

## THE MANY SINS OF MOSCOW'S NEW ST. ANDREWS COLLEGE

by Nick Gier

In April 2000, I gave a talk to the students and faculty of New St. Andrews College (NSA), a small Calvinist college established in Moscow in 1994. At that time I congratulated Douglas Wilson, founder of the college, on the success of both NSA and his K-12 Logos School.

I told some stories about Wilson as a student in the philosophy department, and I also announced that I was prepared to help NSA students with their senior theses. In the previous year I had spent about 60 hours helping a bright NSA student with a thesis on Buddhism.

In December 2002, I invited NSA faculty and students to the regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion. It was held in Moscow in May 2003, and 40 percent of the papers were presented by faculty from conservative Christian colleges. NSA president Roy Atwood defended their absence by saying that they "had better things to do."

Wilson wrote an article "Why Evangelical Colleges Are Not" in "Chronicles" (September, 1998), the journal of the far right Rockford Institute. The hostility displayed against reputable evangelical colleges in this article not only shows blatant disrespect for these fine schools, but it manifests shameful disregard for the entire academic enterprise.

In a letter to the Moscow-Pullman Daily News on May 23, 2003, Atwood wrote that his college was an accredited institution. At a legal hearing before the Latah County Commissioners in April 2003, the NSA attorney also testified that NSA was accredited. The problem, however, is that NSA did not receive its accreditation until November 29, 2005.

In October, 2003, the community learned of the existence of Wilson's booklet on slavery in the Antebellum South in which he stated that "there has never been a multi-racial society which has existed with such mutual intimacy and harmony in the history of the world" (p. 24). It was later discovered that 20 percent of this text was lifted from another book. When two UI history professors wrote a paper criticizing Wilson, his reaction was to write Governor Kempthorne and request that the professors be disciplined.

Only recently did I learn that NSA faculty celebrated April Fools of 1999 by stealing letterhead from the UI provost's office and using a UI FAX machine to distribute an announcement of visiting feminist scholars who would give their presentations topless. There is nothing wrong with a good joke, but one usually tries to avoid criminal activity in pulling stunts such as this.

Recently Wilson defended this action in his blog: "By the time you receive this, our local police will probably have forgotten all about it, so a little bragging is now safe. . . . [My son-in-law], . . . encouraged by some winks and nudges from me, . . . made up a flyer which announced a topless and proud lecture series by topless feminist scholars."

An important academic virtue is "collegiality," which consists of respect for, and cooperation with, all members of the academic community. I believe that we can conclude from NSA's actions that it has not been a very good academic citizen. The supreme irony is that 9 of the 15 NSA faculty have, or are expecting, 13 UI degrees.

The following are some more disturbing NSA facts:

- Only 27 percent of the college's faculty have PhDs. NSA has the resources to hire PhDs, but evidently chooses not to do so.
- Two of the college's senior fellows, presumably equivalent to full professors, do not have PhDs. Generally, a PhD is required at the lowest rank of assistant professor.

- Although full resumes are not available on NSA's website, it appears that a majority of the faculty's published books are from Canon Press, Wilson's own creation and the publisher of the infamous slavery booklet.
- Of special concern is the fact that Wilson's brother, his son, and his son-in-law are on the college's faculty.
- Steve Wilkins and George Grant are regular speakers at Wilson's annual conferences in Moscow. Grant has a mail order doctorate and Wilkins is a conservative Calvinist minister from Louisiana.
- Wilkins is a founding director of the League of the South, which has been declared a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Confederate flag used to hang in Wilson's office and Logos School displayed it at its social functions.
- When a Moscow journalist interviewed Wilson, Grant, and Wilkins in February, 2004, they each proudly affirmed their belief that only propertied males should vote. Always the jokester, Wilson said that democracy was just like two coyotes and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch.

There are well qualified students at NSA and some competent faculty, just as there are good, decent people who attend Wilson's 800-member Christ Church. One can usually spot these people because they frequently speak of Wilson's goal of achieving "truth, goodness, and beauty."

These fine folks need to be reminded that their leaders have not always told the truth, that condoning slavery is not good, and that calling for the execution of homosexuals is just plain ugly.

Nick Gier taught religion and philosophy at the University of Idaho for 31 years. For more on NSA's academic transgressions see <http://users.adelphia.net/~nickgier/nsaccred.htm>. For more on Wilson and his religious empire see <http://users.adelphia.net/~nickgier/Wilson.htm>.