The executive committee of RTS has announced the retirement of Dr. Michael A. Milton as chancellor and CEO of RTS. Dr. Milton has suffered from a debilitating illness that physicians confirmed could not be remedied without sustained rest. Physicians also confirmed that upon sustained rest and a period of recovery, he could resume pastoral duties. In light of this, for the sake of recovery from a chronic illness and to help toward Dr. Milton’s long-term church ministry future, the RTS executive committee recommended a compassionate retirement from the chancellor and CEO position effective May 1.

“This difficult decision was made out of love for Mike and a desire to see a return to health and future service in the church of Christ,” said Richard Ridgway, chairman of the RTS board of trustees.

The search for Dr. Milton’s replacement as chancellor is ongoing. Steve Wallace, RTS chief of staff, has been serving as acting CEO for the interim until the naming of the next chancellor. Dr. Milton has served RTS since 2006 in various capacities, including as a professor of pastoral theology and as president of RTS-Charlotte. As RTS-Charlotte president he founded the Chaplain Ministry Institute as well as the Institute for Reformed Campus Ministries, and for over a year also served as interim president of RTS-Orlando. Dr. Milton was named chancellor elect in 2011, and after serving in that role for a year, he became the fourth president/chancellor of RTS in June 2012, succeeding Dr. Ric Cannada. As RTS chancellor, Dr. Milton led in the restructuring of the seminary’s global education initiatives and spread the word of RTS through pulpits nationwide and worldwide.

The entire RTS family asks for prayers for Dr. Milton during his time of rest and recovery. ML.
Dr. Mark Futato spoke on “Blessing for the Nations” at Park Community Church, Chicago, April 11, at Pastorum, a conference for pastors sponsored by Logos; and at a mission conference for Saint Andrews Chapel, Sanford, Fla., April 26-28. He will lead a men’s retreat for Redeemer PCA, Newport Beach, Calif., May 17-19; and teach an Old Testament survey for Cru’s staff training, Fort Collins, Colo., June 13-26.

Dr. Chuck Hill spoke on “The Canon: How Early Did We Have a New Testament?” at The Table Conference: Presenting God to Those Who See Christianity Differently, sponsored by the Howard Hendricks Center for Christian Leadership and Cultural Engagement, at Bent Tree Bible Fellowship, Carrolton, Texas, April 20.

Dr. Leslie Holmes, regular guest faculty, will be a speaker and workshop leader at the National Conference on Preaching, Charlotte, N.C., May 14-16.

Dr. James Hurley spoke at a marriage conference in Utica, Miss., April 5-6.

Dr. Andrew Peterson will give a presentation on the use of iTunesU courses for course development and delivery at the EDUCAUSE Southeast Regional Conference, Atlanta, May 29-31.

Dr. Guy Richardson spoke at a weekend marriage and family conference at Evangel Presbyterian Church, Alabaster, Ala., April 12-14.

Dr. Don Sweeting spoke on “The Life and Legacy of Billy Graham” at an RTS event at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove, Asheville, N.C., April 6; and at the “Good Friday Observance” sponsored by Cru for faculty and staff at the University of Central Florida, Orlando. He will speak on May 2 to the Pacesetters group (senior adults) at Chain of Lakes Community Bible Church, Antioch, Mich., where his father, Dr. George Sweeting, serves as the senior adult director; and at the Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference, Muskegon, Mich., June 22-25.

Dr. Derek Thomas spoke at a retreat for the covenant family of Uptown Church, Charlotte, April 12-14; and at PCRT 2013 (Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology), hosted by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, April 19-20. He will also speak at the annual theology conference at Grace Community Church, Medford, Ore., May 14-18.

Dr. Bruce Baugus will present a paper at the International Congress of Reformed Churches at Changshin University and Theological Seminary, Seoul, South Korea, May 2-7, and preach at a Presbyterian church there.

Dr. Ric Cannada, chancellor emeritus, will represent RTS and serve as a part-time consultant with a group in Indonesia seeking to reach that country with the gospel. As part of the agreement, Ric and his wife, Rachel, will spend two months in Indonesia each year. The Indonesian group has a goal of starting over 1,000 Christian schools with a Reformed theology and worldview, planting a Reformed church through each of the schools, developing chaplaincies in each hospital. The Canndas returned on March 27 from a trip to Indonesia with Bellhaven University and hosts James and Aileen Rady.

Prof. Mike Glodo will represent RTS at the induction of alumnus Heuter Rolle as pastor of the historic Salem Baptist Church, Nassau, Bahamas, June 2.

Dr. James Hurley spoke alongside alumnus Louis Steenkamp in South Africa at the end of April to psychologists about family systems and addictions and to pastors and Christian counselors about neurobiology, narrative therapy and biblical counseling. Dr. Hurley will also travel this spring with his wife, Phyllis, to Uganda to sell crafts made by Ugandan women through Friends of Uganda.

Dr. Derek Thomas spoke at a pastors conference and a family conference in Singapore, March 27-April 6, and will speak at a conference with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Australia in Melbourne, July 2-11.

Dr. Guy Waters will teach “Topics in the Epistle to the Romans” at Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne, Australia in July.

Dr. Don Fortson has written The Presbyterian Story: Origins and Progress of a Reformed Tradition (The Presbyterian Lay Committee, due summer) and Charles Hodge (Evangelical Press, summer).


Dr. Leslie Holmes, regular guest faculty, has just completed the book A Moment for Eternity (CSS Publications, due fall).
It’s not easy being a Christian in today’s world. Every day we are bombarded with cultural messages about what we should value and how we should act — messages often contrary to the teachings of Scripture. As a result, we often feel marginalized and isolated. Christians just don’t seem to fit in.

But of all the attacks upon Christianity, one of the most challenging is its regular ridicule as being intellectually deficient and academically bankrupt. Just a brief look around our world shows that a large percentage of people view the Christian way of thinking as utterly ridiculous.

Now, if we are honest, this sort of ridicule is not easy to take. It makes us wonder about the faith we hold so dear. Is it really ridiculous? Is it really intellectually bankrupt? If we are asking these questions, we need to remember that we are not the first to do so.

In the first century, the church at Corinth found itself in quite a similar situation. Corinth was a vibrant intellectual center, not far from Athens, priding itself on its philosophical and intellectual sophistication. When Christianity came to Corinth, the intellectual elites of the day rejected it, and the Christians in Corinth found themselves in a bit of a crisis. If Christianity were true, then why did the greatest thinkers of the day reject it?

Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, addresses this challenge head on. In the very first chapter, he lays out three adjustments for his listeners that will help them face the intellectual challenges of their day.

**Adjust Your Expectations**

The first area Paul addresses is our expectations when presenting the gospel to an unbelieving world. For whatever reasons, we often operate with the mistaken assumption that if something is true, most people will believe it. And if most people reject something, then we assume it must be false. It is precisely this mistaken assumption that lands us in an intellectual quandary. If Christianity is true, then why do most people (and many intelligent people) reject it?

But Paul challenges this assumption by showing that people, when confronted with truth, do not naturally accept it, but in fact do the opposite. People naturally reject it. Why? Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:18: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing.” To nonbelievers, those with minds darkened by sin, the idea of worshipping a crucified Savior is complete foolishness. People are not neutral; they already have a worldview that directly opposes God’s truth. Unless the Spirit opens their eyes, they will never respond positively to the message of the cross.

The offensive nature of the cross in the Greco-Roman world can be seen vividly in a piece of second- or third-century “graffiti” found by archaeologists on an ancient Roman wall. It depicts a person hanging on a cross with the head of a donkey, while another person bows down in worship before the cross. Next to the graffiti, someone wrote in Greek “Alexamenos worships his god.” Apparently, this drawing was designed to mock a Roman Christian named Alexamenos for worshiping a crucified man — the height of humiliation in the ancient Roman world.

Paul recognizes the difficult situation of the Corinthian believers and gives them a simple encouragement: Do not be surprised by the widespread rejection of the gospel. It proves nothing about the truth of Christianity. On the contrary, it is ample demonstration of a Christian truth, namely that the natural man does not receive the things of God.

**Adjust Your Mind**

As soon as Paul demonstrates that Christianity will always look foolish in the eyes of the world (unless God intervenes), he is quick to clarify this point. Although Christianity looks
foolish, Paul wants to make sure his audience realizes that Christianity is not actually foolish. On the contrary, Christianity is intellectually robust and academically defensible.

Here Paul wants to adjust the thinking of the Corinthians. He wants to show them that it is non-Christian thought, not Christian thought, that is foolish and incoherent. Paul makes this point by taking the offensive: “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20).

But what exactly is Paul’s complaint about non-Christian thinking? Simply put, non-Christian thinking depends on human wisdom. What sense does it make, argues Paul, for these secular teachers to make sweeping declarations about eternal matters — God, salvation, heaven and hell — when all they have is their own fallible, fallen minds? Why should we think they can know anything for certain about such eternal issues?

As a modern example of the foolishness of unbelief, consider the evolutionary view of the origin of life. To most modern scientists, the Christian view (as described in the Book of Genesis) seems intellectually untenable. But when one probes into the evolutionary explanation of the first living cell, things fall apart rather quickly. A living cell, even at its most basic level, is infinitely complex, and scientists continue to uncover more and more layers of complexity. Where did this first cell come from? We have no empirical examples anywhere of life arising from non-life. Moreover, we cannot even accomplish such a feat intentionally in a laboratory.

In fact, the empirical evidence is so against the possibility of life arising naturally from non-life that some scientists, including DNA co-discoverer Francis Crick, have suggested that it must have come to Earth from alien life on another planet. Thus, some scientists are more willing to believe in alien life than in the God of the Bible.

The Christian is in a very different position. Christians also make sweeping truth claims, but do so on the basis of God’s revealed Word. In other words, Christians claim knowledge about eternal matters on the basis of divine revelation. Which is more coherent: to make statements about eternity on the basis of one’s own knowledge, or on the basis of divine revelation? Only the latter makes sense.

Adjust Your Attitude

After arguing that Christian thought is intellectually robust, Paul identifies another danger that must be nipped in the bud: intellectual pride. It would be easy for the Corinthians to begin thinking highly of their own intellectual abilities — as if they were believers because they were smarter than everyone else.

But Paul is quick to challenge this danger by reminding the Corinthians that their faith in Christ is not due to their own intelligence: “For consider your calling, brothers; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards” (1 Corinthians 1:26). In other words, be humble because you did not figure this out on your own. You only believe, says Paul, “because of Him” (v. 30).

Here Paul reminds us of something special about Christianity: It allows a person to be absolutely humble and absolutely certain at the same time. The world will tell us that humility requires uncertainty, but this is not a Christian definition of humility. A Christian can be humble because his knowledge is dependent upon God’s revelation, and can be certain for the exact same reason. Depending on God’s Word, not human wisdom, is the key to obtaining both certainty and humility.

In conclusion, 1 Corinthians 1 guides us in handling the intellectual challenges of our day. It reminds us that we need not fear the rejection of the gospel message, instead trusting that God will open the eyes of those He is calling to Himself. While the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing, “to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (v. 18).
As Americans living in an affluent society, there are few times when we make a substantial sacrifice. Practically speaking, a serious sacrifice of our time, resources or personal comfort is disconcerting. We are used to having just about anything we want and getting it when we want it. Sacrificial living is hardly a topic that most are drawn to consider, let alone to read an article about. There seems to be an innate resistance deep within each of us to the very idea of personal sacrifice. Therefore, quite honestly I was hesitant to title this article “Sacrificial Living” in fear that no one would read it. Nevertheless, hang with me — don’t skip to the next article or throw the magazine down, as the sacrifice I want you to consider will cost you little, but benefit you greatly!

I was fortunate to have had sacrificial living modeled to me by my mother and father before I remember reading about it in Scripture. They traveled to eastern Africa in 1957 on a freighter, and their first home was a mud hut complete with a thatched grass roof. There is not space in this brief article to list all they had to sacrifice, but in 40 years in Africa, they sacrificed much.

My greatest lesson in sacrificial living came early in my own ministry, when I inquired of my father about his daily time in God’s Word. In fact, I recall very little of that conversation except how he told me that the first thing he did every morning was to take time to thank God for the many blessings in his life. He believed this was an important part of his personal worship and provided grace as He faced many trials. His challenge to me was to follow that pattern by daily lifting before the Father a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. This was no novel concept on his part, of course, but rather a response to Hebrews 13:15, where we read, “Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.”

The sacrifice of praise is not a new concept to Hebrews, but points to the sacrifice of thanksgiving that accompanied animal sacrifices in the temple. The author of Hebrews was probably recalling Psalm 50, where we read, “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving” (v. 14) and “The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me” (v. 23). Even when the sacrificial system was in place, there was a tendency for people to simply go through the motions, not appreciating who God was and what He had done for them. However, the significance of the sacrifices and offerings was not only what was being offered, but also the heart attitude of those who offered them.
offering it. They were to be offered as an expression of gratitude.

Through Christ’s atoning sacrifice, we have been set free from both the penalty and the power of sin. We no longer need to carry the burden of our guilt and sin. When we fully understand who Christ is, what He has done and what He continues to do on our behalf, our natural response will be praise and thanksgiving. I appreciate John Calvin’s observations on Hebrews 13:15 in his commentary on Hebrews: “We hence see that it is the highest worship of God, justly preferred to all other exercises, when we acknowledge God’s goodness by thanksgiving; yea this is the ceremony of sacrificing that God commands to us now.”

How, then, are we to offer this sacrifice or offering of praise? That is made clear in the second half of the verse, where we read, “. . . that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.” This language borrowed from Hosea 14:12 is a figure of speech used for the words offered to God upon the forgiveness of sins. Though the sacrifices of the Old Testament were restricted to set times, our sacrifice of praise is to be continually offered up as a response of gratitude rooted in the heart and evidenced through the words of our mouth.

Our first and greatest reason to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving is the priceless gift of salvation given to us through the finished work of Christ Jesus. Recalling the value of this gift on a daily basis enables us to live life with the proper perspective. Though we may be facing the loss of a loved one through death or broken relationship, we can be grateful that our Father loves us and will never leave us or forsake us. We may be facing job or financial loss, yet we will never lose our position in Christ. We may lose everything on this earth, but we will never lose what is most valuable and indeed eternal!

We must also not neglect to be grateful for the constant care of our sovereign Father as He faithfully watches over His children. God is always blessing His people whether we recognize it or not. Interestingly, when we take time to reflect on what God has done for us, we quickly discover that we have been taking much for granted.

I grew up hearing a gospel song written in 1897 by Johnson Oatman Jr. The song, titled Count Your Blessings, reminds believers that regardless of what challenges they face, be they heavy burdens, financial trials, conflict or discouragement, they should “Count [their] many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise [them] what the Lord has done.” It is as we are reminded and surprised by the many blessings lavished on us that we then can extend our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Over the years I have found my missionary father’s advice on sacrificial living a precious gift of grace that has regularly fed my dry and thirsty soul. I am convinced that if you make it a pattern in your life, you will experience the joy of His salvation in ways you have never experienced before. Here are some practical ideas to get started:

Familiarize yourself with the Psalms, reading them through monthly, and they will become the prayer and song of your heart. On those days where the praise and thanksgiving are hard to come by, meditate on Psalms 145 through 150, soaking up the reasons to praise the Lord.

Find a hymnal and start to sing, whether you can carry a tune or not. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord! If there is no place to sing with your voice, read the hymns with a song in your heart.

Be grateful for the little blessings in your life. It could be as simple as a good cup of coffee, a sunny spring day, an encouraging word from a friend or a wagging tail. Personally, I regularly thank God for Simba, our Jack Russell terrier mongrel rescued from the Humane Society. He is always glad to see me, makes me laugh and is a constant reminder of God’s adoption and His transforming grace toward another rescued mongrel — me! M.

Dr. Orner is dean of students, a guest lecturer in practical theology and director of field education at RTS-Orlando. Contact him at borner@rts.edu.
The singing of *How Great Thou Art* began familiarly enough, but soon took a dynamic turn. That’s when many of those gathered at a church just inside the Washington, D.C., Beltway started singing the first verse in Mandarin Chinese.

This cross-cultural moment helped define the confluence of the traditional global East and West at the China’s Reforming Churches conference held in early January at Wallace Presbyterian Church in College Park, Md. Sponsored and organized by RTS, the conference united pastors, church leaders, missionaries and others committed to helping reach mainland China with the gospel from a Reformed perspective.

Over three content-packed days, attendees heard presentations from many different sources in both lecture and panel formats, with lunch breaks featuring (appropriately enough) Chinese food and followed by the singing of a hymn such as the aforementioned *How Great Thou Art*. The assembled group included a blend of Anglo Americans, Chinese Americans, Canadians and even indigenous Chinese who made the journey halfway across the world to attend. Subjects covered included historical perspectives on the growth of the church in China, as well as more practical concerns such as the contextualization of church polity issues to the distinct complexities of Chinese culture.

Several RTS alumni and students representing a cross-section of the RTS campuses attended the conference, which was directed and moderated by RTS-Jackson professor Dr. Bruce Baugus (see page 9). On the following pages, these men give their perspectives on various elements of their personal callings, including how God called them to faith in Christ, ministry in China and attendance at the conference.
TIM (LAST NAME WITHHELD)

RTS-Orlando alumnus, conference speaker

I'm a teaching elder in a Reformed church presbytery in Maryland, which is where my church membership is, and I am the East Asia national director for a denominational mission. We have about 35 to 40 people on the field in China. Part of my role is to take care of them, but mostly our team is focused on church planting, theological education and leadership training. Our main ministry is with a theological seminary for church leaders.

My effectual calling to Christ was as a freshman in college, and I was immediately impressed by the need for world evangelism. I wrestled for two years with becoming a missionary, but eventually I just asked God to do whatever He wanted with me. About two weeks after that, the director of the campus fellowship I was involved with challenged me to go to China on a summer mission project. I took that as a direct sign from the Lord, so I ended up going. That experience was instrumental in opening my eyes to the world and specifically to the need in China.

I developed a love for the language, the people and the culture, and ended up going back on the same project the next summer. After graduation, I ended up getting a job at an insurance company just to pay the bills, and after two

Continued on Page 10

The conference focused on how to more effectively equip the indigenous Chinese church to reach the more than 1.3 billion people in China with the gospel.

REFORMED THEOLOGY: SILK INROADS IN CHINA

BY DR. BRUCE BAUGUS

According to a 2011 BBC News Magazine article, more people go to church on Sunday in China than in all of Europe. China is now home to more evangelical believers than any other nation, and the church continues to grow and make inroads in every level of Chinese society. Today, tens of millions of Chinese profess faith in Jesus Christ. Such dramatic growth, against the backdrop of modern China, has produced profound and urgent church development needs. As faithful Chinese ministers strive to meet these needs, an increasing number are discovering the rich biblical and theological resources of the Reformed tradition and Presbyterian polity.

The turn toward Reformed theology and church polity is geographically widespread but far from enveloping the majority of congregations. Arising out of the practical demands of pastoral ministry and the church's mission, this movement is as vibrant and vigorous as it is young and tender. Critically, it is an actual reformation of the church. We are not talking about a pocket of evangelicals who have just discovered Reformed soteriology, as good as that sort of thing is. What is happening in China is of a different order, embodying a clear ecclesiastical form with concrete confessional and institutional dimensions. This, in turn, is likely to have deep and long-lasting influence on Chinese and, in time, global Christianity.

Perhaps some orientation to this nascent reformation will prove helpful.

A FAST-CHANGING CULTURAL CONTEXT

China's population, now roughly 1.35 billion people despite numerous enormous setbacks since 1839 and the current one-child policy, has impressed Western observers for centuries. Recently, observers have been even more
years, I realized I wasn’t called to do that. I applied to go to China with a mission organization, and ended up in central China in 1991 as an English teacher at a university.

My first contact and experience with the house church in China came then. A student taught by one of my teammates was a product of that house church movement. He had an amazing testimony of being in Tiananmen Square in 1989 with bullets whizzing around. He and his house church friends invited us teachers to attend one of their conferences. We went and were blown away by this vibrant, indigenous house church movement.

In 1993 I joined an organization called China Outreach Ministries, focused on Chinese scholars studying at U.S. universities. I did that at the University of Maryland until 2009, except for the three years I attended RTS-Orlando. But my experience with the house church movement began a gradual process for which seminary sealed the deal in showing that what China needs most is well-trained church leaders.

When I worked at the University of Maryland, I always encouraged people who came to our Friday night fellowship to be involved in a Chinese church, so I developed relationships with the local Chinese churches. One aspect of that partnership is the seminary, through which we’re trying to educate the next generation of Chinese church leaders. We have a strong sense of needing to partner with the Chinese, which has carried over into what we’re doing in China. As foreigners in China, we’re called to work alongside the local church. There needs to be a local buy-in to whatever we do.

That said, though we’re not in the pioneering phase of missions in China anymore, I think the church in China is in the adolescent stage. One of the challenges is finding full-time leadership, people willing to commit to what they need to lead the church effectively and be educated in biblical theology. The great challenges are things like cults, bad doctrine, lack of love and a lack of willingness to address some of the problems China faces. I’m not saying no one’s doing that, but the church is going to have to step up to the plate to address those issues.

I’ve been encouraged by the issues being discussed here at the conference, and I hope we can ask ourselves why Presbyterian and Reformed churches aren’t more of a presence in China. With that in mind, it’s good to network with people here and see how we can work together more effectively.

**SONG “JIDIAN” CHENG**

RTS-Virtual student

Jidian (“Gideon”) is my pen name. When I write books and anything on the Internet, I use that name. I work for a Chinese ministry called Overseas Campus Ministries as director of evangelism. In its beginning 20 years ago, it was just one single magazine targeting Chinese internationals in this country — graduate students who are spiritual seekers, like I was then.

My great passion and burden is for Internet ministry. That started many years ago, when there was barely any Internet — just some international students inputting Chinese on a primitive interface. We started giving our testimonies and telling people about our faith, and we became friends through the Internet. On the Internet I work primarily in cultural apologetics. I have cultural blogs, and recently my book was published in China. It’s all about Christianity, but it’s under the banner of culture. There’s no such category as evangelism — Chinese censorship won’t allow that. Contrary to some Chinese church tradition, which is anti-cultural, Reformed theology has a good balance between culture and faith.

Here at the conference a lot of people have asked questions about how Reformed people can influence culture and society. My interest is with how to witness to the “post-90” kids — those born after 1990. They need Jesus, and who is going to tell people about Him? In China they may not be reached by any church at all, but when I travel in China, I take the subway and see all the young people on their smart devices, and I pray they are viewing our websites.

**BORN (LAST NAME WITHHELD)**

RTS-Jackson student

My life took a dramatic turn about three years ago when I was converted while a graduate student in biomedical research in Birmingham, Ala. The gospel came to me on multiple occasions, but I finally accepted the gospel while I was in jail (I did something stupid and locked myself up). The first time I heard the gospel was eight years ago, when I first came to the U.S., but...
impressed by the spectacular rate of cultural change taking place: China is arguably changing faster than any national culture in history not at war. Cities are bulging, skylines are soaring, industry is booming, money is flowing, demand is growing, and her global influence is rapidly rising. China is already the world’s second largest economy and predicted to overtake the United States in a decade or two.

The standard of living in Shanghai has surpassed some European Union capitals, and the masters of this growth continue to invest heavily in domestic and international infrastructure, export-driven manufacturing sectors, military modernization, and in securing and developing the world’s natural resources. Though tens of millions of Chinese citizens still lack basic modern conveniences and live on less than $1.25 a day (the international poverty line), World Bank figures indicate that China’s economic boom accounts for most of the reduction in global poverty levels over the past three decades.

Any predictions about China’s future, however, may soon appear naïve. But predictions disclose present perceptions that, though far from self-fulfilling prophecies, are forceful realities in their own right. Whatever the future may be, it’s coming fast — that, at least, is the perception. And this is not just a remote view of the situation, either, but is the word on the streets of China’s great cities.

Surely this is one of the great kingdom projects of our generation.

Dr. Baugus, associate professor of philosophy and theology at RTS-Jackson, organized the China’s Reforming Churches conference. This article is an edited version of his introduction to the book China’s Reforming Churches, featuring numerous contributors and due to be published by Reformation Heritage in spring 2014.
“Dr. Kapic is the best professor I’ve ever had. His Christology class changed my life! Every class meeting was like hearing the most interesting and powerful sermons! I also took Dr. Kapic for Doctrine I & II and loved those classes. He is an amazing person and excellent (and hilarious) teacher! You will never regret taking him.”

For a dozen years now, Kelly Kapic has been a professor of theological studies at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Ga. The RTS-Orlando alumnus sees his calling to the classroom as his way of helping new generations of undergraduate students make the connection between theology and life — a connection often overlooked and even avoided.

“The thing I love about theology is how it informs and shape our lives,” Kelly explains, “and I’ve also come to see how our life informs and shapes our theology. [Being a college professor] has provided me a wonderful avenue to be in people’s lives, not only by trying to give them a rigorous education, but to help them make constant connection between theology and why it actually matters to the life of the church and to us as individuals.”

By Kelly’s estimation, college students are well positioned to tackle that task. “Students between the ages of 18 and 23 are willing to ask difficult questions and wrestle through things,” he observes, “because they are trying to figure out if this faith is really for them now. Is this really worth getting up early on a Sunday morning for, or more importantly, how does this work when they see crises in their own lives and in the lives of people they care about? The students are willing to go to hard places and ask honest questions. They’re not so caught up with the busyness of life that they have given up on questions about the meaning of life.”

“Dr. Kapic is one of the most interesting professors I’ve had thus far at Covenant. His classes are hard to get into purely because he is one of the best professors. Class is mandatory, but who wants to miss the most interesting professor?”

The Lord clearly prepared Kelly to be in a position to help his students. “My junior high experience in [northern California] was like many people’s rebellious college experience,” he recalls. “In order to get out of trouble, I agreed to go to church with some friends who also behaved like I did.” Not only was Kelly drawn to faith in Christ through his youth group experience as a high school freshman, but the gears were also set in motion for him to eventually attend RTS.

“The youth minister I was converted under moved to a different church,” Kelly explains, “and he started getting more into theology, and because we were still in relationship, I started getting more into theology, R.C. Sproul books and that kind of thing. That youth minister, Todd Capen, ended up going to RTS-Orlando, and to make a long story short, I have the privilege of teaching his daughter at Covenant College — it’s amazing how God works.”

Indeed it is. Kelly completed his bachelor’s degree at Wheaton College, his Master of Divinity degree at RTS-Orlando, and his doctorate in systematic and historical theology from the University of London. Covenant College hired Kelly onto its faculty in 2001, and he and his family have been there ever since.

“Best teacher I have ever had. Period. His classes are life-changing. It’s like midweek worship.”

Like any successful professor, Kelly aims to influence both the hearts and minds of his students. “My role is not to teach facts and figures,” he says, “but to shape theological instincts. I have alumni constantly tell me they draw from their experience for years and years because it does help shape who they are.”

In other words, Kelly targets the interconnection between theology and life. “I’m trying to help [students] see that theology really is a word about God,” Kelly explains, “that we are all theologians whether we know it or not. One of the most exciting things for me is to watch students who have been resistant to theology or thought it was just irrelevant — their eyes light up when they start to see how much it matters to their lives, to the decisions...
For some people the question of whether or not God exists is a painful and haunting uncertainty not easily dismissed. But for most people the question is not whether God exists, but what is God like. Not whether there is a deity, but how many, and which one(s). How do we know God? Can God be trusted? Does God care? And is God good?

Whenever we speak about God we are engaged in theology. The term “theology” means a word (logos) about God (theos), so when anyone speaks about God, whether that person dropped out of high school or completed a Ph.D. in philosophy, he or she is engaged in theology. Theology is not reserved for those in the academy; it is an aspect of thought and conversation for all who live and breathe, who wrestle and fear, who hope and pray.

Theological questions surround our lives, whether we know it or not. A wife and husband facing infertility inevitably struggle through deep theological questions, whether or not they want to voice them. College students working
One of Kelly’s areas of concentration in his theological study has been the writing of Puritan theologian John Owen — an interest nourished by his experiences with the late Dr. Roger Nicole at RTS-Orlando. “The thing I love about Owen is how much he talked about the affections and their importance in shaping us,” Kelly observes. “I was introduced to him early on in terms of his [well-known work on sin and] temptation, but the more I got into him, the richer I found him.” Kelly’s interest in Owen’s writings led to him co-editing (with fellow RTS alumnus Justin Taylor) two volumes of Owen’s republished works.

“We are all theologians whether we know it or not.”
— Kelly Kapic

Those are two of the 12 books Kelly has either edited, written or is in the process of writing (see page 13 for an excerpt from his 2012 A Little Book for New Theologians). “In some ways I don’t know what I think until I write it,” says Kelly in an explanation of what led him into his own writing ministry. “This can sound funny to people, but I really have to wrestle through words and ideas. Writing is a way for me to slowly work through what I believe and how I think. Also, it is a way for me to be part of a larger conversation. And working with students, I realize that I get them personally for probably two to three years at the most, but I’d still like to be a voice in their heads and their hearts, so writing allows me some of that.”

“Dr. Kapic lectures in a stimulating and passionate way that causes you to nearly cry in praise of our great God.”

The student comments quoted in the article are taken from posts at RateMyProfessors.com. For more information about Kelly, visit www.covenant.edu/academics/undergrad/bible/faculty/kapic.
through issues of identity, culture, politics and ethics struggle — in one way or another — with theological convictions and how to live them. Our concepts about the divine inform our lives more deeply than most people can trace. Whether we view God as distant or near, as gracious or capricious, as concerned or apathetic, the conclusions we reach — whether the result of careful reflection or negligent assumptions — guide our lives.

Christians must care deeply about theology. If the true God is renewing our lives and calling us to worship Him “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23), then such worship includes our thoughts, words, affections and actions. Do we want to worship Yahweh or waste time and effort on a deity we have constructed in our own image?

Ludwig Feuerbach, a 19th-century atheist philosopher, argued in *The Essence of Christianity* that talk about God is no more than amplified talk about ourselves: “God” is merely the projection of human thoughts and desires. Surprising as it may seem, Christians share a fundamental concern with Feuerbach, for we recognize the temptation to create our own gods — gods that belong to us — rather than to respond faithfully to the One who is.

The Scriptures testify to the God who made the heavens and the earth, who created men and women to enjoy His creation and their communion with Him. But sin has entered the world, creating chaos instead of order, death instead of life, and substituting idolatry for the worship of the true God. The Bible often describes our temptation to create and follow false gods.

For example, after delivering Israel from Egypt, God warns them against forgetting their Redeemer and returning to false gods: “Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them” (Deuteronomy 11:16). The Song of Moses warns that, despite this display of God’s favor and power, the Israelites would eventually look to “strange gods . . . to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your father had never dreaded. You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forget the God that gave you birth” (Deuteronomy 32:16-18). The Song warns coming generations against provoking God with their idols — with “what is no god” (Deuteronomy 32:21).

Theological reflection is a way of examining our praise, prayers, words and worship with the goal of making sure they conform to God alone. Every age has its own idols, its own distortions that twist and pervert how we view God, ourselves and the world. Whether it is the distant and uninterested deity of modernity or the fragmented and territorial gods of postmodernity, all times and cultures carry the danger of warping our worship. We aim not to escape our cultures, however, but to recognize that God calls us to respond faithfully to Him in our place and time, whatever our particular social and philosophical climate. We, not just our ancestors, are invited to know and love God — and thus to worship Him.  

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A native of Lodi, Calif., Kelly came to Covenant College in 2001.
MANNING A NEW CORNER

A FORMER NFL CORNERBACK TAKES HIS GAME TO RTS-JACKSON.

BY PAUL SCHWARZ
AS KELLY JENNINGS WALKS INTO THE RTS-JACKSON LIBRARY IN HIS CASUAL
sports clothes, he looks better suited to taking on professional wide receivers in man-to-man coverage than to tackling biblical Greek or other theological subjects. That’s for good reason — his fall semester at RTS was the first autumn in memory in which Kelly wasn’t playing football at the highest possible level at the time. From 2006 to 2011 he plied his trade as a cornerback in the National Football League, facing off against the elite pass-catchers in the sport.

But during his third year in the NFL, Kelly went through a conversion that had nothing to do with the two-point kinds against which he sometimes defended. His acceptance of Christ as his Savior put him on a path where, within less than five years, he willingly walked away from taking another shot at staying in the NFL and instead moved with his family to Jackson so he could become a student in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at RTS.

Kelly’s NFL career had begun with great promise. The Seattle Seahawks selected him in the first round of the 2006 NFL draft after he had starred at the University of Miami at a time when the Hurricanes were not far removed from college football dynasty status. A first-round NFL draft pick is expected to develop at the very least into a solid part of the starting line-up if not an All-Pro star, but Kelly never quite reached that level of success. In fact, after the 2010 season the Seahawks traded him to the Cincinnati Bengals in exchange for a sixth-round draft pick, just a small step up from being released outright.

But though Kelly’s time in Seattle did not endear him to many Seahawks fans (one commenter on an online news story announcing Kelly’s trade called him “Mr. Toast,” referring to the times he was “burned” in pass coverage), it made all the difference for him eternally. In his third year with the Seahawks, Kelly came face to face with the dichotomy between his profession of faith in Christ and the way he was living.

“When I was 12, I was baptized at a revival at church,” says the Live Oak, Fla., native in the gentle, soft-spoken manner befitting the counselor he senses a calling to become. “But I feel I did it more because my mother was pushing me to actually do it. In October 2008, I was at home at the side of my bed talking with the Lord, and my life from that moment on changed in a way that I consider to be my conversion. Ever since then I’ve been looking to Scripture and living my life according to what the Word of God says.”

Karl Payne, a Seattle-area pastor and longtime chaplain for the Seahawks, observed the change in Kelly. “He was involved in every Bible study and every prayer meeting, and started coming to my discipleship classes.” Karl says. “He learned how to share his faith, and wanted to know how to defend your faith when people are throwing it in your face. He was very, very verbal with the other players — by the time he left (Seattle), he was one of the strong guys as far as a Christian testimony on a daily basis on our team.”

Kelly’s growing biblical convictions eventually led him to a crossroads. After the 2011 season, the Bengals wanted to resign him, and other teams had contacted his agent to make offers. But a different calling had been planted in his heart.

“After my third year in the NFL, I was at a place in my life where I wasn’t sure if I wanted to continue to play football,” declares Kelly — a startling admission for someone competing at one of the highest levels in sports. “But I know that God had revealed Himself to me in an undeniable way, and I realized that God wired me to help people, and [for various reasons] I decided I wanted to be a counselor when I was done with football.”

When Kelly began checking out seminaries, he received a recommendation for RTS from Voddie Baucham, a prominent pastor in the Houston area whom he met through his involvement in the Seattle-based Pro Athletes Outreach. “When I looked into it, I saw the Marriage and Family Therapy program, and marriage and family is an area my heart just jumps for because of what seems to be happening to the family dynamic,” says Kelly, who with his wife, Fritzie, has three children. “So that’s how I ended up here in Jackson.”

That’s when, as Kelly tells it, “I knew I was done with football, and I made that clear to my agent, and he definitely tried to paint the picture, showing me all the consequences of the decision I was making. Teams were calling and trying to get me to come, but I was already accepted here to RTS, and I knew that’s where I was going. [So] I can say I didn’t leave [the NFL] because I was forced out.”

The net result of Kelly following his calling is a man at peace with the knowledge that he’s where God wants him. “I’m at a point where when I watch a football game, it doesn’t bother me or make me feel like, ‘Oh, man, I wish I was out

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“When I was playing,” he explains, “I saw myself as the guy when I tell you that on the surface it’s that way, but when you get deep into it, it’s not. [NFL players] are normal human beings trying to deal with issues they’ve never dealt with before, but in a way they don’t truly understand. The whole situation with Belcher [he murdered his girlfriend] was in the locker room, I used to look for guys who seemed to be sitting away from everyone, and sit down and have a conversation, because that seemed to go a long way.”

Kelly’s relationships with fellow players play prominently in his sense of calling to counseling ministry. “Lot of people think you have it all together, but trust me when I tell you that on the surface it’s that way, but when you get deep into it, it’s not. [NFL players] are normal human beings trying to deal with issues they’ve never dealt with before, but in a way they don’t truly understand. The whole situation with Belcher [he murdered his girlfriend and then shot himself to death in front of his head coach], you hate when it manifests itself in that way, but a lot of times that’s what it can lead to. That’s why for me, when I was in the locker room, I used to look for guys who seemed to be sitting away from everyone, and sit down and have a conversation, because that seemed to go a long way.”

Karl Payne appreciates what he saw in Kelly’s heart for those around him. “I have guys who are very boisterous, a bull in a china closet,” Karl observes. “Kelly was very good about seeing ones who were wired more like him: thoughtful, bright, never knowing for sure where they were coming from until you get to know them well enough to talk with them. He was very good about building relationships and getting guys involved. I’ve been pastoring since 1977 and have watched people play games and play church, but that’s not who Kelly is — he’s for real.”

About the MFTC Program at RTS-Jackson

Christian counseling is a highly specialized calling that requires careful training. Hurting people can heal. The Marriage & Family Therapy and Counseling program at RTS-Jackson prepares Christians who can work with God’s Word and God’s world as they minister God’s truth to the fabric of people’s lives. Under the authority of Scripture and with the foundation of a biblical worldview, students learn to see people both as individuals living before the face of God and as active members of family relationships.

Accreditation

The MFTC program is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

Solid Biblical Foundation

Faithful and vigorous biblical studies shape one’s understanding of God’s character, God’s world and His work in our lives. The MFTC program includes biblical studies courses that cover every book in the Bible as well as courses devoted to theology and the relationship between theology and therapy.

Integrated with Strong Academic Studies

The MFTC program is committed to Scripture as God’s Word and the norm for faith and practice. Each course is taught from a biblical perspective and interacts with current theory and the best available texts in the field. Students will learn to evaluate psychology in light of Scripture and to put what they have learned into practice.

Extensive Clinical Experience

MFTC students receive a strong emphasis on practical experience. The program includes at least 500 hours of face-to-face client contact (250 of which must be relational), a minimum of 100 hours of direct supervision with practicing professional therapists, and between 1,000 and 1,500 hours of total clinical experience.

With Kelly having only begun his second semester at RTS, his ultimate landing place ministry-wise isn’t completely clear, but he has an eye on returning to the NFL in some role where he would utilize his biblical counseling preparation. “Having been there and in becoming a counselor, I hope to one day tap back into the NFL in some way and say, ’I’ve done that, I’ve been there — it’s OK not to necessarily be strong all the time, but instead to know that you’re going through issues and it is OK to talk about them.’

Wherever Kelly’s ministry field ends up being, it promises to be greener than any football field on which he played.

For more detailed information, visit rts.edu/site/rtsnearyou/jackson/mft/homepage.aspx.
Dr. Bruce A. Lowe published the essay “Paul, Patronage and Benefaction: A ‘Semiotic’ Reconsideration” in the book Paul and His Social Relations.

Dr. Scott Swain co-edited New Studies in Dogmatics, a major new 15-volume series commissioned by Zondervan Academic. He also wrote the book The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson’s Trinitarian Theology (IVP Academic, due May), the article “The Mystery of the Trinity” for the online Gospels: The Magazine, and (with Michael Allen) the article “The Obedience of the Eternal Son” in the International Journal of Systematic Theology (April).

Dr. Guy Waters wrote “Emulating Our Elders” for the March issue of TableTalk, and reviewed Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views and Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, Volume 1: Introduction and 1:1 – 2:47 for the March/April issue of Themelos. Also, his A Christian’s Pocket Guide to Being Made Right with God: Understanding Justification has been republished (Christian Focus).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Inauguration in D.C.

Dr. Scott Redd Jr. was inaugurated as president of RTS-Washington, D.C., in a ceremony on April 20 at Fourth Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Md. Dr. Robert Norris, senior pastor of Fourth Presbyterian, offered the message, and a reception followed the ceremony. A full report on the inauguration will appear in the Fall M&L.

New Radio Program

Dr. Don Sweeting, president of RTS-Orlando, launched the daily radio program Take 5 this spring. It can be heard on WTLN-AM in Orlando at 6:55 a.m. and 5:55 p.m. This five-minute show is intended to help people contemplate how the gospel can help them cultivate a mind for truth and a heart for God.

Dean of Libraries

John Muether, who established the library at RTS-Orlando and has served as chief librarian for the RTS system for the past 24 years, will become dean of libraries on June 1, involving greater oversight of the development and resource sharing of the campus libraries. He will continue to administer a special curriculum initiative providing more instruction on Islam in the seminary’s M.Div. program, and continue as professor of church history at RTS-Orlando.

Expansion at RTS-Houston

RTS-Houston will move into four new classrooms, a new library and two (and eventually up to four) new offices beginning in June. The extension campus is generously and graciously hosted by Christ Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

ATS Reaffirms Accreditation

The board of commissioners of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada voted at its February meeting to reaffirm accreditation for RTS following its 10-year accreditation evaluation. First accredited in 1977, RTS is grateful to the Lord for this provision.

Faculty Discussion Panel at the Gospel Coalition

Eight RTS faculty members participated in a faculty discussion panel at the Gospel Coalition at Rosen Shingle Creek, Orlando, April 8-9. The discussions were titled “Having Confidence in the Scriptures” and “Seeing Christ in the Old Testament.” Justin Taylor, an alumnus and vice president of editorial at Crossway, and David Mathis, RTS student and executive editor at Desiring God, were the facilitators. Faculty participants were Dr. Bruce Baugus, Dr. John Currid, Dr. Charles Hill, Dr. Mike Kruger, Dr. Mark Futato, Dr. Scott Redd Jr., Dr. Derek Thomas and Dr. Miles Van Pelt. A full report is planned for the fall M&L.

OnePassion Conference

RTS-Atlanta will host the OnePassion Conference for pastoral training and renewal from May 20-22 with RTS alumnus Dr. Steve Lawson in conjunction with Ligonier Ministries. OnePassion is committed to training pastors in expository preaching firmly anchored in proclaiming God’s Word.

Houston Church Planting Network

RTS-Houston hosted the March meeting of the Houston Church Planting Network, at which RTS alumnus Dr. Tom Wood presented sessions on “How to Plant a Generous Church” and “Coaching Church Planters Through the Various Seasons of a Church Plant.” Over 50 church planters and network representatives from various denominations attended. Dr. Wood is the director of the North Georgia Church Planting Network and of ministries that help churches grow and multiply.

GRADUATIONS

Atlanta

May 25, 10 a.m., on campus. Speaker: Dr. Sam Larsen, RTS professor of missions emeritus.

Charlotte

May 25, 11 a.m., Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, N.C. Speaker: T. David Gordon, professor of religion and Greek at Grove City College and professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Jackson

May 18, 10 a.m., First Presbyterian Church, Jackson. Speaker: Dr. Sean Lucas, senior pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, Miss.

Orlando

May 24, 7:30 p.m., St. Andrews Chapel, Sanford, Fla. Speaker: The Hon. William (Bill) Armstrong, president of Colorado Christian University and former U.S. Senator.

Washington

May 31, 7:30 p.m., McLean Presbyterian Church, McLean, Va. Speaker: Dr. Richard Gaffin, professor of biblical and systematic theology emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary.
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