

ARPTalk (15)

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May 7, 2009

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ARPTalk(15.1)

LETTERS TO ARPTalk

EDITOR'S REMARKS: The article below appeared in the March/April issue of *The Mirror*, the Erskine College newspaper. The article complains about the abuse of both the Erskine College and Student Government Association's (SGA) policies on the use of alcoholic beverages at the SGA's Formal, an abuse encouraged, even embolden, by the Erskine College Administration's passivity and the aggressiveness of the SGA leaders. The SGA Formal was held on Saturday, May 2, 2009. Note that the date of the article of complaint is well before the date of the SGA Formal.

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SGA's Circumvention of the Rules

At the SGA meeting on March 16, 2009, a motion was brought up to not allow a bar serving alcohol to be open during the SGA Formal. The objection to alcohol was made because of a clause in the Erskine Pilot: "The possession or consumption of any alcoholic beverage by any Erskine student or guest of any Erskine student anywhere on the Erskine campus is a violation of College and SGA regulations. The possession or consumption of any alcoholic beverage at a function that is sponsored by any College organization, whether the function is on or off campus, is a violation of College and SGA regulations. The purchase of alcoholic beverages by any College organization with College funds will also constitute a violation of College and SGA regulations" (taken from page 24 of the 2007-2008 edition of the Pilot).

The objection was defeated, 13-6. The question is, why? Why would the SGA vote to violate its own rules? Why would the SGA vote to circumvent its own constitution as well as college regulations? The constitution is clear: any possession (for those who like to split hairs, that obviously means that you have the alcohol on

your person; holding it in your hand, for example) or consumption (that means drinking, or snorting, or injecting, or however you choose to put it into your body) of alcohol *at an off-campus function sponsored by any College organization* is against SGA and College regulations. So why the no-vote? According to the SGA minutes, the reasoning was as follows:

Philip Bunch – “If this is an off campus event and the bar is separate from the dance floor then this allows those of age to drink. To be frank I would be more inclined to go to a party that has alcohol instead of having to drink before or after somewhere else.”

Heather Nycum – “It isn’t SGA’s job to enforce the rules. Underage drinking is more likely to happen off campus at school and not at the formal. Alcohol is everywhere and we need to be in the real world.”

Jessica Gregg – “There is a separation of event/bar. If you don’t want to see it then don’t go to the bar area.”

SGA seems to think that paying for a venue only means you pay only for the dance floor. This is simply not true. As President Bethea made clear: “You can say if you want a bartender there or not.” In other words, we pay for the venue, *and specify whether or not we want alcohol served*. The SGA specified that they want alcohol served. The SGA Formal event includes the entire venue that the SGA paid for – not just the dance floor. This is shameless hairsplitting to circumvent the clear rules and regulations of the constitution.

The other reasoning in the above statements is just as flawed. Who cares if you would rather go to a party where you can drink? The rules are clear! Besides, it is certainly possible (and probable) that the party will be just as fun without beer. By agreeing to come to Erskine College, every student agreed to abide by the Pilot. Whether or not the function would be “more fun” is irrelevant. Furthermore, the statement made that “it isn’t SGA’s job to enforce the rules” is patently false. It *is* SGA’s responsibility to enforce the rules, for the Judicial Council is part of the Student Government Association.

I am not against drinking. But I am against the blatant disregard of the rules and regulations. SGA has a responsibility to ensure that these rules are followed, so when they don’t have enough respect for their own rules, why should any other students follow them? I find it especially concerning that the incoming president has shown such low regard for the Constitution and Bylaws of the SGA. Amend the constitution if you have to, but don’t ignore the rules! SGA has undermined its own authority and given students license to ignore the rules in the Pilot.

**Michael Sewall
Assistant Editor of the Mirror
Class of 2011**

EDITOR'S REMARKS: The following photographs were taken by a concerned Erskine student at the SGA Formal (5/2/09) and sent to the Editor of *ARPTalk*.





EDITOR'S REMARKS: The photographs above have been altered to protect the identity of Erskine students at the bar. One can see how well the Erskine College's policy and the SGA's policy that prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages by students at Erskine College events are enforced! Yeah!!! We in the ARPC have much of which to be proud in Erskine College!

If the above is not enough sad condemnation of the Erskine Administration, let it be pointed out that vans were rented to transport students who drank too much back to their dorms. Painfully, the Editor has been informed that this is a longstanding policy that was established to avoid traffic incidents. But, according to student sources, other incidents have occurred. According to student sources, an incident of violence occurred last year. It is alleged that at the Athenian Formal last year a student "got drunk" and physically assaulted his date. Student sources report that this sort of incident is not thought by the Administration to be as serious as students writing on the sidewalk asking for accountability on the part of the Erskine Administration.

The Editor was puzzled by these events. How was the non-alcohol policy circumvented? It was explained that a room was rented for the SGA Formal. With a "wink of the eye," a room adjacent to the event-room was set up with a bar. Indeed, the Editor is confident that the

bartenders were careful not to serve underage students. However, the Editor surmises that some of those who were twenty-one or older shared with their underage friends. Certainly, policies were ignored and broken. The laws of South Carolina regarding drinking age may well have been circumvented by a so-called "Christian college." The word that comes to the Editor's mind to describe this sort of contravention of institutional policy and South Carolina law is "appalling."

Charles W. Wilson

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PAUL CONDEMNED FOR CRITICISMS OF THE GALATIAN CHURCH

EDITOR'S REMARKS: The following satire is both cutting and brilliant. It is taken from "Sacred Sandwich" and the site location is (<http://sacredsandwich.com/archives/2781>).

The article is a satire of those who complain that anyone who speaks out against that which is wrong or corrupt or erroneous or lacking in the theology of the church or the life of the church or the institutions of the church is not "nice" and probably a "wicked Pharisee." This article puts a modern spin on what might have been responses to Paul's biting criticisms of the Galatian church had those letters been published in *Christianity Today*.

Please remember that the article below is a spoof. After reading this article, ask this question: Does this sound like something we might hear in the ARPC?

Charles W. Wilson

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Christianity Today:

In response to Paul D. Apostle's article about the Galatian church in your January issue, I have to say how appalled I am by the unchristian tone of this hit piece. Why the negativity? Has he been to the Galatian church recently? I happen to know some of the people at that church, and they are the most loving, caring people I've ever met.

Phyllis Snodgrass; Ann Arbor, MI

Dear Editor:

How arrogant of Mr. Apostle to think he has the right to judge these people and label them accursed. Isn't that God's job? Regardless of this circumcision issue, these Galatians believe in Jesus just as much as he does, and it is very Pharisaical to condemn them just because they differ on such a secondary issue. Personally, I don't want a sharp instrument anywhere near my zipper, but that doesn't give me the right to judge how someone else follows Christ. Can't we just focus on our common commitment to Christ and furthering His kingdom, instead of tearing down fellow believers over petty doctrinal matters?

Ed Bilgeway; Tonganoxie, KS

Dear CT:

I've seen other dubious articles by Paul Apostle in the past, and frankly I'm surprised you felt that his recurrent criticisms of the Church deserved to be printed in your magazine. Mr. Apostle for many years now has had a penchant for thinking he has a right to "mark" certain Christian teachers who don't agree with his biblical position. Certainly I commend him for desiring to stay faithful to God's word, but I think he errs in being so dogmatic about his views to the point where he feels free to openly attack his brethren. His attitude makes it difficult to fully unify the Church, and gives credence to the opposition's view that Christians are judgmental, arrogant people who never show God's love.

Ken Groener; San Diego, CA

To the Editors:

Paul Apostle says that he hopes the Galatian teachers will cut off their own privates? What kind of Christian attitude is that? Shame on him!

Martha Bobbitt; Boulder, CO

Dear Christianity Today:

The fact that Paul Apostle brags about his public run-in with Peter Cephas, a well-respected leader and brother in Christ, exposes Mr. Apostle for the divisive

figure that he has become in the Church today. His diatribe against the Galatian church is just more of the same misguided focus on an antiquated reliance on doctrine instead of love and tolerance. Just look how his hypercritical attitude has cast aspersions on homosexual believers and women elders! The real problem within the Church today is not the lack of doctrinal devotion, as Apostle seems to believe, but in our inability to be transformed by our individual journeys in the Spirit. Evidently, Apostle has failed to detach himself from his legalistic background as a Pharisee, and is unable to let go and experience the genuine love for Christ that is coming from the Galatians who strive to worship God in their own special way.

William Zenby; Richmond, VA

Kind Editors:

I happen to be a member of First Christian Church of Galatia, and I take issue with Mr. Apostle's article. How can he criticize a ministry that has been so blessed by God? Our church has baptized many new members and has made huge in-roads in the Jewish community with our pragmatic view on circumcision. Such a "seeker-sensitive" approach has given the Jews the respect they deserve for being God's chosen people for thousands of years. In addition, every Gentile in our midst has felt honored to engage in the many edifying rituals of the Hebrew heritage, including circumcision, without losing their passion for Jesus. My advice to Mr. Apostle is to stick to spreading the gospel message of Christ's unconditional love, and quit criticizing what God is clearly blessing in other churches.

Miriam "Betty" Ben-Hur; Galatia, Turkey

EDITOR'S NOTE: Christianity Today apologizes for our rash decision in publishing Paul Apostle's exposé of the Galatian church. Had we known the extent in which our readership and advertisers would withdraw their financial support, we never would have printed such unpopular biblical truth. We regret any damage we may have caused in propagating the doctrines of Christ.

~Scroll down for the next article, *ARPTalk(15.3)*~

ARP Talk(15.3)

EDITOR'S REMARKS: The Editor has entitled the article below "Berkhof on Barth." Berkhof wrote this article in 1942. The article may be found at http://www.thirdmill.org/newfiles/lou_berkhof/lou_berkhof.WordofGod.html.

Many of us who are older learned our theology from *Systematic Theology* by Louis Berkhof. In the brief article below, Berkhof takes on Barth's view of Scripture and shows it dreadfully deficient. Interestingly, Berkhof's critique of Barth is just as timely today as it was in 1942.

These words are certainly a corrective to the neo-Barthian view of Biblical authority held by Professors Richard Burnett and Michael Bush at of Erskine Theological Seminary.

Charles W. Wilson

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Berkhof on Barth

It is a well-known fact that Barth distinguishes three forms of the Word of God. (1) The primary form, the original revelation, is Jesus Christ, the revelation given once for all. Hence, both Barth and Brunner speak of the revelation as einmalig. Says Barth: "To know anything about revelation in the original, true and strict sense of the concept, we must know Jesus Christ." Revelation, p. 45. However, this revelation given once for all is not to be found, where the liberals find it, in Jesus as a historical person, nor in the teachings of Jesus, but in the appearance of something absolutely new in Him, something formerly veiled and hidden. It is the manifestation of the eternal Word of God in Him, the actual coming of God to man as a God of grace, bringing sinful man into judgment, but at the same time offering a way of escape. This revelation shines forth especially in the incarnation, in the passion of our Lord, and in His resurrection. However, even this revelation is not completed and does not become a real revelation, until it is brought to recognition in, and meets with the response of, a God-given faith. Faith must pierce the incognito of Jesus and see in Him very God of God. (2) The second form of the Word of God is the written Word, the Bible. This is not in itself the divine revelation, but a human word full of imperfections; and yet it can be called the Word of God in a secondary sense. Says Barth: "Holy Scripture as such is not the revelation. And yet Holy Scripture is the revelation,

if and in so far as Jesus Christ speaks to us through the witness of His prophets and apostles." Revelation, p. 67. One may read or listen to many parts of the Bible without hearing the voice of Jesus; but may also, while reading, all at once, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, recognize the voice of the Master addressing one personally. The Bible is not the revelation, but the witness to the revelation. The Word of God may come up out of the word of this witness, and is never heard apart from it. In view of all this the Bible can still be called the Word of God. (3) The third form of the Word of God is that in Church proclamation or preaching. Barth expresses the relationship between this and the previous form as follows: "But the Bible, speaking to us and heard by us as God's Word, attests the past revelation. The proclamation that speaks to us and is heard by us as God's Word promises the future revelation." The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 125. Church proclamation rests upon the attestation of the past revelation in the Bible. And what constitutes preaching Church proclamation, is exactly the hope or anticipation with which it is accompanied, that it will itself become a real revelation through faith in Jesus Christ on the part of those that hear it.

There is one point that deserves special emphasis here, namely, that the polarity of revelation and faith is in a sense dissolved. The situation is not this, that God gives a revelation, and that man accepts this by faith. God is the subject in both, and God's revelation never becomes an object for man. It may be thought, and has sometimes been said, that Barth, by emphasizing this point, simply wants to stress the fact, over against Pelagians and Arminians, that faith is a gift of God; but there is something more in it than that. In the first place, Barth does not conceive of faith, even after it is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as a constant possession of man, something which enables man to lay hold on God and His revelation. This would again put man in possession of a way from man to God, and would make God and His revelation an object. And in the second place revelation is always simply God speaking, and never something given, and now having an objective existence apart from the Speaker, so that man can accept it by faith. Revelation does not exist as a historical datum. It is something that comes from above and strikes through history. The conception of the revelation of God as a given datum at once places man as subject over against God as object; and this may not be. Hence, Barth cannot possibly identify God's revelation and the Bible, and merely says that the Bible may become for us the Word of God at various times. The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 124. There is no revelation apart from faith, and this faith is not primarily an activity of man; it is rather something in which man is passive. It is a miracle wrought in man by the Holy Spirit. Says Camfield in his Barthian study on Revelation and the Holy Spirit, p. 103: "In faith man becomes the subject of a great aggression upon his life, a great approach of God, which disqualifies his consciousness, his thought-world for purposes of revelation." The revelation itself creates faith through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Where this God-wrought faith is non-existent, there is no revelation. The principle that God is always subject, and never object, is thus consistently carried through.

There are, of course, several other particulars connected with the Barthian doctrine of the Word of God, which might be mentioned, but what was said is sufficient to convey at least some idea of the Barthian view. We gratefully record the fact that he absolutely rejects the modern view of the Bible as a record of the experiences of the writers in their search for God. The idea of man's discovering God is entirely foreign to his theology. Moreover, it is a matter of satisfaction also that he declares war on the philosophy of evolution, which underlies the modern conception of Scripture. He maintains that the Word of God speaks to us from the Bible and from the Bible only, and does not believe that it can be learned also from nature, from history, or from the sacred books of other religions. While he strongly emphasizes the unity of the Bible and the Biblical revelation, the idea of a progressive revelation does not find favor with him, since it would again make revelation something historical. **It is regrettable that he regards the Bible as a merely human book with many imperfections, and therefore as a legitimate subject for literary and historical criticism. He absolutely repudiates the doctrine of plenary inspiration, and of the Bible as an infallible book** [Editor's emphasis]. At the same time he is willing to regard the Bible as the Word of God in the sense that it is the accredited witness to the original revelation, that various parts of it may become at different times, for individuals, the Word of God in the strict sense of the word, and that the revelation of God never comes to us apart from the Bible. In his search for the truth man is bound to the Word of God that speaks from the Bible. Of course, he would fully agree with Brunner in saying that "the statement that God's Word speaks to us in the Holy Scriptures has at once to be supplemented by adding that the word of the Bible is the Word of God to us only in so far as God's Holy Spirit opens our ears so that we can hear His voice in the word of the Apostles — something which at no time can be taken for granted." *The Word and the World*, p. 89 f. The following statement of the same author is also significant: "While for living Christians the Bible always is the living present voice of God, orthodoxy has made the Bible an independent thing, which just as such, a *corpus mortuum*, is stamped with divine authority." *Ibid.*, p. 92.

~Thank you for reading ARPTalk(15)~