

ARPTalk (18)

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May 28, 2009



ARPTalk(18.1)

LETTERS AND NEWS

(18.1.1)

Letter from Peter G. Rambo, Sr. Pastor, New Hope ARP Church

Dear Editor and Associate Reformed Presbyterians,

I am perplexed by Drs. H. Neely Gaston's and Richard Burnett's letter that was recently posted on "Erskine Action" and ARPTalk. What has become painfully obvious is the ABOUT FACE, change of direction that we are seeing take place in our ministerial training institution. Three things from Drs. Gaston and Burnett's correspondence cut deep to my heart. First, Gaston is not in the least apologetic or cautious about the theological position of his professors. This is extremely disturbing. Rev. Gaston was ordained to be a "watchman" over the flock when he placed himself under the authoritative bonds of the ARP Synod, the Standards, and our position on the Bible. Now Rev. Gaston defends what we DO NOT AFFIRM in any way. Is Rev. Gaston using Erskine Seminary to push an agenda against the ARP Church's position on inerrancy? If he is, we must now take action against him.

Secondly, Dr. Richard Burnett and Erskine College and Seminary's Administration note "how disturbing these endless charges and character assassinations have been to our seminary community, and not least of all to our ARP students. Several have come to me and expressed grave concerns about the ARP and their future in it in light of all that has happened (and not happened) recently. I have reminded them that every denomination has its problems and that it sometimes takes time for such things to work out." WOW! If this does not gravely concern our hearts, then what

will? This letter indicates that because many within the ARP, who simply wish to hold Erskine College and Seminary accountable to our Standards and position on Biblical authority, ARP students have become concerned with the direction of their denomination. Either this is an admission that some Erskine Seminary's faculty is pushing our students away from our position on Biblical authority, or that ARP students will be ill-prepared to pass licensure and ordination exams. Beyond this, it certainly appears to be an assertion that the ARP will work out its problems with Biblical authority. Such an aggressive assertion of defiance against what the ARP values angers and disappoints me that our students—our future as a denomination—do not have men who can honestly and without disingenuousness submit to the Standards and position of inerrancy of the ARP Synod. Indeed, we have in Dr. Burnett a terrible role-model for our young men preparing for Biblical, gospel ministry.

Thirdly, Dr. Burnett indicated that he has “not changed” his “views regarding Holy Scripture since being recruited’ by Dr. John Carson and appearing before the Board of Trustees in the spring of 2002.” Is Dr. Burnett saying that Dr. Carson betrayed his denomination, instead of promoting a firm foundation of biblical authority? Or, is Dr. Burnett trying to drag Dr. Carson's name—who advocates biblical inerrancy—into this argument. Again, whatever Dr. Burnett and Rev. Gaston are doing, this political dance needs to stop now. Erskine must firmly uphold the doctrinal Standards and spiritual prerogatives of the ARP Church and not the academic/ecclesiastical inclinations of a few who wish to unsettle the peace and purity of a solidly Evangelically Reformed denomination.

Finally, should we interpret absence of Dr. Ruble and the Board of Trustees in such discussions as an affirmation that Erskine is moving in a left-ward direction?

Fathers and Brothers in Christ, we need to clean up what has quickly become an untidy house. We need to pass the memorial for First Presbytery that calls for a Commission to investigate this mess. We also need to give that Commission full power to do whatever is necessary to restore Erskine Seminary to the ARP Church.

In Christ,

Peter G. Rambo, Sr.

Pastor, New Hope ARP Church, Blackstock, SC

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(18.1.2)

Letter from Erskine Alumnae Miss Tré Wylie

Editor's Comments: At Miss Wylie's request, the Editor has edited her letter. The two edits are obvious.



May 19, 2009

Board of Trustees
Erskine College
Due West, SC 29639

Dear members of the Board of Trustees:

My name is Tiffany (Tre) Wylie. I am a graduate of Erskine College, class of 2003 with a Bachelor's of Arts in Social Studies and a Minor in Secondary Education. For the past four years, I have served [as an English teacher overseas]. During my tenure [overseas], I have earned a Master's degree in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from Azusa Pacific University. I returned home in February to have knee surgery. Since my return, I have heard disturbing rumors about Erskine from current students, fellow alumni, and others outside of the Erskine family. I am concerned about the direction of Erskine College if these rumors prove to be true. Below are some of the rumors that have come to my attention. These rumors, whether true or false, can damage the reputation of the school and should be investigated.

1. There is a current attempt to change the mission statement of Erskine College in order to secularize Erskine College to increase student enrollment.
2. There is a desire to separate Erskine College from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and tradition.
3. The Vice President of Enrollment is seeking to change the prospective student demographics to target and increase recruitment of more secular students and decrease recruitment of Christian students.
4. There is an attempt to remove questions pertaining to faith or religious beliefs from the Presidential Scholarship interviews.
5. There has been an active attempt by some in the administration to discourage students from attending the Due West A.R.P Church.

Erskine College, as a Christian institution, has an opportunity and responsibility to set itself apart from and counter the secularism and relativism that is pervasive in American culture today, particularly in higher education. According to the mission and purpose statements, all subjects should be taught from a Christian worldview. Students should learn how to incorporate their faith into their respective field of study, and should be taught how to recognize philosophies, ideologies, and religious beliefs that contradict Christianity to teach them how to counter these contradicting belief systems and live as salt and light among the nations. Students ought to be equipped for life-long ministry and service as servants of the Most High God, no matter what field they enter once they leave Erskine.

Many current students have voiced their dismay with the failure of Erskine College to implement this mission statement. In his article, which appeared in *The Mirror* and *ARP Talk*, entitled *To the College of Laodicea*, Daniel Stephens comments,

Here at Erskine we are hearing that we have money, admissions, and retention problems . . . students arrive with a perception of the college that is not accurate at all. Once they find out that Erskine is, in reality, quite different from what they were sold on, they become dissatisfied and frustrated. Some feel lied to, some let down, some attempt to change the institution to what they were originally told it was. If this scenario was the fault of the students, we should expect to see just a couple leave each semester of their freshmen year. However, this is not the case as we all know. The students are not mistaken, they are deceived.

This is an alarming statement as to the portrayal of Erskine College. Prospective students are told that Erskine is a Christian college and that they will receive faith-based education centered on the person of Jesus Christ. However, according to current students, this is not completely true. The fact that current students have begun in various ways to voice their concerns and opinions about the present status of Erskine College must give everyone reason to question the direction and goals of the current administration. On Saturday, April 25, students organized themselves and proceeded to carry out what has been coined a “Moonlight Revolution”. Students, using Martin Luther’s *95 Thesis* as their inspiration, used sidewalk chalk to write their complaints and opinions about Erskine College and its administration on the sidewalks of the campus. The following is a list of student complaints that I find relevant and disturbing:

- The administration refuses to integrate faith and learning
- Dr. Ruble is not willing to take any strong theological positions
- The Admissions Office tries to compete head-to-head with larger secular schools like Furman rather than implementing and selling the mission of Erskine as a distinctively Christian liberal arts college
- The ARP Church does not support Christian students by demanding accountability of Erskine’s leadership
- Question: Why does the Admissions Office discourage any talk about Christ with prospective students?
- Why is the Bible ignored at Erskine?
- Where’s the focus on Christ? Please fulfill the mission statement.
- We want actual integration of Faith and Education.
- If you care, please PRAY FOR ERSKINE.
- What happened to Gospel driven at EC?

These complaints are an attempt by concerned students to request those in leadership to fulfill their duty as *servant-leaders* of the college. Christian students are demanding that their leaders provide a Christ-centered education and solid Christian leadership. These students are demanding that their leaders be held accountable to the mission and purpose statements of Erskine College by the Board of Trustees and the Synod. They want what they were told they would get when they made the decision to attend Erskine College. I as an alumna of Erskine College also want accountability and desire that Erskine integrate faith and learning as stated in the mission and purpose statements.

My purpose in drafting this letter is to humbly request that the Board of Trustees and the Synod investigate the rumors and complaints that I have listed and to examine the total program of Erskine College and the use of its resources in all areas of its mission. What is Erskine College currently doing in the field of Christian higher education? Are students presented with Christ and the Christian viewpoint? Are students learning tangible ways to live their lives in right relation to God and man? Is the current direction of Erskine College a direct reflection and extension of the leadership of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church? What can be done to assure that Erskine College implements its mission and purpose statements? What change is needed? Are the members of the Synod, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Directors willing to do what is necessary to ensure that Erskine College is what it claims to be – Christ centered?

In Christ through faith,

Tiffany Wylie

cc: Members of the Synod

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(18.1.3)

Letter from Erskine Alumnus Mr. Daniel Wells in Response to Mr. Carey Whitman's Remarks on "Erskine Action"

Editor's Comments: Below is a letter from Mr. Daniel Wells. Mr. Wells is responding to a letter by Mr. Carey Whitman that is posted on the blog-site of Erskine Theological Seminary. Mr. Whitman's letter may be found at "Erskine Action" (<http://seminary.erskine.edu/blog>). A quick perusal of Mr. Wells' letter reveals that he has read a great deal in the writings of Karl Barth.



A Response to Carey Whitman

By

Daniel F. Wells

It certainly comes as a shock to me that I am writing in *ARPTalk* after I have expressed my displeasure with some of Dr. Wilson's methods of communication to the ARP Church.¹ Yet, I would like to thank my good friend for allowing me this venue to respond to Carey Whitman's recent blog post over at "Erskine Action" (the official blog site of Erskine Theological Seminary)² especially since I may articulate matters in a different matter than Dr. Wilson at points.

¹ Cf. Daniel F. Wells, "What's the Deal with Erskine College," n.p. [cited May 21 2009]. Online: <http://cosmicchrist.blogspot.com/2009/05/whats-deal-with-erskine-college.html>.

² Cf. Carey Whitman, "Karl Barth and my Erskine Seminary Experience," n.p. [cited May 21 2009]. Online: <http://seminary.erskine.edu/blog/?p=142>. Interestingly, Mr. Whitman refers to me as an "RTS student" and not according to my name. I would have preferred to be named since the seminary in which I am enrolled has nothing to do with these matters. In addition, Mr. Whitman noted how I accused Barth of being a "Universalist or a crypto-Universalist." Actually, I noted that G.C. Berkouwer made such an accusation more than 50 years ago. In addition, I do not believe my original article, "A Seminarian's Perspective on Karl Barth, Universalism, and the ARP Church," in *ARPTalk 13* made any accusations concerning Dr. Burnett, Dr. Bush, Neely Gaston, or ETS as a whole. My purpose in writing was only to demonstrate the theological implications of a Barthian trajectory. Mr. Whitman wrote in a comment under his blog

Let me begin by saying how I was intrigued to see Erskine Theological Seminary having two students (Carey Whitman and Jacob Thielman) write on the seminary's blog from two differing perspectives regarding Barth. My intention here is not to interact with Mr. Thielman (though we have gone back and forth in the comments section under his blog post), but I must admit my initial puzzlement. Anyone reading Mr. Thielman would speculate, "Okay. Perhaps some professors are promoting a Barthian trajectory and obviously some students are latching onto it." Yet, Mr. Whitman's writing leads us to the conclusion that Barth is a hard person to find at ETS. I am certainly not suggesting that either of these Christian men is being deceptive, but they are offering markedly different pictures of the ARPC's seminary.

Even if Mr. Thielman didn't reveal his theological leanings, for Mr. Whitman to say, "It is possible, likely even, to attend Erskine and leave knowing Barth in name only," is equally peculiar since Rev. Mark Wright has given his own testimony of a professor being uncritical of controversial aspects of Barth's theology. I am not claiming that Rev. Wright's testimony is definitive, but it does make Mr. Whitman's testimony quite bewildering! If Barth is hard to run across in a typical M.Div program at an evangelical seminary (even for critical reflection) I would believe such would constitute ETS as being "on the verge of creating an anti-intellectual atmosphere which will stifle responsible scholarly inquiry within the ARP Church," rather than demanding confessional accountability to the ARPC's rejection of neo-orthodoxy.³

Mr. Whitman's analogy of Schleiermacher versus Barth is also left me confused (mainly with its logic). After admitting that he had much dialogue (involving criticism, obviously) with the father of modern liberal theology, Mr. Whitman states, "Suppose I were to clamor about stating that Erskine Seminary is under the influence of liberalism because Schleiermacher is taught? That would be analogous to the outcry of the alleged Barthian influence." However, Mr. Whitman doesn't quite understand what Rev. Wilson, Rev. Wright, and many others are "clamoring." Their argument is not that Barth is being taught but rather that Barth is being taught enthusiastically and uncritically and from a stance that is in tension with the position of the ARP Church on Scripture and revelation. Perhaps Mr. Whitman didn't articulate himself as clearly as he would have liked to, but in taking his statements at face value I would have to conclude that his reasoning is off the mark here. I'm glad he would be concerned "if Barth or Berkhof or anyone else were being taught uncritically," but the point being made by Dr. Wilson and others is that all thinkers need to be critiqued according to the theological tradition of the ARPC.⁴

post to me that such is necessary to do before making accusations. I feel that I did do such a thing. I only wish my piece had been read more carefully.

³ As a Bible & Religion and Philosophy double major at Erskine College, I experienced plenty of interaction with Barth. Even my "Philosophy of Religion" class with Dr. David Reiter discussed Barth's view of Scripture as compared to an evangelical viewpoint.

In citing Wikipedia as his main source on Karl Barth since Mr. Whitman admits “complete ignorance” concerning the man, it is implied that since Barth opposed liberalism he must be a friend to conservatives and is not “heresy.” I admit that Barth does not go as far as typical mainline Protestant liberalism on many points. Neo-orthodoxy is closer to evangelical notions of Scripture than much of liberal theology in that Barth and his followers still want to talk about special revelation and the centrality of Jesus Christ. However, the issue with ETS and Barth is the confessional identity of the ARPC. At a host of points (his view of Scripture and revelation, his implicit universalism, his rejection of infant baptism, his rejection of the Westminster concept of election and predestination, his rejection of general revelation, and so on) Barth’s theology stands in dramatic and irreconcilable tension with the confessional standards of the ARP Church. Since the ARPC has decisively rejected Barthianism and neo-orthodoxy, it needs to be examined whether certain professors and/or administrators teach and approve such a thing (including Barth’s rejection of evangelical inerrancy). Since I myself am ignorant of the particular beliefs of some of these individuals in question, I would like to know if they are trichotomistic or whether they are more nuanced in terms of the theological landscape concerning the doctrine of Scripture.⁵

Finally, I would encourage Mr. Whitman to find the time (if he is able) to explore more of these issues. There is no shortage of evangelical literature on the subject.⁶ And as a note to the ARP Synod, I think one issue that Rev. Wilson has not brought up that would be helpful for a study committee to look at regarding Barth’s theology is the contemporary Barthian influence in the so-called “Emergent Church” movement. In reading Rob Bell’s three books this last year I have constantly thought “Barth” when examining Bell’s hermeneutic.

As a concluding thought, does Mr. Whitman or anyone else in the ARPC really want anyone in leadership or employment in any of our denominational agencies or behind an ARPC pulpit to echo with Barth, “[B]ut the vulnerability of the Bible, i.e., its capacity for error, also extends to its religious or theological content... There are obvious and overlapping contradictions –e.g., between the Law and the prophets, between John and the Synoptists, between Paul and James”?⁷ I sure hope not.

⁵ By “trichotomistic” I mean the notion that Barth is the “third way” that is opposed to both fundamentalist biblicism and liberalism. In my interaction so far with Mr. Thielman, I have pointed out that a more nuanced perspective would examine a fourth option, the Westminsterian/Calvinian doctrine of Scripture as articulated by J. Gresham Machen, Geerhardus Vos, John Murray, and Cornelius Van Til (which rejects fundamentalism, liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, yet affirms inerrancy). Current proponents of this perspective today would include J.I. Packer, G.K. Beale, and the ARPC’s own Sinclair Ferguson.

⁶ Cf. G.K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008); Harvie M. Conn, *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, a Challenge, a Debate*, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1.2, 509.

Once again, are these the Barthian sentiments we wish to hear in the pulpits and courts of our Church? The following are the words of Karl Barth:

"The men whom we hear as witnesses speak as fallible, erring men like ourselves. What they say, and what we read as their word, can of itself lay claim to be the Word of God, but never sustain that claim." - CD, I.2, 507

"For within certain limits and therefore relatively they [biblical writers] are all vulnerable and therefore capable of error even in respect of religion and theology." - CD, 1.2, 510

"The prophets and apostles as such, even in their office, even in their function as witnesses, even in the act of writing down their witnesses, were real, historical men as we are, and therefore sinful in their action, and capable and actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word...To the bold postulate, that if their [biblical writers'] word is to be the Word of God they must be inerrant in every word, we oppose the even bolder assertion, that according to the scriptural witness about man, which applies to them too, they can be at fault in any word, and have been at fault in every word, and yet according to the same scriptural witness, being justified and sanctified by grace alone, they have still spoken the Word of God in their fallible and erring human word." - CD, I.2, 529-530

"If God was not ashamed of the fallibility of all human words of the Bible, of their historical and scientific inaccuracies, their theological contradictions, the uncertainty of their tradition, and, above all, their Judaism, but adopted and made use of these expressions in all their fallibility, we do not need to be ashamed when He wills to renew it to us in all its fallibility as witness, and at is mere self-will and disobedience to try to find some infallible elements in the Bible. but finally we are absolved from having to know and name as such the event or events, in which Scripture proves and confirms itself to us as the Word of God." - CD, I.2, 531-532

"We must dare to face the humanity of the biblical texts and therefore their fallibility without the postulate that they must be infallible, but also without the superstitious belief in any infallible truth alongside or behind the text and revealed by ourselves." - CD, I.2, 533

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(ARP Talk 18.2)

Erskine Seminary Leadership and Inerrancy

by Rev. Mark Wright, Pastor, Unity ARP Church

Has the leadership of Erskine Theological Seminary sought to mislead the ARP Church regarding the stance of the Seminary faculty on the inerrancy of Scripture? Last year, during the period leading up to the meeting of the General Synod, First Presbytery was to consider a motion from the Rev. Bill Marsh regarding the John Leith Chair at Erskine Seminary. Current Trustee and Seminary Committee Chairman Doug Petersen sent an e-mail to the members of First Presbytery's Theological and Social Concerns Committee contending that the motion was unnecessary because the Seminary faculty had already unanimously affirmed the General Synod's 1979 statement on Scripture. A portion of that message from Petersen reads as follows:

Although the Manual of Authorities and Duties only requires that any newly hired administrator or faculty member give "satisfactory evidence of his belief in and adherence to the basic doctrines of evangelical Christianity," the faculty of Erskine Seminary have not only unanimously affirmed their commitment to the Synod's Definition of an Evangelical Christian but also to the Synod's position statements on the inerrancy of Scripture. (See Erskine Seminary "Who We Are" Statement, adopted by the faculty and the Erskine Board in 2006 and revised and unanimously reaffirmed by the Erskine faculty in April 2008.)

This statement by Petersen is misleading for at least two reasons. First, the Seminary faculty did not unanimously affirm the Synod's 1979 statement that "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God without error in all that it teaches." When such affirmation was suggested in the faculty meeting, two members of the faculty (Neo-Barthian professors Drs. Burnett and Bush) demurred. Instead, a motion was made to insert the General Synod's language into the Seminary Catalog but without explicit affirmation by the faculty. This motion then passed unanimously. Second, there was discussion in that very faculty meeting to the effect that the 1979 General Synod statement (which Burnett and Bush would not affirm) was not tight enough to be considered an "inerrancy statement" because it does not use the term "inerrancy." Thus Petersen's representation of the faculty sentiment is inaccurate on two counts—they did not vote to "affirm," and even what

they would not affirm was not regarded, at least by some, as “statements on the inerrancy of Scripture.”

At the meeting of the Moderator’s Committee on Erskine at the 2008 General Synod meeting, Dr. Neely Gaston made the same claim that Petersen had earlier: that the faculty had affirmed the General Synod’s 1979 statement on the authority of Scripture. He was then corrected on this factual point by Dr. R. J. Gore. In short, though Dr. Gaston and Mr. Peterson have sought to give assurance to the ARP Church that there was unanimous Seminary support for the Synod’s 1979 statement, such assurances were contrary to the facts.

Now the same story about faculty affirmation has surfaced once again, this time in an article entitled “Karl Barth and My Erskine Seminary Experience,” posted on the official Seminary blog (*Erskine Action*) by student Carey Whitman. This article is part of a larger public relations effort by the Seminary intended to quell concerns about the Seminary (“Over the next few days, Erskine Action will publish several articles, letters, and documents that respond in various ways to questions that have been raised about our mission and personnel.”). In that article, Whitman responds to information earlier presented in *ARPTalk* in this manner:

The case of rumors is not so immediately clear. My advice: consider how certain information could have been obtained. Take for instance a recent report that states that Dr. Gaston gave the impression that the entire faculty affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture when there were actually two objections. What is the source of this information?

This supposedly happened in an April 2008 faculty meeting. So I asked myself, “If this was a faculty meeting, then minutes were recorded, right? All minutes would have been approved, with or without objections, at the next meeting.” So what does the official record show? Without a great deal of effort I obtained the minutes from the April 2008 meeting. The minutes show that the discussion centered on bringing the statement in line with synod’s language. After the discussion, Dr. Bush made the relevant motion and Dr. Gore seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Like much of Whitman’s article, this quoted section is none too clear, but the intent of it is clearly to cast doubts on the corrections to the record offered by the Editor of *ARPTalk* and others. While Whitman does not expressly say that the “unanimous” vote was to affirm the “inerrancy of Scripture,” that impression is certainly given. The rest of Whitman’s article is equally disappointing; the central thrust of it involves Whitman’s claim of nearly total ignorance about Karl Barth, and he concludes from this fact of his own ignorance of Barth that Erskine Seminary does not have a Barth problem!

When Whitman’s article appeared (with the imprimatur of the Seminary Administration) with its misleading account of the faculty vote, Dr. R. J. Gore

submitted a comment of correction to the Seminary blog site. Without knowing this I emailed Dr. Gore to see if he planned to write an article for the blog. Dr. Gore replied and said he had attempted to post a comment of correction on the blog site. Dr. Gore included that comment in an email to me. To this point, the moderator of Erskine Action (Dr. Michael Bush) has not posted that comment, though other comments have been posted. In Dr. Gore's email to me, he stated that his comments were not private since he was expecting them to be posted publicly. In the interests of full and free discussion, I print his comments here:

Since Mr. Whitman has referenced the April 08 faculty meeting, I believe a word of clarification is needed. He wrote: "The case of rumors is not so immediately clear. My advice: consider how certain information could have been obtained. Take for instance a recent report that states that Dr. Gaston gave the impression that the entire faculty affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture when there were actually two objections. What is the source of this information? This supposedly happened in an April 2008 faculty meeting. So I asked myself, 'If this was a faculty meeting, then minutes were recorded, right? All minutes would have been approved, with or without objections, at the next meeting.' So what does the official record show? Without a great deal of effort I obtained the minutes from the April 2008 meeting. The minutes show that the discussion centered on bringing the statement in line with synod's language. After the discussion, Dr. Bush made the relevant motion and Dr. Gore seconded. The vote was unanimous."

I am a bit surprised to know that faculty minutes are not hard to access. I was under the impression that these were not public documents. Nevertheless, that is not really the issue. I would like to give a clearer picture of what transpired. A few years back, as VP and Dean, I had led the faculty to include (as a footnote) references to General Synod's statements on Scripture. This was placed in our "Who We Are" section of the catalog. This was, I hoped, the first step toward getting a strong statement on Scripture—and the faculty's acceptance of that—into the catalog. Of course, I moved on to other responsibilities and so did not follow through any further. Meanwhile, during the editorial process of preparing the catalog, these footnotes had dropped out. A motion was made by one faculty member to reinsert these statements in body of the "Who We Are" statement using, if I remember correctly, the word "affirms" to explain the faculty's view of this language. When another faculty member asked, "who is doing this affirming?", VP Gaston said the board, administration and faculty. This was then followed by some discussion, during which two faculty members stated that they would not/could not affirm inerrancy.

There was then some discussion about the language of the General Synod's statements (the old statement- not the statement adopted last summer that affirms inerrancy) and recognition that it did not clearly require inerrancy. Mr. Gaston asked the faculty to take some action. We batted around different verbs to see if we could find a satisfactory verb to replace "affirms." One faculty member

suggested that we state that we “acknowledge” these statements to be the position of General Synod. This I felt would be potentially misleading and was much weaker than the original footnote references. I pointed out that we did not have time in that faculty meeting to work through all the issues that had surfaced and that the only thing I would vote for at the moment would be a return to the status quo ante. That is, simply put the old General Synod language back into the catalog without addressing the issue of what the faculty would or would not affirm. At this point, Mr. Bush made the motion to take that action and I seconded. The faculty voted unanimously to return the statements to the “Who We Are” section.

The point of our vote was procedural and editorial. We put back into the catalog statements that had fallen out without faculty or administrative approval or awareness. In other words, someone goofed while packaging the catalog. This vote was not a declaration re the faculty’s position on Scripture. A number of faculty members present made their positions known, but that was all part of the discussion—not part of the motion as carried. As to whether or not any one individual’s characterization of this vote is accurate or not, there are reports to synod, minutes, emails, and conversations aplenty. I have neither the time nor the inclination to pursue all of that. I do, however, believe that my time is well-spent explaining my actions at that faculty meeting. Lest there be any confusion, let me be clear: I would have preferred to have voted for faculty approval of the original motion to “affirm” the old General Synod statements on Scripture. I would be even more pleased if the faculty would vote to affirm the current General Synod statement on Scripture, which includes language on inerrancy. Perhaps the administration will lead us to do so next year.

And so the question is posed: Has the leadership of Erskine Theological Seminary sought to mislead the ARP Church regarding the stance of the Seminary faculty on the inerrancy of Scripture? If so, how long will the General Synod tolerate such behavior by those entrusted with training the next generation of ministers in the ARP Church?

~Thank you for reading *ARPTalk(18)*~