

CHAPTER 12

TWO PROFESSORS AND AN ENTRAPMENT

It Just So Happened that the University of Denver was not my first choice. I really wanted to go to the University of Colorado at Boulder, but had no way to finance it. Getting into a university was one thing. Food and shelter was another. Denver University was a bicycle ride away from 3042 So. Lincoln, so for food and bed I lived at home. Trumpet sound paid the tuition. For spare money I worked part time at The May Company and in summer on the campus grounds--digging dandelions, I am embarrassed to say.

NOT A BAD WAY TO MAKE A LIVING. At the University, I got indebted to two professors for two very different reasons. Professor William Hyslop, director of band and orchestra, saw to it that I got four years of scholarships. Besides being director of band and orchestra and a horn player with the Denver symphony, Professor Hyslop was also on the science faculty of the University--chemistry, engineering, something, I don't remember exactly what. He was also a man who appeared to be quite content with himself and what he was doing. I decided that being a professor was a great way to spend your time. I was going for it.

TAKE A PENNY. The second professor of merit was Professor Frank Dickensen--professor of philosophy. I concluded rather early in my studies at the University that Dickensen was absolutely the worst professor possible. After all, a philosophy class was where you went to get important answers, especially if you were a not so sure sophomore atheist. But all I got from Dickensen were questions. I would ask a question and he would answer with a question. This went on and on! He was impossible!

For example, for a final examination he gave everybody in class a penny and instructed us to tell him everything that could be said about that penny. Oh, my God! A philosophy test? Well, it is metal, so the material world is implied in a penny. It is, of course, an item of monetary value, so economics is involved. If economics is involved, human history is involved. Human history involves humans. Humans involve social structures. This is ridiculous!

Years later I was invited back to the University to make a speech. I was being considered for a position as University Chaplain, which I was actually offered but turned down *for economic reasons*. When I was offered the position, I told the president that I was already making more money than he was offering. He said, "But here you will have all those beautiful mountains to look at." I said, "Yes, but you can't eat mountains." I took the path more traveled by.

But back to my talk and Professor Dickensen. He was there and afterwards I shook his hand and said, "Professor, when I graduated from this University, if anyone had asked me who was the poorest professor here, you would have gotten top honors. If, however, anyone were to ask me *today* who was the best professor I ever had at this University, you would get top honors." He looked startled. How could he know that he was one of the few college

professors that ever made me think on my own.

BEWARE OF FRIENDS WITH BIBLES IN THEIR HANDS. And then there was that unexpected entrapment. When I got to the University I found, also on music scholarship, a fellow named Charles Milligan. When I got there as a freshman, he was already a sophomore. His home was in Sterling, Colorado, but he lived with his brother (a physician) in *Englewood*, and Charles owned *an automobile*. Charles was not only a fine French horn player, he was also an excellent student and a fun guy to be around. He became my transportation to and from 3042 and DU. Also, we became good friends. Years went by--one, two, three. I was a junior. He was a senior. Springtime graduation was coming soon. One day, in the band room, in the basement of Buchtell Chapel, I asked Charles what he was going to do now that he was educated. He told me that he had decided to go next door to Iliff School of Theology. I was flabbergasted. I knew his father had been a Presbyterian minister, but how could anybody with Charles Milligan's talent waste it in theology? I said so. But he just gave me one of those Milligan grins and went off to Iliff.

So next year I was a senior at the University, and Charles was in his first year graduate school. And he was still the only one of us who had a car. Riding back and forth to university and seminary, I sometimes voiced my opinions on things religious. After all I had not only taken philosophy courses and history courses, but, also, courses in biology and psychology. I could make a pretty good negative case about six days of creation, Adam's rib, parting the Red Sea with a stick, walking on water, arising from the dead. But one time, driving home, I made a mistake. I said, "The Bible really tells a pretty dumb story, doesn't it?"

At that point, Charles made his entrapment move, he asked, "Have you ever read the Bible?" "Well, no, but I saw the movie." We were sitting in front of 3042 So. Lincoln at the time. He took his Bible and marked two places. He handed it to me and said, "Here read this." Then he drove off leaving me with a Bible in my hands. I doubt I had ever had a Bible in my hands before. After all, Catholics did not read bibles. They went to mass and confession instead.

Those two places marked in Charles' Bible: One of them reads:

O that you would kiss me with
the kisses of your mouth!
For your love is better than wine...

He speaks:

Behold, you are beautiful, my love,
behold you are beautiful!
Your eyes are doves behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats,
moving down the slopes of Gilead...
Your lips are like a scarlet thread,
Your...breasts are like two fawn,
twins of a gazelle,

that feeds among the lilies...
You have ravished my heart...with
a glance of your eyes...

She speaks:

I slept, but my heart was awake.
Hark! my beloved is knocking.
"Open to me, my sister, my love,
my dove, my perfect one...
My beloved put his hand to the latch,
and my heart was thrilled within
me.
I arose to open to my beloved...
but my beloved had turned and gone....
I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
if you find my beloved,
that you tell him
I am sick with love....

Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.¹

For that other place Charles marked for me to read try 2 Samuel, chapter 11, sometimes called "David Commits Adultery with Bath-sheba."

Charles was sneaking up on me, no doubt about it. But the real entrapment came not from sexy stories in the Bible, of which there are not many, but from what Charles began to tell me about what they were saying at that seminary across the way. I began to argue less and listen more. The trap was closing--slow motion. I was headed for Iliff. But first I had to make the biggest and best mistake I ever made--somewhere in Eastern Colorado.

¹For all 117 verses of the same stuff, try the Song of Solomon in the Holy Book.