

ARPTalk (19)

www.arptalk.org
<http://arptalk.weebly.com>
June 3, 2009

* * * * *

ARPTalk(19.1)

LETTERS AND NEWS

(19.1.1)

Letter from An Erskine Board Member: Rev. David Johnston

Editor's Comments: Rev. David Johnston is an Erskine Board member. In his letter he identifies two problems: (1) The Erskine Board is too large and ineffective; and (2) The Erskine strategic plan evidences an anti-ARP Church bias.

θ θ θ θ θ θ

I am completing my first year of service as a member of the Erskine Board of Trustees. Because I am a Board member, I've tried to avoid putting my hand into the controversies now swirling. I now realize that there will be controversy regardless of what I do or say.

If there is going to be a deep-stirring of the pot, it is important that we make correct decisions and attack the right issues. I have two things that concern me. I have not said this within the Board, but I have written this to President Ruble and Chip Smith, the out-going Chairman.

First, I have an issue that probably no one else has: I think the Erskine Board is too large.

The third paragraph of the 2009 Erskine Report to Synod says, "The Board of

Trustees exercises direct control of the operations of Erskine College and Erskine Theological Seminary and establishes policies and educational programs and manages all properties and funds." After one year of serving on the Board, I do not have a sense that this is what I experienced.

I think that when we meet as a Board, there are too many people in the room for effective discussion and decision-making. An ineffective Board means that the Administration works without real oversight. Others may legitimately disagree with me on this, but recent dissatisfaction with Erskine suggests that the Board is not doing its job. We have really good people on the Board, but even really good people can't fight off ineffectiveness that is built into the structure. The Board is too large to be effective.

This problem cannot be repaired without a revolution.

Second, the first thing that happened as I became a Board member was approval of the mission statements for both the College and the Seminary. As I read the documents, I was shocked to find places in those documents where both the College and the Seminary were separating themselves from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and from Reformed theology. All I could do was suggest alternative wording in a few places because the work was too far advanced to permit substantive alterations, and also because the document was developed not by the Board, but by the faculty and administration. We were being asked to approve it, not to rewrite it.

I've been asking myself, "Why didn't this divorce-like language get caught and corrected before I came to the Board?" I am troubled by the thought that the language was there because that is really what is in the hearts and minds of some people who work on campus and wrote the document.

Repair of this problem will require profound change.

If we don't repair this problem, the alternative is that Synod de-fund and de-certify Erskine College and Seminary as our official institutions and complete the divorce that began in the mission statements approved last year (and maybe before that!). I do not want to divorce Erskine. I want Erskine to be a reflection of the ARP Church at its best, and a continuing source of strength for this Synod.

I pray that the Lord will guide us. I am sure that the Synod will be asked to take some action in the upcoming meeting. I pray that we will not be consumed by anger and controversy, but that the peace of the Lord may come among us and lead us to wise actions and decisions.

David R. Johnston

~Scroll down for *ARPTalk(19.1.2)*~

(19.1.2)
Letter from
Dr. John Wingard
Explaining Why He Left Erskine

Editor's Comments: Dr. Wingard's letter is dated June 1, 2007. In his letter to friends who had supported him in his decision process, he explains why he left Erskine College to take a position at Covenant College. Dr. Wingard also identifies a number of serious problems at Erskine College.

θ θ θ θ θ θ

June 1, 2007

Dear brothers in Christ:

I want to thank each of you for the ways you have blessed me over the past months as I sought our Lord's will with respect to my vocation. I am so very grateful to you all for your many prayers and words of wisdom and encouragement, both during and subsequent to that process. All of you have been a blessing to me, and I deeply appreciate your kindness and the sacrifices so many of you made to help me through what was for me a most difficult decision.

I haven't yet had the opportunity to share with some of you why I decided to leave Erskine, and some have requested that I do so. Thus, in order to honor that request and also to help prevent/eliminate confusion and/or misunderstanding, especially in the rumor-rich environment surrounding Erskine, what follows is an account in some detail of the actual reasons for my decision. I know that the rumor mill has been active with respect to my departure. So I'm hoping that some of you might even be able to help set the record straight if necessary.

By the way, I should mention that I'm copying this letter to Dr. Weatherman, my dean. I value him highly and am quite thankful for his constant support and encouragement of me over the past months – indeed, over the past seven years. I don't want to leave him in the dark as to what I'm doing or saying – especially given the issues I'll be addressing below.

Well, without further ado, here's my story – the sober truth, so to speak. As all of you know, I am passionately committed to evangelical Christian liberal arts education and the project of integrating faith and learning that is central to such an

education. This is the sort of education and scholarship to which I believe I am called to contribute, and it's the sort of education that I desire to provide for my own children. Furthermore, it's the sort of education and scholarship that is promised by our foundational documents at Erskine – i.e. the documents that lay out Erskine's mission and purpose, the educational philosophy of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, etc. When I came to Erskine seven years ago, I was excited about being involved in our becoming what we claim to be – a Christian liberal arts college that engages in faith-learning integration from an evangelical standpoint. That vision still animates me. I remain excited about what Erskine could and should become if she is to be faithful to Christ and to the A. R. P. Church.

Unfortunately, however, progress in that direction has been exceedingly slow during my tenure here – much slower that it ought to have been, in my judgment. Mistakes have been made and repeated, and many significant opportunities have been missed. As we discussed in March, there are many things at Erskine that are deeply disturbing to one with my educational and ecclesiastical commitments. Radical repentance, which is long overdue, is required at every level if Erskine is to become a genuine Christian liberal arts college rather than merely a church-related school that provides a mostly secularistic education. As Scripture makes abundantly clear, we cannot and should not expect to see Erskine flourish unless and until the fear of man is displaced by the fear of God in the leadership of Erskine.

As you know, in seeking direction concerning my own calling during the past academic year, I looked very closely at the situation at Erskine in order to try to discern as best I could, not just where the college currently is, but where it is actually moving as well. *Most important to me in the end was how things were looking with respect to Erskine's future and the future college educational options for my own children.* It was in considering that set of issues in particular that things finally became clear for me with respect to the issue of whether I should stay at Erskine or accept the Covenant offer.

My older two children, Benjamin and Megan, will be ready for college in three and six years, respectively. My wife Barbara and I desire to be able to provide for Benjamin and Megan the sort of education that Erskine promises, but (with only a handful of exceptions) is not yet delivering – the sort of education that Dean Turbeville described so eloquently and winsomely in his baccalaureate sermon almost two weeks ago. What became clear to me this spring is that even if, by God's grace, Erskine does ultimately succeed in making the transition, we cannot reasonably expect that transition to be far enough along to guarantee that my children could get a solid Christian education at Erskine. At the same time, Covenant College, while not perfect, *is* providing such an education. By serving as a professor at Covenant, my children will have the privilege of getting an integrated Christian liberal arts education free of charge financially – a privilege that's particularly significant for us as a family living on just my income. While I realize that Benjamin and Megan would have the privilege of enrolling free of charge at Erskine were I to stay here, the truth is that (with the exception of just three or four

professors here at Erskine) I would prefer that they have the opportunity to study with professors at Covenant – professors in the wide variety of academic disciplines who are committed to loving Jesus Christ in their work as scholars and teachers; who are enthusiastically, intentionally, and competently engaged in the project of faith-learning integration; who avoid the “Kantian” fallacy of reducing Christian commitment in education to morality alone, and who simply refuse to play the naturalists’ game. I would also prefer that Benjamin and Megan have the opportunity to be involved in campus life that's under the thoughtful oversight of the sort of Christian integrationists who run the Office Student Development at Covenant. Frankly, there's no comparison between the student development divisions at Erskine and Covenant. I've seen and/or heard things here that make me shudder. Brothers, it was precisely these considerations that ultimately made it clear to me that, as much as I love Erskine and earnestly desire to be part of the transition to faithfulness here, I had to accept the offer at Covenant. While I could fill a book with details, in the end, it really was that simple.

Please know that despite my deep, long-standing disappointment with the lack of substantive progress toward missional fidelity at Erskine, I have enjoyed teaching at Erskine more than at any other institution I've had the privilege of serving. It has been a great honor to teach the students I have had at Erskine (including the children of some of you!) and to serve with my wonderful departmental colleagues, Bill Evans and Terry Eves! Those relationships, as well as my relationship with Paul Patrick, our chaplain, have been especially precious to me.

Again, my primary aim in this letter has been to thank you all and to make clear why I am leaving Erskine. I would be more than happy to talk with any of you, or anyone else, who would like to inquire further into any of this. Please feel free to share this letter with others if you think it would be appropriate and in the best interests of Erskine and the Kingdom of Christ to do so. I'll trust your discretion with respect to that.

Thank you all, once again, for your fellowship with me through this most difficult of decisions for me personally. I am exceedingly grateful for you all, for your wisdom and commitment to Christ and His kingdom, and for the support you all have given and continue to give to the Lord's work at Erskine College! If there is any way I can be of assistance to you all, even from my new post, please do not hesitate to let me know. May Christ's great kingdom come in glory at Erskine!

Yours in Him,

John C. Wingard, Jr.
Professor of Philosophy

[Editor's Comments:](#) Recently, rumors have arisen regarding Dr. Wingard's leaving of Erskine College to go to Covenant College. One of the rumors suggests that Dr. Wingard's reason for going to Covenant

College involved salary. In this email from Dr. Wingard, dated June 1, 2009, he denies that rumor and, once again, he delineates the grave concern that he sees at Erskine College—specifically, institutional fidelity by the Administration and faculty in their refusal to embrace the Erskine mission statement and their refusal to embrace the theological ethos of the ARP Church that has made it possible for Erskine College and Seminary to exist.



Please know that I still love and am deeply concerned for Erskine College. Because of that, I welcome the opportunity to help set the record straight concerning my decision two years ago to leave Erskine and join the faculty of Covenant College. While my letter of two years ago explained my decision, perhaps the following comments will help clarify what I said in the letter vis-a-vis certain rumors that are currently circulating about my reason for leaving Erskine for Covenant.

First, let me say as clearly as I can that it is NOT the case that I left Erskine because Covenant offered me more money. While I have heard from more than one source recently that this is what some people are saying, I have no idea why anyone would think such a thing. I actually don't know how much Erskine was prepared to offer me in the way of salary had I stayed. As a matter of fact, I never saw a contract for the 2007-2008 academic year, and no one told me what the college would offer me to stay. Furthermore, I never inquired. So, I don't know how my salary at Covenant compares with what I would have had at Erskine had I stayed.

In fact, my departure from Erskine was because of Erskine's continued lack of fidelity to its mission as a *Christian* liberal arts college. Had there been evidence two years ago of significant progress, or at least serious promise of real progress, toward becoming a genuine Christian liberal arts college, I'm convinced that I would still be at Erskine. As my letter of two years ago makes clear, there was a crucial economic dimension to my decision to leave Erskine, to be sure, and that had to do with my children's college education in the future; but it's important to recognize that that economic concern was inextricably linked to the matter of Erskine's general unfaithfulness to its mission, and, by contrast, the fidelity of Covenant College to its mission as a community of rigorous Christian scholarship and higher education. The real issue for me at the time of my decision two years ago was whether Erskine was moving significantly toward becoming a Christ-honoring liberal arts college. After much observation and careful inquiry, I had to conclude, sadly, that Erskine was not moving in that direction -- that, at least for the foreseeable future, Erskine would continue to provide a mostly secularistic education (with a very few blessed exceptions, of course) to its students, even while promoting itself as a Christian college. My conversation with Dr. Ruble the day before I announced my resignation to Dr. Weatherman confirmed my sense that this was the case. It was evident to me as I listened intently to what he shared about his concerns and vision for the college that the administration was not committed to the sort of education that was called

for by the ARP Church through Erskine's foundational and governing documents -- an education that recognizes that Scripture is normative *for our thinking* as well as our acting and that takes seriously the integration across the disciplines of what we know from Scripture with what we know from other sources. By the way, in that same conversation with Dr. Ruble, I tried to make it quite clear that money was not the issue for me. (I did the same in my conversation with Dr. Weatherman the next day.) I also tried to make it clear to Dr. Ruble that the moral issues concerning student conduct in the residence halls, which was clearly a concern of his, was not the issue for me. The issue for me was whether King Jesus would be recognized as Lord over *every* area of life at Erskine, and especially over the life of the mind, since this is, after all, a college, an institution of higher learning. Sadly, it was clear that he was not envisioning that sort of trajectory for the college.

For me, then, the opportunity to "transfer" to Covenant meant that not only would I have the opportunity to live out my calling with fellow scholar-teachers and students who were committed to rigorous, Christ-centered scholarship across the disciplines, but that the opportunity to be part of such a community would be guaranteed for my children as well. So, bottom line, while there was a crucial economic factor having to do with the future, my decision to leave Erskine was about mission and integrity, not money. In my case, concerns about institutional direction and fidelity to mission coalesced with pragmatic concerns; but it was the former concerns, not the latter, that drove the decision.

I'm aware that it has been said by at least one former colleague of mine at Erskine (with whom I radically disagreed concerning both the claims of Christ and Erskine's identity and direction) that I "did not think that Erskine was Christian enough." With respect to that, I must confess that I am indeed guilty as charged. However, as a grateful and committed disciple of Jesus, I make no apology for that. Somewhat ironically, given the hostile source(s), this claim about me gets much closer to my actual reason for leaving Erskine than the current rumor that I left over money!

It's possible that I've raised more questions here than I've answered, but I hope that it is at least clear that my reason for leaving Erskine was not that Covenant offered me more money. Any claim that I left for that reason is simply false. My concern was, and remains, a concern about integrity at Erskine relative to Erskine's mission as an evangelical Christian liberal arts college. In my judgment, having served Erskine for seven wonderful years, at the time of my departure there were gravely serious issues of integrity, both at the institutional level and, for many in the administration and faculty, at the personal level as well.

My prayer is still that Christ will ultimately be exalted at Erskine. The Church and our society need more colleges that are willing to be radically different than secular ones for Jesus' sake. May our Lord be pleased to transform Erskine into such a college!

John Wingard

~Scroll down for *ARPTalk(19.1.3)*~

(19.1.3)

Letter from Mr. Robert Land: Father of An Erskine Student

Editor's Comments: The following letter, by Mr. Robert Land was sent to the Editor of *ARPTalk* for posting. This letter references correspondence between Mr. Land and Dr. Randy Ruble, President of Erskine College and Theological Seminary. The letters of correspondence between Mr. Land and Dr. Ruble are not printed. If the reader desires to see that correspondence, Mr. Land's address is given and he is amenable to sending out that information. Mr. Land is the father of an Erskine College student, and he expresses serious concerns for Erskine.

θ θ θ θ θ θ

May 25, 2009

Gordon S. Query, Moderator
ARP Synod
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Center
1 Cleveland Street
Suite 110
Greenville, SC 29601-3646

C. Ronald Beard, Principal Clerk

Re: Erskine College

Dear Sirs:

I am writing this letter as a member of the ARP church and the father of a current Erskine student. Recent incidents at Erskine have given me concern as to the direction the school is moving, and have brought into question the level of oversight that is provided by the ARP Church.

I believe the attached correspondence [Editor: That correspondence is not included] with Dr. Ruble is self-explanatory. I do not presume to question Dr. Ruble's actions or his commitment to carrying out his mission as President of the school, as I believe he is sincere in those efforts. However, I am concerned about what appears to be a growing negative influence there.

I have heard on more than one occasion that there is a growing liberal influence at Erskine, even to the extent that some professors feel at ease to challenge the faith and beliefs of students. I have been told that there is little that can be done if a

professor has tenure. This to me is unacceptable for a school supported by our denomination. We must all be held, and will be held accountable.

As you will note in some of the attached documents [Editor: That correspondence is not included], it is suggested that the ARP Church fails to support the Christian students by maintaining accountability of the Erskine leadership. Is this perception or reality?

While I've never believed in the old adage "where there's smoke, there's fire", I do believe that where there is smoke something is causing it, and more often than not it turns out to be a burning ember. Our students are raising concerns here, and I don't believe the burden can be placed solely on the shoulders of one man chosen to run the school.

It is easy to sweep the views of a few under the rug assuming they will go away, as they may for a while.

The problem here is that when this occurs we are sending a message to these young men and women that it is only what we say that is important, or that their concerns are not valid unless they represent the majority. I certainly don't believe that is the philosophy that the ARP Church teaches or espouses.

It would seem to me that it is time for the ARP Church leadership to stand back and examine how effective, if at all, their system of ensuring accountability and consistency with our beliefs is, as it applies to Erskine College.

I trust you will accept this in the spirit in which it is written. It is my desire to offer constructive criticism to ensure that Erskine remains a unique and Christ-centered school for years to come.

Respectfully,

**Robert L. Land
9 Hawks Perch Way
Simpsonville, SC 29681**

~Scroll down for ARPTalk(19.1.4)~

(19.1.4)

VANISHING ACT!

Articles Mysteriously Disappear from “Erskine Action,” the ETS Blog-Site

An open letter to ARP ministers by Rev. Richard Burnett, PH.D. (Professor of Systematic Theology, ETS), a sermon by Rev. Neely Gaston, D.D. (Executive Vice President, ETS), a letter by ETS student Mr. Jacob Thielman (non-ARP, M.Div. program), and an article by Mr. Carey Whitman (ARP, Th.M. program) have been removed from the ETS official blog-site, “Erskine Action,” without explanation. This is a mystery. Some of these articles had been posted for over two weeks.

This is the second time such unexplained action has been taken on “Erskine Action.” The first time was in March. A small portion of a letter critical of the Editor of *ARPTalk* that was signed by some ETS faculty and sent to the Board was posted. The letter that was posted was highly edited—and the Editor has knowledge of the entire letter. The Editor of *ARPTalk* inquired of Board members as to why the “whole letter” was not posted, and the posting was removed the next day.

With regard to the present situation, the Editor has not inquired about the recent postings. It is reported to the Editor that in a conversation with Mr. Carey Whitman, Dr. Michael Bush, the “Blog-Master” of “Erskine Action,” complained that he had been forced “from on high” to remove the posting.

This is odd! What does it mean? What about “Erskine Action’s” promise of May 19, 2009, that “Much Information Is Coming” and that they will “respond in various ways to questions that have been raised about our mission and personnel”? Was Dr. Gaston’s “sermon” embarrassing or unfit for public consumption? Was Dr. Burnett’s rejection of Inerrancy “counterproductive”? Did Mr. Thielman’s spirited defense of Barth’s view of Scripture work against Mr. Whitman’s contention that ETS must not have a “Barth problem” because Mr. Whitman does not know very much about Karl Barth? The Editor and readers of *ARPTalk* want to know!

Reported by,



~Scroll down for *ARPTalk*(19.1.5)~

(19.1.5)

Did the PC(USA) Conservatives Win the Vote on Gay Ordination?

On April 27, 2009, the ETS Blog "Erskine Action" trumpeted the defeat by the presbyteries of proposed PC(USA) constitutional changes that would have removed the "fidelity and chastity" requirement for church officers: "PC(USA) Upholds Morality Standard for Church Officers" (<http://seminary.erskine.edu/blog/?p=127>). But HAVE THEY? Has the pro-gay movement in the PC(USA) been ousted?

Have you noticed that the vote gets closer and closer each time the issue comes before the presbyteries? It is only a matter of time now! In fact, we have learned that the pro-gay forces in the PC(USA) expected to lose this vote. The pro-gay leadership is content to wait. After all, it's a "generational thing," and they know that time is on their side. Plus, they have already gotten most of what they want! How is that?

Last year's PC(USA) General Assembly did two very important things in addition to the proposed constitutional change: it removed all the "definitive guidance" and "authoritative interpretation" language restricting the ordination of practicing homosexuals, and it issued an "authoritative interpretation" that ANY portion of the church's constitution can be "scrupled" by candidates for ordination. It is up to the court in question (Session or Presbytery) to decide whether to allow a "scruple." NEITHER OF THESE REQUIRED APPROVAL BY THE PRESBYTERIES BUT WENT INTO EFFECT IMMEDIATELY!! Bottom line: the PC(USA) now has a "local option" policy on the ordination of practicing homosexuals firmly in place. Presbyteries are now officially empowered to do as they please, and a significant number of gay, lesbian, and transgendered people have been and are being ordained to the ministry of the PC(USA). The reality is that the fight over gay ordination in the PC(USA) has been lost! No victory here!

Reported by,

Charles W. Wilson

~Scroll down for ARPTalk(19.2)~

ARPTalk(19.3)

A STRATEGY TO SAVE ERSKINE AND THE ARPC: A CALL FOR A COMMISSION

In the ARP Church there is a difference between a committee and a Commission. A committee is sent by a church court to investigate a matter and, after its investigation, it returns to the sending court with recommendations to be voted on. A Commission is sent by a church court with the authority of the court both to investigate and act on matters that it finds amiss. A Commission has the power to act on behalf of the court that sends it, if it deems an action wise and necessary. A Commission then returns to the sending court with a report of its actions or, if it chooses, its recommendations. The major difference between a committee and Commission is that a Commission has the full authority of the sending court to act.

The strategy called for in this article is a call for a Commission. This strategy stems from the Editor's conviction that the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church has the potential to be a church that is truly Kingdom-focused, Gospel-loving, and Bible-driven. This is a call for the 2009 General Synod of the ARP Church to adopt the Memorial of First Presbytery that calls for a Commission. This is a call for the Commission to be empowered with plenipotentiary authority and charged to do whatsoever is necessary to define Erskine College and Theological Seminary in Biblical, confessional, connectional, Evangelical, and historic Presbyterian terms.

For the General Synod to pass resolutions and expect the "Erskine family" to change willingly is pointless! The Erskine Administration prides itself on standing up to the "ARP Ayatollahs" who, they declare, have no business in THEIR educational sphere. EC/ETS administrators have a protectionist instinct. They are institutionally inbred. Rarely do they hire from without, and, obviously, they hire from within when they feel threatened by the General Synod of the ARP Church. Erskine administrators labor to inform their faculty and staff as to WHO in the ARP Church is "against" them in order to keep things "in house." Erskine loves autonomy and detests accountability to the ARP Church.

Without a Commission, the Erskine administration will never be moved to be in step with the ARP Church.

We ARPs can nit-pick and have a spat over this and that regarding EC/ETS, or we can even attempt to withhold Synod's money. In the end, Erskine is likely to survive. We ARPs will become weary of the struggle. Perhaps, in frustration, we will grant EC/ETS independence and the administrators and faculty will be glad to have the albatross of the ARP Church removed from their necks. The Erskine endowment is shaky, but it is large enough to maintain EC/ETS for a number of years. No doubt the Erskine Administration is prepared to raid the endowment. They have enough financial resources to keep them sputtering along and employing the same sorts of people that have gotten EC/ETS into the current mess. If we do not authorize a Commission that has the full authority of General Synod, an institution that is at odds with the ARP Church will continue in its rebellion.

Historically, exchanging political jabs with the Erskine Administration over issues such as alcohol use, distribution of prophylactics, and a disorderly faculty member has never remedied the problems at Erskine. They are not moved. It is like trying to box with a mound of Jell-O! The General Synod is ignored. In fact, such tactics probably have served to increase resistance to any sort of Evangelical-Reformed identity! The Erskine Board and the Administration have always outlasted the critics in the ARP Church—and plan to do so again and again and again. It is reported that an Erskine-Vice President once told a former Erskine student and employee “Every ten years or so, the ARP ministers get all up-tight over one thing or the other; however, the reality is that Erskine is not the ARPC, and ministers don't understand Erskine.” This is the problem, isn't it? It also sheds light on the solution! This shows the depth of the intransigence. It also demonstrates that without a powerful Commission Erskine College and Seminary will continue to be a source of discord and division in the ARP Church.

The plan of the Erskine elite is to weather the June storm of the 2009 General Synod. No matter how many INVESTIGATING COMMITTEES are inflicted on EC/ETS administrators, they will withstand the COMMITTEES. They pride themselves on this. Thus, Erskine problems can be summarized succinctly: The Erskine Administration and Board have a problem with the ARP Synod demanding REASONABLE ACCOUNTABILITY. No COMMITTEE of General Synod can deal with Erskine. A General Synod COMMISSION is necessary to achieve substantive change.

THE PROBLEM AT EC/ETS IS THAT IT IS DISEASED BY ITS LEADERSHIP. The Erskine leadership is loath to hire people on its own

from the outside who do not match the DNA structure of its own diseased system. Consider the following example. The recent appointment of the new Vice-President of Student Services is a remarkable demonstration of the institutional incestuousness and protectionism. Instead of conducting a bona fide search for an ARP or someone outside of Due West, Dr. Ruble promoted Dr. Robyn Agnew to the position. He did that knowing there is outspoken opposition to this by influential ARP representatives on the Board and distrust of Dr. Agnew by a significant segment of ministers, laymen, current students, and Erskine alumni in and out of the ARP Church. Dr. Ruble did “the Erskine thing”—institutional incest, protectionism, and continuance of a diseased culture. A Commission of General Synod is necessary to deal with the institutional diseased culture at Erskine.

Why has the Erskine Administration and Board not demonstrated the same missional integrity that has characterized institutions such as Covenant College, Covenant Seminary, Geneva College, Pittsburgh Reformed Presbyterian Seminary, RTS, or Westminster Seminary? The reason is simple: THE ARP CHURCH HAS NOT INSISTED THAT ERSKINE DO SO! We have been willing to settle for the appearance of change while the institution remains the same. Erskine’s policy of hiring a handful of Evangelical and Reformed Christian professors has historically, at least, placated the General Synod in the short-term. However, the Erskine Administration knows and has known that this is all that is needed to keep the ARPs off their backs. Are we content with having less than a Kingdom-minded vision for Erskine? Will we, once again, sell ourselves short with having “a few good guys” teaching the future ministers, elders, deacons, and WOCs of our denomination? Will we in the ARP Church not send forth a Commission to reestablish missional integrity at Erskine?

The greatest impediment for the ARP Church and the greatest ally to the Erskine Administration is the ARP Church herself, which the 2007 General Synod admitted was characterized by a “culture of niceness and mediocrity.” “Niceness” is not going to fix Erskine. The work of establishing a Commission is not going to be “nice.” The work of a Commission in investigation and reclamation is not going to be “nice.” But what is the alternative? If a Kingdom-focused vision is implemented at Erskine, it will have to be initiated by a Commission from outside of the Erskine community and for the sake of the ARP Church.

Why should a Pastor who graduated from UNC and did his pastoral training at RTS care about EC/ETS? His children are going to attend UNC. For sure, he was informed by other Evangelicals in seminary or his former ARP or PCA minister that Erskine is “liberal” and not good for pastoral training—it is only natural that he will recommend something

other than Erskine College to his high school seniors and RTS to those sensing a call to seminary. But why are these ARP ministers and their congregations not concerned for Erskine? IS IT NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY? Is Erskine too far from salvaging anything at all? It is this attitude that the Erskine Administration and Board rely on to get them through conflicts over accountability. It is this attitude that the Erskine Administration and Board rely on to get them through the present conflict over accountability and connection to the ARP Church. For the sake of the Church of Jesus Christ, we cannot allow this to happen. ARPs, let us love Erskine and not allow her to slide away! Let us love Erskine with Gospel-focused love. God grant us the courage to authorize a Commission empowered with a Gospel-Kingdom vision and the strong imprimatur of the ARP Church to get the work done. Let us stop being lulled to sleep with the same old rhetoric of the Erskine Administration. Let us stop being frightened by the threats of lawsuits by ARP-hating faculty and administrators. Let us stop believing that Erskine is unsalvageable. Let us stop believing that Erskine has no potential. Let us grasp a vision for Erskine as a place of educational excellence for our children, as a solid training ground for our pastors-to-be, and as a place that values the Standards of the ARP Church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Dr. Paul Koistra and Dr. Bryan Chapell convinced the PCA's ministers and congregants that Covenant College and Covenant Theological Seminary were worth the investments. They cleaned house at Covenant Theological Seminary, not because of liberalism, but because they felt that the seminary had become in-bred and lost its vision. There were some well-known scholars at Covenant Theological Seminary, but some of these did not have pastors' hearts and passion for the challenges of day-to-day ministry. Covenant Theological Seminary needed a strong Evangelical and Reformed faculty that passionately promoted the goals, welfare, and growth of the PCA. It took a few years to assemble the outstanding people they now employ as faculty. The PCA's success in missions, College ministry (RUF) and church planting is rooted in their commitment to Covenant College and Covenant Theological Seminary. RTS is a proxy seminary for the PCA. Thank God for RTS! RTS is also a proxy seminary for the ARP Church. Where would the ARP Church be without OUR conservative seminary? RTS and Covenant Theological Seminary do not retain professors who refuse to speak with clarity on issues of Biblical authority and Confessional adherence. Why should we in the ARP Church?

The time is now to take hold of what God has given us—**AND MAKE GOOD OF IT!** We need Erskine and Erskine needs the ARP Church. A God-honoring vision for the ARP Church needs to be cast. We need new leadership at EC/ETS. We need to find responsible, godly leaders who

will uphold the doctrinal standards of the ARP Church and who delight in accountability to the ARP Church as a God-given calling. However, the first step lies with the minister and elders of the ARP Church. The immediate imperative is our taking leadership and responsibility for the ARP Church and EC/ETS. The call for a Commission is the beginning point. Will we be Godly leaders or continue to let Erskine slide by and defame the name of the ARP Church—and worse, the name of Christ? Ultimately, the goals, the welfare, the growth, and the unity of the ARP Church depend on what we do this June.

These are my thoughts,

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

Charles W. Wilson

~Thank you for reading *ARPTalk(19)*~