

Book Reviews

Vasile Bîrzu, *Împlinind Legea Dragostei în adâncul inimii: spiritualitate isihastă la Sfântul Diadoh al Foticeei [Fulfilling the Law of Love in His Heart: Hesychastic Spirituality in St. Diadochos of Photike]*, Astra Museum/Ecclesiast, Sibiu, 2013, 340 p.

This volume is the revised and extended version of the PhD thesis presented under the guidance of Archdeacon Ph. D. Constantin Voicu at the chair of Patristic of “Andrei Țaguna” Faculty in Sibiu. The paper is divided into four chapters, which address from a historical and doctrinal point of view the ascetic and mystical spirituality of St. Diadochus of Photike, author of the fifth century AD.

The first chapter (pp. 13-50) presents the socio-historical and doctrinal context in which St. Diadochus’ writings have appeared, while dismantling the views of some modern scholars in whose opinion these writings would be nothing more than a deliberate summary of the corpus of *The Pseudo-Macarian Homilies* (see Frederick Dörr and Herman Dorries). The author makes a comparison with other similar writings of the time, demonstrating both the kinship of Diadochus’s writings with these ones and some original features. In other words, Diadochus’s doctrinal corpus enrolls in a traditional line which, on the basis of biblical and philosophical legacies, brings an answer to some age-specific spiritual problems.

Chapter II (pp. 69-102) highlights the Orthodox character of St. Diadochus’s writings, especially as compared with the two spiritual heresies that have troubled the Church in the fifth century: messalianism and pelagianism. Along with presenting its balanced character, the chapter also exposes the other dimensions of the spirituality of Diadochus’s doctrine: the sacramental fundament of his mysticism, which also implies other characteristics: the ecclesiastical and community character is the result of the Trinity, Christological and pneumatological character of the spiritual life in the Church.

The third chapter (pp. 103-226) is the largest and the most interesting chapter of the volume. Here is an attempt to systematize the elements and stages of ascetic life in St. Diadochus of Photike’s vision, which includes both the struggle with the passions and the practice of virtues: after exposing the mechanisms of human temptation, the author also mentions some of the most dangerous passions (“love of the world”, “unjust anger” and “vain glory”), a subchapter (p. 143) evoking then the ascetic virtues: faith, obedience, temperance, “wise anger” or prayer. Like for other ascetical-mystical authors,