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Copyediting Sample: Blog Post

Client:	Managing editor whose client is a pastor/social justice activist
Title:	<i>Sorry—You Can't Bake Your Cake and Refuse to Sell It Too!</i>
Type of writing:	Op-ed
Level of editing:	Medium/heavy copyediting and line editing where appropriate
Style guide:	<i>The Chicago Manual of Style</i> , 17th Edition

Below I have provided the first editing pass and the [final cleaned version](#) of a blog post. Instructions were to complete basic copyediting tasks, improve the clarity of the author's argument, and to cut and combine paragraphs to enhance readability. Additionally, I made the following global edits:

- Changed passive voice to active voice where appropriate
- Checked facts to help AU more effectively express his points
- Recast transitional phrasing between paragraphs to smooth out abrupt changes in content
- Sdjusted tone to better fit register of writing

Editing Pass

Sorry—You Can't Bake Your Cake and Refuse ~~To~~ Sell It Too!

Though it might seem like they're striking a blow for religious freedom, ~~religious~~ owners of licensed businesses who try to deny services to same-sex couples on the basis of ~~their~~ religious beliefs are missing ~~their~~ ~~the~~ mark. ~~Through Their such actions, are they misinterpreting misinterpret~~ the point of religious freedom, ~~both in both~~ the ~~Constitutional-constitutional sense~~ and ~~in the Biblical-biblical sense~~; alike.

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

So ~~reads-written in the Bible are~~ the red-letter words of ~~our Lord~~ Jesus ~~Christ in the Bible~~ (Matthew 22:21). This short and hotly contested passage reflects an early, divinely sourced version of the secular values we now find enshrined in our U.S. Constitution. They are values that guarantee both our religious ~~freedom~~ and ~~our~~ personal freedoms ~~—, and they are the~~ values that are slipping away far too quickly.

Of course, what constitutes freedom and what ~~doesn't does not~~ is a highly debatable question; but let's consider the details.

When ~~Jack Phillips, the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop in~~ suburban Denver, ~~area-baking company Masterpiece Cakeshop~~ tried to deny a gay couple service for their wedding simply because of ~~owner Jack Phillips'his own~~ ~~personal~~ religious beliefs, he was struck down by a Colorado court for anti-gay discrimination. Then, in a nearly complete reversal, ~~the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Phillips~~ ~~he was supported by the Supreme Court, which~~ ~~painting~~ painting him as a victim of anti-religious bias that resulted in the violation of his First Amendment rights.

However, Jack Phillips's First Amendment rights were no more violated than were his religious freedoms.

~~In this context,~~ "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" ~~translates to means,~~ —when Caesar issues ~~you~~ a business license, ~~you the business owner are~~ automatically ~~agreeing agrees~~ to operate it according to Caesar's laws. In the United States, ~~that means this equates to the~~ separation of church and state, ~~—~~ debate over.

~~Accordingly,~~ ~~No-no~~ for-profit business or nonprofit organization should ~~be~~ allowed to refuse service to gays, lesbians, or ~~to~~ anyone else. Why? Because Caesar's law, in this country, is ~~restrained-constrained~~ by the 14th

Commented [JB1]: Reduce wordiness and add emphasis: OK to change to "and biblical senses." (italicizing "and" for emphasis) and to delete "alike" to reduce wordiness?

Commented [JB2]: Tone adjustment: Toned down from "our Lord Jesus" to simply "Jesus Christ." OK?

Commented [JB3]: Contraction: Removed contraction for emphasis.

Amendment ~~It, which states says~~ that “no State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States.” The Colorado court, therefore, had it right ~~the first time when they found that Phillips had discriminated against the gay couple.~~

~~At the same time~~ Along similar lines, consider ~~the a~~ recent congressional rule change in the House of Representatives; ~~sponsored by Rep. Illhan Omar and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, to allow the wearing of which permits wearing~~ the hijab ~~in the federal government on the House floor for the first time, and in a space where such a thing had been previously forbidden, that previously has never allowed anything similar.~~

“Jefferson’s Manual”, also known as the Rules of the House of Representatives, explicitly states that “when any Member means to speak, he is to stand up in his place, uncovered,” and that; “no ~~Member member~~ is to come into the House with his head covered.” Yet Omar and Pelosi made the distinct case that religious ~~freedoms of the Members-members~~ of the House are themselves protected by the First Amendment to dress as they please, ~~with —Omar stating on Twitter, “it’s It’s my choice.”~~

In January, Omar became the first person ever to overturn the ban on head coverings, ~~effectively changing the perception of religious symbols.~~ This was a huge ~~change to the way religious symbols are seen~~ win, but we shouldn’t celebrate too quickly.

The problem ~~with this,~~ is, if we are going to respect all religions, ~~in all of their diversity along with all the diversity doing so would entail, we’ve got to also retain some~~ our government institutions ~~must as be entirely~~ free of religious expression ~~entirely.~~ Our modern-day Roman Senate is no place for religious symbols or religious considerations. It is a ~~sacred place that is sacred,~~ but sacred in its own way: ~~secularism a secularist way.~~ Those things that are God’s should be rendered unto God, indeed, but they should be rendered within His holy spaces or ~~in His followers’ own homes and other private spaces. In a modern society,~~ places of government should be secularly unified.

The flipside is that, by ~~keeping the meaning of separating~~ government buildings ~~and from~~ religious ~~symbols distinct,~~ we might actually promote religious freedom and cultural diversity rather than repress it. Just as ~~Jesus’s Jesus’~~ red-letter words on the issue referred to the responsibility of Christians to pay taxes to Caesar despite their religious affiliation, so too must all ~~religions-religious institutions~~ in our increasingly diverse society respect the neutrality of our government.

So, what’s the solution? First, ~~when it comes to questions of discrimination, instantly revoke remove all licenses the business licenses instantly for from any business that those who~~ refuses to recognize the supremacy of the 14th Amendment ~~when it comes to questions of whether discrimination, is or isn’t allowed.~~ For those new start-ups that try to do what Phillips did, but along their own idiosyncratic lines, they just won’t get a license in the first place. The minute a business decides to ~~go against these standards discriminate in any way, shape, or form,~~ ~~their-its~~ license ~~would should be immediately withdrew withdrawn immediately. As for the~~ The House ~~and as well as the other branches of government must, we need to heed the rules-guidelines~~ set forth by Thomas Jefferson ~~and so as to remain a secularly-operated structure, retain the secular nature of our system of government.~~

Final Version

Sorry—You Can’t Bake Your Cake and Refuse to Sell It Too!

Though it might seem like they’re striking a blow for religious freedom, owners of licensed businesses who try to deny services to same-sex couples on the basis of religious belief are missing the mark. Through such actions, they misinterpret the point of religious freedom in both the constitutional and biblical senses.

“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.”

So written in the Bible are the red-letter words of Jesus Christ (Matthew 22:21). This short and hotly contested passage reflects an early, divinely sourced version of the secular values we now find enshrined in our U.S. Constitution. They are values that guarantee both our religious and personal freedoms—values that are slipping away far too quickly.

Commented [JB4]: Title clarification and formatting: The actual title of this book is *Manual of Parliamentary Practice*, and should be written in italics as per CMOS. And what do you think of using em dashes and the word “guidelines” for “rules”:

“Thomas Jefferson’s *Manual of Parliamentary Practice*—the guidelines for the House of Representatives—explicitly states”

OK?

Commented [JB5]: Tone adjustment: I’m actually going stronger on this one. The AU originally wrote “some.... must be free of...” but that’s vague IMO. I removed that vagueness. OK?

Commented [JB6]: Tone: “The flipside” seems a bit too informal for this piece. What do you think? OK to delete?

Commented [JB7]: Punctuation: This is the appropriate possessive of this name according to Meriam-Webster.

Commented [JB8]: Faulty logic: a “business” cannot do what Phillips did before it is actually a business (before it gets a license). It must first get its business license, then do what Phillips did and then have its license revoked. OK to delete this?

Commented [JB9]: This phrasing felt awkward. See my recast that follows it. OK?

Of course, what constitutes freedom and what does not is a highly debatable question, but let's consider the details.

When Jack Phillips, the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop in suburban Denver, tried to deny a gay couple service for their wedding simply because of his own personal religious beliefs, he was struck down by a Colorado court for anti-gay discrimination. Then, in a nearly complete reversal, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Phillips, painting him as a victim of anti-religious bias that resulted in the violation of his First Amendment rights.

However, Jack Phillips's First Amendment rights were no more violated than were his religious freedoms.

In this context, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" means when Caesar issues a business license, the business owner automatically agrees to operate it according to Caesar's laws. In the United States, this equates to the separation of church and state—debate over. Accordingly, no for-profit business or nonprofit organization should be allowed to refuse service to gays, lesbians, or to anyone else. Why? Because Caesar's law, in this country, is constrained by the 14th Amendment, which states that "no State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States." The Colorado court, therefore, had it right when they found that Phillips had indeed discriminated against the gay couple.

Along similar lines, consider a recent congressional rule change in the House of Representatives, sponsored by Rep. Ilhan Omar and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, which permits wearing the hijab on the House floor, a space where such a thing had previously been forbidden.

Thomas Jefferson's *Manual of Parliamentary Practice*—the guidelines for the House of Representatives—explicitly states that "when any member means to speak, he is to stand up in his place, uncovered" and that "no member is to come into the House with his head covered." Yet Omar and Pelosi made the distinct case that religious freedoms of House members are themselves protected by the First Amendment to dress as they please—Omar later stating on Twitter, "It's my choice."

In January, Omar became the first person ever to overturn the ban on head coverings, effectively changing the perception of religious symbols. This was a huge win, but we shouldn't be too quick to celebrate.

The problem is, if we are going to respect all religions, along with all the diversity doing so would entail, our government institutions must be entirely free of religious expression. Our modern-day Roman Senate is no place for religious symbols or religious considerations. It is a sacred place, but sacred in its own way: a secularist way. Those things that are God's should be rendered unto God, indeed, but they should be rendered within His holy spaces or His followers' own homes and other private spaces. In a modern society, places of government should be secularly unified.

By separating government buildings from religious symbols, we might actually promote religious freedom and cultural diversity rather than repress it. Just as Jesus' red-letter words on the issue referred to the responsibility of Christians to pay taxes to Caesar despite their religious affiliation, so too must all religious institutions in our increasingly diverse society respect the neutrality of our government.

So what's the solution? First, when it comes to questions of discrimination, instantly revoke the business licenses from those who refuse to recognize the supremacy of the 14th Amendment. The minute a business decides to discriminate in any way, shape, or form, its license should be immediately withdrawn. The House as well as the other branches of government must heed the guidelines set forth by Thomas Jefferson so as to retain the secular nature of our system of government.
