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# The Association of Mark and Barnabas with Egyptian Christianity

(Continued)

by John J. Gunther

*This is the second part of Dr Gunther's article on the origins of Christianity in Egypt (for the first part see THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY 54, 1982, page 219)*

## THE LETTER OF BARNABAS

The author of the Epistle was a man of the Diaspora who wrote in unpolished Greek; he usually quoted the Septuagint, though more loosely than did Philo.<sup>79</sup> A majority of scholars<sup>80</sup> have believed him to be an Alexandrian teacher. What is the evidence?

In advocating spiritual rather than physical circumcision, 'Barnabas' (9:6) writes: 'Every Syrian and Arab and all the priests of the idols . . . were circumcised. Do these also, then, share in their covenant? Why, even the Egyptians practice circumcision!' (9:6)<sup>81</sup> On the one hand, this reference reflects a generalised and inaccurate knowledge of the Syrians.<sup>82</sup> Titus, who accompanied Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem, was uncircumcised (Gal. 2:1-3). The dissension caused among Antiochene Christians by the Judaizers (Acts 15:1-2; cf. Gal. 2:12), which issued in Gentile freedom from the law of circumcision (Acts 15:23-30), presupposes that the practice was exceptional rather

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<sup>79</sup> That only about a quarter of the quotations conform closely to the LXX is attributable to the use of midrashic traditions, commentaries, paraphrases and homiletic material. See P. Prigent, *Les Testimonia dans le Christianisme primitif. L'Épître de Barnabé I-XVI et ses sources*, (Paris, 1961), 84-126; R. A. Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers. Volume 3. Barnabas and the Didache*, (Toronto, N. Y. & London, 1965), 49, writes: 'There is no reason to think that Pseudo-Barnabas knew a Semitic language.'

<sup>80</sup> C. A. Albin, *Judasbrevet. Traditionen Texten Tolkingen*, (Stockholm, 1962), 40-41, n.124; K. Wengst, *Tradition und Theologie des Barnabasbriefes*, (Berlin & N. Y., 1971), 113, n.56. Evidence for a Syrian origin is weak (L. W. Barnard, *Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background*, (Oxford, 1966), 46, n.2; 134; review of Wengst's book, *JEH* 23 (1972), 346-47; H. Stegemann, review of Prigent, *op. cit.*, *ZKG* 73 (1962), 150.

<sup>81</sup> This quotation of the Epistle is drawn from the translation of J. E. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers*, (N. Y., 1950).

<sup>82</sup> Philo (*Quaest. Gen.* iii, 47-48; *Spec. Leg.* 1, 2) names the Egyptians, Arabs, Ethiopians and inhabitants of the torrid zone. Josephus (*contra Apion* ii. 14) and Origen (*Hom. 14 ad Jer.* 4:14) noted the circumcision of Egyptian priests. Epiphanius (*Haer.* 30.33) listed the circumcised as the idolaters and priests of Egypt, Saracens, Ishmaelites, Samaritans, Jews, Idumeans and the Homeritae (of south-western Arabia). On the Arabs, Idumeans and Iturians see Josephus, *Antiq.* 1, 12.2; xiii, 9.1; 11.3 and Ps. Clementine *Recogn.* viii. 53. Ps. — Barnabas probably misread Herodotus (Geogr. ii. 104): Colchians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Phoenicians and Syrians in Palestine who learned it from the Egyptians.

than customary among local Hellenized Syrians (11:20). The Latin translator of Barnabas may have recognised the inaccuracy, for he substituted *Judaeus* for 'Syros'. On the other hand, the climactic argument that *alla kai* the Egyptians belong to the circumcision was deemed convincing to the Epistle's readers. The reference to circumcision by priests in general (9:6) also would be familiar to readers in Egypt, where the operation had special purificatory significance for its native priests.<sup>85</sup>

The terminology<sup>84</sup> and the typological or allegorical exegesis<sup>85</sup> of the epistle have been described as 'Alexandrian'. Whatever resemblance in exegetical method may exist between Barnabas<sup>86</sup> and Philo has some confirmatory force. More weight can be given to cases of dependence on thought found also in Philo. In arguing that Barnabas is not millenarian, Hermans<sup>87</sup> points out the agreement of Barn. 15:4, 8 with the ideas and vocabulary of Philo (*Gen. II*, 2-3); in both the eighth day follows the sixth millennium. Barnabas's chiliastic views also overlap with those of the Egyptian 2 Enoch (32:3; 33:2): seven days of a thousand years ending with a sabbath rest and followed by the new world-age on the eighth day. Further evidence of Philonisms in Barnabas has been assembled by P. Heinisch.<sup>88</sup> Pseudo-Barnabas' citation of apocrypha as authoritative accords with the broad canon of Clement of Alexandria and with the use of 1 Enoch and the Assumption of Moses by the Alexandrian Epistle of Jude (vv. 9, 14).<sup>89</sup> 'Barnabas' uses phrases like: 'the Scripture says' (16:5, 6 and probably 4:14)), 'another

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<sup>83</sup> See A. Erman, *Die Religion der Ägypter*, (Berlin & Leipzig, 1934), 400; S. Souneron, *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, (London, 1960), 37. P. Vielhauer (*Urchristlichen Literatur*, (Berlin & N. Y., 1975), 612) is the most recent to conclude Barnabas is Egyptian because the rite was general among Egyptian priests, but not for all pagan priests, Syrians and Arabs.

<sup>84</sup> J. Muilenburg, *The Literary Relations of the Epistle of Barnabas and the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, (Marburg, 1929), 67; W. Cunningham, *A Dissertation on the Epistle of S. Barnabas*, (London, 1877), xxv-vi; cf. xciv-vi; e.g. *kollasthai meta dogmata* (as hidden mysteries), and the commands *mathete, noeite, prosechete*.

<sup>85</sup> A. O'Hagan, 'Early Christian Exegesis Exemplified from the Epistle of Barnabas', *Australian Biblical Rev.* 11 (1963), 33-40; but see Wengst, *op. cit.*, 76-77, 80.

<sup>86</sup> K. Siegfried, *Philo von Alexandria als Ausleger des Alten Testaments*, (Jena, 1875), 330-32; Barnabas illustrates four of Philo's rules of allegory. P. Meinhold ('Geschichte und Exegese in Barnabasbriefe', *ZKG* 59 (1940), 255-303) considers it a pneumatic exegesis primarily; its practical application takes the form of typology and allegory (260-63). But see Wengst, *op. cit.*, 114, n. 59.

<sup>87</sup> 'Le Pseudo-Barnabé est-il millénariste?', *Ephem. Theol. Louv.* 35 (1959), 863.

<sup>88</sup> *Der Einfluss Philos auf die älteste Exegese*, (Münster im West., 1908), 36, 58-61, 75, 78, 100-02; Kraft, *op. cit.*, 48, 81-83, 94, 101, 106-07, 110, 120, 122-23, 130.

<sup>89</sup> Gunther, 'The Alexandrian Epistle of Jude', forthcoming article in *NTS*.

prophet says' (11:9; 12:1) and 'as Enoch says' (4:3). G. Allon<sup>90</sup> found that Barnabas used a written Greek midrash integrated into the Biblical text; this tradition circulated amongst Alexandrian Jews. The 'Lord's' command of spitting on the scapegoat and pricking him (Barn. 7:6-8) was a strange usage which the Gemara attributes to the Jews of Alexandria.<sup>91</sup>

The salutation of Barn. 1:1, though 'unique in ancient Christian epistolography',<sup>92</sup> agrees with those of second-century Egyptian letters preserved in Papyri.<sup>93</sup> A. Paap<sup>94</sup> has demonstrated that the practice of contracting *nomina sacra* (e.g. *Theos, Kurios, Israel, Iesus*) had arisen among copyists in Egypt not later than A.D. 100. 'To assume that the creation of "ths" has to be located among Alexandrian Jews who embraced Christianity seems not unreasonable', he writes. L. Traube,<sup>95</sup> who traced the origins of contractions to Septuagint translators protecting the sacred name, had called attention to the overlined suspension, the 'IH', for 'Iesus' in Barn. 9:8. This passage contains the first known abbreviation of his name. The Papyrus Egerton 2 Gospel contains the next known contraction of his name.

'Barnabas' manifests an interest in medicine. 'He who suffers in body is cured' by the foulness of the hyssop (8:6). The rachel or rachid shrub (7:8) is a diuretic (*ouriskontes outos*), if we follow the conjectural emendation of J. Rendel Harris.<sup>96</sup> He<sup>97</sup> thought that this shrub with thorns and sweet berries could be identified with the ghurkud, which is found everywhere in Egypt, in the Libyan desert and along the Red Sea.

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<sup>90</sup> 'The Halacha in "Barnabae Epistolae"', *Tarbiz* 11 (1939), 23-38; see S. Lowy, 'The Confutation of Judaism in the Epistle of Barnabas', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 11 (1960), 24. This interweaving is found in Jubilees. The therapeutae had their own writings (Philo, *de vita contempl.* 28-29).

<sup>91</sup> M. Rodkinson, *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud. Tract Yoma*, (New York, 1899), vi, 92; pointed out by Rendel Harris, 'The Structure of the Gospel of Peter', *Contemporary Review* 64 (Aug., 1893), 226.

<sup>92</sup> J. Kleist, *The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas . . .* (Ancient Christian Writers, no. 6; Westminster, Md. & London, 1948), 167.

<sup>93</sup> Muilenburg, *op. cit.*, 49; E. J. Goodspeed, 'The Salutation of Barnabas', *JBL* 34 (1915), 163-65.

<sup>94</sup> *Nomina Sacra in the Greek Papyri of the First Five Centuries A.D.*, (Leiden; E. J. Brill, 1959), 125-26.

<sup>95</sup> *Nomina Sacra*, (München, 1907), 4; cf. J. Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, (Princeton, N. J., 1946), 320 S. Brown, 'Concerning the Origin of the "Nomina Sacra"', *Studia Papyrologica* 9 (1970), 7ff.; G. Howard, 'The Tetragram and the New Testament', *JBL* 96 (1977), 74-77.

<sup>96</sup> 'On the Locality of Pseudo-Barnabas', *JBL* 9 (1890), 61-62.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-65

B. H. Streeter<sup>98</sup> held that the Epistle was 'written by a revered teacher of the church of Alexandria to the church in one of the small towns in Egypt, which he had recently visited (1:3-4; 9:9; 16:9), in order to provide them with some record of the essential features of his teaching'. He uses many imperatives and addresses them as 'children' (15:4), 'sons and daughters' (1:1). Yet he prefers his readers to think of him as one of them and as their servant, rather than as teacher (1:8; 4:9*cf.* 4:6; 17:1-2; 18:1; 21:2, 7). In ch. 10 are found illustrations which pertain to rural rather than to metropolitan conditions. L. W. Barnard,<sup>99</sup> though doubting the spread of the gospel 'outside of Alexandria much before A.D. 100', concedes that there were 'constant contacts between the Egyptian metropolis and Middle and Upper Egypt for administrative and commercial reasons, and most probably Christianity was first carried along these routes'. It did not take long for the church at Antioch to send out evangelists to surrounding areas (Acts 13:2ff.; *cf.* 18:24-19:1).

An Egyptian origin gains support from the canonical history of the Epistle. The fourth century Codex Sinaiticus, a witness of the Alexandrian text of the N.T., contains Barnabas in its entirety, including its ascription at the beginning and end. The mid-4th c. bishop of Thumis, Serapion, quoted 'Barnabas the apostle . . . in his epistle' (5:5).<sup>100</sup> Origen believed the epistle to be from the apostle Barnabas (*contra Celsum* i, 63.18; *de princip.* iii, 2.4; *comm. ad Rom.* i, 24), and quoted a passage (19:6) from it as scriptural (*de princip.* iii, 2.7). He even called it a 'catholic epistle' (*contra Celsum* i, 63).<sup>101</sup> Clement on seven occasions<sup>102</sup> quoted passages from the epistle as the writing of Barnabas the apostle. He never dissented from its presumably authoritative

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<sup>98</sup> *The Primitive Church*, (London, 1929), 248; *cf.* L. W. Barnard, 'The problem of the Epistle of Barnabas . . .', *Church Quarterly Review* 159 (1958), 212.

<sup>99</sup> 'The Date of the Epistle of Barnabas — A Document of Early Egyptian Christianity', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 44 (1958), 104, 101.

<sup>100</sup> G. Wobbermin, *Altchristliche liturgische Stücke aus der Kirche Aegyptens*, (Tu 17, 3b; Leipzig 1899), 21. However, the authorship of the letter, 'Concerning Father and Son', is in question. J. Wordsworth (*Bishop Serapion's Prayer Book*, (London, 1910), 20-23) considered it probably Egyptian. J. Quasten (*Patrology*, (Utrecht, Antwerp & Westminster, Md., 1960), iii, 84) thought it probably belongs to an older generation of opponents of Arianism.

<sup>101</sup> H. Windisch, *Die Apostolischen Väter. III. Der Barnabasbrief* (Handbuch zum N.T.: Tübingen, 1920), 301; Ruwet, 'Les Antilegomene dans les oeuvres d'Origène', *Biblica* 23 (1942), 35-36.

<sup>102</sup> *Strom.* ii, 6.31; ii, 7.35; ii, 15.67; ii, 18.84; ii, 20.116; v, 8.51-52; v, 10.63. These passages and six additional parallels not attributed to Barnabas are given by Muilenburg, *op. cit.*, 25, n. 2; *cf.* Kraft, *op. cit.*, 40, n. 13. The latter justifiably observes that 'Clement is still the best commentator on Barnabas . . . He breathes the

words. He even commented on it in his *Hypotyposes* (Eusebius, *h. e.* vi, 14.1). These facts show that the letter enjoyed virtual canonical status at Alexandria for two centuries.

There are quite a few resemblances in thought between the Epistle of Barnabas and the Epistle to the Hebrews which merit mention.<sup>103</sup> The sprinkling with the ashes of a heifer and the cleansing with scarlet wool prefigure the shedding of blood by Jesus (Barn. 8:1-2, 6; Heb. 9:13-14, 19; *cf.* v.21).<sup>104</sup> Salvation is through the sprinkling (*rhantismos*) of Jesus' blood (Barn. 5:1; 8:2-3; Heb. 12:24; *cf.* 13:12); i.e. he sanctifies us by the remission of sins (Barn. 5:1; *cf.* 15:7; Heb. 1:3; 2:11; 9:22; 10:18). Christ partook of human flesh and destroyed the power of death (Bar. 5:6; Heb. 2:14-15) by suffering voluntarily unto death (Barn. 5:5-6; 14:4-5; Heb. 2:9, 14-15; 5:7; 12:2; 13:12). Man is not yet ruler over all the creation (Barn. 6:18-19; Heb. 2:8-10), but like Jesus, we are heirs (Barn. 4:3; 6:19; 13:6; 14:4-5; Heb. 1:2; 6:17; 9:15), and our destiny is perfection under the new covenant (Barn. 6:19; Heb. 6:1; 10:1, 14; 12:23-24; *cf.* 2:10; 5:9; 9:9; 11:40). Jesus, as the founder of the church, is superior to the servant Moses (Barn. 14:4-5; Heb. 3:3-6). Those addressed are exhorted not to forsake the common assemblies (Barn. 4:10; Heb. 10:25). *Archè kai telos pisteos hemon* (Barn. 1:6) is akin to *tes pisteos archeos kai teleiotes* (Heb. 12:2). Finally, Psalm 22:2 is similarly used in Barn. 6:16 and Heb. 2:12.

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Because these resemblances are more in substance than in phraseology, and because they constitute a coherent form of gospel preaching, literary dependence is out of the question. We must look rather to a similar background and world of ideas of both teachers. To different addressees each presents his *apologia pro* Christianity as the fulfilment of God's promises.

The Epistle is universally dated between A.D. 70 and 140. Scholarly estimates have been rather evenly distributed through this period,<sup>105</sup>

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same atmosphere of gnosis, ethical parenthesis in the quest of salvation, Hellenistic Jewish interests and methods' (45-46). This Kraft believes to be the Alexandrian catechetical approach (46-48).

<sup>103</sup> Most of these are pointed out by V. Bartlett in *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* by the Oxford Society of Historical Theology, (Oxford, 1905), 6-11; G. Oger, *Les Pères Apostoliques. I-II.*, (Paris, 1907), lxxvii; Meinhold, *art. cit.*, ZKG 59 (1940), 282-85; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, (Paris, 1952), i, 169-70. On the parallels of Barnabas and later developments in the Gospel of John see Gunther, *art. cit.*, CBQ 41, 1979, 590-91.

<sup>104</sup> E. Selwyn, *First Christian Ideas*, (London, 1919), 50.

<sup>105</sup> Bibliographies on the dating exist in R. Kraft's 1961 Harvard Ph.D. thesis, 17-18 and in the 1949 Harvard Ph.D. thesis of C. Andry, *An Introduction to the Epistle of Barnabas*, 13-19. More accessible is Mulienburg, *op. cit.*, 2.

based chiefly upon two passages: the rebuilding of the Temple (16:3-4)<sup>106</sup> and the enumeration of the emperors represented by horns (4:4-5). A relationship exists with the *Didache*<sup>107</sup> and the Shepherd of Hermas,<sup>108</sup> but the question hinges upon a comparison of their 'two-way' teaching. The literary relations (if any) of the various Christian and Jewish examples of the two-way doctrine are still indeterminate.<sup>109</sup> The problem is complicated by differing views of the unity of *Barnabas*.<sup>110</sup> However, an earlier date for *Barnabas* is suggested by the fact that its two-way section (chh. 18-20) has far fewer specifically Christian elements than do the corresponding sections of Hermas (*Mand.* vi-viii) and the *Didache* (chh. 1-6).<sup>111</sup> *Barnabas*'s dependence on Synoptic Gospels is quite unlikely.<sup>112</sup> The Gospel was what was preached (5:9; 8:3) rather than written.

The Epistle abounds with internal evidence of early origin. Time had not yet sanctified the memory of the Twelve, for they were chosen 'from the worst type of sinners' (5:9). A critical attitude was possible in apostolic times (e.g. Mk. 6:52; 8:18; Gal. 2). Not only is the Epistle devoid of second-century Christian vocabulary and Christology, but it contains the substance of the Churches primitive preaching;<sup>113</sup> ch.5 gives a good summary. The Epistle is entirely devoid of reference to Gnostic Christian teaching, which abounded in Egypt from the late first century onward. If there was an error being attacked, it was Judaizing Christianity (3:6; 4:6-7; 9:4; 10:12; 13:1). The only divisions within the church warned against are between private, irreconcilable disputants (19:12). No false apostles and prophets appear, though the last days are

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<sup>106</sup> Gunther, *art. cit.*, *Jnl. for the Study of Judaism* 7 (1977), 143-51. The destruction of the Temple was polemically less and less useful to Christians against Jews as time passed. Its rebuilding in stone under Hadrian was not alluded to by Ps.-Barn.

<sup>107</sup> J. A. Robinson, *Barnabas, Hermas and the Didache*, (London, 1920), 43-119; Muilenburg, *op. cit.*, 140-68.

<sup>108</sup> Robinson, *op. cit.*, 1-42, 69-72; Muilenburg, *op. cit.*, 23-24.

<sup>109</sup> See Kraft, *op. cit.*, 4-16, 135-36; Barnard, *op. cit.*, 102-03.

<sup>110</sup> Muilenburg (*op. cit.*, 109-39) argues for its literary integrity; Prigent (*Les Testimonia* . . . , 11-16) for a later editor; Windisch (*op. cit.*, 409-11) for a revision or second edition; E. Robillard ('L'Épître de Barnabé: trois époques, trois théologies, trois rédacteurs', *RB* 78 (1971), 184ff.) for three editions, Audet (*art. cit.*, *RB* 70 (1963), 387-88) writes: 'notre "didascalie" a bien de fois débite son morceau, en tout ou en partie, et sous diverses formes, avant de la confier a l'écriture et de le livrer a "l'édition"'.  

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<sup>111</sup> Kraft, *op. cit.*, 7-8; Robillard, *art. cit.*, *RB* 78 (1971), 206-07; M. J. Suggs, 'The Christian Two Ways Tradition', in *Studies in N.T. and Early Christian Literature* (A. Wikgren Festschr., ed. D. E. Aune, Leiden: 1972), 70-71.

<sup>112</sup> H. Koester, *op. cit.*, 127-58 ('Nichtbekanntschaft des Barn. mit unsern Evangelien').

<sup>113</sup> As reconstructed by C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London, 1936).

repeatedly said to be at hand (4:3, 9; 6:13; 7:2; 12:9; 16:5; 19:10; 21:3).<sup>114</sup> Eschatological hopes had neither faded nor caused disappointment. The writer and readers still thought in Jewish terms. Jewish sources are freely used.<sup>115</sup> Christianity had become separate, but the opposition was still to Judaism and its cultus rather than to Jews. The life of the church portrayed by Barnabas is rather primitive. All property is to be shared with fellow believers (19:8). They have pastoral and teaching responsibilities to each other (10:11; 16:10; 19:10; 21:4). The Eucharist is unmentioned. Not only is the author himself an itinerant charismatic (1:3-4; 9:9; 16:9), but he makes no reference to local ecclesiastical organisation (*cf.* 10:11; 16:10). His authority is personal rather than institutional. There are common meetings and discussions of the common good (4:10). No presiding church officer seems to exist.<sup>116</sup> Believers are already in the kingdom of the Lord (4:13; *cf.* 7:11; 8:5; 16:8). Apparently the Spirit was still being received by each believer (1:3; *cf.* 4:11; 16:6-10); the Spirit had not yet been institutionalized in ecclesiastical officers, nor had the Spirit been personalized in a Trinitarian direction (*cf.* Mt. 28:19).

Fully in accord with a date of *ca.* 75 is the intriguing reference in Barn. 4:4-5 to the prophecies of Daniel 7:7 and 7:24. While it is generally recognised that the ten horns represent ten Roman emperors, there is some uncertainty as to whom to count. Starting with Julius Caesar<sup>117</sup> and counting continuously, one finds Vespasian to be the tenth. Not all were deified by the Senate, however, and it is possible to start with Augustus and to eliminate or combine such minor figures as Galba, Otho and Vitellius. Yet one should follow the natural sequence unless there is a compelling reason to the contrary.<sup>118</sup> The three kings to be humbled and subdued 'at one blow' are obviously united in some way historically. They might be Galba, Otho and Vitellius, who lost out to Bepasian (the little horn) in the struggle for the imperial crown follow-

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<sup>114</sup> Kraft, *op. cit.*, 27-29

<sup>115</sup> In his Harvard thesis Kraft concludes that there was relatively little Christian influence on the Epistle's sources (278-81).

<sup>116</sup> This arrangement is incompatible with the episcopal supremacy known to Ignatius of Antioch.

<sup>117</sup> M. D'Herbigny ('La date de l'Épître de Barnabé', *Recherches de science religieuse* 1 (1910), 436-43, 540-50) demonstrated that for the Jews of Palestine and of Alexandria, the fourth empire began with the imperial rule of Julius Caesar.

<sup>118</sup> In his dating of the Epistle during Hadrian's reign, A. Harnack (*op. cit.*, 410-28) felt frustrated in the placement of Hadrian. He was neither a minor king nor did he overcome his three predecessors with one blow. He was the 14th emperor.



ing Nero's death.<sup>119</sup> This interpretation is not fully satisfying because Vespasian personally did not dispose of all three claimants simultaneously. Actually the prophecy occurs in an eschatological context; the humiliation of the three horns by the 'small horn, a side growth', is a fast-approaching event. 'The final stumbling-block is at hand' (4:3). J. B. Lightfoot<sup>120</sup> argued that the small horn is the Antichrist, Nero, brought back to life; he is to slay together the three rulers now jointly reigning, namely, the three Flavii. The expectation of Nero's return was at its height during the reign of Vespasian and his sons, Titus and Domitian, whom he had associated with himself as rulers.<sup>121</sup> In the words of the Bishop, 'the three were thus associated together in the public mind, as no three persons had been associated before in the history of the Empire . . . No other epoch in the history of the Caesars presents this coincidence of the three elements in the image — the ten kings, the three kings, and the Antichrist — so appropriately.'<sup>122</sup>

W. Ramsay<sup>123</sup> developed this thesis. 'In the time of Vespasian, Otho and Vitellius were not regarded as Emperors, for Vespasian claimed to succeed Galba directly, and to avenge his death on the two usurpers. Vespasian therefore was the eighth, Titus the ninth, and Domitian the tenth king; and the three kings reigning together between 70 and 79 were according to widespread belief destined all to perish together at the hands of the expected Nero'. E. Selwyn<sup>124</sup> called attention to the small stature of Vespasian as conclusive, i.e. in fitting the prophecy of a small horn, an offshoot (*mikron keras; mikros basileus; paraphua dion*):

Vespasian 'was square-built, with a compact and sturdy frame', says Suetonius; and we have the confirmation of his stature. He also says he was an upstart, with a lack of dignity, until it grew to him. He was a well-known figure in Alexandria, where he performed solitary devotion in the temple of Serapis and wrought miracles on the blind and lame. And we remember that the 'strong belief that overspread the East, that persons from Judea would master the world, was proved to apply to this emperor' (Tacitus).

119 So K. Weizsäcker, *Zur Kritik des Barnabasbriefes aus dem Codex Sinaiticus* (Tübingen, 1863), 20; Cunningham, *op. cit.*, xxxv; d'Herbigny, *art. cit.*, *Recherches de science religieuse* 1 (1910), 550-56, 565; J. D. Burger, 'L'Enigme de Barnabas', *Museum Helveticum* 3 (1946), 180-93.

120 *The Apostolic Fathers. I-II, S. Clement of Rome* (London, 1890, 2nd ed.), 509-12; Bo Reicke, 'Die jüdische Apokalyptik und die Johanneische Tiervision', *Recherches de science religieuse* 60 (1972), 184ff.

121 'When Vespasian assumed the supreme dignity, the power of the empire was sustained by Titus among the legions, while it was represented by Domitian in the Capitol' (Tacitus, *Hist.* ii, 8.4; iv, 2.3).

122 Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, 509

123 *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170* (London, 1903), 307-09.

124 *Op. cit.*, 43-44.

M. d'Herbigny<sup>125</sup> offered a similar explanation of 'mikros': Vespasian was the first emperor who was small in respect to his obscure family and plebeian birth. The signs of the times were so clear that pseudo-Barnabas did not have to revise or 'update' a disappointingly unfulfilled prophecy through editing, and he could look forward to the imminent eschaton and expected his readers to understand (4:3, 6) in spite of their limited powers of comprehension (17:2). The itinerant writer, while visiting his 'brethren' and 'children' (1:1; 15:4), would have given them some detailed explanation of the royal figures' identity.<sup>126</sup> In writing it was sufficient to point out that the main facts were obvious and needed no elaboration for his readers. He simply hinted at the familiar and indubitable.<sup>127</sup> Our author, as a prophet (6:10; 9:8-9; 15:3-7; 16:9; 17:2), claimed understanding of history. But he did not write all of his knowledge. He avoided the political risks of being explicit concerning the relation of contemporary emperors to the eschaton. More than one interpretation pointed to the pending apocalyptic fulfillment; 'the prophet' and 'Daniel' had spoken intelligibly enough of the current royal situation. The loosely quoted prophecy of Dan. 7:7-8, 19-24 in its simplest form (contrast Rev. 13: Hippolytus, *Antichrist* 25) and its apocryphal tradition were still intelligible to readers.

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In conclusion, the attribution to Barnabas of an Egyptian writing dateable before A.D. 80 strengthens the case for his and Mark's labours in the writer's churches *ca.* 50-57. The Epistle's anti-Judaic framework was most meaningful in the land with the greatest number of Hebrews deemed to be in need of evangelism.

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<sup>125</sup> *Art. cit.*, *Recherches de science religieuse* 1 (1910), 554, 565.

<sup>126</sup> Modern teachers of the approaching eschaton point to and interpret prophecy in terms of modern history. The *peshet* commentaries of Qumran interpreted contemporary history as fulfillment of scriptural prophecy.

<sup>127</sup> Lowy, *art. cit.*, *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 11 (1960), 28.