INTRODUCTION
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Christians today outnumber one thousand million persons living mostly in Europe, Australia, and the two Americas. Thus Christianity is one of the largest religions in the world now. It is strongly competed, however, by Islam, which attracts new converts every day, all over the world.

Some of the major beliefs of Christianity are the divinity of Jesus Christ (PBUH), the Trinity (God is three in one and one in three), Jesus Christ (PBUH) as the only son of God, original sin, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (PBUH), salvation through crucifixion and recoming of Jesus Christ (PBUH).

It is really unfortunate that most of the people do not examine their own beliefs; they just inherit their beliefs from parents and grandparents without any investigation. Although, for example, Jesus Christ (PBUH) was sent to the people of Israel ONLY, most Christians, who are not from that people, do not pay attention to this fact which is emphasized in their own gospels by Jesus himself.

Although the present Gospels differ a great deal among one another, they still have enough proofs to falsify the basic beliefs of Christianity as it stands nowadays.¹

Many readers of the Gospels are embarrassed and even abashed when they stop to think about the meaning of certain descriptions. The same is true when they


Gospels, Four books of the New Testament, known as the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; called 'gospel' by the 2nd century Church (Gr euangelion, 'good news'). Each portrays a perspective on the ministry and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, concluding with an account of his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection. The first 3, called the synoptic Gospels, agree on the order of events.
make comparisons between different versions of the same event found in different Gospels.²

The majority of Christians believe that the Gospels were written by direct witness of the life of Jesus Christ (PBUH) and therefore constitute unquestionable evidence concerning the events high-lighting His life and preachings. One wonders, in the presence of such guarantees of authenticity, how it is possible to discuss the teachings derived from them and how one can cast doubt upon the validity of the Church as an institution applying the general instructions Jesus Himself gave. Today’s popular editions of the Gospels contain commentaries aimed at propagating these ideas among the general public.³

There are four Gospels included in the Bible – the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We come across many inspired sayings of Jesus Christ (PBUH) in these Gospels. They were composed between forty and eighty years after the departure of Jesus Christ (PBUH) on the basis of some earlier documents which are now lost. Biblical scholars have identified some of these earlier documents as (1) ‘Q’ or Q Document (German Quelle = ‘Source’), a lost document in Aramaic, which reached the writers of the Gospels in a Greek translation, (2) (‘Urmarcus’ = Primitive Mark) an earlier draft of Mark’s Gospel written on the basis of Peter’s discourses about Jesus Christ (PBUH), and (3) ‘L’, a collection of reports about Jesus Christ (PBUH) used only by Luke. A comparison of the Gospels show either the compilers were careless or advertant interpolates because they did not even hesitate to change some things contained in them to suit their own purpose.

² Maurice Bucaille, The Bible, the Qur’an and Science (New Delhi: Idara Isha’at-E-Diniyat (P) Ltd, 2002) p.44.

³ Ibid, p.49.
The first Gospel to be written was that of **Mark**. It was written at Rome at least forty years after the so-called crucifixion of Jesus Christ (PBUH) (40 A.D.). The Gospel as we have it today is considered to be an expanded version of **Urmarcus**, about which Papias, an early Christian writer (140 C.E.), has the following to say:

> "The elder John used to say, Mark having become Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not; however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied him, but subsequently as I said attached himself to Peter who used to frame his teaching to meet the wants of his hearers, and not as making a connected narrative of the Lord’s discourses."

It is not possible to say whether **Urmarcus** was expanded and revised to give us the Gospel of Mark as we have it by Mark himself or by some other person. Dr. C. J. Cadoux, who was Mackennal Professor of Church History at Oxford, thus sums up the conclusions of eminent Biblical scholars regarding the nature and composition of this Gospel:

> "It was written after Peter’s martyrdom (65 A.D.), and at a time when Mark, who had not himself been a disciple of Jesus, apparently had none of the personal disciples of Jesus within reach by whose knowledge he could check his narrative these circumstances of its composition account for the existence in it, side by side, of numerous signs of accuracy and a certain number of signs of ignorance and inaccuracy."

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4 **Mark** the Evangelist (1st century) is traditionally believed to be the author of the Gospel of Mark and a companion of Peter. He also accompanied Paul and Barnabas in Paul’s first journey. After a sharp dispute, Barnabas separated from Paul, taking Mark to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-40). Ironically, this separation helped bring along the creation of the Gospel of Mark. Later Paul calls upon the services of Mark, the kinsman of Barnabas, and Mark is named as Paul’s fellow worker. He is also believed to be the first Pope of Alexandria by both the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Greek Church of Alexandria, and thus the founder of Christianity in Africa. His evangelistic symbol is the lion.

The Gospel of **Matthew** was written in Greek at Antioch about 90 C.E. The author made use of at least two lost documents—'Q' and 'Urmarcus'. Matthew incorporates most of Mark (approximately 80 per cent) and follows his Markan source closely. No independent scholar regards this Gospel as the work of Matthew the apostle of Jesus Christ (PBUH). If Matthew composed anything it must have been only ‘Q’. Regarding the liberties taken by the unknown author of this Gospel with the original material, C.J. Cadoux writes:

“But a close examination of the treatment he gives to his borrowings from Mark shows that he allowed himself great freedom in editing and embroidering his material in the interest of what he regarded as the rightful honouring of the great Master. The same tendencies are often visible elsewhere when he is producing ‘Q’ or providing matter peculiar to himself. Anything, therefore, strictly peculiar to ‘Matthew’ can be accepted as historical only with great caution.”

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6 Matthew the Evangelist (“Gift of the LORD”, Standard Hebrew and Tiberian Hebrew: Mattay or Mattiyahu), most often called Saint Matthew, is a Christian figure, and one of Jesus’ Twelve Apostles. He is credited by tradition with writing the Gospel of Matthew, and is identified in that gospel as being the same person as Levi the toll collector.


Antioch on the Orontes (Latin: Antiochia ad Orontem; also Antiochia dei Siri, Great Antioch or Syrian Antioch) was an ancient city on the eastern side (left bank) of the Orontes River. Continuously inhabited since then, it became the modern city of Antakya, Turkey. Founded near the end of the 4th century BC by Seleucus I Nicator, one of Alexander the Great’s generals. Antioch eventually rivaled Alexandria as the chief city of the nearer East and was a cradle of gentile Christianity. It was one of the four cities of the Syrian tetrapolis.


The third Gospel, the Gospel of Luke,\textsuperscript{10} was written some where in Greece about the year 80 C.E. for the benefit of “the most excellent” Theophilus, probably a high official of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{11} It is an apologetic addressed to non-Jews. The writer, who was the friend and travel-companion of St. Paul, made use of at least three lost documents, two of these were identical with those used by the writer of Matthew’s Gospel and the third was peculiar to himself.\textsuperscript{12} Luke, who wished to bring

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\textsuperscript{10} Luke the Evangelist was an early Christian who is said by tradition to be the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, the third and fifth books of the New Testament. Saint Luke was born of Greek origin in the city of Antioch. In Catholicism, he is the patron saint of physicians and surgeons, and his feast day is October 18.
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\textsuperscript{12} Saint Paul (also called Paul the Apostle, The Apostle Paul or Paul of Tarsus) (Ancient Greek: Saul and Saulos and Paulos, Hebrew: Šaúl HaTarsi (“Saul of Tarsus”)) (died c 64-65), was a Hellenistic Jew, who called himself the “Apostle to the Gentiles”, and was, together with Saint Peter and James the Just, the most notable of early Christian missionaries. His efforts to accept gentile converts and to define the Torah as superceded by Christ were successful and decisive. According to the Acts of the Apostles, his conversion (or metanoia) took place on the road to Damascus, where he experienced a vision of the resurrected Jesus after which he was temporarily blinded. Unlike Jesus’ apostles in Jerusalem, Paul had not known Jesus in person. Paul asserted that he received the Gospel not from man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, Paul claimed almost total independence from the “mother church” in Jerusalem. Thirteen epistles in the New Testament are traditionally attributed to Paul, of which seven are considered absolutely genuine, three are decidedly not from Paul, and the other three are in dispute. Paul apparently dictated all his epistles through a secretary (or amanuensis), who would usually paraphrase the gist of his message, as was the practice among first-century scribes. These epistles were circulated within the Christian community, where they were read aloud in church along with other works. Paul’s epistles were accepted early as scripture and later established as Canon of Scripture. Critical scholars regard Paul’s epistles (written 50-62) to be the earliest-written books of the New Testament, being referenced as early as Clement of Rome (c. 96). Paul’s influence on Christian thinking arguably has been more significant than any other New Testament author. Christianity is commonly said to owe as much to Paul as to Jesus. Paul declared that faith in Christ made the Torah unnecessary for salvation, exalted the Christian church as the body of Christ, and depicted the world outside the Church as under judgment. Augustine’s foundational work on the gospel as a gift (grace), on morality as life in the Spirit, on predestination, an on original sin all derives from Paul, especially Romans. Martin Luther expressed Paul’s doctrine of faith most strongly as justification by faith alone. John Calvin developed Augustine’s predestination into double predestination. Karl Barth’s commentary on the Letter to the Romans had a political as well as theological impact. In the East, church fathers reduced the element of election in Romans 9 to divine foreknowledge, as have the Western humanists. He is the patron saint of London.
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his Gospel in line with the Pauline point of view, took even greater liberties with his sources than the writer of Matthew’s Gospel had done.\textsuperscript{13}

The Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke are called “the Synoptic Gospels” because they proceed on the basis of the same lost document and have much in common.\textsuperscript{14} The Gospel of John is very different from these.\textsuperscript{15} The divinity and pre-existence of Jesus Christ (PBUH) are affirmed in this Gospel alone, though Jesus himself did not claim to be so. In the opening lines the writer of this Gospel makes the claim that the divine Logos, the Word or Reason of God, which created the world, had become incarnate in Jesus Christ (PBUH). The Gospel of John was written at or near Ephesus between the years 110 and 115 of the Christian era by some unknown writer who was anti-semitically inclined and represented the Jews as the enemies of Jesus Christ (PBUH). No independent scholar regards it as the work of John the Son of Zebedee, who, according to R. H. Charles, Alfred Loisy, Robert Eisler, and other

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\item \textsuperscript{13} Pauline epistles are the fourteen New Testament books which have been traditionally ascribed to the Apostle Paul. Among them are some of the earliest extant Christian documents. They provide an insight into the beliefs and controversies of formative Christianity and, as part of the canon of the New Testament, they have also been, and continue to be, hugely influential in Christian theology and ethics. In the order they appear in the New Testament, the Pauline epistles are: Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews. All of the epistles except that to the Hebrews present Paul as the author. The epistle to the Hebrews is something of a special case, being anonymous. Authorship of Hebrews was disputed from the earliest, and few modern scholars would attribute it to Paul. Thus some classifications do not include Hebrews as a Pauline epistle, listing it instead with the general epistles.
\item \textsuperscript{14} The Synoptic Gospels, a term applied to three New Testament Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke), so called because of the striking amount of common material that they contain Most of Mark’s Gospel, for example, is reproduced in Matthew and Luke, and the correspondence often extends to the order of passages and wording.
\item \textsuperscript{15} John the Evangelist (d. ca. 110; “The LORD is merciful”, Standard Hebrew Yoḥanan, Tiberian Hebrew Yōḥānān), or the Beloved Disciple, is traditionally the name used to refer to the author of the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. Traditionally he has been identified with John the Apostle. The identification with the author of the second and third epistles of John and the author of the Book of Revelation is a long-held tradition, though debated among some historical-critical scholars. Christian tradition says that John the Evangelist was one of Christ’s original twelve apostles; the only one to live into old age; and not martyred for his faith. John the Evangelist is associated with Ephesus, where he is said to have lived and been buried. Some believe that after a long life he was exiled to Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. However this is a matter of debate, with some attributing authorship to John of Patmos or John the Presbyter. It also debated whether John the Evangelist is the same as St. John the Apostle.
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scholars, was beheaded by Agrippa I in the year 44 C.E., long before the Fourth Gospel was written. The modern Biblical scholars doubt the genuineness not only of the writer’s own views expressed in this Gospel, but also of the words put by him in the mouth of Jesus Christ (PBUH). C.J. Cadoux writes:

“The speeches in the Fourth Gospel (even apart from the early messianic claim) are so different from those in the Synoptic, and so like the comments of the Fourth Evangelist himself, that both cannot be equally reliable as records of what Jesus said: Literary veracity in ancient times did not forbid, as it does now, the assignment of fictitious speeches to historical characters: the best ancient historians made a practice of composing and assigning such speeches in this way.”

The Content of the Four Traditional Gospels

Let us look into the gospels to find out the nature of their contents. The four famous gospels are Matthew’s, Mark’s, Luke’s, and John’s. Let us begin with Matthew’s gospel:

- Chap. 1 & 2: the genealogy and birth of Jesus Christ (PBUH).
- Chap. 3: Jesus Christ (PBUH) and John the Baptist.
- Chap. 4: Jesus Christ (PBUH) being tested by Lucifer (devil).
- Chap. 5: peace, tolerance, and some commandments mainly moral ones.
- Chap. 6 & 7: reliance on God.
- Chap. 8 & 9: the miracles of Jesus Christ (PBUH).
- Chap. 10: A: 12 disciple of Jesus Christ (PBUH) and there preaching missions to Bani - Israel only. (Not to non-Jews and event Samaritans were not to benefits from Jesus Christ teaching) Matthew 10:1-7

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16 Ulfat Aziz-us-Samad, N.11, pp.2-5.
B: Effect of Jesus Christ teaching. (Matthew 10:16-42)

- Chap. 11: John the Baptist.
- Chap. 12: the miracles of Jesus Christ (PBUH).
- Chap. 13: some parables.
- Chap. 14: more miracles.
- Chap. 15: more miracles.
- Chap. 16: Jesus Christ (PBUH) and Peter.
- Chap. 17: more miracles.
- Chap. 18: tolerance.
- Chap. 19: more commandments.
- Chap. 20: about the would-be crucifixion.
- Chap. 21: the trip to Jerusalem on an ass.
- Chap. 22: Jesus Christ (PBUH) being tested by some Jews.
- Chap. 23: Jesus Christ (PBUH) reproaching the Jews.
- Chap. 24: Jesus Christ (PBUH) preaching.
- Chap. 25: Jesus Christ (PBUH) preaching.
- Chap. 26: the last supper prayer by Jesus Christ (PBUH) to God to save him from Ignominy unfaithfulness of his disciple, event Peter forsook him; Betrayal by Judas Iscariot and his arrest by Roman.
- Chap. 27: the crucifixion.
- Chap. 28: the end.

These are the twenty-eight chapters of Matthew’s gospel as previously shown.

The other three gospels have the same themes, no more and no less, although they differ in the number of chapters and pages. We can easily see that most of the gospel
chapters deal with the birth, genealogy, miracles, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ (PBUH). The gospels do in the full-fledged form but only scanty indications to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and charity are made. 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. ¹⁷

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 — for example, the Shepherd of Hermas¹⁸ — and conversely, books like Revelation were once considered apocryphal.¹⁹ The following are some of the Apocryphal Gospels:

¹⁷ Muhammad Ali Alkhuli, N.1, pp.84-85.

¹⁸ The Shepherd of Hermas (sometimes just called The Shepherd) is a Christian work of the second century, considered a valuable book by many Christians, and occasionally considered canonical scripture by some of the early Church fathers. The Shepherd had great authority in the second and third centuries. It was cited as Scripture by Irenaeus and Tertullian and was bound with the New Testament in the Codex Sinaiticus, and it was listed between the Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of Paul in the stichometrical list of the Codex Claromontanus. Some early Christians, however, considered the work apocryphal.

The work comprises five visions, twelve mandates, and ten parables. It relies on allegory and pays special attention to the Church, calling the faithful to repent of the sins that have harmed it. The book was originally written in Rome, in the Greek language, but a Latin translation was made very shortly afterwards. Some say this was done by the original author as a sign of the authenticity of the translation, though others dispute this. Only the Latin version has been preserved in full; of the Greek, the last fifth or so is missing.

1. Gospel of Thomas

The Gospel of Thomas is a New Testament-era apocryphon nearly completely preserved in a papyrus Coptic manuscript discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The text is in the form of a codex bound in a method now called Coptic binding. It was written for a school of early Christians who claimed the Apostle Thomas as their founder and does not have a narrative framework, nor is it worked into any overt philosophical or rhetorical context. Unlike the four canonical gospels, which are structured as narrative accounts of the life of Jesus Christ (PBUH), Thomas is a “logia or sayings Gospel” with short dialogues and sayings attributed to Jesus Christ (PBUH). The writer is credited in the incipit as “Didymus Judas Thomas”. The words “Didymus” (Greek) and “Thomas” (Hebrew) both mean “twin” and the name Judas (or Jude) is a derivative of Judah.

The work comprises 114 sayings attributed to Jesus Christ (PBUH). Some of these sayings resemble those found in the four canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Others were unknown until its discovery, and Christian scholars assert that a small number are incompatible with sayings in the four canonical gospels. No major Christian group accepts this gospel as canonical or authoritative.

When this Coptic version of the complete text of Thomas was found, scholars realized that three separate Greek portions of it had already been discovered in

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20 Nag Hammadi (Arabic نجع حمادي), is a city in Upper Egypt. Nag Hammâdi was known as Chenoboskion in classical antiquity, meaning “geese grazing grounds”. It is located on the west bank of the Nile in the Qena Governorate, about 80 kilometres north-west of Luxor. It has population of about 30,000, who are mostly farmers. Sugar and aluminium are produced in Nag Hammâdi. The town of Nag Hammadi was established by Mahmoud Pasha Hammadi, who was a member of the Hammadi family in Sohag, Egypt. Mahmoud Pasha Hammadi was a major landholder in Sohag, and known for his strong opposition to the British occupation. Mahmoud Pasha Hammadi created Nag Hammadi for the indigenous people from Sohag who were forced to abandon their homeland by the British occupation. In recognition of this, the new town was given the name “Hammadi”.
Oxyrhynchus, 21 Egypt, in 1898. The manuscripts bearing the Greek fragments of the Gospel of Thomas have been dated to about AD 200, and the manuscript of the Coptic version to about 340. Although the Coptic version is not quite identical to any of the Greek fragments, it is believed that the Coptic version was translated from an earlier Greek version, itself recorded from an earlier oral version. The Gospel of Thomas has been translated and annotated in several languages. The original manuscript is the property of Egypt's Department of Antiquities. The first photographic edition was published in 1956, and its first critical analysis appeared in 1959. 22

2. Gospel of Truth

The Gospel of Truth is one of the texts from the New Testament apocrypha found in the Nag Hammadi codices. It is a pseudonymous Gnostic text occurring in the first codex, known as the Jung Codex. The Gospel of Truth was probably written between 140 and 180 by Valentinian Gnostics (or, as some posit, by Valentinus himself). 23 It was known to Irenaeus of Lyons, who objected to its Gnostic content and declared it heresy. Irenaeus declares it one of the works of the disciples of Valentinus, and the similarity of the work to others thought to be by Valentinus and

21 Oxyrhynchus (Greek: “sharp-nosed”; ancient Egyptian Pr-Medjed; Coptic Pemdje; modern Egyptian Arabic el-Bahnasa) is a city in Upper Egypt, located about 160 km south-southwest of Cairo, in the governorate of Al Minya. It is also an archaeological site, considered one of the most important ever discovered. For the past century, the area around Oxyrhynchus has been continually excavated, yielding an enormous collection of papyrus texts dating from the time of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods of Egyptian history. Among the texts discovered at Oxyrhynchus are plays of Menander and fragments of the Gospel of Thomas, an early Christian document.


23 Valentinus (c.100 - c.160CE) was the best known and for a time most successful early Christian Gnostic theologian. He founded his school in Rome. Tertullian, in Adversus Valentinianos iv, said that Valentinus was a candidate for bishop - presumably of Rome (about the year 143 AD) - but that, when the choice fell instead on one who had been a confessor for the faith, Valentinus broke with the Church and developed his Gnostic doctrine. However, few historians believe Tertullian's account. It is more likely that the break was initiated by the Orthodox Church rather than Valentinus as many of his teachings implicitly undermined the divine authority claimed by the orthodox clergy.
his followers, has made many scholars agree with Irenaeus on this point. The text had been lost until its discovery in the Nag Hammadi library.

The text is written with strong poetic skill (in Coptic), and includes a heavily cyclical presentation of themes. It is not a “gospel” in the sense of an account of the works of Jesus Christ (PBUH) of Nazareth, but is better understood as a homily. It was originally composed in Greek in elaborate style with frequent flourishes. The text is generally considered by scholars one of the best written texts in the whole Nag Hammadi collection, considering its worth highly as both a great literary work and a gnostic exegesis on the canonical (and other) gospels.

The text describes Gnosticism’s idea of creation, and the origin of evil as being a by product of the fall of Sophia (thus becoming Norea), since ignorance breeds fear and fear is a fog in which error gains power. It then describes Jesus Christ (PBUH) as having been sent down by God to remove the ignorance, but error (personified) gets angry at this, and nails Jesus Christ (PBUH) to a tree.

It describes Jesus Christ (PBUH) acting as a teacher confounding the other scribes and teachers, and asserts they were foolish since they tried to understand the world by analysing the law. It also proceeds to describe how it is knowledge which grants salvation, which constitutes eternal rest, describing ignorance as a nightmare.

Having next described the parable of the good shepherd, in an esoteric manner, it then describes how feeding the hungry and giving rest to the weary is to be understood as feeding spiritual hunger, and resting the world weary.

Aside from a final description of achieving rest by gnosis, the remainder of the text concerns a treatise on the connection between the relationship between the Son and the Father, and the relationship of a name to its owner. The prime example of this is the phrase it uses that the name of the Father is the Son, which is to be understood
3. Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians

Two versions of the formerly lost Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians (which is quite distinct from the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians), were among the codices in the Nag Hammadi library, discovered in 1945. A sub-title the text appears to have in addition to Gospel of the Egyptians, is The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit.

The main contents concern the Sethian Gnostic understanding of how the earth came into being, how Seth, in the Gnostic interpretation, is incarnated as Jesus in order to release people’s souls from the evil prison that is creation.

It also contains a hymn, parts of which are unusual in being apparently meaningless sequences of vowels (thought to be a representation of early Christian glossolalia), although the vowels of the final paragraph can be partitioned to read (in Greek) who exists as Son for ever and ever. You are what you are, you are who you are.25

4. Greek Gospel of the Egyptians

The Greek Gospel of the Egyptians is a Gnostic religious text. Its title is adopted from its opening line. The suppressed Greek Gospel of the Egyptians, (which is quite distinct from the later, wholly Gnostic Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians), written in the second quarter of the 2nd century, was already cited in Clement of Alexandria’s miscellany, the Stromata, where quotations give us many of the brief

excerpts that are all that remain; it was also mentioned by Hippolytus, who alludes to “these various changes of the soul, set forth in the Gospel entitled according to the Egyptians” and connects the Gospel of the Egyptians with the Gnostic Naasene sect. Later, that fourth-century collector of heresies, Epiphanius of Constantinople, asserts that the Sabellians made use of this gospel; though it is unlikely that he had any firsthand information about Sabellius, who taught in Rome in the mid-2nd century, his connection of the gospel with Sabellius would confirm a date early in the 2nd century, whereas the euphemism, the Word logos, as an appellation of the Saviour, which appears in the gospel, betokens the influence of the Gospel of John, thus suggesting a date ca 120 – 150. At Earlychristianwritings.com its date is estimated ca 80 – 150. No text for it exists outside of these testimonies.

From these few fragments, it is unknown how much more extensive the contents were, or what other matters they discussed, or whether the known fragments present essentially the nature of the whole entity, which is apparently a “sayings” tradition worked into the familiar formula of a duologue. Also, due to the fragmentary nature, it is unknown whether it constitutes a version of some other known text. The Gospel of the Egyptians was apparently read in Egyptian churches in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

The known fragments of text takes the form of a discussion between the disciple Salome and Jesus Christ (PBUH), who advocates celibacy, or, more accurately, “each fragment endorses sexual asceticism as the means of breaking the lethal cycle of birth and of overcoming the alleged sinful differences between male and female, enabling all persons to return to what was understood to be their primordial and androgynous state”. The familiar question of Salome— “How long shall death prevail?” provoke Jesus’ famous answer “As long as women bear
children”—has echoes in other 2nd and 3rd century apocrypha and is instanced by Theodotus of Byzantium as if it were commonly known: “67. And when the Saviour says to Salome that there shall be death as long as women bear children, he did not say it as abusing birth, for that is necessary for the salvation of believers.” This saying must have had a wide circulation, though it did not suit the purpose of any canonical Gospel. A radically different interpretation of the division of the sexes as recounted in Genesis and a return through baptism to a primordial unity was expressed in Pauline Christianity, explicitly in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians (3:26-28) and the First Epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 12:13). A similar view of the body as an entrapment of the soul was an essential understanding of Gnosticism. The rejection of marriage was also supported by the Encratites and many of the other early Christian groupings praised celibacy, and therefore it is difficult to tell from what group the text originated.26

5. Arabic Infancy Gospel

The Arabic Infancy Gospel is one of the texts found in the New Testament apocrypha concerning the infancy of Jesus Christ (PBUH). It may have been compiled as early as the sixth century, and was based on the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, and Protevangelium of James. It consists of three parts:

1. The birth of Jesus Christ (PBUH) - based on the Protevangelium of James.

2. Miracles during the Flight into Egypt - seemingly based on nothing more than local traditions.

3. The miracles of Jesus Christ (PBUH) as a boy - based on the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.

It contains a number of embellishments on the earlier text, however, including a diaper (of Jesus) that heals people, sweat (of Jesus) that turns into balm, curing leprosy, and dyeing cloth varied colours using only indigo dye. It also claims earlier encounters for Jesus with Judas Iscariot, and with the thieves whom he is later crucified with, as well as being one of the earliest documents.

The text was originally written in Syriac, possibly during the fifth-sixth century, but later became translated into an Arabic text, which has since been lost. It's earliest known mention was by Isho'dad of Merv, a ninth-century Syrian church father, in his biblical commentary concerning the Gospel of Matthew. The narrative of the Arabic Infancy Gospel, particularly the second part concerning the miracles in Egypt, can also be found in the Holy Qur'an. According to some critical scholarship, its presence in the Holy Qur'an may be due to the influence the Gospel had amongst the Arabs. It is not known for certain that the Gospel was present in the Hejaz, but it can be seen as likely. However, Islamic apologists claim that the Gospel was translated into Arabic in the post-Islamic period due the difficulty that 16th century Europeans would have in translating early Arabic's defective script into Latin as well as the extreme rarity of written texts in Pre-Islamic Arabia.

6. Gospel of James

The Gospel of James, also sometimes known as the Infancy Gospel of James or the Protoevangelium of James, is an apocryphal Gospel probably written about AD

\(^{27}\) al-Hejaz (also Hijaz, Hedjaz; Arabic: الحجاز al-Hadżaz, Spanish: Hiyaz, literally “the barrier”) is a region in the west of present-day Saudi Arabia. Defined mostly by the Red Sea, it extends from Haq on the Gulf of Aqaba to Jizan. Its main city is Jeddah, but it is probably better-known for the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina. As a region, The Hijaz, as it is often referred to, because of being the site of Islam’s holy places, has significance in the Arab and Islamic historical and political landscape. In Arabic, Hejaz means literally “the barrier” as it separates the land of Najd in the east from the land of Tihamah in the west.

The Gospel of James may be the earliest surviving document attesting the veneration of Mary by stating her perpetual virginity (19-20) and presenting her as the New Eve (13). The document presents itself as written by James: “I, James, wrote this history in Jerusalem.” Thus the purported author is James the Just, whom the text claims is a son of Joseph from a prior marriage, and thus a step-brother of Jesus Christ (PBUH).

Scholars have established that, based on the style of the language, and the fact that the author is apparently not aware of contemporary Jewish customs while James the Just certainly was, the work is pseudepigraphical (written by someone other than the person it claims to be written by). The echoes and parallels of the Old Testament appear to derive from its Greek translation, the Septuagint, as opposed to the Hebrew Masoretic Text, which is noticeable due to several peculiarities and variations present in the Septuagint. It apparently embellishes on what is told of events surrounding Mary, prior to and at the moment of, Jesus' birth, in the Gospel of Matthew and in the Gospel of Luke.

As for its estimated date, the consensus is that it was actually composed some time in the 2nd century AD. The first mention of it is by Origen in the early third century, who says the text, like that of a “Gospel of Peter”, was of dubious, recent appearance and shared with that book the claim that the ‘brethren of the Lord’ were sons of Joseph by a former wife.

Some indication of the popularity of the Infancy Gospel of James may be drawn from the fact that about one hundred and thirty Greek manuscripts containing it have survived. The Gospel of James was translated into Syriac, Ethiopian, Coptic, Georgian, Old Slavonic, Armenian, Arabic, Irish and Latin. Though no early Latin versions are known, it was relegated to the apocrypha in the Gelasian decretal, so
must have been known in the West. As with the canonical gospels, the vast majority of the manuscripts come from the tenth century or later. The earliest known manuscript of the text, a papyrus dating to the third or early fourth century, was found in 1958; it is kept in the Bodmer Library, Geneva (Papyrus Bodmer 5). Of the surviving Greek manuscripts, the fullest surviving text is a tenth century codex in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Paris 1454).

The Gospel of James is one of several surviving Infancy Gospels that give an idea of the miracle literature that was created to satisfy the hunger of early Christians for more detail about the early life of their Saviour. Such literature is filled with ignorance of Jewish life, unlike the many consistent details in the Bible, which where obviously written by authors who were at least acquainted with Judaism. Interestingly enough, not one work of the genre under discussion is in any Bible. In Greek such an infancy gospel was termed a protevangelion, a “pre-Gospel” narrating events of Jesus’ life before those recorded in the four canonical gospels. Such a work was intended to be “apologetic, doctrinal, or simply to satisfy one’s curiosity”. The literary genre that these works represent shows stylistic features that suggest dates in the second century and later.29

7. Gospel of Peter

The Gospel of Peter was a prominent passion narrative in the early history of Christianity, but over time passed out of common usage and has come down to us only in fragments. The surviving text is notable for ascribing responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (PBUH) to Herod Antipas rather than to Pontius Pilate and for representing the true Cross as miraculously capable of speech.

In modern times it is known from early quotations, especially from a publicly circulated letter of Serapion, Bishop of Antioch in 190 - 203, who had found upon examining it that “most of it belonged to the right teaching of the Saviour,” but that some parts might encourage its hearers to fall into the Docetist heresy. Serapion’s rebuttal of the Gospel of Peter is lost, but it is mentioned by Eusebius. Origen too mentions, in his Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (x.17), that the Gospel of Peter, together with “the book of James”, was the source for the story, which later became Church doctrine, that the brothers of Jesus Christ (PBUH) were sons of Joseph “by a former wife who had lived with him before Mary”, thus:

“They [of Nazareth] thought, then, that He was the son of Joseph and Mary. But some say, basing it on a tradition in the Gospel according to Peter, as it is entitled, or “The Book of James,” that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honour of Mary in virginity to the end, so that that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word which said, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee,” might not know intercourse with a man after that the Holy Ghost came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her.”

It is strange that Origen includes the Gospel of Peter with “The Book of James”, as no version of the Gospel of Peter has been found which contains birth or infancy of Jesus Christ (PBUH) or his mother. It is quite possible that he was referring to another Gospel of Peter which perhaps is evidenced by two papyrus fragments: P.Oxy 4009 and P.Oxy 2949. However, these two fragments also give no support to the identification of this work with “The Book of James”, also called Protevangelium.
of James. This work and the Gospel of Peter should be kept quite distinct, with the Gospel of Peter a source only on the Passion narrative.

In 1886, when it was first recovered by a French archaeologist, Urbain Bouriant, from an 8th or 9th-century manuscript that had been respectfully buried with an Egyptian monk, the fragmentary Gospel of Peter (now in the Cairo Museum) was the first non-canonical gospel to have been rediscovered, preserved in the dry sand of Egypt. Publication, delayed until 1892, occasioned intense interest. From the passion sequence that is preserved, it is clear that the gospel was a narrative gospel, but whether a complete narrative similar to the canonical gospels or simply a Passion cannot be said. Two other papyrus fragments from Oxyrhyncus (P.Oxy 4009 and P.Oxy. 2949) dating to the 2nd or early 3rd century, have turned up since. They are possibly but not conclusively from the Gospel of Peter, and would suggest, if they belonged, that the text was more than just a passion narrative. These small fragments both seem to give first person accounts of discussions between Jesus Christ (PBUH) and Peter in situations prior to the Passion week. To date it is one of four early extracanonical narrative gospels, which exist only in fragmentary form: this Gospel of Peter, the Egerton Gospel, and the very fragmentary Oxyrhynchus Gospels (P.Oxy. 840 and P.Oxy. 1224).

While scholars debate as to whether this text is dependent upon the canonical gospels or to what extent it contains an independent witness of the earliest Christian traditions, they generally agree on a date in the 2nd century, for when it was condemned by Serapion upon inspection at Rhossos, circa 190–203, the Rhossos community had already been using it in liturgy. Later Western references, which condemn the work, such as Jerome, ("Of famous men" i: "the books, of which one is entitled his Acts, another his Gospel, a third his Preaching, a fourth his Revelation, a
fifth his Judgment are rejected as apocryphal”) and Decretum Gelasianum, traditionally connected to Pope Gelasius I, are apparently based upon the judgment of Eusebius, not upon a direct knowledge of the text. In the 5th century, Theodoret (Religious History ii.2) mistakenly reports that the Jewish Christian sect of the Nazoraean used “the gospel called 'according to Peter.” All other references to the Jewish Christian group show that their single gospel was in fact the Gospel of the Nazoraean.

8. Gospel of Philip

The Gospel of Philip is one of the Gnostic Gospels, a text of New Testament apocrypha, dating back to around the third century but lost to modern researchers until it was rediscovered by accident in the mid-20th century. Although this gospel may at first appear similar to the Gospel of Thomas, it is not a sayings gospel, but a collection of Gnostic teachings and reflections. Sacraments, in particular the sacrament of marriage, are a major theme. The text is perhaps most famous as a very early source for the idea that Jesus Christ (PBUH) was married to Mary Magdalene. Though this is never explicitly stated in the document itself, she is described as Jesus Christ (PBUH) “lover” in some translations.

The text’s title is modern; the only connection with Philip the Apostle is that he is the only apostle mentioned (at 73,8). The text makes no claim to be from Philip, though, similarly, the four New Testament gospels make no explicit claim to be written by Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

It is also interesting that a Philip the Evangelist is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles:

21:8 [...] and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

A single manuscript of the Gospel of Philip, in Coptic, was found in the Nag Hammadi library, a cache of documents that was secreted in a jar and buried in the Egyptian desert at the end of the fourth century, when Gnostic writings and pagan ones were being burned by the official church.31

9. Gospel of Judas

The Gospel of Judas is a Gnostic gospel. The document is not claimed to have been written by apostle Judas Iscariot himself, but rather by Gnostic followers of Jesus Christ (PBUH). It exists in an early fourth century Coptic text, though it has been proposed, but not proven, that the text is a translation of an earlier Greek version. The Gospel of Judas is probably from no earlier than the second century, since it contains theology that is not represented before the second half of the second century, and since its introduction and epilogue assume the reader is familiar with the canonical Gospels. The original Coptic document has been carbon dated to plus or minus 50 years of 280 AD.

According to the canonical Gospels of the New Testament, (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), Judas betrayed Jesus Christ (PBUH) to Jerusalem’s Temple authorities, which handed Jesus over to the prefect Pontius Pilate, representative of the occupying Roman Empire, for crucifixion. The Gospel of Judas, on the other hand, portrays Judas in a very different perspective than do the Gospels of the New Testament, according to a preliminary translation made in early 2006 by the National Geographic Society: the Gospel of Judas appears to interpret Judas’s act not as

betrayal, but rather as an act of obedience to the instructions of Jesus Christ (PBUH). This assumption is taken on the basis that Jesus Christ (PBUH) required a second agent to set in motion a course of events which he had preplanned in advance. In that sense Judas acted as a catalyst. The action of Judas, then, was a pivotal point which interconnected a series of simultaneous pre-orchestrated events. This portrayal seems to conform to a notion, current in some forms of Gnosticism, that the human form is a spiritual prison, and that Judas thus served Christ by helping to release Christ’s spirit from its physical constraints. The action of Judas allowed him to do that which he could not do directly. The Gospel of Judas does not claim that the other disciples knew gnostic teachings. On the contrary, it asserts that the disciples had not learned the true Gospel, which Jesus Christ (PBUH) taught only to Judas Iscariot.32

10. Gospel of Mary

The Gospel of Mary is a apocryphal book discovered in 1896 in a fifth-century papyrus codex. The codex Papyrus Berolinensis 8502 was purchased in Cairo by German scholar Karl Reinhardt.

Although the work is popularly known as the Gospel of Mary, it is not technically classed as a gospel by scholastic consensus. For example, Andrew Bernhard notes in his text-critical edition of non-canonical gospels that, “the term ‘gospel’ is used as a label for any written text that is primarily focused on recounting the teachings and/or activities of Jesus Christ (PBUH) during his adult life.”33


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. Irenaeus (130-200) wrote in support of pure monotheism

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Saint Barnabas flourished 1st century; feast day June 11 original name Joseph The Levite, or Joses The Levite Apostolic Father, an important early Christian missionary. A Jew born in Cyprus and due to his devotion to the cause of Jesus, the other apostles had given him the surname of Barnabas; this term is variously translated as “Son of Consolation” or “Son of Exhortation” Barnabas was a hellenized Jew who joined the Jerusalem church soon after Christ's crucifixion, sold his property, and gave the proceeds to the community (Acts 4:36-37). He was one of the Cypriots who founded (Acts II: 19-20) the church in Antioch, where he preached. After he called Paul from Tarsus as his assistant (Acts 11:25), they undertook joint missionary activity (Acts 13–14) and then went to Jerusalem in 48. Shortly afterward, a serious conflict separated them (concerning circumstance and other allowed and disallowed items of eating and drinking etc.), and Barnabas sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). There is no contemporary mention of his subsequent activity, except for a brief reference by Paul a few years later (1 Corinthians 9:6). Nothing is known for certain about the time or circumstances of his death. Barnabas' alleged martyrdom and burial in Cyprus are described in the apocryphal Journeys and Martyrdom of Barnabas, a 5th century forgery. Subsequent church tradition finds Barnabas in Alexandria, Egypt, and ascribes to him the Letter of Barnabas (an exegetical treatise on the use of the Old Testament) or pictures him in Rome and assumes that he wrote the Letters to the Hebrews. Barnabas' reputed tomb, discovered in 488, is near the Monastery of St. Barnabas, in the Cypriot city of Salamis, whose Christian community was founded by Paul and Barnabas.

36 Canonical Gospels: Of the many gospels written in antiquity, only four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) came to be accepted as part of the New Testament, or canonical. An insistence upon there being a canon of canonical four, and no others, was a central theme of Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 185. The general consensus among biblical scholars is that all four canonical Gospels were originally written in Greek, the lingua franca of the Roman Orient.

37 The Church of Alexandria in Egypt is the particular church headed by the Patriarch of Alexandria. It is one of the original four Apostolic churches of Christianity, with Rome, Antioch and Jerusalem (Constantinople was added later as the fifth). The Church of Alexandria has jurisdiction over the Christians in all the African continent. In other words, all the Christian churches in Africa are considered daughter churches of the Church of Alexandria. Today, three churches claim to be the direct heirs of the original Church of Alexandria:

- The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, an Oriental Orthodox church.
- The Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria, also known as the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria, an Eastern Orthodox Church.
- The Coptic Catholic Church, an Eastern Catholic church in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

38 Saint Irenaeus, (2nd century AD - c. 202 AD) was Bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, Roman Empire (now Lyons, France). He was an early church father and apologist, and his writings were formative in the early development of Christian theology. He was a disciple of Saint Polycarp, who was said to be a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist. St Irenaeus's best-known book, *Adversus Haereses* or *Against Heresies* (c. 180) is a detailed attack on Gnosticism, which was then a serious threat to the Church, and especially on the system of the Gnostic Valentinus. As the first great Catholic theologian, he emphasized the traditional elements in the Church, especially the episcopate, Scripture, and tradition. Irenaeus wrote that the only way for Christians to retain unity was to humbly accept one doctrinal
and opposed Paul for injecting into Christianity doctrines of the pagan Roman religion and Platonic philosophy.³⁹ 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.

In 325 C.E., the Nicene Council⁴⁰ was held, where it was ordered that all original Gospels in Hebrew script should be destroyed. An Edict was issued that any one in possession of these Gospels will be put to death. In 383 C.E., the Pope secured a copy of the Gospel of Barnabas and kept it in his private library. In the fourth year of Emperor Zeno (478 C.E.), the remains of Barnabas were discovered and there was found on his breast a copy of the Gospel of Barnabas written by his own hand. The famous Vulgate Bible appears to be based on this Gospel.

Pope Sixtus V (December 13, 1521 – August 27, 1590, born Felice Peretti di Montalto, was Pope from 1585 to 1590) had a friend, Fra Marino. He found the Gospel of Barnabas in the private library of the Pope. Fra Marino was interested because he had read the writings of Iranaeus where Barnabas had been profusely quoted. The Italian manuscript passed through different hands till it reached "a person authority—episcopal councils. Against the Gnostics, who said that they possessed a secret oral tradition from Jesus himself, Irenaeus maintained that the bishops in different cities are known as far back as the Apostles — and none of them was a Gnostic — and that the bishops provided the only safe guide to the interpretation of Scripture. His writings, with those of Clement and Ignatius, are taken to hint at papal primacy. Irenaeus is the earliest witness to recognition of the canonical character of all four gospels. St Irenaeus is recognized as a saint by both the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. His feast day is celebrated on June 28. In the 1962 calendar, his feast day is on July 3rd. This is only the case in this calendar. In earlier calendars, his feast day was the same as today (June 28th). The 1962 movement of the day was to accommodate a Vigil Mass of the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul.

³⁹ Platonic philosophy attempted to capture essence in a different way. Plato thought what we see in the physical world is a dim reflection of the true ideal thing. For example circular objects are crude approximations to the ideal perfect circle. Platonic philosophy aims to understand reality in terms of the ideals that capture the real essence that is dimly reflected in physical existence.

⁴⁰ The Council of Nicaea, held in Nicaea in Bithynia (present-day Iznik in Turkey), convoked by the Roman Emperor Constantine I in 325, was the first Ecumenical council of the Christian Church, and most significantly resulted in the first uniform Christian doctrine, called the Nicene Creed. With the creation of the creed, a precedent was established for subsequent general (ecumenical) councils of Bishops’ (Synods) to create statements of belief and canons of doctrinal orthodoxy—the intent being to define unity of beliefs for the whole of Christendom.
of great name and authority” in Amsterdam, “who during his life time was often heard to put a high value to this piece.” After his death it came in the possession of J. E. Cramer, a Councillor of the King of Prussia. In 1713 Cramer presented this manuscript to the famous connoisseur of books, Prince Eugene of Savoy. In 1738 along with the library of the Prince it found its way into Hofbibliothek in Vienna. There it now rests.

Toland, in his “Miscellaneous Works” (published posthumously in 1747), in Vol. I, page 380, mentions that the Gospel of Barnabas was still extant. In Chapter XV he refers to the Glasian Decree of 496 C.E. where “Evangelium Barnabe” is included in the list of forbidden books. Prior to that it had been forbidden by Pope Innocent in 465 C.E. and by the Decree of the Western Churches in 382 C.E. A Greek version of the Gospel of Barnabas is also found in a solitary fragment. The rest is burnt.41

The Latin text was translated into English by Mr. Lonsdale Ragg and Mrs. Laura Ragg and was printed at the Clarendon Press in Oxford. It was published by the Oxford University Press in 1907. This English translation mysteriously disappeared from the market. Two copies of this translation are known to exist, one in the British Museum and the other in the Library of the Congress, Washington, DC. The first edition was from a micro-film copy of the book in the Library of the Congress, Washington, DC.42


The Contents and Message of the Gospel of Barnabas

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.  

The Bible, especially the New Testament, was not put together until the 4th century (CE), and under very suspicious conditions, there were controversies, and many books formerly accepted by prominent church fathers were deleted, books that contradict the present form of Pauline Christianity, “Believers” in the Truth were burned and martyred, in horrendous ways, because they stood up for the Truth as taught by Jesus Christ (PBUH) and these teachings all contradicted the Pauline concept of Christianity.

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

43 http://www.itl.org.uk/barnabas/contents.html
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), and Gospels written by others who never knew Jesus Christ (PBUH) were included, why? Why?

THE BIBLE

The word Bible comes from the Greek biblia meaning “books”. It is a collection of many books which form the foundation of Christian belief. Admittedly they have been written by a large number of authors, known and unknown. But those authors are believed to have been inspired by God and they wrote the books under the supervision and guidance of God; hence the Bible is referred to as The Word of God. The Catholic Bible, however, is somewhat different from the Protestant Bible. The former consist of 73 books, while the latter has only 66 books,

In general the Bible is divided into two main portions, The Old Testament which was written before the advent of Jesus Christ (PBUH) and the New Testament which was written after Jesus Christ (PBUH) and describes the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (PBUH) and the activities of his disciples, or apostles, in spreading the

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44 The Shepherd of Hermas (sometimes just called The Shepherd) is a Christian work of the second century, considered a valuable book by many Christians, and occasionally considered canonical scripture by some of the early Church fathers. The Shepherd had great authority in the second and third centuries. It was cited as Scripture by Irenaeus and Tertullian and was bound with the New Testament in the Codex Sinaiticus, and it was listed between the Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of Paul in the stichometrical list of the Codex Claromontanus. Some early Christians, however, considered the work apocryphal. The work comprises five visions, twelve mandates, and ten parables. It relies on allegory and pays special attention to the Church, calling the faithful to repent of the sins that have harmed it. The book was originally written in Rome, in the Greek language, but a Latin translation was made very shortly afterwards. Some say this was done by the original author as a sign of the authenticity of the translation, though others dispute this. Only the Latin version has been preserved in full; of the Greek, the last fifth or so is missing. In parable 5, the author expresses an adoptionist view of Jesus Christ, as a virtuous man filled with the Holy Spirit and adopted as the Son. In the 2nd century, adoptionism was one of two competing doctrines about the nature of Jesus Christ, the other being that he pre-existed as a divine spirit (Logos).

Christian faith. The New Testament contains also letters addressed to various Christian groups and individuals. These letters were written mostly by Paul, a Jew who converted to Christianity and became the chief exponents of the Christian faith as it is known today. He has at times described the true founder of modern Christianity.

The books of the Old Testament in their present form were probably written after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity i.e. after 536 B.C. Those of the New Testament were collected and accepted as legal in the 4th century after Christ (about 367 A.D.) Besides the Four Gospels (describing the life and teaching of Christ) which are in the Bible there are a number of other Gospels which were not accepted by the Church elders, and some of them are available even today. The books which could have formed part of the Bible, and indeed were and are accepted by some Christians, but which the main body of the Christian Church rejected, are called the Apocrypha, a Greek word meaning “Hidden”. But which now has wrongly been understood as meaning “false, not genuine”. The officially accepted books are called “Canonical”. It is these canonical books of the Bible which are regarded as THE WORD OF GOD.46

Differences in Bible Translations

As Hebrew and Greek, the original languages of the Bible, have idioms and concepts not easily translated, there is an on going critical tension about whether it is better to give a word for word translation or to give a translation that gives a parallel idiom in the target language.47 However, the English language Catholic and Protestant translations are seen as fairly literal translations (or “word for word”) that try to


47 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible
convey the original meaning in contemporary language, for instance such as following:

1. **The Vulgate** is an early Fifth Century version of the Bible in Latin, and largely the result of the labours of Jerome, who was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382 A.D. to make a revision of old Latin translations. Its Old Testament is the first Latin version translated directly from the Hebrew Tanakh, rather than the Greek Septuagint. It became the definitive and officially promulgated Latin version of the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. In the 13th century it came to be called *versio vulgata*, which means “the published translation”. There are 76 books in the Clementine edition of the Vulgate Bible: 46 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament, and three in the Apocrypha.

2. **The King James Version** or the *Authorized King James Version* is an English translation of the Christian Bible begun in 1604 A.D. and first

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48 The **Tanakh**; also Tenakh or Tenak) is the Bible used in Judaism. The name “Tanakh” is a Hebrew acronym formed from the initial Hebrew letters of the Tanakh’s three traditional subdivisions: The Torah (“Teaching,” also known as the Five Books of Moses), Nevi’im (“Prophets”) and Ketuvim (“Writings”) - hence Tanakh. The elements of the Tanakh are incorporated in various forms in Christian Bibles, in which, with some variations, it is called the “Old Testament.” According to the Talmud, much of the contents of the Tanakh were compiled by the “Men of the Great Assembly” by 450 BCE, and have since remained unchanged. Modern scholars are less certain, but believe that the process of canonization of the Tanakh became finalized between 200 BCE and 200 CE. The Hebrew text was originally an abjad: consonants written with some applied vowel letters (“matres lectionis”). During the early Middle Ages scholars known as the Masoretes created a single formalized system of vocalization. This was chiefly done by the Family Ben Asher, in the Tiberius school, based on the oral tradition for reading the Tanakh. It also included some of Ben Naftali and Babylonian innovations. Despite the comparatively late process of codification, some traditional sources and some Orthodox Jews believe the pronunciation and cantillation derive from the revelation at Sinai, since it is impossible to read the original text without pronunciations and cantillation pauses. The combination of a text, pronunciation and cantillation enable the reader to understand both the simple meaning, as well as the nuances in sentence flow of the text.

published in 1611 A.D. by the Church of England. The Great Bible was the first “authorized version” issued by the Church of England in the reign of King Henry VIII. By the first half of the 18th Century, the Authorized Version was effectively unchallenged as the sole English translation in current use in Protestant churches. Over the course of the 18th Century, the Authorized Version supplanted the Latin Vulgate as the standard version of scripture for English speaking scholars. In most of the world, the Authorized Version has passed out of copyright and is freely reproduced. In the United Kingdom, the British Crown holds perpetual Crown copyright to the Authorized Version. Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, and Collins have the right to produce the Authorized Version.\footnote{\url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version}}

3. The Revised Version, Standard American Edition of the Bible, more commonly known as the American Standard Version (ASV), is a version of the Bible that was released in 1901. It was originally best known by its full name, but soon came to have other names, such as the American Revised Version, the American Standard Revision, the American Standard Revised Bible, and the American Standard Edition. By the time its copyright was renewed in 1929, it had come to be known at last by its present name, the

\footnote{King James: James VI and I (19 June 1566 – 27 March 1625) was King of Scots as James VI, and King of England and King of Ireland as James I. He ruled in Scotland as James VI from 24 July 1567, when he was only one year old, succeeding his mother Mary, Queen of Scots. Regents governed during his minority, which ended officially in 1578, though he did not gain full control of his government until 1581. On 24 March 1603, as James I, he succeeded the last Tudor monarch of England and Ireland, Elizabeth I, who died without issue. He then ruled England, Scotland and Ireland for 22 years, often using the title King of Great Britain, until his death at the age of 58. Under James, the “Golden Age” of Elizabethan literature and drama continued, with writers such as William Shakespeare, John Donne, Ben Jonson, and Sir Francis Bacon contributing to a flourishing literary culture. James himself was a talented scholar, the author of works such as Daemonologie (1597) and Basilikon Doron (1599). Sir Anthony Weldon claimed that James had been termed “the wisest fool in Christendom”, an epithet associated with his character ever since.}

American Standard Version. Because of its prominence in seminaries, however, it was sometimes simply called the “Standard Bible”.\(^{52}\)

4. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) is an English translation of the Bible published in the mid-20th century. It traces its history all the way back to William Tyndale’s New Testament translation of 1525 and the King James Version of 1611. The RSV is a comprehensive revision of the King James Version (KJV), the Revised Version (RV) of 1881-1885, and the American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901, with the ASV being the primary basis for the revision.\(^{53}\)

5. The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT) is a modern-language translation of the Bible published by Jehovah’s Witnesses, first published in 1950.\(^{54}\) It is not the first Bible to be published by the group, but is their first original translation of ancient Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic Biblical

\(^{52}\) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Standard_Version


\(^{54}\) Jehovah’s Witnesses is a restorationist, millenialist Christian religious movement. Sociologists of religion have classified the group as an Adventist sect. The religion emerged from the Bible Student Movement, founded in the late 19th century by Charles Taze Russell. It underwent significant changes between 1917 and the 1940s, having its authority structure centralized and its preaching methods brought under greater regimentation. The religion today claims an active worldwide membership of approximately 7 million people. They are most well-known for their door-to-door preaching, and their refusal of military service and blood transfusions. The religion’s stance of conscientious objection to military service has brought it into conflict with governments that conscript citizens for military service. The refusal of Jehovah’s Witnesses to accept blood transfusions has necessitated advances in the medical practice of bloodless surgery. Activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses are banned in some countries. Since 1876, adherents have believed that they are living in the last days of the present world. In the years leading up to 1925 and 1975, the religion’s publications expressed strong expectations that Armageddon would occur in those years, both times resulting in surges in membership and subsequent defections. The organization’s teachings and practices diverge greatly from traditional Christian theology, which has caused several major Christian denominations to denounce the group as either a cult or heretical sect. Medical ethicists have criticized Jehovah’s Witnesses as an authoritarian group for coercing members to reject blood transfusions. Former adherents have claimed that the religion demands unquestioning obedience from members, with the consequence of expulsion and shunning facing any who act in disagreement with its doctrines.
texts. As of 2008, this Bible translation was available in whole or part in 71 languages with 143 million copies in several editions having been printed.\textsuperscript{55}

6. **The New English Bible (NEB)** was a fresh translation of the Bible into modern English directly from the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts (with some Latin in the Apocrypha); with the New Testament being published in 1961, and the Old Testament, along with the Apocrypha, being published in 1970. It was significantly revised and re-published in 1989 as the Revised English Bible.\textsuperscript{56}

7. **The New American Standard Bible (NASB)** is an English translation of the Bible. The New Testament was first published in 1963. The complete Bible was published in 1971. The most recent edition of the NASB text was published in 1995. Copyright and trademark to the NASB text are owned by the Lockman Foundation.\textsuperscript{57}

8. **The New International Version (NIV)** is an English translation of the Christian Bible. Published by Zondervan, it became one of the most popular modern translations made in the twentieth century. The New International Version project was begun after a meeting in 1965 in Palos Heights, Illinois between the Christian Reformed Church, National Association of Evangelicals, and a group of international scholars. The New York Bible

\textsuperscript{55} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_World_Translation

\textsuperscript{56} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_English_Bible

\textsuperscript{57} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_American_Standard_Bible
Society was selected to do the translation. The New Testament was released in 1973 and the full Bible in 1978. It underwent minor revision in 1984.\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_International_Version}

9. **The Living Bible** is an English version of the Bible by American publisher and author Kenneth N. Taylor. It was released in 1971. Unlike most English Bibles, the volume is a paraphrase. Mr. Taylor was quoted as having said that he paraphrased the American Standard Version.\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Living_Bible}

10. **The New Living Translation (NLT)** is a translation of the Bible into an easily readable form of modern English. It started out as an effort to revise The Living Bible, but the project evolved into a new English translation from available texts in the original languages. Some stylistic influences of The Living Bible, however, do remain. A team of eighty-seven translators worked on it; the process began in 1989, and the translation was completed and published in 1996. The Second Edition of the NLT was released in 2004.\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Living_Translation}

11. **The Revised English Bible (REB)** is a 1989 update of the New English Bible of 1970. Like its predecessor, it is published by the University publishing houses of Oxford and Cambridge.\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised_English_Bible}

12. **The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)** of the Bible, released in 1989, is a thorough revision of the Revised Standard Version (RSV). There are also

\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_International_Version}
\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Living_Bible}
\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Living_Translation}
\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised_English_Bible}
Anglicised editions of the NRSV, which modify the text slightly to be consistent with British spelling and grammar.62

13. The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language was created by Eugene H. Peterson and published in segments from 1993 to 2002. It is a paraphrase of the original languages of the Bible. The Message Bible was published in piecemeal over a nine year period. The entire Bible was released the same year and follows the traditional Protestant layout.63

14. Today’s New International Version (TNIV) is an English translation of the Bible developed by the Committee on Bible Translation, or CBT. The CBT is the same organization that translated the New International Version (NIV) in the 1970s. The TNIV is a new translation based on the NIV. It is explicitly Protestant. The TNIV New Testament was published in March 2002. The complete Bible was published in February 2005.64

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63 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Message_%28Bible%29