CHAPTER I

Introduction

What terms would early 'Christians' have used when they addressed one another? What would they have called each other? Would they have said, 'Are you a Christian?' or 'Are you a disciple?' or 'Are you a believer?' How would various 'Christian' groups have answered the question 'Who are we?' And how did authors refer to members of the communities to whom they were writing, and how would these members have referred to each other? Would different 'Christian' groups in different cities at different times during the New Testament period have given different answers to these questions? This will involve us in looking at a range of 'self-designations' or 'labels'. Further, what do their chosen self-designations say about the early 'Christian' movement, its identity, self-understanding, and character? This is the topic of this book.

I.I WHAT SORT OF TERMS ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

How do we tell what is and what is not a 'self-designation'? McConnell-Ginet has helpfully discussed different forms of 'labels'. Grammatically we are looking at varied phenomena. Note the following sentences:

1(a) 'We are *children of God*.' (Rom 8:16)
1(b) 'I am a *Kiwi*.'
2(a) 'At present, however, *I* am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to *the saints*.' (Rom 15:25)
2(b) '*Gill* said *she*'d talked with *the professors in the department*.'
2(c) 'When are *you guys* going to dinner?'
3(a) 'Finally, *brothers and sisters*, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus.' (1 Thess 4:1)
3(b) 'Excuse me, *sir*, could you help me please?'
3(c) 'Wait for me, *you guys*.'

In (1), we have the nominal labels 'children of God' and 'Kiwi'. These are 'used to describe or to evaluate, to sort people into kinds. These predicative

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labels characterize and categorize people.'[1] In the NT, the *characterising* use of nominal labels is the most significant usage. In (2), the labels are used *to refer*: 'Referring is basic to conveying information; we refer to the people we talk about . . . Referring expressions play grammatical roles such as *subject* or *object*. Typically, they identify the participants in the eventuality designated by the verb.'[2] All the designations I will be discussing in this book are used as both nominal labels and in referring expressions.

In (3), the italicised labels are used as *terms of address*. 'Address-ing . . . exists only because of the social nature of linguistic interaction. Address forms tag an utterance with some label for the addressee, the target to whom an utterance is directed. Unlike referring expressions (and the predicative use of labels . . .), they are not grammatically related to other expressions in the utterance; in English, they are often set off intonation-ally much as other "parenthetical" expressions.'[3] Terms of address in a text function in the same way as the 'address' on an envelope, and so their key role is in gaining attention or 'finding' particular recipients.[4] The same 'label' can be used in different ways; in 2(c) *you guys* is used to refer, while in 3(c) it is used as a term of address.[5]

Accordingly, here we will be interested in a variety of grammatical forms. In all three forms – nominal labels, terms used to refer, and terms of address – we are concerned with 'labels' or 'names', or what we shall call 'self-designations', since, in the NT, they are generally applied by a writer to a group of which he is a part. Our study, then, focuses on terms which are used to address or designate the readers in some way.[6] When a speaker or writer uses a self-designation for a group, whether as a name, or for referential purposes, or as a term of address, they are assuming that the group can be categorised by that term and that it is applicable to the addressees. So the content of the self-designation or name is important, since it has a 'potential characterizing value'.[7] All of these forms can be

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[1] McConnell-Ginet 2003: 69.   [2] McConnell-Ginet 2003: 72–3.

[3] McConnell-Ginet 2003: 73. Address forms can be used in greetings, or to get someone's attention in order to speak to them; these uses have been called 'summons'; see McConnell-Ginet 2003: 77.

[4] See McConnell-Ginet 2003: 77. She notes address forms can be found at a variety of points in an opening exchange, although they are common in greetings and other openings. Many terms of address are also used to refer, which is what we find in the NT with 'brothers and sisters'.

[5] See McConnell-Ginet 2003: 72–3.

[6] The most convenient way to think of the matter may be to note that the word 'Christian' can generally be substituted in all three situations given above. Thus 1(a) could become 'we are *Christians*' (Rom 8:16), 2(a) 'At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to *the Christians*' (Rom 15:25), and 3(a) 'Finally, *Christians* [or perhaps better *co-Christians*], we ask and urge you' (1 Thess 4:1). Thus, in looking at NT texts, we are 'looking for' any term or phrase for which the word 'Christian' could be substituted.

[7] McConnell-Ginet 2003: 73.

thought of as 'self-designations' which can give us very significant information about a group.

1.2 CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE SELF-DESIGNATIONS DISCUSSED HERE AND THE PLAN OF THIS WORK

A whole range of self-designations were used by the early 'Christians' but here in order to contain the size of this study I will only consider those that are used the most frequently and are also found in a range of documents. Although it is only found in Acts and then comparatively rarely, I will also include the designation 'the Way' because there are strong arguments that it is an early designation of some significance. I have also chosen to look at the term 'Christian', even though it only occurs three times, because of its obvious ongoing significance, and discussion of this term will also involve brief discussions of 'Nazarenes' and 'Galileans'. I am not looking at terms that designate a particular group within early Christianity.[8]

Accordingly, I will discuss brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί) in Chapter 2; believers (most often οἱ πιστεύοντες and οἱ πιστοί) in Chapter 3; saints (most often οἱ ἅγιοι) in Chapter 4; the assembly (ἡ ἐκκλησία) in Chapter 5;[9] disciples (μαθηταί) in Chapter 6; the Way (ἡ ὁδός) in Chapter 7; and 'Christian' (Χριστιανός) in Chapter 8. This will be followed by general conclusions of the study. In each chapter, I will follow the same general procedure of discussing the usage of the term in the NT, the Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts for the term, and the origin of the usage of the term by the early Christians. I will also discuss details of its use by and significance for various NT authors.

1.3 THE TERM 'CHRISTIAN'

It is obvious that when we discuss 'the earliest Christians', we need a designation to use! Until recently 'Christian' was the term that most scholars used. However, it is hard to avoid the charge of anachronism in the use of the term.[10] It can suggest that many of the characteristics of 'Christians' and 'Christianity' in the second, fourth, and twenty-first centuries

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[8] Thus, for example, I am not looking at the designations 'apostles' or 'the Twelve', since they are clearly only applied to particular groups of people, nor am I looking at labels such as the 'Hellenists', the 'Hebrews' (Acts 6:1), 'the weak' (Rom 14:1–2; 15:1) and 'strong' (Rom 15:1) or 'the Nicolaitans' (Rev 2:6, 15) since they are used of particular groups, and my focus here is on designations that are used of all readers.

[9] In this chapter, I will also discuss the use of ἐπισυναγωγή in Heb 10:25 and συναγωγή in Jas 2:2.

[10] See Pilch 1997: 119–25; Elliott 2007: 147–8; Dunn 2009: 5–6; see also Robinson 2009: 203–7.

were present in the first century. Particularly significant developments as time went on relate to the creeds and to church structure; in addition, in the earliest period many Christians were Jews, whilst, as time progressed, the movement became more and more a Gentile one. Whilst in my view there was much continuity between, for example, belief in the first century and the content of the later creeds, there is undeniable development too. Although scholars would, of course, want to underline the fact that they are *not* importing all the later associations of the term 'Christian' into the first century, the simple use of the same term means there is some unavoidable 'spillage' back from later connotations into the first century. Particularly when scholars discuss 'Christians' and 'Jews' or 'Christianity' and 'Judaism' in the first century, it is very difficult to avoid the long history of negative interaction and 'the parting of the Ways' and all that it involved from seeping back into discussions about the earliest period. And, of course, the use of the term 'Christian' with regard to people in the first century suggests that they were separate from 'Jews', which was not the case for many, including Paul. Accordingly, many scholars have been using alternative terms, either instead of, or alongside, the use of the term 'Christian'. For example, scholars have used terms such as 'the Jesus movement',[11] 'Christ-followers',[12] 'Christ-believers',[13] 'believers',[14] 'saints',[15] 'Christ-confessing communities',[16] and 'a follower of the Way'.[17]

All of this raises the issue of how I speak of 'Christians' in the first century in this book. I could opt at this point for an alternative term (perhaps one of those just given above), but to do this would be to pre-empt the discussion of the book itself, since one of the aims here is to discuss which terms *were* most significant, most widespread, or the earliest terms used. I do not want to privilege any one alternative designation, which I would do if I called them 'Christ-believers' or something similar from this point. Accordingly, I will continue to use the term 'Christian' throughout this book and I will return to this issue in Chapter 9. It would be possible to use inverted commas for the term all the time, but I have rather opted to use inverted commas on the first occurrence in each chapter as a reminder that the term needs to be considered carefully.

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[11] See Horsley 1989.   [12] See, e.g., Esler 2000: 157.
[13] See Tellbe 2009: *passim*; Jewett 2007: 323. On twenty occasions in Acts the NRSV translates ἀδελφοί as 'believers'. See Acts 1:15; 9:30; 10:23; 11:1, 29; 12:17; 15:3, 23, 32, 33, 36, 40; 16:2; 17:6, 10, 14; 18:18; 21:7; 28:14, 15. See also Acts 9:32 (where 'among all the believers' translates διὰ πάντων); 11:2 (where believers is added); 20:2 (where 'the believers' translates 'αὐτούς').
[14] See Jewett 2007: 27, 525.   [15] See Friesen 2004: 323, 334, 348.
[16] Stegemann and Stegemann 1999: 262–87.   [17] Klassen 1998: 92.

1.4 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Surprisingly, few studies have looked in a detailed way at the most sig-
nificant self-designations. These are by von Harnack, Cadbury, Karpp,
Spicq, and Fitzmyer.[18] Some designations have been studied in depth and
this work will be drawn on and discussed in the appropriate chapter.[19] A
monograph-length study looking at the most important self-designations
in the NT has never been completed; that is the task attempted here.

1.5 INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER AREAS OF STUDY

A range of other disciplines offer some insights and perspectives which I
have found to be helpful in this study.[20]

1.5.1 *The importance of self-designations*

The development of a name is significant in itself. As Tabouret-Keller
notes, 'Identifying others or oneself is a means of differentiation and of
opposition.'[21] The articulation of a self-designation by a group implies that
they *are* a group, and that they have a distinctive identity compared to
outsiders, who are to be distinguished from 'us'.

Do the actual names of groups matter? The self-designations used by
a group have an impact on the group's identity and on how it sees itself.
Drury and McCarthy write that names 'announce to others and resonate to
ourselves in a reflexive process who we are (or who we wish to see ourselves
being)'.[22] The way members of a group answer the question, 'Who are
we?' has a significant impact on the group's life. Studies have confirmed
this sense that names of groups really do have an impact on the group
concerned. Mullen, Calogero, and Leader note that research shows that
personal names are important for an individual's personal identity, and that
individuals with more socially desirable names tend to be more popular

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[18] Harnack 1908, 1: 399–421; Cadbury 1933; Karpp 1950; Spicq 1972: 13–57; Fitzmyer 1989a. Other
significant discussions looking at a range of self-designations are Kosmala 1959: 44–75, 332–44;
Minear 1960; Turner 1980; Roloff 1993: 82–5; Schenk 1995; Klassen 1998: 91–105; Stenschke 1999:
322–32; Reinbold 2000: 15–24; Bauckham 2003b; 2007: 56–9; Blenkinsopp 2006: 169–221; Dunn
2009: 4–17. Chapter 12 of Trebilco 2004 was devoted to this topic with regard to the Pastoral
Epistles, the Johannine Letters, and Revelation. This current work builds on that chapter.
[19] See, e.g., Aasgaard 2004; Burke 2003; Evans 1975; Woodward 1975; Wilkins 1988; Repo 1964.
[20] It might be thought that 'labelling theory' would be of help but this looks at labelling in connection
with social deviance, rather than self-designations developed by a group for the group itself. Social
identity theory will be drawn on briefly in Chapter 3.
[21] Tabouret-Keller 1997: 315.   [22] Drury and McCarthy 1980: 310.

and better adjusted.[23] They go on: 'Therefore, at the intergroup level of analysis, analogous effects of ethnonyms[24] on the in-group's behavior may be expected to occur, with the in-group's ethnonyms serving as an important anchorage point for social identity. . . . Thus, ethnonyms may be important because the names that an in-group uses to identify itself could influence the behavior of members of that group in a manner analogous to the effects of personal names on individuals.'[25]

Philogène's 2004 study concerns the use of the name 'African American' and its use to change perceptions and attitudes. She notes that when a group 'is talked to or talked about, the name used defines and represents the group for those involved in the interaction. And this collective activity turns the name into a shared reality.'[26] She thus calls group names 'vectors of identity'.[27] Her study demonstrates the vital connection between a name, social identity, and social representation of a group.

1.5.2 The 'social dialect' or 'shared repertoire' of language of a group

Particular language (words, forms of speech, and so on) is used in particular groups and there is considerable variation in language use across groups. Much work in the area of language variation and change has been done within Sociolinguistics on this phenomenon,[28] and the concepts of the 'Speech Community',[29] the 'Social Network',[30] and of 'Communities of Practice',[31] have been utilised. The latter concept is of particular assistance here, and will help us to analyse the 'social dialects' or 'shared repertoire' of language in a group.

A Community of Practice is characterised by the mutual engagement of participants in shared practice, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire.[32] Examples include people working in a factory or workplace, a sports club, a gang, a religious group, an academic department, and so on. Clearly, early Christian groups can be seen as a 'community of practice'. Wenger notes: 'The repertoire of a community of practice includes routines, words,

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[23] See Mullen, Calogero, and Leader 2007: 613 and the work cited there.
[24] Literally, names for a national group; see 1.5.3 below.
[25] Mullen, Calogero, and Leader 2007: 613.   [26] Philogène 2004: 92.
[27] Philogène 2004: 92.   [28] See Chalmers, Trudgill, and Schilling-Ester 2002 for an overview.
[29] See Halliday 1978: 66, 154; Patrick 2002: 573–97. The concept of the Speech Community continues to be useful, but since the Community of Practice focuses on 'practice' rather than primarily on speech, it gives the latter, more integrated model greater explanatory force; see Bucholtz 1999: 210.
[30] See, e.g., Milroy 1987; 2002: 549–72; Le Page 1997: 26–7; Romaine 2003: 113–14.
[31] See Wenger 1998; Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999: 173–83; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999: 185–201; Bucholtz 1999: 203–23; Meyerhoff 2002: 526–48; Mendoza-Denton 2002: 486–91.
[32] See Wenger 1998: 73–83.

tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice. It includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world.'[33] These are elements of 'practice' which provide the source of coherence for a community. Characteristics of a community of practice which are particularly relevant here are: '[the] absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process . . . jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones . . . a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world.'[34]

Particular linguistic practices are a part of the 'shared repertoire' of a group then, and so are one crucial dimension in the construction of a community. This shared repertoire involves creating a set of shared linguistic resources including 'specialized terminology and linguistic routines',[35] which have also been called social dialects, or sociolects.[36] Halliday writes: 'A social dialect is a dialect – a configuration of phonetic, phonological, grammatical and lexical features – that is associated with, and stands as a symbol for, some more or less objectively definable social group.'[37] This social dialect includes technical terms not found elsewhere in the wider culture, abbreviations and specialised use of otherwise common language, including self-designations.

There are several points to note with regard to the 'shared language repertoire' or 'social dialect' of a group. First, because of the relationship between the practice of a community and a shared language repertoire, different communities can have very different linguistic repertoires, since they have very different practices.[38] Halliday makes this point in a general way when he notes: 'Variation in language is in a quite direct sense the expression of fundamental attributes of the social system.'[39] In different social systems or communities, we will find different language repertoires or social dialects.

Secondly, the social dialect of a community is shaped by its social practice and by its shared enterprise. Meyerhoff notes 'Analyses of [linguistic] variation based on the CofP [Community of Practice] emphasises the role

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[33] Wenger 1998: 82–3.
[34] Wenger 1998: 125–6, who gives a list of fourteen characteristics of communities of practice; those given above are points 4, 12, and 14.
[35] Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999: 176.
[36] See Halliday 1978: 66, 154–92; Martin and Ringham 2000: 124.   [37] Halliday 1978: 159.
[38] Meyerhoff 2002: 529.   [39] Halliday 1978: 2.

of language use and linguistic variation as pre-eminently social practices, and they link the analysis of linguistic variables to speakers' entire range of social practices . . . By focusing on speakers' engagement in a matrix of inter-related social practices, the CofP can provide a framework for understand-ing both the social and the linguistic facets of sociolinguistic variation.'[40] The actual language used by a group is developed jointly by the community as it constructs its social identity.[41] Particular language is used because it is meaningful to the group itself and because it is intimately connected with all that they are involved in as a group with shared goals. Through the community of practice concept we can better understand the social significance of a community's language.

Thirdly, while a community will use language in its own distinctive way to construct and maintain its identity, to construct meaning, and to symbolise loyalty and solidarity,[42] that language, once used, impacts on how identity is understood. Identity is constructed in language, and language in turn shapes identity. Neither can be seen as independent of the other. As Halliday notes: 'the relation of language to the social system is not simply one of expression, but a more complex natural dialectic in which language actively *symbolises* the social system, thus creating as well as being created by it.'[43] Language and identity are co-constructed then.[44] It is central to this inquiry that one feature of the 'social dialect' of the early Christian groups is the use of particular self-designations and that these self-designations both arise from and shape identity and practice.

Fourthly, how do we conceive of 'self-designations' being developed in a community of practice? I will generally be discussing the adoption of exist-ing self-designations by Christians. How do we envisage this happening? Le Page writes:

Inherent within all linguistic systems are two fundamental characteristics which stereotypically are lost sight of: Their units and processes have values arrived at idiosyncratically and then negotiated collectively; and built into them is the capacity for analogical creativity, available to and made use of by every speaker-listener, and a source of language change. A language is best thought of as a game in which all the speakers can covertly propose and try out rules, and all the listeners are umpires.[45]

Here we are precisely looking at the sort of creativity which is 'negotiated collectively'. I will suggest that the 'game' resulted in the early Christians

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[40] Meyerhoff 2002: 526.   [41] See Philogène 2004: 94.   [42] See Milroy 1987: 208.
[43] Halliday 1978: 183 (emphasis added); see also Romaine 2003: 112.   [44] See Milroy 2002: 553.
[45] Le Page 1997: 32; see also Wenger 1998: 58–9.

adopting particular self-designations which for them both expressed their identity and had the ongoing effect of further creating and reinforcing that identity.

Overall, then, the concept of the community of practice provides an integrated approach for exploring the relationship between language and society. As Eckert notes: 'The value of the construct *community of practice* is in the focus it affords on the mutually constitutive nature of individual, group, activity, and meaning.'[46] The concept thus enables us to focus on how early Christian identity is constructed in actual social practice, and the part language and language changes play in this construction and negotiation of group identity, and of meaning.

1.5.3 'Insider' and 'outsider' designations

Within the group that became popularly known as 'the Quakers', the terms 'Children of the Light', 'Friends in the Truth', or 'Friends' became the preferred self-designation by members of the group themselves.[47] However, outsiders came to call the group 'Quakers'.[48] This example shows how designations for a group can be used in different ways by insiders and outsiders. Levin and Potapov coined the term '*ethnonyms*',[49] which are literally names for a national group, but the term is used more widely than simply for ethnic groups. Mullen, Calogero, and Leader define ethnonyms as 'the names an in-group uses to distinguish itself from out-groups . . . [ethnonyms] may be interpreted as revealing how members of an in-group think about their in-group, serving as collective representations that stand as symbols of the in-group itself.'[50] The names used by an in-group to distinguish itself from out-groups can be further classified according to their source or derivation: 'On the one hand, *autoethnonyms* appear to be names that an in-group developed on its own to distinguish itself from out-groups. On the other hand, *heteroethnonyms* appear to be names that an out-group initially applied to the in-group but that eventually came to serve as the name the in-group uses to distinguish itself from out-groups.'[51]

This classification is useful but needs to be further differentiated for use here. *Autoethnonyms* can be used in two ways. First, as strictly 'insider

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[46] Eckert 2000: 35.   [47] See Braithwaite 1955: 44, 73, 131–2; Nickalls 1952: 26, 28.
[48] Braithwaite (1955: 57) notes this was a derisive nickname probably based on 'the trembling of Friends under the powerful working of the Holy Ghost'.
[49] See Levin and Potapov 1964; see also Larson 1996: 541–60.
[50] Mullen, Calogero, and Leader 2007: 612, 613; see also Biddle *et al.* 1985.
[51] Mullen, Calogero, and Leader 2007: 613, emphasis original; see also Elliott 2007: 121–5.

language' for self-designation, that is, to designate other members of the group when speaking strictly within the group. Secondly, *autoethnonyms* can be used as 'out-facing language' to designate members of the group when addressing outsiders, or to represent a group to outsiders. On the other hand, Mullen, Calogero, and Leader assume that outsider-coined language ('*heteroethnonyms*') used by outsiders to designate a group would eventually be adopted by the in-group for itself, but one could understand if an in-group never adopted this language for the purpose of self-designation. Further, the terms an out-group uses for an in-group could conceivably have been developed by the in-group itself and *then* picked up by the out-group. In our study it is more relevant to look for the language that is *used by outsiders* for the in-group, and as a subsidiary point to note that this could come from two sources – outsider-coined language, *or* insider-coined language which is then adopted by outsiders.

Accordingly I would propose a *three-fold categorisation* for designations. First, 'insider language for self-designation', which is language used for self-designation within the group. Secondly, 'outward-facing self-designations', which are used by insiders *to* outsiders. Thirdly, 'outsider-used designations', which are used by outsiders to designate or name the in-group. This last category could be outsider-coined language, which is language *developed* by outsiders, or it could be language developed by insiders that is then adopted by outsiders.[52]

1.5.4 Terms of address

In section 1.1 above, I noted that 'brothers and sisters' was being used as a term of address in sentence 3(a). Terms of address are words that can be used after a greeting like 'hello'. Different terms of address are used in different settings, and their use varies according to age difference and the relative social position of those taking part in a conversation. Examples of address are Mr, Mrs, Coach, Auntie, Mum, Sister, Brother, Son, dear.[53]

The classic discussion of terms of address was given by Brown and Gilman in 1960 in a paper entitled 'The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity'.[54] They looked at European languages which had formal and more familiar second-person pronouns and noted what they called the T/V

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[52] See also Lampe 2003: 373. Mullen, Calogero, and Leader 2007, 612 note rather surprisingly that 'There has been no social psychological research to date exploring the effects of ethnonyms.'

[53] See the lists given in McConnell-Ginet 2003: 78.

[54] Brown and Gilman 1960: 253–276. On forms of address see Braun 1988; Hock and Joseph 1996: 249–51; Shibatani 2001: 552–9; McConnell-Ginet 2003: 77–87.