GALLIO'S RULING ON THE LEGAL STATUS OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY (ACTS 18:14-15)

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Summary

The purpose of this article is to examine in detail Luke's succinct account of the unsuccessful criminal action by some Corinthian Jews against Paul before the governor of Achaea. This is done in order to understand the nature of the case against Paul, Gallio's legal reasons for rejecting it, the implication of that ruling for early Christians, and the defence Paul mounted in subsequent Roman criminal proceedings.

The discovery of the Delphic inscription of Claudius,[1] with its reference to L. Junius Gallio, who is specifically named in Acts 18:12-17 as 'Proconsul of Achaea', has been used to provide a fixed point for Pauline and early Christian chronology.[2] Gallio was a noted jurist in his day with very important imperial connections. He was named by Claudius in the inscription at Delphi as 'my friend and proconsul' (ὁ φ[ίλος] μου κα[ὶ ἀνθύ]πατος).[3] The implications of his legal ruling on the Jewish attempt to bring Paul to trial in Corinth were important in defining the status of early Christians in the eyes of the Romans and for the subsequent Roman trials of Paul in Acts.

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[1] The first four fragments were discovered in 1905 and three more fragments five years later which were published in 1913, SIG^3 2.801. It was not until 1967 that two more were uncovered and published by A. Plassart, 'L'inscription de Delphes mentionnant le proconsul Gallion' *REG* 80 (1967), pp. 372-78.

[2] For example Colin J. Hemer, 'Observations on Pauline Chronology' *Pauline Studies. Essays Presented to Professor F.F. Bruce on his 70th Birthday* (eds. D.A. Hagner & M.J. Harris; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 3-18; G. Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (London: SCM, 1984), pp. 162-75.

[3] Line 6. He possibly secured the office of proconsul through the influence of his brother, Seneca, the philosopher, following the latter's restoration from an exile lasting from A.D. 42-49. See K. Haacker, 'Gallio' *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. D.N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), II, pp. 901-903.

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I. The setting

A text which attests the possibility of imperial intervention to resolve disturbances within Jewish communities is the famous letter of emperor Claudius to the Alexandrians in A.D. 41. Posted publicly by the Prefect of Egypt, Lucius Aemilius Rectus, for all in Alexandria to read and admire the majesty of 'our god Caesar' (τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν Καίσαρος), this letter gave stern warning of imperial intervention if Alexandrian Jews dared to entertain their fellow countrymen whom it specifically named as coming 'from Syria or Egypt'...'formenters of what is a general plague infecting the whole world'.[4] Given the Jewish network it is not surprising that Thessalonian Jews and others declared before their civic rulers that Paul and Silas were Syrian or Egyptian insurrectionists—'these who have turned the world upside down have also come here' (Acts 17:6).

As had happened in Thessalonica and elsewhere following Paul's evangelistic efforts, there was a major altercation in Corinth between Paul and the Jews as a result of his arguing and persuading some of the Jews and Greeks connected with the synagogue that Jesus was the promised Messiah (Acts 18:4-6). The breakaway group set up what must have come to be seen as a rival meeting in the house right next door to the synagogue which was owned by Titus Justus, a god-fearer (18:7). Presumably he had attached himself to the synagogue until Paul's arrival. That, followed by the defection of Crispus, the head of the synagogue, together with all the members of his household obviously fuelled the desire for a confrontation (18:5-8). How could the Jews retaliate against such a humiliating loss of their synagogue ruler as well as significant and potential members to a 'rival' synagogue at a time when, given the anti-Semitism of Rome (18:2), Jewish unity meant everything? From the time of Tiberius onwards there had also been an empire-wide preoccupation with guilt by association as a result of the trials in Rome which followed the Sejanus conspiracy.[5] The 'orthodox' Jews needed to distance themselves from Christians so that they would not be implicated in any way with the difficulties that might occur between the authorities and this breakaway, radical Messianic group.

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[4] *P.Lond.* 1912 (A.D. 41) *ll.* 96-100; accessible in A.S. Hunt & C.C. Edgar, *Select Papyri II: Non-Literary Papyri, Public Documents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), no. 212.

[5] B. Levick, 'Tiberius and the Law: The Development of *Maiestas*' *Tiberius the Politician* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), ch. 11.

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II. The charge (18:13)

The situation in section I may explain why Corinthian Jews brought Paul to the notice of the Roman governor of Achaea through the due process of the criminal law.[6]

It is significant that the earlier charges brought against Paul while he was in Macedonia had to do with Roman issues. In the Roman colony of Philippi, Paul and Silas were charged with having 'set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive or to observe, being Romans' (Acts 16:21). The Thessalonians had charged that 'these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar' (17:7a). In the former place the petitioners did not include Jews although in the latter they did. A.N. Sherwin White summarised the situation as follows 'at Philippi, when Paul is first brought before a Roman tribunal, Acts is remarkably precise: Paul is causing disturbance by preaching about an un-Roman cult', then at Thessalonica...'contrary to the decrees of Caesar',[7] alleging that there was another king, Jesus (17:7b).[8]

In Athens the issue between Paul and the Areopagus indirectly involved the Romans. He was thought to have been 'the herald of foreign deities' (17:18), and as such, would be required to give proof of their divinity, build a temple, and provide a feast day for the city. The only gods in effect to be recognised in this period were emperors on their accession to the throne and occasionally members of the imperial family, so his evangelistic activities warranted further investigation.[9]

What was the nature of the charge brought against Paul in Corinth by Sosthenes, the new ruler of the synagogue? The essence of the initiating petition is usually translated 'This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law' (Acts 18:13). While Luke uses the verb 'to persuade' (πείθω) in 18:4 to describe the outcome of Paul's synagogue ministry, i.e. 'he persuaded Jews and Greeks', he uses the

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[6] For a discussion of the legal proceedings see A.N. Sherwin White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 97-107 and more recently H.W. Tajra, 'Corinth: Paul and Gallio' *The Trial of St Paul: A Juridical Exegesis of the Second Half of the Acts of the Apostles* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989), ch. 3 esp. pp. 51-60.

[7] See E.A. Judge, 'The Decrees of Caesar at Thessalonica' *Reformed Theological Review*, XXX (1971), pp. 1-7 for a discussion of the decrees and the swearing of an oath of loyalty to the emperor.

[8] Sherwin White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament,* p. 101.

[9] See my 'On introducing Gods to Athens: An alternative reading of Acts 17:18–20' *TynB* 47.1 (May, 1996), pp. 71-90, esp. p. 78 and n. 32 for evidence of first-century decrees on emperors.

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verb ἀναπείθω to describe the Jewish charge in 18:13. Occurrences of the latter word in legal settings, however, imply that the person concerned operated out of deceit in order to mislead or seduce others. This is very much the case in comparable official petitions which aim to initiate legal proceedings. In *P.Magd.* 14 (221 B.C.) a father protests against the actions of a courtesan who induced his son to sign a bill for 1000 drachmas in her favour. In *P.Ryl.* 114 (A.D. 280) a widow petitions the prefect of Egypt on the grounds that her deceased husband was persuaded to pasture his flock on the defendant's land and he then stole stolen sixty of them.[10] So the charge recorded against Paul implies that he was deceptively misleading others.[11]

Those whom he was misleading are described as 'the men' (τοὺς ἀνθρώπους); those whom it was alleged Paul was manipulating deceptively were described as 'Jews and Greeks' in 18:4, but seem to have been designated by the generic term, 'the men' in 18:13. Sherwin White has taken this to refer to Roman citizens of Corinth, and Titus Justus was, by his name, one.[12] A legal distinction was drawn in Corinth between those who were Roman citizens and those who were 'inhabitants'. In the time of Claudius it is known that Greeks of substance were drawn to this capital of Achaea,[13] and the colony was already a mix of Roman citizens and provincials. The President of the Games gave a number of banquets—'several times entertained all the citizens [of Corinth]', i.e. Roman.[14] There could not have been vast numbers of Roman citizens in a city whose population was estimated at around 100,000 making it the largest city in the Province of Achaea.[15] It would seem that the reference to 'the men' includes Jews and non-Jews, Roman citizens and Provincials, all inhabitants of the Roman colony.

The deception related 'to worship' and the object of that worship was stated as 'God' (σέβεσθαι τὸν θεόν). The verb is used elsewhere

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[10] Moulton and Milligan, p. 37 suggest that 'the nuance (compared with *P.Magd.* 14) is weaker, but survives in the complaining tone of the aggrieved widow'. It would seem that the orator's choice of the word in the petition is meant to imply deceit even when her husband was alive, and confirmed his despicable actions against the widow after his demise.

[11] Liddell and Scott cite Acts 18:13 under the classification 'seduce', 'mislead'.

[12] Sherwin White, *Roman Society and Roman Law,* p. 102.

[13] A.J.S. Spawforth, 'Roman Corinth: The Formation of a Colonial Elite' in ed. A.D. Rizakis *Roman Onomastics in the Greek East Social and Political Aspects* Μελεθματα 21 (Athens, 1996), p. 175.

[14] Plutarch, *Quaestiones Conviviales* 8:4.1.

[15] D. Engels, *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), p. 82.

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in Acts to denote 'devout proselytes' designated apart from Jews (13:43), women 'god-fearers' whom the Jews used to stir up trouble (13:50), Lydia who worshipped God (16:14), 'devout Greeks' connected with the synagogue (17:4), and 'devout persons' distinguished from Jews (17:17).[16] It is also used of Titus Justus who worshipped God (σεβομένου τὸν θεόν, 18:7), and of Diana of the Ephesians, whom all Asia and the world worshipped (19:27). It can therefore be used of those non-Jews connected with the synagogue, of whom two were said to worship God, and one to worship a pagan deity. The use of the verb in 18:13 cannot therefore be restricted to God-fearers. The Jews were accusing Paul of deceitfully misleading both Jews and non-Jews formerly connected to their synagogue into joining another 'meeting' in order 'to worship God'.

The allegation was that Paul was contravening the law. Could it be that 'the law' to which they referred was the Jewish one? If so, what was Paul doing? Was he preaching against circumcision and the keeping of the Mosaic law as he would be misrepresented as having done even by Jerusalem Christians (Acts 21:21)? It seems unlikely that his synagogue preaching would centre on this issue when the essence of the case he placed before the Jews was the Messianic claims of Jesus (Acts 18:5).

If it was Roman law, to what were they referring? Was it the law governing the meetings of associations? While it was illegal from the time of Augustus for members of associations to gather more than once a month, weekly Jewish synagogue meetings were specifically exempt from that provision.[17] The legislation of Augustus had been introduced to restrain undesirable political activity among societies, and subsequent rulings had proscribed certain outlandish religions.[18] The crime of an association meeting weekly was that of being a *collegium illicitum* with political or seditious overtones.[19] Since weekly Jewish meetings were exempted, was it not true that the Christian gathering in the house of Titus Justus was a Jewish 'house of prayer' (προσευχή)[20] and therefore not an unlawful assembly, even

[16] J.N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 198.

[17] O.F. Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1995), p. 80 and more fully W. Cotter, 'The *collegia* and Roman Law: State restrictions on voluntary associations' in edd. J.S. Kloppenborg and S.G. Wilson *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1996), ch. 5.

[18] Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Rome*, pp. 80-81, 95-96.

[19] Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Rome*, p. 80.

[20] I. Levinskaya, 'A Jewish or Gentile Prayer House? The meaning of

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if it was not strictly 'Jewish'. The Jewish scriptures would still be the basis of its teaching and the presence of Paul, other Jews and God-fearers, would make it very much a look-alike Jewish gathering. Was the Jewish charge meant to signal to the governor that this was not a rival synagogue at all but an un-Roman cult led by Paul which was meeting contrary to the law? Tajra argues 'There was a deliberate and conscious ambiguity in the accusation which demonstrates a certain cunning, but also the weakness of the plaintiff's case against Paul'.[21]

III. Gallio's ruling (18:14-15)

Gallio's ruling may throw further light on the meaning and significance of the charge. He made it clear that Paul was not guilty of 'a felony' (ἀδίκημα) or of 'a political misdemeanour' (ῥᾳδιούργημα πονηρόν) under Roman law (18:14). πονηρόν had political connotations and was an antonym for the activity of those designated καλοὶ κἀγαθοί.[22] The latter terms became a standard title conferred on public benefactors who were so described in inscriptions because of their civic-mindedness, witnessed by their generous contributions that enhanced the quality of life in their cities.[23] The choice of language in Gallio's ruling at this point would suggest that the Jewish charge concerning the worship of God contrary to Roman law was meant to point to the fact that the issue was a political one—as we have seen, the term ῥᾳδιούργημα implied some misdeed or villainy. Were his comments designed to reject the implication that Paul was one of those Syrian Jewish political trouble-makers whom Claudius had in mind and with whom the Thessalonians had also sought to identify Paul? Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians would have the force of law. Certainly, some evil intent by this promoter of the worship of God was implied.

Gallio then makes it clear that if their charge could be sustained, he would, of course, proceed with the case, for ἀνεσχόμην was a

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ΠΡΟΣΕΥΧΗ' *TynB* 41.1 (1990), pp. 154-59.

[21] Tajra, *The Trial of St Paul*, p. 58.

[22] Liddell and Scott, πονηρός,

[23] See A.W. Gomme, 'The Interpretation of καλοὶ κἀγαθοί in Thucydides 4.40.2' *CQ* (1953), p. 658. and W. Den Boer, *Private Morality in Greece and Rome* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), pp. 161-2. For epigraphic evidence see for example *OGIS* 215, 339, *BMI* 420, *IEph* 1395, 1412.

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technical legal term and the phrase κατὰ λόγον in 18:14 refers to the legal grounds for a charge.[24]

He gives his considered judgement, stating that the issue before him related to 'subjects of dispute' or 'claims' (ζητήματα).[25] ζήτημα in the singular could refer to an official or judicial enquiry or 'claims' as it was so used by Festus in Acts 25:19 concerning the case of the Jews *v.* Paul—'Jews had certain claims against him of their own superstition'.

The disputes concerned three matters, i.e. περὶ λόγου καὶ ὀνομάτων καὶ νόμου τοῦ καθ' ὑμᾶς. The term λόγος, while it carries a wide range of meanings, is used to refer to 'a debate', 'an argument', 'a law', 'a rule of conduct' or 'a declaration of legal immunity'.[26] The the Jews had a 'legal immunity' in relation to the observation of the imperial cult, although they themselves offered sacrifices for the emperor in Jerusalem but not to him.[27] One argument in the petition could have been that Paul's group did not qualify for such immunity, given its racial composition and Paul's abandoning the synogogue with the declaration that 'from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles' (18:6).

The second term, ὀνόματα, sometimes designates 'names' as the opposite to a real person, 'false names' or 'pretexts' or 'terms'. If the word refers to 'terms' in this context, then Gallio sees it as an internal dispute over the meaning of words.[28] However, if the reference is to 'names', then 'Roman law held a person liable for actions and not for any name they professed'.[29] This may well account for the fact that Christians were subsequently charged with crimes which involved actions.[30] Gallio's judgement enunciated an important principle of Roman law which would have precluded proceeding on that basis in a criminal action.

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[24] For the use of this phrase to describe the legal basis for proceeding, see Liddell and Scott, λόγος III.b.

[25] For the meaning 'official or judicial enquiry' see *P.Oxy.* 97.14 (ii A.D.) and 'claims' *P.Ryl.* 117.14 (ii A.D.) *SIG* 785 (i A.D.).

[26] See this additional classification of λόγος in the *Revised Supplement to Liddell and Scott* (1996) VII.6 citing Justinian, *Nov.* 17.6, *Edict* 2 pr.

[27] M.H. Williams, *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans* (London: Duckworth, 1998), p. 91.

[28] Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 15.32 'our argument (λόγος) shows that it is not the philosophers who misuse the terms (ὀνόματα)'.

[29] W. Cotter, 'The *collegia* and Roman Law: State restrictions on voluntary associations', 82 and Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Rome,* p. 17.

[30] For the history of this see most recently M. Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (ET London: Routledge, 1994).

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Gallio also ruled that the matter concerned 'the law' i.e. 'your own' (νόμου τοῦ καθ' ὑμᾶς). Two observations are made in connection with this ruling. First, did the Jews raise the issue of circumcision, i.e. that Paul did not teach it, in their petition? Circumcision was a widely accepted distinguishing feature of the Jews, and although repugnant to the Romans who equated it with castration,[31] it nevertheless functioned as an effective identification marker.[32] Second, Gallio, in declaring that it was an issue concerning 'your own law', was drawing a distinction between the Jewish law and that of the Romans. Breaches of the latter, the Jews alleged, constituted the grounds of Paul's guilt. Gallio, in giving this judgement, clearly rejected the over-arching charge that Paul had breached Roman law.

On the basis of the information supplied by Luke it is interesting to speculate on the nature of the legal petition that would have outlined the case and which initiated the proceedings.[33] It would have contained an *exordium* which enunciated the essence of the case and spelled out the competence of Gallio to hear it. Given its function in legal cases, the Jewish case was summarised from the *exordium* as cited —'This man dupes men to worship God contrary to the [Roman] law' (18:13). The *narratio* would have outlined evidence of Paul was a law breaker and a Jewish political dissident. The *confirmatio* may have been taken up with the proof that Paul was mischievous in his handling of the Jewish scriptures, and that he had been persuading both Jew and Greek to worship God which would have included the Messiah, Jesus (18:4 cf. 17:2-3). The *peroratio* could have implied that Paul was a politically motivated Jewish trouble-maker promoting an un-Roman cult. While there is only a very brief summary of the case, there are sufficient clues based on legal conventions to outline the case in the formal petition.

Did the recent expulsion of Jews from Rome under Claudius have any influence on the way in which the case against Paul was framed? Acts 18:2 refers to this incident. Suetonius explains 'Chrestus was the instigator of it' *impulsore Chresto* (*Claudius* xxv.4). This incident in Rome has been seen either as a problem created for orthodox Jews with the Romans over the Messiah of this new Jewish sect;[34] or as the

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[31] Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Rome*, pp. 51-52.

[32] Suetonius, *Life of Domitian*, 12, Martial 7.82.

[33] For a form critical analysis of examples of forensic petitions initiating legal proceedings, see my 'The Importance of the *Captatio Benevolentiae* in the Speeches of Tertullus and Paul in Acts 24:1-21' *JTS* 42.2 (1991), pp. 505-531.

[34] B. Levick, *Claudius* (London: Batsford, 1990), p. 121 has most recently discussed this.

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result of a Messianic megastar (not the Christian's Messiah) creating trouble in Rome;[35] or one of any number of persons in Rome called by the name, Chrestus, possibly 'a once well-known slave or freedman of Claudius'.[36] If the first was the case, the Jewish litigants in Corinth could not afford to present a charge based on the claims of Paul's *Christos* without running the risk of their own expulsion from this Roman colony. That would have been a strong possibility given the tendency, if not obligation, of Roman colonies to act and react in sympathy with the sentiments and actions of Rome. In Acts 18:18 Luke suggests that Gallio saw the beating up of Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue,[37] who was the Jewish prosecutor in this case as an appropriate action in keeping with his 'friend' Claudius' anti-Semitism.[38]

In subsequent centuries Christianity might be proscribed as a sect because of the disturbance it caused in misleading people in the matter of religion. According to *The Digest* 'if anyone does anything whereby men's light minds are frightened by superstitious awe, the deified Marcus wrote in a rescript that persons of this kind are to be relegated to an island'.[39] There is also Paul's *Sententiae* in Roman law dealing with those who introduce new sects, and religions unknown to reason, disturbing men's minds (5.21.2). In stating that Paul acted 'contrary to the law', were the Jews making reference to the fact that Judaism was a *religio licita*? It was recognised as such by the Romans,[40] or in the first-century concept, a *mos maiorum,* i.e. living in accordance with ancient Jewish traditions of their own.[41]

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[35] E.A. Judge and G.S.R. Thomas, 'The Origin of the Church at Rome: A New Solution', *Reformed Theological Review* 25 (1966), pp. 81-94, where they argue this partly on the basis that Suetonius introduces the Christian movement as a new phenomenon only at a later stage in his work (*Nero*, xvi.2).

[36] H.D. Slingerland, 'Here a Chrestus, There a Chrestus', *Claudian Policy-making and the Early Imperial Repression of Judaism at Rome*, Studies in the History of Judaism (Atlanta: Georgia, 1997), ch. 9.

[37] He would be a person of status, see T. Rajak and D. Noy, '*Archisynogogoi*: Office, Social Status in the Graeco-Roman World' *JRS* 83 (1993), pp. 75-93. His public humiliation would, in the eyes of the Romans, be a way of violating his person and thus robbing him of his *dignitas.* On shaming in Roman society see R.A. Kaster, 'The Shame of the Romans' *APA* 127 (1997) pp. 4-5.

[38] See Slingerland, *Claudian Policymaking and the Early Imperial Repression of Judaism at Rome.*

[39] *Digest* 48.19.30.

[40] While there was no 'charter' as T. Rajak, 'Was there a Roman Charter for the Jews?' *JRS* 74 (1984), pp. 107-23 righly points out, and the concept of *religio licita* is a later term, the exemption given specifically to the Jews concerning their weekly meetings and other concessions, not least of all exemption from the cult, indicates that they did possess a 'special' status. The shorthand term, *religio licita,*

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Because the Corinthian Jews argued that Paul was misleading others by teaching them to worship God contrary to the law, Christianity would be a *religio illicita.* What did they achieve? Apart from providing an unwanted opportunity for the expression of local antagonism, they secured the very ruling that no orthodox Jew wanted to hear. Christianity was a sect within Judaism and therefore a *religio licita,* part of the *mos maiorum.* This was how Christianity was judged in the eyes of the Roman governor with expertise as a jurist. What Gallio ruled 'when Paul was about to open his mouth' (18:14a) had implications for this early Messianic movement. Whether Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians, Roman citizens, or provincials, they were all seen as 'a party' operating under the Jewish umbrella. Therefore being a Christian in the province of Achaea was not a criminal offence, according to Gallio.

Attention has been briefly drawn to the legal immunity the Jews enjoyed with respect to the veneration of the emperor because of the *mos maiorum.*[42] While New Testament scholars have underestimated the importance of this cult during the Julio-Claudian emperors, evidence showed that it grew more spectacularly throughout the empire during the first century than even the early Christian movement did.[43] 'The diffusion of the cult of Augustus and of other members of his family in Asia Minor and throughout the Greek East from the beginning of the empire was rapid, indeed almost instantaneous.'[44] Augustus enjoined it on all Roman citizens and Provincials.[45] Local worship of the divine Caesar existed in Corinth from the very foundation of the colony in 44 B.C. and during the latter part of the Principate of Claudius a federal imperial cult was set up in

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indicates that they did possess a 'special' status. The shorthand term, *religio licita,* is only used thus to describe the exemptions.

41 Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Ancient Rome*, p. 97 cites Tacitus, *History*, 5.5 *antiquitate defenduntur*, cf. Josephus *AJ,* xvi.6.2 as evidence.

42 See page 219.

43 Archaeological sites where Christian churches were planted in New Testament times in Syria and Greece that have been excavated all have evidence of imperial cult temples. See D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult and the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987-92) I-III for details of indiviual cities, and ed. A.Small, *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity*, JRA Supplement 17 (1996).

44 S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), I., p. 100.

45 Dio Cassius, 51.20.6-7.

this Roman colony.[46] Gallio's decision meant that all Christians in Corinth were thereby exempted from the annual obligation to worship the gods on the earth, i.e. the emperor and certain members of his family and his predecessors who had undergone an *apotheosis* at death and now to whom all were also to burn incense, apart from the Jews, and now following this ruling, the Christians.[47] This judgement was valid for the Province of Achaea by reason of his *imperium*, but although it was not legally binding beyond it, an opinion of a leading jurist could not be lightly disregarded.[48]

When Paul subsequently opened his mouth in another Roman courtroom to make a defence, his *captatio benevolentiae* stated that Felix possessed the necessary competence to judge this matter because it was about a Jewish issue—'Forasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defence.' He proceeded to argue that his presence in Jerusalem was connected with Jewish worship, and alms-giving for the nation and that the issue in question was the statement made before the Sanhedrin concerning the resurrection (Acts 24:10-21). This refuted the criminal charge made by Tertullus, representing the Jews, that Paul was as a Jewish insurrectionist, an enemy of Rome. In the final hearing before Festus in the presence of Agrippa II, Paul again mounted his defence along the same lines—'I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said should happen' (26:22).[49] Festus confirmed Gallio's ruling that the case concerned 'certain questions of their superstition' and the alleged resurrection of Jesus (25:19).

While awaiting the hearing of his appeal, Paul was still allowed to engage in his ministry 'with all boldness'. After that comment, Luke added the highly significant word, 'unhindered' (28:31). This term was used to indicate that there was no legal impediment to what a

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[46] A.J.S. Spawforth, 'Corinth, Argos, and the Imperial Cult' *Hesperia* 63.2 (1994) pp. 211-32 and in an abbreviated form see 'The Achaen Federal Cult Part I: Pseudo-Julian, Letters, no.198' *TynB* 46.1 (1995) pp. 151-68.

[47] For a discussion in relation to 1 Cor. 8:4-6 see my 'The Achaean Federal Imperial Cult II: The Corinthian Church' *TynB* 46.1 (May, 1995), pp. 169-78, and for a wide-ranging treatment of the New Testament in preparation *The Imperial Gods and the First Christians*.

[48] On the *imperium*, see A.N. Sherwin White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, pp. 1-12.

[49] For detailed discussion of the legal proceedings see my 'Official Proceedings and Forensic Speeches in Acts 24-26', in A.D. Clarke and B.W. Winter (ed.) *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, (Grand Rapids and Carlisle: Eerdmans and Paternoster, 1993), ch. 11.

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person was doing.[50] There are instances where it was used in connection with Jewish religious activities. Its antonym, 'hindered' (κωλύτως), was used to describe the inhibiting of the religious activities of Jewish people.[51] The term, 'unhindered' or 'without interference' (ἀκωλύτως) is found in an imperial decree on the legal right of Diaspora Jews to collect money for Jerusalem—that they 'according to their ancient custom to bring sacred money to Jerusalem, may do this without interference' and also in a forensic petition to Agrippa on Jewish religious observances 'The only things we ask to share with others is the right to preserve our ancestral religion unhindered.'[52] What Luke indicated was that although Paul was under the constant eye of a Roman guard (28:16), he was not in breach of Roman law by engaging in preaching and teaching. No charge of felony or political misdemeanour could be levelled against him on the basis of these activities in Rome. Luke's final word to Theophilus in the Book of Acts was a vindication of the legal ruling concerning the status of early Christianity at this particular stage in its history by a governor of whom it could not be said that he was no 'friend of Caesar'.

[50] In legal documents the term was found in leases and described legal access, i.e. without let or hindrance, *P.Oxy.* 1127 (A.D. 183), 1641 (A.D. 68).

[51] Josephus, *AJ*, xii.187.6, xv.420.2, xvii.241.3.

[52] *AJ*, xvi.16.3.

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