

RTS REFORMED

A MIND FOR TRUTH, A HEART FOR GOD Quarterly

40 YEARS
of
FAITH
in ACTION

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EARLY YEARS**

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REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY



FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY 2006

A MIND FOR TRUTH, A HEART FOR GOD



Chancellor's Message



Dr. Robert C. Cannada Jr.

Anyone who has ever taken a long drive knows the importance of mileposts. They tell us our exact location on the journey, how far we have traveled and how far we have left to go. Along the way, especially on a familiar trip, certain mileposts become associated with specific exits or other landmarks that comfort us in the assurance that we are on the right route, about to pass the halfway point, or otherwise making good progress toward our destination. Also, mileposts are located so that travelers can view them while still keeping their eyes focused forward on the road ahead.

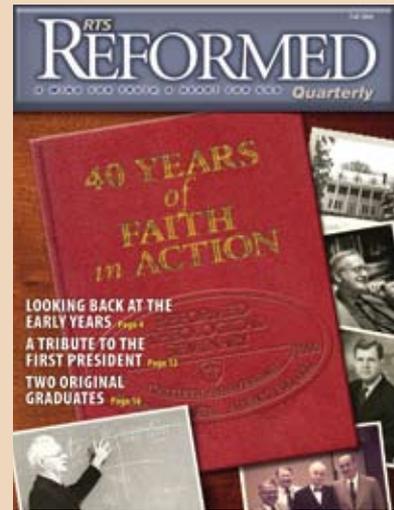
Likewise, people and organizations have mileposts marking the stages in their development. In the life of RTS there have been personal and corporate markers identifying critical junctures at which our God has worked to bring us to the place of ministry where we are today. Considering those markers, those special occasions of God's faithfulness, encourages us as we see where

we once were and where we are now. In doing so we recognize His gracious hand in bringing us this far.

As RTS celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, consider this and upcoming issues of *Reformed Quarterly* to be a review of some of the mileposts marking the ways God has worked in our midst. Remembering the past can be nostalgic and fun, but it also has important value for the future. We have an opportunity to appreciate the faithful saints who have gone before us and who, through their exercise of faith, have set an example for us as we trust God to work in and through us in unprecedented ways in the future.

In addition, just as the Israelites built piles of memory stones to teach future generations about God's faithfulness and character, we also recall the lessons from our history. We are reminded that our goal is not to build a seminary for our own sake, but to bring glory to God — to remain faithful to His holy, inerrant Word, to the doctrines of grace taught within, and to proclaiming His gospel to all nations. We share this vision and heritage with those who worked sacrificially to found RTS in the 1960s.

Space does not permit the retelling in this issue of every significant story in the establishment of RTS, although excerpts from a book to be published in the coming year paint a more complete picture of our history (see page 4). Regardless, I trust you come away from this issue with a renewed sense of confidence in the God who has chosen to bless RTS all these years. The ministries of each of our more than 7,000 alumni stand on the foundation of that God, as well as His faithful saints who went before us. To God be the glory. ♦



On the Cover: As RTS celebrates its 40th anniversary during the 2006-07 academic year, the seminary family remembers some of the people who served as God's instruments in bringing RTS to where it is today. They include (dockwise from top right) former professor Al Freundt; former president Luder Whitlock; original board members Robert Cannada, Robert Kennington, Sam Patterson and Frank Horton; and former visiting professor Cornelius Van Til, the famed theologian from Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia.

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Reformed Quarterly promotes RTS through articles designed to edify its readers through solid biblical instruction, and through reports that focus primarily on the national and global impact of RTS students, faculty and alumni. 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.

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RTS at Work...

PUBLICATIONS

- » **Dr. Steve Brown**, professor of practical theology, RTS-Orlando, authored a new book titled *What Was I Thinking?*, released by Howard Publishing on July 18.
- » **Dr. J. V. Fesko**, adjunct professor of theology, RTS-Atlanta, has a new book, *Last Things First: Genesis 1-3 in the Light of Christ and Eschatology*, to be released by Mentor Publications in spring 2007.
- » **Dr. John M. Frame**, professor of systematic theology and philosophy, RTS-Orlando, has a new book, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, released by P&R Publishers on June 25.
- » **Dr. W. Andrew Hofferker**, professor of church history, RTS-Jackson, wrote an article, "The Rule of St. Benedict," for the August edition of *Tabletalk* magazine.
- » **Dr. Miles Van Pelt**, assistant professor of Old Testament, RTS-Jackson, and Gary D. Pratico have written *Graded Reader of Biblical Hebrew: A Guide to Reading the Hebrew Bible*, released by Zondervan on Aug. 1.
- » **Dr. Derek Thomas**, John E. Richards professor of practical and systematic theology, RTS-Jackson, authored a chapter, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Twenty-first Century" in *Always Reforming*, edited by Andrew McGowan and released in July by InterVarsity Press in the United Kingdom.

» **Orlando:** Spiritual Life Retreat, Sept. 22,23, with Rev. Mike Malone, reflecting on Eugene Peterson's *Eat This Book*.

TRAVEL

- » **Dr. William Barclay**, academic dean and professor of New Testament, RTS-Jackson, will speak at the Bolton Conference in Whitinsville, Mass., on Oct. 27,28. The theme will be "House Beautiful: Christ's Church."
- » **Dr. Steve Brown**, professor of practical theology, RTS-Orlando, will speak at Perimeter Church, Duluth, Ga., on Oct. 28,29.
- » **Dr. Bob Cara**, chief academic officer, RTS, and professor of New Testament, RTS-Charlotte, will teach the Gospels at the Ukraine Biblical Seminary in Kiev on Oct. 9-13.
- » **Dr. Steve Childers**, professor of practical theology, RTS-Orlando, led 60 indigenous church leaders in a church-planting summit in Accra, Ghana, in West Africa. He was the plenary speaker for a World Harvest Mission conference in Athens, Greece. Childers will lead a training seminar Aug. 16,17 for church planters and pastors of the Mid-Atlantic Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, N.C. On Aug. 18,19 he will lead a seminar for the church planters and pastor of the Evangel Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America, Birmingham, Ala. In October, Childers will speak in South Korea and Japan.

» **Dr. Frank James**, president and professor of historical and systematic theology, RTS-Orlando, will present the Beeson Divinity Lectures, "The Reformations of Peter Martyr Vermigli," on Oct. 31–Nov. 2 at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Ala.



IN MEMORIAM:

Dr. Frank Kik, who was James Baird Professor of Practical Theology at RTS-Charlotte, went home to be with the Lord on Aug. 1 after a brief bout with lung cancer. One of the memorial services in his honor took place at Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Wichita, Kan., where Dr. Kik pastored for 18 years.



APPOINTMENTS

- » **RTS E-Newsletter**
An online newsletter every two weeks includes news and events from all the campuses. To receive this e-newsletter, visit www.rts.edu/Site/NewsEvents/nl_signup.aspx or e-mail jburgdorf@rts.edu.
- » **Rev. Mike Glodo**, stated clerk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and former RTS professor, will return to RTS-Orlando as associate professor of biblical studies. He is tentatively slated to teach Genesis-Joshua, Advanced Biblical Exegesis, and Gospels.
- » **Dr. Richard Pratt**, a full-time RTS faculty member for over 20 years, has been appointed adjunct faculty. He will focus his time on further developing Third Millennium Ministries.

New Faculty Approved for Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

The RTS Board of Trustees approved the immediate addition of two full-time faculty members, one at RTS-Atlanta and the other at RTS-Washington, D.C. Both positions have been funded, and a search has been initiated. Also approved but awaiting funding are two additional faculty members for both campuses. RTS has received a \$1 million grant that must be matched to fully fund the positions. The goal is to match the grant and fill the positions in the next year. For more information, e-mail Dr. Robert Cara, chief academic officer, at rcara@rts.edu.

CAMPUS EVENTS

» **Charlotte:** Student Life Conference, Sept. 12, with Rev. John Sittema, pastor of Christ Church, Jacksonville, Fla., speaking on pastoral issues.



40th Anniversary Celebrations

Charlotte:

An on-campus FORTS (Friends of RTS) dinner with the Board of Trustees on Oct. 5 will feature student testimonies, a presentation by John Currid and the chancellor's address.

Orlando:

J.I. Packer will be the keynote speaker Nov. 15 at the regular chapel service, followed by a question-and-answer session during a community lunch with students and faculty. That evening, Packer will speak at a celebration dinner for donors and friends of RTS.

Jackson:

The 40th-anniversary celebrations will be closed out with the biannual Board dinner on May 10, 2007, at the Country Club of Jackson.



“How Big Is Your God?”

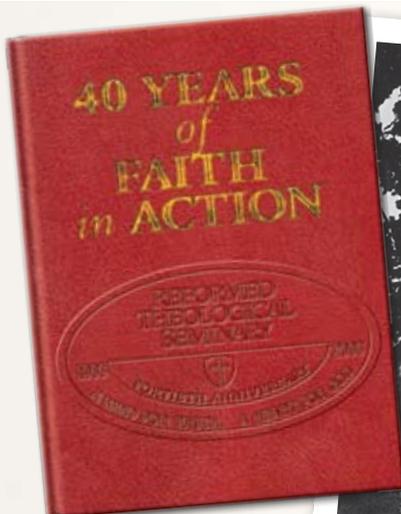
by John R. Muether

In an excerpt from a book to be published by RTS, the early years of the seminary reveal its founders' fidelity to the Reformed faith.

Erskine Wells vividly remembered the birth of Reformed Theological Seminary. He was in his law office in Jackson, Miss., in the summer of 1963 when his receptionist buzzed him to announce: “Sam Patterson is here to see you.”

As Patterson, pastor of French Camp Presbyterian Church in Mississippi, explained his dream for a new seminary, Wells quickly dismissed the idea: “Sam, you are a preacher. You live in an ivory tower, and you are not in touch with reality. I’m a layman, and I can tell you that it’s just not practical.”

Wells never forgot what followed: “Sam leaned back in his chair and asked, ‘Erskine, how big is your God?’ The question troubled me. ‘Well, Sam,’ I responded, “when do we start?” For Erskine Wells that moment was the beginning of RTS. He and other founding members of the Board of Trustees of RTS enlisted in a renewal movement in the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS, or the Southern Presbyterian Church). “The movement had been going on for years,”

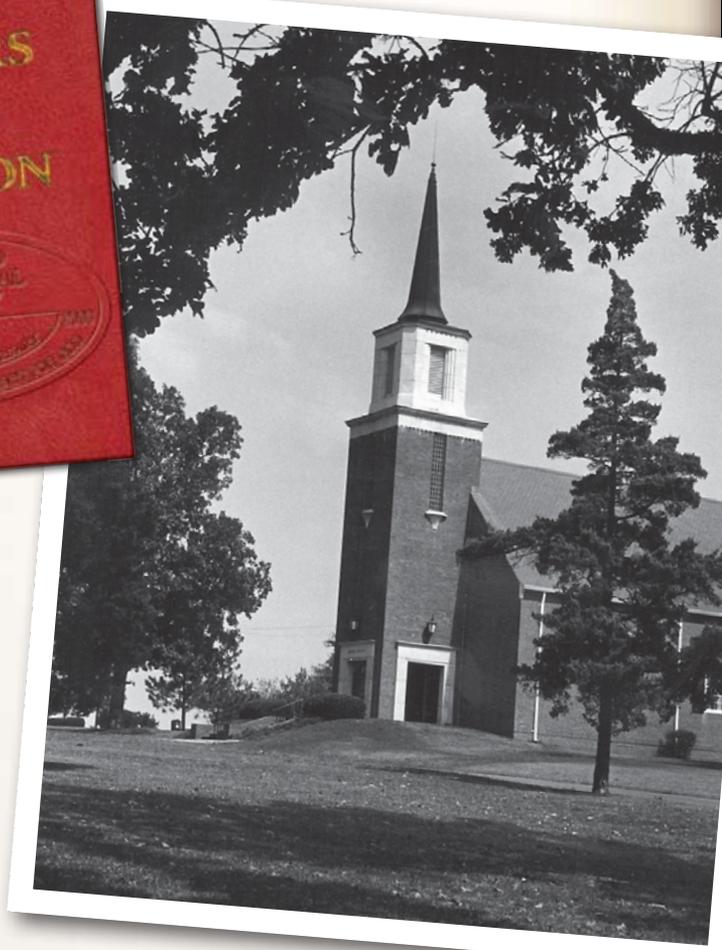


remembered Robert Cannada, an original trustee, “and RTS just joined in.”

Southern Presbyterian Decline

In 1861, Presbyterians in the South formed the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America.

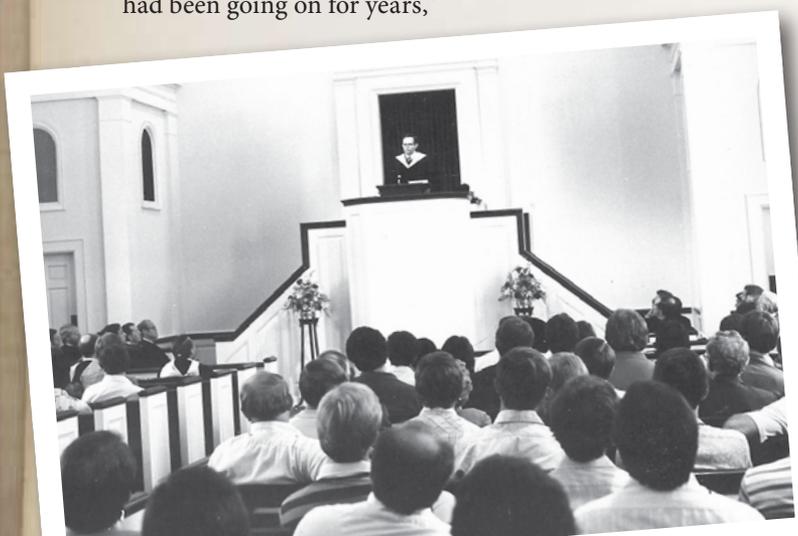
In the North, there was a strong impulse toward embracing the liberal theological trends of the late 19th and early 20th century. In the South, there was a tendency toward the



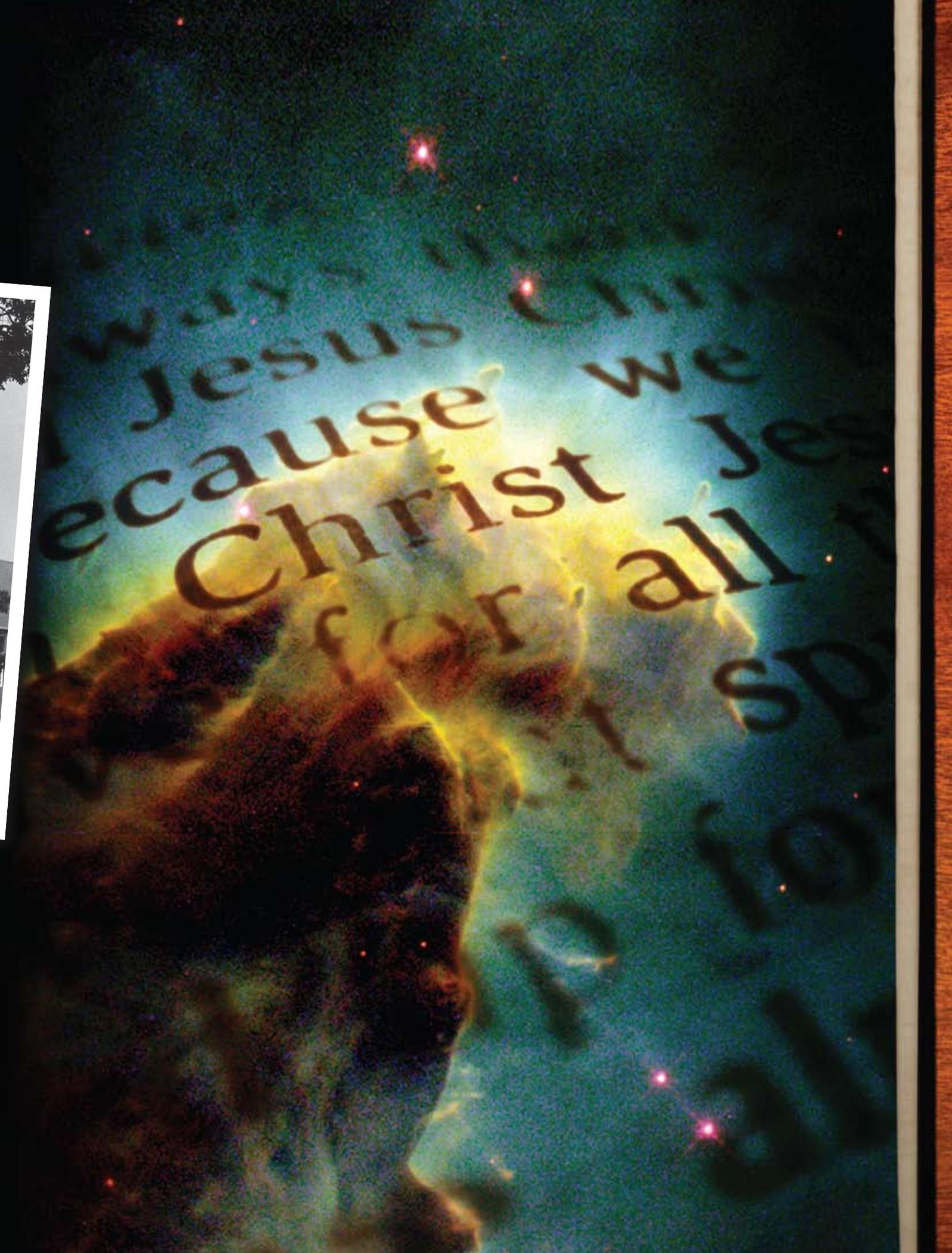
preservation of the past. But in 1931, Southern Presbyterian church historian Ernest Trice Thompson

wrote an influential article pronouncing upon the Northern church a clean bill of spiritual health.

This and similar assessments alarmed conservatives in the PCUS. Their fears were confirmed when efforts were launched (beginning in 1939) to weaken the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. Conservative opposition began to take organized form in 1942. Nelson Bell, longtime PCUS medical missionary to China and the father-



Upon its completion in 1971, Grace Chapel became a centerpiece of spiritual life on the RTS campus.



way
Jesus
because
Christ
for all
we
Jesus
all
sp
all



This aerial view reveals how the Jackson campus has changed over the years, especially when looking at the parking area in the middle of the picture.

in-law of evangelist Billy Graham, launched the *Southern Presbyterian Journal* (later the *Presbyterian Journal*), an alternative to the progressive *Presbyterian Outlook*. Conservatives shared a desire to reform the church from within. The RTS founders developed another conviction: the Presbyterian renewal movement needed to find expression in a theological seminary.

In December 1962, the *Presbyterian Outlook* published "Do We Need an Infallible Bible?" Professors from the four Southern Presbyterian seminaries provided four negative answers. The very question was "absurd," according to one. Clearly, renewal of the church required alternative theological education.

Starting the Seminary

The brazen liberalism of the *Presbyterian Outlook* mobilized Sam Patterson into action. On June 13, 1963, when the Synod of Mississippi met, four ministers joined Patterson for prayer during breakfast: Erskine L. Jackson, John Reed Miller, James Spencer and William Stanway. The

five men conducted a follow-up meeting on July 2 in Jackson. The ministers determined to proceed with a Reformed Institute, commissioning Patterson and Leonard Van Horn to call upon several Presbyterian elders in Jackson. Patterson then paid his memorable visit to Erskine Wells' office and later to Robert Cannada.

Wells recruited Frank Tindall, a farmer, and Cannada brought in fellow lawyer Frank Horton and retired businessman Robert Kennington. Together with Patterson, these five threw themselves into establishing the Institute.

Location, Location, Location . . .

On Christmas 1963, Sam Patterson announced the birth of Reformed Theological Institute. The natural place to locate the institute was French Camp Academy, where Patterson was located, but resistance by the Synod, which controlled the Academy at the time, forced a change in plans. The Central Mississippi Presbytery of the PCUS was hospitable to the school's goals and

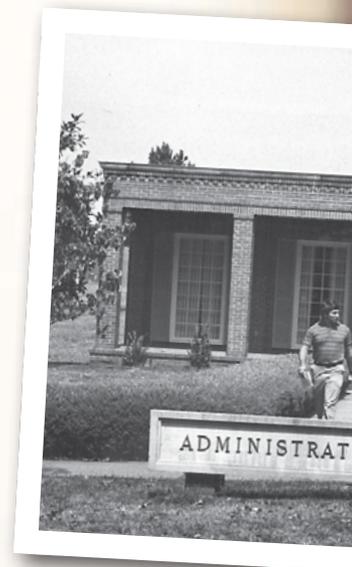
objectives; so the Board determined to find a location there.

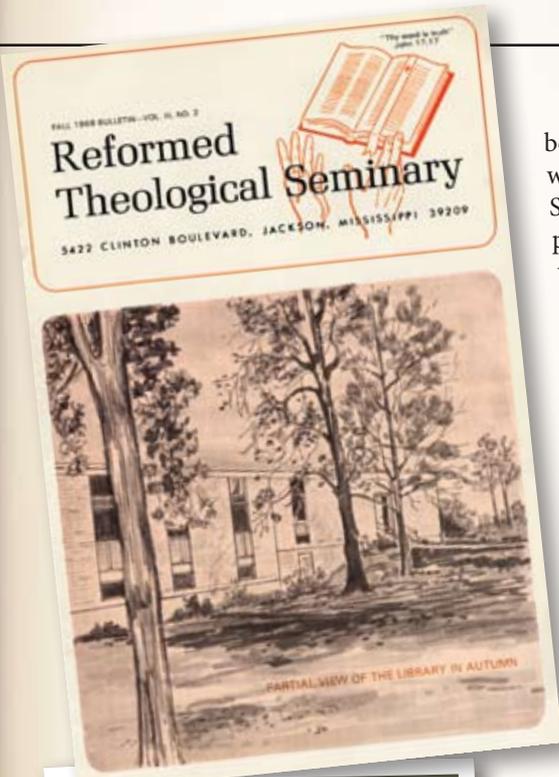
A Jackson real-estate agent reported that the Byrd property in west Jackson, which contained a large home on 17 acres, was available for \$75,000. Cannada immediately called Horace Hull in Memphis, and in Cannada's words, "Hull did not bat an eye." Hull, who would join the Board, supplied a \$50,000 loan that would be forgiven if the Institute could demonstrate, upon Hull's death, faithfulness to the theological direction of its founding. He challenged the founders to raise the remaining \$25,000, which they were able to do.

Recruiting a Faculty

Even before the campus was settled, the Board sought to secure a faculty. In March 1964, Morton Smith became the first faculty member. He established contacts at other seminaries, securing recommendations for additional faculty. He also began purchasing books in order to establish a library. One key donation was the 3,000-volume library of the late John Blackburn — one of the finest private collections of Southern Presbyterian theology and history at the time.

Meanwhile, the Reformed Theological Institute was officially incorporated on April 13, 1964. Two weeks later, the Board approved the statement of the institute's purpose and intent (see





box on page 11). Particularly absent was any negative assessment of the Southern Presbyterian Church. The plan and purpose of the Institute was stated in strictly positive and constructive terms.

The following summer, the opening of the school was postponed one year, as it continued to recruit faculty, build a library and establish a campus. Also, the charter was changed to Reformed Theological Seminary in determination to offer graduate-level theological education. Still a year from the start of classes, RTS hired its second faculty member, Albert Freundt, in September 1965.

Uncertainties

By the summer of 1966, RTS supporters had grown to 66 churches and 400 individuals. The Board had acquired property, made progress in developing a strong library, and recruited five full-time professors: Smith, Freundt, James DeYoung, Jack Scott and Richard Bodey.

Yet on the eve of opening its doors, RTS was still burdened by four uncertainties: Would the seminary recruit sufficient students? (It had secured only three enrollments.) Would it maintain and expand a quality faculty? Would it secure adequate financial support? Finally, and perhaps most haunting, because it would not be answered for at least two years, was: Would its graduates be accepted by presbyteries and find calls in churches?

Sam Patterson did not claim answers to these questions. “But one thing I do know,” he reminded the faculty, Board and friends, “God is able, and we are willing.”

Grand Opening

Westminster Presbyterian Church in Jackson hosted the opening convocation of RTS on September 6, 1966. Fourteen students had enrolled.

Despite the importance of recruiting students, Robert Cannada regularly sought to *dissuade* inquirers from enrolling. Prospective students needed to know that the seminary was an experiment; there was no guarantee the school would stay in business long enough for students to graduate.

Despite the long odds of success, students enrolled. They came in faith as the Board labored in faith. Also great was the faith of the five faculty. They had put their careers at risk, as the threat of discipline loomed from some synods. The faculty worked hard, often meeting until midnight and then returning for early-morning classes. They supplemented their initial low salaries by filling local pulpits on Sundays.

The first classes were held in the White House, a building that became a beloved symbol of the Jackson campus. The faculty conducted chapel exercises in the largest room. Other bedrooms and sitting rooms on the first floor served as faculty offices. Smith lived with his family on the second floor that first year, and the library was housed in a detached garage.

When the White House could not house all the needs, RTS purchased an adjacent building, dubbed “Tyrannus Hall” by DeYoung (after Acts 19). Scott recalled that “many of the floors were giving way and the walls were not certain. . . . on a rainy day or windy day, it was a harrowing experience,” and there were “running battles with mice, termites, cockroaches” and even rats.

Regardless, healthy academic routines were quickly established, such as a Winter Theological Institute, which brought J. I. Packer to campus in February 1967. Gifts large and small continued to arrive as RTS gradually strengthened its donor base, with a library building and an administration building eventually being built. And in May 1968, RTS graduated its first class of three: Tim Fortner, Johnny Long and Doug Miller.



Robert Kennington (above, with bow tie) had retired from running a successful department store in Jackson when he became an original RTS Board member.



Campus Life

In the spring of 1967, students formed a Society for Missionary Inquiry, which sponsored a fall Missions Institute, conducted prayer meetings, and raised financial support for mission projects. This student-led initiative raised the world mission consciousness of RTS.

The spiritual life of RTS was enhanced in 1971 when “Tyrannus Hall” gave way to Grace Chapel. No longer did faculty and students have to walk up the street to Westminster Presbyterian Church for chapel services. William Wymond, a 1970 graduate, supervised the de-

sign and construction of the chapel’s eight-rank pipe organ. The purchase of adjacent property expanded the campus from 17 to 52 acres. Married student apartments and a new campus bookstore opened in 1973, and in 1975 the Biblical Studies building was dedicated to Nelson Bell, who died in 1973. In 1978, RTS broke ground for the Dean Christian Education Center, which included faculty offices, classroom space and a gymnasium/auditorium.

Struggles

In its early years RTS struggled to maintain good relations with the

PCUS. This factored into accreditation efforts, which proved arduous. On June 29, 1970, the American Association of Theological Schools granted RTS associate membership. The AATS (later ATS) advised the seminary to alter its governance — its standards required the appointment of a president. In compliance, Sam Patterson was named the school’s first president in 1975. Three months later, the AATS granted RTS pre-accreditation status.

By 1970, PCUS conservatives were coming to different assessments about the future of the church. Within the RTS community, passions

Early RTS board members (below, left) oversaw projects such as the building of the campus bookstore (below, right).



The RTS family in front of the White House during the early days of the seminary.

were high, with both advocates for the formation of a new church and voices for staying in the existing denomination. Caught in the middle of this debate, RTS adopted a position of neutrality.

All eyes were focused on a series of actions in 1973, when a joint committee of Northern and Southern Presbyterians were to present a plan of union. Rumors spread that there would be no “escape clause” for congregations not wishing to join the united church. Conservatives quickly convened sessions that led to the first General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church (later the Presbyterian Church in America) on December 4, 1973.

RTS’ efforts to avoid the reputation of troublemaking succeeded to a remarkable extent. There was no denominational advocacy from any official pronouncement by RTS, and the seminary was steadfast in developing Reformed preachers for many denominations. Although its official neutrality preserved trust with friends in both camps, RTS had an undeniable influence on the PCA, Morton Smith serving as stated clerk of the PCA General Assembly. Yet Sam Patterson remained in the PCUS and passionately called others to do the same.



What Does It Mean to Be “Reformed”?

by Morton H. Smith

When we refer to the “Reformed Faith,” the question may quite properly be asked, “What does this mean?” Historically, the term comes from the Reformation. The Reformers looked upon themselves as returning to the Bible, and they described their faith as reformed according to the Word. They taught that the church should always be reforming itself to conform more and more to the Word with each generation.

This is a far cry from the modern idea that a church to be Reformed must simply be constantly reforming itself, without any definite standard by which the reform is to be made. “Neo-orthodoxy” substitutes the subjective standard of man’s concept of the “Word” — meaning their concept of Christ in place of the objective written Word found in the Scriptures.

The orthodox position has always maintained that Christ, the Incarnate Word, has given to us through His Holy Spirit the written Word of the Scriptures as the objective revelation of His guide for us in matters both of faith and practice. It is this commitment to the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice that is the foundation principle of the Reformed faith.

This has not always been understood. Some have wanted to assert the principle of the sovereignty of God or predestination as the founding principle of Reformed theology. These doctrines are found in Scripture, and are therefore stressed by those who believe in Reformed theology. They do not constitute the basic principle of the Reformed faith, however. The Reformed Christian accepts the Bible as the authoritative work

of God, the only rule of faith and practice. He submits to this authority, and endeavors to be true to the Scripture in all matters of his faith and life.

Though all evangelical branches of the Christian church acknowledge the Bible as God’s Word, it has been in Reformed theology that

we find the most consistent outworking of this principle of submission to its absolute authority. The essence of this submission is to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent. This means that the Reformed Christian will believe whatever the Bible says. He is not to place his reason above the Bible, but to submit it to God’s revelation.

When it is understood that the principle of Reformed theology is ultimately to let the Bible be the only rule for both faith and life, then one can see how Reformed Christianity has been described as “Christianity come into its own.” In a sense, any form of Christianity that conforms to the Scripture is Reformed. Any failure in either faith or practice is a failure to be Christian, a failure to be reformed by the Word. To be Reformed then is to be biblical in the fullest sense of the word. ♦

Adapted from an article published in the spring 1973 issue of Reformed Theological Seminary newsletter.

Morton H. Smith was the first professor ever hired by RTS. He taught at the seminary until 1977.



Original Statement of Belief and Covenant

Each member of the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff of RTS is required to initially and annually sign a Statement of Belief and Covenant.

Here is the original statement:

“Believing that there is but one only, the living and true God, and that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory, and with solemn awareness of accountability to Him in all that we feel, think, say and do, the undersigned engages in and subscribes to this declaration:

“1. All Scripture is self-attesting and, being Truth, requires the human mind wholeheartedly to subject itself in all its activities to the authority of Scripture complete as the Word of God, standing written in the sixty-six books of the Holy Bible, all therein being verbally inspired by Almighty God and therefore without error;

“2. Reformed Theology as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as originally adopted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States, is the system of doctrine taught in Scripture, and therefore is to be learned, taught and proclaimed for the edification and government of Christian people, for the propagation of the faith and for the evangelization of the world by the power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;

“3. And I do solemnly promise and engage not to inculcate, sanction, teach or insinuate anything which shall appear to me to contradict or contravene, either directly or implicitly, any element in that system of doctrine.

“4. NOW, THEREFORE, the undersigned, in the presence of God, states and signifies that he consents, agrees and binds himself to all of the foregoing without any reservation whatsoever, and that he further obligates himself immediately to notify in writing the Trustees should a change of any kind take place in his belief and feeling not in accord with this Statement. Amen.” ♦



Professors (from left) George Fuller, Allen Killen, Guy Oliver, Simon Kistemaker and Daniel Morse meet on the steps of Grace Chapel in 1972.

ARP officials quieted those fears.

Some observers have claimed that RTS was instrumental in returning the ARP to its heritage. Key denominational posts were eventually held by RTS graduates Jim Corbitt (head of domestic mission work) and John Carson (president of Erskine College and Seminary). With the revitalization of Erskine Seminary, fewer ARP students attend RTS today, itself a positive sign of RTS' influence.

Transitions

Associate Reformed Presbyterians

Another denominational constituency opened up when ministerial candidates from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church began to attend, identifying RTS as

the institution Erskine Seminary in South Carolina formerly was. Their influence encouraged classmates to consider ministry in the ARP. This fueled ARP concerns that RTS was sanctioning schismatic behavior and even “guerilla tactics,” but visits by

By its 10th anniversary, RTS showed many signs of institutional strength. The faculty had grown from five to 18 (including a practical theology professor named Luder Whitlock), the student body had expanded to 264, the budget in-



Al Freundt (left) was the second professor ever hired by RTS.

Meanwhile, Sam Patterson's passion for renewal in the mainline church placed strains on his presidency as the school grew increasingly influential in the PCA. In 1978, he resigned his presidential post to become "special representative of RTS for pan-Presbyterian relations." In his new role Patterson could work quietly in the background to serve as an instrument of renewal in the PCUS.

In searching for Patterson's successor, the surprising turn was the selection of Luder Whitlock. Patterson enthusiastically endorsed the appointment: "He is a minister, scholar, committed Reformed theologian [and] earnest evangelist."

Controversy

Whitlock's presidency commenced at the end of painful controversy involving the termination of two professors. Also, defections of churches from the PCUS to the PCA created some tensions between the PCUS and the seminary. A drop in the number of supporting churches resulted in financial challenges.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

creased to over \$1 million, and the library contained over 40,000 volumes. Also, in 1977, RTS attained accreditation from the ATS.

A noteworthy feature of the faculty was its strong Dutch influence, including James DeYoung, Simon Kistemaker, Gerard Van Groningen, Willem Van Gemmeran and Richard DeWitt. While emphasizing its Southern Presbyterian heritage, RTS was also exposing its students to the riches and depths of international Calvinism. Guest lecturers included R.C. Sproul, whose association with RTS began with a week of lectures in the spring of 1978.

Early RTS students work in the original campus library.



Declaration of Dependence

The original RTS purpose statement as adopted by the Board of Trustees on April 13, 1964.

“Our endeavor in connection with Reformed Theological Institute is not in the nature of an attack upon any of the church's institutions, but rather it is the positive institutional and educational promotion of the theological and Biblical point of view we believe to be that of traditional Reformed Faith, and of the founding fathers of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. “Our endeavor in connection with Reformed Theological Institute is not divisive or schismatic in intent or purpose but wholly dedicated to the preservation of, and the propagation of the original Southern Presbyterian convictions in regard to:

- The inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.
- The Calvinistic theological system, as set down in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, in the form in which they were adopted at the origin of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.
- The concept of the spiritual nature and mission of the Church as set forth in the above Standards and in the principles set forth by the founding fathers of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

“Our endeavor in connection with Reformed Theological Institute is based on our conviction that the above stated points of view in the area of theological, biblical and ecclesiastical truth have the right to be presented and represented institutionally in the church.” ♦



A Signpost to Christ

As a founding father of RTS, Sam Patterson set an example of faith in action.

by Rebecca Barnes Hobbs

If Sam Patterson were alive, he would not allow this article to be written, and he certainly would forbid the upcoming biography of his life. He would likely be embarrassed, since he was an extremely private person and studiously avoided calling attention to himself, desiring only to point others to Christ. In that divine endeavor, he wore many hats across the years — beloved pastor, evangelist, teacher, administrator, mentor, benefactor and friend. Thousands grew to love and admire him, counting their relationship with him among their most cherished.

Yet even while he served others so selflessly, most people still know virtually nothing about his personal history. Sam's friendships during his adult life ultimately revolved around fellowshiping with other Christians for mutual edification in the Lord, or sharing Christ with an unbeliever and seeking to deepen that person's commitment. Almost never did he afford anyone a glimpse of his personal life, because doing so would have taken the focus off Christ and put it on Sam.

But it's time now to remove the shroud that has lain so long over the personality and heart of this dear man whose life influenced so many for Christ.

Man of Faith and Action

Without Sam Patterson, RTS would not exist. That's the consensus of most who knew him. By the 1960s, problems with liberalism had been brewing in the Southern Presbyterian Church for a long

time, and conservative ministers had talked of starting a conservative seminary. But that's all it remained — talk. "The one missing ingredient," says former RTS president Luther Whitlock, "was a leader to galvanize the troops into decisive action. Sam stepped forward courageously and led an effort to make something happen."

Sam was a man of action because of his deep faith in God; what set him apart was his utter unwavering certainty that God would provide. "The only argument I ever had with Sam was over money," recalls Talmadge Branning, former deacon at French Camp Presbyterian Church, where Sam served as pastor. "He wanted to get rid of money, and I thought the church needed a little to operate on!" Sam constantly reminded those around him that a Christian's endowment is Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." When asked how he planned to fund a project, he replied with his famous grin, "I'll open my mailbox and see what's there!" That was no joke — time and again people were astounded to see the heavens open, as it were, to fulfill a current need for which Sam had been praying.

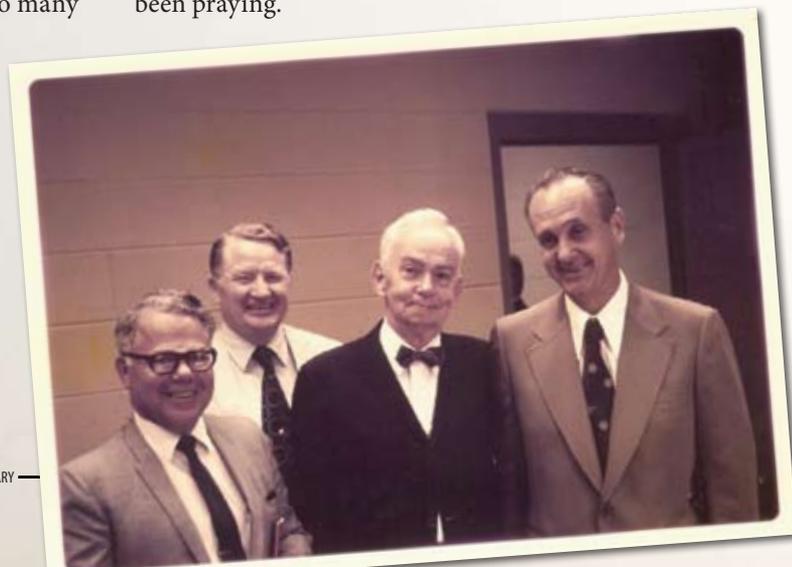
Man of Prayer

Much of Sam's time alone was spent on his knees. "We'd come back from basketball games at midnight, and Mr. Pat would still be in his little office," said the late Billy "Coach" Thompson, longtime staffer at French Camp Academy, a school led by Sam. "Many times I looked in the window and saw him on his knees in prayer." The morning Sam died in 1987, his daughter Becky and her husband Jimmy found him in his camper truck, head bowed with his open Bible on his lap.

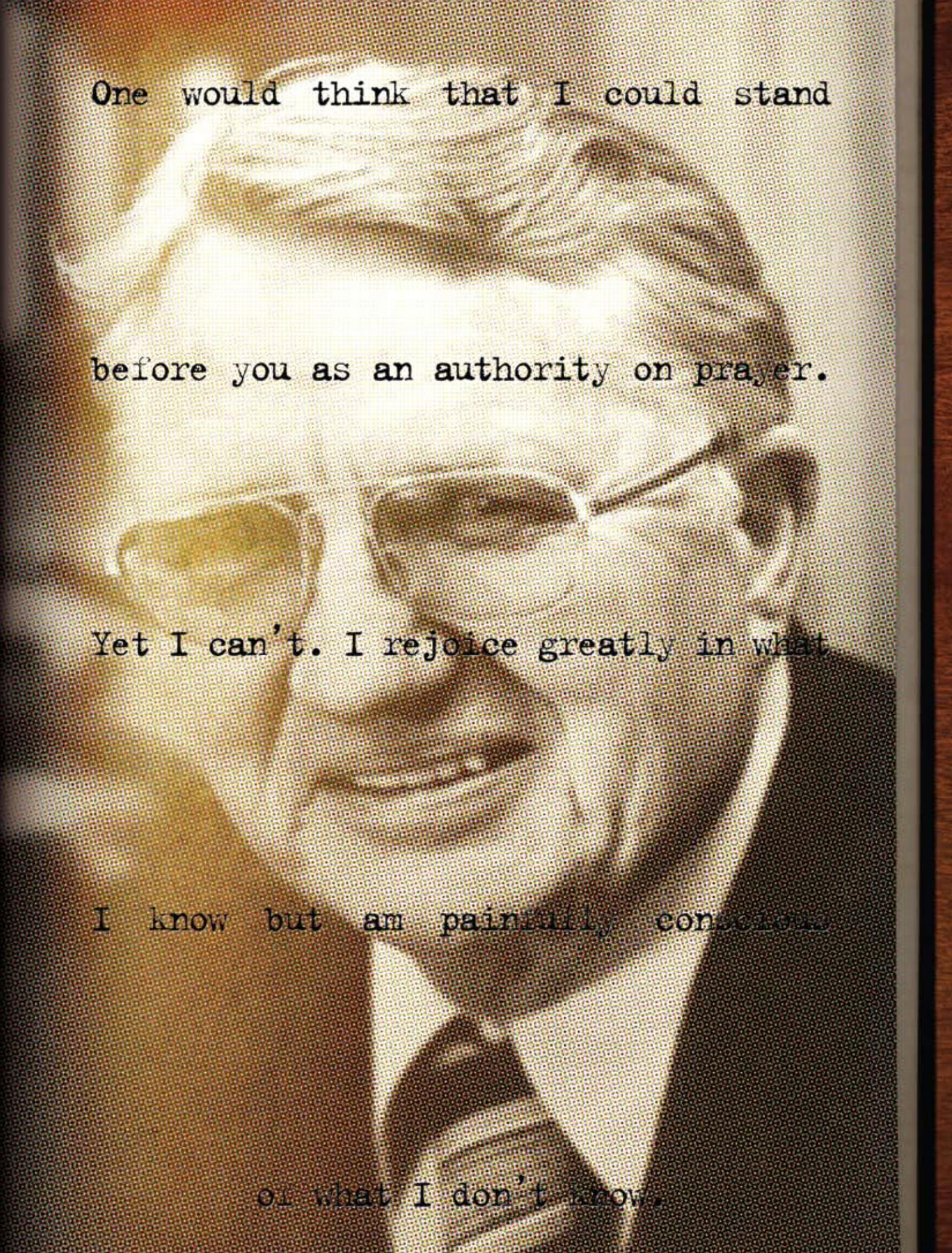
If Sam ever told you he was praying for you, you could take that to the bank. His personal papers are brimming with prayer lists totaling hundreds of names — on journal pages, scraps of paper, backs of bulletins or datebooks. One grocery list reminds him to "get milk and pray for Mike."

One of Sam's most memorable sermon series is "The School of Prayer," in which he examined each part of the Lord's Prayer, revealing what the Lord had taught him through years of simply praying and contemplating that prayer. Yet he told congregations that he was a rank amateur in the school of prayer.

"After being associated for many



Sam Patterson (second from left) helped found RTS along with men such as (from left) Frank Horton, Robert Kennington and Robert Cannada.



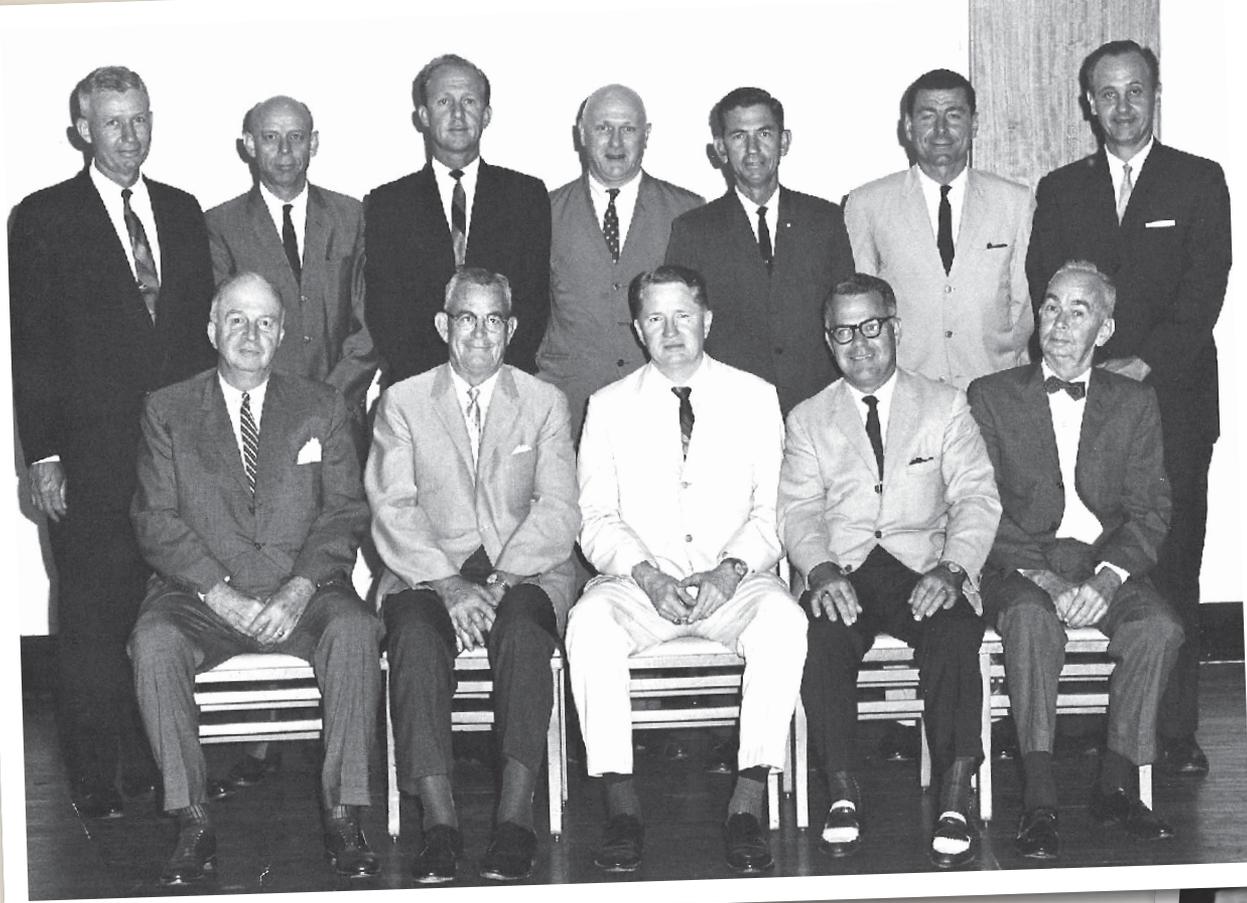
One would think that I could stand

before you as an authority on prayer.

Yet I can't. I rejoice greatly in what

I know but am painfully conscious

of what I don't know.



Some of the RTS Board of Trustees members with whom Sam (bottom, center) served included (top, from left) Elliot Belcher, Erskine Wells, Robert Rugeley, Hugh Potts, Frank Tindall, Emery Folmar, Robert Cannada, (bottom) Gettys Guille, H.S. (Coot) Williford, Frank Horton and Robert Kennington.

years with two institutions and movements that were born in prayer and subsequently depended on it hourly for their existence,” he once said, “one would think that I could stand before you as an authority on prayer. Yet I can’t. I rejoice greatly in what I know but am painfully conscious of what I don’t know.”

Man of Godliness

More than anything else, Sam wanted to know and be like Jesus. “Sam wanted to be a living signpost pointing to the Lord, always directing people to Christ,” explains longtime friend Charleton Hutton. “In word and deed, he was always contriving to get himself out of the way so that people would not focus on him, but on Christ.”

Sam lived what he preached. The words he imparted to congregations were a part of him because he had already digested the Scripture, taken the precepts to heart, and put them

into practice. The hallmark of his sermons was the simple, clear presentation of the gospel. His illustrations were riveting — people remember and use them 50 years later, even if they heard them as children in one of Sam’s legendary “object lessons.”

Despite his many roles, Sam never saw himself as anything other than an evangelist. “I started to be an evangelist the day I got up off my knees,” he told his siblings in a letter detailing his conversion. Even as president of two schools, he always made sure he was given permission to preach, and preach he did.

Man of Goodness and Kindness

“Sam left a trail of blessing everywhere he went,” relates Ralph Buchanan, a seminary classmate. With that perennial wide smile and twinkle in his eye, Sam wanted always to show Christ’s love selflessly for all people. Prince or pauper, adult or child, Sam treated everyone alike,

giving each the same kind, unhurried attention and interest. Time meant nothing if someone needed him. Everyone loved to see this stocky, red-headed, good-natured man coming and wanted him to stay as long as he could.

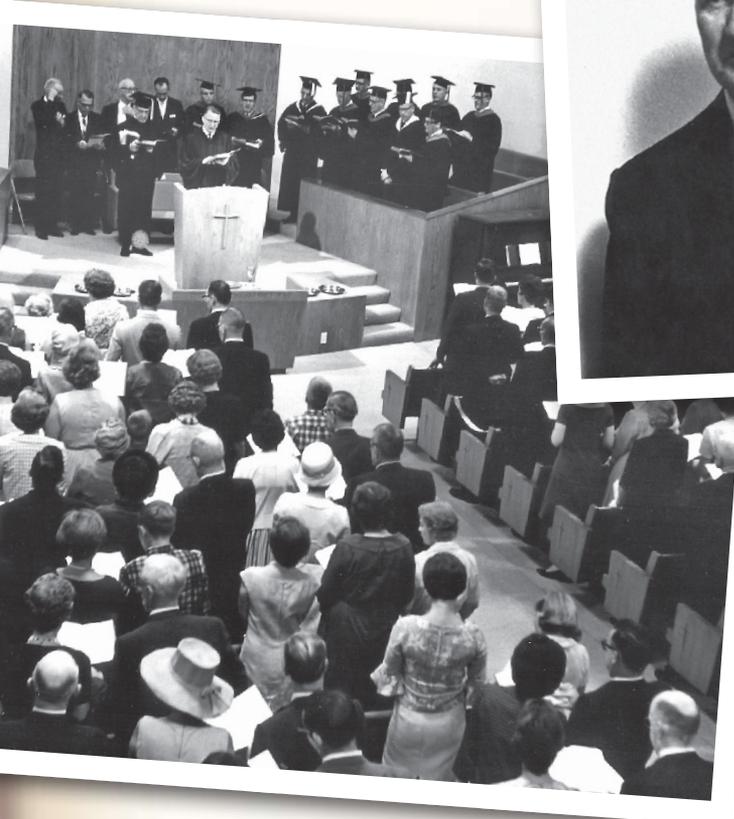
“Goodness oozed out of Sam Patterson’s every pore,” says Luder Whitlock. “Not many people are really good through and through, wanting the best for everybody, but Sam was.”

Men and women frequently cried at the mention of Sam’s name or the very thought of him. Remembering one who loved and accepted so unconditionally *does* bring tears. Sam wanted the very best for people and tried with all his might to see that it happened. And people knew this.

Man of Humility

Material things meant nothing to Sam. At his death, he had only \$100 in his checking account. Yet he tithed regularly to several organiza-

Betty Legg (far right, standing) worked in the RTS business office and Alicia Pittman was an assistant for Sam and for his successor as RTS president, Luder Whitlock.



He lived happily with only the simplest furnishings — a wood stove, a cot, a recliner, a small desk, his typewriter and his theological books. Jimmy wanted to redo the entire structure, but Mr. Pat allowed him only

ready brought hundreds to the Lord through his preaching, snatched French Camp Academy from bankruptcy and put it on a sound footing, become a beloved father figure to hundreds of children there, and endeared himself as a trustworthy friend and mentor to countless people. In just two years he would lead the way in forming RTS.

“He was a true man of God — a saint in my eyes, but certainly not in his,” says French Camp resident Jim Arnold. “That’s what made him a saint — the fact that he did not think he was.”

Leland Presbyterian member Mary Boteler came closest to nailing Mr. Pat when she said, “Sam gave a testimony to Christ every time he opened his mouth.” And that’s exactly what made him happiest. Medals, plaques and honorary degrees held no allure for this man. He was content to be forgotten, merely a signpost to Christ on the road to heaven. ♦

tions — including RTS — all his life. Many cannot forget the sight of his little Toyota camper truck, where he slept, made coffee and meditated on God’s Word at all hours. When Sam retired to French Camp, he lived in a small, rustic cabin next to the house he had given to his daughter Becky.

to put in new carpet and paneling. Sam never wanted to be RTS president. He took the job because the seminary needed accreditation and could not get it without having an acting president. In a 1962 letter Sam wrote, “I am still no prize for the Lord.” Yet by this time he had al-

Robert Cannada (right) and Sam recruited the seminary’s first Board members.



Rebecca Barnes Hobbs (right, as an RTS student in the late 1970s), former managing editor of Reformed Quarterly, is writing a book on the life of Sam Patterson. This article is based on her research.





Two of a Kind

Original RTS graduates Tim Fortner and Johnny Long reflect on their years of service.

by Paul Schwarz

When recalling being a part of the very first classes ever held at Reformed Theological Seminary, Tim Fortner and Johnny Long both remember the aroma. Not so much the figurative aroma of Christ, mind you, but the unmistakable scent of freshly copied class notes — a product of what was in 1966 the latest in cutting-edge technology. The notes may no longer be hot, wet and laden with chemical odor like they were 40 years ago, but Tim and Johnny still possess some of those original papers.

Likewise, the two men carry in their hearts and minds the memories and the legacy of being part of RTS' first graduating class, finishing before their fellow original students because they entered RTS with a year of seminary already under their belts. They left RTS in 1968 to embark on what has become a lifetime of ministry that collectively has taken them around the world. Johnny currently lives in England, where he works with the World Harvest Mission of the Presbyterian Church in America. Tim recently relocated to Oxford, Miss., after retiring as senior pastor at Lawndale Presbyterian Church in nearby Tupelo.

Full Circle

In Oxford, Tim is fulfilling the adage that one never truly retires from the ministry. As a part-time youth minister at College Hill Presbyterian Church, the Georgia native is bringing his lifetime of ministry full circle in more ways than one. Tim's original calling was to youth ministry — his

first position upon leaving RTS was as a youth pastor at Granada Presbyterian Church in Miami. Moreover, the senior pastor at College Hill, Alan Cochet, is an RTS-Jackson graduate who came to faith in Christ through Tim's ministry in Miami and who was one of several members of Tim's youth group there to attend RTS.

The churches where Tim has served also connect with his RTS heritage in that Johnny, Tim's original RTS classmate, has often spoken at Lawndale, which is one of the churches supporting the Longs' World Harvest work in England. Beyond that, Tim and Johnny's friend-

ship dates back to before RTS. The two men attended Belhaven College in Jackson, where they courted their future wives (ironically, Tim's wife Anna grew up attending First Presbyterian Church in Jackson along with Johnny).

All this shared legacy gives Tim and Johnny a formidable memory bank. For example, they both recall fondly the joint influence of John Reed Miller, legendary former pastor of First Presbyterian in Jackson, on their decision-making process concerning seminary. "My mother-in-law was a member [there]," Tim recalls, "and Dr. Miller and I had some extended conversations over coffee early



Johnny Long

Tim Fortner

in the morning. Sometimes he would call me and say, "Timothy, meet me at 6:00 at a certain restaurant. I'll buy you a cup of coffee." And you didn't dare turn Dr. Miller down."

Johnny has a similar recollection: "When I had to choose a school, [Dr. Miller] said to me 'Jawn, the purpose of seminary is not to see if your faith can stand up under error for three years.' So he gave me a choice of several seminaries." Unfortunately, this being 1965, RTS was not yet one of those choices. At that time, Southern Presbyterians looking for a conservative, Reformed-friendly seminary had two choices: go north or go liberal. RTS was formed as a response to the rampant liberalism that had taken hold in the Southern Presbyterian denomination (for the story behind RTS' founding, see page 4).

Lessons in Faith

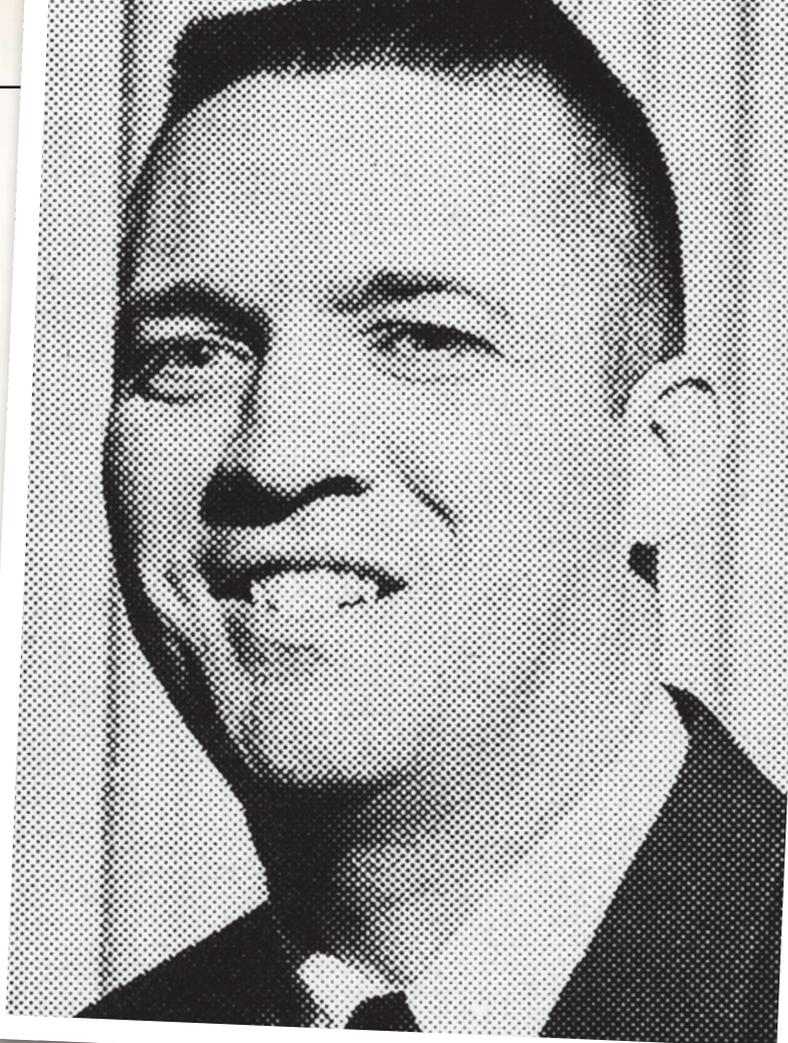
Tim spent his first year of seminary at liberally oriented Southern schools, and became distressed over the impact of his education on the preaching roles he already had at the time. "I began to see the neo-orthodox inclinations in my professors," Tim says, "and their introduction of doubts about the authenticity and authority of Scripture. My wife cautioned me one day, 'You don't preach with the same authority you used to preach with,' and I began to real-

ize that my sense of the authority of Scripture was eroding. So I needed to get a firmer foundation."

As Johnny remembers it, "I got word as I was up at [what later became Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts] that RTS was opening up next year. As a Southern boy from Jackson, and [it was] opening in Jackson — it was

for people like me that had to flee to some other school that the seminary was opening. So we immediately decided to come back home and join up. That was no contest."

This understates the measure of faith and courage the two men exercised in identifying with the fledgling RTS enterprise. For one thing, professors and students alike had no guar-



First-Class Graduates

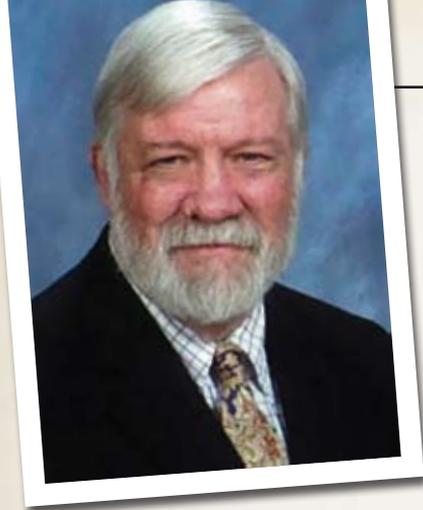
Tim Fortner and Johnny Long were not alone in cap and gown when RTS graduated its first class in 1968. The original group of graduates was actually a foursome.

Doug Miller received his degree at the same time as Tim and Johnny. After an inner-city pastoral ministry, Doug and his family served as Mission to the World missionaries in France until 1993. Upon return-

ing stateside, the Millers ministered to international students in in Mobile, Ala., with an emphasis on Chinese students. Doug will retire as a Presbyterian Church in America minister this October, but the Millers plan to continue to be active in international ministry, particularly France-related work.

Harris Langford technically did not graduate with the other three, as he completed his course require-

ments that summer. Regardless, like the others he has had a distinguished ministry, including writing the book *Hope in Hard Times: Studies in the Book of Ruth*. After a stroke in the early 1990s prompted Harris to leave pastoral ministry, the former military chaplain has worked on a variety of national-defense contracts, including a combat simulator used by U.S. troops training to serve in Iraq. ♦



Tim Fortner (left) and Johnny and Becky Long (below) as they appear today. Johnny is holding a commemorative medal he received from RTS as an original graduate.

antee that the school would ever be accredited, or for that matter would even stay open long enough for anyone to graduate. “It was amazing how you step out and pursue the truth and possibly jeopardize your future,” Tim admits. “So we stepped out, and I was among some very courageous people. It certainly rubbed off on me. It was a very encouraging, exciting, electric time in my life.”

For Johnny Long, it was a hungry time. “Becky and I were poor,” Johnny says. “I remember one time Becky came back from the grocery store crying because we didn’t have money for food.” God gave the students physical and spiritual sustenance, though. “A powerful class was Palmer Robertson’s on Old Testament Biblical Theology,” says Johnny. “We’d sit there as he unfolded the gospel in the Old Testament — I remember Abraham and the vision of the lamp passing between the pieces.

“We’d just sit there weeping; it makes me weep to think about it,” he continues, voice cracking with emotion. “Just the thrill of the power of the gospel coming through.”

Tim’s RTS experience had an unexpectedly practical benefit when it came time for him to be examined by a presbytery as a ministerial candidate — a process early RTS graduates feared because of the uncertain status of the seminary. “The presbytery was pretty well split between liberal and conservative; there were some very definite lines drawn,” he recalls. “So the conservatives were very concerned about my passing the examination. People around the world were praying, and it was as if I

could do no wrong in that presbytery examination.

“Jack Scott had taught us about five verses to [memorize] in Hebrew, and one of the pastors in the presbytery was notorious for asking candidates to translate and locate a [specific] verse [in Hebrew]. In God’s providence, he quoted Genesis 1:1, and I was able to identify [it] and even correct [him] — he left a preposition out. It made me look a lot better than I was!”

Personal Renewal

Johnny knows full well the tendency of ministers to make themselves look better than they are. In fact, the direction of his current ministry addresses this issue. “Becky and I had a life-changing event in 1990 [at] a conference — a powerful time of personal renewal in the gospel,” Johnny says. “A big danger in the ministry is falling into doing it for your own reputation. You don’t realize this, but you begin to worry about what people think of you, and you want to be right and look good. That consumed me unknowingly, and I saw my heart in a new light, and it started me off in a new direction of ministry. “So instead of the guy who had it all together in the pulpit, telling everybody else to come up here in the

ether of the Christian life where I am, which was not true, I just became a sinner saved by grace for my people, and that refreshed them.”

At the time, the Longs were in Alabama, in “Buh-ming-um,” as Johnny whimsically pronounces the city name in an assimilated-to-England manner, at Altadena Presbyterian Church. They had served in Kenya as missionaries in the 1970s, returning in 1993 to conduct church renewal work with African pastors and church leaders. “Dr. Miller,” says Johnny, “used to say, ‘The pastor needs to be the chief repenter, otherwise the gospel becomes the theoretical solution to the theoretical problem of sin for theoretical sinners should there be any present.’”

In 2005 the Longs moved to England to begin developing a course called Grace4Life, designed to reach European cultures with the same church-renewal messages as in Africa. “It’s basically a ministry of helping people recapture the power of the gospel in their lives,” Johnny explains.

It’s been 40 years since Tim Fortner and Johnny Long walked into those first RTS classes. Even today, though, they testify to the power of that gospel that gave birth to their spiritual lives, the seminary they attended, and the ministries they’ve had the past four decades. ♦



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

In summarizing his early years as president, Whitlock evoked the title of Morton Smith's book on Southern Presbyterianism: "The gold had become dim." RTS was in danger perhaps of disappointing its hopeful, generous constituency. The school needed to strengthen its faculty, rebuild its donor base and develop new and expanded constituencies.

Others might have shirked from the challenge, but the Board of Trustees, now equipped with a youthful and energetic president, eagerly embraced it. ♦

The Lord blessed RTS with amazing growth during the next 25 years. The next issue of Reformed Quarterly will tell the story of that expansion.

This article is excerpted from the first two chapters of a book to be published by RTS chronicling the history of the seminary.

John R. Muether is director of libraries for RTS and associate professor of church history at RTS-Orlando.

RTS students walk across campus in the early years of the seminary.

Testimony From an Early Student

In this testimony adapted from the fall 1968 edition of the Bulletin, RTS' original newsletter, 1969 graduate William H. Bell Jr. explains why he attended the seminary. In the process he helps place the attraction of RTS to its first students in its historical context.

Today we live in a world that is characterized by insecurity and relativism. This is not limited to the world but encompasses the church as well. In the contemporary scene the church does have a message concerning social and spiritual needs. It has the Good News — that Jesus Christ died for sinners.

Being called of God to be a minister of the gospel has been the most challenging experience of my life, and yet the most frightening. However, I know that the Lord never forsakes His own. He has given me the greatest gift ever given — eternal life in Christ my Lord. Therefore unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. This includes myself, an individual Christian. My life, soul and body are therefore not my own, but belong to Him.

Therefore, I feel that I must prepare myself to the best of my ability. This includes the choice of seminary, to be sure. George Verwer of Operation Mobilization, a missionary society, recently said at the Urbana Missions Convention that many of the seminaries of the church are slowly but surely becoming cemeteries. I wanted a seminary that was true to the Word of God, and was not ashamed of it, [believing] that it is the infallible and inerrant Word of God to man. I wanted a seminary that would prepare me to the fullest of my capability for the extremely difficult task of preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus. In Paul's language to Timothy, I wanted a seminary [that] stressed

a continuance in the things . . . I have learned and have been assured of — that the

gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believes. I wanted a seminary that was alive and full of fire for the proclamation of the Word of God.

In short, I wanted a seminary that would prepare me for the gospel ministry — the only ministry that can meet the needs of a sin-sick world. I wanted a seminary that was true to historic Presbyterianism and placed the Word of God at the center of the curriculum.

I also wanted a seminary that stressed evangelism, knowing full well that "mod man" in all of his so-called "security measures" is still lost without Christ.

It was imperative that I choose a seminary where I could learn to *preach the Word!* I have not been disappointed in my choice of seminaries — Reformed Theological Seminary. It has met every expectation I had in a seminary. I have never experienced such edifying fellowship. Studying under men of God who put Christ first in their lives is one of the real joys of my life. [RTS] is difficult academically . . . Yet the energies spent in hard labor for the Lord are only a token of what I should do for Him. He expects me to do my best, to choose the best, and to prepare myself in accordance to such a privileged calling.

I praise God for leading me to [RTS] and echo the words of the psalmist: "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" ♦



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