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Preview Response

# THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR MUST ATTEND TO THE VIRTUES

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What a fine brief statement on virtues Jennifer Herdt has given us!

From some of the responses to my own Theology Brief on justice, it became clear to me that a significant gap in what I have written about justice is that I have paid no attention to the virtue of *being just*; I have focused all my attention on acting justly. But in the absence of the virtue of *being just,* acting justly will be, at best, episodic. If one has the virtue of being just, then one will act justly (most of the time). But it is possible to act justly now and then without having the virtue of being just. One might, for example, act justly when the law requires it, and because the law requires it, not because one has the virtue of being a just person.

In what I have written about the religious voice in democratic politics, I have discussed the virtues required in the citizenry for the sustenance of democratic politics.

Those who write about what it is to be a Christian scholar have tended to focus on the content of such scholarship. The content is, of course, important. In what I myself have written on the matter, I have also paid attention to the virtues that should characterize the Christian scholar and teacher. Treating one's students and discussion partners with dignity is prime among those. In my teaching and writing, I have done my best to exhibit that virtue - treating both my students and my fellow scholars with dignity. I remember vividly a seminar in which we were discussing something in Augustine, and one of the students in the class was being brusquely dismissive of him. Finally I said to her, "Would you say what you just said if Augustine were sitting across the table from you?" "Of course not, she replied." Enough said!

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