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of the Apostles  
Jeremy L. Williams  
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## Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles

In this study, Jeremy L. Williams interrogates the book of Acts in an effort to understand how early Christian texts provide glimpses of the legal processes by which Roman officials and militarized police criminalized, prosecuted, and incarcerated people in the first and second centuries CE. Williams investigates how individuals and groups have been, and still are, prosecuted for specious reasons – because of stories and myths written against them, perceptions of alterity that render them subhuman or nonhuman, the collusion of officials, and financial incentives that foster injustices, among them. Through analysis of criminalization in Acts, he demonstrates how critical race theory, Black studies, and feminist rhetorical scholarship enable a reconstruction of ancient understandings of crime, judicial institutions, militarized police, punishment, and sociopolitical processes that criminalize. Williams' study highlights how the criminalization of Jesus' followers as depicted in Acts enables connections with contemporary movements. It also presents the ancient text as a critique against the shortcomings of some contemporary understandings of justice and human rights.

Jeremy L. Williams is Assistant Professor of New Testament at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University. He earned his PhD in New Testament and Early Christianity at Harvard University. He also graduated from Yale University Divinity School, where he received the Henry Hallam Tweedy Prize, the highest prize awarded to its graduates. He is a steering committee member of the Rhetoric in Early Christianity section of the Society of Biblical Literature.

# Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles

*Race, Rhetoric, and the Prosecution  
of an Early Christian Movement*

JEREMY L. WILLIAMS

*Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University*



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*to our Journey*

## Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xv
Introduction	I
PART I	
1 The Analysis for Rhetorical Criminalization (ARC)	19
2 Analyzing Structures in Ancient Roman and Jewish Criminalizing Discourses	38
3 Analyzing Stories and Myths in Ancient Roman and Jewish Criminalizing Discourses	62
PART II	
4 “I am a Human”: Criminal Classification of Humans and Racializing Assemblages in Acts	93
5 “Before the Court” and the Confines of Judicial Structures in Acts and <i>Callirhoe</i>	121
6 “The Foundation of the Prison Shook” and the Critical Analysis of Apollo’s, Dionysus’, and Acts’ Myths	144
7 “Not Lawful for Romans” and the Commitments of Roman Elites in Acts	172
Epilogue	189
<i>Bibliography</i>	195
<i>Ancient Sources Index</i>	217
<i>Modern Author Index</i>	222
<i>Subject Index</i>	226

## Figures

1	Siege of Jerusalem	<i>page</i> 75
2	“The Mosaic of the Captives”	90
3	Ernest Withers, “I am a Man,” 1968, Birmingham Museum of Art	93
4	Altar to Dionysus with an inscription in Greek	162

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xiii

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This project is in no way the result of one person's Herculean effort. It represents the work of many, those in the footnotes of this text and those in the footnotes of my life.

## Abbreviations

Translations of biblical and other ancient texts are my own, except where otherwise noted.

- ANRW *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*  
 BDF F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961)  
 BETL Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium  
 BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft  
 GRBS *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*  
 HSCP *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*  
 HTR *Harvard Theological Review*  
 JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*  
 JJS *Journal of Jewish Studies*  
 JNG *Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte*  
 JQR *Jewish Quarterly Review*  
 JSHJ *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*  
 JSJSup *Journal for the Study of Judaism, Supplement Series*  
 JSNT *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*  
 JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*  
 LCL Loeb Classical Library  
 LSJ Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1940; reprinted 1966)  
 NTS *New Testament Studies*

SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZThK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>