

VISITING SCHOLAR NEWS

RTB 30
REASONS TO BELIEVE

MAY 2016



As Reasons to Believe celebrates its 30-year anniversary, we are encouraged to see how far the Visiting Scholar Program has come since its inception in 2010. What incites even more enthusiasm is seeing how much more room there is for this program to grow. With 2016 already booked (and then some), we can't help but be in awe of how God keeps bringing amazing individuals to our team.

I'm heartened to see our past visiting scholars using their experience and expertise to reach the lost with the gospel. Read about how both Russ Carlson and Kevin Birdwell are using science apologetics to influence those on university campuses. Philosopher Mark Perez is a newer addition to the visiting scholar community. Take this opportunity to learn more about Mark in his Q&A interview. I also encourage you to check RTB's YouTube channel regularly as we keep adding visiting scholars' interviews into the mix, including several new videos featuring Mark. Enjoy!

-Karina Rodriguez

VISITING SCHOLAR HIGHLIGHT

Mark Perez



What is your area of expertise?

I have a bachelor's in philosophy, a master's in analytic philosophy of science, and a master's in public administration focused on organizational development. I've been teaching a critical

thinking course for Reasons Institute and Hope International University for about seven years. I've also been teaching critical thinking in public sector training for about 17 years. After 36 years in policing, I retired from the LAPD as a deputy chief of police.

At what age did you come to Christ and under what circumstances?

I came to Christ in my early 20s, after having been raised to be an atheist by my father. Conversion was a long process where I had to be shown objective evidence. A friend led me to a Hugh Ross talk at a

local church and from then on I immersed myself in books and articles on apologetics to wrestle with my doubts. Having come to Christ this way makes it easier for me to talk with atheists and skeptics. I was once one of them.

Tell us about a project or accomplishment that you consider to be the most significant in your career.

As an executive for the LAPD, I undertook a multiyear, complex, and career-risky project to fundamentally reframe the basis of police misconduct discipline. It required extensive research in widely diverse domains and the questioning of fundamental ideas, practices, and arguments. It was immensely satisfying to apply my training in analytic philosophy to such a gritty real-world problem.

What do you like most about the Visiting Scholar Program?

Being able to meet regularly with the RTB scholars and also contribute to the RTB team has been a privilege and a joy. Seeing their passion to reach the lost with the gospel deeply inspires me.



Russ Carlson

Biochemist
Visiting Scholar Dates:
October 2014

I retired from the University of Georgia (UGA) in June 2014. Since then, my wife, Cheryl, and I have been

involved in reaching out to international scholars at UGA. These are usually faculty members from universities in other countries. Most are from China. These interactions have led our church to start a mission community group that is focused on assisting international scholar families. We are also part of Cru's Faculty Commons organization, helping locally by organizing activities for the UGA Christian faculty.

I have spoken to the international scholars on the relationship between Christianity and science and on the origin of life. I've addressed groups of 20 to 130, as well as individuals. Many of the scholars identify as atheist or they have been taught the atheistic view exclusively. However, rather than being antagonistic toward Christianity, they are very interested and curious about the Christian viewpoint. In all of these activities I have relayed RTB resources, particularly the books *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is*, *Creating Life in the Lab*, and *Origins of Life*.

With regard to research, I have been collaborating with a group at Aarhus University in Denmark and last year we published a paper in the journal *Nature*,¹ and we have three other manuscripts in preparation.

I greatly enjoy participating with RTB as a visiting scholar, and RTB has been a great help and encouragement to me.

Endnotes

1. Y. Kawaharada et al., "Receptor-Mediated Exopolysaccharide Perception Controls Bacterial Infection," *Nature* 523 (July 2015): 308–12, doi:10.1038/nature14611.



Kevin Birdwell

Meteorologist
Visiting Scholar Dates:
April–May 2012 • June–July 2013
September 2014 • March 2016

My meteorological operations work in Tennessee is keeping me busy with investigations of the effects of various wind flow regimes and

how they interact with various topographic features. This work could have potential importance in paleoclimatology, particularly those studies related to the use of pollen and dust particulate deposition. Paleoclimatologists use pollen and dust concentrations to analyze the extent and character of past vegetation and then to infer past climates.

As time permits, I am also researching the scientific literature of the Holocene, Pleistocene, and earlier climates to better understand the influence of climate on ancient human migrations and history, as well as to better understand climate change in geologic history. One area that I am focusing on is the period of Toba volcanic eruption of about 74,000 years ago, which seems to be associated with a severe climate deterioration and associated impacts on humans. I'm also focusing on the end of the last glacial period at the beginning of the Holocene. I have begun conversations with an archeologist at Lee University in the hopes of better corroborating past climate changes with the archeological record, especially as it pertains to biblical history.

Meanwhile, I continue teaching a freshman level earth and space science course for Lee University. This is a great venue for introducing non-science majors to science-faith issues, which I do through bonus discussions about narrated lectures on creation, Scripture, and the record of nature. Although most of these students are of a Christian background or even in ministry, the majority of them have not studied science seriously within the context of Christian doctrines. A number of them have expressed thanks for being exposed to this material, especially when they discover the connectedness of Scripture with the record of nature. A few students came into the course holding young-earth views but subsequently changed their minds and were encouraged by the support that science can offer Christianity.



EXPLORE MORE RESOURCES
FROM OUR VISITING SCHOLARS

Russ Carlson: Watch his video on
["God's Fingerprints in Biochemical Systems"](#)

Kevin Birdwell: Read his article on
["Climate Change and Society"](#)

VISITING SCHOLAR
NEWS

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