

*The Whole Counsel of God*  
**Study 22**

**THE DOCTRINE OF PROCREATION**

*...male and female He created them. God blessed them;  
and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply....*

*Genesis 1.27-28*

*When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years,  
he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image,  
and named him Seth.*

*Genesis 5.3*

*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
And in sin my mother conceived me.*

*Psalms 51.5*

Procreation is a biological fact which makes it a biological subject. But, is it a doctrinal subject? For a subject to be doctrinal, it must not simply be mentioned in scripture. It must have a significant place in the biblical revelation of God and establish the truth of God's relationship with mankind. Revelation reaches its high point in the person and work of Christ, and when a biblical subject is an essential part of this great truth it takes its place among the most important doctrinal subjects. Procreation qualifies on all counts. God is intimately involved in procreation, and this involvement is part of the revelation of God. Also, the foundation of a person's relationship with God is set in procreation. This biblical theme reaches its high point in the virgin birth of Christ through which the incarnation took place. The angel Gabriel pointed this out when he said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Lk 1.35). The fact that this child would be the Son of God depended on the nature of his conception in the womb, and that is a matter of procreation.

We are taking up the doctrine of procreation as the last subject within the doctrine of man which in turn is part of the doctrine of creation. So, with this study we will exit the arena of God's work in creation. We will concentrate our attention on OT passages that touch on the subject, which anchor the theme of procreation in creation. Later, when we take up the doctrine of the person of Christ, we will return to this subject.

It has not been common practice to treat procreation as a doctrinal subject. The subject has, however, become urgent due to the legitimization, legalization and widespread practice of abortion. The culture of abortion has forced Christians to ask when a human being in the image of God comes about. When we bring our questions about abortion to the Bible, we are faced with a certain silence. The scriptures do not deal with this practice. If we are narrowly focused on abortion, we will find the Bible only speaking sparsely and indirectly leaving us to learn God's will by inference. But, if we take up the biblical point of view on procreation, we will see that revelation is very clear and rich on the matter. In the Bible procreation is not looked into to give an answer to the practice of abortion but to establish the person as the image of God in his intimate relationship with God. This gives us a clear theology that will enable us to give a clear and decisive answer to the theological questions surrounding abortion.

In working through this study, we must be prepared to do some serious rethinking. The Bible makes us look at procreation in a way that is very different from the way we observe the formation of a human being with our eyes. In the course of our study, we will see that the Bible makes it clear that the true meaning of procreation takes place in the sphere of God's activity that is hidden from human view and is beyond the

natural ability of the mind of comprehend. This makes our study an exploration into the unknown. We have to follow the path of biblical revelation carefully and discover and prove our points at each turn. This makes the study somewhat laborious. But, the labour is worth it if it brings us around to a biblical view of what we are before God.

## A. CREATION AND PROCREATION

The two creation accounts end with the divine word on procreation, which give us two perspectives on procreation.

### 1. Two perspectives on procreation

In the first account, the creation of the world is seen from God’s point of view. He is above the world speaking, creating and decreeing. The highest and last act is the creation of man, which is narrated as an event that leads directly to procreation. The steps are: 1) God created man in his image (v 27a), 2) he made them male and female, which are terms of gender and point to the sexual nature of mankind (v 27b), and this leads directly to 3) the decree to procreate given in the creator’s blessing to be fruitful and multiply (v 28). In this decree, the theme of sexual reproduction is covered. How this reproduction works out in human life, however, is not pointed out. All is seen from above – from the point of view of God’s purpose that mankind rule over the whole earth.

This first creation account gives us an important perspective on procreation. Being fruitful is only the first step toward realizing the goal of ruling the whole earth. The man and woman are not just to multiply human beings but raise their children to extend the reach of the human race, colonize the world, subdue the earth and further extend human dominion through having children. What Gen 1.28 points to is assumed throughout the rest of the Bible. With the birth of children comes the responsibility to raise them to secure the continuity and extension of God’s purposes through the family. We must keep the subject of procreation within this vision. Throughout our study we will see that the formation of a human being through procreation is always seen with a view to the person’s total life and God’s purpose for him.

In the second creation account, we see Adam enter step by step into the full scope of his life. Adam’s journey begins with his creation, and from here he enters other aspects of creation until at last he discovers the woman’s role to give birth to children.

Genesis 2 and 3 follows the same order in which the themes are presented in Gen 1.26-28. We can lay them out as follows:

| The first account                                 | The second account  |
|---|---|
| The creation of man in God’s image (Gen 1.26-27a) | The creation of Adam (Gen 2.7)                                  |
| Creation of male and female (Gen 1.27b)           | Adam and the creation of the woman: man and woman (Gen 2.21-24) |
| The blessing of procreation (Gen 1.28)            | God ordains the childbirth process (Gen 3.15-16, 20).           |

The themes of the purposes of God stated succinctly in Gen 1.26-28 are opened up in a narrative in terms of Adam’s world and experience. One important point made in the second account is that the union of the man and the woman stands independently of the function of having children. The sexual union of man and woman is first established and discovered in Gen 2.22-24 and this union is presented without any mention of having children. Childbirth is not given as the purpose of the union. The decree of marriage, in fact, inverts the order. It does not say that the man and woman become one to have children. Rather, it says that the child’s relationship with the parents must give way to the marriage relationship. In Genesis 2 marriage is presented as an end in itself. Sexual union is an essential part of procreation, but in the Bible it is not seen simply as part of the procreative process. It stands on its own, has its own value and does not need the fruit of the womb to give it meaning and purpose. The theme of childbirth is first introduced in Gen 3.15

and 16. The focus now is not on the union between the man and the woman but on the way ahead after sin had entered the world.

The two creation accounts show that procreation functions at two levels. The first level is creational, at which procreation is the creator's blessing on the union between male and female and functions in the realization of the creator's purpose for mankind. This has not been reversed by sin. Added to this is the second level. Here procreation functions in the fallen world in which God must carry out his purpose for history by engaging the human race in conflict with the serpent (Gen 3.15) and in which he secures the continuation of mankind under the sentence of death (Gen 3.16, 20). Now the creational mandate to fill and subdue the earth is harnessed for the history of salvation in which the seed of the woman engages in mortal combat with the serpent to defeat evil.

The fact that Adam and Eve first learned of childbirth in God's judgment on sin brings out the full dimensions of procreation. Procreation is not just a matter of biological reproduction. It does not just involve the transmission of created human life and nature. It involves the entire relationship between God and man, not just the way God set that relationship up in creation but also the way Adam and Eve affected it through sin. In our study, we must keep our eye on this fact.

## **2. The relationship between creation and procreation**

Genesis 1 to 3 draws a clear line between God's work of creating and the human act of procreating. God's creative activity took place within confines of the six days of creation and the Garden of Eden. Procreation, in contrast, is the couple being fruitful (Gen 1.28) and the woman's conception and childbirth (3.16), and this first happened outside of the Garden and so outside of the sphere in which our world was set up (4.1).

### **a. Looking into the language**

The difference between God's work and human procreation is reflected in the language of the early chapters of Genesis. The creational terms, *to create* (Gen 1.26, 27), *to make* (1.26) and *to form* (2.7), are used of God's activity. The terms for procreation are *to know*, *to conceive* and *to give birth* (3.16). The Hebrew term for giving birth is *yld* and is used both for the mother's role in giving birth (3.16; 4.1) and the father's role in begetting (5.3).

If we limited our discussion to the early chapters of Genesis, we could make a clear cut distinction between creation, God's work, and giving birth, the human role. But, if we work within the whole OT, the matter is not so simple. The language of conception and birth describes the human side of procreation, but the scriptures show that God is directly and creatively involved in the process, and this divine work is seen in terms of creation. All of the creational terms (to create, make and form) are used for God's work in childbirth.

The Hebrew word of critical importance for our discussion is the word, *bara*, translated with the English word, create. This term is never used for the human act of making something. It is only used for God's act of creating. As a result, in theological discussion the word, creation, is commonly used only for God's activity in creating the world. However, in the Bible it is not limited to God's work within the creation week. The word has the basic sense of bringing about something new. It is used for God working (lit., creating) miracles not performed before (Ex 34.10), bringing about (creating) a new phenomenon (Num 16.30) and creating a new heart in the sinner (Ps 51.10). Isaiah's use of this term in 48.7 brings out its force. In Ish 48.3 God says, "Suddenly I acted and they came to pass," and then in vv 6-7 he goes on, "I proclaim to you new things, even hidden things which you have not known. They are created now..." (v 7). The build up to the announcement of God's creative work shows that the word, *bara*, has the sense of bringing about something that is new, with the sense that it is different and surprisingly new. In this vein, Isaiah 65.17 speaks of the creation of new heavens and a new earth (see also Jer 31.22).

In Genesis 1, the word *bara* is used only for the creation of what is new, i.e., what was not there before: the creation of the universe (Gen 1.1; 2.4), the creation of the first animal life, which introduces a new level of creation (Gen 1.21) and the creation of man in God's image (Gen 1.27). Here the word has the full force of what we mean by creation. But, we cannot take the word, *bara*, as a technical term for the act of bringing about something for the first time. The same word is used of other works of God in which God brings about changes in nature and history (Ish 41.20; Ish 45.7; Ish 45.8; 48.7; Ish 57.19; 65.18; Amos 4.13). It is even used for God's act in bringing about a new generation of animals (Ps 104.30) and a new generation of human beings (Ps 102.18). It is also used for God's act in creating people, which happens through birth (Ps 89.47; Eccl 12.1; Ish 54.16; Mal 2.10), and for the creation of nations (Ish 43.1, 15; Ezk 21.30).

Our word study presses a point that we must keep in mind. The Bible does not have a highly developed technical jargon. This kind of technical language only develops in a tradition of specialized study. Theologians have developed the specialization and need technical language, but revelation does not work like this. Having said this we must point out that in its own way the Bible establishes the line that separates God's work in creating the world and what happens thereafter.

#### **b. Establishing the dividing line**

The early chapters of Genesis establish a clear line separating God's work in creating the world and human procreation. The line is fixed by the seventh day in which God rested from his work. Within human experience, the line is fixed by the exile from the Garden. Procreation took place outside of the time and space in which God created the world. However, God's work as the creator is not locked away in the creation week and in the Garden. All procreation takes place under the blessing of Gen 1.28, and this is the decree of the creator. The creator's word works through childbirth. The literal translation of Gen 3.16 is: "I will greatly multiply your pain and conception." This literal translation does not just see God adding the pain to childbirth but also bringing about birth in a fallen world. Adam got the point when he named the woman Eve. God's role in giving conception is confirmed by the rest of the scriptures which see God at work creating and forming a person in the womb. The Lord opens and shuts the womb (Gen 20.18; 29.31; 30.22; 1Sam 1.5-6).

The scriptures make us see not only the difference between God's creation of Adam and Eve and procreation but also the connection between the two. We can put the difference between God's work in creating Adam and in childbirth this way: the creation of Adam was vertical in that God created and raised him up out of the ground whereas in procreation the creative work is lateral in that God works from one living generation to bring about the next.

### **B. A THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF PROCREATION**

The biological view of procreation is succinctly given in Gen 4.1: Adam knew his wife Eve (i.e., had sexual intercourse with her), and she conceived and gave birth. But, the Bible does not look at the human being as a mere biological being. The creation accounts present him in a relationship with God through which he transcends the biological world of animals. The Bible gives us a theological understanding of man and of procreation.

#### **1. The image of God (Genesis 5.1-3)**

The transmission of the image of God in procreation is presented in Gen 5.3. Since the fact that each human being is made in the image of God is so important to both biblical doctrine and ethics, we must take a close look at this passage.

**a. The connection between creation and procreation**

In Gen 5.1-3 procreation is presented in the formal setting of an official genealogy. A genealogy is concerned with succession and inheritance, and in keeping with this the birth of Seth is tied to the creation of Adam in Gen 1.26-28. The connection is made clear by the parallel between Gen 1.26-28 and 5.1-3.

| <b>Genesis 1.26-28</b>   | <b>Genesis 5.1-2</b>  |
|--|---|
| God created man in his own image and according to his likeness (vv 26-27a) | “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God” (v 1)  |
| “...male and female he created them” (v 27b).                              | “He created them male and female...” (v 2a).  |
| “And God blessed them; and God said, “Be fruitful and multiply...” (v 28). | “...and he blessed them...” (v 2b).<br>“...and named them Man (Adam) in the day when they were created” (v 2c). |

The mention that God created them male and female and blessed them points to the sexual nature of mankind and the power of reproduction. This provides the link between the creation of Adam and the birth of Seth, which is the focus of the genealogy. The text says of Adam, “...he begot in his own likeness, and according to his image, and named him Seth.”

The account of Adam’s act in begetting Seth is parallel to the account of God creating man:

| <b>Genesis 5.1-2</b>               | <b>Genesis 5.3</b>                          |
|------------------------------------|---|
| In the day when God created man... | When Adam had lived 130 years...            |
| He made him                        | He begot                                    |
| In the likeness of God             | In his own likeness, according to his image |
| And named them Man                 | And named him Seth                          |

Adam’s act of begetting a son is parallel to God’s act of creating man. Procreation is parallel to creation with this key difference, God created and Adam begot. The Bible sees the parents giving birth but never creating. Creation is God’s work.

**b. Likeness and image**

In both the creation account (Gen 1.26) and the genealogical account (Gen 5.1-3), man is seen in terms of image and likeness, but these terms are presented in a different order. In Gen 1.26 the order is image and likeness, whereas in Gen 5.3 it is likeness and image.

| <b>Creation: from God to man (Gen 1.26)</b> | <b>Begetting: from Adam to son (Gen 5.3)</b> |
|---|--|
| <b>image</b> → <b>likeness</b>              | <b>likeness</b> → <b>image</b>               |

The account of creation focuses on the image, whereas the account of begetting focuses on the likeness. This difference in focus is also reflected in the statements of the creation of man. Gen 1.27 says that God created man in his image, whereas Gen 5.1 says that he made man in his likeness. What are we to make of this?

To answer our question we should begin with the obvious: in terms of the double feature of man (image and likeness), the relationship between God and man is looked at from one end (i.e., the image of God), and the relationship between father and son is looked at from the other end (i.e., the likeness of the father). Why is the divine-human relationship viewed from the point of view of the image while the father-son relationship is viewed from the point of view of likeness?

First we must take note that the image and the likeness of God are not two separate things as if one could be made in the image and not according to the likeness or vice versa. To be made in the image of God is to be made according to his likeness, and to be begotten in the likeness of the father is to be begotten according to his image. In a previous study, we noticed that the idea of image points to the function of representing God whereas the idea of likeness is that of resemblance, i.e., having features characteristic of God. Since God is Spirit, the likeness of God is not a matter of physical form but of the characteristics of personhood. This does not mean that our likeness to God does not involve our bodies. It does, but the resemblance is not in the shape of the mouth but in the function of the mouth, i.e., the power of speech; and so we could go through all the members of the body. In man physical functions resemble God's powers of action.

The idea of the image is more abstract and spiritual. It concerns man's function in relation to God and the world (i.e., representing God to rule over the earth). The likeness is more concrete. It is the resemblance to God that the person possesses in his features. In Genesis 1, man is seen from the point of view of the image because the stress is on what man is in God's purpose and what his function is as standing between God and the world. This narrow focus is seen in Gen 1.27-28 which says that God created man in his image (here the likeness is not mentioned) and decreed that he subdue the earth. In the genealogy, the focus is not on the divine side (what man is in God's purposes) but on the human side, i.e., what he possesses in his humanity (the likeness of God) which he transmitted to his son as an inheritance. In imparting his likeness, Adam imparted his image, i.e., the function of representing Adam.

The point we are considering is theologically significant. The likeness of God (and the image involved with it) given to Adam is transmitted through the father to the son. This point is assumed throughout the scriptures. Each and every human being descended from Adam is made in the image of God. But, Gen 5.3 adds another dimension. Adam does not simply transmit the image and likeness of God like water passes through a hose (the water flows through the hose without taking up the hose and extending). The likeness and image of God was imparted as Adam's own likeness and image. We could put it this way: the image is passed on through Adam as well as from Adam. Does this mean that Adam added a dimension to the likeness and image we received?

### **c. Biblical understanding**

Scripture teaches two important truths. The first is that all human beings are made in the image of God, and this is the basis for the sacred nature of each human being's life (Gen 9.6). The Fall never affected this sacred value of human life. The second truth is that the change in Adam's relationship with God through sin has also been imparted to us by virtue of the fact that we are his descendants. Genesis 5.3 provides for both facts of our existence.

We commonly speak of each person being the image of God, and this is correct. Paul, in 1Cor 11.7, says that man is the image and glory of God. In all other cases, however, the scriptures say that God *made* man in his image. The focus is not on what man is in himself (he is the image of God) or on what he possesses (he has the image in himself) but on the fact that God made man in his image, and it is this act of God that gives human beings their dignity (Gen 9.6; Jas 3.9). (By the way, this focus is also present in 1Cor 11.7f. Man [as the male] is the image and glory of God because God created him first). What we are taking note of is important for understanding the biblical view of man. In the Bible, man is not viewed for what he is in and of himself but for what he is in relation to God, and this is determined by how God relates to him. Jesus reasoned along this line to prove the doctrine of resurrection (Matt 22.29-32). The thinking in his argument is as follows: we can be certain that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have a continued existence after their death and will be raised because God identifies himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is a first truth

that God is the God of the living, i.e., that he relates to people by giving life. This means that as the God of the fathers he relates to the fathers as the God who will give them life, and for human beings this must be life in the body, for the separation of the soul from the body is a state of death. By this kind of reasoning, people are seen as the image of God by virtue of the fact that God made Adam in his image and not because they can carry out a certain function that represents God or have certain active attributes such as intelligence.

The view that man is understood for how he was made is carried over to procreation in Gen 3.5. The text does not say that Adam begot a son and the son bore his likeness and was his image. Rather, it says that Adam begot him in his likeness and according to his image. The stress is on the father bringing the son about in his likeness and not on the son possessing the features of the man. This means a mere resemblance of features is not in mind. Rather, the relationship established in the begetting is essential, and this is the key point in genealogies. The father begets in his likeness at the point of conception. He has no further role in the formation of the child. This means that the transmission of the image of God from the father takes place at conception. The subsequent formation of the child concerns the mother and not the father, and to this we will now turn.

## **2. The formation of a person in the womb**

Most scriptures that dwell on the process of giving birth speak of what happens in the womb of the mother. This focus on the mother rather than the father is set in Gen 3.15-4.2 and carried through to Gen 4.1-2. Genesis 5.3 marks a shift in focus from the woman's to the man's role in childbirth. This scripture says that Adam begot and named the son in contrast to Gen 4.1-2 which says that Eve gave birth and did the naming. At first, childbirth was very much the woman's domain, but this changed with the birth of Seth. The change in the focus of scripture can be explained by the fact that the account of Seth's birth is given in a genealogy. In the Bible, succession in genealogies went through the males.

The genealogical concern in the birth of Seth may be rooted in the story of Adam and Eve. The death of Abel and the exile of Cain meant that the first two sons did not secure the succession of the humanity created in Adam. This pressed the point that childbirth was not simply about God giving life through the woman but also and more fundamentally the need to secure the continuation of mankind through succession. This genealogical concern continues throughout scripture until the birth of Christ, after which the focus is on being born of God in contrast to being born of a man (Jn 1.13) and the new birth by the Spirit in contrast to being born of a mother (Jn 3.4-8). Having said this, we should add that the concerns of the OT are not abandoned in the NT. Paul, in 2Timothy highlights the continuation of faith from grandmother and mother to son (2Tim 1.5; see also 3.15; 1Tim 2.15) and the succession of the teaching ministry, which in the NT is seen as the domain of men of God (2Tim 2.2).

As important as the genealogical concern with succession from father to son is, the reflections on childbirth in scripture are carried out in the spirit of Gen 4.1-2 and focus attention on the mother's womb.

### **a. God's work in the womb**

The prophets and poets of the OT focus on what happens in the woman. The forming of the child is consistently ascribed to God and not to the woman, and God's work in the womb is described with the language of creation. The LORD forms the person from (i.e., from within) the womb (Ish 44.24; 49.5; Jer 1.5), and the Hebrew word in question is the word used for the forming of Adam's body from the ground in Gen 2.7. Isaiah 44.2 says, "Thus says the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb...." Here the word, *made*, is added, and this word is the most common word for God's work in Genesis 1. Job speaks of his birth in terms of Gen 2.7 when he says to God, "Your hands fashioned and made me altogether... Remember now, that you have made me as clay..." (Job 10.8-9). Isaiah 49.1 says that God called from the womb and named from inside the mother. In light of the creational language used for the divine work in the womb, this calling and naming is to be linked to God naming man when he created him (Gen 5.2).

In the OT, God's creative work in the womb is seen as the foundation of the relationship between God and the party that God formed. The fact that God made Israel and formed him from the womb is the basis for Israel's trust in God (Ish 44.2) and for God being Israel's redeemer (Ish 44.24). In Ish 46.3-4, God says that what he was to Israel from the womb, he will be to his old age; in other words, the relationship established in the process of formation in the womb will hold true to the end. In Ish 49.5 God makes the purpose with which he formed his servant in the womb the basis for the confidence that the servant's mission will succeed. These assurances based on the relationship set in the womb are given against all the contrary and discouraging events in one's experience. This way of reasoning is used beautifully in Psalm 22. The sufferer does not find his basis for confidence within Israel's relationship with God (Ps 22.3-5), for he is a worm and not a man (v 6). So, he turns to his birth as the basis for his trust in God (vv 9-10). He was made cast upon God from birth, and this is his basis for praying for help (vv 11ff.; see also Ps 71.6).

**b. Exploring the divine work in the womb**

Two poetic passages take a closer look at the divine work in the womb.

*i. Job 10*

To see how Job views the divine work in the womb, we will have to have the whole passage before us. The statements that we will draw on are given in bold type.

"I loathe my own life;  
 I will give full vent to my complaint;  
 I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.  
 2 "I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me;  
 Let me know why You contend with me.  
 3 **'Is it right for You indeed to oppress,  
 To reject the labor of Your hands,**  
 And to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked?  
 4 'Have You eyes of flesh?  
 Or do You see as a man sees?  
 5 'Are Your days as the days of a mortal,  
 Or Your years as man's years,  
 6 That You should seek for my guilt  
 And search after my sin?  
 7 'According to Your knowledge I am indeed not guilty,  
 Yet there is no deliverance from Your hand.  
 8 **'Your hands fashioned and made me altogether,  
 And would You destroy me?**  
 9 **'Remember now, that You have made me as clay;  
 And would You turn me into dust again?**  
 10 **'Did You not pour me out like milk  
 And curdle me like cheese;  
 11 Clothe me with skin and flesh,  
 And knit me together with bones and sinews?**  
 12 **'You have granted me life and lovingkindness;  
 And Your care has preserved my spirit.**  
 13 'Yet these things You have concealed in Your heart;  
 I know that this is within You:  
 14 If I sin, then You would take note of me,  
 And would not acquit me of my guilt.  
 15 'If I am wicked, woe to me!  
 And if I am righteous, I dare not lift up my head.  
*I am* sated with disgrace and conscious of my misery.  
 16 'Should *my head* be lifted up,

You would hunt me like a lion;  
 And again You would show Your power against me.  
 17 'You renew Your witnesses against me  
 And increase Your anger toward me;  
 Hardship after hardship is with me.  
 18 **'Why then have You brought me out of the womb?  
 Would that I had died and no eye had seen me!  
 19 'I should have been as though I had not been,  
 Carried from womb to tomb.'**  
 20 "Would He not let my few days alone?  
 Withdraw from me that I may have a little cheer  
 21 Before I go -- and I shall not return –  
**To the land of darkness and deep shadow,  
 22 The land of utter gloom as darkness *itself*,  
 Of deep shadow without order,  
 And which shines as the darkness."**

The point Job presses on God is stated in vv 3 and 8. He is the labour of God's hands (v 3) in that God's hands fashioned and made him (v 8). Job perceives God contradicting this creative work in that he rejects the labour of his hands (v 3) and would destroy the one he made (v 8). Job is thinking about God's work in forming someone in the womb along the same lines we noticed in Isaiah. What God has done in the womb sets the relationship and expectation for life. In Isaiah, God's creative work is the basis for confidence in God, and this stands against all contrary experiences. For Job, this very conviction raises the challenge against what God is doing.

In v 9 Job calls God to remember his work in forming him in the womb. Here Job gives a twofold account of this divine work. The first is given in v 9, and this one answers to the view of creation in Gen 2.7. God formed Job as clay just as he had formed Adam. God would contradict this creative work by turning Job to dust again, and this answers to Gen 3.19. In the creative work, God works with clay because clay is moldable. For the destruction of the creation, Job speaks of dust that is not moldable. Dust is formless, and to turn a man to dust is the destruction of any form.

Job 10.10 gives another poetic account of the way God makes a person. This time, Job outlines a process in which God began with liquid (milk poured out) turning it into a soft solid state (curdled, referring to soft tissue and organs) and clothing it with skin and flesh so that it has shape and giving it a frame of bones and sinews (Job 10.10). In v 9, the movement is from form (of clay) to formlessness (dust). In v 10, the movement is from formlessness (a poured out liquid) to form given by skin and flesh with rigidity and strength given by bones and sinews. The two descriptions together present a beginning and end in formlessness, and Job will draw on this in vv 19-22.

In vv 9-11 Job reminds God of his work in forming the body. In v 12 he presents the other side—the grant of life and spirit. This two-sided view of the creation of man is seen in Gen 2.7 where God is seen forming the body out of dust and breathing in the breath (spirit) of life. The material of the body comes from the ground, but the spirit ever comes directly from God and is in God's power (Eccl 12.7; Job 12.10; 27.3; 33.4; 34.14-15). In the gift of life and spirit, God gives his lovingkindness and care. This is about the living relationship.

Job ends his thoughts on the process of birth and destruction by connecting the womb and the tomb. Between the two is life on earth, and for Job this experience has turned out to be a contradiction of the very commitment of God given in birth. The state of death is not, in the OT view, a state of nonexistence, just as the state in the womb is not one of nonexistence. Rather, it is a state of darkness in which no eye can see (Job 10.18) and without order (v 22). This state answers to the state of the earth in Gen 1.2: without form and void and in darkness. In the OT Sheol is understood as a place in which souls exist without the active and visible life we have on earth. This corresponds to the womb. As a state of being, the womb and Sheol

correspond to each other. But, in the womb God creates life to be lived in this world of light and order, and in death this creation is destroyed so that the person passes into Sheol.

ii. *Psalm 139*

Psalm 139.13-16 is the most famous biblical meditation on God's creative work in forming a person in the womb.

- 13 For You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother's womb.
- 14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works,  
And my soul knows it very well.
- 15 My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
*And* skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;
- 16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
And in Your book were all written  
The days that were ordained *for me*,  
When as yet there was not one of them.

The Psalmist begins with God's work in creating his inner life (v 13a). The Hebrew word translated with "inward parts" is *kidneys*. Just as the word heart, which refers to an organ in the body, is used for the seat of purpose and volition, so the kidneys stood for a person's thought life. Both are internal organs and represent a person's inner conscious life. The Hebrew word translated with "form" also has the sense of to acquire and possess. The Psalmist may have chosen this word to focus on the fact that by his creative work God possesses his inner life, and this fits in with the context. The focus on the inner conscious life takes up the opening theme of the Psalm. In vv 1-6, the Psalmist dwells on the fact that his thought life is completely open to God's scrutiny, and he finds this to be wonderful. In his closing prayer in vv 23-24, he surrenders himself to this scrutiny to have any hurtful way in him exposed and to be led in the way of life (i.e., to be led through his kidneys; see Ps 16.7, where the translators render the Hebrew term with *mind*, and v 11). Here again we see the pattern of thought we noticed in other biblical passages: God's work in forming a person determines how God relates to him for all of his life.

The Psalmist moves from the formation of his inner consciousness to his body (v 13b). He uses the image of weaving for the creator's activity. God wove his body. This is an appropriate metaphor for the body with its layers of muscles, arteries and tissue running throughout. After giving thanks for the way God made him (v 14), the Psalmist returns to God's work in forming the body in vv 15-16. The image of an artisan at work (suggested in the creator as weaver) is reflected in the expression, skillfully wrought (v 15). In vv 15-16, he is turning his eyes inward to the unseen, beginning with the frame (lit., the bones which are hidden in the body) and moving to the unformed substance which God alone has seen.

The creative work of God was done in secret. In fact, the Psalmist goes so far as to say that God made him "in the depths of the earth." This expression refers to Sheol, the lower regions of darkness and formlessness. We observed this connection between the womb and Sheol in Job. The reason why the Psalmist goes here in his meditation is found in vv 7-12. After dwelling on the wonder that his thought life is open to God's view (vv 1-6), he turns to his body and dwells on the thought that he can go nowhere to hide from God. The surest hiding place would be Sheol (v 8), that place of darkness (v 12) and formlessness, but the Psalmist knows that God would be there. This has its basis in the fact that God made him in the hidden darkness and saw his unformed substance (vv 15-16).

In the second part of v 16, the Psalmist turns from space (where he was formed) to time. Before there were any of the days of his life on earth, all the days ordained for him were written in God's book. The Psalmist has made his point with great force. All dimensions of his being are before God—his inner consciousness, his body and his days—and this is rooted in the work of God in the womb.

The biblical writers wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God, and the Spirit focuses attention on God's relation to the person. This relation is fixed in God's creative work. For the human race as a whole, the divine work is the creation in the beginning, and for each individual it is the work of God in the womb, in the very beginning stages of his being when God began to form the unformed substance and craft the body. It is at this stage that the sacred relationship between God and the person is established and the human being is given the foundation of trust in God.

### **3. Sin and procreation**

In Psalm 139 David looked at his formation in his mother's womb as the wonderful work of God, but in Psalm 51 he spoke of his procreation quite differently. He said, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps 51.5). In these two Psalms, David looked at himself from two different points of view. In Psalm 139 he saw himself within God's relationship to him. God knew all his thoughts and would be there wherever he might go. This was wonderful to him and he traced the wonder back to his formation in the womb. In Psalm 51 David was seeing himself from the point of view of his sin against God (Ps 51.4). Before God the judge, he became aware of his sin from God's point of view. God does not just look at the deed committed, which the human eye can see. Rather, he looks at the innermost being and the hidden part, and this is where he desires truth and makes the person know wisdom (v 6). Turning inward, David saw that sin was deeper than the act. Sin had its root in the core of his being, and this pointed to the very formation of his being in the womb. The line of thought runs parallel to what we observed in Psalm 139. What a person is has its foundation in the formation of his being in the womb. This is true of David in the presence of God as well as of David as the sinner before God the judge.

In Psalm 51, David did not look at God's work but at his sin against God. From this point of view, he did not look at how God made him but at the human process of procreation. God did not bring him forth in iniquity; it was his mother that conceived him in sin. In Psalm 51, David focused on human generation rather than the creative work of God.

#### **a. Born of woman: studying a biblical phrase**

In the Bible, when man is viewed as one born of woman he is seen in his perishable human nature before God. In the OT, this view is opened up to us in the Book of Job. Job viewed "man who is born of woman" as transient in his existence on earth (14.1-6). His friend Eliphaz took up the idea of man born of woman to focus attention on man's corruptible nature (Job 15.14-16). Bildad the Shuhite sees man born of woman as unclean and as a maggot (Job 25.4-6). In all of these scriptures, reference is made to the fact that man born of woman will be found wanting in God's eyes (Job 14.3; 15.15-16; 25.4-6).

Jesus took up this language for common humanity when conferring honour on John the Baptist. He said, "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." In this saying, to be born of women does not have the pejorative sense found Job. Jesus is simply referring to common human beings. But, when he says that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than one who is greatest among those born of woman, he is pointing to the fact that to be born of woman does not bring one into the kingdom. To be born of woman is to be born as a creature of earth for life on earth, and this will not give one a place in the kingdom of heaven. Paul pointed to this in 1Cor 15.50: "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." The themes of being born of woman and entering the kingdom are taken up in John 3.4-8. Nicodemus asked if a man can enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born (v 4). Jesus does not answer the question directly and say that this is impossible. Rather, he points out why such a birth could not be the birth needed to enter the kingdom of God. To be born of woman is to be born as flesh of flesh (v 6). One needs to be born of the Spirit.

In Gal 4.4 Paul says that the Son of God who was sent into the world was born of woman. Again, the expression, “born of woman,” refers to a person having common humanity. The context makes clear that Paul is thinking of the low position people have in their common humanity. The Son of God, a title of the divine person, was born of woman and so entered our position of a child under the Law and under the elemental things of the world. This position is common to all human beings (Jews, v 3, and Gentiles, v 9), and it stands in contrast to the position as son and heir of all things.

The scriptures we have reviewed show that man born of woman has a nature of low estate that is perishable. Psalm 51.1 works with this insight and adds that when we were born of woman we not only received a weak and perishable nature but were actually conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity. Here we must be careful to think biblically. There is no room in the biblical way of thinking that the act of sexual intercourse within marriage is a sin. The sin in which David was conceived was not the sinful act of his parents. Rather, David saw his sinful act as having its root in his innermost being and traced this root back to his formation, right back to his conception. This insight is stated again in Ps 58.3 which says, “The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth.” Isaiah 48.8 applies this insight to Israel. God says, “You have not heard, you have not known. Even from long ago your ear has not been open, because I knew that you would deal very treacherously; and you have been called a rebel from birth.” This insight into the chronically sinful state of mankind is developed by the apostle his teaching on original sin in Rom 5.12-21 and on sin dwelling in the body in Romans 7 (see also Eph 2.3).

#### **b. Doctrinal understanding**

The fact that our mother conceived us in sin does not mean that the woman (in contrast to the man) is the source of our sinful nature. Our study of the doctrine of original sin established clearly that the legal status of sinner was imposed on all human beings (except Christ) through Adam’s sin and not through Eve’s. The reign of sin and death came in through Adam. One result of this reign is that sin dwells in the body to reign in it (Romans 6 and 7). As long as people are in the flesh, the passions of sin are at work in the members of their bodies (Rom 7.5). In light of these points of biblical doctrine, we can get a clearer picture of the connection between our conception in the womb and our human nature.

The first level at which we must understand the procreative process is the level of creation. God who created Adam from the dust works creatively to form each human being in the womb. In this creative work, he does not create from the dust (as in the case of Adam) or solely from the male (as in the case of Eve) but from the male’s seed in the woman’s womb causing us to become a being of flesh born of flesh. This process is seen both as a creation by God and as generation by the human couple.

The procreative work occurs within the relationship between mankind and God set in Adam, and that involves the relationship set up by God in creation as well as the change in relationship brought about by the first sin. While God is not seen as creating sin in the womb, he is seen as forming a human being within the sinful state of the human race. Here we must be careful in the way we think about the sin nature. This nature was fully established in the first sin, and Genesis 3 does not indicate any alteration in the created nature of Adam and Eve. In terms of their created constitution, Adam and Eve were the same after they sinned as they were before. What happened through the act of sinning is pointed out by Jesus’ word that he who commits sin is the slave of sin. In our study on the first sin, we saw how Eve was realigned in the process of sinning. Rather than being governed by the word of God through her mind and spirit (by which mankind is related to God), her human nature and especially the senses and appetites of the body took over and began to drive her. This realignment in which the flesh is autonomous and rules the mind and will is the sin nature. To be in sin is to be in the flesh. After the fall, mankind was trapped in this misalignment of human nature, and God will never reverse the process. Even for the believer who has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, the flesh is still this sinful nature with its passions that seeks to drive us.

God, being true to his creative decree that man and woman be fruitful and multiply, works with the male seed in the woman’s womb to replicate the male and female according to the created design. But, he does this work within the misalignment of human nature due to sin and so the human being formed in the womb is formed in sin. This formation in sin does not happen at a certain point in the development of the child in

the womb. It happens right at conception. This means that there is no part of the human being that is not misaligned by sin. It is not the case that at the first stage of our development sin is absent so that at the core of our being is not affected by sin. Each human being is essentially and totally fallen. He is essentially fallen in that sin has affected the very formation of his being. He is totally fallen in that there is no part of his being that is formed outside of this grip of sin. This is not the way we naturally feel or think about ourselves. The Spirit of God used the shocking sin of adultery and murder to make David discover this.

## **C. FOUNDATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN BEING**

The biblical view of procreation gives a foundational understanding of the human being. The human being is not simply seen for what he is in his life on earth but more fundamentally for what he has become through the process of procreation. This has profound implications for our understanding of what it means to be human.

### **1. Personal identity**

At the foundational level of our existence, we are not what we know ourselves to be through our own experience of life. Rather, what we are is determined by what God is toward us. This is not an abstract relationship but has been made real in the way God established his relationship with us in the formation of our being before we are born. God pressed this point on Jeremiah when he called him to be a prophet. Jeremiah was young, and he could not see anything in himself that qualified him to be a prophet to Judah. God, however, overrode such experiential considerations when he based the call on what was prior to Jeremiah's personal existence. He said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you..." (Jer 1.5). Jeremiah had to realize that what he knew himself to be by his experience and his qualifications did not determine who he was before God. Rather, his calling in life was set by God who formed him in the womb. In fact, God's relation to Jeremiah predated his formation in the womb, for God undertook the formation of the person with a set purpose before him. The apostle Paul saw himself in the same light when he said in Gal 1.16, "But when God, who had set me apart from my mother's womb..." Jeremiah and Paul were called to a special public ministry for God, but our study shows that the case of these two men of God fits into a common pattern.

What we see in the formation of the individual is true to the creation of mankind in the beginning. Adam had no role in making himself. He was what he was solely by God's doing, and his relationship with God was established by the way God related to him in creating him. What God established in the creation of Adam remains true for the whole human race and each member of it. All have been made in the image of God so that the life of all is sacred (Gen 9.6). This fact is not dependent on the individual's performance as the image of God. A person's life does not become sacred when he actively represents and reflects God. It is sacred not because he makes himself the image of God but by the fact which stands prior to and independent of his doing—God made him in his image. The transmission of that image through human generation works the same way. A child is not in the image of his father when the child attains a visible likeness to him. In fact, the child being in the image of the father has nothing to do with the child. It all has to do with the father, according to Gen 5.3. The father begets the child in his image through his contribution to conception. By this very act, the child is begotten in the father's image and through this the image of God is transmitted to the child. This, and this alone, secures the sacredness of the child's blood and life (in Hebrew the word translated life in Gen 9.6 is the same word translated with soul) and gives him a dignity that we are not to curse with the tongue (Jas 3.9).

People usually look at their life from the moment of birth onwards to understand who they are. The biblical writers, however, looked to the person's formation by God in the womb for the foundation of their personal identity. The reason for this difference lies in the difference between our natural understanding and that understanding that is guided by the Spirit. We naturally see ourselves in terms of our experience, as that is observed by others and ourselves. But, the Spirit ever makes us look at all things, including ourselves, from God's point of view, and this is the point of view of the creator set in his work of making us.

The biblical witness is clear that the work of God that provides the foundation of a person's identity is hidden from human view. This point is important to Christians in our secular age that insists on defining the human being scientifically. Science can only deal with what is open to human observation. This means that just as science cannot deal with the invisible God it cannot establish the sacredness of the life of man who was made in God's image. The Christian must be clear on this. Our belief that human life is sacred is based solely on the knowledge of God and his creative work. The implications of this for our secular age are horrific. Science cannot establish anything as sacred and having transcendent value, and that means that a society that will only accept the authority of science has in principle ruled out any idea of sacredness or real moral truth. The talk about ethics is just a word game in a secular world.

The legalization of abortion has pressed the question with urgency: when does human life begin? The question assumes that at one point human life (that is to be protected under the criminal code) emerges, and if we could pinpoint that moment we would know when abortion amounts to murder. For Christians, the issue must be decided in terms of Gen 9.6. God forbade murder because human beings were made in the image of God. Our study has shown that this is not a matter of when an embryo or fetus becomes the image of God. The Bible focuses on the divine side. When did God make man in his image and when is that image transmitted to the person being formed? The biblical answer is clear—at creation and through conception.

When people reason that the image of God is acquired sometime after conception to justify abortion at an early stage of a pregnancy they destroy the foundation for the person's relationship with creator, for that is set in the creator's work from the beginning.

## **2. Creation and generation**

In the Bible, the process of bringing a person into the world has a vertical and horizontal axis. The vertical axis is God's work creating a human being. The horizontal axis is the generation of a child by the parents. These two cannot be taken apart.

The biblical view of God's creative work in bringing about a child in the womb is modeled after the creation of Adam in Gen 2.7. God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath (spirit) of life and he became a living soul. The creative work of God in the womb is seen principally as the work of forming the body in the womb. Even in the womb, the material of the body comes from the dust; it is just the dust processed through the mother's body. The spirit given to the child, however, always comes directly from God, and this secures the direct and living link between the person and God (Eccl 12.7). The spirit of life has its source only in God (Job 33.4). The child receives it from God and not from the parents.

The spirit that God imparts is not a human spirit that God has created prior to putting it into the body. In the act of impartation, spirit is the breath of the Almighty (Job 33.4) and not an individual spirit. This spirit is imparted into the physical creation, and through this man becomes a living soul. In this process, spirit given by God becomes the spirit of the creature. Zechariah 12.1 speaks of the human spirit in an unusual way and throws some light on the subject. Rather than speaking of God breathing in spirit, the prophet says that the LORD forms the spirit of man in him; the word for forming is the same as in Gen 2.7. As the LORD imparts spirit into the physical form of the person, he forms that person's own spirit.

The soul is not something that God adds to the person. Rather, it is what results from the formation of the body and giving of spirit. The creation becomes a living soul, and as a soul he is a living self that has both the body and the spirit as his own.

When God created Adam, he created a living soul from the nonliving dust. This is not the case when God creates a person in the womb. Rather than working directly with inanimate dust, he works with the living flesh of the parents. John 1.13 points to the male's side in this: children are born of blood (and the life is in the blood), of the will of the flesh and of the will of man (i.e., a male). John 3.6 points to the birth through a woman: the child is flesh born of flesh. If we speak in the language of creation, the image of God is not

created anew in the child. It is transmitted from the human father. On the female side, God does his forming work in the womb from the living flesh of the mother. The whole tenor of the scriptures gives the sense that the whole person is generated by the parents. It is not the case that only the body is generated while the soul is not. This would mean that the child as a person (a soul) is not the offspring of the parents.

The spirit is the only aspect of the human constitution that has its source only in God. The human spirit gives the person his direct link with God, and God gives this spirit within the relationship between God and mankind set in Adam and transmitted through procreation. The spirit is formed as the individual's own spirit in connection with the body and within the alienation of the fallen human race from God.

### **3. Body and soul**

The biblical doctrine of procreation helps to clear up the way we think about the relationship between the soul and the body in the formation of a human being. On this question, there are three standard theories: 1) the pre-existence of the soul, 2) creationism, which is the theory that the soul is created directly by God in contrast to the body which is generated by the parents and 3) traducianism, which is the theory that the whole person, body and soul, is generated by the parents. In going over these theories, we will have another opportunity to sharpen our thinking on our subject.

#### **a. The pre-existence of the soul**

The theory of the pre-existence of the soul teaches that the souls were created before the world and that God places a soul within a body formed in the womb. There is no biblical basis for this theory. In fact, it goes against the biblical view of man. In the Bible, man is seen as flesh, and he is flesh in his whole being. But, according to the theory of pre-existence of the soul, man is fundamentally a spirit and so was created like the angels. The body is regarded as a cage or house in which soul enters and lives for a while. This theory also destroys the truth that mankind is one race descended from one head, which truth is essential to the work of Christ in dying for us (a doctrine we will take up later).

The theory of pre-existence works with a dualistic view of the body and the soul that comes from pagan philosophy. In this view, the soul and the body do not essentially belong together. This dualism undermines the doctrine of the sanctification of our bodies, which teaches that we must give our bodies to God in unity with our spirits and souls, as well as the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which is based on the fact that man is essentially a corporal being and so will exist in a body eternally.

#### **b. Creationism**

The theory of creationism connects with the creational language that scripture uses for God's work in procreation. But, it is one sided in that it only uses the creational language for the soul. In the scriptures, creational language is used for the formation of the body and the whole person in the womb. Only one scripture speaks explicitly of the formation of the human spirit (Zech 12.1). The distinction between the creation of the soul by God and the generation of the body is not true to scripture. God is creatively involved in the natural process.

This theory runs the risk of a subtle dualism in that it separates the creation of the soul from the formation of the body. Genesis 2.7 makes clear that God did not perform two creative acts, the formation of the body and the creation of the soul, and then join them together. Rather, there is one creative work through which man became a living soul, and this secures the intimate and essential link between the soul and the body fundamental to all scripture. Creationism also is troubled by the doctrine of original sin and the inherited sin nature. That man is born a sinner is not just a fact of the body but of the whole person, i.e., of man's soul. If God created the soul separately from the body, then how was the person born a sinner? The theory of creationism, however, highlights one biblical point: the human spirit is given directly by God. The parents are not the source of spirit.

### **c. Traducianism**

Traducianism gives full force to the idea of generation and removes the artificial separation of God's creative work and human generation. In the theological discussion, this theory has been troubled by the problem of how the soul can be transmitted from parents to children. This problem is based on a conceptual difficulty. In the tradition of philosophical and theological discussion on these matters, the soul is assumed to be a substance, some invisible, intangible and indivisible substance that stands in contrast to the material body. The process of making a new soul is then conceived of as one in which some of this substance is taken from the parents' souls to be formed into a new soul. The result would be that my "self" would be a combination of parts of my parents' "selves". This way of conceiving the soul is philosophical and not biblical. In Gen 2.7, the soul is the living being that Adam became. It is not a substance.

The discussion must shift from the soul to the spirit. The difference between soul and spirit is important, a difference often blurred in the discussion. The soul is the personal self. It is experienced in our self consciousness and has both the body and the spirit as its own. The soul expresses itself in the personal pronoun, I, me and mine. This self has no identity apart from the body. It came into being through the formation of the body. After death, the soul continues as a conscious living being by adhering to the spirit, but its identity is ever tied to the body. It is known as the soul of a person who died. In the judgment, we will not be rewarded for what we did in the state of a disembodied soul but in our bodies. Man has no identity apart from what he is in the body, and that is why his eternal destiny is determined by his decisions in the body. If God had created the soul, i.e., the person who is a self, independently of the body, the child would only have a connection with his body and his parents that is external to the soul.

If the soul relates one to himself and relates all to the self, spirit is what relates us to God. When we say that spirit comes from God, we acknowledge that spirit is not dependent on our body or ourselves. But, spirit in God is not our self. Only as spirit is imparted and takes its seat in the body is it formed as an individual spirit in that it brings about a soul, a personal self, which in turns knows the spirit as its own. This spirit relates to our parents in two ways. On the one hand, spirit is not given to us by our parents, and this means that each person at the foundation of his being has a connection with God that stands apart from his parents. On the other hand, God imparts and forms spirit within the relationship between God and mankind transmitted through the parents. God thus passes on to the child the same endowment of spirit he gave to Adam and to his parents on the basis of the inherited divine-human relationship. God forms this imparted spirit as the person's own spirit within the formation of the person in the process of generation. To understand this, we can use the idea of the vertical and horizontal axes of the creative work and procreative process. God gives spirit (the vertical axis) and forms it as the individual's spirit in the formation of the person in the procreative process (the horizontal axis). The result is a living soul that is brought about by the process of generation.

This understanding of body, soul and spirit in procreation agrees with the biblical point that man is flesh. He cannot be flesh without spirit, for without spirit there would just be dust. He is flesh through having been given spirit. He is not a spirit who lives in a body of flesh, but he is flesh by virtue of having spirit and has spirit as his own spirit only because spirit has been individualized in his flesh. Thus, his soul, i.e., his personal identity, is defined from his nature of flesh, and this clearly is formed through the process of generation from the parents.

### **d. An emergent view of the soul**

Since the scientific mind in our secular age does not allow for any reality that is outside of the field of human observation, the idea of any dimension in man that comes from outside of the physical realm is rejected from the outset. We experience the soul in our mind life. The scientific thinking wants to explain this simply as a phenomenon that emerges as matter reaches a certain level of organization. Life and the human mind are thus seen as an emergent phenomenon. This view cannot be proven scientifically. It is forced through by the authority of "scientific" assumption.

The authority of secular science exerts an atmospheric pressure to reconcile all ideas to its dictates. Such reconciliation has been attempted by asserting that God created matter with this amazing quality that at a certain level of organization life emerges. This theory may sound like it exalts the creator of matter by making the created matter so wonderful that it can do what the Bible says God does directly—the giving of life and spirit. This emergentism only puts a halo on materialism, and the achievement is hollow. It achieves nothing but to make some religious people comfortable with materialistic science. The atheistic scientists reject this religious emergentism in that they deny God created the matter, and the biblical witness is against the idea that spirit emerges from dust.

The biblical witness is clear. Dust cannot produce life, and man exists in a direct connection with God that does not emerge from the dust. The fact that our bodies are made of dust confronts us with our weak frame, but we do not relate to God through the dust! In all of its advancements, science has found nothing to refute biblical truth that dust cannot produce life. At the same time, the biblical witness to our relatedness to God stands true to what we are. In our consciousness, we transcend the material reality and must live at a level that cannot be explained by physics, chemistry and biology. We can only truly know ourselves in relation to God. In this knowledge of God, the Spirit through the witness of scripture takes our minds to the very foundation of our being in the womb to see God establishing us in his relationship with us and to understand the way we are integrated with the whole human race through the process of human generation. This truth takes away from us the control of what we are as human beings and the sovereignty over human life and places them in the hand of God. Faith responds by surrendering the power and right to God with fear and joy as an act of profoundest worship.