

reason of their employment or even just out of curiosity to know, they wish to study in a serious way Vatican law: which, in the light of the peculiarities that derive from the extraordinary configuration of the State, can act both as a useful key to reading other legislation, both as an “instrument” to better understand the bilateral and multilateral relations that unite the Vatican City State with other subjects of international law.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Constantin Rus

Sfântul ISAAC SIRUL, *Cuvinte ascetice (Ascetical Homilies)*, vol. 1, Cuvintele I-XXX, ediție bilingvă, text critic grec stabilit de Marcel Pirard, Université de Louvain; Introducere, traducere, note și comentarii Ieromonah Agapie Corbu (Bilingual edition, Greek critical text established by Marcel Pirard, Université de Louvain; Introduction, translation, notes and comments by Hieromonk Agapie Corbu), Editura Sf. Nectarie, Arad, 2022, ISBN 978-606-8840-20-8, CXLVIII+622 pp.

After a translation effort worthy of an intellectual odyssey, the indefatigable father Agapie Corbu offers the Romanian culture and theology one of the philokalical pearls which influenced and inspired entire generations of Christian monks, theologians of all denominations, and lovers of the *Philokalia*. St. Isaac of Syria's *Ascetical Homilies* (Λόγοι ασκητικοί) is the most famous philokalical work, along with the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* of St. John Climacus. For centuries, these two works will become true manuals of asceticism for labors' lovers.

This famous and, at the same time, extremely practical writing was translated into several languages and became known throughout the Christian world. Over time, its notoriety determined the appearance of several manuscripts and prints of the famous *Ascetical Homilies*, reaching

hundreds of copies and printed versions. Father Agapie's translation is based on the critical edition of the Hellenist and Belgian Orthodox orientalist Marcel Pirard, spiritual son of the Holy Monastery of Iviron in the Holy Mountain, under whose auspices this critical edition appeared in 2012.

The novelty of the Romanian edition lies in the fact that Father Agapie also uses the Syriac manuscripts of the *Ascetical Homilies* and not just the critical edition, with the idea of rendering the original text as faithful as possible. It is also worth noting that Father Agapie's translation is the first modern language translation of its critical edition.

The translator endeavors to render as much of the nuances of the Semitic thought of St. Isaac as possible, bearing in mind that the philokalical author thought and wrote in a Semitic language. To the same extent as consistently as possible in Romanian, the translator renders technical terms specific to the Syriac terminology systematically used by Saint Isaac to convey his teaching. A methodological principle the translator uses is linguistic parity which defines a quality translation. Thus, the Syriac technical terms found at the origin of the Greek ones, which depart from the original, were rendered by Romanian terms that correspond stylistically and semantically.

The bilingual text is equipped with a highly complex critical apparatus. Thus, the Greek text is accompanied by the following marginal notes: on the left, in red, there are references to patristic texts quoted by St. Isaac or to which he alludes, as well as references to his other texts; on the right, in red, there is the indicative numbering of the lines, corresponding to the five-by-five numbering of the Iviron edition; also on the right, in black bold, the page numbers of the Bedjan edition are noted, corresponding to the Greek text. Biblical quotations are rendered in italics.

The following marginal notes accompany the Romanian text: on the left, at the beginning of each paragraph, the corresponding line number from the Greek edition of Iviron is indicated in red, being in correspondence with the numbering in the Greek text on the left page; to the right of the translation, the biblical references are marked in red.

The entire bilingual text is accompanied by explanatory footnotes, taken from the critical edition, which points out the significant differences

between the Syriac text and the Greek translation. The terms, phrases, or phrases corrected by Marcel Pirard are contained in the critical text between asterisks, printed in red. The corresponding Syriac variant is noted in the footer, followed by the correct translation in ancient Greek.

The Romanian translation of the *Ascetical Homilies* is a true “perichoresis” between erudition and spirituality, a priceless spiritual treasure and an exceptional philological-theological achievement, adding to this the printing of the text in excellent graphic conditions.

The volume opens with a “Prologue to the Romanian edition of the Greek text”, written by the well-known orientalist Marcel Pirard, who showed his full availability for the Romanian translation as the translator testifies. The short but dense prologue defines the nobility and professionalism of this specialist, enslaved by the spirituality and beauty of Abba Isaac’s writings.

An extensive “Introductory Study” follows (pp. XIII-CXII), a real academic marathon structured in two large parts: I. The historical part, and II. The theological part. The historical part presents the history and development of the Syriac-Oriental Church, where Father Isaac was spiritually formed and active, his life, the landmarks of his intellectual and spiritual formation, and his writings. It ends with a detailed presentation of the saint’s writing translations from the earliest (8th-9th centuries) to the modern ages, and then with an insistence on the history of the Greek version. This version circulated in Eastern Orthodoxy from the Mediterranean European area.

The theological part focuses on the terminology, which contains the entire spiritual teaching and theological thinking of Abba Isaac. Aware of this richness and subtlety, sometimes difficult to notice, the translator chooses and explains the most common terms and expressions found in the writings of Saint Isaac. We see the refined etymological predilection of the translator for each word or phrase. Thus, the term is rendered in six languages with the corresponding translation, and all translation variants are reproduced for the Romanian language. It should be noted that these explained terms are found in the Romanian translation and rendered in italics.

After this introductory study, the bibliography follows, which is exhaustive in content, at least for the Romanian theological space. This impressive bibliography includes critical editions and manuscripts, translations into modern languages of Saint Isaac's writings, patristic sources, secondary literature - books, treatises, studies - grammar, dictionaries, and electronic resources. In a few pages, the translator explains the "Principles of the present edition" (pp. CXLI-CXLV), then the "Symbols of the critical apparatus", and then the first thirty words of *Ascetical Homilies* bilingually presented.

The last part of the volume includes the translator's notes on the text (pp. 467-622) organized for each Homily. These explanatory notes form a second study of great theological depth which indicate the differences between the Greek and Romanian text due to the corrections made by the translator based on the Syriac original.

So, St. Isaac's text is flanked by two studies for freedom of interpretation and understanding of his writing, a non-systematic author, not included in any scheme typical for academic theology. It is the great merit of the translator to decipher Saint Isaac in his true spirit.

The translator, Protosyngellos Dr. Agapie Corbu, abbot of the "Bunavestire" Monastery, Almas, from the Archdiocese of Arad, is already well known in the Romanian theological and cultural environment through more than 20 books translated from Greek. His reverend's translational effort restored famous patristic works to Romanian culture, theology, and spirituality, such as: *The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, by Cyril of Scythopolis; *Philokalical Homilies*, Evagrius' Disciples; *Notes on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, Evagrius Ponticus; *Spiritual Homilies*, Joseph Hazzaya. To these is added the spiritual experience of Elder Aimilianos Simonopetritis, a renewer of contemporary hesychastic life in the Holy Mountain, in the form of homilies, catechesis, interpretations, and speeches edited by the Ormylia Monastery in Greece. Father Agapie's erudition and professionalism are also recognized abroad, in the circles of Hellenists, Orientalists, and Syriacists, and in the Athonite spiritual environment.

Protosyngellos Lect. dr. Nicolae M. TANG