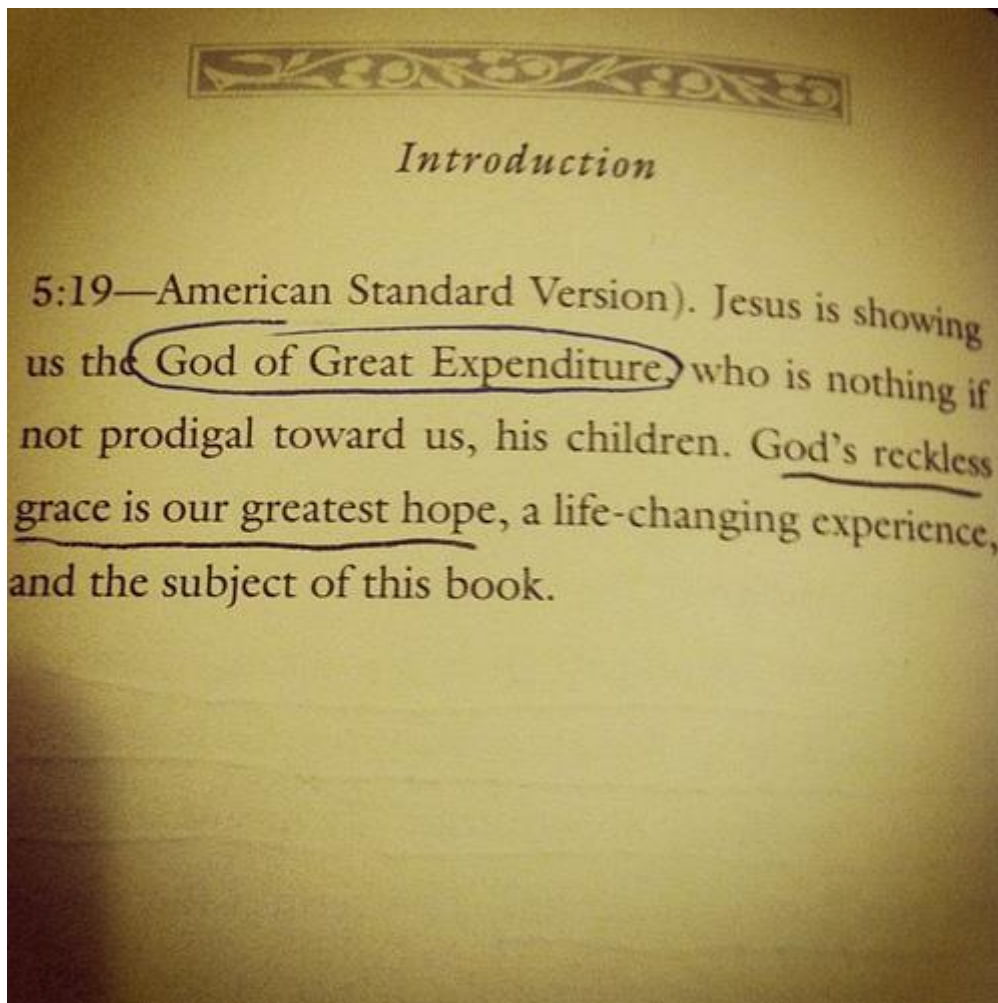


Sharing concerns about TIM KELLER

Timothy (Tim) Keller has pastored Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York since 1989. My first awakening to his name and simultaneously to concerns about him occurred about 3 years ago. I was listening to a sermon and in the course of it the preacher referred to God's grace and said words to the effect – 'I particularly like Tim Keller's description of it as "reckless grace"'. I confess that as soon as I heard those words "reckless grace" I was grieved in my spirit – to ascribe such terminology to the grace of God was for me verging on the blasphemous.

Tim Keller wrote in one of his books called 'Prodigal God' that "God's reckless grace is our greatest hope".

'Reckless' is defined as 'having or showing no regard for danger or consequences; heedless; rash;' To suggest that any action (in this case a loving one) by the God of Heaven could be described in such terms, namely 'reckless', is to portray a different God from the One who reveals Himself in His Word. In the picture that follows you can see how the expression was used.



Not only do I have problems with the expression “**God’s reckless grace**” I am equally disturbed by God being described as “**prodigal toward us, his children**”.

‘Prodigal’ is defined as ‘recklessly wasteful or extravagant, one who spends lavishly or squanders’. To be “**prodigal**” is to fritter away resources and to have nothing to show for it. In grace Christ offered Himself on the cross of Calvary to redeem His people. **Isaiah 53:11** prophetically tells us “**He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied**” and **Hebrews 12:2** tells us to be “**looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of God**”. What was “**the joy that was set before him**” – Peter tells us in **1 Peter 3:18** of how “**Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God**”.

God’s Word tells us that God the Father, in grace, sent His Son to die for and so to save lost sinners who were His enemies (see Romans 5:8-10). It also tells us that God the Son, in grace, willingly became obedient unto that sacrificial and redeeming death on the cross (see Philippians 2: 5-8). To suggest that these (equally loving) actions by the First and Second Persons of the Triune God of Heaven could be described in such terms, namely ‘**prodigal**’, is to portray a different God from the One who has revealed Himself in His Word. Again to ascribe such terminology to God is for me verging on the blasphemous.

Since hearing that sermon a couple of years ago Tim Keller had not appeared on my ‘**apologetics radar**’ until just a few days ago (**this was in 2012 when I first started this article**) when a brother in the Lord posted links on Facebook to a series of 5 articles critical of some of Tim Keller’s views and teachings and he invited feedback.

This post on Facebook certainly attracted quite a variety of responses (mostly supportive of the views in the articles) but one particular supporter of Tim Keller was quite horrified by it all and wrote –

Sorry but this is a load of nonsense. How on earth is Keller preaching a false gospel? Because he wants to engage in a relevant way with the culture. Wow somebody better tell the apostle Paul that he shouldn’t have quoted those Athenian poets in Acts 17 so as to engage them with the truths of the gospel. This is unnecessarily divisive and wrong. Tim Keller is a brother, and God has used him, and his tireless preaching of the biblical gospel, to bring many people to Christ. Be very careful about labeling someone a false teacher! It is not a term to throw around lightly and the way that Keller is brandished one here is shameful and dangerous.

The brother in Christ who first posted the links responded by saying –

Why is it nonsense? Is the article inaccurate and misleading? Has the author misrepresented Tim Keller? If so then please enlighten us all. If not, then read the article properly. The issue is not at all about seeking to reach people with the Gospel. It is about changing that Gospel to be culturally relevant, which of course it can never be. "The preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness." And, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned." Stay on track and deal with the genuine concerns of God's people. If we are wrong then inform us.

Mr Keller's supporter responded to that in these terms –

Nowhere does Keller say to change the gospel. I suggest you read it!! Instead what he tries to do is speak the irrefutable unchanging truth of the gospel in a way that is engaging to the surrounding culture. Just like the apostles, again I refer you to acts 17. I wonder if you boys would be blogging about the apostle Paul. "He didn't even use a Bible" "He quoted their own poets! Can you believe it?!!!" You yourself have said you hardly heard Keller. And the fact that you and your followers here are desperate to watch this man burn and spread false accusations about him is worrying. Keller's just a sinful man who does muck up like all of us however he is a faithful minister of the Gospel, whom God has gifted and used. Your attacks towards a man who is faithfully proclaiming the gospel are shameful.

The response to that by the links poster was –

I would suggest you read some of the material produced by John MacArthur on the dangers of seeking to make the Gospel culturally relevant. From what I have read and heard of Keller already gives me cause for concern, which is why I'm posting this. In your appeal to Acts 17, I don't believe you're comparing like with like. Keller seems to have gone way beyond the principles set out in Acts 2 & 17. And of course there are other concerns that the LORD'S PEOPLE have raised about him

That provoked the following response from Mr Keller's supporter –

Still struggling to see your point about the article. All I see is you attacking a brother. How is Keller's approach different to the apostles? In what way does he deny Christ and him crucified? In fact every sermon I've heard him preach has that explicitly. I suggest all of you listen to them before you spout your vitriol. I'm sorry I don't have time to waste on such conversations anymore. "whoever loves God must also love his brother" - just think about what you say before you launch attacks on brothers.

The responses to that from the brother who posted the links were –

I really don't need to know, as Keller has suggested, what people are reading, what they are watching on TV, what daily paper they read, or what interests they have. I know the human heart, because the Bible tell me so!... none of us here have attacked Keller. I have not called him baldy, fatty, or even ugly! It is not about persons. It is about what a man teaches and genuine concerns for what is truth. And, before you judge us and so reveal yourself to be unloving towards your brethren, spend more time finding out about what he does believe and teach

A further comment by Mr Keller's supporter read as follows –

How incredibly sad this thread is. It smacks of hypocrisy, self-righteousness and ignorance. I know Tim Keller - in fact I had lunch with him last week. None of what is implied or said here is true. You are guilty of bearing false witness and attacking a servant of Christ without warrant. Keller believes in the infallibility of Scripture, the humanity and divinity of Christ, heaven and hell etc - yet you claim that the foundations are rotten. The stench is not coming from Keller but from those who seem to have little to do with their time but justify their own self-righteousness by attacking those whom the Lord is using in such a phenomenal way. The notion that you don't need to listen to people, read newspapers etc because you know what the human heart is betrays both a misuse of Scripture and a misunderstanding of the human heart and of the gospel. I don't have the time or inclination to be bothered with 'Christians' whose reason for existence seems to be to attack other Christians but I do have one word for you - repent.

The brother who posted the links responded –

All are of course welcome to comment on this thread. As one who is all for freedom of expression and open honest debate (and without calling people 'hypocrites', 'self righteous', and 'ignorant.') we ought to encourage one another in questioning each other when serious concerns over another's teaching and theology are suspect; especially when such has, for whatever reason, a large following. As mentioned, if the article posted is wrong then, without steaming up glasses and foaming at the mouth, please correct such, so we can all at least then REPENT of our bearing 'false witness.' I am interested why I need to know what papers people are reading, what TV they are watching etc in order to communicate the Gospel to them. Or even to be their friend. WHY?

As I write this article those questions posed have not received a response from Mr Keller's supporter. Links were provided to the articles analysing concerns about Mr Keller and I want now to post them and also just to quote some short extracts from each of those articles.

The 5 articles can be viewed on –

http://www.teachingtheword.org/articles_view.asp?columnid=5449&articleid=77005

Dr. Timothy J. Keller is one of today's most influential religious leaders and one of the most dangerous. At the heart of the danger is his widespread promotion of a false gospel that encapsulates Keller's un-Biblical views of God, His Word, His creation, man, sin, the cross, and the mission of Christ's church... Some in Keller's large following simply assume that he is orthodox because he is a leading figure in a purportedly conservative Protestant denomination. When faced with the reality of Keller's true beliefs, many of these people recoil in righteous horror.

http://www.teachingtheword.org/articles_view.asp?columnid=5449&articleid=77008

(The video link in this article does not now connect but the interview can be seen on)

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=keller+one+way+to+god+video+youtube&view=detail&mid=578CA3A0A8742E57E6DF578CA3A0A8742E57E6DF&FORM=VIRE>

A segment from an interview with Tim Keller shows just how gutless his "gospel" is - a mass of evasions, equivocations, and misrepresentations of God's truth.

Cecil – when I watched this interview I just could not believe the lengths to which Mr Keller went to avoid giving a straight, direct BIBLICAL answer to what really was quite a simple question to answer in the light of Paul's comments in Romans 10:13-15 and the Lord's affirmation in John 14:6. He verbally 'danced around' giving a straight answer and looked distinctly uncomfortable in being confronted with such a question - discerning Christians must ask one simple question in return – 'Why'?

<http://www.teachingtheword.org/apps/articles/web/articleid/77007/columnid/5449/default.asp>

Timothy Keller's conception of the "gospel" and method of presenting it are both built on a faulty foundation: the misconception that man changes, therefore the message must change... What, then, is at the center of Keller's conception of "gospel"? Man is - unregenerate man. The presentation of the "gospel" must be, to quote Keller, "in line with the [unregenerate] culture's own (best) aspirations, hopes, and convictions." ... The foundation of Keller's false conception of a "gospel" is that man changes, and therefore the message must change as man changes in terms of his culture... Man's problem is not cultural, as Keller asserts. Man's problem is sin... Keller's insistence that the "gospel" must be "in line with" sinful man's highest "aspirations, hopes, and convictions" is, in fact, a stark denial of man's total depravity. It is the kind of thinking that leads to a view of salvation as a cooperative work between man and God. In historical-theological terms this is known as semi-Pelagianism, and it is the cardinal error of true Arminianism **and also** (despite its denials) **of Roman Catholicism** - that God helps those who help themselves into the kingdom.

<http://www.teachingtheword.org/apps/articles/web/articleid/77100/columnid/5449/default.asp>

The Bread of Life is healthy bread - life-giving, strengthening, and sustaining. But Timothy Keller calls for a "sandwich presentation of the gospel" that contains no such bread... Keller's methodology approaches unbelieving man on man's terms. Here is the first fatal flaw of Keller's method: He approaches man in spiritual darkness as though he had some semblance of spiritual light... (Cecil – again this 'flaw' reflects the same error found in Roman Catholicism) Keller's method is, despite all its emphasis on human effort, an ironic form of easy-believism:... Keller's method denies the essential, indispensable, and sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the spiritually dead to life in Christ. It is strange that this should be the thinking of a man who claims to be Reformed in his theology... It is interesting to note that Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit uses the phrase "sound doctrine" in this passage... The sense of the phrase "sound doctrine" is, "teaching that is free from any mixture of error." Sound teaching. Healthy teaching. The Bread of Life is healthy bread. It is life-giving bread. It is strengthening bread. It is sustaining bread. Timothy Keller's "sandwich presentation" contains no such bread.

<http://www.teachingtheword.org/apps/articles/web/articleid/77114/columnid/5449/default.asp>

Timothy Keller promotes a "gospel" designed to be attractive to unregenerated man, but stripped of the Biblical essentials and robbed of Divine power and authority...

In his discussion of "Why We Are Here" we next come to Keller's view of the created order: "God made a good, beautiful world filled with beings who share in this life of joy and peace by knowing, serving, and loving God and one another." First of all, it is ironic that Keller, **a promoter of theistic evolution**, would say that "God made a good, beautiful world" when his evolutionary position entails billions of years of suffering and death to reach the present state of the world - in which suffering and death predominate. The theistic evolutionary view has no place for a "good and beautiful world" - a perfect world that could be launched into chaos by man's sin...

In his writings and teachings, Keller avoids the word "sin" and rejects the Biblical definition of the term... I have to rebrand the word 'sin,' "

Keller says. "Around here [in his Redeemer Network churches] it means self-centeredness, the acorn from which it all grows. Individually, that means 'I live for myself, for my own glory and happiness, and I'll work for your happiness if it helps me.' Communally, self-centeredness is destroying peace and justice in the world, tearing the net of interwovenness, the fabric of humanity. Is this how the Bible speaks of sin? Can any true preacher of the Gospel dare to "rebrand the word 'sin' "? Never!..

Keller's portrayal of the cross-work of Christ in this section of his presentation also revives a long-standing heresy: "By his sacrificial life and death he both exemplifies the life we must live and rescues us from the life we have lived." Here Keller restates the language of the moral-influence theory of the atonement that has often plagued the church through the centuries. It is in direct conflict with the reason that Scripture says Christ went to the cross, which is *penal substitution* - to be the propitiation for our sins, to appease the wrath of God, to satisfy His justice by taking the punishment we deserve for our sins (Romans 3:25, 1 John 2:2 and 4:10).

A final, 6th article in this series has been written since I was first made aware of these 5 articles and started my own article (back in 2012) so I'll quote some extracts from this 6th article which is located on

<http://www.teachingtheword.org/apps/articles/web/articleid/77115/columnid/5449/default.asp>

In this series of articles we have examined the destructive influence of the false teachings of Timothy Keller, a leading figure in the church of our time. As I stated in the beginning, at the heart of Keller's dangerous influence is a false gospel. Keller's hetero-gospel encapsulates his un-Biblical views of God, the authority of His Word, the origin and present state of His creation, the nature of man, the definition of sin, the purpose of the cross-work of Christ, and the mission of His church. We have also seen that Keller's own stated motivation for his methodology and message is to make his "gospel" palatable to the pagan world...

And, what must be the response of those who seek to remain faithful to the one true Gospel? Dr. John McKnight, pastor of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Darlington, Maryland and a friend of this ministry, focused on these very issues in a commencement address he delivered at Faith Theological Seminary in Baltimore on May 21, 2011. I do not believe I could improve on what he has said. What follows is a partial transcript of his remarks...

Cecil's concluding thoughts

From my own perspective there were 2 points in particular that were noteworthy. Bearing in mind that Mr Keller is supposedly coming from a 'Reformed' position

(1) He supports '**Theistic Evolution**' and

(2) He regards favourably the heretical teachings of **Ignatius Loyola**, the founder of the Jesuits whose aim of course is to reverse The Reformation and restore the Universal Rule of 'Mother Church' and that cause has been greatly helped by the election of the first ever Jesuit Pope earlier this year.

These same 2 traits were also identified by me when I wrote articles highlighting the ministry of another supposed 'Reformed' minister here in Ireland, namely Dr Keith McCrory of Maynooth Community Church (part of the Irish Presbyterian Church).

The article identifying Mr McCrory's love for '**Theistic Evolution**' can be viewed on http://www.takeheed.net/Take_Heed_2012/Current_Concerns/April_2012/Maynooth_Community_Church_on_Evolution_Creation.htm

The article identifying Mr McCrory's admiration for **Ignatius Loyola** can be viewed on http://www.takeheed.net/Take_Heed_2011/Current_Concerns/Oct_2011/Maynooth_Community_Church.htm

Jesuitry has not gone away and history has shown that one of the means favoured by The Jesuits to achieve reversal and destruction of The Reformation has been through 'infiltration' of Protestant denominations. Whether these men are 'closet Jesuits' is impossible for me to say with any certainty but anyone supporting the Vatican view of sympathy with '**Theistic Evolution**' and supporting the spiritual views of **Ignatius Loyola**, as these men do, must not be regarded by God's people as "**faithful men... able to teach others**" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Back in 2010 I wrote an article highlighting a conference in Ireland that sought to establish some spurious connection between John Calvin and **Ignatius Loyola** and for those interested in learning more about Loyola and The Jesuits that article can be viewed on http://www.takeheed.net/Take_Heed_2010/Current_Concerns/Oct_2010/Maynooth_conference_on_Calvin_and_Loyola.htm

I'll finish now with a short quote by John MacArthur from his book '**The Battle for the Beginning**' concerning those who advocate '**Theistic Evolution**' – it is found on pages 25-26 and reads –

'So-called Theistic Evolutionists who try to marry humanistic theories of modern science with biblical theism may claim they are doing so because they love God, but the truth is that they love God a little and their academic reputations a lot. By undermining the historicity of Genesis they are undermining faith itself. Give evolutionary doctrine the throne and make the Bible its servant, and you have laid the foundation for spiritual disaster'.

Cecil Andrews –‘Take Heed’ Ministries – 18 June 2013