rally-to-trump-religious-nones-back-clinton/) | S | 7/13/2016 | Pew Research Center |
| 31 | Evangelicals Recast Trump as an Old Testament king. Will He Usher in Second Coming? (https://www.kentucky.com/living/religion/paul-prather/article205469924.html) | OE | 3/16/2018 | Lexington Herald Leader |
| 32 | Evangelicals Rethink Alliance with Trump (https://www.pressherald.com/2018/04/13/evangelicals-rethink-alliance-with-trump/) | C | 4/13/2018 | Portland Press Herald |
| 33 | Evangelicals' Uncritical Embrace of Trump (https://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/opinion/article161457368.html) | OE | 7/16/2017 | Charlotte Observer |
| 34 | Why Evangelicals Support Trump Despite His Immorality (http://time.com/5161349/president-trump-white-evangelical-support-slaveholders/) | OE | 2/16/2018 | Time |
| 35 | For Evangelical Leader, Trump Now Like 'Cyrus' (https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/For-evangelical-leader-Trump-now-like-Cyrus-517266) | NS | 12/7/2017 | The Jerusalem Post |
| 36 | For Such a Time as This: Conservative Evangelical Women and the Trump Presidency (https://religionandpolitics.org/2018/03/06/for-such-a-time-as-this-conservative-evangelical-women-and-the-trump-presidency/) | P | 3/6/2018 | Religion & Politics |
| 37 | Former GOP White House official: Evangelicals' Mulligan Defense of Trump is 'Complete Hypocrisy' (https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/20/politics/pete-wehner-axe-files/index.html) | NS | 3/20/2018 | CNN |
| 38 | Has Trump Caused White Evangelicals to Change Their Tune on Morality? (https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2016/10/19/has-trump-caused-white-evangelicals-to-change-their-tune-on-morality/) | O | 10/19/2016 | Brookings |
| 39 | Holy Hypocrisy! Evangelical Leaders Say Trump's Stormy affair is OK (https://www.nj.com/opinion/index.ssf/2018/03/holy_hypocrisy_evangelical_leaders_say_trumps_stor.html) | T | 3/13/2018 | nj.com |
| 40 | Hopeful and Relieved, Conservative White evangelicals see Trump's win as their own (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/15/hopeful-and-relieved-evangelicals-see-trumps-win-as-their-own/?utm_term=.d30219628496) | C | 11/15/2016 | The Washington Post |
| 41 | How Evangelical Leaders are Responding to the Stormy Daniels Story (https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a15895083/evangelical-leaders-trump-stormy-daniels/) | C | 1/26/2018 | Esquire |
| 42 | How Evangelical Republicans Brought Themselves to Vote for Donald Trump (https://www.minnpost.com/eric-black-ink/2017/09/how-evangelical-republicans-brought-themselves-vote-donald-trump/) | OE | 9/20/2017 | MinnPost |
| 43 | In Age of Trump, Evangelicals Back Self-Styled Top U.S. Pimp (https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-religion-brothels/in-age-of-trump-evangelicals-back-self-styled-top-u-s-pimp-idUSKBN1JI1A9) | P | 6/22/2018 | Reuters |
| 44 | In the Age of Trump, a Moment of Decision for Evangelicals-Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (https://www.heraldsun.com/opinion/article209847194.html) | OE | 4/26/2018 | The Herald Sun |
| 45 | In Trump Era, What Does It Mean to be an 'Evangelical'? (https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2017/1228/In-Trump-era-what-does-it-mean-to-be-an-Evangelical) | OE | 12/28/2017 | The Christian Science Monitor |

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| 46 | In Trump, Evangelicals have Found their President (https://www.kansascity.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/syndicated-columnists/article203084974.html) | OE | 3/3/2018 | The Kansas City Star |
| 47 | Evangelicals' Support for Trump is Hypocritical (https://www.petoskeynews.com/news/opinion/letters_to_editor/letter-evangelicals-support-for-trump-is-hypocritical/article_a771e336-631e-5e96-8e9f-bc3007a0c855.html) | L | 3/30/2018 | Petoskey News |
| 48 | Many White Evangelicals Stand by Trump Because They Are More White Than Evangelical (https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2017/12/many-white-evangelicals-stand-trump-because-they-are-more-white-evangelical) | OE | 12/7/2017 | New Statesman America |
| 49 | No, the Majority of American Evangelicals Did Not Vote for Trump (https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/no-the-majority-of-american-evangelicals-did-not-vote-for-trump/) | C | 11/15/2016 | The Gospel Coalition |
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| 52 | Opinion: Evangelicals Replace Reverence for God with Reverence for Trump (https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/opinion/columnists/2018/03/23/opinion-evangelicals-replace-reverence-god-reverence-trump/454024002/) | O | 3/23/2018 | Montgomery Advertiser |
| 53 | Poll: White Evangelical Support for Trump at Record High (https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/383886-poll-white-evangelical-support-for-trump-at-record-high) | S | 4/19/2018 | The Hill |
| 54 | President Trump Gets a Stormy Daniels Bump with Evangelicals: Rodney Hessinger and Kristen Tobey (https://www.cleveland.com/opinion/index.ssf/2018/04/president_trumps_stormy_daniel.html) | OE | 4/11/2018 | cleveland.com |
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| 56 | Push by Evangelicals Helped Set Stage for Trump Decision on Jerusalem (https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-evangelicals/push-by-evangelicals-helped-set-stage-for-trump-decision-on-jerusalem-idUSKBN1E104U) | NS | 12/6/2017 | Reuters |
| 57 | Reclaiming Jesus from the Trump Evangelicals (https://sojo.net/articles/reclaiming-jesus-trump-evangelicals) | OE | 3/29/2018 | Sojourners |
| 58 | Robert Jeffress: Trump's Alleged Affair with Porn star 'Totally Irrelevant' to His Evangelical Base (https://baptistnews.com/article/robert-jeffress-alleged-affair-porn-star-totally-irrelevant-trumps-evangelical-base/#.XFg6wVVKjDc) | NS | 3/9/2018 | Baptist News Global |
| 59 | Several Christian Leaders Walk Out After Evangelical Meeting Turns to Trump-Bashing (https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/politics/2018/april/trump-s-faith-advisory-council-pushes-back-against-lesquo-evangelical-identity-rsquo-meeting) | NS | 4/17/2018 | CBN News |
| 60 | Shrugging Off Trump Scandals, Evangelicals Look to Rescue G.O.P. (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/us/politics/trump-evangelicals-midterm-elections.html) | C | 4/24/2018 | The New York Times |
| 61 | Study: Clinton Voters Much More Likely to Leave Evangelicalism Than Trump Voters (https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/april/clinton-trump-voters-evangelical-identity-2016-election.html) | C | 4/30/2018 | Christianity Today |
| 62 | Support for Trump Could Spell End of the Evangelical Church. But When? (https://baptistnews.com/article/support-for-trump-could-spell-end-of-the-evangelical-church-but-when/#.XFhHmlVKjDc) | C | 3/19/2018 | Baptist News Global |
| 63 | The Jerusalem Embassy Ceremony Is A Huge Gift From Trump To Evangelicals (https://forward.com/news/israel/401108/the-jerusalem-embassy-ceremony-is-a-huge-gift-from-trump-to-evangelicals/) | C | 3/14/2018 | Forward |

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| 64 | The Miracle of Trump: Why Did Evangelicals Deliver the Votes For a Sinner? (https://psmag.com/news/the-miracle-of-trump-why-did-evangelicals-deliver-the-votes-for-a-sinner) | OE | 2/13/2017 | Pacific Standard |
| 65 | The 'Trump Effect' and Evangelicals (https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/springsummer2017/trump-effect-and-evangelicals) | OE | Spring/Summer 2017 | Harvard Divinity Bulletin |
| 66 | To Evangelicals, Trump is the Whirlwind. And They're Fine with That (https://www.yahoo.com/news/evangelicals-trump-whirlwind-theyre-fine-030853540.html) | OE | 5/24/2017 | Yahoo! |
| 67 | Trump and Evangelicals, the Culmination of an Unholy Alliance (https://whowhatwhy.org/2017/05/16/trump-evangelicals-culmination-unholy-alliance/) | C | 5/16/2017 | Who. What. Why. |
| 68 | Trump and the Evangelical Electorate (https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/trump-evangelical-electorate-180126090925883.html) | OE | 2/1/2018 | Al Jazeera |
| 69 | Trump and White Evangelicals: Support for President Grows, but Millennials Leave Movement (https://www.newsweek.com/trump-evangelicals-support-millennials-888267) | C | 4/17/2018 | Newsweek |
| 70 | Trump Caters More to Evangelicals Than the Working Class (https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2018/05/21/trump_caters_more_to_evangelicals_than_the_working_class_137076.html) | OE | 5/21/2018 | Real Clear Politics |
| 71 | Trump Promises Evangelical Conference He'll save Christmas, Kill Poor people (https://www.avclub.com/trump-promises-evangelical-conference-hell-save-christm-1819449299) | T | 10/13/2017 | AV Club |
| 72 | Trump, Netanyahu Take Evangelical Support to a New Level (https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-05-14/trump-netanyahu-take-evangelical-support-new-level) | NS | 5/14/2018 | Public Radio International |
| 73 | Trump, the Evangelicals and the Middle East (https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/trump-evangelicals-and-middle-east) | OE | 5/22/2018 | Middle East Eye |
| 74 | Trump's Evangelical Voters Are Not Hypocrites (https://arcdigital.media/trumps-evangelical-voters-are-not-hypocrites-e459003fc2f5) | E | 11/1/2017 | Arc Digital |
| 75 | Trump's 's---hole' Remark Rattles Evangelicals, other Christians (https://www.kansas.com/news/local/article194508159.html) | C | 1/12/2018 | The Wichita Eagle |
| 76 | Trump Evangelicals Sold Their Souls (https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trump-evangelicals-have-sold-their-souls/2018/03/12/ba7fe0f8-262c-11e8-874b-d517e912f125_story.html?utm_term=.37eca82cfb6c) | OE | 3/12/2018 | The Washington Post |
| 77 | Watch Samantha Bee Probe Why Evangelicals Still Support Trump (https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-news/watch-samantha-bee-probe-why-evangelicals-still-support-trump-205391/) | I | 12/21/2017 | Rolling Stone |
| 78 | What Should We Do About Trump? Ask Ex-Evangelicals (https://splinternews.com/what-should-we-do-about-trump-ask-ex-evangelicals-1818817424) | P | 9/26/2017 | Splinter News |
| 79 | What's Behind Evangelical Support for Donald Trump? Less Than You Think (https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/whats-behind-evangelical-support-donald-trump-less-you-think-n666146) | C | 10/16/2016 | NBC News |
| 80 | What's Next for Evangelicalism? (https://newrepublic.com/article/148779/whats-next-evangelicalism) | C | 6/7/2018 | The New Republic |
| 81 | White Evangelical Support for Donald Trump at All-Time High (https://www.pri.org/spotlight/white-evangelical-support-for-donald-trump-at-all-time-high/) | S | 4/18/2018 | PRRI |
| 82 | White evangelical support for Donald Trump at all-time high (https://boingboing.net/2018/04/19/white-evangelical-support-for.html) | S | 4/19/2018 | Boing Boing |
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| 84 | White Evangelicals Oppose Calls to Impeach Trump (https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/august/white-evangelicals-oppose-calls-to-impeach-trump.html) | NS | 8/17/2017 | Christianity Today |
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| 87 | Who's Riding Who: 8 Evangelical Leaders Still On The Trump Train (https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/evangelical-leaders-trump) | T | 8/16/2017 | Bitch Media |
| 88 | Why are evangelicals sticking with Trump despite Stormy Daniels allegations? (https://www.cbsnews.com/news/evangelical-christians-supporters-voters-favor-donald-trump-cbsnews-poll-stormy-daniels/) | C | 4/4/2018 | CBS News |
| 89 | Why Are Evangelicals Supporting a President Who Allegedly Had an Affair with a Porn Star? (https://www.gq.com/story/trump-evangelical-support?verso=true) | C | 1/23/2018 | GQ |
| 90 | Why Believers Support Trump (https://townhall.com/columnists/susanstamperbrown/2017/08/14/why-believers-support-trump-n2368163) | O | 8/14/2017 | Townhall |
| 91 | Why do evangelicals love Trump? Dumb Question: Why Wouldn't They? (https://www.salon.com/2018/01/30/why-do-evangelicals-love-trump-dumb-question-why-wouldnt-they/) | T | 1/30/2018 | Salon |
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| 93 | Why Do US Evangelicals Support Trump's Jerusalem Policy? (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42402350) | C | 1/5/2018 | BBC News |
| 94 | Why Evangelicals Are Born Again for Donald Trump (https://www.thedailybeast.com/why-evangelicals-are-born-again-for-donald-trump) | OE | 2/23/2016 | Daily Beast |
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| 96 | Why Evangelicals Don't Care About Trump's Affair (https://www.buzzworthy.com/trump-affair-gets-pass-from-evangelicals/) | C | 2/8/2018 | Buzzworthy |
| 97 | Why Evangelicals Made a Deal with the Devilish Donald Trump (https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/page/ct-perspec-page-trump-evangelicals-tony-perkins-0128-20180126-story.html) | OE | 1/26/2018 | Chicago Tribune |
| 98 | Why Evangelicals Should Rethink the Trump Gospel (https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/31/opinions/evangelicals-samaritan-immigration-leadership-cornell-brooks-opinion/index.html) | OE | 1/31/2018 | CNN |
| 99 | Why Evangelicals Support Donald Trump By Kaitlyn Dombrowski (https://www.ucpublicaffairs.com/home/2018/5/7/why-evangelicals-support-donald-trump-by-kaitlyn-dombrowski) | C | 5/7/2018 | Utica College Center of Public Affairs and Election Research |
| 100 | Why Evangelicals Voted for Donald Trump . . . and Continue to Support Him (https://www.redletterchristians.org/why-evangelicals-voted-for-donald-trump-continue-to-support-him/) | OE | 7/24/2017 | Red Letter Christians |
| 101 | Why Every Member of Trump's Evangelical Advisory Board Should Quit, And Why They Probably Won't (https://auburnseminary.org/voices/trump-evangelical-advisory-board/) | OE | 8/18/2017 | Auburn Seminary |
| 102 | Why White Evangelicals Abandoned Their Principles for Donald Trump (https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/03/why-white-evangelicals-abandoned-their-principles-for-trump.html) | I | 3/13/2018 | slate.com |
| 103 | Will Trump's Meeting With Evangelicals Get Stormy? (https://www.advocate.com/politics/2018/4/07/will-trumps-meeting-evangelicals-get-stormy) | T | 4/7/2018 | The Advocate |

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| 104 | Worldly Politics, Not Heavenly Powers, Inspire Evangelicals to Stick with Trump (https://www.latimes.com/opinion/topoftheticket/la-na-tt-evangelicals-trump-20170829-story.html) | OE | 8/30/2017 | Los Angeles Times |
| 105 | Why Many Evangelicals Support Donald Trump (http://thefederalist.com/2016/05/17/blame-pastors-for-evangelicals-trump-support/) | O | 5/17/2016 | The Federalist |
| 106 | 4 Problems Associated with White Evangelical Support of Donald Trump (https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/thabit-anyabwile/4-problems-associated-with-white-evangelical-support-of-donald-trump/) | O | 11/9/2016 | The Gospel Coalition |
| 107 | How Evangelical Leaders are Responding to the Stormy Daniels Story (https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a15895083/evangelical-leaders-trump-stormy-daniels/) | C | 1/26/2018 | Esquire (Hearst Digital Media) |
| 108 | Might There Be Another Reason That Evangelical Whites Stick with Trump? (https://jewishjournal.com/blogs/232632/evangelical-white-support-trump/) | OE | 4/3/2018 | Jewish Journal |
| 109 | White Evangelicals Can't Quit Donald Trump (https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/white-evangelicals-cant-quit-donald-trump/558461/) | C | 4/20/2018 | The Atlantic |
| 110 | Evangelicals, Trump and the politics of redemption (https://religionnews.com/2017/08/11/evangelicals-trump-and-the-politics-of-redemption/) | O | 8/11/2017 | RNS (Religion News Service) |

*C: commentary; OE: op-ed; O: opinion; NS: news story; S: survey; T: Tabloid; P: profile; E: essay; L: letter. The categories indicate overall traits of the articles, but in many cases, there is an overlap between types.