"THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH"

by Dr. Derek Thomas

Also in This Issue:

Dr. Ligon Duncan on the Relevance of the Reformation Today
John Calvin From the Old Testament on Assurance • New Executive Director in Atlanta
A MIND FOR TRUTH.
A HEART FOR GOD.
A LIFE FOR MINISTRY.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Ministry & Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chancellor’s Message</td>
<td>Dr. Ligon Duncan explains why the Protestant Reformation is still relevant 500 years later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>Learn about the new executive director in Atlanta and other happenings across RTS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Calvin on Assurance</td>
<td>by Dr. J. Nicholas Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>“The Just Shall Live by Faith”</td>
<td>by Dr. Derek Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Making His Mark</td>
<td>Alex Mark has planted a church in his hometown in South Carolina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Rooted in the Gospel</td>
<td>Cameron Cole leads children’s ministry while working on an RTS Distance M.Div. degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Researching the Reformation</td>
<td>Interview with Dr. Jon Balserak, Reformation expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>RTS at Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STAFF**

- **Publisher**: Dr. Ligon Duncan
- **Editor in Chief**: Brad Tisdale
- **Managing Editor**: Paul Schwarz
- **Art Director**: Bill Henderson
- **Photography Director**: Matt McQuade
- **Editorial Assistants**: Catherine Bruce, Cheryl McCullouch

**Who We Are**

Reformed Theological Seminary exists to serve the church by preparing its leaders through a globally accessible program of theological education based on the authority of the inerrant Word of God and committed to the Reformed faith. This program promotes biblical fidelity, confessional integrity and academic excellence, and seeks to prepare students marked by “A mind for truth. A heart for God. A life for ministry.”

As such, Ministry & Leadership seeks to show how God is working through the ministries of RTS graduates, faculty members and students. Our goal is that readers will become partners with RTS through prayer, financial giving, educational experience and student referral, as well as providing placement opportunities.

Copyright 2017
Reformed Theological Seminary.

All rights reserved. For reprint permission, please call 601-923-1643 or email cbruce@rts.edu.

All Scripture references from the English Standard Version except where noted.

Read the digital version of the magazine at www.rts.edu/MandL.

Reformed Theological Seminary
Jackson, Orlando, Charlotte, Atlanta, Washington D.C., Houston, Dallas, New York City, Memphis, Global

800-543-2703 • rts@rts.edu • www.rts.edu

www.rts.edu
This year marks the 500th year of the Protestant Reformation. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed to the Church door in Wittenberg, Germany, 95 theses (theological propositions) he wanted to debate. That date is usually given as the starting point of what became the Reformation era of Western Christendom.

In our time there are all sorts of attitudes toward this event. In the 19th and 20th centuries, theological liberals hailed the Reformation as the coming of an age of reason, and the throwing off of the shackles of superstition that held back the progress of mankind.

Today, however, many liberals look at the Reformation with lament, viewing it as a force for division and intolerance. My, how things change. But even among some evangelical Protestant Christians, who are the heirs of the Reformation, there is ambivalence. There are various reasons for this: Some evangelicals tend to suffer from historical amnesia, some yearn to move past the past and into a new experience of Christian unity, while others have a penchant to view history as irrelevant.

So why should we remember the Reformation with thankfulness, honoring the heritage we have received from it? Well, in short, because the Reformation still matters — in positive and important ways.

First, the Reformation addressed the question of ultimate religious authority and the knowledge of God. What is the sole, final authority for faith and life? The Reformers answered: Scripture. God makes Himself known by His Word. God brings His church into being by His Word. God reveals Himself, rules His people, and shows the way of salvation by His Word. The Bible — not the church, not the Pope, not human reason, not religious experience — is the final authority for faith and practice in the Christian life. We need this teaching as much today as 500 years ago.

Stephen Prothero, a famous scholar of world religion, has observed that one of the things that makes religions different is the big question they are trying to answer or the big problem they see in the world. Well, the Reformers taught that the big problem in the world is us! Our sin is the problem. We have met the enemy and he is us. This has massive implications for the rest of Christian theology, and the Reformers understood that.

Meanwhile, we live in a time where there is, simultaneously, a diminished consciousness of sin and an increased evidence of it. I remember a Scottish professor of mine saying, “Today we ask ‘Why pain?’ but in the 16th century they asked ‘Why sin?’” Our modern outlook is fundamentally man-centered, as opposed to the God-centered view taught by the Reformers.

Of course, the solution to the problem of sin is even more important, and the Reformers answered: God’s grace! Their answer to the problem of our sin and our deserving of God’s judgment was not something they found in us: not our works, not our righteousness, not our trying to be good, not our best intentions and efforts — “nothing...
in our hands we bring, simply to His cross we cling.” Our problem is inside us (our sin), but the solution is outside us (in Christ’s death and resurrection). To paraphrase Jonathan Edwards, “The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that made it necessary.”

This question is important for every age and culture: How can we be saved? How can we be right with God? The Reformers answered — by God alone, by Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. This is the great issue of justification, and what the Reformers said is still desperately relevant to the church in the world today.

The question of identity has been roiling in our culture for over a century, and even in the recent debates about gender and sexuality, people are searching to answer: Who am I? And the Reformers bequeathed a trio of doctrines to help us answer it: creation, the Imago Dei and union with Christ.

Contrary to naturalistic evolutionary thought, we are not higher animals, but created by the one, true and living God to be His image in this world. Because all humans are created by God in His own image, they are image bearers and must be treated with dignity and respect. Furthermore, as believers, our fundamental identity is found in union with Christ. Whatever our background, culture, ethnicity or sex may be, we are fundamentally “in Christ,” and thus one with Him, adopted sons/heirs, brothers and sister to one another, saved for communion with Him.

Along with the question of identity (who am I?) is the related question: What am I here to do? What is my purpose in life? And the Reformers gave a great (and biblical!) answer to that question: we are here to worship God, both as His glad, redeemed people, gathering Lord’s Day after Lord’s Day for His praise, and also in every part of everyday life. In short, we were created to glorify God in everything we do. That means that Christianity isn’t only important for eternity; it’s important for now. The Bible speaks to our life Monday to Saturday, not just to Sunday. God cares about our vocations, our love for our neighbor, and our involvement in society and culture. He cares about it all (and it all belongs to Him and owes Him tribute).

In all these areas and more, the Reformers speak to us faithfully and helpfully about vitally important things we need to know, about which our age is not nearly so wise.

Five hundred years after the Protestant Reformation, where do evangelicals stand, and what do we stand for? On Oct. 31, 2017, the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing the 95 Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, leading scholars and pastors will celebrate the confessional legacy of the Reformation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary during a three-day conference, “Here We Stand.”

Speakers from Southern Seminary, Ligonier Ministries, and Reformed Theological Seminary will explore why the Reformation was necessary, what fueled the movement’s success, and the challenges that remain for evangelicals today. Join us for this historic commemoration on Southern’s beautiful campus, Oct. 31 – Nov. 2, as we proclaim and affirm with Luther’s boldness the Reformation truths on which we stand.

Reformed Theological Seminary will be represented by Ligon Duncan, Derek Thomas, Mike Kruger, and Guy Richard.

JOIN US OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 2
REGISTER NOW ONLINE: EVENTS.SBTS.EDU
A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN ATLANTA

Dr. Guy Richard accepted a call to serve as the executive director of RTS Atlanta starting June 1. The ordained PCA teaching elder served as senior minister at First Presbyterian Church in Gulfport, Miss., from 2005 until his appointment at RTS. He earned an engineering degree from Auburn University, where he was converted to Christ through the influence of RTS alumnus Paul Hahn and Reformed University Fellowship (see “Called to Serve” in the Spring 2017 issue). Dr. Richard (right) later earned an M.Div. from RTS Jackson and a Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh. He and his wife, Jennifer, have three children: Schyler, Jane Barton and Ellie.

“I am delighted that my good friend Guy Richard has agreed to lead RTS Atlanta into the future,” says Dr. Ligon Duncan, RTS chancellor and CEO. “He is a pastor-theologian with strong gifts for teaching and leadership. He is well acquainted with and connected in Atlanta, and has taught for RTS at several of our campuses over the years, with much appreciation by our students. Guy is a churchman par excellence, and his love for and commitment to the local church was demonstrated extraordinarily when he went to a congregation devastated and dispersed by Hurricane Katrina, and by God’s grace, was used to build it up into a thriving flock again. He embodies our aspiration to cultivate in our students a mind for truth, a heart for God and a life for ministry.”

In addition to giving leadership to RTS Atlanta, Dr. Richard will serve as assistant professor of systematic theology. “I am very excited to be joining the RTS family and look forward to the opportunity to serve the next generation of leaders in the Lord’s church,” he says. “The Atlanta campus already has a rich legacy of equipping ministers and church leaders, and I am honored to be invited to help build upon the firm foundation that has been laid.”

That firm foundation flows from the work of John Sowell, who retired this summer after serving RTS Atlanta for 17 years, the last nine as president. “It has been my privilege to plant, grow and nurture this campus,” he says. “It has been an amazing blessing to interact with literally thousands of choice individuals who have been united in their desire to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through their commitment to theological education. I am pleased that we have identified the right person to take the Atlanta campus to the next level, and I am working with Dr. Richard to facilitate a smooth transition.” In appreciation for his service, Dr. Duncan has recommended to the RTS Board of Trustees to honor John with the title of president emeritus.

For more information about RTS Atlanta, visit www.rts.edu/atlanta.

AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP

In an effort to better prepare gospel ministers in an increasingly ethnically diverse world, RTS is launching the African American Leadership Scholarship beginning in the 2018-19 academic year. The scholarship will benefit African-American students who have experience in and a heart for ministry in African-American, multiethnic or urban contexts, and will apply to any degree program at any campus.

With the scholarship, RTS is reaching out to a specific ethnic demographic in its various local contexts. The seminary has campuses in cities with substantial African-American populations: Jackson 80%, Memphis 63%, Atlanta 52%, Washington 47% and Charlotte 34%.

“The African American Leadership Scholarship will provide the opportunity for more African Americans to study at RTS, where they will become well equipped to serve and provide Christian leadership within their realm of ministry,” says Dr. Jerry Young, an RTS Jackson alumnus who pastors New Hope Baptist Church in Jackson and serves as president of the National Baptist Convention.

For more information about the scholarship, visit www.rts.edu/aals. Those who wish to contribute financially to this initiative may do so through www.rts.edu/give by noting “AALS” in the Special Notes or Instructions field.
KEVIN DEYOUNG’S TRANSITION

Kevin DeYoung has been appointed assistant professor of systematic theology at RTS Charlotte as of June 1. Formerly a chancellor’s professor for RTS, Kevin (above, second from right) is now a residential, voting member of the Charlotte faculty, and will teach several courses each academic year.

His appointment to the RTS Charlotte faculty corresponds to his call as the new senior pastor of Christ Covenant Church in Charlotte, effective June 19. Planted by noted PCA pastor and RTS adjunct professor Harry Reeder in 1983, Christ Covenant has functioned as one of the flagship congregations in the PCA.

“Kevin reminds me of a young R.C. Sproul or James Montgomery Boice,” says Dr. Ligon Duncan, RTS chancellor and CEO. “He is a theologian, churchman, writer, preacher, teacher and leader. He brings a rich pastoral experience to the task of theological education and a sharp theological mind to the work of seminary education.”

“I could not be more thrilled with Kevin’s joint appointment to Christ Covenant Church and RTS Charlotte,” adds Dr. Michael Kruger, RTS Charlotte president. “This allows Kevin to have a foot in both the church and the academy, embodying our vision of raising up pastor-scholars who will lead the next generation of the church. This appointment will be a great blessing to both the seminary and the city of Charlotte.”

For more about RTS Charlotte, visit www.rts.edu/charlotte.

CHANCELLOR’S PROFESSORS APPOINTED

In the RTS system, chancellor’s professor status is a rank of distinction for a regular, voting faculty member who teaches at multiple RTS campuses, thus benefiting a greater number of students. Four professors have taken on or will be taking on this designation:

Dr. Sean Lucas, formerly professor of church history at RTS Jackson, and now chancellor’s professor of church history as well as senior pastor at Independent Presbyterian Church in Memphis, Tenn.

Dr. Derek Thomas, formerly Robert Strong Professor of Systematic and Pastoral Theology at RTS Atlanta, and now chancellor’s professor of systematic and pastoral theology while continuing as senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, S.C.

Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, formerly an adjunct professor and now chancellor’s professor of systematic theology along with being the evening preacher at St. Peter’s Free Church of Scotland in Dundee.

Dr. John Currid, currently Carl W. McMurray Professor of Old Testament at RTS Charlotte, will become chancellor’s professor of Old Testament effective June 1, 2018.

WISDOM WEDNESDAY QUOTE

“The Lord is always up to something even when the culture is dark, dangerous and opposing. He is always preparing the way to lift up the name of Jesus.”

— Dr. Ligon Duncan, Chancellor and CEO
DR. CARL AND KAREN ELLIS JOIN THE RTS FAMILY

Dr. Carl Ellis has been named assistant to the chancellor, senior fellow of the African American Leadership Initiative and provost’s professor of theology and culture. As leader of the RTS-wide AALI, Dr. Ellis will teach as well as collaborate with campus presidents, deans and faculty to cultivate mentoring of students who aspire to serve in the black church and/or multi-ethnic contexts, as well as promote fellowship for African-American students. He will work directly with the chancellor as RTS seeks to help develop minority leadership in the Reformed community for this generation and the next, and increase its institutional diversity.

In addition, Karen Ellis, a Ph.D. candidate and an expert in the persecuted church and world Christianity, has been named Cannada Fellow for World Christianity. A Cannada Fellow is a distinguished visiting scholar honored for expertise in particular fields of study. Cannada Fellows lecture at various RTS campuses, contribute to publications (especially the Reformed Faith & Practice online journal), receive office and library privileges at an RTS campus during sabbatical or study leave, and more. The Cannada Fellow program is named in honor of Dr. Ric Cannada, RTS chancellor emeritus, in view of his substantial contributions to the mission of RTS and his strategic involvement in spreading the Reformed faith around the world.

MATTHEW BRYANT

Matthew Bryant has accepted the call to serve as the senior vice president for development at RTS. He has dedicated his career to serving in higher education. After graduating from Covenant College, he served there in various leadership roles for 14 years. Most recently he has served as vice president of advancement for Chattanooga Christian School.

In addition to working with Dr. Ligon Duncan, RTS chancellor and CEO, Matthew (right) will provide leadership to RTS in all its fundraising efforts. The active member of Rock Creek Fellowship (PCA) in Lookout Mountain, Ga., is married to Jocelyn and they have four children: Mitchell, Davis, Bobby and Lindy Mae.

“I am so thankful to have Matthew as a part of our team here at RTS,” Dr. Duncan says. “His understanding and experience in cultivating Christian generosity for the work of God’s kingdom, and his love of the mission and commitments of RTS, will all be tremendous assets to us. He has a passion to share that vision with our partners who support this vital work.”

WISDOM WEDNESDAY QUOTE

“God’s Word is delivered to us, and it is the job of God’s people to not pick and choose, but to receive with gratitude what was given. Who chose the Gospels? God.”

— Dr. Charles Hill, John R. Richardson Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity
The biennial Together for the Gospel conference for pastors and church leaders will take place April 11-13, 2018, in Louisville, Ky. Registration is now open at www.t4g.org, where conference details are being posted as they are confirmed.

RTS chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan co-founded T4G (the story of its founding can be seen in “The Conference Phenomenon” article in the Spring/Summer 2016 issue of M&L at www.rts.edu/MandL).

Kevin DeYoung, newly appointed assistant professor of systematic theology at RTS Charlotte (see page 7), is a regular speaker. T4G seeks to reaffirm and reiterate the central doctrine of the Christian faith, encouraging local churches around the world to do the same.

T4G 2018: REGISTRATION OPEN

FACULTY OPENINGS

RTS has declared professorial openings related to the Atlanta, Charlotte, Washington D.C., Houston and Dallas campuses. They are as follows:

Old Testament, RTS Atlanta, to be filled immediately — CVs to Dr. Richard Belcher at rbelcher@rts.edu, more information at rts.edu/atlanta/newsevents

Old Testament, RTS Charlotte, to be filled June 1, 2018 at the earliest — CVs to Dr. Belcher at rbelcher@rts.edu, more information at rts.edu/charlotte/newsevents

New Testament, RTS Washington D.C., to be filled June 1, 2018 at the earliest — CVs to Dr. Howard Griffith at hgriffith@rts.edu, more information at rts.edu/washington/newsevents

New Testament and Old Testament (two openings), RTS Dallas and RTS Houston, most likely with one professor living in Dallas and the other in Houston, both professors teaching at both campuses, CVs to Dr. Guy Waters at gwaters@rts.edu

JOHN REED MILLER LECTURES IN JACKSON

The annual John Reed Miller Preaching Lectures will return to RTS Jackson October 17-19. This year’s lecturer will be Rico Tice (above), senior minister (evangelism) at All Souls, Langham Place in London and a contributor to the course material for the popular Christianity Explored and Life Explored series.

Rico’s messages will be “What Is the Gospel, and How Do We Preach It?”, “Where Is the Power, and How Do We Start?”, “What Is the Pain Line, and How Do We Cross It?”, and “Motivating the Church Family for Evangelism.” He will also deliver an off-site lecture at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, where John Reed Miller, who participated in the founding of RTS, once pastored.

More information about the lecture series may be found at www.rts.edu/jackson/newsevents.

WISDOM WEDNESDAY QUOTE

“In times of stress, trial and difficulty — at times and in short seasons — God seems to withdraw the presence of His countenance to make us want Him more, to desire Him more, and to be glad when He returns.”

— Dr. Derek Thomas, Chancellor’s Professor of Systematic and Pastoral Theology
Ongoing Ministry in Indonesia

RTS chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan will visit Indonesia in November in conjunction with chancellor emeritus Dr. Ric Cannada’s ongoing ministry there. Here’s what’s planned so far for Dr. Duncan’s trip:

- Speaking at a conference for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation at a church in Jakarta, the congregation Dr. Cannada (above) helped establish just outside Jakarta
- Preaching on a Sunday at Karawaci Presbyterian Church, the congregation
- Speaking at the Tuesday morning faculty chapel at Pelita Harapan University
- Being accompanied by members of the RTS Board of Trustees
- Hosting, along with Dr. Cannada, a delegation from a large indigenous church movement in another Asian country

Remembering the Reformation in Orlando

Throughout the year, in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, RTS Orlando has been celebrating and exploring the biblical roots and historical development of the Reformation. Events have included:

- Dr. Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School and noted Reformation scholar, delivering the annual Kistemaker Academic Lectures in March on “Retrieval for the Sake of Renewal: The Witness of Four Reformers”
- Dr. Michael Allen (right), John Dyer Trimble Professor of Systematic Theology, teaching an elective course called Reformation Readings of Paul
- A Summer Reformation Lectures series at First Presbyterian Church of Orlando featuring “Reforming Preaching” by Dr. David Swanson, “Reforming Worship” by Dr. Ligon Duncan, “Reforming the Care of Souls” by Dr. Jonathan Linebaugh and “Reforming Reading” by Dr. Wesley Hill
- Dr. Linebaugh, lecturer in New Testament at the University of Cambridge, teaching a summer elective course called “Martin Luther: Theology for Ministry”
- The annual Current Read program on campus featuring Luther on the Christian Life by Dr. Carl Trueman from Westminster Theological Seminary, with Dr. Trueman speaking at Current Read events

For more information, visit www.rts.edu/site/rtsnearyou/orlando/500_anniversary.aspx.
The first graduation ceremony for RTS New York City took place on September 8 at Redeemer Presbyterian Church’s Upper West Side location on 83rd Street. RTS chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan preached the sermon, and Redeemer founding pastor and RTS guest faculty member Dr. Timothy Keller (right) gave the charge to the graduates.

Graduation was preceded the day before by the convocation and kickoff for the City Ministry Year (part of the Redeemer City to City church-planting initiative, with which RTS has a partnership) at Redeemer’s offices in Midtown Manhattan, at which Dr. Keller spoke.

For more information about RTS New York City, visit www.rts.edu/newyork.

“People wrestle with the injustice in the world, but the thing that should shock us is that Christ died on the cross for unworthy sinners. God is not obligated to save anyone. But in His grace, He sent His own Son to pay for our sin. The better question is ‘Why could God be willing to sacrifice His own Son for sinful people?’”

— Dr. Richard Belcher, John D. and Frances M. Gwin Professor of Old Testament

Wisdom Wednesday is a weekly series of videos where RTS faculty members and friends of the seminary address relevant matters of the Christian faith with truth, candor and grace. Check back each week at rts.edu/site/wisdomwednesday for a video from RTS.
The famed Reformer turns to an Old Testament prophet to affirm the doctrine of election.

by Dr. J. Nicholas Reid
If one of the key questions of the Reformation is “What must I do to be saved?”, then a related question of almost equal importance is “How can I know that I am saved?” Or to put it differently, how can one find assurance? Historically, the church has offered a number of answers to the question of assurance, and one has to look no further than the 16th century to find writings that affirm and deny that believers can even possess it. For example, writing in the middle of the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent treated assurance as sinful presumption:

If any one saith, that he will for certain, of an absolute and infallible certainty, have that great gift of perseverance unto the end, unless he have learned this by special revelation; let him be anathema.

John Calvin, however, writing around the same time in his Institutes of the Christian Religion, had a very different notion about the assurance of salvation.

Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

While Calvin did not envision an assurance untouched by fear and doubt, he held that it was something that believers possessed by faith. If assurance can be possessed, then how does Calvin envision it taking place? To answer this question, consider Calvin’s doctrine of assurance from his lecture on Zechariah 2:11–3:4. Here, Calvin connects the basis of our assurance to the Word of God and the doctrine of predestination.

For the modern reader, the doctrine of predestination (or election) might be surprising. It has often been maligned as undermining the motivation for mission and assurance. These two responses to the doctrine of election can be connected on the basic level of our not knowing who the elect are. For Calvin, however, the grounds for our assurance and our hope in missions flow from God’s sovereignty over salvation.

Calvin states that Zechariah was sent to encourage “weak minds.” After the destruction of the temple and the exile, the Lord sent Zechariah, whose name fittingly means, “Yah(weh) has remembered.” After the Babylonian exile, the people of God returned to the Promised Land in order to rebuild the destroyed temple and start their lives again. Zechariah 3 contains a scene where Joshua, the high priest, appears in filthy garments and the accuser, Satan, stands accusing him before the Lord.

In seeking to address this text, Calvin does not wish to understate the difficulty of spiritual warfare. Although Satan was present, Calvin highlights that God was there too. While spiritual warfare is real, Calvin asserts that our victory is certain. This certainty cannot come from anything found within us. Instead, we may be assured because of our adoption by God in His eternal purposes. Calvin teaches this, since the response to Satan’s accusations is God’s choice, not anything found

Continued on page 14
within Joshua himself. After considering the spiritual warfare represented in the text, Calvin writes:

But we are at the same time reminded, that we are not to regard what we have deserved in order to gain help from God; for this wholly depends on his gratuitous adoption. Hence, though we are unworthy that God should fight for us, yet his election is sufficient, as he proclaims war against Satan in our behalf. Let us then learn to rely on the gratuitous adoption of God, if we would boldly exult against Satan and all his assaults. It hence follows, that those men who at this day obscure, and seek, as far as they can, to extinguish the doctrine of election, are enemies to the human race; for they strive their utmost to subvert every assurance of salvation.

For Calvin, if salvation is not rooted in the eternal purposes of God, one cannot have assurance. In fact, he denies that we should look to what we deserve to gain help from God. In this context, Calvin’s doctrine of depravity is in view here. If we consider what we deserve before God, then we are without hope. Rather than looking to ourselves, we must fix our eyes on God and His gracious adoption of us. Although we do not deserve God to fight for us, His gracious choice is sufficient.

When Satan is accusing Joshua, the high priest, Calvin understands this to represent an attack on the priesthood. During the exile, the priesthood lost its splendor and many questions arose from this hard providence. Jeremiah 33:14-26 captures the idea that the exile could lead to the assumption that God had forsaken His covenant with David to rule and that the Levites would no longer serve as priests. But God was not forsaking His people. Calvin connects this idea to Satan’s attempts to undermine the priesthood of Jesus: “is it possible for thee to pull down from heaven him whom thou coudest not detain in hell.” Although the priesthood of Joshua stood in tattered rags and justly accused because of the unrighteousness of Israel, God was not finished with His people.

In his comments on an earlier verse, Calvin provides further insight into his doctrine of assurance. When discussing Zechariah 2:11, Calvin differentiates between knowledge about God gained through experience and the assurance based on the Word of God:
Something has also been said on this sentence: the Prophet means, that it would be evident by what would really take place, that these things had not been in vain foretold, as the prophecy would be openly fulfilled before the eyes of all. Then shalt thou know, not by the assurance of faith, which is grounded on the word, but by actual experience.

This experiential knowledge comes from the Lord fulfilling the word of the prophet that then testifies to the truth that the Lord sent Zechariah: “...and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee” (2:11). This distinction between experience and the assurance of faith is important, since the immediate experience of the people of God was anything but encouraging. Nevertheless, in the face of many difficulties, the people of God could rest assured because they lived by a faith rooted in the Word of God and not by sight.

For some, the doctrine of predetermination undermines assurance. They experience spiritual angst, asking “Am I elect or not?” Calvin, however, views the doctrine in an entirely different way. For Calvin, election does not lead to complacency, nor does it undermine assurance. Instead, it is a call to arms that we can fight the good fight with confidence. This is seen in the closing prayer of his lecture: “...O grant, that we, being endued with thy power, may boldly fight against Satan, and never doubt but that thou wilt finally give us the victory...” So how can we gain assurance? By taking our eyes off ourselves and looking by faith to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Five hundred years after the Protestant Reformation, where do evangelicals stand, and what do they stand for? Starting October 31, the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing the 95 Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, leading scholars and pastors, including representatives from RTS, will answer that question in celebration of the confessional legacy of the Reformation. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary will host, in partnership with RTS and Ligonier Ministries, a three-day conference called Here We Stand.

Speakers will explore why the Reformation was necessary, what fueled the movement’s success, and the challenges that remain for evangelicals today. RTS-affiliated speakers will include chancellor and CEO Dr. Ligon Duncan (see page 4), chancellor’s professor of systematic and pastoral theology Dr. Derek Thomas (see pages 7 and 16-19), Doctor of Ministry alumnus Dr. Steven Lawson, and adjunct professor of church history Dr. Stephen Nichols.

The registration refund deadline is October 1 for this historic commemoration and proclamation of Martin Luther’s bold affirmation of the Reformation truths on which we stand.

Visit events.sbts.edu/herewestand to register.

Dr. Reid is assistant professor of Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern studies at RTS Orlando, where he is also director of the Distance Master of Divinity program. Learn more about the Distance M.Div. on pages 24-27 (“Rooted in the Gospel”).
by Dr. Derek Thomas

“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”

Galatians 2:15-16
proclaims Sola Fide,
a hallmark of the
Reformation.

Writing to the Galatians, the apostle marked a definitive line in the sand. Obedience to “the works of the law” cannot secure our justification before God. He explains:

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified (2:15-16).

These words occur in a passage where Paul recounts an incident in Antioch when Peter suddenly reversed his practice of table fellowship with Gentiles. This reversal came about because of a visit to Antioch by the most important people in the church in Jerusalem — “mother church.” Prejudices and suspicions had gotten the better of

The 16th-century Reformation was necessitated by more than one issue, but among the chief concerns was the doctrine of justification — how sinners are made right with God. Medieval Catholicism insisted that justification came through ritualized performance from cradle to grave in a sacramental treadmill. Martin Luther insisted that Scripture taught another view. Justification, he proclaimed, is by faith alone in Christ alone, apart from any works of the law.

Luther drew courage from Paul. He wrote to the Galatians, the apostle marked a definitive line in the sand. Obedience to “the works of the law” cannot secure our justification before God. He explains:

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified (2:15-16).

These words occur in a passage where Paul recounts an incident in Antioch when Peter suddenly reversed his practice of table fellowship with Gentiles. This reversal came about because of a visit to Antioch by the most important people in the church in Jerusalem — “mother church.” Prejudices and suspicions had gotten the better of
the leadership in Jerusalem. What exactly were Peter and Paul saying in Antioch? Was it true that they were saying that one did not have to be circumcised in order to be saved? Surely not? If true, the consequences for the largely Jewish church in Jerusalem were very grave indeed.

Ham Sandwiches, Anyone?

Peter’s behavior at Antioch was the last straw, and Paul said so publicly — to his face. The event was spectacular — a clash of apostolic Titans. In refusing to eat lunch at the same table with Gentile Christians because it would offend the heavy-weights from Jerusalem, Peter’s behavior managed to offend Paul (not to mention the Gentile Christians). Peter’s behavior was reprehensible and offensive in the extreme. His actions reflected more than petty racism (though it was certainly that); his conduct denied what lies at the heart of the gospel itself.

And what was it, exactly, that so offended Paul? In refusing to fellowship with the Gentiles, Peter was in effect affirming that obedience to the requirements of ceremonial laws — laws respecting what a person may eat, and more importantly, circumcision — was necessary in order to be considered right with God.

Peter knew better, of course. His actions portrayed more cowardice than conviction. But he had made a public spectacle of himself, and those who observed it might draw from it conclusions utterly detrimental to the gospel. Paul had no choice, therefore, but to withstand him. Peter had behaved in a manner that could only be described as “hypocrisy” (2:13). He had said one thing, and now done another. And the ugly mask (the meaning of the

Continued on page 18
word “hypocrisy” in Greek) of political correctness toward Jews from Jerusalem hid the real face of what his actions demonstrated: uncircumcised Gentiles were damned after all.

Paul explained his own response carefully. He was not denying his own Jewish background or the privileges that went along with it: “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners” (2:15). However, to be a Gentile was synonymous with being “a sinner.” Jews, too, were by nature sinners, but Gentiles especially so. Devoid of the most basic privileges of the gospel—what Paul elsewhere terms “the oracles of God” (Romans 3:2)—Gentiles were no better than street dogs (cf. Mark 7:27).

But to suggest that Gentiles needed to obey “the works of the law” (2:16) was utterly wrong—so wrong that Paul was prepared to go against the hierarchy of Jerusalem and even Peter. And remember, at this point Peter and James were considered far superior in the apostolic pecking order than Paul.

New Perspectives
What did Paul mean when he said “a person is not justified by works of the law” (2:16)?

In our own time, the phrase “works of the law” (cf. Rom. 3:28; Galatians 3:2, 5, 10) has occasioned considerable debate. The so-called “New Perspective on Paul” (and it would be more accurate to speak of “perspectives” in the plural) has loudly complained that the Reformation misunderstood Paul on this issue. For our part, though this modern debate has highlighted some important and sometimes neglected issues (the issue of racial prejudice, for example), we remain convinced of the rightness of the 16th-century Reformation understanding of Paul.

For Martin Luther, the issues raised by medieval Catholicism and the question of justification were precisely parallel to those faced by Paul in his encounter with Pharisaism. Pharisees sought reassurance of salvation through obeying the law (specific laws like circumcision, food laws and the Sabbath). Obedience to “the works of the law” ensured the crediting of merit to the sinner’s account, credit that secured justification. In crass terms, a person is justified by obedience to the law. Medieval Catholics viewed things in similar terms. In place of kosher food laws and circumcision, the Roman church provided its own list of requirements, and parsed a similar treadmill of sacramental obedience in order to be justified.

Pharisees and Catholicism
Whether the Pharisees or medieval Catholicism, the end is the same: a person is justified by works done and appropriate merit consigned. Thus, Luther, in his monumentally important commentary on Galatians, responded forcefully in his observation on Galatians 2:15, “without faith all things are deadly.”

For Luther, our obedience is deadly. Obedience on our part cannot merit justification. It is not a matter of obedience to this or that law, but the whole of it. As Paul goes on to say, “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law” (Galatians 5:3).

And Luther gets to the heart of the issue in a comment on verse 16:

For Luther, our obedience is deadly.
Obedience on our part cannot merit justification.
human being is hardwired for self-justification. It is an instinct, something with which we are born. And nothing could be more wrong. For every effort on our part falls short of what the law requires: perfection!

Salvation must be by grace alone through faith alone, or else it is unachievable.

Not faith plus works.
Not works plus a little bit of grace.
But faith alone apart from works.
And by grace alone without any consideration of merit on our part.

This understanding of justification was vital for Luther. He explained: “Because if this article [of justification] stands, the church stands; if this article collapses, the church collapses.”

Paul thought so, too, and was prepared to go up against the most important men of his day to defend it. It wasn’t simply a matter of his reputation, or anyone else’s for that matter. It was an issue that lay at the very heart of the gospel.

The Reformation was about many things, but it was first and foremost about getting the gospel right. Luther saw medieval theology and practice as failing in providing an answer to the most basic question of all: how is a person saved from the wrath of God? The answer, he urged, was: The just shall live by faith.
In 1940 Thomas Wolfe’s *You Can’t Go Home Again* was published. The legendary author clearly didn’t have Alex Mark in mind when he wrote the novel.

Born and raised in Beaufort, S.C., Alex and his family returned to his hometown in 2013 to plant what became First Scots Presbyterian Church. The Marks arrived there after Alex completed a Master of Divinity degree at RTS Charlotte.

Alex was born in Beaufort to a Jewish family (quick Carolinas geography lesson: Beaufort, S.C., is pronounced BYOO-furt, while Beaufort, N.C. goes by BO-furt). He attended a Christian-affiliated college, acknowledging with a laugh that when asked why a young Jewish man would go to a Christian-affiliated school, “I said they had great parties. But I wasn’t a believer [in Jesus yet].”

 Providentially, Alex met fellow students in his dormitory who were “very diligent in sharing the gospel with me — very patient, very understanding.” After hearing the gospel for six months, Alex began looking through the Gospel of John at the request of his resident adviser, “I

Continued on page 22

by PAUL SCHWARZ
thought there was no way that I could live up to God’s standards,” Alex confesses. “I just knew I was a very broken sinner, and I came to know the Lord.”

As God redirected his heart, Alex’s career aspirations were redirected to Christian education. His first job after graduation was at First Presbyterian Church in Dillon, S.C., as director of Christian education. Later he became headmaster at Dillon Christian School. During this time Alex and his wife, Stefany (whom he met in Dillon), started attending Reedy Creek Presbyterian Church, a small congregation in a farming community just outside of Dillon. Unbeknownst to him, this set the stage for his calling to pastoral ministry and to RTS Charlotte.

Reedy Creek is where RTS Charlotte professor emeritus Dr. Douglas Kelly preaches on Sundays. “I don’t remember Dr. Kelly saying to me I had gifts for ministry, but I just remember him giving me opportunities to fill the pulpit on occasion when he would be gone,” Alex recalls, adding with a laugh, “I would preach and the people would be incredibly patient with some very bad sermons.”

Under Dr. Kelly’s tutelage, Alex began to develop his gifts and perspective. “There were a lot of things I didn’t understand about ministry,” he admits. “I didn’t understand what we would call the ordinary means of grace — how God works through the Word, sacrament and prayer. But Dr. Kelly, instead of being reactively corrective, was proactively teaching me Reformed theology through his preaching and through our time together. For being one of the most intelligent people in the world, he brought it down to my level.”

As Alex began teaching a Bible study at Reedy Creek and continued to preach, “I realized there was so much joy for me in the pulpit that I thought this was what the Lord was calling me to do for the rest of my life.”

The Marks left Dillon for RTS Charlotte in 2010. Knowing that Dr. Kelly was nearing retirement (which came to pass in 2016) and wanting every minute with him he could, Alex became his teaching assistant. Besides the ongoing discipleship by Dr. Kelly, Alex’s time at RTS “gave me the conviction, which Dr. Kelly had started to build, that the Word is enough in pastoral ministry. My job in preaching is not to add more to it, but to be drowned out by the Word.”

Alex also learned the pastor-scholar model from his professors: “These men are scholars, but yet they understand pastoral min-

---

**“THE WORD IS ENOUGH IN PASTORAL MINISTRY. MY JOB IN PREACHING IS NOT TO ADD MORE TO IT, BUT TO BE DROWNED OUT BY THE WORD.”**

— ALEX MARK
istry really well. They understand the nuances of difficult situations. When Dr. Kelly first went to Reedy Creek, the church wasn’t in the greatest of shape spiritually, so he knew what it was like to preach the Word and feel like it was falling on deaf ears at times, but to pray and believe that the Lord would change hearts, which He did.”

For all his preparation at RTS, though, Alex had a roadblock to overcome: his own attitude toward church planting. “When I was in seminary, I said to the Lord that I would go anywhere except please don’t make me a church planter,” he admits. “Because there’s a model of church planting that’s been accepted in broad evangelicalism and even in the Reformed world that is very personality-centered. I get the impression that some people are looking for church planters with the ability to read culture more than the ability to read Scripture. I remember thinking, ‘Lord, if I want to use all these tools I’ve been given at RTS, I’m not sure I can do that in a traditional church plant setting.’”

That’s when a group of people back in Beaufort began seeking help in establishing a theologically sound Presbyterian church in Alex’s hometown. Becoming aware of the church plant through a newspaper article, Alex called some of the people involved with it and offered to help them in any way he could. What began as helping fill the pulpit a couple of times led to him being hired as an intern at Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Ga., 45 minutes from Beaufort. For the first year Alex would preach in Beaufort but also fulfill duties in Savannah, and then in 2014 Alex became ordained as a PCA pastor and First Scots Presbyterian officially joined the denomination.

First Scots started with 30 members and now is up to about 150. More significantly, those members are being established in their ministry gifts. “Our job is to help equip the saints for the work of ministry,” Alex explains, “sending people out, equipping them with apologetics skills, with the knowledge of the Word and of theology, so they can go out to their workplaces, neighborhoods and families, and share Christ in a winsome, loving way, to go out into that world.”

How fitting, then, that Alex carries out the work of equipping the saints to go out into the world with the gospel from the vantage point of his own hometown.

For more information about First Scots, visit www.firstscotsbeaufort.org.
Cameron Cole was an addict. Pharmaceuticals were not his drug of choice, mind you — rather, he was a self-admitted performance junkie.

“To give you a snapshot of what my life was like,” Cameron explains, “my senior year of high school I took five [Advanced Placement] classes, I swam six days a week, I was vice president of the honor society, I was on the newspaper staff, and that’s just the beginning of it. I continued that way in college, graduating in three years while double majoring, founding a nonprofit organization, being active in ministry, and in what would have been my senior year doing a master’s degree.”

For all his achievement, though, Cameron was miserable — in fact, by the time he started working as a teacher in an inner-city school, he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. That’s when he met with his pastor, who advised him that his biggest problem was that he didn’t understand the gospel. “He told me, ‘I don’t doubt that you’re a Christian, but I get the idea that your entire life is pretty much a complex of proving yourself and trying to impress people all the time,’” Cameron recalls. “I didn’t understand how the gospel applied to me as a Christian until I was about 22 years old.”

His story forms the backdrop for his current work as director of children, youth and family ministry at Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Ala. Cameron’s passion is to practice and promote “gospel-centered youth ministry,” and to help him better achieve this, he studies in RTS Orlando’s Distance Master of Divinity program.

Cameron’s passion to reach children with the gospel is informed not only by his own experience as a youth, but also by more recent tragedy. On November 11, 2013, Cameron and his wife, Lauren, discovered that their then-3-year-old son had mysteriously died in his sleep. “I’m very passionate about helping kids know Christ as their Savior as early as possible, and for families to have that assurance and that hope,” he declares. “For anybody who has lost a child, it is a pain and agony that is just indescribable. I’m so grateful I have Christ in my life and the truth of God’s Word to sustain me, to reassure me that He is good and He is with me, because I know that kids are going to suffer, and bad things are going to happen. That’s part of living in a fallen world.

“It is a criminal irresponsibility if churches only tell kids to not drink and not engage in premarital sex, thinking that alone will sustain them when their worst nightmare occurs. I can speak as someone who has been in the valley of darkness, it will not comfort, sustain and support someone if all they have is a shallow understanding of Christianity and the character of God. We have to prepare kids to suffer, and I am passionate about kids having a deep doctrinal base that will help them when it doesn’t feel like God is good.”

To that end, Cameron identifies his current work as director of children, youth and family ministry at Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Ala. Cameron’s passion is to practice and promote “gospel-centered youth ministry,” and to help him better achieve this, he studies in RTS Orlando’s Distance Master of Divinity program.

Cameron’s passion to reach children with the gospel is informed not only by his own experience as a youth, but also by more recent tragedy. On November 11, 2013, Cameron and his wife, Lauren, discovered that their then-3-year-old son had mysteriously died in his sleep. “I’m very passionate about helping kids know Christ as their Savior as early as possible,” he declares. “For anybody who has lost a child, it is a pain and agony that is just indescribable. I’m so grateful I have Christ in my life and the truth of God’s Word to sustain me, to reassure me that He is good and He is with me, because I know that kids are going to suffer, and bad things are going to happen. That’s part of living in a fallen world.

“It is a criminal irresponsibility if churches only tell kids to not drink and not engage in premarital sex, thinking that alone will sustain them when their worst nightmare occurs. I can speak as someone who has been in the valley of darkness, it will not comfort, sustain and support someone if all they have is a shallow understanding of Christianity and the character of God. We have to prepare kids to suffer, and I am passionate about kids having a deep doctrinal base that will help them when it doesn’t feel like God is good.”

To that end, Cameron identifies his current work as director of children, youth and family ministry at Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Ala. Cameron’s passion is to practice and promote “gospel-centered youth ministry,” and to help him better achieve this, he studies in RTS Orlando’s Distance Master of Divinity program.

Cameron’s passion to reach children with the gospel is informed not only by his own experience as a youth, but also by more recent tragedy. On November 11, 2013, Cameron and his wife, Lauren, discovered that their then-3-year-old son had mysteriously died in his sleep. “I’m very passionate about helping kids know Christ as their Savior as early as possible,” he declares. “For anybody who has lost a child, it is a pain and agony that is just indescribable. I’m so grateful I have Christ in my life and the truth of God’s Word to sustain me, to reassure me that He is good and He is with me, because I know that kids are going to suffer, and bad things are going to happen. That’s part of living in a fallen world.

“It is a criminal irresponsibility if churches only tell kids to not drink and not engage in premarital sex, thinking that alone will sustain them when their worst nightmare occurs. I can speak as someone who has been in the valley of darkness, it will not comfort, sustain and support someone if all they have is a shallow understanding of Christianity and the character of God. We have to prepare kids to suffer, and I am passionate about kids having a deep doctrinal base that will help them when it doesn’t feel like God is good.”

To that end, Cameron identifies his current work as director of children, youth and family ministry at Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Ala. Cameron’s passion is to practice and promote “gospel-centered youth ministry,” and to help him better achieve this, he studies in RTS Orlando’s Distance Master of Divinity program.

Cameron’s passion to reach children with the gospel is informed not only by his own experience as a youth, but also by more recent tragedy. On November 11, 2013, Cameron and his wife, Lauren, discovered that their then-3-year-old son had mysteriously died in his sleep. “I’m very passionate about helping kids know Christ as their Savior as early as possible,” he declares. “For anybody who has lost a child, it is a pain and agony that is just indescribable. I’m so grateful I have Christ in my life and the truth of God’s Word to sustain me, to reassure me that He is good and He is with me, because I know that kids are going to suffer, and bad things are going to happen. That’s part of living in a fallen world.

“It is a criminal irresponsibility if churches only tell kids to not drink and not engage in premarital sex, thinking that alone will sustain them when their worst nightmare occurs. I can speak as someone who has been in the valley of darkness, it will not comfort, sustain and support someone if all they have is a shallow understanding of Christianity and the character of God. We have to prepare kids to suffer, and I am passionate about kids having a deep doctrinal base that will help them when it doesn’t feel like God is good.”

To that end, Cameron identifies his current work as director of children, youth and family ministry at Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Ala. Cameron’s passion is to practice and promote “gospel-centered youth ministry,” and to help him better achieve this, he studies in RTS Orlando’s Distance Master of Divinity program.
five characteristics of gospel-centered youth ministry: “The first thing a kid needs to know is the gospel. Second is theological depth through biblical teaching. Third is relational discipleship — we need to be mentors to kids and help them understand in their own lives what it means to follow Jesus. Fourth is partnering with parents — churches have often taken on a mentality of dropping off the kids and leaving ministry for someone else. Fifth is intergenerational integration — we want children as much as possible to be integrated into the broader life of the church so that they understand what it means to be a faithful church member, so that they’re prepared to be so as adults.”

Cameron helps promote this vision for gospel-centered youth ministry through an organization known as Rooted, which he founded in 2010 with “a little bitty conference,” as he describes it, for like-minded youth ministers. Since then Rooted has grown, in a manner not unlike partnerships like The Gospel Coalition and Together for the Gospel, to also include a blog, pod-

An M.Div. That Goes the Distance

ough RTS firmly believes that residential learning is the best way to prepare for gospel ministry, the seminary recognizes that not everyone is able to relocate for a degree program. For those like Cameron Cole (see main article) who are unable to leave a particular ministry or job in order to move to campus, RTS Orlando’s Distance Master of Divinity program offers a flexible way to earn a fully accredited M.Div. degree.

Through the Distance M.Div. track, one can complete up to 70 credits through distance education, while finishing the remaining 36 credits in intensive courses on the Orlando campus. Some intensives allow students to complete two to three courses in each residential week on campus.

Distance M.Div. students enjoy a cohort-like experience as they take online courses in the fall and spring semesters and meet on campus each January and July. For most working students, the program can be completed comfortably in five years, though students have the flexibility to complete the program in as few as three years or as many as seven.

In order to successfully complete the Distance M.Div. program, students must begin intensive courses in the summer term and complete certain courses in intensive residential format, even if they are offered fully online.

Interested individuals can contact Winston Miller at wmiller@rts.edu with questions about this program.

Cameron’s most recent family portrait includes the son who is no longer with them: Cameron Jr. (“Cam,” inset photo).
casts and publishing projects. A prolific writer, Cameron edited and contributed to *Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry: A Practice Guide*. “At the TGC conference in 2013 we brainstormed what became the book on a piece of paper that had a ketchup stain on it,” he says with a laugh.

The development of his approach to youth ministry has also been nourished by his RTS Distance M.Div. studies (see “An M.Div. That Goes the Distance” on page 26). “Two years into my ministry, I felt like I needed more theological knowledge, but at the same time felt like I didn’t want to leave my job,” Cameron explains. “It didn’t really occur to me until I investigated online that maybe there was a middle way, where I didn’t have to leave my job but still get a seminary education. The Distance M.Div. is an absolutely perfect fit. It helps me have a much bigger ministry in my church now, in that it has given me more credibility to minister to adults and to parents.”

For 12 years now Cameron has ministered at Cathedral Church of the Advent, which he describes as “an evangelical mainline Episcopal church theologically influenced by the Reformation.” At Cathedral, Cameron is seeing young people “being raised up to have a passion and desire to use their gifts, to lead people to Christ and make disciples,” with six students currently leading Bible studies for junior high-age children and “a number of kids helping lead children’s ministry in partnership with adults and parents. All these kids are being trained with the adults in how to interpret and correctly teach Scripture and exposit it.”

Unlike the experience of many teenagers, that’s performance rooted in the gospel, and Cameron helps deepen those roots.

For more information about Rooted, including a direct link to an archive of Cameron’s blog posts, visit www.rootedministry.com/author/cameron-cole. More information about Cathedral Church of the Advent can be found at www.adventbirmingham.org.
RESEARCHING THE REFORMATION
Jon Balserak has devoted his life and career to the study of the Protestant Reformation, becoming a noted expert on the subject. The senior lecturer at the University of Bristol (and RTS Jackson alumnus) recently returned to England after a stint as a visiting scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

M&L managing editor Paul Schwarz caught up with Dr. Balserak (pictured with his wife, Bilgay) to find out more about his research and its relevance to the 21st-century church.

What interested you in beginning to research the Reformation?
I became a Christian during my first year at James Madison University in Virginia. People at my church were talking about The Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan, so I asked for it for Christmas. That book changed my life. It single-handedly got me interested in reading older literature, which eventually drew me back to the Reformation and people like Martin Luther and John Calvin. I ordered Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion, and that hooked me on Calvin.

Later I was attending church with an RTS Jackson student who was pursuing ministry interests. I wasn’t thinking along the lines of becoming a minister, but about doing work that would allow me to keep reading these authors I enjoyed so much. So I ended up attending RTS Jackson, where I met people like Dr. Ligon Duncan and Dr. Duncan Rankin, who had a huge impact on steering me more toward older writers. They were also very generous in talking with me about my interests in doing a Ph.D. and teaching as a profession.

In researching the Reformation, what have you discovered that has surprised you most?
Primarily it relates to the humanity of the people I’m studying. People tend to think of Luther, Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli and the others we hear about as people who didn’t have any problems, almost as if they weren’t human. But Calvin, for example, had a terrible temper that really made him an unpleasant person to be around. Martin Bucer was willing to stretch the truth when he thought the occasion called for it. Zwingli was incredibly funny — the records of the 1523 disputation in Zürich will say quite often, “The crowd is laughing right now,” or “Zwingli made a joke about Martin Luther, and his opponents are laughing.” If you read much about Luther, he clearly suffered from depression on and off throughout his entire life.

Those sorts of things not only are surprising, but they are pleasantly surprising. You end up realizing these were normal people who nonetheless ended up doing extraordinary things.

On a related note, what are the most common misconceptions about the Reformation?
Probably the biggest misconception is that we think the Reformers aren’t human, that they dropped out of a spaceship, having no rela-
tion to the world around them and no experience of the sorts of peculiar situations you and I find ourselves in every day. But when you research the Reformation, you find first of all that the Reformers were hugely influenced by their own day: the Middle Ages. It affected the way they thought about theology, their reading of the Bible, and their views toward women, other religions, the future, etc.

A second common misconception is that the religion practiced during the Reformation period was pure and pristine in a way we don’t experience today; that the people to whom the Reformers preached were an incredibly godly group of people who hardly ever sinned. In reality, they preached to spiritually weak, impoverished, disobedient people. Calvin used to have to deal with someone who skipped church and would stand outside hitting a tennis ball against the wall of St. Pierre’s Cathedral (where he was preaching) to annoy him. Calvin’s brother, Antoine, went through a messy divorce: Antoine’s wife was tortured by the Genevan authorities to try to get her to confess her adultery, but she refused to.

Another misconception is that all the Reformers basically believed the same stuff you and I do today. They didn’t. Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s protégé, believed ardently in astrology and would refuse to leave his house if the stars suggested it would be dangerous for him to do so. Similarly, it would be very hard for either Zwingli or Calvin or John Knox, for example, to be ordained as a minister in the PCA today. If you took them out of the 16th century and plopped them wholesale into the 21st century, their views on the church and state would cause problems, not to mention their views on the sacraments.

Who would be a good example of a Reformer who is relatively overlooked by the public?
The first person who comes to mind is Johannes Oecolampadius. If people read about him, it would be in reference to the Marburg Colloquy in 1529, where Zwingli and Luther had a blowup over the Lord’s Supper because they held different views. Very few of Oecolampadius’ writings have been translated, though some of his sermons on Genesis have by Mickey Mattox and make for wonderful reading! Also Diane Poythress has published a biography of Oecolampadius.

But research done over the last 10 to 15 years has persuasively shown Oecolampadius’ enormous impact on Luther, Calvin and other well-known figures, especially concerning the Lord’s Supper. If somebody picked up a typical book on the Reformation, he would think it’s about Zwingli or Luther, with the later insertion of thoughts from Calvin, but he wouldn’t include Johannes Oecolampadius. But he was an extremely significant and influential thinker on the Lord’s Supper.

Another area where he was enormously important that has been overlooked is biblical interpretation. The kind of interpretive approach taken during the late Middle Ages went through enormous changes from the time of Luther onward, and we don’t tend to associate Oecolampadius with those changes. But he wrote commentaries on many books of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, and in thinking through how to understand those books, he developed ideas on biblical interpretation that ended up being enormously significant for the next 500 years. We don’t realize these ideas come from him, but they do.

Why should laypeople concern themselves with research into the Reformation?
One reason that comes to mind almost immediately is that it provides one with perspective. We tend to think of our era as spirit-

"WE THINK THE REFORMERS AREN’T HUMAN, THAT THEY DROPPED OUT OF A SPACESHIP, HAVING NO RELATION TO THE WORLD AROUND THEM."
– DR. JON BALSERAK
tually dead compared to previous eras, or our lives as boring in com-
parison. But if you read about the lives of ordinary people during the
Reformation, you discover they experienced the same trials and wor-
ries we do — about their sons and daughters marrying, or if there
would be rainfall or a drought, in the same way we might wor-
ry about a tornado. So I think it makes us realize that the things
we fret over are not unusual.

Also, although we say it all the

time I still think it’s important to
repeat: we think the church in
the time of the Reformation main-
tained an extremely high level
of spiritual maturity and we, by
contrast, wallow in sin and leth-
argy. I’m quite convinced now,
though, that the church wrestled
in the 16th century with the same
ludicrously mundane and nitpicky
disputes we do today, yet somehow
managed to continue. This gives
all of us hope that the church today
will continue as well.

Another reason to learn more
about the Reformation is that it is
extremely fascinating. Consider
Luther at the Diet of Worms, for
example — even the most staunch
Luther hater, and there are plenty
of them out there, cannot help but
marvel at what Luther did when
he stood in front of the Emperor
Charles V and refused to recant,
knowing that if he walked out
the door and was killed, it would
not be regarded as a crime. If you
read a good treatment of that time,
you can’t find it dry and boring.
There is a new biography of him by
Heinz Schilling, Martin Luther:
Rebel in an Age of Upheaval, that
I’d highly recommend.

How did you come to specialize
in the French Reformation?
It’s through my research on Calvin.
He was born in France, and though
he immigrated to Geneva, Swit-
zerland and spent the bulk of his
adult life there, he still had a huge
love for his homeland and continued
to try to influence it, especially
through writings that were smugg-
gled back into the country.

The people they were smuggled
to were the Huguenots, French
Protestants. Calvin’s letters, or for
that matter those of Theodore Beza,
his right-hand man, were often to
Huguenot leaders or to families of
Huguenots suffering under per-
secution. As my research moved
from Calvin’s theology to looking
more at the work done in Geneva
to try and influence various sur-
rounding regions, it drew me to-
ward the Huguenots, a fascinating
collection of people who struggled
mightily with persecution. They
were put to death in large num-
bers, with each successive king in
France wanting to make it harder
and harder to adhere to the Re-
formed faith without suffering ei-
ther loss of property or life. Many
of them left France and came to
Geneva, and Calvin, Beza and oth-
ers trained them as ministers and
snuck them back into France.

What kind of impact are you
able to have in your teaching?
I work with fantastically enjoyable
students. Very few of them, though,
have a personal spiritual interest:
their interests are intellectual.
So if they’re sitting down to read
Calvin’s Institutes, or writings by
Luther, they’re doing it from the
perspective of not being biblically
literate. They’re really sharp and
have all sorts of brilliant questions,
but they tend to be simply about
ideas that catch their fancy or seem
strange or contradictory to them.

For example, they’ll read the In-
istutes and find Calvin absolutely
fascinating, but they’ll ask, “How
in the world could he say that
this God whom he worships and
preaches about has predestined
people to heaven or hell? That
seems fundamentally unfair.” Or if
we’re talking about the Reformed
document of the enslavement of
the human will to sin, they will ask,
“How can God hold people account-
able for the sins they commit, if
that’s the case?” They will probe
and pick and analyze until they’re
satisfied they have a deeper under-
standing of the question than be-
fore they started asking.

Within that context, I certainly
hope that I can show my students
the character of a Christian: that a
Christian does not ignore or gloss
over intellectual difficulties or
challenges; that a Christian faces
squarely and honestly the com-
plexities of this life.

Learn more about Dr. Balserak and
his teaching, research and writing at
www.bristol.ac.uk/religion/people by
clicking on his name.
Dr. Charley Chase (D.Min. ’03) is publishing a new book this fall titled Grace-Focused Optimism.

Dr. Donald Fortson wrote the second edition of The Presbyterian Story: Origins and Progress of a Reformed Tradition (Wipf & Stock, fall).


Dr. John Currid contributed the article “Theistic Evolution Is Incompatible with the Teachings of the Old Testament” to Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique (Crossway, November, also co-editor). He also is senior editor and contributor of numerous essays and notes to the books on Genesis through Deuteronomy for The Archaeology Bible (Crossway, February 2018).

Dr. John Frame wrote Theology in Three Dimensions (P&R, Sept.) as well as an introduction to his “tri-perspectival” method, and Theology of My Life: A Theological and Apologetic Memoir (Cascade Books/Wipf and Stock, fall).


Dr. Steven Lawson (D.Min. ’90) has published The Cost: What It Takes to Follow Jesus (Christian Focus Publications).
Dr. James Newheiser wrote *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible — Critical Questions and Answers* (P&R, July).

Dr. Nicholas Reid co-wrote “Let the Algar Be Played: A New Manuscript of Šu-Suen B” for the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* and “Cuneiform Tablets of the University of Mississippi Museum” for *Akkadica*.


Dr. Luder Whitlock, former RTS president, wrote *Divided We Fall: Overcoming a History of Christian Disunity* (P&R, May).

Dr. Paul Jeon (visiting lecturer in New Testament) will release a three-volume commentary on 1 Timothy this fall from Pickwick Publishing.


ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Gregory Lanier was called as part-time associate pastor at River Oaks Presbyterian Church, Lake Mary, Fla., and has completed the ordination process within the PCA.

Jose Portillo has been appointed campus administrator and director of Hispanic engagement at RTS Houston. He was born in Costa Rica and lived in El Salvador before coming to Houston. The 2016 RTS Charlotte graduate previously served as a pastoral intern at Christ Central Church in Charlotte.

New Director of Communications

Phillip Holmes will serve as the director of communications, having a wide span of skills to share with RTS in both writing and digital marketing. The graduate of Belhaven University with a B.A. in biblical studies co-founded the Reformed African American Network, serving as vice president. He has written for Voddie Baucham Ministries, The Gospel Coalition and Desiring God, and most recently served as creative director for Rivertree Financial Planning, where he oversaw all marketing and branding initiatives, including both digital and printed materials. Phillip is married to Jasmine, and they have one child, Wynn. He is an active member of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Miss.

Timoteo (Timo) Sazo has been appointed admissions coordinator at RTS Washington, D.C. Timo was born in Santiago, Chile, where he met his wife, Kaitlin (from St. Louis), who had decided to spend a semester studying in Chile. They married in Washington and now live in northern Virginia. Timo and Kaitlin are members at Sterling Park Baptist Church. His past experience includes working as an editor for The Gospel Coalition. He is currently working towards his M.A.B.S. at RTS.

www.rts.edu
TRAVEL AND SPEAKING

Dr. Michael Allen will be the plenary speaker for the Ontario regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Hamilton, Sept. 30, will speak at an EPC Presbytery of Florida conference on the Reformation in Oviedo, Fla., Oct. 20; will be a plenary speaker for a Reformation conference at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Oct. 27-28; and will give two papers at the ETS meeting.

Dr. Bruce Baugus will teach in East Asia on Calvin’s Institutes, Oct. 2-6, and Apologetics, Oct 9-12.

Dr. Robert J. Cara will speak Sept. 16-17 at Westwood Baptist Church, Evansville, Ind., and Oct. 14-15 at Faith Presbyterian Church, Morganton, N.C.

Dr. Kevin DeYoung will be a plenary speaker at the PCA Global Missions Conference, Dallas, Nov. 10-12, in conjunction with Park Cities Presbyterian Church, which hosts RTS Dallas. More information about the conference can be found at www.mtw.org/gmc.

Dr. Ligon Duncan will be a plenary speaker at the 500th anniversary Reformation conference in Jakarta, Indonesia in November at the Reformed Evangelical Church pastored by Dr. Stephen Tong. Dr. Ric Cannada will travel with Dr. Duncan and will return to Indonesia for three weeks in late March and early April (see page 10).

Dr. Donald Fortson will speak on “500th Anniversary of Protestant Reformation” at the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, Weddington, N.C., Sept. 30; at Shearer Presbyterian Church, Mooresville, N.C., Oct. 20-21; and at RTS Charlotte chapel, Oct. 31. He will also teach the D.Min. course Presbyterian Ministry in American Culture at RTS Orlando, Jan. 22-26, 2018.

Dr. Charles Hill will deliver three papers and participate in a panel at the ETS meeting; deliver a paper at the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, Nov. 18-22; and speak at the Fife Lectures at Emmanuel Christian Seminary, Johnson City, Tenn., March or April 2018.

Dr. Michael Kruger will lead a weekend conference on apologetics at Chestnut Mountain Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Oct. 21-22; preach at Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, N.C., Oct. 29; and speak at the G3 Conference on “Knowing God,” Atlanta, Jan. 18-20, 2018.

Dr. Gregory Lanier will present two papers at the meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence R.I., Nov. 15-17.

Dr. Bruce Lowe will be speaking at several different retreats for the Fellows Program in December and January, to groups of Fellows in Raleigh and Charlotte (N.C.), Macon (Ga.), and Chattanooga, Knoxville and Nashville (Tenn.).

Dr. James Newheiser will speak September 22-23 at the ACBC counseling training in Laguna Hills, Calif., Sept. 22-23; and will be the plenary speaker at the ACBC National Conference, Jacksonville, Fla., Oct. 2-4.

Dr. Scott Redd will deliver a series of talks on “The Greatest Commandment and Biblical Wholeness” at the fall retreat of Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Church, Hampton, Va., Oct. 14-15; and will speak on the reliability of the Scriptures for the C.S. Lewis Institute Fellows in the Washington area, Nov. 4.

Dr. Nicholas Reid will travel to London for research at the British Museum, Oct. 16-21, and has been invited to lecture Oct. 17 at the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, as part of the lecture series Topics in Ancient Near Eastern Studies and Egyptology. He will also speak at a joint Reformation service in October held by Redemption OPC, Gainesville, Fla., and Covenant OPC, St. Augustine, Fla.; and at two seminars in November at Emory University, Atlanta, consulting for a new exhibit at the Michael C. Carlos Museum.

Dr. Guy Richard will speak at a Reformation conference at The Bible Church of Little Rock, Arkansas, Oct. 20-22; a Reformation conference at Smyrna Presbyterian Church, Georgia, Oct. 29; and Here We Stand: The Reformation at Five Hundred, Louisville, Ky., Oct. 31–Nov. 2.
WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE OUR RTS ALUMNI?

It’s never been easier for RTS alumni to stay connected. Update your contact information online at rts.edu/alumni/UpdateUs.asp and tell us about your job, publications, speaking engagements and ministry work.

Blair Smith will present a plenary talk on “Solus Christus (Christ Alone)” at the Reformation Conference and Celebration jointly held by Christ Covenant Church and RTS Charlotte, Oct. 27-29.

Dr. Scott Swain will speak at the EPC Presbytery, Oct. 20-21, and the Reformation 500 Conference at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Oct. 27-28.

Dr. Miles Van Pelt will speak at SEMBEQ Seminary, Montreal, at its Seminar on the Subject of Origins, Sept. 30, and will deliver a paper on the Framework Interpretation of the days of Genesis 1-2 (www.originsseminar.com).

Dr. Guy Waters will speak at the “Semper Reformanda” Conference at Grace Family Reformed Baptist Church, Houston, Oct. 20-21; and speak on “Suffering and Discipline in the Age to Come” at the Ecclesiology Consultations Session at the ETS meeting, where he will also speak on the Panel on Theistic Evolution.

CHICAGO
Reformation Conference and Celebration, Oct. 27-29, Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, N.C., a weekend of events concluding with a concert by Keith and Kristyn Getty

Harold O.J. Brown Lecture Series, Feb. 20, 2018, 10 a.m.-noon, Christ Covenant Church, guest speaker Dr. Rosaria Butterfield (author of The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert)

Faculty Forums, RTS dining room, noon, monthly lunches hosted by Charlotte faculty and addressing issues that impact ministry and the Christian life, open to any interested students or guests, no RSVP needed (Oct. 3, “Five Confusing Theological Phrases You Should Avoid,” Dr. Michael Kruger; Oct. 31, “Luther and Calvin the Counselors,” Dr. James Newheiser)

JACKSON
John Reed Miller Lecture Series, Oct. 17-19, guest speaker Rico Tice (see page 9)

NEW YORK CITY
RTS Board of Trustees meeting, Oct. 5, Redeemer City to City in Midtown Manhattan, including board meetings and dinner

Dr. Ligon Duncan and Dr. Timothy Keller will team up for the third time to teach the course Introduction to Pastoral and Theological Studies during the January 2018 winter term.

ORLANDO
Vision Dinner (Sept. 19) and Presidential Inauguration of Dr. Scott Swain (Sept. 20), Andrew Peterson providing special music at both events, and Dr. Kevin Vanhoozer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School delivering the inaugural address.

The Current Read, Dr. Carl Trueman “Luther” 500th Reformation Anniversary Oct. 31–Nov. 1, visit www.rts.edu/Site/RTSNearYou/Orlando/thecurrentread.aspx for more about The Current Read book program.

Hughes Preaching Lecture Series with Rev. Kevin DeYoung, Dec. 5-6

Kistemaker Academic Lecture Series, Feb. 27-28, 2018, Pamplin Chapel, keynote speaker Dr. Grant Macaskill

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Faculty will host a series of lectures and panels as part of its Reformation 500 celebration culminating Oct. 28-29 with Dr. Ligon Duncan.

PREVIEW DAYS
Washington, D.C.: Aug. 30
Jackson: Sept. 27
Charlotte: Oct. 3
Orlando: Oct. 11 and March 7, 2018
Atlanta: Oct. 26
Houston: Dec. 2
Prepare for a lifetime of ministry in a community of truth and grace, close to home.

Apply Now • rts.edu/apply