

## Exegetical Analysis of Alleged ‘Anti-Temple Tendency in Acts of the Apostles

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### **Abstract**

Luke’s presentation of the speech of Stephen in Act 7 with special emphasis on vv.48-50 comes up with a provocative theme that seems to suggest anti-temple tendency. Consequently, this paper, through exegetical analysis re-examines the supposed claim, and argues that the anti-Temple tendency interpretation is not true to the text. Rather, Luke strategically mirrors a real theological conflict structure between the Jerusalem Christian Community and the rest of Jerusalem for the sake of achieving the theological intent of the Book, that is, the world-wide mission (Acts 1:8).

### **Keywords**

Anti-temple, interpretation, Temple, Stephen, Luke, Acts, Acts of the Apostles

**“But the Most High Does Not Dwell in Houses Made with Hand”  
(Acts 7:48)**

### **Introduction**

A common authorship of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles is widely accepted in the contemporary New Testament scholarship. The sympathy and prejudice of the author for material and information relating to the Temple is never in doubt. His Luke's Gospel begins (1:8-23) and ends (24:53) in the temple; in Acts not only do the apostles and their associates attend temple worship (2:46; 3:1; 5:12), Paul himself has a vision of Christ in the Temple (22:17-21) and participates in a Nazirite ceremony in the Temple (21:26-30). Yet Luke’s editorial pen would suggest that one of his characters (Stephen) in the plot of Acts assumes an anti-Temple posture (7:48-50) with the provocative assertion “But the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hand” (Acts 7:48).

The paper, through historical critical exegetical analysis of Acts 7:48-50 in its broad and immediate contexts, re-examine the supposed claim of the “anti-Temple tendency.” It identifies the text within its broad setting in order to evaluate the anti-temple tendency associated with the group of Stephen (Hellenists).

### **Acts 7 and its Text Structure**

The missionary mandate given to the Twelve in 1:8 may be classified into three main ‘geographical boundaries’ that demonstrates a programmatic universal missionary agenda of Luke in the plot of the Book of Acts. A major section of the missionary mandate (1:8b) is that the Twelve will witness to Jesus’s ministry and resurrection:

- i. in Jerusalem (3:1-8:3)
- ii. in all Judea and Samaria (8:4-40), and
- iii. to the ends of the earth (9:1-15:12)

It is observed from the storyline that the witness of Stephen in Acts 7 concludes the witness in Jerusalem, and therefore makes him the crown (ste,fanoj) of the witness in Jerusalem – a play on word and ecclesiastical canonical reality.

Dillon<sup>i</sup> observes that Stephen’s witness assumes a structure of:

- i. God's way with Abraham, vv.2-8;
- ii. God's way with Joseph, vv.9-16;
- iii. God's way with Moses, vv.17-43;
- iv. God's dwelling with his unfaithful people, vv 44-50;
- v. Conclusion: Israel's perennial resistance to the holy Spirit and its messengers, vv.50-53.

Krodel characterises the text in line of inclusion. For him, the opening phrase of the speech invokes God as “God of glory” (v.2), thus introducing the divine transcendence as the organising theme of the speech, and for the same reason it is enclosed by the final vision of “the glory of God” (v.55). The text is enclosed with the “God of glory” (vv.2 and 55).<sup>ii</sup>

Thus, the text under survey is identified as a correction in the understanding of Israel’s salvation-history which moves from Abraham’s call over the careers of Joseph and Moses. It presents Israelite resistance to God’s designs, which has grown into a sustained counterpoint, and finally to the building of the Temple, treated as the climax of the former generations’ infidelities. The polemic of vv.51-53 then makes a withering peroration for the present audience, illustrating the nation’s perennial

disobedience in its violence against all the prophets and showing the logical conclusion of this in the murder of the "Mosaic" prophet (v 37), the Messiah, by the listeners.<sup>iii</sup>

**The Text of Acts 7:48-50**

**Text Translation<sup>iv</sup>**

It is generally considered logical and wise to treat the text under survey (7:48) together with the two subsequent interconnected verses (vv.49 and 50):

v.48	avllV ouvc o` u[yistoj evn ceiropoih,toij katoikei/(	But not the Most High in [places] made by hand dwells;
	kaqw.j o` profh,thj le,gei\	as the prophet says:
v.49	o` ouvrano,j moi qro,noj(	the heaven to me a throne,
	h` de. gh/ u`popo,dion tw/n podw/n mou\	and the earth a footstool of the feet of me;
	poi/on oi=kon oivkodomh,sete, moi\	what house will you [pl] build for me,
	le,gei ku,rioj(	says [the] Lord,
	h' ti,j to,poj th/j katapau,sew,j mouE	or what place of the rest of me?
v.50	ouvci. h` cei,r mou evpoi,hsen tau/ta pa,ntaE	not the hand of me made these things all?

**Text Delimitation of Acts 7:48-50**

Acts 7:48 is taken together with 7:49-50 to highlight the fact that the contrast in the text structure is not necessarily between vv.46 and 47 but between v.48 and what precedes it. The adversative particle avlla,, which begins v.48, signals a clear contrast between v.47 (Solomon's Temple) and vv.48-50, which argues that God dwells in heaven.<sup>v</sup> By combining avlla, and the negative adverb ou, at the beginning of v.48 the distinction is further brought to the fore. It makes the action of Solomon in the foregoing verse (v.47) the very opposite of God's will, who wills not to dwell in a house made by human hand. In other words, the action in v.47 is not God's but human. The same trend will be noted in v.50 where the negative adverbial ouvciis introduced to strengthen the argument in vv.48-50, and at the same to stress the difference between the omnipotence of God and stubbornness of the people. Consequently, the text of vv.48-50 is considered a unit.

The text is further seen from the perspective of the *dramatis personae*. The actions of the ancestors are relayed in vv.44 to 47. These actions follow God's plan until the time of David, when the idea of finding a *dwelling place for the house of Jacob* (skh,nwma tw/| oi;kw| Vlakw,b) comes into play, and executed by Solomon oivkodo,mhsen auvtw/| oi=kon) id when the dream of has run according to the plan of God, and v.47 becomes a unprecedented human action that deviates from the design of God, that is, a deviation that forces God to move from *tent to house* – Solomon building a house for God rather than allowing God to remain in a tent he is used to. The succeeding verse (v.51) is also a human response, which marks it different from the preceding unit (vv.48-50). It refers to the stubbornness of the people. So, the adjoining texts (vv.44-47 & 51-53) to the unit (vv.48-50) are about the good and bad deeds of the people. Luke tactfully inserts the divine plan in-between the actions of the ancestors and the obstinacy of the present generation.

### **The Sources of Acts 7**

Acts places Stephen's speech within the report of his martyrdom (6:8-15; 7:54-60; 8:1-3). But discussion on sources used in the composition of the speech is very complicated. Opinions vary from a completely traditional to a completely compositional product. Scholars are generally unanimous that the speech (vv.2-53) is not given in the situation presented in the passage.<sup>vi</sup> Some are of the view that the speech is a secondary insertion<sup>vii</sup> from revised traditional material, which has a longer history within the tradition,<sup>viii</sup> but perhaps found in a written form by Luke.<sup>ix</sup> It is a product of a Hellenistic Christians (in Palestine), who reworks the basic outline of Israel's history to produce a "Deuteronomistic" conversion sermon. As part of this reworking the polemical passages (vv.35, 37, 39-42, 51-53) are added.<sup>x</sup> According to this hypothesis, Luke might have acquired the prototype of his speech of Stephen from within the circles of Christian "Hellenists,"<sup>xi</sup> and probably inserts the two Scripture citations in vv.42b-43 and vv.48b-50 into the speech.

The earliest stratum represented in the present text is probably a historical survey from Abraham through Moses up to the building of the temple (approximately vv.2b-48a). Dillion remarks that the first of two speeches (with 13:16-41) are extensive recapitulation of Jewish history, a genre of which other examples abound in the OT and Judaism.<sup>xii</sup> Witherington acknowledges the septuagintal nature of the speech but with strong editorial influence from Luke in order to suit his

rhetoric and theological outlooks – the salvation history.<sup>xiii</sup> Some analogies can equally be noted between the text and other OT materials like Jdt 6:6-18; Neh 9:6-31; Ps 105 without making the text directly dependent on any of these.

The sharp polemic climax of Stephen's argument draws on a historical schema developed by the deuteronomic historians.<sup>xiv</sup> On this note some scholars are quick to identify the overarching parallel between the account of Jesus' death and Stephen's.<sup>xv</sup> This has enormous implications for source, form and redaction criticisms: Luke received the narrative speech of Stephen at least as part of the traditional sources, and then fluctuates in its portrayal between a judicial proceeding and a lynching,<sup>xvi</sup> presumably because Luke augmented the source account with elements of a Sanhedrin trial in order to configure the protomartyr's death to Jesus' death. The parallelism between the two "martyrdoms" is then typically Lucan in that ingredients of the Synoptic passion story omitted in Luke 22-23 are now inserted in the process against Stephen (e.g., vv.13-14 = Mark 14:57-58).<sup>xvii</sup> The echo of Jesus' passion in Stephen's will include the false witnesses, the high priest's question, the "Son-of-Man" vision (7:56), and the dying prayers (7:59-60).<sup>xviii</sup> Also, the Sanhedrin-trial setting permits Stephen's martyrdom to fall within the earlier persecutions in Acts, the first having ended in mere threats (4:17,21), the second with scourging (5:40) and a resolve to kill (5:33) which will now reach fruition.<sup>xix</sup> Stephen equally stands in an even longer line of holy figures before him – Joseph, Moses and the later prophets. Like Joseph, Moses, and Jesus Stephen is full of grace and power and inspired words; someone of great character and stature, the first martyr of the church.<sup>xx</sup>

### **The Literary Form of Acts 7**

The Speech in Act 7 appears the most important in Acts,<sup>xxi</sup> not only because of its obvious summary account of the experience of Jesus and the apostles,<sup>xxii</sup> it provides both literary and theological link to the world-wide mission. It is a response to a theological mistake constructed on a "false witness" against Stephen. The nature of the speech is apologetic,<sup>xxiii</sup> kerygmatic,<sup>xxiv</sup> midrashic<sup>xxv</sup> and historiographic.<sup>xxvi</sup> It tells the story of unrepentant Israel in a prophetic manner commonly found in biblical and contemporary Jewish literature. Thus the story-teller exercises the freedom to determine the inclusion and exclusion of material, the sequence of the presentation and the particular line of vision in Israel's faith and destiny.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Witherington views the importance Luke assigns to the speech from the length of speech as the longest and its location in the book.<sup>xxviii</sup> According to him, it ends a series of three trials before the Sanhedrin chronicled in Acts 4-7, with escalating results of warning, flogging, and in this case death.<sup>xxix</sup> It is the first time that "the people" and not just the authorities become antagonistic toward the followers of Jesus. For another, the death of Stephen causes many of his fellow Christians to flee Jerusalem and persecution, which in turn leads to the evangelizing of other places(8:1). In fine, the story, which ends with the death of Stephen, is a catalyst that engenders a crisis for the earliest Christians and a turning point.<sup>xxx</sup> It serves Luke, whose chief concern is to demonstrate how and why the church develops and moves in the east-to-west direction.<sup>xxxi</sup>

### **The Hellenists and Anti-Temple Tendency in Acts**

One of the arguments projected to support the anti-Temple Tendency in Acts 7 can be presented with the traditional syllogism as follows:

- i. The Hellenists are generally anti-Temple
- ii. Stephen is one of the leaders of the Hellenists
- iii. Therefore Stephen is anti-Temple in his attitude and speech.

The above argument is transposed into in the discourse of Act 7 with the inevitable conclusion of anti-temple theology. However, the issue which has eluded every effort for consensus is the identity of the Hellenists. Who are really these Hellenists? What type of theological view does the group represent? Is the group's theology different from the orthodox apostolic theology? Can one correctly adducing from historical and theological evidence that the group is anti-Temple?

The Hellenists as a group within the world of Acts (6:1; 9:29; 11:29[?]) has been described as a mysterious group of people, who never appeared in any literature prior to Acts.<sup>xxxii</sup> But the term is closely associated with the verbal form *hellenizein*, referring most probably to someone, who 'speaks' Greek,<sup>xxxiii</sup> or 'hellenizes' or 'follows' Greek ways, or simply a Gentile.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Amidst the complexities of identifying the true meaning of the term, there is rather insinuation from some quarters that Hellenist is associated with ideology and doctrine starkly different from the supposed orthodox Jewish Christian and apostolic tradition. The position is further provoked by another claim that the Hellenists are the prime target of the Jerusalem persecution (cf. 8:1-3) because of their theological views and disposition.

Suffices it to mention that Luke's deployment of the term does not suggests any religious, doctrinal or theological definition but linguistic.<sup>xxxv</sup> Its reference is not whether one is a Jewish<sup>xxxvi</sup> or non-Jewish Christian. Its primary meaning points to "one who speaks Greek" as the 'first language.' It can be a Jew or a Roman or any other non-Greek depending on the context.<sup>xxxvii</sup> It can mean Diaspora Jews living in or around Jerusalem (or their descendants) for whom Greek is their spoken language, and who attended synagogues where Greek is the official liturgical language. So argued Bruce, the decisive identification criterion for 'Hellenist' or 'Hebrew' is membership of a synagogue where the service (reading of the scriptures, recitation of the prayers and blessing and preaching of sermon) is conducted in Hebrew or in Greek. Such a synagogue would be the one in Jerusalem described in Acts 6:9 as the "Synagogue of the Freedmen both Cyrenians and Alexandrians and those from Cilicia and Asia".<sup>xxxviii</sup> This is the synagogue attended by Stephen, whose interventions there sound so subversive and lead to his conviction before the Supreme Court on a charge of blasphemy (including anti-temple tendency) and to the dispersal of his fellow-Hellenists who are believed to share his views.<sup>xxxix</sup> It is, therefore, not a welcoming exegesis to make any difference between the "Hebrews" and the "Hellenists" on the basis of doctrine or attitude towards the Torah and the Temple. The interest of Luke is rather on the progress of word and the unity of the mission. Every conflict and misunderstanding comes within this range at the end sounds the *exultate of felix culpa*.

So, the shots in this discussion is:

- i. that Stephen is one of the leaders of the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, who presents a speech that could have equally been held by Peter or Paul.<sup>xl</sup>
- ii. that Stephen is martyred not because he is a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian but simply an active Christian.
- iii. That the martyrdom of Stephen is consequent upon his faith (belief) in Christ and witness (public confession and proclamation) to Christ, which finally results to vision of the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56).

Articulating the same view in a broader perspective, Witherington argues that no section or group within the Church, be it Jewish Christian or Hellenist is singled out for special attention, and nothing suggests any group or section of the Church is individually targeted based on

doctrinal, theological or ideological views. Rather all are affected, and a great significant of them, but the Twelve, have to leave Jerusalem. There is nothing in Acts or Paul that suggests that the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians are persecuted by one group while the "Hebrew" Christians by another.<sup>xii</sup> To the contrary, even in the case of Stephen, while the action is first taken up by "Hellenists" against him (6:9), one hears quite specifically that Stephen is taken at some point to the high priest (7:1), the very same authority before to whom the apostles are dragged in 5:17. It is also on notice that in 4:1-22 these same Jewish leaders are involved with the apostles earlier (cf. 4:5).<sup>xliii</sup> What *is* also suggested by a close reading of Acts 8-11 is that while many of the "Hebrews" seem to have returned to Jerusalem after the persecution is over (cf. 9:26, 31; 11:1), many others, perhaps even most, of the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, who have likely come from the Diaspora (or their descendants), keep going not only into Judea and Samaria but into the Diaspora proper, including Syrian Antioch, as 11:19ff. As they move from place to place they continue to spread the Good News.<sup>xliii</sup>

It is also necessary to note that early Christianity comprises of converts who range from extreme Judaizers to antinomian teachers, but that Peter, James, John, Philip, and even Paul hold views somewhere in between these two radical extremes. This is what Acts 15 suggests, though there could be some difference in ecclesiology, the most basic matter is salvation (soteriology) in Christ, especially for Gentiles,<sup>xliv</sup> something that Paul himself also suggests in Gal. 2:7-9.<sup>xlv</sup> There is nothing in passage that makes Stephen Samaritan,<sup>xlvi</sup> Qumran,<sup>xlvii</sup> or Ebionite.<sup>xlviii</sup> Bruce at this point may be very informative.<sup>xlix</sup> Stephen being a Hellenist does not legitimise the conclusion that his speech must be anti-Temple since the Hellenists themselves are not from Luke's perception anti-Temple.

#### **Acts 7:48 in its Broad Context**

The passage begins with a retrospect of the history of the people of God. The argument is that throughout Israel's history the divine presence is never confined to a place: God reveals himself to Abraham in Mesopotamia, Joseph in Egypt, Moses in the wilderness of Sinai (vv.2, 9, 38).<sup>1</sup> Stephen's rehearsal of the history shows that the wandering Abraham obeys God and follows God's directions from place to place (vv.3-4; cf. Gen 11:31—12:5) even outside the Promised Land (Palestine/Jerusalem). It is also worth noting that Stephen depicts this future posterity of promise as "resident aliens, who "will worship me in



this place” (v.7; cf. Gen 15:14; Exod 3:12 LXX). The striking emphasis is Luke’s argument of making worship a blessing rather than possession, hence the recasting of Gen 15:13-14 LXX. The final phrase “with great possessions” (meta. avposkeuh/j pollh/j) in the text of Genesis is substituted with a revised phrase from Exod 3:12, which instead of reading “this place” (tw/| to,pw| tou,tw|) that is Canaan reads “this mountain” (evn tw/| o;rei tou,tw|) that is (Sinai). The effect, therefore, is to hear that God’s purpose for Israel (and for all creation) is to “worship me in this place.” While “this place” might anticipate Jerusalem’s Temple, Luke is well aware that this Temple has long since been destroyed according to the Lord’s prediction. The centre of sacred worship has now shifted from a particular place to a particular person.<sup>li</sup> Rhetorically, Stephen identifies with the people as a family by the intermittent reference to Abraham as “our ancestor” (v.2; cf. vv.11-12, 19, 38, 44-45) and the “covenant of circumcision” (v.8; cf. Genesis 17), but at the same time distances himself from the “land” and “place” of God’s promise by alluding to the expression “in which *you* are now living” (eivj h]n u`mei/j nu/n katoikei/tev.4).

Consistent with his interpretive key, Stephen’s account of Joseph portrays him as a type of prophet (vv.9-16) whose story typifies all prophets, including Jesus and now Stephen. But of more interest in the frame of this discussion is the introduction of Shechem by Luke, a region associated with Mt. Gerizim, the most sacred site of Samaritan religion and the principal competitor to the temple site in Jerusalem (v.16; cf. Gen 33:18-20). Its reference here relays another piece of his larger contention that true worship of God is not relegated to a single place, which is a form of idolatry.

In v.33 Luke takes up Moses, theophany at the burning bush and interprets it to match his theological outlook. The concentration is on the Lord’s statement that “the place where you are standing is holy ground” (v.33; cf. Exod 3:5-6). It relativizes the importance of a particular “holy place” (= temple site in Jerusalem cf. 6:13) such that *anyplace* where God leads his people through the Holy Spirit is *holy*.<sup>liii</sup>

Incidentally, the reason to release the Israelites from Egypt will be for worship (Exod. 4:23). The same motif remains in Luke’s evaluation of the people’s response to the mission of Moses. It is more a spiritual treachery. “They made a calf, offered a sacrifice to the idol, and revealed in the works of their hands” (v.41; cf. Exod 32:4-6). Out of disappointment “God turned away from them and handed them over to

worship the host of heaven” (v.42a; cf. Rom 1:24, 26, 28; also 1 Kgs 22:19 //Jer 7:18). Luke shapes his account of Israel’s spiritual failure in the wilderness by describing a religion composed of handmade idols and human calculations, neither of which leads a people into communion with God.<sup>lviii</sup> The citation from Amos (Amos 5:25-27 LXX), which has been described as “the most astonishing jump in the speech,”<sup>liv</sup> concludes the line of the argument on Moses’ mission in the passage. Again, “Luke inserts the phrase “to worship” (proskuneiv/v.43c) into the prophecy and changes Damascus to “Babylon” (v.43d) to correct its history and make clear Scripture’s lesson: If Israel rejects the prophet’s second offering of God’s salvation, it is the people and not the prophet of whom God says, “Therefore I will send you into exile” (v.43d).”<sup>lv</sup>

So, God’s persistent action in the history of “our ancestors” to reverse evil with good is fully presented in this broad context. He makes and keeps. He sees (v.34), hears (v.34), appears (v.2), speaks, (vv.3, 6, 33) and comes down (v.34) to rescue (vv.10, 34) Israel from despair and death. He is the God who judges those who oppress Israel (v.7), and who turns from an unfaithful Israel in sorrow (v.42). It is a fact of Israel’s history that places no one in doubt.<sup>lvi</sup> As a pattern expressive of God’s persistent concern for Israel and its persistent disregard for God’s saving word, God sends the prophetic carrier of God’s saving word twice to Israel (7:12-13, 35-36), and their stiff-neck and uncircumcised heart and ear ( ) would make it impossible to hear the word of God (7:9, 26, 39-41),<sup>lvii</sup> hence the word will depart Jerusalem for another place since God cannot be confined in a place. He will continue to move from place to place in accordance with his desert practice.

#### **Analysis of the Pericope of 7:48**

The foregoing section shows strong evidence of “worship” motif without any allusion to the Temple. But it is in this pericope (vv 44-50) that Luke allows Stephen to reflect directly on the Temple. There is here a rapid transition from the “tent of testimony in the wilderness” - ~h sknh. tou/marturi,ou ... evn th/| evrh,mw| (v.44; cf. Exod 27:21) to Solomon, “who built a house [temple] for God” (v.47; cf. 1 Kgs 5:1—7:51). The stress is the understanding of the role of thesknhh/j(sknhh.- tabernacle/tent) asmartu,rion (bearing witness). Thus the tabernacle is a testimony or witness to the God of glory.<sup>lviii</sup> The same witness to the God of glory will be summarised in the prophetic role of the apostles and Stephen within Israel (see 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41).

Some of the principal elements in the argument that should be noted for the sake of the concluding thesis in this presentation include:

- i. Some weight is laid on the 'tent' as God's dwelling in the wilderness and Canaan (vv.44-45).
- ii. The "tent of witness" is precisely willed by God, built according to the "model" God showed Moses (v.44; cf. Exod 25:9, 40). Everything about the tent is under the direct control of God (v.44). And the tent continues to witness to the glory of God until the time when David whom God favoured, prayed to find a "habitation" (of God), in which his people might worship (Ps 132:5) in accordance with the divine promise (v.46).
- iii. The "tent" instead of "Temple" envisages portability and mobility; its easy movement in the wilderness journey from one place to another place so that one particular site is unimportant. The same can be transferred theologically as demonstrating the central argument of Luke that God Israel knows is not the sitting God but the moving God. It is the God that moves along with his people.
- iv. The movable tabernacle of wilderness days is then much more suitable; indeed, everything necessary for pure worship subsists in the tabernacle of the wilderness, and is made available to the people before ever they enter the holy land. Even in the land, the "tent of witness", made according to divine pattern," continues to serve their purpose of worship until "Solomon built a house for him" (vv.44-47).<sup>lix</sup>
- v. By contrast, Solomon's (and certainly Herod's) Temple is deprecated because it is not built according to God's pattern and instruction. It is a fixed building of stone, not a suitable shrine for a pilgrim or wondering people as Israel is intended to be. And "the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands" (v.48)
- vi. The adversative *de*, adds to the argument. It strikes the counterpoint between the dream of David and its realisation. It strikes the note that Solomon's Temple is not the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham or of David's prayer.<sup>lx</sup>
- vii. The glossary of worship terminology employed in the pericope – "land," "tent," "worship," "God," "our ancestors"—shifts the definition of worship from the routines of a permanent structure to the dynamic presence of a transcendent God.
- viii. Taking the argument in vv.48 further would mean that even if Stephen should announce the supersession or destruction of the

temple, which he never intends, it is not to commit blasphemy or sacrilege against God, because God is independent of any temple or place.<sup>lxi</sup>

- ix. The text contains ironic wordplay that could suggest that any characterisation of Israel’s worship that has no direct relationship with the worshipping God (= “the tent of testimony”) runs the risk of substituting a “*tent* for Moloch” for the “dwelling place for the house of Jacob” (v.46; cf. Ps 131:5 LXX).<sup>lxii</sup>
- x. Now, a contrast is made between Solomon, who builds a “house for God” (v.47), and a God who “does not dwell in houses made with human hands” (7:48). It is the very heart of Stephen’s criticism of his accusers (cf. 17:24-25).
- xi. The Isaian text (vv.49); cf. Isa 66:1 LXX) at the conclusion of the old historical summary accentuates the fact that Diaspora Jewry has in the course of history been encountering God who does not dwell in shrines or Temple made by human hands. The people do not have to go back to Jerusalem; they must not visit the Temple in order to encounter God.<sup>lxiii</sup> It becomes strong evidence in the argument of Stephen. If Stephen should be accused of anti-Temple tendency, then Isaiah could have earlier been convicted of similar offence. In this case, Stephen is marching the line of the prophetic tradition. It is the very word of God that Stephen is repeating. That the text ends with rhetoric question (v.49-50; cf. 17:24) draws out the seriousness. It is a question that generation upon generation must confront in its relationship with the God that Stephen prophesies.
- ix. One equally observes intra-textual repetition of worship motif with earlier references to Israel’s idolatry in the wilderness:

v.41: And they made a calf(εἰδωσκόποι, ἡσαν) in those days	v.48: in houses made with human hands(οἰκοδομή, τοῖς);
v.42: But God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven (οὐρανῶν);	v.49: 'Heaven(οὐρανὸς) is my throne(θρόνος),

The interplay between work of human hand and heaven the throne of God comes to fore. The throne of God, unlike the Temple, is not the work of human hand. Again, God dwells in heaven (cf. Ecc 5:2; Psa 73:25), which is above earth (cf. Isa. 63:15; Psa 102:19). The text tells the story that the Lord’s throne is in heaven (Psa 11:4); hence the conception of an earthly Temple that forces God to dwell *only* within

its vicinity, or be discovered and identified only therewith is the contention of the text. The argument is that God transcends the Jerusalem Temple, and even the earth. The Temple is not the *only* dwelling place of God. He could be, and has been often experienced beyond the Temple vicinity and also worshiped. In fine, neither God's presence nor his activity on behalf of his people is restricted to Palestine. As Wall finely puts it, the God of the discourse is the God that is constantly on the move from heaven to earth, and upon earth from place to place, making surprising choices at every turn in fulfilling the promise of Israel's salvation. Consequently, God cannot be caged in the Temple, not even in Jerusalem or on earth. His rightful dwelling place is above and beyond human imagination.<sup>lxiv</sup>

### **The Text Interpretation and Reflection**

The stress point is that the purpose of the speech is *not* to criticize the Temple per se, since it continues to function as a worship centre for the faith community (see 2:46; 3:8; 5:12). Stephen could not criticise Solomon (or even Herod) for building a Temple to worship God, earlier conceived by his father David (v.47; cf. 2 Sam 7:2-7). What the language of the text implies is that any theological claim is a direct affront to the holiness and transcendence of God (cf. Jer. 23:24). God does not inhabit "houses" bound by space and time, since "the prophet says 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool' " (7:49).

This inter-text clarifies the primary subtext of Stephen's speech. It does not polemicize against religious institutions (Temple, Torah) but against an unrepentant people who persist in refusing to believe the word of God's prophets (see v.39)—Moses, Messiah, his apostolic successors, and now Stephen. His attack is directed against the temple hierarchy, which attempts to place God in the Temple and then define the terms of Israel's worship of God. This subverts the sovereignty of God and constitutes idolatry.<sup>lxv</sup>

Again, the distinction between "true" and "false" worship is an important theme of Stephen's speech. The "true" worship of a transcendent God can never be domesticated into cultic prescription, to handmade artifacts, or to an institutionalized protocol.<sup>lxvi</sup> The 'vital texture' of his speech is provided by the continuous motion that characterises Israel's relationship with God, who moves constantly from place to place, from land to land, while God's promise given to Abraham, reissued by the prophets to this constantly changing environment, remains the fixed. Stephen's concluding remark about the tent *cum* Temple is not to criticize the

Temple as a sacred site for worshipping God. Stephen is only out for the Sanhedrin's temple politics, which divide the house of Israel and blind the people of God to the truth about Jesus.<sup>lxvii</sup>

The adjoining pericope makes clearer the intention of the Temple-criticism, which centres rather on Israel's perennial disobedience and resistance to the Holy Spirit and God's messengers (vv 51-53). In other words, Stephen blasphemes neither Moses nor God, nor does he speak against the Temple or the Torah. His polemical peroration follows rather a "classic" specimen of the deuteronomic prophet-murder parenthesis.<sup>lxviii</sup>

His charge against his accusers is more serious. They are in danger of repeating Israel's wilderness sin and are thereby perilously close to being sent into spiritual exile. Stephen accuses them of four evils:

- i. They are "stiff-necked" (sklhrotra,chloi). The accusation is more meaningful when read co-textually with Exod. 33:3, 5. It demonstrates in clear terms the Lord's anger and his condemnation of disobedient Israel.
- ii. They are "uncircumcised of heart and ears" (avperi,tmhtoi kardi,aij kai. toi/j wvsi,n). It is a reversal of the deuteronomic definition of the covenant renewal when "God will circumcise your heart" (Deut 30:6; cf. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; cf. Rom 2:29). The phrase recalls Jeremiah's judgment of unfaithful Israel as having "ears that are uncircumcised/they cannot listen [= obey]" (Jer 6:10 ). Thus, the accusation recalls Stephen's earlier retelling of God's promise to Abraham, when "the covenant of circumcision" (7:8) indicated God's commitment to fulfil the promise within the history of the covenant/circumcised people (7:17). In effect, then, the refusal to believe Jesus imperils one's membership in the covenant community.
- iii. They are "forever opposing the Holy Spirit" (echoing Isa 63:10, which remembers Israel's rebellion in the wilderness).
- iv. They behave "just as your ancestors used to do" (v.51). Here Stephen goes beyond the present generation in his stern accusation against the people. He accuses all Israel, generations present and past of obstinate resistance to God's word; for God repeatedly sends prophets to correct their ways but they will reject, persecute and even murder the prophets.<sup>lxix</sup> They have always shown hostility to God's messengers - to Joseph, to Moses, to the prophets, and most recently to "the Righteous One," whose coming the prophets had foretold (v.52).

So, the charge of blasphemy against Moses and against God comes ill from the descendants of those who during the wilderness wanderings

repudiate the leadership of Moses and abandon the worship of the true God for idolatry.<sup>lxx</sup> This is a rhetorical shift from defence to accusation. Thus the accusers are now the accused. One observes the retreat from the recital of traditions received from “*our* ancestor(s)” (oi` pate, rej h` mw/n: vv.2, 11, 15, 17, 19, 38-39, 44-45) to an accusation that his audience belongs to a history of spiritual failure written and handed down by “*your* ancestors” (oi` pate, rej u` mw/n – vv.51, 52). The association of the present generation with their father’s sins is resolute in this tradition (2 Kgs 17:14; Neh 9:32-35; Luke 11:50-51; 6:22-23). It is a tradition to which Stephen and Jesus do not belong. More important, however, is that these accusations provide judicial evidence for his stinging indictment: “You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels and yet you have not kept it” (v.53). The perennial disobedience to the law culminates in the Messiah-murder culminated (15:10).<sup>lxxi</sup>

So, what marks out a people belonging to God is neither Temple nor Torah purity but obedience to God’s command. The harsh implication is that the priestly establishment has forged temple practices and manipulated Torah observance into a kind of idolatry that keeps Israel in a spiritual wilderness without Jesus, the true medium of sacred Worship. Could one say the same with the generation of today? Can religious leaders of today be exonerated from the guilt of Israel? Can Christians and their counterparts be free from the charge? Is the voice of Stephen not a voice calling on all to release the transcendental God from shrines and building made with human hand, from selfish prayers made with human mind, the human scripture, and from the manipulation of the word of God for personal or group interest? The God of Stephen is the God that transcends the earth. It is the God that transcends the universe. It is the true Christian God.

### **Conclusion**

Our findings from the foregoing discussion include the following observations:

- i. The ‘Temple discourse’ of Acts 7 is determined by various and complex sources and genres.
- ii. The discourse is not anti-Temple as such but a review of Israel’s salvation history drawn on the LXX (or some Greek OT) version of the stories.
- iii. The discourse does not only revere the Jewish salvation history of election and selection. God is understood as the principal subject of

- Israel's salvation history, and that the realisation of this history is predicated on God's design and provident care.
- iv. The Patriarchs and early prophets first encountered God in alien countries, who chose and called them, granted them wisdom, special insight, and "signs and wonders" to lead the repentant Israel (vv.10, 22, 36).
  - v. God used major figures like Abraham, Moses, and Joseph to achieve his overall intent and design to save Israel.
  - vii. The actions of God on behalf of Israel is not confined by a particular place of worship or time of salvation.
  - viii. Despite God's benevolence, Israel has a long history of unfaithfulness to God's purposes (v.51) stretching back to the early times at Sinai (v.39). They are seen as a people who repeatedly fail to keep the Law (v.53) to their own discredit.
  - ix. There is no doubt certain level of criticism of the temple as opposed to the tent of meeting in vv.44-50, but if so it is not different from the sort of prophetic critiques one finds in an Amos or a Jeremiah or in Isa. 66:1-2, or for that matter in some of the Samuel material.
  - x. What that comes to fore is principally the criticism of the idea that God dwells in earthly temples made by human hands, when in fact heaven is God's proper dwelling place.
  - xi. Jesus (and his witnesses including Stephen) is identified with the OT prophetic tradition (vv.37, 52), and the reaction of the people to Jesus (and his witnesses) with the reaction of early Jews to the prophets.
  - xii. The mob reaction that led to the martyrdom of Stephen is not because of his criticism of God's people and their unfaithfulness, not because of some criticism of the Temple. The views on the Temple are rather conventional in a prophetic vein.
- "The Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands" (v.48) is the provocative theme of the biting criticism of our days. Luke understands clearly the Christological module to temple politics. It is simply politics of power without spiritual interest. It is not the Temple, the Torah or any institution of national life or religious cult that counts. The accusation of Israel as "stiff-necked" is a challenge to their presumption that a transcendent God, the only God, can be confined in a 'sacred' place or particular parcel of land and regulated by a powerful group of self-appointed people. The criticism is against the temple officials who define the operative domain of the transcendental God. The temple officials seem to have forgotten that the Temple is not the central



symbol of Christian faith; that the core conviction of Christianity is that Christians are the people gathered together and marked out by their faith in the person of Christ, who is the living Temple that sanctifies the Christian gathering.<sup>lxvii</sup> The temple officials are once more reminded that the resurrection of Jesus confirms his Messiahship, the central symbol of the true faith and life. Who are these temple officials today? To whom does Stephen speak?

<sup>i</sup> Richard J. Dillon, "Acts of the Apostles" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, 722-267. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1990), 741.

<sup>ii</sup> Krodel, G., *Acts*, ACNT (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986) 140

<sup>iii</sup> Dillon, Richard J., "Acts of the Apostles," 741.

<sup>iv</sup> The Greek text used is from *Nestle-Aland. Greek-English New Testament*, ed. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994, 8th ed.). All English scriptural citations outside the translation are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* (New York, 1989).

<sup>v</sup> Cf. Robert W. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 12 Vols. ed. Leander E. Keck, (Nashville: Abingdon. CD Edition), n. 304.

<sup>vi</sup> Gerhard Schneider, "Ste, fanoj," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 Vols, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, 3:273-274. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 275.

<sup>vii</sup> Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*. (London: SCM, 1956), 168

<sup>viii</sup> Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2 vols. (Freiburg, Basel and Wien: Herder 1980, 1982), 1:441-69.

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. G. Ludemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 79ff.

<sup>x</sup> Schneider, "Ste, fanoj," 275

<sup>xi</sup> O.H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten*. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1967), 268-69; Ulrich Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte*, 3rd edn. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 219.

<sup>xii</sup> E. Richards, *Acts 6.1-8.4: The Author's Method of Composition*. (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 141-45.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company / The Paternoster Press, 1998), 240, 261

<sup>xiv</sup> Steck, *Israel*, Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden*.

- <sup>xv</sup> Cf. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 253, listed ten points where Luke, some indicating a conscious omission in the Gospel for the sake of accounting for the event of Stephen in Acts. Thus:
1. Trial before high priest/Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53 and par./Acts 6:12; 7:1)
  2. False witnesses (Mark 14:56-57; Matt. 26:60-61; *not in Luke/Acts 6:13*)
  3. Testimony concerning the destruction of the temple (Mark 14:58; Matt. 26:61; *not in Luke/Acts 6:14*)
  4. Temple "made with hands" (Mark 14:58; *not in Luke/Acts 7:48*)
  5. Son of Man saying (Mark 14:62 and par./Acts 7:56)
  6. Charge of blasphemy (Mark 14:64, Matt. 26:65; *not in Luke/Acts 6:11*)
  7. High priest's question (Mark 14:61; Matt. 26:63; *not in Luke* [cf. 22:67, "they"]/Acts 7:1)
  8. Committal of spirit (*only in Luke 23:46/Acts 7:59*)
  9. Cry out with a loud voice (Mark 15:34 = Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:37 and par./Acts 7:60) .
  10. Intercession for enemies forgiveness (*only in Luke 23:34/Acts 7:60*)<sup>238</sup>.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Both Conzelmann and Schneider are of the opinion that the original martyrdom report more likely told of tumultuous lynch-mob justice. Cf. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia, ET. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 61; Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, I:432-34
- <sup>xvii</sup> Again, the report itself suggests that the features recalling an assembly of the Sanhedrin probably comes about by assimilation to the trial of Jesus. So, Bruce is right to observe here that this episode from Mark's account of the trial of Jesus (Mark 14:57f) is not reproduced by Luke, who has a habit of omitting from his gospel motifs which he proposes to develop in Acts.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Richards, *Acts 6.1-8.4*, 281-301
- <sup>xix</sup> Dillon, "Acts of the Apostles," 740); also Ernest Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*. (Philadelphia and Oxford: Fortress and Basil Blackwell, 1971), 273-274.
- <sup>xx</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 252-53.
- <sup>xxi</sup> C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. 2 vols. ICC. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 1994-98, 334.
- <sup>xxii</sup> L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*. SP 5. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992, 137
- <sup>xxiii</sup> M. L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) 58, argues that the speech may be seen as incomplete. But it is a kind of judicial rhetoric called "counteraccusation." The defendant does not offer countervailing evidence to overturn an indictment or even seek acquittal on some other grounds. Rather, the defendant takes the offensive to indict his accusers as the guilty party. Naturally, since the accusers generally hold judicial power and the indicted defendant has none, the audience should not expect the defendant to be

acquitted, and Stephen isn't. Cf. also Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," Stephen only indirectly responds to the charges levelled against him as an element of this theological perspective, and the central themes of his speech are those of a pious Jew who would never blaspheme God or Moses (cf. 6:11, and note 277 from Wall).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Wall correctly observes that Stephen's speech in vv.17-43 focuses on Moses as another exemplary prophet of God. Indeed, Moses is the prototype of the anticipated Messiah whom God will raise up to deliver God's people from death to lead them into newness of life (v.37). This messianic prophet-like-Moses is, of course, Jesus (see 3:22-23). Thus Stephen's account of Moses authorizes his gospel proclamation that Jesus is God's Messiah and at the same time provides his defence against the charge that he speaks "blasphemous words against Moses" (see 6:11).

<sup>xxv</sup> Stephen's speech is midrashic—that is, he retells Israel's history by recalling a selection of biblical stories that carry his theological freight—a prophet's exposure of Israel's need for repentance and restoration. Important to note is that Luke's quotation or allusions of Scripture are in line with his use of Scripture elsewhere in Acts. He does not distort the theological intent of the cited/echoed biblical (LXX) text but interprets its current meaning to fit into his narrative. The impression that lingers after this speech is that Stephen's verdict of those who accuse him is also God's verdict as scripted and sanctioned by the Scriptures. (Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," n. 276)

<sup>xxvi</sup> According to Wall, the speech is *on the face of it*, hardly an apologia in either form or motive; nowhere does he *directly* respond to the charges brought against him. Nor is the speech kerygmatic, since nowhere does Stephen draw together biblical passages in support of the church's proclamation that the risen Jesus is God's promised Messiah (*italics mine*). Cf. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles". Besides its terseness, the basic literary convention that differentiates the 'historiography' from secular counterparts, such as Herodotus, Thucydides and Josephus, is its biblical diction and citation.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 120.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 253

<sup>xxix</sup> J.P. Polhill, *The Acts of the Apostles*. (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 183.

<sup>xxx</sup> Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (1-12). (Zurich: Benziger, 1986), 266-67.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 253.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*. 240.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> John Chrysostom, (*Horn*. 14 co!. 113; *Horn*. 21)

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Cf. H.J. Cadbury, "The Hellenists" in *The Beginning of Christianity*, 5 Vols. ed. H.J. Cadbury and K. Lake, 5:59-74 (London: Macmillan, 1933).

<sup>xxxv</sup> Witherington *The Acts of the Apostles*, 240-247, gives a detail analysis to prove that the term is of no religious or ethnic significance but linguistic.

- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Moule has strongly argued that a Jew could be either someone who speaks Aramaic only or (like Paul and many others) speak both Aramaic and Greek. Cf. C.F.D. Moule, "Once More, Who Were the Hellenists?" *The Expository Times* 70 (1958--59), pp. 100-102. His view would equally cover Paul's designation of himself as a Hebrew or Jew (2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5).
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 1994, 388
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Bruce observes that it may be difficult to determine the number of synagogue meant, one or more. F.F. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James, and John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994 [1st Paper Back Edition]), 51, n.8.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Bruce, F.F., *Peter, Stephen, James, and John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994 [1st Paper Back Edition]), 51.
- <sup>xl</sup> The description of the situation in Acts 6 and 7 by Bruce is judged as over interpretation of the text. Stephen is not more radical than the Twelve or Paul, neither does he maintain the abrogation of Mosaic customs and the cessation of sacrificial worship. His interest is quite different. It is about the transcendence of God in anticipation of the Gentile mission. Cf. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James, and John*, 52. On another passage Bruce (82f) argues: "We meet nothing quite so radical elsewhere in the New Testament. It was common ground to most of the early Christians (for which indeed they could adduce words of Jesus as a precedent - Matt. 12:6; John 2:19)" that the temple-order had now been superseded by something better - a spiritual temple with spiritual priesthood and spiritual sacrifices' (Rom.12:1; Heb. 13:15f.; 1 Pet. 2:5) - but the idea that the temple was a mistake from the beginning is unparalleled in the New Testament. The nearest we come to Stephen's approach, so far as the New Testament writings are concerned, is in the Letter to the Hebrews; but the writer to the Hebrews simply ignores the temple and draws his analogies from the literary description of the wilderness tabernacle and its services."
- <sup>xli</sup> Witherington's position here is contra Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).
- <sup>xlii</sup> C.C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 34-35.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 244.
- <sup>xliv</sup> This point has been well made in the study by Michael Enyinwa Okoronkwo, *The Jerusalem Compromise: A Conflict-Resolution Model in Acts 15 in the Light of Modern Linguistics*. (Bonn: Borengasse, 2000).
- <sup>xlv</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*. 247.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> H. Scharlmann, *Stephen: A Singular Saint* (Rome, 1968); C. H. H. Scobie, "The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity", *NTS* 19 (1972-73), 390-414.

- <sup>xlvii</sup> O. Cullmann, "The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity," *JBL* 74 (1955), 213-226, reprinted in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. K. Stendahl, 18-32. (London, 1958).
- <sup>xlviii</sup> H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentums* (Tübingen, 1949), 440-445.
- <sup>xlix</sup> The argument of Bruce (*Peter, Stephen, James and John*, 55-56) is at this point very informative. According to him, "The Samaritans, however, were not against the temple in principle: they objected to the Jerusalem temple because they believed that the holy hill of Gerizim was the divinely-appointed location for the sanctuary of the God of Israel (John 4:20). The men of Qumran avoided the Jerusalem temple while it was dominated by a high-priesthood which they believed to be illegitimate; but they looked forward to the resumption of acceptable sacrifices in a purified temple under a worthy priesthood - even if, for the time being, their own community served as a spiritual sanctuary with its inner council as the holy of holies (1QS 8.4-10). The restoration of the priesthood and sacrifice is presupposed in 1QM 2.1--6. (Cf. B. Gartner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1965); also R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple* (Oxford, 1969) The Ebionites' negative attitude to the temple was probably a rationalization of its overthrow in A.D. 70; James the Just, whose memory they revered, had been assiduous in his attendance at the temple during his lifetime in the days when it was still standing (Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James, and John*, 55-56).
- <sup>l</sup> Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James, and John*, 54
- <sup>li</sup> Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," n. 284.
- <sup>lii</sup> Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 128. It is also important to note that the prominence given to Moses indirectly exonerates Stephen from the accusation of speaking "against the law" (cf. 6:13)
- <sup>liii</sup> Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," n. 300.
- <sup>liv</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1996), 96.
- <sup>lv</sup> Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles."
- <sup>lvi</sup> Dunn, J.D.G., *The Acts of the Apostles*, 92.
- <sup>lvii</sup> Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles."
- <sup>lviii</sup> Could the same be said in the context of buildings that are constructed and dedicated to God? Could it justify big church buildings that are infested all over the nation? The purpose for such buildings should be well stressed. That the buildings should not be identified as but with God is very clear from the text.
- <sup>lix</sup> Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James, and John*, 54
- <sup>lx</sup> N.A. Dahl, "The Story of Abraham in Luke-Acts" in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn, pp. 139-58. London: SPCK, 1968; also Dillon, "Acts of the Apostles," 742.
- <sup>lxi</sup> Bruce, F.F., *Peter, Stephen, James, and John*, 54-55.

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- <sup>lxii</sup> Wall observes the difference in certain translations that opt for either tent of Jacob (NRSV – scholarly supported by B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 351-53) or God of Jacob (NIV supported by Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 132-33). Fortunately, the stand on the issue does not bear directly on the inquiry in this text.
- <sup>lxiii</sup> Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1:467
- <sup>lxiv</sup> The result of the text analysis completely disagrees with Bruce, (*Peter, Stephen, James, and John*, 53), who tries but unsuccessfully to make a difference between views of Luke the author of Acts and Stephen, the Hellenists. According to him, Stephen's reply is not an epitome of Luke's own position: Luke, in both parts of his work, reveals a much more positive attitude to the temple than Stephen does." What we find in Acts 7 is in agreement with the theological understanding of the Apostolic Church by of Luke.
- <sup>lxv</sup> C.A. Evans, and J.A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 197-99.
- <sup>lxvi</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 271.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> Cf. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles."
- <sup>lxviii</sup> Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden*, 215-16; Steck, *Israel*, 265-69.
- <sup>lxix</sup> Dillon, "Acts of the Apostles," 742.
- <sup>lxx</sup> Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James, and John*, 54
- <sup>lxxi</sup> Dillon, "Acts of the Apostles," 742.
- <sup>lxxii</sup> Cf. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles."