

ORIGINAL SIN

This great power of blackness in him (Hawthorne) derives its force from its appeals to Calvinistic sense of innate depravity and original sin from whose visitation, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. Herman Melville

Sin has many tools, but a lie is a handle which fits them all. Oliver Wendell Holmes

Ignorance is not innocence but sin. Robert Browning

For a healthy man to refuse an invitation to a beautiful woman's bed is a mortal sin. Paraphrased from Zorba the Greek

I am now an old man. I wish to chronicle the last sixty years of my life. It has been marked by some remarkable occurrences in which I played a significant part. If the reader thinks I am about to blow my own horn and thus feed my ego, the reader will be absolutely correct.

I had just graduated from Earth's renowned Space Academy and was returning home after my first solo mission in space. The usual routine for space explorers coming back was to stop at a large complex located on the moon. This allowed for a health examination and a period of unwinding. It was staffed to allow for any contingency and to provide any desirable amenity. Much to my surprise and chagrin, when I landed on the moon I found that the base was completely deserted. However there was a message asking me to contact headquarters on Earth as soon as possible. This I did and was devastated by the news, related by a remote electronic messenger. It seemed that all life on Earth had been eradicated by excessive radiation due to an all out nuclear conflagration. I was the last human alive. The small staff that usually served on the moon base had been on leave on Earth, since I was not expected for a while. They died there. I was also informed that while I was now totally alone, the moon station was equipped with computer robots that would provide anything I required. Culinary repasts would be tailored to my taste, any form of entertainment that I might desire and a virtual reality that could satisfy any of my erotic wishes would be available. The station was up-to-date on just about any scientific materials and apparatus that might be of interest. There were enough basic substances to sustain my life for at least another two hundred years.

For the next three months I led a life of leisure in which I enjoyed all my primitive desires, especially since a virtual world, inhabited by very desirable women and others of equal interest was always on hand. Then I started to get bored. It was like predictable theatre. I was reminded of Shakespeare's famous line from 'As You Like It, "All the world is a stage, And all the men and women merely players". I developed a feeling of loneliness. My holographic comrades had obviously been programmed to flatter me with all sorts of nonsensical compliments. My life had no spice. It was too plush. I longed for real human contact.

I spent sleepless nights pondering my dilemma. Suddenly an idea sprung up. I wondered why I had not thought of it before. I am an avid fan of Science Fiction and in a number of stories the phenomenon of 'Cloning' is predominant. The first thing I thought of and immediately rejected was to clone myself. That would have been like creating a mirror image of me. I subsequently did a vast amount of library research. I never realized that there was an enormous 'Tree of Knowledge' on hand of which I could avail myself. Inevitably I discovered the biology of Recombinant DNA which allows for altering genes and replacing chromosomes with different ones. The next step consisted of trying to alter my genetic make-up before cloning the cell involved. I must have carried out at least one hundred attempts until one succeeded. It produced a clone of me that was not really me. It had a host of different traits. I next cloned fifty others, each with different traits. I was elated with the results.

By altering the ratio of X and Y chromosomes I was able to produce a female. Again, I went ahead and fashioned fifty-one females, one of them to be my mate. I had been able to alter their genetic make-up so that they matured far more rapidly than normal humans. With now fifty-one couples the population increased exponentially. Within twenty years we numbered in the thousands. Many decided to migrate to other planets in other galaxies. Yet we remained a large, viable and contented social group.

I was now able to relax and contemplate what I had accomplished. The first thing I realized was that I had recreated the human race. It appeared that all the clones were my off springs. They regarded me with deference. I wondered if they had become my disciples, and whether they considered me as a sort of 'God'. That notion had also occurred to me. I certainly did not think of myself as any type of deity and I had no desire for adherents. However, in this new world for which I was largely responsible, who or what am I?

I then remembered a puzzle that had plagued me, but could not solve when I first discovered that I was alone. It was, 'Under these circumstances, could I commit an act of evil, or in other words, a sin.' At that time the only possible answer might have been suicide. Yet, if I had done so, so what? It seemed to me that a sin required someone beside the sinner to appreciate it. I now believe that I have an answer. There are two types of sin. One consists of an act of omission and the other of commission. Doing nothing would have been an example of the former. Doing harm of any kind to any of my co-humans would have been one of the latter. I soon realized that, fundamentally, there had to be freedom of choice to commit a deleterious deed. It is impossible to commit any sort of action, good or evil, if there are no options. I did have choices. Therefore under my original dire circumstances I could have performed an action regarded by some as a sin. Freedom is a two-edged sword.

Finally and as stated earlier, I am approaching the end of my life. However, I have become conscious that there is a way to prolong it. All I have to do is create a clone of myself. When the clone reaches the end of its life, the process could be repeated ad infinitum. Thus I would have eternal life. Is God nothing more than a clone that has been recreated an infinite number of times? That begs some questions. If so, who or what was the entity that initially was cloned? Was there an initial non-clone? Is all reality nothing more than a facsimile?

Jack Basuk, Jan. 29, 2010