

# REDEEMER

R E P O R T

OCTOBER 2011

## THE ALTAR

BY TIM KELLER

George Herbert was an early 17th century Anglican priest and English poet. Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, once said, “I love George Herbert with my very soul.” C.S. Lewis, in his atheist days, found George Herbert unnerving. He wrote about him, “Here was a man who seemed to me to excel all the authors I had read in conveying the very quality of life as we live it...but the wretched fellow...insisted on mediating it through what I would have called ‘Christian mythology.’”

The first poem in Herbet’s compendium *The Temple* is a shape poem. That is, it is designed to be printed on the page so the words form an image of the subject. In this case, the poem is called and shaped as “The Altar.” In the Old Testament, God required that worshippers come to him through a sacrifice on an altar,

and the altar had to be made of unhewn stones—that is, made of stones as God himself had shaped them (cf. Exodus 20:25). In some cases, such as when Elijah built an altar on

turned into an altar, something acceptable to God, a place where we can meet God.

He tells God he is ‘rearing’ an altar. As God has commanded, in his altar ‘no workman’s tool’ has touched the stones. Instead, it is God himself that has made his heart into an altar. “A heart alone is such a stone that nothing but thy pow’r doth cut.”

Only God himself can put our heart into altar shape. Only God’s power can take our stony, hard hearts and turn them into hearts that praise God’s name (cf. Ezekiel 36:26, 27). Here Herbert is laying out basic, solid, Biblical doctrine. The human heart is so hard, so self-absorbed, so filled with anger and self-pity and pride, that nothing but God’s power can cut it, change it. (cf. Romans 3:9-18)

But how does God exercise this power in our lives? It is through sorrow and trouble. The stones of our life come  
*(Continued on page 4)*

*A broken ALTAR, Lord thy servant rears,  
Made of a heart, and cemented with tears:  
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;  
No workman’s tool hath touch’d the same*

*A HEART alone*

*Is such a stone,  
As nothing but  
Thy pow’r doth cut.  
Wherefore each part  
Of my hard heart  
Meets in this frame,  
To praise thy Name:*

*That if I chance to hold my peace,  
These stones to praise thee may not cease.  
O let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine,  
And sanctify this ALTAR to be thine.*

Mt. Carmel in 1 Kings 18, God showed his favor and power by sending fire down from heaven to consume the sacrifice. Herbert is here considering how our lives can be



INSIDE: • MISSIONS MONTH JULY 2011 • A GOSPEL & CULTURE *GLIMPSE* • HFNY FAIR: SERVING OUR YOUTH  
• HFNY-CHRISTMAS? • JOIN THE REBIRTH OF DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN • THE ALTAR (CONT'D)

# MISSIONS MONTH JULY 2011

BY AMY ALEXANDER, COORDINATOR OF VOLUNTEERS

*“In Mott Haven, a part of the South Bronx, nearly sixty percent of the population is without a high school degree and forty percent of the households earn less than \$10,000 a year.”*

Half of the people in the world live in severe poverty, surviving on less than \$2 per day. Around 340 million people do not have the Bible in their own language. In Mott Haven, a part of the South Bronx, nearly sixty percent of the population is without a high school degree and forty percent of the households earn less than \$10,000 a year. These are just some of the facts the children of Redeemer discovered during our “Missions Month.”

Throughout the month of July, the children who attend Redeemer’s Sunday School classes gathered to learn about and pray for people living in other parts of the world. The focus was to further expose the families of Redeemer to God’s purpose and our part in making His name known in New York and internationally. The theme verse was Mark 16:15, “He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

The children learned ways they can take part in reaching the world for Christ and how to value other children in New York City and around the world. During July’s Vacation

Bible School, they learned about loving and serving THE CITY. On Sundays they heard about many different cities of the world and how missionaries go abroad to tell others about Jesus. They also thought about specific ways they can participate in missions as children. In one class a five year girl was asked, “What is a missionary?” She simply answered, “Someone who goes and tells others about Jesus.”

We were able to partner with Redeemer’s Short Term missions teams to create a tangible and memorable experience. The children had learned for weeks about missionaries and then the missions’ teams came in person to tell about their work in Argentina and South Africa. A highlight one Sunday included an opportunity to speak directly with orphans living in South Africa by video chat. The children previously brought in sports equipment, shoes, school supplies and other needed items for the orphanage which the missions teams delivered earlier in the year. It was a wonderful experience for the children at Redeemer to connect and chat with the children in Africa.

We hope to continue this partnership year after year.

Another way the children learned how to engage in foreign missions was through prayer. We prayed with the children for all parts of the world, that Jesus would make himself and his love known to the children and adults living there.

Lastly, the children raised funds and donated sports equipment for an afterschool program for children in the South Bronx. The children raised over \$1000 in one week. A parent told of her kindergarten who had been saving for a long while but then donated his entire savings when he heard about the situation and need in the South Bronx.

It is such a joy to see the children of Redeemer fall in love with Jesus, gain a vision for world missions and give sacrificially. Our long term prayer is that these children will become the next generation of New Yorkers influencing our city and the cities of the world for Christ. We invite you to pray along with us.

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## REDEEMER REPORT

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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

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# A GOSPEL & CULTURE GLIMPSE

BY C. J. MAISMORE, GOTHAM FELLOW

“Excuse me, but does this arepa have eternal significance?” This isn’t necessarily something you’d ask the clerk at your favorite arepa stand, but after joining the Friday night *Glimpse* (part of Redeemer’s Gospel & Culture Conference), you may consider the question.

After God called the world into existence, he mandated humans to civilize creation through social and cultural development. The unfolding of culture and society is integral to God’s creation...giving profound meaning to the jazz in the East Village, trading at the New York Stock Exchange and the Chinatown immigrant experience. As New Yorkers, we are uniquely situated in relation to social and cultural development such that we often see glimpses of God’s good creation in a piece of art at the Met, a brilliantly performed rock opera, or yes, even in an arepa. These cultural nuggets

are the things that draw many of us to the city and in which we often find joy amidst an otherwise chaotic metropolis.

The Gospel and Culture conference on November 4-5, 2011, kicks off with an evening in which conference partici-



*Arepa – a South American dish made from ground corn dough or cooked flour*

pants engage New York City and its culture through *Glimpses*. A wide selection of cultural events is available to help us *Glimpse* God’s glory and sovereignty over all things. Led by people involved in our various ministries, the *Glimpse* leaders will be sharing their particular cultural interests in New York City with the rest of

our conference participants. Throughout the evening, we will explore how God is working through social and cultural development to further Creation and examine aspects of New York City that point toward the New Jerusalem—including that amazing arepa.

On Saturday, November 5, the conference will continue at St. Bart’s church with a full day of interacting with practitioners from many sectors of culture and industry. The gospel brings a unique perspective and purpose to our daily lives, and this immersive, interactive conference will encourage you to see that God is indeed actively involved in every inch of this great city.

Register for the conference online at:

[www.faithandwork.org/gc2011](http://www.faithandwork.org/gc2011).

Volunteer and receive a discounted registration. Email Amilee Watkins:

[amilee.watkins@redeemer.com](mailto:amilee.watkins@redeemer.com)

## HOPE FOR NEW YORK VOLUNTEER FAIR: SERVING OUR YOUTH

Hope for New York held its annual “Serving our Youth” Volunteer Fair after Redeemer worship services on Sunday, September 25. These fairs provide an opportunity for Redeemer attenders to meet HFNY affiliates that serve the children and youth of our city and to learn about serving as a volunteer in the new school year. It’s not too late to get involved! To learn more about our mentoring opportunities or making a donation, please visit [www.hfny.org](http://www.hfny.org).

## HOPE FOR NEW YORK—CHRISTMAS? BUT IT'S OCTOBER!

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Believe it or not Christmas is just around the corner! HFNY loves Christmas, but we know that it can be a tough season for low-income families. That's why we have two programs to serve our neighbors: Angel Tree and His Toy Store. Last year, over 250 HFNY volunteers set up "toy stores" at neighborhood churches all over the city and we gave away over 3,000 toys to over 700 families. Through the Angel Tree program, we gave away toys and clothing to over 200 children who had an incarcerated parent.

Help make Christmas a joyous season for our neighbors in need throughout the city by donating a toy or volunteering your time. We will start collecting toys every Sunday in November. You can also volunteer to run a toy store or to collect toys after church. This is a great activity for fellowship groups and families. Email [volunteer@hfny.org](mailto:volunteer@hfny.org) for more information on our Christmas programs.

## THE ALTAR (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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together to form an altar because they are "cemented with tears." It is suffering that takes the various parts of our lives and forges them into something that can praise God. Difficulty breaks our lives into pieces, just as a boulder has to be broken if it is to be the material to build a bridge, a wall, or an altar. Trials and troubles show us our insufficiency, reveal to us our weakness and sin and our need for him.

The image of the altar means a heart that is on fire with God's praise and love. "My heart an altar and thy love the flame," goes an old hymn. But to have the joy of knowing God's grace and love requires the tears of a heart broken over

the knowledge of its sin. "My sacrifice is...a broken and contrite spirit." (Psalm 51:17)

The image of the altar also represents a heart dedicated—"sanctified"—offered to God in usefulness and service. But do you see that it is largely through our tears, through our difficulties, that God has shaped us into people that can be useful in his service, in ministry, and in the lives of others? It is suffering that teaches you patience, sympathy, wisdom, and how to rely on God. "We glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character, hope." (Romans 5:3-4)

Why would things work

this way? Why are tears the key to finding God and being changed by him into something useful and joyful? Because this was the way Jesus saved us. Unlike us, the Father did not have to break his stubborn will, his hard heart. He voluntarily left his power and privilege. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. And the Father used his ultimate sacrifice to save us. He redeemed us through suffering, weakness and tears. It is not surprising then, that, if we respond to him in trust and faith, our own suffering and tears—the most inevitable things in this life—can turn our lives into something useful, joyful, and beautiful.

# JOIN THE REBIRTH OF DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN

BY JOHN LIN

One of the most compelling stories of the last decade has been the reemergence and revitalization of Downtown. It may, in fact, continue as one of our most compelling stories of the next decade.

The High Line and renovation of the waterfront along the East and Hudson Rivers have beautified recreation and green space. New construction has increased the residential population, particularly young families who benefit from several new schools. The ten-year old Tribeca Film Festival and forthcoming Whitney Museum have caused Downtown to thrive as a cultural center. A new transportation hub will make Downtown even more accessible.

And, of course, the World Trade Center site has been completely re-envisioned with a memorial to honor the victims of 9/11 and with an entirely new complex of buildings, including the Freedom Tower, to signal Downtown's rebirth. In fact, over the past few years, several new houses of worship have opened their doors to serve the spiritual needs of Downtown people. The Downtown story is one of redemption and resurrection as the oldest part of our City now experiences rebirth on every corner.

Throughout the summer, I met with over 130 people to begin thinking about how we might serve Downtown

together as one of Redeemer's congregations. Together, we prayed, brainstormed and developed a profile of the various and distinctive needs of Downtown. Some of our insights include:

- *Downtown is one of the most diverse part of New York City, economically, professionally and socially. Unlike more exclusively residential or commercial parts of the city, Downtown is a place where social, professional, cultural and relational spheres of life all overlap within the same geographical area.*
- *Downtown people are typically open-minded and comfortable with new ideas, while few are conventionally religious. They tend to be more self-defining and non-institutional than other New Yorkers.*
- *Downtown people often live with a strong sense of neighborhood and place. A map of Manhattan immediately reveals numerous distinct areas of Downtown, each with its own culture, street life and ethos, both mainstream and "off the grid."*

We all spent time discussing what a flourishing Downtown might look like—how could a gospel-centered church seek the shalom of this part of the city? Some of our ideas include richer community and relational networks, support for a thriving cultural and profes-

sional life, a more thorough and everyday experience of mercy and justice, and an understanding of the gospel that is robust enough to help people live out their faith in a part of the city that is as dynamic as it is complex.

Over the next few months, we will begin to promote a more gospel-centered community Downtown. Events like the upcoming Catalyst initiative will help align us to serve parts of the City where we have not yet had a physical presence. Local "pop-up" services throughout the year will help us to experience worship together.

We are excited about the interest and momentum we're seeing for Downtown and are hoping to begin weekly worship earlier than originally planned—perhaps as early as fall 2012. More importantly, we hope to build a sense of community and mission even before we begin our regular worship together. In Acts 11, there is a story about Barnabas who travels from Jerusalem to Antioch to encourage people in the work that God was already doing there. We feel tremendously privileged to begin serving in a part of the City, knowing that God is already at work there and is eager for us to join in.

For updates and information on the Downtown congregation please go to [www.redeemer.com/downtown](http://www.redeemer.com/downtown). Join us now, in this formative stage!

*"The Downtown story is one of redemption and resurrection as the oldest part of our City now experiences rebirth on every corner."*



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## THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

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Tim and Kathy Keller will be speaking on marriage at the Ethical Culture Society on Tuesday, November 1 at 7:00PM. A guest interviewer will pester them with questions based on the content of their forthcoming book, *The Meaning of Marriage*. Both singles, married couples, and those in-between are welcome to attend.

The event is free but tickets must be obtained so guests are not turned away for lack of seats. To reserve a ticket, please go to the Penguin/Dutton website: <http://themeaningofmarriage.eventbrite.com/> (Please try to disregard the commercial nature of the website—they have to sell books, we just want you to be able to come to the event for the teaching!)

Upon reserving a ticket, people will receive an email confirmation with their ticket as a pdf attachment. They will need to print it out and bring it with them to the event. Eventbrite does not take orders via phone so please encourage people to reserve via the website. In the event that a ticket gets lost, we will have a manifest at the door.

Anyone who is experiencing problems reserving tickets for the event should feel free to call Jamie McDonald from Penguin at: (212) 366-2223