

J. CHRISTOPHER EDWARDS

The Gospel According to the Epistle of Barnabas

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
503*

Mohr Siebeck

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The Gospel According to the Epistle of Barnabas

Jesus Traditions in an Early Christian Polemic

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

After publishing a revised version of my doctoral thesis on the early reception history of the ransom saying in Mark 10:45/Matt 20:28, friends and colleagues would occasionally inquire about my next project. My consistent answer was that I had absolutely no clue – not the expected response to the standard academic icebreaker. All I knew was that I did not want to write anything about the Jesus of the synoptic gospels. I was raised in a protestant environment, which means that somewhere deep inside me there is a pressure to write about Paul, but the time required to wade into the minefield of Pauline studies has always proved to be an effective deterrent. My best option for a project seemed to be a focused study on something non-canonical. After exploring various ideas for a few semesters, I decided to concentrate my research on the reception of Jesus in the Epistle of Barnabas. Why? Barnabas has a lot of Jesus traditions, which have never been the focus of any work on the epistle, as far as I can tell. Also, the extant manuscripts of Barnabas are only in Greek and Latin. Even with these highly beneficial settings, this project, like all academic projects, was a complicated mixture of thrill and burden. Now that the project is complete, and I am satisfied with my contribution to Barnabas research, I hope to overcome my earlier inhibitions and turn my attention towards producing a volume on Paul.

There are many people who have supported me in various ways over the past few years. First and foremost is my spouse, Lucia, whose love and companionship are a great source of stability. I am very pleased that our children, Vincent and Michael, are turning into good-natured people and that they have acquired a love for learning and baseball. My parents, Darrell and Michelle Edwards, have been a constant support, as have my in-laws, Anthony and Lucia Luciano. I am fortunate to have Darrell Hayes as my next-door neighbor. Never move, Darrell! I am thankful for the continued friendship of Grant MacAskill and Charles Huff, and for rekindled friendships with Timothy Hein and Ryan McAuley. I'd like to thank Ben Wood for being an ideal officemate and a consistent voice of reason, both professionally and personally. I'm also thankful for the supportive friendships of Athena Devlin, Richard Grasso, Emily Horowitz, Chris Keith, Jennifer Lancaster, George Laskaris, Michael Luciano, Nickie Phillips, Eric Platt, Mark Rawnsley, Sara Rzeszutek, Scott Weiss, and

Jennifer Wingate. I'd like to thank the members of the St. Francis College Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies who model an integration of scholarship, teaching, and good humor, especially Alexandria Egler, Rachel Falkenstern, James Freeman, Jenny Labendz, Rex Mixon, and Clayton Shoppa. I'm very thankful for all my other colleagues at SFC who are too numerous to mention – I started to write your names down, but I was six lines in and only through last names beginning with K! Let me just say that I really like everyone I work with at the college.

Further thanks are due to Erica Lakata and Timothy Hein for making trips to the Burke Library and the University of Edinburgh Library to scan articles I needed. I am grateful to Jon Laansma, David Lincicum, and R. J. Matava for offering insightful comments on the Greek and Latin texts. Scott Weiss was an invaluable resource for correcting my German translations. The members of the Columbia New Testament Seminar provided vital criticisms of my ideas at an early stage in the project. More importantly, the Seminar has provided me with new friendships among other Early Christian specialists in the New York area. In this regard I am especially grateful to Emma Wasserman and Larry Welborn, who have served as excellent professional examples. Much praise is due to Juliet Barron, Gloria Gianoulis, and Jenny Labendz, who closely proof-read this manuscript before final submission. James Carleton Paget was kind enough to glance at the manuscript and provide critical comments that substantially improved the text. Jens Schröter also offered helpful comments on my engagement with German scholarship. I would like to thank the editors of WUNT II, especially Jörg Frey and Tobias Nicklas, for accepting the volume for publication. I am very grateful to see my work alongside other important works on Barnabas in this same series, those by James Carleton Paget, Reidar Hvalvik, and James Rhodes.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Rev. Charles Howell. Father Howell was the Rector of Christ Church New Brighton on the north shore of Staten Island from 2006 to 2015. He combined deep spirituality, great learning, wisdom, humility, and charity in a way that I can only describe as the image of Christ. He remains an example to all who knew him.

New York, 20 August 2019

J. Christopher Edwards

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Abbreviations

<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Part 2, <i>Principat</i> . Edited by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
<i>AThR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3 rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CURSOR	Cursor Mundi
<i>EC</i>	<i>Early Christianity</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GCP	Graecitas Christianorum primaeva
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAV	Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern

KWJS	Key Words in Jewish Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PRCY	Philosophy and Religion: A Comparative Yearbook
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RBén</i>	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCJ	Studies in Christianity and Judaism
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJS	Studia Judaeoslavica
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPB	Studia Post Biblica
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
<i>StEv</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
StPatr	Studia Patristica
StPB	Studia Post-biblica
<i>StStR</i>	<i>Studi storico-religiosi</i>
SUC	Schriften des Urchristentums
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
TENTS	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAC</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity</i>
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>

Editions and Translations

The Greek text comes from K. Wengst, *Didache (Apostellehre). Barnabasbrief. Zweiter Klemensbrief. Schrift an Diognet*, SUC 2 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984). The Latin text comes from J. M. Herr, *Die Versio Latina des Barnabasbriefes und ihr Verhältnis zur altlateinischen Bibel* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1908).

I follow Wengst's text-critical abbreviations: S = Codex Sinaiticus; H = Codex Hierosolymitanus; V = Codex Vaticanus graecus 859; L = Codex Corbeiensis (the Latin translation); P = Papyrus PSI 757. For a fuller discussion of these manuscripts, see P. Prigent and R. A. Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, SC 172 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 49–70.

Almost all the English translations follow M. W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007). On a few occasions, I prefer my own translation, or that of B. D. Ehrman, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: Epistle of Barnabas, Papias and Quadratus, Epistle to Diognetus, The Shepherd of Hermas*, LCL 25 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Biblical texts are quoted from the NRSV.

Introduction

It is not overly artificial or imposing to read Jesus as having significant importance in Barn. The name “Jesus” occurs twenty-one times in the epistle. The author also frequently refers to Jesus with various titles, such as “beloved,” “Son of God,” “Christ,” and “Lord” – a title he shares with God.¹ The Jesus traditions in Barn. are most concentrated in chapters five through nine and eleven through twelve. In these chapters and elsewhere, the main topic is Jesus’ prefiguration in the scriptures. The author reads various texts from the Septuagint as speaking directly about Jesus’ preexistence, incarnation, ministry, suffering, resurrection, and future coming. Given the author’s extensive use of Jesus traditions, the paucity of research on Jesus in Barn. is surprising but not inexplicable. Earlier research on Barn. focused primarily on standard introductory questions, such as date, provenance, and authorship,² and there was less

¹ The author of Barn. uses the title, Lord (κύριος), with reference to both God and Jesus. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see J. C. Edwards, “Identifying the Lord in the Epistle of Barnabas,” *StPatr* 93 (2017): 51–60. The only previous study to very briefly (in a couple footnotes) attempt to identify the referents for the uses of κύριος in Barn. is W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. John E. Steely (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 290–91. Cf. F. R. Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief*, KAV 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 337.

² Barn. must have been written sometime between 70 CE and the end of the second century since Barn. 16.3–5 references the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and Clement of Alexandria is the earliest witness to Barn. Attempts to offer a more precise date are based on Barn. 4.4–5 and 16.3–4. Barn. 4.4–5 cites Daniel’s prophecy concerning the humiliation of three kings, which could be a reference to the humiliation of three Roman emperors, although there is no agreement on which three. Barn. 16.3–4 recognizes an effort to rebuild the Jerusalem temple, but there are difficulties matching this text with a particular building project. While the ambiguous nature of the evidence for a precise date will likely never produce a scholarly consensus, there are clusters of support around the reigns of Vespasian, Nerva, and especially Hadrian, whose construction of the temple to Jupiter in his *Aelia Capitolina* is thought to match the temple construction mentioned in 16.3–4.

The majority of scholarship favors an Egyptian provenance – or more specifically, Alexandria – as the most plausible option among several others. The rationale for this preference is grounded in the early reception of Barn. within Egyptian Christianity. Clement of Alexandria appeals to the epistle on several occasions, as do later Alexandrian fathers, such as Origen and Didymus the Blind. Further, the text of Barn. is included in Codex Sinaiticus,