

a. General Summary of the understanding

(1) Regarding the Soul.

Anthropology:

The
Soul

Uniformity does not prevail among the Ante-Nicene thinkers. Origen thought the soul had pre-adamic, pre-creation existence; Clement held a view which in theology is called "Creationism" (Clement of Alexandria, not Clement of Rome) while Tertullian and Cyprian held what is popularly called Traducianism. Regarding the relation of the soul and body, (the whole man), Tertullian and Cyprian were dichotemists (just soul and body...the soul being the total non-material part of man) while the Alexandrian Fathers were trichotemists holding that man was comprised of three elements, body, soul, and spirit, and so corresponded to the Godhead in an analogical sense. Origen may have been under the influence of some aspects of platonism but he usually is moved more in philosophic senses. Theologians are still not agreed on this point. Traducianism sees the soul drawn from the Adamic soul and has strong representatives in Catholic and Reformed bodies. Creationism sees a created soul when the breath of life is present and has generally been found in reformed and anabaptist circles. In orthodoxy traducianists outnumber creationists about 2 to 1 but the church did not find it necessary to take a definitive opinion on this subject in the early days. In more recent times some denominations have added doctrinal statements on these points but most of the great confessions use a wording that is sufficiently ambiguous to allow for any accepted definition.

(2) Regarding the will and mind.

Anthropology:

Will and Mind

The early fathers saw a greater freedom to the human will and urged a greater exercise of it in the direction of good. The Alexandrian fathers followed a "synergistic" view which expresses the concept that the will both initiates holiness and sin. Divine grace is needed, however, to complete the transaction and to bring one to final truth. The African fathers generally opposes this and eventually their ideas won the church. Both Tertullian and Cyprian are firm in the basic concept of initial sin that condemns us and about which we, in ourselves, can do nothing.

Anthropology:

The Body

(3) Regarding the Body

The early church avoided the problem of the gnostics in thinking that the body was evil but they quickly saw it as a source of aggravation in its proclivity to sin. Consequently, they tended towards an advised asceticism for those called to