Tale of a Womanizer, who, by God's Grace and his own Free Will, finds it back to the True Way

--1994

I awoke to hear the spring wind blowing through the trees nearby, and to the sound of a branch, blown back by this wind, tip-tapping upon my window outside, as though to warn me. The sun had just begun to cast, in perfect gold, its beams across ground and firmament, waking the foliage and creatures of the day.

But all of this was nought to me, for my mind was set upon other matters. Scarcely had I awoken, when I shook off the equanimity of sleep and put my whole mind and spirit back to the task which I had left the day before, thinking of my different options.

For, of what good was all the beauty of the world to me if I had no young woman to charm and dazzle with my wondrous grasp of things? There were about four young women on whom I had my sights, but I wanted to organize my day so as to most likely get at least one of them. Yesterday, I had spent too much time with that pretty red-headed girl, but she had run away, like a trickster, at the last minute, leaving me all alone to myself, with only hours before I needed to go home. As a consequence, although I had been chivalrous, kind, wise and caring to every need of those I was wooing, I had not had enough time to *get* one of them. Therefore, I had gone home, all depressed, cursing that pretty red-headed girl who had ruined my plan, to spend a boring, lonely and uneventful night.

***"But now is a whole new day," I thought, "and hopefully one which will be more favorable to my aim in life."* I considered trying again with that nice Catholic girl. That would be a tricky case, however, since, the last time that I had tried my luck on her, she had looked back at me with such a stern look that I had had to run away from her rather quickly. (Who was she to look at me like that, in any case, as though she were God, himself, passing judgment upon me at judgment day?) But maybe I could impress her if I showed her that I was also intellectual and knew many things about fine culture.**

It was about a ten minute walk into town, by road, from where I lived on its outskirts, although one could also take a longer path over a wild hillside overlooking the town, which I had taken once before. Today, walking down toward the town, and coming to where this path exited from the road, I stopped and thought: it *was* a fine day and I was feeling quite well physically; why not take this path? Would not some mountain air do me some good? I thought about it for a few more moments, then, on the spur of the moment, decided to take the path instead of the road.

Now, as I was walking along that path, I noticed a young man standing against a tree, slightly bowed, looking down onto a field, where the light wind was creating waves of blowing grasses. He was very still, as though thinking very intently. As I neared this man, I became fearful that he would turn and look at me. He seemed so dignified in how he was

standing. My view was drawn to this stranger. Then, to my horror, he *did* look at me directly! I noticed that his eyes were full of tears.

In shock, I stopped, staring directly into his eyes. His whole presence drew me, as a magnet. Then, I heard myself gasp, in a voice sounding from far away, as though it were not my own, "Are you well?"

The stranger looked back at me silently for a moment, as though he could see right down into my deepest thoughts. I could only look back with a kind of horror. Then he asked: "You are going to town?"

"Yes," I said.

He looked intently at me for another moment. Then he said: "You seem to be genuinely asking, and, so, I will tell you: I am contemplating the mercy of God."

Then he was silent for a moment, and began a discussion which is here writ, speaking as though he had known me for all my life.

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Man: It was one year ago that I stood at this very place, agonizing over my sin, pleading for forgiveness, for I had become selfish and self-serving, very much a part of this Dark Age which we inhabit. For, being proud of what I had thought was my superior intellect, I had complained about others, and thought myself very intelligent and good, but, while thinking this, parts of the world had been plunged into the worst hideousness of the century. Then, standing here one year ago, I pled to God: "Take away from me my selfishness, my evil. For, have I been any better than those people who I have considered fools?" And, in saying that, I was referring to people who I had thought fools because of their endless sexual fantasies, their rabid womanizing. Perhaps you know some people like that also.

Myself: [swallowing] Yes

Man: [nodding] But how was I any better than these womanizers if I permitted evil crimes to be committed upon the citizens of the world? But one thing bothered me in my prayer to God, and it was this thing which caused me to strike out on a path of discovery, to resolve the problems which I had. The problem was this: that, while I had sinned, I did not think it right that God give me mercy as a free gift. I only wanted his mercy if I deserved it.

Myself: But, surely, if He gives mercy, He gives it to those who deserve it, since, otherwise, He would not be just.

Man: But therein lies the problem: for, if God gives his mercy freely to me, then is it not true that I am not, myself, responsible for that which He has given? In such a case, I do not deserve His mercy, since I obtain it by no good merit of my own. And yet, we know that

God extends his mercy to all men, for His doing anything less would imply imperfection on His part. This was a problem which caused me much agony, for I wanted God's mercy only if I could rigorously prove that I, myself, was worthy of it. And yet, the sins of my past weighed so heavily upon me that I felt that, without mercy, I would die. Moreover, I could not see how the commission of a sin, which is as an eternal blot upon my soul, could be totally and finally washed away by myself alone, if it were me whose sinful disposition had caused it to come into being in the first place. But did that mean that only God could purge me of my sin, as by a free gift, that I could never really be worthy of this purge? And, so, I passed from argument to argument in a state of agony.

Myself: And what did you do then?

Man: Let me tell you what I have come to believe, after much thought, so that you will, by it, despite its being only a shadow of the truth, see why it brings such joy to me.

In my search for truth, I began with only one premise: that, while man has sinned, he is capable of good, since, otherwise, everything which we would argue would be pointless anyway and nothing would be important. My purpose was to prove that the sinner can be worthy of salvation, and to discover how that salvation is manifest. Now, it we start from this one premise, that man can do good, then the freedom of man necessarily follows, since, without freedom, man would be bound by certain external laws, like the wind which has no choice of where to blow but simply blows where the external laws of the world decree, or like the stone which, when dropped, has no choice but to fall to the ground. However, if a man does evil, this evil must be done freely, else he who does it is not responsible for it if he did it by necessity, and had no choice but to do it. Similarly, if a man shoots another innocent man dead, it is not the bullet used which is evil, since it simply follows the lawful course decreed by the external laws. However, the man who freely chooses to use the bullet, for an evil end, is evil, since he caused harm willfully. And we could go on like this, but I think that this point is clear enough.

Myself: Yes, it is clear.

Man: Then, for argument's sake, let us call our premise, that man is capable of good, the "doctrine of human goodness," and let us see what naturally follows from this single premise. We already know that freedom necessarily follows from it. In fact, we know that, if man sins, he is capable of good, since it is impossible to sin without being free and free men are capable of both good and evil. Therefore, we can say to the repentant sinner, "Find comfort, for your freely committed sin is proof that you are capable of good."

Now, if man is free to do good, what is that good? That which is good must tend toward absolute perfection. Otherwise, it is not good, since that which freely chooses as its goal anything less than absolute perfection, makes a choice less perfect than it could have made. But to deliberately choose something less then absolute perfection as our ultimate goal, would be to sin, since it would imply that we were satisfied to give a lesser good equal stature to the highest. This highest, absolute perfection, which must exist, *if man is good*, we can name "God."

Now, if man is good, there are only two possibilities: either he is God, which we can easily prove to be false, or he must eternally come nearer to God.

Myself: I agree with you that man cannot be God, but why do you say that he must eternally come nearer to Him?

Man: If man is not God, but is good, his good must be measured against the absolutely good, which is God. But how does that which is less good partake of the absolute Good, if it is not as good as is that absolute Good itself? This is the old problem of Parmenides, as elaborated by Plato, thousands of years ago. For example, you are not God. Yet, if you do good, you must, somehow, partake of His absolute Good. But how do you do that, since you are imperfect, while He is absolutely perfect? Can the imperfect partake of the perfect?

Myself: Oh, my goodness, that is dreadful.

Man: Of course the absolutely imperfect cannot partake of the perfect. However, is there some perfection in you, which can? The only possible way that you can partake of absolute perfection is if that absolute perfection is your end and goal. Therefore, the good act is only good in so far as it leads toward absolute perfection. Now, the reason I say that the good act must eternally approach the Good is that, if it did not, it would be eternally stuck in a position less than the Good, unable to advance further, and, thus, unable to partake of the absolute.

Now, let me approach our problem from another angle to make it clearer. Let us take the doctrine of original sin. Clearly, all men that we know of, except for Christ, are not as perfect as they could freely choose to be. Every honest man will admit that he has made grave mistakes in his life, that he has surrendered to anger, fear and any of a number of vices. He will also admit, no matter how good he may be, that he could become better. Now, why does man freely choose to be less good, even for a moment, than he could possibly be? It is this imperfection of man which constitutes his original sin. How terrible that man, having been given all the wonders of the universe, still errs on the side of sin! Our original sin is like a black blot upon our souls, as though we had spat in God's face, telling him that his whole creation was not good enough for us, but that we wanted to be able to sin also. Ah, this is not a small matter!

But, those who repent, are filled with grief for their error and desire to correct it. Desiring mercy, they nonetheless want to be worthy of it. As you see, now we have come to the fundamental paradox with which we must wrestle to solve. We must discover some way that God's mercy can manifest, without taking from us our own responsibility to be freely worth of it.

Myself: That doesn't sound like an easy task.

Man: Well, let me ask you this: We have already said that man is free: therefore, no man

can force any other to be either good or bad.

Myself: Yes

Man: How, then, do I cause another to be good?

Myself: You can't. Only each person can make himself good.

Man: But what if I desired to help other men overcome their imperfections? Would I be condemned to simply watch them, helplessly, and hope that they would become better?

Myself: That is a very difficult paradox which you are laying forth.

Man: But one which we must solve, if we are to understand the nature of mercy. This is the question over which I agonized for many months, before, at last, I came to think of the problem in a different light.

Myself: What was that?

Man: This is what I finally came to believe: that mercy is manifest through beauty, since beauty is that which challenges the sinner to do good, *without forcing him to do so.* God surrounds us with the maximum beauty , from the lowest order to the highest. He has constructed the entire universe with the purpose to most readily save the souls of all sinners, and He has taken into account the soul of every sinner, in His construction. Only God, who is absolutely perfect, is capable of constructing such a perfect and merciful universe, which appears before mankind at every turn, beckoning him, pleading for his soul, whose very stones cry out. Yet, man is free to choose whether or not he will heed the call of mercy, or reject it. And if we perform a good deed, which is a deed of beauty, God, who has constructed the universe, will ensure that this good deed performs the maximum possible good, by holding it up, as a mirror, to all other men.

Imagine this case in the nation of Somalia, where IMF genocide has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands. Even in the midst of such physical ugliness and evil, some Somalis have demonstrated beauty. I heard of one ten year old Somali girl, living hundreds of kilometers from one of the emergency refugee stations, who is an example of that: everyone in her family had died except for herself and her two-year-old brother, who she carried alone all the way to the refugee station. When she had reached the station, she, herself, died. But her younger brother, because of her, survived. That is an example of beauty in the midst of the worst physical ugliness imaginable, and God, understanding the sacrifice that this young Somali made, will ensure that the outcome of her action brings both herself and mankind salvation. For example, what if her brother who survived were to later become a great scientist who would make important discoveries for mankind? What if the sheer beauty of what she had done were to cause others to turn away from sin? And may we doubt that that good which she does does not eternally approach the Good? Is it not true that she partakes of whatever good follows from her good act, for all eternity?

Myself: Yes, that must be said. All good which her brother does, all good that his children do, and so on, is only possible because of her sacrifice in saving his life.

Man: Yes, and in addition, we must say this: that not only does a living man effect all others by his deeds, but that, by effecting another positively, as, for example, a musician effects a man hearing a recording of his work, who he may never have met, he causes the man hearing his music, in absolute, or eternal, time , to add more impetus to the performance of his own good deeds. Therefore, if, in listening to a piece by Beethoven, I am influenced to do good, then, in absolute time, my being positively influenced is a *cause* of Beethoven's actions in writing the particular piece that influences me. Similarly, the sacrifice of the young Somali which we mentioned, since it is a good deed, must comprehend its own eternally expanding nature. Otherwise, it cannot be good. Therefore, in absolute time, this Somali girl *died for us*, knowing, in the eternity, that what she was doing would benefit humanity and contribute to its salvation. We, by loving others, such as her, who have done good for us, partake of their good actions, although without robbing their authors of their justified claim to being sovereign. We fulfill the purpose and outcome of their good deeds. However, the performance of the good deed, done freely by the individual, can be done by the individual alone.

So we see how the eternal expansion of our good deeds manifests in the world. This is why I say that history, or the progression of time, is nothing so much as the unfolding of God's mercy to mankind, since it is by history that our eternal progression towards the Good is manifest, even beyond our death, so that we escape the dreadful finality of death. Yet, the unfolding of history, the progression of time, is only a projection, or map, of God's mercy, which occurs in the eternal realm.

Also, in a universe in which original sin occurred, wherein God has created everything for the purpose of purging this sin, one more requirement is needed. For, although God constructs the universe to bring before each sinner the best forms of beauty for the overcoming of each sinner's particular original sin, and, although each good man is in a state of eternal progression toward the Good, yet no man is that Good *itself*. Therefore, within the unfolding of particular time, it is necessary that the absolute Good itself, that is God, live a mortal human life. Simply following from the premise that man has sinned, but that he is capable of good, the coming of God to earth is proven, as the maximum manifestation of beauty of an all-merciful God.

Myself: What you have said is like a thunderbolt of happiness to me, for, it seems that I am beginning to find my true self again and that a certain weight is lifting before me. But, tell me one thing: how, ultimately, is the original sin purged? For, while I can see how each soul eternally becomes less sinful, I wonder how the final step is taken. Do we come back to the problem of mercy as a free gift, since only God can remove the final traces of what is an eternal blot upon our conscience?

Man: My answer to this is very subtle, and difficult to express. But let me first ask you

this: Do you believe that man partakes of God's creation?

Myself: You mean in the sense that God creates through man?

Man: Yes, but I mean more than you are thinking: Do you believe that man, in any way, partakes of God's Creation of the Universe, *even from the beginning?*

Myself: That would be very difficult to comprehend, since, how could man partake in Creation before he, himself, was created? Man would have to be timeless, as is God Himself. How could man be eternal if he was created in time?

Man: The eternity was also created by God, but does that mean that it is not eternal?

Myself:No

Man: And what of the so called "eternal ideas?" Were they not created by God?

Myself: Yes, I see.

Man: And yet, they are still eternal?

Myself: Yes, I see now that there can be eternal things which are not God.

Man: Even though eternal things other than God exist, He is still prior to them in the order of Creation, since, without Him, they could not exist. Yet, man, while not God, does approach Him eternally, and, therefore, partakes of Him on the highest level. Therefore, man is eternal. There never was a time before man existed at least in spiritual form.

It seems to me that, if we recognize this, if will give us a far better understanding of the term "original sin," since, if man is eternal, it follows that the commission of any sin within particular time must have resulted from an absolute, eternal sin, inherent in his freely chosen identity. This is why original sin is so dreadful: because it is eternal. Yet, God, out of mercy, arranges a kind of progression within eternal time, itself, which progression is caused by the agapic relationships of different men to one another. For example, by our fulfilling the purpose of the Somali martyr who we mentioned earlier, we actually change the eternal outcome of her life. This is how progression occurs within absolute or eternal time. All that we see in particular time is a reflection of this progression in absolute time.

Myself: But why did God create Man?

Man: The best reason that I have ever seen is that of Leibniz, who said that, to be perfect, God's creation had to be as varied as possible. A universe with more souls is superior to one with less, especially if each soul is unique and unlike any other. Think about it from the standpoint of good deeds. Does not the good deed of Beethoven increase in glory and magnitude with each new soul touched by his music? Is it not also true, that, if each soul is

unique, each can add its own special value to the deed of Beethoven, by partaking of it in whichever way it can? Leibniz, by the way, also showed how even evil men, while condemning themselves, bring good to the universe, since good men, reacting with horror to their evil, resolve to be more good.

But coming back to my question of Creation, how can man partake of it from the beginning? Let me give this example: our own planet's moon. Because of its existence, mankind's path of discovery was different than it would otherwise have been. How much of modern science depends upon the fact that early man, curious about the nature of this moon, investigated its behavior, thereby increasing his own knowledge of the universe? Or take the case of the planet Venus. Did man partake of its creation? You may know that Venus is a planet almost exactly the same size of earth, with virtually identical gravity and composition. It even has continents, like our earth, and sea floors. Yet, there is no water in its sea bed. It is as earth would be were our entire ocean to be evaporated, leaving dead ocean floors where today we have the seas. The entire ocean of Venus is locked up in its thick atmosphere, 100 times thicker than our own. High up in the clouds of Venus, a constant rain of sulphuric acid is constantly raining, but never hitting the surface of the planet. Now, one day, mankind will transform the atmosphere of Venus, create oceans, and turn the planet into a second earth in our own solar system. At that point he will have fulfilled a purpose for which the planet was created. By putting the planet to good use, mankind gives it a reason for having been created; he becomes a cause of its creation. It is similar for all created things, for they were all created by God out of love for man, out of a desire that man be as perfect as he possibly could be, even if he had sinned.

Moreover, it follows from our doctrine of human goodness, that, if man is good, he partakes of God on the highest level. Therefore, there are no beings in the universe higher, in form, than man, except for God. Even the angels cannot be higher, in form, than man, but are probably simply men who did not partake of original sin. This is contrary to the notions of those who believe that man is only at one rung of a ladder of higher and higher beings, leading up to God, and that there are angels who are higher than man in the same way that man is higher than the animal.

Since man is the highest possible being apart from God, we must conclude that all that exists in the universe is caused by the sacred relationship of God to man, and of man to God, ultimately, that, therefore, divine love, itself, is the most fundamental cause and substance of the universe and constitutes everything in it. In this regard, the so called "higher monads" of Leibniz, which are human souls, are the cause of the creation of all lower monads, or simple substances.

Myself: But something is bothering me. You have said that God has ordered the universe in such a way as to take into account the sins of all men, so as to best redeem them.

Man: Yes.

Myself: Then the universe would have been constructed differently, had man not sinned.

Man is the cause of the universe's having been constructed as it is.

Man: Absolutely.

Myself: And, if, as it seems, it is the mission of mankind to perfect that which is perfectible in the universe, in order to win salvation, it seems that God has deliberately created a universe less perfect than he could have made, for the benefit of man. But this would be very odd. Then, does man, by sinning, partake of the creation of a *bad* universe, one less perfect than one in which he had not sinned?

Man: No, for, *insofar as man chooses to be good*, he partakes of a *good* universe, one which is constructed for the purpose of purging his sins. Our universe is the most perfect possible, as Leibniz noted, because even its imperfections exist for the purpose of redeeming mankind and, hence, creating the maximum good.

Now think of your question about original sin from this standpoint. For man to sin after all that God has done for him is the most hideous crime imaginable. It is as a cloud which can never be cleared, a source of eternal grief. It may be true that only God, ultimately, can clear all traces of it from our souls. However, if this is the case, is there some way that man, by being good, can partake of the creation of God's mercy to himself? Can man, by being good, give cause and reason to God's having given him mercy? If so, God's mercy, which can be given by God alone, it not a free gift at all, but one which must be earned, and one of which man must partake.

And, since God is all-knowing, we can also say that he knew "before" he had created each human soul, whether that soul would freely decide to be good or not. And knowing that the great majority of men would, ultimately, choose to be good, this goodness foreseen became a reason for His creation of man. In this regard, we can say that man, by being good "after" his creation, gives cause for his creation, in which case, man partakes even of the ultimate creation, which is his own.

But those evil men who sell themselves to Satan are given existence only because the horror of their evil causes good men to become better. The grief of such evil men is greater than anything imaginable, for they rebel against the order of God. However, although they can kill, ravage, rape and plunder, yet they can cause no harm to the souls of those who freely choose not to be harmed by them. Those who are killed by them are no less good on account of having been killed by them. Therefore, it is only their mortal existence which is harmed by them.

But those evil men must wallow in their own ugliness for all eternity. In addition, they can never partake of creation, since, by hating mankind, they do not act as a cause for mankind's having been created. Therefore, they attempt to violate the very creation of the universe and must be thrown from it, that is, "thrown out of heaven."

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The two of us continued our discussion for some time longer, going back over many of the ideas which I have writ above.

During the course of our discussion, we seemed to have known each other for all of our lives, and both remarked how remarkable it was that we had met. I invited him to my home, where we discussed many worldly and philosophical matters, becoming life-long friends. Later that evening, after he had gone, I stood on my porch, looking out as the evening deepened, and the stars came out one by one. Down below the lights of the town were also shining, but, now, they seemed much more beautiful to me then they even had before, for each was evidence of the lives of men.

As I was looking up, I heard the summer cricket singing and the wind blowing through the trees. High above me, I watched an airplane soaring beautifully across the heavens. And watching it, I thought about the wondrous nature of mankind, and thought the following prayer to the Creator:

"Amidst all my folly, You still did not forget me. Though I awoke full of vileness and error, thinking only to fulfill my own sin, still, You organized this day entirely for my own good. You thought more about my well-being than I did myself. You knew that I would, by chance, take the path over the hill which I took, and organized it such that this man came to where I met him, when I met him. You did this all for me, O God, for You had more faith in me, despite my sin, than I did myself. Now I am overcome with grief, for I realize that You trust me, despite all my error. You have constructed the entire universe, taking me into account. You have even come to earth for me, and You have died for me.

Then let me be worthy of You, O God! **For now I see where I have erred, and it seems that to err more would be the worst death imaginable. Let me serve You truly and purge myself of all sinfulness, so that I might become Your Ambassador to man, to guide him, redeem him, and fulfill Your glory."**

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And so it was that the Creator intervened, at my darkest moment, to lead me back to the true way.

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