
Who Are the “Christians”?

This chapter will demonstrate the provisional nature of Christian identity and argue that Justin attempts to usurp and correct the contemporary use of “Christian” as a shame name employed by non-Christians:

A Christian? What’s that? I can do no more than attempt to describe some phenomena; some of them may appeal to us, others may not. A quick glance at the early church, even if we break off very suddenly and very artificially in Theodosian times, will reveal that our question about “the Christian” is a question about diversity. . . . Let us confuse things still more: In addition to that kaleidoscope of perspectives—I do not call them objective perspectives because they are only internal to Christian historiography—there are further perspectives quite different from these internal ones. We can also meet a variety of external views, where the contemporaries of antiquity, whether they were Jews or so-called pagans, knew that certain individuals were Christians. I think they simply knew it from living in the same city or village, in the same street or insula-block. They knew it even though it did not normally interest them too much. . . . Diversity prevails even if the *nomen Christianum* and the *unitas ecclesiae* are not unknown but (as I would like to think) a common term for the surrounding world, at least if we follow the records of Roman administration and the fiction of Lucian.¹

Although Wischmeyer ignores Justin and starts his study with Tertullian, this characterization of the challenge of early Christianity is extremely pertinent to this project. Specifically, “what” a Christian is, rather than simply who (and by extension who are Christians), is of paramount importance to Justin beyond a superficial reading of him as an apologist for apologetics’ sake. Before one can know who counts as Christian one needs to know what a Christian is. Even if the name “Christian” is known and used, which Justin’s presentation suggests it is, it is by no means clear that what a “Christian” is understood either by non-Christians or indeed by the claimants of the term themselves.² This is Justin’s challenge: to make it known, definitively, what a Christian is and to demonstrate the true Christianity, which he believes comes from Christ, the apostles, and the spirit of prophecy. This was, as mentioned above, the task that Harnack attributed to Marcion.³ Both men were involved with and related to one another in the task of Christian identity-making and definition. The task of the historian and theologian is to reconstruct Justin’s questions, the motivations that led him to shape his account of what it is to follow Christ in the ways in which he did. As R. M. Grant has noted, this cannot be done without giving due attention to the political and social struggles of the time. Justin’s and other ancient texts are not theological vacuums but the products of precise circumstances, and it is these circumstances that require attention if the texts are to speak as intended.⁴

The political and social struggles of the time shape how and what Justin says. The social struggle is one of identity: who the Christians are (or who is Christian) is one of the central questions of all of Justin’s

1. Wolfgang Wischmeyer, “A Christian? What’s That?,” *StPatr* 34 (2001): 270–72.

2. The term is uncommon in Christian usage before Justin. Grant surveys its use: It can be found in two New Testament texts (Acts 11:26; 26:28 and 1 Pet 4:16) and five times in the works of Ignatius, once in the *Didache* (12.4) and four times in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. However, Justin claims that there are many who claim the name “Christian,” and in contrast to rare Christian textual usage, the term occurs frequently in Roman usage in those such as Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Lucian, suggesting that this was indeed so. See R. M. Grant, “A Woman of Rome: The Matron in Justin, *Apology* 2.1–9,” *CH* (1985): 469.

3. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 279.

4. R. M. Grant, *The Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (London: SCM, 1988), 10.

texts. In particular, are they “Jews,”⁵ or are they something else? Boyarin has also drawn attention to the issue of self-definition as a central plank of the *Dialogue* with particular reference to “Jews.” However he has also noted that many of arguments Justin deploys against “Jews” and the identity claim can also be applied to heretics, as two sides of one coin, so a much wider debate about who the people of god are is discernible in the text.⁶ There is a political struggle that follows from this. If they are “Jews” then they are due a certain tolerance. However, “Jews” were particularly unpopular with the Roman rulers following the latest revolt lead by Simon Bar Kokhba, so very close association with the “Jewish” body politic may not have been desirable. This is a multi-dimensional question. The argument of this chapter will be that “Christian” identity has no fixed form in Justin’s period and that this is one of the key issues that motivates and drives his addresses to non-“Christians.” This involves the origins of “Christians” and their relationship to “Judaism.” As Buell has argued, the distinction between these two groups was by no means obvious in this period and identity is always negotiable and open to revision according to particular needs:

“The complex dynamism within and overlap between Christianness and Jewishness in Justin’s rhetoric make sense if we think of the mid-second century as a time when these identities are neither uniform nor wholly distinct. Justin is staking out a distinct domain and meaning for Christianness when these are murky and contested.”⁷

Staking a claim for “Christian” identity is indeed exactly what Justin is doing, but not only in relation to “Jews.” His claims concern the

5. For reasons of good style and sense, the term “Jew” will be presented in quotation marks to highlight its provisional and ambiguous nature. The same will follow for the term “Christian,” which we shall see below is also a less stable term than we might expect. This is done in order to make the word strange to ourselves and help us to keep in mind the disputed identity of “Christians,” which we shall see is a central feature of the debate. “Jew” will be taken as referring to circumcised Hebrews like Trypho and his teachers. However, in chapter 2, where the *Dialogue* is the main focus, “interlocutors” or “Trypho’s nation/people” will be preferred to reflect the specific ambiguity within that text.

6. Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 38.

7. Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 96.

wider Greco-Roman population also. The political implications of being “Jewish” or not, or being some other group in categories recognisable to Greco-Romans or not, were great. How one presented oneself and was understood could mean the difference between life and death. Presentation of identity is a subtle art, and one at which Justin was a master. Indeed, it was not just “Jews” and “Christians” who were engaged in deliberate, and unavoidable, self-presentation; Greeks and Romans were just as invested in this phenomenon:

Most identifiable perceptions of ethnicity were not passive, erudite, or antiquarian but self-aware and aimed at being meaningful and convincing. In attempting a response to the question “Who is a Greek” [most ancient writers] would play with acceptable conventions, choosing to emphasize particular aspects or even invent new ones. Greek ethnicity appears to have been something that was always both traditional and negotiable.⁸

Something similar can be said of Romans, Egyptians, Lydians, and Aphrodisians: each has to “invent” themselves, or give an account of themselves, that reflects and creates, how they see themselves. Justin is presenting an account of what a “Christian” is but his account is not the only one. Consequently, he has to do so in such a way that is most credible to his audience and that undermines the credibility of alternative visions, particularly that of Marcion. That there are disputed claimants to Christ is the root of all the problems Justin is trying to address.

Central to my argument is the claim that the term “Christian” in the early to mid-second century is not an obvious marker of identity as we would take it to be in modern times, or as it became at least as early as the legalisation of “Christianity” after Constantine. K. H. Rengstorf in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* characterizes the term thus:

The identification of the messiah with Jesus of Nazareth brought the disciples the name Christianoi. Compared with other names for the

8. Irad Malkin, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Washington, DC: Centre for Hellenic Studies; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 6.

followers of Jesus, like disciple or believer, the word is quite rare in the NT. By its whole formation it is a word which defines the one to whom it is applied as belonging to the party of a certain Christos, very much as Herodianos is a technical term for the followers of Herod (Mk 3:6; 12:13; Matt 22:16). Its use also presupposes that for the Greek environment of developing Christianity Christos had taken on the meaning of a proper name, a process which would have been facilitated by the resemblance to the name of Chrestos, pronounced Christos. According to Acts 11:26, Christianos was first used for Christians in Syrian Antioch. This passage, like the two others in which the word occurs in the NT (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16), leads us to suppose that, being applied to Christians by outsiders, it contained an element of ridicule and that in this it did not differ from the description Nazarenos or Nazoraios. Like it and like many other names formed in the same way, it soon clearly became a name which those called by it felt honoured to bear.⁹

This definition, short as it necessarily is for its context, matches to some extent what we will find in Justin.¹⁰ In agreement with Rengstorf, I argue that for Justin, the term “Christian” (Χριστιανός) functions very much like “Herodian” and that this is indeed the beginning of bearing this name as an honor. Beyond this, I argue that Justin has very particular motivations, both theological and political, for doing so.

The New Testament usage is, as Rengstorf states, extremely rare (two of three attestations coming from the same book) and should not be taken as representative of the experience of “Christians” everywhere within the empire. I agree that it functions as a term of ridicule primarily employed by outsiders. I will show that both Justin’s texts and external Greco-Roman sources support this view and suggest that it has become, or is becoming, more widely known and used.

Comparison with the attribution of the name Jesuit is instructive here. Jesuit, an anglicized version of the Latin *Jesuita*, originated as a pejorative term for members of the Society of Jesus and later came to be adopted by those members as a term that makes sense apart from the derogatory overtones. This is similar to the development of the term “Christian”. However, difference can be seen in the fact that the

9. Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, “Χριστιανός (Christianos), Christian,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1975), 2:343.

10. In 2 *Apology* Justin makes a pun precisely on the similarity between Christos and Chrestos.

Jesuits were not more or less loosely connected groups of Jesuits with different understandings of Ignatius Loyola's vision. The application of the term Jesuit, albeit as reproach, was to a clearly identifiable and self-organized society.¹¹ "Christians" in Justin's period have yet to fully become such an organization and the adoption of the term, transitioning from pejorative to honorific, is part of this slow and contested transformation.¹² That is, Justin is staking a claim for the identity of followers of Christ, staking a claim against alternative positions (of which Marcion's is the most significant for Justin's purposes), and taking this term along with it. Sebastian Moll has said, "His [Justin's] mission is to clear the Christian name."¹³ Consequently apologetics in this period needs to be thought of as an attempt to create clarity and definition as much as, and probably more so than, defense and presentation of a defined faith.¹⁴

The "Christian" name that Justin is trying to clear is first and foremost the name of Jesus, the Christ, and only by extension is it the title of those who follow him. It is only becoming a proper title internally, and many who claim to follow Jesus and are considered "Christians" (not by Justin but by Romans and probably "Jews," and some other "Christians") abuse the name of Christ by their association with it. Buell points out that:

Other texts studied as early Christian do not use the name "Christian," however, opting instead for other collective terms of self-identification

11. J. C. H. Aveling shows that the term Jesuit was that of an outsider's world view which the society usually rejected but gradually tolerated. For this, "their motive was partly practical convenience, and partly a sense that it would be fitting if they wore 'a badge of shame' as a 'badge of glory.'" Furthermore, the term predates the society and originated in the Netherlands and Rhineland for people who were overly zealous in their devotions in the name of Jesus and set themselves against the religious authorities and ordinary Catholics. The term "Jesuit" thus came to be applied to members of the Society of Jesus because this is how they behaved also. Both of these features present a striking similarity to the phenomenon I observe in Justin in relation to the name "Christian." See J. C. H. Aveling, *The Jesuits* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1981), 20.
12. The technical term for such transformation in linguistics is "semantic amelioration." See Rodica Calciu-Hanga, "Semantic change in the age of corpus Linguistics," *JHSS* 1 (2012): 50-52.
13. Moll, "Justin and the Pontic Wolf," 149.
14. A scholarly consensus has emerged on the provisional and rhetorical nature of all claims to Christian truth in this period: perspectives in general concert on this include the of voices Judith Lieu, Denise Kimber Buell, Laura Nasrallah, Karen L. King, Rebecca Lyman, and Shelly Matthews. However we should not forget that figures like Justin really believe they are presenting the faith of the apostles and see themselves as defending this faith.

(for example, the elect, Hebrews, etc.). This is worth noting since it suggests that the importance of the name “Christian” does not apply to every individual or group in the second and third centuries that might now be classified by scholars as “early Christian.”¹⁵

Justin is right in the middle of this diversity of purpose and understanding. We shall see that Justin uses the term “Christian” in different ways at different points in his argument. We shall see examples of Justin speaking of “us Christians” (*Dial.* 78.10; 110.2) where he is claiming the identity in order to define it, but we shall also see that he often prefers to talk about Christ directly and about those taught by him or who follow his teaching. Furthermore, often Justin’s use seems to reflect a pejorative label used by outsiders (such as Romans) or potential insiders who do not wish to be associated with this group (such as other “Jews”). In this way, the comparison made with the term Jesuit is apt. Peter Tomson’s work on the development of the term the term “Jew” (Ιουδαῖος) in the Greco-Roman period is also instructive here. He sees it is a designation belonging primarily to non-“Jews.”¹⁶ He qualifies this saying:

In every language, albeit to varying degrees, particular speech forms are used when addressing persons of either sex, of a specific age or of other social distinction. Speech differs according to the relative social status of speaker and listener. More specifically: such speech differentiation signals social identity. Naturally, group names such as ethnic appellations are strong signifiers of social identity. Speaking in these terms, “Jew” and “Israel” signal different social identities: an “outside” identity as a Jew in regard to the ancient world of nations, or alternatively, an “inside” identity as one belonging to the “people of Israel.” . . . An even closer parallel [than the distinction between “Dutch” and “Hollander” and similar] is found in the Gypsies. While their “outside” appellations are Gypsy, Bohemien, Gitano or Zigeuner, they call themselves Rom, and their “inside” language Romany.¹⁷

For Tomson, the term “Israel,” as an internal designation, is to be

15. Buell, *New Race*, 195–96n94.

16. Peter J. Tomson, *If this be from Heaven: Jesus and the New Testament Authors in their Relationship to Judaism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 110.

17. Peter J. Tomson, “The Names Israel and Jew in Ancient Judaism and in the New Testament,” *Bijdr* 47 (1986): 120–21.

contrasted with “Jew”: the two names have distinct social functions. A “Jewish” speaker refers to “Jews” in speech addressing or quoting non-“Jews,” but when communicating with fellow “Jews” calls them “Israel.” It will be argued below that this is precisely what Justin is doing when he uses the term “Israel” to refer to “Christians” rather than to the ethnically uniform claimants to the title whom he calls “Jews.”¹⁸ Tomson argues that this distinction is well established and observable across all three of the major languages spoken by “Jews” in the Greco-Roman period and is thus not just a geo-linguistic variant.¹⁹ In the context of an argument for the anachronistic nature of the scholarly term “Christian Judaism,” Boyarin suggests something similar when he says “non-Christian Jews rarely (at best) called themselves Ioudaioi, and . . . Christian Jews seemed to have used the term for someone other than themselves.”²⁰ Boyarin does not draw out the specific parameters of what he means by “rarely, whereas Tomason goes further citing numerous examples of the term “Jew” as a term that projects an external objectivity onto the community across five categories in the Greco-Roman period, including influential figures close in time to Justin, for example in Philo and Josephus.²¹ Margaret Williams, however, has argued that Tomson overstates the case because counterexamples can be found. Nonetheless, she recognises that Tomson has identified one of the legitimate “range of connotations” of a term not easily defined in the period.²² Something

18. *Ibid.*, 21. Naturally there is need to note that “inside” and “outside” speech always has a degree of rhetoric and intentional definition about it. With this proviso, however, Tomson’s thesis, that “Jew” ceases to have territorial or linguistic association and comes to define an *ethnos* from an external perspective, makes much sense of what Justin, and other early “Christians,” are doing in claiming the term “Israel” for Christ and arguing against the inheritance of Abraham *κατα σάρκα*.

19. *Ibid.*, 127.

20. Daniel Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is Appended a Correction of my *Border Lines*),” *JQR* 99 (2009): 32.

21. Further examples are taken from papyri, coins, inscriptions; hagiographa, apocrypha, and pseudepigrapha; Qumran, rabbinic literature, and the New Testament. Tomson, “Names,” 129–39.

22. Margaret H. Williams, *Jews in a Graeco-Roman Environment* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 267–79. In fact one such counterexample might be detectable in *Dial.* 80.4, where Justin speaks of sects that Trypho would not recognize as genuinely “Jewish,” so “Jew” functions as normative to sectarian *hairesis*. As far as Tomson’s thesis is concerned however it would be noteworthy that Justin here is an outsider offering this term. Furthermore there is a doublespeak in the *Dialogue*, to which Boyarin draws attention, where Justin sometimes highlights not to a distinction between “Jew” and “Christian,” but between “Jew” and “Jew” and “Christian” and “Christian.” This may be one such instance where the analogy of *hairesis*/authenticity is more relevant than the

similar can be said of “Christian” in Justin’s time: He does use the name in a way that suggest internal “Christian” identification but also in ways which suggest that it is a term whose meaning is supplied by outsiders and is primarily general and pejorative. Tacitus, in his report on Nero’s fire (Annals 15.44.4), identifies “Christians” as “called Christians by the populace” (*vulgus Christianos appellabat*) rather than as “Christians,” so the emphasis is on external application of the title.²³ Furthermore, we shall see that this pejorative usage frequently lacks any specific content concerning the practices and beliefs of these so-called “Christians”; that it can function as a criminal charge apart from any seemingly obvious criminal content is a scandalous facet of the messy identity confusion that Justin is trying to address. Buell, using the example of a contemporary of Justin engaged in a similar struggle in another part of the Empire, clearly and succinctly summarizes the issues:

Athenagoras and other apologists give the appearance that accusations using the name “Christian” are scandalous and not sparked by anything but the name. Yet even if Christians might have been called to public attention for illegal deeds rather than by (or for) their name alone, Athenagoras and many other early Christian writers seek to gain recognition and rights as “Christians”; that is, the name is actually central to their aims.²⁴

Regardless of how the name, and they themselves, come to be known, the task is, as Lieu says, to “reject the power of others to determine the meaning of the name.”²⁵ Justin, and other like him such as Aristides, Athenagoras, and Theophilus of Antioch, mean to take control of this

“Jewish”/“Christian” identity debate. The present example occurs at a point in the *Dialogue* where Justin is reprising the arguments made in his philosophical introduction and again at *Dial.* 35 which have a particular and limited point to make (namely the difference between true teaching and sectarian imitations), whereas the *Verus Israel* language (of which Justin is the first attested source) is much more relevant to the later portions of the *Dialogue* where kinship and ancestry are brought to the fore. See Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 71.

23. H. Furneaux notes that the implication is strongly that “Christians” had not yet begun to call themselves such but were known as such popularly in Rome. H. Furneaux, *Annals of Tacitus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 374.

24. Buell, *New Race*, 55.

25. Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 267.

name in order to redefine it without changing its meaning entirely.²⁶ The aim is to gain rights and recognition: aims which can only be achieved where their identity can be seen to function, within tolerable limits, with coherent practices and beliefs. This is the beginning of the formal recognition of heresy and orthodoxy, where what really counts as genuinely “Christian” is being claimed and tested. Before moving the discussion on another important proviso is required. Having already noted that “Jew” (Ἰουδαίους) is a complicated and loaded term when focusing on late antiquity, it is important to mark how Justin uses this term and how we shall employ it.

In the *Dialogue* Justin seldom uses the term at all. It occurs only six times in the space of four chapters.²⁷ This is perhaps because in the *Dialogue* Justin is articulating an internal debate and wishes to promote the idea that he is not discussing a group completely separate from his own. His argument in the *Dialogue* centres on the common project of the Hebrews and the “Christians” and so Israel (Ἰσραήλ) is the preferred (and the more scriptural) term. Though Justin is highly critical of the customs practiced by “Jews” and their lack of recognition of Jesus, in his eyes the responsibility for these faults usually rests at the feet of their teachers, who form a category that we shall see is very important for Justin.²⁸ In this way, “Jews” are understood as erring brethren under the influence of the wrong teachers rather than a separate people, religion, or ethnicity.

In *1 Apology* Justin refers to “Jews” in a more external fashion with far greater frequency than he does in the *Dialogue*.²⁹ In *1 Apology* Justin is, ostensibly at least, addressing Greco-Roman pagans. As Tomson noted, “Jew” is in many ways their term, so Justin’s use of it reflects to whom he is speaking and their understanding of whom he speaks about. Furthermore, perhaps because of this Justin mainly avoids the

26. Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 267.

27. *Dial.* 72.3 (twice); 77.3; 80.4 (twice); 103.3.

28. Timothy J. Horner, *Listening to Trypho: Justin Martyr’s Dialogue Reconsidered* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 104.

29. There are thirty-four references to “Jews” or “Jewish” things in *1 Apology*: 31.1 (twice), 2, 5, 6 (twice); 32.2 (twice), 3 (thrice), 4, 6, 14; 34.2; 35.6; 36.3; 38.7; 40.6 (twice); 47.1, 6; 49.1, 5; 52.10; 53.2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 63.1, 3, 10, 14. Unsurprisingly these all occur in the dense middle part of *1 Apology* which takes prophecy as its main topic.

term in the *Dialogue*, where he is addressing a “Jew,” because his primary target in that text is the teachers who pull the strings and control what “Judaism” is and who constitutes it rather than ordinary “Jews” like Trypho.³⁰ In this regard, Horner goes as far to say that Justin views the “Jewish” people as victims rather than as his main competition, and though this is not always obvious in the text, it does appear to be the general pattern.³¹ Therefore, in *1 Apology* it is more than possible that the frequent naming and criticising of “Jews” functions in the same way as the treatment of the teachers in the *Dialogue*; namely, at the level of summary for outsiders.

Persecution

An important feature of Justin’s claiming of “Christian” identity is the story he tells of its misrepresentation and persecution. This, as Justin describes it, proceeds in stages. In the first stage is persecution at the hands of the/fellow “Jews” in which “Christians” come to be labeled as different. Often this is connected with the Bar Kokhba revolt, but this is not always explicit. The second step, as we shall see in the Greco-Roman treatment of “Christians,” is that by virtue of this process, this identity has become more widely known and, because of the political threat it might pose to “Judaism’s” already fragile position in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt, opposed by the “Jewish” teachers beyond the time of Bar Kokhba. The third step is that “Christians” like Justin adopt this identity as their own and beginning to understand themselves as a new *genos*, leading them to take control of this identity and attempt to define and police it—with similar intentions to the “Jewish” treatment of themselves. This first section will deal with the persecution by “Jews,” and the other two points will be taken in turn thereafter in the sections which follow.

30. *Ibid.*, 130–36.

31. *Ibid.*, 186. This also brings to mind a loose commonality between Justin and Marcion. On this analysis both see the “Jewish” people as victims; Marcion as the victim of the evil god they do not choose but who takes them as his own and Justin as the victim of teachers who do not understand their god, which is parallel to his thinking on Marcion also. Neither hate the “Jewish” people as such.

Justin presents the persecution of “Christians” by “Jews” first and foremost as a misrepresentation, a recasting, of who “Christians” are. In the *Dialogue*, “Christians” are a class of people hated by the “Jews” (e.g. Trypho’s teachers).³² These people have singled “Christians” out and publicized their opinions about them. In doing so they have attempted to define “Christians” in pejorative terms. The significance of this presentation is that it suggests a close relationship between “Jews” and “Christians” at this time that non-“Christian” “Jews” wish to end or distinguish themselves from. *Dial.* 17.1–2 offers us an introduction to this theme:

The other nations have not inflicted on us and on Christ injustice to such an extent as you have, who in very deed are the instigators of the evil prejudice against the Just One, and us who hold by Him. After that you had crucified Him, the only blameless and righteous Man,—through whose wounds those who approach the Father through Him are healed, and when you understood that He had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, as the prophets foretold He would, you not only did not repent of the evilness, but you selected and sent out from Jerusalem to all lands, certain men to tell that the godless heresy of the Christians had sprung up, and to publish those things which all they who do not know us say against us. So that you cause not only of your own unrighteousness, but in fact of that of all others. And Isaiah cries justly: “By reason of you, My name is blasphemed among the Gentiles.”³³

We should note straight away that Justin does not say that other nations have not inflicted as much on “Christians,” but rather that they have not inflicted as much “on us and Christ.” Justin does not use the term “Christian” (Χριστιανῶν) here but refers to the person of

32. Though Justin does not call them “Jews” in the *Dialogue*, he does mean the same body of people he calls “Jews” in 1 *Apology*.

33. My translation. Οὐκ οὕτως γὰρ ἄλλα ἔθνη εἰς ταύτην τὴν ἀδικίαν τὴν εἰς ἡμᾶς καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν ἐνέχονται, ὅσον ὑμεῖς, οἱ καένοις τῆς κατὰ τοῦ δικαίου καὶ ἡμῶν τῶν ἀπ’ ἐκείνου κακῆς προλήψεως αἴτιοι τοὶ ὑπάχετε· μετὰ γὰρ τὸ σταυρῶσαι ὑμᾶς ἐκεῖνον τὸν μόνον ἄμωμον καὶ δίκαιον ἄνθρωπον, δι’ οὗ τῶν μωλώπων ἴασις γίνεται τοῖς δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν πατέρα προσχωροῦσιν, ἐπειδὴ ἐγνώκατε αὐτὸν ἀναστάντα ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ ἀναβάντα εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, ὡς αἱ προφητεῖαι προεμήνουσιν γενησόμενον, οὐ μόνον οὐ μετενοήσατε ἐφ’ οἷς ἐπάξατε κακοῖς, ἀλλὰ ἄνδρας ἐκλεκτοὺς ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐκλεξάμενοι τότε ἐξεπέμψατε εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, λέγοντας αἰρεσὶν ἄθεον Χριστινῶν πεφνημένοι, καταλέγοντάς τε ταῦτα ἅπερ καθ’ ἡμῶν οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες ἡμᾶς πάντες λέγουσιν· ὥστε οὐ μόνον ἑαυτοῖς ἀδικίας αἴτιοι ὑπάχετε, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ἀπλῶς ἄνθρωποις. Καὶ δικαίως βοᾷ Ἡσαΐας. Δι’ ὑμᾶς τὸ ὄνομά μου βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι.

Christ and his own group. The first time the word “Christian” appears in the *Dialogue* it is present in reported speech from the mouths of non-“Christians” where it is paired with the word *heresy* (αἵρεσιν) and used in propaganda against followers of Christ. The very first time the word “Christian” appears it is therefore to be understood as the shame name attributed to followers of Christ by a group of people external to, or rather who wish to be considered as external to, that group. The term “Christian” is not a given here, nor is the group identity. Instead, the term is a pointer, synonymous with shame and depravity, and it is Justin’s task to capture and redefine it. Before investigating how this term operates further it is necessary to consider more closely the content of Justin’s claims that “Jews,” more than other nations, are shaming followers of Christ and are the originators of this prejudice.

“Christians” here are introduced as a “godless heresy.” Bearing in mind that heresy can mean just school or opinion at this time, having not yet taken on its later formal meaning,³⁴ it is the term “godlessness” (ἄθεος) that is truly the operative word.³⁵ The god(s) that one worships, and the manner in which one worships, are fundamental factors affecting one’s standing at this time. As godlessness would certainly limit their authentic “Jewishness,” portraying “Christians” as a “godless heresy” has to be taken as casting them as “non-Jewish.”³⁶ “Christians” must have been difficult to distinguish from “Jews” (if it occurred to one to try do so), but according to Justin, “Jews” embarked

34. Lieu notes that though early attestations of the term in Justin and Hegesippus are too inconsistent to suggest new coinage by them into a settled new sense for the term, even Irenaeus’s more extensive usage is not sufficiently consistent to reflect confidently an established “concept of heresy” by the late second century. See Lieu, *Making of a Heretic*, 86.

35. A. le Boulluec’s *La Notion d’hérésie* is still the most important text on this. Here he argues that the formation of the category of heresy is modeled after philosophical schools transformed from modes of thought into institutions with a pejorative meaning. Le Boulluec understands that “Christian” writers like Justin are influenced by rabbinic work (questioned by Boyarin), but the thesis that in the mid-second century haireisis moves from describing a philosophical school to a wrong opinion is salutary. See Alain le Boulluec, *La Notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque IIe siècle* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1985), 82–91.

36. This is a serious claim for Justin and he repeats it at *Dial.* 108.2: “I said before, you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver” (ὡς προείπον, ἄνδρας χειροτονήσαντες ἐκλεκτοὺς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐπέμψατε, κηρύσσοντας ὅτι αἵρεσίς τις ἄθεος καὶ ἄνομος ἐξήγηται ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ τινος Γαλιλαίου πλάνου).

on their clarification mission to achieve just this by casting the ones they called “Christians” as atheists.

Boyarin has convincingly built on le Boulluec’s classic monograph to argue that the nascent nature of heresy is not only emerging at this time, but is being created dialectically by “Christians” and “Jews” ruling each other in and out and forming new standards of belonging in the process. Boyarin’s thesis is not that these two groups witness to one another’s existence, but rather that, in the course of their conversation, they invent one another. They are not two religions, or obvious diametric poles of one, but differing strands, wide and varied, with different points of overlap in different places.³⁷ Rhetorical recastings and claims for identity become rarefied and separate bodies form. This is a process that he sees as beginning in approximately the mid-second century.³⁸ Nina E. Livesey has put this even more starkly by saying: “What we see in the Dialogue, then, is not just the beginning of orthodoxy and heresy—a theological enterprise that determines who is in and who is out—but also the advent of understanding Jews and Christians as split selves, as theological beings in distinction from social ones.”³⁹

The relationship between “Christians” and “Jews” at this time is very much a complicated and socially negotiated one. There is much evidence that “Christians” and “Jews” have a lot to do with one another for a long time to come after Justin, with many “Christian” texts preserving fears about interaction and confusion of the groups.⁴⁰ But even this evidence can be construed in overly deterministic ways. As Andrew Jacobs has argued, it is important we avoid insouciant claims for boundaries and difference. Getting away from assumptions about

37. Indeed Boyarin rejects the notion of “religion” as an internal Jewish category until modern times and understands the invention of the category to be a Christian achievement taking definitive shape around the fourth century. See Boyarin, “Rethinking,” 7–36.

38. Daniel Boyarin. “Justin Martyr Invents Judaism,” *CH* 70 (2001): 438.

39. N. E. Livesey, “Theological Identity Making: Justin’s Use of Circumcision to Create Jews and Christians,” *JCS* 18 (2010): 79.

40. Blanchetière points to the Council of Elvira in its prohibitions against mixed “Christian”-“Jewish” marriage, blessing “Jewish” owned fields, or eating with “Jews” as evidence of just those things as well as the presence of “Christians” in synagogues. See François Blanchetière, “The Threefold Christian Anti-Judaism,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham Stanton and Guy B. Stroumsa (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 194.

boundaries means recognizing their provisional and rhetorically negotiated nature: “The textualization of religious difference may lie not in logical resolution, but in dialogical irresolution: the problems of difference (and similarity) are not resolved, but rather enacted, creating the sense of a boundary (between speaker and interlocutor) without finite closure.”⁴¹

This is to say that not only “heresy,” but “Christianity” and “Judaism” are coming into existence in this period, and coming into existence by mutual and multifaceted exclusion. Indeed, it is not until a number of centuries later that it becomes possible firmly to identify a “Christianity” which is uniformly not “Jewish” or a “Judaism” which hierarchically excludes all “Christians” from its orthodoxy. Many voices, agreeing and differing, at different points and places, but not different sides make this distinction over time. Justin is part of this process, of which his interaction with Marcion is an exemplary element as well as his explicit debate with Trypho.

Justin reiterates the point that the “Jews” are the cause of “Christians” being maligned at *Dial.* 108.2:

As I stated, you chose certain men by vote and sent them throughout the whole civilized world, proclaiming that a godless and lawless sect has been started by a deceiver, one Jesus of Galilee, whom we nailed to the cross, but whose body, after it was taken down from the cross, was stolen at night from the tomb by his disciples, who now try to deceive men by affirming that he has arisen from the dead and has ascended into heaven. And you accuse him of having taught those irreverent, riotous, and wicked things, of which you everywhere accuse all those who look up to and acknowledge him as their Christ, their Teacher, and Son of God.⁴²

Here the “Jews” have sent certain men appointed for a task. This was a particular and specially planned mission, not just a knee-jerk reaction.

41. Andrew S. Jacobs, “Dialogical Differences: (De-)Judaizing Jesus’ Circumcision,” *JCS* 15 (2007): 298.

42. Καὶ οὐ μόνον οὐ μετενοήσατε, μαθόντες αὐτὸν ἀναστάντα ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἀλλ’, ὡς προεῖπον, ἄνδρας χειροτονήσαντες ἐκλεκτοὺς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐπέμψατε, κηρύσσοντας ὅτι αἵρεσις τις ἄθεος καὶ ἄνομος ἐξήγερται ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ τινος Γαλιλαίου πλάνου, ὃν σταυρωσάντων ἡμῶν, οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κλέψαντες αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ μνήματος νυκτός, ὁπόθεν κατετέθη ἀφηλωθεὶς ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, πλανῶσι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους λέγοντες ἐξηγέρθαι αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀνεληλυθέναι κατειπόντες δεδιδαχέναι καὶ ταῦτα ἄπερ κατὰ τῶν ὁμολογοῦντων Χριστὸν καὶ διδάσκαλον καὶ υἱὸν θεοῦ εἶναι παντὶ γένει ἀνθρώπων ἄθεα καὶ ἄνομα καὶ ἀνόσια λέγετε.

Here the “Jews” are displayed as taking full responsibility for the death of Jesus, “whom we crucified,” and as countering the claims of Jesus’s followers and slandering Jesus himself in order to cut them off from “Jewishness.” Atheism, deception,⁴³ and lawlessness are on the agenda. All of these are socially and politically sensitive charges: To move somebody from being “Jewish” to being an atheist is pushing the person outside the legal realm, set by the Romans for “Jews,” and to oppose Roman society; deception suggests hidden agendas and threatening behavior; and lawlessness intimates apostasy from “Judaism,” and rebellion towards Romans.

Bar Kokhba

1 *Apol.* 31.5–6 further develops our understanding of the manner in which, for Justin, the “Jews” distinguish between themselves and the followers of Christ by demonising them. For Justin “Christians” are to be understood as abiding by the prophets while the “Jews” kill them (as they killed the prophets of old):

And after this [the legend of the origins of the Septuagint] the rolls remained among the Egyptians until now, and are also present everywhere to all the Jews, who, even though they read them, do not understand what has been said, but consider us to be enemies and adversaries. And, like you, they destroy and punish us whenever they are able, as you are able to learn. For even in the recent Jewish war, Bar Kokhba, the leader of the rebellion of the Jews, ordered only Christians to be led away to fearsome torments, if they would not deny Jesus as the Christ and blaspheme him.⁴⁴

Why did Bar Kokhba target only “Christians” and force them to deny

43. In chapter 3 we will note that those who deceive (*ἐξαπατήσωσιν*) are usually connected with the work of the demons, as Simon, Menander, and Marcion are in 1 *Apology*, and that Justin’s demonology is of “Jewish” origin. As such, it is possible that this charge of deception has more weight to it than that of a simple liar and represents an unholy trickster who is working actively against god and therefore must be outside of his people.

44. καὶ τοῦτου γενομένου ἔμειναν αἱ βίβλοι καὶ παρ’ Αἰγυπτίοις μέχρι τοῦ δεῦρο, καὶ πανταχοῦ παρὰ πᾶσιν εἰσιν Ἰουδαίοις, οἱ καὶ ἀναγινώσκοντες οὐ συνιᾶσι τὰ εἰρημένα, ἀλλ’ ἐχθροὺς ἡμᾶς καὶ πολεμίους ἡγοῦνται, ὁμοίως ὑμῖν ἀναιροῦντες καὶ κολάζοντες ἡμᾶς ὅποτεν δύνωνται, ὡς καὶ πεισθῆναι δύνασθε. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ νῦν γεγενημένῳ Ἰουδαϊκῷ πολέμῳ, Βαρχαχέβας, ὁ τῆς Ἰουδαίων ἀποστάσεως ἀρχηγέτης, Χριστιανούς μόνους εἰς τιμωρίας δεινὰς εἰ μὴ ἄρνοιντο Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ Βλασφημοῖεν ἐκέλευεν ἀπάγεσθαι.

and blaspheme Jesus as Messiah? This may have been because he himself was seen either by himself or at least by some as a Messiah-figure. The title “Christians” here again is used by Justin, in order to make “Jews” (here Bar Kokhba) distinguish followers of Christ from themselves.⁴⁵ According to him, Bar Kokhba had separated these “Christians” who did not deny Jesus as the Christ and did not blaspheme him from the body of “Jewish” people, a claim that is supported by Eusebius.⁴⁶ It is interesting that this claim occurs only in *1 Apology*. The war or its affects are alluded to six times in the *Dialogue* and three times in *1 Apology*,⁴⁷ but this is the only point at which Justin suggests any strong or direct link between the campaign of Bar Kokhba and the slander of those who follow Christ. This singling out strongly suggests that “Christians” at this time were sufficiently part of “Jewish” society in Palestine such that they could be meaningfully targeted and separated from it by Bar Kokhba. Singling out “Christians” in this way identifies them as disloyal and not truly belonging. As Justin does not seem to fabricate this account the plausibility of such a development must be investigated.

Peter Schäfer notes that “shirkers” are recorded in the letter from Bar Kokhba to Yehonatan Bar Ba’ayan and Masabala Bar Shimon, military commanders at Ein Gedi, found in the Judean desert.⁴⁸ These are the men of Tekoa. Punishment for these and any harbouring them was severe.⁴⁹ We see here that the rebels were more than prepared to enforce their authority on the “Jewish” people and make examples of them. Schäfer puts the coarse tone of much the Bar Kokhba letters down to his character and the increasingly desperate situation towards

45. Justin’s use of this event to create an interpretive narrative is striking because, as Lieu notes, contemporary reactions are sparse. Key to Justin is that the failure of the revolt constitutes punishment, but most sources would give the decisive significance to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Justin is unusual in making so much of Bar Kokhba. See Lieu, *Making of a Heretic*, 317.

46. Eusebius, *Chron.* 660, 18. “Barchochebas, the only son whose name was interpreted as star, was the cause of the revolt of the Jews. This [Barchochebas] punished in many ways the ‘Christians’ for desiring not to be in alliance against the Romans” (my translation: Τῆς Ἰουδαίων ἀποστάσεως Χοχεβᾶς τις ὁ μονογενὴς ἠγεῖτο, ὃς ἐρμηνεύετο ἀστήρ· οὗτος Χριστιανοὺς ποίχλιως ἐτιμωρήσατο μὴ βουλομένους κατὰ Ῥωμαίων συμμαχεῖν).

47. *Dial.* 1.3; 9.3; 16.4; 24.3; 92.2; 110.6; *1 Apol.* 31.6; 47.4–6; 52.11.

48. Peter Schäfer, “Bar Kokhba and the Rabbis,” in *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered*, ed. P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003): 8.

49. *Ibid.*, 8.

the end of the revolt. Bar Kokhba presumably was not successful in asserting his authority if such letters were necessary.⁵⁰ This further suggests that not all “Jews” were supporters of Bar Kokhba and those who did not ally themselves with the war effort could expect to be attacked. We know then that Justin’s comment has the air of plausibility even if this singling out was not necessarily exclusively reserved for “Christians,” and even then only those who maintained their allegiance to Jesus as Christ. This restriction is perhaps the reason why Justin reserves this claim for *1 Apology* rather than presenting it in the *Dialogue* since in the latter he speaks to Trypho and “Jews” who were certainly not singled out by Bar Kokhba, but still might have known the situation and known that “Christians” did not necessarily suffer alone.

Further evidence that Bar Kokhba singled out “Christians” can be found in Richard Bauckham’s reading of the *Apocalypse of Peter* as an early “Jewish” “Christian” text contemporary with the second revolt that warns “Christians” to avoid the false messiah.⁵¹ As he claims many scholars agree, Bauckham takes this “false messiah” to be Bar Kokhba, which again displays persecution of “Christians.”⁵² Justin does not tell us why Bar Kokhba singled “Christians” out during the revolt. He is, however, clear that this happened *during* the revolt. This suggests that resources would have been diverted away from fighting the true enemy in order to target “Christians,” and that there must, therefore, have been a compelling reason for doing so. Bauckham posits such a reason by holding that the aim of rebuilding the temple was not shared by “Jewish” “Christians” who understood Jesus to be the spiritual and final temple. This comes out in the narrative of Peter declaring who Jesus is.⁵³ This being the case, “Christians” may be denying the messianic ambitions of the regime, the extent of whose existence as

50. *Ibid.*, 9.

51. Richard Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables in the Apocalypse of Peter,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 286–87.

52. Independently Skarsaune came to the same, albeit brief, conclusion concerning this text and the impact of the Bar Kokhba revolt on “Christians.” See Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 272.

53. *Ibid.*, 233.

an explicit mythos is unclear,⁵⁴ but also standing in opposition to an imminent and nationally important practical agenda which causes “Christians” to become conscientious objectors and vulnerable to attack as disloyal and cowardly. Furthermore, Cassius Dio’s testimony that “many outside nations, too, were joining them [the ‘Jews’] through eagerness for gain” only sharpens the contrast between loyal participant and disloyal nonconformist.⁵⁵ For Hannah Cotton, this explains the supposed Nabatean involvement suggested by *P. Yadin* 52.⁵⁶ Cotton believes that the revolt may have spread into other regions, such as Syria and Arabia, and been successfully put down there earlier.⁵⁷ Further, she argues that the Nabateans involved may have been refugees from the revolutionaries’ activities in neighbouring provinces.⁵⁸ If this were so, and if “Christians” really abstained from the revolt, then “Christians” would have looked strikingly aloof at a time when even non-“Jews” were prepared to join in to challenge the Romans, and the evidence suggests that Bar Kokhba did not look kindly on those who did not follow the party line. This being the case it seems that we must take Justin seriously in this claim that “Christian” persecution by “Jews” was rooted in the Bar Kokhba war.

Though Justin does not assert that “Christians” were singled out by Bar Kokhba in the *Dialogue*, he does repeat the claim that Bar Kokhba suppressed them in *Dial.* 9.1, 3:

If you will agree to hear our account of him, how we have not been deceived by false teachings, and how we shall not cease to profess our faith in him (even though men thereby persecute us, and the most cruel tyrant tries to force us to deny him) . . . two of his friends, joking and making fun of our earnestness, went their way. When we came to that part of the stadium where there were stone seats on both sides, Trypho’s other

54. Schäfer claims that apart from Aqiva it is only “Christian” sources that apply the name Bar Kokhba with messianic overtones to Simon. Schäfer does not believe this was a self-designation nor one by his close followers. See Schäfer, “Bar Kokhba,” 17.

55. πολλοί τε ἄλλοι καὶ πᾶν ἄλλοφύλων ἐπιθυμία κέρδους σφίσι συνελαμβάνοντο (Cassius Dio, *Rom. Hist.* 69.13.2).

56. Hannah M. Cotton, “The Bar Kokhba Revolt and the Documents from the Judean Desert: Nabataean Participation in the Revolt,” in Schäfer, *War Reconsidered*, 148.

57. *Ibid.*, 149.

58. *Ibid.*, 151.

companions went to sit on the one side and after one of them had made a remark about the war waged in Judea, they spoke of it.⁵⁹

This passages comes at the conclusion of Justin's long account of his conversion, just after the point that Trypho and his followers have discovered that he is a follower of Christ. At this point Trypho's friends become indignant and laugh at Justin, casting a seemingly throw-away and incongruous comment about the Bar Kokhba revolt, after he had spoken of a "terrible tyrant" who compelled them to deny (ὁ δεινότατος ἀπιοπεῖν ἀναγκάζῃ τύραννος) Jesus. As this description is close to what we have read before in *1 Apol.* 31.6, where Bar Kokhba used fearsome torments to attempt to force "Christians" to deny Christ, it seems Justin has in mind Bar Kokhba here also. This sense is increased by the fact that the war is mentioned in the same passage. Why do the friends make this comment? This is hard to establish. What it does suggest, though, is that the link between the revolt and "Christians" seems to reflect fresh and real experience.⁶⁰

Justin's speech immediately following this gives us a further clue as to meaning of this comment: "My friends, is there any accusation you have against us other than this, that we do not observe the Law, nor circumcise the flesh as your forefathers did, nor observe the Sabbath as you do? Or do you condemn our customs and morals?"⁶¹ (*Dial.* 10.1).

The reply comes back in the negative. There is no suspicion of corruption from Trypho but only incredulity at Justin's claim to be one of god's children and yet not to keep his commandments. Justin's "Jewish" friends are not necessarily questioning his non-"Jewishness" here, but the non-"Jewish" behavior of people who they supposed were

59. Εἰ δὲ βούλοιο τούτου περί δέξασθαι λόγον, ὡς οὐ πεπλανήμεθα οὐδὲ παυσόμεθα ὁμολογοῦντες τοῦτον, κἂν τὰ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἡμῖν ἐπιφέρωνται ὀνειδή, κἂν ὁ δεινότατος ἀπιοπεῖν ἀναγκάζῃ τύραννος . . . τῶν δὲ σὺν αὐτῷ δύο, χλευάσαντες καὶ τὴν σπουδὴν ἡμῶν ἐπισκώψαντες, ἀπηλλάγησαν. Ἡμεῖς δὲ ὡς ἐγενόμεθα ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ τόπῳ, ἔνθα ἐκατέρωθεν λίθινοι εἰσι θῶκοι, ἐν τῷ ἑτέρῳ καθεσέντες οἱ μετὰ τοῦ Τρύφωνος, ἐμβαλόντος τινὸς αὐτῶν λόγον περὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γενομένου πολέμου, διελάου.

60. A plausible conjecture as to the specific significance is that the comment comes just at the point Justin tries to flee the conversation at their cruelty. It could be that they are commenting on a typical pattern among "Christians" of fleeing when the going gets tough and of not being prepared to meet a challenge.

61. Μὴ ἄλλο τί ἐστὶν ὃ ἐπιμέμφεσθε ἡμᾶς, ἄνδρες φίλοι, ἢ τοῦτο ὅτι οὐ κατὰ τὸν νόμον βιοῦμεν, οὐδὲ ὁμοίως τοῖς προγόνοις ὑμῶν περιτεμνόμεθα τὴν σάρκα, οὐδὲ ὡς ὑμεῖς σαββατίζομεν; Ἡ καὶ ὁ βίος ἡμῶν καὶ τὸ ἦθος διαβέβληται παρ' ὑμῖν;