

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

MAY 2009

SCOFFERS, SCORNERS, AND SNARK

BY TIM KELLER

The *New Yorker* film critic David Denby recently wrote a book called *Snark*. He observed that a tone of snide, mocking, 'nasty and knowing,' speaking was coming to dominate our public discourse. 'Snark' aims not just at refuting someone's position, but also at destroying their 'cool,' erasing their effectiveness, trying to get control of and sully the person's image with the public. Opposing views are not treated with respect but instead with snarling disdain and *ad hominem* mockery. Even many regular editorial writers in major newspaper do little more than ridicule. Denby pointed out that politics has been a major

source of snark, since insinuating, insulting, and demonizing the opposition (rather than respectful arguments) often wins elections. But the Internet has put 'snark' on steroids.

Recently I have been reading through Proverbs and was struck by a particular character that shows up about 17 times. In the NIV translation he's called the 'mocker,' in the King James Version the 'scorner' and in many others 'the scoffer.' The scoffers' behavior has two characteristics. First, he or she is marked by dogmatism, a closed mind. The scoffer never says, 'Well, I might be wrong here' or 'I was wrong here.' The scoffer is always right

(13:1). There is never a humble openness to change. In a striking phrase 20:1 tells us that the scoffer is no more open to reason than a hopelessly drunk person.

Second, scoffers show no respect for opponents or opposing points of view. They do not simply refute them; they belittle, insult, and mock them (9:7-8.) There is always a tone of contempt and disdain. Together dogmatism and contemptuous derision comprise the spiritual condition of 'scoffer.'

According to Proverbs, these two characteristics do not stem from a lack of intelligence.

(Continued on page 4)

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: MAY 17, 12:15PM

The Congregation of Redeemer Presbyterian Church of New York City will meet for the following purposes:

- 1.) Election of Officers
- 2.) Financial Report
- 3.) Update of the '05-'08 Vision Campaign (which will include an update on the W83 building)

Please note that the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America does not permit proxy voting. No other business will be conducted. *Childcare will be provided.



INSIDE:

- A REASON FOR HOPE
- CENTER FOR FAITH & WORK MAY 2009 EVENTS
- HFNY EASTER OFFERING
- STEWARDSHIP CORNER
- SERMON STORE SPOTLIGHT
- SCOFFERS, SCORNERS & SNARK... CONT'D

A REASON FOR HOPE

BY DAVID KIM, KATHERINE LEARY

Has hope been missing from your conversations and thoughts? Many of us have been watching helplessly as the markets and our financial net worth slide south, politicians scramble to cope, and acts of malfeasance flash across news screens. Seeking “*A Reason for Hope*,” 150 people congregated at the 2009 Entrepreneurship Forum on Saturday, April 4 around that theme, based on Hebrews 10:23–24, to “*hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*” The Forum is the fourth annual gathering of those committed to a vision of faithful, gospel entrepreneurship in all areas of marketplace and cultural renewal.

The Forum gathers thought

leaders, entrepreneurs, consultants, and investors to collaborate on supporting innovative entrepreneurship within the church body. As word has spread over the past three years,



Anna Corpron and Sean AuYeung of Working Proof

attendance has doubled. This year attracted 50 out of town “investors” representing 11 states and 1 Canadian province, who came to learn more about Redeemer’s Entrepreneurship

Initiative with the hope of creating some version of it in their home churches. We expect future Forums to bring together gospel-centered entrepreneurs and investors from churches around the globe.

This year, the Forum’s speakers included: Andy Crouch, author of *Culture Making*, who drew our focus to Eden as the first entrepreneurial incubator, with an abundance of resources, risk-taking humans, and the mandate to create culture. Steve Bell, our keynote speaker, founded Pacific Crest Industries, a custom cabinet manufacturing company. Their tagline is “a company with a conscience” and their mission is to honor God through delivering high quality products.

HOPE FOR NEW YORK EASTER OFFERING

On behalf of its affiliates that serve New York City’s poor and marginalized, Hope for New York would like to thank all of those who gave sacrificially on Easter Sunday. The funds will be used as direct grants to affiliates to

sustain programs and expand services. This year HFNY will also distribute emergency grants to affiliates who provide basic services such as food and shelter and who are experiencing critical shortfalls. If you were unable to give on Easter

Sunday but would still like to participate in the sacrificial offering, please visit www.hfny.org for further information on how to give. Again, our deepest thanks to all of you on behalf of all of those we serve.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 10:30AM • 6:00PM

ETHICAL CULTURE
West 64TH and CPW
service at 9:15AM

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Corner of West 79TH and Broadway
service at 5:00PM & 7:15PM

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

OFFICE • 1359 BROADWAY (BETWEEN W. 36/37TH STREETS) • FOURTH FLOOR • NY, NY 10018-7102
(212) 808-4460 (PHONE) (212) 808-4465 (FAX) www.redeemer.com

CENTER FOR FAITH AND WORK MAY 2009 EVENTS

DATE & TIME	EVENT & LOCATION
Sat., May 2, at 6:00PM	Filmmakers Group, Redeemer Offices
Thurs., May 7, at 7:00PM	Law Dinner, Redeemer Offices
Fri., May 7, at 7:00PM	InterArts Fellowship, Redeemer Offices
Sun., May 10, at 6:30PM	Healthcare Dinner, First Baptist Church (meet at back left of sanctuary)
Mon., May 11, at 7:00PM	Dancers Group, Location TBA
Wed., May 13, at 7:00PM	Business Group welcomes Bill Pollard, Redeemer Office
Wed., May 13, at 7:00PM	PhD Students Group, Redeemer Offices
Sun., May 17, at 12:00PM	Health Care Lunch, meet in lobby of Hunter College Auditorium
Mon., May 18, at 7:00PM	Entrepreneurs Fellowship, Redeemer Office
Tues., May 19, at 7:00PM	The A.D. Agency, Cooley Studio
Wed., May 20, at 7:00PM	Writers Group, Redeemer Offices
Thurs., May 21, at 8:00AM	Legal Fellowship Breakfast, Redeemer Offices
Fri., May 22, at 7:30PM	Higher Ed Group, email dmugglin@poly.edu for location
Tues., May 26, at 7:00PM	Actors Group, Ripley Grier Studios, 520 8th Ave.
Wed., May 27, at 7:00PM	Financial Services Ministry, Redeemer Offices
Wed., May 27, at 7:00PM	The Best in New Fiction Book Group, Redeemer Offices

If no location is cited, please check the website at www.faithandwork.org

WE CONGRATULATE THE 2009 BUSINESS PLAN WINNERS

In the For-Profit category:

Tegu (Will and Chris Haughey), a locally-headquartered prospective toy manufacturer with a social enterprise mission of bringing entrepreneurialism and hope to Honduras by establishing manufacturing operations in that country and through selling the toy products in the U.S.

In the Arts Venture category:

The Working Proof (Sean Au Yeung and Anna Corpron) will be an online platform connecting artists with design-driven buyers to build community and encourage charitable giving.

In the Not-for-Profit category:

Alphabet Scoop (Juliet Vedral), a lower east side ice cream shop offering artisanal ice cream and beverages while employing and mentoring at-risk youth.

Proverbs speaks of the ‘simple’ or the gullible person, those who ‘lack sense’ because of their lazy thoughtlessness. But scoffers are not intellectually lazy (14:6), indeed they are often sharp witted, and may have been seduced into this mode by their very mental acuity. Their condition is not due to their mental *capacity*, but to their mental *attitude*, especially their attitude toward themselves and therefore toward God.

First, this attitude is marked by pride (21:24.) The Hebrew word for pride used of the scoffer is a word that means ‘people who must have things their own way, who have a need to control and correct everyone.’ Second, scoffers are, under their veneer of confidence, filled with anger (9:8, 15:25.) They never act like they take their opponents seriously, but underneath there is great insecurity. In some cases there may be a root of bitterness. They may have been wronged in some significant way, and, rather than letting God be judge (Romans 12:17-21) they have taken matters into their own hands. But in many other cases, the scoffers are simply lacking the combination of humility and inner peace that a firm grasp of the gospel brings.

Who are the ‘scoffers’ and ‘mockers’ of our day? On the one hand, there are those who consciously or unconsciously have adopted Nietzsche’s exhortation to ‘do philosophy with a hammer.’ They consider all truth-claims to actually be

efforts to gain power. They feel the need to de-bunk and tear down almost anyone who has a serious proposal for how people should live. They laugh and mock anyone who has the podium.

Secondly, there are ideologues. Ideologues are not such not because of the policies or positions they espouse, but because of the way they demonize and ridicule all opponents to their position, and because they never admit any downsides or dangers to their policies. In this they are the classic ‘scorners’ the Bible warns about. Ideologues, then, are not necessarily extremists at all. They can exist anywhere along the spectrum of opinion, even at the center.

Among orthodox Christians there are many people and churches that issue warnings against unbelief and error. Indeed this often needs to be done, and Proverbs 26:28 says that a ‘flattering tongue,’ unwilling to criticize those in power, is destructive to the church. But many believers, even when they flag teaching and practices that should be identified, do it with the attitude of the scoffer in the book of Proverbs. In response to this charge, some of them point out that some Biblical speakers and writers used sarcasm. That is true—you can see it in Elijah’s debate with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, or especially in Paul’s critique of his critics in 2 Corinthians 10-13. Sarcasm and irony can be effective ways to drive a point

home, but derision and contempt cannot be the settled, main way that sinners talk to other sinners.

Paul described his communication approach among the Corinthians. He says, ‘*I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom...I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.*’ (1 Corinthians 2:1,3.) These two phrases ‘eloquence’ and ‘superior wisdom’ referred to practices that often marked public orators in Greco-Roman culture. Anthony Thiselton, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, defines them. First, there was ‘verbal bullying’, using force of personality, witty and cutting disdain, and super-confident demagoguery to beat the listeners into wanting to be on the speaker’s side. Second, there was applause-generating, consumer-oriented rhetoric, playing to a crowd’s prejudices, pride, and fears. Though they were effective in his culture (and ours!) for garnering popular support, Paul refused these rhetorical strategies, both of which were practices of the scoffer or mocker.

According to Proverbs, what happens to the scoffer, the man or woman who always has to be right, who derides rather than engages opposing views? Proverbs says that the first result is loneliness (9:12). Scoffers impress the impressionable if they are allowed to hold forth (19:25; 21:11) but as time goes on, the scoffer not only destroys relationships but
(Continued on page 5)

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Counting re-committed campaign gifts through the end of 2009, we will be at 93.5% fulfillment. This is considered a very good fulfillment rate. *The Operating Budget, however, needs our attention.* If you are in financial distress, remember that we have the Diaconate, Counseling Services, and our Generosity & Stewardship classes to serve you. If you are giving from each paycheck, thank you for your faithfulness.

If you are figuring out how to start giving or increase it, let us encourage you: the writer of Hebrews calls attention to the nature of faith and also to

Abel's offering in Genesis 4. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Abel was said to have made a "better sacrifice" (v. 4) because, by faith, he believed that God would provide him with more after he made his gift. Abel gave from his first-fruits. Ultimately, this points us to the Cross: God gave us his "first-fruits" when he came as Jesus, his "only begotten son," incarnating himself into the world to be a sacrifice for us, the best sacrifice of all (Cf. Heb. 12:24). Having been granted eternal life through this sacrifice, we

can give completely of ourselves and our possessions out of trust and love.

Gifts as of April 19, 2009:

For the Operating Budget:

- \$2.824M received YTD
- 11% behind the budget
- 14% behind 2008 giving

For the Vision Campaign:

- \$17.577M received in total
- 91% of \$19.2M pledged.

<https://giving.redeemer.com/> has a current-week snapshot of YTD giving, and also is where you can make an online gift.

REDEEMER SERMON STORE SPOTLIGHT ON CLASSIC REDEEMER SERMON SERIES:

The Book of Acts (from 1995)

The book of Acts chronicles the earliest days of the Christian faith, depicting the amazing impact the gospel had on the lives of the people who first received it. Tim Keller takes us through the early chapters of Acts, highlighting the new forces and ways of thinking that shook the lives of the first Christians. In seeing how the gospel re-wove the fabric of their society, we can better understand how it can re-weave the fabric of ours as well.

Receive a 50% discount when purchasing the entire series in MP3 format during the month of May, at sermons.redeemer.com.

SCOFFERS, SCORNERS AND SNARK (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

is listened to less and less by the public (24:9.) Often the scorner has valid points, but because of his or her dogmatic and proud attitude, no peace is possible inside a community. This is because scoffers don't know how to affirm and live in

harmony with people who don't agree with them on everything. The problem is, as Kidner says, *'the mischief he does is not the random mischief of the ordinary fool, but the deeper damage of the 'debunker'...*' (Kidner, p.42) Therefore, mockers may

be actually driven out of some communities. (22:10.)

But by far the most terrible and just result of scoffing is a divine taste of their own medicine. *"He [the Lord] scorneth the scornful; but he gives grace to the lowly."* (Prov 3:34, KJV)



1359 BROADWAY
4TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10018

NON PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK NY
PERMIT # 349