

September 30, 2012

**To Whom It May Concern:**

I have known Dr. Christopher Rollston since 2004; he was my professor, thesis advisor and minister during my study at Emmanuel Christian Seminary (then Emmanuel School of Religion).

Dr. Rollston is a professor whose superb pedagogical skills are only matched by his outstanding scholarship. Each of his lectures that I attended was vibrant, dynamic and always intellectually stimulating. His unfailing commitment to an honest historical-critical examination of the biblical texts never failed to impress me and I have profited immensely in my further studies from the analytical method I learned to employ in his class. His passion for the subject he teaches was evident in the engaging manner in which he presented each lesson and in the desire to share with his students the latest academic discoveries and debates in the field of ancient near eastern studies. Dr. Rollston is the only ECS professor I know who unreservedly shared his knowledge with students never shying from difficult questions, something that was not necessarily the norm in other courses. Moreover, Dr. Rollston was one of few faculty members who designed and developed new courses on his own volition, e.g. Coptic, for those seminarians who expressed interest in the subject.

Having had the privilege to work as Dr. Rollston's research assistant from 2005 until 2007, I observed closely the manner in which he interacted with students beyond the classroom. He would readily interrupt his work to speak with students outside office hours invariably offering sound academic advice accompanied with kind words of encouragement and a warm cup of coffee. He is a fair and consistent assessor of student work whose demand for academic rigor is balanced by his sensitivity to the specifics of each student's situation and her individual needs.

I also had the chance to attend services in Airport Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) during 2004/2005, where Dr. Rollston was an interim minister at the time. He led Sunday school, the main service, and actively participated in the social life of the church. He was fully aware of the needs of the parishioners and provided pastoral support accordingly. Seeing Dr. Rollston in ministerial capacity was an educational experience in its own right: his behavior taught me that scholarly excellence and pastoral service can be approached with the same commitment and enthusiasm.

Personally, Dr. Rollston has been hugely instrumental in helping me achieve my professional aspirations. His decision to take me as his research assistant effectively allowed me to graduate from seminary, something that otherwise would have been financially unachievable. He has written numerous academic and employment references including the recommendation which contributed to my acceptance for doctoral studies. With his help I am currently able to pursue research on antidiscrimination law and policy as related to vulnerable populations in Europe. In this research, I strive to emulate his scholarly integrity and merit. I am also working towards ordination in the Church of England in an attempt to combine my academic pursuits with ministerial work, an endeavor I first saw done by Dr. Rollston.

Once in a while life presents each of us with the rare opportunity to meet someone of truly extraordinary character who refreshes and motivates us to flourish in unexpected ways. Dr. Rollston has been such a catalyst for my academic and spiritual formation. For this I remain deeply indebted to him, my professor and mentor.

**Sincerely,**

Katya Ivanova



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