

ARPTalk(27)

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One of the hallmarks of the healthy church is vigilance. Without vigilance truth turns into syncretism, orthodoxy dilutes into heresy, love corrupts into license, discipline degrades into ecclesiastical anarchy, and intellectual pursuit devolves into intellectual idolatry, and academic freedom transmogrifies into academic tyranny. Woe to the church that fails to be vigilant in the care of her agencies!

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ARPTalk(26.1)

LETTERS AND THINGS

(26.1.1)

Resolution of Commendation of the Investigatory Commission on Erskine College and Seminary Passed by Northeast Presbytery (ARP)

Northeast Presbytery commends the Moderator's Commission on the Erskine Board for its hard work and wise recommendations designed to help Erskine more faithfully fulfill its mission. Furthermore, Northeast Presbytery supports the

Erskine Interim Board and continues to pray for the peace, purity, and prosperity of Erskine College and Seminary.

(26.1.2)

Letter from Andy Putnam

Chuck,

Regarding your latest issue of your *ARPTalk(Extra 7)*, dated March 12.

I felt it important to point out an inaccuracy in your report and would hope that you would publish this with the same expediency.

You ask the question (regarding Scott Mitchell)

1. Mr. Mitchell is an active elder serving an ARP Church within the bounds of the Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery. Mr. Mitchell has taken vows of submission to the authority of the courts of the ARP Church. Is his action showing faithful submission to these governing authorities? Has he followed proper ecclesiastical procedures? For instance an appeal to the court of the ARP Synod? Has he exhausted the appropriate means of confrontation within the ARP Church? Why has he taken such a drastic and harmful action toward his Church and his alma mater? Does he not trust his brothers with whom he serves in the name of Christ?

I wanted to make sure that you and your readers understand that Mr. Mitchell does not have an avenue of appeal for this decision ecclesiastically. The decisions reached at the called meeting of Synod were actions of the highest court of our denomination. These actions cannot be appealed to a lower court as you would suggest, nor can the action of General Synod be appealed to General Synod. We do not go home from Synod appealing decisions to the local church session or the presbytery. Any action (of any body) may be "reconsidered", but that must happen during the meeting the action takes place, and the motion to reconsider must be made by someone who voted for the prevailing side. (I believe Mr. Mitchell was not at the called meeting and would assume that he would not have voted for the prevailing side)

Mr. Mitchell, along with any proper delegate to any meeting of Synod, can make motions that might reverse any action of a previous Synod meeting, (just as a meeting of Synod does not bind future meetings of Synod) - however it is not an appeal of a previous action. Mr. Mitchell, like all ARP church members, could appeal the actions of a lower court at the next higher court (session-presbytery-synod etc) as has occurred on occasions within our history.

As a trustee of both the previous board and the newly approved interim board, Mr. Mitchell could argue that he was attempting to do what the General Synod had

entrusted him to do; care for Erskine College & Seminary by taking the action that he took. I am not weighing in an opinion on that - I will leave it to you and your readers to determine what they feel would have been the best way for that to have been accomplished.

While I grieve for any lack of unity or peace within the denomination and it is troubling to see the witness of the ARP Synod that is being played out in the regional media, I pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ would be evident to all through our conduct and the work of the denomination.

[Editor's Response:](#)

The Editor wishes to thank Rev. Andy Putman, the Parliamentarian of General Synod, for his correction. The word "appeal" is incorrectly used. The Editor's point, as Rev. Putnam concurs, is that Mr. Mitchell has the right to reopen this matter by means of a memorial drafted from the Session of his local church and sent for adoption by the Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery, and, if adopted by the Presbytery, sent to the General Synod for adjudication. As Mr. Putnam notes, the actions of one Synod are not binding on another Synod. What is absolutely astounding about this particular matter is the dogged unwillingness of the leaders of the minority to abide the opinions of the overwhelming majority of their brothers in General Synod (3 to 1 and 2 to 1). In the past, the counsel of these same individuals has been that we in the ARP Church are confessional, connectional, family, and vow-honoring. In other words, we discuss, debate, and vote, and when we vote, we take it as the direction of the Holy Spirit in our midst and then join hands in the prevailing opinions. But something is now amiss. This is not working with these so-called teachers who now find themselves in the minority. They have come up with a new principle: **ONLY WHEN THE VOTE GOES THE WAY ONE WANTS IT!** Do they not realize that is ecclesiastical anarchy and schism?

- Charles W. Wilson

(26.1.3)

A Love Letter Straight from Bill Crenshaw's Heart

Chuck — your points in number 8 (among others) are inaccurate, and if anything redounds on me because of what you say, you will find yourself at the other end of a lawsuit.

And no, I will not clarify or correct what you say. You need to check your own facts and not listen to your own propaganda or the propaganda of your cronies at the college. As you contemplate what you say about what I do and say, you should know that in a court you will have to give proof of your allegations; be advised also that I routinely record all of my classes, all of my public conversations, and many of my private conversations. I will have evidence; I do have evidence; all you have is hearsay and witnesses whom the evidence will impeach.

Just letting you know what the score is.

And if I do decide to take you to court for slander and libel, know that I will have no problem raising money for my suit. There are legions — thought you'd like that word — of people eager to see your hide tacked on a legal wall. You've made far too many enemies over the years, my friend, and the arena is about to change.

So unless you've got rock hard evidence for any allegations, you might want to prayerfully consider what you say. And this — “An English professor” — will offer no defense to you in the civil — read secular — legal system.

And finally, Chuck, you know me. I'm like you. And so you know I don't back off of fights.

Tropical storm winds. Katrina on its way.

Editor's Response:

Have you noticed that recently there has been a lot of lawsuiting in ARPland? Yes, the Editor is aware that “lawsuiting” is not a word; however, in the current situation, “lawsuiting” should be a word. Definition: “lawsuiting” - (1) in the ARP setting, indigenous to the environs of Due West, SC; finding its impetus in the nefarious legal maneuverings of PC(USA) churchmen who have successfully used lawsuiting to stifle and ultimately destroy the evangelical witness in the PC(USA) - (2) any threat of or actual legal action by those who have ignored and circumvented the mission of

Erskine College and Seminary to obstruct those seeking the implementation of the mission of Erskine College and Seminary.

- Charles W. Wilson

ARP Talk (26.2)

A FEW THOUGHTS CAPTURED FROM FACEBOOK

Jay West (Former Erskine Vice President)

It is a sad day when an institution such as Erskine has to suit the denomination it [sic] it is affiliated with in order to maintain its' [sic] academic integrity and freedom. Well done, Erskine! I applaud [sic] you for standing up for what is right and noble! This is a watershed moment in the institution's history and too many wonderful people have suffered because of greed. As someone, who served the college for 14 years, I can tell you without a doubt the Spirit Of Christ is alive and well there, and so is the rage for learning. The ARP was seeking to choke the life out of her and leave her bones to rot in the desert. There is a deep, rich , [sic] history there with the blood, sweat and tears of many alumni who are not ARP. These people have given the endowed chairs, buildings, scholarships, etc. Now, their voice can be heard! In the end, the contributions of the ARP Synod toward the institution is in the low single digit percentages when compared to the alumni, students and friends of the institution. It is like the church waiting until everything is beautiful and funded and saying, " okay, [sic] now that we have your money, we want to make some changes and you are not involved!" Well Done, EC!!!!

Jay West (Former Erskine Vice President)

We need to develop our own list of professors that need to leave EC. Let's start with Bill Evans, since he misrepresented facts and lied to others. This guy actually stood up and spoke against Erskine! Sorry- he's got to go!!!!

Jay West (Former Erskine Vice President)

Save Erskine from the idiots within the ARP denomination. They can't run a denomination, why do they think they can run a college? Maybe they want the college to crash so they can have \$50 million in the endowment!

Buddy Ferguson (Presently Alumni Director)

New Arp [sic] Church leadership and in a sense a power play. They want Erskine to be a great Christian College as we all do and they want it Now. I feel truly that it is and is only getting better but not everyone agrees with me. Now because the votes are coming together.

Jay West (Former Erskine Vice President)

Hey Guys, It is time to start raising money for a legal fund! Erskine has to file for separation.

Mary Lou Holmes

I don't have the statistics for you. The Moderator of Synod is not an Erskine alum from Columbia First, which used to be PCUSA. They just became ARP in 1983. They run Synod. They run the "commission" (3 out of 6) which investigated complaints of a few students that resulted in recommendations that the 14 be ousted. Columbia First also runs the... See More Presidential Search Committee. They claim they want to shrink the board. But the interim board is the exact same size. They don't have contempt for all Erskine alums, just those who disagree with them.

Jonathan Breazeale

Religious intolerance, in ANY form, is a sin and disgrace to the Christian faith. Think about that, ARP Synod.

Due West N Distress

My advice would be to make the most of the time. Rest assured that "they" will be moving swiftly. Any moves made MUST be done quickly. They have been planning this takeover for a long time.

Rick Norwood

Look like the ARP Tea Party has takeover [sic]. From the towers that point heaven look we sadly down (sorry if you've already heard this one).

Marie Tompkins

I am so disappointed in the recent events at EC!! I hope they can find a way to separate from the ARP synod. I would hate to see our school turned into another Bob Jones!

Roddy Gray

If we separate from the new arp[sic] Taliban [sic], Erskine lives---if we don't Erskine dies. I feel sorry for those ARP's [sic] who were courageous enough to disagree with this cult. Most of the conspirators have moved from denomination to denomination and decided that the Arp [sic] church was ripe for take-over and hey--they had a college.

Elizabeth Rogers Hartley

I am astonished how the Synod group is fitting the perfect profile of the Pharisees as depicted [sic] in the New Testament....twisting the "law" to suit their needs, more interested in exclusion than inclusion...There's a reason Jesus didn't hang out with the church leaders of old. Doing what they did to Erskine was the in...itial [sic] offense. Now calling EC's attempt to defend itself as unbiblical? Pa-leez.

Linda Steber

I guess I just don't think there is THE Christian World View --I don't think the Bible says that either. The Bible is always in conversation with itself--two creation stories for instance. AND the Reformers would be appalled at all of the 'Bibology'

[sic] espoused. We worship God, not the Bible. Even John Calvin said the Bible did not become the Word of God until it was preached and interpreted.

Al Brady Law

I graduated in 1966, and I am surprised by the lack of "old timers" posting here. I see a few but I wonder if it's because [sic] they don't care or just don't know what's going on. My two cents...my four semesters of Bible were fine. The rest of the courses I took in order to broaden my knowledge and hopefully prepare me ...for life after Erskine. Other than my Bible professors, religion didn't really enter into my other classes. That's as it should be. I questions [sic] those whose faith is strong enough to stand examination.

Beau Maye

The Presidential Search Committee meeting scheduled today was cancelled by the chairman who just happens to be on the commission and appointed himself to the new interim board. If the meeting had occurred [sic], he would have been looking eye to eye with three members of the search committee that were "fired" from the board o...f [sic] trustees. He knew he was going to be out voted. His plan is to convene the new interim board and ask that the present search committee be disbanded. Then the new interim board would appoint a new search committee and guess what? Erskine would have a new minister president. Listen to me people...I know what I'm talking about.

Phil Rembert

Thinking about the SAFE crowd I am reminded of the Dead Kennedy's Holiday in Cambodia "So you've been to school for a year or two and know you've seen it all." Also same song: "you suck like a leech, you want everyone to act like you."

John Tribble

Rick, this is the kind of stuff that needs to be said. The old ARP church as we knew it has been "taken over" by a bunch of ultra conservatives non ARP who think it is okay to judge your or my Christianity. A very sad day in the ARP church.

Linda Steber

I guess I just don't see Erskine as the fine Liberal Arts College it once was and can be if it doesn't sever ties with the ARP Synod. Unfortunately the ARP Synod is not what it was, it has been taken over by folks who I would not even say are conservative or Reformed. I won't say they are not Christian because that is ...not true. But they have jumped back over the Reformation to medieval nominalism which the Reformers, John Knox, John Calvin, and Ebenezer Erskine were against. They have a list that one has to subscribe to to [sic] make it to heaven and they want to control the list just as the medieval church did. I will no longer give any money unless the college is separate. The college did not leave the ARP Synod, the Synod left the college.

Preston Barnhart

Believe me...they (commission) don't want parents showing up. If my son or daughter was at Erskine you better believe I would show up. It's like Diane said what are they going to do throw me out. These arrogant power hungry commission guys are no christians [sic]. You can bet they have already contacted the SAFE students to show up and give them support. That's how these sleeze [sic] balls operate. They aren't going to walk into a situation they can't control. Please alumni in the abbeville [sic] area SHOW UP!!

Ebenezer Erskine

Yes the Cola Church is the Vatican and DeWitt is the Pope.

Beau Maye

Don't waste your time looking for any of the commssion [sic] members in the Inside Erskine magazine. They don't give to the school. All 8 members of the commssion [sic] have spoken against Erskine in the past. One of the commission members even had a blog site that demanded our VP of Student Services resign. So he got rewarded as a member of the commssion [sic]. The ... See MoreModerator [sic] doesn't hide the fact that he doesn't like Dr. Ruble or Erskine. Why? do you ask...because Dr. Ruble and Erskine are two things he can't control. Now that he is Moderator he could appoint a one-sided commssion [sic] to get the results he wanted.

Aldon Knight

To all - any of you who think I have no compassion for the group who perpetrated this, you're right. I don't. Don't really care who is pissed off about that. If you want to call them 'brothers in Christ' or whatever makes you feel good, go right ahead. But make no mistake. They are no 'brothers' of mine. Period.

Mary Lou Holmes

Secretive, unsubstantiated accusations about the 14 ousted members of the Board can't survive the light of day. Public debate is not the enemy. Hidden agendas to control Erskine College and its assets and erase debate: those are the evils we should fight against. Christianity will be the winner when Erskine frees itself of this stifling influence.

Herbert P Dove

My first thought was "The scribes and Pharisees have just crucified another innocent victim---this time it is Erskine College."

Rick Norwood

I'm an '81 graduate and my thoughts really don't belong here with you super intellects, but these actions call for a bit of sarcasm - please forgive me. I understand that they (General Synod) also attempted to pass a resolution that would give them final discretion regarding which ARPs would be allowed in heaven, but... this measure was narrowly defeated. Also, I always thought the expression that you had

to go to Bonclarken before you went to heaven was just that - an expression - apparently it is now official ARP policy. "SCIENTIA CUM MORIBUS

Aldon Knight (Former Erskine Employee, Alumni Director)

Folks - a handful of people are having difficulty with the term "war" to describe what is going on at Erskine. That term remains the most accurate descriptor in my mind of what is going on. That said, if there are different terms that are equally accurate in describing what is going on, let's get them out there. I want our terminology to reflect our rage and vehemence at this latest action (and frankly the state of things with Erskine and the right wingers for too many years), but also want to offend as few mainstream alums as humanly possible. Comments welcome...

Aldon Knight (Former Erskine Employee, Alumni Director)

Thanks Eric. I didn't take that oath, so I'm sticking with war. Webster define's [sic] war as "a struggle or competition between opposing forces or for a particular end." That's exactly descriptive of what we're in now as far as I'm concerned. In my mind there is now no acceptable solution except total separation from the ARP church. There are many ... See Moregreat [sic] folks in the ARP church still, but it is so obviously run by the far-righters that I really can't see any common ground left between the church and an effective Erskine in the future.

Beau Maye

*****VERY INTERESTING*** LISTEN UP ALUMNI.. The chairman of the Presidential Search Committee is Gordon Query. Mr. Query just happens to be a member of the Commission that handed down the death sentence to our alumni board of trustee members. Mr. Query also named himself to the new Board of Trustees. It gets better..Mr. ...Query is an Elder at the Columbia ARP Church. Is there any doubt that our next president will be an ARP MINISTER? Dr. Ruble has done an excellent job bringing the alumni together and balancing the budget for the past three years but there is only one Dr. Ruble and we should all be thankfull [sic] for all he has done. WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER MINISTER AS OUR PRESIDENT.**

Preston Barnhart

1st Pres. in Columbia broke off from the PCUSA church because they couldn't run the denomination. The ARP's [sic] were warned in 1983 that they were making a mistake accepting 1st Pres. but they were to excited watching their membership grow by 2,000. Now the church runs the denomination.

Linda Steber

you know, unfortunately all church arguments--all through the ages--have really been about power and control and not about theology or actually loving God and loving neighbor.

Ebenezer Erskine

Excellent observation Wes, Power is a big disease with these FAR RIGHT NEO NAZI JERKS. They talk about "spirit of love" but actually mean "do what I say". They'll all have to answer for their actions one day. THEIR DAY IS COMING.

Thomas B. Roper

Virtually {sic} all of these posts view the Erskine debate as one of theology. However there is another side of this debate that must also be addressed and that is the procedure followed by the Moderator's Commission (MC). The Moderator is the retired senior pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC. He appointed himself to the MC as well as two ruling elders from this church. Thus three members were affiliated with one church [sic] out of the entire denomination. Also the Moderator appointed additional members who shared his views. There was no effort to get a cross section of the denomination on the MC. The MC was appointed last summer and began its work. It NEVER met with the existing Board of Trustees (BOT) until approximately one week before the emergency called meeting of Synod. At that time the MC presented the BOT with a list of five demands that were non-negotiable and told the BOT that they would recommend to the Synod the dismissal of the BOT if the BOT did not not [sic] agree to the demands. (Aside: one of the complaints by the MC against a faculty member was that he created an atmosphere of intimidation in his class. The faculty member was intimidating a student but the MC was not intimidating the BOT?) The MC stated as a reason [sic] for the need of the emergency meeting was the fact that a presidential search committee was meeting to select a new president of Erskine. Yet when Ken Wingate was on the talk show he stated that it was entirely "coincidental" that the meeting of Synod was just prior [sic] to the search committee meeting. The MC refused to distribute its reports to the delegates until they arrived at the emergency meeting. Thus delegates were required to hear the report [sic] and then vote on its recommendations. As long as I have lived I have never heard of such behavior before a reformed, deliberative body. Anyone opposed to any part of the MC report was never afforded an opportunity to present any contrary evidence to the Synod since they didn't know what the report said until they got there. How could a delegate prayerfully consider the report or the recommendations? Then the MC dismissed 14 members of the 30 member [sic] BOT. This number is significant in that there were some members of the BOT in agreement with the MC, so that those members, together with the new 14 members, guaranteed a majority on the new Board. There was also a committee of 5 appointed to re-write the by-laws, with 3 of this committee being members of the MC, again guaranteeing a majority on this committee. The MC also appointed its own members to the new Board. Ebenezer Erskine would be none too pleased with the filing of a lawsuit and I can guarantee you he would have been appalled at the railroad job orchestrated by the MC.

Editor's Response:

Trying to respond to this is like attempting to engage a diaphanous gossamer. The level of venom, the disinformation, and the lack of understanding as to how the Presbyterian system of church government works is insurmountable. Add to that

the fact that there are those with an agenda who love to hate the evangelical faith of the ARP Church more than they love Erskine and the task of response is very difficult. All that the Editor can say is that we in the ARP Church deserve such disdain from these alums of Erskine. Instead of addressing this situation in the late 1970s, we winked at it and allowed it to continue. Shame on us!

– Charles W. Wilson

ARP Talk (26.3)

A JUSTIFICATION FOR LAWSUITS

The following is taken from *Erskine Action* (<http://seminary.erskine.edu/blog/>). *Erskine Action* is the official blog-site of Erskine Theological Seminary. The article is by James Hering, New Testament Professor and ARP minister (Second Presbytery).

Paul and the Issue of Litigation in 1 Corinthians 6

James Hering, Ph.D.
Erskine Theological Seminary
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In 1 Corinthians 6 we read of the lamentable matter of fellow believers calling one another before the magistrate over unspecified “grievances”.¹ For reasons we can only suppose,² the church members preferred the civil courts over ecclesiastical regulation. Paul’s distress over the Corinthians’ serial litigiousness, their inability to adjudicate and the chosen civil venue is clear. His incisive response to their practices and flawed ethic has informed both Christian opinion and related interpretative discussions. Due to his guarded style of inquiry,³ however, clear answers regarding the limitations and the realworld application of his ethic do not fall easily to hand. Does the shame mentioned in verse 5 lie in the fraternal litigation itself, the motivation or perhaps the triviality of the cases? Are Christians *never* to seek civil litigation? Is the regulation inter-Christian only? If civil litigation is allowed, under what circumstances might it be invoked? Are Christians forbidden to protect their interests? The following brief

¹ The Greek word here is a common term which is generically translated as “matter, thing, incident”, but also may intimate an adversarial matter such as a dispute or a law-suit.

² The church at Corinth was beset with a variety of sins, too many to list here. Paul’s rhetorical question as to whether there was no one wise enough to adjudicate a case is not a genuine indicator of the problem, rather a reflection of their party spirit and unwillingness, in most things, to be regulated by love and righteousness. In such an environment, it may well have been that the civil courts offered a more equitable solution. This would go a long way towards explaining the depth of shame which Paul himself reflects in this appeal.

³ Paul’s instruction here does not include a single command, but consists of a catena of rhetorical questions, which are primarily answered in yes or no; the exceptions are v. 4 and 7, which demand a considerate response as to *why* they go before the magistrate, and *why* they should not suffer wrong. It appears that the Apostle is expecting his hearers to formulate their ethic along the lines of their inner motivation (pure or corrupt), and ultimately, in light of God’s judgment, v. 9f.

investigation offers clues from the text which may be of help in defining the limits of the Pauline regulation.

The shameful conduct is defined, first of all (and in truth further aggravated), by the fact that these disputes *are not even serious in nature, but trivial*. The Apostle asks them in 2b, as future judges of the cosmos, “Are you not capable of [judging] the most *trivial* cases?” The adjective found here is the superlative form of *ἡ μικρότης*, meaning “the smallest”. Paul expects the believers in Corinth to settle such embarrassingly small squabbles outside of the civil courts. Arguing from the greater to the lesser, he appeals to their sense of shame by accentuating the dissonance found between their future cosmic role and their present behavior. Important to note in this first section of our passage is that he wishes to impress upon the hearers the unessential nature of the litigation. He repeats, and thereby underscores, this characteristic in verses 3 and 4. The litigants’ concerns are described twice as *ἡ μικρότης* and *ἡ μικρότης τῆς ζωῆς*, “everyday matters of this life.” Paul’s directive to the church is clear: The church should not be taking common and trivial matters before the magistrate. The shame, then, is not in the litigation itself (the grievances, though small, are not imagined).⁴ The focus of Paul’s criticism is that *they have not found among themselves the capacity to try even trivial matters*. The civil cases are the secondary, undesirable outcome of this central malady.

If this is indeed the case, then it would follow that Paul *might* allow a Christian to be engaged in litigation involving a more significant grievance, which exhausts the capacity of the church to adjudicate, or falls outside of its juridical purview. In the latter case, Paul’s life appears to bear this out. In Acts 16:19-40, we read of Paul’s unjust beating and imprisonment in Philippi. Here he insists (after the fact) upon his rights as a Roman citizen, which invokes quaking fear (and an apology!) from the magistrates. In similar fashion, when threatened with a scourging in Acts 22:24f., Paul quickly argues the same case to good effect.⁵ In both instances, Paul identifies the culpable behavior of his adversaries with the adjective *ἡ ἀδικία*, “without due process or trial.” He identifies, even in the corrupt Roman legal order, a process that serves a righteous end. Indeed, he sees the civil authority as appointed by God and a hedge against evil-doing, Rom. 13:1-7.⁶

⁴ Calvin distinguishes between law-suits and the passions which corrupt them: “Let us therefore bear in mind, that Paul does not condemn a law-suit on the ground of its being a wrong thing in itself to maintain a good cause by having recourse to a magistrate, but because it is almost invariably accompanied with corrupt dispositions; as, for example, violence, desire for revenge, enmities, obstinacy, and the like.” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, vol. 1 (Baker: Grand Rapids, 2005), 205.

⁵ Here Charles Hodge agrees: “...Paul himself did not hesitate to appeal to Caesar to protect himself from the injustice of his countrymen.” Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: R. Carter & Bros., 1860), 97.

⁶ Calvin insists that the magistrate is a God-ordained organ for our good, John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.20.17.

Later in his ministry, a quick-minded appeal to Roman law led to an extended court case with the Jewish authorities (attended by imprisonment) in Caesarea. In the end, Paul demanded that it be justly shown what he had done wrong, either towards the Jewish nation or against Rome [Acts 25:6-12]. In this pagan court it was decided that Paul was innocent of the various charges brought against him.⁷ It appears that Paul did not seize upon litigation due to fear of persecution or punishment (v.12), but *rather consequently insisted upon a court judgment that was consistent with the truth*. It is not unreasonable, then, for a Christian, when confronted with false charges, to seek a genuine process of trial, where the assumed outcome is the discovery of truth. In all such cases, the Christian must be prepared, as with Paul, to endure the outcome of such proceedings.⁸ These observations, to be sure, have been drawn from Paul's contact with non-Christian and pagan authorities. *They were not an example of brother against brother, and could not have taken place in the church, for there was no ecclesiastical mechanism for such legal process, then as now*. In such cases, it seems clear that the believer is free to access the civil courts, with the proviso that such litigation is undertaken with an eye towards justice and the establishment of truth. But are there provisions to try even serious matters in the church?

It appears that cases, both great and small, were being settled within the walls of the church. We may assume that Paul would have insisted upon the rapid dispatch of superfluous and trivial cases, per his reasoning in 1 Cor. 6:1-6. It cannot be assumed, however, that he would have made dispatch of the truth, or declare more serious matters as adiaphorous. Indeed, he boldly pronounces judgment on the evildoer according to his sin *in absentia*, and calls upon the Corinthians to expel him from their fellowship (1 Cor. 5:1-6). Paul reasons here that such behavior carries consequences for the fellowship which cannot and should not be handled by dismissing the case. It is the duty of the church to confront and restore the brother who stumbles (Gal. 6:1), always acknowledging that the evildoer stands before the impartial judgment of Christ (Col. 3:24). Paul's assumption is that the churches will agree at some fundamental level as to what constitutes sin or inappropriate behavior,⁹ and then act according to love¹⁰ and a

⁷ These are characterized in v. 7 as $\exists \forall \Delta \exists \forall \forall \exists \forall \phi: \forall \exists \forall \dots \square \Leftrightarrow \exists \cap \Phi \Pi \exists \Lambda < \square \exists * , \wp > \forall 4$, "serious charges which they could not prove."

⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.20.18, insists that "...if it is a civil case, a man does not take a right path unless he commits his cause, with innocent simplicity, to the judge as public protector; and he should think not at all of returning evil for evil [Rom. 12:17], which is the passion of revenge."

⁹ In general terms, Paul tends to reference the Torah, in particular the Decalogue, along with numerous citations from Deuteronomy, i.e., Dt. 25:4 in 1 Cor. 9:9f., the regulation of wages in the Christian mission.

¹⁰ Calvin, *Commentary*, 206, insists that all matters, the believer must "...take heed that he does not bring into court any desire of revenge, any corrupt affection of the mind, or anger, or, in fine, any other poison. In this matter, love will be the best regulator." In his footnotes, he poetically exclaims, "We must be adorned with true love." In *Institutes*, 4.20.21, Calvin puts it so beautifully, that it merits a longer citation, "To sum up, love will give every man the best counsel. Everything undertaken apart from love and all disputes that go beyond it, we regard as incontrovertibly unjust and impious. For this must be a set principle for all

humble spirit to correct those who stumble (Gal. 6). *It was not, then, the practice of Paul to ignore a matter of spiritual consequence; the church was expected to adjudicate the cases which came to her attention, great and small. Adding to this his displeasure of the Corinthians' preference for the civil court, it is a logical and axiomatic norm of the church to begin and end all litigation within her walls.*

We have not considered, however, cases which, as mentioned above, exhaust the church's juridical capacity (legal expertise). Nor have we asked the question of jurisdiction when the church fails to exercise self governance and discipline. Even more severe in its implications: what is to be done when a church or church member has violated civil law, and remains unrepentant? It is common practice that churches, when in need of professional legal services such as the generation of deeds, acquisitions or sales requiring legal documentation, marriage licenses, etc., turn to the civil authorities. This includes, of course, legal counsel. The motivation here is not to bypass ecclesiastical regulation, but to secure legal services in accordance with the law. Likewise, if a matter of dispute cannot be decided in a church court (including the process of mediation, where applicable) due to an intractable division of opinion, then the church has no choice but to seek out the civil courts if an equitable conclusion is to be achieved. Paul nowhere assumes that the grievances, petty or great, are to be allowed to continue *ad infinitum* or *dismissed by default*. *Only a genuine and equitable resolution can restore the peace of the church.* More difficult are the cases where the church has done nothing to resolve a grievance, or has in some way made itself culpable under civil law. These are generally serious matters, not to be confused with the everyday tussles treated in 1 Cor. 6:1-6. The court case would then be brought from the injured church member against the church or its members. Such cases are sadly the subject of recent headlines, where innocent parties have been financially defrauded, spiritually manipulated or even sexually abused. The reason for the ensuing court cases? Certainly some have been unjust and superfluous, and reflect the unsavory litigious spirit of Corinth. Others, to be fair, occur due to the legal corporate status of some church entities, which require civil adjudication. And a few cases, to be truthful, reflect the church's inability or unwillingness to confront her sins and mistakes, thereby engendering a number of genuine victims with legitimate grievances. An appeal in such cases to the peace of the church, or, as in our passage, v. 7, "to overlook" these sins, makes light of the matter of sin and its consequences. When the church abdicates her responsibilities, coddles sin or condones unrighteousness, her violated members must turn elsewhere for truth and justice. But is this allowed by Paul?

The Apostle turns from the trivial matters of verse 1-6 and simultaneously raises the stakes by asking why the believers do not simply "allow themselves to be

Christians: that a lawsuit, however just, can never be rightly prosecuted by any man, unless he treat his adversary with the same love and good will as if the business under controversy were already amicably settled and composed."

treated with injustice ($\square^*46, \wp 2,$) “Why not, yet the more, to be defrauded ($\forall B \ni \Phi \theta \Delta, \Delta, \wp \Phi 2,$)?” This manner of argumentation, so familiar in Paul, assumes that the previously mentioned trivial cases, fraught with selfish concerns, are to wither in significance in light of the suffering of injustice (and all that this might imply). In contrast to their petty disputes, Paul introduces the weighty matter of genuine suffering and significant loss. He poses a sincere question, which certainly opens the possibility for the believer “to overlook” (and we assume forgive) even such grievous personal harm as the words imply. Note that here, as with the rest of our passage, he simply poses a question to the suffering believer; *it is not, as popularly assumed, a command from the Apostle*. There is no indication that this question should be the foundation for dismissal of all inter-Christian grievances, or a prohibition against all civil litigation. *The question is posited, as with other rhetorical questions in Paul, to engender appropriate attitudes and behaviors, not to eliminate the possibility of righteous litigation*. In spite of this it remains a legitimate goal for a Christian to appeal to this ethic in the face of injustice or wrongs committed. It is a praiseworthy Christian ideal, often executed with the highest of virtue and at great personal cost. *It is illegitimate, however, for believers to call upon this text to embolden acts which are unjust or result in others’ loss. The verse is directed solely to those who have been treated with injustice or have been defrauded*. An exegesis which allows appropriation of Paul’s ethic for personal gain is nothing more than presumption and arrogant self-indulgence, the very things against which the Apostle is reasoning. Indeed, we are sternly warned that such behavior involves more than personal loss; it invites divine retribution [v.9].¹¹

After challenging his hearers to rise above their pettiness and consider a higher ethic of suffering, Paul issues a stinging indictment in v. 8: “But *you* (emphatic) work injustice and defraud, and this, even to your own brothers.” This is an astonishing state of affairs.¹² Here our passage resembles the warnings found in James 5.¹³ In James, those who defraud the believers are rich “outsiders” who face a withering catena of judgment images; in Paul, those who work unrighteousness and defraud are Christian brothers, who, if they persist in their behavior, can expect the loss of the inheritance of the kingdom of God [v. 9a]:

¹¹ Calvin, *Commentary*, 207f., does not overlook the severity of Paul’s words to those who would make the “sacred brotherhood a matter of no moment.” The unrighteous are characterized as “...those who inflict injury on their brethren, who defraud or circumvent others, who, in short, who are intent upon their own advantage at the expense of injuring others, *will not inherit the kingdom of God*.”

¹² Calvin, *Commentary*, 207, does not overlook the matter: “Here is another aggravation of the evil; for if those are doubly culpable who defraud strangers, it is monstrous for *brother* to be cheated by *brother*.”

¹³ Although Paul’s apostolic regulation of believers’ behavior regarding litigation is significantly different from that found in the second and fifth chapters of the book of James, there is a connection between the two which should not be overlooked before at this point in our examination of 1 Cor. 6. The rich, who cut a pretty poor figure in James, are described as those who have “defrauded” the poor, 5:1-6. It is probably not insignificant that James uses the same verb ($\square B \ni \Phi \theta, \Delta \Xi T$) here, which Paul selects in our passage to describe the *believers’* culpable activity. The meaning in James and our passage is the same: to steal by deception or defraud by denial of goods or justice.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” The warning reflects a stereotypical pattern found within Paul, which, after having identified a sin, then answers it with a formulaic reminder of God’s perspective.¹⁴ We can assume, from Paul’s words, that unrighteousness¹⁵ in all its forms was the overarching rubric lying behind the church’s various conflicts, including the vexing juridical cases. This backdrop of unrighteousness is bound to disrupt not only the normal operations of the church, but her attempts to regulate disputes, whether inside or outside the confines of her walls. Indeed, it appears that the most fundamental question/problem is not, in the end, the location of the court venue (unrighteousness destroys both). The problem lies in appropriating litigants who allow for a just and equitable outcome. The Pauline ethic, which always has a corporate aspect, is here intensely personal. The *individuals* involved in the court cases determine the outcome of the matter, and sadly, this can be to the disadvantage of the many.¹⁶

The passage does not, by virtue of its content and structure, treat all the potential manners (our surveyed spectrum above) in which grievances might be resolved by the Christian. The fundamental message of our passage is this: there are trivial matters which should be handled within the church, and that, without exception. Here the door is firmly closed to civil litigation. It is a shame to the church and a sign of her spiritual immaturity to do otherwise. On the other end of the spectrum, Paul challenges the believers to consider suffering and loss in terms of forgiveness. The earthly-mundane and the heavenly-profound are juxtaposed without apology. Equally stark is the manner in which the passage accepts and rejects unrighteousness. For the sufferer, it may be accepted and transformed by the grace of God; for the oppressor, it is strictly prohibited, ringing only condemnation. *Both* realities are precipitated by litigation. For Paul there are not winners and losers, but the just and unjust. The courts of the church, then, are deeply touched by the presence of unrighteousness. The litigants, regardless

¹⁴ The formulation, " ἐβ6 ἐϋ*∇9, ©94 is common in Pauline argument, and indicates a summary warning statement as in the cases: Rom. 6:16,11:2; 1 Cor. 5:6, 6:2, 6:3, 6:9, 6:16, 6:19, and 9:13. It also has an inceptive use, however, seen in 1 Cor. 3:16 and 9:24.

¹⁵ Paul explicates the breadth of unrighteousness in v. 10, enumerating several of the vices found here and in other such lists in the *corpus paulinum*.

¹⁶ Calvin, as a trained lawyer, is acutely aware of the problem. At several points, he registers dismay at the prospect of finding righteous litigants, and, interestingly, with Paul, includes a list of vices which corrupt the litigant and the judicial process. He admits, *Institutes*, 4.20.17, that here are “two kinds of men” to be found in court, the righteous, who is “prepared to yield his own and suffer anything [rather] than be carried away with enmity toward his adversary” and those who “carry on their lawsuits with bitter and deadly hatred, and an insane passion to revenge and hurt...to the ruin of their adversaries.” With the presence of the latter, he laments that “...the whole court action of even the most just cause cannot but be impious.” He admits, *Institutes* 4.20.18, that a loving litigant is rare, and that “Perhaps someone will interpose here that such moderation is so uniformly absent from any lawsuit that it would be a miracle if any such were found. Indeed, I admit that as customs of these times go, an example of an upright litigant is rare; but the thing itself, when not corrupted by the addition of anything evil, does not cease to be good and pure. But when we hear that the help of the magistrate is a holy gift of God, we must more diligently guard against its becoming polluted by our fault.”

of the matter or venue, are called upon to be simultaneously righteous and yielded, for the outcome, at least in this realm, is not guaranteed. The mundane results of the courts, often negative, pass into the eternal as the passage speaks to the brazen and unrighteous believer. The sin mentioned here, the defrauding of a believer, is scarcely trivial matter, and is not to be confused with the petty personal cases mentioned in 6:1-6. *It is a grievous act of unrighteousness which may be met with Christian charity, yet intractably with the justice of God.* Although a believer may indeed pass over such an offense, and thereby honor the Lord, the one who defrauds has no grounds to presume upon such spiritual largesse. On the contrary, such behavior invites both human scorn and the judgment of God. After all the questions which Paul poses in this passage have been considered, the final question is laid before the Christian litigant: are you just?

Editor's Response:

The passage that Dr. Hering is discussing is 1 Corinthians 6:1-11. Using the ESV, the passage reads in this manner:

¹ When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? **8** But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!

Do these words mean what they say? If they do, then Dr. Hering's arguments are destroyed. Dr. Hering's arguments are self-serving and protective. He is attempting to make the works of the passage mean something they do not mean.

Dr. Hering has joined with others in legal actions against the ARP Church. Dr. Hering's arguments are tendentious and they are also an act of obfuscation. He is attempting to justify his actions under the guise of academic jargon. However, no matter what he writes, the fact stands that in violation of his vows of submission to his brothers in the court system of the ARP Church, he has joined with others to take the ARP Church to secular court. Now, consider the following from Gordon Fee's commentary on 1 Corinthians in the *NICNT*

The opening paragraph is as sharp as it is abrupt. Like 5:1-8 it begins as though it were a word to the offender, but instead it becomes a word to the

church as a whole. It turns out that the failure of the two men is primarily a failure of the church to be the church. The “argument” comes basically in the form of a series of rhetorical questions. . . .

Crucial to the whole argument is Paul’s view of the church as an eschatological community, whose existence as God’s future people absolutely determines the life in the present age (see on 4:1-5). In light of these eschatological realities, matters of everyday life are trivial, and the pagan courts who concern themselves with such trivialities are themselves trivialized. Such people have no standing at all with the people of God. The absurdity of the Corinthian position is that the saints will someday judge the very world before whom they are now appearing and asking for a judgment. Not only does such an action give the lie to who they are as the people of God, but it is done in the presence of unbelievers, the very people to whom the church is to be God’s alternative. (230)

This article in *Erskine Action* is nothing more than self-serving tripe in a pitiful attempt to cover disloyalty to the ARP Church. Does Dr. Hering make legitimate points? Of course! However, the main point of his writing must not be missed. The promulgation of such nonsense by Dr. Michael Bush, the blog-master on the Erskine Theological Seminary website, makes it abundantly clear that drastic and far-reaching changes at Erskine Seminary are necessary.

Sadly, this sort of silly thinking is epidemic. I relate the following to you from an exchange between Dr. Jay West and Rev. Drew Collins:

[Dr. Jay West \(Former Erskine Vice President\):](#)

I believe I Cor. 6 refers to frivolous [sic] lawsuits. This is not a trivial matter at all. What would have happened if the Church had the opportunity to file a suit in Nazi Germany? would you oppose that action as a Christian. The people involved at the genesis of this process completely abandoned Scripture and assassinated the character of many good people!

[Drew Collins \(Former ARP, ETS grad, and now serving in a conservative Episcopal diocese\):](#)

Well, Jay, just whom would the Church have sued in Nazi Germany and where would they have sued them? St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6 have to do with believers suing believers in the civil courts, not with believers suing just anyone (i.e., if the Roman Catholic Church [or another church] wanted to sue Planned Parenthood for the wanton slaughter of the pre-born then they would have my applause and support; although I think Morris Dees is a grandstanding charlatan, I applaud the lawsuits that were brought on behalf of several black churches --victims of arson -- against the Ku Klux Klan, greatly

diminishing their power).

Y'all in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church are members of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council and have been for a number of years. If the actions were as heinous and un-Christian as has been alleged then could they not have been appealed to for redress? That would have been, in my humble opinion, a case of rightful appeal perfectly in keeping with 1 Corinthians 6.

- Charles W. Wilson

ARP Talk (26.4)

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF SYNOD BY DOUG PETERSEN

**REFLECTIONS ON THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ON ERSKINE COLLEGE
AND THE MARCH 2-3, 2010 CALLED MEETING OF GENERAL SYNOD**

Doug Petersen

1. The 2009 meeting of the General Synod of the ARP Church instructed the Moderator to “form a special commission to investigate whether the oversight exercised by the Board of Trustees and the Administration of Erskine College is in faithful accordance with the standards of the ARP Church and the synod’s previously issued directives,” and “to report back to General Synod no later than the 2010 meeting of General Synod with a report and the Commission’s findings and recommendations.”
2. The memorial which the Synod adopted, the report of the Moderator’s Committee on Memorials, the debate on the floor of Synod, and the composition of the commission as appointed all indicate that it was the intent of the Synod to create an ecclesiastical commission, not a committee, and to restrict that commission from taking any other action than to investigate and report back to Synod.
3. While the authorization to investigate “whether the oversight exercised by...” and “is in faithful accordance with...” is subject to various interpretations, the meaning of “Standards of the ARP Church” and “previously issued directives” is unambiguous. Both are the result of official actions adopted by the General Synod and recorded in the Minutes of the General Synod and other appropriate documents. The Commission was obligated by its charge to confine itself to investigate “whether the oversight exercised... was in faithful accordance with...” those officially adopted and recorded items.
4. The Manual of Authorities and Duties (MA&D) lists the duties of the Moderator, and the Form of Government (FOG) regulates ecclesiastical commissions. The Moderator departed from the MA&D by appointing himself a voting member of the Commission instead of serving as a non-voting advisory member. Furthermore, the Moderator departed from the FOG XIV.B.3.b. by appointing two ruling elders, Mr. Wingate and Mr. Robinson, who were not members of the 2009 General Synod. Without the eligibility of those three persons, the Commission failed to meet the minimum requirements of FOG XIV.B.3.d.(4).

5. The Moderator created at least the appearance of conflict of interest by appointing himself, a voting ex-officio member of the Erskine Board, and Mr. Query, an appointed voting member of the Erskine Board, as voting members of the Commission to investigate the Erskine Board. Conflict of interest is also raised by the appointment of Mr. Maye, an appointed voting member of the Erskine Board, as an advisory member of the Commission.

6. The Commission exceeded the bounds of its charge by inquiring into areas not addressed by the Standards or directives of the Synod, such as the financial decisions of previous boards. Moreover, the Commission flagrantly exceeded its authority when at the February 18-19, 2010 meeting of the Erskine Board it conditioned its potential recommendation to remove the Board immediately based on whether or not the Board agreed totally to the Commission's other findings and recommendations. Such an ultimatum clearly constituted unauthorized action by the Commission.

7. The preliminary report of the Commission states that "The Minutes of the General Synod from the past 40 years give evidence of a long-standing concern about Erskine College and Seminary." While it is true that there are periodic references to concerns about Erskine in the Minutes, there are many more commendations, including the following adopted by the 2008 General Synod, "That Erskine College and Seminary faculty, staff and administration be thanked for their devotion to the ARP denomination and to Christianity throughout the world." (2008 Minutes, p.502) Furthermore, "directives" to Erskine are rarely found in the Minutes, although this should come as no surprise, since the MA&D and the FOG XIV.A.2.a. state "A board shall perform special work entrusted to it without particular instructions from the appointing court but shall follow the general instructions of the court." The general instructions are found in the MA&D and the FOG.

8. Both the preliminary and final reports of the Commission engage in sweeping generalizations and employ highly opinionated language such as "irreconcilable and competing visions," "untenable situation," and "culture of intimidation" while providing little or no independently verifiable documentation to support these claims. The reports rarely tie their claims to the "Standards" and "directives" of Synod, and even when they do their claims are presented without context and never mention actions taken by the Board and Administration to respond to the Synod – actions which are readily available in the Board reports recorded in the Minutes of Synod. Both Commission reports evidence no semblance of impartiality on the part of the Commission.

9. The Moderator departed from the FOG XIV.B.3.a. by having the Commission report to a called meeting of Synod rather than a stated meeting as prescribed. Furthermore, by restricting the called meeting to hearing and acting upon the findings and recommendations of the Commission, the Moderator precluded the members of the court from offering alternative remedies which might have spared the college and the church from the turmoil which has ensued. The obvious effect of having a commission report to a stated meeting is to prevent a commission from restricting the options of Synod.

10. The claim of the Commission in its preliminary report that “We believe that the release of some conclusions and our recommendations [prior to the called meeting] would have the effect of depriving Synod of the deliberative process...” has been revealed to have just the opposite result. The effect of the Commission’s withholding of its draconian recommendation to immediately remove the Board of Erskine deprived the delegates of the opportunity to thoughtfully and prayerfully prepare for the deliberations and to consider the potential far-reaching implications of approving such a recommendation.

11. The Moderator added to the appearance of conflict of interest and partiality by presiding over the called meeting of Synod. Roberts Rules of Order recommend that when a presiding officer is a party to a controversial matter, he should relinquish the chair while the matter is being considered. Since the Moderator was a voting member of the Commission and the Vice-Moderator was an advisory member, neither should have presided. Instead, an impartial member of the court should have been appointed to preside.

12. The characterization of financial actions of previous Boards as “financial irregularities” was misleading and prejudicial to the current Board as well as being outside the charge of the Commission, since it failed to demonstrate how such matters were tied to the “Standards and directives” of Synod. The standard of “competent, engaged and independent” is found nowhere in the “Standards and directives” of Synod; the Commission had no authority to judge the Board by its own tendentious standard, and the Synod clearly erred in allowing this standard to be applied. The reports of the Commission give every appearance of a partisan effort to discredit and demonize the Board in order to justify fashioning a Board which would be compliant to the views of the Commission.

13. The Commission clearly attempted to foreclose any opportunity for redress by the Erskine Trustees as illustrated by Mr. Wingate’s claiming both the civil law as a justification for the arbitrary removal of Trustees and I Corinthians 6 as a prohibition against resorting to the civil courts for relief. At the same time the Moderator used his authority to specify the only matters to be considered at a called meeting to deny the Trustees an opportunity to appeal until the June stated meeting, by which time the Commission’s recommendations would have become a fait accompli. The net removal of 14 specified Trustees was either for cause or was purely arbitrary. If it was for cause, the Standards of the Church contain a Book of Discipline and the by-laws of Erskine College, which were approved by the General Synod, both of which contain detailed provisions for due process. If the removal was arbitrary, it was a violation of FOG II.C.1.&2. In either case the General Synod violated its own Standards and directives by concurring with Commission.

14. The Commission usurped the authority of the Nominating Committee of Synod by nominating individuals to serve on the so-called interim board and violated the MA&D by failing to follow the policies of Synod governing the nominating process, including the prohibition against nominating its own members for service on any boards. By

making the nominations part of the exclusive matters to be considered at the called meeting, the Moderator precluded the delegates from exercising their ordinary rights to nominate alternate candidates. The Synod violated its own Standards and directives by concurring with the Commission.

15. The Commission not only failed to demonstrate that its investigation was in keeping with its charge, it also failed to demonstrate that its findings were fair and accurate and that its proposed remedies were the most reasonable and effective available. The Moderator could have expanded the agenda of the called meeting of Synod or waited for the stated meeting as prescribed by the FOG to allow for consideration of alternatives. The alternative plan presented by the Board of Trustees would have avoided most or all of the legal, constitutional and ethical controversy that has occurred. The fact that the Trustees plan would have taken longer was insufficient reason for rejecting it, since no immanent danger to Erskine was established. On the contrary, the “rush to judgment” called for by the Commission, aided by the Moderator and abetted by the called meeting of the General Synod has endangered both Erskine and the ARP Church.

CONCLUSION

The actions of the Special Commission on Erskine and the called meeting of the General Synod are so egregious, the violations of Synod’s own Standards and directives are so numerous, the treatment of the Trustees of Erskine is so arbitrary and cruel, and the consequences of these actions are potentially so catastrophic for both Erskine and the ARP Church that they call for immediate redress. The Executive Board of Synod should exercise its authority to act in an emergency to suspend the actions of the called meeting of Synod, refer the whole matter to the Ecclesiastical Commission for Judiciary Affairs for a ruling on the constitutional issues, and recognize the Board of Erskine that existed prior to the called meeting as still being the rightful Board.

Editor’s Remarks:

First, some clarification is needed. The Moderator’s special Commission was **NOT** an Ecclesiastical Commission but an Investigatory Commission. The motion to form the Investigatory Commission was overwhelmingly supported and the authority given to the Moderator to form the Investigatory Commission was also overwhelmingly supported. Therefore, the Moderator has done exactly what he was asked to do by the 2009 General Synod using the authority that was publicly and overwhelmingly granted to him. The *FOG* (14.B.1) reads: “An ecclesiastical commission is a body appointed and empowered by a court of the Church to examine, consider, and conclude certain designated business.” The difference is that an Ecclesiastical Commission is empowered to conclude business on behalf of the General Synod. That sort of authority for the Investigatory Commission was voted on and rejected by the 2009 General Synod. Had the Investigatory Commission been an Ecclesiastical Commission, there would not have been a

Called Meeting of the General Synod. That Commission would have simply acted and reported back at the June meeting of Synod as to what it had done. The Investigatory Commission was not empowered to act on behalf of the General Synod and conclude its business, thus the Commission brought its recommendations to the General Synod for action. Thus the action to pass the four recommendations is not the action of the Investigatory Commission but the overwhelming will of the General Synod.

Second, Rev. Petersen's venom toward the Moderator is uncalled for. If Rev. Petersen is angry and upset, it is with his brothers with whom he serves in the ARP Church who, hearing the same testimony that he heard, voted 3 to 1 and 2 to 1 in public standing votes in opposition to Rev. Petersen's opinion. Is Rev. Petersen now disregarding the will of his brothers? Rev. Petersen's language is both inflammatory and insulting. The Editor hopes that Rev. Petersen is gentlemen enough to apologize to the Moderator.

- Charles W. Wilson

ARP Talk (26.5)

A CONCLUDING PRAYER

Editor's Remarks:

The prayer below is the Editor's prayer. The Editor would be delighted if you will join him in it.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit we come to thee, our God and our Father: Blessed is thy great name, for thou hast made the heavens and the earth and hast come to sinful men in mercy and grace to redeem from us a people to be thine own dear children.

We are sinners who are unworthy of thy favor. We have not watched over those things that thou hast entrusted to our stewardship. We have been careless in honoring thy Word – thy Word which is Truth. We have walked in willful ways and treated thy commandments and injunctions as though they were mere suggestions. Have mercy and forgive us. Grant to us a repentance of the heart and not simply of high-sounding rhetoric. And, if it be thy will, grant to us a new beginning and new hearts, washed and revived, to serve thee in joy and faithfulness.

O Lord, for too long we have halted between two opinions. We have made unworthy our name, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. We have polluted our sense of family, our sacred traditions, and our institutions by allowing them to become idols. No wonder we are poor and small and weak and sick and dying and a laughingstock! Our orthodoxy is only words and our practice is betrayal by compromise and accommodation, for we have so long harbored Achans in our camp, and thou hast sent thine angel to oppose us.

O Lord, by thy Spirit, bring to us the works of reclamation and renewal and reformation in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and Erskine College and Seminary. Thou, God of the Bible is mighty and strong, for thine own name and the cause of thine own dear children, work, we pray, the fires of renewal in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and all her agencies. Remove and dismay those who would dress the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in the soiled rags and dying flesh of unbelief. Father, bring down the idolatry of secular academia that covers its hatred of the God of the Bible and the church of the Lord Jesus with the high sounding platitudes of academic freedom and inquiry as they assiduously seek to undermine the faith of our covenant children and those others to whom we have been given charge. Send thine angel to guard those who are bold

for Truth. Honor thy Word written and Jesus thy living Word, and the cause of thy church as she is represented by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church with a new day of faithfulness and integrity and reformation and refreshing so that we may be an effective arm for the redemptive work of the Lord of the universe, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

- Charles W. Wilson wrote this prayer