

**THE DOGMATICS TEACHINGS IN THE WORKS OF SAINT SYMEON THE NEW
THEOLOGIAN
(A SUMMARY)**

The life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian written by his disciple, Nichita Stethatos, is a product of byzantine hagiographic literature, although Nichita Stethatos wasn't a biographer, but a mystic writer and a defender of Christian Orthodoxy against latin innovations. Even though some scholars argue that the life of Saint Symeon was written following the pattern of byzantine hagiographers and thus exaggerating some aspects, we don't have to forget that Nichita Stethatos knew Saint Symeon and was a witness at some of his life events and the life of Saint Symeon was written to prepare the return of the saint's relics in Constantinople and it had to be a writing worthy of Saint Symeon's personality.

The theological developments of Saint Symeon are not the product of scolastics developments, but they are the real experiencing faith teachings in every day life. For Saint Symeon the true theologian is that who first receives the divine light and only then teaches about God.

The theology of Saint Symeon the New Theologian is based on the teachings of Church Fathers and mystical writers like: Marc the Ascetic, Diadoch of Foticee and Macarius the Egyptian. An important influence on the New Theologian theological developments had Saint Symeon the Pious, New Theologian spiritual father.

The doctrine about Trinity in the works of Saint Symeon isn't systematized in a special study. Saint Symeon didn't propose himself to write about Trinity's doctrine. The Trinity doctrine was written in defensive purposes against his opponents who accused him of heresy, and to spur his readers to follow him and become receivers of the uncreated light of divinity. In his teachings about Trinity, Saint Symeon pleads for unity of the Trinity, without terminate the three hypostases: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Saint Symeon also shows that the purpose of the believer is the vision of Trinity's Persons, vision which begins in this present life as a bounty of the eternal life.

When Saint Symeon talks about the Holy Spirit, he doesn't separate Him from Father and Son, showing so the unity of the Trinity.

A characteristic teaching of Saint Symeon is that about the conscious felling of the divine grace. The saint insists on the conscious felling of the divine grace as an assurance for the faithful that he fulfills God's will, and, thus, his efforts are received by Him.

The Christology doctrine, in general, and Incarnation doctrine, in particular, in the works of Saint Symeon follows the teachings of the Church and those of Holy Fathers. Thus, based on the judgements of the fourth ecumenical Synod, Saint Symeon confesses that the two natures of God's incarnated Son have united in a unmixed, unchanged, undivided and inseparable way¹.

Jesus Christ our Savior is true God and true human, who was incarnated for our salvation and deification². Saint Symeon shows that the preparation for the Incarnation was made through the faithful remnant who God chose. Then, at the fullness of time (*Gal. 4, 4*), the Savior Incarnated from Virgin Mary, who conceived by Descent of Holy Spirit and so, God's Word assumed in the divine hypostasis the human nature, free of sin³. Only by assumption of whole human nature, free of sin, Jesus Christ our Savior could deify it and make possible deification for all humanity. Therefore the human nature assumed by God's Son was taken by the divine hypostasis and so in Christ there were not two persons, but one person of two natures⁴. Hence, the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God because she gave birth to God's Son who became human⁵.

Thru the ages, Saint Symeon the New Theologian was regarded sometimes as a mystic who didn't granted too much significance to the hierarchy. His doctrine about the Church isn't too developed, but this thing doesn't mean he didn't gave it too much importance. His doctrine about the Church isn't too much developed, but this thing is not due to the low importance that Saint Symeon gave to it, this thing is due to the fact that the saint was preoccupied to show the Church as the body whose head is Christ, and the faithfuls form the parts of the body, including the sinners which are the sick parts of the body which need to be cured. The body of the Church isn't whole until those who are destined by God will be born and the sinners will repent.

¹ SC 122, p. 251.

² Sfântul SIMEON NOUL TEOLOG, *Imne, Epistole și Capitole*, p. 69.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 209.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 292.

⁵ Sfântul SIMEON NOUL TEOLOG, *Discursuri teologice și etice*, p. 134.

Talking about the hierarchy of the Church, Saint Symeon shows the importance and prestige, but at the same time he reproves those who are unworthy. The hierarchy is the guardian of the teachings of the Apostles received from Jesus Christ, and this quality is shown by apostolic succession.

The sacraments through which the faithful receive divine grace, are committed by successors of the Apostles, bishops and priests. The Church is also the place in which the faithful receive the divine light, because through the sacraments and religious holidays faithful receive the divine light of Holy Spirit. Saint Symeon insists on a true feeling of the divine grace, because the only the dead doesn't feel anything and, thus, all the religious holidays of the Church and, also, the sacraments beside the seen acts have an unseen part which reveals only to those which have acquired spiritual sight of the uncreated divine light.

The writings of Saint Symeon are full of testimonies of the vision of the uncreated divine light. For Saint Symeon the vision of the divine light is synonymous with the vision of God. Reading the writings of Saint Symeon we can say that for him the purpose of Christian life is the vision of the divine light which is the vision of God. More, Saint Symeon shows that the vision of God is the result of seeking Him with all strength.

Repentance and tears are the first steps to discover God as light, then are required ascetic efforts which shouldn't be separated from love and humbleness. Also, the saint focuses on sincerity and kindness and tells that God shows himself to those who are honest and kind, rather to those who make from asceticism the only purpose and forget that the asceticism is only a step to the vision of God.

For those who receive the view of the divine light, the kingdom of God begins in this life and the other life means only a greater vision of God.

The hesychast experience of Saint Symeon has in center the person of Jesus Christ because He is the one who brings the humans in communion with the Trinity.

Saint Symeon shows that Jesus Christ is the example to follow, He unites himself with the faithful in a „mystical wedding”.

The New Theologian describes eternal happiness that the righteous will have and the eternal torment of the sinners. He shows that happiness or torment depend on us, because God doesn't constraint our freedom and those who search Him find Him (*Lc. 11, 10*).

About the Judgment Day, Saint Symeon tells that this day have already arrived for the righteous because by receiving the divine light they already live in the kingdom of God, and the second coming of Jesus Christ will not be surprising and unexpected because they wait Him relentless⁶. The Judgment Day will bring a renewal and a transfiguration by fire, the divine fire which burns impurity and deifies⁷.

After the transfiguration the creation will be „immaterial and spiritual”⁸. Also, Saint Symeon states that the transfiguration of the creation is related to the transfiguration of humans⁹.

The influence exerted by Saint Symeon on his contemporary means the influence on the monks of his monastery and the influence on his disciple Nichita Stethatos which was influenced by the teachings about prayer, knowledge of God, divine grace, and also the teachings about tears and repentance.

In his writings Saint Symeon the New Theologian doesn't expand the distinction between the nature and energy of God, nevertheless his doctrine about the divine light influenced Saint Gregory Palamas who inherits from Saint Symeon the New Theologian the doctrine about the divine grace which he develops and states clearly and without ambiguities.

Saint Symeon is considered to be a predecessor of hesychasm because it includes most of the saint teachings. The hesychasm isn't a new doctrine but the return of the monachism to the primordial simplicity.

Although hesychasm is a monastic notion his teachings can be applied by christian laity, because it can bring one closer to God.

⁶ *Disc. etice, p. 312.*

⁷ *Disc. etice, p. 117.*

⁸ *Disc. etice, p. 119.*

⁹ *Disc. etice, p. 110-111.*