

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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## Workers of the Church, Unite!: The Radical Marxist Foundation of Tim Keller's Social Gospel by Timothy F. Kauffman

When Bill de Blasio, the new mayor of New York City was running for office in 2013, he acknowledged that he has been largely influenced by the Marxist Liberation Theology movement,<sup>1</sup> and his campaign web site boldly proclaimed that he would tackle “the crisis of income inequality.”<sup>2</sup> In his inaugural address, Mayor de Blasio promised to end the economic inequality that is threatening New York,<sup>3</sup> and his solution for this is the enactment of a living wage law.<sup>4</sup> The enactment of living wage laws is a typical attempt by a Marxist to return “surplus value” to the worker—which is to say, the “living wage” redistributes profits from the capitalist back to the worker to whom it allegedly belongs. According to Marxist theory, all profit is “surplus value,” and “the capitalist who produces surplus value” does so by “extract[ing] unpaid labour directly from the labourers.”<sup>5</sup> Profit,

therefore, is wages that have been withheld, or stolen, from the laborer. In his *Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*, Marxist economist Ernest Mandel explains the significance of the living wage:

[T]he living cost of labour-power constitutes its value and that surplus value is the difference between this living cost and the value created by this labour-power.... [E]verything beyond this fraction is surplus value, free labour supplied by the worker and appropriated by the capitalist without an equivalent offset.<sup>6</sup>

The “living wage” therefore is simply a euphemism for redistribution of wealth generated in a capitalist system. To de Blasio, paying workers anything less than a “living wage” is “wage-theft,” so a part of his platform was to “create a dedicated legal services fund to support low-income workers challenging wage theft.”<sup>7</sup> But as Mandel explains, “the concept of a living wage...is not a physiologically rigid one but incorporates wants which...tend to increase” over time.<sup>8</sup> There can therefore be no end to calls for a higher “living wage.” No wage can ever be enough if it is based on a man’s wants, and as long

<sup>1</sup> Javier C. Hernandez, “A Mayoral Hopeful Now, de Blasio Was Once a Young Leftist,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/23/nyregion/a-mayoral-hopeful-now-de-blasio-was-once-a-young-leftist.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed January 4, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Bill De Blasio, *One New York, Rising Together*, <http://www.billdeblasio.com>, retrieved January 5, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Bill De Blasio, “Inaugural Address,” *New York Times*, January 1, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/02/nyregion/complete-text-of-bill-de-blasios-inauguration-speech.html>, retrieved January 3, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> De Blasio, *One New York, Rising Together*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 7: “The Accumulation of Capital.”

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Mandel, *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*, (Chippendale, New South Wales, Australia: Resistance Books, 2002), 19-20.

<sup>7</sup> De Blasio, *One New York, Rising Together*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Mandel, 19.

as there yet exist profits in a free market system, there will be calls for those profits to be returned to the workers through an increase in the living wage. That is Marxism.

In November 2013, newly elected Pope Francis issued his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, in which he criticizes the theory of trickle-down economics and Adam Smith's "invisible hand" that essentially uses the price mechanism of a free market as the engine for the efficient allocation of scarce resources with alternate uses. He criticizes those who advocate for free markets and who trust in "the invisible hand" to establish market prices for goods and services. In short, Francis teaches that free-market supply-side economic theory is a "selfish ideal" and "has never been confirmed by the facts."<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis denies that he is Marxist,<sup>10</sup> but his Apostolic Exhortation is riddled with Marxist economic theory. He calls for a "just wage," which is another term for the "living wage" and reflects his desire that wages be set by the purchasing preferences of the workers rather than by the market value of their labor: "A just wage enables them to have adequate access to all the other goods which are destined for our common use."<sup>11</sup>

It bothered Marx that the value of a worker's labor in a capitalist society was expressed in monetary terms established by a free market exchange—what he called the commoditization of labor<sup>12</sup>—and it apparently bothers Pope Francis, too. He wants people to be paid according to their needs, not according to the market value of their labor. Francis' complaint that corporations are known to "increase profits by reducing the work force"<sup>13</sup> pays homage to Marx's theory in which "profit" is

"surplus value," and "surplus value" is essentially "unpaid labor."<sup>14</sup> Profits realized through gains in operational efficiency by reducing workforce, according to Francis, are actually wages taken from the newly unemployed.<sup>15</sup> That is Marxism.

Only a few days after Pope Francis issued his Apostolic Exhortation, U. S. President, Barack Obama declared that income inequality "is the defining challenge of our time."<sup>16</sup> This is the core belief of Marxist philosophy, and as Obama himself acknowledges in his memoirs, he is naturally drawn toward Marxism, and intentionally chose Marxist professors while he attended Occidental College.<sup>17</sup> Barack Obama's former church in Chicago, Trinity United Church of Christ, lists as part of its 10-point mission to work toward "economic parity," because God "is not pleased with America's economic maldistribution!"<sup>18</sup> In 1996, Barack Obama joined the leftist New Party, a political party that is "deeply hostile...to American capitalism."<sup>19</sup> His affection for Marxist economic theory and his distaste for capitalism are the basis for President Obama's famous quip to Joe the Plumber, "when you spread the wealth around, it's good for everybody." Not surprisingly, President Obama identifies Reinhold Niebuhr, a committed Marxist, as "one of my favorite philosophers."<sup>20</sup> Like Liberation Theologians of today, Niebuhr "argued that social radicalism and Marxism owed their existence to

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<sup>14</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 1, 1, 1, 7: "The Accumulation of Capital."

<sup>15</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 204.

<sup>16</sup> David Jackson, "Obama: Income Inequality Threatens American Dream," *USA Today*, December 4, 2013, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/12/04/obama-income-inequality-speech-center-for-american-progress/3867747/>, accessed January 4, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Barack Obama, *Dreams From My Father* (New York: Random House, 2007), 100.

<sup>18</sup> Trinity United Church of Christ, "About Us," "Our Mission," <http://www.trinitychicago.org/index.php>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley Kurtz, "Obama's Third-Party History: New Documents Shed New Light on His Ties to a Leftist Party in the 1990s," *National Review*, June 7, 2012, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/302031/obamas-third-party-history-stanley-kurtz>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> David Brooks, "Obama, Gospel and Verse," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/opinion/26brooks.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/opinion/26brooks.html?_r=0), accessed January 4, 2014.

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<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 54, 204, <http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/index.html>, November 24, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Pullella, "I'm No Marxist, Pope Francis Tells Conservative Critics," *Reuters*, December 15, 2013, [http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2013/12/15/21909041-im-no-marxist-pope-francis-tells-conservative-critics?lite](http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/12/15/21909041-im-no-marxist-pope-francis-tells-conservative-critics?lite), accessed December 30, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 192.

<sup>12</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 1, 1, 1, 4: "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof."

<sup>13</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 204.

Christian inspiration.”<sup>21</sup> Biographer Ronald H. Stone provides the background of Niebuhr’s Marxism:

Late in the 1930s [Niebuhr] outlined his essential agreement with Marxist thought. Marxism furnished an analysis of the economic structure of society that was essentially correct. It correctly perceived the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as inevitable. He agreed that private ownership of the means of production was the basic cause of periodic economic crises. Marxism was right in its judgment that the communal ownership of property was the prerequisite of social justice. He accepted Lenin’s view that capitalism was responsible for the economic imperialism that characterized the advanced nations.<sup>22</sup>

When he saw the vast accumulation of wealth by the Ford Motor Company, Niebuhr “argued that an entity the size of the Ford Motor Company was in fact a public corporation and should no longer be privately owned.”<sup>23</sup> This conviction is the same as that behind President Obama’s restructuring of America’s health care industry. One of the key planks in a transition to Marxism, according to Engels’ *Principles of Communism*, is the “gradual expropriation” of private industry “through competition by state industry.”<sup>24</sup> Obama campaigned for the inclusion of a public option in his signature Affordable Care Act: “I continue to believe that a public option within the basket of insurance choices would help improve quality and bring down costs.”<sup>25</sup> The inclusion of a “public option” to compete with private corporations was just part of his strategy to transition the U. S. health

care industry to a single-payer, government run industry.<sup>26</sup> That is Marxism.

Whether through the campaign of Mayor de Blasio in New York, the writings of Pope Francis in Rome, or the philosophical meanderings of President Obama, Christians throughout the world are being exposed to the economic theories of high-profile Marxists. Because of the recent prominence of Marxist thought in the daily news diet of the informed Christian, it may serve the Church well to become familiar not only with the fundamentals of Marxism, but also with the Biblical condemnation of Marxism as an economic theory.

Socialism, which according to Marx merely serves as a transition in an economic shift away from capitalism toward Marxism,<sup>27</sup> may justifiably be called the institutionalization of man’s natural proclivity for covetousness. P. T. Bauer wrote that socialism and its advocates essentially “institutionalize and organize envy and resentment against economically effective people.”<sup>28</sup> Economically effective people have a propensity for accumulating wealth, and that concentration of wealth is the object of the socialist’s envy. The sole necessary ingredient for socialism is for a populace to *covet* its neighbor’s goods. In a socialist economy, the government sanctions that covetousness and appropriates the goods of the economically effective to the economically ineffective. Appropriation of another man’s property, however, is immoral because it is theft.

Capitalism, on the other hand, requires something more than the raw desire to obtain another man’s property. It requires that a man *value* his neighbor’s goods. There is nothing so efficient in establishing the objective value of another man’s goods as the price mechanism of the free market. The prelude to a commercial exchange in capitalism is not only “which of my neighbor’s goods do I *desire*?” but

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<sup>21</sup> Ronald H. Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr: A Mentor to the Twentieth Century*, (Louisville, KY, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 87.

<sup>22</sup> Stone, 89.

<sup>23</sup> Stone, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Frederick Engels, *The Principles of Communism*, Question 18, (ii).

<sup>25</sup> Jake Tapper, “Obama’s School Speech and Health Care Push Highlights Challenges of Presidency,” *ABC News*, September 8, 2009, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obama-school-speech-health-care-push-highlights-challenges/story?id=8513467>, accessed January 5, 2014.

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<sup>26</sup> President Obama’s pledge to transition the US Health Care industry to a single-payer system can be seen at <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/05222009/watch2.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Part IV: “On Democracy,” (May 1875), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> P.T. Bauer, *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 24.

also, “what is the *value* of my neighbor’s goods?” It is the difference between “I want to eat my neighbor’s apples,” and “What are my neighbor’s apples *worth*?” The price mechanism itself does not quench man’s covetousness—it merely informs it, and that information is what draws the line between theft and legitimate acquisition. Because theft is prohibited, the buyer must decide whether he wants his neighbor’s apples more than he wants to keep his own money, and his neighbor must decide whether he wants the buyer’s money more than he wants to keep his apples. The completion of such a transaction is purely voluntary, as neither party is obligated or compelled to part with either his goods or his money. Promiscuous consumption of “thy neighbour’s goods” is thus discouraged when price informs desire and when a government respects the property rights of both parties. Put simply, capitalism respects property rights, establishes objective value through the price mechanism, and stands in the way of a man’s natural proclivity for covetousness. It is no surprise, as we shall see, that socialists despise the price mechanism precisely because it has this effect. Socialists do not appreciate, and do not approve of, the erection of a moral barrier between their desire and its object.

The Scriptural prohibition against appropriating one’s neighbor’s property is found in *Deuteronomy* 27:17, “Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark.” Before God, it is reprehensible to appropriate thy neighbor’s goods. God’s final commandment in the Decalogue therefore prohibits the only thing that can make socialism work: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s” (*Exodus* 20:17). Paul’s exhortation in *2 Thessalonians* 3:10—“if any would not work, neither should he eat”—is based on these principles. Paul refused to appropriate his neighbor’s bread unless it was obtained in a free market exchange for the equivalent value of his labor: “Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you” (*2 Thessalonians* 3:8). In this context, when Paul says that we should work in quietness and eat

our own bread, lest there be “some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all” (*2 Thessalonians* 3:11), he is prohibiting socialism. A man cannot simply take his neighbor’s bread because he is hungry. He must earn it by monetizing his labor, converting his labor into a wage, and then accumulating wages sufficient to acquire his neighbor’s bread in a voluntary exchange. Paul’s parting words to the Ephesian elders were that he had not “coveted” his neighbor’s goods, but rather had acquired his “necessities” by actually *earning* them (*Acts* 20:33-34). This, as we shall see, is deeply and gravely offensive to the socialist mind.

Because it is un-Biblical, socialism must always be repackaged and remarketed to Christians in a manner that cloaks its lawlessness behind the curtain of the ostensible kindness and compassion of its advocates. As Bauer observes, “Politicians and intellectuals have supplied articulation and a veneer of intellectual respectability to envy and resentment,” in their advocacy for socialism.<sup>29</sup> There is one high-profile Marxist who is particularly effective at repackaging Marxism for a Christian audience, but due to his ability to disguise his economic philosophy, he is largely flying “under the radar.” That Marxist is Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

It may come as a surprise to his conservative evangelical readers that Tim Keller’s recent book, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work*, is simply a recapitulation of Marx’s theory of alienation, and that Keller’s solution to the problem of alienation is indistinguishable from Marx’s. It will surprise his readers to know that Keller’s theory of wages is derived from Marxism. It will surprise his readers to know that when Keller recommends modern examples of churches that implement a Christian economic ideal, he identifies churches and organizations that are thoroughly Marxist, and are inspired by leftist Saul Alinsky, the author of *Rules for Radicals*. In this article, we will review Keller’s words and his sources to establish his economic theory. What we shall find is a consistent call for a transition from a capitalist

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<sup>29</sup> Bauer, 24.

economy to a socialist economy through class struggle based on Marxist principles—all cloaked in the language of Biblical Christianity.

### Marx's Theory of Alienation

According to Marx, alienation occurs in society when “private individuals or groups of individuals ...carry on their work independently of each other,”<sup>30</sup> and wage labor is the “most profound form of alienation.”<sup>31</sup> According to Marxists.org, “Since wage workers sell their labour power to earn a living, and the capitalist owns the labour process, the product of the workers’ labour is in a very real sense alien to the worker.”<sup>32</sup> When a man works in order to obtain money by which he procures food in order to live, he has been unjustly alienated from the product of his labor. Tim Keller’s recent book, *Every Good Endeavor*, is marketed as a Christian approach to work, but it is actually Keller’s defense of a Marxist economic paradigm within the church. Keller makes this clear:

Karl Marx was the first person to speak of “alienated labor” in the heyday of the early-nineteenth century European industry... The great shift from an industrial economy to a knowledge and service economy has improved the immediate working conditions of many but has locked countless others into low-paying service sector jobs that experience the same alienating disconnectedness from the fruits or products of their work.<sup>33</sup>

Keller has simply restated the basis of Marx’s economic theory: because the capitalist owns the labor process, the product of the workers’ labor is in a very real sense alien to the worker. In such an environment, Marx wrote, “my work is an alienation of life, for I work in order to live, in order

to obtain for myself the means of life.”<sup>34</sup> But Marxists have a solution: “Alienation can be overcome by restoring the truly human relationship to the labour process, by people working in order to meet people’s needs, working as an expression of their own human nature, not just to earn a living.”<sup>35</sup>

Keller explains from the beginning that the purpose of his book is to overcome alienation by doing exactly what Marxists suggest. He is not nearly so candid, but this is exactly what he proposes to do. Keller writes,

Robert Bellah’s landmark book, *Habits of the Heart*, helped many people name the thing that was (and still is) eating away at the cohesiveness of our culture—“expressive individualism.” ... [N]ear the end of *Habits*, the author proposes one measure that would go a long way toward reweaving the unraveling culture: “*To make a real difference...[there would have to be] a reappropriation of the idea of vocation or calling, a return in a new way to the idea of work as a contribution to the good of all and not merely as a means to one’s own advancement.*” That is a remarkable statement.<sup>36</sup>

The “expressive individualism” that is “eating away at the cohesiveness of our culture,” is just another way of expressing Marx’s concept of alienation, *i.e.*, when “private individuals or groups of individuals ...carry on their work independently of each other.” Bellah’s challenge, italicized above, is simply a recapitulation of the Marxist solution to it. Keller dives in and takes Bellah’s challenge:

If Bellah is right, one of the hopes for our unraveling society is the recovery of the idea that all human work is not merely a job but a calling.... And so, taking our cue from Bellah’s challenge, in this book we will do what we can to help illuminate the transformative and

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<sup>30</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 1, 1: “Commodities and Money,” 1: “Commodities,” 4, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof.”

<sup>31</sup> See “Alienation” at <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/a/l.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> See “Alienation” at <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/a/l.htm>.

<sup>33</sup> Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (New York: Penguin Group, 2012), 104, 105.

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<sup>34</sup> Karl Marx, *Comments on James Mill, Éléments D’économie Politique*, 1844, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/james-mill/>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> See “Alienation” at <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/a/l.htm>.

<sup>36</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 18, 19 (brackets in original, emphasis added).

revolutionary connection between Christian faith and the workplace.<sup>37</sup>

What Bellah proposed was government intervention to end capitalism by reducing the “punishments of failure and the rewards of success.” To give the reader an indication of the vast sociological and economic significance of the Marxist “challenge” issued by Bellah and taken up by Keller, we provide Bellah’s actual words from *Habits of the Heart*, including what Keller left out:

If we are right in our stress on a revitalized social ecology, then one critically important action that government could take in a new political atmosphere would be, in Christopher Jencks’s words, to reduce the “punishments of failure and the rewards of success.” Reducing the inordinate rewards of ambition and our inordinate fears of ending up as losers would offer the possibility of great change in the meaning of work in our society and all that would go with such a change. To make a real difference, such a shift of rewards would have to be a part of a reappropriation of the idea of vocation or calling, a return in a new way to the idea of work as a contribution to the good of all and not merely as a means to one’s own advancement.<sup>38</sup>

Bellah is calling us to implement Christopher Jencks’ recommendation from his book, *Inequality*. Jencks recommends that we equalize distribution of income through government intervention and break the capitalist link between effort and reward. That is Marxism. In his book, Jencks makes no attempt to cloak this desire: “The reader should by now have gathered that our primary concern is with equalizing the distribution of income.”<sup>39</sup>

What offends both Jencks and Bellah is the capitalist idea of linking wages to productivity, and risk to reward. To correct this problem, Bellah

recommends a Marxist solution to effect a “great change in the meaning of work in our society.” Keller passes it on to the church for consumption by first sanitizing it of its Marxist context. This is no passing or accidental reference to Bellah’s work by Keller. It is rather the core of Keller’s thesis. Later in *Every Good Endeavor*, Keller re-emphasizes this, reminding the reader that the purpose of the book is to respond to Bellah’s challenge to implement a Marxist solution: “Bellah called us to recover the idea that work is a ‘vocation’ or calling, ‘a contribution to the good of all and not merely...a means to one’s own advancement,’ to one’s self-fulfillment and power.”<sup>40</sup>

The origin of Bellah’s affinity for Marxism is evident from his own words: “I was a member of the Communist Party as a Harvard undergraduate from 1947 to 1949. During that period I was mainly involved in the John Reed Club, a recognized student organization concerned with the study of Marxism.”<sup>41</sup> It is no accident, therefore, that Bellah’s “challenge” is simply a call to implement Marx’s solution to the problem of alienation. What is surprising is that Keller takes it up and expects the church to swallow it whole *as the hope “for our unravelling society”!*

### **Marx’s Theory of Wages**

Marx’s solution to alienation was to change completely how people think about wages. Marx’s concern about the capitalist paradigm was that earning a wage in exchange for labor is a way of serving oneself, rather than the needs of the community: “Production has become a means of gaining a living.... I have produced for myself and not for you, just as you have produced for yourself and not for me.”<sup>42</sup> To Marx, the wage one ought to receive in exchange for his labor is not money, but the pleasure of “looking at the object” produced as a “manifestation of my life,” and the satisfaction of having served the needs of the community:

<sup>37</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 18, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Neelly Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 287, 288.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Jencks, et al, *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 261.

<sup>40</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 66 (ellipses in original).

<sup>41</sup> Robert Bellah, “To the Editors,” *The New York Review of Books*, (July 14, 1977), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1977/jul/14/veritas-at-harvard-another-exchange/>, accessed September 27, 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Marx, *Comments on James Mill*.

In my production I would have objectified my individuality, its specific character, and therefore enjoyed not only an individual manifestation of my life during the activity, but also when looking at the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be objective, visible to the senses.... In your enjoyment or use of my product I would have the direct enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a human need by my work... and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another man's essential nature.... In the individual expression of my life I would have directly created your expression of your life, and therefore in my individual activity I would have directly confirmed and realised my true nature, my human nature, my communal nature.<sup>43</sup>

eyes,<sup>45</sup> just as it was with Marx. As with Marx, Sayers wanted to eliminate the price mechanism in commercial exchanges, and replace it with a subjective communal determination of the value of goods and services. Workers would thereby be provided just enough to continue doing that which most enflames their creative passions. No longer should they have to consider salary, *or even whether there is a demand for their products*. In fact, Sayers thought workers should be able to choose their occupation independently of “economic or any other considerations.”<sup>46</sup> Society would require of each man according to his skills and abilities, and provide him with sufficient compensation to meet his needs.<sup>47</sup> His wages are simply to contemplate the product of his labor and to know that he has served the community. She writes:

One advocate of Marx’s theory of wages was Dorothy Sayers, and in *Every Good Endeavor*, Keller says Sayers got it exactly right. Like Marx, Sayers resented the monetization of labor, and felt that labor should be an expression of one’s true nature rather than an activity performed in order to earn a wage. That true nature, she believed, should be spent in service to society rather than for the purpose of “gainful employment.” She wrote in her two essays “Creed or Chaos?” and “Why Work?”,

[W]hat a revolutionary change it would be to think about [work] instead in terms of the work done. To do so would mean taking the attitude of mind we reserve for our unpaid work—our hobbies, our leisure interests, the things we make and do for pleasure—and making *that* the standard of all our judgments about things and people. We should ask of an enterprise, not “will it pay?” but “is it good?”; of a man, not “what does he make?” but “what is his work worth?”<sup>48</sup>; of goods, not “Can we induce people to buy them?” but “are they useful things well made?”; of employment, not “how much a week?” but “will it exercise my faculties to the utmost?” ... So long as Society provides the worker with a sufficient return in real wealth to enable him to carry on the work properly, then he has his reward. For his work is the measure of his life, and his satisfaction is found in the

The modern tendency seems to be to identify work with gainful employment; ... The fallacy being that work is not the expression of man’s creative energy in the service of Society, but only something he does in order to obtain money and leisure.... The habit of thinking about work as something one does to make money is so ingrained in us that we can scarcely imagine what a revolutionary change it would be to think about it instead in terms of the work done.<sup>44</sup>

This idea of work as a means of gainful employment was considered “heresy” in Sayers’

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<sup>45</sup> Sayers, “Creed or Chaos” in *Letters to a Diminished Church*, 65.

<sup>46</sup> Sayers, “Why Work?” in *Letters to a Diminished Church*, 131.

<sup>47</sup> Sayers is also parroting Roman Catholic Social Teaching, as she was also a Romanist. – Editor.

<sup>48</sup> Sayers means “worth” apart from the price mechanism of the free market here. As she clarifies in the next paragraph, a product should not be “valued for what it will fetch, but only for what it is worth in itself” (Sayers, 126).

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<sup>43</sup> Marx, *Comments on James Mill*.

<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Sayers, “Why Work?” in *Letters to a Diminished Church: Passionate Arguments for the Relevance of Christian Doctrine*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 65, 125.

fulfillment of his own nature, and in contemplation of the perfection of his work.<sup>49</sup>

That is Marxism. Sayers arrived at these conclusions at the height of World War II, and marveled that, in a time of scarcity when survival is the primary objective, everyone was keenly focused on the quality of his work rather than on profits.<sup>50</sup> In fact, she deeply resented capitalism, and recommended that the wartime mentality of scarcity be preserved after the war: “[S]hall we want to go back to that civilization of greed and waste which we dignify by the name of a ‘high standard of living?’”<sup>51</sup> Yet in *Every Good Endeavor*, Keller highlights Sayers’ “revolutionary way of looking at work” and recommends it to the church as the ideal. Listen to Keller extol the wisdom of Sayers’ approach:<sup>52</sup> “This revolutionary way of looking at work gives all work a common and exalted purpose: to honor God by loving your neighbor and serving them through your work. Author Dorothy Sayers recounts how many British men and women stumbled upon something like this understanding of work during the dark days of World War II.”<sup>53</sup>

To bring about this new world order, Sayers proposes in true Marxist style that the workers of the world should unite and throw off the shackles of the Bourgeoisie, so the Proletariat can take over:

Now the answer to this question, if we are resolute to know what we are about, will not be left to rich men—to manufacturers and financiers. If these people have governed the world of late years, it is only because we

ourselves put the power into their hands. The question can and should be answered by the worker and the consumer.... We could—you and I—bring the whole fantastic economy of profitable waste down to the ground overnight, without legislation and without revolution, merely by refusing to cooperate with it.... Whatever we do, we shall be faced with grave difficulties. That cannot be disguised. But it will make a great difference to the result if we are genuinely aiming at a real change in economic thinking. And by that I mean a radical change from top to bottom—a new system; not a mere adjustment of the old system to favor a different set of people.<sup>54</sup>

This woman’s theory of wages, says Keller, is the model for the Christian work ethic—a theory of wages derived straight from Marx—to solve the Marxist problem of alienation. This was no passing or accidental reference to Sayers. Rather Keller returned to her over and over again: “So Dorothy Sayers could write.... Dorothy Sayers recounts.... Dorothy Sayers writes.... Dorothy Sayers explores this point.... Dorothy Sayers helps us understand.... This is what Dorothy Sayers meant....”<sup>55</sup>

It will be helpful here to remember that Keller introduced *Every Good Endeavor* with Bellah’s challenge to solve the Marxist problem of alienation.<sup>56</sup> He ends the book with Sayer’s Marxist solution to it: “This is what Dorothy Sayers meant when she urged us to serve the work.”<sup>57</sup> Recall that Bellah’s challenge *in its original context* was a Marxist call “to reduce the ‘punishments of failure and the rewards of success.’” “Reducing the inordinate rewards of ambition and our inordinate fears of ending up as losers would offer the possibility of great change in the meaning of work in our society and all that would go with such a change.”

Keller left this out of his citation of Bellah, but he clearly did not leave it out of his conclusion: “Those

<sup>49</sup> Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church*, 125, 126. Emphasis in original.

<sup>50</sup> Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church*, 119-121.

<sup>51</sup> Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church*, 123.

<sup>52</sup> Why are Protestants extolling the “wisdom” of Roman Catholic writers? Douglas Wilson has advocated Sayers medieval Romanist Classical education for years. Keller also recommends many Roman Catholic mystics: “The best things that have been written almost are by Catholics during the counterreformation—Ignatius Loyola, Francis de Sales, John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila—great stuff!” (from Keller’s *Meditation—What it is*, October 5, 1998, leadership training session at Redeemer Presbyterian Church (24:50-25:00), retrieved from <http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/meditation-what-it>). – Editor.

<sup>53</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 74.

<sup>54</sup> Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church*, 123-125.

<sup>55</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 38, 74-76, 110, 111, 229, 241.

<sup>56</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 18.

<sup>57</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 241



who grasp this understanding of work will still desire to succeed, but will not be nearly as driven to overwork or made as despondent by poor results.”<sup>58</sup>

Let us remember that the ultimate goal of Marxism is “the separation of labour from wages”<sup>59</sup> and the elimination of competition between workers.<sup>60</sup> By answering Bellah’s challenge, Keller thinks he has helped us arrived at a Christian work ethic, but he has merely led us to a Marxist one.

### **Two Models of Reform**

Keller teaches that the church must actively influence social systems by providing instruction to policy makers and through political intervention. To do this effectively, the church must be reform-minded, and Keller provides two models: a “California Model” and a “New York Model.” The California Model is Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, “a model of a full-service church.”<sup>61</sup> The New York model is “the East Brooklyn Churches (EBC), a coalition of churches in Brooklyn, New York, [founded] in the early 1980s.”<sup>62</sup> Both are influenced by the Marxist philosophy of Saul Alinsky as described in his book, *Rules for Radicals*, and the former actively teaches Liberation Theology. For those not familiar with Saul Alinsky, his purpose in *Rules for Radicals* was to empower the “Have-nots” in their war against the “Haves,” and “to create mass organizations to seize power and give it to the people” through “revolution.”<sup>63</sup> The two models Keller prescribes to the church have recommended exactly that.

### *East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC)*

According to its web page, “EBC was founded in September, 1980 in East New York and Brownsville.”<sup>64</sup> The locality is particularly susceptible to leftist initiatives, because communists and the Socialist Party “Sunday Schools” were

influential there in the early 1900s. The Sunday Schools were established for the purpose of counteracting the dominant “capitalist culture,” and influenced the efforts of neighborhood organizations to redevelop the area.”<sup>65</sup> The EBC itself “is a citizen organizing project affiliated with the IAF [Industrial Areas Foundation – Editor] training network that Saul Alinsky and his associates established in late 1968.”<sup>66</sup> Its much-lauded low income housing program, the Nehemiah Plan, is fueled by EBC’s ability to pressure the city to condemn other people’s property, seize it through eminent domain, and then give it or sell it to EBC at below market rates.<sup>67</sup> In other words, instead of valuing its neighbor’s property through the price mechanism of the free market, EBC simply covets the property, and pressures the government to move the neighbor’s landmarks, thereby hating the neighbor who owns the property in order to claim that they are loving the one who needs it! EBC’s so-called “gospel of change” is to use Alinsky’s radical methods to advance the Marxist “revolution.”<sup>68</sup>

### *Allen Temple Baptist Church*

As the pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church, J. Alfred Smith, Sr. writes, “Ours are the roots of Black Theology, of Liberation Theology, of the Social Gospel movement.”<sup>69</sup> His most recent book, *Sounding the Trumpet*, is intended to “nourish the seeds of Jesus’ liberation theology,”<sup>70</sup> and has

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<sup>58</sup> Wendell E. Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 36-39.

<sup>66</sup> Civic Practices Network, “East Brooklyn Congregations Build Nehemiah Homes,” <http://www.cpn.org/topics/religion/eastbrook.html>, accessed October 5, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> Anthony DePalma, “The Nehemiah Plan: A Success, but...”, *New York Times*, September 27, 1987.

<sup>68</sup> Sam Roberts, “In East Brooklyn, Churches Preach Gospel of Change,” *New York Times*, March 24, 1988.

<sup>69</sup> Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary R. Sawyer, *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*, “Breaking the Silence: Reflections of a Black Pastor,” by J. Alfred Smith, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 140.

<sup>70</sup> Charlotte W. Meyers, J. Alfred Smith, and Brooks Berndt, “A Congregation Based Study Guide for *Sounding the Trumpet* by Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. and Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt,” Revised Edition (Boiling Springs, NC: A Pair of Docs Publishing, 2013), 2.

<sup>58</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 79.

<sup>59</sup> Marx, *Comment on James Mill*.

<sup>60</sup> Engels, *The Principles of Communism*, Question 18, (iv).

<sup>61</sup> Timothy Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1997), 190.

<sup>62</sup> Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 190.

<sup>63</sup> Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1989), 3.

<sup>64</sup> <http://ebc-iaf.org/>, accessed January 5, 2014.

received praises from Marxist Cornell West.<sup>71</sup> Reverend Daniel A. Buford is the Prophetic Justice Minister at Allen Temple Baptist Church, and “is a founding organizer and trainer of the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond.”<sup>72</sup> The People’s Institute is an organization that trains community organizers using “lessons learned from other organizing models, particularly those led and inspired by Saul Alinsky.”<sup>73</sup> In short, Allen Temple is a socialist church dedicated to Marxist Liberation Theology in the spirit of Saul Alinsky’s revolution.

### **Keller’s Advisors**

To this point we have reviewed Keller’s thinking about alienation, wages, work, and church organization. His Marxist thinking on these topics was not developed in a vacuum. He has been heavily influenced by several prominent economists and theologians, whom he cites regularly to support his theses. We will review their various contributions to Keller’s economic philosophy. They lean heavily to the economic left, either as Socialists or Marxists, and consistently verbalize the need for economic revolution to take down capitalism.

### *Vinoth Ramachandra’s “Scandalous Justice”*

In his recent work, *Generous Justice*, Keller correctly identifies God as “a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,” but then he immediately superimposes a class-system over the narrative: “This is one of the main things he does in the world. He identifies with the powerless, he takes up their cause. It is hard for us to understand how revolutionary this was in the ancient world. Sri Lankan scholar Vinoth Ramachandra calls this ‘scandalous justice.’”<sup>74</sup>

What makes the justice of the gospel so scandalous, says Ramachandra, is that it subverts the modern utopias of Marxism and capitalism.<sup>75</sup> It does not, apparently, subvert the modern utopia of Ramachandra’s socialism. He sees the gospel as a socialist utopia that militates against capitalism, because capitalism requires workers to adapt to market forces in order to bring the costs of their labor to market clearing levels—as the Apostle Paul did when he was hungry—either by improving their skills, or by reducing their wages. Specifically, he complains that Indian workers are recruited by Western companies to field telephone inquiries “about a credit balance, an airline schedule, or a malfunctioning dishwasher.” To participate in the global economy, they use Anglicized names, watch US television shows to learn to speak with a familiar accent for their customers, and they do this for less than the employers would have paid Westerners.<sup>76</sup> What Ramachandra leaves out in his complaint is that Indian call center employees who put in this extra effort can *triple* their earning capacity in the local Indian market.<sup>77</sup> In other words, India has a resource that consumers are willing to buy in a voluntary free market exchange, and the result is the creation of wealth for both parties.

This is more than Ramachandra can stomach, and “the gospel”—at least his socialist utopian version of it—is the only cure for his indigestion. Instead of placing “diverse localities in competition with one another” for business opportunities<sup>78</sup>—that is, to compete in the free market—Ramachandra says the gospel ought to ensure “that the benefits of globalization are more equitably distributed,” without the inconvenience of workers having to adjust their skills to market forces. We would know all this, he says, if we would just sit at the feet of

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<sup>71</sup> “Cornell West Praises *Sounding the Trumpet*,” <http://soundingthetrumpet.org/2013/10/25/cornel-west-praises-sounding-the-trumpet/>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.allen-temple.org/pastoral-team/36-information/pastoral-team/359-rev-daniel-budford>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Margery Freeman, *The History of the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond*, 2001, [www.soflo.fau.edu/sfrrc/documents/History\\_PeoplesInstitute.doc](http://www.soflo.fau.edu/sfrrc/documents/History_PeoplesInstitute.doc), accessed October 6, 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010), 6.

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<sup>75</sup> Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Scandal of Jesus*, (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 25.

<sup>76</sup> Vinoth Ramachandra, “Pray Globally, Act Locally,” *Sojourners* (May 2004), <http://sojo.net/magazine/2004/05/pray-globally-act-locally>, accessed September 27, 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Chris Walker and Morgan Hartley, “The Culture Shock of India’s Call Centers,” (*Forbes Magazine*, 12/16/2012), <http://www.forbes.com/sites/morganhartley/2012/12/16/the-culture-shock-of-indias-call-centers/>, accessed September 25, 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Ramachandra, “Pray Globally, Act Locally.”

Occupy Wall Street, and communist student leader Camila Vallejo, and learn from them “what following Christ entails.”<sup>79</sup> What Ramachandra says we need is a “transnational mobilisation of grassroots movements” to effect the necessary change in the social order, or to put a finer point on it, a Marxist revolution. This is the “scandalous justice” of the cross that Keller commends to his readers.

*Gustavo Gutiérrez and “God’s Preferential Option for the Poor”*

Keller continues in *Generous Justice* by citing Gustavo Gutiérrez: “This emphasis in the Bible has led some, like Latin American theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, to speak of God’s ‘preferential option for the poor.’ At first glance this seems to be wrong, especially in light of passages in the Mosaic law that warn against giving any preference to rich or poor (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:16–17). Yet the Bible says that God is the defender of the poor; it never says he is the defender of the rich.”<sup>80</sup>

If God had a “preferential option for the poor,” as Gutiérrez describes it, He would have released the captive servant girl and let Naaman, a Syrian general, rot in his leprosy. Instead, Naaman was cured, and kept his slave (2 Kings 5:1-19). God apparently had different priorities than Gutiérrez asserts (Luke 4:27). It is true that the Bible never says God “is the defender of the rich,” but God defends the righteous (Psalm 5:12) and sometimes the righteous are wealthy (Proverbs 13:11). When God defended Naboth, it was not because Naboth was poor, disenfranchised, and alienated from the products of his labor, but rather because, as a landowner in possession of the means of production, his private property rights had been violated by someone who thought he was free to appropriate his neighbor’s goods through eminent domain (1 Kings 21:1-19). In matters of justice, God favors the “haves” over the “have-nots” if the latter are guilty (Proverbs 6:30-31, 1 Kings 3:16-28). The Scriptures have God defending the poor

when they are defenseless in a matter of justice (Psalm 72:4, 82:3, 4; James 5:4). But when the poor are themselves doing injustice, God does not defend them, but defends the property rights—yes, *the property rights*—of the rich.

This offends the sensibilities of Gutiérrez who is not merely a “Latin American theologian,” as Keller calls him. He is a Roman Catholic priest and *the founder* of the Marxist Liberation Theology movement. As is evident from Gutiérrez’s writings, what he calls “God’s preferential option for the poor” is actually just Gutiérrez’ preferential option for Marxism. Gutiérrez writes, “For some, participation in this process of liberation means not allowing themselves to be intimidated by the accusation of being ‘communist.’ On the positive side it can even mean taking the path of *socialism*.... This transformation ought to be directed toward a radical change in the foundation of society, that is, the private ownership of the means of production.”<sup>81</sup>

In other words, Gutiérrez is a Marxist revolutionary. But Keller takes Gutiérrez’ Marxism and recasts it as the embodiment of God’s zeal for justice. In this context, Keller says that “God injected his concern for justice into the very heart of Israel’s worship and community life” in *Deuteronomy 27:19*, which curses “anyone who withholds the justice due to the immigrant, the fatherless, and the widow.”<sup>82</sup> We will remind the reader here—because Keller does not—that God also injected His zeal for property rights of the owners of the means of production, as well as His antipathy for socialism, “into the very heart of Israel’s worship and community life” in the same chapter: “Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen” (*Deuteronomy 27:17*).

*Daniel Bell and “The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism”*

In *Every Good Endeavor*, Keller informs the reader that “even in the most successful capitalist societies like that of the United States, many recognize the cultural contradiction that consumerism tends to

<sup>79</sup> Ramachandra, *Redemption and Debt*, October 16, 2011, <http://vinothramachandra.wordpress.com/2011/10/16/redemption-and-debt/>, accessed September 22, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Keller, *Generous Justice*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 65, 116, emphasis in original.

<sup>82</sup> Keller, *Generous Justice*, 9.

undermine the very virtues of self-control and responsibility on which capitalism is founded.”<sup>83</sup> As evidence of this, Keller refers to Daniel Bell’s 1978 work, “The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism.” As worded, Keller seems to be saying that even capitalists recognize that capitalism is fundamentally flawed. But Bell was not a capitalist. Bell, whose “first love” was Marxism, was an avowed socialist who later lamented the decline of socialism in the face of capitalism: “the death of socialism is the most tragic—and unacknowledged—political fact of the twentieth century....”<sup>84</sup> Bell’s 1978 work was inspired by the *Communist Manifesto* which claimed that capitalism is internally contradictory, and therefore unstable, and must inevitably be replaced by Marxism.<sup>85</sup> Correcting capitalism’s “cultural contradictions,” Bell wrote, will require time and radical social changes, or more to the point, Marxist revolution:

The resources are present (or will be, once the Vietnam War is ended) to relieve many of the obvious tensions and to finance the public needs of the society. The great need here is *time*, for the social changes which are required (a decent welfare and income maintenance system for the poor, the reorganization of the universities, the control of the environment) can only be handled within the space of a decade or more.<sup>86</sup>

This is the man to whom Keller defers to show that even people in capitalist societies believe capitalism is unstable and will eventually have to be replaced.

*Reinhold Niebuhr: “Socialism Must Come in America”*

In *Every Good Endeavor*, Keller takes aim at the “idol” of elevating “the interests of one’s own tribe or nation over others,” and calls on Reinhold Niebuhr to help determine the cause: “American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr understood that the

tendency to privilege the interests of one’s own tribe or nation over others is due to the ‘cosmic insecurity’ of our sinful hearts.”<sup>87</sup>

Here, Keller draws from Niebuhr’s Gifford Lectures, delivered in 1939, and later published in his opus, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. But Niebuhr, as a Marxist, could not conceive of the sin of pride except through that Marxist lens. The sin of pride, he said in the same lecture, “rises to greater heights among those individuals and classes who have a more than ordinary degree of social power.”<sup>88</sup> Society must destroy, he wrote, “the kind of power which cannot be made socially responsible (the power which resides in economic ownership for instance).”<sup>89</sup> In the end, Niebuhr predicted, because of class conflict, capitalism in America “will inevitably be followed by the emergence of the American Marxian proletariat.”<sup>90</sup> He was among the men who “gained control of the Socialist Party in 1936” at which point this “victory for the left of the party” brought it new life.<sup>91</sup> Though he eventually gave up on the Socialist Party, he never gave up on socialism: “Elements of socialist theory continued to play a significant role in his thought as late as 1947 or 1948, but his loyalty to the socialist party ended with Roosevelt’s third-term campaign. ... ‘Nothing is more obvious than that socialism must come in America through some other instrument than the Socialist Party.’”<sup>92</sup>

Niebuhr has been called “the supreme American theologian of the twentieth century,”<sup>93</sup> and one gets the impression that Keller holds him in high regard as well. From *Counterfeit Gods*, alone: “Niebuhr answered.... First, said Niebuhr.... Niebuhr recognized.... Niebuhr argued.... Niebuhr taught.... Niebuhr believed.... Niebuhr says.... Niebuhr

<sup>87</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 138, 139.

<sup>88</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, Volume 1: Human Nature (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 189.

<sup>89</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, second edition (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 20. Parentheses in original.

<sup>90</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 144.

<sup>91</sup> Stone, 96.

<sup>92</sup> Stone, 96.

<sup>93</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), back cover.

<sup>83</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 147.

<sup>84</sup> Daniel Bell, “First Love and Early Sorrows,” *Partisan Review*, Volume 48, number 4 (1981), 532-551.

<sup>85</sup> Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, Chapter I: “Bourgeois and Proletarians.”

<sup>86</sup> Bell, Daniel, “The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Volume 6, Number 1/2, Special Double Issue: *Capitalism, Culture, and Education* (January - April, 1972), 11-38.

argues.... As Niebuhr points out.... If Niebuhr is right...."<sup>94</sup> As we have earlier observed, Marxism itself is founded on the idolatry of covetousness, and it is of no small concern to us that Keller finds in Niebuhr a voice to criticize Western "cultural idols," but cannot see Niebuhr's own idolatry for what it clearly is.

*Michael Schluter, "Transforming Capitalism from Within"*

Continuing on his theme of the problem of alienation, Keller commends the work of Michael Schluter, a Christian economist who "sums up the criticisms that Christians and others have leveled at capitalism in its present-day form. Nearly all the problems usually cited stem from the loss of primacy of human relationships."<sup>95</sup> Michael Schluter is CEO of Relationships Global in Cambridge, England. In his book, *Transforming Capitalism from Within*, his criticism is that capitalism relies on Adam Smith's invisible hand instead of using a company's wealth to serve relational and societal goals. Capitalism therefore needs a "Copernican revolution," which is to say, it needs to incorporate the Marxist solution to alienation by restoring, as Marxists would say, "the truly human relationship to the labor process":

[T]he heart of our proposition is that a "Copernican revolution" is needed as the basis for corporate enterprise. Our current way of looking at the world needs to be turned on its head. No longer should stakeholder relationships be seen as serving a financial objective, but financial objectives should be seen as serving Relational goals. This shift in understanding the purpose of a company means that the company ceases to be an agglomeration of individual goals, often in competition with one another, which somehow through the hidden hand of the market miraculously—in Adam Smith style—produces an optimum outcome. Rather, the stakeholders in a company get to know each other and become, in a limited sense at least, a community, characterised like all communities by conversation, a shared story,

mutual respect, an alignment of interests and a common direction.<sup>96</sup>

Schluter ultimately calls for minimizing pay differential between the highest and lowest paid employees in a company. He is puzzled at the idea that an employee's compensation is based on his level of productivity: "Is it fair that the contribution to the business of the lower-paid employees is regarded as so insignificant as to be valued in this way?" That is covetousness. In a relational environment, Schluter says, "the dignity of all employees is respected by minimising remuneration differentials within the business."<sup>97</sup> Additionally, according to Schluter, a company must respect its suppliers, and only terminate a supply contract "after a generous period of notice and, where appropriate, the offer of reasonable compensation for loss to the supplier."<sup>98</sup> A corporation is also expected to return a percentage of profits back to the community "from which it takes its personnel and makes its livelihood."<sup>99</sup> After reading *Transforming Capitalism from Within*, it is clear that Schluter's view of companies is that they exist to distribute their profits to employees, suppliers, and the community! That is Marxism, and it is what Keller prescribes to solve the "problems" of capitalism.

### **Marxism: The "Gospel Foundation" of our Work Lives**

In his introduction to *Every Good Endeavor*, Keller laments the "plethora" of traditions that "give somewhat different answers to the question of how we should go about the task of recapturing vocation." All these conflicting traditions cannot be resolved in a single book, he writes, but "we do hope to make things clearer."<sup>100</sup> What Keller has done to "make things clearer" is to recast the Marxist view of work in Christian terms. The Foreword to the book expresses appreciation for

<sup>96</sup> Jonathan Rushworth and Michael Schluter, *Transforming Capitalism from Within*, (Cambridge: Relationships Global, 2011), 3.

<sup>97</sup> Rushworth and Schluter, 38, 39.

<sup>98</sup> Rushworth and Schluter, 41.

<sup>99</sup> Rushworth and Schluter, 44.

<sup>100</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 21, 22. (Foreword by Katherine Leary Alsdorf.)

<sup>94</sup> Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, 101-111.

<sup>95</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 222.

how Keller has “applied the gospel to our work lives” over the last 25 years, and that he has “finally taken the time to put these foundations into print.”<sup>101</sup> What Keller reveals to us in *Every Good Endeavor*, and in his other writings, is that the foundation of his social gospel is Marxism, which is itself founded on covetousness, which is idolatry (*Colossians* 3:5). Notice the latent covetousness—the idolatry—in Keller’s own thinking as he considers the moral implications of high versus low tax environments:

Highly progressive tax structures can produce a kind of injustice where people who have worked hard go unrewarded and are penalized by the high taxes. A society of low taxes and few benefits, however, produces a different kind of injustice, where the children of families who can afford good health care and elite education have vastly better opportunities than those who cannot.<sup>102</sup>

Keller has created a false dilemma, requiring that we choose between the injustice of confiscatory taxes, or the injustice of inequitable distribution of goods and services. This is how Keller supplies, in Bauer’s words, “a veneer of intellectual respectability to envy and resentment.” The problem with Keller’s reasoning is that the Bible imposes no moral prohibition against one neighbor having more or higher quality goods than another. There is only the moral prohibition against covetousness—something to which Keller is oblivious here. We note at this point that the price mechanism of the free market is what makes the best health care plans and the best schools inaccessible to some people, and therefore prevents promiscuous consumption of scarce resources. As we stated earlier, the Socialist does not appreciate the erection of a moral barrier between his desire and its object. Keller resents it as well.

The Biblical response to the “injustices” Keller identifies is that we have no right to appropriate the property of the wealthy neighbor through progressive taxes and seizure in order to satisfy the consumption preferences of the poor neighbor.

Further, the poor neighbor must learn not to covet his neighbor’s goods, his neighbor’s healthcare, his neighbor’s education, his neighbor’s income, “nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s” (*Exodus* 20:17). Rather, he must “be content with such things as ye have” (*Hebrews* 13:5).

It does not surprise us, therefore, that Keller redefines covetousness in such a way that it is the *economically effective* who are guilty of it! He allows Sayers to define productivity as “covetousness,” and he himself defines it as seeking a higher standard of living. Citing Sayers, he writes, “Covetousness rakes us out of the bed at an early hour in order that we may put pep and hustle into our business.”<sup>103</sup> Keller writes elsewhere, “covetousness...is here defined as the continual drive to increase our standard of living.”<sup>104</sup>

If any person is curious to know what happens in society when the price mechanism disappears, when rewards are withheld from the economically effective, when the economically ineffective are protected from the consequences of failure, when people no longer rise early to “put pep and hustle” into their businesses, and no longer seek a higher standard of living through hard work—in short, what happens when Bellah’s Marxist vision “and all that would go with such a change” is realized—he need look no further than Venezuela. Commodity prices in Venezuela are set based on the desire of the consumer rather than by the price mechanism of a free market.<sup>105</sup> “Fair wages” are imposed on employers by government fiat,<sup>106</sup> not by the value of the employee’s productivity. There is therefore no incentive to produce goods, for there is no profit associated with production. There is no disincentive to consume, for there is no penalty associated with it.

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<sup>103</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 230.

<sup>104</sup> Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 71.

<sup>105</sup> Andrew Cawthorne and Carlos Rawlins, “Maduro Government ‘Occupies’ Venezuela Electronics Chain,” *Reuters*, November 9, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/09/us-venezuela-economyidUSBRE9A808C20131109>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>106</sup> Ewan Robertson, “Venezuela Implements Second Minimum Wage Increase of 2013,” *Venezuela Analysis*, September 1, 2013, <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9993>, accessed January 5, 2014.

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<sup>101</sup> Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 17.

<sup>102</sup> Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, 106, 107.

The result? Abject scarcity. President Maduro complains about the effects of his own policies: Venezuelans are consuming too much,<sup>107</sup> and companies are not producing enough.<sup>108</sup> Oil tankers sit idle at dock in a country with vast oil reserves. There are rolling blackouts, and the citizenry fight to the death for basic foodstuffs, as grocery store shelves sit empty.<sup>109</sup> This is what happens in every society that eliminates the consequences of failure and the rewards of success. All this was brought about by Maduro and his predecessor in the name of equality and helping the worker feel less alienated from the product of his labor. Yet Adam Smith's invisible hand—so disparaged by Keller and his advisors—would fill the grocery market shelves, turn the lights back on, and set the oil tankers back in motion in a week. Of course, that would also move Venezuelans back to what Dorothy Sayers falsely called, a “civilization of greed and waste which we dignify by the name of a ‘high standard of living.’” If we really love our Venezuelan neighbors, we should advocate for unfettered free-market capitalism there. And those who truly love their neighbors must reject Tim Keller's Marxist social gospel.

The reality of Marxism is that it is based on covetousness, greed, and idolatry, and is an effective way of hating one's neighbor. That has been demonstrated wherever Marxism is implemented. It simply cannot be fused with Christianity for this reason. As Keller wrote in *The Reason for God*, he was raised in a conservative Christian environment, but in his formative years he was exposed to the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt school. He found that the “social activism was

particularly attractive, and the critique of American bourgeoisie society was compelling.” Facing the choice between “two camps,” Keller sought “a spiritual third way.”<sup>110</sup> In *Every Good Endeavor*, he thinks he has found it—he has fused the Gospel of Christ with Marxism in the hopes of creating “a third way.” Unfortunately all he has done is import the idolatry of Marxism into the Church, as if Marxism could be used to institutionalize love of neighbor. Marxism can only institutionalize covetousness, and it is logically impossible to “love thy neighbour” while simultaneously agitating for the government to seize “thy neighbour's goods” for your use. Yet Keller would have it so.

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## The Final Authority in Constitutionalism and Catholicism

By C. Jay Engel

The libertarian has learned that one should be a bit suspicious about the fact that one branch of the Federal Government, the Supreme Court, has the ability, or claims it does, to pontificate the constitutionality of certain laws. While the Tenth Amendment notes that “the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people,” the Supreme Court has ignored this and has actively worked against it since, well, the very beginning. To say that the government itself can decide whether or not the government has the legal authority to do something is a dangerous notion. The libertarian might see the Constitution as a great standard compared to the authoritarianism of today, but, if he is honest with himself, notes that the Constitution itself established the Federal Government, which, as all governments are prone to do, began its growth pattern immediately. Lysander Spooner was particularly observant when he wrote:

But whether the Constitution really be one thing, or another, this much is certain—that it has either authorized such a government as we

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<sup>107</sup> Alasdair Baverstock and Hannah Strange, “As Socialist Dream Crumbles, Venezuelans Find Nicolas Maduro ‘a Bad Copy’ of Chavez,” *The Telegraph*, October 6, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/venezuela/10359267/As-socialist-dream-crumbles-Venezuelans-find-Nicolas-Maduro-a-bad-copy-of-Chavez.html>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>108</sup> “Venezuela Orders Temporary Takeover of Toilet Paper Factory,” *The Telegraph*, September 21, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/venezuela/10324852/Venezuela-orders-temporary-takeover-of-toilet-paper-factory.html>, accessed January 5, 2014.

<sup>109</sup> Baverstock and Strange, “As Socialist Dream Crumbles.”

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<sup>110</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, (New York: Dutton, 2008), xi-xix.

have had, or it has been powerless to prevent it. In either case it is unfit to exist.

Many perhaps would squabble over the last sentence. But it should be at least seen as a reasonable conclusion given the rest of the quote. Has the Constitution authorized such a large government? The honest man would say no. But then could the honest man deny that the document has been powerless to stop the most powerful government in the history of the world? Constitutionalism is good if it is a steppingstone. But is it not idolatry to worship it as perfection? Did not the Articles of Confederation allow for even more decentralization than the Constitution? And is it not conceivable to imagine a document that is better than the Articles? Perhaps the non-existence of any established Federal Government would have been better for individual liberty after all.

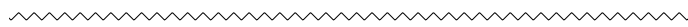
Our point however is that when you have an institution with the monopoly role of interpreting its own power, corruption takes over and expansionism ensues. Human nature has proven that this tendency is not strictly limited to the State *qua* State. What about the Roman Catholic Church? Here is an institution that claims it has the monopoly role on interpreting the Scripture and determining official doctrine. While the Constitution is not perfect, it would be better if it determined the action of the Federal Government rather than the Federal Government determining the meaning of the document. In the same way, a major contention between Protestantism and Catholicism is that the latter claims the ultimate authority to tell the world what the Bible means. Roman Catholics are under the belief that the [Romish] Church produced the Bible, authenticates it, and has the final word on its meaning. But this, like the Supreme Court's claim that it alone can interpret the Constitution, seems largely suspicious. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Amusingly, this brilliant statement was written by Roman Catholic Lord Acton.

If Constitutionalism must exist, it should operate on the Protestant model. The Roman Catholic model leads to big government in the same way that it has led to such an authoritative and politically driven Roman State Church. The Protestant view of Scripture is the opposite of the Roman Catholic view. For the Protestant, the Scripture, the Word of God, preceded the Church and called it into

existence. Thus, the Scripture itself provides the definition and function of the Church, not vice versa. Scripture is final and Scripture is the standard by which churches should be compared. The American problem with the Constitution is that it has ventured away from this principle. The Constitution established and called the Federal Government into existence and thus the Federal Government should be compared to the document as a standard. Not the reverse.

The skeptical reader might interject by assuming that I have blasphemously set the Constitution on the same plane as the Bible. But this is hardly a legitimate complaint. The Constitution does not determine truth nor is it infallible. And as stated above, in an ideal world, the Constitution would not exist. Government should be far more local and the State as a monopoly on coercion would not exist. But our present argument is about the use of the Constitution given that it exists and is therefore a factor in our political environment. It should be used as the interpretive standard and should not be so manipulated, abused, and taken advantage of, as has been done for over two hundred years. If the Constitution has been misinterpreted by earthly Powers to give the government more power as time goes by, so it is true with the Roman manipulation of the Scripture. The Supreme Court should be stripped away of its authority by the document in the same way that the Roman Catholic Church should be stripped by the Word of God. But unfortunately in both instances, Rome and Washington are so corrupt and sinful that to ask them to limit themselves now that they have such mighty power is a pipe dream. However, the good Lord reigns supreme and vengeance belongs to him. Neither Rome nor DC are kingdoms that will last forever.

*C. Jay Engel won the 2013 Christian Worldview Essay Contest. This article first appeared on his blog ReformedLibertarian.com and is used with permission.*



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