Amazing grace

God’s unmerited favor
is more than first meets the eye.

by Steve Brown
The last few months have been a challenging time for me, my family and RTS as a whole. Within a three-day span in July, we lost my father, Robert C. “Bob” Cannada Sr. (see page 4), as well as Harold O.J. “Joe” Brown, one of our most distinguished faculty members (see page 16).

Thanks so much for all the many expressions of kindness, support and prayer sent to me and my family during the five months since my father’s stroke and subsequent homegoing. Though it has been a challenge, it has also been a good experience, as we had many sweet times with Dad, expressing over and over to him how much we loved and appreciated him. The funeral service appropriately honored Dad and his service to the body of Christ, which included his role in helping found RTS, but particularly focused on the Lord and on heaven. If you were not able to attend, you can listen to it online at www.fpcjackson.org.

In Dad’s last few weeks, we often read Psalm 139 to him. Our family refers to this as “Dave’s Psalm,” in honor of my brother who died at age 19 in 1970, because it was the psalm that Dave wanted us to read to him the night before he died from cancer. Also, my brother Barry was reading to Dad from Revelation 21 about heaven at the very time Dad took his last breath.

The Scripture placed on Dad’s headstone is from Romans 11:36: “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To God be the glory forever! Amen.” The Lord is good and faithful always, and we look forward to seeing Dad again in the new heavens and the new earth.

Until then, we recognize that with the passing of my father and of Joe Brown, we see the continued passing of a generation of church leaders. While Dad’s role as a lay churchman differed from Joe’s role as a theologian, both men used their spiritual gifts to advance the kingdom of God through championing the call to biblical fidelity and orthodox theological commitment. Through RTS and other institutions, they devoted their lives to handing off this baton to the next generation of leaders in the body of Christ.

If the history of RTS has shown us anything, it’s that as the seminary goes, so goes the church. If we expect the ministry of the local church to be gospel-centric, then it is as important as ever to be about the business of training our future pastors in biblical truth. Each generation is called to pass on that responsibility to the next.

The loss of men such as my father and Joe Brown reminds us that a new generation of leaders is being called upon to step into the gap to preserve the witness of the gospel and the Reformed faith. May we in the RTS family be faithful, as they were, in doing our part to help equip that next generation to do so.
PUBLICATIONS

• Dr. Steve Brown has written a booklet, (Amazing) Grace, about the joy and freedom of God’s grace. Visit www.rts.edu/Site/Resources/Booklets/Amazing_Grace.pdf, or request a hard copy at info@rts.edu.

• Dr. W. Andrew Hoffecker’s new text, Revolutions in Worldview: Understanding the Flow of Western Thought (Presbyterian & Reformed), which he edited, will be released in late August.

• Dr. Mike Kruger signed a book contract with Crossway to co-author a volume with Andreas Kostenberger titled, The Heresy of Modern Reformation. He wrote “How Do We Know We Have the Right Books?” for the March/April issue of Modern Reformation.

• John R. Muether co-authored, with D.G. Hart, Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism (P&R), released in June. A biography is scheduled for release in November from P&R: Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman.

• Dr. Allen Curry taught Theology of Ministry in Sao Paulo, Brazil, July 16-20, for the Portuguese-language Doctor of Ministry program in partnership with the Andrew Jumper Graduate Center at Mackenzie University.

• Don Fortson will do a four-week series on “Legacy of the Ancient Church” at Carmel Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C., Sept. 9-30, on Sunday evenings. He is also doing a 10-week series on “Christianity in America” at Christ Covenant Church, Charlotte, on Sunday mornings, Sept. 9 to Nov. 18.

• Howard Griffith will preach at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Winston-Salem, N.C., in October.

• Dr. Frank James lectured at McGill University, Montreal, Aug. 8-10, on “Justification and Sanctification in Vermigli’s Romans Commentary.” The lecture is part of the third International Conference of the Peter Martyr Society.

• Dr. David Jussely preached at the annual summer retreat of Trinity Reformed Church, Beatenburg, Switzerland, in June.

• Dr. Simon Kistemaker will teach New Testament Theology for two weeks in August at Sangre de Cristo Seminary, Westcliffe, Colo.

• Dr. Mike Kruger will preach at the ordination of Carlton Wynn at Providence Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Sept. 9, and speak at a church conference for Hope Presbyterian Church (PCA), Winston-Salem, Oct. 19-21.

• Dr. Allen Curry, Sam Larsen and Eunsoo Kim taught modular courses on Theology of Ministry and Intercultural Education in Sapporo, Japan, June 4-15, for the Korean language Doctor of Ministry program.

• Dr. Steve Brown is scheduled to teach in Kiev, Ukraine, from Oct. 15-19. Dr. Cara will teach a Greek course, and Dr. Belcher a course on preaching the Psalms.

• Dr. Steve Childers was a plenary speaker at the interdenominational North American Church Planting Conference at Bethlehem Baptist Church (John Piper, senior pastor), Minneapolis, July 23-27.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

• Dr. Harold O.J. Brown, John R. Richardson Professor of Theology and Philosophy, RTS-Charlotte, went home to be with the Lord on July 8 at age 74 (see article on page 16).

• Mr. Robert C. Cannada Sr., founding member of the RTS Board of Trustees and Board chairman for 25 years, went home to be with the Lord on July 5 (see article on page 4).

• RTS on iTunesU

All RTS-Virtual course lectures are now available for free download on iTunesU. With just a click, you can access and download courses to your computer or MP3 player, or listen to special events, chapel services and lectures. Visit itunes.rts.edu.

• RTS Newsletter

Enjoy hearing what our professors are doing and where they are speaking? Want to know more about what is happening at RTS? Keep up with the ministry of RTS by signing up for the RTS e-newsletter. Visit www.rts.edu and click on the “Add your e-mail address here to receive the RTS newsletter” box on the bottom left-hand column of the page.

AWARDS

The Evangelical Christian Booksellers Association has awarded five Gold Medallion awards to RTS faculty members. Dr. Simon Kistemaker received four awards, for Exposition of Hebrews, Exposition of the Epistles of James and John, Exposition of Acts and Exposition of First Corinthians. Dr. John Frame received one for The Doctrine of God.

APPOINTMENTS

• Dr. Joel Harlow has been appointed to serve on the National Consultation on Spiritual Formation in Theological Distance Education. The consultation will be spearheaded by Erskine Theological Seminary, and funded by a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion.

TRAVELS

• Dr. Steve Brown spoke at the 20th anniversary celebration of Peculiar People — Drama Team, Aug. 18-19, Nashville, Tenn. From Aug. 20-24 he will be at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. He will speak at Willow Creek Church, Winter Springs, Fla., Sept. 2, and at Perimeter Church, Duluth, Ga., Sept. 22-23.

• Dr. Robert Cara and Dr. Richard Belcher are scheduled to teach in Kiev, Ukraine, from Oct. 15-19. Dr. Cara will teach a Greek course, and Dr. Belcher a course on preaching the Psalms.

• Dr. Steve Childers was a plenary speaker at the interdenominational North American Church Planting Conference at Bethlehem Baptist Church (John Piper, senior pastor), Minneapolis, July 23-27.

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ONLINE

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LEGACY OF A FOUNDING FATHER

by Paul Schwarz
The RTS family lost one of its original pillars when Robert C. “Bob” Cannada Sr. died on July 5 at age 86. He had been ill for several months after having suffered a stroke.

Mr. Cannada was one of the founders of RTS, having served as chairman of the Board of Trustees for 25 years. His legacy at the seminary continues through his son, Robert C. “Ric” Cannada Jr., who has been the president/chancellor of RTS since 2002.

Besides his RTS service, Mr. Cannada was an elder for 50 years at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Miss.; a founder and former managing partner of the Butler, Snow, O’Mara, Stevens and Cannada law firm; and an officer in the Navy and veteran of World War II and the Korean War. He was also a board member of several other legal, business, civic and Christian organizations.

As an RTS founder, Mr. Cannada was one of three former classmates at the School of Law at the University of Mississippi who, in 1963, responded to invitations to pray and plan for the formation of a new theological institution. He, Erskine Wells and Frank Horton were mutually distressed by the Southern Presbyterian Church’s abandonment of the Reformed faith, particularly its rejection of the inerrancy of Scripture.

Mr. Cannada once described his shock at returning home from his service in World War II: “I went off to war and returned to find a different church. Neo-orthodoxy had taken over.” He saw this most keenly in the materials he reviewed as Sunday-school superintendent at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, where he served in that role for 25 years and led in the dramatic growth of that Sunday-school program.

RTS eventually opened its doors in 1966 with Mr. Cannada as one of its founding board members. In the sober nature of a legally trained mind, he reminded prospective enrollees of the tenuous nature of the seminary. “I told them not to come unless they felt called of God,” he once said. “They had to come in faith that this is what the Lord wanted them to do.”

After starting that fall with 14 students and five faculty members, RTS grew to what Mr. Cannada lived to see: three residential campuses, three extension campuses, the Virtual Campus, 2,500 students, almost 70 full-time and part-time faculty members, and more than 7,000 graduates across the globe preaching the gospel of Christ alone from God’s inerrant Word. What RTS is today is attributable in part to the faithful stewardship of Bob Cannada and his fellow founding fathers. These pages seek to reveal some of his influence on those who knew him.

As noted in his official obituary, Mr. Cannada was preceded in death by his lifelong love and wife, Inez Chisholm Cannada, and by one son, Paul Davis Cannada. He is survived by sons Ric Cannada (and wife, Rachel) and R. Barry Cannada (and wife, Angelyn); by five grandchildren: Christy Cannada Burrow (and husband, Beau), Cecilia Cannada Rutledge (and husband, Bryan), Kathryn Cannada Nicholas (and husband Taylor), Caroline Chisholm Cannada, and Robert Davis Cannada; and by five great-grandchildren and a sixth great-grandchild expected in September.
The audio of Bob Cannada’s memorial service is available at www.fpcjackson.org.

by Dr. Robert C. Cannada Jr.

I

n the Cannada family through the years, one of the common things we did between parents and children was for one person to squeeze the other person’s hand three times, signaling the message “I love you.” Then the second person would in return squeeze twice, signaling the message “How much?” Then the first person would squeeze the hand of the second person as hard as possible to show how much they were loved.

When I became better acquainted with the Jim Wilson family at Trinity Church in Montgomery, Ala., I found out they had a family tradition, even used in their business, that whenever they prayed together, they would all hold hands, and at the end of the prayer or blessing they would squeeze three times while they said “I love you.” Whoever was around in the home or at the office would be included and join in this.

Then when I was asked to participate in Jim’s funeral in 2006, I suggested that for the benediction/closing prayer that everyone in the congregation be asked to hold hands, squeeze three times and say “I love you” in honor and memory of Jim. At that funeral, my message was a final reminder from Jim to them to “be there.”

After the service the Wilson family members were sent baseball caps and desk paperweights with “Be there” written on them. The Wilson family decided to add “be there” to the end of the blessing/prayer activity of holding hands and saying “I love you.” So now when the Wilson family prays, they hold hands and at the end squeeze three times, saying “I love you” and then “Be there” to each other.

When former RTS board member Elliot Belcher died in 2006, at the end of Elliot’s funeral I asked everyone to hold hands, and after the prayer squeeze three times and say “I love you” and then “Be there.” My dad had heard about this and started using it with our family, primarily at blessings before meals. Dad attended Elliot’s funeral with my brother Barry and with Barry’s wife, Angelyn, and afterward started using it at all family gatherings. My daughter, Ceci, and her husband, Bryan, had already started doing this as a family, and their 2-year-old fusses if they ever forget the “Be there” after the “I love you.”

At Christmastime, Dad said to us, with mostly Barry’s family present, that he wanted us to follow that practice and to remind each other to “be there.” He said he wanted us to do it as our new family “tradition.” So we had been doing this since Christmas, and prior to Dad’s stroke at any time we said prayer with Dad.

After his stroke, Dad could talk very little, although he could at times respond with a shoulder shrug, a smile, a raised eyebrow or a head movement signaling yes or no. When he was too weak to respond in any other way, the last way he could respond would be to squeeze our hands with his good left hand unaffected by the stroke. Squeezing that left hand became our primary communication.

Most often, to be sure he was still “there” and with us, we would squeeze his hand three times, saying “I love you” and asking him to squeeze back twice so as to say “Be there.” The last communication we had from him before he finally went to sleep and didn’t wake again was when he squeezed the hands of several of us, telling us to “be there.”
A Legal Legacy

This message was posted on the Web site of the Butler Snow law firm, which Mr. Cannada helped found, shortly after his death.

Both professionally and personally, Robert C. Cannada made a lasting mark. His legacy lives on in the law firm he founded, the colleagues he mentored, the friends he cherished, and the clients he served.

The spirit of collegiality that marks Butler Snow today was present in the beginning, thanks in large part to the leadership of Bob Cannada. “The firm was a family with shared interests, and Bob worked to make it a happy family,” said Gene McRoberts, a retired attorney who worked with Bob for about 35 years. Phineas Stevens, a retired founding partner, recalled, “Bob and I were friends for 67 years.”

He and Bob began their enduring personal and professional relationship at the University of Mississippi Law School and continued it after World War II. Their association would have a big impact on the Mississippi legal scene. In 1946, he and Bob partnered as Stevens & Cannada. Personal ties also played a role in 1954 when Stevens & Cannada merged with Butler, Snow & O’Mara.

In 1954, a lot of complex legal business — bonds, mergers, stock offerings — went out of state. So Bob and his partners set out to build a firm capable of handling those complex matters. “Bob was a top-flight attorney, well-rounded and well-respected,” recalls Stevens. Bob was managing partner of the new firm — Butler, Snow, O’Mara, Stevens & Cannada — for 25 years.

Bob’s leadership abilities won the trust of clients and colleagues. “He was a tremendous leader, very confident,” said McRoberts. “That confidence rubbed off on you and on clients.”

“The clients he represented were a who’s who of business leaders in Jackson and Mississippi,” said Jay Travis, who joined the firm in 1969 and worked closely with Bob for several years. Besides keen intelligence, legal expertise and absolute integrity, Bob offered clients a rare discernment. “He had excellent judgment in legal matters,” says retired attorney Larry Franck, who joined the firm in 1963.

“He gave both legal and practical advice, and these high-powered businessmen listened,” Travis says. “Bob was often the last one they consulted before a big decision,” adds McRoberts. Clients were not the only ones to benefit from his counsel. “He was a lawyer’s lawyer,” Travis says, noting that attorneys at smaller firms would seek Bob’s advice, which he freely shared. He encouraged Travis and others in the firm to do likewise.

Bob led the firm by consensus, working to achieve harmony by making sure everyone had a voice. “He had a powerful personality and was able to steer the firm toward consensus,” says Franck, who credits him with sound management.

McRoberts sums up the lasting mark of Bob Cannada. “I knew him well and I loved the man,” he says. “He was a great lawyer, a faithful man and a true friend.” We could all hope to leave such an enduring legacy.

Reflections From Those Who Knew Him

Bob and I practiced law together for 48 years. We were close during retirement. To say that he was a unique person is the understatement of all time. He, as much as anyone, gave this firm its uniqueness. The following is what I wrote about him when I retired:

Bob Cannada chaired the Butler Snow firm from the death of Mr. Snow in 1960 until 1986. He had the ability, desire and stamina to lead us for a quarter-century. He is a practicing Christian who openly made the practice of law a religious event. During retirement, he continues this effort. He is a counselor extraordinaire. Many referred to the firm as “Cannada’s Firm.”

He was a peacemaker. His approaches were those of a mediator. He had much to do with my increased interest in mediation by suggesting that I be the initial president of the Christian Conciliation Service of Central Mississippi.

Bob led by power of personality and always sought consensus. He is the creator of [his own] Robert’s Rules of Order, including the “Butler Snow straw vote,” i.e., a binding vote is never taken on a divided issue. All binding decisions are unanimous.

Hal Miller
Jackson, Miss.
In 1959, Hal was the first associate attorney hired by Mr. Cannada’s law firm.

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I wish to extend Christian sympathy to you, Ric, and recognize the work of a man who no doubt shaped the formation and development of RTS. There were joyous days and there were days when tough decisions had to be made. How marvelous the way God used him through it all.

In recent years he has entrusted you with that leadership. The mantle has shifted from father to son. We pray God may continue to enrich you with his grace day by day. May he grant you wonderful memories of the man you called your father.

Bob den Dulk
Former President, Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Westminster Seminary California

Bob Cannada was a giant. Measuring the impact of his life on our church and God’s kingdom is beyond human capacity. He stood for biblical principles with courage and resoluteness unparalleled in our time. We are not able in this life fully to consider how our lives would have been different without the faithfulness of forefathers, but I recognize that all that I have been called to do in the life of the Presbyterian Church in America would not have been possible had it not been for him. Countless thousands found safe haven for claiming the truths of the gospel because your dad acted with such valor to establish the PCA with its commitment to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith and the Great Commission. I count it a great privilege to have known him, and I treasure the kindness he showed me.

Dr. Bryan Chapell
President
Covenant Theological Seminary
St. Louis

Bob Cannada loved the Lord, and that was apparent from his daily life and ordered priorities. RTS figured prominently in his commitment from the time of its founding. He served as chairman of the board for many years with distinction, leaving a lasting legacy.

Dr. Luder Whitlock
President, Trinity Forum
He is the former president of RTS.

In the RTS e-newsletter, there was a picture of Ric and his dad in the new sanctuary at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson. It made me think in some ways how Mr. Cannada had been Moses-like in faithfully guiding the people of God at Jackson in an evangelical, Reformed and Presbyterian way over two long generations. There at the very end of his life, and also visibly in the new renovations in the church, he got to see ever so shortly (almost like the prophet on Mount Nebo) the picture of the promised land to come (Isaiah 43:3-7).

In the middle of the 20th century, a post-exile time for American evangelicalism, God certainly used Mr. Cannada to bring many Presbyterians back home to the promised land from their captivity.

Mel Duncan
Ligonier Ministries
Greenville, S.C.
Mel is the brother of RTS-Jackson adjunct professor Ligon Duncan.

I don’t think I ever met a more persistent man in my entire life. The great thing is that he was persistent about good and noble causes: the gospel primarily, and secondarily the Declaration of Independence. I suppose you could say that there’s no one in America who did more over these recent years to refresh and renew our sense of gratitude for the Declaration than Bob Cannada. And of course RTS is a great living legacy of his life.

Chuck Colson
President
Prison Fellowship

Mr. Cannada was always both an encouragement to me and a mentor in whom I found solid advice and kind rebuke when needed. I really enjoyed our lunches together and the table conversation there. I am beginning to see the wave of loss that is coming upon us. The generation of our spiritual fathers is passing on — all the more reason to encourage one another and seek to be diligent. But I rejoice in the truth Mr. Cannada taught us: eternal life in Jesus Christ!

Mike Ross
Senior Pastor
Christ Covenant Church
Matthews, N.C.
We, the members of the board of governors, faculty, administration and the student body at the Uganda Bible Institute, have been deeply saddened by the news of the death of Mr. Robert (Bob) Cannada Sr. We, however, thank God for the life of Mr. Cannada because he has used his time and gifts wisely and effectively to serve the church community. He has indeed built a legacy. We shall, indeed, miss his wise and kind words so much, but we are encouraged by our hope in Jesus Christ that we shall meet him in heaven.

Mr. Cannada is closely connected to the UBI ministry, which is training church leaders in Africa. Most of the UBI teachers (six out of nine) have been trained and equipped at RTS, which was founded by Mr. Cannada, and this means that the church in Africa is harvesting from the fruit of his vision and labor. Indeed we have lost a friend and father.

I admire Mr. Cannada and am grateful for his life and ministry, in particular his pastoral ministry to me at an excruciatingly difficult moment in my life. A conversation with him in the office board room remains a vivid and powerful memory — he gave me wisdom and counsel that has served me well and shaped how I have made many decisions since then. His cheerful and playful grandfatherly encouragement made a significant impact in my life, and his principled and passionate leadership of the RTS board modeled many qualities that I hope will be true of my stewardship of leadership responsibilities entrusted to me.

Steve Froehlich
Pastor
New Life Presbyterian Church
Ithaca, N.Y.
Steve is a former staff member at RTS-Jackson.

I am thankful for Bob Cannada’s service to the nation, RTS and the Presbyterian Church in America. He was an inspirational leader who set the example for many. I greatly admired him and enjoyed our association at RTS and other events. I am sure our Lord will commend him with “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter now into the joy of the Lord.”

Frank Young
Former Executive Director
RTS-Washington, D.C.

After Bob Cannada’s stroke, the Cannada family maintained a blog updating his condition from his original hospitalization to his eventual death. An archive is available by visiting www.caringbridge.org and searching for the Robert Cannada page.

Amos Magezi

Worldwide Influence

Upon the news of Bob Cannada’s passing, words of condolence and tribute flowed in literally from around the globe. The words of Amos Magezi, an RTS alumnus who directs the Uganda Bible Institute, underscore the far-reaching fruit of the work initiated by Mr. Cannada and his fellow RTS founders more than 40 years ago.
The Doctrine of Grace

Generally, the English word “grace” has to do with beauty, winsomeness, attractiveness or charm. The Latin word for “grace” (gratia) literally means “an attractive or pleasing quality” or “favor.”

As is often the case, God, in the Bible, takes a common word, sanctifies it and gives it a new and more profound meaning. The word “grace,” as used in the Bible with the Hebrew word (h-e-n) and Greek word (charis), has very little to do with what is commonly understood by our English word. In fact, Scripture says that grace isn’t a personal virtue at all; but, rather, undeserved favor lavished on an inferior by a superior.

My pastor, Pete Alwinson, has a great definition of grace. “Grace,” he says, “is doing good for someone when there is no compelling reason to do so and every reason not to.”

That’s it! That is the grace God has given to us.

The formal doctrine is called “imputed righteousness.” It means that all the goodness of Christ was transferred to our account: “That is why his faith was . . . ‘counted to him as righteousness.’ But the words ‘It was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It [Christ’s righteousness] will be counted [‘imputed” in the KJV] to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:22-25).

So, if you are a Christian, God will never be angry at you again. God’s wrath has been turned away because Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to you (credited to your account). How can God be angry at perfection? “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Paul then expounds on that theme when he writes: “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38,39).

That’s called “grace.”

The Experience of Grace

As you may know, the focus of my teaching is grace. That is because I so desperately need grace. In our broadcasts, in my teaching and in my books, I tell God’s people that, because of Christ, He isn’t angry at them and never will be.

However, there are those who say that I am encouraging sin by my teaching. Raymond Edman, the former president at Wheaton College, used to say, “We don’t encourage dating at Wheaton; we don’t have to!” Well, I don’t encourage sin in what I teach — I don’t have to! Christians were doing fine in the sin department long before I was ever born and, I suspect, will still be sinning long after I’m gone. Not only that, I don’t think I’ve ever met a Christian man or woman who didn’t want to be better than he or she was.

Trying to be perfect has been, believe it or not, a very good thing for me. At first it took away my freedom, but then it gave my freedom back. Do you know why?

Because of grace.
If I had never tried to be perfect, I would never have known that I couldn’t do it. And I would never have wondered if my lack of effort pointed to a problem far more serious than the fact that I couldn’t get better. It is one thing to do wrong and know it is wrong. It is quite another to do wrong and not know it is wrong, or even to rejoice in doing wrong.

If you had never desired to be better than you are, it is a good indication that there is something missing in your heart. As Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:15-18).

The very fact that you want to be better — even perfect — is a sign that you belong to Christ. One of the best ways to find assurance of your salvation is not so much to examine what you do, but to look carefully at what you want to do.

I was a pastor long before I was a Christian (or, at least, before I was a red hot one). Being a pastor is a wonderful job if you don’t know Jesus. I’ve always had a glib tongue, and the church required that I talk each Sunday morning. That was no problem. And then one needed to be nice, visit hospitals on occasion, and look reasonably spiritual. I could do that too. And then, after I had done all that, I was free to fish and play golf. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I thought, Is this a great job or what?

That is when Jesus came and messed up a very good thing. He began to teach me that there was a job description far different than the one I supposed. He put the people on my heart and caused me to love them. He gave me a source of authority in the Bible and commissioned me to teach others about what I had found therein. He showed me His love, and because of that love, I wanted desperately to please Him. I blew it a lot. I made a lot of mistakes. I sometimes wish I could go back to that little church I served on Cape Cod and correct some of those mistakes. The point is this: When Jesus came, I wanted desperately to please Him. And in the wanting of it, I was confirmed in my call by God to be their pastor and in His grace in my life.

The wanting of perfection is a sign: Something in us has given us that “wanting.” It is the Holy Spirit, and His presence is felt in the desire.

How to Get From Here to There

But how does one get from here to there? That’s right — grace.

If you know you’re loved without exception or reservation, that God’s grace covers all your sin and that God’s love will never change, the Holy Spirit begins to change you and make you holy because you no longer have to obsess on your sin — but instead on the love of Christ.

Here’s a biblical truism: The only people who get better (i.e. those being sanctified and becoming holy) are those who know that God’s grace will still be there if they aren’t. We really are “constrained by the love of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:14).

I’ve been a pastor for a long time. Let me tell you something I’ve observed: Those who live by the law, desire perfection and are even fairly accomplished at creating goodness because of their fear of God’s will, at one point or another hit the wall of their own sin and rebellion. When that happens, they often “slip into the darkness.”

I have also observed that those who first learn about the amazing grace of God do, for a period, sin more than before. They are often like the college student who, finally out from under the parents’ strictures, tests his or her newfound freedom. These also will slip into the darkness.

But the most important thing about those who understand grace and slip into the darkness is that they always come back. Those who were trying to be righteous by their own efforts sometimes never come back.

What’s grace? Grace is what saves you, holds you and finally gets you home before the dark.

It’s called “Amazing Grace” because when you understand and experience it, it takes your breath away.

Dr. Steve Brown is a professor of preaching at RTS-Orlando. He has written more than a dozen books, and has hosted numerous TV and radio programs. For information on downloading the booklet from which this article was adapted, see page 3.
Winter had come to Kiev. Amid the gently falling snow, worshippers arrived to fill the seats of an old, rented theater building. It was Wednesday evening, so there would be only one service instead of several, as on Sunday. Greeters passed out headsets to visitors, while hymns and choruses were joyously sung first in Russian, then Ukrainian, then in one or another of several other languages. Speakers, myself among them, addressed the crowd in differing languages, while interpreters simultaneously translated it all into the headsets. The smiles, hugs and lively conversations conveyed a family atmosphere. Ethnic tensions so prevalent throughout the country were somehow melted in the shared identity of a community of faith.

This scene notwithstanding, diversity presents challenges and elicits widely differing responses. A kitchen blender is a rather severe solution for resolving diversity. It simply emulsifies each component into a homogenous mixture. Unlike a salad or a stew, an emulsion yields no noticeably differentiable tastes, colors, smells or textures. As a metaphor for the church, it comes up biblically short, however.

Much closer to the biblical understanding of the church is an orchestra. Each time I have attended a symphony, I have listened first to the musicians warming up before their performance. The sound at best can only be described as cacophony and could easily lead a spectator prematurely to conclude that instruments should only be used one at a time (or at least one section at a time) so that they don’t interfere with each other. Such a conclusion would be tragic, however, for it would fail to anticipate the greater beauty that can result from coherent diversity in the music of an orchestra working as one under the hands of a skillful conductor.

Sin brings confusion and conflict to cultural and linguistic diversity. That is the legacy of Babel (Genesis 11). Yet God does not eliminate all diversity (the cultural blender approach) but rather restores harmony to a redeemed humanity. Our Lord is not honored by genocides that strive for so-called ethnic cleansing and cultural singularity, but rather by the creation of a people whose diversity is preserved even while forged into a single shared new identity: “in Christ.”

That truth is an important part of Acts 2, the account of Christ pouring out His Spirit upon the church on the first Pentecost following His resurrection and ascension. The purpose and goal of global, multi-ethnic ministry is ultimately doxological: God will be honored by “all nations” everywhere in His dominion. Nothing less will adequately praise Him.

It is easy to read Acts 2 and rush to the conclusion that it constitutes the “reversal” of Babel. On closer reflection, Acts 2 is not, strictly speaking, a reversal of Babel, but rather its “healing.” At Babel, humankind lost a common vocabulary and language structure, resulting in confusion and conflict. The cause of this was not diversity alone, but the simultaneous loss of a unifying way of communicating with and understanding one another — a lingua franca, so to speak. At Pentecost the diversity of languages was not reversed. Rather, the languages were affirmed as the Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in the full array of languages present that day. It was the content, not the language, of their message that was unified.

The emphasis on the variety of creation in Genesis 1 gives us a glimpse into the wisdom of our Creator (see Proverbs 8:22-36). Each variety functioned within God-appointed boundaries (“kinds”) to bring praise to their Maker. God is infinite; His creatures are not. Multiple perspectival vantage points (as with our fourfold Gospel account) help His finite creatures more fully comprehend and honor Him. One eye alone cannot provide the parallax required for depth percep-
tion, distance measurement or three-dimensional vision.

In Acts 2, we are told that the ascended Christ received the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured out the Spirit upon His church (v. 33), resulting in what the onlookers saw and heard: a declaration of the wonders of God in each one’s own language (v. 11). As the gospel was proclaimed by Peter to the Aramaic-speaking Jews, many were convicted and believed (v. 41). The result was the formation of a multicultural congregation. The chapter ends almost idyllically, but the author (Luke) soon reminds us that the challenges of living and worshipping together across cultural boundaries were already present, quickly emerging in the form of unintentional — but institutional and real — discrimination.

The apostles had to address the issue, doing so (as recorded in Acts 6) by the appointment of seven men who were to oversee the mercy ministry of the church. Interestingly, every one of the seven has a Hellenized name (and some likely came from the previously marginalized cultural minority). The church apparently bent over backward, so to speak, in order to ensure unintentional discrimination did not continue.

With such radical diversity in the early church, what was the “glue” that held it together and even permitted it to establish daughter congregations in Samaria and later in Antioch? It was their shared allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord, their conviction of the truth of the gospel, and their shared identity “in Christ.” It was the love they felt and expressed toward their Savior and one another. It was the presence and power of the Holy Spirit working in and among them to bring about all those things.

We live in an era of accelerating globalization, with cultural and ethnic convection resulting from migration and urbanization. We need to have a biblical perspective on cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. We need to be reminded of God’s call to Abraham, in which God promised, “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). We need to be encouraged by the description of the fulfillment of that promise in the apostle John’s glimpse of heaven, where he witnessed “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” giving praise to God (Revelation 7:9). The nations will be represented in glory, to the praise of the God who made and redeemed them.

How many of our neighbors, co-workers or fellow-students are from cultural, linguistic or ethnic backgrounds different from our own? How are we intentionally building bridges to reach them? How are we cultivating an enjoyment of their company and of the stimulation and challenge they present to us, while winsomely holding before them the invitation of Christ to become part of His “forever family” through faith in His completed work of atonement at Calvary? How are we seeking to learn from others in the body of Christ whose cultural vantage point is different from our own in ways that enable them to notice things taught in Scripture that we have overlooked?

While attending the second Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in Manila in 1989, I remember experiencing the harmonized, simultaneous singing of praise to God in multiple languages. Let me acknowledge that this is not easily done. Yet it is wonderfully worth the effort! The point of global mission work is not just to gather individual persons from out of many cultures and languages and bring them into our own culture and language, but also to enrich the polychromatic variegation of the people of God. In doing so we bring God, from His disparate and finite creatures, the fuller praise that is His due.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Sam Larsen is vice president for international doctoral programs at RTS as well as Samuel Patterson professor of missions at RTS-Jackson.
How have you seen CGST grow over the years?
I returned to Hong Kong after studying in the States, and my main challenge was to establish the school. I have seen it grow from 30 students to more than 450. It is very rewarding to see how the Lord has blessed this school, serving the Chinese church worldwide.

What programs do you offer?
We are modeled after U.S. seminaries in that we are a graduate school. We have a Master of Divinity program, began our Master of Theology program in 1986, and in 2000 we began our doctoral program. We also have a two-year Master of Christian Studies program.

Who are the people you serve?
Mainly we train pastors for ministry, but we also train lay leaders who are witnesses for the Lord in their own professions. In the last five years we have more contacts with men in China, so our faculty members have been invited to lecture and teach at seminaries and universities there. We are also beginning to get students from China. In fact, this past year we had up to 10 students from China, which is a very small percentage, but that is a good beginning.

This summer we offered a two-week modular program, which we will also offer in January. By only coming twice a year for two weeks at a time, they can work toward a master's degree. This is a new venture.

What is the state of theological education in China?
In China right now there is rapid church growth, but the training is very behind. For 10 years, during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, all the seminaries were closed down. That’s a big a vacuum. But in the mid-1980s, things began to reopen. Officially there are 18 seminaries in China today. But of those 18, only one has a graduate program. There’s a great need to upgrade the faculty, the numbers of schools are too few to meet the challenges, and there’s a long way to go to upgrade.

In Hong Kong in the last 20 years, there’s been great development in theological education. We have competent faculty members — a good number went overseas to study and get their doctorates and then came back. So the picture here in Hong Kong is a good one. In Asia, I think Hong Kong comes next to Korea in have the best situation for theological education, and then comes Singapore.

In China, though, it’s going to take a while to develop more schools, and I think the churches and government authorities want to make sure that things do not expand too quickly. They are very cautious. That is also part of the problem now.

He’s not a household name in the American church, or even in Reformed circles, but Dr. Wilson Chow has enjoyed a long, distinguished career in theological education. He has lived and ministered from his native Hong Kong for more than 30 years, founding the China Graduate School of Theology in 1975. After 18 years as the seminary’s president, Dr. Chow retired in August, continuing to teach and conduct research at CGST.

His global profile has grown in recent years, as he now serves on the executive committee of the World Reformed Fellowship, of which RTS is a member. Dr. Chow chairs the WRF task force on theological education, and he shared the podium with RTS chancellor Ric Cannada at last year’s WRF Congress in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The graduate of Brandeis University and Westminster Theological Seminary holds a unique perspective on the Chinese church, having begun his seminary service during the Cultural Revolution in mainland China and having personally witnessed the transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese rule.

Editor’s note: When Dr. Chow says “China,” he refers to the mainland. This reflects in part the significant cultural divide still existing between Hong Kong and the rest of China.
How has the political situation affected ministry in China?

Hong Kong has its own government, so I think that after the handover in 1997, we enjoy the same measure of freedom, if not more, and there’s more of an open door for us into China. We in Hong Kong and on the mainland serve each other with three mutual principles — we don’t belittle each other, we don’t interfere with each other, and we respect each other. In China, we have to observe the law and respect their religious policies.

We with WRF here in Asia want to identify those of us who are of the Reformed persuasion in our theology, because here in Asia and especially in China we are not in traditionally Reformed denominations. I myself am with the Christian & Missionary Alliance. Regardless, we want to identify Reformed people and form a network. We are going to have a conference in Asia next March to see what we can contribute to the work of churches in China with our Reformed faith.

On the worldwide level, much work needs to be done. WRF has a Web site where we can communicate directly with each other, offering opportunities, sharing resources and discussing issues of concern. There will also be regional meetings. I’m just beginning to gather people together. I’m hoping that the conference in March will help people in Asia see the relevance of Reformed theology in pastoral ministry and the design of seminaries. We have to pool our minds together on these issues.

We have to build schools, but we also have to share resources. One key resource is theological writings. We also need faculty exchanges, not only based on need but also for mutual enrichment. Even schools with enough faculty members are looking outside for teachers of courses. It’s a two-way traffic. We also need student exchange. Of course, there are difficulties to overcome — language barriers and others — but there are great possibilities.

What is retirement from the presidency of the seminary freeing you to do?

As the president emeritus, I have been asked to stay on for two years to do research and teach. I will finish promised writing projects such as a commentary on the Book of Judges, which is a sequel to my commentary on Ruth that appeared last year. I also agreed to write a textbook on theology.

This will also free myself to travel a bit more. I hope to spend more time in China, as well as share with other theological schools my experiences as the head of such a school. I also hope to contribute more to the WRF.

For more information about World Reformed Fellowship, visit www.wfrnet.org. More information about the China Graduate School of Theology is available at www.cgst.edu (many portions of the site are Chinese-only).

“IT’S A SERVANT ATTITUDE — WE DO NOT GO INTO CHINA WITH OUR OWN AGENDA.”

Dr. Wilson Chow

In what ways does your work with World Reformed Fellowship help in promoting theological education to China specifically and to needy areas of the world in general?

From my experience, if Christians are being arrested in China, it’s mainly because of illegal gatherings — those without government registration. It’s not based on their faith, but because they assemble without government approval. The government doesn’t want any conflicts between the religions. So there is freedom, but in China we have to be very low-key, though there is a lot we can accomplish.

In Hong Kong we are open to the countries of the world, but I think China is still in the next stage of development. They want to observe their own sovereignty. The principles of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement — self-governance, self-support and self-propagation — mean that the church and the Communist regime are very sensitive to foreign interference, especially from religious organizations.

So the outside world, especially the West, must be very careful, because we may be looked upon as outside intruders, in view of past experience with Western domination and so on. The best thing for us outside China to do is pray for the church and the government, and go there to help build the Chinese church by offering our help in case there’s a need for us.

It’s a servant attitude — we do not go into China with our own agenda. Once that is clear, I have found that the church in China appreciates our attitude and where we stand. The Chinese church wants the outside world to understand its situation — that is all they ask. Once that is instilled, then we can offer our services.
Dr. Brown’s primary legacy to the Christian world is his seminal leadership in the modern-day pro-life movement, long predating his association with RTS. In 1975, in the aftermath of the Roe vs. Wade decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973, he co-founded the Christian Action Council with former United States Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, M.D. Dr. Brown served as chairman of the organization (now known as Care Net), a leading evangelical pro-life action group and an educational and service ministry, until 1998.

“Joe,” as his friends knew him, had an interest in culture, science and theology that eventually led him to confront bioethics issues beyond abortion. “He had a crucial role in firming up evangelical thinking on the nature of human life as well as the new questions being raised by human dignity and bioscience,” said Nigel Cameron, who worked with Brown to develop a bioethics program at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, in an obituary article published by Christianity Today, for which Dr. Brown was a contributing editor and writer. “Joe had a sort of gregarious intellectual imagination.” That imagination was informed by his many academic honors. Dr. Brown earned four degrees from Harvard University and Harvard Divinity School: the Bachelor of Arts in Germanic languages and biochemical sciences, the Bachelor of Divinity in theology, the Master of Theology in church history, and the Doctor of Philosophy in Reformation studies. He also studied at the University of Marburg in Germany and at the University of Vienna, and taught courses in Basel, Switzerland, and Yeotmal, India.

Another of his enduring legacies in ministry is his impact in the lives of his students. A prime example is RTS-Charlotte graduate Cynthia Ruble, who leads Life Hope Network, a crisis pregnancy center in Nagoya, Japan (see “The Value of a Ruble” in the Fall 2005 issue of RQ). Through Dr. Brown’s influence, Cynthia sharpened the focus of her service on the mission field, working to establish the only crisis-pregnancy center of its kind in all of Japan.

Dr. Brown’s influence on people’s lives flowed from his personal interest in those around him. “We remember Joe as a friend,” said Dr. Ric Cannada, RTS chancellor, at Dr. Brown’s memorial service. “Among the faculty and the staff, he was well loved and congenial — we just loved being with him. But more than that, he was a friend to the students. He spent time with them and was a mentor to them. That was a characteristic throughout Joe’s life.” “His legacy will be felt not just in the broader public he’s met, but [also through] the people he’s trained to be the next generation of Christian leaders,” said Dr. Mike Kruger, academic dean at RTS-Charlotte, to CT. “Joe was a rich blessing to RTS, not only in his solid scholarship and classroom excellence but also in his per-
sonal relationships and care for students, staff and other faculty,” adds Dr. Cannada. “He had a European ‘dry wit’ and a great sense of understated humor. Even though slowed by poor health in his later years, he was always challenging in his teaching and tender in his thoughtfulness to others. We will miss him, but we rejoice in the heritage he left to us and in his presence with our Savior.”

Dr. Brown came to RTS in 1998 in the later stages of a distinguished academic career. He received Fulbright and Danforth awards and was voted Faculty Member of the Year in 1989 at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he held the Franklin Forman chair of Christian ethics and theology, and was professor of biblical and systematic theology. He taught at Trinity as a visiting professor in 1971 and 1975 and served as associate professor of systematic theology there from 1976 to 1983. After four years as a pastor in Switzerland, Dr. Brown returned to the Trinity faculty in 1987, where he stayed until coming to RTS.

His influence was also felt through his prolific writing. Besides his CT roles, Dr. Brown served on the editorial staff of *Human Life Review* and was a contributing editor for *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*. He was editor of *The Religion and Society Report* and wrote numerous articles over the last 40 years in such magazines as *National Review*, *Eternity*, *Hemelios*, and publications in Germany, Austria and London.


Dr. Brown was also director of the Center on Religion and Society at the Rockford Institute, and taught in the International Seminar on Jurisprudence and Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. He was also a member of the American Theological Society and the Turnerschaft Saxonia Marburg.

He and his wife, Grace, had two children, Cynthia Brown Erb and Peter E.H. Brown. In his spare time, Dr. Brown enjoyed crew, skiing and mountaineering. As such, Melinda Delahoyde, one of his former students and a Care Net board chair emeritus, described Dr. Brown in the *CT* obituary article as a renaissance man who “was good at fencing, which he learned in Europe — he was just a very athletic individual. His athletics were an extension of the view that you need to be a well-rounded person and pursue excellence in everything.”

She also recalled an open house at the Browns’ house in mid-June, shortly before his death. “People were coming and going from the house to sing his praises and to say thank you for all he’d done,” she said. “He wrote me a little note in the middle of it that said, ‘I really do not think of myself the way these people speak of me.’ I realized he really did not. He was just living his life as God had given it to him.”

Appropriately enough, Dr. Harold O.J. Brown devoted his own life to giving others the hope of both earthly and eternal life.

To read the *CT* obituary article in full, visit www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/julyweb-only/128-13.0.html. The audio of the July 28 memorial service for Dr. Brown in Charlotte may be downloaded from itunes.rts.edu.
I once heard him say to a group of people he knew that he had not written the definitive systematic theology, nor volumes of historical works. He then pointed to all of us and said, ‘You are my volumes. I have written on all of you by caring for you and investing in you.’ After my own conversion I would discover how much Joe did invest in me — hours of personal meetings and much prayer.

Dr. William Edgar, Westminster Theological Seminary

I took many courses with Dr. Brown. I distinctly remember him saying, ‘Repetition is the essence of teaching,’ and with students like me, he was completely correct! He had a pirate patch over one eye and a rather rough exterior (it is rumored he survived a 400-foot fall off of a mountain!), yet he would surprise you with his wit and joyful humor. He was a defender of the unborn, a scholar, a pastor and a friend.

He loved the students, and it showed. He led students on a trip to Luther’s hometown every summer, always had time for lunch, and in the evening would reserve a table at a fine German restaurant in town where he and his wife would get together with students for dinner and hymn singing. He was a true soldier of the cross, a man’s man, tough and yet amazingly humble.

Since a disciple cannot be above his master, let it be enough if we should be like him, as grace had fitted him to be our example. May his example be repeated as he insisted by saying, ‘Rise up oh men of God / Have done with lesser things / Give heart and soul and mind and strength / to serve the King of Kings.’

He also had a way to make you smile, so we will not mourn as those who have no hope. Can’t wait to see you again, but for now, goodbye, Dr. Brown.”

Joe Knott III, Raleigh, N.C.

Joe Brown encapsulated a rare combination of incredible brilliance and strong love for the students. Although an avid reader, scholar and writer, and what I always termed a ‘theological and philosophical think tank,’ Dr. Brown was a deeply relational being who wanted to enjoy the students as individuals. His goal was to help the students love Christ more and think biblically about the whole world.

Rod Culbertson, Dean of Admissions, RTS-Charlotte

He always introduced himself to me as Harold, though his older friends called him Joe. A few called him O.J. at one time, but cultural events brought an end to that. “Harold took all his degrees from Harvard: A. B., M. Div., Th. M., Ph. D. Somehow he emerged from there with his evangelical faith intact. He worked in the ministry of Park Street Church and did post-doc work at a number of European universities. He emerged with a distinctly Reformed theology, but with almost none of the Reformed buzzwords.

“We met for the first time when he was a professor at Trinity. I gave the lectures later published as Perspectives on the Word of God, for which Harold expressed appreciation. After I came to RTS, I had a couple of lunches with him during trips to Charlotte. Once he was in a wheelchair, and we ate together in the student commons. Another time he was wheeled around by a student so we could eat in a restaurant. Still another time he was mobile and he took me to a very classy French place. I was amused that rather often he would pop in to my classes to recruit students for his summer tours of Reformation sites.

“I got word that cancer had spread from his throat, and that the surgeons had removed much of that area, so that he would not any more be able to speak or to eat or drink through the mouth. I was asked, then, to teach courses at Charlotte that he normally would have taught. Harold sent his colleagues an e-mail, in effect a valedictory, regretting only that for the rest of his life he would not be able to take the Communion bread. He hoped that the doctors would allow a drop of wine on his tongue before he eats and drinks with Christ in glory.

“He was a dear Christian man, a formidable scholar and a strong, principled Christian leader. I and RTS will miss him greatly.”

John Frame, Professor, RTS-Orlando
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