

C. S. LEWIS IN TIMES OF TRUMP

A selection for Trump-voting and Lewis-reading
American Christians, offered as an
INVITATION TO THINK AGAIN

by
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SEPTEMBER 2020

Given the surge in [American] evangelical political participation beginning in the 1970s, Lewis' influence on evangelicals is all the more politically significant.

— Justin Buckley Dyer and Micah J. Watson,
C. S. Lewis on Politics and the Natural Law
(Cambridge U.P., 2017), page 13, note 60



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Extracts from C. S. Lewis's writings are presented in chronological order. Most of them are followed by a comment (>) specifying the reason for inclusion. A general analysis and practical conclusion is submitted at the end. For more information on the availability of Lewis's shorter writings see www.lewisiana.nl/cslessays.

Utrecht, The Netherlands, September 2020

¶ 1. *Getting a clear issue*

If all Christians consented to bear arms at the command of the magistrate, and if all, after that, refused to obey anti-Christian orders, should we not get a clear issue? A man is much more certain that he ought not to murder prisoners or bomb civilians than he ever can be about the justice of a war. It is perhaps here that “conscientious objection” ought to begin. I feel certain that one Christian airman shot for refusing to bomb enemy civilians would be a more effective martyr (in the etymological sense of the word) than a hundred Christians in jail for refusing to join the army.

Letter to the editor, *Theology*, May 1939
Collected Letters, vol. II, p. 251-2; also in *God in the Dock* (1970), p. 325

> The letter was published under the heading “The Conditions for a Just War” four months before the beginning of World War II. As the first item in this chronological sequence, this extract provides a useful warning that the political significance of C. S. Lewis for today often needs to be distilled and distinguished from the issues of his day. For present purposes his point is probably best taken if questions about the ethics of international armed conflict are put on hold; what remains is a point about “effective martyrdom”. The etymological sense of “martyr” is a person who gives testimony of his or her faith by undergoing torture and death rather than renouncing it. Being “effective” is not making this or that particular sensation, but making sure that what results is “a clear issue”.

¶ 2. *Ends and means, doves and serpents*

The danger of mistaking our merely natural, though perhaps legitimate, enthusiasms for holy zeal, is always great. ... On those who add “Thus said the Lord” to their merely human utterances descends the doom of a conscience which seems clearer and clearer the more it is loaded with sin.

All this comes from pretending that God has spoken when He has not spoken. He will not settle the two brothers’ inheritance: “Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?” By the natural light He has shown us what means are lawful: to find out which one is efficacious He has given us brains. The rest He has left to us.

... Non-conformity* has influenced modern English history not because there was a Party but because there was a Nonconformist conscience which all parties had to take into account. An interdenominational Christian Voters’ Society might draw up a list of assurances about ends and means which every member was expected to exact from any political party as the price of his support. Such a society might claim to represent Christendom far more truly than any “Christian Front”; and for that reason I should be prepared, in principle, for membership and obedience to be obligatory on Christians. “So all it comes down to is pestering M.P.’s† with letters?” Yes: just that. I think such pestering combines the dove and the serpent. I think it

* An umbrella term for English Protestants outside the Church of England.

† Members of Parliament.

means a world where parties have to take care not to alienate Christians, instead of a world where Christians have to be “loyal” to infidel parties. ... But I had forgotten. ... He who converts his neighbour has performed the most practical Christian-political act of all.

— “Meditation on the Third Commandment”, 1941
God in the Dock (1971), pp. 198-199

> When Lewis wrote that God has shown us by the natural light “what means are lawful”, he was referring to traditional morality – the *Tao*, as he once called it. Many Trump-voting Christians deplore Trump’s moral character but still think he can and must be used as a means to a set of non-negotiable Christian ends, such as de-legalizing abortion and safeguarding Christian education. Is Trump a traditionally “lawful” means to these ends? The *Tao* includes a ban on lying. Trump appears to have no regard for distinctions between truth and falsehood except for purposes of propaganda; he is a serial liar. This is relevant for comparisons made between Trump’s sins and those of the Biblical hero King David. Should a Nathan-like prophet arise, president Trump’s response is sure to be the opposite of King David’s. Equating Donald with David is therefore to pull the sting from one of the Old Testament’s most powerful stories. Safeguarding Christian education under the protection of a serial liar whose one approach to critics is head-on scorn and insult is likely to pervert such education: Trump would not tolerate the breeding of any Nathans, and presidential lying would continue unchecked. Also, since promises are an important department of truth, and Trump is often considered to be keeping his election promises, it is to be noted that his single most solemn and important promise – *to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States* – is one which to all appearances he has made without knowing what it means. As could be predicted in 2016, he now questions the validity of upcoming elections in case he will lose them. Granting this president four more years, in exchange for whichever gain, is to bargain away one’s bargaining power. Christian attempts to use Trump as a means toward their own ends suggest that the “dove” and the “serpent” have both been laid to rest: adopting this means is neither moral nor shrewd.

¶ 3. *What’s worse*

... Persecution is a temptation to which all men are exposed. I had a postcard signed “M.D.” saying that anyone who expressed and published his belief in the Virgin Birth should be stripped and flogged. That shows you how easily persecution of Christians by the non-Christians might come back. Of course, they wouldn’t call it Persecution: they’d call it “Compulsory re-education of the ideologically unfit”, or something like that. But, of course, I have to admit that Christians themselves have been persecutors in the past. It was worse of them, because *they* ought to have known better: they weren’t worse in any other way. I detest every kind of religious compulsion: only the other day I was writing an angry letter to *The Spectator* about Church Parades in the Home Guard!

— “Answers to Questions on Christianity”, 1944
God in the Dock (1970), p. 61

> Although Lewis died in 1963, several passages in his work may be found to give eloquent support for this or that part of the political agenda of Trump-voting Christians today. However, using such extracts will often be awkward since Lewis rarely fails to add some profoundly anti-Trumpian note of self-accusation.

¶ 4. *Getting further*

... the New Testament, without going into details, gives us a pretty clear hint of what a fully Christian society would be like. ... If there were such a society in existence and you or I visited it, I think we should come away with a curious impression. We should feel that its economic life was very socialistic and, in that sense, “advanced,” but that its family life and its code of manners were rather old fashioned – perhaps even ceremonious and aristocratic. Each of us would like some bits of it, but I am afraid very few of us would like the whole thing. That is just what one would expect if Christianity is the total plan for the human machine. We have all departed from that total plan in different ways, and each of us wants to make out that his own modification of the original plan is the plan itself. You will find this again and again about anything that is really Christian: every one is attracted by bits of it and wants to pick out those bits and leave the rest. That is why we do not get much further: and that is why people who are fighting for quite opposite things can both say they are fighting for Christianity.

— *Christian Behaviour*, 1943, chapter 2
Mere Christianity (1952), III.3, “Social Morality”, pp. 66-67

> Christian statements of support for Trump, if they go into some detail, naturally tend to include additional considerations which have no specifically Christian grounds; some might on a closer look go against Christian teaching. The point to take is, not that Christians should try to reach agreement on every single issue, but that these additional issues need to be distinguished from the non-negotiables. In suggesting “we do not get much further” he may mean Christians fail to get a “clear issue”.

¶ 5. *Errors in pairs*

I feel a strong desire to tell you – and I expect you feel a strong desire to tell me – which of these two errors is the worse. That is the devil getting at us. He always sends errors into the world in pairs – pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one. But do not let us be fooled. We have to keep our eyes on the goal and go straight through between both errors. We have no other concern than that with either of them.

— *Beyond Personality*, 1944, chapter 6
Mere Christianity (1952), IV.6, “Two Notes”, p. 147

> The errors in question need not be cited here, since Lewis certainly wished this advice to be interpreted as broadly as possible. Abhorring one of two presidential candidates may make the other seem less horrible even if he is, on balance, just as bad.

¶ 6. *Retracing our steps*

... since we have learned sin, we have found, as Lord Acton says, that “all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. The only remedy has been to take away the powers and substitute a legal fiction of equality. ...

Equality is for me in the same position as clothes. It is a result of the Fall and the remedy for it. Any attempt to retrace the steps by which we have arrived at egalitarianism and to re-introduce the old authorities on the political level is for me as foolish as it would be to take off our clothes. ... [T]his egalitarian fiction ... is our only defence against one another’s cruelty. I should view with the strongest disapproval any proposal to abolish manhood suffrage, or the Married Women’s Property Act. But the function of equality is purely protective. It is medicine, not food.

— “Membership”, 1945
The Weight of Glory (1980, 2001), pp. 168-170

> Lewis is talking of our having “found” a truth, of “retracing steps”, and of “old authorities” which he would hate to see re-instated. It seems to evince, in effect, a good deal of standard modern belief in human progress, though not on modern grounds. Perhaps, if pressed, he would have pointed out that supporting democracy and the rule of law is a matter of using our God-given “brains” so as to find among the lawful “means” those which are efficacious.

¶ 7. *Christianity on the map*

...The “decline of religion” so often lamented (or welcomed) is held to be shown by empty chapels.* Now it is quite true that chapels which were full in 1900 are empty in 1946. But this change was not gradual. It occurred at the precise moment when chapel ceased to be compulsory. ... The new freedom first allowed accurate observations to be made. When no man goes to church except because he seeks Christ the number of actual believers can at last be discovered. ... The decline of “religion”, thus understood, seems to me in some ways a blessing. At the very worst it makes the issue clear. ... The decline of “religion” is no doubt a bad thing for the “World”. ... But I am not clear that it makes conversions to Christianity rare or more difficult: rather the reverse. It makes the choice more unescapable. ...

So much for the Decline of Religion; now for a Christian Revival ... [P]erhaps no one would deny that Christianity is now “on the map” among the younger *intelligentsia* as it was not, say, in 1920. ... But remember, in England the opposition will quite likely be *called* Christianity (or Christo-democracy, or British Christianity, or something of that kind).

I think – but how should I know? – that all is going reasonably well. But it is early days. Neither our armour nor our enemies’ is yet engaged. Combatants always tend to imagine that the war is further on than it really is.

—“The Decline of Religion”, 1946
God in the Dock (1970), pp. 218-223

* College chapels.

> For the currently relevant point to emerge, Lewis’s essay is perhaps best read as a whole. Talking of the prospects for Christianity in Britain, and while using militant language, he never alludes to any *political* way in which he thinks the post-war Christian revival in Great Britain could or should or does proceed. The one exception is a short and rather slighting remark in parentheses at the tail end of his essay, and it seems to imply a warning rather than a recommendation. To go by Lewis, the chances of Christianity finding a suitable embedding in politics are dim.

¶ 8. *Little to fear or hope*

A society which is predominantly Christian will propagate Christianity through its schools; one which is not, will not. All the ministries of education in the world cannot alter this law. We have, in the long run, little either to hope or fear from government.

—“On the Transmission of Christianity”, 1946
God in the Dock (1970), pp. 116-117

¶ 9. *Reasonable prudence*

I am a democrat because I believe that no man or group of men is good enough to be trusted with uncontrolled power over others. And the higher the pretensions of such power, the more dangerous I think it both to the rulers and to the subjects. Hence Theocracy is the worst of all governments. If we must have a tyrant, a robber baron is far better than an inquisitor. The baron’s cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity at some point be sated; and since he dimly knows he is doing wrong he may possibly repent. But the inquisitor who mistakes his own cruelty and lust of power and fear for the voice of Heaven will torment us infinitely because he torments us with the approval of his own conscience and his better impulses appear to him as temptations. And since Theocracy is the worst, the nearer any government approaches to Theocracy the worse it will be. A metaphysic, held by the rulers with the force of a religion, is a bad sign. It forbids them, like the inquisitor, to admit any grain of truth or good in their opponents, it abrogates the ordinary rules of morality, and it gives a seemingly high, super-personal sanction to all the very ordinary human passions by which, like other men, the rulers will frequently be actuated. In a word, it forbids wholesome doubt. A political programme can never in reality be more than probably right. We never know all the facts about the present and we can only guess the future. To attach to a party programme – whose highest real claim is to reasonable prudence – the sort of assent which we should reserve for demonstrable theorems, is a kind of intoxication.

— “A Reply to Professor Haldane”, 1946
On Stories (1982), pp. 75-76

> For today’s American purposes, Lewis’s preference for the “robber baron” over the “inquisitor” could perhaps be construed as a preference for Trump over progressives. However, for some Christians the decisive reason to vote for Trump appears to be an expectation that God, at the Last Judgment, will call them to account if they do not now at any cost prevent non-Christians from having abortions or same-sex marriages, or fail to side with the state of Israel. In light of

Lewis's abhorrence of Theocracy, wherever such considerations are actually decisive for Trump-voting Christians, they would seem to come perilously near to combining the worst of two worlds rather than seeking a way to "go straight through between both errors".

¶ 10. *Never put survival first*

... There is "another world", and that is where we come from. And that explains why we do not feel at home here. ... But what, then, is Nature, and how do we come to be imprisoned in a system so alien to us? ... Nature, like us but in her different way, is much alienated from her Creator, though in her, as in us, gleams of the old beauty remain. But they are there not to be worshipped but to be enjoyed. She has nothing to teach us. It is our business to live by our own law not by hers: to follow, in private or in public life, the law of love and temperance even when they seem to be suicidal, and not the law of competition and grab, even when they seem to be necessary to our survival. For it is part of our spiritual law never to put survival first: not even the survival of our species. We must resolutely train ourselves to feel that the survival of Man on this Earth, much more of our own nation or culture or class, is not worth having unless it can be had by honourable and merciful means.

— "On Living in an Atomic Age", 1948
Present Concerns (1982), pp. 78-79

¶ 11. *Knives who say and fools who believe*

I feel greatly obliged to the Prime Minister,* and so far as my personal feelings are concerned this honour would be highly agreeable. There are always however knives who say, and fools who believe, that my religious writings are all covert anti-Leftist propaganda, and my appearance in the Honours List would of course strengthen their hands. It is therefore better that I should not appear there. I am sure the Prime Minister will understand my reason, and that my gratitude is and will be none the less cordial.

— Letter to the Prime Minister's secretary, 4 December 1951
Collected Letters, vol. III, p. 147

> Lewis's religious writings, along with the rest, don't make it altogether easy to believe that he would have ever voted for Trump. But whichever hypothesis we like to entertain, it would be an error to align his supposed choice with any specifically left-wing or right-wing priorities and sympathies.

* Winston Churchill, who had offered Lewis the honorary title of C.B.E., "Commander of the British Empire".

¶ 12. *Revolution*

Revolutions seldom cure the evil against which they are directed; they always beget a hundred others. Often they perpetuate the old evil under a new name. We may be sure that, if [in Britain] a Ku Klux Klan arose, its ranks would soon be chiefly filled by the same sort of hooligans who provoked it. A Right or Central revolution would be as hypocritical, filthy and ferocious as any other. My fear is lest we should be making it more probable.

— “Delinquents in the Snow”, 1957
God in the Dock (1970), p. 309

> In a bitterly anti-“progressive” column in *Time and Tide*, Lewis was sounding an alarm which, half a century on, Americans both on the left and the right may heed with profit. As a conservative in the authentic sense, he opposed Revolution as such. In so far as Trump’s inauguration as president was a “Right revolution”, it comes close to what Lewis was fearing along with any “Left” or other revolution and the way one provokes the other.

¶ 13. *The black man and the red man*

We know what our race does to strangers. Man destroys or enslaves every species he can. Civilized man murders, enslaves, cheats, and corrupts savage man. Even inanimate nature he turns into dust bowls and slag-heaps. There are individuals who don’t. But they are not the sort who are likely to be our pioneers in space. Our ambassador to new worlds will be the needy and greedy adventurer or the ruthless technical expert. They will do as their kind has always done. What that will be if they meet things weaker than themselves, the black man and the red man can tell. If they meet things stronger, they will be, very properly, destroyed.

— “Religion and Rocketry”, 1958
Fern-seed and Elephants (1975), p. 91-92; also in *The World Last Night* (1960)

> Some passages in Lewis’s writings provide eloquent support for broadly “conservative” political aims; others would seem no less supportive of “progressive” ones. If C. S. Lewis is to inspire political discourse today, wholesale assimilation to any preconceived political agenda is to be avoided if his true significance for any party is to come out.

¶ 14. *Power and corruption*

... I do not like the pretensions of Government – the grounds on which it demands my obedience – to be pitched too high. I don’t like the medicine-man’s magical pretensions nor the Bourbon’s Divine Right. ... I believe in God, but I detest theocracy. For every Government consists of mere men and is, strictly viewed, a makeshift; if it adds to its commands “Thus saith the Lord”, it lies, and lies dangerously.

... In every age the men who want us under their thumb, if they have any sense, will put forward the particular pretension which the hopes and fears of that age render most potent. They “cash in”. It has been magic, it has been Christianity. Now it will certainly be science. ...

... Have we discovered some new reason why, this time, power should not corrupt as it has done before?

— “Is Progress Possible? Willing Slaves of the Welfare State”, 1958
God in the Dock (1970), 315-316

> The final question concludes Lewis’s “Willing Slaves” essay. In spite of changing conditions and shifting objects of hope and fear, the question appears to be as relevant for Americans as it has ever been in the history of the United States. If power has not corrupted president Trump, it is because he was corrupt from the outset. During the 2016 campaign he departed from custom by refusing to reveal his tax returns, in spite of promises to do so. Having secured the nomination for a second term, he still hasn’t. If only for this reason, for Christians to vote for Trump requires a flouting of the instruction contained in Matthew 10:16 for sheep sent out among wolves – to be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”*

¶ 15. *Unprotesting participation*

... I am inclined to think a Christian would be wise to avoid, where he decently can, any meeting with people who are bullies, lascivious, cruel, dishonest, spiteful and so forth.

Not because we are “too good” for them. In a sense because we are not good enough. We are not good enough to cope with all the temptations, nor clever enough to cope with all the problems, which an evening spent in such society produces. The temptation is to condone, to connive at; by our words, looks and laughter, to “consent.” ...

What is one to do? For on the one hand, quite certainly, there is a degree of unprotesting participation in such talk which is very bad. ... By implication we are denying our Master; behaving as if we “knew not the Man”. ... Disagreement can, I think, sometimes be expressed without the appearance of priggery, if it is done argumentatively not dictatorially ... There comes of course a degree of evil against which a protest will have to be made, however little chance it has of success. There are cheery agreements in cynicism or brutality which one must contract out of unambiguously. If it can’t be done without seeming priggish, then priggish we must seem. ... [T]here are circles in which only a man indifferent to all accuracy will escape being called a pedant, and others where manners are so coarse, flashy and shameless that a man (whatever his social position) of any natural good taste will be called a snob.

— *Reflections on the Psalms*, 1958,
chapter 7, “Connivance”, p. 71-74

> As examples of evil, Lewis mentions “cynicism or brutality”, but he doesn’t specify the “degrees” of them which would require protest. He is only reminding his readers that such degrees exist. However, he mentions “cheery agreement” as a possible sign of things going wrong. Among Christian and other Trump-voters, perhaps many keep their distance from the man, pointing out that they are not voting for *him* – far from it – but for a set of policies that can be advanced only by voting for him. The implication must be that they have weighed what they consider the upside against the downside of such a vote. Quite often, though, self-deception about the downside appears to be at work among Trump voters, including Christians among them. Along with the policies, an unprecedented regime of lies, callousness, divisiveness, self-

* Or “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent and doves” (NIV).

aggrandizement, incompetence and routine undermining of the Constitution started the moment Trump was sworn in as president. After four years, his Christian electoral flank still appears to be effectively covered by his vice president, Mike Pence. On August 26th 2020, in Baltimore, Pence accepted the candidacy for a second term as Trump's vice-president with a speech containing the following passages:

Now we came by very different routes to this partnership, and some people think we are a little bit different. But, you know, I have learned a few things watching him, watching him deal with all that we have been through over the past four years. He does things in his own way, on his own terms. Not much gets past him. And when he has an opinion, he is liable to share it. He certainly has kept things interesting, but more importantly, President Donald Trump has kept his word to the American people. ...

... From these hallowed grounds, American patriots in generations gone by did their part to defend freedom. Now, it is our turn.

So let's run the race marked out for us. Let's fix our eyes on Old Glory and all she represents. Let's fix our eyes on this land of heroes and let their courage inspire. And let's fix our eyes on the author and perfecter of our faith and our freedom and never forget that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. That means freedom always wins.

Religion News Service soon offered an analysis of the way Pence, in the second fragment, was using words from 2 Corinthians 3:17 and Hebrews 12:1-2. To compare Donald Trump with King David is to cast Mike Pence as the prophet Nathan's perfect opposite. If Pence broadly represents the American Christian approach to Trump, Lewis's chapter on Connivance deserves another reading.

¶ 16. *The lesser evil*

When the prevalent morality of a nation comes to differ unduly from that presupposed in its laws, the laws must sooner or later change and conform to it. And the sooner they do so the better. For till they do we inevitably have humbug, perjury, and confusion.

This applies equally whether prevalent morality is departing from that embodied in the laws for the better or for the worse. The law must rise to our standards when we improve and sink to them when we decay. It is a lesser evil that the laws should sink than that all judicial procedure should become a travesty.

If we ceased to disapprove of murder, we should, no doubt, be fools and villains. But it would be better to admit the fact and alter the law accordingly than to go on acquitting of murder those who had certainly committed it. ...

The lesser of the evils now before us is to abandon all moral censorship. We have either sunk beneath or risen above it. If we do, there will be reams of filth. But we need not read it. Nor, probably, will the fashion last for ever.

— “Sex in Literature”, *The Sunday Telegraph*, September 30, 1962
Present Concerns (1982), 105-108

> Lewis was here talking as one British citizen to others about the Obscene Publications Act. This law, dating from 1857, had recently been revised but still turned out to be impracticable and lacking support in “prevalent morality”. He did not mention his general objections to Theocracy (see extracts #9 and #14, above). What makes the case relevant for present purposes is Lewis's remarkable suggestion that the law should permit *murder* if the population at large permits

murder. As for abortion, that word is practically absent from Lewis's writings. Had he lived now, there is no telling if he would have equated abortion with murder. In any case, though, it is very likely that he would have condemned today's abortion industry as he condemned vivisection in his day, and he might have drawn similar grim conclusions regarding modern Western culture. At the same time, he upheld the separation of Church and State as scrupulously as any secularist, and would hardly recommend other ways to Christianize a nation than by increasing the number of Christian citizens. On balance, it seems pretty certain that he would not have put the political order of a modern democracy and the rule of law at risk for the chance to impose Christian laws on a non-Christian majority of the population. Indeed, he would have resisted the latter attempt anyway.

ANALYSIS AND PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

As Dyer and Watson suggested in their 2017 study, C. S. Lewis's influence on American evangelicals is "politically significant". Whichever shapes this significance has been taking in practice, it seems altogether hard to bring the true political meaning of Lewis's work for Americans today into line with a vote for Donald Trump in the upcoming presidential elections.

This true meaning, on the basis of the above anthology, might be summarized as an advice for Christians, in their pursuit of political ends,

- to choose means in accordance with basic traditional morality and common sense, combining the dove and the serpent (#2),
- to avoid strong commitments to whichever corner of the political arena (##4-5, ##11-13),
- to speak up against blatant evil regardless of consequences (#1, #15),
- to distrust revolutions of all stripes (#12),
- to cherish the modern western achievements of democracy and the rule of law (#6, #9),
- to take a modest view of what the state can and should do, first and foremost with regard to religious objectives (#3, #8, #16),
- to suppress any tendency towards theocracy (#9, #14).

If the above comments and analysis make sense, it may still be asked if Lewis, had he still been available, would have advised American Christians to vote for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. There is no telling whether he would. What seems certain is that he would not have advised anyone to vote in defiance of his or her own conscience. Whoever considers Biden worse than Trump should not vote for Biden.

But then, to go by Lewis, if Biden were actually worse than Trump, the fact must be faced that the choice is between two very great evils indeed. Regardless of the evils expected from a Biden administration, Trump's demeanor not just as a man, but as president, remains beyond "connivance". Lewis's true significance here appears to consist in his warnings for situations representing "the devil getting at us" and his exhortation "to keep our eyes on the goal and go straight through between both errors".

Democracy is a precious achievement, but the American two-party system is not. Nor is there a sacred duty for Christians always to vote. In certain circumstances a refusal to vote for either candidate might be the best option. A predicament of this type seems to have actually arrived for those who honestly consider Biden for president worse than Trump. A massive Christian abstinence from voting in the 2020 presidential elections is in the short term likely to mean victory for Biden. If the wisdom of C. S. Lewis is to count for anything, though, a strongly argued and well-publicized refusal to vote is not to be equated with an endorsement of the outcome. For one thing, it could in the longer term prove to be the best conceivable kick-off for a reform of the Republican Party, supposing such a thing is still possible. But perhaps more importantly, like the hypothetical Christian's refusal to murder prisoners or bomb civilians regardless of the cost of disobedience (#1), a Christian refusal to vote for either Biden or Trump might offer the only morally sound and sensible hope of ever attaining "a clear issue" about Christianity in the public square – the only way to follow "our spiritual law", part of which is "never to put survival first" (#10).

Impractical as it may seem, the instruction for sheep sent out among wolves is to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.