

ON THE LOCALITY OF PSEUDO-BARNABAS.*

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STUDENTS of the Apostolic Fathers can hardly fail to perceive that the time is approaching when newer and more searching criticisms must be applied to many of the early Christian writings, in order that judgments may be pronounced which will stand the test of time better than the contradictory and fluctuating hypotheses which have so often been current in the matter of questions concerning place and time of production, and relative position in the historical development of Christianity. Not only does the accession of new material make this possible, but there is also an increment of method which would compare favorably, if it could be gauged, with the additions that are constantly being made to our sources of knowledge; and, indeed, the two act upon one another reciprocally, the matter of science inviting method, and the method multiplying the matter by those links which it is constantly forging between subjects that at first sight seem dissimilar. We see this, for instance, in the case of the "Teaching of the Apostles," of itself a sufficiently meagre addition to our apostolic documents, a mere intra-mercurial planet of the system, chiefly valuable, at first sight, because its place had been in some measure predicted even by early observers; and yet, in its influence upon our interpretation of Barnabas, of Justin, and other early writers, and in the change which it is producing upon the general conception of primitive Christianity, we may safely say that its discovery marks a critical epoch. Not the least amusing part of the study is the way in which it arranges those who had speculated about it into the classes of true and false prophets. For example, how successful, for work done in the dark, was Ussher's time-location of the *Didaché*; and, on the other hand, how unfortunate was Grabe's attempt to show that no such book as a *Didascalía Barnabae* could have existed, because, although we find early mention¹ of Teachings of Ignatius and Polycarp, we find no reason to believe in a Teaching of Barnabas; by which unhappy speculation he threw out of the list of early writers the very one that shows most external claim to be

* Read in December 1889.

¹ This is, of course, a misapprehension.

the owner of a Teaching, since he incorporates the Doctrine of the Two Ways almost in full in his closing pages. And even modern writers show the most curious illustrations of the way in which the ground may be cut from under one's feet; as, for instance, when Hilgenfeld² uses the passage οὐδὲν γὰρ ὠφελήσει ὑμᾶς ὁ πᾶς χρόνος τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν καὶ τῆς πίστεως to prove the date of the Epistle of Barnabas to be as early as the reign of Nero, and makes a similar conclusion follow from οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον σου ἐν φθορᾷ κτέ., both of the passages being simply quotations from the Teaching. I do not mention such cases, which might be multiplied largely, for the purpose of discrediting the conclusions of great scholars; but to show how constantly the patristic student, like all other scientific men, works in the dark without being aware of it, and how time fools us all. It may, then, be regarded as certain that we must before long have a new edition of the Epistle of Barnabas, which shall take account of the Teaching and allied documents, and clear up some of the confusion of thought over this at once eccentric and typical early Christian writer. Such an event being probable at no distant date, it has occurred to me that it might be worth while to stretch the first thread of a new critical spider's web, or to strengthen a web that has already been spun, by giving some reasons for the current belief that the writer of the Epistle called after the name of Barnabas was an inhabitant of Egypt; while at the same time throwing light on some obscure passages of this very interesting letter.

1. *On the Shrub Rachid.*

In the seventh chapter of the Epistle there is an account of the ceremonies of the day of atonement, and especially of the dismissal of the scape-goat into the wilderness with the scarlet wool twisted round his horns; upon which Barnabas remarks: καὶ ὅταν γένηται οὕτως, ἄγει ὁ βαστάζων τὸν τράγον εἰς τὴν ἔρημον, καὶ ἀφαιρεῖ τὸ ἔριον καὶ ἐπιτίθησιν αὐτὸ ἐπὶ φρύγανον τὸ λεγόμενον ραχία, οὐ καὶ τοὺς βλαστοὺς εἰώθαμεν τρώγειν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ εὐρίσκοντες· οὕτω μόνης τῆς ράχου οἱ καρποὶ γλυκεῖς εἰσίν. So, at least, the text is given by Harnack, the reading ραχία [PAXIA] being assumed as the origin of ραχηλ [PAXIA] of the Sinaiticus, and ραχιλ of other authorities; and it is very likely, though we need not discuss this at present, that this or a similar reading should be restored in place of the second word ράχος. Hilgenfeld,

² *Prolegg. in Barnab.* xxxvi.

however, following the Constantinople Codex, reads *ράχη, ραχῆς*, and, on the faith of the same text, changes *βλαστούς* to *καρπούς* and *τρώγειν* into *ἐσθίειν*.³ Both of these readings seem to me to be nothing but commonplace corrections,⁴ and I believe it will be found that the Constantinople Codex in Barnabas has a very faulty text, which will not justify the devotion which Hilgenfeld has lavished upon it. However, the first point is the identification of the shrub in question. I think it may be taken for granted that we have here not a generic Greek name, but a proper name. Barnabas certainly is not speaking of the "shrub which is called *brier*," or, if he were, he spells his brier with a capital *B* (*τὸ λεγόμενον ραχία*). We have, then, to identify the shrub by means of its name, and not merely to treat it as if it were a common thorn-bush. And this name should be written, if the text of the Sinaiticus has transmitted it with any degree of accuracy, either as *PAXIA*, *PAXIA*, or *PAXIA*, or some form not very different from these.

But we can identify not merely by the name, which is obscure enough, but by the properties. And here we may add something to the common interpretation of the text by means of a conjectural emendation. Every one will notice a certain hardness in the words *εὐρίσκοιτες οὕτως*. If, with Hilgenfeld, we join *οὕτως* to the preceding, what does Barnabas mean by "finding [them] thus"? If, with other editors, we carry *οὕτω* over to the beginning of the next sentence, it is almost as much out of place. It would have been better boldly to change the *οὕτως* into *αἰτούς*. But this is not necessary; for it is probable that even a change of a single letter will suffice; let us read, then, *οὐρίσκοιτες οὕτως*, and remark that the point which Barnabas is making is simply that the plant in question has diuretic properties. Barnabas is a bit of a doctor, as we may see elsewhere in the Epistle, and being also somewhat colloquial in his manner, does not think that he deviates unduly from the argument if he emphasizes the medicinal property of the shrub in question.

Thus our criteria of identification are, (1) the name; (2) the spiny nature of the shrub (*τὶ δὲ ὅτι τὸ ἔριον εἰς τὸ μέσον τῶν ἀκανθῶν*); (3) the shoots are in some sense edible (*εἰώθαμεν τρώγειν*); (4) and operate as a diuretic; and (5) only the berries are sweet.

³ Hilgenfeld, 1887. *τρώγειν*.

⁴ Funk, who retains the text *βλαστούς*, adds a note: "*Germina in sensu ampliori = fructus*."

Now, with regard to these points, we may say that the first ought to enable us, by the aid of the philological apparatus (and probably this means the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic lexicons), to find some plant bearing in the East a name not very different from that given by Barnabas; while the other points should furnish sufficient data to the botanist to enable us, again, to speak with some measure of confidence as to the shrub which had found its way into Dr. Barnabas's pharmacopoeia. I must confess to an almost total ignorance of botany, and to a very scanty knowledge of Arabic; but the problem is an interesting one, and I have tried to approach it on both these points; and I will indicate what seem to be the possible solutions of the enigma.

SOLUTION A. When I was recently in the Sinaitic Peninsula, one evening, as we were approaching the Wady Ghurundel, the supposed site of the Elim of the Exodus, I observed several of our camel drivers and camels making for a group of stunted, somewhat spiny shrubs, with leaves of olive green, of which they commenced to eat rather greedily, as it seemed to me. They brought me also a handful of the leaves to chew; and a little further on my camel driver brought me the fruit of the same shrub—a sweetish berry, with a somewhat acid flavor like a currant. The name of the shrub was pronounced differently by different members of the party; but it did not vary much from what I have seen it written by other travellers, who spell it *ghurkund*, where the *gh* appears to stand for the Arabic *ghain*, and the *k* for the Arabic *qaf*.⁶

Turning, now, to the five marks of identification which we have proposed above, the name is somewhat too far removed from the Greek word *παχιδ*; for we have nothing to represent the strong guttural, and the Greek *χ* is hardly an adequate equivalent of the Arabic *qaf*. Moreover, we must not forget that nothing is more dangerous than the identification of an Arabic plant or tree by its name; for the same name will cover many different plants not necessarily generically related, and a journey of a few hours will sometimes take one from a place where the name means one thing to a place where it is applied quite differently. As a specimen of the looseness which prevails on this head, I may state that I asked an Arab at Baalbek the name of the white poplar-tree. He

⁶ غرقد

said it was *safsâf*, which commonly is supposed to mean a willow. This is an extreme case of a general looseness and inconstancy of speech amongst the Arabs in the naming of the objects of nature.

From the other marks of identification we get more encouragement. In fact, I have verified them all, including the medical one — this last, however, with some uncertainty; for the Arabs were unaware of the property, and the experiment needs to be repeated with a wider range of subject. Assuming, then, that this is the plant referred to by Barnabas, we have now to give its botanical name and to examine its local distribution.

The shrub is described in a paper entitled "Notes on the Flora of the Desert of Sinai," read before the Linnaean Society, on April 6, 1865, by Mr. R. M. Redhead, who found it at the same place as I have noted above. His language is as follows: "Here [at Ain-el Hawâra] were growing a few dwarf palms and thick tufts of a prickly shrub, bearing thinly scattered, glaucous, fleshy leaves, — *Nitraria tridentata*, the *ghurkud* of the Arabs. Its greenish spikes of inconspicuous flowers were now appearing here; but on the following day, in the Wady Ghurundel, I found the small oval, scarlet berry, with sub-acid flavor, fully ripe; the leaves in taste resemble our sea-coast *Striptex*. It has been alleged that the *ghurkud* was the plant employed by Moses to sweeten the water of Marah. The change, however, was certainly miraculous; at present, the water has the saline taste of a weak solution of Epsom salts."

In another paper, read before the same society, on April 6, 1865, by Mr. B. T. Lowne, "On the Vegetation of the Western and Southern Shores of the Dead Sea," we find that the writer notes, under the desert flora of Zuweirwât and Mahawat Wadies, as follows: *Zygophyllaceae*, *Nitraria tridentata* (Desf.); and further on (p. 207) he notes that this species is found in Africa, and not in Europe.

In Dr. Post's "Narrative of a Scientific Expedition in the Trans-Jordanic Region in the Spring of 1886," we find (p. 277), *Nitraria tridentata* (Desf.). El-Ghor.

In Boissier, "Flor. Oriental." i. 919, we have the following summary of its properties and locations: "N. tridentata spinosa foliis integris vel retusis 3-5 crenato-dentatis ramulorum novellorum alternis ceteris fasciculatis stipulis persistentibus floribus ad ramulorum apicem longe pedicellatis dichotome et irregulariter corymboso-paniculatis petalis hispidulis, pyrena a basi trigona, faciebus ad basim foveolis et superius

sulcis exsculptis. Hab. in desertis salsis (Del. Auch. exs. 2645. Bové. Boiss.), Arabia Petraea in Ouadi Ghurundel (Boiss.), Palaestina ad lacum asphalticum (Boiss). Fl. Mart. Apr., sarcocarpium pulposum tantum fructu maturo manifestum. Ar. geogr. Africa borealis interior, Senegalia.

In Ascherson and Schweinfurth's "Illustration de la Flore d'Égypte," we find it given as follows (p. 57): *Zygophyllaceae*; (262) *Nitraria retusa* (Forsk.) Aschs. Syn. *Nitraria tridentata* (Desf. Boiss. i. 919). Arab. *gharqad ghardaq*: les fruits *anab ed-dîb*,⁶ *abad* (?) *sahanoûn* (Klunz). And the authors note that it is found everywhere in Egypt, in the Libyan desert, and along the Red Sea.

An examination of the foregoing authorities will show that there is room for at least a suspicion that the bush described by Barnabas is the *ghurkund*; and if this were so, we should probably be able to say that, since it is a desert plant, growing principally in the Egyptian deserts, the Epistle of Barnabas was written in some Egyptian city. And, indeed, this agrees with what has been deduced from other considerations; derived, for example, from his account of the ceremonies of the day of atonement. Barnabas is evidently a city man, from the way in which he describes the bush as in the country. But whether his city be Alexandria or some other Egyptian city we will leave an open question at present. We will now ask whether there are any other possible solutions that present themselves besides the foregoing. And this brings us to our

SOLUTION B. In a striking article by the late Emanuel Deutsch, on "Islam," I find the following story — one, indeed, which is often quoted, but always, as far as I have seen, without references: "He [Mohammed] tended the flocks — even as Moses, David, and all prophets had done, he used to say. 'Pick me out the blackest of those berries,' he cried once at Medina, when, prophet and king, he saw some people pass with berries of the wild shrub *Arak*. 'Pick me out the blackest, for they are sweet, even such was I wont to gather when I tended the flocks of Mecca at Ajyûd.'" ⁷

The italics are ours, and they furnish a parallelism to the language of Barnabas as to the name and quality of the shrub. It becomes interesting, then, to see whether Mohammed's *Arak* can be identified.

⁶ Wolf-grape.

⁷ [Deutsch, *Literary Remains*, p. 70. The authorities for this tradition may be found in Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, II. 12 f.; Sprenger, I. 148. G.F.M.]

Its name is certainly not very remote from the *ῥαχία* which we find in the text of Harnack, and the sweetness of the fruit is emphasized even more decidedly than in Barnabas. We must examine what other properties belong to the plant in question, and make a botanical description of it.

It seems to be the same plant which is mentioned by Burton, in "The Gold Mines of Midian" (p. 296); "Caper bushes (*Capparis spinosa*, the Arab's *Asaf* or *Lasaf*, with fleshy leaves in bright green tufts, hang from the rock-clefts; the *Arak*, another *Capparidea*, shows bunches of fruit like currants." It seems likely that the bush mentioned by Mohammed and Burton may have to be considered in our botanical inquiry. Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify further than what is given above; namely, that the plant is a *Capparidea*, and is distinct from the *Capparis spinosa*.⁸

The only thing that remains to be done is to turn to the Arabic lexicons; but, as has been stated, the evidence gathered from this source is extremely uncertain on account of the loose application of language to botany in the East. The following are some of the lexical notes for the word:

α. Vocabulaire Arabe-Français. Beyrout: Imp. Catholique. 1883.

Arāk,⁹ Espèce d'arbre à épines.

β. Dictionnaire Arabe-Français par A. de Biberstein Kazimirski. Paris. 1860.

Arāk. 1. Espèce d'arbre à épines dont se nourrissent les chameaux et dont on fait des cure-dents. 2. Baies de cet arbre. 3. Morceau de terrain.

γ. Lane, Arabic Lexicon.

Arāk — *Irk*. Certain trees of the kind termed *hamd*, well-known, bearing what resemble bunches of grapes, and of which sticks for cleaning the teeth are made; that is, of the branches and of its roots, which latter are more esteemed for this purpose. It is the best of the trees of which the branches are used for this purpose, and

⁸ [*Capparis Sodata*. Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes*, i. 18. 707. Barth, *Travels in Central Africa*, i. 295. Brown, in Denham and Clapperton, *Narrative*, etc., Appendix, p. 76 (Boston, 1826). In Southern Arabia, according to Forskål (*Flora arab.* p. 32), the name *arāk* is applied to the *Cissus arborea*, the *Salvadora persica* of modern botanists. Hooker, *General System of Botany*, p. 548. 1873. G.F.M.]

⁹ أراك

the best of those upon which beasts feed, with respect to the odor of the milk yielded by those beasts: or, one of the large thorny trees upon which camels feed; the milk of the camels that feed upon it is the best of milk, and it is not allowable to prohibit the public from feeding their beasts upon it: or, a kind of tall, smooth, or soft tree, abounding with leaves and branches, the wood of which is weak, and which has a fruit in bunches or racemes called *barir*, one bunch of which will fill the hand. — A piece of land in which are trees of the kind thus called.

Lane gives his authorities in references to various native lexicographers.

Substantially the same statements in the Arabic Lexicon of Freytag. These are all the authorities accessible to me. It is interesting to note that, although they do not supply us with an exact botanical identification (and Freytag, who usually gives the botanical names, is here silent), yet they supply many curious parallelisms to the descriptions in Barnabas. They describe the plants as spinous and as bearing bunches of berries, and they say that the branches are used for tooth-sticks. Perhaps we have here a case of the use of shoots of plants as masticatories which would agree well enough with the *τρώγειν τοὺς βλαστούς* of Barnabas.

Nothing is said as to the medical virtues of the plant; but if Burton is right in calling it one of the *Capparideae*, then we could deduce its properties from a consideration of the natural order to which it belongs.

Let us turn, for example, to Hooker's System of Botany (p. 234); "The herbaceous capsular *Capparideae* rival *Cruciferae* in their stimulating properties, which depend on an acrid, volatile principle. The species with fleshy fruit, which are mostly woody, possess this acidity in their roots, leaves, and herbaceous parts; their bark is bitter, and some have a pleasant fruit. . . . Among the *Capparideae* with fleshy fruit, *Capparis spinosa* must rank first. It is a shrub of the Mediterranean region, the bitter, acrid, and astringent bark of whose root has been esteemed from the most ancient times for its aperient and diuretic qualities. The flower buds, preserved in salt and vinegar, are known as capers, and much used as a condiment. *Other species of Capparis, from Greece, Barbary, and Egypt, are similarly used. . . . Capparis nurvala* of tropical Asia produces succulent and vinous berries; its acidulous leaves are diuretic."

There is no difficulty, then, in imagining that the Arabic Arak-shrub

might fulfil also the medical condition which we have reason to believe once stood in Barnabas's text. And since the only actual traces of the *arak* which we have found in literature are Arabian, we may say that this second identification which we have suggested is favorable to the theory of an Egyptian origin for Barnabas.

To sum up the arguments, the shrub mentioned by Barnabas may be either the *Nitraria tridentata* or an unrecognized member of the botanical family *Capparideae*, i.e. it is not the *Capparis siphosa*.

2. On the Hyssop Cure in Barnabas.

The previous discussion opens the way for an elucidation of another very obscure passage in the text of Barnabas viii., which runs as follows: "And why is the wool placed on the wood? Because the kingdom of Jesus is on the wood [= the tree, with reference to the well-known passage in the Psalms, 'God reigned from the tree'], and they that hope in him shall live forever. But why the wool and the hyssop in conjunction? Because in his kingdom there will be days evil and filthy wherein we shall be saved. Because, also, he who has a pain in his flesh is healed, διὰ τοῦ ῥύπου τοῦ ἰσώπου."

So the text stands in all the mss; and so it is given by all the editors except, I think, Hilgenfeld. The only attempt to explain it that seems capable of defence is, to take "the filth of the hyssop" to represent the ashes that are sprinkled therefrom on the worshipper, and then to interpret, as Dr. Charles Taylor does, by means of the "Teaching of the Apostles," in the last chapter of which the rule of salvation is given as "by the curse itself." I am well aware of the amount of light which this curious canon of soteriology throws on many places both of Scripture and of the early Fathers. It is one of the many keys which the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" has put into our hands. The objection, however, to the use of this canon in the present case is a fatal one — the language of Barnabas shows clearly that he is talking medicine, and not theology. The person with a pain in his flesh finds no necessary parallel amongst the sprinkled worshippers; and the use of the word *iārai* shows that his argument is as follows: "Hyssop is mentioned along with wool, because hyssop is a curative agent"; thus *iārai* answers to the *σωθησόμεθα*, the natural to the spiritual.

The current explanation breaks down. Let us see next how Hilgenfeld handles the passage. He begins by noticing that the text

has come under the influence of the word ῥυπαράι in the previous sentence, and, suspecting corruption, he modifies a single letter, and reads τοῦ τίπου τοῦ ὑσσώπου. A little explanation would probably make this into very good sense; and, at all events, I think Hilgenfeld must be right in suspecting a corruption. The difficulty, however still remains, that one does not see the force of the words ὁ ἀλγῶν σάρκα. Surely for a specific trouble we have a right to expect a specific remedy.

Dressel, apparently feeling this difficulty, but not wishing to meddle with the text (a very laudable sentiment if not carried too far), attempts to get a new meaning out of ῥύπου by deriving it from ῥύω (ῥύομαι) and ῥέω. According to this, we are to understand the sick person to be cured by the *juice* of the hyssop. This makes perfect sense; but the method of interpretation will not, I think, bear examination. But, with a very little change, we may get the whole thing clear by reading as follows: ὁ ἀλγῶν σάρκα διὰ τοῦ ὀπού τοῦ ὑσσώπου ἰᾶται.

Ὀπός is the proper word to describe vegetable exudation produced by incision, and appears as the root of our word *opium*, as well as, perhaps, in the word *sap*; it requires no violent change to produce the current text; and it is an explanation thoroughly in harmony with medical usage. To discuss this point at length would be tedious and there would be the additional difficulty of entering into the dispute as to whether the hyssop be really the caper plant, or something different. My own belief inclines towards the caper; and it may be mentioned here that Pliny (*h. n.* xx. 165), in speaking of the medical virtues of the caper, says that it is useful in cases of paralysis, ear-aches, lumbar pains, tooth-aches. The majority of his uses fall at once under the comprehensive term of Barnabas, ὁ ἀλγῶν σάρκα.¹⁰ But whether the hyssop identification of Royle be correct, or not, I suggest the emendation of the text, as one which requires but slight changes and produces good meaning.

3. *On the Inedible Hare.*

In Barnabas x. 6 there is a commentary on the injunction not to eat the flesh of the hare. The passage is very curious, not only as a specimen of Gnosis on the Pentateuch, but also on account of the way in which the use of the "Teaching of the Apostles" shows itself.

¹⁰ I asked an Arab, on my Sinai journey, what the *Capparis spinosa* was good for; and he said it was excellent when there was a worm inside you, — which is a very good equivalent for the ἀλγῶν σάρκα of Barnabas.

Barnab. x. 6. — Ἄλλὰ καὶ τὸν δασύποδα οὐ φάγγη. πρὸς τί; οὐ μὴ γένη, φησίν, παιδοφθόρος οὐδὲ ὁμοιωθήσῃ τοῖς τοιοῦτοις. ὅτι ὁ λαγῶς κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν πλεονεκτεῖ τὴν ἀφόδυσιν· ὅσα γὰρ ἔτη ζῆν, τσαυτὰς ἔχει τρύπας. 7. — Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὴν ἕταν φάγγη· οὐ μὴ, φησίν, γένη μοιχὸς οὐδὲ φθορεὺς οὐδὲ ὁμοιωθήσῃ τοῖς τοιοῦτοις κτέ.

The passage is not, however, one upon which a commentator would choose to dwell; and I quote it not to prove the use made of the "Teaching," but to point out that the very same interpretation is still current in the deserts of Arabia, and the question of hare's meat or no hare's meat is to this day one of the articles of dispute between the Sunnees and Shiya'ees. The following passage from Palgrave's "Travels in Central Arabia" will show what I mean (i. 360): "For the illegality of hare's meat they [the Shiya'ees] adduces a special reason, too stupid by far, and too coarse to be recorded here. The present controversy [between Sunnees and Shiya'ees] ran high, and nothing was wanting to bring it to a matter-of-fact issue except the essential article of a certain well-known receipt: 'First catch your hare.'"

I think there is no doubt that the story to which Palgrave alludes is precisely the same as we find in Barnabas. More than this it is not necessary to say.

The conclusion, however, bears upon the question which we started out to confirm, viz. the Egyptian origin of Barnabas. It is quite true that we may find the legend much more widely distributed than this.¹¹ Just in the same way, we are obliged to admit that the shrub *arak* may be found to have a larger botanical habitat. But I submit that there is something significant about the way in which these Barnabas passages find a ready explanation at the hands of a traveller in the desert, and that we have here a mark of locality much stronger than the fact that no early quotations from Barnabas can be found in the Western Fathers. And I am inclined to believe that it is upon such grounds as these that we ought to establish the identification of place.

¹¹ References are usually given to Aelian, Pliny, Varro, Clem. Alex., etc. Pliny, I believe, says that he took it from Archelaus, the scientific attaché of the expeditions of Alexander. This is perfectly compatible with an Eastern origin for the legend.