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Laato, Antti

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Abraham in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue*

Antti Laato, ÅAU

Abstract:

In this article I have attempted to put Justin's theology in its own historical context. I would like to see Justin's theology as a development from intra-Jewish theological discussions which took place in the Jewish-Christian confrontations where the borderlines between Judaism and Christianity were not at all clear in the first century and at the beginning of the second CE. Justin's way of dealing with the promise given to Abraham mainly follows the Jewish apostle's Paul's interpretation of the Abrahamic faith in Romans 4 and Galatians 3-4. He has used Paul's way of treating Abrahamic faith and Jesus' saying in Mt 8:11-12, and developed more clearly a theological idea that the promise given to Abraham concerned the Christian Church from the very beginning. However, it is difficult to say that Justin represented pure supersessionistic theology because his interpretation does not nullify the intra-Jewish discussion still present in the New Testament. According to this intra-Jewish discussion, the promise of Abraham is related to Abraham's physical descendants, the Jews who continue to practice the Mosaic Law (as expressed by Paul, the Jew, in Rom 9:1-5). The central debate in this intra-Jewish discussion concerned the question whether Jesus from Nazareth should be regarded as Messiah/Christ.

1 Introduction

The aim of this article is to discuss how we should understand Justin Martyr's expressions regarding the heritage of Abraham. This research question is related to the way how God's promise to Abraham was understood in Jewish and early Christian texts of late antiquity. Abraham's family history in the Book of Genesis contains two important interpretive modes which have played a significant role in early Jewish writings: *universalism* and *particularism*.¹ Universalism is manifested in the many promises given to Abraham (and repeated to Isaac and Jacob) that all nations will be blessed in Abraham or in his seed (Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) whatever this means.² Universalism indicates an inclusive aspect. Even other nations can be incorporated among the "sons of Abraham" (*universalistic and inclusive mode of reasoning*). Particularism, in turn, is visible in the divine election among the offspring of Abraham: Isaac, and

¹ See the concepts universalism and particularism in A. Runesson, "Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity? Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology," *Studia Theologica* 54:1 (2000): 55-75.

² The promise has been expressed with the aid of niph'al (Gen 18:18; 28:14) and hitpa'el (Gen 22:18; 26:4) forms and there is a discussion whether the promise should be translated (1) "in the seed of Abraham all nations will be blessed" or (2) "all nations will bless themselves in the seed of Abraham". In the Septuagint the promises have been translated in the passive i.e. according to the alternative (1), and this understanding is clearly possible for both niph'al and hitpa'el. For this, see H.S. Nyberg, *Hebreisk Grammatik* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1952), 223-224. On the other hand, the particularistic interpretation becomes evident in Aramaic Testament of Levi 10:12 (preserved only in the Greek version) where Gen 12:3 is interpreted in an exclusive way: "And blessing shall be pronounced by your seed upon the earth and your seed shall be entered in the book of the memorial of life for all eternity."

not Ishmael, is chosen; and later Jacob is elected while Esau is not (*particularistic and exclusive mode of reasoning*).

In the present form of the Hebrew Bible the patriarch narrative mainly emphasizes particularistic thinking. The election history within the family of Abraham was introduced so that Jacob was presented as the main figure and the true inheritor of the blessing of Abraham. Anyone who reads the patriarch story in the present form of Genesis finds that the true lineage of divine blessing is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as his descendants who moved to Egypt and whom God rescued from slavery as the Book of Exodus continues the story of Genesis. Even though the patriarch and exodus narratives have been combined in the present form of the Pentateuch³ so that the particularistic reasoning is emphasized, the later reception history of Genesis clearly shows that the universalistic and inclusive reasoning also played a role. This theological tension between universalism (all peoples will be blessed in the seed of Abraham) and particularism (only Jacob is elected among the descendants of Abraham) became the focus in Christian theological thinking in particular. In the early Jewish reception history (before the outcome of Christianity) both a particularistic mode of reasoning (e.g. in the Book of Jubilees; the Aramaic Levi document) and a universalistic mode of reasoning (e.g. in the Septuagint; Philo's writings) were used to explain the patriarch stories.⁴ This indicates that both reasoning modes were apparently known to early Christian writers, and moreover they could use them as the evidence in the New Testament shows.

In our research project UNIPAR (nickname for "Universalism and Particularism in Abraham's Family Narrative of Genesis and Its Reception in Jewish and Christian Writings") supported by the Inez and Julius Polin Institute for Theological Research we are interested in cases where the universalistic-inclusive and particularistic-exclusive modes of reasoning can be compared.⁵ The patriarchal stories of the Hebrew Bible were translated more or less verbatim in the Septuagint, which means that both Jews and Christians used the same version of the story, even though the Christians mainly read the Septuagint and only Jewish-Christian groups were able to consult the Hebrew Bible. Much midrashic material was developed in the Second Temple period and this Jewish material was adopted and modified in the patristic and rabbinical writings of late antiquity. Analyzing these rewriting processes and interpretive strategies in inter- and multi-disciplinary ways gives knowledge of the way biblical traditions have been used both in the formation of Christianity and rabbinical Judaism and provides a hermeneutic perspective to understand the common ground of these religions and early forms of confrontation.

One of the most important "Christian" theologians who struggled with the universalistic and particularistic aspects of the Abraham-narrative was the Apostle Paul. On one hand, Paul

³ This combination has taken place in the postexilic period according to Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012). For another view, see Erhard Blum, "Hosea 12 und die Pentateuchüberlieferungen," in Anselm C. Hagedorn and Henrik Pfeiffer, eds., *Die Erzväter in der biblischen Tradition: Festschrift für Matthias Köckert* (BZAW 400; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 291–321.

⁴ For this, see e.g. James Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press 1998).

⁵ <https://www.polininstitutet.fi/en/polin-institute/>

interpreted the universalistic promise, that all nations will be blessed in the seed of Abraham, Christologically, so that all believers in Christ are the “true descendants” of Abraham (e.g. Gal 3:15-18, 29; Rom 3-4). On the other hand, he also used a particularistic interpretive mode of election history of Abraham’s family in Galatians 4 and Romans 9-11. In these chapters, Paul refers to the election of Isaac (over Ishmael) and Jacob (over Esau) in order to emphasize that not all who are descendants of Abraham in the carnal sense can be regarded as the true offspring of Abraham.

In the patristic exegesis Paul’s theological ideas concerning Abraham’s faith and his typological or allegorical interpretation concerning Abraham, Isaac/Ishmael and Jacob/Esau were developed further. While Paul apparently still started from the fact that Jacob (i.e. Israel) is presented in the Hebrew Bible as being an ancestor for all Israelites and Jews, Church fathers often presented a straightforward “cuckoo-nest-theology”. Later patristic texts are examples of theology where Paul’s exegesis of Abraham functions like the egg of the brood parasite cuckoo. The cuckoo lays its egg (= the promise given to Abraham that all nations will be blessed) in the nest (= God’s Israel). The cuckoo’s offspring grow up and become stronger than all other youngsters in the nest (= Jews), and finally expel them from the nest (= only Isaac and Jacob will be blessed and they symbolize the Christian Church). The classical Christian substitution theology, where Jacob or Israel symbolizes the Church, functions in this way. The universal promise to Abraham was used in order to argue that the gentiles could be included among the true Israelites, and the particularistic mode of reasoning was then used to expel the Jews, the (carnal) offspring of Abraham, away from “the Israel of God” (cf., the use of this term in Gal 6:16).

The focus in this article is Justin Martyr’s theology⁶ as it has been elaborated in his work *Dialogue*.⁷ My central research question defined at the beginning of the article is therefore related to the problem whether Justin already represents “cuckoo-nest-theology” to Trypho (= Justin’s Jewish protagonist)⁸ or whether he has a more nuanced theological treatment of the universalistic and

⁶ Concerning Justin’s works and life, see L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); E. R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr: An Investigation into Conceptions of Early Christian Literature and its Hellenistic and Judaic Influences* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968; first edition 1928); E. F. Osborn, *Justin Martyr* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973); H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984); S. Parvis and P. Foster, eds., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (Minneapolis: Fortress 2007).

⁷ See the text in: E. J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten: Texte mit kurzen Einleitungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1984); Miroslav Marcovich (ed.), *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994); Miroslav Marcovich, Edouardo Des Places (eds.), *Justin Dialogus cum Tryphone* (New York: Walter de Gruyter 1997). Good translations can be found in the Ante-Nicene Fathers and in T. B. Fall, *Dialogue with Trypho and with a new introduction* by Thomas P. Halton (ed. by Michael Slusser; Catholic University of America Press 2003). I follow the (fairly literal) translation of the Ante-Nicene Fathers if not interpreted otherwise.

⁸ There is detailed scholarly discussion in which ways Justin’s work *Dialogue* is based on a real conversation (scholars agree that *Dialogue* cannot be any protocol of a real dialogue) and in which ways Justin has reliable information about Jewish theological concepts (scholars have demonstrated that in many points Justin’s references find correspondences in the Jewish belief system even though he has presented simplifications). See W. Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (London: T&T Clark International, 2006) 127-161; many articles in O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik (eds.), *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers 2007) where Justin’s relation to Jewish-Christian groups as well as to Judaism are referred to; Antti Laato, “Justin Martyr Encounters Judaism,” in A. Laato and P. Lindqvist, eds., *Encounters of the Children of Abraham from Ancient to Modern Times* (STCA 1; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 97-123.

particularistic aspects of the promise to Abraham.⁹ Earlier Jeffrey Siker has discussed this question,¹⁰ and formulates his thesis as follows:¹¹

To anticipate my conclusions, we will see in the present chapter that Justin uses Abraham to render the Jews orphaned, without legitimate claim to Abraham as their father in any meaningful way. The Jews do not have a future, nor do they have any true past. Justin uses the very Abrahamic heritage that the Jews claim in order to show that they are not the children of Abraham; he thus leaves them abandoned and disinherited.

Susan Wendel presents another similar, even though in my view more balanced view on Justin's theology when she compares Justin's treatment of Jews with that in Luke-Acts:¹²

Unlike Justin, Luke distinguishes between the identity and heritage of Jewish and non-Jewish members of the Christ-believing community. In so doing, he recognizes the distinct status of Jewish Christ-believers in relation to their scriptures even as he excludes Jews who do not embrace the exegesis and message of Jesus.

These ways of characterizing Justin's theology in negative terms seems too straightforward to me and in this article I try to define more accurately how the reception of Abraham in *Dialogue* should be considered. My aim is not to present Justin as a model for modern interreligious dialogues between Judaism and Christianity. He is clearly unsuitable in that role. Rather, I want to put Justin's theology in its own historical context so that I emphasize the following points in my analysis:

- a) Justin lived in an era when Christians were persecuted,¹³ not in the post-Constantine era when the Christian Church had political power. Therefore, Justin's aim could not have been an oppressing theological argumentation (with political implications) against the Jews, but

⁹ Cf., similar questions which have been presented in Susan Wendel, "Interpreting the Descendant of the Spirit: A Comparison of Justin's Dialogue with Trypho and Luke-Acts," in Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 95-103. Scholars have often compared Justin's way of using the scriptures with their use in Luke and Acts, and see continuity between them. See the detailed study on this topic and literature referred within Susan Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation and Community Self-Definition in Luke-Acts and the Writings of Justin Martyr* (SupNT 139; Leiden: Brill, 2011).

¹⁰ Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 163-184.

¹¹ Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 163. Siker refers to E. Mihaly, "A Rabbinic Defense of the Election of Israel: An Analysis of Sifre Deuteronomy 32:9, Pisqa 312," *HUCA* (1964) 103-143, as did David Rokéah (*Justin Martyr and the Jews* [Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 5; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 117-127) when they rightly comment that Sifre Deuteronomy gives Jewish answer to one-sided Christian interpretation on the patriarchs. See further Pekka Lindqvist's article in this volume.

¹² Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation and Community*, 281.

¹³ The problem of the persecutions of Christians and the role of Jews in them is a difficult historical problem. Patristic evidence often makes one-sided statements about these persecutions so that all Jews everywhere persecuted Christians and blasphemed them (or Jesus) in synagogues. This concerns also Justin Martyr. For this, see especially M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 1996). Nevertheless, it is understandable that Justin had to encounter the Jewish "liturgical" approach against Christians by arguing that Christians are not cursed by God of Israel but that they suffered in the name of Christ, and in that way fulfilled prophetic expectations.

rather a way of finding a biblical (Old Testament) background for the self-definition of the Christian Church.¹⁴

- b) Justin's biblical argumentation was based on the New Testament models, and even some early Jewish-Christian interpretive tradition influenced his way of arguing.¹⁵ This means that Justin's theological argumentation followed certain axioms which were developed in intra-Jewish struggles and which he accepted without critical examination.
- c) Justin was the child of his own era, and he followed typical ancient Jewish and Christian ways of interpreting the scriptures.¹⁶
- d) Finally, Justin's way of understanding the Mosaic Law is an essential question. I have devoted a separate study to this intra-Jewish problem and this article is related to that article.¹⁷

This being the case we must be careful not to evaluate Justin's treatise *Dialogue* according to modern categories and thus regard his formulations simply as tendentious supersessionistic opinions which aimed at establishing strong anti-Jewish tendencies.¹⁸ We know those lines of development which did lead to that problematic theology within the Christian Church, but Justin cannot be blamed for that later tendency. So let Justin be responsible only for what he actually wrote!

2 Historical Credo in the New Testament

Justin's argumentation concerning Abraham cannot be understood if it is not related to the use of the so-called historical *credo* in the New Testament. Gerhard von Rad made the concept of the historical *credo* famous in Old Testament exegesis.¹⁹ The historical *credo* was a part of the temple

¹⁴ I would like to emphasize how important it is that we read Justin's texts without attempting to interpret them with the anti-Jewish modes of post-Constantine era.

¹⁵ For the influence of Jewish-Christian traditions in Justin's theology, see especially Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy. A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-text Tradition. Text-type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (SupNT 56, Leiden: Brill 1987).

¹⁶ A good overview of different ways of interpreting biblical stories of Genesis in late antiquity can be found in Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*. A good example is Justin's typologies of the cross (*Dial* 90-91, 94) which are based on three texts of the Hebrew Bible which in antiquity were regarded as difficult among Jews because of their assumed promotion of magical thinking: 1) Blood ritual in the Passover (Ex 12); 2) Moses' prayer (Ex 17:8-15); 3) Bronze Serpent (Num 21:4-9). Justin interprets all three texts as referring typologically and symbolically to the cross. Another way of interpreting these difficult texts can be found in Mekhilta de Rabbi Ismael. For this, see Marc Hirshman, "Polemic Literary Units in Classical Midrashim and Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho," *JQR* 83 (1993): 369-384; Antti Laato, "Interpreting the Hebrew Bible with Different Hermeneutical Models: A Contribution to Jewish and Christian Exegesis," in Sven-Olav Back and Matti Kankaanniemi, eds., *Voces Clamantium in Deserto: Essays in Honor of Kari Syreeni* (Studier I exegetisk och judaistik utgivna av Teologiska fakulteten vid Åbo Akademi 11; Åbo: Åbo Akademi University, 2012), 163-183.

¹⁷ I have discussed more closely Justin's treatment of the Mosaic Torah in my article "Jewish Believers in Jesus and the Mosaic Law: The Opinion of Justin Martyr," forthcoming in *Studies on the Children of Abraham* (STCA 8; Leiden: Brill).

¹⁸ Concerning this, see my treatment of Justin's theology towards Jews in Antti Laato, "Justin Martyr Encounters Judaism."

¹⁹ Gerhard von Rad, "Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch," in Gerhard von Rad, *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (TB 8, Munich 1958), 9-86; idem, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band I: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1982). It is a well-known fact that von Rad developed

liturgy (Deut 26:5-11) where a Jew confesses his relationship to the patriarch Jacob to whom God has actualised mighty acts in history by leading his descendants, the people of Israel, out of Egypt and giving them the land of Canaan. Similar historical credos can be found in other parts of the Old Testament, for example, in Deut 1-4; Joos 24; 1 Sam 12; Neh 9; Ps 78; 105-106; 136. The aim of these texts was to remind the people of Israel that Yahweh is God who has acted in history and entered into covenantal relationship with his people. The historical *credos* became a central part of Old Testament theology: God has led the history of his people throughout the centuries, and still leads and will lead it in future.

In the New Testament, historical *credos* have been used in intra-Jewish discussions to relate the decisive salvation-historical event that took place in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to older salvation-historical events recounted in the Old Testament.²⁰ An illustrative example is Luke's description in Acts 7 where Stephen begins his speech by referring to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and then continues by stating how Jews have always opposed the leader whom God has given, first Joseph, then Moses and then finally Jesus, the Messiah. In this way, Jesus is related typologically to Joseph and Moses and Stephen's aim is to call the Jewish people to repentance. Luke gives another example in Acts 13:16-47 where Paul delivers a speech in Antioch of Pisidia. Like Stephen Paul begins his speech by referring to the patriarchs and then continues to describe the exodus of Egypt, the conquest of the Land of Canaan, refers to the judges and then comes to the history of David. David received the promise of the eternal dynasty (2 Sam 7) which gives Paul the possibility to actualize the messianic promise which has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In this way Paul gained the opportunity to speak about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how the universal message of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed everywhere in the world.

In his own letters, the Jewish apostle Paul uses the historical *credo* to illustrate how God has led his people. In Romans 9-11, Paul shows that God has always chosen a remnant which has remained loyal. Paul begins by referring to the patriarchs and argues that not all offspring of Abraham was elected, only Isaac and then Jacob (Rom 9:1-13). The election of Yahweh continued in the history of Israel too, and, by using the prophetic texts from the Books of Hosea and Isaiah, Paul argues that only a remnant of the people has been loyal to God (Rom 9:14-29). Another biblical story, which illustrates the idea that only a remnant remains loyal to God, is the story of Elijah. At the time of Elijah, only 7000 Israelites remained faithful to God (Rom 11:1-10). Paul uses biblical stories typologically to illustrate that similar history will continue in the era of Jesus Christ when only a small remnant of the Jewish people will accept the apostolic message. God will punish (but not reject) disloyal Jews because of their disbelief, and during this period non-Jewish peoples will join the new Israel. Nevertheless, Paul presents an eschatological hope that in the future the

his salvation-historical understanding of the Old Testament in Jena under the pressure of Nazi theology (which he apparently opposed). A good and brief introduction to this struggle in Jena is Bernard M. Levinsson, "Reading the Bible in Nazi Germany: Gerhard von Rad's Attempt to Reclaim the Old Testament for the Church," *Int* 62 (2008): 238-254.

²⁰ It is a well-known fact that the scholarly concept "salvation history" has been related to Luke's works (Luke and Acts) in the New Testament. In patristic literature especially Irenaeus has been regarded as representing salvation historical theology.

Jewish people will understand the gospel of Jesus Christ and turn to their Messiah. He also warns against non-Jewish peoples behaving arrogantly towards those Jews who now temporarily live in unbelief (Rom 11:11-36).

It is significant that the salvation-historical presentation of the Christian kerygma appears in Luke-Acts as well as Paul's letters. Both New Testament corpuses were important for Justin.²¹ The historical *credo* where Jesus' life, proclamation, death and resurrection form a new decisive salvation historical stage in the plans of God is important for Justin's theology and put it in the continuity of the New Testament theology. In this article, my focus is not laid on continuity (which is evident) but on the way in which Justin modified that New Testament theology.

3 Abraham-Promise in Justin's Dialogue 119-120

The central passage where Justin deals with the election history relating to Abraham's family is *Dial* 119-120.²² I shall first analyze this passage and then deepen its meaning by referring to other texts in *Dial* (see Chap. 4). *Dial* 119 contains four Old Testament quotations Deut 32:16-23; Zech 2:11; Isa 62:11 and Isa 65:1. Justin's aim is to show that the Jewish people have provoked God with their idols and abominations. Therefore, God will choose a new nation and (foolish) people (Deut 32:16-23) which will consist of many nations (Zech 2:11) and become holy (Isa 62:11) because God will manifest his grace to those who previously did not belong to his people and did not know him (Isa 65:1). This new chosen people will inherit the promise given to Abraham (*Dial* 119:4-6):

(4) For this is that nation which God of old promised to Abraham, when He declared that He would make him a father of many nations [*patera pollōn ethnōn thēsein*]²³; not meaning, however, the Arabians, or Egyptians, or Idumæans, since Ishmael became the father of a mighty nation, and so did Esau; and there is now a great multitude of Ammonites. Noah, moreover, was the father of Abraham, and in fact of all men; and others were the progenitors of others. (5) What larger measure of grace, then, did Christ bestow on Abraham? This, namely, that He called him with His voice by the like calling, telling him to quit the land wherein he dwelt [*ekselthein apo tēs gēs en hē ōkei*]²⁴. And He has called all of us by that voice, and we have left already the way of living in which we used to spend our days, passing our time in evil after the fashions of the other inhabitants of the earth; and along with Abraham we shall inherit the holy land, when we shall receive the inheritance for an endless eternity, being children of Abraham through the like faith [*tekna tou Abraam dia tēn homoian pistin ontes*]²⁵. (6) For as 'he believed' the voice of God, 'and it was imputed to him for righteousness'

²¹ See Oskar Skarsaune, "Justin and His Bible," in Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 53-76.

²² According to Siker, Justin mentions Abraham 103 times. He regards *Dial* 119:3-6 "the most striking passage." See Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 163.

²³ Cf., Gen 17:5: *hoti patera pollōn ethnōn tetheika se*.

²⁴ Cf., Gen 12:1: *ekselthe ek tēs gēs sou*.

²⁵ Cf., Gal 3:7: *ginōskete ara hoti hoi ek pisteōs, houtoi hyioi eisin Abraam*.

[*episteuse kai elogisthē autō eis dikaiosynēn*]²⁶, in like manner we having believed God's voice spoken by the apostles of Christ, and promulgated to us by the prophets, have renounced even to death all the things of the world. Accordingly, He promises to him a nation of similar faith, God-fearing, righteous, and delighting the Father; but it is not you, 'in whom is no faith' [*hois ouk esti pistis en autois*]²⁷.

Justin's argumentation is based on the axiom which Paul formulated in his letters to the Galatians and Romans where he argues that a true descendant of Abraham is one who has faith like the patriarch.²⁸ Therefore, Justin argues that all nations have the possibility to inherit the promise given to Abraham when they approach God through Jesus Christ.²⁹ Here Justin uses a universalistic-inclusive mode of reasoning. However, Justin develops the argument of Paul still further by stating that it was Jesus Christ who called Abraham (Gen 12:1). This corroborates well with Justin's many statements in *Dial* that it was Son of God who appeared to the patriarchs (see further Section 4 in this article). At the end of *Dial* 119 Justin presents similar argument to Paul in Rom 11:17-23, namely, that those Jews who do not believe (in Jesus Christ) will not be included in the holy people (or in Paul's words "will be cut off from the olive tree"). Justin's rhetoric argumentation here is more straightforward, however, because he emphasizes that the original promise to the patriarchs has been given to the new nation (i.e. Christianity) and not to the Jewish people. Paul's argument in Romans, on the other hand, emphasizes *expressis verbis* that Jews "are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen" (Rom 9:4-5). In *Dial* 120 Justin elaborates his rhetorical argumentation as to why the promise given to Abraham (and repeated to Isaac, Jacob and Judah) concerns only the Church:

(1) Observe, too, how the same promises are made to Isaac and to Jacob. For thus He speaks to Isaac: 'And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed' [*kai eulogēthēsontai en tō spermati sou panta ta ethnē tēs gēs*]³⁰. And to Jacob: 'And in you and in your seed shall all families of the earth be blessed' [*kai eulogēthēsontai en soi pasai hai fulai tēs gēs kai en tō spermati sou*]³¹. He says that neither to Esau nor to Reuben, nor to any other; only to those of whom the Christ should arise, according to the dispensation, through the Virgin Mary. (2) But if you would consider the blessing of Judah, you would perceive what I say. For the seed is divided from Jacob, and comes down through Judah, and Phares, and Jesse, and David. And this was a symbol of the fact that some of your nation would be found children of Abraham, and

²⁶ Cf., Gen 15:6: *kai episteusen Abram tō theō kai elogisthē autō eis dikaiosynēn*.

²⁷ Cf., Deut 32:20: *hois ouk estin pistis en autois*.

²⁸ Scholars have discussed whether Justin knew Paul's letters or not. Justin never quotes Paul verbatim but it seems that Justin's argumentation is difficult to understand if we do not assume his familiarity with Paul's writings. For this see especially Skarsaune, "Justin and His Bible," 74-75 where he – by referring to other studies – notes that Justin no doubt "made extensive use of Paul's letters, especially Romans and Galatians" (p. 74).

²⁹ For this see especially Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 345-346.

³⁰ Gen 26:4: *kai eneulogēthēsontai en tō spermati sou panta ta ethnē tēs gēs*.

³¹ Gen 28:14: *kai eneulogēthēsontai en soi pasai hai fulai tēs gēs kai en tō spermati sou*.

found, too, in the lot of Christ; but that others, who are indeed children of Abraham, would be like the sand on the sea-shore, barren and fruitless, much in quantity, and without number indeed, but bearing no fruit whatever, and only drinking the water of the sea. And a vast multitude in your nation are convicted of being of this kind, imbibing doctrines of bitterness and godlessness, but spurning the word of God. (3) He speaks therefore in the passage relating to Judah: 'A prince shall not fail from Judah, nor a ruler from his thighs, till that which is laid up for him come; and He shall be the expectation of the nations' [*ouk ekleipsei arkhōn eks louda kai hēgoumenos ek tōn mērōn autou, heōs an elthē hō apokeitai kai autos estai prosdokia ethnōn*; Gen 49:10].³² And it is plain that this was spoken not of Judah, but of Christ. For all we out of all nations do expect not Judah, but Jesus, who led your fathers out of Egypt. For the prophecy referred even to the advent of Christ: 'Till He come for whom this is laid up, and He shall be the expectation of nations.' (4) Jesus came, therefore, as we have shown at length, and is expected again to appear above the clouds; whose name you profane, and labour hard to get it profaned over all the earth. It were possible for me, sirs, to contend against you about the reading which you so interpret, saying it is written, 'Till the things laid up for Him come' (*heōs an elthē ta apokeimena*); though the Seventy have not so explained it, but thus, 'Till He comes for whom this is laid up.' (5) But since what follows indicates that the reference is to Christ (for it is, 'and He shall be the expectation of nations'), I do not proceed to have a mere verbal controversy with you, as I have not attempted to establish proof about Christ from the passages of Scripture which are not admitted by you which I quoted from the words of Jeremiah the prophet, and Esdras, and David; but from those which are even now admitted by you, which had your teachers comprehended, be well assured they would have deleted them, as they did those about the death of Isaiah, whom you sawed asunder with a wooden saw. And this was a mysterious type of Christ being about to cut your nation in two, and to raise those worthy of the honour to the everlasting kingdom along with the holy patriarchs and prophets; but He has said that He will send others to the condemnation of the unquenchable fire along with similar disobedient and impenitent men from all the nations. (6) 'For they shall come,' He said, 'from the west and from the east, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness' [Mt 8:11-12] And I have mentioned these things, taking nothing whatever into consideration, except the speaking of the truth, and refusing to be coerced by any one, even though I should be immediately torn in pieces by you. For I gave no thought to any of my people, that is, the Samaritans, when I had a communication in writing with Cæsar, but stated that they were wrong in trusting to the magician Simon of their own nation, who, they say, is God above all power, and authority, and might.

In *Dial* 120 Justin uses a particularistic-exclusive mode of reasoning by arguing why Jews (carnal descendants of the patriarchs) cannot be the real target of the promise given to Abraham. Justin

³² Justin quotes Gen 49:10-11 several times and some quotations do not follow the Septuagint version. However, here in *Dial* 120.3 the quotation is practically identical to the Septuagint. Concerning the quotations of Gen 49:10-11 in Justin, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 25-29, 140-144, 260-264.

develops the argumentation – presented in the New Testament – in the direction that the Christian Church is the real target of the promises given to the patriarchs. He presents the lineage of four patriarchs, Abraham – Isaac – Jacob – Judah, and argues that all the promises God has given to them concern the Christian Church. According to Justin, this becomes especially clear from the promise given to Judah in Gen 49:10 (for this see Section 4).

An important saying of Jesus for Justin is that which is documented in Mt 8:11-12. Justin interpreted this saying as Jesus speaking about the new Christian people who had not descended physically from the three patriarchs but who will, nevertheless, join their eschatological banquet while the carnal offspring of the patriarchs i.e. Jews will be discarded. This saying of Jesus is also used in *Dial* 76:4 and 140:4 showing its importance for Justin.

The central question is whether Justin indicates that this emphasis on the Christian Church excludes the salvation historical reality that patriarchal promises were given to the Jewish people – something which Paul emphasized in Romans 9-11. In order to answer this question it is important to consider the following two points.

First, the four-patriarch-lineage is presented already at the beginning of the discussion with Trypho (*Dial* 11:5). Trypho demands Justin to become a Jewish proselyte who follows Mosaic instructions. Justin answers by referring to the new covenant which God has promised to establish (Isa 51:4-5 and Jer 31:31-32) and relates the four-patriarch-lineage to this discussion. This being the case the Abraham-promise is understood in *Dial* so that Christians may become members in the spiritual Israel which lives in the new covenantal relationship with God. This rhetorical situation at the beginning of *Dial* is important, and it is related to Justin's way to speak about the descendants of Abraham.

Second, according to *Dial* 119-120, Judah received a promise of the new ruler (Gen 49:10) which would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the son of David. Justin argues that "the seed is divided from Jacob, and comes down through Judah, and Phares, and Jesse, and David" (*Dial* 120). This division is attested in the way the descendants of Jacob will "bear fruit", i.e. can do good works. Justin's discussion concerning the Mosaic Law is important in this context. He presupposes that some of the Jewish people who followed Mosaic instructions will bear fruit (cf., *Dial* 46-47 where Justin discusses the Mosaic Torah and Jewish-Christian groups), and therefore they will be part of the spiritual Israel.

I now proceed to discuss Justin's way to use the concept "descendants of Abraham".

4 The Descendants of Abraham in Justin's Dialogue

I have argued insofar that Justin's theology in *Dial* 119-120 is based on two important New Testament themes: 1) The Pauline theology in Romans and Galatians; 2) Jesus' sayings in Mt 8:11-12. The Pauline theology gave Justin a biblical justification for interpreting the promise given to

Abraham as concerning the new Christian people, and Mt 8:11-12, in turn, indicated that many members outside the Jewish people are included in the banquet of the patriarchs while, because of their disbelief, Jews themselves are excluded. The disbelief of Jews is also discussed in Paul's Letter to the Romans 11:17-23. Justin develops his Abraham-promise-theology in the context of the confrontation of the counter-arguments presented by Trypho in the beginning of *Dial* and therefore it is important to consider this rhetorical situation.

In *Dial* 119-120 Justin modifies the promise given to the patriarchs so that it concerns the Christian Church. The question remains whether *Dial* 119-120 represents Justin's overall theological emphasis or whether it is rather a part of Justin's rhetorics which aim to call Trypho and his friends to turn to Christ? Siker seems to take it for granted that *Dial* 119 "gives an indication of the thorough manner in which he [=Justin] takes over the traditions about Abraham for his own purposes in his controversy with Judaism."³³ Siker has argued that Justin speaks about the descendants of Abraham in three different ways: 1) Jews are physical descendants of Abraham; 2) true spiritual descendants of Abraham are those who believe in Christ; 3) Justin also presents disclaimers of the Jewish claims to be true descendants.³⁴ Therefore, it is important to deal with other passages from *Dialogue* and examine Justin's theology concerning the concept "the descendants of Abraham." The central question is whether we can find more nuances in Justin's treatment of the concept.

1 In *Dial* 119-120 Justin emphasizes that there are two different groups among the children of Abraham and who differ from each other as far as good works are concerned. In order to "become fruitful" and be able to do good works one needs Abraham's faith (Gen 15:6). Justin emphasizes this same theology elsewhere in *Dial*. The true descendants of Abraham are those who believe like Abraham and recognize mysteries (*Dial* 44:1-2):

For thus, so far as you are concerned, I shall be found in all respects innocent, if I strive earnestly to persuade you by bringing forward demonstrations. But if you remain hard-hearted, or weak in [forming] a resolution, on account of death, which is the lot of the Christians, and are unwilling to assent to the truth, you shall appear as the authors of your own [evils]. And you deceive yourselves while you fancy that, because you are the seed of Abraham after the flesh, therefore you shall fully inherit the good things announced to be bestowed by God through Christ. For no one, not even of them, has anything to look for, but only those who in mind are assimilated to the faith of Abraham, and who have recognized all the mysteries: for I say, that some injunctions were laid on you in reference to the worship of God and practice of righteousness; but some injunctions and acts were likewise mentioned in reference to the mystery of Christ, on account of the hardness of your people's hearts.

Like John the Baptist, Justin criticizes Jews for not trusting in their being the descendants of Abraham. Justin emphasizes, as Paul, that Jews should believe as the patriarch did. In this context,

³³ Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 164.

³⁴ Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 171-173.

Justin also criticizes the Mosaic injunctions in which Jews put their trust. However, Justin's view on the Mosaic Torah is not "black and white" as becomes clear from *Dial 47* where he presents different alternatives concerning who among the Jews can be saved.³⁵

But if, Trypho, some of your race, who say they believe in this Christ, compel those Gentiles who believe in this Christ to live in all respects according to the law given by Moses, or choose not to associate so intimately with them, I in like manner do not approve of them. But I believe that even those, who have been persuaded by them to observe the legal dispensation along with their confession of God in Christ, shall probably be saved. And I hold, further, that such as have confessed and known this man to be Christ, yet who have gone back from some cause to the legal dispensation, and have denied that this man is Christ, and have repented not before death, shall by no means be saved. Further, I hold that those of the seed of Abraham who live according to the law, and do not believe in this Christ before death, shall likewise not be saved, and especially those who have anathematized and do anathematize this very Christ in the synagogues, and everything by which they might obtain salvation and escape the vengeance of fire.

Justin gives credit for those Jews who follow the Mosaic injunctions and who believe in Jesus Christ and confess him as being the Son of God. Such Jews will be saved, according to Justin. On the other hand, Justin emphasizes that they should not persuade other Christians to follow Mosaic laws. What seems to be important for Justin is the emphasis that the promise given to Abraham concerns those who come to believe. Therefore, he warns against any Jew putting his reliance on the seed of Abraham if he does not believe in Christ. Such a faith cannot save anyone. This shows that Justin does not cut the promises given to patriarchs off from those Jews who practice Mosaic instructions providing that they believe in Christ. In this opinion Justin seems to follow the New Testament basic attitude toward Jewish-Christian groups, and Justin's opinion can be compared with Paul's ideas presented in Romans 9-11.

Justin allows that Jews who believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour can continue to follow the Mosaic Law. In the same context, *Dial 44*, Justin allows Jews to be called the seed of Abraham.³⁶ This indicates that Justin's main aim is not to argue that Jews can no longer inherit the promises given to Abraham. In *Dial 47* Justin clearly implies that those Jews who follow the Mosaic Torah and also believe in Jesus Christ are the children of Abraham.

³⁵ The first detailed treatment of the problem of the Mosaic Torah was T. Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law* (SBL DS 20; Missoula: Scholars Press 1975). I have discussed Justin's treatment of the Mosaic Torah more closely in my article "Jewish Believers in Jesus and the Mosaic Law: The Opinion of Justin Martyr," forthcoming in the Brill series *Studies on the Children of Abraham*. In that article I argue that Justin has inherited an old Christian tradition which goes back to the New Testament period according to which the Jewish believers in Jesus had the possibility to continue to practice the Mosaic Torah. This inherited tradition looms behind Justin's formulations which are not always consequent.

³⁶ "The children of Abraham" is presented in *Dial 44* as a disclaimer – as Siker puts it. However, the context implies that Jews who believe in Jesus and follow the Mosaic Torah must be regarded as the children of Abraham. Justin seems to follow Paul, the Jew, in his argumentation and allows – like Paul – that Jewish believers in Jesus can continue to practise the Mosaic Torah.

2 In *Dial* 52-54 Justin elaborates on the lineage Abraham – Isaac – Jacob – Judah and the promise given to Judah in Gen 49:10 more closely.³⁷ Justin argues that in Gen 49:8-12 Jacob predicts the two advents of Christ (*Dial* 52:1):

And it was prophesied by Jacob the patriarch that there would be two advents of Christ, and that in the first He would suffer, and that after He came there would be neither prophet nor king in your nation (I proceeded), and that the nations who believed in the suffering Christ would look for His future appearance.

Justin's argument is that the offices of king, the high priest and prophet ceased just before and during the destruction of the Second Temple. This means that the promised Messiah of Gen 49:8-12 must have appeared at the end of the Second Temple period which (according to Justin) would parallel excellently with the life time of Jesus Christ.³⁸ Justin understands the reference to the ass in Gen 49:8-12 as parallel to the prophecy of Zech 9:9-10 indicating Jesus' first (humble) appearance (*Dial* 53). In a similar way, Justin interprets the blood of the grapes in Gen 49:8-12 as referring to the death of Christ (*Dial* 54). The second glorious appearance is also referred to in Jacob's prophecy about Judah (*Dial* 52):

But after the manifestation and death of our Jesus Christ in your nation, there was and is nowhere any prophet: nay, further, you ceased to exist under your own king, your land was laid waste, and forsaken like a lodge in a vineyard [cf., Isa 1:7-8]; and the statement of Scripture, in the mouth of Jacob, 'And He shall be the desire of nations' [*kai autos estai prosdokia ethnōn*] meant symbolically His two advents, and that the nations would believe in Him; which facts you may now at length discern. For those out of all the nations who are pious and righteous through the faith of Christ, look for His future appearance.

Justin argues that the Christians "out of all the nations" who have become "pious and righteous through the faith of Christ" will wait for the second future and glorious appearance of Jesus Christ. In this way, the promises given to the patriarchs concern the Christian Church.

³⁷ In *Dial* 52-54 Justin's quotation of Gen 49:8-12 follows that of the Septuagint. Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 25-27.

³⁸ It is worth noting that Justin's way of interpreting Gen 49:10 became a central Christian (anti-Jewish) argument for the beginning of the Messianic era from the time of Jesus onwards which corroborate with the destruction of the Temple and Jewish "royal" institution. See more closely Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihre literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.-11. Jh.)* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 172; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999) and *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte (11.-13. Jh.)* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 335; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997) with indexes; idem, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihre literarisches und historisches Umfeld (13.-20. Jh.)* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 497; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994). This topic was presented in the famous Barcelona disputation among others. For this, see Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 1993) and Robert Chazan, "The Barcelona 'Disputation' of 1263; Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response," *Speculum* 52 (1977) 824-842; idem, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California 1992).

In *Dial* 100:3 the patriarch-lineage is presented by Abraham – Isaac – Jacob – David and, in this context, emphasis is made on the virginal birth of Jesus and the promise in Isa 7:14 which was given to the House of David.³⁹

3 The confrontation between Justin and Trypho begins in *Dial* 10 with the latter's statement that Christians should circumcise themselves and keep the Mosaic instructions.⁴⁰ Justin answers by referring to the promises of the new covenant (Isa 51:4-5; Jer 31:31-32). In *Dial* he argues that this new covenant (where circumcision is not included) corresponds to the faith which the patriarchs had. Even though circumcision was given to Abraham, his relationship to God was not based on circumcision but rather on belief as indicated in Gen 15:6. Justin argues that what is needed is the real circumcision, i.e. the circumcision of the heart. Justin refers to Deut 10:16-17 and interprets it as referring to criticism of the Jewish carnal circumcision, and then introduces the Christian baptismal ritual (*Dial* 16:2). Justin emphasizes several times that, according to the Old Testament, some true believers in God were uncircumcised (*Dial* 27:5; 46:3-4; 92:2-4) including, for example, Melchizedek to whom Abraham also paid tithes (*Dial* 33:2; 43:1). Justin is clearly dependent on Paul's theology when he emphasizes Abraham's faith: Abraham was uncircumcised when he believed in God.

In order to understand Justin's treatment of circumcision in his *Dialogue*, it is important to emphasize this connection between circumcision and the Mosaic instructions which is put in high relief at the beginning of the dialogue between Justin and Trypho (*Dial* 10). In *Dial* 46-47 Justin allows that Jews can circumcise their male children but nonetheless they cannot demand that non-Jewish Christians must follow the Mosaic instructions.⁴¹ This continuity of practice of the Mosaic Torah among Jewish believers is an important aspect in Justin's theology and, as noted already, I have discussed this topic elsewhere.

4 An important topic for Justin is that the Son of God i.e. Christ revealed himself to Abraham and to Jacob (*Dial* 75:4; 114:3; 126-127). This means that the patriarchs had a living relationship with Christ, and therefore it is no wonder that all promises given to them are also related to Jesus

³⁹ For this see further Oskar Skarsaune, "Jewish and Christian Interpretations of Messianic Texts in the Book of Isaiah as Jewish/Christian Dialogue – from Matthew to the Rabbis," *SEÅ* 77 (2012): 25-45.

⁴⁰ "This is what we are amazed at, but those things about which the multitude speak are not worthy of belief; for they are most repugnant to human nature. Moreover, I am aware that your precepts in the so-called Gospel are so wonderful and so great, that I suspect no one can keep them; for I have carefully read them. But this is what we are most at a loss about: that you, professing to be pious, and supposing yourselves better than others, are not in any particular separated from them, and do not alter your mode of living from the nations, in that you observe no festivals or Sabbaths, and do not have the rite of circumcision; and further, resting your hopes on a man that was crucified, you yet expect to obtain some good thing from God, while you do not obey His commandments. Have you not read, that that soul shall be cut off from his people who shall not have been circumcised on the eighth day? And this has been ordained for strangers and for slaves equally. But you, despising this covenant rashly, reject the consequent duties, and attempt to persuade yourselves that you know God, when, however, you perform none of those things which they do who fear God. If, therefore, you can defend yourself on these points, and make it manifest in what way you hope for anything whatsoever, even though you do not observe the law, this we would very gladly hear from you, and we shall make other similar investigations."

⁴¹ It seems to me that even here Siker's conclusion is too straightforward (*Disinheriting the Jews*, 170): "Far from being a blessing, circumcision is a curse that marks the Jews out for God's punishment."

Christ. This theological viewpoint indicates that the promises given to the patriarch became Christocentric. This means that Jews have possibility to be true descendants of Abraham when they believe in Jesus Christ.

5 An interesting detail in *Dial* is Justin's emphasis that the names of the patriarchs (Abraham, Sarah and Jacob) were changed. Justin argues that God wanted to reveal a typological model which contains a Christological secret. This secret concerns the name of Joshua, which was originally Oshea but was subsequently changed to Joshua/Jesus (*Dial* 75:2; 106:3; 113:1; 132:2-3). According to Justin, Jews are interested in discussing why Abraham's and Sarah's names were changed but avoid clarifying the change of the name of Oshea to Jesus. According to Justin, Joshua is a typos for Jesus, indicating that the whole salvation history from the time of Abraham via Moses to Joshua refers to the coming Savior Jesus Christ (*Dial* 113).

5 *The Descendants of Abraham and Isa 63:15-64:12*

Justin's emphasis that the promise given to Abraham concerns the Christian Church comes into focus in the way he interprets Isa 63:15-64:12 (*Dial* 25-26). Justin begins his interpretation by referring to those Jews who claim to be sons of Abraham. He claims that Isaiah predicted that they will become "desirous even in a small degree to receive the inheritance along with us⁴²." Justin then quotes a long passage from Isa 63:15-64:12 according to the Septuagint:⁴³

Return from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Your holiness and glory. Where is Your zeal and strength? Where is the multitude of Your mercy? For You have sustained us, O Lord. For You are our Father, because Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel has not recognised us. But You, O Lord, our Father, deliver us: from the beginning Your name is upon us. O Lord, why have You made us to err from Your way? And hardened our hearts, so that we do not fear You? Return for Your servants' sake, the tribes of Your inheritance, that we may inherit for a little Your holy mountain. We were as from the beginning, when You did not bear rule over us, and when Your name was not called upon us. If You will open the heavens, trembling shall seize the mountains before You: and they shall be melted, as wax melts before the fire; and fire shall consume the adversaries, and Your name shall be manifest among the adversaries; the nations shall be put into disorder before Your face. When You shall do glorious things, trembling shall seize the mountains before You. From the beginning we have not heard, nor have our eyes seen a God besides You: and Your works, the mercy which You shall show to those who repent. He shall meet those who do righteousness, and they shall remember Your ways. Behold, You are angry, and we were sinning. Therefore we have erred and become all unclean, and all our righteousness is as the rags of a woman set apart: and we have faded away like leaves by reason of our iniquities; thus the wind will take us away. And there is none that calls upon Your name, or remembers to take hold of You; for You have

⁴² Paris-manuscript has *syn hymin*, but it seems clear that the context demands *syn hēmin*.

⁴³ For this see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 78.

turned away Your face from us, and have given us up on account of our sins. And now return, O Lord, for we are all Your people. The city of Your holiness has become desolate. Zion has become as a wilderness, Jerusalem a curse; the house, our holiness, and the glory which our fathers blessed, has been burned with fire; and all the glorious nations have fallen along with it. And in addition to these [misfortunes], O Lord, You have refrained Yourself, and are silent, and have humbled us very much.

Justin interprets Abraham's ignorance concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem as Abraham no longer being interested in the Jews because he has found a new people, his true spiritual descendants who believe in Jesus Christ. Justin's interpretation of the Isaianic passage must be read in its historical context. Two important aspects should be emphasized. (1) The Isaiah passage is closely related to Jerusalem, and *Dial* has been written about twenty years after the war of Bar Kochba. (2) Justin allows Trypho to react strongly against his interpretation which gives him the opportunity to clarify what he really meant.

After having heard the quotation which Justin uses against the Jews, Trypho reacts by asking: "What is this you say? That none of us shall inherit anything on the holy mountain of God?" Justin's fine rhetorics become apparent in this presentation because he is able to answer Trypho by emphasizing that there are Jews who will be saved – and this same point is emphasized in *Dial* 46-47 which I have analyzed in a separate article. Justin's answer is worth quoting because it reveals that, according to Justin, not all Jews will be excluded from the Temple Mount:

I do not say so; but those who have persecuted and do persecute Christ, if they do not repent, shall not inherit anything on the holy mountain. But the Gentiles, who have believed on Him, and have repented of the sins which they have committed, they shall receive the inheritance along with the patriarchs and the prophets, and the just men who are descended from Jacob, even although they neither keep the Sabbath, nor are circumcised, nor observe the feasts. Assuredly they shall receive the holy inheritance of God.

Justin presents two additional quotations from the Book of Isaiah, Isa 42:6-7 and Isa 62:10-63:6, which speak about the coming glory of those gentiles who turn to God of Israel. Justin's interpretation of Isa 63:15-64:12 is related to his understanding of Isa 64:9-11 which he presents elsewhere in 1 *Apol* 47 (he quotes the text according to the Septuagint). According to Justin, this text refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and the military struggles during the Bar Kochba war (1 *Apol* 47):

That the land of the Jews, then, was to be laid waste, hear what was said by the Spirit of prophecy. And the words were spoken as if from the person of the people wondering at what had happened. They are these: Sion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. The house of our sanctuary has become a curse, and the glory which our fathers blessed is burned up with fire, and all its glorious things are laid waste: and You refrain Yourself at these things, and have held Your peace, and have humbled us very sore [Isa 64:9-11]. And you are convinced that Jerusalem has been laid waste, as was predicted. And concerning its desolation, and that no

one should be permitted to inhabit it, there was the following prophecy by Isaiah: Their land is desolate, their enemies consume it before them, and none of them shall dwell therein [Isa 1:7]. And that it is guarded by you lest any one dwell in it, and that death is decreed against a Jew apprehended entering it, you know very well.

Justin's way of using prophetic texts which contain references to the destruction of Jerusalem may well have been an early Jewish or Jewish-Christian tradition which was directed against the Jewish people who were punished by God in 66-70 and 132-135 CE.⁴⁴ Justin develops this topic and in the case of Isa 63:15-64:12 he connects this fate with his idea that the real focus of the promise given to Abraham concerns the Christian people. Therefore, 66-70 and 132-135 CE manifested the rejection of the carnal Israel when, at the same time, the promise given to Abraham became fulfilled, and the new Christian people were formed.⁴⁵ It seems to me that *Dial* 25-26 is Justin's Christian version of the Jewish proclamation of repentance directed to Jews after the two rebellions in 66-70 and 132-135 CE.

6 Conclusions

In this article I have attempted to put Justin's theology in its own historical context. I would like to see Justin's theology as a development from theological discussions which took place in the Jewish-Christian confrontations where the borderlines between Judaism and Christianity were not at all clear in the first century CE and at the beginning of the second.⁴⁶ In this perspective which I fully share, the New Testament writings represented mainly the intra-Jewish controversy where Jewish writers (like Paul, for example) try to offer argument for both gentile and Jewish audiences concerning how the Old Testament scriptures should be understood rightly and in the light of Christ. The intra-Jewish confrontation in the New Testament can be compared in many ways to the intra-Jewish struggles between Qumran and Jerusalem. When the Jewish members in the early Church became a clear minority, the centre of Christianity was moved from Jerusalem to other cities, and contacts with Jewish traditions were diminished, the intra-Jewish confrontation then developed into interreligious confrontation. Justin's theology represents this gradual shift. What is a striking phenomenon in Justin's way of treating Judaism is that he still recognizes the presence of the Jewish-Christian groups in the Church and accepts their observation of the Mosaic Torah –

⁴⁴ Similar treatment of the events of 66-70 CE can be found in 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, for example.

⁴⁵ In *Dial* 44-45 Justin has a corresponding interpretation for Ezek 14:18, 20. The text is read so that Noah, Jacob (not Job!) and Daniel asked for sons and daughters for themselves but will not receive them. The idea is that after the appearance of Christ, Jews refer to the promise that they would get offspring in vain because from Christ onwards God will have spiritual – not carnal – children.

⁴⁶ For this, see especially Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (University of Pennsylvania 2004).

something which was totally rejected later.⁴⁷ It is against this background that Justin's interpretations concerning Abraham should be understood.⁴⁸

Justin's way of dealing with the promise given to Abraham mainly follows Paul's interpretation of the Abrahamic faith in Romans 4 and Galatians 3-4. He has used Paul's way of treating Abrahamic faith and Jesus' saying in Mt 8:11-12, and developed more clearly a theological idea that the promise given to Abraham concerned the Christian Church from the very beginning. However, it is difficult to say that Justin represented pure supersessionistic theology (i.e. "cuckoo-nest theology") because his interpretation does not nullify the intra-Jewish discussion still present in the New Testament. According to this intra-Jewish discussion the promise of Abraham is related to Abraham's physical descendants, the Jews who continue to practice the Mosaic Law (as expressed by Paul, the Jew, in Rom 9:1-5). The central debate in this intra-Jewish discussion concerned whether or not Jesus from Nazareth should be regarded as Messiah/Christ.

I have attempted to add some nuances in Siker's and Wendel's analyses. It seems to me that Justin balances two theological poles. First, he follows an early Jewish-Christian tradition that Jews were able to follow Mosaic instructions including circumcision and therefore the salvation history continues among the Jewish people through the Jewish-Christian groups. This position is reflected in Luke's (Acts 15:21) and Paul's theology (Rom 9:1-5) indicating that the Jewish people continues to exist and Jewish-Christians will maintain intra-Jewish discussions concerning Jesus Christ. Second, Justin was one important *primus motor* who developed a new salvation historical tendency in Christian theology that Christ revealed himself with the patriarchs and, therefore, the Abrahamic promise must concern Christ and his Church. This view was developed later in the patristic literature. It was combined with theology that the Jewish people should no longer practice the Mosaic Law because God has rejected the Sinai covenant and its followers.

⁴⁷ For this, see Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity. From the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem-Leiden: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, Brill 1988) and instructive articles in Skarsaune & Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*.

⁴⁸ Cf., also the theology in the Letter of Barnabas, especially chapters 13-15. Concerning Barnabas, see especially Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century* (WUNT 2/82; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); William Horbury, "Jewish-Christian Relations in Barnabas and Justin Martyr," in William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (London: T&T Clark International, 2006), 127-161.

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