Following Gods leading

THE STORY OF ORLANDO AND CHARLOTTE

DO WE NEED AN INFALLIBLE BIBLE?

RTS AND THE BILLY GRAHAM FAMILY

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

How Big Is Your God?

by John R. Muether

Page 4

Page 12

Page 19

Page 20
Chancellor’s Message

From the day RTS opened its doors in 1966, its leaders have been guided by a passion for making biblically sound theological education available to as many future ministers in the body of Christ as God would enable. In the first of our three-issue RQ series on the history of RTS, part of our ongoing celebration of RTS’ 40th anniversary, we addressed how the founding of the seminary was a significant event in the life of the church in the Southeast. The founders of RTS took considerable personal risks in taking steps of faith to build a seminary campus nearly from scratch, humanly speaking. This current issue focuses on how that vision grew from a regionally recognized seminary into a national and international institution.

Our former president, Luder Whitlock, left a successful legacy in expanding our programs and making theological education more accessible to as many people as possible. In the 1980s, when he and the RTS Board of Trustees began planning the establishment of a second full residential campus in the Orlando area, it was a rare move among accredited seminaries.

When RTS-Orlando held its first classes in 1989, our sovereign Lord was obviously blessing this effort to bring theological training to the students. The relevance of this model has been confirmed with the establishment of the residential campus in Charlotte in the 1990s, followed by branch campuses in Atlanta; Washington, D.C.; Boca Raton, Fla., and, Lord willing, additional cities to come. This vision — making theological education available, accessible and flexible — has also led to the development of the Virtual Campus (distance education), which will be covered in the third issue in the RTS 40th anniversary RQ series.

Today more than ever, potential seminarians are finding it increasingly difficult to uproot themselves and their families from their communities, churches and ministries to move across the country to attend seminary. The establishment of the Orlando and Charlotte campuses were the beginning of a trend in which RTS has purposed to establish a variety of means of preparing students according to their unique circumstances.

A motto RTS adopted in the 1980s, “Standing Firm but Not Standing Still,” reflects this mindset. In everything we do we stand firm on the inerrancy of God’s Word and the Westminster Confession of Faith. However, we will not stand still as we seek new ways to spread these truths broadly through educating increasing numbers of future pastors and other church leaders in their present setting. The apostle Paul spoke of becoming “all things to all people, so that by all means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). RTS’ approach to theological education seeks to capture some of the essence of that principle of service to the glory of God.

As we move into, Lord willing, another 40 years of ministry, we look forward to seeing what other creative ideas He will provide us as we distribute theological education to those who are called to ministry. This RQ celebrates the implementation of just some of those ideas.

Dr. Robert C. Cannada Jr.
PUBLICATIONS

» Dr. Richard Belcher, professor of Old Testament, authored a new book, *The Messiah and the Psalms* (Christian Focus), which was released in November/December.

» Dr. John D. Currid, Carl W. McMurray professor of Old Testament, has written two books released in November. They are *Calvin and the Biblical Languages* (Christian Focus), and *Commentary on Deuteronomy*, part of the Evangelical Press Study Commentary series. He has been appointed associate editor of Old Testament backgrounds and archaeology for the upcoming ESV Study Bible by Crossway Books.

» Dr. W. Andrew Hoffecker, professor of church history, wrote *Building A Christian Worldview*, which was recently translated into Indonesian.


» Dr. Stephen W. Brown, professor of preaching and practical theology, will preach at Willow Creek Church, Winter Springs, Fla., Dec. 3 and 10 and Feb. 4, 2007. He will preach at a pastor’s forum in Miami on Feb. 16–17, 2007, and at Kendall Presbyterian Church in Miami on Feb. 18, 2007. On March 10, 11, 17 and 18, 2007, he will preach at Perimeter Church in Duluth, Ga.


» Dr. John M. Frame has been appointed to the J. D. Trimble Chair of Systematic Theology and Philosophy. He gave his inaugural lecture, “Antithesis and the Doctrine of Scripture,” Nov. 29 at RTS-Orlando.

» Dr. Mark D. Futato, academic dean at RTS-Orlando, has been appointed to the Robert L. Macellan Chair of Old Testament. His inaugural lecture, “Structure and Meaning: The Messages of Jonah,” will be at 10 a.m. on Feb. 7, 2007 in the Katherine B. Pamplin Chapel.

» Dr. Frank James III, president of RTS-Orlando, has been appointed by Florida Gov. Jeb Bush to a three-year term on the Florida Commission for Independent Education.

» Dr. John W. P. Oliver has been appointed to the Robert Strong Chair of Homiletics and Practical Theology. His inaugural address, “Charge to the Student Body: Biblical Preaching,” was given Aug. 29.

» Dr. Miles V. Van Pelt, assistant professor of Old Testament, was inducted into the Academic Hall of Honor at the C. P. Haggard School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University on Oct. 28.

» Dr. Bruce K. Waltke, professor of Old Testament, was awarded the Doctor of Literature at Houghton College in New York on Oct. 6.

» Dr. Simon J. Kistemaker, professor of New Testament emeritus, will travel to Jakarta and Malang, Indonesia, in Jan. 2007 to teach 1 Corinthians.

» Dr. Derek Thomas, John E. Richards professor of systematic theology, traveled to Houston in Sept. to speak at the Ligonier Conference on the “The Ransom Theory of the Atonement.” He also traveled to Toronto to speak at a conference for Sola Scriptura Ministries on “Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature” and “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Interpretation.”

» Dr. Bruce K. Waltke, professor of Old Testament, traveled to Medford, Ore., Nov. 3–5 to teach a seminar on the Psalms at Cornerstone Church. He taught Nov. 26 at the Institute for Biblical Studies in Washington, D.C.

TRAVEL

RTS All-Korean Alumni Conference
In celebration of RTS’ 40th anniversary, Dr. Ric Cannada, chancellor, traveled to Pusan, South Korea, for the All-Korean Alumni Conference on Oct. 11–13 at Soooyoungro Presbyterian Church, where Dr. Pil-Do Jung is the senior pastor. Dr. Cannada was joined by Dr. Guy Richardson, Dr. Allen Curry, Dr. Sam Larsen and Dr. Eunsoo Kim. All Korean RTS alumni and spouses were invited.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Robert Bridges has been named executive director of the RTS Foundation. He has over 25 years of professional experience in gift and estate planning. He may be contacted at bbridges@rts.edu.

Polly Stone has been named director of institutional planning and assessment. She may be contacted at pstone@rts.edu.

Introducing RTS on iTunes U
The RTS Virtual Campus has worked with Apple Computer Company to develop a new platform for delivering course materials to RTS students. This platform, iTunes U, allows students 24/7 access to password-protected materials including audio lectures, video role plays, syllabi and other items. Also, iTunes U allows friends of RTS free access to special on-campus events including seminars, conferences, chapel sessions and more. To experience RTS on iTunes U, visit itunes.rts.edu and click on “Click here to launch RTS on iTunes U.” To access RTS on iTunes U you will need to have iTunes already installed on your computer. The program may be downloaded by visiting www.apple.com/itunes.

RTS Newsletter
The RTS Newsletter, available in a biweekly electronic format, is a great way to stay informed about events, activities and alumni. Subscribe by visiting www.rts.edu/Site/NewsEvents/nl_signup.aspx or e-mailing jburgdorf@rts.edu.
Expanding Borders

by John R. Muether

From the 1980s into the 21st century, RTS grew beyond its Jackson roots, becoming the dominant evangelical seminary in the Southeast by establishing the Orlando and Charlotte campuses.

In the 1970s and early 1980s a number of significant ecclesiastical changes affected the ministry of Reformed Theological Seminary. The Presbyterian Church in America was founded in 1973, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church was established in 1981, and in 1982 the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod united with the PCA. Also, in 1983, Southern and Northern Presbyterians reunited to form the Presbyterian Church (USA).

While some RTS faculty remained in the old Presbyterian Church (U.S.) and became part of the new PCUSA, over the next decade the seminary recruited fewer students from the mainline denomination. Originally founded to provide a biblical and Reformed education for ministry candidates primarily in the PCUS, RTS refocused its recruiting beyond the PCUS.

Due to the few choices for a Reformed theological education, many in the PCA came to regard RTS, though independent, as its “unofficial” seminary. As the denomination grew, so did RTS enrollment. The primary role RTS enjoyed in the early years of the PCA was challenged when the RPCES/PCA union resulted in the PCA inheriting Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. Covenant became the “official” seminary of the PCA, along with Covenant College in Tennessee.

Today, there are more RTS graduates serving in the PCA than from any other seminary, and RTS is committed to continuing to serve the PCA and train as many of its ministerial candidates as the Lord provides. But RTS’ ministry has expanded greatly through its focus on serving many denominations, a commitment consistent with the seminary’s founding vision to propagate the Reformed faith as widely as possible. Under the leadership of Luder Whitlock, who became RTS president in 1978, RTS energetically applied this founding principle and made it a core value. Today over 60 denominations are represented in the RTS student body, with enrollment mushrooming to over 2,500 students each year.

Looking Ahead

In 1986, Whitlock posed this question: “What would the seminary be in the next 20 years?” What lay ahead were exciting times, he suggested, because “I have an unshakable confidence in God’s promises.” Whitlock’s gaze focused on the millennium, as he urged the “shaping [of] a vision for the 21st century.” He had a keen interest in cultural trends, eager for seminarians to grow in cultural discernment. Technology, medical advances, pluralism, the information explosion and globalization presented challenges about which RTS graduates needed to be well read.
“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body...”

Hebrews 10:19-20
Despite the progress, obstacles remained, one being RTS’ location in the Deep South. In the late ’80s, RTS received — and declined — a generous offer to entirely relocate the campus to South Florida. But could RTS attempt a branch campus? Westminster had tried and failed to establish a south Florida branch, and RTS had considered participating in Westminster’s work. The seminary also explored extension work in Birmingham, Ala.

Whitlock urged the Board to focus on Atlanta and Orlando as possible extension sites. In May 1988, the Board determined to establish a branch campus in Orlando. For all their vision, Whitlock and the Board could not imagine what would unfold over the next two decades.

Frank Horton, long-time RTS Executive Committee member, once observed that from its earliest days RTS recruited many students from Florida. As interest and support from the Sunshine State continued to grow, Horton and his colleagues clearly felt that God was directing the school’s attention there. Florida was the fastest growing state in 1989. Central Florida was also becoming an entertainment and tourist mecca.

Confirmation of the decision came from many quarters. The bestselling book Megatrends 2000, published in 1990, focused on central Florida in its discussion on religion in America. “In the bellwether state of Florida,” wrote the authors, “the religious revival is spurring an extraordinary church building boom. Central Florida’s more than 450 churches are not enough. ‘We’re growing so rapidly that we’re growing out of our churches,’ says Edward Thomas, an Orlando architect.”

Professor Richard Pratt moved to Orlando to help staff the campus (also serving as dean of students), along with Lyn Perez as campus administrator. Perez set ambitious goals for the campus, praying for 30 students in the first year and 100 students by three years. He was shocked to witness 94 students registering for classes when the doors to its temporary campus in Maitland opened in September 1989.

**Orlando**

Whitlock invested considerable energy in recruiting faculty, including Roger Nicole as visiting professor of theology. Recently retired after four decades at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Nicole was one of the founding fathers and staunchest defenders of the renaissance of American evangelicalism in the 20th century. In October 1956, Nicole’s name appeared on the masthead of a new magazine, Christianity Today. Fifty years later, his name remains on the masthead. When Nicole joined the faculty of RTS, he brought his 25,000-volume personal library. He graciously shared the riches of his personal collection with students as the campus steadily built its own library holdings.

Another prominent addition was Ronald Nash in 1991. Nash had taught for 27 years in the philosophy department at Western Kentucky University, and also served as visiting professor at Fuller Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Southern Baptist Seminary.

The Orlando campus was bolstered by the presence of R.C. Sproul of Ligonier Ministries (above, while teaching at the Jackson campus).

**Prominent Faculty**

Whitlock invested considerable energy in recruiting faculty, including Roger Nicole as visiting professor of theology. Recently retired after four decades at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Nicole was one of the founding fathers and staunchest defenders of the renaissance of American evangelicalism in the 20th century. In October 1956, Nicole’s name appeared on the masthead of a new magazine, Christianity Today.
He was widely published (over 35 books), and lectured extensively at over 70 colleges and universities in the United States and overseas. An heir of the theological tradition of Carl F.H. Henry and a lifelong student of Augustine, Nash impressed a love for philosophy upon his students. He taught at Orlando for a dozen years, and RTS mourned his passing in 2006 to a stroke.

RTS’s arrival in Orlando was preceded by Ligonier Ministries, the “teaching fellowship of R.C. Sproul.” With the opening of Orlando, Sproul, who had been associated with Jackson as a professor since 1978, seized the opportunity for greater involvement. While still directing Ligonier full time, Sproul came to campus one day a week to teach two courses per semester in systematic theology. Originally Sproul also served as academic dean, while Richard Watson paid regular visits from Jackson to establish the academic program and advise students. Ligonier conferences were useful in recruiting prospective students, and Ligonier provided, and continues to provide, employment for many students and their spouses.

### Building a Campus

The Orlando campus quickly sought to build a library. Supplemented by Nicole’s substantial personal library, aggressive collection included the purchase of a large collection of materials from Princeton Seminary and other schools, as well as the acquisition of personal libraries from retired scholars, theologians and historians. Combined with duplicate materials from Jackson, the Orlando library accessioned 50,000 titles within its first five years.

Carl Henry was the speaker at the first Orlando convocation in September 1989. The selection of the former Fuller professor and long-time editor of *Christianity Today* symbolized RTS’ hope to help shape American evangelicalism. Henry spoke on “Christianity in a Troubled World.” He called upon faculty and students to take on the challenge of mission to the world with fresh courage.

RTS-Orlando opened its doors in the fall of 1989 at a temporary location in Maitland, north of the city (opposite page, upper left).
Whitlock generally framed his vision for RTS by invoking the spirit of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation. “Our real hope,” Whitlock wrote, “is to work for a new reformation. With the serious spiritual declension in this country, we are seeing an absolute hemorrhage of Christian influence and effectiveness. Something must be done to reverse it. What happened in Europe will happen here unless something brings about a great spiritual renewal.”

One barometer for the seminary’s progress was a 1989 survey of American religious leaders taken by Christianity Today. Of dozens of seminaries surveyed, RTS ranked 13th in “seminary awareness,” first in “doctrinal soundness,” and second in “spiritual atmosphere.” Meanwhile, RTS joined other evangelicals in debating how best to shape the theological direction of its movement. In 1992 Whitlock and Sproul joined James Boice, Michael Horton and other Reformed evangelicals in establishing the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

On to Charlotte

No sooner had RTS established roots in Florida than it began to explore further extensions. In a sense, a campus in Charlotte, N.C., was the logical next step. If Florida produced its main stream of students, its second major source came from the Carolinas. Yet in contrast to the fanfare and publicity accompanying the Orlando opening, Charlotte began on a much smaller scale.

The “Queen City” was the birthplace of Billy Graham, a city full of churches and rich in Presbyterian history. The rapidly growing urban center was becoming the headquarters of several evangelical parachurch organizations. RTS’ work in Charlotte began when Douglas Kelly traveled from Jackson to teach a weekend course each semester for two years, beginning in 1990. As local interest spread, the seminary opened temporary quarters in a former real-estate office in 1992. Gordon Reed administered a program featuring evening and weekend courses. Through donations from Jackson and Orlando, an 8,000-volume library was quickly assembled.

Alumnus Robert C. (“Ric”) Canada Jr., then pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Macon, Ga., was appointed vice president for administration in Charlotte. He was joined by alumnus Robert Cara, a Ph.D. candidate at Westminster who served as New Testament professor and interim librarian. Under
Cannada’s leadership quickly expanded to over 100 students. The seminary soon relocated to a 10-acre parcel purchased from Carmel Baptist Church. The former church property was fully retrofitted as a seminary campus in 1997, when Charles Colson spoke at the dedication service. By then the campus had five full-time faculty and its first class of 16 graduates.

The Campus Grows

Kelly had relocated from Jackson to anchor the Charlotte faculty. Joining him were Will Norton (recently retired from Jackson), Frank Kik (who served as professor of practical theology after over 35 years in the pastorate) and Richard Belcher. In 1999 Harold O.J. Brown was appointed professor of philosophy and theology. The Harvard-educated Fulbright scholar had taught at Trinity for many years and pastored a church in Switzerland. When John Oliver joined the faculty in homiletics (after serving as pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Augusta,
Ga., for 28 years), the small campus held special strength in practical theology.

As RTS established a full master’s program in Charlotte, it quickly discovered that it was not the only school with eyes on the city. Before long five evangelical seminaries were established in the region. Cannada stressed the need for cooperation among the seminaries wherever possible. He encouraged cross-registration privileges for students, and RTS also led the establishment of a library cooperative.

The campus especially benefited from Bill Robinson’s years of development labors. Robinson secured deferred gifts, including several multi-million-dollar estates. Particularly significant was the Barron Estate in Rock Hill, S.C., near Charlotte, which enabled the purchase of the Carmel Road property.

### Measuring the Seminary’s Impact

The Charlotte campus prompted a significant reshaping of institutional life. With the establishment of a third residential campus, a truly multi-campus institution began to emerge. This presented challenges, not least to the accrediting agencies that visited RTS. One accreditor threw up his hands in frustration and confessed that the seminary seemed almost as mysterious as the doctrine of the Trinity: “We can’t figure out if you are one or if you are three.”

Luder Whitlock was aware of the significant role RTS was assuming when he spoke at the groundbreaking for the permanent Orlando campus in April 1995. “The ministry of this seminary is needed now more than ever,” he noted. If it fails, “what shall our culture become?” Whitlock’s sense of the seminary’s growing societal influence fit with increasing engagement of evangelicals in the “culture wars” of that day. RTS was poised, he claimed, to offer the hope and encouragement of the gospel, not only to American culture but also throughout the world.

That same year British evangelical scholar Alister McGrath acknowledged RTS in his book, Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity. He cited RTS along with Fuller, Regent, Trinity and Westminster as “leading evangelical centers of scholarship and research.” Together they were symbolic of a renaissance and maturity of American evangelical theological reflection. Yet McGrath’s congratulatory note also contained caution: Success can become an enemy, and the spread of the influence of schools such as RTS can contribute to a dilution of its identity. An identity, McGrath warned, must be “com-
mensurate with its tradition.” For a seminary in the Reformed tradition, this was the challenge of Semper Reformanda: always being Reformed according to the Word of God.

Changes on the Horizon

One of the crowning achievements of Whitlock’s service at RTS occurred when he was elected president of the Association of Theological Schools from 1998 to 2000. Not only did this honor reflect the respect he commanded in American theological education, but it also revealed his success in leading RTS from its days of ATS probation to recognized academic excellence.

In 1999, the Board of Trustees granted Whitlock a long-overdue sabbatical. He used it to pen his first book, The Spiritual Quest. He completed it from his study on the new 60-acre, lakefront Orlando campus in Oviedo on the east side of metropolitan Orlando. From one perspective, Whitlock could find great satisfaction in the realization of the seminary’s vision. On the eve of the new millennium, he wrote, “As the hours drift away and the 20th century becomes history, we are also aware that it has been a breathtaking ride during the past exciting 100 years. So much has happened one can hardly take it in.” That statement aptly described his long-time association with RTS as well.

However, the collapse of the stock market and high-tech industries in the late 1990s brought financial pressures to RTS through endowment-value losses and declining income. This significantly affected the growth and expansion of ministry and building programs. In addition, after 23 years as president, Whitlock announced his retirement from RTS in May 2001. After leaving RTS, Whitlock’s labors have included directing the Trinity Forum and serving as interim president at Erskine College and Seminary in South Carolina.

Despite the financial pressures and Whitlock’s retirement, the Executive Committee acknowledged God’s faithfulness by renewing its ongoing commitment that RTS would remain one united institution. The search for Whitlock’s successor in turn raised questions about the means by which the seminary would continue its expansion and yet maintain its Reformed identity. The serious financial challenges reminded the older committee members of the struggles during RTS’ founding, and the Executive Committee committed itself toward “praying like we used to,” in the words of Frank Horton.

In September 2002, RTS inaugurated a new president and ambitiously began restructuring its leadership. The next RQ will describe how these changes, as well as the development of the Virtual Campus and new extension campuses, have positioned RTS to meet the challenges of the 21st century.
In December 1962, former RTS president Sam Patterson read an article in Presbyterian Outlook titled “Do We Need an Infallible Bible?”. The article categorically denied the need for inerrancy in Scripture and maintained that the Bible was indeed subject to error. Shaken by such opinions, Patterson threw all his energy into the founding of a new seminary dedicated to the infallibility of God’s Word.

Today, RTS is still firmly committed to the inerrancy of Scripture. In this adaptation of an article published in the fall of 1985 in the RTS Bulletin, a precursor to Reformed Quarterly, Luder Whitlock — also a former RTS president — looks at the question posed nearly a half-century ago in Presbyterian Outlook and answers with a timelessly resounding “Yes!”

Frustrated by the emotional trauma of a denominational controversy, someone asked, “Why isn’t it enough to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and seek to follow Him as the Lord of your life? Why do those people insist on plenary verbal inspiration and substitutionary atonement? I’m not sure I even understand those terms!”

That seems to be a fairly reasonable reaction, especially when posed by someone not familiar with the technical terms used by theologians. Why do doctrinal issues become so controversial? Does it really make that much difference?

Of course it matters; it makes all the difference in the world whether the Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God or not. While a person may be a Christian without affirming this truth, there is abundant evidence that those who surrender the doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture inevitably abandon orthodox Christianity as well. The reason for that inevitable drift is the loss of the Bible as the ultimate authority for what you believe and how you live.

Once you grant that the Bible has errors in it, then of course you are under no obligation to believe the erroneous material. But who determines what part is erroneous and what part is not? Someone must make that decision. By passing judgment on the Bible, people shift their authority from God’s Word to their own decisions. Let us understand this transfer of authority clearly. Rather than attempting to understand and obey God’s Word, they decide what they will believe and do.

These people readily agree, of course, that the Bible is special, that it contains God’s Word and that it is an important guide. But by believing that the Bible contains errors, the damage has been done. If that is so, can you really believe what the Bible tells you about the creation of the world or about a big fish swallowing Jonah and then spitting him up alive three days later? What about its attestation to the Resurrection? Can you believe its message about the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through the atoning death of Christ? The trustworthiness of the Scriptures is seriously damaged when inerrancy is abandoned.

Once the certainty of “Thus saith the Lord” has been lost, the church also loses its sense of direction and begins to flounder. Determining right and wrong becomes an entirely different matter. The old biblical absolutes are washed away, and new values are thrust upon the church. People no longer know what they can and should believe.

For example, the Bible is unambiguous in designating homosexuality as sinful behavior (Romans 1:26,27 et al.). Yet contemporary churchmen, some of them prominent leaders and teachers, have not been willing to condemn such behavior. Rather they have offered a place in the church for unrepentant, untransformed homosexuals and have even suggested the possibility of their ordination and service as church officers.

Abortion is an entirely different
kind of issue, but biblical advocacy of the sanctity of human life is indisputable. Moreover, the Ten Commandments forbid murder (Exodus 20:13). Such biblical texts should be an adequate guide. In spite of that, some ministers and churches aggressively agitation for the right of a pregnant woman to determine whether or not her unborn child shall be aborted.

The least we should do is sound an alarm, calling attention to the dangerous consequences of weakening the Bible's authority. And of course, that is really the point. The Bible is no ordinary book. It is not the product of human ingenuity or authorship, although it was delivered through human instrumentality. It is God's Word — no less — His recorded message, given through apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit.

Peter the apostle stated it succinctly: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20,21, New International Version). The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, said essentially the same thing in different words. He said, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). It is straight from the mouth of God. In the Old Testament the mouth of God was regarded as the source of the divine message, so Paul is affirming that all the Scriptures are God's Word.

The attitude of Jesus toward Scripture corroborates that of Peter and Paul. He countered the temptations of the devil by quoting the Scriptures. For Him, the fact that "it is written" (Matthew 4:11) was sufficient. He knew that the Scriptures could not be broken, and in His great Sermon on the Mount, He reminded His audience, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17,18, NIV).

To reject these clear, unambiguous statements from the Bible regarding its origin and nature is to raise a question regarding the credibility of any doctrine presented in its pages. Ultimately, the reflection thrusts you into a sea of relativism regarding what to believe.

But that is unnecessary — and wrong. God has spoken through apostles and prophets — and with finality through His Son, Jesus Christ. His message is recorded in the Bible. It is just as much His Word as if He were to speak directly to you from heaven right now. It bears the full authority of His character and person. You can believe it. You can rely on it. God doesn't make mistakes. What He says is true, and you must believe it for your salvation.

If you cannot turn to God and His sure Word, then where can you turn? He alone has the words of eternal life.
Tribute to Luder Whitlock

by Dr. Simon J. Kistemaker

The 1986 article reprinted in this issue on the need for an infallible Bible originally appeared in a magazine eventually evolving into Reformed Quarterly and launched under the supervision of Luder Whitlock, the article’s author. Simon Kistemaker, professor emeritus of New Testament at RTS, is one of a handful of men who witnessed the entirety of Whitlock’s RTS presidency firsthand. “Dr. K,” a beloved figure at RTS in his own right, reflects on Whitlock’s influence.

In 1975, an unassuming, gentle person joined the RTS faculty in Jackson, Miss., in the area of missions and evangelism. Luder Whitlock had served Presbyterian congregations in Hollywood, Fla., and Harriman, Tenn. During his ministry in Tennessee, Vanderbilt University in Nashville granted him a Doctor of Ministry degree, which enabled him to teach courses on the seminary level.

Within three years at RTS he had earned the respect of the faculty and administration. When Sam Patterson retired as RTS president, the Board of Trustees looked to Whitlock to replace him. The Board approved the appointment, and in 1978 Whitlock began his presidency with a period of listening and learning. He adapted quickly to working with the Executive Committee of the Board, and served us faculty with insight and wisdom.

For example, when a certain professor began teaching doctrine in conflict with the tenets of the seminary, students complained to Whitlock. He talked to the man, who promised to mend his ways, but the following year he taught the same doctrine again. Whitlock made a wise decision by promising the man a sabbatical followed by immediate dismissal. He prudently solved the problem in such a way that all parties (students, faculty, Board members and constituency) were pleased.

Whitlock realized that funding for RTS needed to be increased, so he went to numerous donors not only in the Southern states but also to many people nationwide. Over time this unrelenting pursuit began to pay off. The seminary developed programs in counseling and missions along with the Th.M. and D.Min. degrees that attracted students from numerous areas and countries.

As president, Whitlock was a man with vision. Realizing that a seminary serves a particular region, he launched the idea of having separate campuses in different areas. Thus, in 1989 RTS started the Orlando, Fla., campus, in 1993 the one in Charlotte, N.C., and in 1995 the Virtual Campus that would attract students from numerous places worldwide. In addition, Whitlock envisioned extension campuses in both Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

During his 23-year presidency, he raised RTS to a higher level of influence and stature. Amid all the growth, as this 1986 article demonstrates, he kept the seminary faithful to Sola Scriptura and other tenets central to its founding. ✦
Of all the things that would describe Tullian Tchividjian, “church planter” is not on his list. Disciple, preacher, teacher, husband, father, grandson of Billy Graham, great-grandson of a prominent Presbyterian medical missionary to China — those might be some of them. Tullian’s current ministry, though, was off his radar screen as recently as three years ago.

As pastor of New City Presbyterian Church in Margate, Fla., in the bustling Broward County area near Miami, Tullian is emulating his famous grandfather in that he’s fulfilling a ministry calling, while forging his own identity in a different type of spiritual harvest field.

Tullian grew up in South Florida as the middle of the seven children of Stephan Tchividjian, a prominent psychologist born and reared in Switzerland, and Gigi Graham Tchividjian, an award-winning author and speaker in her own right. His journey to faith in Christ took a wide detour into the world of partying, drugs and promiscuity. Eventually, though, his hedonistic lifestyle left him, at age 21, broken and desperate in the manner of the prodigal son.

After his conversion and eventual graduation from Bible college in South Carolina, Tullian enrolled at RTS-Orlando. “I’m a native Floridian, so the thought of going south of the Florida state line was exciting,” Tullian says, only half-jokingly. “No more coats!” he adds, more jokingly. The serious side of his journey to RTS came in part through mentoring by Mike Potts, a South Florida pastor and former member of the RTS-Orlando advisory board.

The “deal-maker” for Tullian concerning RTS was a personal meeting with Luder Whitlock, then president of the seminary. “Luder winsomely presented RTS-Orlando, and I knew this was exactly where I wanted to go,” Tullian says. Tullian started at RTS in January 1998, graduating in May 2001.

Tullian’s time at RTS enabled the former philosophy major to feed his growing passion for the realm of ideas. “It sounds a little sick,” Tullian recalls, “but I remember spending free time literally walking up and down the aisles of the library becoming well acquainted with books and writers. I look at my time at RTS as not just getting a formal education in the classroom.”

The ideas he absorbed did not remain locked up in the ether of the impractical. “John Stott once said that Christians need to be people of double listening,” Tullian says, “both to the questions of the world and the answers of the Word. I really took that to heart. I felt that both philosophically and sociologically I was equipped to understand the questions our culture raises.” He began to apply those lessons in earnest when he and his wife, Kim, moved with their three children back to South Florida in 2003 to help plant New City Presbyterian after two years in an associate pastorate at Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, Tenn.

Not that Tullian planned it that way. “The one thing I swore I would never do was plant a church,” he acknowledges. “The guys [at RTS] who were interested in planting churches were all the math and engineering majors. They were all the detail-oriented, administrative minds. I was more a philosophical, big-idea guy.”

That mentality led him to reject his first invitation to help plant a church. “I was thoroughly enjoying my work [in Knoxville] when I got an out-of-the-blue phone call from a guy down here,” Tullian recalls. “He said, ‘There are four or five of us who are

Like his famous grandfather (above), Tullian (right, with wife, Kim) has been called to a preaching ministry.
praying about the possibility of starting a new church.’ I said, ‘Obviously the people who gave you my name don’t know me very well. I don’t know the first thing about church planting.’

Regardless, the idea intrigued Tullian and Kim, because they were genuinely interested in returning home to South Florida. Tullian did agree to act as an informal consultant who would help the men find a pastor. The persistent men offered to fly him to Florida to meet with them, to which he agreed. “After spending three days with them,” Tullian says, “God planted a seed. He helped me see that if I ever were to plant a church, these would be the type of guys I would do it with. They were humble, resourceful, godly, not disgruntled, not angry, not trying to do it right because everyone else is doing it wrong — which I was very much looking out for.”

The men then offered to fly Tullian and his whole family down to meet with a core group of about 70 people. “We saw it as a free vacation,” Tullian admits. “But that week is when God confirmed that this is exactly what he wanted me to do.” An out-of-the-mouths-of-babes moment sealed the calling. “I’m standing in line at some breakfast place with my two boys who were at the time 8 and 6. I asked, ‘Guys, what do think about the possibility of moving back down here?’ My oldest, Gabe, said, ‘To be honest, Dad, I’m 50 percent happy and 50 percent sad.’ I saw that as enough of a stop sign to not do it. Then Gabe said, ‘But I think we should come here, because Cedar Springs has other preachers, and these people have no preacher.’

“I remember my eyes literally welling up with tears while thinking to myself, ‘He’s right.’ The field is ripe for harvest down here. I’m surprised that as big as South Florida is, there are not more churches defined by the strength of the pulpit. So I said, ‘God, You do with me as a preacher whatever you want, with all my misgivings and inadequacies, and use me, and I’ll come down there.’

New City Presbyterian held its first worship service on August 24, 2003. Today, by Tullian’s estimation, the church has outgrown its meeting facility at a local school. Also, the pastoral staff team has grown, with RTS alumni and students like David Gordon as executive pastor, Paul Manuel as body life pastor, Brandon Wells as music director and Dylan Callion as youth director. The harvest indeed is plentiful.

“Ironically, the postmodern rejection of absolute truth is beginning to create a hunger for truth that is unprecedented in recent generations,” he says. “I think the opportunity to be devotionally doctrinal in our preaching is great today — at least that’s what we’re finding here. [People] keep coming because they are on the receiving end of something substantial, and they know it, whether they understand everything about it or not. They know they are encountering something bigger than they are, and that gives them hope.”

Tullian uses descriptions like “gravity and gladness,” “depth and delight,” “doctrine and devotion,” “precept and passion” and “truth and love” to describe New City’s approach to worship and preaching. “We want to be a church that thinks and feels theologically while seeking to avoid intellectualism and emotionalism,” he explains. “There are churches that do thinking really well but do feeling very poorly, while other churches do feeling well but do thinking very poorly. We see having to choose between the two as a weakness in the church, not a strength.”

When it comes to his perspective on being in such a highly visible Christian family, Tullian sees strengths and weaknesses of its own. “I’ve had a front-row seat to watch a man who has been given every opportunity under the sun to do just about anything he’s wanted to do, and he has stayed the course,” he says, referring to his evangelist grandfather. “There are fringe benefits — opportunities to meet people, speaking opportunities, writing opportunities. Now that also contributes to the challenge, because ‘to whom much is given, much is required.’ Knowing how to wisely steward those opportunities keeps me very dependent on God.”

One such opportunity is his first book, “Do I Know God?”, to be released in 2007 as part a two-book contract with Multnomah Press. “Being the grandson of Billy Graham opens doors, but it doesn’t keep you in the house,” Tullian explains. “The
[book opportunity] came about initially because of who my grandfather is. Now if I write a bad book, those doors slam. So it requires me to exercise my God-given gifts and passions in order to make an impact. God can provide the platform to do something worthy with the platform.” In this case Tullian is using the platform to address “non-Christians and confused Christians” about the subject of assurance of salvation.

“If you have a relationship with God, He wants you to know it, and if you don’t have a relationship with God, He wants you to know it [as well],” he says. “The two things God does not want are for you to think you have a relationship with Him if you don’t, or for you to not think you have a relationship with Him if you do.”

As soon as the book is finished, Tullian will start working on book number two — that is, once he’s determined the final subject. One idea is based on the working title “Feeling God.” “I make a distinction between God-centered emotion and emotionalism,” he observes. “In many Reformed circles, we think that thinking is more reliable than feeling. But if we really believe in total depravity, our thinking is just as unreliable as our feeling and [vice versa]. So both are in the process of being sanctified. To elevate our thought life above and beyond our devotional life is a decision God does not want us to make.”

Like a true South Floridian, Tullian’s competing idea came while vacationing at the beach this summer. “What in the World is God Doing?” would be about how God is expanding His kingdom here and now,” he says. “I think most Christians assume that God’s goal for His people is to pull them out of this world and into heaven. The Lord’s Prayer offers a wonderful corrective to that — God intends to bring the reality of heaven, what’s going on up there, namely the hallowing of His name and the doing of His will, down here.”

It took 21 years before Tullian Tchividjian encountered the reality of God’s presence in his own life. He’s devoting the rest of his life to helping lead others to the same knowledge.

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The connection between RTS and the world’s most famous evangelist runs deeper than the fact that one of its graduates is a grandson of Billy Graham and his wife, Ruth. For one thing, when Tullian Tchividjian graduated from RTS-Orlando in 2001, Billy Graham was slated to speak at the commencement ceremony. However, the health problems that have subsequently prompted Graham’s retirement from crusade evangelism kept him from following through on the invitation.

On a more personal level, Graham is a longtime friend of Roger Nicole, the retired RTS-Orlando professor who came to RTS after a distinguished career at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (see page 4 for more about Dr. Nicole). Graham helped in the formation of Gordon-Conwell, and as such, he and Nicole were two of the original “young lions” of the burgeoning evangelical movement in the United States after World War II. Billy and Ruth Graham later supported RTS in that, as Tullian testifies, they so eagerly embraced his choice of RTS that they helped pay for his education there.

This is consistent with the fact that Ruth Graham in particular has a close family connection to the founding of the seminary. Her father, L. Nelson Bell, was a prominent Presbyterian missionary and statesman who was instrumental in the evangelical renewal movement among Southern Presbyterians that ultimately fueled the formation of RTS.

The about-to-be-published book written by John R. Muether, RTS librarian and professor, and excerpted in adapted form in both the Fall and Winter issues of RQ (see page 4), contains more detail on Nelson Bell’s link to RTS, including his speech on the Jackson campus and the building named for him there.
Father-son relationships and their characteristic bonding activities have been well documented in society, especially in dramatic portrayals. For example, the protagonist in the movie *Field of Dreams* longs to be able to reconnect with his father through a game of catch on the family farm. In a sense, an Iowa cornfield became a North Carolina seminary classroom for David and Barrett Jordan. Whereas fathers and sons typically bond through activities like playing catch, fishing, woodworking projects and so forth, the Jordans bonded in an unconventional manner — they went to seminary together.

Granted, they didn’t plan it that way; David followed through on a calling to ministry relatively late in life, whereas Barrett’s calling was at a somewhat young age. The eventual result was a priceless family experience that took place on the ground floor of the establishment of the RTS-Charlotte campus in the late 1990s.

The timing of their journey to RTS is not the only aspect of the experience that David and Barrett hold in common. They arrived there having both, in their own ways, resisted that calling for years. Barrett’s road carried some self-inflicted bumps. “I had felt that call pretty strongly in college, and had told the Lord, ‘No, that’s not what I wanted to do,’ says the graduate of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. “So the way the Lord works, He gives you exactly what you want [so as] to prove to you that you’re miserable in it.”

For Barrett, that meant making a lot of money for his age in pharmaceutical sales. Along with it, though, came the depths of despair. After less than a year of marriage to his college sweetheart, he watched her leave and file for divorce. The breakup of his first marriage led Barrett to a renewed passion for His Savior.

His father, meanwhile, was beginning to respond to an inner stirring that had percolated for a long time. Over the years David and his wife, Carol, had participated in five church-planting efforts in the Atlanta area — many of those associated with Perimeter Church, the influential congregation originally founded by RTS alumnus Randy Pope. “[People] encouraged me to go to seminary to get some training,” David says, “and this went on until I was 51 years old.”
Finally, though, the Atlanta natives began investigating seminars. RTS resonated with them; David in particular first learned about the seminary because, with Mississippi as part of his sales territory, he frequently visited Jackson. The two men settled on RTS-Charlotte in large part because of its proximity. Barrett was already living in the Carolinas; David didn’t even know there was a Charlotte campus until he applied.

What David did know, though, was the news of Barrett’s acceptance by RTS before his son did. “I was told I’d been accepted,” David recalls, “and was asked, ‘By the way, do you know this guy Barrett Jordan? He was accepted earlier this morning. Is he kin to you?’ I said, ‘Yes, he’s my son.’ So I called him and told him we were going together.”

Father and son moved to the Charlotte area, where Carol found a house for the three of them to live in together; Barrett lived upstairs from his parents. David and Barrett spent the next three years of their lives attending every single RTS class together, save one elective. “My son had suspected that his dad was an idiot most of his life,” says David with exaggerated self-effacement. “I then went to classes with him every day, taking Greek and Hebrew, and in a systematic fashion proved to him I’m an idiot for the next three years.”

In more serious moments, though, the two men acknowledge their reconnection during that period — their first extended time together in Barrett’s adulthood. “Though we were always on great terms, I was always the son and he was Dad,” Barrett says. “Now I was coming back to him as somebody standing on my own two feet. I was able to spend many hours with my father and relearn him in a sense. That was a huge blessing that I’ll always cherish.”

Despite the new adult-to-adult dimension to their relationship, there was also the expected sense of...
fatherly concern as Barrett worked his way through seminary. “He’d get off work at midnight,” David remembers, “and I would stay up and pray for him until he got home at about 12:20, and I’d open the door for him. He would often study at night, and we would jump up in the morning, and I would drive to classes, and we would be there by 8:30. It concerned me a great deal that he was having to work so hard to [follow God’s calling], but it worked out.”

Today, in their respective pastorates in the Presbyterian Church in America, the Jordans are separated by several hundred miles. David is the pastor at Vineville Presbyterian Church in Macon, Ga., while Barrett and his family (he married Judy, his second wife, shortly before he and his father’s RTS graduation) moved to West Virginia to plant Redeemer Presbyterian Church in a suburb of Charleston, the state capital.

Having been, in his words, “primed for missions” through his upbringing in various church plants, Barrett has become a church-planter himself. Redeemer was begun in 2002 in Taze Valley, W.Va., a suburb of the capital city of Charleston. The church was a so-called “parachute plant,” in that the presbytery planted the church without a pre-existing core group of people with which to begin. “I told Judy we’d give it three years to see what the Lord does,” Barrett recalls.

Barrett and Judy have seen the congregation grow to the point where the church has taken to renting out a movie theater to meet its needs. Considering the places he’s called “church” over the years, that’s par for the course for him. “We met in hotels, funeral homes, roller rinks and all kinds of places,” Barrett says, reflecting on his family’s experiences with church plants, in which he and his brother, Tim, were usually the first two members of the youth group. “When you couple that with the understanding that [church] was always the people, not the building, I [see that] I was being built for this, though I didn’t know it at the time.”

From Barrett’s vantage point, Redeemer’s worship venue is an example of God’s common grace. “It’s built for worship,” he says. “To me, a theater is a pagan worship hall. It’s not [a] traditional church loca-
The Charlotte Campus: 
Frank Kik Remembered

by Tim R. Watson

Just like David and Barrett Jordan, Dr. Frank Kik was a presence in the formative years of RTS-Charlotte. The professor of practical theology left this earth in August after a brief battle with lung cancer. Tim Watson, RTS-Charlotte alumnus and pastor at New Sterling ARP Church in Stony Point, N.C., reflects on the loss of his mentor.

I came to know Frank late in his ministry and early in mine. He as professor and me as student quickly established a relationship that developed into a bond that would carry each of us through the ministries our Lord had given us.

Our bond quickly became more than simply professor-student. He was called to serve as interim pastor where I served as an elder and vice moderator. That year and a half was more than an education in the dynamics of church operation. He, in short, said, “I’ll take care of the preaching; you take care of everything else.” He would call to check on things and give advice, but he allowed me to lead. He trusted me and therefore allowed me to put to work the things we had discussed in class or in conversations.

In these years Frank became a confidant. I could call anytime with any question, and with his blunt yet caring way he would provide guidance. Frank taught many things, but one key element was realism. Yes, the Lord’s church will stand, but the daily interactions sometimes get dirty. He loved the church and his Lord, but he knew people, and he helped us to not have expectations that could lead to failure.

Frank believed the pastorate was the greatest call anyone could have, so he protected it furiously. He was not afraid to tell someone they may need to consider another career. Frank did not want anyone to step in the pulpit who may have been misled or unprepared. He knew it was a challenging call and did not want anyone to fail.

He was hard to take seriously at times, though. When called on the phone, he sometimes answered, “This is God; are you on your knees?” Then there was the deep voice that would answer, “This is the Most Holy Right Reverend Honorable Esteemed Father; speak, my child.” And can we ever forget the Jeff Gordon neckties and the ugly suspenders he wore?

On a serious note, I asked him to officiate the service for my 16-year-old daughter after her passing. He told me he was just too close and thought of Marli as a daughter. I understood and appreciated his position. But in that time I saw his heart most clearly and understood that before any of his other titles, Frank was a tender man who loved greatly. The rough exterior many saw was not Frank at all. Through the tears he showed it was first necessary to be who you are — a person called by God to be and do many things, but first an individual with feelings, cares and limitations. He taught me we did not need to look strong and big in front of people, but be who God made us to be.

I miss Frank Kik. I was not finished with him. There was so much yet he had to teach, and I was more than willing to listen. I can see his influence in much of what I do.

Frank, I love you. Tell my Marli I said hello! ♦
On August 17, President Bush signed into law the Pension Protection Act of 2006. The new legislation includes provisions designed to promote charitable giving. The one provision that has drawn the most attention concerns individual retirement account rollovers to charity made during a donor’s life.

The IRA rollover provision allows otherwise taxable distributions of up to $100,000 from a traditional IRA or a Roth IRA to be excluded from gross income. In addition, the amount rolled over will count against a donor’s minimum distribution requirement. As in previous versions of IRA rollover legislation, no federal income tax deduction is available for these contributions in addition to their exclusion from income.

This new legislation offers a welcome incentive to donors who want to use the money in their IRAs to make charitable gifts. The legislation makes the process simple and assures these donors that their gifts will not increase their taxes. Donors to whom the new IRA rollover likely will appeal include those:

- already giving at their 50% deduction limit.
- whose income level causes the phase-out of their exemptions.
- who don’t itemize their deductions.
- for whom additional income will cause more of their Social Security income to be taxed.

Here is the fine print: The donor must direct the IRA custodian to directly transfer funds to charity. A withdrawal followed by a contribution will still have to be reported as income. The donor must be at least age 70, and the recipient must be a tax-exempt organization to which deductible contributions can be made. Donor-advised funds and supporting organizations are not eligible. The gift must be outright; rollovers to a gift annuity or a charitable remainder trust do not qualify. The provision is effective only through December 31, 2007.

If you are interested in discussing your options under this new provision, please contact me at (704) 688-4218 or mseeley@rts.edu. As always, we recommend you seek the advice of your tax and/or legal counsel before deciding on a course of action.

Mark R. Seeley is vice president for planned giving for RTS.