

**BARNABAS, HERMAS AND THE
DIDACHE: BEING THE
DONNELLAN LECTURES
DELIVERED BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN IN 1920**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760576738

Barnabas, Hermas and the Didache: being the Donnellan lectures delivered before the University of Dublin in 1920 by J. Armitage Robinson

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J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON

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BY
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DEAN OF WELLS



LONDON:
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1920

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS LIMITED
LONDON AND BECCLES

45203564✓

PREFACE

THE ultimate aim of these Lectures is to reach a point of view from which the literary character and the historical value of the Didache, or Teaching of the Apostles, can be justly estimated. The study of the Epistle attributed to the Apostle Barnabas goes to show that its closing section, which treats of the "Two Ways," is wholly in character with the rest of the Epistle and is almost certainly the original composition of this rabbinically-minded author. The study of the Shepherd will suggest that Hermas knew the "Two Ways" in the form in which it is found in the Epistle of Barnabas. The Didache in its opening section offers us the "Two Ways" of the Epistle of Barnabas with an improved arrangement of its precepts and with modifications introduced from the Shepherd of Hermas as well as from the Sermon on the Mount. Moreover the closing section of the Didache has borrowed from the earlier part of the Epistle of Barnabas.

The use of Barnabas and Hermas was recognised at once by Bryennius the first editor of the Didache in 1883, and by Dr Harnack in his notable edition of 1884; and it was allowed that for this reason the Didache could not be placed earlier than c. 140-160. But the question of date was obscured by a theory propounded two years later by Dr C. Taylor, who was impressed by the rabbinic cast of much of the

Didache and accordingly suggested that the earlier part of it, at any rate, was a Jewish manual of instructions for proselytes which had been embodied with various modifications in the Epistle of Barnabas and in the Didache. The references to the Sermon on the Mount and to the Shepherd of Hermas were disposed of by the assumption that the chapter of the Didache in which they occurred was a Christian interpolation, introduced to make this Jewish manual more suitable for candidates for Holy Baptism. As the interpolation might have been made, not by the author of the Didache himself, but by a later reviser of it, neither Barnabas nor Hermas need any longer be taken into account in fixing the date of the book in its uninterpolated form. Some critics were therefore courageous enough to assign it to the first century, though Dr Harnack, who accepted the new theory, still refused to go back behind the time of Hadrian.

If what is urged in these Lectures is accepted, the theory of a Jewish manual disappears altogether, and the ground is cleared for a new consideration of the whole problem. Eight years ago I suggested that the aim of the writer of the Didache was to be gathered from the title which he himself prefixed to his work: "The Teaching of the Lord, through the Twelve Apostles, to the Gentiles." In other words, he was endeavouring to present a picture of the way in which the Gentile Churches were ordered by their Apostolic founders, and he sought to confine himself, so far as he could, to such precepts and regulations as could be authenticated, directly or indirectly, by writings of the Apostolic age. In the essay which dealt with this matter, and which I have reprinted here as Appendix A, only the second portion of the Didache came under investigation; for when it was written I still held the almost universally accepted

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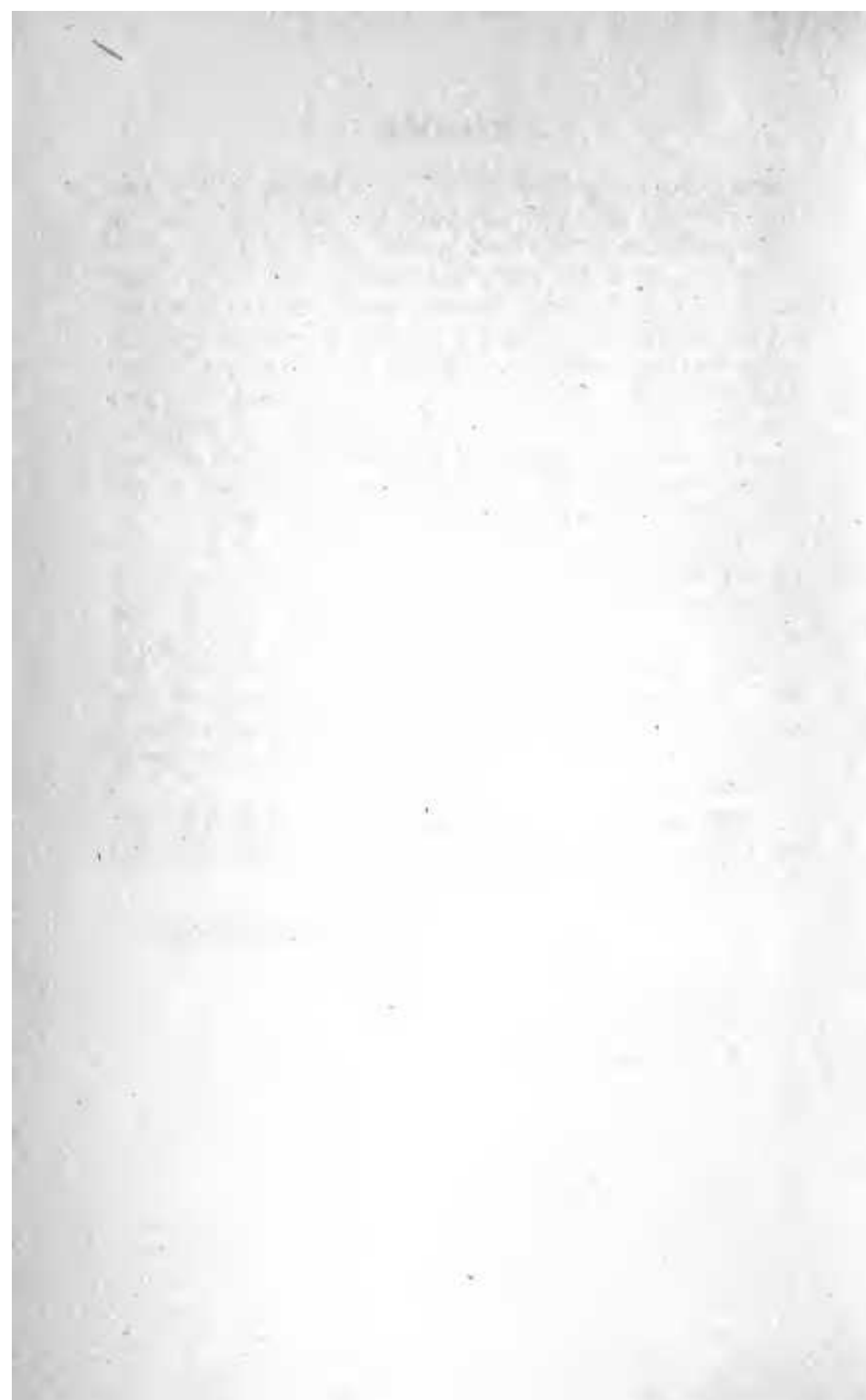
theory of an original Jewish "Two Ways," and therefore did not attempt to apply the same principle of interpretation to the first portion of the book. This I have now done, with the result that I am more than ever convinced that the writer of the Didache was trying to represent the moral instruction and the ecclesiastical ordinances which the Apostles might reasonably be supposed to have sanctioned for their Gentile converts; and that accordingly we may not assume that the whole of the picture which he has drawn corresponded to the actual conditions of his own time, whatever that time may have been.

It is not easy to present in a course of Lectures an argument which needs for its full appreciation a constant reference to the original Greek. But I hope that what is here said will suffice to clear away some serious misconceptions and to open a new path for the criticism and interpretation of a document the discovery of which has had an extraordinary influence upon the modern presentation of early Christian institutions.

For the Table of Parallels in Appendix B I have to thank my friend Dom Connolly, who has also helped me by valuable suggestions.

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON.

THE DEANERY,
WELLS, SOMERSET.
June, 1920.



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