

EVAGRIE PONTICUL, *Scolii la Pilde și Ecclesiast*
[EVAGRIOS OF PONTUS, *Scholia on Proverbs and on Ecclesiastes*], Traducere din limba greacă veche, introducere și note de Ierom. Agapie CORBU, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2017, 223 p.

Among the numerous and valuable publications of “Institutul Biblic și de Misiunea Ortodoxă” Publishing House, there appeared the exceptional Philokalic work *Scholia on Proverbs and on Ecclesiastes*, published for the first time in Romanian. The book has the blessing of His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and it is a part of the collection “Credința Ortodoxă”, totalling 223 pages, in excellent graphic condition: sober, legible and practical. Moreover, the mentioned collection has already published a series of patristic works, translated for the first time in Romanian, being a valuable primary source for Romanian theology, handed over by the Romanian Patriarchate, through the care and exhortation of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel.

The book includes two works by the famous monk Evagrius (345-399) born in Pontus, Asia Minor, that is two short scriptural comments on two of the Old Testament books, in the form of scholia: *The Proverbs* and *The Ecclesiastes*. The translations are based on the Greek text from the critical editions published in the series *Source Chrétiennes*, vol. 340 and vol. 379. Thus we can speak of a direct translation rather than an intermediate one, which facilitates direct access to the thought and expression of the Philokalic author.

The two Evagrian works are preceded by an extensive and comprehensive academic study designed to restore the true theological profile of Abba Evagrius. The study signed by the translator is based on the latest

researches and opinions of the specialists and theologians from the Orthodox and Catholic societies, and on the views of the scholars concerned with Evagrius Pontikos' work and thinking. He also discusses the acceptance of Evagrian thinking in the Romanian theology, through the Philokalia translated by Father Dumitru Stăniloae, through the famous doctorate thesis of Patriarch Iustin Moisescu, submitted at the Faculty of Theology from Athens in 1937 and by the newer translations of Father Ioan I. Ică jun., comprising the studies and work of Father Gabriel Bunge, the greatest specialist in the work and thought of Abba Evagrius. The introduction has the merit of providing an overview of the life, work, spiritual thought, and the reception of the Evagrian theology in the academic and monastic theological world. The introductory study ends with a small terminology dictionary designed to give the reader some landmarks on essential terms of ascetic literature which was systematised by Abba Evagrius. Such a rigorous and scientific study, framed in the spiritual line of the Church Fathers' thought opens the reader the possibility of perceiving this translation much more than an intellectual work of great philological and philosophical refinement, enabling him to see in the Evagrian thinking the traditional line of the Cappadocian Fathers' thinking, as well as of the Fathers of the Desert.

The footnotes accompanying the two works may constitute a separate study that aims to clarify the reader punctually in terms of explaining and giving a nuanced translation of the terms and words specific to the Evagrian thinking. Similarly, the notes refer to the Scriptural text used by Abba Evagrius in his scholia, which gives an exhaustive picture of how Evagrius mastered and used the Holy Scripture. The bibliography at the end of the book comes to certify the scientific value of the introductory study, the explanatory notes and the translation itself.

The two scholia present Abba Evagrius as an exquisite exegete of the Scripture, bringing to light his exegetic works less known and appreciated in the theological environments and especially in the Romanian theology. In fact, the entire Evagrian exegetic work reveals the central place the Holy Scripture held in the life of the Egyptian monks. The very way of rendering the scholia, which follows the literary form of the texts, places them in the line and tradition of the Desert Fathers and the Philokalic literature. Such a translation is entirely new in Romanian theology, highlighting the ascetic interpretation of the Scripture for the purpose of spiritual guidance, as well

as the rich spiritual literature based on Divine Revelation.

The Evagrian Scholia on *The Proverbs* and *The Ecclesiastes* only follow the representative and enlightening elements of the spiritual life without insisting too much on the literal meaning of the text. Their purpose was to teach the monk how to use Scripture as the basis for everyday life. So, they discover a spiritual theology of the Fathers from the wilderness of Egypt, a way of living beyond the simplistic and reductive framework of biblical exegesis and patristic textbooks that see scholium as a certain literature genre. The text of the scholia follows the three great stages of spiritual life: work or practical, physical or the natural form of contemplation and theological or the contemplation of the Holy Trinity. In fact, these stages of spiritual life are applied to three books from the Old Testament. So, *The Proverbs* corresponds to the first stage, that is, to practice; *The Ecclesiastes* corresponds to the second stage of spiritual ascension, namely natural contemplation; *Song of Songs* corresponds to the last stage, namely the theology or contemplation of the Most Holy Trinity, which is nothing but perfection. This way of thinking and association does not belong to Evagrius. It follows the line of the previous Fathers: Origen, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus the Blind, pursuing only the spiritual meaning of the Scripture.

The present translation is part of a highly balanced, current and accessible philological line, but the afferent theological accents open it both to the unprofessional reader who loves spiritual literature and to the specialists and theologians, who can discover nuances and the meanings of some theological terms. The translator, the erudite hieromonk Agapie Corbu, puts into operation two works at the same time simple and spiritual, complex and theological, which can open true personal spiritual and theological paths through the reading, studying and interiorization of the Evagrian text.

The present work as well as the entire translation effort is meant to give the Church and theology the true theological profile of one of the most fascinating spiritual authors, Abba Evagrius Pontikos.

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