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The Conflicts of Acts 1–8:3 in View of Recent Research on Religious Conflicts in Antiquity
Part Two: Enabling Conditions and Other Factors

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RÉSUMÉ

La première partie de cet article (publiée dans le précédent numéro) a présenté des théories récentes sur les conflits religieux dans l'Antiquité. Elle a abordé diverses questions relatives aux conflits religieux qui apparaissent en Actes 1.1-8.3 : l'héritage israélite, l'identité, le sort et le rôle de Jésus, le privilège et la responsabilité d'instruire le peuple de Dieu, l'autorité dans d'autres domaines spirituels, la manière légitime de diriger le peuple de Dieu, l'honneur ou la reconnaissance publiques. *La deuxième partie* traite ici des facteurs politiques, sociaux, économiques, culturels, psychologiques et transcendants intervenant des deux côtés de ces conflits et qui ont déterminé la tournure qu'ils ont pris et leur aboutissement. Elle considère aussi les traces de désamorçage et de résolution de ces conflits, ainsi que la manière dont les parties sont parvenues à une certaine coexistence et coopération, grâce à des transitions et assimilations. L'auteur termine par des réflexions concernant la pertinence des récits de conflits dans le livre des Actes pour l'Église d'aujourd'hui.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Teil Eins dieses Aufsatzes (erschienen in der letzten Ausgabe dieser Zeitschrift) stellte jüngere Hypothesen zu religiösen Konflikten in der Antike vor. Er erforschte die strittigen Bereiche der religiösen Auseinandersetzungen in Apostelgeschichte 1 – 8,3, und zwar das Erbe Israels, Identität, Berufung und Bedeutung von Jesus, Vorrecht und Verpflichtung, das Volk Gottes zu lehren, Autorität in weiteren geistlichen Aufgabenbereichen, legitime Leitung im Volk Gottes sowie öffentliche Anerkennung/Ehre. *Teil Zwei* untersucht nun die politischen, sozialen, wirtschaftlichen, kulturellen, psychologischen und transzendenten Bedingungen auf beiden Seiten dieser Konflikte, welche deren Verlauf und Ausgang ermöglicht haben. Er erörtert ebenfalls Hinweise auf Deeskalation und Lösungsmöglichkeiten, Koexistenz und Kooperation sowie Entwicklung und Integration. Dieser Teil schließt mit Überlegungen zur Bedeutung der Konflikterzählungen in Apostelgeschichte 1 – 8,3 für die Kirche und Gemeinde von heute.

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SUMMARY

Part one of this essay (which appeared in the previous issue of this Journal) introduced recent theorising on religious conflict in antiquity. It examined the contested domains in the religious conflicts of Acts 1–8:3, namely the heritage of Israel, the identity, fate and significance of Jesus, the privilege and duty of instructing the people of God, authority in other spiritual matters, legitimate leadership of the people of God and public recognition/honour. *Part two* now examines the political, social, economic, cultural, psychological and transcendent enabling conditions on both sides of these conflicts which made their course and outcome possible. It also discusses traces of de-escalation and resolution, co-existence and co-operation and transition and assimilation. It closes with reflections on the significance of the conflict accounts of Acts 1–8:3 for the church today.

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3. Introduction to Part two

Like in *Part one*, we start with an observation by Wendy Mayer who points out that

> religious conflict is best described as a more complex phenomenon that engages a combination of contested domains, including power, personality, space or place, and group identity. These contested domains should not be confused with enabling factors or conditions, which … can be political, social, economic, cultural and psychological. When both of these aspects are taken into consideration, we should be open to the possibility that, as a religion develops over time and/or as different enabling conditions come into play, different contested domains are accorded priority. A distinction should also be drawn between the root cause/s of the religious conflict (what is contested) and the way in which the conflict is discursively or narratively framed. That is, what a conflict is said to be about may differ significantly from what is actually being contested. We should be similarly open to the possibility that what is contested may be reframed retrospectively, just as it is also possible that what is not a conflict becomes viewed or framed as a conflict in hindsight and vice versa.[1]

Building on Mayer's observation that

> religious conflict is a complex phenomenon that engages a combination of *contested domains* (ideology/morality, power, personality, space/place, and group identity), in turn enabled by a range of other conditions (political, social, economic, cultural and psychological),

the focus in *Part one* of this essay was on the several *contested domains* between the parties of the conflicts in Acts 1–8:3. On the surface, *the* contested issue is the identity and significance of Jesus of Nazareth – clearly a religious issue. However, we have seen that other contested issues are also involved which are closely linked to the different evaluations of the identity and significance of Jesus. As these contested domains are often closely linked with the enabling conditions in conflicts – the contested domains are often also the enabling conditions, and the enabling conditions are (also) the contested domains – brief reference is made to them where appropriate.

On this basis, *Part two* of this essay examines the enabling conditions in these conflicts and the traces of peaceful *co-existence* and *co-operation* as well as *transition* and *assimilation* between the conflicting parties in Acts 1–8:3 in order to obtain a complete picture and to place these conflict accounts in a broader context. Mayer rightly cautions that the focus on religious *conflict and violence* must not detract from instances such as conflict de-escalation and conflict resolution, peaceful co-existence and co-operation, and transition and assimilation. *Part two* also relates the development in Acts to some insights from social identity and group theory. As ancient historiography not only intends to inform the readers about the past, but also wants to provide instructive examples and guidance for the present and the future, *Part two* will close with some suggestions of how the conflicts of Acts could relate to today's religious conflicts. Both parts of this essay apply a number of the insights of recent theorising on religious conflict to Acts 1–8:3 in order to shed fresh light on the conflicts in Jerusalem. Acts 1–8:3 offer a multifactorial and nuanced portrayal of religious conflict.

4. Enabling conditions in the conflicts of Acts 1–8:3

In examining the enabling conditions of the two rounds of conflict in Acts 1–8:3, we will employ Mayer's distinction between political, social, economic, cultural and psychological enabling conditions.[2] It will become clear that these five categories are helpful in recognising and understanding the resources on both sides of these conflicts which may not be noticed otherwise. These enabling conditions constitute decisive components of these conflicts: without one or several enabling conditions, conflict is short-lived or even impossible.

However, these five categories are not sufficient for an account such as Acts, because its author leaves no doubt that there is a further condition involved, i.e., a transcendent condition, at least on the side of the apostles and of Stephen. While this condition cannot be identified on the side of their opponents, it is available to *the apostles*: they have been called and commissioned by Jesus, God's supreme agent, to be his witnesses. They have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and are affirmed by their bold proclamation, their integrity, popular esteem and the miracles which they perform in the name of Jesus.

Stephen is part of the Christian community. In the short account regarding him, he is character-

ised repeatedly as 'a man of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom' (6:3), 'a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit' (6:5, 'they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking', 6:10), 'full of grace and power' (6:8, 'his face was like the face of an angel' 6:15) and also affirmed by the miracles which he performed ('was doing great wonders and signs among the people', 6:8). A stronger recommendation is hardly possible. The message and function of this transcendent enabling condition is clear: God is fully on the side of the apostles and of Stephen,[3] although this does *not* mean that they emerge unharmed or victorious from these conflicts.

We will first examine these six conditions in the conflict of Acts 1–5 (4.1) and then in the conflict of Acts 6–8:3 (4.2). In both narratives we will first look at the enabling conditions available to the religious leaders and Stephen's opponents and then at the conditions available to the apostles and Stephen.[4] Three methodological reflections are necessary:

1) We will only address what is apparent from the text of Luke–Acts itself. Other historical information about the authority, status, financial means, etc. of the religious leaders and the Diaspora Jews of Jerusalem, their assessment by the population and related aspects will not be included.[5] For the apostles and Stephen we are limited to the account of Acts in any case.

2) We concentrate on the enabling conditions *as they appear in the text*. For example, the religious leaders obviously also know the Scriptures and can quote from them, independent of the fact that they are not portrayed as doing so in Acts; the apostles probably also knew of the fate of Theudas and Judas the Galilean (5:36–37), although they do not refer to these or other historical events to support their case. The same applies to the opponents of Stephen.

3) The six enabling conditions often overlap; a clear distinction is not possible.

As is the case with the passion account of Luke's Gospel with its focus on Jesus, the focus of Acts is on the Christian protagonists and community; the religious leaders remain relatively flat characters[6] who appear only when and to the extent that it is necessary to understand the behaviour and responses of the Christians.

It will become clear that the enabling conditions on the side of the religious leaders/Stephen's opponents and of the apostles/Stephen correspond in a negative way to each other: a clear enabling condition on the one side is often matched by its absence on the other side: what the religious leaders/Stephen's opponents have, the apostles/Stephen lack and *vice versa*.

4.1 Enabling conditions in the conflict of Acts 1–5

4.1.1 Enabling conditions on the side of the religious leaders

In the portrayal of Acts, the leaders certainly have *political enabling conditions* on their side. They have their power base in Jerusalem. They are the established authority in religious matters and constitute a formidable group which includes the 'high priestly family' (4:5–6).[7] Acts 5:21 lists the high priest, those who were with him and the council, 'all the senate of the people of Israel'.

The readers know from Luke's Gospel that the leaders have direct access to the representatives of Rome in Jerusalem and have their own means of getting their way. Although they do not make use of their connections to the Roman overlords in this conflict (as they had done in the case of Jesus), this is an option always available to them, but not to others. Other than imposing a death sentence (Lk 23:1–25), their power is unlimited and not challenged either by the Roman overlords or the population of Jerusalem (at least in the early stages of the conflict). They are in charge of the temple premises and all activities there (see, however, Lk 19:45–48).[8] They have their own personnel, the captain of the temple and policing force and a public prison at their disposal. They can summon or arrest the apostles at any time and imprison them (4:3). They have the authority to warn, threaten and to command (4:17–18, 21). They can arrest the apostles again and put them into prison (5:18). Even after the counsel of Gamaliel, the apostles are beaten and charged again not to speak in the name of Jesus. The leaders are able and ready to assert their authority to the end, even though it becomes clear that they cannot enforce it over against the apostles, due to their popularity with the people and their transcendent enabling conditions.[9] The leaders can enforce their decisions up to 5:18; from 5:26 onwards they need to be careful as their authority is limited by the popular esteem of the apostles: 'The captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the

people' (5:26; cf. 4:21). The people of Jerusalem side with the apostles.

This enabling condition is also limited by the fact that the angel of the Lord liberates the apostles from the leaders' own prison in a way that is not even noticed (5:19–26, esp. 23).

The leaders' authority is challenged and eventually rejected outright by the apostles. The leaders must judge themselves whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to them rather than to God (4:19). Obviously, it would be wrong to do so. The apostles will obey God more than humans (5:29).

Social enabling conditions. The religious leaders have high social status and are well networked. The council is a well-established body of influential people who can take decisions, have crucial means available to them and access to the representatives of the empire. However, their influence on the population is limited (Lk 19:48; 22:6; 23:27). The people of Jerusalem follow the apostles – as their adherents (see the large numbers of people joining the apostles) or as benevolent observers – not the religious leaders who appear as acting in isolation. The religious leaders do not have and do not need popular support for taking action against the apostles. They can call the council together and act whenever they wish. They have enough enabling conditions of their own. However, a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, is held in honour by all the people (5:34). He is exceptional among the group of the opponents.[10]

Economic enabling conditions.[11] The religious leaders have the material resources to enforce their authority. They can fund their own police force and public prison. The priests among them receive their income from the temple; other income comes from dubious activities on the temple premises (Lk 19:45–46). They need not worry about their income (they can act at any time) or loss thereof. However, these superior material resources do not play a role in the conflict. The leaders do not try to pay a traitor or assassin(s) or gather together a larger force of mercenaries against the apostles and their sympathisers in Jerusalem. (See Josephus' account of later conflicts in Jerusalem mentioned in *Part one*.)

Cultural enabling conditions. 'Cultural' enabling conditions are a wide field, for which Mayer does not offer a precise definition. I will treat under this heading references to *religion* and *education/knowledge*.[12] The religious leaders are indeed the *religious* leaders of Jerusalem. They are well trained and knowledgeable – in comparison to them, the apostles are uneducated, common men (Acts 4:13). Apart from the apostles, no one challenges their status directly. As members of the council and as office bearers in the temple of Jerusalem they have a significant function in Jerusalem and beyond. As priests/high priests they serve as mediators of divine forgiveness and other favours. As councillors they have far-reaching powers in religious, legal and administrative matters. Some of the religious leaders can claim the authority of Scripture for their offices.

Yet in the account of Acts, the leaders are not portrayed as using the religious conditions available to them. In contrast to the apostles, they do not quote from the Scriptures, neither do they resort to prayer as the Christian community does (4:24–30). While they fail to recognise divine affirmation for Jesus in his resurrection or for the apostles (through their miracles), they do not want to be found opposing God and agree with Gamaliel's advice (5:39–40).

In his speech, Gamaliel refers to events from the past (Theudas and Judas the Galilean, 5:36–37).[13] He is aware of past events and their eventual outcome and can presuppose this knowledge also on the side of his fellow leaders and draw conclusions from it. Gamaliel reckons with the possibility that this plan or undertaking (i.e. the apostles and their claims) may not be merely of human origin (5:38–39). If it should be of God, then the opponents will not be able to overthrow the apostles and they might even be found opposing God (5:39).

The category of *psychological enabling conditions* is also a wide field and closely related to the previous enabling conditions. At least in the initial phases of this conflict, the leaders react orderly and composed. They know how to employ the enabling conditions available to them and do so calmly. There is no fear or helplessness on their side. Only later do they reach their wits' end when their enabling conditions proof to be of no avail: They begin to *react* to the apostles, rather than *acting* on their own volition and pace.

However, up to the end of the conflict they also have a person like Gamaliel among them who stays calm and presents his proposal once the apostles are put outside. He is able to analyse the situation and the options available to the leaders, convincing others in the group. Based on his sober analysis, he gives wise counsel. Gamaliel is the only person identified as a Pharisee among the opponents; only he is identified as a teacher of the law (5:34–39).[14]

In his references to Theudas and Judas, he does not equate the apostles with these insurrectionists against Roman rule; the point of comparison is the outcome of different movements.

The psychological enabling means of the leaders are limited by their characterisation as morally flawed: they are greatly annoyed because the apostles were teaching the people (4:2), they are filled with jealousy regarding the success and public recognition of the apostles (5:17) and are enraged at the apostles' response to their charge and want to kill them (5:33). They cannot control themselves.

With these five *human* conditions, the leaders are well equipped and likely to prevail. However, as noted above, there is a further element in these conflicts, namely t*ranscendent enabling conditions.* While the religious leaders are the official leaders in political and religious matters, maintaining positions described and instituted by the Mosaic Law (priests, sacrifices, temple, etc.), they do not seek or receive any divine or popular affirmation for their status or their actions.

4.1.2 Enabling conditions on the side of the apostles

The enabling conditions on the side of the apostles are rather different: while they score low on most of the five enabling conditions mentioned by Mayer, they score high on the transcendent enabling conditions which their opponents lack. The enabling conditions on their side are also closely interrelated.

The apostles have no *political enabling conditions* available to them. They lack formal status or recognition. They have come from Galilee and are looked down upon as common and uneducated amateurs (4:13)[15] without any means.

Social enabling conditions. While the apostles have no established social relations (kin, trade, etc.) in Jerusalem, they have the social enabling conditions of unity among themselves and of the loyal support of their own community. It stands behind them and prays with and for them (1:14). The Christian community is characterised as one of siblings (1:15: 'among the brothers') and Peter addresses his fellow Christians as brothers (1:16).[16] The community adheres to the apostles' teaching (2:42). Once released from prison, the apostles go to their community and find support in prayer there (4:23–31). In the midst of conflict, the believers are said to be of one heart and soul (4:32).[17] The community acknowledges and trusts the apostles: those who sell land or houses bring the proceeds for what was sold and lay it at the apostles' feet, i.e. entrust it to them. The money is now at the apostles' disposal. From there it is taken and distributed (4:25, 37). The authority of the apostles is even acknowledged by a Levite from Cyprus (4:36–37). Amid conflict, the Christian community 'was altogether in Solomo's Portico' (5:12).

The very fact of a supportive divinely-initiated community and its exemplary unity ('fellowship', emphasised in 2:42–47, also expressed in the sharing of goods, described in detail in 4:32–37) are resources for the apostles. There is also the inner-community affirmation of their spokesman Peter through the death of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–11 ('And great fear came upon the whole church', 5:11). Peter is able to uncover and confront hypocrisy. The Christian community is united through this experience.

In contrast to the religious leaders, the apostles also receive repeated public acknowledgement from the crowds.[18] Acts describes their response in a number of statements ('and awe came upon every soul', 2:43; 'and having favour with all the people', 2:47; 'And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him', 3:10) and through their actions (5:16). The people of Jerusalem – in contrast to the leaders – respond to the apostles' proclamation and join the Christian community in great numbers (2:37, 41; 4:4). The apostles are portrayed as teaching the people (4:1–2). The leaders' options (punishment) are limited because of the people (4:21). Great fear comes on all who hear of the failure and fate of Ananias and Sapphira (5:11). The people of Jerusalem hold the Christian community in high esteem (5:13). Even the people from the towns around Jerusalem acknowledge the apostles' miraculous powers and bring their sick in order to receive healing for them (5:16). This response of the people is an enabling condition on the apostles' side, which the opponents need to take into consideration and which limits their enabling conditions.

The apostles' *economic enabling* conditions are limited. They came to Jerusalem with limited resources, depended for a longer period on some generous women (Lk 8:1–3), have no means of production in Jerusalem and do not benefit from the religious set-up (e.g. the temple) in any way. However, due to the community of goods and the mutual sharing, emphasised in Acts 2:44–47 and 4:32–37, the apostles suffer no immediate material

need and can concentrate on their task of proclaiming the Gospel as they had been commissioned by Jesus.[19] Lack of material resource does not limit their activities, options or behaviour in this conflict in any way. The availability of more material means would not have made any difference.

The apostles also score on *cultural enabling conditions* in the above sense of religious qualification and knowledge. Although they do not have the formal status and training of their opponents, they are obedient to Jesus and devote themselves to prayer (1:12–14, 2:42, 46; 4:23–30). They are Jews; their Jewishness and right to be in Jerusalem and on the temple premises is not questioned. As pious Jews, they go to the temple to pray. In the initial stages of the conflict they do not question the authority of the established religious leaders as such.

The apostles know the Scriptures of Israel, quote and interpret them repeatedly and in a creative way.[20] 'But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel …' (2:15–16). The speeches in Acts 1:16–22; 2:14–36; 3:11–26; 4:8–12 and 5:29–32 contain extensive quotations from the Scriptures and conclusions drawn from them for the present situation.[21] The apostles also lay claim to the heritage of Israel: Jesus was raised from the dead by no other than *the God of our fathers* (5:30).

When faced with a decision (two men fulfil the requirements listed in 1:21–22 to succeed Judas), the Christian community knows how to receive divine guidance by prayer and casting lots.[22] This is not said of its opponents.

As exemplary Jews the apostles go to the temple at the hour of prayer (3:1). Together with their adherents, they devote themselves in the temple and praise God (2:46–47). They readily give honour and glory to God; they deny acting by their own power and piety (3:12–16). They affirm the priority of Israel in God's purposes (3:26). The community responds with prayer to opposition (4:24–30). Their prayer quotes directly from the Old Testament (4:25–26) and is also otherwise strongly coloured by it. The community as a whole receives great grace from God (4:33).

The apostles obey divine instruction in exemplary manner: despite the danger it involves, they readily follow the angel's instruction and continue their ministry on the temple premises at the earliest opportunity (at daybreak, 5:21). This is acknowledged by their opponents (5:25). The apostles leave no doubt that they want to obey God, even if it means defying the orders of the human authorities (5:29; see also 4:19).

The apostles rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name of Jesus (5:41). They deal in an exemplary manner with the suffering which their commission and ministry entails.[23]

Through the election of Matthias in the place of Judas, the number of the twelve is completed (1:15–26).[24] As a group they represent Israel regathered and restored and are concerned with Israel and her fate.

Peter knows of the end of Judas and is able to give good advice on the basis of this knowledge (1:16–19). We have here a similarity to Gamaliel's references to past events (5:34–39).

There are also some p*sychological enabling conditions*: the apostles appear calm and fearless, despite the massive resistance which they face. However, this is not their natural state, but due to the reception of the Holy Spirit. They are aware of, request and count on divine support. Even when their opponents are enraged and at their wits' end, the apostles remain calm. They are always able to answer boldly and know what to do despite being inferior in origin, social status and training. Whatever they lack in human qualifications is compensated for by the following transcendent enabling condition.

Several transcendent enabling conditions are the main asset of the apostles in this conflict. They do have enabling human conditions, but their main enabling conditions are transcendent. Their strong convictions and boldness derive from their extended period of fellowship with Jesus (Lk 5:1–24:53): they were called by him (Acts 1:2), were witnesses of his miracles and his resurrection, and received 'many convincing proofs' of Jesus' resurrection (1:4) and his extended post-resurrection instructions (1:3). They were commissioned by Jesus to remain in Jerusalem (1:4) and were witnesses of the ascension of Jesus and its explanation by angels (1:9–11).

The readers know of the apostles' commission by the risen Christ to be his witnesses.[25] They obey Jesus' instruction (1:12–14) and are characterised as obedient and faithful witnesses (2:32; see also 2:40). As Jesus' witnesses, they cannot but speak of what they have seen and heard (4:20). Their ministry and its content are not negotiable. 'And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus' (4:33). This happens in direct contrast to what their opponents demand of them (4:17–18)

and it annoys the opponents ('greatly annoyed because the apostles were … proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead', 4:2). The opponents acknowledge that the apostles have filled Jerusalem with their teaching (5:28, cf. v. 32). Despite repeated warnings and the punishment of beating (5:40), the apostles continue faithfully the task to which they had been called: 'And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus' (5:42).

Their bold ministry within the community and in public is further enabled through the public coming of the Holy Spirit on all of them at Pentecost (announced in 1:4–5, 8; fulfilled in 2:1–12; this is the origin of their proclamation of the mighty works of God, 2:11). When Peter responds to a group of formidable opponents, he is characterised as filled with the Holy Spirit (4:8). The apostles and their adherents receive a further pneumatic experience in the midst of conflict (4:31, 'they were all filled with the Holy Spirit'). Even their opponents recognise the boldness with which the apostles act and are astonished (4:13). Strengthened by the Spirit, the Christian community prays not for relief or deliverance, but for more boldness and continued miraculous affirmation (4:29–30). The prayer is answered: they 'continued to speak the word of God with boldness' (4:31). The Spirit is given to those who obey God (5:32). Therefore, having the Spirit and acting in its authority and power is a clear sign that the apostles obey God.[26]

The apostles receive continued divine affirmation before all the people through the miracle of Pentecost (they are the bearers of the eschatological Spirit) and their spectacular signs and wonders.[27] The apostles work these miracles ('and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles', 2:43; 3:1–10; 5:12–16; they never refuse to perform a miracle or fail in performing one; cf. Lk 9:40) and also experience miracles wrought by God on their behalf. One of their miracles becomes the point of departure for the clash with the religious leaders in Acts 4–5. The miracle is acknowledged by the opponents and silences them (4:14, 16–17: 'For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.'). In the midst of the account of conflict appears the following summary note, 'Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles' (5:12) and a more detailed account of exemplary miracles (5:15–16). Through an angel of the Lord the apostles are liberated from prison and receive direct instruction: they are to continue with the public proclamation (5:20).[28]

The communal prayer after the apostles' release in Acts 4:24–30 receives divine affirmation through an earthquake (4:31)[29]; later they are liberated from prison by an angel of the Lord (5:19–20). As divine confirmation of the apostles' ministry, God himself adds people to their community (2:47; 5:14).[30]

Guided by the Spirit, the apostles offer an astute analysis of past failures and the current situation (2:38, 40); they know how to answer in spiritual matters and readily give the right instructions to the people (2:37: 'Brothers, what shall we do? Repent and be baptised every one of you …', 2:37–38; 3:19) and their opponents (4:8–12).

The prayers of the apostles and their community are answered (1:26; 4:24–31). In this way, they appear as mediators of salvation (2:47).

Amid conflict, Peter is also affirmed by his supernatural knowledge of Ananias and Sapphira's secret scheme. He knows the intentions of people and confronts them boldly like an Old Testament prophet. The immediate divine judgement on Ananias and on Sapphira indicates that God cannot be fooled, but also affirms the apostles (5:1–11).[31]

These generous transcendent enabling conditions, unique to the apostles, outweigh all their human disadvantages in this conflict. Due to the transcendent conditions available to the apostles, the religious leaders cannot prevail despite their superior political, social, economic, cultural and psychological enabling conditions. The apostles have on their side what the religious leaders lack and vice versa. While they contest the same domains (see *Part one* of this essay), there is little overlap between the political, social, economic, cultural and psychological enabling conditions on both sides. The main enabling condition on the side of the apostles, i.e. the transcendent enabling condition, is beyond their human availability. It is granted by God/Jesus, can only be requested in prayer and are limited to those who obey God. The apostles emphasise that they do not act by their own authority (3:12–16).

Both parties in the conflict have in common that they make full use of the enabling conditions at their disposal, only limited by the circumstances (such as the popular esteem of the apostles). The leaders only once resort to physical violence as an

official punishment decreed by the council (5:40); Gamaliel's intervention prevents the use of lethal violence. As they constitute the formal authority, the leaders need not resort to false witnesses or instigation as is the case in Luke 23 or Acts 6. The apostles do not use their supernatural powers against the leaders (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 1; Lk 9:54), incite the crowds against them (see Acts 6:11–12) or try to harm them otherwise. The apostles do not budge either by withdrawing from Jerusalem, by limiting their ministry to the Christian community or by following the leaders' orders.

4.2 Enabling conditions in the conflict of Acts 6:1–8:3

The balance of power and the nature of enabling conditions are different in the second round of conflict in Acts 1–8:3, the Stephen episode and its aftermath (6:8–8:3).[32] Initially, the conflict is not between the Christian protagonist(s) and the established leaders in Jerusalem, but within the community of Diaspora Jews to which both Stephen and his opponents belong. As Stephen's opponents cannot prevail against him with the enabling conditions available to them (verbal dispute, 6:9–10), they involve false witnesses, stir up the people and forcefully bring Stephen before the council (6:12) – which was already involved in the earlier conflict – and in this way involve this higher authority on their side. Acts does not note when or whether the whole council eventually sides with Stephen's opponents.

4.2.1 Enabling conditions on the side of Stephen's opponents

Political enabling conditions. The opponents have no formal political authority. In contrast to the religious leaders in Acts 4–5, their enabling conditions are limited: once they cannot prevail with their own enabling conditions (raising up and disputing with Stephen, 6:9), they 'transfer' their case to the official council through false accusations and instigation. Eventually they seize Stephen and with popular support bring him before the council (in contrast to Acts 4:1–3; 5:18, 26). In this way they force the council to take up their case against him.[33] The council initially follows proper legal proceedings: Stephen is given the opportunity to defend himself (7:1; recalling the previous proceedings against the apostles who were also given an opportunity to defend themselves).

At the end of Stephen's speech and his vision of the exalted Jesus, the opponents rush at him, cast him out of the city and lynch him. In the account, a proper verdict of the council is lacking. Stephen is not brought to the Roman overlords which would have been necessary for obtaining a capital punishment (as was the case with Jesus, Lk 23:1). Acts does not mention any response from the Romans to the murder of Stephen.

In Acts 8:3 Saul's activities first appear as his own private initiative ('But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house …').[34] The fact that he can arrest and imprison people indicates some formal authorisation by the council to proceed against the followers of Jesus. This characterisation of Saul is supported in Acts 9:1–2 where he has access to the high priest and receives official letters of authorisation to extend the persecution to the synagogues of Damascus (9:2).

Social enabling conditions. The opponents are united among themselves and act with one accord. They are Jews with a Diaspora background, belonging to the synagogue(s) of the Freedmen (6:9).[35] Acts 6:9 limits the activities against Stephen to '*some* of those who belonged to the synagogue (s) …'. The response of other Jews belonging to this synagogue/these synagogues is not noted.

Economic enabling conditions do not play a significant role. The opponents can afford to enter into debates with Stephen and to proceed against him. Apparently this happened over an extended period of time.[36] It is not indicated how intensive these debates were. It is not clear whether the opponents' activities presuppose material resources on their side. Whether their secret instigation of men who falsely charge Stephen (6:11) involves a bribe is also not clear.

Cultural enabling conditions. The opponents cannot withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen speaks (6:10). It is unclear what resources they drew on in their attempt to withstand him. As their political enabling conditions are limited (see above) and as they have no cultural/religious enabling conditions to prevail against Stephen, they resort to other means which also involve social and psychological skills and enabling conditions. They give these means a distinctly religious content: they secretly instigate people who raise against Stephen the false charges of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God (6:11).[37] They stir up the people, the elders and the scribes and seize Stephen and bring him to the council (6:12). Again through false witness, they charge him with continually speaking

against the temple and the law (6:14–15, 'for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us'). They present themselves as pious Jews who are concerned with the main tenets of Judaism. Whether this is their true motivation is not clear. In contrast to the earlier conflict (4:2: 'greatly annoyed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead'; 5:17: 'and filled with jealousy'), no motivation is directly provided for the actions of Stephen's opponents. The growth of the number of disciples (including many Christians with a Diaspora background, 6:1–7), the fact that many priests became obedient to the faith and Stephen's great wonders and signs among the people (6:7–8) are motivations suggested by the context. We have discussed the several contested domains between Stephen and his opponents in *Part one*.

The *psychological enabling conditions* on the side of Stephen's opponents are entirely negative. Once they cannot prevail against him in dispute (which is no surprise in view of Stephen's characterisation in Acts 6:3–4), they resort to secret instigation (6:11), stirring up of the people, the elders and the scribes (6:12) and setting up false witnesses (6:13).

In response to Stephen's speech, his opponents are enraged and grind their teeth at him (7:54). When Stephen shares his vision of heaven opened, they shout him down and refuse to listen (7:57), rush together at him, cast him out of the city and end up lynching him without mention of a proper verdict of the council. They cannot control themselves (see 5:33) and are portrayed as violent schemers.

In comparison to the religious leaders in the conflict of Acts 4–5, Stephen's opponents appear entirely negative in their behaviour (6:10–14). They do not have a figure like Gamaliel among them nor can such a figure intervene to prevent the violent reaction at the end of Stephen' speech. While it seems that the council initially takes up a proper trial against Stephen (the high priest opens the formal proceedings), the reaction at the end of Stephen's speech is not limited to his initial opponents but appears as a joint action of these opponents and members of the council. None of the council members intervenes on Stephen's behalf or calls the assembly to proper proceedings like in Acts 19:35–41.

The opponents have no *transcendent enabling conditions*. They cannot withstand the wisdom and the Spirit in which Stephen is speaking.

4.2.2 Enabling conditions on Stephen's side

Stephen does not have any *political enabling conditions* on his side. In this conflict, Stephen appears as a singular figure. Although he belongs to the Christian community, is held in esteem there for his qualifications and is elected and appointed to an important office (6:1–6), neither the other six office bearers (mentioned in 6:5) nor the wider Christian community play a role in this conflict as was the case in the previous conflict. As they are not mentioned (which need not mean that they were not involved), these colleagues or the community as a whole do not appear as a *social enabling condition* on Stephen's side. Possibly some members of the community appear once Stephen is dead: devout men come to bury Stephen and lament him (8:2).[38]

Stephen is part of the Christian community with its sharing of goods. As a member in this community and in particular in his position as a servant of the tables (6:2), Stephen can draw on these resources as *economic enabling conditions* in this conflict.

Like the apostles, Stephen is a gifted public speaker and well versed in the Old Testament. He can recount and interpret the history of Israel in his spontaneous speech of defence (7:2–50) and draw conclusions from it for the present situation (7:51–53). His criticism of the temple is expressed in quotations from the Old Testament.[39] This is a *cultural/*religious *enabling condition* on his side. While his opponents resort to dubious means, Stephen uses Scripture and powerful rhetoric.

Like the apostles, Stephen also identifies with Israel and leaves no doubt about his own belonging and loyalty to the people of God: 'The God of glory appeared to *our* father Abraham' (7:2, so also v. 44–45, see however v. 51). A final and important characterisation of Stephen appears at the moment of his death. He prays to Jesus: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' (7:59) and, falling on his knees (either in reverence for Jesus or due to the stoning which already affects him), he asks divine forgiveness for his opponents (7:60), just as Jesus had done (Lk 23:34). A greater commendation of his character is hardly possible.

The references to Stephen's spiritual qualification in this short text overshadow any *psychological enabling conditions* which he brings to this conflict: that Stephen cannot be defeated in discussion,

that he stands calmly before the council, delivering the longest speech in Acts, is not ascribed to his human resources but to divine empowerment. The same also applies to his request for divine forgiveness in Acts 7:60.

What Stephen is lacking with regard to the previous five enabling conditions, he fully compensates with the *transcendent enabling conditions* available to him. In only thirteen verses (6:3–15), he is characterised as a man of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom (6:3), as a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit (6:5), as receiving the recognition of the apostles (6:6), as full of grace and power (6:8), and as speaking with wisdom and with the Spirit. As he embarks on his speech of defence, his opponents can see that Stephen's face was like that of an angel (6:15). Stephen is again characterised as full of the Spirit at the end of his speech: 'But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven …' (7:55). His provocative speech is bracketed by these references and surely carries divine approval. In this Spirit, Stephen can ask for divine forgiveness for his opponents (7:60). His spiritual qualifications are formidable.

He also has the trust of the Christian community and the apostles. He is appointed to take over a task which was previously administered by the apostles themselves. He bears an office in a community which is greatly increasing in numbers (6:1; see also 6:7: 'and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem') by divine intervention (2:47) and the continued increase of the word of God (6:7). This community now even includes many priests who become obedient to the faith (6:7). However, as noted above, the community does not play a role in the portrayal of the conflict between Stephen and his opponents. Whether and how precisely these events (great increase, obedience of priests) impacted on the conflict is not indicated.[40]

Like the apostles, Stephen is portrayed as a powerful *public* miracle worker although no details are provided: 'full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs *among the people*' (6:8).[41]

At the end of his speech, Stephen receives hitherto unsurpassed divine affirmation (7:55–56). He gazes into heaven and sees the very glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (cf. 1:9–11). To this experience he testifies with reference to the Old Testament: 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God' (7:56).[42] Jesus stands to plead Stephen's case before the heavenly tribunal, to acknowledge his loyal witness (Lk 12:8) and to welcome Stephen to the heavenly realm.[43] A greater divine recognition is hardly thinkable. With these transcendent enabling conditions, Stephen is well equipped in this conflict, although he is defeated and eventually killed.

What we observed for the conflict of Acts 1–5 also applies to the second conflict which is narrated in less detail.[44] Both parties have different enabling conditions on their side which correspond to each other. Stephen has generous transcendent enabling conditions which his opponents lack. The means available to the council and initially used in the first conflict are not available to the opponents and therefore not employed (see below on de-escalation). As they do not have those enabling conditions (the authority to warn and threaten their opponents, a police force and a public prison at their disposal), they resort to questionable means to bring Stephen before the council which has those enabling conditions on its side.

The conflict is portrayed as that of a sub-group within a sub-group (*some* of the group of Diaspora Jews in Jerusalem) and an individual. The communities to which the opponents and Stephen belong do not play a role in the conflict. Both Stephen and the opponents draw on the enabling conditions available to them. When the opponents reach their limits, they do not give in (as eventually was the case in the first conflict), but resort to dubious means. Nothing comparable is said of Stephen: he does not use his miraculous powers against his opponents, discredit them directly or instigate or stir up resistance against them. Stephen does not withdraw from Jerusalem or cease his public ministry in word and deed.

4.3 Evaluation

Our analysis of the enabling conditions in both rounds of conflict has shown that Mayer's five categories of political, social, economic, cultural and psychological enabling conditions are an excellent heuristic tool for analysing accounts of religious conflict. However, as Acts narrates a story which involves more than human means and enabling conditions, they had to be supplemented with the category of *transcendent* enabling conditions in order to do justice to the text. These transcendent conditions have the function of affirming the apostles and Stephen in their faithful fulfilment of their commission. By emphasising this divine affirmation, Acts leaves no doubt that the Christian protagonists acted in the right way and that they

did so with divine approval.[45] God is on their side, their opponents are opposing God (5:39).

In comparing both rounds of conflict, we need to remember that some of what is said explicitly and in more detail in Acts 1–5 might be presupposed for the shorter conflict account of Acts 6–8:3. The enabling conditions in both rounds are unevenly distributed; often they are in direct opposition: what is available to one side is lacking on the other. Several enabling conditions appear in both rounds of conflict:

- The Christian protagonists lack the political enabling conditions on which their opponents, as the established leadership, can draw by right or by dubious means.
- Economic factors do not play a significant role. In contrast to popular assumptions regarding religious conflict, these conflicts are not 'all about money' and material interests, although the outcome might have financial implications.
- The apostles and Stephen are portrayed as devout Jews who know and practise their religion. In their recourse to the Old Testament (as the established authority), to prayer and in their suffering, they are exemplary. They live and minister in the very centre of Judaism and refrain from withdrawing from it.
- The Christian protagonists have superior psychological enabling conditions on their side. They remain calm and composed, without resorting to questionable means or violence. The leaders and opponents are portrayed as morally inferior: annoyed, jealous, raging, instigating false witness and stirring up the crowds. They do not resort to Scripture for guidance and do not pray.
- The Christian protagonists in both rounds have generous transcendent enabling conditions on their side. The opponents do not have these enabling conditions and do not recognise the divine affirmation and authentication of the Christian protagonists or refuse to do so. They fail to recognise that God is on the Christians' side.[46] While miracles are reported for both the apostles and for Stephen and have an important function, neither of them directly use miraculous powers in the conflict with their opponents. The punitive miracle with regard to Ananias and Sapphira concerns deviant *members of the Christian community*, not its opponents (see Acts 8:20–24; 13:9–11).

There are also a number of differences between both rounds of conflicts:

- At an early stage, the political enabling conditions are different for the opponents. The leaders represent the established authority, while Stephen's opponents form a minority group themselves. The apostles belong to a minority group and face the religious establishment; both Stephen and his opponents belong to a minority group.
- The social enabling conditions are unevenly distributed. While the apostles are well equipped through the support of their community and the wider population, the leaders appear as isolated. While the religious leaders do not have and do not need popular support in their opposition to the apostles, Stephen's opponents cannot proceed against him without bringing their case before the council. However, eventually, both the apostles and Stephen face the council. The Christian community does not play a role in Acts 6:8–8:3.
- The result differs: while the apostles are eventually tolerated in Jerusalem, Stephen is murdered. The leaders in Acts 1–5 follow proper legal procedures, but Stephen's opponents appear as villains who know how to succeed through false accusations and instigation. In this way, despite the wide acceptance of the Gospel in the city,[47] the closing scene for the witness to the Gospel in Jerusalem in Acts is negative. Having been presented to the Jews of Jerusalem with a mixed response,[48] the gospel now ventures beyond the confines of Jerusalem.

5. Other factors involved in the conflicts

5.1 De-escalation and resolution, co-existence and co-operation, transition and assimilation

Acts offers a vivid description of at times fierce religious conflict between different groups in different constellations. However, in its direct reports of conflict or elsewhere, Acts also contains other elements that must be noted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the conflicts. Mayer rightly emphasises that the focus on religious *conflict* should not distract from the 'prevalence of evidence for actual religious co-existence and co-operation, as well as … transition and assimilation'.[49] Acts 1–8:3 also contain some indications of co-existence and co-operation, as well as transition and assimilation, although more implicitly than explicitly. As the 'mechanisms involved in the resolution of religious conflict and the role of

religion in reconciliation, for instance, prevalent in studies of contemporary religious conflict, are aspects rarely addressed …'[50], we want to include the contribution of Acts 1–8:3 in this regard.

5.2 De-escalation and resolution of conflict

Despite heated conflict, there are also instances of what could be described as de-escalation and resolution of conflict. At the beginning of the conflict in Acts 4–5 the religious leaders proceed relatively moderately against the apostles. No violence is threatened or used. They start their proceedings with a questioning and close with an order. However, the apostles openly refuse to follow the order 'not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus' (4:18–19). Later they are called to account accordingly: 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching' (5:28). The leaders are annoyed that the apostles preach that in Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead (4:2), yet the apostles continue to do precisely this in public (4:33). In addition, the apostles are charged with being determined 'to bring this man's blood upon us', by charging the leaders for the death of Jesus. In doing to, the apostles also discredit the leaders' spiritual qualification.

The apostles openly declare why they refuse to follow these orders: 'Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard' (4:19–20). 'We must obey God rather than human authority' (5:29; this human authority is in opposition to God). In addition, they uphold their charge of 'bringing this man's blood' upon the leaders (5:30) and claim exclusive possession of the divine Spirit (5:32). The apostles' refusal to obey 'men' and their insistence to remain in Jerusalem and continue their ministry (including the assumption of leadership roles in competition with the established leaders) makes the leaders' efforts ineffective and eventually leads to the harsh reaction reported in Acts 5:33. By their repeated refusal to follow orders or compromise in other ways, the apostles do not contribute to a de-escalation of the conflict, but rather cause its escalation.

In their insistence on their proclamation regarding Jesus and the failure of the religious leaders, the apostles see themselves bound by the commission of Jesus (1:8) and God (4:19–20; 5:29) and they are affirmed by an angel (5:20). Under these circumstances, compromise becomes impossible as it would mean obeying human authority rather than God, and the apostles sail straight into the storm. Like Jesus, they do not use the opportunities to leave Jerusalem. For the apostles, the only means to resolve this conflict would be for the leaders to at least tolerate them with their provocative behaviour or, ideally, to accept their witness to Jesus, repent accordingly, join the Christian community and submit to the apostles as the legitimate leaders. (This is the reaction of the priests mentioned in 6:7.)

Gamaliel's advice of Acts 5:33–39 and its acceptance by the enraged opponents is the most prominent example of conflict de-escalation in Acts 1–8:3. It entails a compromise on the part of the leaders (a new order and physical punishment, 5:40, but abstaining from further action if their order is not followed, 5:42) and it opens the way for co-existence (see below). In this attempt at de-escalation or resolution by the religious leaders, the enabling conditions on the side of the apostles play a major role. The resolution proposed by Gamaliel acknowledges that with the means available to the leaders, the conflict cannot be resolved otherwise.

However, the apostles also offer a road to conflict resolution. The portrayal of Jesus in the speech-sections in the narrative of Acts 4–5 is twofold: On the one hand, the developing conflict is intensified by the apostles' claims for the identity and significance of Jesus[51] and the serious charges levelled against those who rejected him (2:23, 40; 3:13–15, 26; 4:10; 5:28, 31). On the other hand, their proclamation also contains aspects which potentially *de-escalate* the conflict. While they maintain their claims for the identity and significance of Jesus, the apostles take account of the ignorance of the people and the leaders in rejecting Jesus (3:17) and of the plan of God which was fulfilled in this way (3:18; without detracting from the human responsibility). In addition, if people repent and turn to God, even horrendous sins such as rejecting God's Messiah can be forgiven and times of refreshing are announced for all (3:19–20). Jesus is still ready to 'give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins' (5:31). This is the resolution offered by the apostles.

The leaders never refer to past events as they relate to Jesus. They do not discuss the identity and significance of Jesus or the legitimacy of their rejection of him with the apostles. Neither do they engage or challenge the apostolic proclamation regarding the resurrection of Jesus. In

the portrayal of Acts they seem more concerned with the consequences of the apostolic proclamation for their status (5:28). Through this lack of engagement with the claims of apostles and their repeated refusal to repent (in contrast to the people of Jerusalem, 2:37–42, and later even some priests, 6:7), the leaders do not contribute to a de-escalation.

There is little that could lead to de-escalation or conflict resolution in the *Stephen- episode* on either side. Stephen does not leave Jerusalem or stop his spectacular ministry among the people in the face of mounting opposition. The opponents do not back off once it becomes clear that they cannot withstand Stephen ('the wisdom and the Spirit with which he as speaking', 6:10) or recognise that their own enabling conditions (other than taking recourse to dubious means which discredit them) are insufficient. Their actions deliberately escalate the conflict and their resolution is to draw on the greater enabling conditions of the council. They do not wait for an official verdict of the council but immediately lynch Stephen. The weight of the initial false accusations against Stephen suggests that they took account of such an end to this conflict. It is not clear how long the conflict developed before the opponents intervened in this way.

5.3 Co-existence and co-operation?

The intense conflict in Acts 1–5 is limited to *some* representatives of early Judaism and *some* followers of Jesus; it does not involve all *the* Jews and all *the* Christians, if this distinction means anything at this stage. Except for the clashes between the leaders of each group, there is co-existence. The common use of the temple precincts and the city suggests co-existence between the Christian and the wider Jewish community. It is difficult to assess the time covered by the account of Acts 1–5: it was probably too short to include multiple periods of co-existence between the religious leaders and the apostles. Following the de-escalation of the conflict in Acts 4–5, there seems to have been a period of co-existence (5:42; 6:1). This is suggested by the summary of Acts 6:7. Acts also notes that the wider public benefits from the miraculous powers of the apostles: the people expect that the apostles will heal their sick and they are not disappointed (5:15–16).[52] Acts mentions both the high esteem in which the apostles are held by the people of Jerusalem and the awed distance maintained by other Jews (5:13).

The *Stephen-episode* contains no direct evidence for any co-existence and co-operation. The account makes it clear, however, that it initially only involves Stephen (not yet a large part of the Christian community as later in Acts 8:1) and *some* from the Diaspora synagogue(s), not all members. In the wake of this conflict, the persecution extends to all Christians (presumably those with a Diaspora-background), while the apostles can remain in Jerusalem (8:1).[53] The duration of this conflict is not indicated. Possibly and probably a longer period of co-existence preceded the escalation of the conflict (from 6:10 onwards).

5.4 Transition and assimilation

The hints of some relatively peaceful co-existence after Acts 5:42, the limitation of religious conflict to the leaders of both camps, the respect for the followers of Jesus, the benefits of the movement for the wider populace (3:1–10; 5:12–16) and the large numbers of converts suggest a measure of transition and assimilation from the established varieties of early Judaism to the new Jewish Christian movement or its acceptance by and among other Jewish groups.

It is noteworthy that while the people of Jerusalem are called to repent of their misjudgement regarding Jesus (2:37–39; 3:26, etc.), they are never called to *convert* or understand themselves to be changing over to another distinct religion. As the legitimate descendants of the prophets and heirs of the covenant and *first* addressees of the risen servant Jesus (3:25–26), they are now called to join the restored people of God who are obedient to the plan and purposes of God. Those who will *not* believe in the prophet like Moses and listen to whatever that prophet tells them will be rooted out of the people (3:22–23). The emphasis is on continuity.

There are no direct traces of transition and assimilation in the Stephen episode. If arguments from silence carry weight, it is noteworthy that the conflict only involves Stephen (other Christians apparently were tolerated by the Jewish Diaspora community in Jerusalem) and that only some of this group resist Stephen and dispute with him. Others in this group remain neutral or possibly even join the Christian movement. (The 'devout men' who bury Stephen and lament his death possibly belong to this group, 8:2.)

6. Further observations on the conflicts in Acts 1–8:3

6.1 Intra-religious conflict and the 'parting of the ways'

According to Acts, this conflict is not a conflict between *the* Jews and *the* Christians. Rather, it is a conflict between the Jerusalem religious establishment (with exceptions, see Lk 23:50 and Gamaliel) and the apostles who challenge this establishment not only by their claims regarding Jesus (including the charges levelled against the leaders) but also by their uncompromising behaviour. The rank-and-file Christians (such as the 120 people mentioned in Acts 1:15 who had come with Jesus from Galilee and their numerous recent converts in Jerusalem) do not feature in this conflict. The population of Jerusalem is neutral or even in favour of the apostles.[54] As the conflict heightens, many come to faith in the Jesus whom the leaders reject.

All conflicts in Acts 1–8:3 are *intra*-religious. They occur within the various strands of early Judaism, including early Christianity, and are portrayed as conflicts between the Jewish followers of the Jewish Messiah Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. This is to be expected in this part of Acts which focuses on the witness to the Gospel in Jerusalem. This observation is in accord with Mayer who notes that there is

> an increasing recognition that religious conflict that self-identifies – and was thus previously viewed – as *inter*-religious is now proving on careful analysis to be primarily *intra*-religious, dissolving the formerly pervasive oppositional dichotomies Christians and Jews, and Christians and pagans.[55]

While this picture changes in Acts 13–28 when the Christian message reaches the Greco-Roman world, even there most religious conflicts are *within* early Judaism. Acts 1–8:3 can be read as the *beginning* of an *intra*-religious conflict narrative which traces the painful and at times violent 'parting of the ways' between various forms and representatives of early Judaism, including the nascent Christian movement. In view of the often tense relationships between other groups in early Judaism (also reflected in Acts, see 23:6–10), it is not surprising that this is an account of conflicts.

James Dunn and other scholars of early Judaism and early/ancient Christianity and their interrelationship have referred to a number of historical, theological and social phenomena under the heading *The Parting(s) of the Ways*.[56] Research into this phenomenon is based on the realisation that the separation between Judaism and Christianity was gradual, happened at different rates in different places, and was influenced by a variety of factors. There is disagreement as to precisely what caused the rift, and estimates vary with regard to the date. According to this discussion, in the first century the concern was to determine who was Christian and who was or was not Jewish. Later developments were characterised by a move from concern with Christian self-definition to defining and shaping the church as a distinct entity over and against nascent Rabbinic Judaism.

To what extent and how Acts contributes to these quests depends on when it was written. While the author narrates events in the early years of the community, he does so at a later stage. The narrative takes its readers up to the early sixties of the first century. Even with an early dating of Acts, that is, soon after the events described up to Acts 28,[57] the course of the development of early Christianity and its relation to early Judaism will have coloured the way in which the relationship between both groups is reflected. The later Acts is dated, the more such influence should be assumed, as the author not only refers to past events but also deals with issues current at the time. The contribution of Acts to these quests also depends on the assessment of the genre and nature of Acts: is it by and large a historically reliable account or is it more of a theological construct?[58] These two options are not necessarily mutually exclusive, however, as both could be the case.[59]

A brief summary of the contributions of Acts 1–8:3 to this nuanced discussion must suffice. According to Acts 1–8:3, the ways of the Jewish apostles and the Jewish religious leaders parted early on. This was caused by the leaders' refusal to either tolerate or believe the apostles' claims regarding Jesus and to repent. They did not relinquish their claim to their leadership role. This was not the fault of the apostles who are portrayed as faithfully fulfilling their commission. Acts does not indicate that the apostles were mistaken in doing so or could or should have acted otherwise. There is no trace of self-criticism or a hindsight reflection that the developments could or should have been different.

In their proceedings against the apostles, the religious leaders act in isolation and in contrast to the Jewish people in general, who become believers or hold the apostles in high esteem. Like the

rejection of Jesus, the early parting of the ways is the fault of the Jewish *leaders* of Jerusalem, not of the Jewish *people* as a whole.

Although they lead a community of their own with distinctive convictions and practices and behave in ways unusual for their social status, the apostles are portrayed as Jews acting within Judaism. While the leaders consider and treat them as heretics who must be disciplined, they never question their Jewish identity or their belonging to the people of God. In contrast, the apostles indicate that belonging to the people of God depends on the stance taken vis-à-vis Jesus: those who refuse to listen to him will be rooted out from the people (3:23).

The portrait of the Jewish leadership is not entirely negative. While they refused to repent and believe in Jesus, guided by a variety of motives (due to the popularity of the apostles, none of the means available to them proved to be efficient) they try to de-escalate the conflict and eventually resolve it by giving in and not taking further measures against the apostles.

Acts indicates that more than the evaluation of Jesus is contested. Closely related to this domain, a number of other domains are directly or indirectly, deliberately or by chance, affected by this estimate and contested in this conflict. According to Acts, the beginning of the parting of the ways was a complex issue.

6.2 Inter-personal and divine–human conflict

This conflict is more than a conflict between two or more collective *human* agents deriving, for example, from separate religions, separate factions within the same religion, or from within the same faction in the same religion and/or secular authority.[60] In rejecting Jesus, the leaders do not reject a mere human and his devotees, but *God*'s specially anointed and affirmed Christ and saviour. To reject him is to incur divine judgement (3:23). This conflict transcends human collective agents: it is interpreted by the apostles in light of Psalm 2:1–2: 'For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and plan had predestined to take place' (4:23–33). Even the opponent who most extensively comments on the events, Gamaliel, is portrayed as deeming it possible that the events reflect the plan and purposes of God: 'because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them – in that case you may even be found fighting against God' (5:39). Resistance against the plan of God is understood as fighting *against God* (5:39): to the leaders, Jesus is a mere human (5:28; they reject all super-human claims for him) and his adherents have no particular qualification for their provocative claims and behaviour. While not atheistic when it comes to their own convictions and position, the leaders reject Jesus as God's Messiah and question the commission of the apostles by him. In the conflicts of Acts 1–8:3, divine agency itself is among the contested domains or perhaps even *the* contested domain behind all others. It is noteworthy that the opponents in Acts 1–8:3 are not associated with the devil by the narrator or the Christian protagonists (see Lk 22:3; Acts 5:3).[61]

This deeper dimension of the conflict also becomes apparent in that in their course of action, the apostles do not act of their own initiative and launch a mere human challenge to the religious leaders. Appointed by Jesus, they follow his commission and angelic instruction. Thus they must stay in Jerusalem, go and stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life (5:20). Acts characterises the apostles as exemplary, faithful and obedient in contrast to their opponents. In addition, they continually receive divine affirmation for their identity, commission and proclamation through various sorts of miracles. In view of this divine instruction, empowerment and affirmation, compromise with the leaders or negotiation of any sort – which would allow for de-escalation and resolution of the conflict – is not an option. The apostles cannot and must not leave Jerusalem, avoid the temple precincts, modify their message or limit their ministry to their adherents (5:20). Their situation is presented as requiring a choice between obeying God and obeying human authority (5:29). The claim to obey God, and in turn the honour which this generates from God and/or humans becomes a further contested domain. Once conflicts are framed in this way by one (or more) of the parties involved or are portrayed as such in the discourse(s) about them, compromise, de-escalation or resolution of conflict become difficult or almost impossible.

6.3 The prevalence of conflict in Acts 1–8:3

What is the purpose of the detailed account of conflict in the first chapters of Acts? How does it contribute to the purpose of Acts? Its early chapters

describe how the apostles tried to fulfil their commission to the people of Israel despite fierce resistance from the religious leaders. In all of this, they remained faithful to their commission by Jesus and were divinely affirmed in different ways. Through their efforts Israel and its leaders had a chance to respond to the offer of salvation in Jesus. Many Jews indeed responded positively to the Christian proclamation: the re-gathering and restoration of Israel had indeed taken place in Jerusalem, before the gospel went out to the Gentiles. Now Gentiles *as Gentiles* can and should join this restored people (Acts 15:14–18). Resistance came not from the Jewish *people* but from the *leaders*.

Another answer to this question lies in the often-observed parallels between Peter and Paul in Acts. Acts is written primarily as an apology for the controversial Paul and for his disputed law-free mission that did not require Gentiles first to become Jews in order to participate in God's salvation in the Messiah Jesus for his people, Israel. The second half of Acts explains the origin and course of the conflicts in which Paul was involved as a faithful witness to Jesus. He was even charged with sedition. According to Acts, in each case it was not Paul who is to be blamed. Against the backdrop of the later portrayal of Paul, the early chapters of Acts indicate that conflicts did not start when Paul entered the scene, but were there from the beginning – before Paul joined the movement and apart from him. Paul's experiences correspond to those of the apostles in Jerusalem. According to Acts, faithful witness to Jesus will lead not only to conversions and growth of the Christian community, but also to resistance and fierce conflicts which cannot and must not be avoided.

6.4 Conflict and community building

Acts 4:23–37 shows that the opposition it faced bound the Christian community even closer together internally (cf. the first description of its life in 2:42–47). This is a classic function of conflict which has been analysed and described by social psychologists and sociologists. They suggest that whether a threat genuinely exists or not, by promoting discourse that constructs the community as threatened by an external group, its leaders strengthen the in-group's identity.[62]

In the case of Acts the threat is presented as real. Other than faithfully continuing with their commission by Jesus against all human orders to the contrary (4:18–20; 5:29–33), the apostles do not *initiate* the conflict in order to achieve closer internal bonding, nor do they *employ* or deliberately *prolong* it for any purpose. The same applies to Stephen. Greater group cohesion was an outcome of these conflicts, but it was not their purpose. Christians who initiate and employ conflicts in this way cannot refer to Acts for justification. While the community has boundaries and a clearly defined in-group identity, it not only remains open to others but also actively invites them.

To a lesser extent this phenomenon applies to the religious leaders as a group of their own. While they gather together and act unanimously (4:5–6), they lose their legitimacy and command over the people who either become Christians, or while not joining the Christian community, are positively inclined towards it. Neither Jesus nor the apostles are perceived as a threat by the people.

7. Evaluation

Our examination in both parts of this essay has shown that the religious conflicts of Acts 1–8:3 are highly complex. Although the author of Acts has other intentions for Luke–Acts and does not intend to tell a tale of conflicts, his account still offers valuable insights into these conflicts and religious conflict in general. The conflicts of Acts involve several contested domains and political, social, economic, cultural, psychological and transcendent enabling conditions on both sides. While they become increasingly fierce and include verbal and physical violence, there are also traces of de-escalation and resolution, co-existence and co-operation and transition and assimilation. The conflicts of Acts illuminate the complexities of intra-religious conflict (including the potential consequences of a 'parting of the ways') and the relationship between inter-personal and divine–human conflict. The conflict accounts in Acts 1–8:3 contribute to the overall purpose of Acts in their own way.

8. Present-day significance

Wendy Mayer has drawn attention to the relationship between the religious conflicts of today and those of antiquity. The study of today's religious conflicts (more accessible and better documented) has shed light and provided methodology and theoretical frameworks for studying religious conflicts in antiquity. However, the contribution of the study of religious conflict in antiquity – in particular when it comes to a contribution that modern

study cannot also make – toward understanding present-day religious conflicts and their academic study is less clear. The same also applies to instances of de-escalation and conflict resolution.

One benefit of studying the religious conflicts of antiquity (with all the methodological challenges that this involves) is an appreciation of the continuity and discontinuity in religious conflict and in the motives behind it. This is a field where history, religious studies, social psychology and other disciplines interested in the subject of religious conflict intersect.[63]

The community of faith, to whose canon of sacred writings Acts belongs, has had different experiences with regard to the nature and intensity of religious conflicts throughout its history. Even in the present, Christians in different contexts will read and appreciate the accounts of Acts differently. They will mean something very different in areas where the Church is being persecuted from what they do in secular Western societies. What they might learn from studying this account will also differ.

Luke's descriptions of religious conflict can alert students of religious conflict, those concerned with it and those involved in religious conflicts of a different nature, to the fact that some religious conflicts are intra-religious and therefore need to be resolved in that context. Acts also indicates that more than 'purely' religious motives can be – and most likely are – involved in religious conflicts. Religious conflict is not only motivated by different convictions and practices (intra-religious and inter-religious). Through such insights, at least some religious conflicts can be 'de-mythologised'. Appreciating and recognising these mechanisms helps in understanding the origin and ferocity of some religious conflicts. Recognising and understanding these other factors can help to understand and resolve religious conflicts today.

As in the study of religious conflict in antiquity, so also today the focus on religious conflict and in particular on violence must not overshadow the potential of the instances of de-escalation and resolution and of co-existence and co-operation which Acts mentions and which also belong to the Christian heritage, although that aspect has at times been neglected.

Current readings of religious conflict which dominate all theory *a priori* exclude the reality or otherwise of the divine. They focus on the role attributed to the divine by an individual (in this case the author of Acts) or by a group in the narrative (in this case the Christians) that is crucial in generating, escalating or otherwise affecting conflict. If we assume that religious conflict is a purely human phenomenon, the divine cannot be an agent proper, but is attributed by humans as a cause. However, *religious* conflicts by definition involve not only humans but have their roots in what is perceived to be human resistance to divine purposes. They can be influenced in their course by what is perceived to be divine intervention which must be followed without compromise. In such cases human practices and experiences of mediation and conflict resolution, as desirable as they are, will prove to be of limited use. All people involved in understanding, addressing and solving such conflicts need to be aware of this dimension.

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Endnotes

1 W. Mayer, 'Religious Conflict. Definitions, Problems and Theoretical Approaches' in W. Mayer and B. Neil (eds), *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam* (AKG 121; Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2013) (1–19) 3.

2 Mayer, 'Religious Conflict', 3.

3 The theocentric nature of Acts has rightly been emphasised by R. Gebauer, *Die Apostelgeschichte (Teilband 1. Apostelgeschichte 1–12)* (Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2014) and *Teilband 2. Apostelgeschichte 13–28* (2015).

4 For full treatment of the accounts see the commentaries of C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles I. Preliminary Introduction and Commentary on Acts I–XIV* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), R.I. Pervo, *Acts. A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), E.J. Schnabel, *Acts* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012) and C.S. Keener, *Acts. An Exegetical Commentary Vol. 1. Introduction and Acts 1:1–2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012) and *Vol. 2. Acts 3:1–14:28* (2013).

5 For the priests, see the recent survey by V. Gäckle, *Allgemeines Priestertum. Zur Metaphorisierung des Priestertitels im Frühjudentum und Neuen Testament* (WUNT 331; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) 19–141. For a survey of the sources regarding the Sanhedrin, the priesthood and the Sadducees

see E. Schürer, G. Vermes and F. Millar, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC – AD 135)*, vol. II (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979) 199–308, 404–414. See also the following entries in J.J. Collins and D.C. Harlow (eds), *Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2010): J.C. Vanderkam, 'High Priests', 739–742; R.A. Kugler, 'Priests', 1096–1099; G. Stemberger, 'Sadducees', 1179–1181; C.A. Evans, 'Sanhedrin', 1193–1194; for the Diaspora/Diaspora Jews see E. Schürer, G. Vermes and F. Millar, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC – AD 135)*, vol. III.1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986) 1–176 and M. Zugmann, *'Hellenisten' in der Apostelgeschichte. Historische und exegetische Untersuchungen zu Apg 6,1; 9,29, 11,20* (WUNT II.264; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) 89–294.

6 On characterisation in Acts see J.A. Darr, *On Building Character. The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke–Acts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992) and his study *Herod the Fox. Audience Criticism and Lukan Characterization* (JSNTS 163; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). Generally on characters and characterisation in narratives see D.E. Aune, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (Louisville, London: Westminster, John Knox 2003) 91–92.

7 For their identity see Barrett, *Acts I,* 222–225, Schnabel, *Acts,* 235–236 and R. Metzner, *Die Prominenten im Neuen Testament. Ein prosopographischer Kommentar* (NTOA /StUNT 66; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008) 342–346, 348–351.

8 However, even in their actions against Jesus, they had to take his popularity with the people of Jerusalem into account, see Luke 19:48; 22:3–6; 23:27. They did not dare to use their full means against him in public.

9 Acts 5:36–37 suggests that the authority and claim to leadership of the council is not unchallenged: although their movements eventually came to nothing, other figures of the past managed to draw followers and in this way presented a challenge to the established leaders.

10 For the Pharisees see R. Deines, 'Pharisees' in Collins and Harlow, *Dictionary of Early Judaism, 1061–1063* and D.B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend. Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (ESEC 2; New York: Peter Lang, 1991); on Gamaliel see O. Padilla, *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts. Poetics, Theology and Historiography* (SNTSMS 144; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 106–134; J.A. Darr, 'Irenic or Ironic? Another Look at Gamaliel' in R.P. Thompson and T.E. Philips (eds), *Literary Studies in Luke–Acts. Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998) 121–140 and Metzner, *Prominente*, 351–356.

11 See L.R. Iannaccone, W.S. Bainbridge, 'Economics of Religion' in J. Hinnells (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (2nd ed.; London, New York: Routledge, 2010) 461–475.

12 For brief discussion see P.J. Bräunlein, 'Kultur' in C. Auffarth, H.G. Kippenberg and A. Michaels (eds), *Wörterbuch der Religionen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006) 299–300.

13 For their identity see Barrett, *Acts I,* 293–296; Schnabel, *Acts*, 314–316 and Metzner, *Prominente*, 357–367.

14 See Padilla, *Speeches, 106–134.*

15 On Galilee see S. Freyne, 'Galilee' in Collins and Harlow, *Dictionary of Early Judaism,* 653–657. Schnabel, *Acts*, 243 comments:

> the members of the Sanhedrin realize that these two men are not priests trained to use the law in the context of their ritual duties in the temple, or wealthy aristocrats who have enjoyed the privileges of primary and perhaps secondary education, or law experts schooled in interpreting the Torah in all its minute details. They are 'uneducated' …, a term that here does not mean 'illiterate' but 'uneducated' in terms of scribal education. It is also possible that this evaluation reports the opinion of those who interrogate Peter and John and does not reflect their actual educational background, which must have been rather modest in comparison with the Sanhedrin's own level of education. The Jewish elite here regard them as 'amateurs' …, as people who have no standing as priestly, political, or scribal experts.

16 On kinship language of early Christianity see P. Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 16–67, on Acts see 50–53.

17 For the characterisation of the community see D.A. Hume, *The Early Christian Community. A Narrative Analysis of Acts 2:41–47 and 4:32–35* (WUNT II.298; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

18 For the significance of the crowds in Luke–Acts see R.S. Ascough, *The Crowds in Luke–Acts. Political-Apologetic in Defence of the Christian Community* (MA thesis, University of St. Michael's College, 1992) and his essay 'Narrative Technique and Generic Designation. Crowd Scenes in Luke–Acts and in Chariton', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996) 69–81. Within the crowd scenes of Luke–Acts, Ascough distinguishes between crowds as audiences ('crowds are often presented as the hearers of stories and teachings and as witnesses of mighty deeds', 74), crowds as an indication of popularity ('The presence of a crowd … is often used to highlight the popularity of the protagonists of the story', 76), crowds as preventing hostile

action (77–78), crowds that are involved in disturbances (78–79; this characteristic appears later in Acts – 16:22; 17:8, 13; 19:23–29; 21:27–30 – but is absent from Acts 1–8) and crowds that contribute to the narrative flow (79–80). Regarding the latter, Ascough writes:

> The crowd in Luke is more, though, than a necessary but distinct part of the stage setting. The crowd takes on a significant role in Luke's passion narrative by calling out for Jesus' death (Luke 23:18–23). Subsequently the crowds are presented repenting of this deed (23:48) and forming the Christian Community in Jerusalem (Acts 1–5). In this way Luke is able to move the narrative from the completion of Jesus' ministry by his death to the beginning of the apostles' ministry and the growth of the church through the repentance of the people (80).

19 Although Acts 6:1 suggests that the sharing of the proceeds of sold property was limited to the Christian community, Acts 2:45 on its own does not limit this activity to the believers ('as any had need'); see Barrett, *Acts I*, 169: 'In the present passage it is not clear whether the charitable distribution was confined to Christians or not; 6:1 suggests that it was'; see also Schnabel, *Acts*, 182 who comments on 2:45: 'were distributed among needy believers'. If such sharing included non-Christians, it would also have enhanced the status of the apostles in the wider community and added to their authority.

20 This happens both before and after Pentecost, see Acts 1:20 and 2:14–41. On the use of the Old Testament in Acts see the survey of I.H. Marshall, 'Acts' in G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (eds), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker; Nottingham: Apollos, 2007) 513–606 and D. Rusam, *Das Alte Testament bei Lukas* (BZNW 122; Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2003); on the use of the Old Testament in the apostles' preaching see D.L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern. Lucan Old Testament Christology* (JSNTS 12; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987).

21 See Barrett, *Acts I*; Schnabel, *Acts* and J. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

22 The religious leaders have – at least in theory – the breast plate and pouch of the high priest with its lots Urim and Thummin. When proceeding against the apostles, they do not seek divine guidance in prayer and/or through lots.

23 See S. Cunningham, *'Through Many Tribulations'. The Theology of Persecution in Luke–Acts* (JSNTS 142; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

24 See A.W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias. A Study on Context and Concern of Acts 1.15–25* (WUNT II.187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

25 Acts 1:8; for witness in Acts see A.A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (SNTSMS 31; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

26 For Luke's pneumatology see now H. Gunkel, *Der Heilige Geist bei Lukas* (WUNT II.389; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

27 See S.S. Liggins, '*Many Convincing Proofs'. Persuasive Phenomena Associated with Gospel Proclamation in Acts* (BZNW 221; Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2016) and R. Strelan, *Strange Acts. Studies in the Cultural World of the Acts of the Apostles* (BZNW 126; Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2004).

28 See J.B. Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany. Prison-Escape in Acts of the Apostles* (BZNW 131; Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2004).

29 For this function of earthquakes see C. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith* (WUNT II.108; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) 201.

30 See W. Reinhardt, *Das Wachstum des Gottesvolkes. Untersuchungen zum Gemeindewachstum im lukanischen Doppelwerk auf dem Hintergrund des Alten Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995) 143–201; Ulrich Wendel, *Gemeinde in Kraft. Das Gemeindeverständnis in den Summarien der Apostelgeschichte* (NThDH 20; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1998) and C. Stenschke, 'Zu den Zahlenangaben in Apostelgeschichte 2 und 4, den Orten der Zusammenkünfte der Urgemeinde und ihrem materiellen Auskommen', *Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie* 20 (2006) 177–183.

31 See M. Rydryck, 'Miracles of Judgement in Luke–Acts' in S. Alkier and A. Weissenrieder (eds), *Miracles Revisited. New Testament Miracle Stories and Their Concepts of Reality* (SBR 2; Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2103) 23–32.

32 For a recent survey see K. Haacker, *Stephanus. Verleumdet, verehrt, verkannt* (Biblische Gestalten 28; Leipzig: EVA, 2014).

33 Cf. the account in Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.200 of the high priest Ananus' activities against James.

34 Earlier on, Saul was introduced to the narrative as a sympathiser of the opponents of Stephen. While not directly involved in stoning him, the false witnesses of Acts 6:13–14 entrust their garments to Saul (7:58). In this way, Saul is identified with them. Acts 8:1 explicitly notes that Saul approved of Stephen's execution; see J.C. Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (SNTSMS 77; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and R. Riesner, *Paul's Early Period. Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 1998) 59–74.

35 For the number of synagogues (from one to five) see Schnabel, *Acts*, 344. He concludes: 'The Greek syntax is not sufficiently clear to allow a decision regarding the number of synagogues listed here'.

36 Says Schnabel, *Acts*, 347: 'The perfect of the finite verb "heard" … and the present participle "speak" … indicate that the diaspora Jews claimed to have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words *constantly, over a longer period of time'* (italics CS).

37 Haacker, *Stephanus*, emphasises that is highly problematic to reconstruct the actual position of Stephen on these issues on the basis of false charges (the content of the charges is ascribed to instigation and false witness). Such reconstructions should be based on Stephen's speech. However, even the speech is Luke's abbreviated version and responds to an agenda set by others.

38 Schnabel, *Acts*, 394 notes: 'Had they been believers, Luke would have said so, referring to "brothers". The term may refer to Jews who sympathised with the Christian message. … the "great lamentation" … may have been a public protest by the people who buried Stephen and who disagreed with what the Jewish authorities had done.'

39 For a survey see Marshall, 'Acts', 556–572.

40 Some have made a link between the appointment of Stephen (and the six other men) and the 'continued spread of the word, the great increase of the number of disciples in Jerusalem and the becoming obedient to the faith of a great many of priests' (as summarised in Acts 6:7); for a popular proponent see G. Edwards, *Revolution. The Story of the Early Church* (Jacksonville: SeedSowers, 1974) 91: Saul 'watched as even temple priests became believers. Stephen had probably been the instrument behind some of these conversions. The flame of Saul's anger was almost out of control. Temple priests! Following Jesus! Unthinkable!'. If the Diaspora Jew Stephen was involved in this, he might have been blamed and accused by his fellow Diaspora Jews (this is where the opposition to him arose) of undermining the temple and its cult. For his fellow Diaspora Jews this would have been a very serious matter as many of them had returned from the Diaspora to Jerusalem precisely for this reason. This explains their particular concern for the Law and the temple. Anything perceived to threaten these divinely ordained institutions would have aroused their resistance.

41 Barrett, *Acts I*, 322 notes the parallel to the miracles of the apostles in Acts 2:43, 4:30 and 5:12. Stephen is not inferior to them.

42 See Schnabel, *Acts,* 389.

43 For details see Schnabel, *Acts*, 389–390.

44 The conflict account serves as a brief narrative introduction to Stephen's speech, which functions as far more than an apology in the whole book.

45 If we would not take these transcendent enabling conditions into account, both conflicts would still be understandable. The popular esteem of the apostles, only based on their bold proclamation (!), which limited the leaders' enabling conditions and the wise counsel of Gamaliel, could explain the eventual decision not to intervene any further, but to await the outcome of this new movement.

46 A notable exception is Gamaliel, for whom it is at least conceivable that the leaders are actually fighting God (in vain), Acts 5:39.

47 See J. Jervell, 'The Divided People of God. The Restoration of Israel and Salvation for the Gentiles' in J. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God. A New Look at Luke–Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) (41–74) 44–49 and Reinhardt, *Wachstum*, 143–201.

48 See Jervell, 'Divided People'.

49 Mayer, 'Religious Conflict', 17.

50 Mayer, 'Religious Conflict', 18.

51 For the Christology of Acts see H.D. Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology* (MSSNTS 89; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); for a survey see C. Stenschke, 'The Presentation of Jesus in the Missionary Speeches of Acts and the Mission of the Church', *Verbum et Ecclesia* (2014) (Art. #803, 18 pages. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ ve.v35i1.803).

52 While the verb at the beginning of Acts 5:15 ('*they* even carried out the sick') could refer to the believers mentioned in v. 14 ('more than ever *believers* were added'), v. 16 notes that people from the towns around Jerusalem gather and bring their sick to the apostles to be healed. This is a clear instance of co-operation. See Barrett, *Acts I*, 276: 'The action of unnamed persons (not said and probably not thought to be Christians) in bringing out their sick friends … No subject is expressed for ἐκφέρειν; it is better to take one out of λαός (vv. 12,13; non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem …) than out of πλήθη (v. 14)'.

53 See the discussion in Barrett, *Acts I*, 390–391.

54 See their characterisation in Padilla, *Speeches*, 113.

55 Mayer, 'Religious Conflict', 16 (italics CS).

56 J.D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways. Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (rev. ed.; London: SCM, 2006; 1st ed. 1991); J.D.G. Dunn (ed.), *Jews and Christians. The Parting of the Ways: AD 70–135* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); D. Boyarin, *Border Lines. The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) and J.M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Greco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); for a current summary see H. Shanks (ed.), *Partings. How Judaism and Christianity Became Two* (Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2013) and J. Kok and D.T. Roth, 'Introduction' in J. Kok, T. Nicklas, D.T. Roth and C.M. Hays (eds), *Sensitivity Towards Outsiders. Exploring the Dynamic Relationship between Mission and Ethics in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (WUNT II.364; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) (1–23) 1–4.

57 On the date of Acts see Keener, *Acts I*, 383–401.
58 For discussion see Keener, *Acts I*, 16–30, 90–220, 320–382.
59 For a classic presentation of this case see I. H. Marshall, *Luke. Historian and Theologian* (3rd ed.; Exeter: Paternoster, 1988).
60 See Mayer, 'Religious Conflict', 5.
61 On the devil in Luke–Acts see Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait*, 248–251, 381–382 and S.R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil. Magic and the Demonic in Luke–Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).
62 See, for example, the discussion of in-group/out-group bias and its function in R. Powell and S. Clarke, 'Religion, Tolerance and Intolerance. Views from Across the Disciplines' in S. Clarke, R. Powell and J. Savulescu (eds), *Religion, Intolerance, and Conflict. A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) (1–35) 19–22. The phenomenon of inner-group cohesion combined with hostility towards external groups as normative is explained on the basis of moral psychology by Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes. Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013).
63 See the survey of different approaches and perspectives in M. Juergensmeyer, M. Kitts and M. Jerryson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).