

0213-0270 – Gregorius Thaumaturgus – Ad Tatianum de anima per capita disputatio

On the Subject of the Soul

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THESE “twelve anathemas,” as they are called, do evidently refute the Nestorians and later heretics. Evidently, therefore, we must assign this document to another author. And, as frequent references are made to such tests, I subjoin a list of Œcumenical or Catholic Councils, properly so called, as follows:—

1. JERUSALEM, against *Judaism*,⁴³² A.D. 50.
2. NICÆA, against *Arianism* (1),⁴³³ A.D. 325.
3. CONSTANTINOPLE (I.), against *Semi-Arianism* (2), A.D. 381.
4. EPHESUS, against *Nestorianism* (3), A.D. 431.
5. CHALCEDON, against *Eutychianism* (4), A.D. 451.
6. CONSTANTINOPLE (II.), against *Monophysitism* (5), A.D. 553.
7. CONSTANTINOPLE (III.), against *Monothelitism* (6),⁴³⁴ A.D. 680.⁴³⁵

These are all *the undisputed* councils. The *Seventh Council*, so called (A.D. 537), was not a free council, and was rejected by a free council of the West, convened at Frankfort A.D. 794. Its acceptance by the Roman pontiffs, subsequently, should have no logical force with the Easterns, who do not recognise their supremacy even over the councils of the West; and no free council has ever been held under pontifical authority. The above list, therefore, is a complete list of all the councils of the undivided Church as defined by Catholic canons. There has been no possibility of a *Catholic* council since the division of East and West. The Council of Frankfort is the pivot of subsequent history, and its fundamental importance has not been sufficiently insisted upon.



On the Subject of the Soul.⁴³⁶

⁴³² As widely different from the other councils as the Apostles from their successors, and part of its decisions were local and temporary. For all that, it was the greatest of councils, and truly *General*.

⁴³³ These numbers indicate the ordinary reckoning of writers, and is correct ecclesiastically. The Council of Jerusalem, however, is the base of Christian orthodoxy, and decided the great principles by which the “General Councils” were professedly ruled.

⁴³⁴ Theological students are often puzzled to recall the councils in order, and not less to recall the rejected heresies. I have found two mnemonics useful, thus: (1) INCE and (CCC) *three hundred*; (2) JAS. NEMM. *Dulce est desipere*, etc.

⁴³⁵ A.D. 325 to 680 is the Synodical Period. Gregory I. (Rome) placed the *first four* councils next to the four Gospels.

⁴³⁶ A Topical Discourse by our holy father Gregory, surnamed Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neo-Cæsareia in Pontus, addressed to Tatian.

YOU have instructed us, most excellent Tatian,⁴³⁷ to forward for your use a discourse upon the soul, laying it out in effective demonstrations. And this you have asked us to do without making use of the testimonies of Scripture,—a method which is opened to us, and which, to those who seek the pious mind, proves a manner of setting forth doctrine more convincing than any reasoning of man.⁴³⁸ You have said, however, that you desire this, not with a view to your own full assurance, taught as you already have been to hold by the Holy Scriptures and traditions, and to avoid being shaken in your convictions by any subtleties of man's disputations, but with a view to the confuting of men who have different sentiments, and who do not admit that such credit is to be given to the Scriptures, and who endeavour, by a kind of cleverness of speech, to gain over those who are unversed in such discussions. Wherefore we were led to comply readily with this commission of yours, not shrinking from the task on account of inexperience in this method of disputation, but taking encouragement from the knowledge of your good-will toward us. For your kind and friendly disposition towards us will make you understand how to put forward publicly whatever you may approve of as rightly expressed by us, and to pass by and conceal whatever statement of ours you may judge to come short of what is proper. Knowing this, therefore, I have betaken myself with all confidence to the exposition. And in my discourse I shall use a certain order and consecution, such as those who are very expert in these matters employ towards those who desire to investigate any subject intelligently.

First of all, then, I shall propose to inquire by what criterion the soul can, according to its nature, be apprehended; then by what means it can be proved to exist; thereafter, whether it is a *substance* or an *accident*;⁴³⁹ then consequently on these points, whether it is a body or is incorporeal; then, whether it is simple or compound; next, whether it is mortal or immortal; and finally, whether it is rational or irrational.

For these are the questions which are wont, above all, to be discussed, in any inquiry about the soul, as most important, and as best calculated to mark out its distinctive nature. And as demonstrations for the establishing of these matters of investigation, we shall employ those common modes of consideration⁴⁴⁰ by which the credibility of matters under hand is naturally attested. But for the purpose of brevity and utility, we shall at present make use only of those modes of argumentation which are most cogently demonstrative on the subject of our inquiry, in order that clear and intelligible⁴⁴¹ notions may impart to us some readiness for meeting the gainsayers. With this, therefore, we shall commence our discussion.

437 [A person not known.]

438 [True to the universal testimony of the primitive Fathers as to Holy Scripture.]

439 [Aristotle, *Physica*. Elucidation I.]

440 ἐννοίαις.

441 εὐπαράδεκτα.

I. Wherein is the Criterion for the Apprehension of the Soul.

All things that exist are either known by sense⁴⁴² or apprehended by thought.⁴⁴³ And what falls under sense has its adequate demonstration in sense itself; for at once, with the application, it creates in us the impression⁴⁴⁴ of what underlies it. But what is apprehended by thought is known not by itself, but by its operations.⁴⁴⁵ The soul, consequently, being unknown by itself, shall be known property by its effects.

II. Whether the Soul Exists.

Our body, when it is put in action, is put in action either from without or from within. And that it is not put in action from without, is manifest from the circumstance that it is put in action neither by impulsion⁴⁴⁶ nor by traction,⁴⁴⁷ like soulless things. And again, if it is put in action from within, it is not put in action according to nature, like fire. For fire never loses its action as long as there is fire; whereas the body, when it has become dead, is a body void of action. Hence, if it is put in action neither from without, like soulless things, nor according to nature, after the fashion of fire, it is evident that it is put in action by the soul, which also furnishes life to it. If, then, the soul is shown to furnish the life to our body, the soul will also be known for itself by its operations.



III. Whether the Soul is a Substance.

That the soul is a substance,⁴⁴⁸ is proved in the following manner. In the first place, because the definition given to the term substance suits it very well. And that definition is to the effect, that substance is that which, being ever identical, and ever one in point of numeration with itself, is yet capable of taking on contraries in succession.⁴⁴⁹ And that this soul, without passing the limit of its own proper nature, takes on contraries in succession, is, I fancy, clear to everybody. For righteousness

442 αἰσθήσει.

443 νοήσει.

444 φαντασίαν.

445 ἐνεργειῶν.

446 ὠθούμενον.

447 ἐλκόμενον.

448 οὐσία.

449 τῶν ἐναντίων παραμέρος εἶναι δεκτικόν, παραμέρος, here apparently = in turn, though usually = out of turn.

and unrighteousness, courage and cowardice, temperance and intemperance, are seen in it successively; and these are contraries. If, then, it is the property of a substance to be capable of taking on contraries in succession, and if the soul is shown to sustain the definition in these terms, it follows that the soul is a substance. And in the second place, because if the body is a substance, the soul must also be a substance. For it cannot be, that what only has life imparted should be a substance, and that what imparts the life should be no substance: unless one should assert that the non-existent is the cause of the existent; or unless, again, one were insane enough to allege that the dependent object is itself the cause of that very thing in which it has its being, and without which it could not subsist.⁴⁵⁰

IV. Whether the Soul is Incorporeal.

That the soul is in our body, has been shown above. We ought now, therefore, to ascertain in what manner it is in the body. Now, if it is in juxtaposition with it, as one pebble with another, it follows that the soul will be a body, and also that the whole body will not be animated with soul,⁴⁵¹ inasmuch as with a certain part it will only be in juxtaposition. But if again, it is mingled or fused with the body, the soul will become multiplex,⁴⁵² and not simple, and will thus be despoiled of the rationale proper to a soul. For what is multiplex is also divisible and dissoluble; and what is dissoluble, on the other hand, is compound;⁴⁵³ and what is compound is separable in a threefold manner. Moreover, body attached to body makes weight;⁴⁵⁴ but the soul, subsisting in the body, does not make weight, but rather imparts life. The soul, therefore, cannot be a body, but is incorporeal.

Again, if the soul is a body, it is put in action either from without or from within. But it is not put in action from without; for it is moved neither by impulsion nor by traction, like soulless things. Nor is it put in action from within, like objects animated with soul; for it is absurd to talk of a soul of the soul: it cannot, therefore, be a body, but it is incorporeal.

And besides, if the soul is a body, it has sensible qualities, and is maintained by nurture. But it is not thus nurtured. For if it is nurtured, it is not nurtured corporeally, like the body, but incorporeally; for it is nurtured by reason. It has not, therefore, sensible qualities: for neither is

⁴⁵⁰ The text has an apparent inversion: τὸ ἐν ᾧ τὴν ὑπαρξιν ἔχον καὶ οὐ ἄνευ εἶναι μὴ δυνάμενον, αἴτιον ἐκείνου εἶναι τοῦ ἐν ᾧ ἐστί. There is also a variety of reading: καὶ ὁ ἄνευ τοῦ εἶναι μὴ δυνάμενον.

⁴⁵¹ ἔμψυχον.

⁴⁵² πολυμερής.

⁴⁵³ σύνθετον.

⁴⁵⁴ ὄγκον.

righteousness, nor courage, nor any one of these things, something that is seen; yet these are the qualities of the soul. It cannot, therefore, be a body, but is incorporeal.

Still further, as all corporeal substance is divided into animate and inanimate, let those who hold that the soul is a body tell us whether we are to call it animate or inanimate.

Finally, if every body has colour, and quantity, and figure, and if there is not one of these qualities perceptible in the soul, it follows that the soul is not a body.⁴⁵⁵

V. Whether the Soul is Simple or Compound.

We prove, then, that the soul is simple, best of all, by those arguments by which its incorporeality has been demonstrated. For if it is not a body, while every body is compound, and what is composite is made up of parts, and is consequently multiplex, the soul, on the other hand, being incorporeal, is simple; since thus it is both uncompounded and indivisible into parts.

VI. Whether Our Soul is Immortal.

It follows, in my opinion, as a necessary consequence, that what is simple is immortal. And as to how that follows, hear my explanation: Nothing that exists is its own corrupter,⁴⁵⁶ else it could never have had any thorough consistency, even from the beginning. For things that are subject to corruption are corrupted by contraries: wherefore everything that is corrupted is subject to dissolution; and what is subject to dissolution is compound; and what is compound is of many parts; and what is made up of parts manifestly is made up of diverse parts; and the diverse is not the identical: consequently the soul, being simple, and not being made up of diverse parts, but being uncompound and indissoluble, must be, in virtue of that, incorruptible and immortal.

Besides, everything that is put in action by something else, and does not possess the principle of life in itself, but gets it from that which puts it in action, endures just so long as it is held by the power that operates in it; and whenever the operative power ceases, that also comes to a stand which has its capacity of action from it. But the soul, being self-acting, has no cessation of its being. For it follows, that what is self-acting is ever-acting; and what is ever-acting is unceasing; and what is unceasing is without end; and what is without end is incorruptible; and what is incorruptible is immortal. Consequently, if the soul is self-acting, as has been shown above, it follows that it is incorruptible and immortal, in accordance with the mode of reasoning already expressed.



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⁴⁵⁵ [These are Aristotle's *accidents*, of which, see Thomas Aquinas and the schoolmen *passim*.]

⁴⁵⁶ φθαρτικόν.

And further, everything that is not corrupted by the evil proper to itself, is incorruptible; and the evil is opposed to the good, and is consequently its corrupter. For the evil of the body is nothing else than suffering, and disease, and death; just as, on the other hand, its excellency is beauty, life, health, and vigour. If, therefore, the soul is not corrupted by the evil proper to itself, and the evil of the soul is cowardice, intemperance, envy, and the like, and all these things do not despoil it of its powers of life and action, it follows that it is immortal.

VII. Whether Our Soul is Rational.

That our soul is rational, one might demonstrate by many arguments. And first of all from the fact that it has discovered the arts that are for the service of our life. For no one could say that these arts were introduced casually and accidentally, as no one could prove them to be idle, and of no utility for our life. If, then, these arts contribute to what is profitable for our life, and if the profitable is commendable, and if the commendable is constituted by reason, and if these things are the discovery of the soul, it follows that our soul is rational.

Again, that our soul is rational, is also proved by the fact that our senses are not sufficient for the apprehension of things. For we are not competent for the knowledge of things by the simple application of the faculty of sensation. But as we do not choose to rest in these without inquiry,⁴⁵⁷ that proves that the senses, apart from reason, are felt to be incapable of discriminating between things which are identical in form and similar in colour, though quite distinct in their natures. If, therefore, the senses, apart from reason, give us a false conception of things, we have to consider whether things that are can be apprehended in reality or not. And if they can be apprehended, then the power which enables us to get at them is one different from, and superior to, the senses. And if they are not apprehended, it will not be possible for us at all to apprehend things which are different in their appearance from the reality. But that objects are apprehensible by us, is clear from the fact that we employ each in a way adaptable to utility, and again turn them to what we please. Consequently, if it has been shown that things which are can be apprehended by us, and if the senses, apart from reason, are an erroneous test of objects, it follows that the intellect⁴⁵⁸ is what distinguishes all things in reason, and discerns things as they are in their actuality. But the intellect is just the rational portion of the soul, and consequently the soul is rational.

Finally, because we do nothing without having first marked it out for ourselves; and as that is nothing else than just the high prerogative⁴⁵⁹ of the soul,—for its knowledge of things does not come to it from without, but it rather sets out these things, as it were, with the adornment of its own

⁴⁵⁷ ἐπεὶ μηδὲ στήναι περὶ αὐτὰ θέλομεν.

⁴⁵⁸ νοῦς.

⁴⁵⁹ ἀξίωμα. [Elucidation II.]

thoughts, and thus first pictures forth the object in itself, and only thereafter carries it out to actual fact,—and because the high prerogative of the soul is nothing else than the doing of all things with reason, in which respect it also differs from the senses, the soul has thereby been demonstrated to be rational.



Elucidations.

I.

(*Substance or accident*, p. 54.)

THIS essay is “rather the work of a philosopher than a bishop,” says Dupin. He assigns it to an age when “Aristotle *began to be in some reputation*,”—a most important concession as to the estimate of this philosopher among the early faithful. We need not wonder that such admissions, honourable to his candour and to his orthodoxy, brought on him the hatred and persecutions of the Jesuits. Even Bossuet thought he went too far, and wrote against him. But, the whole system of Roman dogma being grounded in Aristotle’s *physics* as well as in his *metaphysics*, Dupin was not orthodox in the eyes of the society that framed Aristotle into a creed, and made it the creed of the “Roman-Catholic Church.” Note, e.g., “transubstantiation,” which is not true if Aristotle’s theory of *accidents*, etc., is false.⁴⁶⁰ It assumes an exploded science.

II.

(*Prerogative of the soul*, p. 56.)

If this “Discourse” be worthy of study, it may be profitably contrasted, step by step, with Tertullian’s treatises on kindred subjects.⁴⁶¹ That the early Christians should reason concerning the Soul, the Mind, the immortal Spirit, was natural in itself. But it was also forced upon them by the “philosophers” and the heretics, with whom they daily came into conflict. This is apparent from the *Anti-Marcion*⁴⁶² of the great Carthaginian. The annotations upon that treatise, and those *On the Soul’s Testimony* and *On the Soul*, may suffice as pointing out the best sources⁴⁶³ of information

⁴⁶⁰ See Bacon’s apophthegm, No. 275, p. 172, *Works*, London, 1730.

⁴⁶¹ Vol. iii. pp. 175–235, this series.

⁴⁶² Vol. iii. pp. 463, 474; also pp. 532, 537, 557, 570, and 587.

⁴⁶³ Compare, also, Bishop Kaye’s *Tertullian*, p. 199, etc.

on speculative points and their bearings on theology. Compare, however, Athenagoras⁴⁶⁴ and the great Clement of Alexandria.⁴⁶⁵



Four Homilies.⁴⁶⁶

The First Homily.

On the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary.⁴⁶⁷

TO-DAY are strains of praise sung joyfully by the choir of angels, and the light of the advent of Christ shines brightly upon the faithful. Today is the glad spring-time to us, and Christ the Sun of righteousness has beamed with clear light around us, and has illumined the minds of the faithful. To-day is Adam made anew,⁴⁶⁸ and moves in the choir of angels, having winged his way to heaven. To-day is the whole circle of the earth filled with joy, since the sojourn of the Holy Spirit has been realized to men. To-day the grace of God and the hope of the unseen shine through all wonders transcending imagination, and make the mystery that was kept hid from eternity plainly discernible to us. To-day are woven the chaplets of never-fading virtue. To-day, God, willing to crown the sacred heads of those whose pleasure is to hearken to Him, and who delight in His festivals, invites the lovers of unswerving faith as His called and His heirs; and the heavenly kingdom is urgent to summon those who mind celestial things to join the divine service of the incorporeal choirs. To-day

⁴⁶⁴ E.g., vol. ii. p. 157, etc.

⁴⁶⁵ Vol. ii. pp. 440, 584 (Fragment), and what he says of free-will.

⁴⁶⁶ [This very homily has been cited to prove the antiquity of the festival of the Annunciation, observed, in the West, March 25. But even Pellicia objects that this is a spurious work. The feast of the Nativity was introduced into the East by Chrysostom after the records at Rome had been inspected, and the time of the taxing at Bethlehem had been found. See his Sermon (A.D. 386), beautifully translated by Dr. Jarvis in his *Introduction*, etc., p. 541. Compare Tertullian, vol. iii. p. 164, and Justin, vol. i. p. 174, this series. Now, as the selection of the 25th of March is clearly based on this, we may say no more of that day. Possibly some Sunday was associated with the Annunciation. The four Sundays preceding Christmas are all observed by the Nestorians in commemoration of the Annunciation.]

⁴⁶⁷ The secondary title is: The First Discourse of our holy father Gregory, surnamed Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neo-Cæsareia in Pontus, on the Annunciation to the most holy Virgin Mary, mother of God. Works of Gregory Thaumaturgus by Ger. Voss, p. 9.

⁴⁶⁸ ἀνακεκαίνισται; others ἀνακέκληται, recovered.