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### SYMEON METAPHRASTES "THE LIFE OF SYMEON THE STYLITE" (THE SOURCES)

The main sources on the founder of stylitism, Symeon the Stylite (386-459), are the following two works:

1. *On Symeon*, the 26<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Historia Philothea* (written by Symeon's eyewitness, Theodoret of Cyrus in 444).<sup>1</sup> This Greek source represents a broad and precise account of the biography of the ascetic, however, it lacks its death.

2. *The Antony Life* (written by Antony, a disciple of Symeon in the 5th c.).<sup>2</sup> It depends on Theodoret's one.<sup>3</sup>

The lives of Symeon are preserved also in Syriac. AbouZayd Shafiq<sup>4</sup> lists some of them, such as Vatican Ms. Syr. 117<sup>5</sup>, British Museum Add. 14484 (copied in the VI c. the text written in 472)<sup>6</sup> and Add. 12174 (copied in 1197)<sup>7</sup>, Damascus Dam. Patr. 12/17 of 12. Gérard Garitte<sup>8</sup> and Arthur Vööbus<sup>9</sup> mention also Ms. Vat. syr. 160 (473)<sup>10</sup>, a long panegyric to Symeon the Stylite, Nešhānā, or praise, as Vööbus calls it. The later Syriac lives and legends on Symeon scientists regard as less reliable.

Symeon Metaphrastes (X c.) was interested in the life of Symeon, and composed a work on him.<sup>11</sup> The question is, what kind of sources had been used by Symeon Metaphrastes when writing *the Life of Symeon* and how did he use them.

The comparison between *the Life of Symeon* (Symeon Metaphrastes) and *On Symeon* (Theodoret) can prove the observation that Symeon Metaphrastes used work of Theodoret as the main source. The texts of both of these works are almost the same. Symeon Metaphrastes is beginning his work: Συμεών τον πάνυ, τὸ μέγα θαῦμα τῆς οἰκουμένης, ἴσασι μὲν πάντες οἱ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας ὑπήκοοι· ἔδραμε δὲ καὶ μέχρι Σκυθῶν τῶν νομάδων τῆ φημηῆ· ἦδη δὲ καὶ Πέρσαι, καὶ Ἰνδοὶ, καὶ Αἰθιόπων ἔθνη, καὶ ὅσοι τῆς γῆς ἄλλο τι μέρος (I, 1-5).

The first lines of Theodoret's *On Symeon* are: Συμεώνη τον πάνυ, τὸ μέγα θαῦμα τῆς οἰκουμένης, ἴσασι μὲν ἅπαντες οἱ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας ὑπήκοοι· ἔγνωσαν δὲ καὶ Πέρσαι, καὶ Μῆδοι<sup>12</sup>, καὶ Αἰθιόπες, καὶ πρὸς Σκύθας δὲ τοὺς νομάδας ἡ φήμη δραμούσα τὴν τοῦδε φιλοποιίαν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν ἐδίδαξεν (I, 1-5). This similarity can not be accidental. All the more,

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Canivet et Alice Leroy-Molinghen, *Theodoret de Cyr, "Histoire des Moines de Syrie."* Sources Chrétiennes NN 234, 257. Paris: 1977, 1979. English translation: Price R.M. *A History of the Monks of Syria*. Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> French translation: André M.-J. Festugière. *Antioche Païenne et Chrétienne. Libanius, Chrysostome et les Moines de Syrie*. Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1959, 496. For the Greek text: Lietzmann, *Das leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites*. TuU 32,4. Leipzig, 1908 and *Συλλογή Παλαιστίνης καὶ Συριακῆς ἀγιολογίας*. Ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus. SPB., 1907.

<sup>3</sup> When researching *the Antony Life* Festugière mentions that "Lietzmann(218) en conclut à une dépendance directe d'Antoine à l'égard de Théodoret" (371).

<sup>4</sup> Abou Zayd Shafiq. *Ihidayutha: a Study of the Life of Singleness in the Syrian Orient. From Ignatius of Antioch to Chalcedon 451 AD*. ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies. Oxford, 1993, 372-373.

<sup>5</sup> It was published by Assémani: Acta Sanctorum II, 273-394.

<sup>6</sup> It was published by Bedjan: Acta Martyrum IV, 507-644, BHO 1121ss.

<sup>7</sup> Acta Martyrum IV, XI-XIV.

<sup>8</sup> Gérard Garitte. Les Vies Géorgiennes de S. Syméon Stylite L'Ancien et de S. Ephrem. *Scripta Disiecta*, 1941-1977, vol. I. Louvain-La-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 1980, 269.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Vööbus. *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*. 2 vols. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 184, 197. Subsidia 14, 17. Vol. 2: *Early monasticism in Mesopotamia and Syria*. 1960, 209.

<sup>10</sup> It was published by Assémani, BHO 1124.

<sup>11</sup> Patrologia Graeca, vol. 114, col. 335-392: Συμεών Μαγίστρου καὶ λογοθέτου Λόγος εἰς τῶν ὁσίων Συμεών τον ἐν τῷ στήλι. For the Georgian edition see: *ძველი მეტაფრასული კრებულება / სექტემბრის საკითხავები*. ძველი ქართული მწერლობის ძეგლები, VII. თბილისი: მეცნიერება, 1986, 26-58.

<sup>12</sup> Canivet comments: Au lieu de Μῆδοι, plusieurs mss ont "Ἰνδοὶ" (*"Histoire des Moines de Syrie"*, vol.2, 159, n. 2).

Theodoret himself is mentioned few times in *the Life of Symeon*, for example: ἄπαξ δέ τις τῶν παρὰ τῷ φιλαρέτῳ Θεοδωρήτῳ χιλίας καὶ διακοσίας ἐπὶ τεσσαράκοντα καὶ τέσσαρσι ἀριθμήσας, εἶτα ὀκλάσας ἀφῆκε τὴν ψῆφον (Metaphrastes, PG. 114, col. 377-380). These lines correspond to those of Theodoret's *On Symeon*: "Ἀπαξ δέ τις τῶν σὺν ἐμοὶ χιλίας καὶ διακοσίας πρὸς τέτταρσι καὶ τεσσαράκοντα ἀριθμήσας, εἶτα ὀκλάσας ἀφῆκε τὴν ψῆφον (Canivet, vol. II, 204). The text is almost the same.

The rest of the text of *On Symeon* is changed by Metaphrastes a little bit more. There are some addition-lessenings, new chapter numbers and some other differences. However, in Metaphrastes' work, in the 1-49<sup>th</sup> chapters of it, all the text of *On Symeon* is more or less included, except a few paragraphs from the middle of *On Symeon* and the 17<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> chapters in full. The parallels with regard to Theodoret are represented in the scholia of the *Life of Symeon*, PG 114.

Another source of Symeon Metaphrastes is *the Antony Life*. Metaphrastes reduced this long text and made some changes. He altered it and replaced the chapters. Thus, the 24-25<sup>th</sup> chapters of the *Life of Symeon the Stylite* correspond to the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of *the Antony Life*, 29<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 32-34<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>, 52-53<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>st</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>st</sup>, 56<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> to the 31-32<sup>nd</sup>. The editors of *Patrologia Graeca* do not mention *the Antony Life* in the scholia of the *Life of Symeon*, nevertheless, it is one of the main sources of it. There is a story about the sterile queen in *the Antony Life*: "Une certaine reine des Sarrasins, qui était stérile, vint suppliant le saint pour qu' elle enfantât: car elle était chaque jour insultée par son mari. Faisant donc nombre de prosternations et supplications elle demeurait là bien des jours obstinément fidèle à la colonne de saint Syméon".<sup>13</sup> The *Life of Symeon* represents the same text in the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter with the addition-changes: Γυνὴ δέ τις ἐπιφανῆς φύσει οὐκ ἀσήμου, τῷ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν ἄρχοντι συνώκει, καὶ τὴν νηδὺν ἄγονος οὔσα παίδων· ἄλλως τε δέ καὶ τῆς συμφορᾶς ἐπίτασιν τὸν ἄνδρα ἔχουσα πολλὰ τῆς ἀπαιδίας ὀνειδίη αὐτῆς καταχέοντα. Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο παίδων ἐφιεμένη παρὰ τὸν μέγαν ἄπεισι Συμεῶν, καὶ στᾶσα πρὸς ταῖς τοῦ περιβόλου εἰσόδοις.

Symeon Metaphrastes used for a source also the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Evagrius, particularly, a little part of it, that concerns with Symeon the Stylite (I, 13-14). Metaphrastes used it for the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 56<sup>th</sup>, 58<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> chapters of his work. The episode with the Symeon Church, of which Evagrius was eyewitness, has to be underlined: 'Ἐπόθουν τὸ τέμενος τούτου δὴ τοῦ ἁγίου θεάσασθαι. Διέστηκε δὲ Θεουπόλεως σταδίου μάλιστα τριακοσίους κείμενον πρὸς αὐτὴν τοῦ ὄρους τὴν κορυφὴν... Ἡ δὲ τοῦ νεῶ οἰκοδομία σύγκειται μὲν σταυροῦ δίκην ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων πλευρῶν στοαῖς κοσμουμένη· παρατετάχεται δὲ ταῖς στοαῖς κίονες ἐκ λίθου ξεστοῦ πεπονημένοι εὐπρεπῶς, εὗ μάλα τὴν ὀροφὴν εἰς ὕψος ἐπαίροντες. Τὸ δὲ γε μέσον αὐτῆ ὑπαίθριος ἐστίν, μετὰ πλείστης ἐξειργασμένη τῆς τέχνης· ἔνθα ὁ τεσσαρακοντάπηχυς ἴσταται κίων, ἐν ᾧ τὸν οὐράνιον διήνυσσε βίον ὁ ἐπὶ γῆς ἔνσαρκος ἄγγελος. Πρὸς τῇ ὀροφῇ τοίνυν τῶν λελεγμένων στοῶν κλειθρίδια καθεστᾶσι - θυρίδας ἔνιοι καλοῦσι - πρὸς τε τὸ λελεγμένον ὑπαίθριον πρὸς τε τὰς στοὰς ἀπὸκρινόμενα (I, 14).

Symeon Metaphrastes made some changes on this part of the text of Evagrius: Τῆς μέντοι τοῦ ὄρους, ἐν ᾧ τοὺς μεγάλους ἐκείνους ὁ θεῖος Συμεῶν ἄθλους διήνυσεν, ἰδρυμένον ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς τέμενος ἱερὸν φερούσης, σταυρός ἦν τοῦ εὐκτηρίου τὸ σχῆμα, τέσσαρσι στοαῖς ἐφ' ἑκατέρᾳ τῶν πλευρῶν διειλημμένος. τὴν δὲ στοὰν λίθου ξεστοῦ κίονες ἤρειδον ἐφ' ὕψηλοῦ τοῦ ὀρόφου. Καὶ τὸ μεταξὺ ὑπαίθρος ἦν αὐτῆ πολλῶ περιλαμπομένη πάντοθεν τῷ ἡλίῳ. Ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ ὁ στύλος ἐκείνος ὁ τεσσαρακοντάπηχυς ἴστατο, ἐφ' οὗ τὴν ἀγγελικὴν ἐκείνην ἐποιεῖτο πολιτείαν. Ἐν γε μὴν τῇ τῶν στοῶν ὀροφῇ καὶ θυρίδες ἦσαν, δι' ὧν τὰ ἔνδον τὸ τῆς ἡμέρας φῶς κατεδέχοντο (59).

It is clear that the work of Evagrius has been quite changed by Metaphrastes. Nevertheless, it is mentioned in the scholia of PG as a source.

One more source can be also mentioned. It is the *Life of Daniel the Stylite*. The 40<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Life of Symeon*: Δεξιωσάμενος δὲ αὐτὸν ὁ θεῖος Συμεῶν τὰ εἰκότε, "Ἰσχυε καὶ ἀνδρίζου, τέκνον Δανιήλ, ἔφη· πολλοὺς γὰρ διὰ τὸν κοινὸν Δεσπότην ὑποστήση καμάτους. Πλὴν ἀλλὰ χαῖρε· τῇ γὰρ αὐτοῦ χάριτι τοῦ πολεμίου κρατήσας ἀπολαύσεις τῆς τοῦ οὕτως ἀλλοῦντας περιμενούσης μακαριότητος. Καὶ τὴν χεῖρα τῇ τοῦ Δανιήλ κεφαλῇ ἐπιθείς, εὐχαῖς τὰ εἰρημένα ἐπεσφραγίσατο. It can be compared with the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Life of Daniel the Stylite*: Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ μακαριὸς Συμεῶν· "Ἰσχυε καὶ ἀνδρίζου, τέκνον Δανιήλ· πολλοὺς γὰρ κόπους ἔχεις ὑπομεῖναι

<sup>13</sup> The Greek text of *the Antony Life* can be found in the following editions: Lietzmann. *Das Leben des Heiligen Symeon Stylites. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 32,4. Leipzig, 1908; A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus. *Συλλογὴ Παλαιστίνης καὶ Συριακῆς ἀγιολογίας*. SPB, 1907. However, they were out of our reach.

διὰ τὸν κύριον· ἐλπίζω δὲ τῷ Θεῷ, ᾧ λατρεύω, αὐτός σε ἐνισχύσει καὶ συνοδοιπόρος σου γένηται". Καὶ ἐπιθεὶς τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπευχόμενος αὐτῷ καὶ εὐλογήσας αὐτὸν ἐπέτρεψεν κατιέναι ἀπὸ τῆς κλίμακος.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, Symeon Metaphrastes used for sources the works of four authors: *On Symeon* from the *Historia Philothea* of Theodoret of Cyrus as the main source (compared with other works it is less changed), *the Antony Life*, *the Life of Daniel the Stylite* and *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Evagrius. For the 1-13<sup>th</sup> chapters Metaphrastes used Theodoret's *On Symeon*, 1-10,

14 \_ ?

15 \_ ?

16-19 \_ Theodoret, 12

20 \_ Theodoret, 13

21-22 – Evagrius, I, 13

23 – Theodoret, 14

24-25 – *The Antony Life*, 14

26-27 – Theodoret, 15, 16

28 – Theodoret, 18

29 – *The Antony Life*, 18

30 – *The Antony Life*, 22

31 – *The Antony Life*, 23

32-34 – *The Antony Life*, 20

35 – *The Antony Life*, 21

36-38 – Theodoret, 19

39 – ?

40 – *The Life of Daniel the Stylite*, 8

41 – ?

42-49 – Theodoret, 20-27

50 – Evagrius, I, 13

51 – ?

52-53 – *The Antony Life*, 26

54 – *The Antony Life*, 28

55 – ?

56 – Evagrius, I, 13

57 – *The Antony Life*, 31, 32

58 – Evagrius, I, 13

59 – Evagrius, I, 14

None of the aforementioned authors is the source for the following chapters: 14, 15, 39, 41, 51, 55. It does not seem that these chapters are derived from the Syriac texts, and it is, all the more, doubtful, whether Symeon Metaphrastes knew Syriac and used the Syriac lives for sources. Syriac lives do not mention Martyrios of Antioch at the funerals of Symeon the Stylite<sup>15</sup> and the burial place of Symeon for the Syriac lives is the church of Constantine the Great instead of the Cassianos' Church mentioned by Metaphrastes and by *the Antony Life*. The Syriac Lives place the first movement of Symeon to obtain the blessedness after the death of his parents (his first appearance in the church),<sup>16</sup> while in Metaphrastes' *Life* Symeon comes to the church together with his parents.

The Greek and Syriac lives have some more differences. The main difference lies in the death of Symeon. Theodoret does not mention it (if not count the later addition at the end of the text). *The Antony Life* as well as *the Syriac Lives*<sup>17</sup> describe the death of the ascetic. The first one places it on Friday and the second – on Wednesday. However, Metaphrastes does not mention what was the day of Symeon's death.

Hence, Symeon Metaphrastes operated with four sources when composing the *Life of Symeon*. He used for the basis *On Symeon* of Theodoret, altered it and enriched with the stories from other sources: *the Antony Life*, *the Life of Daniel the Stylite* and *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Evagrius. However, these four sources do not cover all *the Life of Symeon*, that reveals the necessity of the entire and thorough research of other *Lives* that concern with the open-air life and stylitism of Symeon the Stylite.

<sup>14</sup> Delehay. Vita S. Danielis Stylitae. *Analecta Bollandiana XXXII*. Bruxelles, Societe des Bollandistes: 1913, 113-214, 129.

<sup>15</sup> Festugière: "L' évêque d' Antioche n'est pas nommé: c'est Martyrius selon Ant. 29, 66.21 [458-465?]" (369-370).

<sup>16</sup> Vööbus, 212.

<sup>17</sup> *Syriac Life*, that is Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum*, IV, 507-644. English translation: Frederick Lent and Hans Oertel. "The life of of Symeon the Stylite," *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 35(1915-17): 103-98.