

ARPTalk(17)

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May 22, 2009

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ARPTalk(17.1)

LETTERS AND NEWS

(17.1.1)

Letter from Rev. Curt Young Senior Pastor Church of the Atonement

Some background is need for Rev. Curt Young's email to the Editor of *ARPTalk*. On Tuesday, May 19, a mass email was sent out from ETS entitled "Meet Your Faculty and Staff." The Editor wrote the following response:

To the readers of "Meet Your Faculty and Staff";

I'm a bit miffed that I was left off the mailing list, but a friend hit "Forward" and I have a copy of the first issue of "Meet Your Faculty and Staff."

Well, it's about time that something like this was done. Over the years, in many ways, the faculty members of ETS have been a mystery to many of us in the ARP Church. Introductions and re-introductions are important and necessary for health and trust in a denominational seminary.

Now, let me begin by noting that while I was a Board member that I was involved in the hiring of a number of ETS faculty members. As I recall, I was involved in the hiring of former-

Professor Jimmy Agan, Professor George Schwab, Professor Dale Johnson, and Professor Jerdone Davis. With two exceptions, I support the Erskine faculty. I hope the Executive Vice President isn't trying to spin the story as though I am critical and condemnatory of the whole faculty outright! I'm not! I'm not! I don't know how to say it clearer. I'M NOT! I'M NOT! I'M NOT!

The Executive Vice President can "cut through the fat and get down to the bone" of this controversy by answering clearly the following two questions?

- 1. Are Dr. Burnett and Dr. Bush neo-Barthians? Does Dr. Bush still say that his piety will not allow him to say that the Bible is without error in all that it teaches? Does Dr. Burnett present Karl Barth's understanding of Biblical authority as the "corrective" to Evangelicalism's "broken" view of inerrancy? Does Dr. Burnett still affirm the statement below?**

From my youth I have believed Holy Scripture to be "the only infallible rule for faith and practice." By that I have understood the Bible to be wholly true and fully trustworthy in all that it teaches and that this extends to all manner of events it, in various ways, seeks to describe. I can also affirm the Bible's "inerrancy." However, given the protean nature of this term and the various ways it has been employed, I find it necessary to clarify my affirmation in the following way.

While I can affirm that the Holy Scriptures are "inerrant . . . in all they say," the question this immediately raises is: What *do* they say? Scripture, of course, says many things but, according to my own theological tradition, what the Scriptures *say*, and say not "primarily" or "for the most part," but wholly, indispensably, and irreducibly, is *about God*. *God* is the central subject matter and theme of the Bible and it is He as its primary author who, by means of secondary human authors, speaks and reveals Himself through the Scriptures by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. Any attempt to read the Bible apart from *this* subject matter and theme is, therefore, from the standpoint of faith, the discipline of theology, or even, I would argue, from the perspective of sound literary theory, improper.

If, then, we wish to speak of the Bible as “inerrant” and are really serious about “all” that the Holy Scriptures have to say, then I think it is necessary to stipulate that no question concerning the Bible’s errancy or inerrancy is appropriately asked or answered apart from this one, central subject matter and theme.

That no question of truth or falsehood can be appropriately asked or answered apart from the one, central subject matter and theme does not, in any way, limit the kinds of questions that can be raised from the perspective of science or historical-criticism, nor does it render scientific or historical-critical judgments irrelevant. Reading the Bible according to its central subject matter and theme *does*, however, relativize these questions *and* the standards of truth and falsehood, error or inerror, many of us would seek to apply to the Bible. None of our concepts from any of our fields of knowledge (not least of all, Systematic Theology!) are exempt from the judgment of God’s revelation. All our concepts, including those informing us of error and inerror, must die and rise again, as it were, before they can be applied to the true subject matter and theme of Holy Scripture.

Therefore, in light of the particularity of Holy Scripture’s subject matter and theme and the fact that “His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts,” my only reservation is that rather than allowing concepts *intrinsic* to the Scriptures themselves to define truth and error, many have sought to apply *extrinsic* concepts to the Bible and have insisted upon these as constitutive for affirming or rejecting biblical “inerrancy.” By “extrinsic concepts” I mean, for example, concepts related to theories about time, space, and matter which are extrinsic to the Scriptures themselves.* Because such theories persist, for example, as independent criteria for assessing the truth or falsehood of Holy Scripture, I find it is necessary to qualify my affirmation by stating that to the extent that the concept of “inerrancy” does not subvert the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* by submitting Scripture to criteria independent of the Scriptures themselves, and so long as it is based, not on any speculative foundation or human value judgment (Matt.

16:17), but on the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14), I affirm the Bible's inerrancy.

I must emphasize, however, while the Scriptures are infallible, my understanding of them as such is not.

**Dr. [name removed by CW], what I have in mind here has to do with, for example, those who insist that with regard to Genesis 1, one day = 24 hours. Another way of saying this is that although human knowledge is gained in various ways, all of which make important contributions to the totality of human learning, the true meaning and value of what is learned must be tested by Holy Scripture itself.*

If you're not aware, a view such as this one by Dr. Burnett will not get one admitted to membership in the Evangelical Theological Society.

Ten years ago, ETS had one professor who was a Barthian: Dr. Merwyn Johnson. Today, ETS has two professors who are enthralled with Barth. Is this the direction of the ARP Church that holds to inerrancy? Is this direction not going to cause distrust and division in the ARP Church?

- 2. Why is the Executive Vice President attempting to move ETS in the direction of the "Confessing Church"/so-called conservatives of the PC(USA)? The Executive Vice President has often said that the PC(USA) conservatives are "just like us." No they are not! Don't they still hold to the Confession of 1967?" That Barthian rewrite of theology is one of the reasons the PC(USA) is in the theological and moral "mess" that it is in. Don't they ordain women to the office of Elder and Pastor? That has been decisively rejected by the ARP Church. The so-called conservatives in the PC(USA) are not "just like us." What kind of stewardship would cause the Executive Vice President to lead ETS in that direction? How does that draw ETS and the ARP Church closer? How does this in any significant way promote the goals, the welfare, the unity, and the growth of the ARP Church?**

Once again, answer those two questions and, one way or the other, this discussion is over. It doesn't take multiple issues of *ARPTalk* or "Erskine Action" or "Meet Your Faculty and Staff."

**Thank you,
Chuck Wilson
Editor
*ARPTalk***

To the ETS mailing, "Meet Your Faculty and Staff," and the Editor's response to the ETS mail out, Rev. Young responded with these words:

Dear Chuck,

Thanks. You got their attention. The institutional reaction is predictable. We have a technical problem; a minister is criticizing us and influencing others. Spin control is the solution. Never mention him. Just crank up the propaganda and pump it out. If they look at the side of the steeple that isn't eaten away, they'll forget about the side that is. Oh, we'll get around to talking about that side, too, but in terms that curry empathy rather than alarm. It is so hard being a leader.

Very clever. Instead of calling for prayer and fasting, we crank up a machine. Instead of welcoming a conversation with a brother, we refuse to acknowledge him. Instead of responding as openhearted believers, we respond as crafty politicians. When we're done, our students will learn that criticism doesn't pay. We will diminish anyone who takes up their cause by refusing to acknowledge them. We won't even send him what we are saying. This isn't about making peace. At the end of the day our students will learn that there is no one to hear them. The church that taught them the faith they brought to college will not defend it.

Of course this could all be too clever by half. The strategy could serve to confirm what Erskine denies, that the school has not just drifted away but moved away from the ARP and would prefer to be out of earshot.

All the best from all of us in Washington, D.C.

Curt

Response to Dr. Bill Crenshaw

In response to *ARPTalk(16)*, the following email was received from Dr. Bill Crenshaw, Professor of English, Erskine College:

Chuckie-Baby —

For someone who got his information from student sources, you sure are liberal with your loaded language and editorial conclusions. Your conclusions might carry more weight if you had better reporting of fact.

By the way, several students and faculty have thanked me for my comments — many more, in fact, than reported my comments to you.

Oh — be sure to check out my editorial in the most recent *Mirror*. I'd be interested to know how you think it will poison more Erskine minds.

Fondly, and giving you all the respect you deserve —

Bill

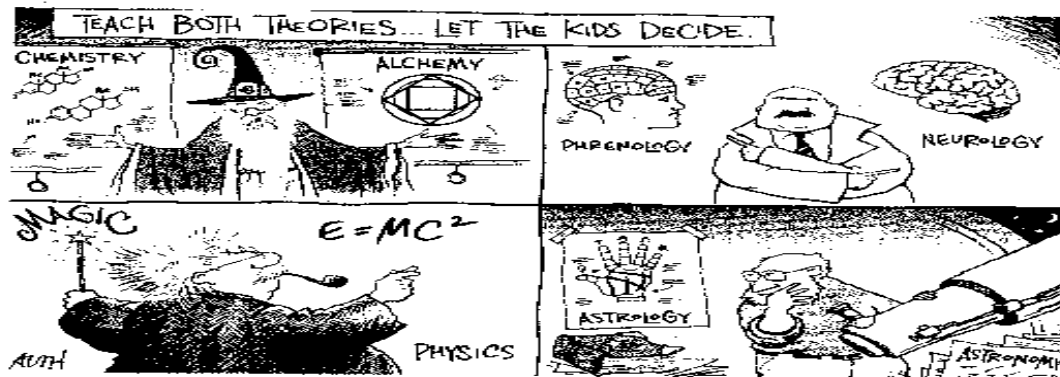
The Editor makes the following comments.

- 1. Without permission and direct instructions to do so, the Editor does not reveal sources. However, most of the information the Editor gleaned was from the SGA minutes of the "Student Forum" that was conducted at Erskine on Friday, May 8.**
- 2. The Editor has seen Dr. Crenshaw's *Mirror* article. Not bad, if you think Erskine College should be about "Recruiting Devil's Advocates" and uncritical celebrations of 1950's-era positivism!**
- 3. The fact that "many" students and faculty affirmed Dr. Crenshaw's "speech" at the "Student Forum" is indicative of the Erskine dilemma for the ARP Church. Dr. Crenshaw does not equivocate on NOT being a friend of the ARP Church or Evangelical Christianity in general. Dr. Crenshaw does not equivocate on being opposed to the Erskine Mission.**

There is one other point that the Editor needs to make: Dr. Crenshaw's outrage at the Editor's remarks in *ARPTalk(16)* is a bit excessive.

The following story involving Dr. Crenshaw is well documented and well known on the Erskine campus, but it has not been spoken of in ARPdom. And in case someone wants to know, not a word of this story comes from Dr. David Reiter.

Dr. David Reiter, Professor of Philosophy, taught a course on Atheism during the January term this year. On Friday, January 23, 2009, Dr. Reiter and his students discovered in their classroom a number of photocopies of a derisive comic strip comparing creationism and Intelligent Design to the pseudo-sciences of the past. Below is a copy of the comic strip.



On Monday, January 26, 2009, Dr. Reiter found taped to his office door a parody of the Christian symbol of the fish. The fish contained the word "EVOLVE" within it and the fish had feet, one of which was holding a wrench. Obviously, the comic strip and the "evolve fish" symbol were intended to be derisive mockeries of Christianity and creationists.

The suspicion was that this was the work of a disturbed student. However, on Tuesday, January 27, 2009, Dr. Crenshaw indicated to Dr. Reiter that he was the one who was responsible for both the comic strip and the "evolve fish." According to sources, Dr.

Crenshaw did not offer an apology to Dr. Reiter or his class for his sophomoric prank.

In spite of the fact that Dr. Crenshaw invaded the domain of a colleague and disrespected that colleague, Dr. Reiter did not pursue the matter any further. Nevertheless, the matter did come before the Erskine Administration. Whatever the institutional actions were, there are two BIG questions left outstanding.

Here are those two questions: (1) If a colleague had disrespected Dr. Crenshaw in the manner than he disrespected Dr. Reiter, what would Dr. Crenshaw have done? Is there any doubt? (2) If the comic strip and cartoon had been about a "black" or a "Jew" or a "woman" or a "homosexual," no doubt (and rightly so) there would have been loud cries of racism or anti-Semitism or misogyny or homophobia. Well, does this mean that Christian-bashing, to the point of mocking not only beliefs but also hallowed religious symbols, is now appropriate at Erskine? Would Erskine respond with the same studied indifference to the public trashing of a Menorah or the Koran? Does this mean that Evangelical-bashing is now accepted at Erskine? Does this mean that Intelligent Design-bashing is now appropriate at Erskine? Why no outcry from the Erskine academic community?

The Editor has friends who teach at Clemson University. The Editor asked them what would have happened if a Professor disrespected another Professor in the manner that Dr Crenshaw did Dr. Reiter. The response: "In all probability a matter such as this would have ended in disciplinary action against the perpetrator of the prank. This is a serious violation of academic freedom!" (Editor's emphasis).

Charles W. Wilson

~Scroll down for the next article, *ARPTalk(17.2)*~

EVANGELICAL OR HOMOPHOBIC?

The words “evangelical” and “homophobic” are two words that get bantered around a lot nowadays in both the religious and secular worlds. Definitions are important. For the sake of clarity, in this article, “evangelical” and “homophobic” are defined in the following manner:

- ❑ **EVANGELICAL** – “Evangelical” is a theological term. In this article an Evangelical is a Protestant Christian who affirms the following about the Christian Faith: (1) the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead; (2) the inerrancy of the Bible; (3) creation by a direct act of God; (4) the virgin birth; (5) the deity of Christ; (6) the resurrection of Christ from the tomb; (7) the miracles of the Bible; (8) the sinful nature of man apart from God; (9) salvation by grace through faith in Christ; (7) the reality of both heaven and hell; and (10) the Second Coming of Christ in power and glory. In others words, historically, the Evangelical is one who affirms the cardinal doctrines of the Bible in contradistinction to those who either deny or redefine these doctrines.
- ❑ **HOMOPHOBIA** – “Homophobia” is a sociological term that was originally coined by pro-homosexual advocates to disparage traditional heterosexual marriage advocates. This definition of homophobia at its core is pejorative. Sadly, the word has stuck in the language of our culture. Therefore, in common usage, the word has come to mean “those who fear homosexuality and, therefore, are opposed to homosexuality”—whatever the reason. In this article, “homophobia” is used to describe those who oppose homosexual behavior for cultural or personal preference reasons rather than for explicitly religious or theological considerations.

PC(USA) conservatives often identify themselves as “Evangelical.” Now that the “ordination of practicing homosexuals to the ministry” issue has become bitterly divisive and many churches have withdrawn from the PC(USA) (mainly to the EPC) or are in the process of attempting to withdraw, a question must be asked: Are these PC(USA) conservatives Evangelicals or simply social conservatives and, therefore, if simply social conservatives, homophobic?

It is the opinion of the Editor of *ARPTalk* that a good many of these PC(USA) conservatives are not Evangelical but social conservatives and homophobic. In other words, they are more concerned for social issues than they are concerned for theological issues. Consider the following:

- When the PC(USA) expanded its view of God to include ideas other than Trinitarianism, the PC(USA) conservatives were able to accommodate themselves to that and stayed in the denomination.**
- When the PC(USA) allowed ministers to reject the deity of Christ, the PC(USA) conservative were able to accommodate themselves to that and stayed in the denomination.**
- When the PC(USA) rejected the inerrancy of the Bible, the PC(USA) conservative were able to accommodate themselves to that and stayed in the denomination.**
- When the PC(USA) conservative watched the central tenets of historic Christianity being eviscerated from the theological fabric of the PC(USA), the PC(USA) conservatives were able to accommodate themselves to that and stayed in the denomination.**

Why has the homosexual issue become so significant that they are willing to “split the church?” They are now willing to violating their own sacred motto: “Schism is worse than heresy!” Why the homosexual issue? Certainly, it’s not because many of the PC(USA) conservatives are Biblical Evangelicals. In the past, they have demonstrated that they are not. Most of the faithful, Biblical Evangelicals left long ago. These pseudo-evangelicals, who have demonstrated a tolerance to abide the theological despicable, are withdrawing from the PC(USA) because they are social conservatives. The issue is social and not theological. They are homophobic.

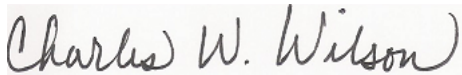
The Editor makes these distinctions because the Executive Vice-President of Erskine Theological Seminary, Dr. H. Neely Gaston, has, on more than one occasion, stated that the PC(USA) conservatives are Evangelicals who are “just like us.” NO THEY ARE NOT!!!

One supposes that Dr. Gaston says this because he is trying to drag ETS in the direction of the PC(USA) conservatives in order to find a new source of students for the seminary. This, however, portends danger for both the seminary and the ARP Church.

We in the ARP Church are Evangelical. We oppose homosexual practices, marriage, and ordination in the church, not because we are social conservatives, but because we are Bible-believing Christians. Our opposition to the homosexual culture that would engulf American civilization is theologically principled.

Let us in the ARPC rejoice in and encourage those PC(USA) conservatives who are withdrawing from an apostate denomination. We can hope that in a fairer land they will reconsider their theological foundation and indeed become more consistent Evangelicals. But, until that day, let us in the ARP Church be very wary of them. Today, coherent Evangelicals they are not! To use Biblical language, they are a "mixed multitude." The "mixed multitude" caused Israel to stumble.

These are my thoughts,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles W. Wilson". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a large initial 'C' and 'W'.

Charles W. Wilson

[~Scroll down for the next article, ARPTalk\(17.2\)~](#)

AN OLD VISION FOR ERSKINE

Is there a vision for Erskine that combines authentic Christian faith and excellence in learning? Is there a vision for Erskine that is both decidedly Evangelical and aggressively academic? Is there a vision for Erskine that draws EC/ETS in a relationship of unity?

Dr. Randy Ruble, Erskine President, does not seem to have a stated vision that he has written out and published. Such a document cannot be found in the archives of the Erskine website. The vision that Dr. Ruble seems to have advocated is the revitalization of the football program and, in these difficult economic times, football is not going to happen.

However, a search of the archives of the Erskine website does reveal a vision statement for Erskine that promotes both authentic Evangelical Christian faith and excellence in learning and academic pursuit and a dynamic relationship with the ARP Church: <http://www.erskine.edu/news/carson/comments.html>.

This is the vision statement of former President Dr. John Carson. Certainly, we can debate Dr. Carson's implementation of his vision statement; however, no one can deny the compelling validity of his vision statement and the overwhelming approval that his vision statement was given by the General Synod. Indeed, Dr. Carson's statement still contains the aspirations of the General Synod for Erskine.

Why the present Administration has abandoned Dr. Carson's vision statement for Erskine is both a mystery and disturbing.

It seems that the present Administration has washed out Dr. Carson's vision statement in the same way their water hoses washed out the criticism that Erskine students wrote on the sidewalks of Erskine calling for the Administration's loyalty to the Erskine Mission.

Time passes and we easily forget. Below is a copy of Dr. Carson's mission statement. Erskine needs to return to a past that sought Evangelical faith combined with excellence in learning and loyalty to the ARP Church.

Text from Dr. John Carson's comments to Erskine College faculty and staff
May 21, 1998

Why A Christian Liberal Arts Education?

· I am here today to ask you to give something to Erskine College and Seminary. I am asking you to give your time, your money, your students, your sons and daughters, your gifted teachers and administrators, your wise and resourceful leaders, your kind words, your constructive criticism, your interest and concern, your moral support, and most of all your prayers. Most of you have already given, some of you sacrificially. I begin by thanking you for what you have given in the past. Without you Erskine would not be here today.

· I apologize for asking you to give even more today. This apology, however, is not the kind which says I am sorry for doing something, as in the contemporary meaning of *apology*. No, I am not sorry for asking you to give to Erskine College and Seminary, I am not apologizing in that sense of the word. I am apologizing in the older Greek meaning of the word, where I speak of false charges and give a rational defense for my appeal. If you are to continue to give sacrificially to Erskine I need to tell you why this is an important investment, why it is crucial for Erskine to have your contribution. You know as well as I do that Erskine costs more than state supported institutions. There are any number of institutions of higher education where you could get off cheaper, and everyone knows it. Erskine costs more money, true; but Erskine also costs more in a number of other important ways. It costs faculty members more to teach in such an institution, students to learn in such an environment, alumni and trustees to support such an enterprise. I am going to tell you that it cost more in every sense of the word, yet the expense is justified, and more - it is essential to what God is doing in the world and in the lives of young men and women. I am telling you that what we do at Erskine is so important that I am not ashamed to ask you to do more.

5 Reasons for a Christian liberal arts education.

When asked by the Search Committee what my number one objective would be as President of Erskine College and Seminary, I did not bat an eye. Erskine needs to get all of its constituencies working off of the same page. Its mission is too valuable and its life is too fragile to have competing forces pulling it in different directions. This one vision casting message will be preached to every constituency - trustees,

administrators, faculty, students, parents, friends, donors, ministers and members of churches. Erskine will not be all things to all people. This vision is not new - The Philosophy of Christian Higher Education and the Definition of an Evangelical were adopted 21 years ago by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Board of Trustees of Erskine College and several years ago in its Mission. I do not intend to add anything new - not one new straw on the backs of faculty or staff or students; but I do intend to be consistent in making this vision a reality. Erskine College will be by God's grace what it has been called to be- a Christian Liberal Arts College open to all students. Erskine Seminary likewise will be what God has called it to be - a professional school for ministers unashamed of its Reformed heritage but open to all Christian students.

·Here are the 5 reasons for a Christian Liberal Arts Education.

1. The Creator God Commands It.

CREATION. ORIGIN - Where do we come from?

a. God is the author of Creation.

Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

By faith we believe that God created the world and all that is in it. God is the author of all of life. All truth is God's truth. While there is no such things as Christian math or Christian biology, neither is there autonomous math or autonomous biology. All truth comes from God.

b. The creation pictures its Creator.

Romans 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

The creation is one primary means through which God makes Himself known to people. Who God is and what He is like is revealed through the natural world. Every person who has a heart to know God will delight in being a diligent student of the world.

c. You are made in God's image - Gen. 1:27

Genesis 1:27 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

God made human beings in His own image and gave them power and authority like His own. Human beings were created with the capacity to think God's thoughts after Him and to apply that knowledge as His vice-regents over all the earth.

d. Fulfilling God's cultural mandate requires knowledge.

Genesis 1:28 *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

Genesis 2:19 *Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.*

God commanded our first parents to procreate life as well as to subdue and exercise dominion over all of His creation. Herein lies an awesome academic challenge and responsibility. Knowing about the creation is a prerequisite to subduing and ruling it. God also commanded Adam to name the animals. Naming presupposes knowing.¹ Adam's intellectual capacity to discern the characteristics of each animal and to name each accordingly constituted an important aspect of his God given superiority over the animal kingdom.

· Our Creator God commands the pursuit of Academic Freedom.

The world - including human beings themselves - is the field of knowledge which students and teachers are commanded by God not merely to learn about but to improve and guide. Christian Higher Education has the God given responsibility to investigate, experiment and question. Furthermore, all truth is God's truth. The Christian teacher and student are not restricted in their academic pursuits because they fear they may discover some data which will discredit God or contradict His Word. Quite the opposite. God commands and encourages them to search extensively and question exhaustively - always pressing for greater detail and wider explanations. This is one of the reasons God made us and this is what He commands students and teachers to do!

Academic Freedom is for both professor and student. Although I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, I also taught my students in Systematic Theology at Erskine Seminary the most succinct, penetrating critique of that position I could find. Howard Marshall's *Biblical Inspiration*. I wanted my students' view of Scripture to be not merely the party line of the ARPC but a doctrine they were committed to on the basis of their own investigation. One of the greatest compliments I ever received as a professor came at the end of a lecture on written revelation. A student from another denomination was baffled that I could teach Marshall's view that infallibility does not require inerrancy when I revealed my own position at the end of the lecture. I guess he expected me to make a caricature of the opposing position or to reach out for something so radical it was off the charts - like Robert Funk's Jesus Seminar with its red, pink, gray and black marbles. Instead I took the best critic with the most devastating attack of my position. I taught both *inerrancy* and Howard Marshall's *infallibility*.

Should *evolution* be taught at Erskine College? Of course, it is the prevailing view in the academic world. To ignore it or caricature it would be to stick one's head in the sand. Should the most penetrating, devastating critique of evolution be taught as well. Absolutely. I hope - and I can only say I hope because professors not presidents teach courses - but I hope that science professors would also teach Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. This Lehigh professor's compelling presentation of the irreducible complexity of the Lilliputian world of biochemistry has been reviewed in over 60 scientific journals. Academic freedom argues strongly for its consideration. Fear of contradiction and paranoia can inhabit the left of the secular university as well as the right of the Bible College. Academic Freedom in a Christian liberal arts college seeks the middle way between the license of the left and the legalism of the right. Academic excellence comes from rigorous intellectual exchanges in the marketplace of ideas - on a level playing field with no quarter given. No one with confidence in God and belief in His creation need ever fear looking through a microscope or a telescope with an inquiring mind. Do I believe in evolution? No, I think it will pass from the scene in my lifetime. Will creationism supersede it? I seriously doubt it. I believe this not because of any scientific conclusions. I am not a scientist - but because of my observations concerning the history of thought, I am a historian. Evolution is a product of philosophical naturalism. Darwin's conclusions in the realm of biology followed the same modern stream of thought as those of Hegel, Fierbach, Freud, Marx and Durkheim. In the history of thought ideas come and go. In this post-modern era in which we live, it is merely a matter of time before evolution has run its course and something else rises in its place.

Q. Why is Academic Freedom emphasized at Erskine College and Seminary?

A. Because Erskine students can have confidence in their creator God, they are equipped to explore courageously every aspect of creation, every field of knowledge, and every avenue of learning.

2. The Fallen World Needs It.

FALL. PROBLEM - What went wrong?

a. Evil spiritual forces distort and deceive God's creation.

Ephesians 6:11-12*Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

The Prince of Darkness comes into the world to beguile and subvert. Christians must be vigilant in exposing lies that pass as truth, darkness that masquerades as light, and evil that poses as good.

b. The field of knowledge has been devastated.

Genesis 3:17-19 *To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."*

Sin brought catastrophic results upon the world. God's good creation is now marred by disease, disaster, devastation and death - not least of which is violence, pollution and every form of inhumanity perpetrated by individuals and nations.

c. Human judgment has been perverted.

Romans 1:21 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

Our first parents' fall into sin has affected human perception and discernment. People twist and contort what they know, neither judging nor interpreting correctly.

· Our fallen world for **Critical Thinking and Investigation**.

Christian faculty and students must search out and expose every form of wrongdoing, seek the cause and cure of disease and devastation, and question theories and motives - not merely those of others but their own. Christian students and teachers must be wary - sin has warped the world and all its people.

Q. Why is Critical Thinking and Investigation emphasized at Erskine College and Seminary?

A. Because Erskine students are aware of the distorted nature of our world and its inhabitants, they are prepared to ask questions, have a healthy suspicion of motives, confront deception and solve problems.

3. *The Savior Embodies It.*

RECREATION. SOLUTION - What is the answer?

a. God the Son came personally to recreate the world from inside out.

Philippians 2:5-11 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became*

obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is God's solution to the world's problems. God did not give up on His creation after it was marred by sin. Neither did He offer a detached answer from on high. God came Himself in the person of the Son to recreate the world. He humbled Himself by leaving heaven, obeyed His Father by becoming a servant, sacrificed His own life, in hope abandoned His cause to the will of the Father, and ultimately was exalted not by Himself but by God.

b. God the Son became a human being - One inseparably united with creation.

John 1:1, 14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

In the incarnation God the Son who is eternal Spirit was joined with a material body - the Creator became a part of His creation. He became like one of us in order to show us the Father and to solve the problem of our sin from inside out. Christ engaged sin and corruptions personally.

c. All knowledge converges in Christ.

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

1 Corinthians 8:6 *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*

Colossians 1:7 *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Jesus Christ did not come merely to give us an example. Neither did He come only to seek after or reveal the truth. He came as the Truth. Jesus is the touchstone of all Truth - all Truth is inherent and coherent in Him. All of life's questions find their ultimate answer in relationship to Jesus Christ. Students and teachers must not only trace down every fruitful avenue of thought, ultimately they must relate all findings back to the Touchstone.

· Our Savior embodies the true picture of **Servant Leadership**.

Christ's attitude is the finest example which can be placed before a scholar.

Academic excellence is marked by humility before the questions of life, obedience to

the rules of research and evidence, sacrifice of all other priorities for the pursuit of truth, in hope subjecting one's own theories and prejudices to the objectivity of truth and knowledge, and trusting others - not yourself - to recognize and vindicate the value of your work. All who seek a graduate or under-graduate degree must experience this.

Q. Why is Servant Leadership emphasized at Erskine College and Seminary?

A. Because Erskine students have the One who is both the Truth and the servant of the Truth set before them, they understand how to know and serve the Truth in the world, as well as in the church.

4. *The Spirit Today Enables It.*

TODAY. INTERIM - How do we implement the solution?

a. TODAY marks the period between Christ's first and second comings.

Hebrews 3:13 *Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

All the days between Christ's coming to initiate His Kingdom and His return to consummate it are called TODAY. During this interim, believers must help one another remain faithful.

b. During this interim, the Holy Spirit leads Christians into all truth.

John 16:13 *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.*

While it is still TODAY, believers witness to others by the power of the Holy Spirit as they undertake God's work in the world. During this time the Holy Spirit applies Christ's benefits to believers and - through them - to others.

c. The Holy Spirit enables believers to do what Christ did in the world.

John 14:12 *I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

Instead of providing the *quick fix* for the world which Christ's apostles wanted (Acts 6:1) and many of His disciples still want, God equips His people with His Spirit and gives them the experience of working with Him in His recreative work. God works through people to implement His solution to the world's needs.

· The Spirit today enables a Christian Liberal Arts Education.

Jesus was a student of the world around Him. In this sense, He was a liberally educated man. He knew the characteristics of the flowers of the field, the meaning of a red sky, the habits of birds and other creatures. He observed the work habits and economic realities of soldiers, farmers, fishermen, and tax-collectors. He apprehended the cultural distinctives of Israelites, Samaritans, Greeks and Romans. He knew how present and past events affected the world of His day. His knowledge covered much of today's liberal arts curriculum - botany and zoology, sociology and psychology, economics and business, history and government.

Furthermore, He used this liberal education in His ministry. He met people where they were and redirected their thoughts through His knowledge of the world. Although He was divine, much of the material in His teaching and the insights in His conversations came from what may be known by any other human student of the world.

However, He was not content merely to know. He compassionately applied His liberal knowledge. He touched oozing sores, dead corpses and social outcasts. He confronted corruption, hypocrisy and lifeless tradition. He pointed others above and beyond the shallow existence of their day to a rich, meaningful life through faith in God. He applied this knowledge to bring hope and comfort to men and women not merely for their day but for eternity. In Him, Christian commitment and academic excellence interpenetrated one another perfectly - the liberal arts came into their own.

Jesus did many great works while He was here on earth. His promise to His followers, however, is that they will do even greater works than these. While it is difficult to imagine what works of His followers could be greater in kind, certainly by the power of the Holy Spirit these works may be greater in number. The Holy Spirit works through Christian scholars TODAY in arriving at and implementing godly solutions to life's ills for the benefit of others and for God's glory. No greater witness can be given to Christ, no greater service can be given to the world - than faithfully bringing together Christian commitment and academic excellence as He did.

Q. Why is a Christian Liberal Arts Education necessary in today's world?

A. Because Erskine students are students of the world, they can by God's grace apply this knowledge for His glory of God and the welfare of others.

5. *The Consummation Anticipates It.*

CONSUMMATION. GOAL - What will the end look like?

a. The Kingdom is *already* here but *not yet* fully manifest.

Matthew 13:33 *The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.*

Although the Holy Spirit is presently at work and the things of Christ's kingdom are already being implemented, God will not leave the world in its present, unfinished state. Christ will return to bring all things to a wonderful conclusion.

b. The Bible gives glimpses of the joy and perfection yet to come.

Revelation 21:1-2 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

The Bible's pictures of the consummation are mere snapshots - a righteous victory, a final judgment, a glorious worship service, a holy city, a beautiful bride, a perfect kingdom, a joyous wedding feast. Although the information is scant, these significant aspects of God's ultimate goal provide the direction for our penultimate goals.

c. Human beings - and all creation - long for God's future.

Romans 8:22-23 *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

Amid the dust and decay of our day, "the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1) sounds very refreshing - not only to Christian, but to everyone.

· The Consummation gives the ultimate **Godly Vision** of the penultimate possibilities for Today.

Christian Higher Education must work for pure cities, righteous rule, just judgments, joyous celebrations, and perfect kingdoms. Such work anticipates God's future goal for His creation. The fact that God's kingdom will come only at Christ's return - and not by our own efforts - does not diminish the fact that much practical and spiritual good can be done by working toward such ends. Jesus' command to "be perfect . . . as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48) is neither nullified nor diminished by the fact that you will not be able to accomplish it perfectly. A powerful testimony for Christ will be made when professors and students, motivated by a strong desire for redemption, strive for the great vision which anticipates it.²

Q. Why is **Godly Vision** needed at Erskine College and Seminary?

A. Because Erskine students are shown the worthy goals of life, they are aware of the direction they must pursue in their respective careers.

CONCLUSION. Why an Erskine education and not some alternative?

· What advantage does an Erskine education have over one from [1] a secular university, [2] a Bible College, or [3] a traditional church-affiliated college? At Erskine, Christian commitment interpenetrates academic excellence in a way which is neither artificial nor contrived.

[1] At a secular university, students may sit at the feet of brilliant teachers and find Christian nurture in a campus group. Most likely, however, academics will be taught from the perspective of philosophical naturalism - a purely horizontal approach in which God's activity in the world is not considered. Questions about *origin, problem, solution, interim* and *goal* are answered from a purely horizontal perspective. For example, Marxism - a political and economic ideology produced by philosophical naturalism answers these questions according to dialectic materialism: *origin* (guilds master craftsmen and apprentices working together), *problem* (capitalism - unfair control of the means of production), *solution* (revolution of the masses), *interim* (the dictatorship of the proletariat), and *goal* (a classless society). Although Marxism is an extreme case, it demonstrates that a purely horizontal approach to education produces fatal errors and disastrous consequences because of its erroneous philosophical assumption. The theological premise of naturalism is that God does not exist. Christians who study in the educational environment of philosophical naturalism may believe that God exists, but they may not be aware of their underlying educational assumption - His existence has no relevance for the world.

[2] At a Bible College, students may receive excellent training for a Christian vocation. The focus of that education, however, is on developing Christian disciplines and may preclude an intensive and extensive examination of the world. A subtle assumption that the sacred takes precedence over the secular may curtail critical examination of all relevant data and theories. Suspicion may surround anyone who dares to ask questions or express views which potentially undermine cherished theological commitments. Christians who study in this environment may assume wrongly that what they find in the laboratory or the library could overturn Biblical truth or deny God. This displays a lack of confidence in God and the Bible - both have withstood academic challenges, new theories and the blasts of unbelief for centuries.

[3] At a traditional church-affiliated college, students may attend wonderful classes in both religion and the liberal arts. Each of these, however, stands alone and no attempt is made to see the inter-relation between them. Students are left on their own to discover the implications each has for the other.

· At Erskine College, students attend wonderful classes in both religion and the liberal arts - but they are also challenged to see ways in which Christian commitment and academic excellence come together. Body, mind and spirit, though distinguishable - are inseparable both in life and in education. At Erskine we believe in educating the whole person as a whole person. Christian commitment interpenetrates academic excellence in a way which is neither artificial nor contrived.

ILLUSTRATION. Nazi Medical Experiments

· One of the members of the Presidential Search Committee posed this hypothetical scenario. Once upon a time there was a professor of organic chemistry at Erskine who was zealous for his subject and his students. He started class 5 minutes early. He kept the students until after the bell rang. Every moment in the classroom and every moment in the laboratory was devoted to instruction he believed to be crucial in order for his student to be proficient in organic chemistry. That professor also attended church regularly - even prayer meeting on Wednesday night, taught his children the catechism and conducted his life morally. In other words, the professor had a zealous commitment both to organic chemistry and to Christianity - but he kept these commitments in separate compartments. Is this the kind of professor Erskine wants?

· My answer is, "While that is a good beginning, Erskine will not be content with this." Let me tell you why. I will use the example of organic chemistry because that is the example the questioner used; but similar illustrations could be found for history, literature, foreign languages, and every other academic discipline. The only thing I know about organic chemistry is that it causes a lot of pre-med students to change their major.

· Do you know where some of the best organic chemistry professors were over a half century ago? They were in the universities in Germany and they were the professors who taught the doctors of the Third Reich, doctors like Josef Mengele - a brilliant student in the classroom and technically excellent in the laboratory. Yet, in Hitler's Germany he performed some of the most atrocious experiments imaginable on his fellow human beings. One series of experiments which Dr. Josef Mengele performed was with twins in whom he would inject one with a deadly virus, and after that twin died, kill the other to compare organ tissue at autopsy.

· As crucial as all the material is which may be studied in organic chemistry, I wonder if Josef Mengele's professor could not have spared 5 minutes at appropriate points in his organic chemistry lectures to pause and reflect on the mystery and wonder of God's creation. Was there not something he could have said - a thought that he could have planted in Josef's mind - that would have kept Josef from using his skill as physician to enact genocide on multitudes of his fellow human beings.

· I wonder if Josef Mengele's professor could not have taken 5 minutes now and then to walk into the laboratory where Josef was gazing intently at a slide of tissue under his microscope and reflect on the sanctity of human life - life so holy and valuable to God that He sent His only begotten Son to be joined with it and give His life for it. Could such a small but constant reminder from his professor have kept Josef Mengele from his experiments?

· German Christians were great at compartmentalization. They could come from their churches humming "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," and go straightway into their hospitals to perform all manner of hideous, unspeakable atrocities on their fellow human beings. Somehow the church was in one compartment and the world was in a separate compartment with a great wall of separation between them. Christian commitment was within the walls of the sanctuary and academic excellence within the walls of the laboratory - and never the twain did meet.

· Is there another Josef Mengele in a classroom somewhere in America today? Could the integration of Christian commitment and academic excellence make a difference in such a person? Does not such a student need to be in a classroom or a laboratory at Erskine College where professors bring science and values together? Our society is losing its balance on the slippery slope of human experimentation. Doctors as well as research scientists are frequently confronting the choice between what is possible and what is prudent - whether it be fetal tissue transplantation, euthanasia, or cloning.

· As important as every minute of instruction in every course is to every professor, what could be more important than teaching students to reflect wisely on how Christian commitment impacts each academic discipline? This is the kind of classroom experience we must strive for at Erskine. Can we afford to do otherwise and be true to our mission?

· Every day in news reports we learn of the moral and ethical bankruptcy of professionals - insider trading, woefully deficient standards of practice in health care, not to mention fraud. Most of the time the individuals involved are well trained and technically proficient - they passed their medical boards, bar and CPA examinations - but they cannot pass the tests of life. Our world desperately needs professionals who have been prepared to integrate Christian commitment and excellence in learning. This is the mission of Erskine College and Seminary, and this is the direction we will take.

¹ Keil & Delitzsch, I, 88, "by bringing the beasts (God) gives (Adam) an opportunity of developing that intellectual capacity which constitutes his superiority to the animal world."

² 6. *The Secret Purposes of God (Mysteries) Disclose It.* a thought which needs further development

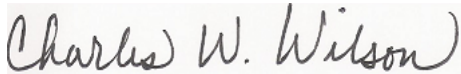
ETERNITY. SECRET PURPOSESWhat is God doing in all of this?

· Scripture contains a limited number of hints at the mysterious inner-workings of divine providence. One of God's revealed mysteries is that He has broken down the wall of partition between people and is uniting them as one in Christ. Another is that He will return at a time no one will suspect. Where the mysteries are revealed, the academic community must take the lead in being a people who are faithful in such things as [1] bringing unity to all people in Christ and [2] vigilance.

· The true humility of an Open Mind.

May God grant that the ARP Church and Erskine see the renewal of this statement! In the words of the 1980s movie: 'BACK TO THE FUTURE.'

These are my thoughts,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles W. Wilson". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a large initial 'C'.

Charles W. Wilson

~Thank you for reading *ARPTalk(17)*~