

**THE DEPICTION OF CONFLICT IN ACTS: A STUDY OF SPEECH SCENES
INVOLVING CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN JEWS**

by

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A thesis submitted to
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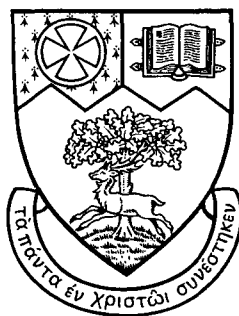
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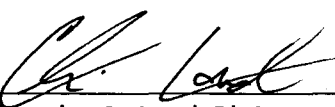
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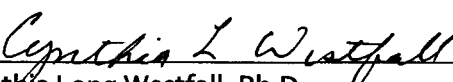
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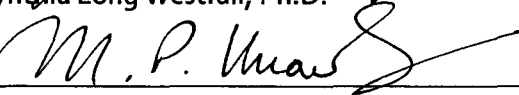
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ABSTRACT

The Depiction of Conflict in Acts:
A Study of Speech Scenes Involving Christian and Non-Christian Jews

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There are many factors related to conflict between early Christianity and wider Judaism. I argue that in Acts, Luke employs speech content in speech contexts involving Christian speakers and non-Christian Jewish hearers to advance his belief that Jesus' role and identity, confessed and proclaimed by the early Christians, is the most important factor in these conflicts. My analysis demonstrates that, in his narrative, Luke clarifies that outsiders frequently produce mistaken interpretations of the early Christian movement and that their accusations against Christianity, based on these mistaken interpretations, are false. At the same time, Luke shows how attitudes and decisions regarding Jesus' identity provoke, escalate, and alleviate conflict. The end result of this is that Luke's implied readers are directed to view Christology as the single most important factor involved in conflict between Christian and non-Christian Jews.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis is the depiction of conflict in Acts between the early Christian movement and wider Judaism.¹ I will investigate this subject by looking at those speech scenes in Acts where there is conflict between Christian speakers and non-Christian Jewish hearers,² using both narrative criticism and social-scientific criticism.³ Generally, the Christian speaker is a representative of the Christian movement and the non-Christian audience represents wider Judaism, since, in the first-century Mediterranean world, individuals' value and status are tightly tied to the groups to which they belong. Thus, any conflict between speaker and audience illuminates conflict between the groups they represent.⁴

The scenes in Acts with Christians speaking to non-Christian Jews play a significant role in demonstrating the conflict between these two groups of characters. All the Christian speakers in these scenes are Jews. Therefore, strictly speaking, the conflict that is studied in this paper is a conflict between Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews. I

¹ When I differentiate the early Christian movement from Judaism, I do not deny that the early Christian movement has its roots in Judaism. Even if we take early Christianity as one sect of Judaism, its particular features and practices, which are derived from the teaching and life of Jesus, provoked conflict between the early Christian movement and the other sects of Judaism. To simplify the discussion, "Judaism" in this paper will refer to the rest of Judaism apart from the early Christian movement, i.e. non-Christian Judaism.

² Since Bar-Jesus is depicted as a false prophet and hence not a typical representative of Judaism, I will not include him in this study even though he is a Jewish audience. Also, there are non-speech scenes that depict conflict between Christianity and wider Judaism, but this study restricts itself to the speech scenes.

³ Seland, "Once More," 197.

⁴ Seland, "Once More," 197.

do not deny that there are other conflicts depicted in Acts, including conflict between Christians and conflict between Christians and non-Jews.⁵ The scope of this study, however, is restricted to those speech scenes involving Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews, so that a full-scale study of conflict in Acts must await a longer study.

The scenes investigated here include various examples of the proclamation activity of the Christian movement, which is one of the main themes of Luke's second narrative.⁶ The narrative shows that Jesus' followers are commissioned by Jesus and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim Jesus from Jerusalem to all Judea and Samaria and to Rome. A large amount of material depicts their evangelistic and apologetic efforts among their fellow Jews. Their proclamation, which interprets the scriptures through the lens of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, provokes conflict with non-believing Jews.⁷ Some of these Jews react to the conflict produced by the Christian proclamation by putting their faith in Jesus and becoming Christians. Others reject the message, and some even strive to stop the proclamation of the message, including bringing up false accusations against Christian speakers.⁸ In view of this relationship of parts to the whole,

⁵ There are traces of conflict within the Christian community related to the observance of traditional Jewish practices (e.g. 15:1–35; 21:17–26). As the narrative shows, the resolution or alleviation of this conflict is through affirming that both the Jews and the Gentiles are saved by the grace of Jesus, and also through respecting the reality that Moses has been proclaimed for generations (15:21). Thus, Christian leaders have decided not to trouble the Gentiles but only ask them to abstain from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood (15:20). Implicitly, the Jewish Christians are still practicing the law, thus conflict between the Jewish Christian who are zealous for the law and Paul is invoked by the "rumour" that Paul teaches the Jews to forsake Moses (21:21). Whether the Apostle Paul actually did what he is accused of doing in Luke's "rumour" is a question beyond the scope of this study.

⁶ In this paper, I will not discuss the authorship of Acts but will simply employ "Luke" as the name of the author.

⁷ The phrases "non-believing" and "unbelieving" in this paper refer to not believing in Jesus' identity as it is proclaimed by the early Christian movement.

⁸ If we take witnessing for Jesus in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth as the main theme covering the whole narrative of Acts, this study indicates that the conflict between non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews plays a significant role in driving the proclamation activities from

I presume that Luke's depiction of the conflict between Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews is secondary to his main intention of depicting the proclamation of Jesus. However, the analysis of the conflict shows how Luke perceives the impact of proclamation activities on non-Christian Jews and how Christian leaders respond to this impact.

Furthermore, within Acts, public speaking is closely related to the proclamation of the Christian message in that it is an important and useful channel to convey the message to an audience. In fact, conveying the message that was proclaimed is so essential for Luke that he composes his narrative in such a way that speeches take up a large part of it. On the basis of the research presented here, I am convinced that through speech content, Luke makes known how he perceives the conflict that occurred when the Christian message was initially proclaimed to Jews. At the same time, the narrative contexts in which Luke presents his speech content indicate his understanding of both the reasons for the speeches and, in at least some cases, the responses they received. In a word, both speech content and speech contexts work together in order to convey Luke's perspective on the conflict that is the focus of my analysis.

In the relevant speech scenes of conflict, it is clear that Luke acknowledges that many different factors are involved in conflicts between Christian and non-Christian Jews. At the same time, he consistently addresses the issue of Christology through the speech content of his Christian speakers throughout the narrative. This characteristic prompts me to distinguish Jesus' identity from other factors. With the aid of both narrative and social-scientific research, I will argue in this thesis that Luke has intentionally composed the

Jerusalem to all Judea and to Samaria and to Rome. From narrative criticism's perspective, if we take this main theme as the plot for the whole narrative, this conflict is one of the forces that advances the plot. At the same time, the text also indicates that Jesus and God are the authors of these proclamation activities. Thus, the conflict between non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews is presented by Luke as something that cannot impede God's plan of salvation through Jesus.

scenes in Acts in order to convey the idea that disagreements and decisions regarding Jesus' identity are more important than all of the other factors which provoked, escalated or alleviated the conflict between Christian and non-Christian Jews in the early days of the Christian movement. For example, some scenes show that from the perspective of non-Christian Jews, the law or the temple or some other factor provokes conflict with Christians. Luke thus shows his awareness of the concerns of these Jews. But he uses various approaches to brush away their claims, such as identifying them as false accusations or demonstrating that the Roman authorities have a different perspective. At the same time, he repeatedly points out that Christian leaders, amidst conflict, persistently proclaim Jesus. In this way, Luke indicates in these scenes that Christology is a more fundamental source of conflict than the other sources identified by non-Christian Jews.

1. Previous Studies of Jewish-Christian Relations in Acts

The conflict motif in Acts is substantial and has garnered interest from various scholars over the years. However, the approach most scholars adopt is to research this theme in the New Testament or in early church history instead of in Acts alone. These scholars search for evidence in the abundant ancient literature to support their hypothesis, and Acts is just one resource for them. Nevertheless, Acts is such an important piece of literature demonstrating the social life of the early Christian movement that it deserves more attention for studying how Luke handles conflict.

Some scholars focus on observing one specific aspect of the conflict in Acts, and their argument may not be in accord with the basic textual evidence. For example, J.T. Sanders claims that at the end of Acts, "Jewish opposition to Christianity is now

universal and endemic.”⁹ In Acts 28, however, Luke states that some Jews are convinced by Paul’s message, and while others refuse to believe, Paul nevertheless preaches and teaches without hindrance. The text shows that Luke perceives that the attitude of the Jews is mixed, and he does not emphasize that the Jews try to prohibit Paul’s proclamation. Sanders needs to clarify what “Jewish opposition” is from Luke’s perspective, since the fact that some Jews believe in Jesus would seem to indicate the opposite of Sanders’ claim. Another example involves an alleged anti-Judaism theme in Acts.¹⁰ Adolf Harnack has called Acts “the first stage of developing early Christian anti-Semitism,”¹¹ and Sanders describes Acts as “anti-Semitic” without demonstrating how he reaches the conclusion.¹² Norman Beck labels Acts as the most anti-Jewish document in the New Testament.¹³ These claims that Acts contains a consistently negative portrayal of the Jews, however, do not match the whole picture of the Lukan narrative. Setzer’s analysis and evidence show that the “themes of rejection and acceptance appear side by side for a good part of the work.”¹⁴

My study on Lukan speech content and speech context attempts to understand how Luke perceives the conflict between Judaism and early Christianity. It is necessary and helpful for properly understanding the issue of anti-Semitism related to Luke’s text. For example, regarding the attitude of these two groups shown toward each other, the

⁹ Sanders, *Jews in Luke-Acts*, 77, 80.

¹⁰ Donaldson examines the meaning of the phrases *anti-Semitic* and *anti-Judaic* and provides the axes to examine whether the New Testament is anti-Semitic or anti-Judaic. See Donaldson, *Jews and anti-Judaism*, 13–20.

¹¹ Cited by Sanders, *Jews in Luke-Acts*, xvi–xvii.

¹² Sanders, *Jews in Luke-Acts*, xvi–xvii.

¹³ Beck, *Mature Christianity*, 270.

¹⁴ Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians*, 82. Setzer’s work focuses on Jewish responses to early Christians from 30 C.E. to 150 C.E. The book of Acts is one of the resources she examines in her study.

narrative demonstrates that instead of merely opposing the accusations against them, as in Stephen's scene, Christian speakers also persuade the audience to believe, as in the scenes at Pentecost and in Antioch of Pisidia. At the same time, Luke's plot also reveals that some Jewish people and leaders respond positively to the message of the Christian speakers, including several characters who do *not* subsequently become believers themselves.

Of course, there are some works that focus on the Jews' negative attitude and reaction to Christians, without taking it as Luke's exclusive depiction of the Jewish attitude toward Christians. For example, Kelhoffer analyzes the motif of persecution in Acts in Chapter 10 of his recent monograph *Persecution, Persuasion and Power*. Kelhoffer argues that Luke consistently questions the legitimacy of the depicted persecutors, who are usually Jewish.¹⁵ He notes that the legacy of the suffering apostles and Stephen and Paul is being transferred to Luke's later community so they can face persecution.¹⁶ Moreover, Kelhoffer views the legacy of Paul and Stephen as part of a larger pattern of persecution, which includes the persecution of the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus. Kelhoffer is not satisfied with gathering Luke's descriptions of persecution and searching for a pattern. He also probes the place of this pattern in the entire context of Christian literature and its significance for Luke's readers. Due to the limited scope of my research, I can only focus on the depiction of conflict in Acts, but I hope that this will provide useful insights for those who want to search further into the relationship between Acts and other Christian literature regarding this theme, and how it contributes to the early Christian community.

¹⁵ Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power*, 286.

¹⁶ Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power*, 361.

One of the reasons I have chosen to analyze speech content and speech contexts is that few scholars pay exclusive attention to these matters when they work on the conflict in Acts. Weatherly's work *Jewish Responsibility for the Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts* does examine the speech context that implicates the Jews in Jesus' death (2:22–23; 3:12–13; 4:27–28; 10:39; 13: 27–28), but it is only one of his methods to answer the question of whether or not Luke holds the Jews as a people culpable for the death of Jesus.¹⁷

Weatherly's research shows that the detailed depiction of the characters in various scenes can help avoid making generalizations, which is also one of the strengths of exploiting narrative criticism in my study. I hope my exclusive focus on speech content and speech contexts will contribute distinctive insights to research on the theme of conflict.

There are some works on the function of the speeches, even though they are not directly related to conflict.¹⁸ For example, Bruce understands that different speeches function in different ways. He classifies the speeches into four categories—missionary,

¹⁷ Weatherly, *Jewish Responsibility*, 271–72.

¹⁸ Dibelius opines that the repetition of the motifs in the speeches of Acts demonstrates that the significance of the speeches is not merely to convey ideas but also to serve as a living exhortation and proclamation. See Dibelius, "Speeches," 175–78, 180–81. Dibelius also notes that Luke employs the speeches for the intended readers to advance the main themes in the story. See Dibelius, "Speeches," 145. Tannehill argues that every speech has a different function relating to the narrative setting as it constitutes an action in the unfolding plot. See Tannehill, "The Function of Peter's Mission Speeches in the Narrative of Acts," 400–14. Soards works on the repetitive motifs of the speeches and regards them as Luke's tool to unify his narrative. See Soards, *Speeches*, 12. Some scholars work on the speeches from theological perspectives, for example, Ridderbos' *Speeches of Peter* and Neudorfer's "Speech of Stephen." Apart from working on the function of the speeches, many scholars also argue about the historicity of the speeches. They ask whether Luke records the actual content of the utterance of the speakers, or whether Luke is responsible for the composition of the speeches without considering the historicity of the speeches. Baur and Cadbury doubt the historical reliability of the speeches, but they do not deny the possibility that Luke may have access to the traditional materials. See Baur, *Paul*, 38; Cadbury, "Speeches in Acts," 407–10, 417–20, 426–27. Hemer argues that Luke demonstrates the historicity of his account by presenting the historical knowledge in his context. See Hemer, *Acts*, 131–32. Bruce tends to accept Luke as a historian within his Greco-Roman setting. He claims that Luke does report the gist of what the speakers actually said. See Bruce, *Speeches in Acts*, 25–27. Bruce refers to the tradition of Thucydides as the speech reporting practice in ancient time. The reporters tried to report what happened and what was said, even though only in summary. See Bruce, *Speeches in Acts*, 6. Finley and Porter, however, focus on discussing the problems of Thucydides' practice. See Finley, *Three Essays on Thucydides*, 95; Porter, "Is There a Thucydidean View," 121–42. For a more detailed summary of the discussion regarding the historicity of the Acts, see Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians*, 44–46.

deliberative, hortatory, and apologetic—which serve different functions. Even though classifying these speeches may not be significant to my study,¹⁹ the different categories indicate the relationship between the speakers and the audience, which is beneficial for my analysis.

2. Previous Studies of the Speeches with Narrative and/or Social-Scientific Approaches

My research involves the conflict between the two parties in each speech. The interaction of these two parties, including their action and speech content as well as the setting and gradual development of their interaction, are the main data for my analysis. I am going to use a narrative approach as my main method to analyze these data, but because conflict is an important social phenomenon, it is beneficial for me to apply a social-scientific approach as well.²⁰ This is because, when Luke presents conflict in his narrative, he not only shows his awareness of the relevant social background but also demonstrates an understanding that outsiders to the Christian movement may have different interpretations of the conflict. What is more, he tries to use his narrative to make his perspective known to his implied readers. When his earliest readers read the text, they would have interpreted this literary effort in connection with the social realities of the ancient Greco-

¹⁹ Bruce believes that Luke's intention is to teach his readers to follow his examples if they want to speak effectively in performing different functions. See Bruce, *Significance of the Speeches*, 22.

²⁰ I adopt the view that Acts belongs to a historiographical genre and thus has the characteristic of a historical narrative. Marshall provides a detailed argument for the historical evidence in Acts. See Marshall, *Luke*, 69–76. He believes Luke includes the speeches in his account because they are a part of the activity of the early church. The speeches fit perfectly into their context, which shows that Luke is aware of their historical and social background. According to Ridderbos, even though Dibelius doubts the historicity of the content of the speeches, he agrees that Luke composes the speeches to depict certain historical situations. Ridderbos also notes that when the speakers repeatedly mention in their speeches that they are the witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (2:32, 3:15, 4:20, 5:32, 10:39, etc.), they ascertain the factual content of the preaching. See Ridderbos, *Speeches of Peter*, 8, 18.

Roman world, so today's readers need the aid of social-scientific criticism in order to understand how the implied readers of Acts are meant to perceive what Luke is doing. Tannehill states that "an understanding of first-century society and of historical events within it may be important for understanding Acts as a narrative," and he also believes that study of first-century Mediterranean society may "illuminate unspoken assumptions behind the narrative."²¹ In this way, I will explore conflict using both a narrative and social-scientific approach.

Since the 1980's and 90's, narrative criticism has concentrated its application on the Gospels and Acts.²² David Rhoads and Donald Michie's *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* and R. Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* are two monographs that prompted this approach to become more popular than other literary approaches. Both works demonstrate that the authors of the Gospels are masters of storytelling and that the Gospels are presented as "comprehensive *descriptive poetics*."²³ Focusing on the narrative to examine the perspective of the author is the main characteristic of narrative approaches.

Tannehill's two-volume work *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* is another prominent work employing narrative criticism. Tannehill's understanding of the main characters is based on their action and interaction within an unfolding plot. Thus, his work demonstrates the conflict among the roles.²⁴ In the second

²¹ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:4–5.

²² There are many works that provide an introduction to narrative criticism. For example, Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism*; Gunn, "Narrative Criticism," 171–95.

²³ Rhoads and Syreeni, *Characterization in the Gospels*, 21.

²⁴ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:1.

volume, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Tannehill notes that conflict with unbelieving Jews is a prominent part of Acts. He notes that on the one side, “the mission to bring salvation to the Jewish people through the message of Jesus Messiah has fallen short of its goal,” but on the other, the desire to bring salvation to the Jews persists. Both sides are demonstrated in the last major scene in Acts.²⁵

Soards and Padilla analyze the speeches in their narrative contexts using narrative criticism, and they also pay attention to the historical and social background.²⁶ Soards investigates all the speeches in the narrative settings of Acts to study “the part the speeches play in the work as a whole and the place of Acts itself in the ancient world.”²⁷ To achieve the latter purpose, he compares the speeches in Acts with Greco-Roman literature, the Septuagint, and Hellenistic Jewish literature to examine the speeches’ historical milieu.²⁸ Ancient literature helps us understand the social background both of Acts and of its original readers.²⁹ In order to show the significance of the consideration of the social background in understanding the speeches, Padilla not only presents the speeches of outsiders in selected biblical and Second Temple narrative literature, but also studies the social background when he analyzes the context and the setting of the outsider speeches in Acts. However, even though both scholars acknowledge the importance of

²⁵ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:2–3.

²⁶ Soards, *Speeches*; Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*.

²⁷ Soards, *Speeches*, 30. Soards examines thirty-six speeches with literary criticism and rhetorical criticism.

²⁸ Soards, *Speeches*, 134–61. He concludes that the speeches in Acts share similarity with the Greco-Roman histories in their form, with the Septuagint in their content, and with Hellenistic-Jewish histories in their purpose. He does not engage the analysis of the ancient literature with the analysis of Lukan speeches. Instead, he presents them in separate sections.

²⁹ Steyn also analyzes the ancient literature to understand whether Luke changes the materials he quotes. See Steyn, *Septuagint Quotations*.

social backgrounds for their analysis, they do not identify their method as social-scientific criticism.

In the 1970's, the scholars began to examine social-scientific criticism as a method for biblical exegesis, after a century's awareness of the relevance of the social sciences to biblical scholarship. The scope of works on social-scientific criticism is diverse.³⁰ I divide them into three major areas.³¹

First, there are works that explore the application of the concepts and theories of the social sciences to biblical exegesis.³² For example, Carney argues that the model building process involves the interpreter's value and perspective, which is likely to be influenced by modern sociology.³³ However, scholars have gained more confidence in using this methodology now that the study of ancient sociology has become developed and systemized. The insights provided by this approach are perceived to be more and more useful, and critics of social science criticism are becoming more and more open and thoughtful.

A second area of study is of the social world related to biblical exegesis. Some works only focus on illustrating some feature or features of ancient society without analyzing, synthesizing, and explaining, such as Jeremias's *Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus* and Stambaugh and Balch's *The New Testament in its Social Environment*. Some of

³⁰ The major early works include Gager, *Kingdom and Community*; Theissen, *Sociology*; Elliott, *Estrangement and Community*; Gottwarld, *Tribes of Yahweh*; Belo, *Materialist Reading*; Malina, *New Testament World*; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*.

³¹ These three foci complement each other, and sometimes scholars handle more than one in their works—for example, in Esler's *First Christians in Their Social Worlds* and Elliott's *What is Social-Scientific Criticism*. Elliott's work provides a comprehensive introduction to the development of social-scientific criticism. See Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism*, 17–35.

³² For a review and application of some models, see Elliott, "Social-Scientific Criticism," 1–33.

³³ Carney, *Shape of the Past*, xiv.

these general features provide the backdrop for the setting of the biblical text, which is beneficial for understanding how the implied readers are meant to understand the text in my study. Some scholars study the ancient world by probing specific social issues and analyzing them in all capacities, such as Hengel and Barrett's *Conflicts and Challenges*, Stanton and Stroumsa's *Tolerance and Intolerance*, two major collaborative works of *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* and *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models*.³⁴ Hengel's work suggests that different factors have an impact on how the Jews respond to Christian perspectives.³⁵ Instead of taking the Jews as one general group of people, it is better for me to regard them differently in view of their geographical place of residence, social status, etc. Many models in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, such as the pivotal values of honor and shame, first-century personality, labeling and deviance theory and models for interpreting conflict, are very useful for understanding how the implied readers may perceive the interaction between the speakers and the audience in Acts.

The third category of works involves the application of social-scientific criticism to biblical exegesis. These works focus on applying the enlisted model and theory of the social sciences to the analysis of biblical texts. The works in this area are fruitful, including Talbert's *Reading Luke-Acts*, Petersen's *Philemon*, Esler's *Luke-Acts*, Moxnes' *Luke*, Malina and Rohrbaugh's *Social-Scientific Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, and Malina and Pilch's *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts*. Some works

³⁴ For the application of social-scientific criticism, see Elliott, "Methods and Models;" Esler, *Modelling Early Christianity*; Neyrey, "Luke's Social Location of Paul;" Roetzel, *World*. For religion from a social and cultural perspective, see McGuire, *Social Context*; Strelan, *Strange Acts*. For Jewish-Christians relations, see Sanders, *Schismatics*; Sanders, *Charisma, Converts, Competitors*; Porter and Pearson, *Christian-Jewish Relations*; Sheleff, *In the Shadow of the Cross*.

³⁵ Hengel, "Early Christianity," 3.

regard religious experience and theological activity as social phenomena. For example, Esler examines Luke-Acts and its theological design as an example of ideological legitimation; Malina and Pilch take great effort to explain religious experience in the ancient Mediterranean social world in their social-scientific commentary. Thus, it is possible to perceive Lukan theological purposes or the evangelistic or apologetic pursuit of the Christian speakers as social phenomena, which helps integrate the social-scientific approach, the narrative approach, and the discussion on Christology in my study.

In summary, a large body of literature, related to narrative criticism, social-scientific criticism, and the speech content and speech contexts in Acts, can contribute to my research, but the distinct contribution of my study is that I try to employ both narrative and social-scientific research to analyze Luke's depiction of conflict between Christians and Jews in and around his speeches. This contribution is helpful because it indicates that while Luke composes his narrative with Christological biases and motives, he is still sensitive to historical and sociological realities.

3. Scope of the Texts

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the scope of this study is those speech scenes in Acts involving Christian speakers and non-Christian Jewish hearers, including speech content and speech context.³⁶ Here is the list of the speeches:³⁷

³⁶ In one narrative setting, there may be several speeches. Bruce notes that by comparing one speech with the other, we may be able to figure out what the conflict is. See Bruce, "Significance of the Speeches," 20.

³⁷ Soards notes that scholars are not in full agreement with identifying speeches in Acts because they approach the text from different angles. He lists thirty-six speeches to analyze their content, context, and concerns from a holistic perspective to observe the unity of Acts. See Soards, *Speeches*, 21–22. Dibelius identifies twenty-four speeches by viewing them in relation to the speakers. See, Dibelius, "Speeches," 138–85. Kennedy focuses on the rhetorical dimensions of the speeches and discusses twenty-five speeches. See Kennedy, *Interpretation*, 114–40.

Speaker	Audience	Scene	Speech Content	Chapter
Peter	The Jewish people	Pentecost	2:14b–36, 38–39, 40b	Chapter Three
Peter	The Jewish people	Healing a paralytic	3:4b, 6, 12b–26	Chapter Three
Peter	The Council	Defence after Peter and John's arrest	4:8b–12, 19b–20	Chapter Four
Peter	The Council	Defence after the apostles' arrest	5:29b–32	Chapter Four
Stephen	The Jewish people and the Council	Defence after Stephen's arrest	7:2–53, 56, 59b, 60b	Chapter Five
Paul	The Jewish people ³⁸	Preaching in Antioch of Pisidia	13:16b–41, 46–47	Chapter Six
Paul	The Jews	Preaching in Thessalonica	17:3b	Chapter Six
Paul	The Jews	Preaching in Corinth	18:6b–d	Chapter Six
Paul	The Jewish people	Defence after Paul's arrest	22:1, 3–21	Chapter Six
Paul	The Council	Defence before Claudius Lysias	23:1b, 3, 5, 6	Chapter Seven
Paul	The Jewish leaders ³⁹	Defence before Felix	24:10b–21	Chapter Seven
Paul	The Jewish authorities ⁴⁰	Defence before Festus	25:8, 10, 11	Chapter Seven
Paul	The Jewish leaders	Testifying in Rome	28:17c–20, 25b–28	Chapter Seven

³⁸ The audience includes God-fearers (13:16).

³⁹ "The Jews" in 24:9 refers to the other members of the delegation (i.e. the Jewish authorities). See Williams, *Acts*, 397. This speech is directed at Felix, but the Jewish authorities are present and hence there is a Jewish audience.

⁴⁰ This speech is directed at Festus, but the Jewish authorities are the accusers and hence there is a Jewish audience.

I group these scenes according to their speaker and/or their audience, with the latter being classified as either a general Jewish audience or an audience consisting of Jewish leaders. The first group is Peter's speeches to the Jewish people, including his speech at Pentecost (2:14b–36, 38–39, 40b), and his speeches in the temple at the scene of healing a paralytic (3:4b, 6, 12b–26). The second group is Peter's speeches to the Jewish authorities, including his speech to the Council after his and John's arrest (4:8b–12, 19b–20), and his speech to the Council after the apostles' arrest (5:29b–32). The third group is Stephen's speech (7:2–53, 56, 59b, 60b), where the audience includes both regular Jewish people and Jewish authorities. The fourth group is Paul's speeches to the Jewish people, including his speeches in Antioch of Pisidia (13:16b–41, 46–47), in Thessalonica (17:3b), in Corinth (18:6b–d), and lastly to the Jerusalem Jews (22:1, 3–21). The fifth group is Paul's speeches to the Jewish authorities, including his speech before Claudius Lysias and the Council (23:1b, 3, 5, 6), before Felix and the high priest Ananias (24:10b–21), before Festus and those Jerusalemites who have authority (25:8, 10, 11), and to the Jewish leaders in Rome (28:17c–20, 25b–28). I will undertake the analysis of each successive group in the ensuing chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

As stated in the introduction above, I am going to apply narrative and social-scientific approaches to study the depiction of conflict between the early Christian movement and Judaism in the speech content and speech contexts of Acts. In this chapter, I am going to introduce the procedure used in my analysis and explain how I apply narrative criticism and social-scientific criticism.

Before I proceed to introduce the general procedure of analysis and how I apply narrative criticism and social-scientific approach, I need to clarify some terms first. In narrative criticism, an analysis may involve different kinds of “conflict,” including not only conflict between characters but also conflict in the sense of narrative plot development. In order to distinguish the narrated conflict between non-Christian Jews and Christians from the latter notion of narrative conflict, I will use the terms “disequilibrium” or “equilibrium” when discussing plot development. Malina and Pilch state that “[n]arratives generally begin with an equilibrium, followed by a disturbance of that equilibrium, and conclude with a restored equilibrium in the end.”¹ The development of the plot is to engage the implied readers to grasp Luke’s perspective, thus, the analysis of “equilibrium” and “disturbance of equilibrium,” which is “disequilibrium,” may display some tracks of Luke’s perspective.

¹ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 10. Frye calls the beginning stage of the plot in the mythos of romance the preliminary minor adventures, to which he also applies the Greek term the *agon* or conflict. See Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 187.

The terms “conflict” in this paper specifically refer to the narrated conflict between non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews. For the definition of “conflict,” I adopt Malina and Pilch’s concept. They state that “[c]onflict, whether interpersonal or social, refers to the antagonistic state or action of persons or groups and their divergent interests, values, and ideas.”² Thus, the conflict in this paper includes not only overt actions, such as beating, killing and stoning, but also words of argument and accusation, and attitudes that create distance in the relationship of two parties.

1. General Procedure of Analysis

Throughout chapters three to seven, I will examine instances of conflict by analyzing the general context, the immediate narrative setting, the plot, the characters, and the speech content of each chosen scene. I will take the speeches as an integrated part of the narrative. The speeches demonstrate and prompt the development of the plot. As Chatman perceives, speech is one type of non-narrated story. He notes that speech, framed in a narrative scene, can be seen as a secondary narrative, which means that there is a narrative story in the speech.³ The narrator tells non-narrated stories through the narrative speakers to communicate a perspective to his or her implied readers. Therefore, when I analyze the narrative, including the plot, the setting and the characters, I will take the speech content into account. Moreover, I will analyze speech content to search for the settings and the factors that the speakers perceive as the important reasons which provoke conflict, and also for the possible solutions which they think will alleviate conflict. For example, in the scene of Stephen speaking to the Jews, I will study Stephen’s speech

² Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 196.

³ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 173–78.

(7:2–53, 56, 59b, 60b) in its larger context and the immediate narrative setting, consider the development of the plot and the characters, and also examine how Luke addresses the conflict through Stephen’s speech, and whether and how his speech aggravates or alleviates the conflict.

Throughout the analysis, I will use social information or models from both primary resources and secondary literature to gain a better understanding of the scenes and speeches.⁴ The whole book of Acts may have an overall social background, but the conflict in each scene may involve some specific social-cultural phenomena which need to be understood. I will discuss the related social background in the analysis of each scene.

2. Application of Narrative Criticism

The main method used in my analysis is narrative criticism, which interprets a text in its final form in terms of its own story world. It looks into the literary meaning of the text, regardless of its sources, composition history, or historical value. It upholds the coherence and unity of the text.⁵ Therefore, I apply this approach under the proposition that the texts themselves provide the most obvious evidence for understanding Luke’s

⁴ For example, Thomas Finn notes that the literary evidence in Juvenal, Josephus, and Philo reveals that the Gentiles in various places are drawn to Jewish belief and practice. See Finn, “God-fearers Reconsidered,” 81–83. The background of the relationship between the God-fearing Gentiles with the Jews may help me understand the Jewish attitude toward Paul when his speeches are related to the Gentiles. For the social background of God-fearers, see also Levinskaya, *Acts in its First Century Setting*, 51–126. For the Gentiles in general, see Wilson, *Gentiles*; Stenschke, *Luke’s Portrait of Gentiles*.

⁵ This insistence on the unity and coherence of texts is criticized by many scholars who note the existence of the *aporias* of the texts. They argue that the discontinuity of the texts is so obvious that even those who are not trained can discern them. But scholars who advocate the coherence of the texts insist that the *aporias* spotted by contemporary readers may not be problematic to the original readers or the implied readers.

intention. I plan to adopt Culpepper's Theoretical Model.⁶ This model pays attention to narrative devices in order to arouse the attention of contemporary readers to important issues in the text. It involves three main domains: the narrator, the story and the audience.⁷

The narrator domain includes the author, the implied author and the narrator. It is assumed that the author achieves his or her purpose through the role of the narrator. The author's purpose is to challenge the perspectives of the original readers, through engaging them in searching for the perspective of the narrator.⁸ The real reader composes the image of the implied author from the narrative, which may not be identical with the image of the real author. We have to keep in mind that the real reader tries to interpret the perspective of the implied author, which may not be identical with the perspective of the real author. When I talk about Luke's perspective or Luke's intention in this paper, I refer to the implied author of Acts instead of the real Luke of history, since I can never know the actual perspective of the real author.

The audience domain includes the implied reader, the real reader, and the narratee. The narrator addresses the narratee, who is Theophilus as stated in Acts 1:1. But the

⁶ Scholars can approach any one piece of literature with various procedures and foci. Westfall notes that a "uniform system of reading cannot guarantee uniform interpretation." See Westfall, "Narrative Criticism," 238. Narrative criticism is not attempting to create a uniform interpretation of a text, but encouraging people to interpret the text with a controlled method, and to contribute to the understanding of the Scriptures. Culpepper derives this theoretical model from Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse* and the communicational model of Roman Jakobson. See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 6. Chatman holds that every narrative is "a structure with a content plan (called 'story') and an expression plan (called 'discourse')." The story layer includes the content of events, characters, items of setting, etc. The discourse layer refers to the means to present the story. Chatman's model holds that every narrative can be analyzed according to the relationship between the story and the discourse. See Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 176.

⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 6. The audience here is not the audience of the speech, but the audience of the narration.

⁸ The author may claim his or her purpose of writing clearly through the narrator. We know from Luke 1:4 that Luke's general intention is for the implied reader to know the truth of the way he or she has been instructed.

narrator may intend to compose the narration for an implied reader, who may not be identical with the original reader and the real reader, which implies that the author may not have had 21st century readers in mind when he or she wrote the story.⁹ The implied readers come to read the text with the knowledge of the social-historical events and their perspectives toward these events. But they are asked to put aside their perspectives and follow the flow of what the narrator tells them in the narrative to understand the implied author's perspective. They are not omniscient like the narrator. By engaging the implied readers with the flow of the text, without prior knowledge of the events, characters, or locations of the narrative before the disclosure of the narrator, the narrator guides the implied readers to adopt the implied author's perspective. Therefore, how the narrator tells the story is important, because it implies not only the expectation that the author tries to ask the implied readers to put aside their experience or perspective and listen to his or her perspective, but also what experience the implied author wants the implied readers to put away in order to gain a hearing. With the aid of a social-scientific approach, I may be able to understand what the implied readers have experienced at their time and what the implied author wants them to put aside.

The story domain contains various components of the story, including its setting, its plot, its characters, and the implicit commentary. This is the major domain I will analyze in my research. The plot includes the beginning, the arrangement of events leading to climax, and the ending according to the narrative time instead of historical sequence.¹⁰ Culpepper notes that "the central features of 'plot' are sequence, causality,

⁹ It is possible that Theophilus in Acts 1:1 is the implied reader of Luke. Regarding the identity of Theophilus and the implication of Luke mentioning his name, see Trites, *Gospel of Luke and Acts*, 353.

¹⁰ In contrast to the approach of narrative criticism, many scholars seek the meaning of the story among the gaps, suspense, or inconsistency. See Westfall, "Narrative Criticism," 237.

unity, and affective power of a narrative.”¹¹ A whole narrative may have a plot if the events of this narrative demonstrate a relationship that fits the central features of plot. Similarly, an episode or a scene may have its own plot if its events display these features. Since I will analyze some scenes in Acts instead of the whole narrative, throughout the analysis, the term “plot” will generally refer to the plot of an individual scene instead of the plot of the whole narrative (unless I explicitly indicate otherwise).¹² The plot indicates changes in the characters, whether they stay the same or become better or worse. The aspects of change can be action, situation, moral character, thought or feelings.¹³ These changes may be related to the conflict of Christian and non-Christian Jews.

In summary, in order to understand how Luke depicts conflict, I will pay close attention to the following matters: (1) what disturbs the equilibrium of the plot? (2) what restores the equilibrium of the plot if it is restored? (3) what are the differences between the speakers and the audience? (4) what makes the differences between these two groups vanish if it happens? For example, in the scene of Pentecost, one of the differences between the speakers and the audience is that the former receive the Holy Spirit as a promised gift from God, while the latter does not, which leads to conflict between them. Once some hearers accept Jesus as Lord, however, they receive the gift too, so that the difference between the speakers and the converts disappears and the conflict between them is gone.

¹¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 80.

¹² Padilla similarly adopts the approach of analyzing the plot of individual speech scenes in his monograph *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts*.

¹³ Crane categorizes these aspects into plots of action, plots of character, and plots of thought. See Crane, “Concept of Plot,” 239. Norman Friedman extends Crane’s system and classifies plots of character into more categories: the maturing plot, the reform plot, the testing plot, the disillusionment plot. See Friedman, “Forms of the Plot,” 157–62.

3. Application of Social-scientific Criticism

Recently, the narrative approach has begun to recognize the contribution of other hermeneutical methods applied to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Going with the trends, I try to apply this method with the aid of social-scientific criticism to understand the text in the eyes of the implied readers.¹⁴ I assume that Luke wants his implied readers only to hear what the narrator says in the text, but I also hold the position that Luke presents his account as a series of historically-situated scenes and traditions. Both speech content and speech context are intended to be viewed as historically plausible, regardless of their historical accuracy. As Setzer notes, Luke's scenes are typical of historical situations, even though some of them are possibly not historically accurate.¹⁵ From all the historical information and traditions to which Luke has access, he chooses those which he perceives as important for his composition. As a real reader, I need a social-scientific approach to help me understand what he says in the text and what he does not want to say in the text. I may not know the real author's intention, but I try to explore the implied author's perspective with the attainable resources.

Social-scientific criticism adopts ideas and perspectives from social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, social psychology, economics and so on. Elliott gives it a useful definition:

Social-scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences. As a component of the historical-critical method of exegesis, social-scientific criticism investigates biblical texts as meaningful configurations of language intended to communicate between composers and audiences. In this process it studies (1) not only the social aspects of the form and content of texts

¹⁴ Westfall, "Narrative Criticism," 237–38.

¹⁵ Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians*, 46.

but also the conditioning factors and intended consequences of the communication process; (2) the correlation of the text's linguistic, literary, theological (ideological), and social dimensions; and (3) the manner in which this textual communication was both a reflection of and a response to a specific social and cultural context—that is, how it was designed to serve as an effective vehicle of social interaction and an instrument of social as well as literary and theological consequence.¹⁶

These three areas of social-scientific criticism indicate that I can search for the social aspects of the text that relate to conflict, how these aspects relate to each other, and how these aspects relate or respond to the social context outside the text.¹⁷ Actually, conflict is one specific social phenomenon. Theissen states that:

[w]herever we look, we find deep-rooted tensions, tensions between productive groups and those who enjoy the profit, between city and country, between alien and native structures of government, between Hellenistic and Jewish culture. This is the situation from within which the Jesus movement emerged, and it was partly conditioned by these tensions, while at the same time having its own effect on them.¹⁸

According to Theissen's perspective, the different social backgrounds are factors of conflict. And he notes that data can be assembled to reveal stress points and conflicts that have a critical bearing on social activities, including the aims and effects of those activities.¹⁹ He suggests that Christian movement is a "renewal movement" that aims to

¹⁶ See Elliott, *Social-Scientific Criticism*, 7.

¹⁷ The application of social-scientific criticism entails that the interpreter of biblical texts will utilize resources directly related to the social setting of the texts and to the interrelationship between that setting and the ideas it contains. See Esler, "Social-Scientific Approach," 337. The application of social-scientific criticism may expand horizons, sharpen insight, and bring a more comprehensive understanding of connections and processes which may not be perceived in one dimensional, one disciplinary view. See Elliott, "Methods and Models," 2. There are debates, however, on the pros and cons of developing and applying models to define and select the social concepts and data. See Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 6–12; Esler, *Modelling Early Christianity*, 4–8; Horrell, "Models and Methods," 83–105.

¹⁸ Theissen, *Sociology*, 94. According to the definition of conflict in this paper, "tension" in Theissen's statement is conflict.

¹⁹ Theissen, *Sociology*, 94.

overcome multi-fold conflict of Palestinian society.²⁰ According to his above statement, this movement at the same time brings new conflict to the society.²¹

Therefore, I will focus on studying conflict from Luke's perspective with the aid of social-scientific approaches, which will examine the following three areas: the social aspects in the text, the relations among these social aspects, and whether and how they respond to the social aspects outside the text, which is possible only if I know the social world in the first century related to the text. Furthermore, I will also differentiate how the speakers and the audience in the narrative may understand these three areas, and examine whether and how their understandings have changed or developed, which may be demonstrated in their thoughts, actions, or feelings. Through such analysis, I may discern the intention of the implied author in guiding the implied readers to understand those factors involved in conflict. Moreover, I will also pay attention to the possibility that the different groups of the Jewish audiences in each scene may come from different social backgrounds. Hengel notes that in different places, Judaism is under Hellenistic influence in various degrees, and we must also take note of the differences regarding education and social conditions.²² In the process of analyzing each individual speech, I will discern whether the different groups of Jews demonstrate different social backgrounds relating to

²⁰ Theissen, *Sociology*, 1, 95, 97–98. Theissen, however, does not give a definition of this renewal movement.

²¹ I do not agree with Theissen that the early Christian movement aims to relieve the conflict of society. Of course, some areas of social differences, such as social status, are lessened among those who rally together because of the Christian movement. The biblical perspective, however, resonates with Theissen's note that the Christian movement brings new conflicts into society, as Jesus foresees one of the outcomes of the Christian movement is the causing of disaffection among some groups (e.g. Matt 10:34). Therefore, I would rather call relieving some conflict in society as an effect of the Christian movement, instead of its aim. Furthermore, from the perspective of the Gospel authors, the Christian movement transcends conflict at the human level, which is only one aspect of social phenomena, and derives its cause from the divine purposes and addresses also divine-human relationships.

²² Hengel, "Early Christianity," 3.

the conflict in each scene. These social factors may include socio-economic factors, political-legal factors, and culture-belief systems.²³ The data will often fall in the category of cultural-belief system, which involves beliefs about eschatology, the Messiah, the Holy Spirit, prophecy, the divine promise to David, and resurrection.

In summary, I, as a real reader, need social-scientific tools to help me get closer to the implied reader to understand Luke's narrative and to grasp its perspective on conflict. I will mainly study what is in the text, but also try to discern the related issues which are not in the text in order to explore what Luke wants his implied reader to conclude concerning conflict between the early Christians and wider Judaism.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduce the general procedure of how I am going to analyze the scenes that Christian Jews speak to non-Christian Jews. I not only interpret the speech content and speech context in these scenes as narrative; I do so with reference to the socio-cultural environment of the implied readers, trying to identify the factors related to conflict between non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews. Furthermore, I exclusively apply the term "conflict" to the conflict between characters to avoid the confusion of this kind of conflict with the other types of conflict in the narrative analysis.

²³ Elliott has developed Multivariate Matrix Model for Comparing Palestinian Interest Groups, which gives a detailed list of the social factors. See Elliott, "Methods and Models," 19. For some other works dealing with the social conflict, see Esler, *Conflict and Identity*; Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom*; Coser, *Continuities*; Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*.

CHAPTER THREE: PETER'S SPEECHES TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

This chapter will investigate the conflict between Christian leaders, with Peter as the representative, and their fellow Jews. There are two scenes I am going to study. The first scene is the interaction between Peter and the Jewish people on the day of Pentecost. The second is the narrative around Peter healing a paralytic. Peter's speeches (2:14b–36, 38–39, 40b; 3:4b, 6, 12b–26) explain the supernatural phenomena and direct the audience to believe his testimony about Jesus.¹ Many hearers accept his message and join the early Christian movement. The initial and potential conflict between this group of people and Peter is lessened, which indicates that the speeches disclose the core issue related to the conflict.

1. Context

The encounter between Peter and the audience takes place following Jesus' ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, appearance, ascension and commission of his disciples with the promise of the power from the Holy Spirit. According to Luke, Jesus has a lot of followers, but also has conflict with a large group of people including the scribes, the Pharisees and the priests, which leads to his crucifixion, which leaves a shameful mark on the public image of his followers. Jesus' resurrection, appearance, ascension and

¹ Malina and Pilch call these phenomena Alternate States of Consciousness (ASC). They state that "anthropologists studying cross-cultural psychology define altered (preferably, alternate) states of consciousness as conditions in which sensations, perception, cognition, and emotions are altered." See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 185–87.

commission, however glorious they may be, are kept to the small circle of the disciples, until they go public with the good news, with an emphasis on the resurrection. Jesus' name continues to be well known in Jerusalem through the apostles' miraculous act and speeches. Peter's speeches, according to Luke's account, are delivered at the very beginning of the Christian movement in Jerusalem, the center of Judaism.

2. Peter's Speech at Pentecost

2.1. Setting

The setting of this event may help us understand several factors related to the conflict between the apostles and the audience. First of all, conflict is triggered by *glossolalia*.² According to Malina and Pilch, in Luke's time, Alternate States of Consciousness (ASC hereafter) experiences are normal and acceptable.³ Therefore, it is possible that the hearers may not reject *glossolalia*, but they may understand its meaning differently from the apostles, which may bring about conflict.

Secondly, whether the hearers belong to a sect in Judaism may not be a factor involved in the conflict. Many sects in Judaism share some common beliefs and practices, but also differ in many aspects, such as having their own distinctive understanding of the scriptures.⁴ Since many primitive Christians are Jews who share many aspects of the religious tradition and literature with the non-believing Jews, many people see

² For a detailed discussion on *glossolalia*, see Stott, *Acts*, 66–68.

³ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 186.

⁴ Horbury, *Judaism*, 734. One distinctive practice is that usually a person has to adopt certain practice such as circumcision to become a Jew. See Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," 31.

Christianity as one sect of Judaism at the very beginning.⁵ Near the end of the first century, it seems that Josephus still regards Christianity as a Jewish sect.⁶ The different sects of Judaism may appear competitive when they try to achieve their common goals, but generally they tolerate each other, especially when they face the same enemy.⁷ Luke does not mention any such background of the hearers in this scene, which may indicate that he regards them as a group with the general background of Judaism, and he does not expect his implied readers to consider the distinctive differences between the sects as a factor of the conflict.

Thirdly, Luke perceives that the morality of the apostles is not a factor leading to conflict. Peter directly rebukes those Jews who mock their *glossolalia*, noting that it is that the third hour of the day and too early for men to be drunk. Josephus indicates that the normal Jewish breakfast time is the fourth hour (approximately 10 a.m.), on Sabbath the sixth.⁸ Therefore, it is not hard for the implied readers to accept Peter's explanation instead of that of the mocker.

Fourthly, the audience may not expect the divine activity outside the temple, which may create conflict. The narrative shows that *glossolalia* happens in the house where the apostles gather together. Arnold states that they continue to speak when they move into the streets, which attract a large crowd.⁹ It is also possible that they move into

⁵ Whether Christianity is a sect of Judaism or not is a complicated issue in the first century. Tomasino notes that Roman authority may become aware of the nature and beliefs of Christianity when Paul comes to Rome for trial. By the time of Nero, they have learned to make a clear distinction between Jews and Christians. See Tomasino, *Judaism before Jesus*, 231.

⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.3.3 §63–64.

⁷ Horbury, *Judaism*, 422–23.

⁸ Josephus, *Life*, 279.

⁹ Arnold, *Acts*, 231.

the streets after they notice that a large crowd is attracted by the noise and gathers around the house. It is estimated that the population of Jerusalem may swell from about one hundred thousand inhabitants to around a million during the festival.¹⁰ They would stay in private homes and inns, or camp in tents both within the city walls and its vicinity.¹¹ Therefore, it is not unusual to gather three or four thousand people in some places.¹² Williams suggest that they may even have gone to the temple.¹³ This is hardly possible since during the festivals, the temple has already been filled with the pilgrims in the early morning.¹⁴ In a word, this group ASC happens in a house instead of the temple, which may not be expected by the non-believing Jews. Neyrey points out that the Israel's land and places are classified and ranked according to degrees of purity or impurity, and the temple is more holy than houses. He also notes that "the temple and its sacrificial system became the concrete structural expression of the ordering encoded in Gen 1 and thus of God's holiness. After the monarchy was abolished, it became the central and dominant symbol of Israel's culture, religion, and politics."¹⁵ From the Jewish perspective, it should be the temple where the divine Spirit has a close encounter with the divine people. The implied readers may understand that Luke is depicting the diminishing importance of the temple, which may create the conflict between the apostles and the non-believing Jews.¹⁶

¹⁰ Reinhardt, "The Population Size of Jerusalem," 262–63. For more discussion on the theoretic opinions on the population of Jerusalem, see also Pervo, *Acts*, 86–87.

¹¹ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 61.

¹² 6,000 square feet (less 1/5 of a football field) can hold 3000 people standing.

¹³ Williams, *Acts*, 42.

¹⁴ Safrai, *Jewish People*, 891.

¹⁵ Neyrey, "Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts," 278–79.

¹⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of a contrast between the temple and household in Luke-Acts, see Neyrey, *Social World of Luke-Acts*, 211–40.

Fifthly, honor and shame system may help understand the relationship between the speaker and the audience, which may indicate the development of conflict. Honor is a dominant social value of the first century Mediterranean world, affecting every aspect of social life. When one group is held honorable by another group, it indicates less conflict between them.

Most Jews recognize that God is the ultimate source of honor.¹⁷ Acting outside of their inherited social roles and ranks, the early Christians are shameful from the perspective of the social elites of their world. From their own perspective, however, they acquire honor from God. At the Pentecost scene, the audience calls the apostles Galileans, a people group regarded as ignorant in the Torah, even though they believe that the Torah enshrines divine law given to Israel for their guidance. R. Yohanan b. Zakkai in the first century C.E. remarks in pique: “Galilee, Galilee, you hate the Torah” (y. Šabb. I6. I5d). Goodman notes that the evidence showing an intensive study of the Torah by sages before C.E. in Galilee is very weak.¹⁸ Therefore, it is a shame to be a “Galilean.” But Luke also ascribes honor to these Galileans by saying that they are speaking of the mighty deeds of God. Moreover, the apostles also acquire honor when Peter demonstrates a rich knowledge of the scriptures.

Honor can also be acquired through some actions. Challenge-riposte is an active effort to obtain the honor of another party. When some of the Jews dishonor the apostles by mocking them, Peter responds with a counter-challenge followed by a speech, which is received by many Jews, which indicates the prominence of the apostles after the riposte.

¹⁷ Neyrey, *Social World of Luke-Acts*, 38. God controls a person’s existence and is held vertically sacred.

¹⁸ Goodman, “Galilean Judaism and Judean Judaism,” 601–604.

The early Christians also acquire honor by applying to Jesus the honorable titles such as Messiah, Lord, son of David, Son of God.¹⁹ Furthermore, the recognition of honor depends also on the degree of publicity and witness.²⁰ A great honor has been ascribed to the Christian movement when three thousand souls are added to the apostles. Therefore, ascribing honor to the apostles alleviates the conflict between them and the hearers, who originally regard them as a dishonorable group.

In conclusion, at the Pentecost scene, the setting indicates the following factors involved in provoking and alleviating the conflict between Christians and the non-believing Jews: the understanding of *glossolalia*, the diminishing importance of the temple, honor and shame aspects including the apostles' Galilean background, the indicators of the divine honor in Peter's speech, and the massive acceptance of Peter's message. The morality of the apostles and the sects of the hearers, however, are not factors Luke wants his implied readers to consider.

2.2. Characters

Luke describes Peter's hearers as pious Jewish pilgrims from every nation to show devotion to their religion. Their attitude toward the apostles changes after Peter's message. In the beginning, most of them feel awed when they hear the apostles talking about the wonder of God with miraculous ability, even though they look puzzled.²¹ Moreover, some of them look down on the apostles and hold a skeptical attitude toward their tongue speaking. After listening to Peter's message, many accept the forgiveness of

¹⁹ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 28–32.

²⁰ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 36.

²¹ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 148.

sin in Jesus' name and join the apostles. At the same time, Luke depicts the Apostles as faithful witnesses for Jesus. They first assure that God promises the gift of the Spirit and salvation, and then guide the hearers to accept this gift through accepting Jesus. The differences between the hearers and the speaker include the knowledge about *glossolalia* and the possession of the gift. Once the hearers accept Peter's message about Jesus, they receive the gift. The conflict between the apostles and the hearers is alleviated, in which the hearers accepting Jesus' identity plays an important role.

2.3. Plot

The plot also indicates that the turning point with regard to conflict is the hearers' decision to accept Jesus. The plot starts with the apostles' ASC experience. It develops when a Jewish crowd is attracted by the noise of *glossolalia*. It loses its equilibrium when the crowds respond with perplexity and mock. As I have analyzed in the setting section, they may accept supernatural phenomena, but may not expect it to happen in a house instead of the temple and through a group of mediocre people. Lacking the knowledge of what is happening may create conflict between them and the apostles. The solution of the conflict relies on an explanation from the apostles, which Luke provides immediately.

Peter defends their behavior, explains the divine origin of *glossolalia*, and challenges the crowds to respond rightly to the fulfillment of prophecy. Peter's speech is to direct the attention of the hearers to focus on the divine aspects. The focus of the speech is Jesus' identity (see below). Peter's explanation contains Jewish traditions but also new interpretation of the traditions, which may provoke more conflict. The plot comes to the climax when most of the hearers make their decision to respond positively

to the speech and accept the forgiveness of sin in Jesus's name. The plot ends when they get baptized and join the believers' community. The equilibrium of the plot is mostly restored. The crucial point is the acknowledgement of Jesus' identity by the hearers, which is guided by Peter's speech.

The analysis of the setting, the characters and the plot indicate that Peter's message provides a direction for the hearers to resolve their conflict. Now I turn to analyze the speech content to explore the factors involved in the conflict.

2.4. Speech (2:14b–36, 38–39, 40b)

2.4.1. *Summary*

The main theme of Peter's speech is the proclamation of Jesus as Lord and Messiah. Bruce points out that there are usually four elements in the early apostolic preaching: the announcement of the coming of the age of fulfilment; an account of the ministry, death, and triumph of Jesus; citation of Old Testament scriptures to prove Jesus to be the promised one; a call to repentance. These four elements are present in Peter's speech.²²

In the beginning of the speech, Peter clarifies that drunkenness is not the explanation for *glossolalia*. The real reason, he continues, lies in Joel's prophecy that when the last days come, God will pour forth his Spirit, and he will save those who call on the name of the Lord (Joel 2:28–32). Then Peter turns to introduce the Lord whose name will bring salvation. In this way, Peter brings the hearers' attention to Jesus' ministry, crucifixion and resurrection. Peter quotes from Pss 16:8–11 and 110:1 to testify

²² Bruce, *Acts*, 63.

that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah. It is through this Jesus that the apostles are granted the Holy Spirit, who empowers them to speak in tongues. In addition, God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ. Peter also calls the audience to repent, to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter's final exhortation is to call them to be saved from their perverse generation.

2.4.2. Main Components Related to Conflict

First of all, through singling out "Men of Judea" from the audience, Peter addresses the issue of honor and shame, which is raised by the hearers when they call the apostles Galileans.²³ Judeans look down on Galileans. This simple touch by Luke discloses that the gap of social background related to honor and shame may create conflict between the audience and the apostles. According to Peter, this gap is taken away when God fulfills his promise of the Spirit for all his children now.

Peter argues that God's promise of the Spirit and salvation, of which the hearers possess neither but the apostles have both, is granted to his chosen people through Jesus. Malina and Pilch notes that the hearers have observed the effects of God's power through the Spirit, which in the physics of antiquity, is liquid, thus can be "poured" forth.²⁴ The tangible phenomenon of *glossolalia* brings the difference between the hearers and the apostles to the surface, while the promise of God in the scriptures, which is shared by both groups, becomes a stepping-stone for Peter to guide his hearers to desire the promise, which eventually prompts them to seek a way to obtain the promise. Fundamentally, from

²³ "Galileans" may simply imply a spoken language which is different from the other native languages spoken by visitors from other places in the world, if it is not to be interpreted in light of the honour/shame system and Peter's deliberate address "Men of Judea" in the speech.

²⁴ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 213.

Peter's perspective, the Lord Jesus is the way to acquire the promise of God (2:21, 38).

As Peterson summarizes, Peter's speech directs the attention of the audience to the glorified Messiah.²⁵ Accepting Jesus, the hearers will join the early Christian movement, and the conflict between them and the apostles will become eased.

To make his points, Peter calls on the authority of the scriptures and prophecy. Nock says, "It was normally expected that a great man would be heralded by signs and prophecies."²⁶ Prophecies are widely used in biographical literature of Mediterranean antiquity in the period of a hero's life before he enters upon his public career.²⁷

Mediterranean culture usually assumes that there is a divine order or plan disclosed either through divine or human initiative in 'prophecy' of some sort. Prophecy, both oral and written, belongs to the propaganda strategies of Mediterranean religion generally.²⁸ By using prophecy for the argument, Peter is working within the framework of common cultural assumptions. The particulars vary but the underlying structural assumptions are similar.²⁹ The prophecy and its fulfillment are the positive elements for the audience to receive the speech and its argument.

Before I turn to analyze Christology in Peter's speech, it is necessary to discuss what "the LORD" and "be saved" in 2:21 refer to from both the audience's and Peter's perspective. Malina and Pilch suggest that it is possible that this verse involves two

²⁵ Peterson, *Acts*, 138.

²⁶ Nock, *Conversion*, 240. Talbert notes that many Greco-Roman people believe that there exists a divine order of things which could be known by humans either through the initiative of the gods or through the initiative of human beings skilled in unlocking such secrets. See Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 73.

²⁷ Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 71.

²⁸ Nock, *Conversion*, 250.

²⁹ Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 77.

characters: Jesus as the Lord, whose name is called upon, and God as the one who saves.

They say that

The word *Lord* probably means Jesus rather than God (see Acts 1:15, where “name” means person). On the other hand, “to be saved” is passive voice, and as usual in the New Testament, verbs with an unnamed subject in the passive voice always imply that God is the agent or doer. “They will be saved” means God will save them.³⁰

However, both the Hebrew text and the Targum of the prophets read “Lord” as “Yahweh” here.³¹ When the Jewish people hear Peter’s speech up to v. 21, what they have in mind is that the LORD, Yahweh, will rescue those in Jerusalem in the last days who will call on his name. It is plausible that they have had no idea yet that God sends Jesus to save those who call on his (Jesus’) name. Peter, however, is referring it to Jesus. Stott notes that Peter applies it to Jesus, “so that ‘the Lord’ who brings salvation is no longer Yahweh who shelters survivors on Mount Zion, but Jesus who saves from sin and judgment everyone who calls on his name.”³² Longenecker argues that when Peter quotes from Joel, he uses *peshar* interpretation and applies the passage to Jesus.³³ Even if *peshar* is an acceptable interpretation method for the hearers, we still need to ask whether they can perceive that Jesus becomes the divine agent of salvation whose name is supposed to be invoked. Even though the hearers may have in mind the representatives such as prophets sent by God, they still call on the name of God instead of the name of the representatives. The concept of calling the name of representatives is something new to

³⁰ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 33.

³¹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 179 n. 5. The implied readers can observe that the quotation from Joel derives from the LXX. But they can also understand that the Hebrew audience may perceive the meaning of “Lord” and “salvation” from their traditional perspective.

³² Stott, *Acts*, 73.

³³ Longenecker, “Acts,” 38–45, 70–75 and 129–132.

them. Peter is delivering his speech to change the hearers' perspectives. During the process, however, conflict is built up.

Furthermore, the concept of salvation needs to be addressed. Malina and Pilch note that "to be saved" means to be rescued from a difficult situation, which the hearers may perceive as the prevailing social corruption such as greed, injustice, maltreatment and abuse.³⁴ Peter may point to a deeper experience of new Exodus liberation and purging restoration of Israel, and therefore it is a continuous fulfillment of the promise of salvation to Israel, as Turner holds.³⁵ Whatever it is, it is clear that Peter is arguing for a new agent in a new era for the continuous salvation work of God.³⁶ The audience may be able to grasp the general idea of what he wants to argue for.

This new agent, whom Peter introduces, is Jesus the Nazarene, who performs miracles and wonders and signs. On the one hand, Peter clearly refers to the Jesus who has been labeled as Nazarene, which is considered as no honor from human perspective.³⁷ On the other hand, he argues for the divine legitimation of Jesus' identity as divine agent with his power of miracles.³⁸ God's honor surpasses the shame coming from the birthplace background. Furthermore, wonders and signs also have a connotation of redemption, since the phrase "signs and wonders" in the scriptures always refers to God's extraordinary acts associated with exodus. Thus, when Peter speaks of wonders and signs through Jesus, the hearers can picture Jesus as an executive role of the divine redemption,

³⁴ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 33.

³⁵ Turner, *Power*, 356.

³⁶ Peterson, *Acts*, 144.

³⁷ See John 1:46.

³⁸ Haenchen, *Acts*, 186; Barrett, *Acts*, 141.

a deliverer like Moses.³⁹ Even though as Barrett notes, this executive role has no connotation of a pre-existent divine being, Jesus' identity ascribed from human perspective and from divine perspective creates conflict between the apostles and the hearers.⁴⁰

Peter continues to disclose the controversy of Jesus' identity. Jesus was crucified by men, yet he was raised up from the dead by God (vv. 23–24). The Jews' perception of Jesus, as is evident in their hounding him to the cross, is in striking contrast with his true status, which is demonstrated in his performance of wonders and signs.⁴¹ Matera analyzes all the text in Acts and concludes that Luke holds the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their leaders responsible for the death of Jesus.⁴² In this scene, Peter addresses the hearers as the inhabitants of Jerusalem and identifies them as wicked killers (v. 23), accomplices to those who know no laws, which certainly provokes conflict between them. At the same time, Peter wants his hearers to know that the crucifixion is an event willed and foreseen by God, and the resurrection of Jesus by God's power indicates that the shame of crucifixion does not fall upon Jesus but upon his murderers.⁴³ Furthermore, the accusation of killing Jesus is an issue over Jesus' identity.⁴⁴ When the killers crucify

³⁹ Peterson, *Acts*, 145 n. 55.

⁴⁰ Barrett, *Acts*, 141.

⁴¹ From the evangelists' perspective, there is no ground for some Jews to challenge the source of Jesus' power to be demonic (Mark 3:22). See Williams, *Acts*, 50.

⁴² Matera, "Responsibility," 86–87. Some scholars such as O' Neill, Maddox, Tyson and Sanders, insist that Christian scriptures intend to convey that all the Jews are guilty for Jesus' death. See O'Neill, *Theology*, 79–81; Maddox, *Purpose*, 45–46; Tyson, *Death*, 118–19, 126–29, 138–39; Sanders, *Jews in Luck-Acts*, 3–9, 38–39. Sandmel notes that the charge of deicide itself by the Christian Scripture is "the historical product of the bitter two-sided controversy raging at the time of the writing." See Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism*, 136–38. Weatherly argues from the source and tradition perspective that Luke only holds the Jerusalemites and the leaders instead of the whole Israelites responsible for Jesus' death. See Weatherly, *Jewish Responsibility*, 271–72.

⁴³ Haenchen, *Acts*, 186.

⁴⁴ Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism*, 133.

Jesus, they accuse Jesus of blasphemy for two reasons. The first is that Jesus has indicated that he has authority to forgive sins, which is perceived by the Jews to be ascribed to God alone (Luke 5:21; 7:49). The second is his assertion of his specific divinity (Luke 22:70).⁴⁵ In short, they challenge the legitimation of Jesus' identity, for which Peter turns to argue after he raises the accusation against them. If the hearers repent and acknowledge Jesus' identity, the conflict of accusation will be alleviated.

Peter argues for Jesus' identity from the perspective of divine prophecy and promise.⁴⁶ He quotes Pss 16:8–11 and Ps 110:1 to show that the scriptures, together with Jesus' resurrection, testify to Jesus' lordship and messiahship.⁴⁷ His argument may create conflict among the hearers; however, he also tries to alleviate the conflict to guide them to accept his argument.

First, when Peter compares Jesus to David and indicates that Jesus is superior to David, it may be a challenge to those hearers who hold David in high esteem. Peter uses the word “confidently” (*παρηγορίας*) to introduce his grounds of argument to avoid negative reaction. The first one is the physical evidence of David's tomb. The Jewish historian Josephus confirms that David's tomb is present in Jerusalem in the first century, which attests that Peter's argument is plausibly credible.⁴⁸ The second one is David's

⁴⁵ Conzelmann points out that the Jews' ignorance of Jesus' identity does not exempt them from the guilt of rejecting Jesus. See Conzelmann, *Theology*, 90, 92–93. From Conzelmann's view, the charge against the Jews is related to Jesus' identity.

⁴⁶ Mack notes that the mention of anointment, election, appointment, the covenantal aspect of an office, special endowments as well as a variety of mythological imageries link a figure's office to divine initiative, selection and purpose. See Mack, “Wisdom Makes a Difference,” 18.

⁴⁷ Peterson, *Acts*, 147; Bruce, *Acts*, 65.

⁴⁸ Josephus tells the story about a Jewish priest named John Hyrcanus entering the tomb and taking out three thousand talents of silver to give to the invading Syrian king in 134 B.C. with the hope that the invasion could be forestalled. Josephus, *Ant.* 7.15.3 §393. For archaeological findings regarding David's tomb, see Arnold, *Acts*, 235.

own anticipation for the eternal messiah. And the third one is the personal witness of Jesus' resurrection and ascension and bestowing the gift of the Spirit.⁴⁹

Second, there is a gap between Peter's messianic perspectives and the social expectation for messiah. Mack notes that in the first century, the social-historical context of the Jews in Palestine is marked by three characteristics: firstly, tremendous efforts to establish a stable sovereignty in Judaea; secondly, the internal conflicts over the options of sovereignty and the ways to achieve them; thirdly, the rise of social formations both in Judaea and in the Diaspora to achieve the sovereignty.⁵⁰ Therefore, on the one hand, it is not unusual for the audience to hear Peter proclaim a new Christ; on the other, his concept of "sovereignty" is quite new for them to embrace, in comparison with Jewish rulers of all kinds, for example, Herod,⁵¹ Athronges, Simon of Peraea, Judas the Galilean,⁵² Theudas and John of Gishala. The personal witness of the divine power through Jesus may assure them of Jesus' lordship and messiahship, which may lessen the conflict.

Third, from the hearers' perspective, Jesus' ascension and exaltation and messiahship do not explicitly imply his divinity. However, the obscurity of the lordship may push the limit of Jewish monotheism. Some scholars argue that "Lord" is similar to

⁴⁹ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 34.

⁵⁰ Mack, "Wisdom Makes a Difference," 19.

⁵¹ The Herodians refer to Herod's work on the temple and also the monument at the tomb of David and Solomon (*Ant.* xvi 182–83). And they present him as a divinely blessed king of the Jews, similar to a divinely royal deliverer of the people. Thus their assertions about Herod may be close to the concept of messiah. A messianic atmosphere is being fostered around a non-Davidic reigning king, somewhat as appears to have occurred earlier with Hyrcanus I, or later on among the following of Bar Cocheba; it is likely that temple-building has already been associated with the messianic king. See Horbury, *Messianism*, 91–92.

⁵² "The fourth philosophy," so named by Josephus, is of Pharisaic origins and led by Judas the Galilean and by Saddok a Pharisee. It attacks those Jews who are in favor with Roman rule. It may be suppressed swiftly but has gained a wide spread support. See Gabba, "Palestine 63 BEC–CE 70," 133.

“God.” Sandmel notes that term “Lord” is unintelligible to the Jews, because for them “Lord” and “God” are exact synonyms. When they hear it, they may wonder if Peter views Jesus as God.⁵³ Bruce notes that “[t]o a Jew there was only one name ‘above every name’—the ineffable name of the God of Israel, frequently represented in synagogue reading and in the Greek Bible by the designation ‘Lord.’”⁵⁴ Even though Lord can represent both YHWH and a common noun meaning “sir,” Peter gives that title a status that only God possesses, when he asks the hearers to repent, get baptized in the name of Jesus, and receive the forgiveness of sin and the Spirit. For the Jews, only God can forgive sins and assure the eschatological salvation.⁵⁵ Hurtado notes that Jesus, as an exclusive agent of divine redemption, may not have been completely different from the hopes connected with the heavenly Melchizedek at Qumran. However, he also mentions that he knows of “no comparable use of the name of any redeemer figure in other Jewish groups of the time,” which has put any figure “in the center of the initiation process and in a cultic setting” like the early Christianity has done to Jesus.⁵⁶ As Barrett notes, Peter’s statement places the early Christians along with those Jews who are prepared to accept the notion of a second power in heaven and bring upon them severe persecution.⁵⁷

In summary, Peter’s speech leads the audience to focus on Jesus’ identity, and what the hearers may receive if they accept Jesus. Peter’s claim about Jesus’ status as lord and messiah builds up the conflict between him and the audience, which reaches the climax when he discloses Jesus’ divine status by requesting the hearers to be baptized in

⁵³ Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism*, 133–34.

⁵⁴ Bruce, *Acts*, 68.

⁵⁵ Harman, “Baptism ‘Into the Name of Jesus,’” 35–37.

⁵⁶ Hurtado, *One God*, 108.

⁵⁷ Barrett, *Acts*, 151.

Jesus' name to receive the forgiveness of sin and the Spirit. The witness of tongue speaking and Jesus' resurrection and the related prophecies in the scriptures prepare the heart of the hearers to bear the conflict, until they make the decision to be baptized in the name of Jesus and join the Christian community, then the conflict is alleviated.

3. Peter's Speech at the Beautiful Gate and at Solomon's Portico

3.1. Setting

The spatial setting of the second scene moves to the temple. The healing occurs at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, and the speech is given at the portico of Solomon. It provides a space for gathering 5000 converts and others (4:4). Pilch suggests that the Beautiful gate may be the gate of Nicanor⁵⁸ that leads from the Court of non-Israelites into the Court of the women, which indicates that the healing happens just outside the temple building, and the lame person is an Israelite since he can get so close to the temple building.⁵⁹ However, he is not allowed to enter it to worship and pray due to his physical defect. The law and purity system keep such a person away from God and the temple, whereas Jesus' name makes him whole, holy and able to get close to God and the temple without breaking the law and purity system.⁶⁰

This event happens at three in the afternoon. According to Josephus, the priests at the temple "twice each day, in the morning and about the ninth hour" offer the daily animal sacrifice according to the law of Moses (see Num 28:1–8), which is called *tamid*

⁵⁸ Pilch notes that the Nicanor Gate is mentioned in Mishnah (Mishnah, *Middot* 2.3). Scholars also have other suggestions for which gate is beautiful gate. See Williams, *Acts*, 66. Peterson, *Acts*, 168.

⁵⁹ Pilch, *Visions and Healing*, 39.

⁶⁰ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 117.

in Judaism. Following an offering of incense, a sacrificial lamb is slaughtered on the altar. This is accompanied by the priests presenting a cereal offering (an unleavened loaf of wheat flour and oil) and a drink offering (a libation of wine). The priests then lead those in attendance in a time of singing and prayer.⁶¹ Penner notes that “a number of recent studies have shown that there is virtually no evidence that daily fixed prayer (or even prayer on a less than daily basis) was a major component—it was certainly not an obligatory component—in the pre-70 C.E. synagogue serve both in the Diaspora and Judea.”⁶² He also points out that “while the temple stood, prayer was always inferior, mere ‘decorations’ and sayings always on the periphery of the official temple service and never on par with sacrifice.”⁶³ Instead of mentioning sacrifice, however, Luke indicates that Peter and John are going to the temple for prayer, which may be an indication of a switch of foci of religious life for the Jews after they put faith in Jesus, even though they still go to the temple while it stands.

As a result, on the one hand, as Arnold states, in the early stages of the church, the apostles and other Jewish believers continue to observe the law and purity system, worship and prayer in the temple, with no intention to provoke conflict with the non-believing Jewish group.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the implied readers can perceive that the

⁶¹ The Mishnah describes this time of prayer following the sacrifice: “When he stooped to pour out the drink offering the Prefect waved the towel and Ben Arza [a priest] clashed the cymbal and the levites broke forth into singing. When they reached a break in the singing they blew upon the trumpets and the people prostrated themselves [in prayer]; at every break there was a blowing of the trumpet and at every blowing of the trumpet a prostration [in prayer]. This was the rite of the daily whole-offering in the service of the House of our God.” (*m. Tamid* 7:3)

⁶² Penner, *Patterns*, 23.

⁶³ Penner, *Patterns*, 22.

⁶⁴ Arnold, *Acts*, 241.

difference of the foci of religious life between the non-believing Jewish group and the early Christian movement, which indicates the existence of conflict between them.

Another related setting is political background. Before Pontius Pilate is removed from office in 36 C.E., he does not have a smooth relationship with the religious authority and is resented by the Jewish people because of his actions against Jewish commandments.⁶⁵ It seems that he is concerned more about political issues than religious issues, not trying to compromise his political intention to appease the religious leaders, unless he senses that the political benefit is in jeopardy, threatened by the religious leaders. Thus, when Peter states that Pilate had intended to release Jesus (3:13), the crowds and the implied readers may understand that Jesus' issue is definitely not a political issue.⁶⁶ Therefore, this scene indicates that the early Christian movement has no intention to get into the political conflict.

3.2. Characters

The life of the paralytic has gone through a tremendous turnover after he puts faith in the name of Jesus the Nazarene. He may be disappointed when the apostles cannot meet his expectation for almsgiving, but his attention turns to Jesus and his blessings for his well-being. And he may have known Jesus performing miracles in public, and heard people

⁶⁵ Roetzel, *World*, 29.

⁶⁶ Cassidy notes that the martyrdom of James under Agrippa the king is the first case of Christian suffering under the political persecution. See Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 47–48. In Israel, it is hard to differentiate the religious and political issues. Many times, they are intertwined. Horbury observes that everything that concerned public order in the province comes under the exclusive decision of the Roman governor, and the Council focuses on the matters of religion and Jewish law, and may use these as excuses to excise power for their political gain. See Horbury, *Judaism*, 135. But according to Saldarini, the situation varied from time to time. See Saldarini, "Sanhedrin," 975. Political authority and religious authority check and balance each other.

talking about the apostles doing wonders and signs.⁶⁷ Thus, when Peter commands him in the name of Jesus to stand up and walk, he puts his faith in Jesus. Luke depicts that he acknowledges the divine origin of Jesus' name and power, which restores both his physical and spiritual well-being. The conflict between him and the apostles, because of the physical well-being, the law and the temple system, and the issue of almsgiving, is dissolved by his putting faith in Jesus' name.

The crowds in this scene have witnessed the power of God that restores the well-being of the paralytic, whom they have known for years. According to Peter, they take Peter and John's power and piety as the credit of the healing until Peter discloses the role of Jesus. When Peter reveals that Jesus is the Promised One to bring the time of refreshing to them, many of them seize the opportunity and believe. Luke does not report any conflict or negative attitude that this group of crowds raises against the apostles at the end of this scene.

The apostles guides the crowds to know that the truth about the miracles lies in Jesus. They are bold to accuse the crowds for killing Jesus, but at the same time, they show their understanding that the hearers act in ignorance. The apostles have no intention to provoke any conflict, but help the hearers with their ignorance of Jesus and call them to repentance.

3.3. Plot

After Luke's summary statement that the apostles perform many wonders and signs (2:43), he reports one special scene in detail. The plot of this scene starts with Peter and

⁶⁷ Williams, *Acts*, 64–65.

John encountering a paralytic expecting alms. It loses its equilibrium when Peter says they cannot meet his expectation. But the plot develops when Peter heals him in the name of Jesus, which the paralytic does not expect at the scene but may hope for down in his heart. The equilibrium gets restored. Then the plot develops to another level when Peter encounters the Jewish crowds, who feel amazed at the healing miracle. The equilibrium is lost again because the crowds understand this unexpected miracle in a way that is not in accord with Luke's perspective. Then through Peter, Luke tries to restore the equilibrium by disclosing Jesus' identity and role. Peter's speech to the paralytic and the crowds turns the attention of the crowds to focus on Jesus. Luke does not forget to mention that many hearers believe Peter's message and accept Jesus. The conflict between the apostles and the Jewish crowds brought by the interpretation of the miracle is lessened when the hearers accept Jesus. Luke does not mention about the conflict with the hearers who remain unbelieving, which indicates that he does not want the implied readers to take into consideration in this scene. His composition may imply that from his perspective, the conflict with the Jewish people has not become a serious issue yet.

3.4. Speech at the Beautiful Gate (3:4b, 6)

Peter's speech to the paralytic directs his attention away from his expectation for money to focus on Jesus' name and power. This man may be among many other people in Jerusalem who have heard about God performing wonders and signs through Jesus. But he also knows that Jesus was crucified and died. When he hears the name invoked by Peter, he may know who Peter refers to, because "Jesus the Nazarene" is the name Pilate has written on the sign attached to Jesus' cross (John 19:19). Usually, a holy man calls

upon God to perform wonders and signs. Now when Peter invokes Jesus' name to perform wonders, it seems like Jesus taking up a position similar to God in the miracle. A shameful person now appears to be the Messiah. Peter's speech provokes new conflict. Both the previous conflict and the new conflict, however, are resolved when the paralytic receives Peter's message and puts faith in Jesus.

3.5. Speech at Solomon's Colonnade (3:12b–26)

3.5.1. *Summary*

This speech focuses on a comparison between what God and the people have done to Jesus and what God has sent Jesus for. Peter attributes the miracle to Jesus instead of the apostles (3:11–26; cf. 2:14–40). He also accuses his hearers of killing Jesus and declares God's vindication by resurrecting him. He affirms that Jesus' identity is confirmed by the scriptures through the prophets, thus, the hearers need to repent even though they kill Jesus in ignorance so that they can receive God's promise through Jesus.⁶⁸

3.5.2. *Main Components Related to Conflict*

Many elements in this speech may lead to conflict between the hearers and Peter, most of which are related to Jesus' identity and role. Since it has many similarities with the speech at the scene of Pentecost, such as God's predetermined plan of messiah's suffering, I will focus on some points which I have not emphasized in the previous analysis.

⁶⁸ Peterson, *Acts*, 165.

Firstly, Peter directly confronts his hearers and points out that Jesus is the actual healer, which helps the hearers to clear away their previous image of Jesus, coming from the disgraceful crucifixion. Pilch notes that in the health care system at Jesus' time, folk healers are those who have ability to heal and gain honor from the people, but they need continued success to maintain honor.⁶⁹ Jesus once enjoyed the honor which was denied after he was arrested and crucified. Now Peter claims that his healing continues and his honor should not be denied. Thus, it helps the hearers to reflect upon what they have done to Jesus, which may lessen the conflict.

Secondly, the accusation against the hearers is stressed through four contrasts: God glorifies Jesus while the hearers disown Jesus; the hearers hand over Jesus while Pilate decides to release Jesus; Pilate decides to release innocent Jesus while the hearers want to release a murderer; the hearers put Jesus to death while God raises Jesus from the dead. If the hearers perceive the hostility of Peter's repeated comparison, the conflict is inevitable. Peter continues to call them to repent, however, pointing out that they kill Jesus out of ignorance (v. 17). Williams says, "[t]he mood of the speech changes in the second half from reproof to conciliation."⁷⁰ Peter tries to soft the conflict when he guides his hearers to accept Jesus.

Thirdly, from Peter's perspective, Jesus' titles and role have the connotation of divinity, while his hearers' perspective may not be on the same page. Jesus is introduced as God's servant, the Holy and Righteous One, and the Prince of life. "God's servant" does not necessarily claim divine status for Jesus. Barrett comments that the word "servant" is in common use in the Old Testament, which indicates that God calls and uses

⁶⁹ Pilch, "Sickness and Healing," 199.

⁷⁰ Williams, *Acts*, 68.

Jesus, thus, from the audience's perspective, this word does not indicate that Jesus is more than a prophet, even though he is greater than Moses.⁷¹ "The Holy and Righteous One" is also rooted in the Old Testament language. The title "the holy one" is ἅγιος, not ὁσιος as in 2:27. Similar titles are given in the Old Testament to Aaron the priest (Ps 106:16) and Elisha the prophet (2 Kgs 4:9).⁷² "The Righteous One" appears in Exod 9:27 and Isa 24:16, which plausibly refer to the Lord; yet when it appears in Isa 53:11, it refers to the servant of the Lord. Taylor also observes that messiah is called "the Righteous one" in 1 En 38:2.⁷³ These usages may imply that "the Righteous One" in Peter's speech refers to the righteous nature of the Lord's Anointed One as the Lord is righteous. "The Prince of Life" may denote Jesus' resurrection, and the redemption he may bring to those who repent, since both "life" and "salvation" are represented by one Aramaic word, ܢܝܚܐ.⁷⁴ However, the prince of life or the author of life may also indicate that Jesus is the source of life, a function normally ascribed to the ancestors in the Old Testament, as Arnold notes it.⁷⁵ This may put Jesus at a status much higher than the other servants, but it is not necessarily the same as God since God raises Jesus to life. Therefore, from the audience's perspective, all these titles do not automatically argue for the divinity of Jesus. Thus, it is plausible that they will not provoke a conflict over monotheism when the audience first hears it, even though Peter has Jesus' divinity in mind.

⁷¹ Barrett, *Acts*, 189.

⁷² Bruce observes that in both places, Heb. *qāḏōš* is rendered ἅγιος in LXX. See Bruce, *Acts*, 81 n. 29.

⁷³ It is also used in the plural style, "righteous and holy ones," referring to the messianic people in 1 Enoch 38:5; 48:1, 7; 51:2. See V. Taylor, *Names of Jesus*, 80–83.

⁷⁴ Bruce, *Acts*, 82 n. 30.

⁷⁵ Arnold, *Acts*, 244.

Furthermore, healing by Jesus' name does not necessarily indicate his divinity from the Jewish perspective,⁷⁶ as some evidences (e.g. *Testament of Solomon*) show that some Jewish exorcists also expel demons by pronouncing over the afflicted person the names of angels, but they may not claim the divinity of these angels and worship them, as Hurtado argues.⁷⁷ Having said this, however, when Peter calls the hearers to repent and receive the forgiveness of sin, the audience may still ponder whether Peter is proclaiming the divinity of Jesus. Whereas, repentance for salvation is not unfamiliar in Jewish literature, of which the best known passage is Sanhedrin 97b–98a.⁷⁸ Thus, the blessing of refreshing coming from accepting Jesus is not unperceivable for the audience, which may guide them to put faith in Jesus.

Fourthly, the promise of sending Jesus is predicted in the scriptures. It seems that Peter refers Moses' prophecy of the judgment of the Prophet to Jesus' second coming. It is possible that the audience can perceive that Peter refers to a messianic and prophetic figure, but it is hard to find explicit prophecy regarding Jesus, even though the prophets after Samuel predict the establishment of the Davidic kingdom.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the wording of judgment may be hard for the hearers to swallow. Barratt argues that “be destroyed from among the people” is a threat to the hearers since it is not referring to

⁷⁶ Peterson argues that “[s]ince ‘calling upon the name of the LORD’ was a distinguishing mark of Israel in the ancient world, it was extremely provocative for the apostles to claim that Jesus was the one on whom to call for salvation. It was an implicit claim to divinity, which could not be ignored by pious, monotheistic Jews.” See Peterson, *Acts*, 177. It depends, however, on what scope of message the hearers have comprehended to judge whether they have perceived the divine status of Jesus proclaimed by the Christian movement.

⁷⁷ Hurtado, *One God*, 35.

⁷⁸ Barrett, *Acts*, 203.

⁷⁹ Bruce, *Acts*, 87. Scholars also observe that this may be a probable allusion to a Moses-like Messiah in *Sib Orac.* 5:256–59 or to Deut 18:15, 18, 19 and Lev 23:29, or *florilegium* from Qumran (4QTestim), or even from a collection of *testimonia*. See Barrett, *Acts*, 208; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 29; Dodd, *Scriptures*, 53–57; Allegro, “Further Messianic References,” 183.

being cut from the new people but from the old people, a punishment carried out by God himself.⁸⁰

Fifthly, Peter calls his hearers to receive God's blessing through Jesus, which is God's promise to their ancestors which they are supposed to receive (vv. 25–26). The blessing of total forgiveness, spiritual refreshment and universal restoration, which is in the scriptures, is familiar to the audience.⁸¹ This offer may turn the hearers' attention to solve the conflict provoked by their former reaction against Jesus and God.

In summary, Peter's speech directs its hearers' attention away from the paralytic and the apostles to focus on Jesus. His speech builds up conflict in that he accuses his hearers of killing Jesus and offending God, discloses Jesus' identity with the ambiguity of divine status, and warns them of God's judgment. At the same time, he also prepares their heart to resolve the conflict by relating Jesus to God's prophecy in the scriptures and calling them to repent and receive God's blessing through Jesus. Therefore, the possibility of solving the conflict rests on whether the hearers accept Jesus as he is proclaimed.

4. Conclusion

The above analysis, using a narrative approach and social-scientific evidence, discloses many factors that lead to conflict between Peter and his hearers and also contribute to the alleviation of the conflict. The factors that evoke the conflict include a different understanding of the phenomenon of *glossolalia*, the diminishing importance of the temple, the social background of the apostles, the accusation against killing Jesus, the

⁸⁰ Barrett, *Acts*, 210.

⁸¹ Stott, *Acts*, 94.

ambiguity of Jesus' divine status, and a misunderstanding concerning the source of the power of the miracle. Some factors that alleviate conflict are God's prophecy of Jesus' suffering, the witness of ASC, the witness of Jesus' resurrection, the promise of God's salvation and the Spirit, the call for repentance to receive the promise. When the hearers decide to accept Jesus, the conflict is lessened. Therefore, in these two scenes, Luke demonstrates that the matter of Jesus' identity is more fundamental than other factors involved in conflict between Peter and his fellow Jews.

CHAPTER FOUR: PETER'S SPEECHES TO THE JEWISH AUTHORITIES

Interactions between the apostles and the Jewish people have drawn the attention of the Jewish authorities. This chapter will analyze conflict between the apostles and the Jewish authorities by exploring two scenes: the interrogation about the healing of the paralytic, and the questioning on the violation of the high priest's order. To respond to the inquiries, Luke composes Peter's speeches, which show the main issues of the conflict from his perspective.

1. Context

Peter's speeches to the Jewish authorities are followed by a wave of intensive persecution against the early Christian movement, as narrated in Acts 4:1–8:3. In chapter 4, Luke describes two apostles being warned to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. In chapter 5, the persecution expands to all the apostles. In chapters 6 and 7, the severity of the persecution escalates to the killing of Stephen, one of the lay leaders of the church.

2. Peter's First Speech before the Council

2.1. Setting

Malina notes that “[t]here is always latent conflict between the powerful and the powerless.”¹ The presence of the Council indicates the potential conflict between them and the apostles.² The supreme Council in Jerusalem exercises legislative and executive power over religious issues and civic matters as well, with the consent of the Roman power, to keep Jerusalem, especially the temple, in order.³ Throughout hundreds of years before the temple's destruction, the high priests and the high priestly party (the Sadducees) seem to have been able to maintain a tight control of the Council.⁴ Luke says that Annas, Caiaphas, John and Alexander, and all who are of high-priestly descent, are there to put the apostles on trial. They are of the Sadducees, the main opponents of the apostles. Therefore, the sectarian background of those in juridical power becomes a factor involved in the conflict in this scene.

The Sadducees were formed during the Maccabean era. They were not numerous and popular but they had wealth and political power, controlling the priesthood in Jerusalem and gaining support from the Roman government.⁵ Their role as guardians of the temple and the conservative interpretation of the scriptures brought them into frequent conflict with other Jewish groups, including the apostles. For example, since Pentateuch

¹ Malina, *New Testament World*, 83.

² The Council members include the rulers, the elders and the scribes, referring to the high priests, the representatives of Israel, and the scholars studying the scriptures respectively. See Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 152; Pervo, *Acts*, 115.

³ Schürer, *History*, 377; Arnold, *Acts*, 248; Saldarini, “Sanhedrin,” 976.

⁴ Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 199–236.

⁵ Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 149.

provides little evidence about resurrection, the Sadducees, who hold Pentateuch in a high authoritative position, drew the conclusion that there is no resurrection.⁶ They were not looking for a messiah because they held that the messianic age had begun already in the Maccabean period.⁷ Apparently, their belief regarding resurrection and messiah is contrary to Peter's proclamation about Jesus.⁸

2.2. Characters

Peter, labeled as uneducated and untrained,⁹ speaks boldly to the authorities, which is seen as an act of deviance.¹⁰ From Luke's perspective, however, it is an act of obedience to God's order to proclaim Jesus with the power of the Spirit. The authority cannot deny the power to heal but tries to stop them from proclaiming that the divine power of healing comes from Jesus. Therefore, the conflict between them is inevitable. But in this scene, the authority does not punish the apostles because they fear the people who are still supporting the apostles.¹¹

⁶ Roetzel, *World*, 45–46.

⁷ Stott, *Acts*, 95.

⁸ Stanton and Stroumsa note that there are different kinds of religious exclusion in the ancient world. For a summary of Christian exclusivism, see Stanton and Stroumsa, *Tolerance and Intolerance*, 356–61.

⁹ The Council regards the apostles as non-professionals with no proper training in rabbinic theology. They are like their rabbi Jesus, who is not professionally trained in theology, but teaches with authority and confidence. See Stott, *Acts*, 98.

¹⁰ For more details on labeling and deviance, see Malina and Neyrey, "Conflict," 99–110.

¹¹ Padilla notes that the Jewish crowds are open to the message of Jesus and can therefore serve to deter violence against the apostles. Nevertheless, they fail to display firm allegiance to Jesus or the apostles. See Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 114.

2.3. Plot

After healing the paralytic, Peter and John continue proclaiming Jesus' resurrection and gather a large crowd. The plot loses its equilibrium when the temple authorities arrest Peter and John and throw them in prison because they teach a resurrection in Jesus. Gathering the whole Council to interrogate them implies the solemnity of the conflict.¹² Luke composes Peter's speech to answer the high priest's inquiry regarding the source of power of healing, which directly discloses that it is by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene.¹³ Furthermore, he claims that Jesus is the source of salvation. The foci of the conflict switch from the general resurrection to Jesus' power and his role in salvation. The plot develops when the Council cannot deny the miracle but forbids the apostles to proclaim in Jesus' name, and reaches its climax when Peter challenges the command as it is against the will of God, the highest authority. The conflict does not escalate into active persecution, however, because the Council cannot find any support from the people for they are all glorying God for the healing of the paralytic. The people's praising indicates that they acknowledge Jesus' power is from God. Their attitude toward Jesus' identity is positive. Of course, the text indicates that many of those people related to this scene are converted to Christianity (4:4). The miracle puts the Council in an impasse position as long as it rejects Jesus as the source of power.¹⁴ The apostles are set free. The plot restores its equilibrium for the time being. Klausner, a Jewish historian, comments that the arrest and release in a drastic quickness reveals the "authority" that endorses and

¹² Johnson, *Acts*, 97.

¹³ In Greco-Roman world, people are calling upon various deities, spirits, magical names or using many tools to effect healing. See Arnold, *Acts*, 247.

¹⁴ Barrett, *Acts*, 235.

protects Peter and John, which the leaders fear enough to hold back their persecution.¹⁵

The experience of Peter and John encourages the other apostles to proclaim Jesus' name, which also leads to the expansion of the scope of the conflict.

2.4. Speech (4:8b–12, 19b–20)

2.4.1. *Summary*¹⁶

Peter makes it clear that it is by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene that the paralytic gets well. Again, Peter emphasizes that it is Jesus the Nazarene whom the leaders crucified but God raised from the dead. Furthermore, Peter continues to claim that Jesus is the source of salvation for all human beings. At last, he challenges the leaders that he will obey God to proclaim Jesus instead of following their order to be silent.

2.4.2. *Main Components Related to Conflict*

Peter's speech provides an answer to his actions and solidifies his commitment to his proclamation. Both aspects create further conflict in the next episode. Peter appeals to an authority higher than the leaders' for the legitimation of proclaiming Jesus, so if the Jewish leaders confront this authority, the conflict will not go away. Peter shows due respect to the Jewish authorities by labeling them rulers and elders of the people, which functions as *capitatio benevolentiae*, as Soards notes.¹⁷ Peter continues, however, to

¹⁵ Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 282–83.

¹⁶ The last section of the speech is delivered by Peter and John. In this paper, I take Peter as the representative when it does not significantly affect the analysis.

¹⁷ Soards, *Speeches*, 45. Soards holds that the way the apostles addressing the authorities implies neither reticence nor fawning.

disclose a higher level of authority that comes from God.¹⁸ God has vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead, and Jesus has demonstrated his divine legitimation by healing the paralytic, which the Jewish leaders cannot deny. Furthermore, God has made Jesus the sole source of salvation.¹⁹ Peter invokes the scriptures as the witness for his argument.²⁰ Bruce notes that the rejected stone in the original context may refer to Israel, who is “despised by the nations but chosen by God for the accomplishment of his purpose.”²¹ Now Jesus’ followers refer the images of “the rejected stone” and “corner stone” to Jesus, whom God has chosen for his divine purpose, even though he is rejected by “the builders” who regard him unsuitable for their purpose.²² In a word, Jesus’ resurrection, the power of healing in his name, and the scriptures prove Jesus’ role and attest the divine endorsement of the apostles’ proclamation of Jesus. Therefore, from Luke’s perspective, when the leaders ignore Jesus’ identity and forbid the apostles to proclaim Jesus, they are confronting the divine authority. Thus, the apostles challenge the judgment of the leaders and claim that they would never follow this kind of order. Peter’s speech indicates that his obedience to God’s command to proclaim Jesus and the leaders’ disobedience to God’s command by forbidding the proclamation of Jesus will be in consistent conflict, if the leaders do not change their attitude and decision regarding Jesus.

¹⁸ Malina and Neyrey, “Conflict,” 99–109.

¹⁹ Soards points out that the combination of *δεῖ* (“it is necessary” according to Soards’ translation) and *σωθῆναι* (“to be saved”) indicates that “‘salvation’ and ‘being saved’ are to be understood in relation to the theme of divine necessity.” In Peter’s speech, “to save” and “to heal” work in tandem so that “the healing becomes evidence for the saving power of the resurrected Jesus.” See Soards, *Speeches*, 46–47. Barrett notes that “in” is instrumental thus “the salvation is in Jesus” refers to Jesus’ role as the agent of salvation. See Barrett, *Acts*, 231.

²⁰ For the use of Ps 118:22 in other Christian and Jewish literatures, see Conzelmann, *Acts*, 33.

²¹ Bruce, *Acts*, 93.

²² Barrett, *Acts*, 230.

3. Peter's Second Speech before the Council

3.1. Setting

Luke discloses that the Jewish leaders want to kill the apostles (5:33). Kistemaker and Hendriksen, based on an inscription provided by *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia*, comment that they have no right to do so except to a Gentile who enters the inner court of the temple.²³ If this is the juridical regulation, the implied readers may understand that even though the Council has the authority to execute certain sorts of criminals, they abuse their authority in this occasion, which may become a factor involved in the conflict.

Luke's narrative also involves a famous law teacher Gamaliel, who possesses an honorable position in the Council. Gamaliel holds the typical thought of the Pharisee sect.²⁴ As Josephus describes,

[T]he Pharisees, who are considered the most accurate interpreters of the laws, and hold the position of the leader sect, attribute everything to Fate and to God; they hold that to act rightly or otherwise rests, indeed, for the most part with man, but that in each action Fate cooperates.²⁵

So it is not a surprise to hear Gamaliel's comment on how the Council should treat the apostles—Fate will lead them to their destiny; God will determine what they deserve.²⁶

Even though the Sadducees are the majority in the Council, they have to accede to the

²³ Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 150. See also Tenney, *Pictorial Encyclopedia*, 650. The inscription says, "No Gentile may enter within the railing around the sanctuary and within the enclosure. Whoever should be caught will render himself liable to the death penalty which will inevitably follow."

²⁴ The similar teaching is that "God is over all, and needs no help from men for the fulfilment of His purposes; all men must do is to obey, and leave the issue to Him." See Findlay, *Acts*, 85.

²⁵ Josephus, *War*, 2:162.

²⁶ Bruce comments that Gamaliel's temporizing policy is not always the wisest one from both the religious and political perspective. Saul applies a different approach by persecuting the church. See Bruce, *Acts*, 117. Barrett comments that Luke demonstrates a positive comment on Gamaliel's attitude as an intelligible and credible one within Judaism. See Barrett, *Acts*, 282.

opinion of the Pharisees, who are popular among the people.²⁷ As Saldarini notes, they are politically active in Jesus' time but not extreme revolutionaries.²⁸

In view of the religious and political context, Padilla comments that Luke's description of Gamaliel is negative, even though he does not oppose the apostles like the Sadducees.²⁹ Instead of discerning the source of authority for the apostles' proclamation, which is testified by the miracles, the scriptures and Jesus' resurrection, Gamaliel perceives it a better way to obey God by leaving fate to God.³⁰ Since the purpose of the Christian proclamation is to demand a turning to Jesus, Gamaliel's response is a negative one. Pervo comments that Gamaliel's suggestion is "scarcely responsible advice, for it urges the Council to abrogate the duties for which they have been appointed, and, as noted, his examples were not truly relevant."³¹ From this perspective, it is reasonable for Padilla to note that Gamaliel's speech is dramatic irony and plays the role of the divine intervention to release the apostles, which advances the plot and the conflict.³²

3.2. Characters

The apostles are fearless when they obey God's command to proclaim Jesus and claim that the Council disobeys God by killing Jesus and forbidding them to proclaim Jesus.

²⁷ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 80.

²⁸ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees*, 128–33.

²⁹ Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 114–15.

³⁰ Malina and Neyrey note that the early Christian movement is in conflict with other groups not over whether God should be obeyed, but over which way is the best to heed God's command. See Malina and Neyrey, "Conflict," 98. In the scenes of Acts 4 and 5, it is not explicitly stated that the Sadducees relate the trial to obey God's command, but the Council reaches a decision to release the apostles, following Gamaliel's council. But in Luke's narrative, the Council goes astray from this decision later, which indicates that their concern is not about the best way to obey God any more.

³¹ Pervo, *Acts*, 148.

³² Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 133–34.

They regard suffering for Jesus' name an honor, which indicates that Jesus' name is the key for honor and shame switch.³³ Therefore, it is impossible for them to quit proclaiming Jesus even when the conflict escalates. The high priest and the Sadducees refuse to be enlightened by the miraculous rescue of the apostles. Instead, they continue to stop the apostles from proclaiming Jesus and become furious when they get a negative answer. Their ignorance about the divine work through Jesus remain unchanged, because of jealousy as Luke perceives.³⁴ Therefore, the conflict of these two groups does not resolve, which indicates their opposite attitude toward Jesus is the key factor of the conflict.

3.3. Plot

The plot of this scene begins with the popularity of the Apostles due to the proclamation of the Lord Jesus (5:12–16). The plot loses its equilibrium when the high priest and the Sadducees arrest the apostles out of jealousy. It is temporarily restored when an angel of the Lord sets the apostles free and commands them to preach in the temple, which they do immediately. However, they are arrested once more and the disequilibrium appears again. The authorities bring the apostles before the Council and accuse them of proclaiming Jesus. The high priest also questions their intention of blaming the authorities for Jesus' death.³⁵ Luke declares through Peter that the high priest is challenging God. When Peter continues to disclose God's salvation plan through Jesus,

³³ Pervo, *Acts*, 149.

³⁴ Ζήλου can mean "zeal" or "jealousy" or "envy." For the definition of these three words, see Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 50–51.

³⁵ Haenchen thinks that the leaders fear that the apostles are invoking divine vengeance. See Haenchen, *Acts*, 245. Barrett holds that the leaders may consider that the apostles' claim may lead to an uprising. Barrett, *Acts*, 288.

the priests get furious and intend to kill the apostles. Both the plot and the conflict reach their climax. An attempted killing is restrained by Gamaliel, who persuades the Council to release the apostles, considering the possibility that they may fight against God. He points out that the center of this issue is for or against God's will to forbid the proclamation of Jesus. Following his advice, the Council releases the apostles after beating them. The plot restores its equilibrium. The development of the plot shows that the opposite perspectives on whether Jesus' role is ordained by God is the core factor that aggravates the conflict.

3.4. Speech (5:29b–32)

3.4.1. Summary

Peter clearly states that they must obey God rather than men. Again, he brings out the contrast that God resurrected Jesus while the leaders crucified him. Then they claim that God has exalted Jesus and made him the source of salvation and forgiveness of sins to the Israelites. At last, they declare that both the Holy Spirit and they are the witnesses of what they have claimed.

3.4.2. Main Components Related to Conflict

The speech directly points out that the issue of the conflict is obeying God or not, with a particular focus being attitudes and actions toward Jesus. On the one side, the Jewish leaders forbid teaching in the name of Jesus, whom they have crucified. The use of the word "cross" indicates that Luke is emphasizing the intention of the leaders to call down

a divine curse on Jesus, an intention that is foiled because God exalts Jesus instead. The claim that the authority of the high priest is of a human sort which stands against God's authority is a touch of sarcasm directed at the high priest, who is the so-called highest representative of the divine authority. This sarcasm may intensify the conflict.

On the other side, the speech focuses on what God has done to Jesus. God's raising up of Jesus vindicates Jesus and indirectly condemns the Jewish leaders. It also indicates that if they do not repent of what they have done to Jesus, they are still against God. Peter continues to disclose Jesus' role ordained by God as prince and savior to bring repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. As Conzelmann notes, "[h]ope for the eschatological redemption of Israel dominates the whole Jewish expectation of the end. Cleansing from sins belongs to this eschatological picture."³⁶ Peter's declaration implies that Jesus is the divine necessity for this hope.³⁷ The Jewish leaders are reluctant to put their hope on Jesus. The escalation of the conflict is unavoidable.

God's plan for Israel through Jesus also ordains the proclamation of Jesus among the Israelites. Moreover, witnessing for Jesus is not only the mission of the apostles, but also the Spirit's. The association with the Spirit enhances the authority of the apostles' proclamation of Jesus. On the contrary, possessing the Spirit is a sign for obeying God, which again puts the Jewish leaders in the position of disobeying God because they have not yet acquired the Spirit.³⁸ In a word, every single phrase of Peter's speech may

³⁶ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 42. The language of cleaning from sin can be found in *Pss Sol* 17.22–23; *Jub.* 4.26; 50.5; *1 Enoch* 10.22; *T. Levi* 18.9; *T. Jud* 24.1 etc.

³⁷ Soards, *Speeches*, 52.

³⁸ In the Pentateuch, which is highly valued by the Sadducees, the Spirit is life-giving spirit, and empowers Moses and other leaders to act in a miraculous way (Num. 11:16–17, 25), which indicates that the Sadducees may give the Holy Spirit an honorable position in the religion.

provoke the Jewish leaders to anger, since they do not seek to reconsider their attitude toward Jesus.

Furthermore, the speech contains plain statements about Jesus, without appeal to the authority of the scriptures. This indicates that the apostles are relying solely on the authority of Jesus' name and seek no other way to solve the conflict, which may be a factor to further increase the fury of the leaders.

4. Conclusion

These two scenes, namely the healing of the paralytic and teaching in Jesus' name in the temple, constitute a continuous development of the conflict between the apostles and the Jewish leaders. Several factors are involved in the escalation of the conflict. For example, the Sadducees and the apostles having different views on resurrection and the Messiah, the Council's intention to abuse their authority by killing and forbidding the apostles from teaching in Jesus' name, the apostles claiming to have a divine endorsement for their preaching and healing, the apostles accusing the leaders of killing Jesus and disobeying God, the apostles claiming that Jesus is the divinely ordained source of salvation. Peter's speeches direct the leaders' attention to Jesus, not only for answering their inquiry, but also for claiming their commitment to proclaim in Jesus' name, his identity and his role. Therefore, if the leaders' attitude toward Jesus does not change but becomes worse, the escalation of the conflict is unavoidable. The attempt of killing the apostles is restrained by Gamaliel, who advises the Council to leave the apostles to God. Gamaliel's advice, however, indicates neither his acknowledgement of the divine endorsement for proclaiming in Jesus' name, nor a change of attitude toward this

movement. The narrative which I will discuss in the next chapter indicates that the conflict is restrained temporarily just to prepare for a larger scope and a more intensified scale of persecution, which leads to the martyrdom of Stephen. Thus, Gamaliel's advice is not a key to resolving the conflict.

CHAPTER FIVE: STEPHEN'S SPEECH

In this chapter, I am going to analyze conflict between Stephen and his audience, which includes both the Jewish authorities and the Jewish people. Stephen is a Hellenistic Jewish Christian leader, and his Jewish audience also has diaspora background, including people from the synagogue of the Freedmen, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and from Cilicia and Asia. In Acts, the conflict depicted in Acts 6 and 7 seems to be the most serious, since it leads to the death of Stephen. An analysis of the narrative and its setting will disclose various factors leading to the escalation of the conflict.

1. Context

Stephen's speech is found in the larger context of 4:1–8:3, where Luke narrates that the early Christian movement encountered a wave of persecution during the continuous process of proclamation and community expansion. In this context, the persecutors not only include the Jewish leaders but also the Jewish people. And the scope of Christians being persecuted expands from the apostles to lay leaders. The severity of the persecution also escalates from warnings to beatings and killings.

2. Stephen's Speech

2.1. Setting

The Mediterranean world is a violent world. Society is filled with frequent public violence, and the reaction of the crowds to social activities is unsure and may be explosive. Ordinary people do not have any rights. Those who try to protect their rights tend to apply violence in the name of the status quo.¹ Both the sacred law and the juridical law, however, do not grant the Jewish crowds the authority to execute capital punishment without the regular court procedure.² Furthermore, the sacred law is against any violence which is not ascribed by God's commandment, even though it uses violence to punish those who betray God and disobey his order.³ It seems that the Jewish crowds respect the sacred law in one way, yet they violate it in another. They are furious at Stephen, but they do not stone him until they drag him out of the city, maybe because the law requires stoning to be carried out outside the city.⁴ Luke, however, explicitly says that the witness against Stephen is false, implying that the crowds usurp the right to kill Stephen. From Luke's perspective, the accusation brought up by the audience is a factor that leads to the conflict but it is not legitimate. Thus, Luke guides his implied readers to question this factor.

Another related social setting is the influence of Hellenization on the Jews, especially on their attitude toward the law. Hellenization in the Jewish society is

¹ Seland, *Establishment Violence*, 10.

² Seland, "Once More," 198–99. See also Arnold, *Acts*, 276. For the procedure of stoning, see Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 6:1–4.

³ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 198–200.

⁴ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 61. According to Lev 24:14 and Deut 17:2–5, stoning to death is executed outside the camp or the city.

unavoidable in the matters of language and organization and other neutral matters. The Jewish ruling elites as well as those who have high educational background are more open to Hellenistic culture.⁵ Regarding the religious issues, some Jewish groups are strong-minded in observing the law and relate it to the fate of the Jews. For example, the Pharisees believe that if the Jews fail to observe the law scrupulously, God will punish the entire nation. The Qumran Community also holds the similar view. One group, called the fourth philosophy by Josephus, is very aggressive to use violence against those Jews who are deviated from the Jewish religious tradition to show strong favor of the Hellenistic culture. Therefore, those who advocate a major relaxation of the law, including some Christians, may encounter conflict with these Jewish groups.⁶ Luke, however, does not give a sign that Stephen advocates relaxation of the law. Thus, from his perspective, the accusation of violating the law against Stephen may not stand.

2.2. Characters

Some men from the synagogue(s) instigate a conflict with Stephen.⁷ Luke describes that they are a group of insidious people who bring Stephen to trial by provoking false testimonies against him, and they are prone to anger and violence. Accusing Stephen of breaking the law, they violate the law themselves. Wiens notes that the reason behind their determination to persecute Stephen is that they feel threatened by Hellenistic Christians' message and practice, which they think might make the Jews lose their

⁵ Hengel, *"Hellenization" of Judaea*, 8, 11, 16.

⁶ Tomasino, *Judaism before Jesus*, 319–20.

⁷ Williams holds that the synagogue(s) have Hellenistic background. See Williams, *Acts*, 124, 127–28. Arnold notes that these synagogue(s) are established by the Jewish Roman slaves who have been set free and by other Jews from four geographical places. See Arnold, *Acts*, 265.

identity.⁸ Yet Luke wants his implied readers to know that their accusation against Stephen is false, even though many Jewish people are stirred up to support them. In the previous scenes, we have seen that the Jewish people are described as willing to listen to the Christian message and to honor the apostles. Now those who remain unbelieving are misguided by these Hellenistic Jews to join the elders and the scribes in attacking the Hellenistic Christians.⁹ Even though the Council does not play a leading role in Stephen's persecution, they gain a large scale of support from the Jews because of the incident. Previously they were afraid to lay hands on the apostles because of the people, but now this caution is removed. They are more than willing to allow these men to stir up the people and employ violence under the cover of the judicial procedure.¹⁰ The escalation of the conflict is unavoidable.

Luke describes Stephen as a godly and charismatic person who does wonders and signs among the people. He also describes through the eyes of the people in the Council that his face is like the face of an angel, which implies that Stephen is aligned with Moses instead of speaking against Moses.¹¹ Through the depictions of the characters, Luke indicates that the concerns presented by the accusers are false.

⁸ Wiens holds that the men from the synagogue of freedmen are the Jews freed from slavery and find their protection in Jerusalem, and their experience urges them to protect the Jews from losing their identity found in the law and the temple. Thus, when they perceive any attempt against the law and the temple in the Jewish Christian, especially the Hellenistic Jews, they try to put them down. They take Jesus and his followers as revolutionaries because from their perspective, these Christians deny the ethos and cult. See Wiens, *Stephen's Sermon*, 9–10. For the meaning of "freedmen," see Conzelmann, *Acts*, 47.

⁹ Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 113. John Darr regards this description as the inconsistency of the same Jewish people. See Darr, "Irenic or Ironic," 134. Even though Luke calls them "the people," however, they are not the same group of people in Peter's speeches.

¹⁰ Seland states that the degree and manner of conflict is greatly influenced by the authority's ability and willingness to stand up against the deviants, and also the support they gain. See Seland, "Once More," 177.

¹¹ Williams, *Acts*, 126–27.

2.3. Plot

The plot starts with the argument between Stephen and the Jews from the synagogue(s). The details of their argument are not disclosed, but one may infer from the accusation that it is related to Moses, God, the temple, the law and Jesus of Nazareth. The plot loses its equilibrium when the Jews take Stephen by force to stand before the Council and bring in false witnesses to accuse him. They say they have heard Stephen saying that Jesus is going to destroy the temple and change the law. According to their understanding, Stephen's preaching is a blasphemy against God and Moses and a danger to the law and the temple, so they determine to punish the blasphemer and eliminate the threat. The plot develops when Stephen replies to the high priest's inquiry. He does not explicitly deny and explain the falseness of the accusation.¹² Instead, he brings up similar charges against the accusers, who get furious upon hearing his accusation. The plot reaches its climax when Stephen declares that he is visioning Jesus at the right hand of God. The hearers are enraged by Stephen's declaration. They reject his witness and drag him out of the city and stone him. Stephen dies after he prays to Jesus to receive his soul and forgive his persecutors. The equilibrium is restored not by the hearers turning away from their wrongdoing, but by Stephen pleading forgiveness for them. Jesus, the one to forgive sin, plays a core role in the restoration of the equilibrium.

Stephen's death, however, does not solve the conflict. The postlude of the plot discloses that the persecution against Christians spreads, and the scope of the conflict expands to its largest scale in Jerusalem.¹³ The persecution against Stephen, including his arrest, trial and stoning, occurs all on the same day. The pace of the plot is very fast,

¹² Kennedy, *Interpretation*, 121–22.

¹³ Luke resumes the story of persecution in 9:1ff.

which indicates the intensity and severity of the conflict. When Luke's brief description of the conflict is compared with the lengthy speech, however, the latter appears to be the focus of the narrative. I now turn to analyze the speech for factors related to conflict.

2.4. Speech (7:2–53, 56, 59b, 60b)

2.4.1. Summary

Stephen's speech alludes to many stories in the scriptures, including the stories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon. In these stories, God promises the land and brings people into the land to serve him, even though they leave the land several times. With these stories, Stephen presents several contrasts, including God calling the ancestors away from their idolatry versus the ancestors making and worshipping idols, God not dwelling in man-made houses versus men's will to find him a dwelling place, God raising up the prophets versus the ancestors persecuting the prophets, and God giving the oracles versus the ancestors rejecting the law. Stephen identifies his hearers with the ancestors in the stories of the ancestors, because just as their ancestors rejected the prophets, so also his hearers reject the Righteous One sent by God. Thus, Stephen responds to the accusations in a counter-accusation manner relating to God and Moses (vv. 2b–45), the Holy Place (vv. 46–50),¹⁴ the Law (v. 53) and Jesus,¹⁵ in which sequence I will analyze the speech content.

¹⁴ Verses 44 and 45 bring to a closure the time of the tabernacle, which witnesses the ancestors rejecting God's chosen deliverers and committing idolatry. Soards and Kilgallen include them in the section related to the temple. See Soards, *Speeches*, 59; Kilgallen, *Stephen Speech*, 31.

¹⁵ Penner notes that the charges provide the themes of the speech, which amount to a counteraccusation. See Penner, *Praise of Christian Origins*, 304. Arnold also realizes that through the narration of the ancient stories, Stephen actually refutes the charges: rejecting Joseph and Moses leading to

2.4.2. Main Components Related to Conflict

2.4.2.1. God and Moses

Regarding the charge of blasphemy, Stephen accuses his hearers of blasphemy because they disregard God's sovereignty. God initiates calling Abraham, making covenant with him and giving him the promised land. He uses Joseph and Jacob to rescue the ancestors from the affliction of famine.¹⁶ He raises up Moses and gives him the living oracles and the pattern of the tabernacle of testimony. The ancestors challenge the divine sovereignty by committing idolatry and rejecting Moses. "You are doing just as your fathers did" (7:51b) shows the main purpose of alluding to the scriptures, as Krodel notes.¹⁷ Like the ancestors, Stephen's hearers are blaspheming against God and Moses.

Stephen presents his understanding of God's sovereignty through the ancestors' stories, which builds the foundation for further discussing on the temple, the law and Jesus. The extensive use of the scriptures indicates that the early Christian movement has an unbroken continuity with ancient Judaism, guiding the implied readers to reconsider the accusation of the hearers, even though the hearers have the support of the Jewish crowds and the Council.¹⁸

the rejection of Jesus; appearing to the ancestors outside the temple leading to the possibility of seeing God's glory in Jesus. See Arnold, *Acts*, 266. Wiens sketches the structure as answering to the charges. But he takes vv. 2–41 as answering to the accusation of speaking against Moses and the law, while vv. 42–50 as answering to the accusation of blasphemy against God and the temple, and vv. 51–52 as counter-accusing them of resisting the Holy Spirit. See Wiens, *Stephen's Sermon*, 11. Bruce regards the words against the temple as blasphemy against God. See Bruce, *Acts*, 147.

¹⁶ "Send" in verse 12 connotes God's authority in a commission directly or indirectly through human agents. See Soards, *Speeches*, 63.

¹⁷ Krodel, *Acts*, 139.

¹⁸ Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism*, 73.

2.4.2.2. The Temple

The Holy Place in 6:13 is the temple, which is the focus of the life of the Israelites.¹⁹ As Neusner notes, “The Torah made (the) temple the pivot and focus... The life of Israel flowed from the altar; what made Israel Israel was the center, the altar.”²⁰ The importance of the religious role of the temple makes it the center of politics and economy, which in turn, however, defile the temple.²¹ Some religious groups, such as the Essenes at Qumran, abandon the temple and establish their own community as an alternative, and see themselves as a temporary place of true worship of God until the reconstitution and rededication of the temple.²²

Some scholars hold that the temple also becomes a focus of conflict between Judaism and early Christianity. According to these scholars, the temple ceases to be central to the religious life of Christians. Elliott says,

Stephen’s speech and his stoning in connection with remarks concerning the temple form a turning point between the earliest phase of the church’s life and its connection with the temple (Acts 1:1–8:1a) and its full-scale mission to the households of the diaspora (8:1b–28:31). In the remainder of Luke’s account, the temple plays no positive role as a place of Christian assembly or symbol of Christian identity..... the temple reckons only negatively as a locale of Jewish-Christian conflict over purity and its implications for the course of universal salvation.²³

¹⁹ Τοῦτοῦ is omitted by P⁷⁴ & A D E Ψ 0175 m lat. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 341. Barrett notes that the omission seeks to remove the possible interpretation of the phrase as referring to the Sanhedrin’s meeting place. See Barrett, *Acts*, 327.

²⁰ Neusner, *Judaism*, 74.

²¹ Josephus (*JW* 5: 402, 412–13) criticises that the temple becomes a place where abominable sins are committed, and he concludes that God can no longer inhabit in a house which has been defiled to such an extent.

²² Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 50–51.

²³ Elliott, “Temple Versus Household,” 216–17.

Dunn argues that Stephen attacks the temple because of his Hellenistic background.²⁴ For Dunn, it seems that Stephen is speaking on behalf of the Hellenist Christians who would have been unable to join in the prayers which are said in the temple and who probably no longer attend the temple, which “presumably means that the sacrificial system (for which the Temple existed) had ceased to be used or to be meaningful for the Christian Hellenists.”²⁵ Penner holds that the tradition of worship in the temple ceases after the death of the founder—Solomon.²⁶ These notions, however, are contrary to the fact that Stephen lives in Jerusalem and is ordained by the apostles and follows the leadership of the apostles, who are still attending the temple. Stephen does not explicitly state that his hearers are wrong in persistently protecting the temple. Instead, through using the scriptures to prove that God does not live in a man-made temple, he implies that the physical temple is not a necessity for God’s presence.

Stephen’s remark about the temple, however, does demonstrate and create conflict between him and his hearers. Dunn interprets Stephen’s statement as a sharp critique of the temple.²⁷ He points out that the adjective χειροποιήτοις made with hand” is the word used by Hellenistic Jews to condemn idolatry.²⁸ It sounds horrible to the Jewish leaders and the Hellenistic people, especially when Stephen puts it in the context of accusing ancestors who worship handmade idols or images. It sounds extreme for Dunn to claim

²⁴ Dunn, *Partings*, 81, 91.

²⁵ Dunn, *Partings*, 91.

²⁶ Penner, *Praise of Christian Origins*, 318. Penner points out that God’s guidance of worship for Joshua and his people is associated with the tabernacle, so is the temple for Solomon and his people, thus, God’s new promise in the new era makes those holding to the old ones actually worship the idols. For Christians with their new founder Jesus, the temple obviously is not the center of their worship.

²⁷ Dunn, *Partings*, 87.

²⁸ Dunn, *Partings*, 89.

that the temple itself becomes an idol.²⁹ He may make his point, however, since by upholding the temple higher than God and confining God in the temple, the Jewish leaders make the temple an idol.³⁰ Moreover, Stephen avoids the statement that God commands Solomon to build the temple, but focuses on the perception that a “human” asks to build a house for God, which becomes more obvious when compared with building the tabernacle. Thus, Stephen is not against the temple, but against people who defile the temple by disobeying God.

Regarding the preaching of Jesus concerning the temple, which the Jews mention, there are different understandings and hence a possible factor of conflict. It is probable that Jesus did utter statements relating to the temple. Mark 14:57–58 and Matt 26:61–62 state that after Jesus was arrested, he was accused by a false testimony given against him to the effect that he once said that he would destroy this temple made with hands and after three days rebuild another made without hands. Mark 15:29 and Matt 27:39–40 also show that this accusation was widely known in Jerusalem. At the same time, the three synoptic gospels report Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the temple (Matt 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:5). The non-canonical Gospel of Thomas also attributes similar sayings to Jesus (*The Gospel of Thomas* 71). Now the Jewish leaders bring up the charge of destroying the temple by putting it in the mouth of Stephen.

What is the real meaning of Jesus’ claim about the temple? John proposes that Jesus was talking about himself as the temple, being destroyed but rebuilt in three days. When Stephen relates the temple to the prophets, however, it seems that he refers to

²⁹ Dunn, *Partings*, 89.

³⁰ Williams points out that the operative word “live” (v. 48) bears the connotation of “confine.” See Williams, *Acts*, 142. Witherington sates, “What is being opposed is a God-in-the-box theology that has magical overtones.” See Witherington, *Acts*, 273.

predictions about the destruction of the temple. Adopting either interpretation, it is nowhere mentioned that the destroyer is Jesus himself, which is perhaps why the accusation is false. Furthermore, the evidence that the Jerusalem apostles continue to worship and sacrifice in the temple proves that their proclamation is not related to destroying the physical temple.³¹

From another perspective, however, when Luke states that the accusation against Stephen's preaching about Jesus is a false accusation, it is possible that Stephen's speech goes beyond the physical temple. His intention is to point to the temple made not with hands. Since God does not dwell in the temple made by human hands, maybe it is the time to pay attention to the temple made not by human hands, which is Jesus. Wiens notes that Stephen deliberately traces the "places" for Israel's cult in a series to repudiate an inappropriate preoccupation with temple-worship. God is capable of giving a place of worship only to then abandon it, as is shown by the tabernacle stationed in Shiloh. Now the time has come for another divine answer for true worship, which lies in Stephen's gazing into heaven and seeing Jesus standing at the right hand of God.³² The audience takes the remark literally, and issues a charge against Stephen in light of their perceiving Jesus the Nazarene to be a convicted criminal. Yet Stephen's agenda is proclaiming Jesus, based on his resurrection and ascension (John 2:13–22). Thus, Stephen's preaching on what Jesus says about the temple may create intense conflict between the Jewish people and him which results in his arrest and trial.³³

³¹ Dunn, *Partings*, 78–80.

³² Wiens, *Stephen's Sermon*, 61–83.

³³ Simon, *Stephen*, 95–96. See also Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 81–85.

2.4.2.3. The Law

Stephen accuses his hearers of rejecting the law. The Israelites inherit the living oracles from God and pass them down from generation to generation. But when they do it with a disobedient or uncircumcised heart, it implies that their ignorance of God's will and the law may make them alter the law.³⁴ As the ancestors persecuted God's prophets, Stephen's hearers in the same manner have killed the Righteous One. Thus, Stephen feels right to say that his hearers reject the living oracles. From Stephen or Luke's perspective, the "law" they claim to abide is the altered law, and when they deny Jesus, they are under the charge of rejecting the original law.

From the aspect of bringing in the role of the Righteous One, the accusation of altering the law may be related to the authority to interpret the law. Many scholars hold that Jesus is not against the Torah. Jeremias perceives that Jesus' criticism demonstrated in his critical attitude toward the Pharisaic elaboration of the law is against the oral law, the Halakah.³⁵ Sanders states that he finds no evidence from the first century to show that Jesus has transgressed the Sabbath law and the food laws, and Jesus does not dispute the law's authority, thus there is no real point of dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees.³⁶ In his private correspondence with Dunn, E. P. Sanders notes that the arguments relating to the scriptures such as plucking grain are within the normal range of disagreement, such that Jesus' behaviour cannot be regarded as transgressing the law, so it is impossible for the Jewish leaders to initiate such arguments to support their own practice.³⁷

³⁴ Krodel, *Acts*, 145.

³⁵ Jeremias, *Theology*, 208–11.

³⁶ Sanders, *Jesus*, 291.

³⁷ Dunn, *Partings*, 134–35 n. 19.

What, then, makes the Jewish leaders think that Jesus is altering the law? One possibility is that Jesus is going to alter the law, which refers to the practice of the new ceremonies in the Christian community. The accusation against Jesus states that "...we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs..." (6:14). It seems like the change has not taken place yet. Sandmel points out that "facets of the Jewish sacred calendar prescribed in Mosaic law failed to be perpetuated in Christianity"; essentially only Passover, Pentecost and the Sabbath survive in Christendom with alternation into Easter, commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Christian community, and Sunday worship respectively.³⁸ These practices in the future have not yet become very obvious at the early first century, when the Jewish Christians celebrate the Jewish ceremonies as they have done before. Therefore, as is stated in the accusation, the concern is with what *will* happen rather than with what *is* happening. The conflict is provoked more by what the Christians proclaim than by what they are practicing, and their proclamation is about Jesus. Moreover, the new ceremonies—baptism and the Lord's Supper—may have caught attention of the Jewish leaders in the early first century. The must-do ceremonies may arouse the uneasiness of the Jewish leaders, which has direct relation with Jesus. The baptism is performed in the name of Jesus. The Lord's Supper is breaking the bread and drinking the cup, which through the explanation of the apostles or other leaders is known to be connected with Lord Jesus too.

If the Jewish leaders have not understood what Jesus has said about these things, then Stephen's speech explains why Jesus will bring about change. Yet this too leads to

³⁸ Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism*, 141.

conflict. The living oracles from God through Jesus are valid if Jesus is the Righteous One. The Righteous One, the title of the spiritual leader, is also adopted by the Qumran community. The Righteous One has developed a particular interpretation of the Torah. Those who do not go along with it are denounced as those who have departed from the paths of righteousness.³⁹

For the Jewish people, the interpretation of the law relies on the temple cult. According to Dunn, the distinctive features of the law are circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws.⁴⁰ Thus, regarding the accusation about altering the law, it is “an issue focussing more or less exclusively on the Temple, since the laws of Moses and ‘customs’ which grew upon its basis were so largely concerned with the regulation of the Temple cult.” In another word, it is an issue about the authority of the temple cult instead of specific law and regulation.⁴¹

Therefore, it is not the Torah that brings about conflict among the Judaism sects, but the interpretation of the Torah. And the leaders of each community, who claim to have the authority to interpret, can easily become the focus of conflict. In the early Christianity community, Jesus is the one who has this authority. For their hearers, Jesus and his followers challenge the authority of the temple cult through various statements and practices. Stephen accuses the hearers of betraying and murdering the “one” who uses his authority to interpret the law, thus rejecting the will of God and resisting the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in this way, the speech also directs us to perceive that Jesus, who is referred to as the Righteous One, is at the core of the conflict.

³⁹ Dunn, *Partings*, 137.

⁴⁰ Dunn, *Partings*, 42.

⁴¹ Dunn, *Partings*, 85.

2.4.2.4. Jesus

The speech content explicitly exposes Jesus as the focus of the conflict. The attitude toward what Stephen claims about Jesus pushes the conflict to escalate. The appeal “Hear me” at the beginning of the speech (v. 2) calls for the attention of Stephen’s hearers, which reminds Luke’s readers to anticipate the narrative report at the conclusion (7:54), as Soards notes.⁴² The conclusion reflects the attitude of the hearers toward the speech, and indicates aggravation of the conflict instead of resolution. While the climax of Stephen’s speech content is the description of Jesus. The exalted Jesus is referred as “the Son of Man,” which is unique and may refer to the power of dominion.⁴³ Instead of sitting at the right side of God, as appearing in Peter’s speech which is quoted from Ps 110:1, Jesus in Stephen’s vision is standing, which may refer to his status after receiving authority and power as a Judge, who vindicates Stephen, and also as a deliverer and savior, who will receive Stephen’s soul.⁴⁴

Different groups of Jewish people may have different responses to Jesus’ identity. Previously, when a group of people in Jerusalem heard statements concerning the exaltation of Jesus, they were pieced to the heart and accepted Jesus. Now another group of people in Jerusalem become furious and determined to kill Stephen. The comparison of these responses indicates that the attitude toward Jesus’ identity is an important factor in the conflict between Judaism and early Christianity.

⁴² Soards, *Speeches*, 61. This kind of appeal occurs six times in Acts (i.e. 2:22; 13: 16; 22:1).

⁴³ For a survey of scholastic discussion on this title, see Caragounis, *Son of Man*, 1–33.

⁴⁴ Moule, *Phenomenon*, 90–91. Talbert notes that the standing position indicating the status as a heavenly Judge appears in Isa 3:13; 2:19, 21; Amos 9:1; *Assumption of Moses* 10:3. See Talbert, *Acts*, 64–65. Scholars have different perspectives on why Stephen sees a vision of Jesus standing at the right side of God instead of sitting as in Ps 110:1. Kelly says that he is giving the Jews a final opportunity before he finally gets his seat. See Kelly, *Acts*, 102–103. Barrett holds that Jesus is standing because he is about to come. See Barrett, “Stephen and the Son of Man,” 32–38. Barrett also provides a long list of the views of other scholars. See Barrett, *Acts*, 384–85.

What Stephen has seen in Acts 7:55–56 is one of the visions of Jesus participating directly and fully in God’s glory and majesty, from which the early devotional practices attributing to Jesus derives, as Hurtado notes.⁴⁵ These religious experiences show that early Christianity does distinguish Jesus from God, and also that they are not making Jesus a second god. At the same time, they think that unless they honor Jesus with worship, they are disobeying God who ascribes to Jesus the status of being worthy of worship.⁴⁶ This devotional practice toward Jesus may have caused pious Jews to doubt whether Christians had crossed the boundary of committing to one-God worship.⁴⁷ What Stephen says about Jesus stretches the limits of Jewish monotheism and perhaps provokes conflict.

Stephen’s statement about Jesus’ identity reaches its climax when he cries out to Jesus to receive his soul and pleads for the forgiveness of his murderers. Stephen’s prayer to Jesus shows reverence to Jesus as the Lord.⁴⁸ Hurtado notes that prayer to Jesus is not merely a practice of personal prayer done in private, but also a liturgical practice in cultic setting, which begins among Jewish Christians at the first stratum of the Christian movement. There is no indication that the other divine representatives such as angels received such cultic devotion.⁴⁹ Hurtado takes this factor as one of the mutations that the

⁴⁵ Hurtado, *One God*, 117–18. Neudorfer hold that v. 56 is a confession of Jesus’ deity. See Neudorfer, “Speech of Stephen,” 280. Barrett, however, points out that the focus is not about Christology demonstrated in these titles, but that Stephen’s dispute with the hearers has been proved right by God. See Barrett, *Acts*, 385.

⁴⁶ Hurtado, *One God*, 121–22.

⁴⁷ Hurtado, *One God*, 122–23.

⁴⁸ Hurtado, *One God*, 104–108.

⁴⁹ Hurtado, *One God*, 107–108. For example, in apocalyptic texts such as Rev 19:10; 22:8; *Ascen. Isa* 7:21; 8:5, the messenger angels forbid the seers to worship them. See, Hurtado, *One God*, 24.

early Christian community brought to the religious practice of Jewish monotheism.⁵⁰ The mutation provokes conflict between Stephen and his hearers, who become determined to put Stephen to death even without the consent of Roman authority.

The content of the prayer further reveals the convictions that early Christians held concerning Jesus. Soards notes that Stephen's petition to Jesus to receive his soul indicates that Jesus is a savior with authority over human life and death. And Stephen also asks God to forgive the sins of his hearers. Both petitions may identify him with God, since the soul comes from God and returns to God, and only God has the authority to forgive sin.⁵¹ Dunn notes that pleading with Jesus for the forgiveness of sin is basically the same as ascribing divinity to Jesus. This is an offence to the priestly system assigned by God, because it usurps the role of God.⁵² Furthermore, through Stephen's prayer, the Jews may assume that Christians do regard Jesus announcing the forgiveness of sin, which they would count as the sin of blasphemy. In a word, the early Christians perceive Jesus as someone who possesses the divine identity and shares in the divine glory and transcendence, and who is therefore to be revered in terms and actions characteristically reserved for God.⁵³ By way of contrast, the other Jews perceive this as a blasphemy deserving the penalty of death. To the hearers on the scene, Stephen's speech on Jesus' identity is pushing the boundary line of Jewish monotheism.

⁵⁰ Hurtado, *One God*, 108.

⁵¹ Soards, *Speeches*, 69.

⁵² Dunn, *Partings*, 61. Sanders attributes the offence to the possibility of pronouncing sins forgiven in the absence of confession and restitution. See Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 61–63.

⁵³ Hurtado, *One God*, 107.

3. Conclusion

Stephen's hearers accuse him of blasphemy against God and Moses, speaking against the temple and against the law. The accusations against Stephen are false from the Christian perspective, but Stephen's teaching regarding the law and the temple nevertheless disturbs other Jews. Stephen counter-accuses his hearers of blasphemy against God and Moses, resisting the Holy Spirit, killing the Righteous One, and rejecting the law. Stephen perceives that the relationship between the Israelites and God has broken down.⁵⁴ What makes Stephen think that his perspective on the law, the temple, and the Jewish people's present relationship with God is right? Williams states that "[t]he key to Stephen's thought lies, perhaps, in the vision of Christ that he had at the end of his trial."⁵⁵ The Jewish people including the leaders reject Jesus, whereas for Stephen, the exalted Jesus has divine authority and he is the answer to the true worship of God. Stephen's speech thus pushes its hearers to fix their attention on the identity of the Lord Jesus.⁵⁶ When they cannot accept it but perceive it as offence against them and God, the escalation of the conflict is inevitable.

⁵⁴ Penner, *Praise of Christian Origins*, 324.

⁵⁵ Williams, *Acts*, 126.

⁵⁶ For Jesus as the authentic interpreter of Torah, see also Wilson, *Gentiles*, 145f.; Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 61–63.

CHAPTER SIX: PAUL'S SPEECHES TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

After Peter and Stephen, Luke introduces another Christian representative, Paul, a Jew with both diaspora and Jerusalem background. He is a Roman citizen and has sat under the strict training of a Hebrew Rabbi, Gamaliel. Paul's speeches to the Jewish people include his speeches at Antioch of Pisidia, at Thessalonica, at Corinth, and lastly to the Jerusalem Jews.

Paul brings a new element into the conflict I have been examining, namely, the Gentiles. Both Paul and the Jewish people have a connection with the Gentiles. On the one hand, Paul's proclamation about Jesus has gained popularity among God-fearers and other Gentiles. His frequent contact with the Gentiles may impact how the Jewish people react to his speech, and the presence of the Gentiles at the scene may impact Paul's speech. On the other hand, some Gentiles join with the Jews in persecuting Paul when the Jews stir up opposition against him.

1. Context

The context for Paul's speech to the Jewish people is Paul carrying out Jesus' commission to preach the gospel in the diaspora, both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. Luke records Jesus' commission: "he is a chosen instrument of mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel, for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake" (9:15, 16). This is demonstrated in that Paul is sent by

the Holy Spirit, inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak, and guided and encouraged by Jesus in the visions. Luke also depicts Paul's three missionary journeys. It is in the milieu of the Gentiles and kings that Paul witnesses to the Jews about Jesus, and it is during and after the journeys that Paul delivers his speeches.¹

2. Paul's Speech in Antioch of Pisidia

2.1. Setting

In the first century, Antioch of Pisidia was regarded as the most important Roman colony in Asia Minor. The population consisted of local Anatolian peoples, the Jews, and Roman citizens, which included many Roman senators and equestrians. The Jews had resided in the region for more than 200 years, when they were forcibly resettled from Babylon. Popular religions other than Judaism included the moon-god Mên, Jupiter, Dionysus and Asklepios, as well as the ruler cult. The main focus of the public and religious life of the colony was provided by the imperial temple and the associated buildings.² A balance of multiple religions was maintained until it was broken by something new introduced by an ordinary man, Paul. Conflict then erupts from those who seek to restore the balance.

Paul is invited to speak at a synagogue service where Gentiles are present. They are so attracted by Paul's message that "almost the whole city," Luke describes, comes to listen to his speech at the second Sabbath. Paul's speech discloses the reason why the Gentiles are attracted: Jesus surpasses the law to receive them into God's community.

¹ Talbert notes that the first missionary journey from Antioch (13:1–3) to Antioch (14:24–28) displays the pattern of proclaiming to the Jews and to the Gentiles, alternating between these two groups three times. See Talbert, *Acts*, 116.

² Arnold, *Acts*, 342.

The Second Temple Jews are convicted that God is the ruler of the universe, so they welcome the Gentiles to attend the synagogue service. There is no evidence, however, that they have developed a mission to the Gentiles with aggressive attempts to convert them.³ Furthermore, they try to live a holy life and guard themselves from the contamination of the Gentile world, which build up a high bar for the Gentiles to join them. God-fearers are the Gentiles who generally have supportive attitude toward the Jews without necessarily showing religious interest.⁴ Most God-fearers are attracted to the one true God but prefer loose requirements without the rite of circumcision.⁵ When Paul discloses that the divine blessing of saving grace through Jesus is available to them, it is not surprising that they embrace the news gladly.⁶ As Hengel states, “[t]he way to true, eternal life [i]s no longer the fulfillment of the law, but obedient trust in God’s eschatological saving work, revealed through his Messiah.”⁷

2.2. Characters

The attitude of the Jewish people toward Paul changes from being supportive to hostile, when they see Paul’s message attracting a large group of Gentiles who decide to accept

³ Mcknight, *Light*, 116–17.

⁴ Cohen lists the wide range of types of interest that attract God-fearers to Judaism and also the multiple meanings of “God-Fearers.” See Cohen, *Beginning of Jewishness*, 146–48, 168–74. Barrett argues that due to the various uses of “God-fearers” in different situations, it is not a technical or semi-technical term. See Barrett, *Acts*, 630.

⁵ Juvenal provides some evidences for this specific description of God-fearers. See Juvenal, *Satires*, 164. See also Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 462, endnote 12. God-fearers are perceived as second-class citizens by the Jews who are obedient to the law, because they have not been circumcised and do not observe the law in its entirety. See Hengel, *Acts*, 89. Some scholars differentiate God-fearers and proselytes. See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 96; Bruce, *Acts*, 253, 264; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 338; Levinskaya, *Diaspora*, 118–20.

⁶ Bruce, *History*, 276f.

⁷ Hengel, *Acts*, 90.

Jesus. Paul is described as a good orator and also as a bold proclaimer who never withdraws from proclaiming Jesus when facing challenge and conflict.

2.3. Plot

Paul is invited to speak at the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. After his speech on God's plan of salvation through Jesus for the Israelites, many Jewish people and God-fearers follow him and ask him to speak again the next Sabbath. It seems that on this Sabbath, his hearers have no problem with his speech content. "The grace of God" (v. 43) indicates that many hearers response rightly to the message, which is accepting God's salvation.⁸

The plot develops after one week when a lot of Gentiles, who probably got news from the God-fearers who first heard Paul's message, gather to hear Paul's teaching. The plot loses equilibrium, however, when the Jews become jealous because of the crowds attracted to Paul's message and they start opposing Paul. Bruce suggests that the Jews become annoyed because they realize that Paul attracts a large group of God-worshippers by offering them a looser observance of law, which is a threat to the regular religious order of the synagogue.⁹ From Luke's perspective, however, it seems that the Jews care more about the attraction of the message than how the law would be observed. Furthermore, if the Jews care about the observance of the law among their own community, they should be relieved later when Paul indicates that he will go to the Gentiles instead of spread Jesus' news among the Jews.

⁸ Malina and Pilch understand "grace" as the favor of a patron, which in this context specifically refers to God's message of salvation through Paul. See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 95.

⁹ Bruce, *Acts*, 265.

The plot reaches its climax when the word of the Lord spreads through the whole region after Paul discloses that the Lord's salvation plan turns to the Gentiles. The Jews respond to the spread of the message by driving Paul out of the district. The plot's equilibrium in this scene does not get restored because the Jews determine to oppose Paul and succeed. The plot indicates that the conflict is more related to the message of Jesus than the Gentiles and the observance of the law in the Jewish community, even though the spread of the message involves the Gentiles. Furthermore, the Gentile converts are present at the scene of both the first and second Sabbath. The narrative shows clearly that the Jews have no problem when they are converted on the first Sabbath, and it does not mention the Jews' negative reaction toward their conversion. In a word, the analysis of the plot shows that from Luke's perspective, it is the popularity of the message about Jesus, as opposed to the observance of the law or the conversion of Gentiles, which provokes and aggravates the conflict.

2.4. Speech (13:16b–41, 46–47)

2.4.1. Summary

There are two major motifs in Paul's speech. One is God's sovereignty in the salvation history, which is demonstrated in that God brings Jesus the savior into the history of Israel, and the Lord commands Paul to bring the message of salvation to the Gentiles.

The other is human beings' response to Jesus the savior, which includes that of John the Baptist, the Jerusalemites and the Jewish leaders, the apostles and their companions, Paul and his companions, the audience, and the Gentiles.

2.4.2. *Main Components Related to Conflict*

Paul's speech on the first Sabbath uses the story of the Israelites to show God's sovereignty in bringing Jesus the savior to Israel. God chooses the ancestors, makes them great in Egypt and leads them out of Egypt, puts up with them in the wilderness, destroys their enemies in Canaan and gives them the land, gives them judges and kings, deposes Saul and raises up David, then finally gives them Jesus the savior as he promised. The climax of Israel's history in Paul's speech is that Jesus the savior is given to Israel. Moreover, Paul enhances the effect of the salvation through Jesus by comparing it to what the law of Moses could not accomplish (v. 39).

The scriptural witness concerning Jesus' identity is similar to that given in Peter's speeches. The use of Ps 2:7, Isa 55:3 and Ps 16:10 in the context of Jesus' resurrection refers to Jesus' eternal identity as God's "promised one." Paul is working carefully to get his audience to align with him and to accept Jesus as the savior promised by God.

Paul also devises his speech to guide the hearers to have a right response to Jesus' identity. Firstly, John's proclamation of repentance through baptism is a witness to Jesus' identity as savior, and his attitude toward Jesus provides an example for the hearers. Secondly, the use of the verb *στέλλω* in the passive voice, which refers to the divine commission, not only indicates that the message of the speaker is trustworthy, but also demands the right attitude from the audience.¹⁰ Thirdly, Paul points out the negative example of those people living in Jerusalem and their leaders, who killed Jesus. By using third plural pronouns (vv. 27–29), Luke indicates that Paul is not accusing his hearers. At the same time, he states that the reason these people killed Jesus was their ignorance

¹⁰ Soards, *Speeches*, 84.

concerning Jesus' identity and the meaning of the scriptures. Furthermore, God overcomes the murderers' wrongdoing by raising Jesus from the dead. Paul advocates that now it is time for his hearers to take Jesus' identity seriously.

Fourthly, Paul emphasizes the results coming from the different responses to his proclamation. On the one hand, those who believe will be set free from all sins. The mention of the law indicates the superiority of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus, which may appear to be good news for the Gentiles and those are struggling with the observance of the law to be accepted into God's covenant.¹¹ As Bruce notes, the context suggests that Paul is making "total claims for the efficacy of the gospel over against the law."¹² It may seem to be the solution to acquire the right relationship with God for both the law-observers and the Gentiles who find it hard to observe the law interpreted and required by the Jews. But it may also appear to some law interpreters that Paul is abandoning the law. Luke, however, seems to focus on Jesus' salvation, avoiding the notion of deviation from the law. On the other hand, Paul announces the judgement by quoting from the prophet Habakkuk that those who do not recognize God's doing through Jesus and reject the message will perish.¹³

The speech on the second Sabbath is addressed to a Jewish audience in the presence of Gentiles, who respond very positively after Paul discloses that the Lord commands him to preach to the Gentiles. Paul also quotes briefly from Isa 49:6 LXX to support the Lord's commission. It is clear that the Lord does not command Paul to go to

¹¹ Malina and Pilch hold that the meaning of "being set free" refers to the right relationship with God. See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 93. Arnold refers it specifically to the acquittal of sins and guilt. See Arnold, *Acts*, 345.

¹² Bruce, *Acts*, 263.

¹³ The warning is originally against Chaldeans. See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 93.

the Gentiles because of the repudiation of the Jews. It is Paul's preference to go to the Jews first then go the Gentiles. In the speech, even though Paul confirms God's judgement that those who response negatively to the message are unworthy of eternal life, Luke does not mention that there is conflict triggered by this statement. Neither does Luke mention the Jewish audience's response to the conversion of the Gentiles. Instead, the persecution escalates after the spread of the message about Jesus and the massive reception of Jesus the savior.

3. Paul's Speech in Thessalonica

3.1. Setting

Thessalonica became the capital of the second district of Macedonia in 146 B.C. It became a free city in 42 B.C. and was granted the right of self-government on a Greek pattern.¹⁴ The government was proactive in preventing any threat to its freedom,¹⁵ especially at a time when open hostilities were on the increase.¹⁶ Maintaining stability may have been the objective when the government tried to prevent future disturbances instigated by Paul, on the occasion when non-Christian Jews led a mob to set the city in an uproar, instead of putting down this uproar. Through receiving a pledge from Jason, they kept Paul out of the city.¹⁷

¹⁴ Peterson, *Acts*, 477.

¹⁵ Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 618.

¹⁶ Sanders, *Schismatics*, 137.

¹⁷ Ramsay, *Paul the Traveller*, 231. Ramsay holds that, in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, Paul's statement that his eagerness to return to Thessalonica was prevented by Satan refers to this bond Jason posted.

The Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica is for social meeting and Torah study from Septuagint perspectives, which sticks less to traditions.¹⁸ It allows God-fearing Greeks and the leading women to attend the service, with whom Paul reasons from the scriptures for what he proclaims about Jesus.

3.2. Characters

The non-believing Jews become jealous after some Jews and many God-fearing Greeks and leading women are attracted by Paul's message and join him. They decide to reject Paul's message and align with some wicked people to persecute the Christian community.¹⁹ And they use Paul's claim about Jesus against the converts by accusing them before the civil authority that they act against Caesar's decrees. In a word, the persecution against Christians is provoked by the conversion of some hearers. The conflict in this scene is more between the group that rejects Jesus and the other group than it is between Paul and his hearers.

3.3. Plot

The plot begins when Paul preaches in the synagogue from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ, and it develops when people convert. It loses equilibrium when the Jews who remain unbelieving become jealous because of the converts and start to stir up a mob. When they do not achieve their goal, they bring Christians before the city authorities. The charge is related to Jesus' identity as a king. The accusers want the city authorities to

¹⁸ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 122.

¹⁹ Safraï describes the mob in the first century as "landless men, displaced persons and casual labourers who had lost their sources of livelihood, proved an unfailing source for the quarrels and public disturbances that broke out repeatedly." See Safraï, *Jewish People*, 577.

believe that it is a political issue by stating that they have upset the world and violated the decrees of Caesar, although Luke does not disclose which decrees these are.²⁰ The equilibrium is restored when the city authorities obtain a pledge from Jason and the others and release them. The pledge is to prevent any future activity leading to uprising, which is brought about by some people responding positively to Jesus' identity and joining Christian community.²¹

3.4. Paul's Speech in Thessalonica (17:3b)

Paul's simple speech claims that Jesus is the Christ. The narrative context of his speech clarifies that presented evidence from the scriptures concerning what must happen to the Christ. The connotation of the title Christ is not clear in this scene, however, and there is no reference to specific scriptures. According to the previous speeches and the claim of the accusers (v. 7), Paul's speech may be taken as proclaiming a king with political connotations, especially when it is taken out of the context of the forgiveness of sin through Jesus, as may be manipulated by some non-believing Jews to bring a charge against Paul and Christians. As Cassidy states, it cannot be said that the charge from Paul's opponents is totally fabricated.²² Anyway, the speech shows that a profound reason behind the conflict between the non-believing Jews and Paul's followers is Jesus' identity as Christ.

²⁰ Cassidy holds that it is more accurate to say that "they have stirred up revolution throughout the world." Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 90. Malina and Pilch note that the Jews accuse Paul of steering loyalty from Caesar to Jesus. See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 124. Judge holds that oaths of loyalty which local magistrates have to administer and enforce are one example of responses to the decrees of Caesar. One example of such an oath discloses that any form of violence will be used to attack Caesar's enemies, which may justify why the civil authorities do not act against the accusers' uprising. See Judge, "Decrees," 2, 6.

²¹ Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 91. Sherwin-White provides some of the procedures of giving a pledge (security) relating to the decrees of Caesar. See Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 95 and 82 n. 2.

²² Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 90.

4. Paul's Speech in Corinth

4.1. Setting

Corinth is a prosperous commercial Roman colony, filled with multi-ethnic immigrants from around the Mediterranean,²³ who are devoted to worshipping many gods and lords.²⁴ After many Corinthians believe in the Lord and get baptized, their influence among the Gentiles may provide protection for Paul from the persecution of non-Christian Jews, which may be the reason that Paul is not punished by the authority of the synagogue. And when the unbelieving Jews turn to the Roman authorities, Gallio dismisses their charge.²⁵ Scholars have various interpretations of the intentions of the Jews and the actions of Gallio. Stott holds that, because Judaism enjoys the religious immunity of the observance of imperial cult, the Jews try to persuade Gallio that the new religion promoted by Paul is not Judaism, thus it is against the Roman law.²⁶ But Gallio may perceive it as an internal religious issue, judging from the conversion of the former synagogue leader and some prominent God-fearers and from Paul's continuing to preach among the Jews.²⁷ Or the Jews possibly condemn Paul's campaign among the Gentiles, which, strictly speaking, violates Claudius' warning that the Jews should not engage in a

²³ Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 129.

²⁴ Peterson, *Acts*, 506; Arnold, *Acts*, 394.

²⁵ For Gallio as the proconsul of Achaia, see Arnold, *Acts*, 399–401.

²⁶ Stott, *Acts*, 299. Conzelmann, however, notes that "legal religion" is a concept unknown to Luke but used by modern literature without hesitation. See Conzelmann, *Acts*, 153–54. For the religious immunity, see Williams, *Jews*, 91

²⁷ See Bruce, *Acts*, 353. And as Barrett states, Paul still preaches to the Jews even after some Jews reject him. See Barrett, *Acts*, 867. Furthermore, Cotter notes that the Roman law usually holds a person liable for actions instead of professing any name. See Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 17.

campaign of proselytism (Dio Cassius 60.6.6).²⁸ A third possibility is that both the Jews and Gallio are referring to the Jewish law.²⁹ Scholars have also proposed that Gallio deliberately rejects the Jews' charge out of disrespect.³⁰ Whatever the interpretations are, Luke describes that the conflict is between non-Christian Jews and Paul, and the accusation of the Jews concerns both the contents of Paul's preaching and the fact that he is persuading people to believe in Jesus.

4.2. Characters

Paul persists in proclaiming the word of the Lord to the Jews and the Gentiles in the midst of hardship and persecution. As a prophet, he denounces those Jews who reject his message about Jesus Christ. His profile implies that the conflict between him and the unbelieving Jews comes from his preaching about Jesus Christ. The unbelieving Jews are described as a group who are determined to resist Paul's message and to prohibit him from preaching. The emergence of converts with high social status, such as Titius Justus³¹ and Crispus,³² indicates the influence of the proclamation. Roman proconsul

²⁸ Tajra, *Trial*, 53.

²⁹ Sherwin-White posts the problem that "[t]he question is whether Jewish residents at Corinth, who presumably were not citizens of Corinth, could expect the proconsul to enforce their domestic law within the territory of a community that was a Roman colony." See Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 100.

³⁰ Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 660. Pervo also notes that the Corinthian scene presents a dominant concept of hostility toward the Jews, the general expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius and the particular expulsion of the Jews from the judgement seat of Gallio. See Pervo, *Acts*, 448. The former expulsion is likely referred to by Suetonius, Claudius 25.4: "Since the Jews were continually making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome." Many scholars think that Chrestus is a garbled spelling of Christus and the disturbances referred to are the result of conflicts in the synagogues between Messianists and non-Messianists. Orosius 7.6.15–16 dates the event to about 49 C.E. (Claudius's ninth year). Noting that in v. 17, the Western and Byzantine manuscripts read "all the Greeks" instead of "they all," Talbert holds that the episode of the Gentiles beating Sosthenes indicates a general antipathy toward the Jews among the Gentiles, which may come from Claudius' expulsion. See Talbert, *Acts*, 163. Also Slingerland, *Claudian Policymaking*, 244–45.

³¹ According to Tajra, the name of Titius Justus discloses his high social status. See Tajra, *Trial*, 50.

Gallio ignores the attacks brought up by the unbelieving Jews against Paul's preaching, which prevents the conflict from escalating.

4.3. Plot

Paul starts preaching Jesus Christ in the synagogue for several Sabbaths. The plot then loses its equilibrium because of the Jews' resistance to Paul's message. Paul responds with denouncement and turns to the Gentiles, yet he stays in Corinth for a year and a half because of the Lord's command and promise of protection. The plot reaches its climax when the Jews bring Paul before the Roman proconsul Gallio and accuse him of teaching Jews to worship in ways contrary to the Law. Equilibrium is finally restored when Gallio dismisses Paul's accusers, which indicates Luke's dismissal of the Jews' opposition. After this discharge, Paul remains in Corinth for a longer time. As we can see, the interactions between Paul and the Jews, and between the Jews and Gallio, focus around Paul's preaching to persuade the hearers to accept Jesus Christ.

4.4. Paul's Speech in Corinth (18:6b–d)

Paul's speech has two components: it claims that the non-Christian Jews are personally responsible for rejecting Jesus Christ and declares Paul's plan to preach to the Gentiles. An allusion to Ezek 33:1–9 implies that Paul is called by the Lord to be a watchman for the house of Israel and also for the Gentiles. His responsibility is to proclaim the word of God, particularly the message that Jesus is the Christ. Stott notes that for Paul, it is Jesus'

³² The leader of the synagogue may be a title for status instead of the weekly operations of the synagogue. See Rajak and Noy, "Archisynagogoi," 84–89; Clarke, *Serve the Community*, 126–38.

identity that matters.³³ As God warns the person who does not heed the message that ‘his blood will be on his head’ (Ezek 33:4–5), so also the non-Christian Jews are responsible for rejecting Jesus as the Christ.³⁴ As Bruce says, Paul conveys a message that his opponents are “indulging—not so much against Paul himself as against the one whom Paul proclaim[s] as Messiah and Lord,” which is indicated also in his gesture of shaking out his cloak. Paul is innocent of the blood of the unbelieving Jews, which refers to the divine punishment for their iniquity, since without accepting Jesus, there is no other way to have their iniquity forgiven. He has discharged his responsibility to them, having faithfully proclaimed God’s message of salvation through Jesus to them. Now he is turning to fulfill the other task committed to him by the Lord—proclaiming to the Gentiles the same message that Jesus is Christ. In a word, Paul’s speech focuses on the attitude toward Jesus’ identity as the Christ.

5. Paul’s Speech in Jerusalem

5.1. Setting

Paul delivers this speech when he is about to be taken into the barracks for interrogation by Roman soldiers, after he is dragged from the temple by a mob of Jews. The setting may disclose some features of the conflict between the Jews and Paul with the involvement of the Roman authorities. Firstly, the Jewish attitude toward the Gentiles’

³³ Stott, *Acts*, 297–98.

³⁴ Peterson, *Acts*, 511.

participation in Jewish religious practices is complicated.³⁵ From Luke's perspective, Paul's hearers have no tolerance concerning the presence of Gentiles in the temple. They have heard about Paul's preaching among the Gentiles, which focuses on Jesus more than law-observance since he preaches that the Gentiles are freed because of Jesus. And they have perhaps speculated that Paul does not respect the temple any more. Then, relating their speculation to the presence of Paul's Gentile companion Trophimus, they infer that Paul has brought Trophimus to the temple to defile it. From Luke's perspective, however, they have no grounds for accusing Paul, since Paul, as a Jewish Rabbi, has the right to worship God in the temple (v. 30). Secondly, Roman soldiers bind Paul with chains before the interrogation and knowing his Roman citizenship. Even though the chaining will put a permanent stain on the honor of a person,³⁶ it turns out that the barracks, which serves to protect the temple, now serves to protect Paul.³⁷ In Luke's narrative, the Roman authorities do not play the role of Paul's opponent.

³⁵ Talbert notes that there is a stream of the Pharisaic movement showing hostility to Gentile converts. There is also possibly a growing Jewish nationalism against Greek influence, which leads to the revolt against Rome in 66–70 C.E. See Talbert, *Acts*, 193. The evidences show that the Jews had a strong tendency to resist any form of religious reform because of their consciousness of being God's chosen people and their separation unto God. At the same time, there is also opposing evidences showing that they generally welcomed Gentiles into their religious practice, if they did not perceive any threat of violating the law or reformation from them, and they even allowed others to worship in the temple, to offer sacrifices, and to donate gifts. See McKnight, *Light*, 15, 24. As Josephus states, the temple is a place "which flung wide its gates to every foreigner for worship" (Josephus, *War* 4.275).

³⁶ Garnsey, *Social Status*, 150–52.

³⁷ The barracks are the Antonia fortress. See Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 190. Josephus states that the Roman cohort "at the festivals took up positions in arms around the porticoes to watch the people and repress any insurrectionary movement," and that the stairs lead down to the porticoes of the temple (Josephus, *War* 5.243–44).

5.2. Characters

Paul is described as a Jew who knows the law well but is misunderstood as one breaking the law.³⁸ Facing the violent riot of the Jews against him, he is calm and tries to gain a hearing. He is also perceived as a holy man whose claim is trustworthy.³⁹ The encounters with the Lord are the turning points of Paul's life. He accepts Jesus and changes his life from persecuting Christians to testifying for the Lord. The Jewish people in this scene are the Jews in Jerusalem and from Asia. They wish to protect the holiness of the temple, but their violence and their efforts to shed a person's blood outside the temple prove that their accusation unjustified. They remain unbelieving but become more furious after hearing Paul's speech. Therefore, even though the conflict is triggered by the accusation that Paul acts against the Jewish people, the law and the temple, Luke presents that the conflict is about his decision and attitude toward Jesus the Lord.

5.3. Plot

The plot starts when the Jewish people see Paul entering the temple and misinterpret this as an act desecrating the temple, because of a rumor they have heard about him. It develops when the Roman authorities stop an attack on Paul's life and try to find out the reason for the violence. The violence is temporarily restrained when the Jews become quiet and listen to Paul's defence. The episode reaches its climax when the hearers become more furious at Paul after his speech. The conflict escalates because of Paul's

³⁸ Scholars debate whether or not Paul was a law-observer. Certainly, there seem to be places in his letters that display a position against observing the law (Gal 4:9–11, 5:6). Scholars like Cole explain this by arguing that Paul displays strong opinions against law-observance when it becomes fatal to the gospel (Gal 5:3–4). See Cole, *Galatians*, 50.

³⁹ Malina and Pilch note that a holy man is perceived to have direct contact with the deity and mediate information and favor from the realm of God to the earth. See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 156.

speech, which discloses that the Jerusalemites have been destined not to receive Jesus, which is proved to be true in this scene. At the end of the episode, Paul is under temporary custody in the barracks, waiting for the development of the plot in the larger context. In a word, the plot discloses that even though there are several elements involved in the conflict, the response to Jesus the Lord is the core feature.

5.4. Paul's Speech in Jerusalem (22:1, 3–21)

5.4.1. Summary

Paul's defence begins with his self-introduction and then focuses on the two redirections of his life-experience caused by two encounters with the resurrected Jesus. The first redirection is from persecuting the Way to witnessing for the Way. And the second is from proclaiming Jesus to the Jerusalemites to proclaiming Jesus to the Gentiles.

5.4.2. Main Components Related to Conflict

Paul addresses the Jews and introduces himself as a Jew who has no reason and intention to act against his people and the law. His upbringing in Jerusalem, education under Gamaliel, and zeal for God indicate that he possesses a good reputation according to the Jewish standard. He identifies his former persecution against "the Way" with the "zeal" of the Jewish people demonstrated in the scene. He came to realize, however, that his former "zeal" was against God instead of for God, when Jesus revealed himself in a vision to him on the road to Damascus. In the vision, Jesus called himself "Nazarene," a name which was once an indication of shame but is now a title of honor and glory. The

glorified Jesus appoints Paul to testify for him, which is identical with God's appointment, according to the statement of Ananias, a devout man by the standard of the law.

Furthermore, God's "will" indicates that it is God's plan that Paul should witness Jesus' exalted identity and testify concerning him.⁴⁰ In a word, Paul tries to serve God by persecuting Christians, but God reveals his divine will which has to be seen through the Righteous One.⁴¹ Paul follows the instruction to call on Jesus' name, which resolves his conflict with Christians.

Paul's second encounter with Jesus in a vision in the temple is a divine commission for Paul to go to the Gentiles. Jesus discloses that the Jerusalemites will not accept Paul's testimony about him. Paul responds with his former persecution inflicted on his witnesses, which may indicate that he pleads for the Jerusalemites for their repentance, because if he can be turned away from his wicked way, so may the Jerusalemites.⁴² Jesus, however, does not respond to his appeal but sends him to the Gentiles, which may indicate that he denies the possibility of the Jerusalemites' repentance at that time. Bruce notes that their knowledge of Paul's former life makes the Jews even less willing to trust him.⁴³ It is ironic that a persecutor of Christians is accepted by those who are persecuted, but rejected by other persecutors. The difference lies in whether he accepts Jesus. The commission to the Gentiles may also play a role in the outrage of the hearers, but it is not the main speech content. The main speech content is the divine prediction or will of the

⁴⁰ Soards, *Speeches*, 113.

⁴¹ Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 789.

⁴² In 1 Tim 1:16, Paul mentions that his life as the foremost sinner is an example of Jesus' patience for sinners who come to him for the eternal life.

⁴³ Bruce, *Acts*, 419.

hearers' rejecting Jesus. Furthermore, Paul's prayer in the temple also indicates that he does not abandon the temple, and has no intention to demean the temple.

In summary, Paul's life experience and the reaction of his hearers demonstrate that Luke presents decisions and attitudes toward Jesus as the key feature in the conflict.⁴⁴ Paul justifies the redirections in his life by putting them in the context of God's calling and the revelation of God's will in Jesus Christ.⁴⁵ God has the ultimate responsibility for what he has done to witness for Jesus.⁴⁶ When the hearers deny what Paul says about Jesus' identity, there is no way for them to acknowledge Paul's argument. Instead, they must view his position as blasphemy. The opposite decisions made by Paul and his hearers concerning Jesus thus lead to the opposing positions in the conflict, which supports my hypothesis.

6. Conclusion

My analysis of Paul's four speeches to Jewish audiences shows that, although several elements are involved in the conflicts between Paul and his hearers, the decision to follow Jesus or reject Jesus plays the most significant role. The Antioch scene discloses that the unbelieving Jews become jealous because the message about Jesus is received by a great number of people, and they respond to the spreading of the word of Jesus by persecuting Paul. Even though Paul claims just prior to the persecution that the Lord has sent his servants to the Gentiles according to the scriptures, Gentile conversion is not the main issue from Luke's perspective, since the Jews are fine with the Gentile converts on

⁴⁴ Downing notes that the drama of someone changing from one entrenched commitment to another makes for good listening. See Downing, *Words*, 211.

⁴⁵ Peterson, *Acts*, 595.

⁴⁶ Kennedy, *Interpretation*, 134–35.

the first Sabbath, and the main speech content is that God sends Jesus as the savior to the Israelites and the Gentiles. The conflict escalates mainly because the Jews realize that a lot of people are accepting the message about Jesus. As the setting shows, the Jews at Antioch of Pisidia live in a multi-religion society and develop a certain degree of religious tolerance. What Paul proclaims is based on the Scriptures, which does not initially alert the non-Christian Jews. However, the tolerance is broken when they see many Gentiles, especially those who are not God-fearers, convert to this savior who is claimed to be superior to Moses. The Thessalonian scene also mentions the jealousy of the Jews regarding a large number of people receiving Jesus, but it involves the Roman government as a way to accuse the Christian movement of defying Caesar's decree. The accusation, however, is regarding Jesus' identity as a king, which the unbelieving Jews reject and oppose. The Corinthian scene involves a Roman government whose attitude is indifferent toward the conflict, which involves the unbelieving Jews rejecting Jesus and opposing Paul's evangelism effort to bring people to believe in Jesus. In Jerusalem, Paul is accused of acting against the Jewish people, the law and the temple. The defence of Paul claims that these accusations are false. Even though the Jews show great concern regarding these issues, the speech serves to soften their concern, while guiding the implied readers to focus on Jesus's identity and attitudes toward Jesus.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PAUL'S SPEECHES TO THE JEWISH AUTHORITIES

Paul's speeches to the Jewish authorities are the continuous development of his defence to the Jewish people in Jerusalem after his arrest, including his defence before Claudius Lysias and the Council, his defence before Felix and the high priest Ananias and an attorney, his defence before Festus and those Jerusalemites who have authority, and his speeches to the Jewish leaders in Rome.¹ Through Paul's custody and defence, Luke presents his perspective of the involved factors of the conflict between the Christian movement and Judaism.

1. Context

As I have stated above, the journeys of Paul, including his time under custody, are presented as part of the divine plan of God, even though the scenes appear to be instigated by the Roman authorities.² The Roman authorities exercise their judicial powers to find out the truth of the accusation, while the Jewish authorities play the role of accusers and Paul the role of defender. The Roman scene is special due to the absence of any accusers from Jerusalem, thus there is no trial before Caesar. Without the influence

¹ Whether the audience in the second part of the speech in Rome is the Jewish leaders or just the Jews is not very clear. The use of "they" suggests that it refers to a group of Jewish leaders. Barrett takes them as the representative of the Jews. See Barrett, *Acts*, 1243.

² Pervo, *Acts*, 576.

of the Jerusalemites, the Jewish leaders in Rome present the conflict from another angle that is different from that in the courts.

2. Paul's Defence before Claudius Lysias and the Council

2.1. Setting

This episode does not take place in the temple where the Council gathers regularly, since Lysias and Roman soldiers cannot enter the temple. Lysias does not hand Paul to the Council since he needs to stand trial before the Roman procurator Felix because of his Roman citizenship. But he gives order to the Council to meet so he can search for the nature of the charge against Paul.³ But the Council still wants to control the process of the meeting and exercise its authority. The controversial relationship between the Jewish authorities and the Roman authorities casts a shadow on the possibility of justice in Paul's trial. Paul's citizenship, however, plays an important role to protect him against false accusations. Furthermore, the different perspectives regarding resurrection between the Sadducees and the Pharisees in the Council produce dissention among them and distract them from accusing Paul with one accord. This prompts us to look for the core issue in the conflict in the words of Paul, instead of in the accusations brought forward by the Jewish leaders.

³ Arnold, *Acts*, 442.

2.2. Characters

Paul is described as a genuine law observer. He is knowledgeable about the scriptures and is bold to challenge the authorities. And he is shrewd in defending himself by making the members of Council turn against each other. His profile meets the characteristics of an honorable person. On the contrary, his accuser, the high priest Ananias, is caught violating the law at the scene.⁴ Luke's descriptions of these two characters implies the error of the accusations against Paul. Lysias, the representative of the Roman authorities, seeks to find the basis of the accusation. He is a controversial figure, who acts too swiftly and without enough information. He puts Paul in chains without inquiring about his citizenship, and he judges the conflict to be related to the Jewish law before he actually looks into it. Padilla notes that he lacks clear knowledge about Judaism.⁵ Lysias' role implies that the Roman authorities do not care about religious disputes and that their impression of the core issues of the conflict between the Christian movement and Judaism may be wrong.

2.3. Plot

This episode begins when the Roman tribune wants to find out the truth about the accusations against Paul by convening the Council. The plot develops when Paul insists that he has lived his life with a perfectly clean conscience before God. It loses its equilibrium when Ananias tries to shame Paul, ordering someone to strike him. But Paul

⁴ For a brief background of Ananias, see Bruce, *Acts*, 425; Josephus, *Ant.* 20:205–13.

⁵ Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 195–96.

responds boldly by accusing him of breaking the law.⁶ Paul also quotes from the law to show that he is ready to abide by the law.⁷ The plot reaches its climax when Paul states that the real reason for putting him on trial is the hope of resurrection, which disturbs the Council. The equilibrium is somewhat restored when some Pharisees defend Paul. The Pharisees' defence discloses that they acknowledge Paul's encounter with Jesus in a vision, but they do not fully grasp the reality of the encounter or the true identity of Jesus (23:9). At the end of the plot, Roman soldiers take Paul back to the barracks to protect him from the Council. The plot anticipates further development, as the Lord appears to Paul to promise a safe journey to Rome, where Paul must bear witness. The analysis of the plot thus discloses the falsehood of the accusation against Paul, while also pointing out that the conflict is related to the person of the resurrected Jesus.

2.4. Paul's Defence before Claudius Lysias and the Council (23:1b, 3, 5, 6b)

The focus of Paul's defence is that he has lived his life with a good conscience before God.⁸ We may doubt his claim since he persecuted Jesus and his followers, but, as Barrett point out, Paul lived his life with a good conscience by acting in accordance with what he knew to be right.⁹ In front of the law-giver God, Paul lived in accordance with the standard of the law. The Christian movement shifted the core of Judaism from the law to a messiah who offers the forgiveness of sins, which is one reason why Paul persecuted "the Way," but once he received a revelation from the Lord that God's will is the

⁶ Malina and Pilch refer to Lev. 19:15 and note that in ancient Israel, the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty. See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 159.

⁷ Williams suggests that Paul uses irony to shame Anania since he does not behave like a high priest. See Williams, *Acts*, 385.

⁸ Bruce, *Acts*, 424.

⁹ Barrett, *Acts*, 1057.

forgiveness of sins through Jesus, Paul acknowledged the revelation and changed his life so as to live in accordance with his new knowledge.

The interaction with Ananias is an “incidental” episode showing that Paul acts according to what he knows, which proves Paul’s statement about himself.¹⁰ Since Ananias does not act like a high priest, striking him before the interrogation, Paul accuses him of disobeying the law and asks God to judge him. After learning that Ananias is the high priest, however, Paul apologizes for his disrespectful remark, proving that he knows the law and is ready to submit to the law.¹¹ Furthermore, when he claims God’s punishment for the violation of the law, he declares God’s ultimate authority over the law. Thus, Luke designs the episode to argue that the accusation against Paul of breaking the law cannot stand.

Next, Paul discloses the reason that he stands for trial is his hope for resurrection from the dead. Similar statements appear throughout Paul’s defences (24:15, 21, 26:6–8 and 28:20), which connects all these scenes together. Thus, I do not segregate the information of these scenes for the analysis. Schubert holds that Paul’s declaration is not merely about the Pharisaic concept of resurrection, but should be linked with Lord’s commission (v. 11).¹² Thus, what Paul presents to the Council is that the resurrected Jesus is the hope for the general resurrection and his resurrection is the anticipatory first

¹⁰ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 192.

¹¹ Hemer explains that the unpopularity of Ananias may be the reason for Paul’s failure to recognize him. See Hemer, *Acts*, 170f. Ramsay suggests that Paul can hardly recognize Ananias because they are far from each other, since the Roman tribune convenes the meeting according to the Roman assembly, with Paul on one side of him and the Council on the other. See Ramsay, *Bearing of Recent Discovery*, 90–94.

¹² Schubert, “Final Cycle,” 5–6.

stage of the general resurrection at the last day.¹³ The Pharisees' statement (v. 9d) also demonstrates that they have heard about Paul's vision of the resurrected Jesus and his encounters with him.¹⁴ Thus they understand what Paul presents, but they may not grasp fully its meaning without further revelation. The conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees regarding resurrection in this context indicates that the attitude toward the resurrected Jesus matters a lot in the conflict between the Christian movement and wider Judaism.

3. Paul's Defence before Felix and Ananias

3.1. Setting

Paul may have been kept under guard in Herod's Praetorium in Caesarea, which would indicate his non-threatening status.¹⁵ He does not have liberty to hold a multitude of people as his audience but is granted some freedom to meet his friends, which may be the product of the interdependence of the religious and political authorities to maintain the social order. In this social context, the preaching of the Way may not be condemned as a crime unless the justice system is corrupted.

¹³ Barrett, *Acts*, 1064. Haenchen holds that Luke convicts that the fellowship between Pharisaism and Christianity is possibly that the Pharisees also hope for the Messiah and wait for the resurrection of the dead. See Haenchen, *Acts*, 643.

¹⁴ Soards, *Speeches*, 116.

¹⁵ Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 208–209; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 157.

3.2. Character

Paul's profile and integrity in Luke's narrative remains the same. The appearance of the lawyer Tertullus implies that the Jewish leaders are determined to win but they are aware of Paul's strong influence on Felix, which also indicates the severity of the accusation and the intensification of the conflict.¹⁶ Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, understands "the Way" and knows that the accusation of political threat against Paul is false, but he uses his authority to keep Paul in prison.¹⁷ The controversy of Felix's judgement may represent the ambiguous perspectives of society toward the issue behind the conflict between Judaism and early Christianity. People may have some idea what the core issues are, yet still be entangled by the allegations.

3.3. Plot

The defence of Paul continues before the governor Felix in Caesarea. The plot develops when the attorney, the representative of the high priest and some elders, insists that Paul stirs up riots and attempts to desecrate the temple as a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.¹⁸ The dropping of the previous charge of violating the law indicates the success of Paul's previous defence. The plot reaches its climax when Paul strongly expects justice, showing that there is no evidence against him and no real accusers present at the court.¹⁹ Furthermore, Paul once again advances the resurrection as the real

¹⁶ Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 211; Arnold, *Acts*, 451. Rapske suggests that the Jewish leaders feel that Paul's citizenship may win the hearing of the judge. See Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 159.

¹⁷ Felix is the governor from 52 to 59 C.E. For a detailed background, see Arnold, *Acts*, 448, 451.

¹⁸ Malina and Pilch note that it is perceived as a coalition or faction, which is "a type of impermanent group gathered for specific purposes over a limited time period." See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 193.

¹⁹ Roman law is strongly against those accusers who abandon their charges. See Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 52–53.

issue that brings him to trial. It seems that Paul is about to be set free when Luke mentions Felix is well acquainted with “the Way.” With some excuses, however, Felix surprisingly keeps Paul in prison to show favor to the Jews, instead of converting to “the Way,” even though he listens to Paul talking about faith in Jesus Christ. The detainment of Paul prevents the Jews from killing him, and it thus sustains the conflict while preventing its escalation. From a narrative perspective, it sustains the suspense produced by the plot of the previous scene. Again, Luke designs the plot to reject the accusations brought up by the Jewish leaders and to point to the thing he views as the core issue in the conflict, namely, the resurrection. He faithfully presents the complicated situation behind the conflict, while nevertheless directing attention to this one point.

3.4. Paul’s Defence before Felix and Ananias (24:10b–21)

Paul’s defence focuses mainly on two sides of the trial: he is innocent of the charges against him, and the real reason for the trial is related to resurrection. On the one hand, Paul clearly declares that there is no way for his accusers to provide evidence to support their charges, because he was not involved in any riot or argument when he was in Jerusalem and in the temple. He also states that he came to Jerusalem for charity and offerings, and went to the temple for ceremonial cleansing. His accusers could themselves witness to this, except that they are not in the court. On the other hand, Paul claims that he serves God according to “the Way,” the same God whom is worshipped by the ancestors. This indicates that he is not pursuing another God other than the God of Israelites. He explains that “the Way” is in accord with the law and the scriptures, even the resurrection of the dead, which is the reason he stands in trial. At the same time, the

text implicitly relates together the resurrection of the dead with Jesus, when it discloses that Paul even asks Felix to have faith in Jesus Christ. As Skinner says, Paul does not hesitate to “assert the central gospel claim about Jesus and his resurrection.”²⁰

In summary, Paul indicates that the core issue of the conflict is neither the desecration of the temple, nor the attempt to cause a riot against the Roman government, nor the disobedience of the law. Instead, he is put in the conflict by the Jewish authorities because of the resurrection, a belief of “the Way” which he is serving. In other words, even though the Jewish leadership bring many concerns, Luke explains that the conflict is related to “the Way”—resurrection through Jesus Christ.

4. Paul’s Defence before Festus and the Jewish Authority from Jerusalem

4.1. Characters

Paul is resolute to appeal to Caesar, keeping in his heart the Lord’s promise to guard him safely to Rome, and knowing that the conflict with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will never be resolved.²¹ Festus is described as a person on the fence. He tries not to annoy the Jewish elites nor to offend the Roman judicial system.²² Without knowing Paul’s defence, he hesitates to grant the Jewish leaders’ request to bring Paul to Jerusalem.²³ After

²⁰ Skinner, *Locating Paul*, 144. Peterson notes that what Festus says in 25:19 indicates that Paul proclaims the fulfillment of Israel’s hope in the resurrection of Jesus. See Peterson, *Acts*, 647.

²¹ Walaskay argues that Luke uses Paul’s example to encourage Christians to trust the Roman juridical system and defend themselves. See Walaskay, *Political Perspective*, 66.

²² Witherington, *Acts*, 720. For more details about Festus, see Barrett, *Acts*, 1123.

²³ Kistemaker and Hendriksen notes that the Jewish leaders intend to weaken Festus’ authority by having him move the judgement seat from Caesarea to Jerusalem, which is why Festus rejects this suggestion. See Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 862–63. Festus may realize later that he should have granted the Jews’ previous request instead of becoming an opponent of the Jewish leaders because of Paul’s case.

knowing Paul's innocence, instead of setting him free, which he should (v. 21), he deliberately asks Paul whether he would like to stand trial in Jerusalem. He tries to show the Jewish leaders a favor, which he hides from King Agrippa, while holding Paul responsible for any accident afterwards.²⁴ When Paul declares his decision to appeal to Caesar, he seems puzzled but feels relieved after consulting with his council.²⁵ His reaction demonstrates the dilemmatic relationship between the religious authorities and the political authorities.²⁶

4.2. Plot

The Jewish leaders immediately bring the charges against Paul to Festus when he succeeds Felix as procurator. They push Festus to bring Paul from Caesarea and judge him in Jerusalem. Their intention is to ambush him on the road. The conflict is intensified in this scene since the Jewish leaders intend to create an opportunity to kill Paul. But Festus invites them to present their charges in Caesarea, where Paul defends plainly against the charges of acting against the law, the temple and the Roman Empire. The plot is about to lose equilibrium when Festus asks Paul whether he wants to change the place of trial to Jerusalem,²⁷ to which Paul responds with his decision to appeal to Caesar.²⁸

²⁴ Padilla, *Speeches of Outsiders*, 227.

²⁵ Talbert notes that Festus plays it safe politically by granting Paul's request to appeal to Caesar. See Talbert, *Acts*, 205–206.

²⁶ Festus understands that it is very important to gain support from the Jewish leaders if he wants to handle the political and social unrest in Judea. That is why he goes to Jerusalem to meet the high priest after he arrives in Caesarea. See Schürer, *History*, 231.

²⁷ Luke states that the motivation of Festus' suggestion is to do the Jews a favor. But it is not clear what Festus is going to proceed. See Arnold, *Acts*, 458. Barrett summarizes the discussion of several scholars such as Hanson and Bengel on this issue. See Barrett, *Acts*, 1127–28.

²⁸ Sherwin-White notes that Paul considers that Festus would use the members of the Sanhedrin as his Council, so that it is impossible to have a fair trial. See Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 67. Kistemaker and Hendriksen notes that Paul appeals to Caesar also because he needs the protection of the Roman

Paul's request is granted by Festus and his council.²⁹ The suspense left by the previous scenes comes to a close. God's gracious providence is implicit in the plot, fulfilling his purpose by protecting Paul and making the trip to Rome possible.³⁰ As Walaskay states, "divine necessity brings Paul and the gospel to Rome under the aegis of Roman law."³¹

4.3. Paul's Defence before Festus (25:8, 10, 11)

Paul's speech includes two elements: his denial of any wrongdoing and his attitude toward the juridical system. These two elements are collated alternatively three times.³² He first denies all the wrongdoings (v. 8b), then recognizes the authority of Caesar (v. 10b), followed by denying doing anything wrong against the Jews again (v. 10c). Then he claims his willingness to accept the punishment if he deserves it (v. 11a). In the third round of his speech, he first indicates the charges against him are not true (v. 11b), and then he claims that he appeals to Caesar (v. 11c). Since Paul insists that the real issue behind his trial is resurrection, there is no way Caesar would judge on this issue. But the Romans provide Paul an escape from those Jews who are consistently determined to shed his blood.³³ Paul's appeal to Caesar indicates the intensified conflict regarding the resurrection between the Jewish leaders and him. This conflict would never be resolved if the Jewish leaders cannot accept God's plan through Jesus. Furthermore, the appeal

military from the Jews. See Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 865. For the discussion on the right of appeal, see Witherington, *Acts*, 724–26; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 203–204.

²⁹ An official is forbidden by the law to bind, torture, or kill a Roman citizen who has appealed to Rome. See Tajra, *Trial*, 146. Only exceptional cases can be sent to the emperor. See Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 868. Whatever reason behind Festus' consent of Paul's request, the Lord's plan is not thwarted.

³⁰ Peterson, *Acts*, 645.

³¹ Walaskay, *Political Perspective*, 58.

³² I apply the structure suggested by Soards. See Soards, *Speeches*, 119–20.

³³ Barratte, *Acts*, 1129.

brings Paul to Rome, which is projecting what “the raised Jesus has informed him of the divine plan for his testimony in Rome (23:11).”³⁴ Moreover, Paul’s speech plays the role of bridging the previous defences with the speech in Rome.

In conclusion, Paul’s speech achieves at least three goals. First, by repeatedly denying the accusations brought by the Jewish leaders, Paul indicates that the core issue of the conflict lies in his claim of “the Way”—Jesus. Second, by reaffirming his trust that the Roman juridical system will protect him from the Jewish leaders, he denies any possibility that the conflict might be resolved. Third, by appealing to Caesar, Paul’s speech becomes the tool to fulfill God’s plan and prophecy that Paul will testify for Jesus in Rome.

5. Paul’s Speeches to the Jewish Leaders in Rome

5.1. Setting

In Rome, Paul stays in his own lodging with two personal guards, who take turns watching over him.³⁵ Even though he may be literally chained and unable to visit the synagogues or other public places, he is granted a certain degree of freedom to receive visitors.³⁶

³⁴ Soards, *Speeches*, 120.

³⁵ The western text states that Paul’s lodging is outside the camp or barracks. For a detailed discussion of the camp or barracks, see Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 108–11; Tajra, *Trial*, 177–79; Hemer, *Acts*, 157, 199f.

³⁶ Paul may be lightly chained by the wrist to the guard. See Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 181.

There were several synagogues in Rome,³⁷ serving around 40,000–50,000 Jews.³⁸ Some Jews came to Rome as captives or slaves because of Roman campaigns in the eastern Mediterranean area, and some freedmen became Roman citizens.³⁹ At the time of Cicero, the Jews in Rome had already acquired political import.⁴⁰ They may have been successful in proselytism,⁴¹ which would perhaps be suppressed if the Roman authorities perceived it to be overactive.⁴²

There are Christians already in Rome when Paul arrives (v. 15).⁴³ But it seems that they are not active in public. The conflict between the Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews is not apparent when Paul arrives in Rome. According to Luke, it is only when Paul proclaims Jesus in Rome that a conflict emerges and develops between those who become Christians after Paul's exhortation and those who remain unbelieving.

³⁷ There are at least eleven synagogues in Rome. See Witherington, *Acts*, 794; Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 180. Schürer notes that the Jewish community in Rome hasn't had an organized form which functions like the Council in Jerusalem, but is structured loosely through religious associations. See Schürer, *History*, 3:1.95–102. George La Piana holds a different opinion, however, that in the Jewish settlement on the banks of the Tiber, the degree of concentration in special districts, religious associations, and the relation with the land of origin is very high. See La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome," 345.

³⁸ Leon, *Jews*, 15. For more details on the population of Rome at the first century, see Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 94.

³⁹ Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 93.

⁴⁰ The evidence is shown in Cicero's defence for Lucius Valerius Flaccus (Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28 #66–67).

⁴¹ McKnight notes that "[i]t is a consistent feature of the ancient evidence, both Jewish and Gentile and both literary and non-literary, that the Jews favored non-Jews' joining their religion." However, he also notes that this need not imply that Judaism is a religion which engages in aggressive missionary activity. See McKnight, *Light*, 34.

⁴² Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 94. Evidences show that they even convert a lady of senatorial family. This may be the reason triggering the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Tiberius in 19 C.E.

⁴³ Malina and Pilch note that the news of Paul's arrival reaches Rome by "the gossip network." Christians hear the news and come to meet him. Some come from the Appian Forum (65 km from Rome), and some come from Three Taverns (about 50 km from Rome). See Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 177.

5.2. Characters

Paul thinks that the Jewish leaders in Rome may be influenced by those in Jerusalem. When he finds out that news about his appeal to Caesar has not reached Rome, he starts proclaiming Jesus again instead of merely defending himself. Therefore, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, who keep rejecting Paul's message, may be an important factor of the conflict. The Jewish leaders in Rome are interested in learning what Paul claims to be the hope of Israel. They are divided by Paul's message, and those who convert argue with those who do not. The conflict between them shows clearly that, for Luke, differing attitudes toward Jesus is the core feature in conflicts between the Christian movement and wider Judaism. The non-violent attitude of the non-Christian Jews, however, allows Paul to preach Jesus in Rome for more than two years.

5.3. Plot

When Paul arrives in Rome, he asks to see the Jewish leaders and clarifies his reason for appealing to Caesar, which is well received by them. Apparently, they have not heard any negative report from Jerusalem, but they know that the sect to which Paul belongs is under attack everywhere.⁴⁴ These remarks indicate that any potential conflict between them and Paul is not going to be about his alleged violation of the law or actions against the temple. At the same time, the remarks display a desire to hear Paul's ideas and to

⁴⁴ Brown and Meier provides a picture that "the Jerusalem-Rome axis was strong." See Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 92–97, 104. Williams notes that there may be two reasons why the Jews in Rome did not hear about any news against Paul. One is that Paul was dispatched to Rome immediately after his appeal so that his arrival in Rome was earlier than the Jewish Council's words against Paul. The other is that the Jewish Council had no intention to proceed with the matter after their failure before Felix and Festus, in light of the fact that the Roman authorities were harsh towards accusers who failed to substantiate their charges. Williams, *Acts*, 452. Tajra notes that the use of the double negative in v. 21 emphasizes the Jewish Council's withdrawal from the accusation. See Tajra, *Martyrdom*, 73. Gaventa states that "here the issue is not Paul's observance or nonobservance of the law, or Paul's posture towards his own people, but the gospel." See Gaventa, *Act*, 365.

learn about the Christian sect, which leads to a second visit and to a disclosure of the core Christian belief, namely, that the resurrected Jesus is in God's salvation plan. Some Jews are persuaded while others cannot believe,⁴⁵ and a conflict emerges between the believing Jews and the non-believing Jews.⁴⁶ The equilibrium of no-conflict is lost and does not get restored in this scene. Upon their departure, Paul warns the non-believing Israelites and speaks about God's plan for the Gentiles. The plot of this scene thus shows that the conflict is more about Jesus than it is about God's salvation for the Gentiles.⁴⁷

5.4. Paul's Speeches before the Jewish Leaders in Rome (28:17c–20, 25b–28)

5.4.1. Summary

In his first speech, Paul first clarifies that his appeal to Caesar is not because he has anything against the Israelites but is a way of protecting him from those Jews who want to kill him, and he also declares that the Roman officials have found him innocent. Then he expresses his desire to proclaim to them the hope of Israel. In the second speech, he warns them about God's judgement against the stiff-necked Israelites, and also discloses God's salvation plan for the Gentiles.

⁴⁵ Williams notes that the Jews who are persuaded have not yet reached the point of believing that Jesus is the Messiah, but since the tenses are imperfect, there is possibility that the process of persuasion goes on until some are converted. See Williams, *Acts*, 453. However, it is also possible that they do accept Jesus' identity at the scene, since the effect of Paul's proclamation does not necessarily connect with the rite of baptism as in Peter's. Peterson refers to 17: 4 where *epeisthēsan* (were persuaded) clearly means that they believed. See Peterson, *Acts*, 714. Generally, the context does not emphasize the exclusively rejection of all the hearers.

⁴⁶ Gaventa states that "here the issue is not Paul's observance or nonobservance of the law, or Paul's posture towards his own people, but the gospel." See Gaventa, *Act*, 365.

⁴⁷ Several Western texts add v. 29, which is late and not widely attested, being absent from the earliest Greek manuscripts and some of the versions. See Peterson, *Acts*, 719. Metzger notes that the verse is added so that the transition from v. 28 to v. 30 will not be abrupt. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 444.

5.4.2. *Main Components Related to Conflict*

When Paul defends himself, he tries to clarify what has caused the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to accuse him. He claims that he is not opposed to his people nor to the tradition handed down by the ancestors. He emphasizes how differently the Roman officials and the Jews in Jerusalem treated him: whereas the Jewish leaders handed him over to the Roman officials, the Roman officials wanted to release him and declared that he is innocent.⁴⁸ Paul's speech sets the scene for the audience to hear the news about Jesus without presumption, and it presents more clearly the main issues behind the conflict from Luke's perspective.

Eventually, Paul discloses that the reason for his chains (i.e. for the conflict between himself and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem) is the hope of Israel. Paul does not explicitly identify the hope of Israel, but the context shows that it involves God's act of salvation through Jesus (v. 23). Pervo states that "[f]or Luke, the hope of Israel means belief in Jesus as the messianic savior."⁴⁹ Barrett specifically points out that Paul alleges that the hope has been, and will be, fulfilled in Jesus, guaranteed and anticipated by the resurrection of Jesus.⁵⁰ Thus, through Paul's clarification, Luke proposes that Jesus is a

⁴⁸ Paul's statement is contradicted with the reality that both Felix and Festus do not set him free to show a favor to the Jews. Nevertheless, it concords with what Festus has told King Agrippa, which may appear in his letter to Caesar.

⁴⁹ Pervo, *Acts*, 683. Pervo also claims that the essence of the hope of Israel is a liberation, which indicates "a turn away from understanding the Israelite heritage as observance of Torah to a view of Scripture as the repository of promises and prophecies revealing God's plans for all the peoples of the earth." Paul, however, clearly claims that he has nothing against the heritage, and does not turn away from it, even though he may not adhere to it when he is in the Gentile community (1 Cor. 9:19–23). The essence of the gospel for the Gentile or God's salvation plan for them is to accept Jesus instead of accepting the Israelite heritage. The Jews hold negative attitude toward the Gentiles basically because they despise pagan religion which leads to "ethical practice which are unacceptable for those who are members of the covenant of Abraham and Moses," and this contempt is a reflection of zeal for God, his Torah, his land, and his people. See McKnight, *Light*, 27.

⁵⁰ Barrett, *Acts*, 1240.

more significant factor underlying conflict than the other factors identified by Paul's accusers.

The main content of the second speech is God's warning for those who reject the message. It is not about God rejecting the Israelites because the context shows that some Jews receive the message. Kistemaker and Hendriksen note that "[t]he Book of Acts ends not on a negative note of unbelieving Jews refusing to accept the gospel."⁵¹ The quotation of Isaiah's prophecy is not to shut out the hope of salvation for the Israelites. The context of Paul's last speech is different from that in 13:46–47 and 18:6, where Paul speaks to hostile Jews who reject his proclamation on Jesus.⁵² In Rome, some Jewish leaders believe. Furthermore, the original literary context of Isa 6:9–10 LXX indicates that God promises remnants for the Israelites.⁵³ Moessner notes that these declarations of Isaiah show that the believing Israelites are the eschatological remnant within unbelieving Israel.⁵⁴ Peterson also states that "Scripture is not used to write off the possibility of further ministry to Jews, either in Paul's time or subsequently."⁵⁵ The quoted text draws "a distinction between hearing and understanding, seeing and perceiving, and goes on to attribute people's non-comprehension to their deliberately hard hearts, deaf ears and

⁵¹ Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Acts*, 964.

⁵² Soards, *Speeches*, 132.

⁵³ This has already been in Paul's mind when he writes the epistles to the Romans. There are scholars who take this quotation as a condemnation of the Jews in general. See Pervo, *Acts*, 685–86. However, it only says that the Jews rejecting the message at that time is in the control of God. The rejection by the massive Jews does eventually lead to the separation of Christianity from Judaism. The door of God's salvation, however, is still open to the Jews.

⁵⁴ Moessner reaches the conclusion by comparing these three declarations with three similar statements in Luke's Gospel, which indicates the parallels between Jesus and Paul. See Moessner, "Paul in Acts," 96–104.

⁵⁵ Peterson, *Acts*, 717.

closed eyes, for otherwise they might see, hear, understand, turn and be saved.”⁵⁶

Believing accompanying hearing makes the difference.

The last statement of Paul’s speech concerns God’s salvation for the Gentiles, which Paul thinks that the Jews should know about. This statement emphasizes God’s authority to include the Gentiles in God’s kingdom, without necessarily emphasizing that God rejects the Israelites. As Soards notes, the identification of salvation as “God’s” emphasizes the divine authority and “direction of the outworking of salvation on a universal scale according to the divine plan.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, “the Gentiles will listen” refers to their listening to the message, not necessarily to their understanding. Even though, in comparison with that of the Jews, the attitude of the Gentiles toward the gospel is generally receptive, at least in some cities in Luke’s narrative, not all Jews are rejected, nor are all Gentiles included. Believing is what matters.

6. Conclusion

Four scenes involving Paul’s captivity compose a picture for studying conflict between the Christian movement and wider Judaism. Paul, a Pharisee, a preacher to both Jews and Gentiles, is zealous for doing God’s will. From Jerusalem to Caesarea to Rome, he repeats his defense to the Jewish leaders that he is not acting against his people, the temple, the law, or the Roman government. Even though the Jewish religious leaders claim that their accusation against Paul comes from these issues, Paul’s defence clearly indicates that their perspective is not in accord with Luke’s. Through Paul’s speeches, Luke conveys that the proclamation of God’s salvation plan through Jesus should be

⁵⁶ Stott, *Acts*, 399.

⁵⁷ Soards, *Speeches*, 133.

regarded as the main problem that produces conflict between Christians and non-Christian Jewish leaders. When the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem persist in their attitude toward “the Way,” the conflict cannot be resolved. When the Jewish leaders in Rome open their minds to listen, the opportunity of believing in Jesus is open to them as well. Yet this brings about conflict between those who become the believers and those who remain unbelieving. Thus, according to Luke, the decision to believe in Jesus or disbelieve is the main factor involved in the conflict between Christian and non-Christian Jews.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conflict between the early Christian movement and wider Judaism has caught the attention of many scholars over the years, and particularly the factors behind it. The question whether Luke is anti-Semitic or anti-Judaic is lingering in the minds of many scholars, as are questions concerning the reasons that Jews rejected and criticized the early Christian movement. By studying speech content and speech contexts in Acts, I have observed how the narrative depictions of key scenes illuminates the conflict that existed between the early Christian movement and wider Judaism—or at least, the perspective Luke conveys regarding that conflict.

Acknowledging that I am not able to know the original author's actual intention, I have applied narrative criticism and explored the implied author's perspective through examining the flow of the narrative. With the aid of social-scientific information, I have tried to understand and analyze the text through the perspective of its first-century implied author and implied readers.

In the end, I have reached the conclusion that Luke consistently demonstrates through his narrator, and especially through his Christian speakers, that disagreements and decisions regarding Jesus' identity are the crux of the conflict between non-believing Jews and Christians, and that this single area of disagreement is more significant than the other historical, sociological, and religious factors that trigger, aggravate or alleviate conflict.

1. Summary and Analysis

Within Luke's narrative, at the very beginning of the Christian movement, the apostles gain a high level of support from the Jewish people in Jerusalem. Their message, with Jesus' role and identity as its core, is well accepted. A large group of Jewish people accepts Jesus as God's representative and become Christians. Conflict exists primarily because of different interpretations of *glossolalia* and the scriptures, and this conflict is substantially relieved when many in the audience accept Jesus.

In the same city, however, the apostles soon encounter severe opposition from the Jewish authorities. This opposition mainly comes from the high priest and the Sadducees, who question the apostles' authority to teach and their power to heal, and who are enraged at the apostles' accusation that they have killed Jesus. The apostles proclaim that Jesus is the source of their authority and power, which is denied by the Jewish authorities. The conflict between these two groups is triggered and escalated by their different perspectives concerning who Jesus is. On the one side, the Jewish authorities do not accept Jesus' identity as proclaimed by the apostles and accordingly forbid them to continue to teach concerning Jesus. On the other side, the apostles claim their intention of being persistent in proclaiming Jesus. The conflict is inevitable, but it is restrained temporarily by some factors, such as the support of the believing Jewish people surrounding the apostles, the suggestion of Gamaliel to allow God to determine the destiny of the movement, and Paul's detainment in prison by the Roman government. At the same time, however, the conflict escalates in severity and scope. In the beginning, the main targets of persecution are Peter and John, who are arrested and given warning. Later, the authorities become enraged and intend to kill all the apostles.

The conflict in Jerusalem becomes intensified and reaches its climax at the scene of Stephen's martyrdom. Stephen is a Hellenistic Jewish Christian leader. He is facing persecution not only from the Jewish authorities but also the Jewish people. The Jews from the Diaspora start the persecution and bring in the Jewish authorities and the Jewish people in Jerusalem.¹ They accuse Stephen of speaking against Moses and God, and they allege that Jesus' teaching is against the law and the temple.² Stephen counters that they disobey God and Moses, idolize and deconsecrate the temple, alter the law, and have even killed the Righteous One sent by God. When Stephen uses the stories of the ancestors, he correlates his hearers with their ancestors in the sin of persecuting the prophets sent by God. Whereas the ancestors killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, Stephen's hearers have now killed that Righteous One. From Stephen's perspective, this Righteous One is Jesus. Stephen's speech also points out that God does not live in a man-made temple, which implicitly relates to Jesus' claim that he is the temple. When Stephen explicitly claims Jesus' Lordship, the conflict escalates so seriously that the hearers stone him to death. From Luke's perspective, the accusations of Stephen's hearers are wrong. Through his composition, he highlights Jesus' identity. I argue that the rejection of Jesus' identity by Stephen's hearers aggravates the conflict.

Another Christian leader, Paul, is also persecuted in Jerusalem. Some Jews from Asia stir up the crowds and want to kill Paul when they see him in the temple. The accusation is that Paul preaches against the Jewish people, the law and the temple. Luke

¹ Stephen's Hellenistic background and his opponents' Hellenistic and Jerusalem background indicates that from Luke's perspective, the differing social backgrounds are not a factor in this scene.

² Richard Bauckham notes that the centrality of the temple for the self-identity of Judaism lies in that it is the place for God's covenant people to access to his presence. The Jews are expected to visit it if they have the ability to do so. All Jews participate in offering sacrifice through paying the temple tax, even though they may not be able to offer it by personal presence in the temple. See Bauckham, *Jewish World*, 184-85.

has Paul tell his personal story as a tool to imply that those who persecute the Christians persecute the Lord Jesus, who is resurrected by God. The accusations against the Jewish people, the law and the temple may be related to Paul's ministry among the Gentiles. According to Luke, Paul clarifies that these accusations and the reasons behind them are wrong. The turning point of Paul's life experience shows that accepting Jesus' identity as Lord is the way to resolve the conflict between the Christian movement and Judaism.

Outside Jerusalem, relationships between non-believing Jews and Christians demonstrate another pattern of conflict. Some Jews and Gentiles accept Paul's message while some reject it. Some become believers while some do not. In Luke's narrative, the Gentiles are more receptive than the Jews. A possible reason is that salvation through Jesus removes some barriers for them to be included in Jewish community. One of the barriers is the observance of certain Jewish laws such as circumcision. On the one hand, when the unbelieving Jews see the spread of the message about Jesus among the Gentiles, they start to persecute Paul and the movement, and some of them use violence. One possible reason for the violence may be that, in some regions such as Jerusalem and Thessalonica, they play a strong political role even with the presence of the Roman authorities. Moreover, for some radical diaspora Jews, failure to observe Jewish laws is regarded as a severe trespass on their religion, especially for those who go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.³ On the other hand, when Paul sees his fellow Jews rejecting Jesus and opposing his proclamation, he announces judgement and warning from God, and so the conflict becomes further intensified.

³ There is no description of the Jewish people issuing any charge against the Jerusalem apostles. The reason may be that these apostles live among them demonstrating a lifestyle consistent with the traditional observance of the law and its purity regulations.

The Jewish leaders from Jerusalem continue to play a role in Christian persecution. There is no sign showing their repentance and acceptance of Jesus. Some leaders in the Diaspora, however, become believers in Jesus. Three defending speeches convey an overall message that Paul is not against his people, the law, the temple and the Roman authorities, but is on trial because of the hope of resurrection manifested in his proclamation about Jesus.

The final scene includes Paul's relationship with the Jewish leaders in Rome. Luke depicts that in Rome, the Jews are not influenced by earlier misunderstandings of the Christian movement. Furthermore, even though there are Gentiles living in Rome, they do not appear to be a significant factor in the conflict that develops. The Jews are prepared to listen to the message, but a conflict breaks out between those who receive Jesus and those who do not. Paul's quotation of Isa 6:9–10 reinforces that this division is regarding the message of Jesus. From Luke's perspective, accepting Jesus is the divine expectation, which indicates that the conflict over Jesus is a serious issue. At the last scene of Acts, the speech content and speech context clearly demonstrate that, for Luke, Jesus' identity is the key dividing line between Christian and non-Christian Jews.

In short, through the speech content and speech contexts involving Christian speakers and Jewish audiences, Luke recognizes that *various* forces were involved in the conflict that emerged between these two groups, such as the interpretation of supernatural phenomena and the scriptures, Jesus, God, Moses, the law, the temple, the Gentiles, political issues, etc., among which Jesus' identity is a very important factor. My overall analysis indicates that Luke uses these narratives, and especially the speeches, to

demonstrate that accepting or rejecting Jesus' identity can provoke as well as alleviate or aggravate conflict between Jesus' followers and their fellow Jews.

One particular theme demonstrated throughout the scenes I have analyzed is God's will in Jesus' identity or role. For Luke, it is God's plan to disclose Jesus' identity through whatever happens to him and whatever he has done, as well as through the Christian movement, which is the fulfillment of God's promise and prophecy written in the scriptures. Therefore, the Christian movement must obey God's will to proclaim Jesus. One possible reason for Luke to embed this theme in his account is that he argues for the divine legitimation of the Christian movement, which propels its advancement despite all kinds of conflict. Without intentionally creating conflict, however, it inevitably has to face the conflict provoked by those who perceive their obeying God's will as an offence or a threat. Those who accept the message of Jesus join the movement; those who reject it raise concerns regarding the movement. Whether the claimed issues are related to the temple, the law, the people or the political order, Luke shapes his narrative so as to argue that the only source of conflict for which Christians are truly accountable is their proclamation of Jesus' identity as Lord and Saviour—which can also be an important factor in the resolution of conflict.

2. Some Implications

The analysis of the conflict in this paper has some implications for research on the date of Acts and its alleged anti-semitic or anti-Judaic agenda.

2.1. The Date of Acts

The texts I have covered in this analysis indicate that Luke's narrative, and particularly its description of factors involved in the conflict between the early Christian movement and wider Judaism, can be read coherently as a response to pre-70 conflict. Indeed, it can even be read as a pre-70 response to pre-70 conflict. Regarding the Gentiles, Luke indicates that the first groups of Gentile converts were the God-fearers from the synagogues, who responded positively to the message of Jesus because it announced full salvation and full community participation in the people of God without the requirement of certain Jewish laws. It is not implausible that Jews, witnessing Paul's evangelism in the synagogue among the God-fearers, would have accused him of disobeying the law and speaking against his own people.

The evangelistic effort among the Gentiles also brings about conflict related to the temple. It is not strange that the Jews would guard against Paul violating the purity of the temple, since many Jews took the defilement of the temple as a very grave sin which could bring God's wrath on the land, and since they will have seen Paul surrounded by Gentiles and insisting that Gentiles need not abide by Jewish law. What is perhaps strange, however, is that Luke's text does not show any sign of these Jews blaming Paul for potentially bringing disaster upon the Jews. Thus, the description reflects the Judean situation before the destruction of the temple.

The issue of the temple in Stephen's scene in Acts is another description that makes sense in a pre-70 context. The accusation against Stephen concerns his teaching that Jesus will destroy the temple, yet the text shows no awareness of the destruction of the temple, nor does it in any way present Jesus as one who destroys the temple. And

when Stephen counter-accuses his Jewish hearers in connection with the temple, Luke does not dwell on the religious implications of Stephen's remarks about the temple being a "man-made" building but instead turns to Jesus' identity. Luke's main purpose in mentioning "man-made" buildings is thus to disclose Jesus' identity—not to comment on the Jerusalem temple. In light of Jesus' resurrection and his appearing to Stephen in the vision, the account is more about Jesus' teaching that he will rebuild the temple when it is destroyed, meaning his crucifixion and resurrection. A misinterpretation of this teaching was widely spread among the Jews (Matt 26:60–65; Mark 14:57–63; Acts 6:14).⁴ The texts of the synoptic Gospels, however, do not record Jesus' personal teaching. John, about half a century after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, records Jesus' personal teaching on this issue and gives it an explanation (John 2:18–20), clarifying that this teaching is not related to the destruction of the physical temple. Jesus' teaching regarding his body as the temple may be a historical reality, existing as oral tradition. When Luke states through Stephen that God does not live in a man-made building, the implied readers may understand this text as referring to Jesus' teaching without further explanation. The implicitness of this teaching may indicate an early dating of the narrative.

The Roman authorities' role in the conflict between the non-believing Jews and the Christian leaders is also in accord with a pre-70 context. The Roman authorities either ignore the conflict or protect the Christian leaders from the persecution of the Jews, even

⁴ The Jews brought up the same false testimony against Jesus, but Jesus was not convicted by it (Matt 26:60–65; Mark 14:57–63). Jesus also prophesies the destruction of the physical temple in front of the disciples and other followers (Matt 24: 1–3; Mark 13:1–4; Luke 21:5–7). They do not doubt its possibility but ask for the signs. There is no record that it stirs up significant disturbance at the time. The temple built by Solomon was destroyed by Babylonian army. With the upheaval political conflict in Palestine, it is not hard to find someone who are ready to believe in Jesus' prophecy.

though sometimes they do not totally carry out justice. The Roman authorities' attitude toward the Christian movement is a little bit ambiguous but mostly positive, and they are possibly not able to distinguish the Christian movement from Judaism. This image is totally different from that which the Roman authorities demonstrated in persecuting Christians in Rome and in the destruction of Jerusalem. The description suggests an early date of the book of Acts before 70 C.E.

2.2. The Anti-Semitic or Anti-Judaic Issue

In my discussion of method, I mentioned that research on the conflict theme is important for discussions of whether Lukan texts exhibit anti-Semitic or anti-Judaic elements. With the narrative approach, I focus on studying what Luke wants the implied reader to grasp through the narrative, which means that Luke expresses his intention explicitly through the texts. Social-scientific criticism provides an aid for me, a modern reader, to understand how the implied readers would approach the text. At the same time, it also helps me to examine the possible factors in the implied readers' society that Luke ignores in his text, which indicates what he does not want his implied reader to consider.

My research discloses that Luke demonstrates that the conflict between the early Christian movement and Judaism is the relationship between the believing Jews and the non-believing Jews, which makes it unreasonable to claim that his depiction is anti-Semitic or anti-Judaic. Furthermore, Luke shows in the texts his awareness of a few complex factors that create conflict, such as the law, the temple, the accusation of killing Jesus, etc., but he claims through Paul's defences that the Christian movement has no intention to break the law, defile the temple or act against the Jewish people.

Moreover, the analysis of conflict shows that Luke's focus is Christology, instead of attacking the religious practices of Judaism. He presents Christology not as a distinct element outside Judaism, but as having its roots in Judaism. He argues for Jesus' Jewish origin from the scriptures, and his legitimate authority from the divine endorsement. For example, through Stephen's speech, the implied readers understand Judaism as what God has originally handed to the Jewish ancestors, and that the audience who rejects Jesus has gone astray because Jesus is the Righteous One promised by God. As when Moses in the scriptures accuses the disobedient Israelites, Luke may not perceive his text as anti-Semitic or anti-Judaic.⁵

⁵ Donaldson defines *anti-Semitic* from the ethnic perspective, and mentions that many scholars have argued the New Testament cannot be described as anti-Semitic. But he also notes that one should discuss this term under various specific situations to discern whether the texts bear an anti-Semitic perspective. See Donaldson, *Jews and anti-Judaism*, 13–15.

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