

The Church's Mission: sent to 'do justice' in the world?

Peter J. Naylor

Introduction

In October 2011, 'Occupy Wall Street' set up a camp outside St Paul's Cathedral in London; and the church did not know what to do.¹ Everyone else, it seemed, thought that they knew what the church should do and had no hesitation in saying so. Daily TV coverage never failed to show one protest banner that read, 'What would Jesus do?' More than one senior minister of the church resigned. *The Times'* headline of 1 November ran: 'Church leadership in crisis'. Ruth Gledhill wrote:

The resignation of the Dean of St Paul's is the latest development in an unfolding disaster, not just for the Cathedral but for the entire Church ... There is still no apparent awareness in the Church of quite how damaging this whole episode has been both to the Church and to Christianity in the West ... The Archbishop should have been down there with his own broad tent ... Richard Dawkins must be laughing. The Church has sunk itself without the aid of a single torpedo from him. Dawkins' mistake was to target Christianity on the intellectual level and imagine that believers are stupid. Most, or at least many, are not. The social gospel is what attracts them and keeps them there.

Gledhill was both right and wrong in various ways. She was wrong about the church being in mortal danger over the affair. The Church of England may indeed destroy itself but *the* church of Christ is indestructible.² On the other hand, the archbishop did eventually appear on the scene as hoped. But in larger terms, Gledhill was wrong on this count as well: the protest was not his business any more than it was Dawkins'.³ Finally, if Gledhill was right in her assertion that people are attracted to the Church of England by the social gospel, then that is a great tragedy for all concerned, because they are in the church for the wrong reason. In fact, this difficult situation exposed a failure to think clearly. No one was asking the basic question, 'What *is* the church's mission?'⁴ That is the subject of this chapter.

Timothy Keller on the Church's Dual Mission

Timothy Keller's understanding of the church's mission is implicit throughout his works but is presented most clearly in his book *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. Keller teaches that the church has a twofold mission in this world: to preach the gospel *and to do justice*. This is reflected in Redeemer Presbyterian Church's self-understanding as a church 'seeking to renew the City, Socially, Spiritually & Culturally'.⁵ Keller has also put his name to the *Missional Manifesto* which explicitly affirms missional duality:

We believe the mission and responsibility of the church includes both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration ... The church must constantly evangelize, respond lovingly to human needs, as well as 'seek the welfare of the city' (Jeremiah 29:7).⁶

Keller's work deserves close attention. He is extremely influential, and his ideas about the church's task will be adopted far and wide.⁷ He is also raising a fundamental question that ought in any case to be considered.⁸ We can in truth be thankful that, in his book *Generous Justice*, Keller calls for Christian love and good works. It is good, for example, to be reminded there of Jonathan Edwards' sermon, 'Christian Charity: The Duty of Charity to the Poor, Explained and Enforced'.⁹ Even so, it is apparent that Keller's work calls for a careful examination.

Keller's main thesis is that the church has a twofold mission in this world: (1) to preach the gospel and (2) to do justice, which involves social and cultural transformation and renewal. What would this look like in practice? He spells it out in several places:

In our world, this could mean prosecuting men who batter, exploit, and rob poor women. But it could also mean Christians respectfully putting pressure on a local police department until they respond to calls and crimes as quickly in the poor part of town as in the prosperous part. Another example would be to form an organization that both prosecutes and seeks against loan companies that prey on the poor and the elderly with dishonest and exploitive practices ... In our world this means taking the time personally to meet the needs of the handicapped, the elderly, or the hungry in our neighborhoods. Or it could mean the establishment of new nonprofits to serve the interests of these classes of persons. But it could also mean a group of families from the more prosperous side of town adopting the public school in a poor community and making generous donations of money and pro bono work in order to improve the quality of the education.¹⁰

Common relief ministries are temporary shelters for the homeless and refugees, food and clothing services for people in need, and free or low-cost medical and counseling services. Relief can also mean caring for foster children, the elderly, and the physically handicapped through home care or the establishment of institutions. A more assertive form of relief is advocacy, in which people in need are given assistance to find legal aid, housing, and other kinds of help, such as protection from various forms of domestic abuse and violence ... [Development] includes education, job creation and training, job search skills, and financial counseling, as well as helping a family into home ownership.¹¹

That is not all.

We have considered what it takes to help an individual or a family. But what does it take to help entire neighborhoods to self-sufficiency? Most of the best answers to that question begin with a look at the life and work of John M. Perkins. Perkins, born in 1930, founded ministries ... His work has included a dizzying variety of programs, including day care, farm co-ops, health centers, adult education centers, low-income housing development, tutoring, job training, youth internships, and college programs, *as well as very vigorous evangelism and new church planting*.¹²

Such are Keller's ideas, presented in *Generous Justice*. The aim of the present chapter is to examine whether these ideas are biblical.

Preliminary Considerations

Before we embark on this examination, it would be helpful to keep some things in mind. In terms of terminology, we should remember that 'Mission' does not cover everything that the church is called to do. Edmund Clowney wrote, 'The church is called to serve God in three ways: to serve him directly in *worship*; to serve the saints in *nurture*; and to serve the world in *witness*.'¹³ For the sake of clarity, we shall reserve the term 'mission' for the third of these: what the church has been *sent into the world* to do.¹⁴ In addition, we must keep in mind five fundamental principles.

1. The church may not act without a mandate

Creation confers absolute rights: what God created he owns outright.¹⁵ He did not breathe into Adam the breath of life and then let him loose to work out his own purpose and to act according to his own wisdom and desires. From the beginning, God told Adam what he must do. Similarly, the church is not permitted to determine its own work. It cannot act without a divine mandate. We see this illustrated in history time and time again. Israel was led out of Egypt by the Lord in the pillar of cloud and fire. At every stage of the journey, they set out and made camp 'at the command of the Lord'.¹⁶ Later on in the history of the nation, David always inquired what the Lord's will was.¹⁷ Likewise, no man could enter the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood unless he was called of God.¹⁸ When King Uzziah presumed to take on that holy office, he was immediately struck with leprosy.¹⁹ The principle continues in our days: Paul says that no one ought to preach the gospel unless God has called him.²⁰

This principle was most strictly observed by Jesus Christ. He did not advance himself as prophet, priest or king, but was appointed by God.²¹ He would not receive the throne in any other way than that ordained by his Father.²² In his earthly ministry, he did nothing except what his Father had given him to do. 'For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.'²³ When asked to arbitrate in a dispute between a man and his brother, he refused, saying, 'Who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?'²⁴ The fundamental principle is that the church cannot undertake any task without a clear mandate from God.

2. There are three spheres: family, nation and church

There are many man-made organizations in this world (schools, trade unions, clubs, etc.), but three fundamental institutions have been created by God: the family,²⁵ the nation,²⁶ and the church.²⁷ To each, God has given a defined purpose and function. In each, he has delegated *limited* authority to particular people: to husbands,²⁸ kings,²⁹ and elders³⁰ respectively. Jesus Christ is over them all, the head of every man, the King of kings, and the head of the church. To him they all must render an account.

So, within the sphere of the *family*, God has invested *married* couples with the right to have children and bring them up. The *state* and its government have been given the power of the sword, to preserve peace and social justice.³¹ The Westminster Confession of Faith plainly insists that the church must not interfere in the government's work:

Synods and councils [of the church] are to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical; and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs, which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition, in cases extraordinary; or by way of advice for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate [i.e., the government].³²

The Lord has committed the keys of the kingdom (the preaching of the gospel, its two sacraments, and discipline), to the *church* and its elders, and the state and its rulers must respect this and not intrude.

Andrew Melville and the leaders of the Church of Scotland clearly proclaimed this distinction, in 1590:

There are two jurisdictions exercised in this realm: the one spiritual, the other civil; the one respects the conscience, the other external things; the one directly procuring the obedience of God's word and commandments, the other obedience unto civil laws; the one persuading by the spiritual word, the other compelling by the temporal sword; the one procuring the edification of the Kirk, which is the body of Jesus Christ; the other, by entertaining justice, procuring the commoditie, peace, and quietness of the Commonweal, the which, having ground in the light of nature, proceeds from God, as He is Creator, and so termed by the Apostle Humana Creatura.³³

So then, family, state, and church are three distinct spheres with different God-given tasks and powers, and they ought to keep to the limits that God has set for each.

3. We must distinguish between the body and its members

We must always distinguish clearly between a corporate body and the members of that body. Logicians have identified two informal fallacies: the *fallacy of composition*, where the properties of the parts are transferred to the whole; and the *fallacy of division*, the opposite error, where the properties of the whole are attributed to the parts.³⁴ For example, the fallacy of composition is committed in this false argument: 'All the parts of this machine are light. Therefore this machine is light.' The combined weight of many light parts can produce a very heavy machine. And the fallacy of division is found here: 'This school has an academically strong record. John is a pupil of this school. Therefore John must have an academically strong record.'

We must guard against committing these fallacies in our ecclesiology. The attributes and function of the church as a body are not necessarily the attributes and functions of the members individually. For example, it does not follow that because the church is the bride of Christ, each member is the bride of Christ (a form of the fallacy of division). Because the 'good

Samaritan' transported the wounded man on his own animal and paid for his care, it does not follow that the church as a body ought to organize an ambulance service and a hospital or use its funds to help the victims of violence on the streets.³⁵

4. We must distinguish between members and office-bearers

In order that each sphere may perform its task, God has placed appropriate 'office-bearers' within each one. Our focus is on society and the church. Society has its governors (king, parliament, judges) and the church has its ministers and elders. Since God is pleased when a society enjoys peace and order, he has placed the power of the sword in the hands of its rulers but not in the hands of its citizens. Under normal conditions, a citizen cannot assume to himself that power: it is not his task to judge his neighbor, to execute murderers, or to declare war on behalf of his nation. Similarly, although the church is the custodian of the truth of God in the Scriptures, that does not make the church member a preacher.³⁶

5. We must distinguish between Jesus' mission and the church's mission

'What would Jesus do?' is a misleading slogan. The Christian is not commanded to do all that Jesus did, and in fact he cannot. Although Jesus Christ set us an example of obedience, holiness, love, etc., and we are called to be changed into his image, nevertheless in other respects he came to do what we could never do. For example, he became incarnate in order to make the Father known, and he came in order to make atonement for us.³⁷ He became the author of eternal life for us. Because his work in these respects was unique, we cannot assume that Jesus' commission is the church's mission.³⁸

Summary

As we consider the church's mission, we must bear these five principles in mind. (1) The church cannot act without a mandate from God. (2) The God-given boundaries between the three spheres of family, nation, and church must be respected. (3) The distinction between the body and its members must be carefully observed. (4) The distinction between the office bearers and the members must be respected. (5) Jesus' commission from his Father was unique and the church cannot assume that Jesus' commission is its own mission.

Assessing Keller's Doctrine of the Mission of the Church

We now turn to examine Keller's case in *Generous Justice*. As we do so, we must make it clear that we would agree on some important areas. Every member of the church is called to righteousness and to Christlike practical love. If he is an employee, he will be honest and reliable; if he is an official, he will be even-handed and not guilty of favoritism. If his light does not shine, something is wrong. This is a point of agreement. Nor are we concerned with a second question, whether the Christian should go further, not merely seeking to live for Christ in the world, but striving to change that world by active social campaigns. Since the Christian is a citizen, he has all the rights of citizenship and he may participate in the political process.³⁹

One crucial question only is before us. Should *the church* (as a corporate, organized body) work directly for social and cultural transformation? Certainly it must *proclaim* the truth and *call* for

change, for justice, love, kindness and generosity. Should it also take direct action to bring about a new culture, justice, elimination of poverty, and so on? For example, Keller presents the Perkins model for us to imitate.⁴⁰ Should we do so? Should we accept these goals as from Christ?

Christ's mission according to Isaiah

On the first page of the Introduction to *Generous Justice*, Keller refers to Luke 4:17–18 (quoting Isaiah 61:1) and Isaiah 42:1–7.⁴¹

And he was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.⁴²

'Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, my Elect One in whom my soul delights! I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise his voice, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench; he will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for his law.' Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it: 'I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.'⁴³

We can hardly miss the repeated reference to justice: the Lord's servant will establish justice in the earth. Keller immediately begins to develop his case for the mission of the Christian and the church to seek social justice in the world. Justice (Hebrew *mishpāt*), he explains, is 'giving people their rights', 'social justice', and material 'generosity'.⁴⁴ He reinforces this by saying that when justice is joined with righteousness (Hebrew *š'ḏāqâ*), the combination means 'social justice'. So he translates Psalm 33:5a ('He loves righteousness and justice') as 'The Lord loves social justice.'⁴⁵ The logical integrity of the opening page depends on whether Isaiah means 'social justice' and whether Christ's work in that respect is paradigmatic for the believer.

Is this the way to understand Isaiah 42:1–7 and the mission of Jesus? If so, it would be hard to avoid the conclusion that Jesus failed in this mission. During his earthly ministry, he appears to have made no attempt to rectify injustice in Judea and Galilee, let alone among the Gentiles. Why did he not step in to prevent Herod from unjustly executing John the Baptist?⁴⁶ Why did he not administer justice to the one who came to him appealing for help?⁴⁷ What did he do to reduce the number of poor in Galilee? Where is the social justice that we are being led to concentrate on?

Clearly, when Isaiah spoke, he was referring to the anointed servant, the King.⁴⁸ The nature of the justice is determined by the nature of his kingdom. Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight ...'⁴⁹ In another place he said, 'The kingdom of God is within you.'⁵⁰ Christ's kingdom is *spiritual* in nature and *eschatological* in its full accomplishment. John Calvin wrote:

*He will exhibit judgment to the Gentiles. By the word judgment the Prophet means a well-regulated government ... Now we ought to judge of this government from the nature of his kingdom, which is not external, but belongs to the inner man; for it consists of a good conscience and uprightness of life, not what is reckoned so before men, but what is reckoned so before God. The doctrine may be summed up: 'Because the whole life of men has been perverted since we were corrupted in every respect by the fall of Adam, Christ came with the heavenly power of his Spirit, that he might change our disposition, and thus form us again to "newness of life" (Rom. vi.4).'*⁵¹

His spiritual reign advances unseen by the preaching of the gospel and the Holy Spirit's work within the heart.⁵² He does deliver the poor, brokenhearted, captives and blind. Christ himself showed that all these terms refer to a spiritual condition.⁵³ Of course, he did open the eyes of the physically blind; but such miracles were *signs* identifying him as Messiah and pointing to his spiritual work.⁵⁴ Only when Christ returns in glory will his reign of righteousness be established fully and finally in new heavens and a new earth.⁵⁵

If Isaiah's promise of Christ's reign produces a 'passion' in the hearts of believers, it is a passion for the gospel harvest and for Christ's return.⁵⁶ Certainly, the injustice found in the world causes grief; but the hope of deliverance from it does not lie in the way of cultural and social transformation.

Is Job a paradigm for the Christian?

Keller states that Job 'illustrates what this kind of righteous or just-living person looks like' and shows that 'the righteous life ... is profoundly social'.⁵⁷ Further, he says, 'We see direct, rectifying justice when Job says, "I took up the case of the immigrant ..."'⁵⁸ Taking his cue from Job, Keller suggests that Christians must take social action: they might respectfully put pressure on a local police department or form an organization that prosecutes loan sharks, and so on.⁵⁹

Job is certainly a wonderful example of justice. But Keller has overlooked one crucial fact. Job was no mere private citizen but a prince and a judge. He sat 'in the gate', which was the place where the elders would try cases and deliver judgments, the equivalent of today's courts of justice.⁶⁰ He was like a king.⁶¹ It is one thing for a Christian to emulate Job's uprightness in all his dealings with his neighbors; but it is a different matter for a Christian to begin to act as if he had the authority of a judge. Moral authority is not the same as legal, or official, authority. The latter authority has been given to the governing authorities to exercise 'direct rectifying justice'.⁶² There is a significant difference between exercising citizenship and interfering with

the police and the courts, between speaking for justice and actively prosecuting the wicked. Indeed, even if we believe that citizens have the right to bring law cases against oppressive lending institutions, it is quite another thing to add that work to the church's task. In principle, it is an error to take the work of the governing powers and attribute it to the church. A similar error is committed—in the opposite direction—when, for example, Christ's instruction about turning the other cheek (which was for his disciples) is misapplied to a judge at law, or a nation at war.⁶³ Judges must not turn the other cheek, but administer justice. Rulers must not turn the other cheek, but call the nation to arms in defense of life and liberty.

In the same context, Keller refers to King Lemuel, who was commanded to 'judge righteously',⁶⁴ and to Judah's king on David's throne, who was commanded to 'execute judgment and righteousness'.⁶⁵ As with Job, these men held an office that gave them authority to judge. We must not obscure the distinction already set out. Righteousness or justice is the same for all; but the exercise of justice in society is a burden of office.

The law and the Christian

Keller is undoubtedly right that Old Testament law has 'some abiding validity' for the church today and that in Jesus' teaching we hear the Old Testament again.⁶⁶ He presents several references to justice in Israel⁶⁷ and the justice of God's own character.⁶⁸ However, in all these places, the law is regulating the internal life of the covenant people.

This does not mean that the law had no relevance to other nations.⁶⁹ The prophets addressed oracles to the nations and made it clear that God would judge them too.⁷⁰ But the prophets did not send Israel into those nations with the task of imposing the covenant culture and the law's justice upon them. Jonah, for example, did go into a foreign nation with a message of impending judgment for their wickedness; but Jonah did not lead Israel into Nineveh in order to transform its culture. Indeed, Israel's possession of the law distinguished it from the Gentile nations. It was Israel's glory to have the law and the wisdom of God contained in it.⁷¹

The poor

The Lord gave his people a land flowing with milk and honey, in which each tribe and family had an allotment of land as a possession, an inheritance. Fruitfulness, success, and wealth were temporal blessings of God, which he added to his chief, spiritual, blessings.⁷² Prosperity resulting from industry or received as an inheritance was not wrong; Abraham's servant could testify, 'The Lord has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys.'⁷³ Indeed, even in the period of history since the New Testament, it has often been the case that where a biblical work ethic has been inculcated, prosperity has followed.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, even in the land flowing with milk and honey there were almost always poor or needy people. First of all, the Levites were placed in a permanently dependent position. Unlike the other tribes, God gave the Levites no land. Instead of land, the Lord appointed for them

another work to do and another form of income: the tithes and a portion of the sacrifices which the other tribes brought.⁷⁵ There were also widows and orphans, who did not have a man's strength, care, and protection. Even if they still owned the land, they were not able to benefit from it. In addition to these, no land was given to foreigners and hence, if one did come to Israel, he was unable to provide for himself from the land. The law spoke about the stranger who is 'within your gates', that is, the foreigner who had entered Israel and was subject to the laws of Israel. The book of Ruth provides a detailed case study: there is Boaz the landowner, Naomi the widow, and Ruth the stranger who had come to seek refuge under the wings of the Almighty.⁷⁶ In Israel, there were also people who had become poor for a variety of reasons; perhaps foolishness or laziness,⁷⁷ oppression,⁷⁸ chastening,⁷⁹ and God's sovereignty in sending and withholding rain.⁸⁰

Several laws addressed the needs of Levites, widows, orphans and strangers: tithes were principally for the Levites but also for the widow, orphan and stranger,⁸¹ and gleaning was allowed.⁸² Greed was challenged: landowners were not to harvest everything. Those who became poor, for whatever reason, were not left without hope: the seventh and the fiftieth years were years of redemption or jubilee, when slaves were freed, debts written off, and land restored.⁸³

Keller argues from these laws that the church should take direct action to alleviate the poverty of the city.⁸⁴ However, these laws were given to regulate the life of the covenant people, not to dispatch them to the wider world with cartloads of grain. We see clear continuity in the New Testament church, in its support for the ministry,⁸⁵ its care for its believing widows,⁸⁶ and its relief of its poor.⁸⁷ Careful examination of these texts shows that this material support was available to those within the church. There was not a needy person *among them*.⁸⁸ The test of a widow's eligibility was strict: she had to be a member of the church, known there for her good works and godliness, not a young woman who could marry again, nor one who had believing family.⁸⁹ This corresponds with the law's phrase 'within your gates'.⁹⁰ There is no evidence that the church at Ephesus ran a social service for all the widows in the city; in fact, *the text of 1 Timothy 5 shows us that it did not do so*.

Keller says, 'Today this quartet [widow, fatherless, stranger, poor, of Zechariah 7:10–11] could be expanded to include the refugee, the migrant worker, the homeless, and many single parents and elderly people.' He translates 'strangers' as 'immigrants'.⁹¹ But none of the main English versions chooses the term 'immigrant'.⁹² Taken out of context, that translation would be misleading, because it would almost certainly suggest someone who, for example, has crossed from Mexico into the United States, or from Africa to Europe, in order to find employment and a better lifestyle. In the Old Testament, a stranger who came into Israel was in fact entering the context of the church. The spread of the church among the nations and the separation of church and state means that such an 'immigrant' does not simultaneously enter the church. The 'stranger within your gates' is simply not equivalent to the immigrant. Where the New Testament epistles speak of strangers, they refer to those whose service to Christ has caused them to travel away from home. The Apostle John encourages the church to offer hospitality to 'the brethren and strangers' who are travelling in the service of Christ, fellow-

workers.⁹³ When the author of Hebrews reminds believers to entertain strangers and remember those in prison, he is not advocating an open home to all and sundry or general prison visitation, but brotherly love, particularly towards those whose needs arise through persecution.⁹⁴ This does not rule out *a Christian* helping a foreigner who comes to live nearby; but neither does it lay an obligation on *the church* to meet the social needs of society's immigrants. The law differentiated between covenant members and strangers. For example, the Israelite was allowed to charge interest to the foreigner but not to an Israelite.⁹⁵ Foreign slaves were not released along with Israelite slaves.⁹⁶ Land was restored to Israelites but not donated to foreigners. A careful study of the law and of its continuity in the New Testament does not support Keller's application of it to a dual-track mission of the church.

Redistribution of wealth

Keller teaches that the laws of jubilee support the redistribution of wealth,⁹⁷ 'the ultimate relativization of private property'.⁹⁸ 'Israel did redistribute money, assets, and even land from the well-off to the poor, with the help of state-sponsored laws and institutions.'⁹⁹ This is a complete misunderstanding of the laws of jubilee. Those laws (which were not state-sponsored) did the very opposite of what Keller says they did. Far from *relativizing a person's property*, the law was designed to *preserve it*. So, if you, an Israelite, were forced by poverty to sell your inheritance land, it was not lost forever. Remember God's judgment for the daughters of Zelophehad: 'every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers'.¹⁰⁰ Naboth would not sell or exchange his inheritance.¹⁰¹

The preservation of private property (it is better to speak of the family's inheritance) and the release of Hebrew slaves had a spiritual purpose: the jubilee was redemptive, not economic.¹⁰² It was essential that covenant families could live in the land where God was among them, where his tabernacle was. Isaiah denounced those who joined house to house and field to field, not because it was a sin to be wealthy, but because by their actions they were preventing the poor from remaining in the land of covenant promise.¹⁰³ Redistribution of wealth is not found in the New Testament either. Ananias and Sapphira did not have to sell their property and they did not have to bring the proceeds to the apostles.¹⁰⁴ Kuiper says, 'There was nothing compulsory about it.'¹⁰⁵ What was required was truthfulness.

The Westminster Confession of Faith explicitly repudiates what Keller advocates. On the communion of the saints, it states: 'Nor doth their communion one with another, as saints, take away or infringe the title of property which each man hath in his goods and possessions.'¹⁰⁶ Robert Letham explains that this was 'directed against sects such as the Levellers, who wanted private property abolished. The communion that saints enjoy with each other does not erode or destroy the integrity of the individual, and in particular his or her property.'¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Scripture teaches that governments have a right to levy taxes, but it explains the purpose: it is to enable them to attend continually to their duty.¹⁰⁸ It does not support taxation designed to redistribute wealth. Similarly, the tithes and offerings of God's people are to enable the church to fulfill its task, not to equalize the wealth of its members.

Keller says, 'If you do not actively and generously share your resources with the poor, you are a robber.'¹⁰⁹ Follow his logic: God requires justice; justice demands generosity; and so any lack of generosity is injustice and robbery. The basic problem with this reasoning is the confusion of justice with generosity, two separate and distinct things in Scripture. When Paul asked the Corinthians to send relief to their Judean brothers, he did not command them on the basis of justice, as if failing to do so would be theft, but appealed to their willingness on the basis of God's grace.¹¹⁰ Without doubt, the Bible calls for generosity.¹¹¹ If a professing Christian cannot bring himself to show practical kindness, the genuineness of his own salvation by grace must hang in doubt.¹¹² However, this is very different from saying that he is a 'robber'.

Moreover, the liberality taught in Scripture is not intended to equalize wealth but to meet needs, particularly the needs of the household of faith.¹¹³ Christianity is not a form of socialism or communism.¹¹⁴ It respects private property. In fact, difference in wealth is just one of many differences that God has ordained among people. We have different gifts and abilities, different life spans and health, etc., and in fact we are led to believe that even in the eschatological kingdom of God we shall be granted different rewards, all of grace.¹¹⁵

The last step of the case—from the believer to the church

The believer has been given a place in all the spheres of life: in the family, the nation, and the church. In each sphere he or she must exercise love in his or her capacity as a husband or wife, a father or mother, a citizen, and a member. The same thing cannot be said about the church, which is one sphere of the three, and which is not identical with the state and is not an institution of the state, but is in fact a distinct, and 'transcendent', sphere.¹¹⁶

Keller assumes, without proving it, that the duty of the individual is somehow also the duty of the church.

Many believe that the job of the church is not to do justice at all, but to preach the Word, to evangelize and build up believers. But if it is true that justice and mercy to the poor are the inevitable signs of justifying faith, it is hard to believe that the church is not to reflect this duty corporately in some way.¹¹⁷

This is not precise enough. No one is suggesting that 'the church is not to do justice at all'. That is a straw man. The church's elders and deacons serve the interests of justice and mercy.¹¹⁸ But those offices are established in the church and not in the state; they are entrusted with the care of Christ's flock and not the general oversight of society at large. Paul charged the elders of the church at Ephesus, 'Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.'¹¹⁹ Peter gave the same instructions: 'The elders who are among you, I exhort ...: Shepherd the flock of God ... those entrusted to you.'¹²⁰ 'For what have I to do with judging those who are outside?'¹²¹ And in Keller's second sentence quoted above, his expression, 'it is hard to believe ... in some way', is very vague. In that vagueness, he takes the crucial step—

from the justifying faith of the believer to the corporate duty of the church. We cannot build a solid ecclesiology on such a vague foundation.

In what follows, having described at length grandiose programs of social restructuring, Keller back-pedals. He insists that 'word and deed' ministry cannot be separated, that the burden of social justice and cultural transformation cannot be lifted from the church's shoulders; and yet he concedes that Abraham Kuyper's ideas about sphere sovereignty are 'generally right', thereby substantially removing the burden of the second track of the dual-track mission.¹²²

As we have said, churches under their leaders should definitely carry out ministries of relief and some development among their own members and in their neighborhoods and cities ... But if we apply Kuyper's view, then when we get to the more ambitious work of social reform and the addressing of social structures, believers should work through associations and organizations rather than through the local church ... Churches that, against Kuyper's advice, try to take on all the levels of doing justice often find that the work of community renewal and social justice overwhelms the work of preaching, teaching, and nurturing the congregation.¹²³

This is an interesting statement. Not only is this a tacit admission that the Bible does not with any clarity mandate a dual-track mission (if it did, Keller himself would not need to speak in this way; no such qualifications are needed when we speak of the church's single mission to make disciples), it also points to the inescapable problem with social action. When the church does engage in this type of enterprise, it inevitably absorbs resources of time, energy and money from the preaching and witnessing task. Keller speaks as if there is a certain point at which this becomes problematic, but he does not demonstrate how this effect is not already in operation the moment the church becomes involved in this kind of work at all.

In a subsequent book Keller appears to modify or retract his position. He writes, 'I have argued in *Generous Justice* and elsewhere that while the mission of the *gathered* (institutional) church is to proclaim the gospel of individual salvation, to win people to Christ and form disciples, yet the will of God for the church *dispersed*—Christians living in the world—is to minister in both word and deed, to do evangelism and to do justice.'¹²⁴ This appears to be an important step away from the idea of the dual track mission of the church. However, it is clear that in the same book, *Center Church*, the same old dual-track message is still being promoted. For example, he says that 'faithful churches' have 'evangelistic outreach as one of their goals' but also that 'They are looking for ways to strengthen the health of their neighborhoods, making them safer and more humane places for people to live'.¹²⁵

Distortions

Enveloped in the prevailing materialism and consumerism of the world, especially in the G8+5 countries,¹²⁶ some may be tempted to believe that material poverty is the greatest evil suffered by the human race.¹²⁷ It is not so. Man's plight, at the most profound level, lies in his sin, guilt and misery, in his being under the wrath of God, and in his being subject to the power

of the devil and death. In short, his basic need is spiritual, not material. Whilst not wishing to belittle the sufferings that poverty can bring, we must insist that the world needs Christ, and all else is entirely secondary.

Keller focuses on the materially poor. This involves a distorted picture of human need and produces distortions elsewhere in his doctrinal system. For example, Keller's interpretation of the incarnation is thereby distorted.

Jesus, in his incarnation, 'moved in' with the poor. He lived with, ate with, and associated with the socially ostracized (Matt. 9:13). He raised the son of the poor widow (Luke 7:11–16) and showed the greatest respect to the immoral woman who was a social outcast (Luke 7:36ff). Indeed, Jesus spoke with women in public, something that a man with any standing in society would not have done, but Jesus resisted the sexism of his day (John 4:27). Jesus also refused to go along with the racism of his culture ...'¹²⁸

In Proverbs we see God identifying with the poor symbolically. But in the incarnation and death of Jesus we see God identifying with the poor and marginal literally ... In all these ways, Jesus identifies with the millions of nameless people who have been wrongfully imprisoned, robbed of their possessions, tortured, and slaughtered.¹²⁹

In such paragraphs, Keller is reading first-century gospels through his own twenty-first-century lens.¹³⁰ The Bible does not present the incarnation as moving in with the poor. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.¹³¹ The Son of God assumed human nature and came to his own people, rich and poor, because they were sinners.¹³² Without a doubt, his humiliation included his poverty.¹³³ He experienced all the temptations that befall his people. He did this in order to save sinners. Our Lord ate with tax collectors and sinners (as in Matthew 9:10–13) not because he was concerned to rectify their social ostracization, but because he came to call 'sinners to repentance'. In fact, Jesus also ate in the homes of Pharisees.¹³⁴ The crucifixion was not about Christ associating with victims of injustice: he was numbered *with the transgressors* and made an atonement for the sheep, those whom God had chosen and given to him before the foundation of the world.¹³⁵ When Keller focuses on poverty and injustice, he distorts the incarnation and crucifixion, and takes us away from the purpose of both—which was to save sinners—and leads us into the byway of social transformation.¹³⁶ He is leading us to concentrate on the wrong goal.¹³⁷

The Great Commission

The church's mission ought not to be in doubt because Christ has authoritatively commissioned it.¹³⁸ He clearly commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to every person, ¹³⁹ to teach the nations and make them disciples,¹⁴⁰ to go and testify of all that they had witnessed during the earthly ministry of Christ,¹⁴¹ to cast wide the net of the gospel and to supply spiritual food to the sheep.¹⁴² The Apostle Paul was called separately, but to the same task: Christ commissioned Paul to bear his name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.¹⁴³ He understood his own appointment to be that of a preacher.¹⁴⁴ He was 'separated' to that task

and refused to be diverted, 145 except to 'remember the poor'¹⁴⁶ (not a reference to a general social ministry, but a very specific collection among the Gentile churches for the saints in Jerusalem and Judea). Paul considered preaching the gospel to be an inescapable obligation: 'Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!'¹⁴⁷

We see in Acts and in the New Testament letters how the apostles of Christ carried out his commission, going into the world to preach the gospel.¹⁴⁸ The same is true of those who were scattered in the first persecution: they 'went everywhere preaching the word'.¹⁴⁹ The apostles commissioned others to do the same.¹⁵⁰ Timothy, Titus, Silas, and all the unnamed pastors and teachers in every church, were commissioned to preach and teach the whole counsel of God. The church was the pillar and ground of the truth.¹⁵¹ Christ had entrusted to the church the faith once for all delivered to the saints and the gifts to preach it.

The church and its ministers did not seek to transform the culture by direct social action. Paul, for instance, made no attempt to abolish slavery.¹⁵² He taught believing slaves to serve their masters willingly.¹⁵³ He did not ask believers to liberate their slaves. He returned Onesimus to his master, Philemon.¹⁵⁴ The apostles did not seek political change. They simply urged the church to pray for those in authority.¹⁵⁵ This was remarkable, to pray for such as Nero and Felix.¹⁵⁶ What was their prayer? It was that these governing authorities might carry out their God-given task of promoting a just society at peace, which would be conducive to the progress of the gospel.

We can anticipate an objection from history. Are we advocating then that William Wilberforce's campaign against slavery should not have taken place? Of course not. But we are pointing out that Wilberforce was a politician, not a pastor; he was not the church, but a Christian man. It is certainly within the scope of Christian men, especially those who sit in parliament, to work actively for social justice. And then, we have the case of William Carey. In 1803, the brutal Hindu practice of religious murder came to the attention of Lord Wellesley. 'Childless wives were taught to vow to the sacred river [Ganges] that if she would grant them children, they would give one back in solemn sacrifice. In due time many would return mournfully to execute their vow. The doomed infants were pushed down the mud banks, either to drown or to be devoured by crocodiles and sharks.'¹⁵⁷ This is what Carey wrote: 'As teacher in Bengali, I have received an order from the Vice-President to make every possible enquiry into the number, nature and reasons of these murders, and to make a full report to the Government.' Simply notice that Carey was acting under instructions, in his capacity as an employed teacher, not a missionary, and that the action to put a stop to such vile practices was taken by the government, not the church.

Confidence in the Gospel

The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.¹⁵⁸ As long as we believe this, we shall have the courage to devote all our energies to the single task of proclaiming the gospel. The power lies with God and therefore preaching must be preceded, accompanied, and followed by prayer. The preacher is merely a 'clay container' and preaching

appears to be such a weak and ineffective method. But God clothes it with power by his Holy Spirit. He assures us that his Word will not return to him empty, but it will accomplish what he pleases.¹⁵⁹ By using such weak means, God makes it evident that the power is his, and so the glory is his.¹⁶⁰

When preachers come under pressure to show results, to boast of numbers, then they can be tempted to doubt the sufficiency of preaching and to devise new methods to supplement it. The cry goes up, 'We need new and relevant ways of reaching our own age! In our technological age with its wordless communications, who can listen to sermons?'¹⁶¹ However well-intentioned, this amounts to simple disbelief in God's promised blessing upon his chosen means. Moreover, if we allow ourselves to be diverted from preaching to social action, we shall inevitably dilute our devotion to the principal task. This error is seen in its fullest development in liberalism. When a liberal abandons the Word of God, he has nothing left but his own reason; when he abandons the preaching of the Word, he has nothing left but social activism.¹⁶² But the just shall live by faith.¹⁶³ If we see no results, we continue obediently with the work and we wait until it pleases the Lord to give results. Some plant, others water, and others again bring home the harvest. The kingdom of God advances in secret, imperceptibly, and in his own time.

Keller has admitted that the social change agenda is substantial. It can totally absorb a church's energies. It can overwhelm us. Even a very good and commendable project can distract the church from its commission. It can also give the world a wrong view of what to expect from the church. Whenever the church is drawn into a narrow concentration on one issue, it loses its balance and the breadth of the whole counsel of God.

Conclusion

How shall we respond to Keller's doctrine of the church's mission? We must reject it for several reasons:

- (1) He fails to establish his case on the basis of Scripture. This happens because his handling of Scripture is defective. He approaches the text with a predetermined agenda that distorts his interpretation. For example, his interpretation of Christ's mission is skewed from the spiritual and eternal plane to the temporal and social plane.
- (2) He focuses too narrowly on the problem of material poverty and thereby takes away from a concentration on the deeper spiritual plight of man, which is what the church is really to address.
- (3) He has misunderstood the Mosaic Law and has taught an unbiblical concept of wealth redistribution—and that on the basis of texts which actually preserve ownership of property.

(4) He has failed to observe proper distinctions between the spheres of church and state and between the Christian and the church (members and the body). As a result, the dual-track mission that he advocates lacks the authority and wisdom of Christ. It also conceals some real dangers for the church. For example, if the church accepts the second track—of activism in the cause of social justice and so on—it will find itself overburdened. Even modest social tasks can soak up the energies of a congregation. But it will also find its concentration on preaching the gospel and personal witnessing becomes diluted. And when the gospel message is preached, it will be set in an unbalanced framework. It is a concern that some of the actions advocated will lead the church on a collision course with the authorities of the state. At the very least, the church will be teaching the surrounding society to look to it for those things that it has not been called to deliver. Expressing this in the style of elenctic theology (denial, affirmation and distinction), we *deny* that the church has a dual mission; we *affirm* that the Christian should exercise love and mercy in all his relationships; we *distinguish* between the commission given to the body and the commission given to the member; and we *distinguish* between the church's role and the state's.

We therefore encourage the believer to live to the full the Christian life, and to do good to all men, especially those who are of the household of faith. We encourage the church to preach the gospel to every person and to stand before kings with the truth. Its ministers must give themselves to the Word of God and prayer. The most effective means of changing society is indirect—by means of the Word of God and prayer.¹⁶⁴

Endnotes

1. 'Occupy Wall Street' was a protest movement against capitalism, which it regarded as social injustice. See Andy Coghlan and Debora MacKenzie, 'The Hard Core of Power, Global Capitalism', *New Scientist*, 22 October 2011, pp. 8–9.
2. R. B. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), pp. 21–25.
3. It is important to be clear: the protest was not directed at St Paul's or any part of the church. The camp was there simply because that was where the police halted their march. Ironically, when the bailiffs moved in to clear the camp at the end of February 2012, the church expressed regret over the action.
4. We are thankful for the recent appearance of Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011). However, within many parts of the church, the answer has already been given and the course set. K. Deddens and M. K. Drost, *Balance of Ecumenism* (Winnipeg: Premier, 1989) traces the swing to the social gospel in the context of the ecumenical movement. See also Alec R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution* (The Pelican History of the Church, volume 5; London: Penguin, 1961), pp. 246ff.
5. Redeemer Presbyterian Church's website: www.redeemer.com (accessed 16 August 2011).
6. http://mission-net.org/sites/default/files/missional_manifesto_engl._1106.pdf (accessed 14 May 2013).
7. *Center Church*, p. 14.

8. Not that he is the first to do so; see John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (American edition; Downers Grove: IVP, 2008); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret. An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (revised edition; London: SPCK, 1995).
9. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Sereno Dwight, revised Edward Hickman, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974; first published 1834), pp. 163–173; *Generous Justice*, p. 4.
10. *Generous Justice*, pp. 12–13.
11. *Generous Justice*, pp. 114–115.
12. *Generous Justice*, pp. 115–116 (italics mine).
13. Edmund Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), p. 117.
14. DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, pp. 17–20; Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 48.
15. Gen. 14:19.
16. Num. 9:15–23.
17. 2 Sam.5:19; contrast 1 Chr.10:14.
18. Num. 1:50–51; 2 Chron. 26: 18; Heb. 5: 4; cf. Deut. 18: 1–14; Exod. 28: 41; 40: 12–15.
19. 2 Chr. 26:16–21.
20. Rom. 10:14–17.
21. John 14:10; Heb. 5:5; 1:5.
22. John 6:15; Matt. 4:8–10.
23. John 6:38. Compare John 4:34; 5:19.
24. Luke 12:14; cf., 1 Cor. 5:12.
25. Gen. 1:26–28; 2:18–25; Matt. 19:3–9.
26. Gen. 11:1–9; Deut. 32:8.
27. Gen. 3:15. See Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, pp. 36–40.
28. 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22–32; 1 Peter 3:1–7.
29. Ps. 2; 96:10; Isa. 40:21–24; Dan. 2:21; 4:1–37; 5:22–31; 6:25–27; Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:17; Rev. 19:16.
30. Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–5.
31. Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Tim. 2:1–2.
32. WCF 31:5.
33. Neil A. Macleod, ‘Church and State’, in *Hold Fast Your Confession*, ed., D. Macleod (Edinburgh: The Knox Press, 1978), p. 53. Macleod acknowledges his source as James Walker, *Scottish Theology and Theologians*, pp.143–4.
34. Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 3rd edition (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 80–83; C. L. Hamblin, *Fallacies* (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 18–22.
35. John Stott blurs the distinction when he proposes three areas of responsibility for mission: the vocational, the local (church), and the national scene. No sooner does he begin to speak about the local church than he slides from it to the Christian’s personal vocation again. *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, pp. 51–52.
36. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, pp. 126–131.
37. John 1:18; Heb. 1:2–3.
38. In fact, Stott builds his case for the church’s social service substantially upon his interpretation of John 17:18 and 20:21, which is that the Son sends his disciples (all) *in the same*

way and for the same work as the Father sent him, the Son. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, pp.37–40.

39. Clarence Bouwman, *The Overflowing Riches of My God. Revisiting the Belgic Confession* (Winnipeg: Premier, 2008) pp. 390–1.

40. *Generous Justice*, pp. 115ff.

41. *Generous Justice*, p. ix.

42. Luke 4:17–18, quoting Isa. 61:1.

43. Isa. 42:1–7.

44. *Generous Justice*, pp. 3–18.

45. *Generous Justice*, p. 14.

46. Mark 6:16–29.

47. Luke 12:13–15.

48. 2 Sam. 7:12–13; 23:1–7; Ps. 72:2, 4, 12–13.

49. John 18:36.

50. Luke 17:21.

51. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, tr. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993 reprint), vol. 3, pp. 286–7.

52. Luke 13:18–21.

53. Matt. 5:3–5; John 8:34–36; 9:39. See also Eph.4:18; 2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4; 2 Peter 1:9; 1 John 2:11; Rev. 3:17. Note that the term ‘poor’ (Hebrew *‘ānāw*) in Isaiah 61:1 refers to the heart and some have rendered it ‘meek’.

54. John 2:11.

55. 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 6:11; 11:15; 21:27.

56. ‘Passion’ is Keller’s term: *Generous Justice*, p. xiv.

57. *Generous Justice*, p. 11. He quotes Job 29:12–17 and 31:13–28.

58. *Generous Justice*, p. 12.

59. *Generous Justice*, pp. 12–13.

60. Deut. 21:19; 22:15; 25:7; Josh. 20:4; Ruth 4:11; Lam. 5:14.

61. Job 29:7–9, 25.

62. Rom. 13:1–4.

63. Matt. 5:38–42.

64. Prov. 31:8–9.

65. Jer. 22:2–3.

66. *Generous Justice*, p. 19, pp. 41ff.

67. *Generous Justice*, chapter 1. Micah 6: 8; Zech. 7:10–11; Ezek. 18:5, 7–8a.

68. Deut. 10:18–19; Ps. 146:7–9; Jer. 9:23–24.

69. Rom. 2:11–16.

70. For example: Isa. 13–24; Amos 1–2; Jonah; Nahum.

71. Deut. 4:5–7; 1 Kings 10:1–10; Ps. 147:19–20; Rom. 3: 1–2.

72. Deut. 8:28. We must be careful not to think, however, that God’s promises and blessings to Israel were only temporal. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), vol. 1, 2:10–11 reminds us that the promises to Israel were substantially the same as those to the New Testament people of God.

73. Gen. 24:35.

74. Joel Beeke and Ray Pennings, 'Calvin the Revolutionary: Christian Living in a Fallen World', *Calvin, Theologian and Reformer*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Garry J. Williams (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), p. 113.
75. Num. 18:20–28; Deut. 12:6–19; Neh. 10:35–39; 12:44; 13:10–14.
76. Ruth 1:16–17; 2:12.
77. Prov. 13:4; 20:4.
78. Eccles. 5:8.
79. Lev. 26:14ff; Deut. 28:15ff; Joel; Mal. 3:8–12.
80. Amos 4:6–8.
81. Deut. 14:22–29; 26:12–15.
82. Lev. 19:9–10; Deut. 24:19–22.
83. Lev. 25.
84. *Ministries of Mercy. The Call of the Jericho Road*, 2nd ed., pp.80ff also sets out the same thinking; and *Gospel in Life Study Guide*, Session 1, pp. 7–30, shows why Keller places a focus on the city.
85. Matt.10:9–15; Luke 8:1–3; 1 Cor. 9:1–14; 1 Tim. 5:17–18.
86. Acts 6:1–7; 1 Tim. 5:3–16.
87. Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37; 11:27–30; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8–9.
88. Acts 4:34.
89. 1 Tim. 5:3–4, 9–12.
90. Deut. 12:12, 18; 14:27–29; 15:7; 16:11, 14; 17:2, 8; 24:14; 26:12; 31:12; Ps. 147:13; Isa. 60:18.
91. *Generous Justice*, p. 4.
92. They have 'sojourner' (ESV), 'stranger' (KJV, NASB), 'alien' (NKJV, NAB, NRSV), and 'foreigner' (NIV).
93. 3 John 1:5–8.
94. Heb. 13:1–3; Matt. 25:41–46.
95. Deut. 23:19–20.
96. Deut. 15:1–4.
97. *Generous Justice*, p. 21.
98. *Generous Justice*, p. 28, quoting Craig Blomberg.
99. *Generous Justice*, p. 29.
100. Num. 36:7.
101. 1 Kings 21.
102. Lev. 25:42.
103. Isa. 5:8.
104. Acts 5:4.
105. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, p. 151.
106. WCF 26:3.
107. Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), p. 323.
108. Rom. 13:6; 1 Sam. 8:11–18.
109. *Generous Justice*, pp. 16–17.
110. 2 Cor. 8:8.

111. Deut. 15:14; Prov. 11:25; 22: 9; Eccles. 11:1–2; Rom. 12:8, 13; 1 Cor.16:2–3; 2 Cor. 9:13.
112. James 2:15–17; 1 John 3:16–19.
113. Gal. 6:10.
114. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, p.150. Johannes G. Vos, *The Westminster Larger Catechism. A Commentary*, ed., G. I. Williamson (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2002, originally 1946–49), pp. 378–380.
115. Matt. 13:8, 23; 19:28.
116. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, pp.36–40.
117. I, p. 135.
118. Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Tim. 5:17–25.
119. Acts 20:28.
120. 1 Peter 5:1–3.
121. 1 Cor. 5:12.
122. *Generous Justice*, p. 145. James E. McGoldrick, *Abraham Kuyper, God's Renaissance Man* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2000), pp. 158ff.
123. *Generous Justice*, pp. 145–6.
124. *Center Church*, p. 274.
125. Keller, *Center Church*, p. 175.
126. The G8 consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom and United States of America (with the European Union also represented). +5 refers to the five largest emerging economies: Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.
127. Matt. 6:32; Luke 12:30.
128. *Generous Justice*, p. 44.
129. *Generous Justice*, pp. 185–6.
130. Sexism was not the issue in John 4:27 and racism was not the issue in Luke 10:26ff. It is highly debatable that we should use the term sexism at all. Jesus agreed with male headship and was not speaking with her to lift her social position but to lead her, a sinner, into everlasting life. On several occasions, he also affirmed racial barriers: John 4:22; Matt.15:21–28. Jesus' earthly ministry took place before the point in history when the message of salvation was sent throughout the world (Acts 1–2). Modern racism is to be rejected in the church on the grounds of Christian love.
131. 1 Tim. 1:15; Matt. 9:13.
132. John 1:1–3, 9–11; Heb. 2:10–18.
133. 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:1–11; Luke 9:58.
134. Luke 7:36; 14:1.
135. In that sense, with the perpetrators of injustice rather than the victims of it.
136. In fact, the distortion does not stop with the crucifixion. The same error is encountered in Keller's comment about the day of Pentecost: 'At Pentecost the first gospel preaching was in every language, showing that no one culture is *the* 'right' culture' (*Generous Justice*, p. 122). This is not at all what Pentecost shows. It is the signal of the gospel being sent out to the nations.
137. *Generous Justice*, p. 177: 'when we concentrate on and meet the needs of the poor'.
138. 'All authority', Matt. 28:18–20; 'declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness', Rom. 1:4; Ps. 110; Rev. 5.

139. Mark 16:15. DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?* p. 47, omit this text on the basis of textual criticism; but it has been retained in the main English versions and defended by Dean John William Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark Vindicated Against Recent Critical Objections & Established* (Oxford & London: James Parker, 1871).
140. Matt. 28:18–20.
141. Luke 24:48–49; Acts 1:7–8.
142. John 20:21–23; 21:1–19. The narrative of John 21:1–14 no doubt was another reminder of Christ’s deity, but also of his preaching and his call to them to be fishers of men: Matt. 4:17–20; Luke 5:1–11.
143. Acts 9:15; 26:16–18.
144. 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11.
145. Rom. 1:1, 15–17; 1 Cor. 1:17. This must be read in context: Paul did baptize, but he is rejecting the idea that he is gathering *his own* pupils. This verse illustrates his single-minded attention to the gospel.
146. Gal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; Acts 11:27–30; Rom. 15:25–27.
147. 1 Cor. 9:16.
148. Matt. 24:14.
149. Acts 8:4.
150. Eph. 4:7–16; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:1–3; 3:14–17; 4:1–5; Titus 1:9.
151. 1 Tim. 3:15; Jude 1:3; 1 John 2:21; 2 Peter 3:15–18. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, pp. 102–108, speaks of the church as conveyor, custodian, interpreter and proclaimer of the truth, and in pp. 126–131 speaks of the universal office of believers before dealing with the special offices.
152. 1 Cor. 7:20–21.
153. Eph. 6:5–9; Col. 3:22–25.
154. Philem. 1: 12.
155. 1 Tim. 2:1–5. See also Rom.13:1–7 and 1 Peter 2:11–17; 3:13–17; 4:12–19.
156. E.g., Acts 18:12–17; 24:27.
157. S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: Wakeman, 1993), p. 212.
158. Rom. 1:16–17.
159. Isa. 55:10–11.
160. 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 1:18–4:21.
161. This is an issue very much to the fore in the International Conference of Reformed Churches and also among the European members of that conference, the EuCRC.
162. Keller recognizes this: *Generous Justice*, pp. xii–xiii.
163. Hab. 2:4.
164. In a world that feels the curse, Jesus Christ is the source of all blessing (Gen. 3:14–19), the seed of promise in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. 22:18). He is the one who was made a curse so that we who believe might receive the blessing promised to Abraham (Gal. 3:13–14). By his blood, all the sins of his people are forgiven (Heb. 8–10). He is the beloved Son in whom God is well-pleased, and whose obedience merits all blessing (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Rom. 5:12–21). It is in Christ that God has blessed his people with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3–14). He did not come to redistribute material wealth, but to grant us eternal treasure in heaven that defies valuation.