

C. Developed views in the Pre-Nicene Period

Naturally the church shied away from the heretical views mentioned on page 73. As noted the early Christians saw the body as a vehicle for serving God and the soul as a medium for apprehending divine truth. Following are some generalizations on the parts of man:

1. Regarding man's soul

a. As pertains to its Origin

Origen thought the soul had pre-adamic, pre-creation existence. It is a view that easily leads to transmigration and reincarnation.

Clement of Alexandria championed what we would call creationism...the soul came with the breath of life to the newly born child.

Tertullian and Cyprian thought the soul drawn from Adam's soul and this is known as traducianism

Representatives of all groups are still with us although in evangelical theology traducianists outnumber creationists about 9 to 1.

b. As pertains to the non-material character

The North African Fathers (Tertullian, et al) generally held that "soul" described all of man's non-material being. The view is generally known as dichotomy today.

The Alexandrian fathers leaned towards a distinction in soul and spirit and were generally in the camp known as trichotomy.

The early church did not find it necessary to take definitive positions on these things. The majority were traducians and dichotemists so far as we can see. In more recent times some denominational groups have added a phrase or so to make them more "tight" in regards to all their particular beliefs and so have made case studies out of these doctrines as well. The record of historical theology is that they have been endlessly studied but not finally defined.

2. Regarding man's mind (will).

Earlier fathers seemed to see a great er freedom in man's will and urged a greater exercise of it in the direction of God and good. The Alexandrian fathers leaned towards a synergism which expressed the concept that the will both initiates holiness and sin. Divine grace was needed, they felt, to complete the transaction and to bring one to final truth. Most of the African fathers opposed this and their ideas eventually won the church: man was not free in his will. Tertullian and Cyprian make nice representatives of this group and they are firm in the concept that original sin has condemned us and there is nothing we can do in ourselves to solve that.