

NOTES

THMUIS REVISITED: ANOTHER LOOK AT THE PRAYERS OF BISHOP SARAPION

Contemporary estimates of the date, orthodoxy, and literary competence of the compiler of the Prayers of Sarapion have been largely formed by three great liturgical scholars: F. E. Brightman, Bernard Capelle, and Bernard Botte. The combined effect of their work has been to create a picture of Sarapion as (respectively) muddleheaded, avant-garde, and heretical. This picture seems unfair; and this article has the aim of doing something to restore Sarapion's reputation. The name "Sarapion" is used for convenience, without ruling out the possibility that someone else may have been the final editor of the collection.

First, Brightman. His edition appeared in the first issues of the *Journal of Theological Studies*,¹ and in it he commented: "The contents of the collection are not arranged in any proper order." Accordingly he printed the prayers in what he thought to be the most logical order. The prayers are not numbered in the original manuscript, but Brightman gave them numbers in the order of the manuscript, which he placed after the titles and in brackets. F. X. Funk a few years later followed Brightman's order, but added corresponding numbers before the titles, while still quoting the numbers of the manuscript order in brackets.² As a result, Brightman's order has been generally accepted as definitive, and Funk's numbers are usually quoted for reference (for instance, by Capelle and Botte) as though they were Sarapion's own.

It is the contention of this article that, with one simple change, the order of the manuscript is perfectly natural. Its contents may be set out thus:

- 1 Prayer of offering of Bishop Sarapion
- 2 After the prayer, the Fraction and the prayer at the Fraction
- 3 Blessing of the people after giving the broken bread to the clergy
- 4 Prayer after the distribution to the people
- 5 Prayer over the offered oils and waters
- 6 Blessing after the blessing of the water and the oil
- 7 Sanctification of waters
- 8 Prayer over those who are being baptized
- 9 Prayer after the renunciation
- 10 Prayer after the reception
- 11 Prayer after the being baptized and coming up

¹ "The Sacramentary of Sarapion," *JTS* 1 (1900) 88-113, 247-77; the quotation is on p. 89.

² *Didascalia et Constitutiones apostolorum* 2 (1905) 158-95.

- 12 Blessing of the appointment of deacons
- 13 Blessing of the appointment of presbyters
- 14 Blessing of the appointment of a bishop
Prayer(s) of Sarapion, Bishop of Thmoueis
- 15 Prayer for the anointing of those who are being baptized
- 16 Prayer for the chrism with which those who have been baptized are anointed
- 17 Prayer for oil or bread or water of the sick
- 18 Prayer for a dead man and one who is being carried out
- 19 First prayer of the Lord's day
- 20 Prayer after standing up after the sermon
- 21 Prayer over the catechumens
- 22 Prayer for the sick
- 23 Prayer for harvest
- 24 Prayer for the Church
- 25 Prayer for the bishop and the Church
- 26 Prayer of genuflection
- 27 Prayer over the people
- 28 Blessing of the catechumens
- 29 Blessing of the laity
- 30 Blessing of the sick.

These titles may be summarized thus:

- 1 Anaphora
- 2-6 Postanaphoral prayers
- 7-11 Baptism
- 12-14 Ordination
- 15-17 Blessings of oils
- 18 Burial
- 19-27 Preanaphoral prayers
- 28-30 Preanaphoral blessings.

If we make the hypothesis that our present (and only) manuscript was copied from a codex which had become dilapidated (which seems to be the only reason why it should have been copied at all in the eleventh century), and that its second half has been placed by the copyist before the first half, everything falls into place.

Where, then, did the manuscript originally begin? Brightman starts with the Eucharist (i.e., at prayer 19), but the manuscript is much more likely to have begun with prayer 15, since between prayers 14 and 15 there is a general title (see above), followed by a separate title for prayer 15. The first word of the title is spelt in the manuscript *Proseuch*, which Brightman interprets as plural, having noticed that prayers 15-17 go very closely together. He is followed by almost all scholars except Botte, who hesitates between plural and singular. The general title differs from that of the anaphora (prayer 1) in adding the word "Thmoueis." The practice

of inserting a subordinate title before the anaphora is paralleled most relevantly in the Liturgy of St. Mark in the Coptic version. There the main title is "The Beginning of the Order of the Holy Anaphora of Our Holy Father Mark the Apostle," and there is a second title just before the anaphora, "The Holy Anaphora of All-Blessed Mark and of the Most Holy Cyril."³ So it seems reasonable to suppose that the title before prayer 15 originally stood at the head of the whole collection, which began with prayers 15-17. The copyist may have been misled into taking the title of the anaphora as the title of the whole collection, and therefore putting the anaphora first. When he reached the end of his task, he must have realized that something was wrong, as he added the note "All these prayers are to be said before the anaphora," obviously referring to prayers 19-30.⁴ The true order is then:

Preliminary blessings of oils (15-17)
 A burial prayer (18)
 The Eucharist (19-30, 1-6)
 Baptism (7-11)
 Ordination (12-14)

This order is thoroughly logical; and indeed it was J. M. Hanssens' opinion that Brightman acted "rashly" (*temere*) in changing the order.⁵ There are a few rough places to be made plain. First, the position of the burial prayer between the blessings of oils and the Eucharist. This prayer is the odd man out wherever in the collection it is placed, but it is quite natural for it to follow the blessing of oil for the sick, as in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer. The preanaphoral blessings (28-30) are collected at one point rather than placed after the corresponding prayers (as Brightman does), which reflects the fact, borne out by other prayers, that the book was intended for use by a priest rather than a bishop (cf. prayer 25: "Sanctify this bishop"). These blessings are also arranged in a different order from the prayers for the same subjects. The prayers run: (1) catechumens, (2) the sick, (3) the people, whereas the blessing of the people comes before that of the sick. The most probable explanation is that the blessing of the sick is a later addition: its vocabulary is noticeably lacking in the characteristic words of the collection. Lastly and most importantly, a problem created by Brightman himself: the group of prayers which has here been called "blessings of oils." Brightman regarded these as intended to accompany the actual anointing, and so inserted the first two into the baptismal group. The first can certainly be

³ F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (1896) 158, 164.

⁴ Brightman, "Sacramentary" 89; Funk, *Didascalia* 2, xli.

⁵ *Institutiones liturgicae de ritibus orientalibus* 2 (1930) 444.

interpreted in this way, but the second and third are undoubtedly consecratory in character, which suggests that the first should also be taken thus. If these prayers were to be said at the moment of anointing, they would include some demonstrative pronoun, *touton* or *tonde*, as the baptismal and ordination prayers do. But these blessings do not: they are preliminary prayers, and that is why, in the conjectured original order of the manuscript, they stand at the head of the collection, just as "Sanctification of waters" stands at the head of the baptismal group.

It may be concluded, then, against Brightman, that the collection is carefully and logically arranged. Whoever arranged it knew what he was doing. Capelle and Botte agree in regarding him as a competent theologian.

Capelle in his well-known article⁶ sets out to deny the support of Sarapion to Lietzmann's theory of the origins of the Eucharist. He begins by quoting Lietzmann's statement that the author of the anaphora must have been the author of the whole collection, because the words *genētē physis*, *diermēneuein*, *chorēgos*, and *epidēmia*, which occur in the anaphora, occur also in other prayers. But the epiclesis paragraph of the anaphora does not fit in with Lietzmann's general theory about Sarapion, so he proposed to delete it as a later interpolation. "Lourde erreur," says Capelle, and uses Lietzmann's own method to show that this paragraph, as much as any in the anaphora, has "verbal concordances" with the rest of the collection.⁷ But, though Capelle's facts are right, his conclusion does not necessarily follow.

To take a parallel case from the Anglican rite: in the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 there is a well-known prayer entitled "A General Thanksgiving," whose origin is well documented. At 10 a.m. on December 14, 1661, Bishop Edward Reynolds, its probable author, introduced it into the Upper House of Convocation, then engaged in the revision of the Prayer Book. This is its first appearance in any shape or form. Yet virtually every word of it, including the relatively rare words "inestimable" and "unfeignedly," occurs in the second edition of the Prayer Book in 1552. By Capelle's reasoning, this should prove that the General Thanksgiving was already in the 1552 Prayer Book. But the facts show incontestably that it was not.

Linguistic analysis of the kind used by Capelle can be very useful, but it needs to be used with great caution. The presence of a significant word in one prayer and its absence from another where it might have been expected to occur may suggest that the prayers are not by the same

⁶ "L'Anaphore de Sérapion: Essai d'exégèse," *Muséon* 59 (1946) 425-43; reprinted in *Travaux liturgiques* 2 (1962) 344-58, from which it is cited here.

⁷ *Ibid.* 345-46, 349-50.

author; but the presence of the word in two different prayers does not *prove* common authorship. Capelle is too ready to accept the homogeneity of the collection. In fact, analysis suggests that it is made up of various groups of prayers, all of which may have been worked over to some extent by one or more hands.

Brightman noticed that the three prayers 15-17 (blessings of oils) form a unit, to be distinguished from the rest of the collection.⁸ (Actually he proposed a group of *four* prayers, 15-18, but the case is much stronger if the group is restricted to 15-17.) His criteria are: (1) the occurrence of "certain words and phrases which do not occur elsewhere in the collection"; (2) the curious idiom *hōste* after verbs of praying, which are usually followed by the imperative or plain infinitive in the rest of the collection; and (3) the absence of words characteristic of the other prayers. In the first group he quotes *antikeimenos, ho kyrios kai sōtēr hēmōn, energeia,* and *energeō*, to which may be added *sēmeion* and *ananeōō*; and in the last group *agenētos, katharos, zōn, prokopē,* and *eklektos*, to which may be added *gnōsis, ekklēsia, eulogeō, katallassō, laos, logos, oiktirmos, sarx,* and *charizomai*. To the curious idiom with *hōste*, the strongest point of all, may be added the titles of these three prayers, which all begin *Euchē eis. . .*, whereas all other titles use *meta* (indicating sequence), *hyper, peri*, or a straight genitive. Unconscious quirks of style such as this are the most reliable indicators of authorship.

Two further examples may be adduced which suggest the existence of different strata within the collection. Of the nine preanaphoral prayers (19-27), six use the word *gnōsis*; the same six also use the word *katharos*, not a common word in liturgy. Neither of these words occurs in the anaphora, but both occur also in the ordination prayers. *Logos* occurs in the anaphora and in three of the five baptismal prayers, but nowhere else in the collection. There are various other, less striking correlations of this kind.

The word *logos* is especially important, since the first thing that every student learns about Serapion is that the epiclesis prays for the Word, not the Spirit, to consecrate the elements. Capelle remarks: "One finds in the whole collection a suspect tendency to attribute to the Logos the role entrusted elsewhere to the Spirit"; and quoting prayer 7 (Sanctification of waters) he comments:

It is by the communication of the Spirit with which they will be filled that they will become *pneumatikos*, but it is the Logos who comes to effect this transformation. A theology of solidarity, of "economy," in perfect harmony with the admirable letters of St. Athanasius *ad Serapionem*, but whose translation into an

⁸ "Sacramentary" 276.

epiclesis of the Logos is found nowhere else but here.⁹

He then goes on to demonstrate how slender is the evidence on which is based the theory of a Logos-epiclesis at Alexandria ca. 350 (he describes it as “a phantom”). Sarapion is an innovator, and the possibility of his having preserved a primitive doctrine of consecration by the Logos is dismissed without argument (“nothing recommends this hypothesis more than the opposite”).

Botte goes over the same ground, summing up his argument thus: “There is here no archaic doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There is a deliberate intention to put the Holy Spirit in the shade. This is improbable in the real Sarapion, who evoked the letters of St. Athanasius on the divinity of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰ Both scholars appeal to the letters of Athanasius, and indeed they are of the utmost importance as evidence for Sarapion’s Logos doctrine. In them Athanasius sees Word and Spirit as very closely linked, unlike Sarapion’s opponents, whom he criticizes for separating them. Here are some characteristic quotations:

The Spirit is in the Logos.

The Spirit is the anointing and seal with which the Logos anoints and marks everything.

There is nothing which does not happen and operate itself by the Logos in the Spirit.

When the Logos descended on the holy virgin Mary, the Spirit came with Him. The Father creates all things by the Logos in the Spirit, because where the Logos is, there the Spirit is also; and the things created by the medium of the Logos receive the power of existing from the Spirit by the Logos.¹¹

That is the sort of background against which Sarapion’s references to the work of the Logos must be read. For Athanasius, an epiclesis of the Logos necessarily involves the Spirit also. The first half of the fourth century did not make the sharp distinction between Logos and Pneuma which we take for granted. On this count, at any rate, Sarapion can claim to be completely orthodox.

Many scholars have found Botte’s article sufficiently convincing to start referring to “Pseudo-Sarapion.” This seems premature. Besides the matter which has just been dealt with, Botte’s key point is Sarapion’s practice of describing the Father as *agenētos*, contrasted with the Son, who is *monogenēs*. Botte sees here a subtle introduction of subordina-

⁹ “L’Anaphore” 355–56.

¹⁰ “L’Eucologe de Sérapion est-il authentique?” in *Oriens christianus* 48 (1964) 50–57; the quotation is on p. 55.

¹¹ PG 26, 633B, 585A, 601A, 605A, 632B/C; ed. J. Lebon, SC 15 (1946) 171, 125, 139, 142, 169.

tionism.¹² But the *Patristic Greek Lexicon* begins its entry on *agenētos* with this caveat: "in MSS and edd. freq. confused with *agennētos*"; and Botte himself acknowledges this confusion in a footnote.¹³ It is quite likely that a scribe writing seven hundred years later, with little knowledge of the Arian controversy, would be unaware of the theological implications of the extra nu. In fact, a much better sense is obtained by reading *agennētos*, which is the true opposite of *monogenēs*: "unbegotten" contrasted with "only-begotten." The opposite of *agenētos*, "uncreated," is *genētos*, "created," which Sarapion never applies to the Son. Support for the reading *agennētos* is found in prayer 20, where the Father is addressed as *gennētōr tou monogenous*. With this reading the prayers lose this particular taint of heresy. Admittedly the reading is only conjectural, but the mere possibility seriously weakens Botte's argument.

The question of Sarapion's orthodoxy is chiefly important from its implications for the date of the collection. Further support for an early date (and therefore for the collection's authenticity) may be found in the sections of the anaphora which also appear in St. Mark. These are the Sanctus, with the passages leading up to it (pre-Sanctus) and on from it (post-Sanctus), and the institution narrative.

In the pre-Sanctus, Sarapion agrees with the Coptic St. Mark and the Deir Balyzeh papyrus in omitting a passage derived from St. James¹⁴ which leads up to the Sanctus recited by the celebrant alone. Sarapion also, unlike the others, omits any reference to the cherubim, perhaps to preserve the text of Isaiah without additions.¹⁵ Sarapion and Deir Balyzeh both read "veiling the face" (scil., of God), where both versions of St. Mark have altered it to "their faces" in the interests of orthodoxy. Sarapion himself is probably responsible for the introduction of four heavenly orders from Col 1:16, with the resultant clumsy repetition.

After the Sanctus, where all other sources quite clearly intend to pray for the consecration of the elements, Sarapion presents a text which could be interpreted as referring back to the thanksgiving which culminates in the Sanctus: "Fill this sacrifice with your power and participation, for we have set before you this living sacrifice, the bloodless offering." Dix¹⁶ relates the word "living" to "living men" in the Preface, in which case the sacrifice will be a self-offering. It seems more probable that Sarapion intended a consecratory epiclesis like the others, but the wording shows traces of an older conception of the sacrifice of praise, not otherwise known later than the second century.

In the institution narrative, again, Sarapion's text, when disentangled

¹² "L'Eucologe" 52-53.

¹³ *Ibid.* 52, n. 6.

¹⁴ Brightman, *Liturgies* 131.28-132.1 = 50.26-30.

¹⁵ So Funk, *Didascalia* 2, 173, n. 9.

¹⁶ *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945) 166.

from his anamnesis, is shorter than any other among the relevant sources,¹⁷ and may therefore be regarded as evidence for an early date.

These points, taken together, suggest that Sarapion knew an earlier and simpler form of the anaphora of St. Mark than that of the *textus receptus*. The insertion of the Sanctus was made at an earlier date than in any other source. If the text of Sarapion's anaphora was further revised at a later date, it is most probable that the opportunity would have been taken to update the sections from St. Mark to conform with their latest version at Alexandria. It thus becomes increasingly possible that the collection and editing of these prayers was, after all, the work of Sarapion, Bishop of Thmuis, the friend of Athanasius.

King's College, London

G. J. CUMING

Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxford

¹⁷ Conveniently tabulated by R.-G. Coquin, "L'Anaphore alexandrine de saint Marc," *Muséon* 82 (1969) 335.