

SPIRIT OF A LIBERAL

The blog of RW Holmen, author | RSS

BILLY GRAHAM'S SMALL COLLEGE IS "LEFT BEHIND"

Over thirty-five years ago, my wife and I lived in the northern suburbs of St. Paul, Minnesota while I attended law school at the University. We toured the greater neighborhood aboard our ten-speed bicycles. We sometimes pedaled through the arched gate to [Northwestern College](#) in the wooded hills of Roseville, which we learned was a small evangelical Christian college. I have since learned that evangelist Billy Graham served as the president of the college from 1947-53.

But there's trouble afoot. Are the end times near?

An article appearing in the [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#) recounts the internecine fight between the administration and a group led by 1997 graduate Dallas Jenkins, the son of Jerry B. Jenkins the author of the "Left Behind" series of novels that promote the idea of end times rapture. From the [Left Behind Website](#):

Are you ready for the moment of truth?

- *Political crisis*
- *Economic crisis*
- *Worldwide epidemics*
- *Environmental catastrophe*
- *Mass disappearances*
- *Military apocalypse*

And that's just the beginning . . . of the end of the world. It's happening now.

Seems Jenkins and his cronies are claiming the college is tilting away from its conservative roots, allowing an undesirable secular influence to creep in. College President Alan Cureton is their foil. From the [Strib article](#):

Several former trustees said in a letter that they had seen the college's culture changing and hoped it "might, by God's gracious intervention, be spared the fate of so many other institutions that have witnessed the dying of the light. ..."

Last January, the student government sent a letter expressing a vote of "no confidence" in Cureton and asking for his resignation or removal. The letter said that Cureton had committed "grievous sin, lies, slander, and

unethical actions” –including lying about his reasons for demoting two faculty members and falsely accused another employee of viewing pornography.

In response, the board of trustees appointed a three person task force (including the president of the Evangelical Free Church of America) to investigate whether the charges of doctrinal drift were warranted. They concluded they were not, but the sniping continues even though the website of the dissidents has been closed to the public by requiring password entry. [The college website openly acknowledges](#) the controversy and attempts to put it in the past.



For regular readers of this blog, a familiar character made a cameo appearance in the Strib article. Dr. Robert Benne, a member of the Lutheran CORE advisory council and author of several CORE articles that have been critiqued [here](#) and [here](#), was consulted by the Strib apparently because he wrote a book about secular drift in religious colleges.

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It does no good to simply commiserate on what we think is a fallacious finding of the court -- now's the time to fight back and do it right! We simply cannot have our election process intimidated and influenced by a flood of corporate and union cash.

GUNN ERICKSON, OAKDALE

...

The Supreme Court ruled campaign spending is free speech and should be applied uniformly. An individual cannot deduct political contributions when paying taxes. To be consistent, businesses should not be able to consider campaign spending as a business expense. Let's be consistent.

ROBERT LOSCHEIDER,

GRAND RAPIDS, MINN.

NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE

Conflict doesn't aid the school's mission

Enough already! As professor emeritus and former chair of the Music Department, I respectfully request that the reported conflict at Northwestern College cease ("An identity crisis for a Christian college," Jan. 21).

Mistakes have been made, admitted to, apologized for, accepted, and lessons have been learned. While President Alan Cureton and chief protagonist Dallas Jenkins may have disagreements concerning complex theological issues, the charge of "theological drift" has not been proven, or even detected, by an independent three-person panel.

By continuing this campaign, "Friends of Northwestern" are beginning to look more like "head hunters" than legitimate friends. The college appears to be flourishing under Dr. Cureton's leadership. He is a man of God who loves the institution and the students, and is providing dynamic leadership in a difficult economic climate. Public airing of petty differences does nothing to further God's Kingdom or build a stronger Northwestern College. The time has come to agree to disagree and move on.

KENNETH FENTON, BROOKLYN PARK

SAVING ON FLYING FEES

One good idea deserves another

A Jan. 21 letter writer had a great idea about traveling without packing clothes in order to save on checked baggage. She said this would save baggage fees, save fuel, save time at the airport, eliminate lost luggage and stimulate the economy by purchasing clothes at the destination.

My wife added one more step to this idea: Donate all the purchased clothes at the destination location to a homeless shelter before returning. This helps others, and eliminates baggage, providing the same benefits for the return trip.

DAVID BERGER, MINNEAPOLIS