

Fall of Man

I am older now than I told you the story of the Shadow. But I don't feel any wiser. Perhaps I feel more mature. Regardless, I have a few things to say before I vanish into the woodwork forever. I have, since my initial memoir, acquired an ideal dwelling for both an atheist cast out from the world of self-righteous men and women and a recluse cast into self-exile. I am still that devout atheist, though, and still, I wander the paths of the forest. But it is a different forest nowadays. As I rambled about for some 10 years in the peripheral lands of humanity, I reflected on my situation critically. In doing so, I became even more critical of the Other, the Enemy. But I met my wife, Faith Freewill. I was 40 years old then. And I was invited to attend Church on Sunday at Hallowed Temple.

I shall begin here.

I still comb the woods now and then, a willful wanderer, but I rarely get to anymore. I wander the concrete forest of Aion, the Great City, here in Amerika. Aion is an average city here in the South. I walk the main Wayward Avenue, which meanders through the town and over the Omen River. My cabin was to the West of Aion, in the backwoods community of Aion, which was planted in the dead center of Amerika, the Great Nation. Living in my cabin, one day, I drifted into the concrete asylum of Aion, and I was at a coffee shop. I saw a flyer for "The Conversation," a sermon to be given by a Pastor Rightwise. I thought that through the Conversation, Pastor Rightwise was trying to mend the relationship between unbelievers and the church folk. I felt by the Conversation that Rightwise was attempting to build a bridge between my kind, atheists and agnostics, and his kind, whatever they are, as that is still a mysterious phenomenon to a devout atheist like me.

That Sunday, I told myself I would go again and try to reach out a helping hand to the indoctrinated and free at least one poor person. And I was a fool for trying to do so, but fortune favors the bold, as the adage goes.

I had sent Pastor Rightwise an email, a criticism of the sermon he had posted on the Hallowed Temple website. Pastor Rightwise responded enthusiastically, wishing everyone in his congregation was as attentive to his preaching as I was. Still, I doubt he wanted a pack of wolves like me tending to his flock. I had also included in the message what my therapist called the parable of my "spiritual confusion." It had come to that I had sought out a mental health professional to help me cope with the confusion of existence, but she was of little use to an old stray dog like me.

"I lay in my bed wide awake when two demons came out of the wall of my home, and they dragged me to the Netherworld, to Hell. I tried to escape and jumped out of bed but fell into a deep well. At the bottom of the well was a man whipping a child to beat the devil out of him. And at the bottom of the dry well was another pit, Hell within Hell. The pit was dark, but I could see it was full of serpents. My

skin started to crawl as if an insect was crawling out of my flesh. And I opened a book with pages stuck together and bound with its words, so I began to eat the knowledge.

When I tore the first page, a swarm of crows came out of the book and began peaking at me. And in response to all of this, I set first the book, which was the Word –I set it on fire by tossing it into the pit, which erupted into flames, and I kicked the man whipping my youth into the pit. I saved the second book, which was The Great Work.

As I climbed out of the well, thunderheads formed on the ceiling of my room, and a torrent of rain that I had conjured held off and simmered the fires of Hell... but the rains cannot hold off what is coming, what hides within the Shadow.” I told the Pastor.

I sent a message to Pastor Rightwise. I do not know whether he knew that I sought a middle ground with the Other, but he agreed to meet me at the Neighbor's Coffee Shop.

The preacher, Pastor Rightwise.... Was he my neighbor? Was I to love him as myself? Or fear him?

After we met at Neighbor's Coffee Shop, I asked him for a ride. He asked which direction I was going, cleverly, I might add, and when I told him I was going Downtown Aion, he said: "Well, I'm going the other way." And he was going the other way that day and in life. There was no middle ground with the Other, with the church folk. Indeed, I coexist with them and breathe the same air, but it is a choking existence.

As are others of my kind, I am strangled by the conceit clothed as righteousness. Now, I will tell you, the reader... There must be another way. The believer believes that the atheist cannot be moral without God; everything is permitted. This is a foolish belief, and it is a belief, no doubt. It is more than a belief; in some sense, it is the human mark, a curtailing of our species: the belief that humans are superior to all else. And if you are not one of us, the believers, then you are inferior. Nothing could be a better or more dignified way of labeling the herd mentality, and the herd goes herd fashion over the cliff of reality.

I met with Pastor Rightwise one other time, with my wife still at the time, Fig, who was also a believer. And I believe that would be another story as to how a devout atheist like me fell into a relationship with a devout Christian, an Evangelical. But things happen, and under her advice, I asked for the ride I told the reader about above. And he denied me. So, I took him a copy of Son of God, the other story I have told. And I never saw him again. Now, if this was just a coincidence, I could accept it. But I take it as a slight from the world of believers, the world of sinners. But let me tell you a little about myself. I look more like an ascetic nowadays, whatever an ascetic looks like: I have glasses, fattened up with age, and shave my head as a form of renunciation of the world, at least the world of self-image and narcissism. And I have been subtly accused a time or two of narcissism. But my love is for the world. I am a wanderer of this world, and the next world, I believe, is not. I believe: “I am that I am not.” I will continue this path of atheism until I am not, and then life will mean what it means now... nothing.

This is the only life that I have, and it would seem a waste preparing for the next life, an afterlife. What is that, and what does it mean an "afterlife?" Afterlife is death, and in death, our existence ceases, a Great Philosopher concluded. And we have not, as humans, come to any greater truth than that of existential nihilism. Life means nothing. But this does not prevent us from living with purpose. A self-made purpose, but a purpose all the same. I say that doubt shadows the atheist, but even more, it shadows the believer. It haunts every moment of his or her being. And for what, the truth that there is no God. The dogma and the doctrine will continue. But after my experience with Pastor Rightwise, I know God is a lie.

Humankind is the Great Work. I don't think I would have had any "spiritual confusion" if it weren't for the spiritualists in my childhood.

And so, as a 12-year-old, I set out to write The Great Work you read now. It is called an antithesis to the Great Work of Alchemy. This is a spiritual quest and a work of writing, anyhow. It is my Great Work against God; may He rest in peace.

I had been to Church only once that I could remember as a child. And I remember the most essential part of the Church was giving. Giving to the Church. I gave a dime since it was all I had. It was all my increase, not just 10% of my increase. Now, Pastor Rightwise had a twin who spoke at length during his sermons about the importance of giving. There are all kinds of politics surrounding this practice in the Church, but I say it is good to give to your fellow man. And I gave for some time to Hallowed Temple, Pastor Rightwise, and his brother's Church. But just because you are giving to the Church... well, you are giving to just that, the Church, not your fellow Humankind.

Now, Churches have outreach programs, but these programs, such as giving food to the poor, work to make the poor person a slave or a servant, and I'm no slave nor servant. This is why I have come as a man who serves no masters; I am my own master. But with women, the Church has a long history of peddling women as property.

I am the Son of a man and a woman, not the Son of Man; that old prophecy is dead and gone. The Son of God is dead and gone. Family matters; it is the best institution of Humankind, and an institution survives the individual's death. God will not endure; His mythos are shrouded in fear, and fear is not the way to truth. Overcoming fear is the way to truth. Now the Son can say he is "the way, the truth, and the light, and that no man shall come to the Father except through him." This is to say that no one can come to the truth except through Christ, the most dangerous of martyrs, a human sacrifice to a god. A god who sacrificed himself for himself and to himself seems the Great Narcissus, and we are God's Echo. Christ pines away in the desert, and I lived in the woods, in the safety of the forest, in a haven of Shadow.

As far as life goes, we are always at the inevitable end. And each day we are still alive, the end gets nearer. Will we move on from this world to something else? I doubt it.

But unlike the Stoics, hope is a good thing. I hope I am incorrect in my understanding of things, but oblivion isn't so bad of a concept. I live a simple life, and being without many possessions has benefits. It seems that the soul or the self, which and whatever you call it. I call it the will sometimes because that's all we have: the will to be and the will to exist is temporal.

"Where there's a will, there's a way," it is said. So, one could also assume, then, that "Where there's no way, there's no will." When there is no more Way, no Path, there is nothing. Now, I've mentioned taking the wrong path, and it matters that what path we take in life will lead us somewhere different after death. But it seems to me there is no life after death. Things have a teleological being to them. But by the end, it means the absolute end, not transitional or transforming, but obliterating oblivion. We become nothing. A dead man's dream: Nothing. I have read: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18 NIV). This is most important to a young proselyte such as me. "I once was saved, but now I am lost" is my atheist's joy. What is grace anyway, but powerlessness, a helpless and pitiful surrender? I am now more than an atheist: I am an anti-theist. God hates my body and my spirit, and he cannot have my soul. It belongs to the castaways of doubt and disbelief. There is a story I would like to share at this point, and then I'll have said all that will need to have been noted for this fiasco. I have said that I took Rightwise's silence as a slight. Well, I say I was the victim of another slight, verbal slap to the conscience: a man I knew somewhat or perhaps didn't know: an old neighbor, let's say. This Old Neighbor became homeless by one of, like Rightwise, the Good Christian folk. I was entertained that I was doing some good in helping the poor guy, as we were both poor folks.... But as we were sitting there on the third evening of his stay, he made the following comment off-hand: "You know, atheism is the easy way out." And I stewed over it all night as I sat up, and when he woke in the morning from his sleep, it was raining, but I had made my mind up: he had to leave my home for the insult. So, I sent him into the rain, afoot.

I offered him a trash bag as a makeshift rain jacket, but he was insulted. But he left with some encouragement. The point here is that when Good Christian folk cannibalize each other, I let them nowadays. If they want to fight amongst themselves, I let them, Old Neighbor and Good Christian alike. They can both tell their slights and slurs to Jesus. I am nearly 50 years old, and my story of being a devout atheist continues. But the last come first and the first last. Below are some more thoughts on The End.

Rapture

Each generation thinks it's the one, but it's not the one... and each generation after that thinks it's the one, but it's not the one... ".... like a thief in the night," Jesus says he'll come again. Maybe the Rapture is just that: a thief in the night; it has come to take your peace. Jesus also said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." And in turn, He offers war: live by the sword, die by the sword, etc. I come in the light; I come with the light; I offer light instead of darkness, and the fallen.... For, have you all not had enough of the taste of death?!

Visions

I shared with the reader above the experiences with Pastor Rightwise, the two demons taking me captive into Hell, and that Old Neighbor, exiled into bad weather. In closing, I must mention the strange and mysterious occurrence at Fig's dead Grandmother's house. Faith and I went to stay there shortly after we had married. Fig's Grandmother had "passed away" and left no will. Faith asked her father's permission to stay there, and he obliged her to wish. I was there for several months, and after about the 6th month, I recalled the story I had shared with the twin devils in the Son of God. I remembered this bit of nostalgia because Fig's dead Grandmother's house had those very same almost fitting bars barricading the windows. I was told this was because a blind couple lived there, and it was for their safety.

Nevertheless, those damned bars were on the windows and doors, and I began having visions of being consumed in the house by fire. Then one day, our cat Nimrod woke me and wanted to go outside. I let him out. In doing so, I saw embers glowing in the yard where we had used the grill to cook some vegetables and meat earlier that day. I got the water hose and soaked down the yard but couldn't sleep all that night.

I woke and told her we were leaving at dawn. And we did. Thanks to my cat Nimrod, I think I was not consumed in a fiery and ironic twist of fate and nostalgia. But my wife said we couldn't take the cat, Nimrod. And I insisted that he go. But she said he had the mark... That is the Mark of the Beast. Not the Gematria numerology 666, which I had learned represented the coded name Cesar Nero.

No, the reason Faith thought Nimrod carried the mark was half my fault. But first, it was because Nimrod had a microchip implanted in him in case he was lost. But even further, I did not know that Nimrod in the Evangelical circles was believed to be that "mighty hunter before God" and was in Babylon several millennia ago. I named him Nimrod because it was the Greek name for just a "mighty hunter." And I owned a Nimrod speargun deep in the past. It was an excellent speargun!

I was a fisherman of fish, though. I was not, then, one of the "fishers of men" the Fellowship of Jesus Christ had set up to proselytize the Gentiles. No, that was not I, Roman. Anyhow, it is worth mentioning this story to the readers in the audience who love irony.

I am middle-aged now. And it seems this irony is my fate, which Heraclitus said: "A man's character is his fate." My fate eludes me, but death awaits to set me free someday. Until then, I shall continue to write in secrecy and in hiding from the world as a recluse, an atheist recluse, rather than at a religious hermitage. Until you hear from me again, congregate with others of your kind. I will follow the path of the brokenhearted. It is the true Geist of God. I shall end here.