

ARPTalk (22)

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ARPTalk(22.1)

LETTERS AND THINGS

(22.1.1)

The Creation According to Atheists *Behold, the origin of mankind as set forth in the Logical Bible.*

by Frank J. Fleming

EDITOR'S REMARKS: A hilarious spoof, this article, by Mr. Frank J. Fleming, is taken from the blog *PajamaMedia*. The article was posted on July 22, 2009. The article is at <http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/>. The Editor posts this article for the Saganites who chant in the worship of the idol Evolution "billions and billions of years ago!" Enjoy the story of Athor.

Atheists are often an unfairly feared and scorned group. Many people tend to look upon them with disdain just because they have doubts about theology and like to go on TV and scream about how the majority of Americans are stupid for believing in God. This has led many religious people to have negative misconceptions about atheists, thinking among other things that they are followers of Satan.

That's ridiculous. Atheists don't worship Satan. They worship Athor, rational god of logic, who cherishes all that is logical and smites all that is illogical, such as religion. His worshipers leave him gifts of logic, like Sudoku puzzles, at his altar so that Athor might bestow upon them rational thought and they can better spot ideas that are stupid and worth mocking. This leads to the greatest gift Athor has to offer his followers: a feeling of superiority.

Ever notice how many Bibles are labeled “Holy Bible” on the front? Ever wonder what other types of Bibles there are? Atheists learn the teachings of Athor from the “Logical Bible,” as atheists consider “Logical” infinitely better than “Holy.” To help you better understand atheists, here’s part of the story of creation as written in the Logical Bible:

In the beginning, there was nothing, the most logical state for the universe to be in. Though Athor, rational god of logic, approved of such a logical existence, he longed for there to be beings who foolishly believe in irrational things such as religion so that he might laugh at them and their stupidity. Thus Athor set about to create conditions in which such beings would arise in a purely logical and scientific manner. So he created the universe from an infinitely dense and infinitely hot singularity in the Big Bang. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Photons continued to form as the universe cooled. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

More cooling. And the evening and the morning were the third day. Again, more cooling. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

...

Eventually, a planet was formed at the right distance from a star for life to be sustained — as was likely and logical to happen given the size of the universe(s) — and Athor saw it and declared it “good enough.” Thus was formed the planet Earth. And the evening and the morning were the three trillion, three hundred forty-five billion, six hundred eighty-eight million, seven hundred twenty-three thousand, five hundred forty-second day.

The earth cooled. And the evening and the morning were the three trillion, three hundred forty-five billion, six hundred eighty-eight million, seven hundred twenty-three thousand, five hundred forty-third day.

More cooling. And the evening and the morning were the three trillion, three hundred forty-five billion, six hundred eighty-eight million, seven hundred twenty-three thousand, five hundred forty-fourth day. ...

Athor determined that the earth was now in such a condition that life might logically form, and thus it became so, through means still unknown though we have many theories about them. Athor’s ways can be enigmatic to us, but eventually we always figure them out and they are no longer so. So while the means by which Athor formed life are currently unknown, we can have faith that the means were quite scientific and logical and by no means mysterious. And when a single celled organism had formed through completely normal, scientific means, Athor said unto it: “Go forth and multiply and gradually

mutate so that you may become more complex entities.” And the single celled organism did as it was told. And the evening and the morning were the three trillion, six hundred one billion, three hundred sixty-three million, eight hundred seventy-two thousand, nine hundred third day.

And the organism continued to multiply. And the evening and the morning were the three trillion, six hundred one billion, three hundred sixty-three million, eight hundred seventy-two thousand, nine hundred fourth day. ...

And after two billion years, Athor checked in on his creation to see the progress it had made and exclaimed: “What the what?! It’s been two billion years, and you’re still just single-celled organisms?! How long is this going to take?” And he did pepper his speech with much vulgarity, because he’s not some sort of Christianist who gets hung up on that sort of thing. And the evening and the morning were the four trillion, three hundred thirty-one billion, eight hundred sixty-three million, eight hundred seventy-two thousand, nine hundred third day. ...

Eventually, complex organisms formed, and through very scientific, unmysterious processes did come forth plants, the fish of the sea, the avian dinosaurs of the air, and the beasts of the earth — though not necessarily in that order. There were even really big dinosaurs which were totally awesome, although they died out except for things like chickens which aren’t anywhere near as awesome.

And, as logically would happen, on the five trillion, three billion, nine hundred six million, seven hundred thirty-seven thousand, five hundred thirty-second day, modern man arose ... not that the generation before it would look any different or be identifiably human, but you have to draw the line somewhere, and we’re drawing it here.

And on the five trillion, three billion, nine hundred six million, seven hundred thirty-seven thousand, five hundred thirty-third day, man did look upon the world, the sky, and the many wonders of existence and did speculate that some marvelous being must have created all its splendor. At this time, did Athor appear to them saying: “There is nothing wondrous to creation, stupids! Its existence follows an extremely logical process — as I ensured it would — and you’d all realize that if you weren’t such willful morons! You make me sick. You’re what’s wrong with this world!” And Athor did laugh heartily at the silly religious types, and it was good.

And on the five trillion, three billion, nine hundred six million, seven hundred thirty-seven thousand, five hundred thirty-fourth day, Athor rested.

~Scroll down for *ARPTalk(22.1.2)*~

(22.1.2)

Integration of FAITH and SCIENCE

by Dr. Sam Gray

EDITOR'S REMARKS: Dr. Sam Gray is a 1995 graduate of Erskine College. He has a Ph.D. in genetics from Clemson University. One of his interests as a scientist and teacher of science is the integration of Biblical faith and science. The article below reflects some of his thoughts.

How does Christian faith integrate with the practice of science? Unfortunately, many people say the two never mix. I believe this response is wrong. I will attempt to show how scientific inquiry harmoniously integrates with Christian faith.

To begin, all learning rests upon faith in something. For the purpose of illustration, I pose a question. Does Antarctica exist? Before you answer, consider where your knowledge originates. Have you been to Antarctica, or do you accept its existence on the authority of the testimony of someone else who has been? One also sees faith within the discipline of mathematics. Mathematical theorems rest on unprovable statements called postulates. Historians place faith in original documents. Experimental scientists place faith in the scientific method. Scholars must accept by faith *something* as true in order to pursue a rational course of study. All inquiry begins with faith.

The Apostle Paul (Colossians 1:15-19) knew that Christ was the image of the invisible God, firstborn over all creation. He knew that a faith whose center was anything other than Christ would fail and could not possibly serve as the foundation for learning or living. Only in Christ do all things hold together.

Our pluralistic society asserts knowledge from God's word remains separate from knowledge gained through scientific inquiry. Some claim these two sources of knowledge bear no influence on each other and Christian faith holds no place in science. Many would say that the content of Christian faith is not "knowledge" at all. Rather it is, at best, "opinion." This understanding of knowledge fails to accurately describe reality. Such a view denies God's sovereignty over the discipline of science. Furthermore, it neglects the history of science as a Christian endeavor supporting Christian theology. Early scientists believed a rational God created the universe (Genesis 1:1); therefore, the universe can be understood through reason.

The laws of science can describe the decisions and actions of God as He holds His creation together (Colossians 1:17). Science provides a way for us to exercise dominion over God's creation (Genesis 1:28). God reveals His glory through creation (Psalm 19:1). He created a world that can and should be comprehended. Science provides a method for gaining this comprehension.

Science seeks to know the truth of how the natural world operates. Christ himself provides the proper foundation for this pursuit. All truth begins with God. He is the God of truth (Psalm 31:5), His Son is the Lord of truth (John 14:6), and His Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). All truth originates from a single source and, therefore, composes one harmonious whole. Consequently, God's written word provides the starting point of all rational inquiry and the guide to all interpretation of reality. Every search for truth starts and concludes with Christ.

Scholars who insist upon removing Christian faith from the practice of science espouse the worldview known as naturalism. Naturalism holds all phenomena in the universe can be explained wholly in terms of natural causes. The natural world cannot be influenced by anything outside the natural world, such as God. Naturalism strikes at the heart of the gospel. Abraham faced similar attacks from the Canaanites and Paul from the Athenians. Today these attacks resonate within the universities of the United States. Ramifications of naturalistic thought include the following:

- **God does not exist.**
- **Men exist only as a chance product of billions of years of random particle collisions.**
- **Mankind is not unique, just another animal.**
- **There are no absolutes.**
- **We have no responsibility to God.**
- **There is no basis for deciding the difference between right and wrong.**
- **Life has no real purpose.**
- **Man is the master of his own destiny.**
- **There is no such thing as sin, so there is no need for a savior.**

Clearly, naturalism conflicts with Christianity. Logically, one cannot simultaneously claim to be a Christian and a proponent of naturalism. Correct science, however, does not conflict with Christian faith. Both provide complementary views of the world. God tells us of Himself and our condition in His special revelation, the Bible. Science provides us with a method of knowing the parts of creation we can experience with our senses. Science lets us explore God's general revelation. The Bible answers questions of our origin, purpose, and destiny. Through science we understand, albeit incompletely, how God orders and sustains His creation.

Genesis tells of God purposefully creating the world. His creation shows many predictable patterns. Scientists call these predictable patterns scientific laws. God pronounces his creation very good. By studying his creation, scientists see God's wisdom, power, creativity, beauty, and majesty. In Genesis 3 we learn of the fallen state of creation. Today we see a blend of the good and the fallen. As followers of Christ, we are called to serve as agents of redemption, restoring the world to its original good state. Scientists participate in this redemption by breeding cows that give more milk, transforming bacteria to produce human insulin, developing technology to increase crop yields, creating methods for reducing industrial pollution, and discovering new drugs to cure illness. Furthermore, as Christian scientists, we are equipped by the Holy Spirit to make ethical decisions in our research, to serve as responsible stewards of God's natural resources, and to properly exercise dominion over the earth.

As teachers and parents we need to develop our students' understanding of Christian vocation. Abraham Kuyper correctly writes, "[T]here is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" (Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper, A Centennial Reader* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], p. 488). God calls and equips some of His people to go forth in the scientific community and to serve as salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14). Salt flavors and preserves what we consume. Light illuminates our path and allows us to avoid hazards. We Christian scientists interpret scientific discoveries through the lens of God's word. We understand God's revelation of Himself through the natural world (Romans 1:20). We show students where God's word intersects with science, glorifying Christ.

Population geneticists define evolution as a change in gene frequency within a population. A population consists of a group of organisms of the *same species*, living in the same location, interbreeding amongst themselves. This definition of evolution describes reproduction within kind as recorded in Genesis. For example, suppose a scientist observes that 20% of the rabbits living in a forest have gray fur. A year later the scientist returns to that same forest and observes that 60% of the rabbits now have gray fur. The rabbit population now shows a higher percentage of genes coding for gray fur. According to the definition at the beginning of this paragraph, evolution occurred. Notice the example starts with rabbits and ends with rabbits. The scientist observes the number of rabbits and their fur color. By counting the rabbits, he measures the population. The scientist can repeat these observations by placing an identical population under identical circumstances. The change in gene frequency is observable, measurable and repeatable. The above observations operate within the parameters of Genesis.

Regrettably, scientists operating within a naturalistic worldview espouse evolution as a theory describing life's origin. Evolution as a theory of origin assumes the first living cells arise from nonliving coacervates in a primordial soup. Life spontaneously appears via natural processes apart from any divine

intervention. Over billions of years and through natural processes, these primitive first cells give rise to the multitude of diverse life forms present today. Christians take issue with evolution as a theory of origin on both scientific and theological grounds.

Scientific theories must be observable, measurable, repeatable, and testable. No person observed the origin of life. Additionally, evolutionists hold that life spontaneously arose from nonliving matter. Louis Pasteur disproved spontaneous generation in 1861. To date, no scientist has created life. Evolutionists posit that the first cell gave rise to increasingly complex organisms, such as fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. No scientist has observed this degree of evolution, nor demonstrated a mechanism whereby these increasingly complex organisms acquire the new genes required to produce greater complexity. Evolutionists also hold that life arose as a result of random chance. This assumption is not repeatable. Evolutionists say life arose over billions of years. This time frame is not observable. Furthermore, evolutionists hold that geological, biological, and astronomical processes presently observed operated identically in the past at the same strength and intensity as they do today. Science operates in the present only; past phenomena are not observable. Questions regarding the origin of life fall beyond the scope of science.

Theologically, man as a random product of chance denies God's special creation of Adam. Christians believe Adam had no earthly parents. We believe in a literal Adam who was created directly by God and fell by sinning against God. Adam, the federal head of mankind, fell into sin dragging all mankind with him (Romans 5:19). Evolutionists deny the existence of a literal Adam. Without a literal Adam, there is no original sin. Neither is there a need for a savior. Consequently, 1 Corinthians 15:22 bears no relevance. How can Christ serve as the last Adam if indeed there is no first Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45)?

In summary, Christian faith integrates well with scientific inquiry. God's special revelation provides the framework within which science operates. Science provides a tool to explore God's general revelation. Through science, we begin to understand how God orders and sustains His creation. All truth, including truth learned through science, originates from Christ; therefore, all truth points to Him.

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(22.1.3)

**Another Story
of An ARP Student
Who Will Not Attend
Erskine College
Because of Erskine's Lack
of A Christian Worldview**

EDITOR'S REMARKS: The following is a letter that was written to the Editor. Permission has been given to use this letter.

Today I received the *ARPTalk* (21). I am grateful that Dr. Gore's sermon was printed in full. It was a very stimulating and challenging read.

I also appreciated the letter from Miss Karis Tucker who is attending Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi, and it is in this regard that I am writing this note. I felt that you should know that Karis Tucker is not unique in the ARP community. Our own daughter, Laura, is also a student at Belhaven College.

Laura had also seriously considered Erskine College. However, one of the most persuasive arguments in favor of Belhaven was its integrated Christian worldview curriculum. My wife and I were very impressed with how the college has made every effort to bring the Bible into the whole way of thinking at Belhaven rather than just as a separate subject in the college's curriculum. We have rejoiced to see Laura grow in her understanding of how the Word of God has a direct impact on every area of life.

The decision to send Laura to Belhaven College instead of Erskine College was not easy (it seemed so disloyal to the ARP denomination) but it was confirmed for me during this past meeting of the annual Synod of the ARP Church (June, 2009). While I honor Dr. Ruble in his very difficult position as the President of Erskine College and Seminary where he has to balance several competing interests, I also have to say that I was very disappointed in his affirmation of the Erskine Science faculty's statement on the relationship of science to the Christian faith. Evolution was presented as "science" while creation was dismissed as "faith." I cannot agree with such a non-Christian worldview. I expect it to be taught at a secular college, but in my view it is totally unacceptable in a college which declares itself to be Christian and Reformed.

It is my hope and prayer that Erskine will move to a more biblical Christian curriculum as a result of Synod's initiative at this past meeting of the ARP Synod.

Yours in Christ

Rev. Frank Van Dalen

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(22.1.4)

Is Erskine Unique

by Ken McMullen

EDITOR'S REMARKS: Some speak of the mess at Erskine as though it were something that has recently taken place. The article below, by Rev. Ken McMullen, was taken from *The Associate Reformed Presbyterian*, July, 1986. The Erskine College and Theological Seminary rebellion against and disregard for the ARP Church is long and well-documented.

UNIQUE /yōō nēk'/ *adj.* 1. being the only one of its kind. 2. unmatched; without equal. 3. rare, unusual. 4. limited to a region, class or time.

By DEFINITION, the word "unique" implies something that is quite literally one of a kind. Something either is unique or is not. And it cannot be "very unique," for that is like saying something is "very dead." Something is dead or alive. Something is unique or not unique.

We often use the word "unique" to describe Erskine College. Our denomination's institution of higher education is said to have a unique atmosphere, a unique setting which is unlike that of other colleges and universities. In many ways it is a campus that is different from any other.

We especially feel this way as springtime arrives, clothing dogwood trees in white blossoms, bringing daffodils and tulips to carpet spots which were lifeless during the winter. Trees burst forth in waves of green, offering the setting for lazy walks across the campus and through the town.

The town, Due West, is itself a part of Erskine's rare qualities. Many would claim the town is too small for a college, but who can match Due West's support for its college? In addition the friendliness of the people in the community adds much to the atmosphere of Erskine which sets it apart.

This friendliness often carries over into the student body. Everyone may not know everyone else's name, but rarely do most students pass each other without a friendly "Hey," or a smile (exam week may be excepted). This most certainly is in contrast to the large state universities, where often one is simply a number in the crowd.

One of the qualities which attracted me to Erskine when I was considering colleges is this friendliness. It bears true of faculty members as well, for they are truly caring and often are willing to spend extra time in the office to aid students who need help

on their work or who simply want to talk. Erskine's friendliness can be quite contagious.

This often is tied to another thing which we see as unique—something now proudly displayed on the new campus sign: "Erskine College, The College of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church." Erskine is the only school sponsored by the ARP Church, and many see this as the central characteristic that gives Erskine a unique quality.

The college's motto, adopted in 1842, is "Scientia cum moribus conjinta," or "Knowledge Joined with Morals." Many trace Erskine's friendly, caring atmosphere to this emphasis on joining a liberal arts education with Christian morals both in and outside of the classroom.

This is the "statement of purpose" adopted by the Erskine Board of Trustees:

"Erskine College exists to provide opportunities for liberal arts education in an environment created from and expressive of Christian commitment. Striving for excellence and respecting individually, the college seeks to enable each student to integrate knowledge and moral values in preparation for a life of service to God and society. Erskine, as part of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian tradition since 1839, attempts to unite faith and reason to produce an atmosphere in which Christianity undergrads the freedom of inquiry and inspires dedication to the search for truth and understanding."

Many see this purpose as what makes Erskine something other than just another academic institution. They see Erskine in this light as unique.

But why have I bothered to go over these things with you when many of you already know them (a number of you having also attended Erskine)? Why have I shared with you some of the characteristics which make Erskine unique? I have done so, sadly, because I am afraid these things alone do not make Erskine College unique.

Are not the atmosphere and surroundings unique? There is only one Due West, after all, isn't there? True, but there are other small towns across the nation which are home to colleges and even universities, and each one has its own local flavor and qualities. Erskine's atmosphere is a special thing, but it alone does not make our college unique.

Well, what about its friendliness? Surely that sets Erskine apart from the crowd, so to speak. True, Erskine's friendly aura is a rare prize in a fast-paced, individualistic world. But there are other colleges which match or even outdo Erskine on this count. So we must concede again that these things alone do not make Erskine College unique.

Ah, but there is one thing that is unique, you may say. Only one college is sponsored by the ARP Church. Yes, in this Erskine is unique; in this way it is one of a kind (although it has not always been alone; e.g. Bryson College). But is this fact alone enough to claim that Erskine is "unmatched, without equal"?

Well, what if this fact is Joined with Erskine's statement of purpose? Would we not then be able to say that Erskine College is unique in the true sense of the word? To this I would have to answer: "Yes, but"

What I mean here is that if this statement of purpose was actively being implemented, then Erskine would have reason to claim being a unique institution.

But is this purpose being pursued actively? Unfortunately it takes quite an imagination to say that it is.

From my experience and the experience of many others associated with Erskine College, it can be said the Erskine takes a laissez faire ("let do, let alone") attitude toward implementing these purposes.

Erskine does offer an excellent academic program; that cannot be questioned. But it appears to me that this has been divorced from the purpose of instilling Christian values in the individual student.

This is not to say there is no Christian emphasis. There is Christian emphasis. But too often it is relegated to a token position in the life of the college, being confined to Christian Emphasis Week or to occasional speakers.

In fact, the college's statement of purpose is often undermined, for some members of the faculty and staff of Erskine College show little affection for the ARP Church and its connections with the college, and I strongly suspect that a few would prefer to be independent of the ARP denomination.

This purpose also is undermined when the administration does not appear to deal with un-Christian practices unless they "get out of hand." A regular part of some literary societies' initiations appears to involve taking the new members out to get drunk. Alcohol rules are often openly flouted in the dormitories. Does allowing such casual practices foster "an environment created from and expressive of Christian commitment?" The answer to that question is obvious. But why worry about whether Erskine College is unique in the first place (especially by my "narrow" definition, you may ask)?

My question is born of a heart thoroughly devoted to Erskine. As our fight song says: "I'm Erskine born and Erskine bred, and when I die I'll be Erskine dead."

As such, as the economy pushes costs of tuition up, as America's pool of new students declines with the decline of the birth rate, we must ask ourselves about Erskine College's future.

There are many excellent liberal arts colleges and universities where students can get as good an education as at Erskine (and in some cases a better one). In this sense, Erskine is not unique. Thus, why not attend an excellent state college or university where the cost is less? This is one reason I've heard from students transferring from Erskine to other institutions.

What about students seeking a quality education in a Christian atmosphere? Here again, there are many colleges which offer a strong academic program while at the same time providing an active and vibrant Christian setting. While Erskine offers some Christian emphasis, it falls short of its own statement of purpose. It is not unique in this area. Once again, then, why not go to an institution that does offer such things?

What it boils down to is that unless Erskine has something unique to offer, people's pocketbooks will lead them elsewhere, and Erskine will limp along with low enrollment or worse; our college is not guaranteed to have an eternal existence on its own.

The hope of Erskine lies in fulfilling the purpose for which it was created: Joining 'knowledge with the Christian faith in an active way.

Straddling the fence will not make Erskine unique; standing for Jesus Christ will. We need to heed the words inscribed in Hebrew above the doors of the Erskine Building: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Let us seek to make our college unique, for His sake.

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(22.1.5)

Billy Mays for ETS!

EDITOR'S REMARKS: This e-mail from Erskine Theological Seminary is real. The Editor is not creative enough to make this up. This is a Bill Mays for OXYCLEAN . . . uh . . . no . . . Billy Mayes for Erskine Theological Seminary. What is a "Fans of Erskine?" Is this a new low in bad taste and mediocrity? Good grief!

From: Mary Lowe <mlope@erskine.edu>
Date: Tue, Aug 11, 2009 at 5:06 PM
Subject: Fans of Erskine Seminary
To: SEMINARY_STUDENTS@listserv.erskine.edu

Fans of Erskine Seminary

August 11, 2009

Erskine Seminary is giving away a free course!

Be one of the first 100 fans to join the Facebook group, *Fans of Erskine Seminary*. To help us reach our goal of 100 fans, share this group with your friends, church members, and professional contacts.

Once we reach our goal of 100 fans, a drawing will be held for one free course for Fall 2009. Winners will be notified via Facebook.

Click [here](#) to find this group.

~Scroll down for *ARPTalk(22.2)*~

ARPTalk(22.2)

Is Erskine's Ranking Tanking?

In recent years, Erskine College has used the motto "Christian Commitment and Excellence in Learning." No doubt readers of *ARPTalk* are aware that the Editor has repeatedly raised questions about the Erskine Administration's implementation of the "Christian Commitment" part of this slogan. In this article the Editor will focus on the second half of the now obsolete motto: "Excellence in Learning."

NINTH IN SOUTH CAROLINA—THAT CAN'T BE GOOD!

On July 22, 2009, Erskine's *NetNews* proclaimed that "Erskine ranks ninth in state among public and private colleges and universities" (<http://www.erskine.edu/news/07.22.09.htm>). *NetNews* is a public relations arm of Erskine College and Seminary, so we assume this is supposed to be good news. According to the *NetNews* article, these rankings on *StateUniversity.com* are "completely statistical and based on government sources." The article added that schools are assigned a score on a scale of 100 and that the "most important" criteria are "a school's ACT/SAT scores, student retention, faculty salary and student/faculty ratio." To be sure, these are all important indicators of academic quality. Apparently the Erskine Administration is satisfied both with the criteria used and with Erskine College's ranking on the *StateUniversity.com* site. But should they be happy with this ranking? A visit to the *StateUniversity.com* website (http://www.stateuniversity.com/rank_by_state/score_rank/SC.html) quickly uncovered some deeply troubling information.

The top 15 schools with their scores were:

- 1 [Furman University](#) 97.5
- 2 [Clemson University](#) 94.8
- 3 [University of South Carolina-Columbia](#) 90.7
- 4 [Presbyterian College](#) 89.9
- 5 [Converse College](#) 80.2
- 6 [Winthrop University](#) 79.9
- 7 [Claflin University](#) 79.0

- 8 [Columbia International University](#) 78.0
- 9 [Erskine College and Seminary](#) 76.4
- 10 [Francis Marion University](#) 73.2
- 11 [University of South Carolina-Aiken](#) 72.9
- 12 [Columbia College](#) 72.4
- 13 [Coastal Carolina University](#) 71.7
- 14 [Lander University](#) 70.0
- 15 [University of South Carolina-Upstate](#) 69.6

Given that Wofford College and up-and-coming Anderson University and North Greenville Baptist University were not included in the rankings due to insufficient data, it is quite possible that Erskine College would not even make the “top ten” in South Carolina if these schools were included.

What can we learn from this ranking? The Editor recalls from his time as a Trustee on the Erskine Board that Erskine College’s peer group has traditionally been thought to be the top-ranked private schools in the region (e.g., Furman University, Presbyterian College, Wofford College, etc.). That is now wishful thinking. Erskine College has fallen WAY behind the top four, and to speak of Erskine College as competing academically with schools like Furman University is ridiculous. In reality, Erskine now jockeys with schools like Winthrop University, Anderson University, North Greenville Baptist University, Columbia College, and Lander University.

Another implication of these rankings is that Erskine College cannot continue to charge the level of tuition and fees that it now does. The real peer-group competitors for Erskine College are less expensive to attend than Erskine College. How long will it be until current and prospective students at Erskine College wise up? And when they do wise up, how will Erskine College adapt? Given the track record of President Ruble, who built Erskine Theological Seminary as a low-cost professional school with an emphasis on accessibility rather than quality, a future for Erskine College with distance-education programs and adult degree-completion programs looks inevitable. How will Erskine College compete with state institutions that can offer such programs much more cheaply? Will Erskine College follow Erskine Seminary and become just another “bottom feeder” school scrambling for scraps of donations, faculty, and students?

The Editor of *ARPTalk* has invested considerable time and money in Erskine College and Seminary over the years. He has been

instrumental in sending quite a few students to both Erskine College and Erskine Theological Seminary, and so he takes no pleasure in saying that Erskine College is in decline. But the facts speak for themselves!

SELECTIVE REPORTING?

The *NetNews* article also went out of its way to mention what have traditionally been regarded as peer institutions (Furman University, Clemson University, USC-Columbia, Presbyterian College, and Converse College) but was CURIOUSLY SILENT about two other schools that outranked Erskine College, namely Claflin University and Columbia International University (formerly Columbia Bible College). The Editor of *ARPTalk* wonders why!

ANOTHER INDICATOR OF DECLINE

Several years ago Erskine College dropped completely out of Liberal Arts Tier 3 of the *US News & World Report*/Carnegie Foundation's rankings. Some may recall that Erskine College's presence in that liberal arts college ranking was a keystone of President John Carson Administration's advertising strategy for Erskine College. Now Erskine College is ranked as a "Baccalaureate" school instead of a "Liberal Arts" institution because it no longer meets the Carnegie Foundation's criteria for liberal arts colleges. Historically, Erskine College has thought of itself as a quality liberal arts institution, but the current Administration seems more intent on adding sports than strengthening academics (see http://arptalk.weebly.com/uploads/7/0/5/3/705327/arptalk_8_.pdf). There is little hope that Erskine College will regain its status as a liberal arts college.

Ironically, when former Erskine College Academic Dean Dr. Donald Weatherman, who was well-known as an administrator and champion of liberal arts education, came to Erskine College from Lyon College in Arkansas a decade ago, both Erskine College and Lyon College were ranked as Carnegie Foundation Tier 3 Liberal Arts colleges. And if the Editor's memory of his years on the Board is correct, a key goal of Dr. Carson's strategic plan was moving Erskine up to Liberal Arts/Tier 2. Now fast forward ten years: Lyon College, which has just called Dr. Weatherman as its President, has moved up to Liberal Arts/Tier 1 while Erskine College has completely dropped out of the Liberal Arts ranking! Dr. Weatherman, in his final interview in the Erskine College *Mirror* newspaper, exhorted the

Erskine College community to “embrace the mission.” It is also no great secret that Dr. Weatherman was sorely distressed by the current direction of the school.

A NEW MOTTO

Recently hired Erskine Enrollment VP Woody O’Cain announced a new slogan for Erskine College: “Forever Connected.” We are told that the new motto was plastered all over campus before it was approved by President Ruble, to the consternation and confusion of many students (see the letter by 2009 graduate Katie Beth Leathers in *ARPTalk*(16), www.arptalk.org). Some suspect that the reason for the change was to get rid the word “Christian.” Is this yet another instance of what the Editor has called the “Furmanization” of Erskine (see <http://arptalk.weebly.com/extra-1.html>)?

Frankly, the Editor of *ARPTalk* is also unsure of what “Forever Connected” means; however, the Editor wishes to commend the leaders of Erskine College for their candor. After all, in light of these embarrassing rankings they really can’t talk about “Excellence in Learning” anymore, can they? “Forever connected” is bland enough—it will do!

EXPLAINING ERSKINE’S DECLINE


Erskine English Professor Dr. Bill Crenshaw and others have insisted that academic excellence and a pervasive evangelical Christian identity are incompatible and that the ARP Church’s influence is to blame for Erskine’s academic decline. But is this the case?

The information on the *StateUniversity.com* website suggests otherwise. Let us recall that *Council for Christian Colleges and Universities*-member Columbia International University (formerly Columbia Bible College) is now ranked above Erskine College. A look at the national rankings on the site is even more stunning. How does Erskine College compare with some of the historically evangelical Christian colleges/universities? These are institutions that take seriously the integration of evangelical Christian faith and learning. Erskine is ranked nationally at **879** out of 2000 (for rankings for the top 2000, see http://www.stateuniversity.com/rank/score_rank/position/975). Compare Erskine College with the following: Union University (88),

Asbury University (154), Taylor University (159), Westmont College (171), Cedarville University (216), Houghton College (273), The Master's College (303), Azusa University (373), John Brown University (421), Columbia International University (794), and Geneva College (848). To the Editor's amazement, Toccoa Falls College, formerly Toccoa Falls Bible College, was ranked 975, but only two point two percentage points behind Erskine College. This corrects the notion that embracing a mission that integrates evangelical Christian faith and academic excellence is going to result in academic decline, does it not?

So what is the cause of Erskine College's academic decline? Is it an Administration that has steadfastly resisted the mission of the ARP Church? Is it a stupendously inept Board of Trustees that has repeatedly failed to put and keep competent administrators in place and to demand accountability? Is there any way to reverse this decline? These are issues that the Investigatory Commission on Erskine will have to sort out. In the meantime, what will the alums of Erskine do? Will some of them continue to embrace Dr. Ruble and his failed administration as a hedge against the mission of the ARP Church? Or will they finally speak up and say, "ENOUGH OF THIS MEDIOCRITY!"?

These are my thoughts,



Charles W. Wilson

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RUBLE TO RESIGN?!?

It has been reported to the Editor of *ARPTalk* that Dr. Randy Ruble, President of Erskine College and Seminary, is saying that this will be his last year as President.

Dr. Ruble has been President of Erskine College and Seminary since 2006. Dr. Ruble became President of Erskine College and Seminary when the attempt to ramrod the appointment of Dr. Paul Baker as President failed. Dr. Baker is a layman in the United Methodist Church and an administrator at Hampton Sydney College, VA. It was unthinkable to many in the ARP Church and on the Board that a United Methodist should be the President of the only ARP college, and, even more unthinkable, the President of a seminary that purports to be theologically Reformed and Presbyterian—the theological divide was just too wide. According to witnesses at the Board meeting in 2006, Dr. Ruble was elected President by only one vote in a head-to-head contest with a third candidate.

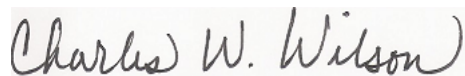
The “Ruble Years” have been tempestuous. The meetings of General Synod have been filled with high drama because of Erskine College and Seminary issues. Student unrest, administrative appointments that are unpopular with many on the Board and many in General Synod, questions regarding evangelical Christian commitment by the members of the Administration and Faculty, a precipitous decline of trust in Erskine College and Seminary by many in the ARP Church, the loss of the EBK Scholarship program, student criticisms in the college newspaper, *The Mirror*, of the Administration’s lack of missional fidelity, and other contentious issues have marked Dr. Ruble’s time in the president’s office as, to say the least, troubled.

The recent ranking of Erskine College as ninth in South Carolina, behind Columbia International University (formerly Columbia Bible College) and Claflin University and 879 nationally by *StateUniversity.com* cannot be very encouraging to Dr. Ruble’s Administration and the Faculty. In the world of counseling, one of the goals of a counselor is “do no harm.” No, not everything Dr. Ruble has done has been harmful. Indeed, he has been able to balance the budget so far. But the fact remains: much harm has been done. The divide between the college and seminary and the

ARP Church has never been so great. Presently, the weather indicators for Erskine College and Seminary and the ARP Church portend even worse conflicts. A NEW beginning is needed for Erskine College and Seminary. New leadership is required—leaders who understand the evangelical, Reformed, and Presbyterian faith of the ARP Church, and leaders who know how to implement the dream of the ARP Church: an Erskine College and Seminary that is the premiere, Christ-centered institution in the southeast and that unashamedly integrates evangelical Christian faith and academic excellence in the lives of young people to the glory of God.

If Dr. Ruble intends to resign and retire in May, perhaps NOW is better so that a new beginning can be made as soon as possible!

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(22)~