

ARPTalk (12)

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ARPTalk(12.1)

LETTERS AND THINGS

Letter from Mr. Scott Cook

EDITOR'S REMARKS: Mr. Cook is a student at Erskine College. In the last issue of *ARPTalk* there was a letter of concern by an Erskine College student, Mr. Daniel Stephens, regarding issues at Erskine College. Mr. Cook joins Mr. Stephens in expressing concerns regarding the direction of Erskine College.

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When I came to Erskine College, I knew that I was going to a Christian Liberal Arts Institution owned by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Knowing this, I assumed that the mission of the college would be to glorify Christ in all things, by exalting Him as the Lord and Originator of all truth. In sciences, mathematics, religion, indeed all areas, I expected Erskine to attempt to present all learning as God's truth. Along with this first expectation, I also realized that, at points, this college would fail to live up to its mission as a Christian institution. I expected there to be just and sinful aspects to this institution, for no one, and no institution, is free from the effects of sin.

However, after being a student at Erskine for a year and a half, I do not think I can call this place a "Christian institution," for that would be a discredit to the honor of the name of Christ. At the same time, I cannot ascribe the title "secular" to this college either. As one student already said, Erskine College is some kind of "bastard" school. Neither hot nor cold, left nor right. It cannot be identified as either "Christian" or "secular." It is caught somewhere in between; therefore, it is satisfying to no one.

Allow me to offer an example of what I am speaking of. Erskine was presented to me as a Christian college where "We do not force Christianity down anyone's throat, for that is a choice the individual has to make. Yet, the college does

strive to make a ‘Christian environment’ where Christ is preeminent in all things.” This sounded good, but I soon realized it was but a façade. I took my two freshmen History courses with Dr. Sandra Chaney. Instead of using “A.D.” and “B.C.” for dates in history, she switched to “C.E.” (Common Era) and “B.C.E.” (Before the Common Era), which is the politically correct way for identifying dates. This is a relatively small and insignificant change, but it is an example of her education philosophy: an attempt to present history, not in Christian terms, but in a more “neutral and objective way,” very much in the vein of what Francis Schaeffer called “Humanism.” She instructed our class that the early Jewish faith was originally henotheistic (the Hebrews chose to serve only one of the many gods they thought existed) and that only later did the faith become monotheistic (believing that only one god exists). Furthermore, she taught, via a video from the History Channel, that the Hebrew Old Testament was not written until the Babylonian exile, and that many of the biblical narratives are Jewish spins on Babylonian myths that the Jews encountered in captivity. She did not teach this as a theory and then present an orthodox interpretation of the Old Testament; she simply stated these things as facts. One must interact with these theories in order to be well educated, but that does not mean that this evolutionary view of Hebrew religion must be taught as truth. Furthermore, how can Dr. Chaney hold to the definition of an evangelical provided by the ARP Church? She cannot affirm the Old Testament to be the inspired, authoritative, inerrant Word of God. This, in my opinion, presents a serious problem.

I can continue with examples of how Dr. Chaney is in line with other secular philosophies (i.e., feminism), but I think my point is clear: she teaches history from a secular, non-Christian perspective.

The fact that incoming freshmen are encouraged to hold secular views is a tragic fact. What is even more tragic is that secular teaching is not an isolated issue for Erskine, nor is it localized to a few departments. I speak of Dr. Chaney at length, but only to show an example of the secularism that runs through this school. It is endemic throughout the institution. I could go on and on citing more examples of the same sort of secular humanism in numerous teachers throughout the broad spectrum of the school’s departments.

What I find to be even more perplexing is that this is not some new issue for Erskine. Many of the teachers who do not hide their non-Christian positions have been here for a very long time. In addition, I have seen no positive action by the school’s administration to deal with this. Professors who promulgate non-Christian views have been hired within the last year, and I do not see the administration exerting its influence to curtail teachers who do disservice to the name of Christ. It is a fact that our science department teaches Naturalistic Darwinian evolution as scientific truth without considering any of the ramifications of Genesis 1 and 2. It is a fact, well known, that Dr. Crenshaw tries to force repackaged enlightenment modernism down the throats of young freshmen in his seminar class. Why has this gone on for so long? Why has the current administration done nothing to halt this?

This is not acceptable. When potential students read on the Erskine website that “Many American colleges [have] abandoned their commitment to the historic Christian faith; however, from its inception, Erskine College has been committed to the principle that facts and values—learning and faith—are inseparable,” they ought to be able to trust that they will get a uniquely Christian liberal arts education, not some form of moralistic secularism that they can get somewhere else for less tuition. It is false advertising for this school to say that it stands in the “historic Christian faith” when the administration makes no apparent effort to stop teachers from frequently attacking the Christian faith.

We have only two options. We can either choose to enforce the mission statement of Erskine College and truly become a Christian liberal arts college or we can drop all the false advertisement and come out and call ourselves a secular college. Either option is preferable to the “bastard” situation we have now.

As I have said, I would not call Erskine either secular or Christian, but I do know of at least one fitting title for the school: DANGEROUS. It is dangerous on two accounts. We stand in danger of the judgment of God, and we risk the welfare of our young people.

The Old and New Testaments are replete with warning against being lukewarm in devotion to Christ. Matthew records how Jesus scolded the Pharisees for presenting an outwardly religious veneer while being inwardly filled with all forms of defilement. The prophets continually scolded Israel for maintaining the signs of religion while robbing those signs of anything they signified. Erskine would do well to heed the warning of Martin Luther: “If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the Word of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Him. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battle front besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point” (Francis Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, vol. 1, p. 11) It does not matter how much this institution, its administration and faculty, say that they follow Christ, if they do not take up the task of giving an orthodox Christian education to its students. In effect, they are not fighting where the battle is raging, and they are not loyal to Christ or faithful to His church.

As a member of an ARP church, I would say it is dangerous for us to send our covenant young people here. It is one thing to send our young people to a school where they expect to be taught a secular world view, but it is quite another to send them to a place where they expect to be given a Christian interpretation of the world, only to be given secular teaching with moralistic elements here and there. I do not deny that there are good and godly teachers and administrators here, but their influence is not powerful enough to ensure that our young people are given a sound Christian liberal arts education.

Let us either fix the problems at Erskine and be faithful to the gospel or drop the Christian label. But what we should not allow is secular teaching with a Christian title. It is expected that the world will slander the name of Christ, but the church and her institutions ought not to be a part of this slandering of His holy name.

Scott Cook
Erskine Judicial Council Member
Class of 2011

Letter from Rev. Tony Locke

EDITOR'S REMARKS: Rev. Locke is the Pastor of the Newberry ARP Church, Newberry, SC. Mr. Locke's letter is in response to issues in Second Presbytery involving Dr. L Thomas Richie, the former Pastor of the Young Memorial ARP Church, Anderson, SC, and the Session of the Young Memorial ARP Church. There is considerable "heartburn" amongst a goodly number of ministers and elders in Second Presbytery as regards the outcome of decisions regarding Mr. Richie and the Young Memorial ARP Church. Since the meeting of Presbytery, March 10, 2009, a spirited email discussion has been joined. The Editor of *ARPTalk* does not agree with all of Mr. Locke's views and conclusions, but the Editor does believe that Mr. Locke's letter is candid and representative of the discussion. Mr. Locke's letter is printed with his permission. The context for this letter is found in the report of the March meeting of Second Presbytery in the current issue of *ARPTalk*. Mr. Locke encourages the readers of *ARPTalk* to dialogue with him regarding the issues he addresses in his letter. His email address: anthonylocke@gmail.com.

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I am fearful hitting the "*reply all*" button not knowing who will read this. I am committed to the peace and prosperity of Second Presbytery and would hate to prolong negative dialogue. People fear that the recent issues Second Presbytery was forced to handle related to our purity and did not reach a final resolution. So, with fear and trepidation, I am going to share my thoughts.

Recent issues are not happening in a vacuum for me. I have more than a dozen people in my community that drive to a PCA church outside of town because our ARP denomination is so liberal. The first time I heard this I was very perplexed that they would say such a thing. Within the Newberry community my testimony and the testimony of our church is main stream Reformed and evangelical. Our

standards are not a witness to our faith but a standard by which we measure our orthodoxy. We fully subscribe. So, when I meet people unconvinced that our church is a safe place to belong, I ask them what led them to this conclusion. I usually get one of two answers. Either, that the Anderson church has been around a long time, is in good standing within the Presbytery, and we as a Presbytery have never challenged their ministry. Or, that Erskine College is our institution and it promulgates evolution.

So, despite my personal pastoral convictions and the Newberry church's commitments to the Apostles' doctrine, we as a church have been unable to elevate our testimony over the testimony of the ARP denomination within our regional context.

Based on this personal experience, it is my opinion that Southern ARP churches that find themselves defined by Erskine College and in close proximity to the Anderson church will struggle to attract conservative families. This is not an excuse for not growing. Last week we received a family that formerly attended Liberty University. There are exceptions. But, it is my opinion that other families do not join our church for fear that we are hiding liberal tendencies behind our warm smile.

Recently, I ate lunch at the NCO club at Ft Jackson. Most of our lunch conversation consisted of me defending our denomination and my involvement in it to PCA chaplains. My defense was that Erskine College is in transition. It is slowly coming around but it takes at least 10 years to see changes because of tenure and such. I did not make a defense of the seminary. I support the current roster of faculty despite the other debates. Regarding the Anderson church and the doctrinal allegations about their minister, my defense was that Second Presbytery was doing what it could via a commission. I think I lost that argument when the commission stopped short of their charge to review confessional fidelity based on previously recorded sermons. The commission chose to believe that no audio of sermons preached and no sermon transcripts were available.

So, I find myself searching for a response to those who charge me and my denomination with passive acceptance of liberal teaching. What do I tell prospective church members that assume negative things about my church from the louder testimony of these other ARP entities?

What can we do? Well, for the last three decades we lived with it. Small groups of conservative men complained behind closed doors, but we did nothing corporately to confront the nonconformity to our standards. And at this time, when the minister of the Anderson church is retiring, some members of our Presbytery want to ratchet up the noise and kick him in the pants as he walks out the door. Are we to find our corporate courage now that he is transitioning to solo status without the congregation and session to back him up? *Now* we want to pick up sticks and matches? I say too little too late.

In truth, we are progressing as a denomination to be more conservative. As we do so our angst increases toward those unwilling to walk this path with us. The question being raised is how to handle churches, institutions or individuals unwilling to join our newly minted conservative moral majority? How do we approach folks grandfathered into our denominational family back when subscription to our standards could be done with escape clauses and crossed fingers? I believe that how we treat each other in moments like this says more about our Christianity than what perfect orthodoxy says about our Christianity. We need the patience of Job and the love of God. We must treat people like family. We must not vilify because our doctrines are now in the majority.

What do I think our course of action should be toward those outside the majority? I say live with it. Like any family that has a crazy uncle or a wayward child. It's part of who we are. We have a long past. A few nano seconds of that past is hard to defend. That regrettable past is still affecting our present. Yes . . . but . . . *get over it*. Better yet, claim it and learn the lessons.

Admit that the ARPC wasn't always faithful to hold everyone's feet to the fire regarding our Confession. We made some large scale mistakes when we valued national academic standing over confessional fidelity. Some of our churches tried to remove the offense of the cross by diminishing the exclusivity of salvation offered through Christ. Our delay to celebrate the theological buzz-word inerrancy retarded some of our progress and reform.

Hey, it's o.k. to admit these things. The way I present it to prospective church members is that the ARPC is conservative by conviction and not just tradition. We chose to be who we are today and that means more than dispassionately inheriting old convictions from the previous generation. We are not a denomination in an identity crisis and we are on the march. What family doesn't have regrets or failures? Tell prospective church members that we are experiencing a revival, at least a new reformation, and we would love their help living corporate life for the glory of God.

Case in point. When Synod joined NAPARC we had to write a bio about ourselves. We put in that self description that we flirted with joining the PCUS, that we were infected for a time by theological liberalism, we tolerated higher criticism of the Bible, and that we were now making a slow climb back to the conservative commitments of NAPARC.

It's no secret that our denomination is still a mixed bag. There are some ministers in our Presbytery that were against affirming inerrancy, but cut them some slack. Maybe it's because they used the word infallibility the same way. Did you ever ask? Maybe they were worried that people were encouraging faith in the *authority* of the Bible by labeling it inerrant. That would be against the WCF paragraph five of chapter one. The Bible's authority is not established by our

affirming its inerrancy. Either way, these folks have been a part of our family for generations. Don't target them now that a new majority has the upper hand.

Others in our family wanted us to embrace theistic evolutionary possibilities. Others wanted us to teach tolerance toward the homosexual lifestyle instead of God's love of deliverance. Hey, they are still your ARP family! They were baptized into Christ and have grown up with us over the years at Synod, at Music Conferences, Bonclarken camps and in our churches. Don't lynch them now that they are in the minority. Pray for them. Be their best friends: dialogue, debate, reason and maybe God will use you to be a blessing.

Look at it historically. We invited them in years ago. (Maybe they invited us in!?) We have moved our denomination from their liberalism, and now that they are a very small minority we should not want to embarrass them further.

Seriously, what newly discovered passion should awaken Second Presbytery to go any further in dealing with these distractions? Label it as a liberal phase of our denomination and look to the future. We will look very small trying to deal out some sort of punishment to the Anderson church. Pray that they will have enough grace to receive our conciliatory actions and joyfully find their connectionalism with us. The truth is our Presbytery should have acted as a team and handled this years ago. We need to love them and shepherd them back to good standing. Presbytery seems to be doing that and we should pray that work continues.

Should we go further to deal with the minister? No. We need to trust the Holy Spirit's leading of His church through the commission we established and believe God's will for this time was accomplished. We will look very small trying to deal out some sort of punishment to the minister.

Really, our hearts should break for him that he has been humiliated before the church court in his last hour before "honorable" retirement. Why did we not love him enough as a Presbytery years ago to remove this skepticism over his ministry? The commission recently put the questions of the catechism to him and he affirmed his profession in their doctrine. We need to leave it at that.

Sadly, he diminished himself by not providing recorded messages or *final copies* of written sermons. For me, his claim that nothing of his sermonic ministry survived in almost 30 years of preaching for the commission to review stretches creditability.

In Christian love I will assume he is telling the truth, but how sad. How depressing to bury your life's work: uncelebrated, unread, and unpublished for fear that Presbytery might review it. Do you know any other minister of the Reformed tradition that ends a life of service to Christ without a single sermon to celebrate? Normally sermons are collected, categorized and published, but not for this man. Why were his sermons discarded over a 28 year period? Was there fear of a future

heresy trial even 30 years ago? Who knows! He stands before God. I think we should let the matter drop off our Minister and Work agenda. With love and compassion we need to reclaim him for the glory of God. Nothing less will be acceptable from us. He is part of our past and present. He is family. Don't begrudge God's patience and mercy.

In conclusion, I hope God blesses these years of the ARPC. I hope Erskine College can rediscover her Christian identity so that we can joyfully support her with our money. I pray Second Presbytery will have the fortitude in the future to nip neo-orthodoxy in the bud before it festers into a legacy. My greatest prayer and concern is that we will become so loving, so compassionate, and so aware of God's mercy to us that when making our boast in the Lord we will attract the world to the Savior. Folks, we need a return to biblical evangelism.

Sorry for this being so long. These were weighty issues and I was asked to rewrite it for a general public.

Blessings,

Tony Locke

[\(scroll down to the next article\)](#)

REPORT ON THE MEETING OF FIRST PRESBYTERY

Highlights from the Spring Meeting of First Presbytery of the ARP Church

March 10, 2009

Compiled by Mr. Tom Patterson, Stated Clerk

- Voted down a proposal to request Synod to divide the Presbytery.
- Affirmed the language in a Memorial to Synod calling for the severing of all fraternal relations with the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
- Approved a Memorial to Synod concerning the 500th Anniversary of the birth of John Calvin encouraging the congregations and Presbyteries to promote commemorative events and petitioning the state and national governments and their leaders to mark the date by appropriate resolutions.
- Approved the organization of the Covenant of Grace Mission in Winston-Salem. Approved the call to the Rev. Roger Wiles to be pastor of the new church.
- Approved first and second reading of amendments to the Presbytery Manual of Procedure.
- Granted permission to the Craig Avenue Tabernacle Church to sell the property of its daughter congregation, the Hemby Bridge Mission.
- Granted permission for the Hemby Bridge Mission to relocate to Indian Trail. Placed the Hemby Bridge Mission under the oversight of the Church Extension Committee. Re-appointed the Provisional Session for the Mission. Changed the Mission's name to Good Shepherd Community Mission Church.
- Appointed Provisional Elders for the Calvary Church and the Rivertown Mission.
- Approved a request to the Board of Church Extension for a supplement for the Hope Chapel Mission.
- Went on record as supporting church planting in Scotland and requested assistance of Outreach North America and World Witness in this endeavor.

Gave permission for the Treasurer of First Presbytery to receive moneys for this project.

- Requested funds from Outreach North America for an emerging mission in the North Davidson Street area of Charlotte.
- Noted the forming of a group in Southport who desire to establish an ARP Church there.

Endorsed the candidacy of the Rev. Juan Carlos Unda as an Army Chaplain.

- Removed the Rev. Scott Siems from the roll of ministers and Mr. Jeff Weber from the roll of seminary students. Noted the transfer of the Rev. Luke Davis to the PCA.
- Received 3 students under care of Presbytery: Patrick Gretzinger (All Saints), Josiah Jones (Coddle Creek), and Tripp Kimbrough (Christ Community).
- Licensed Student Robert Arendale and approved his ordination and call as associate pastor to the Ballantyne Church.
- Approved the call to and ordination of Licentiate Stephen Myers to the Pressly Memorial Church.
- Sent a motion to the General Synod asking the Moderator to form a special commission to investigate whether the oversight exercised by the Board of Trustees and Administration of Erskine College and Seminary is in faithful accordance with the Standards of the ARP Church and the Synod's previously issued directives.
- Elected Elder Bob Stone (Ballantyne) Moderator for the Fall 2009 Term.
- Elected the Rev. John Currid as Vice Moderator for the Fall 2009 Term.
- Elected the Rev. Vaughn Hathaway as Moderator for the Spring 2010 Term

EDITOR'S REMARKS

Charles W. Wilson

Note the following motion above, fourth from bottom: "Sent a motion to the General Synod asking the Moderator to form a special commission to investigate whether the oversight exercised by the Board of Trustees and Administration of

Erskine College and Seminary is in faithful accordance with the Standards of the ARP Church and the Synod's previously issued directives."

Someone has said that "Personnel is policy." The situation at EC/ETS is serious. The leadership and stewardship of the Board and the senior administrators regarding direction at EC/ETS are seriously questioned by many. In the model of Wheaton College, it is the desire of many of us to see Erskine College the premiere Christian Liberal Arts College in the southeast. In the model of a seminary that is unashamedly Presbyterian, Reformed, Confessional, and Evangelical and uniquely and proudly Associate Reformed Presbyterian, it is the desire of many of us to see Erskine Theological Seminary the premiere seminary in the southeast. How are these to be accomplished? Who are the leaders to accomplish these lofty goals?

EDITOR'S REMARKS

Below is a report that was distributed at the meeting of First Presbytery.

**Report of the Seminary Committee on Allegations about the Leith Chair
and Certain Seminary Faculty Members
October 16, 2008**

The Seminary Committee was asked by the Board to "conduct a thorough review of matters related to recent allegations about the John Leith Chair and certain Erskine Seminary Faculty members and to report our findings and recommendations to the Board."

The Committee faced a challenge in accomplishing its task in that most of the "allegations" took the form of rumors, innuendo, and proposed memorials to presbyteries that were never passed. Nevertheless, the Committee met on two occasions, conducted extensive interviews with two faculty members whose names had been mentioned in the allegations, and reviewed other related matters.

At the request of the administration, Dr. Michael Bush and Dr. Richard Burnett were interviewed at length by the Committee. Both men appeared voluntarily and cooperated fully with the Committee. They submitted written statements of their position and responded in writing to questions from the Committee. The Committee met with them both at great length on two occasions. A full and detailed discussion on numerous aspects of the issues involved was held. . Both men expressed certain scruples about the use of the term 'inerrancy' to describe their positions on Scripture. Not all Committee members were fully satisfied with some of the answers provided. However, both men did affirm that the Bible is the Word of God and that "the Bible is without error in all that it teaches." They affirmed the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture. They affirmed that the Bible is infallible in its authority in keeping with the Westminster Standards. The

Committee was in unanimous agreement that both men are in full accord with the terms under which they were called and affirms their continued ministry at the seminary.

With regard to the complaint by Rev. Wright about Dr. Burnett's over emphasis on Karl Barth in the Theological Hermeneutics course, the Committee found that the Seminary had followed its established policies in dealing with the complaint. The Seminary grievance process found that Dr. Burnett acted appropriately, and Rev. Wright has not appealed the decision. After reviewing the documents in the case, the Committee found no basis for further action on the matter. It should be noted that this is the only complaint that has been received about the content of Dr. Burnett's teaching, and no such complaints have been received about Dr. Bush's teaching.

With regard to allegations about the John Leith Chair and the possibility of it being used to introduce neo-orthodoxy into the Seminary, the Committee reports that the Chair is currently held by the respected orthodox reformed scholar, Dr. Hughes Oliphant Old, and that the terms of the John Leith Chair and Seminary policy require that any future faculty member to be called to fill the Chair will have to meet all requirements for faculty appointment in the Seminary, including those in the Manual of Authorities and Duties of the ARP Church.

With regard to the allegations that neo-orthodox theology is being promoted in the Seminary, the administration and the Seminary Committee reaffirm that, while many theological views are studied in a seminary education, there is no intent or desire that the Seminary espouse anything other than historic, orthodox, evangelical and reformed theology as defined in our policy statements. To this end, the Seminary Committee will continue to exercise careful oversight of employment and teaching at the Seminary.

Remarks

The above "orphan document" purports to be a report from the ETS Seminary Committee. The date on it is October 16, 2008, so it is dated. The paper appeared on the table at the meeting of First Presbytery. It is unsigned. It is anonymous. It isn't owned by a name (though we may surmise that it came from Rev. Doug Petersen, a member of First Presbytery who chairs the Seminary Committee). However, since it seems to be an official document of some kind, the Editor of *ARPTalk* is going to take it seriously because it has a wide distribution now. If this unsigned document is not official, please accept my apology for introducing this discussion. If this is an official document, at least some members of the Seminary Committee are out of touch with where the ARP Church currently is and where it is headed.

The following are the Editor's comments:

- 1. This is a report of an "internal audit." This is like asking a lion to keep watch over the chicken coop at night. Don't expect the rooster to crow the rising of the sun! Internal audits are controlled and have expected results. Internal audits protect the status quo. Here's a good question: Why don't we ask the Moderator of General Synod to appoint an audit committee? What would that report look like?**
- 2. What are these "rumors, innuendo, and proposed memorials to presbyteries that were never passed?" The Editor of *ARPTalk* is afraid that some of the members of the Seminary Committee may have been miffed at something that had appeared in *ARPTalk*. As is well known, *ARPTalk* doesn't deal in "rumors, innuendo, and proposed memorials" that are hopeless, nor do the articles in *ARPTalk* appear as "orphan documents."**
- 3. The Editor of *ARPTalk* is delighted to know that Dr. Burnett and Dr. Bush have presented written statements concerning their views on Scripture and, perhaps, on other issues. May we in ARPLand see them? Please, if these are sent to *ARPTalk* they will be printed promptly. *ARPTalk* is sent to all the ministers in the ARPC who will open the attachment or go to the website. Please, let the rank and file of the ARPC see these documents. Frankly, and this is no secret, there are many of us who do not trust the oversight and interpretations of the Seminary Committee on these documents by these professors. And let's be sure to read these documents in context. As of quite recently, Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush were refusing to affirm inerrancy. Have they changed their SUBSTANTIVE stance on the issue, or are they and the ETS leadership simply "finessing" the question?**
- 4. The Editor of *ARPTalk* has to ask about the statement that says that the Committee was in "unanimous agreement." The line above that states that there were those who were not "fully satisfied." That doesn't compute. The Editor of *ARPTalk* has been in conversation with those who were not "fully satisfied." Fairness, honesty, forthrightness, and truth demand that whoever wrote this "orphan document" reconsider what has been written.**
- 5. Dr. Burnett teaching regarding Barth and the Bible are problematic for many of us. Dr. Burnett hasn't been shy about stating that Barth's understanding on Biblical authority is the**

corrective to evangelicalism's view on Biblical authority. That sort of teaching doesn't cause historic evangelicals who affirm inerrancy to salute and cheer Dr. Burnett's work. Nor does it endear him to the rank and file of the ARPC. It only creates an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust in the ARPC toward our denomination seminary.

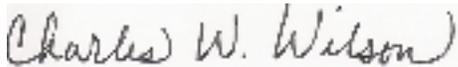
- 6. From the beginning, there were troubling concerns about the John Leith Chair. It is fair to say that the Leith Chair has not been joyfully received by all in the ARPC. Nor has it brought in students and money by the thousands from the PC(USA) and the Confessing Church element of the PC(USA). Those eligible for the Chair are to be PC(USA) ministers who hold to the theological positions of John Leith. Has this language been changed? While Dr. Leith's views appeared more moderate in his later years (as his own denomination moved precipitously to the left), there is no evidence that his Neo-orthodox views on Scripture changed. Has the Chair been funded yet by the PC(USA) and Confessing Church constituencies? Interestingly, when ARPs are given the opportunity to support what they believe in they respond overwhelmingly. The John R. de Witt Chair was fund almost immediately. Haven't we in the ARPC had enough of the leaven of the PC(USA)? According to the Interchurch Relations Committee of General Synod, the PC(USA) doesn't even officially recognize the existence of the ARPC. Why do we want to give aid and comfort to any of them? What is there that we in the ARPC could possibly want? What we smell in the PC(USA) isn't a church dying but a corpse rotting.**
- 7. The author of this Seminary Committee report should not have minimized the concerns of Rev. Mark Wright, an ARP minister in Second Presbytery. Mr. Wright's concerns were not a "grievance." Mr. Wright was addressing institutional direction. Even the grievance committee acknowledged this (see www.arptalk.org, ARPTalk(4), "Correspondence between Mark Wright and Erskine Theological Seminary"). This isn't an issue of "process" or whether certain people acted "appropriately." It's an issue of what is being taught at ETS. And to this day that has not been satisfactory addressed.**

Once again, what are the greater issues involved? Is the ARPC moving in a direction of relationship with the PC(USA) or in a direction of relationship with our NAPARC brothers and sisters? Is the ARPC moving toward a view of Scripture as errant or moving in

an inerrancy direction? Where will the ARPC be in ten years? Therefore, what sort of stewardship seeks to move our educational and theological institutions toward any of the elements of the PC(USA)? Our overwhelming commitment to inerrancy and our principled rejection of the ordination of women to the eldership will NOT allow the ARPC to go in that direction. At ETS why do we bend over backwards to accommodate those who do not affirm inerrancy? At ETS why do we bend over backwards to accommodate those who reject our view on the ordination of elders and pastors? Does anyone really believe that the ARPC is going to reject inerrancy or begin to ordain women to the eldership? What sort of administrative stewardship at ETS seeks to move the seminary in a non-inerrancy and an ordination of women to the eldership direction? These are longstanding problems. Why is it that no one is willing to address these questions openly? Let the Seminary Committee and the Administration of ETS deal with these issues openly for they can no longer deal with them privately and maintain the confidence of a very large portion of the church. Please, don't hide behind the façade of "due process." This is an ecclesiastical issue that involves the theological direction, the identity, the biblical integrity, and the peace and purity of the ARPC. Failure to be forthright on these issues only creates suspicion and division in the church.

The Editor of *ARPTalk* and those who are in agreement with the purposes of *ARPTalk* want to be proud of ETS. Enter into open debate with us. We are mature enough to do that. Let there be agreement in the church. Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. It seems to the Editor of *ARPTalk* that the greatest single threat to the theological integrity of the ARPC over the last fifty years has been posed by Erskine Theological Seminary. It is time for this chronically dysfunctional situation to change!

These are my thoughts,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles W. Wilson". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Charles W. Wilson

[\(scroll down to the next article\)](#)

REPORT ON THE MEETING OF SECOND PRESBYTERY

Highlights from the Spring Meeting of Second Presbytery of the ARP Church
March 10, 2009

Compiled by Charles W. Wilson

- Received a tribute by Dr. R. T. Ruble in memory of Dr. Jack Farnam Heinsohn.
- Received a report by Rev. Walt Shepherd regarding his work “outside the bounds of the Presbytery.”
- Students Tim Brooks and Mark Hering preached “student sermons.”
- Dr. John Carson gave a report on the work of MT3.
- A memorial from the Unity ARP Church regarding the severing of relationships with the PC(USA) was forwarded to Synod’s committee on Inter-Church Relation “as an expression of our concern.”
- The Executive Committee has asked the Committee on Stewardship to make a study on projected revenue and expenses for the next five years.
- The Executive Committee asked the Committee on Candidates and Credentials to contact the appropriate committee in First Presbytery to determine why student Spenser Swain was unable to pass their examination.
- The Executive Committee asked the Committee on Candidates and Credentials to review Second Presbytery’s examination procedures.
- Mr. Stuart M. Moore was received by transfer from Catawba Presbytery as a “Student of Theology.”
- Rev. Spenser Swain, having been ordained by an independent Reformed Church in Rockwell, NC, was removed from the roll of Presbytery.
- Report of the Judicial Commission on the “Minority Report” of the MHWC regarding Dr. L. Thomas Richie and the Young Memorial ARP Church. The following were recommended and passed:

- ❑ The Commission recommends that with respect to retiring ministers, Second Presbytery adhere to the *Form of Government* procedures applicable to any situation in which the Pastoral relationship is dissolved; and in order to do so, require ministers to request retirement far enough in advance that the Moderator has time to call a meeting of the Presbytery to consider and act upon the request prior to the expected retirement date. If the retirement request is approved, Presbytery should dissolve the pastoral relationship effective on the retirement date, and then confer retired status upon the minister without further descriptive qualification.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that Second Presbytery request that General Synod's special committee on revising the *Form of Government* review and clarify ministerial retirement procedures in conformance with the above.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that Second Presbytery, in conjunction with General Synod, should develop guidelines on the use of electronic communications.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that Second Presbytery, in conjunction with General Synod, provide guidance to the Minister & His Work Committee regarding known but not formally stated issues which may arise with regard to doctrine and conformity with the ARP standards.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that Second Presbytery take great care not to approve Session minutes which contain indications of practices not in conformity with the ARP standards.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that Second Presbytery instruct the Young Memorial Session to immediately cease the practice of serving communion to non-communicant members.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that Second Presbytery inform the Young Memorial Session that it was out of order with respect to the letter of censure sent to Dr. Rob Roy McGregor.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that the Minister and His Work Committee review with the Young Memorial Session the church's website and the appropriateness of the material available on the site.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that Second Presbytery review and revise the procedures manual with respect to the duties of the Stated Clerk; specifically describing the responsibilities and procedures of the Stated Clerk with respect to the dissemination of information related to the work of the Presbytery.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that the Minutes of Second Presbytery for October 14, 2008, be clarified to show that no action was taken on Recommendation No. 1 of the Minister & His Work Committee report because of the a motion by Dr. Charles Wilson that was passed.
- ❑ The Commission recommends that Second Presbytery send a letter to the General Synod concerning a proper understanding of how duty #19 of the Principal Clerk is to be properly interpreted and acted upon by the Clerk.
- ❑ The Commission respectfully requests that the Judicial Commission be dissolved and that follow up on approved recommendations be accomplished through appropriate Presbytery means.

- **A motion was made and passed that Dr. L. Thomas Riche be granted “honorable retirement” by the Presbytery. The vote was taken by “secret ballot.” The motion passes, 36 to 32.**
- **A motion was made and passed to thank the members of the Judicial Commission for their work.**
- **The Minister and His Work Committee report was presented. The following were recommended and passed.**
 - Minister and His Work Committee recommends that all Presbyters reacquaint themselves with the Book of Discipline, specifically IV, 3-4, “...to effect reconciliation without disturbing the peace of the church...” Copies of correspondence of complaints and/or calls for redress of grievance should not be sent to mass distribution lists before they are handled privately and then through the appropriate committees of the courts of the church.
 - That Presbytery receive [as corrected] as information the items contained in I. & II. Above regarding Charles Wilson. [See below Mr. Wilson’s statement which was read into the Minutes of Presbytery.]
 - That Presbytery approve the request of First Presbyterian Church of Tucker to continue the services of TE John Allen Little for one year.
 - That Presbytery pray for the Lord’s guidance of Jay West as he seeks the Lord’s call for his life and ministry.
 - That Presbytery approved the request of Jeffrey Lewis to resign as pastor of Grace Presbyterian, pending the approval of the congregation, and that Presbytery pray for him and the church.
 - That Presbytery continue to pray for the Louisville church as they seek a pastor.
 - That Presbytery continue to pray for the Abbeville-M. Carmel church and Lee Bond as they move forward with a call to Dr. Bond.

[The following is Mr. Wilson’s statement which he read before Second Presbytery and it was moved and passed to be read into the minutes of Second Presbytery. The statement is an apology to Mr. Neely Gaston regarding his leadership of the Young Memorial Session. Mr. Wilson sent a letter to the Minister and His Work Committee and to the Executive Board of Synod asking for an investigation of why the Young Memorial Session allowed Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, a well-known liberal, feminist, pro-homosexual, Jewish, New Testament scholar at Vanderbilt Divinity School, to speak at the Young Memorial ARP Church. The statement is also an apologia of Mr. Wilson concerns.]

Statement to Second Presbytery

March 10, 2009

Mr. Moderator,

Having read the report of the Committee on the Minister and His Work, I want to make the following statement.

First, judging by the Committee's report, I see that some people have interpreted my letter calling for an investigation of the Young Memorial Session's hosting of Dr. Amy-Jill Levine as being personally directed at Mr. Gaston. The Scripture passages I quoted in that letter were directed, not at Mr. Gaston, but against Dr. Levine—a Jewish, pro-homosexual, New Testament scholar from Vanderbilt Divinity School who was hosted by the Young Memorial Church. For this lack of clarity in my writing I sincerely apologize for any hurt I caused Mr. Gaston. It was never my intention to fault him but to question the wisdom of the direction taken by the Session. I have known Mr. Gaston as a fellow presbyter for many years and have supported him in various ways over the years. As is known by many, I was very active in recruiting and supporting Mr. Gaston in his successful run for Moderator of the General Synod some years ago. Henceforth, I will seek to use due prudence in the way I present concerns so that this kind of confusion does not reoccur.

Second, it was not my intention to allege wrongdoing on Mr. Gaston's part regarding his leadership of the Young Memorial Session involving the issue with the *Anderson School of Theology for Lay Persons*. I simply asked questions. I was astonished by the circumstances that allowed what the Bible calls a "wolf" to come into a Christian Church and give sanctioned addresses to the people of God. However, I was not a participant in the decision making process and I do not know the particulars of the Young Memorial Session's decision as they dealt with a situation that was set up by others. The decision I would have made is not what others made under the stress of the situation. I can see where various comments in my letter to the Committee might be taken by some to suggest wrongdoing on Mr. Gaston's part. Again I apologize for the misunderstanding. However, I would ask the Committee to change their wording on this matter from "clearly untrue" to "potentially misleading" in their final report. I will discuss this more when I meet with them. I am encouraged to hear from the Committee that the Young Memorial Session is disassociating their church from the *Anderson School of Theology for Lay Persons* and is attempting to

move to the theological center of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Having said the above, I want to make it clear that I remain very concerned about the issues I have voiced in the previous fourteen editions of *ARPTalk*. It is the issues I wish to address and I will make every effort to stay focused on the issues and not specific individuals. To be clear and particular, I am very concerned about the following matters:

- 1. I am concerned about a continuing Barthian influence on future generations of Associate Reformed Presbyterian ministers at our Associate Reformed Presbyterian seminary.**
- 2. I am concerned about the erosion of a Synod-mandated commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture at Erskine College and Seminary.**
- 3. I am concerned about the issues of missional fidelity and of faith and practice at Erskine College. Once again students are presenting substantial and substantive complaints that Erskine advertises one thing and practices quite another. Even a senior faculty member agrees with the students.**
- 4. I am concerned about the presence of faculty members at Erskine College who mock historic Christianity and belittle Christian students.**
- 5. I am concerned about the long-standing *de facto* subversion of the Synod-mandated mission of Erskine by a Board of Trustees that is clearly divided. The Erskine Board is more or less self-perpetuating because the Nominations Committee of the General Synod often simply accepts most or all of the Board's nominations. In effect, a status quo is maintained between "conservatives" and "not so conservatives" on the Erskine Board.**
- 6. I am concerned about the Erskine Seminary Administration's protection and promotion of theologians and administrators who do not affirm the inerrancy of the Bible.**
- 7. I am concerned about a lack of transparency and openness by the Erskine Administration and Board of Trustees.**
- 8. I am concerned about the perpetuation of an ecclesiastical relationship with the PC(USA)—a relationship that is dishonoring to Christ and his Word.**
- 9. I am concerned about a Board of Trustees that sets loyalty to Erskine over loyalty to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.**

- 10. I am concerned about the failure of the Board of Trustees and the Erskine Administration to deal with what Second Presbytery's Committee on the Minister and His Work identified on the floor of Presbytery in 2007 as a "culture of intimidation" at Erskine.**

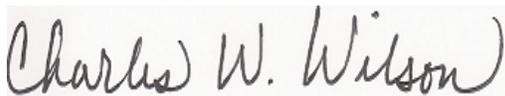
It is my intention to keep these issues at the forefront of our attention and to call for action on them. I would ask those who have sympathies with the views I present to make their concerns known openly—enough with "whisperings." I would further ask those who disagree with what I perceive as concerns in my writings to enter into open and public debate by stating their positions clearly so it can be seen whether they are within the mainstream of our Confessional Standards or not.

I truly believe the future health and direction of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is at stake in many of the matters I have addressed. I further believe that some people in positions of power and influence are content to allow and abet the continuing drift away from Biblical and Confessional integrity.

Again, I apologize for any instance in which I have confused issues with individuals. That being said, we must also not forget that policies are implemented by individuals.

I ask that this statement be printed in the Minutes of Presbytery.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles W. Wilson". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Charles W. Wilson