

Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I

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Clear-cut concepts are an essential basis of impartial critical research
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1. Exploring the Question

In Christian art of the Middle Ages, the synagogue and the church were often portrayed as opposites. The latter was frequently depicted as a victorious queen and the former as a defeated woman, sometimes being stabbed by one of the arms of the “living cross” on which Jesus hangs crucified.² Not only do such (barbaric) depictions assume the institutional and theological independence of Judaism and Christianity, they also affirm a close relationship between the two religions by claiming that the life of the one requires the defeat or death of the other.

Depictions such as these affirm centuries-old Christian theology: Christians replace Jews as the people of God. In order to substantiate such a claim, a common origin for both traditions had to be asserted: from the synagogue proceeds the Church, which then takes the place of the parent

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¹ “Jewish Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times,” *New Testament Studies* 6 (1960): 103–116, 116.

² Cf. Heinz SCHRECKENBERG, *The Jews and Christian Art: An Illustrated History* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 64–66; see especially plates 5 and 6, as well as fig. 2.

body. The idea of a common origin of Judaism and Christianity long served Christian triumphalist and supersessionist theologies.³ However, the same notion was later, especially from the 1960s onwards, adopted by Christians with a very different theological agenda: religious dialogue. These more recent theological currents often refer to a common origin for Judaism and Christianity in order to emphasize positively the close relationship between Jews and Christians – and indeed, so doing, they explicitly challenge earlier supersessionist theologies.⁴

The idea of a common origin for what became Judaism and Christianity has not only dominated different theologies of Jewish/Christian relations, it has also been, and still is, a very powerful construct in scholarly studies on Christian origins. Indeed, taking as their point of departure the two distinct categories of “Judaism” and “Christianity,” scholars have been intrigued by the question of when and where these two traditions separated. Since the beginning of the 1990s and the publication of James Dunn’s *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways Between Judaism and Christianity*,⁵ this quest has often been referred to as a “parting of ways” that once were one and the same. Not seldom, scholars perceive of such a “parting of ways” as the key to understanding the origin of Christianity as a religion separate from Judaism. Judaism, on the other hand, is commonly understood as the continuous part of the equation, whose origins are essentially unrelated to the so-called “parting of the ways” question.⁶

Interestingly, very soon after Dunn and others had given the scholarly community this convenient way of referring to the historical process(es) under discussion, other specialists began to question the assumptions behind the metaphor. Daniel Boyarin, Paula Fredriksen, John Gager, Judith Lieu, Adele Reinhartz, Stephen Wilson, Magnus Zetterholm, and Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, the latter two editing a volume in 2003

³ Cf. Judith LIEU, *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 11–29.

⁴ Cf. Philip S. ALEXANDER, “‘The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” pages 1–2 in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999).

⁵ The symposium leading up to the publication was held in Durham in 1989. The volume, edited by Dunn, was published by Mohr Siebeck in 1992 and republished by Eerdmans seven years later.

⁶ Cf., however, Alan F. SEGAL, *Rebecca’s Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986). ALEXANDER, “Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” 1–2, problematizes such oversimplifications. See also the very helpful charts in Martin GOODMAN, “Modeling the ‘Parting of the Ways,’ ” pages 119–129 in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). There are multiple variants of such thought-structures, all of which, however, imagine a common origin of what are today two related but separate religions.

entitled *The Ways that Never Parted*, all provide critical perspectives and reveal difficulties involved for the historian.⁷ Indeed, already in Dunn's 1992 volume, Philip Alexander states:

“When did Christianity and Judaism part company and go their separate ways?” is one of those deceptively simple questions which should be approached with great care. Though formulated in historical terms it cannot easily be answered within a narrow historicist framework. It raises profound contemporary theological issues and, if not handled sensitively, can quickly become entangled in apologetics and confessionalism. Time spent on clarifying the structure of the question will not, consequently, be wasted.⁸

In this same spirit of “time not wasted,” I wish to present some of my thoughts on how the question is constructed and what role terminology has had, and continues to have, in this construction.

After discussing terminological questions and suggesting some – I think decisive – adjustments, I shall continue to outline important events leading up to the modern situation in order to put it in perspective. In other words, the present study will discuss the way we ask the question about the ori-

⁷ Daniel BOYARIN, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); idem, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Paula FREDRIKSEN, “‘What Parting of the Ways?’ Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City,” pages 35–64 in *The Ways that Never Parted*; Judith LIEU, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?*; Adele REINHARTZ, “A Fork in the Road or a Multi-Lane Highway? New Perspectives on the ‘Parting of the Ways’ Between Judaism and Christianity,” pages 278–329 in *The Changing Face of Judaism: Christianity and Other Greco-Roman Religions in Antiquity* (ed. Ian Henderson and Gerbern Oegema; Jewish Writings from the Greco-Roman Period; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006); Stephen G. WILSON, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Magnus ZETTERHOLM, *The Origins of Christianity at Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation Between Judaism and Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2003); Adam BECKER and Annette Yoshiko REED, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). Other valuable recent contribution to the quest for Christian origins include Per BILDE, *En religion bliver til: En undersøgelse af kristendomens forudsætninger og tilblivelse indtil år 110* (København: Forlaget Anis, 2001); Annette Yoshiko REED, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), especially chapter 4 (122–159); Matt JACKSON-MCCABE, ed., *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007). See also Stanley E. PORTER and Brooke W. R. PEARSON, “Why the Split? Christians and Jews by the Fourth Century,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000): 82–119. For a recent discussion of the state of research on the so-called parting(s) question, based on the metaphors used in the debate, see REINHARTZ, “Fork in the Road,” 279–283.

⁸ ALEXANDER, “Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” 1. Note also LIEU's comment, *Constructing Early Christianity*, 15: “The ‘parting of the ways’ is a model and only one among a number of possible models ... It is not a model which would have made much sense to any of the participants or observers of the drama itself.”

gins of separate Christian and Jewish identities and then provide a general historical and interpretive frame within which local-specific developments may be understood.⁹

2. ‘Don’t Trust the Horse!’ Terminology, Categories, and the Battle for Historical Precision

Language is in many ways comparable to architecture. Via external, visible structures that are experienced and shared by others, we enter into edifices that influence our impression of reality. In architecturally constructed space, perception is re-configured, our vision “re-visioned,” and whatever is focused upon within that space is seen and understood from within the landscape that we have entered and which encloses us. There is room for a variety of interpretations within the frames provided by the external structures, largely depending on our experiences prior to entering the space. Nevertheless, the structures still establish the points of departure for any discussion and provide the frame within which conclusions may ultimately be drawn.

Scholarly terms and concepts, all of which are carriers for specific views and ideas, function in much the same way. They construct the “space” within which we focus on specific issues and topics in our conversations. Terminological edifices are built slowly over time and are not easily torn down. Yet, as has been pointed out by researchers before,¹⁰

⁹ Of course, multiple investigations of local-specific situations have provided the basis for the more general conclusions drawn here. See, e.g., Anders RUNESSON, “Architecture, Conflict, and Identity Formation: Jews and Christians in Capernaum From the First to the Sixth Century,” pages 231–257 in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee* (ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); idem, “Re-Thinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 95–132.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Morton SMITH, “Terminological Booby Traps and Real Problems in Second Temple Judaeo-Christian Studies,” pages 95–103 in *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh* (ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen; vol. 1: *Studies in Historical Method, Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism*; New York: Brill, 1996). Note Smith’s warning: “[T]here is a prejudice in favor of any established terminology; from infancy we have been trained to believe that what we have been taught is right. Moreover, this belief is convenient” (95). Anders RUNESSON, “Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity? Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 1 (2000): 120–144; John GAGER, “Paul, the Apostle of Judaism,” pages 56–76 in *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism* (ed. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz; Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002); Paula FREDRIKSEN, “Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the

now-unsustainable scholarly (and non-scholarly) ideas and consensuses from previous eras influence current discourses because many of us still occupy the space created by the terminological walls, arches and vaulted ceilings they have left behind. It is high time for us to re-consider and discuss not only the conclusions we draw, but the “architecture” within which we think them. Laocoon’s warning to the Trojans, *Equo ne credite*, should be heeded lest we inadvertently admit terms and categories pregnant with destruction into our theoretical constructs, inviting their eventual downfall.¹¹

While it is true that the complexity of the source material prohibits simplistic approaches to categories and labels with regard to the people and beliefs involved in the process in which we take interest, it is nevertheless crucial that steps are taken toward some more general categorizations that may reflect ancient rather than modern realities. Daniel Boyarin has referred to language as a heuristic tool for forming a new model that would describe the ancient situation. Transferring the Wave Theory to our field and referring to religious traditions as clusters of dialects, he is able to avoid assumptions about an original single source for what became two religions. Still, however, the use of traditional terminology creates problems.¹² To a certain degree, of course, using labels or models will always involve arbitrariness. Keeping this in mind, there are still, in my opinion, certain “places,” both as we travel diachronically back in time from the Middle Ages to the first centuries and as we journey synchronically within those early centuries of the Common Era, where differences coming to light are of such nature that they demand distinct names to avoid the confusion of phenomena that are more diverse than a single term allows for.

Although the term “religion” itself is a given point of departure for any investigation such as this, and the definition of this term may be seen as linked with the question of the invention of Christian identity and the so-called “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity, we shall, in

Study of Christian Origins Whose Time has Come to Go,” *Studies in Religion* 35:2 (2006): 231–246.

¹¹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.48–49. This metaphor is borrowed from Anna RUNESSON, who uses it in a different context: “Exegesis in the Making: The Theoretical Location and Contribution of Postcolonial New Testament Studies” (Lic.Phil. diss., Lund University, 2007), 104–105, scheduled for publication by Brill (Biblical Interpretation Series) in 2009.

¹² BOYARIN, *Dying for God*; see also idem, “Semantic Differences; or, ‘Judaism’/‘Christianity,’” pages 65–85 in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 74–85, especially 76: “[V]arious Christian groups formed a dialect cluster within the overall assortment of dialects that constituted Judaism (or perhaps, better, Judaeo-Christianity) at the time.”

the interest of space, focus here on the latter two terms: “Judaism” and “Christianity.”¹³

The use of the terms “Judaism” and “Jews” to describe first century phenomena related to what is today called by the same names has been discussed with some intensity during the last 15 years or so.¹⁴ One of the reasons for this interest in the terms is undoubtedly theological and related to assumed anti-Jewishness in so-called “early Christian writings,” especially in the Gospel of John.¹⁵ While the theological implications of any choice of translation of these terms should not be denied, my interest here is historical and linguistic. The latest, and I believe it fair to say, one of the most thorough discussions of the topic to date is the 2007 study by Steve Mason: “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History.”¹⁶ This article is a must-read for all biblical scholars and ancient historians.

In brief, Mason convincingly shows that, from an emic perspective, *Ioudaioi* in antiquity refers not to “Judaism” understood as a system of beliefs abstracted from ethnic and cultural customs, but rather indicates an *ethnic*

¹³ For discussion of the term “religion,” see, e.g., Jonathan Z. SMITH, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” pages 269–284 in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. Mark C. Taylor; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); idem, “Religion and Religious Studies: No Difference at All,” *Soundings* 71 (Summer/Fall 1988): 231–244; Russell T. MCCUTCHEON, “The Category ‘Religion’ in Recent Publications: A Critical Survey,” *Numen* 42 (1995): 284–309; Sam GILL, “The Academic Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (1994): 965–975; Bruce LINCOLN, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion After September 11* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹⁴ For thorough discussions, see, e.g., Shaye COHEN, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Sean FREYNE, “Behind the Names: Samaritans, Ioudaioi, Galileans,” pages 389–401 in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson* (ed. Stephen G. Wilson and Michel Desjardins; Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000); Philip ESLER, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), especially 19–76; *Studies in Religion* 33 (2004) is dedicated to the theme of names and naming in the ancient world and contains several helpful essays; Steve MASON, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 457–512. Note also Graham HARVEY’s monograph, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). Although Harvey’s study, a revised version of his 1991 Ph.D. thesis, contains some very problematic conclusions, it provides a helpful collection of source material and points to difficult questions involved in the interpretation and translation of the terms in question.

¹⁵ See, e.g., the contributions in Reimund BIERINGER, Didier POLLEFEY, and Frederique VANDECASTEELE-VANNEUVILLE, eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

¹⁶ See note 14 above.

group, its culture, and its politico-geographical homeland. "Judaism," he emphasizes, came into being in late antiquity as a consequence of the religionizing (my term) of beliefs and practices along the lines of (non-Jewish) Christian self-understanding at that time. "Judaism," thus understood, was a creation of non-Jewish Christians for polemical purposes. This construct mirrored the way Byzantine Christians understood their own religious identity, and so was a convenient rhetorical tool: whatever "Judaism" was, it was the opposite of "Christianity." Comparison was made possible with such a construct, always to the advantage of "Christianity."¹⁷ In reality, "religion," as we often understand the term today, cannot be abstracted from but was integral to at least six categories of life in antiquity: ethnos, (national) cult, philosophy, familial traditions/domestic worship, voluntary associations (*collegia/thiasoi*), and astrology and magic.¹⁸

The conclusion Mason draws from his analysis of the ancient material is that, in order to reflect the historical ethnic/cultural aspects mentioned, *Ioudaioi* should be translated "Judaean."¹⁹ While I strongly agree with many of Mason's arguments regarding the content of the term *Ioudaioi* in antiquity, this is the point where I must part ways with him, for several reasons. In brief, Mason's findings regarding the ancient situation in fact support a terminological continuity, not a discontinuity, between ancient and modern Jews and Judaism. The problem with Mason's argument lies not in his discussion of the ancient period, but in the understanding of Judaism in the modern period and the hermeneutics involved in translation.

If we introduce a terminological distinction between ancient contexts on the one hand, and the late antique and modern situation on the other, we introduce what seems to be a false dichotomy between ancient and modern *emic* (Jewish) understandings of what it means to belong among the *Ioudaioi*. In fact, as Mason draws his conclusions, he inadvertently adopts a (late antique, non-Jewish) Christian perspective on what it means to be a member of a "religion." Despite his discussion of modern "Judaism," he fails to recognize that the aspects he identifies as belonging to what he would prefer to call Judean ethnicity, culture, practice, beliefs etc. are, in fact, also integral to the self-understanding of most modern varieties of "Judaism." Contrary to (late antique and modern) Christian understandings

¹⁷ MASON, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," e.g., 512; but cf. 488 and the quote from Smith's study (n. 70).

¹⁸ See especially the discussion in MASON, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 482–488.

¹⁹ ESLER, *Conflict and Identity*, draws the same conclusion but from a partly different perspective. Since the problem I wish to address here relates to the hermeneutics of translation, and the arguments and conclusions drawn can be applied to studies other than Mason's, I shall, in the interest of space, limit the discussion here to Mason's article.

of “religion” and “Judaism,” which often lack ethnic or national-specific²⁰ aspects as integral to specific worldviews and ritual practices,²¹ Judaism, even after the destruction of its national cult center in Jerusalem, organized itself maintaining an essential historical continuity with regard to a shared religio-ethnic identity and a religio-political homeland.

When Mason argues for the introduction of a distinction between modern and ancient understandings of the meaning of *Ioudaioi*, he refers, in addition to the (problematic) argument above based on difference in the nature, or understanding, of “religion,” to the name of the geographical-political area and its importance for choice of translation.²² The argument is this:

1. In antiquity, *Ioudaios* referred to, as did, e.g., *Aigyptos*, a person from a specific ethnic group, originating from, or having close connections to, a specific homeland: *Ioudaios* = of *Ioudaia*.
2. Today, Jews who would be asked where they come from would not answer “from Judaea,” since “the changes that produced our English word [i.e., Jew] *have removed any immediate association with a place*” (my emphasis).²³ Mason refers to Jews who may consider themselves to be from Poland, Russia, Yemen, or Iraq, and, since 1948, from Israel. The ethnonym that corresponds to, e.g., “from Israel” is not, Mason continues, “Jew,” but “Israeli.” The other nations would produce the corresponding designations Polish, Russian, Yemenite, and Iraqi. “If modern Israel had been called ‘Yehuda’, there would be Judaeans today ... (as in ‘the Judaeans community of Toronto’).”²⁴

²⁰ For the use of “national,” see the recent study by David GOODBLATT, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²¹ The following example may serve as an illustration. I recently had a discussion with a Christian scholar (from a different discipline) in which he referred to some Jewish friends of his. He noted that these friends were atheists, but still called themselves Jews, a designation he then said that he rejected as invalid, due to the lack of “religious beliefs.” This example is telling: Christian majority culture defines what “religion” is and how it connects (or not) to ethnic aspects, such as those involved in Jewish self-identity. This definition is then applied to all other religious traditions. “Judaism” is seen by the Christian, who emphasizes “faith” as defining “religious identity,” as more or less devoid of defining ethnic and cultural aspects. If “religious” aspects are lacking the term “Judaism,” or “Jew” cannot be used, regardless of any understandings among Jews of their own identity. This is not far from the late antique period, in which “Jews” not accepting “Christianity” were denied the recognition of other vital aspects of their identity. The acceptance of a Christian understanding of Jesus was the defining core of belonging to the people of God. If such beliefs were not included in one’s “religious identity,” all other aspects of ethnic belonging and a geographical-political homeland lose their value. We shall return to this below.

²² MASON, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 489, 504.

²³ *Ibid.*, 489.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 504.

There are, in my view, two main problems with this argument. In the ancient period, e.g., in the first century C.E., there were more people identifying themselves as *Ioudaioi* living in the Diaspora than in the nation called Judea. These *Ioudaioi* were from various nations, including Judea, speaking various languages, and identifying themselves as related to various homelands of other ethnic groups. Consider Acts 2:5-11 in this regard:

Now there were devout *Jews from every nation (apo panta ethnous)* under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking *in the native language of each (hekastos tē idia dialektō lalountōn autōn)*. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans (*Galilairoi*)? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language (*hekastos tē idia dialektō hēmōn en hē egennēthēmen*)? Parthians, Medes, Elamites (*Parthoi kai Mēdoi kai Elamitai*), and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea (*Ioudaian*) and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes (*Ioudaioi te kai prosēlytoi*), Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages (*tais hēmeterais glōssais*) we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.

In other words, people identified as *Ioudaioi*, like today, could consider themselves, and be considered to be, from various nations (speaking various *native* languages), including Judea and Galilee, without this in any way leading to the conclusion that they would not be *Ioudaioi*. I fail to see the conceptual difference between the ancient period when Jews identified themselves as coming from “Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,” even if they lived in Jerusalem, and the modern period, when Jews identify themselves as being from “Poland, Russia, Yemen, or Iraq,” even if they live in Jerusalem. In the ancient period, just as much as in the modern, such identification came with cultural differences and various native languages. Indeed, the application of the English term “Jew” has not meant the removal of an “immediate association with a place” any more than was the case for ancient Diaspora Jews, who were removed culturally and linguistically from their homeland, the land of Israel.

The second problem relates to the name of the place associated with Jews. Again we need to look at both the ancient and the modern period, since we are involved in translation from an ancient language and situation to a modern language and situation. Mason argues that the shift of names designating the area should have implications for our translation of *Ioudaioi*. In antiquity we find *Judeans* in and/or related to *Judea*. Today the land is called Israel, and therefore another term than “Judeans” is needed. In antiquity, however, this area was also called the “land of Israel.” Consider the following examples from various time periods up to the first century C.E.: *’adamath Israel* (Ezek 12:19); *’Eretz Israel* (2 Kgs 5:2; 2 Chr 2:17); *gē Israel* (Tob 1:4; Matt 2:20).

There can be little doubt that the designation “land of Israel” referred to a geographic-political and cultural entity, the homeland of an ethnos (even though people identified as not being among the *Ioudaioi* also lived there). In the first century C.E., the area also went under the designation Judea, the official Roman name. The name could refer to either a limited area (the province), or the entire land, including the Galilee. Still, during this time we find the designation “Israelites” (*Israēlitēs*) frequently applied to designate the ethnos otherwise called the *Ioudaioi* (e.g., 1 Macc 7:13; Rom 9:4; 2 Cor 11:22²⁵; Acts 2:22; 4 Macc 18:5). In other words, in antiquity there was more than one designation for the area or the ethnos, and the different designations could be used in ways not corresponding directly to each other. In the same way, today, the fact that the nation is called Israel does not differ much in terms of usage from that of the ancient period. In modern “Israel” we find citizens belonging to the ethnos “Jews,” but we also find citizens of other ethnic belonging. In antiquity, someone speaking about “Judea” could designate the ethnos living there “Israelites.” Or the reverse: *Ioudaioi* were identified with their homeland, “the land of Israel.”

Further, Mason argues that *Ioudaioi* maintained the ethnic and cultural elements, as well as their connection to Jerusalem and the homeland, even after 135 C.E.²⁶ Although, as Mason notes that Louis Feldman has pointed out,²⁷ *Judaea* continued to be used after 135 as a designation of the area that was now officially called *Palaestina*, we still need to pay attention to the fact that the ethnic element and the connection between the ethnos and the homeland was maintained regardless of what the area was called. In other words, just as “Jews” may live in “Israel” today, *Ioudaioi* lived in *Palaestina* from the late second century onwards. For obvious reasons, it would be confusing to call the *Ioudaioi* living in late antique *Palaestina* “Palestinians,” yet this is where we would end up should we follow the principles for translation laid out by Mason. Instead, when we translate *Ioudaioi* into English, we need to focus on the “content” of the term, and

²⁵ MASON notes that *Ebraioi* would be a modern way to refer to “Jews” in Greek, indicating that a new understanding of the religion necessitated a new terminology (“Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” n. 90). However, this term was used already by Paul in 2 Cor 11:22, as synonymous to “Israelite,” and it was also used in some later synagogue inscriptions from Rome (ca. 3d – 4th century: *JJWE* vol. 2, nos. 2; 33; 578; 579).

²⁶ MASON, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” e.g., 496.

²⁷ Louis FELDMAN, “Some Observations on the Name of Palestine,” *HUCA* 61 (1996): 1–23. See also M. DOTHAN, “Terminology for the Archaeology of the Biblical Periods,” pages 136–141 in *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, April 1984* (ed. A. Biran, et al.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 136–139; David GOODBLATT, “From Judaeans to Israel: Names of Jewish States in Antiquity,” *JSJ* 29 (1998): 1–36. RUNESSON, *The Origins of the Synagogue: A Socio-Historical Study* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001) 62–63, also discuss terminology and criteria in this regard.

look for continuity and discontinuity between the ancient and modern period.

While outsiders, mainly Christians, may eventually have come to talk about “Judaism” as a “religion,” in the sense Mason understands that word, in order to categorize Jews within their own worldview as divorced from a Jewish homeland and a shared religio-ethnic identity,²⁸ Jewish self-understanding never adjusted to such outsider perspectives.²⁹ From an emic perspective, then, the terms “Jews” and “Judaism” still signal many of the central realities present already in antiquity. The idea of a Jewish homeland, related to the Jewish ethnos, was never abandoned; Jerusalem is still considered a religio-geographic center, the remains of the Western Wall of the Temple area being the most holy site for Jews.³⁰ This religio-ethnic identity may be compared to, e.g., Samaritans, whose Samaritanism orbits not Jerusalem but Mount Gerizim as the most holy place. This ethnos lives in what was called Samaria in antiquity, located within the Roman province of Judea, an area now located on the West Bank.³¹

In sum then, based on Mason’s identification of central components of the identity connected to what in Greek was called *hoi Ioudaioi*, and noting that such components are still central to the ethnos called *the Jews* in English, the terms “Jew,” “Jewish,” “Judaism” should be retained (with this

²⁸ It is worth noting that this Christian re-categorization of Judaism as a negative mirror image of itself for rhetorical purposes happens about the same time as Christianity is adopted by the ruling elite of the Roman Empire, which in turn begins its colonization of the Jewish homeland. Thus, the Christian view of Judaism as a “religion” divorced from ethnic and national elements is part and parcel of Christian anti-Jewish colonial theology. Cf. the discussion in MASON, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 504, which refers to Christian anti-Judaism, or “anti-Judaean sentiments,” as related to this process.

²⁹ One should also note the impact of Islam in the 7th century onwards, in addition to Christianity, in this regard. Islam, like Christianity, is not based on the ancient relationship between ethnos-homeland-culture-ritual practices-beliefs. The combined force of these to “religions” paved the way for a general disconnect between ethnos and “religion,” a disconnection that was never adopted by Jews in the East, nor in the West.

³⁰ The Jerusalem temple is of major significance for Rabbinic Judaism, which is the mother of all major varieties of modern Judaism. Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, the synagogue was never seen as replacing the temple, although it developed temple-related notions of sacred space. For a discussion of this latter point, see, e.g., Steven FINE, “Did the Synagogue Replace the Temple?” *BR* 12 (1996): 18–26, 41. As to the hope of rebuilding the temple, one may also note that very recently, a huge menorah, which is said to be designed in ways making it fit to be installed in a re-constructed temple on the temple Mount, has been placed by an unidentified Jewish group just west of the Western Wall, overlooking the Dome of the Rock. Most Jews would not be concerned about the rebuilding of the physical temple, however, but would leave that to God.

³¹ For a discussion of Samaritan history, see, e.g., Robert T. ANDERSON and Terry GILES, *The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002).

content in mind) to designate this ethnos in antiquity as well as today, in order to avoid anachronisms.

This does not mean, however, that *Ioudaioi* should *always* be translated “Jews.” As is the case with all interpretation, the dynamics of one language rarely translate directly into another with a one-to-one correspondence. A single word in one language may, depending on context, refuse direct translation into another single word in the target language in a standardized way. In other words, while ethnic and geographic-political aspects are always assumed in the term “Judean” or “Jew,” in first century usage we sometimes find contexts which emphasize geographic-political meaning *to the exclusion* of a wider application of the term *Ioudaioi*, i.e., a narrowing of the usage of the term to apply only to Jews living in Judea, as opposed to, e.g., Jews living in Galilee. In the Gospel of John we find examples of such narrow geographic usage, which may be represented here by John 7:1.³² Such nuances would not be lost on an ancient Greek-speaking audience, which would immediately think of one group of Jews living in one place as opposed to another group of Jews living elsewhere, without this in any way implying discontinuity in ethnic or other aspects of identity related to the overall group orbiting Jerusalem and its temple (whether it still stood or not). Without such distinctions between Judeans and Jews when we translate *Ioudaioi*, it would be difficult indeed to convey what was in many cases meant to describe tensions between Jews living in Judea and elsewhere (in the Gospels, most often Jews living in Galilee).³³

³² “After this Jesus went about in *Galilee*. He did not wish to go about in *Judea* because the *Ioudaioi* were looking for an opportunity to kill him.” The *KJV*, *RSV*, *NRSV*, *NIV* (and many other translations into other languages) all miss the point and mistranslate *Ioudaioi* as “Jews,” despite the fact that the context would then imply that no “Jews” were living in Galilee at the time, which is demonstrably false. Another passage where choice of translation is of significant historical (and theological) importance, as shown by its reception history, is 1 Thess 2:14–16. In my opinion, the context makes quite clear that *Ioudaioi* in vv. 14 and 15 should be translated “Judeans,” since the point is that the Jew Paul is discussing suffering inflicted on Jewish Christ-followers in Judea by other Jews also living in Judea (note *symphyletēs*, “compatriots,” in v. 14), as opposed to Jews living elsewhere (including Paul himself). “Judeans” thus signals part of the whole, a group of Jews within the totality of Jews, and the criterion for the selection is geographic-political.

³³ One such passage where choice of translation is crucial for the overall interpretation of a text is Matt 28:15. A comparison with modern examples may be instructive. Put side by side the ancient situation under discussion and the use of “England,” “English,” “Great Britain,” and “British” as terms referring to political areas. A paraphrase, with some historical significance, of John 7:1 indicates the problems: “After this William went about in Scotland. He did not wish to go about in England [not: Great Britain] because the English [not: the British] were looking for an opportunity to kill him.” For more complex discussions of terminology, language, countries, kingdoms, and provinces,

Turning now to “Christianity,” as already hinted at, things developed very differently and this needs to be reflected in our terminology, so as to do justice to the source material. Paul was an important figure in this regard, and Ignatius even more so. We shall return to their letters below. Here we shall focus briefly on a few terminological issues and their larger implications for how we understand the first century C.E. and late antiquity. At the heart of the problem lies the inseparability of ethnic, cultural, national, and religious aspects of identity in antiquity.

“Christianity” as a term, has, in our culture and for more than a millennium, referred to a “religion” in the sense described by Mason (above); the term designates a generalization of various patterns of beliefs and practices that are embodied by individuals and groups in numerous cultures in a variety of ways, all of which place, in one way or another, Jesus of Nazareth at the center. More importantly for the present investigation, “Christianity” is *non-ethnic* with regards to its membership, rather than *open-ethnic* or *closed-ethnic*.³⁴ Christianity is therefore unrelated to a specific ethnos, as opposed to Judaism. In this regard, “Christianity” is fundamentally different not only from Judaism, but also from other forms of “religion” in the Greco-Roman world, including that of the first *Christianoi*.

The English terms “Christianity” and “Christians,” despite their Greek origin and the use of *Christianos* three times in the New Testament,³⁵ can be applied only anachronistically to a first-century context.³⁶ “Christiani-

the reader is referred to discussions, in English and in Dutch, of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. How would one be able to describe tensions between (North and South) Holland and other provinces in The Netherlands, the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, if one were to use the term “Holland,” as many do in English, as a synonym for The Netherlands?

³⁴ For these terms and a full discussion of their meaning, see RUNESSON, “Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity?” 129–134. “Closed-ethnic” refers to religions, which membership is exclusive to a specific ethnos, and conversion is regarded as unwelcome or unacceptable due to the inextricable interwovenness of a specific god with a specific people. A “non-ethnic” stance is defined as one in which full and equal membership is unrelated to ethnic identities and concerns linked with such identities. An “open-ethnic” position maintains a crucial connection between a god and a people, but allows for conversion (which means, then, that a person from a different ethnos would leave his or her national, cultural and ethnic background and identity in order to join the history and identity of another people). In later rabbinic literature we find both open-ethnic and closed-ethnic, but no non-ethnic positions; for discussion and examples, see *ibid.*, 139–141. See also Terence L. DONALDSON, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 C.E.)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007). I shall return to these categories in the final section below.

³⁵ Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16. The earliest use of *Christianismos* is found in the second century: Ign., *Magn.* 10.1; cf. William R. SCHOEDEL, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 126.

³⁶ Cf. GAGER, “Paul, the Apostle of Judaism.”

ty,” in the modern sense of the term, comes into existence, rather, around the fourth century, with important developments taking place in the second century. Since this development of Christ-centered movements in late antiquity, which continues into the present, represents a fundamental discontinuity with religious phenomena of earlier periods in the Greco-Roman world, including Judaism, and since this shift in the understanding of “religion” is of vital significance to the formation of Christian identity and the so-called “parting of the ways” question, we need a language tool to indicate this difference. We need a term that distinguishes what *was* from what *became*.

While it is true that *Christianoi* was not an original designation for people claiming Jesus to be the Messiah (The author of Acts preferring, e.g., “The Way”), it became a primary descriptor before the aforementioned shift took place around the fourth century and later. Indeed, even when non-Jews had become a significant component of the membership referred to by this name, the term could still be used in a sense foreign to later uses. I suggest, therefore, that the *modern* English term “Christianity” be restricted to *modern* uses, i.e., post-late antique phenomena (with some pre-cursors before this time; see further below). For earlier periods, antedating the change in the thought and practice of “religion,” I would prefer to use a transliteration of the Greek: *Christianoi*.

In the first and second century, people called *Christianoi* by outsiders could be either Jewish or non-Jewish, and they could have radically different opinions on practices and beliefs relating to their convictions about Jesus as Messiah. Still, at least as late as in the 90s, outsiders, as well as insiders, would regard at least some of these groups as more than just related to Judaism: they would be expressions, or embodiments, of Judaism (cf. Acts 18:15; 22:12; 23:6). This would, to be sure, imply a strong affinity of such groups to Jewish cultural and ethnic aspects, including a recognition of the inalienable relationship between land, God, and people. Since such identities were Jewish ethno-religious identities, the word “Judaism” should be part of the term used for these groups. Mark Nanos and I have coined the term *Apostolic Judaism* to indicate a common religio-cultural and ethnic focus.³⁷ The designation matches, e.g., Pharisaic Judaism, Sad-

³⁷ We develop this in some detail in a co-authored book on Paul: *Paul and Apostolic Judaism* (in progress). The term “apostolic” is not meant to refer to shared authority structures or uniform practices or beliefs. Rather, “apostolic” simply refers to a basic shared understanding of a Jewish ethno-religious center, i.e., a maintaining of the connection between ethnos–god–land. Within this shared (“religious”) worldview, various individuals and groups would hold different views on the specific implications following from belonging to a messianic community. A synonym to the term “Apostolic Judaism” would be “Christ-Centered Judaism.” While the latter term is useful, “apostolic” signals a greater specificity with regard to an identity that orbits Jesus rather than any other Mes-

ducean Judaism, and Essene Judaism, as well as later Rabbinic Judaism.³⁸ Some of these Apostolic Jewish groups (e.g., Pauline communities) would argue that non-Jews could attach themselves to the Jewish ethnos, and become adopted without conversion (which would have involved circumcision for men). Since such status is considerably different from the status of god-fearers, I would suggest the term *Christ-fearers* for these people, indicating their relationship to Apostolic Jews. Although not Jews, they would think of themselves as members of the people of God as defined by Apostolic Jewish theology.

In the second century, however, one could find insiders among those called *Christianoi* who would reject any overlap between the identity of the *Ioudaioi* and their own identity as *Christianoi* (e.g., Ignatius), foreshadowing late antique developments. Because of this conscious separation from the culture and ethnos of the Jews (and we shall give an explanation below as to why and how this happened), such claims to a radically different identity need to be separated terminologically from various expressions of Judaism. I prefer to call such groups and individuals “proto-Christians.” I use “proto-Christianity,” then, to designate a cluster of beliefs and practices, adhered to by non-Jews (or Jews who rejected their Jewish ethno-religious identity), which relates to the Jewish religious system and makes use of the Holy Scriptures of the Jews, but is defined by ancient authors as being something other than Judaism, and its adherents as being “outside” of Judaism.

If we, in conversation with Martin Goodman,³⁹ present the above categories and terms in a drawing, excluding “Christianity” for the moment, the result may be shown as follows. (Note that Apostolic Jews could also be members of other Jewish associations, such as the Pharisees, as “Messianic” subgroups. I have argued elsewhere that such circumstances explain the Matthean communities and the final redaction of that gospel.⁴⁰ Cf. also, of course, Acts 5:33-39; 15:5; 23:6.)

siah (“Christ”). The fact that the later (non-Jewish) church claimed, and claims, the apostles as the founders of what is, in reality, non-Jewish Christianity, might complicate hermeneutical and theological issues, but it does not change the historical fact that the apostles, just like the prophets, were Jews and understood Jesus and their own roles in history from the perspective of a Jewish worldview.

³⁸ Pharisaic, Sadducean, Essene, and Rabbinic Judaism are all convenient ways of referring to major trends, or “clusters of dialects,” in Jewish religion without therefore denying the diversity existing within each movement or group. Thus, just as in the case of “Apostolic Judaism,” no uniformity or shared authority structure is assumed when these terms are used.

³⁹ GOODMAN, “Modeling the ‘Parting of the Ways.’”

⁴⁰ RUNESSON, “Re-Thinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations.”

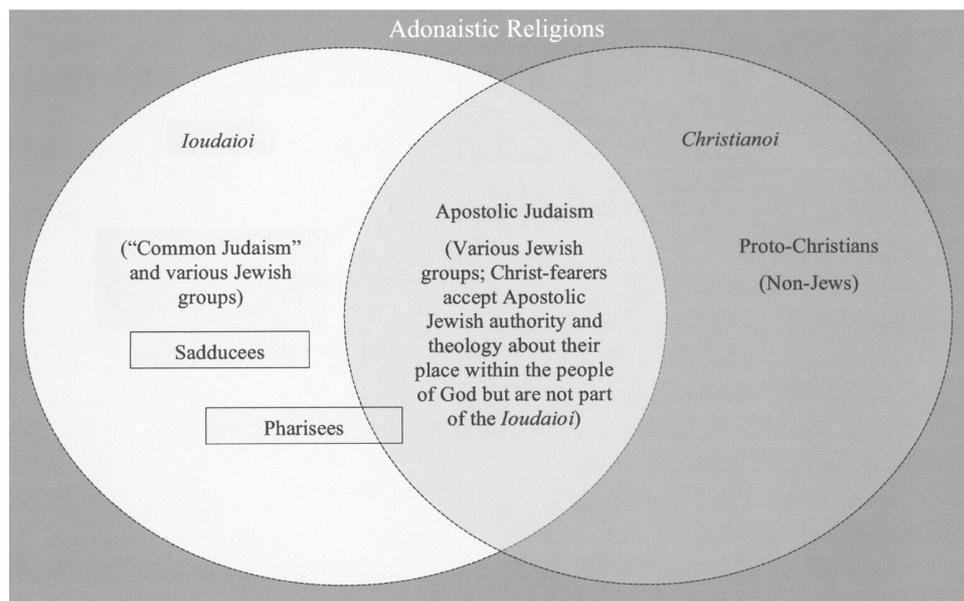


Figure 1. Conceptualizing first and second century *Ioudaioi* and *Christianioi* according to religious type and ethnic identity.

In order to account for various relationships between all of these groups, including later Christianity, in a way that makes clear the distinctions between Jewish religious patterns and Greco-Roman religious patterns, I have suggested that we summarize the former under a common heading: Adonaistic religions.⁴¹

While much more could be said, and more terminological ground could be covered, the above discussion and suggested categories may suffice to set the stage for returning to the question of the so-called parting of the ways and "early Christian identity formation" in relation to questions of ethnos, culture, land, and the God of Israel, i.e., in relation to what was "real" in various ancient social, religious, and political life-settings.

⁴¹ Cf. RUNESSON, "Re-Thinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 105. The category "Adonaistic Religions," defined according to worship focus (deity; the God of Israel), includes additional religions such as, e.g., Samaritanism, "Christianity" (closely related to proto-Christianity), and Islam. This definition of the category is to be preferred to Boccaccini's suggestion, which privileges Judaism; such a strategy neglects the ethnic criterion and brings together groups with separate and mutually exclusive identities under the heading of one of these groups. See Gabriele BOCCACCINI, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought: 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), especially the chart on page 20, which includes both Samaritanism and Christianity along with other variants whose origins are claimed to be found in "Ancient" and "Middle" Judaism. He further states that "Christianity," like "Rabbinism," never ceased to be a Judaism (18). Cf. James CHARLESWORTH's critical remarks on this in the foreword to Boccaccini's study (xviii).

3. Re-thinking the Question

Framing the question of the origins of “Christian identity” as a “parting(s) of the ways between Judaism and Christianity,” which is often done, assumes what still needs to be proven, i.e., a common origin for the phenomena today summarized under the general categories of Judaism and Christianity. The ancient situations categorized above represent a first step in the process of de-familiarizing ourselves with “what we know or expect to be the case”; of re-structuring the “architecture” within which we think. A next step in approaching these basic problems of identity formation is to look carefully at the question itself. If we do, and the assumptions behind the question are exposed, we are left with the task of re-phrasing the enquiry.

If separation, or “parting(s),” is defined as a process in which any positive interaction between Jews and Christians ceases, excluding the possibility that either tradition had any (positive) relevance to the self-definition of the other and further that participation in both traditions was an unattractive or inconceivable option,⁴² then a “parting” between the two traditions has to be dated very late. We may even point to current Jewish/Christian dialogues as evidence of positive interaction that leads to further reflection within each tradition about their own identities as well as their relationship to others.⁴³ Indeed, we might even be forced to conclude therefore that no separation has yet occurred. Such a conclusion would, quite understandably, be controversial and inappropriate from the perspectives of many mainstream Jewish and Christian traditions.⁴⁴

We need, therefore, a sharper instrument in order to enable analysis of the situation in antiquity, since, obviously, something happened that led members of both traditions to identify themselves as not being members of the other.⁴⁵ While there was, for centuries, continuous interaction between “Jews and Christians,” and sometimes blurred boundaries between “synagogue and church,” mostly within non-elite strata, it is nevertheless clear that, institutionally and theologically, there existed distinct options for those who did not share this affection for dual membership. It is therefore necessary to begin our analysis as early as possible, in the first century, in order to understand how such options developed.

⁴² So Annette Yoshiko REED and Adam H. BECKER, “Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions” pages 1–33 in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 22–24. Cf. REED, *Fallen Angels*, 122–159, 277.

⁴³ Cf. the recent study by Michael S. KOGAN, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴⁴ Obviously, for modern Messianic-Jewish minority groups, who define their identity as Christ-followers within Judaism, the “parting of the ways” question is irrelevant.

⁴⁵ Both Jews and Christians; cf. ALEXANDER, “Rabbinic Perspective,” 2.

I would suggest that there are at least three main aspects of our problem that need to be taken into account before conclusions are drawn. Framed as questions, they are as follows.

First, did there exist, at any point in time, common theological or halakhic fundamentals shared by people belonging to what would become “Christianity” and “Judaism”? This question calls attention to patterns, or types, of religion. *Second*, was there a point in time when people of both traditions shared ethnic identity, implying that some Jews eventually developed what became “Christianity” and thereby left their Jewish identity behind? This question addresses the critical aspect of ethnic identity as related to cultures, nations, and gods in antiquity. *Third*, did Jews and Christians once share an institutional setting, i.e., did they all exist within what has usually been called “the synagogue” (in the singular)? The last question is perhaps among the most misunderstood in traditional scholarship. It deals with institutional belonging as basic to any investigation into the matters with which we are concerned here.

These separate fields of investigation will, I believe, help us avoid a too-narrow approach (such as either primarily sociological or exclusively theological), and thus prevent us from producing answers based on a mere portion of the available evidence. It is also important to keep in mind the differences between elite and non-elite strata, as mentioned above. More options were available for people who were further from the centers of power. A brief discussion of each of the three questions may be instructive.

Type of Religion. While it is not helpful to isolate and use theological ideas as a basis for explaining a process of separation, neither is it advisable to ignore such factors. We need to discuss what Ed Sanders has called patterns of religion,⁴⁶ including both a praxis-oriented criterion (Sabbath keeping, food regulations, purity concerns, festivals, tithing, focus on Jerusalem, all of which are essential to Jewish identity), and an analysis of core theological ideas. We need to understand what the priests and the people agreed on, “common Judaism” in Sanders’ words,⁴⁷ and how this related to convictions and practices within specific groups and associations.

⁴⁶ E. P. SANDERS, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 16–18. While Sanders focuses more on thought patterns than ritual, or cult, in this study, his later analysis, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 B.C.E. – 66 C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1992), strikes a better balance in this regard.

⁴⁷ SANDERS, *Practice and Belief*, 47–49. Cf. Jacob NEUSNER, “The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh (Jamnia) from A.D. 70 to 100,” *ANRW* II.19.2. (1979), 1–42, 21: “[T]he beginnings of the rabbinic structure is to be located in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. ... Before the destruction there was a common ‘Judaism’ in the Land of Israel, and it was by no means identical to what we now understand as rabbinic Judaism.”

Ethnic Identity. Defining ethnicity is notoriously difficult.⁴⁸ It is nevertheless clear that, as Mason has argued (cf. above), ethnic belonging is essential, politically as well as religiously. For our purposes, it is instructive to note Acts 15 and 21 where ethnicity is the basis on which a variant pattern of religion is created for non-Jews who believed Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah and who were convinced that this had consequences for themselves *as* non-Jews. In the same way we find in Paul an insistence that non-Jews remain non-Jews with regard to ritual and cultural behaviour (e.g., 1 Cor 7:18). In both cases, the people inventing this new religious pattern were Jews who did not themselves practice what they taught the non-Jews; the religious pattern they constructed was meant for people in the movement who were ethnically defined as non-Jews. We also find that ethnicity and religious behaviour was important for Roman authorities, especially under Domitian, who intensified the *fiscus Iudaicus* and related “the Jewish way of life” (*Ioudaikos bios*) to the crime of *asebeia*, or “impiety.”⁴⁹ Of course, this is the perspective of religious and political leaders. As is evidenced in Pauline letters and Roman texts, some people felt free to ignore any absolute relationship between ethnic identity and type of religion. We shall return to reasons why this may have been the case. But there certainly is a core of shared assumptions regarding the relationship between ethnos, gods, land, and religious patterns. This is crucial for how we reconstruct the process in which what became “Christianity” was formed.

Institutional Belonging. “The synagogue,” and how ancient institutions referred to by this English term are defined, is of vital importance to our investigation; indeed this aspect is a *sine qua non* for any conclusions drawn regarding the so-called parting of the ways question. I have argued

⁴⁸ Ethnic identity is socially constructed and subjectively perceived, a myth of a shared descent, as someone phrased it. The literature on the topic is vast; cf. the discussion in ESLER, *Conflict and Identity*, 40–76. John M. G. BARCLAY, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 B C E – 117 C E)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 402, provides a basic working definition: “ethnicity,” he states, refers to “a combination of kinship and custom, reflecting both shared genealogy and common behaviour.”

⁴⁹ In the case of non-Jews acting like Jews, it could even lead to death sentences according to Dio Cassius (cf. 67.14; 68.2). On non-Jews imitating Jewish customs, cf. Michele MURRAY, *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries C.E.* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004). Ekkehard W. STEGEMANN and Wolfgang STEGEMANN, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of its First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), emphasize that only matters relevant to Rome led to measures against sympathizers of Judaism. Examples of punishment of sympathizers under Domitian include Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla, and Acilius Glabrio.

elsewhere⁵⁰ that, in the first century in the land of Israel, behind the (mostly Greek) terms used for what in English is translated “synagogue” we find two types of institution: a) The public village or town assembly; a municipal institution including religious functions⁵¹ and b) association synagogues, or Jewish *collegia*: institutions in which groups with similar background, or specific interests and interpretations of Jewish life gathered (e.g., the Essenes, Philo, *Prob.* 81; the Theodotos inscription in Jerusalem; Acts 6:9).⁵² These association synagogues related to each other, to the public synagogues, and to the Jerusalem temple in different ways, and an analysis of this interaction is crucial for understanding processes of separation. In the Diaspora, synagogues were regarded as associations, but they filled, with regard to internal Jewish affairs, many of the functions that the public synagogue filled in the land of Israel. There were, however, Jewish separatist groups in the Diaspora too, whose synagogues were meant for sectarian members only (e.g., the Therapeutae, Philo, *Contempl.*): such Jewish groups had, institutionally, parted ways with other Jews.⁵³

With these definitions and the three questions in mind, we may address the problem of identity in relation to the so-called parting(s) of the ways afresh. Was there ever a basic common theology and halakhah for what is today “Judaism” and “Christianity”? Was there a common ethnic identity? Did they ever share an institutional context?

First the obvious: the question of the “parting of the ways” takes as its point of departure modern Judaism and Christianity. We identify two religions that exist in our society, we assume that they once belonged together, and we ask how it came to happen that they parted ways. Modern Judaism in all its mainstream varieties developed out of Rabbinic Judaism. Rabbinic Judaism evolved as a coalition of Jewish groups sometime in the late first, early second century C.E., but did not become dominant in Jew-

⁵⁰ I first proposed this in RUNESSON, *Origins*.

⁵¹ So also Lee I. LEVINE, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (2d ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁵² Cf. also Peter RICHARDSON, *Building Jewish in the Roman East* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2004), 111–133, 165–221. For classification of *collegia* and comprehensive discussion, see also Philip A. HARLAND, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

⁵³ For *semneion*, the term Philo uses for this institution, as a synagogue term, see Donald D. BINDER, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999) 149–151. Cf. the list of synagogue terms in RUNESSON, *Origins*, 171–173; discussion of the synagogue of the Therapeutae is found on pages 455–458. For a comprehensive source book on ancient synagogues up to 200 C.E., see Anders RUNESSON, Donald D. BINDER, and Birger OLSSON, *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 C.E.: A Source Book* (AJEC 72; Leiden: Brill, 2008).

ish society in Palestine until the fifth century at the earliest.⁵⁴ Until then, Rabbinic Judaism is best understood as an association with little influence outside its own group or in the public synagogue.

Thus, when proto-Christianity, in many ways the mother of modern (non-Jewish) Christianity, first appeared in the early second century, Rabbinic Judaism, the mother of modern Judaism, was still not in charge of the public institutions of the Jews. Proto-Christianity, and later “Christianity,” consequently evolved as a separate religion independent of what became Judaism with regard to institutional setting: at no point in time did this type of Christianity share institutional setting with Rabbinic Judaism. Neither is there a shared basic religious pattern, especially with regard to halakhah. (Of course, all basic concepts in Christianity are connected more or less tightly to Jewish thought [including the idea of a Messiah!]. But without the ethnic aspect, the cultural and national aspects are lost, and so are halakhic regulations.) In terms of ethnic identity, Proto-Christianity and Christianity turned a radical rejection of any such connections with Jews and Judaism into a virtue.

In one sense, this answers our question of common origin: the Judaism and Christianity of the modern period and the Middle Ages never “parted ways” because they never belonged together in any of the three aspects mentioned earlier.⁵⁵ However, such a conclusion is only half the answer. After all, Jesus was Jew and practiced a form of Judaism. We need to address the question of possible forerunners of late antique and medieval Christianity and Judaism, and provide an overall interpretive frame for understanding their developments.

4. The How, When, and Why of Christian Identity: Some Tentative Suggestions

Taking the above categories, definitions, and three basic questions as a point of departure, new aspects of the problem of Christian identity formation and the so-called parting(s) of the ways process emerge. It goes without saying that local-specific contexts and factors meant that things developed differently in different places. I have dealt in some detail with the

⁵⁴ E.g., LEVINE, *Ancient Synagogue*, 466–498; Günter STEMBERGER, *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land: Palestine in the Fourth Century* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000). Cf. Seth SCHWARTZ, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E.–640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), who emphasizes an even later date for rabbinic dominance in Jewish society.

⁵⁵ Cf. the similar conclusion of Jacob Neusner, *Jews and Christians: The Myth of a Common Tradition* (London, SCM Press, 1991).

Mattheans and the Gospel of Matthew elsewhere.⁵⁶ Historically, however, the Apostolic Jewish “religion” of that Gospel displays few or no connections with what later developed into proto-Christianity, even less so with modern Christianity. This form of Judaism at some point ceased to exist (just as did multiple other forms of Second Temple Judaism). In the present section, I would like to focus on the larger picture, in which clues may be found that explain how the basic features of modern Christian identity came into existence. Doing so, I shall identify important stages in the development from the situation reflected in our earliest textual evidence, Paul’s letters, to the late fourth century, when Theodosius I proclaimed “Christianity” the religion of the empire. In this complex historical process, three main stages of development are distinguishable that will offer a general interpretive frame, which may then be used for understanding more local-specific situations and processes. For matters of convenience, I shall structure the discussion around three individuals whose actions and thought bring together and crystallize significant contemporary religio-cultural traits: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I. This is not to say that there ever was a necessary development from one to the other. Rather, as it happened, aspects of one were picked up and developed by another in ways mirroring concerns and strategies of the time. Only in hindsight is it possible to trace commonalities and impulses that connect the three in a pattern where aspects of A are taken up by B, and B is significant for C, but C has little or nothing in common with A.

With his acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, and after years of reflection, Paul most likely moved from an understanding of Judaism as an open-ethnic “religion,” or way of life, to a closed-ethnic, eschatologically motivated theological understanding of his ancestors’ traditions.⁵⁷ The open-ethnic stance was certainly the most common Jewish position around the first century C.E.,⁵⁸ and this is also what we find with Pharisaic Christ-followers apart from Paul (Acts 15:5). In the Greco-Roman world such a position was not unheard of, but was often considered problematic since movement from one religion and people to another could be understood as disloyalty – even treason – if the old gods were abandoned completely. Paul’s shift in this regard comes through in his comment in Gal 5:11, that he had once preached circumcision (i.e., actively convincing non-Jews to join the Jewish ethnos) but no longer does so.⁵⁹ Indeed, the fundamental

⁵⁶ See above, n. 10.

⁵⁷ As opposed to a non-ethnic stance, which is, in my view, a common misunderstanding of Paul’s thought: see RUNESSON, “Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity?” 131, 135–137. The categories are briefly described above, n. 34.

⁵⁸ For sources and commentary, see DONALDSON, *Judaism and the Gentiles*.

⁵⁹ Without entering the debate about how well Acts represents Paul’s theological worldview, both the closed-ethnic stance and the open-ethnic position would have re-

conviction of Paul, and in my view the key to understanding his theological position on law and faith, is that all people must remain in the condition in which they were when they were called (1 Cor 7:17-20).⁶⁰ Due to the general relationship between ethnos, culture, and law articulated by Mason (see above), such a position would automatically exempt people not belonging to the ethnos of the Jews from keeping the Law of Moses.⁶¹

It seems quite clear that Paul's understanding of what it means to be "in Christ" (*en Christō*) reflects an eschatological worldview in which Jews and non-Jews, the latter by adoption via a hermeneutical elaboration of the story of Abraham in which the covenant is said to be open to more than one people (Rom 4),⁶² together form the people of God. If this had not

quired Timothy's circumcision, since his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1-3; cf. Gal 5:3). A non-ethnic stance would not. One may also point to Acts 21:21-26.

⁶⁰ "However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision." (1 Cor 7:17-18). Note that this is hardly a rule that may be followed or not, according to Paul, on the basis of social or political context. Circumcision is always connected to a belonging within, or joining, the ethnos of the Jews, and doing so implies adherence to the law of the Jews, i.e., the law of Moses, as explicitly claimed in Gal 5:3.

⁶¹ The information given by Josephus about the events leading up to the circumcision of Izates of Adiabene (*A.J.* 20.34-48) provides an important context for understanding Paul in his first century world. Ananias and Eleazar represent two different Jewish views on what should be required of non-Jews who wish to worship the God of Israel, the former insisting that circumcision was less important than worship, and the latter insisting that Izates could only worship the God of Israel as a Jew, referring to the Law of Moses. Although Ananias refers to political circumstances as reasons for Izates not to become a Jew, the point is that this is also a theologically acceptable solution. As DONALDSON, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 337, notes, the picture is one of a spectrum. Non-Jews may place themselves on various levels and worship the God of Israel as non-Jews. At the end of the spectrum, however, is circumcision, which results in the transfer of a person's status from non-Jew to Jew; such a transfer has political implications. While Josephus seems to accept both Ananias' and Eleazar's positions on this matter, pointing to the fact that trust (*pisteuō*) in God is more important than being Jewish or not (so Donaldson, *ibid.*, 338), Paul puts equal emphasis on trust in God (interpreted as trust in his Messiah) for Jews and non-Jews, but rejects categorically circumcision of non-Jews. See further below.

⁶² Paul's theological logic, as based on the Abraham story in Genesis, seems rather straightforward: a) Abraham interacted with God *before* and *after* he was circumcised, b) God established Abraham's righteousness *before* he was circumcised, c) achievement of righteous status is attributed to Abraham's *trust* in God, d) circumcision *confirmed* Abraham's status as righteous, based on trust. Therefore: e) Abraham is the father of both the uncircumcised (non-Jews) and circumcised (Jews) who trust in God in Paul's day (which is defined as trusting in the message that Jesus is the Messiah). Moving on from Romans 4 to Romans 11, Paul adds that because God loves the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), even those who do not trust in that message, but are, like Abraham, circumcised,

been the case, the God of Israel would have been the God of the Jews only, and not of all peoples (since circumcision would have included non-Jews in the ethnos of the Jews). Such a theology would go against a rather compact tradition in the Scriptures, stating that Israel's God is indeed the God of the whole world, and that faith, or trust, is at the heart of the covenant (as proven by the Abraham story). In other words, while Apostolic (and other) Jews (Rom 11:18) and Jerusalem (Rom 15:19, 25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15) are always at the center for Paul, the hub around which the world turns, non-Jews need to join *as* non-Jews (Rom 3:27-31). In this way, and in this way only if the goal is the adoption of non-Jews as members of the people of God, the crucial connection between ethnos, culture, and law is kept intact (Rom 3:31).⁶³

Paul's Apostolic Judaism takes as point of departure the firm conviction that the Jews are the people of God, even when they do not join the Apostolic Jewish movement (Rom 11:28-29). The non-Jews are *adopted* in a sense described as "contrary to nature" (Rom 11:24), a fact that makes them vulnerable in a way Jews are not (Rom 11:26). Paul even states that reconciliation between non-Jews and the God of Israel is dependent on the main part of the Jewish people *not* accepting Jesus as the Messiah (*katallagē*, Rom 11:15). No such function is described for non-Jews who do not belong "in Christ," and, contrary to what is the case for Jews beyond Apostolic-Jewish membership (Rom 11:26), no salvation is envisioned for such non-Jews. For Paul, the basic difference *within* the people of God between Jews and non-Jews along the lines of ethnic-cultural identity was a *sine qua non* in the last days, and he urged both groups to accept this difference and keep the peace (1 Cor 7:17-20; Rom 15:7-12). Non-Jews must remain non-Jews, but they were, according to Paul, completely dependent on Jewish Christ-followers: "If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you" (Rom 11:18).⁶⁴

remain elect and will be saved (Rom 11:28-29; 26). Non-Jews who do not trust in Jesus as the Messiah are not on Paul's eschatological radar; this reinforces the importance of circumcision-ethnos-law-God in Paul's letters, both within and beyond the Jesus movement. On the absolute connection between ethnos/circumcision and law in Paul's thought, see Gal 5:3.

⁶³ Cf. John GAGER, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 263-264.

⁶⁴ So also Mark NANOS, *The Mystery of Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 175, n. 28, who relates this position to Lukan theology in Acts. See also ESLER, *Conflict and Identity*, 298-305. Cf. Robert JEWETT, *Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 686-687. For a refreshing and thought-provoking perspective on Rom 11, see also Krister STENDAHL (may he rest in peace), *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 33-44.

Thus, Paul always affirmed a basic characteristic shared by Mediterranean cultures, namely that *the gods run in the blood*, as Paula Fredriksen has aptly described it.⁶⁵ What changed for Paul as a Christ-believer in this regard was his view on the status of the category of ethnos: from an active openness to non-Jews joining the Jewish ethnos, to a rejection of this possibility based on an eschatological conviction. It is this very fact – the closed-ethnic stance combined with a) the belief that non-Jews still need to worship the God of Israel and, no less important, b) they must not pay homage to the gods of their own ethnos, or any other gods related to family, city or empire – it is this fact that eventually leads to a situation in which identity and belonging can be re-interpreted as unrelated to the category of ethnos. Ignatius will serve us well as an example of such a hermeneutical step in the formation of a proto-Christian identity.

As is well known, what we would call “religiosity” today took various forms in the Greco-Roman world. In addition to ritual attention to multiple gods related to family, ethnos, city and empire, people could engage in religious activities and be members of societies and cults *unrelated to their ethnic identity*. I am thinking here especially of the mystery religions, such as the Mithraic cult, or Mithraism, the Eleusinian mysteries, and the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, but also of the philosophical schools (e.g., Stoics, Cynics etc.).⁶⁶ The mystery cults provided the *individual* with a setting focused on his or her salvation by means of a series of rituals leading to full membership and participation in sacrificial ceremonies. There was no apparent contradiction between participating in mystery cults on the one hand and attending to the gods of one’s ethnos on the other; these were just different parts of the “religious universe” of the period.

While Paul emphasized the ethnic aspect of his Judaism as the center around which everything else turns, the closed-ethnic stance was confusing for non-Jews in the Greco-Roman world (which is clear from Paul’s polemic against his adversaries, not least in Galatians). Indeed, whereas Paul’s model for non-Jews was constructed building on Jewish theological convictions, responding to an eschatological awareness, later non-Jewish readers understood his letters from a Greco-Roman socio-religious perspective. From such a perspective, the directive *not* to convert to the Jewish ethnos would naturally place Christ-belief in the context of other Greco-Roman cults and associations in which ethnic identity was irrelevant. Such understandings would, thus, “re-categorize” the identity of belonging with-

⁶⁵ FREDRIKSEN, “Mandatory Retirement,” 231–246, 232. She clarifies: “cult is an ethnic designation / ethnicity is a cultic designation.”

⁶⁶ Cf. MASON, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 486: “a category least likely to be connected with religion in our world, philosophy, was in its ancient form rather close to our religion.”

in the Christ-movement, *from* the religion of the Jewish ethnos *to* a Greco-Roman mystery religion, or a philosophy. As such, Judaism would become irrelevant, since Judaism was “categorized” along with other Greco-Roman *ethnic* cults.⁶⁷ Just as a Roman would not mix the “category” of his or her national cult with a membership in a mystery cult or a philosophical school, he or she would not mix a Jewish national cult with a “religion” lacking a connection to a specific ethnic identity: to do so would be to confuse apples with oranges.

Such a “re-categorization” is, arguably, very close to what we see happening in the early second century, our first evidence being Ignatius’ letters. For Ignatius, Christ-belief had nothing to do with Judaism. On the contrary, he writes that it would be absurd to confess Christ and adhere to Judaism at the same time.⁶⁸ The God of Israel was no longer the God of the Jewish ethnos. Christ-belief, according to Ignatius, was detached from any specific ethnic identity (the Jews were disinherited), and, as would be the case in the context of Greco-Roman ritual sensitivities, this meant that no ethnic concerns whatsoever were appropriate. The difference for Ignatius, and others of similar convictions, between mystery cults and membership among the Christ-believers was that there were absolutizing claims linked to the latter: adherence to Christ excluded participation in any other rituals. Ignatius’ “religion,” then, combined a basic Jewish “monotheistic”⁶⁹ characteristic (serve no other gods) with the “form,” or “category,” of the Greco-Roman mystery cults. *This combination represents a fundamental shift in “religious” identity.*⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Cf. MASON, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 489, who emphasizes the “universal tendency” of ancient non-Christian authors to discuss the *Ioudaioi* alongside other *ethnē*. “*Ioudaioi* were not often compared – as the Christians *were* compared (Celsus in *Contra Celsum* 1.9, 68) – with members of cults (e.g., of Mithras, Cybele, Isis) or voluntary associations.”

⁶⁸ Ign., *Magn.* 10:2–3: “So lay aside the bad yeast, which has grown old and sour, and turn to the new yeast, which is Jesus Christ. Be salted in him, that no one among you become rotten; for you will be shown for what you are by your smell. It is outlandish to proclaim Jesus Christ and practice Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity – in which every tongue that believes in God has been gathered together.” Note that the longer recension, usually dated to the fourth century, adds, as if needed, a clarification: “It is absurd to speak of Jesus Christ with the tongue, and to cherish in the mind a Judaism which has now come to an end. For where there is Christianity there cannot be Judaism.” Cf. the “softer” position taken by Justin Martyr in *Dialogue with Trypho*, 47; the basic move away from ethnicity as a defining characteristic is, however, the same.

⁶⁹ Note FREDRIKSEN’s comments on this term (“Mandatory Retirement,” 241–243). I use it here not to refer to beliefs that only one god exist, but rather that no other gods than one specific god must be served.

⁷⁰ SCHOEDEL, *Ignatius*, 15–16, notes that the first scholar who presented a comprehensive case for understanding Ignatius’s religion as closely related to mystery cults was

Ignatius' martyrdom, therefore, had more to do with a refusal to attend to his duties in relation to his ethnos, city, and empire, than with any involvement with Jewish religion, or for participating in a "mystery cult" or association more generally. It just did not make political sense for someone who was understood to be a member of a mystery cult to not also perform the rituals for the health of the emperor and the empire. What Paul presented us with was an innovative Apostolic-Jewish socio-theological solution to the place of non-Jews among the people of God in the last days. Ignatius' religion takes Jewish themes and understands them within the socio-religious interpretive frame provided by the (non-ethnic) mystery religions. This matrix, *in and of itself*, invalidates Judaism because of the ethnic aspect. Proto-Christian identity, with its marked non-ethnic stance, now begins to take form. Proto-Christianity cannot be classified as Judaism, since the connection between god-people-land-law is considered void and precisely these features are a *sine qua non* for defining Judaism.⁷¹

This re-configuration, effectively creating what we have chosen to call proto-Christianity, was needed for this movement to spread among the elite strata of Roman society. As long as Christ-belief was understood as related to a (conquered) people – Jews and Judaism – it could hardly be a political tool to be used by rulers with other ethnic (and thus also cultic) identities. "Categorized" with, e.g., Mithraism, rituals and beliefs centered on a Christ-figure, who was given names, honors and titles belonging to emperors, history could take another turn.⁷²

On February 28, 380 C.E. Christianity, as it would develop in Medieval Europe, was born. This is not true, of course, in any absolute sense of that

Gillis P:son WETTER, professor of New Testament Exegesis in Uppsala, Sweden, in the early 1920s (*Altchristliche Liturgien: Das christliche Mysterium* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921]). There are, in my view, several reasons to return to Wetter's study on this topic, not least because of his focus on the importance of ritual. My argument here, however, is not dependent on any specific conclusions regarding the importance of ritual in ancient cults. Rather, the connection suggested in the present study is based on the importance of ethnicity as related, or not, to specific forms of "religious" organizations.

⁷¹ Note how closely related Christ-belief and the mystery religions are in the writings of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Clement talks about initiation into the sacred (Christian) mysteries, and other mystery cults are severely critiqued (*Exhortation to the Greeks (Protrepticus)*, 2, 12). It is quite clear from second century writings that non-Jews who belong within the Christ-movement relate to their beliefs and practices using terminology shared with mystery religions and philosophy, respectively.

⁷² To be sure, this should not be understood as if proto-Christians consciously "changed things" with the explicit purpose of making their religion acceptable to rulers; Ignatius' martyrdom and his attitude to life generally should warn us against such conclusions. Rather, what happened provided the necessary ingredients to enable later Roman rulers to adopt "Christianity" as a political tool.

word. But Theodosius' edict of that year, issued independently of church authorities, that Nicene Christianity was to be the religion of the empire to the exclusion of all other forms of "religion," including other forms of Christianity, was indeed a crucial step in the development of Christian social and political identity.⁷³ All Greco-Roman ethnic-based religions and cults were, basically, outlawed, and Jewish communities were restricted in their communal gatherings.⁷⁴

What we see here is a re-entering of empire-wide religio-political concerns, such as those that were behind persecution of Christ-followers until the early fourth century and Constantine's reform. Now, however, the form of religion that was adopted as state religion was non-ethnic. In other words, a non-ethnic religious identity was required of all subjects (with some provisions made for the Jews), and such an identity was brought into the center of political affairs: the security and welfare of the empire was dependent on it. While this development took long to be firmly established, as also the archaeological record shows,⁷⁵ this is what fundamentally and for the future changed the phenomenon of "religion" into our modern concept. Ridding a vast empire, consisting of a multitude of ethnic and national identities, all of which were interwoven with gods and the rituals that had been developed to please them, of the idea that people's ethnic identity was irrelevant to their relationship to the gods – and more specifically, there was to be one God only – was simply unrealistic. Yet it worked, at a success rate of almost one hundred percent: only the Jews, despite Christian claims that their ethnos no longer had any relationship to their God, preserved the ancient understanding, once shared by Apostolic Jews too, of "religion."

This new religio-political culture was implemented over hundreds of years through persecution of adherents to Greco-Roman traditions ("pagans"), and discrimination of the Jews. For the Jews of Palestine, Christian rejection of the people-land-god principle meant colonization.⁷⁶ This began already in the early fourth century, but was intensified in later centuries. The idea of a Christian Holy Land in Palestine, contrary to Jewish understandings, builds on an absolutizing and universalizing view of "religion"

⁷³ This ruling was not enforced, however, until eleven years later, when Theodosius explicitly prohibited all other cults, sacrifices, and temples.

⁷⁴ On Roman legislation on Jews and synagogues at this time and later, see Amnon LINDER, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation. Edited with Introductions, Translations, and Commentary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987).

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Eberhard SAUER, *The Archaeology of Religious Hatred in the Roman and Early Medieval World* (Charlestown: Tempus, 2003).

⁷⁶ For a recent and in-depth discussion of Christianity, empire, and the Jews in Palestine, see Andrew JACOBS, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

as non-ethnic at its interpretive and ritual core. Although Ignatius could not possibly have drawn the conclusions that were self-evident for Theodosius, we can see that the fundamental steps taken by him in de-ethnosizing belief in Christ, “categorizing” it among the mystery cults, had direct implications for Christian empire building in later centuries. It goes without saying, however, that for Paul such developments would have been utterly inconceivable, although his Apostolic Jewish approach to non-Jews and his closed-ethnic stance was a necessary factor without which Ignatius would not have been able to establish proto-Christianity.

If we, then, take a look at the three questions that we outlined above as a strategy for investigations into the so-called parting of the ways and the problem of Christian identity formation, the following can be said.

First, for Ignatius there is a fundamental difference between Jewish and proto-Christian patterns of religion, and this difference is based on opposing views of the role of the Jewish ethnos in Judaism and the lack of such a role among the *Christianoi*. For him, although he uses Jewish themes and ideas, there never was a time when “Christians and Jews” shared origins in this regard. The one abolishes the other from day one. Paul’s view is different indeed: the existence of the one is dependent on the other. However, Paul’s closed-ethnic position leads him to a distinct separation of Jews and non-Jews, so that the former never left their religious pattern (based on ethnic identity), and the latter were forbidden to share in the Jews’ halak-hic practices that were specific for the Jewish ethnos. Thus, not even for Paul was there ever a time when Jews and non-Jews “in Christ” shared a pattern of religion. Needless to say, that also answers the question of an originally shared ethnic identity: at no time, as long as Paul (or the Jerusalem Council, Acts 15) was considered authoritative in his rulings, was there a shared origin (1 Cor 7:17–18). Ignatius’ writings imply that a Jew who wanted to join his movement had to leave his or her ethnic identity behind; he or she had to “convert.” Even if some Jews may have done this, and interpreted their “Messianic” identity as non-Jewish at its core, we have no evidence of this happening on a larger scale. On the contrary, this is unlikely since there was no alternative ethnic identity to convert to; joining a movement in the category of mystery cults without one’s own ethnic background would hardly have made sense for a Jew in the second century.

Finally, the institutional context: was there ever a shared sense of belonging in the synagogue? While Paul’s theology takes a social point of departure in a shared institutional context, the Diaspora synagogue (indeed, Paul, in my view, does not make sense apart from such an institutional framework),⁷⁷ Ignatius’s approach is entirely foreign to such a social

⁷⁷ On the question of Christ-believers as subgroups within diaspora synagogues, cf. Mark NANOS, *Mystery*; idem, *The Irony of Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

setting. In other words, non-Jewish Christ-believers who followed Paul's teachings most likely existed within an institutional context shared with Jews, either in more open associations, such as those in which Paul, according to Acts, preached his own message about the Messiah, or in separate Apostolic Jewish association synagogues, sharing space and leadership with Jewish Christ-followers. If there is any connection between message, theology, and institutional setting (and I believe that there is), those non-Jews most likely remained in such synagogue settings. Just as certain, however, is that the type of organization Ignatius belonged to could, by definition, not co-exist with Jews in an institutional setting such as a synagogue, focused on ethnic identity.

So if we are to assume a common institutional origin, we must assume that non-Jewish Christ-followers who once were attached to various forms of Diaspora synagogues, changed their understanding of religious identity quite radically, in the direction described here with the help of Ignatius. This is possible, and the question that would follow would be: did such changes take place within more open Jewish synagogues and lead directly to separate non-Jewish associations (without Apostolic Jewish presence), or was it a later development within separate Apostolic-Jewish synagogues?⁷⁸ There is no space here to argue the case, but several reasons suggest that the latter is the more sociologically plausible alternative. If so, we would find a first institutional "parting of the ways" *within Diaspora Judaism*, much like the establishment of a separate synagogue.⁷⁹ A second institutional split would be between Jews and non-Jews *within the Christ-movement*, as non-Jews rejected an identity based on attachment to the Jewish ethnos. It is also entirely possible that non-Jews organized themselves apart from any Jewish communities early on, and that such organizations were independent from the very beginning. In either case, the idea of a shared institutional setting in which occurs a split along the lines of "Judaism and Christianity" is so terminologically simplified that it can only mislead someone interested in early Christian identity formation and the origin of Christianity as a religion separate from Judaism.

⁷⁸ Cf. Magnus ZETTERHOLM, *Antioch*.

⁷⁹ Cf., e.g., the social location of the synagogue of the Therapeutae; we are dealing, then, with a Jewish group, with Christ-fearers attached to it, that decides to organize itself separately from other Jewish groups. This type of separation is also witnessed by the Gospel of Matthew, as noted above.

5. Conclusions

It is customary to end an article by summarizing the main conclusions. It seems to me that sometimes – especially as the topic at hand is susceptible to misunderstandings, and language more generally is a blunt tool for conveying ideas – it may be good to also direct the reader’s attention to what *has not* been claimed.

It *has not* been argued that Judaism was or is a uniform religion with an unbroken continuity from the first century C.E. (or earlier centuries) until today. Indeed, Second Temple Judaism was striking in its diversity in ways different from the diversity of Judaism since. Rabbinic Judaism, the mother of modern mainstream variants of Judaism, began to develop only half a century after the Jesus movement was formed, and did not begin to dominate the interpretation of what Judaism was, or is, until the fifth or sixth century at the earliest: it was not mainstream Judaism during the period in which we have taken interest here, and it was not a Second Temple Jewish movement, as Apostolic Judaism was.⁸⁰ This process meant a major shift in Jewish religious identity, which developed in relationship – and opposition – to imperial Christianity. As Daniel Boyarin states, “Judaism . . . is not the parent religion to Christianity; indeed, in some respects the opposite may be true.”⁸¹ It is thus not possible to understand Judaism today without studying the development of late antique Christianity. It *has* been claimed, however, that the main characteristic of ancient “religion” in the Greco-Roman world, namely the connection between ethnos-god-land, has been maintained in Judaism throughout history, including our own time. Since the Greek term *Ioudaioi* signals such aspects of ethnic identity, we need to argue for terminological continuity over the centuries and thus (except in special cases; see above) translate this term into English as “Jews.” In the same way, the “religious” life identified as Jewish in antiquity – and

⁸⁰ Cf. Jacob NEUSNER, “Formation of Rabbinic Judaism,” 1–42, 21: “[T]he beginnings of the rabbinic structure is to be located in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E.” See also Stephen G. WILSON, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 170: “A common error, for example, is to assume that rabbinic Jews = Judaism, that is, that after the Jewish War the rabbis rapidly became the dominant and representative strain within Judaism – in effect, the mainstream.”

⁸¹ BOYARIN, “Semantic Differences,” 65. He continues by asserting: “An increasing number of cutting-edge scholars are referring to the ‘fourth century as the first century of Judaism and Christianity’ ” (66). While this is certainly true in the sense that Rabbinic Judaism at this time differed considerably from variants of Judaism in the Second Temple period, one should not, however, neglect the major difference regarding ethnic identity between Judaism and Greco-Roman “religion” on the one hand, and Christianity on the other.

today – implies this connection between people-god-land; we should thus, in English, speak of “Judaism” with regard to both the ancient and modern periods.

It *has not* been claimed that there is an absolute discontinuity between various ways to shape “Christian identity” in the first century and in late antiquity, or in our own time. There is, regardless of how it is interpreted and lived, within all Christian churches today, as well as among first-century Christ-followers, a distinct focus on Jesus as Christ. Such “Christ-centrism” makes the various movements that adhere to it distinct and identifiable among and within other constructions of “religious” identities.⁸²

It *has* been claimed, however, that there was a major shift in how “Christian identities” were formed, beginning in the second century and culminating in the late fourth century. At the heart of this shift is the de-ethnosizing of Judaism, which resulted in the rejection among “Christians” of all movements or phenomena labeled “Jewish.”⁸³ Socio-religiously, this removed non-Jewish Christ-followers beyond Greco-Roman ethnic-religious “categories” into categories already inhabited by mystery cults and various philosophies. This change thus touches the core of how the an-

⁸² The centripetal core-metaphor of Jesus as Christ has been and is always inculturated and embodied in various (social, political, economic, ethnic, national, geographical) contexts and worldviews, and transformed in terms of meaning during such processes. To take a modern example, it is well known that *naming* can be controversial and some Christian groups reject other groups’ claim to a Christian identity. Recently, in the early stages of the preparation for the presidential campaign in the United States, a person of some political importance who was interviewed on Canadian national television polemically claimed, with a certain Republican candidate in mind, that Mormons were not Christians. A similar rhetoric may be found between mainstream churches and Jehovah’s Witnesses. From a scholarly perspective however, it should be quite clear that both of these movements are to be categorized along with other expressions of Christian identities. Sociologically, Christian identities span the entire spectrum from sect and cult to denomination and state religion. Such perspectives should be kept in mind as we read polemics related to Christian identity in, e.g., patristic literature. As Martha HIMMELFARB, “The Parting of the Ways Reconsidered: Diversity in Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations in the Roman Empire: ‘A Jewish Perspective,’” pages 47–61 in *Interwoven Destinies: Jews and Christians Through the Ages* (ed. Eugene J. Fisher; New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 57, points out, “As our experience today testifies, the existence of different kinds of Jews and Christians assures a variety of relationships between Jews and Christians. For the historian it is a worthy goal to show us a past as complex as the present.”

⁸³ It also influenced how “Judaism” was re-defined in the Christian world, namely, as divorced from the connection with the land, and with the God of Israel, as an integral part of the “people-god-land” theological equation. Such re-interpretation also served, it has been claimed, Christian imperial and colonial interests in Palestine. The rise of Christian anti-Judaism is, thus, closely connected not only to theological developments related to the socio-religious category of ethnic identity, but also to colonialism.

cients constructed “religious identities,” and it affected all mainline constructions of “Christian identities” from antiquity down to the present.

It *has* also been claimed that since the time of Paul there were non-Jews among some of the Apostolic-Jewish communities who continued (for centuries) to understand their “religious” identity as dependent on their ethnic identity. These non-Jews accepted what we have called Apostolic Jewish theological worldviews, including their own place in such worldviews *as* non-Jews. They were, thus, adherents of Apostolic Judaism without being Jews. In order to distinguish such non-Jewish identities from proto-Christian identities, which rejected everything Jewish (i.e., rejected the connection between ethnos-god-land), I have used the term Christ-fearers for the former.

From all this follows that it *has not* been claimed that Christ-centered movements in the first, second or fourth centuries were in any way uniform. It is particularly important in this regard is to differentiate between various social strata; such differentiation affects conclusions about how diversity – or lack thereof – is constructed on different levels in society. On the other hand, *neither has* it been claimed that we may find behind every text (within or beyond the New Testament) interpreting Jesus of Nazareth various and distinct forms of “Christ-belief” or different communities of believers. Rather, it *has* been claimed that there are general patterns discernable in clusters of texts confessing Jesus as the Messiah; some major differences between such clusters can be argued, and different communities with distinct identities may, as a consequence, be postulated.⁸⁴ Whether such distinct communities rejected each other based on their differences or accepted one another as tolerable variants within a larger movement is another question, one which has not been addressed in this study.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ For example, what is sometimes called Matthean Judaism is in fact a form of Pharisaic Judaism, and as such was probably more widespread than has traditionally been thought; Matthew’s Gospel would have been a favorite among such communities. On the other hand, it is inconceivable that such communities would have been able to house people nurturing theologies such as those expressed in, e.g., the Pastoral Letters.

⁸⁵ As is seen in the writings of the church fathers from the second century onwards, rejection certainly became the norm. (Note, however, the more open position of Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, 47, which also implies distinct communities of Christ-followers.) The picture is more ambiguous as we change focus and look at the first century material. Ultimately, the formation of the New Testament canon brought together various strands of Christ-belief which, in and of itself, may be interpreted as a legitimization of some significant diversity. However, later theologies founded on the canonical texts invariably seem to harmonize differences and create uniformity – and, therefore, support exclusivity and social boundaries. It seems to the present writer that the biblical canon leads, in more than one way and with the aid of historical-criticism, to a re-appreciation of theological diversity within the “people of God.” Judging from the paral-

Returning to Medieval art and the representation of the synagogue as a defeated woman and the church as a victorious one, we may ask what, more precisely, the metaphor is symbolizing. Does the depiction of Christian victory refer to an allegedly superior religious system, embodied in the independent institution of the church? It is when the ethnic aspect is brought to the fore that one realizes the horrifying consequences of Christianity's struggle for a shared, and then appropriated, heritage with the Jews. Far from Paul's eschatological vision of a unity in diversity, the children of his non-Jewish converts turned against their parents and cut themselves loose. This institutional separation between proto-Christians and Apostolic Jews and Christ-fearers was developed into, and cemented as, a theological schism by later Christians. Interestingly, it is precisely this type of non-ethnic Christ-belief that was persecuted by some Roman emperors, and then later became the official religion of the empire. As the empire's religion, Christians could not, of course, acknowledge Apostolic Judaism as the center of the movement, the root of the olive tree, the very reason for their own holiness (Rom 11:16-17).

When we re-define the question of Christian identity formation and the so-called parting of the ways so that it deals, not with evidence of positive interaction and dual memberships, but with institutional belonging in combination with investigations into religious type and ethnic identity, we are pushed back into the first centuries and a complex and diverse development, of which we have discussed evidence associated with Paul, Ignatius and Theodosius I. Central to the question of Christian identity formation is, therefore, the problem of Apostolic Judaism and its disappearance.⁸⁶ Switching perspectives, this question is connected with the rise of Rabbinic Judaism in the fifth century and later. The study of political, colonial, and social mechanisms behind these processes provides fruitful entries for a fuller understanding of the relationship between modern Judaism and Christianity and should be given more attention than has been the case in the past.

lel movements of dialogue and ecumenical conversations on the one hand, and the current role of historical criticism on the other, we are, arguably, observing the growth of an old olive tree.

⁸⁶ Cf. RUNESSON, "Jews and Christians in Capernaum," 254–257.