

# **THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS: ITS TRUE VALUE**

by

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[www.study-islam.org](http://www.study-islam.org)

July 11, 2010

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Christian Study Centre

Rawalpindi

1989

**ISBN 1-881085-02-3**

Middle East Resources  
P.O. Box 96  
Upper Darby, PA 19082

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This Book is Dedicated

To God

To Truth

And

To My Wife

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**\*\* Note** Page numbers correspond to the page numbers in the book.

## PROLOGUE

In these days of greater mixing of peoples, Christians and Muslims sometimes sit around comparing their beliefs. In such discussions it is natural for each person to quote from his own sacred book — Christians from the Gospel accounts in the New Testament, and Muslims from the Qur'an. Since for Christians the only authentic Gospel is the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, it comes as a great surprise to them when a Muslim is suddenly heard to say, "But the true Gospel is the *Gospel of Barnabas*." Such a statement brings a new basic document into the discussion. Most Christians have never even heard of the *Gospel of Barnabas*, and very few Muslims have ever read it, so almost everyone needs a detailed evaluation of this book which many Muslims claim to be "the true and original Gospel". Here is my attempt at such an evaluation.

The oldest known, and the only complete, copy of the *Gospel of Barnabas* is found in the Austrian National Library in Vienna as Codex No. 2662.<sup>1</sup> Since 1709 when it was mentioned by Mr. John Toland in Holland, it was known only to European scholars,<sup>2</sup> all of whom judged it to have been written toward the end of the Middle Ages. Then in 1907 an English translation from the Italian original was made by Lonsdale and Laura Ragg.<sup>3</sup>

This made it available to Muslims of Egypt and India where English was the main foreign language of educated people. The Gospel according to Barnabas was immediately translated into Arabic. The first edition appeared in Cairo in 1908. It was used up and several more small editions have been printed since then.

In addition to these Arabic editions, the English version has been reprinted a number of times, including a 1974 edition in which the introduction is signed by Lt. Col. (Retired) M. A. Rahim, the Secretary General of the Qur'an Council of Pakistan. He closes with this wish,

I pray that this (edition) may lead you from darkness into light and to a new spiritual and more satisfying life. Amen.

Do we conclude therefore, that the *Gospel of Barnabas* has been widely read? Probably not. The successive Arabic editions have not totaled more than 10,000 copies. During more than 25 years in North Africa, I have seen only one copy in any language. It was an Arabic copy owned by an Imam in Tangier. Five English editions, printed between 1973 and 1980, totaled only 28,000 copies, and the French translation by Luigi Cirillo and Michael Freman, Paris, Beauchesne, only became available in 1977. However, several books of Islamic apologetics base one or another of their statements on it. It is known widely among religious Muslims because of quotations which are given here and there. Therefore it is hardly an exaggeration to say that multitudes, who have never read it, know of its existence and speak of it.

In summary, the *Gospel of Barnabas* has exercised a definite influence during these last 80 years.

Before considering the *Gospel of Barnabas* itself, it may be helpful to explain to Christian readers why Muslims would be looking for some other Gospel. Why are they so

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<sup>1</sup> *Barnabas-Evangelium*, Cod. 2662, Handschriften-und Inkunabelsammlung, Austrian National Library, Vienna.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the manuscript see Chapter V.

<sup>3</sup> *The Gospel of Barnabas*, Edited and Translated from the Italian ms, in the Imperial Library at Vienna, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907).

convinced that the *Injil*,<sup>4</sup> or Gospel, mentioned in the Qur'an is not the Christian one? Why are they willing to spend time and money making the *Gospel of Barnabas* available — even though all western scholars and even some Muslim scholars have judged that it was written long after the first century AD?

It is because of certain difficulties in reconciling the Qur'an, written in the 7th century AD, with the New Testament Gospel written 600 years before. For example, the Qur'an says in the Sura *Al-Saff* (Battle Array)<sup>5</sup> 61:6, from 3 AH,

And remember Jesus, the son of Mary, said: 'O Children of Israel! I am the apostle of God (sent) to you, confirming that which is between my hands from the Torah, and giving glad tidings of an apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.' But, when he came to them with clear signs, they said, 'this is evident sorcery.'

In Arabic, the word Ahmad and the word Muhammed are built on the same three-letter root 'H M D' meaning to praise. Muslims believe that Ahmad is a slightly veiled prophecy in the mouth of Jesus that Muhammad will come after him, so they expect to find such a prophecy in the Gospel. When they read the Gospel of Jesus according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, they do not find any obvious prophesy of Muhammad. So they conclude that Christians have changed (*harraf* حَرَّفَ) the Gospel. On the other hand, when they find passages in the *Gospel of Barnabas* where Jesus says that he is glad to be a servant of Muhammad who is still to come, many Muslims become convinced that this must be the true, unchanged Gospel.

A second, and much more important difficulty, is that the Gospel found among the Christians claims that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. Muslims cannot accept this central Christian idea because in the Sura *Al-Nisa'* (The Women) 4:157 the Qur'an says,

They (the Jews) did not kill him and they did not crucify him, but it was made to appear this way to them.

When we examine the *Gospel of Barnabas*, we find it claiming that Judas Iscariot was placed on the cross and crucified in place of Jesus. Again this agrees with the Qur'an and sounds very convincing to many Muslims. When Christians have answered that this is not the true Gospel because it denies that Jesus died for our sins, the Muslims have naturally reacted by saying, "bring the proofs." Cheikh Mohammed Abu Zahre, who used the *Gospel of Barnabas* in his course in 1940 at Al-Azhar University, gave to Christians the following challenge,

The most significant service to the religions and to humanity would be that the church take the trouble to study the gospel according to Barnabas and refute it and to bring us the proofs on which this refutation is based.

This is a valid challenge, and is the reason for writing this book.

### **Some Results from the Assumption that Barnabas is the True Gospel**

Before looking at a summary of the *Gospel of Barnabas* and then considering some of its details in depth, we must examine this assumption that it is the true Gospel and clarify some of

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<sup>4</sup> Arabic word for the Gospel derived from the Greek *euangelion* which means good news.

<sup>5</sup> The system for transcription of the Arabic words into English is shown at the back of the book. All quotations from the Qur'an are taken from the translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (*The Holy Qur'an. Text, Translation and Commentary*, 1938). Bible quotations are from the *Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

the results that follow, especially the relationship between a true *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Qur'an.

## First Result

If the *Gospel of Barnabas* was written in the first Christian century as many Muslims believe, then it should reflect an accurate knowledge of 1st century Palestinian history and social customs. (This would not prove a 1st century date of composition, of course. A careful author from a later epoch might write a very accurate work.) If, on the other hand, it has serious errors concerning first century Palestinian history and geography, and mentions customs and ideas which were not known until a later date, this will be proof that it is not an original document from the time of Christ and his disciples.

## Second Result

If *Barnabas* is the true Gospel, the Qur'an would have to agree that there could be a true unchanged Gospel. That may seem rather obvious to some readers, but when it is remembered that Muslims almost always charge that Christians have changed their Gospel, it is very valid to ask the question, "Will the Qur'an support the possibility that there is an unchanged Gospel?"

It may come as a surprise to Muslim readers that, in fact, the Qur'an does seem to support the idea that the true Gospel was present while Muhammad was alive. In the Sura *Yunus* (Jonah) 10:94, from just before the Hejira, the following words are addressed to Muhammad:

If you are in doubt as to what we have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before you.

In the Sura *Al-Nisa'* (The Women) 4:47, from 3-5 AH we read:

Oh you to whom the Scriptures have been given! Believe in what we have sent down confirming that which is with you (مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ) (the Torah and the Gospel) from before.

And in the Sura *Al-Ma'ida* (The Table) 5:50, written in AH 10, near the end of Muhammad's life, we read:

"And let the people of the Gospel judge according to what God revealed (sent down) in it (the Gospel)."

Since, according to the Qur'an, God told Muhammad to ask information of "those who have been reading the book before you", sent the Qur'an to confirm what was present "with" the Christians in 3 AH, and told the Christians in the year 10 AH to 'judge according to what (He, God) had revealed in it (the Gospel)', we may conclude that the Qur'an supports the idea that the true Gospel was present at the time the Qur'an was given.

## Third Result

If the *Gospel of Barnabas* is the true Gospel, then it must be added to the Qur'an. By that I mean it ought to be printed with the Qur'an as the true Word of God. Unless abrogated by the Qur'an every word and sentence would be binding on the Muslim as well as the Christian, and Muslims would wash before reading it as they do for the Qur'an.

It would also mean that any contradictions or errors in historical facts would be added to the Qur'an. This is very important. With worldly books we can quote one sentence which pleases us and ignore the rest of the book. But with a book which comes from God, the believer must take

the whole book.

Furthermore this is not just my private idea. The Qur'an states it in the Sura *Al-Baqara* (The Heifer) 2:85, from 2 AH where the following accusation is brought against the Jews in regard to their own Torah:

Then it is only a part of the Book that ye believe in, and do ye reject the rest? But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this? but disgrace in this life, and on the day of resurrection... grievous penalty.

This particular group of Jews is being blamed because they pick and choose what pleases them rather than obeying the whole Torah. But the opposite is also true. If a book has many errors proving that it did not come from God, then it is wrong to pick out verses which pleases one from the midst of the mistakes and quote them as having come by revelation.

In summary then, if the *Gospel of Barnabas* is the true Gospel it means:

1. That the details of history, geography, and social customs found in the *Gospel of Barnabas* must be correct for the first Christian century and not reflect the customs and ideas of another time.
2. That the relevant Qur'anic texts agree that a true Gospel has been preserved, and that if the *Gospel of Barnabas* is this true Gospel then it must not contradict the Qur'an in matters of fact.

### **The Gospel of Barnabas**

What does the *Gospel of Barnabas* actually say about itself? In his introduction the author claims to be Barnabas, the friend of Paul. He is writing what he heard and saw when he was with Jesus because some, including Paul, have been deceived by Satan for they deny the necessity of circumcision and allow the eating of unclean meats.

In the following outline summary the chapter numbers from the *Gospel of Barnabas* are on the left. After many sections there is a reference which shows where the same passage is found in the Bible. These are references where 50% or 80% or, in a few cases, 100% of the material is exactly like the Biblical passage. In addition there are hundreds of shorter allusions to Biblical prophets, stories and sayings. I have mentioned these only where they form the basis of a discussion. For example God's statement to Abraham "I will be thy great reward" from Genesis 15:1 is the basis of a discourse extending from Chapter 180 to 182.

<b>Outline</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>1</b>	Gabriel tells Mary she will bear Jesus. (Luke 1:26-33, 46-55)
<b>2</b>	Gabriel commands Joseph to take Mary as his wife even though she is pregnant. (Matthew 1)
<b>3</b>	Jesus' birth in a manger. There is no room in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)
<b>4</b>	The angels appear to the shepherds. (Luke 2:8-20)
<b>5</b>	Circumcision and presentation at the temple combined. (Luke 2:21, 22)
<b>6-9a</b>	The wise men come to worship the newborn king of the Jews. King Herod wants to kill Jesus. Joseph is warned and taking his family flees to

	Egypt. (Matthew 2)
<b>9b</b>	Jesus talks with the temple leaders at age 12. (Luke 2:40-52)
<b>10</b>	Jesus begins his ministry at age 30 after a book, as a mirror, descends into his heart. (Luke 3:23)
<b>11</b>	Jesus heals a leper.
<b>12</b>	Jesus gives a sermon at the temple from the pinnacle.
<b>13</b>	Gabriel, after telling of Abraham being willing to offer, “his only begotten son, Ishmael,” orders Jesus to also offer a sheep and provides a sheep for him.
<b>14</b>	Jesus fasts 40 days, then drives the devil away by the power of the words of God and angels come to strengthen him. (Matthew 4) Jesus chooses 12 disciples. The list includes Thaddeus as mentioned in Matthew 10:3 and the second Judas as mentioned in Luke 6:16. Barnabas, the author is one of the twelve.
<b>15</b>	Jesus changes water into wine. (John 2)
<b>16</b>	Jesus preaches from the mountain. Teachings from Matthew 5-7.
<b>17</b>	Philosophical discussion that God is one and that there are 144,000 prophets. (Matthew 5-7)
<b>18</b>	If given blow on one side of face, offer the other: be ye perfect. (Matthew 5-7)
<b>19</b>	Jesus heals ten lepers, one returns to thank him. (Luke 17: 12-19)
<b>20</b>	Jesus calms the storm and arrives at Nazareth on the shore. (Luke 8: 22-25)
<b>21</b>	Jesus heals the wild demoniac. (Luke 8: 26-37) Jesus heals the daughter of a Canaanite woman. The fact that he answered not a word is from Matthew 15: 21-28. The fact that she went home to find her daughter healed is from Mark 7:24-30.
<b>22</b>	Condition of the uncircumcised before God.
<b>23</b>	Origin of circumcision. Adam wanted to punish his own flesh because of having sinned through the flesh. Gabriel showed him where to cut.
<b>24</b>	The rich man and Lazarus. (Luke 16:19-31)
<b>25</b>	How one ought to despise the flesh; one should bridle it like a horse.
<b>26</b>	Abraham’s contention with his father about idols.
<b>27</b>	Laughter is improper.
<b>28</b>	Abraham cuts off feet of all idols but one.

<b>29</b>	God calls Abraham, Gabriel takes the form of a man and shows him how to wash and calls him to another land.
<b>30</b>	Love God and thy neighbor; story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37)
<b>31</b>	Give to Caesar that which is Caesar's. (Luke 20:20-26) Healing of the centurion's "son". Combination of facts from Matthew 8:5-13 and John 4:43-54.
<b>23-33</b>	On idolatry — particularly idolatry of the appetites; includes Jesus' teaching that sin, not food, defiles. (Mark 7:1-23)
<b>34</b>	Jesus heals a man with a shrunken hand, and teaches that one ought not take the highest place at a feast. (Luke 14:8-11) He speaks of pride and quotes Isaiah 14:12 on Lucifer falling.
<b>35</b>	Jesus tells how Satan fell and repeats there will be 144,000 with the mark of prophecy, plus the Messenger of God who was created 60,000 years before anything else.
<b>36-38</b>	On prayer, Jesus claims that without washing, no prayer is pleasing to God, though washing is useless if you love your sin. Lord's prayer as in the Bible except that instead of, "Our Father who art in heaven." the prayer starts, "O Lord our God." (Matthew 6:9-13)
<b>39-41</b>	Creation of Adam. The first thing Adam sees are the words, "There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God." Chapters 40b-41 are essentially like the Bible. (Genesis 3)
<b>42</b>	The Jews ask Jesus if he is the Messiah and he says, "No." (John 1:15, 19-27) Jesus goes up to Mt. Tabor with Peter, James, John and Barnabas and is transfigured. Voice of God says, "Behold my servant," instead of "this is my Son." Matthew 17:1-8 plus one fact from Luke 9:31
<b>43-44</b>	Disciples ask about the Messiah. Jesus says that he is the messenger of God who will come — the seal. Psalm 110 is quoted as being about the Messiah, the messenger of God through Ishmael. (Psalm 110, Matthew 22:42-45)
<b>45-46</b>	On hypocrites', including Jesus being rebuked for healing on the Sabbath, although the Jewish leaders would pull their ox out of a ditch on the Sabbath.
<b>47</b>	Healing of widow's son from Nain. (Luke 7:11-17)
<b>48</b>	Discussion of others about Jesus as God, or the Son of God, with some saying that God can have no son because God has no body.
<b>49-50</b>	Jesus' preaching in a synagogue.
<b>51</b>	Jesus asks God to forgive Satan. God agrees if Satan will repent. He

	won't.
<b>52-58</b>	Long discourse on what will happen during the last 15 days of world history ending with only God alive for 40 years. Then judgement with Muhammad raised first. He asks for justice. The names of the elect are in a book and on their forehead the mark of the Messenger of God, every idle word shall be judged. People shall be rewarded for the hair-shirt they have worn and each louse they have born. (A number of facts from Revelation)
<b>59-60</b>	Description of hell as 7 parts, but each sin is rewarded as a hell.
<b>61-62</b>	Therefore, be on guard as one expecting a thief. "Satan is as a roaring lion that goes about seeking whom he may devour." (I Peter 5:8) Adaptation of the parable of the talents and rich man who sold all to buy a field.
<b>63-64</b>	On vengeance, from James and John wanting to bring fire on the Samaritans. Enemy is not human beings, but our own bodies. "You do not know by what spirit you are led." (Luke 9:52-56)
<b>65</b>	Jesus heals the man by the pool of Bethesda, found at the sheep-gate. (John 5:1-16)
<b>66-69</b>	Jesus preaches in the temple that we should ask what we can do for God, rather than what reward God will give us. Chapter 68 has one of the rare parables original to the <i>Gospel of Barnabas</i> . Jesus heals a deaf and dumb man and the Pharisees say it is by the power of Beelzebub. Jesus says blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. (Matthew 12:22-32)
<b>70</b>	Jesus asks, "Who do men say that I am," and rebukes Peter severely when he answers, "You are the Christ, Son of God". (John the Baptist omitted from list that people say Jesus is.) (Matthew 16:13-23)
<b>71</b>	Healing of man sick with palsy. Jesus says, "thy sins are forgiven," and then qualifies it by explaining that as a servant of God he can beseech for the sins of others. (Luke 5:17-26)
<b>72</b>	Jesus foretells that he will be betrayed and depart from this world. Then, later, the Messenger of God will come to slay the idolaters and barely 30 true Christians will be left at that time.
<b>73-75</b>	How Satan tempts.
<b>76-77</b>	Man's laziness. It is not enough to know but one must also act.
<b>78-79</b>	Andrew then concludes that perhaps it is better not to know. Jesus disagrees and says that the knowledge which comes by the prophets is to be obeyed.
<b>80</b>	Even if a few people are the only ones with faith, they should obey the

	revelation they have. He then mentions Job, Noah and Daniel.
<b>81-83</b>	Samaritan woman at the well almost exactly as it is in the Bible, except that Jesus says that he is not the Messiah. (John 4)
<b>84-86</b>	Disciples ask what to do if a friend calls while they are praying. Jesus says finish your prayers; if he is offended he is not a valuable friend. Then a long discussion of friendship.
<b>87</b>	Verses concerning offenses which must come and cutting off hand or foot if they offend and ending with, "If your brother offend you..." (Matthew 18:6-18)
<b>88-89</b>	Jesus speaks of pardon, including forgiving 70 times 7, and that we should be very patient in waiting for others to repent. (Matthew 18:21-22)
<b>90</b>	Jesus speaks of faith.
<b>91</b>	The Romans say Jesus is God come to visit. The discussion is so heated that Pilate, Herod and the high priest, each with an army of 200,000 are ready to go to war about it; but they decide instead to ask Jesus.
<b>92-95</b>	They seek Jesus and find him near the Jordan and he denies that he is God. The Romans say no mere man could do these signs. He reminds them that Moses and the prophets did signs.
<b>96-97</b>	Priest asks, "who are you, then? Are you the Messiah?" Jesus says, "I am not the Messiah." The Messiah shall be called Muhammad.
<b>98</b>	Roman senate passes an imperial decree that no one may call Jesus God or Son of God. 5000 people are left from the three armies and Jesus feeds them with 5 loaves and 2 fishes. (John 6:5-13)
<b>99-111</b>	Jesus sends the 72 to preach "penitence" and gives a long exhortation about repentance and penitence and that tears must be shed with fasting and little sleep.
<b>112</b>	Jesus foretells that Judas will betray him for 30 pieces of silver and Jesus will abide in dishonor because people called him God. When Muhammad, the Messiah, comes, he will remove this infamy.
<b>113</b>	Jesus speaks again of penitence.
<b>114-115</b>	Jesus praises work and says that man should content himself with one wife.
<b>116-117</b>	Jesus tells of a blind man who wanted to see Elijah. Elijah rebukes him for not using all his desire to see God.
<b>118-119</b>	Human beings must guard against lust by praying.
<b>120</b>	Jesting is wrong.
<b>121</b>	Every person has 2 angels: one to write his good deeds, and one the bad.

<b>122-125</b>	On avarice.
<b>126</b>	Jesus sends his disciples two by two; they return praising because they have thrown out demons. Jesus says, "I have seen Satan fall." (Luke 10:17-18)
<b>127-129a</b>	Jesus preaches on pride from the pinnacle where prayer was wont to be made. Includes the two men who went up to the temple to pray. (Luke 18:10-14)
<b>129b-130</b>	Jesus eats at Simon's house and allows a sinful woman to touch him. When Simon is shocked Jesus speaks of two debtors and then tells her, "God has pardoned your sins," rather than, "Your sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:36-50)
<b>131</b>	On the dangers of pride.
<b>132</b>	Jesus gets into a boat and addresses the crowd giving the parable of the sower and the field. Then there are three original parables about people who prefer bad figs, apple peels, and who refuse to use good water. (Mark 4:1-9. Matthew 13:24-29)
<b>133-134</b>	The explanation of the above parables.
<b>135</b>	The 7 carnal sins of envy, gluttony, etc., lead to the 7 levels of hell.
<b>136-137</b>	Description of grades of punishment. Everyone must go to hell. Muhammad will successfully intercede so that no one with faith will stay more than 70,000 years.
<b>138-141</b>	Jesus and the people pray 19 days and ripe wheat is found the 20th day in the fields eaten previously by worms (one of the two original miracles). Therefore the people want to make Jesus king.
<b>142</b>	Judas decides Jesus is no prophet or he would know that Judas was stealing the money. Therefore he talks with scribes and Pharisees about betraying Jesus.
<b>143 and 146a</b>	Jesus eats with Zaccheus, the tax collector. (Luke 19: 1-10)
<b>144-145</b>	The doctrine of the true Pharisees. Elijah as the first one.
<b>146-147</b>	Parable of the Prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-32)
<b>148-151</b>	Long story describing true Pharisees who give up everything for the love of God.
<b>152</b>	Jesus challenges the Roman soldiers and says that if their gods can make even one fly, he will worship them. The soldiers try to attack Jesus and are rolled out of the temple.
<b>153</b>	Discourse on stealing including that if we do not say, "if God wills," then we are stealing from God.

<b>154</b>	Even worse than stealing things is stealing a person's honor.
<b>155</b>	Why God created human beings free.
<b>156-157</b>	The healing of the man born blind. (John 9)
<b>158-162</b>	Long discussion about how God might use a lie with sinful people. It includes the story of King Ahab and Jehoshaphat who lived around 800 B.C., exactly as recorded in 2 Chronicles but says that Daniel wrote it down. (2 Chronicles 18)
<b>163-167</b>	Jesus speaks of predestination ending with the statement that if their minds will not rest content with his explanation they should not be surprised since, even though the whole earth rests on water, a human being cannot make a single stone float.
<b>168</b>	Jesus again claims that his teaching was given to him by God as a book like unto a clear mirror which came down into his heart.
<b>169-179</b>	Jesus speaks about paradise saying that the food of those in paradise is the glory they will see there. There will be no light because God is the sun of paradise and his Messenger, Muhammad, is the moon. (Revelation 21:23)
<b>180-182</b>	A scribe asks Jesus what God meant when He said to Abraham, "I will be thy great reward," for how can God owe us anything? Jesus answers that for Abraham God is his gift and his debt. (Genesis 15:1)
<b>183-189</b>	Jesus speaks of humility including a very nice story about two true Pharisees, Haggai and Hosea.
<b>190-192a</b>	A scribe speaks of seeing an old book — the true Book of Moses — which described Muhammad in the arms of Ishmael and Ishmael in the arms of Abraham. Next to Ishmael stood Isaac holding Jesus in his arms, with Jesus pointing toward Muhammad and saying "This is he for whom God has created all things."
<b>192b-193</b>	Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. (John 11)
<b>194-198a</b>	The disciples say that if each person could die and be raised everyone would repent. Jesus answers that every person sees the dead carried away and this is enough so that each one can know and repent.
<b>198b-199</b>	Jesus prophecies that a wicked one will suffer in his place.
<b>200</b>	Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. The account speaks of an ass and its colt as in Matthew but concludes with Jesus saying that if he rebuked the crowd even the stones would cry out, as found in Luke. (Matthew 21:1-9, Luke 19:39-40)
<b>201</b>	The woman taken in adultery, followed by the parable of the lost sheep. (John 8:1-11, Luke 15:1-7)

<b>202a</b>	Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and calls them the righteous unrighteous.
<b>202b-204</b>	Jesus cries over Jerusalem. The author combines phrases found in Luke with those found in the parallel passage in Matthew. (Luke 19:41, Matthew 23:37)
<b>205</b>	Mary anoints Jesus' head but the detail that it is for his death is omitted. Judas, angered that he didn't get hold of the money and had thus lost 30 of the 300 pieces (for he always stole a tenth), goes to the high priest and agrees to deliver him up for 30 pieces of gold. (John 12:1-8, Matthew 26:14-16)
<b>206-208</b>	Jesus is again questioned as to who is the Messiah. As before he denies that he is the Messiah who must be descended from Ishmael.
<b>209</b>	The angel Gabriel speaks to Mary and tells her to fear not, for God will protect Jesus.
<b>210</b>	The high priest agrees with Herod and Pilate on the necessity of getting rid of Jesus.
<b>211-212</b>	After stating that he must depart to a place where he will not feel any tribulation, Jesus prays a high-priestly prayer. (John 17)
<b>213</b>	Jesus greatly desires to have the last supper, eats it and washes the disciples' feet. (Luke 22:15, John 13)
<b>214</b>	Jesus goes to a garden to pray.
<b>215</b>	When the soldiers come God commands the ministering angels, Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel to take Jesus out of the world.
<b>216</b>	"The wonderful God acted wonderfully," and Judas was changed to look like Jesus so that even the other disciples thought he was Jesus.
<b>217</b>	Arrest and trial of Judas (who now looks like Jesus). Judas is tried before the Jews, appears before Pilate and King Herod. (John 18:28-19:12, Luke 23:6-11) Judas crucifixion when he cries out, "God, why have you forsaken me, seeing the malefactor has escaped and I die unjustly." (Matthew 27:46) Judas is buried by Nicodemus and Joseph. (John 19:38- 41)
<b>218</b>	Some of the disciples who did not fear God went at night and stole the body and said that Jesus was risen. (Matthew 28:13)
<b>219</b>	Mary's guardian angels go to the third heaven and tell Jesus that his mother and disciples are weeping. Jesus asks God, who allows him to return to earth for three days to show himself to his disciples.
<b>220</b>	Jesus prays for permission to show his disciples the four angels, and again explains that God has decreed that people should believe the infamy of his crucifixion so that he won't be punished in the next world.

221	Jesus orders Barnabas to write what he has seen. He shows himself to more than 60 people. On the third day they go to the Mount of Olives where the angels carry him to heaven. (Acts 1)
222	The disciples scatter and preach the truth, but other disciples, especially Paul, preach that Jesus rose again and is the Son of God.

## Some Observations

For those readers who have read the Bible, it will be clear that the outline format of the *Gospel of Barnabas* is almost exactly the same as that found in the Gospels. Except for one miracle and one prophecy, all of the miracles recorded by *Barnabas* are found in the Canonical Gospels. Almost all the Old Testament prophets and many kings and ordinary people from the Bible are mentioned. What is noteworthy is that no non-Biblical people are included. One might expect an original first century witness to speak of someone not mentioned by the others. For example, in the New Testament, John alone mentions the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

In between these “Biblical” passages are long philosophical discourses on humility, on faith, on the qualities of true Pharisees. As we shall see later, these discourses reflect the language, style, and beliefs of Christian Europe of the Middle Ages. The ascetic life of monks is greatly praised and two chapters declare laughter to be unspiritual.

The author of *Barnabas* knew the present New Testament exceedingly well. His history of the actual events in the life of Christ follows the Canonical Gospels very closely, and he even takes care to gather together the small details from the different Gospel accounts. Chapters 21, 31, 42, 200 and 204 are examples which have been noted in the summary above.

In other places he interweaves long passages or whole chapters dealing with the same subject. Chapters 1 to 9a include all the information that the Bible gives about the birth of Jesus with nearly the same wording. Chapter 1 tells how Gabriel told Mary she would have a son as recorded in Luke 1. Then Joseph’s dream is included from Matthew 1. Next Luke 2 up to verse 22, then Matthew 2, and finally back to Luke 2:40-52. Chapter 217 on the trial of Judas (Jesus) includes passages worked together from the trial accounts of Matthew, Luke, and John.

In addition quotations are occasionally made from other New Testament books. In Chapter 61 words from 1 Peter which were written at least thirty years after Jesus’ ascension are placed in Jesus’ mouth.

Finally, it must be pointed out that almost all the statements and facts which support the Christian beliefs that God loves us as a Father, and that Jesus died for our sins, have been removed or given other meanings.

With this summary in our minds we shall now evaluate the *Gospel of Barnabas*:

1. In relation to the Qur’an.
2. In relation to the history, geography, and customs of Palestine at the time of Christ.
3. In relation to the way Christian religious ideas are expressed.
4. In relation to medieval and modern science.
5. What can be learned from the history and description of the document itself.

# CHAPTER I

## CONTRADICTIONS TO THE QUR'AN IN THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS

At the end of the prologue, the necessary characteristics of any relationship between the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Qur'an were mentioned briefly. Now we shall look at this question in detail, because for a Muslim this relationship is of prime importance.

We shall first examine the type of changes or differences which might be accepted or even approved of by the Qur'an. Then we shall look at some of the differences which are actually found when we compare the two documents.

### Abrogation or Change Accepted in the Qur'an

It is clear from the Qur'an itself that we might expect some type of difference or change in the revealed law because there are two verses that provide for change or abrogation by the hand of God. In the late Meccan Sura *Al-Nahl* (The Bee) 16:101, it is written,

When we change one verse for another verse, and God knows best what He sends down.

and in the Sura *Al-Baqara* (The Heifer) 2:106, from 2 AH, it reads:

None of our verses do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but we substitute something better or similar.

In addition there are clear examples in the Qur'an itself where such changes, or progressive revelation, took place. Here are two examples where laws governing human activities and relationships are changed. In one case the law was made stricter and in the other more relaxed.

### Changes Concerning Human Activities and Relationships

The first is the activity of drinking wine. In the Meccan Sura *Al-Nahl* (The Bee) 16:67 revealed a few years before the Hejira there is a list of beverage blessings starting with water and milk, and ending with honey. Included in this list is the following:

And among fruits, ye have the palm and the vine, from which ye get wine (*sakar* سَكْرٌ) and healthful nutriment: in this, verily, are signs for those who reflect.

Wine, here, is regarded as a sign or proof of God's interest and provision for us.

In the Sura *Al-Baqara* (The Heifer) 2:219, from 2 AH, we read:

They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: 'In them is great sin and some profit for men; But the sin is greater than the profit.'

This verse discourages the use of wine, but does not give an absolute command to abstain from it, which is also true of the following passage from the Sura *Al-Nisa'* (The Women) 4:43, 5- 6 AH, where we read:

Oh ye true believers, come not to prayer when ye are drunken (*sukara* سُكَارَى), but wait until you can understand what you say.

But in the Sura *Al-Ma'ida* (The Table) 5:93, 94, from 10 AH, we find:

Oh, ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling... are an abomination, of Satan's handiwork: Eschew such that ye may prosper, Satan's plan is to excite enmity and hatred between you with

intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will ye not then abstain?

These two verses are a strong prohibition using two commands, “eschew” (put them aside) and “abstain” from them. Therefore, this last revelation from 10 AH has removed any ambiguities or doubt that rested in the earlier verses.

Dr. Muhammed Abdul Rauf makes this same point in his book *Al-Qur'an — Introduction and Sample Texts*.<sup>6</sup>

When we as Muslims, seek to learn this (chronological order of the revelations), our aim is more than academic. The dating of a passage may be significant in making inferences related to the Qur'anic guidance. When we learn, e.g., that 4,43 which implies the prohibition of drinking wine when the time of prayer approaches, preceded 5,90 (the same as Yusef Ali's 5:93,94 above) which stipulates absolute prohibition of wine, we realize that the prohibition of drinking wine is extended to all times. Therefore, the study of this subject was an important pursuit since early times; and an adequate knowledge of it is one of the necessities for the students of Islamic Law.

Our second example is from the teaching on marriage. In the Sura, *Al-Baqara* (The Heifer) 2:221, from 2 AH, we read:

Do not marry unbelieving woman (idolaters) until they believe: a slave woman who believes is better than an idolater (or polytheist) even though she allure you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe. A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever even though he allure you. Unbelievers only beckon you to the fire.

This same idea is repeated in the Sura *Al-Nisa'* (The Women) 4:25, AH 5 or 6, where it says:

If any of you does not have the money to marry a believing free woman he may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess (girls taken captive in a jihad or holy war).

The teaching here is very clear that both men and women should marry only believers because the unbeliever may lead one to unbelief and the fire of hell. But in the Sura *Al-Ma'ida* (The Table) 5:6, given four years later in 10 AH, the rule is changed and we read:

Chaste women who are believers (Muslims) and chaste women from those to whom the Book came before your time (Jews and Christians), may be taken in marriage.

The rule has now been broadened to include Jewish and Christian women as lawful wives.

## **Changes in the Form of Worship**

Another area where we might expect to find changes is in the ceremonies of worship — how to pray, for example. In fact, we find an example of that in the Sura *Al-Baqara* (The Heifer) 2:142-144 from the year AH 2. The Qibla, or direction toward which one should pray, was changed from Jerusalem to the sacred mosque of Mecca. We read:

The fools among the people will say: ‘What has turned them from their Qibla toward which they used to face?’ Say: to God belongs both the East and West...and we appointed the Qibla toward which you used to face so that we might know those who follow the Apostle from those who turn on their heels. The change is a difficulty, but not to those who God guides... but we will have thee turn to a Qibla that will please thee. Turn then thy face toward the sacred Mosque.

From these examples we see that changes were ordered, both in the form of worship and in the commands for personal behavior, during the 23 years of Qur'anic revelation. We are not

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<sup>6</sup> *Al-Qur'an: Introduction and Sample Text* (Washington DC: Islamic Center) p.16

surprised, therefore, to find differences of this nature between the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the Qur'an. One example will suffice. In Chapter 115 of *Barnabas*, Jesus is represented as saying,

Let a man content himself, therefore, with the wife whom His Creator has given him, and let him forget every other woman.

But in the Sura *Al-Nisa'* (The Women) 4:3, 5-6 AH, we read:

Marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if you fear that you cannot do justice, then marry one.

So we see that in the *Gospel of Barnabas*, as in the Canonical Gospels, Jesus orders a man to content himself with one wife, while the Qur'an goes back to the polygamy allowed in the Torah of Moses, but limits the number to four wives.

### Unacceptable Differences

There is, however, a type of difference which is much more difficult to reconcile with the belief that both the Qur'an and the *Gospel of Barnabas* were written by God. That is a disagreement about a historical fact. For example, if the *Gospel of Barnabas* were to say that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (which it does say in Chapter 3), and the Qur'an were to say that he was born in Jerusalem (which the Qur'an does not say) they could not both be right. One would have to be wrong. It would be difficult to maintain that they were both from God.

With this in mind we must now examine and compare the two books. When we turn to the *Gospel of Barnabas* we find that there are a number of passages which contradict the Qur'an in matters of fact.

#### a) Jesus' Birth

In *Barnabas* Chapter 3 we read:

Joseph having arrived at Bethlehem... he found no place, wherefore he took lodging outside the city in a lodging made for a shepherds' shelter. While Joseph abode there the days were fulfilled for Mary to bring forth. The virgin was surrounded by a light exceeding bright, and brought forth her son without pain, whom she took in her arms, and wrapping him in swaddling clothes, laid him in the manger, because there was no room in the inn.

However in the Sura *Maryam* (Mary) 19:22-27 given 7 years before the Hejira we find:

And she (Mary) conceived him and she retired with him to a remote place, and the birth pains drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. She said, 'Oh would that I had died before this and had been gone and forgotten'.

But (a voice) called to her from beneath her, 'Grieve not! for thy Lord has provided a streamlet at thy feet...So eat and drink and cool your eye. And if you see any man, say, have vowed a fast to the Most Gracious One and today I will talk with no one.' At length she brought the babe to her people.

In comparing these two accounts we see that they differ in at least two matters. First of all *Barnabas* indicates that Mary had the baby in the shepherds' shelter while the Qur'an says that she was outside under a palm tree. This is not very serious in itself and could be reconciled by saying she rushed outside during a pain, but had the baby in the shelter.

The second point is more serious however. The Qur'an says that Mary had such pain that it made her cry out. But the *Gospel of Barnabas* specifically claims that she brought forth her son "without pain", implying that this was part of the miracle. The Raggs pointed this contradiction

out in their original analysis in 1907 and explained that “(This idea) was an accepted part of Latin Mediaeval Christianity.”<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, in addition to contradicting the Qur’an, this statement is the first of many examples which we will look at, showing that the author of *Barnabas* was much more familiar with the customs and thought of medieval Christianity than he was with those of Palestine at the time of Christ.

### **b) Human Beings and Angels at the Time of Judgement**

In Chapter 53 of the *Gospel of Barnabas* a list is given of what will happen during each of the last fifteen days of earthly history. The end of the list includes the following information.

The thirteenth day the heaven shall be rolled up like a book and it shall rain fire so that every living thing shall die... The fifteenth day the holy angels shall die and God alone shall remain alive; to whom be honor and glory.

But in the Sura ‘*Abasa* (He Frowned) 80:33-37 revealed in the early Meccan period, the last day, the day of judgement, is described with these words:

And when there comes the deafening noise (or stunning trumpet blast), that day shall a man flee from his own brother and his mother and his father and from his wife and his children. For every man of them on that day his own concerns shall be enough.

And in the Sura *Al-Haqqa* (The Sure Reality), 69:13-18 from the middle Meccan period we read:

And when one blast shall be blown on the trumpet, and the earth and the mountains are moved and are crushed to powder in one stroke — on that day shall happen the great happening, and the sky will be split, for it will that day be flimsy, and the angels will be on its sides, and eight will uphold the throne of their Lord that day, above them. Ye shall be brought before Him on that day; none of your hidden deeds shall remain hidden.

In summary, *Barnabas* says that all human beings will die on the 13th day and the angels will die on the 15th day. The Qur’an says that human beings will be running around in fear and dismay on the day of judgement (which would correspond to the 15th day of the *Gospel of Barnabas*) and the angels are present with eight of them holding up God’s throne. Again we find straight forward contradictions and problems.

### **c) Heaven**

In the Sura *Al-Baqara* (The Heifer) 2:29, we read:

He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth. Then He turned to the heaven, and fashioned it as seven heavens. And He is the knower of all things.

The same information stating that there are seven heavens is found in six other Qur’anic verses, given on dates ranging from the early Meccan period to 6 AH.

*Nuh* (Noah) 71:15, early Meccan, “Do you not see how God created seven heavens one above the other.”

*Al-Mulk* (Dominion) 67:3, Middle Meccan, “He who created the seven heavens one above the other.”

*Al-Mu’minun* (The Believers) 23:86, late Meccan, “say, who is the Lord of the seven

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<sup>7</sup> L. and L. Ragg, op.cit., Introduction p. xxv.

heavens...?”

*Ha-Mim Al-Sajda* 41:12, late Meccan, “So He completed them as seven heavens in two days...”

*Bani Isra’il* (The Children of Israel) 17:44, Mecca one year before the Hejira, “The seven heavens and the earth declare His glory.”

*Al-Talaq* (The Divorce) 65:12, 6 AH, “God is He who created seven heavens...”

When we look at *Barnabas*, though, we find different information. In Chapter 105 we read:

I tell you then that the heavens are nine... But all the size of the earth with that of all the heavens is in proportion to paradise as a point.

And in Chapter 178 we read:

Paradise is so great no man can measure it. Verily I say unto thee that the heavens are nine... And verily I say unto thee that paradise is greater than all the earth and all the heavens (together)...

In contradiction to the 7 heavens described in the Qur’an, the *Gospel of Barnabas* says that there are nine heavens; with paradise, the tenth, being above or surrounding the others. This was a widespread idea in the Middle Ages, as is seen in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante,<sup>8</sup> and is a second indication of the medieval origin of the work.

#### **d) The use of the word “Messiah” (Christ)**

##### **(i) The Origin of the Word “Messiah”**

This word “Messiah” which is used in various forms by Jews, Christians and Muslims has its origin in the Jewish Torah. When a new priest or king was to be placed in office, God commanded Moses and said that his head should be anointed with a special oil. He thus became a *mashiakh* in Hebrew — an anointed one.

When God revealed the Psalms (*Zabur*) to David by the Holy Spirit, He spoke of a special “anointed one” (see Psalms 2 and 45). As time passed Jewish believers began to understand that these Psalms and other passages were pointing to a special priest-king who would come with miraculous power, and they began to talk about and wait for this special *mashiakh*.

Later in about 200 BC when Jewish scholars made their own Greek translation of the *Torah* and the *Zabur*, they used *christos*, the Greek word for “anointed”, to translate the Hebrew *mashiakh*. And from this we get the English word “Christ”. Thus when John the Baptist came (Yahya Ibn Zakariya of the Qur’an), the Jewish people asked him, “Are you the *mashiakh*?” i.e. the promised special Messiah, and he answered, “No, I am not the Christ (*mashiakh*)... I am not (even) worthy to untie the straps of his sandals”. (Luke 3:15-16). When he comes he “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16).

During his earthly ministry, Jesus taught that he, himself, was the promised *mashiakh* or Messiah, for whom the Jewish people were waiting. After he ascended his followers continued to teach this truth. When they explained the gospel, the good news about the forgiveness of sins, to

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<sup>8</sup> Canto II, lines 102-132; canto XXII, lines 61-69; canto XXVII, lines 109-117; and canto XXVIII, lines 16-49. For good notes and a map of the heavens according to Dante, see L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds, *The Divine Comedy - A New Translation*, (London: Penguin Books, 1962) Also Edmund Gardner, *Dante's Ten Heavens* (Constable, 1900).

Jews, they used the Hebrew *mashiakh*. When they spoke to people who knew Greek, they usually used the Greek word *christos* (and because of this they were called Christians). Sometimes, however, they used the Hebrew *mashiakh* even with the Greeks, but since Greek has no “sh”, and since “kh”, was often ignored in transliteration, the word became *messias* (see John 1:4 and 4:25). This spelling brought over through Latin became *messia* in Italian and can be seen twice in Figure 8 (photograph of page No. 213 of the Italian manuscript of the *Gospel of Barnabas*). Thus, for example, Al-Maurid, A modern English-Arabic Dictionary by Munir Ba‘alkaki published in 1987 lists both words as follows:<sup>9</sup>

messiah مسيح

Messias يسوع المسيح

We can conclude therefore, that when Christians use *mashiakh* in Hebrew, or *messiah* in English, or *messias* in Greek, or *messia* in Italian, they are referring to Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary.

### (ii) “The Messiah” in the Qur’an

The Qur’an also has a number of verses about Jesus, so we are not surprised to find that the name “messiah” (*Al-Masih* المسيح) is present there too. When we look up the word, we find that it is used 11 times in the Qur’an in eight different sections as shown below.

1. *Ali ‘imran* (The Family of ‘Imran) 3:45, AH 2-3. “Behold! the angels said: O Mary! God gives thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: His name will be the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary.”
2. *Al-Nisa’* (The Women) 4:157, AH 3-5. “And they said, We killed the Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary, the Apostle of God’; but they didn’t kill him.”
3. *Al-Nisa’* (The Women) 4:171-172. “The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was only an apostle of God and His Word which He put on Mary, and a Spirit from Him,... The Messiah does not disdain to be a servant of God.”
4. *Al-Ma’ida* (The Table) 5:19, AH 10. “In blasphemy are those who say that God is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say, ‘Who then has any power against God, if He wanted to destroy the Messiah, the son of Mary, his mother, and everyone on the earth.’”
5. *Al-Ma’ida* (The Table) 5:75. “They blaspheme who say that God is the Messiah, the son of Mary... and the Messiah said, ‘Oh Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’”
6. *Al-Ma’ida* (The Table) 5:78. “The Messiah, the son of Mary, was no more than an apostle.”
7. *Al-Tauba* (Repentance) 9:30, AH 9. “And the Christians said that the Messiah is the Son of God. That is their saying from their mouths.”
8. *Al-Tauba* (Repentance) 9:31. “...As well as the Messiah, the son of Mary.”

It is perfectly clear from these verses that the Qur’an gives the title “Messiah” to Jesus the son of Mary. Some of these passages were given as late as 9 and 10 AH, or the very end of the Qur’anic

<sup>9</sup> Dar El-Ilm, Lil-Malayan, Beirut 1987.

revelations, so there is no question of any change in the meaning of the word. Though they may disagree about other things, Christians and Muslims firmly agreed that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary was the Messiah.

### (iii) “The Messiah” According to the Author of the Gospel of Barnabas

As a first century Jew and claiming to be one of Jesus’ disciples, we would expect such a Barnabas to be using the word “messiah” many times when speaking of Jesus. One is surprised to read, therefore, the following eight sections from the *Gospel of Barnabas* and find that the name “messiah” is used for another person.

1. Chapter 42. “They sent the Levites saying, ‘Who art thou?’ Jesus confessed and said the truth, ‘I am not the Messiah.’”<sup>10</sup>
2. Chapter 82. “Said the woman: ‘O Lord, perchance thou art the Messiah.’ Jesus answered: ‘I am indeed sent to the house of Israel as a prophet of salvation, but after me shall come the Messiah.’”
3. Chapter 83. “And (Jesus) said to them: ‘This night shall be in the time of the Messiah, messenger of God, the Jubilee every year — that now cometh every hundred years...’”
4. Chapter 96. “The priest answered, ‘In the book of Moses it is written that our God must send us the Messiah... Art thou the Messiah of God whom we expect?’ Jesus answered, I am not he.”
5. Chapter 96. “‘Tell us in what wise the Messiah will come.’ Jesus answered, ‘... I am not the Messiah.’”
6. Chapter 97. “Then said the priest, ‘How shall the Messiah be called ...?’ Jesus answered, ‘...Muhammad is his blessed name.’”
7. Chapter 198. “Jesus answered, ‘...but since I have confessed...that I am not the Messiah, therefore God hath taken away the punishment from me.’”
8. Chapter 206. “The High Priest said, ‘Tell me, O Jesus, hast thou forgotten all that thou didst confess, that thou art not... the Messiah?’ Jesus said ‘Certainly not... and I am God’s servant and desire to serve God’s messenger whom ye call Messiah.’”<sup>11</sup>

These eight passages say plainly and openly that Jesus is not the Messiah — that Muhammad is the Messiah. In addition, there are at least seven others which make the same claim. These are found in Chapters 42 (a second time), 43, 112, 142, 191, 208, and 210 for a total of fifteen passages.

This teaching is in blatant contradiction to the Qur’an which teaches, as we saw above, that the Messiah is Jesus the son of Mary. It is also in blatant contradiction with Christian scriptures. In I John 2:22, we read, “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah)? This is the anti-Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This verse is visible in the photograph of the Vienna ms. p. 44r, (see Figure 9).

<sup>11</sup> See the photograph of the Vienna ms., p. 213r (Figure 8).

<sup>12</sup> If a reader should see one of the rare Arabic copies of the *Gospel of Barnabas*, he will find that the Italian word *messia* has not been translated into Arabic and written *masih* (مسيح). Instead it was transliterated. That means that the Italian *messia* has been left as is, but written in Arabic letters as *masiya* (مسيياً). Why the Arabic translator left

## CONCLUSION

We have examined 21 verses or passages where the *Gospel of Barnabas* is in factual disagreement with 26 Qur'anic passages. To add these contradictions to the Qur'an will only result in a loss of credibility.

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the word as *masya* (مَسِيًّا) rather than writing *masih* (مَسِيح), I do not know.

## CHAPTER II

### AUTHORSHIP OF BARNABAS. WAS THE WRITER A JEW OF THE TIME OF CHRIST?

According to the *Gospel of Barnabas*, the writer, speaking in the first person, claims to be one of Jesus' twelve disciples. He traveled with Jesus throughout Palestine. He was present at the miracles Jesus did. He had heard and knew Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the Jewish leaders. From this we can make the following assumptions.

- A. He would know who the Jewish High Priest was and when Pilate, the Roman Governor, took office.
- B. He would know the geography of Palestine having walked around through most of it with Jesus.
- C. He would know the general plan of the Temple and the feasts of his Jewish religion.
- D. His native language would be Aramaic, but he would know at least some of the classical Hebrew of the Torah; and if he was educated he would probably know Greek, and possibly even Latin.
- E. He would know where the hated Roman troops were and approximately how many were stationed in his country.

Having established this picture of a Jew living at the time of Christ, we must now see whether the author of *Barnabas* shows this knowledge, or not. What we discover is that the *Gospel of Barnabas* makes errors in every one of these areas.

#### **A. Errors in Knowledge of Who the Leaders Were in His Country.**

In Chapter 3 of *Barnabas* we read,

There reigned at that time in Judea, Herod, by decree of Caesar Augustus, and Pilate was governor in the priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. Wherefore, by decree of Augustus all the world was enrolled; wherefore each one went to his own country... Joseph accordingly departed from Nazareth, a city of Galilee, with Mary his wife great with child to go to Bethlehem.

The last sentence showing Mary to be "great with child" tells us that the author is speaking about the period when Christ was born. According to the best historical and archeological evidence available Jesus was born in 4 BC. So the *Gospel of Barnabas* is correct when it says that Herod reigned in Judea when Christ was born.

But what shall we say of the other people mentioned? When we look at secular history we find that Pilate did not become governor until 26 AD and that he held this position from 26 to 36 AD. In other words he was governor when Jesus started preaching, as Luke says correctly in Chapter 3 of his Gospel; but not at time of Jesus' birth in 4 BC, as Barnabas incorrectly says.

As for the priests, Annas was high priest from 6 AD to 15 AD, when he was deposed by the Roman procurator. But he continued to have great authority and was consulted on all important matters and interrogated Jesus when he was captured. Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, was high priest from 18 AD to 36 AD. Again we see that neither of them were in power when Jesus

was born in 4 BC. In summary, counting from Jesus' birth in 4 BC, Barnabas is 10 years off with Annas, 22 years off with Caiaphas, and 30 years off with Pilate.

In addition Herod (Antipas) is spoken of as having power and soldiers at his command in Jerusalem and Judea (Chapter 214). This is false for his authority was in Galilee, 60 miles away (See Figure 2). In Chapter 217 Herod is called a Gentile who "adored the false and lying gods." The truth is he practiced the Jewish law, and believed in one God. The reason he was in Jerusalem to be consulted during Jesus' trial was because he had traveled there from Galilee for the feast of the Passover.

## **B. Mistakes in Geography**

In general, the *Gospel of Barnabas* repeats the topographical indications contained in the New Testament, but the author makes several mistakes.

### **i) Position of Tyre (Tiro)**

We read in Chapter 99 of the *Gospel of Barnabas*, that after feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes,

Jesus, having withdrawn into a hollow part of the desert in Tiro near to Jordan, called together the seventy-two with the twelve.

This sentence states that Tiro (Tyre) is near the Jordan River. In fact, Tyre is in present day Lebanon on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea (see Figure 1), more than 30 miles (50 kilometers) from the Jordan River.

### **ii) Nazareth on the Shore of the Sea of Galilee**

In Chapter 20 of the Italian manuscript, we find this curious description. Jesus and his disciples embarked on the Sea of Galilee and sailed<sup>13</sup> toward Nazareth. On the sea, the miracle of stilling the tempest took place. Then the text continues;

Having arrived at the city of Nazareth, the seamen spread through the city all that Jesus had wrought.

Jesus stayed for a while in Nazareth and then in Chapter 21 it says that he "went up to Capernaum."

Nazareth is thus placed at the shore of the sea and Capernaum is inland. In reality, Capernaum is on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and Nazareth is more than 15 miles away as can be seen in Figure 1.

We find the same imprecision later when Jesus decides to go from Damascus to Judea. In one long passage given over to arguments with the Pharisees and descriptions of a true Pharisee, we find at the beginning of Chapter 143 that Jesus left from Damascus and "came to Nazareth." After more discussion, we read in Chapter 151 that "Jesus then embarked on a ship." This passage further confirms our understanding that for the author of *Barnabas*, Nazareth is on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

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<sup>13</sup> In Arabic "sailed" has been incorrectly translated as "travelled" in order to lessen this difficulty.

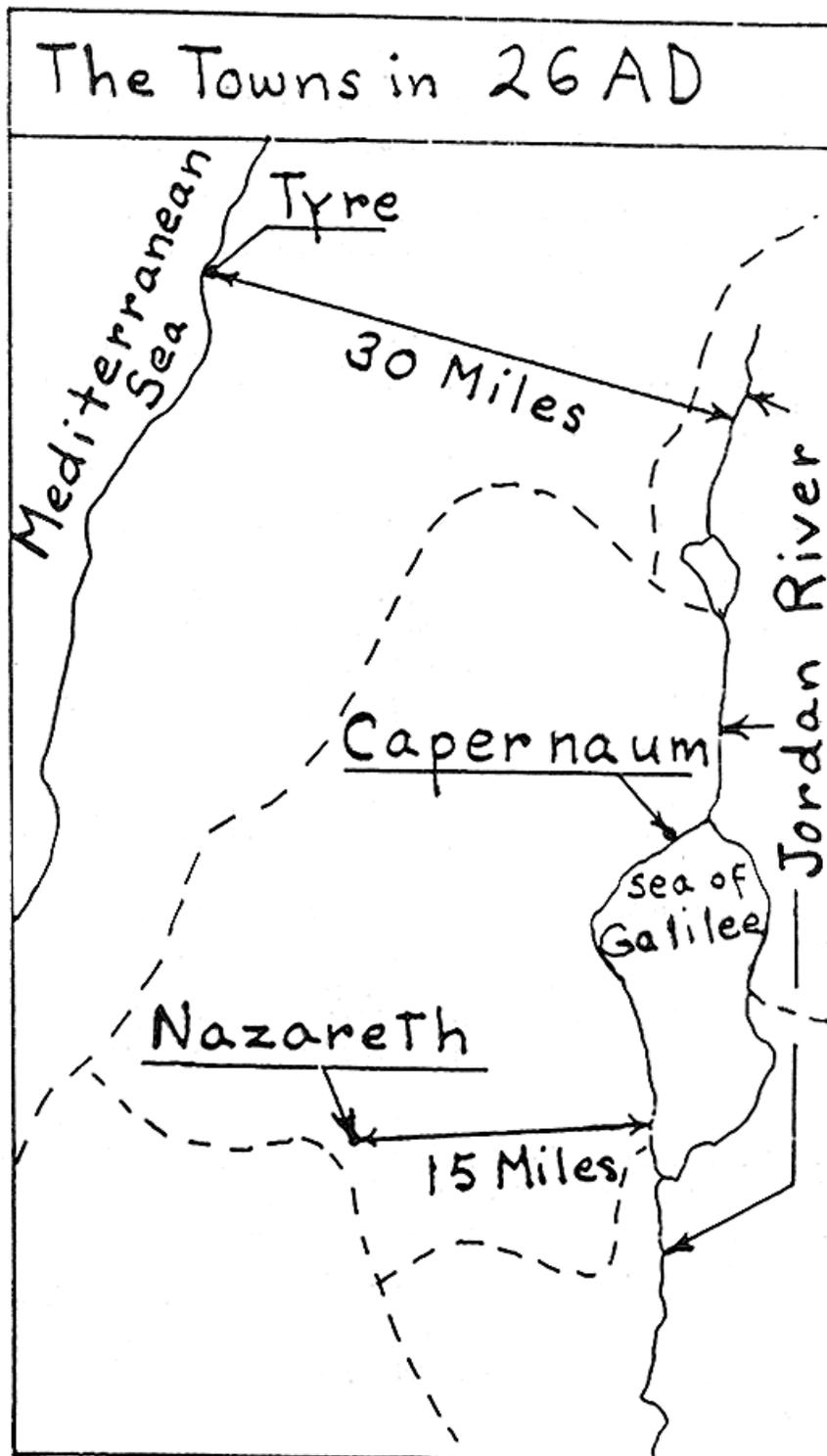


Fig. 1 Towns of Palestine in 26 AD

### iii) He Speaks of Israel and Samaria as Separate Places.

During the time of the kings from the tenth to the sixth century BC, Palestine was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah, as can be seen in map A of Figure 2. In Jesus' day, the northern part of Palestine, formerly called Israel, was made up of two regions called Samaria and Galilee. One no longer spoke of Judah and Israel. One spoke of Judea, Galilee and Samaria. This can be clearly seen on map B in Figure 2.

In Chapter 100 of *Barnabas* the disciples are to go and preach throughout Judea and Israel. But a few lines farther on, the text speaks of passing throughout Samaria, Judea, and Israel. What does the author call Samaria? What does he call Israel? As we have seen on the two maps, "Israel" and "Samaria" are two different names for the same region, but used at different times. The mistake is repeated in Chapter 126 where it says that Jesus sent his disciples throughout "Israel." An eye-witness would have been much more precise.

### iv) Nineveh is Placed Near the Mediterranean Sea.

It is well-known that the town of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, was built on the eastern bank of the Tigris river, on an outlet known by the name of Al-khisr in northern Iraq. But in Chapter 63 of *Barnabas* we read:

Remember that God decided to destroy Nineveh because there was no one in that town who feared Him. He (Jonah) tried to escape to Tarsus (Spain), being afraid of the people, but God threw Him into the sea and a fish swallowed him and cast him out near Nineveh.

For the author of *Barnabas*, Nineveh is near the Mediterranean Sea, when in reality it was 400 miles away in Iraq.<sup>14</sup>

In summary, when the author of *Barnabas* separates himself from the four Canonical Gospels, he almost always falls into error. The Raggs also noted this in 1907. In the preface to their translation they wrote,

His geographical ignorance matches his chronological vagueness... Evidently he possesses no firsthand knowledge of Palestine, still less of Palestine in the first century of our era.<sup>15</sup>

## C. Mistakes in Culture and Religious Knowledge

As we argued in the introduction to this section, we would expect one of Jesus' disciples to know all about the 1<sup>st</sup> century customs and religious festivals, but in fact, the author of this book makes many mistakes.

### i) Culture

#### a. Wine Casks

In Chapter 152 where we read about the Roman soldiers being miraculously thrown out of the Temple by Jesus, it says,

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<sup>14</sup> Iskandar Jadeed, *The Gospel of Barnabas "A False Testimony"*, (Rikon, Switzerland: The Good Way).

<sup>15</sup> Lonsdale and Laura Ragg, op. cit., p. xxi.

Whereupon straight-way the soldiers were rolled out of the Temple as one rolls casks of wood when they are washed to refill them with wine.

Now where did these wine barrels come from? Invented in Gaul, they didn't appear in Italy until the 1st century. Up to the present no trace of them has been found in archeological excavations of 1st century Palestine. If there were any they would have been very rare. The Jews used vessels of pottery to store their wine. It is a word picture from and for the Middle Ages but it would not be understood in the 1st century.

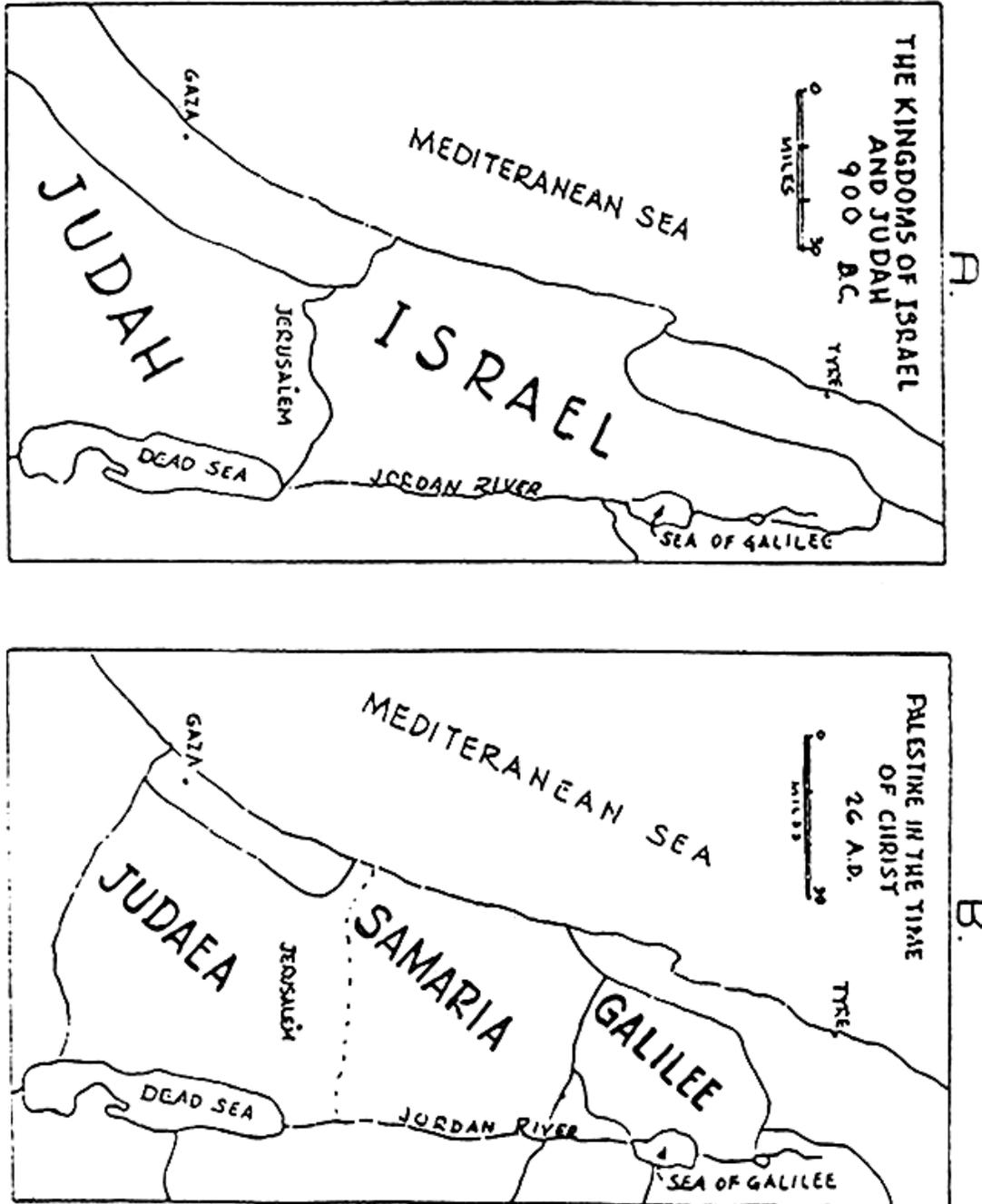


Fig. 2 Palestine in 900 BC and 26 AD

## **b. 200 Pieces of Gold**

In Chapter 6 of John's Gospel where it speaks of the 5,000 men who had spent the whole day with Jesus and were now hungry, the Apostle Philip remarks that "two hundred pennies" would not be enough to buy bread for everyone. Philip is referring to two hundred silver coins each weighing about an eighth of an ounce, a type of Roman money well-known at that time and representing a day's pay. A modern translation makes this clear by using the phrase "eight month's wages",<sup>16</sup> and a paraphrase for children has Philip exclaim "It would cost a fortune".<sup>17</sup>

In the Italian manuscript of *Barnabas*, Chapter 98, Philip's answer has become, "Lord, two hundred pieces of gold could not buy so much bread that each one should taste a little." But with 200 pieces of gold one could easily buy enough bread for everyone and have a lot left over. Philip's remark then loses all value.

How did this change come about? The English word "pennies" is used to translate the Latin word *denarii* — singular *denarius* — which is the word actually used in the Greek New Testament. By the Middle Ages, the Latin word *denarius*, slightly transformed to *dinar*, meant a gold coin. The medieval origin of the *Gospel of Barnabas* is starting to show through.

## **ii) Religious Customs**

### **a. "The Forty Days"**

What is this fast of 40 days spoken of in Chapter 92 where it says, "And there Jesus with his disciples kept the forty days (*allo quadragesima* in Italian)"? The writer mentions it as though it would be completely understood by his readers — as indeed Lent would be in later Christian periods, because it is a late Christian idea. No such fast existed among the Jews of Jesus' day.

### **b. Regular Prayers Several Times a Day Including Midnight**

What are these prayers which Jesus prays regularly — he and everyone with him? Prayers spoken of as being known by all? For example, note the following,

Chapter 155: "Jesus, who was gone out of the Temple, and was sitting in Solomon's porch, waiting to pray the midday prayer."

Chapter 156: "When he had made the midday prayer." (Also Chapter 163)

Chapter 61: "Then Jesus opening his mouth after the evening (prayer)."

Chapter 100: "Every evening when the first star shall appear, when prayer is made to God."

Chapter 83: "After the prayer of midnight the disciples came near unto Jesus."

Chapter 89: "Jesus answered, 'It is time that we say the prayer of the dawn.'"

Chapter 106: "When he had finished the prayer of the dawn, Jesus sat down."

The author mentions at least four daily prayer times as though they occur at set hours known to everyone. The first century Jews did have a custom of praying three times a day, but there was no prayer at midnight. No *Barnabas* would have spoken of the "prayer of midnight" at the time of Christ. The author has introduced a custom of the later Christians who prayed, for example,

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<sup>16</sup> *New International Version*, (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1982)

<sup>17</sup> *The Living Bible*, (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1982).

the matin-midnight prayers.

### c. The Jubilee

In Chapter 82 we read,

Jesus answered: I am indeed sent to the house of Israel as a prophet of salvation; but after me shall come the Messiah (Muhammad) sent of God to all the world; for whom God has made the world. And then through all the world will God be worshipped, and mercy received, insomuch that the year of jubilee, which now comes every hundred years, shall by the Messiah be reduced to every year in every place.'

What is this jubilee that “now comes every 100 years”? The Jewish year of jubilee was every fifty years (Torah of Moses, Leviticus 25:8-55). The only possible explanation is that “Barnabas” has written his work after the year 1300 AD. Before that date a time span of 100 years would have been considered a complete error. After that date, everything becomes clear. *Barnabas* makes an allusion, not to the Jewish Jubilee, but to a Christian Jubilee instituted by Pope Boniface VIII. It was to be celebrated every 100 years and was celebrated for the first time in 1300 AD. Part of this Christian Jubilee was that the believers should receive forgiveness of sin. Later Popes changed it, first to 50 years, then to 33 year intervals, and finally every 25 years. Since 1450 the Holy Years have been celebrated at this interval.<sup>18</sup>

The author of *Barnabas* seems to know about this reduction too. For as we saw above he writes, “the year of jubilee...shall by the Messiah be reduced to every year.” This passage, by itself, is very strong evidence that the work was written after 1300 and indeed long enough after 1300 so that the reduction in intervals had already begun. In any case, there was no such thing as a Jewish year of Jubilee every 100 years when Jesus was walking around in Palestine.

## D. Language Errors

### i) The Pinnacle of the Temple

The author does not know what is meant by the pinnacle of the Temple (*pinocchio* in Italian). According to his use of the word he seems to understand it to be the place where the scribes stood to preach. In Chapter 12 it says,

Therefore the priests besought Jesus, saying: ‘This people desires to hear you and see you; therefore ascend to the pinnacle and if God gives you a word speak it in the name of the Lord.’ Then Jesus ascended to the place whence the scribes were wont to speak.

Again in Chapter 127-129 we read,

So after the reading of the Psalms Jesus mounted up on the pinnacle where the scribe used to mount, and, having beckoned for silence with his hand, he said, ‘Blessed be the Holy name of God...’ And having said this, Jesus prayed... When he had finished his prayer he descended from the pinnacle.

The person who made the Arabic translation understood the word in the same way and translated the Italian *pinocchio* with the Arabic word *dikka* (دِكَّة) the platform from which one speaks in the mosque. But, in reality, the pinnacle was a high point on the exterior border at the top of the temple from where one could easily feel dizzy and risk falling. It was certainly not the place from which the scribes spoke to the people.

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<sup>18</sup> Jomier, op. cit., note on p. 223.

## ii) Meaning of the Word Pharisee

The author speaks of Pharisees often and at great length, and in Chapter 144 he talks of their origin and the meaning of the word. We read,

(Jesus said) Tell me, know ye your origin, and wherefore the world began to receive Pharisees? Surely I will tell you... Enoch, a friend of God, who walked with God in truth... was translated into paradise... And so men, having knowledge of this, through desire of paradise, began to seek God their creator. For “Pharisee” strictly means “seeks God” in the language of Canaan, for there did this name begin by way of deriding good men, seeing that the Canaanites were given up to idolatry, which is the worship of human hands. Whereupon the Canaanites beholding... such a one, said ‘Pharisee!’ that is, ‘He seeks God.’

And in Chapter 145 we read,

As God lives, in the time of Elijah, friend and prophet of God, there were twelve mountains inhabited by seventeen thousand Pharisees; and so it was that in so great a number there was not found a single reprobate, but all were elect of God.

From this it is clear that the author believes that the word “Pharisee” means “seeks God”, and that the Jewish religious group known as the Pharisees started when the Canaanites had power in Palestine. This would place it before the time of David who eliminated all foreign rule in that country — that is, before 1000 BC. According to the *Gospel of Barnabas* the group grew so that when Elijah was a prophet in the 9th century BC there were 17,000 of them.

As we read on in Chapters 145-150 we find that the Pharisees are described as a religious movement, organized into a “congregation”, following “the rule” formed by Elijah, and wearing a special uniform or robe — “the habit of the Pharisees.” They are told to live in solitude, speaking with men once a month; to rise from the table hungry; to sleep two hours a night and that only on the earth; all this as though they were a congregation of monks from the Middle Ages.

In fact, the movement of the Pharisees only dates from the second century before Jesus. They are not mentioned in any of the literature concerning the Maccabean revolts from 168 to 135 BC, revolts in which a patriotic and zealous movement such as the Pharisees would surely have participated. The earliest historical reference to them which can be dated is in *Antiquities of the Jews* xiii. 10. 5f by Josephus where he reports a schism between the Pharisees and John Hyrcanus, a Jewish ruler who was at the same time High Priest and who died in 104 BC.

The Pharisees were not monks, but people living in the world and usually married. Certain of them even recommended learning a manual trade in a spirit of simplicity and humility. In addition the word “pharisee” is a Hebrew word which does not mean “seeks God”. It probably means “separated”. The Pharisees were the separated ones. A Jewish contemporary of Jesus would never describe the Pharisees in the terms used by the author of *Barnabas*.

## iii) Feast of Tabernacles

In Chapter 15 of *Barnabas* we read, “When the feast of Tabernacles was near, a certain rich man invited Jesus...” This phrase written in Italian as “*la festa di Tabernacholi*” is correct. The Jews had such a feast (Torah of Moses, Leviticus 23:33-36) and Jesus surely celebrated it. However, in Chapter 30 of *Barnabas*, which is still describing the first year of Jesus’ ministry (see Chapter 47), we read,

Jesus went to Jerusalem, near into the Senofegia, a feast of our nation.

The problem is that this word “senofegia” is a deformation of the Greek word *skenopegia* which means tabernacles. The author has made Jesus celebrate the “feast of tabernacles” twice in one year because the author does not know that the Greek word *senofegia* means exactly the same as the Latin *tabernacoli*.

#### **iv) The Pool Called Probatca**

In Chapter 65 of *Barnabas* we find,

And he (Jesus) went to the pool called Probatca. And the bath was so called because the angel of God every day troubled the water, and whosoever first entered the water after its movement was cured of every kind of infirmity.

For the author of *Barnabas* the meaning of the word “probatca” is located in the phrase which follows — viz., either in the “troubling or movement of the waters”, or perhaps the “healing”. In fact, the word has no such meaning. It means simply “of the sheep” in Greek and is so utilized in the Gospel according to John 5:2 where we read, “Now there is in Jerusalem near the gate of the sheep (Probatca) a pool which in Aramaic is called Bethesda.” Again the author errs because he does not know the meaning of the Greek word “*probatca*”. The Raggs in the introduction to their 1907 translation, give several examples showing that the author of *Barnabas* was actually using the Vulgate, a Latin translation of the 4th century, as the basis for his Biblical knowledge and had little or no understanding of Greek, the language in which most of the New Testament was originally written.

### **E. Errors Concerning the Roman Military Power in Palestine During the Time of Jesus’ Ministry**

To have a quick overall view of how Rome distributed its troops at the time of Christ, we need only look at the *Annals* of the Roman historian Tacitus who lived from about 55 to 117 AD. In Book IV, Chapters 4 and 5, he writes about the distribution of Roman troops under the reign of the Emperor Tiberius who ruled from 14 to 37 AD. We read as follows,

Tiberius also rapidly enumerated the legions and the provinces which they had to garrison. I too ought, I think, to go through these details, and thus show what forces Rome then had under arms, what kings were our allies, and how much narrower then were the limits of our empire.

Italy on both seas was guarded by fleets, at Misenum and at Ravenna... But our chief strength was on the Rhine, as a defense alike against Germans and Gauls, and numbered eight legions. Spain, lately subjugated, was held by three. Mauretania was king Juba’s who had received it as a gift from the Roman people. The rest of Africa was garrisoned by two legions, and Egypt by the same number. Next, beginning with Syria, all within the entire tract of country (which included Palestine) stretching as far as the Euphrates, was kept in restraint by four legions, and on this frontier were Iberian, Albanian, and other kings, to whom our greatness was a protection against any foreign power. Thrace was held by Rhomatalces and the children of Cotys; the bank of the Danube by two legions in Pannonia, two in Mossia, and two also were stationed in Dalmatia, which, from the situation of the country, were in the rear of the other four, and, should Italy suddenly require aid, not too distant to be summoned. But the capital was garrisoned by its own special soldiery, three city and nine praetorian cohorts, levied for the most part in Etruria and Umbria, or ancient Latium and the old Roman colonies.

When we add up these numbers we see that there were just 25 legions, or 150,000 Roman soldiers from Spain to the Euphrates river. In addition there were probably another 200,000

auxiliaries for a grand total of 350,000 men to keep the peace in the whole Roman Empire.

**i) Roman Forces in Tunisia as an Example**

As an example of the way in which Rome stationed its troops during the time of Tiberius, we shall consider Tunisia. The Roman military strategy is clearly outlined in *Histoire de la Tunisie - L'Antiquité* in the section "Rome et L'Apogée" by Ammar Mahjoubi.<sup>19</sup> He states,

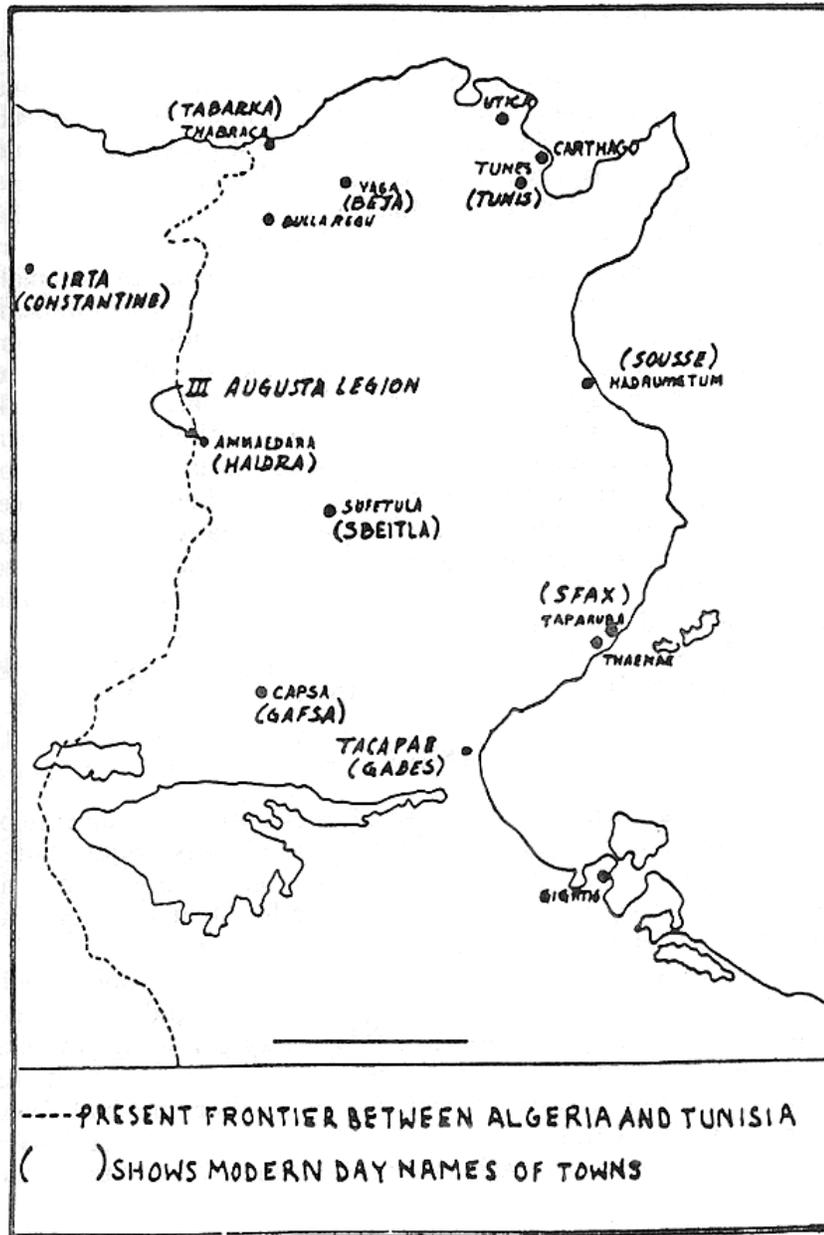


Fig. 3 Roman Tunisia

<sup>19</sup> *Histoire de la Tunisie - L'Antiquité* (Tunis: Société Tunisienne de Diffusion) pp. 137-139.

For the defense of the occupied territory, Rome maintained only a feeble army of occupation: one legion of 5,500 men and a slightly larger number of auxiliaries — foot soldiers, and especially cavalry; for a total of 13,000 men.

He goes on to say that at the time which interests us the legion was limited to Roman citizens (though this changed later), and the auxiliaries were recruited from provinces outside Africa. Many inscriptions have been found giving their names as coming from Spain, Chalcedon in Turkey, etc. During the reign of Tiberius the III Augusta legion was stationed at Ammaedara represented in present day Tunisia by a small village called Haidra a few miles west of Thala on the Tunisian border with Algeria. At the same time they built a road from Tacapae (present day Gabes) to Ammaedara (Haidra) to complete their system of roads which permitted quick displacement of troops to trouble points. Although southern Tunisia was not included in their area, a large section of Algeria over as far as Constantine was under their surveillance, as can be seen on the map in Figure 3. Finally, according to the same source,<sup>20</sup> order was assured in Carthage the capital by one cohort of 600 men detached from the 3rd legion, and who acted under the authority of the proconsuls.

In summary then, 13,000 soldiers were sufficient to keep the peace in an area of more than 50,000 square miles.

### **ii) The Situation in Palestine.**

In Palestine with an area of about 10,000 square miles the situation was similar except that Rome was doubly hated by the Jews. They were hated, of course, for occupying the country, but they were hated even more for their idolatry. The result was that groups of Jews often rose in revolt.

Because of this possibility of revolt, the Romans could not trust the Jews to be auxiliary soldiers and they were exempted from military service. Pilate was the local governor and representative of Caesar with Roman soldiers at his command. But because Palestine was smaller, he had fewer soldiers to keep the peace. There was a small unit of cavalry and several cohorts — each one of 600 men, for a total of not more than 3,000 men in the whole country.<sup>21</sup>

The Romans were suspicious of large gatherings. They knew that the people tolerated their domination very badly. A Roman garrison, in the fortress of Antonia, watched over the Temple at all times. And at the great feasts, the procurator left his capital at Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem to be ready to act if necessary. It was because of the feast of the Passover that Pilate was in Jerusalem and could try Jesus in 30 AD.

### **iii) Soldiers in Palestine According to the Gospel of Barnabas**

a. In Chapter 91 we read,

Thereupon, to quiet the people, it was necessary that the high priest should ride in procession, clothed in his priestly rob, with the holy name of God, the teta gramaton,<sup>22</sup> on his forehead. And

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 242.

<sup>21</sup> See E. Schurer, *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes* (Leipzig, 1901) Vol 1, p. 458-465.

<sup>22</sup> The correct spelling is “tetragrammaton” which means “4 letter word.” This is like misspelling God's name. Though possible, it is difficult to think that a first century Jew whom Jesus ordered to write a Gospel would do this.

in like manner rode the governor Pilate, and Herod.  
Whereupon, in Mizpeh assembled three armies, each one of two hundred thousand men that bore sword.

What are we to say when we read that the Jewish high priest had 200,000 soldiers and the Jewish vassal king Herod had 200,000 soldiers? If these men were Jews — 400,000 Jews — they would have risen in revolt against the 200,000 Romans in order to have their independence. If we are to understand that they were all Roman soldiers and auxiliaries, it would represent more Roman soldiers than actually existed at that time in the whole Roman Empire, and 200 times the number present in Palestine.

We saw above that Tacitus said,

Next (after Egypt) beginning with Syria, all within the entire tract of country stretching as far as the Euphrates (including Palestine), was kept in restraint by four legions.

In other words 24,000 soldiers, plus auxiliaries, had the task of keeping the peace in about 100,000 square miles of territory, an area 10 times that of Palestine. To speak of 600,000 soldiers in Palestine alone is a comedy.

b. The same type of error is found in Chapter 210 where we read,

Then the governor (Pilate) feared the senate and made friends with Herod... and they joined together for the death of Jesus, and said to the high priest: 'Whenever thou shalt know where the malefactor is, send to us, for we will give thee soldiers.'

Now why does the high priest need soldiers if he already has 200,000?

c. Again in Chapter 214 with Judas speaking:

'If you will give me what was promised, this night will I give into your hand Jesus whom you seek; for he is alone with eleven companions.' The high priest answered: 'How much seekest thou?' Said Judas, 'Thirty pieces of gold.' Then straightway the high priest counted unto him the money, and sent a Pharisee to the governor to fetch soldiers, and to Herod, and they gave a legion<sup>23</sup> of them (6,000 soldiers), because they feared the people.

First of all it is unthinkable to send 6,000 soldiers to arrest 12 men. Secondly, the high priest already had 200,000 men. Thirdly, as we saw above, Herod had no power or authority to have or provide soldiers in Jerusalem, as he was the tetrarch of Galilee. Fourthly, as we saw in the historical overview, there was not a legion in all of Palestine and probably not more than a cohort in Jerusalem, which at that time had a normal population of about 60,000 people.<sup>24</sup> Barnabas as an eye-witness should have known all these things.

d. The final error concerning Roman soldiers is found in Chapter 152. Some of them are in the Temple talking with Jesus and he says to them,

'Assuredly, seeing (the Roman idols) make not a single fly afresh, I will not for them forsake that God who hath created everything with a single word; whose name alone affrighteth armies.' The soldiers answered: 'Now let us see this; for we are going to take thee,' and they were going to stretch forth their hands against Jesus. Then said Jesus, 'Adonai Sabaoth!' Whereupon straightway the soldiers were rolled out of the Temple as one rolleth casks of wood when they are washed to

<sup>23</sup> In Arabic they have translated legion (6000 soldiers) as *katiba* (كَيْتَبَة), but *katiba* is the word for battalion (600 soldiers), or cohort in Latin. *Katiba* would agree with the Gospel of John 18:12 which says a cohort with its tribune came, but to use it for "legion" is incorrect.

<sup>24</sup> See F. F. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James and John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 99.

refill them with wine; insomuch that now their head and now their feet struck the ground, and that without any one touching them. And they were so affrighted and fled in such wise that they were never more seen in Judea.

That the soldiers were afraid after being thrown out of the Temple miraculously, and that they fled back to the fortress of Antonia, mentioned above, could obviously be true. But that they “fled in such wise that they were never more seen in Judea” seems very unlikely. The punishment for desertion was death. One can only conclude that being rolled out of the Temple, while turning end over end like pins on a bowling alley, and leaving the country completely is not being serious. It is farce and comedy.

#### **iv) First Century History as Recorded by Luke.**

In contrast when we look at the story of Paul’s imprisonment in Jerusalem recorded in The Book of Acts Chapters 21 and 23 of the Holy Bible, we find that it agrees with secular history in every particular. In Acts 21:26-33 we find the following incident related. Some of the most orthodox Jews had seen Paul walking around Jerusalem with a Greek Christian. They thought that Paul had brought the foreigner into the Temple and desecrated it so they stirred up the crowd.

Then all the city was aroused, and the people ran together; they seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. And as they were trying to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort<sup>25</sup> that all Jerusalem was in confusion. He at once took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them; and when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the tribune came up and arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains.

Next a plot was made by the Jews to kill Paul and the account continues as follows (Acts 23:16-24):

Now the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush; so he went and entered the fortress and told Paul. And Paul called one of the centurions and said, ‘Take this young man to the tribune; for he has something to tell him...’

(The boy spoke to the tribune and said) ‘The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him. But do not yield to them; for more than forty of their men lie in ambush for him, having bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you.’ So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, ‘Tell no one that you have informed me of this.’ Then he called two of the centurions and said, ‘At the 9th hour of the night get ready two hundred soldiers with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea. Also provide mounts for Paul to ride, and bring him safely to Felix the governor.’

Acts 23:31-33:

So the (foot) soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. And on the morrow they returned to the fortress, leaving the horsemen to go on with him. When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him.

We see that Paul was thrown out of the Temple because the Jews thought that he had brought an uncircumcised pagan Greek in and desecrated it. They closed the door of the Temple and started to kill him. The sound came to the tribune of the cohort (Acts 21:31,32) who took soldiers and centurions to put down the disturbance. In Chapter 23:16 Paul’s nephew came to the

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<sup>25</sup> A tribune was over a cohort of 5 to 6 companies. Each company of a hundred men had a centurion in command.

fortress to warn Paul. After hearing the news the tribune called two centurions to prepare 200 foot soldiers, 70 horsemen, and two hundred spearmen. Leaving at 9 P.M. they went in full strength at walking speed down one of those famous Roman roads until they had gone 30 miles to Antipatris. Then the foot soldiers went back to the fortress and the cavalry quickly finished the remaining 30 miles to Caesarea.

Luke was a first century Christian author. His description of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem is in complete agreement with what we know about Jerusalem under Roman occupation.

What a contrast to the false information given by the author of *Barnabas*. It's plain that he was never there.

## Summary

We have now discussed 25 historical, geographical and cultural errors in great detail. We could go on and discuss the statement in Chapter 217 that "the council of the Pharisees" judged Jesus. When in fact the Sanhedrin or Jewish high court was controlled by powerful members of another Jewish religious group called the Sadducees. We could discuss the use of the word Ishmaelites in Chapter 142 — a word no longer in use at the time of Christ. But it would change nothing. The general theme of Jesus who affirms that he is not the Messiah, the numerous erroneous details — historical,, geographical, cultural, religious, and linguistic all lead to the same conclusion.

It is impossible that the *Gospel According to Barnabas* was composed by a "Barnabas" who lived in Palestine at the beginning of the first century, and to this even some Muslim scholars agree.

## Testimony of Muslim Writers that the Gospel of Barnabas is a Forgery

In his book *The Gospel of Barnabas, in the Light of History, Reason and Religion*, the author Aaad Simaan writes:<sup>26</sup>

Some Muslims scholars have studied the Gospel of Barnabas extensively and agree completely with what we have found.

He notes particularly the following two authors.

A. Professor Aabas Mahmoud Aqad writing about *Barnabas* in the newspaper *Al Akhbar*, published October 26, 1959 makes five principal' points.

First he notices that many expressions used in the *Gospel of Barnabas* were not known before the spread of Arabic into Andalusia. Secondly, the description of hell "leans" on late facts not known among Hebrew Christians at the time of Christ (see Chapter IV). Thirdly, some expressions found in it had penetrated into the continent of Europe from Arab sources. Fourthly, the Messiah did not customarily tell the crowds his message in the name of "Muhammad, the Apostle of God." And fifthly, some mistakes mentioned in this gospel are of the type that the Jew familiar with the books of his people would not be ignorant of, and the Christian of the Western Church who believes in the Canonical Gospels does not repeat, and the Muslim who understands the contradictions in the *Gospel of Barnabas* between it and the Qur'an, will not become involved in them.

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<sup>26</sup> إنجيل برنابا في ضوء التاريخ والعقل والدين (Cairo: Publishing and Distribution House of the Episcopal Church) 3rd edn.

B. Dr. Muhammad Chafiq Ghorbal writing in the Arabic Encyclopedia, *Al Misra* under the heading “Barnabas” said as follows:

A forged (or Pseudo) Gospel produced by a European in the 15th century; and in its description of the political and religious condition in Palestine at the time of the Messiah, full of errors. For example, it places on the tongue of Isa (Jesus) that he is not the Messiah, but that he came to announce Muhammad who will be the Messiah.

### **Conclusion**

In the light of all this information, we can only conclude that the *Gospel of Barnabas* has no historical value as an original first century document. From now on we shall refer to it as *Pseudo-Barnabas*, and in the next chapter we shall consider evidence which shows that it was composed much later — many centuries after the time of Christ.

## CHAPTER III

### EVIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS WHICH PROVES AN ORIGIN BETWEEN 1300 AND 1634 AD

In Chapter I we saw that the *Gospel of Barnabas* speaks of 10 heavens, and it was pointed out that in addition to contradicting the Qur'an which speaks of seven heavens, this idea was unknown until the time of Dante in the 13th century. In Chapter II while discussing the many things which were impossibilities for a first century Jew, we found that several of these erroneous statements coincided with customs from the Middle Ages; e.g., a dinar as a gold coin, and the Jubilee which was celebrated every 100 years for the first time in 1300 AD.

In this Chapter we are going to look in greater detail at certain beliefs found in *Barnabas* and their evolution in time. These are Christian beliefs, doctrines, and customs which evolved over the years. If a person is familiar with the Christian literature up through the Middle Ages it is possible to make an educated estimate as to the time when *Pseudo-Barnabas* was actually written.

I am not highly familiar with this literature. Therefore, I have asked for and received permission from Frere J. Jomier O.P. to utilize material from his article "L'Evangile Selon Barnabe" for the arguments in this chapter.<sup>27</sup> I have taken the liberty of shortening some sections; and lengthening others by giving the complete quotation from *Barnabas* rather than giving just the reference. Otherwise, it represents the very fine work of Jomier and his associates. I mention his associates because a note on p. 219 reveals the extensive work necessary even for Catholic Christians familiar with the literature. It reads,

The proceeding study was undertaken by the R.R.P.P. Robillard and Kenzeler whom we thank very sincerely. They spent several days without claiming to have made an exhaustive search. No doubt there exist many other references.

#### **At What Time and in What Place Did the Author of the Gospel of Barnabas Live?**

The question that we will consider now is quite distinct from the preceding one. Until this moment we have compared certain statements of *Pseudo-Barnabas* with what history teaches us about the Palestinian milieu during the first century of the Christian era. From this examination we were able to conclude with certainty that it was not composed in Palestine at the time of Jesus. This conclusion is purely negative, but it is sufficient to speak in an absolute fashion against the authenticity of the work.

Now it is necessary to see what can be said further about this work. As we examine the text it will become clear that the most likely hypothesis is that it was written by an Italian<sup>28</sup> between the 14th and the 16th century. Only the discovery of new documents would permit one to make a more certain pronouncement on the date and place of composition. But, to repeat again, any question of authenticity is completely and incontestably closed.

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<sup>27</sup> *MIDEO* (Melanges; Institute Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales du Caire) Vol. 6 (1959-61) pp. 209-225.

<sup>28</sup> Documents found since Jomier wrote his article in 1959 point to a Spanish origin rather, than an Italian.

## Elements Which Betray a Western Milieu During the End of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance

### i) Tears

Certain details of the *Gospel of Barnabas* are not purely medieval; however they are not out of place at this epoch. Crying is a sign of pain or of emotion. It is a fundamental human reaction. Nevertheless, we know that a whole current of spirituality, coming from the Christian monastic circles, insisted on tears. In the West, this tradition was still alive in the Middle Ages, and one sees in the lives of the saints the importance of the gift of tears. To pour out “as many tears as the sea holds water and to wish to cry still more” for one’s sins as *Pseudo-Barnabas* states in Chapter 103, may be an expression which seems a bit exaggerated to us. But it was probably not so on the lips of a preacher in the Middle Ages and on into the 16th century, at a time when certain saints wrote down daily the favours which God had accorded them of this type.

Here is the essential of what the Rev. P. Robillard wrote to us on this subject.

Tears have a great importance in the Christian east (I. Hausherr, *Penthos, La doctrine de la componction dans l’Orient Chrétien*, [Roma, 1944]). Crying is the duty of the monk, resulting from the exercise, from the practice of the commandments. This tradition passed to the west through Cassien who died about 435, (*Conference 9, de la priere*, ch.29 [P.L., Migne, t.49, 804-805]) and through St. Gregory the Great (*Dialogues*, L.3, ch.34), in about 600 AD. Compunction (regret or remorse), according to St. Gregory the Great, comes to mind at the memory of sin, at the fear of hell, at the thought of misery of this life, at the desire of heaven.

Saint Bernard (died about 1153) marks a new step in the history of this type of spirituality. He gives to tears a mystical signification (d. *In Epiphania Domini*, Sermon 3, P.L., 183, col. 152)... Soon we have works describing the mystical itinerary as a function of tears and their more or less great nobility. Thus the discussion of tears inserted in the *Dialogue* of Saint Catherine of Sienna (died in 1380)... Finally St. Ignace de Loyola, in his spiritual diary, notes the tears which he has poured out (see especially the second book from the 13th of March 1544 to the 27th of February 1545 in St. Ignace, *Journal Spirituel*, translated and commented on by M. Gielliani, [Paris, Desclee-de Brouwer, 1959]).

*Pseudo-Barnabas* speaks of tears because of sin (c.f. Chapters 12, 47, 50, 70, 103, 117, 195, etc), because of the miseries of this life (Chapter 27), because of divine punishment (Chapters 41, 203-204), because of hell (Chapters 55,57-58), because of the desire of paradise (Chapter 112), etc. It mentions crying for a friend or a brother (Chapters 188,193), the tears of Mary for her son (Chapters 209, 219). The crying because of devotion is also found, but it is relatively rare.

### ii) Philosophical Expressions

In Chapter 83, Pseudo-Barnabas represents Jesus as praying,

I confess you are God alone... that has no likeness among men, because in your infinite goodness you are not subject to motion nor to any accident.

In Chapter 133, Jesus is made to say,

Of that father of a family, I tell you verily that he is God our Lord; Father of all things, for that he hath created all things. But he is not a Father after the manner of nature, for that he is incapable of motion, without which generation is impossible.

And again in Chapter 106 we read,

Then said Jesus, ‘As God lives, in whose presence stands my soul, many are deceived concerning

our life. For so closely are the soul and the sense joined together, that the more part of men affirm the soul and the sense to be one and the same thing, dividing it by operation and not by essence, calling it the sensitive, vegetative, and intellectual soul.'

Finally in Chapter 174 there is a discussion as to whether there is putrefaction (rotting) in Paradise.

These philosophical expressions employed in the Italian manuscript do not permit us to date the text with great accuracy. Their presence only shows that the composition took place at a time when educated believers had already reflected on the contents of their faith and placed it in relation to philosophy. Among Christians, the first attempts of this type started in the third century in Alexandria. Among Muslims we find a similar effort by the Arab philosophers.

At first this type of thought was restricted to a limited circle. In contrast we note that Pseudo-Barnabas seems to address himself to a public which already possesses a fairly complete philosophical understanding. He uses a vocabulary which the scholastic teachers of the Middle Ages had made familiar among the educated people in the west by the 13th or 14th century.

To speak of the end, of movement, of accident, of the division of the soul according to essence or operation, and the tripartite aspect of the soul (which we saw mentioned in the above quotations) would have no meaning, unless these ideas were already well understood among his readers. Such a fashion of speaking would not be out of place for an educated preacher at the end of the Middle Ages or the beginning of the renaissance. However, it would be clearly out of place in the mouth of Jesus as he spoke to the people of first century Palestine, just as it seems out of place to us because we do not speak this way in the 20th century either.

### **iii) Passages Which Point to a Medieval Social Structure**

One passage, in which Jesus attacks the doctors of the law, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the priests, has a clearly medieval appearance. Found in Chapter 69 it presupposes a refined society in which the leading classes live in luxury and where the religious leaders only think of imitating them. It also assumes a society in which the knights are often at war, and where the religious leaders in question are unmarried.

And Jesus continued, saying: 'O Doctors, O scribes, O Pharisees, O priests tell me. You desire horses like knights, but you don't want to go forth to war. You desire fair clothing like women, but you don't want to spin and nurture children. You desire the fruits of the field, and you don't desire to cultivate the earth. You desire the fishes of the sea, but you don't desire to go a fishing. You desire honour as citizens, but you desire not the burden of the republic; and you desire the tithes and first fruits as priest, but you don't desire to serve God in truth.'

A tirade such as this would have been out of place in Palestine at the time of Jesus. Scribes and Pharisees, even though they were village leaders, led a simple life, traveling on foot, or using donkeys or mules, and each one nourishing his own family. This type of reproach would be very unnatural.

And this question of war! War against whom? Are we to believe that Jesus spoke in this way at a moment when only the Romans possessed an army, and where even those in sporadic revolts were unable to find mounts on which to meet the cavalry. Again such a reproach is absolutely out of place.

On the other hand, we can easily imagine such a scene in the Italy of the republics of the renaissance. From the 14th century on these reproaches would apply perfectly to the worldly

clergy and the bad pastors. We need only listen to the reproaches that Catherine de Sienne (died in 1380) addressed to such clergy to exhort them to repentance and conversion. After having rebuked and stigmatized their ambition and their desire for honours and high offices in the church she continues:

All the revenues of the church are used to buy sumptuous clothes in order to be seen dressed with delicacy and style, not as church scholars and religious men obedient to their vows, but as Lords and Ladies of the court. Their taste is for beautiful hair-styles, numerous gold and silver vases for their homes... They dream only of feasts and they make a God of their bellies. (*Dialogue*, II, 55.)

These are approximately the same reproaches as in the Italian manuscript — thirst for honours, use of church revenues for luxury and ostentation. There is of course one difference. Only *Barnabas* mentions, “not wishing to nurture children”. Perhaps he wishes to attack celibacy, which the Catholic Christian Saint Catherine de Sienne obviously did not question. In summary, the two texts match the same situation — a situation found in Italy and western Europe in the 14th century and on into the renaissance.

Other passages which reflect the political and social situation of medieval Italy are found as follows:

In Chapter 131, the Apostle John speaks of himself as “a poor fisherman, ill-clad, sitting among the king’s barons.”

In Chapter 133 where Jesus explains the parable of the seed sown on stony ground we read,

It falls upon the stones when it comes to the ears of courtiers for by reason of the great anxiety these have to serve the body of a prince, the Word of God does not sink into them.

Finally in Chapter 194 where the Jewish leaders want to kill Lazarus after Jesus raised him from the dead it says,

But because he was powerful, having a following in Jerusalem, and possessing with his sister Magdala and Bethany, they knew not what to do.

With these phrases Lazarus is pictured as a mighty feudal lord of Magdala and Bethany. Herod is sitting among his barons. And the only interest of the courtiers is to serve the body of a prince. This was beautiful and excellent preaching for medieval Italy or Spain, but Jesus never said these phrases in 1st century Palestine.

#### **iv) Definition of Hypocrisy**

In Chapter 45 the Italian manuscript places the following words in the mouth of Jesus,

As God lives, in whose presence I stand, the hypocrite is a robber and commits sacrilege, inasmuch as he makes use of the law to appear good, and steals the honour of God, to whom alone pertains praise and honour for ever.

He defines hypocrisy, and especially the hypocrisy of the religious scholars as a theft of the honour of God and a sacrilege. His position here is very clear.

Now, in the history of spirituality we can follow the evolution of ideas. (And by this means have an idea of the time when a document was written). Hypocrisy and theft have been associated with each other for a long time. Saint Gregory the Great, pope from 590 to 604, compared the hypocrite to a ravisher who,

While he commits a sin desires to be honoured as a saint; he steals the praises for a life that is not

his.<sup>29</sup>

For him, the hypocrite is a thief; he steals goods which consist of unmerited praises. The influence of Saint Gregory persisted during the whole Middle Ages, but there was no mention of the honour of God.

In the fourteenth century, however, the idea of the honour of God began to have an important place in certain books about spirituality. Saint Catherine de Sienne (died in 1380) insisted very strongly on this point. The soul, she taught, which does not have the gift of discernment, runs the risk of “robbing God, like a thief, of the honour that belongs to Him, in order to attribute it to himself and accept the glory.”<sup>30</sup> Here, the idea of stealing “the honour of God” appears in complete clarity.

Later in the 15th century, we find Denys le Chartreux (died in 1471) associating hypocrisy with the idea of sacrilege. He says, in substance, that the religious scholars who pretend humility in order to have a better possibility of obtaining ecclesiastical honours are sacrilegious persons, “*les sacrileges*”, who abuse sacred things.<sup>31</sup>

The definition of hypocrisy given by Pseudo-Barnabas includes all of these ideas. This leads us again to the same date in the west. But this time the Rev. P. Robillard, to whom we owe so much for the present study, leans toward the end of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th century.

In order not to prolong this study indefinitely, we will finish with two other examples.

#### **v) The Preliminary Signs of the Final Judgement.**

In Chapter 53, Jesus is represented as speaking of the end of the world. After mentioning the classic trilogy of calamities — plagues, famine, and war; he describes the cosmic cataclysms which occur during the last fifteen days before the day of judgement. This theme of distributing catastrophes throughout the last fifteen days is found in the works of numerous medieval authors in Western Europe. It appears during the 11th and 12th centuries in two forms which later writers continued to reproduce, and thus it became a widely known idea.<sup>32</sup>

An extremely detailed inventory of the themes and images of the apocalypse used by the Jews, made by Professor Volz<sup>33</sup> revealed no such beliefs. Almost certainly, therefore, this represents one of those medieval legends whose source is completely unknown. Repeated by Pseudo-Barnabas, this theme, found everywhere among medieval authors, brings us to the same date of composition — the end of the Middle Ages, or later.

#### **vi) Capital Sins in the Description of Hell**

The description of hell will also give us some very valuable indications as to the date of the text. The idea that hell is divided into regions is certainly not new. For a long time authors have localized the punishment of the damned in separate well-defined places where each group of sinners would endure torments appropriate to its sin. However one detail is very revealing. The

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<sup>29</sup> *Moralia*, 18, Ch. 7; Patrologie Latine, Migne, t.76, col. 44.

<sup>30</sup> *Dialogue*, I, 35.

<sup>31</sup> <sup>31</sup>Denys le Chartreux, *Erarratio*, in Chap. VI Matth., Opera Omnia, T.9, pp. 76-77.

<sup>32</sup> For further documentation on the history of this theme in medieval Christian literature see Jomier, “*L'Evangile Selon Barnabé*,” p. 219

<sup>33</sup> *Die Eschatologie der judische Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, (Tubigen: Mohr, 1934).

place of damnation, according to Chapter 135 of *Pseudo-Barnabas*, is composed of seven centers each one below the other. At each of the centers the punishment corresponds to one of the seven sins which Christian spirituality of the Middle Ages called “the seven capital sins”, meaning the seven “principal” sins. But by associating them with hell, Pseudo-Barnabas turned them into mortal sins. He lists these capital sins in the following order — starting with the worst: pride, envy, avarice, lust, laziness, gluttony, and anger.

This doctrine of the capital sins was born in Christian monastic centers. Its purpose was to put the monks on guard against the faults which were the most dangerous for their souls, and especially those which indirectly could lead the guilty ones on to other sins — each one worse than the last one. We find this idea in the writings of the eastern Christians like Cassien (died in 432), but at that time he spoke of eight capital sins. Later, in both the east and the west this number was reduced to seven.

Saint Gregory the Great was one of the first in the west to mention seven capital sins starting with pride. This number became standard in the west, but the order varied according to the author, except for pride. Everyone placed this at the head of the list. Beginning in the 13th century envy began to be standard in the second place, just as we find in the Italian manuscript. During the height of the Middle Ages these seven sins were considered the greatest dangers which could threaten the spiritual life, but one did not speak of them in relation to a place in hell. The idea that these capital sins each had a special place in hell — or in other words that they were mortal sins — was a late idea. M. Bloomfield, after having studied the question at great length, concluded categorically, “The association of the seven capital sins with visions of hell was a late European phenomenon.”<sup>34</sup> The “Divine Comedy” of Dante (1265-1321) is the most outstanding and well-known example. Before the 14th to the 16th centuries, these seven sins were always capital and never mortal.

The *Gospel of Barnabas*, therefore, describes hell and Christian spirituality in a manner that was unthinkable before the 14th century. We see this displayed very clearly in the chart shown in Figure 4.

## Summary

The historical study of the spiritual theme and images has led us each time to the same result. Ideas that were not found among the Christians of the first century, or the 5th century, or the 10th century, or even the 12th or 13th century are found in the *Gospel of Barnabas*. Therefore it is impossible that the writer of this false gospel could have written it before the end of the western Middle Ages. It could only have been written after the 13th century and was probably written after the 15th century.

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<sup>34</sup> Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, (Michigan: State College Press, 1952).

### BELIEF

1. 10 Heavens — also contradicts the Quran written between 609 and 622 AD.
2. Jubilee every 100 yrs for the first time in 1300 AD.
3. Tears and Weeping.
4. Philosophical Expressions.
5. Mediaeval Social Structure.
6. Hypocrisy — as theft.
7. Hypocrisy — as theft of the honour of God
8. Hypocrisy — as sacrilege.
9. 15 days of signs before the final judgement.
10. Capital sins.
11. Capital sins become mortal.

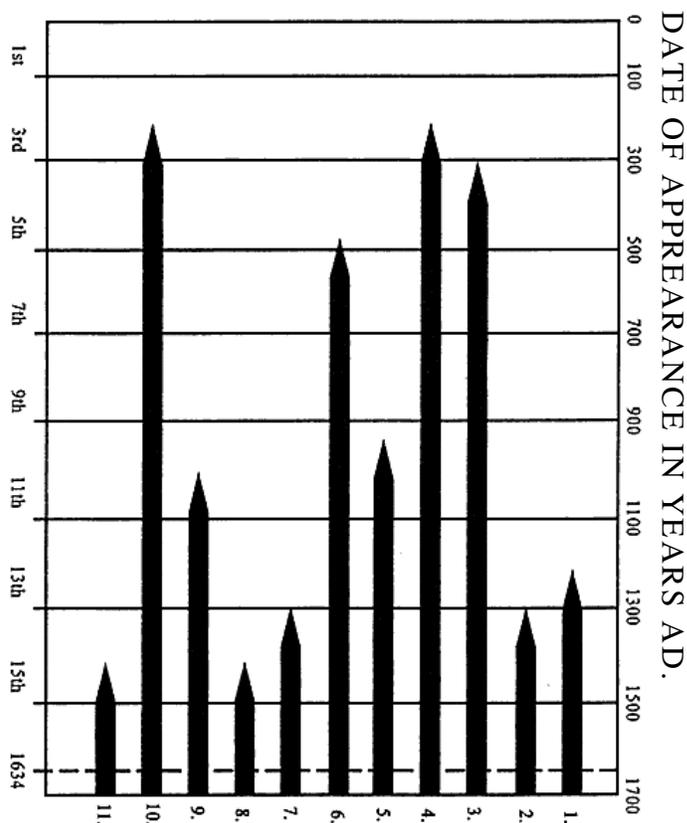


Fig. 4 Time Chart Showing Beginning of Various Doctrines

### DATE IN CENTURIES

From this chart it is clear that the Gospel of Barnabas contains many doctrines that were unknown at the time of Christ in the 1st century, and some that were unknown until after 1300 AD. Therefore the date of writing has to be between 1300 AD. and 1634 AD. — the date when the present Gospel of Barnabas was first mentioned

## CHAPTER IV

### SCIENTIFIC FAULTS IN THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS

As we look at the following quotations showing the beliefs held by the author of *Barnabas* on the composition of human beings, the structure of the universe, etc., we must keep two opposing ideas in mind. First of all, are these descriptions consistent with modern 20th century experimental knowledge of these subjects — knowledge supported by man-made trips around the world and rocket probes into space, for example. Or, do they really reflect the ideas held in other times, including the end of the Middle Ages, and thus give support to the information found in the last chapter — information indicating a date of composition in the 15th century?

#### **A. Chemical, Anatomical and Medical Errors**

##### **i) The Composition of Human Beings**

In Chapter 123 of the *Gospel of Barnabas* we find the following ideas:

Our God, to show to his creatures his goodness and mercy and his omnipotence, with his liberality and justice, made a composition of four things contrary the one to the other, and united them in one final object, which is man — and this is earth, air, water, and fire — in order that each one might temper its opposite. And he made of these four things a vessel, which is man's body, of flesh, bones, blood, marrow, and skin, with nerves and veins, and with all his inward parts...

And in Chapter 167 we read,

Tell me, why is it that, while water extinguisheth fire, and earth fleeth from air, so that none can unite earth, air, water, and fire in harmony, nevertheless they are united in man and are preserved harmoniously?

What shall we say about this? The author of *Barnabas* speaks of earth, air, fire, and water as four things contrary the one to the other. Water extinguishes fire. Earth flees from air. Does earth flee from air? We know that the earth spins around in space with the air sitting on top of it. Or supposing “flee” means “not mix”? Would that be true?

Let us consider the following facts. The earth is made up of many metals, usually found in combination with oxygen or as salts. One of them is iron. Does iron flee from air? No. It rushes to combine with the oxygen in the air, especially in the presence of water, and we spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to paint bridges and other things so they will not rust. Does water flee from air? No, it evaporates into the air and mixes with it. Without this there would be no rain, no water cycle. Or let us consider kaolin which is used to make dishes. It contains a large amount of aluminum silicate which has the formula  $Al_2O_3 \cdot 2SiO_2 \cdot 2H_2O$ . What does all that tell us? It means that the “earth” aluminum (we would say element or maybe mineral) combined with “air” oxygen and then mixed with the “earth” silicon combined with “air” oxygen which in turn combined with  $H_2O$  or water. The *Gospel of Barnabas* talks of four things that do not mix and yet an ordinary thing like kaolin is made of three of them — earth, air and water. Now let us consider fire. What is it? It is only the heat and resultant light given off when “earth” and “air” are combining. The “earth” magnesium burns or unites with “air” oxygen to light up the country side at night in a magnesium flare.

We see that in many situations earth, air, fire and water do mix or unite, and the author of

the *Gospel of Barnabas* clearly contradicts modern science.

## **ii) The Origin of the Larynx (Adam's Apple)**

At the end of the 40th Chapter, the *Gospel of Barnabas* represents Satan as saying,

But if thou and thy companion do according to my counsel, ye shall eat of these fruits even as of the others, and... like God ye shall know good and evil... Then Eve took and ate of those fruits, and when her husband awoke she told all that Satan had said; and he took of them... Whereupon, as the food was going down, he remembered the words of God; wherefore, wishing to stop the food, he put his hand into his throat, where every man has the mark.

Now what is this “mark” which “every man” has on his throat? There is no mark on the skin of each man's throat. But every man does have another kind of mark. It is the protrusion of the male “voice box” at the front of the throat. Women have one too, but it is much less prominent. In English it has a popular name, the “Adam's apple” (in French *la pomme d'Adam*), which is derived from an old folk idea that the protrusion represents the apple which stuck there when Adam tried to stop swallowing it.

But everyone with even a small amount of scientific knowledge knows that the “Adam's apple” is really a part of the larynx. To use correct medical terminology it is a projection of the thyroid cartilage at the front of the throat. It contains the vocal chords which allow us to speak, and has nothing to do with the esophagus where the apple would have passed. Further, in a healthy person it would be impossible to stop the apple from going down the esophagus.

As for the phrase, “he put his hand into his throat, where every man has the mark”, putting his fingers into his throat to cause vomiting, or on the outside of his throat, would not leave a mark nor cause any enlargement of the larynx. One can only conclude that this is an unscientific folk tale about the origin of the Adam's apple which has no place in a book which claims to have come by revelation.

## **iii) The Origin of a Human's Navel or Umbilicus**

At the end of Chapter 35 we read,

And in his departing Satan spat upon that mass of earth, and that spittle the angel Gabriel lifted up with some earth, so that therefore now man has the navel in his belly.

Scientifically we know that the “navel” or umbilicus is the remains of the umbilical cord by which the tiny baby was connected to the placenta, and indirectly to its mother. It contains one vein and two arteries, which run deep into the baby's abdomen to connect with the fetal circulation. For this reason it must be tied tightly when cut by the mid-wife or doctor, or the new baby would soon bleed to death.

Whether Adam and Eve had an unused umbilicus or “navel”, we don't know. Artists in the Middle Ages used to argue about whether to paint an umbilicus on Adam or not. But the *Gospel of Barnabas* is talking about all human beings for the writer says, “So that therefore now man has the navel in his belly”. “Now” is talking about the moment when the writer wrote. This is clearly not true. Men and women have an umbilicus because they were attached to their mother, not because Satan spat on some bit of earth. Here again we are dealing with an unscientific folk myth which does not conform to 20th century reality.

## **iv) Medical Healing of a Fistula.**

In Chapter 119 we read the following:

As God liveth in whose presence we are, a man without prayer can no more be a man of good works than a dumb man can plead his cause to a blind one; than a fistula can be healed without unguent...

Now if the author were talking about miraculous healing by prayer, there would be no objection, but he is using a medical treatment as an example. So let us consider his statement and see how it stands up to modern medical knowledge and experience.

As even nonmedical people know, a fistula is a narrow tube or canal formed in the body by incomplete closure of an abscess, or wound, or bone infection. Because there is still infection inside the body, there is a continuous flow of fluid such as pus, or the liquid from some organ or bodily cavity. The body tries to close the opening, but is unable to do so because of the uncontrolled flow from the bottom of the fistula. The author of the *Gospel of Barnabas* says flatly that a fistula cannot be healed without unguent (ointment — usually with an oil or fat base). The truth is that a fistula cannot be healed with an unguent because the unguent will not reach down into the infected area through the small opening. Even in our modern era, the use of antibiotics which act from inside, will rarely heal a fistula. There is almost always dead necrotic tissue at the bottom of the fistula and the only way to promote healing is to operate. The doctor opens the infected area widely, usually cutting out the fistulous tube at the same time. He then scrapes out the dead material and packs the hole wide open and the body must heal the wound from the bottom up to the skin. Therefore, the author's statement is doubly wrong. The truth is that a fistula will not heal with an ointment and it will heal without an ointment.

## **B. Errors in Astronomical Facts and Heavenly Distances**

### **i) The Earth Rests on Water**

*Barnabas* believes that the earth rests on water. We see this very clearly in Chapter 167 where we read the following:

I will disclose to you a “wherefore”. It is this. Tell me, wherefore cannot a (single) stone rest on the top of the water, yet the whole earth rests on the top of the water?... If, then, ye know not this, nay, all men, as men, cannot know it — how shall they understand that God created the universe out of nothing with a single word?

It is true that God created the world out of nothing. It says this in the Torah of Moses and in the Epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament. But that the earth rests on water is clearly a mistake on the part of the author of *Barnabas*, and represents a belief held in many former times, including the Middle Ages.

### **ii) Size of the Sun Relative to the Earth.**

In Chapter 179 we find the following statements:

When the prayer was done, Jesus called Peter and told him and all the disciples what he had seen. And to Peter he said: ‘Thy soul, which is greater than all the earth, through one eye seeth the sun, which is a thousand times greater than all the earth.’

The diameter of the Earth is about 8000 miles. The diameter of the sun has been calculated as about 865,000 miles, or about one hundred times more. But when we calculate the volume of the earth and the sun, we find that the sun could hold one million earths in its center and still have room left over for another 264,000. To say that the sun is 1000 times bigger than the earth is

completely false. The sun is 1 million times larger than the earth. The *Gospel of Barnabas* is mistaken not by 50% or 100% but by 1,264 times 100%.

### iii) Heavenly Distances.

In Chapter 105 we read,

I tell you, then that the heavens are nine and that they are distant from one another even as the first heaven is distant from the earth, which is distant from the earth five hundred years' journey. Wherefore the earth is distant from the highest heaven four thousand and five hundred years' journey...

The subject is mentioned again in Chapter 178 where we read,

Paradise is so great that no man can measure it. Verily I say unto thee that the heavens are nine, among which are set the planets, that are distant one from another five hundred years' journey for a man: and the earth in like manner is distant from the first heaven five hundred years' journey. But stop thou at the measuring of the first heaven, which is by so much greater than the whole earth as the whole earth is greater than a grain of sand. So also the second heaven is greater than the first, and the third than the second, and so on up to the last heaven, each one is likewise greater than the next. And verily I say to thee that paradise is greater than all the earth and all the heavens (together), even as all the earth is greater than a grain of sand.<sup>35</sup>

I think that we can summarize this information with the following statements:

1. The first heaven is a hemisphere (or sphere) with a radius of a five hundred year journey and the earth floating on water as the center. Each successive heaven has an added radius equal to the distance which one can cover in 500 years.
2. The planets are set in these nine heavens at a five hundred years journey from each other.
3. This journey is the 'journey for a man'.

Since the *Gospel of Barnabas* is supposed to be an eye-witness account written during or just after the life of Christ, that is between 30 and 50 AD, we will follow out two hypotheses for "a journey for a man". We will consider a 1st century speed of 30 miles a day (50 kilometers) and a 21st century futuristic man going at the speed of light. This latter being a possibility if the writer of this book was really a prophet writing a prophecy under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

### **Hypothesis A. 30 miles (50 Km) per day.**

30 miles x 365 days per year = 10,950 miles or 18,250 km in one man-year.

10,950 miles x 500 man-years = 5,478,750 miles or 9,125,000 km to the first heaven.

5,478,750 miles x nine heavens (4500 man-years) = 49,308,750 miles or 82,125,000 km from earth to the 9th heaven.

We will round these distances off to 50 million miles and 80 million kilometers. The first thing that strikes us is that this is only a little more than half the distance from the earth to the sun. As we learn in secondary school, the sun is 93,000,000 miles (149,000,000 km) away. In

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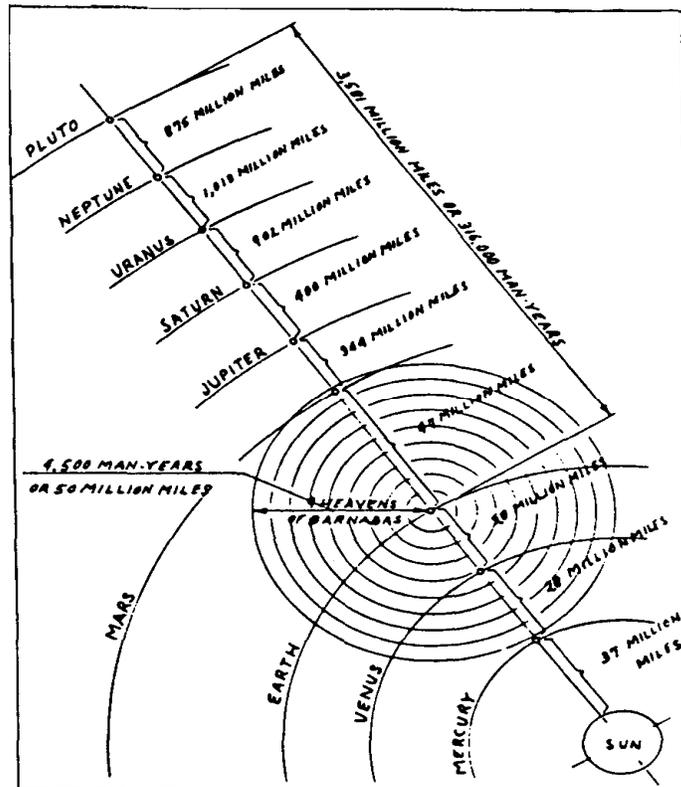
<sup>35</sup> As we saw in Chapter I this contradicts the 7 heavens described in the Qur'an, but we will make the analysis anyway.

other words according to hypotheses A as seen in Figure 5: all the planets, all the heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and stars) and all the nine heavens — whether spiritual or material — are closer to us than the sun.

Our current knowledge about the distance of the planets from each other is summarized in millions of miles and millions of kilometers in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Nearest Distance to which Each Planet Approaches the Earth**

Planet	Miles	Kilometers
Mercury	56	60
Venus	28	45
Earth	—	—
Mars	47	74
Jupiter	391	628
Saturn	791	1272
Uranus	1693	2723
Neptune	2706	4354
Pluto	3581	5761



**Fig. 5 Hypothesis A**

From Table 1 and Figure 5, it can quickly be seen that only two of the planets — Venus and Mars — ever come within 50 million miles of the earth. All the rest, plus the sun and all the stars are outside the ninth heaven of the *Gospel of Barnabas*. So this hypothesis is clearly false.

### **Hypothesis B. A man traveling at the speed of light —186,000 miles per second (300,000 km per second).**

The reader will probably realize that this is one of the measuring units in actual use in modern astronomy. Because the distances are so great we speak of light years or how far light can travel in a year as the measure of distance. The nearest star to our sun is 4.3 light years away. If one uses the period at the end of this sentence to represent the sun, then a similar tiny dot 10 miles (16 km) away would represent Alpha Centauri, the nearest star.

At this speed the first heaven would be 500 light years away — or well outside our solar system and the ninth heaven would be 4500 light years away. This seems a little closer to the facts, but it still leaves two very bad — in fact, insurmountable, problems.

The first is that the planets were also stated to be 500 years journey apart from each other. They would then be 500 light years apart and completely outside the solar system. In fact they would be way beyond the closest stars. The second error is that 4500 light years is still way too small to include all the stars. Our galaxy, which is called the milky way, is 120,000 light years across all by itself. Beyond it are many other galaxies. Using the largest telescope stars have been seen which are up to 1.6 billion light years away. 4500 light years is nothing.

### **Conclusion**

The descriptions of the heavens and the composition of human beings as found in the *Gospel of Barnabas* are wrong when compared with modern science. On the other hand, *Pseudo-Barnabas'* descriptions of the earth floating on water, and human beings being composed of earth, air, fire and water, are in complete agreement with the ideas of former times, including the Middle Ages. As for the belief in 10 heavens, we have already seen that this description of the universe originated in medieval times.

Taken as a whole the “scientific” ideas analyzed in this chapter give strong support to a date of composition after 1300 AD. Surely no one would want them associated with the Qur’an or expect to find them in a valid testimony to the prophethood of Muhammad.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DOCUMENTS AND THEIR HISTORY

#### The Italian Document

Now let us see whether we can learn anything from the document itself. As mentioned in the prologue, the document is in the Austrian National Library of Vienna (Codex No. 2662). A careful study of the paper on which the *Pseudo-Gospel of Barnabas* was written shows that it is characterized by a watermark in the shape of an anchor. This type of paper is Italian and dates from the second half of the 16th century. The style of writing is also typical of the same date. In their preface the Raggs compared it to certain Venetian manuscripts written between 1543 and 1567. “The most exact parallel ... is a document (in the Archives of St. Mark’s, Venice) which bears the signature, Franco Vianello, Segretario Ducale, and the date, April 15, 1584.”<sup>36</sup> All scholars from the Raggs until now have been agreed that this Italian copy of the *Gospel of Barnabas* was made sometime after 1550, perhaps around 1600.

#### History of its Transmission (Isnad) Since 1709

When Muslims wish to verify a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad or some other historical document they search for a record of the chain of witnesses through whom the tradition or document was transmitted. In Arabic this is called the *isnad* (الإسناد). The *isnad* of this Italian copy begins in Holland in 1709 when it was borrowed by Mr. John Toland from Mr. J. F. Cramer of Amsterdam. Mr. Toland, the first person to speak or write publicly about the *Gospel of Barnabas*, called it a “forgery”, a lie. In a book entitled *An Historical Account of the Life and Writings of the Late Eminently Famous Mr. John Toland*, published in 1722, he is quoted as saying,

The occasion of my book was the discovery I made of an apocryphal gospel father’d upon the Apostle Barnabas, and interpolated if not quite forged.<sup>37</sup>

And in another article Toland writes, “I missed no opportunity of detecting the forgery.”<sup>38</sup> In 1713 the manuscript was given to Prince Eugene of Savoy, and in 1738 it was donated to the Imperial Library (now the Austrian National Library) in Vienna where it is presently filed.

#### Spanish Document

#### History of its Transmission (Isnad) Since 1734

George Sale described a Spanish copy of the *Gospel of Barnabas* in the preface of his English translation of the Qur’an.<sup>39</sup> He saw this in 1734 and gives three quotations including the Spanish text, which are in complete agreement with the Italian copy. No more was heard of this Spanish version until another student and lover of books, Mr. J. E. Fletcher, recently found a partial copy of the manuscript described by Sale. This copy, made in the 18th century, is in the

<sup>36</sup> Lonsdale and Laura R.agg, op. cit., p. xiv.

<sup>37</sup> *An Historical Account of the Life and Writing of the Late Eminently Famous Mr. John Toland* (London: J. Roberts, 1722), p. 141.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

<sup>39</sup> *The Koran*, translated by George Sale, (Perth, U.K.: Cowan & Co. Limited), Preface “To the Reader,” p. ix.

Fisher Library of the University of Sydney in Australia, and it comes complete with an *isnad* connecting it to George Sale.<sup>40</sup> Written inside the front cover are the following words:

Transcribed from ms (manuscript) in possession of Revd Mr. Edm. Callamy who bought it at the Decease of Mr. George Sale 17.. and now gave me at the Decease of Mr. John Nickolls 1745 (signed) “N. Hone”.<sup>41</sup>

But since this is a copy made by an Englishman between the death of Sale in 1736 and the death of Nickolls in 1745, we can learn nothing from the type of paper or the type of handwriting.

### **The Lack of any Isnad Before 1634**

The earliest mention of the *Gospel of Barnabas* found to date is in a letter written by a Tunisian Morisco in Spanish. This letter, presently in the National Library of Madrid as No. 9653, was written in 1634 by Ibrahim al-Taybili (in Spanish Juan Perez).<sup>42</sup> After a long paragraph stating that Muhammad is mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel, but that the church will not let people read them, he continues,

And also in the Gospel of Saint Barnabas, where one can find the light.

In a second letter from the National Library of Madrid, written at about the same time by a man named Bejarano (in Arabic Ahmad al-Hagari), both al-Taybili and Mustafa de Aranda of Istanbul, are mentioned.<sup>43</sup> De Aranda is the very man mentioned by Sale as the translator of the Spanish copy of *Barnabas* which he saw in 1734.<sup>44</sup> In other words the first mention of the *Gospel of Barnabas*, and the name of a translator are both mentioned at the beginning of the 17th century — just after the probable time of writing of the Italian copy in our possession. Before this there is complete silence.

Some Muslims would not agree that there is complete silence, for they believe a “Gospel of Barnabas” mentioned in the Gelasian Decrees to be the very pseudo-Gospel which we have been studying. J. Slomp discusses this in his article “The Gospel in Dispute”. He writes,

There is no text tradition whatsoever of the G.B.V. (*Gospel of Barnabas*)... There are no quotations by church fathers or in other records to prove the identity or authenticity of the G.B.V... One reference only is found in the Pseudo-Gelasian Decrees (6th century) and in a list of canonical and apocryphal books of the Greek church of a later date. But only the *name* “Gospel of Barnabas” is mentioned in these records as one of the books rejected by the church.<sup>45</sup>

In other words there is no mention of the content of the Gospel. There is no way to show that it is (or is not) the same as the manuscript in Vienna.

Here I must point out something very important. It must not be supposed that because a work was declared apocryphal by the church that therefore it agrees with the doctrines of Islam. This is simply not the case. There was a *Gospel of Peter* which claimed clearly that Jesus is the Divine Word of God and died on the cross for our sins. The reason that the church rejected it was because, first of all, it was not written by Peter, and secondly it denied Jesus’ true humanity

<sup>40</sup> J. E. Fletcher, “The Spanish Gospel of Barnabas,” *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 18(1976), pp. 314-320.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p. 317.

<sup>42</sup> Mikel de Epalza, “Le Milieu Hispano-Moresque de l’Evangile de Barnabé,” *Islamo-Christiana*, No.8(1982) p. 176, where he gives the Spanish text.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p. 172. The letter is found in the National Library of Madrid, No. 4953.

<sup>44</sup> Sale, *op. cit.* p. ix.

<sup>45</sup> J. Slomp, “The Gospel in Dispute,” *Islamo-Christiana*, No. 4(1978) p. 74.

saying that when he was on the cross he felt no pain.<sup>46</sup> There was an *Acts of Paul* which agrees completely with the Christian doctrine of Jesus' death for our sins, but says that "you shall have no part in the resurrection unless you remain chaste and defile not the flesh", which meant no sexual intercourse even for married people. The church rejected it because this is against Christian teaching as it is also against Qur'anic teaching; and also because a presbyter (church leader) of Asia admitted writing it out of his love for Paul. In other words it was a complete forgery, so he was removed from his office in the church for this lie.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, I will mention the *Epistle of Barnabas* which is a work which was so highly respected by many second and third century Christians that it was even written with one early copy of the Bible.<sup>48</sup> The teaching which it contains about Christ is correct, but it was declared apocryphal. Why? First, there was no proof that it was written by Barnabas and secondly it attributes the Law of Moses to the wiles of a demon,<sup>49</sup> a statement which contradicts Jesus' words and which contradicts the Qur'an too.

Muslims have had the same problem with hadith, many of which have been declared "weak". When a hadith is declared weak, it is being stated that "there is no evidence that such and such was actually said by Muhammad or one of the original companions". The doctrine in it might be correct, but its authenticity or veracity as to the source is doubted. This is exactly what Christians mean when they use the words "apocryphal" or "uncanonical".

Now to return again to the lack of an *isnad*, Jomier says,

The complete silence of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions is bothersome. If it was only a secondary text of little importance, this silence could be understood. But a fundamental work, which claims to have been written on the direct orders of Jesus would have to leave some traces in history.<sup>50</sup>

The truth of Jomier's statement is all the more compelling when we realize that according to the *Gospel of Barnabas*, the teaching that Judas was placed on the cross instead of Jesus, was not a secret teaching revealed only to Barnabas. It was taught to a number of people. In Chapter 219 we read,

Jesus came, surrounded with splendour, to the room where abode Mary the Virgin with her two sisters, and Martha and Mary Magdalene, and Lazarus and him who writes, and John and James, and Peter.

In Chapter 221, still in the presence of the above witnesses it says,

And Jesus...said, 'See, Barnabas, that by all means thou write my gospel concerning all that hath happened through my dwelling in the world. And write in like manner that which hath befallen Judas, in order that the faithful may be undeceived, and every one may believe the truth.' Then answered he who writes: 'All will I do, if God will, O Master; but how it happened unto Judas I know not, for I did not see all.' Jesus answered: 'Here are John and Peter who have seen all, and they will tell you all that has passed.' And then Jesus commanded us to call his faithful disciples that they might see him. Then did James and John call together the seven disciples with Nicodemus and Joseph, and many others of the seventy two, and they ate with Jesus. The third day

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<sup>46</sup> *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE) (Chicago: Howard Severence Co., 1915) p. 197.

<sup>47</sup> ISBE, pp. 188-190.

<sup>48</sup> Codex Sinaiticus — a complete Greek text of the Canonical Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. The manuscript dates from about 350 A.D.; it can be found in the British Museum, London.

<sup>49</sup> *Early Christian Writings*, (London: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 190 and 205.

<sup>50</sup> J. Jomier, op.cit., p. 195.

Jesus said: ‘Go to the Mount of Olives with my mother, for there will I ascend again into heaven, and ye shall see who shall bear me up.’ So there went all, saving twenty-five of the seventy-two disciples who for fear had fled to Damascus.

Now if we put this information all together we have the following people who are supposed to know that Judas was substituted for Jesus.

Mary the Virgin and her two sisters	3
Martha, Mary Magdalene, and Lazarus	3
Barnabas, John, James, and Peter	4
The other seven disciples (to complete along with Judas the twelve disciples)	7
Nicodemus and Joseph	2
Seventy-two less twenty-five	47
Total	66

Now I will ask you, my readers, this question. Can you really believe that not one of these people ever told what he knew? Especially when some of them had heard Jesus tell Barnabas to write? Would they not have wanted to console others who loved Jesus, just as they had been consoled? In Chapter 221, quoted above, are they not, in fact, ordered to tell the faithful so that “the faithful may be undeceived” concerning Jesus’ death?

All I can answer is that I do not believe that every one of these sixty-six key people who had known Jesus personally, seen his miracles, heard his teaching, and loved Jesus very much would have disobeyed his direct order. Can Muslim readers really believe this? If they do, they are believing something which even the Qur’an contradicts. In the Sura *Al Saff* (The Battle Array) 61:14 from 3 AH we read:

As said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples, ‘Who will be my helpers to (the work of) God?’  
Said the Disciples, ‘We are God’s helpers!’

Surely when Jesus’ disciples said, ‘We are God’s helpers!’ the Qur’an does not mean to say that they all kept quiet and disobeyed what Jesus commanded them to do. We can only conclude that there is no *isnad* before 1634 AD because this pseudo-Gospel of *Barnabas* had not yet been written.

### Summary

1. The development of Christian doctrine which indicates a date between the 14th and the 16th century;
2. 1634 AD as the date when the document was first mentioned as a prophecy of Muhammad;
3. The lack of any *isnad* before 1634 AD;
4. The paper, ink, and handwriting of the Italian copy dating it between 1550 to 1600 AD;

All lead to the end of the 16th century as the probable date of writing of this pseudo-*Gospel*

of *Barnabas*. It is even possible that either the Spanish copy seen by Sale, or the Italian document in Vienna, is the original and the other a translation.

### The Arabic Notes

There is, in my opinion, one last thing to be learned from the Italian copy; and that concerns the Arabic notes which have been written in the margins and sometimes in the text. These notes, which are in a different ink, have been mentioned by previous authors and it has been suggested that they were written by someone to whom Arabic is a foreign language. The errors in the Arabic certainly support this idea. Spelling the words “they prepare” as (يحظروا) instead of (يحضروا) in Chapter 42,<sup>51</sup> and “our Creator” as (خالقنا) instead of (خالقنا) in Chapter 206<sup>52</sup> represent the type of mistakes which a person would make who was weak in Arabic.

More important than that, however, is the fact that these marginal comments in Arabic seem to be suggested changes for the overlined words in the Italian text, as though this was a working copy, or a rough draft, perhaps in preparation for a translation into Arabic. In some cases these notes are even written upside down as can be seen in Figure 6.

Some notes are suggestions for chapter titles. They are even called Suras, the word used for a chapter in the Qur’an. The name suggested for Chapter 40 is “The Sura of the Deprivation of Adam.” Chapter 41 is to be called “The Sura of the Punishment of Adam and Eve and of the Serpent and Satan.” Chapter 42 is called “The Sura of the Good News.” One of these suggestions can be seen very clearly in Figure 7 where the writer of the Arabic notes proposes “The Sura of Ahmad Muhammad, the Prophet of God” (سورة أحمد محمد رسول الله) as the title for Chapter 44.

Other notes are proposals which make the style more like the Qur’an or make the text conform to Muslim theology.

In Chapter 42 where the text has, “Then said Jesus: ‘I am a voice that cries through all Judea, and cries: ‘Prepare ye the way for the messenger of God, even as it is written in Isaias,’” the Arabic note suggests, “Jesus said, ‘I am a voice that cries that they prepare the way of the Apostle of God, for he shall come.’”<sup>53</sup> This suggestion by the Arabic writer to change “*il nontio di dio*” (the messenger of God) by putting in “رسول الله” (the apostle of God) is found all through *Barnabas*. It can be seen five times in the four original photographs reproduced in this book, and in one case (Figure 8) it is even written in the body of the text. Why should the writer of these Arabic suggestions be so keen about this change that he has insisted on it, literally hundreds of times, throughout the manuscript; especially since “nontio” means messenger in Italian and “رسول” means messenger in Arabic?

The Arabic writer wants to use “apostle”, which would be *apostolo* in Italian, because this title has much more meaning and honor in Muslim theology. An apostle is someone who, by revelation, has received a book from God for his people, and in the case of Muhammad and Jesus, “a book for the worlds”. The very first sentence of the *Gospel of Barnabas* starts with the phrase “*Barnaba apostolo di iessu nazareno*” (Barnabas, apostle of Jesus the Nazarene). If Barnabas is an “apostle”, it was absolutely necessary in the mind of the writer of the notes to show that Muhammad was also an “apostle” and not just a “messenger”.

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<sup>51</sup> See Figure 9 plus note 2 on the following page.

<sup>52</sup> See Figure 8 plus note 2 on the following page.

<sup>53</sup> See Figure 9 and notes.

Looking again at the photograph in Figure 7, the overlined words at the beginning of Chapter 44 read, “Jesus answered with a groan: ‘It is so written but Moses wrote it not, nor Joshua, but rather our rabbins (rabbis) who fear not God.’” The writer of the Arabic notes has written, “The Jews change words from their places and afterwards the Christians in the same way change in the Gospel.” Now this Arabic phrase is a standard way of talking about the Bible among Muslims. It has been repeated to me personally many times. All of my readers who are familiar with the Qur’an will realize that the first half of the phrase, “The Jews change words from their places” (اليهود يحرّفون الكلم من بعد مواضعه), is right out of the Sura *Al-Ma’ida* (The Table) 5:44 where this very accusation is made against them. It agrees with Jesus’ complaint against the rabbins and could be considered a logical association. But what shall we say of the second half of the phrase which reads, “and afterward the Christians in the same way change in the Gospel” (وبعدہ النصارى كذلك يحرّفون في الإنجيل)? How could a Muslim write this on a book which he believed to be the true Gospel from the first century?

Three things are therefore obvious from this. The first is that in order to include a quotation from the Qur’an these Arabic notes had to be added by a Muslim after the beginning of Islam. A true 1st century Barnabas would neither speak nor write Arabic. Secondly he certainly would not say that the Christians had already changed a Gospel which he had not yet finished writing. The third thing is that the Muslim adding these notes knew that it was not the true Gospel. If a Muslim found a book foretelling the coming of Muhammad, a book which he thought might be the authentic Gospel, he would certainly not write in the margin that the Christians had changed the Gospel. In addition he would not dare suggest ways to improve God’s Word, and he would be afraid to write in the book at all.

During more than 25 years of conversations about the Canonical Gospel no Muslim has been willing even to mark a verse with a dot to remind himself about where he wanted to ask me a question. This may be because of the order given by Omar, the second Caliph, that no marginal notes were to be written in the Qur’an. If no Muslim will mark the Christian Canonical Gospel, which he believes may have been at least partly changed, how can we believe that he would write upside down notes in the margin of a book which he believed to be completely true and from God. This would be to him a desecration of God’s holy Word and unthinkable. It is such a strong emotional reason that it can almost stand completely by itself without the preceding intellectual arguments. Therefore, I repeat it again. **No Muslim would ever write these notes on a document that he believed to be the Holy Word of God. These notes were written by a man who knew that this was not the true Gospel. The Arabic writer and the Italian writer were making a forgery just as John Toland said in 1709 AD.**

## Conclusion

We can only conclude that the Gospel of Barnabas has no value as a historical document of the first century AD.

134

date l'adagio quanto per ammore di dio • onde non  
 siate pigri nel dare le date quello che avete  
 del migliore per ammore di dio • Ditemi uolte  
 se uoi riceuete ch'ossa ueruna d'adagio batua  
 no certo lo potuerete tenere • adunque come  
 ha uete fede in uoi se darate ch'ossa ueruna  
 tiua per ammore de dio • Meglio saria non da  
 re niente che dare ch'ossa batua per che non  
 do ha uerete qualche scupa se cond oil mondo  
 • mandando ch'ossa trista se seruando per uoi il  
 migliore quelle sera la scusa: he questo he qua  
 fo uoi da dire circa la penitenza • Rispose bar  
 to lameo quanto tempo deue durare la peniten  
 za • Rispose iesu mentre che lo homo ha instate  
 di peccato deue sempre pentirsi he farne peni  
 tenza onde siccome la uita humana sempre pe  
 cca ch'osi sempre deue fare penitenza • Se uoi  
 non uollete fare piu ch'onto delle scarpe uostre  
 della anima uostre polsci che ogni uolta che si  
 ronpono quelle uolte rachoniate •

Chomuto

اذا عطيتهم الله تقاهم من الخبايا ما قلتم عند الله تقاهم

واذ قالوا يا يسوع ابن مريم انزلنا من السماء سحابة من السماء ونسقيك بها فاجابهم قائلين اني انزل من السماء سحابة من السماء ونسقيك بها فاجابهم قائلين اني انزل من السماء سحابة من السماء ونسقيك بها

Fig. 6: Page no 134r of Codex No. 2662 from the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Gospel of Barnabas, Chapter 125. Photographs used by permission of Prof. Dr. Otto Mazal, Director, Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria.

## Notes Concerning Figure 6

The reproduction on the opposite page shows page 134r of the Italian copy of the pseudo-*Gospel of Barnabas* in the Austrian National Library. In many English copies of the *Gospel of Barnabas* you can see this very page reproduced, but the Arabic notes have been omitted. Perhaps because if the reader saw them he would suspect that it was a false Gospel. At the top of the writing can be seen the Arabic page no 132 (١٣٢). See pages no 286 to 289 in the original 1907 edition of the Raggs.

1. The writer of the Arabic notes has used overlining to draw attention to words or phrases instead of underlining as we use. The first overlined words beginning in the second line read: “*date quello che auete del milgiore per ammore di dio. Ditemi uollete uoi riceuere chossa ueruna da dio chativa no certo ho poluere he cenere.*” Which means: “Give of the best of that which ye have, for love of God. ‘Tell me, desire ye to receive of God anything that is bad? Certainly not, O dust and ashes!’”

The Arabic suggestion at the top of the right margin is: إذا أردت من الله شيئاً أردت بخير: عمل الصدقة اعملوا الصدقة من الخير منه which means: “If you desire anything from God, you desire the best of things. If you do a work of almsgiving, give alms of what is good.”

2. The second group of overlined words starting at the end of line 5 reads: “*chome hauete fede in uoi se darete chossa ueruna chatiua per ammore de dio.*”

Or: “How have ye faith in you if ye shall give anything bad for love of God?”

The second Arabic suggestion (or question) in the right margin reads: من أي دين عنده ينبض أن يصدق الخبائس منه Or: “According to what religion would it be commanded to give alms of what is vile?”

3. The third overlined passage beginning at line ten reads: “*ma dando chossa trissta he seruando per uoi milgiore quella sera la scusa.*”

Or: “But in giving a worthless thing, and keeping the best for yourselves, what shall be the excuse’?”

The Arabic in the left margin suggests: إذا اعطيت الله تعالى من الخبائس ما قلتم عند الله تعالى منه

Or: “If you give unto God most high of what is vile, what can you say before God therewith?”

44

Pupa dre di iacob be iacob pupa dre di iuda della  
 chui shirpe hadavit • allora disse iesu be il non ti di  
 di o quando uenira de quale shirpe uera elgi • si  
 sposero li discepoli di dauit onde disse iesu uoi ue in  
 ganate per che dauit in spirito lo chiama signora  
 chosidicendo • hadeto di o al mio signore si ed i alla  
 mia destra insino chio ppono li tuoi inimici scago  
 delli tuoi piedi • meta dio la tua baccha che si  
 gnore gera in mezzo li tuoi inimigi • se il non ti di  
 dio il quale chiamata messia fusi fiolo di dauit che  
 me dauit lo chiama maria signora • ch'ed esimi per che  
 in uerita uidicho che la promission fu fatta in il ma el beo  
 in iacob

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Di sero ad angeli di sepoli • zoma e sro elgie che  
 si scritto nel libro di moise che in iacob fu fatta la promi  
 sione • si sposo iesu con gemito elgie scritto e sro ma  
 pero non la scritto moise ne i sue masibere li rabini no  
 sti che non te mono dio • io uidicho in uerita che se  
 uoi considerate le parole dello angello gabriel  
 trouarete la malitia di no stri scribi be dotori • impe  
 ro che di se l'angelo, abraham tutto il mondo ch'ono p  
 ra

رسول الله

رسول الله

رسول

رسول الله

رسول الله

اليهود

يكرهون الكلام من بعد مواضعه وبعده النصا  
 كذلك يكرهون  
 الجيل

رسول الله

Fig. 7: Page no 46r of Codex No. 2662 from the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Gospel of Barnabas, the end of Chapter 43 and the beginning of Chapter 44.

## Notes Concerning Figure 7

The reproduction on the opposite page shows page 46r of the Italian copy of the pseudo-*Gospel of Barnabas* in the Austrian National Library. At the top of the writing can be seen the Arabic page no 44 (٤٤). See pages no 102 and 103 in the original 1907 edition of the Raggs.

1. The Italian writing end of line 2, beginning of line 3; and end of line 10; beginning of line 11 reads: “*il nontio di dio*”, or “the messenger of God”.

The Arabic notes in the left margin suggest: “رسول الله” or “the apostle of God”. See the text for the explanation of this very common correction.

2. The Italian in the middle of line 6 reads: “*ha deto dio al mio signore*”, or “saying thus, God said to my Lord.”

The Arabic note in the left margin reads: “رسول”, or “apostle”. The Arabic writer does not feel that it is appropriate to apply the title “Lord” to Muhammad and suggests changing this to “apostle”.

3. The Arabic in the right margin opposite the space between chapters reads: “هذا سورة أحمد محمد رسول الله” Or: “This is the Sura (chapter) of Ahmad Muhammad, the Apostle of God.”

4. In the Italian of lines 16-18 the overlined words read: “*iessu con gemito elgie scritto chosi ma pero non la scritto mosse ne iosue ma sibene li rabini nostri che non temono dio.*”

Or: “Jesus answered with a groan: ‘It is written, but Moses wrote it not, nor Joshua, but rather our rabbins, who fear not God.’”

The Arabic comment in the left margin in relation to this reads:

"اليهود يحرفون الكلم من بعد مواضعه وبعده النصارى كذلك يحرفون في الإنجيل"

Or: “The Jews change words from their places and afterwards the Christians in the same way change in the Gospel.”

213

Rispossero loro hora chome celo darai in mano • di  
 sei uida quanto sapero che fuori della citta uadi la fase  
 oratione uel diro be chonduroi doue el gisi trouera per  
 che il prendelo nella uita non sera senza sedition • Rispo  
 se il pontifice setu celo darai in mano ti daremo trenta  
 danari d'oro be ti faro tal bere che uederai •

---

Venuto giorno i esu a siese al tempio chongrande mol  
 titudine di popullo • onde seli uicino il pontifice dicendo  
 • di anie ho i esu se i tu menti chato di quanto chonffesato  
 hai che tu non sei di none fillo di dio ne tampoco il mesia  
 Rispose i esu • certo no che io non son menti chato perche  
 que sta be la chonfessione mia la quale porterò a i  
 il tribunalle di dio il giorno del iudicio • che quanto he scri  
 to nel libro di moisse che be uerissimo impero che dio chma  
 fore nostro he solto • che io son feruo di dio be de si de ro di  
 seruire al non ho di dio il quale chiamate mesia • di  
 se il pontifice ad on que za che se ue uenire al tempio  
 ch'ontanta moltitudine di popullo cerchi forse di farti be

والجيسى الله خلقنا احد وانا عيزه وايزه انما عيزه

رسول قال الله اب وانا عبد الله

الله خالق

Fig. 8: Page no 213r of Codex No. 2662 from the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Gospel of Barnabas, the end of Chapter 205 and the beginning of Chapter 206.

## Notes Concerning Figure 8

The reproduction on the opposite page shows page 213r of the Italian copy of the pseudo-*Gospel of Barnabas* in the Austrian National Library. At the top of the writing can be seen the Arabic page no 212 (٢١٢). See pages no 454 and 455 in the original 1907 edition of the Raggs.

1. The first Arabic word in the left margin is “رسول” or “Apostle”. It may be a correction for “*mesia*” or “messiah” at the end of line ten in the Italian text, but this is not at all sure as there are other places where he makes no attempt to alter the word.
2. The Italian lines 14 to 16 with the overlined words underlined reads as follows: “-*to nel libro di moisse he uerissimo imperoche dio chreatore nosstro he sollo. he io son seruo di dio he dessidero di seruire al nontio di dio il qualle chiamate messia. Dis-*” Which means: “Written in the book of Moses is true, inasmuch as God our creator is alone, and I am God’s servant and desire to serve the messenger of God whom ye call Messiah.”

Both margins carry suggestions as to how this should be written. The right margin says: “قال عيسى الله خلقنا (خلقنا) أحد وأنا عبده وأريد أن أخدم رسوله منه”. Which means: “Jesus said, ‘God our Creator is one, and I am his slave and wish to serve his apostle.’”

The left margin says: الله خالق

”قال عيسى الله أحد وأنا عبد منه“

God is Creator.

Which means: “Jesus said, ‘God is One and I am the slave of God.’”

3. In the body of the text, above the words “*al nontio di dio*” of line 16, which mean “the messenger of God”, are written in Arabic: “رسول الله” or “the apostle of God”.  
See the text for comments on the importance of this change and the fact that it is written in the body of the text.
4. Note: This page has two passages about the “messiah”. In no. 2 above Jesus was made to say that he wished “to serve the messenger of God (Mohammed) whom ye call messiah”. In lines 8 to 10 the Italian reads: “*pontifice dicendo. di a me ho iessu sci tu smentichato di quanto chonffesato hai che tu non sei dio ne fiollo di dio ne tampoco il mesia. Risspose iessu. certo no.*”

Or: “The high priest drew near, saying: ‘Tell me, O Jesus, hast thou forgotten all that thou didst confess, that thou art not god, nor son of god, nor even the messiah?’ Jesus answered, ‘Certainly not.’”

These words make Jesus say that he is not the messiah. See Chapter 2.

1. →

٤٢

mandorno li lauti be al chum scribi ha interrogato  
 condire chi seitu • confeso ijesu be disse la uerria  
 iono son il messia • dissero loro, seitu helia ouero be  
 remia ouero alcuno di profeti antichi • Rispose  
 ijesu • allora dissero loro chisei di cillo agrocche  
 diamo te testimonio ha cholloro che cia mandati  
 • disse allora ijesu io son una uoce che chrida per  
 tutta iudea che chrida • apare chiate la uia al ma  
 li di dio si chome be scritto in esai • dissero loro  
 setu non sei il messia ne helia ouero alcuno profe  
 ta perche predichi noua dotrina be li fai tenere  
 da piu del messia • Rispose ijesu li miracoli che  
 dio fa per le mie mani dimostrano che io parlo  
 che uolle dio ne pero mi fago tenere da quello che  
 uoi dite • perche io non sono degno di sciogliere i legami  
 delle cinghie ouero le choriegie delle scarpe del  
 non ho di dio il quale chiamate messia • il quale be  
 faso auanti di me be uenira da poi di me be portera  
 le parole di uerita onde la fede sua non ha uera  
 fine • Partirono sili lauti be scribi confusi be rinon  
 liarono il tutto all'incipie di la uerda li quali dissero

رسوالله

رسوالله

رسوالله اسرائيل بعيسى من انت قال عيسى انا  
 صوت انا الذي ان يحطوا طريقه ، هو الله  
 الاله هو

باف ابتدا منه  
 لانه خلق من قبل وسبق من بعدي ودينه  
 واليه

Fig. 9: Page no 44r of Codex No. 2662 from the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Gospel of Barnabas, Chapter 42.

## Notes Concerning Figure 9

The reproduction on the opposite page shows page 44r of the Italian copy of the pseudo-*Gospel of Barnabas* in the Austrian National Library. At the top of the writing can be seen the Arabic page no 42 (٤٢). This is represented by pages no 96 to 99 in the original 1907 edition of the Raggs.

1. Line 3 reads, “*io no son il messia*”, or “I am not the messiah”.
2. The overlined words in lines 7 to 9 of the Italian manuscript read: “*Disse allora iessu io son una uoce che chrida per tutta iudea che chrida. Aparechiate la uia al nontio di dio.*”

Or: “Then said Jesus: I am a voice that cries through all Judea, and cries: Prepare ye the way for the messenger of God.”

The Arabic suggestion in the upper right margin reads: “سألوا بني إسرائيل بعيسى من أنت قال: “عيسى أنا صوت أنادي أن يحضروا طريق رسول الله”

Or: “The children of Israel asked Jesus, ‘who are you?’ Jesus said, I am a voice that cries that they prepare the way of the Apostle of God, for he shall come.” (يحضروا)

3. End of line 9, beginning of line 10; and beginning of line 17 read: “*al nontio di dio*”. or: “the messenger of God”. The Arabic reads: “رسول الله” or “the apostle of God”.
4. The overlined words in lines 15 to 17 read: “*Risspose iessu...perche io no son degno di sciolgere li legami delle chalice houero le choregie delle scarpe del nontio di dio quale chiamate messia. il quale he fato auanti di me he uenira dapoì di me he portera le parolle di uerrita onde la fede sua non hauera fine.*”

Or: “Jesus answered, ‘... for, I am not worthy to unloose the ties of the hosen or the latchets of the shoes of the messenger of God whom ye call messiah,<sup>54</sup> who was made before me, and shall come after me<sup>55</sup> and shall bring the words of truth, so that his faith shall have no end.”

The Arabic suggestion reads: قال عيسى لا ينبغي لي أن يخدم نعلين رسول الله لأنه خلق من قبلي وسيجيء من بعدي ودينه باق أبداً، منه

Or: “Jesus said, ‘It is not fitting for me that he (? I) should be a servant to (sic) the shoes of the apostle of God, for he was created before me and shall come after me, and his religion will remain forever.’”

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<sup>54</sup> Jesus says that Muhammad, the messenger of God, is the messiah. For a discussion of this mistake see Chapter II.

<sup>55</sup> This phrase found in both the Italian and Arabic notes, and found today in the “Yellow Books” in Tunisia shows a belief in the pre-existence of Muhammad (before Jesus). This belief contradicts even the Qur’an.

## EPILOGUE

Until this moment I have been presenting proofs that the *Gospel of Barnabas* is a false Gospel: proofs which are the same for a Muslim or a Christian and have nothing to do with the religious content. Naturally, I hope that these 40 or 50 reasons and proofs will convince all that this document cannot be the true *Injil*, the true Gospel of Christ, and is useless in Muslim-Christian discussions.

Now I wish to present three serious and tremendous difficulties, difficulties which make it almost impossible for any Christian to take the Gospel of Barnabas seriously, even without the above findings. These three reasons are:

1. The lack of any mention of John the Baptist, called Yahya Ibn Zakariya in the Qur'an.
2. The statement that Jewish sacrifices did not come from God even though almost every one of the New Testament writers mentions them for a total of hundreds of times — and the Qur'an mentions them at least three times.
3. The fact that pseudo-Barnabas calls himself one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus, and Thomas is omitted from the list of apostles — a statement which disagrees with all four of the Gospel writers.

### No Mention of John the Baptist Yahya Ibn Zakariya

Yahya Ibn Zakariya is mentioned five times in the Qur'an. The first passage is found in the Sura *Al-Anbiya'* (The Prophets) 21:89-90, from the middle Meccan period, where he is praised by God, along with his father Zakariya and his mother, for their good works and their reverence. The second passage in the Sura *Al-An'am* (The Cattle) 6:85, from the late Meccan period, mentions him along with Jesus as being "in the ranks of the righteous". Thirdly in the Sura *Maryam* (Mary) 19:1-15, 7 AH, Yahya is mentioned twice. In the second reference he is commanded, "O Yahya! take hold of the Book<sup>56</sup> with might" and he is described as having wisdom even as a youth and piety and purity.

The last passage which mentions Sidna Yahya is found in the Sura *Ali-'Imran* (The Family of 'Imran) 3:38-41,45 from 2 or 3 AH. This is a very important passage and we must consider it at some length because it says quite clearly that Yahya was a prophet and prophesied that Jesus would come. Verse 39 reads,

While he (Zakariya) was standing in prayer in the chamber, the angels called upon him, 'God gives thee glad tidings of Yahya, witnessing the truth of a word from God, and (Yahya will be) noble, chaste, and a prophet of the company of the righteous.'

And then in verse 45 we read about this word:

Behold the angels said, 'O Mary! God giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and in the Hereafter, and of those nearest to God.'

There is no doubt here that Yahya is to come witnessing the truth of a Word from God ( مُصَدِّقًا )

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<sup>56</sup> "The Book" must refer to the Torah and the Zabur as being available to him without having been changed.

(بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْ اللَّهِ) whose name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary. And this account agrees in all major details with the account of Yahya's birth in the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Luke, Chapter 1.

To show the importance of Yahya in relation to Jesus in another way, we find that Yahya is mentioned in three of the 11 Suras where Jesus is mentioned. This represents 27 percent of the time.

According to the Gospel as we have it in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there was a man sent from God named John the Baptist (Yahya). He preached repentance and as a sign of this repentance he had the people stoop down and cover themselves with the waters of the Jordan river. This was a sign of leaving their sins and turning to God and was called baptism. From this sign he was called John the Baptist. He did no miracles but he prophesied many times that Jesus, the Word of God, would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit. His great importance in the Gospel can be understood by the fact that in the Canonical Gospels plus the Acts of the Apostles, John the Baptist is mentioned 92 times, in 32 out of 117 chapters where Jesus is mentioned. This is also 27 percent of the time just like the Qur'an.

He is also mentioned in secular history by the Jewish historian Josephus who wrote around 90 AD. In his long work called the *Antiquities of the Jews* we read:

Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God and that very justly, as a punishment for what he did against John, that was called the Baptist. For Herod slew him, who was a good man and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism. Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise rebellion, thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause.<sup>57</sup>

It may be questioned however what this has to do with anything. To leave a person out has no meaning at all. And with that response I certainly agree. But when we look at the text of the pseudo-*Gospel of Barnabas* and compare it with the text of the Canonical Gospels, we discover that although John the Baptist (Yahya) is not mentioned, he wasn't left out at all because his words are still there. Only this time they are placed in the mouth of Jesus who is made to say exactly the same words about Muhammad.

Let us look at the following comparisons:

Gospel According to Luke, Chapter 3, verses 8 and 9

John said, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance ... The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down."

*Gospel of Barnabas* Chapter 100

Jesus says to his disciples, "go through all the region... preaching penitence: because the axe is laid nigh unto the tree, to cut it down."

The Italian text for the following passage from the pseudo-*Gospel of Barnabas* is found in the photograph of page 44r seen in Figure 9.

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<sup>57</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book xviii, Chap. 5

Gospel According to John, Chapter 1, verses 19 to 30

*Gospel of Barnabas*, Chapter 42

Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He ... confessed freely, "I am not the Christ."\*

They (the priests) sent the Levites and some of the scribes to question him, saying: "Who are thou?" Jesus confessed and said the truth: "I'm not the Messiah."\*

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

They said: "Art thou Elijah or Jeremiah,

He said, "I am not."

or any of the ancient prophets?

"Are you the Prophet?"

Jesus answered: "No".

He (John) answered, "No".

Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

Then said they: "Who art thou? Say, in order that we may give testimony to those who sent us."

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

Then said Jesus: "I am a voice that cries through all Judea, and cries: 'Prepare ye the way for the messenger of the Lord,; even as it is written in Isaiah".

Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ,\* nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

They said: "If thou be not the Messiah\* nor Elijah, or any prophet, wherefore dost thou preach new doctrine, and make thyself of more value than the Messiah\*?"

"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie..." The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me."

Jesus answered: "The miracles which God worketh by my hands show that I speak that which God wills; nor indeed do I make myself to be accounted as him of whom ye speak. For I am not worthy to unloose the ties of the hosen or the latchets of the shoes of the Messenger of God whom ye call 'Messiah,' who was made before me, and shall come after me..."

(\* Here the Greek "Christ" clearly equals the Italian "*mesia*" or "*messia*" which can be seen in lines 3 and 12 of Figure 9.)

We see from these comparisons that not only has the author of *Barnabas* contradicted the Qur'an in calling Muhammad the Messiah, but he has copied the Canonical Gospels practically word for word. The only change he has made is to place the words of John the Baptist in the mouth of Jesus, making Jesus call Muhammad the Messiah; and eliminating Yahya from the

book entirely.

Eliminating Yahya may seem a small thing to a Muslim for it would only change five verses in the Qur'an. But omitting the greater part of four chapters and changing 28 others in the Canonical Gospel is a very large change. It surely cannot be expected that Christians should eliminate the great Yahya on the basis of one witness who has shown himself false 50 times in other areas, and also contradicts the Qur'an.

### **Barnabas Denies that God Ordered Burnt Sacrifices in the Torah which He Gave to Moses**

In Chapter 32 of the *Gospel of Barnabas* Jesus is talking with the scribes and is made to say to them,

And I ask you, for what cause have you annulled the precept of God to observe your traditions?  
You say to the sons of poor fathers: Offer and make vows unto the temple.

The author declares clearly that offerings are not a precept or commandment of God. They are only by tradition.

Then in Chapters 66 and 67 Jesus is made to make the following statements:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees: woe unto you, priests and Levites,.. For you say unto (those who come to sacrifice): 'Bring of your sheep and bulls and lambs to the temple of your God, and eat not all, but give a share to your God (as a burnt offering) of that which he hath given you.'

Here even the priests and Levites, the official religious leaders ordained by God in the Torah, are rebuked for teaching people to offer sacrifices. The reason given by the author of Barnabas is that God does not need meat to eat. This is true, of course. God revealed it by the Holy Spirit in the Zabur (Psalms). In Psalm 50:7-15 from 1000 BC God says,

Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against you. I am God, your God!  
I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me. I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

In other words God is saying, "I don't eat food from you or need your sacrifices as food, but I have commanded you to sacrifice. Now sacrifice with a pure heart."

Is not God all-powerful and all-knowing? Does he not have the right to order what he wishes? To say that he has no right to order some of the meat of the sacrifice to be burnt by the Jews as a "sweet-savour" rising to him is also to say that he has no right to order the thousands of uneaten camels, bulls and sheep offered to him now in the present by Muslims at Mecca during the Hajj on Aid-el-Kabir.

In addition, the present practice of offering a sacrifice to deal with ceremonial sin at Mecca would be wrong. If someone makes an error during pilgrimage, wears the wrong kind of clothes, for example, this would nullify the pilgrimage. In order to "cover it", "pay for it", "atone for it", according to the Sura *Al-Baqara* (The Heifer) 2:196, 2-3 AH, he must give a ransom (fidya فدية) and one of his alternatives is to offer a sacrifice (*nusuk* نُسُك) This happened to a friend of mine. He and seven other men went together to buy a bull to cover, (pay for?, atone for?) their

ceremonial sins made during the Hajj.

The important thing, though, for Muslim readers is to know what the Qur'an says about burnt offerings in relation to the Torah of Moses. Did God order the Jewish believers to offer sacrifices or not? In the Sura *Al-Ma'ida* (The Table) 5:30, from 10 AH, it says about Cain and Able:

Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold! they each presented a sacrifice (*qurban* قُرْبَان) (to God): It was accepted from one, but not from the other.

This agrees exactly with what was revealed to Moses in Genesis 4:1-4 of the Torah where it says that "Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock". Al Beidawi and Jallalo'ddin add further details not found in the Qur'an saying that God declared his acceptance of Abel's sacrifice in a visible manner, by causing fire to descend from heaven to consume it, without touching that of Cain.<sup>58</sup>

Next we read in the Sura *Ali-Imran* (The Family of 'Imran) 3:183, from 2 or 3 AH, these words:

They said: 'God took our promise not to believe in an apostle unless he showed us a sacrifice (*qurban* قُرْبَان) consumed by fire (from heaven): Say, 'There came to you apostles before me with clear signs and even with what you ask for. Why then did you slay them, if you speak the truth?'

This refers clearly to Elijah. The account of his great victory is found in 1 Kings 18:16-45. Elijah challenged the priests of the idol Baal to a contest. The priests of Baal were to cut up a bull and place it on an altar, and Elijah would do the same. The God who answered with fire from heaven would thus show himself to be the true God. Elijah even wet his sacrifices three times with jars of water. Then he prayed and the Lord God of Israel answered with fire consuming the meat, wood, and all of the water.

This great victory is also mentioned in the Sura *Al-Saffat* (The Ranks) 37:123-128, from the early Meccan period where we read:

So also was Elias (Elijah) among those sent (by us). 'Behold', he said to his people, 'Will you not fear God? Will you call upon Baal and forsake the best of creators — God, your Lord and cherisher of your fathers of old?' But they rejected him, and they will certainly be called up (for Punishment), except the sincere and devoted servants of God.

Finally we find in the Sura *Al-Baqara* (The Heifer) 2:67-72, from 2 AH, the following words:

And remember Moses said to his people: 'God commands that you sacrifice a heifer.' They said, 'Do you make a laughing-stock of us?' He said, 'God save me from being an ignorant fool!... (then after they ask several foolish questions because they do not want to obey, the passage continues)... They said: 'Now you have brought the truth.' Then they offered her in sacrifice, but not with good-will.

Here it says in perfect clarity that God commanded the people through Moses to offer a certain sacrifice. The story told in these verses agrees with the command to sacrifice found in the Torah of Moses, Numbers 19:1-10.

From all these Qur'anic quotations we see clearly that sacrifices were commanded by God. And again we find the *Gospel of Barnabas* contradicting both the Bible and the Qur'an.

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<sup>58</sup> George Sale, *The Koran*, op. cit. note o on p. 77.

## **Sacrifice in the Old Testament**

This contradiction may not seem very important to a Muslim, but for Christians (and for Jews) it is a terrible contradiction. It means that 57, or almost one third, of the 187 chapters in the Torah of Moses, are in error. It means that 10 percent of the Zabur (Psalms) of David is wrong. In total, 23 out of the 39 books of the Jews mention peace offerings, or sin offerings, or trespass offerings. We cannot believe that they are all wrong. That is almost 2/3 of the Old Testament.

## **Sacrifice in the New Testament**

In the Christian New Testament sacrifices are mentioned or implied many times in all four of the canonical Gospels and in 9 of the 23 books given by revelation to Jesus' disciples. This represents 48% of the Christian New Testament.

In Luke 2:22-24 we read that after Jesus' birth,

Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord... and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: 'a pair of doves or two young pigeons.'

In Luke 5:12-15 where we read about Jesus healing the man with leprosy, Jesus says to the healed man,

Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.

In summary sacrifices and offerings are mentioned in almost two thirds of the Old Testament and nearly half of the NT. Surely Muslims do not expect Christians to abandon the good news that Jesus opened Paradise to all by dying as a sacrifice for our sins on the basis of a book which is full of historical errors and even contradicts the Qur'an.

## **Barnabas Claims to be One of the Twelve Disciples Who Knew Jesus Personally**

According to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus chose 12 disciples for special training. Matthew, a tax collector, was called right out of the tax office. Matthew 9:9 says,

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

On another occasion,

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew casting a net, for they were fishermen. 'Come follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed him. (Mark 1:16- 18)

These and nine other men left everything and followed Jesus for a period of three or four years, living with him and learning the Gospel. And with this the Qur'an agrees for we read in the Sura *Al Saff* (The Battle Array) 61:14, from AH 3,

As said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples (الْحَوَارِيُونَ), 'who will be my helpers to the work of God?' The Disciples said, 'we are God's helpers!'... But We (God) gave power to those who believed against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed.

Jesus chose these 12 special disciples early in his ministry, and sent them with the message of his Gospel. Since they were specially chosen messengers and specially sent by Jesus,

Christians often talk about them as “The Twelve Apostles”, because “apostle” means messenger in Greek. From this the reader can understand our Christian definition of the word “apostle”. It is a man who saw and heard Jesus and was specially sent by Jesus as a messenger to preach the Gospel.

In three of the Gospels we find the names of these twelve disciples. Thousands of Christians knew these men and their names are as follows:

Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-18	Luke 6:13-16
Peter	Simon Peter	Simon
Andrew	Andrew	Peter
Matthew	Matthew	Andrew
John	John	Matthew
James	James	John
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	James
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Judas of James (a second name for Thaddaeus)
Philip	Philip	Bartholomew
James of Alpheus	James of Alpheus	Philip
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	James of Alpheus
Thomas	Thomas	Judas Iscariot
Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Thomas

If the reader were to look through the New Testament, he would find a great deal of information about some of these men. About others we know almost nothing except their names. But one thing is very clear. The name of Barnabas is not on any of these lists.

### **The Twelve Apostles According to the Gospel of Barnabas**

When we look at the *Gospel of Barnabas* we find that the author claims to be an apostle. In the first lines of Chapter 1 we read:

Barnabas, Apostle of Jesus the Nazarene, called Christ, to all them that dwell upon the earth, desiring peace and consolation.

There is a Barnabas, a church leader and friend of Paul, mentioned many times in the New Testament book called the Acts of the Apostles. He was probably a second generation Christian. “Second generation” refers to those Christians who believed through the testimony and preaching of the apostles. They may or may not have know Jesus of Nazareth personally.

In the Acts of the Apostles 4:36-37 we are told that this Barnabas was a Levite who came from Cyprus. He was the man who took Paul “and brought him to the Apostles” after Paul was converted (Acts 9:27). Sometime later,

Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Paul, and... brought him to Antioch, where for a whole year Barnabas and Paul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. (Acts 11: 25-26)

Chapters 13 and 14 of Acts tell how Barnabas and Paul took a long journey to preach the good news of forgiveness of sin to the idol worshippers.

When we look again at Chapter 1 of the *Gospel of Barnabas*, we find that the author claims to be that very Barnabas who knew Paul. He says,

Dearly beloved...many, being deceived of Satan, under pretense of piety, are preaching most impious doctrine... repudiating the circumcision ordained of God for ever, and permitting every unclean meat: among whom Paul has been deceived, whereof I speak not without grief; for which cause I am writing the truth which I have seen and heard in the intercourse that I have had with Jesus.

Perhaps he is using the word “apostle” with another meaning? Perhaps he only means that he heard Jesus’ preaching and saw his miracles? But, no, he claims to be one of the twelve closest disciples. In Chapter 14 he also has a list of the Twelve. It reads as follows:

Andrew, Peter, **Barnabas**, Matthew, John, James, Thaddaeus, Judas, Bartholomew, Philip, James, and Judas Iscariot.

Pseudo-Barnabas has included himself as one of the Twelve Apostles. But there are other changes. Let us look at the four lists together.

<b>Matthew 10:2-4</b>	<b>Mark 3:16-18</b>	<b>Luke 6:13-16</b>	<b>Barnabas 14</b>
Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Peter
Andrew	Andrew	Andrew	Andrew
_____	_____		<b>Barnabas</b>
Matthew	Matthew	Matthew	Matthew
John	John	John	John
James	James	James	James
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Judas of James (a second name for Thaddaeus)	<b>Thaddaeus</b>
_____	_____	_____	<b>Judas</b>
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
James of Alpheus	James of Alpheus	James of Alpheus	James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot
Thomas	Thomas	Thomas	_____
Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	_____

What do we find? Not only has Barnabas been added, but “Thaddaeus” and his second name “Judas” have become two different apostles. Finally, two men whom we thought for 1900 years were apostles, are not found on the list. The names of Simon the Zealot and Thomas are

completely missing. This is a mistake of the same order as giving a list of the 10 most distinguished followers of Muhammad, “the ten who received glad tidings”, and missing out the name of Abu Bakr.

We may not know much about Simon the Zealot, but Thomas was a very important person. He travelled as far as India to preach the Gospel. To this day there is a church group in that country named for him, called Mar Toma. The most important thing though is his testimony to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. According to John 20:25, when Thomas was told by the other disciples that Jesus had risen, he said,

Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.

The next week, the risen Jesus appeared to him and rebuked him for his unbelief. It is from this happening that the phrase “doubting Thomas” has entered into English and most of the other languages spoken by Christians.

His doubt and subsequent acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord has been a strong proof to Christians, then and now, of the truth of the Gospel. So what is to be done? The answer was simple for pseudo-Barnabas. He left him out.

In summary we can say that if you compare the pseudo-*Gospel of Barnabas* with the Canonical Gospels, you find long passages where the two are identical. But any passage which does not agree with the doctrines of Islam, as understood by the author of *Barnabas* has either been changed or eliminated. Since John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus was to be the Saviour of the world from sin, he was eliminated. Since Mosaic sacrifices for sin were a type of Jesus’ death for our sins, it is claimed that God did not order them. Since Thomas is a strong witness to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, he was left out.

## **Conclusion to the Epilogue A Fantasy**

I ask my Muslim readers to imagine their reaction to the following idea. Someone comes to you now in the 20th century with a book which has never been mentioned before — a book which claims to be the true original Qur’an assembled by Zaid Ibn Thabit during the first century of the Hejira. It has a preface which mentions disagreements between Omar and Ali, the prophet’s son-in-law, and claims to have been hidden until a future time when it will be revealed to correct the present Qur’an.

You begin to read and arrive at the Sura *Al-A’raf* (The Heights) 7:158, from the late Meccan period. There you find the following words:

So believe in God and His Apostle, the unlettered Prophet who believes in God and his Words: follow him that ye may be guided **toward the light that will come.**<sup>59</sup>

Next you are reading in the Sura *Al-Tahrim* (The Forbidding) 66:8, from 7 AH, and it says:

The day that God will not permit to be humiliated the prophet and those who believe with him, nor **the prophet of light who will follow him.** Their light will run forward before them.

Another day you are reading the famous verse about the seal of the prophets from the Sura

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<sup>59</sup> Let me emphasize that **I** am speaking of a fantasy. The boldfaced words are my creation, they are not part of the Qur’an.

*Al-Ahzab* (The Confederates) 33:40, from 5-7 AH. There you find the following words:

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of God and the Seal of the prophets **and the revealer of the Arm of light who will come in the future. And surely the arm which stamps the seal is greater than the seal.** And God has full knowledge of all things.

Another day as you near the end of the Qur'an, you find a new Sura called the Sura *Al-Ashara Al-Mubashsharun* (العَشْرَةَ الْمُبَشِّرُونَ) (The Ten who Received Glad Tidings). It is stated to be a Meccan Sura. As you read this Sura of which you have never heard, you find a list of the ten most distinguished followers of Muhammad (from which the Sura obviously got its name), men who were promised the "glad tidings" of certain entrance into paradise. You read through the names: Omar ben Khattab, Othman ben Affane, Ali ben Abi Taleb, etc. to the end. Suddenly you say to yourself, "Wait a minute! Where is the name of Abu Bakr Sadiq? This is impossible! He was the most important of all!" You read the list again and there is the name Aqba Ibn Nafia. "How could his name be there? you say to yourself, "This is ridiculous. He was the son of Omar's sister — a 'second generation' Muslim. He was not one of the 'Ten who Received Glad Tidings'!" As you read a few lines farther, you find that Aqba Ibn Nafia is claiming that God told him to memorize all that he heard from Muhammad. Next to write it all down. And finally to keep it until a later date in order to correct all the mistakes that false people like Zaid, the Prophet's adopted son, put forth.

In addition to the boldfaced words and the new Sura (which were added by me of course) you find a reference to gunpowder being used in the Battle of Badr and a steam battering ram being used in the battle of Uhud. There are corrections written along the margins in Swedish and French and to top it all off there is one final absurdity. In one of the Suras the coolness of the rivers and streams in heaven is compared to the coolness one experiences when he has an iced Coca-Cola on a hot summer day.

Now what would Muslim readers say to this fantasy? They will say, with great feelings of resentment, This is a lie! This is terrible! How could an honest intelligent person believe such a thing? There is no record of this book before the 20th century! No Muslim writer ever mentioned such a reading! It's a pseudo-Qur'an! Not even a Christian or Jewish writer ever spoke of it!

And gunpowder? Gunpowder was brought to Europe by Marco Polo about 1300 AD (700 years after the Qur'an). How could it have been used in the Battle of Badr? Or the steam battering ram in the Battle of Uhud. The steam engine was not invented by James Watt until about 1800 AD (1100 or 1200 years after the Qur'an was written) How could anyone believe this terrible lie? This forgery could not have been written before the 20th century when Coca-Cola was put on the market. This is a horrible, terrible, awful thing.

This, of course, is exactly how Christians feel when it is said that this pseudo-*Gospel of Barnabas* is the true Gospel. How could an honest intelligent person believe such a thing?

## Appendix A Transcription of Arabic into English

International Symbols	English Adaption	International Symbols
ا	a	ف f
ب	b	ق q
ت	t	ك k
ث	t <u>th</u>	ل l
ج	j	م m
ح	h <u>h</u>	ن n
خ	k <u>kh</u>	ه h
د	d	و w
ذ	d <u>dh</u>	ي y
ر	r	ء ' (glottal stop)
ز	z	
س	s	Short Vowels
ش	s <u>sh</u>	ا a
ص	s <u>s</u>	ي i
ض	d <u>d</u>	و u
ط	t <u>t</u>	Long Vowels
ظ	z <u>z</u>	ا a     â
ع	'	ي i     î
غ	g <u>gh</u>	و u     û
		Diphthongs
		او au     aw
		اي ai     ay