

People of the living God,  
I have sought the world around,  
Paths of sin and sorrow trod,  
Peace and comfort nowhere found.  
Now to you my spirit turns,  
Turns, a fugitive unblest'd;  
Brethren, where your altar burns,  
O receive me into rest!

Lonely I no longer roam,  
Like the cloud, the wind, the wave;  
Where you dwell shall be my home,  
Where you die shall be my grave;  
Mine the God whom you adore,  
Your Redeemer shall be mine;  
Earth can fill my heart no more,  
Every idol I resign.

Tell me not of gain or loss,  
Ease, enjoyment, pomp, and power,  
Welcome poverty and cross,  
Shame, reproach, affliction's hour:  
"Follow me!" —I know the voice;  
Jesus, Lord, Thy steps I see;  
Now I take Thy yoke by choice,  
Light Thy burden now to me.

## ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

### *In the Nick of Time*

#### **Body, Soul, and Spirit, Part 6: Origins**

*Kevin T. Bauder*

The first human being was the direct creation of God (Gen 1:26–28). When making the first man, God shaped him from the dust of the ground and then breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 2:7). At that point, the man became a living soul.

The second human being was the first woman. God did not shape her from the dust of the ground. He fashioned her from a rib of the man (Gen 2:21–22). Scripture records no second inbreathing. While her life came ultimately from God, it transmitted directly from the man. He recognized the likeness and kinship between them. He expressed this recognition by calling her bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. Since she was taken out of a male (Hebrew *'ish*), the man named her *'ishah* (the feminine form of the same word, Gen 2:23).

Since the creation of these first humans, all people have been procreated. In one case (the virgin birth of Christ), this was a miraculous event that involved a human mother but no human father. All other humans come from both a mother and a father.

The question is how much of the person is procreated. Another way of phrasing this question is to ask where the soul comes from. This question has been answered in three main ways.

Some have claimed that souls already exist. For example, Plato believed that souls are eternal. They migrate from one body to another after death. Mormons assert that God created souls first, and that these souls agreed to be joined later to human bodies. Neither of these theories is compatible with biblical teaching. The Bible never even hints at preëxistent souls. Also, preëxistence violates the integrity of the person. In Scripture we are not only our souls, we are also our bodies.

Another theory is that God creates each soul at conception, birth, or somewhere between. On this view, each soul is a unique creation of God. The theory is called *creationism*. This label can be confusing. It does not address whether or how God made the world. It is about the origin of each human soul.



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[www.centralseminary.edu](http://www.centralseminary.edu) | [info@centralseminary.edu](mailto:info@centralseminary.edu)  
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

Some good theologians have taught creationism. Charles Hodge is an example. A common proof text for this view is Ecclesiastes 12:7. This verse describes human death. It says, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (KJV). The argument is that bodies come from earth and souls come from God. Ergo, God must have made each soul (spirit) individually.

This is hardly a clear proof text. It concludes a metaphorical description of aging and death. It does not intend to address the question of where the soul comes from, but of where it goes. It states that the spirit comes from God, but it never specifies how that happens.

The creationist view runs into significant difficulties. One problem is that God finished His work of creation on the sixth day (Gen 2:1–2). But if creationism is true, then God continues to create. He must create a soul whenever a man and woman procreate. At the moment, that would be upwards of 364,000 unique acts of creation out of nothing every day.

Creationism also violates the biblical teaching that the body is the person. If creationism is correct, then the soul is the real human being. The body is merely its warehouse. On this view, why do humans even need bodies?

Worse, creationism fails to explain the actual sinfulness of every human soul. David asserted that he was a sinner from the moment of conception (Psalm 51:5). How? Did God create a sinful soul? Or did God create a pure soul and knowingly join it to a sinful body that would surely corrupt it? If that is the answer, then how can we avoid the Gnostic teaching that evil resides in the body? A satisfying answer to this question has not yet appeared.

The better theory is that humans procreate soul and body together. This theory is called *traducianism*. The word *traduce* means to transfer or hand down. On this view, humans procreate other humans and not merely bodies. Like the body, the soul comes from the natural union of male and female.

In other words, God does not have to breathe the breath of life into each successive human being. At first, Eve’s soul must have come from Adam. Since then, each soul comes from Adam and Eve by natural descent. Thus, Paul said that God made all the nations of humanity from one (Acts 17:26). If creationism were true, then God would create the souls of all the nations one by one. They would be from Him, even if their bodies were from Adam.

Traducianism offers the best explanation for the unity of the human person. Body and soul—inner person and outer person—go together. Individual personhood comprises both together. The separation of body and soul damages full personhood. The disembodied person is “found naked” (2 Cor 5:3–4). But creationism has body and soul coming from widely different sources. Creationism leaves no basis for the intimate bond between material and immaterial.

In short, traducianism is the best explanation for the origin of the soul. It avoids making God the author of sin. It best explains the reality of depravity for newly-conceived souls. It locates depravity in the whole person, not in just the body or soul. It best supports the unity of the human race. It best vindicates the unity of the human person.

This conclusion does not mean that the soul originates in some sequence of DNA in the human genome. Our genetics have to do with the procreation of our outer persons, our bodies. We do not know what mechanism God employs for the procreation of our inner persons. We do not know how the soul is begotten or conceived.

But we can be confident that it is. Your mother and father did not just give you your body. They became parents of the whole you. In the same way, your children are genuinely yours, both body and soul. Our spirit comes ultimately from God, who breathed into our first father the breath of life. Between him and us, though, it is traduced through the natural process of procreation.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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