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HERESY AND ORTHODOXY

JOSEPH PETRAMALO

There has been much written on the topic of heresy and orthodoxy within the scholarly community.¹ This discussion began with the work of Walter Bauer’s *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*² in the 1930s and has continued to the present. Because this topic has evolved and changed due to scholarship, these concepts are not viewed in the same light as they were in the 1930s. But the topic has further to go as it is analyzed and the theories are tested. As we begin our discussion, there are certain points that must be remembered and taken into consideration in regard to defining heresy and orthodoxy. According to the great French scholar Le Boulluec, the notions of heresy and orthodoxy are constructed systems and thus are not absolute.³ He argues that we must move away from the circle of value judgments implied by the word *heresy*. If we do not detach ourselves, we are unable to approach the text and subject objectively. This is an important part of analyzing the information in front of us. The purpose of this paper will be to first look at Bauer and the effect of his work on the scholarly community. Next I will look at the origin and usage of the Greek work *aiρεσις* in the contexts in which it appears. It can be found in a number of different early sources, both canonical and

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¹ For articles that deal with the further scholarship, see Simon Marcel, "From Greek Hairees to Christian Heresy"; Michael Desjardines, "Bauer and Beyond: On Recent Scholarly Discussions of *aiρεσις* in the Early Christian Era"; Le Boulluec, *La Notion D’Heresie*; Hans Dieter Betz, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Primitive Christianity"; James McCue, "Orthodoxy and Heresy: Walter Bauer and the Valentinians"; Heinrich von Staden, "*aiρεσις* and Heresy: the Case of the hairesis iatrikai"; Daniel Harrington, "The Reception of Walter Bauer’s ‘Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity’ During the Last Decade", as well as a number of prominent books that touch on the topic as well.

² Bauer’s book was probably the single most influential work written on the topic of orthodoxy and heresy. He sets up the later discussion that would follow. While no one has proved Bauer’s thesis wrong, many scholars have shown some aspects to be weak and incorrect.

noncanonical. I will focus mainly on the canonical sources and then continue with what was written by the early heresiologists in the second and third centuries C.E. My intent is to look at the way in which the word developed into its latter use as a polemic term against opposing groups. I will look at the negative rhetoric employed to force separation and then follow with the development of the concepts of orthodoxy and heresy as they came to be known.

If we are to continue our discussion and move forward, we must first look at some of the major assumptions which have been proposed previously. The history of heresy was outlined by Bauer in the following way:

Even after the death of the disciples the gospel branches out further. But now obstacles to it spring up within Christianity itself. The devil cannot resist sowing weeds in the divine wheatfield…. These Christians blinded by him abandon the true doctrine. This development takes place in the following sequence: unbelief (Unglaube), right belief (Rechtglaube), wrong belief (Irrglaube). There is scarcely the faintest notion anywhere that unbelief might be changed directly into what the church calls false belief. No, where there is heresy, orthodoxy must have preceded. 4

James McCue identifies what he thinks are the two main theses of Bauer. Both of these are critical for our discussion. The first thesis was, “From the outset Christianity was a congeries of different groups differing profoundly in their interpretations of Jesus and in their history of religious provenance.” 5 The second thesis was, “Quantitatively the predominant form of Christianity in most places down to the end of the second century was heresy rather than orthodoxy.” 6 This last thesis is interesting considering Bauer’s history of heresy mentioned above.

There is one difficult part to the second half of Bauer’s statement. The question becomes when did the falling away start? Bauer’s second thesis simply says that heresy existed to the end of the second century. But if we are to take Bauer’s original thesis to be correct and that correct belief (Rechtglaube) must have existed before wrong belief (Irrglaube), or in other words the heresy that was so prevalent, then when did it begin? This is something that must be answered because Bauer brings up both, but they seem to contradict one another. Here I think that Bauer’s thesis is incorrect. His theses contradict one another because both cannot be true. Bauer is incorrect in his assumption that unbelief (Unglaube) preceded right belief (Rechtglaube). This would assume that the earliest Christian converts would have been pagan in belief. But this obviously is not correct since all of the first Christian converts were in fact Jews. Paul and the early apostles preached first in Palestine. Jesus himself commanded that they first preach to the Jews, and it was not until the mid-first century that Peter would receive a vision (Acts 10) which would allow the preaching to spread to the non-Jewish nations as well. Thus, in his thesis Bauer could have

argued that it was incorrect belief which was the beginning of the belief cycle, but to argue unbelief would be to equate Judaism with Paganism. For most this would no doubt be too far a stretch.

Thus Bauer’s thesis needs to be reevaluated taking into consideration the early Christian converts and their religious views. A more correct thesis should perhaps read (1) incorrect belief, (2) right belief, (3) wrong belief. While the first portion of his thesis is incorrect, the second portion is not. While orthodoxy must have preceded heresy, the orthodoxy which preceded it was not what would later appear as the predominant form of “orthodoxy.” Instead the true orthodoxy was that which was preached by the early apostles in the first century, and the “orthodoxy” of the second and third centuries was a heresy itself. We can definitely see a difference in teachings between the first century and what would follow in the continuing centuries as Christianity continued to develop. But because the church needed substantiation for its claim, it had to draw on authorization from the early apostles such as Peter and Paul. We can see a similar trend in the heterodox offshoots as well. They arguably contain teachings and authority from the apostolic branch. This is significant because both groups are vying for power. Bauer spends considerable time looking at this by showing the influence of Rome on the orthodox and heretical groups during the second and third centuries. I will look further into this topic when I discuss the early Christian writers.

The first place we must turn to as we begin to look at the word heresy is the New Testament. This provides the beginning of the change of the word that would later be evident in the writings of the Apostolic and later Apologetic Fathers. My design is to look at the word and its development within early Christianity. I will first look at the origin of the word ἀἵρεσις in Greek, and then analyze its development within the writings of the New Testament and other Christian documents.

**Origin and Usage**

To begin, the original meaning and usage of the Greek word ἀἵρεσις appeared in many forms. They were (a) “seizure” of a city, (b) “choice” with no negative intention but simply a general choice, and (c) “resolve.” Each of these appears in a variety of texts, but the one that I would like to focus my attention on for the purpose of this paper is “choice.” This was first used by the Hellenes in the philosophical sense to mean a “doctrine” or “school.” In antiquity one would choose a particular ἀἵρεσις to follow. A good example of this is the descriptions of philosophical schools as ἀἵρεσις (Polyb., V, 93, 8). To show this view, Simon Marcel uses Sextus Empiricus’ view: “To profess a ἀἵρεσις, a coherent and articulated doctrine founded on principles grounded in reason,

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7. For a discussion on the different meanings of the word ἀἵρεσις and their usages both in the New Testament as well as Greek and Christian literature, see *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*.
demonstrated that one was intellectually alert, fitted for reflection and philosophical discussion.”10 This was the understanding that the word carried during this period. This term was carried proudly by individuals because it showed intellectual or philosophical learning and an association with a formalized group. Von Staden defines the word as meaning “a group of people perceived to have a clear doctrinal identity.”11 Von Staden has traced the development of the word back to the Greek medical profession, where it began in the third century B.C.E. He states,

Greek medicine is the more significant early nurturing ground for ἀἵρεσις as a doctrinal group designation. A group with fairly coherent and distinctive theories with an acknowledged founder…, and with publicly identifiable leaders who articulate (a) their rejection of rival theories through theoretically founded polemics, as well as (b) their own systematic alternatives, would qualify as a ἀἵρεσις.12

Thus the term was widely used within the intellectual community throughout the Mediterranean. While it was widely known and used, it did not have the negative connotations that would later be associated with the term. But as I will show momentarily, this traditional understanding of the word and its concept would change dramatically with the coming of the early Christian movement. However, it must be remembered that the word heresy had a much earlier history than orthodoxy. Thus, heresy was not a result of orthodoxy, but instead orthodoxy was a direct result of heresy. This term would be used in a neutral sense until the beginning of its change in the late part of the first century and into the second. This would happen within Christianity as well as Rabbinic Judaism. While the change in Christianity would happen much earlier, the effect within both religions would be total.

**The New Testament**

While many scholars argue that the word ἀἵρεσις does not really begin to develop until the second century with Justin Martyr, I would argue against this theory and side with I. Howard Marshall, who argued that “Paul and the Evangelists combated false teachings and that the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy already existed near the end of the first century.”14 In his excellent work *La Notion D’Heresie*,15 Le Boulluec argues that Justin was the first of the heresiologists. I am not countering Le Boulluec’s theory by arguing that Paul should be considered the first heresiologist, only that the development

10. Marcel, “From Greek ἀἵρεσις,” 111.
11. Von Staden, “ἀἵρεσις” 76.
13. All scriptural references to the New Testament here will come from the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament unless specifically noted otherwise.
15. Le Boulluec, *La Notion D’Heresie*. 
of ἀἵρεσις begins with Paul. I will argue this on the premise that the word is already developing during the later part of the first century and is carrying the polemic which would later be so characteristic of the word. The word ἀἵρεσις in one form or another is used in the New Testament ten different times. I would like to look at each of them to show that the word had already begun developing during the apostolic age and not later. While I wish to show this development, it is not meant to be comprehensive or to show that the development was exclusive to the first century but simply to demonstrate that the development began not in the second century but the first.

To begin this discussion I would like to first look at the Book of Acts. Luke wrote this book probably sometime in the early 60s C.E. Here we find six references in the Book of Acts. Each time it is translated as “party” or “sect.” The references in 5:17, 15:5, and 26:5 all seem to be used in the neutral tone, without any polemic feeling, while those found in 24:5, 14 and 28:22 all seem to carry the negative tone. The most obvious of them is 24:15, as it “demands the translation of a non-legitimate sect or cult.” It is interesting to note that there is not a consistent meaning carried throughout this text. Instead, the author is implying with one word two different meanings within the same text. From this one example it is obvious that both meanings are already being used.

Paul

The next example appears in 1 Corinthians 11:19. The letter to the Corinthians was no doubt written prior to the Acts of the Apostles. Gordon Fee comments, “the letter may be safely dated in the Spring, ca. 53–55 C.E.” This is significant because Paul is, in all probability, the precedent for the use of this word.

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16. Bauer in his *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianities* comments, “As we turn to our task, the New Testament seems to be both too unproductive and too much disputed to be able to serve as a point of departure. The majority of its anti-heretical writings cannot be arranged with confidence either chronologically or geographically; nor can the more precise circumstances of their origin be determined with sufficient precision” (xxv). While this is somewhat true, much has been learned in the last century since the appearance of Bauer’s work. New Testament scholarship has developed and we know much more now then we did then. However, taking Bauer’s argument into consideration as well as new scholarship, a good analysis of the information in the New Testament can provide us with more information on an important part of the discussion of heresy. While chronology in the New Testament is disputed, as Bauer said, there is still much that can be learned without relying on the factor of dating.

17. Johannes Munck argues for this dating in his commentary on *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1973). He first looks at the reasons for a late dating after the 70s with the destruction of Jerusalem, but he argues that the reasons for a late dating do not have proof and instead shows reasons why it would require a date over a decade before. F. F. Bruce agrees with Munck in his commentary on Acts by also arguing that the reader must look closely at the ending of the Book of Acts because this provides significant material that would lead to an earlier dating probably around 61 C.E.


of this word. Luke, as well as Peter, probably picked up the usage of the word from Paul. However, because of Luke’s background in Antioch as a gentile and his medical profession, he may have come into contact with it separate of Paul. Obviously there is no way to confirm such a hypothesis, I simply state it to show the possibility. Where in the preceding verses Paul is addressing the Corinthian saints and is chastising them in regards to divisions among the saints, he follows with “For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.” The theological message that Paul implies here is interesting. He is telling the people that there is a need for “factions” or “heresies” in order for the truth to be recognized. According to Paul, there must be falsehoods in order to recognize the truth. Thus, different forms of heresy are a needed commodity within theology.

Next, Paul in his epistle to the Galatians makes reference to numerous “works of the flesh” (5:19–20). These are things which many were struggling with, and among this numerical list is the word *dissension*. This is the term he uses to show the polemics within the membership of the church during this period. The last reference that Paul makes using the word αἵρεσις is in Titus 3:10. In verse 10, Paul is making stipulations of disfellowship by saying the saints should give others ample time to repent and change, but if that does not happen, then they should no longer associate themselves with those who are “factions.” Each term Paul uses carries a polemic and negative tone. Not once does he use it in the earlier Greek sense, but instead always uses it with the later developed meaning.

According to Bauer, one thing that must be remembered is that Paul was generally lenient to those committing heresies. Dieter Betz considers Bauer’s statement on Paul’s own view of orthodoxy, “Paul tolerates other forms of Christianity and neither rejects nor condemns them as heretical, even if he considers them to be inadequate.” This is because “[Paul] considered different theological thoughts as being legitimate varieties of the new religion.” While Betz argues that Bauer overlooked some important information when coming to this conclusion, it may be partially true. This is because he (Paul) saw the gospel as something evolving and constantly changing due to continuing rev-

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21. The term αἵρεσις in the Nestle-Aland translation uses the word *factions*, whereas the KJV uses the word *heresies* for its translation.
22. F.F. Bruce in his commentary *The Epistle to the Galatians* NIGTC (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982) argues that the dating of Galatians is the most difficult of any of the Pauline letters. He takes into consideration much of the controversy that has lead scholarship in the debate, but he feels the evidence does not support what many argue. While he does not give a precise date for the authorship of this epistle because of the extreme difficulty of placing it with confidence, he does argue that it is the earliest of the Pauline epistles. He puts it at least fifteen years after the conversion of Paul but before his other four main epistles to the members of the church.
elation. If we look back at McCue’s two main theses, which he identifies from Bauer’s work, the second helps us to see the perspective that Paul probably had. He was just one of many “parties” or “sects.” He obviously counted himself as a σήραγγειος in Acts 26:5. This he says without a negative tone. He saw the Christian sect as another among many. Thus Paul is implying the original rabbinic meaning, which held the same meaning employed by the Greek philosophers, at least until the late second century. This seems to have been the prevailing feeling among the Jews during this period. We find another example of the same usage within the writings of Josephus: “Indeed, Josephus sees all the Jewish religious schools in terms of the Greek philosophical schools, the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees.” From this we get the picture that many of them are carrying the Hellenistic view. The philosophical view still seemed to coexist for a period even after the Christians had picked it up and began deploying it in the negative sense. Thus, there is not an immediate change but a gradual one with both terms being used. Often this would occur by the same author in the same text. A good example of this occurring is Luke as shown above. Paul held this view because he saw the gospel as something evolving and constantly changing due to continuing revelation.

While each of these examples I have presented here is not meant to show Paul as the first heresiologist, I use it simply to show how heresy was an issue that existed in the first century and that Paul was aware of the terminology and was using it himself. It would be picked up later by the Christian apologetic writers in the second and third centuries C.E.

Peter

Only one reference to the word σήραγγειος can be found elsewhere. It is found within the writings of Peter in the New Testament. Here, in 2 Peter 2:1, Peter draws a direct correlation between false prophets, false teachings, and “destructive heresies.” One cannot miss the negative sense that this verse conveys. Peter is using the same terminology Paul uses by showing the negativity of all those that falsify the truth. Because of the lack of material in Peter, we do not get the sense of the usage as we do in Paul. One of the main reasons is because Peter would not have had the same depth of philosophy and politics as Paul had. Peter was a fisherman and did not have the educated upbringing that Paul had under Gamaliel. Thus Paul makes references that show his educated

25. TDNT, 181.
26. When discussing 2 Peter, we come across a number of difficulties that must be pointed out here because of where it leads our discussion. The first is because the dating for the book by scholars has been placed in almost every decade from 60–140 C.E. with the exception of 70–80. However, Richard Bauckham argues that it can be placed plausibly about 80–90 C.E. This brings up the next problem with 2 Peter. This text is considered to be pseudonymous. Because of this, the book can’t be attributed to Peter himself but likely someone very familiar with the Peterine teachings. Taking this into consideration, I will discuss it as if Peter was the author. While this is not the case, he would have been the major influence on the writings attributed to him, and the book would provide us with a good basis of his teachings, whether or not he wrote it himself.
legal and political background. But even with the lack of references in Peter’s writings, we can still assume that he was using it, although probably only in the negative feeling which is evident in 2 Peter 2:1.

**Early Christian Writers**

After looking at the development of the word in the New Testament and showing the significance of its usage, I will now turn to the early Christian writers for the continuation of the development of the word ἀἵρεσις. Following the writings of the apostles in the first century C.E., the next major players to begin using the term were Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and some of the Gnostic leaders in the mid to late second century. Much of what was written between these heterodox and orthodox leaders was in retaliation to one another’s ideas. During this time, there was a contest for predominance that is evident in their writings. Their writings are very important because much that was written on the topic survived, and we are able to see the development much more clearly than those few references found in the New Testament. Much of Justin’s *Apology* and Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* were focused on this subject. I will look at these to show the continuation of the development of ἀἵρεσις. Because of the extensiveness of the topic of Egyptian Christianity and that of Gnostic origin, I will not be able to discuss these here. This subject would require far too much space to be look at in depth. However, later I will touch lightly on the subject to show how the development was so influential on the later division of ideas and groups that developed, as well as the significance of the outcome pertaining to the latter development of Christianity.

**Justin Martyr**

The first major Christian figure to begin using the term ἀἵρεσις in the developed polemic form was Justin during the mid second century. While he uses the term extensively in his major work *Apology*, as well as others, my focus of this part will not be to look at each reference, but instead to look at the goals and outcome of his usage. He is the first that goes through systematically and identifies its different manifestations. Le Boulluec argues that Justin invented the term heresy, but this is something that I would disagree with. As I have just shown, heresy was already a developed idea and was simply used and expanded by Justin, and later Irenaeus. One of the main ways in which Justin was able

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27. For an excellent discussion and reader on Christian writings and texts in the first few centuries that deal with the heretics, see Hultgern and Haggmark, *The Earliest Christian Heretics: Readings from their Opponents* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

28. Here my focus is to simply give a brief sample of the usage as well as the purpose for it. My section on Irenaeus will be the same. To do a comprehensive look at Justin’s and Irenaeus’ work against the “heretics” would require more than a book. Because of the extensiveness of the topic, I will only focus on the major issues. My purpose is to give the reader a good sampling so that the significance of the later portions will be understood. Also, after Justin began deploying the term negatively, others would pick it up and use it against the heretics. Many examples of this survive, one being Polycarp when he went so far as to use the expression “firstborn of Satan” (*Phil. 7.1*).
to categorize this was by associating different Christian groups with the many various philosophical schools. Thus each group had a distinct teaching that they were associated with. Of course he uses this in a polemical way. But the main theological reason for Justin making the divisions and categorizing everything was due to the fact that he wanted to show the perfection of the church and thereby explained away the many different factions and diverse groups that existed during his time. Another way in which he uses the term ἀἵρεσις is to show sects who have wrongly claimed the Christian name. He argues that such people are only “so-called Christians” (Dial. 80.3). Many have incorrect beliefs that are shown to be contrary to the true teachings of Jesus Christ. Similar to this, he shows the digression and split made by the “heretics,” which was a decline from a distinct and primitive truth. Because of this agenda in the usage of the word, it begins to take on another meaning. He uses it frequently when he attacks the other prominent groups.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus began his work a little after Justin and was influenced greatly by him. Irenaeus took what Justin had worked on and pushed it further. He began to develop a number of ideas that Justin had used, and deployed them against the other Christian groups. One of the main things Irenaeus does in his work Against Heresies is to link heresy with paganism and philosophical sophistry.29 He builds on Justin's idea that only they had the true teachings of Christ, which come through the scriptures. Thus he linked the simplicity of the scriptures with truth and naturally would thus exclude those groups with philosophical teachings. He showed that because the other groups were constantly separating and fighting within themselves, they must be false, since the true church was distinguished by its unity both in doctrine and scriptures. He used rhetoric to accomplish this goal.30 By arguing the need for the unity of the scriptures and the church, he begins to further develop the negative rhetoric of separation.

Another way in which he furthers the separation was by applying pagan terms and categories to describe the other groups of Christians. Of course this would have the effect that Irenaeus desired and completed the separation that followed. He argued the correctness of the Church by showing apostolic succession and tradition. He uses the Book of Acts in Adv. Haer. 3.12.1–7 to argue that the apostles never taught Gnostic tradition, contrary to the Gnostics' claims. Most of Irenaeus' arguments were against the ever-expanding Gnostics.

29. It is interesting to note that while Justin and Irenaeus both argue that philosophy was used strictly by the “heretics.” However, it is interesting to note that both Justin and Irenaeus use rhetoric and philosophy to combat the heretics. Clement of Alexandria later argued that you had to be careful with the distinction between philosophy and heresy because they were very different. In fact the need to be careful was due to the fact that philosophy was the weapon which the church had to use to fight against heresy.

and the offshoots of Valentinian and Marcionite beliefs. In Pheme Perkins's words, “[Irenaeus] accuses the Gnostic teachers of patching together a new garment out of the useless old rags of Greek philosophical speculation.”31 This is interesting because he sees nothing new about Gnostic belief and takes special precautions to abstaining from correlating it with Christianity in any way. Here is a typical form of rhetoric that Irenaeus used frequently to disassociate the church with the “heretics.” Irenaeus continues by claiming that the Gnostic teachings violate the “rule of faith” (Adv. Haer. 1.10.1–2). Because of this violation there was the need to disassociate themselves from these other groups that they considered to be false. As mentioned above, his main focus in doing so was to marginalize the other groups and using rhetoric against them.

Development of Concepts Orthodoxy and Heresy

Because of the significant development of negative rhetoric used by Paul and the apostles, as well as Justin and Irenaeus, the concepts of orthodoxy and heresy became very pronounced. No longer was there the toleration of ideas that we see from Paul in the first century, but a total and complete disassociation with anyone that was not willing to align their views with the church. Bauer argues that the church used the wealth and power of Rome to secure itself by doing just this. This is interesting however because heretics were “the primary and dominant proponents of Christianity in several regions. Ironically, the ‘heretics’ often were the ‘orthodox’ insofar as they established themselves first in the communities, became the majority, and were seen to hold and transmit the correct belief.”32 To begin this discussion I think it wise to define a heretic. Segal argues that “a heretic is someone who began in the parent group but who has put himself beyond the pale with respect to some canon of orthodoxy.”33 Thus while in many parts, and according to Bauer, in all parts, the latter “orthodoxy” was in fact the minority. While considering this, it is interesting to note Kurt Rudolph’s description of Gnosticism as “a Hellenistic garment over an oriental-Jewish body, a politically and culturally marginal movement on the borderline between the East and Rome.”34 Thus, Gnosticism was part Hellenist philosophy and part Jewish in nature. It is interesting though that it was such an attraction to so many because of its ties between the old and the new. Because of the success that the Gnostic Christians were seeing, Irenaeus came out in his Against Heresies and speaks so condemningly of them. They only taught, in his eyes, false doctrine but also were a major threat to the church.

As stated above, the division of ideas became very pronounced. I attempted to outline many of these divisions with Justin and Irenaeus. These categorizations were important in the development of the groups. While the consider-

32. Desjardins, “Bauer and Beyond,” 68.
33. As quoted in Desjardines, “Bauer and Beyond,” 67.
34. As quoted in Franzmann, “Taking the Heretics Seriously,” 125.
Franzemann makes an excellent point in regards to the Gnostics:

The problem then for a fair hearing for the Gnostics and an honest historical view of earliest Christianity is that the effort of any religious group towards self-definition and the clear statement of identity occurs most intensely in those times of institutionalization when the focus is on what divides rather than unites groups, when the processes of defining and maintaining orthodoxy and orthopraxis are almost an obsession.\(^{35}\)

Regardless of this, the division took place. Harrington argues, “Orthodox and heretical groups used similar tactics; e.g., repeating false rumors, not recognizing false believers as fellow believers, emphasizing their weaknesses and inadequacies, and supporting or even falsifying their views.”\(^{36}\) Were Justin and Irenaeus very different from the Gnostic and other “minority” groups? In reality the same tactics were being used. Here I would make the argument that perhaps they were no different, just another Christian “trajectory”\(^{37}\) trying to assert its superiority. As the division widened, the rules became “as much about defining what is left out as much as what should be kept in.”\(^{38}\) Towards the end of this division, “any groups that are not in step with the mainstream group, for spiritual, dogmatic, social or political reasons, are labeled most strongly as heretics and most severely persecuted.”\(^{39}\) But one point that must be considered is that the heretics had let the search for truth slip and become secondary in importance. Instead they were focused on searching for the secret teachings of Jesus and the apostles, and for the gnostics that would free them from the evil, corrupt material in which they lived. But Marcel makes an excellent point by saying, “Diversity of opinions (doxai) is normal in the universal search for truth. For, as Plato says, ‘no one willingly goes after evil or what he thinks to be evil’” (Protag. 358c).”\(^{40}\)

Because of this division of ideas, the inevitable division of groups occurred. This list could become quiet lengthy. I will simply categorize it as the “orthodox” and “heretical” groups. It is apparent through history which ones made it into which category. In actuality, many of the marginalized groups ended up as part of the first due to abandonment of certain teachings or doctrines. There were many groups who seceded and soon became the minorities. Bauer argues that this was because:

\begin{quote}
a unified front composed of Marcionites and Jewish Christians, Valentinians and Montanists, is inconceivable. Thus it was the destiny of the heresies, after they had lost their connection with the orthodox Christians that
\end{quote}

\(^{35}\) Franzmann, “Taking the Heretics Seriously,” 125.


\(^{37}\) James Robinson and Helmut Koester in their book \textit{Trajectories through Early Christianity} (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971) show how there are many trajectories through early Christianity, and this is just one of many.

\(^{38}\) Franzmann, “Taking the Heretics Seriously,” 118.

\(^{39}\) Franzmann, “Taking the Heretics Seriously,” 125.

\(^{40}\) Marcel, “From Greek αἵρεσις,” 104.
remained, to stay divided and even to fight among themselves, and thus to be routed one after another by orthodoxy.\footnote{Bauer, \textit{Orthodoxy and Heresy}, 231.}

Thus, because of their own internal struggle, “History focuses on [the religious professionals who won the debates over major doctrinal issues] as the ones who define and maintain orthodoxy.”\footnote{Franzmann, “Taking the Heretics Seriously,” 122.}

\section*{Conclusion}

In the beginning I showed what the Greek word \acr{airesis} meant, both in its original form, as well as the developed one. Due to the early usage by Paul and Peter, the early Christian writers continued the development of the word into what it has become today. As I have just shown, heresy was not a Christian development, but instead a pagan one. In fact, Simon Marcel said, “We would be inclined to think . . . these Greek ‘heresies’—themselves already corrupt—in spite of their superiority in some respects, are the source of the Christian heresies.”\footnote{Marcel, “From Greek \acr{airesis},” 104.} I continued by showing how Justin and Irenaeus used the word to specify those who had a specific belief. This was done by identifying certain individuals with the groups which they lead. These heretical groups were categorized by heresiologists and created a typological categorization that distinguished the “heretics.” Thus we see how the term marginalized the fringe groups that were no longer the majorities. This marginalization would have far reaching effects on the latter development of Christianity. In summary, because of Paul’s usage of the term, Justin and Irenaeus pick it up and employ it by using negative rhetoric for classifying and distinguishing the heretical groups. Because of this marginalization, most of the previous “majorities” became minorities and were eventually extinguished by the “orthodox” Christians.