

# The Transmission of the Soul

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[This article was adapted from a series of posts on Dr. Henebury's [BLOG](#).<sup>1</sup>]

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How do we get our souls? How are our souls transmitted to each of us?

Three Distinct Views of How the Soul has been Transmitted in the History of Christianity

- The Pre-Existence of the Soul
- Creationism
- Traducianism

## First – the Doctrine of the Pre-Existence of the Soul

[Obviously, we know this is not taught by the Scriptures anywhere, but it has been taught in Christian history.]

The man who is most famous for bringing this doctrine into the church is the third century scholar Origen, who was born in Alexandria in Egypt, and died in Caesarea, Palestine in the year 254 A.D. Origen's view of the pre-existence of the human soul begins with his rather confused doctrine of God. Origen believed that God created just as many spirits as he could handle, before he created the material world. Because he was shot through with platonic thinking, Origen believed that the realm of immaterial forms or ideas was where we sprang from and where we were headed to.

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<https://drreluctant.wordpress.com/2013/09/05/the-transmission-of-the-soul-pt-1/>

Therefore, it is unsurprising to learn that he did not believe in a physical resurrection of the body. In Origen's view human spirits were originally disembodied before the world was formed, and they were created bodiless as free beings. This is their proper state according to him. In fact, their goodness was really situated in their freedom.

As Colin E. Gunton says in his book *The Triune Creator*:

These spirits, called to live in eternal contemplation of God, fell away from him and misused their freedom so that they could be restored to unity with the divine only through the redirection of that freedom.<sup>2</sup>

Basically, that redirection of the spirit's freedom came about by the creation of the world, along with what we might call the 'imprisonment' of these spirits; preexistent souls put into human bodies. So, according to Origen, all the material creation really is, is a kind of training ground, so that we can learn how use our freedom again. And when we die we are again disembodied.

Hence,

Our world is created out of nothing, but for a purpose and its function is educational or pedagogic for the training of the fallen spirits in virtue

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<sup>2</sup> Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 58,

so that they are qualified to return to unity with the One.<sup>3</sup>

There is Origen's view. This view was condemned as heretical, and it certainly is heretical. Nevertheless, it has been taught in the history of the church, and Mormonism teaches something like this today. Moreover, the view of the Pre-Existence of the Soul needs to be kept in mind as a heretical view because it does have a lot in common with the Eastern religious view of reincarnation, where the soul just keeps coming back into new bodies as it tries to escape the wheel of karma.

Of course, this belief would have as its corollary the opinion that the material world is not part of God's final eschatological plan. Everything is going to be realized in an immaterial future in glory. And so Origen is one of the sources for this pagan notion that heaven, somewhere in the by-and-by, is just purely a spiritual experience; where souls float around and enjoy spiritual communion with no material or bodily substance to mess things up.

Wayne Grudem writes,

[In relation to the preexistence of the soul] There is no support for this view of Scripture; before we were conceived in the wombs of our mothers we simply did not exist, we were not. Of course God looked forward into the future and knew that we would exist but that is far removed from saying that we actually did exist at some previous time. Such an idea would tend to

make us view this present life as transitional or unimportant and make us think of life in the body as less desirable and the bearing and raising of children as less important.<sup>4</sup>

(Actually, Grudem's treatment of Creationism and Traducianism is very unsatisfactory and one of the more disappointing aspects of his book).

## **Second – The Doctrine of Creationism**

There are two positions on this issue which are deemed orthodox: "Creationism," and "Traducianism."

By "Creationism" is not meant the creationism of the Answers in Genesis or the Institute for Creation Research or some similar agency, as valuable as their work is. We're not dealing here with the origins of the world, or the origins of man, or the age of the earth or anything like that. Here we're talking about the origin of the soul, and of the souls of individual people.

Where then do our souls come from? Creationism answers that God creates a new soul in each person at conception, sometimes even at birth. This view is held almost uniformly by reformed covenant theologians, though not by all of them. There are some exceptions: Jonathan Edwards, W.G.T. Shedd, Gordon Clark, Robert Reymond, and J. Oliver Buswell, come to mind; but for the most part, covenant theologians are creationists, and there is a reason for that which we will discuss as we continue.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 59

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<sup>4</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 484

It appears also that even though John Calvin did not express himself very much on this issue, there is a quotation from the *Institutes* which shows that he certainly veered toward it, (even as Augustine did – though Augustine refused to be completely drawn on the subject).

Now, the creationists derive their support from a number of passages. These passages are, I think, inconclusive:

And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. – Ecclesiastes 12:7

The idea here is that God gives the spirit to the human body, the body goes to the dust, and the spirit goes to God. Soul Creationism uses some reverse logic here which says that the body is propagated by the human genes but the soul is given by God to each individual body that is created. Of course the verse doesn't say this, but it is sometimes inferred. The inference does not seem to be very sound. The verse is just a statement of the fact that material things turn back into the dust that they are from. As spirit is immaterial, then obviously it does not decay like the body does. It goes to God. But there is nothing here that says that God implants the spirit in each individual that is born.

The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him. – Zechariah 12:1

Again, this is supposedly a proof that God forms the spirits of individuals, but this is

an original creation verse! Note, "...Stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, forms the spirit of man within him." This is man generally as in Genesis 1 and 2. There God put a spirit within man, but "man" in Genesis 1:26-27 is a designation for male and female in that context.

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? – Hebrews 12:9

Here it is supposed that God is the Father of individual spirits placed into us, just in the way that our fathers are the fathers of our genetic makeup. But that is not the subject of the verse. The verse is talking about paying respect; honor both to our earthly fathers, and then to our heavenly Father. So, it has nothing to do God implanting a soul into every human body individually whatsoever.

### **Problems with Creationism's view of God creating new souls in individual bodies:**

#### **1. What about sin?**

If God is creating new souls in each individual body then how does that soul become sinful? Or are we back to the old Platonic view that the body is sinful and that somehow by contact with the material body, the soul becomes sinful?

That gets us back into Greek philosophy. Actually this seems to be what *some* creationists at least say! They say that because the flesh, the body, is polluted, and they believe that the Greek term *sarx* means 'the human flesh' in some

contexts, that just by contact with the sinful body the soul becomes sinful.

Now, quite how that happens I have yet to discover. How does immaterial sin pollute a material body? How does sin get from the material body to the immaterial soul? Needless to say, most creationists don't go there. But what is left to them? The only other solution left to them is the view that God must create sinful souls within each of us (because we're sinners aren't we?).

Certainly, we are sinners from the womb according to Psalm 51:5. If that is the case, how does each individual person *become* a sinner? In creationism God has to create the sinner, and that is not a very palatable doctrine. There are reasons that many creationists hold to it, but the fact of the matter is that would be enough for most people to have nothing to do with the doctrine. The remedy appears to be even worse than the cure!

## **2. What about our relationship to Adam?**

Is the only relationship that we bear to Adam a physical-biological relationship? Do we derive only our bodies from Adam, but not our souls? If that is the case, then what is the connection between Adam's immaterial nature and personality (which sinned and fell), and our personality? Or we might ask the question this way: what is the connection between the image of God in Adam and the image of God in ourselves?

The answer soul-creationists give is that there is no actual connection at all. Any connection is made in the same way that there is a connection in a car plant where

you are making the same kind of car, but none of the cars are really related to each other, they just look the same because they are made the same. Our relationship to one another and to our first parents would be similar; we're just another type of the model "human being," but we're not really connected to Adam other than materially. Spiritually, soul-creationism teaches there is no realistic tie to Adam. This plays into the federal idea. Enter Romans 5:

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. – Romans 5:12*

All Bible believers hold that when Adam sinned we all sinned. We're all part of that transgression, but does that necessitate that we are also participants in Adam's guilt? That is a question for another day, but it does overlap somewhat with the present topic. One must ask how we are guilty if we did not actually (personally) participate in Adam's sin? Remember, according to creationism, we did not participate in Adam's sin because our souls were not created until some time after we were conceived. As we shall see, with the third option; "Traducianism," just as our physical makeup comes from our first parents, so our soulish makeup comes from our first parents. And because that is passed down to us, so is the sin nature within that soulish makeup. In creationism however, one can't have that. In creationism you just have the propagation of the body, not the propagation of the soul. So, how on earth are we considered guilty of Adam's transgression?

Well, how did we sin?

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. – Romans 5:15-21

How were we made sinners if we didn't participate in Adam's disobedience? We can only be made sinners if there is a soulish cum spiritual connection between us and Adam (which traducianism teaches). How can sin reign (verse 21), in death if we are not connected with Adam's

sin in any way apart from federally, wherein God designates Adam our representative? As Tertullian said many centuries ago, "the transmission of sin involves the transmission of the soul." Or, to cite Shedd:

The imputation of the first sin of Adam to all his posterity as a culpable act is best explained and defended upon the traducian basis. The Augustinian and Calvinistic anthropologies affirm that the act by which sin came into the world of mankind was a self-determined and guilty act and it is just rechargeable upon every individual man, equally and alike. But this requires that the posterity of Adam and Eve should in some way or other, participate in it. Participation is the ground of merited imputation, though not of unmerited or gratuitous imputation.<sup>5</sup>

Sin is imputed to us because we *deserve* it. We are all sinners! But grace is imputed to us, not because we deserve it, but because God is gracious. Creationists believe that imputation of sin in Adam is the same as imputation of grace and life in Christ, and they balance it out that way. But that cannot be the case, as even Romans 5:12-21 tells us. Again, here is Shedd:

But a transgression supposes a transgressor, and a transgressor in this instance must be the 'all' who sinned spoken of in Romans 5:12. The doctrine of the specific unity of Adam and his posterity removes the

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<sup>5</sup> W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Gomes edition), 444



great difficulties connected with the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity that arise from the injustice of punishing a person for a sin in which he had no kind of participation.<sup>6</sup>

And of course, that is *exactly* what creationists have to teach! They teach even though we did not sin in Adam, that God, because of some voluntaristic decree, decided that we did, and that we are guilty for it, even though we weren't in Adam when he did it (since there is no connection between the soul of Adam that sinned and our souls).

Now, creationists will come back and say, "Well, what you're saying is that Adam had the complete contents of humanity's Soul within him, and that Soul was somehow divided up into his offspring and into the millions of people who came from them." But this is to commit the fallacy of a false conception. Yes, some traducianists have taught something like that, but it is not at all necessary to think of "Soul" in quantitative terms. We certainly do not have to conceive of this one "Soul" as if it were somehow part of the gene pool.

### **The Traducianist Position**

Traducianism (from a word meaning 'to sprout'), holds that both the material-bodily substance of a person, and the soulish part of a person is passed on from parent to child through all generations, and because of this, the sin nature is passed on through all generations. This involves what is called a realistic view of the impartation of sin, within the transmission

of the soul. Why "realistic?" Because it actually happens; it is not something whereby guilt is just decreed, but because we participate in sin by sinning according to the fallen nature which we inherit from Adam.

As W.G.T. Shedd writes,

Sin cannot be transmitted along absolute nonentity; neither can it be transmitted by merely physical substance. If each individual soul never had any other than an individual existence and were created ex nihilo in every instance, nothing mental could pass from Adam to his posterity; there could be the transmission of only bodily and physical traits. There would be a chasm of 6000 years between an individual soul of this generation and the individual soul of Adam, across which original sin or moral corruption could not go by natural generation.<sup>7</sup>

### **I myself am drawn to the Traducianist view for the following reasons:**

1. It appears to be everywhere assumed by Scripture that through conception via our human parents, we inherit sin natures, and not just physical bodies. So the psalmist says, "...in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5b).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 445

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<sup>7</sup> W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 446

When Charles Hodge, himself a staunch creationist, to avoid the conclusion that God creates sinful souls, declares 'We do not know how the agency of God is connected with the operation of second causes, how far the agency is mediate and how far it is immediate', and then admits in his later discussion of Original Sin that, "it is, moreover, a historical fact universally admitted, that character within certain limits is transmissible from parents to children; every nation and every tribe and every extended family of man has its physical, mental, social, and moral peculiarities which are propagated from generation to generation", he has effectively abandoned his Creationism, for if God does immediately create souls at conception or at birth, the mental and moral characteristics of parents cannot be propagated.

2. Creationism allows for only the physical or corporeal connection between Adam and his offspring, and has to explain how human souls, immediately created by God, with no soulish connection to their parents, become evil. Whereas Traducianism has a ready answer for why the individual is guilty in Adam and is thus corrupt.<sup>8</sup>

Lewis and Demarest add,

Neither do we find adequate evidence to support the view that spirits are individually created at

conception or birth. The passages teaching that spirits come from God can be interpreted providentially and ultimately, rather than miraculously and approximately. Creationists raise the problem of how Christ could be without sin if souls are derived from parents along with bodies. The point is irrelevant to normal conceptions however, because the conception of Jesus was miraculous! The conception of Jesus by a virgin, involved both a biological miracle and a moral miracle, so that Mary's sinful nature was not transmitted to Jesus and he was holy (Lk 1:35). The major problem with a Creationist hypothesis is that for all normally born persons, the Holy One allegedly directly creates their souls with sinful dispositions. Scriptural teaching traces sinfulness not to the body but to the inner soul or spirit...(Jer.17:9). The "flesh" refers in moral contexts only secondarily to the body as the instrument of the fallen spirit; primarily the flesh is the sinful nature conceived at conception. Since throughout Scripture God is the source of good and not of moral rebellion against Himself, it seems unthinkable that He, the Holy One, should specifically create each human soul with a bent toward disbelieving and disobeying him.<sup>9</sup>

To this I add the comment of Robert Culver:

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<sup>8</sup> E.g. Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 424-425

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<sup>9</sup> Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Integrated Theology*, Vol. 2. 170

It seems to this writer that it takes some shading of evidence from sincere convictions drawn from another quarter of doctrine to suppose that *adam* and *anthropos* whence 'anthropology', ever means just man's body to the exclusion of his soul.<sup>10</sup>

But that is what Creationists must teach. So, how do Creationists say that we are sinners and we are guilty of Adam's transgression if we didn't participate in it, and really we had nothing to do with it? They say that it is because God imputes his sin to us in the same way as God imputes righteousness in Christ to us. Well, we understand why God has to impute the righteousness of Christ to us: because we're not in ourselves connected to the righteousness of God in Christ. But we also understand that we are connected to Adam!

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. – I Corinthians 15:22

### **Why Do We Die?**

Why do we die? Because we are "in Adam." We need to get into Christ to be made alive. But how do we get into Christ? By a new birth. We have to be joined to Christ, and we are joined to Him through adoption and the new birth by the Holy Spirit. That is when His righteousness is imputed to us. But why do we need Adam's sin and guilt heaped on us?

As Shedd says, "to make the eternal damnation of a human soul depend upon

vicarious [i.e. "in our place"] sin, contradicts the profound convictions of the human conscience."

To say that because Adam sinned we're damned, just because that's the way God decides it, and not because of any relationship we bear to Adam, would be unjust. Calling on God's freedom to do as He wants to validate such a thing amounts to redefining God's desires along voluntarist and nominalist lines. This is a card played all too often by some theologians.

Arguing against Traducianism and *for* Creationism, Herman Bavinck introduced covenant theology to bolster his doctrine. He wrote:

The so-called realism, say of Shedd, is inadequate both as an explanation of Adam's sin, and as an explanation of righteousness by faith in Christ. Needed among human beings is another kind of unity, one that causes them to act unitedly as a moral body, organically-connected as well as ethically-united, and that is a federal unity, that is a covenant unity. Now on the basis of a physical unity an ethical unity has to be constructed; Adam as our ancestor is not enough, he must also be the covenant head of the human race just as Christ, although he is not our common ancestor in a physical sense, is still able as covenant head to bestow righteousness and blessedness upon his church. Now this moral unity of the human race can only be maintained on the basis of Creationism, for it has a character of its own, is distinct from that of

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Culver, *Systematic Theology*, 279



animals, as well as that of the angels, and therefore also comes into being in its own way; both by physical descent [Adam] and by a created act of God [Creationism], the two of them in conjunction with each other.<sup>11</sup>

Of course, Traducianism is not inadequate for an explanation of Adam's sin, because we are connected to him spiritually. As the Bible clearly declares, God created the *whole* person:

The Creation of Eve - So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. – Genesis 2:21-22

Did God just bring a body to the man, or did he bring a person, body and a soul? There is nothing here to say that God breathed a soul into Eve like he did with Adam in verse 7. Here, God just takes the material as it were – the substance, the essence of the man – from the man and creates a woman, body and soul. In the Old Testament the words for 'soul' and 'spirit' (especially the former), designates more often than not the whole person.

### **The Question of the Incarnate Christ**

What do we do with Christ's human soul in this matter of transmission? Do we commit the Apollinarian heresy of the Early

Church, which says Christ had a human body but a divine soul? Or are we to fall into the Eutychian heresy, where Christ was said to have had a human body mixed with the divine soul? Those are not orthodox positions. But there are certain passages which speak to this doctrine and must be clarified. What is one to do with these texts?

For instance, Romans 1:3 says,

Concerning his Son, who was descended (*who was born*) from David according to the flesh.

Whether one is a creationist or a traducianist, there is no getting around the need for the miraculous when it comes to the birth of Christ. The creationist may point to the logic of Christ's human soul being newly created by the Father at conception, but the traducian realist will ask how that soul remained sinless in a sinful mother, and will again call attention to the implication that if the human body does not stain the soul the only other road open to the creationist is to say that God makes each new soul sinful (all except Christ that is).

In place of this miracle the traducian view will say that although the soul may be passed on through the female, the absence of a human father could account for why the sin nature was not passed on to Jesus. If this conclusion seems unsatisfactory the alternative is to say that God protected Christ's soul from the stain of sin. Either way, the realist position has less explaining to do than the creationist – federalist view.

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<sup>11</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2.586

### More Evaluations

In his great volume on *Sin*, the Dutch theologian G. C. Berkouwer spends many pages evaluating both the realist (traducian) position and the federalist (creationist) position. His problems with the traducian position basically boil down to the imputation of guilt (something which will have to be taken up elsewhere). But it should be noted that many theologians, both in the early church and after the Reformation, did not tie in the imputation of guilt with the imputation of sin.

Berkouwer's problems with federalism are more numerous and severe. They can be summed up in his statement about the double-meaning of imputation as guilt accounted because of our sinning, *and* 'alien guilt' foisted upon us by God's ordinance (458-459). He continues,

Realism has done us the service of sharpening our insights concerning the meaning of *imputatio*. Is [this] concept at odds with the very nature of his justice? Does it contradict the statement of Ezekiel [ch.18:4, 20, 25-26] concerning the activity of God? Surely the "rule of Ezekiel" underscores the correlation of guilt and punishment in a very unambiguous way.<sup>12</sup>

Certain passages of Scripture clearly imply realism rather than mere federal representation. Surely John 1:14 designates the human nature of Christ, body and soul? And what is one to do with Hebrews 7:9-10?

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<sup>12</sup> G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, 460

One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

If Creationism is true this statement would be untrue. In fact, it would be nonsense.

This genealogical passage in the early chapters of Genesis should also feature in the debate:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. – Genesis 5:1-3

Regarding the image of God, is this passage just talking about Seth's physical body and not also talking about his soul? If only Seth's body is under consideration then surely 'likeness and image' in Genesis 5:3 refers just to the physical makeup? But if we allow that interpretation we must allow it as the right interpretation of 'image and likeness' in Genesis 1:26-27. Of course, no Creationist would wish to assent to that!

What about the great proof text for Creationism:

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? – Hebrews 12:9

Straight away the antenors go up, for the verse seems hardly to be asserting that God the Father is responsible for implanting new spirits within newly conceived human beings.

As Robert Culver says:

Is this contrasting human males as fathers of our material nature and God as Father of our immaterial nature? Quite to the contrary! Note it is not said that God is Father of *our* spirits, but simply of spirits. The argument is from the less to the greater to encourage reverence toward God. So the author is arguing that if we revere the lesser earthly parents of our humanity, we surely should revere the greater universal heavenly Father, God of all spirits. The manner of generating parts of human nature is not even under consideration.<sup>13</sup>

And in their lengthy treatment of the subject, Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest conclude:

The derivation of all persons from Adam and Eve accounts for the unity of the entire human population (Acts 17:26). The unity of human beings is not merely physical but also moral and spiritual. Humanity is not a company of individually created spirits, such as the angels are. The fact that human persons comprise a single race is crucial theologically, as well as socially and politically (Rom. 5:12-14)... Jesus explicitly attributes the fleshly nature of

children to parents. The characteristics of the evil heart (Matt. 15:18-19) or sinful nature (Eph. 2:3) can hardly be the creation of a God who is of purer eyes can look with favor upon sin (Hab. 1:13)... A Traducian view does not contradict divine justice in condemning all mankind for the one act of Adam (Rom. 5:16, 18). On this view Adam is not merely the legal or federal representative of the race as Creationists maintain. God may have made a covenant of works with Adam as the legal head of the race, the biblical evidence for this is minimal. If we were not in some sense in Adam generically, physically, and spiritually, however, the covenant of works appears to be a legal fiction without basis in reality. From a Traducian perspective, with or without the covenant of works, God can justly regard the race generically in Adam. So "in Adam all die" (I Cor. 15:22), for in Adam all "sinned" (Rom. 5:12, Greek aorist tense). Hence a Traducian view of the origin of the soul provides the more coherent position with the fewer difficulties. The difficulty of explaining how the soul originates is less than explaining how a holy God can create depraved souls.<sup>14</sup>

Creationists teach that there is a direct correlation between Christ's act of representation in redemption and Adam's act of representation in sin. But W.G.T.

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Culver, *Systematic Theology*, 279

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<sup>14</sup> Gordon Lewis & Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 2.171

Shedd demolished this inference long ago.

In criticizing the federalist representative view Shedd commented:

In the first place, Christ suffered freely and voluntarily for the sin of man, but Adam's posterity suffer necessarily and involuntarily for the sin of Adam... They do not, like Christ, volunteer and agree to suffer, but are compelled to suffer; and their suffering, unlike that of Christ, is accompanied with the sense of ill desert...

Second, Christ was undeservedly punished when He suffered for the sin of man. But Adam's posterity are not undeservedly punished when they suffer for the sin of Adam...

Third, Christ was a substitute when He suffered, but Adam's posterity are the principals. They do not suffer in the place of sinners when they suffer for Adam's sin, but they suffer as sinners. They are not vicarious sufferers, As Christ was. They suffer for themselves...

Fourth, the purpose of Christ's suffering is expiatory; that of the suffering of Adam's posterity is retributive. Christ endured penalty in order for the remission and removal of sin; but Adam's posterity endure penalty solely for the satisfaction of justice. Their suffering obtains neither the remission nor the removal of sin.

Fifth, the guilt of Adam's sin did not rest upon Christ as it does upon Adam's posterity and hence, he could voluntarily consent and agree to endure its penalty without being under obligation to do so. Christ was free from the guilt of Adam's sin, both in the sense of [culpability] and [punishment]. But the posterity are obligated by both. Christ therefore suffers as an innocent person to expiate a sin in which he did not participate; but Adam's posterity suffer as guilty persons to satisfy the law for a sin in which they did participate.<sup>15</sup>

The question of participation in regard to guilt is not before us at present. Shedd, as a covenant theologian, argued for original guilt as well as for original sin. Not everyone has linked the two together as Shedd did. But the arguments he set forth against creationism are not blunted either way. As he wrote a little further on,

...to argue that if gratuitous imputation is not true in the case of Adam's sin it is not true in the case of Christ's righteousness is like arguing that if God is not the author of sin by direct efficiency he is not the author of holiness by direct efficiency.<sup>16</sup>

You don't need Creationism to be a covenant theologian, Shedd, Dabney, and Reymond are examples of covenant theologians who were traducianists. But

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<sup>15</sup> W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), 461-462

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 464

creationism certainly fits in with covenant theology, and that is why covenant theologians tend to be Creationists.

Calvin it appears was not a Creationist. There is a quotation from the *Institutes*, Book 2, Chapter 1, Section 7, which seems to clearly indicate that he believed that a 'contagion' was imparted from Adam to us. That would put him closer to Traducianism than to Creationism.

It is often thought that this subject is unimportant. But it is not unimportant; it is needful that we establish that we have a direct relationship with Adam, not just physically, but also spiritually. And it is essential that we do not create trouble for the justice and goodness of Almighty God due to the seeming logic of our theological precommitments.



Source: [SpiritAndTruth.org](http://SpiritAndTruth.org)