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December 2, 2009

Welcome to the eighth issue of *ARPTalk*. Featured in *ARPTalk(8)* are the following six articles:

- (8.1) Highlights of the Fall Meetings of ARP Presbyteries;
- (8.2) Westminster Theological Seminary Standing Strong and well
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ARPTalk is posted on a blog site (http://arptalk.weebly.com) by a friendly blogger. This makes it possible to archive past issues of ARPTalk and to make them readily available to those who would like to read them. It also makes it possible to post resource materials that you may find interesting but are too long for the regular issues of ARPTalk.

ARPTalk is an attempt at being an e-magazine. The editor of ARPTalk doesn't know how to blog. The editor of ARPTalk is thankful for friends with computer skills.

If you are new to ARPTalk, ARPTalk is NOT an official voice of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The purposes of ARPTalk are two-fold: (1) To inform and educate the ministers and laypeople of ARPdom on significant issues that are before ARPdom; and (2) To give voice and encouragement to those who feel they hae been ignored and marginalized.

If you have thoughts, articles, reviews, criticisms, or news that are of interest to the ministers and laypersons of ARPdom, and if you submit them, they will most likely be published in *ARPTalk*.

If you have missed past issues of *ARPTalk* and would like to see them, the above blog site should assist you in your search. If that doesn't work, e-mail me at wilson6114@bellsouth.net and copies will be sent to you.

I hope you find ARPTalk(8) interesting and informative. I look forward to hearing from you.

The opinions expressed in the articles of *ARPTalk* are the opinions of those who write them.

Charles W. Wilson W. Wilson

(continue to the first article)

ARP Talk (8.1)

Highlights of the Fall Meetings of ARP Presbyteries

Canadian Presbytery

The meeting of the Canadian Presbytery was a time to celebrate the progress of the Trinity Associate Reformed Presbyterian Mission. The Lord willing, the Rev. Henry Bartsch will soon be the Pastor of the Trinity Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of Chatham, ON, Canada. PTL!

Catawba Presbytery

The news out of Catawba Presbytery is encouraging. In the everyday actions of the Presbytery, the delegates were informed that Providence Mission in Mt. Pleasant, SC, under the leadership of the Rev. Richard Brown, is to be organized as a "church" in the early months of 2009. The work of establishing a Louisiana-Texas Presbytery is continuing to progress. The First ARP Church of Rock Hill, the Tirzah ARP Church, and the Ebenezer Presbyterian Church are looking to plant a "daughter" congregation in the Rock Hill area. PTL!

First Presbytery

Besides the usual items, the Fall Meeting of First Presbytery had three items of particular note:

- 1. The Gaston Community Mission was received. This church plant is a "daughter" congregation of the First Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of Gastonia. This "church plant" was organized with enough members so as to be organized as a "Church" in the very near future. PTL!
- 2. The Church Extension Committee of First Presbytery was given permission to work with Outreach North America in exploring the possibility of a church plant in Scotland.

3. A Memorial to General Synod was approved in principle that called for the severing of corresponding relations with the PC(USA). The document was then referred to the Committee on Theological and Social Concerns to refine the language of the document.

Bravo for First Presbytery for taking the lead in this matter. In the Spring meetings of our Presbyteries, one hopes that other Presbyteries will join First Presbytery in this matter regarding the PC(USA).

Florida Presbytery

According to the Clerk of the Presbytery, Dr. Jim Klukow, the meeting was "pleasantly uneventful."

Mississippi Valley Presbytery

The business of the Mississippi Valley Presbytery was generic; however, there was a point of celebration: the Rev. Alex Coblentz has been installed as the first ARP minister of the recently received French Camp Presbyterian Church.

Northeast Presbytery

PTL! The Northeast Presbytery reported signs of growth. The Christian Center Ministries Church, Alexandria, VA was received. The Christ Mission in Grove City, PA, under the leadership of Dr. Iain Duguid, is doing very well. Mr. Duguid reports that the worship services are running between 150 to 180 in attendance.

Interestingly, the Yae Dam Presbyterian Church, Flushing, NY, a primarily Korean-speaking congregation, is the LARGEST congregation in Northeast Presbytery. It may also be the second largest congregation in the ARPC. PTL!

Pacific Presbytery

ARPTalk was not able to find any information in English regarding the Fall Meeting of the Pacific Presbytery.

Second Presbytery

The most entertaining of the Fall Meetings of our Presbyteries was the meeting of Second Presbytery.

A few days before the meeting of Second Presbytery an e-mail letter was sent to the ministers of Second Presbytery by Dr. Rob Roy McGregor informing them of his intentions to oppose the "Honorable Retirement" of Dr. L. Thomas Richie, the Pastor of the Young Memorial Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Anderson, South Carolina. Mr. McGregor's reason for sending out his letter was to inform Second Presbytery of the wording of a potentially controversial motion that he was prepared to make so that the members of Second Presbytery would have time to think about his proposed action rather than having the motion suddenly sprung on them at the Fall Meeting of Second Presbytery.

In Mr. McGregor's letter, he pointed out the following issues regarding Mr. Richie:

- That from the pulpit of the Young Memorial Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church Mr. Richie said that "he would not tell anyone that Jesus is 'the only way of salvation,' but that he is 'a way.'"
- That from the pulpit of the Young Memorial Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church Mr. Richie said "that the church should 'stop trying to present ourselves as superior' and as 'having a superior way,' and instead of trying to 'figure out ways to convert Jews, and Muslims, and whoever else is out there,' should instead 'struggle to find ways to be one with our Muslim neighbors."
- That for many years it has been Mr. Richie's custom and the custom of the Session of the Young Memorial Presbyterian Church to practice paedo-communion.

Mr. Richie responded to Mr. McGregor's letter with a letter of his own, which he sent to the Clerk of Second Presbytery, Rev. L Calvin Draffin. The Clerk then forwarded that letter to the Minister and His Work Committee.

At the writing of this article, the contents of Mr. Richie's have not been made known to Second Presbytery. This will be explained in the following paragraphs.

When the report of the Minister and His Work Committee was presented, the section regarding Mr. Richie's "Honorable Retirement" was pre-empted by a "minority report" of the Minister and His Work Committee. The "minority report," signed, as stated on the floor of Presbytery, by two members of the Minister and His Work Committee, reportedly brought formal "charges" against Mr. Richie on the basis of the contents of Mr. Richie's letter.

A motion was passed to establish a Judicial Commission of eight to investigate and adjudicate ALL MATTERS pertaining to this issue and to report back to Second Presbytery with the actions of the Judicial Commission no later than the Spring Meeting of Second Presbytery.

Mr. Richie attended the meeting of Second Presbytery accompanied by an attorney he had retained for the occasion. One wonders why the attorney was needed. In the debates of the day it seemed that Mr. Neely Gaston, the Executive Vice-President of Erskine Theological Seminary, was Mr. Richie's attorney. Mr. Gaston worked untiringly to quash the presentation and discussion of the matters regarding Mr. Richie, to prevent the reading of the "Minority Report" (with charges), and to suppress the reading of Mr. Richie's controversial letter of explanation to Second Presbytery.

One would think that if Mr. Richie's letter was a clarification of the concerns expressed by Mr. McGregor and the two members of the Minister and His Work Committee who brought charges that Mr. Richie would have demanded that his letter be read before Second Presbytery.

The verbal engagements between Mr. Gaston, the Moderator of Second Presbytery, Mr. Philip Malphrus, and the Parliamentarian of Second Presbytery, Dr. Bill Evans, would have been comic relief to a tedious afternoon if the issue had not been of such a serious nature.

Does it seem a bit odd to the reader that the Chief Administrator of a supposedly orthodox seminary, but a seminary whose orthodoxy is presently under fire, would choose, at this particular time, to be the chief advocate of a minister whose orthodoxy is being scrutinized?

The other actions of the day were, thankfully, uneventful.

Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery

The meeting of the Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery saw the presentation of a memorial that, if passed, would have asked the 2009 General Synod to overturn the "position" statements that were passed by the 2008 General Synod regarding inerrancy. After vigorous debate the memorial was referred for further study and eventually withdrawn by the maker of the memorial.

Virginia Presbytery

The meeting of Virginia Presbytery was a time of taking care of the regular business of the Presbytery.

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer and compiler,

Charles W. Wilson

Charles ("Chuck") W. Wilson

ARP Talk (8.2)

Westminster Theological Seminary Standing Strong and Well

The Peter Enns affair at Westminster Theological Seminary was very messy and traumatic. Faculty members and Board members were lost in the controversy. This upheaval was followed by negative comments and dire predictions by discontented alumni, former faculty, and former supporters. So, are we to expect the imminent demise of Westminster Theological Seminary?

According to Dr. Peter A. Lillback, the President of Westminster Theological Seminary, we will have to wait on the demise of WTS. Since the Enns affair, God's people have rallied around WTS with their support. Note the following from Dr. Lillback's most recent report on September 4, 2008:

- Received a 3-year grant of \$4.2 million to the General Fund that allows WTS to build for the next generation.
- Received a \$1 million grant to the General Fund.
- Received a half million dollar matching grant for the General Fund.
- Received a grant of \$75,000 for the 80th Anniversary celebrations of WTS.

These are a few of the items that President Lillback mentioned in his report. In the words of Mark Twain, the untimely demise of WTS has been greatly exaggerated!

We in the ARPC wonder what would have happened if the Barthian affair of Burnett and Bush had been resolved differently. What would have happened if the ETS Administration and the Erskine Board had shown the courage and Biblical commitment to deal with the Barthian affair in the same manner that WTS did? Would God's

people, who love the Word of God, have rallied around ETS as God's people did rally around WTS?

The waffling decision to protect PC(USA) professors who are Barthians has not encouraged God's people to come to the financial rescue of ETS. Today, in spite of the bad economic time, WTS has money to spend in building for the future and expanding faculty. Today, God's people have ignored ETS and ETS has a spending freeze and a hiring freeze.

This article was compiled by and commented on by

Charles ("Chuck") W. Wilson

Charles W. Wilson

<u>ARPTalk(8.3)</u> Martyrs of Due West

Did you know that there are now martyrs in Due West, South Carolina?

In a conversation with an ETS student, the student reported overhearing a conversation in which it was said that the ETS Administration has now designated PC(USA) Professors Dr. Richard Burnett and Dr. Michael Bush as "Martyrs of ETS." And, one would suppose, as soon as it can be verified that miracles have been performed in their names, they will also be canonized in solemn ceremony in the Bowie Chapel as "Saints of Due West Academia." And all this while they are still living!

Here is the context of the martyrology of Due West. Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush were asked and agreed to meet with the Seminary Committee of the EC Board in October. As is well-known, Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush are PC(USA) ministers who are on the ETS faculty. Both were trained at Princeton Theological Seminary. Both men are a part of the PC(USA) Confessing Church movement that opposes the PC(USA) General Assembly's approval of the ordination of practicing "homosexuals, lesbians, and transgendered persons." However, Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush's views on the authority of the Bible are characterized by most of us in the ARPC as neo-Barthian. They are not friends of the doctrine of inerrancy.

The position of the ARPC on the authority of the Bible before the meeting of the 2008 General Synod was "the Bible is without error in all that it teaches." The position of the ARPC on the authority of the Bible since the meeting of the 2008 General Synod is "the Bible alone, being God-breathed, is the Word of God written, infallible in all that it teaches, and inerrant in the original manuscripts." BOTH of the above statements are inerrancy statements—the first generally and the second specifically.

Both Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush take exception to these statements. Mr. Burnett's written statement (found in *ARPTalk(5)*, *article 1*, see http://arptalk.weebly.com) is convoluted, but it is definitely not an inerrancy statement, and Mr. Bush stated in a Spring Faculty Meeting that his piety would not allow him to say that the Bible is without error.

The particulars of the October Seminary Committee's meeting are still "under wraps"; however, whatever the contents of the official report of the Seminary Committee, it is known that the EC Board approved the report of the Seminary Committee. Indeed, Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush continue at their posts. Whether the EC Board acted responsibly is up for debate. One wonders whether the members of 2009 General Synod will have the courage to engage the EC Board on their actions. What of their stewardship to the ARPC? What were the members of the EC Board thinking?

Whatever the actions of the EC Board and the Seminary Committee, one wonders about the intentions of Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush. Here questions can certainly be asked. It does not take a Princeton Seminary Ph.D. to be able to discern the direction of the ARPC. How is it that they choose to remain in the theological seminary of the ARPC while the ARPC has repeatedly opposed Barthianism? Why would they not seek employment in an independent seminary that has a Barthian bent or the seminary of a denomination that reflects their views on the authority of the Bible? We can certainly understand the pragmatic desire of Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush to protect their employment, but should not theological integrity count for something, especially amongst theologians—people who are expected to know and teach ethics?

Even more troubling is the stance of the ETS Administration. Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush were hired as a means of reaching out to the

Confessing Church movement in the PC(USA). We were assured by the Due West "Seers" that "these people are just like us in the ARPC." It was even reported that, in order to appease the concerns of some conservatives, Mr. Burnett said he would join the Evangelical Theological Society if hired. That hasn't happened. And now that the theological allegiances of Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush are clear, why has nothing been done? Why is the ETS Administration ACTIVELY PROTECTING these men rather than working to preserve the theological integrity of ETS and the ARPC? What are the intentions of the ETS Administration? Is it what some at ETS have called "the moderation and broadening" of the ARPC? We at ARPTalk call this THE THEOLOGICAL CORRUPTION OF THE ARPC.

These recent actions, or more properly the LACK of action, of the EC Board raise pressing questions about the EC Board. Has the EC Board been remiss in its responsibility to the General Synod of the ARPC? The ARP *Manual of Authorities and Duties* states that the Trustees of the Erskine Board, who serve as the authority of the

ARPC at Erskine, representing the ARPC's will and presence, must have "a perception of the Church and its work that coincides with that of the Synod", and that they must be "kept informed of the church's policies and purposes" (pp. 38-39).

One would reasonably expect by the last sentence that, at the EC Board meeting after the meeting of the 2008 General Synod, those policies and actions passed by the General Synod that direct or effect Erskine College or ETS would be examined and explained to the Trustees so that full implementation at Erskine College and ETS might result.

Was this done at the last meeting of the EC Board and the meeting of the Seminary Committee? If not, why not? Certainly, this policy is well known by the Administrators. Do they not have copies of and have they not read the ARP *Manual of Authorities and Duties*? Does the General Synod direct the Erskine Board, or is it the other way around? Is this not a fair question to ask?

This writer has been watching the Erskine Board for 37 years. This writer does not think that the EC Board as a whole has openly defied the General Synod. But this does look like another example of the Administration's PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE ATTITUDE toward the ARPC—ignoring the General Synod and hoping the matter will be forgotten; that the motions and actions will go into the *Minutes of Synod* and never be brought before the EC Board as the "voice" that informs and directs Erskine College and ETS of their direction. And another fair question to be asked is this: Does this not look like CONTUMACY toward the authority of the ARPC?

Well, how does this make Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush martyrs?

The answer is not complicated. Because their views reflect what the great majority of ARPs would consider a HETERODOX VIEW ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE, they were asked to explain their views before the Seminary Committee. What else would one expect? That's not unreasonable, and this isn't an act of persecution! Such an investigation does not constitute the martyrdom of heroic theologians! To call this martyrdom trivializes the word "martyr."

Interestingly, the membership of the Seminary Committee that examined Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush included the Executive Vice-President of ETS, the Academic Dean of ETS, and at least two other members of the ETS faculty. Whether all the faculty members had

voting privileges is uncertain (and it doesn't matter), but this is certain: This was an internal audit, by an internal committee, with a predictable and preset outcome!

The question that was framed before the Seminary Committee was not the "theological fit" of Mr. Burnett as a professor of theology and Mr. Bush as an administrator in the seminary of the ARPC, or their orthodoxy on the authority of the Bible, or the theological position and direction of the ARPC, but the PROCEDURE whereby they were employed. The Seminary Committee seems to have functioned as though a theological shift in the ARPC has not taken place in the last twenty-five years. The Seminary Committee seems to have functioned as though ETS represents the theological center of the ARPC. Unfortunately, ETS has NOT represented the theological center of the ARPC for a very long time.

It seems that no one on the Seminary Committee asked this question: How is ETS to be recaptured by its OWN SPONSORING DENOMINATION so that it reflects the theological concerns of the ARPC? Was this question asked? Instead, there seems to have been an obsession with PROCEDURE. Is it unfair to say that procedure trumped an orthodox view on the authority of the Bible? No wonder ETS is not trusted in so many circles in the ARPC!

Sadly, it seems that Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush have been used as pawns by the Administration in a not too subtle attempt at latitudinarianism. It seems that those in the Administration desire to moderate and lessen the position of the ARPC on the authority of the Bible. It seems that they desire to redefine "inerrancy" so as to make the doctrine theological gibberish. Certainly, this is a reaction by the ETS Administration to thwart those who are seeking to draw ETS back to the theological center of the ARPC. Unfortunately, Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush are caught in the middle of this struggle.

No one at *ARPTalk* or anyone that this writer knows desires to see Mr. Burnett or Mr. Bush "tossed out" with no means to feed their families. The livelihoods of these men need to be protected while they seek positions in places that are more compatible to their theological views.

Indeed, this shameful episode in Due West has resulted in martyrs. And this episode is shameful, but NOT because Mr. Burnett and Mr. Bush were examined thoroughly by members of the Seminary Committee who are often ridiculed as "Fundamentalists." These men

are victims of the ETS Administration's failure to exercise their stewardship to the ARPC by asking, Where IS the ARPC theologically? and also by asking, Where is the ARPC GOING theologically? The only "martyrs" that may come out of this struggle are THE ORTHODOX DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE and THE THEOLOGICAL HEALTH AND INTEGRITY OF THE ARPC!

Theses are my thoughts,

Charles W. Wilson
Charles ("Chuck") W. Wilson

ARP Talk (8.4)

President Randy Ruble's Vision Statement for Erskine College

What is Dr. Randy Ruble's Vision Statement for Erskine College? After an extensive search through the various Erskine online sites, the follow Vision Statement has been found:



Since there isn't one, from the rhetoric that is heard, one has to draw the conclusion that the above is President Ruble's Vision Statement: FOOTBALL.

At the meeting of the 2006 General Synod, President Ruble assured the delegates representing the ARPC that his Presidency was going to be DIFFERENT. President Ruble asked for time to get the "Erskine house" in order. He begged that the problems at EC were not the problems of his making—that the problems were what he had inherited.

It has been three years since Mr. Ruble became the President of EC. What is his vision for EC? His predecessor was not bashful about his Vision Statement. Everywhere President John Carson went he spoke of his vision for EC, and in most of his writing he wrote of his vision for EC. Where is President Ruble's Vision Statement? Why is he so dilatory in providing one?

The only thing that seems to be on the agenda in Due West for President Ruble is FOOTBALL. Football is the Messiah. A return to a football program will make all the woes go away.

When the Board met in October the question of football at EC was not embraced enthusiastically. However, the Board did vote to continue to study the possibility of a football program. But it seems that no one wants to rush into this. There is something sobering about an estimated \$7,000,000 plus price tag!

One would think that the pause has greatly lengthened as of late after a report that the endowment has taken a 26% loss in the stock market decline. However, the question, in Shakespearean terms, "to be football or not to be football," seems to live on.

Indeed, President Ruble's Presidency is DIFFERENT. No football has been added, but three new athletic programs have been added. One wonders how that has played out. Is it a touchdown? One would think that these programs would have garnered a host of new Erskine Freshmen and transfer students anticipating football! The word on the street in Due West is that all this new athletic activity has resulted in the smallest entering freshman class in years!!!!

All of this is the trivialization of an academic community. What are the plans? What is the direction? What of academic excellence? What of Christian commitment? What are President Ruble's values? Where is President Ruble's Vision Statement? Why hasn't he written one? Does he have one? Is EC being run as an ADHOCRACY? Why is it that the Erskine Administrators, at the College and the Seminary, are NOT forthcoming with public statements? Why are they so loath to do this?

Theses are my thoughts, Charles W. Wilson

Charles ("Chuck") W. Wilson

$\mathcal{ARPTalk}(8.5)$

The Best-Kept Secret in Due West

Probably the best-kept secret in Due West is the campus ministry of the Erskine Chaplain, Rev. Paul Patrick.

The present Office of Chaplain at Erskine College was established by the action of the General Synod some 10 or so years ago. If memory serves, in those days, the General Synod paid half the salary of the Erskine College Chaplain and Erskine College paid the other half. The position disappeared and the Pastor of the Due West ARP Church assumed the responsibilities on a part-time basis. However, the General Synod was keen on the reinstitution of the Office of Chaplain as a permanent position. The full salary of the Chaplain is now requested by Erskine College from the General Synod.

An example of the GOOD WORK of the Campus Ministry of the Chaplain is the recent "Evening with Red Mountain Music." The Red Mountain Band, an RUF team out of Birmingham, AL, was highlighted in the Campus Ministry's Sunday Evening Barn Ministry that held its first "Fall Hymn Sing." It is reported that there were 225 people in attendance. Some of those in attendance were prospective students who were visiting Erskine College, and they left Due West with a good impression. There were also young alumni, Erskine faculty and staff, and Due West people in attendance.

The attendees were served free barbeque and ample servings of rich worship through the singing of traditional hymns to new tunes.

Though the salary of the Chaplain is funded by the General Synod through Erskine College, the Campus Ministry is unbudgeted by Erskine College. The ministry depends on the gifts of friends who see the need for such an outreach to the Erskine College community.

Wow! This is what one would call "cost effective" for Erskine College!

Below is the address of Campus Ministry at Erskine for those who would like to participate financially in this ministry. This is a ministry that actually works well.

Campus Ministry at Erskine Erskine College PO Box 338 2 Washington St Due West, SC 29639

Bravo for what the Lord is doing through this ministry at Erskine College!

The information for this article was found at (www.ecstudentfellowship.org). You are encouraged to check out this site often.

Theses are my thoughts,

Charles W. Wilson
Charles ("Chuck") W. Wilson

ARP Talk(8.6)

Planning to Plant and Grow New Churches

The first "Parenting Church Community Summit" was held in Rock Hill at the First Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church on October 30. Pastors and Elders from North Carolina and South Carolina were in attendance. The program was conducted by Global Church Advancement and was led by Steve Ogne and Steve Childers. Both Mr. Ogne and Mr. Childers are well known in the field of Church Planting and highly respected by those of us in the ARPC who long for the growth of the ARPC.

The focus of the five workshops was church planting through the involvement of the local church and local church groups called a "Parenting Church Community." The desire is to see new church parenting through the involvement, recruitment, mobilization, equipping, and utilization of laypersons and their resources in local churches. The ideal is the forming of communities of three congregations with a common vision for planting a new church. A recent example of this is the work of First Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Gastonia, NC, and the Gaston Community Mission which will soon be organized as a "church."

PTL, several of the groups will pursue the forming of a Parenting Church Communities.

This meeting was followed by a meeting of North Carolina and Virginia church planters and their coaches in Charlotte on November 5-6. Unfortunately, this meeting was on "Election Day" and was not as well attended as other such meetings. The seminar was led by Rev. John Kimmons and the topic was on growing the church through discipleship. It is the opinion of this writer that there is no one in the ARPC more qualified to teach this topic than Mr. Kimmons. Those present were treated to a wealth of information about and passion for discipleship.

We in the ARPC owe a big **THANK YOU** to Alan Avera and his staff of John Kimmons and Ken Priddy at Outreach North America. They

have a vision for the growth of the ARPC through new church planting, and they work tirelessly to that end.

Theses are my thoughts, Charles W. Wilson

Charles ("Chuck") W. Wilson