



The Fall of Man

ARTICLE III



Creation and The Fall

Historical?

Creation

- The divine act of bringing the universe and all that inhabits it into existence.
- The biblical presentation of creation is neither scientific nor monolithic but testifies to the beauty and complexity of this foundational event in ancient Israel's consciousness.
- Most traditional views isolate creation events to the initial two creation accounts:

[Gen 1:1–2:4a](#) and [Gen 2:4b–25](#).



Evidence of the Fall

Man's Nature and Task

The narrative of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 affirms the distinctiveness of both man's nature and task.

- Man was created in the image of God for the purpose of communion and fellowship with God.
- As God's vicegerent, he was given dominion on the earth to cultivate and use its resources for the glory of God.
- Man was created righteous with a disposition and with every encouragement to do good.

The Command

- He was authorized to use the vegetation of the garden of Eden for food, but he was expressly forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- The purpose of this command was to introduce into the human consciousness the radical antithesis between good and evil and to confirm man in service of the Creator.
- As a faithful and loyal servant, man was to enjoy all the blessings bestowed by his father in heaven and at last be led into the fulness of eternal life with God.

The Relationship

- Man was made a living creature as were the animals, but the core of his life was to be union and communion with God.
- Fellowship with God was to become Adam's conscious possession, in contrast to the animals which know neither the possibility of sin nor conscious communion with God.

Evil and Temptation

- In full awareness of the evil of the alternative, man was to serve God willingly and lovingly.
- His life before God was therefore to be religious rather than instinctive.
- The purpose of God in giving the command not to eat was to establish man in the ways of righteousness and faith, but Satan used the command as an occasion to tempt man to rebel against God.

Existent Evil

- Although there was no evil for man in being tempted, it was evil for Satan to tempt man to sin.
- This means that there was evil in the universe prior to the fall of man.
- It was the apparent purpose of Satan to subject man to himself, and through man to extend his kingdom of darkness over the earth.

The Approach

- The fall of man and the subsequent program of redemption must be understood in the context of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan, in which the ultimate triumph of God is assured.
- Satan approached Adam by way of Eve, using as his instrument the serpent and urging them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- The difference between good and evil was not concealed from man prior to the fall, though man's experiential knowledge was only of the good.

Believing Trust

- Adam was to receive instruction concerning the nature of this distinction and the consequences of eating or not eating only from God.
- As he had received life in the beginning from his Creator, so he was to live in obedience to every word that proceeded from the mouth of God.
- Such obedience was believing trust in God.
- Adam was a righteous man whose destiny was to live by faith.

God or god?

- The point of the temptation was to urge independence from God.
- Satan called into question the truth of God and challenged his authority.
- He led man to think that he could determine for himself the difference between good and evil and that he could control the consequences to his own advantage.
- It was the temptation for man to be a god to himself.

Yielding to Temptation

- Adam fell when he yielded to the temptation of Satan and, together with his wife, ate of the forbidden fruit.
- As it is impossible to establish the date of the creation, so it is impossible to establish the date of the fall or the length of time between the creation and the fall.
- The length of this period is not theologically significant, but the historicity of it is.
- The sin of man is not eternal, nor is the fall given with the creation or existence of man.

The Attack

- The fall took place in calendar history at a point after the creation as an act of rebellion by the creature against the Creator.
- The act of rebellion was an act of disobedience, disloyalty, faithlessness, and unbelief.
- As the command not to eat summarized and brought to a focus all that was involved in righteousness before God, so the transgression epitomized radical apostasy (desertion/departure) from God.
- Satan attacked Adam precisely at the concentration point of man's covenant loyalty.

Whole-Souled Rebellion

- Undivided obedience to God gave way to whole-souled rebellion and complete revolt:
 - the **authority** of God was repudiated;
 - the **goodness** of God was doubted;
 - the **wisdom** of God was disputed;
 - and the **truth** of God was contradicted.
- A whole new complex of affections and emotions took possession of the heart and mind of man.

Voluntary Acceptance

- The cause of the fall is not located in God, for he is not the author of evil.
- Nor is the cause to be found in Satan, since the temptation was the occasion for the fall, not the cause of it.
- There is no rationale for man's voluntary acquiescence to the temptation and the overt act flowing from this acquiescence.



Effects of the Fall

Fear and Shame

- The immediate effects of the fall are visible in the loss of boldness and joy in the presence of God and the emergence of fear and shame.
- They are visible also in the alienation of Adam and Eve from God and in the revolution in the relation that God sustains to man.
- This is exemplified in the curse in relation to man, but more pointedly in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden.
- The garden was the dwelling place of righteousness, the sphere of union and communion between man and God.

Suffering of Hell

- Expulsion was inevitable once the communion was severed by unrighteousness.
- As God had warned, the consequence of sin was death.
- Righteousness is the way of blessedness and life in communion with God; sin is punished by the suffering of hell in separation from God's beneficent presence.
- Since death intervenes at every point where there is life, it works itself out also in the dissolution of the body in the grave.

Descendants

something deriving in appearance, function, or general character from an earlier form.

- The consequences of the fall are not limited to Adam and Eve but extend to all those descended from the first pair by natural generation, because there is a unique relation of solidarity existing by divine institution between Adam and the rest of the race.
- The consequences of Adam's transgression for humans are the imputation of his sin to all his descendants, their consequent liability to death, and their inheritance of a depraved nature.

The Results

- The results of the fall are also manifest in the cosmos as the curse works itself out in the resistance offered to the accomplishment of the original cultural mandate.
 - **Be fruitful and multiply**
- Only with the pain and danger attendant upon childbirth is the world populated, and only with arduous, toilsome labor is the food, clothing, and shelter necessary to sustain life provided.

God's Remedy

- However, the fact that death does not descend *immediately* upon man after the fall as *final* judgment is indicative of God's saving purpose for man.

- Adam does not hear the curse pronounced until he has heard the promise of a savior.

Genesis 3:15 (NRSV)

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

- An **indirect consequence** of the fall, and one which by no means justifies or explains it, is the magnificent display of grace in the **redemption wrought by Christ**.

The Promise

- **The thrust of the Bible is toward the future—the widening effects of sin and the unfolding of God's remedy.**



Historical Account?

Contemporary Theology

Contemporary Theology

There is widespread denial of the historicity of the biblical account of the fall.

Christian doctrine holds that sin entered the world within the horizon of man's **daily** life and is overcome by Christ within the arena of human history by his death and resurrection.

Contemporary Theology Question

- What influence does the historical account of the Creation and the Fall have on your faith?