

**Doctrine or Judaism?  
The texts of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 as vehicles for ideology**

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Orientation

The voice of the martyr is truly powerful. It directs an intense emotional appeal towards anyone that hears it. Martyrdom may even influence the audience to adopt a specific ideology that is communicated through the martyr's speech. Accordingly, Jan Willem Van Henten (1997:3) states that the accounts of martyrdom in 2 and 4 Maccabees can be "considered important documents about patriotic-political views of the Jewish people". Perkins (1995:2-3), in her study on "The suffering self", argues that defining the human self as a sufferer, as a body in pain, greatly contributes to the growth of a community. Thus, texts on martyrdom are loaded with ideological communication that aims to drive the development of a community. The author communicates this ideology through various techniques such as: selective usage of sources, addition, reduction and links between sources.

Texts that portray martyrdom may also serve the purpose of answering questions posed by a community. Traumatic events such as persecution and discrimination may lead communities to ask questions such as:

- Why does God punish his people?;
- Why doesn't God punish the persecutors of his people?;
- Why does evil prevail?;
- Is this the end of our nation?.

Two biblical texts that are concerned with the theme martyrdom are 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7. These texts do not primarily record the ideas of the one that gives the speech, but rather apply the speeches in such a way as to support the ideology that the author wishes to portray.

The two texts mentioned share a number of similarities in terms of the authors' motivation for including the speeches of martyrs, viz.:

- Both texts employ the events of martyrdom because of its rhetorical value;
  - Both texts employ the speech of the martyr/s as a vehicle for propaganda;
  - Both texts note events where Jews are the subjects of martyrdom;
- 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 both seem to rationalise martyrdom in terms of eschatology.

Such similarity is a reasonable motivational factor for initiating a comparative study on 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7, but in noting these similarities one cannot ignore the differences in how the authors employ their chosen texts. Studying the differences between the passages (instead of focussing on the similarities) presents an exciting and interesting vantage point on the texts. In terms of ideological realisation, the factors presented in the following table are incongruent:

**Table 1. Differences in how martyrdom is employed in the two texts 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7**

<b>In 2 Maccabees 7</b>	<b>In Acts 7</b>
Jews are martyred by Syrians.	A Jew is martyred by Jews.
The martyrs foretell God's future revenge upon the persecutor.	The martyr prays: "Lord, do not let this sin stand against them" (7:60).
The martyr foretells future life.	The martyr actually sees (experiences) the heavens open.
The martyrs neutralize their humiliation through proclaiming their divine 'office' of dying for the sake of the law.	The martyr's face becomes like the face of an angel.
The persecutor is depicted as the personification of evil.	The martyr encourages reconciliation with his persecutors.

The differences presented in Table 1 form the focus of this study.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

This study supposes that the texts of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 have a significant difference regarding the author's intention. The divergent intentions can be described as follows:

- The text of 2 Maccabees 7 may not be an allusion to ancestral Jewish doctrine as traditionally accepted, but rather to Jewish-religious revolution in order to sustain a socio-political ideology;
- Acts 7 seemingly sacrifices socio-political ideology through prioritising consistency between Jewish and Christian doctrine.

Scholars such as Bickerman (1930:794), Goldstein (1976:62-89), Habicht (1976:185-191) and Nickelsburg (1972:9) suggest that 2 Maccabees 7 looks back and builds on preceding Jewish doctrine. This view states that 2 Maccabees 7 is simply supporting and prolonging the ancestral Jewish doctrine. Bickerman (1979:21) argues that “the centre of the book is formed by the restoration of the sanctuary.” Collins (2000:79) suggests that the view of Judaism represented in 2 Maccabees “may reasonably be described as covenantal nomism”. The view of doctrinal consistency is mainly formed by the many references to the God of Moses and the early history of Israel as can be seen in the following examples:

- 2 Maccabees 7:2 ἀποθνήσκειν ἔσμεν ἢ παραβαίνειν τοὺς πατρίους νόμους [We will die rather than transgress the ancestral laws.]
- 2 Maccabees 7:9 ἀποθανόντας ἡμᾶς ὑπὲρ τῶν αὐτοῦ νόμων [After we have died for the sake of his laws.]
- 2 Maccabees 7:30 τοῦ δὲ προστάγματος ἀκούω τοῦ νόμου τοῦ δοθέντος τοῖς πατράσιν ἡμῶν διὰ Μωυσέως [But I obey the command of the law that was given to our fathers through Moses.]
- 2 Maccabees 7:37 ἐγὼ δὲ καθάπερ οἱ ἀδελφοί καὶ σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν προδίδωμι περὶ τῶν πατρίων νόμων [But I, like the brothers, sacrifice both body and life regarding the ancestral laws.]

This study presents a fresh reading of 2 Maccabees 7. Unlike Bickerman (1930:794), Goldstein (1976:62-89), Habicht (1976:185-191) and Nickelsburg (1972:9), the argument presented here is that 2 Maccabees 7 is not about looking back and applying the Law of Moses, but about looking forward to the Law of the God of 2 Maccabees. This is a modified Law that sustains Jewish patriotic, political identity.

A theme of remembrance and rededication makes little sense when one considers the sculpting and reframing of Jewish doctrine that is present in 2 Maccabees 7.

The study aims to establish if 2 Maccabees 7 notes a change in theological framework through incorporating new ideas in order to make sense of God in horrid times. These may be ideas such as:

- The reward for martyrdom is eternal life and restoration of the body;
- The blood of the tortured serves as sacrifice for the sins of Israel.

The text of 2 Maccabees 7 does not seem to build on and apply ancestral Jewish doctrine, but appears to provide revolutionary and new doctrinal ideas.

Another facet which needs to be comprehended is the references to the God of Moses and his divine law. If the primary task of the frequent references to the ancestral worship is not to reform and remain unchanged in the ways of the God of Moses, there must be a greater didactic value. Thus, the study aims to establish whether these ancestral references were not at all used as an apologetic structure for Jahwism, but rather as a defence for Judaism<sup>1</sup>. In accordance, Dijkhuizen (2008:57) states that “symbolic opposition to a dominant culture, associated with remembered times of crisis, can be an obvious part of the way in which the minority constructs and maintains its identity”.

However, whereas 2 Maccabees 7 seems to revolutionise Jewish doctrine in order to sustain Judaism, Acts 7 is less revolutionary and seems to prioritise doctrinal consistency. The author provides a comprehensive and exegetical overview of the ways of the Jewish ancestors through the speech of the martyr.

Regarding doctrinal consistency, Sterling (1992:381) argues that the author of Acts had to account for the fact that Christianity was a “historically distinct movement”

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<sup>1</sup> This becomes clear when noted that the word *λουδαϊσμον* [Judaism, as holistically referring to the Jewish way of life] is exclusively used in the Septuagint in 2 and 4 Maccabees. *λουδαϊσμον* is used in the context of the defence of Jewish identity.

from Judaism. Sterling (1992:381) further mentions that “the author of Acts’ concern for this issue is reflected in the recurring theme of Israel’s rejection”. This theme is evident from the programmatic text of Luke 4:16-30, up until the final declaration of Paul in Acts 28:25-28. Sterling (1992:381) concludes as follows: “The answer that Luke-Acts offers is that Christianity is not a new movement, but a continuation of Israel”. This supports the idea of the author’s aim for a consistent doctrinal line rather than drastic progression.

Conzelmann (1963:50), providing additional support, states the following on the speech of Stephen: “Die polemischen Partien lassen sich herauslösen. Dann zeigt sich, dass unter der jetzigen polemischen Oberfläche ein andersartiges Substrat liegt, eine erbauliche, heilsgeschichtliche Betrachtung”. Here, Conzelmann is suggesting that Acts 7 is not only consistent in doctrinal development, but explicates it through placing the stoning of Stephen within a theological framework of the history of salvation. The author of Acts 7 is thus demonstrating two facets through the speech of the martyr: How the polemic parties were formed that are now evident in the circumstances of this speech; and how the God of Moses has been working salvation amongst the Jews.

Regarding the difference in aims between 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7, Sleeman (2009:139-171) demonstrates that the author of Acts moves away from any form of socio-political agenda through revolutionising the spatial perspective<sup>2</sup>. Through the speech of Stephen, the author portrays a kingdom which exceeds all horizontal, and even vertical, borders. Where 2 Maccabees 7 has a strong focus on the delimitation of the land of the Jews and an enmity against all outside, Acts 7 seems to promote an Israel which is all-encompassing. The text of Acts 7 seems to maintain a generally inclusive stance.

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<sup>2</sup> In his book *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts*, Sleeman (2009) demonstrates that the author of Acts aims to move away from a delimited idea of Israel toward the concept of an Israel that exceeds all horizontal and vertical borders. It is thus an aim that is opposed to any socio-political propaganda and fits into the theory of this study concerning the aim of Acts 7.

In Acts 7, as in 2 Maccabees 7, the martyr provides ancestral references to win over the Jewish audience. Barret (1998:341) states that this reference will identify the martyr “as a Jew concerned for the honour of the national religion”. Unlike the martyrs of 2 Maccabees 7, Stephen not only refers to terms such as “Moses”, “Abraham” or “Philistines”, but also alludes to events in the history of Israel and applies them within a specific theme.

In order to determine the intended aim of the respective authors of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7, there are various factors that need to be considered. The section that follows describes the methodology followed to attend to these factors, and finally to the main research question of this study.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The aim of the study, by means of a comparative literary analysis, is to give an account of the narrative perspective of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7. The study proposes the following respective narrative perspectives:

- The author of 2 Maccabees 7 is using martyrdom as a vehicle for propagating a socio-political agenda;
- The author of Acts 7 is using martyrdom as a vehicle for propagating doctrinal consistency.

Subsequently, the following aspects need to be clarified for both 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 respectively:

- Literary character as supportive structure for the author’s intent;
- Determining the degree of religious progress;
- The relevance of the speeches of the martyrs;
- The significance of the circumstances in which the speeches are given as implicit communication of the author’s intent;
- Eschatological communication as support for the author’s intent.

These five aspects are elaborated below.

- i. The genre is investigated and its relevance in supporting the author's intent is discussed. The texts are investigated for phrases that testify what the author hoped the text would accomplish. For example: if the text is historiography, then the author's intent will be to state the facts as it happened. However, the study holds the premise that there might exist some subgenres within the genre of historiography. These subgenres, as well as their significance in supporting the author's intent, are then highlighted.
- ii. In order to determine the degree of doctrinal progress, the following steps are taken:
  - Phrases from the text which imply doctrinal teaching are identified;
  - These phrases are evaluated in terms of their place in the line of doctrinal progression;
  - The author's attempt to place these doctrinal teachings into context is assessed;
  - The relation between doctrine and emotional appeal is explicated in table format.
- iii. In addressing the aim to explicate the purpose of the martyrs' speeches to support the author's intent the following aspects need to be highlighted, and are therefore examined accordingly:
  - The speeches seem to be adapted to conform to the main aim of the text;
  - The speeches carry a great emotional appeal because the speakers are martyrs;
  - The speeches communicate the author's intent more clearly through direct speech and logical formulation.
- iv. The relevance of the circumstances are clarified by considering the circumstances that surround the speeches, and demonstrating their accordance with the respective aims of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7.
- v. Lastly, in order to explain the function of eschatology in supporting the author's ideology, phrases are extracted from the two texts to determine the

specific views on the afterlife. These views are then considered in terms of the extent to which they support either a socio-political, or a consistent doctrinal agenda.

Applying this five-sectioned method to both 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 will hopefully highlight the important similarities as well as differences between the two texts. Most importantly, the method will demonstrate the variance in the intention that the respective author's had for the texts.

The method will first be applied to 2 Maccabees 7 in the chapter that follows (Chapter 2). However, some references will be made to Acts 7 in Chapter 2 already as it contains sections that incorporate both texts.

## **CHAPTER 2: HIGHLIGHTING THE INTENT OF THE AUTHOR OF 2 MACCABEES 7**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the intention of the author of 2 Maccabees 7. This means that the priorities of the author need to be highlighted. The following questions need to be answered:

- What is the narrative perspective?
- How does the author achieve to communicate this perspective?

The presumption that underpins the discussion in this chapter is that the author of 2 Maccabees 7 aims to communicate a socio-political agenda and achieves this through an emotional appeal. In order to prove this statement, certain aspects need to be clarified:

- The specific literary character of 2 Maccabees 7;
- the relevance of the speeches;
- the degree of religious progress;
- the role of the circumstances in which the speeches are given;
- and the eschatological viewpoint.

These aspects are investigated below.

### **2.2 Literary character as supportive structure for the author's intent**

The purpose of this first point of discussion is to determine the communicative value of the specific genre and literary technique the author uses. It is argued that the genre of 2 Maccabees 7 increases the reader's positive attitude towards the ideology presented within the text. This happens through the author's specific selection of events in his writing.

Attridge (1984:176) notes that, from a literary point of view, 2 Maccabees is a much more complex document than 1 Maccabees. In comparison to 1 Maccabees, the text of 2 Maccabees is written with “much greater attention to emotional impact and to the didactic value of the events which it relates” (Attridge 1984:178). The text of 2 Maccabees 7 fits into this aim of the author to incorporate elements which are capable of influencing the reader because of its emotional appeal. The text’s detailed description of the torture methods further increases the level of emotional appeal. The author of this epitome refers to himself as an artist who decorates what a master builder has constructed (2:29)<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the author could have constructed the text to influence the reader through subjective and interpretive historiography. The author is notably and openly biased.

Historicity must also be considered when evaluating the literary character of 2 Maccabees 7, in other words the factual reliability of the text. Schwartz (2008:299) notes that “despite the fact that there definitely were martyrs in the Antiochian persecutions, no one would claim that this story as such is anything more than a stylised didactic narrative”. Schwartz (2008:299) further mentions that it perhaps derives, “ultimately, from a historicization of Jeremiah 15:9, which refers to the unfortunate mother of seven who died the same day they did”. The author has gone to lengths in order to remain true to his aim to “decorate what a master builder has constructed”.

However, this subjectivity does not mean that 2 Maccabees must be interpreted as a purely fictional document. Doran (1981:77-78) mentions that 2:24-26<sup>4</sup> must not be interpreted as avoiding the dullness of a chronicle and choosing interesting events to write about in a lively manner. He also notes that the flood of numbers/statistics (2:24) may simply refer to the alteration of the great extent of Jason’s work which the

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<sup>3</sup> καθάπερ γὰρ τῆς καινῆς οἰκίας ἀρχιτέκτονι τῆς ὅλης καταβολῆς φροντιστέον τῷ δὲ ἐγκαίειν καὶ ζωγραφεῖν ἐπιχειροῦντι τὰ ἐπιτήδεια πρὸς διακόσμησιν ἐξεταστέον οὕτως δοκῶ καὶ ἐπὶ ἡμῶν [For as the master architect of a new house must be concerned with the whole building: but he that undertakes to paint it, must set out to fit things for the adorning of it: so it must be judged of us.]

<sup>4</sup> These verses refer to the process of summarising Jason’s five books into one volume that is more pleasurable to read.

author is redacting. The aim of 2 Maccabees is therefore not only to give an accurate overview of Jason's five books, but also to decorate it to ease the reading. This 'decoration' can only imply an increase of the history's emotional appeal.

Goldstein (1976:34) points out that Jason and/or the epitomator wrote in the style of 'tragic' or 'pathetic' historiography through sympathising with the Jewish nation in her time of crisis. This study supports this view and acknowledges the implication that 2 Maccabees is emotionally loaded historiography. The history portrayed, lay close to the hearts of the Jews and therefore provided an emotional setting for any views to be strengthened or adopted. The author was capable of introducing certain progressive doctrines through this interpretive historiography in order to maintain a social political ideology.

Bickerman (1979:21) refers to the fact that the author of 2 Maccabees looked at history from a specific point of view. His aim was to describe the holiness of the temple in Jerusalem. Bickerman (1979:21) further mentions that "for this reason, he begins with the first (frustrated) attempt to desecrate Zion, that of Heliodorus. The church, as we know, saw in the miraculous expulsion from the temple of the blasphemer Heliodorus the model for the fate of her own enemies".

This means that the author may have selected and placed the events in such a manner that it would generate hope. Thus, this beginning serves as a pointer for the way in which the story will develop. The beginning implies the plan of the author to finally portray the victory of the Jewish nation over her political enemies. It is part of a blueprint which highlights the author's intent as a political one through describing the events in the form of a struggle that cannot end in reconciliation with non-Jewish people. The question is not whether hope is created, but rather what the content of this hope may be, namely political relief.

Another facet which intensifies the emotional appeal of 2 Maccabees 7, and therefore its ability to enforce ideological progress, is its sub-genre namely martyrology. This sub-genre provides tools for a community to enable them to conceptualise hardship and reinterpreting faith. In her study on "*The suffering self*", Perkins (1995:2-3) argues that defining the human self as a sufferer is a powerful

tool in mobilising a religious community. The human as a body in pain became the major discursive focus of Christianity in the second century. This contributed to the growth of Christianity in a major way. The point here is not the discursive focus of Christianity, but the effect of martyrology. In this regard Dijkhuizen (2008:57) states that “symbolic opposition to a dominant culture, associated with remembered times of crisis, can be an obvious part of the way in which the minority constructs and maintains its identity”. She argues that 4 Maccabees, and thus 2 Maccabees, being its main source<sup>5</sup>, uses the events of martyrdom and persecution as a setting for the articulation of cultural and religious self-definition.

The Jews needed to understand the persecution in terms of their traditions and faith. These times of tribulation were so intense that Bousset and Gresmann, in their book *Die Religion Judentums im Späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (1926:394), describe the Jewish religion from the Maccabean to the early rabbinic periods as a religion of martyrdom (*“Religion des Martyriums”*). Although this may be a somewhat exaggerated view, it still bears witness to the milieu for the events recorded in 2 Maccabees 7. Van Henten (1997:2) states that the text of 2 Maccabees offers “reflection about Jewish identity in this situation of confrontation with a non-Jewish opponent in the land of Israel”. He further mentions that “both works (2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees) can be considered important documents about patriotic-political views of the Jewish people” (1997:3). However, Van Henten (1997:7) warns against labelling the genre of 2 Maccabees 7 as a martyrology exclusively, since martyr texts can belong to several genres. Consequently, this study refers to the text of 2 Maccabees 7 as apologetic or interpretive historiography.

The designation “martyr text”, taken in a broader non-generic sense, may be used for texts that share a specific theme and a number of motifs. Accordingly, the following definition may be given to describe these martyr texts: “In a martyr text it is described how a certain person, in an extreme hostile situation, has preferred a violent death in compliance with a decree or demand of the (usually) pagan authorities” (Van Henten, 1997:7). The death of such a person is a structural element

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<sup>5</sup>According to Dijkhuizen (2008:58), it is generally assumed that the author of the later book of 4 Maccabees made use of 2 Maccabees chapter 6 (verses 18-31) and 7.

in such a text. It is also logical then, to accept the fact that the death of such a person has rhetorical value in the text.

Consequently, the term “martyr texts” as used in this study is meant in a general sense as a sort of sub-genre of historiography. In this sense 2 Maccabees 7 is regarded as a martyrology and subgenre within historiography for the purpose of this study.

Van Henten (1997:8) provides a pattern that groups texts which belong to the sub-genre martyrology. The sequence of events in the following table can generally be identified in martyrologies and specifically within 2 and 4 Maccabees:

**Table 2. Sequence of events typical of martyrologies.**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Event</b>
Setting	The (pagan) authorities issue an enactment in a situation of oppression, which carries the death penalty.
Restriction	The content of the decree makes it impossible for Jews to stay faithful to their God, the Law, and their Jewish way of life by forcing the consumption of pork.
Reaction	When Jews are forced – for instance after their arrest – to decide between complying with the decree or remain faithful to their religion and Jewish practice, they choose to die rather than obey the authorities.
Endurance	This decision becomes obvious during the examination, which is sometimes accompanied by torture.
Finality	The execution is described.

The text of 2 Maccabees 7 demonstrates all five stages presented in Table 2 but emphasises the phases: “reaction”, “endurance” and “finality” through repetition. This emphasis implies that the text is focussed on the martyrs in person. The construct of 2 Maccabees 7 is also climactic up until the last stage namely “finality”. The “finality” is emotionally intense as the martyrs usually die while remaining obedient to their religious laws. Thus, repeatedly the climax lies in the stage with the highest emotional value.

Consequently 2 Maccabees 7, as martyrology, is more than capable in helping the reader to make renewed sense of God as he easily associates with, and

sympathises with the martyr. The martyrs become the voice of the Jews and their words become the words of the reader.

In this sense, martyrology serves the purpose of aligning the text with the author's intent. The author can communicate a social political ideology and religious progress through a text of which the characteristics are ideal for communicating ideology.

Another characteristic of the text of 2 Maccabees 7 that is ideal for ideological communication is the recording of the direct speech. The presentation of the speeches of the primary speaker acts as literary device. This device will now be discussed.

### **2.3 The relevance of the speeches of the martyrs**

The difference between modern and ancient historiography should be discussed before investigating the place of the speeches in 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7. One needs to comprehend the variance that exists in ancient historiography concerning the correlation between the notation of the speech and the actual speech that was given.

Historiography may seem to be limited to noting events in the exact manner they occurred, but it is when one considers the motive for this genre that the contrary is evident. Any historian has a specific purpose planned for his account of events. The very action of an author selecting a specific scene from history explicates this intent. The author of a historiographical text such as 2 Maccabees (a recording of a collection of historical events) has sources from which he selects specific events that fit into his aim. These sources are either the words of eyewitnesses, or different texts that have recorded different events. The author then chooses from these extensive sources what he deems important, but the decision has to adhere to some kind of criteria. This process of decision-making shows that the author wishes to illuminate a certain theme from history; otherwise it would have been a futile action.

Thus, it is reasonable to speak of the author's ideology even with a factual genre such as historiography. Dibelius (2004:49) highlights the presence of the author's

aim by providing three possible ways in which the author is communicating his aim. The author can imply his aim:

- implicitly through the order and choice of the events portrayed;
- explicitly through the historian's own noted judgement; or
- through the persons involved that speak and indicate the meaning of events either in a speech or in an argument.

It is this last facet regarding speeches which the authors of both 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 apply in order to communicate their intent. Both 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 demonstrate the use of speeches to enforce the meaning of that event and its significance within the larger text.

It is important first, when referring to these speeches, to comprehend the use of speeches in ancient historiography, particularly since this use is somewhat different from the modern application of speeches as conventions followed in ancient historiography are not necessarily followed anymore. Dibelius (2004:53) states that "what seems to the author his most important obligation is not what seems to us the most important one". To the modern reader, it is important in historiography to establish the exact words of the speech that was originally given. To the ancient historiographer however, it is rather to "introduce speeches into the structure in a way that will be relevant to his purpose" (Dibelius, 2004:53). What was written did not necessarily happen. In order to highlight this phenomenon of incongruence, Dibelius (2004:50-53) refers to the work of ancient historiographers such as Tacitus, Josephus and Thucydides. For example: Tacitus did not use the known text which contained the speech of Claudius preserved in CIL 13.1668. Instead, he adopted one that was revised in order to conform to the style of the greater text in the Annals 11.24.

According to the work of Braun (1934) and Sprödowsky (1937), Josephus does not comply with the form of the speeches in the Bible in his first and second books of Antiquities, but invents speeches that provide a different point of view. An even more effective demonstration of the freedom of ancient writers regarding the content of speeches is the fact that Josephus records the same speech differently in two

instances. According to Dibelius (2004:50), Josephus reproduces the speech by Herod in the war against the Arabs twice (*War* 1.19.4 [paragraph 373-379]; *Ant.* 15.5.3 [paragraph 127-146]), “but in such a way as not to correspond with one another at all”. The two recordings are modified in order to fit into the greater context in which they are placed. Josephus clearly placed an emphasis on the intended effect of the speech rather than on the exact notation of the original words.

Thucydides admittedly dealt with the documentation of speeches in an artistic and free manner. Thucydides (1.22) notes his views in his work on the principles involved in his composition of the speeches. Thucydides explains that it has indeed been difficult to retain the ἀκριβεία [exactness] of the speech. Therefore, he documented the speeches in such a way as to support the natural way in which individuals would have found it necessary to speak on the subject discussed. Thucydides concludes by adding the words: “In doing so, I kept as much as possible to the ξυμπάσα γνῶμη [general sense] of what had actually been said” (1.22.1). These words lead us to the purpose of recording the speeches. It is not a question of content, but of the intention of the speech.

Ancient historical writing places more value on the intention of the speech and its place and meaning in context than to its perfect correlation to the original words of the speech that was given. Consequently, a question may arise concerning the validity of the method of these Greek historians when the study is dealing with the nobility of a Jewish pre-Christian text and a Christian text. The significance, however, lies in understanding the contemporary climate in which the speeches in 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 were documented.

In both 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7, the role of the martyr’s speech is essential in understanding what the author is communicating. The author notes these speeches in a specific manner. The text does not have to give the exact words of the person; neither does it give the full extent of the speech. The question is not whether the speeches are noted *verbatim*, it is rather how the author is applying the speech in order to give an account of the fuller event, this fuller event being the circumstances that surround the speech. These speeches are not merely incorporated into the

historiography as part of a series of events; they are actually moulded into a form that would submit to the major aim of the text. Dibelius (2004:49) states that: “the historian’s art begins where he no longer contents himself with collecting and framing traditional events, but endeavours to illuminate, and somehow to interpret, the meaning of events”. The speeches within these two texts do exactly that. They illuminate and interpret the events. On the role of the speeches Dibelius (2004:50) notes the following four possibilities. They can provide:

- An insight into the total situation – for this purpose, several speeches are usually required in order to illuminate the situation from different angles;
- An insight into the meaning of the historical moment concerned;
- An insight into the character of the speaker;
- An insight into the general ideas that are introduced to explain the situation.

The speeches within 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 mostly serve the purpose of the last two possibilities, i.e. demonstrating the character of the speaker and providing an insight into the general ideas introduced. The text of 2 Maccabees 7 especially demonstrates the character of the speakers through explicitly noting the words of the martyrs. The following words communicate the martyr’s attitude towards the persecutor:

- ἀλλήλους παρεκάλουν σὺν τῇ μητρὶ γενναίως τελευτᾶν [They encouraged each other together with their mother to die nobly (v.5)]
- τὴν γλῶσσαν αἰτηθεὶς ταχέως προέβαλεν καὶ τὰς χεῖρας εὐθαρσῶς πρότεινεν [with the requiring, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched out his hands (v.10)]
- ἐκπλήσσεσθαι τὴν τοῦ νεανίσκου ψυχὴν [they were astonished at the young man’s spirit (v.12)]

The use that overarches both possibilities, however, is the author’s application of these speeches as his own words. The voice of the speaker becomes the voice of the author. This happens without great labour as the speeches are not only aimed at

the audience within the text, but also at the readers. The fact that the words are noted in direct speech means that it speaks also to the reader in a direct and natural manner. Through these speeches, the reader becomes the immediate audience within the text. Yet, the speaker is not the author, but a very noble and acquainted martyr. The ideology of the author could be communicated more effectively through the words of the primary speaker than through the indirect form of normal historiography. Thus, a fact which advances the success of the communication even further is that the person giving the speech is a martyr. The events of martyrdom and persecution are used as a setting for the articulation of cultural and religious self-definition.

It must be acknowledged that the texts of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 are both speeches and martyrologies. Consequently, as speeches they are aimed directly at the reader, and as martyrologies they help the reader to welcome the author's ideology through sympathising with the martyr.

Interestingly, the author of 2 Maccabees 7 uses the characteristics of both speech and martyrology to incorporate certain doctrinal progressions. The following section discusses these progressions and explicates the method which the author employs in accomplishing this goal.

#### **2.4 Determining the degree of religious progress**

The survival of Israel was of such importance that a minor shift in doctrinal perception would have been tolerable. Making renewed sense of God is part of Judaism's rejuvenation. To achieve this, the author was reinventing Jewish religious identity. The key was to interpret the defence of their political identity by Judas and other Maccabeans on a doctrinal level. The author is making sense of God's apparent absence and helps the Jews to do the same by incorporating doctrinal ideas through the speeches of the martyrs. The author is also making these doctrinal ideas acceptable through constantly using familiar and safe references such as 'Moses' and 'the Laws of the fathers'. He uses martyrdom as it is a highly sensitive matter and rich in emotional appeal. In order to use martyrdom, the author does so by constructing the text upon three pillars that serve mainly as support for an

emotional appeal. The whole of 2 Maccabees 7 can be divided into these three parts which are: enduring torture, being the icon of courage, and patriarchal/ancestral reference.

Through these three parts the whole text becomes a vessel for communicating doctrinal progress through emotional appeal. By enduring torture, these martyrs are liberated to unchallengeable status. What they say may not be dismissed because there has been none like them, enduring the most unspeakable afflictions and defending the Law of Moses, the command of ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς [the Lord God]. The seven brothers and their mother are the voice of change that is accepted through emotional appeal and at the centre of this appeal are the ancestral references that represent Israel's identity. The author is speaking to the very soul of the Jews. The following table demonstrates the interdependency of the three parts:

**Table 3: Ideological communication in 2 Maccabees 7**

Row	Torture	Courage	Ancestral Reference	Doctrine
A	μάστιξιν καὶ νευραῖς [with whips and thongs (v.1)]	ἡμῶν ἔτοιμοι γὰρ ἀποθνήσκειν ἔσμὲν [because we are ready to die (v.2)]	τοὺς πατρίους νόμους [the fatherly laws (v.2)]	
B	αὐτῶν προήγορον προσέταξεν γλωσσοτομεῖν καὶ περισκυθίσαντ ας ἀκρωτηριάζειν [he ordered to cut out his tongue and that, after they had scalped him, they should cut off his hands and feet (v.4)]	ἀλλήλους παρεκάλουν σὺν τῇ μητρὶ γενναίως τελευτᾶν [they encouraged each other together with their mother to die nobly (v.5)]	ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς [the Lord God] καθάπερ διὰ τῆς κατὰ πρόσωπον ἀντιμαρτυροῦ σης ᾧδῆς διεσάφησεν Μωυσῆς [just as, through witnessing against the people, Moses declared the song (v.6)]	

Row	Torture	Courage	Ancestral Reference	Doctrine
C	καὶ τὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς δέρμα σὺν ταῖς θριξίν περισύραντες [and they tore off the skin of the head with the hair (v.7)]	προσεῖπεν οὐχί [he said: No. (I will not eat) (v.8)]	ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς τῇ πατρὶω φωνῇ [but he answered in the language of the forefathers (v.8)]	ὁ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου βασιλεὺς ἀποθανόντας ἡμᾶς ὑπὲρ τῶν αὐτοῦ νόμων εἰς αἰώνιον ἀναβίωσιν ζωῆς ἡμᾶς ἀναστήσει [but the King of the cosmos will raise us up, because we have died for his laws, to an everlasting renewal of life (v.9)]
D	μετὰ δὲ τοῦτον ὁ τρίτος ἐνεπαίζετο [after this, the third was used as sport (v.10)]	καὶ τὴν γλῶσσαν αἰτηθεὶς ταχέως προέβαλεν καὶ τὰς χεῖρας εὐθαρσῶς προέτεινεν [with the requiring, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched out his hands (v.10)] ἐκπλήσσεσθαι τὴν τοῦ νεανίσκου ψυχὴν [they were astonished at the young man's spirit (v.12)]	διὰ τοὺς αὐτοῦ νόμους [because of his laws (i.e. the laws of Moses)]	εἶπεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ταῦτα κέκτημαι καὶ διὰ τοὺς αὐτοῦ νόμους ὑπερορῶ ταῦτα καὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ ταῦτα πάλιν ἐλπίζω κομίσασθαι [he said: "I have received these (hands) from heaven, and because of his laws I disregard these, and from him I hope to receive these back (v.11)]
E	τὸν τέταρτον ὡσαύτως ἐβασάνιζον αἰκιζόμενοι [they maltreated and tortured the fourth] v.13			προσδοκᾶν ἐλπίδας πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ σοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἀνάστασις εἰς ζωὴν οὐκ ἔσται [expecting the hope of again being resurrected by him, but for you there will be no resurrection to life] v.14

Row	Torture	Courage	Ancestral Reference	Doctrine
F	ἠκίζοντο [they maltreated (the fifth)] v.15		μη̄ δόκει δὲ τὸ γένος ἡμῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καταλελειφθαι [but do not think that God has forsaken our people] v.16	θεώρει τὸ μεγαλεῖον αὐτοῦ κράτος ὡς σὲ καὶ τὸ σπέρμα σου βασανιεῖ [see how his mighty power will torture you and your descendants] v.17
G				ἡμεῖς γὰρ δι' ἑαυτοὺς ταῦτα πάσχομεν ἁμαρτόντες εἰς τὸν ἑαυτῶν θεόν [for we are suffering these things because we have sinned before God] v.18
H		ὑπεραγόντως δὲ ἡ μήτηρ θαυμαστὴ καὶ μνήμης ἀγαθῆς [The Mother was especially admirable and worthy of honourable memory] v.20	τῆ πατριῶ φωνῆ [the language of the forefathers] v.21 ὁ τοῦ κόσμου κτίστης [the Creator of the world] v.23	τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ζωὴν ὑμῖν πάλιν ἀποδίδωσιν [he will give breath and life back to you] v.23
I	τούτῳ παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους χειρίστως ἀπήντησεν [he (the king) came upon him worse than that of the others] v.39	ὁ νεανίας εἶπεν τίνα μένετε οὐχ ὑπακούω τοῦ προστάγματος τοῦ βασιλέως [the young man said: For what are you waiting? I will not obey the king's command] v.30	τοῦ δὲ προστάγματος ἀκούω τοῦ νόμου τοῦ δοθέντος τοῖς πατράσιν ἡμῶν διὰ Μωυσέως [but I obey the command of the law that was given to our fathers through Moses] v.30	An exclamation and explanatory epilogue on the doctrines mentioned by the brothers and their mother. v.31-38 ἐν ἐμοὶ δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου στήσαι τὴν τοῦ αυτοκράτορος ὀργὴν τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ σύμπαν ἡμῶν γένος δικαίως ἐπηγμένην [But in me, and in my brethren, the wrath of the Almighty, which has justly been brought upon all our nation, shall cease]

The text teaches resurrection, but as a resultative clause (as illustrated in Table 3, Row C under *Doctrine*). The martyrs must die for the Law. As we have already suggested, the martyrs represent all who uphold the law, and accordingly the persecutors represent the ἀντινόμοι (those whose sole purpose is to oppose the Law). These martyrs will not only be raised to life but will receive new bodies (Row D under *Doctrine*). The one who persecutes the upholder of the law/ ἀντινόμοι will not be resurrected to life (Row E under *Doctrine*). The persecutor and his descendants will be tortured (Row F under *Doctrine*). The martyrs are suffering these things as a punishment (Row G under *Doctrine*). The seventh martyr provides a concluding summary to the doctrines of his brothers but with further development. He refers to the Hebrews in 7:34 as τοὺς οὐρανίους παῖδας (heaven-children, v. 34) and introduces human mediatory sacrifice namely that the blood of the tortured brothers will actually serve as payment for the sins of the entire nation (v. 37-38).

There are two major strands of doctrinal revolution evident in the text and highlighted in Table 3, namely:

- a doctrine that teaches about life after death;
- and a doctrine that teaches about human mediatory sacrifice.

Through these doctrines, the author is making sense of the apparent absence of God in the present space. There is no hope in the present life, so there has to be another space after life where true judgement exists. Antiochus isn't punishing the Jews, God is. These martyrs did not die in vain, but they actually sanctified, and maybe even saved, the entire Israel.

This raises the question of how the author sells this view to a nostalgic nation. Firstly, all these doctrines are within the direct speech of the martyrs. As mentioned previously, the martyrs become the voice of the Jews. Secondly, the author is using three pillars namely torture, courage and ancestral reference as an emotional appeal. Through torture, an emotion of fear is generated; through courage and ancestral reference, an emotion of respect is generated.

Both these emotional fields create in the reader a reverence for the martyrs. As mentioned above, the martyrs are liberated to an unchallengeable status. The author uses a combination of appeals that regard the political and religious identity of the Jews. Through this, an environment is, in fact, created in which doctrinal progression would be easier to adopt. Through these progressions, the Jews are de-humiliated. Thus an endangered identity is rescued.

The text provides an answer to the 'why questions' resulting from the conflict of the circumstances of the Maccabean persecutions. There is more to the persecution than meets the eye: the God of 2 Maccabees 7 is working in new ways. He is resurrecting the persecuted, punishing the persecutor, and saving the nation through human sacrifice.

## **2.5 The significance of the circumstances in which the speeches are given as implicit communication of the author's intent**

Despite the fact that the two texts explicitly demonstrate ideology through the content of the speeches of the martyrs, other levels of communication exist. The texts also communicate ideology in an implicit way. This happens when one interprets the circumstances in which the speeches are given.

The circumstances of the martyr's speeches in 2 Maccabees 7 is perfect for the ideology communicated by the author. The ideology is socio-political and encourages Jewish patriotism through creating a boundary between Jews and Syrians. The author encourages enmity towards the persecutor through the martyr's speech and by nurturing a love for Judaism. The text of 2 Maccabees 7 mainly encourages an exclusive ideology. These factors are explained further below.

### **2.5.1 Jews are martyred by Syrians**

In the text of 2 Maccabees 7:1 we find that seven Jewish brothers and their mother were arrested with the purpose of being compelled to eat swine flesh. This is the forbidden flesh of LXX Lev 11:7: καὶ τὸν ὕν ὅτι διχληλεῖ ὀπλήν τοῦτο καὶ ὀνυχίζει

ὄνυχας ὀπλῆς καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἀνάγει μηρυκισμὸν [and (also you may not eat of) the swine, because this animal divides and makes claws of the hoof, but it does not chew the cud]. The king that is mentioned was Antiochus (v24). More specifically, he was King Antiochus, called Epiphanes, son of king Antiochus of Syria (1 Maccabees 1:10). These were the same Syrians the Jews were engaged with in war, the war against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator (2 Maccabees 2:20). Thus, the Jewish brothers and their mother were being persecuted by their national enemies. The text of 2 Maccabees 7 is actually recording another form of battle as two nations oppose each other.

Thus, this factor enforces division on a political level. The persecution by the national enemies of the Jews encourages disaffection. The fact that the persecutors are Syrians enforces exclusion: Jews against Syrians. If the ideology is socio-political, there is no place for another nationality.

### **2.5.2 The persecutor is the personification of evil**

The king and his followers are overemphasised as the ones who are not only opposing the servants of the Lord God, but they are opposing God himself:

- 2 Maccabees 7:9 σὺ μὲν ἀλάστωρ [you accursed wretch]
- 2 Maccabees 7:14 σοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἀνάστασις εἰς ζωὴν οὐκ ἔσται [but for you, there will be no resurrection to life]
- 2 Maccabees 7:29 μὴ φοβηθῆς τὸν δήμιον τοῦτον [do not fear this butcher]
- 2 Maccabees 7:34 σὺ δὲ ὦ ἀνόσιε καὶ πάντων ἀνθρώπων μιαιώτατε [but you, oh unholy wretch, and most defiled of all humans]

The language personifies evil in the form of the persecutors. The persecutors are not mere sinners; they are the defilers of the Law and oppressors of the holy people of God. They are unredeemable. Their punishment is an unchangeable certainty in the future. Thus, this factor also communicates exclusion. There is no way of

incorporating those against the Law, as LXX Ps 36:28 states it: ἄνομοι δὲ ἐκδιωχθήσονται [those against the law will be cut off].

## 2.6 Eschatological viewpoint as support for the author's intent

The text of 2 Maccabees 7 seems to provide a clear and precise description of events that will happen after the death of the martyrs. The text teaches resurrection, but as a result of specified actions: the martyrs must die for the Law. As mentioned above, these martyrs will not only be raised to life but will receive new bodies. The one who persecutes the upholder of the law will not be resurrected to life. Above this, the persecutor and his descendants will be tortured. The martyrs are suffering these things as a punishment. The seventh martyr provides a concluding summary to the doctrines of his brothers but with further development. He introduces human mediatory sacrifice namely that the blood of the tortured brothers will actually serve as payment for the sins of the entire nation (2 Maccabees 7:38):

ἐν ἐμοὶ δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου στήσαι τὴν τοῦ παντοκράτορος ὀργὴν τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ  
σύμπαν ἡμῶν γένος δικαίως ἐπηγγέμενην

[But in me, and in my brethren, the wrath of the Almighty, which has justly been brought upon all our nation, shall cease.]

It seems that 2 Maccabees 7 reflects an eschatological perspective that focuses rather on revenge upon the blood of the martyr and his glorification than on the spatial elements and beings in the 'afterlife'.

An important aspect within the investigation of the eschatological viewpoint is the coming kingdom. There is no direct declaration as to such a kingdom in the second book of Maccabees, though it seems that 7:37 refers to it. Here the youngest of the seven brothers prays that "God may speedily be gracious to the nation." Earlier in 2 Maccabees, we find a similar reference implied in the expectation of the return of the tribes. This expectation appears in the prayer of Jonathan (2 Maccabees 1:27):

ἐπισυνάγαγε τὴν διασπορὰν ἡμῶν  
ἐλευθέρωσον τοὺς δουλεύοντας ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν  
τοὺς ἐξουθενημένους καὶ βδελυκτοὺς ἔπιδε  
καὶ γνώτωσαν τὰ ἔθνη ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν

[Gather together the scattered ones  
Liberate them that are in bondage among the heathen  
Look upon those that are despised and abhorred  
And let the heathen know that you are God.]

In 2 Maccabees 7:33 the hope is expressed that God will again be reconciled with his servants and in 2 Maccabees 7:37 the blessed future of Israel which they will yet experience is noted. Here, it is clear that the text is not mentioning events that will happen within the present age, but only after the deaths of the martyrs, because they themselves will be incorporated in the events. In 12:4 it is stated that Judas made a certain sacrifice in the belief that those Jews who had fallen in battle would rise again. For the non-Israelite there was no resurrection (7:14):

αἰρετὸν μεταλλάσσοντας ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων τὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ προσδοκᾶν ἐλπίδας  
πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ σοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἀνάστασις εἰς ζωὴν οὐκ ἔσται

[It is good to die at the hands of men and look for the hopes which are given of God, that we shall be raised up again by him; but as for you, you shall have no resurrection to life.]

Further eschatological communication on the resurrection is as follows:

- The resurrection is to be to an eternal life (7:9, 36): εἰς αἰώνιον ἀναβίωσιν ζωῆς [to an eternal resurrection of life];
- It is to be a resurrection of the body (7:11,22,23): παρ' αὐτοῦ ταῦτα πάλιν ἐλπίζω κομίσασθαι [from Him I hope to receive it (the martyr's hands) back again];

- This resurrected body will be one much like the earthly body as the words of Razi in 14:46 states that even τὰ ἔντερα (the intestines) will hopefully be given back in the coming life;
- Lastly, it is resurrection to a life to be enjoyed in the community of the righteous according to the words of 7:29: σὺν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς σου κομίσωμαί σε [I may receive you again with your brothers]. This community would logically find its place within the idea of a coming kingdom.

These eschatological elaborations should, however, not mislead one to assume that the text might prioritise doctrinal consistency. The elaborations do imply the priority of doctrine, but the doctrine hardly fits into a steady line of development present in Jewish texts. So this is new. No other witness of life after death exists in earlier Jewish literature.

One needs to focus on the purpose of these doctrinal insertions rather than on the interpretation of the insertion itself. This purpose is not merely to incorporate doctrine into the text of 2 Maccabees 7. Doctrinal teaching is not the aim of the text. If it were the aim, the author would have also set the doctrine in context or even provided a logical basis in the earlier texts within the Jewish tradition. The phrases which communicate eschatological doctrine are, however, isolated (see Table 3 above). There are no elaborations on, or explanations of these doctrinal phrases. This isolation suggests that these phrases serve another purpose, namely to provide a rationalisation for the intense persecution through bringing the promise of meaning. The author is demonstrating that the events of martyrdom are not simply a meaningless formality, but a fruit bearing line of events. As mentioned earlier, the author is stating that beyond death lies immortality and retribution.

It is interesting to note the fact that the eschatological promise fits perfectly into a socio-political aim. If the author's intent is to propagate Judaism and its superiority over any other 'pagan' nation, then resurrection to eternal life and the promise of a coming kingdom is to enforce this ideology. These eschatological phrases show that the battle does not end with death. The persecutor does not conquer Israel through killing the mother and her sons, because they will be resurrected. Likewise, this

Syrian king does not humiliate the Jews through his authoritative judgement, because he will in turn be judged by the Supreme God and Judge of the Jewish nation: καὶ θεώρει τὸ μεγαλεῖον αὐτοῦ κράτος ὡς σὲ καὶ τὸ σπέρμα σου βασανιεῖ [see how his mighty power will torture you and your descendants] (7:17).

This chapter demonstrated the socio-political inclination of 2 Maccabees 7. The political aim has a negative effect on doctrinal consistency. The author of 2 Maccabees 7 creates a heightened emotional appeal in order to persuade the reader to adopt this political perspective. The following chapter aims to demonstrate the doctrinal inclination of Acts 7 as well as the degree of socio-political propaganda.

## **CHAPTER 3: HIGHLIGHTING THE INTENT OF THE AUTHOR OF ACTS 7**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Whereas the previous chapter was concerned with the aim and intention of 2 Maccabees 7, the purpose of this chapter is to establish the intention of the author of Acts 7. This means that the priorities of the author need to be highlighted. The following questions need to be answered:

- What does the author aim to communicate?
- How does he achieve this communication?

The argument that underpins this chapter is that the author of Acts 7 aims to communicate a doctrinal agenda and achieves this through maintaining doctrinal consistency, as opposed to the author of 2 Maccabees 7's intent, as argued in the previous chapter. In order to demonstrate this argument, certain aspects need to be clarified:

- The authorship of Acts 7;
- the specific literary character of Acts 7;
- the relevance of the speeches;
- the degree of religious progress;
- the role of the circumstances in which the speeches are given;
- and the eschatological viewpoint.

These aspects are investigated in the following sections.

### **3.2 Authorship**

Tradition attributes the book of Acts to Luke, the author of the third Gospel. There are some things to be said against this tradition, but there are far more in favour thereof. Scholars agree on this almost as one, but because of clarity and because of the fact that a significant number of conclusions are deduced based on the

assumption that Luke is the author of both the Gospel and Acts, some arguments are considered here.

Regarding internal evidence, the key elements are, as Bock (2009:15) states the so-called “we sections and the debate that swirls around this material (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16)”. If these units were meant to be interpreted in a literal manner, then the author had to have been a witness to some events recounted in Acts and was a companion of Paul (Bruce, 1990:3-5). Barret (1998: xxvii-xxix) attributes the “we sections” to an itinerary list, and states that these phrases, written in the first person plural, refer to the original people that experienced the events noted. The fact that these “we sections” occur in an unorganised pattern in a variety of places throughout the book, adds to the idea that it is indeed an authentic reflection of the author’s own involvement. Porter (1999:10-66), on the other hand, argues these sections to be distinct from the author’s greater aim in Acts.

One cannot conclude that Luke was constantly with Paul as these sections only briefly refer to Luke’s presence in the “we sections”. Shillington (2007:7) argues that identifying the author is only possible through finding out about the character of the author. His aims, intentions and interests should be investigated. Shillington (2007:7-8) further mentions that, while discerning between author and redactor, “in a very real sense the redactor of Luke-Acts is also the author”. Shillington (2007:8) mentions that the Greek of Luke-Acts is that of an educated man, and the special interest in medicine in both Luke and Acts (Luke 4:38; 5:12; 8:44 Acts 5:5, 10; 9:40; 12:23) suggests someone as a physician to be the author. Therefore Luke, the beloved physician would be a reasonable fit.

It can, however, not be ruled out or proven without doubt that it refers to the author. The external evidence strongly favours Luke as the author of Acts. The major key to this deduction is the fact that “no other Pauline companion was ever put forward as the author of this work when many such candidates existed” (Bock, 2009:19). Tradition in the second century, identified Luke ‘the beloved physician’, friend of Paul, a Gentile, as the author of both the Gospel and Acts in accordance with Philemon 24. It is the Muratorian Canon, in the late second century that first adds the name of Luke to the book of Acts. Luke’s role as author is then argued in the work of

Irenaeus (ca. 180). In the third century, Origen thought the name 'Luke' to refer to 'Lucius' that was mentioned in Romans 16:21, namely a relative of Paul. Others thought that 'Luke' referred to Lucius of Cyrene in Acts 13:1, one of the leaders of the church at Antioch. Despite this confusion, however, the earlier tradition of Luke 'the beloved physician' prevailed in the Church, and still does so even unto the present time.

For the purpose of this project, the most favourable route to choose is the traditional view based upon external evidence to Luke's authorship and the correlation to the Gospel of Luke. This view is, according to Guthrie (1990:119), "widely held as the view which most satisfactorily explains all the data."

This study is, however, more concerned with what the author is aiming to say than with the particulars of the author himself. The section that follows is thus to discuss the character of the text. The form, style and specific genre of Acts 7 will be highlighted in order to further understand the aim of the text.

### **3.3 Literary character as supportive structure for the author's intent**

It is imperative, when interpreting a text, to investigate and identify its character. Critics like Hirsch (1967), Gerhart (1977) and Dubrow (1982) have pointed out an interesting function of genre. In his *Validity in Interpretation*, Hirsch (1967:74) suggests that "an interpreter's preliminary generic conception of a text is constitutive of everything that he/she subsequently understand". This claim highlights the significance that identifying genre is an indispensable aspect of interpretation of the text and the author's intention. The task here to delineate a specific historiographical tradition is therefore not merely for the sake of doing it, but in order to understand the demarcations which the text sets in interpreting it. In order to understand the relevance and place of Acts 7 within the book, the genre of the book as a whole is discussed here before focussing on the possible sub-genre of Acts 7.

Scholars of Luke-Acts for long have recognised the apologetic nature of sections of the work, especially in the latter part of Acts. The consequence of this recognition however, is that it led to a tension between the author's agenda and the historicity of

the events that are recorded in the book. This is because the apologetic nature presupposes a theological focus rather than a historical one.

In the nineteenth century, merits of Luke-Acts as historical works were widely debated. The interpretation of the development of Christianity by F.C. Baur and the Tübingen School gave further impetus to this discussion. Baur's main argument was that Luke-Acts was a *Tendenzschrift*. This term refers to the notion that Luke-Acts is historically reliable, yet not for the events it reports, but rather for the time of its composition namely the second century. This is, however, true to the strongly critical and sceptic nature of the studies at the Tübingen School.

In turn, the *Stilkritik* by Martin Dibelius (1956) and redaction criticism by Hans Conzelmann (1960) and Ernst Heanthen (1971) became a problematic alternative method. The emphasis on the shaping of texts in concordance to the theological agenda of the author again shifted the focus away from the historical aim of Luke-Acts. The concentration of the creative role that the author played in constructing the text has led to questions that could only be answered through applying methods of literary and rhetorical analysis.

The answer to this seemingly conflicting situation might lie in the fact that one does not have to regard historiography and historicity as one and the same. It is reasonable to accept that there are many variations in the field of historiography. The method of determining exactly where Luke-Acts fits in would then be to investigate the author's plan for the text. Any historiographer has a planned intention for the text that he creates. Shillington (2007:8) states that the author uses "sources, probably both oral and written, purposefully to accomplish some end in his readers' mind and life".

One reasonable solution Sterling (1992:3) suggests is the emergence of a distinct historiographical tradition: "The issue of reliability can only be fully addressed once we understand the historiographical tradition of Luke-Acts and comprehend what the tasks and expectations of that tradition were". Sterling (1992:3) states that, regarding this search for a distinct tradition within historiography, an obvious author is Josephus. The reason for its suitability is that it relates the story of an identifiable

group of people within the Greco-Roman world and is as apologetic as Luke-Acts. The result of this comparison, and also reference to predecessors of Josephus, is the emergence of a specific historiographical tradition/genre that Sterling (1992:3) calls apologetic historiography. He describes this tradition/genre as follows:

Apologetic historiography is the story of a subgroup of people in an extended prose narrative written by a member of the group who follows the groups' own traditions, but Hellenises them in an effort to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world.

Here in Acts 7, the emphasis lies on the attempt of the author to provide identity for the group to which the author belongs in contrast to outside perceptions.

### **3.4 The relevancy of the speeches of the martyrs**

As in the case of 2 Maccabees 7, the role of the martyr's speech is essential in understanding what the author is communicating. Barret (2004:334) notes that "if there is any direct relation between length and importance, this is the most important speech in Acts". Though such a statement may be an over-simplification, Barret (2004:334) further mentions that it is "unthinkable that Luke should give at such length a speech that he did not regard as important in itself and significant in the development of the primitive church".

Regarding Acts, it is important to establish whether the author belongs among these writers mentioned who use speeches as an artistic device. The writings of the New Testament as a whole employ this use of speeches and therefore it is unlikely that the author of Acts would assume a unique position in terms of the notation of speeches. Dibelius (2004:53) provides a few logical aspects that seem to support this view:

- The early Christian writers have not yet become literati;
- The speeches of Jesus in the synoptic gospels are compilations of sayings, and not "speeches" in the sense of rhetoric;

- The speeches in John belong to an oriental setting and have nothing in common with the speeches in Acts;
- Even Paul's own rhetoric is the rhetoric of the spoken word, not of great literature.

Thus, the texts of the New Testament as a whole, although compiled by a diverse group of people, seem to apply speeches in such a manner that the artistic value is not of the highest priority.

However, the view that the author of Acts did not use speeches as artistic devices rests upon the premise that Acts does not assume a unique position in the New Testament. This premise fails when considering that Acts was not intended only for "communities of people in humble circumstances, but also for another circle of higher social standing" (Dibelius, 2004:54). The prologue to the Gospel, and therefore also the prologue to Acts, highlights the author's "more far-reaching intention" (Dibelius, 2004:54). The prologue, in addressing the most excellent Theophilus, puts him under an obligation to distribute the book (Dibelius, 2004:55). The text resembles the works of cultivated literature in vocabulary and construction. The humble communities would not have been interested in these literary customs. The phrase, "the events which have taken place among us" (Luke 1:1), could hold a dual meaning, namely:

- a portrayal of the events that happened within this Christian religious tradition;
- and merely a work that described a much-discussed event in secular circles.

Thus, the Gospel of Luke as well as the book of Acts seem to have the combined aim to be read by the Christian community and, at the same time, was intended for the private reading of people of literary education. Accordingly, there is a twofold assurance embedded in the words of the prologue of Acts:

- For the Christian community it meant that the content was truthful in a religious sense because of the collection of information from various eyewitnesses to the acts of the apostles, who were in turn eyewitnesses to the acts of the Messiah;

- For the secular/literary educated, it meant that the content was truthful in a historical sense and had literary integrity because of the careful and methodical approach.

The last point has the result of the author moulding the book in a specific form. It is a form that requires a variety of literary techniques, one of which would be to apply speeches as an artistic device in order to fit into the greater structure and aim of the text. In this sense, the book of Acts may reasonably be placed among the style of ancient historiography as mentioned previously. This suggests that the author was able to construct the speech in Acts 7 in such a manner as to fit into the greater aim of the text, in accordance with his technique. Consequently, it is reasonable to refer to this greater aim as the author's intent regarding the speech in Acts 7.

Although such stylising seems unseemly for an author that records such noble events, stylising is exactly what the author has done throughout the book of Acts, namely selecting, omitting, abbreviating and supplementing the original records of the events. To name a few examples:

- Despite the brevity in other accounts in Acts, the author creates a broad development of the story of Cornelius. This shows, as Dibelius (2004:56) states, that the author wants this story to "illuminate the crucial turning toward the conversion of the gentiles at God's command";
- In Acts 16:6-10, Luke has omitted all the stations on Paul's journey into Asia Minor with the exception of Troas. This happened despite the fact that Luke would certainly have had details of them in the sources he worked from. Here, brevity is applied to achieve the aim. The author wants to communicate the importance of the destination and not the journey. He wants to communicate that it was divine governance that brought Paul to his goal and not merely a route planned by a human. Therefore, the intervention of a higher power is mentioned three times. The Holy Spirit (16:6), the Spirit (16:7) and a vision in the night (16:9) direct Paul to Troas and Macedonia;
- Another instance of stylising is evident in the comprehensive detail of Paul's trials. Paul's defence is extensively discussed. He has to undergo questioning no less than six times. The author's aim, however, is not to pursue the course

of the trial because the outcomes of the trials are never noted. The author's intent is rather to educate and strengthen the reader through the words of Paul's defence in these trials;

- There is one last sign of the author's active partaking in the aim of the text. One notes three formal renunciations of the Jews through the course of Paul's journey. Despite the fact that there would have been countless such instances, no attempt is made by the author to give a reason for this strict judgement. The notation of the judgement by the Jews is therefore not to highlight what they had against Paul, but what their actions have caused. The author is briefly showing that it was the Jews themselves who caused Paul to turn to the Gentiles. This is proven through acknowledging firstly that the renunciation of the Jews is noted without substantiation, and secondly, that the three instances are distributed cunningly through important sections of the book namely chapters 13, 18, and 28.

Referring to Stephen's speech in Acts 7, Dibelius (2004:69) states that "the irrelevance of most of this speech has for long been the real problem of exegesis". It seems an impossible task to find a connection between the accusation against Stephen and the history of Israel to the time of Moses that is provided. It does not seem that Stephen's speech is at all a defence against his prosecutors. Up unto Acts 7:35 the speech seems merely to provide an overview of the history of Israel, but it is the words "this Moses, whom the Israelites rejected" (Acts 7:35), and "whom they did not obey" (Acts 7:39) that share a hint of what the author planned this speech to communicate. Here, it becomes clear that Stephen's defence is not one that tries to explain his own actions, but a defence that counter-attacks the prosecutors, thus proving their inability to judge any other person. The prosecutors judge Stephen against the Law of Moses and the holiness of the temple. Consequently, if it should be proven that their understanding of these two aspects is incorrect, the accusation would lose its weight. Verses 35-50 elaborate this defence in two sections:

- The Jews have rejected the living words (λόγια ζῶντα) that Moses was the bearer of, whom they did not obey, who was sent to them by God as a leader,

a deliverer out of Egypt, as a prophet (7:35-43). The first part of the defence states that they should not lightly mention the Law of Moses if the Jews did not even obey the Law;

- The Jews did not understand the essence of the house of God. First it took the form of a tent, then the temple of Solomon, but the speech clearly demonstrates that God does not dwell in what men have made. Thus, this second part of the defence shows that they cannot make accusations regarding the temple because they do not know what the temple is.

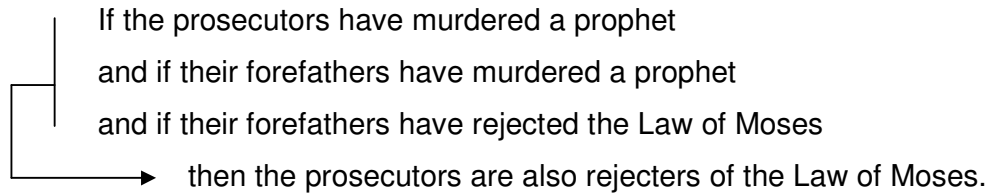
After this, in the concluding words, the reader comes to the knowledge of the true accusation against the people: they have always opposed the revelation of God. This accusation is the product of the two lines of defence mentioned above. These two lines of defence should now be connected to the original accusation against Stephen in order to fully understand the relevance of the speech. The following table summarises and aids to clarify the connection between accusation and defence:

**Table 4: Stephen's defensive strategy**

Accusation	Defence by Stephen
<p><i>Stephen does not respect and obey the Law of Moses:</i>            καὶ ἀλλάξει τὰ ἔθνη ἃ παρέδωκεν ἡμῖν            Μωϋσῆς            [and will change the customs which Moses delivered us.] (6:14)</p>	<p><i>The prosecutors are the ones who do not respect and obey the Law of Moses. On the contrary, they have killed all the prophets:</i>            Τοῦτον τὸν Μωϋσῆν, ὃν ἠρνήσαντο            [This Moses whom they refused] (7:35)            ὃς ἐδέξατο λόγια ζῶντα δοῦναι ὑμῖν            [who received the lively oracles to give unto us] (7:38)            ᾧ οὐκ ἠθέλησαν οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν [whom our fathers would not obey] (7:39)</p>
<p><i>Stephen supports the destruction of the temple/Stephen does not count the temple holy:</i>            ἀκηκόαμεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος οὗτος καταλύσει τὸν τόπον τοῦτον            [For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place] (6:14)</p>	<p><i>The prosecutors may not speak of the temple because they do not understand the meaning of the word:</i>            Ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ μαρτυρίου ἦν τοῖς πατράσιν ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ            [Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness] (7:44)            Δαυὶδ, ὃς εὗρεν χάριν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἠτήσατο εὐρεῖν σκηνώμα τῷ θεῷ Ἰακώβ            [David, who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob] (7:45-46)            Σολομῶν δὲ οἰκοδόμησεν αὐτῷ οἶκον [But Solomon built him a house] (7:47)            ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ ὑψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ: καθὼς ὁ προφήτης λέγει            [But the most High does not dwell in temples made with hands; as says the prophet] (7:48)</p>

Based on the comparison in the table above, the main defence is thus that the Jews do not interpret the scripture correctly. It is a logical defence. The problem, however, is with the defence regarding the obedience to the Law of Moses. The ones who are prosecuting Stephen are not necessarily part of the group of Jews that disobeys the Law and rejects Moses. It is clear how they would have had an incorrect interpretation of what the temple is: they only regard the manmade building. Their disobedience to the prophets and the Law is not so clear. The only logical connection may then be made through 7:52: "Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted? And they have slain them who prophesied of the coming of the Just One; of whom you have now been the betrayers and murderers".

The forefathers of the ones that are prosecuting Stephen have murdered every prophet. And these prosecutors have murdered Jesus Christ. The line of logic may thus be presented as follows:



The argument of Acts 7 is that Jesus was the same true prophet as the ones who were murdered by the forefathers. This argument portrays the relevance of this part of the speech to be a Christological discourse that links Jesus to the Law of Moses. Despite the correlation between accusation and defence, Dibelius (2004:69) still mentions that “this cannot alter the fact that the major part of the speech (7:2-34) shows no purpose whatever”. It does, however, contain a unique, compressed reproduction of the story of the patriarchs and Moses. As a result, Dibelius (2004:69) provides two suggestions as to what the speech is intended to mean:

Firstly, a major part of the speech does not fit into the structure of the context and accusation because the speech is inserted into the original text that Luke had at his disposal. The original text would have joined 6:15, where Stephen’s face becomes like the face of an angel, to 7:55-56, where the transfigured martyr looks up into the opened heavens and sees the Son of Man on the right hand of God. In our text, however, the description of the transfigured face of Stephen is followed directly by the question of the high priest. This is then the link that the author constructs in order to link 6:15 to the long speech (7:1-53) that follows without explicitly being connected with the accusation. This particular possibility would suggest that Luke contributed this part (of the question of the high priest) himself when incorporated the speech into his narrative.

Secondly, the irrelevance of the main section of the speech is a fact which stands out. Dibelius (2004:69) argues that the long sections of the speech that are simply reproductions of the history of Israel can only be explained when one regards the person of Stephen. Thus, the explanation does not lie in the place and event of the

speech, but in the person that gives the speech. Stephen is described in the prelude to the martyrdom as belonging to the world of Hellenistic Judaism. Through the speech then, the author is seeking to portray the significant content of such a person's faith and how a Jew is able to conceptualise and adopt Christianity in a natural manner. In short, the speech demonstrates how the Jewish tradition can flow into the Christian paradigm. Christianity is explicated not as an entirely new and different view, but one that has consistency and continuance in doctrine from Moses, right through to Jesus.

The two suggestions of Dibelius can of course be merged into one possibility, namely that the author was indeed adding the speech of Stephen between Acts 6:15 and Acts 7:55-56, and that this alteration served the purpose of demonstrating the possibility of doctrinal consistency and continuance between Jewish tradition and the Christian faith. This merged action would in turn support the idea of the author's intent to prioritise doctrinal consistency.

Nonetheless, instead of theorising on the reason for the author's actions, one can rather assess the actions themselves. It has become clear, through investigating the place that the speech holds within the greater aim of the text, that the author was indeed selecting, omitting, abbreviating and supplementing the original records of the events. The speech of the martyr has definitely been applied in such a manner as to support the author's intent. The speech is part of a historiography, yet it serves a purpose that goes beyond the task of simply recording the events of history. It is shaped to comment on the Jewish people's inability to interpret the Law of Moses, to demonstrate the unity between the Law of Moses and the Christian faith, and to educate the Christian in apologetic discourse. It is reasonable to accept that the speech of Stephen is a vehicle for ideology. The task of identifying this ideology is undertaken in the remainder of this study.

### **3.5 Determining the degree of religious progress**

Unlike the case of 2 Maccabees 7, the text of Acts 7 is not constructed on the three pillars namely 'enduring torture', 'being the icon of courage' and 'patriarchal/ancestral

reference'. It is rather constructed on the following two main pillars namely patriarchal/ancestral reference; and interpretation of these references.

It is important to note that these two pillars, that are absent in comparison to 2 Maccabees 7, both served the purpose of an emotional appeal towards convincing the reader of the doctrinal revolution.

There is no doubt that the author of Acts 7 employs the speech of Stephen because of its rhetorical value. Yet, the difference between 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 lies in the elaboration and intensity of the emotional character of the events recorded. In 2 Maccabees 7 the persecution of the seven brothers and their mother is elaborated in detail. In Acts 7 the stoning of Stephen is briefly discussed. Therefore, Acts 7 has a much lower priority on emotional argumentation. The following table (Table 5) demonstrates this reduction in emotional intensity. The relation between ancestral reference, doctrinal consistency and interpretation is also highlighted:

**Table 5: Ideological communication in Acts 7**

Row	Torture	Linkage between Israel and the prosecutors	Heroism	ancestral reference	Doctrine/ Interpretation of history
A (v.2)		τῷ πατρὶ ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ [our father Abraham]		τῷ πατρὶ ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ [our father Abraham]	ὁ θεὸς τῆς δόξης [God of glory]
B (v.5)		εἰς τὴν γῆν ταύτην εἰς ἣν ὕμεῖς νῦν κατοικεῖτε [into this land, wherein you now dwell]			
C (v.8)				διαθήκην περιτομῆς [the covenant of circumcision] τὸν Ἰσαὰκ [Isaac] τὸν Ἰακώβ [Jacob] τοὺς δώδεκα πατριάρχας [the twelve patriarchs]	
D (v.9)				Ἰωσήφ [Joseph] Αἴγυπτον [Egypt]	Καὶ οἱ πατριάρχαι ζηλώσαντες [And the patriarchs, because they were envy] καὶ ἦν ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτοῦ [And God was with him]
E (v.10)				Φαραὼ [Pharao]	
F (v.11)				Χανάαν [Chanaan]	
F (v.16)				Συχέμ [Sichem] υἱῶν Ἑμμώρ [the sons of Hemor]	

Row	Torture	Linkage between Israel and the prosecutors	Heroism	Ancestral Reference	Doctrine/ Interpretation of history
G (v.17)					καθώς δὲ ἤγγιζεν ὁ χρόνος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας [and as the time of the promise grew near]
H (v.18)					ἄχρι οὗ ἀνέστη βασιλεὺς ἕτερος ἐπ' Αἴγυπτον ὃς οὐκ ᾔδει τὸν Ἰωσήφ [until another king arose in Egypt who did not know Joseph]
I (v.20)				Μωϋσῆς [Moses]	καὶ ἦν ἀσθεῖος τῷ θεῷ [he (Moses) was acceptable to God]
J (v.25)					ἐνόμιζεν δὲ συνιέναι τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὅτι ὁ θεὸς διὰ χειρὸς αὐτοῦ δίδωσιν σωτηρίαν αὐτοῖς, οἱ δὲ οὐ συνῆκαν [And he thought that his brothers understood that God would save them by his hand. But they did not understand]

Row	Torture	Linkage between Israel and the prosecutors	Heroism	Ancestral Reference	Doctrine/ Interpretation of history
K (v.32)				θεός τῶν πατέρων σου, ὁ θεός Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ [the God of your fathers: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob]	
L (v.35)					Τοῦτον τὸν Μωϋσῆν, ὃν ἠρνήσαντο εἰπόντες, τίς σε κατέστησεν ἄρχοντα καὶ δικαστήν; τοῦτον ὁ θεός καὶ ἄρχοντα καὶ λυτρωτὴν ἀπέσταλκεν [This Moses, whom they refused, saying: Who has appointed you prince and judge? Him God sent to be prince and redeemer]
M (v.36)				Ἐρυθρᾶ Θαλάσση [the red sea] τῇ ἐρήμῳ [the desert]	
N (v.39)		ᾧ οὐκ ἠθέλησαν ὑπήκοοι γενέσθαι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν [to whom our fathers did not desire to be obedient]			
O (v.40)				Ἀαρών [Aäron]	

P (v.43)				Βαβυλῶνος [Babilon]	
<b>Row</b>	<b>Torture</b>	<b>Linkage between Israel and the prosecutors</b>	<b>Heroism</b>	<b>Ancestral Reference</b>	<b>Doctrine/ Interpretation of history</b>
Q (v.44)				Ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ μαρτυρίου [The tent of witness]	
R (v.45)				Ἰησοῦ [Joshua] Δαυίδ [David]	
S (v.48)					ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ ὕψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ [But the Most High does not live in manmade temples]
T (v.51)		Σκληροτράχηλοι καὶ ἀπερίτμητοι καρδίας καὶ τοῖς ὤσιν, ὑμεῖς ἀεὶ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ ἀντιπίπτετε, ὡς οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν [You stiff-necked people and uncircumcised of heart, you always withstand the Holy Spirit, just like your fathers ]			
U (v.52)		τίνα τῶν προφητῶν οὐκ ἐδίωξαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν [Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted]			καὶ ἀπέκτειναν τοὺς προκαταγγείλαντας περὶ τῆς ἐλεύσεως τοῦ δικαίου οὗ νῦν ὑμεῖς προδόται καὶ φονεῖς ἐγένεσθε [And they have slain them who prophesied of the coming of the Just One; of whom you have now been the betrayers and

					murderers]
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In comparison with the table for 2 Maccabees 7 (Table 3: p 27-29), this table presents an addition of two columns namely the *Linkage between Israel and the prosecutors* and *Doctrine/Interpretation of history*. These two columns are important for understanding the specific aim of Acts 7.

Firstly, the *Linkage* column demonstrates the aim of Acts 7 to match the sins of Israel to the sins of Stephen's persecutors. This column shows the phrases which form Stephen's defence.

Secondly, the column on *Doctrine/Interpretation of history* shows the aim of Acts 7 to provide a basis for the doctrine that is present in the text.

Unlike in 2 Maccabees 7, there is almost no reference in the column on *Torture* and none at all under the column on *Heroism*. As already mentioned, these two categories represent communication on an emotional level. This demonstrates the fact that the author of Acts 7 does not mainly focus on an emotional appeal.

The facet which the author does, however, prioritise is a doctrinal exposition. Again it is not the same doctrinal exposition as in 2 Maccabees 7. There are no drastic progressions in this doctrine. It is simply a comprehensive overview of the history of Israel in order to serve as a defence. Two themes are obvious according to Bock (2009:276):

- God has raised up a series of leaders whom the Jews have failed to recognise;
- The Jews have also responded inappropriately to God's presence as reflected in the tabernacle and temple, since they fell into idolatry;

The text is not an attempt to establish doctrinal progression, but to interpret existing doctrine and correct deviated conceptions. The author is noting, through the speech of Stephen, that the temple was never designed to confine God but was intended to be a place of worship to the omnipresent God. Bock (2009:276) states that Stephen,

in his defence, is showing “how the Law truly works”. Stephen shows the inadequacy of the Jewish understanding of Christians, God’s will, the temple, the law and God.

Thus, Acts 7 seems to be an attempt to demonstrate doctrinal consistency rather than revolution. Even if there exists a doctrinal revolution within Acts 7, the author is still providing a logical explanation and connection with Israelite history compared to 2 Maccabees 7 where the doctrine remains isolated and unexplained. The text’s lower prioritisation of emotional appeal shows that the author does not have to persuade the reader through excessive sympathy with the martyr to adopt radical doctrinal ideas, such as human mediatory sacrifice.

### **3.6 The Significance of the Circumstances in which the Speeches are given as Implicit Communication of the Author’s Aim**

#### **3.6.1 Implicit communication through Acts 7**

To recall, the circumstances of the martyr’s speeches in 2 Maccabees 7 imply a social political ideology. It encourages Jewish patriotism through creating a boundary between Jews and the persecutor. It is about Jews against Syrians. Jews are martyred by Syrians, in Syrian territory. The persecutor is portrayed as the personification of evil. Thus, the author is encouraging enmity towards the persecutor through the martyr’s speech as well as through nurturing a love for Judaism. The text of 2 Maccabees 7 encourages an exclusionist ideology.

Regarding Acts 7, there is also the possibility that the text communicates on an implicit level through the circumstances that accompany the martyrdom. However, the ideology seems to be inclusive. It cannot propagate exclusion seeing that a Jew is martyred by Jews and the martyr encourages reconciliation with the persecutor. Furthermore, the content of the speech is rather Jewish-orientated. The words seem to be constructed towards persuasion of the audience rather than to resist.

### **3.6.2 A Jew is martyred by Jews**

In Acts 7, the persecutor is no longer distinguished from the martyr in terms of nationality. Both persecutor and martyr are Jews. The martyr, although having a typical Greek name (Στέφανος), is a Jew. The words ἄνδρες ἀδελφοὶ καὶ πατέρες [brothers and fathers] and πατρὶ ἡμῶν [our fathers] in Acts 7:2, clearly state this fact. Furthermore, the martyr clearly has an exemplary knowledge of the Septuagint. In Acts 7, unlike in 2 Maccabees 7, the martyr is of the same nationality as the persecutor. This Jewish martyr is brought before the Sanhedrin [εἰς τὸ συνέδριον], the highest Jewish council in religious and civil matters.

Thus, there cannot be an exclusion based on nationality. The fact that both persecutor and persecuted are Jewish, shows us that the ideology cannot be political. No nationality is excluded through the implicit communication of the circumstances. Therefore one has to consider that another form of exclusion is at stake, namely an exclusion in terms of doctrine. In 2 Maccabees 7 the author is propagating a social political ideology (cf. Chapter 2) such as Judaism through creating tension between Jews and non-Jews. In Acts 7, the author is propagating a doctrinal ideology through creating tension between people of the same nationality. It is however interesting to note that, regardless of the difference in doctrine between the martyr and the persecutor, Acts 7 is not exclusive, but inclusive.

### **3.6.3 A Jew is martyred in Jewish territory**

It would be normal to speak of a Jew being prosecuted in Jewish territory for some form of disobedience to the Law of Moses, but it is not normal to speak of a Jew being stoned for his religion in Jewish territory. A Jew is not only martyred in Jewish territory, but in the heart of it, namely Jerusalem (Acts 6:7; 8:1). This leads to two important deductions:

- The text of Acts 7 does not create division between two ethnic groups; and
- it does not propagate a political boundary between Stephen and those who will stone him.

In the text of Acts 7 there is no socio-political difference between persecutor and persecuted. Stephen acts like a Jew and speaks like a Jew. There is no-one that can be excommunicated in terms of political tradition. The intent of the author cannot be a socio-political one. The only two remaining factors that may serve as the motivation for expulsion or execution is disobedience to the Law or doctrinal apostasy.

Since Stephen was found blameless (6:10) and since the Jews had to set up false witnesses against Stephen (6:11), there remains but one motive. The Jews had a problem with the content of Stephens' proclamation. Therefore we find the only true accusation in 6:14 ἀκηκόαμεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ("For we have heard him say"). Thus, the conflict between prosecutor and persecuted is on the basis of doctrinal tendency rather than on Stephen's social-political proclivity.

#### **3.6.4 The martyr encourages reconciliation with the persecutor**

The text of Acts 7 communicates an inclusive ideology through noting the martyr's attitude towards the persecutor. The martyr encourages reconciliation with the persecutor.

Stephen warns the Jewish audience with a speech that is directed to influence the audience. For this reason, the speech is introduced with the aorist imperative and thus urgent immediate appeal ἀκούσατε [Listen!]. The content of the speech, therefore, is Jewish-orientated. It is not in opposition to the persecutor, as in 2 Maccabees 7, but rather to try and persuade the Jewish audience, if possible.

The martyr's life is ended with the words in Acts 7:60 κύριε, μὴ στήσης αὐτοῖς ταύτην τὴν ἁμαρτίαν [Lord, do not charge them with this sin]. This is in sharp contrast with the words of 2 Maccabees 7:17: σὺ δὲ καρτέρει καὶ θεώρει τὸ μεγαλεῖον αὐτοῦ κράτος ὡς σὲ καὶ τὸ σπέρμα σου βασανιεῖ [keep on, and see how his great power will torture you and your descendants!]. Thus, the author of

Acts 7 communicates a doctrinal orientated ideology (as suggested in the previous sections) that is both admonishing and inclusive.

### 3.7 Eschatological viewpoint as support for the author's intent

Eschatological ideas in Acts 7 are quite dissimilar to that of 2 Maccabees 7. The text of Acts 7 does not speak only of hope of what is to come, but actually notes Stephen staring into an opened heaven. The hope is thus also, in some sense, made reality.

One might still argue that there is not much explicit communication in Acts 7 about the things to come, but this specific scene of Stephen before the Sanhedrin places Acts 7 within the context of the New Testament eschatology as a whole. This happens through the allusion in Acts 7:55-56 which Sleeman (2009:165) calls the heart of Acts in terms of his spatial analysis: ὑπάρχων δὲ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ἀτενίσας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἶδεν δόξαν θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ νέστωτα ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ [and being full of the Holy Spirit, after he looked up into heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God].

Spencer (1997:79) rightly observes that “Stephen sketches an innovative map of divine space extending above and beyond the holy place of Israel”. The eschatology in Acts 7 seems to be focussing not on vengeance or on the restoration of the martyr's honour, but on where God is. Sleeman (2009:165) mentions that the martyr's speech has already demonstrated where “the God of glory appeared” (7:2), but is also showing where He is appearing now. Sleeman (2009:165) continues by stating that “Theology and Christology are bound together in 7:55 through the phrase δόξαν θεοῦ [the glory of God]”.

Fitzmyer (1998:392) mentions that δόξα is “expressive of the resplendent aspect of Jahweh's majestic presence”. Furthermore, as Sleeman (2009:165) notes, δόξα also reveals connotations of the coming of the heavenly Son of Man (Luke 9:25; 21:27), connotations which “underpin the content of Stephen's vision”. Consequently, one may state that, through this phrase, theology (as the Jewish audience of the martyr's speech would understand it) and eschatology are bound together in Acts 7:55-56.

It is interesting to note that, disregarding the Gospels, the reference to the “Son of Man” in Acts 7 is one of only three in the rest of the New Testament. This phrase can

either refer to a single person in the human race, or to the second person in the trinity. It is logical that in Acts 7 it refers to the person of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It is also interesting to note that the three mentioned references are all eschatological as they envision the Son of Man in a heavenly context. The eschatological relevance would firstly be that this phrase refers to the “Son of Man” mentioned in Daniel 7:13-14. In this sense it is, according to Charles (1913:56-57), the “Assessor to the Ancient of Days in the final judgement” that Stephen sees in the opened visions. It is the one that will enforce Stephen’s defence even if it is to be in the life after the present one.

Secondly, this reference seems to be a significant contribution in the establishment of the author’s intent. Through this phrase, as seen in the references in 2 Maccabees 7, the author’s aim is strengthened. It is a reference which, as stated above, portrays a consistent line of doctrinal progression from the early prophets and apocalyptic Jewish literature through to the doctrine of early Christianity. Johannes L.P. Wolmarans, in his article “Narrative Perspective in Acts 4:23-31”, adds to this discussion by stating that the author “pictures God as determining history linearly in three phases: a period of prophecy, a period of fulfilment, and a period of judgement initiated by the return of Christ.” Apparently, this is also evident in Acts 7. Although the return of Christ is not mentioned explicitly, the connection between the Son of Man’s attribute as judge and his final action of (eschatological) judgement cannot be ignored.

The speech’s aim is to prove the roots of Christianity to be in Jewish tradition. Accordingly, the reference to the “Son of Man” demonstrates the consistency between the history of Israel and the witness of Jesus the Nazarene - it envisions multicultural Christian worship in the presence of the God of the exclusionist Jewish nation.

This chapter has contributed in a major way to the discovering of the intent of the Author of Acts 7. The literary character of Acts 7 proves to be one that supports the aim of the Author to sustain doctrinal consistency. A specific genre was suggested namely apologetic historiography. This genre implies the story of a subgroup of people in an extended prose narrative written by a member of the group who follows

the groups' own traditions. The author portrays this group in such a way as to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world. Here in Acts 7, the emphasis lies on the attempt of the author to provide an identity for the group to which the author belongs in contrast to outside perceptions. Apologetic historiography, in the case of Acts 7, conceptualises the unity between ancient Israel and the ideas of Christianity.

Secondly, the chapter has challenged the perception that speeches necessarily have to be quoted perfectly. The speech in Acts 7 serves as an artistic and stylistic device. In the process of incorporating the speech, the author was indeed selecting, omitting, abbreviating and supplementing the original record of the events. The speech of the martyr has been applied in such a manner as to support the author's intent. It is shaped to comment on the Jewish people's inability to interpret the Law of Moses and to demonstrate the unity between the Law of Moses and the Christian faith.

The chapter explicated, by means of a table (Table 5), a reduction in emotional intensity in comparison with the text of 2 Maccabees 7. The relation between ancestral reference, doctrinal consistency and interpretation was investigated. This investigation highlighted that the author of Acts 7 did not use ancestral reference as an emotional device to convince the reader of doctrinal ideas as was the case with 2 Maccabees 7. This, in turn, demonstrated the emphasis the author of Acts 7 placed on doctrinal consistency as well as on the author's inclusive approach.

Lastly, it was established that the eschatological communication, as opposed to 2 Maccabees 7, supports the above mentioned inclusive approach. The eschatology represented in Acts 7 is not about vengeance, but about doctrinal consistency through connecting the Law of the Jews to the ideas of the Christians of Acts.

The chapter that follows provides an overall and formal conclusion for the study and places the two texts of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 in perspective.



## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This study provides a formal comparison of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7, which had not been done before. Interesting new results were discovered such as:

- Both texts employ the events of martyrdom because of its rhetorical value;
- Both texts employ the speech of the martyr/s as a vehicle for ideology;
- Both texts note events where Jews are the subjects of martyrdom;
- The texts of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 both seem to rationalise martyrdom in terms of eschatology;
- But there are also considerable differences between the two texts. The text of 2 Maccabees 7 is exclusivist, emotional and doctrinally progressive. The text of Acts 7 is inclusive, logical and doctrinally consistent;

The study demonstrates that both 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 are perfect for communicating ideology. The author of 2 Maccabees 7 communicates a socio-political ideology that upholds the honour of the Jewish nation. The author of Acts 7, on the contrary, communicates an ideology of doctrinal consistency.

It was discovered that both texts contain specific elements that help the reader to adopt a certain ideology. Every aspect enforces persuasion:

- The specific genre serves as supportive structure for the author's intent;
- The bravery of the characters play a role in adopting ideology;
- The speeches play an important role in the communication of an ideology as they are written in the first person. They speak directly to the reader.
- The circumstances in which the speeches are given serve as implicit communication of the author's intent.
- Even eschatological information supports the author's intended communication of ideology.

An interesting finding is that the author of 2 Maccabees 7 uses a more intense emotional appeal than the author of Acts 7. The deduction can be made that this variation in emotional intensity is directly related to the ideology communicated within

the text. If the ideology is mainly socio-political, then a strong emotional appeal is needed to create a feeling of unity and strength against the persecutor's nation; if the ideology is mainly doctrinal, then a more logical appeal is created.

The authors were also found to communicate these ideologies through careful redaction of their sources. Various techniques were applied to 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 such as: selective usage of sources, addition, reduction, and links between sources.

The argument put forward in this paper that the two texts have a difference regarding the author's intention is supported. The divergent intentions can be described as follows:

- The text of 2 Maccabees 7 is not an allusion to ancestral Jewish doctrine as traditionally accepted, but communicates Jewish-religious revolution in order to sustain a socio-political ideology;
- Acts 7 sacrifices socio-political ideology through prioritising consistency between Jewish and Christian doctrine.

The fact was highlighted that 2 Maccabees 7 is not about looking back and applying the Law of Moses, but about looking forward to the Law of the God of 2 Maccabees 7. This is a modified Law that sustains Jewish patriotic, political identity. The study established that 2 Maccabees 7 notes a doctrinal revolution through incorporating new ideas in order to make sense of God in times of persecution. These are ideas such as:

- The reward for martyrdom is eternal life and restoration of the body;
- The blood of the tortured serves as sacrifice for the sins of Israel.

Consequently, the text of 2 Maccabees 7 does not build on and apply ancestral Jewish doctrine, but provides revolutionary and new doctrinal ideas.

Dissimilarly, Acts 7 was found to have a different aim. Whereas 2 Maccabees 7 revolutionised Jewish doctrine in order to sustain Judaism, Acts 7 is less

revolutionary and prioritised doctrinal consistency. The author provided a comprehensive and exegetical overview of the ways of the Jewish ancestors and linked it to the Christian faith through the speech of the martyr.

Furthermore, five stages were identified that characterise the specific genre of 2 Maccabees 7 and Acts 7 as martyrology. These stages are: Setting, restriction, reaction, endurance and finality. The five stages were shown to be typical of martyrologies and designed to achieve a climactic storyline.

A variety of tables were used to demonstrate a number of aspects. Firstly, in 2 Maccabees 7, the author uses three pillars namely torture, courage and ancestral reference as an emotional appeal. Through torture, an emotion of fear is generated; through courage and ancestral reference, an emotion of respect is generated. Both these emotional fields create in the reader a reverence for the martyrs. The martyrs are liberated to an unchallengeable status. The author uses a combination of appeals that regard the political and religious identity of the Jews. Through this, an environment was in fact created in which doctrinal progression would be easier to adopt. Through these progressions, the Jews are de-humiliated. Thus an endangered identity is rescued.

Secondly, the tables demonstrated that Acts 7 is an attempt to demonstrate doctrinal consistency rather than revolution. Even if there exists a doctrinal revolution within Acts 7, the author is still providing a logical explanation and connection with Israelite history compared to 2 Maccabees 7 where the doctrine remains isolated and unexplained. The text's lower prioritisation of emotional appeal shows that the author does not have to persuade the reader through excessive sympathy with the martyr to adopt radical doctrinal ideas, such as human mediatory sacrifice.

The investigation according to a theme of doctrinal progress has led to new suggestions regarding Judaism. Through the study, it has become clear that Judaism is not seen as a concept which was moulded into a static idea. It is rather a source of life to the political and religious identity of the Jewish people. Judaism is an ever changing force which has driven a nation to survive for more than three and a half millennia.

The text of Acts 7 then, is an attempt to provide answers to the Jewish nation regarding the Christian religion and its roots. The author of Acts 7 does not seek to establish doctrinal progression, but to interpret existing doctrine and correct deviated conceptions. The author is noting, through the speech of Stephen, that the temple was never designed to confine God but was intended to be a place of worship to the omnipresent God. Stephen, in his defence, is showing how the Law truly works. Stephen shows the inadequacy of the Jewish understanding of Christians, God's will, the temple, the law and God.

The investigation of the two texts demonstrated that ideology is a dynamic concept. When social political ideology is sustained, doctrine may be reshaped; when doctrine is sustained, social political ideology may be re-evaluated.

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