

§ ii. I am not going to dive into the many curious notions which people have concerning the condition of Adam before the fall; everyone agrees that it was a very great loss,¹ not only in things relating to the outward man, but also in regard to the true fellowship and communion he had with God. He was warned of this loss in the command, “in the day that you eat it, you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). This death could not be an outward death or the dissolution of the outward man, because he did not die until many hundred years later; this death must concern his spiritual life and communion with God. Besides what refers to the fruits of the earth, the consequence of the fall is expressed in Genesis 3:24: “So he drove out the man; and he placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Whatever literal meaning this has, we may safely ascribe to this paradise a mystical meaning, and truly consider it the spiritual communion and fellowship with God which the saints obtain through Jesus Christ. The cherubims only give way to him and those who enter through him, who calls himself the Door. And so, though we do not ascribe any of Adam's guilt to men until they make it their own through similar acts of disobedience, still we cannot suppose that men, who naturally derive from Adam, can have any good thing in their nature which Adam did not have first so that he could transmit it to them.²

¹ Latin: *lapsu magnam foelicitatem amiserit*, “by the fall he lost a great happiness”

² Since the translation retains part of the difficulty of the original, we have tried to understand Barclay's logic this way: Before the Fall,

So if we can affirm that Adam did not retain in his nature any will or light which could give him knowledge of spiritual things, so neither can his posterity have it. Whatever real good anyone does, does not come from his nature as man or as the son of Adam, but rather it comes from the *seed of God in him*, a new visitation of life to bring him out of that natural condition. Although it is *in* him, it is not *part of* him. The Lord himself testified of this in Genesis 6:5 where it says that God saw “that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” These words are very explicit and very comprehensive. Notice the emphasis: First “every intent of the thoughts of his heart;” this does not permit any exception of any intent of the thoughts of his heart. Second, “is only evil continually;” it is neither partly evil continually, nor completely evil at some times, but completely evil and always evil. This certainly rules out any good as a natural effect of man’s heart, because what is always completely evil cannot produce any good thing from its own nature. The Lord expressed this again a little later (chapter 8:21): “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” This indicates how natural evil is to him. From this I argue:

If the thoughts of man’s heart are not only evil, but always evil; then they are, as they proceed from his heart, neither good in part, nor at any time.

The first is true;

Therefore the last is true.

Again, if man’s thoughts are always completely evil, then they are completely useless to him in the things of God.

The first is true;

Therefore the last is true.

Adam could have had some goodness in his capacity for the spiritual life and communion with God. But the loss he suffered was precisely the death of that capacity. After the fall Adam did not retain that good capacity and therefore he could not hand it down to his children.

The same idea appears clearly in the saying of the prophet (Jeremiah 17:9) “The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and desperately wicked.” Who can imagine that something which is like that has any power of its own, or is in any way able to lead a man to righteousness, which is directly contrary to its nature? This is as contrary to reason as that a stone could fly upwards by means of its own nature and motion. Just as the nature of a stone is inclined to move downwards towards the center, so the heart of man is naturally inclined to evil, some people to one, others to another evil. From this I argue:

That which is “more deceitful than anything else, and desperately wicked” is neither fit nor able to rightly lead a man to things that are good and honest.

The heart of man is that way.

Therefore, etc.

The apostle Paul fully describes the condition of men in the fall, citing the psalmist: “There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks God. They have all gone out of the way, they have altogether become unprofitable, there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”³ What could be said more explicitly? He seems to be particularly careful to avoid ascribing anything good to the natural man; he shows how he is polluted in all his ways; he shows how he has no righteousness, understanding, or knowledge of God, how he has lost his way, and in short

³ [Romans 3:10, Psalms 14:3, 53:2, etc. RB](#)

[In addition to the citations Barclay identifies, scholars have identified many others in this passage: Psalms 5:9, 14:1-3, 10:7, 36:1, 53:1-4, 140:3, Proverbs 1:16, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Isaiah 59: 7-8](#)

how he is useless. Nothing can be said nore fully to confirm our judgment. If this is the natural condition of man, of man who is in the fall, he is unfit to take one step toward heaven.

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition IV § ii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 86-89 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 54-56.