



David Whalen's "Go Forth & Forget This School"; Review: Background of the Song of Solomon; Principles for Identifying One's Right Person

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In the season of graduations, the following unlikely commencement address is offered as an antidote, a dream, a provocation.

HONORED GRADUATES, I hope you will pardon a departure from the routine. Ordinarily, I would be expected to drone harmlessly a while, and you would be expected to day-dream of whatever bacchanalian revels await you. But these are not ordinary times. For, my dear graduates, you have suffered a profound miseducation. Much of what you have learned is false, silly, and even dangerous. This lapse in your education has not been the result of hapless misdirection or well-intentioned error. Such errors exist, of course, but the failure of your education has been systematic and consistent. It has failed largely as the result of unreal ideologies, ideologies that exhibit everything from pathological self-hatred to grossly wishful thinking. And, if this is not enough, the miseducation rests on rigorously lousy reasoning.

How many times have you heard -- from professors, administrators, fellow students speaking with self-important gravity -- that gender is, essentially, "socially constructed"? That there is nothing really different about men and women, only perceptions created, perpetuated, and "valorized" by social expectations and conventions? This bromide of modern academia is so wispy and insubstantial, even the word "false" seems to give it undue weight. And yet the matter is now a doctrine, denial of which is punishable by a poor grade or sensitivity training or both.

Relying on logic that could adorn the "fallacies" section of a dreary textbook, the argument is advanced that, because social practices encourage certain behavior in men and women, behold, those practices created the sexes! Add to this the momentous discovery that the behavior of men and women across different eras and places has varied, and there you have it. Sex is, as it were, all in the head. Indeed, this is a curiously abstract doctrine for an era that prides itself on carnality. When it comes to sex, "there is no there there," nothing natural or given. Social institutions are, like men and women themselves, so much shapeless, damp clay to be molded according to the whim of the political moment. If someone is so foolish as to wonder if the body suggests anything meaningful, the answer is swift and censorious: Things don't have meaning. Constructions do.

In this context, the *reductio ad absurdum* becomes impossible. Parody is overtaken by the real. With tedious regularity, sexual practices that would startle a Caligula and social practices that would astonish a Kinsey are advanced as tokens of an inevitable progress. Such a claim, of course, can justify anything. Why not "construct" multiple partner marriages? (At least this has a venerable history.) Civil unions between man and beast? Or man and cabbage? Shrubbery? Cactus? There is no silliness beyond the reach of the arguments used to propound contemporary sexual ideologies, but you have been taught that such reasoning is sensitive, astute, the very mark of higher intelligence.

Many of you have probably had moments of doubt about such sexual doctrines. In the darkest recesses of your musings, you might have wondered if all this is somehow unreal -- perhaps, for all the historical and social variations, there really is something given or (dare we say it?) natural in the sexes. The bizarre behavior of the occasional penguin, triumphantly cited as dashing traditional notions of nature, may have failed to destroy your hunch about sex. The human body, you dared to speculate, might be more than a *tabula rasa* on which societies inscribe their crude and confining meanings. I hope you did. But if you did, you probably kept such musings to yourself.

If silly sexual ideologies abound, then they are escorted by a host of other doctrines that seem almost pathologically self-loathing. The Western world, one is taught, has a shameful record, even though those so regarding it teach from an institution -- the university -- which is one of the signal creations of that world. This anti-Western prejudice is so powerful, it amounts to a reverse jingoism. It has all the unthinking, passionate excess that one associates with patriotism gone bad, especially in that it seems motivated by hatred rather than love.



You have learned that, throughout its history, the West has careened from one form of oppression to another. Slavery, bondage, bigotry of various sorts dog the human condition indeed, but these are presented as if they are particularly Western vices. A sufficiently jaundiced view of human nature would think such evils insuperable in any case. All the more surprising, then, that the West has seen slavery and bigotry gradually eliminated. Around the world, meanwhile, ethnic cleansings and the subjugation of entire populations are the stuff of the daily news.

Similar errors cheerfully clutter campuses, errors that enjoy a slow rate of decay despite being discredited. Environmentalism that looks suspiciously fashionable is, in a kind of eco-transference, predicated of any society that is either technologically primitive or fortunate enough not to be Western. Quaint local customs in such cultures attract due appreciation, but brutalities and flagrant illiberalities are politely veiled. To draw attention to them would seem to "pass judgment," something reserved for Western (and especially American) history and practices.

I point this out not to suggest that the West is an unspotted lamb while other cultures are alien, evil, or in need of a bath. Indeed, the failures of the West are spectacular. It is revealing to note, however, which of those failures attract notice and which are downplayed. You have rightly been taught the horrors of the Holocaust and the betrayals and bigotry witnessed in the West. But at the same time, you have heard curiously little about the Soviet Ukraine of the 1930s, or the number of those slain throughout the 20th century in Communist regimes, many of which qualify as "Western" and ought, therefore, to be fair game. Your education has likely trained you in the evils of imperialism, colonialism, or "globalization." But has it said much about the aggressive imposition of progressive sexual ideologies, including population control, upon the undeveloped world? Or the parallel imposition of secularism upon developing countries with strong religious cultures?

You are all familiar with the commonplace notion that public life or "having a voice" has been the domain of men, not women. You have dutifully learned that our practices, such as voting and writing, are surely the essence of meaningful participation in public life, and that women have not historically enjoyed them. Behold, then, the reductive conclusion is drawn. Never mind that most of humanity, regardless of sex, has been a stranger to these forms of public life, and never mind that, even now, people do not generally experience those activities as the heart of their "engagement with the world." Nonetheless, the clumsy doctrine persists: public life is the really important part, and one sex has had the market cornered. The irony is that (at last check) it even required two sexes to create a "public."

THE DEATH KNELL of Christianity has been tolled again and again, yet like a certain famous plague victim, it keeps refusing to die. The modern academy tends to regard Christianity as a musty remnant of the past, and many of your professors are publicly committed to rooting out this religion among their students. One may admire such missionary zeal, of course, but the easy presumption that intelligence and Christianity are incompatible is most unintelligent. Not to mention bigoted. This may be why such professors often roll out fanciful "facts" about medieval Europe: the existence of gay marriage ceremonies, absolute monarchies, and that perennial favorite, the imperialistic bullying of the first Crusade. With facts like these, fantasy is superfluous.

These errors are buttressed by another historical fancy, however. In blithe contradiction to a number of anti-Western notions, it is often assumed that man's history is a steady ascent out of error and into the light. We once thought spirits inhabited rocks and trees, we then came to think they inhabited the heavens, and soon we will have banished them from existence altogether. Secularism is as inevitable as gravity.

All this you have learned. Rather, you have seen it taught. Many of you, I am sure, smelling a rat and its nest of error have learned at least one lesson: play along, get the grade, but don't take anything seriously. The great danger in all these absurdities is not that you will be persuaded of much. Reality tends to invite itself to almost any party, so the twilight world of ideological fantasy, wishful thinking, and sad self-loathing is probably self-limiting. No, the danger is that, more than representing just a waste of your time, money, and intelligence, your experience has rendered you a cynic. But even that can be fixed. It may have to wait, though, until you reach middle age and rediscover the drama of truth and beauty -- just ask Dante. That's Dante... D-A-N-T-E... a medieval poet you might, someday, read.

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- C. Review: Background of the Song of Solomon:
1. This book is what we might refer to today as an opera. Italian operas are in three acts however this is Hebrew which was customarily in five acts.
 2. There are four main characters plus a chorus:
 - King Solomon (KS)**, basso profundo: the paramour
 - Shulammitte Woman (SW)**, soprano: the right woman
 - Shepherd Lover (SL)**, tenor: the right man
 - Jealous Queen (JQ)**, alto: the jilted lover
 - Daughters of Jerusalem (DJ)**, chorus: the virgins of Solomon's harem
 - Jerusalem Guard (JG)**
 - Bystanders in Jerusalem 1-4 (BJ1, BJ2, BJ3, BJ4)**
 - Bystander in Shulam (BS)**
 - Shulammitte's Mother (SM)**
 - Shulammitte's Brothers 1-2 (SB1, SB2)**
 3. The Shulammitte woman comes from a very well-to-do family which owns a large vineyard and winery in the north of Israel. She is the daughter of a widow and therefore the responsibility for her protection and care falls to her two brothers who do not approve of her attraction to the shepherd. Apparently they do not think a sheep herder is an acceptable suitor for those in genteel society.
 4. Solomon is the king of Israel having succeeded his father David. He has been out of country and on his ride back south toward Jerusalem he passes the Shulammitte's family vineyard where he sees her chasing foxes away from the vines where they've been eating the grapes.
 5. As is evident in the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon was a rounder, a chaser, and a womanizer. He is said in 1 Kings 11:3 to have had a harem that included 700 wives and 300 concubines and there was an unknown number of virgins called the "Daughters of Jerusalem."
 6. Not only was this a violation of divine order but a large percentage of them were foreigners which was also against divine policy for Israel.
 7. The prohibition was imposed because it was known to divine omnipotence that such associations would tempt Israel to become involved with these women's heathen religions which is exactly what happened to Solomon.
 8. The thing that motivated Solomon to accumulate such a large and diverse harem was the pagan concept that a king should be the principle progenitor of his kingdom.
 9. In Ecclesiastes 7:26-29 Solomon admits to the frustrations that came to him from his uncontrolled sexual lust for women and Song of Solomon is his account of how when finally finding what he believed was his right woman his soul was so distorted by his perversions that she had no desire for him.
 10. Solomon wants to recruit the Shulammitte and uses deceit to lure her into his harem as a virgin with the intent of making her one of his queens later on. The Shulammitte is willing to function in the capacity of a virgin in order to neutralize the influence of her brothers with the intent of rekindling her relationship with the shepherd.



11. Every quality that God intended to provide in Solomon's right woman was represented in the Shulammitte woman. However, knowing of Solomon's sexual lust, the Lord provided this woman with a right man compatible with her: the Shepherd Lover.
12. Solomon never had the capacity to identify his right woman since his soul was so distorted by his involvement in pagan idolatry plus an insatiable sexual lust that could only be assuaged by his large harem.
13. But for Solomon his sexual lust was never satisfied. For him, everyday was Groundhog Day.
14. Solomon's degeneracy is summarized in:

1 Kings 11:1 - Now King Solomon loved [**אָהַב** 'ahav: to give oneself over to polygamy] many foreign women besides the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites [**Chemosh**], Ammonites [**Molech**], Edomites, Sidonians [**Ashtoreth**], and Hittites.

v. 2 - They were from the nations about which the Lord had warned to the sons of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, neither shall they intermarry with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon maintained intimate relations with them.

v. 3 - Solomon had seven hundred wives of royal birth plus three hundred concubines. His wives turned his heart away (from God).

v. 4 - It came about, when Solomon grew old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

v. 5 - For Solomon worshipped Ashtoreth \ash' to-reth\ the goddess of the Sidonians [**same as the Babylonians' Ishtar**] and after Milcom \mil' cum\ [**or Molech \mō' lek**] the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

v. 6 - And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow after the Lord fully, as David his father had done.

v. 7 - Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh \chē' mosh\ the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem [**Mount of Olives**], and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.

v. 8 - Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

v. 9 - Now the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice [**1 Kings 3:1-14; 9:1-9**],

v. 10- and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But Solomon did not keep the Lord's command.

1 Kings 11:11 - So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept My covenants and My laws which I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant [**Jeroboam, from the tribe of Ephraim, was secretary of the departments of treasury and labor under Solomon and became the first king of the Northern Kingdom**].

v. 12 - "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son [**Rehoboam**].

v. 13 - "However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe [**Benjamin**] to your son [**Rehoboam, tribe of Judah**] for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."



14. We read about the death of Rehoboam plus an interesting fact in:
1 Kings 14:31 -And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and his mother's name was Naamah ḥnā' a-maḥ the Ammonitess.
15. A summary of Naamah is provided by:
Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Women of the Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 116:
Naamah was from the royal line of the Ammonites, and her evil influence was abhorrent to the people of Israel as they witnessed her leading Solomon into her idolatrous ways. Since she was chief lady, the king erected a high place for her god, Moloch. Naamah became the mother of Rehoboam, who succeeded Solomon, and who was the last king of the united kingdom of Israel. Rehoboam lived and died a monument of his evil mother's hatred of the true God.
16. From this we learn some principles for identifying one's right person:
- 1) The Lord imposed a prohibition against the Jews entering into marriage with other races, "You shall not intermarry with them, neither shall they intermarry with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods" (1 Kings 11:2).
 - 2) This prohibition had nothing to do with the races of the aliens but rather with their religions. All were involved in idolatry and the Lord did not want any citizen of Israel, let alone her king, intimately involved in "evil associations" with their women.
 - 3) Solomon disobeyed this mandate and married them for many reasons not the least of which was to satisfy his insatiable sexual lust.
 - 4) As predicted by the Lord, Solomon's norms and standards were corrupted by his wives as he not only built heathen altars for the perverted rites that were practiced in these religions but he also became involved in worshiping these gods as well.
 - 5) Solomon's disobedience led to the fall of the kingdom of Israel. His son Rehoboam was borne by his wife Naamah who was from the royal line of the Ammonites. It was for her that he built an altar for the worship of her chief god Molech on the Mount of Olives.
 - 6) When a believer becomes attracted to someone romantically, the first obligation is to determine as soon as possible that person's spiritual status.
 - 7) This effort may reveal that the person is an unbeliever, a believer who is negative to the Word of God, or a believer who is positive to the Word of God.
 - 8) The unbeliever should be evangelized with the hope of bringing the person to salvation at which point a romantic relationship could continue.
 - 9) The negative believer should be introduced to Bible study with the intent of interesting the person in the mechanics of spiritual growth.
 - 10) The positive believer is someone with whom a cordial and beneficial relationship can be built and as it continues compatibility may or may not occur.