

Al Wolters, *Creation Regained*
Chapter Three: Fall

The Scope of the Fall

1. The first sin didn't not just affect our human parents, but had catastrophic significance for creation as a whole. Both the human and non-human worlds were infected by sin. The affects of sin are extended to all creation, and nothing is left unscathed or undamaged by the Fall.
2. Sin seems to be the one empirically provable biblical doctrine. The results of sin are widespread in every department and category of life: marriage, family, state, politics, industry, labor, cultural life, academics, personal life, disease, etc. The entire created order has been rendered abnormal and anti-normative due to human sin which lies at the base of all the perversion of God's good creation. Human sin and disobedience lie at the base of all the perversion of God's world.
3. Two passages in particular focus on the ravages of sin in the fallen order. Genesis 3: 17 pronounces a curse on creation, and Romans 8: 19-22 indicates that through the first sin the creation was reduced to vanity, anti-normativity, and distortion. Human guilt again is culprit for the "uncreation."

The Relation of Sin and Creation

4. Sin neither abolishes nor becomes identified with creation. The order of creation and the order of sin and redemption (J. Calvin) remain distinct, though sin and creation are intimately intertwined (like the threads in a cross stitch). Evil does not have the power of reducing God's good creation to itself or to nothing, for God is faithful to the works of his hands.
5. Sin does not abolish creation and is never reducible to or identified with God's good world, but is a distortion, a caricature, and a parasite upon it. Hatred is a distortion of human assertiveness, a fallen human being, a humanistic school, a broken relationship, and muddled thinking all illustrate how sin does distort and caricature and is parasitical upon the world, yet "what something fallen in creation 'still is' points to the enduring goodness of creation—that is to say, to the faithfulness of God in upholding the created order despite the ravages of sin" (48).
6. Hence, redemption is concerned with the elimination of sin, not creation. In fact, redemption should be viewed as the recovery, restoration and renewal of creation from the consequences of sin. Redemption restores creation! Two clichés will help here. "You don't throw out the baby (creation) with the bath water

(sin).” “You don’t burn down the barn (creation) to get rid of the rats (sin).” Redemption is the removal of the bath water and rats of sin. You save both the creational baby and barn.

Structure and Direction

7. Hence, a distinction must be made between the order of creational structure and the orders of directional sin and redemption. Structure is the substance, essence or nature of a thing created good and lawed by God. Direction has to do with whether or not all structural entities are directed toward God in obedience or directed away from God in disobedience, a directional alternative that applies both to the human and non-human worlds. Sin is taking things in the wrong direction; redemption renews all things for the possibility of true obedience.

8. The structural goodness and normativity of creation, anchored in God’s faithfulness and in His common or conserving grace, sets a limit (like a leash on a vicious dog) on the corruption and bondage wrought by evil. Structure is never obliterated by misdirection and cannot be.

9. Hence, in the reformational worldview, contrary to most other religious and philosophical systems, no aspect of creation itself or anything within it as an expression of it (marriage, food, body, passions, culture, institutions, technology) can be blamed as the cause of human problems and suffering. To do so would be to confuse structure (creation) with misdirection (sin). Keeping these two orders apart is clearly the implication of Genesis 1-3. Rather we must pin the tail on the donkey and the donkey is us. Nonetheless, “there seems to be an ingrained Gnostic streak in human thinking, a streak that causes people to blame some aspect of God’s handiwork for the ills and woes of the world we live in” (51).

“World” as Perverted Creation

10. A Christian’s use of the word “world” is a litmus test of his or her Christian or biblical worldview. When a Christian uses this term, what does he or she understand by it? Biblically, the word world can refer to God’s very good creation (John 3: 16) or to the world of people. On the other hand, it can refer to “the totality of unredeemed life dominated by sin outside of Christ” (53; a parallel case would be the word “flesh”).

11. Most Christians, however, when they use the word “world” use it with reference to a so-called limited area of life called “worldly” or “secular” (work, education, culture, sports, etc.) in distinction from the sacred or holy with reference to the Church, to spiritual activities, to personal piety, to evangelism and discipleship, and to theology. Hence, Christian life is compartmentalized, dichotomized (= cut up) into two parts: the sacred spiritual aspect and the secular worldly aspect.

12. This is a “very great error” (54) for several reasons:

One, it implies there is no “worldliness” (things like pride, envy, and anger) in the Church or in Christian institutions and that there can be no holiness or spirituality in the so-called “worldly” in areas like business, politics, or journalism.

Two, it identifies the “secular” and the “sacred” not on the basis of direction or obedience, but rather on the basis of structure, that is, the sacred and the secular depends upon the basis of the creational neighborhood it occupies. It divides the whole of God’s very good creation into two distinct parts manifesting that old Gnostic streak once again.

Three, it causes us to misread Scripture by interpreting it in a foreign context. Passages like John 18, James 1, Colossians 3 are thought to suggest a rejection of the world entirely in favor of the other heavenly world. See G. E. Ladd, *The Pattern of NT Truth*, chp. 1.

Four, the abandonment of the world by Christians has led to its thoroughgoing secularization, for if we don’t care anything about it and see it as outside the pale of the faith, then is it any wonder that forces outside the church have dominated most of the spheres of human life?

Fifth, the sacred/secular dualism results in leaving the majority of God’s creation in bondage to the spiritual empire of satan who seeks to twist and pervert (to uncreate) the good creation and its many gifts. The world remains demonized and distorted by the prince of the world. Through human disobedience, satan has gained access to God’s world and continues to mar it. The earth and its condition is and remains a human responsibility and its present fallen condition is the result of human sin and the creature’s and the creation’s enslavement to the bondage and captivity of satan.

13. Hence, every area of the created world cries out for redemption and the coming of the kingdom of God.