

From: Adam Bean

To: Emmanuel Christian Seminary and Whom It May Concern

It is no overstatement to say that I would not be where I am now, doing what I am now doing, without the work of Dr. Christopher Rollston at Emmanuel. He initiated and/or strengthened my grasp of numerous languages (including Hebrew, Aramaic, Ugaritic, Akkadian, Coptic, Greek, and, I should add, English), and from him I took numerous invaluable classes including those covering Old Testament Archaeology, Second Temple Jewish Literature, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. He mentored me outside the classroom in my development as a student, communicating innumerable gems of wisdom about navigating the opportunities and challenges of biblical scholarship both within the academy and within the church. He guided me through the intimidating process of first presenting my own work at academic conferences. One result of this was that during my final year at Emmanuel I won the competitive (and monetarily rewarded) Joseph A. Callaway Award at the 2011 SECSOR regional meeting, edging out multiple doctoral students from major universities in that contest. Thanks in large part to his support and influence, and no less to that of Dr. Bemby as well, I am now studying at a school which was my top choice among prospective programs, and because of their thorough instruction, I entered this program at a very even level with students coming from major universities around the world. I have also already been able to apply my excellent training from Emmanuel to service in the church as a member of First Christian Church of Baltimore, where I am working closely with minister Carol Cook to develop new educational programs for the congregation.

Nothing in the preceding paragraph would be surprising for anyone acquainted with Dr. Rollston, so I will not further belabor the obvious, but rather hasten to add two key points: (1) Dr. Rollston's teaching and mentorship was only one part, but nonetheless an essential part, of my overall experience at Emmanuel, and (2) of all things, I am most impressed by the pastoral ministry that Dr. Rollston has given to the Emmanuel student body over the years.

Regarding the first point, the four wonderful years I spent at Emmanuel would not have been what they were without the full variety of Emmanuel's curriculum and faculty. I studied equally as much with Dr. Bemby as I did with Dr. Rollston, and I valued the classes I had in Ministry, Christian Education, Theology, Church History, and New Testament no less than those in my chosen concentration area of Old Testament. Each of these areas has its challenges for teaching, perhaps especially in the graduate seminary context, and each has been well represented by Emmanuel's faculty. The peculiar attention that the challenges associated with instruction in Old Testament have received in Emmanuel's recent history seems to have become somewhat self-fulfilling, and it would be inaccurate to associate such challenges with any single area or individual professor at such an academically rigorous institution as Emmanuel. I know that in my own study, both at Johnson and Emmanuel, one of the most painful, and indeed faith-challenging subjects of study was church history, with its myriad tales of political violence and ideological strife in which our own faith tradition was complicit or even instrumental. Painful as they may

be, these realities have never been avoided in the Stone-Campbell heritage, with its great tradition of ecclesiastical self-critique, and neither should they be. The same is certainly true for study of the biblical text, including the Old Testament, and Emmanuel has recently been extremely well served by the work of two excellent professors in that area, whose distinct emphases and approaches have complemented each other brilliantly.

The second, and perhaps more important point, is that what I gained academically from Dr. Rollston during my time at Emmanuel was in fact nothing out of the ordinary, and in truth pales in comparison with the meaningful pastoral ministry he has provided to so many students. Having worked at the professorial assistant desk in his office for most of a year, I can attest to the constant stream of traffic which passed through his office on a daily basis, and to the conversations which occurred there about seemingly anything and everything. I also know from many close friends how genuinely pastoral he has been to them during their time at Emmanuel and beyond. This included students coping with illness or death of loved ones, facing familial challenges (including divorce), and navigating challenges associated with church ministry. I recall very well the comforting words he spoke to me when both of my maternal grandparents passed away during the same year, and know that he has done likewise for many other students, many of them in much more difficult circumstances than any I have faced. One of the most recent Emmanuel promotional videos includes the true observation that “his door is always open to students,” and further directs the viewer to “the coffee that is always prepared” in his office. Not only a key center of caffeineation for the Emmanuel student body, his office has long been one of the busiest forums on Emmanuel’s campus for theological discussion, pastoral counseling, and the general exchange of wisdom.

During my last semester at Emmanuel, my father suffered, and mercifully survived, a very serious heart attack. As I returned to campus after visiting Dad in Illinois, I was immensely thankful, but deeply shaken and disoriented. Dr. Rollston, knowing the entire situation, responded with such a profoundness of compassion and an economy of words which I shall never forget: “Adam, the coffee is on, and I saved you a couple donuts. Come work with me in the office as long as you want, if it might help.” When I did join him there and we both sat quietly working away, his calming, comforting presence was palpable with little need for speech, and a deep, God-given sense of peace gradually returned to my shaken soul. Such has been the ministry of Dr. Christopher Rollston, a brilliant teacher and scholar, and a caring mentor and friend for countless students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Adam Bean". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Adam L. Bean