

INTRODUCTION

St. Luke, “the beloved physician” (col. 4:14) wrote The “Book of Acts” around A.D. 75-85 after his composition of the third Book of the Gospel. The book was considered a cornerstone of the “Truth and Faith”; it has been read during the Paschal cycle as part of the Divine Liturgy since the 4th Century. The Acts of the Apostles has enlightened and strengthened the Faith of the Early Church. It has inspired and ignited the apostolic work of many Christians.

The Major theme of the Book is *“the spread of the Gospel by the Apostles, from Jerusalem to the whole world.”*¹ It is in fact the story of the missionary work of the Apostles that began when they were enlightened and inspired by the descent of the Holy Spirit, the description of Paul’s conversion, his journeys establishing small communities and ordaining presbyters for each community. The two main heroes are Peter (Acts 1-12) and Paul (Acts 13-28).

The Book of Acts can be described as the atlas of the Pauline letters and the model, the example, set to solve different controversies of the church. The Holy Fathers copied the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:5-31) in the controversial issues that faced the Early Church, resulting in the establishment of the dogmas and the canons of the Orthodox Faith at the Ecumenical Councils.

This Book is a book of action: a tireless movement to spread the “Good News” of salvation, through the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the proclamation of the eschatological theology. This movement is well described by Edgar Johnson Goodspeed: *“where, within eighty pages, will be found such a varied series of exciting events-trials, riots, persecutions, escapes, martyrdoms, voyages, shipwrecks, rescues-set in the amazing panorama of the ancient world-Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus and Rome, and with such scenery and settings-Temples, courts, prisons, deserts, ships, barracks, theaters?”*²

¹ *“The Orthodox Bible Study”* (OBS).

² Quoted in *“Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, Acts”*, Jaroslav Pelikan, 2005, p 23. Quoted in Krodel 1986, 13.

The content of the book has revealed in the past, is revealing to us nowadays and is going to reveal to the future generations until the end of the earthly time, God the Creator (Acts 17:24), who made the covenant...the covenant of salvation...with our Fathers (Acts 3:25 & 13:17), and has fulfilled His promise (Acts 3:18) by sending His Son and raising Him from death (Acts 3:22, 26 & 13:23). And “*What is seen and heard*” (Acts 2: 33) since the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the continuation of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Acts 2:16-21, 13:40, 15:15-18 & 27: 25-27). It announces first in Jerusalem and thereafter to the whole world, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ...the Salvation message through the proclamation of the Apostles, the first witnesses and their partners: Stephen (the first martyr), Philip, Barnabas and Paul.

This proclamation and this zealous work must not cease nowadays, but it should be continued because the Holy Spirit is still at work in us. Christians who have put on Christ are the continuation of this apostolic missionary; we are partners and witnesses of this Eschatological Good News message.

In the following chapters we will be like the Ethiopian Eunuch discovering, searching, meditating and asking to learn so that we may “*understand what we are reading*”. With the help of Philip and the Church teachings filled with the Holy Spirit, we will be ready to confess our Faith (Acts 8:30, 31 & 37).

The following are my inspirations based on my pilgrimage with the Apostles. They are personal reflections that were inspired by the actions and the words cited in this Book which affected effectively my soul. These personal thoughts have helped me to adapt myself to the teachings of the Early Church and its sacrifice, and ultimately to adopt the Word of God as the Way of life.

Therefore, the content of this paper is according to the traveling history as it is in the Book written to Theophilus "θεόφιλος" the friend of God by Luke the “disciple of Paul” as John Chrysostom describes him. Some messages may seem repetitive because the chapters conveyed same messages. At the same time, the content does not include the various possible ways of interpreting the passages and the sayings of the fathers and scholars. Also, it is not a paper of criticism to search for the authenticity of the texts and the precisions of the geographical citations. This paper does not claim a study in depth of the book. At the end, it is a paper of faith that expresses the effects of the power of

the Holy Spirit that worked in me within the Church at the moment of reading the chapter. It is my personal reflection, pilgrimage, with the Apostles as a Christian whose identity is rooted in Christ and sealed by the seal of Chrism right after my baptism, which made me a member of the body of Christ, the Church, where I can commune with God's graces.

Yes, indeed, this Book was written almost two thousand years ago, but every word and act may be reflected and applied in today's life. This Book and the Scriptures are relevant and are speaking to us right now. The words written on the pages of the Bible are not only in the past and for the past but they are for the present for everyone to read and to stay attentive and vigilant to the whispering of God, and for the future for those who will get hold of this Book.

The Book of Acts may be described as a garden full of flowers. Each flower has its own characteristics that should be discovered. It is the work of the Triune God through the actions of His faithful. Even though the garden, the message, is beautiful and clear, it is full of different colors and aromas. Each flower can produce a different fragrance that will enlighten and inspire our daily Christian life.

Therefore, let us enter this garden and make our pilgrimage through its twenty-eight flowers that we may grasp God's love, grace and mercy.