

Smaller Colleges Gone Rogue

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Introduction

Various other brethren and I have expressed grave concerns occasionally over the rampant apostasy of the large and prominent universities operated by members of the church (e.g., PU, ACU, DLU, HU, et al.). Inadvertently, in focusing on them, we have neglected to call attention to the same phenomenon occurring on the campuses of some of the small colleges in remote areas. I have in mind especially, York College (York, NE) and Rochester College (Rochester Hills, MI). It is only appropriate to correct this omission. The church is comparatively weak in their respective immediate geographical areas, and instead of helping to strengthen the Cause, both schools seem bent on tearing it down.

York College

Disturbing reports have been circulating concerning events at York and I have received documentation of such things. York has been exposing its students to such notorious false teachers as Jeff Walling and F. LaGard Smith for some time (and what school has not?). A brother has furnished me with the transcript of a speech Smith delivered at York (during chapel, I believe). He expressed hesitation to say some of the things he was bursting to say, but he finally said them. They included ridicule of our worship assemblies and of the idea that they are anything like those of the first century church. He had his listeners (students and faculty, I suppose) clapping and cheering. As it turns out, this speech was apparently a “trial balloon” for his latest book, *Radical Restoration*. His reported worship habits in Nashville apparently reflect some of the radical suggestions in his book. There is no doubt about his worship habits during his six-months in England each year: He attends/fellowships a denomination.

In August 2001, James Sampson, Gospel preacher in Anselmo, Nebraska, enrolled his son, Caleb, in York. After only one semester, he and Caleb became so concerned with events at York (and with the response of administrators and instructors to their concerns) that Caleb transferred to another school. In a lengthy e-mail message to me, James cataloged several matters of grave concern he and Caleb encountered in only one semester, including:

- A denominational “pastor’s” leading a prayer at a student-led devotional
- A denominational woman preaching in chapel, attributing her message to the Holy Spirit, and offering a denominational “plan of salvation.” Although about twenty-five students walked out, after her

sermon, York's "Family Life Campus Minister" lauded her and said, "she has the approval of Heaven" (she was invited back for a repeat performance.)

- A Bible professor who taught that miraculous gifts have not ceased and that the Lord's Supper can be observed any day of the week
- A "Family Life Campus Minister" who (1) claims the Holy Spirit gives him his best sermons and he just lets the message flow out of his mouth, (2) has no problem with instrumental music in worship, and (3) who believes there are Christians in all denominations
- A college president (Baker) who contended that the woman preacher in chapel was allowed to preach her false doctrine because "We have to allow free expression of ideas. We are an educational institution and not the church."

Those who are considering sending their young people or their money to York need to know that this school is in the hands of traitors of the Truth. The school began operation in 1956. Monroe Hawley, who was still sound in the faith in those days, wrote of the school: "Its influence for good may be expected to greatly help advance the cause of Christ in years to come" (*The Harvest Field* [Athens, AL: C.E.I Pub. Co., 1958], p. 37). For several years, this prediction was fulfilled, but no longer will it thus serve until there is a change in its direction.

Rochester College

Rochester College began as Michigan Christian College but changed its name in the late 1990s. It had already started drifting before the name change, indicated by the laundry list of change agents invited to speak on the campus in recent years, if by nothing else. But the changing of its name seems almost to have been a signal involving a clear and conscious attempt to break with its founding principles. Rochester's president, Ken Johnson, issued a position paper, setting forth its position on certain doctrinal matters in December 1998. In it one finds such gems as the following:

We recognize that the early years of the American Restoration Movement were dominated by a call to unify all Christians, explicitly recognizing not that denomination membership precludes salvation but that the creedal requirements of denominationalism hinder the cause of Christ...

Some members of Churches of Christ acknowledge that their heart for nondenominational Christianity is increasingly unfulfilled as dialog and open discussion are eliminated in many Churches of Christ, replaced by creedal tests of fellowship.

The range of tolerance [of Rochester College] would allow interaction by the college with non-divisive, non-liberal, Christ-exalting believers in other fellowship groups from whom we may learn or otherwise benefit or influence.

On the subject of baptism, Johnson and his "Bible" faculty object to the phrase, "baptism for the forgiveness of sins" on the following grounds:

1. It diminishes “the biblical basis for baptism” and disregards “the fullness of the baptismal experience.”
2. It transfers “the healing virtue from God to ourselves.”
3. It misleads non-Christians, causing them to believe “that we teach baptismal regeneration.”

All the quotes above constitute nothing more than a collection of liberal, denominational meanderings. However, if nothing else indicates its theological stance, the “Sermon Seminar” it hosted May 20–22, 2002, certainly does. It attracted about 140 preachers from 14 denominations. These all pretended to ignore the obvious matters of doctrine and practice to which these “pastors” would remain loyal and took part in a “communion” service. Since the conference was conducted Monday through Wednesday, this mock “communion” could not have occurred on the Lord’s Day.

A Rochester College religion faculty member, David Fleer, said of the meeting: “The overwhelming response from...preachers was that nothing like this exists in Churches of Christ.” My response to this statement is to rejoice that it is so.

Once more, we have here a school that at one time provided a strengthening influence and help to brethren in its area, but no more. It has abandoned the principles upon which its faithful founders built it, and it is leading young and old who will follow into error and sin. [Subsequent to writing this article, in 2005 Rochester employed apostate Rubel Shelly as Professor of Philosophy and Religion. In 2009, he was appointed President of the college, in which capacity he served until 2013 when he resigned in order to move back to Nashville, TN, his long-time home.]

Conclusion

Brethren would be wise not to send either students or financial support to either of these schools. Both of them deserve to die.

[**Note:** I wrote this MS, and it originally appeared in the December 2002 issue of *The Gospel Journal*, a 36-page monthly of which I was editor at the time.]

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