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Christianity, Ethics, and Politics in the Age of Isabella Chow

Ian Huyett

Washington and Lee University School of Law, huyett.i@law.wlu.edu

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Christianity, Ethics, and Politics in the Age of Isabella Chow

Ian Huyett*

Abstract

This Essay responds to comments by Samuel Calhoun, Wayne Barnes, and David Smolin, made as part of a roundtable discussion on Calhoun's symposium address Separation of Church and State: Jefferson, Lincoln, and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Show It Was Never Intended to Separate Religion from Politics. In Part I, I discuss current events, especially as they pertain to Smolin's comments. In Part II, I answer Calhoun's challenges to my own response. In Part III, I criticize Barnes's response, which was diametrically different from my own. In Part IV, I draw on Smolin's observations to discuss the path forward for Christians in the current climate.

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* J.D., 2018, Washington and Lee University School of Law. Huyett was the 2018 President of Washington and Lee's chapter of the Christian Legal Society. His paper "As I Had Mercy on You': Karla Faye Tucker, Immanuel Kant, and the Impossibility of Christian Retributivism" was published in the summer 2018 issue of *Religio et Lex*.

*I. Events Since This Roundtable Began Have Demonstrated Its
Relevance*

I am struck by the fact that this roundtable—published by a secular law review—has now turned largely to the discussion of internal Christian questions of ethics and strategy. While my initial response was focused largely on advocating a Christian perspective to a general audience, I welcome this turn in the conversation. If I was grateful to the Washington and Lee Law Review Online for publishing Christian perspectives before, I am all the more grateful for its hosting an in-house Christian exchange.

As Smolin reminded us throughout his response, it is almost a truism that American academia privileges anti-Christian voices and marginalizes Christian ones.¹ In the short period since our responses were written, in fact, anti-Christian intolerance in universities has notably escalated. In October, Brian McCall, Associate Dean at Oklahoma Law School, resigned after his archconservative views on gender and sexuality reportedly “came to light.”² In truth, McCall had openly expressed these views in his published work for years.³ He resigned not because his colleagues

1. See also George Yancey, *Anti-Christian Bias in Academia and Beyond*, YOUTUBE (May 3, 2013), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7jIKcGo_zc (last visited Jan. 14, 2019) (discussing statistical models that demonstrate how the academia is hostile to would-be evangelical and fundamentalist Christian academics) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

2. Jason Tashea, *Oklahoma University College of Law Associate Dean Resigns over Sexist, Homophobic Writings*, ABA J. (Oct. 3, 2018, 2:45 PM), http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/oklahoma_university_college_of_law_as_sociate_dean_resigns_over_sexist_writi/ (last visited on Jan. 14, 2018) (stating that Professor McCall’s writings criticized the concept of same-sex marriage and advocated extreme views of modest dress, including the view that women should wear dresses rather than pants) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

3. See Rod Dreher, *Catholic Thoughtcriminal Forced Out at OU Law*, AM. CONSERVATIVE (Oct. 8, 2018, 10:40 PM), <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/brian-mccall-catholic-thought-criminal-ou-law/> (last visited Jan. 14, 2019) (noting that a student “who describes herself as a Democrat and a feminist” attested to Professor McCall’s professionalism and said that he never discriminated against her despite their differing “sociological, theological, and political views”) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review); see also Andrew C. Spiropoulos, *Right Thinking: A Violation of the Principles of Academic Freedom*, J. REC. (Oct. 10,

had recently discovered his views, but because they had recently decided that a traditionalist Catholic should not be a dean of a law school.

The McCall incident is a reminder that cultural progressivism is committed—alongside its vision of linear historical progress—to a perpetual contraction of the “Overton window,”⁴ whereby an ever-shrinking range of views is regarded as acceptable in polite society.⁵ This process has the strategic advantage of rarely alerting people of its danger until it is too late. McCall’s resignation, for example, drew disturbingly little attention from Christians. Many observers, perhaps, told ourselves that because our own views are less radical than those of traditionalist Catholics like McCall, McCall could be silently thrown under the bus in the knowledge that our own careers are secure.

Any Christian who responded to the McCall incident with such naivete, however, should have been quickly disabused of it. Later that same month, the student senate of UC Berkeley passed a resolution denouncing the Trump Administration’s definition of gender. One student senator—Isabella Chow—abstained from the

2018), <https://journalrecord.com/2018/10/10/right-thinking-a-violation-of-the-principles-of-academic-freedom/> (last visited Jan. 14, 2019) (arguing that since there is no evidence that Professor McCall engaged in discrimination, using his personally published writings to force his resignation is, in itself, religious discrimination) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

4. Nathan J. Russell, *An Introduction to the Overton Window of Political Possibilities*, MACKINAC CTR. FOR PUB. POL’Y (Jan. 4, 2006), <https://www.mackinac.org/7504> (last visited Jan. 15, 2019) (giving a history of the Overton Window concept and explaining its framework and implications) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

5. See also Adrian Vermeule, *A Christian Strategy*, FIRST THINGS (Nov. 2017), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/11/a-christian-strategy> (last visited Jan. 14, 2019).

Progressive liberalism has its own cruel sacraments—especially the shaming and, where possible, legal punishment of the intolerant or illiberal—and its own liturgy, the Festival of Reason, the ever-repeated overcoming of the darkness of reaction. Because the celebration of the festival essentially requires, as part of its liturgical script, a reactionary enemy to be overcome, liberalism ceaselessly and restlessly searches out new villains to play their assigned part. Thus the boundaries of progressive demands for conformity are structurally unstable, fluid, and ever shifting, not merely contingently so—there can be no lasting peace.

(on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

vote. Chow carefully explained that she loved LGBT individuals, opposed all forms of discrimination against them, and was abstaining from the vote because, in her words:

God created male and female at the beginning of time, and designed sex for marriage between one man and one woman. For me, to love another person does not mean that I silently concur when, at the bottom of my heart, I do not believe that your choices are right or the best for you as an individual.

Predictably, a follow-up student senate meeting was a festival of hostility. When Chow arrived, a giant banner demanding her resignation adorned the room. Chow then sat patiently through three hours of angry denunciations that were sometimes vulgar.⁶ Berkeley's student newspaper attacked Chow and then refused to run an op-ed she wrote in her defense.⁷ The Berkeley Political Review, which bills itself as a "nonpartisan political quarterly magazine,"⁸ fired Chow in order to ensure that "our members feel secure in our publication."⁹

Chow's language was so meticulously kind and loving that her detractors do not even attempt to quote it out of context, instead generically asserting that she made "anti-LGBTQ+ comments."¹⁰ For Christian observers, Chow's treatment helped to explode the idea that Christians can be seen as "goodwill, reasonable actors" if

6. See Sophia Lee, *Convictions and Consequences*, WORLD MAG. (Nov. 20, 2018), https://world.wng.org/2018/11/convictions_and_consequences (last visited Jan. 14, 2019) (describing the general atmosphere of the meeting as an "onslaught of harsh, sometimes vulgar comments") (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

7. See *id.* ("The paper said that [Chow's] op-ed 'utilized rhetoric that is homophobic and transphobic by the Daily Cal's standards.'").

8. *The Berkeley Political Review*, U. CAL. BERKELEY, <https://callink.berkeley.edu/organization/berkeleypoliticalreview> (last visited Jan. 15, 2018) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

9. Amanda Bradford, *Berkeley Political Review Ends ASUC Senator Isabella Chow's Membership*, DAILY CALIFORNIAN (Nov. 15 2018) <http://www.dailycal.org/2018/11/15/berkeley-political-review-ends-asuc-senator-isabella-chows-membership/> (last visited Jan 15, 2018) ("Senator Isabella Chow made remarks that directly violate and threaten our organizational duty to ensure that our members feel secure in our publication and that their contributions are validated and protected in our space.") (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

10. See *id.* (labeling Chow's comments as "marginalizing discourse").

we can “just communicate orthodox beliefs in the right way.”¹¹ Rather, “Chow is a living example of how this approach is naïve.”¹² As a writer for the Southern Baptist Convention wisely observed, “No amount of niceness, civility, or winsomeness [sic] will pacify those voices who will hate you.”¹³

David Smolin’s response to this roundtable could hardly have been more prescient. He warned that those who would alienate Christians and “delegitimize their participation in political, public, and economic life . . . cannot expect their votes nor control to whom they go for assistance.” Echoing Smolin’s point, a popular Christian satire website recently ran an article entitled “Christian Just Voting For Whichever Political Party Less Likely To Make His Faith Illegal One Day,” imagining a hypothetical Trump voter who states that “I don’t particularly love the party I usually vote for, but hey! They’re a little less likely to one day outlaw my faith.”¹⁴

Especially in this climate, it is refreshingly subversive for a secular law review to give a platform to an explicitly Christian perspective on the law—let alone play host to a conversation among Christians. To take full advantage of this opportunity, I will respond to all three of the other participants in the roundtable. First, I will further clarify my own position by answering Calhoun’s criticisms of my response. Second, I will address the arguments of Barnes, whose separationist views are nearly the opposite of my own. Finally, I will engage with Smolin’s piece and discuss the strategy that Christians should adopt in an increasingly hostile political climate.

11. Andrew T. Walker, *Cultural Winsomeness Will Not Be Enough for Christians*, THE ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION (Nov. 13, 2018), <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/cultural-winsomeness-will-not-be-enough-for-christians> (last visited Jan. 15, 2019) (one file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.*

14. *Christian Just Voting For Whichever Political Party Less Likely To Make His Faith Illegal One Day*, BABYLON BEE (Jan. 9, 2019), <https://babylonbee.com/news/christian-just-voting-for-whichever-political-party-less-likely-to-make-his-faith-illegal> (last visited Jan. 15, 2019) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

II. Answering Calhoun's Challenge to Clarify My Own Views

Calhoun's first criticism of my paper is that he disagrees with my suggestion "that a God-based system resolves all difficulties in grounding moral duties." Although this challenge warrants an entire paper or book on meta-ethics, I will offer a brief sketch of my answer.

I propose a theory of "joy-seeking obedience" to explain why God's commands become our duties. In short, I hold that all persons desire their own joy—and that moral language refers to those actions which will bring one joy. It follows that all moral duties come from God, as God structured our reality and established all the conditions which lead to joy or suffering. My position is prefigured, among other places, in *Blackstone's Commentaries*. Blackstone said that all ethics, or natural law, "amount to no more than demonstrating, that this or that action tends to man's real happiness, and therefore very justly concluding that the performance of it is a part of the law of nature."¹⁵ Blackstone's position is not that we *ought* to pursue happiness. Rather, whenever we talk about what we morally "ought" to do, we are already debating about which action will bring us the most joy. As God created our reality and its conditions, all moral *oughts* therefore depend upon God. Whatever unease Calhoun might have with my view, I hope he will agree that it does not suffer from any internal incoherence—and that it can offer an answer, albeit perhaps not one he finds satisfying, to any meta-ethical question he might ask.

Calhoun also challenges my allegation that secularists who seek to exclude religion from political debate are doing so in bad faith. He asks: "[M]ight not an atheist in good faith believe (wrongly, I assert) that religious beliefs, true or not, shouldn't inform public policy due to existing constitutional constraints?"¹⁶

My answer is that, while many laypeople believe in exclusion as a vague principle of secular modernity, such people rarely make constitutional arguments. While some atheists might hold the position Calhoun suggests, such an interpretation of the First

15. 1 WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, COMMENTARIES *2 (1765).

16. Samuel W. Calhoun, *If Separation of Church and State Doesn't Demand Separating Religion from Politics, Does Christian Doctrine Require It?*, 74 WASH. & LEE L. REV. ONLINE 565, 576 (2018).

Amendment would be so contrary to its wording and intent as to reveal the absence of good faith engagement with the text. Nothing in the First Amendment's language suggests that religious arguments should be excluded from political debate. James Madison, the drafter of the Amendment, sought to protect religion precisely because religion precedes and orients all other obligations.¹⁷

Calhoun adds that he is "not sure what Huyett means in saying that because atheism is a false belief, it shouldn't 'inform public policy.' I expect not, but this language suggests that Huyett would erect his own wall of separation."¹⁸ If I am erecting a wall of separation, it is not the kind we have been discussing. I would certainly criticize atheistic political arguments on the grounds that their premises are false. What I would not do is attempt to manipulate the debate by asserting, as a neutral principle, that atheistic arguments must not be heard or considered. I wish to defeat atheism in a fair exchange of ideas—not, in the manner of cultural progressivism, by ruling disagreement inherently illegitimate. On the contrary, it is better to voice one's disagreements with Christianity—enabling competent apologists to answer them—than to be isolated from God by stifled and gnawing skepticism.

Finally, Calhoun voices reservations about my characterization of Christianity as a force for political liberty. While stating that my position is supported by powerful evidence, he notes that "it must not be forgotten that Christians unfortunately have sometimes supported causes that virtually all Christians now agree were morally wrong: e.g. the pro-slavery stance in the Civil War era."¹⁹ Although I do not dispute that there

17. See James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, in 8 THE PAPERS OF JAMES MADISON 295, 295–306 (Robert A. Rutland & William M. E. Rachal eds. 1973).

Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governour of the Universe: And if a member of Civil Society, who enters into any subordinate Association, must always do it with a reservation of his duty to the General Authority; much more must every man who becomes a member of any particular Civil Society, do it with a saving of his allegiance to the Universal Sovereign.

18. Calhoun, *supra* note 16, at 576.

19. *Id.* at 577.

were pro-slavery Christians, I also think any suggestion that Christianity was equally at work on both sides does not quite do justice to the facts. Although Lincoln observed that both sides “read the same Bible and pray to the same God,” after all, he then derided pro-slavery religiosity as absurd on its face: “It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged.”²⁰

That Christianity was prevalent in the South does not change the fact that the abolitionist movement was spearheaded by evangelicals, nor the fact that intellectual defenses of slavery were either entirely secular—like John C. Calhoun’s²¹—or else facile assertions that God had instituted the status quo. At any rate, to any suggestion that I have not given equal time to Verdun or the Inquisition, I would respond that it is Christians who must give equal time to Christianity’s achievements. We can be confident that nobody else will. Hollywood portrayals of Christianity’s role in history, for example, are almost exclusively negative. In the 2005 crusader epic *Kingdom of Heaven*,²² any likable crusaders are portrayed as closeted secularists—who privately see through the folly of religion—while sincerely Christian characters are portrayed exclusively as cowardly, greedy, and cartoonishly evil.

III. The Bible Contradicts Barnes’s Attempt to Create a Christian Seperationism

Wayne Barnes is a Christian who asserts that Christian premises should not be used in political arguments. I find Barnes’s seperationism much harder to comprehend than that of secularists—for Barnes is in the odd position of discouraging people from using premises which he himself holds to be true. Barnes and I hold views so wildly divergent, I suspect, that our ultimate disagreement lies in a premise he did not reach in his response. Despite the risk of talking past Barnes, however, his response demands an answer.

20. President Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (Mar. 4, 1865).

21. John C. Calhoun is not related to Samuel Calhoun.

22. KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (Scott Free Productions 2005).

Barnes self-identifies with Rawlsian liberalism and acknowledges John Rawls's influence on his position. In support of excluding religious arguments, Barnes quotes Rawls as saying that, in political debate, "such inaccessible religious arguments should not be made, but rather arguments should only be made by resort to 'public reason' which all find to be accessible."²³ I answer that *Christian* religious arguments, at least, are in no sense "inaccessible" and—more pertinently—that Barnes cannot consistently hold that they are.

The accessibility of Christian theism is evident throughout the Bible. Paul wrote that God's divinity has been "clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made," so that human beings are "without excuse" for disobeying him.²⁴ Paul also emphasized that the resurrection was a well-evidenced public event, writing—for instance—that Jesus "appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive."²⁵ Jesus himself rebuked the Pharisees for rejecting him even though they had seen that "the works [that is, miracles] that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me."²⁶ In short, the central claims of Christianity are observable in nature and history, and do not—as Rawls suggested—hinge solely upon secret inner revelation. It is less remarkable that Rawls should refer to "inaccessible religious arguments" than that Barnes, a Christian, should quote him approvingly. Barnes did not engage with these or similar verses in his response. Perhaps it is not surprising that Barnes, in urging Christians not to make religious arguments, has not discussed religious arguments which seem to contradict his view. Yet Barnes's separationism should not permit him to hold two logically contradictory positions. He may either believe, with Paul, that religious truths are publicly accessible, or else agree with John Rawls that they are not. He cannot have it both ways.

Barnes's central argument is that Christian political advocacy "miscommunicates the central Christian belief of how to obtain

23. Wayne R. Barnes, *The Paradox of Christian-Based Political Advocacy: A Reply to Professor Calhoun*, 74 WASH. & LEE L. REV. ONLINE 489, 491 (2018).

24. *Romans* 1:20.

25. *1 Corinthians* 15:6.

26. *John* 1:25.

favor with God.”²⁷ Using Christian premises in a political argument, Barnes says, implies that if one “behave[s] in the legally argued way . . . it will please God,”²⁸ an idea that is a “tragically mistaken view of Christianity.”²⁹ This argument applies, not just to the advocacy of political behavior, but to the advocacy of behavior in general—a fact which does not seem to trouble Barnes. The very crux of his criticism, in fact, is that Christian political advocacy is misleading precisely because it promotes specific behaviors as Christian. “Christian political advocacy,” he fears, will be “interpreted as follows: ‘if I behave according to the proposed ‘Christian’ principles being advocated for, I will obtain greater favor with God.’”³⁰

I find this argument mystifying at a fundamental level. On Barnes’s view, for instance, it seems clear that one cannot say that Christians should criminalize murder. For that matter, I see no reason that Barnes would allow a Christian to describe murder as a sin—as this might be interpreted to mean that one who does not commit murder will thereby “obtain greater favor with God.”³¹ I imagine that Barnes would allow a Christian to assert that murder is wrong, but he apparently would not allow him to explain why this is the case, or how he knows his assertion to be true. This rule would prohibit the Christian from demonstrating—among other things—that Christianity is a coherent worldview which, moreover, answers meta-ethical questions that others cannot.

As I noted in my own response, the New Testament is full of practical ethical instructions for believers. When I first began to read Barnes’s response, then, I quickly suspected that Barnes belonged to a strain of Christianity which rejects the canonicity of much of the New Testament. To my surprise, however, Barnes went on to quote widely from the New Testament, including Paul’s writings. Assuming it was permissible for both Jesus and Paul to give ethical instruction, then, does Barnes think it impermissible for Christians to read these instructions aloud? Or would Barnes allow Christians to verbalize these instructions but not to discuss

27. Barnes, *supra* note 23, at 492.

28. *Id.* at 507.

29. *Id.*

30. *Id.* at 506.

31. *Id.*

their application? If so, Barnes's view cannot allow that—as Paul writes—all scripture is profitable “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness[.]”³²

Moreover, both Jesus and Paul used religious premises in specifically judicial contexts. In saving an adulteress from being stoned—the designated criminal punishment for her crime—Jesus objected that the crowd's own sinfulness meant that they lacked standing to administer the punishment.³³ Jesus also taught that the fact that we have been shown mercy by God means that we must show mercy to others in, for example, the civil collection of financial debts.³⁴ Likewise, Paul used religious arguments when he taught that Christians are prohibited from suing one another in a secular court. Secular judges are not competent to hear such cases, Paul taught, because they “have no standing in the church.”³⁵ Believers alone can judge disputes among Christians, for “if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!”³⁶ It is especially difficult to make sense of Barnes's position in light of scripture which itself contains Christian arguments about the law.

32. 2 *Timothy* 3:16.

33. See *John* 8; see also Ian Huyett, “As I Had Mercy on You”: Karla Faye Tucker, Immanuel Kant, and the Impossibility of Christian Retributivism, 1 *RELIGIO ET LEX* 15, 25 n.11 (2018)

As an aside, it should be acknowledged that John's famous story of the adulteress—rarely for any piece of scripture—is not present in the oldest extant manuscript. Without exploring this topic in complete detail, there are nonetheless good reasons to accept the veracity of the story. Augustine was confident that this story was present in the original text, but had been deleted by those who feared its implications, “as though He who said ‘From now on, sin no more’ granted permission to sin” (Augustine 1955:107 [in the original: Book 2, chapter 7]). The story of the adulteress was apparently accepted as historical by the church father Papias, an incredibly early source (Eusebius 1926: 296–99). Papias personally spoke with many persons who had known the disciples, and investigated “what Andrew of Peter said, or Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any of the Lord's disciples had said” (MacDonald 2012: 16–17).

34. See *Matthew* 18:33 (“And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?”).

35. 1 *Corinthians* 6:4.

36. 1 *Corinthians* 6:2–3.

One factor contributing to Barnes's mistake appears to be his conflation of political advocacy with coercion. This is clearly not the whole of his objection to political advocacy; Barnes objects that law "has the coercive power of the state for its enforcement, *and* it is focused on actions, or behavior."³⁷ Nonetheless, the claim requires a response, for, where the law exists independently of politicians, it limits coercive power rather than wields it. Our phrase "the rule of law," itself a denial of the rule of men, suggests that it is precisely the coercive power of politicians which the law limits.

Constitutional case law in the United States, for example, is ultimately incapable of imposing itself on the personal lives of Americans. It may do only one of two things: permit some preexisting coercion or stand in its way. Since any coercive actions which courts approve would still occur in their absence, *limiting* coercive power is the only concrete *telos* which the courts actually possess in constitutional cases. This fact means that the relationship between law and coercion is far from necessary. There is no reason why Christian political engagement cannot be analogous to constitutional law. As I noted in my response, the late Christian leader Charles Colson taught that it is precisely to protect freedom that the church should be engaged politically.

Barnes's essential mistake, however, lies in his understanding of the nature of faith. Barnes writes that "[faith] is what is necessary to please God—this is merely *cognitive* in essence."³⁸ As Barnes himself briefly acknowledges, certain behaviors necessarily follow from genuine faith.³⁹ This makes action critical to the Christian life just as surely as it makes it secondary to faith. Jesus said that "[e]very tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits."⁴⁰ Likewise, we learn from Isaiah that a "merely cognitive" faith, if such a thing can truly exist, is not pleasing to God: God tells us flatly that what pleases him is an active faith which breaks "every yoke."⁴¹

37. Barnes, *supra* note 23, at 504 (emphasis added).

38. *Id.* at 508.

39. *See id.* at 509 n. 72.

40. *Matthew* 7:19-20

41. *See Isaiah* 58.

Barnes is clearly not unaware of these verses: he himself quotes James as saying “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”⁴² Yet he does not explain how this verse can possibly be reconciled with his view that faith is “merely *cognitive* in essence.”⁴³

Finally, Barnes appears to suggest that Christian political arguments cannot have any motive other than the promotion of a works-based view of salvation. Barnes writes that “Christians are telling the public that voting for, and complying with, such laws will be pleasing to God and will obtain His favor—why else bother with advocating for their ‘Christian’ nature?”⁴⁴ As he does elsewhere, I think Barnes fails to distinguish between an action’s being “pleasing” to God—something to which Christians should certainly aspire—and the individual who performs the action thereby obtaining salvation.

I need not develop this, however, for I think Barnes contradicts Jesus’s own words. Jesus himself said that he will tell the wicked:

Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.⁴⁵

One can imagine a first-century Barnes responding to this sermon by saying, to paraphrase his earlier statement, “Jesus is telling the public that these actions will be pleasing to God and will obtain His favor—why else bother with advocating for their religious nature?” Christian separationism, then, is ultimately a kind of self-eating ouroboros which, if applied consistently, nullifies the Christian faith.

For his part, Barnes himself confidently affirms the cardinal tenets of the Christian faith—something which, given his role as a law professor at a secular school, is compelling evidence of Christian conviction. I can be grateful, then, that Barnes’s separationism does not seem to have been consistently applied.

42. Barnes, *supra* note 23, at 509 n.72 (quoting James 2:14-17).

43. *Id.* at 508 (emphasis in original).

44. *Id.* at 509.

45. *Matthew* 25:41-43.

*IV. David Smolin's Observations Illustrate the Need for
a Bold Response*

If David Smolin's insightful response was any indication, there is tremendous overlap between his own views and my own. In fact, I suspect that—of the three other participants in this roundtable—his own instincts are closest to mine. Smolin has still provided me with an opportunity for fruitful debate, however, for his response raises a crucial issue: the strategic position of the church in the age of Isabella Chow.

I think Smolin misdiagnoses the reason for anti-Christian hostility in academia. Smolin correctly points out that “Democrats significantly over-perceive [the] identification of evangelical Christianity with the Republican Party.”⁴⁶ Yet he then concludes that “for many academics evangelicals equals Republicans which equals the political—and in our hyper-partisan environment—moral, enemy.”⁴⁷ In other words, Smolin appears to posit that anti-Christian sentiment may be a proxy for hostility to Republicans. If this were correct, Christians could presumably mitigate anti-Christian hostility by disassociating Christianity from the Republican Party. While I firmly agree that Christians should articulate views distinct from those of any secular party or ideology, I think that Smolin's view of the source of anti-Christian bias is a misdiagnosis—one which could lead Christians to underappreciate the severity of, and the reasons for, anti-Christian contempt and hostility.

In a 2013 lecture, sociologist George Yancey explained that—when he began to study anti-Christian bias in academia—he expected to find that hostility to evangelicals was ultimately about Republican policy positions. Instead, Yancey found, academics report that they would be far less likely to hire an evangelical Christian than to hire a member of the National Rifle Association.⁴⁸ It therefore seems more likely that the relationship Smolin posited is actually inverted: that is, for many academics,

46. David M. Smolin, *America's Creed: The Inevitable, Sometimes Dangerous, Mixing of Religion and Politics*, 74 WASH. & LEE L. REV. ONLINE 512, 527 (2018), <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/wlulr-online/vol74/iss2/13>.

47. *Id.*

48. See Yancy, *supra* note 1.

Republicans equals evangelicals which equals the religious, and therefore moral, enemy.

An illustration of this relationship can be seen in the treatment of the British Member of Parliament Tim Farron. Farron is a Christian who, as a liberal Democrat, holds the complete range of left-wing policy positions. Farron has long taken a resolutely pro-LGBT stance on every policy issue, saying “I’m passionate about equality, about equal marriage and about equal rights for LGBT people, for fighting for LGBT rights, not just in this country but overseas.”⁴⁹

Disgusted by Farron’s private Christian faith, however, a group of British journalists—spearheaded by Channel 4 anchor Cathy Newman—began to persistently ask him whether he personally regarded gay sex as sinful. Farron repeatedly refused to answer the question directly, saying “we’re all sinners,” but this only put blood in the water.⁵⁰ Although Farron had never brought the issue up, his failure to affirmatively endorse gay sex became a national outrage. English comedian David Baddiel Tweeted that Farron was a “fundamentalist Christian homophobe.”⁵¹ Finally asked on the floor of parliament itself if he thought gay sex was a sin, Farron capitulated and said “no I do not”—but it was too late. Farron was forced to resign from his leadership position in the Liberal Democrats. Perhaps ironically, Farron has since become more traditional and outspoken in his views.⁵²

Where cultural progressivism is concerned, then, it does not matter if Christians reject Republican politics, or even if they accommodate a range of progressive political views. Rather, it is

49. Helena Horton, ‘Absolute disgrace’: Tim Farron Under Fire for Refusing to Answer When Asked if Being Gay is a Sin, TELEGRAPH (Apr. 19, 2017), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/19/absolute-disgrace-tim-farron-fire-refusing-answer-asked-gay/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2019) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

50. Harriet Sherwood, *Christians Are Deemed to be Dangerous, Says Tim Farron*, GUARDIAN (Nov. 27, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/nov/28/christians-deemed-dangerous-tim-farron-speech> (last visited Jan. 15, 2019) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

51. Horton, *supra* note 49.

52. Rowena Mason, *Tim Farron Says He Regrets Saying Gay Sex Is Not a Sin*, GUARDIAN (Jan. 10, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jan/10/tim-farron-regrets-saying-gay-sex-not-sin> (last visited Jan. 15, 2019) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

traditional religious views themselves—and not the politics they connote—which must be hunted out and annihilated, as if by an unrelenting machine of hatred. Christians’ religious views have become far more offensive to secular progressivism than are secular right-wing positions, such as nationalistic opposition to immigration. To be sure, nationalism is noxious to the left. Yet sexual or other ethics based on theism are worse: they nullify the theist’s status as a citizen of the West.

Both Tim Farron and Isabella Chow, in different ways, attempted to make their views politically palatable. Chow expressed a controversial position—that God created humans male and female—but did so with love and even deference to her hostile audience. Farron simply remained outright silent about his controversial beliefs, but—because he is a Christian—his prominence was *prima facie* offensive, and the burden shifted to him to prove that he should be tolerated in polite society. In either case, it was not politics that were the target.

Likewise, in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop*⁵³ case, the Supreme Court noted that Colorado’s Civil Rights Commission expressed hostility to the baker’s religious views themselves, saying “[t]he commissioner even went so far as to compare Phillips’ invocation of his sincerely held religious beliefs to defenses of slavery and the Holocaust.”⁵⁴ Bias of this kind does not reflect hostility to Republicans—it reflects Rousseau’s conviction that “one has to begin by exterminating these Religions in order to ensure the peace of the State.”⁵⁵

Foreshadowed in this anti-Christian hostility, Smolin wisely sees a tumultuous reckoning. It is odd, he says, that academics have not considered the “political and social risks that such exclusion, if taken seriously, would significantly worsen the dangers of social unrest.”⁵⁶ Yet I do not find this odd—for I see the cultural elite’s confidence that it will always hold power as part and parcel of its linear conception of history. The notion that history is linear, of course, is almost necessarily based in ignorance

53. *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colo. Civil Rights Comm’n*, 138 S. Ct. 1719 (2018).

54. *Id.* at 1729.

55. GERARD CASEY, *FREEDOM’S PROGRESS* 512 (1st ed. 2017).

56. Smolin, *supra* note 46, at 542.

of history and, consequently, ignorance of the tendency of reactionary movements—from the Maccabean Revolt to the Islamic Revolution in Iran—to burst onto the world stage and overthrow programs of enforced cultural programming. While it would be prudent for cultural progressives to heed Smolin's warning, it is probably an inevitable consequence of their philosophy that they will not do so until it is too late.

As for Christians, I think the wisest counsel is to err on the side of strength rather than conciliation. Our political culture, in general, increasingly respects boldness—whether used for good or for ill. Tellingly, public apologies by targeted persons often seem to further excite the person's opponents and crystalize his damnation—functioning as a kind of Kafkaesque seppuku with zero redemptive function. It is not hard for me to understand why. As a militantly anti-Christian teenager, I perceived the apparent passivity of Christians as proof that, deep down, they secretly knew that I was right and that their faith was a lie. Having now been a Christian for many years, I can see that the Christians I challenged were actually attempting to model the humility of Christ but, regrettably, doing so imperfectly.

For Christians to speak with greater boldness would be biblical as well as pragmatic. Too often, Christians emphasize only one component of Jesus' personality, resulting in a one-dimensional meekness isolated from the fullness of Christ's character. As the novelist Walter Miller indicated in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, the church today is capable of saying "[l]et the little children come to me,"⁵⁷ but is less capable of saying—as Jesus did only a few chapters later—"[y]ou serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?"⁵⁸

Ultimately, God willed that Paul give his life in attestation of the Gospel—as Jesus had done. Yet, during their ministries, both Jesus and Paul were remarkable for their ability to use bold proclamations to diffuse pressure and consolidate their positions. On trial before the Sanhedrin, Paul provocatively riled up the Pharisees against the Sadducees, triggering a riot and ending the proceedings.⁵⁹ After Jesus committed the outrageous act of

57. *Matthew* 19:14.

58. *Matthew* 23:33.

59. *Acts* 23.

whipping money-changers in the Second Temple, he responded to the Pharisees' umbrage by doubling down with further controversial statements, such as promising that God would "put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."⁶⁰ Although the Pharisees "perceived that he was speaking about them," and sought to arrest Jesus, "they feared the crowds" who had been excited by Jesus' striking message.⁶¹

This has therefore been an ideal season for Calhoun to organize a roundtable through which Christians can discuss their views. I hope that other Christians will follow Calhoun's example and, like Jesus and Paul, respond to increasing hostility by being increasingly bold.

60. *Matthew* 21:41.

61. *Matthew* 21:45–46.