

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE FACULTY, ADMINISTRATION, AND TRUSTEES OF
CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY

January 9, 2008

We, The Coalition of the Concerned, are a group of current and retired Cedarville University faculty members, who have a combined total of approximately 500 years of service at the University.

We have grave concerns over several continuing issues at the University which have affected faculty morale in general and the public reputation of the University in particular. Our concerns for this University, which we love and to which we have committed our endeavors and support, are broad. The bewilderment over governance, the diminishing value of tenure, and the apparent theological trend at the University are overarching perplexities. The attachment to this letter outlines these perceptions with supporting evidence for such broad concerns. At the same time, these items which have promoted confusion and uncertainty, are at the core of the confab over which the recent termination of the two tenured faculty members occurred, among other substantial personnel issues. It is our desire that possible litigation, which will cause irreparable damage to all involved, including the University, will be avoided.

President Brown graciously invited us to meet with him. We accepted the invitation and appreciated greatly the opportunity that he afforded us to express our perceptions and concerns. We are hopeful that timely and definitive solutions will be proffered for serious consideration in resolving these issues, amicably, and for the long-term good of Cedarville University.

Governance, faculty service, and theological fidelity are essential components of the University's identity. The integrity of these factors is indispensable to the fulfillment of the University's mission.

Our desire and prayer are for resolution, reconciliation, and revival on the Cedarville University Campus.

The Coalition of the Concerned

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THE PERCEPTIONS ON UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

I. There is the perception of low faculty morale on campus due to a lack of confidence in the administrative governance.

1. Faculty confidence and trust in the administration received the lowest ratings in the recent Christianity Today surveys. The university did not participate in the survey this 2007-08 year.

2. There is an increasing sense among faculty members that the faculty, even department chairs are often left out of the decision making process. Academic and personnel decisions are becoming more and more autocratic. For example, a decision was made this past summer to reorganize the Academic Division with little or no input from the department chairs or the faculty affected by the restructuring.

3. There is a general reluctance on the part of the faculty to disagree with administrative policies and decisions, for fear of retribution.

4. The apprehension that the "Community Covenant" and "General Work Place Standards" codify an administrative desire to unilaterally act against those faculty members who would take positions which differ from those of the administration.

5. The assertion that there is only one side to the recent Department of Biblical Education faculty terminations. This has raised the question that if there is only one side, then why is there a conflict in the department? Further, "The Bible Department and Doctrine, A Response to Concerns" document lists a number of theological views over which there are differences in the Department.

II. There is the perception that tenure has become meaningless due to recent tenure decisions and the termination of two tenured faculty members.

1. Dr. Tom Cragoe's tenure was denied even though he received unanimous approval for tenure by both the Department of Biblical Education and the University Tenure Committee, and was also recommended for tenure by his dean.

2. Two tenured faculty members were granted contracts for the 2007-08 academic year then were terminated three months

later. The terminations were not for violations that might have occurred during those three months, for the contracts were granted with the intent to terminate the two faculty members during the summer break. This appears to be a violation of good faith practice toward the faculty.

THE PERCEPTION ON THE UNIVERSITY DOCTRINAL POSITION

There is the perception that Cedarville University is drifting away from its historic conservative theological position and identity as a Baptist University.

1. The five Department of Biblical Education faculty members who were either terminated or resigned at the conclusion of the 2006-07 academic year were known to be theologically conservative. There is the fear that other theologically conservative faculty members within the Department and the general faculty may be terminated.
2. The assertion that Christians cannot be certain about the truthfulness of the necessary divine propositions of the faith due to the possibility that these doctrines may be proven to be fallacious beliefs. For example we cannot have 100% subjective assurance of the Virgin Birth and/or the Resurrection of Christ due to the fact that both might not be 100% certain objectively. Consequently it is argued that we can only have pragmatic assurance or confidence in these doctrines. The perception is that the confidence or assurance only view in the necessary divine propositions opens the door for legitimate intellectual doubts about all that the Scriptures affirm, which will result in an erosion of students' faith. Actually, if these necessary divine propositions are fallacious, then there is no truth!

Further, those faculty members who hold to the certainty position have been labeled as claiming omniscience and are therefore arrogant. The certainty view in the "The Bible Department and Doctrine, A Response to Concerns" document is defined as a philosophical/metaphysical certainty. However, the basis for this view of certainty is the clear statements of God's Word in which the adherents of certainty have placed their trust, rather than the outcome of a rational Cartesian epistemological process. While believers may doubt, they have no reason to doubt. To doubt a necessary divine proposition given by God is unbelief and therefore a sin. Therefore, we cannot talk about Biblical doubt as Cartesian doubt.

3. The introduction of the view on justification that believers are justified both now and in the future; however, only God knows whether or not we are justified now. Justification by faith in the present is the anticipation or promise that we will be affirmed or justified at the future judgement on the basis of our perseverance. Our personal assurance of justification is more or less based on our perseverance. The focus of perseverance is social justice because social justice is next to the heart of the gospel. The gospel is the announcement of the arrival of the long-awaited kingdom of God. The kingdom is now and God is now involved in restoration broken human relationship and His creation. The future day of judgement occurs at the Judgment Seat of Christ or the White Throned Judgment, which are one and the same judgment. This view of justification appears to obscure the distinction between justification and sanctification. There is a tension between a present justification by faith and a future justification based on a life of perseverance. It has caused confusion and alarm among students with regard to the assurance of their personal salvation. Further, the mingling of the Judgment Seat of Christ and the White Throne Judgment as one and the same judgment does not cohere with premillennialism.

4. The University does not have an a priori commitment to anyone epistemological theory ("A Vision for Christ-centered Education at Cedarville University"). Can a faculty member, for example, hold to and propagate an existential, or neo-orthodox epistemology? One's view of epistemology affects his hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures. Consequently, since Cedarville holds to the grammatical/historical view of hermeneutics, can a grammatical/historical hermeneutic be found on any other epistemology than modest foundationalism?

5. How does the University guarantee that all the members of the faculty are in agreement with the Truth/Certainty statement issued by the Board of Trustees in 2006? The Community Covenant must be signed by all faculty members. Does this suggest that it is more important than the Truth/Certainty statement?

6. The introduction of a nonfoundational, postconservative evangelical approach that argues that theology is a Spirit-led three-way conversation between Scripture, culture, and tradition. The Spirit speaks through these three sources. While Scripture is the "norming norm," yet it is interpreted by a local believing community with its unique context or situatedness. God uses language as an act of revelation in

this three-way conversation in the present. The result of this three-way conversation is that we are able to orient or to construct, our world of reality. This raises several questions. Is the Scripture the sole source and authority of truth in the church? Does the Scripture stand alone apart from our interpretative strategies? Has special revelation been completed, or is God still truly revealing Himself by the Spirit's speaking? What is the Scriptural basis for stating that the Spirit speaks through culture and tradition? Through which culture and which tradition does the Spirit speak? Is the purpose of theology functional rather than propositional?

7. Cedarville University appears to be moving away from its historical position as a Baptist University to an interdenominational institution of higher education. Cedarville professors may attend churches which are not in agreement with the University's doctrinal statement. Should there not be a coherence between the commitment to the University doctrinal statement and the doctrinal statement of the local church to which a faculty member belongs?

8. It appears that Cedarville University is moving to a broader ecumenical position through its program of bringing speakers to campus who represent movements and positions that are theologically inclusive.

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