

Historical interpretations of Acts 6 no longer viable

1. The Apostles take the “superior” role of proclaiming the Word while the Seven the “inferior” role of “waiting on tables.”

The Twelve and the Seven are not shown to be related in terms of “higher” or “lower” status/importance.

2. Arguments over whether “Jewish” or “Greek” models of providing food charity are at issue.

The scene is most likely not about “food” at all, which is not mentioned in the text.

3. Taking “the Hellenists” as more “liberal” for their “openness” to Greco-Roman culture and “the Hebrews” as more “conservative in supposedly rejecting “other” cultures.

This has been shown to be a result of the prejudice of German Protestant scholars whose anti-Judaism was not challenged.

4. The “neglect” of widows implies the women’s poverty and dependence on male support.

Luke shows widows with assets substantial enough to be sought by plunder by the scribes (Luke 20.46-47).

5. The scene shows the “ordination of the first deacons” in the church

The notion of “deacons” as a church office is anachronistic in the first centuries CE.

6. The members of the “synagogue of the Freedman” challenge Stephen on theological grounds, objecting to his supposed denigration of Moses and God.

It is much more likely that their opposition is based on jealousy of their independent system of “banking” (= resource distribution) that is not connected to the Jerusalem Temple.