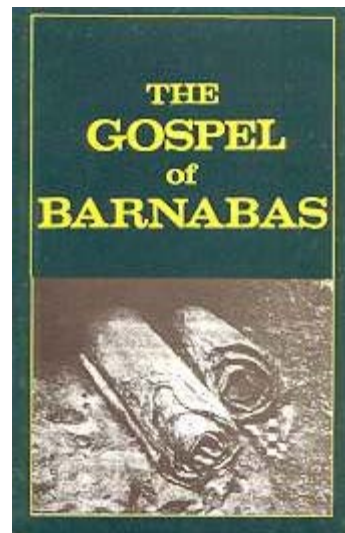


THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS

By Samuel Green

I can remember well one of my first conversations with a Muslim. One of the first things he did was to accuse the Church of suppressing the Gospel of Barnabas. He said that if I read this Gospel I would see that Jesus foretold the coming of Muhammad. (Maybe you have heard or said something like this yourself?) I had never heard of the Gospel of Barnabas so I sat there silently. However I wanted to know whether or not the Gospel of Barnabas was true so I bought a copy from a Muslim bookshop and began to study it. The following article is a summary of my results. I hope that you find it helpful.



Contents

1. The Gospel of Barnabas and the Epistle of Barnabas
2. The Gospel of Barnabas and the 1st Century A.D.
3. The Gospel of Barnabas and Islam
4. The Gospel of Barnabas and the 14th Century A.D.
5. When was the Gospel of Barnabas Written?
6. The Muslim Evidence for the Antiquity of the Gospel of Barnabas
7. Why was the Gospel of Barnabas Written?
8. Who wrote the Gospel of Barnabas?
9. Conclusion

1. The Gospel of Barnabas and the Epistle of Barnabas

There are two books which carry the name, Barnabas. There is the Gospel of Barnabas and the Epistle of Barnabas. These are two very different books. The Gospel of Barnabas is the book promoted by Muslims today, while the Epistle of Barnabas is an ancient Christian book which teaches about the lordship, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Epistle of Barnabas is [freely available](#) and thoroughly Christian. The distinction between these two books needs to be understood because sometimes people confuse them; they think that a reference to the Epistle of Barnabas is a reference to the Gospel of Barnabas, but it is not. They are two completely different books.

2. The Gospel of Barnabas and the 1st Century A.D.

The Gospel of Barnabas is promoted by Muslims as an original Gospel written by the man named Barnabas[1] who it is claimed was a disciple of Jesus (p. 2). Thus they claim it was written by a Jewish man in the 1st century A.D. who travelled with Jesus. If Barnabas really is the author then it is reasonable to expect that he would be familiar with the basic facts of Jewish life at this time. We will now consider this book to see if he does.

a/ Christ. The word $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ (Christ) is the Greek translation for the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah). Both these words when translated into English mean the *Anointed One* or *the Chosen One*. This word is not an obscure or rarely used word, on the contrary it is one of the most famous words in the Jewish and Christian religions. There is no doubt that a religious Jew like Barnabas would have been very familiar with this word.

At the very start of the Gospel of Barnabas Jesus is called the Christ: *God has during these past days visited us by his prophet Jesus Christ* (p.2). However, throughout the book Jesus denies being the Messiah: *Jesus confessed and said the truth, "I am not the Messiah"* (chap. 42). How can Jesus be the Christ and deny being the Messiah when both words mean exactly the same thing? Whoever wrote this book did not know the Greek meaning of the word Christ is Messiah. Barnabas was a Hebrew who lived on the island of Cyprus, a Greek-speaking island, and travelled around the 1st century Greek-speaking world![2] He was Hebrew and knew Greek and could not have made this mistake with such a famous word.

b/ The Rulers of the 1st Century A.D. In chapter 3 we are told that Herod and Pilate both ruled in Judea at the time of Jesus' birth: *There reigned at that time in Judaea Herod, by decree of Caesar Augustus, and Pilate was governor.* This is historically wrong for Herod and Pilate never ruled Judea at the same time. Herod ruled Judea alone from 37-4 B.C., while Pilate ruled thirty years later from 26-36 A.D.[3] The real Barnabas lived during the rule of Pilate, so if he really was the writer of this book, how could he make such a simple mistake?

c/ Geography. In chapters 20-21 of this book we are told about Jesus sailing to Nazareth and being welcomed by the seamen of that town. He then leaves Nazareth and goes up to Capernaum:

Jesus went to the sea of Galilee, and having embarked in a ship sailed to his city of Nazareth. ... Having arrived at the city of Nazareth the seamen spread through the city all that Jesus wrought (done) ... (then) Jesus went up to Capernaum (chaps. 20-21).

There is a major error in this account. Nazareth was not a fishing village, in fact it was about 14 km from the sea of Galilee and situated in the hills of a mountain range![4] Capernaum was the fishing village that Jesus arrived at with his disciples, not Nazareth.[5] Nazareth and Capernaum were two towns which Jesus often visited with his disciples[6] therefore any disciple of Jesus would know these towns well. However the author of this book does not! This casts doubt over the claim that he was a disciple of Jesus. It also make us doubt that he ever lived in that region.

Conclusion: the Gospel of Barnabas makes basic mistakes about the language, history and geography of the Jewish world in the 1st century A.D. These types of mistakes cast doubt over the claim that it was written by Barnabas in the 1st century.

3. The Gospel of Barnabas and Islam

The Gospel of Barnabas overwhelmingly supports the teaching of Islam. However, there are a few rare occasions when it does not.

a/ The Messiah. The Qur'an teaches that Jesus *is* the Messiah, and it *never* teaches that Muhammad is the Messiah:

Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary (Qur'an 3:45, Pickthall).

However, the Gospel of Barnabas denies that Jesus is the Messiah, and instead says Muhammad is the Messiah:

Jesus confessed and said the truth, "I am not the Messiah". (chap. 42). Then said the priest: "How shall the Messiah be called?" ... (Jesus answered) "Muhammed is his blessed name" (chap. 97).

Both these ideas contradict the Qur'an.

b/ Wives. Marriage in the Qur'an binds a woman to one man but it does not bind a man to one woman. Muslim men are free to have several wives (Qur'an 4:3) and an unlimited number of female servants (Qur'an 70:30). However, the Gospel of Barnabas teaches the Biblical idea of marriage, that marriage binds a man and a woman equally together:

Let a man content himself therefore with the wife whom his creator has given him, and let him forget every other woman (chap. 115).

c/ The Birth of Jesus. The Qur'an clearly teaches that Mary had pain when she gave birth to Jesus:

(A)nd she withdrew with him to a far place. And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm tree. (Qur'an 19:22-23, Pickthall)

However, the Gospel of Barnabas teaches the opposite: *The virgin was surrounded by a light exceeding bright, and brought forth her son without pain* (chap. 3).

d/ The Heavens. The Qur'an teaches that there are seven heavens: *The seven heavens and the earth praise Him* (Qur'an 17:44, Pickthall). However the Gospel of Barnabas teaches that there are nine heavens:

Verily I say unto thee that the heavens are nine, among which are set the planets, that are distant one from another five hundred years journey for a man (chap. 178).

4. The Gospel of Barnabas and the 14th Century A.D.

There is good evidence that links this Gospel of Barnabas to the 14th century A.D.

a/ The Jubilee Year. The Jubilee year is a celebration commanded by God in the Torah. It was to be observed every fifty years:

Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you (Leviticus 25:10-11, NIV).

In the year 1300 A.D. Pope Boniface VIII falsely proclaimed that the Jubilee should be celebrated by Christians every 100 years instead of 50 years. However the next Pope, Clement VI, changed it back to every 50 years, and so it was celebrated in 1350 A.D.[7] Therefore, in the church's history there is a 50-year period when the Jubilee was thought by many to be every 100 years. The author of the Gospel of Barnabas has unknowingly accepted the Pope's false decree as true and included it in his book. For in the Gospel of Barnabas these words are put on Jesus' lips:

(I)nsomuch that the year of Jubilee, which now comes every 100 years, shall by the Messiah be reduced to every year in every place (chap. 82).

Is there any other evidence that could date this book to the 14th century? There is.

b/ Dante's Heaven. Dante was a famous and popular poet of the 14th and later centuries. Among Dante's work is a book of poetry called, *The Divine Comedy*.[8] In this book he describes ascending through the heavens to reach paradise. Dante describes ascending through nine heavens, with paradise being the 10th.

The author of the Gospel of Barnabas describes, in the same way as Dante, nine heavens before paradise:

Paradise is so great that no man can measure it. Verily I say unto thee that the heavens are nine, among which are set the planets, that are distant one from another five hundred years journey for a man ... and Verily I say unto thee that paradise is greater than all the earth and heavens together (chap. 178).

It appears that the author of the Gospel of Barnabas could have taken the idea of the nine heavens from reading Dante.

c/ The Manuscript Evidence. The manuscript evidence for this book is from after the 14th century. The oldest copies are written in Italian and Spanish and these are dated from the 15th century A.D. or later.[9]

5. When was the Gospel of Barnabas Written?

So far we have seen that the author of the Gospel of Barnabas was not familiar with the language, history or geography of the time of Jesus. He also has several 14th century ideas in his book and the manuscript evidence dates from the 15th century onwards. It therefore is reasonable to conclude that the Gospel of Barnabas was composed in the 14th century A.D. and not in the 1st century by a disciple of Jesus. Is this a reasonable conclusion? It seems so because even some Islamic scholars agree with this dating:

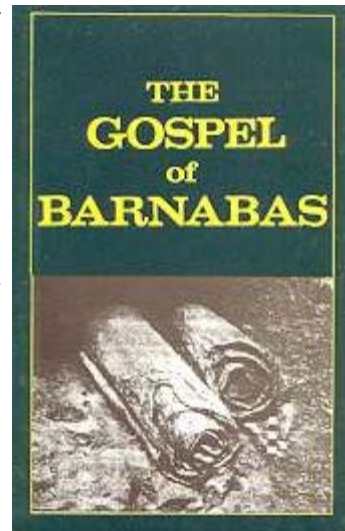
As regards the "Gospel of Barnabas" itself, there is no question that it is a medieval forgery ... It contains anachronisms which can date only from the Middle Ages and not before, and shows a garbled comprehension of Islamic doctrines, calling the Prophet the "Messiah", which Islam does not claim for him. Besides its farcical notion of sacred history, stylistically it is a mediocre parody of the Gospels, as the

writings of Baha Allah are of the Koran. (Cyril Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989, p. 65)

(The medieval period is from the 8th to the middle of the 15th century A.D.)

6. The Muslim Evidence for the Antiquity of the Gospel of Barnabas

There are no copies of the Gospel of Barnabas among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been public knowledge for many years and you can learn for yourself what scrolls were discovered by going to any major library and reading a book on the subject. What is common knowledge is that no part of the Gospel of Barnabas has been found among these scrolls. This is an important fact to know because some Muslims have put pictures of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the cover of their editions of the Gospel of Barnabas. This is an attempt to deceive people into thinking that the Gospel of Barnabas is an ancient document. The book shown to the right is an example of this deceitful behaviour.



In many modern editions of the Gospel of Barnabas there is an introduction or appendix entitled, "How the Gospel of Barnabas Survived".[10] This is a shortened version of what was written by Muhammad `Ata ur-Rahim in his book, *Jesus a Prophet of Islam*. [11] In this he seeks to demonstrate the antiquity of the Gospel of Barnabas. For many people what Rahim has written has convinced them of the antiquity of the Gospel of Barnabas. For this reason I will now examine in detail the evidence he gives.

Rahim writes:

The Gospel of Barnabas was accepted as a Canonical Gospel in the Churches of Alexandria up until till 325 A.D. (Rahim, p. 41)

Rahim makes this claim but you will notice he provides no evidence for it. I am not aware of any evidence, and until some evidence is provided this claim is baseless.

Rahim continues:

It is known that it (the Gospel of Barnabas) was being circulated in the first and second centuries after the birth of Jesus from the writings of Irenaeus (130-200 A.D.), who wrote in support of the Divine Unity. He opposed Paul whom he accused of being responsible for the assimilation of the pagan Roman religion and Platonic philosophy into the original teaching of Jesus. He quoted extensively from the Gospel of Barnabas in support of his views. (Rahim, p. 41)

Again we see Rahim make a claim but not provide any evidence for it. He claims that the early church theologian, Irenaeus, quoted the gospel of Barnabas as he opposed the Apostle Paul. When this claim is investigated it is found to be false. The writings of Irenaeus are readily available[12] and I have examined them and he never quotes the Gospel of Barnabas. This is why Rahim cannot refer to where in Irenaeus' work he quotes the Gospel of Barnabas. Nor is Irenaeus opposed to the Apostle Paul as Rahim claims. In fact he endorsed the Apostle Paul and quotes Paul's writings as authoritative scripture. Consider what Irenaeus writes:

(God) at first narrated the formation of the world in these words: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"(Genesis 1:1) and all other things in succession; but neither gods nor angels [had any share in the work]. Now, that this God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul the apostle also has declared, [saying,] "There is one God, the Father, who is above all, and through all things, and in us all" (Ephesian 4:6). I have indeed proved already that there is only one God; but I shall further demonstrate this from the apostles themselves, and from the discourses of the Lord (Jesus). (*Irenaeus Against Heresies*)[13]

Rahim continues:

In 325 A.D., the famous Council of Nicea was held. The doctrine of the Trinity was declared to be the official doctrine of the Pauline Church, and one of the consequences of this decision was that out of the three hundred or so Gospels extant at the time, four were chosen as the official Gospels of the Church. The remaining Gospels, including the Gospel of Barnabas, were ordered to be destroyed completely. It was also decided that all Gospels written in Hebrew should be destroyed. An edict was issued stating that anyone found in possession of an unauthorised Gospel would be put to death. (Rahim, p. 42)

This claim is total nonsense. The edicts/canons from the Council of Nicea are freely available for you to read and I encourage you to do so.[14] There were twenty edicts issued at the Council of Nicea. None of them were about selecting or rejecting any Gospels. Nor were there any edicts about executing a person for being "in possession of an unauthorised Gospel". Rahim's scholarship is very poor indeed; he seems to be inventing his own evidence.

Rahim continues:

In fact, it is known that the Pope secured a copy of the Gospel of Barnabas in 383 A.D., and kept it in his private library. (Rahim, p. 42)

Again Rahim provides no evidence for this serious claim. It is very poor scholarship to make such claims and provide no evidence. I am not aware of any evidence, and until some is provided this claim is baseless.

Rahim continues:

In the fourth year of the Emperor Zeno's rule in 478 A.D., the remains of Barnabas were discovered, and a copy of the Gospel of Barnabas, written in his own hand, was found on his breast. This is recorded in the *Acta Sanctorum*, Boland Junii, Tome II, pages 422-450, published in Antwerp in 1698. (Rahim, p. 43)

When this claim is investigated it is found to be false. The *Acta Sanctorum* (Acts of the Saints) is available in major libraries and the internet.[15] I have read the references that Rahim refers to and they do not say what he claims. What the *Acta Sanctorum* actually says is:

The relics of Barnabas the Apostle were found in Cyprus under a cherry tree, having upon his breast the Gospel of St. Matthew copied by Barnabas' own hand. (*Acta Sanctorum*, Jun II, p. 422.)[16]

Again we see Rahim's poor scholarship. The story of Barnabas says he was found with the Gospel of Matthew not the Gospel of Barnabas.

In the version of Rahim's work that is found in the introduction section of the Gospel of Barnabas we read a ridiculous claim.

The famous Vulgate Bible appears to be based on this Gospel (of Barnabas). (p. xv)

This is total nonsense and again lacks any evidence. The Vulgate Bible is a very famous early translation of the Bible into Latin. It was done by Jerome in the 4th century A.D., and has been the standard Bible used by the Roman Catholic church. It does not contain the Gospel of Barnabas nor was it based on the Gospel of Barnabas. Jerome based his translation on the books of the Old and New Testaments which he read in the original languages.[17]

Next, Rahim considers three official church documents. These documents are catalogues of which writings are regarded as scripture and which writings are not. Rahim writes:

In the Glasian (sic) Decree of 496 A.D., the *Evangelium Barnabe* is included in the list of forbidden books. ...

Barnabas is also mentioned in the *Stichometry* of Nicephorus as follows:

Serial No. 3, Epistle of Barnabas ... Lines 1, 300.

and again in the list of *Sixty Books* as follows:

Serial No. 17. Travels and teaching of the Apostles.

Serial No. 18. Epistle of Barnabas.

Serial No. 24. Gospel According to Barnabas.

(Rahim, pp. 42-43)

In this case Rahim accurately represents the sources. Barnabas *is* mentioned in them, and it is recorded that there was a Gospel and an epistle (letter) in this name. However, evidence is required to establish that the Gospel of Barnabas mentioned in these documents is the same book that Muslims promote today. There are in fact several reasons why we cannot just assume they are the same book.

First, as we have seen already, there is good evidence that the modern Gospel of Barnabas was composed in the 14th century A.D., a date even some Islamic scholars accept.

Second, there is the related evidence from the Epistle of Barnabas. The Epistle of Barnabas appears in these lists along with the Gospel of Barnabas. They are both attributed to Barnabas, and are recorded in the same lists at the same time. For these reasons the Epistle of Barnabas provides us with the best available evidence as to the character of the Gospel of Barnabas mentioned in the same lists. In 1859, a 4th century A.D. copy of the Epistle of Barnabas was discovered.[18] I have provided the text of this epistle for you to read.[19]

So what does the Epistle of Barnabas show? If it confirms the teaching of the Gospel of Barnabas that Muslims promote, then this would provide good evidence that this book is indeed the same Gospel mentioned in these lists. But it doesn't. The Epistle of Barnabas is a thoroughly Christian document, though it is not to be regarded as scripture. It teaches Jesus' sacrificial death, resurrection and lordship.

For to this end the Lord endured to deliver up His flesh to corruption, that we might be sanctified through the remission of sins, which is effected by His blood of sprinkling. (Epistle of Barnabas, ch. 5)

Therefore, the related evidence from the Epistle of Barnabas suggests that the Gospel of Barnabas mentioned in these lists was still a Christian document which taught the death, resurrection and lordship of Jesus. It is therefore a different book to the one that Muslims are promoting.

Next, Rahim appeals to an old Greek fragment of text:

There is a solitary fragment of a Greek version of the Gospel of Barnabas to be found in a museum in Athens, which is all that remains of a copy which was burnt:

βαρνάβας ὁ ἀπόστολος ἔφη ἐν ἀμίλλαις πονηραῖς ἀθλιωτερος
ὁ νικήσας διότι ἀπέρχεται πλέον ἔχων τῆς ἀμαρτίας

(Rahim, p. 43)

The problem with this evidence is that the text on this fragment is not the text of the Gospel of Barnabas! Here is a translation of the text from the fragment.

Barnabas the Apostle said that in evil contests the victor is more wretched because he departs with more of the sin.[20]

This sentence bears no resemblance to any sentence in the Gospel of Barnabas. The fragment is from a different book altogether. Therefore this fragment does not provide any evidence for the antiquity of the Gospel of Barnabas. Again Rahim's scholarship is found wanting.

Conclusion. There is no evidence that the Gospel of Barnabas that Muslims promote is an ancient document. Therefore

the 14th century date for its composition remains valid.

7. Why was the Gospel of Barnabas Written?

Why would somebody in the 14th century A.D. write this book and pretend that it was written by Barnabas in the 1st century? What could be their motive for doing this? In order to answer this question we need to consider what the author was trying to achieve with his book; what was he trying to teach? If we can understand what he was trying to teach and convince people then we should be able to understand why he wrote the book. So what does the Gospel of Barnabas teach?

The main topic of the Gospel of Barnabas is the life of Jesus. It retells most of the events of Jesus' life as recorded in the Biblical Gospels, but at some points there are changes and additions to these stories. These changes are not random, instead they follow a clear pattern. They are intentional changes to make the Biblical accounts conform to the teaching of the Qur'an. Consider the following changes:

a/ John, Jesus and Muhammad. In the Bible we read how John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus:

Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" ... The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:19-29, NIV)

In the Gospel of Barnabas we see how this account has been transformed to make Jesus predict the coming of Muhammad, as the Qur'an says Jesus did (Qur'an 7:157, 61:6).

(T)hey saw many who came to find him, for the chiefs of the priests took counsel among themselves to catch him in his talk. Wherefore they sent the Levites and some of the scribes to question him, saying: "Who are you?" Jesus confessed, and said the truth: "I am not the Messiah." They said: "Are you Elijah or Jeremiah, or any of the ancient prophets?" Jesus answered: "No." Then said they: "Who are you? Say, in order that we may give testimony to those who sent us." Then Jesus said: "I am a voice that cries through all Judea, and cries: "Prepare you the way for the messenger of the Lord," even as it is written in Esaias;" (chap. 42)

Then said the Priest: "How shall the Messiah be called ..." Jesus answered: "The name of the Messiah is admirable ... Mohammed is his blessed name (chap. 97).

b/ The Son of God. In the Bible the title *son of God* is a title given to the nation of Israel (Exodus 4:21-23) and also to all of her kings (2 Samuel 7:11-14, Psalm 2). Jesus was the promised king of Israel, the Christ, the Messiah, and so he is also given this title. In the Bible we see the apostle Peter identify Jesus as this King:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-17, NIV)

Contrary to the Bible the Qur'an teaches that Jesus is not the son of God (Qur'an 9:30). In the Gospel of Barnabas we see that its author has altered Peter's confession to conform with what the Qur'an says:

(Jesus) asked his disciples, saying: "What do men say of me?" They said: "Some say that thou art Elijah, others Jeremiah, and others one of the old prophets." Jesus answered, "And Ye; what say ye that I am?" Peter answered: "Thou art Christ, son of God." Then was Jesus angry, and with anger rebuked him saying:

"Begone and depart from me" (chap. 70)

c/ The Death of Jesus. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was crucified and died.

Then he (Pilate) released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. ... As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ... When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ... And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. (Matthew 27:26-50, NIV)

Contrary to the Bible, the Qur'an teaches that Jesus was not crucified and did not die on the cross (Qur'an 4:156-157). Again, in the Gospel of Barnabas we see that its author has altered Jesus' crucifixion to conform with what the Qur'an says:

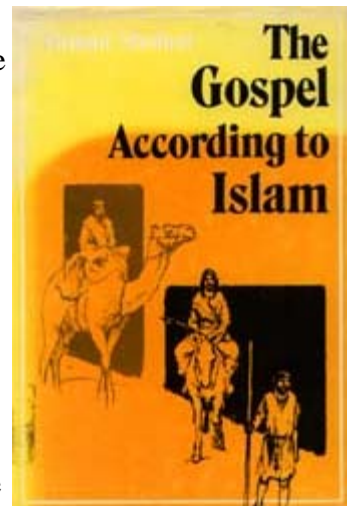
God acted wonderfully, insomuch that Judas was so changed in speech and in face to be like Jesus. The soldiers took Judas and bound him ... So they led him to Mount Calvary, where they used to hang malefactors, and there they crucified him (chap. 216-217).

These examples show how the author of the Gospel of Barnabas has systematically rewritten the Biblical Gospel to make it agree with the Qur'an. Only on rare occasions does he make an error (see section 2). When we consider these changes we can understand what the author was trying to achieve. He was rewriting the Gospel so that it now agreed with the Qur'an; he was trying to convince people that Jesus taught what the Qur'an teaches.

Rewriting the Gospel to make it agree with the Qur'an has happened elsewhere. In 1979 the Muslim scholar Ahmad Shafaat rewrote the Biblical Gospel to make it Islamic. His book is called the *The Gospel According to Islam*.

Ahmad Shafaat says about his Gospel:

The book before you is a Gospel. It is written in the light of the revelation of God made to the prophet Muhammad. ... This outline is supplemented in this book by some background material (derived mostly from the New Testament and sometimes transformed accordingly to the Qur'anic revelation) to form a Gospel of approximately the size of Mark. ... As we said earlier, this book is offered as a new Gospel, a Muslim equivalent of, and alternative to, the existing Gospels. (Ahmad Shafaat, *The Gospel According to Islam*, New York: Vantage Press, 1979, pp. 1-2)



Ahmad Shafaat has explained very clearly what he has done. He has rewritten the Biblical Gospel by transforming it according the Qur'an. He calls his new book "a Gospel"; it is written with chapters and verses, and he offers it as an alternative to the Biblical Gospels.

Reading the Gospel According to Islam is just like reading the Gospel of Barnabas. Just as the author of the Gospel of Barnabas changes Biblical accounts to make them agree with the Qur'an so too does the Gospel According to Islam. Consider how the Gospel According to Islam rewrites the crucifixion of Jesus so that it agrees with the Qur'an:

And Pilate sent an order, that Jesus Barabbas be released. But the officers who received the order did make an error and released Jesus of Nazareth, and crucified Jesus Barabbas. And when he was released he departed for Galilee, and he met two travellers who were going to Emmaus ... And Jesus answering said unto them, Lo, Jesus of Nazareth is not crucified nor dead, but he liveth. (26:21-30, The Gospel According to Islam)

And just as throughout the Gospel of Barnabas Jesus is made to predict the coming of another prophet so too in the Gospel According to Islam Jesus is made to predict another prophet:

He hath appointed me (Jesus) as a sign for men and a mercy from Him. This was a matter decreed ... That I may bring to the world the good news of a messenger who will come after me as light and mercy to all

the nations; his name shall be called Admirable. (2:21-3:1, The Gospel According to Islam)

And then there shall arise the Man of perfection with great power and glory; and he will build a new house of prayer ... Peter therefore asked Jesus, Teacher, tell us what is that blessed named. And Jesus answering said, His name shall be Admirable, Counsellor, as it was prophesied by Esias. (23:15-20, The Gospel According to Islam)

There are still more examples of where Muslim leaders have rewritten books to make them agree with Islam. In August 2006 Turkish Muslim leaders rewrote 100 famous stories for publication in Turkey.

Pinocchio, Tom Sawyer and other characters have been converted to Islam in new versions of 100 classic stories on the Turkish school curriculum. ... Pollyanna, seen by some as the embodiment of Christian forgiveness, (now) says that she believes in the end of the world as predicted in the Koran. (Malcolm Moore, The Daily Telegraph (UK), 31/08/2006)[21]

It could even be argued that Muslims have taken their inspiration for rewriting these books from Muhammad himself, for in the Qur'an we see that Muhammad transforms the stories he heard about Jesus. Consider this story about Jesus from Muhammad's time.

Jesus spoke, and, indeed, when He was lying in His cradle said to Mary His mother: I am Jesus, the Son of God, the Logos, whom thou hast brought forth, as the Angel Gabriel announced to thee; and my Father has sent me for the salvation of the world. (*Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour*)[22]

Muhammad transforms this story so that Jesus says he is a Muslim, only a prophet, and is not the son of God:

Mary pointed to the child then; but they said, "How shall we speak to one who is still in the cradle, a little child?" He (Jesus) said, "Lo, I am God's servant; God has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet. Blessed He has made me, wherever I may be; and He has enjoined me to pray, and to give the alms, so long as I live, ... " That is Jesus, son of Mary, in word of truth, concerning which they are doubting. It is not for God to take a son unto Him. (Qur'an 19:31-35, Arberry)

Conclusion. The authors of the Gospel of Barnabas and the Gospel According to Islam have both rewritten the Biblical Gospel to make it agree with the Qur'an. The aim of these books is to try to convince people that Jesus was a Muslim and predicted the coming of Muhammad.

8. Who wrote the Gospel of Barnabas?

The content of the Gospel of Barnabas provides us with the best evidence for who wrote it. As we have seen the content, method, and style of this book are highly similar to the Gospel According to Islam written by Ahmad Shafaat. Since we know that Ahmad Shafaat is a Muslim, it is most likely that the author of the Gospel of Barnabas was also a Muslim who rewrote the Gospel in a similar way to Ahmad Shafaat. Who else but a Muslim would want to make the Gospel agree with Islam?

Some Muslims have said to me that since the Gospel of Barnabas has some minor teaching contrary to the Qur'an (section 2) this proves it was not written by a Muslim for a Muslim would not make these kinds of mistakes. However, just because an author makes a few minor mistakes about Islam does not mean he is not a Muslim. Islamic authors today still make minor errors in their writings. This does not mean they are not Muslims, it just means they are learning, as we all are. It is the same with the author of the Gospel of Barnabas. Thus it is still most likely that the author of the Gospel of Barnabas was a Muslim.

9. Conclusion

The Gospel of Barnabas is not an authentic Gospel of Jesus. The author does not understand the language, history or geography of the 1st century A.D., and there is no ancient evidence for the book. The internal evidence of the book suggests it was written in the 14th century and there are Muslim scholars who agree with this dating. The book is a

rewrite of the Biblical Gospel most likely by a Muslim who wanted to portray Jesus as a Muslim who taught Islam and predicted the coming of Muhammad. This type of rewriting has been done elsewhere by Muslims in the Gospel According to Islam. It is disgraceful for Islamic leaders to continue to publish, promote and distribute this false Scripture. It is disgraceful for them to create this deliberate confusion.

You are invited to [read a genuine Gospel](#).

Endnotes

- [1] There is a Barnabas mentioned in the Bible: Acts 4:36-37, 11:19-30
- [2] Acts 4:36, 14:8ff
- [3] FF Bruce, *Israel and the Nations*, Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1973, p. 240.
- [4] "Narareth", *New Bible Dictionary*, England: IVP, 1987, p. 819
- [5] John 6:16-21
- [6] Matthew 2:23, 4:13, 8:5, 11:23, 17:24, 21:11, 26:71, Luke 4:16
- [7] Herbert Thurston, *The Holy Year of Jubilee*, London: Sands & Co., 1900, p. 5
- [8] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, section: Paradiso.
- [9] J.E. Flectchure, "The Spanish Gospel of Barnabas", *Novum Testamentum*, vol. XVIII, 1976, pp. 314-320. Also, Iskandar Jadeed, *The Gospel of Barnabas - A False Testimony*, Switzerland: The Good Way, p. 6, not dated.
- [10] "How the Gospel of Barnabas Survived", *The Gospel of Barnabas*, Lahore: Islamic Publications (PVT.) Limited, 1993, pp. xv-xvi. [Available online](#)
- [11] Muhammad `Ata ur-Rahim, *Jesus A Prophet of Islam*, Karachi: Begun Aisha Bawany Waqf, 1981, pp. 41-43.
- [12] The works of Irenaeus can be found in the, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts, D.D. & James Donaldson, LL.D.; Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995, vol. 1, pp. 315-578. Available online at [The Early Church Fathers](#)
- [13] Ibid., "Irenaeus Against Heresies", book 2, chapter 2, p. 362.
- [14] Read the edicts of [The Council of Nicaea](#)
- [15] Joannes Bollandus, et al, *Acta Sanctorum*. Reprint. Originally published: Antuerpiae: Apud Ioannem Meursium, 1643-. [The Acta Sanctorum online](#)
- [16] Ibid., *Acta Sanctorum*, Jun II, p. 422. Translated from the Latin by Fr. Max Polak.
- [17] [Jerome and the Vulgate Bible, Catholic Encyclopedia](#)
- [18] *Early Christian Writings*, ed. Betty Radice; London: Penguin Books, 1987, pp. 155-158.
- [19] Read the [Epistle of Barnabas](#) for yourself.
- [20] Translated by John Lee.
- [21] Various articles reporting the Turkish Muslim leaders rewriting the childrens stories:
 - [Malcolm Moore, Pinocchio and friends converted to Islam, The Daily Telegraph \(UK\) 31/08/2006](#)
 - [Malcolm Moore, Pinocchio, Tom Sawyer Now Muslim In New Turkish Versions of Classics, The New York Sun, August 31, 2006](#)
 - <http://www.sweetness-light.com/archive/schoolbooks-make-pinocchio-tom-sawyer-muslim>
 - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3298359,00.html>
- [22] *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ed. Alexander Roberts, et al) Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, vol. 8, p. 405.

The author welcomes [your response](#) via email.

More [articles](#) by Samuel Green.

Copyright © 2004 Samuel Green.

Further material on the [Gospel of Barnabas](#)
[Answering Islam](#) Home Page

Conclusion: the Gospel of Barnabas makes basic mistakes about the language, history and geography of the Jewish world in the 1st century A.D. These types of mistakes cast doubt over the claim that it was written by Barnabas in the 1st century. 3. The Gospel of Barnabas and Islam. The Gospel of Barnabas overwhelmingly supports the teaching of Islam. However, there are a few rare occasions when it does not. a/ The Messiah. The Qur'an teaches that Jesus is the Messiah, and it never teaches that Muhammad is the Messiah: Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him, whose name is the Mess The Gospel of Barnabas is one of three, or more precisely four, writings associated with the name of Paul's companion in the first part of his mission to the gentiles. The earliest of these writings is the Epistle of Barnabas, dating from the first half of the second century. The Acts of Barnabas, a more convenient appellation than the formal Greek title, The journeys and the testimony of St. Barnabas the apostle, dates from the fifth century. Then there is the Gospel of Barnabas, a title which is confusingly applied to two works. The first of these is known to us only by name. It is referred 1 Clement 2 Clement Epistles of Ignatius Polycarp to the Philippians Martyrdom of Polycarp Didache Barnabas Diognetus The Shepherd of Hermas. Ebionites Hebrews Nazarenes. James Thomas Syriac Pseudo-Matthew History of Joseph the Carpenter. Judas Mary Philip Truth Secret Mark The Saviour. Thomas Marcion Nicodemus Peter Barnabas. Paul Peter Pseudo-Methodius Thomas Stephen 1 James 2 James. Of course Barnabas was a scholarly person and he composed a 'Gospel', but the attribution of the 'Epistle to Hebrews' to him is not authentic. Actually there exists another 'Epistle of Barnabas'. It has been included in 'The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Translations Of The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325', Ed. The Rev. Gospel of Barnabas was declared a rejected book in the Decretum Gelasianum by Pope Gelasius [Pope of Rome 492-96]. According to E. Von Dobschutz, it is a private compilation which was composed in Italy (but not at Rome) in the early sixth century.[2]. It is strange that a book which is claimed to be 'composed in Italy in the early sixth century' had been declared a 'rejected book' in the fifth century.