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Why Voting for Donald Trump Is a Morally Good Choice

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Why Voting for Donald Trump Is a Morally Good Choice

Some of my Christian friends tell me they can't in good conscience vote for Donald Trump because, when faced with a choice between "the lesser of two evils," the morally right thing is to choose neither one. They recommend voting for a third-party or write-in candidate.

As a professor who has taught Christian ethics for 39 years, I think their analysis is incorrect. Now that Trump has won the GOP nomination, I think voting for Trump is a morally good choice.

American citizens need patience with each other in this difficult political season. Close friends are inevitably going to make different decisions about the election. We still need to respect each other and thank God that we live in a democracy with freedom to differ about politics. And we need to keep talking with each other – because democracies function best when thoughtful citizens can calmly and patiently dialog about the reasons for their differences. This is my contribution to that discussion.

A good candidate with flaws

I do not think that voting for Donald Trump is a morally evil choice because there is nothing morally wrong with voting for a flawed

candidate if you think he will do more good for the nation than his opponent. In fact, it is the morally right thing to do.

I did not support Trump in the primary season. I even spoke against him at a pastors' conference in February. But now I plan to vote for him. I do not think it is right to call him an "evil candidate." I think rather he is a good candidate with flaws.

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He is egotistical, bombastic, and brash. He often lacks nuance in his statements. Sometimes he blurts out mistaken ideas (such as bombing the families of terrorists) that he later must abandon. He insults people. He can be vindictive when people attack him. He has been slow to disown and rebuke the wrongful words and actions of some angry fringe supporters. He has been married three times and claims to have been unfaithful in his marriages. These are certainly flaws, but I don't think they are disqualifying flaws in this election.

On the other hand, I think some of the accusations hurled against him are unjustified. His many years of business conduct show that he is not racist or anti-(legal) immigrant or anti-Semitic or misogynistic – I think these are unjust magnifications by a hostile press exaggerating some careless statements he has made. I think he is deeply patriotic and sincerely wants the best for the country. He has been an unusually successful problem solver in business. He has raised remarkable children. Many who have known him personally speak highly of his kindness, thoughtfulness, and generosity. But the main reason I call him "a good candidate with flaws" is that I think most of the policies he supports are those that will do the most good for the nation.

Seek the good of the nation

Should Christians even try to influence elections at all? Yes, definitely. The apostle Peter says Christians are "exiles" on this earth (1 Peter 1:1). Therefore I take seriously the prophet Jeremiah's exhortation to the Jewish people living in exile in Babylon:

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7).

By way of modern application, I think Christians today have a similar obligation to vote in such a way that will “seek the welfare” of the United States. Therefore the one overriding question to ask is this: Which vote is most likely to bring the best results for the nation?

If this election is close (which seems likely), then if someone votes for a write-in candidate instead of voting for Trump, this action will directly help Hillary Clinton, because she will need one less vote to win.

Therefore the question that Christians should ask is this: Can I in good conscience act in a way that helps a liberal like Hillary Clinton win the presidency?

Under President Obama, a liberal federal government has seized more and more control over our lives. But this can change. This year we have an unusual opportunity to defeat Hillary Clinton and the pro-abortion, pro-gender-confusion, anti-religious liberty, tax-and-spend, big government liberalism that she champions. I believe that defeating that kind of liberalism would be a morally right action. Therefore I feel the force of the words of James: “Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Some may feel it is easier just to stay away from this messy Trump-Clinton election, and perhaps not even vote. But the teachings of Scripture do not allow us to escape moral responsibility by saying that we decided to do nothing. The prophet Obadiah rebuked the people of the Edom for standing by and doing nothing to help when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem: “On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that . . . foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.” (Obadiah 1:11).

I am writing this article because I doubt that many “I can’t vote for Trump” Christians have understood what an entirely different nation would result from Hillary Clinton as president, or have analyzed in detail how different a Trump presidency would be. In what follows, I

will compare the results we could expect from a Clinton presidency with what we could expect from a Trump presidency.

The Supreme Court with Clinton as president

Hillary Clinton would quickly replace Justice Scalia with another liberal like Breyer, Ginsburg, Sotomayor, and Kagan. This would give liberals a 5-4 majority on the Supreme Court even without Justice Kennedy, and 6-3 when he votes with them.

But that is not all. Justice Ginsburg is 83, and she has had colon cancer, pancreatic cancer, and has a heart stent. Justice Kennedy is 80. Justice Breyer is 78. A President Clinton could possibly nominate three or four justices to the Supreme Court, locking in a far-left activist judiciary for perhaps 30 or more years. She could also add dozens of activist judges to federal district courts and courts of appeals, the courts where 99% of federal lawsuits are decided. Judicial tyranny of the type we have seen when abortion rights and same-sex marriage were forced on the nation would gain a permanent triumph.

The nation would no longer be ruled by the people and their elected representatives, but by unelected, unaccountable, activist judges who would dictate from the bench about whatever they were pleased to decree. And there would be nothing in our system of government that anyone could do to stop them.

That is why this election is not just about Hillary Clinton. It is about defeating the far left liberal agenda that any Democratic nominee would champion. Liberal Democrats are now within one Supreme Court justice of their highest goal: gaining permanent control of the nation with a five vote majority on the Supreme Court, and then relentlessly imposing every liberal policy on the nation not through winning elections but through a relentless parade of one Supreme Court decision after another. Even if Clinton were to drop out of the race (perhaps due to additional shocking email disclosures, for example), our choice in the election would be just the same, because any other Democratic nominee would appoint the same kind of liberal justices to the Court.

Abortion

On abortion, a liberal court would probably find the ban on partial-birth abortion to be unconstitutional (it was upheld by only a 5-4 majority in *Gonzalez v. Carhart*, 2007). In addition, the court could find an absolute “right to abortion” in the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution and then sweep away with one decision most or all of the restrictions on abortion that pro-life advocates worked for tirelessly over the last 43 years, including ultrasound requirements, waiting periods, parental consent requirements, and prohibitions on non-doctors performing abortions.

Voters should not doubt the power of the Supreme Court to abolish all these laws restricting abortions. Think of the power of the *Obergefell v. Hodges* 5-4 decision in June, 2015. It instantly nullified all the work that thousands of Christians had done over many years in persuading the citizens of 31 states to pass constitutional amendments defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman. But no one is campaigning for such laws or amendments anymore, because it would be futile. The Supreme Court has spoken, and therefore the issue is settled in the political system of the United States. We lost – not at the ballot box, but because we had a liberal Supreme Court that nullified the democratic process regarding the definition of marriage.

So it would certainly be with any efforts to place legal limitations on abortion. Nobody would campaign any more for laws to limit abortions, because any such laws would be unconstitutional. The legislative lobbying work of pro-life advocacy groups would be totally and utterly defeated. Millions of unborn children would continue to die.

Religious liberty

The current liberal agenda often includes suppressing Christian opposition to its views. So a liberal court would increasingly nullify rights of conscience with respect to forced participation in same-sex marriage ceremonies or expressing moral objections to homosexual conduct. Already Christians are being pushed out of many occupations. Florists, bakers, and professional photographers have had their businesses destroyed by large fines for refusal to contribute their artistic

talents to a specific event, a same-sex wedding ceremony to which they had moral objections.

Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran in Atlanta was removed from his job because of self-publishing a religious book that briefly mentioned the Bible's teachings regarding non-marital sexual conduct, including homosexuality, amidst a host of other topics. His situation holds ominous implications for any Christians who hold public sector jobs. In our military services, many high-ranking officers have quietly been forced to resign because they were unwilling to give support to the homosexual agenda.

Mozilla/Firefox CEO Brendan Eich was pushed out from his own company merely because he had donated money to Proposition 8 in California, supporting marriage between one man and one woman. This event has troubling implications for Christians in any corporate executive role who dare to support a political position contrary to the liberal agenda.

Last year Boston urologist Paul Church, a Harvard Medical School faculty member, lost his hospital privileges at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center because he had expressed concerns about the medical dangers associated with same-sex activity.

Are my predictions about this kind of loss of religious liberty too grim? The three conservative justices still on the Supreme Court expressed similar concerns just last month. The case concerned a Washington pharmacy that has been owned for 70 years by the Stormans family, who are committed Christians. They will likely now be put out of business by the Washington State Pharmacy Board for refusing to dispense an abortion-causing prescription drug. On June 28, 2016, the Supreme Court refused to hear the Stormans' appeal, in spite of the strong dissent written by Justice Alito (joined by Roberts and Thomas):

“At issue are Washington State regulations that are likely to make a pharmacist unemployable if he or she objects on religious grounds to dispensing certain prescription medications. . . . there is much evidence that the impetus for the adoption of the regulations was hostility to pharmacists whose religious beliefs regarding abortion and

contraception are out of step with prevailing opinion in the State If this is a sign of how religious liberty claims will be treated in the years ahead, those who value religious freedom have cause for great concern.”
(italics added)

Christian business owners

If Clinton appoints just one more liberal justice, it is likely that many Christian business owners will be targeted. Hobby Lobby won its 2014 Supreme Court case (again 5-4), so it was not compelled to dispense abortifacients to its employees, but that case could be reversed (the four liberal justices in the minority, Ginsburg, Breyer, Sotomayor, and Kagan, are still on the court). If that case is overturned, it would force Hobby Lobby out of business, because the Green family had said they would shut down the company of 23,000 employees and over \$3 billion in annual sales if they lost the decision. The implications for other Christian business owners with pro-life convictions are ominous.

These incidents show that it is not an exaggeration to say that, under a liberal Supreme Court resulting from Hillary Clinton’s election, Christians would increasingly experience systematic exclusion from hundreds of occupations, with thousands of people losing their jobs. Step-by-step, Christians would increasingly be marginalized to the silent fringes of society. Is withholding a vote from Donald Trump important enough to pay this high a price in loss of freedom?

Some Christians have even hinted to me that “persecution would be good for us.” But the Bible never encourages us to seek persecution or hope for it. We should rather work to prevent such oppression of Christians, just as Jesus taught us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13). Paul did not encourage us to pray that God would give us bad rulers but good ones who would allow us to live a peaceful life:

“I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”
(1Timothy 2:1)

Christian schools and colleges

A liberal Supreme Court would also impact education. Christian colleges would likely be found guilty of “discrimination” if they required adherence to the Bible’s standards regarding sexual conduct, or even required affirmation of primary Christian beliefs. Campus ministries like Cru and InterVarsity have already been forced off of many university campuses following the 5-4 Supreme Court decision *CLS v. Martinez* (2010), which upheld the exclusion of the Christian Legal Society from the campus of Hastings College of Law in San Francisco. And now California’s Equity in Higher Education Act (SB 1146), which recently passed the California state senate and will likely become law, would prohibit Christian colleges from requiring students or employees to hold Christian beliefs or abide by biblical moral standards regarding sexual conduct, and would prohibit colleges from assigning housing based on a student’s biological sex if a student claimed to be transgender. Colleges like Biola and Azusa Pacific could not long survive under those regulations.

With regard to elementary and high schools, laws promoting school choice or tuition voucher programs would likely be declared unconstitutional if they allowed such funding to go to Christian schools. A tax credit program for scholarships to private schools, including Christian institutions, was only upheld by a 5-4 Supreme Court decision in *Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization v. Winn* in 2011, and all four liberal justices who voted against it are still on the court. Another possible target of the liberal agenda would be laws that allow for home schooling, if the secular/ liberal governmental hostility to home schooling in European countries is any indicator.

Churches

Churches would not be exempt from the impact of a liberal Supreme Court. The court could rule that any school district is allowed to ban churches from renting school buildings on Sundays, an action that could severely hinder the work of small churches and church planting in general. (This was already the ruling of the Second Circuit in the *Bronx Household of Faith* case regarding New York City public schools.) And some churches in Iowa have now been told that they have to make their

bathrooms open to people on the basis of their “gender identity” if the churches are going to be open to the public at all.

Freedom of speech

Freedom of speech would be increasingly restricted in the public square. In 2014, the Supreme Court ruled that prayers of visiting pastors who prayed “in Jesus’ name” when they opened a city council meeting were allowed under the Constitution, but again it was a 5-4 decision (*Town of Greece v. Galloway*) and all four liberals who wanted to restrict such prayers are still on the court.

Criminalizing dissent

Another troubling possibility is that liberal activists, once in power, would further entrench themselves by criminalizing much political dissent. We have already seen it happen with the IRS targeting of conservative groups and with some state attorneys general taking steps to prosecute (!) groups who dare to disagree with activists’ claims about the danger of man-made global warming.

“But my conscience won’t let me vote for Donald Trump,” some have told me. But I wonder if their consciences have considered the gravity of these destructive consequences that would come from a Clinton presidency. A vote for Trump would at least be doing something to prevent these things.

In addition, I think there are several positive reasons to vote for Trump.

The Supreme Court with Trump as president

Trump has released a list of 11 judges to show the kind of nominee he would appoint to the Supreme Court. A lawyer familiar with many of these names has told me that they constitute a “dream list” of outstanding judges who would uphold the original meaning of the Constitution and would not create new laws from the bench. Trump has said he would rely primarily on advice from the Federalist Society, the organization that promotes the “original meaning” view so strongly exemplified by Justice Scalia before his death.

If Trump would appoint a replacement for Scalia from his list of 11, and probably one or two other Supreme Court justices, then we could see a

5-4 or even 6-3 majority of conservative justices on the Supreme Court. The results for the nation would be overwhelmingly good. Such a Supreme Court would finally return control of the nation to the people and their elected representatives, removing it from dictatorial judges who repeatedly make law from the bench.

Abortion

Such a court would likely overturn *Roe v. Wade* and return abortion laws and the regulation of abortion to the states.

Religious liberty

A conservative court would vigorously uphold the First Amendment, protecting freedom of religion and freedom of speech for Christian colleges, Christian ministries, and churches.

Such a court would likely overturn the horribly destructive decision in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) that changed the meaning of the First Amendment and ruled that a government action “must not have the primary effect of either advancing or inhibiting religion” (note: not a specific denomination but “religion” in general). A conservative court would likely declare that the First Amendment was only intended to prohibit the establishment of a state-sponsored church or denomination. Such a decision would once again allow the nonsectarian affirmation of personal belief in God in public schools, would once again allow coaches to pray with their football teams before a game, and would allow visiting clergy to be invited to give a prayer at high school graduation ceremonies. It would also imply that nativity scenes without Santa Claus and Buddha should be allowed in government-owned parks and buildings at Christmas time. It wouldn't require these things, but would allow them if local officials chose to approve them. It would restore true freedom of religion as the First Amendment intended. It would also protect freedom of conscience for Christians who object to participating in abortions, or dispensing abortifacient medicines, or who do not wish to participate in same-sex wedding ceremonies. It is also possible that a conservative Supreme Court would eventually return control of marriage to the states.

Freedom for Christian influence in politics

Significantly, Trump has pledged to work to repeal the 1954 Johnson Amendment to the IRS code, which has been used for 62 years as a threat to silence pastors from speaking about political issues, for fear of losing their tax-exempt status. This would be a great victory for freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

In short, a Trump-appointed Supreme Court, together with dozens of lower court judges appointed by him, would probably result in significant advances in many of the policy areas important to Christians. It would also open the door to huge expansion of influence for the many Christian lobbying groups known as “family policy councils” in various states, especially enabling them to work for further legal protections for life, for marriage and family, and for religious liberty.

How can we know that Trump won’t change his mind?

“But Trump has changed his mind in the past,” a politically-minded friend said to me. “How do you know that he will do what he has promised? Maybe he’ll betray you and appoint a liberal Supreme Court justice.”

My reply is that we can never know the future conduct of any human being with 100% certainty, but in making an ethical decision like this one, we should base the decision on the most likely results. In this case, the most likely result is that Trump will do most or all of what he has said.

In the history of American politics, candidates who have been elected president have occasionally changed their minds on one or another issue while in office, but no president has ever gone back on most of what he has promised to do, especially on issues that are crucially important in the election. In this election, it is reasonable to think that the most likely result is that both Trump and Clinton will do what they have promised to do. That is the basis on which we should decide how to vote.

And notice how Trump has changed his mind. He continues to move in a more conservative direction, as evidenced by his list of judges and his choice for vice president. Just as he succeeded in business by listening to the best experts to solve each problem, I suspect that he has been learning from the best experts in conservative political thought and has

increasingly found that conservative solutions really work. We should applaud these changes.

His choice of Indiana Gov. Mike Pence as his vice presidential running mate is an especially significant indication that he will govern as a conservative. Trump could have picked a moderate but instead picked a lifelong solid conservative who is a thoughtful, gracious policy wizard. Pence is a lawyer and former talk radio host who served 12 years in Congress and had significant congressional leadership positions, so he will be immensely helpful in working with Congress. He is a committed evangelical Christian. He is a former board member of the Indiana Family Institute, a conservative Christian lobbying group in Indiana. However, the Supreme Court is not the only issue at stake in this election. While I disagree with Trump on a few things (especially trade policy), on most important issues, Trump will likely do much good for the nation.

Taxes and jobs

Trump has pledged to cut taxes significantly, while Clinton wants to raise them. Trump is advocating a 15% tax rate for corporations rather than the current 35%. Lower corporate taxes would lead to business expansion and a massive increase in available jobs and higher pay levels. For individual taxpayers, Trump favors a top rate of 25%, but for Clinton it's 45%. Most small businesses file under this individual rate, so once again Trump's lower taxes would result in substantial expansion of businesses and many more jobs. Finally our economy would snap out of its eight years of anemic growth.

In my judgment, Christians should support lower tax rates that would lead to more jobs, because Obama's economic policies for the last eight years have hurt lower income and low-middle income families the most. Many can't even find jobs, and others can't find full-time jobs. Those who have jobs struggle to survive with no meaningful pay raises year after year. It is no surprise that these are the people who are supporting Trump in overwhelming numbers.

Tax rates are also a good indicator of government control. Higher tax rates mean greater government control of our lives, while lower tax rates indicate greater freedom.

Minorities

Two of the deepest causes of poverty among minority groups and racial tensions in our country are failing public schools in our inner cities and lack of available jobs. Trump expressed a commitment to solve these problems at several points in his acceptance speech at the Republican convention. He pledged to reduce taxes and regulations, leading to many more jobs. And he said:

“Nearly 4 in 10 African-American children are living in poverty, while 58% of African-American youth are not employed This administration has failed America’s inner cities. It’s failed them on education. It’s failed and on jobs. It’s failed them on crime Every action I take, I will ask myself: does this make life better for young Americans in Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Ferguson who have as much of a right to live out their dreams as any other child in America? We will rescue kids from failing schools by helping their parents send them to a safe school of their choice.”

By contrast, Clinton will bow to the teachers’ unions and oppose school choice at every turn, and she will continue to strangle businesses with high taxes and regulations, preventing job growth.

The military

Trump has promised to rapidly rebuild our depleted military forces, but Clinton would continue the liberal policy of eviscerating them through denying funding. This is dangerous in light of increasing threats from China, Russia, Iran, and ISIS.

Borders

Trump has repeatedly promised that he will finally secure our borders, an urgent need to protect the nation from ever more terrorists and drug smugglers. Clinton will not do this but will continue to allow in what she thinks will be thousands of future Democratic voters.

ISIS and terrorism

Trump has pledged to aggressively attack and utterly defeat ISIS. Clinton will continue the anemic Obama policy of periodic bombing runs and drone attacks, under which ISIS has continued to thrive.

China and Russia

Trump will not let China and Russia and Iran push us around anymore, as Obama has done, with Hillary Clinton's support when she was secretary of state. If Trump is anything, he is tough as nails, and he won't be bullied.

Israel

Trump has promised to vigorously defend and support Israel, while Clinton will most likely continue the Obama administration's criticism, snubbing, and marginalization of Israel.

Energy

Trump has said he will approve the Keystone oil pipeline and grant more oil drilling permits leading to lower energy costs and providing thousands of jobs. Lower energy costs help everybody, but the poor most of all. Clinton, by contrast, will make fracking nearly impossible and essentially abolish the coal industry, causing energy prices to skyrocket.

Executive orders and bathrooms

Trump has promised to rescind many of the most objectionable executive orders given by President Obama, so he will likely end the compulsory moral degradation forced on us by a liberal agenda, including orders forcing schools to allow boys in girls' bathrooms and locker rooms, in defiance of the will of the vast majority of Americans. But Hillary Clinton would likely perpetuate and expand these policies.

Health care

Trump will work to repeal Obamacare, which is ruining the nation's health care system, and replace it with an affordable free market system in which companies have the ability to sell insurance across state lines, thus substantially lowering insurance prices especially in those states that currently allow only high-priced "Cadillac" insurance plans. But Clinton would continue to work relentlessly toward federal government control of our entire health care industry.

The unprotected

Trump will finally begin to recognize and protect what Wall Street Journal writer Peggy Noonan calls “the unprotected” in America -- people in lower income areas who cannot find good jobs, cannot find good schools for their children, do not feel protected from crime, and find their retirement savings are not enough because for years they have been earning no interest in the bank. Trump said in his acceptance speech, “Every day I wake up determined to deliver for the people I have met all across the nation that have been neglected, ignored, and abandoned . . . I have joined the political arena so that the powerful can no longer beat up on people that cannot defend themselves.”

These American citizens recognize that Trump has built a business career on listening to experts, solving problems, and getting things done. They realize that Trump didn't earn \$4 billion by being stupid, and their instinct says that he might be exactly the right person to solve some of the biggest problems in a nation that has for too long been headed in the wrong direction and stuck in political gridlock.

They may not have college degrees but their old-fashioned common sense tells them that America would be a much better place if we no longer had to be afraid to say “Merry Christmas,” or that boys are different from girls, or that Islamic terrorists are Islamic terrorists. They're sick and tired of being condescended to by the snobbish moralism of the liberal elites who dominate the power centers in our nation. That is why they cheer when Trump repeatedly violates the canons of politically correct speech. They have found in him someone who gives them hope, and they are supporting him by the thousands.

Does character matter?

“But are you saying that character doesn't matter?” someone might ask. I believe that character does matter, but I think Trump's character is far better than what is portrayed by much current political mud-slinging, and far better than his opponent's character.

In addition, if someone makes doubts about character the only factor to consider, that is a fallacy in ethical reasoning that I call “reductionism” – the mistake of reducing every argument to only one factor, when the situation requires that multiple factors be considered. In this election, an

even larger factor is the future of the nation that would flow from a Clinton or a Trump presidency.

To my friends who tell me they won't vote for Trump because there is a chance he won't govern at all like he promises, I reply that all of American presidential history shows that that result is unlikely, and it is ethically fallacious reasoning to base a decision on assuming a result that is unlikely to happen.

Consider instead the most likely results. The most likely result of voting for Trump is that he will govern the way he promises to do, bringing much good to the nation.

But the most likely result of not voting for Trump is that you will be abandoning thousands of unborn babies who will be put to death under Hillary Clinton's Supreme Court, thousands of Christians who will be excluded from their lifelong occupations, thousands of the poor who will never again be able to find high-paying jobs in an economy crushed by government hostility toward business, thousands of inner-city children who will never be able to get a good education, thousands of the sick and elderly who will never get adequate medical treatment when the government is the nation's only healthcare provider, thousands of people who will be killed by an unchecked ISIS, and millions of Jews in Israel who will find themselves alone and surrounded by hostile enemies. And you will be contributing to a permanent loss of the American system of government due to a final victory of unaccountable judicial tyranny. When I look at it this way, my conscience, and my considered moral judgment tell me that I must vote for Donald Trump as the candidate who is most likely to do the most good for the United States of America.

This article expresses the opinion of the author and should not be understood to represent the opinion of Phoenix Seminary.