

FOURTEEN

Christian Claims on the Inheritance of Israel

Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho the Jew

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UNDERLYING SOME RECONSTRUCTIONS of Christian origins is a dichotomy of Christian universalism and Jewish particularity. For instance, three of the four pillars of Second Temple Judaism(s) listed by James Dunn are election, covenant, and land.¹ Despite dating the “parting of the ways” of Christians from Jews to between 70 and 135 CE,² he considers Jesus and Paul to be precursors to the Christian negation of these pillars. According to Dunn, Jesus’s practice of open table-fellowship challenged the internally drawn boundaries and his responses to the Syrophoenician woman and the centurion suggest that he “[r]egarded faith expressed by whomsoever as more important than the ethnically understood and ritually expressed boundaries surrounding and protecting the elect people.”³ Paul also opposed a covenantal nomism which set Israel apart in its “ethnic distinctiveness.”⁴ To be fair, Dunn notices descriptions of Christians as the “true Israel” (e.g., Justin, *Dial.* 11.5) or a “third kind” of humanity (e.g., Clement, *Strom.* 6.5) but judges such language to reflect a fall from an original universalistic ideal:

Here was a great irony: Christianity began by rejecting the *ethnocentricity*

¹ 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, 2006), 26–47.

² Dunn, *Partings*, 312–18. His new preface stresses that the plural in “partings” signals a process rather than a single clear-cut split between two monolithic traditions, “Judaism” and “Christianity,” but he concedes that the process was longer and more complicated than he had supposed (xix–xxiv).

³ Dunn, *Partings*, 152, cf. 141–53. See Mark 7.24–30 (Matt 15.21–28); Matt 8.5–13/Luke 7.1–10.

⁴ Dunn, *Partings*, 178, 181, cf. 194. Dunn indicates that he does not wish to revive the dichotomy between universalism and ethnocentrism (xxvii, n. 65), but this is contradicted by his reading of certain texts. He reads Rom 2.28–29 as a critique of a Jewish identity constructed in “too formal, outward, physical and ethnic terms” (181, 194) or Rom 9.6–13 as shifting the definition of “Israel” from an ethnic designation to one that revolves around the divine calling, a calling extended to the Gentiles (xxvii).

of *Judaism* and of *Jewish* Christianity; but in coming to think of itself as a separate “race,” it opened the door to a different kind of racialism, where Christians defined themselves by excluding the Jews, making the very mistake against which Paul in particular protested so vehemently.⁵

Appeals to Christian egalitarianism and inclusivism have served the cause of liberation theology, but it is frequently at the expense of setting up “Judaism” as a negative foil.⁶ Daniel Boyarin fairly protests that racism is not just on the side of the particular but can also be on the side of an imperialistic universalism that refuses the right of others to retain their difference.⁷ There is an additional problem of historical anachronism, as “religion” was bound up with ethnic identity in antiquity, so criticism of the ethnic “boundary markers” would have been perceived as an attack on Jewish identity.⁸ The strongest objection to the contrast of Christian universalism against Jewish ethnocentrism is the number of recent studies that underscore the importance of “ethnic reasoning” in early Christian identity formation.⁹

The self-representation of Christians as a distinct people (ἔθνος, γένος, λαός) is often dismissed as fictive as if other ethnic identities had a fixed and primordial essence.¹⁰ Although Stanley Stowers has a largely positive assessment of Denise Buell’s foundational work in this area, he objects that, “[a] writer’s claim that a recently formed group is an ancient ethnicity is not the 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.”¹¹ However, I want to build on Buell’s case that Justin Martyr understood the Christian community as an ancient *ethnos* akin to the nation of Israel, regardless of how incredible the claim may have sounded to onlookers, and demonstrate that the hallmarks usually associated with ethnic identity such as a shared name, ancestry, kin-

⁵ Dunn, *Partings*, 314–15 (emphasis added).

⁶ See Denise K. Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 11–12; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 44, 46, 128.

⁷ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 233–35.

⁸ Paula Fredriksen, “Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins whose Time Has Come to Go,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 35, no. 2 (2006), 238; “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 Press, 2007), 39–40.

⁹ This terminology was coined by Buell, *New Race*, 2. See also Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 239–68; Hodge, *If Sons*; Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Michael Kok, “The True Covenant People: Ethnic Reasoning in the Epistle of Barnabas,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 40, no. 1 (2011): 81–97; David G. Horrell, “‘Race,’ ‘Nation,’ ‘People’: Ethnic Identity-Construction in 1 Peter 2.9,” *NTS* 58 (2012): 123–43.

¹⁰ Thus, Hodge (*If Sons*, 17) resists the language of “fictive” kinship because it may give the impression that there is a pure, natural kinship that is not a social product and that the Christian claims are less real.

¹¹ Stanley Stowers, “Review of *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, by Denise K. Buell,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75 (2007): 730.

ship, territory, customs, and cult are present in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*. To legitimize his Christ association as an ethnic community after severing its ties with the Jewish people, Justin completely appropriates the heritage and land of Israel.

Ancient Ethnic Reasoning with Special Reference to the Ἰουδαῖοι

There has been a shift in the academic understanding of ethnicity from a natural and biologically self-perpetuating to a socially constructed category.¹² Fredrik Barth influentially argued that the chief feature of ethnic identity is that it is ascribed and a social boundary is set up between insiders and outsiders, though that boundary encloses ever-changing cultural content and remains permeable for individuals to cross.¹³ Not only is primordialism unable to account for this mutability within ethnic identities, but it also neglects the emergence of new ethnic groups under colonial conditions which claim primordial status and reinterpret older cultural resources.¹⁴ This is not to adopt an instrumentalist view that ethnic symbols are consciously exploited to attain certain political ends, a position which condescendingly disregards the self-understanding of members of minority collectivities or the durability of such groups over time.¹⁵ Human constructions wield real power over social life and it is impossible to re-negotiate identity or stir up collective sentiments if such negotiations fail to convince the actors involved.¹⁶

While recognizing that ethnicity is socially constructed, Jonathan Hall insists that its defining criteria are a myth of collective descent and kinship, an association with a specific territory, and a shared history. Biological features, language, religion, or culture are relegated to “secondary *indicia*” or “surface pointers.”¹⁷ For instance, Jews look back to their ancestor Abraham who was promised a homeland and a lineage.¹⁸ Caroline Hodge explains the logic of patrilineal descent: sons inherit the property of the fathers and incorporate wives into the family line.¹⁹ The rite of circumcision (Gen 17.9–14) on the male generative organ was a sign of belonging to Abraham’s lineage

¹² I take up the debate about whether Ἰουδαῖοι should be translated as “Jew” or “Judaean” below.

¹³ Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), 13–16. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith note that Barth is open to critique for assuming the fixity of bounded ethnic identities: “Introduction,” in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9.

¹⁴ Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, “The Poverty of Primordialism,” in Hutchinson and Smith, ed., *Ethnicity*, 46.

¹⁵ Jonathan Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 18–19; Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 9. Not even Eller and Coughlan deny that there are some long-lasting social realities (“Primordialism,” 47).

¹⁶ Hodge, *If Sons*, 22, 162 n. 96; Sechrest, *Former Jew*, 47–48.

¹⁷ Jonathan Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9; *Ethnic Identity*, 25.

¹⁸ See Gen 12.1–3; 13.14–17; 15.4–5, 7, 18–19; 17.2–8, 19–21; 22.16–18.

¹⁹ Hodge, *If Sons*, 22.

and a fertility rite to perpetuate his line of descendants (cf. Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.7).²⁰ When the province of Yehud was re-established under Persian rule, the religious elites tried to strengthen the communal boundaries by enforcing endogamous marriage (Ezra 10.9–44, Neh 10.23–31).²¹ Adrian Hastings observes that intermarrying societies often define themselves by common ancestors and a shared myth of origins or land, genealogical claims that he discourages scholars from cavalierly dismissing.²² But descent can be reconfigured through adoption or the re-writing of genealogies.²³ One example is when it happened to be discovered that the Jews shared a kinship with the Spartans through mutual descent from Abraham (1 Macc 12.1–23). Another is Paul’s central concern with how members of the nations might be adopted into Abraham’s family (Gal 3.6–9, 29; Rom 4.11–19).²⁴

Buell disagrees that “religion” or “culture” are mere markers rather than among the constitutive elements of ethnicity and counters that descent and kinship can be discursively or ritually redrawn.²⁵ She proposes that ethnic reasoning incorporates aspects of both fixity and fluidity in that ethnicity is believed to be inherited yet is also acquired by adopting cultural practices.²⁶ Hastings broadly defines ethnicity as the common culture by which a group of people share the basics of life such as clothing, styles of houses, occupational roles, laws, rituals, customs, history, myths, religious beliefs, or language.²⁷ However, to distinguish a group as ethnic instead of some other form of social arrangement, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith enumerate six features that generally characterize an ethnic group: a shared proper name, myth of ancestry, historical memory, elements of a common culture, link to a homeland, and social solidarity.²⁸ Their list is not a far cry from Josephus’s defence, against detractors, of the ancient pedigree (*C. Ap.* 1.71), national territory (1.1; 1.224; 1.132; 2.147; 2.289), common language (1.167; 1.319; 2.27), sacred texts (1.128; 1.154; 2.45), temple system (1.315),

²⁰ Hodge, *If Sons*, 28, 60–61; cf. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, 231.

²¹ Shaye Cohen argues that the exclusion of the foreign wives may be because Ezra had no jurisdiction over foreign men marrying Judaeans women and that the matrilineal principle (*m. Qidd.* 3.12; *m. Yev.* 7.5) was a rabbinic innovation to determine the ethnicity of a child of a mixed marriage: *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 263–82.

²² Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood*, 169.

²³ Hall, *Greek Identity*, 43; *Hellenicity*, 25–29; Hodge, *If Sons*, 28–41.

²⁴ Hodge renders ἐκ πίστεως in Gal 3.6–9 and Rom 4.16 as “descended out of the faithfulness” of Abraham, signifying that the reward for Abraham’s faithfulness is not only to be the father of the circumcised but also of many nations who are blessed “in” (ἐν) him (Gen 12.3; 15.5; 17.5; 18.18): *If Sons*, 84–89, 97–100. Conversely, Sechrest reads Rom 4.9–12, 16 as differentiating Jewish descendants out of the law (ἐκ τοῦ νόμου) (4.16) from Christ-believing Jews (the circumcised who follow in the faith of Abraham in 4.12) and Gentiles who form a new ethnic community, anticipating the construction of Christians as a third γένος: *Former Jew*, 121–26.

²⁵ Buell, *New Race*, 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6–10.

²⁷ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 167. I adopted this definition in Kok, “True Covenant People,” 84.

²⁸ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 7.

and Mosaic constitution (2.145; 2.185–89) of his people.²⁹ It is also similar to Herodotus's articulation of Greek unity as based on blood (δῆμιον), language (δμόγλωσσον), shrines (θεῶν ἱδρυματα), and customs (ἡθέα τε δμότροπα) (*Hist.* 8.144.2).

As can be seen from both writers, “religion” was an integral component of ancient ethnic identity. The communal memory of the exodus and the Torah as the group's covenant charter was central to many ancient Jews. For groups holding a myth of election, Smith lists four patterns of ethnic survival: the *imperial dynastic* model where election is attached to the ruling dynasty; the *communal-demotic* model where election is applied directly to the people living in their sacred land; the *emigrant-colonist* model where the people settle in new homelands with little regard for the indigenous inhabitants; and the *diaspora-restoration* model where a return to the land is a precondition of collective redemption.³⁰ Smith traces a belief in the divine election of the monarchy to ancient Sumer and Egypt, but contends that the Hebrew Bible enshrines the earliest articulated theology of communal election.³¹ The biblical conquest narratives fit the emigrant-colonist model while the banishment from the land after the Bar Kochba revolt in 132–35 CE fits the diaspora-restoration model. The Maccabean revolt hardened the construction of religious difference from outsiders in its defence for Judaizing ways (Ἰουδαϊσμός) in opposition to Hellenizing (Ἑλληνισμός).³² Probably categorized as an ἔθνος by the Seleucids, 2 Maccabees appropriated the term to contest Seleucid control.³³ Other texts draw sharp social boundaries around religious lines, characterizing the other ἔθνη (nations) as idolatrous and immoral (Wisdom 13–14; Rom 1.18–32, Gal 2.11–15), which reflects what Hall describes as an oppositional strategy for identity formation.³⁴

Some may still object to imposing modern conceptions of ethnicity onto the Ἰουδαῖοι or any other ancient people group. The term ἔθνος might simply denote a group sharing a common identification such as a flock of birds (Homer, *Il.* 2.459), swarm of bees (2.87) or group of warriors (2.91).³⁵ There is no equivalent Greek term for gender, class, or culture, but scholars do not shy away from using these categories as heuristic

²⁹ 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), 101–11.

³⁰ Anthony D. Smith, “Chosen Peoples,” in Hutchinson and Smith, eds, *Ethnicity*, 194–96.

³¹ Smith, “Chosen Peoples,” 196.

³² Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 460–80. See 2 Macc 2.21; 8.1; 14.38; 4 Macc 4.25; cf. Gal 1.13–14; Ign. *Phld* 6.1; *Magn.* 8.1. Mason argues that nouns ending in *-ismos* represent in nominal form the ongoing action of the cognate verb in *-izō*. Thus, he is adamant that Ἰουδαϊσμός should be translated as “Judaizing” rather than as a fixed and ossified religious system (Judaism), an innovation he attributes to Christian usage from Tertullian onwards.

³³ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 245. See 2 Macc 1.1; 2.16; 10.8.

³⁴ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 179. Hall sees the Persian invasion (480–479 BCE) as crucial to the shift in Greek identity from an aggregative identity based on kinship networks to an oppositional contrast with the “barbarians.”

³⁵ Hall, *Greek Identity*, 35; Horrell, “Ethnic Identity Construction,” 125.

devices.³⁶ Love Sechrest has exhaustively surveyed the literary contexts where ἔθνος and γένος appear in Greek-speaking Jewish, Christian, or Greco-Roman sources between 100 BCE and 100 CE, with an exception made for the Septuagint, under the following categories: 1) people-groups or classes, 2) group description, 3) war or conflict, 4) land and territory, 5) government, 6) customs or laws, 7) religion, 8) language, 9) group name, 10) kinship, 11) humanity (i.e. the human γένος) and 12) group founder.³⁷ What she uncovers is that ἔθνος is most often found in reference to territory or war while γένος is most often related to kinship followed by people-group and territory in Greco-Roman texts.³⁸ On the other hand, “religion” is the most prominent criterion of an ἔθνος and, excluding the emphasis on kinship and territory in Josephus, the second most prominent criterion of a γένος after defining a people-group in Jewish texts. A potential weakness in her results may be in how she defines the slippery term “religion” as the cultural expression of human piety with reference to a deity or cultic activity and personnel, thus double counting some Jewish references to kinship, land, customs, and so on under the rubric “religion” as well,³⁹ but her main point on the distinctiveness of Israel’s sense of divine election and covenant relationship with a deity seems secure.

With this background in mind, what are the implications for the translation of Ἰουδαῖος? The names of ethnic groups were often associated with their place of origin.⁴⁰ Out of roughly 220 references to Ἰουδαῖος in the LXX, John Elliott estimates that 61 translate Hebrew terms with the יְהוּדָה-root and 154 scattered in the apocryphal writings refer mainly to the regional sense of residents of Ἰουδαία (Judaea).⁴¹ Aristotle’s pupil Clearchus derives Ἰουδαῖος from Ἰουδαία according to Josephus (*C. Ap.* 1.179), though Josephus maintains that the purity of the priestly stock is preserved wherever the exiles are dispersed (1.32–33).⁴² To render Ἰουδαῖος consistently as “Judaean” underscores that they were a recognisable ethnic entity like any other within ancient ethnic discourse. Alternatively, Shaye Cohen contends that the influence of the Greek idea of πολιτεία (citizenship), resulting in the incorporation of the Idumeans into the Hasmonean state through circumcision, and the acceptance of Gentile proselytism (Jud 14.10; Philo, *Virt.* 20.102–3) indicates that the term Ἰουδαῖος broadened from an ethnic-geographic

³⁶ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 17; Sechrest, *Former Jew*, 54.

³⁷ Sechrest, *Former Jew*, 61–105. She examines the LXX, the Jewish Apocrypha, Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius Halicarnassus, Philo, Josephus, the NT, Strabo, and Plutarch. Horrell (“Ethnic Identity Construction,” 126–27) adds that λαός is found 2,000 times in the LXX generally for the “people” of Israel whereas the plural of ἔθνος tends to be reserved for the other nations, but he notes some exceptions where ἔθνος is applied to Israel.

³⁸ Sechrest, *Former Jew*, 94–96. Horrell (“Ethnic Identity Construction,” 126) comes to the similar conclusion that γένος may be used either synonymously with ἔθνος or have a more specialized focus on kinship.

³⁹ Sechrest, *Former Jew*, 75–76, 102.

⁴⁰ John H. Elliott, “Jesus the Israelite was neither a ‘Jew’ nor a ‘Christian’: On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature” *JSHJ* 5 (2007), 132. Elliott provides some examples such as Ἕλλην (Greek) with Ἑλλάς (Greece), Ρωμαῖος (Roman) with Ρώμη (Rome) or Φιλιππησίος (Philippian) with Φίλιπποι (Philippi).

⁴¹ Elliott, “Jesus the Israelite,” 132.

⁴² Barclay, “Constructing Judean Identity,” 104–5; Elliott, “Jesus the Israelite,” 130.

designator (Judaean) to a religious one (Jew).⁴³ Just as “Hellenicity” became equated with civilization and was attainable through a Hellenic education (παιδεία),⁴⁴ so too “Jewishness” became a “portable culture.”⁴⁵ Daniel Schwarz cites epigraphic evidence to show that Ἰουδαϊσμός was applied to non-residents of Judaea and even proselytes. He calls attention to royal figures willing to Judaize (2 Macc 9.17; Jos., *Ant.* 20.17–96) without abdicating their position as foreign rulers and “pagan” residents of Judaea are identified as Ἕλληνες.⁴⁶

While Cohen and Schwarz demonstrate a historical shift in how “Jewishness” was defined and how the boundaries became more porous in the Hellenistic period, their arguments seem to rely on a bifurcation of religion and ethnicity in antiquity. Individuals in the ancient Mediterranean were free to assume whatever cultural practices they wished, though Cohen’s study of a set of Greek verbs in the *-izein* family used to denote persons who offered political support or adopted foreign languages or customs shows that it generally carried negative connotations.⁴⁷ Texts that speak about initiates who Judaized all the way by leaving their blood relations, country, customs and icons behind (Philo, *Virt.* 20.102–3) or how a group of Chaldaens were transformed into Israelites when they abandoned their native divinities (Jud 14.10) are better read as the crossing of the boundary from one *ethnos* to another rather than the anachronistic “religious conversion.”⁴⁸ Given the fear that living among barbarians could lead to the adoption of their language, customs and gods (*Rom. Ant.* 1.89.4),⁴⁹ Judaizing represented the threat of the Other within the empire itself, leading to a total abandonment of native traditions for a foreign superstition (cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.3–5).⁵⁰ Thus, I had supported the translation “Judaean” to get across that “religion” was embedded in ethnicity in

⁴³ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 109–39. See also Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 161–62. Cohen argues that non-Israelites could bless Israel’s deity or actively participate in Israelite society, but they did not become Israelites. They were still resident aliens, such as Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 11) or Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 1.22; 4.10).

⁴⁴ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 172–226. For example, he highlights that during the Roman period Dionysius omitted shared blood altogether when he defines Greeks in relation to language, customs, laws, and cult (*Rom. Ant.* 1.89.4). Yet if Hall adopted Buell’s model of fixity and fluidity instead of narrowly defining ethnicity as necessitating shared descent (i.e., blood), a shift from an ethnic to a cultural identity is not so transparent.

⁴⁵ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 134.

⁴⁶ Daniel R. Schwartz, “‘Judean’ or ‘Jew’? How Should We Translate *ioudaios* in Josephus?” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripentrog (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 12, 14–16.

⁴⁷ Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 175–79. For some of his examples: to phoenicize is to adopt unnatural vice, to cilicize is to be cruel and a cheat, to egyptize is to be sly and crafty, to cretize is to lie, and so forth.

⁴⁸ Mason, “Problems of Categorization,” 491; Buell, *New Race*, 31. Fredriksen (“Mandatory Retirement,” 232–37) urges that the terminology of “conversion” be dropped from the study of religious life in the ancient Mediterranean.

⁴⁹ Buell, *New Race*, 466.

⁵⁰ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 276; Fredrickson, “What Parting,” 41–42.

antiquity.⁵¹

However, like Caroline Hodge, I have had a change in heart on the necessity of a change in nomenclature.⁵² A major drawback is that it overestimates the importance of land at the expense of other criteria, especially the dominant role of religious praxis. Schwarz points out that the Diaspora had a long history without a national homeland and that Greco-Roman authors did not always call the land “Judaea” but also “Idumea” or “Palestine,” nor did they always associate the Jews with the land but with cultural practices and motifs like their Sabbath (Frontinus), sacrificial system (Damocritus), superstition (Quintilian), the legislator Moses (Nicarchus), or diet (Epictetus).⁵³ Turning land into the quintessential criterion of ancient Jewish identity may carry negative ramifications for the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian situation. To address this concern, Mason writes, “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 a term full of complex possibilities.” A further liability to the translation “Judaean” is that it may downplay significant continuities between first-century Ἰουδαῖοι and modern Jews. It assumes the tradition changed so drastically after rabbinic literature to warrant a change in terminology, but Amy-Jill Levine highlights significant examples of continuity such as circumcision, wearing *tzitzit*, keeping kosher, honouring the Sabbath, attending synagogue gatherings, reading the Torah and Prophets or celebrating Passover. Notwithstanding the intentions of careful advocates of “Judaean” to introduce linguistic precision, there is the risk that modern hate groups may exploit the denial that “Jews” existed in antiquity.

Space does not permit a full evaluation of Elliott’s proposal that scholars adopt “Israelite” as the preferred emic terminology instead of the outsider term Ἰουδαῖος. A preference for “Israel” or “Hebrew” may be due to its greater scriptural warrant and archaizing resonances with their epic narratives, but I am not persuaded that the use of Ἰουδαῖος in the LXX, Josephus, Philo, the New Testament, and inscriptional or epigraphic evidence does not signal that it was also an insider term.⁵⁴ For example, Elliott reads the Samaritan woman’s address to Jesus as a Ἰουδαῖος as mistaken because he journeyed from Judaea (John 4.9). But Jesus positively identifies with the term when he stresses that “we” worship what we know for salvation is from the Ἰουδαίων (4.22b). Levine points out that the woman does not find Jesus on the move but sitting at Jacob’s well (4.6–7).⁵⁵ Elliott dismisses Paul’s reference to himself and *Cephas* as Ἰουδαῖοι (Gal 2.14) as due to the fact that he was writing for a mixed audience and downplays the identification of Paul as a Ἰουδαῖος before a Jerusalem crowd in Acts 22.3 as a singular

⁵¹ Kok, “The True Covenant People,” 95 n. 1.

⁵² See Hodge, *If Sons*, 11.

⁵³ Schwartz, “‘Judean’ or ‘Jew,’” 19–20. Mason (“Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 496) does counter that the name Judaea was preserved even after 135 CE for centuries.

⁵⁴ Contra Elliott, “Jesus the Israelite,” 126–38, 143–44.

⁵⁵ Levine, *Misunderstood Jew*, 163.

example. James Crossley also warns that some scholars, who are by no means anti-semitic, have non-reflexively borrowed the statistics and argument that Ἰουδαῖος was an outsider term from the notorious antisemite Karl Georg Kuhn.⁵⁶ To conclude, I affirm the valid points about not retrojecting the privatization of “religion” as a disembedded category back to the ancients, but this point does not require changing the standard nomenclature.

Justin Martyr’s Ethnic Claims and the Heritage of Israel

The self-understanding of the people of Israel, which Smith aptly describes as that of a “sacred communion of the people” and “holy congregation,”⁵⁷ served as a model for Justin’s ethnic reasoning. Justin probably composed his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* after the *Apology* (*Dial.* 120.6) and before his martyrdom under the prefect Junius Rusticus (ca. 162–68 CE), though it covers an earlier encounter with a Hebrew refugee named Trypho shortly after the Bar Cochba revolt (1.3) which Eusebius credibly places in Ephesus (*Church History* 4.18.6).⁵⁸ It resembles classic Socratic-style debates, albeit Justin rigidly controls the time allotted to each speaker and the outcome of the dispute.⁵⁹ It is unclear whether he intended the work for outsiders or for internal consumption or had multiple audiences in mind, though it may be unlikely that many besides Christians would be interested in this lengthy work and his objective seems primarily to supply an apologetic for a distinctly Christian identity and worldview against Jewish objections.⁶⁰

Justin must have had some contact with Jews or with Jewish sources. He is able to describe a phylactery (46.5), recounts post-biblical details about Yom Kippur (40.4; *m. Yoma* 6.1), and evinces a similar eschatological outlook to Jewish apocalyptic texts involving the defeat of Amalek (49.8; 131.5) and the fourth beast (i.e., Rome) (31.5; 32.3) and a chiliastic hope (80–81; 85.7; 138.3; 139.4–5). He took the legendary origins of the Septuagint seriously and was aware that it was read in synagogue services (72.3), even though he accuses Jews of tampering with the divinely inspired text (71.1–3; 72.1–4;

⁵⁶ Crossley, *Neoliberalism*, 186–87 n. 37.

⁵⁷ Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 32.

⁵⁸ Judith M. Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 103; William Horbury, *Jews and Christians: In Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 131; Michele Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2004), 91–92. Lieu (*Image and Reality*, 103) adds that Eusebius’s report of Trypho as a leading Hebrew of his day is contradicted by Trypho’s ignorance of Hebrew and dependence on his teachers. The identification of Trypho with Rabbi Tarphon is spurious.

⁵⁹ Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 259.

⁶⁰ See Nina E. Livesey, “Theological Identity Making: Justin’s Use of Circumcision to Create Jews and Christians,” *J ECS* 18, no. 1 (2010): 51–79; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 261–65; Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 105–8.

73.1–2; 84.1–4).⁶¹ For some scholars, Trypho actually comes across better when his friendly demeanour is compared to Justin’s lengthy tirades and may have been a real individual or representative of realistic objections against Christian antinomianism or Christology.⁶² Conversely, Paula Fredriksen deems the hermeneutical idea of the “Jew” as fleshly, half-hearted, philosophically dim, and violently anti-Christian to be a product of Christian intellectuals striving to make sense of the premier literary medium of revelation, the Septuagint, and positioning the Jews as the anti-type for the “correct” type of Christian.⁶³ Justin had the double task of explaining why a majority of Jews were unimpressed by Christian readings of their scripture and refuting other Christians (e.g., Marcion) who were equally unconvinced (35.5–6). Therefore, the *Dialogue* may genuinely reflect the kind of debates Justin engaged in, but he has massively shaped it for the needs of Christian identity formation.

What may have prompted Justin to write the *Dialogue* is precisely the need to work out the place of Christians in the world, for Justin had become a stranger to his native customs yet resisted joining the Jewish people despite their established roots in antiquity. Trypho was perplexed at why Christians do not segregate themselves from the nations and spurn the commandments which mark out Jewish election (8.3–4; 10.2–4), so Justin endeavoured to carve out a collective identity for the Christians that distinguished them from the Jews but was also a recognisable category in the Greco-Roman context. Ethnic reasoning helped Justin accomplish these aims. As Buell demonstrates, 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), a holy people (λαὸς ἅγιος) or another Israel (123.5–6; 130.3).⁶⁴ Justin’s original contribution is the explicit assertion that Christians constitute the true spiritual Israel (11.5). In a creative stroke of exegesis, he re-interprets the oracles of Isaiah and the other prophets as referring to two entities called Israel; all the curses apply to non-Christian Israelites and the promised restoration foreshadowed the Christians (123.5–9; 135.3–6). By these means, in spite of their recent appearance, Justin roots the Christians in the antiquity of the Israelite epic. He also brings into sharp relief the difference between an association model where non-Jews are grafted onto Israel through Christ (cf. Rom 11.16–32) and a substitution model where the Gentile Christians replace Israel.⁶⁵

Although Justin juxtaposes Trypho’s image of Israel as Abraham’s descendants κατὰ σάρκα (according to the flesh) (44.1; 125.5; 140.2) with his fluid definition of Israel

⁶¹ Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 92; Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 151–54.

⁶² Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 104; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 260; Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 92.

⁶³ Fredriksen, “What Parting,” 37.

⁶⁴ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 99–106.

⁶⁵ Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof From Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 326–27, 352–53. Note, however, that Sechrest embraces the admittedly minority reading of Romans 9–11 as re-defining Israel around Jewish and Gentile Christ-followers against the presently severed branches symbolizing Israel κατὰ σάρκα and of Gal 6.16 as applying the name “Israel of God” to the Christ congregation (*Former Jew*, 141–45; 181–86).

κατὰ πνεῦμα (according to the spirit) as comprised of all who share Abraham's faith (11.4–5; 44.2, 4), the fluidity of Trypho's understanding is revealed in his connection between practice and salvation (45.1–2) and exhortations to adopt his way of life (8.4) while Justin's appeal to Abrahamic descent reveals an element of fixity.⁶⁶ Abraham plays a critical function in Justin's ethnic reasoning, appearing 103 times in the *Dialogue*.⁶⁷ Christians are defined as Abraham's γένος (11.5; 43.1; 66.4), τέκνα (children) (25.1; 80.4; 110.5; 120.2), or σπέρμα (seed) (44.1; 44.7) and Abrahamic descent is used to concede that the Jews are Abraham's physical descendants, to designate Christians as his spiritual descendants, and to discount the sole Jewish claim on Abraham.⁶⁸

It may be to undermine such claims on Abrahamic descent that the Rabbis in *Sifre Deuteronomy* (on Deut 32.9) deny that election has its basis in descent from Abraham or Isaac because some of their descendants were unworthy (Ishmael, Esau); the Lord takes the portion of his inheritance from Jacob's offspring. If this tradition existed in Justin's time, his counter is that Christians are also descendants of Jacob because the Isaianic Servant, whom Justin identifies with Christ, was surnamed Jacob and Israel (cf. Isa 42.1–4) and so by extension the followers of Christ are the true Israelite γένος (123.8–9).⁶⁹

Justin rejects traditional Jewish praxis on fasting, dietary laws, Sabbaths, circumcision, sacrifices or festivals as identity markers of the true Israel because he perceives their typological intent (cf. 12–24; 40–43). Although Trypho concedes that the laws relating to the temple cult can no longer be performed, he is unwavering on circumcision, Sabbath, festivals, and ceremonial washing as key marks of difference in the Diaspora (46.2).⁷⁰ For his part, Justin allows that the Law promulgated at Horeb was valid for a limited duration before being rendered obsolete by a new covenant (11.2–4; cf. Jer 31.31–32), but submits that the remarks in Ezekiel 20.25 on the addition of statutes which were not good (21.4) and the Golden Calf incident indicate that the ceremonial laws were added as an accommodation to Israel's idolatrous disposition and hard hearts (18.2; 19.5; 20.4; 22.1; 27.2; 43.1; 44.2; 45.3, etc.).⁷¹ His repeated invocation of Jewish hard-heartedness equates the rites themselves with impiety, echoing Pharaoh's hardened heart (Exod 14.4, 17) and anticipating Trypho's resistance to Christianizing to the end (142.3).⁷²

Justin aims his full arsenal at circumcision, asserting that humans are by nature uncircumcised (29.3), several biblical heroes were uncircumcised (19.3–4; 92.2), Abraham was reckoned as righteous before he was circumcised (92.3), females cannot be circum-

⁶⁶ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 95–96, 106–7.

⁶⁷ Abraham Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 163.

⁶⁸ Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 171; cf. Buell, *Why this New Race*, 103–8.

⁶⁹ Skarsaune, *Proof From Prophecy*, 346–50.

⁷⁰ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 115.

⁷¹ Skarsaune (*Proof from Prophecy*, 313–20) discerns an earlier Jewish-Christian critique of the sacrificial cult (e.g. Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*) that Justin extended to cover all aspects of the ceremonial law.

⁷² Livesey, "Theological Identity Making," 60–61.

cised (23.5; 46.3), other peoples are circumcised (28.4), Gentiles have divine approval without being circumcised (29.1), and the only thing that counts is for the heart to be circumcised (15.7; 16.1; 19.3a). His case deconstructs when he puts forward the view that circumcision makes the Jews visible for punishment (16.2–5; 19.2) while dismissing it as a custom shared by others (28.4).⁷³ His aversion towards the rite is not due to fear about the procedure or the political costs of the act (18.3), for Christians endured torture and death to avoid idolatry (34.8; 35.7–8),⁷⁴ but reflects the breakaway sect's dramatic reversal of "formative symbols" of the dominant group as a means of differentiation and self-justification.⁷⁵ Indeed, Christians underwent a "second circumcision" like the wilderness generation under Joshua (Ἰησοῦς) (Josh 5.2), but Justin reinterprets this allegorically as Jesus circumcising a new righteous nation (24.2).⁷⁶

Justin's polemic should not be misread as transcending ethnic particularism in favour of Christian universalism. He too describes particular customs that mark out the Christian community including baptism (14.1), the Eucharist (41.1–3; 117.1), and a select holy day (41.4). They even have a dietary restriction to abstain from idol meat (εἰδωλόθυτα) (35.1–3; cf. 1 Cor 8.1–13; 10.25–31; Acts 15.20; Rev 2.14, 20). Boyarin emphasizes that a mutual process of identity formation revolved around the classification of binitarianism as the "Christian" position and monarchianism as "Jewish" and the Christian heresy par excellence,⁷⁷ but Justin was also concerned to differentiate "Christianness" from "Jewishness" at the level of social praxis.

One thing that Buell's otherwise excellent discussion on Justin overlooks is the crucial role of the Abrahamic promise of land (25.6–26.1; 80.1–81.4; 85.7; 119.5–6; 138.3; 139.4–5). In a key passage, Justin writes that the Christians are not a despised people (δῆμος) or barbarian tribe (φύλον), nor are they like the nations (ἔθνη) of the Carians or the Phrygians or the faithless people of Israel. Instead, they are a holy people (λαὸς ἅγιος), the nation (ἔθνος) promised to Abraham, who will inherit the land with the patriarch (119.3–6). Siker points out that Justin enlists Abraham as an honorary Christian in heeding Christ's call to leave the land in which he dwelled, just as Christians left their former way of life (119.5),⁷⁸ but Justin emphasizes that Abraham and those who have become Abraham's children through sharing his faith and believing upon the same divine voice will inherit the holy land (119.5–6). Justin interprets the prophecies that Jerusalem would be rebuilt quite literally, aligning it with his chiliastic interpretation of the Apocalypse (81.4; cf. Rev 20.1–6).

Hence, both Trypho and Justin fit Smith's *diaspora-restoration* model, the former as an exile after the failed Bar Kochba revolt and the latter with his expectation that

⁷³ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 119.

⁷⁴ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 116. She adds that the accusation of idolatry may have had a major role in the propaganda war, which explains Justin's polemical appeal to Israel's worship of the Golden Calf.

⁷⁵ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 119.

⁷⁶ Livesey, "Theological Identity Making," 58.

⁷⁷ Daniel Boyarin, "Justin Martyr Invents Judaism," *Church History* 70 (2001): 438, 449–56.

⁷⁸ Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 164; cf. Buell, *New Race*, 103–5.

Christians will be gathered with the saints of old in a rebuilt Jerusalem in a millennial kingdom. The more sinister aspect of Justin's account is that the Jewish history of rebellion and persecution of divine messengers, climaxing in the murder of the Just One (ὁ δίκαιος), resulted in the desolation of their cities and expulsion from Jerusalem (16; 108; 133; 136). Skarsaune detects an underlying Deuteronomic theology where Israel's covenantal unfaithfulness results in the state of foreign domination and was designed to move the nation to penitence,⁷⁹ which Justin turned into a replacement narrative. In light of the Hadrianic decree, circumcision was indeed a "sign" (σημεῖον) (cf. Gen 17.11) to set the Jews apart for suffering under the Romans and prohibit their re-entry into the land now possessed by others (16.2–5).⁸⁰ Not only does Justin extrapolate circumcision as a key marker of Jewishness, it is precisely their Jewishness that cuts them off from the inheritance! Yet when Trypho forthrightly asks Justin if means to suggest that none of Jews will inherit the holy mountain in the future, he wavers a bit and does not explicitly deny them a share in it, though he is adamant that Jews who persecute Christians will not partake in the inheritance promised to those who believe in Christ (25.6–26.1).

Thus, Justin equates the Jewish way of life with a hard-heartedness that resulted in the curse of exile, while the true Israel that is entitled to the scriptural promises is characterized by a Christian way of life. He promoted this essentializing Christian identity in contradistinction to the Jews, but he is not entirely successful in concealing that the socially-constructed boundaries are porous. He grudgingly tolerates the presence of Jewish (and Gentile Judaizing!), Torah-observant Christ followers (47.1–4), regardless of his demand on all peoples to relinquish their former way of life (121.3).⁸¹ Livesey sees in this compromise an indication that the complex social reality between Jews and Christians was considerably different to Justin's theological construction.⁸² In spite of his best efforts to police the border and check the spread of Christian Judaizing by censuring Jews who induce Gentile Christians to adopt their customs (47.1b, 3), he ultimately cannot control the flow of goods and personnel across the border.⁸³

Ethnic Election in Judaism and Christianity

All of the criteria outlined by Hutchinson and Smith feature in Justin's *Dialogue*: a collective name (Israel), myth of descent, scriptural memory, way of life, attachment to a homeland, and sense of group solidarity. Nor is the *Dialogue* an aberration in Christian thought. Hastings and Smith have challenged the modernist theory of the

⁷⁹ Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*, 278–79. For the accusation of killing the prophets, see Neh 9.26; Ezra 9.11; Josephus, *Ant.* 9.13.2; 10.3.1; *Jub.* 1.12; 1 Thess 2.15.

⁸⁰ Livesey, "Theological Identity Making," 62–63; Skarsaune (*Proof from Prophecy*, 293–95) argues that Justin's other points against circumcision could have been drawn from traditional sources, but this particular polemic was Justin's own innovation based on the Hadrianic ban on circumcision.

⁸¹ Buell, *New Race*, 112–13.

⁸² Livesey, "Theological Identity Making," 75.

⁸³ I owe this analogy to Boyarin, "Justin Martyr," 456.

origins of nationalism and focus on how the biblical model of Israel and specific forms of Christianity have been instrumental in creating and sustaining various nationalisms throughout history.⁸⁴ Ethnic reasoning was a mode of discourse available to early Christians to articulate their sense of peoplehood. Regrettably, it was accompanied by the denigration of the Jews in order to justify the existence of the Christians as a separate entity, their *raison d'être*. Yet since the “Other” is no more primordial or given than the Self, Lieu writes, “acknowledging this acts as a reminder that there can be other relationships with 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.”⁸⁵

While several contributions to this volume fairly critique uncritical uses of the Bible in contemporary Zionism, I think it important to issue a reminder that historically Christians have held to an equally flawed replacement theology. Further, while I am sympathetic to the aims of liberation theologians to address the Israeli-Palestine situation, I would discourage comparing a caricatured Judaism to an idealised version of Christianity. Specifically, it is time to bid adieu to the binary opposition of Christian universalism and Jewish ethnocentrism as Christians have historically defined themselves as a chosen people and made totalizing claims on the heritage of Israel. A more fruitful line of inquiry may be to ask about the implications of the doctrine of election in *both* traditions. Smith denies that a myth of ethnic election equates with plain ethnocentrism as the former entails a moral responsibility to live up to certain obligations and values.⁸⁶ Belonging to such a group can be accepted as a call to incarnate divine justice and compassion in the world. However, it becomes a dangerous force when it leads to the suppression of difference or the de-humanization of the Other, whether manifested in antisemitism or in the mistreatment of the Palestinians.

⁸⁴ Smith, *Chosen Peoples*; Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood*.

⁸⁵ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 269.

⁸⁶ Smith, “Chosen Peoples,” 190.