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„Jews and Gentiles, Reconciled in One Body“

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CONTENT

1. Introduction

This thesis deals with questions of identity that are spoken about in Eph 2:11-22. But whose identity is written about in this text? It seems that one group is easily identified, as the author of the text addresses them directly: the Gentiles. But who are they exactly? Who does the term refer to? The word used in the original Greek text is ἔθνη, which literally means "peoples" or "nations". The other group is not directly mentioned in the text, but because the author mentions circumcision, Israel, and the covenant, we readily exclaim in our mind: the Jews! Indeed, this is exactly how the text has been translated and interpreted without much hesitation up until the end of the 20th century by New Testament scholars. They considered the text to be about the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in "one body", which they understood to be the Church, established in and by Jesus Christ. However, during approximately the past two decades scholars have called for a more differentiated usage of identity categories generally in Pauline and deutero-Pauline letters. They have brought to our attention that it has been too hastily assumed, on the basis of modern concepts, that the term "the Jews" is the proper name for a group that could be identified by that name. They challenged the underlying assumption that there is no discrepancy between the way the term is used today and how it was used in late antiquity. Henceforth, academics from the field of New Testament studies returned to the notion of "the Jews" and "the Gentiles" with more caution, trying to understand whether the term "the Jews" refers to an ethnic or rather to a religious identity, only to then realize, that the notions of ethnic identity and religion are in fact modern concepts which are applied to ancient texts anachronistically. It seems to be a complicated matter.

Still, we are dealing with a text that proclaims a great and paradigmatic change concerning ethnic and religious relations of different people. It comprises a proclamation about who can consider themselves as belonging to God and about the implications of that. And it contains the important Pauline message about a new possibility for all people to enter into a relationship with God. It is therefore very interesting to entertain all thoughts and questions related to this text as differentiated as possible and possibly discover new facets and nuances of meaning lying underneath the seemingly fixed and established identity categories.

This thesis will first of all, in chapter two, deal with general questions concerning language, context and interpretation of the text, Eph 2:11-22. Since reconciliation constitutes a key

theme of this text, an excursus within chapter one will look closely at the way this theme is dealt with there and compare it to Pauline metaphors of reconciliation as these appear in 2 Cor 5:15-20. In this section, there will also be a comparison of two very different interpretations: Rudof Schnackenburg's interpretation shall represent the traditional view on the text, while Tet-Lim N. Yee's interpretation provides an analysis from the viewpoint of the New Perspective on Paul. Chapter three of this thesis will investigate the categories of ethnic and religious identity inherent to the text and consider different ways how these can be understood, knowing full well that any such endeavor means applying modern concepts, and even a post-modern notion of modern concepts, anachronistically onto a text from late antiquity. The question concerning the nature and quality of the "one new body" shall also be addressed in this chapter. Does it simply refer to the Christian church, as any traditional interpretation of this text was and still is to a large extent purporting? How does our understanding of the processes involved in the emergence of Christianity and its relations to Judaism influence this answer? Chapter four finally asks whether the insights of the New Perspective on Paul, which especially highlights the Jewish identity of the Apostle Paul, can shed any new light on our attempts at understanding the central message of this text.

The question of naming has proved particularly difficult when writing this thesis. It was the aim of this study from the outset to take one step back from traditional interpretations of Eph 2:11-22, which work under the assumption that "the Jews" and "the Gentiles" are fixed and unambiguous notions that do not require further explanations. However, if one decides to approach these categories with more caution not to impose prefixed notions, the question of how to name them is not easy to answer.

For the first category, "the Jews", the text itself does not state a name at all. We know who the author is speaking about and also speaking for, of course, because we have knowledge of other New Testament texts and of ancient history. Paul calls them Ἰουδαῖοι in several instances within his letters (e.g. Gal 2:15 and 1 Cor 12:13). Colossians, which Ephesians is closely connected to, also uses this term in its singular form Ἰουδαῖος (Col 3:11). It is therefore safe to assume that Ephesians also refers to this group of people. I have considered the term "Judaeans",[1] which some authors choose nowadays in order to highlight the ethnic dimension of this group, but have in the end refrained from using this term as a translation. It would mean having to use the term "Judaeans" when referring to the ethnic

[1] See Miller: Ethnicity, Religion and the Meaning of Ioudaios, p. 1f.

group and to use "Jews" when speaking of today's religious and ethnic group, both within the same text. This would introduce, in Miller's words, "a false sense of precision"[2], because the categories are not completely different from one another, there was much overlap in reality, and after all the original language only knows of one word, Ἰουδαῖοι. The disruption expressed by such a practice would be much greater than there is in reality and this would veil the actual continuity that exists between "ancient Jews" and "today's Jews". After all, there is something to be gained from being aware that Jesus was a "Jew" and that there exists a continuity between him and today's Judaism. For this reason, I have decided to use the term "Jew/Jews" within this thesis, being well aware that it is not an uncontested term and that there is the danger of imposing our modern concepts related to the term onto the text.

The question of how to translate the term ἔθνη also proves difficult but in a different way. While the term can be translated as "peoples" or "nations", within the text at hand it is used to denote "non-Jews", which is in fact the meaning of the English word "Gentiles". Using the term "Gentiles", however, in a text that speaks of reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles gives the impression that we are dealing with another ethnic group besides the Jews. In order to stress the fact that we are not dealing with an ethnic group called "the Gentiles", but that this term is in fact a non-ethnic ascription within a discourse of ethnic identity, I have decided not to refer to this category in the usual way. I will use the Greek word ἔθνη when the argument remains close to the Greek text, and at other times I will employ the terms "Gentiles" and "nations" interchangeably. I am hoping this practice will disrupt our pre-established habits of understanding the text and its categories and allow for a more accurate perception of the change of relations that Eph 2:11-22 speaks of.

[2] Miller: Ethnicity, Religion and the Meaning of Ioudaios, p. 44.

2. Ephesians 2:11-22: Jews and Gentiles become one

a) The text: Eph 2:11-22

One in Christ[3]

11 So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision" – a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands –

12 remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

15 He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,

16 and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility in himself.

17 So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;

18 for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,

20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

21 In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;

22 in whom you also are built together in the spirit into a dwelling place for God.

[3] This translation of Eph 2:11-22 is taken from the NRSV. Vv 11, 16 and 22 implement the alternative translation suggestion that is stated in the footnotes of the NRSV.
All further biblical quotes within this thesis are also taken from the NRSV.

b) Interpretation

i) Context

Eph 2:11-22 within the letter to the Ephesians

With regards to the structure of the letter to the Ephesians, the verses 2:11-22, which this work concerns itself with, have a prominent position and function within the whole letter. The generally accepted structure of the letter[4], which I also follow, divides it in two large parts. Chapters 1-3 form the first part of the letter, which is doctrinal in character, and chapters 4-6 form the second, the ethical part. As Sellin helpfully describes[5], Eph 2:11-22 constitutes the center section of the first part with three cyclical layers surrounding it in a chiastic manner. The eulogy of 1:3-14 and the corresponding doxology of 3:20-21 complement each other and form the outer layer. The expression of thanks in 1:15-23 and pleads in 3:1-13 form the second layer. The soteriological doctrinal section 2:1-10 corresponds to 3:1-13 in which Paul's role as a mediator of salvation becomes evident and both together form the third and innermost layer directly surrounding the nucleus of the first part: Eph 2:11-22. While Mußner points to verse 2:18 as the central message of the entire letter ("for through him [Jesus Christ] both of us have access in one spirit to the Father"), I would highlight that at the very heart of this passage lies v 16: "[He] might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility in himself."

<u>Immediate textual context</u>

Eph 2:11-22 follows the preceding soteriological and doctrinal section 2:1-10 and is connected to it by the causal conjunction Διὸ at the beginning of v 11. On account of what is described in 2:1-10, their salvation by God's grace and their having been made alive out of the state of death through trespasses and sins, they should now remember their original condition before salvation.

The section following Eph 2:11-22 describes Paul's role as a mediator of salvation and so the first line of 3:1-13 is connected to our text by the phrase Τούτου χάριν – "for this reason" Paul is in prison for Christ, for the sake of the Gentiles who are addressed above.

[4] See Sellin: Epheserbrief, p. 1345; Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 29; Mußner: Der Brief an die Epheser – the two-fold structure can be seen in the table of contents; see also Lincoln: Ephesians, p. xxxvi; etc.
[5] See Sellin: Epheserbrief, p. 1345.

Eph 2:11-22, therefore, appears to be a text segment of its own, a conceptual unit that follows its own line of thought, while being linked to the surrounding text elements, as indicated by the words Διὸ in 2:11 and Τούτου χάριν in 3:1.

The letter to the Ephesians within the *corpus paulinum*

Authorship

Recent New Testament scholars agree[6] that Ephesians was not written by the Apostle Paul himself. Gnilka has given a detailed discussion of the reasons for this argument, which I will draw on as well.[7] First, Eph 3:1ff seems to be speaking in the voice of Paul himself, yet it conveys the impression that Paul is spoken about rather than speaking himself. Second, even though the content may be similar, these verses lack the struggles and tensions that are substantial to Paul's original letters. His position as the universal apostle seems to be firmly established and acknowledged. Third, Ephesians reflects upon the achieved development of communities that include Gentiles and thus shows that it is further removed in history than Paul himself was when he wrote his letters. Fourth, while Paul was concerned with the salvation of Israel, Ephesians lays its focus (especially in Eph 2:11-22) on the new body in which both those who used to be heirs of Israel's promises and those who were not now have a shared access to the Father in one spirit.

Having assessed that Paul is not the author of Ephesians, the identity of the actual author, however, remains unclear. Based on indications from the content of the letter, it seems likely that the author was a Jew[8]. His familiarity with Jewish tradition and biblical scriptures points in that direction. The author was also very much familiar with Pauline thoughts, theology and with his letters, which enabled him to convincingly write in Paul's name in Ephesians. Therefore it seems likely that the author was from a so-called 'Pauline school', a representative of Pauline theology.[9]

Colossians

There is an apparent relationship between the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians, which can be and has been explained in a variety of different ways. It appears that

[6] See Mußner: Epheserbrief, p. 49; but there are a few exceptions to this position, e.g. van Roon (ibid.).
[7] See Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, pp.14-18.
[8] The question of whether the author was Jewish or not is a matter of interpretation. Schnackenburg has argued to the contrary that the author was not Jewish (Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser, p.118).
[9] See Sellin: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 58.

the best explanation is that of a literary dependency of Ephesians on Colossians, i.e. that the author composed Ephesians along the lines of Colossians, which functioned as a master document. The two letters share common content, have a similar structure and sometimes even similar wording. With regards to important theological topoi (for instance the body of Christ metaphor) it is possible to detect a development of concepts that progresses from Colossians to Ephesians.[10] This observation gives reason to assume a dependency of Ephesians on Colossians, so that it can be classified not only as a deutero-Pauline but moreover a "trito-Pauline" letter.[11]

The letter's embeddedness in time and space

Time of its writing

Since the author of Ephesians has drawn on Colossians as its master text and Colossians is taken to be written around the year 70 CE, Ephesians cannot be written any earlier than in the year 80.[12] The Apostle Paul is depicted as a well remembered person within the letter, which is an indication for it being written not too long after the Apostle's death. Gnilka takes the absence of references to the persecution of Christians, which started in the later days of the emperor Domitian, as a time indicator and concludes that Ephesians cannot be written any later than the year 90 CE.[13]

The letter's address

A special feature of this letter is that it cannot be said with any certainty to whom it was addressed. The tradition that refers to this letter as "the letter to the Ephesians" goes back to the late second century.[14] The Canon Muratori, Irenaeus of Lyons and Clement of Alexandria provide for our oldest texual witnesses to it. However, it was not before the second half of the

[10] See Gnilka's detailed explication of the dependency of Ephesians on Colossians in: Der Epheserbrief, pp. 7-13. On the particular example of the body-head-metaphor, Hanna Roose showed in her article "Die Hierarchisierung der Leib-Metapher im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief als 'Paulinisierung'" the conceptual development of Paul's metaphor of Christ's body (1 Cor 12, Rom 12), which is „democratic" in nature, to its modification in Colossians, where the metaphor is used in a "monarchic" sense presenting Christ as the head of the Christian community, and lastly to its use in Ephesians, which modified it further to show not only a hierarchy from Christ to Christian community but also a hierarchical relationship between Christian community and the rest of the world (Roose: Hierarchisierung, p. 119).
[11] Sellin: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 56.
[12] Mußner: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 36.
[13] Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 19.
[14] See ibid, p. 1.

fourth century that the location ἐν Ἐφέσῳ appears in the opening of the letter in a commentary by Victorinus Afer.[15] Older texts lack this mention of a location.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that Marcion was accused by Tertullian of having changed the title of the letter into "the letter to the Laodiceans".[16] From this fact derives the hypothesis that considers Ephesians to be the lost letter to the Laodiceans mentioned in Col 4:16. However, since there is no text available today that states this address, the hypothesis cannot stand its ground. Also, having established earlier that Ephesians is dependent on Colossians and was written at least a decade later, the letter to the Ephesians cannot be the letter that was mentioned in the earlier document.

We are, then, confronted with the following situation: Ephesians was from very early on known as "the letter to the Ephesians", yet the earliest manuscripts available today do not state an address in its prescript. Gnilka offers a convincing explanation for this.[17] He claims that after the death of the Apostle Paul, there were still a number of disciples who were following his school of thought and who produced several of the deutero-Pauline scripts. They were probably located in Ephesos where the Apostle had stayed for a longer period of time during his third missionary journey (see Acts 19). What has been added as an address to the letter can therefore be understood as a label pointing to the location of its origin and to the general area it was written for. The center of this area was Ephesos and the designated area embraces all the Christian communities that lie within the sphere of its influence in Asia Minor.[18]

Another important detail about Ephesians becomes evident after having established these facts: The literary genre of what is known as "the *letter* to the Ephesians" is (strictly speaking) not really a letter written to an actual community, but, as Mußner points out, it is rather an "epistle", i.e. a dogmatic letter meant for a larger audience than only one community.[19]

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[15] See: ibid.
[16] See: ibid., p. 2.
[17] See: ibid., p. 6. More recently, Rainer Schwindt (Das Weltbild des Epheserbriefes, pp. 61-62) comes to the same conclusion. Similarly, Mußner argued as well that "Ephesos" did not constitute the original address of the letter, his explanation differs slightly from Gnilka's by claiming that using the name of the city where the Apostle Paul has had a longer stay the author of Ephesians attempted to make the letter appear more authentic (Epheserbrief, p. 750). Mikael Tellbe (Christ-Believers in Ephesus, p. 54) argued in a slightly different way that since there is no proof Ephesos was the original address, it is impossible to establish any connection of the letter with the city of Ephesos at all.
[18] See Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 6.
[19] See Mußner: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 17.

ii) Analysis

Language

The language of Ephesians is characterized by a special linguistic style that makes it different from other New Testament letters. As Gnilka points out, the numerous questions that Paul has used in his letters to elaborate his thoughts and concerns are missing (only one question is left in v 4,9).[20] Instead, we are dealing with an abundant language full of exceptionally long sentences and liturgical phrases. These long sentences consist of loosely connected phrases of participial constructions, relative clauses, compound prepositional phrases, infinitive phrases etc.[21] This aspect is true for the passage of Eph 2:11-22 as well. Due to these long sentences the entire passage consists of only five sentences: vv 11-12 form the first sentence, v 13 the second, vv 14-16 the third, vv17-18 the fourth and vv 19-22 the fifth. Another linguistic style of Ephesians is its frequent use of ἐν, which is found 113 times in the entire letter.[22] This feature is also true for 2:11-22, in particular in the way ἐν in combination with nouns is placed at the end of sentences. This can be identified for example in v 12 (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) and v 22 (ἐν πνεύματι).

This linguistic style differs not only from authentic Pauline letters but also from Colossians, which, as has been established above, Ephesians depends on to a large degree. However, almost all of these specificities of style can also be recognized in hymns and texts found in the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran. Gnilka (following Kuhn) hence comes to the conclusion that Ephesians was greatly influenced by the Qumran tradition, its language and style.[23] The discovery of this stylistic relatedness to the Dead Sea Scrolls is an important feature that marks a turn in the history of interpretation of Ephesians. The interpretations of the school of religious history, which developed towards the end of the 19th century, have had a great influence on later theologians of the 20th century such as Schlier and Käsemann[24], who considered Ephesians to be greatly influenced by Gnostic thought. Motives that have been identified as Gnostic material are, for instance, being enthroned together with Christ in heavenly places (2:5-6), the destruction of the wall of separation (2:14), the creation of "one new humanity" (2:15), etc.[25]

[20] See Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 31.
[21] See ibid.
[22] See ibid.
[23] See ibid., p. 32.
[24] See an elaboration of Käsemann's hypothesis in Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 34f.
[25] See Sellin: Epheserbrief, p. 1346.

When Kuhn and others discovered a similarity between the motives that are found in Ephesians and motives found in the Qumran texts, this constituted a shift away from gnoseological interpretations connected to the school of religious history.[26] Another strand of thought, represented by Hegermann and Colpe, also reject an interpretation on the basis of Gnostic influences, but they understand the unique style of Ephesians to emerge from a connection to a tradition of Judaism in Alexandria.[27]

One of the linguistic aspects structuring the text is the use of the ποτὲ … νῦν ("then/now") contrast schema.[28] It already appeared in the previous text section Eph 2:1-10 in order to illustrate how the state of death through trespasses and sins (v 1) has ended in exchange for a relationship with Christ that makes truly alive (v 5). In fact, this schema is built into vv 1-7 which can as a whole be understood in the light of this contrast. In these verses only ποτὲ is explicit, however, whereas νῦν functions only implicitly within the text.

In Eph 2:11-22, however, the ποτὲ … νῦν schema is used fully explicitly[29]: ποτὲ is first introduced in v 11 in order to describe the former state of alienation of the ἔθνη, the Gentiles; the first corresponding νῦν contrast is found in v 13, which states (with an additional contrast scheme, but this time with an implicit νῦν) that now those who once were far off have become near in Christ; the second corresponding element appears in v 19 in the equivalent form of οὐκέτι ("no longer"). This last contrast depicts, as Lincoln explicates, that the addressees once "were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel (v 12), but now they are fellow citizens with the saints (v 19). Once they were seen as aliens with regard to the covenants of promise (v 12), yet they are no longer aliens and strangers (v 19). Previously they […] were without God in the world (v 12), but currently they are members of the household of God (v 19)."[30]

The ποτὲ … νῦν contrast schema is, therefore, an important underlying formal element that structures the message of the whole text at hand.

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[26] See Sellin: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 59.
[27] See Sellin: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 60.
[28] This ποτὲ … νῦν schema was described by Lincoln (Ephesians, p. 86) with regards to Ephesians 2. He argues that while within NT letters this schema is a common way of contrasting the non-Christian past of the addressees with their present privileged experience after having been saved by Christ, it is more dominant within Eph 2 than in any other place. Referring to Tachaus's monograph "'Einst' und 'Jetzt'", he points out that this device is not known within the OT (*Joseph and Asenath* being the only exception) and the Greek use of the schema as a rhetoric device is not nearly as strong with regards to its expression than the use within NT letters. It is believed to originate in very early Christian preaching, possibly in connection with baptism.
[29] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 125.
[30] Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 125.

When scanning the text for its key terms a chiastic structure becomes visible on a linguistic and rhetorical level:

A) V 11 contains very fleshly terms that highlight the dichotomy of Jews and non-Jews, which manifests itself in the flesh (ἐν σαρκί) on the matter of circumcision (περιτομῆς) or non-circumcision, foreskin (ἀκροβυστία) or no-foreskin.

B) V 12 speaks of the former alienation (ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι) of the Gentiles from the commonwealth of Israel, of their having been strangers (ξένοι).

C) V 13 employs the biblical intertextual reference to Isa 57,19 so to express that those who were far off (μακράν) have been brought near (ἐγγὺς) in Christ.

D) Verses 14-16 form the centerpiece, describing in several different ways Christ's reconciling deeds, that he himself constitutes peace (εἰρήνη) and makes both groups into one (ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφότερα ἓν). He destroyed the hostility (ἔχθραν) so that they can become one new humanity (ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον) in him and he reconciled (ἀποκαταλλάξῃ) both in one body to God.

C' V 17 picks up the theme from v 13 again, stating – in even closer similarity to Isa 57,19 Christ proclaimed peace to those who were far off (μακράν) and to those who were near (ἐγγὺς).

E) Verse 18 constitutes a paranthesis within the chiastic structure, as it repeats the theme of section D) also describing the new state of unity and reconciliation both groups share, in this particular verse with regards to their access to the father.

B' Verse 19 develops further the alien-stranger rhetoric of verse 12, claiming that now the addressees are no longer aliens (πάροικοι) and strangers (ξένοι) but citizens (συμπολῖται) with the saints and members of God's household.

A' Verses 20-22 do not resemble section A but constitute an intentional aberration of the initial theme: while section A described the separation of the two groups on a physical basis, section A' describes the situation under changed circumstances using physical terms of a shared architecture in which both groups are joined together. The apostles and prophets constitute the foundation (θεμελίῳ), Jesus Christ is the cornerstone (ἀκρογωνιαίου) and in him the whole structure (πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ) is joined together and grows into a holy temple. This social collective is to be built in the spirit into a dwelling place (κατοικητήριον) for God.

Genre

The letter to the Ephesians appears in the form of a letter. It opens by stating the (supposed) sender's name and the addressees, the opening includes greetings, blessings and it gives thanks. It ends by mentioning personal matters and giving a benediction to the addressees. However, as has already been mentioned above, it does not constitute a real letter as it is not addressed to a specific community or person. Mußner therefore calls it an epistle, a dogmatic text meant for a larger audience. Gnilka has very accurately classified it as a homily that appears in the form of a letter.[31]

Structure of Eph 2:11-22

Different ways to structure Eph 2:11-22 have been adopted by different New Testament scholars. Even though they differ only slightly, it is worthwhile to present a few of them here in order to show what thoughts have motivated their decisions.

Bruce, who entitles the whole section "The Incorporation of the Gentiles", divides the text in three parts: vv 11-12 form part one and are entitled "Their Former Plight"; vv 13-18 form part two and are entitled "Their Present Access"; and vv 19-22 form part three and are entitled "Their Membership in the House of God". This structure shows that Bruce's focus is entirely (and solely) on the Gentiles and their status.

Mußner proposes a different structure by dividing the whole section in only two parts: part one embraces vv 11-18, which he entitles "Die Erschaffung des einen neuen Menschen in Christus"[32]; and vv 19-22 form part two, which is entitled "Der heilige Tempel im Herrn"[33]. Where other interpreters see cause to divide the section into two parts, for Mußner, vv 11-18 constitute one coherent whole and its internal meaning has its climax in verse 18 that speaks of a shared access for both groups to the Father.

The majority of interpreters, however, follows this three-part structure: vv 11-13 form part one; vv 14-18 form part two, vv 19-22 form part three.[34] There are convincing arguments that lead to this structure, which shall be explained as follows.

[31] See Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 33.
[32] English: "The creation of one new man in Christ".
[33] English: "The holy temple in the Lord".
[34] See for example Gnilka (1990), Merklein (1973), Schnackenburg (1982) and Lincoln (1990).

Vv 11-13: State of separation and exclusion

In the opening section, the author speaks directly to the ἔθνη ("nations") and contrasts their former deprived state in this world with the privileged status of the commonwealth of Israel. He points out that this has been changed thorough Christ's deed, which has brought the far one's near in him.

Vv 14-18: Peace, reconciliation and unity through Christ

This passage explains in greater detail how the change mentioned in v 13 has been brought about. The explanatory character is indicated by the opening words referring back to Christ Αὐτος γάρ which also reveal the beginning of a new unit of meaning. The following verses tell of the wonderful deeds of Christ, who signifies peace, who destroyed the enmity between Jews and ἔθνη and who created one new humanity out of the two previously alienated groups. He did so by reconciling the two groups not only to one another but (moreover) to God, and by proclaiming universal peace. This segment culminates in v 18, which expresses that both groups now have a new and shared access to the Father in spiritual one-ness.

This passage is clearly a cohesive unit which has led some interpreters to call it an excursus that contains an exegetical interpretation of Isa 57,19[35], while some assumed some older Christological material or even an older Christological hymn which the author of Ephesians has used and amended for his own purposes here.[36]

Vv 19-22: As members of God's household built into a dwellingplace for God

The third section commences with the introductory terms Ἄρα οὖν, which indicates the beginning of a new unit of meaning.

Following the elaboration of Christ's salvific deeds, then, the third section of the text contains a description of their consequences, an illustration of the positively changed situation for those who have previously been precluded from the commonwealth of Israel. They are now citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. In this section, architectural metaphors are used in order to demonstrate the enduring solidity of these new processes of unity and inclusion. The "whole building" (ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοκομὴ) of those joined together is built up to be a temple for the Lord and the members of this new unified structure are also built up to become a dwelling place for God.

[35] See Dibelius and Conzelmann in Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 138.
[36] Gnilka (ibid, p. 147f) describes the positions of Schille and Sanders, who were in favour of the hymn theory. Lincoln (Ephesians, p. 131) speaks of traditional material that the author has reworked.

iii) Exegesis

Verse 11

Διὸ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπό τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκί χειροποιήτου

In this opening verse, the readers or listeners of the text are directly addressed as ὑμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη, which the NRSV translates as "you Gentiles". The literal meaning of its singular form, ἔθνος, simply translates into "a people" or "nation", its plural form later came to mean "foreign, barbarous nations" in opposition to the Greek nation, and within the LXX it meant "non-Jews" in opposition to the Jews.[37] As established above, the author is a (Christian) Jew and he therefore addresses non-Jews as his audience or readership: "you Gentiles".

The first verse establishes the identity categories that are at play in the following verses. These categories are formed along the lines of a Jewish world-view, which separates people into those who are Jews (i.e. those who belong) and non-Jews (i.e. the others, who do not belong). The line of separation is a physical one (ἐν σαρκί) based on the Jewish identity marker of circumcision that stands for their belonging to the elect people of God.[38] The ἔθνη are therefore called ἀκροβυστία, which literally means "the foreskin", a derogatory insult to denote "those who are not circumcised". In a figurative manner of speaking, however, it is used to refer to those who are not circumcised, "the uncircumcision", the non-Jews[39]. The people who called that way would not have thought of themselves in these terms, it is therefore clearly a Jewish perspective that is expressed here.[40]

The term ἀκροβυστία, and several other key terms from this verse such as "circumcision", "made with/without hands", and "flesh" are also used in Col 2:11.13. But while the author's use of circumcision and uncircumcision in Col 2:11.13 is metaphorical[41]

[37] See article ἔθνος in: Liddell & Scott, p.480.
[38] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 135.
[39] Danker: Greek-English Lexicon, p. 39.
[40] There is wide agreement in recent NT exegesis that the term "Gentiles" and the following references to circumcision and uncircumcision are to be understood from a Jewish perspective. This view is shared by Yee: "Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation", Gnilka: "Der Epheserbrief", Lincoln: "Ephesians", et al. "Gentiles" (ἔθνη), therefore, means "non-Jews" and is not to be interpreted within a Christian paradigm as the non-believers, or those who need yet to "convert to Christianity". Mußner, for example, suggests such a view by stating that the addressees of the letter are "former heathens" – the mention of "former heathens" is not taken from the text but indicates Mußner's view, which takes their being without Christ as a reference point (Mußner: Der Brief and die Epheser, p.70).
[41] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 135.

(for example when speaking of putting off "the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ"[42]), it is used in a literal sense in Eph 2:11 in order to distinguish between those who practice circumcision and those who do not, Jews and non-Jews. It draws a social demarcation line. The term ἀκροβυστία also appears in Col 3:11 and is used there precisely in order to make that distinction, as is the case in Ephesians as well.

The term ἀκροβυστία is also used a number of times in the letters of Paul: Rom 2:27, 3:30, 4:9-12; 1 Cor 7:18.19; Gal 2:7, 5:6, 6:15. Of these, Rom 2:25-29 is highly relevant for our purpose of understanding Eph 2:11. There, the Apostle Paul speaks of circumcision in relation to practicing the law and he purports that circumcision is only profitable if one also practices the law. If that is not the case, then circumcision will turn into uncircumcision, which means that the privileges tied to circumcision will be lost before God.[43] It appears that Paul was contesting the meaning of circumcision for the Jews of that time by stating that an uncircumcised (a "non-Jew") who fulfills the law might in the end be the one to judge the Jew.[44]

Ultimately, Paul proposes in Rom 2:28-29, "circumcision does not guarantee salvation and […] its lack does not bar one from salvation".[45] What matters, however, is a manifestation of one's relationship with God in the heart. It is this contrast that is being expressed in vv 28-29: the outward circumcision done "in the flesh" is not valued by Paul as highly as the inward "circumcision of the heart". This may also be an undertone of Eph 2:11, where the Jews' circumcision is referred to as one that is done "in the flesh by the hands". One can detect a certain distance of the author to this practice of circumcision. If the circumcision "in the flesh, done by the hands" is the only one there is, there would be no need to highlight this fact. Yet the mention of flesh and hands to distinguish this type of circumcision suggests that there is another, possibly better form of circumcision – the circumcision of the heart, which Paul has promoted.[46] This form of circumcision is possible for Jews and non-Jews, it is not a demarcation line but an inward connection with God that does away with such borders completely.

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[42] Bruce suggests (The Epistles to the Colossians..., p. 104.) that "the circumcision of Christ" can be understood as a metaphor for the radical change to a person's life brought about in baptism, and "putting off the body of the flesh" "refers to the reckoning of one's former self with its desires and propensities to be dead" (ibid.). This verse is an allusion to Col 3:9-11 which speaks of a personal renewal which includes the stripping off of the old self and clothing oneself with the new self in the image of the creator. In this renewal, it goes on to say, there is no longer "circumcised and uncircumcised" (i.e. περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία).

[43] See Moo: The Epistle to the Romans, p. 167.

[44] See ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] See e.g. Barnard: Unity in Christ, p. 169.

Verse 12

ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Ξριστοῦ, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ ᾽Ισραὴλ καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

V 12 continues the line of thought from v 11 and explains now what it is that the ἔθνη should remember: their disadvantaged state of being without Christ and without the privileges of Israel. Their categorization as "uncircumcision" was relevant because it was on *that basis* that they were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. The promises that were tied to the covenant between Israel and their God were not meant for the Gentiles, who were without hope and without God in the world.[47]

Interestingly, this is the only case within the whole of Eph 2:11-22 where those who we usually refer to as "the Jews" within New Testament interpretations are given a proper name. In v 11 it was said that they call themselves "uncircumcision" and v 12 refers to them as the "commonwealth of Israel", but apart from that the author refrains from naming them for the rest of the passage.

The use of the term πολιτεία is interesting at this point, because it can mean both citizenship and commonwealth. While it is likely to indicate the latter meaning in this case, it may well be that the first meaning was intended as a connotation as well. The term ξένοι that is used in the same sentence supports this view as it is part of the same linguistic complex. As Dunning points out, stranger/citizenship rhetoric was well understood throughout the Roman Empire at that time and hence this linguistic complex might have opened a way for Gentile readers or listeners to understand the new status that has become possible for them through Christ.[48]

Verse 13

νυνὶ δέ ἐν Ξριστῷ ᾽Ιησοῦ ὑμεῖς οἵ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγὺς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Ξριστοῦ.

[47] See also Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 137,

[48] See Dunning: Strangers and Aliens No Longer, p.13. The accumulation of citizenship terminology has also been pointed out by Mußner (Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 71). Other authors have rejected the connotation of the term "citizenship" for the reason that Israel was in fact no state, which the term "citizenship" would imply (see for example Merklein: Christus und die Kirche, p. 19; Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 109). With regards to the commonwealth of Israel, Schnackenburg highlights that Ephesians does not mention the question concerning the future fate of Israel, even though this was a major concern for the Apostle Paul himself (p. 110).

At this point their former state of disadvantage is contrasted with the newly gained status in Christ. This verse already hints at the Old Testament verse from the book of Isaiah (Isa 57:19), which will be more prominent in v 17, by stating that the ἔθνη "who were far off" have become near in Christ now. While it is a common Old Testament metaphor to refer to non-Jewish nations as the ones who are far off[49] (e.g. Micha 4:3; Jes 5:26, etc.), the point of reference being Israel, it is important to note that the following "coming near" in this verse does not mean to say that they came near to Israel, but (even though it is not stated explicitly yet) the point of reference is someone else. It may well be that this verse already points to the message that v 18 is going to express – that the Gentiles have now come close to "the Father" since they now share together with the "Jews" the access to Him through Christ Jesus. This has been accomplished "in Christ" (ἐν Ξριστω) and "in the blood of Christ" (ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Ξριστοῦ).

Verse 14

Αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ἡ εἰρὴνη ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσασ τὰ ἀμφότερα ἓν καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ,

With v 14 begins the second segment of Eph 2:11-22, which may (as has been noted before) comprise hymnic traditional material that the author has amended for his purposes. This verse elaborates further what v 13 has mentioned briefly: that Christ has brought about change for the situation of division that had meant privilege for one group and disadvantage for the other. Here it is said that Christ is peace – he does not bring or establish peace, but he himself embodies it. It is also interesting to note, that the author is at this point for the first time not speaking of the two separate groups, but claims that Christ is "our peace", ἡ εἰρὴνη ἡμῶν, thereby anticipating that all separation is going to be overcome in Christ. This strong image of Christ as peace evokes images from the Old Testament, where peace (שלום) means more than an absence of war or hostility but constitutes moreover a way of living in general wellbeing, in a state of whole-ness and healing and within a just society.

Eph 2:14, however, does not intend to speak of the messianic dimension of peace, it really "only" refers to the state of peace which two formerly hostile groups gain after being reconciled with one another.[50] The clause ὁ ποιήσασ τὰ ἀμφότερα ἓν is formulated in neutral

[49] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p.111.
[50] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 140.

terms, but it is clear that it is the two groups introduced above, "the Jews" and "the nations" (ἔθνη), which "he", i.e. Jesus Christ whose name was stated at the end of v 13, has made into "one".[51] The following explication that he has broken down the dividing wall can therefore also be interpreted with regards to these two entities, the Jews and the nations one. These two entities were firmly separated and qualitatively different in terms of their relation to God and the privileges that spring from it. However, Christ has destroyed the wall of separation between them and thereby destroyed the hostility that had built up between them. In the history of New Testament Studies, this "wall of separation" has given way to grand theories and several very distinct interpretations.[52] The text itself, however, does not give immediate reason to interpret it any other way than as a metaphor for a form of social separation that has become absolute and manifest, so that it has almost become a tangible, physical reality. The wall of separation is further on identified with the hostility between the two social groups, and Christ has destroyed it in his blood.

Verse 15

τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην

The author continues his line of thought from v 14 and now names explicitly what has caused this separation to become manifest: the law with its regulations and ordinances is the cause for the ultimate distinction between Jews and Gentiles and therefore the reason for their separation and disadvantage in relation to God. The terms ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτου from the previous verse may very well be applicable for this predication as well, in order to express

[51] Lincoln argues that the neuter form of these terms indicates that we are dealing with a remnant from the hymn that was used by the author to formulate this passage (see above) and it originally referred to heaven and earth (ibid). Merklein and Mußner, on the other hand, suggests that the neuter was chosen by the author because the above mentioned terms "circumcision" and "uncircumcision" do not stand for actual people but are used as categories that stand for two separate spheres or entities. (Merklein: Christus und die Kirche, p. 30; Mußner: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 75). This argument is convincing: our text is not speaking of groups of people anymore, but these groups have become objectified to represent two firmly established separate entities.

[52] Gnilka, in his attempt to recover the Christological hymn in Eph 2:14-18, offers an "original interpretation" of the „wall of separation" in terms of gnostic mythology as the cosmic wall that separates heaven and earth and keeps humanity isolated within the earthly realm. The gnostic savior therefore has to destroy the wall in order to save his people and unite them with himself (Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 149). Lincoln mentions another possible interpretation, which for instance Abbot and Hanson have adopted, that takes the "wall of separation" literally to be the wall within the confines of the temple that separated the Gentiles off from the Jews (Lincoln: Ephesians, p.141). Schnackenburg holds the view that this wall of separation is a metaphor for the law, which applies only to the Jews but not to the Gentiles (Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser, p.114). Yee suggests yet a different interpretation by stating that this wall is a metaphor for the social separation between Jews and Gentiles caused by the practice of circumcision (Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p.150).

that in his flesh, i.e. through his death on the cross he has abolished the law.[53] The Torah as "the law with its commandments and ordinances" has been given to Israel, the elect people of God. The ἔθνη were, from this perspective, denied access to Israel's God by definition according to the commandments and ordinances of the Torah. This is why the abolition of the law was good news for the Gentiles, as is explained further on in v 15: Christ abolished the law so that the two no longer need to be separate but instead they are created as one new humanity – this is how Christ made peace.[54]

The image of the "new humanity" takes the process one step further than simply making peace. When hostility between two social groups is overcome and peace is established, these two groups can live side by side in a new state that allows contact and interaction, maybe even friendship. A new humanity, however, means that the two groups are now part of a new and larger entity that had not existed before. The one-ness mentioned in v 14 is repeated and thus emphasized here in order to highlight that what once was separate is now one. Christ has created them εἰσ ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον, into one new person, i.e. one new humanity.[55]

The author says nothing further to qualify what this new humanity was meant to be like. Whether it shall be understood in terms of Gal 3:28 as an annihilation of differences ("There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.") or in terms of a community that allowed and valued differences without prioritizing one over the other is not stated[56]. Only peace and unity are

[53] Lincoln (Ephesians, p.142) has mentioned that this crude statement about the abolition of the law has led many interpreters to seek a milder understanding of this verse. Barth holds that not the whole law, but only the dividing element of the law has been abolished. Others suggest that it is only the ceremonial law and not the moral component of it that is done away with (Hendriksen). However, as Lincoln convincingly argues, the author himself has made a special effort to express as precisely and detailed as possible that the entire law was abolished, using the rather complicated formulation "the law consisting of commandments which are expressed in regulations" (ibid.).

[54] Paul never used such a strong word as καταργέω in relation to the law. When Paul speaks in Rom 10:4 of what in Lutheran tradition was referred to as the end of the law ("das Ende des Gesetzes") this goes back to the Greek formulation τέλος γὰρ νόμου Ξριστὸς – τέλος means end, but it can be understood in two different ways: either in terms of a termination, or in terms of a purpose or a goal (Horn: Paulus Handbuch, p. 363f). This last interpretation expresses continuity instead of discontinuity, fulfillment instead of termination. In this latter sense, because the purpose of the law is Christ, Paul can argue in Rom 3:31 that we are not trying to "overthrow (καταργοῦμεν) the law […]. On the contrary, we uphold the law". Paul does not mean to nullify the Tora as such, but he proposes that in Christ there is a new way that leads to salvation, which is open to the Gentiles also. In this way, Eph 2:15 is not so far away from a Pauline understanding of the law as it might seem. The difficult question of salvation with or without the law, which Paul was very much concerned with, is simply not the focus of Ephesians.

[55] This "new creation" brings to mind Paul's use of this image in Gal 6:15, where circumcision and uncircumcision are said to amount to nothing in comparison to it, and 2 Cor 5:17.18, where the new creation is mentioned in connection with reconciliation.

[56] Lincoln interprets this notion of "one new person" in terms of a total transformation wherein newness represents more than a combination of the previous two entities. In fact, he understands it in terms of "a new race which is different from both Jews and Gentiles" (Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 144).

repeatedly mentioned in order to qualify the newly created humanity and hence this is taken to be the notion that the author aimed to stress with this image. And the author also makes clear that Christ is the one who created this new humanity – he himself is the creator.

Verse 16

καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχτραν ἐν αὐτῷ

Up until this point, the focus of the letter was horizontally on the two separated groups. V 16 picks up this theme again and continues praising Christ's deed and making known that he has also reconciled the two in one body to God. The notion of reconciliation is introduced for the first time here, using the verb ἀποκαταλλάσσειν "to reconcile". It is used in the active form ἀποκαταλλάξῃ with Christ being the one who enacts this reconciliation. The only other use of this compound form of "to reconcile" appears in Col 1:20.22. In all probability it is an altered form of Paul's notion of reconciliation as explicated in 2 Cor 5:18 where he proclaims that "we" (i.e. Paul) have been reconciled to God through Christ – in this case, however, it is God himself who brings about reconciliation through Christ, i.e. Christ is not the active agent here. As is fit for the special focus of Eph 2:11-22, this passage focuses on the social dimension of reconciliation first of all and only as a second step grounds this human reconciliation in a shared relationship with God.[57] Since they both have become one, they are both reconciled to God *as one*.

How can the phrase "in one body", ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι, be understood with regards to this reconciliation? Different interpretations have been considered for the notion of ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι: first, it could refer to the body of Christ on the cross; second, it could refer to both the body of Christ on the cross and (in a mystical sense) the church; third, it refers only to the church.[58]

[57] Lincoln raises the question why both groups (as opposed to only the Gentiles, having been far from God) require reconciliation with God now. His answer is that the separation of the Gentiles from access to God has doomed also the Jews to become separate from God based on the bad consequence of the Torah. This seems unlikely, however, as the following verse speaks of the Jews in terms of "those who were near". However, reconciliation of the whole new humanity to God can simply indicate that *all* separation has been abolished and therefore both share the same access to the Father (as v 18 is going to claim). It simply cannot be, that after reconciling both groups there would still be two different statuses before God.

[58] See Merklein: Christus und die Kirche, p. 45. He argues that the correct interpretation has to be the church constituted by both Jews and Gentiles, because the preceding "one" functions in the same way as in the previous verses to highlight the new oneness that has been established through Christ. This view is also supported by Schnackenburg (1982), Gnilka (1990), et.al.

As Lincoln points out, the thought of "in one body" is parallel to the earlier mentioned creation of "one new humanity".[59] This also indicates that it is not Christ's body on the cross that is referred to here, but instead the new body indicates a new entity that was created out of the two groups. Their reconciliation has given rise to a new social constitution amongst them and brings forth a new body, a new social entity. Just like the term "humanity" was a metaphor to describe the newly established community, so is the "body" in this case. I would refrain from calling this body "the church", however, because this term is nowhere to be found in Eph 2:11-22. Schnackenburg argues that throughout Ephesians σώμα refers to the church and it is therefore safe to refer to it as the church in this case as well. However, this decision might narrow our understanding of the text and of the newly emerging entity in particular. If we infer the concept "church" too quickly, we might be misled to believe what was intended, simply because we know how it evolved historically. I therefore suggest maintaining the terms that the text itself provides us with, i.e. the notion of "one new humanity" and "in one body".

All this has happened through the cross, the enmity has been put to death in him. The mention of the cross in this verse as well as the flesh in v 14 and the blood in v 13 seem like reference points to a Pauline school of thought, they are not the focus of attention, not the subject that the author is grappling with. The center of this passage is the newly established entity, this line of thought enfolds along the structure of this passage and is embedded in Pauline thought and teachings, indicated by references to the cross, the blood and the flesh.

Verse 17

καὶ ἐλθὼν εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς:

Now, in v 17, we hear the quotation of Isa 57,19, which has already been hinted at in v 13: "Peace, peace to the far and the near, says the LORD". Interestingly, Christ is here presented as the messenger of peace when at the same time we have heard in v 14 that he is this peace himself, that he embodies it. While originally the verse from Isaiah did not necessarily refer to Jews (near to God) and Gentiles (far from God), but spoke during exilic times of those who were in exile and those who had remained in the land,[60] in our case it is precisely the Jew/Gentile dichotomy that is referred to, as has been established above.

[59] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 145.
[60] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 146f.

The peace that is spoken of in this verse does not refer to peace between the two estranged groups – that Christ has made these two groups into one and has reconciled them with one another has already been established in vv 14-16. A new thought is introduced at this point – this time peace is proclaimed (to both groups *separately*, as Lincoln has pointed out[61]) because of a new relationship to God that has been established, as they both have been reconciled to God as well. It is the vertical dimension of peace between humanity and God that is spoken of here. But why are both groups mentioned separately again, after it had been established with emphasis that they have already become one? It is no contradiction if this verse is understood not in terms of a chronological progression to v 16, but as a way of expressing the process described in all of v 14-16 in different words. The message of v 18 is tightly connected to the previous verse.

Verse 18

ὅτι δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφότεροι ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.

The first term, ὅτι, is a causal conjunction which makes clear that the following sentence will establish the grounds for what the previous verse has expressed. This verse constitutes the end of the text's middle section and it is interesting that v 14 (the beginning verse of this section) started out by proclaiming that he (Christ) is "our" peace and the final line of the section ends by stating that in him (Christ) "we" both have access to the Father. It is only in these two instances that the first person plural is being expressed, or in other words, that the author is speaking on behalf of the "one new humanity" that has been established in Christ. In v 18 this serves to show that all differences in terms of privilege or status have indeed been abolished so that both groups share the same access to God.

Access here is spoken of here in cultic terms, referring to possibility to approach God.[62] Having access is further defined by the phrase "in one spirit". While many elucidating pneumatological thoughts have led to different interpretations of this verse, in terms of e.g. the spiritual nature of approaching God,[63] or the spiritual unity of the one new body as

[61] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 148.
[62] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 149. It is Old Testament images of cultic ceremonies and sacrificial offerings that are evoked by the term προσαγωγή. Lincoln states as well that there are political connotations to this term, as it can also be used to denote access to a king. In Eph 2:18, however, the cultic meaning is clearly more relevant than the political.
[63] See Mußner: Der Brief an die Epheser, p .88.

opposed to the separation in the flesh according to v 11,[64] it seems that the most important aspect is the notion of oneness that characterizes the spirit. It is yet another emphasis on oneness that runs like a golden thread trough this passage. Moreover, as Lincoln has pointed out, the mention of "in one spirit" is parallel to "in one body" in v 16 and resembles 4:4 "there is one body and one spirit".[65]

This verse also indicates a new form of relationship that the spirit opens up – both Jews and non-Jews can now call God their father, neither one of them can be said to be God's favorite son or daughter any longer. Therefore, v 18 can be understood in terms of depicting the grounds for the peace which is proclaimed to both the far away and the near ones equally, yet at the same time, practicing their shared access to the Father as one is truly an expression of the peace they have.[66]

Verse 19

Ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ,

The Ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι at the beginning of the verse indicates that a new line of thought within the overall argument of the passage is now beginning.[67] After having proclaimed in vv 14-18 the marvelous deeds of Christ and their effects on the formerly separated entities, the Jews and the Gentiles, the author now turns back to the initial argument in vv 11-13, where the disadvantage of the Gentiles in contrast to the commonwealth of Israel was established. Now, in v 19, the Gentiles are addressed again in order to explain their new situation after the paradigmatic shift of the Christ event. As in v 12, the author uses political terminology to describe their new situation, "no longer strangers" (ξένοι) and "aliens" (πάροικοι) but "citizens" (συμπολῖται) with the saints and "members of the household" (οἰκεῖοι) of God. All these terms clearly indicate a form of belonging, a status that is of high esteem and that entails rights. Their change of status did not merely imply that they now belong to the commonwealth of Israel, whereas before they were strangers to it, but, as Schnackenburg has

[64] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 149.
[65] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 150.
[66] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 150, and also Bruce: The Epistles to the Colossians, p. 301.
[67] It has been argued by some interpreters that vv 19-22 represent an older baptismal hymn, but this hypothesis has been widely refuted by now (See Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 152f, Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 130f.)

pointed out, together Jews and Gentiles form a new body in which they share their common access to the Father.[68]

Verse 20

ἐποικοδομηθέντος ἐπι τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Ξριστοῦ ᾽Ιησοῦ

Having established the new community relationships within the newly formed entity, it seems that the author is now building a house for the community, using architectonic terminology to invoke stability, persistence and solid grounding.[69] Yet what is described is not monolithic, but instead it is a building *process*. The author describes that a house or building is being established on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone (and therefore the first and most important part of the building) is Jesus Christ himself.

Verse 21

ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὰ συναρμολογουμένη αὔξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ

This whole building or structure that has been established on afore mentioned basis, the author continues, is now joined together in him. Jesus Christ is therefore highlighted again as one who makes all this possible – the consolidation of unity can only occur with Christ as its original beginning (as is expressed by the term ἀκρογωνιαίου "cornerstone") and connective link (see "joined together", συναρμολογουμένη). Only then it can grow into "a holy temple", εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον in the Lord. Imagery of a holy temple is also used in 1 Cor 3:16-17 with regards to the individual person, in a similar sense as the temple of the holy spirit in 1 Cor

[68] Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 121. Schnackenburg then goes on to argue that this new body is the church and that it was in fact God's plan for salvation to replace the commonwealth of Israel by the ecclesial body of the church (ibid.). This issue of continuity or discontinuity from Israel to the church is a matter of great theological controversy. Schnackenburg's interpretation views the establishment of church clearly as discontinuity: something new has been established in Christ, and henceforth the church, not Israel, shows the way to God and to salvation. Yee's position holds that it is not Israel itself that has been replaced, but Israel's politics of exclusion (Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 222). Lincoln opts for a third interpretation: in his view, there is both continuity *and* discontinuity. Discontinuity can be detected by the author's language of contrast, which indicates a change in the social order of the time, of the self-understanding of the commonwealth of Israel, and there is a change with regards to the authority of the Torah. However, the new body that has been founded in Christ on the basis on these changes is in continuity of the tradition of the commonwealth of Israel, their scriptures, and the messianic hope they had held (Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 163f).
[69] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 212.

6:19, and with regards to the congregation as a temple of the living God in 2 Cor 6:16.[70] The temple is of course already part of Old Testament prophecy in which, as in Isa 56:6-7 it represents an eschatological house of God within which all nations will be collected to pray and worship God in the end times.[71]

The verb αὔξει ("it grows") lends a particular dynamic to these sentences that otherwise are characterized by architectural terms that invoke a notion of stability and solidity. Yet this structure of building is alive and actively growing.

Verb 22

ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι.

V 22 continues in this lively tone by stating that in the Lord the addressees themselves are built together in the spirit into a dwelling place for God. Verses 21 and 22 parallel each other structurally in order to emphasize the message of the text.[72] Both verses start with ἐν ᾧ, which refers back to Christ the cornerstone in v 20.[73] The verbs in both verses begin with the prefix συν- to indicate a togetherness of the activity that takes place here. All that was necessary in order to overcome the situation of separation and hostility between Jews and Gentiles has been achieved in Christ. The unification of the formerly separate groups has also taken place already, as the author speaks of one shared access to the Father for both groups as something that already existed, it didn't need to be established anymore. But vv 19-22 tell us of a continuing process of building and growing, which indicates that what had happened so far was only the beginning of changes and processes yet to come. What is being built together, according to v 22, is a "dwelling place for God in the spirit". The passage of vv 19-22 therefore started out by bringing stability to the presumably unstable relationships of this new humanity that has only now been reconciled. It is described as a solid house, with Christ as its cornerstone and the apostles and prophets as its foundation. Yet the temple that it should ultimately resemble is of a motile quality, it's substance being the spirit, so that God may dwell in it.

[70] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 156.
[71] See ibid. Unlike Lincoln, I consider it a possibility that this image from the book of Isaiah could be a connotation to the text at hand. More obvious, however, are the similar notions to the mentioned verses in First and Second Corinthians, especially with regards to the mention of a "dwelling place for God" of v 22.
[72] See Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 160.
[73] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 158.

iv) Excursus: Reconciliation

One of the central arguments of the exegesis elaborated above is that unity was established where before there was separation, and peace and reconciliation was brought about where before there was division and hostility. In the Apostle Paul's thoughts and theological concerns expressed in his letters, reconciliation was indeed an important notion. Even though other theological topoi may have featured more prominently, as they were mentioned more frequently or debated more hotly in his letters, the notion of reconciliation can, however, be said to be an essential feature within Paul's multi-faceted theological concerns. It was in part the important development of the New Perspective on Paul, which criticized the Lutheran tradition within New Testament interpretation for overly emphasizing the matters of justification by faith alone. The justification of the sinner not by works but by faith alone was not Paul's major concern, according to the "New Perspective", but it was the urgent question of Martin Luther and was only later imposed on to the letters of Paul, thereby rendering other aspects of his thought invisible or marginal. One of those marginalized topoi is the theme of reconciliation, which has in recent years received more attention than previously – also, but not only, thanks to the impetus of the New Perspective. Ralph P. Martin (although he is not a proponent of the New Perspective), for instance, has thoroughly investigated the theme of reconciliation within Paul's letters and has come to the conclusion that it actually constitutes the center of Paul's theology.[74] Though it cannot be the task of this thesis to examine Martin's hypothesis, the weight he gives to the theme of reconciliation within Paul's thought should nevertheless be taken seriously and further attention should be given to it within this thesis.

The questions that this thesis seeks to answer with regards to the theme of reconciliation are: What are the characteristic features of Paul's metaphors of reconciliation and in which ways can they be understood? Can these features be identified within Eph 2:11-22? Or putting it differently, having established earlier that Ephesians constitutes a deutero-Pauline letter, does it nevertheless reflect Paul's use of reconciliatory metaphors adequately? Which features can be identified that are unique or specific to the letter to the Ephesians concerning the use of metaphors of reconciliation? These questions shall be addressed in the following section.

[74] See an explication of Martin's position in his article "Center of Paul's Theology" in: Hawthorne and Martin (eds.), Dictionary of Paul and his letters, pp. 92-95.

Paul's metaphors of reconciliation

In order to give an outline of Paul's metaphor of reconciliation and its background, I will follow the arguments in Cillliers Breytenbach's (2010) distinguished analysis and explication.

It needs to be clarified from the start, that in Breytenbach's opinion the two terms that seem related in the German language, "Versöhnung" (reconciliation) and "Sühne" (atonement) are not related in their Greek original use. Δι- and καταλλάσσειν can be translated as "to reconcile" and refer to an interpersonal process of making peace, whereas ἱλάσκεσθαι means "to atone" and belongs in the holy or sacred sphere as part of a process of cleansing.[75]

The traditio-historical context of Pauline metaphors of reconciliation lead back to the Septuagint, where διαλάσσειν is used twice in order to describe the reconciliation of two estranged people (Ri 19:3; 1 Regn 29:4b). The term καταλλάσσειν is used in the Second Book of Maccabees to refer to the relationship between God and Man.[76] There is therefore no indication, that Pauline metaphors of reconciliation should originate in the tradition of atonement of the priestly source of the Old Testament.

Breytenbach then shows how Paul coined the phrase "to be reconciled to someone" in a way that differs distinctively from the usage in his Hellenistic context. He uses the phrase in 1 Cor 7:11 to advise the estranged wife to be reconciled to her husband. This particular usage shows an example of reconciliation in interpersonal relationships, which is a common feature in Greek texts.[77] It is a different matter, however, when the term is used to refer to the relationship between God and humans – in Paul's writings there are only two such cases (2 Cor 5:18-20 and Rom 5:10), and generally in Greek texts from antiquity there are about a dozen cases.[78] Breytenbach, hence, speaks of a "metaphorical mapping of non-religious terminology unto a religious domain."[79]

What, then, influenced Paul's terminology of reconciliation? In attempting to answer this question, it is important to note that in 2 Cor 5:11-6:2 Paul is trying to defend his position as an apostle to the Corinthians. In so doing, he is depicting himself to be sent by God in order to allow for a new relationship of reconciliation between humankind and God.[80] Paul is here drawing on old metaphorical images from Hellenistic writings, where ambassadors are sent

[75] See Breytenbach: Grace, Reconciliation and Concord, p. 12.
[76] See ibid., p. 14.
[77] See ibid., p. 171.
[78] See ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] See ibid.

out in order to negotiate for reconciliation. When Paul uses this metaphor of reconciliation in relation to the change of relationship between God and humankind, he also uses this element of the ambassador (for himself) mediating and negotiating for peace and reconciliation between the two estranged parties.

Besides these applications of reconciliatory metaphors within the interpersonal domain, there are a few Hellenistic texts that tell of relationships between humans and gods in these terms. For instance, the Greek tragedy "Ajax" by Sophocles tells us how Ajax, the hero, reconciled himself to the gods by refraining himself from anger.[81] These few cases from Hellenistic texts show reconciliation as a process whereby the human part has to change in order to bring peace to the damaged relationship between humans and gods. Gods are portrayed as being easily reconciled by prayers or sacrifices on the part of humans – upon the accomplishment of the latter the gods forgive offenses done to them by humans.

Hellenistic Judaism was familiar with this tradition and transferred the terminology of reconciliation onto the relationship between the Jewish people and their only God.[82] Differently from other New Testament scholars, Breytenbach postulates that it is not possible to detect one uniform language usage of Hellenistic Judaism where Paul might have drawn his metaphors of reconciliation from. Those few instances in Hellenistic texts where reconciliation is described are from different geographical locations and times – they do not constitute one Hellenistic Jewish dialect that Paul might have been part of.[83]

Moreover, Paul's usage of reconciliatory metaphors differs from the way they were used in Hellenistic-Jewish writings to describe a change on the part of God in order to bring about reconciliation. In Second Macabees, for instance, a wish is expressed: "May he [God] hear your prayers and be reconciled to you, and may he not forsake you in time of evil"[84] (2 Macc 1:5). In this instance it is God who changes; God was estranged from humans and it is he who shall be reconciled. Further examples for this type of understanding of reconciliation between humans and God, where God needs to change in order to bring about reconciliation, can be found in writings of Josephus, in the narration of Joseph and Asenet, and others.[85]

Paul's usage of reconciliation metaphors, however, distinctively differs from the Hellenistic-Jewish writings described above precisely because it is *not* God who changes, as Breytenbach

[81] See Breytenbach: Grace, Reconciliation and Concord, p. 176.
[82] See ibid.
[83] See ibid., p. 177.
[84] New Revised Standard Version
[85] See Breytenbach: Grace, Reconciliation and Concord, p. 177.

explains: "Paul's God does not change, he does not reconcile himself to his human enemies, instead, he reconciles humankind to himself."[86] In Paul's understanding, therefore, God is depicted as being the active party who accomplishes reconciliation and he effects reconciliation on part of humankind, while he himself does not need to change because he does not constitute the estranged party.

Breytenbach's explication shows, that Paul's own role is also of decisive importance in the reconciliatory process he describes: In 2 Cor 5:18-22 (which can be considered one of the key passages for his understanding of reconciliation) reconciliation is said to be mediated through an ambassador.[87] The process of reconciliation starts in a state of enmity between humankind and God and ends in a condition of reconciliation and peace. Paul himself has received the word of reconciliation (λόγος τῆς καταλλαγῆς), he is a representative of Christ when he pleads the Corinthians (δεόμεθα ὑπέρ Ξριστοῦ), and acts as an ambassador (πρεσβεύομεν) for God. He not only announces peace, but he is also the mediator of peace between God and humankind. When Paul, then, is pleading the Corinthians to be reconciled with God, it is as if God himself is inviting them through him.

After this depiction of Pauline reconciliation metaphors, the next section of this work will compare the key elements of a Pauline understanding of reconciliation with the way reconciliation is used in the letter to the Ephesians.

Specific use of reconciliation in the letter to the Ephesians

According to Breytenbach's explication, the following elements are crucial for the specifically Pauline use of the metaphors of reconciliation. First, when Paul speaks of reconciliation, he does not refer to the relationship between individual persons, nor between social groups or nations, but it is the relationship between humans and God that is in his main focus. Second, Paul's use of reconciliatory metaphors is not connected to a notion of sacrifice or cultic cleansing. Third, reconciliation in Paul's letter is achieved through God's deeds, not human deeds – i.e. God is the active party in the process effecting reconciliation. Fourth, the change that takes place, however, is on the human side of the process, not on the side of God – in other words: humans are in a state of enmity and are consequently reconciled, not God. Fifth, Paul himself plays a vital role in the process of reconciliation as he has been endowed

[86] Ibid.
[87] See ibid., p. 174.

with the ministry of reconciliation, which makes him an ambassador for Christ. Does the metaphor of reconciliation as it is used in Ephesians match Paul's own use as outlined above? Has the author of Ephesians simply adopted Paul's metaphor of reconciliation or has he actually elaborated it further? Can all or some of these characteristic features be found in the way reconciliation is spoken of within Eph 2:11-22? What is the specifically Ephesian notion of reconciliation with regards to the unification of Jews and Gentiles, as has been elaborated in the exegesis of the text?

Ad 1) Reconciliation with God

The primary concern of Eph 2:11-22 is the reconciliation of the two separated and hostile entities, i.e. the Jews and the Gentiles. While several phrases, verbs and expressions within the text indicate this social aspect of the reconciliatory process, there is only one instance where the author states that these groups were also reconciled to God (τῷ θεῷ), in v 16. It shows that the author was a good disciple of Paul and he diligently unfolds his argument within the Pauline teaching of reconciliation, which he was very familiar with. His point of concern was different from Paul's, however – while the Apostle Paul has urged and pled with the addressees of the second letter to the Corinthians to (re-)enter into a truthful relationship with God, the author of Ephesians focused on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles first and foremost (5:20).

How can this dative object τῷ θεῷ be understood, then, with regards to reconciliation in the altered circumstances of Ephesians? The text states that both groups are reconciled to God in one body, once the hostility between them is put to an end. Lincoln points out that the reconciliation of both groups to God raises some difficult questions.[88] While vv 11-13 depict comprehensibly why the Gentiles needed to be reconciled to God, having been without God, without Christ and without hope in the world before. But why were the Jews in need of reconciliation, when the text mentioned earlier that Israel had received by election the covenants of promise? While the letter to Ephesians itself does not answer this question, various interpreters have attempted to answer it by interpretation. Lincoln's interpretation considers the hostility between Jews and Gentiles to have affected both of them. The Gentiles were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, who held the covenantal privileges, and thus they were by consequence also alienated from God. The Jews, however, were separated from God by practicing the law that denied the Gentiles access to God. Through the Gentiles'

[88] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 145f.

separation from God on the basis of the law that was practiced by the Jews, they themselves were separated from God and in need for reconciliation with Him.[89]

Yee holds a similar view, but his argument has a sharper edge to it by claiming that „the Jews who had played a substantial role in excluding (and agonising) them [i.e. the Gentiles] need to be reconciled and restored to God.“[90] This position almost seems to attribute some form of blame or even sinfulness to the Jews for excluding the Gentiles.

Merklein sheds light on a different aspect of reconciliation with God in Ephesians when he points out that the καὶ linking v 15 and v 16 does not merely effect a conjunction of the two clauses, but indicates a logical sequence, in terms of “and consequently”.[91] The unification of the two social groups therefore necessarily precedes the reconciling act of God, which could not take place in a state of hostility.[92] All three scholars, Merklein, Yee and Lincoln, therefore interpret the author of Ephesians as implicitly holding the view that the separation constituted a phenomenon not wanted by God. Separation and hostility between the two groups were abolished not only for their own sake, but because God’s will was for them to be reconciled.

However, as Breytenbach has pointed out, the metaphor of reconciliation as a process that does not only take place on a horizontal, human level, but also vertically in their relationship to God, can be considered as a specifically Pauline notion, something that had not been there before Paul’s introduction. Therefore, even though the above interpretations seem sensible, the matter may be quite different indeed: the Jews used to trust in the law, which was tied to Israel’s covenant to God and thereby excluded other nations from it. In Jesus Christ, however, a new access to God, the father, has opened up that was not there before. It constituted a paradigm shift, which Paul expressed in the metaphoric language of reconciliation. Only once reconciliation with God through Christ became possible, the need for both Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled with Him could be expressed. Just as in 2 Cor 5,19 Paul announces that in Christ God has reconciled the *world* (κόσμον) to himself (not only the Gentiles, not only those who have trespassed), thereby expressing a universal dimension

[89] See Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 146.
[90] Yee: Jew, Gentiles, and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 172f.
[91] See Merklein: Christus und die Kirche, p. 54.
[92] Bruce (The Epistles to the Colossians, p. 300) holds the opposing view to Merklein, claiming that by their reconciliation to God they are as a consequence reconciled to one another. This view, however, is not supported by the textual evidence at hand, since the unification of both groups into one new humanity is mentioned before the reconciliation of both to God. Moreover, Merklein quite convincingly demonstrated (as mentioned above) that the καὶ linking vv 15 and 16 can even be understood as indicating a logical consequence, thereby suggesting that the reconciliation of both groups to God could only take place once they were reconciled to one another.

of reconciliation, Eph 2:16 does not single out those who by their sins or faults are more in need of reconciliation than others.

Ad 2) Non-sacrificial reconciliation

The key term in Ephesians for reconciliation is ἀποκαταλλάξῃ, a compound form of the verb καταλλάσσειν, "to reconcile", meaning "to reconcile (completely)". The term that would indicate a sacrificial exchange or action in the relationship between humans and God is ἱλάσκεσται, which is missing in the entire passage. It is therefore rather surprising that Yee concludes from the mention of the cross that reconciliation is to be interpreted as sacrifice in the context of Ephesians. He writes, that "[…] the peace-making procedure of Christ (*pax Christi*) has prepared a brand new framework within which mutual acceptance between members of the 'one body' might in turn be filled out […] This framework, to be sure, is constructed not by brutality or bloodshed (like the *pax Romana*), but by Christ's own sacrifical [*sic!*] death on the cross (cf. vv 14d, 16)."[93] Yee is here contrasting Christ's supposedly peaceful and peace-bringing suffering and dying on the cross to the bloodshed that led to the forcefully imposed and maintained peace of the Roman imperial rule. He suggests, that Christ gave his life as a sacrifice in order to accomplish peace for humankind. His very interpretive category, however, the death of Christ as sacrifice, lacks any grounding in the actual text of Ephesians.[94]

In relation to the reconciliation of both in one body to God (v 16) Ephesians mentions the cross as the medium through which this reconciliation is achieved, which led Mußner to refer to it as a "Heilsinstrument", a tool for salvation.[95] His argument rests upon the interpretation of ἐν αὐτῷ as referring back to the cross rather than referring to Jesus Christ himself, which leads to an understanding wherein not only the reconciliation between the two entities was achieved through the cross, but the hostility was abolished through in it (ἐν αὐτω) as well.

[93] Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 179.
[94] Similarly, Lincoln (Ephesians, p. 146) mentions in passing that "the cross" here implies Christ's sacrificial death. He neither mentions any textual evidence to support his view, but seems to take the notion of the cross itself to stand for Christ's sacrifice which effects reconciliation amongst humankind.
[95] Mußner, Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 84.

Various New Testament scholars are divided on this matter as the text itself allows for both interpretations.[96]

However, the difference within these two ways of interpreting the ἐν αὐτω appears to be slim, if there is one at all. When v 16a proposes that Christ reconciled both in one body to God *through the cross*, doesn't the cross here constitute a symbol for Christ's dying on it? A symbol even for Jesus' life, for what he said and did and embodied that led to his crucifixion? A symbol for the effects his crucifixion has for those who believe in him? Suffice it to say here that Paul's use of "the cross" in his letters always referred to the saving effect of Christ's death on the cross.[97] This would imply that "through the cross" also refers to himself and to his crucifixion, and consequently it would amount to the same thing to interpret ἐν αὐτω as "in himself" or "in the cross".

It can therefore be said that neither Paul nor the author of Ephesians portrays Christ's death as a sacrificial act. The notion of reconciliation within Eph 2:11-22 hence stays true to the original Pauline metaphor of reconciliation in this respect.

Ad 3) Acting party within the process of reconciliation

In Pauline metaphors of reconciliation God is always the acting party, God is the one who accomplishes reconciliation, which can therefore be called a work of God. As can be seen in 2 Cor 5:15-19, reconciliation is effected by God, it is connected to Christ's resurrection and can thereby be linked to the new creation in Christ. Paul speaks of a new creation in Christ καινὴ κτίσις and immediately states that "all this [comes] from God" who achieved reconciliation between "us" and God.[98] When compared to Eph 2:11-22, it becomes apparent that we are dealing with a specifically Ephesian characteristic because here it is *not* God who is effecting reconciliation, but Christ (v 16) who reconciles both in one body to God through the cross. The theme of a new creation is also feasible in Ephesians when it expresses that Christ creates (κτίσῃ) one new humanity (ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον) in himself. Even though there are similar patterns to be detected within the two texts, the striking difference is that the "all this from God" from 2 Cor 18 seems to have been replaced by an implicit "all this from Christ", who has brought peace and created a new humanity.

[96] For instance Lincoln (Ephesians, p. 146) takes ἐν αὐτῷ to refer to Christ rather than the cross, arguing that it is a parallel phrase to ἐν σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, "in his blood", in v 14; Gnilka on the other hand suggests that it refers to the cross (Der Epheserbrief, p. 145).
[97] See Horn (ed.): Paulus Handbuch, p. 288.
[98] See Mußner: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 84; Merklein: Christus und die Kirche, p. 52.

Ad 4) Not God changes, but the people

The focus on the social dimension in Eph 2:11-22 is so dominant that God is merely mentioned once my means of the dative object to the verb "to reconcile", i.e. τῷ θεῷ. The change within this social dimension comprises the overcoming of hostility between Jews and Gentiles, the becoming one of the formerly separated entities. The new humanity that Christ had created out of the two is reconciled in one body to God. There is no change on the part of God within the Ephesian notion of reconciliation, it therefore stays within the original Pauline use of reconciliation metaphors.

Ad 5) Paul's role within the process of reconciliation

Paul's own understanding of his role as a mediator for peace is very important for an understanding of reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:15-20, as he has received the ministry of reconciliation, τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς (v 18) and the message of reconciliation τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς (v 19). Therefore, Paul is an ambassador of God and when he pleads the Corinthians to let themselves be reconciled to God, it is God who is pleading through him.

In Ephesians, Paul does not hold such a crucial position to the process of reconciliation. There, it is Christ himself who is the agent of reconciliation and he unifies the two social entities and consequently he reconciles the new humanity that he has created to God. Paul is not directly mentioned in the process. When in Eph 4:1-4 is making Paul address the readers to maintain the unity in the Spirit they hold and in the bond of peace that has been established, it can be understood as referring back to what has been established in the peace making process in 2:14-18, the "unity" that has been established there is now mentioned explicitly as τὴν ἑνότητα. Paul's role is therefore not connected to the process of establishing peace, but he is now merely asking to make the effort necessary to maintain the unity and the bond of peace that was established through it.

c) Comparing different interpretations of Eph 2:11-22

i) Rudolf Schnackenburg: united in one body, the church

At first, I will give a summary of Rudolf Schnackenburg's interpretation of Ephesians 2:11-22. Schnackenburg was a German catholic priest (1914-2002) and he laid out a

comprehensive approach to the Epistle to the Ephesians in volume 10 of the EKK (Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar).[99]

Schnackenburg reads in the opening line of the passage (v. 11) a confrontation of the Gentiles with the Jews, in that the former are called "uncircumcision" (i.e. the uncircumcised) by the Jews, whose determining identity marker is precisely their circumcision.[100] According to Schnackenburg, the phrase "in the flesh" specifically refers to the matter of concrete and bodily circumcision. He takes the author's description of the Jews as the "so-called circumcision" to be a form of devaluation, as well as the addition that this circumcision is made in the flesh by human hands. At the same time, these references to circumcision indicate the privileged status of Israel with regards to their covenant with God, which includes their promise of salvation, and as a consequence they indicate the Gentiles' disadvantage in comparison to the Jews.

The Gentile's disadvantage is further elaborated in v 12, which describes their former state of separation from Christ, which is later to be compared to the present state of salvation of being in Christ Jesus (v 13). Schnackenburg understands the described advantages of Israel to be illustrations of how this new state of salvation can be understood, which is now open to both Jews and Gentiles. However, the question concerning the relation of church and synagogue is not addressed in this passage of the epistle at all, and Schnackenburg concludes that the author's main focal point simply is the church, consisting of "former Jews and Gentiles", in which distinctions like circumcision or the law have lost their meaning. Schnackenburg speaks of "former Jews and Gentiles" in order to refer to those who used to be either Jews or Gentiles but who have, through their attachment to Jesus Christ, taken on a new form of identity which will at a later stage in history be called Christian. It is questionable, however, whether these people at the time thought of themselves as "former Jews and Gentiles". This question will be addressed in more detail at a later point in this thesis.

Schnackenburg takes the unity of Gentile and Jewish Christians *in the church* to be the main concern of the author of this letter and also of this passage, even though the term "church" is not used here. The fact that this passage does not speak of "the Jews" is taken by Schnackenburg to be an indication that the part of Judaism that stayed outside of the newly

[99] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, 1982.
[100] See ibid., p. 108.

emerging church was not relevant to the author of Ephesians.[101] Following Boyarin's elaboration on emerging Jewish and Christian identities, there will be a discussion at a later point whether the borders between "former Jews" (i.e. now Christians) and "Jews outside the Church" (i.e. now Judaism) might not have been as clearly established at that time as Schnackenburg assumes in his retrospective glance.

The text does not speak of "the Jews" but at one point it refers to the "the commonwealth of Israel" and this terminology needs further explanation. Schnackenburg speculates that the author did not use it in terms of citizenship rights or a political system. For him, the author rather intended to use it in a metaphorical way in order to refer to the social collective that had been chosen by God and committed to him through His commands and His covenant. Since the terms "church" (ἐκκλεσία) and "synagogue" (συναγωγή) already carried the connotations specific to the situation of the newly emerging Christian Church and the post-Christian synagogue, Schnackenburg goes on, the author chose the neutral term "commonwealth" instead. In this view, it seems that the term "commonwealth" was chosen rather at random. We shall see later that Benjamin H. Dunning gives an interesting alternative interpretation in which it is precisely the political meaning the term commonwealth conveys that becomes meaningful for the Gentiles being addressed in this letter.[102]

The covenants of promise (τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆσ ἐπαγγελίασ), which v. 12 speaks of, point to the promise of a coming Messiah in whom all salvation will be fulfilled, holds Schnackenburg.[103] This used to be a promise to Israel, and hence the Gentiles being addressed in this passage are reminded that they, not being part of the elected group, were formerly without hope in the world and without God. Now in Jesus Christ also "former Gentiles", as Schnackenburg names them, have part in this promise, which has been fulfilled already. It is interesting to note that Schnackenburg again calls them "former Gentiles", even though the letter itself addresses them as "Gentiles". It raises the question concerning the actual meaning of the term is and concerning the intention of using it in the letter.

V 13 reflects a verse from the book of Isaiah (Isa 57:19), which proclaims peace to those who are far off and to those who are near. In the Isaiah passage, Schnackenburg takes "those who

[101] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 109.
[102] Dunning: Strangers and Aliens no Longer, 2006.
[103] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 110.

are far off" to be "the Gentiles", while "those who are near" are "the Jews". In the letter to the Ephesians this hint on Isa 57 is used metaphorically, the meaning however has shifted, according to Schnackenburg, so that those who were far off, i.e. "the Gentiles", have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ, which means to him that they are not Gentiles anymore.[104] It seems, that according to Schnackenburg's understanding being a Gentile is a matter of belief, yet in the opening line of our passage, a different point was made with reference to the physical aspects of flesh and circumcision.

What follows next is an explication of the meaning and implication of Christ's death for both groups of people. For the first element of v 14, making peace by breaking down the dividing wall, Schnackenburg names three possible interpretations:[105] The cosmic, Gnostic interpretation, in which the wall represents the separation between the heavenly and earthly realms; the literal understanding as the wall that keeps Gentiles from entering the temple district; and the interpretation that understands the Torah as a wall or fence, which is supposed to protect Israel and keep it away from the other nations. Schnackenburg follows the third interpretation – for him, the entire passage is a midrash style exegesis, which positively purports the old testament notion of peace, while at the same time destroying the concept of law that is inherent to a Judaic understanding of the world and according to which the Torah is a dividing wall between Jews and non-Jews. In this line of thought, peace is to be understood as "overcoming enmity, eradicating contrasts, merging separated parties."[106] The notion of peace as an "eradication of contrasts" is puzzling – does being reconciled and united entail that contrasts and differences are eradicated in the process? Schnackenburg, takes this to be, in a nutshell, the intention of the author of Ephesians for this entire passage: To show that the former contrast between the "uncircumcision" and the "circumcision" has been overcome in Jesus Christ and thus gave way to a homogenous and neutral room, free of ethnic differences, which is to be found in the church that was founded in him.[107]

It is interesting again, that Schnackenburg uses the term "church" at this point, even though the text itself does not once use the corresponding Greek term (ἐκκλεσία) in order to express the processes at stake. At this point (v 14), the author of Ephesians simply expresses that Jesus Christ has made both groups into one "in his flesh".

[104] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 111.
[105] See ibid., p. 113f.
[106] Ibid, p. 113.
[107] See ibid., p. 114.

Schnackenburg continues by arguing that the new "one-ness" created in Christ can be compared to two partners being created as one single new person.[108] He identifies this person with the church, once again, which represents the new creation consisting of Jews and Gentiles. At this point Schnackenburg seems to return to an understanding of the term "Gentiles" that is closer to the text's original usage, since the Gentiles that belong to the church surely must be near to God, yet unlike above Schackenburg does not call them "former Gentiles" in this instance. This shows a discrepancy in the use of his terminology, which I believe stems from a lack of

Let us now take a closer look at Schnackenburgs usage of the ἄντρωπος metaphor (v 15) for the newly created church. He emphasizes that this new person that Jesus Christ creates is not to be understood as something he creates or constructs externally, but that it is created *in himself*.[109] The new person, i.e. the church, is thus inseparably connected to Jesus Christ himself, and Schnackenburg compares this newly created unit to the unsolvable tie of marriage between a man and a woman. This comparison is surprising and the way in which it is carried through seems also a little disturbing. Firstly, there is no reference to marriage in the text itself and hence it is in no way necessary to establish such a connection. Schnackenburg, however, infers a verse from chapter 5 of Ephesians, where the unity of marriage is used as an analogy for unity of Christ and his church (Eph 5:31f) in order to point to the new creation in the light of a marriage bond.[110] As feminist theologian Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza pointed out, these two passages (Eph 2:11-22 and 5:21-31) do show some similarities, but the contexts of the notion of "making peace in Christ" are very different.[111] The latter text instructs slaves and wives to subordinate themselves to their husband or master, while the former speaks of making peace with two parties without upholding a form of subordination[112]. Secondly, Schnackenburg then uses a Gnostic text to exemplify the very inseparability of man and woman in a marriage. He quotes a passage from the Gospel of Philipp, an apocryphic text, which not only portrays the woman as being dependent on her husband with death being the

[108] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 115.
[109] See ibid., p. 116.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Schüssler Fiorenza: Zu ihrem Gedächtnis..., p. 327.
[112] According to Schüssler Fiorenza's interpretation, it is the Jews who are depicted as subordinate to the Gentiles. Her argument therefore is that in Eph 2,11-22 the subordinate Jews are not advised to accept their subordinate role in order to make peace, as it is the case for to the slaves and women in Eph 5,21-33.

consequence for separation, it also mentions the union in the bridal chamber as a prerequisite for a true union that will never be separated, thereby adding a sexual connotation to the ideal form of union which implicitly contains a condemnation of premarital sex[113]. It seems odd that Schnackenburg decided to make use of this particular text, which carries such difficult connotations with regards to gender relations, in order to explain the metaphor of a new person being created out of two groups of people. For these reasons, the marriage analogy appears to be problematic rather than useful for Schnackenburg's general line of argument.

For Schnackenburg, the metaphor of "one new person" (ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον) also resembles the notion of the "perfect man" from Eph 4:13, which all the members of the church should strive for and reach one day. His interpretation thus conveys an unnecessary androcentrism, and especially in combination with his reference to marriage (Eph 5:21-33) his interpretation is problematic from a gender point of view, as he makes use of images that show women as subordinate and dependent on men in order to explicate the meaning of the new unity in Christ. While there certainly are texts in the New Testament, which contain such images and challenge us today in our attempts to interpret them in meaningful ways, our passage of Ephesians does not and it remains unclear, why Schnackenburg deliberately chose to evoke these images in our text.

However, Schnackenburg then turns back to the image of this new person, the newly emerging unity, which Jesus created by reconciling the torn humanity with God "in one body".[114] Schnackenburg argues that "the body" in this case is unlikely to stand for the body of Christ, for which the author would rather use the term "flesh". Instead, the term "body" is used to designate the new unity that the two previously separate groups of people now form, i.e. "the church". In Schnackenburg's opinion, this argument is supported by the fact that the author always means "church" when he writes "body". This, however, is not very convincing – Schnackenburg is in fact simply backing one assumption (that in this case "body" means "church") by another assumption ("that the author of Ephesians always means "church" when he writes "body"). Moreover, Schnackenburg continues, the terms ἕν or εἷς, used to describe the newly established reality in verses 14-18, always indicate "the church".[115] The phrase "in

[113] NHC II/3, Sprüche 78 und 79.
[114] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 117.
[115] See Ibid.

one body" corresponds with the expression in verse 18 "in one spirit" and both express the new unity of the church.

For Schnackenburg, the church exists in immediate proximity to the cross: The church is born through the death of Christ on the cross. It is through his sacrificial act of redemption on the cross that he becomes the savior of his own body, the church, which then comes into being on the cross as a redeemed humanity.[116]

It has become clear by now, that Schnackenburg strongly emphasizes the church as the primary focus of the author of Ephesians. He thereby evokes images of a kind of church as we know it today, even though this newly emerging unity that is written about in our letter clearly must have been a totally different kind of congregation or body than we know it now. What we probably think of when we hear or use the term "church" is a fairly homogenous Christian institution with a rather settled form of identity that has developed during almost two thousand years of church history. But the newly united body that is addressed in the letter to the Ephesians must have been a pluralistic assembly of people with a rather vague notion of identity, an identity that was just about emerging, that was forming then and there, that had hardly any history or tradition to lean back on. To consistently use the term "church" for "body" in Ephesians is to infer a term and a meaning from our times into a text that was not expressing and could not express such notion.

The essence of vv 17 and 18 (in a parallel sequence to v 13) takes Schnackenburg to be the making of peace between Jews and Gentiles. He notices that the Gentiles are directly addressed, while the Jews are simple referred to as "those" instead of, for example, "us". Schnackenburg concludes that the author himself is therefore not Jewish.[117] I would like to question this conclusion, however, because the formulation "both of us" of the next verse may serve as an indication of the author's Jewishness. Moreover, why would the author address this audience with "you Gentiles" and call them "the uncircumcision", which appears to be offensive language, if he were speaking to his own group? It remains at least open and questionable whether the author was Jewish or not.

In Schnackenburg's view, however, we hear in the letter to the Ephesians the appeal of a non-Jewish Christian author to other people of non-Jewish descent not to treat the Jews

[116] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 117.
[117] See ibid., S. 118.

with disdain or to look down on them, because their own Christian faith is built on the basis of ancient Israel.[118] There has been much debate on this question and several scholars in recent times, such as Yee (2005) or Dunning (2006) have come to different conclusions, as we will see later in this thesis.

In the final section of our text, Schnackenburg emphasizes that the distance between Jews and Gentiles is not abolished by adding the "former Gentiles" to God's people (i.e. Israel), but that they have come close through a shared access to the father they both have through Jesus Christ - the place of this access is located within the newly established church[119]. It becomes evident, that the church as the body of Christ, in which both Jews and Gentiles are united is for Schnackenburg the ultimate gift and indeed the essence of the text at hand. He even goes as far as to say that the church has taken the place of Israel. The privileges of Israel mentioned in v 12, he insists, are now accessible for both groups united in the newly established body: in the church.[120]

ii) Tet-Lim N. Yee: covenantal ethnocentrism

Tet-Lim N. Yee, lecturer at the Theological Centre for Asia in Singapore, wrote a book entitled "Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul's Jewish Identity and Ephesians". This book was developed as his doctoral thesis at the University of Durham and was supervised by Prof. James Dunn, who is one of the leading figures of the New Perspective on Paul (henceforth: NPP). Yee explicitly considers his work to be part of the tradition of the NPP in its extension to a New Testament letter that is generally assumed to be written not by Paul himself but by what is considered to be the "Pauline school"[121]. The wider context of this application of the NPP on a deutero-Pauline letter and the specific questions that arise from it will be discussed in chapter three.

Yee begins his analysis of Eph 2:11-22 with a discussion concerning the addressee of the letter. "You Gentiles in the flesh" is an expression used and shared by Jews, which reflects their perception with regards to covenant identity.[122] Yee understands it to be an ethnographic statement, a derogatory term used for non-Jews, who lacked the identity marker of

[118] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 120
[119] See ibid., p. 120f.
[120] See ibid., p. 121.
[121] See Mußner, Epheserbrief, p. 749.
[122] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 73f.

circumcision.[123] This reference builds up an ethnic barrier between circumcised Jews on one side, and uncircumcised non-Jews on the other, which are thereby situated as "the other" to "the Jews." It is interesting to note, that in Schnackenburg's understanding "the Jews" were the ones who were offended, on the grounds that the author refers to their circumcision as one that is merely done by human hands in the flesh. Already in this first verse we can discern two quite different perspectives on the letter: For Yee, the author is denouncing "the Gentiles" by making them the non-Jewish other, for Schnackenburg, the author is denouncing the Jews by devaluing what is called the "circumcision in the flesh".

The interpretation of this act of naming is indeed important for our consequent understanding of the entire passage. Yee goes on to show, that to call them "Gentiles in the flesh" expresses both a typical Jewish attitude toward the rest of the world and their own self-definition as Jews.[124] While for the latter circumcision is a sign of God's covenant with his people, the former who lack this sign are hence considered to be outside of the sphere of God. The "flesh" therefore serves as a boundary marker, which distinguishes the Jews from non-Jews.[125]

Consequently, it is clear to Yee that the author of Ephesians is a Christian Jew. To address and thereby situate the Gentile other was important for Jewish self-definition. The author did so by means of polar inversion - by describing the Gentiles, what 'they' do and who 'they' are, it becomes clear what 'we' – that is: the Jews – do and are not. Both sides of the divide are created in this oppositional depiction.[126] This conclusion is again at odds with Schnackenburg's interpretation, who was convinced that the author of Ephesians was a "former Gentile".

The otherness that is attributed to non-Jews by naming them "Gentiles in the flesh" is also tied to their position with regards to God. As Yee points out, for the Jews circumcision was a sign of their election by God, of God's covenant with Israel as instituted in the covenant of God with Abraham, Israel's forefather. The Gentiles, who lacked that sign, where on the other side of the divide – the boundary marker "circumcision" designated them as 'outsiders'[127] –

[123] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 74.
[124] See, ibid., p. 74.
[125] See ibid., p. 75.
[126] See ibid., p. 74.
[127] See ibid., p. 77.

for the Jews, however, the boundary marker helped to establish their own identity as the chosen heirs of God's covenant.[128]

The author's expression that the circumcision was done in the flesh by human hands has been interpreted by many New Testament scholars as a critical statement indicating that this form of circumcision is no longer the real or ideal form.[129] Yee states that it was taken as a sign for Christian Judaism breaking away from mainstream Judaism. Yee, on the other hand, understands this phrase in a literal way and does not take it to mean anything else than what the text says: that this circumcision, which is essential for Jewish collective identity, is something that law-abiding Jews do and in so doing they show their allegiance to the old covenantal custom of Israel.[130] In Yee's view, the author intends to make the point that there is an ethnic and religious divide separating Jews from non-Jews, which is erected by the very practice of the covenantal ritual of circumcision. To say that the Jews are making this circumcision "by the hand" is to say they are upholding the separating barrier between them and non-Jews. Moreover, this does not merely happen in a neutral way, but they actually put a value judgment on this world-view, as Yee puts it: "By labeling the Gentiles as the 'uncircumcision', the Jews also proclaimed their pre-eminence over 'the rest' with respect to their position in the covenant God made with Israel."[131]

Moving on to v. 12, Yee investigates the use of the term "politeia of Israel" with regards to the exclusion of the Gentiles from it. Turning first to the term Israel, he explicates that, as it points to the story of the descent of the Jewish people, it provides at the same time a form of "group identification, similarity and belonging: because they are descended from the same ancestor (Jacob/Israel) and belonged to the place (the land God promised), they belong together."[132] And of course, as has already been laid out above, the designation 'Israel' contained a reference to the covenant God has made with 'his chosen people'. This understanding of 'Israel' constitutes an insider perspective from which the Gentiles were excluded due to the 'body-politic of Israel' which constitutes the Jews covenantal ethnocentricity.[133]

[128] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 82.
[129] See ibid., p. 83.
[130] See ibid., p. 85.
[131] Ibid., p. 87.
[132] See ibid., p. 89.
[133] See ibid., p. 91.

The term 'politeia' in relation to Israel also deserves special attention. Unlike Schnackenburg who thought it to be a randomly chosen term referring to the chosen people of God, Yee considers it to be a *political* term.[134] In his analysis of Hellenistic writings about the political philosophy of the Jewish community, such as Philo, Yee argues that the term 'politeia' has been used to refer not to a local parochial body, but to a community based body, that different Jewish communities belonged to – a 'community of communities'[135]. One has to imagine it as a network based on kinship and shared moral obligations, which forms this ethnically based community-body from which the covenantal self-identification of the Jews derives. In Yee's view, we are therefore again confronted with the insider perspective of a Jew, who describes in a way meaningful to fellow Jewish listeners the former exclusion of Gentiles and the separation of Jews and non-Jews as a consequence.

Another important point Yee emphasizes is, that the Gentiles didn't just happen to be excluded from the politeia, but they were actively excluded from it *by* Jews. He builds this argument on the usage of the verb ἀπηλλοτριόω in v. 12, which in its active form conveys dismissive undertones, meaning "cause to feel an aversion", or "to cause to become estranged". In its passive use, the verb should still carry these negative connotations, as is the case in our sentence.[136] A certain disdain of the Jews towards non-Jews can be detected in it, according to Yee. The Jews, who have made circumcision the ultimate criteria for membership in this covenantal community, have thereby made it virtually impossible for non-Jews to enter into this ethnically based religious group, even if it were only for religious reasons.[137] The author of Ephesians will propose a way that makes this possible.

According to Yee's interpretation, in a similar way to how the term πολιτεία was employed in order to express the Gentiles' exclusion from it, the term ξένοι also was used to show the estrangement of the Gentiles from the covenantal community of the Jews. Dunning's interpretation of Eph 2:11-22 in chapter three will provide new insights and an altered understanding based on a different, more political viewpoint he applies to the text.

With reference to v 13, Yee insists that the 'far-off/near' topos with regards to the Gentiles does not express a theological perspective (as has widely been assumed by New Testament

[134] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 94.
[135] See ibid., p. 95.
[136] See ibid., p 99.
[137] See ibid., p. 102.

scholars[138]), but is indeed a sociological description.[139] Due to the ethnocentric exclusivism of the Jews, he argues, there was a social distance between Jews and non-Jews. Schnackenburg, for instance, whose position was discussed at length above, supports the theological interpretation by arguing that this theme depicts a slightly altered usage of Isa 57,19. Yee, however, points out that this topos is frequently used in Jewish scriptures and thus it cannot with any certainty be assumed that Eph 2,13 draws on Isa 57,19 instead of any other passage.[140] Yee simply understands this "far-off/near topos" in the light of the circumcision/uncircumcision dichotomy, according to which the Gentiles are indeed far off from the Jewish point of view. It is a summary of the author's argument so far which described the Gentiles situation of exclusion from the body politic of Israel. Along with this "far-off/near" topos, the author of Ephesians then presents the solution to this hopeless situation, in Yee's words: "The death of Christ is in the perception of the author the solution to the problem of ethnic estrangement […]."[141] In his understanding, to break open the perspective of covenantal ethnocentrism means to provide a possibility for an inclusion of the Gentiles. The author must have doubted that the exclusion of the Gentiles was actually God's plan or wish.[142]

In Summary, it can be said that according to Yee's understanding, Eph 2,11-13 is a Jewish discourse about the Gentile other.

Next, we turn to Yee's interpretation of Eph 2,14-18, the explication of the reconciliation of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ. Yee rejects theories that interpret this part of the text due to its literary structure as a remnant of a Christological hymn, as have for example Schille, Schlier et. al.[143] He also argues against interpreters that tended to read it in terms of Gnostic theology, such as Gnilka.[144] Yee instead focuses on rhetorical features in the text and identifies four different rhetorical methods which all serve the purpose of an amplification of praising Christ and his acts.[145] All four methods in sum accomplish to eulogize Christ by

[138] See Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser; p. 111; Gnilka: Der Epheserbrief, p. 137; Mußner: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 73; et. al.
[139] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 112.
[140] See ibid., p. 114.
[141] Ibid., p. 119.
[142] See ibid., p. 122.
[143] See ibid., p. 127.
[144] See ibid., p. 129.
[145] See ibid., p. 138f.

highlighting his reconciliatory work and his goodness. Against the backdrop of this magnanimity of Christ, who brings peace to Gentiles and Jews, Yee points out that the exclusivist attitude of the Jews, who were merely concerned with their own covenantal election by God and their salvation, seems even more reprehensible.[146] Yee even goes as far as suggesting that this was indeed the author's intention, to denounce the Jews for their exclusivist attitude and practice.

The two halves that the author of Ephesians refers to are the Gentiles and the Jews. In Yee's interpretation, Jesus Christ making 'one' out of the two means that he has come "to bridge the gap between the two ethnic groups."[147] Yee's interpretation portrays Christ as the mediator of peace and bearer of reconciliation whose praiseworthy deed was to end the estrangement between Jews and Gentiles. He claims that this act of making both ethnic groups into one does not require that differences between the two groups are diminished, but that instead it encompasses the annihilation of the estrangement and the social distance between Jews and Gentiles that had been built up by the Jewish focus on their identity as the elect people of God.[148]

When discussing the metaphor of the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, Yee – in a similar manner to Schnackenburg – also mentions the three commonly known interpretations: the Gnostic interpretation, the understanding in terms of an actual wall in the temple district and the interpretation of the wall as the law.[149] We remember, Schnackenburg was a proponent of the third interpretation, considering the wall to stand for the Torah as a means to separate Israel from the rest of the world. It is interesting, however, that Yee's own explanation differs from all three. Instead of searching for a concrete wall, that might be referred to here, or even taking it as a metaphor for either 'the law' or 'a cosmic wall', Yee prefers so regard it as a literary topos which was commonplace in the Greco-Roman world.[150] He mentions several authors from antiquity who employed this topos; Cicero, for example, for whom the city walls not only meant safety for the citizens, but also symbolized solidarity. He quotes Quintilian, who wrotes about the sacrilege of foreigners approaching the wall, which in this case is probably the pomerium, i.e. the demarcation line separating the city from the

[146] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 140.
[147] Ibid., p. 143.
[148] See ibid., p. 143f.
[149] See ibid., p. 144f.
[150] See ibid., p. 150.

countryside and also was meant to divide the holy from the profane. He also draws on other antique quotes where the 'wall' represents a type of fortification to protect the citizens' well-being.[151] Against the backdrop of these possible meanings for 'wall' in antiquity, Yee interprets the 'wall-language' in v. 14 as the social barrier that the Jews had built up against the Gentiles in order to protect their religious and ethnic identity. He therefore refers back to the social distance between the two on the basis of the circumcision as the ultimate identity marker. This social barrier was what kept one group from approaching the other. The enmity that Christ abolished thus represents the animosity of the Jewish group towards the Gentiles.

When v 15 states, that 'the law with its commandments and ordinances' has been abolished, this does not meant that the law has completely lost its significance, but, according to Yee, it is once again the aspect of the law that has controlled Jewish conduct in such a way as to exclude Gentiles and even create enmity between the different ethnic groups.[152] In Yee's words: "…the enmity between Jew and Gentile[,] lies not with the Torah *per se* but with the human attitude that perverted the gifts of God into signs of separation and exclusiveness."[153] Hence, it was not the law of the Torah in itself that was abolished, but the separation and the ethnic enmity it has caused.

It is this enmity that Christ has abolished in his flesh and thereby he integrated the two estranged ethnic groups into one unified whole, states Yee, for whom the 'one new man' that was created is a metaphor aimed to redefine a society which was split into two separate groups by the Jewish ethnocentric perspective.[154] This metaphor is to be understood in the context of other symbols of one-ness of Jews and Gentiles in this text, such as "in one body", "in one spirit", and demonstrates a paradigm shift for Jewish self-understanding in relation to the rest of the world. The new status as 'one new man', so Yee, ceases to define humanity according to divisions and enmity, and instead allows Jews and Gentiles to relate to one another across their differences and to conceive of themselves as both being united in Christ.[155]

[151] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 150.
[152] See ibid., p. 157.
[153] Ibid., p. 160-1.
[154] See ibid, p. 163.
[155] See ibid., p. 166.

There is a noticeable difference between Yee's and Schnackenburg's interpretation at this point. We remember that Schnackenburg strongly favored an understanding of the 'one new man' metaphor as being the church. Yee, on the other hand, explicitly rejects the notion of the church as an interpretation for the new man, and he especially refutes the idea that the church has replaced Israel, since according to him both circumcision and the body politic of Israel are still of importance.[156]

Yee carries his main thought further through the text when he interprets v. 16 and the therein mentioned 'reconciliation of both in one body' as the reconciliation of the two estranged ethnic groups and thus as the overcoming of ethnic antagonism through the death of Christ.[157] Surprisingly, however, Yee simply ignores the dativ object adjunct τῷ θεῷ, "to God", which follows right after the formulation "reconciled in one body". While Yee convincingly shows that God is not depicted as the 'injured party' in the reconciliation process (or at least not explicitly so), it is not unambiguously clear that the author is merely depicting an act of ethnic reconciliation, leaving the question of reconciliation to God out of the picture. Schnackenburg's interpretation showed that it is through their shared reconciliation *with God* that they both become one and thus overcome their enmity.[158] Yee, however, only acknowledge with reference to v. 18 that the author of Ephesians expresses the need for both of them to be reconciled and restored to God as well.[159] The specific questions concerning the differences between Paul's use of metaphors of reconciliation and the way in which the author of Ephesians has made use of them have already been discussed at length in chapter one.

Yee then turns to the question of how to interpret the term 'one body' of v. 16. For Schnackenburg, the 'one body' definitely referred to the ecclesial body of the church that was founded in Christ, while Yee, on the other hand, rejects this interpretation. To him, the new body does not constitute a substitute for Israel in being the new people of God.[160] He also refutes theories that understand Israel and the 'new body' that is the church as two separate entities which overlap in the case of the Jewish Christians. Instead, Yee keeps his focus on the ethnocentric perspective of the Jews and claims that the question the author of Ephesians was

[156] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 166.
[157] See ibid., p. 171.
[158] See Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 106.
[159] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 173.
[160] See ibid., p. 175.

grappling with was the question of the identity of Israel.[161] Was Israel to be understood as an exclusive body politic, i.e. a community of communities? Was it an ethnically closed community of the chosen people of God? In Yee's opinion, it is the author's conviction that Israel can overcome its ethnocentric exclusivism and become "an inclusive (and non-ethnic) community-body in which the 'holy ones'/Israel and Gentiles who believe in the Messiah could be together as a harmonious whole (hence 'in *one* body')."[162] Instead of introducing the church as a new entity in which Jewish Christians and former Gentile Christians now are united (e.g. Schnackenburg's position), Yee insists that Ephesians is presenting an entirely Jewish perspective, which proclaims that through the reconciling deed of Christ there is now the possibility to open the community to include former Gentiles in its midst. The status of Israel as being the people of God, however, is not threatened by it.[163] On the contrary, claims Yee, because the author of Ephesians states in v. 18 that the *one God of Israel* is now accessible to both Jews and Gentiles through Christ.[164]

Yee is at this point taking up an argument which was widely assumed by New Testament scholars[165] and which Yee calls "one of the most unfortunate features in the Christian history of interpretation", that is the assumption, that the 'Church' has taken up the position which once was held by Israel in relation to God. Under this assumption, the chosen people – 'the true Israel' – is now the Christian Church. However, the metaphors of 'one body', 'a new man', or 'in one spirit' are not intended to replace Israel, but they point towards a new form of identity of Israel, which includes Jews and former Gentiles 'in one body', Yee holds.[166]

With regards to the last verses of our text passage, Yee points to the author's usage of architectonic terms such as 'building', 'foundation', 'cornerstone', 'temple' and 'dwelling place', which he interprets as the intention to consolidate the new identity of the Gentiles and describe their 'location' as they are now reconciled with the Jews.[167] Especially the last image of the temple carries strong meaning for the Gentiles – while the temple was once exclusively for the Jews, its meaning has now been transcoded so that both Jews and Gentiles in their

[161] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 176.
[162] Ibid.
[163] See ibid., p. 180.
[164] See ibid., p. 184.
[165] See Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 121. Merklein: Christus und die Kirche, p. 77, et. al.
[166] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 187.
[167] See ibid., p. 201.

inter-relatedness build this holy temple, which is the dwelling-place of God. The Gentiles, who were in the beginning reminded that they were far off and excluded from the promises of Israel are now included and are valued highly.[168]

[168] See ibid., p. 210.

3. Concepts of identity, unity and belonging in Eph 2,11-22

In chapter two of this thesis, two interpretations of Eph 2,11-22 have been discussed, which differ greatly in numerous rather important aspects. This section specifically focuses on the ways in which the concepts of identity, unity and belonging, which are partly underlying and partly explicit concepts of our text, are being used by Schnackenburg and Yee. Moreover, it poses questions concerning the concept of ethnicity, concerning ethnic and religious identity with regards to Jews and Gentiles, and concerning the proximity or distinctiveness of the categories "Judaism" and "Christianity".

a) Religion, Ethnicity and Identity

i) Schnackenburg on ethnic identity in Ephesians

When we first take a look at Schnackenburg's usage of the categories "Jew" and "Gentile", we notice that in his interpretation these are treated as fixed entities. Schnackenburg writes, for example, that Christ has reconciled the until then separate groups of people, the Jews and the Gentiles with one another.[169] Of the first group, the Jews, Schnackenburg highlights, the letter only addresses Christian Jews and does not even take non-Christian Jews into consideration. He uses the phrase "the outside form of Judaism", or in German: "das außenstehende Judentum"[170], in order to refer to these non-Christian Jews. The text at hand, however, does not necessitate such a distinction. We do not know from the text, whether there was already a split to be perceived at that time, or whether there were merely many different shades of Jews who were more or less inclined to consider themselves Christ-believers.

With reference to their uncircumcision, Schnackenburg insists that the Gentiles are presented as the opposite group to the Jews in the letter to the Ephesians, and that the author of Ephesians claims that such distinguishing features are of no relevance in the newly established church that consists of former Jews and Gentiles.[171] It seems, therefore, that Schnackenburg considers Jews *and* Gentiles to be two separate ethnic groups. While this may be true for the Jews, the matter is more complicated with regards to "the Gentiles", since they are not an ethnicity as such but the term simply means "non-Jews". Through their new access

[169] "dass Christus, [...] die beiden bisher getrennten Menschheitsgruppen, Juden und Heiden, [...] zu unlöslicher Einheit zusammengefügt [...] hat." In: Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 105.
[170] Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 109.
[171] See ibid., p. 108.

to God in Jesus Christ they have the possibility to overcome their ethnic identity and enter into a new form of group identity, in which their former ethnic group membership no longer matters. On several occasions, Schnackenburg refers to "former Jews and Gentiles" when he speaks about the new attachment of both groups to Jesus Christ. In these instances, it seems that he treats both not as ethnic but religious categories in a modern sense, implying that it is possible to change one's faith. Was this really the case, or did the text rather stay within ethnic parameters and what would this consequently mean for the one new body? Does it imply a new group identity that we call "religion" or is it closer to a new "race/ethnic group"?[172] Schnackenburg, who did not concern himself with such questions of ethnicity and race in his own text, does not answer these questions. At a later point, this thesis will return to such questions in a discussion of Buell's position concerning race and ethnicity in relation to religion.

ii) Yee on ethnic identity in Ephesians

When we take a look at Yee's interpretation of our passage, we can see that he explicitly defines "the Jews" as an ethnic and religious group. The main theory throughout his book is that Eph 2,11-22 is written by a Jew whose argumentation is built against Jewish exclusivist ethnocentrism, which he is highly critical of, and who hails Christ's death on the cross as a way to overcome it. In the exclusivist view, "the Gentiles" are the "have nots" in comparison to "the Jews" who are those who have (circumcision, the covenant with God, promises), and the former are defined as such by the Jews themselves.[173] We are dealing, in Yee's own words, "with a self-confident Judaism which is bold enough to fence off the Gentiles on the basis of Jew's distinctive identity in the covenant which God made with Israel."[174] So for Yee there existed a form of Judaism at the time, which was content with, maybe even arrogant and proud of its own distinctive identity. Within this ethnocentric perspective, the Gentiles' position was defined in relation to Israel which was the position of the excluded.

In the above quote, Yee uses the term "Judaism" to refer to the ethnic and religious group constituted by the Jews. During large parts of his book, he refrains from using this term and writes of "the Jews" instead. Unfortunately, Yee does not make explicit how he defines

[172] As Denise Kimber Buell suggests by her provocative book title "Why This New Race" (2005) which will be considered further on in this thesis.
[173] See section 2.b) above or Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, pp. 72-87.
[174] Ibid., p 88.

"Judaism" nor "the Jews" an investigation of his writing let me come to the following interpretation. It appears, that Yee consciously tried to avoid the term "Judaism", because it invokes the very notion of a closed off entity that to him the author of Ephesians tried to open up. Yee uses the term "Jewish body politic" (which he describes as a social network that works to create and maintain ethnic and religious identity[175]), he employs the term "Israel" as the ethnic and religious identity of the Jews with regards to their covenant with God which makes them God's people,[176] and in most cases he simply writes about "the Jews", their perception of the Gentiles, their social, ethnic or religious group identity. In those rare instances when he does indeed use the term "Judaism", it is done in a tone of criticism. He states, for instance, that "the identification between the Jewish ethnic group and the Jews' religious identity is far too close (thus covenantal ethnocentricity is understood as the functioning of a certain stream of Judaism as a 'closed-ethnic religion')".[177] At a different point, he writes about the exclusion of the Gentiles from the Jewish body politics on the basis of their uncircumcision, that "from the context of both Ephesians and Judaism, such alienation of the Gentiles cannot be deemed normal."[178]

Two things are important here. First, Yee assumes that at the time the letter to the Ephesians was written, there was a fixed entity that he calls "Judaism". Several New Testament scholars question this view in recent publications,[179] Yee, however, is using this term as if the existence of "Judaism" in late antiquity can be taken for granted and is self-explanatory. Second, the fixed nature of this entity and especially the fact that it closed itself off from others on the grounds of its ethnic features is considered problematic by Yee, as we can gather from his judgment that the identification between the Jewish ethnic and religious identity is 'far too close' and that the estrangement of the Gentiles 'cannot be deemed normal'. It seems rather unprofessional for a scholar to put a value judgment on to our insights about the situations we study through ancient texts and show disdain about certain features, which were characteristic of the time and circumstances. As we will discuss in more depth later with regards to Buell's ethnic considerations, Yee's perspective represents a Christian bias that discredits the particularism inherent to the Jewish ethno-religious identity

[175] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 121.
[176] See ibid., p. 100.
[177] Ibid., p. 71.
[178] Ibid., p. 121.
[179] See e.g. Boyarin (2004); Mason (2007).

and practice of antiquity, while hailing the seemingly universal and non-ethnic religion that was made possible in Jesus Christ.[180]

In his writing, Yee criticizes Jewish ethno-centrism for the dichotomy of peoplehood it constructs and for the social exclusion of the nations and also for the religious exclusion from the people of God. He tries to uncover Jewish sentiments about the Gentiles in the letter to Ephesians and hence arrives at an understanding in which there are "the Jews" on one side and "the Gentiles" on the other. In fact, the main argument of this passage of Ephesians is an invitation to enter into this one new body which is created through Christ and to enjoy this shared access to the Father. The letter itself displays only scarce use of attributions to ethnic identities. It mentions "Gentiles" once in the beginning of the passage and henceforth only carefully ascribes differences of status by referring to "you who were far off and …those who were near" (v. 17).

The following sections will take a closer look at what can be said and known today about ethnic identities at the time the letter to the Ephesians was written, and how today's academics have attempted to get to the core of how "the Jews", "the Gentiles" and in fact "ethnicity" as such can be defined.

iii) Ἰουδαῖοι and ethnicity

In the above exploration we have used both the terms "Jews" and "Gentiles" as well as the concept of ethnic identity without further analysis and questioning of their meanings. As mentioned above, there has been a special focus in New Testament studies in recent years on the question of the identity of "the Jews" in antiquity, how they should be referred to today, whether their identity was based more on ethnic or on religious grounds, whether there already existed a form of "Judaism", and many insightful publications have sprung forth as a consequence.[181]

Miller, for instance, has delivered an in-depth analysis of the meaning of ethnic terminology with special attention given to the historical shifts of its meaning during the twentieth century.

[180] See for a critical assessment of Paul's tendency for universalism Boyarin's discussion of Paul's own ideal of a universal human essence, his desire for one-ness and his inclination to praise a human identity that has overcome particular features such as ethnicity or social status, in: Boyarin: A radical Jew, pp. 3-8.
[181] See for instance Mason (2007), Miller (2012, 2013), Boyarin (2004).

He opens his analysis with an overview of how the Greek term Ἰουδαῖος can be translated into English. While most scholars prefer the term "Jews", which was the common translation up until the later part of the 20th century, some rather apply the term "Judaean" and argue that this term refers to an ethnic group instead of a religious affiliation, just like the term "Egyptian" or "Syrian" does, which is more appropriate for Ἰουδαῖοι at that time.[182] By speaking of "Jews", the argument goes, we impose our modern understanding of a religious Judaism onto the ancient group of Ἰουδαῖοι, who did not consider themselves constituting a religion in the way we perceive of it today. This line of argument proposes that Ἰουδαῖοι is better understood in terms of ethnicity concepts. Miller does admit, however, that ethnicity is also a modern concept we apply to pre-modern texts.

In his article he explicates why it has become commonplace today, when speaking of Ἰουδαῖοι, to use the term "ethnicity" as opposed to "race" or "nation".[183] While historically 'race' and 'ethnicity' have already been distinguished in the 1930s, there was also a clear shift away from racial terminology after the Second World War, since it was (mis-)used as part of the Nazi ideology.[184] While the term 'nation' served as a middle ground between 'race' and 'ethnicity', it was rejected once there was scholarly agreement on the fact that the concept of the nation state was not applicable to ancient social realities of group identity. Both 'race' and 'ethnicity' are social constructions of modern times, of course, and our question is to decide which term more adequately describes the social reality we study, i.e. which term is most helpful for our understanding of ancient Ἰουδαῖοι. In Miller's view, 'ethnicity' is a better alternative to both 'race' and 'nation', because it is a wider term that is also open to other cultural and geographical characteristics than common ancestry.[185]

Buell, who has dealt extensively in her work with the question of ethnic reasoning, has also acknowledged that 'race' and 'ethnicity' have different meanings and that after the Second World War 'ethnicity' has become the term that is mostly used. However, instead of accepting the general academic language in this field, she decided to use the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' interchangeably for her academic writing. She argues that the definitions of both terms are almost identical and that by re-entering 'race' as a concept into discourse we are

[182] See Miller: Ethnicity Comes of Age, p 293.
[183] See ibid., p. 294.
[184] See ibid., p. 306.
[185] See ibid., p. 307.

reminded of existing racist sentiments and stay alert to any new uprising of racism in academic work.[186] Even though I appreciate her effort to stay sensitive to racist undertones in academia and to counter racism where necessary, I agree with Miller in highlighting the distinction between the two terms. I am arguing that 'ethnicity' is not only a more open term (as Miller has suggested), but that in our specific case it also represents the attempt to be as sensitive and differentiated as possible when trying to understand what was associated with the term Ἰουδαῖοι. I would definitely refrain from using "race" with regards to "Jews" or "Judaens", precisely because of the racist and anti-Semitic past of this terminology. There are, however, different connotations this term conveys in its German and English usage. Whereas in the German speaking world the term "Rasse" cannot be said or heard without establishing links or invoking memories to Nazi terminology and ideology – especially when it is used in relation to "Jewishness" –, it *is* possible to use the English term "race" with regards to group identity in a positive and empowering way. For a white, Christian, Austrian woman (which I am) to refer to Jews as "the Jewish race" ("die jüdische Rasse") would indeed be highly problematic. Even though Buell may be right in reinforcing that there is work to be done to uncover and counter racist or anti-Jewish sentiments in the academic world, I doubt that using "race" and "ethnicity" interchangeably (and much less "Rasse" and "Ethnizität" in German) is the way to reach that goal. Using nuanced language in any differentiated examination of this subject seems more suitable to this end.

iv) Conceptualizing ethnic identity

But what is actually meant when we refer to "ethnic identity"? Miller, though he does not set out to give a definition of ethnicity, briefly mentions in reference to an article by Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin that it is an abstract term which becomes meaningful only in a context of relativities and identification processes – as an analytical concept, however, it is hard to define.[187] In its abstract conceptualization, the term escapes the grip of those who try to define it.

While modern notions of race and ethnicity have tended to view these concepts as fixed phenomena that can be objectively studied and defined, there has been an important shift in perspective brought about by postmodern and postcolonial efforts. While a modern

[186] See Buell: Why This New Race, p. 20.
[187] See Miller: Ethnicity Comes of Age, p. 294.

understanding of ethnicity and race as describing a natural reality and referring to fixed sets of characteristics was inherent to colonial hegemony up until the 20th century, this view has been challenged by the work of a range of postmodern and postcolonial scholars such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Mayra Rivera, to name but a few, writing towards the end of the 20th century up until today. It has now become common understanding that both race and ethnicity are not fixed and stable concepts but instead they are socially and discursively constructed.[188] This makes it indeed hard to grasp and define ethnic identities in general and also specific ethnicities, such as "the Jews", as Miller has pointed out above.[189] Fenton and Carter write about today's sociological investigations into ethnicity that "popular perceptions have come to be reinforced by government and state policies and social arrangements that strengthen the assumption that ethnicity is a real phenomenon and that distinct ethnic groups and populations exist. Rather than regarding ethnicity as a definite object in this way, we want to argue that, along with ideas about race, ideas about ethnicity function as social descriptions, or […] as a way of 'making up people'."[190] In a similar way to what Carter and Fenton describe as forces stemming from state policies and social arrangements, the academic world needs to be cautious not to speak and write about ethnic identities as if they were real and existing groups of people. Academic considerations concerning the ethnic dimension in religious relations and developments in ancient times are valuable tools that help us understand more about the social settings of Pauline and deutero-Pauline letters, for example. But it would be wrong to assume that when we speak of ethnicities such as "the Jews" and "the Gentiles" with reference to Eph 2:11-13 we are speaking about actual ethnic groups with clearly drawn limits around them. When we are using these concepts and thereby "making up people", it is important to define what we mean by them – the following paragraph attempts to define "ethnicity".

Barreto, who draws on J. Hall, emphasizes the following three dimensions in the construction of ethnic identities: firstly, there is the myth of a shared descent and kinship; secondly, there is an association with a specific territory, and thirdly, the discursive character in the process of its construction.[191] Cohen also offers a general definition of the general characteristics of any ethnic group, but his names six instead of three points[192]. These are: (1) 'a named group', (2)

[188] See Baretto: Ethnic Negotiations, p. 15; Miller: Ethnicity Comes of Age, p. 306, Buell (2005).
[189] See Miller: Ethnicity Comes of Age, p. 294.
[190] Carter and Fenton: Not thinking ethnicity, p.8. The phrase "making up people" is a quote by Hacking (2002) in ibid.
[191] See Baretto: Ethnic Negotiations, p. 15.
[192] The following is a summary given by Miller in: Ethnicity, Religion..., p.6.

'attached to a specific territory', (3) 'a sense of common origins', (4) 'a common and distinctive history and destiny', (5) 'one or more distinctive characteristics' and (6) 'a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity'. While Hall and Cohen agree on the aspects of a sense of common origins or descent and the attachment to a specific territory, Hall's definition is characterized by a greater openness and by a consideration of communicative processes, Cohen's insists on certain "hard facts" and qualitative features that would help decide what can be a considered an ethnic group, thereby limiting the applicability for certain groups, which simply might not qualify.

Moreover, Barreto highlights Halls distinction between the insider (emic) and outsider (etic) perspective which can help to differentiate any discussion of ethnic identities. However, they also bear certain weaknesses – the former perspective focusing on a primordial vision of one's own identity and the latter being prone to an instrumentalist approach to another social group. Both the insider and the outsider perspective play an important role in the construction of a specific ethnic identity.[193] This aspect will also be relevant when we look at how "the nations" are addressed as a group in the letter to the Ephesians, and this example will show how important the outside view, or in other words 'to be addressed from the outside' is for people to be perceived and to perceive themselves as a social group.

As we could see above, according to Barreto, Hall does not define an ethnic identity by a specific "content" like shared ancestors, but he highlights certain ascriptive boundaries, such as a shared myth of decent, as being constitutive of ethnic identity.[194] One could say, for J. Hall it is not 'hard facts' that decide who belongs to an ethnic group, but 'soft factors of communication' are crucial for the process of perceiving oneself as an ethnic identity. Buell, in her investigation of race and ethnicity in early Christianity even goes one step further than that. Not only does she agree to the assertion that ethnicity is a socially and discursively constructed phenomenon, she also claims that ethnic identity is not static but in a flux: "Instead of presuming that ethnicity and race are fixed aspects of identity, I approach these concepts as dynamic and characterized by an interaction of appeals of fluidity and fixity."[195] Buell draws on her insights from the study of texts from antiquity and shows that at that time ethnicity and race were considered to be acquirable rather than inherited and given.[196] Moreover, Buell states explicitly that she disagrees with Hall in one specific point: While Hall

[193] See Baretto: Ethnic Negotiations, p. 15.
[194] See ibid., p. 16.
[195] Buell: Why This New Race, p.12.
[196] See ibid., p. 32.

gives special attention to the notion of genealogy and territoriality (even if both are viewed to be discursively constructed), Buell proposes a wider understanding of what can be constitutive of ethnicity, referring to religion as an important element in ethnoracial discourse. We will now turn to the connection between religion and ethnic identity in the following section of this work.

v) Ethnic identity and its link to religion

Buell differentiates a number of ways in which religion in antiquity could be linked to ethnoracial discourse. For instance, religious belief and/or practice were employed by Christians in order to portray their own distinctiveness from other people.[197] Further more, religion served as a means for ethnoracial transformation as one could become part of an "ethnos" by acquiring a new religion.[198] Religion in ancient texts could also serve as a link between ethnically different people or as a means to establish intra-ethnic unity.[199]

An analysis of Yee's writing on Jewish ethnic and religious identity showed that he criticized the close connection between ethnicity and religion in Jewish self-perception. He deemed it "unnormal" for an ethnic group to exclude other ethnic groups from their own religious practices and convictions and ultimately from the salvation that they held to be a gift to their group only. Yee thereby makes a value judgment about Jewish self-understanding in the first century CE and disregards that both the concepts of "ethnicity" and "religion" are part of a modern world view which we use retrospectively in our attempt to understand pre-modern societies and phenomena and that, moreover a separation of these two concepts is not only a modern way of thinking but maybe even inherently Christian. Boyarin, who is an important Jewish scholar of Pauline texts, exposes today's Western practice of categorizing groups of people as religions or faiths, even though they may not speak of themselves in these terms, as a "[…] projection of a Christian worldview or a Christian model upon peoples and practices who don't quite fit, or even don't wish to fit that model and worldview…".[200] To speak of "Judaism" in the first century CE as "a religion" is anachronistic and it is therefore inappropriate to decry what may appear today as Jewish ethnocentrism. What we perceive of

[197] See Buell: Why This New Race, p. 42.
[198] See ibid., p. 44.
[199] See ibid., p. 48.
[200] Boyarin: Border Lines, p.8.

today as two different elements of what it meant to be a Jew (i.e. ethnic and religious elements) must have been inseparable to Jewish people at the time.

Maybe Yee's inappropriate conclusion about the abnormality of Jewish ethnocentrism on the basis of its covenantal religious practices points us towards a very important and sensitive issue: In a Christian theological tradition which, for instance, Schnackenburg explicitly considers himself part of, Eph 2,11-22 describes the constitution of the Christian Church. All Christ-believers, both "former Jews" and "former Gentiles", now form one common body, the institution of the Church which we still know today. Jews could become "former Jews" (in Schnackenburg's terminology), rid themselves of their ethnic heritage and take on the Christian faith. It is this very notion of being able to 'acquire a religion' which Boyarin calls an inappropriate reproduction of a Christian worldview. He quotes Seth Schwartz who takes the argument one step further by claiming that the emergence of Christianity also represents the invention of religion as such.[201] He speaks of "the emergence of religion as a discrete category of human experience" and calls this "religion's disembedding".[202] Religion was not perceived anymore as something interwoven with ethnic and cultural features of identity but it rather stood for itself and could be acquired and practiced independently. That is to say, in the process of constituting itself as 'one new body' Christianity needed religious others who they could seal themselves off from. Hence, the notion of Judaism as a religion, Boyarin argues, only came into existence with the constitution of Christianity in the first few centuries CE as part of the emerging heresiological discourse.[203]

But let us turn back to the critical connection between what we are inclined today to call religion and identity with regards to Jewish identity. How can we understand the invitation the author is offering the Gentiles in Eph 2,11-22? Are they invited to become part of the "politeia tou Israel" in terms of becoming part of an ethnic group? Is Yee speaking of a mere inclusion of Gentiles into the covenantal people of God? Or are we – upon invitation – witnessing the birth of a new body of "former Gentiles" and "former Jews", taking the place of Israel as the new covenantal people as Schnackenburg has suggested? Or should we imagine the emergence of the new group as one being tied together by religion rather than ethnicity, hence forming a non-ethnic group?

[201] See Boyarin: Border Lines, p.11.
[202] Schwartz: Imperialism and Jewish Society, p.179.
[203] See Boyarin: Border Lines, p.11.

The latter view would resemble Buell's critical perspective of the common classification of religions according to which there are religions that are more highly developed than others, with universalization and individualization being markers for development and cultural progress. She writes: "In the study of Christianity, and especially Christian origins, this has translated into an emphasis upon defining the difference between Christianity and Judaism as that of an ideally universal religion versus a religion of a particular people."[204] In her study of the complex connections between religion and ethnicity in early Christianity, Buell points to an understanding of Christianity "as a kind of religion that is defined by its *not* being linked to race, and the higher value accorded to Christianity on this basis."[205] Similar to Schwartz' argument above, in which Christianity was depicted as the disembedded religion *per se*, Buell is here highlighting that it is a specificity of Christianity's self-understanding to be a religion that is not rooted within a particular ethnic context. Yet Buell notes that even though in early Christian literature Christianity was intended to be portrayed as not being a race, the history of Christianity was in fact treated as the history of a people[206] and the terms used in the process of establishing this new religion were often terms of sexual/racial purity, such as "syncretism", "Judaizing" and "heresy."[207] However, despite the fact that the early Christian movement engaged in an ethnic discourse of identity formation, this does not mean, that they did in fact form an ethnic group. Boyarin, who appreciates Buell's work in this field, argues that the new emergence of the notion of orthodoxy as a defining feature for membership constitutes the decisive point from which onward Christians did not make use of ethnic metaphors for their self-understanding anymore.[208]

How do these considerations of ethnicity figure in relation to the positions of Schnackenburg and Yee, whose interpretations of Eph 2:11-22 have been discussed at length above? In fact, both Yee and Schnackenburg, though their interpretations differ radically from one another at certain points, share the notion of describing the newly emerging body of believers as being defined by their lack of ethnic affiliations. Schnackenburg speaks of the one body as being constituted by "former Jews" and "former Gentiles", as if both used to be clearly defined groups who have been stripped of their defining (ethnic) characteristics and who now form a

[204] Buell: Why This New Race, p. 24.
[205] Ibid., p.27.
[206] See ibid., p. 27.
[207] See ibid., p. 28.
[208] See Boyarin: Rethinking Jewish Christianity, p. 16.

neutral body that is simply "Christian" (whatever this may be). Yee, who stands in the tradition of the NPP, pays close attention to the role of ethnicity in the argumentation of Eph 2,11-22. But his main theory of Jewish covenantal ethnocentrism, which runs through his entire book, leads him to a similar conclusion as Schackenburg. At first glance, Yee is taking an alternative route by arguing that the new body allows for ethnic pluralism, since the text at hand does not require ethnic differences to be assimilated or overcome. But he also marks "the Jews" as the ethnically particular over against the newly found body which is able to become a universal religion. It is not normal, to quote Yee once again, for a religion to be tied to an ethnic group. Religious universalism, in Yee's view, should be sought and that is what he claims that Ephesians is to be understood as a corrective to Jewish ethnocentrism.

And what about the Gentiles? The text does not characterize them in an affirmative way but only via negation – they are described as the *non*-circumcision. In much Christian theological writing, what they are does not seem to matter much – it's what they aren't that matters. Indeed, often Gentile Christians or "former Gentiles" (in Schnackenburg's terminology) are treated as a neutral category. The following section will take a look at what has pretty much remained an empty category so far, the category of "the Gentiles".

vi) ἔθνη and ethnic identity

Much attention has been given to the concept "ethnicity" in the course of this work, but little has been said with regards to "the Gentiles" and their ethnic ties and affiliations. Most literature on ethnicity I draw upon in this work has simply left out the question whether the attribution "Gentiles" qualifies as an ethnic term or not. Benjaming H. Dunning, Denise K. Buell and Caroline J. Hodge, whom I will turn to shortly, are an exception in this regard. I hold the opinion, that even though the term itself does not refer to a specific "ethnos" (as in "a people"), it qualifies as an ethnic term because it has a function within ethnic discourse. In our context of Eph 2,11-22, the term is used to describe those, who in a Jewish perspective are *not* Jews.

The term used in the original Greek text is τὰ ἔθνη which is the plural form of ἔθνος meaning "people", or "nation. In its plural form, however, the word has been used in ancient Greek texts for instance by Aristotle to designate all those people or nations who are "not Greek",

and in the Septuagint version of the First Testament it refers to those who are "not Jews".[209] Rather than referring to some specific group or ethnicity, this term has historically been used to express a sense of otherness. It has been used from an inside perspective to designate "those who do not belong to us".

From a sociological point of view, the question of perspective is an important matter when it comes to ethnic group identity. The external attribution "the Gentiles" would have to be actively accepted by a social group for us to be able to speak of an ethnic identity.[210] This is not the case here, and we know that the term was used in an undifferentiated way for various ethnic groups, the Romans, the Greek, etc… Suffice to say here, that in Christian literature up until this day we find this term used to refer to a neutral group of people. Buell and Hodge have pointed out that there is a certain tendency in American New Testament scholarship which views "Jewish Christianity" as "marked", whereas "Gentile Christians" "…are treated as the unmarked or ethnically neutral group (which also implies theologically "mainstream"), much like "white" has functioned until recently."[211] This tendency can be detected for New Testament academic writing in German as well, if not more so. Whereas the English language differentiates between "Gentile" (non-Jew) and "heathen" (non-believer), the German language only has one word: "Heiden". The term τὰ ἔθνη hence translates into the German "Heiden" which refers to both non-Jews and non-Christians alike – in a more general sense it refers to all those, who do not believe in God, "the unconverted". This is expressed in Schnackenburg's use of the term "former Gentiles" ("ehemalige Heiden"[212]) when he refers to those who were not near to God and have now come to believe in Christ. Any ethnic connotation of the term has been dropped in favor of religious meaning.

In Eph 2,11-22, however, the term τὰ ἔθνη is used directly to speak to the supposed addressee of the letter, the Gentiles, as if addressing a specific group of people. Moreover, this was done in a very brute way, calling them "the foreskin", a figurative speech for "the uncircumcision". Why was this address chosen, how were the addressees expected to react to such an offence?

[209] See Liddel & Scott: Greek-English Lexicon, p. 480.
[210] See Abercrombie et. al: The Dictionary of Sociology, p. 150.
[211] Buell and Hodge: The Politics of Interpretation, p. 243.
[212] Schnackenburg: Brief an die Epheser, p. 108f.

vii) Identity called into being

Benjamin H. Dunning pays specific attention to the function of the designation "Gentiles" in Eph 2,11-22. While some interpreters have, as has been noted above, understood this passage to refer to a Christian/non-Christian context, Dunning explicates that in his view the letter works on the basis of a "Jew/non-Jew" binary.[213] The author is likely to be Jewish, addressing his audience as non-Jews. Dunnings points out that Ephesians is the only letter in the New Testament Epistles which uses the term "Gentiles" as the address to his audience, and he asks himself the following, highly relevant question: "why would a non-Jewish audience in late first century Asia Minor (or wherever) think of themselves as 'Gentiles'?"[214] And without much ado he gives a straightforward answer to this question by saying "they would not."[215] Whereas several cultural or religious aspects at that time and place would have represented a possibility for identification, the Jew/non-Jew classification did not, so that there was no group who thought of themselves as the "non-Jews". What was the function of introducing this category in the argumentation of Eph 2,11-22, then? Dunnings identifies two functions: The first function is that it constitutes an audience, it creates a seemingly singular and unified group within the diverse and chaotic social sphere.[216] The second function is to involve the audience in Paul's theology, in which the Jew/non-Jew distinction played an important role.

The first function is what we are interested in here. Rather than calling an existing group by its name, Dunning suggests that addressing people as a group constitutes these people as a group in the first place. In order to demonstrate how this works, Dunning draws on a theory established by Judith Butler (who in her turn was building on work done by Louis Althusser) on hate speech and the constitutive power of naming. Before Benjamin Dunning, Daniel Boyarin has also built upon Butler's work in order to show how hate speech directed to Jews within the discourse of emerging Christian heresiology has contributed to the constitution of an emerging Judaism. The Butler quote they both refer to is: "If to be addressed is to be interpellated, then the offensive call runs the risk of inaugurating a subject in speech who comes to use language to counter the offensive call."[217] Boyarin points out that for example Athanasius very often called heretics "Jews" and this led to an important revival in Jewish

[213] See Dunning: Strangers and Aliens no Longer, p. 11.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] See ibid., p. 12.
[217] Judith P. Butler: Excitable Speech, p. 2.

history in that "Jews" increasingly spoke out for themselves to counter the offense they were confronted with.[218]

Dunning was not concerned with the Jewish situation but instead he applied the Althusser/Butler notion of interpellation to our particular text of Eph 2,11-22, where it is "the Gentiles" who are addressed and who are thereby called into being as a unified group.[219] Whereas Dunning is leaving aside the aspect of hate speech and merely considers the power of naming to be relevant for the context of Ephesians, I would like to call to mind the offensive way "the Gentiles" are being addressed in v. 11. It may not be hate speech *per se*, but the designation ἀκροβυστία, which literally denotes the foreskin, has to at least be understood as an insult or offense, as Jody Barnard has also pointed out.[220]

What he takes from Butler's work on hate speech is her insight in the effect of language on reality. She shows that language does not so much describe reality (or not only), but that when language is used to interpellate (or hail, as Dunning adds) a subject, this subject is in fact constituted as a subject through the very act of being interpellated (or hailed). As Dunning argues, "in Ephesians, hailing or interpellating the implied audience as "Gentiles" becomes a way for the text to categorize an imagined audience in all its diversity of possible identities as a unity."[221] The category "Gentiles" thereby is depicted and at the same time constituted as the other in the Jew/non-Jew dichotomy. This leads us to the second function Dunning has defined before: by constituting "the Gentiles" as the meaningful other to "the Jews" in the letter to the Ephesians, they are being pulled into the logic of Pauline Theology. The question of salvation for Jews and Gentiles has never been what they themselves have been wrestling with, but after identifying with the ascription of "the Gentiles", this discourse and its promises suddenly become meaningful to them. To put it in Dunning's words, it is a way of "saving Paul for the non-Jewish context".[222]

Besides his valuable explication of the constitutive power of naming with regards to "the Gentiles in Eph 2:11, Dunnings also offers an interesting interpretation of the terminology of belonging and identity in our text, which we will turn to in the following section.

[218] See Boyarin: Border Lines, p. 9.
[219] See Dunning: Aliens or Stranger no Longer, p. 12.
[220] See Barnard: Unity in Christ, p.169.
[221] Dunning: Strangers and Aliens no Longer, p.13.
[222] Dunning: Strangers and Aliens no Longer, p.13.

b) Christianity as citizenship

In his paper "Strangers and Aliens No Longer: Negotiating Identity and Difference in Ephesians 2", Dunning offers an insightful interpretation of what he considers to be key concepts of Eph 2, but which have often been neglected or only treated marginally by New Testament scholars. He highlights the following three terms: πάροικος "resident alien" (v 19), ξένος "stranger-foreigner" (v 12) and πολιτεία "citizenship" (v 12).[223] Dunning outlines that together these terms form a linguistic complex of early Christianity which was used "to demarcate difference, to define identity, and otherwise to contribute to projects of persuasion."[224] To tap into this linguistic complex is not unique to Christianity but this complex is in fact familiar to the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint and is also known in Platonic thought. Dunning's focus is on the functions of this particular language complex, which he refers to as "alien-rhetoric" or "alien-stranger topos", in Ephesians. He shows the different ways in which early Christians have used the language of alterity and valorized the alien-stranger topos which has been ascribed to them by the ruling majority of the society they were part of. Adopting the alien-rhetoric for themselves was a way of accepting the outsider status they held in society and using it to constitute their own distinctive identity[225]. Buell has also discussed the element of alien-rhetoric within the discourse on Christian identity in antiquity. In her search for distinctiveness of the new Christian group, she comes across the Epistle to Diognetus that speaks of citizenship: "they [the Christians] display the wonderful and admittedly strange character of the constitution of their own citizenship (politeia)... they share all things as citizens (politai) and suffer all things as foreigners (zenoi)…".[226] This reading gives a good example of how alien-stranger rhetoric in combination with the citizenship topos was used in late antiquity in order to describe the distinctive and apparently puzzling identity of this new group of Christ believers as a unified body of foreigners. Their unity was noticed as a special feature and it was described as citizenship, which was a meaningful concept within the context of the Roman Empire, but at the same time it was a citizenship of foreigners, since they are outsiders and "have their citizenship in heaven."[227]

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[223] See Dunning: Strangers and Aliens no Longer, p. 2
[224] Ibid.
[225] See ibid., p. 3.
[226] Ep. Diog. 5.4-5,9 quoted in Buell: Why This New Race, p.31. This letter dates several decades after the letter to Ephesians, but is still close enough in time to provide an insight in the way these concepts were used in relation to the Christians at approximately that time.
[227] Dunning: Strangers and Aliens no Longer, p. 3. .

However, the alien-rhetoric could be and was used to the contrary as well, as is the case in Ephesians 2. The author of Ephesians is using the alien-stranger rhetoric, which was familiar to the people he was addressing, in order to make the all-important point that the addressees *no longer* have to be aliens and strangers, as vv 19-20 tell us. Christianity – if we can already speak of the newly established unity in Eph 2 as such – is thereby described as citizenship: "you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints" (v 19).

In the case of Ephesians we are indeed dealing with a specific case of alien-rhetoric, Dunning points out, as it is used not merely to valorize a certain type of identity, but to "link legitimate Christian identity to a particular vision of unity in the church."[228] Whereas I would use the terms "Christian" and "church" more carefully and hesitantly, his point is clear and insightful. The terms "citizen" and "stranger/foreigner" constitute a word pair of binary opposition, one term gaining meaning only in relation to the other. To express that someone was not a stranger anymore but a citizen, was, and this was understandable to everyone within the context of the Roman Empire, "to denote ultimate insider status".[229] By using the citizenship rhetoric of the Roman Empire, the author of Ephesians offers a new understanding of the Christ event and he offers a vision for unity for all those Christ believers from divers backgrounds and identities.

But to this point this thesis has not answered the question yet what this new unity was like. Is it justifiable to refer to it as "Christianity" as Dunning did in his essay? Should it be called "the church" consisting of former Jews and Gentiles as Schnackenburg referred to it, since in his view the church was already born in the hour of Christ's death? Or did Yee maybe come closest to the truth with his interpretation that this new unity of divers ethnicities and identities should be the attempt to overcome a narrow, ethnocentric Judaism which did not live according to God's plan to offer salvation to all of humanity? The following section will turn to these and similar questions and seek to answer them by discussing Daniel Boyarin's arguments, who, in his monograph "Border Lines" has challenged the traditional view constituting that Christianity set itself off from Judaism, that there was a clear parting of the ways soon after Christ's death.

[228] Ibid., p. 5.
[229] Ibid., p. 6

c) (No) borders between Judaism and Christianity?

From the very beginning of this paper, it has been made clear that terms such as "the Jews" and "Judaism" and "Christianity" have to be used with caution, as they are part of today's concepts and terminology and cannot be imposed anachronistically on to phenomena of a very different time, without establishing a distorted view of these past developments and conditions. At this point, a discussion of the meaning and usage of these terms shall take place, which takes into consideration Boyarin's highly valuable insights on the emergence of Christianity and Judaism.

As mentioned above, Eph 2:11-22 does not contain terms like "the Jews" or "Judaism" at all, it only once mentions the "commonwealth of Israel" (τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ). Schnackenburg interprets this phrase to mean "Judaism at the time when the letter to Ephesians was written".[230] He notes that, while Paul has been much concerned with the question of Israel's future fate in the letter to the Romans, the letter to the Ephesians does not address this question explicitly. What it seems to be more concerned with, in Schnackenburg's view, is the relationship between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians within the church ("das Verhältnis der Heidenchristen zu den Judenchristen in der Kirche").[231] He suggests, that Jewish Christians have been looked down upon by the Gentile Christians, yet this specificity – disregarding whether it is accurate or not – should not concern us here. It is the terms "Gentile Christians" and "Jewish Christians" that we need to investigate further.

The title of Boyarin's recent article "Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category" (2009) already gives away the direction in which he is taking his argument, which he develops in three steps. Firstly, he argues that there is no pre-modern notion of such a thing as Judaism.[232] The Greek term "Ioudaismos", which appears in non-Christian Jewish writing in 2 Maccabees, where it does not refer to Judaism as a religion, but it is used to refer to the larger set of loyalties and practices that are common to the people of Israel.[233] From then on up until the 19th century, the term was used to refer to a Jewish religion by writers who did not consider themselves part of it.[234] Boyarin therefore writes: "It

[230] See Schnackenburg: Der Epheserbrief, p. 110.
[231] Ibid., p. 119.
[232] See Boyarin: Rethinking Jewish Christianity, p. 8.
[233] See ibid.
[234] See ibid.

might seem, then, that Judaism has not, until some time in modernity, existed at all, that whatever moderns might be tempted to abstract out, to disembed from the culture of Jews and call their religion, was not so disembedded nor ascribed particular status by Jews until very recently."[235] Boyarin refers to Mason's article "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient Historiy" which demonstrates in great detail that there is no term in any language that was originally used by Jews to refer to themselves and neither did they refer to themselves by the name "Jews" until modern times.[236] As Mason shows, the term came to be used in the sense of "Judaism" in the mid-third century and it was Tertullians usage of the term "Judaismus" in contrast to "Christianismus" that coined its meaning in such a way that it "strips away all that was different in Judaean culture – its position among ancient peoples, ancestral traditions, laws and customs, constitution, aristocracy, priesthood, philosophical schools – abstracting only an impoverished *belief system*".[237] To put it in a nutshell, Boyarin's first proposition is that there is no "Judaism" to be found in the first century C.E. but that it is an invention of a much later time.

Boyarin then goes on to formulate his second point of the article, which proposes that "religions" themselves were invented in the fourth century CE. He points to an epistemic shift taking place at the end of the fourth century and in the first quarter of the fifth century within Christian self-definition – definitions along the lines of kinship, language and land were replaced by "religious" alliances.[238] As has been discussed above, Schwartz has shown how for a construction of "Christianness" an invention of religion as a disembedded phenomenon, detached from "cultural practices and identifying markers" was necessary.[239] Boyarin explains that there is a notable conceptual shift taking place in ancient writings, from a time when "religio" meant a particular, singular act of worship, to a later point when it referred to a substance that can be inherent in different kinds of "religions", be they Christianity, Hellenism or Judaism.[240] So Christianity emerged as a result of a development of self-understanding of itself as a belief system and this process necessitated the idea of orthodoxy in order to determine who belongs to it and who does not.[241] Boyarin writes: "Christianity, in constituting itself as a religion, needed religious difference – Judaism – to be its Other, the

[235] Boyarin: Rethinking Jewish Christianity, pp. 8-9.
[236] See ibid., p. 9.
[237] Mason in Boyarin: Rethinking Jewish Christianity, p. 10.
[238] See Boyarin: Rethinking Jewish Christanity, p. 12.
[239] See ibid., p.13.
[240] See ibid., p. 18.
[241] See Boyarin: Rethinking Jewish Christianity, p. 19.

religion that is false."[242] Both Judaism and Christianity came into being in a process of reciprocity, they were mutually influencing each other in the process of drawing borders between each other and around themselves.

Boyarin's third argument is that Judaeo-Christianity is in fact a term that was invented as part of the heresiological discourse that produced both Christianity and Judaism. He explains, quoting from Jackson-McCabe, that whenever Jewish Christianity is mentioned, two underlying assumptions are at work in the argument: The first one holds that there was a religion in place immediately after Jesus' death, even if it was not called Christianity at that time. The second assumption is that the group that is nowadays referred to as "Jewish Christianity" is best defined as members or a sub-group of the latter group, otherwise they would be called Christian Jews.[243] The latter would be much more in line with Boyarin's thinking, who states that when we look back at the time of the first generation of Christ-believers it is more appropriate to distinguish between different kinds of *Jews*. (Gentile Christians are not within Boyarin's focus at all, because, obviously, they are not Jewish and fall into a different category altogether.) Boyarin then goes on to make the following daring proposition: "I suggest, therefore, that there is no nontheological or nonanachronistic way at all to distinguish Christianity from Judaism until institutions are in place that make and enforce this distinction…"[244] This is quite a surprising suggestion, considering that the distinction between Judaism and Christianity has come to be accepted as an unquestioned fact among lay people, church people and academic theologians as well. In this view, the Christ believers who are addressed in Ephesians cannot constitute Christianity yet.

The distinction Schackenburg draws when he states that Ephesians is not concerned with those Jewish groups that stay outside of the emerging Christian church, that did not believe in Christ, is – in Boyarin's view – an artificial line drawn retrospectively in order to fit our model of thinking today in which Judaism and Christianity constitute separate and distant entities with neatly established borders. The assumption of this understanding was, that Christianity and Judaism share a common origin but have split off from one another, or possibly that Christianity was born out of Judaism and then went its own separate ways.[245] The reality was quite to the contrary as Boyarin's indicates, when he poses and answers the

[242] Boyarin: Rethinking Jewish Christianity, p. 20.
[243] See ibid., p. 27.
[244] Ibid., p. 28.
[245] See ibid., p.18 and 19.

question: "…are there sets of features that absolutely define who is a Jew and who is a Christian in such wise that the two categories will not seriously overlap…? I think not."[246] So even though our traditional views and concepts taken from the field of church history and theology may lead us to look at the first two centuries after Jesus' death and search for the beginning of Christianity (e.g. Schnackenburg's position: the Christian church was born in the moment of Jesus' death on the cross) or for the parting line to Judaism (e.g. Yee's position: the Apostle Paul's rejection of Judaism's covenantal ethno-centrism), this proposition is challenging us to accept that a much messier process may have taken place. Boyarin imagines this process in postcolonial terms like a contact zone of "transculturation", where different cultures meet and influence each other, where power is not arranged in a clear and rigid hierarchy but within and across shifting layers of relations.[247] He depicts the emergence of what we today refer to as different religions not in terms of a "Stammbaum"-model, which assumes a shared origin and explains differences as products of historical change, but he borrows from the wave theory model that allows for more fluidity and mixture in the development of different religions.[248]

Boyarin then employs the notion of hybridity in order to demonstrate how even the most "pure" religions (judged so by their own self-understanding) are not free from a mix of influences, fusions and creolizations.[249] Via this model, he seeks to speak out against an understanding of religions as natural entities that have split off from one another and proposes a new and more realistic view, which regards them as "distinctions produced (and resisted) for particular purposes by particular people".[250] While I value this contribution very highly, I do question, however, whether the notion of hybridity is indeed suitable to serve his ends. As John Hutnyk has shown in his article "Hybridity", the term originates in biology and botany, where it describes a form of interbreeding or mixing of species and has then been employed to mean any form of mixing and variety within settings of cultural change.[251] Homi Bhaba refers to hybridity in terms of a third space indicating an in-between zone and describes it as a form of heresy that is imbued with disruptive and productive qualities.[252] Paul Gilroy, on the other

[246] Boyarin: Border Lines, p. 21.
[247] See ibid., p. 19.
[248] See ibid., p. 18.
[249] See ibid., p. 18 and 19.
[250] Ibid., p. 19.
[251] See Hutnyk: Hybridity, p. 80.
[252] See ibid., pp. 80 and 81.

hand, denies the term's productive qualities and prefers not to use the term at all, since "the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities…"[253]. In other words, the idea of hybridity, of mixture necessitates an understanding of pure and uncontaminated forms that have existed before they encountered and influenced each other.

Boyarin's use of the notion of hybridity is interesting in two ways. First, it is used retrospectively from two existing (more or less "pure") religions, Christianity and Judaism, back two the time and process of their origin, thus going the opposite way of the logic of thinking hybridity. Second, the term hybridity presupposes what Boyarin's argument asserts has never – or at least not at the outset – existed: two separate and pure forms of religions! I therefore hold the opinion, that the strength of his argument is rather weakened by introducing the concept of hybridity. I would highlight again his convincing statement that there is no way to distinguish between Christianity and Judaism except by imposing anachronistic and theological concepts on to a time and sphere that saw a lot of mixing and mingling, that actually was productively bringing forth new forms of spiritual and religious practices and forms of identity. The borders we know today have only been erected and accepted over time in a heresiological discourse from about the fourth century CE.

Therefore, when it is claimed that the church came into being at the moment of Christ's death and that the term "body" in Ephesians always signifies "the church" (as Schnackenburg does), these are obviously dogmatic statements but not attempts to grasp the situation in its complexity. The borders that Boyarin claims were not erected before the fourth century seem to be firmly in place in Schnackenburg's interpretation of Eph 2:11-22. Or is the latter to be understood as part of the discourse that keeps the borders in place?

Yee's interpretation is more careful in its use of the terms "the Jews" and "Judaism" than Schnackenburg's – very often he uses the term "Israel" to stay within the terminology of the letter itself. It is more open to processes of development and provides a space for diversity in the "one new body" that is the result of Christ's act of reconciliation. Jewish context and influences as the bedrock from which Christianity emerged are taken into consideration and appreciated – except for the ethnocentric aspect of Judaism that needs to be overcome, as Yee tells us. However, Boyarin's position would still criticize this view, even though there is only a slight difference: Yee assumes not an existing Christianity, but an existing Judaism from which Christianity ultimately emerged. Yet, as Boyarin has convincingly explicated, both

[253] Gilroy in Hutnyk: Hybridity, p. 82.

Christianity and Judaism came into being as twins and the borders between the two were drawn no sooner than in the fourth century. In order to imagine the time beforehand, and the writing of Ephesians falls into that timeframe, I find Boyarin's image of a contact zone quite helpful, in which different ethnic identities, religious affiliations and practices mix and mingle, a creative sphere of cultural and religious production were old traditions are opening up to new people and influences.

4. The letter to the Ephesians in new perspective

One of the most prominent scholars within this thesis was Yee, whose interpretation of Eph 2:11-22 differed considerably from other New Testament scholars that were discussed because of his close link to the NPP. He is a student of Dunn, a crucial figure within the NPP and he indicates explicitly as the aim of his work is to interpret the letter to Ephesians by via the NPP approach. The NPP has therefore been present implicitly at different parts of my thesis. In this chapter, it shall be outlined what constitutes the approach of the NPP in general terms, and what can be distinguished in Yee's interpretation of Ephesians as specific traits and concerns of the NPP. There shall also be a critical discussion of the aims and achievements of the NPP, both in general terms and within an interpretation of Ephesians by Yee.

a) The New Perspective on Paul

It is important to note first of all, that besides what has become known in the second half of the 20th century as the "New Perspective on Paul" there has from the very beginning been dispute and grappling over what is the "right understanding of Paul". Already in antiquity we see different interpretations of Paul by Pelagius and Augustine. Different readings of Paul's letter to the Romans became crucial for Martin Luther's highly critical engagement with the church of his time and led him to equate the "Werke des Gesetzes" (works of the law) with the *vita religiosa aut devotaria*.[254] Henceforth, Paul has by and large been interpreted through a Lutheran perspective, which has coined the way we understand Paul's letters and his message until this very day. Rudolf Bultmann, whose interpretation of Paul can be considered to represent a typically "Lutheran" perspective, emphasized that Paul's position can indeed be seen as an opposition to Judaism[255] and this position expresses that justification by faith in Jesus Christ is preferred over an obedience to the law.[256]

While criticism of this understanding of Paul had existed at various degrees all along,[257] it gained strength and became more effective in the latter half of the 20th century by the works of Krister Stendahl, a Swedish scholar who taught at Harvard University, and Ed P. Sanders, an American Professor at Duke University, under a name that was later given to this

[254] See Bachmann in Horn (ed.): Paulus Handbuch, p. 30.
[255] See ibid.
[256] See ibid., p. 31.
[257] Bachmann mentions Ernst Lohmeyer (1929), Adolf Schlatter and Ulrich Wilckens.

new direction Pauline interpretation by James Dunn, Prof. for New Testament Studies at Durham, England, the "New Perspective on Paul".[258]

In his important essay of the year 1968 "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West", Stendahl criticizes western interpreters of Paul, who have seen in him "a hero of the introspective conscience".[259] Paul's writing about justification by faith has been understood as an answer to the inner battle of individuals and their troubled conscience. Paul however, Stendahl argues, considered himself to be a righteous Jew[260] and was not troubled about his conscience at all. Instead, it was much rather Martin Luther's struggle with an Augustinian notion of human sinfulness and salvation that has been anachronistically imposed on Paul's letters. In Stendahl's view, Paul is much more interested in the relation between Jews and Gentiles – since the Law has not helped the Jews, they, in Stendahl's words, "stand before God as guilty as the Gentiles, and even more so."[261] His questions were about the function of the Law after the coming of the Messiah, about the place of the Gentiles within God's plan of salvation, the proper relationship of Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians within the church.[262] Once this original core of questions got lost in Pauline interpretations, the "Western problems of conscience"[263] (in Stendahls words) became its substitute. Hence, what was once a matter of sociological interest (the relationship between Jews and Gentiles after the coming of the Messiah) with soteriological ramifications has been turned by Western thinking into an anthropological question universally applicable to the troubled self-consciousness of every human being.

Paul Sanders, in his 1977 published book "Paul and Palestinian Judaism", was more concerned with the question of continuity and discontinuity between Paul and the Palestinian Judaism that preceded him.[264] While Bultmann viewed Paul to be opposing and ultimately rejecting Judaism, Sanders triggered a re-interpretation of Palestinian Judaism as constituted by its "covenantal nomism" rather than by a form of justification by works.[265]

Dunn is one of the most influential figures of the New Perspective on Paul until this day. He acknowledged the valuable new insights of Sanders' work on Palestinian Judaism,

[258] See Bachmann in Horn (ed.): Paulus Handbuch, p. 31.
[259] Stendahl: The Apostle Paul, p. 199.
[260] See ibid., p. 200.
[261] Stendahl: The Apostle Paul, p. 201.
[262] See ibid., p. 204.
[263] Ibid., p. 208.
[264] See Bachmann in Horn (ed.): Paulus Handbuch, p. 31.
[265] See ibid., p. 32.

but he takes these one step further than Sanders himself, who remained within the "Lutheran" perspective purporting that Paul rejected Judaism in favor of Christianity.[266] The interpretation of Paul's rejection of works of the law (ἔργα νόμου) are crucial in this respect, as Dunn understood these in terms of "identity and boundary markers" – in particular the practice of circumcision – which functioned to exclude Gentiles.[267] In Dunn's view, Paul was critical of a form of Judaism that inhibited the inclusion of non-Jews to the elect people of God.

In her study on kinship and ethnicity in Pauline letters, Hodge provides not only a brief overview of the development of the New Perspective on Paul, she also remarks that while the New Perspective in general and James Dunn in particular have furthered an important rethinking of Pauline theology and its Jewish context in the first century, they fall short of realizing fully what they set out to do. Dunn, for example, points out that Paul did not criticize Judaism, but he then goes on to say that Paul did reject a particular aspect of Judaism, that is the ethnocentric perspective that considers itself more favored by God because of their election and possession of the Law.[268] Dunn thereby portrays Paul as opposing the notion of election on the basis of exclusion of others and as attempting "to break through the barriers that Israel erected around itself."[269] Dunn's work thus depicts a type of Judaism that is self-centered and arrogant, only concerned with election and salvation that is reserved to their own ethnic group as the people of God. Christianity, Hodge claims, appears as the universal and thus positive religion against this negative portrayal of Judaism in Dunn's work, who remains trapped in the same dichotomizing paradigm that views Judaism as ethnic and particular, Christianity however as the all-inclusive, universal religion. As Buell and Hodge have shown in an earlier article on the politics of interpreting Pauline texts, to view Christianity as inherently universal can have two very different effects. First, it can be and has been argued, that racist and ethnocentric oppression within Church practice is not in line with the universal and all-inclusive vision of earliest Christianity.[270] This view has enabled many anti-racist reforms to be implemented. Second – and negatively so – this position can at the same time entail racist views. In Buell and Hodge's words: "The view of early Christian universalism as non-ethnic can lead us to ignore the racism of our own interpretive frameworks and overlook

[266] See Hodge: If Sons Then Heirs, p. 8.
[267] See Horn: Paulushandbuch, p. 32.
[268] See ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] See Buell and Hodge: Politics of Interpretation, p. 237.

how early Christian discourse relies on ancient modes of 'othering.'"[271] They argue that Christianity was attributed with what was conceived of as "positive" attributions, like universal, non-ethnic, while Judaism, which emerging Christianity needed as it's other in order to establish their own identity, was described negatively "as everything Christianity was not: legalistic, ethnic, particular, limited, and so on."[272]

Even though the New Perspective on Paul was aimed at leaving behind old anti-Jewish sentiments that have permeated New Testament interpretation for a long time, and has in fact made a major contribution to this end, it seems not to have been fully able to break out of this binary thinking completely. This dichotomy is also recognizable in the application of the New Perspective on the letter to the Ephesians, as the following analysis will show.

b) The New Perspective on Ephesians

Since, as has been noted above, there is an overall agreement in New Testament scholarship that the author of Ephesians is not Paul himself and we are thus dealing with a letter written by a disciple of Paul, it is not immediately obvious why the NPP is relevant for this thesis. Tet-Lin N. Yee, however, who was himself a student of James Dunn, applied the New Perspective on his thorough study of the letter to the Ephesians. In the preface to Yee's book "Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul's Jewish Identity and Ephesians", Dunn states that while the New Perspective on Paul has focused largely on the two letters that deal most explicitly with the ethnic issues of Judaism and Israel, Romans and Galatians, which it is interested in studying and reinterpreting, the letter to Ephesians has so far been neglected, even though, to put it in Yee's words, "Ephesians 2 is arguably one of the most expressive statements of Paul's view of the Jew/Gentile issue."[273]

In other words, the New Perspective seeks a more accurate understanding of Pauline texts by taking into consideration Paul's own Jewish identity, his Jewish views and convictions – the New Perspective applied to a deutero-Pauline letter aims at gaining new insights by laying bare the Jewish perspective forming the message of the letter and ideally by exposing Paul's heritage within it.

[271] Buell and Hodge: Politics of Interpretation, p. 237.
[272] See ibid.
[273] Dunn in Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. xi.

Let us take a closer look at Yee's New Perspective focus on Eph 2:11-22. Yee's primary interest is in the Jewish perspective within the letter, the Jewish view of the Gentiles and the church's Jewish heritage, i.e. the continuity from Israel to Church.[274] He draws on Dunn's work on Ephesians, who, in his "Deutero-Pauline Letters" sets out to trace the line of continuity between the Jewish context that influenced Paul and the Jewish context still prevalent and recognizable in the deutero-Pauline letters.[275] Dunn admits that it is a difficult endeavor to analyze Jewish context of a deutero-Pauline letter of whose author we neither know the location nor any identity features. He therefore turns solely to the letter itself for clues and defines context "in broad categories of Jewish thought and praxis, for the most part leaving aside questions of local factors and social conditions…".[276] However, it seems to be a rather vague and questionable approach to assume some general 'Jewish thought and praxis' which is later taken as an indication for a Jewish perspective that is apparently inherent in the letter to the Ephesians.

Dunn then outlines three aspects where he sees the author of Ephesians to be in dialogue with Jewish heritage.[277] First, Ephesians is written in Jewish language, which cannot be put down to a mere familiarization with Jewish texts and scriptures.[278] Second, Jewish characteristics and the semitic language are not used in a polemical way.[279] Third, the meaning of Eph 2:11-22 can best be understood in relation to Jewish thought, because the author's perspective is a Jewish one. For Dunn, this last point clearly demonstrates continuity from Paul to Ephesians: The Gentile believers can now participate in the blessings that had previously been reserved for Israel as the elect people.[280]

Yee states that most New Testament writers will agree today, that the author of Ephesians was a Christian Jew. What has been neglected, he claims, is the study of Jewish attitudes towards Gentiles that become apparent in this letter. A new look at the letter within the NPP should help to show more clearly the implications of the contention about the author's Jewishness. In his study, Yee highlights as specific features of his new perspective approach to Ephesians the Jewish attitudes towards the Gentiles, covenantal ethno-centrism

[274] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p.3.
[275] See Dunn: Deutero-Pauline letters, p. 130.
[276] Ibid., p. 131.
[277] See a summary of Dunns argument in Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 29. The original essay by Dunn is to be found in Barclay & Sweet (eds.): Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context, pp. 130-144.
[278] See Dunn: Deutero-Pauline letters, p. 137.
[279] See ibid., p. 138.
[280] See ibid., p. 139.

which is a consequence of the Jewish perspective and a particularly social form of reconciliation of Eph 2:11-22 as the solution to ethnic estrangement between Jews and Gentiles.

i) The Jewish perspective of the author

The opening line of v. 11 contains the author's address to the audience that, in Yee's view, demonstrates a particularly Jewish perspective.[281] As a member of the Jewish people the author views the human race as divided in two, the Jewish people who share the covenantal identity on one side, and all the rest, the Gentiles, on the other. The identity marker that justifies this division is circumcision, which is why in v. 11 the Gentiles are also called the 'uncircumcision' by the Jews, who are themselves called 'the circumcision'.[282] Again, this line of argument only makes sense from the perspective of the Jews, for whom circumcision was such an important element. The term 'uncircumcision' is not used as a neutral designation, but it is a derogatory term that is used by the Jews as part of the binary opposition of insider and outsider, elect people and godless rest.

That this circumcision was done by the hands (χειροποιήτου) does not, for Yee, signify that there exists an alternative form of circumcision which is not done by the hands.[283] Quite to the contrary, he claims that circumcision done by the hands is literally referred to in terms of the Jewish *practice* of circumcision, which they continued to exercise.[284] It is to be understood as a faithful Jewish response to the promises they have received in their covenant to God. The distance to this practice, which the author of Ephesians does express at a later point, is not expressed by the term χειροποιήτου that is to be understood in a positive way. This positive interpretation of the circumcision that is done by the hands represents a particular concern of the NPP to value Jewish practices and heritage which are depicted in the text.

[281] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 72.
[282] See ibid, pp.73-76.
[283] This has been argued by many New Testament scholars, such as Schnackenburg: Der Brief an die Epheser, p. 108, who takes the reference to the hands as a devaluation; See also Lincoln: Ephesians, p. 136, who explains that this usage reflects the view expressed by the Apostle Paul in e.g. Rom 2:28f that circumcision in the flesh made by hands is no longer the real form of circumcision.
[284] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 85.

ii) Covenantal ethnocentricity

Yee argues that this above mentioned binary view by the Jews of the human race based on ethnic distinctions is precisely what the author seeks to reveal and, in the end, to help to overcome.[285] He states that the Jewish ethnic and religious identity is closely tied up with their self-understanding as the covenantal people of God, which leaves for the Gentiles the unworthy distinction of 'having no hope and being without God in the world' (v. 12). So what is an invaluable gift for the Jews is for the Gentiles a fatal factor for exclusion.[286] When the commonwealth of Israel is mentioned, the Gentiles are described as aliens, they do not belong. This leads Yee to speak of an 'insular nature of Judaism', which he further describes as 'covenantal ethnocentricity'.[287] This ethnically oriented position, which the author of Ephesians is according to Yee struggling with, has made an inclusion of Gentiles impossible. It is this polarization of and social distance between Jews and Gentiles that becomes Yee's key focus and even more, he attaches a strong value judgment to his perception of the Jewish attitude he sought to unveil: Jewish ethno-centrism is "not normal" and hence to be overcome. He goes on to argue that "the desire to live within the covenantal framework and to be marked off from the 'uncircumcision'/Gentiles cannot be what God had originally planned for humankind."[288] He claims, that the exclusivistic understanding of God's covenant and promises as being only meant for ethnic Israel, is actually deployed within the logic of Ephesians in order to place a hidden criticism of this view, given that the ultimate goal is for God to be known to all the people, as can be seen in Eph 1.10, 13-14; 2.13; 3.5-6.[289] Even though Yee mentions at one point that this view may only be true for one Jewish group of that particular time,[290] the general image he conveys throughout the book is, that Jewish identity and perspective is important for an accurate understanding of Pauline and Deuter-Pauline letters, a self-understanding of the Jews in ethnic terms and moreover an exclusion of non-Jews from the covenantal people of God on the basis of ethnic distinctions is to be rejected and criticized. The main message of Ephesians 2:11-22, then, is the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles and the constitution of a new body of reconciled people not separated on an ethnic basis.

[285] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 87.
[286] See ibid., p. 88.
[287] See ibid., p. 91.
[288] Ibid., p. 121.
[289] Ibid., p. 122.
[290] Ibid., p. 123.

Yee's approach to the letter to the Ephesians, which attempted to value and pay tribute to the Jewish heritage and context of the author and hence of the letter itself ends up portraying Jewish ethnic identity and Jewish perspective in negative terms as being 'abnormal', 'self-centred' and opposed to the true plan of God for all of humankind.

Yee falls into the same trap that Hodge revealed with regards to the NPP in general. In her examination of Dunn's position, she argues that while insisting that Paul did not criticize Judaism overall, Dunn holds the view that Paul did "object to a certain aspect of Judaism, an ethnocentric attitude that presumes God's favor based on possession of the Law."[291] In his opinion, Paul's aim was to break through the barrier of ethno-centric exclusivism that Judaism had built up around itself and thereby paved the way towards a Christianity that does not regard one people or ethnic group as more holy or favored than others or more entitled to the grace of God.[292] This position is similar to what Buell has criticized as a depiction of Christianity "as a kind of religion that is defined by its *not* being linked to race, and the higher value accorded to Christianity on this basis."[293]

A similar view to Dunn's can be recognized in Yee's work, when he depicts Jews as exclusivist, self-centered and greedy because they do not care about the Gentile's fate. The one new body that is founded by the reconciling deed of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is depicted as universal and all-inclusive. So while Yee highlights that Judaism is to be valued as the context that coined Paul's thinking and therefore as the heritage to the Christian church, he claims that the form of Judaism that is tied to ethnic Israel is deemed 'unnormal'. In his view, it was this enclosing aspect that Paul sought to break up, so that all of humanity would be able to know the one God of Israel. This line of thought, which is at the core of the NPP, is also prevalent in Ephesians, so Yee – to him this ethnic dimension constitutes the key to an understanding of reconciliation that considers the social dimension, as is the case in the letter to the Ephesians.

iii) Ethnic reconciliation in sociological perspective

For Yee, ethnic reconciliation is the main message of Eph 2:11-22 as it presents the solution to the problem of ethnic estrangement posed in the opening of the passage and as it contains

[291] Hodge: If Sons, then Heirs, p. 8.
[292] Ibid.
[293] Buell: Why This New Race, p. 27.

in essence what every disciple of Christ, both Jew and Gentile, should ultimately embrace: Christ's all-inclusive attitude of the ethnic other.[294]

The NPP approach to reconciliation therefore focuses strongly on the overcoming of ethnic enmity as the key to understanding this passage, the "one body" (v. 16) is to be understood in a social perspective as a metaphor for community.[295] Similarly, Yee also interprets the metaphor of the "dividing wall" (v. 14) within a social perspective as the social barrier that had kept Jews and Gentiles apart.[296] For him, it is associated with the boundary markers which led to the Jews ethnocentric perspective, such as to the physical sign of the covenant (circumcision) and to an ethnically based community (body politic) of Israel.[297] Any references to theological or historical attempts to understand "the dividing wall" as, for instance, a metaphor for the Jewish law or the actual balustrade that had separated the Jewish from the Gentile area within the temple district are discarded by Yee's new perspective approach.

Important for Yee's new perspective approach to Ephesians is also the relationship between the Church and Israel. He refuses to interpret the "one body" of v. 16 as the Church that has replaced the commonwealth of Israel. He argues that the reconciling work of Christ who brought peace to two estranged human groups has not stripped Israel of the promises it held, but has denounced Israel for having misinterpreted the covenant as an ethnically exclusive gift which was granted only for themselves.[298]

Yee contends that it is important to understand the description of Christ's reconciling deed in vv.14-18 as an amplification of his laudable act.[299] Yee's argument can be summed up as follows: Firstly, the noble act of Christ has brought peace to estranged humanity and his death has provided a new framework of mutual acceptance that allows Jews and Gentiles to worship the one God together. Secondly, since the author praises Jesus Christ for this all-inclusive attitude and reconciling action, he denounces the Jews for their previous exclusive and ethno-centric attitude.[300] Again, as has been mentioned above with regards to the ethnic dimension of the New Perspective interpretation, we notice that despite the attempts to value Jewish

[294] See Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, p. 127.
[295] See ibid., p. 179.
[296] See ibid., p. 151.
[297] See ibid.
[298] See ibid., p. 187.
[299] See ibid., pp. 136-140.
[300] See ibid., p 140.

identity and practice, there is a strong denunciation of these elements on the grounds of their self-definition on ethnic terms. This attitude is problematic, as it moves close to the anti-Jewish sentiment that has haunted much of New Testament studies for a long time. It denounces Jewishness only to hail what is depicted as an emerging all-inclusive Christianity, which embodies what God has intended for humanity and what it means to follow Christ's footsteps. So while Yee writes that "one of the values of the 'new perspective' is that it allowed the fundamental problem of the relationship of Christianity to Judaism to re-emerge on centre stage",[301] we might want to add, that this problematic relationship still lingers on and can even be found in the positive attempt by Yee (as part of the New Perspective) to overcome it.

In general terms, Yee's interpretation of the reconciling act of Christ represents a new perspective approach that can be defined by its strong emphasis on the ethnic and social dimension. Ethnic reconciliation is understood to be brought about by Christ, the carrier of peace, whose deed gave way to one new body and who built a bridge across the gap of ethnic estrangement between Jews and Gentiles.[302]

[301] Yee: Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation., p. 2.
[302] See ibid., p. 143.

5. Conclusion

Eph 2:11-22 is a text that works with a binary view of humankind, a way to look at the world divided in insiders and outsiders, two estranged groups, only in order to proclaim that this view no longer matters. "The Jews" represented one category, and it has been established that this group constitutes an ethnic group with (what we would call today) distinctive religious features. The term "Judaism" is inappropriate for the ethnic group the author of the letter of Ephesians has in mind. The Gentiles constituted the other category, yet while it is safe to consider the Jews to be an ethnic group, the Gentiles were not a group at all. "The nations" were a diverse bunch of people defined only as a category by the Jews who viewed them as "those who do not belong". The address within the letter itself can be understood as a way of calling them into existence, as Dunning pointed out[303], in order to make the message of the letter understandable to them and explain to them in a meaningful way why the privileges of Israel, which had always been reserved for the Jews only, were now available and relevant to them.

The whole point of calling both Jews and Gentiles as two opposing halves to mind within Eph 2:11-22 is to proclaim that the separation does not need to be kept up anymore – the two have become one! The metaphors we receive from the text are "one body" and "one new humanity" – metaphors of unity within an ethnic and religious process of identity formation. Very little is said about the one body in the text itself, probably because the text constitutes a call for a form of unity that had not yet been established. It was a call to dare something new, to let loose what had been taken for granted, let go of the way their ancestors, and also their ancestors' ancestors had looked at the world and structured their social relations. This constituted a paradigm shift! Those who had always counted as outsiders to the Jews suddenly had to be considered as one of their kind in relation to God. The exclusive position they had held as part of the commonwealth of Israel now had to be given up, their God revealed himself to be the God of "the others" as well. That's quite a lot that had to be given up. What was there to be gained for the Jews? The Apostle Paul had in his role as an ambassador carried the good news of Christ who had died for all and thus opened a new way of reconciliation to God for all the world. This gift of reconciliation was not exclusive but it was available to all and available in a new form that took shape within that one body, within one new humanity.

[303] See Dunning: Stranger and Aliens no Longer, p. 12.

The two formerly estranged groups were thus reconciled in one body to God. The Pauline metaphors of reconciliation to God have thereby been altered in order to be meaningful to the time and context of the letter to the Ephesians. While Paul had been grappling with his congregations about his own role as an apostle and pleading for them to be reconciled to God, Ephesians takes the authority of Paul for granted and speaks to a social reality where Christ-believers among Gentiles and Jews need to be brought closer to one another, the age-old separation needs to be overcome. The metaphors of reconciliation within Ephesians, therefore, show an ethnic focus, elaborating the social implications of reconciliation at length while the reconciliation to God is only mentioned briefly, almost in passing – the two are reconciled to God in one body.

This social dimension of reconciliation within Eph 2:11-22 has been accurately captured by Yee's new perspective approach to the letter that brings the matter of ethnicity to the center of attention, and it thus constitutes a positive contribution to the history of interpretation of Ephesians. However, what is quite problematic is that his interpretation takes on an almost judgmental undertone when he claims that the Jewish perspective as led to what he calls "Jewish covenantal ethno-centrism". This view describes the Jews as self-centered and egotistical as opposed to the new humanity constituted in an emergent Christianity which offers a way to God for all. This was revealed by Buell and Hodge as a general downfall of the NPP as such – it seeks to value Judaism but ends up getting caught within the old and problematic dichotomy of portraying Judaism as self-centered and particular, while Christianity is depicted positively as being a universal, non-ethnic religion open to all.[304]

Did the one body within which both groups were reconciled to God already constitute the church? Not in any form that we know today. But at the same time we cannot say that it wasn't, knowing retrospectively that what had developed out of it grew into what we know of today as the church. As Boyarin's enlightening explication showed, we cannot distinguish between Christianity and Judaism before there were institutions in place to represent the one or the other[305]. Anything taking place before these were established, can be described as a process of "transculturation"[306], a mixing and mingling of different traditions, a time and place within which old Jewish traditions and newly emerging traditions of Christ-believers were influencing each other in a process of cultural production and religious formation.

[304] See Buell and Hodge: Politics of Interpretation, p. 237.
[305] See Boyarin: Rethinking Jewish Christianity, p. 28.
[306] See Boyarin: Border Lines, p. 19.

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7. Appendix

a) Abbreviations

CBR	Currents in Biblical Research
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar
ExpT	Expository Times
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JR	The Journal of Religion
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies, Oxford University Press
JTSB	Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
TJQR	The Jewish Quarterly Review
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

b) Abstract English

This thesis discusses different interpretations of Eph 2:11-22. A three-fold research interest has motivated this thesis: First, there are the identity categories that play a key role in the message of reconciliation within the text. The categories "Jews" (Ἰουδαῖοι) and Gentiles (ἔθνη) will receive special attention with regards to their ethnic and religious meaning in this respect. D.K. Buell's discussion of the connection between ethnicity and religion in the process of identity formation of early Christianity contributes to a differentiated understanding of the concept of "ethnicity" in the time Ephesians was written. D. Boyarin's insights in the emergence of "Judaism" and "Christianity" will shed some light on the notion of "one body" (v 16). Second, the message of reconciliation within Ephesians will be compared to Paul's metaphors of reconciliation in order to find out whether the deutero-Pauline author of Ephesians was indeed a truthful disciple of Paul. To do so, I rely largely on C. Breytenbach's distinguished analysis of Paul's metaphors of reconciliation. Third, the New Perspective on Paul has found its way into this thesis via T.-L. N. Yee, who applied the new perspective approach onto his own interpretation of Eph 2:11-22. The strength and weakness of the New Perspective approach and its ethnic focus will be discussed using the example of Yee's interpretation.

c) Abstract German

In dieser Masterarbeit werden unterschiedliche Interpretationen von Eph 2,11-22 besprochen. Die Fragestellung gliedert sich in drei Richtungen: Erstens, die Identitätskategorien, die im Zusammenhang mit der Versöhnungsbotschaft eine große Rolle im Text spielen, sind von Interesse. Die Kategorien "Juden" (Ἰουδαῖοι) und "Heiden" (ἔθνη) stehen dabei im Vordergrund und werden hinsichtlich ihrer ethnischen und religiösen Bedeutung betrachtet werden. D. K. Buells Auseinandersetzung mit dem Zusammenhang von Ethnizität und Religion hinsichtlich der Identitätsbildung der frühen Christenheit leistet einen wichtigen Beitrag für ein differenziertes Verständnis des Konzeptes "Ethnizität" zur Zeit der Abfassung des Epheserbriefes. D. Boyarins Erkenntnisse bezüglich der Entstehungsprozesse von "Judentum" und "Christentum" erhellen den Begriff "ein Leib" (V. 16). Zweitens, die Versöhnungsbotschaft innerhalb des Epheserbriefes wird mit paulinischen Metaphern der Versöhnung verglichen, um herauszufinden, ob dessen deuteropaulinischer Autor wirklich ein treuer Schüler des Paulus war. Dafür beziehe ich mich hauptsächlich auf C. Breytenbachs großartige Analyse paulinischer Versöhnungsmetaphern. Drittens, die "New Perspective on Paul" hat sich über T.-L. N. Yee einen Weg in diese Masterarbeit verschafft. Yee wendete die Herangehensweise der "New Perspective" auf seine Interpretation von Eph 2,11-22 an. Die Stärken und Schwächen dieser Herangehensweise und ihres ethnischen Schwerpunkts werden am Beispiel von Yees Auslegung des Textes erörtert.

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