

MILTON AND THE IDEA OF THE FALL

WILLIAM POOLE

New College, Oxford



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page viii
<i>Note on the text</i>	x
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction	I
Part I Fallen culture	
1 The Fall	9
2 Augustinianism	21
3 The quarrel over original sin, 1649–1660	40
4 The heterodox Fall	58
5 Heresiographers, Messiahs and Ranters	83
6 The Fall in practice	96
Part II Milton	
7 Towards <i>Paradise Lost</i>	125
8 <i>Paradise Lost</i> I: the causality of primal wickedness	146
9 <i>Paradise Lost</i> II: God, Eden and man	158
10 <i>Paradise Lost</i> III: creation and education	168
11 <i>Paradise Lost</i> IV: Fall and expulsion	182
Conclusion	195
<i>Notes</i>	200
<i>Index</i>	234

CHAPTER I

The Fall

In early-modern England, you could not escape the Fall. It was political: if man was fallen and wayward, how should he be governed? Was the original state of Adam as, supposedly, head and ruler of his family, holding, 'by Right of Father-hood, Royal Authority over [his] children', intrinsic justification for a patriarchalist monarchy? Was 'the desire of Liberty . . . the First Cause of the Fall of *Adam*'?¹ Or, asked Republicans of Patriarchalists, was Adam, created in the image of God, originally free, and in possession of political liberty, and does this apply to his progeny too? In 1649 Milton certainly said so: 'No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were borne free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey: and that they liv'd so.'²

The Fall also had class implications: in a famous sermon preached late in 1662, Robert South declared that it was as difficult for us now to imagine the height of unfallen Adam's intellect 'as it is for a Peasant bred in the obscurities of a cottage, to fancy in his mind the unseen splendour of a Court'.³ By contrast, Defoe later claimed that 'the most noble Descendants of *Adam's* Family, and in whom the Primogeniture remained, were really *Mechanicks*'.⁴

Of course, Eve's role as temptress secured for her daughters particular opprobrium. As Abraham Cowley lamented:

Nay with the worst of Heathen dotage We
(Vain Men!) the *Monster Woman Deifie*;
Finde *Stars*, and tye our *Fates* there in a *Face*,
And *Paradice* in them by whom we *lost* it, place.⁵

Not stopping at feminine inferiority because of the Fall, most commentators located such inferiority even in the state of innocence, occasionally somewhat inadvertently, as when John Salkeld protested that Eve before

the Fall wasn't frightened of snakes 'though by nature timorous and fearfull'. Alexander Ross repeated a commonplace when he said that Eve didn't mind being treated as inferior to Adam before the Fall: only fallen women, presumably, resent being dominated.⁶ Most trenchant was John Knox, who insisted on feminine subjection because 'God by the order of his creation hath spoiled woman of authoritie and dominion'.⁷ In many discussions of the Fall, including *Paradise Lost*, circularity thus ensues, where Eve is stated to be inferior to Adam before the Fall, and is then told afterwards that this is one of her punishments, a possible cause of the Fall thereby redefined as an effect (*PL* 4.295–9, 10.195–6). The way out of this problem, theologically, was to claim that women's inferiority is double, deriving from *both* nature *and* sin: 'One of them onely was deriued from this sinne, the other was the prerogatiue of creation.'⁸

Lack of any political and legal rights for women, again, was all because of Eve. Reflecting on the curse delivered to Eve in Genesis 3:16, one lawyer explained:

See here the reason . . . that Women have no voyse in Parliament, They make no Lawes, they consent to none, they abrogate none. All of them are understood either married or to be married and their desires or [*sic*] subject to their husband, I know no remedy though some women can shift it well enough. The common law here shaketh hands with divinity.⁹

Not all women took this kind of attitude lying down. Aemilia Lanyer, for one, devoted a section of her *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* to a defence of Eve, arguing that Adam was more to blame for the Fall than Eve, who was in her inexperience 'simply good'.¹⁰

Eden and what happened in it were not, however, completely shut away in the past. The place Eden itself, though supposedly lost, intruded on the early-modern reader as a literal, mappable location. The Geneva Bible (1560) included such a map, deriving from the French text of Calvin's *Commentary on Genesis* (1553). By this point, emblematic maps in which Eden was depicted as the centre of the Universe, with Adam, Eve, tree and serpent observed by God looking down from the heavenly spheres, were giving way to geographical maps. In these, emblematic elements had been replaced by something similar to modern cartographical practice, in which a rough scale map of ancient Mesopotamia was drawn, insinuating similarity to other geographical maps.¹¹

Though it might be locatable in this way, one could hardly deny that Eden itself had disappeared, presumably as a consequence of the Flood. But the ideal lived on, not just as a metaphor for delight, idleness,

solitariness, even death, as in Shirley's 'summer room, / Which may, so oft as I repose / Present my arbour and my tomb'.¹² Increasingly, and reciprocal to the Protestant affirmation that Adam and Eve worked hard in Eden, agricultural reform in early-modern England adopted corresponding terminology, often in combination with an at first incongruous, rather technical vocabulary of 'artificiall help[s]'. Thus John Beale, future FRS and current cider enthusiast, in 1657:

We do commonly devise a shadowy walk from our Gardens through our Orchards (which is the richest, sweetest, and most embellisht grove) into our Coppice-woods or Timber-woods. Thus we approach the resemblance of Paradise, which God with his own perfect hand had appropriated for the delight of his innocent Masterpiece. If a gap lyes in the way between our Orchard and our Coppice, we fill up the vacancy with the artificiall help of a hop-yard.¹³

Gardening provided man with a zone that could remind him of his lot before the Fall, and the many manuals for agricultural and horticultural improvement combined recollection of Eden with often Messianic expectations of salvation to come, just as biblical commentaries celebrated the perennial pleasures and duties of gardening:

As [Adam's] charge was both to dresse the garden, in planting and nourishing of trees: in which kind of husbandrie many euen now do take a delight, and hold it rather to be a recreation, then any wearines vnto them: as also to keepe it from the spoile of the beasts . . . Adam was not to liue idely in Paradise, much lesse should we spend our daies in doing of nothing.¹⁴

Nevertheless, standing in a garden also gave opportunity for reflection, as to Ralph Austen, author of one of the most popular horticultural manuals of the century, *A Treatise of Fruit-Trees*. For Austen, tending to fruit trees allowed opportunity for lamentation and self-abasement.¹⁵

Beale's correspondent John Evelyn was one of the most enthusiastic gardeners of the age. In the difficult days just before the Restoration, Evelyn proposed to withdraw from the confusions of society, and found a utopian group who would cultivate their garden: 'a society', he said, 'of the *Paradisi Cultores*, persons of antient simplicity, paradisean and hortulan saints . . . by whom we might hope to redeeme the tyme that has bin lost'.¹⁶ Unfallen Eden was supposed to be a changeless environment; Evelyn employed evergreens in his horticultural designs.¹⁷ His fragmentary *Elysium Britannicum* pointedly echoed Bacon's line on God almighty first planting a garden, and elsewhere in the work Evelyn wrote with a grammatically enforced parallelism between pre- and postlapsarian opportunities: 'It was then indeede that the *Protoplast* onely remained

happy, whilst he continued in this *Paradise* of God; and, truly, as no man can be very miserable that is master of a Garden here; So no man will ever be happy, who is not sure of a Garden hereafter.¹⁸ In the opening words of Evelyn's *Kalendarium hortense*, the parallelism (with carefully limiting brackets) is explicit:

As *Paradise* (though of *Gods* own Planting) was no longer *Paradise* then the *Man* was put into it, to *dress it and to keep it*; so, nor will our *Gardens* (as neer as we can contrive them to the resemblance of that blessed Abode) remain long in their *perfection*, unless they are also continually *cultivated*.¹⁹

At the other end of the political scale, the haberdasher and one-time army Agitator Roger Crab decided, in about 1652, to give away all he owned and take up the life of a hermit in his garden, where he ate 'nothing but *Roots*, and the *fruits of the Earth*, and . . . *fair Water*', as the press reported.²⁰ There he turned east, and had a vision of paradise: 'Reader, this is to let the[e] understand, when I was in my Earthly Garden, a digging with my Spade, with my face to the East side of the Garden, I saw into the Paradise of God from whence my Father *Adam* was cast forth . . .'²¹

Such partial re-enactments of paradisaical behaviour appeared in many different places. Augustine's autobiographical *Confessiones* had instigated this trend with the father's anecdote about his youthful sins, including stealing fruit from someone else's pear tree, merely 'because we would do that which was not lawfull'. Likewise, in his partially imitative autobiography, Richard Baxter recalled how 'to concur with naughty Boys that gloried in evil, I have oft gone into other men's Orchards, and stoln their Fruit, when I had enough at home' (Baxter later recounts how he was abused in the streets of Kidderminster for preaching infant damnation as a consequence of the Fall).²² Cowley, in his remarkable ode on the Royal Society, celebrated Bacon, in an inversion of the traditional ethical signatures of the Eden narrative, as a marauding orchard-robber:

With the plain magique of tru Reasons Light,
 He chac'd out of our sight,
 Nor suffer'd Living Men to be misled
 By the vain shadows of the Dead:
 To Graves, from whence it rose, the conquer'd Phantome fled;
 He broke that Monstrous God which stood
 In midst of th'Orchard, and the whole did claim,
 Which with a useless Sith of Wood,
 And something else not worth a name,
 (Both vast for shew, yet neither fit

Or to defend, or to Beget;
 Ridiculous and senceless Terrors!) made
 Children and superstitious Men afraid.
 The Orchards open now, and free;
Bacon has broke that Scar-crow Deitie;
 Come, enter, all that will,
 Behold the rip'ned Fruit, come gather now your Fill.²³

Less salubrious figures than Bacon were again reported as copying, in various ways, Adam and his conduct. From 1641 the Adamites reappeared – heretics from the patristic era who had had isolated revivals over the centuries on the continent. These were restaged in Long-Parliament London in a string of part heresiographic, part pornographic accounts, often accompanied by lurid woodcuts of naked gatherings. As one London Adamite says, ‘I am the Sonne of *Adam*, who begot me in his innocencie: I follow his steps before he fell: that is, I am an *Adamite*.²⁴ Although these pamphlets were clearly spurious, some early Quakers notoriously paraded naked ‘as a sign’, often just for prophetic force, but occasionally with explicit Edenic reference. One Quaker couple toured the north under the names of Adam and Eve.²⁵ Sudden stripping also happened in sensitive places: in 1652 one female Quaker started stripping off during a sermon given by Peter Sterry, an event which attracted a good deal of coverage.²⁶ When the popular presses turned their attention to the Ranter phenomenon from 1649, they recycled various of the Adamite woodcuts, with minor alterations. Thus the Adamite speech-bubble ‘Downe lust’ becomes ‘Behold these are Ranters’.²⁷

John Robins, a fanatic who sprang into prominence in 1651–2 and who, according to the press, said ‘*That he was God Almighty*’, apparently also stated that he was the *third* Adam, one better than Christ. His opponent John Reeve claimed that Robins’ disciples ate only apples and water, and that some thereby died. Robins, never shy of self-publicity, had also said that he was the first Adam ‘in state’, and that ‘Christ was a weak and imperfect Saviour, and afraid to dy, but [Robins] was not afraid to dy’.²⁸

Another spurious anecdote about certain Quakers was related by William Kaye and then popularised by the stationer and heresiographer Thomas Underhill. Kaye had visited these Quakers in jail where he heard that ‘their Conscience telling them that they were to destroy original sin, [they] did therefore, in obedience to the lights thats in them . . . sacrifice or kill their own mother’.²⁹ This shades into the territory of the joke, and in a related vein the mischievous Republican Henry Neville, in his series of pamphlets depicting female parliaments, had the assembled ladies

panicking that the end of the world was nigh in April 1647, because Adam and Eve 'were seen both in one person, and whereas *Eue* was once taken out of *Adam*, *Adam* was now seen strut[t]ing out of *Eue*'. Later on in the century, Neville was to write an internationally successful hoax, *The Isle of Pines* (1668), in which a sophisticated critique of patriarchalism was undertaken via a rewrite of the Genesis narrative, set on a distant desert island. Despite or arguably because of its clear structural affinity with Genesis, it was taken by some as fact: shortly after publication Louis XIV's secretary Henri Justel wrote to Henry Oldenburg, one of the Royal Society's two secretaries, to confirm that *The Isle of Pines* was real, and with his recommendations about how its inhabitants should be treated, living as they did untroubled by lawyers, quacks and theologians. Oldenburg had to disabuse him; Justel was not pleased.³⁰

This selection of anecdotes introduces us to the variety and extent of talk about the matter in Eden and its consequences. Next, though, we need to understand the theological underpinning that created this environment in which the Fall and original sin were so important. This will involve phrasing the problem in early-modern terms, and then, in the next chapter, exploring its theological origins in patristic thought, following its course in outline up to the age of Milton. First, then, we need to understand the concept and the problems of the Fall, and what kinds of decisions can be taken about these problems.

Western monotheistic Christianity – or any other monotheistic religion that holds God to be both benevolent and omniscient – has a basic problem: in Boethius' well-known formulation, *si quidem deus est, unde mala? bona vere unde, si non est?* – '[if] there be a God, from whence proceed so many evils? and if there be no God, from whence cometh any good?'³¹ It is the first of these questions that necessitates the device of the Fall, a story to explain why evil and the God of love coexist. In Aristotelian thought the propensity of man to err was discussed simply in terms of inherent weaknesses: *kakia* (vice), *acrasia* (unrestraint) and *theriotes* (bestiality) are properties of man, and not, moreover, properties that require *theological* justification.³² In Judaeo-Christian terms, however, justification was sought, and in narrative form: the question was now phrased in terms of historical happenings, and not explained as a timeless property of man. Presuming God to be an unchanging good, and accepting the real existence of evil in the world, such evil had to have been caused by man, and caused, so readers conditioned by the primarily historical genres of the Old Testament naturally assumed, by a specific man or men at a specific time.

One early attempt to identify a plausible Fall story in the early Old Testament latched onto the account in Genesis 6:2 ‘. . . the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose’, causing hybrid offspring. At least two early-modern English readers reinterpreted this section of the Old Testament as implying the existence of *two* genetically distinct strands of humanity, an Adamite and a pre-Adamite branch: ‘that the Sons of *Adam* of the second Creation, saw the Daughters of the Men of the first Creation that they were fair, and married them’.³³ Such an interpretation, of course, was rare, and the use of Genesis 6 itself as a Fall narrative had been rejected in the Jewish literature of the immediately pre-Christian centuries in favour of the now familiar tale of Adam and Eve, naked in Eden.³⁴ The point is that neither Genesis 6 nor Genesis 2–3 was designed to house an aetiology for universal sinfulness; and attempts to found such a doctrine on either section of Genesis are posterior, and hence likely to encounter certain problems of fit.

Concentration on Genesis 2–3, though, in equating the problem of evil with the creation and subsequent behaviour of the two first people, had one stark problem and one stark advantage. The advantage was that the problem of evil was thus more obviously concentrated on purely human agents, without the problematic influence of marauding angels, although the role of the serpent, subsequently interpreted as Satan, qualifies this advantage. It also cleared the stage: Genesis 2–3 is much more explicit about what two humans did and said than Genesis 6 with its vague ‘daughters of men’. Again, the Flood following Genesis 6 was supposed to have wiped out the monstrous brood of the human–angelic marriages, hence eradicating that recension of original sin, and so Genesis 6 fails to solve the problem of whence current original sin derives. The disadvantage of privileging Genesis 3 was that it associated questions concerning the origin of evil with questions concerning the status of creation itself. Making creation and Fall contiguous makes one wonder whether man was made fallible, and if so, why?

So, if we accept the axioms of an omniscient and benevolent God and the fact of a fall of some kind in Eden, we have a number of choices we must make concerning our estimation of the status of *unfallen* man: and almost all early-modern discussions are conditioned by where they locate themselves in relation to this choice. Either we imagine that Adam and Eve were created perfect, or we imagine that they were created imperfect. If we choose the former version, we will be likely to regard the Fall as a plunge from heights to depths, a catastrophe severing the realm of

perfection from the realm of the fallen, a cosmic disaster. If we stress the latter, we will take a more lenient view of the matter in Eden, saying that man maybe is not so different after the Fall from what he was before it; that man was made to fall, and that, trusting in the inscrutable wisdom of God, we ought not to worry about it too much.³⁵ We may even take Genesis literally and celebrate a paradoxical promotion, for does not God admit at Genesis 3:22, 'Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil'? Perhaps the forbidden fruit did contain real wisdom. And with this suspicion that the 'Fall' may be no such thing, a third way of thinking is generated out of the second, a tendency to query what this god was doing making prohibitions at all, if our gain was for our good. We may even find ourselves regarding this botching demiurge of vain prohibitions as a jealous tyrant, though that is of course an almost impossible admission in this period.

So from the two initial options spring three tendencies, which appear mutually exclusive. The first two agree that God is good but disagree about the perfection of his creation. The second and third versions identify creation as imperfect but make opposing estimations of the moral status of the creator. The third position exists as the shadowy antithesis to the first but in Christian literature for obvious reasons its influence is felt as a threat rather than as a positive thesis. The first position, historically, is associated with the Western Church and its Latin fathers, particularly Augustine (354–430). Later, after a period of the modification of Augustinianism, certain reactionary movements in late scholasticism, especially Gregory of Rimini (d. 1358) and the *schola Augustiniana moderna*, reinstated the father's original gloom. Gregory's admirers, with respect to his patristic commitment, called him the *Doctor authenticus*; his opponents called him the *Tortor infantium*, the torturer of children, reflecting his Augustinian insistence that unbaptised babies, tainted as they are with original sin, go to hell.³⁶ Next, with the advent of the Reformation, the Augustinian understanding of the Fall assumed theological centrality, especially in the Calvinist inflection so influential in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

The second tendency, less ambitious in its initial estimation of and thus more lenient in judgement on the first man and woman, was developed in the Eastern Church by the Greek fathers, most influentially in the writings of Irenaeus (c. 140–c. 200), who in his maturity came west to become the bishop of Lyons. Although this version of the Fall became the heterodoxy in Augustinian Europe, its logical force persisted, and indeed certain German Spirituals, particularly Sebastian Franck, resurrected the

Irenaeus interpretation as part of their anti-Lutheran theologies. This tradition had an important influence in England in the radical decades, as we shall see. Other important carriers were Socinians, who, in seeking to limit the status of Christ, limited the extent of the Fall and the initial grandeur of man. Consequently, they made Adam ‘a rude unwritten Blanck’ or an ‘idiot’, as South and Milton respectively complained.³⁷ As Socinus said, ‘Whatever Divines dispute about Original Sin, it is all of it clearly to be reckon’d as the mere invention and forgery of humane wit’; original sin was ‘a Jewish Fable, and brought into the Church from Antichrist’.³⁸ Stephen Nye, the Socinian controversialist and first English historian of the sect, wrote that to say that God imputes sin to us and then damns us for it is to draw ‘the *just* Character of *an Almighty Devil*. For if the Devil had Supream Power, what worse could he do[?]’³⁹

One need not be a conscious heretic to slip into thinking about newly made Adam in child-like terms, however. The characterist John Earle in his *Micro-cosmography* (1628), for instance, wrote that ‘A Childe . . . Is a Man in a small Letter, yet the best Copie of *Adam* before hee tasted of *Eue* or the Apple . . . His Soule is yet a white paper vnscribed with obseruations of the world, wherewith it becomes a blurr’d Note-booke.’⁴⁰

Francis Osborne, ‘an old atheistical courtier’ who wrote an Oxford student best-seller, *Advice to a Son*, also essayed ‘A Contemplation on Adams Fall’. This idiosyncratic piece sought to excuse Adam and Eve or at least lessen their culpability in various ways. Adam was ‘no better furnished with *Knowledge* than an *Infant* in his *Primitive Innocencie*’, said Osborne, which is why he desired more. Osborne also suggested that Adam’s naming of the beasts constituted a prophecy of the Fall, as his etymologies were ‘suitable to the *sinful Use* [which] was after to be made of them’. Eve is less to blame than Adam because while she did try to shift some responsibility onto the serpent, at least after the Fall she didn’t have the cheek to remind God, as Adam did, just who was responsible for having created such fallible beings.⁴¹

Others simply rejected the Fall altogether. William Rabisha, the mysterious soldier-preacher-cook, wrote that Adam was ‘in his own nature one and the same for ever; for he was made of the earth earthly’.⁴² More socially conservative figures like Jeremy Taylor and Thomas Traherne went back directly to Greek patristics, part of the general resurgence of interest in the Greek fathers as a complement to the Augustinianism of the schools.

The final, highly subversive reaction to the narrative of the Fall – to call God bad – is almost invisible in the early-modern period, but any

educated person would recognise it as a tenet of the patristic heresy of Gnosticism. Most Gnostic writings remained undiscovered in the seventeenth century, but Gnostic beliefs had been recorded and refuted principally by Irenaeus and Epiphanius, although material was also available from Tertullian, Augustine, Philastrius of Brescia and Theodoret of Cyrus.

Accounts of the Gnostics also filtered through vernacular Church histories. One Civil War yellow-press heresiographer, for instance, managed to list a bewildering number of impossible 'Cavalier' sects supposed to be stalking the streets of 1640s London: joining Jesuits and Arminians, there were Adamites, Minanders, Ebionites, Corinthuses, Nicholitains, Marcions, Encraticae, Valentinians – thirty-three groups altogether. Many of these sects were (mis)named after Gnostic sects, and the anonymous writer has simply lifted most of the names from Patrick Simson's *Historie of the Church*, the third book of which listed with thumb-nail biographies the principal heretics from Simon Magus to the Pope.⁴³ An important semi-Gnostic text was translated and published by John Everard in 1649 – the *Corpus hermeticum*. Isaac Casaubon's now celebrated philological demolition of its supposed antiquity comprised merely an incidental few pages of his 1614 *De rebus sacris*, and so Everard could still announce untroubled over three decades later that the *Corpus hermeticum* was 'written some hundreds of yeeres before Moses his time'.⁴⁴

The *Corpus hermeticum* contained a disturbing kind of Fall narrative, a cataclysm in the primal heaven itself:

But after a little while, there was a darkness made in part, coming down obliquely, fearful and hideous, which seemed unto me to be changed into a *certain moyst nature*, unspeakably troubled, which yielded a smoke as from fire; and from whence proceeded a voyce unutterable, and very mournful, but inarticulate, insomuch that it seemed to have come from the Light.⁴⁵

Two years later, Thomas Totney, writing under the prophetic name of Theauraujohn Tany, pushed back the Fall to the point of creation itself: 'Know the fall is being created, for when we were not created, and uncome forth, we were as he is, that is in perfection.'⁴⁶ This Gnostic tradition, then, was visible in seventeenth-century England, although as with the Irenaean tendency it exerted influence not so much as a witnessed belief as a set of possible thoughts, both preserved and occurring in often quite different milieux.

These tendencies were not nearly as distinct as they might seem. The connection between the Irenaean and Gnostic models was pointed out by

orthodox theologians. Thus the Utrecht theologian Saldenus, commenting on the supposed properties of the forbidden tree, wrote:

It is said to be of the species 'tree', which suffices, but it is also said to be a 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. By which appellation in no sense is there placed any efficacy or power in the tree itself for engendering or multiplying wisdom, such as many of the ancient writers supposed and as the Socinians would have it today. Upon which error, doubtless, was the madness of the Ophites [a Gnostic sect] founded, who once held in veneration the serpent-seducer above all others because of its deeds, by which men were led to taste of the tree, and thereby to gain knowledge of good and evil, which before they did not have. No indeed, they went further, and put the serpent in place of Christ, or what is even worse, blasphemed that Christ was actually changed into it.⁴⁷

But the dominant tradition, with its stark logic of perfect God, perfect creation, itself had some necessary kinship with its subversive counterparts, a kinship driven by the difficulty of constructing a convincing narrative out of the Augustinian position. If man was created perfect, he would not fall. Because he did, elements of imperfection, whether phrased in metaphysical terms of the inherent instability of matter or in psychosexual terms of Adam unable to resist Eve, had to be admitted. Narrative explorations of the event of the Fall almost always noticed this problem. The Quaker Isaac Pennington the Younger adopted the metaphysical tack: 'Nothing can act above its nature. *Adam* when he fell, shewed the weakness of his nature, *The Prince of this World* came and found somewhat in him to fasten upon. Frailty is a property of the flesh. Weakness is proper to the earthly image, as strength to the heavenly.'⁴⁸

The problem with the narrative attack on the conventional understanding of the Fall was simply that it failed as theodicy. Dogma could not really explain easily how man got from one side of the Fall to the other, but its principles were secure: God remained good, axiomatically so. The objection that some frailty was needed was designed to explain how man got from one side to the other, but it was obviously flawed in terms of explaining *why* rather than *how* this had taken place. As Stephens retorted to Everard, scepticism concerning the original splendour of Adam 'to my understanding doth cast a blurre upon the Creator himselfe'.⁴⁹ So a certain clandestine reciprocity between these models is needed in practice, as what the one lacks, the other supplies. And if the conventional tendency required, at some point, elements of the second, it therefore might find itself closer on occasion to the third, Gnostic, tendency, than it had imagined.

This is partly a question of genre. The Reformed understanding of the Fall and of original sin was dogmatic, and dogmatically disseminated. The

paradigm is the catechism, designed to be repeated by children until it is mechanically known and perhaps mechanically believed. It has no need of narrative sophistication. Edward Elton's popular *A Forme of Catechizing*, typical of such texts, managed the process of the Fall in three questions and answers.⁵⁰ Catechisms, understandably, emphasised effects, not causes:

The woman deceiued by the deuill, perswaded the man to taste the forbidden fruite, which thing made them both forthwith subiect to death. And that heauenly image according to which he was first created, being defaced, in place of wisdome, strength, holinesse, truth and righteousnesse, the iewelless wherewith God had adorned him, there succeded the most horrible plagues, blindnesse, weaknesse, vaine lying, and unrighteousness, in which euils and miseries he also wrapped and ouerwhelmed his issue and all his posteritie.⁵¹

Despite the impeccable orthodoxy of such statements, many of the constituent components were not deducible from Genesis, which does not state that the serpent is the devil, fails to explain why Adam and Eve do not die upon eating the fruit, has nothing to say about the effects of the transgression on Adam's posterity, and does not specify its causal role in terms of subsequent diseases and sins. Indeed, as we saw, God says in Genesis 3:22 not that 'blindnesse' was the result of the Fall but that Adam and Eve's eyes were opened, and they had become as gods themselves.

In response to this troubling statement, orthodox commentators, in a moment of pure doctrinal imperative, glossed this verse as spoken ironically. Gregory of Rimini thought it proof that God could lie.⁵² Luther said that it was 'a sarcasm and bitter derision'; vernacular commentators followed suit: 'vttered *ironice*, by way of derision'; 'a bitter mock'. The Geneva Bible marginalium is 'derision'. In this way, God becomes the first person to joke in the Bible, and it is a grisly joke.⁵³

On the other hand, it is not as simple as saying that catechism represents one extreme, and epic, say, the other: 'credal' versus 'experimental' forms, to adapt familiar terms from a different argument in this period.⁵⁴ Rather, writing about the Fall traverses the spectrum between such extremes, and single texts can include diverse hues. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, for instance, contains sections of more dogmatic material, and then sections where such dogma is tried out.

If these three tendencies, then, have certain interdependences, it is nonetheless true that the Augustinian strand was dominant in seventeenth-century England, though under increasing pressure. First, then, the history and structure of the Augustinian Fall must be delineated, and its inherent tensions revealed.

CHAPTER 2

Augustinianism

AUGUSTINE

‘Let us admit’, wrote Voltaire on original sin, ‘that Saint Augustine was the first to authorise this strange idea, worthy of the fiery and romantic head of a debauched and repentant African, Manichaeian and Christian, indulgent and persecuted, who spent his life contradicting himself.’¹ Augustine also incurred the wit of Gibbon, who brilliantly described the Western Church’s adoption of the father’s teachings as conducted ‘with public applause and secret reluctance’.²

Such enlightened scorn was not the dominant tone of the age. The first full English translation of the *City of God* appeared in 1610 with the influential annotations of Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540), featuring on its title page a picture of the Sun dispersing its rays with the motto *SIC AVGVSTINVS DISSIPABIT* – ‘Thus will Augustine spread abroad.’ The continental Reformation itself had been intellectually established on the re-editing of Augustine, particularly the later Augustine. As Luther wrote in May 1517, ‘Our theology and St Augustine are progressing well . . . Aristotle is gradually falling from his throne.’³ In 1506 Amerbach published his landmark eleven-volume edition of Augustine at Basel, where Erasmus, who had earlier persuaded Vives to write his commentary on the *City of God*, produced his own edition of the father in 1528–9. The other major edition of Augustine prior to the celebrated Maurist edition of 1679–1700 was the one prepared by the Louvain theologians and printed at Antwerp in 1576–7.

English vernacular consciousness of Augustine was well-served, though it is notable that publication of translations of Augustine somewhat petered out as the seventeenth century progressed. Various sermons and tracts appeared throughout the sixteenth century, particularly during the reforming years of Edward’s reign, but the major works only appeared in the first half of the seventeenth century. We have seen that the *City of God*

was published in 1610; the *Enchiridion* had appeared three years previously, and the *Confessions* were translated first by the Roman Catholic Sir Tobie Matthew in 1620 and published at Saint Omer, prompting William Watts' 1631 Protestant effort, with 'the marginall notes of a former Popish translation, answered', as its title page advertised. The early moderns, though, possessed no complete printed translations of either *The Trinity*, or, of more relevance here, the mature *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, but access to Latin editions of these and other works was not problematic, and Augustine's later thought on the Fall could easily be extracted from the middle books of the *City of God*. Reformed teaching was in any case largely based upon Augustinian sources, and the brand of Calvinism that reached England in the sixteenth century, particularly through the mediation of Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr and Theodore Beza, had a recognisably Augustinian attitude to the Fall.

In keeping with his own intellectual biography, Augustine's ideas on the Fall were not static, but evolved over his prolific career. Pelagius, for instance, could even quote the young Augustine against the old Augustine on the freedom of the will.⁴ For our purposes, the sites of most importance occur in the *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (*De Genesi ad litteram*, hereafter *LC*; composed 401–14), and the central books of the *City of God* (*De civitate Dei*, hereafter *CG*; these books composed 417–20), later distilled in the *Enchiridion* (hereafter *E*; composed 421–2).⁵ The late anti-Pelagian works necessarily engage with Genesis, and Augustine also left various earlier commentaries, finished and unfinished, on Genesis.

Augustine's mature thought was shaped by controversy, with specific reference to the British monk Pelagius, and various other Pelagian or semi-Pelagian theologians, notably Julian of Aelclanum. Pelagius had a reputation for asceticism – though Jerome did say that he was stuffed with Scottish porridge – and in early fifth-century Rome he popularised the notion that man was able of his own free will to perfect himself. This, though, required Pelagius to reject the Fall, or at least its consequences, which he enthusiastically did. Commenting on the crucial verse Romans 5:12 – '... as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' – Pelagius insisted that Adam's Fall applied to his posterity merely as an example or pattern. Hereditary transmission of original sin and the guilt associated with it were mere doctrinal fictions.⁶ This was the position against which Augustine had to define his views on the origin and effects of sin.

There were various prior exegeses of Genesis, often allegorically tinged, on which Augustine could draw. We mentioned in the last chapter the

Greek tradition represented in the West by Irenaeus, who wrote of Adam in innocence: ‘man was a child, not yet having his understanding perfected; wherefore he was easily led astray by the deceiver’.⁷ But in the West the greatest influences on Augustine were Tertullian, the African jurist-turned-Christian apologist, and the so-called Ambrosiaster, commentator on Paul. Tertullian and Ambrosiaster both emphasised the literal truth of the events of Genesis 2–3, and the ensuing depravity of man, which must therefore be transmitted from parent to child as a seminal toxin. Ambrosiaster, commenting on Romans 5:12, which ends, in the Authorised Version’s translation of the Greek construction, ‘. . . for that all have sinned’, used instead the Old Latin Bible, which read ‘*in quo omnes peccaverunt*’, ‘*in whom* [i.e. Adam] all have sinned’ (my italics). This reading, also preserved in the Vulgate, is nevertheless a mistranslation of the Greek *eph*’ from *epi*, ‘inasmuch, because’. What had been a statement connecting death and sin in a causally ambiguous fashion became the statement that all had sinned *in Adam*, the fulcrum text for those who wished to argue for the biological transmission of original sin (‘traducianism’), or for the seminal presence of all mankind in Adam’s loins. This did not mean, however, that pointing out the error disposed of the doctrine, as ethical convictions are based on deeper foundations than chance mistranslations.⁸ Augustine, for instance, would later argue for the seminal identity of all mankind in Adam on the reasoning that while Adam was made from the dust, which is something different from flesh, all his progeny were made from flesh, and therefore all creation was in Adam (*CG* 13.3).

Augustine’s own ideas follow closely the writings of Tertullian and Ambrosiaster. He insisted that Genesis 2–3 must be understood as literally having happened, though amenable to allegorical readings, of which Augustine produced at least two, the early *Allegorical Commentary on Genesis* and the last books of the *Confessions*. But the literal truth had to be preserved, especially as, for Augustine, in order for the prophetic, typological elements of the Old Testament to be instances of God’s design in history, they had to be located within a fabric of entirely real happenings. In this way, paradoxically, Augustine promoted all Old Testament narrative to the level of fact while simultaneously subordinating it to the figural structures for which such facts serve as material.⁹

Augustine’s emphasis on the literal truth of Genesis also reflects his rejection of moments in his earlier writings in which he had speculated about the Fall in terms of a Plotinian fall-into-flesh.¹⁰ Again following Tertullian and Ambrosiaster, Augustine stressed the disaster of the Fall

and all humanity's implication in it. His mature thinking, though, is a complex of various movements, and although his understanding of the Fall is bleak, he did not, *pace* Voltaire, simply invent the doctrine, nor is the texture of his argumentation merely dogmatic. Indeed, Augustine deliberately thinks his way through some dangerous areas using a mixture of narrative and dogmatic approaches, and the result is a kind of laboratory of thought-in-process rather than a credal digest.

Augustine's Adam and Eve are mature, tranquil figures, untroubled by any adverse mental or physical motions. Adam, had the occasion arisen, would have masterfully controlled his erections, and he and Eve would have coupled lustlessly (Augustine then closes off this line of thought by asserting that they fell before they had consummated their marriage; *CD* 14.26).¹¹ Because God brought the beasts to Adam for him to name, so Augustine told Julian, Adam must have been possessed of the greatest of intelligence.¹² Before the Fall the first humans suffered from no emotional disturbance or *perturbatio*, and 'there was no depressing gloom at all, no unreal gaiety' to trouble their steady thoughts (*CD* 14.10, 26). In such stasis did they live, in an environment that nonetheless seemed to have been designed for temptation, with its forbidden and unforbidden trees. Importantly, this vision of prelapsarian tranquillity was to underpin a widespread discussion on the origin and governance of emotional disturbance – the early-modern theory of the 'passions'. The current mental turmoil suffered by all men was traced explicitly to the Fall, and defined in opposition to the state of affairs that had obtained before this calamity for mental equilibrium. As J. F. Senault wrote, deriving his authority from Augustine, 'In this happy estate the soul commanded with mildness, the body obeyed with delight, and whatsoever object presented it self, these two parties did alwaies agree.'¹³ Another writer on the passions pointed out that had Adam not fallen all his posterity would possess *equal* ability 'to apprehend the mysteries of Nature', and the phenomenon of relative intelligence would not be.¹⁴

Such uncompromising elevation of Adam and Eve led Norman Powell Williams to present Augustine as the extreme manifestation of the tendency to exalt Adam and Eve in their first creation. But, as J. M. Evans suggested, Augustine's thought is slightly more nuanced.¹⁵ Even despite the logical impossibility of ultimate exaltation – Adam and Eve would then be indistinguishable from God and no creation would have taken place – Augustine is careful to stress the conditional nature of Adam and Eve's prelapsarian state. First, they were not created constitutionally free from death but only conditionally so (*CD* 13.1). This distinction

Augustine defined in the *Literal Commentary* and the *Enchiridion* as the difference between the angelic state of *non posse mori*, not being able to die, and the unfallen human *posse non mori*, able not to die (*LC* 6.25.36, *E* 28.105). They can will good, but they can also will evil (*E* 28.105). In this way, they are suspended in a position halfway between the angels and the beasts:

For he [God] created man's nature to be midway, so to speak, between the angels and the beasts in such a way that, if he should remain in subjection to his creator as his true Lord and with dutiful obedience keep his commandment, he was to pass into the company of the angels, obtaining with no intervening death a blissful immortality that has no limit; but if he should make proud and disobedient use of his free will and go counter to the Lord his God, he was to live like a beast, at the mercy of death, and enthralled by lust and doomed to eternal punishment after death. (*CG* 12.22)

This was a classic, much repeated sentiment, but Augustine perhaps derived it from the Eastern father Theophilus, the second-century bishop of Antioch, who had used the same distinction in his own early discussion of the Fall. Theophilus puts the problem in a nutshell: '[f]or if God had made him [Adam] immortal from the beginning, he would have made him God. Again, if he had made him mortal, it would seem that God was responsible for his death.' So God created him 'in an intermediate state'.¹⁶

The ambiguity of this 'middling man' model, though, is obvious when one compares Theophilus' idea of middling with that of Augustine: Theophilus quite explicitly says that Adam was forbidden the fruit of knowledge because he was a child and so not yet ready for it, whereas Augustine emphasised Adam's maturity.¹⁷ The tendency of the Augustinian usage to slip towards the Theophilan is seen in the seventeenth century in phrases such as Raphael's to Adam in Milton's *Paradise Lost* that 'God made thee perfect, not immutable' (*PL* 5.524), a direct quotation from at least William Perkins; and the whole matter was laconically summarised by the Calvinist commentator Zacharias Ursinus, who noted 'the equivocation and ambiguity in the word *Perfect*'.¹⁸

Augustine, then, develops a qualified position in which mere perfection is shaded into something more conditional. In the *Literal Commentary* he adds, 'I do not think that a man would have deserved great praise if he had been able to live a good life for the simple reason that nobody tempted him to live a bad one' (*LC* 11.4.6). Nevertheless he does not qualify the consequences of the Fall. We all fell in Adam, and even though 'we did not yet have individually created and apportioned shapes in which to live

as individuals; what already existed was the seminal substance from which we were to be generated' (CG 13.14). This makes us guilty: 'whatever should spring from their stock was also to be held liable to the same penalty' (CG 13.3). We are lucky God hasn't damned the whole lot of us as a result, and he would have been perfectly just to do so (E 25.99).

So much for Augustine's understanding of man before and after the Fall; how, then, does man get across the Fall? In the *Literal Commentary*, Augustine had proposed two types of knowing evil: through knowledge of good, and through experience (LC 8.14.31). Adam and Eve unfallen possessed the former, and fallen, the latter. For the Augustine of this work, evil can be known innocently by contemplating and avoiding the inverse of good. It is noteworthy that this argument does not appear in the corresponding discussion in the *City of God*. There, as we saw, innocence relies on not feeling *perturbatio*. This is, however, a different approach to evil from that adopted in the *Literal Commentary*, where the mental barrier between pre- and postlapsarian states is akin to the difference between a doctor knowing a disease and a patient contracting it. The contemplative knowledge of evil is supplanted in the *City of God* by a kind of insulation from knowledge of evil. Granted, the ideas of knowledge *per prudentiam boni* and a lack of *perturbatio* are not strictly incompatible, but the emphasis has shifted. In the *City of God* the unfallen mind is both a more static and a more implicitly frail original, with fewer testing experiences allowed near it. While Augustine asserts the tranquillity of unfallen man, he also makes unfallen man more distant and unratificative, defined as innocent primarily by his lack of perturbation rather than by his doctorly knowledge of the ills one must avoid.

Hence the old narrative problem is exacerbated: how can Eve desire a fruit unlawfully without feeling perturbation? How can Adam assent to Eve? There must have been a fall, perhaps some falls, before the Fall. The *per prudentiam boni per experientiam* distinction had the advantage of giving a clearly delineated Fall. At the point at which one becomes the other, the apple is taken. But recourse to *perturbatio* is at once more psychologically persuasive and less definite, replacing a vertical line separating two states with a zone of indeterminacy. The public act is now preceded by the private transgression.

Augustine meets this problem, and in 14.11–13 of the *City of God* he accepts the consequence that the hard typological, single Fall must be replaced with a more protracted phenomenon: 'in Adam's transgression the evil act was preceded by an evil will'. *Voluntas* has to come before *opus*: 'the evil act could not have been arrived at if an evil will had not

gone before' (14.13). Otherwise the Fall would be mere puppetry. Yet the bifurcation of the old Fall produces two different kinds of fall: a public, easily locatable fall, and a secret, occluded fall.

At this point in the argument of the *City of God* Augustine could have introduced into his discussion of the causation of the Fall the character of Satan in the serpent, as the agent or at least external ('procatartetic', in the terms of early-modern logic) cause of the first, shadowy fall of the human mind.¹⁹ Yet Augustine chooses not to do this, accepting that a tempter needs temptable subjects. Thus, Eve had *already* experienced the first fall when the serpent approached her, and likewise Adam when Eve approached him:

Now this first falling away is voluntary [*spontaneus*], for if the will had remained steadfast in love of the higher unchangeable good that provided it with fire to love, it would not have been diverted from this love to follow its own pleasure. Nor would the will in consequence have grown so dark and cold as to allow either the first woman to believe that the serpent had spoken the truth or the first man to place his wife's will before God's injunction. (14.13)

Augustine then repeats this remarkable conclusion: 'the evil act was committed only by those who were already evil'. This first evil happened *in occulto*: 'in secret they began to be evil, and this enabled them to fall into open disobedience' (14.13).

What is the relation between these two falls? Augustine now betrays slight unease:

In short, the fall that takes place in secret preceded the fall that takes place in full view, but the former fall is not to be regarded as such. For who considers exaltation a fall, though there is already present in it the lapse whereby the Most High is deserted? On the other hand, who could fail to see that there is a fall when a manifest and unquestionable transgression of some command takes place? (14.13)

Nevertheless it is hard to see why from God's omniscient point of view the second of these falls is any more significant than the first. If God had to decide on one, surely the fall of the will would be a better choice than the apple-taking? Although Augustine feels the need to reaffirm the physical transgression, he has by this point dissolved the typological outlines with which he had started, and replaced them with an indeterminate expanse, stretched between a visible *terminus ad quem* and an invisible, potentially recursive *terminus a quo*. Did Adam and Eve fall together? How soon after creation did they fall? Were their wills untroubled at any point excepting the instant of their creation? What would

have happened if their wills fell but they thought better of taking the apple? Could they fall off from grace and then repair themselves? These are the kinds of questions for which Augustine does not provide answers, although other generic contexts will render them insistent.

Instead Augustine seeks to curtail discussion of such issues, and he employs a number of different devices to this end. Although he emphasises that it is the act of turning, not the object to which one turns, that is bad – ‘the lapse is not to what is bad, the lapse is bad’ (12.7) – he can also on occasion attempt to reunite turning and the object turned to, the private and the public fall. Meditating on Matthew 7:17–18 (‘Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit’), Augustine encourages us to see the evil will of the fall *in occulto* as itself the fruit. It is a complex manoeuvre, but, following the logic of the thought, the apple thus becomes a metonymy for itself being taken: ‘the will itself, or man himself in so far as he was possessed of an evil will, was the evil tree, as it were, that bore the evil fruit that those works represented’ (14.11). If this were to be illustrated graphically, a hand is reaching for a fruit, which fruit is itself a hand reaching for another fruit, which in turn repeats the action, and so on. But contact is never made. Augustine’s attempt to equate the will with its object by means of visual metaphor evasively freezes the causality of paradise into a tableau of incompleteness.

This is because Augustine cannot admit a *positive* will to transgress as that would grant evil a positive existence, and on Augustine’s Neoplatonic understanding evil is not a thing at all; it is the absence of good, literally nothing: ‘For evil has in itself no substance; rather the loss of what is good has received the name evil’ (11.9). Such a model has the advantage that it overcomes the objections of the Gnostics or the Manichees, who held that there were two positive principles at work in the world, one good and the other evil, and that matter was the realm of the evil principle (11.13, 22). As Augustine says, good can exist on its own – God – but evil cannot (12.3). To interpret evil as a real thing is simply a linguistic move – in Augustine’s metaphors, it is like trying to see darkness or to hear silence (12.7).

The privative theory of evil is open to the criticism that in Aristotelian terms it provides no efficient cause for evil, and Augustine deals with this problem in his discussion of Lucifer. Aristotle, in the third chapter of the second book of the *Physics*, had enumerated the four causes that exhaust causality: formal, material, efficient and final (an apple is made *to* the form of an apple, *out of* vegetable substance, *by* the tree from which it

derives, *for* people to eat). In Augustinian terms, formal and material categories do not apply to sin, and the final cause must always be for the greater glory of God; as Augustine says, ‘at the very moment when God created the devil, although in his own goodness he created him good, he had already through his own foreknowledge prepared a way to use him even after he became bad’ (11.17).

Augustine is left with the efficient cause of the evil will – which Augustine then rejects. His reasoning is noteworthy. Augustine, discussing the first sin, admits that an evil will must be the efficient cause of an evil deed, and as we saw he will later use this decision to bifurcate the next fall, the Fall in Eden. But when one asks for the efficient cause of the evil will, no answer is found, because ‘nothing is the efficient cause of an evil will’ (12.6). Indeed, as he titles his subsequent chapter, ‘an efficient cause of an evil will must not be sought [*non esse quaerendam*]’. He continues: ‘No one then should look for an efficient cause of an evil will, for the cause is not one of efficiency but deficiency even as the evil will is not an effect but a defect’ (12.7). Augustine derives from the tangible notions of a defect or the act of defecting (*defectio*, *deficere*) the intangible ‘deficient’ (*deficiens*) cause, a notion resting on its aural similarity to the efficient cause.²⁰ But in Aristotelian terms there is no antonym of the efficient cause, nor any accompanying antonyms of the other three. There are four, not eight causes. Attempts to construct others based on the *verbal* possibility of antonym are mere puns. And lest it be argued that Augustine is embarking upon a subtle critique of Aristotelian causality from a Neoplatonic standpoint, his final words in this paragraph arrest cogitation: ‘Hence let no one seek from me to know what I know that I do not know, except it be in order to learn how not to know what we should know cannot be known.’ Earlier, in the *Literal Commentary*, he had imposed a similar ban on the question of why God didn’t make man just a little bit more sufficient to have stood: ‘Obviously he is able. So why didn’t he? Because he didn’t want to. And why he didn’t want to is his business. For we ought not to know more than it is proper to know’ (*LC* 11.10.13).²¹

Furthermore, Augustine’s account of the creation of the angels raised the problem that the angels who fell seem not to have possessed the same extent of wisdom as the angels who stood: ‘who can clearly determine to what extent they partook of that wisdom before they had sinned?’ (*LC* 11.11). This comes dangerously close to admitting that the angels-to-fall were created with that propensity, and at least one influential modern theologian, arguing for a rehabilitation of the Irenaean understanding of

creation, has judged Augustine's theodicy to founder on exactly this problem.²² Again, R. F. Brown, in his powerful and negative critique of Augustine on evil, notes that the unfallen angels appear to have been created with that assurance, and therefore literally determined not to sin. Real freedom is only possessed by the angels-to-fall.²³ Two chapters later, despite surrounding protests to the contrary, Augustine finally admits: 'So we must conclude either that the angels were unequal in rank or, if they were actually once equal, it was after the fall of the sinning angels that the others acquired certain knowledge of their own everlasting felicity' (II.13).

The Augustinian Fall, then, is a complicated and indeed somewhat mysterious thing. As the father wrote of original sin itself, 'nothing is more important to proclaim; nothing is more hidden from the understanding'.²⁴ He inherited, refined, authorised and transmitted a set of decisions about the angelic and human falls more influential than any other comparable set – indeed, he effectively blocked the possibility of organised opposition in the West for many centuries, and dissent almost always took the form of modification rather than rejection. But Augustine's actual writings on the whole matter, as we have seen, are often experimental, willing to explore narrative techniques of making sense of the opening chapters of the Bible, and this experimentalism both enlivens Augustine's writing and destabilises its doctrinal output. Augustine replaced one human fall with at least two, one happening in the mind, one in public. He admitted that man might have been made better. He stated that too much thinking was not good. He was not above using pun as a rhetorical tool. Perhaps the angels had not all possessed the same mental surety before the Fall, he wonders. 'Augustinianism', then, is a very much more fraught business than its credal digests let on: 'All seem'd well pleas'd, all seem'd, but were not all' (*PL* 5.617).

ANSELM TO ARMINIANISM

Such was the inheritance of the continental Reformers, although after a long succession of adjustments usually concerned to lessen the force of Augustine's doctrinal base. Anselm, under the guise of obedience to the father, considerably softened the father's teachings, holding the fallen appetite morally neutral unless acted upon; children, moreover, suffer merely from a *deprivation* of original justice rather than themselves being *depraved*, the hallmark distinction between Augustinian and most scholastic models of original sin.²⁵ For Augustine, original sin was both

ineradicable and incriminatory; later thinkers preferred to suppress the second attribute, while not quarrelling with the first. After Anselm, on the continent the 'Chartrain School' displaced Genesis with *Timaeus*, offering allegorised readings of creation shorn of any obvious fall at all.

Such allegorism was ousted by the *Magister sententiarum*, Peter Lombard, the twelfth-century theologian whose *Sententiae* was adopted as the host text for subsequent medieval commentary. Lombard and his colleagues and immediate predecessors developed subtle discussions of the Fall and its causes, ventilating the timing of external versus internal temptation, whether Adam sinned more than Eve or not, and whether the psychogenesis of sin can be abstracted into stages. Lombard himself helpfully distinguished between *suggestio* and *consensus*, temptation and capitulation, arguing that only the latter constituted sin.²⁶

Yet the Anselmic revision persisted. Thomist teaching portrayed the original righteousness of Adam as a *donum supernaturale*, a gift added to Adam's nature *qua* human nature, something of which one could be deprived, like other *dona*, but not an intrinsic quality the loss of which causes depravity. Aquinas was quite clear that Adam did not possess knowledge of all things, and placed him 'half way between what the present state of knowledge is, and what is the knowledge of the fatherland [i.e. heaven], where God is seen in his essence'. Adam, like other humans, would grow into a state of knowledge rather than having it all given to him at once. The trees of Eden did not actually contain the things their names suggested.²⁷ Duns Scotus went as far as to say that Adam had to be tempted, and that concupiscence was not part of original sin, but natural to man, all men. Likewise Gabriel Biel considered man to be *ab initio* potentially rebellious. As Heiko Oberman summarises, 'the differences between the deficiencies of Adam's nature before and after the possession of original justice is certainly not a qualitative but a quantitative one: the difficulties have increased, the struggles intensified'.²⁸ The moral thrust of Augustinian anthropology, with its material and mental plunges from heights to depths, had been replaced by a more conservative model of gifts and subtractions. The predominantly Aristotelian anthropology of the schoolmen was, as it were, uninflected: Aristotle provides no ready categories for pre-, postlapsarian and resurrected man. Rather, the quasi-mystical notions of original sin and original righteousness inherited from Augustine were re clothed as additions to or subtractions from a given, implicitly static nature.

This was likewise the inheritance of the Council of Trent, which decided that concupiscence was in itself no sin but merely the *fomes*

peccati or 'tinder of sin'. Again, the Tridentine decrees did not mention Adam's supposed mental powers before the Fall. Counter-Reformation teaching on the Fall and original sin, then, had partially dismantled the Augustinianism on which it was still recognisably based, and many of Augustine's loaded categories, such as original righteousness, original sin, depravity, concupiscence and so forth, had been emptied out. A mid-seventeenth-century heresiographer perceived the difference between Catholics and Protestants on original sin as follows: '[T]he difference between them and us standeth not in the abolishment of it, but in the manner and measure of the abolishment of it.'²⁹

This had ecclesiological ramifications: Protestant anti-Calvinist writers in England also argued that too great an emphasis on original sin put in question the efficacy of baptism, which such writers were anxious to defend. It was not solely a Catholic complaint therefore, and this 'sacramental thrust', in Tyacke's phrase, would come to characterise English Arminianism. As early as the 1590s, Richard 'Dutch' Thompson of Clare College, Cambridge, who knew Arminius personally, was arguing in a work only published posthumously that the universal efficacy of baptism negated absolute predestination.³⁰

In the later scholastic period, however, there were reactionaries who contributed a great deal towards the reintroduction of a more austere Augustinianism, and as such provided the 'headwaters of the Reformation', in Oberman's phrase.³¹ The *via antiqua* of Aquinas' age, which had held that the created order of the Universe was effectively the only way it could have been, came under attack by the so-called *via moderna* as insufficiently awed by God's *potentia absoluta* to do as he pleased. The *via moderna* contrastingly insisted that the Universe was 'less a rational than a volitional construct; God made a covenant and *will* not break it, yet this promise leaves the world a more anxious place than Thomas had known . . . Christ had said that his church was built on a rock, but later medieval theology seemed to expose it as a scaffold of possibilities'.³²

The *schola Augustiniana moderna* shared this interest in reaffirming God's absolute power but regarded the certainty that God '*will* not break' his *pactum* or soteriological 'pact' with man as semi-Pelagian. What is the point of stressing God's power if he is then disallowed from exercising it? The *schola Augustiniana moderna* in contrast rejected the implication that although God could choose not to reward good works he will never take up this option, and instead reinstated a 'strongly pessimistic view of original sin, with the Fall being identified as a watershed in the economy of salvation'; a 'strong emphasis on the priority of God in

justification, linked to a doctrine of special grace'; and a 'radical doctrine of absolute double predestination'. These retrenchments were buttressed by Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings.³³

The magisterial reformers continued the trend of the *schola Augustiniana moderna*, though precise links are unclear. Luther in his *Lectures on Genesis* unhesitatingly affirmed Adam's initial splendour, even ascribing to Adam and Eve perfect knowledge of astronomy.³⁴ Adam also controlled the animals: he could 'command a lion with a single word'. This ability Luther derived from Adam's naming of the beasts: 'solely because of the excellence of his nature, he views all the animals and thus arrives at such a knowledge of their nature that he can give each one a suitable name that harmonises with its nature'.³⁵ This was further than Augustine had gone: the father had used Pythagoras' observation that the first giver of names was the wisest of men, but had not mentioned any attendant physical powers. Adam as mage, however, would become an important symbol in the hermetic tradition.³⁶

Luther, however, also acknowledges Augustine's statement on man created *inter angelos bestiasque*: 'Man is a living being compounded of the nature of the brute and of the angels.' In the same section, he comments upon 'innocence' in tones that recall ideas on the childishness and naivety of the first people: 'I call it the innocence of a child because Adam was, so to speak, in a middle position and yet could be deceived by Satan and fall into disasters, as he did. The danger of a fall will not exist in that perfect innocence which will be found in the future and spiritual life.'³⁷ Now, far from man being the great astronomer, he is a figure in his 'childhood glory'.³⁸

Calvin too mirrored these hybrid tendencies, though in his commentary on Genesis, translated into English in 1578, he was less affirming of Adam's supposed magical abilities.³⁹ Calvin emphasises man's creaturely station under 'the yoke of God'; man does not require any great intelligence in order to subsist in his given moral and intellectual stratum with ambitionless humility. This restriction of Adamic cognition is particularly jolting in the *Institutes*, where Calvin can move from heady tones – '[T]he nimblenesse of the minde of man which veweth the heauen and earth & secretes of nature, and comprehending all ages in vnderstanding and memorie, digesteth euery thyng in order and gathereth thynges to come by thinges past, doth playnly shewe that there lyeth hydden in man a certayne thing seuerall from the body' – to pessimism: 'From hence cometh it that all the Philosophers wer so blynded, for that in a ruine they sought for an vpright buildyng, and for strong ioyntes in an

vniointed ouerthrowe.⁴⁰ Calvin, like Luther, united the straying ideas of man as created upright and man as bending down in the now familiar trope of pendency: ‘Adam therefore might haue stande [*sic*] if he wold, because he fell not but by his owne wil. But because his will was pliable to either side, and there was not geuen hym constancie to continue, therefore he so easily fel.’⁴¹ This spare account, Eve nowhere in sight, provided the template for subsequent English discussions, many of which we have encountered in the form of catechisms or *summae*. English theologians such as William Perkins and William Ames produced best-selling manuals, adding to continental tracts by Wollebius, Polanus, Pareus, Ursinus, even Curcellaeus and Arminius.⁴²

Although within academic theology there was a good deal of strife in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries about whether God had formulated his absolute decrees of predestination before the creation or after the Fall (Supra- versus Sublapsarianism), no one, at least in the academe, disagreed about the basic importance of the event itself.⁴³ As the ninth of the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1571 ran:

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, as the Pelagians do vainly talk, but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature enclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.⁴⁴

The original Forty-Two Articles of 1553, upon which the Thirty-Nine were based, had inserted *et hodie Anabaptistae repetunt* – ‘which also the Anabaptists do now a daies renue’ – after the mention of the Pelagians, demonstrating the context of doctrinal controversy in which the articles were drawn up. Most other confessions, including the Augsburg, Genevan, Heidelberg and Scottish, contain similar passages. The influence of the catechism has been mentioned; as Glanvill complained in another context but with a telling metaphor, ‘We seldom examine our Receptions, more then children their *Cathechisms*; For *Implicit* faith is a vertue, where *Orthodoxie* is the object.’⁴⁵ The deficient cause as the explanation for this state of affairs also lived on. As Sir William Leighton wrote from the debtors’ prison:

Iniurious *Adam* in thy selfe accurst,
 cease to *complaine* of God & natures thrall:
 Since he that made man good, left him at first,
 a power to stand, and yet a will to fall.

fetch not thy fault, from heauens determination
 but blame thy mind to weake & insufficient:
 Sinne is no being but a meere priuation,
 and hath no cause efficient, but deficient.⁴⁶

And finally, the intellectual superiority of Adam and Eve before the Fall was also affirmed late into the period. As South put it, 'An *Aristotle* was but the rubbish of an *Adam*, and *Athens* but the rudiments of Paradise.'⁴⁷

Not all influences upon conceptions of Adam and Eve were aural or textual: visual art too insinuated a version of the Eden narrative that did not so much gloss over as escape from certain of the causal issues Genesis raises. The tall, often bearded Adam with his sexually mature wife gaze out of countless windows, tapestries and paintings of the period, frozen in various postures, assiduously gardening, or talking with the serpent. Books, too, employed illustrations: a fine example is the *Theatrum vitae humanae* of Jean-Jacques Boissard, with engravings by the celebrated Theodore de Bry. Boissard's *Theatrum* moves through *Mundi creatio* to *Lapsus diaboli*, then to *Hominis creatio* and *lapsus Adami*, all headed by de Bry's finely etched illustrations.⁴⁸

Indeed, Adam and Eve are often portrayed in all the significant stages of their Edenic life in the same frame. In one Medici tapestry, for instance, there are three Eves and two Adams; in Cranach's *Paradise*, there are five Eves and six Adams, all stages of innocence and guilt crowding into one canvas.⁴⁹ In de Bry's *Creatio hominis* plate, Adam and Eve in their various postures are shadowed around Eden by God as a cloud with the Tetragrammaton in it.⁵⁰ In this way, visual representations of Adam and Eve could insist upon their maturity, and their proper as well as improper occupations, while at the same time giving the viewer the quasi-divine role of seeing it all happen at once.

However, this vision was derived from a theology that had used the maturity of creation to emphasise our *distance from* that maturity, sometimes even the impossibility of comprehending unfallen man. This aspect visual art often neglected, though one notable exception is the fine Burgesse plate, after Medina, in Tonson's 1688 edition of *Paradise Lost*, accompanying the book of the Fall. Like the Medici and Cranach multiplications, various duplicate Adams and Eves recede into the distance. By far the most imposing presence, though, is Satan, darkly inked, thrusting into the foreground. The viewer cannot get to Adam and Eve in innocence without Satan impinging, a visual situation that parallels the epistemological difficulty of thinking about sinless environments.

The location of pieces involving Adam and Eve could also be extremely pointed. We noted the connection between the issues of original sin and baptism and the desire of anti-Calvinists to stress the efficacy of the latter for washing away the former. The most imposing affirmation of this position must be Grinling Gibbons' 1685 marble font in the Wren church of St James, Piccadilly. The baptismal font is carved as the tree of knowledge itself, with Adam and Eve flanking its base. Water poured in the top of the hollowed tree washes off the stain originally caused by the figures further down. Incidentally, William Blake was baptised in it.⁵¹

Nevertheless, there were some changes in the theological climate, and before leaving Augustinianism it is necessary to track the various signs of change from the Elizabethan to the Caroline period. In the universities, the debates held at the Cambridge Commencement and the Oxford exercises at the Comitia and Vesperies act as a theological barometer for such changes, reflecting mainly Calvinist commitment but with some later indications of Arminian usurpation.⁵² In 1597, Richard Field held that 'the doctrine of predestination once handed down by Augustine and in our own time by Calvin is the same and is in no way contrary to Catholic truth and upright faith'. He followed this with the provocative statement: 'The orthodox fathers who once held the will to be free and those today who hold it to be bound mean the same thing', a statement almost all of the popular systematic manuals contained.⁵³ Such Calvinist reaffirmation may in part have been prompted by the scandal in Cambridge the previous year over the Frenchman Peter Baro, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, who had been involved in theological quarrels since 1581, and William Barrett, a chaplain at Gonville and Caius. Barrett preached against Calvinist determinism in 1595, and as a result was summoned before Convocation and told to recant. Through his complaint to Archbishop Whitgift, he became the unwitting cause of the Lambeth Articles of 1595, which, against Barrett, reaffirmed determinism.⁵⁴ Baro himself was in especial trouble in 1596 for his proto-Arminian views, and was eventually hounded out of the university.⁵⁵ His *Summa trium de praedestinatione sententiarum*, published posthumously in 1613, distinguished between *two* views on predestination held by Augustine at different times, and a third position claimed for Augustine by Calvin and Beza, but possibly not authentically Augustinian. Here one can see the polemic strategy of separating supposed versions of 'Augustinianism' from the writings of the father himself, as a prelude to discrediting Calvinism as not as patristically grounded as it claimed.⁵⁶

Oxford had earlier had similar troubles over Antonio del Corro, a Spaniard accused of meddling with predestinarian issues. Certainly, in his 1581 version of Paul's letter to the Romans, recast as a dialogue between a *Discipulus* and a *Praeceptor*, Corro glossed the crucial verses on the first and the second Adam in a non-Calvinist fashion. Romans 5:12 appears in subtly different garb from what we earlier encountered: 'For as through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death; and thus death came over all men, from whom [*ex quo*] all have sinned.'⁵⁷ The grammar is as problematic as the *in quo* reading of the Vulgate, but the implication of the parallelism is clear: that people sin *from* Adam, not *in* him, a position that is indeed akin to saying that original sin *does* stand 'in the following of Adam, as the Pelagians do vainly talk'. Corro also said that Christ's sacrifice 'is indeed universal and sufficient, but such is the fault of unbelieving men that efficiency cannot at all correspond to sufficiency'.⁵⁸ Unsurprisingly, this book was not printed in Oxford, where, as Wood said of Corro, 'his person could never be well relish'd'. His publisher also sold the famous Danish Lutheran and supporter of free will Niels Hemmingsen on Ephesians.⁵⁹ The *in quo* reading, however, had already been quietly challenged by Erasmus: his celebrated *Paraphrases* simply read 'inso muche as all men synned', and cautioned that the first and second Adam are not to be rigidly compared.⁶⁰

In general, though, the theses debated between the students and the doctors maintained an even keel. In 1617, as it had been earlier in 1597, the habit of treating original sin as merely a lack of something rather than a real disease is trounced: 'Original sin is not simply a privation of original righteousness, but is a positive quantity.' The next year similar ideas were still in the air, Thomas Marler answering yes to 'Did Adam possess original righteousness before the fall?'; he also agreed that Adam's Fall was both necessary and contingent 'in different respects'. In 1622 concupiscence still remains in the regenerate, original sin is a positive entity, free will is extinguished for Adam's posterity, and we are unable of our own will to turn to God.

Cambridge, traditionally Calvinist earlier and to a greater degree than Oxford, despite the Baro affair mentioned, carries a similar record. In 1612 we are assured 'Divine Prescience was not the cause of man's Fall'; the next year it is still the case that 'Fallen man is subject to divine predestination.' But in 1629 Edward Quarles of Pembroke said that 'all baptised infants are without doubt justified', which got him into some trouble, and in 1632 the thesis affirmed was exactly the opposite: 'traces of sin remain in the regenerated, even after baptism'. Tellingly, the Root-and-Branch

petitioners of 1640 complained, as an example of 'the faint-heartedness of ministers', of their neglecting to preach 'of original sin remaining after baptism'.⁶¹

The generally Calvinist climate of the universities was changing, however. The declaration of Charles I in November 1628, ordering that 'all further curious search be laid aside, and these disputes shut up in God's promises', nominally banned predestinarian disputes in the universities, but effectively accompanied a rising tolerance for Arminianism.⁶² Bastingius, the favoured Oxford textbook, received his last printing there in 1614, and Ursinus, his Cambridge counterpart, in 1601.

A salient indication of the way things were moving is provided at Oxford by a publication of Giles Widdowes, sometime fellow of Oriel and rector of St Martin's church. In 1630 he published at Oxford, at his own expense, his hectoring sermon against 'Puritans' which he titled *The Schismatical Puritan*. It was republished the following year. Widdowes, who was an ally of William Laud, then in his ascendancy, listed ten types of schismatic Puritan. But this list, as well as containing Familists and Anabaptists, sects uncontroversially controversial, included Perfectists, Sermonists and Presuming Predestinists, supposed schismatics who held what were clearly Calvinist tenets and indeed were simply various of Widdowes' fellow academics dressed up as Separatists – which they were not. That Widdowes was able to lump academic Calvinists together with 'Puritans' and 'Schismatics', even if for polemic purposes, is an indication of how different things were from the 1590s, when anti-Calvinism was the hand that rocked the boat. For the first time, Calvinist and Anabaptist were seen alike as enemies of the Church, and Widdowes' category of anti-Disciplinarians, 'whose purenes is about the Kings Supremacy', is particularly offensive, suggesting as it does that those who think the elect cannot fall from grace are treasonable. These are again associated with '*Geneva-Presbyters*'.

The implications this has for how original sin was viewed can be seen in Widdowes' rebuttal of Anabaptist tenets: 'The *Anabaptist* is he, whose purenes is a supposed birth without originall sinne. And yet our bodies are parts of *Adams* nature, that did sinne. And no man was borne without sinne, *Christ only excepted*. His tenet is, that infants must not be baptized.' Widdowes' continued refutation, though, has other prey in sight:

[I]t is without question, that Gods Supremacy may pardon or punish *pro absoluto beneplacito*, only as he will, seeing 'tis the prerogatiue of supremacy, he being supreme Iudg. But he *cannot be iust in decree*, if he so reprobates, but for sinne foreseene. For the law was not, that any should die in *Adam*, if *he* had not eaten

of the forbidden fruit: *and therefore this law in prevision transgressed is the meritorious efficient of reprobation.*⁶³

Widdowes' terminology is hard, deliberately so, but his basic revision is obvious. He effectively rehearses the scholastic *Via moderna's* position: God can do precisely what he likes, but won't. This is because he is just. Therefore he judges, even to damnation, those whom he knows will sin. We only die in Adam because he happened to sin and God foresaw that he would. But judgement according to 'sinne foreseene' was exactly the kind of presumption upon God's Eternal Decrees of absolute predestination to election and to reprobation, based upon his mere pleasure, that the Reformers, and before them the *schola Augustiniana moderna*, had reviled. Importantly, it was also the position the Lambeth Palace articles of 1595 and the Synod of Dort in 1618–19 had anathematised. As the Dortist articles open, 'Forasmuch as all men haue sinned in *Adam*, and are become guiltie of the curse, and eternall death, God had done wrong vnto no man, if it had pleased him to leaue all mankind in sin, and vnder the curse, and to condemne them for sinne.' Election is 'not vpon foresight of faith, and the obedience of faith, holinesse, or any other good quality'.⁶⁴ Widdowes' revision of this position is not the last instance of neoscholasticism we will see, a neoscholasticism which in no sense dispenses with the Fall and original sin, but which does significantly rewrite the meaning of such ideas, away from the mainstream of reformed commentary.