

UNIVERSITATEA BABEŞ-BOLYAI
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY
"ISIDOR TODORAN" DOCTORAL SCHOOL

THE DISCOURSE OF MILETUS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL (ACTS 20:17-38) IN
THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF THE SECOND HALF OF
THE CHRISTIAN FIRST CENTURY.
- A PROBLEM OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM?-

SUMMARY

Coordinator:

Rev. F. Prof. PhD Dr. STELIAN TOFANĂ

PhD Candidate:

Protos. SILUAN FARCAŞ

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KEYWORDS: SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE, SAINT APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST LUKE, APOSTOLIC AGE, MISSIONARY JOURNEYS, ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, APOSTOLIC DISCOURSE, ANCIENT DISCOURSE, CHURCH OF ASIA, CHRISTIAN SOCIETY, APOSTOLIC CHURCH ORGANIZATION, SACRAMENTAL PRIESTHOOD, ANCIENT SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT, APOSTOLIC BIOGRAPHY, ELITES, CONTEMPORARY TEXTUAL CRITICISM

SUMMARY

The problem of approaching a subject such as the present one is not a new one in Pauline historiography¹, especially since any approach to the life and missionary activity of Saint Paul is inevitably linked to the discourse that the missionary and apostle pronounces, in the vision of his biographer, Luke, as a testament to the incipient Christian community in the Roman province of Asia². Of course, the life and public activity of Saul of Tarsus (*Paulus*/Paul) broadly followed the life and activity of the one who influenced his entire creative missionary work after the "Damascus moment", that is, Jesus Christ, recognized by the community he formed, as the Messiah.

It is easy to see that, in this area, that of the historical figure of the Messiah, in the European or Eastern space, both amateurs, with pretensions of scientists, but also real researchers, the vast majority very honest and well trained, connoisseurs of languages that are now extinct or little used, outside a small circle of specialists, have expressed themselves. And we are considering the Aramaic language, ancient Greek (Attic dialect), the Latin of the classical era, Hebrew. The academic environment has generated an important series of researchers who have studied both the documents from NagHammadi or Qumran, but also other various texts from Semitic, North African or other languages, etc. All of them came to various

¹ For an exhaustive review of the disputes surrounding the subject, see Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 1-14.

² Cf. *THE BIBLE OR HOLY SCRIPTURE*, printed with the blessing of His Beatitude DANIEL, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Publishing House of the Orthodox Biblical and Mission Institute, Bucharest, 2015, p. 1263: "You know how I behaved with you... from the first day when I came to Asia." See also Aland KURT, Matthew BLACK, Bruce M. METZGER, Allen WIKGREN (ed.), *The Greek New Testament*, United Bible Societies, London, 1966, p. 498 (Πράξεις Ἀποστόλων 20, 18: "... εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν"). The meaning of province is understood, for example, from a fragmentary inscription from Jerusalem, datable between the first century BC and the first century AD: "A1. Ἰουλία Ἀσιανή./B.1. Ἰουδι {sic}²." (A.1 Ioulía Asianí. /B.1 Ioudi {sic}²: Julia of Asia. Hebrew), see *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, vol. 33, in the series edited by Henry W. PLEKET, Ronald S. STROUD, Amsterdam, 1983, no. 1284. Alexander Loveday even points to Paul's preference for a Roman citizen's preference for typically Roman provincial names, which were detested and unused by the conquered. See Alexander LOVEDAY, "NARRATIVE MAPS: REFLECTIONS ON THE TOPONOMY OF ACTS," in *The Bible in Human Society. Essays in Honour of John Rogerson*, edited by M. Daniel CAROLL, David J. A. CLINES, Philip R. DAVIES, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1995, p. 21. *Honour of John Rogerson*, edited by M. Daniel CAROLL R., David J. A. CLINES and Philip R. DAVIES, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1995, p. 21.

conclusions, solutions, identified original texts or wrote their opinions on how to interpret those ancient texts.

There are many important names in the area of university academicism and not only, Catholic or Protestant (even neo-Protestant) or Jewish of the nineteenth and twentieth or twenty-first centuries, such as F. F. Bruce, Charles K. Barrett, David Wenham, Richard Wallace, F. Baur, J. D. G. Dunn, William M. Ramsay, Jerome Murphy-O Connor, Rainer Riesner, Steve Walton, Craig S. Keener, Gordon D. Fee, Adrian T. Smith, Bart Ehrman, Brian Pitre, N. T. Wright, Dominic Crossan, Robert Eisler, R. Bauckham, Geza Vermes, E. P. Sanders, Israel Knohl or Maurice Casey, each expounding their own visions on the life and earthly activity of Jesus Christ or St. Paul or the other Apostles. Some of them were challenged or responded in a polemical spirit to other Bible colleagues, sometimes successfully, sometimes with less reference.

Research on the life and activity of the Holy Apostle Paul, but also on his writings, can serve in a kind of "*iter Damascii*".³ We do not always come across an identical portrait of the Holy Apostle Paul. However, the fact that his personality has been preserved for us through the Holy Apostle Luke and his epistles, the only place that offers more room for speculation is that given by his writings. These are nodal points, from which many choose to depict different chronologies or attribute various editing moments (or even authorships) to the writings of St. Paul. Fortunately, from this point of view, the theological activity and work of the Apostle could not be so attacked as that of the Savior.

If the Gospels of Matthew and Mark are centered less on the socio-cultural realities of the Jewish world in the Roman Empire, Luke, as a historian, is clearly interested in all this interweaving, as is John, who makes substantial references to places in Judea, recalling the most diverse toponyms. Luke finds, in fact, the most brilliant, as a true historian that he was (the demonstration in a later chapter) to insert two important characters in this ferment-type mixture, Peter and Paul, their association with the world in which they moved being very well highlighted.

The speeches of Peter and Paul, inserted with a clear purpose in the text of Lucania's work, are identical to the speeches delivered by the historical characters contemporary to them and, obviously, Luke with the help of his collaborators, holding the monopoly of assembling the text, chose to render in an accessible form the essence of what the two said or thought Luke

³ We use the phrase in the sense that she became known either through her biographer (Acts of the Apostles) or personally (Epistle to the Galatians) about her revelation.

could have said. It is possible that he did not hear Peter directly, but he heard Paul (Acts 21:19-21) and we can suspect that some information or fragments from a kind of personal diary seem to have been inserted in the final text⁴. This is also possible for the Pauline Epistles, which he may have had in front of him at the time of their writing⁵. It is very likely that by spending enough time with the missionary he also learned the way of thinking of the missionary. Peter and Paul, the latter especially for the present research, had the role of disseminating the idea of the Savior in the Jewish world, but also of the Roman pagans, preparing, in fact, the evolution of Christological, soteriological theology, from the second to fourth centuries AD. Hr.

What we want through this dissertation is to get closer to the world of St. Paul, a real character who knew Jesus through direct revelation and through direct contact with the community that He formed in about three years of mission in the Near East, more precisely in Galilee and Judea. Paul best conveyed his information through writing and also enjoyed a biography that completes his image as a tireless traveler, missionary and writer, philosopher and polemicist in the religious area of the Roman Empire in the middle of the first century AD. Hr.

After all his activity, he is best defined *by his testament, a discourse left to the community of the Roman province of Asia and which Luke conscientiously passed on in the biography of his heros*. Whether Luke retained everything or retained only the essence and developed the subject in the margin of the mental or scriptural notes, this is less important from a theological point of view. **The text itself had another value: to convey what Luke thought was important for Theophilus and others who will read the text to understand about his real, historical character, engaged in his time and how he saw the future of the communities he created in the Empire.**

The structure of our work is presented as follows:

⁴ These are the famous passages of speech from the third person to the first person plural in the *Acts of the Apostles*, called in English literature *he/we*, and in Romanian *he/we*. The passages are found in 20:5-8; 13-14 and 21:1-18. Steve Walton reviews the positions taken in the extremely recent historiography of the subject, see Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, p. 19.

⁵ Based on 2 Timothy 4:11: "Luke alone is with me," one might think that the short Pauline note can be interpreted in such a way as to allow such a suggestion. On the other hand, the most recent researcher of the subject, Steve Walton, makes an exhaustive review, with all the positions taken in the historiography of the subject until recently related to the knowledge or lack of knowledge of the Pauline texts by Luke, Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, pp. 14-16. Personally he does not pronounce, but describes the arguments of the pro and con parties, his purpose not being one to give justice to one or the other of the parties.

I. INTRODUCTION: in this content we have tried to explain what are the basic coordinates of the research, the temporal and spatial coordinates of the thesis, the historiographical framework of the researched subject, the research method, the sources and, especially, the research queries, as follows:

I.1. Purpose and objectives of the research

I.1.1. Purpose of the research

The main purpose of this research, after a lot has been written for this part regarding the discourse of Miletus in Western exegesis and historiography and beyond⁶, is a bold one. **We propose to outline, starting from the relations between the Holy Apostle Paul and the Church of Asia, revealed through the discourse of Miletus, the world in which Saint Paul⁷, the Christian missionary par excellence, moved and how his biographer, Saint Luke, understood it in writing.**

The fundamental text on which the achievement of this goal is based is the discourse of the Apostle Paul in Miletus (Acts 20:17-38), seen in academic research or in biblical exegesis as a pastoral testament⁸ with community valences⁹. This text is inserted in the work of the evangelist Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, a work included in the biblical canon, but which has biographical value, as they were fashionable at the time.

Also, **this main goal cannot be achieved without a series of complementary goals:**

1. fixing the role and place that St. Luke gave in his work to the religious communities that St. Paul the Apostle founded in the Roman province of Asia. In principle, we consider the importance that St. Luke assigned in the economy of his work to the Church of Asia and to the relations between St. Paul as founder of this Church and the religious leaders of the Church of Asia;

⁶ Steve Walton asked rhetorically, after all the presentation of the dispute around the Pauline discourse, what else can be written about the subject? Personally, he also replies that he could only bring a novelty by comparing the entire Pauline discourse of Miletus with an entire Pauline epistle, namely 1 Thessalonians, Steve WALTON, *Leadership and Lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*.

⁷ Justin Moisescu, "The Holy Apostle Paul and the Life of the Most Important Christian Communities in the Apostolic Age", in *Theological Studies* III (1951), no. 7-8, pp. 409-410 especially.

⁸ See Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, p. 27, on the Dupont theory. After stating that regarding the nature of the discourse it has generated rivers of ink, he indicates the two categories where absolutely all researchers have framed it: *farewell speech* or *testament*, with the *pastoral testament version*, p. 55.

⁹ The fact that it addresses the problem of the destiny of the community it leaves behind transforms the Pauline message into one with clearly communitarian valences. See also Justin Moisescu, "Saint Paul the Apostle and the Life of the Most Important Christian Communities in the Apostolic Age", pp. 411-413.

2. What exegetical and theological message does the Discourse of Miletus carry as St. Paul's testament and farewell address for the Church of Asia and by extension for the Universal Church;

3. how it was copied in series of manuscripts and, above all, how the discourse of Miletus was reflected in Christian works in the period immediately following the appearance of the Acts of the Apostles;

4. how the text of the Pauline discourse was received and translated into Romanian between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how the Romanian translators related to this crucial text for understanding the birth of the priesthood of the Christian Church

The **chronological coordinates** on which the research is carried out are due to the proposed purpose **two: the interval of the first to the second century AD** (broadly speaking, the period between 10-125 AD), **respectively the interval 1874-2015**. The first interval includes *the Apostolic Age* and is related to the probable moment of Paul's birth in Tarsus, somewhere between 1 BC and 2 AD¹⁰ and the identification of the first Egyptian papyrus/papyrus with the Gospel of John around 125 AD¹¹. The second interval includes the period between the printing of the Scripture in the 1874 version¹² and the synodal version of the Holy Synod of the ROC in 2008, reprinted in 2015. The present research will oscillate between the two ranges to cover the proposed dual purpose of the present study.

I.1.2. Research objectives

The objectives we wanted to achieve in this analysis are the following:

a.) what place does travel occupy in the writing of the Holy Apostle Paul as a means of fulfilling his missionary purpose and how did the Apostle relate to travel as the goal of his evangelical mission?

b.) How did the tradition of the Christian Church develop in the first centuries related to the writings of St. Luke as an evangelist along with the other three evangelists?

c.) how has the image and traditions of St. Luke as a biographer and historian of St. Paul been sketched and preserved in liturgical and hagiographic texts?

c.) what the biography of the Holy Apostle Paul looks like in the light of the Acts of the Apostles and his writings; What image of a historical figure involved in the Roman society of the time can be observed?

¹⁰ James D.G. DUNN, *Beginning From Jerusalem*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, 2009. Other years have been proposed, but we will come back to them in another chapter.

¹¹ Geza Vermes, *The real Jesus: then and now*, p. 117.

¹² *The Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments*, New edition, revised according to the original texts, and published by the Bible Society for Britain and Abroad, H. Goldner Type-Lithograph, Iașii, 1874.

d.) which reveals the exegesis of the discourse of Miletus on the theology and mystical living of the Christian life about St. Paul in the vision of his biographer,

e.) What does the Miletus discourse about the Apostle Paul and the religious community he created in the province of Asia in the first century AD affirm and reveal?

e.) last but not least, the way in which the text of the Pauline discourse in Acts 20:17-38 was received and translated into Romanian in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how the Romanian translators related to this important vein of the birth of the sacramental priesthood.

Thus, starting from the outside towards the passage in question, we propose to outline several aspects: of a society, which chose, under the impact of the missionary discourse, a new religion, which brought another perspective on the life of heterogeneous communities in the Roman Empire; of the impact given by a hero to a social group and a community; of the importance of a theological message beyond the time in which it was launched and beyond its primary recipients; the importance of translating the sacred texts with care for keeping as intact as possible the pastoral-missionary message of the Christian Church that Christ the Savior won with His own precious blood on the Cross.

I.2. Research space

It mainly concerns **both the space of ancient Palestine** (the land of the Philistines) and Israel, that Canaan promised to the first patriarchs, or, as Shimon Gibson called it, in a broad sense, as the Southern Levant¹³, **but also the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire** (Lycia, Pamphilia, Galatia, Syria Coele, Cyprus, Asia, to name just a few) or the Balkans, Greece or Italy, or Arabia, at that time a space not yet controlled by Rome, as Armenia was.

The other provinces also enjoyed their description¹⁴, so much so that we only point out the micro and macro-regional area in which the monographic analysis is carried out.

I.3. Argument and motivation

The main argument that led us to start this monographic analysis and more in-depth exegesis of Lucania's text **was the fact that we do not know that such an approach has been present in our theological historiography.**

¹³ Shimon F. GIBSON, „From Wildscape to Landscape: Landscape Archaeology in the Southern Levant- Methods and Practice”, în *The Rural Landscape of Ancient Israel*, Aren M. Maeir, Shimon Dar, Ze'ev Safrai, (editori) Archaeopress, Oxford, 2003, p. 1.

¹⁴ On the place occupied by imperial toponymy in the Pauline epistolary writing, see recently Alexander LOVEDAY, "NARRATIVE MAPS: REFLECTIONS ON THE TOPONOMY OF ACTS", pp. 17-57.

As stated, for example, by Steve Walton, whose doctoral thesis defended in 1997 materialized in the extensive monograph of the discourse in Miletus compared to the first epistle to the Thessalonians, the most complete up to this moment, it seems that nothing can be "squeezed" out of a subject, which has preoccupied the entire plethora of Pauline specialists.

And yet, as Steve Walton has found a loophole, offering on the basis of the comparative study of the two plays that Paul in the Acts of the Apostles is the same as Paul in the Epistle to the Thessalonians¹⁵, indicating as possible Luke's good knowledge of the epistle and, implicitly, their relationship as magister-disciple (with all the implications that derive from this), in the same way, we have also found a gap through which **to offer first of all an image of the relationship between the Holy Apostle Paul and the Christian community in the province of Asia, starting from the discourse in Miletus.**

Concretely, what does the selected Lucanian text from the Acts of the Apostles say or let shine through about the relationship between the Apostle Paul and the community he created¹⁶ during his years of mission among the Roman provincials in the Myrcasian area, more precisely in the province of Asia, because those members are addressed by Saint Paul in his farewell speech.

Secondly, we have set ourselves a goal, equally bold, but which offers the historiographical novelty necessary for our approach, which would otherwise risk being perceived only as a simple repetition of a subject very well known and commented on in theological circles, namely **a case study that considers the evolution of the Romanian translation of the Acts of the Apostles 20, 18-38**, trying to identify why at one time or another a certain translation path was chosen and whether there are notable differences in the evolution of the text translated by Romanian biblical scholars from 1874 to 2015.

Through this approach, we want to provide the much-needed element of novelty that also explains why a topic could be resumed, which may seem exhausted in terms of exegetism or philological criticism of the text proposed for in-depth study. We propose a comparative analysis of the evolution of translations from Romanian primarily taking into account the Greek and Latin variants of the discourse of Miletus, in order to analyze how the Romanian translators evolved and how they related to the philological subtleties of the Greek or Latin text or perhaps the various autochthonous forms, already in use at that time¹⁷.

¹⁵ Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, pp. 212-213.

¹⁶ Justin MOISESCU, "Saint Paul the Apostle and the Life of the Most Important Christian Communities in the Apostolic Age", *passim*.

¹⁷ *HOLY SCRIPTURE OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS*, 1874, the title page states that it is a "new edition revised according to the original texts", which implies the possibility or probability that the edition was not only based on

The motivation behind such an investigation is related to the encounter with the various translations of the New Testament text and thus the idea of a comparison of the evolution of the translation of a discourse into Romanian, which is defining in Pauline pastoral care, was born. Of course, the question could be asked: why only this discourse and not more of all that the labor of translating the Acts of the Apostles meant? We can answer that we intended to approach this farewell speech because **the Miletus speech is a nodal one in that it touches on four major themes: the faithful fulfillment of the responsibility of leadership, suffering, the attitude towards wealth and work, and the death of Jesus**¹⁸. Given that it is one of the few references in the Acts of the Apostles to the death of Jesus (verse 28 "*with His own blood*")¹⁹ and implies an assumption by Luke of a "revealed" rather than "spoken" theology of the Cross²⁰, the text is all the more important. The fact is all the more spectacular, since it is found in an explicit context connected with Paul and therefore with Pauline theology, that one can very quickly associate the theology of the importance of the Cross of Luke with that of St²¹. Paul.

Also as a motivation we can indicate that this passage from the Acts of the Apostles allows us to escape in several directions of research, starting from the context in which it is found in Lucan's work: it is a passage related to the Pauline journey, to the diary notes of the form "he/we", to the life of the Apostle Paul, to a sequence from the life of St. Luke, by the

the Greek text, but we do not anticipate from this stage.

¹⁸ Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, p. 84.

¹⁹ Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, p. 91 proposes for the most probable form of the text in verse 28, τῶν ἰδίου the English translation of *his own one*, which is translated exactly into Romanian in the version BIBLIA OR HOLY SCRIPTURE, 2015 with *himself*. Somehow even more accentuated would have been *his/herself*, but then the phonetically correct form of the Romanian language would have been sacrificed. In the given case: *which he won with his/her own Blood*, instead of the printed version: *with his/her own blood*, which sacrifices the genitival article because in this case, it was preferred that the term regent be articulated enclitic (*blood*). Here *itself* is not a pronominal adjective, but a reinforcing pronoun, in the sense of *it alone, personally, without the help of someone else*. Etymologically it comes from *Ins(ul)+* -, and in this case, see DEX. The verse thus emphasizes through the pronouns of strengthening the personal action, independent of someone else of Jesus who won his Church by His action on the Cross. In fact, Walton pointed out in his speech on pages 94-98 precisely that this is the only problematic passage in the discourse because the manuscripts give two variants for the verse τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου in that some read θεοῦ, and others κυρίου and others instead of τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου give the variant τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος. Variant 1 is the most certain in this case in the opinion of the biblical scholar, being best supported by the paleographic material, just as θεοῦ is more certainly present than κυρίου. Concluding after the 4 pages of exegesis, Walton writes of verse 28: "Therefore, we conclude that the fourth translation, '*shepherding*' the church of God (the Father) which he won with his own blood," has the least difficulty with this translation and is then our working translation," see Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, p. 98. Aland KURT, Matthew BLACK, Bruce M. METZGER, Allen WIKGREN (ed.), *The Greek New Testament*, p. 499, notes 8 and 9 provide all the explanations for the option τοῦ θεοῦ ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου, even if he also presents the other variants.

²⁰ Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, p. 91-92.

²¹ Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, p. 92.

Roman provincial society, by the organization of the Christian community in the first century A.D. All this could be developed starting from this passage of Lucan's writing.

I. 4. Research methodology

The methodology specific to a topic of exegesis such as the one we have in front of us, but in relation to the approach we want, is that of statistical and comparative analysis, i.e. a comparative-statistical approach, which makes full use of the tools of the first (graphs, tables, especially), and from the second, it takes over the ability to differentially evaluate the evolution or, why not, the involution, sometimes, of the translations operated. These two methods combined form the basis of the present analysis.

It must be said that the opulence and luxuriance of the bibliographic and exegetical material in English, French or German can give the impression that everything was written before what you have to research, and the methodology of the approach brings the necessary novelty to such a study undertaking. **We took suggestions** from the work of Steve Walton, but the works that gave us impetus as a research method were the classic ones of F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake dedicated to the beginnings of Christianity²², but also the work of W. M. Ramsay in 1895²³, the first to deal in detail with the Apostle Paul as a traveler and a Roman citizen.

I.4.1. Research queries

There are two of them and they constitute the basis from which we start this research and to which we want to answer as accurately as possible. **The two questions are: *what does the Lucan text say about the relationship between Paul and the Christian community created by him in Asia?* respectively, *how did the Romanian translation of Acts 20:17-38 evolve between 1688 and 2022?*** Through the two interrogations we establish very clearly the goals we pursue in this investigation and what we propose for presentation. A secondary question may be related to the way in which the scriptural text was received in the works of homiletics and exegesis in the contemporary Romanian space, but it does not constitute the main research direction of this study.

²² F. J. Foakes Jackson, Kirsopp LAKE, *The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I: The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 4. MacMillan and Co., London, 1933; F. J. FOAKES Jackson, Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginings of Christianity. Part I: The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 5, MacMillan and Co., London, 1933.

²³ William M. RAMSAY, *Saint Paul the traveller and the roman citizen*, 1895.

I.4.2. Research and analysis methods

If at the beginning of the Research Methodology subchapter we announced only the methods, in the lines below we will develop more on what we have already written.

Continuing the idea from the previous paragraphs, we can indicate that **the comparative method allows in such research to observe as faithfully as possible the translation in relation to the preserved originals or to vernacular variants, which started from the originals**. Also, the comparative method allows the researcher to observe the common place of inspiration and the way in which the various translation variants have been used or constitute the starting point for other translations, allowing the creation of diagrams of the source and derivatives of the source, establishing the origin of the translated text, from one or more sources.

The statistical-comparative method can use all the advantages given by graphs and tables in exposing edifying conclusions on the use of terms or compositional formulas, the repetitiveness and the number of repetitions of some terms or expressions found in translations or in the original texts.

The statistical analysis can also be done on the number of keywords of the text, how many nouns were used, how many adjectives, how many verbs, how the parts of speech are distributed, how often they are repeated, being able to provide a few lines of interpretation related to the writing style, the touches that the writer chooses or even the style that he adopts.

Another method used is the "survey" because through this method, a type of approach from the sociological research school, even if the total is missing, **the sample can offer a glimpse of the whole**, and the representative terms put in the context of an exegetical analysis, outline what is sought by the researcher. Plus, as I pointed out in the previous sentence, **the survey has the advantage of offering with a margin of error what an exhaustive analysis would offer, which is not always possible**, and sometimes not even proposed as a goal.

These are the methods on which we have chosen to base ourselves in the present research, also noting the importance that has recently been given to some interesting methods of approaching the text of the discourse of Miletus: the narrative-critical method present in theologians such as R. Tannehill, which analyzes the way in which the narrative flows and the unity of the text, respectively the rhetorical-critical method, which analyzes the rhetoric of the text from the perspective of ancient rhetoric, style, its arrangement or the type of epideictic farewell speech.

Important from our point of view is also the way in which **the Lucanian narrative thread** about Paul managed to render what the author wanted to emphasize about the *hero* he chooses to describe. From our point of view, the Acts of the Apostles and the narrative that this work induces is about the heroes and their destiny, rather than about the fate of the Christian community and its growth and decline. Luke's account aims at this only accidentally, and the unity of ideas and continuity between *the Gospel* and *Acts* has already been noted (Steve WALTON, *Leadership and lifestyle. The portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech and I Thessalonians*, p. 43)

From our point of view, the Lucanian narrative thread in the Acts of the Apostles is close to Plutarch and *the Parallel Lives*, and *the Gospel* to Philostratus and *the Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Similarities, for example, between the work of Flavius Josephus and the text of the Gospel of St. Luke have already been pointed out by Steve Mason²⁴.

I.4.3. Research sources

These are the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Gospels, for it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to identify any new source on this subject.

Today, every researcher benefits fully from the fruits of the work of all theologians, biblical scholars, historians and archaeologists of the last hundred years, who have wished to clean up and clarify the unclear aspects of the birth, development and expansion of the Christian community in the first centuries after the physical disappearance of its Founder.

If the natural and assiduous desire of the generations immediately following the earthly life of the Savior Jesus Christ to know Him better, gave rise to the apocrypha, which explain a diversity and diverse vibration of the groups that claimed to be from Him in the second and third centuries A.D. However, they do not bring anything new to the economy of knowing the Son of Man or his direct disciples.

These apocrypha were born out of a general spirit of saying more about the favorite characters with whom Christians identified, and the literature of the time peddled these materials in works attributed to or related to these characters²⁵.

Even after stricter control was imposed on what was to be read by believers, some of these popular books continued to appear clandestinely or in censored versions²⁶. Starting from

²⁴ Steve Mason, the best known and most prestigious translator of Flavius Josephus, brings the works of Josephus and Luke closer to the general current called Hellenistic, see S. Mason, *Josephus and New Testament*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1992, p. 186, pp. 188-189.

²⁵ For more on the subject in the introductory part, see J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal Jesus. Legends of the Early Church*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, 2008, pp. 1-5. Also, on this subject, see J. K. Elliott, *A Synopsis of the Apocryphal Nativity and Infancy Narratives*, Brill, Boston, Leiden, 2006, pp. IX-XI.

these considerations, when we operate with the selection of information from these texts we cannot be sure of their complete accuracy.

We note that an important apocryphal literary effervescence was born around Paul. If we go through this secondary literature, we can say that it does not seriously bring any help in clarifying crucial aspects of the life and activity of the Holy Apostle Paul.

Coming back, after this brief digression, we affirm that the sources mentioned in the first paragraph are the basic sources, with which one can operate when we try to outline the life and missionary-pastoral activity of St. Paul. These being the sources, it is obvious that all those who investigate one or another of the aspects of the Apostle's life, mission or pastoral care appeal to them and try to identify something new or possible to interpret or reinterpret in them.

By stepping on this path, we try to extract and use everything that these sources allow us to outline the proposed research.

In addition, we will use the gains of epigraphy, archaeology, numismatics, architecture, philological analysis or ancient literary analysis or biblical exegesis to bring and connect our analysis to those existing in the great historiography of frontier biblical analysis, where exegesis meets, in a natural process, in theological-historical and biblical studies in order to provide a validly accepted and scientifically validated answer.

Results:

We try to draw a final conclusion at this beginning part of the work which, as we have mentioned, includes the introductory and structural notions of the thesis. In this content we have explained what are the basic coordinates of the research, the temporal and spatial coordinates of the thesis, the historiographical framing of the researched subject, the research method, the sources and, above all, the research queries, we believe that we have demonstrated the fact that there is a lively interest in the Pauline work, in the Gospel of Luke, in the history of the deeds of God.

Methodologically, we have demonstrated that structural analysis, based on samples, statistics and philological analysis correlated, where necessary, with archaeological and epigraphic discoveries can open new directions of interpretation and analysis in New Testament studies and that are in accordance with what historiographical, academic interpretation has achieved.

²⁶ J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal Jesus. Legends of the Early Church*, pp. 1-2.

Of course, from an Orthodox point of view, which it is normal to have, all these positions of analysis, coming from Protestant and neo-Protestant research, must be carefully analyzed and only then seen what does not seek to dislodge the truths of faith that we have received from the beginning through the Holy Fathers.

That is why **the struggle for the Byzantine majority text** seems to us to be one of the greatest struggles of Orthodoxy in its fullness. The fact that more and more researchers, such as Maurice Robinson or William Pierpoint, Adam Boyd and many others, have had the merit of emphasizing **the pre-eminence of the Byzantine text over the critical text** (Nestlé-Aland, but also Holmes-SBLNTG, Westcott-Hort or Tyndale 2017) and the fact, unofficially accepted somehow, that the majority/Byzantine/Syrian-Antiochian text is as old as the Alexandrian, Caesarean and Western text, opens new horizons so that the sacred, liturgical text can be received in its absolute value and dimension as a *received text* of the Church from the beginning.

Our conviction, as well as that of the happily remembered patriarch of Romania, Nicodim Munteanu, expressed since the 1930s, is that the Byzantine/Syrian text precedes the copies made by the scribe Lucian in the time of the Tetrarchy coordinated by Emperor Diocletianus.

Unfortunately, the rabid anger of the imperial officials to destroy any trace of Jesus Christ, the determination of some of the emperors to falsify even the documents of the Savior's trial (as were the cases mentioned by the historian Eusebius), led to the irreparable loss of the sacred text.

Historical accidents have left us only Alexandrian texts, especially, and formed in the Western academic environment the preconceived idea that the Alexandrian text is primordial.

The Alexandrian scribes had, in our opinion, a tendency to remove from the sacred text everything that seemed to have been added by Lucian and/or his predecessors. This fact contributed to the idea that the Byzantine/Syrian-Antiochan text, which has always been the liturgical text of the Church of the East, is a secondary variant because most of the codices, uncials, lectionaries or minuscules are dated after the eighth century A.D. But these texts are on the order of a few thousand and they all tell the same story, unchanged, of Jesus and His apostles, of the Holy Spirit and His work in the world.

From the point of view of the historiography of the problem, we have managed to demonstrate the solidity of the theme of the Miletus discourse in the area of research starting from the nineteenth century, in academic form. We also believe that we have correctly established the two questions of the research and have answered them punctually. We also

believe that we have correctly highlighted the sources of research that we have chosen to use in this analysis.

II. CHAPTER I: In this chapter I have approached the problem of the traveler-missionary and writer Paul from two directions: analyzing in the first phase statistically and then comparatively the presence of references involving movement, suggests the journey (verbs, common or proper nouns, prepositions, compound expressions) in the Pauline Epistles and very briefly in the Acts of the Apostles, the second known work of St. Luke.

We want to subject these references extracted from the scriptural text to a statistical analysis and a comparison with each other in order to issue a set of preliminary conclusions. Then we will offer a series of conclusions regarding the presence of travel and movement actions in all these sources, thus being able to offer an introspective look at the Pauline writing and very briefly the Lucanian one dedicated to this activity so common to Paul and others like him, namely the journey with missionary purpose. The chapter will conclude with a series of enlightening conclusions.

The chapter ended with a series of enlightening conclusions:

Paul was an eternal traveler, without an initial support group, and we do not know how he supported himself in Arabia or on his return from there to Damascus.

It is possible that sums of money were sent to him by relatives such as his sister or nephew mentioned in Acts 23:16 and who were in Jerusalem and had a good material situation, being close to the hierarchical circles, as the context outlined by Luke for this biographical moment suggests.

On the other hand, Paul supported himself from his work in Corinth and Philippi, but he also received help from the Macedonians and others, for he writes at one point, as we have seen, that he asked in extremis for money for his mission from other churches, so as not to make it difficult for those he was in. When he moved with Barnabas or the evangelist John Mark, it is possible that he had sums in common or received something from the Jerusalem community. However, the fact that he made several collections of money for Jerusalem indicates that James the Less, the brother of the Lord (in fact, a cousin), constantly needed sums of money to strengthen or support the community in Jerusalem and beyond.

We can thus affirm from our point of view that the attempt to fit Paul's profile into a profile of a traveler of the first century AD, based on what is generally accepted as his work, proved to be credible and sustainable. Paul was a traveler of his time, and this is also demonstrated by the fact that he did not die in his native Cilicia, in Tarsus, but a few thousand

kilometers away, in the imperial capital, which he wanted so much to see through the prism of the friends he had there. Not many friends, but trustworthy.

III. CHAPTER II: here, we have proposed to rediscuss a series of biographical elements of Luke from his position as historian and biographer of Paul, as well as of the reception of St. Luke in the hymnographic and liturgical tradition of the Byzantine period. Regarding this chapter, we can say that we have reached a series of enlightening conclusions:

First of all, we believe that we have managed to offer as working hypotheses, a series of opinions that can be confirmed or refuted, but which, from our point of view, have the value of a solid demonstration, by carefully dissecting all the sources and information that we have been able to collect. Everything in our demonstration in this chapter was based not on denialism or exaggerated skepticism, often unsupported, even if it is academic.

It seems extremely strange that what the specialists of the last century have achieved, demonstrated, argued, today is eliminated from the research as outdated, partisan or not having all the sources at their disposal. It seems useful to us to emphasize the path of the historian William Ramsay, one of the most brilliant students of Theodor Mommsen. He went to write about his hero, the traveler Paul, with the smile of distrust of "stories" on his lips and it happened to him, in a historical rhyme, what happened to Paul too, but on the road to Damascus. He came to believe that nothing in the accounts of the Pauline letters, but especially of *the Acts of the Apostles*, is forced, erroneous, or invented.

The academic school of the new interpretations of the New Testament looks to W. Ramsay, J. Lightfoot, R. Rackham, F. F. Bruce, W. Gasque, J. Finegan or Th. Zahn and many others whom I have mentioned in these pages with a "distance" that, however, does not start from anywhere else than the denial of the authenticity of the New Testament writings. However, from our point of view, we believe that the line adopted by the above-mentioned and the other unnamed ones, this is the line to follow in honest research and which has demonstrated since the nineteenth century the evidence of the profession of faith.

Resuming the thread of the conclusions from chapter II, we have further stated that we believe that we have managed to bring enough information that is in agreement with independent, honest, current academics, such as Brant Pitre or Maurice Robinson, William Pierpont, but also with lines of research such as those of the spouses Aland, Bruce Metzger, Philip Comfort or David Barrett. Nor have we avoided the research of skeptics such as Bruce Malina, K. J. Elliot or atheists such as Bart Ehrman, where they made observations that could

be taken into account, without destroying what we know about the Scriptures, as transmitted to us in the spirit of the Holy Fathers, this being the healthiest academic line.

We also believe that we have succeeded in pointing out what has been noted more recently, namely the fact that we do not have to look for a laboratory text (*Critical Text*) of the New Testament, but to understand that the text that was copied the most was the one that was in the use of the Orthodox Church from the liturgical point of view, and that text represents *the Received Text* of the Church of the East and not that of a school of copyists, very good in fact, but extremely case-like, like the Alexandrian school. The Byzantine text is the text that has crossed the centuries, was copied with the utmost attention from Antioch to Athos and Ohrid and constituted the basis for the Protestant texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We have emphasized, in fact, the fact that we accept the so-called Nestlé-Aland text as a working basis for the research laboratory, but we will always refer to the historical and philological importance of the Byzantine text.

We also consider the fact that it was an extremely important exercise We consider that the discussion about the precursors of the Lucanian script was useful because we were able to ascertain the fact that honest researchers of the last century and of this century have found enough arguments about the life of St. Luke and his writing in the preserved primary testimonies. We could also affirm that tradition must not be ignored, but must be revisited in order to be able to reinforce the accuracy of the Church's tradition on issues essential to the knowledge of the Church's past.

We believe that we have succeeded in discussing some more important moments in the life of St. Luke and last but not least, we believe that we have argued, in turn, that from the point of view of the reception of St. Luke in the hymnographic and liturgical tradition of the Byzantine period, the saint enjoyed a constant appreciation, he was praised in hymnography, which also contributed essentially to the strengthening of the liturgical traditions about the life and activity of the holy evangelist. The most important hymnographers, such as Anatolius, or hagiographers, such as Simeon Metaphrastus, assigned important pieces of their work to Luke's life and writing, and the reception of this information, as we have indicated, was essential in fixing the hymnographic and liturgical tradition related to the saint celebrated on October 18 in the Church calendar. The Minaeas of the Church represent the best example from this point of view.

IV. CHAPTER III: In this chapter, we have analyzed the life and activity of St. Paul based on the sources we have and on the historiographical and biographical analyses to date.

The conclusions of this chapter have been highlighted as follows: we have tried to outline a part of the troubled life of the most important apostle of the pagan world. Of course, the Holy Apostle Paul did not work alone. He had entire sets of collaborators, of the most diverse kind. Some of them were his relatives, others friends, others became his enemies over time. Paul did not have a personality that was easy to understand and accept. Physically he was not massive, compared to, for example, his friend and colleague Barnabas, but his energy was overflowing. He was not necessarily a masculine beauty, by the standards of the time, but he was an excellent speaker, a nervous speaker, who often burst into real tirades, when he considered himself wronged.

The life of an eternal traveler, which I outlined for him in chapter I, profoundly marked him through physical and nervous exhaustion. He was beaten countless times with his fists, with his palms, with whips, with rods, he was stoned, he suffered shipwrecks, he had various diseases that exhausted him and left traces on his body. He was bitten by a viper, he fought with various spirits, he endured cold and hunger, he walked around with large sums of money on him, he probably avoided numerous robbers and pirates. He suffered numerous persecutions and was imprisoned in numerous prisons, each more inhospitable, including the praetorium of Caesarea (in our opinion), in the black Mamertina, in the fortress of Antonia, perhaps in Ephesus. He met with various rulers of the time: procurators, prefects, proconsuls, kings, queens. He knew the world of military camps, Roman colonies, cosmopolitan and crowded cities or cities that lost their bright air and remained provincial cities (Athens, Corinth).

In this chapter we have tried first of all to discuss issues on which there have been greater or lesser controversies. We tried not to avoid the difficult topics that are often quickly reviewed with a bibliographic reference so as not to "disturb". This is not how we considered that the problem should be addressed. Each time we discussed the less certain aspects, we offered solutions, we dissected them and we offered the best hypothesis, from our point of view, from the many hypotheses that were put on the historiographical wallpaper. I have refuted with reasonable arguments or explanations those theories that bordered on the impossible, but I have also recalled those, every time it was possible. Perhaps our arguments may not always be acceptable, but they have always sought a middle line, never extremes, even if, sometimes, simple matches, coincidences, could have led us to a simple, fascinating and shocking solution.

Knowing human nature, the mentalities of the time, the people of the period, we always tried to find those reasonable explanations. Where tradition has presented divergent or

incomplete solutions, we have turned to those traditional veins that have been the most pertinent and that have had the greatest resilience.

We have tried to avoid contemporary academic hypercriticism, which only deconstructs and leaves almost nothing in place. The Church, however, and everything that composes it as an institution was not born only on the basis of stories, myths, fables and pseudo-writers. Yes, some writings may have been interpolated, interpreted, truncated, imitated, etc., but this was done out of the need for explanations and never in texts considered sacred. Only contemporary academic hypercriticism has come to the position of believing through diverse voices that it can credit the fact that the early Church Fathers were creating falsehoods to cover up realities or inconsistencies. Nothing could be more dangerous and false. We must understand that the too simple accusations of "falsification" of sacred texts must be in accordance with the thinking and mentality of the first Christians who were extremely attentive to the transmission of the sacred text.

Obviously, the copying process was cumbersome and arduous and that is why mistakes were sometimes made, but when all the known variants were liturgically harmonized in what we know as the Byzantine text, no copying error was made knowingly.

In Chapter III we believe that we have succeeded in bringing quite a number of arguments to propose a number of amendments to the Apostle's known chronology, for example the placement of the collection trip to Jerusalem in the spring of A.D. 55. and the one to the Philippians during the period of detention in Caesarea Maritima.

In the end, we believe that we have managed to bring enough data for a more consistent sketch of some of the key characters of the Church's life in the first century of existence and, also, to be able to observe the concept of family in the Jews who became Christians during this period.

Of course, within this biography of the Holy Spirit, as we can mistakenly call the volume dedicated to the Acts of the Apostles, this remembrance of the actions of the Holy Spirit and of some apostles has, like any *Hellenistic* bios or *Latin vita*, elements of chronology, but chronology is not an end in itself in this volume. The only point where chronology prevails, in order to fix the firm chronological framework, that of Paul's definitive departure from Asia is chapter 20 that induces the discourse of Miletus, which is the subject of this research.

Basically, Luke emphasizes the importance of the Apostle leaving one of the churches that were most dear to him. Here, in Ephesus, he spent most of the flowing years and became emotionally attached to this Church. It was here that St. Paul delivered his discourse, a speech that prophetically prepared the community for the coming of the Apostle John to Ephesus, in

the context of the appearance of Gnostics such as Cleobius, Simon, Cleobulos (former members of the residual Joanian community from the years 28-37) or Demas and Hermogenes (former collaborators of Paul, if we rely on a series of writings such as *the Acts of Paul and Thecla*) and later, Cerinthus. The Holy Apostle John took over and firmly led the Ephesian Church, thus concluding, at least for the moment, around 96-101/02 A.D. Pauline prophecy about the "terrible wolves".

We cannot understand the discourse of Miletus without this geographical-historical context, which prepared the ground for the coming here, in Asia, of John the Apostle, seen as the high priest of the early Church, given that no one was alive among the apostles. Moreover, Jesus' surviving relatives had to return for the most part to Galilean Nazareth, and even appear before Domitian, being accused that they as members of the *Dawyd/Dawyt* (house of David) would like to rebel against the Romans.

This chapter has succeeded in sketching, we think quite well, something of the world that the Christian missionaries of the first century A.D. saw with their own eyes in the long peregrinations, which carried them along and across the Mediterranean basin in their attempt to herald a new kingdom and a new man, a restored Adam.

V. CHAPTER IV: We have proposed, here, to sketch exegetically the vision of the Discourse of Miletus of the Holy Apostle Paul. It will address the art of ancient discourse, of the Lucanian discourse and implicitly of the Pauline one, as a model of farewell speech in the first century A.D. The end of the chapter will also benefit from a series of edifying conclusions. He will also make explicit reference to the discourse of Miletus and to what the Lucan text of Acts 20:17-38 says about the community created by St. Paul in Asia and the relationship of this community with its creator, respectively. So, we set out in this chapter to achieve a series of objectives. The objectives of the analysis on the discourse to which I gave an answer were these:

1. Can this discourse from Miletus be seen as a lay testament of the Apostle?

From all the demonstration and analysis of the verses of the discourse of Miletus, we cannot conclude by any consistent argument that the Pauline discourse is a form of lay testament which he leaves to the Church and the priests of Ephesus. Paul, just by telling them that he did not collect anything and worked for his maintenance like any other, the legacy he leaves them is a deeply spiritual one.

2. Can the discourse at Miletus be seen as a spiritual testament of the Apostle?

From the entire demonstration of the Miletus discourse, the theme of a spiritual testament emerges. The Apostle leaves to them the Church founded by him, won by Jesus Christ with His blood and led invisible by the Holy Spirit. The priests of the Church have the duty to care for this spiritual heritage.

3. Is the discourse of Miletus a sum of the apostle's imperative appeals?

The presence of imperative verbs throughout the discourse leaves no room for doubt that the testament, the spiritual heritage of St. Paul, is based on imperatives such as: vigilance, increased attention, the ability to discern good from evil, not to fall into the trap of ravenous wolves. From this perspective, the Pauline Discourse can also be considered a sum of imperative appeals.

4. Can Paul's beliefs be separated from what Paul's biographer, the evangelist Luke, believed?

Here, in our opinion, as we have pointed out in the exegesis of verse number 32 of the discourse, but as it is also visible in verses 33-35 and beyond, the voice of the Apostle Paul is heard, as we have also stated in the case of verses 24, 28 and 31. This fact is an indicator of the evidence of a possible separation of the two voices, that of St. Paul and that of his biographer. The great merit goes to the Evangelist Luke for having succeeded in extraordinarily combining the two voices so that they would be only one.

4. What is the central theme and subthemes of the Miletus Discourse?

In our opinion, after going through the analytical steps, the central theme of the discourse in Miletus remains the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Ephesians and the inhabitants of the province of Asia, a Gospel that proclaims the Kingdom of God. Intrinsically linked and as a result of the main theme of the speech is the imposition of the state of alert regarding the role of priests in the unaltered preservation of the Christ message and of the Church as the mystical body of Christ. The Church was won by God the Son by His own blood, and as a result it is the role of the Church as heir of God's Grace to guard what God the Son gained by His precious blood.

The secondary themes are related to issues such as work, charity, almsgiving, humility, not accumulating wealth and running after unearned money, communion under the Grace of God, the constant preaching of the Gospel as a free good offered by Jesus Christ to Christians.

5. What are the warnings and predictions that the Church of Asia and, by extrapolation, the Church will suffer in the period following the departure of the Apostle Paul?

The Church of Asia and, by extrapolation, the universal Church must guard against the danger of heresies and the possibility that the members of the Church, including priests, will

fall into the sin of heresy that leads to the destruction of the truths of faith and the loss of salvation of each of the members of the Christian community. The tears of the Holy Apostle are testimony to the prayers he offered to protect the Church from dissensions, quarrels, and rapacious wolves, heretics. Priests and faithful, but especially priests as beneficiaries of the Grace of the Holy Spirit, must do everything possible to guard the flock given to shepherding. Guarding the flock of believers is a sacred duty that pastors invested with Grace must fulfill at every moment of their existence and not postpone the fight against the danger of their fall or that of the flock they lead to salvation.

I have affirmed from the perspective of the theological ideas and the theology with which the text operates the fact that the discourse of Miletus, from its reality of a spiritual testament with active imperatives, underlined and synthesized a theology based on:

- a.) the humility and suffering of the servants of the Lord Christ.
- b.) Divine grace as the foundation of man's salvation.
- c.) The responsibility of bishops and priests to guard the true faith.
- d.) The importance of selfless service and mercy.

The Pauline Discourse as structured by the Evangelist Luke remains a model of pastoral care for all the servants of the Lord Our God and constantly calls for vigil and vigilance towards and in the Church, service full of love and humble sacrifice, as well as fidelity to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have stated in this chapter that Paul leaves a testament in this "farewell discourse" – he prophesies and gives imperatives of action for the presbyteries, the priests of the Church of Asia, that priestly priesthood that Stelian Tofană defined in a heartfelt way.

We concluded that the discourse, from our point of view, is an epideictic one, even if it has some references to the deliberative or legal type of discourse.

The central theme of the discourse, from our point of view, is found in verse 25 cumulated with 28, and *probation, proof* and *argumentation* in verses 29-31.

The text has the quality of being a true pastoral testament. The speech is a prophetic testament, with immediate imperatives, for the moment of the appearance of problems. The appeal to future ravenous wolves, however, is a universal testament for the priests of the Church of Christ, not only for the priests of the Church of Asia at the time. Today, the Church of Asia no longer exists, but every servant of the Church under Grace knows that the message of St. Paul is addressed as timely as it was 1970 years ago to the priests of the Church of Asia.

Here the Apostle Paul asks the Church to watch, to watch, so that the heresy that will come (the prophetic character of the lodge) does not destroy the Church, which Christ won Himself, with His own blood.

Knowing that those who were there were worthy of priests and bishops, of a well-prepared priestly priesthood, he did not doubt them or their abilities, but told them that some of them, being very good, would choose to fall out of pride, and others would be like angry, rapacious wolves. As a direct testament, he leaves to these bishops the saving grace of Jesus Christ and a lodge unknown to them of the Savior, a word related to the theology of the gift and active almsgiving.

For the authorship of the discourse we have chosen to affirm the fact that in this problematic of the Pauline discourse of Miletus we must see it as reproduced and constructed by Luke with structures from the epistle to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Hebrews, a fact that does not exclude that the Apostle Paul was the one who actually sustained this discourse which, later, the evangelist Luke reconstructed it based on some notes.

Also in this chapter I have made explicit reference to the discourse of Miletus and to what the Lucan text of Acts 20:17-38 says about the community created by Paul in Asia and the relationship of this community with its creator.

At the end of this chapter, we managed to answer quite pertinently the first of the major questions of our investigation. To the first of these: what does Luke tell us about the special relationship between the Church of Asia and Paul? I have concluded that it is a question of a great affection shown by all possible means of the Hellenistic and Roman narrative of the time.

This great affection was related to the vicissitudes that this church would go through, for which Paul feared that it would not withstand *the storms*. That is why he warns the priests of the Church to be attentive to themselves and their flock. Paul feels that God will rebuke the seven churches through the voice of the pillar John and finally shatter them. Probably, like Jesus, he felt that when he spoke to the bishops, some of those to whom he spoke were thinking of turning into "terrible wolves." They could probably have been of the caliber of Cerinthus and could have destroyed a thriving church, such as the one created by Paul and later inherited by John. The Johannine revelation of Patmos showed that God would destroy the Asian church not because of the wolves on the outside, in particular, but because of the wolves on the inside.

We have concluded the problematic of this fourth chapter by emphasizing once again the orderly rhetoric of the discourse, with key ruptures, with all the classical parts identified,

proof of the mastery of Lucanian historical writing to highlight through the art of discourse an entire theology of the saving Trinity, which is highlighted by the Church and the hierarchy created by His own blood by the Savior Jesus Christ.

VI. CHAPTER V: IN THIS CHAPTER, WE HAVE FOCUSED ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF ACTS 20:17-38 BETWEEN 1688 AND 2022. The conclusions we reached are the following:

A first conclusion is that we have managed through this chapter to answer quite pertinently to the second of the major questions of our investigation: to the question of how the translation of the Miletus discourse evolved. I noticed that there were some key moments such as 1906, 1938, 1968, and 2022, respectively, moments that showed how the traditionalism of Stephanus-Bèze-Elzevir's Received Text was moved, but not definitively.

We believe that we have pointed out the fact that it was only with Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu that the transition from the Received Text to the Byzantine version began in earnest, and that the year 1968 meant the fixation of our scriptural text in an eclectic variant between the Received Text – the Alexandrian Text – small parts of the Byzantine Text. We also believe that we have pointed out that it was only in 2022 that it gave us full access to the pure Byzantine version, which allows us to explain more effectively the theory of the primacy of the Byzantine Text and to preserve it in future editions of the Greek text of the New Testament.

The Byzantine text thus places us, as Orthodox, in the traditional Syrian-Byzantine area of the Holy Fathers such as Basil the Great, John Chrysostom or Gregory of Nazianzus and definitively connects us to the Byzantine world, with its strong Syro-Palestinian influences, from the period of the 4th-8th centuries AD, whose successors were the Romanian political leaders (rulers and boyars alike) of the 15th-19th centuries.

VII. THE FINAL CONCLUSIONS will argue and present what was proposed in these lines and where the end of the monographic analysis, which started from the speech in Miletus, was reached.

Thus, we believe that the effort imposed by this research has succeeded in bringing to the fore valid hypotheses and arguments for the punctual framing of St. Luke the Evangelist and St. Paul the Apostle in the complex world of the first century A.D. under the auspices of *pax romana*, in a moment of calm for the relationship between the Church, the Priesthood and the Roman Empire. It was the first century A.D. that laid the foundations of the Christian world as we know it, with the beginnings of the evangelical redaction, with the

mission in the Empire, with the concretization of what became the Byzantine scriptural text, an expression of a continuous liturgical life.

The discourse in Miletus in this turbulent context proves its relevance, the idea of a farewell speech for the Church, always attacked by terrible wolves, both from within and from without. The prophetic message of the Holy Apostle Paul for the Church of Asia in this farewell discourse must always be before the sacramental priesthood of the Church, of those called now as then, by our Lord and God to shepherd the flock upon which they were placed by the Holy Spirit as bishops in the Church which Christ won with "his own blood".

The imperative of the discourse, a testament with universal valences, that of dedicating oneself entirely to service, in parallel with *ruodelia*, must be doubled by the call made to us by Christ: "to give is more important than to take".

The discourse of Miletus is always current, whether it is a pure Lucanic composition, a Lucanic composition based on Paul's statements, or a transcription of the Apostle's thoughts. In this analysis, we have not pronounced ourselves sharply for any of the hypotheses, even if we would give some precedence to the possibility of a collation by the Evangelist of the Apostle's words with the ceremonial form of the Hellenistic text.

The discourse in Miletus was also an opportunity for Luke to emphasize the importance of the episcopate in the Church and the high role that always belongs to the sacramental priesthood of the Church (*presbeuteros*).

The Discourse of Miletus remains in *the style* of Luke, the most important advocate for the primacy of the episcopate and sacramental priesthood in the Church, for the role of pastors of bishops and priests; bishops are thus *those appointed* by divine decree (like imperial legates by emperors) by the Holy Spirit as the elders of the earthly provinces of the Church.

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²⁷ The biblical editions were ordered chronologically, the rest of the bibliography was ordered alphabetically.

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