

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

SEPTEMBER 2003

ONE COMPLEX SOLUTION

BY TIM KELLER

We should admit that Christians often do respond moralistically—and therefore, simplistically—to the problems of life

Theater critics love complexity and ambiguity. Recently in the *New York Times* a critic reviewed a theater work that had what he called “an evangelical Christian bent.” He thought it was “a terrible play” because “it presumes that life’s problems have one unambiguous solution.” Instead the critic “prefers theater that probes the complexities of conflict.” This reminded me of another recent piece in the *Times* written when the long-running musical *Les Misérables* finally closed. The article called ‘Les Miz’ “sappy” because it “evokes a

world we have lost, when life was...morally starker...[It] allows us to rage at the villain and bawl for the victims; it purges all the ambiguities and uncertainties of contemporary life.”

I don’t want to defend these particular theatrical works nor evaluate whether they give us characters or caricatures. I’d like instead to briefly reflect on the premise being used by the reviewers, namely, that Christianity is a ‘pat’ or simplistic answer to the problems and uncertainties of life. How do we respond to that common criticism?

First, we should admit that Christians often do respond moralistically—and therefore, simplistically—to the problems of life. Around Redeemer we contrast this with the gospel approach. Moralism is a relationship with God based on the assumption: “I obey God, therefore I am accepted,” while the gospel is a relationship with God based on the assumption: “I am accepted through Christ, therefore I obey.”

The human heart even after conversion continues to operate on the moralistic principle as its

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HOPE FOR NEW YORK VOLUNTEER FAIR

The ways to get involved are too numerous to mention

Hope for New York will hold its biannual Volunteer Fair on Sunday, September 28th after all Redeemer worship services. This is your chance to meet the directors and volunteers from our ministry partners face-to-face. Discover how you can use your talents in mentoring children. Express your artistic side in healing fellowship with emotionally struggling individuals. Participate in a building project that provides housing to low income families or get involved in a local renovation project at a church or ministry. Serve homeless men and women, or encourage teen mothers or those living with HIV and AIDS. The ways to get involved are too numerous to mention

here, but you can meet all our partners at the volunteer fair! There are both individual and group opportunities. You can make a one-time, short-term or long-term commitment.

In addition, we continue to conduct volunteer training orientations on Friday afternoons, from 12:00PM to 12:45PM in our midtown office located at 271 Madison Avenue between 39th and 40th Streets, suite 902. Feel free to bring your lunch. If you are unable to attend a midweek orientation, you may attend our Sunday class held the third Sunday of every month at the Hunter College West building on the 5th floor, room 505 from 1:00PM to 1:45PM. To register

for our midweek or Sunday orientations, please contact Joe Ricci at joe@hfn.org or call (212) 808-4460 x114

Hope for New York sends out an email at the end of the month with information about upcoming special events, one-time and group opportunities, new projects and special needs. We promise, only one email a month! To sign up for our monthly email update, please send an email to: monthlyupdate@hfn.org and put “subscribe” in the subject line.

It is our privilege to partner with you to build a great city with our words and our work. Please plan on visiting us on Sunday, September 28th or at an upcoming orientation.



REDEEMER SCHOOL OF GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS

FORMERLY SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

BY JOHN LIN

New Time:

Beginning on September 21, Foundations classes will be offered on the 5th Floor of the West Building of Hunter College at 12:45PM, immediately after the 11:15AM East Side Service. Additionally, food and light refreshments will be offered for those attending classes.

New Location:

On November 9, classes will begin at the YMCA next door to the Ethical Cultural Society (64th and CPW) immediately after the West Side Morning Service. Time TBA.

New Series:

In an effort to broaden the scope of learning at Redeemer, special series will be offered through the School of Gospel Foundations.

Gospel & Life

Discipleship Classes:

As part of the year-long Gospel & Life Discipleship Curriculum, classes will be offered throughout the year in the following areas: Old Testament Overview, New

Testament Overview, Christian World and Life View, Christian Living, Introduction to Theology, and Introduction to Christian Ethics. These classes are designed to be a part of Redeemer's new multi-faceted discipleship initiative.

Origins:

Sunday Seminar Series

Academy of Christian Thought (ACT) will provide 3 lectures by the Director of ACT, Ron Choong. The Origins lecture

series will consider the relationship between scientific inference and theological reflection. The lectures will be held on the 5th Floor of the West Building of Hunter College at 12:45PM.

Oct. 5: *Origin of the Universe.* What is the origin of the universe?

Nov. 9: *Origin of Life.* How did living things arise?

Dec. 7: *Origin of Humanity.* Is the human being unique?

Sunday Classes Offered This Fall:

A fuller description of all classes will be available in our brochure in early September. Class offerings and details may be subject to change.

EAST SIDE: Cycle 1 (September 21 – October 26)

Old Testament Overview (part of the Gospel & Life Discipleship Series). Introduces the thought, literature, framework, and theology of the Old Testament. Instructor: John Lin.

Cultural Renewal Consider how your life and work affects the culture and society around you. Instructors: Center for Faith and Work.

Compassion without Limit Consider the call to serve the poor and oppressed through compassion and mercy. Instructors: Glen Kleinknecht and others.

The Journey of Marriage Study with "veterans" of marriage to explore biblical teaching and skills for marriage. Instructor: Ed Morgan and others.

STEWARDSHIP CORNER — DAVID BISGROVE

Each Fall the Directors, Elders, and Trustees begin the process of putting together the Operating Budget for the following year. To help you see a summary of savings achieved through some of the changes made over the last year, see chart below. We hope this demonstrates our commitment to good stewardship of the resources God has given us for his work in New York City. Please note that these are estimates and

New Cost Savings	Total Per Year
Office Volunteers @ 10 hours/week	\$4000
Large Print Bulletins In-house	\$7000
Emailing Newsletters vs. Regular Mail	\$5000
Stationary: Wholesale Price	\$25,000
Postage: non-profit rate	\$20,000
Print Materials	\$10,000
Total Projected Savings	\$71,000

are savings achieved over a 12-month period.

Resources for Stewardship are available on our website, www.redeemer.com and include a 20 Day Devotional Guide, Tim Keller Sermons, FG Study and Video reflections on Stewardship. Please remember that every year Redeemer relies on strong generosity from its members and friends during the last four months.

In the remainder of 2003, we need approximately

\$2.1M from September to December, which is an average of \$123,000/week. Prayerfully consider how you can contribute to the ongoing mission of Redeemer. If you have any questions, please contact david@redeemer.com.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Fred Lietke
Rebecca Lock

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
EAST 69TH (BETWEEN PARK & LEXINGTON)
services at 9:30AM • 11:15AM • 5:45PM

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
CORNER OF WEST 79th & BROADWAY
service at 7:00PM

VOCATION-BASED GROUPS FALL KICKOFFS

If you're new to Redeemer you might not know that we're developing community groups around common vocations or professions. Last spring we launched groups for writers, educators, those in the legal profession, and those in financial services. The leadership teams of these groups have met through the summer and are eager to get going again this fall. Each has planned a September reception to kick off the season, and in particular to welcome newcomers to NYC and Redeemer.

If you would like to be part of a team that launches a group for others in your profession, please contact **Katherine Leary**, Director at Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work, **(212) 808-4460 x132** or **kleary@redeemer.com**

Financial Services Reception

"Welcome to the Jungle"

Light refreshments and a panel discussion. Time to reconnect.

Sept 7 from 11:30AM to 1:00PM Hunter North C02

A chance to encourage newcomers and set agendas for the year ahead. RSVP to **redeemerfinance@yahoo.com**

Rooftop Writers Reception

Food, fellowship, and fantastic views

All serious writers are welcome. Space limited.

Sept 21 from 3:00 to 6:00PM

RSVP for location details to **writers@redeemer.com**

Legal Professional Reception

Refreshments and social

Sept 28, afternoon

RSVP to **law@redeemer.com**

Educators Fall Kickoff Reception

Refreshments and panel

Sept 7 from 12:30 to 2:00PM, Hunter West Rm 507

RSVP to **educators@redeemer.com**

PROFESSIONAL SPACE PLANNER VOLUNTEER NEEDED

Redeemer is in the process of considering a new lease for office space at a better price in a new location. Our current lease expires in 2004 and we are exploring various options available to us. In relation to this, we are looking for volunteers with professional Space Planning experience (specifically relating to commercial space) to help us evaluate and prepare for our new space. If you are a professional space planner, and would like to volunteer to help Redeemer with the various stages of this project, please call: **Kevin Kirn (212) 875-0060** or email him at: **kevinmkirn@hotmail.com**

TONY HINCHLIFF INSTALLED AS MISSION PASTOR IN HOBOKEN CHURCH

Tony's story began like so many from Redeemer's first years. He was a seeker coming for the first time in November of 1991 who was converted by the power of the gospel three months later. Princeton Seminary and seven years later, Tony was ordained as a minister of that same gospel. Now Tony has accepted the call to the pulpit of our daughter church plant in Hoboken. Tony has served on the RPC staff since June of 1997. He has been an Assistant Pastor and Fellowship Group Director, working with West Side groups and more recently developing the church planting vision among groups in Brooklyn and throughout the area. He also led the CPR monthly prayer service for many years. While we are sad to see him move on, he is a vital part of Redeemer's mission to plant churches throughout the area.

HAVE YOU UPDATED YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE?

The August 31st deadline for updating your personal information on the Redeemer database has come and gone. If you have not updated your personal record but have intended to do so, please go to **www.redeemer.com** and update your information today. Anyone who has not yet updated their profile will receive a "last chance" letter in September with your User ID and password. If you do not update your info (either with the paper form or online at the website) by the deadline listed in this letter, you will be placed on the inactive list at the end of 2003 and may not receive future mailings from Redeemer after December 31st. Anyone who is moved to the inactive list in our database can be reactivated by updating their record or submitting a new record at any time in the future. If you have questions, please call the church office: **(212) 808-4460** or email: **feedback@redeemer.com**



ONE COMPLEX SOLUTION CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE

'default' mode. This leads to severe, continuing problems in the life of Christians and the church. One of them is a simplistic division of the world into "good people" who believe and obey God and "evil people" who do not. It also leads to a simplistic way of engaging the culture around us. When you don't deeply grasp the gospel of grace, you tend toward a Pharisaical obsession with ritual purity and cleanness. You want to create rules even where there are none given by the Bible in an effort to assure yourself that you are 'clean' and therefore acceptable.

Second, however, we should point out that there is an opposite error. Surely it is a just as pat an answer to say "there are no answers!" It is simplistic to say "everything is just so complex." The motivation for that kind of simplisticness can be intellectual laziness—we don't want to have to carefully weigh the competing claims and come to any conclusions. Or the motivation may be moral cowardice—we don't want to have to take a stand. The default mode of our contemporary culture is "there are no answers to the big questions of life's purpose nor any way to

make judgments about truth so you have to accept me." But to say "no one can know the truth" is a truth—and why should we believe that? Certainly that is every bit as much of a simple, faith-pronouncement as "Jesus saves!"

The premise of the reviewers seems to contain the logical fallacy of the 'excluded middle.' This is a form of reasoning that assumes that there are only two opposite positions when there is actually a third way to go. Instead of a 'one simple solution' or 'unending complexity' why couldn't there be one complex solution?

The Christian gospel in many ways provides the most complex possible answer to the question about the problems of life. Christians are accepted by God not on the basis of their work but Christ's work. That means that the believing Christian is at the same moment *simul iustus et peccator*—simultaneously justified yet sinful. So Christians have the confidence of knowing that they are fully loved but also the deeply humbling knowledge that they are not a whit more morally deserving than those who don't believe. What could be more complex than that?

Not only so, but Jesus tells us that this kingdom power which is coming into the world to renew all creation is partially here but not fully present—"already, but not yet." So Christians can work to heal the brokenness and injustice of the world with infinite hope about the future but without any utopian dreams and expectations for the present moment. What could be more complex than that?

Further, the Bible tells us that despite the sinfulness of the world, God's 'common grace' operates widely, giving wisdom, insight, and love to all sorts of people. So we know that the artistic works of Christian believers are done by sinners and therefore can be full of flaws, and also that the artistic works of non-believers are done by persons in the image of God and therefore can be full of wisdom and grace. Reviewers of theatrical works who have a gospel vision would be far less dismissive of works than either moralistic or secular critics. What could be more complex than that?

The gospel reveals that life is complex, but there is still a solution! Jesus Christ is the one complex solution to the problems of life.