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Jesus, Judgment, and the People of God: Learning from Jesus and the Reformed Tradition about the Works Required for Salvation



by Joshua E. Leim

Introduction

Many of you know that one of the most important issues of Greek grammar is participles—perhaps the most important. If you don't master participles—those verbal adjectives we sometimes translate with the *ing* ending (running, walking)—you don't know Greek. If you master participles even while not yet totally proficient in the language, you at least have the keys to unlock the beauty of Greek. Unfortunately, participles are tricky. We try to categorize them as

best we can, but they often break the bounds of categorization. They must be wrestled with, engaged over time through various kinds of literature, and treated according to how various authors employ them, sometimes in quite different ways.

I begin with this analogy for two reasons. First, my topic for today—the relationship between salvation and obedience—is one of the trickiest in the Church's theological grammar. It is difficult—if not impossible—to master. It has caused no little heartache in the Church, especially over the past 500 or so years. I certainly don't pretend to have mastered it. Second, it is also one of the most important issues of theological grammar for our current theological moment. In my view, and as I aim to show below, conservative Protestantism—especially white evangelicalism—has a severely anemic theology of obedience, particularly in relation to the obedience Jesus cares most about: suffering love that issues in justice for the oppressed and mercy toward the broken and vulnerable.

Presbyterian that I am, this paper has three parts. In Part I, I explore the scriptural and reformed grammar of obedience. In Part II, I discuss how conservative Protestantism (especially what is commonly called evangelicalism) has largely lost its theological grammar of obedience (or at least has an anemic/distorted theology of obedience). The paper concludes

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with several brief suggestions for improving our theological grammar.

Part I: The Biblical and Reformed Witness Concerning Salvation and Obedience

Most important is the scriptural witness, so I turn there first. Since my specialty is the Gospels, I will begin with them.¹ A rather remarkable observation one can make simply by reading the Gospels—especially if one takes the time to do so in one sitting, without distraction—is that the constant recipient of Jesus’s warnings about future judgment is the people of God. Let that sink in for a moment: those who need to repent most—in order to avoid future condemnation—are the people of God. Indeed, occasionally Jesus contrasts the lightness of judgment on outsiders with the severity of judgment on insiders (Matt 10:15; 11:20-24).

One of the most common indictments of Jesus against the people of God is not simply that they fail to “believe” in Jesus and instead try to “work” for their righteousness. Rather, *it is that they have failed in a particular kind of obedience*. Especially in Matthew and Luke, it is their failure first and foremost in mercy, justice, generosity, forgiveness (see, e.g., Matt 23:23-24; Luke 11:37-54; 14:14-35; 16:14-31). Jesus does not so much set “faith” against “works”; he lambasts them for *prioritizing the wrong kind of “works”*: they fail to love their neighbors.²

One might be tempted to think that it is only the “hypocritical” Pharisees whom Jesus threatens with judgment; that it is only they—and those who reject Jesus’s summons to discipleship—who will undergo harsh judgment. But that assumption would be wrong. Jesus’s own disciples—his *disciples*—receive similar treatment and warnings. The following words are spoken to the disciples as Jesus’s closing exhortation in the Sermon on the Mount:

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?” Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers” (Matt 7:21-23).

These are warnings *to the disciples*. Jesus’ imaginary interlocutor, who cries to Jesus “Lord, Lord,” clearly thinks of himself as a true disciple. As if to make the point unmistakably clear, the appellant twice calls Jesus “Lord” (the title disciples most often use for Jesus in Matthew and Luke) and thrice reiterates that he acted “in Jesus’s name.” But to no avail: the appellant must “depart.”

Why must that person “depart”? The context makes it abundantly clear: he does not bear the right fruit (7:20); or as 7:24 puts it, does not “hear Jesus’s words and *do* them.” What words does Jesus expect the would-be disciple to do? Clearly, the words of the sermon he just preached.³

It is not that this appellant in 7:21-23 has failed to “believe” in some sense, since he twice calls Jesus “Lord” and appeals to his authority. Rather, as we saw a moment ago, he *has failed in a particular kind of obedience*. Matthew’s Gospel reinforces this point over and over, especially in Jesus’s parables: it is those who are already “in,” i.e., disciples, who end up on the outside because of infidelity to Jesus’s words.⁴

Put plainly, Matthew’s soteriological grammar is that a disciple will not attain to final salvation apart from bearing a specific kind of fruit, such as that in the Sermon on the Mount: loving justice, showing mercy, seeking reconciliation with an enemy, giving away treasures on earth to have treasure in heaven, forgiving an offender, etc. We could go on with more examples from Matthew and the other Gospels, but we would find the same sort of soteriological grammar in them as well.⁵

If we turn to Paul, we find something very similar. While many think that Paul is the pre-eminent New Testament example of pitting faith against works, repeatedly scholars have shown this to be a false dichotomy. Take, for example, the recent, highly acclaimed work of John Barclay on Paul’s language of “grace” or “gift” (*charis*).⁶ Thomas Schreiner and Kavin Rowe recently called it the most important book on Paul in many years.⁷

Over his 600 pages of close historical and exegetical work on the language of grace in Paul and the Greco-Roman world, Barclay definitively demonstrates that Paul’s soteriology is based on the unconditioned, not unconditional, gift of Christ to sinners. Put otherwise, in Christ God redeems sinners without regard to their worth (they have none); and

simultaneously, by the power of the Spirit, those sinners respond with a *congruous* life that befits the gift. Here are a few citations from Barclay making this point:

Paul makes it clear that faith also involves action (5:6), arising from and made possible by the Christ gift (2:20), and that in such action eternal life remains at stake (5:21; 6:8).⁸

What God will judge is not ethnicity but obedience For both Gentiles and Jews, it is the act of God that produces the *necessary* obedience.⁹

*The purpose of the unfitting gift [of Christ] is to create a fit, to turn lawless Gentiles into those who do the law (2:12-15).*¹⁰

In his eschatological scenario, Paul describes *congruity* rather than *incongruity*: he foresees a final judgment in which the righteous are rewarded and the unrighteous are condemned. . . . Paul is clear that those who do the works of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:21), and only those who sow to the Spirit will reap eternal life (Gal 6:7-8).¹¹

The gift of Christ, in Paul's grammar of salvation, is unmerited; it is not conditioned on the worth of the recipients. Yet, that very gift recreates human beings, giving rise in them to a congruity, a fit between the gift and their life; by the power of the Spirit, they are to become the sort of people who will be judged "righteous" according to what they have done (see also Barclay's discussion Romans 2:6-15).

I have spent a good bit of space on the New Testament for two reasons. First, it is often through careful exegesis of passages long neglected that the Church is renewed and challenged to live into its vocation as the people of God. One of Jesus's favorite strategies with the Pharisees is to point out texts in Torah that they have neglected; if they were to appropriate those texts into their theological grammar, perhaps they would find themselves seeing and acting differently (see, for example, Jesus's use of Hosea 6:6 as a hermeneutic in Matt 9:13 and 12:7). Second, the Reformers turned to Scripture alone as the final norm for faith and life; so I have done so as well.

From this brief discussion, I have attempted to highlight one aspect of a Christian theological grammar that is often neglected in protestant and evangelical circles: the necessity of good works—by the power of Christ in us—to attain to final salvation.

The Reformers

Now, however, I turn to two reformers, Martin Bucer and John Calvin, whose soteriology aligns rather closely with the New Testament soteriology I've laid out above. I turn to Bucer and Calvin because, of course, there is a genealogical relationship among Bucer, Calvin, the Reformed tradition broadly, and the Canons of Dort more specifically.

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salvation, leaving aside many other important aspects of their theology. We turn to Bucer first.

Martin Bucer, Calvin's theological and pastoral mentor, tends to be one of the less well-known reformers, but his influence extended far and wide, not only to shaping Calvin profoundly but also to shaping Zwingli. Calvin said of him that there was no finer expositor of Scripture.¹² One of the most interesting aspects of Bucer is his doctrine of double justification (sometimes even called triple justification for reasons we need not explore here¹³). That is, for Bucer, justification is at once both the non-imputation of sins to believers on account of Christ and the *impartation* of righteousness by the power of the Spirit.¹⁴

Paul is accustomed to speaking in this way, denoting by the word "justification" first of course the remission of sins, yet at the same time always indicating in addition that imparting of righteousness [*ilia iustitiae communionem*] which God proceeds to work in us by the Spirit. . . . [the majority of the holy Fathers have taken δικαιούσθαι. . . in the sense of "to be made righteous."¹⁵

Bucer argues that righteousness must be made *visible* in believers—a life conformed to Christ—for two reasons. First, Christ came to *display* to the world the righteousness of God (Rom 3:25), which

now must occur through Christians' righteous living.¹⁶ Second, Bucer takes seriously Paul's pronouncement in Romans 2:13 that the "doers of the law will be justified." Bucer is careful never to suggest that one's good works are somehow one's *possession* apart from the work of the Spirit; at the same time he says, "God will certainly judge us according to our deeds, and he will grant that we enter into eternal life if those deeds are worthy."¹⁷ These worthy deeds, Bucer makes clear, derive from Christ's life in us, and thus they are never something separate from the grace and mercy of God in Christ, but they *none-theless are intrinsic to salvation and cultivated by our Spirit-empowered cooperation*.

In his 1523 *Instruction in Christian Love*, a remarkable manual of discipleship, Bucer exhorts his reader about how to raise their children, and he puts it this way:

Every man should encourage his child to enter... the best profession, and the best profession is the one which brings most profit to his neighbors. But nowadays most men want their children to become clergymen. In the present circumstances, this means to lead a child into the most dangerous and godless position. The rest of men wish their children to become businessmen always with the idea that they would become rich without working, against the commandment of God.... *Encouraging youth to enter that road is leading them to eternal death, while the path to eternal life is only through keeping the divine commandments... [which] will be fulfilled in the single injunction of brotherly love* (italics mine).¹⁸

As one final example from Bucer, consider his Tetrapolitan Confession, drafted in 1530 during the Diet of Augsburg. While the Confession was only adopted by four cities (for various reasons), Bucer remained committed to it his whole life and is said to have recited it on his deathbed. In reading the confession, one is struck by the simple fact that there is only one section on "Justification and Faith" while there are three on "good works." In section V, "To Whom Good Works are to be Ascribed and How They are Necessary," Bucer says this:

Hence Augustine writes wisely that God rewards his own work in us. By this we are so far from rejecting good works that we utterly deny that anyone can be saved unless by Christ's Spirit he be

brought thus far, that there be in him no lack of good works, for which God has created him.¹⁹

Moving from Bucer to Calvin, we find something very similar. As is often emphasized, the heart of Calvin's soteriology is union with Christ.²⁰ While Calvin retains a logical distinction between justification and sanctification, he nevertheless envisions *salvation as a total process of justification and sanctification*:

For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them.... Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. *Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also*.... Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits *are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond*.... Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; *but you cannot possess him without being made partaker in his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces*.... [H]e bestows both of them [justification and sanctification] at the same time, the one never without the other (3.16.1; italics mine).

In a recent article, Richard Gaffin shows just how intent Calvin was by the end of his life never to separate justification from a life of obedience.²¹ In his last biblical commentary (on Ezekiel), which remained unfinished, Calvin evinces significant discomfort with the phrase "faith without works justifies." Commenting on Ezekiel 18:17, Calvin says, "Faith cannot justify when it is without works, because it is dead, and a mere fiction." As Gaffin makes clear, Calvin is not saying that works justify, but something like this, "Faith, *with its works*, justifies without works" (italics mine). Gaffin's point is to show just how careful Calvin is trying to be, how faithful to the Scriptural witness, such that he can sound as if he's talking out of both sides of his mouth. Gaffin's judgment comports with the recent work of Charles Raith, who demonstrates how similar are Calvin's and Aquinas's notions of justification.²² In sum, the point is clear: Calvin has a robust grammar of obedience; there is no salvation apart from obedience to Christ by the power of the Spirit.

Part II: Indicting Protestantism/Evangelicalism

I now turn to the current state of evangelicalism's grammar of obedience. Part II consists of a two-part indictment of evangelicalism. First, I focus on the significant loss of a grammar of obedience in evangelicalism; second, for that bit of attention that obedience gets, I argue that obedience is often distortedly defined.²³

First witness: Evangelical students

At the university at which I teach, we claim to be evangelical, Reformed, and ecumenical. This is reflected in our student body: somewhere around 70 percent of our students are Christians, and the majority of those Christians are evangelicals; many of them hail from a Reformed background.

There is a remarkably consistent phenomenon that occurs every semester that I teach the Gospels—*every* semester (this is not an exaggeration). And it seems to happen only to the most evangelically minded (and attentive) students.

It is this: many evangelical students come to passages like Matthew 7:21-23 (discussed above), and over and over again they formulate essentially the same, incredulous question: “Isn’t Jesus teaching salvation by works?! Isn’t salvation all about *grace*, not works? I was taught that there is nothing I could do to make God love me less. Jesus seems to be saying *we* have to *do* something.” It’s as though they’re wondering if Jesus is a heretic. To put it in more scholarly terms, what Jesus says about the necessity of obedience does not fit their “paradigm”; not only does it not occur to them that obedience is necessary; but on account of their theological paradigm, it *cannot* occur to them that salvation is bound up with a way of life, a life of obedience to Jesus in the Spirit.²⁴

One might protest that these college students are not the most reliable source of conservative Protestant/evangelical theology. In one sense, that is true—they’re not [yet] trained theologians. But in another, important sense, they represent quite well popular, lay-level, evangelical theology. These students of which I speak—earnest, zealous evangelical

youth for whom, I should say, I have much love and respect—have been taught their theological grammar by the church: by youth groups, youth camps, Bible studies, Sunday sermons, and worship songs. It does not really matter their denomination; they have very similar theological grammars and similar reactions to the canonical Gospels.

Second Witness: Social Justice and Gospel Statement

My second witness is the recent evangelical “Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel.” As of recently, it was signed by over 11,000 evangelicals, many of them prominent Church and ministry leaders, many of them Reformed.²⁵ The statement seeks to clarify the relationship between the gospel and “social justice.” In article VI, the statement makes the following denial:

WE DENY that anything else, whether works to be performed or opinions to be held, can be added to the gospel without perverting it into another gospel. This also means that implications and applications of the gospel, such as the obligation to live justly in the world, though legitimate and important in their own right, are not definitional components of the gospel.

Note the language: “The obligation to live justly in the world... is not a definitional component of the gospel” (a point it reiterates in article 14 on “racism”); “works” are in no way associated with the “gospel.” Importantly, one should notice that while the “Statement” references three proof texts in Paul as support for its definition of the gospel, it cites *not a single text from the four gospels* (indeed, in 105 cited proof-texts, only 5 come from the gospels; 0 from Luke; 50 [!] from Paul).²⁶ Put otherwise, certain, select Pauline linguistic habits—interpreted in a particular way—almost entirely drown out the linguistic habits of Jesus in the Gospels.

When it come to the “gospel,” it is difficult to imagine excluding the components Jesus includes in his inaugural sermon at Nazareth that sets the trajectory of his entire mission: good news for the poor, setting at liberty those who are oppressed, etc.

In sum, the point is clear:
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(see Luke 4:17-19). But that is precisely what the “Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel” does.²⁷

Third Witness: Evangelical Worship Music

The third witness is Protestant evangelical worship music. Perhaps as much as anything, it is our worship songs—the ones we hum during the day, listen to on Spotify, sing with friends, etc.—that have the power to shape our theological grammar. Scanning through the top 100 worship songs on CCLI’s website, one looks largely in vain for songs that entail even a marginal theology of justice, mercy, generosity with wealth, forgiveness, and love of enemy. “But,” you say, “are worship songs really the place to sing about such things?” One might answer this by looking to the Scriptural book of worship and prayer, the Psalter. In over 60 Psalms the psalmist uses the language of justice, the poor, the weak, the oppressed, the needy, widow, or orphan. And, it is important to note that these are not spiritualized versions of these words; the Psalmist is speaking of those literally economically disadvantaged, those oppressed by actual injustice, those weakened by social wickedness, those “orphans” who literally have no father/parents, etc. This is the “worship” music that shaped the earliest Christians, and it certainly shaped the Reformers.²⁸

Fourth Witness: White Evangelicals and Politics

The fourth witness to the distorted conservative protestant grammar of obedience is the current state of evangelical politics. Here I am not only—or even primarily—referring to the recent support of Donald Trump by evangelicals. Let’s go back behind those recent issues. In 2010, six years before Trump, James Davison Hunter accurately diagnosed much white American evangelicalism with a deep sickness: a pathological tendency to grasp for public power out of a sense of *ressentiment* (à la Nietzsche) and fear.²⁹ The irony, Hunter argues, is that Christianity’s most trenchant and vitriolic critic—Frederick Nietzsche—has been vindicated by much white evangelicalism: humans, perhaps especially Christians, just *are* the will to power.³⁰ A good portion of conservative Protestantism/white evangelicalism has turned Nietzsche into a prophet. Put more theologically, Hunter shows how Augustine was right: to conflate the city of God with the city

of man is ruinous to the former because the city of man is governed by the *libido dominandi*, a desire entirely at odds with the *humble, crucified* Lord of the Church.³¹

Now, I cannot prove a causal link between the travesty that is white evangelical politics (what happened before, during, and after Nov. 2016) and the poor grammar of obedience in American Evangelicalism.³² I would, however, simply point out that there is usually a close correspondence between *distorted linguistic habits* and *the shape of one’s life*.³³ Stanley Hauerwas puts this well in various places in his corpus:

Yet we want to suggest that the vocabularies by which the objects of our inquiries are conceived and apprehended are themselves manifestations of historically-specific pedagogies connected, so Wittgenstein might say, to “how one sees things”—and, in seeing them, intuiting how properly to live with them.³⁴

You must remember that, morally speaking, the first issue is never what we are to do, but what we should see. Here is the way it works: you can only act in the world that you can see, and you must be taught to see by learning to say. Again, you can only act in the world that you can see, and you must be taught to see by learning to say.³⁵

A distorted Christian grammar teaches one to see the world distortedly; it is a short step from seeing the world distortedly to acting in it distortedly, that is, unjustly and unmercifully.

How might we look if we were catechized into a grammar of obedience more closely tied to the biblical witness and certain Reformation fathers—one that binds our eschatological trajectory to our imitation of Christ for the sake of justice for the oppressed, poor, widow, alien, and otherwise vulnerable? It seems to me that the shape of our public engagement in the world would be quite different. As Hebrews 2 puts it, we simply need to pay more attention lest we continue to drift away and receive our just retribution (2:1-2). Let us re-learn the Scriptural and reformed grammar of obedience.

This leads to my last suggestion. Like many of my colleagues, I had to study various ancient and modern languages for graduate and doctoral studies. One of the more remarkable features of studying

other languages is that it actually helps one become more aware of one's native tongue, more precise with one's native grammar, and sometimes even more creative with one's first language.

Using that analogy, I would like to suggest that one of the most important things Reformed folk could do is to learn more of the grammar of obedience in other Christian traditions. First, we Reformed folk do not have a corner on all theological grammar. But, second, it will also teach us to be more careful, more precise, and more creative with our native theological grammar. Just two recommendations I'll mention, one from the Black tradition, and one from the Catholic tradition. If you read no other book this year, I hope you'll read James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*.³⁶ In my view, this book helps us understand the failure of the white evangelical American grammar of obedience.³⁷ If you venture a second book, read Mother Theresa's *Come Be My Light*. Mother Theresa is a master of teaching us a grammar of mercy to the vulnerable and fidelity to Jesus.

I close with the words of my favorite biblical scholar, C. Kavin Rowe, words that capture the inextricable bond between our theological grammar and the lives we live for Jesus:

In Christian understanding, words are much denser things than simple instruments to be used: they need to fit with your life. The meaning of Christian words, that is, is existential through and through. Using words in a Christian sense is living them. This is in fact why hypocrisy has the critical weight that it does: your life gives the lie to what you say; or, what you say is true exposes your life as a lie. Conversely, to live the words you use—to exhibit the congruence we call faithfulness—is to present to the world the truth of Christianity.³⁸

Endnotes

1. See, e.g., Joshua E. Leim, *Matthew's Theological Grammar: The Father and the Son* (WUNT II/402; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).
2. See, e.g., the work of Christopher Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics: A Study in Their Coherence and Character* (WUNT II/275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).
3. Noted by many commentators. See, e.g., Jonathan Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human*

Flourishing: A Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 275-7.

4. The servant is *already* forgiven but subsequently forfeits that forgiveness (18:21-35); the man already present at the wedding feast is subsequently cast out (22:1-14); the servant whom the master himself sets over his house will subsequently be condemned if unfaithful (24:45-51); five of the virgins eagerly awaiting the bridegroom's coming are subsequently shut out (25:1-13; this parable clearly echoes 7:21-24).
5. Lest one think John is an exception, note the conditional clauses in John 15.
6. *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).
7. See the review by Schreiner at <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/thomas-schreiner-paul-and-the-gift-a-review-article>. See the review by C. Kavin Rowe, "Grace's Perfections," *First Things* (April 2016): 49-52. Cited 29 March, 2019. Online at <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/04/graces-perfections>.
8. *Paul and the Gift*, 406 n. 40 (italics mine).
9. *Ibid*, 467 (italics mine).
10. *Ibid*, 473 (italics original).
11. *Ibid*, 493 (italics original).
12. Calvin said that there was hardly a living person that excelled Bucer in learning, wit, much reading, and other virtues; and none that excelled him in the "exacter diligence in the exposition of Scripture."
13. See David C. Fink, "The Doers of the Law Will Be Justified: The Exegetical Origins of Martin Bucer's *Triplex Iustificatio*," *JTS* 58.2 (2007): 521. For much of the following discussion I am indebted to Fink's work.
14. *Ibid*, 512.
15. Cited in Fink, 513.
16. *Ibid*, 514.
17. *Ibid*, 519.
18. *Instruction in Christian Love* [1523] (trans. Paul Traugott Fuhrmann; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 40.
19. One should note that for Bucer, as for Jesus, good works are primarily defined as concrete acts of love, mercy, and justice, esp. toward the poor (see Sec. 6 "Of the duties of a Christian" in the Tetrapolitan Confession; also see Bucer's *Concerning the True*

Care of Souls).

20. See J. Todd Billings, “John Calvin’s Soteriology: On the Multifaceted ‘Sum’ of the Gospel,” *IJST* 11.4 (2009).
21. <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/justification-faith-and-works-calvin-on-ezekiel-1817-1.php>.
22. Raith has published two articles in *Pro Ecclesia* (2011 and 2012) and one monograph on this issue: *Aquinas and Calvin on Romans: God’s Justification and Our Participation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
23. A number of other Reformed scholars are concerned about (Reformed) evangelicalism’s grammar of obedience. See, e.g., Jason B. Hood, *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern* (Downer’s Grove: IVP Academic, 2013); Matthew Bates, *Salvation By Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).
24. For Thomas Kuhn, a “paradigm” is “the assumptions and conceptual frameworks, exemplary figures, and experimental practices that underwrite what is considered the normal science of the day. A paradigm defines for a field what is reality, what is significant and insignificant; what are the relevant and irrelevant questions; what constitutes data and therefore what needs to be observed and what can be safely ignored; how science is to be conducted and how the results of scientific investigation should be interpreted” (summary by James Davison Hunter in a recent lecture at the Jubilee Center For Character and Virtue; accessible at <https://iasculture.org/news/jdh-jubilee-2016>). Or, as Ludwig Wittgenstein would put it, it makes no grammatical sense; it is literally “nonsense.”
25. The first signatory is John MacArthur, himself a Calvinist. See the list of signatories at <https://statementonsocialjustice.com/>
26. This is, of course, reflective of the Reformational tendency to privilege Paul hermeneutically. As Calvin himself puts it, “If we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture” (*Comm. Rom.* 5). But Calvin integrated the Gospels into his theology much more thoroughly than the “Statement” under discussion.
27. It is baffling that a statement on social justice, ostensibly based in Scripture, does not cite the Gospel of Luke one time. Luke is well-known as the Gospel of “justice” *par excellence*.
28. As is well-known, many reformers endorsed the practice of congregational singing of the Psalms (though many did not endorse exclusive psalmody).
29. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. 101-110.
30. Greg Boyd leveled a similar critique—though less scholarly and more pastoral—in *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). Recently, John Fea has taken up this mantle in *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).
31. This is one of the main threads of Augustine’s magisterial *City of God*.
32. See Hunter’s and Fea’s books for an account how evangelical politics became what they are today.
33. On this, see especially Stanley Hauerwas, *Working with Words: On Learning to Speak Christian* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011) and C. Kevin Rowe, *One True Life: The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).
34. “Disciplined Seeing: Forms of Christianity and Forms of Life,” in *Working with Words*, 37.
35. “Abortion: Theologically Understood,” in *The Hauerwas Reader* (ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 611.
36. (New York: Orbis Books, 2011).
37. With similar, though less visceral, effect, Jemar Tisby’s *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).
38. Interview about his book *One True Life*, published at https://smile.amazon.com/One-True-Life-Christians-Traditions/dp/0300180128/ref=sr_1_3?keywords=kavin+rowe&qid=1554334942&cs=gateway&csr=8-3