

# “Remember that you were once Gentiles”: Making memories in Ephesians and Barnabas

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## **ABSTRACT:**

The letter to the Ephesians is frequently located at a mid-point on a trajectory in early Christianity; i.e. Ephesians is seen as evidence of a Christianity lying somewhere between Paul's struggle to forge unity between ethnic Jewish and non-Jewish Christ-believers and the full-blown use of the concept of Christians as a new “ethnic” or “racial” entity to deny legitimacy to ethnic Jews. This paper questions this trajectory by conducting a comparative analysis of Ephesians and the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Taking its starting-point from the imperatival clause, “Therefore remember that you were once Gentiles in the flesh” (Eph 2:11), it explores the way in which Ephesians and *Barnabas* respectively shape a collective memory for their recipients with respect to Israel, its Scriptures and its symbols.

The paper finds that *Barnabas* and Ephesians both seek to construct collective memories for their readers by evoking Israel's scriptural narrative and symbols. However, the two epistles differ strikingly in the way they construct these memories.

On the one hand, *Barnabas* contrasts Christians with Jews as the “other”, adopts a hermeneutical approach that sees Christians as appropriating all the promises to Israel, depicts Jesus' sacrifice as a judgment against Jews, regards Jews as having been supplanted by Christians in “first” place, describes the nullification of the law as the end of ritual, and emphasises the contrast between the new spiritual temple and the physical Jewish temple.

On the other hand, Ephesians contrasts Christians with their former way of life as the “other”, adopts an Israel-centred hermeneutical approach that views Gentile Christians as graciously included within the promises to Israel, depicts Jesus' sacrifice as an act of reconciliation between Gentiles and Jews, regards Jews as retaining their position as “first” in Christ, describes the nullification of the law as the end of hostility between Gentiles and Jews, and emphasises the unity of Jew and Gentile in the new spiritual temple.

Looking at the two epistles from this perspective highlights their differences strikingly. This calls into question the posited trajectory. In this regard, at least, Ephesians is quite consonant with the undisputed Pauline letters (e.g. Rom 1:16, 11:17–24). There is no obvious development from Ephesians to the ethnic “replacement” concepts of the second century and beyond.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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The canonical letter to the Ephesians is frequently located within a particular trajectory in early Christianity, a trajectory which can broadly be summarised as follows:

- In the Pauline communities, the struggle to forge unity between ethnic Jewish and non-Jewish Christ-believers was a live and pressing issue.
- In later first-century communities who were heirs to the success of Paul’s mission—such as the addressees of Ephesians—the question of Jew-Gentile unity became largely theoretical. Christians began to identify themselves as a new ethnicity or “race” that superseded the prior ethnic categories of Jew and Gentile.
- In the second century and later, the concept of Christians as a new “ethnic” or “racial” entity who are heirs of God’s promises to Israel was further entrenched, and was used explicitly to deny legitimacy to ethnic Jews.

A key proponent of this trajectory is Andrew Lincoln. In his commentary, he writes:

*Ephesians has a cool detachment from Jewish Christian/Gentile Christian conflict, and reflects a setting toward the end of the first century when Paul’s position on admission of Gentiles had been established, Jerusalem had fallen and Gentile Christians in terms of influence and numbers very much overshadowed any Jewish Christians in the churches of Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup>*

Lincoln sees Ephesians 2:11–22 as evidence of a clear “third race” concept emerging in the early post-Pauline community to which Ephesians is written. While this concept is not (yet) being used explicitly to deny legitimacy to ethnic Jews, in later developments it did come to be used in this way.<sup>2</sup>

It is worth noting Lincoln’s approach to Ephesians in this particular question: Lincoln views Ephesians primarily as an inscription and/or legitimation of the belief of the community in which it arose. For Lincoln, the author of Ephesians is using a Jew-Gentile motif to *reinforce* his community’s identity as the church of Christ and the new humanity, and to legitimate its place in the world.<sup>3</sup> Talbert takes a similar approach to Ephesians. He regards the description of unity between Jew and Gentile in Ephesians 2:11–22 as evidence that Jews and Gentiles had already been

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 134; cf. Andrew T. Lincoln, “The Church and Israel in Ephesians 2,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 619.

<sup>2</sup> Lincoln, “Church and Israel,” 623; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 163; cf. Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt, Translated from *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906) (London: Williams & Norgate, 1908), 214.

<sup>3</sup> Lincoln, “Church and Israel,” 618–619.

united into a new corporate entity. As Talbert states, “The language [of Ephesians . . .] reflected the perceived social reality.”<sup>4</sup>

This approach to the text of Ephesians can, however, be questioned. The approach regards the text primarily as a legitimation of a prior social reality. However, it does not give enough weight to considering the text of Ephesians as intended to transform the social reality.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, not all scholars approach the text of Ephesians simply as an inscription of community belief. Many deliberately study the text as an active instrument designed to mould and influence the identity of the community. Nevertheless, within this broad approach, opinions with regard to the question of the “third race” concept in Ephesians are mixed.

Some scholars regard Ephesians as deliberately seeking to cause its Christian readers to identify themselves as a “new ethnicity” which supersedes prior ethnic identities. Harrill, for example, argues that Ephesians is written to persuade its readers to abandon their previous ethnic identity as “Gentiles” and take on a new, Christian ethnicity, analogous to the ideal of Rome as a mediating, transnational, third ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> On Ephesians 2:11–13, Harrill writes:

*In ways analogous to Roman kinship diplomacy, the letter thus exhorts the invited audience of τὰ ἔθνη not to valorise their alleged ‘stranger’ (‘alien’) status but, rather, to remember and so to celebrate their new heritage and bloodline<sup>7</sup>*

Harrill takes the imperative in Ephesians 2:11 to “remember” that they were once Gentiles as an entirely negative statement, that is, simply as a way of emphasising their “new heritage and bloodline” by way of contrast. Similarly, Yee regards the command to “remember” their prior status primarily as way to evoke the Jewish “ethnocentrism” that the author is seeking to oppose.<sup>8</sup> However, neither author explains why such emphasis is placed on this command to “remember” that they were once Gentiles. If, as these authors claim, the passage is written in order to persuade the recipients to forget their former status in favour of a new status, why is the command to

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<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 92.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Horrell’s critique of the concept of “legitimation” advocated by Berger and Luckmann: Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1971); critiqued by David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthians Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement*, Studies of the New Testament and Its World (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 39–45; David G. Horrell, “Berger and New Testament Studies,” in *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*, ed. Linda Woodhead, Paul Heelas, and David Martin (London: Routledge, 2001), 148–151; discussed further by Petri Luomanen, “The Sociology of Knowledge, the Social Identity Approach and the Cognitive Science of Religion,” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions From Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Risto Uro, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Petri Luomanen, Biblical Interpretation (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 206–207.

<sup>6</sup> J. Albert Harrill, “Ethnic Fluidity in Ephesians,” *New Testament Studies* 60, no. 3 (2014): 389–401.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>8</sup> Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul’s Jewish Identity and Ephesians*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 130 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 72–87.

“remember” placed in such a prominent position, and followed by such a long series of items to remember—such as their uncircumcision, separation from Christ, alienation from Israel, hope and God, etc. (Eph 2:11–12)?

Others, however, have made much more of the imperatival clause “Therefore remember that you were once Gentiles in the flesh” (Eph 2:11), arguing that Ephesians is deliberately written to ensure that the Christians’ prior Gentile identity is *not* forgotten.<sup>9</sup>

Earlier Markus Barth (1974) argued:

*The composition of the “new man out of the two” safeguards the rights of Christians to be different from one another, to “remember” (2:11) their distinct histories, to respect priorities (Rom 3:1–2, 9:4–5), to enjoy unity in diversity<sup>10</sup>*

More recently Stephen Fowl (2014) has argued:

*Verse 11 would thus indicate that the immediate good work in view is the work of memory. The Ephesians are challenged here to remember their past. Indeed, the call here may be to remember their past in a new way. [. . .] Whatever else might be involved, the renewal of one’s mind must include a repair or restoration of one’s memory.<sup>11</sup>*

*Here in 2:11 the Ephesians are called to remember their identity as Gentiles. [. . .] That designation only had currency within Judaism or in relation to Judaism. [. . .] They need to remember (or reconceive) of their past as a Gentile past. They need to learn both what being a Gentile meant when they were outside of Christ and what it means now that they are in Christ.<sup>12</sup>*

For Barth and Fowl, then, the imperative “remember” has highly significant function. This suggests that the evocation, indeed the construction, of “memory” is a key factor in the letter’s identity-forming technique.

In this paper, we will explore further the concept of memory construction in early Christianity, with special reference to the issues raised above concerning ethnicity, Jews and Gentiles. In particular, we will compare and contrast Ephesians with the *Epistle of Barnabas*. The reasons for choosing *Barnabas* are straightforward. Firstly, *Barnabas* is an early Christian text that clearly

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<sup>9</sup> Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible 34, 34A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 253–325; Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 83–102; cf. Mark Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 151–179; William S. Campbell, “Unity and Diversity in the Church: Transformed Identities and the Peace of Christ in Ephesians,” *Transformation*, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Barth, *Ephesians*, 1.310–311.

<sup>11</sup> Fowl, *Ephesians*, 85.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 85–86.

seeks to deny legitimacy to ethnic Jewish identity.<sup>13</sup> As such, it may be seen as an obvious early example of the posited third step in the constructed historical trajectory we described above. Secondly, although it is highly unlikely that the author of *Barnabas* was familiar with Ephesians,<sup>14</sup> the two letters deal with many similar themes and thus have multiple points of comparison and contrast. We will explore the way in which Ephesians and *Barnabas* respectively shape a collective memory for their recipients with respect to Israel, its Scriptures and its symbols.

Once we have conducted this analysis, we will have reason to return to the constructed historical trajectory outlined above. We will ask: does Ephesians easily fit within the second step of this constructed historical trajectory? If not, is the trajectory itself valid?

## 2 A COLLECTIVE MEMORY APPROACH

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Philip Esler, writing on the memorialisation of Paul’s imprisonment Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Timothy, has provided a useful framework for exploring collective memory in relation to early Christian texts.<sup>15</sup> Esler observes that:

- 1) collective remembering is central for a community or group,
- 2) collective memory is formed through the interpenetration of personally experienced memories and the memories of others in a group,
- 3) the construction of collective memory is a key element of identity-forming processes, and
- 4) narrative memories in particular can be a key to a person’s identity, even when the narrative is not experienced directly by that person.<sup>16</sup>

We will be asking how the texts of Ephesians and *Barnabas*, respectively, shape the identity of their communities through constructing a collective memory of their relation to Israel.

For our purposes it is not necessary to establish the precise occasion for either Ephesians or *Barnabas*. Indeed, the occasion of both these epistles is disputed. As many scholars have noted, Ephesians is general in nature, and there are considerable disagreements about its specific life-setting, provenance and purpose.<sup>17</sup> As for *Barnabas*, it suffices to say that the recipients were

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<sup>13</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb Classical Library 24-25 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament: 2. Reihe 82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 32.

<sup>15</sup> Philip F. Esler, “Remember My Fetters’: Memorialisation of Paul’s Imprisonment,” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions From Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Risto Uro, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Petri Luomanen, Biblical Interpretation (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 231–58. Esler’s framework is drawn from Halbwachs.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 241–246.

<sup>17</sup> For a general survey of the options for Ephesians, see Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 51–56.

almost certainly Gentile Christians (cf. 3.6, 16.7) and that it was written between 70–135 CE, most likely in the second half of this period, possibly in Alexandria,<sup>18</sup> and probably in response to a perceived threat that the recipients would be attracted to Judaism of some form.<sup>19</sup>

### 3 NARRATIVE MEMORY: ISRAEL’S SCRIPTURES

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As we noted above, central to the construction of collective memory is the sharing of a narrative. Both *Barnabas* and Ephesians draw their readers in to a narrative. Formally, the narrative is the same in each case: it is constituted by the story of Israel as recounted in the Scriptures, quotations of and allusions to which abound in both epistles.<sup>20</sup> However, it is clear that the two epistles have quite different *orientations* to this scriptural narrative.

#### 3.1 THE “OTHER” IN RELATION TO ISRAEL

Social categorization often proceeds by way of contrast with other groups. It is easier for us to understand who we *are* when we understand clearly who we *are not*, i.e. the “other”.<sup>21</sup> One significant way in which *Barnabas* and Ephesians differ in relation to Israel’s Scriptures is their respective delineations of the “other”.

##### 3.1.1 Barnabas

In *Barnabas*, the “other” comprises ethnic Jews. *Barnabas* frequently uses the pronouns “we” and “they” to draw a distinction between Christians and Jews. For example:

*watch yourselves now and do not become like some people by piling up your sins, saying that the covenant is both theirs and ours. <sup>7</sup> For it is ours. But they permanently lost it, in this way, when Moses had just received it. (Barn. 4.6–7)<sup>22</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 6, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*; pace Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus*, *Studia Post-Biblica* 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1995). Some scholars suggest more specific scenarios associated with the prospect of the rebuilding of the temple: S. Lowy, “The Confutation of Judaism in the Epistle of Barnabas,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 11 (1960): 1–33; James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament*: 2. Reihe 64 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Elna Mouton, “Memory in Search of Dignity?: Construction of Early Christian Identity through Redefined Traditional Material in the Letter to the Ephesians,” *Annali Di Storia Dell’esegesi* 29, no. 2 (July 2012): 133–53; Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, 102–136.

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. Raimo Hakola, “Social Identities and Group Phenomena in Second Temple Judaism,” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions From Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Risto Uro, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Petri Luomanen, *Biblical Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 264.

<sup>22</sup> Quotations taken from Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

This “we” and “they” delineation is central to *Barnabas*’ overall hermeneutical method. Portions of Scripture referring to misguided or sinful approaches to God are taken to refer to “them” (Jews) whereas portions of Scripture referring to right approaches to God are taken to refer to “us” (Christians). For example, when *Barnabas* approaches Isa 58:3–10, he claims that God speaks to two different groups in the one passage: God speaks “to them” concerning unacceptable pride-filled ritual (*Barn.* 3.1), whereas God speaks “to us” about true obedience, love and righteousness (*Barn.* 3.3).<sup>23</sup>

For *Barnabas*, the true and sole heirs of God’s covenant with Israel are Christians. Jews are emphatically *not* the heirs and never have been.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Christians cannot be described as “Gentiles” at all. As Lowy notes, *Barnabas* does not use the terms “Jew” and “Gentile”; rather he uses the words “we” and “they”. “The inference is simple: *We* are now the real Israel. Since the covenant belongs to Christians, the latter are not Gentiles any more.” Thus Christians share in the narrative memory of Israel *in direct contrast with Jews*.

*In order for Barnabas to use ethnic reasoning to carve out a place for the new Christian genos in the context of the Graeco-Roman world and to maintain that Christians had deep roots in antiquity, he completely appropriated the covenant, ancestors and scriptures of Israel and simultaneously denied the legitimacy of the Judaeen claim on these same scriptural traditions.*<sup>25</sup>

### 3.1.2 Ephesians

By contrast, in Ephesians, the “other” is clearly non-Christian Gentiles, who represent the former life that the readers once participated in but have now left behind.<sup>26</sup> A key warning in Ephesians is not to become like Gentiles (again):

*Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. (Eph 4:17)*

However, the Christians must still “remember” that they were Gentiles (Eph 2:11). This command to “remember” is in fact a command to adopt an Israel-centred perspective on the world, which not only distances the Christians from their former Gentile culture, but also brings them in to Israel’s narrative:<sup>27</sup>

*remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope*

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<sup>23</sup> Lowy, “Confutation of Judaism,” 1–2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Kok, “The True Covenant People: Ethnic Reasoning in the Epistle of Barnabas,” *Studies in Religion* 40, no. 1 (2011): 93.

<sup>26</sup> Campbell, “Unity and Diversity,” 16.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

*and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph 2:12–13)*

Thus in Ephesians, Christian Gentiles share in the narrative memory of Israel, not by way of *contrast* with Jews, but *alongside* Jews. Indeed, Ephesians’ overall hermeneutical method is to identify its Gentile readers, not with Israel itself, but with the non-privileged group, the group who were indeed “far off” before they were “brought near”:

*And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. (Eph 2:17, citing Isaiah 57:19)*

As Campbell notes:

*It is presumed that gentiles, whilst remaining gentiles, instead of creating a new humanity in opposition to, or displacement of, Israel must develop a deeper understanding of their links with Israel and thus a more Israelite-related identity, though they are never identified as co-Israelites.<sup>28</sup>*

### 3.2 SPECIFIC SCRIPTURES

This point of contrast between these two overall hermeneutical strategies can be seen more clearly by examining some of those Scriptures cited or alluded to by both *Barnabas* and Ephesians.

Firstly, Genesis 1:26–28, on the creation of humanity in God’s image, is used by both *Barnabas* and Ephesians. *Barnabas* 6.11–19 uses this Scripture to underscore the fact that his readers, as the new humanity, are the true heirs of the covenant in contrast to Israel (cf. 6.6–7). Ephesians 4:21–24, however, simply uses this Scripture to insist that the Christians, as the new humanity, should leave behind their former Gentile ways (4:17, 21–22).

Secondly, Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22, which speak of the precious cornerstone that was rejected by the builders, are used by both epistles in different ways. *Barnabas* 6.2–4 use these Scriptures to underscore the enmity between Jesus and those who rejected him (i.e. Jews). Ephesians 2:19–21, on the other hand, uses the concept of the “cornerstone” to highlight the privileged status of Gentiles who have been included in the household of God alongside Jews.

Thirdly, Zechariah 8:16–17, which commands the people of Israel to speak the truth, is used by both epistles in different ways. *Barnabas* 2.6–8 uses this text against Jewish sacrifices: for *Barnabas*, it demonstrates that there is a “new law” which nullifies the old law and renders the sacrifices invalid. Ephesians 4:25–26 uses the same Scripture, not to nullify sacrifice, but simply as an ethical imperative arising from the unity Christians share in Christ.

Finally, Jeremiah 9:25–26, which brings an indictment on Israel for being circumcised “merely in the flesh”, is used by both Epistles in different ways. Jeremiah. *Barnabas* 9.5–6 quotes this passage

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 24.



to demonstrate that circumcision in which the Jews trusted has been entirely “nullified” (9.4). Ephesians 2:11 alludes to the same Scripture, but does so not to nullify this mark of Jewish identity. Rather, it is a reminder that physical circumcision alone does not create a straightforward channel to God’s blessing, opening up the possibility for the inclusion of the Gentiles alongside Jews in these blessings (cf. 2:13).

## 4 SYMBOLIC MEMORY: ISRAEL’S SYMBOLS

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Another method by which both *Barnabas* and Ephesians construct a collective memory is by invoking the symbols of Israel and applying them to the readers so that they are included in these symbols.<sup>29</sup> Both *Barnabas* and Ephesians invoke key symbols of Israel: law, sacrifice, inheritance / covenant, temple and people. However, on the whole, they do so in quite different ways.

### 4.1 SACRIFICE

For both *Barnabas* and Ephesians, the death of Jesus is conceived in terms of his “blood”, i.e. a sacrificial offering.<sup>30</sup> The question is: what did this offering achieve? Both epistles state that Jesus’ blood, first and foremost, achieved forgiveness of sins:

*This is why the Lord allowed his flesh to be given over to corruption, that we might be made holy through the forgiveness of sins, which comes in the sprinkling of his blood. (Barn. 5.1)*

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, (Eph 1:7)*

In addition to forgiveness of sins, both *Barnabas* and Ephesians also describe a second outcome for Jesus’ death. For *Barnabas*, this second outcome is judgment against those who persecuted Jesus and the prophets, i.e. the Jews:

*Therefore, the Son of God came in the flesh for this reason, that he might total up all the sins of those who persecuted his prophets to death.<sup>12</sup> And so this is why he allowed himself to suffer. (Barn. 5.11–12, cf. 8.2)<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of these elements as symbols of Israel’s identity see N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 354–375.

<sup>30</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 106.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the position of earlier anti-Judaistic writers such as Gerhard Kittel, who advocated separation and discrimination against Jewish people in his own day as a “reflection of God’s judgment on disobedient Israel”—a disobedience shown ultimately in their crucifixion of Jesus: William E. Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism, and the Construction of Contemporary Identity*, Religion in Culture (London: Equinox, 2005), 11., summarising a key argument in Kittel’s *Die Judenfrage* (1933).

For Ephesians, however, the second outcome of Jesus’ blood is quite different: *reconciliation* between Jews and Gentiles:

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. . . .<sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Eph 2:13–16)*

Thus, for *Barnabas*, the manifestation of Jesus creates a division between “they” who are filled with sins, and “us” who receive the covenant:

*He was made manifest so that those people might be completely filled with sins, and that we might receive the covenant through the Lord Jesus, who inherited it. (Barn. 14.5)*

Yet for Ephesians, such division is overcome by Jesus. *Everyone* was “dead in sins” (Eph 2:1–3) and the manifestation of Jesus brings reconciliation (Eph 2:12–13).

#### **4.2 INHERITANCE / COVENANT**

Two further, related, symbols evoked by both *Barnabas* and Ephesians are Israel’s covenant and Israel’s inheritance. For *Barnabas*, “we” Christians are heirs of God’s covenant, in contrast to the Jews:

*Now let us see whether this people or the first one that receives the inheritance, and whether the covenant is for us or them. (Barn 13.1)*

*You see about whom he has decreed, that this people [i.e. Christians] will be first, and the heir of the covenant. (Barn. 13.6)*

For *Barnabas*, the Jews’ position as the “first” has been forfeited: although they were “first” they did not receive God’s inheritance and now Christians have become “first”.

For Ephesians, however, the inheritance flows from the “first” to others. The “first to hope” in Christ do indeed obtain their inheritance, and then the blessings are extended to the Gentile Christians:

*In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,<sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.<sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,<sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:11–14)*

### 4.3 LAW

The law is also an important symbol evoked by both *Barnabas* and Ephesians. Both *Barnabas* and Ephesians speak of the law being “nullified” (*katargein*). However, the two epistles differ in how they conceive of this nullification. In each case, the nature of the law that is “nullified” is different, and it is replaced with something different.

For *Barnabas*, it is the ritual law of sacrifices that is nullified. This is replaced by a new non-sacrificial law for Christians:

*And so he nullified these things that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is without the yoke of compulsion, should provide an offering not made by humans. (Barn. 2.6)*

For Ephesians, it is the law of “commandments” that is nullified, understood only in its aspect of creating hostility. This law is not replaced with a new “law”, but only with Christ himself as “peace”:

*For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility<sup>15</sup> by abolishing [καταργήσας] the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, (Eph 2:14–15)*

### 4.4 TEMPLE

Both *Barnabas* and Ephesians speak of the Christian community as a spiritual temple, in the sense of being a dwelling for God. *Barnabas* emphasises this temple in “us” as a *contrast* to the physical Jewish temple hoped for by “them”:

*I will also speak to you about the Temple, since those wretches were misguided in hoping in the building rather than in their God who made them, as if the Temple were actually the house of God. . . Now pay attention, so that the temple of the Lord may be gloriously built. And learn how: we have become new, created again from the beginning, because we have received the forgiveness of sins and have hoped in the name. Therefore God truly resides within our place of dwelling—within us. (Barn. 16.1, 8, cf. 16.10)*

By contrast, the emphasis in Ephesians is on the joint share that Jews and Gentiles have in the same temple: “we both” have access (Eph 6:18). Furthermore, Ephesians highlights the fact that the Gentiles are “built together” into the temple, a temple that otherwise would belong to Jews in Christ, but now belongs to “you also”:

*For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,<sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.<sup>22</sup> In him*

*you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph 2:18–22)*

## 4.5 PEOPLE

Finally, we return to the “people” as a key symbol of Israel. For Barnabas, “Israel was abandoned” (*Barn.* 4.14). There is now a new people, a second humanity, which replaces Israel and acts in contradistinction from Israel:

*Again I will show you how he speaks to us [as opposed to “them”=Israel, cf. 6.7]. He made yet a second human form in the final days. And the Lord says, “See! I am making the final things like the first.” . . .<sup>14</sup> See, then, that we have been formed anew, . . . (Barn. 6.13–14).*

For Ephesians, however, the new humanity is comprised of both Jew and Gentile. There is no sense of replacement of ethnic categories altogether; rather the emphasis is on overcoming ethnic hostility (Eph 2:14–16).

For Barnabas, the “church” is defined as those whom Jesus blesses and brings in to the land, in distinction from the “synagogue” who put him to death (*Barn.* 5.13, 6.6, 6.16). For Ephesians, the “church” refers to the united gathering of Jew and Gentile, also called the “body” of Christ (Eph 1:22–23, 4:4).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

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*Barnabas* and Ephesians both seek to construct collective memories for their readers by evoking Israel’s scriptural narrative and symbols. However, the two epistles differ strikingly in the way they construct these memories.

On the one hand, *Barnabas* contrasts Christians with Jews, adopts a hermeneutical approach that sees Christians as appropriating all the promises to Israel, depicts Jesus’ sacrifice as a judgment against Jews, regards Jews as having been supplanted by Christians in “first” place, describes the nullification of the law as the end of ritual, and emphasises the contrast between the new spiritual temple and the physical Jewish temple.

On the other hand, Ephesians contrasts Christians with their former way of life, adopts an Israel-centred hermeneutical approach that views Gentile Christians as graciously included within the promises to Israel, depicts Jesus’ sacrifice as an act of reconciliation between Gentiles and Jews, regards Jews as retaining their position as “first” in Christ, describes the nullification of the law as the end of hostility between Gentiles and Jews, and emphasises the unity of Jew and Gentile in the new spiritual temple.

Looking at the two epistles from this perspective highlights their differences quite strikingly. This calls into question the posited trajectory described at the start of this paper. In this regard, at least, Ephesians is quite consonant with the undisputed Pauline letters (e.g. Rom 1:16, 11:17–24). There

is no obvious development from Ephesians to the ethnic “replacement” concepts of the second century and beyond.

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