

The Gospel of Barnabas

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I had written two installments of my article '*Barnabas, His Gospel and Its Credibility*'¹, but could not complete it due to some other assignments. Although the article is still incomplete, it would be advisable for the readers to go through both of its installments once again. (Author)

'*Epistle to Hebrews*' had sometimes been attributed to Barnabas by some scholars, but, according to modern research, it was not written by Barnabas. Of course Barnabas was a scholarly person and he composed a 'Gospel', but the attribution of the '*Epistle to Hebrews*' to him is not authentic. Actually there exists another '*Epistle of Barnabas*'. It has been included in 'THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS, TRANSLATIONS OF *The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*', Ed. THE REV. ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON, WM. B. EERDMANS PBLG. CO., GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, Vol. I, pp. 133-149. Initially, there is a three page 'Introductory Note' to it. Necessary footnotes have also been afforded to it. Its attribution to Barnabas is also doubtful. However, it is a worth-reading treatise. As regards his Gospel, the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church asserts:

Gospel of Barnabas was declared a rejected book in the *Decretum Gelasianum* by Pope Gelasius [Pope of Rome 492-96]. According to E. Von Dobschutz, it is a private compilation which was composed in Italy (but not at Rome) in the early sixth century.²

1 The monthly Renaissance, Al-Mawrid, 51-K, Model Town Lahore, July & August, 1997, pp. 14-27; December, 1997, pp. 35-44.

2. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Ed. F. L. Cross
6 Renaissance June 2004

It is strange that a book which is claimed to be ‘composed in Italy in the early sixth century’ had been declared a ‘rejected book’ in the fifth century. So the observation of E. Von Dobschutz, if it has been truly attributed to him, is absurd and baseless and may be rejected outright. It is thus clear that the ‘*Gospel of Barnabas*’ had already been existing when Pope Gelasius declared it ‘a rejected book’ in the fifth century more than a hundred years earlier to the advent of Islam. As to its date of actually being written, there are reasons to believe that it had been written even before the ‘Gospel according to Matthew’ was written. I shall try to elaborate it just a few lines later.

As to the Gospel according to Matthew’s date of being written, the research of the ‘New Testament Introduction’ claims it to be ca. A.D. 85-90. It asserts:

- (1) *Matthew* (ca. A.D. 85-90). This gospel makes use of Mk as well as other traditions about Jesus and collections of Jesus’ sayings. It was composed in Greek as the reference to Daniel as ‘the prophet’ in 24:15 implies. (...). Many scholars think that the community that formed the basis of the Matthean church had come from Palestine and settled in Syria. Mt 4:24 has the only reference in the gospels of Jesus’ fame spreading ‘throughout all Syria’. The community may have been predominantly Christians of Jewish background, since non-Jews (Gentiles) are referred to as outsiders (5:47; 6:7,32; 10:5-6, 17-18; 18:17).³

The results of the research of the ‘Oxford Companion to the Bible’ are also of similar nature. It has afforded the rationale of its conclusion as well. It observes:

It is commonly held that Matthew was written about 85 or 90 CE by an unknown Christian who was at home in a church located in Antioch of Syria. A date toward the end of the first century seems probable because the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 CE, appears to be an event that was rapidly receding into the past (22.7).

and E. A. Livingstone, London, Oxford Univ. Press, II Ed, 1974, p. 385.

3. Rheme Perkins, *New Testament Introduction*, St. Paul Publications, Bandra, Bombay, 1992, p. 15.

Although the apostle Matthew may have been active in founding the church in which the gospel story attributed to him arose (9.9; 10.3), it is unlikely that he was the story's author. On the contrary, the author exhibits a theological outlook, command of Greek, and rabbinic training that suggest that he was a Jewish Christian of the second rather than the first generation (cf. 13.52). Also, Antioch of Syria commends itself as the place where he may have been at home. Because the social conditions reflected in his story correspond with those that seem to have prevailed there: the city was Greek-speaking, urban, and prosperous, and it had a large population of both Jews and Gentiles.⁴

The Cambridge Companion to the Bible writes:

In the late first century, after the destruction of the temple, Matthew, Luke-Acts, and John were written. The mother church of Christianity, the Jerusalem community, was destroyed in the sack of Jerusalem, so power shifted definitively to the Gentile communities around the Mediterranean. Followers of Jesus continued to interpret the Bible to match their evolving understanding of Jesus and new communal circumstances.⁵

Even the identity of the author of the Gospel of Matthew is unknown and it is anonymous like the other gospels. The Cambridge Companion to the Bible notes:

This Gospel is anonymous, like the others. When the church in the second century sought to lend authority to its Gospels, it assigned each of them to an apostle or an associate of an apostle. About 130, Papias attributed this Gospel to Matthew [stress added] (who seems also to have been known as Levi; cf. Matt. 9:9 and Mark 2:13) and claimed that he wrote it in Hebrew. But its author used the Greek Gospel of Mark as a source. [It means that

4. The Oxford Companion to the Bible, Ed Bruce M. Metzger, Michael D. Coogan, NY, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 502 f.

5. Howard Clark Kee, Eric M. Meyers, John Rogerson, and Anthony Saldarini, The Cambridge Companion to the Bible, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 410.

‘Matthew’ was written after ‘Mark’], and the many scriptural quotations are from Greek translation rather than directly from the Hebrew Bible. Although we cannot determine who the author was, careful analysis shows us what his concerns were and on what basis he modified and expanded the Gospel tradition. The issues that are central for him reflect the developments described above that were taking place in Judaism around the years 95-100.⁶

The Cambridge Companion to the Bible also notes at another place:

The most plausible explanation for the relationship among the synoptic gospels is that Mark is the original, with Matthew and Luke drawing on Mark and a second common source (Q) but developing the details of structure and content independently.⁷

As to the date of the gospel of Mark, the same authority observes:

(...), and the oldest of the gospels, Mark, dates from no earlier than the late sixties and was written probably about the time of the Jewish revolt of 66-70.⁸

The time when the Gospel of Mark was written is also uncertain. Its concern with the threatened coming of armies to seize Jerusalem and destroy its temple suggests that it dates from the years after the Jewish nationalists began their revolt against the Romans but before the temple was destroyed: that is, between 66 and 70 CE.⁹

The ‘New Testament Introduction’ places it between AD 68 and 70:

Mark (ca. A.D. 68-70). Our earliest gospel, Mk has been used by both Mt and Lk. Mk emphasizes the need for Christians to expect sufferings.¹⁰

6. The Cambridge Companion to the Bible, op.cit., pp. 502 f.

7. The Cambridge Companion to the Bible, op.cit., p. 447.

8. The Cambridge Companion to the Bible, op.cit., p. 447.

9. The Cambridge Companion to the Bible, op.cit., p. 456.

10. Rheme Perkins, *New Testament Introduction*, op.cit., p. 15.

Although some of the scholars purposefully claim that the Gospel according to Matthew had been written earlier, but it is by no means safe to assign it a date prior to A.D. 70, as can easily be appreciated from the evidence recorded above, which assigns it some date around AD 85-90.

Barnabas died in A.D. 61. He had separated from Paul in A.D. 49 after a 'sharp contention' with him on the question of the inclusion of his cousin, John Mark, in the Second Missionary Journey (AD 49-52)¹¹. He left for Cyprus for good. He might have immediately started composing his gospel and would have completed it within a year or two, i.e. AD 50 or 51 after which he started preaching it.

We see, when I Corinthians was written in c. AD 55¹² or AD 56¹³, Barnabas was still alive, as stated in the New BD:

When I Corinthians was written Barnabas was still alive, and, like Paul and unlike most of their colleagues, supporting himself without drawing on the churches (I Cor 9:6 [which reads: 'Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living.'])¹⁴.

As regards his year of death, it is most probably AD 61. G. Milligan has concluded in his article 'Barnabas' in Hastings DB:

(...), while Col 4.10 has been taken as proving that by this time (about A.D. 63) Barnabas must have been dead, else Mark would not have rejoined Paul (cf. 2 Ti: 4.!!, 1P:5.13).¹⁵

It means that Barnabas must have died shortly before the *Epistle to Colossians* was written. So Barnabas' year of death can easily

11. McKenzie's DB, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1984, pp. 648-9, etc., etc.

12. As asserted in the NIV Study Bible in its introduction to this 'I Corinthians' on page 1734, 'The letter was written c. 55 toward the close of Paul's 3-year residency in Ephesus (see 16:5-9; Ac 20:31).'

13. As stated by The Nelson Study Bible, p. 1911, 'he wrote it in the last year of his three-year stay in Ephesus, sometime in the spring of A.D. 56.'

14. New BD, op.cit., p. 125.

15. Hastings DB, Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, NY, 1904, Vol. I, p. 248.

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be ascertained, if the date of writing of this Epistle is confirmed. Here are some references to establish the date of this Epistle:

McKenzie's DB suggests AD 61-63 to be the date of writing of this 'Epistle to Colossians'.¹⁶ William Smith's DB asserts under the heading of '*First imprisonment of St. Paul at Rome, A.D. 61-63*':

To that imprisonment (...) belongs the noble group of letters to Philemon, to the Colossians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians.¹⁷

The New Bible Dictionary has also assigned the same date to this 'Epistle to Colossians', as can be concluded from the following:

Paul had a stormy sea-voyage and, after being wrecked, spent the winter on Malta (c. AD 61). He reached Rome in the spring and spent the next 2 years under house-arrest (...). Most probably Paul was released in AD 63 (...).¹⁸

The Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia reports:

Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome (ca. 60-64 CE, though scholars are divided as to the exact dates).¹⁹

The above evidence makes it clear that 'Epistle to Colossians' was written during the '*First imprisonment of St. Paul at Rome: A.D. 61-63*'. Thus we can almost exactly ascertain his year of death. It can be located somewhere between AD 55 and 63. Most probably Barnabas died in AD 61.²⁰ The New Age Encyclopaedia reports:

16. John L. McKenzie, Dictionary of the Bible, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1984, p. 648.

17. William Smith, A Dictionary of the Bible, Regency Reference Library, Michigan, 1984, p. 494.

18. The New Bible Dictionary, Ed. N. Hillyer, Inter-Versity Press, Leicester, 1980, p. 891.

19. Pictorial Biblical Encyclopedia, Ed. Gaalyahu Cornfeld, The Macmillan Co, NY, 1964, p. 571.

20. Chambers's Encyclopaedia, 1888, Vol. I, p. 745, as quoted by Mr. Bashir Maḥmūd Akhtar, in his M. Phil. Thesis (at A.I.O.U., Islamabad) on this subject, 1990, p. 34.

Barnabas is supposed to have been martyred at Salamis in Cyprus in 61 AD,²¹

Merit Students Encyclopedia asserts:

Barnabas, Saint, an Apostle of Christ. Born Joseph, 1st century A.D. died about 60 A.D. (...). St. Barnabas is ranked as an Apostle even though he was not one of the 12 Apostles.²²

Everyman's Encyclopaedia states:

Barnabas is supposed to have been martyred at Salamis in Cyprus in 61 AD, but many traditions take him to Milan, Rome, and Alexandria.²³

The New Catholic Encyclopedia has also expressed similar views:

Death apparently came to him after Paul wrote of him, as though still alive, in I Corinthian 9.6 [in AD 55 or 56], and before Paul wrote to the Colossians [between AD 60 and 63] that Mark was now his colaborer (Col 4.10).²⁴

It has thus been made clear that Barnabas died in ca. AD 61 whereas the 'Gospel according to Matthew' was written decades of years after it: ca AD 85-90; but not before AD 70. Even the 'Gospel according to Mark', which is considered to be the source of Matthew's Gospel, was written years after the death of Barnabas.

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica writes:

Barnabas' reputed tomb, was discovered in 488, is near the Monastery of St Barnabas, in the Cypriot city of

21. New Age Encyclopaedia, Ed D.A.Girling, Bay Books, Sydney, London, 7th Edn., 1983, Vol. II, p. 151.

22. Merit Students Encyclopedia, Ed. Bernard Johnston, Macmillan Education Co., NY, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 576.

23. Everyman's Encyclopaedia, Ed by D. A. Girling, 6th Edition in 12 Vols, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London, 1978, Vol. I, p. 733.

24. New Catholic Encyclopedia, The Catholic University of America, Washington, McGraw-Hill Book Co., NY, na, Vol. II, p. 102.

Salamis, whose Christian community was founded by Paul and Barnabas.²⁵

The 1907 edition of Britannica has recorded the name of the Byzantine Emperor, during whose reign the dead body of Barnabas was discovered, as Zeno (Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire from AD 474 to 491).²⁶ New Catholic Encyclopedia says:

(...); his body was later found with his own hand-written copy of Matthew's Gospel over his heart.²⁷

We have another report by '*Acta Sanctorum*' that the manuscript discovered from his tomb was the gospel of Barnabas written with his own hand.²⁸

It has been reported in the "Life of St. Barnabas" that the body of Barnabas was placed in a cave 1½ mile from Salamis. The manuscript of the 'Gospel according to Matthew', written with the author's own hand, was found on his bosom. The dead body was recovered intact during the reign of Emperor Zeno with the Gospel on its chest. The manuscript of the 'Gospel according to Matthew', written by the author in his own handwriting, was sent to Constantinople to be placed in the Emperor's Library. It was destroyed among other valuables during the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks.²⁹

A Turkish journal, 'İlime ve Sanat Dergisi', had published a write-up regarding the discovery of a ca. 19 centuries old Aramaic

25. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, 1985, (15th Ed), Vol. I, p. 903.

26. Britannica, 1907, Vol. 3, p. 326; as quoted by Mr. Bashīr Maḥmūd Akhtar, in his M. Phil. Thesis (at A.I.O.U., Islamabad) on this subject, 1990, p. 39.

27. New Catholic Encyclopedia, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 102.

28. Acta Sanctorum, Boland Junii, Tome II, pages 422-450, published in Antwerp in 1698; as quoted by Mr. Bashīr Maḥmūd Akhtar, in his M. Phil. Thesis (at A.I.O.U., Islamabad) on this subject, 1990, p. 39.

29. S.A.E., Life of St. Barnabas, A Sketch for Nurses, London, W. Knott, Holborn, n.a., p. 84: as quoted by Mr. Bashīr Maḥmūd Akhtar, in his M. Phil. Thesis (at A.I.O.U., Islamabad) on this subject, 1990, p. 35. This booklet has been preserved in the British Museum Library; and the writer of the Thesis, Mr. Bashīr Maḥmūd Akhtar, had himself seen it there.

manuscript of this Gospel. It was written by Dr. Hamzah Piktash and was published in its issue of March-April, 1986. According to it a voluminous book was found by some people in a cave near the Turkish town of Hakari in 1984. They tore a leaf from it to get some information about it. They contacted Dr. Piktash to identify the manuscript. It had been written in the Aramaic language in Syriac script. It was written on Papyrus. Its dating revealed that it was written ca. 19 centuries back. On perusal, it came to be the Gospel of Barnabas written in Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ. The discoverers left the photocopy of its only one leaf with Dr. Piktash. They disappeared; and were later arrested by the police while trying to smuggle it out. The manuscript was given in the custody of the government. Dr. Piktash states that the text with him was concordant with the English and Arabic translation of the Gospel of Barnabas to a great extent.³⁰

We have seen above that the ‘Gospel according to Matthew’ was written many years after the death of Barnabas. How can it be possible that he wrote a book (Gospel according to Matthew) with his own hands which had actually been written many a year after his death and how could it get buried with him in his grave? Actually the Gospel found from his grave lying over his heart was, and could only be, his own gospel, the Gospel of Barnabas, written with his own hand.

There is evidence which shows that the Gospel of Barnabas, which would have been written by AD 51, had become commonly known in Christian community of NW. According to McKenzie St. Paul wrote the Letter to the Galatians in AD 54.³¹ W. Smith says:

When he left Antioch, he “went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples,” (...). It is probable that the Epistle to the Galatians was written soon after this visit—A.D. 56-57.³²

The 7th Day Adventist BD, under the entry ‘Galatians, Epistle

30. *Ilime ve Sanat, Dergisi*, Istanbul, Turkey, (Mart/Nisan, 1986), pp.91-94; as quoted by Mr. Bashir Mahmud Akhtar, in his M. Phil. Thesis (at A.I.O.U., Islamabad) on this subject, 1990, pp. 72 f.

31. J. L. McKenzie, DB, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1984, p. 648.

32. W. Smith, A DB, Regency Reference Library, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984, p. 491.

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to the' says, '(...), the date of writing would be the winter of A.D. 57-58, and the place of writing doubtless Corinth.'³³

According to the New American Bible:

If it is addressed to the Galatians in the north, the letter was probably written around A.D. 54 or 55, most likely from Ephesus after Paul's arrival there for a stay of several years on his third missionary journey.³⁴

A New Catholic Commentary writes:

Nevertheless, because of certain similarities of mood and tone and parallels in phraseology with I Cor and Rm, many commentators with Benoit, ascribe Gal to a date about the same as Rm, i.e. c. A.D. 56.³⁵

It is thus clear that St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians sometime between AD 54 and 58, whereas the Gospel of Barnabas had been written in c.51. Paul writes in Galatians:

I am amazed that you are changing so soon from the one who called you by means of (Christ's) grace, to a different gospel which is not another one, only there are some unsettling you and willing to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven were to proclaim the gospel [to you] differently than how we proclaimed the gospel to you, let that one be anathema [accursed]. As we have just said, and as I now say once again: If anyone should proclaim the gospel to you contrary to what you have received, let him be anathema!³⁶

A footnote has been inserted to these verses saying:

Paul is declaring in the strongest manner that the gospel he

33. 7th Day Adventist BD, Revised Ed, Review & Herald © Pblg. Association, Washington, 1979, p. 398.

34. The NAB, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1991, p. 1320.

35. A New Catholic Commentary, on Holy Scripture, Ed C. Fuller, Nelson, 1981, p. 1173.

36. The NT Standard Ed., Paulines Publications, Africa, Nairobi (Kenya), 1995, p. 474 f.

preaches is the one and only way to salvation, and that to preach another gospel is to nullify the death of Christ. Paul's curse reminds the readers of the absolute truth of his gospel.³⁷

Obviously Paul is pointing to some other 'gospel' in these verses of the Epistle to the Galatians. This Epistle to the Galatians was not written before ca. AD 54 to 58. There did not exist any of the 4 gospels by that time. Therefore the word 'gospel' here means the doctrines which Paul had designed and was preaching. On the other hand the Gospel of Barnabas had already been compiled in ca. AD 51. It was only Barnabas who was preaching some 'gospel' contrary to that of Paul's. It can thus be appreciated that Paul indicated to the 'Gospel of Barnabas' in his Epistle to the Galatians. It makes quite clear that there existed the 'Gospel of Barnabas' prior to AD 54-58, before any of the 4 gospels had been compiled.

All the above discourse makes it abundantly clear that:

- i) Barnabas had died in ca. AD 61.
- ii) The 'Gospel according to Matthew', The 'Gospel according to Mark', and all the other Gospels, were written after his death. None of the Gospels had been written during the lifetime of Barnabas.
- iii) The dead body of Barnabas was discovered in AD 488 from the Cypriot city of Salamis.
- iv) A manuscript of a Gospel was found in his tomb lying on his heart. Scholars identify it in three different ways: (a) it was the Gospel of Barnabas written with his own hand [as stated in the '*Acta Sanctorum*'], (b) it was the 'Gospel according to Matthew' written by Matthew himself with his own hand [as stated in the '*Life of St. Barnabas*'] and (c) it was the 'Gospel according to Matthew' written by Barnabas [as stated in the '*New Catholic Encyclopedia*'].
- v) As regards the options (b) and (c) above, they are absolutely impossible as the 'Gospel according to Matthew' was written many years after the death of Barnabas.
- vi) It could naturally have been the Gospel of Barnabas and none other than it. It may have been in the Aramaic

37. The NT Standard Ed., op.cit., p. 475.

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- language, the language used by Jesus Christ.
- vii) This manuscript was sent to Constantinople (Istanbul of today) to be preserved in the Emperor's Library.
 - viii) An Aramaic Manuscript of the Gospel of Barnabas dating to the first century AD was discovered in a Turkish town, Hakari in AD 1984.
 - ix) Most probably it may have been the same MS. found from the tomb of Barnabas in AD 488 near the Cypriot city of Salamis or some manuscript copied from it.
 - x) Paul has referred to some 'gospel' in his Epistle to the Galatians and this Epistle was written ca. AD 54-58. None of the 4 gospels had been written by that time. Paul could have naturally pointed only to the 'Gospel of Barnabas', which according to him, preached some 'gospel' contrary to his own teachings.

It is now unto the reader himself to draw a reasonable conclusion from the above data.

There is a 'Catalogue of the 60 Canonical Books' (instead of the present canon of 66 books). It has given a list of 25 apocryphal books as well. 'The Gospel according to Barnabas' has been recorded in it at Serial No. 24.³⁸ It shows that this Gospel of Barnabas existed in the early years of Christianity and it was purposely banned by the Christian authorities.

How could some Muslim scholar have written it? It was discovered by the Christians, it was introduced to the world by the Christians, and it was published by the Christians. The Muslims knew nothing about this 'Gospel of Barnabas' until George Sale (AD 1697-1736) mentioned it³⁹ in the prologue (To

38. Edgar Hennecke, NT Apocrypha, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1963, Vol. I, p. 51 f.

39. As stated by the editors of 'The Gospel of Barnabas', Lonsdale and Laura Ragg, in their introduction to the book, p.xvi:

the Moslems themselves who boast, under the title of *Barnabas*, the possession of the only true and authentic Gospel, derive their knowledge of the existence of the 'Gospel of Barnabas' solely from Sale's Preface and Preliminary Discourse, of which they are known to possess a translation.

They have further elaborated their claim at page xlvi, xlvii that the Muslims were unaware of the existence of any 'Gospel of Barnabas'

before the publication of Sale's work. They assert:

Against the supposition that the Gospel of Barnabas ever existed in Arabic we must set the argument from silence from such a Gospel in the Polemical literature of the Moslems. This has been admirably cataloged by Stein-schneider in his monograph on the subject in the *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 1877. Of the works enumerated by him, 3, belonging to very different periods, are accessible in printed editions. To the writers of all these treatises the Gospel of Barnabas would have been very welcomed, but the fame of it had not reached their ears.

The earliest of them is *Ibn Hazm* (obit. 456 A.H.), whose *fiṣal fī-l-milal wal-ahwā wal-niḥal* was printed in Cairo a few years ago (part I., 1317 A.H.) He condemns the four Evangelists with much vehemence, and declares that the names of the Apostles are quite unknown.

The treatise of *Ibn Taymiyyah* (obit. 728 A.H.) was published in Cairo last year: it is called *Al-Jawāb al Ṣaḥiḥ liman Baddala dīn al-Masiḥ*. He is far less virulent than his predecessors, and assigns a certain amount of genuineness to our four Gospels. But he has no suspicion of the existence of a Gospel favouring the Prophet as does the Gospel of Barnabas.

The treatise of *Abu'l-Faḍl al-Su'ūdi* (composed 942 A.H., and based on the earlier work of *Abu'l-Bakā Sālih al-Ja'farī*) was published at Leyden, 1877-92, with the title *Disputatio pro religione Muhammedana adversus Christianos*. The author deals with the Four Gospels, the genesis of which he appears to assume, though he regards the Christian interpretation as erroneous.

A work in which we might certainly have expected to find some allusion to an Arabic Gospel of Barnabas, if such existed, is the bibliography of *Hājjī Khalīfah* (obit. A.H. 1067, 1656-7 A.D.). Under the heading *Injil* he gives the names of the four Evangelists, and asserts, as many others assert, that the Gospel of *'Isā Ibn Maryam* must have been quite different. But he knows of no Barnabas.

The conjecture that any knowledge which the Indian Moslems may possess of the Gospel of Barnabas is due to Sale's *Koran* seems to me highly probable, if not certain.

40. G. Sale writes:

The book is a moderate quarto, in Spanish, written in a very legible hand, but a little damaged towards the latter end. It contains two hundred and twenty-two chapters of unequal length, and four hundred and twenty pages; and is said, in the front, to be translated from the Italian, by an Arrogonian Moslem, named Mustafa de Aranda. There is a preface prefixed to it, wherein the discoverer of the original MS., who was a Christian monk, called Fra Marino, tells us that having accidentally met with a writing of Irenaeus (among others), wherein he speaks against St. Paul, alleging, for his authority, the Gospel of Barnabas, he became exceeding[ly] desirous to find this gospel; and that God, of His mercy, having made him very intimate with Pope Sixtus V [b.1521 d.90, Pope from 1585], one day, as they were together in that Pope's library, his Holiness fell asleep, and he, to employ himself, reaching down a book to read, the first he laid his hand on proved to be the very gospel he wanted: overjoyed at the discovery, he scrupled not to hide his prize in his sleeve, and on the Pope's waking, took leave of him, carrying with him that celestial treasure, by reading of which he became a convert to Mohammedanism.

This Gospel of Barnabas contains a complete history of Jesus Christ from his birth to his ascension; and most of the circumstances in the four real gospels are to be found therein, but many of them turned, and some artfully enough, to favour the Mohammedan system. From the design of the whole, and the frequent interpolations of stories and passages wherein Mohammed is spoken of and foretold by name, as the messenger of God, and the great prophet who was to perfect the dispensation of Jesus, it appears to be a most barefaced forgery [What a reason to pronounce it a 'most barefaced forgery'!]. one particular I observe therein induces me to believe it to have been dressed up by a renegade Christian, slightly instructed in his new religion, and not educated a Mohammedan (unless the fault be imputed to the Spanish, or perhaps the Italian translator, and not to the original compiler [stress added]); I mean the giving to Mohammed the title of Messiah, and that not once or twice only, but in several places; whereas the title of Messiah, or, as the Arabs write it, al-Masih, i.e., Christ, is appropriated to Jesus in the Koran, and is constantly applied by the Mohammedans to him, and never to

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foremost opportunity of going through it after its English translation was first published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford in 1907. Before its introduction by the Christian scholars in 1907, the Muslim scholars had no approach to it. All the Muslim literature, throughout the centuries, is void of any quotation from this Gospel. Had they known it, they must have profusely quoted from it, because it prophesied about the Holy Prophet by mentioning his name.

Why do the modern Christians not own and accept it? Simply because there is a lot in it which does not agree with their ideals⁴¹ and because there are in it a number of prophecies

their own prophet [it is strange that rather than taking it as a proof to the fact that this gospel cannot have been written by a Muslim, the worthy scholar takes it unreasonably to a quite contrary theme!]. (George Sale, ALKORAN OF MOHAMMED, London & NY, Frederick Warne & Co., n.a., p. ix,x under 'TO THE READER')

41. For example, in the introductory paragraph or the prologue of this Gospel, Barnabas writes:

Barnabas, apostle of Jesus of Nazarene, called Christ, to all them that dwell upon the earth desireth peace and consolation. Dearly beloved, the great and wonderful God hath during these past days visited us by his prophet Jesus Christ in great mercy of teaching and miracles, by reason whereof many, being deceived of Satan, under pretence of piety, are preaching most impious doctrine, calling Jesus son of God, repudiating the circumcision ordained of God for ever, and permitting every unclean meat: among whom also Paul hath been deceived, whereof I speak not without grief; for which cause I am writing that truth which I have seen and heard, in the intercourse that I have had with Jesus, in order that ye may be saved, and not be deceived of Satan and perish in the judgement of God. (Lonsdale & Laura Ragg, 'The Gospel of Barnabas' Edited and Translated From the Italian MS in the Imperial Library at Vienna, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1907, p. 3).

Barnabas ends his gospel, in chapter CCXXII, in the following words:

For certain evil men, pretending to be disciples, preached that Jesus died and rose not again. Others preached that he really died, but rose again. Others preached, and yet preach, that Jesus

regarding the Prophet of Islam by his very name in unequivocal terms. There might be some later alterations, adulterations, and interpolations in it like almost all the other books of the Bible. There might have crept into it some misunderstandings or confusions of the writer himself. But its existence as a book written by Barnabas cannot be denied. Its subject matter, its language, its confident style, its exhaustive material on important themes which is elsewhere unavailable, and its presentation of the logical and reasonable themes are superior to the four Gospels of the NT of the Bible. It is unfortunate for the Christians that they have deprived themselves of this valuable treasure of religious knowledge. Here are some excerpts regarding only the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (sws), from Lonsdale & Laura Ragg's '*The Gospel of Barnabas*':

But after me shall come the Splendour⁴² of all the prophets and holy ones, and shall shed light upon the darkness of all that the prophets have said, because he is the messenger of God.⁴³

Verily I say unto you, that every prophet when he is come hath borne to one nation only the mark of the mercy of God. And so their words were not extended save to that people to which they were sent. *But the messenger of God, when he shall come*⁴⁴ [stress added] God shall give him as it were the seal of His hand, insomuch that he shall carry salvation and mercy to all the nations of the world that shall receive his doctrine.⁴⁵ He shall come with power

is the son of God, among whom is Paul deceived. ('The Gospel of Barnabas', op.cit., p. 489.)

42. there is a footnote on it by the editors, 'i.e. *Muhammed*' [sws]

43. Lonsdale & Laura Ragg, 'The Gospel of Barnabas' Edited and Translated From the Italian MS.in the Imperial Library at Vienna, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1907, Chapter XVII, p. 33.

44. The futurity is particularly to be noticed, which means that the messenger is to come after Jesus Christ. The phrase 'Messenger of God' (in Arabic language: Rasulullah) is also to be noted. It is the specific epithet of the Prophet of Islam. Now it is a fact that nobody has successfully claimed to be the prophet or 'Messenger of God' after Jesus Christ except the Prophet of Islam, *Muhammad* (sws).

45. And it is a historical fact. There had been no universal prophet

upon the ungodly, and shall destroy idolatry,⁴⁶ inasmuch that he shall make Satan confused; for so promised God to Abraham, saying: “Behold, in thy seed I will bless all the tribes of the earth; and as thou hast broken in pieces the idols, O Abraham, even so shall thy seed do.” James answered: ‘O master, tell us in whom this promise was made; for the Jews say “in Isaac,” and the Ishmaelites say “in Ishmael.” ’ (...). Believe me, for verily I say to you, that the promise was made in Ishmael, not in Isaac [For it is a fact that no prophet from the progeny of Isaac can be claimed ever to have broken in pieces the idols as Abraham had broken them in pieces].⁴⁷

I therefore say unto you that the messenger of God is a splendour that shall give gladness to nearly all that God hath made, for he is adorned with the spirit of understanding and of counsel, the spirit of wisdom and might, the spirit of fear and love, the spirit of prudence and temperance; the spirit of justice and piety, the spirit of gentleness and patience,⁴⁸ (...). O blessed time, when he

before the Prophet of Islam. It is only *Muhammad* (sws) who has categorically asserted, as directed to him in the *Qur’ān* by the Almighty, ‘O humankind! I am the Messenger of God towards all of you.’ (*Al-A’rāf*, vii:158)

46. This is also a historical fact. Prophet Muhammad (sws) came with power and got all the idols of *Ka’bah* broken to pieces at the time of the Conquest of *Makkah*, and, afterwards, banned and destroyed every form of idolatry by force. The theme has been dilated upon later while exploring the ‘Prophecy Regarding the Prophet of Islam in the ‘Assumption of Moses’.

47. ‘The Gospel of Barnabas’, op.cit., ch. XLIII, p. 101,3.

48. What a true and compact picture of the traits of the Prophet of Islam! Every word depicts the actual and exact qualities of the Prophet of Islam, which has been described in hundreds of pages by the Muslim and non-Muslim scholars the world over. The material for their description has been taken from the reliable compilations on biography and collections of the traditions of the Prophet of Islam. The record of these sources had been related to the compilers of these collections through the complete and continuous (without any break) chain of narrators from the primary eye-witnesses to the last narrator. It is remarkable that the credibility of every narrator or reporter of the traditions of the Prophet of

shall come to the world!⁴⁹ (...). And when I saw him my soul was filled with consolation, saying: “O Mohammed, God be with thee.⁵⁰

Jesus answered: ‘(...). As for me, I am now come to the world to prepare the way for the messenger of God, who shall bring salvation to the world. (...)’ Then said Andrew: ‘Master, tell us some sign, that we may know him.’ Jesus answered: ‘He will not come in your time, but will come some years after you, when my gospel shall be annulled insomuch that there shall be scarcely thirty faithful.⁵¹ At that time God will have mercy on the world, and so he will send his messenger, (...). He shall come with great power against the ungodly, and shall destroy idolatry upon the earth⁵². And it rejoiceth me because that through him our God shall be known and glorified, and I shall be known to be true; and he will execute vengeance against those who shall say that I am more than man. Verily I say to you that the moon shall minister sleep to him in his boyhood,⁵³ and when he shall be grown up he shall take her [the moon] in his hands.⁵⁴ (...)’. He shall

Islam has been objectively judged and recorded in the books on ‘*Asmā al-Rijāl*’, i.e. ‘the qualities of the reporting persons’ etc. The traits described in the Gospel are in complete accord with actual qualities of the Prophet of Islam related in these sources.

49. It is remarkable how respectably Jesus esteems the era of the Prophet of Islam and how ardently welcomes and blesses him.

50. ‘The Gospel of Barnabas’, op.cit., ch. XLIV, p. 105.

51. Obviously it means a lengthy period of time, as the condition ‘when my gospel shall be annulled insomuch that there shall be scarcely thirty faithful’ implies.

52. It is a historical fact.

53. The Prophet of Islām was born orphan, as his father, ‘*Abd Allah*’, had died before his birth. He was assigned to *Ḥalīmah Sa’dīyah* to nurse and breast-feed him. So he was brought up in the open atmosphere of *Banī Sa’ad*. He could not enjoy the lullaby of his mother, and, as such, ‘the moon ministered sleep to him in his boyhood’. His mother also passed away when he was still a boy of six years and he was deprived of the shelter of his parents just in his boyhood.

54. It points to the miracle of the splitting of the moon (The *Qur’ān* - ch. LIV: v.1 ‘*The Moon*’). One part of the moon came in his hand.

come with truth⁵⁵ more clear than that of all the prophets, (...); and so when idolatry shall be seen to fall to the ground and confess me a man like other men, verily I say unto you the messenger of God shall be come.⁵⁶

Jesus answered: 'The name of the Messiah is admirable⁵⁷, for God himself gave him the name when he had created his soul, and placed it in a celestial splendour. God said: "Wait Mohammed; (...). When I shall send thee into the world I shall send thee as my messenger of salvation, and thy word shall be true⁵⁸, insomuch that heaven and earth shall fail but thy faith shall never fail." Mohammed is his blessed name.'⁵⁹

Whereupon I am sure that he who shall sell me⁶⁰ shall be

55. No doubt every prophet came with truth, but the qualities of truth and honesty were so glaringly and characteristically conspicuous in the Prophet of Islam that he was known with the epithets of 'the Truthful', and 'the Honest' even before his being appointed as 'Prophet'. His sworn enemy, *Abū Sufyān*, when he was chief of the pagans of *Makkah* and their supreme military commander in their struggle against Muhammad (sws), bore witness before the Roman Emperor to that effect. Even his worst enemies like *Abū Jahal* etc would say, 'Muhammad, we do not blame you of falsehood, but your defiance of idols and asserting the monotheism is something which is not acceptable to us'.

56. 'The Gospel of Barnabas', op.cit., ch. LXXII, p. 169.

57. The Arabic word 'Muhammad (sws)' is derived from the triliteral root 'H+M+D', which means, 'to praise, commend, laud, extol' (Hans Wehr's A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, SLS Inc., NY, 1976, p.204). The word 'Muhammad (sws)' means, 'praised; commendable, laudable' (ibid, p. 204). 'Hammada' is from another 'form' (the Arabic word for this 'form' is 'Bāb', which literally means, 'door or gate') of the same root word. It means, 'He praised much, with good forms of praise; or repeatedly; or time after time' (E. W. Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, The Islamic Texts Society Trust, Cambridge, 1984, Vol. I, p. 639). The word 'Muḥammad', according to the same Lane's Lexicon, means, 'A man praised much, or repeatedly, or time after time: endowed with many praiseworthy qualities' (ibid, p.640).

58. Prophet Muḥammad (sws) was so notable for his being true that 'The Truthful' became his common title or agname among the Arabs.

59. 'The Gospel of Barnabas', op.cit., ch. XCVII, p. 225,27.

60. 'Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed him', Matt. X: 4, XXVI: 25, XXVII: 3;

slain in my name, for that God shall take me up from the earth, and shall change the appearance of the traitor⁶¹ so that everyone shall believe him to be me; nevertheless, when he dieth an evil death, I shall abide in that dishonour⁶² for a long time in the world. But when Mohammed shall come, the sacred messenger of God, that infamy shall be taken away. And this shall God do because I have confessed the truth of the Messiah; who shall give me this reward, that I shall be known to be alive and to be a stranger to that death of infamy.⁶³

Mark III: 19; Luke XXII: 48; John XVIII: 2, etc.

61. 'Judas Iscariot, which ... was the traitor', Luke VI: 16.

62. The Christian say, 'Jesus died an *accursed* death', the Jews say, 'We got him executed as a convict'; whereas the *Qur'ān* asserts:

and for their [Jews'] unbelief, and their uttering against Mary a mighty calumny, and for their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God'—yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. Those who are at variance concerning him surely are in doubt regarding him; they have no knowledge of him, except the following of surmise; and they slew him not of certainty—no indeed; God raised him up to Him; God is Almighty, All-wise. (...). And for the evildoing of those of Jewry, (...). We have prepared for the unbelievers among them a painful chastisement. But those of them that are firmly rooted in knowledge, and the believers believing in what has been sent down to thee, and what was sent down before thee, that perform the prayer and pay the alms, and those who believe in God and the Last Day—them We shall surely give a mighty wage.' (Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 95 f.)

63. *The Gospel of Barnabas*, op.cit., ch. CXII, p. 259.
