Twitter Thread by Dr. Valerie Hobbs



Dr. Valerie Hobbs
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Wonderfully refreshing
Lusk speaking about "the danger of Christians claiming privilege within the state and the persecution of Christians which that led to...
If you have a political system which gives privilege to Christians then that system have to define what a Christian is"

> A Christian who doesn't think the church should have a privileged voice in the public square? Isn't that like a turkey voting for Christmas? Listen to the new episode of our podcast #GunsandGod, with @HelenEPaynter & @matthew_feldman with guest Paul Lusk.https://t.co/O3t2C41gsM
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> — Centre for the Study of Bible & Violence (@CSBibleViolence) December 7, 2020

Paynter: "If Christians are pursuing political power, what ... they are essentially saying is that might makes right."

Lusk: 1/ "The basic problem w/a religious right is that it says that the state has been established by God to enforce law & all law has a religious basis."

Lusk: 2/ "And therefore whatever the state does must reflect a religious position. And therefore if there are diverse religious positions at work, then the inevitable result is that one will oppress the other."

Lusk: "To say we are post-Christian does not mean we are ex-Christian ... Although Christain belief is a small minority, certainly our culture, our values, our system- these are very much part of a Christian heritage and sensibility which is inherited."

Paynter: It's a question now of what privilege the church should claim. I don't want to say that Christians shouldn't be active in politics or speaking in the public square. But we shouldn't claim a privilege, to work with people of other faiths or none towards the common good"

Feldman now bringing up an example my mind was going to as well, which is Lib Dem Leader Tim Farron:
"He had voted to endorse same sex marriage but then his personal view as a Christian ... he didn't endorse it the same way. Is that the kind of thing that you're getting at?"

[pausing for a moment - will return shortly to tweet more about this fascinating podcast episode]

Lusk: "Essentially, for a politican to be asked, is something a sin, is a violation of religious liberty. What is a sin is properly a matter within the church. What is properly to be [considered] under the law is a matter for the whole community."

Payner saying Judges is one of her favourite books of the Bible.
SAME.
Now talking about the parable of the trees. Exciting stuff.

Sidenote: This is something I've spent some time on too.
https://t.co/1XJQX6cXwr

Lusk speaking about the parable.
Context: God gave permission for the people to have a king. And I interpret that as meaning they could have a state.
They went first to Gideon. He said no, God will rule over you.
So they set up a worship point in his home town.
Idolatry.

Gideon dies. Abimelech asks to be made king.
A grim story about violence in politics, as Abimelech rounds up all his rivals to be killed.
One survives: Jothan, who tells the parable of the trees.

*Jotham.

In the parable, the bramble says I will rule over you. But be careful lest I burn you all up.
At that point, Jotham says, if you have in truth to Gideon made Abimelech ruler, good luck to you. If not, be careful because you will get burnt up.
Israel turns into a failed state.

Lusk: 1/ "The point of this story is that the thorn is a picture of the state. The thorn is not a useless tree. If you travel in dry desert lands, you'll see rows of thorn that keep the animals in, etc. In dry, hot conditions the thorn can catch fire."

Lusk: 2/ "So if you're going to have a thorn bush, keep it watered and trimmed. The picture here is of the state's function, properly and legitimately is to have the monopoly of force. The state can project force to protect the fruit trees."

Feldman: Citing Bellah, "There is no human activity which cannot assume religious significance."
"I wonder if it's possible to have a secular state that doesn't draw upon metaphysical notions of the good or use certain religious tropes."

Lusk: "I would like to think that's possible and to my mind it's worth trying, that we simply have - the job of government should be a technical job."

My comment: As a scholar of religious language, I don't believe this is possible, so I'm interested in the argument here.

Feldman: Arguing that there will by default be cornerstone principles, documents, etc.. That somehow, running a state, is not possible without some element of [the metaphysical].

Feldman: "There is traditional organized religion. That can in some cases be the defining characteristic of a state (theocracy). Then there is this sort of social glue that every society needs... To some degree ... a good society [is an] inherently metaphysical determination."

Sidenote: Strongly recommend that Christians listeners look into two kingdom doctrine, which speaks to much under discussion here.

Lusk: "I don't think the common good is a Christian idea. Christians understand human beings to be sinful, and we believe that good is found only in submission to God."

Sidenote: again, strongly recommend literature on 2 Kingdoms (e.g., Luther), which speaks to this.

Lusk: "We need to explore the idea of the good society as being the competent society, the society that creates safety and the society that makes it possible for people to pursue their own idea of good. People don't become good by conforming to the state."

Lusk: "Religious views do colour an ability to do [a political] job. Because if [a Christian politican] does their job well, it's honouring to God. But it's not the job of a Christian politician to go out and make people behave like Christians."

Paynter: "What are your thoughts about what the religious right is trying to do in the United States at the moment?"

Lusk: "The backbone of this is an ideology, of Rushdoony and Schaeffer and it was the idea that the state exists to promote law, that the law it promotes must be God's law, that if it's not God's law, than it's Satanic. We must wage cultural war against this phenomenon."

Lusk: "A huge movement of protecting men within marriage, the role of women, this stuff is still going on, the subordination of women, meeting sexual needs of men. This is really powerful stuff."

Now some discussion about the role of civil rights movement in the religious right.
Racism, sexism tied in to the religious right.

Lusk: Part of the appeal of Jimmy Carter was character. But part of the pushback against Carter was, he was too nice, not delivering to the evangelical base.
Trump is seen as a strong man who will deliver. Character is irrelevant.

Thanks to @HelenEPaynter and @matthew_feldman and their guest Paul Lusk for such a stimulating episode.

I highly recommend this series.