

THE SACRAMENTARY OF SERAPION
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II. DOCTRINAL TEACHING IN THE SACRAMENTARY

Apart from the fact that a Liturgy and the other services are composed in order to satisfy the need for worship in a religious community, we may discern in their content the doctrinal interests of an epoch and also the struggle of the Church against heretical doctrines which menace her doctrinal purity and unity in a certain period of her history.

Serapion lived in an epoch in which the Church, as the custodian of the true and pure teaching of christianity, had to confront heresies and schisms which threatened her very existence; thus his Sacramentary reflects, in some way, that struggle. After the end of the persecutions, Arianism, Manichaeism, Meletians, secular philosophy and others threatened Orthodoxy (see ch. I—).

Worship, which gathered the faithful at the same place, taught at the same time, in a concise way, doctrinal truth which impressed the minds of Christians easily. On the other hand the composer of hymns or of other liturgical matter was a man of his time. Therefore he was overwhelmed by its ideas and their formulas in such a way as to leave the overflowing ideas of his mind to find their expression in his hymns and prayers «εἰς δόξαν καὶ αἶνον τῆς ἀληθείας» (24).

There is no doubt Serapion did the same as far as he shared in the composition of the prayers of the Sacramentary.

The theological content of the Sacramentary, if it is not of large extent, is at least, of importance and looking at it as an Orthodox. I find the core of many points of the Orthodox doctrinal teaching.

One significant element in it is that which refers to the Person of God the Father and to the relation between the Father and the Son; of course, Serapion was influenced by the Arian quarrels and also he would perhaps want to check their endeavour to minimize the divinity of the Son. There is no doubt that the terminology of Nicaea

(*) Συνέχεια ἐκ τῆς σελ. 54 τοῦ προηγουμένου τεύχους.

is not present in the Sacramentary of Serapion but there is the Antiarian atmosphere. Therefore in the characterization of the Father as (ἀγέννητος) (1,5,7,13,26,27,28, etc.) and as «γεννήτωρ τοῦ μονογενοῦς» (20), also in the characterisation of the Son as the «μονογενής» in every prayer and as the «γεγεννημένος Λόγος» (1) we may discern the relation of these two Persons of the Holy Trinity. Also we are informed about that relation by the idea which is present in the Eucharistic Prayer about the mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son. Certainly, in the way in which that relation between these two Persons of the Holy Trinity appears and also in the way in which the relation of the three Persons, including the Holy Spirit, appears especially in the doxologies, gives the impression that in the Sacramentary the teaching of the one substance of God and the three Persons is present, in that it suggests the eternal existence of each Person of the one God and His revelation to the world. The term «Person» is not present in the Sacramentary but its meaning can be assumed, especially from the Eucharistic prayer.

Each of the three Persons is the divine substance with all its divine qualities and at the same time the one simple and undivided divine substance is present in the three Persons of the Godhead. The Father is distinguished from the other Persons because he begets the Son by nature and eternally «γεννήτωρ τοῦ μονογενοῦς» (20), and (a later definition) because of the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Son is distinguished because He is begotten from the Father (1,20).

Therefore we may discern the personal qualities of the Father and the Son; thus the Father has paternity «πατήρ τοῦ μονογενοῦς» and He is unbegotten; the Son has sonship and He is begotten of the Father. The Father is unbegotten, without beginning and source, and the eternal cause of the Son and out of the limits of time. The Son's generation may be regarded as the eternal action of the Father which takes place within the substance of God Himself. Meanwhile the creation is the action of God which took place in time and out of the divine substance...

The Father and the Son are one God, and They exist in Each Other without confusion, having also an absolute knowledge of the substance of each other «... σὲ τὸν γινωσκόμενον (πατέρα) ὑπὸ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ μονογενοῦς... σὲ τὸν γινώσκοντα τὸν Υἱόν...» (1). Every divine action is regarded as taking place by the Father; through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The Son is He through Whom all things have been made, the world, the revelation and the redemption «...δι' αὐτοῦ (Υἱοῦ)

λαληθέντα καὶ ἐρμηνευθέντα καὶ γνωσθέντα (τὸν Πατέρα) τῇ γενετῇ φύσει». In the above order the Holy Trinity is addressed in the prayer of the consecration of the eucharistic elements. «Σὲ γὰρ τὸν ἀγένητον ἐπεκαλεσάμεθα διὰ τοῦ μονογενοῦς ἐν Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι».

Although there is no developed theology about the Holy Spirit in the Sacramentary of Serapion, He is regarded as a Person of the Holy Trinity Who co-exists eternally with the Father and the Son. Therefore the whole Deity is eternal, without beginning and without end, beyond the limits of times, and present in all time, without change.

The eternity of God is like a perpetual present, and the conceptions of past and future have no reference to Him. Also, God fills eternity by His all perfect existence and life, being without any alteration of unchanged perpetual existence and life. Thus God remains eternal without any change in time therefore without any change in His substance. «Ὡσπερ ἦν καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν καὶ εἰς τοὺς σύμπαντας αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων..» (1).

The Father is regarded as the only-begotten but also of the whole of nature and the world «πατήρ» and «παντοκράτωρ» (1,9,13,27). God, apart from this, created the visible and invisible world in time and from nothing by His mighty will, absolutely freely. Thus God is the «δημιουργὸς τῶν κτισμάτων» (19), «ὁ τῶν ὄλων Κύριος καὶ δημιουργὸς» (11,23,20), «ὁ τῶν πάντων ποιητής» (9). God did not abandon the created world but supports, governs and directs the spiritual and material world so that it may attain its final purpose. Thus God is called «Βοηθὸς καὶ Κύριος πάντων» (21), «Προστάτης τῶν ρυσθέντων» (21), «Δεσπότης» (4,15,18,28), «Ἐφορος» (22), «Κυβερνήτης» (22) and others which express the meaning of love, interest and providence of God for created nature and especially for man.

About the person of the Son and His eternal relation with the Father a few things have been referred to above. He is the «Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ μονογενὴς Λόγος» (1,8,10), Who is begotten of the Father «τὸν ἐκ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα» (1,20).

In order for man to be redeemed from sin and to be restored to the original situation before the fall, and also to be reconciled with God, the eternal Logos of God, the Father's begotten Son through Whom God created the world, had to become incarnate. Therefore the begotten Son of God. His Logos, came down from heaven and took human nature in Jesus Christ Who was born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Son of God Who was sent to the world

released man from sin by His redeeming work and transferred him from the condition of sin and spiritual death to that of the justification and sanctification of the children of God «ὁ τὴν ἀνομίαν καθηρώκως, ὁ διὰ τοῦ μονογενοῦς καταργήσας τὸν Σατανᾶν καὶ λύσας τὰ τεχνάσματα καὶ ἀπολύσας τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δεδεμένους» (21).

In the incarnation of the Son of God not only a divine power is acting but the whole Deity; the eternal Logos of God takes human nature and appears to the world. The Logos of God by taking flesh and human nature reconciled it by a perfect life; He offered Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice on the Cross: finally He rose from death and He governs the Church. «Ὁ πάση τῇ γεντηῇ φύσει διὰ τῆς καταβάσεως τοῦ μονογενοῦς Σου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ χαρισάμενος τὴν σωτηρίαν, ὁ λυτρωσάμενος τὸ πλάσμα τὸ ὑπὸ Σοῦ δημιουργηθὲν διὰ τῆς ἐπιδημίας τοῦ ἀρρήτου Σου Λόγου» (1).

He is «ὁ παθὼν, σταυρωθεὶς καὶ ἀναστὰς» (17) for man's salvation.

The Saviour redeemed mankind from sin and destruction through His manifestation on earth, his redeeming action and life and especially through His incarnation, teaching, Passion and Resurrection. Indeed in the Sacramentary of Serapion we discern that teaching about the redeeming work of the Lord which was achieved through the four main elements of His manifestation referred to above. That may be regarded as an answer to the Manichean docetism as the emphasis on the divinity of the Logos is an answer to the Arianism.

Thus the Son of God, assuming human nature by His incarnation, purified it and joined it with the divine nature, thus initiating redemption; He also by His teaching, applied to human minds which had been led astray, enlightened them with true teaching, confirming it by a perfect life. By His death on the Cross He offered Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice to God the Father, thus accomplishing fully the atonement of man and his reconciliation with God; and by His resurrection from death He raised also men from death to life, from destruction to incorruption. Thus, in Serapion Jesus is called «ὁ καταβάς... καὶ ἐπιδημήσας... χαρισάμενος τὴν σωτηρίαν» (7), «παθὼν... σταυρωθεὶς καὶ ἀναστὰς» (5) and elsewhere is referred to as «ὁ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν σταυρωθεὶς καὶ ἀναστὰς, ὁ τὰς νόσους ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς ἀσθενείας ἀναλαβὼν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς...» (17).

We learn from the above quotations that the death on the Cross is closely connected with the resurrection by which salvation was fully accomplished; «if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him» (Rom. 6,8).

In the prayer (5) Serapion after the reference to the resurrection of the Lord has the phrase: «καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ ἀγενήτου». Therefore the Sacramentary is familiar with the known theological truth about the seating of Jesus on the right of God which is present in the early creeds and the clauses of Synods. The risen Lord, by His power and with His soul and body, went to heaven and is seated on the right hand of the Father sharing the divine honour and glory. Thus, the Saviour accomplished fully the redemption of mankind which had been entrusted to Him by the Father. We must notice that the «καθεζόμενον ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ ἀγενήτου» refers to the humanity of Christ; also it must not be regarded literally but symbolically and metaphorically (cf. Daniel 7,13 f.): it means the resumption by the «God-man» of the former authority in the government and rulership of the world, and also of His eternal glory, and that His royal office at the throne on the right of the Father has reached its highest level, manifesting the highest authority and power of the Lord on His human nature over all things in heaven, earth and under the earth.

In the prayer (17) the phrase occurs: «καὶ ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς». Thus there is teaching about Jesus Christ as judge or king.

The Son and Logos of God, seated at the right hand of the Father founding and governing the Church i.e. the kingdom of heaven on earth; He governs His Church and judges the world now, but he will do that fully as king at the final judgement with His full authority in heaven and earth. The final action of that expression of the work and function of Jesus Christ will be the «parousia» and the final judgement of the world by Him as the Lord Himself said to Caiaphas the high priest (Math 26,64).

While the final judgement the subjective redemption also is completed and generally, the whole redeeming work which the Lord undertook and brought to an end by His incarnation and the other phases of His work. After the judgement when the Lord has fulfilled every thing. He will deliver up His saved believers and «the kingdom to God, even the Father» (1 Cor. 15,24) in order to be as in the beginning so also at the end «that God... all in all» (1 Cor. 15,28). Thus according to Serapion the believers have from the present phase of life «τὰς οὐρανίους τῆς ζωῆς ἐλπίδας καὶ αἰώνιους ἐπαγγελίας τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ» (16).

In the Sacramentary of Serapion there is a prayer for the Church (24) and also for the bishop, the clergy and people (25) and

elsewhere the Church is referred to as «ἁγία καὶ μόνη καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησία» (23).

In all these, we see an endeavour, conscious or not, to present the Church as belonging to Christ. Thus the Church is regarded as a divine and human organization where the «God-man» Christ is united harmoniously with all Christians in the same way, perhaps as in the person of Christ the divine and human nature were united.

In the Church the divine and the human are joined mystically, the invisible with the visible, the heavenly with the earthly i.e. the «God-man» Christ with the Christians; and they are joined in such a mystical but real unity that Christ is the head and the Christians the members of His body.

Thus in Serapion and in the prayer (23) the word «Church» is followed by the possessive pronoun «Σου» in reference to God: so, the Church belongs to God. Also, God, is «κατοικῶν ἐν τῇ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ» (24). On the other hand the Sacramentary refers also to the human element «τοὺς λειτουργούς», the bishop, the other clergy and people all of whom try to become in the Church «ζῶντες καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ ἄνθρωποι» (25).

The Church as a divine and human organization and a spiritual kingdom was founded by Christ Himself and not by her members; therefore her origin in heavenly and supernatural not earthly and natural. That is taught by the Scriptures and it is confirmed by history.

Also the Church is governed invisibly by God (H. Spirit) Who is «κατοικῶν ἐν τῇ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ» (24) and Who strengthened the Apostles and the early workers of the Gospel and makes her «στῦλον καὶ ἑδραῖωμα τῆς ἀληθείας» and «the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it» (Math. 16,18).

The Church teaches divine truth to the people, sanctifies the Christians with the Sacraments and leads them to a mystical union with Christ; also she governs them and directs them to eternal life and beatitude among «τοῖς ἁγίοις... προφήταις καὶ ἀποστόλοις» (26). Thus the Church's aim is to change man internally, to change him from a sinner, son of Adam, to a justified and saved son of God, and also to restore the inner communion of the creature to his Creator and to bring back gradually to God in Christ the whole of fallen mankind «συμμετρηθῆτωσαν τοῖς οὐρανόις, συναριθμηθῶσαν τοῖς ἀγγέλοις» (27). The Church fulfils her function faithfully, and she bestows on her members all the means for salvation and cores for all their spiri-

tual needs throughout their lives: so she is indeed the true «mother» (of Galat. 4,26) of the faithful. The Church gives the grace of God to her members as she is the only custodian of justification and of sanctifying grace, and also is the ark of salvation where God reconciles Himself with man.

Thus, in the Sacramentary of Serapion, God is addressed by the celebrant on behalf of the members of the Church in this way: «*παρακαλοῦμεν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων τῆς ἐκκλησίας ταύτης· πᾶσι καταλλάγηθι, πᾶσι συγχώρησον, πᾶσιν ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτημάτων δός... ἔλεησον ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας καὶ παῖδια καὶ φάνηθι ἐν πᾶσιν...*»(24).

In the Sacramentary of Serapion the Church is called «*μόνη*» (23) and there is the definite article «*ἡ*» before the word church. Therefore the idea that the Church is one is present.

The Church is one, because the Lord founded only one Church, and not many to exist in parallel; she is one because she has one head, one spirit, one body of Christ, one faith and teaching, one form of government, one origin and one purpose. As the Church is the body of Christ and Christ is one «*the same yesterday and to-day yea and for ever*» (Hebr. 13,8) so the Church is one only, unchangeable in substance through the ages and amongst all peoples, up to the end of this «*world*».

Perhaps the deeper reason for the unity of the Church lies in the unity of the Trinity «*there is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in all*» (Ephes. 4,4-6).

The Church is one because there is unity in the faith. Discenters are characterized as heretics and they in the are cut off from the body of the Church as decayed members like the Arians at the time of Serapion.

The Church is one and there is unity in government; all have to submit to the canonical ecclesiastical authorities, otherwise they are cut off from the body of the Church as schismatics, as happened to the Meletians near the time of Serapion (see ch. 1). So, God is asked to the Church of Serapion genuine Christian flock: «*κτιῆσαι λαὸν καὶ ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, κτιῆσαι ποίμνιον γνήσιον*» (20).

Also in the Sacramentary of Serapion the Church is called «*ἁγία*». The Church is holy in herself as being of divine origin, a holy body having as head, Christ, and as guide, the Holy Spirit; therefore she is united with the most holy God. Also she is holy because her members are holy, sanctified by the justification and sanctifying grace of

God, Who is «ἡ πηγὴ πάσης χάριτος» (1), having put on Christ in Baptism. Also her function and purpose is the «perfecting of the saints... unto the building up of the body of Christ» (Ephes. 4,12) and therefore the restoration of holiness and original righteousness to all mankind «ὅλοι ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ ἅγιοι γενέσθωσαν» (27). For that purpose she uses holy means i.e. the divine teaching «εὐλογίαν γνώσεως» (28), the divine grace, the holy Sacraments «εὐλογίαν τῶν... μαρτυρίων» (28). Hence Christ «loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish» (Ephes. 5,25-27).

In the Sacramentary of Serapion the Church is called also «καθολικὴ».

The Church is catholic because she is widespread in the world without limits of «time and space» in order to convert the whole of mankind to Christ. The Church of the New Testament has a catholic ecumenical character in comparison with the national—jewish character of the Old Testament; thus the Lord sent His disciples to preach the Gospel not only to Israelites but to the whole world and to every nation. So, Serapion having before him that reality asks God generally in his prayer (20) for the conversion of people «πρὸς σὲ ἐκλυσάτω τὰς ψυχὰς Θεέ...» and especially for the conversion of people in his diocese «κτῆσαι λαὸν καὶ ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, κτῆσαι ποίμνιον γνήσιον».

The Church is catholic also, in her orthodoxy over against the heretics and schismatics. In the early period of Christianity several heretical and schismatic communities began to be formed apart from the Church, thus the one true Church was called catholic in the sense of orthodox. Not only the whole Church, but also the local Churches or communities (for example in Smyrna), were called catholic in the sense of orthodox because they had the same faith and government as the whole Church. So, in the «martyrdom» of St. Polycarp of Smyrna⁴⁴¹ we read «ἡ ἐν Σμύρνῃ καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησίᾳ» i.e. the orthodox Church of Smyrna over against the heretics.

Serapion seems to use the term «καθολικὴ» about the Church, with the two meanings.

Thus he uses it with reference to the local Church of his diocese in order to distinguish it from the heretical and schismatic like the

141. 16,2 P. Gr. 5,104 1a.

Arians and Pneumatomachi or the Manichees who were disturbing his diocese a great deal, as we may assume from the epistles of St. Athanasius to him, and from his work against the Manichees. So, in the prayer (23) for the fruitfulness he refers to the catholic Church in connection with the «whole land» obviously of Thmuis. Here the «πᾶσα γῆ» in its context means: all the fields and cultivated land.

Also, Serapion uses the term «catholic» in reference to the whole Church, as it becomes obvious in the prayer (24) where God is regarded as «κατοικῶν ἐν τῇ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ» obviously meaning the ecumenical Church.

Therefore the quality of the Church as «catholic» in the sense of the local orthodox Church, is connected logically with the quality of the Church as «one»: that is a historical expression of the unity of the Church.

The position of the clergy in the Church, as it appears in the Sacramentary of Serapion, has been referred to in the preceding chapters, so far as we can deduce it.

In the Sacramentary of Serapion apart from the theological idea of the second «parousia» and the judgement of the living and departed, there is the idea of the resurrection of the body:

Thus in the prayer (18) we read: «... τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἀνάστησον ἐν ἡ ὥρισας ἡμέρα κατὰ τὰς ἀψευδεῖς σου ἐπαγγελίας, ἵνα καὶ τὰς κατ' ἄξιαν αὐτῷ κληρονομίας ἀποδῶς ἐν ταῖς ἀγίαις σου νομαῖς».

Therefore at the second «parousia», the common resurrection of all the departed will take place: the bodies will be joined with the souls in order to receive the reward or punishment which will be attributed to both the body and soul in both of which man has done good or evil. Also, the living at the second coming will not die, but their bodies will change and become spiritual and incorruptible, similar to those of the risen.

Actually the idea which was common among the Pharisees and the people at the time of Jesus, was that the resurrection of the body would take place only among the righteous whereas the Sadducees used to say «there is no resurrection» (Mark 12,18. Luc. 20,27, Acts 23,8). But Serapion follows the teaching of the Lord «... κατὰ τὰς ἀψευδεῖς σου ἐπαγγελίας» (18) and of the New Testament and the tradition of the Church.

The clause «I look for the resurrection of the dead» which has been included in the creeds, and the idea of which is present in Serapion, constitutes also the faith of the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists especially when they turned against the heretics.

Thus at the second coming of the Lord all the dead will be raised incorruptible, by the divine omnipotence, and the living will change their bodies and so they will be gathered before the tribunal of Christ.

A very familiar expression in the Sacramentary of Serapion is that of «ζωή» and it is referred to with various meanings, and is attached to various ideas. But it seems that the most important is its connection with eternal life as it occurs, for example, in the prayer (16) which speaks about the hope of heavenly life.

Death is the common end of all men as «what man is he that shall live and not see death» (Psalm 89,48): it is a universal phenomenon.

Death is the result of sin and especially of original sin, as God «θάνατον οὐ ἐποίησεν» but «ἐκτίσεν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ». It is the result of man's free will, «through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed into all sinned» (Rom. 5,12).

But the Christian who believes that God is «ὁ ζῶης καὶ θανάτου τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχων» (18) and «ζωογονῶν», «τὴν ψυχὴν, τὸ πνεῦμα ἀναπαύων ἐν τόποις γλῶσσης» (18) does not fear death as a superior power which fills him with fear and terror; but believes it is the rejection of the material and corruptible vessel i.e. the body and the completion of eternal life in Christ which has already begun on earth.

Thus, The Christian does not try to avoid death but he confronts it with courage, christian tranquillity and peace regarding it as the sacrifice by which he goes into immortality, eternal life and beatitude near God «ἐν τόποις γλῶσσης, ἐν ταμείοις ἀναπαύσεως μετὰ Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων...» (18).

Finally by the common resurrection and the final judgement «the last enemy that shall be abolished is death» (Rom. 15,26).

Therefore at the physical death of man the corruptible and material body is corrupted and dissolved; meanwhile the spiritual, incorruptible and immortal soul is judged partly before the second «parousia» and the common resurrection when the soul will be joined with the risen body. Then the final and general judgement will take place and the end of the world and eternal life will follow for the Christians «ἐν ταῖς ἁγίαις νομαῖς (of God)» (18).