

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

APRIL 2010

AUTHORITY

BY TIM KELLER

The root idea of modernity is the overturning of all authority outside of the self. In the 18th century European ‘Enlightenment’ thinkers insisted that the modern person must question all tradition, revelation, and external authority by subjecting them to the supreme court of his or her own reason and intuition. We are our own moral authority.

In spite of this tectonic philosophical shift, modern society nonetheless continued to be dominated by relatively stable institutions for a long time. People still were able to root their identities to a great degree in family and clan, in local civic communities, and

in their work or vocation. All that seems now to be passing because of the ‘acid’ of the modern principle, namely that individual happiness must come before anything else. Marriage and family, workplace and career, neighborhood and civic community—none of these institutions now remain stable long enough for individuals to depend on them.

People live increasingly fragmented lives, no longer thinking of themselves in terms of basic roles in communities (“Christian, father, lawyer.”) Instead, their identity constantly shape-shifts as they move through a series of life episodes that are not tightly connected

to each other. They are always ready to change direction and abandon commitments and loyalties without qualms and to pursue, on a personal cost-benefit basis, the best opportunity available to them.

The thread that ties all this together is the inconceivability of a moral order with an authority more fundamental than one’s own experience. Sociologist Christian Smith has written a book called *Souls in Transition* which profiles the beliefs of young adults under the age of 25. He finds that most of them believe it is the *choice* of their beliefs that make them true, not their truth that

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HOPE FOR NEW YORK EASTER SACRIFICIAL OFFERING: SUNDAY, APRIL 4

Don’t forget to pray and prepare for the special offering taken on Easter Sunday at all services for Hope for New York’s work among the poor and marginalized.

See the article on *Motivation for Generosity* and consider how God may want you to sacrifice joyfully so that others may be cared for.

Please prayerfully consider your sacrificial gift this Easter. You may also donate online at www.hfnny.org/donate or you may mail a donation to Hope for New York, 1359 Broadway, Suite 410, NY, NY 10018 (check payable to “Hope for New York.”)



EASTER HOLY WEEK 2010 AT REDEEMER

Thursday, April 1 – Mark’s Gospel

Prepare for Easter with a lively, vivid retelling of the story of Jesus.

Solo performance by Max McLean.

7:00PM at Ethical Culture Society, 64th St. & Central Park West

No admission charge

Thursday, April 1 – New Birth Portrait Series

Explore the meaning of Easter with a friend by coming to see these portraits of New Yorkers’ new birth. Two new portraits will be included in the series.

Thursday ONLY, there will be a short talk about the Resurrection.

7:00PM to 10:00PM at Happy Monkey Studio 348 W. 36th St., Ground Floor

No admission charge

Friday, April 2 – New Birth Portrait Series

12:00PM to 4:00PM and 7:00PM to 10:00PM (See details at April 1 above.)

Friday, April 2 – Good Friday Services

East Side: 5:30PM & 7:00PM at All Souls Unitarian Church, 80th St. & Lexington Ave.

West Side: 5:30PM & 7:00PM at First Baptist Church, 79th St. & Broadway

We will have limited childcare through age 4 at all services. To inquire, please email bethany.griffith@redeemer.com with your service preference and age of child(ren).

Arrive early as these services are generally full.

Saturday, April 3 – New Birth Portrait Series

12:00PM to 4:00PM (See details at April 1 above.)

Sunday, April 4 – Easter Sunday Services

Note special worship schedule this Sunday only

9:00AM at Ethical Culture Society, 64th St. & Central Park West

9:45AM & 11:30AM at Hunter College Auditorium, 69th St. & Park Ave.

5:00PM & 7:15PM at First Baptist Church, 79th St. & Broadway

6:00PM at Hunter College Auditorium, 69th St. & Park Ave.

Further details about Holy Week events and services available at www.redeemer.com

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller

Heather Klein

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 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

WHAT IS THE MOTIVATION FOR GENEROSITY?

BY HOWARD FREEMAN, DIRECTOR OF GENEROSITY

The following is excerpted from a great resource called the Park Forum (theparkforum.org/), led by a congregant, and I thought it captured beautifully the generosity we see in the Cross. (Full post, called "Donor Motivations," at theparkforum.wordpress.com/2010/03/09/morning-walk-donor-motivations-2-cor-8/).

A recent study showed almost 20% of donors give in order to help others meet basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, clothing) and 17% give in order to make the world a better place. But, what about giving because it feels good or brings joy?

Macedonian Motivations

The saints in Macedonia gave out of their abundant joy. "They begged (Paul) earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints"

(2 Corinthians 8:4). They also gave out of their extreme poverty. As a result, they must have denied themselves the food and clothing that they would have bought for themselves. Yet, they took pleasure in sharing God's grace with others.

Cheerful Motivations of Love

Genuine love is more than how you feel or how you act. Paul offered the Macedonians [to the Corinthians] as examples of love because their

giving was the outflow of their joy in God's grace, not just because they gave generously.

Paul continues, "Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9).

In Gethsemane, Jesus "made up in his mind" to act in love and give from his extreme poverty. Would that we would be melted toward our family, friends and neighbors likewise.

EASTER WEEK OUTREACH OPPORTUNITY: NEW BIRTH PORTRAITS

Thursday, April 1 – Saturday, April 3
Happy Monkey Studios
348 W. 36th Street

The New Birth Portrait Series is back! Last September we showcased eight video portraits in a midtown art gallery that explored the new birth experience in the lives of eight New Yorkers. If you missed it last fall, you will have another opportunity to view most of the original portraits, as well as two new ones during Holy Week.

On Thursday, April 1 at 7:00PM we will have a special reception (yes, there will be hors d'oeuvres) for those exploring Christianity that will include a brief talk by David Bisgrove on the meaning of the Resurrection. The gallery will also be open on Good Friday and for part of the day on Saturday. This is a creative and fun opportunity for you to invite your seeking friends and co-workers to see with you.

Additional information is available at www.redeemer.com and you can email Juliet Vedral at juliet.vedral@redeemer.com.

EI FORUM: CREATION AND CREATIVITY

BY CALVIN CHIN

What does the gospel say about renewing culture through starting new ventures? Would the gospel tell you to use your Harvard education to start an organization in a cramped storefront teeming with roaches and gang members milling about outside in one of the roughest neighborhoods in the New York City area? Well Alex Forrester and Alfa Demmellash, of Rising Tide Capital, did just that. As gospel entrepreneurs, their renewing work is helping to restore wholeness in individuals, families, and the community. We create or innovate

because God made us in his image...hence our theme of this year's Ei Forum, "Creation and Creativity."

Redeemer has been nurturing a movement of gospel entrepreneurship that starts innovative organizations and businesses committed to cultural renewal and serving the common good. In our fifth year, we are able to welcome over 10 churches, 12 presenters, over 50 fledging entrepreneurs and 200 participants in a beautiful new venue at 7 World Trade Center on April 16-17. Consider joining Alex and Alfa, Tim Keller, Al Sikes of

READ, Roberta Ahmanson and Ena Heller of MOBIA, and Bill Kurtz of Denver School of Science and Technology. Check out the website to see our impressive list of breakout session facilitators.

The Ei Forum gives you an opportunity to gain a vision for gospel entrepreneurship and connect with the entrepreneurs and investors that are making this possible. I hope you will join us as we work together to become a community of change.

For registration details, visit www.faithandwork.org/2010forum or call (917) 206-1388

I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you
Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness,
And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama
And the bold imposing facade are all being rolled away—
Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long between stations
And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence
And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen
Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about;
Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing—
I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

– excerpt from the "East Coker" section of *Four Quartets*, by T.S. Eliot

THE BODY OF CHRIST THROUGH DUF

BY GREG BUECHELE, DEACON

As a part of Redeemer's Diaconate* I've had the opportunity during the last year to come to a more complete understanding of the body of Christ at our church. Specifically this has occurred through participating in "Deacons/esses up Front" after Sunday services. DUF is the diaconate ministry available to all congregants following the service benediction. As deacons and deaconesses we make ourselves available for a time of prayer—or just a period of answering questions about the church itself—for those in the congregation.

In reflecting on the church body and preparing for this responsibility each week, I have considered and prayed through 1 Corinthians 12. Verses 12-13 in particular have given me perspective as Paul writes, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and

we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

In praying up front after Sunday services I've experienced the tremendous diversity of our body: professionally, ethnically, socio-economically, various spiritual backgrounds, etc. Before joining the diaconate I had a narrow understanding of Redeemer as a like-minded, vocationally-similar group, but it is much more than that. There is a diversity of blessings in the talents the Lord has equipped us with but all reflecting the image of God. As an example, I have taken great joy in hearing about the skills of an artist pursuing his passion and in coming alongside him for purposes of prayer and encouragement.

In addition to diversity there is also commonality in the body: none of us are immune from suffering and all of us face trials. The aforementioned scripture continues in chapter 12 with, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it." Prayer up front means coming alongside a congregation member for a period of time—

occasionally just a minute or two—but the oneness we have in this body results in an interaction of extraordinary depth. It's convicting to realize "I'll keep you in my prayers" is not a generic pleasantry to someone struggling with loneliness or waiting on the result of a medical diagnosis. Prayer is tremendously powerful and DUF ministry invites members, many suffering and burdened, to taste that power communally.

Above all there's Christ. My ultimate takeaway through DUF experiences is the realization that Redeemer is not just a building or event: it's a diverse group of people going through life together with Jesus as their center.

**The Diaconate is Redeemer's ministry of mercy addressing the needs of those in our church family experiencing hardship. The Diaconate is our response to God's calling to be merciful, to love and care for one another in practical ways. If you need practical assistance, please call the Diaconate Helpline, (212) 726-1334.*

AUTHORITY... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

leads to our choice of them. He notes how even young adults who go to conservative churches and identify as Christians often refuse to believe Christian prohibitions against premarital sex and other Biblical norms that conflict with their feelings and intuitions.

Smith relates how he often interviewed people and asked them if their moral convictions (some of which were very strong) were mainly subjective feelings or really true to reality. He found that most had difficulty even understanding what he was asking. He concludes:

"They simply cannot believe in or sometimes even conceive of a given objective truth... that is independent of their subjective self-experience (p. 37).

Many years ago as a young Christian my attention was arrested by an article on
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AUTHORITY... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

'Authority' by John Stott. Stott asked, "Why should people believe that the Bible is God's Word written, inspired by his Spirit and authoritative over their lives?" (*The Authority of the Bible*, IVP, 1974, p.6) This was a big question for me. I had decided that I believed in Jesus Christ, but I struggled with the idea that I had to believe everything in the Bible. Stott answered that we do *not* believe it simply because we want to be dogmatic and certain about our own beliefs, nor because the church has consistently taught this (though it has), nor because we just 'feel' the Bible is true as we read it. "No. The overriding reason for accepting the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture is plain loyalty to Jesus... Our understanding of *everything* is conditioned by what Jesus taught. And that includes his

teaching about the Bible. We have no liberty to exclude anything from Jesus' teaching and say, 'I believe what he taught about *this* but not what he taught about *that*.' What possible right do we have to be selective?" (p.7)

What did Jesus believe about the Bible? He said that not a 'jot or tittle' (i.e. not the smallest letter or even a part of a letter) would pass away from God's Word until all was fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18 cf. John 10:35.) In Matthew 19:5, Jesus tells us that in Genesis "God said" that "A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife." But when you go back to Genesis 2:24 you discover that it is only the human but inspired author of Genesis who wrote that. So, to Jesus, what Scripture says, God says. And Jesus did not simply believe the Bible, but he

guided and regulated every step and detail of his life by it (cf. John 19:28.)

Stott's question—"what possible right do we have to be selective?"—is like a hammer blow to our contemporary way of life. We feel strongly that we have the right, even the obligation to select what parts of Jesus teaching we can accept and what parts we cannot. But that makes no sense. Why should you trust in him as Savior if you are wiser and smarter than he is? Either he is who he said he is, and his views judge our views, or he was lying or deluded about being the Son of God. So Jesus' authority and the absolute authority of the Bible stand or fall together. If we believe he was who he said he was, then we must accept the entire Bible as God's word.