Chapter Eight

MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The account of creation in Genesis 1 contains several repet-itive patterns. Perhaps the most striking pattern is the phrase, "And then God began to say, Let [something] begin to be" (see Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 14). God willed the light, firmament, land and sea, and heavenly bodies into existence. God expressed the idea, and it took shape. Centuries before Plato, the Hebrew Scriptures expressed the priority of the Idea over the Image.

When the creation account moves from inanimate matter to life, however, a startling change in the pattern occurs. God does not say, "Let there be grass on the earth," or "Let there be moving creatures that have life in the waters," or "Let there be living creatures on the earth." Instead of following the established pattern, God creates life in a different way. He involves what he has already created in the bringing forth of life: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:11–12 KJV).

God brings a prior creation into responsibility for cooperating to accomplish his purpose. Instead of willing plants into existence, God wills that the earth produce the plants, and the earth complies. The will of God also included provision for the continuing appearance of life through reproduction signified by seed, and later by procreation of animals.

The creation of plants establishes a new pattern for the creation of life forms. God wills for the earth to produce plants. Likewise, he wills for the waters and the earth to produce animal life. It does not happen as a spontaneous, natural occurrence. It happens as a

result of the earth and the sea responding to the will of God. Though the waters brought forth animal life (1:20), God created that life (1:21). In other words, Genesis emphasizes that regardless of the circumstances under which life appeared, it happened as a result of the creative activity of God.

Some translations of the Bible make a careful distinction between the Hebrew words for "make" and "create" which are found interspersed throughout Genesis 1. The word for create (*bara*) refers to the exclusive activity of God (Gen. 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3–4). The word for make (*asah*), on the other hand, does not imply the exclusive activity of God (Gen. 1:7, 16, 25–26, 31; 2:2). Nonetheless, even when God is one step removed, Genesis emphasizes that even his "making" is "creating." For instance, God determines to *make* man in his image, but when it happens, Genesis gives a threefold emphasis that man as male and female was *created* by God (Gen. 1:26–27).

The Genesis 1 account of creation lays out a series of phases of creation which involve qualitative differences, beginning with the difference between light and darkness, air and water, water and earth. Plant life represents another significant qualitative difference in creation from inanimate matter. The introduction of animal life represents another qualitative distinction from plant life. The creative activity of God described in Genesis 1 concludes with another qualitative distinction. God determines to "make" an animal in his own *image*.

What is the image of God? What is any image? Again, Genesis 1 anticipates a central element of Plato's thought by several centuries. Plato taught that an Image is a mere representation of an Ideal. It is not necessary to pursue Plato's development of the distinction between an Ideal and its Image to appreciate the qualitative distinction between God and people. A statue is an image of a person. By viewing a statue, someone can develop an impression of some of the aspects of the person the statue represents. Yet the statue cannot move, think, talk, feel, or experience the host of other experiences essential to being a person. To say that people are made in the image of God is to say that a gigantic qualitative gulf exists between people and God.

To say that people are made in the image of God is to say they are not God. This statement may seem simplistic to many who read the Bible from a Christian perspective, yet over a billion people

believe they are inseparable from God. Major forms of Hinduism and Buddhism would hold such a view. The Genesis 1 account of creation speaks to this theological issue by making two distinctions with respect to people. They are made qualitatively different from other animals because they are made in the image of God. But because they are made in the image of God, they are qualitatively different from God.

The word for "people" or the "human race" in Hebrew reflects the relationship of people to the rest of creation. The collective Hebrew noun for male and female humans is *adam*. The Hebrew word *adam* comes from the Hebrew word for "dirt," the feminine noun *adamah*. The relationship of people to the earth raises another serious theological issue. From the earliest times until the present, groups of people in various cultures have believed that the earth itself is divine and living, as the Great Mother. Forms of this belief have involved ancient religion in India and Canaan, the Artemis worship of the Ephesians, the Druid worship of the Celts, animistic religions of Africa and the Americas, and contemporary feminist and ecologist religion in the United States and western Europe.

While God may create life from earth and water, the Genesis 1 account makes clear that the earth is not among the living, reproducing work of creation. The earth takes no initiative, nor does it "give birth." Genesis 1 does not concern the scientific dimension of the nature of life so much as it establishes the theological understanding of the origins of life. In the presence of many rival religious explanations of the origin of life, Genesis 1 emphasizes that people and all other living things are the result of the creative work of God, regardless of how he may have used the earth and the sea in the process.

In a culture dominated for fifteen hundred years by a Christian worldview, one might easily suppose that the account of the creation of people is about people. In a much larger world with many competing worldviews, however, the striking feature of the account of the creation of people focuses on what it tells us about God. It is only about people because people are made in the image of God. When these lines were written in a Hebrew community thousands of years ago, the world had numerous explanations for the origins of life, and more numerous explanations of what kind of God or gods exist. As the West enters a post-Christian era, the old Western

worldview that assumed a Creator-creature relationship between God and people has begun to fade as Christianity loses its favored religion status. In this context, the ancient focus of the creation accounts once again speaks directly to the religious pluralism of society. It emphasizes that people are not an aspect of God. Rather, they are creatures made by God.

Whether people are an aspect of God or creatures of God has profound implications for human existence on earth. If people are the result of the creative activity of God based on God's intentional, self-conscious decision to make people, then creation results from the purpose of God. People have a purpose, and this purpose emerges from the Creator-creature relationship. If, on the other hand, people are aspects of a single spiritual unity of which all things are a part, but which lacks self-consciousness, then life has no purpose. It merely exists.

The creation account establishes the basis for human purpose and value. The will of God exercised in creation establishes purpose, while the judgment of God exercised in the evaluation of each aspect of creation establishes value. God decided to make something ("Let us make . . ."). God made what he envisioned ("Let there be . . ."). Finally, God evaluated what he made ("God saw that it was good"). Purpose and value suggest a destiny. The accounts of the creation of people lay the foundation for understanding the purpose and destiny of the human race, which is tied inseparably to the relationship of people to God.

The second chapter of Genesis begins to develop the idea of the purpose and destiny of humanity in relationship to God and in relationship to one another. The second account of creation in Genesis stands in remarkable contrast to the first account and must be understood to make an intentional contrast, because the two accounts appear side by side. Chapter 2 reverses the order in which God creates life and separates the creation of male and female humans. In chapter 1, man is created as male and female in a single act of creation, but in chapter 2 several events come between the creation of the two.

Both chapters acknowledge the creation of the heavens and the earth as coming before the creation of life. Chapter 2 makes no mention of the creation of light, the separation of light and darkness, and the separation of waters and dry land. Rather than presenting a different view on these matters, however, chapter 2

appears to assume the work of creation and separation which establish the order of the heavens and the earth. Chapter 2 is not concerned with the origins of the universe or even the origins of life. Chapter 1 has clearly established the origins. Instead, chapter 2 is concerned with the meaning and purpose of life. With the heavens and the earth established, the accounts of life follow these sequences:

Chapter 1	Chapter 2
1. Plants (v. 11)	Man (v. 7)
2. Sea creatures and birds (v. 20)	Plants (vv. 8–9)
3. Land creatures (v. 24)	Beasts and birds (v. 19)
4. People (v. 26)	Woman (v. 22)

Some translations of the Bible try to resolve the contrast by changing the tense of the English verbs in chapter 2. For instance, after the creation of the man, the New International Version (NIV) states that "the LORD God *had planted* a garden in the east" (2:8, author's emphasis). This translation suggests that plant life had been arranged before the formation of the man. Later, the NIV states that "the LORD God *had formed* out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air" (2:19, author's emphasis). Once again, the use of the past perfect verb translation suggests that the animals had been made prior to the creation of the man. This approach makes it possible to harmonize the sequence of creation in chapter 2 with the sequence of creation in chapter 1. Unfortunately, this approach does damage to the explanation in chapter 2 itself which states that no plants existed when God made the man (2:5–7) and that the man had no living company (2:18–20).

The King James Version took an entirely different approach. It gives a more literal translation of the Hebrew verbs. After the creation of the man, it states that "the LORD God *planted* a garden eastward in Eden" (2:8, author's emphasis). After God decided that it was not good for the man to be alone, the King James Version states that "out of the ground the LORD God *formed* every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air" (2:19, author's emphasis).

Although the New International Version is recognized as a conservative translation of the Bible, it reflects the attitude of the modern era with respect to science and faith. The attitude affects conservative Christians as much as liberal Christians. Conservative Christians believe that the Bible is the Word of God. They also live in a culture that venerates the success of modern science and that

views scientific knowledge as the most reliable and valid form of knowledge. Therefore, the Bible must be accurate scientifically to be valid. When the Bible and science make different statements about an issue, liberal Christians will tend to dismiss the biblical statement as the culturally biased opinion of a person who lived a long time ago, while conservative Christians will tend to dismiss the scientific view as the wrong science. Conservative Christians will adopt the biblical statement as the correct scientific statement, because for the Bible to be true, they reason that it must be scientifically accurate. Oddly enough, this attitude makes scientific knowledge the criteria for judging the validity of biblical revelation. Both liberals and conservatives tend to operate from the bias that for the Bible to be true, it must be scientifically accurate. This bias reflects the view of modernity.

The translators of the King James Version did not operate under the biases of the modern world with its veneration of scientific discovery. The validity of the Bible rested in its being revelation from God. It could make statements about reality without these statements necessarily dealing with the scientific dimension of reality. The fact that chapter 1 and chapter 2 of Genesis contain dramatic reversals of sequence does not suggest an error. For one who believes in revelation, it suggests that God is making a point.

It is inconceivable that the difference between chapter 1 and chapter 2 escaped the notice of the one who originally placed them next to each other as the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures. Rather than harmonizing the difference, perhaps one can find in the difference a clue to the meaning of the passages. The two passages suggest that the timing and sequence of creation are not the point of the accounts since the two accounts cancel each other out with respect to time and sequence. In the first passage, humanity represents the culmination of creation. In the second passage, the world is made hospitable for the man. Both passages declare what kind of God exists and explain the relationship of humanity to God and the rest of creation. The Genesis accounts explain how people fit into the universe. They provide the basis for human purpose, and this purpose centers in relationships of the most intimate kind between male and female and with God.

Formed of Clay

The Bible describes life as having a beginning. At some point in time, life appeared for the first time in physical reality. There was a

point in time before which physical life did not exist. In terms of the development of life, there was a point before which animal life did not exist. Sea life appeared before mammals, or "the beasts of the field." At the tail end of the complexity of life, God made people.

Despite the idea of a definite beginning to each form of life, however, the Bible does not contain a static view of the creation of life. Though the Bible speaks of God creating the initial life forms and the process of reproduction, it also indicates that God remains intimately involved in the creation of life. In fact, the same description of the making of the first man in Genesis 2 is used throughout the Bible as a description of God's involvement in the procreation of every person. While Genesis 1 contains no description of how God created human life "in his own image," Genesis 2 pictures God forming mankind from the red clay like a potter fashioning a pot. Throughout the Bible, this same picture appears to describe God's creation of every other human. All people are made of clay by God (Job 4:19; 10:8–12; Isa. 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Lam. 4:2; Rom. 9:20–21; 2 Cor. 4:7), yet the Bible just as steadfastly asserts that God made each person within his or her mother's womb (Job 10:18; Ps. 139:13–16; Isa. 44:2; Jer. 1:5).

Contemporary readers take the reference to the continuing creation of people from clay as a metaphor, while they would tend to take the reference to creation of people within their mother's womb as literal. The references to human formation from clay harken back to Genesis 2, but one must ask if the Genesis 2 account was ever intended to be taken as anything more than a metaphor for the creation that occurred in Genesis 1. The reversal of the order of the creation of life in the two accounts strongly suggests that Genesis 2 has made the same use of the clay/dust image as the rest of the Bible, yet simply calling Genesis 2 a metaphor dismisses it as not truthful or real knowledge for people disposed to think of metaphors as merely poetic opinion.

Chapter 2, and all the other references to people as clay who will return to the dust, makes a dogmatic statement about the nature of people and their tenuous hold on life. People are composed of the same kind of matter as the rest of the earth and have the same breath of life as the other animals (Eccles. 3:18–21). People have a brief, transitory existence from dust to dust. Unlike Greek thought or Eastern thought, the Bible teaches that people do not have an eternal origin before their physical life. They are born

and they die. The "breath of life" is not a "spark of the divine." Yet this frail life differs from all other animal life in one respect: It is made in the image of God.

In the first three chapters of Genesis may be found the three great issues that *existentialist philosophy* has identified as the cause of humanity's greatest anxiety: the dread of meaninglessness, the dread of loneliness, and the dread of death. These are not scientific concerns but spiritual concerns. Oddly enough, many adherents to existentialism, particularly that form which developed in France and Germany, do not believe in God. It is not necessary to believe in the cure, however, to be aware of the problem. Chapter 1 of Genesis describes a purposeful creation. Chapter 2 describes the basis for relationship. Chapter 3 describes the alienation that destroys the relationship of people with God and with each other.

Chapter 3 explains that the problems of humanity derive from a broken relationship with the Creator, a condition the Bible refers to as *sin*. Sin describes the nature of humans in contrast to the nature of God. Sin is a condition unique to religions that recognize God as the Creator. Islam, Judaism, and Christianity understand sin as a category in relation to God. Sin includes what humans do to injure relationship with God. Cut off from God, people are cut off from their purpose. Life such as this ends in death. Finally, we have a scientifically verifiable condition.

Instead of accepting the condition of death, however, the Bible is concerned with the restoration of the relationship with God which provides meaning and purpose for individuals, and the healing of relationships between people. Ultimately, the restored relationship with God leads to a quality of life that transcends death.

One of the most familiar psalms of David explores the meaning of life in the context of the enormity of creation:

> O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and

> the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth! (Ps. 8:1–9 KJV).

The question, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" poses the purpose question in terms of identity and relationship to God. In other words, David asks, "Who am I in this great big universe?" The answer to the question involves the purpose for which God created humanity, giving people a stewardship responsibility to care for the earth and everything in it. David realizes his identity and purpose in relationship with God.

Divine Incarnation

For the early church, this passage took on new meaning. In Christ they saw the ultimate fulfillment of what it meant to be made "a little lower than the angels" and "crowned with glory and honor." They regarded the passage as more than a statement about humanity in general or even David in particular. They saw it focusing on the Messiah for whom God "put all *things* under his feet." The writer of Hebrews explores the passage as the ultimate intersection of God and humanity. The destiny of humanity is tied to the manifestation of God in the created order. Human destiny is tied to relationship with the Creator. In Christ, God became one of his creatures.

In describing the *incarnation,* or the coming of God in the flesh, Hebrews interprets a portion of Psalm 8: "In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Heb. 2:8b–9).

Aristotle would have been at home with this way of talking. Aristotle believed that knowledge comes through what we can experience through our senses. This passage from Hebrews explains that the incarnation makes knowledge of God possible. We cannot see or understand in what sense the exalted Lord has all of creation under his control. It certainly does not look this way, unless God is some sort of demon. Rather than speculating on what kind of God exists, Hebrews points to Jesus and says that the physical manifestation of God gives the most profound clue as to what kind of God exists.

The apostle Paul would discuss the same issue in similar terms. In his letter to the Philippians Paul said:

> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:5–11 KJV).

Paul used the language of Aristotle to speak of the two natures of Christ. For Aristotle, *Form* represented the perfect, eternal reality. Christ had the form of God. He then took on the form of a servant. In Aristotelian thought, the idea of being the Form rather than the Substance would suggest that Christ took the nature of what humanity was intended to be. By being in the form of a servant, but also in the likeness of men, his physical manifestation could point to his spiritual nature.

The Image of God

The Ten Commandments begin with a strong declaration about who God is, followed by the commandment not to make idols, or physical representatives of the divine (Deut. 5:6–8). This disgust for the physical depiction of God finds reinforcement throughout the Hebrew Scripture as well as in the New Testament (cf. Acts 17:24–31). God is not physical. God created the physical order, but God does not belong to the physical order. God relates to the physical order, but God is not subject to the physical order. In contrast with the physical world of creation, Jesus said that God is Spirit. In whatever sense people are made in the image of God, this image or likeness refers to the sense in which people are like God. People are like all other animals in many respects related to the physical world, but people are like God in many respects related to the spiritual world.

Most English translations of the Bible draw a distinction in Genesis between the forms of life that God created. The King James translation refers to the sea animals as "the moving creature" (1:20), land animals as "the living creature" (1:24), and human life

as "a living soul" (2:7). The NIV follows the practice of most modern translations and speaks of sea and land animals both as "living creatures" (1:20, 24). It refers to the human, however, as a "living being" (2:7). The Hebrew text does not make this distinction. All animal life, whether human or beast or fish, is *nephesh hayah* (literally "a breathing being").[1] With respect to physical life, the Bible teaches that people are like all other animals. English translations have attempted to make the theological distinction between people and other animals based on the animals being made "creatures" while people were made "souls." The original Hebrew of the Genesis accounts, however, makes the distinction based on "the image of God."

The Jewish rabbis of Alexandria translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek following the conquests of Alexander the Great. In this version known as the Septuagint (LXX), they translated *nephesh* with the Greek word *psyche*. *Psyche* originally meant "breath" as *nephesh* did, but Plato and other philosophers used the word to represent the philosophical/theological idea of an immortal, preexistent aspect of human life which returned to merge with God at death. This concept of the human *psyche* being a part of God dramatically conflicts with the biblical teaching of created life which has a beginning and an end.[2]

The Greek philosophical idea has had a confusing influence on theology in the West and especially in the English-speaking world. The English word *soul* has served to translate the Greek word *psyche*. In early English, the soul refers to "the principal of life in man or animals" and represents a good translation of the Hebrew *nephesh* and the early Greek *psyche*.[3] Unfortunately, "soul" also came to represent the Platonic idea of the immortal preexistent aspect of people that returns to God. When theologians insert the Greek philosophical idea into the text, they tend to arrive at the notion that people *possess* souls. In Genesis, people *are* souls. A soul is not a part of divinity implanted into a person. A soul *is* a person.

In areas which have preserved a strong linguistic connection with English without significant influence by immigration from other language groups, the plain meaning of soul still remains. It is not uncommon in the South to hear someone remark of an event which has poor attendance, "Not a soul was there." The statement is not complicated by the philosophical concept of the *psyche* in Platonism.

The distinction between people and the other animals does not lie in an artificial distinction between "souls" and "creatures." It lies in what it means for God to make people in his image. People are souls who have a body and a spirit. The human body and human spirit exist alive as a unity. A body without a spirit is a corpse, while a spirit without a body is a ghost. While each may theoretically exist without the other, the prospect is most unattractive. The spirit at death is but a shadow consigned with its body to the pit. The body decays to dust in the earth. The body allows people to experience the physical world, while the spirit allows them to transcend it. The body affects the spirit, and the spirit affects the body. Through the human spirit, people have the capacity to relate to God who is a spirit. The human spirit is like the Spirit of God, but it is not God. It is like God in the same sense that my photograph is like me. It is an image of something far more.

Theologians and philosophers have tried to reduce the uniqueness of humans to a single dimension, the essential thing that separates people from the animals: language, love, laughter, shame. The idea of the image of God represents a far more complex matter, however, than one essential thing. In describing the human spirit, the Old Testament presents a variety of dimensions as different as taste is from sight. These different dimensions or domains of experience make up the complexity of the extent to which people bear the image of God.

While the domains might be described differently, since the Old Testament does not organize them into a single list, one may speak of six general domains. The human spirit involves emotions, intellect, character, will, imagination (or ability), and vitality. Each of these domains interacts dynamically with the others and with the physical body as a unity that defies reduction. Emotions influence the intellect in terms of how we think. Character influences our decisions. Vitality influences how well the other aspects of the spirit work. When we are tired or sick, our emotions fray or our intellect cannot concentrate.

Though people have physical substance through which the senses allow knowledge of the physical world, they experience life primarily through the spiritual dimension. Falling down the stairs is a physical experience, yet how we cope with the fall is a spiritual experience. Eating a meal is a physical experience that people share with the amoeba and the oyster. The physical process of

nourishment to sustain life operates for all animals, but for humans it moves into the spiritual realm. Many animals prefer one food to another, but for humans it goes beyond preference. It becomes art. Humans ask questions about how they perform their animal functions in a physical world: how they provide shelter, food, and clothing. People reflect, evaluate, and create. People interpret and assign value to their physical experiences.

The Western philosophical worldview tends to separate the emotions from the intellect, the heart from the mind. The biblical worldview teaches that both emotions and intellect are aspects of the spirit. In the Bible, "heart" is used as a metaphor for "spirit." This connection appears in such passages as King David's psalm of repentance: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10 KJV). This connection does not necessarily mean that the Bible teaches that the intellectual functions take place in the heart. Rather, it emphasizes that the spiritual dimension has a dynamic relationship with the body. Today, we would say that the brain is the locus of activity for the spiritual dimension which modern people often call "the mind." Mind and brain are intimately related, but they are not the same.

While sin manifests itself in the physical world, it resides in the spiritual dimension. Sin describes the flawed aspect of the human spirit. Sin operates in each domain of the spirit and may affect another domain in a domino effect. Sin expresses itself through character in such ways as deceit, malice, jealousy, envy, unfaithfulness, and irresponsibility. Though these characteristics abide within a person, they have an impact on how people relate to others. Sin expresses itself through the intellect as bigotry, prejudice, narrow-mindedness, close-mindedness, and self-deceit. These characteristics have a profound impact on human behavior. To confuse matters, all of these expressions of sin may be localized so that a person is not always narrow-minded or jealous. Instances may be localized, which makes them easier to rationalize. Sin expresses itself through the will in terms of the failure of the will. People may know what to do and not do it. Conversely, they may resolve not to do something, yet do it anyway. Sin expresses itself through talents and abilities in terms of how people put those talents and abilities to use. People with the ability to stir the hearts of people may do it like Mother Theresa or Adolf Hitler.

In all of these cases, the difference lies in an external value imposed on creation from the outside. It is a value with which people agree or disagree. This value emerges from the purpose of God in creation and the evaluation of God in establishing the criteria for "the Good" (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Through the spiritual domain, people have the capacity for establishing their own sense of value in violation of God's established valuation of creation. This capacity results in the human behavior described as sinful acts. The third chapter of Genesis explores how sin manifests itself in the simplest fashion from a flawed thought process, to a revised value system, to a failure of the will, to a form of behavior that injures a relationship. Because of God's relationship to creation and because people are made in the image of God, all sin is a matter between people and God.

Regeneration

Nineteenth-century classical Protestant liberalism adopted a view of the inevitable progress and perfection of the human race through science, technology, and education. The civilized West had a mission to civilize the rest of the world and bring in the kingdom of God on earth. This understanding came crashing down in World War I with the slaughter of millions of people by the educated, civilized West, which had learned that science and technology could make mass murder economical on a large scale. Classical liberalism did not take the problem of sin seriously.

According to Jesus, people are not essentially divine; they are essentially physical even though they have a spiritual dimension. In order to have a meaningful existence beyond physical life, people must be born again (John 3:3). People in their present form are not finished, nor is their completion inevitable. Just as physical life must change to meet the challenges of a changing physical environment, spiritual life must change to meet the challenge of a changing spiritual environment. The Bible teaches that God is responsible for whatever twists and turns different physical organisms may take. It also teaches that God brings about the change that humans must undergo in order to live beyond physical death. Jesus explained that the same Spirit who caused creation in the beginning is the one who will transform a human spirit in a way that can be called a new birth.

Though God has entered his rest from the perspective of eternity, the Book of Hebrews teaches that humans have not yet

reached this rest (Heb. 4:3–11). From the perspective of eternity, God looks back on the present and forward to the beginning. He has completed his work, yet the creation in time and space is not finished. The Bible teaches that the God who created people waits at the end of time as the destiny of people who agree to accept God as their destiny.