

ARPTalk (25)

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October 26, 2009

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ARPTalk(25.1)

LETTERS AND THINGS

(25.1.1)

E-mail from Seth Stark

Editor's Remarks: Mr. Seth Stark is a member of the Communion Presbyterian (ARP) Church in Irvine, California. He is a graduate student at Biola University and holds an M.A. in science and religion from the same university. The Editor does not know much more about Mr. Stark, but, regarding the faculty and Coach Alston, the interim Academic Dean of Erskine College, does not Mr. Stark describe the situation well? Indeed, as Mr. Stark clearly points out in his e-mail below, it seems that the academic community at Erskine College does not know the difference between the integration of faith and science and THE SEPARATION OF FAITH AND SCIENCE. Well said, Mr. Stark! Well said! As far as this debate on the integration of faith and science is concerned, what is stunning is the sheer multi-layered and florid ignorance of the Erskine academic community on the subject! This debate is difficult to engage because the Erskine academic community is so unread! Coach Alston and his faculty have no idea what evangelicals mean when they talk about faith and science! They are so secularized and dismissive of evangelicals that one is sure they have not made an effort to read anything that an evangelical has written.

* * *

After reading Dr. Alston's memo concerning the integration of faith and science, I find myself asking if Dr. Alston holds not to the integration of faith and science, but to the segregation of faith from science. Dr. Alston writes, "Those who believe that science and Christian faith are in conflict are thinking at an extremely shallow

level." And yet his memo did not demonstrate an integration of faith and science in the least. One can hold that the Christian faith and science are not in conflict, and yet still not have an integrated view of the two fields.

The late Stephen Jay Gould held that there was no conflict between science and faith because they employ different methods of investigation, different languages of dialogue. There is peace between the two because the one cannot speak to the other, and vice versa. Is this the method of "integration" used at Erskine? Is it even integration at all? To compartmentalize faith to only those areas to which science has not spoken is to limit the authority of faith. It sets science up as the determiner of truth, and leaves faith to the fringes.

If this is the model of integration of faith and science used at Erskine, then I agree with your assessment that a new Academic Dean is needed--one who understands that our Christian faith speaks to every area of our lives, including science.

~Scroll down for ARPTalk(25.2)~

THE EDITOR WASN'T WRONG!

After the publication of *ARPTalk(24)*, the Editor received a phone call from an Erskine Board member – an old friend. The Editor's friend had been asked by the members of the Seminary Committee of the Erskine Board and other Seminary officials to ask the Editor to write a retraction of article *ARPTalk(24.2)*, *DENIAL IS NOT JUST A RIVER IN EGYPT; 7. Degree-mill credentialed "scholar" teaching at ETS* (at <http://arptalk.weebly.com/issue-24.html>).

The following is the Editor's recollections of the conversation: (1) The Editor was accused of "messaging everything up" and getting his facts incorrect. (2) A great deal of work had been done in getting the professor in question in place. (3) Since the professor is Brazilian/Hispanic, he was chosen in order to attract Brazilian/Hispanic students in the Charleston area to the Charleston ETS site. (4) The professor's degree-mill D.Th. from Florida Christian University was not published in seminary documents. (5) The professor was qualified to teach Systematic Theology on the basis of his Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary.

Let the following be noted:

1. Everything the Editor said in *ARPTalk(24.2)* is correct – nothing is misleading. If there are attempts at disingenuousness and obfuscation, they do not come from the Editor.
2. The D.Th. of Dr. Eriberto Soto must be important since it is listed on page 146 of the ETS catalog:
<http://www.erskineseminary.org/Academics/SeminaryCatalog>.

NOTE: Dr. Soto is identified as "M.Div., Sioux Fall Theological Seminary; Th.M., Princeton Theological Seminary; D.Th., Florida Christian University" and "Adjunct Professor of Missions." How then does a background in "Missions" qualify a professor to teach Systematic Theology? Is the professor a recognized and published theologian in the area of Systematic Theology? On the basis of the presentation of the academic credentials of faculty members, how is Dr. Soto's D.Th. different? Is his degree not presented along with those who

have doctorates from institutions that are highly regarded academically, like Oxford University, Westminster Theological Seminary, the University of South Carolina, the University of Virginia and others?

3. In *ARPTalk(24.2)*, the Editor asked why academic protocols were not being followed. The question is still being asked. **Systematic Theology is the KING of theological studies – the science or standard whereby an institution is measured theologically. Why is a professor who is an “Adjunct Professor of Missions” being used to teach Systematic Theology? Once again, ETS is heavy with professors who teach theology – who have taught Systematic Theology, so why not use one of those professors? Why were the academic protocols that direct a terminal degree, and not a master’s degree, ignored? Below, and with the websites, are the protocols of SACS and ATS:**

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/faculty%20credentials.pdf>

Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, *FACULTY CREDENTIALS*, Guidelines - e. Faculty teaching graduate and post-baccalaureate course work: earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline.

<http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Documents/08GeneralStandards.pdf>

ATS – *GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS* – 6.1 Faculty Qualifications, Responsibilities, Development, and Employment – 6.1.1 Faculty members shall possess the appropriate credentials for graduate theological education, normally demonstrated by the attainment of a research doctorate or, in certain cases, another earned doctoral degree. In addition to academic preparation, ministerial and ecclesial experience is an important qualification in the composition of the faculty.

NOTE re ATS: The phrase “another earned doctorate” is used to allow for D.Min. holders who teach in the practical field. The ATS protocols used the term “normally” to make room for someone like the late Rev. Jack Heinsohn, D.D., one who was universally looked on in the ARP Church as a pastor-theologian, a minister who was renown for his preaching skills and who had made the study of preaching a life-long avocation. It was never the intention of the writers of the *ATS Standards* to allow for unaccredited doctorates.

4. **The academic protocols for Florida Christian University read in this manner: "Our faculty is composed of very qualified and capable instructors who hold either a Master s or a Doctor s Degree in a discipline closely related to the courses they are instructing" (at <http://www.fcuonline.com:8080/fcu/Content.do?method=build&type=ativo&lang=enus&mld=254>). Well, is this the sort of thing that ETS is going to put into practice? Is this the direction of quality theological education? Put this together with the unprecedented "fire sale" of the EDEN (distance-learning) courses last spring (see *ARPTalk(11.4)* at www.arptalk.org) and it kind of sounds degree-millish, does it not?**

5. **Executive Vice President of ETS has a penchant for seeking out PC(USA) professors to teach at ETS. The professor in question is a minister in the PC(USA). It seems that the Executive Vice President is attempting the PC(USA)fication of ETS. One of the stated goals in the long-term plan for ETS that was presented to the Board a couple years ago is the complete diversification of the ETS faculty to represent all the elements of the student body. Yes, the Editor has a copy of that document. Well, if the PC(USA)fication of ETS under the Executive Vice President has not yet been done, it is well on the way! Except for the fact that the ARP Church still owns the land that ETS sits on and gives the money that faithful ARPs have contributed for the work of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, can we even call ETS an institution of the ARP Church? And what has this gained for ETS? ARE THERE HUNDREDS OF PC(USA) students clamoring to the doors of ETS? In spite of the seeding of the ETS faculty, the Executive Vice President and his administrators have failed in recruiting PC(USA) students. The numbers have not changed much! This, however, is for certain, the Executive Vice President and his administrators have succeeded in alienating most of the ARP Church. Why is it that the Executive Vice President and his administrators are doing this? Could the reason for this be that the great majority of the ETS administrators have no living connection to the ARP Church – no knowledge of the ethos of the ARP Church of 2009 and no loyalty to the ARP Church? If the Executive Vice President and his staff are so enthralled with the PC(USA), why keep putting up the ARP pretense? Why do they not just transfer to the PC(USA) – that is, for those who are not already there! That would be a respected action!**

6. **In the past, the administrators of ETS have not bothered themselves too much to be in conformity with the theological direction of the ARP Church, so why would one now expect these same administrators to be concerned to be in conformity with the protocols of SACS and ATS? The difference is that the ARP Church has been patient to a fault, lacking in oversight, and unwilling to correct, but now the curtain rises on a new scene in the story – **ACCREDITATION**. One wonders what the responses of the directors of SACS and ATS will be when their auditors arrive next in Due West and learn of and give their reports on such non-compliance! Oops!**

7. **One final observation: The Editor does not know nor does he hold any malice for the professor whose name was mentioned in this article. It pained the Editor to mention the professor's name. The Editor is sure that the only thing the professor in question wanted was a job. It is patently unfair that he had to be brought into this discussion. This man has committed no fault. This discussion is not about this man. The focus of this article is on a long-standing problem. This most recent blunder by the ETS administration renews and heightens the concern of many of us in the ARP Church. The focus of this article is on the stewardship of the Board to provide faithful oversight of ETS for the ARP Church. The focus of this article is on another unwise decision by the ETS administration that may jeopardize the accreditation of ETS – a matter of grave concern for all in the ARP Church.**

For those who wonder how the Editor is aware of the information in this article, the Editor would like to inform the reader that the information in this article is either from the Erskine Theological Seminary catalog online or the SACS website or the ATS website. All of this information is on the internet for all to see. This is the age of information. The Editor has not found anything new, but much of what the Editor has found is inconvenient for the present ETS administration. So, does the Board not look into these matters? Does the Seminary Committee of the Board not look into these matters? We all have computers! Does anyone care? Where is the accountability? Where has been and where is the commitment of the Board to provide oversight and care for the cause of the ARP Church? **PERSONELLE EQUALS POLICY!**

These are my thoughts,

Charles W. Wilson

Charles W. Wilson

~Scroll down for ARPTalk(25.2)~

ARP Talk (25.3)

**“EBENEZER ERSKINE”
AND
STEVE SOUTHWELL
ON ERSKINE COLLEGE**

The correspondences below were posted on FACEBOOK and sent to the Editor by a friend.

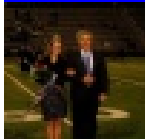
The first correspondence is from an e-mailer who identifies himself/herself as “Ebenezer Erskine.” The e-mail read:

I've just heard that the Moderator of the ARP Synod has formed a "commission" to investigate Dr. Ruble and the Board of Trustees at Erskine. It's no secret that the Moderator does not like Dr. Ruble and the proof is in the selection of the "commission". My sources tell me that the "commission" is made up of ministers and laymen that have publicly stated their dislike of Erskine. Alumni.. [sic] don't let your school go down without a fight.

The next correspondence is found on FACEBOOK. It is from Erskine Board member Mr. Steve Southwell. There are two parts to his posting.

First part:

[Steve Southwell](#) likes this.



Second part:

[Steve Southwell](#)

Let's don't judge to quickly. Let the system work.

In the words of Jed Clampett: “Well, doggies!” These are interesting. Let us count the ways of how they are interesting.

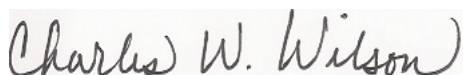
- 1. Who is the anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine"? The anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" has e-mailed the Editor a number of times, and the Editor has asked the e-mailer to identify himself/herself. The anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" has also made his/her presence known on other occasions. So, why the anonymity? The Editor of *ARPTalk* always identifies himself. Why is the anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" hiding? Could it be because he/she does not know what he/she is talking about? Anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" tell us who you are. Stop acting cowardly! Where is your integrity? Where is your spine?**
- 2. The anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" writes: "It's no secret that the Moderator does not like Dr. Ruble and the proof is in the selection of the 'commission'." Really? Has the anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" spoken with Dr. John R. de Witt, the Moderator of the ARP Church, to confirm his dislike for Dr. Randy Ruble, the President of Erskine College and Seminary? No! However, the Editor of *ARPTalk* called and spoke with Dr. de Witt this morning (10/24/09) and asked him if he disliked Dr. Ruble. Dr. de Witt's response was that he liked Dr. Ruble and has always found him to be "very charming". So, what is "no secret"? Where did the anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" get his/her information? Obviously, out of the black hole of his/her imagination! Alas, the anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" does not realize it, but he/she has also insulted Dr. Ruble. The Editor of *ARPTalk* has known Dr. Ruble for 37 years. It is not Dr. Ruble's style to speak ill of a Moderator of General Synod.**
- 3. One wonders if the anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" is a member of the Erskine College faculty. Whoever this person is, he/she has no respect for the leadership of the ARP Church. The anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine" has openly and blatantly disrespected the ARP Church. He/She writes: "My sources tell me that the 'commission' is made up of ministers and laymen that have publicly stated their dislike of Erskine." What sources? Both the Reverends Bill Marsh and Paul Mulner are members of the Commission and both are Erskine alumni. Mr. Gordon Query is a member of the Board and the Commission and he is one of the major donors in recent years – so much so that he was publicly honored. Dr. de Witt is a member of the Commission and a Board member and while he was the Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC, was instrumental in the purchase of a building for the ETS site in Columbia. As a matter of fact, a chair was established in Dr. de**

Witt's name and honor at ETS. Yes, this Commission is made up of people who "dislike" Erskine! So, Mr. anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine," how much have you given to Erskine College? These men are respected in the ARP Church and responsible for a lot of money for Erskine!

- 4. Anonymous "Ebenezer Erskine," how is Erskine College going down "without a fight?" What are you afraid of losing? Tell us plainly. The Editor challenges you to respond to *ARPTalk*! Who are you? What are you afraid of losing? Respond! Nothing will be edited!**

- 5. Finally, Mr. Steve Southwell, what are you doing responding to "Ebenezer Erskine" with "Steve Southwell likes this"? Sir, you are a member of the Board. You are charged with the oversight of Erskine College and Seminary in the name of and for the sake of the ARP Church. Sure, Mr. Southwell sought to cover himself with the second statement in his FACEBOOK posting, but the first statement is scandalous in that it demeans a duly appointed Commission that was given authority by the General Synod of the ARP Church. This statement is indicative of the attitudes of some members of the Board who have no loyalty to the ARP Church and who see the ARP Church as an impediment to the full secularization of Erskine College and Seminary. Do not let anyone tell the Editor that he does not know what he is talking about. The Editor was a member of the Board. The Editor has spoken with people like Mr. Southwell who place loyalty to a theologically desiccated and exsanguinated conceptualization of Erskine College over the God-honoring vision of the ARP Church for Erskine College and Seminary. A Board member who does not have a first loyalty to the ARP Church should resign! No person who does not have a first loyalty to the ARP Church should be allowed to serve on the Erskine Board! **PERSONELLE IS POLICY!****

These are my thoughts,



Charles W. Wilson

~Thank you for reading *ARPTalk*(25)~