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ETHNIC REASONING AND ANTI-JUDAEAN RHETORIC IN EARLY
CHRISTIANITY

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, whose support and encouragement

throughout my academic journey has always been unwavering.

ABSTRACT

There was no abstract conception of religion in antiquity, but religious beliefs and praxis were closely intertwined with ethnicity in the Greco-Roman period. Building on the groundbreaking studies by Denise Kimber Buell, this thesis investigates the use of ethnic reasoning in centrist Christian identity formation in the second century CE. Specifically, I closely examine four different Christian texts (1 Peter, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Judaean* and the *Epistle to Diognetus*) to show how the centrist Christian elites utilized ethnic reasoning to construct a distinct Christian ethnic identity and to manufacture sharp differences between Christians and Judaeans. In order to defend the idea of a homogenous Christian ethnic identity with pure origins, centrist Christian intellectuals re-appropriated the legacy of Israel and represented the Judaeans as an adversarial foil. This rhetorical strategy of "othering" characterizes the Christian *Adversus Ioudaios* literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Two major religious traditions emerged out of the complex matrix of Second Temple

Judaisms: Rabbinic Judaism and centrist (or proto-orthodox) Christianity.[1] Adherents

of each tradition established themselves as an independent entity by setting firm

boundaries between each other and marginalizing groups that occupied the middle

ground. Most scholars affirm that the catalyst for the separation of Christianity from

Judaism was rooted in the Christian promise of universal salvation through Christ, which

apparently challenged the ethnic particularity of Judaism. The dominant theory is that the

early Christians severed the connection between ethnicity and religion that was

widespread in the ancient world. Denise Kimber Buell elucidates that the problem with

this analysis is that, "[d]efinitions of Christianity's racially inclusive ideal will perpetuate

a racially-loaded form of anti-Judaism if the implied point of contrast to Christianity's

inclusiveness is Jewishness."[2]

Buell has subjected this modern consensus that Christians transcended ethnic

divisions to a thorough critique and endeavours to show the importance of ethnic

reasoning to early Christian self-definition.[3] An exhaustive survey of numerous Christian

writings uncovers Christian claims to peoplehood, whether understood as descendants of

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[1] Burton Mack (*Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995], 6), uses the term "centrist" for Christians who positioned themselves between Gnostic Christian expressions on the one hand and radical Pauline (e.g., Marcionite) or other charismatic communities on the other. "Centrist" is a better descriptive term than proto-orthodox because it does not make a normative theological claim that revolves around an orthodox-heresy binary.

[2] Denise Kimber Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition" *HTR* 94 (2001): 476. Her argument for her use of "race" and "ethnicity" as synonymous will be looked at in greater detail in Chapter One and Chapter Two.

[3] See Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); idem, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race," 449-476.

illustrious ancestors (e.g., Abraham), as a holy ἔθνος (nation), as a "third γένος

(people)"[4] or as the true Israel. She provides a helpful description of the discursive

function of ethnic reasoning in formulating a Christian ethno-religious identity:

> As formulations of those not in power, pre-Constantinian Christian texts
> that employ ethnic reasoning can be read as attempts to consolidate and
> mobilize geographically, theologically, and organizationally disparate
> groups under one banner-figured as a people, 'the Christians.'[5]

I want to apply Buell's insights about early Christian identity formation to explain

the relationship of emerging centrist Christianity to other forms of Judaisms in the second

century CE. Some early Christian texts describe the Christ communities as a holy people

or nation and re-apply imagery of biblical Israel to themselves without the accompanying

theology of supersessionism (Gal 3:28-29; Phil 3:3; Col 3:12; Eph 2:11-22; 1 Pet 2:8-9).[6]

The idea of the Christian community as a people or nation in direct continuity with the

Hebrew Scriptures, but with Judaism positioned as an adversarial foil, was fully

developed in the second century in the genre known as the *Adversus Ioudaios* literature.

In order to carve out space for the new Christian identity in the Greco-Roman world,

centrist Christian apologists represent their communities as a new chosen people or as the

true Israel in contrast to Israel "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα).

The general outline of my thesis is as follows. Chapter One explores the

characteristics of ethnic groups within the Roman Empire with insights from history,

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[4] I follow Barclay's translation "people" rather than "race" due to the problematic associations with racial ideology in the nineteenth century. See John M.G. Barclay, "Constructing Judean Identity After 70 CE: A Study of Josephus's *Against Apion*," in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others. Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson* (ed. Zeba A. Crook and Philip A. Harland; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 100.

[5] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 4.

[6] Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

post-colonial theory and anthropology. After documenting many examples of ethnic discourse among different minority collectivities in the Greco-Roman period, I show that the ancients held the highly paradoxical view that ethnicity is both innate to human identity and malleable in changing historical circumstances. Since religion and ethnicity were closely intertwined in this period, ethnic groups were not only defined with reference to ancestry or land but also on the basis of their cultural and religious mores. I want to follow this up with a particularly prominent case study: the definition of a Ἰουδαῖος in the ancient world and whether the term should be translated as "Jew" or "Judaean." Finally, the data from antiquity can be used to inform the modern debates in anthropology between those who support an essentialist definition for ethnicity as opposed to others for whom ethnicity is merely a social construct. Finally, I tackle the difficult issues regarding the proper definition of "race" and find that it is inappropriate to apply modern racial terminology to ancient ethnic discourse.

Chapter Two places the thesis of Denise Kimber Buell under critical scrutiny and evaluates its strengths and weaknesses. Once she highlights the fixity and fluidity of ancient ethnic identities, Buell presents her thesis that ethnic reasoning was a widely used device to assert that Christian identity was both fixed (e.g., descendants of Abraham, conversion as rebirth) yet acquired through adopting specific beliefs (e.g., confession of Christ) and customs (e.g., baptism). Her survey includes a wide range of Christian literature from canonical writings, the church fathers, apologetic treatises, martyrdom narratives and Nag Hammadi texts. While her exegesis is not always convincing and her description of early Christians as a new "race" is anachronistic to this period, I believe her thesis that ethnic reasoning was essential to early Christian self-definition has been

established. I then exegete four key texts found in 1 Peter, *Barnabas*, *Dialogue with*

Trypho and the *Epistle to Diognetus*[7] that further illustrate the presence of ethnic

reasoning among centrist Christian intellectuals. 1 Peter draws from the imagery of the

Israelite Scriptures to describe the Christ cult in ethnic terms (2:8-9) and the *Epistle of*

Barnabas and Justin Martyr appropriate the covenant (*Barn*. 14:1-5) and even the title

Israel (*Dial*. 125:5). The *Epistle to Diognetus* deliberately carves out space between

competing Judaisms and Greco-Roman religious formations when he speaks of a new

Christian γένος (people) that is neither Judaean nor Greek (*Diogn*. 1:1).

 After showing that centrist Christians began to define themselves as a distinct

entity apart from the Judaeans in the second century CE, I reconsider the evidence for the

traditional Parting of the Ways hypothesis in Chapter Three. This historical

reconstruction assumes there was an official break between Judaism and Christianity in

the late first century, especially due to the imposition of an excommunication formula

(*Birkat ha-minim*) that excluded Christians from the synagogue. It tends to be supported

by statements in John that Christians were banned from the synagogue (John 9:22, 12:42,

16:2) and Justin's multiple references to curses in the synagogue (*Dial*. 16, 35, 87, etc). I

counter that the Rabbis did not attain hegemony after Yavneh, that the *Birkat ha-minim* is

irrelevant to any supposed schism between Judaism and Christianity in the early centuries

and that many diverse groups continued to flourish on the Judaeo-Christian spectrum.

Without a decisive Parting of the Ways to explain the emergence of a distinct Christian

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[7] Unless otherwise indicated, translations are taken from *The Apostolic Fathers Volume II* (ed. and trans. Bart D. Ehrman; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); *The Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (ed. Michael Slusser and Thomas P. Halton; trans. Thomas B. Falls; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

ethno-religious identity, I argue that ethnic reasoning was an elitist Christian strategy to construct clear boundaries between the centrist churches and the synagogues.

Chapter Four elaborates on my thesis that the centrist church leaders used ethnic reasoning to begin to define a distinct Christian identity apart from Judaism in response to fuzzy borders between the two entities. A significant aspect of identity formation is the creation of an Other for comparison and contrast. We will observe how the *Adversus Ioudaios* literature (Barnabas, *Dialogue with Trypho*, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, Acts of the Apostles, etc.), which claims Christianity as the only legitimate heir of Judaism and present the Ἰουδαῖοι as a foil for the Christians, helped maintain a unique Christian cultural identity. Unlike Paul, who also does not transcend ethnic categories but accepts that Christ followers have been grafted onto Israel (Rom 11), in the *Adversus Ioudaios* literature the Christians have supplanted Israel. All of these centrist writers had to maintain a fine balance in distinguishing Christian practice from Judaism (in opposition to Gentile Judaizers) while legitimating their new movement by claiming the antiquity of the Hebrew Scriptures (in opposition to Marcionites). Understanding early Christian ethnic reasoning with the aim of manufacturing a stable Christian identity could aid in understanding some of the harshest polemics against Judaism by the early Christian apologists, even as we repudiate anti-Semitism within the Christian tradition.

CHAPTER ONE

ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND EMPIRE IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the characteristics of an ethnic group in the

Greco-Roman period and to find a conceptual model that accurately accounts for all the

data. Concepts such as ἔθνος (nation), γένος (people) and cognate terminology

functioned to classify minority collectivities within the totalizing vision of the Roman

Empire. Since these minority collective identities were contested in the imperial world,

ethnic groups had to negotiate their own claims to ancient origins, common descent,

shared customs or native deities. But the difficulty with using ethnicity as a heuristic

device to explain these features is the lack of scholarly consensus regarding how to define

the term.[8] In this chapter I will argue that the best definition of ethnicity for antiquity

must take into account the fixed and dynamic aspects of ethnic identity. Accordingly, the

ancients viewed their ethnic identity as ascribed and they cherished a particular myth of

origins, but ethnic identity was also defined by a specific mode of life where membership

could be obtained through the acquisition of certain customs and religious practices. This

chapter will especially highlight the importance of religion in creating, sustaining and

transforming ethnic identities in the ancient world.

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[8] For the range of anthropological studies on this subject, see *Ethnicity* (ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith; Cambridge and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

Ancient Ethnic Reasoning: "'Religion' Ran in the Blood"[9]

The Roman Empire brought many different subject peoples and ancestral customs in close proximity to each other and set up a provincial system divided along various ethnic lines. The Romans even may have fostered the creation of unified "tribes" that may not have previously existed, such as classifying the disparate peoples living beyond the Alps and east of the Rhine as the Germanic people.[10] The reason for this arrangement is that tribal units with static boundaries and stable leadership are much easier for an imperial power to manage, for indigenous elites could mediate the interests of these newly organized entities before the state.[11] Rome was tolerant to a certain extant of various local customs and less interested in imposing their culture than on ensuring cooperation with Roman rule and payment of taxes. In spite of this, the imperial propaganda proclaimed that the Romans had a divine mandate to spread the rule of law and civilization, *humanitas*, to the rest of humankind (e.g., Pliny *Nat.* 3.39; Virgil *Aen.* 6.851-3). *Humanitas* was an ideological naturalization; it represented both the symbolic system of Roman values and customs and a universal ideal to which all humanity may aspire.[12]

As the Romans tried to bestow their culture on the rest of humanity, one can detect a universalizing rhetoric that accompanied their ethnic particularity. Aelius

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[9] This title is taken from Paula Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways? Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City," in *The Ways That Never Parted* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 39.

[10] P.S. Wells, "The Barbarians Speak: How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe" in *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources* (ed. Craige B. Champion; Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2004), 252-253.

[11] Wells, "The Barbarians Speak," 254-255.

[12] Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 54-60

Aristides divided the world in half between the Roman γένος and everyone else (*Rom. Or.* 63). In essence, everyone who could become Roman ought to become Roman. There were many ways Romanization was distributed throughout the Empire. Rome granted charters and citizenships to provinces that supported their war efforts and settled thousands of war veterans and citizens all over the Empire, many of whom were legionnaires with specialized skills for community projects.[13] The imperial cult encouraged allegiance to Rome and the provincial aristocracy would preside as its priests at a designated provincial centre.[14] Many communities incorporated aspects of Roman culture even as they sustained their own ethnic identity. Roman interaction with Gaul led to a hybrid Gallo-Roman religion that incorporated Roman epigraphy and rituals.[15] Strabo highlights a successful example of acculturation: the Turdetanoi of Baetica so assimilated to Roman ways that they forgot their own language and were granted rights as Latins, virtually becoming Romans themselves (Strabo, *Geogr.* 3.2.15).[16] Buell surmises that the Romans blurred the boundaries between civic membership and ethnic identity, meaning these were not airtight categories in the ancient world.[17]

The Romans used ethnic reasoning to justify the ascension of their ἔθνος to power. They had their myths of origin and illustrious history, including mythical founders and kings of old such as Romulus and Numa. They traced their descent from

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[13] R. MacMullen, "Romanization in the Time of Augustus," in *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources* (ed. Craige B. Champion; Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2004), 221-222.

[14] Martin Goodman, *The Roman World 44BC-180AD* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 139.

[15] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 230-237. Gallic gods received dual Roman and Gallic names (e.g., Mars Mullo), while the Gauls retained the indigenous names and functions of their goddesses.

[16] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 66.

[17] Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race," 459.

the Trojans (Virgil's *Aeneid*) or the Greeks (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*), allowing them to escape the famous Greek/barbarian dichotomy but the latter conferring upon the Greeks cultural preeminence. Plutarch follows another strategy: the Romans were once barbarians whom the Greeks civilized (*Quaest. rom.* 22). Again, this allows for a Hellenocentric worldview while carving out a third category for the imperial masters that is neither Greek nor Barbarian.[18] Despite these various origins myths, the Romans were aware of their ethnically mixed background as their Empire expanded on the Italian peninsula and that their culture drew from Greek, Etruscan and other Italian roots.[19] The Roman γένος was rather united by its shared virtues, traditions and cult. Woolf writes, "Roman senses of their own past included their rise through virtue and consequent divine favour from a small heterogeneous community to rulers of the world."[20] Thus, a Roman statesman like Cicero can allow some Hellenistic influence but insist that *virtutes* and *mores* are distinctly Roman.[21]

Cultic practices were essential to a unified Roman identity. On the one hand, the Romans were not interested in imposing theological uniformity throughout the Empire and acknowledged divinities outside their pantheon. Polybius ingeniously observes that the public cults as expressed through temple rites, festivals and games reinforced societal

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[18] Rebecca Preston, "Roman Questions, Greek Answers: Plutarch and the Construction of Identity," in *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (ed. Simon Goldhill; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 100.

[19] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 20.

[20] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 74.

[21] Preston, "Roman Questions," 101. See Cicero *Tusc.* 1.1.2-3; *Resp.* 1 18.30, 22.36. Woolf, (*Becoming Roman*, 11-12), makes the important qualification that Roman culture was not monolithic and innovations, whether concerning pottery, building materials, disposal of the dead or homosexuality, involved intensive debate over what it means to be Roman. Even so, becoming Roman entailed joining an insider's debate about what Roman culture should consist of in a given context.

unity and the existing social order (*Hist.* 6.56.7-11).[22] The Romans could use the

principle of *interpretatio* to equate foreign deities with Roman ones, *evocatio* to invoke

alien gods to defect to Rome or simply offered private devotion to foreign gods as they

traveled abroad.[23] Fredrickson explains, "[p]ut differently: a mark of a successful empire

(the subordination of many different peoples to a larger government) was the variety of

gods it encompassed (since many peoples meant, naturally, many gods) and accordingly

the range of traditional religious practices it accommodated."[24] The Romans were

indifferent to different cosmologies, but they were concerned with proper ritual

performance. Honouring the gods in a Roman way was a mark of *Religio*, while foreign

rituals were generally disdained as *Superstitio*. Such superstitious rites included

honouring zoomorphic or aniconic images (a practice in Egypt and throughout the Near

East and Gaul) and human sacrifice.[25] The Druids in Gaul were suppressed because of

perceived magical and barbaric rites.[26] Consequently, religion was an important site of

difference in constructing Romans and the Other, as exemplified by Cicero (*Nat. d.* 2.8):

> If we care to compare our characteristics with those of foreign peoples
> *[externis]*, we shall find that, while in all other respects we are only the
> equals or even the inferiors of others, yet in the sense of religion *[religio],*
> that is in worship of the gods *[cultus deorum]*, we are far superior."[27]

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[22] Goodman, *The Roman World*, 293-294.

[23] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 214-215.

[24] Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways," 40.

[25] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 215.

[26] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 220-221. See Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 30.4

[27] Translation provided by Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race," 459.

The Roman attitude of cultural superiority naturally led to the derision of the non-Roman other. We should be wary of taking Roman ethnography at face value, whether with respect to the Ἰουδαῖοι[28] (Tacitus *Hist.* 5.1-13), Gauls and Britons (*Hist.* 4.54), Germans (*Hist.* 4.61; *Germania* 39) or Egyptians (*Hist.* 111), for it is generally epitomized "ruling class xenophobia."[29] Usually Roman ethnographers, historians or novelists focused on the peculiar and outlandish. Stories of foreigners, along with dangerous anti-associations within Roman society, often involve wild transgressions including human sacrifice, sexual deviance, cannibalism and banditry.[30] The Βουκόλοι ('herdsmen') of the Egyptian Delta are an excellent case study. Strabo's *Geography* attests to their existence (*Geogr.* 17.1.6, 19), but the novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* portrays them as a fearsome, large, black people who shout in foreign language and participate in acts of cannibalism and human sacrifice (*Leuc.* 3.9-15, 22). Dio Cassius historicizes this fiction in his story of the Βουκόλοι abducting some Roman soldiers and consuming the centurion's companion (Cassius 72.4.1-2), but Cassius makes similar charges of cannibalism against the Ἰουδαῖοι (68.32.1-2).[31]

Ethnic communities had to legitimate their existence when confronted by their imperial Roman rulers. They too had tales of venerable ancestors, founding narratives

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[28] Ἰουδαῖος could be translated as "Jew" or "Judaean."   I want to leave it un-translated until we look below at how translation affects interpretation and its implications for studying ancient ethnicity.

[29] Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways," 41.

[30] For ethnic stereotypes of minorities, see Philip A. Harland, "'These People Are… Men Eaters': Banquets of the Anti-Associations and Perceptions of Minority Cultural Groups," in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others. Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson* (ed. Zeba A. Crook and Philip A. Harland; Sheffield: Sheffield Pheonix, 2007), 56-75. Jonathan Z. Smith ("Differential Equations: On Constructing the Other," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 240], 232-234), describes this strategy of naming the Other based on the presence or absence of specific cultural traits as the "metonymical model."

[31] Harland, "'These People Are… Men Eaters,'" 62-64.

and golden ages. The Ἰουδαῖοι traced their lineage back to the patriarchs Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob. The Ἕλληνες (Greeks) were descendants of Hellen and different ethnic

subdivisions such as the Dorians, Aiolians, Akhaians and Ionians bore the name of their

own eponymous ancestor. These figures (Doros, Ailos, Ion) tended not to be considered

so much as ancestors but great kings and military leaders of old who imposed their name

on their subjects.[32] Though the annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE led to a serious decline in

status for the country, the Egyptians preserved a sense of collective history that spanned

from the fifth millennium BCE. Their history was preserved by the great pyramids or

temples and by the priests who alone could read the ancient hieroglyphics inscribed in the

temple precincts.[33] Yet the past is a canvas that can be repainted to suit contemporary

needs. Greek genealogies functioned to negotiate local and supraregional relationships in

the present; as relationships changed the genealogies in turn were rewritten by the

addition, omission or substitution of new names.[34] Likewise the Ἰουδαῖοι could rewrite

their genealogy to support new regional alliances, as Jonathan Maccabaeus recounts a

fictitious letter that demonstrated kinship relations with Sparta through Abraham (1 Macc

12:1-23, 14:20-23). Myths of descent are utilized to provide stability to a minority group,

but primordial significance is also attached to cultural and religious markers.

In order to vindicate their claims to primordial origins, ethnic groups strived to

display the great antiquity of their cultic practices because antiquity was held in high

esteem. Egyptian cultic devotion and zoomorphic imagery was much maligned by

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[32] Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 34.

[33] Goodman, *The Roman World*, 262.

[34] Hall, *Hellenicity*, 25-29; Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 43.

ancient writers (e.g., Juvenal, *Sat.* 15:1-8, 11-13; Philo, *Decal.* 76-81), but the Egyptians could make a case that their traditions were the oldest of all. They could easily exploit Herodotus' concessions that the Greeks borrowed several rituals and even knowledge of the gods from Egypt (*Hist.* 2.43-53) while denying that the Egyptians borrowed in turn from other peoples, least of all the Greeks (1.135).[35] Diodorus of Sicily (first century BCE) reports the fourth century BCE Hecataeus of Abdera's claim that the ἔθνος of the Colchi in Pontus and the Ἰουδαῖοι between Arabia and Syria were originally Egyptian colonies, which is why they continue the Egyptian custom of male circumcision (*Diod.* 1.28.2-3).[36] Some Ἰουδαῖοι used their fluency in Hellenistic historiography to buttress their case that their customs predated others by several centuries. Josephus boasts that the Lawgiver Moses preceded Greek heroes such as Lycurgus, Solon and Zaleucus by centuries and that Homer lacked any concept of Law (*C. Ap.* 2.154-156). Eupolemus credits the invention of the alphabet to Moses, Artapanus equates Moses with the legendary Greek poet Musaeus and fashions him as the father of the Hellenic song and wisdom traditions, and Aristobulus writes that philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato had access to a Greek translation of the scriptures prior to the Septuagint.[37]

By attaching primordial significance to the cult, it could serve the purpose of stabilizing an ethnic identity in changing historical circumstances and providing communal solidarity. The Ἰουδαῖοι looked to their divine election and the *Torah* as the covenant charter that bound them together as a people. They divided humanity between

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[35] Rosalind Thomas, "Ethnicity, Genealogy, and Hellenism in Herodotus," in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (ed. Irad Malkin; Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2001), 216.

[36] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 89-90.

[37] Erich S. Gruen, "Jewish Perspectives on Greek Culture and Ethnicity," in Malkin, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, 352-356.

the Ἰουδαῖοι and the ἔθνη (nations); Gentiles were seen as idolatrous and sexually immoral.[38] This resembles the other well-known division between Ἕλληνες (Greeks) and βάρβαροι (barbarians), a division also founded upon religious difference. Herodotus puts on the lips of the Athenians what has become the classic definition of Hellenistic identity: a unity based on common blood (ὅμαιμον), language (ὁμόγλωσσον), shrines (θεῶν ἱδρυματα) and customs (ἤθεά τε ὁμότροπα) (*Hist.* 8.144.2).[39] The Persian invasion in 480-479 BCE was crucial to Greek self-definition and involved a shift from an aggregative identity (social relations constructed in terms of kin relations) to an oppositional one (contrasting the Greeks against the barbarian outsiders).[40] Elsewhere Herodotus discloses that Persian religion is fundamentally different from the Greeks in that they do not set up statues, temples and altars nor represent their divinities with anthropological images (1.131.1).[41] In the Roman period, Dionysius omitted shared blood from Hellenistic identity altogether and defines Greeks in relation to language, customs, laws and cult (*Ant. rom.* 1.89.4).[42] The cult became the symbol of the community and the marker of distinction.

Although the ideal was to become Roman, the Romans also encouraged their subject peoples to remain loyal to their antique traditions because the stability of the

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[38] Interestingly, this typical division even shows up in Paul, though he self-consciously styled himself as an "apostle to the Gentiles." See particularly Rom 1:18-32, Gal 2:11-15, 3:28.

[39] Hall (*Hellenicity*, 190) and Thomas ("Herodotus," 215), object that Herodotus is not representative of all Greeks. It appears as a kind of afterthought to the real Athenian goal of avenging temples destroyed by the Persians. Nevertheless, Herodotus' work was widely popular even in the Roman period and it remains a highly significant statement of Panhellenic unity.

[40] Hall, *Hellenicity*, 179

[41] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 45.

[42] Hall, *Hellenicity*, 224.

Empire rested on the illusion of fixed and immutable social boundaries. The Romans placed high value on following ancestral ways. Completely abandoning one's own ancestral traditions for foreign ways was equivalent to cultural treason that would offend one's native gods.[43] There is a set of Greek verbs in the *izein* family used to denote persons who offered political support, adopted different customs or spoke another language, but these verbs were generally used to disparage foreign ways.[44] Judaizing (ἰουδαΐζειν) was very detestable in Roman eyes because of the demand for exclusive cultic devotion (Tacitus, *Hist*. 5.1-2). Yet this negative judgment on crossing ethnic boundaries only unveils the fact that ethnic identities are mutable and solid boundaries can become permeable. For instance, Herodotus writes that the Attic people were once Pelasgians, the imaginary pre-inhabitants of Ἑλλάς (Greece), but changed their language from a barbarian tongue in the process of becoming Greek (1.57.3).[45] Cultural convergence was frequent in the ancient world without necessarily leading to ethnic transformation,[46] but adopting a foreign lifestyle (food, clothing, language, or religion) could lead to the birth of a new γένος.

More often than not, it is religion that has a prominent role in facilitating the crossing of the threshold from one ethnicity to another. Just as the cult promoted ethnic

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[43] Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways," 42.

[44] Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley and Los Angelas: University of California Press, 1999), 175-179. These verbs are made up of two components: the verb stem is of a particular *ethnos* and they end in *izein*. These verbs carried with them negative connotations: to phoenicize meant to adopt unnatural vice, to cilicize is to be cruel and a cheat, to scythize is to drink immoderately, to egyptize is to be sly and crafty, to cretize is to lie and so on.

[45] Thomas, "Herodotus," 222-225.

[46] Hall, (*Hellenicity*, 194), stresses this point and mentions Herodotus' statement that the Greeks borrowed Egyptian deities (2.50) and the Persians borrowed pederasty from the Greeks (1.135) without changing their essential ethnicity. The discussion of Romanization above also pointed to the different ways minority groups accommodated Roman culture while retaining their own ethnic particularity.

unity, so adopting another group's beliefs and ritual praxis could lead to a change in ethnic identity. The fictional Assyrian General Achior testified that Israel came into existence when a group of Chaldeans abandoned their native divinities to worship a new deity (Jdt 14:10). Later Achior adopts the god of Israel and became circumcised, thus joining the polity of Israel (Jdt 14:10), and Second Maccabees ironically narrates the promise of the Macedonian king Antiochus to become a Ἰουδαῖος if Israel's god spared his life (2 Macc 9:13-16).[47] Just as religion marked the division between Greek and barbarian (e.g., Persians), Dionysius warned that Greeks who forgot their own language, customs and gods by living among barbarians could degenerate into barbarians (*Ant. rom.* 1.894).[48] The fear of being enveloped by foreign ways explains the disparagement of oriental cults and mysteries as well as the common charges of cannibalism. Dionysius also establishes a connection between the two civilized peoples, the Greeks and the Romans, based upon similarities in religious practices (*Ant. rom.* 121, 7.703-4; 7.72.14, 18).[49] The crucial link between religion and ethnicity will become clear as we examine how one particular people, the Ἰουδαῖοι, were constructed in relation to the god of Israel.

An Ethnic Case Study: Translating Ἰουδαῖος

Entering the debate over whether Ἰουδαῖος should be translated as Jew or Judaean involves a larger discussion over whether the Ἰουδαῖοι are to be categorized primarily as

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[47] See Cohen (*The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 129-130), for a useful summary, though he (mistakenly) uses these as examples of *religious* conversion. See also Buell, *Why This New Race*, 43-45.

[48] Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race," 466.

[49] Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race," 460.

an ethnic or religious community. The Ἰουδαῖοι exhibit all the typical characteristics of an ancient ἔθνος: shared ancestry, history, territory, language, customs and cult. When the province of *Yehud* (Judah) was reestablished during the Persian Empire, Judaean elites such as Ezra and Nehemiah tried to strengthen the boundaries between insiders and outsiders by enforcing endogamous marriage (Ezra 10:9-44, Neh 10:23-31), a strict separation opposed in other quarters (e.g., Ruth, Jonah, Isa 56:5-8). The matrilineal principle (*m. Qidd*. 3:12, *m. Yebam*. 7:5) was a much later rabbinic innovation to determine the ethnicity of a child of a mixed marriage.[50] The centre of the Judaean religio-political structure was the Temple, which served to systematically create a sacred ordered universe with a series of concentric circles used to demarcate between successive levels of holiness. This supported the hierarchical religious and political structure as holiness radiated from the Holy of Holies to, in lesser degrees, the priests, Israelite men, Israelite women, the Gentiles and the unclean.[51] Even with these tight social boundaries, there remains significant diversity among the people. Several parties (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc.) existed within Palestinian Second Temple Judaism and the vast Diaspora, living outside of the sacred order in Jerusalem, had to create their own sacred space to mediate the sacred.[52]

Nevertheless, general ideas such as election and covenant commanded broad consensus among the various Judaisms. The covenant, originally established with the patriarchs and reinforced in the Mosaic legislation with accompanying legal and cultic

[50] Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 263-282.

[51] Jack N. Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred: The Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (rev. and enl. ed.; New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 7.

[52] Lightstone (*The Commerce of the Sacred*, 12-40) points to the importance of shamanistic holy men in the New Testament (e.g., Acts 19:11-20), *Sefer HaRazim* and the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* as mediating the sacred in the Diaspora.

obligations (Exod 20-23, Deut 27-29), was accepted by most of the disparate sects. Smith indicates that the belief in the divine election of the monarchy appeared in ancient Sumer and Egypt, but the Hebrew Bible enshrines the earliest articulated theology of communal election.[53] The Abrahamic covenant was an unconditional promise that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan and mediate the divine blessings to the nations (Gen 12:1-3). Joshua's account of the conquest of Canaan fits Smith's "emigrant colonist" model, where one people believes it is their providential destiny to settle a new land with little concern for the indigenous inhabitants.[54] In the imperial period, especially after the failed attempt of the Bar Kochba revolt to establish Judaean independence (132-135 CE), the Ἰουδαῖοι fit Smith's "diaspora restoration" model of an exiled community that incorporates a return to their ancestral homeland as a precondition of collective redemption.[55] The conclusion follows that ethnicity was thoroughly intertwined with religion and politics.

The translation of Ἰουδαῖος as Judaean is therefore an attractive option. The names of ethnic groups were often associated with the place of origin, such as Ἕλλην (Greek) with Ἑλλάς (Greece), Γαλιλαῖος (Galilean) with Γαλιλαία (Galilee), Ῥωμαῖος (Roman) with Ῥώμη (Rome), Φιλιππήσιος (Philippian) with Φίλιπποι (Phillipi), etc.[56] Elliot estimates that there are roughly 220 references to Ἰουδαῖος in the Septuagint. 61 references translate Hebrew terms of the *Yehud*-root and the 154 scattered references throughout the later apocryphal writings refer mainly to the regional sense of

[53] Anthony Smith, "Chosen Peoples," in Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 196.

[54] Smith, "Chosen Peoples," 196.

[55] Smith, "Chosen Peoples," 196.

[56] John H. Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite was neither a 'Jew' nor a 'Christian': On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature," *JSHJ* 5 (2007): 132.

residents of Ἰουδαία (Judaea) though some apply in a wider sense.[57] Josephus'

apologetic treatise *Against Apion* quotes a Greek pupil of Aristotle, Clearchus, who

clearly derives Ἰουδαῖος from Ἰουδαία (*C. Ap.* 1.179). Josephus highlights six features

about Judaeans: ancient pedigree (1.71), territory (1.1, 1.132, 1.224, 2.289, 2.147),

common language (1.167, 2.27, 1.319), sacred texts (1.128, 1.154, 2.45), temple system

(1.315) and Mosaic constitution (2.145, 2.185-189).[58] The land has a very important role

in his construction of Judaean ethnicity, but as a member of the Diaspora Josephus is

adamant that the purity of the priestly stock is preserved wherever the exiles are dispersed

(1.32-33).[59] Translating Ἰουδαῖοι as Judaeans underscores that they were a recognizable

ethnic entity like any other within ancient ethnic discourse.

Objections to translating Ἰουδαῖος as Judean generally revolve around religious

lines. Cohen argues that the influence of the Greek idea of πολιτεία (citizenship) and

the acceptance of Gentile proselytism meant that Ἰουδαῖος broadened from an ethnic-

geographic term to a religious one that should be translated as "Jew." As evidence, it was

during the Hellenistic period that the Idumeans were incorporated into the Hasmonean

state through circumcision and the first accounts of conversion circulated.[60] Likewise

Schwartz cites epigraphic evidence to show that Ἰουδαῖος was used for non-residents of

Judaea and even for proselytes.[61] He calls attention to royal figures that were willing to

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[57] Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite,"132.

[58] Barclay, "Constructing Judean Identity After 70 CE," 101-111.

[59] Barclay, "Constructing Judean Identity After 70 CE," 104-105.

[60] Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 109-39. Earlier non-Israelites may bless Israel's deity or even actively participate in Israelite society, but they did not become Israelites. They were still known as resident aliens, such as Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 11) or Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 1:22, 4:10).

convert, like Antiochus (2 Macc 9:17) and King Izates of Adiabene (Josephus, *Ant*.
20.17-96), but would not abdicate their positions as foreign rulers.[62] Meanwhile, he
alleges that a "pagan" inhabitant of Judaea was never called a Ἰουδαῖος but instead was
always called a Ἕλλην.[63] The underlying assumption is that ethnicity solely refers to
descent and kinship. If Ἰουδαῖος came to be defined based on religious affiliation, then
we are now dealing with a religion. Schiffman unequivocally states, "[t]he Second
Temple period was crucial for the emergence of Jews and Judaism from the land-based,
Near Eastern concept of people hood… to the self-image of a world religion."[64]

Cohen's argument that Judaean identity was transformed and became more
inclusive during the Hellenistic period is fairly persuasive, but the above arguments seem
to rest on an anachronistic bifurcation of ethnicity and religion. In the ancient
Mediterranean world religion and ethnicity were mutually supportive and people who
traveled all over the Empire brought their gods with them. And just as the Greeks called
everyone else βάρβαροι, with little concern for distinctions, the Judaeans could classify
those outside the covenant as Ἕλληνες. One could join another people by embracing
their cultic practices. Cohen quotes Philo to exemplify religious conversion,[65] but Philo
points out that new initiates abandon their blood relations, country, customs and temple

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[61] Daniel R. Schwarz, "'Judean' or 'Jew'? How Should We Translate Ioudaios in Josephus," in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Frey, D. Schwartz and S. Gripentrog; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 12.

[62] Schwarz, "'Judean' or 'Jew'," 14.

[63] Schwarz, "'Judean' or 'Jew,'" 14-16. Josephus mentions conflicts with the Hellenes in Caesarea (*War* 2.266-70, 284), in Asia-Minor and North Africa (*Ant.* 16.58ff) and in Alexandria (*Ant.* 18.257). Likewise, Nicolas of Damascus reports of thousands of Hellenes in Herod's kingdom.

[64] Lawrence Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew: Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1985).

[65] Cohen, *The Beginning of Jewishness*, 130.

icons to worship the one true god (Philo, *Virt*. 20.102-103). Mason comments,

"[s]hocking though it may seem, we consistently find both the Ἰουδαῖοι and outsiders

understanding 'conversion' as in fact a movement from one ethnos to another, a kind of

change in citizenship."[66] Incidentally, the noun Ἰουδαϊσμός (usually translated as

"Judaism") is rarely found in Judaean or early Christian writings. In non-Christian

Judaean literature, Ἰουδαϊσμός is only used four times (2 Macc 2:21, 8:1, 14:38; 4 Macc

4:25) and appears in opposition to Ἑλληνισμός.[67] The noun is introduced in Christian

usage by Paul (Gal 1:13-14) and Ignatius (*Phld*. 6, 8; *Magn*. 10) in limited contexts, but is

sprinkled liberally throughout Christian writings from the early third century.[68] In any

case, Ἰουδαϊσμός should be understood as the Judaeans' way of life or social practices.

    The only potential drawback to translating Ἰουδαῖος as Judaean is that it might

cause scholars to overestimate the importance of territory to ethnic identity while

underestimating several other cultural markers. Schwarz protests that the Diaspora had a

long history without a national homeland.[69] He also indicates that Greco-Roman authors

did not always link the Ἰουδαῖοι with Ἰουδαία. Five writers call the land not Judaea but

"Idumea" or "Palestine" (Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, Statius, Martial and Dio

Chrysostoam) and another five associate the Ἰουδαῖοι with cultural practices like the

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[66] Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 491.

[67] Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 460-468. Nouns that end in *ismos* represent in nominal form the ongoing action of the cognate verb in *izō*. Mason renders *Ioudaismos* as "Judaization" in opposition to Hellenization, as a struggle to win Judaeans back to the ancestral ways.

[68] Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 469-476. Mason reflects on the absence of Ἰουδαϊσμός from the rest of the New Testament, Justin, Ireneaus, Melito, Clement of Alexandria and other apologists. He argues that Tertullian initiated the Christian understanding of "Judaism" as a fixed and fossilized religious system, which was followed by Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, John Chrysostoam, etc.

[69] Schwarz, "'Judean' or 'Jew,'" 20

Sabbath (Frontinus), the sacrificial system (Damocritus), their superstition (Quintilian), the legislator Moses (Nicarchus) or the food laws (Epictetus).[70] Still, it is not the case that Greco-Roman authors were ignorant of the native title Judaea; the name Judaea was preserved even after 135 CE for centuries.[71] Rather, the Judaeans' peculiar cultic behaviour was of greater interest than their national homeland. Exclusive devotion to one divine being, abstaining from work on the Sabbath, circumcising male infants and refusing to eat pork made the Judaeans stand out to Greco-Roman onlookers. Dynamic qualities such as culture and religion were just as important to Judaean identity as fixed aspects such as birth, kinship and territory. However, this does not justify changing the name from Judaean to Jew. Mason makes an important observation:

> But just as 'Roman,' 'Egyptian,' and 'Greek' (etc.) had a wide range of associations beyond the geographical, and they do not require us to substitute other terms when we refer to 'Roman citizens' or call Lucian a 'Greek,' so too 'Judaean' should be allowed to shoulder its burden as an ethnic term full of complex possibilities.[72]

Although Judaean was a widely used etic term to denote those whose land of origin was Judaea, Elliot disputes that it was the preferred emic term, especially for northern Galileans. Elliot marshals a forceful case that Judaean was mainly used either by Greco-Roman writers or in communication with outsiders, but that Ἰσραήλ (Israel) was the preferred insider designation. Israel is frequently used in much of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of Palestinian provenance and the Qumran community while

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[70] Schwarz, "'Judean' or 'Jew,'" 19. Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 496, responds that this was not unique to Flavian historians after 70 CE. Virgil (*Georg*. 3.12) and Lucan (*Phars*. 3.126) substitute Idumea for Judea, and even Philo can call the region "Palestinian-Syria" (*Prob*. 75) though he certainly knew that his homeland was called Judaea.

[71] Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 496; Elliot ("Jesus the Israelite," 129, n.34), notes that the substantive *Judaea* (cf., Pliny, *Nat*. 5.14.15; Tacitus, *Hist*. 2.79; 5.9) was based on the adjective *Judaeus* ('of, belonging to Judaea') (cf., Juvenal, *Sat*. 6.547; Tacitus, *Hist*. 5.2.).

[72] Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 504

Ἰουδαῖος is absent.[73] Ἰουδαῖος appears 39 times in First Maccabees but on the lips of non-Israelites, in diplomatic correspondence or in official documents.[74] He emphasizes that the historical Jesus is constantly recognized as a Galilean or Nazarene, but is only called a Judaean by outsiders like the Persian Magi (Matt 2:2), the Samaritan women (John 4:1-42) and by the Romans (Matt 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19).[75] In Paul's epistles, Elliot counts 16 uses of Ἰσραήλ for the people of God and 3 uses of Ἰσραηλίτης to identify himself and other Israelites as co-members of the house of Israel (Rom 9:4; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22); Ἰουδαῖος is supposedly only used when Paul addressed mixed audiences with a substantial proportion of Gentiles.[76]

Conversely, there seem to be some major flaws in Elliot's analysis. First, though the differences between Galilee and Judaea are beyond the scope of this chapter, both Galileans and Judaeans used the title "Israel" and could conjure up images of the biblical Israel and the restoration of the twelve tribes (e.g., Isa 11:11-12; Jer 3:18; Ezek 47:13; Mic 2:12; Zech 10:8-10; Sir 36:13, 17; Tob 14:7). Second, non-residents of Judaea also used Judaean as an emic description. The Johannine Jesus is not simply mistaken as a Judaean by a Samaritan but positively associates himself with the term – "We (ὑμεῖς) worship what we know, for salvation is from the Judaeans (Ἰουδαίων)" (John 4:22b). In Acts, Saul of Tarsus describes himself to his fellow Judaeans as a Judaean (Acts 22:3) and Paul labels both himself and the Galilean Peter as Judaeans in Galatians 2:14. It is not enough to dismiss Paul's usage of Ἰουδαῖος as meant for outsiders when it is

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[73] Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite," 134

[74] Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite," 135.

[75] Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite," 126-129.

[76] Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite," 141-146.

coupled with the extensive use of Judaean in Josephus and Philo and with the epigraphic evidence. It is more likely that Judaean was as acceptable to insiders as Israel. Finally, I disagree with Elliot's conclusion that emic terminology is always preferable.[77] Scholars should avoid theologically loaded insider language in describing ancient social formations, whether referring to the "children of Israel" or to Christ followers as the "church of God" or members of "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 19:23; 24:14).

It seems that when ancient people heard Ἰουδαῖος, what they understood is roughly equivalent to our "Judaean." This debate is due to the fact that English possesses two words, Jew and Judaean, while there is only one word in Greek. In translating this word as Judaean rather than Jew, a conscious choice is made to place Judaeans on a familiar map of ethnic discourse. We need to recognize that it is the Christian west, specifically during the Enlightenment, which produced the abstract conception of religions as systems of creeds and disentangled religion from public life.[78] The notions of election, covenant and *Torah* were thoroughly intertwined with Judaean identity. Just as the Romans had a divine mandate to spread civilization, the Judaeans considered themselves to be a priestly nation and mediators of the sacred. Non-Judaeans could participate in the synagogue worship or offer a sacrifice at the Judaean temple, but those who wanted to be exclusively devoted to Israel's god and acquire Judaean rites crossed the boundary from one ethnicity to another. The native cults are crucial to forming a conceptual model of how ethnicity functioned in antiquity.

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[77] Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite," 153-154.

[78] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 40-41.

An Appropriate Definition for "Ethnicity"

An ancient γένος was characterized by shared ancestry, blood, territory, language, customs and cult. The word γένος is related to the verb γενέσθαι, meaning 'to be born' or 'to become,' highlighting that ethnic identity is acquired. On the other hand, ancient ethnic identities were dynamic and fluid and changing historical circumstances could lead to significant cultural changes or even to the emergence of new ethnicities. This has spawned the classic anthropological debate between Primordialism and Instrumentalism. While Primordialists conceive of ethnicity as an innate component of human identity, Instrumentalists approach ethnicity as a politically expedient device to achieve certain ends or as the outcome of a set of peculiar historical or socio-economic circumstances.[79] Still other anthropologists have taken a different course altogether and want to abandon the usage of ethnicity in scholarly discourse. Banks deconstructs ethnicity as "a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals and achievements, being and identity, descent and classification, that has been constructed as much by the anthropologist as by the subject."[80]

The problem with essentialist definitions, as Eller and Coughlan correctly point out, is that they cannot account for the emergence of new ethnicities under colonial rule or the mutability of ethnic identities.[81] We can note subtle changes in ethnic groups even as they resisted Roman hegemonic claims while others became fully Hellenized or

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[79] Banks, *Ethnicity*, 39-48.

[80] Banks, *Ethnicity*, 190.

[81] Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism," in Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 45-51.

Romanized. Such examples are not confined to antiquity. One modern illustration of the advent of a new ethnicity in a colonial context is the rise of Hindu nationalism during the British rule of India. In 1923 Hindu reformer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar originated "Hindutva." Hindutva was a socio-political concept that emphasized a monolithic Hindu tradition, Vedic-Aryan blood and territorial-bounded descent as vital to membership in the Hindu nation.[82] Interestingly, the idea of an Aryan golden age was widely held by both western orientalist and Hindu scholars.[83] Hindu nationalists re-appropriated the European nationalist rhetoric of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to forge a new ethnic identity. Finally, linking a particular custom as an innate aspect of an ethnic community can easily lead to ethnocentrism because it effectively denies the agency of the group in producing its own culture and worldview.

Alternatively, theories of instrumentality that assume that shared cultural symbols are consciously exploited to achieve a certain purpose can hardly explain the endurance of collective minorities over long periods of time. Key identity markers such as circumcision, food laws and festivals have united the Jewish community for centuries against much adversity and in the absence of a national homeland. Boundary maintenance has been reinforced by the practice of endogamous marriage and by identifying the ethnicity of the child through the mother, which causes concern among some contemporary Jewish leaders that the increasing rate of mixed marriages will lead to the corrosion of a distinct Jewish identity. In fact, Schiffman positively reflects on the Rabbis' efforts to define membership around their *halakhah* by emphasizing how the

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[82] Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 96.

[83] Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism*, 14-15.

rabbinic *halakhah* preserved the Jewish heritage in the face of the emerging Christian ideology.[84] This is not to deny the widespread diversity among modern Jews, but just to note some continuity with the past. The powerful and often enduring symbols of ethnic or cultural unity cannot simply be brushed aside. Indeed, it is often dominant groups who do not feel their identity to be threatened that are usually the chief advocates of instrumentalism, but this fails to take seriously the passions evoked when minority groups feel their culture is threatened.[85]

Since ethnicity is notoriously difficult to define, as the excursus through Primordialism and Instrumentalism has uncovered, some have completely denied the usefulness of ethnicity as an analytic tool. The neologism "ethnicity" first appeared in 1941 as an alternative to race; the Greek ἔθνος from which it is derived simply designates any class of humans or animals that share a common identification.[86] But being part of an ancient ἔθνος meant being born to a specific people (γένος), having common kinship (συγγένεια), having a system of norms or laws (νόμοι) and worshiping ancestral gods (θεοὶ). These are all familiar features of an ethnic group. There is also no specific Greek word for gender, class, culture or religion but modern historians still discuss these features of the ancient Mediterranean.[87] Critics of the term ethnicity have not provided a better candidate for recognizing the value placed on territory-bounded descent, sense of kinship and shared way of life. Ethnicity remains a useful shorthand to refer to a lens through which humans view their identity in the larger society.

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[84] Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew*, 77.

[85] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 17-19.

[86] Hall, *Hellenicity*, 17.

[87] Hall, *Hellenicity*, 17.

Though most anthropologists avoid either the essentialist or instrumentalist extremes, most would agree with Hall's judgment, "[e]thnic identity is a cultural construct, perpetually renewed and renegotiated through discourse and social practice."[88] What is more debatable are the essential components for a group to be classified as ethnic rather than some other form of social organization. Hall finds that ethnicity necessitates communal descent and kinship; features such as physiology, language, religion or culture are only secondary indicia or surface pointers.[89] Hastings grants that an intermarrying society will probably share common ancestors and define itself with reference to their ancestors and their national homeland. Hastings adds that, "[a]n ethnicity is in origin constituted by, more than anything else, a genetic unity, partly real, partly mythical."[90] However, such a restrictive definition is problematic because it neglects the importance of other factors in creating and sustaining an ethnic community. The ideal of *humanitas* was as essential to a unified Roman identity as the covenant was to the Judaeans. The Greeks' opposition to barbarians was mostly rooted in language and cultic observance. The Romans, Greeks, Judaeans, Eyptians, Gauls and other ethnic groups were distinguished by their mode of worship and the gods they invoked.

Another problem with a definition that relies on fictive kinship is that it focuses on how ethnicity is perceived as acquired at birth but overlooks that ethnic identity can also be obtained. As shown above, individuals and whole communities could transform their ethnic identity: the Pelasgians became Athenians, Chaldeans became Hebrews, the

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[88] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 19.

[89] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 20-26; idem *Hellenicity*, 9-11.

[90] Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 169.

Idumeans became Judaeans and the Trojans or Greeks became Romans. In many of these cases it was a change in language, customs or religion that facilitated the emergence of the new ἔθνος. This can be obscured in scholarship. For instance Hall, noticing that "Hellenicity" is equated with civilization and could be acquired by attaining a Hellenic education (παιδεία), attributes this as a shift from an ethnic to a cultural identity.[91] Cohen also argues that, just as Greekness was a cultural identity not restricted to a particular people in a specific territory, "Jewishness" became a "portable culture."[92] But this seems to reify culture and impose an artificial division between ethnic groups and their cultural products. It is more accurate to say that kinship can always be discursively or ritually redrawn because cultural items such as food, clothing, language, religion and traditions are as important as myths of descent in creating social ties.[93]

The best definition for ethnicity is probably a polythetic one where ethnic groups are marked by a series of overlapping similarities but with no single definitive feature. Hastings defines ethnicity as "[t]he common culture whereby a group of people share the basics of life."[94] Such a definition does not preclude the importance of kinship ties, but acknowledges that an ethnic group may be constituted by any number of shared cultural features. Cultures are the product of social interactions and are never static, but ethnic groups often attempt to stabilize their collective existence by rooting their shared way of life in the past through a particular myth of origins and descent. As seen above, lineages

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[91] Hall, *Hellenicity*, 172-226.

[92] Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 134.

[93] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 9.

[94] Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 167. He lists off numerous items such as clothes; styles of house; domestic animals and agriculture; work roles; gender roles; customs; beliefs; birth, marriage and death rituals; shared history and myths; mediated culture through language; etc.

can be redrawn to support existing social relationships. The paradox at the heart of ethnic reasoning is that ethnicity is at once both thought to be ascribed at birth yet malleable in changing historical circumstances.

This definition of the term "ethnicity" remains incomplete, however, without a discussion of its relation to the concept of "race." In popular terminology ethnicity refers to voluntary chosen cultural values but race to inherited biological characteristics. Yet the division of humanity into discrete and immutable "races" is scientifically indefensible. Pseudo-scientific judgments of race as an innate, unchanging component of human identity support racist ideologies about the "Other." Ethnicity also entails its own fictions about shared descent and "blood" relations. Some scholars use ethnicity and race as synonymous in an effort to challenge popular myths of racial immutability and reveal that both ethnicity and race are socially constructed. Bartlett is adamant that "[i]t must be possible to reclaim race from the racists."[95]

The conception of race in the nineteenth century as immutable, based on visible phenotypic differences, may contrast with a more flexible conception of "race" in the ancient and medieval periods. According to Bartlett, the Medieval term *gens* encompassed biological descent and notions of geographical determinism (e.g., linking skin colour to different climates), as well as cultural ingredients such as language, customs and laws.[96] Buell adds that the early modern colonialists tended to link religions with various races and judged the "idolatrous" practices of African tribes to be the

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[95] Robert Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity" *Journal of Medieval and Modern Studies* 31 (Winter 2001): 41.

[96] Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts," 42-54. In fact, the medieval worldview that all humans descended from Adam, has the necessary corollary that races change over time (Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts," 45)

consequence of their descent from the cursed Ham (Gen 9:21-25).[97] The idea that races

could be differentiated on the basis of religion seems counterintuitive today, for most

now believe that religion is acquired but physical characteristics are inherited. The fear

of becoming tainted by impure races, however, belies the modern racist ideology of fixed

racial boundaries. Stoler argues that the European colonialist's paranoia of hybridity

exposes that "[r]ace could never be a matter of physiology alone."[98] She offers the

example of Dutch purity concerns in the nineteenth century; persons had to prove their

Dutch citizenship by showing cultural competency in Dutch customs, a sense of

belonging to a Dutch cultural milieu and a distance from Javanese traditions.[99] Bartlett

concludes that biological variations "[d]o not themselves constitute race or ethnicity but

are part of the raw materials from which race or ethnicity can be constructed – along with

language, religion, political allegiance, economic position, and so on."[100]

While the desire to expose racist ideologies is commendable, attempts to redefine

race to include non-biological factors may only obfuscate matters. Contemporary readers

may not easily be able to shed modern notions of race and may impose modern baggage

surrounding race onto a completely different conceptual worldview. To avoid such

confusion Jordan remarks, "I have my doubts about the utility of race (an allegedly fixed

category) in the modern world."[101] Even worse, modern readers might misinterpret

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[97] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 15-21.

[98] Ann Laura Stoler, "Racial Histories and their Regimes of Truth," *Political Power and Social Theory* 11 (1997): 197.

[99] Stoler, "Racial Histories," 197.

[100] Buell, *Why This New Race,* 41.

[101] William Chester Jordan, "Why 'Race'?," *Journal of Medieval and Modern Studies* 31/1 (Winter 2001): 165-173, 169.

ancient ethnic discourse as racism. Racist ideologies began in the past five centuries with the colonial expansion of the Western European nations and the encounter with very different looking indigenous inhabitants in the colonized territories and their subsequent enslavement.[102] Benjamin Isaac has recently challenged this near-consensus and assigned the origins of racism to classical antiquity. He defines racism as, "[a]n attitude towards individuals and groups of people which posits a direct and linear equation between physical and mental qualities."[103] He further argues that these collective traits can be caused by hereditary factors or external influences, and thus classifies the hugely influential treatise *Air, Waters, Places* as an early and influential example of racism.[104]

Though ancient rhetoric suggests these attributes are fixed, imposing racist views on the ancients distorts the fact that they equally allowed for ethnic transformation. "Barbarians" could become Greeks or Romans by attaining a proper education (παιδεία). Since the Romans freely conferred citizenship on other peoples (as did other ethnic groups like the Greeks or the Judaeans) and frequently intermingled and even intermarried with them, racism does not adequately explain ancient ethnic reasoning. Nor did the Romans set up the racially structured societies found in North America or South Africa or attach value judgments based on physical appearance alone.[105] Ethnocentrism still seems to be a better description of their worldview. In attempting to

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[102] Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Boulder; San Francisco; Oxford: Westview, 1993), thoroughly and persuasively presents this case.

[103] Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 23.

[104] Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 60-69. This Hippocratic work treats physical and mental characteristics as geographically determined. For instance, the Asiatics are described as soft and weak because they live in a nice moderate climate.

[105] Smedley, *Race in North America*, 24-25.

understand ancient ethnic reasoning, ethnicity is preferable to race because it has a less threatening history and more easily conveys a process instead of a fixed attribute.[106]

In conclusion, unlike the modern emphasis on individualism, the ancients stressed the value of collective identity. One was born in a particular γένος that possessed its own unique history, traditions and customs. One could also acquire membership in an ethnic community by adopting certain cultural and religious norms. Religious practices played a central role in the creation and maintenance of ethnic identity. In antiquity religion did not have an autonomous essence but each *ethnos* had its own cult (τὰ θεῖα, τὰ ἱερά, θρησκεία, θεῶν θεραπεία, *cultus deorum*) with prominent sacred precincts (τό ἱερόν) that provided a shrine or house (νάος) for the deity and a hereditary or aristocratic priesthood to preside over the rituals and sacrifices.[107] Fredrickson has an apt formulation of the connection between ethnicity and cultic practices when she writes that, "[g]ods also attached to particular peoples; 'religion' ran in the blood."[108] When it comes to the early Christ followers, most scholars consider them to represent something new, something that transcended the usual ethnic divisions. After all, does not Paul write that in Christ there is neither Ἰουδαῖος nor Ἕλλην (Gal 3:28)? However, if we take seriously the above analysis that stressed how a change in religious practices often resulted in a change in ethnic identity, perhaps we can read the Christian claims to constitute a new γένος in a new light. It is to this subject that I now turn.

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[106] Jordan, "Why 'Race'," 168.

[107] Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 484-485. The Roman *princeps* claimed the title of high priest of the *pontifices* and an aristocratic priesthood helped govern Judaea.

[108] Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways," 39.

CHAPTER TWO

NEITHER JUDAEAN NOR GREEK? A CHRISTIAN ETHNIC IDENTITY

In the last chapter I showed how religion and ethnicity were intertwined in the Greco-Roman world, but up to now I have not included the early Christ followers into the picture. Anthony D. Smith has meticulously documented the relation between collective sentiments about the "sacred communion of the people" found in western religious traditions and the rise of nationalism.[109] The Semitic character and brand of Monophysite Christianity influenced the Tigrean-Amharic peoples of Ethiopia to hold the title *dakika Esrael* (children of Israel) and to regard their kings as descendants of Solomon in a dynastic myth of election.[110] Though the Greek Orthodox Byzantine Empire had universal pretensions, Greek was revered as the sacred language and regional and theological conflicts were often inseparable.[111] The Great Trek of the *voortrekkers* from the British Cape Colony to Africa was clothed in imagery of the Exodus and conquest of the Promise Land.[112] Many early settlers of America viewed the nation as a Puritan Promised Land entrusted with a providential destiny to civilize the world.[113]

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[109] See Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Smith uses the phrase "sacred communion of the people" first on page 32.

[110] Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 73-77.

[111] Smith (*Chosen Peoples*, 96-98), shows how Orthodox opposition to Arianism was mixed with hatred of German-speakers or how the sack of Constantinople in 1204 CE fueled anti-Latin sentiment.

[112] Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 77-

[113] Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 138-141.

In spite of these examples that can be multiplied, Smith still echoes the verdict of most scholars that, "[i]n Christian doctrine, chosenness is transferred from a particular ethnic community to the universal Church of believers, *verus Israel*."[114] Denise Kimber Buell has made a valiant effort to overturn the near-consensus that the earliest Christians transcended ethnic and cultural barriers. In her *tour de force* of ethnic reasoning in early Christian literature, Buell illuminates the rationale behind the use of ethnicity as an early Christian self-identification strategy. In this chapter I intend to review Buell's work, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* to see if she has established her thesis that ethnic reasoning had a significant role in Christian literary self-representation. I also want to look at the use of ethnic reasoning in four texts that circulated in centrist Christian circles. 1 Peter, the *Epistle of Barnabas,* Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* and the *Epistle to Diognetus* all represent their Christ associations as an ἔθνος (nation)*,* γένος (people) or λαὸς (people).

A Review of *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*

The title of Buell's study derives from a comment in the *Epistle to Diognetus* where the author answers the questions of his interlocutor about why this new people (καινὸν τοῦτο γένος) exists and how their piety (θεοσέβεια) and practice (ἐπιτήδευμα) sets them apart (*Diogn.* 1:1). Buell explains that Christian ethnic reasoning performed four vital functions. It allowed Christians to take advantage of the privileges granted to other ethnic communities to practice their native religious customs, to determine the criteria for membership into the Christian people, to engage in a universal mission and to uphold a

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[114] Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 66.

pure form of "Christianness" that excluded rival Christian identities.[115] Most of her

introduction is set up to counter critics who would challenge the identification of

Christians as an ethnic group based on a definition that revolves around ancestry and

kinship. Although she notes that the early Christians still conform to this narrow

definition of ethnicity inasmuch as they formed fictive familial units (e.g., "brothers")

whom were adopted by illustrious ancestors (Abraham, Seth, Christ),[116] she contends that

ethnicity is characterized by both fixity with myths of shared descent and fluidity with

ever-changing cultural markers. On this point she is indebted to the anthropologist Ann

Stoler who observed that "[t]he force of racial discourse is precisely in the double-vision

it allows, in the fact that it combines notions of fixity and fluidity that are basic to its

dynamic."[117] I have argued above that her use of race as virtually synonymous with

ethnicity is confusing and anachronistic, but my own study of ethnicity basically

complements her findings that ethnicity incorporates both fixity and fluidity.

In Chapter 1 Buell observes the connection between religious rites and ethnic

identities. She discerns four ways religion functioned in ethnic discourse: to mark

differences between ethnicities, especially under colonial and diaspora conditions; to

facilitate ethnic transformation; to establish links between different ethnic groups; and to

regulate internal differences within the group.[118] She consults Aristides' *Apology,*

Athenagoras's *Embassy on Behalf of Christians,* the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the *Acts of*

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[115] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2-3.

[116] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 9.

[117] This definition is found in Stoler ("Racial Histories," 198) and provides the theoretical underpinnings to Buell's use of the concepts ethnicity and race (*Why This New Race*, 6-10).

[118] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 41, 42-49. See my first chapter (above) which covers much of the same ground and interacts with many of the examples Buell provides in her study.

the Martyrs of Lyons and Vienne and the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*. Aristides deems

religion to be the means of differentiating ethnic groups. He lists the three kinds (γένη)

of people as worshippers of so-called gods, Ἰουδαῖοι and Christians (*Apol.* 2:2) and adds

that Christians have discovered the truth more than all other ἔθνη (nations) on earth

(*Apol.* [Greek] 15:2, 3).[119] Athenagoras appeals to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and

Commodus to afford the same rights to Christians that are granted to every ethnic group,

to keep their own ancestral ways (τὰ πατριά) without fear of reprisals (*Leg.* 1:1-3). The

logic of his argument is that Christians cannot be charged with atheism for abandoning

the local gods because they are just another ethnic group with their own ancestral

traditions among the great diversity of peoples and gods that inhabit cities throughout the

Empire (14:1, 3).[120] The martyrdom literature uses ethnic reasoning to valorize the

martyrs as belonging to the "people of the righteous" (τοῦ γένους τῶν δικαίων) (*Mart.*

Poly. 14:1; 17:1) and Polycarp's epithet the "father" of the Christians (*Mart. Poly.* 12:2)

evokes the image of a civic leader.[121] Indeed, the martyrs' confession, "I am a Christian"

(*Mart. Poly.* 10:1; *Mart. Lyon and Vienne* 20; *Scill. Mart.* 13) locates them socially as

members of an illegal ethno-religious community.[122]

Chapter 2 shows how the Christians rooted their collective identity in antiquity

because the ancients valued tradition over novelty. Buell writes, "[e]arly Christian texts

may not have always persuaded ancient readers that Christians constitute a people with

an ancient pedigree, but that does not mean that the attempts were disingenuous or

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[119] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 36.

[120] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 50-51.

[121] Buell (*Why This New Race*, 52-53) is here indebted to Judith Lieu (*Image and Reality: the Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* [Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1996], 85-86).

[122] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 54-58.

merely metaphorical."[123] Again, she covers a wide range of material including

Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, the Pseudo-

Clementine *Recognitions*, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* and the *Tripartite Tractate*. In

narrating their mythic past, some Christians claimed continuity with the Hebrew epic.

Tertullian boasts that the Scriptures inherited from Israel possess a greater antiquity than

Roman traditions (*Apol.* 19.2; 21.1-2, 6), the *Recognitions* portray Jesus as the prophet

sent to restore the Hebrew cult by replacing sacrifices with baptism (*Rec.* 1.39.1-2) and

Eusebius asserts that Christians adhere to Abraham's religion (*Hist. eccl.* 1.4.14-15).[124]

Several texts trace a genealogical descent to venerable ancestors such as Abraham (Paul,

Justin Martyr, *Recognitions*), Seth (*Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Apocryphon of John*), Norea

(*Hypostasis of the Archons*) or Jesus (Aristides' *Apology*, *Dialogue with Trypho*).[125]

Some texts go back even further and allege that Christians were intended from the dawn

of creation. Clement of Alexandria affirms that Christians are the true image of the

divine λόγος (Word/Reason) (*Protr.* 1.6.4-5) and Justin proposes that the essence of

Christianness, the seed of the *Logos* (λόγος σπερματικος), is implanted in every human

soul (2 *Apol.* 8.1).[126] The *Tripartite Tractate* envisions salvation as an escape from

multiplicity and a return to an original unitary existence (*Tri. Trac.* 132.16-28).[127]

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[123] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 64.

[124] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 71-73, 77.

[125] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 75-76.

[126] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 74, 79. Buell (*Why This New Race*, 80) points out the similarity to the idea in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* in which all people contain a divine drop, but only those who realize they possess this drop belong to the "unruled" people (γενεά) (*SophJesChr* 99.17-19).

[127] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 83-84.

Buell's work is at its most convincing when she closely examines Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* in Chapter 3. The issue at the heart of the *Dialogue* is that two different groups share a common scriptural tradition and stake in the legacy of Israel. Although Justin wants to juxtapose Trypho's image of Israel as too fixed (e.g., Abraham's descendants "according to the flesh" in *Dial.* 44:1; 125:5; 140:2) with his own fluid understanding of Israel as made up of all who share Abraham's faith (*Dial.* 11:4-5; 44:2, 4), Justin's ethnic discourse is grounded in both fluidity and fixity.[128] The *Dialogue* is littered with references to the Christians as the γένος of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham (11:5), the high priestly γένος of god (116:3), another γένος (138:2-3), another people (λαός ἕτερος) (119:3), another Israel (123:5-6; 130:3), descendants of the patriarchs (11:5; 119:4-6, 123:8-9) and so on.[129] In a creative stroke of exegesis, Justin interprets Isaiah's oracles as pertaining to two Israels; the curses apply to non-Christian Israelites but the church fulfills the promised restoration of (another) Israel (123:5-9; 135:3-6). While Justin draws sharp differences between Israel κατὰ σάρκα (according to the flesh) and the spiritual Israel, he cannot conceal that the boundaries he has fabricated are porous. Justin concedes that Judaeans (and Gentile Judaizers!) who believe in Christ but remain *Torah* observant can be saved (*Dial.* 47), when elsewhere other peoples must give up their former ways of life to join the Christians (121:3).[130]

Chapter 4 looks at how scholars have mistakenly accepted the polemic of Clement of Alexandria and Origen that the Gnostics had a deterministic stance on election at face

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[128] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 95-96, 106-107. Buell makes the important point that it is *Justin* who ascribes to Trypho the view that reckons salvation according to the flesh, but Trypho speaks about the connection between practice and salvation (*Dial.* 45:1-2) and exhorts Justin to adopt his way of life (8:4).

[129] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 99-106.

[130] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 112-113.

value. Clement's *Strōmateis* rebukes the Valentinians for claiming to be saved due to "the exceptional seed sown in them" (*Strom*. 2.10.2) and Origen's *On First Principles* complains that Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides teach that some groups (Ethiopians, Scythians, Tauriens) are predestined to receive bad souls and others (Hebrews, Greeks) good ones (*Princ*. 2.9.5).   Both appeal to the principle of free will to contend that Christianity is available to all, though some are more capable and receptive than others (*Strom*. 2.26.1, 3-4) or have a better advantage because of the people to whom they were born (*Princ*. 3.1.23).[131] Yet even as they promote Christian universality, ethnic reasoning frames their spiritual anthropology. Clement speaks about joining the people of god and obtaining a "high birth" (*Strom*. 2.98.1-3) and for Origen those who become Israelites who have entered "into the church of the Lord" are no longer reckoned as Egyptians or Idumaeans (*Princ*. 3.1.23).[132] When Buell turns to the Nag Hammadi collection, she spots the same interplay of fluidity and fixity. The *Tripartite Tractate* does divide humanity into three types (pneumatics, psychics and hylics) and the *Gospel of Philip* makes intra-Christian distinctions between "Hebrews" and "Christians," but they allow for individual transformation from one category to another.[133]

Finally, Chapter 5 reiterates that Christian inclusiveness is not antithetical to ethnic constructions and situates universalizing rhetoric in the context of the Romans' charge to spread *humanitas* by empire building.[134] There are three aspects to Christian

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[131] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 120-125. For instance, Origen notes that Israelites had a noble birth while Egyptians and Idumaeans are farther from the truth, but "vessels of honour" can become turned into "vessels of dishonour" or vice-versa (*Princ*. 3.1.23).

[132] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 122, 125.

[133] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 126-134.

[134] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 152-154.

universalism: allowing universal access to membership, having a global ambition and envisioning the unification of all Christian associations.[135] The *Acts of Andrew* encourages everyone to embrace celibacy and abandon the corruption inherited from Adam and Eve (*Acts Andr.* 37) by joining the blessed (μακάριος) (33:4 [1]) or saved (σῳζόμενος) (50:5 [18]) γένος.[136] In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Hermas envisions a large tower made up of stones gathered from the surrounding mountains (*Herm. Sim.* 9); the tower symbolizes the universal church and the 12 mountains the tribes of the world. Some stones do not change colour to match the tower (9.4.4-6), signifying "deviant" Christians whom are cast out of the "people of the righteous" (τοῦ γένους τῶν δικαίων) (9.17.5).[137] Here universalism functions to obliterate intra-Christian difference. Finally, Tertullian disassociates from the classification of Christians as a third tribe (*tertium genus*) (*Nat.* 1.8; *Scorp.* 10), but he equates Christianness as the most authentic form of Romanness, hence the true bearer of *humanitas*.[138] In each example, universalism is accompanied by a concern for a pure Christian identity.

It is difficult to critique a work that is so wide in scope, so innovative in its exegesis and so provocative in its insights on issues of ethnicity and religion. I find Buell's evidence for early Christians utilized ethnic reasoning to be overwhelming. Gnostic self-descriptions as an "immovable γενεά (generation)" or classifications of humanity into distinct sub-categories such as pneumatics, psychics and hylics has long

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[135] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 140-151.

[136] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 142-144.

[137] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 146-151.

[138] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 154-155.

been noted and castigated as a mark of sectarianism.[139] The idea that "early catholicism" invented the unique species of "religion," detached from the social and political spheres, has prevented scholars from better integrating the evidence that Christians were widely perceived as a new ἔθνος or γένος (1 Peter 2:9; *Diogn*. 1:1; Aristides *Apol*. 15:2-3), descendants of Abraham (Rom 9:7-8; Gal 3:29; *Dial*. 11:5; 119:3-6), the true Israel (*Dial*. 123:5-9) or a third tribe (*Diogn*. 5; Clement *Strom*. 6.5.41 [*Kerygma Petrou*]; Tertullian *Nat*. 1:8). I would only offer some minor constructive criticisms to Buell's project.

The first criticism is that Buell fails to define key terms clearly and her frequent rejoinder that ethnicity incorporates fixity and fluidity seems intentionally vague.[140] She spends more time deconstructing ethnicity and race than with engaging the vast anthropological literature on these subjects. While she addresses the neglect of religion in theorizing ethnicity and seeks to correct that imbalance, she seems to overlook other cultural ingredients in the construction of ethnicity. She hardly notes distinctive Christian praxis such as baptism, table fellowship (i.e., the Eucharist), Sunday gatherings or greeting with a holy kiss. Her neglect of territory is a curious omission in a study of ethnicity. 1 Peter alludes to the Babylonian exile (1 Pet 5:13) and his readers as aliens and exiles (1:1; 2:11), which fits Smith's "diaspora restoration" model.[141] Justin Martyr expected a millennial reign in which Christians will be gathered with the Israelites of old in a rebuilt Jerusalem (*Dial*. 80; cf. Rev 20:1-6). This may mitigate Stower's objection that, "[a] writer's claim that a recently formed group is an ancient ethnicity is not the

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[139] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 117-118.

[140] Other reviewers have highlighted this same lack of theoretical focus. See Margaret M. Mitchell, "Review of *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, by Denise Kimber Buell," *HR* 148 (2007), 175-176; Stanley Stowers, "Review of *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, by Denise Kimber Buell," *JAAR* 75 (2007), 730.

[141] Smith, "Chosen Peoples," 196.

same as a population that has lived for hundreds of years on land passed down with practices that form the belief that these people inherently belong to the land."[142] Literary works from Luke-Acts to Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* were precisely devised to deny the novelty of the Christians by giving them a respectable pedigree and Luke-Acts may be an epic history comparable to Virgil's *Aeneid*.[143]

The second criticism is that Buell casts her net so wide that her exegesis sometimes lacks sufficient depth. She only spends two paragraphs on 1 Peter,[144] though the epistle is arguably one of the first attempts to outline a distinctive Christian ethnic identity (1 Pet 2:9-10) and is one of the earliest examples of the use the noun Χριστιανός (Christian) (1 Pet 4:16; cf. Acts 11:26; 26:28; Ignatius *Rom*. 3:2; *Eph*. 11:2). The epithet "Christian" was first used by outsiders as a term of abuse (e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2), much like the accusation that Christians were some new γένος (people) or third type of humanity, but became transformed from a social stigma into a badge of honour.[145] Ignatius, who does not appear in Buell's study, deserves honourable mention for further developing the idea of an independent "Christian" tribe by coining Χριστιανισμός (Christian ways) in contrast to Ἰουδαϊσμός (Judaean ways) (*Magn*. 8:1; 9:1; 10:3; *Phld*. 6:1). Accordingly, we can see the power of labeling to

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[142] Stowers, "Review," 730.

[143] This has been recently emphasized by Marrianne Palmer Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

[144] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 45-46

[145] Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 251; David G. Horrell, "The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity," *JBL* 126 (2007): 376-380.

construct a group and, "[t]he use of 'identifying' labels or of exclusive group designators surely constitutes a claim to explicit, external recognition and 'facticity'."[146]

At other times, Buell seems to try too hard to force certain passages into the mold of ethnic reasoning. For example, Justin Martyr's opinion that all people have the seed of the λόγος (Word) implanted in them (*2 Apol.* 8.1) or the return to a unitary existence in the *Tripartite Tractate* seem to me to challenge typical ethnic divisions (*Tri. Trac.* 132.16-28). After all, ethnic reasoning was not the only mode of discourse available to the ancients and universalism is not unique in light of some aspects of Hellenistic philosophy.[147] Nevertheless, these criticisms should not detract from the importance of Buell's project. Apart from a little Christian speculation about the beginning or end of history, I am convinced that Christians generally sought to position themselves in relation to the imperial government and to the Judaeans as another ethnic community. In fact, I want to look at four centrist Christian documents, 1 Peter, the *Epistle of Barnabas,* Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* and the *Epistle to Diognetus*, to see how they exhibit the use of ethnic reasoning in early Christian formation.

Ethnic Reasoning in Formative Centrist Christian Texts

A. Introducing Ethnic Reasoning: 1 Peter

1 Peter was written to a largely Gentile Christ association in Asia Minor (1 Pet 1:1) to instruct them on how to be good citizens (2:13-21; 3:1-7) in the midst of suffering and

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[146] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 239-240.

[147] Daniel Boyarin (*A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994], 18-19, 27-28, 57-59, 231) excavates the influence of Hellenistic philosophy, especially middle-platonism, on Hellenistic Judaism with the idea that that the material world is a dim reflection of the spiritual realm and the static ideal of the universal Hellenistic Man.

persecution (3:13-17; 4:1-19). Although some conservative commentators still defend its

authenticity and date it to the early 60s CE,[148] most scholars judge the epistle to be a

pseudonymous work from the late first or early second century CE. The author's facility

in Greek, rhetorical skills and use of the Septuagint (LXX) seem unlikely for an

uneducated Galilean (cf. Acts 4:13).[149] Additionally, the affinity with Pauline themes

and endorsement of known associates of Paul (1 Pet 5:12-13), accompanied by the

absence of any personal reminiscence about Jesus or concern for the status of *Torah*

among mixed fellowships, simply does not match the earlier profile of *Cephas* (Gal 2:9-

14). The epistle seems to be reconciling Pauline and Petrine perspectives and fulfilled

prophecy, the atoning death, the resurrection, Christ's heavenly rule and the coming

judgment have become the standard creed.[150] The spread of the Christ cults throughout

Asia Minor (1 Pet 1:1), the use of Babylon as a cipher for Rome (1.1; cf. Rev 17-18) and

Χριστιανός as an insider designation (4:16) demand a date well after Peter's demise.[151]

The late first or early second century CE are the only two credible options for

dating the epistle. 1 Peter is alluded to in Polycarp's letter to the Philadelphians, 2 Peter

3:1 and possibly in Papias' lost work (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17), establishing a *terminus ad

quem* at the end of the first quarter of the second century. Since the trials seem to be the

subjection of Christians to local harassment rather than official state suppression (1 Pet

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[148] For example, Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* (The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: InterVarsity, 1988), 21-36.

[149] Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 8. Though Grudem (*1 Peter*, 26-31) makes the case that Greek was known in Palestine, Actemeier rightly shows that the author would have needed at least a "middle" education to compose the epistle. Nor can appeals to Silvanus as the scribe save Petrine authorship. The phrase διὰ Σιλουανοῦ (through Silvanus) in 1 Pet 5:12 probably does not indicate Silvanus' scribal activity, but that he is the official letter-carrier.

[150] Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, 209.

[151] John H. Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 87.

2:12; 3:16-17; 4:3-4, 12-16), some scholars date 1 Peter before the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan in ca. 112 CE (Pliny, *Ep*. 10.96-97).[152] The confession of being a Christian as well as the unwillingness to recant was seen as an admission of guilt, but Pliny's ignorance on how to conduct a trial against Christians indicates they were still a relatively unknown entity. Trajan also makes clear that Christians were not to be sought out nor anonymous tips heeded. In addition, there is nothing in 1 Peter's depiction of the fiery ordeal that would necessarily preclude sporadic martyrdoms, especially considering the analogy for suffering (πάσχω) is the death of Christ (1 Pet 2:21, 23; 3:18; 4:1).[153] Mack highlights the importance of the pristine apostolic age and Peter as the founder of the Roman church to centrist Christian mythmaking activity in the second century CE.[154] The epistle was most likely written either late in the first or early in the second century, which is important for determining when Christians first advanced the claim to constitute a new nation or people.

The offense of the Christians lies in their non-participation in the public cults and severing of former social ties (4:3-4) for "[v]oluntary termination of social bonds implied repudiation of public responsibilities, civic disloyalty and personal rejection of those left behind."[155] Consequently, πάροικος (exile/alien) (2:11) is not a metaphorical description of their temporary separation from heaven.[156] Nor does it imply that the

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[152] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 30-33; Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless*, 87.

[153] Horrell, "The Label Χριστιανός," 373.

[154] Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, 201-205

[155] Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless*, 78.

[156] Grudem, *1 Peter*, 1988.

recipients were from the lower class segments of society or homeless.[157] Rather, exile

signified the reduction of social status that resulted from abandoning local customs for a

strange new cult.[158] 1 Peter found a novel way to restore the honour of his Gentile

constituency by insisting that they constituted an ancient ἔθνος. Buell outlines how 1

Peter plays with fixity and fluidity in his own ethnic discourse.[159] Christians are elected

by God (1:2), are miraculously reborn (1:3), are part of a brotherhood (2:17) and bear the

distinct name Χριστιανός (4:16). Outsiders are predestined to reject salvation (2:8b),

further establishing Christian fixity.[160] Christian identity was fluid as one could become

a member through faith in the resurrection and lordship of Christ (1:3-9; 3:15) and

baptism (3:21), except one had to abandon the "futile" Gentile way of life (1:18; 4:3-4).

1 Peter 2:9-10 spells out exactly how the author understood a Christian ethnic

identity. In 2:9 Christians are clothed with biblical imagery (see Exod 19:6 LXX) and

called a γένος ἐκλεκτόν (chosen people), βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα (royal priesthood) and

ἔθνος ἅγιον (holy nation). The author uses the term ἀρετάς (the basic meaning is

"virtues") to denote the deity's mighty deed in delivering Christians from the realm of

darkness and into the light (2:9).[161] Hosea 1:9-10 and 2:23 form the backdrop to 1 Peter

2:10 that Christians were once not a people but have become the people of god (λαὸς

θεοῦ). It is not enough to say that the church is "a new spiritual nation which is based

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[157] Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless*, 46.

[158] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 56.

[159] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 45-46.

[160] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 163.

[161] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 166.

now neither on ethnic identity nor geographical boundaries."[162] This new, yet ancient,

tribe of Christians was equivalent to the nation of Israel with their own beliefs and

customs, though they lived as a beleaguered minority under Diaspora conditions. It

seems that the author has not fully worked out the implications of his ethnic reasoning in

relation to Israel.[163] There does not appear to be any direct competition with the

synagogue over the author's claims nor does he argue that Israel's covenant is obsolete

(Hebrews), that the covenant never belonged to Israel (Barnabas) or that the title "Israel"

is reserved for Christians (*Dialogue with Trypho*).

B. Inheriting the Covenant: The Epistle of Barnabas

The *Epistle of Barnabas* continues to develop the idea of the church as a new chosen

people, but the lack of a named sender[164] or recipients makes it exceedingly difficult to

guess the provenance or date of the work. Egypt[165] or Syro-Palestine[166] are the most

plausible locations for where the epistle originally circulated, but the arguments are

ultimately only educated guesses and the safest conclusion is that "[t]he epistle originated

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[162] Grudem, *1 Peter*, 111.

[163] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 167. It is unclear whether the implied audience is in continuity with Israel, is the true remnant or co-heirs with Israel or has replaced Israel (supersessionism).

[164] The radicalism on the law and post-70 date rules out Barnabas as the author, but this ascription is likely secondary because there is no attempt to exploit "apostolic authorship." See James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background* (WUNT 2.82; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1994), 3-4.

[165] Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2006), 31-34; W. Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 142, 150; Paget, *Barnabas*, 36-42. This location may be supported by the prominence of the allegorical approach in Alexandria, the reference to the circumcision of the priests of the idols and contempt for other Egyptians (shared by Greeks in Alexandria) (*Barn.* 9:6) and early attestation by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 2.6.31; 2.7.35; 2.20.116; 5.10.63) and Origen (*C. Celsus* 1.63).

[166] Michelle Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2004), 48. This location may be supported by the familiarity of Judaean and especially rabbinic traditions (see *Barn.* 7-8) and the positive reference to Syrians and Arabs in contrast to Egyptians (some consider "Egyptians" to be an interpolation) (*Barn* 9:6).

in the Greek-speaking Eastern part of the Mediterranean."[167] As far as the date is concerned, a general consensus places the writing of Barnabas after the Temple destruction in 70 CE (*Barn*. 16:3-4) but before the disastrous consequences of the Bar Cochba revolt which it fails to exploit. Some scholars look to the internal data, especially Barnabas 4:4-5 and 16:3-4, to see if we can pinpoint a more precise date.

Barnabas 4:4-5 alludes to Daniel 7:24 and 7:7-8 respectively, with only minor emendations, and speaks of a succession of 10 kings followed by a "little excrescent horn" (μικρὸν κέρας παραφυάδιον) who subdues three kings. Some believe Nerva fits this profile because he had a short reign (96-98 CE) and ended the Flavian dynasty of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian.[168] Others judge the passage as irrelevant because it is drawn from scriptural and possibly other source material and may not parallel the contemporary political situation[169] or because it could just as plausibly refer to Vespasian (displacing Galba, Otho and Vitellius) or to a future Nero *redivivus*.[170] More promising is the tension in 16:3-4 over the rebuilding of the Temple by the "servants of the enemy." It may hint at Hadrian's building of a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus[171] or to a mooted plan

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[167] Reidar Hvalvik (*The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century* [WUNT 2.82; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1996], 41), notes Barnabas has affinities with Alexandria, Syria, Palestine and Asia Minor.

[168] *Murray, Playing a Jewish Game, 44-45*.

[169] Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture*, 17-18, 26.

[170] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 132. Murray (*Playing a Jewish Game*, 162, n. 4), allows the possibility of Vespasian in a footnote but his successful military and political career seems to disqualify him from the descriptor "small excresent horn."

[171] Hvalvik (*The Struggle for Scripture*, 20-23), takes γίνεται (it is happening) and νῦν (now) to mean that construction on the temple was already underway. The only temple actually built was by Hadrian for Jupiter, but Cassius Dio (*Hist*. 66.12.1) and Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist*. 4.6.4) seem to disagree on whether building of this temple began before or after the Bar Cochba revolt. If Hadrian had begun to lay the foundation before the war, then Barnabas can be dated around 130 CE.

to rebuild the Judaean temple.[172] The words "rebuild it" (ἀνοικοδομήσουσιν αὐτόν)

implies that the Judaean temple is in view and, without evidence that Hadrian ever had

positive intentions towards the Judaeans, others think Nerva is a more likely candidate to

have excited dreams of a rebuilt temple since he suppressed the Judaean tax (*fiscus*

Iudaicus).[173] In the end the evidence is circumstantial; *Genesis Rabbah* 64:10 is the only

text to submit that an emperor had promised and then revoked permission to build the

temple, but the emperor is not named and the tradition historically dubious.[174] The

evidence is too inconclusive to be more specific than the general parameters set above.

What is more compelling is the extent of the Judaean influence over Barnabas.

His indebtedness to a Judaean milieu is evident in his midrashic techniques (*Barn.* 6:8-

19), apocalyptic eschatology (4:1-5, 9-14; 12:9), familiarity with extra-biblical traditions

(7-8), practice of *gematria* (9:8) and use of Two Ways material (18-20).[175] Despite this,

Barnabas is less of a letter than a tractate advocating the superiority of his typological and

allegorical reading of Scripture over against Judaean "literal" hermeneutics. Some

scholars are convinced that the author was a Judaean and that his radicalism is the stance

of a "true believer" who has completely shifted ideological allegiances,[176] but two

pericopes make a Gentile authorship more likely. Speaking in the first person plural, 3:6

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[172] Paget (*Barnabas*, 22-23) and Stephen G. Wilson (*Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 CE* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 135), note this as a possibility (though both lean towards Nerva). It would have been politically astute on Hadrian's part after the Judaean revolts in Egypt under Trajan and Wilson adds that it would fit Hadrian's "penchant for grandiose buildings." The failure to rebuild the temple could have been another factor behind the Bar Cochba revolt.

[173] Horbury, *Jews and Christian*, 133; Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 45-47. More cautiously, Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 135.

[174] Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture*, 19; Paget, *Barnabas*, 22-23; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 349-350, n. 88.

[175] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 146-147; Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 49.

[176] Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 34, 71.

warns of being shipwrecked by becoming proselytes to the law and 16:7 speaks of a former life full of idolatry.[177] It is evident that the Gentile community behind Barnabas had regular interactions with the local Judaean community, but the author felt that a radical line was necessary to distinguish Christians from Judaeans.

The ethnic reasoning in Barnabas has not received much attention but could potentially explain the author's radical approach to the scriptural texts. He uses λαός (people) four times for Israel (9:3; 10:2; 12:8; 16:5) and three times for Christians (3:6; 5:7; 7:5), twice rendering Christians as τόν λαὸν τον καινὸν (the new people) (5:7; cf. 7:5).[178] There is "the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ὁ καινὸς νόμος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (2:6) for the "new people" except, considering the strenuous denial of any validity to Israel's mode of existence, it would be more consistent to see Christians as another type (ἄλλον τύπον) of people (6:11).[179] Barnabas mentions Abraham seven times (6:8; 8:4; 9:7, 8; 13:7 [3x]), more than any Christian writer between John and Justin, and Abraham's reward for his faith is to be the father of nations (παντέρα ἐθνῶν) who are uncircumcised (13:7).[180] The word Ἰουδαῖοι is not found in Barnabas and references about Israel are mostly to the ancient past (5:2; 6:7; 8:1; 9:2; 12:2, 5) or to Jesus' ministry (5:8; 8:3), but the language of "us" (αὐτοί) versus "them" (ἐκείνοι) along with other contrasting pronouns are sprinkled throughout the epistle (2:9-

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[177] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 128; Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 49; Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture*, 44.

[178] Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 164, n. 25. In contrast, Hvalvik (*The Struggle for Scripture*, 144), counts only a single instance of the use of the designation ἐκκλησία (7:11).

[179] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 129; Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 127.

[180] Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 148, 150.

10; 3:1-3, 6; 4:6-8, 14; 5:2; 7:1-2, 5; 8:7; 9:1-4; 10:12; 13:1-6; 14:1, 4-5).[181] The

opposition between the two peoples is deeply ingrained in the author's psyche.

The fundamental question in Barnabas is whether the covenant belongs to "this

people" (οὗτος ὁ λαός) or "the former people" (ὁ πρῶτος) (13:1; cf. 4:6-7; 14:1).

When structuring the argument in chapters 13 and 14, he first turns to the patriarchal

narratives and how the younger sons (Jacob, Ephraim) received a blessing over the older

(Esau, Manasseh) (13:2-5). This symbolized the divine preference for the younger

people (Christians) over the older (Israel) and is confirmed by the statement that

Abraham is the father of the uncircumcised (13:7). Barnabas neglects the fact that

Manesseh is also blessed with the implication that divine favour is solely reserved for

Christians.[182] If one retorts that Israel's status is enshrined in the *Torah*, Barnabas

reaches the radical conclusion that Israel's covenant was immediately revoked when they

crafted a molten image and Moses shattered the stone tablets (14:1-4). There is no talk of

a new covenant, but only one that the Judaeans never really possessed. There is one

people, one covenant and one true understanding (γνῶσις) of the Scriptures. Of course,

this conveniently forgets that Moses inscribed the Law on a second set of stone tablets,

but Barnabas may understand this "second law" to be the covenant intended for

Christians.[183] In a dramatic role reversal, Jesus and, by extension, his followers displace

Israel as the Isianic Servant and the bearers of light and salvation to the nations (14:7-9;

see Isa 42:6-7; 49:6-7; 61-1-2). Christians are the "people of the inheritance" (λαὸν

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[181] Hvalvik (*The Struggle for Scripture*, 37-40), helpfully lays out the contrasting pronouns in a chart. See also Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 129.

[182] Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture*, 148; Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 52

[183] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 144.

κληρονομίας) (14:4) and were redeemed from darkness to be a "holy people" (λαὸν ἅγιον) (14:6). For now it will suffice to note that Barnabas distinguishes Christian praxis from Judaean on key symbols such as fasting (3), land (4), circumcision (9), food (10), Sabbath (15) and temple (16) until a fuller exploration in chapter four.

C. The True Israel: The Dialogue With Trypho the Judaean

Compared to the enigmas in 1 Peter and Barnabas, the transparency of Justin Martyr is a welcome relief. He was born in Flavia Neapolis in Samaria (1 *Apol*. 1.1) yet had no prior biblical knowledge and was originally invested in philosophy before he learned of the Hebrew prophets (*Dial*. 2- 8). The Old Man (3:1; παλαιός τίς πρεσβύτης) who teaches Justin the Christian way epitomizes the best of philosophy, for the highest philosophy could only attain the human soul (5-6) and an indirect knowledge of the λόγος (Word) whereas direct knowledge was available through the revelation of the divine Spirit and the prophetic Scriptures (7-8).[184] From that time forward Justin became a Christian apologist until his martyrdom in Rome under the prefect Junius Rusticus. Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* was probably written after the *Apology* (*Dial*. 120:6) between 155-160 CE, though it features an earlier encounter between him and a Hebrew refugee after the Bar Cochba revolt named Trypho (1:3), which Eusebius credibly places in Ephesus (*Hist*. *eccl*. 4.16-7-8).[185] It is possible that the Dialogue was only written for internal consumption as references to internal issues such as Law observance (*Dial*. 47)

[184] Bruce Chilton, "Justin and Israelite Prophecy" in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (ed. Sarah Parvis and Paul Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 78.

[185] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 103. Eusebius' further report of Trypho as one of the leading Hebrews of his day is contradicted by Trypho's ignorance of Hebrew and dependence on his teachers. Identification of Trypho with Rabbi Tarphon is thus equally spurious.

or Marcionism (35:5; 56:16) suggests. However, Justin seems to be countering actual Judaean objections and seems worried for their salvation (38:2; 64:3; 142:2) and may also have some well-meaning Gentiles in the background (2-8; 143:5), so Justin could have had more than one target audience in mind.[186]

The Dialogue resembles a classical genre, Socratic-style debates, albeit Justin more rigidly controls the time allotted to each speaker and the outcome of the dispute.[187] In many ways, Trypho is a straw man, remaining silent during Justin's lengthy tirades and raising minimal objections. Be that as it may, Trypho's objections against Christian antinomianism, Jesus' divinity, a crucified messiah, the virgin birth and so on are plausible and, if Trypho is a literary fiction, at least he seems to represent one strain of Judaism.[188] Certainly Justin has more than a passing familiarity with Judaean customs. He is able to describe a phylactery (46:5), is familiar with post-biblical details about *Yom Kippur* (40:4), is aware that the Septuagint (LXX) is read in synagogue services (72:3) and his eschatological outlook includes the defeat of Amalek (49:8; 131:5; cf. *Barn.* 12:9), the fall of the fourth beast (i.e. Rome; 31:5; 32:3) and chiliasm (80-81; 85:7; 138:3; 139:4-5).[189] Justin must have been a participant in other exegetical debates with Judaeans as he takes the legend of the 70 elders in Ptolemy's court behind the LXX quite seriously and his lack of training in Hebrew does not stop him from accusing Judaean leaders of deliberately tampering with the divinely inspired LXX (71:1-3). Thus, according to Justin, they have distorted the Christian implications by altering Isaiah 7:14 (84:1-4),

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[186] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 109; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 264.

[187] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 259.

[188] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 104; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 260.

[189] Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 92; Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 151-154.

deleted key prophetic texts in Ezra or Jeremiah (72:1-4) or removed a line in Psalm 96:10 that foreshadowed Christ's reign from "the tree" (73:1-2).[190]

The Dialogue represents a realistic encounter between representatives of each respective tradition. Trypho shares the axiom of the Mishnah that the *Torah* is the hermeneutical key to understanding the Scriptures while Justin finds the systemic meaning in Christ. Accordingly, Justin thematically divides the Dialogue with chapters 1 to 47 undermining the permanence of the Law, chapters 48 to 108 proving the divinity of Christ from the Scriptures and chapters 109 to 136 justifying the extension of the covenant to Gentiles.[191] Ethnic reasoning undergirds Justin's argument, as Buell's penetrating analysis verified. It can be added that Abraham shows up 103 times in the Dialogue and Christians are Abraham's γένος (people; 11:5; 43:1; 66:4) τέκνα (children; 25:1; 80:4; 110:5; 120:2) or σπέρμα (seed; 44:1; 44:7). Abrahamic descent is used in three ways: to concede that Judaeans are his descendants from the flesh, to describe Christians as his spiritual descendants and to discount the sole Judaean claim on Abraham.[192] Christians are not a despised barbarian tribe (φυλον) like the Carians or the Phrygians (119:3) nor a faithless people like Israel (119:1-4). Instead they are a holy people (λαὸς ἅγιος), the nation (ἔθνος) promised to Abraham (119:3-4), and will inherit the land with the patriarch (119:5).[193] The aspirations for a millennial kingdom in Jerusalem should discredit the idea that Christians simply spiritualized the messianic

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[190] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 151-152.

[191] Chilton, "Israelite Prophecy," 79.

[192] Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 171.

[193] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 103-105; Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 164. Christians are compared with other significant people groups descended from Abraham such as the Arabs or Egyptians or Ammonites (119:4) and Abraham himself is made into an honourary Christian by listening to the call of Christ to leave the land he presently dwelled, just as Christians abandon their former way of life (119:5).

prophecies and were less "nationalistic" or "land-oriented." Finally, Justin asserts that Christians do not accept Judaean praxis on fasting (15), circumcision (19), food (20), Sabbaths (21) or sacrifices and oblations (22) because they recognize the true spiritual intent (but see 47:1-4). Still, Christians have their own customs including baptism (14:1), the Eucharist (41:1-3) and abstaining from meat sacrificed to idols (35:1-3).

The original contribution of the Dialogue is the explicit assertion to be Israel and this thesis is laid out right at the beginning (11:5; cf. 123:9; 135:3-6). Combining Isaiah 51:4 and Jeremiah 31:31, Justin asserts that a new eternal covenant (Isa 55:3-4) has been established which defines who is a true and spiritual Israelite ('Ισραηλιτικὸν γὰρ τὸ 'αληθινόν, πνευματικὸν) (11:5).[194] Christians partake of this covenant and are truly descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (11:5). The later Rabbis seem to undermine the Gentile Christian claim to be Abraham's children in *Sifre Deuteronomy* (on Deut 32:9). Election is not on the basis of descent from Abraham or Isaac because some of their descendants were unworthy (Ishmael, Esau), but the Lord claims the portion of his inheritance is from Jacob's offspring. If such a tradition existed in Justin's time, his counter is that Christians are also the descendants of Jacob and Christ himself (the Isaianic Servant) was surnamed Jacob and Israel and so by extension the Christians are the true Israelite γένος (123:8-9).[195] Thus, the prophets (Isa 19:24; Jer 31:27; Ezek 36:12) spoke of two Israels and the promised restoration of Israel was actually a foreshadowing of the Christians (*Dial*. 123:5-6). Justin brings into sharp relief the

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[194] Chilton, "Israelite Prophecy," 83.

[195] Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof From Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition; Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 346-350.

difference between an association model where Gentiles join Israel through Christ (Rom 11:16-32) and his substitution model where the Gentile Christians *are* Israel.[196]

D. Carving Space between Judaeans and Greeks: The Epistle to Diognetus

Of the four texts I have studied in depth, the *Epistle to Diognetus* is the biggest mystery of them all. Many modern commentators have praised it for its "literary excellence and theological insight."[197] Regrettably, the epistle supplies no name for the anonymous μαθητής (disciple) who wrote it and no discernable context, nor do any extant patristic witnesses comment on it and even the single medieval manuscript was destroyed by fire in 1870 (fortunately several transcripts were made in the sixteenth century).[198] A list of potential authors could include Pantaeus of Alexandria (founded a famous catechetical school), Hippolytus of Rome, Theolphilus of Antioch or Quadratus, though most require a latter second or early third century date. If it is dated earlier, scholars are hard pressed to find a specific author.[199] The epistle is addressed to Diognetus, who could possibly be the Claudius Diogenes who was procurator of Alexandria at the end of the second century and known from papyri as the "procurator of Augustus and interim high priest." We do not have enough evidence for any certainty and Diognetus may also be either a wealthy Roman patron, based on his title κράτιστε or "excellent" (*Diogn*. 1:1), or a symbolic name (διογένης means "Ordained by God") as some assume Theophilus ("lover of

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[196] Skarsaune, *The Proof From Prophecy*, 326-327, 352-353.

[197] Bryan C. Hollon, "Is the Epistle to Diognetus an Apology: A Rhetorical Analysis," *JCR* 28 (2005): 127-146, 127.

[198] Paul Foster, "The Epistle to Diognetus," *Exp.Tim.* 118/4 (2007): 162-168, 162. Hollon, "Rhetorical Analysis," 127-128.

[199] Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 35.

God") (Luke 1:1; Acts 1:1) to be.[200] The only thing we can know with a degree of probability is that only the first 10 chapters were part of the original work, whereas the style and message of chapters 11 and 12 are dissimilar to the rest of the epistle and probably a homily added by a later scribal hand. [201]

The epistle sets out to respond to the inquiries of Diognetus about why this new people or practice (γένος ἢ ἐπιτήδευμα) have recently come into existence "now and not formerly" (νῦν καὶ οὐ πρότερον) (*Diogn.* 1). It is a question rife with potential danger, even though it seems to lack an accusatory tone, as the Romans were suspicious of non-traditional, secret societies. It is a "situation that invites utterance" and the epistle should be classified in the Christian apologetic genre of the second century.[202] Ancient rhetorical speeches served a judicial, epideitic or deliberative function. The *Epistle to Diognetus* does not have a defensive tone and seems to be a more deliberative address meant to persuade Diognetus to embrace the Christians' way of life (10:1-8).[203] The opening of the work (1:1) is analogous to Luke 1:1 with an address to a most "excellent" (κράτιστε) patron, a similar opening word (*Diogn.*: Ἐπειδὴ, Luke: Ἐπειδήπερ) and the statement that the author is embarking on a "careful inquiry." Either the author is directly borrowing from the Lukan prologue or these are common rhetorical conventions.[204]

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[200] Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 36.

[201] Foster, "Diognetus," 163; Hollon, "Rhetorical Analysis," 129. This is supported by a marginal note in the manuscript that says at the end of chapter ten "and here the copy has a break."

[202] Hollon, "Rhetorical Analysis," 129, 132.

[203] Hollon, "Rhetorical Analysis," 132, 140.

[204] Foster, "Diognetus," 163.

Since the Christians are the main curiosity to Diognetus, three chapters are devoted to explaining Christian behavior and practice in the middle of the work (5-7).[205]

The author clarifies who Christians are by distancing them from the idolatry of the Greeks (2) and superstitious practices of the Judaeans (3-4). He picks up the Judaean polemic against idols as inanimate objects (2:2-10; Isa 44:12-17) and explains that Christians are hated for their non-participation in Greek religious rites (2:6). Unlike the Greeks, the Judaeans do not offer to "images void of sense" (3:3) but he turns their critique of idolatry against them because they assume the deity is in need of their gifts (3:3-5) and they arbitrarily reject some of the divinely given gifts (e.g., food) (4:2).[206] After pointing out the distinction of Christians from Greeks and Judaeans, the epistle notes that Christians do not possess their own separate country, cities, language, customs, food or laws (5:1-4, 10). Jefford's interpretation is that, "[a]ccording to our author, Christians represent a new sort of *faith* within the ancient world that is neither linked to ancestral customs and traditions nor rooted within set rituals and superstitions" (emphasis added).[207] The problem is that this imposes a modern Protestant understanding of faith as unique and superior to ancestry-based "religions" or "rituals" onto the text.

The Christians are a people (γένος) (1:1). They literally possess their own citizenship (πολιτεία) and live in other homelands only as aliens (πάροικοι) and foreigners (ξενοί), for the domain of Christians' citizenship is in heaven (ἐν οὐρανῷ πολιτεύονται) (5:9). Christians have dual citizenship, with heaven or the kingdom of

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[205] Hollon, "Rhetorical Analysis," 135.

[206] Foster, "Diognetus," 164.

[207] Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 176.

god (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ) (9:1) as the realm of divine activity in the world.[208]

There may be a thinly-veiled critique of the Judaeans as seditious in light of two failed

rebellions, for the author is emphatic that Christian citizenship is not an alternative to

Roman law.[209] With a touch of middle-Platonism, the Christian presence in the world is

as the soul is to a body (6:1-4, 5, 8) and their piety (θεοσέβεια) (4:6; 6:4) is "mysterious

and invisible," thus hardly a threat to the imperial order.[210] Yet Lieu exposes the inherent

tensions involved in Christian ethnic reasoning as an apologetic tool:

> Its purpose is, as we have seen, to claim the right to a place within the
> sociopolitical world of the time, to claim for differentness a virtue. Yet to
> claim to be on a par not with the Germans or Britons, nor even with the
> Romans, but with the barbarians or the Greeks, was to claim a universal
> domain, coextensive with Roman rule.[211]

The conclusion is that Christians understood themselves and were perceived by

others to constitute a new ethnic identity. When compared to other ethnic groups that

live in a definite territory and have passed down customs from generation to generation,

the Christian claims might seem artificial. Nevertheless, we must take the assertions in

early Christian writings seriously if we are to understand how they defined themselves

visa-vie the Other: Judaeans and other Greco-Roman religious formations. As I

surveyed 1 Peter, the *Epistle to Barnabas*, the *Dialogue with Trypho* and the *Epistle to

Diognetus*, it was revealed that Christ followers creatively reconfigured the hallmarks of

ethnicity (ancestry, kinship, territory, customs, cult) around their new found Christian

identity.   What demands further attention is why the texts that have been highlighted as

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[208] Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 204.

[209] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 263. Foster, "Diognetus," 165.

[210] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 263.

[211] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 263.

exhibiting ethnic reasoning typically date from the second century onward or the late first century at the earliest. Since Christian intellectuals began to define themselves as a people who were fully independent and even replace the former covenant people or Israel, does this mean that an irreparable breach had occurred between the church and synagogue that is reflected in these writings? This question will be further explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

DID THE WAYS PART? NEW MODELS IN JUDAEAN/CHRISTIAN

RELATIONS[212]

Buell's thesis that ethnic reasoning had a pivotal role in early Christian self-definition has

been confirmed. Specifically, centrist Christian intellectuals began to imagine their

communities as citizens of a new ἔθνος in contradistinction from their native homelands

and from the Judaeans. It could be presupposed that the efforts to forge a new Christian

ethnic identity independent of its Judaean roots in the second century is another datum in

support of a decisive "Parting of the Ways" between 70 and 135 CE. In contrast, I intend

to show why this model is not the best picture of Judaean/Christian relations in the first

few centuries. Rather than view this period through the later lens of Rabbinic Judaism

and Nicaean Christianity, this chapter will demonstrate that many diverse groups on the

Judaeo-Christian spectrum were just beginning to formulate their own distinctiveness in

the second century. Ethnic reasoning was another strategy by some religious elites to

discursively construct sharp differences between Christians and Judaeans.

The "Parting of the Ways" Model

The traditional "Parting of the Ways" model portrays Judaism and Christianity as

diverging quite rapidly after 70 CE to form two separate religious traditions.[213] Scholars

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[212] This chapter is a revision and expansion of my paper for Dr. Francis Landy, "A Curse Against Jewish Sectarianism," 2008. A version of this chapter was published by Michael Kok, "Did the Ways Part: New Models in Judaean/Christian Relations," *Axes Mundi* (2008/2009): 1-24.

who accept this historical reconstruction generally recognize that Second Temple Judaism was a diverse phenomenon. Still, Dunn detects that four pillars underlie the different expressions of Second Temple Judaism: monotheism, election, *Torah* as covenant charter and land focused on Temple.[214] Christians eventually violated all four of these alleged pillars. Various Christian writings either polemicize against the Temple (e.g., Mark 11:17; Acts 8:48-50; *Barn.* 16:3-4) or identify Christ or the ἐκκλησία (church) as the true Temple (e.g., John 2:19-22; 1 Cor 3:16; Rev 21:22). Christian universalism challenges the notion of election and covenant markers such as circumcision, food laws and Sabbath that divided Judaeans from the other nations.[215] Finally, the full identification of a human with the god of Israel (e.g., John 1:1; 20:28) placed Christians outside the limits of "normative" Judaism. Evans cites the divinization of Jesus, the increasingly Gentile membership in the church, the marginalization of Torah-observant Christians, the use of different versions of the scriptures and the impact of two failed Judaean revolts against Rome as reasons why a schism was inevitable.[216]

According to the rabbinic myth of origins, Yohanan ben Zakkai obtained permission from Vespasian to establish an academy at Yavneh after the Temple's demise in 70 CE. Shortly thereafter the Rabbis are portrayed as exerting the dominant influence

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[213] The best articulation of this model is found in James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2nd ed.; London: SCM Press, 2006); idem, ed., *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, AD 70 to 135* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1992); Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 67-110.

[214] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 26-47.

[215] Dunn finds this revolution already underway with Paul's attack on "a covenantal nomism which insisted on treating the law as a boundary round Israel, marking off Jew from Gentile, with only those inside as heirs of God's promise to Abraham" (*The Partings of the Ways*, 182).

[216] C.A. Evans, "Christianity and Judaism: Partings of the Ways," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 162-167.

over the subsequent history of Judaism.[217] Schiffman infers that the Temple's destruction

ended the Sadducees' power base and the Romans decimated the Dead Sea Sect and

similar messianic and apocalyptic groups.[218] Only the Pharisees "[w]ould adapt to the

new political realities and emerge as the internal rulers of the Jewish people of

Palestine."[219] The Christians were the only remaining alternatives to the Rabbis, but their

Christology and soteriology became unacceptable to the emerging rabbinic orthodoxy.

Christians, along with other religious opponents, were allegedly censured in the

synagogue by the introduction of a liturgical malediction. A *beraita* in the Bavli records

how Gamaliel II requested Samuel *ha-Qatan* to formulate a "blessing" (=curse) against

the *minim* (heretics) to become part of the *'amidah* (eighteen benedictions) at Yavneh (*b.

Ber*. 28b-29a). The most controversial witness, discovered at the Cairo Genizah, reads:

> For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be
> speedily uprooted in our days. Let the *nosrim* and the *minim* be destroyed
> in a moment. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be
> inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who
> humblest the arrogant.[220]

The anticipation that both the imperial government and religious deviants such as

apostates, *minim* (heretics) and *notzrim* (Christians) would be recipients of divine

judgment seems to juxtapose two separate motifs.[221] But Horbury correctly maintains

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[217] For the classic treatment that accepts the essential historicity of these accounts, see M. Simon, *Verus Israel. A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (A.D. 135-425)* (trans. H. McKeating; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 13-14.

[218] Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew*, 3.

[219] Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew*, 3.

[220] The translation is from Reuven Kimelman, ("Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition: Volume Two* [ed. E.P. Sanders, A.I. Baumgarten and Alan Mendelson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981], 226. For the initial publication, see S. Schechter, "Geniza Specimens," *JQR* o.s. 10 (1898): 657, 659.

that the principal focus is on the *minim*. The title "Of the *Minim*" instead of "Of the government" became standard and tradition strongly regards the prayer as an anti-heretical measure.[222] Although it is unlikely that anyone who attended the synagogue would have regarded himself or herself as a heretic, those who consciously opposed the Rabbis may have felt threatened by the benediction and would not voluntarily place themselves in the way of a curse. Since members of the synagogue who suspected that they were implicated in this curse may have been reluctant to pronounce the prayers, anyone who erred reciting the benediction was discredited as a *min* (*b. Ber*. 29a).[223]

There remains a long scholarly tradition of finding Christians as the primary referent behind the twelfth benediction. Horbury believes that Second Temple Judaism was characterized by zeal against apostasy and that the *birkat ha-minim* was only the climax of the long history of hostility towards Christ followers (e.g., Mark 13:9; Acts 21:27-32; Gal 1:13-14; 1 Thess 2:14-16).[224] As Christianity became a missionary rival to Judaism, a curse against Christians was designed to effectively deny Christian pretensions to the covenant.[225] Simon also judges Gentile Christians to be the *minim* par-excellence and always lurking behind Rabbinic disputes regarding two powers in heaven or the oral Torah, in spite of his translation of *min* as "kind" or "species" (the equivalent

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[221] Philip S. Alexander ("'The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism," in Dunn, *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, 7), suggests a curse against the *minim* was added to an early prayer for the overthrow of Israel's enemies. Horbury (*Jews and Christians*, 88-89), also speculates about an original anti-Seleucid prayer. However, in the absence of earlier textual evidence this cannot be demonstrated with any certainty.

[222] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 93-95. Failure to recite certain creedal affirmations (e.g. 'who givest life to the dead' or 'who buildest Jerusalem') could lead to the charge of *minut* (*y. Ber*. 5:4, 9c)

[223] Alexander, "The Parting of the Ways," 9.

[224] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 98. Horbury even perceives the phrase, ἀνάθεμα Ἰεσοῦς (1 Cor 12:3) as an early curse in the synagogue to test the loyalty of its members (*Jews and Christians*, 27).

[225] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 101.

of γένος) and acknowledgement that it could refer to any dissident body (*y. Sanh* 10:6).[226] At least two pericopes explicitly identify a *min* as a disciple of Jesus: in one story a *min* attempts to heal in the name of Jesus *ben* (son of) *Pantera* (*t. Hull* 2:22ff, J. *Šabb* 14:4) while in another R. Eliezer is arrested on a charge of *minut* after hearing forbidden teachings in this same name (*t. Hull.* 2:24).[227] His argument could be further substantiated if *gilyonim* is a reference to the gospels (*t. Yad.* 2:13; *t. Šabb.* 13:5; cf. the Rabbinic deformation of εὐαγγελιον as *'aven galayon* in *b. Šabb.* 116a).[228] The *gilyonim* along with other "heterodox" works (*sifrei minim*) do not defile the hands, hence are not sacred, and are to be consigned to the flames. If *notzrim* was original to the *birkat ha-minim*, it would make the equation of the *minim* with Christians explicit.

Christian writings may further supplement this interpretation of the *birkat ha-minim*, particularly the Gospel of John and Justin Martyr's *Dialogue*. John insists that Christians were banned from the synagogue (John 9:22, 12:42, 16:2) and Justin adds that they were cursed in the synagogue prayers (*Dial.* 16, 93, etc). The historical context for the writing of John's Gospel has been linked with the twelfth benediction since the influential study by J. Louis Martyn.[229] John uses the word ἀποσυνάγωγος to describe how Jewish authorities expelled Christians from the synagogue (John 9:22, 12:42, 16:2). John further speaks of *their* Law (15:25) or *their* feasts (5:1). His consistent labeling of his enemies as Ἰουδαῖοι and his bitter polemic against them (8:42-47; 12:37-43) reflects a traumatic split between the synagogue and the Johannine community. Johannine

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[226] Simon, *Verus Israel*, 179-201.

[227] Simon, *Verus Israel*, 183-184. *Pantera* appears to be a corruption of παρθένος (virgin).

[228] Alexander, "The Parting of the Ways," 13.

[229] J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 37-62.

Christology has been considered a major factor in the Parting of the Ways because it seemed to violate Judaism's central pillar of monotheism.[230] In three separate passages Jesus is accused of blasphemy for claiming divine prerogatives or even the divine name ἐγὼ εἰμί (5:16-18, 8:58, 10:30). John's blanket statements about being cast out of the synagogue for confessing the Christ may suggest such excommunications occurred throughout the regions known to him.[231]

Justin Martyr also protests that the Judaeans curse Christ or Christians seven times in the *Dialogue* (16, 93, 95, 96, 108, 123, 133). Two times these curses are said to happen in the synagogue (16, 96) and four further passages lack any form of the verb καταράομαι (curse) but are related in subject matter (35, 47, 117, 137).[232] Justin insinuates that the Romans prevented Judaeans from more intense forms of persecution (16:4). Granted, Justin's accusations may be influenced by reading Christian polemic (e.g., Acts) and the recent martyrdom of Christians in Judaea during the Bar Cochba revolt.[233] Even so, Justin assumed the ways had parted and later Christian apologists appear to confirm Justin's inclination. Origen writes that Christ is still anathematized by the Judaeans (*Hom. Ps.* 37, 2:8). Epiphanius writes that the synagogue repeats a prayer against the Nazarene sect thrice a day (*Pan.* 29:9). Jerome understands Nazarene as a code for all Christians (*Comm. Am.* 1, *Comm. Isa.* 2). For Horbury, "[t]hese specific (patristic) reports would claim serious consideration even if no inner Jewish

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[230] Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways,* 298-300; Evans, "Christianity and Judaism," 163-164.

[231] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 100.

[232] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 67.

[233] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 173.

corroboration had survived."[234] Therefore, in this scholarly paradigm the process of

separating Judaism and Christianity began shortly after 70 CE and that separation was

sealed after the failed messianic Bar Cochba revolt in 132-135.[235]

Critiques of the Partings Model

The value of the Partings of the Ways model is that it supports the valuable ecumenical

task of proclaiming Judaism and Christianity are two distinct religious traditions that are

in legitimate continuity with the biblical heritage.[236] Unfortunately, there are many

weaknesses with it as a historical reconstruction that make it untenable. The first major

difficulty with it is the problematic assumption that Rabbinic Judaism quickly became the

universally authoritative branch of Judaism. It is far too simplistic to believe that all the

various parties thriving in the Second Temple period disappeared. Indeed, the numerous

conflict between the Rabbis and the *'ammei ha-'ares* (people of the land) throughout

tannaitic literature and the continual struggle against the *minim* suggests that the Rabbis

did not attain prominence until at least the third century CE and then only in Palestine.[237]

Nor were the Rabbis necessarily able to purge Judaism of any writings they perceived in

a less favourable light. Cohen surmises that no books were actually burned at Yavneh

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[234] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 75.

[235] It should be noted that Dunn admits in a new foreword that he has accepted criticism that his model was too simplistic. He now argues for greater complexity and that various partings occurred, "Over a lengthy period, at different times and places, and as judged by different people differently, depending on what was regarded as a non-negotiable boundary marker and by whom" (*The Partings of the Ways*, xxiv).

[236] Judith Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct or Historical Reality?," *JSNT* 56 (1994): 106-108.

[237] Alexander, "Parting of the Ways," 20-21.

and writes this off as the rhetorical excess of Tarphon and Ishmael.[238] Even if one grants

all the assumptions entailed in the argument that Samuel the Lesser crafted the *Birkat ha-*

minim at Yavneh and intended it as an anti-Christian polemic, the Rabbis simply did not

attain hegemony over all of Judaism at this early date to oust their religious rivals.

An even greater problem is the assumption that Gentile Christians constituted the

greatest peril to the Rabbis in the late first and second century. In reality, in this period

the various Gentile Christ associations were numerically inferior and lacked the prestige

of antiquity. The real threats to rabbinic hegemony in the first few centuries were

Judaean dissidents such as apocalypticists, gnostics and hellenizers.[239] Indeed, one text

lists up to twenty-four types of *minim* (*y. Sanh*. 10:6) and the term G*ilyonim* may cover

any number of disapproved "heterodox" writings.[240] Kimelman's careful philological

study proves that a *min* in the tannaitic literature unambiguously denotes a Judaean and

retains this meaning in the Palestinian Amoraic literature.[241] The examples that associate

a disciple of Jesus with *minut* (*t. Hull* 2:22ff, *y. Šabb*. 14:4) only indicate that this

particular *min* was a Judaean follower of Jesus. In the Palestinian Amoraic literature,

Gentile Christians are not called *minim* but the "nations of the world." The "nations of

the world" falsely claim to be Israel, but the true Israel possesses the Mishnah.[242] The

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[238] Shaye Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1984): 27-53, 42 (n. 42).

[239] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 177. For apocalyptic works, one could think of 4 Ezra, 2 Enoch or the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. The *Apocalypse of Adam* has no explicit Christian references and appears to be an example of a Judaean Gnostic work. *1 Macc* 1:15 and *Jub* 15:33-34 oppose a hellenizing party and Philo contends with some in the Diaspora who so allegorize the Scriptures that they are no longer Torah-observant by Philo's standards (*On the Migration of Abraham* 86-94).

[240] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 177. Wilson notes that *Gilyonim* might simply be rendered as the margins or blank spaces of a page instead of translated as "gospels."

[241] Kimelman, "The Lack of Evidence," 228-230.

Genizah text explicitly singles out Christians, but *notzrim* was probably not original to the twelfth benediction. Otherwise it would be known as the *birkat ha-notzrim* and *notzrim* would be more present in the rabbinic corpus.[243] Wilson thinks *notzrim* was added soon after the Bar Cochba revolt based on Justin Martyr's repeated complaints that Christ and Christians are slandered in the synagogue,[244] but Justin could be reacting to popular invective or to a garbled report of the *birkat ha-minim*. Epiphanius and Jerome are the first to allude to a curse of the Nazarenes.[245] The original *Birkat ha-minim* only anticipated that the *minim* will be removed from the covenant (i.e., the Book of Life).[246] Notice that "heretics" are blotted out of the Book of Life and denied a share in the Israel of the world to come (*m. Sanh*. 10:1), but do not forfeit their status as Judaeans.[247]

Since Gentiles had no share in the covenant, they were never obligated to adopt *halakhah* or to abandon their native deities upon attending the synagogue. Judaeans allowed for the existence of other gods so long as Yahweh was acknowledged as the supreme deity.[248] The LXX translators interpret Exodus 22:27 as a command not to revile "the gods" (θεοὺς) and Paul can acknowledge the cosmos as filled with many θεοὶ (gods) and κύριοι (lords) while admonishing the Corinthians to have exclusive loyalty to

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[242] Kimelman, "The Lack of Evidence," 229-230. See *Pesiqta Rabbati* 4.1.

[243] Kimelman, "Lack of Evidence," 233-234. If the term *notzrim* was original, its absence from the tannaitic literature (and relative absence from amoraic literature) would be inexplicable.

[244] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 182-183. Justin Martyr will be analyzed in more detail below.

[245] Kimelman, "Lack of Evidence," 237-238. Compare Epiphanius (*Pan*. 29:9) with Jerome (*Comm.Am. 1, Comm Isa*. 2) for the disagreement over whether a Judaizing Christian sect or Christians in general are in view.

[246] Kimelman, "The Lack of Evidence," 239.

[247] Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew*, 41-46, 51-53.

[248] Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways," 46-47.

the creator god and Jesus (1 Cor 8:5-6). There is no reason why Gentile Christians who

worshipped Christ as a second divine power and did not practice *Torah* would be

unwelcome, let alone cursed, at the synagogue. There is evidence that Gentile Christians

continued to attend the synagogue, as Ignatius (*Phld.* 6:1, *Magn.* 8:1), Justin (*Dial.* 47:4)

and Chrysostom (*Adv. Jud.* 5:4, 8:8, 9) attest. The harsh polemic against the Judaeans

that characterizes the *Adversus Ioudaios* literature in the second century is written from

an elitist Christian perspective and does not necessarily mirror the facts on the ground.

For instance, Barnabas' division of "us" (Christians) versus "them" (Judaeans) is a

reaction to the willingness of many in his congregation to share the covenant with "them"

(*Barn.* 4:6, 13:1, 14:1).[249] Horbury recognizes the evidence for Gentile Judaizers but

remains adamant that, "[s]o long as the claims of Judaism were secured by measures

disallowing Christian pretensions, Christian visitors could be regarded by Jews as

witnesses to popular reverence for the synagogue, and as possible future proselytes."[250]

This convoluted argument does not help explain why Gentile Christians would persist in

attending the synagogue while knowingly being damned in the prayers.

Finally, the most significant problem for the Parting model is the textual evidence

that appears to support a decisive break between Judaism and Christianity in the period

between 70 – 135 CE comes from a much later period. No one has pressed this point as

eloquently as Daniel Boyarin. Boyarin points out that the earliest reference to the *Birkat*

ha-minim is found in the mid-third century Tosefta Berakhot 3:25. It is an apologetic for

why the *birkat ha-minim* is included in the *amidah*, but it does not ascribe this innovation

to Yavneh. The later accounts attribute the blessing to Yavneh but also narrate the ironic

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[249] Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 50-57.

[250] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 101.

legend of how Samuel the Lesser forgot his own benediction (*y. Ber.* 4:3, 8a; *y. Ber.* 5:4, 9c; *b. Ber.* 28b-29a). Boyarin remarks, "[o]ne might as well attempt to write the history of early Britain on the basis of King Lear, or the history of colonial America using James Fennimore Cooper as one's only source."[251] Early Christian writings do not exhibit an awareness of the imposition of an excommunicatory formula in the synagogue. Paul's allusion to antagonists who curse the name of Jesus (1 Cor 12:3) is not specific enough to carry the weight of being evidence for an early formal synagogue curse. Several New Testament writings indicate that their communities faced threats and beatings from the synagogue authorities, but this is in-house punishment rather than exclusion (e.g., Mark 13:9; Matt 10:17-20; Luke 12:11-12; Acts 5:26-42, 1 Thess 2:14-16).

Nor is there any real counter-evidence from John or Justin Martyr. The evidence does most likely suggest the Johannine community was expelled from their synagogue, but we cannot extrapolate from this isolated example the policy of all the synagogues. In any case, the *birkat ha-minim* would not apply to John's situation, because those who insisted on a sectarian self-definition were denounced but were not expelled from the synagogue.[252] There is no hint that the Johannine community left the synagogue because they could not conscientiously say the prayers, so Meeks writes, "[i]t is time to recognize that the *birkat ha-minim* has been a red herring in Johannine research."[253] It is easy to get carried away with John's rhetoric because it exhibits a very sectarian worldview that

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[251] Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004), 68.

[252] Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh," 49-50. Interestingly, the only ones who were expelled were Rabbis who did not abide by the rules of rabbinic discourse. For example, R. Eliezer was expelled for invoking a heavenly voice and miracles in opposition to the will of the majority.

[253] Wayne Meeks, "Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs; Chicago, California: Scholars, 1985), 102.

sharply divides between darkness and light, between those in the κόσμος (including the antagonistic Judaean leaders and their followers) and those who have overcome it (John 1:10-13; 3:19-21; 12:37-50; 15:18-16:4; 17:6-19). In fact, John may be still fiercely competing with the synagogue for followers and calling out covert Johannine disciples that remain in the synagogue to reveal their allegiance to Christ (12:42-43).

Justin's repeated references to curses directed against Christians are also not unequivocal. Kimelman points out that these curses occur only four times in the context of the synagogue (*Dial*. 16, 47, 96, 137) and only once surrounding a prayer (*Dial*. 137). Justin's last example uses "scoff" (ἐπισκώψητέ ποτε) instead of "curse" (καταράομαι) or "anathematize" (καταναθηματίζω) and takes place after the prayer (*Dial*.137).[254] Justin's accusations of Judaean antagonism could just as easily reflect popular hostility towards the centrist Christian claim on the title Israel or, as Boyarin argues is the case for the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, could be completely fabricated to serve his rhetorical purposes.[255] On the other hand, Boyarin should allow that it is equally likely that Justin had received a confused report about the *birkat ha-minim* through his extensive correspondence with other Judaeans and presumed it was directed against Christians. Van der Horst argues that Justin's false impression is understandable in the polemical context in which he wrote.[256] If we grant that Justin reflects indirect knowledge of a liturgical malediction, Justin still wrote a half a century after Yavneh and after the traumatic effects of the Bar Cochba rebellion.[257] Wilson offers the balanced judgment

[254] Kimelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim," 233-234.

[255] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 71-73.

[256] Pieter W. Van Der Horst, "The Birkat ha-minim in Recent Research," *ExpTim* 105 (1994-1995), 367.

that, "[t]he rabbinic account of the introduction of the *Birkat ha-minim* is thus a retrospective, punctiliar summary of what was in reality a lengthy process."[258]

Eventually the ways parted, but the best evidence that the religious authorities attempted to mandate a strict policy of separation derives from the fourth century CE. Of course, Chrysostoam's severe homilies against Judaizing and the increasing imperial measures against Judaism reveal that the attitudes of religious elites may not reflect the actual facts on the ground.[259] Nevertheless, centrist Christianity became the official imperial cult, suppressing rival Christian identities and castigating Judaism as a false *superstitio*. Correspondingly, the *birkat ha-minim* may have broadened to include Gentile Christians. Kimelman points out the shift in meaning of the term *min* in Babylonia to encompass non-Jews and the first use of the expression "*min* among the nations" (*b. Hull* 13b).[260] Boyarin articulates the difference: "Since Christianity itself is no longer a threatening blurring within but a clearly defined without, *minut* comes now simply to mean the religious practices of the Gentiles, the Christian Romans."[261] This is corroborated by the allusions in Epiphanius and Jerome to a thrice-repeated petition against the Nazarenes. Kimelman suspects Jerome's desire to place Judaism in a pejorative light caused him to (mis)interpret the *birkat ha-minim* as cursing all Christians and judges that Epiphanius correctly understood *notzrim* to be a used exclusively for

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[257] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 71-73.

[258] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 181.

[259] In 315 CE, Constantine enacted a law mandating punishments for converts to Judaism. In 339, Constantius outlawed intermarriages and Theodosius forbade the building of new synagogues in 439.

[260] Kimelman, "The Lack of Evidence," 230-232. The parallel passage in the Yerushalmi uses the term *goy* (*y.Yebam.* 8:1, 8d).

[261] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 220.

Judaizing Christians (*Pan*. 29).[262] But the frequent post-Talmudic use of *notzrim* as a

reference to all Christians makes Kimelman's suggestion unlikely.[263] Moreover, Jerome

makes a subtle but important distinction between the Nazoraean sect in his epistle to

Augustine (*Epist*. 112.13) and the term for Christians in general as Nazarenes (*Comm.*

Am. 1; *Comm. Isa*. 1).[264] A curse against Gentile Christians fits the fourth century

context for "[t]he anti-Jewish measures taken by the Roman government that was a

Christian one by now, made such a development well nigh unavoidable."[265] It would be

a mistake to study the first few centuries through the lens of fourth century developments.

Towards Establishing a New Model

In the end, the Partings model wants to draw a straight trajectory from the late first

century to Rabbinic Judaism and Nicaea in the fourth century. However, as Lieu

brilliantly elucidates the matter, the problem here is that the model "[o]perates essentially

with the abstract or universal conception of each religion, Judaism and Christianity, when

what we know about is the specific and local."[266] Arnal also objects to the reification of

religion and how some scholars have used the modern construct of religion as a grid to

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262 Kimelman, "The Lack of Evidence," 237-38

263 Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 76.

264 Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew*, 57-60; Horst, "The Birkat ha-minim," 367.

265 Horst, "The birkat ha-minim," 368.

266 Lieu, "'Parting of the Ways'," 8.

determine what issues or practices a Judaean religious figure could have addressed.[267] Interpretive taxonomies enable scholars to order and classify various phenomena, but scholarly *taxa* can become a hindrance to the descriptive task when they obscure primary data.[268] Our categories of "Judaism" or "Christianity" are in danger of being regarded as self-evident or, worse, may simply be prejudicial restatements of the subject's own classifications.[269] Therefore, Jonathan Z. Smith urges historians of religion to adopt a polythetic mode of classification that jettisons the notion of a single definitive feature that must be possessed by everyone in the class. It is impossible to speak of the "pillars" of Judaism when even a basic identification marker like circumcision could be disputed.[270]

There has been a growing awareness of the diversity that existed within Second Temple Judaism. Since the earliest Rabbinic work, the Mishnah, was written in the early third century CE, we need to treat the Rabbinic sources with caution when trying to decide if some Rabbinic views can be read back into the first few centuries. In spite of these developments, Lightstone complains that much of scholarship continues its "Palestinian-Juda(h)ic-centrism" and "pharisaic-rabbinic centrism" and ignores the Judaism of the Diaspora.[271] Diaspora Judaeans should be credited with reconfiguring

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[267] William Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity* (London and Oakville: Equinox, 2005), 35.

[268] Lightstone, *The Commerce of the* Sacred, 1-2.

[269] Lightstone, *The Commerce of the* Sacred, 1, 4.

[270] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Fences and Neighbours: Some Contours of Early Judaism" in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Volume II* (ed. William Scott Green; Brown Judaic Studies 9; Chicago: Scholars, 1980), 10-15. Circumcision was the quintessential marker of the covenant in the priestly tradition (Gen 17:9-14, Exod 12:43-49). Paul divides humanity between circumcised and uncircumcised, but vigorously opposes Gentile proselytes from getting circumcised (Gal 6:15). Josephus notes that circumcision was part of the ancestral ways (*Ant*. 20.41, 46), but both Josephus and Philo defend circumcision by noting Egyptian practice (*Ant*. 1.214; *Spec. Leg*.1.2). Finally, there was a significant hellenizing, anti-circumcision party (1 Macc 1:15; *Jub*. 15:33-34).

sacred space outside of the temple-state of Judaea and Diaspora Judaism probably exerted one of the most significant influences on the minority Christ associations throughout the Empire.[272] Boyarin's new conceptual model has great heuristic value for studying early Judaean/Christian interactions. Appealing to wave-length theory, Boyarin posits a variety of beliefs represented on the Judeo-Christian spectrum ranging from Marcionites to non-Christian Jews to everyone else in the middle. Gradually this assortment of religious dialects developed into clusters through diffusion and eventually organized to become the "official" religions of Rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity.[273]

In the first few centuries many diverse Judaean and Christ associations were engaging in "social formation and myth-making"[274] in an attempt to articulate their own identities. It is likely that the Rabbis responded to this internal diversity by convening an academy at Yavneh and outlining the principle that multiple viewpoints can represent "the words of God" (*b. 'Erub*. 13b and parallels) in a bid to end sectarianism.[275] Boyarin's view that Yavneh is a late rabbinic myth of origins projected onto the first century is unduly skeptical because it relies too heavily on theological discourse and not

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[271] Jack N. Lightstone, "Is It Meaningful to Speak of a Greco-Roman Diaspora Judaism? A Case Study in Taxonomical Issues in the Study of Ancient Judaism," in *Introducing Religion: Essays in Honor of Jonathan Z. Smith* (ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon; London; Oakville: Equinox, 2008), 269-270.

[272] Lightstone, "Greco-Roman Diaspora Judaism," 271-272.

[273] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 18-19.

[274] This conceptual vocabulary was introduced by Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, 11.

[275] Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh," 27-53. Boyarin (*Border Lines*, 158-159), considers this dialectical to be a late development, but ignores that the principle that multiple views can be the "words of God" is found three times in the Yerushalmi (*y. Yebam.* 1, 3b; *y. Ber.* 1, 3b; *y. Qidd.* 1) and only in the Yerushalmi is it associated with Yavneh. The principle also seems to be implicit throughout the Mishnah. See the critical review of Boyarin by Stuart S. Miller ("Roman Imperialism, Jewish Self-Defintion and Rabbinic Authority," *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 31 [2007]: 354).

enough on concrete historical events.[276] Even if the narrative is shrouded in legend,

Cohen is more convincing that Yavneh was a creative response to the radical impact of

the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. The Temple was often the seat of sectarian

difference; its demise led the Rabbis to try to replace the temple cult with intensive study

of the *Torah* guided by rabbinic rules of interpretation and discourse.[277] The Rabbis still

had to contend with other movements on the Judaeo-Christian spectrum that wanted to

implement their own visions for Judaism.

We must leave behind definitions of orthodoxy that have been established by the

winners of these historical contests. Experimenting with binitarianism or a divine-man

Christology did not place Christ followers outside the boundaries of early Judaisms.

High Christology appears among early Judaean Christ followers. Paul quotes an early

Aramaic prayer to Jesus (1 Cor 16:22b), records early Christological hymns (e.g., Phil

2:6-11), adapts the *Shema* to include "one God" and "one Lord" (1 Cor 8:6) and transfers

scriptural references about Yahweh to Jesus (Rom 10:13, 1 Cor 1:31, 2 Cor 3:16, 10:17, 1

Thess 4:16). Larry Hurtado has done the most extensive survey of early cultic veneration

of Christ, which he styles as a "mutation" or "new variant" of Judaean monotheism.[278]

However, other Judaeans could speculate about the plural thrones in heaven based on

Daniel 7:9, speak about a divine hypostasis such as the λόγος (Word) in Philo or σοφία

(Wisdom) in wisdom literature (Prov 8, Wis 7:22-30), venerate a principal angel such as

Yahoel (*Apoc. Ab.* 10:3-4, 8-17) or Metatron (*b. Sanh.* 38b), or accept the apotheosis of a

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[276] Boyarin,, *Border Lines*, 151-201

[277] Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh," 47-50.

[278] Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 64, 70-74. This cultic veneration includes prophecy in Jesus' name, baptism in Jesus' name, prayer to Jesus, hymns about Jesus (e.g., Phil 2:6-11), hope for Jesus' παρουσία (coming), etc.

human figure (e.g. Enoch in 3 *En*. 10:1-3).[279] We simply do not know the cultic

practices of the average Judaean towards these figures.

Now, some Rabbis repudiate the belief in two powers in heaven as ditheism and

an affront to monotheism.[280] While the Rabbis do not expel every notion of a second

power, the second divinity is completely subordinated to Yahweh (*b. Hag*. 15a; *b. Sanh*.

38b).[281] Other Judaean Jesus groups such as the Ebionites likewise rejected the divinity

of Jesus as a violation of strict monotheism. Justin differentiates between Judaean

factions that held Jesus was a man elected to be Christ (*Dial*. 48) with those who share

Justin's Christology (*Dial*. 48), and later comments by Origen (*Cels*. 5.61) and Eusebius

(*Hist. eccl*. 3.27) lump different Judaean Jesus groups with divergent Christological

beliefs under the heading "Ebionite."[282] It is possible that the Judaean group with the

Christology that more closely aligned with the centrist church may have been known as

the "Nazarenes" based on the description of them provided by Epiphanius (*Pan*. 29) and

Jerome (*Epist*. 112.13).[283] The point in this analysis is to stress that there was no

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[279] See further Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 25; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977). Boyarin (*Border Lines*, 89-147) includes the *Memra* in the Targums as equivalent to the Johannine λόγος, but it is more debatable whether the *Memra* is an actual divine hypostasis or merely a circumlocution for the divine name.

[280] Segal, (*Two Powers in Heaven*, 148-149), provides a list of biblical passages where the Rabbis engaged in exegetical battles with the *minim* over the doctrine of the two powers (e.g. Gen 1:26; Exod 23:21; 24:1; Dan 7:9; etc). Evans ("Christianity and Judaism," 164), attempts to demonstrate that the Rabbis explicitly reject Christian binitarianism. He points to Rabbi Abahu (Third Century) denial that God has a son (*Exod. Rab*. 29.5 [on Ex 20:2]) and to Rabbi Aha's (Fourth Century) commentary on the *Shema,* which excludes any second power whether son or brother (*Deut. Rab*. 2.33 [on Deut 6:4]).

[281] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 128-147. For instance, Metraton is punished for causing the mistaken acclamation of two powers in heaven because he sat on his heavenly throne (*b. Hag*. 15a).

[282] R. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the First Century Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 19-28.

[283] Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 29-70; also Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 155-157. In Acts 24:5 Paul is labeled as a ringleader of the Nazarenes, which may suggest the antiquity of the name before it was overtaken by the Greek χριστιανός (Christian).

normative theology of monotheism or of divine mediation that could serve to clarify the difference between Judaean and Christian movements.

There was also no reigning orthopraxy that was universally held across the Judaeo-Christian spectrum. Scholars have abandoned the simplistic portrait of the quick marginalization of a single *Torah*-observant Judaean Christianity by a single antinomian Gentile Christianity that became dominant. There were several different Judaean Christian sects that thrived for centuries such as the Ebionites, Elkesaites, Jacobites and Nazarenes.[284] There is also diversity among Gentile Christians over Judaean practices. Some followed Paul's admonitions of Gentile Christ followers to not adopt the ἔργα τοῦ νόμου (works of the law) (Rom 3:20, 27-28; Gal 2:16; 3:2, 10), but there is abundant evidence that Gentile Christian Judaizing continued to flourish. In Asia Minor alone, John the seer's condemnation of those who "say they are Judaeans and are not" (Rev 2:9, 3:9), Ignatius' warnings about Christians who practice Judaism (*Phld*. 6:1, *Magn*. 8:1) and Justin's concessions that some Gentile Christians practiced Jewish customs (*Dial*. 47:4) all reflect the presence of Gentile Judaizing.[285] Chrysostom's vituperative sermons against Gentile Judaizing reveal that it was still very much a reality in the fourth century. Lightfoot makes the astute observation that, "[i]f in the period of the Church's triumph Judaizing flourished, how much the more so in years of persecution of the Church, when Judaism enjoyed licit status under Roman law and the prestige of antiquity, while Christianity did not!"[286]

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[284] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 148-159.

[285] Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game,* 73-99.

[286] Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred*, 92.

Developments in the second century led various groups to begin to articulate their own sense of collective consciousness and distinction from other groups on the Judaeo-Christian spectrum. A major part of identity formation is a preoccupation with boundaries and the opposition In/Out, which serves to generate an Other who exists beyond the limits of the group.[287] Boyarin emphasizes that parallel developments of identity formation revolved around binitarianism and that, "[t]wo Powers in Heaven became the primary heresy for the Rabbis, and Modalism, the Christian heresy par excellence, became the only 'orthodox' theology allowed to Jews."[288] Historical developments outside of theological discourse should also be considered when studying the process of identity formation. Other charismatic, apocalyptic and messianic movements became increasingly suspect to the Rabbis. Apocalyptic enthusiasm may have produced the failed hopes of the rebuilding of the Temple as alluded to in Barnabas 16:3-4 and messianic fervor surrounded the disastrous revolt by Simon Bar Cochba ("Son of the Star") in 132-135 CE. Since our earliest possible evidence for the *birkat ha-minim* is Justin Martyr, it is likely that the Rabbis attempted to introduce this benediction into the liturgy in the Second Century in an attempt to strengthen their position of authority relative to other forms of Judaisms.

It is my thesis that it is not a coincidence that ethnic reasoning also began to appear on the landscape as an effort to create a homogenous and bounded centrist Christian identity. In sharply distinguishing Christians from Judaeans, the Christians were divorcing themselves from a venerable historical pedigree and laying themselves open to the charge of forming a new and aberrant anti-association. Ethnic reasoning

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[287] Smith, "Differential Equations," 230.

[288] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 138

allowed Christian elites to legitimate their new ἔθνος to onlookers by rooting it in the history and antiquity of the Hebrew epic while accomplishing their agenda of sharply distinguishing Χριστιανισμός (Christian ways) from Ἰουδαϊσμός (Judaean ways). Even as constant social interaction and hybridity remained the norm among various Judaeans and Christians at the popular level, some centrist Christian intellectuals exploited the fixity of ethnic discourse to reinforce the artificially imposed boundaries between Christians and Judaeans. The rest of this study will observe how the writings classified as *Adversus Ioudaios*, first and foremost, aimed to promote a stable Christian ethnic identity. The corollary of the construction of a Christian ethnic self in this literature was the invention of a Judaean Other. Claims to ethnic purity thus served to legitimate a sharply distinct Christian identity, but as we shall see in the next chapter, it was often at the expense of other Judaeans and rival forms of Christian identity.

CHAPTER FOUR

MANUFACTURING DIFFERENCE: ISRAEL AND THE NEW ETHNOS

To review the ground that has been covered, in response to the widespread diversity and

variability on the Judaeo-Christian spectrum, some centrist Christians employed ethnic

reasoning to promote an essentializing Christian cultural identity. Denying the charges of

being a new, unlawful association, they placed Christians alongside Judaeans and Greeks

as a respectable ethnic community with their own ancestral traditions and customs. In

manufacturing difference between Christians and Judaeans, an educated critic like Celsus

could find the Christian arguments to be spurious and he denounced the Christians as

merely renegade Judaeans (*Cels.* 3.5). In order to advance Christian claims to

authenticity and primordial origins, centrist writers re-appropriated the legacy of Israel

and denigrated the Judaean relationship to the same heritage. This last chapter will draw

attention to how, on the key hallmarks of ethnic identity in antiquity such as a shared

ancestry, history, territory, customs and cult, the *Adversus Ioudaios* literature distanced

the Christians from their Judaean counterparts. This can be classified under the common

strategy of "othering" as a part of social formation in antiquity.

The *Adversus Ioudaios* Literature

The second century is not the only significant period of Christian identity formation.

First-century Christ followers could clothe their communities in ethnic or Israelite

imagery. Self-descriptions scattered across a range of early Christian literature include

the ἐκκλησία (congregation/assembly) (Matt 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13), the children of god (Rom 8:14-15, 19; Gal 3:26; 1 John 3:1-2), the descendants of Abraham (Rom 4:16-18; 9:7-8; Gal 3:29), the circumcision (ἡ περιτομή) (Phil 3:3), the temple (ναός) of the spirit (1 Cor 3:12; 6:19), a kingdom and priests (βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς) (Rev 5:10) and participants of the new covenant (Heb 8:1-13; cf., 2 Cor 3:7-18). Nonetheless, whereas early Christ followers understood themselves as the elect within Israel, much like the Qumran community, no one yet conceived of an independent Christian ethnic and cultural identity.

Paul is an excellent case study. Aside from an ambiguous passage like Galatians 6:16, Paul always reserves the term "Israel" for the historic nation. Paul relied on the fluidity of ethnic discourse by contending that uncircumcised Gentiles who had received spirit baptism and the πνεῦμα (spirit) of Christ are adopted into the lineage and kin of Abraham (Gal 3:29-29; 4:1-7).[289] Paul locates Gentile Christ followers under a Judaean social identity, though Paul tolerates cultural differences in the body of Christ (Rom 14:1-23; 1 Cor 10:23-33) and in a multiethnic situation multiple ethnic identities can be maintained even as one ethnic identity is privileged.[290] For this reason, I cannot accept Boyarin's reading of Galatians 3:28 that by entering into the spiritual body of Christ at baptism all ethnic differences are dissolved in favour of univocity and a universal man.[291] Romans 9-11 is foundational for how Paul related the ἐκκλησία to Israel in the divine

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[289] Denise Kimber Buell and Caroline Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *JBL* 123 (2004): 235-251, 245-247.

[290] Buell, "The Politics of Interpretation," 248-249. Paul does not completely erase ethnic divisions, for Paul remains a Judaean and others Gentiles in Christ, but he does have Gentiles reject their religious practices and myths of origins for the Judaean god, Christ, membership in Israel and its founding ancestors.

[291] Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 23-24

purposes. Paul acknowledges that only a remnant of Israel has accepted Christ while the rest are hardened (11:1-10), but ultimately holds that "all Israel" will be saved (11:26). Paul does not redefine Israel in 11:26 around the community of Christ, for that would be inconsistent with this section's theme of undercutting Gentile supersessionistic attitudes. Paul uses Israel in the traditional sense throughout Romans (9:4, 27, 31; 10:19, 21; 11:1, 2, 7, 11, 23, 25).[292] To use a Pauline metaphor, Gentile Christ believers have been grafted onto the single root of Israel through Christ (11:17-24).

The idea of the Christians as a nation or people, juxtaposed against the Judaeans as an adversarial foil, reaches its pinnacle in the *Adversus Ioudaios* corpus. Second-century literary works include *Barnabas*, the Acts of the Apostles, Ignatius epistles to the Philadelphians and Magnesians, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* and Melito of Sardis' *Peri Pascha*. We have already encountered a sample of Christian contentions to constitute a distinctive ethnic community or to have inherited the covenant or the name Israel. The authors of these documents were part of Christ communities that still shared the same deity and scriptural heritage with other Judaeans. They positioned themselves as "centrist" and resisted the pull in two opposite directions. On the one side, there were Judaean Jesus groups and Gentile Judaizers who saw no contradiction between devotion to Christ and traditional Judaean praxis, but centrist writers saw them as a threat to a distinctive Christian cultural identity. On the other side, Marcion and his followers severed any connection with the Hebrew deity (the demiurge) and the Hebrew past, which challenged the centrist apologetic that rooted Christian

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[292] Christopher Zoccali, "'And So All Israel Will Be Saved': Competing Interpretation of Romans 11:26 in Pauline Scholarship," *JSNT* 30 (2008): 289-318, 295. Zoccali's own view that 11:26 only denotes all of the *elect* within Israel does not seem to take seriously the collective sense of the phrase "all Israel," which is underscored in 11:28-29 where it is stated that Israel's election and calling are irrevocable.

identity on a venerable historical trajectory. Lieu explicates the strategy whereby centrist

Christians dissociated from these rival Christian identities and read the scriptural

traditions in such a way as to stress both their continuity with the historical Israel while

re-interpreting the necessary qualifications for membership in the people of god:

> The same narrative when equally claimed by 'others' who were deemed
> outsiders (the 'Jews') could generate an awareness of a common identity
> with them; but more commonly it became a divisive double narrative, of
> sin and judgment, on the one hand, for 'them', and of hope and salvation,
> on the other, for 'us'. Typology, allegory, or simply creative exegesis
> meant that the framework and language could be re-spoken so as to reveal
> not-previously-anticipated shared symbols or divisive walls."[293]

Christian writers creatively rewrote Israel's history to retroject their fixed essence

back into antiquity. Luke-Acts is an important Christian myth of origins that centers on

the transition from Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 28:16-31), from Judaea to the "ends of the

earth" (1:8).[294] At first the Jerusalem church numbered in the thousands (2:41; 4:4) and

steadily increased until there were myriads of believers in Jerusalem (21:20), but the trial

of Stephen (6:8-7:60) is a turning point in the narrative. Stephen's rehearsal of the

history of Israel focuses on how the divine presence was not restricted to the holy city or

temple.[295] In the end, he charges the Sanhedrin with killing the prophets and the 'Just

One' (7:52) and turning the temple into an idol made with "human hands"

(χειροποιήτοις).[296] The limited success of the Judaean mission in the rest of Acts is

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[293] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 160.

[294] Samaritans (Acts 8:5-25) and Gentile god-fearers (οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν) (e.g. Acts 10:1-48) occupy the middle hybrid-space and soften the transition from a Judaean to a largely Gentile entity.

[295] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 88-90. God met Abraham in Mesopotamia, before he received even a "foot's length" of his promised inheritance (Acts 7:2, 5). Joseph was a blessing in Egypt (7:9-15), the Patriarchs were buried in Shechem (7:16) and Moses led the people in the wilderness (7:38).

[296] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 88-90. For idols built with "human hands," see the LXX of Lev 26:1, 30; Isa 2:18; 10:11; 16:12; 19:1; 21:9; 31:7; 46:6; Dan 5:4, 23; Jdt 8:18; Wis 14:8).

signaled by the thrice repeated denunciation of them (13:46; 18:6; 28:26-28). In the

ending of Acts, Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 to insinuate that Israel's collective heart is

hardened (Acts 28:23-28), which is closely tied with Luke's early foreshadowing of

Jesus' rejection in his own country (Luke 4:16-30).[297] Now, Sanders is too hasty in his

judgment that "by the end of the Acts the Jews have *become* what they from the first

were… [It] is what Luke understands the Jewish people to be in their essence."[298] Dunn

notes positive references to the fathers, the nation and the "hope of Israel" (Acts 28:17-

20) and the imperfect tense of ἐπείθοντο entails that some Judaeans were close to being

persuaded by Paul (28:24).[299] Luke never confuses the church with Israel and allows the

possibility of a future restoration of Israel (Luke 21:24b; Acts 1:6-7). Even so, the focal

point of Acts is the creation of a new λαὸς (people) (15:14; 18:10), the Χριστιανόι

(Christians) (11:26; 26:28).[300] Just as the *Aeneid* has dramatic irony in that the few

remaining survivors of the Trojan War form a new civilization, the tragedy of Israel's

rejection opens the door for the Christians.[301]

Other *Adversus Ioudaios* tracts take their cue from Luke-Acts in rewriting the

history of Israel as one of repeatedly rejecting divine messengers that culminates in the

death of Christ and eventual displacement of Israel. Much of Justin's *Dialogue* exhibits

Jesus' messianic credentials by defending two *parousias* (comings); the first one in

lowliness and suffering and the second one in glory (*Dial*. 32; 52, 110, etc.). The more

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[297] Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 298-299. Luke 4:16-30 opens with Jesus' quoting Isaiah (61:1-2), which is also met with incredulity in his hometown.

[298] Sanders, *The Jews*, 81.

[299] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 199.

[300] Sanders, *The Jews*, 48.

[301] Bonz, *The Past as Legacy*, 190.

sinister aspect of his account is that the murder of the Just One (ὁ δίκαιος), as well as the persecution of the prophets and the Christians, resulted in the devastation of Judaea and the expulsion of Judaeans from Jerusalem (16; 108; 133; 136). Skarsaune detects an underlying Deuteronomistic theology where Israel spurns the prophetic call to covenant faithfulness and is punished by the state of exile or living under foreign rule, which is designed to move them to penitence.[302] In Justin's hands, this narrative provides the justification for his replacement theology. After the coming of Christ, Israel lost its place: there will be no more Israelite prophets or kings (52:1) and the prophetic spirit has been transferred to the Christians (88:1).[303] Correspondingly, the term 'Gentiles' loses its negative valence (cf., Gal 2:14-15; 1 Cor 5:1; Eph 4:17-19; Matt 5:47; 10:5; Rev 11:2; *1 Clem* 55:1; etc.), for Christians are taken from Gentiles who are "God-fearing and righteous" (*Dial*. 52:4) and have ceased their idolatry (34:8; 130:4), hence Justin can speak of "we Gentiles" (41:3).[304] The nations have been transformed into Israel.

Justin cannot match the radicalism of Barnabas towards Israel's foundational narrative. At least Justin concedes a limited dispensation when historic Israel was the covenant people before the arrival of the new covenant (e.g., *Dial*. 11:2) whereas Barnabas argues that Israel completely forfeited the covenant when Moses shattered the tablets after the worship of the golden calf (*Barn*. 4:7-8; 14:1-4). The golden calf incident was the sin par excellence in many Judaean traditions and easy fodder for a

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[302] Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*, 278-279. For the accusation of killing the prophets, see Neh 9:26; Ezra 9:11; *Ant*. 9.13.2; 10.3.1; *Jub*. 1:12; 1 Thess 2:15; etc.

[303] Chilton, "Israelite Prophecy," 84. More specifically, John the Baptist the last successor of the prophets and prophecy ceased after Christ's death (*Dial*. 51:1-52:4). *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* predicted that the prophetic spirit would return to Israel in the last days.

[304] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 288-289.

polemicist (e.g., Acts 7:40-43; *Barn.* 4:7-8; 14:1-4; *Dial.* 19:5-6; 20:4).[305] Not a "new

covenant" (e.g., 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:7-18; Heb 8:1-13), but the one covenant the

Judaeans lost has been delivered to the Christians by Jesus and put into effect by his

death (*Barn.* 4:8b; 14:4). This means that the Judaeans have always been misguided in

their literal observance of the *Torah*. For Barnabas, the death of Jesus solidified the fate

of the two rival peoples: Jesus died in order that *we* might be purified for forgiveness of

sins (5:1; cf. 7:2, 3, 5; 14:5) and so that *they* might fill out the full measure of their sins

for killing the prophets (5:11; cf., 6:6-7; 14:5).[306]

In order to complete the argument that Christian peoplehood is in legitimate

continuity with the Hebrew epic, the early Christians had to counter the charge that they

had abandoned the ancestral ways, namely the Law of Moses. Luke carefully displays

the proper Judaean credentials of the infant church as a sect (αἵρεσις) within Judaism

(Acts 24:5, 14). The apostles' piety is manifested in their generosity to the poor, the

hours they spend in the temple and in prayer (2:43-47) and their respect for the food laws

(10:10-16). Similarly, Paul proudly self-identifies as a Pharisee (23:6), educated by

Gamaliel and zealous for the Law (22:3), and remains observant in spite of contrary

reports (21:17-26). Even the Pharisees, the most devout sect of Judaism in Luke's eyes,

give their stamp of approval on the Christians as legitimate successors of Judaism.[307]

However, the Jerusalem council (15:1-21) only enforces on Gentile believers (the

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[305] Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture*, 155. It was such a national embarrassment that Josephus omits it from his *Antiquities* (see also *Sifre Deut. 1*). If was responsible for the exile and for the power the Angel of Death had over them (*Exod. Rab* 32:2; *b. Shabb.* 88a) and, contrary to Numbers 14:26-35, even the 40 years in the wilderness was punishment for this sin (*Exod. Rab.* 30:7; *Cant. Rabb.* 5:5).

[306] Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture*, 145. These two themes are combined in *Barn.* 14:5.

[307] Sanders, *The Jews*, 85-87, 97. The Pharisees dine with Jesus (Luke 7:36; 11:37; 14:1), warn Jesus about Herod's plot to kill him (Luke 13:31) and do not participate in the Passion (they disappear after 19:39). The Pharisees also defend the apostles (Gamaliel in Acts 5:33-39) and protect Paul (Acts 23:7-9).

majority in Luke's day) four rules that derive from the laws enjoined on foreigners in Leviticus 17-18: to avoid things polluted by idols, sexual immorality (πορνεία), strangled animals and blood (Acts 15:20).[308] By rejecting the "Pharisaical" Christian position that required Gentile proselytism to Judaean customs (15:5), Luke demands only a minimal level of Torah observance from Gentiles in the Christian fold and seeks to inculcate Christian cultural practices such as baptism in the "name of Jesus Christ" (2:38; 10:48) and ecstatic speech or γλῶσσα (2:3-4, 11; 10:46; 19:6). Luke lacks the exegetical complexities of Paul's argument (Gal 3-4; Rom 4) in support of a Law-free Gentile mission, but simply appeals to the movement of the spirit who taught Peter not to call any human (μηδένα… ἄνθρωπον) profane or unclean (Acts 10:28b).

Other Christian apologists bypassed the injunctions of *Torah* by interpreting them allegorically and argued that Judaean obduracy prevents the recognition of their spiritual intent. Instead of a historical continuity, accepting the literal observance of *Torah* for a limited duration, Barnabas uses allegory to stress the timeless unity of the Testaments.[309] He translates the dietary restrictions as commands to avoid certain sorts of people (*Barn*. 10:3-8). His focus on fasting (3:1-6) reflected more contemporary Judaean customs than the Pentateuch and his use of Isaiah 58:3-10 to dismiss the rite in favour of ethical action is the same passage read on the Day of Atonement (*Meg*. 31a).[310] He is familiar with extra-biblical tradition about that day not found in Leviticus 16,[311] though he reads the

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[308] Sanders, *The Jews*, 118-120.

[309] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 143.

[310] Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 136-138. S. Lowy ("The Confutation of Judaism in the Epistle of Barnabas," *JJS* 11 [1960]: 2) shows that Barnabas has weekly fasts (see *C. Ap*. 2:282; *Did*. 8:1) in mind rather than *Yom Kippur* ('the Fast' in Philo *Spec. Laws* 2:193, 200). It is unlikely Barnabas would direct so much animosity to a fast that takes place once a year and he deals with *Yom Kippur* in chapters 7 and 8.

scapegoat and heifer typologically (*Barn*. 7:6-8:7). The Sabbath cannot be hallowed in the present evil age (15:6-7) but he awaits an eschatological Sabbath (15:4-5). He is ruthless on circumcision: using traditional imagery of circumcision of the heart, he scorns circumcision as a seal of the covenant when it is the custom of Syrians, Arabs and Egyptians (9:1-6). Abraham's circumcision of 18 and 300 men was an elaborate parable foreshadowing Christ - the number 10 equals the letter "iota" and 8 an "ēta" for Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) and 300 equals "tau" for the Cross (9:7-9). His assertion that fleshly circumcision is a deception wrought by an evil angel (9:4) is simply unparalleled in the literature.[312] Finally, he reinterprets the literal promise of land (6:8-19) and his critique begins and ends with the temple cult (2:4-10; 16:1-10). The polemic against land and temple was probably meant to counteract Judaean messianic aspirations.[313] The question of following Judaean customs was a matter of life or death; the two ways material (18-20) is thus not just an appendix relegated at the end of the epistle but a central theme.[314]

Justin is less radical than Barnabas but typology and allegory remain crucial to his argument. He realistically places in Trypho's mouth the complaint that Christians do not segregate themselves from the Gentiles and spurn the commandments (*Dial*. 10:2-4). Later Justin forces Trypho to confess that the laws relating to the temple cult can no longer be performed, but Trypho specifies the importance of the Sabbath, circumcision,

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[311] Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 47. Traditions include the two goats being alike (*Barn*. 7:6; *Dial*. 40:4; *m. Yoma* 6:1) and the binding of scarlet wool on the scapegoat's head (*Barn*. 7:8; *m. Yoma* 4:2),

[312] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 130. Some labeled rivals as diabolical (John 8:44; Gal 3:1; Rev 2:9; 3:9; etc.) or equated Israel's god with an evil Demiurge, but no one so narrowly focused on one rite.

[313] Lowy, "The Confutation of Judaism," 26, 32.

[314] Hvalvik (*The Struggle for Scripture*, 64-65), finds that the imagery of Two Ways is a leitmotif running through whole material. He counts 15 occurences of the word ὁδός (way, road) (1:4; 4:10; 5:4[2x]; 10:10; 11: 7[2x]; 12:4; 18:1[2x]; 19:1[2x], 2; 20:1 [2x]), 8 of which are found in chapters 1-17

festivals and ceremonial washing (46:2), key marks of difference in the Diaspora.[315]

Justin explains that Christians share the same deity (10:1; contrast with Marcionites), but that the Law promulgated at Horeb was limited to the Judaeans and rendered obsolete by the everlasting covenant embodied in Christ (11:2). He employs the Golden Calf incident to submit that the ceremonial laws and cult were added as an accommodation due to Israel's idolatrous disposition and hardness of heart (18:2; 19:5; 20:4; 22:1; 27:2; 43:1; 44:2; 45:3, etc.).[316] Both the food laws (20:1) and the Sabbath (21:1) were only imposed as a constant reminder that they not follow their inclinations to go astray. He uses the same proof-text as Barnabas against fasting (15:1-6) and the familiar argument that Christ's blood renders the sacrificial cult unnecessary (13:1-14:1). Indeed, Christ is the reality that many of the rites typologically signified (40:1-5; 41:1-4; 42:1-4; 111:1-4). Justin may have found his exegetical maneuvers not entirely convincing, as he reluctantly permits an exception for *Torah*-observant Judaean and Gentile Christians (47:1).

Justin concentrates much of his arsenal against circumcision: we were created by nature uncircumcised (29:3); Adam, Abel, Noah and Melchizedek were all uncircumcised (19:3-4; 92:2); Abraham was counted as righteous before circumcision (92:3), females cannot be circumcised (23:5; 46:3); other peoples are circumcised (28:4), Gentiles have received divine approval without circumcision (29:1) and the necessity of circumcision of the heart (15:7; 16:1; 19:3a). All of these arguments could have been drawn from earlier sources, but Justin's innovation in light of the Hadrianic decree after Bar Cochba is to

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[315] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 115.

[316] Skarsaune (*The Proof from Prophecy*, 313-320) discerns an earlier Judaean-Christian critique of the sacrificial cult (e.g. the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*) that Justin extended to cover all aspects of the ceremonial law. However, it seems to me to be impossible to get back to an earlier Judaean-Christian voice behind the *Dialogue*, for Justin has completely integrated his sources into his supersessionistic theology.

argue that circumcision was a sign to mark the Judaeans off from the other nations in order that they might suffer the Romans' wrath and the desolation of their cities (16:2-5).[317] Justin's argument deconstructs itself in that circumcision is said to make the Judaeans visible in order to be punished (16:2-5; 19:2) while dismissing it as a common custom of other peoples (28:4).[318] This aversion towards circumcision cannot be due to fear about the procedure or of the political consequences for this act (18:3), for Justin accentuates that Christians would endure torture and death to avoid idolatry (34:8; 35:7-8).[319] The extreme denigration of circumcision in Barnabas and Justin can be explained sociologically as the breakaway sects' dramatically reversal of "formative symbols" of the dominant group as a means of differentiation and self-justification.[320]

We have been misled into imagining this as a contrast between legalism and grace or between ethnocentrism and universalism. The issue was not over whether Christians should have customs, rituals and holy days, but the concern was to set "Christianness" apart from traditional *Judaean* praxis. Christian rites including baptism (Acts 2:38; 10:48; *Barn*. 11:1-11; *Dial*. 14:1; *Did.* 7:1-4), the Eucharist (Luke 22:7-20; *Did*. 9:1-5; *Dial*. 41:1-3; 117:1) or Sunday as a substitute for the Sabbath were encouraged. Notwithstanding Paul's instructions on charitable donations on the "first day" (1 Cor 16:2), there is little evidence that the change to Sunday as the Lord's Day or as the eschatological eighth day took place before the late first century.[321] The replacement of

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[317] Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*, 293-295.

[318] Lieu, *Jews and Christians*, 119.

[319] Lieu, *Jews and Christians*, 116. She adds that the accusation of idolatry may have had a major role in the propaganda war, which explains why Barnabas and Justin appeal to the Golden Calf incident.

[320] Lieu, *Jews and Christians*, 119.

sacrifice with Christian worship and supplication is a common theme (Rom 12:1; Heb 10:1-25; 1 Pet 2:5; *Barn*. 2:4-10; *Ep. Diog*. 3:3-5). Food remained a critical matter and the issue of meat offered at Gentile shrines materialized early in the Christ cults (1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:23-31). Justin may have reckoned some scriptural injunctions as no longer binding in light of Christ, but he held fervently to the command to abstain from idol food (εἰδολοθητα) (*Dial*. 35:1-3; cf., Acts 15:20).[322] Not all Christians adhered to Barnabas' renunciation of fasting; the *Didache* is one early instructional manual that just urges Christians not to fast on the same days as the (Judaean) "hypocrites" (Monday, Thursday) just as they are not to pray in the same way as the "hypocrites" (*Did*. 8:1-3). Finally, while some Christians literally expected to inherit a restored Jerusalem (Luke 21:24b; *Dial*. 80), Barnabas allegorizes the traditional imagery of the Promised Land. The earth represents Jesus and the imagery of milk and honey symbolizes the emerging new creation (*Barn*. 9:9-19); thus he stakes out the whole world for their inheritance.

Not all Christians had even a cursory knowledge of contemporary Judaean praxis or relied on a careful scriptural exposition to validate a Christian ethnic identity and culture. Almost completely opposite to Barnabas or Justin's meticulous approach to the Scriptures, Ignatius acknowledges that the Prophets lived according to Jesus Christ (*Magn*. 8:2) and testified to the Gospel (*Phld*. 5:2), but rebukes Christians who refuse to believe a Gospel truth unless it can be verified in the "archives" (*Phld*. 8:2).[323] He counsels the Magnesians not to take much stock in Judaean fables (8:1-2), a standard

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[321] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 230-232. Rev 1:10; *Did*. 14:1; *Barn*. 15:8-9; Ignatius *Magn*. 9:1.

[322] Chilton ("Israelite Prophecy," 81, 83), argues that since Justin viewed all Scripture as prophetic, only some laws remained binding after Christ. I would argue that this is a second-order rationalization for Justin's social aims of distancing Christians both from Judaeans and Greco-Roman religious practices.

[323] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 37.

polemic against rival groups or philosophical schools.[324] Despite differentiating χριστιανισμός (Christian ways) from Ἰουδαϊσμός (Judaean ways) (*Magn.* 8:1; 10:3; *Phil.* 6:1), Ἰουδαῖοι only appears once in a semi-creedal formulation (*Smyrn.* 1. 2) and he does not interact with organized and named groups.[325] Ἰουδαϊσμός remains undefined and grows out of his dualism between believers and the world (*Magn.* 5:2), wearing "the undifferentiated mask of otherness" that eventually leads to a denial of the Judaeans' basic humanity.[326] Similarily, the *Epistle to Diognetus* scoffs at the fussy and superstitious Judaeans for sacralizing choice meats, certain days and the "mutilation of the flesh" (*Diogn.* 4:1-6). The addition of Greeks may appear to alleviate the Christian/Judaean dichotomy, but in fact further desacralizes any role for the Judaeans in the divine economy, for Judaean and Greeks are just different faces of the same error.[327]

To ward off the criticism that Christians were an aberration, cut off from an ethnic group with deep roots in antiquity, these writers presented themselves as reviving Israel's ancestral faith from which the Judaeans had deviated. In Acts, some positive responses to Paul in the synagogues are often eclipsed by the antagonism of an unruly Judaean mob (13:45; 14:2-6, 9; 17:5-7; 13; 18:5-6, 12-17), though Paul is only following Moses and the Prophets (26:22) and imperial governors repeatedly vindicate him of any crime against Roman law (18:14-16; 26:30-32). Of the 74 times Ἰουδαῖοι appears in Luke-Acts, it occurs 66 times after Stephen's martyrdom and the vast majority are

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[324] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 28.

[325] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 252; idem, *Image and Reality*, 26-27. He cites conventional behavior like the Sabbath (*Magn.* 9:1) or circumcision (*Phil.* 6:1), which could be easily gleaned from the Scriptures.

[326] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 290-291.

[327] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 293-294.

pejorative.[328] Justin Martyr not only indicts Judaeans for cursing Christians in the

synagogue, but accuses them of sending envoys warning about Christians (17:1, 47:4),

spreading malicious rumours (17:1-3; 108:2-3), persecuting Christians to death (96:2;

133:6) and being restrained by the Romans from further violence (16:4).[329] The

Martyrdom of Polycarp crafts the historically unlikely scenario that Judaeans would join

in calling for Polycarp's death for not participating in the public cults (*Mart. Poly.*

12:2).[330] Polycarp is condemned by a crowd of lawless Gentiles (ἀνόμων ἐθνῶν) (9:2;

16:1), though Judaeans assist by gathering wood for the fire (13:1) and obstructing efforts

to give Polycarp an honourable burial (17:2; 18:1). Yet the manner of his death and the

miraculous quenching of the fire (14:1-16:1) confirms the difference between the "people

of the righteous" (τοῦ γένους τῶν δικαίων) (14:1; 17:1) or the elect (16:1) and the rest.

The confession "I am a Christian" bound the martyrs together with all Christians as a

tightly-knit, righteous people against Gentiles and Judaeans who oppose them.[331]

Constructing the Other

These texts are all evidence of Christian experimentation in social formation as they

sought to distinguish themselves from Judaeans on the key hallmarks of ethnic identity:

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[328] Sanders, *The Jews*, 71-72; Wilson (*Related Strangers*, 58, 323 n.86) also notes that the λαὸς (people) of Israel/Judaeans (12:11; 21:30, 36; 26:17; 28:26-27) are consistently at enmity with the church after Acts 6:8. Dunn (*The Partings of the Ways*, 197) counters that some references to Judaeans in the latter half of Acts are neutral (13:5; 14:1; 17:1, 10; 26:3) or positive (13:43; 14:1; 21:20; 28:24a), but generally individual Judaeans may be praised but collectively they are perceived as opponents.

[329] Wilson (*Related Strangers*, 172-173, 178) allows that some of Justin's complaints reflect a few earlier martyrdoms (e.g. Stephen, the two Jameses) and persecution during the Bar Cochba revolt.

[330] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 60; Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways," 59.

[331] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 82.

history, territory, customs and cult. The construction of a self is generally accompanied

by the recognition of an Other, though Lieu asks the rhetorical question of whether it is

the initial perception of that which is 'not-us' which then permits the recognition of an

'us' or if the articulation of who 'we' are precedes the description of otherness.[332] The

survey of the *Adversus Ioudaios* literature above, however, revealed that Christian writers

were not as preoccupied with "paganism"[333] as they were with expressing their

distinction from the Judaeans. The "Judaean" that emerges from the Christian

polemicist's pen is a rhetorical construct and the anti-type of the Christian. Fredrickson

suggests that, based on one particular Christian reading of the LXX, "[t]hese Gentile

contestants shaped the potent and long-lived hermeneutical idea of the 'Jew' – fleshly,

hard-hearted, philosophically dim, and violently anti-Christian."[334] The reason for the

extent of the polemic and vituperation against the Judaeans is because the remote Other is

perceived as less threatening to a distinctive ethnic and cultural identity than the

proximate Other who is not so different from "us" or even claims to be "us."[335]

The Other can be represented metonymically in terms of the presence or absence

of one or more identifiable cultural traits, topographically in terms of centre/periphery, or

linguistically/intellectually in terms of a difference in levels of intelligibility.[336] The

metonymical model is most relevant here as it discriminates one group from another by

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[332] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 269.

[333] Smith ("Differential Equations," 236-237), notes that this term is also the product of Christian discourse about the "Other" represented in terms of centre (Christian civilization/urban life) versus periphery. "Pagan" comes from the same root as peasant and stereotypes non-Christians as simple country dwellers or rustic villagers, while "heathen" denotes a "hearth dweller" on wild and uncultivated land.

[334] Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways," 37.

[335] Smith, "Differential Equations," 245.

[336] Smith, "Differential Equations," 231.

abstracting some cultural feature as a crucial site of difference – this may be a cultural

trait, a physical characteristic or even a denial of the Other's basic humanity.[337] Out of

the wide range of Judaean social practices, Christian polemicists lifted up identity

markers such as circumcision, Sabbath, festivals or food laws. Though these symbols

have ample warrant in the Hebrew Bible, Christians were able to retain this scriptural

heritage through a radical typological and allegorical interpretation of its content and by

replacing Judaean rites with Christian ones. The dualism of Barnabas, depicting angels

who rule over the way of light against Satan's angels who rule over the way of darkness

(*Barn*. 9:4; 18:1), comes close to denying the Other's humanity with the characterization

of fleshly circumcision as diabolical (9:4). Yet an ambivalent reciprocal relationship

exists producing a double metonym, for othering is meant to prove dissimilarity between

Christians and Judaeans, but the stringent warnings against adopting Judaean praxis is

motivated by the fear that "we" were once and could yet become the Other.[338]

In reality, the effort to construct a pure Christian ethnic identity and set up a

binary between Christians and Judaeans served to disguise the internal diversity among

the Christian communities. Lieu reminds us that Christian texts are prescriptive, not

descriptive, and were written to persuade and inculcate certain values in their

readership.[339] Ignatius (*Magn*. 8:1; 9:1; 10:3; *Phld*. 6:1), Barnabas (*Barn*. 3:6), Justin

Martyr (*Dial*. 48) and Luke (Acts 15:1-5) were well aware of Judaizing habits in their

own communities of which they disapproved. Reflecting on nationalism, Homi Bhabha's

observations that the nation is split within itself due to its heterogenous population, its

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[337] Smith, "Differential Equations," 232.

[338] Smith, "Differential Equations," 232-233.

[339] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 156, 168.

alternative histories of minority groups, its antagonistic authorities and its locations of

cultural difference could apply to the Christian *ethnos*.[340] What constitutes

"Judaeanness" or "Christianness" had to be negotiated at "[t]he interstices – the overlap

and displacement of domains of difference."[341] Bhabha encapsulates the strategy of

centrist Christian elites to disavow internal differences and project them onto the outside:

> Produced through the strategy of disavowal, the *reference* of
> discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of
> subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards,
> the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not
> repressed but repeated as something *different* – a mutation, a hybrid.[342]

Centrist Christians utilized ethnic reasoning to stabilize their collective identity by

"naturalizing" the border between Judaean and Christian and regulating differences

within the Christian community. Boyarin explains that the instability of dominating

paradigms "[n]ecessitate their constant reproduction and the constant assertion of their

naturalness and of hybridity as unnatural and monstrous."[343] The language of heresy,

deviation and syncretism was used to denote individuals and groups who did not observe

their imposed boundaries. *Torah*-observant Jesus associations were judged to be an

inappropriate mixing of cultures. Marcionite Christians were too novel in denying the

Christians' claim on the Judaeans' inheritance. In this way, as Boyarin notes, Christian

"heresy" was always in reference to Judaism.[344] A single Christian nation, in solidarity

around certain beliefs and customs, was only in the Christian heresiologist's imagination.

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[340] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 148.

[341] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2.

[342] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 111.

[343] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 15.

[344] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 12.

There were other factors behind the Christian polemics in the *Adversus Ioudaios* collection. Christians may have been puzzled at why, even after the enduring rejection of Jesus as Messiah, Diaspora synagogues continued to thrive. Marcel Simon's classic thesis of the "religious vitality of Judaism" has not been overturned.[345] The ugly charge of Deicide also incited Christian animosity towards Judaeans. The Passion narratives already began the process of shifting some of the blame from the Roman governor towards the hostile crowd in Jerusalem, but the charge is only fully developed and refined by Melito of Sardis in his Passover homily. Dropping the Romans completely out of the picture, Melito protests with rhetorical flourish that "the King of Israel" was slain by Israelites (96). However, if my thesis that centrist Christians were trying to establish Christians as a separate ἔθνος (nation) or γένος (people) from the Judaeans, then this literature must be seen first and foremost as an exercise in early Christian self-definition. These texts were vehicles to express a new Christian ethnic and cultural identity which was in continuity with the legacy of Israel.

Epilogue: Towards an Ecumenical Future

Along with household codes, philosophical schools or voluntary associations, ethnic reasoning was another mode of discourse available to the early Christians to articulate their own sense of peoplehood. In sharp contrast to the modern western emphasis on individualism and the separation of church and state, ancient Mediterranean societies

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[345] Simon, *Verus Israel*, 232. His book is a compelling example of postwar scholarship that challenged latent Christian triumphalist assumptions that after the two failed revolts Judaism turned inward and was no threat to "Gentile Christianity." But his view that Judaeans engaged in a major proselytization campaign has been subject to critical scrutiny; see Fredrickson, "What Parting of the Ways," 48-56.

were collectivistic and culture, economics, politics and religion were bound up together. The early Christians understood their own social identity using the categories that were available to them in the ancient world. I want to echo Buell's refrain that resistance to the idea that Christians transcended ancient ethnic categories does not imply that Christianity is fundamentally racist or ethnocentric, since Christian texts maintain that the Christian offer of membership is theoretically available to all.[346]

The emergence of the "us" invites difference and an external entity with which to compare and contrast. Since Judaeans and Christians were products of the same biblical heritage, much energy was expended in describing their difference from their proximate other. The disparagement of key Judaean symbols and the re-writing of Judaean history correlated with the need for Christians to communicate their *raison d' être*, their reason for existing as a separate people. They had to answer the question of why this new γένος (people) only recently emerged on the historical stage and not formerly (*Diogn*. 1:1). It is thus important to take a closer look at some of the harshest polemic in the *Adversus Ioudaios* collection because it originally supported the Christian rhetorical purpose of constructing a "pure" Christian ethnic identity that was fully independent from its Judaean roots. However, in light of the fact that this literature has fed into the awful legacy of Christian anti-Semitism, it is important for Christian scholars to repudiate the false characterizations and stereotypes of Judaeans and Judaism that exist in these pages.

In the modern ecumenical climate, both Jewish and Christian scholars have engaged in the academic study of the history of Judaism and Christianity in a spirit of mutual respect and dialogue. Since the Other is no more primordial or given than the self, "[a]cknowledging this acts as a reminder that there can be other relationships with

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[346] Buell, *Why This New Race*,

difference and alterity than the oppositional, although it is the latter that has tended to dominate studies of identity and otherness in antiquity as well as in the present."[347] Since Judaism and Christianity continue to be socially constructed, we do not have to be bound by the polemical exchanges of the past and Christians do not have to disparage Judaism to reinforce their own social identity. Christians can celebrate their own identity and rich heritage while respecting the rights of different peoples and cultures to exist.

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[347] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 269.

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