

September 26, 2012

רָאֵת יְהוָה רֵאשִׁית דָּעַת הַכְּמָה וּמוֹסֵר אֲוִלִים כֹּזֵב:

“Fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Prov 1:7

To whom it may concern:

During my time at Emmanuel Christian Seminary (“Emmanuel School of Religion” during my tenure there), I had the opportunity to work very closely with Professor Christopher Rollston. I did not realize it at the time, but the beginning of my training under Prof. Rollston was also the beginning of one of the most important and meaningful relationships I have had the honor and privilege of being a part of.

What I did not realize early on in my time at Emmanuel (but certainly quickly discovered) was the massive positive impact Prof. Rollston’s scholarly endeavors have had on the field of Biblical Studies. His research has helped to shed light on a number of very important issues pertaining to the development and promulgation of the biblical text – most notable is his work on scribal culture, epigraphy, and paleography. It is partly because of his research (and, of course, his collegial personality plays a large role in this as well) that he is so well respected in the academic community. When one considers the epigraphers who have come before him (e.g., William Foxwell Albright, Frank Moore Cross, P. Kyle McCarter) and that his name is counted among them - it is apparent that Prof. Rollston is a very special, important, and impactful scholar. His work, furthermore, has done much for the name of Emmanuel. There are many who hold Emmanuel in high regard largely – verily, even primarily! – because of Rollston’s research and publications. Not only has this been helpful to the school for marketing and recruitment purposes, but to Emmanuel students pursuing further graduate education as well.

The first course I took with Prof. Rollston was Intermediate Hebrew during the Fall of 2008. Rollston had been on sabbatical during my first year at Emmanuel and so it was not until the second year of my training there where I first began studying under him. I recall anticipating the course towards the end of that summer with a considerable amount of nervousness, unsure of what to expect from this new (to me) professor. My anxiety, however, was quickly alleviated during our first class meeting. Rollston led us through a sight-reading of 2 Kings 1 during which his passion for the biblical text and Semitic languages was made immediately apparent. His teaching that day – and throughout all eight courses I took with him during my time at Emmanuel – was inspiring. He instilled in me a similar passion for the biblical text in its various original languages as well as the world that birthed such a beautiful corpus. His teaching, furthermore, was engaging, acting quite unlike any kind of aloof academic. Rather, his instruction was that of a concerned person of faith. There is something within Chris Rollston that lights up when he is in the classroom – some days it’s his charming demeanor and jovial personality, others it’s his deep and abiding love for the material he studies and teaches so well, and always it is his continual care and gospel-driven concern for people of every kind. These are the signs of a man who is so incredibly passionate about his craft (i.e., teaching) – passionate to the point of graceful influence and inspiration. Certainly, the number of Rollston’s students who have gone on from Emmanuel to do further work in the field of Hebrew Bible, myself included, is testimony to this fact. Had I not had the privilege of learning under Prof. Rollston in the

September 26, 2012

classroom I am certain that my love and appreciation for scripture would not be nearly as deep and abiding as it is as a result of his tutelage.

Most importantly, however, Prof. Rollston has been like a father to me. While this metaphor is oft-used in academia to refer to one's dissertation advisor (*Doktorvater*), I here intend a closer familial connection than a strictly academic relationship might allow. Prof. Rollston has always had an open ear and more than a few encouraging words for me in whatever situation I seem to find myself. Some of my most treasured moments are those shared between him and me. He has been to me one of the most caring, gentle, and meek ministers I have encountered in my experience within the Church. He has invested in me far beyond the classroom. His office door has always been open to me – even if it's just to chat over coffee and catch up. Amazing is the fact that amidst his constant research, reading, and translating he still *makes* time for his students. This kind of relational intentionality – more so than any worship service, than any prayer or sermon – has bolstered my faith. Prof. Rollston is a paragon of a teaching-minister, a friend, and a father. If I can be even a tenth of the man of God and father that he is, then I will have lived more than a satisfactory life.

I will be forever indebted to Prof. Rollston for all that he has done for me. I am a better person for knowing him and for having been (and continuing to be!) taught by him. I am confident that there are many more students of Prof. Rollston, both current and former, who have similar experiences with him. For these things, and for him, I am grateful.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel E. Greene  
Emmanuel Christian Seminary Alumnus  
Ph.D. Candidate  
The University of Wisconsin-Madison