

II. THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL SPIRIT IN THE INDIVIDUAL

In the history of Christian doctrine there have been three basic views of the origin of the soul-spirit. They are called the theory of Preexistence, the theory of Creationism, and the theory of Traducianism.

A. The Theory of Preexistence

1. Statement of the theory

Preexistence is the view that the soul-spirits of human beings had a distinct, personal existence in a previous state; that they sinned in that state; and that they are therefore born into the world already sinful. In this view God created all the soul-spirits of mankind *ex nihilo* at one time, and subsequently joins them to their bodies, which He creates mediately (except in the case of Adam and Eve).

2. Arguments put forward in favor of the theory

a. It is argued that this view alone explains how the depravity of the human will can be both inborn and just. Depravity was incurred by a personal act of self-determination in a previous state of existence.

b. It is argued that this view explains intuitive Ideas, fleeting thoughts of life in a previous existence, and the experience of *déjà vu* ("seen before"). These are all understood as reminiscences of things known or learned in a previous state of existence.

c. It is argued that this view best accounts for inborn sins of the spirit, such as pride and enmity to God. These sins do not arise from bodily desires, but from inward inclinations and desires of the spirit. Since these are inborn, they must have originated in a previous state of existence.

d. It is argued that this view explains the disparity of human condition at birth. Some persons are born into low income conditions, some are born into high income conditions; some are born into deplorable social circumstances, some are born into very desirable social circumstances; some are born with high intellectual capabilities and many talents, some are born with low intellectual capabilities and few talents; some are born into morally depraved settings, some are born into morally upright settings. It is argued that the conditions into which human beings are born justly mirror the differences in their conduct in a previous state.

3. Objections to the theory

a. The major objection is that the view is wholly without support from Scripture. There is no revelation to the effect that God created all of the soul-spirits of mankind at one time, or that soul-spirits existed in objective reality prior to the conception of their bodies.