Twitter Thread by Stephen Wolfe



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Thread:
I'm thinking about Tim Keller's influence.

There is the curious fact that Keller is well-regarded among the culture elite (or at least has not suffered the sort of vilification one might expect given his influence). How can we explain this?

Looking at Prodigal God and other writings, you see that his approach to urban ministry is deeply political in a way that appeals to Democrat-heavy cities. It involves two moves:

1) equalizing sins: elevating the sin of hypocrisy, "moralism," and "religion" (the sins of "conservatives") and equating these with the sins tolerated among liberal (e.g., homosexuality)
&
2) emphasizing "self-righteousness" as a sort of chief sin (the sin of "red states").

Keller effectively downplays the sins that liberals tolerate while elevating the sins of their political enemies, the red state conservatives.

But the greatest appeal to liberals is that critiquing the "self-righteous" vilifies political action, particularly the action of social conservatives (e.g., anti-gay marriage). And the equalization of sins eases concerns over changes in social policy (e.g., gay marriage).

Keller does not deny that the liberal sins are sins. Instead he posits a third-way that critiques both "right" and "left", which allows people to be above the sexual deviancy and above the hypocrisy.

But the equalization/elevation described above still appeals to those who are unwilling to directly confront and wholly reject the liberal zeitgeist which dominates urban areas.

It effectively neutralizes conservative political opposition to the zeitgeist on social issues.

His ministry theme or ethos has been very influential in every region of the US. It is captured in the language of

"brokenness" and the "church is for messy people".

Now that equalizing homosexuality and self-righteousness is no longer effective (bc people are unwilling to call homosexuality something deviant or sinful), they've switched to race...

The emphasis on "racial justice" follows the same program: the "self-righteous" conservatives (whites) refuse to reflect on their complicity in injustice, while we (white) liberals rightfully want racial justice but tend to be too "secular" about it.

One thing to notice is that this political posture is not fundamentally political; it is an urban ministry apologetic. But it has become the dominating political theology of elite evangelicalism.

Evangelical elite political theology is ultimately an apologetical approach that appeals to urban liberals by demonizing non-urban conservative Christians.

And it strongly suggests that the elite evangelical program of "moral witness" is oriented toward the sensibilities of educated, white urbanite liberals, and that it relies on the vilification of non-educated white, non-urbanite conservatives.
[End]