

**BIBLICAL SOURCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE CONCEPT OF THE SOUL IN THE
WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS OF THE
EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
100-325 C.E.**

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The topic of the human soul has seen renewed interest in recent years. Studies have been produced that have looked at the soul in light of modern science and medicine, along with a continued focus on the thoughts of the ancients on this topic. The early Church Fathers played an important role in mediating the thoughts of the ancients to more recent times. Because of this role, it is important to understand what function the Scriptures had as a source of authority in this process.

In light of this, the following study researches and analyzes the usage of the two key soul words, $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ and *anima* in the writings of the early Church Fathers. Their semantic range and the understanding of the powers and activities of the soul are studied. Following this background examination, the study then looks at the role of Scripture as an authoritative source for the early Church Fathers in the development of this doctrine.

The results of this study highlight the prevalent usage of Scripture and scriptural themes in defining the doctrine of the soul. Ideas such as the soul coming from the breath of God (Gen 2:7) and creation in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) provide a foundation for discussing the origins of the soul.

In looking at the state after the death of the body, the early Church Fathers repeatedly look to the scriptural notion of a future judgment to defend the necessity of an immortal soul. This is an important discovery, as it is often argued that the concept of an immortal soul comes to the early Church Fathers only from Greek philosophy.

The impact of the philosophical thinking prevalent in the context in which the early Church Fathers lived and wrote can be seen in the similarities of the semantic usage of the terms $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ and *anima*. However, this study has demonstrated the necessity of noting closely the usage of their normative writings, the Scriptures, to more clearly understand the foundation of their teaching on nascent church doctrine.