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NOTES AND STUDIES

THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS ¹

THIS paper is not concerned with anything about the Epistle except the date, save that at the end attention is called very briefly to the nature of the Christianity described.

Yet it is necessary to be reminded of what the Epistle is. After a charming Introduction (ch. i), in which the author speaks of his affection for his 'sons and daughters', writing, as he says, 'not as a teacher, but as one of you', and bidding them live a very godly life, he shews (ii-iv) that external ritual is worthless as a means to this, whether it is that of sacrifices or of fasts. For God never intended these to be observed literally. And he quotes Isa. i 11, 13, Jer. vii 22 sq. Indeed the observance of these is compatible with evil living. But, on the other hand, Christ came to purify us (v. 1). The author then shews that the Old Testament led us to expect this, for it foretells in prophecies His suffering and His Incarnation (v, vi), and in ritual (namely that of the Goats and the Red Heifer) His sufferings and their effect (vii, viii). Having shewn that Christ and His work were thus foretold, Barnabas proves next that the ordinances observed by Christians also were foretold (ix-xii). For Circumcision (ix) and Dietary laws (x) had always been intended to have a spiritual and not a literal meaning, and the Prophets directly foretold Baptism and the fact of Christ's cross (xi, xii). He then proves that Christians, and not unbelieving Jews, are the true heirs of salvation, as was understood by the Patriarchs themselves (xiii), and by Moses and the Prophets (xiv); Christians thus possessing the true Sabbath (xv), and themselves being the true Temple, the habitation of God (xvi). Barnabas concludes this portion of his Epistle by saying that

¹ Besides Funk's large edition, 1901, reference should be made to Lightfoot *Clem. Rom.* ii 503-512, 1890; Windisch *Ep. Barnabas*, 1920; J. A. Robinson *Barnabas, Hermas and the Didache*, 1920; J. Muilenburg *The Literary Relations of the Ep. of Barnabas and the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, Marburg 1929 (see *J.T.S.* xxxiii 25); R. H. Connolly *The Didache in relation to the Ep. of Barnabas*, *J.T.S.* xxxiii 237-253.

he has done his best to write plainly of such things as are profitable to salvation, but has not touched on the future (whether immediate or distant) because these things are expressed in parables (presumably still those of the Old Testament), which his readers will not understand (xvii). So he passes on to another lesson, that of the Two Ways (xviii) the Way of Light (xix), and the Way of the Black One (xx), each of which he describes in detail. In his final chapter (xxi) he entreats his readers to live for God, and he again reveals his own devout and earnest character.¹

Further, it will be assumed in this paper that the Epistle is one and not twofold or more. In other words, that chapters xviii to xx and also xxi are integral parts of it. For though they are of much nobler character than chapters i-xvii, which are sometimes rather paltry in method, the detailed arguments in Muilenburg² leave us, I think, no room to doubt the unity of the Epistle as it stands.

What evidence do we possess for determining the date of the Epistle?

The external evidence will not detain us long. There is no sure evidence that the Epistle was used, much less that it was attributed to a certain author, before about A.D. 190, when Clement of Alexandria quotes it again and again (in all its parts) in his *Stromateis*. In II vi 31 he writes: 'rightly therefore the Apostle Barnabas says: "From the portion I have received I have been eager to write briefly to you", quoting from *Barn.* i 5, ii 2, 3.³ References have been found also in Justin Martyr, Hermas, and Irenaeus, but in no case is there certainty. On the other hand we may assume that Dr Muilenburg in particular, and in some degree Dr Armitage Robinson and Dom Connolly, have proved that the author of the *Didache* was dependent on Barnabas in the sections dealing with the Two Ways. But there is at the present moment no agreement about the date of the *Didache*. Some place it at the end of the first, but others (including the three scholars just named) at the end of the second century.

We may now turn to the internal evidence as to its date. What we can gather from the Epistle itself may be summed up under three headings:—what it does not say; what it does say in general terms; and what definite marks of time it seems to contain.

1. *What it does not say.*

In all writings, particularly those of a controversial kind, and especially when an author has in view the object of guarding those committed to

¹ Muilenburg has a detailed analysis on p. 59.

² Pp. 113-135. Muilenburg compares cc. xviii-xxi clause by clause with cc. i-xvii.

³ Muilenburg gives a long list of Clement's parallels to Barnabas (p. 25).

him in doctrine and practice, we may expect to find allusions to definitely erroneous modes of teaching or morals.

Strangely enough our author makes no reference to Church organization. The attitude of Ignatius is unknown to him. Even the fears and the earnest warnings of Clement of Rome find no parallel. Nor are St Paul's Pastoral Letters applied. Barnabas thinks no more of organization than does the Epistle of James, perhaps not even as much, for St James at least mentions 'the elders of the Church', who are to be summoned to pray over a sick man after using the usual remedies (Jas. v 14). Of more importance is Barnabas's absolute silence with regard to the heresies. There is no trace of Gnosticism in the technical sense, e.g. of the teaching of Valentinus, whose date seems now to be placed about A.D. 120. Nor is there a word about Marcion (also about 120, it appears), or Marcionism, for Barnabas's attitude towards the Old Testament is wholly different. Nor is there even a suggestion that the author knew of Cerinthus and the heresy associated with his name.

For all that we have learned so far, the *Epistle of Barnabas* might have been written at any time after, say, A.D. 40.

2. *But what does the Epistle say in general terms?*

Does it shew any knowledge of the New Testament books? This is more than doubtful, as may be seen in the classical discussion of the subject in Dr J. V. Bartlet's paper vouched for by a Committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology in its *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 1905. For although our author quotes, *ὡς γέγραπται*, a saying which is almost exactly that which is found in Matt. xxii 14: 'Many are called but few are chosen', yet, as it is not uncommon for the Fathers to quote as Scripture words which we cannot find in our canonical books, so this saying need not be from Matthew. Cf. Barnabas itself, vii 4: 'What then saith He in the Prophet, And let them eat, &c.?' These words existed, presumably, in some book, but we do not know which. So, 'Many are called', &c. may be quoted from a document earlier or later than Matthew. Cf. even 2(4) Esdras viii 3: 'Many have been created, but few shall be saved.' Dr Bartlet thinks Barnabas used the Epistle to the Romans (iv 3, 10 sq. [17], see Barn. xiii 7; Rom. ix 7-13, see Barn. xiii 2, 3). Other allusions in Barnabas to New Testament books have been supposed. But none are certain. For myself I become increasingly convinced that Patristic authors used earlier writings much less than has been thought, and that phrases and interpretations commonly supposed to indicate literary dependence are due really to phraseology and interpretation spread over the whole Church. Such phrases and interpretations form, that is to say, extremely doubtful evidence that one writer took them from another.

The characteristic mark that we do find in the Epistle of Barnabas is the author's continual use of Jewish methods of interpreting Scripture. I say Jewish, and not Alexandrian-Jewish, for it is a vulgar error to suppose that such methods—strange as they appear to us—either originated in Alexandria or were the peculiar mark of Alexandrian Jews. The mistake arose, no doubt, from the fact that our earlier scholars who dealt with the subject could read Philo easily enough, but had no knowledge of Talmud or Rabbinic. The point, I may add, is not unimportant, for Barnabas's use of such methods does not in reality throw any light on the place where he wrote. Neither, I may add, does the fact that he wrote in Greek and used the Greek version of the Old Testament point to Alexandria. Indeed it may be suspected that the differences in Barnabas from the Vatican or Alexandrian MSS indicate rather a different locality.¹ But almost nothing is known as yet about either the LXX itself or its relation to the various forms of its text. Further, very little weight can be attached to the fact that Clement of Alexandria is the first to mention the Epistle, for Origen of Alexandria is the first to mention the *True Word* of Celsus, and this, he expressly tells us, was sent there from Rome.

Be that as it may, our author's Jewish methods of interpretation recur again and again. The best known, of course, is the famous interpretation of Abraham's 318 servants, in which 18 (ιη) stands for the first two letters of the word *ἰησοῦς*, and 300 (τ) in itself represents the Cross.

It is not necessary to give more examples of this Midrashic exposition, for they may be found in every few lines of the Epistle. The question for us is, does their recurrence throw any light upon the date of the Epistle? I cannot think that it does. For, after all, Christian Jews only carried on the methods of Biblical interpretation which they had used before their conversion, and Gentile Christians naturally followed suit. In themselves, that is, these quotations throw little light even upon the question whether our author was of Jewish or of Gentile origin, and none at all upon that of his date.

So far the Epistle might still have been written at any time after, say A.D. 40 or, if we are to accept the supposition that the author was acquainted with books of the New Testament, at any time after, say, A.D. 80.

3. There are, however, two passages in the Epistle which have been thought to provide very clear indications of its date. They are xvi 3, 4, and iv 4, 5.

It will be convenient to begin with xvi. This runs as follows:—

¹ Preliminary studies of the subject may be found in Hatch *Essays*, 1889, pp. 180-186; Swete *Introduction*, 1900, pp. 411-413.

1. 'Further, I will speak to you also concerning the temple, how that these wretched men in their error set their hope on the building (and not on their God Who made them), as if it were God's house. 2. For they confined Him within the temple almost like the heathen. But how does the Lord speak, bringing it to nought? Learn . . . *What manner of house will ye build for me, or what is the place of my rest?*¹ You recognize that their hope is vain. 3. Furthermore, He says again : *Lo, they that destroyed this temple shall themselves build it.*² 4. It is happening now. For owing to their waging war it was destroyed by the enemy ; now even the servants of the enemy themselves will build it up again. 5. Again, it was manifested that the city and the temple and the people of Israel were to be delivered up. For the Scripture says : *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the Lord shall deliver the sheep of his pasture and the sheepfold and their tower to destruction.*³ And it took place as the Lord said. 6. But let us enquire whether there is a temple of God. Yes, there is, where He Himself says that He makes and prepares it. For it is written : *And it shall come to pass when the week is being completed that a temple of God shall be built gloriously in the name of the Lord.*⁴ 7. I find then that there is a temple. Learn then how it will be built in the name of the Lord. Before we believed in God the habitation of our heart was corruptible and weak, as is a temple truly built with hands, because it was full of idolatry and was the house of demons through doing things contrary to God. 8. *But it shall be built in the name of the Lord.* Now give heed, that the temple of the Lord may be *built gloriously*. How? Learn. When we received the remission of sins, and set our hope in the Name, we became new, being created again from the beginning ; wherefore God truly dwells in us as His habitation. . . . 10. . . . 'This is a spiritual temple being built for the Lord.'

Now there is no doubt that the chief object of the chapter is to shew that whatever may have happened to the material temple at Jerusalem, the Lord has a Temple not built with hands, the spiritual Temple of them that believe in Him. If this were all that the chapter said, there would be but little question of date, save that (and I think this may be said with some certainty) the author implies that the material temple has been destroyed, the Epistle being written, that is to say, after A.D. 70. So far, so good ; the Epistle was certainly written after A.D. 70.

But it has been thought that one or two clauses carry the date much later. For in Harmer's translation⁵ we read, *v.* 3, 'Furthermore, He

¹ Isa. lxvi 1.

² Isa. xlix 17.

³ 1 Enoch lxxxix 56.

⁴ 1 Enoch xci 12, 13. Cf. Dan. ix 24-27 ; Tob. xiv 5.

⁵ Published in Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*, 1891.

saith again: *Behold, they that pulled down this temple themselves shall build it. v. 4.* So it cometh to pass; for because they went to war it was pulled down by their enemies. Now also the very servants of the enemies shall build it up again.' This passage is interpreted to mean that, when Barnabas wrote, the Temple was actually being rebuilt at Jerusalem. Now we know of no such rebuilding till the time of Julian (A.D. 361-363), obviously far too late in view of Clement of Alexandria's knowledge of the Epistle about A.D. 190. To what then do the words refer? Two answers are given. First, the reference was to a proposal made by some Jews during the Barcochba rebellion (A.D. 132-135);¹ or, secondly, to the building of a Temple there to Jupiter Capitolinus by Hadrian after the rebellion had been quashed in A.D. 135. Frankly, the latter seems to me absolutely impossible. Neither Jew nor Christian could in any way have recognized a heathen temple as the fulfilment of a divine prophecy which equated the new Temple with the old. That explanation may be dismissed.

And even the former fares little better. For the evidence that the Jews did begin to build another Temple in the time of Barcochba is very slight indeed, and even if such a building were begun I do not understand how *the servants of the enemy*, i.e. Roman officials, were helping to rebuild it.²

Personally I am convinced that neither of these curious interpretations can be upheld. The passage contributes no evidence at all, that is to say, for the Epistle being written either in 135, or about 130 or 131.

What then does the passage (xvi 3, 4) mean?

There is one explanation which has been almost laughed out of court, and yet certainly deserves to be mentioned. It is as follows.

The Jews, says Barnabas, had been like the heathen in thinking that the Temple was everything and God almost nothing. *The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord*, said they (Jer. vii 4), and they thought all was safe because they possessed it. But God would destroy it. Yet, says Isaiah xlix, 17 in the LXX (not quite word for word, but in effect) *Behold, they that destroyed this Temple themselves shall build it.* When? How? It was Isaiah who prophesied this (as Barnabas would have said), and he lived a hundred years before Nebuchadnezzar. The hosts of the East destroyed it, and the hosts of the East shall themselves build it. And so it comes about (for *γίεταί*, if genuine, may be an

¹ This proposition is mentioned by Chrysostom, *Hom. c. Judaeos* v 11. Cf. Gennadius *Dialogue* (ed. Jahn 1893, fol. 130 r.). The *Breshith R.* par. 64, on Gen. xxvi 28 sq., refers to a proposal to rebuild the Temple then, but nothing came of it. Windisch (p. 388) adds some other late patristic references.

² Such evidence as there is in the Midrash (see p. 13 note) is all the other way.

historic present).¹ The Temple was destroyed by the enemy, and the servants or perhaps the officials (*δπηρέται*) of the enemy—Cyrus and his successors' officials and servants (cf. Ezra vi 13)—did in fact rebuild it. I say that this interpretation may possibly be correct, the author then passing on to his main subject, the true as against the material building. If so, his words throw no light whatever on the date of his writing.

On the other hand, the verses may well be, and indeed probably are, themselves part of the description of the true, the spiritual, Temple.

Isaiah said that the enemies, the Romans in A.D. 70, were to destroy the Temple. Be it so. They have. But he also said they were to rebuild it, even with their own officials. And this is so. For members of the Roman Empire, yes, even its officials, take part in building the true Temple of God, the Christian Church. Many and many a convert was a citizen of Rome, and some at least in the time of Domitian (A.D. 81-96) were in very high positions in the State, and there had been others in lower positions much earlier.

This interpretation is not of much use in determining the date of the Epistle. But it would be more than satisfied with a date not later than about A.D. 95.²

The second passage is much more definite, though even here the interpretations of the exact point of time indicated differ by some twenty years.

It is iv 4, 5. The author has spoken of the near approach of the Coming of the Lord, and adds: 'And the prophet also says thus: *Ten kingdoms shall reign upon the earth, and after them shall rise up a little king, who shall subdue three of the kings under one.* (So Dr Lowther Clarke's translation, but *ἕφ' ἓν*, not *ἕφ' ἑνα*, can hardly mean here anything but 'at once'). The passage is taken from Dan. vii 24. Barnabas goes on to say: 'Similarly Daniel says concerning the same: *And I beheld the fourth beast, wicked and powerful and fiercer than all the beasts of the sea,*³ and how that *ten horns arose from it, and out of these a little excrescent horn, and how that it subdues under one* (or 'at once', but here the neuter may refer to *κέρας*) *three of the great horns*' (cf. Dan. vii 7 sq.; 19 sq.).

¹ Funk translates 'idque evenit'. The word is read by the archetype of eight Greek MSS and the Latin Version, but is omitted by the Sinaitic and the Constantinopolitan MSS.

² This spiritual interpretation of Isa. xlix 17 is followed by Peter of Blois (c. 1200), but with no reference to our Epistle; '*et aedificabunt filii peregrinorum, &c.* Haec, O Judaeae, templo et civitati tuae convenire non possunt: sed videmus hodie Reges terrae, et ipsi Caesares jugo Christi colla submittere, publicis expensis aedificare ecclesias, &c.' (c. *Perfidiam Judaeorum*, xxxi. Migne P. L. 207, col. 865).

³ So the Constantinopolitan MS and the Latin Version.

The author means, it would seem, that already the Roman Empire has had ten horns (i.e. ten Emperors), and even three more who are soon to be, or have already been, subdued by a little horn.

What then was the exact date when the author was writing?

Bp. Lightfoot regarded Vespasian as the tenth Roman Emperor (counting from Julius Caesar), and the 'three' as Vespasian and his two sons (Titus and Domitian) associated with him in the supreme power. The destroyer would then be Antichrist, who may have been identified with Nero, supposed at that time to be still alive and about to return. If so, the Epistle will have been written between 75 and 79 when Vespasian died.¹

Another opinion is that the little horn is Nerva, who was elected Emperor by the Senate after the murder of Domitian, the last of the three Flavian Emperors, and reigned from A.D. 96 (Sept.) to 98 (Jan.). The Epistle will then have been written between these two dates. On the whole this chronology is perhaps simpler, and the date more probable.²

It will thus be seen that in any case the Epistle must have been written before A.D. 100.

I now add a brief summary of the information which the Epistle of Barnabas contributes towards our knowledge of the Christianity of the writer, and of those whom he addresses. It also would seem to indicate a date about the last decade of the first century of our era.

Although not a word is said directly in our Epistle about Church organization—Bishops, Priests, or Deacons—nor about authority as such, much less about any sacerdotal claims, with regard to which the Epistle is as silent as the New Testament itself—the writer stands evidently in a position of superiority over his readers. For he begins: 'Greeting, sons and daughters, in the name of the Lord who loved us, in peace.' And this position would appear to be not that of an elder who was resident among his people, but that of a superintendent (or as we should say, a Bishop), who was able to visit them only from time to time. For he says in i 3: 'So amazed was I respecting you by the sight of you for which I longed.'³

Again, his interest, and presumably theirs, lies not in the externals of the Faith, but in its effect on doctrine and on life. Not, however, on

¹ Ramsay (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, 1893, p. 308) agrees with the date, but arrives at it in a different way. He omits Otho and Vitellius from the list of Emperors (for 'in the time of the Flavian Emperors' to include them 'would have been treason'), and reckons Vespasian as the eighth, Titus as the ninth, and Domitian as the tenth, who were all to perish at the hands of the returning Nero.

² This date is preferred by Funk, 1901, p. xxv.

³ Οὕτω με ἐξέπληξεν ἐπὶ ὑμῶν ἢ ἐμοὶ ἐπιποθήτη ὄψις ὑμῶν.

doctrine in any narrow sense, as though he were enquiring whether it were orthodox or otherwise. He treats of the Faith in its broadest outlines, belief in the Divine Sonship of Christ, His Godhead in a special sense, His Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Baptism is mentioned and its value assumed (xi 1, 8, 11), but not, as it seems, the Lord's Supper.

The aim of the writer is especially to ensure that his readers may understand the relation of the Gospel to the earlier revelation of God in the Law and in the Old Testament generally. For he desires to make it quite clear that Christianity as he and they know it was in God's mind from the very first, and therefore stands in no unforeseen, much less in any unworthy, relation to the Old Testament. The Christians whom the writer superintended at the end of the first century were exposed to the arguments of the Jews among whom they lived. They did not, so far as we can learn from the Epistle, suffer any persecution at their hands, and the writer shows no trace of bitterness as he speaks of Jews and Judaism. He argues quietly, using the same methods that any Jew would himself employ.

But, besides this, the Christians of his time were liable to think that mere assent to the Faith was sufficient. It is the old story, familiar (as I believe) to the very early Christians of the time when the Epistle of St James was written, as well as to multitudes in all ages down to our own day. Believe, says this superficial interpretation of religion, believe with an intellectual conviction that Jesus of Nazareth is Divine, and that the Christian ordinances are the outcome of the will of God:—*that* is enough to secure final salvation.

Against this our writer cannot speak too strongly. Faith must shew itself in the practical life, or it is worth nothing at all. And, taking up the argument of Deut. xxx 15-20, already embroidered, one may assume, by Jewish teachers, he sets forth in his own style the solemn fact that there are Two Ways, and two ways only, the Way of Light—with the glory and potency of light—and the Way of the enemy of all light—whom the writer therefore calls the Blackamoor, with his power acting at the back of all darkness. And the writer insists that his children must put their very heart and soul into treading the former Way, that thus they may be 'glorified in the Kingdom of God' (xxi 1).

Church Organization was as nothing to Barnabas. Of Orthodoxy in anything beyond the very greatest subjects he took no notice. And even so Orthodoxy had for him no saving power unless with it there was the desire to be 'taught of God, seeking what the Lord requires from you' (xxi 6).

So, 'While the good vessel (of the body) is still with you, fail not any among you as regards these things, but seek them continually and fulfil

every commandment ; for these things are worthy. Wherefore I am the more zealous to write to you of my ability, to give you gladness. May you gain salvation,¹ children of love and peace. The Lord of all glory and of all grace be with your spirit' (xxi 8 sq.).

A. LUKYN WILLIAMS.

'DIDACHE AND DIATESSARON'

THE article of Mr Dix with this title in the JOURNAL for last July at once excited my interest, and as the writer championed the view of the *Didache* held by the late Dr Armitage Robinson and shared by myself, I was very ready to welcome him as an ally. I have to confess also that I was ignorant that there exists a writing in Greek attributed to Isaac of Nineveh which contains *Didache* matter, and though I could by no means adopt the reading of D. i 5a proposed on pp. 247-248, yet I was glad to be told of another witness to the genuineness of the supposed 'interpolation', D. i 3-ii 1. But points of agreement between Isaac of Nineveh and the *Apost. Const.* which were appealed to in the article aroused some misgiving, and accordingly I got down the volume of *Oriens Christianus* containing the work of Isaac and read some of the text side by side with *Apost. Const.*, bk. vii, which contains what the 'Constitutor' made out of the *Didache*. I can only wonder that Mr Dix did not see what is surely so evident, viz. that Isaac was using the *Apost. Const.* and, for all that appears, knew the *Didache* only in the greatly altered form which it has there. I say 'evident' because, although Isaac does not always give us exactly what the Constitutor wrote but shortens a good deal and contributes something of his own, yet he constantly reproduces the Constitutor's glosses, and sometimes even with omission of the words of the *Didache* which formed the basis. Take the following passage :

A.C. vii 5. 5. Μὴ γίνου ὀργίλος μηδὲ βάσκανος μηδὲ ζηλωτῆς μηδὲ μανικὸς μηδὲ θρασύς, μὴ πάθῃς τὰ τοῦ Καὶν καὶ τὰ τοῦ Σαοὺλ καὶ τὰ τοῦ Ἰωάβ.

I of N. Μὴ γίνου βάσκανος μηδὲ μανικὸς ἢ θρασύς, ἵνα μὴ πάθῃς τὰ τοῦ Καὶν καὶ τοῦ Σαοὺλ.

The words ὀργίλος and ζηλωτῆς in *A.C.* are from D. iii 2 ; but Isaac appears to know nothing of this, and in shortening *A.C.* has innocently left out just the words of the original document.

The agreement between *A.C.* and Isaac has therefore no significance for the text of the *Didache*, and a wrong major premiss robs Mr Dix's article of any suggestive value it might have had as to a possible connexion between the 'interpolated' passage of D. and the Diatessaron.

¹ This is Kirsopp Lake's rendering of σώζεσθε.