

WHICH OF THE PROPHETS DID YOUR ANCESTORS NOT PERSECUTE?—STEPHEN’S DEATH AND SECOND TEMPLE DEMONOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

This essay explores the question, “Why was Stephen killed?” Because Acts mentions the charge of blasphemy and the infuriated crowd, most scholars do not see a reason to investigate why he was killed; it seems obvious. However, this ignores numerous details that Luke provides that match the close connection that Second Temple texts make between demonic influence, unclear thinking, and behavior.¹ I argue that Luke’s audience would have understood Stephen’s murderers to be under demonic influence, which would serve as a primary driving force behind the murder.

Recent scholarship on Acts 7 is nearly unanimous in taking Stephen’s speech as an exemplar of forensic rhetoric, with nearly everyone following or adapting the work of Jacques Dupont.² Yet, this decision rests primarily on the *narrative setting* rather than the rhetorical form and content of the speech. After all, multiple clues indicate a forensic setting, such as witnesses, charges, a trial, and what could be a defense speech. However, *every* scholar consulted is curiously unable to demonstrate the speech’s correspondence to the forensic species.³ Most notably, it lacks a *propositio*, an essential element for forensic rhetoric.⁴ This fact leads numerous rhetorical experts to conclude the following:

1. E.g., Jub. 10; 4Q510–511; 3 Bar. 16.3; John 10:20; Rom 1:28–32; 2 Cor 4:4; 2 Thess 2:2; 1 Tim 4:1.

2. Jacques Dupont, “La structure oratoire du discours d’Étienne (Actes 7),” *Biblica* 66 (1985): 153–67. The only exception that I am aware of is Todd C. Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 287–330.

3. In addition to those cited below, see also, Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 261, 267; Ben Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 59; Daniel Marguerat, *Les actes des apôtres (1–12)*, CNT 5a (Genève: Labor et fides, 2007), 231.

4. The *propositio* is essential because it articulates the point(s) argued or defended. Quintilian, *Inst.*, 3.9.1–2. Elsewhere he reiterates “Proof [probatio] cannot be produced unless the Cause [causa or ὑποθέσεις] is duly known” (*Inst.*, 4.2.24 [Russell, LCL]). Cf. R. D. Anderson, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 64, n. 61, n. 62. Quintilian does allow for instances where a *propositio* is unnecessary (4.4.2) but this is only the case when the Question being argued is obvious and a *propositio* would either be superfluous or integral to the *narratio*.

F. F. Bruce—Stephen’s speech is a “defense of pure Christianity” because it “is obviously not a speech for the defense in the forensic sense of the term.”

George A. Kennedy—Stephen employs “counteraccusation” because he “clearly concludes that there is no real possibility of making the Council understand the message of Jesus, he expresses anger at his persecutors, and he deliberately invites martyrdom.”⁵

Richard I. Pervo—Stephen’s speech is “defective,” that is, incomplete, making it difficult to analyze rhetorically.⁶

Joseph A. Fitzmyer—The speech “begins as an apologia [forensic]” but ends in “judgment against his Jewish opponents.”⁷

Craig S. Keener—“The heavy Jewish elements might help explain why it does not fit Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions as well as do Paul's defense speeches in the final quarter of Acts.”⁸

Moreover, as the rhetorical handbooks and ancient defenses attest, forensic rhetoric is not the only species to be found in a legal setting. In fact, epideictic is quite useful in forensic contexts.⁹ In short, those who seek to examine Stephen’s speech as forensic come up short, and my own analysis of the speech agrees with the conclusions of Todd C. Penner that it is an exemplar of epideictic rhetoric.

So why does this matter? Properly identifying the species of the speech is critical to its interpretation. Taking it as forensic rhetoric leads interpreters to focus on details that are not important to the goals of the speech, such as whether and how Stephen is answering any charges, and it fails to make sense of the outcome of the speech. By contrast, the epideictic genre helps us interpret both the content and the result. For example, toward the end of the speech Stephen notably switches from speaking about “our fathers” to “your fathers.” Many take this as evidence of Lukan anti-semitism or evidence for the so-called partings of the ways. Yet, Thomas Römer

5. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 121.

6. Richard I. Pervo, *Acts, Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 178.

7. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AYBC (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 368.

8. Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 3:1-14:28* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 1332.

9. Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.2

and Jean-Daniel Macchi offer a more accurate interpretation. That is, Luke is employing Deuteronomistic theology in Stephen's speech. In fact, elsewhere, I demonstrate that this switch to "your fathers" is not limited to Stephen's speech, but embedded in a literary motif throughout Luke-Acts.¹⁰ In Römer and Macchi's assessment, "the deuteronomistic school cannot be restricted to a group or a well defined 'movement'; rather, it is a matter of a large current of thought spreading across the whole Israelite intellectual history from the Assyrian period right up to the first centuries of the Christian era."¹¹ The typical elements of deuteronomistic language include the following,

Moses' mediation of the Law, a view of the origins of the true Israel based on the Exodus, and an exhortation addressed to the people to obey the divine precepts. Among other things, they serve to set the divine promises of the land or the covenant over against the perpetual disobedience of the people who are hardened, stiff-necked, and so on, but who are constantly warned by the prophets, the 'servants of Yahweh.'¹²

A cursory read of Acts 7 not only produces high correspondence between the two, but more importantly, it explains that Stephen is presenting an argument that is comfortably situated "within Judaism."

For the rest of this paper, I demonstrate how the speech's epideictic form and deuteronomistic theology is key to explaining why Stephen was killed, especially because it draws on ancient conceptions of human behavior and the spiritual or unseen realm that influenced it. That is, Luke is providing us clues into ancient anthropology in how he sets up the story, in what actually happens, and how he describes it. First, I show how Luke situates the spread of the word of God in Acts in the context of spiritual conflict and that Stephen's speech occurs as part of this trajectory. Second, I examine Second Temple perspectives on the relationship between human behavior and the spiritual realm. Finally, I show how Second Temple perspectives inform how we should understand the goals and outcome of Stephen's speech and that he criticizes his Jewish audience in a way congruous with Judaism.

10. Benjamin J. Snyder, "The 'Fathers' Motif in Luke-Acts," *Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* 2 (2015): 44–71.

11. Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi, "Luke, Disciple of the Deuteronomistic School," in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays*, ed. Christopher M. Tuckett, JSOT 116 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 178–87, 180.

12. Römer and Macchi, "Luke," 180.

THE WAR IN ACTS

In just the immediate context, the following details point to spiritual confrontation. There are signs and wonders (Acts 6:8), resistance to the spirit (6:10), Stephen's face appears as an angel's (6:16), persecution breaks out (8:1), signs and wonders continue (8:6), unclean spirits are ousted (8:7), and following this account is the encounter with Simon, the so-called magician (8:9–13). Of course, if we expand this survey to include the entirety of Acts, there is spiritual confrontation throughout the work.

Moreover, David Pao observes in *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* that Luke employs militaristic language when describing the spread of the “word of God.”¹³ Examples of this language include:

- *κατὰ κράτος*, “according to might”—This expression is regularly used in militaristic contexts in Hellenistic literature, Judg 4:13; the Exodus (Ex 6:1, 6; Deut 3:24; 7:19); and the Isaianic New Exodus (Isa 51:5, 9; 53:1).
- *τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος*, “word of grace”—Hans Conzelmann notes the connection of *χάρις* with the *θεῖος ἀνὴρ* tradition and says that “*χάρις* becomes power in a substantial sense” in the Hellenistic period.
- *τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα*, “portents and signs”—This expression is connected to God as warrior in the LXX and is collocated with *χάρις* in Acts 6:8 in relation to Stephen, and then with *τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος* later in Acts 14:3. Then, in Acts 7:36, the same phrase is used explicitly in connection with the Exodus.

Additionally, Pao understands “the word of God” to be the “central character of Acts” that realizes the Isaianic New Exodus.¹⁴ In support of this, he notes that the phrase “the word of God,” *ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ/τοῦ κυριοῦ* and similar expressions often function as the *subject* of various verbs.¹⁵ And he observes that “the word” is always on an outward trajectory from Jerusalem to Rome, never returning to a previously conquered city or place.¹⁶

13. David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 162–67.

14. Pao, *Acts*, 150; cf. François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950-2005)*, 2nd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 272, 554. Confirmation of Pao's proposal that the word of God is a hypostatization is found in other LXX texts wherein the word of God works in and after the creation of the world (e.g., Ps 32:6 [33:6 LXX]; Ps 146:15–18 [147:15–18 LXX]; Hab 3:5 LXX).

15. Examples include: “the word pleased,” (Acts 6:4); “the word continued spreading” (Acts 6:7; 19:20); “the word was heard” (Acts 11:22); “the word was sent out” (Acts 13:26); “the word was spreading” (Acts 13:49); “the word of God was proclaimed” (Acts 17:13). See, Pao, *Acts*, 160–62.

16. Pao, *Acts*, 150–56.

Thus, Stephen's speech falls within the context of a spiritual battle in which the themes of the Exodus and Isaianic New Exodus are active in the narrative. It is a specific battle that takes place in a larger war being waged by God. While this is important framing information, we turn now to consider more deeply Second Temple period perspectives related to humanity, its relationship to the spiritual world, and the latter's influence on the former with respect to human behavior. This will offer us a critical lens with which to interpret more specifically what Stephen argues and what happens to him.

SECOND TEMPLE PERSPECTIVES ON EVIL SPIRITS AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Stephen's switch from "our fathers" to "your fathers" occurs in an invective against his audience that culminates in him accusing them of rejecting God's deliverer, Jesus, and being idol worshippers. He maps this claim onto their ancestry. While they may share Jewish blood lines, Stephen and his audience derive from two different spiritual ancestries. This naturally raises the question of dualism, which is most often associated with the sectarian DSS, Greco-Roman Platonic philosophy, and certain NT writings.

The meaning and classification of dualistic thought continues to be debated among scholars. For example, Jörg Frey's classification of dualism includes ten subcategories.¹⁷ Rather than analyze how each of these might inform Stephen's speech, I build upon three observations that Frey makes about dualism in the DSS that both complicates and advances our understanding of Acts 7. These observations and their relevance to the question at hand are as follows:

- (1) "Only a limited portion of the material is characterized by explicit dualistic terminology and thought." This suggests that dualism is a topos employed as needed in a discourse. Since dualism reflects one's view of reality, it rises to the surface when something or someone challenges one's own perspective.
- (2) "[T]exts and sections labeled 'dualistic' show notable differences in content and terminology." Importantly, Frey notes that the way the Qumran texts discuss dualism is not unique to the DSS. In fact, he questions the notion of a "uniform picture of dualism" with respect to Qumran.
- (3) "There is the problem of the origin of the texts." Many of the DSS, including those that are considered dualistic, derive from a period anterior to the formation of the Qumran

17. Jörg Frey, "Different Patterns of Dualistic Thought in the Qumran Library: Reflections on Their Background and History," in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Cambridge 1995, Published in Honour of Joseph M. Baumgarten*, ed. Moshe Bernstein, Florentino García Martínez, and John Kampen, STDJ 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 275–335.

community. And as John J. Collins has observed, “Communities are founded by people, not traditions, and people may be informed and influenced by more than one strand of tradition.”¹⁸

On the one hand I am proposing that our approach to dualism is too atomistic and that we are missing natural collocations that these different subcategories of dualism connect to even when unstated. For example, if certain people believe that humanity is divided between good and evil whether in their origin at birth or current domination by a spirit, it seems logical to relate this to ethical behavior. On the other hand I do not wish to zoom out so far that all dualism is equal. Thus, I am attempting to walk a fine line between paying attention to the details and specific contexts while at the same time identifying broad contours that enable us to understand dualism from a systematic point of view wherein dimensions of dualism relate to one another.

With this in mind, I will now turn to several Second Temple Period Texts with the sole purpose of demonstrating the connection that ancient people made between human behavior, the unseen realm, and human thinking. I am not attempting to say that Stephen or Luke's perspective is necessarily identical to those in the following texts, but that they are part of a similar worldview.

Jubilees

The popularity and importance of Jubilees, a work that retells Gen 1–50 and Exodus 1–24,¹⁹ is reflected in the fact that it was translated from the Hebrew original and circulated in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Ge'ez. Not surprisingly, it deals with topics such as God, creation, humanity, angels, evil spirits, the covenant, and the nations. In Jubilees 1:11 there is the ominous warning,

they will make for themselves high places, (sacred) groves, and carved images; they will bow to all the works of their error. They will sacrifice their children to demons and to every product (conceived by) their erring minds. I will send witnesses to them so that I may testify to them, but they will not listen and will kill the witnesses.

18. John J. Collins, “The Origin of Evil in Apocalyptic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Congress Volume: Paris 1992*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 61 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 2–38, 31.

19. VanderKam suggests that the pre-Sinaitic narratives were possibly chosen because “There must have been something about the stories regarding earliest times that the writer believed had to be addressed. In this connection, 1 Macc 1:11 offers an intriguing possibility” (*Jubilees*, 40). In his view, some Jews may have looked to the patriarchs, who did not have the Mosaic covenant, which insisted on the Jew-gentile division, distinction that served to exacerbate the relationship between Jews and gentiles during the time of Antiochus IV.

Already we may note the connection between idol worship, demonic influence, and the murder of witnesses. Later in Jubilees 10, we find a more detailed account of the role of demons among humanity. It says the following:

impure demons began to mislead Noah’s grandchildren, to make them act foolishly, and to destroy them.

Noah’s grandchildren tell Noah that the demons “were misleading, blinding, and killing his grandchildren” (Jub. 10.2). Noah then prays to God, “may the wicked spirits not rule them in order to destroy them from the earth” (Jub. 10.3). He notes that the spirits “cause destruction among your servant’s sons” (Jub. 10.5) and prays that they “not have power over the sons of the righteous” (10.6).

In a counter bid, “Mastema, the leader of the spirits,” who is later referred to as “satan” (Jub. 10.11), pleads with God that he might retain some spirits to control because “the evil of humanity is great” (Jub. 10.8). God accepts and leaves him ten percent to control. At the same time God commands his angels to “teach Noah all their medicines [i.e., the demons’] because he [i.e., God] knew that they [i.e., the demons] would neither conduct themselves properly nor contend fairly.” The narrative specifies that the medicines were used for “diseases with their deceptions [i.e., the demons’] so that he [i.e., Noah] could cure them [i.e., his grandchildren] by means of the earth’s plants” (Jub. 12).

About this text, James C. VanderKam observes,

The author here echoes themes from Genesis 9 such as the prohibition of shedding blood (something that demons do and cause others to commit) and the order to Noah and his sons to become numerous. The murderous influence of the demons and the command to Noah and his family to multiply manifestly clash.²⁰

Unfortunately, as Jubilees 11.4 relates, the descendants of Noah ended up under the sway of demonic influence.

They made carved images for themselves. Each one would worship the idol that he had made as his own carved image. They began to make statues, images, and unclean things; the spirits of the depraved ones were helping and misleading them so that they would

20. James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees 1: A Commentary on the Book of Jubilees Chapters 1-21*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 397.

commit sins, impurities, and transgressions.

In this expansion on evil spirits, we discover that they have power over humans, this power is enabled by human wickedness, it manifests in destruction, especially murder, and is accomplished through deception. Additionally, Noah's prayer recognizes the status of his children as the "sons of the righteous" implying that there are children of the unrighteous. Moreover, the power of evil spirits is material in nature as they are affected by earthly plants. Finally, it is important to note that the deception of the evil spirits is countered through the revelatory teaching offered by the angels. On the one hand, evil spirits teach humanity evil and cloud their thinking while angels teach humanity how to defend themselves from this evil.

4Q510—The Songs of the Sage for Protection Against Evil Spirits

This brief text from Qumran is regarded as sectarian because of the mention of "the instructor." It dates paleographically to 25–1 BCE. The relevant portion reads as follows:

And I, the Instructor, proclaim His glorious splendor so as to frighten and to te[rri]fy 5 all the spirits of the destroying angels, spirits of the bastards, demons, Lilith, howlers, and [desert dwellers ...] 6 and *those which fall upon men without warning to lead them astray from a spirit of understanding* and to make their heart and their [...] desolate during the present dominion of 7 wickedness and predetermined time of humiliations for the sons of lig[ht], by the guilt of the ages of [those] smitten by iniquity—not for eternal destruction, 8 [bu]t for an era of humiliation for transgression. [...] Sing for joy, O righteous ones, for the God of Wonder. 9 My psalms are for the upright. And [... let] all those who are blameless exalt Him!

The important point to underscore is the connection made between the evil spirits falling on a person "to lead them astray from a spirit of understanding." While this certainly pertains to those who are outside the Qumran community, community members were not exempt from being led astray. In 1QS III, 13–IV, 14, this same dualistic thought appears in the context of the Prince of Light and Angel of Darkness, each with their respective spirit forces allied against one another for the control of the *minds* of humans, the key to their behavior. For example, 1QS III, 25–26 explains,

It is actually He who created the spirits of light and darkness, making them the cornerstone of every deed, 26 their impulses the premise of every action.

For the author of 1QS, every act occurs under the influence of either good or evil spirits.

1QS IV, 2 further explains that the role of the spirits of light is to “enlighten a [person’s] mind,” which manifests in behavior. By contrast, the spirits of darkness keep humans unenlightened and this also manifests in behavior. In particular, 1QS IV, 11 mentions “a reviling tongue, blind eyes, deaf ears, stiff neck, and hard heart—to the end of walking in all the ways of darkness and evil cunning.” We find some of these traits in Stephen’s speech.

1 Enoch 19

Enoch 19 expresses a similar outlook with regard to spiritual influence over humans in leading humans astray, particularly into worshipping demons.²¹ Enoch 19:1 says,

And Uriel said to me: ‘Here shall stand the angels who have connected themselves with women, and their spirits assuming many different forms are defiling mankind and shall lead them astray into sacrificing to demons as gods, (here shall they stand,) till the day of the great judgement which they shall be judged till they are made an end of.

STEPHEN’S SPEECH

Turning now to Acts 7, details in the speech take on new significance when read in light of the prior texts. First, Stephen makes a clear distinction between Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and “the patriarchs” throughout the speech. Abraham is the “ideal father” who responds by faith to God’s word and receives the covenant of promise.²² In accordance with genealogical conventions, this brief linear genealogy, which would be common knowledge to his audience, serves to introduce and discuss the “persons” of interest, οἱ πατριάρχαι.²³ From 7:9 on, “our fathers” does not generically refer to the Israelite ancestors beginning with Abraham but instead delineates a particular subgroup of Israelites to whom Stephen will link his false accusers.²⁴ Römer and

21. Cf. Bar. 4:7—“For you provoked the one who made you by sacrificing to demons and not to God. You forgot the everlasting God, who brought you up, and you grieved Jerusalem, who reared you” (NRSV).

22. For Luke’s appeal to Abraham as the recipient of the covenant of promise and “ideal father,” see the following: Luke 1:55, 73; 13:16, 28; 16:22–24; 20:37; Acts 3:13, 25.

23. Robert R. Wilson, “Genealogy, Genealogies,” *ABD* 2:929–32; J. W. Wright, “Genealogies,” *DOTP*, 345–50.

24. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cannot be included in the group of “our fathers” who (1) were forced to expose their infants in Egypt (7:19), (2) refused to obey Moses (7:39), and (3) served other gods despite possession of the Tabernacle (7:44) and Temple (7:47).

Macchi concur that “the patriarchs” does not generically mean “all our Israelite ancestors.”²⁵ Bart J. Koet also notes, “In Israel’s history there are, thus, two trends: a positive one which is modelled upon the promise to the fathers and a negative one, modelled upon their obduracy.”²⁶ On the one hand, it seems simple enough to point to Deuteronomistic theology to explain Stephen’s logic. Yet, in light of the texts previously discussed, dualism is not only compatible with Deuteronomistic theology but finds in it clear scriptural support.

Second, Stephen continues the ancestral distinction by underscoring the fathers’ adoption of idol worship, which Second Temple texts associate with demons. The fathers turn from the living oracles (Acts 7:38), forget the wonders and signs, and turn to create their own gods, sacrifice to them, and revel in the works of their hands. This same cluster of themes appears in Jubilees and 1 Enoch above. Moreover, the behavior of Stephen’s audience shares clear parallels with their pagan counterparts in Ephesus in Acts 19.

Acts 7	Acts 19
διεπρίοντο	γενόμενοι πλήρεις θυμοῦ
they were being enraged	becoming full of rage
κράξαντες δὲ φωνῇ μεγάλῃ	ἔκραζον
they cried out	they were crying out
ῥομήσαν ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐπ’ αὐτὸν	ῥομήσαν τε ὁμοθυμαδὸν
they rushed together upon him	they rushed together

It may be coincidental, but the verb used in both of these texts, ῥομάω, “I rush,” is also used to describe the demons cast into the herd of pigs (Luke 8:32–33). Furthermore, Stephen refers to them as “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and hears,” which 1QS IV, 11 associates with the sons of darkness.

Finally, the stoning of Stephen is the epitome of demonic influence, that is, bloodshed. Stephen identifies his audience as descending from the “prophet killers” of old, adding that they are betrayers (προδότης) and murderers (φονεύς). One of the concerns of Noah in Jubilees was the result of murder and Stephen fulfills what Jubilees 1:11 promised, “I will send witnesses to them

25. Römer and Macchi, *Luke*, 186.

26. Bart J. Koet, *Five Studies on the Interpretation of Scripture in Luke-Acts*, SNTA 14 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 132–33. Wilson helps to clarify an important point: While it is true that the singular function of the linear genealogy in the HB is to “ground a claim to power, status, rank, office, or inheritance in an earlier ancestor,” it is also true that, “just as a genealogy can take on new functions as part of a larger narrative, so also a narrative can help to interpret a traditional genealogy” (“Genealogy, Genealogies,” *ABD* 2:931–2, emphasis mine).

so that I may testify to them, but they will not listen and will kill the witnesses.” Luke’s description of the audience includes numerous details, such as grinding teeth, becoming enraged, covering the ears so as not to hear, and shouting and rushing.

Regarding Jubilees, VanderKam says,

The relation of Jubilees to Genesis-Exodus is not as a replacement, but as a guide, as a means of helping the reader derive the correct message from the biblical material and ensuring that wrong conclusions were not drawn from it. The writer of Jubilees takes pains to burnish the image of the patriarchs and matriarchs and to show that they were obedient to the divine laws given to them. In order to bring out the appropriate message from the pre-Sinai stories he engaged the full breadth of divine revelations known to him to clarify and contextualize the material in the stories. He summoned in to service Israel’s legal, prophetic, and poetic literature for the purpose.²⁷

It does not take much imagination to realize that Stephen’s speech had similar goals, but applied to the person of Jesus and his own predicament.

As a final observation, commentators have noted the obvious parallel between the last words of Jesus and Stephen. Both say, *κύριε, μὴ στήσης αὐτοῖς ταύτην τὴν ἁμαρτίαν*, “Lord, do not uphold this sin against them.” The above analysis may offer some explanatory value. Luke 23:34, which has text critical issues, says that Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” If Luke intends the reader to consider the fuller context in the parallel drawn with Stephen, then demonic influence explains *why* “they do not know what they are doing.” While this encounter appears to end in defeat since Stephen dies, this is not the case. Stephen’s plea— “Lord, do not hold this sin against them”— both recognizes that his killers are not thinking clearly and also opens the narrative door for a fierce opponent, Saul, to finally change allegiances. Stephen’s “assault” made its mark despite his death.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, taking Stephen’s speech as an exemplar of epideictic rhetoric explains its content and result. Stephen is not attempting to defend himself of any legal charges, but rather is accusing his audience of being like “their fathers.” Stephen’s deployment of Deuteronomistic theology converges nicely with Second Temple dualistic thought in which good and evil spirits have sway over human behavior. I have argued that Luke’s audience would have understood by his description of this encounter that Stephen’s murder was animated by demonic influence. As

27. VanderKam, *Jubilees*, 39.

such, there is no reason to read the speech as either anti-semitic or as evidence that the so-called partings of the ways has occurred.