ABSTRACT

A Comparative Study of Bible of Barnabas and Four Traditional Gospels

Today, there are three major religions on the earth that believe in the existence of a single God or Creator: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The followers of the two great religions in the world, that is Christianity and Islam, have two books that are supposed to be “the words of God.” The holy book of the Christians is the Bible, Kitab-i muqaddas (holy book). This book consists of two main parts: Old Testament, namely the Torah (Tawrat) The Nebeim and the Khetubeim, and the New Testament, the Injils (The Gospels Acts of Apostles, the Letters of Disciples, or Missionaries to churches communities, Individuals and the Revelation). The holy book of the Muslims is the Holy Qur’an al-karim.

The Bible is the Holy Book of the Jews and the Christians while the Old Testament belong to Jews, the New Testament belong to Christians. However, Christian believe on accept both the Old Testament and New Testament as divine, but the Jews reject the New Testament, which was written and collected after the death of Jesus Christ (PBUH) by Jewish apostles turned to Christianity. In the New Testament, there are Four Traditional Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) which are generally accepted by Christians but there is one, the Gospel of Barnabas, which is not accepted by most of Christians, because the Gospel of Barnabas was traced after the Four Traditional Gospels and there are many things not same and opposed to the Four Traditional Gospels. Consequently, the scholars of comparative religion have taken interests - in examining and analyzing these Gospels. And they found many
similar and dissimilar things between the Four Traditional Gospels and the Gospel of Barnabas.

The Four Traditional Gospels included in the Bible were not the only Gospels written in the early centuries of Christianity. Towards the end of the fourth century the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John were included in the Canon of New Testament and the rest were declared to be heretical or apocryphal by the Church. Before they were canonized and accepted as scriptures, the Gospels did not have that sanctity which they have now and no one felt any compunction in altering them if anything contained in them did not suit his purpose or the purpose of his sect. Even after they were included in the Canon and declared to be the Word of God. Changes continued to be made in them, as is clear from the different early extant manuscripts.

These facts disclosed by distinguished Western scholars go to show that the Gospel of Jesus Christ (PBUH), by which we mean the Message which Jesus Christ (PBUH) had received from God, has not reached us in its original form. The Four Traditional Gospels included in the Bible cannot be considered identical with the inspired Gospel of Jesus Christ (PBUH). The manner of their composition and the circumstances through which they have passed are such that they cannot be relied upon to give us exact knowledge of what Jesus Christ (PBUH) had said and taught.

One thing is surely indisputable from all of this: the Four Traditional Gospels are not, as some Christians claim, the divine words of God. For if they are, God is extremely confused. As, by his very nature, God is unlikely to be confused, it seems safe to conclude that we are dealing with the words of fallible men. So, can the Four Traditional Gospels be relied on to tell us anything about an historical Jesus Christ (PBUH)? What light can scholarship shed on Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?
Well, first of all, the Four Traditional Gospels were not originally even known by these names. They were not attributed to any particular author, each Gospel being regarded as ‘the Gospel’ of a particular Christian sect. Only later did they acquire the names of their supposed authors. The Four Traditional Gospels are actually anonymous works, in which everything, without exception, is written in capital letters, with no headings, chapter or verse divisions, and practically no punctuation or spaces between words. They were not even written in the Aramaic of the Jews but in Greek. The Four Traditional Gospels have also been added to and altered over time. A careful study of over 3,000 early manuscripts has shown how scribes made many changes, false pens of the scribe have written falsely. Despite all of the editing and amending, the Four Traditional Gospels remain contradictory and inconsistent, as we have seen.

There are the twenty-eight chapters in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the sixteen chapters in the Gospel of St. Mark, the twenty-four chapters in the Gospel of St. Luke and the twenty-one chapters in the Gospel of St. John. The first three gospels almost have the same themes, although they differ in the number of chapters and pages. Hence, they are called Synoptic. The Fourth one claims the divinity and incarnation of Jesus Christ (PBUH). We can easily see that all the Gospels deal with the birth, genealogy, miracles, missionary works by him and his (PBUH) disciples, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ (PBUH). Though divine worship play an important part in Christianity, yet only scanty indications to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and charity are made in the Gospels. The Gospels do not include legislation of penalties, marriage, inheritance distribution, and the like. The Gospels, in addition, do not include a comprehensive ethical code, nor a complete code of faith [However, Matthew
describe the sermon of Jesus Christ (PBUH) on the mount of Horne (Jerusalem) (Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8).

In considering how far the Four Traditional Gospels faithfully present the inspired message or Gospel of Jesus Christ (PBUH) we must bear the following facts in mind:

(1) No written copy was made of the inspired sayings of Jesus Christ (PBUH) in his life time.

(2) The earliest records of the sayings of Jesus Christ (PBUH), which were made shortly after the departure of Jesus Christ (PBUH), when the glorification of Jesus Christ (PBUH) had already begun, have all been irretrievably lost.

(3) In the Four Traditional Gospels, which were written between 70 and 115 C.E. on the basis of some of those lost documents, the material contained in them was handled rather freely, the Gospel-writers feeling no hesitation in changing it for what they considered to be the greater glory of Christ or to bring it in line with the views of their sects.

(4) None of the Evangelist had known Jesus Christ (PBUH) or heard him speaking.

(5) The Gospels were written in Greek, whereas the language spoken by Jesus Christ (PBUH) was Aramaic.

(6) They were composed to propagate the points of view of the different factions and that they were chosen from many others which represented different view-points.

(7) For at least a century after they were written they had no canonical authority and could be and were actually changed by the copyists of the different sects to serve their own purpose.
(8) The earliest extant manuscripts of the Gospels—Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Alexandrinus—belong to the fourth and fifth century, and no one knows how much the Gospels had been changed during the centuries of which no manuscript is available.

(9) There are considerable differences at many places among the various extant manuscripts of the fourth and fifth century.

(10) The Four Traditional Gospels taken together are full of contradictions.

**Apocryphal Gospels:** Today, there are several Gospels which are considered as Apocryphal Gospels, mostly written by Christians, that have not been accepted as canonical and consequently are not included in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. Note that some of the books of the New Testament apocrypha were once considered canonical, even though they are not now. The following are some of the Apocryphal Gospels:

1. Gospel of Thomas
2. Gospel of Truth
3. Coptic Gospel (of the Egyptians)
4. Greek Gospel of the Egyptians
5. Arabic Infancy Gospel
6. Gospel of James
7. Gospel of Peter
8. Gospel of Philip
9. Gospel of Judas
10. Gospel of Mary

**Barnabas** was an early Christian mentioned in the New Testament. His Hellenistic (Cyprus-Greek) Jewish parents called him Joseph, but when he sold all his goods and gave the money to the apostles in Jerusalem, they gave him a new name: Barnabas, which means ‘son of consolation’ or ‘man of encouragement’ (Acts 4:36-37), and connotes a prophet in the primitive Christian sense of the word. His feast day among the Christians is June 11.
The Gospel of Barnabas commonly considered by Christian theologians as “Apocryphal”, is most in harmony, as to matters of faith, with the Holy Qur’an. The Gospel of Barnabas was accepted as a Canonical Gospel in the Churches of Alexandria till 325 C.E. St. Iranaeus (130-200) wrote in support of pure monotheism and opposed Paul for injecting into Christianity doctrines of the pagan Roman religion and Platonic philosophy. He had quoted extensively from the Gospel of Barnabas in support of his views. This shows that the Gospel of Barnabas was in circulation in the first and second centuries of Christianity.

The Gospel of Barnabas not only mentions the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S) by name, but including the shahada or testification (chapter 39). It is strongly anti-Pauline and anti-Trinitarian in tone. In the Gospel, Jesus Christ (PBUH) is described as a prophet and not the son of God, while Paul is called “the deceived”. According to Gospel of Barnabas, Jesus Christ (PBUH) denied being the Messiah, claiming rather that the Messiah would be Ishmaelite (i.e. Arab, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S) as Messiah), the Gospel also quotes Jesus Christ (PBUH) as saying that the sacrificed son of the Prophet Abraham was Ishmael not Isaac. Furthermore, the Gospel of Barnabas states that Jesus Christ (PBUH) was secured from the crucifixion by being raised alive to Heaven by the Angels of God; while Judas Iscariot the traitor — miraculously transformed — was crucified in his place and etc.

This rational conclusion becomes virtually a fact when we read the first page of the gospel of Barnabas which was found in the sixteenth century in the private library of Pope Sixtus V (December 13, 1521 – August 27, 1590, born Felice Peretti di Montalto, was Pope from 1585 to 1590):

“Dearly beloved the great and wonderful God hath during these past days visited us by his prophet Jesus Christ in great mercy of teaching
and miracles, by reason whereof many, being deceived of Satan, under pretence of piety, are preaching most impious doctrine, calling Jesus son of God, repudiating the circumcision ordained of God for ever, and permitting every unclean meat: among whom also Paul hath been deceived, whereof I speak not without grief, for which cause I am writing that truth which I have seen and heard, in the intercourse that I have had with Jesus, in order that ye may be saved and not be deceived of Satan and perish in the judgement of God. Therefore beware of every one that preacheth unto you new doctrine contrary to that which I write, that ye may be saved eternally. The great God be with you and guard you from Satan and from every evil. Amen.”

The Gospel of Barnabas can be divided into several sections of which the following is a brief description:

CHAPTERS 1-9: The Birth of Jesus Christ (PBUH); his childhood and his “disputation” with the doctors concerning the law.

CHAPTERS 10-47: Jesus Christ (PBUH) receives a book, the Injil from God. He begins his ministry and performs miracles. He preaches, “I am not the messiah, the messiah will be born of the Ishmaelites”.

CHAPTERS 48-98: The Roman soldiers worship him as God but Jesus Christ (PBUH) tells them that he is not the son of God. He has come to give the glad tidings of the coming of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S).

CHAPTERS 99-126: A crowd gathers to appoint Jesus Christ (PBUH) as king but Jesus Christ (PBUH) leaves for Damascus and then travels to some other cities.

CHAPTERS 127-153: Jesus Christ (PBUH) teaches his disciples about penitence, fasting, prayer, fear of God and high morals.
CHAPTERS 154-191: Jesus Christ (PBUH) teaches about the sinful world, the nature of sin, restoration, freedom, paradise and predestination. A scribe is also mentioned who claims that he saw a secret book of Moses which declares that the “Messiah springeth from Ishmael and not from Isaac”.

CHAPTERS 192-222: Jesus Christ (PBUH) raises Lazarus from the dead and predicts the judgment of Jerusalem. The Jews attempt to stone him but he vanishes. He is betrayed by Judas. Jesus Christ (PBUH) is taken into heaven and Judas’ face is made to look like that of Jesus Christ (PBUH). Judas is mistakenly crucified in place of Jesus Christ (PBUH). Jesus Christ (PBUH) appears to his friends and his mother and tells them that he was not crucified. He charges Barnabas to write the Gospel (Injil) after which he returns to heaven.

This is the Gospel of Barnabas in relation to which great efforts were made to obliterate it. In the 5th Century A.C. (100 years before the coming of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S.)) Pope Jelasius I (d. 19 November 496 A.D.) issued an edict to the effect that the reader of this Gospel is a criminal, and today it is claimed that it has been written by a Muslim. Hence, there can be no doubt whatsoever that present day Christianity represents the theories of Paul, and is not connected whatsoever with the teaching of Jesus Christ (PBUH) or his disciples.

What a pity that the real Bible (Injil) disappeared in the course of time. The nonsensical pretensions of Paul, who was a hypocrite: “The crucifixion of Jesus Christ (PBUH) is, divine reason, justice and salvation. God allowed his own son be killed in order to forgive the sins of human beings,” has become the foundation of
today’s Christianity. Although Jesus Christ (PBUH) never said that anybody was born a sinner, today’s Christianity is explained as follows:

1. Man comes to this world as a sinner. Adam, the first human, did not obey the order of God; therefore, he was expelled from Paradise.

2. The descendants of Adam, up to now, are deemed to have the same sin.

3. Jesus Christ (PBUH) as the son of God was sent to this world to save humanity from that sin.

4. God allowed His own son to be crucified because He wanted to forgive the sins of human beings.

5. This world is a place of suffering. Pleasure and enjoyment are prohibited in this world. Man was created to suffer and to worship.

6. Man cannot have direct relations (worship) with God. They cannot directly ask anything from Him. Only the priests can implore God for them. And only the priests can forgive their sins.

7. The leader of the Christians (Catholic) is the Pope. The Pope is infallible; whatever he does is justice.

8. The spirit (soul) and the body are different. Only the priests can purify the spirits of people. But their bodies remain impure; it will always remain sinful.

How could Paul a late comer have so many books included in the New Testament, when Barnabas was a more prominent, influential and knowledgeable Elder than Paul, how could the book “Shepherd of Hermas”, be excluded when the early Believers, Elders, Apostles all accepted it, as inspired by God? Then there are many other books which were excluded notably “The Gospel of Barnabas”, written by
someone who knew Jesus Christ (PBUH), but Gospels written by others who never knew Jesus Christ (PBUH) were included, why? Why?

How sad it is that every book dealing with life of Jesus Christ (PBUH) in metaphysical language is taken for a Real Gospel. Four such “Man Made Accounts” were officially recognized by the Church as Gospels and were included among the Canonical Scriptures. These four little books are biographies. They do not give us a full account of all the deeds and sayings of Jesus Christ (PBUH) (John 20: 30); whereas the Gospel of St. Barnabas contains a complete history of Jesus Christ (PBUH), from his birth to his ascension, and the most of the circumstances in the Four Traditional Gospels are to be found therein.

Consequently, in the light of Gospel according to St. Barnabas, it is for us to see whether we should still cling to the uncertain and absolute tribal belief or become an integral part of the great fraternity of Islam and help making the world free from destructive conflicts.
The Important Points of the Thesis

The present study brings a new focus: explicit analysis of the Gospels, both the Four Traditional Gospels and the Gospel of Barnabas. The general argument can be briefly stated:

1. Some Christian scholars are being referred that the Gospel of Barnabas as Muslim versions or interpolations. But Muslim scholar dare say no and refuse on this allegation. If there were any interpolations made to the original work of Barnabas, the early scholars of Christendom did it. Because of Islam came into the fore over 600 years after Christianity. The Gospel of Barnabas was already in circulation in 325 AD. But when the early scholars of Christianity cannot reconcile the work and writings of Paul with that of Barnabas, the “Gentile Monarchs” of the time favoured Paul, so Barnabas Gospel was declared “apocalypse”, was removed from circulation and burned. Not only that, whoever was found to be in position of it were put to the sword without the benefit of any fair trial. (http://www.islamonline.net/Discussion/English/bbs.asp?aParID=589733&aTpID=&aGroupID=99665&action=move&aPathID=62&aSubject=Muslims+Against+Violence).

2. Some Islamic scholars cite the Gospel of Barnabas in support of the Islamic view of Jesus Christ (PBUH); in particular, Rashid Rida of Egypt and Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi of Pakistan. They had given it qualified acceptance. While some Muslim scholars also agree that this Gospel of Barnabas has been changed over time, others believe that Barnabas himself wrote the Gospel, whereas the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written by followers of Paul long after the events they described, and that therefore the Gospel of Barnabas is more authentic than the other Gospels (http://www.answering-christianity.com/answersamgreen.htm).

3. The Gospel of Barnabas is the close linkage between Islam and Christianity. But since modern Christians refused to recognize Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S) as the last messenger of God, and Islam as the “Last Testament” then the Gospel of Barnabas had to be thrown out from the Christian Bible ignominiously. It is too factual to be used as a Christian
guide to salvation and eternity. In short, modern Christians refused to be saved by Jesus Christ (PBUH), they prefer to follow St. Paul to elsewhere, a destination other than the way of Jesus Christ (PBUH).

4. The Gospel of Barnabas is the only known surviving gospel written by a disciple of Jesus Christ (PBUH), that is by a man who spent most of his time in the actual company of Jesus Christ (PBUH) during the three years in which he was delivering his message. Therefore he had direct experience and knowledge of Jesus’ teaching, unlike all the authors of the four accepted Gospels. (Muhammad ‘Ataur Rahim, Jesus: A Prophet of Islam (New Delhi: Idara Isha’at-e-Deniyat, 1997) p.41)

5. Jesus Christ (PBUH) announced and Barnabas was appointed by Jesus Christ (PBUH) himself to write the Gospel. (Barnabas 221)

6. St. Barnabas was original one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ (PBUH) (Barnabas 14).

7. Christians do not regard the Gospel of St. Barnabas as an integral part of the New Testament and it is not often preached in their churches. This Gospel was condemned by the Christian council three hundred years before the prophet Muhammad (S.A.S). The reason for this is, no doubt, that the advent of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.S) is predicted therein in very clear words (Ali Akbar, Israel and the Prophecies of the Holy Qur’an (Kuala Lumpur: Marican & Sons: 1980) p.6).

8. Jesus Christ (PBUH) predicts the coming of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S) in the Gospel of Barnabas (Barnabas 39, 41, 46, 54, 55, 97, 112, 136, 163 and 220).

9. Allah, the Merciful and Beneficial, has sent his massagers to all the people in the past. However, none of them was sent for all the people and for the time to come. The house of Nubuwat (Prophecy) started from Adam was being built by Allah which God completion in the prophethood of
Muhammad (S.A.S.). He is the last and final corner stone of the building of Nubuwat (Matthew 21:42-43 and Barnabas 112, 163, 220). His position being unique, he is foretold or prophesied in all the Holy Books sent down by Allah i.e. Torah, Zabur, Injil etc. sent down before the descent (Nuzul) of the Holy Qur’an (As-Saff:6).

10. On the contrary, it appears from the first Chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew that Joseph knew Mary not till she had brought forth her first born son. The Bible nowhere says that Jesus Christ (PBUH) was the only son of Mary but says that Jesus Christ (PBUH) was the firstborn of Mary (Matthew 1:24-25). The term “Only son” used for Jesus Christ (PBUH) is always used in connection with God i.e. Jesus Christ (PBUH) as the only son of God (Matthew 14:33, Mark 1:1, Luke 4:41, John 5:25, John 6:69).


12. Through many New Testament evidences that God sent Jesus Christ (PBUH) as a prophet to the people of Israel only, with the admission of Jesus Christ (PBUH) and his disciples (Matthew 10:5-6). But when most of the people of Israel did not believe in the message of Jesus Christ (PBUH), his disciples were later forced to continue their mission to others besides the Jews due to their devotion to the mission. The disciples’ propagation of the message of Jesus Christ (PBUH) outside the Jews did not occur except after the disappearance of Jesus Christ (PBUH), never during his life. Jesus himself never preached to the Gentiles and warned his disciple against preaching to them. That the disciples or their disciples preached to the non-Jewish Gentiles was a personal opinion contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ (PBUH). Therefore, let it be remembered that Jesus Christ (PBUH) was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ONLY (Matthew 15:24). This is what Jesus himself emphasized several times in the Gospels (Muhammad Ali Alkhuli, The Truth about Jesus Christ (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 1990) pp.78-83).
13. Paul directed his endeavours to prove that he received knowledge directly through revelation and therefore was not in need of being taught by the disciples (Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *What is Christianity?* (New Delhi: Idara Isha’ at-E-Diniyat (P) Ltd., 2003) p.111).

14. The Doctrines of Trinity, Redemption, Incarnation and Abrogation of Law of Torah represent the personal theories of Paul, and were not supported by the disciples (Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *What is Christianity?* (New Delhi: Idara Isha’ at-E-Diniyat (P) Ltd., 2003) p.112).


18. The Holy Qur’an corrects the Bible in making Ishmael a genuine Prophet of God and his mother, Hagar, Abraham’s legitimate wife. Ishmael was not disinherited nor cast out but together he and his father, Abraham, built the Kaaba in Mecca as the symbol of worship of the one truce God and it was Ishmael – nor Isaac – whom God commands Abraham to sacrifice (*Al-Baqarah*:125-127 and *Maryam*:54).

19. According to one version of the Gospel of Barnabas, Jesus Christ (PBUH) denied being the Messiah, claiming rather that the Messiah would be Ishmaelite (i.e. Arab) (Barnabas 42, 82, 83, 96, 97, 198, 206). Jesus Christ (PBUH) must have given answer not recorded in the Four Traditional
Gospels, but mentioned explicitly in the Gospel of Barnabas that the promise was made in Ishmael, not in Isaac (Barnabas 43).

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