If not Christians, What?

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Overview:

This ballot worksheet invites Christianity Seminar members to provide their expert guidance in deciding what word(s) and/or phrases should be used to describe the people(s) and groups under consideration in *After Jesus Before Christianity*: the publication that will present the Christianity Seminar's research to a public audience. As we know, dialogue is creative of reality. The language we use to describe the social realities of the first two centuries is central, therefore, to the accuracy of the book. This language is anything but straightforward. The editorial team is asking for your feedback on how best to represent and respect these realities in the vocabulary available to our reading audience. Before moving ahead with this ballot, please read and consider carefully the paper of the same name, from which this ballot was created.

> *What can we call the diverse groups of the first two centuries, whose self-understandings, values, degrees to which they are primarily loyal to Jesus, degrees to which they are primarily loyal to another leader, kinds of stories they tell and hear, imaginations of where they belong in the cosmos, practices, degrees to which they are primary loyalty to the people of Israel, differ in widely varying degrees, from one group to the next?*

Each ballot item or exercise asks you to use the Westar color code of red, pink, gray and black. Red indicates strong agreement with the statement being made, black represents strong disagreement, while pink (some agreement, "I somewhat agree") and gray (some disagreement, "I somewhat disagree") stand in between.

I. General Orientation

1. Please consider each of the following questions, considered basic to our task of considering the peoples and groups of the first two centuries who followed or adhered to a Jesus tradition. Indicate your position by highlighting one of the colors using **bold font**.

    a. There is no "Christianity" in the accepted sense of that word in the first two centuries of the common era.

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

b. "Christian" and "Christianity" are inappropriate terms to describe the people or groups who follow or adhere to a Jesus tradition in the first two centuries.

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

c. The use of "Christ" as in "Christ people" is inherently misleading and should not be used when discussing the first two centuries.

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

d. The use of "Jesus" as in "Jesus people" is inherently misleading and should not be used when discussing the first two centuries.

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

II. Where We Stand

So far, the editorial team has used the following designations to describe the complex social realities of the first two centuries: (the) Jesus people(s), Christ people(s), early Jesus movement(s), Jesus group(s), Christians.

1. Please rate the usefulness of these terms, on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being "not at all useful", 10 being "extremely useful"). Select the appropriate number by highlighting it in **bold font**.

a. (the) Jesus people(s)

1 = not at all useful   10 = extremely useful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

b. (the) Christ people(s)

1 = not at all useful   10 = extremely useful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

c. early Jesus movement(s)

1 = not at all useful   10 = extremely useful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

d. Jesus group(s)

1 = not at all useful   10 = extremely useful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

e. Christians

1 = not at all useful   10 = extremely useful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

f. Christ

1 = not at all useful   10 = extremely useful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

g. Jesus

1 = not at all useful   10 = extremely useful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Please rate the following, using the Westar scale of red – black (select using **bold font**).

a. We should use one phrase only to describe the first two centuries.

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

b. We should use multiple or a variety of phrases to describe the first two centuries.

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

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III. If So "Christian," Then…

*Traditionally, the Greek **christianos** and Latin **christianus** have been translated as "Christian." In active contrast,* After Jesus Before Christianity *has translated the sporadic uses of these terms with "**adherents of the Anointed**" for the Greek, "**adherents of christus**" for the Latin. While there are some second-century groups and perhaps even individuals not necessarily belonging to any groups that use the term "Christian," it is not used in the sense of a widespread religion. The infrequent and erratic second-century uses of the terms do not signifiy a religion the way the fourth, fifth, fifteenth, or twenty-first centuries often use the word. These fairly rare second-century groups also have different meanings for the word from group to group, and perhaps some individuals use "Christian" just to describe some of their own or someone else's particular practice or certain behaviors.*

1. Please indicate your assessment of the following statements using the Westar red – black scale (select the color by highlighting it in **bold font**).

    a. "Christian" or "Christianity" can be explained in such a way that it is okay to use those terms, in specific situations, of the first two centuries.

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

    b. "Christian" is a mistranslation of the Greek *christianos*

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

    c. "Messianist" is an adequate translation of the Greek *christianos*

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

    d. "Adherent of the Anointed" is an adequate translation of the Greek *christianos*

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

    e. "Anointed" is an adequate translation of the Greek *christos*

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

f. "Adherent of Christus" is an adequate translation of the Latin *christianus*

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

g. "Adherent of christus" is an adequate translation of the Latin *christianus*

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

IV. A "Christian," by 104 Other Names…

There is some important material relating to names or group designations in the wide range of ancient documents. Over 100 possible names can be identified in relation to particular groups, followings, associations, schools, and movements, though groups could also change their names, fight over names, or not have names at all. It seems almost certain that scholars are not yet skilled in foraging for names of these groups because we have been too content to call them "Christians," "Christ people," or "Jesus people" and to divide groups into "orthodoxy" and "heresy." Our skills in seeing how a wide variety of "groups" can be identified are simply not highly developed enough.

1. Existing early writings provide us with diverse identifiers for particular groups: the migrants or the refugees in *James* and *1 Peter*, Chloe's circle in *1 Corinthians*, the slaves of God in *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the way in *Acts of the Apostles*, the students in the synoptic gospels, the order of Melchizedek in *Hebrews*, etc.

   Please indicate your judgment on the following: where a group names itself, that name should be used to identify and describe that group in scholarly research and writing, instead of words like "(the) Jesus people(s)," "Christian," etc.

   For example, if you believe that Jesus people(s) in Corinth should be referred to as Chloe's circle, given the identifier in *1 Corinthians*, mark the *Red* box with an X.

Red	Pink	Gray	Black

V. Honoring Diversity

How can we best signal specific characteristics of pluralistic diversity in the first two centuries?

1. Please match the following **descriptors** to the color code by checking off a box in the appropriate column with an X. For example, if you strongly agree that "adherents" is an appropriate term for use in describing the social realities of the first two centuries, write an X in the "red" column.

Descriptor	Red	Pink	Gray	Black
Followers: small occasional gatherings over a period of at least one year.				
Adherents: disparate persons that have strong individual loyalties to a person, practice, idea, or sense of purpose over a period of at least two years.				
Group(s): a collection of 50 or less persons that spend regular time together over a period of at least several years.				
Association(s) or club(s): a collection of 15-100 people that meet regularly together according to defined rules, financial obligations to one another, and commitment to member burial.				
School(s): a collection of 5-50 persons who spend at least two years learning about defined subjects/ideas/debates together in disciplined regular gatherings.				
Movement(s): a collection of 5 separate groups of at least 50 persons, all of which meet regularly together in groups of 25-50, and gather at least 100 people together, at a minimum of twice a year, for a minimum of two years.				
People(s): a more general, non-specific term.				

2. Please indicate your judgment regarding the following **compound designations or categories**. Again, the purpose this work is to enable the book to describe "groups" with some specificity and honoring of difference.

a. First, consider the **descriptors** in the far left column. How accurate and useful are these descriptors for our work? Judge their accuracy by checking off the appropriate color box next to the descriptor.

b. Next, if you judge the descriptor to be accurate/useful, write the appropriate **category or designation** for that descriptor in the column on the far right: followers, adherents, group, association/club, school, or movement, with the appropriate **preposition** (of, for, about, belonging to, with).

For example:

If you strongly agree that "the Anointed" is an accurate and useful descriptor, write an X the red box. Next, write the compound that you judge fits best with that descriptor, including the preposition: *association of the Anointed*, perhaps, or *movement with Jesus*.

If you somewhat or strongly disagree that "the light" is an accurate and useful descriptor, write an X in the black box, and leave the category/designation blank.

Descriptor	*Agreement*				*Category/Designation of/for/about/belonging to/with*
	Red	*Pink*	*Gray*	*Black*	
God					
The Anointed (One) (meaning, a teacher/sage, king, rebel king, priest, prophet)					
An Anointed (One) (meaning, a teacher/sage, king, rebel king, priest, prophet)					
Anointed Ones					
Jesus					
Wisdom/Sophia					
The Father					
The sky (as in, the sky that is over all the earth; the cosmic *ouranos*)					

The light				
The realm/kingdom				
A person, force, value, or principle from your own research:				
(no descriptor; leave blank) (meaning, use a category or designation only)				

VI. Conclusion

To conclude, we would like to hear your specific preferences regarding the terminology used in the Christianity Seminar's book After Jesus Before Christianity. *Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. The editorial team will work to the best of our abilities to include your assessments.*

1. Which words or phrases would you **most like** to see used in the Christianity Seminar's book?

2. Which words or phrases would you **not like** to see used in the Christianity Seminar's book?