**THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS**

**Background:**

*The Gospel of Barnabas* is a book and not a gospel. It was originally written in Spanish. I have an Arabic copy of this book published by Dar Al Amal in Jordan. Dr. Khalil Saadah translated it from English into Arabic in 1908.

This book was written by a monk who had been a Jew, became a Christian, and thereafter in Spain proclaimed that he was Muslim; his name is Fra Marino.

The contents of this book prove that it is certainly not a gospel. Even the translator of the book into Arabic offered his opinion that it could not be a gospel.

**Opinions of Scholars and Renown Persons Regarding this Book:**

1- In his introduction to the translation of the book into Arabic, **Dr. Khalil Saadah** says on page twenty-two:

Although the claim is that this gospel is originally Arabic, yet this does not mean that its author is originally an Arab, but rather I believe that the writer is an Andalusian Jew who became a Muslim after having looking into the Christian Scriptures and being baptized. I believe that this solution is closer to the truth than any other, because if you look into this gospel, you would find that its writer have great knowledge of the Old Testament, unparalleled by the Christian sects except by few individual specialist whose lives were entrenched in religion, such as interpreters. Even among those, it is rare to find one who is so versed in the Torah, who wrote so exhaustively as the writer of the gospel of Barnabas. It is common knowledge that many of the Andalusian Jews were well versed in Arabic. Among them were some who greatly excelled in literature and poetry, who would be like to them in reading the Koran and sayings akin to the Arabs.

Support for this concept is what appeared in this gospel regarding circumcision, and hurtful words such as saying the dogs are better than the uncircumcised. This saying would not come from a Christian. If you inspect Arab history, after the Andalusian invasion, you would find that initially they were not exposed to other religions at all. This was due to the motivation that caused the Andalusians to submit to the Muslim authority subduing them. They persisted in this plan regarding all the religious issues, except one issue — circumcision. A time came when they forced families to circumcise, and coerced Christians to follow the rule of circumcision according to the practice of Muslims and Jews. This is among the motivations which pushed Christians to rise up against them.

As for the Andalusian Jews, they entered Islam in droves. Not only that, but they had a high hand in bringing Islam to Spain and remain there for a long time.

I am not concerned with the interpreter’s many political details, the matters concerning Andalusia, and the relationships between the religions. My concern here is that the very translator, who lived with the book and translated it into Arabic, is convinced that this book was written in Spain during the era of the Arab’s presence there. It is a well known historical fact that this occurrence was in the Middle Ages, and not in the First Centuries of Christianity. Therefore, this book backs to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and not before.

Let us also see the writings of prominent Arab and Muslim academicians.

2- **In the *Concise Arabic Encyclopedia (Al Mawsooah Al Arabia Al Mouyasarah)*, under the direction of Dr. Muhamad Shafik Ghurbal**, under this title, *the gospel of Barnabas*, on page 778, we find the following:

A fake book written by a European in the fifteenth century. Severe mistakes are in his description of Palestine during the time of Christ. He claims, on the mouth of Jesus, that he is not the Christ, but came preaching Muhammad, who is the Christ.

This is the opinion of the group of Muslim academicians who wrote the *Concise Arabic Encyclopedia*, under the direction of Dr. Muhamad Shafik Ghurbal.

4- **Mr. Muhamad Rashid Rida El-Husainny**, the founder of *El Manar Magazine*, and the publisher of the book in Mohamed Ali Sabih Press at Al Azhar, after being translated by Dr. Khalil Saadah view on this issue:

Centuries passed and the ages ensued while there was no mentioned of this gospel, until a copy of it was found in Europe about two hundred years ago. After inspecting its contents, Dr. Saadah [Khalil Saadah the translator] saw that it seems most logical that its author is an Andalusian Jew from the Middle Ages, who was baptized, and then entered Islam where he mastered the Arabic language and fully learned the Koran and Sonah, after having been well aquianted by books of the Old and New Testaments.

Therefore, the translator and the publisher both agree to the same opinion.

4- In an article in the *Akhbar* Newspaper dated October 26, 1959, the **great professor Abbas Mahmood el-Aqad,** wrote the following concerning the gospel of Barnabas:

The mistakes repeated in this gospel cannot be overlooked by a Torah-studying Jew, cannot be related by a gospel-believing Christian who believe in the Bible authorization in the Western Church, and a Muslim, who understands the contradictions between the gospel of Barnabas and the Koran, would never be entangled. The additions could be by the pen of a Jew or Christian who became Muslim, who wanted to tailor the book to his religious beliefs, but did not touch up the entire book, due to the difficulty of streamlining an entire book, and therefore contradictions and differences remained in the gospel.

What concerns me in this excerpt of the great Proffessor Abas El Aqad is his statement that there are mistakes which a Jew would not overlook, a Christian would not repeat, and a Muslim, who understands the contradictions between the gospel of Barnabas and the Koran, would not be entangled.

5- **Mr. Muhamad Gebreel** wrote an article in the *El Massaa* Newspaper:

Truly, although this gospel agrees with the Islamic viewpoint on the main, I could not find a responsible Muslim personality to support its validity or defend it, and among the many mistakes it fell into…

The he began to mention many mistakes.

6- **Dr. Mahmood Ibn-Elshareef** wrote in the *Religions in the Koran* on page 206:

The books and sources that wrote of this gospel did not mention the origin from which it was copied. Since the origin is not found or supported, then we are under choice and absolution not to admit it.

Note that great Muslim academicians, whether the publisher, the writers of the Encyclopaedia, or a person like Proffessor Abaas El-Aqad, they all felt that it was wrong to claim that this is a book inspired by God.

In our church, various books were published, also cassettes tapes came out in response to the abovementioned book.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III published two tapes in response titled the Fable of the Gospel of Barnabas.

Father Abdel Messih Bassit authored a book titled: *An Analysis of the Gospel of Barnabas: Is it a Real Gospel?* He also authored another book titled: *Fifty Proofs that the Gospel of Barnabas is legendary and false*.

The lecturer Mr. Yassa Mansour also authored a book: *A Criticism of the Gospel of Barnabas: its contradiction to Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Science, History, Geography, and Ethics.*

This is simply an introduction before we dive into the issue at hand, but we will not dive deep, because once you see two or three topics, you will instantly dust this issue aside, knowing that it has no basis of truth.

**Reasons Why The Church Renounced This Book:**

The church rejected this gospel because it denies the crucifixion of the Lord Christ, and therefore denies His glorious resurrection from the dead. Likewise, it denies the divinity of the Lord Christ. These are fundamental Christian doctrines. The Savior and Redeemer must be God Himself, who freed humanity, recreated it, destroyed Hades and defeated Satan, and crushed death and annihilated its power.

St. John says, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*.”[[1]](#footnote-1) The Son is the light that is born out of the light, His generation from the Father is like the generation of the ray out of the original light, the generation of the thought out of the mind. The Son of God Who is born of the Father, and incarnated in the fullness of time. He is born of the Father above time, and incarnated from the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit in the fullness of time “*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law*”[[2]](#footnote-2). He is the Son of God because He is born of God before all ages.

The gospel of Barnabas denied these facts, and claims that the one who was crucified was Judas Iscariot, after God cast Christ’s image on him. It also claims that all the disciples who were present at the time of His arrest thought that Christ is the one who was arrested, except Peter.

The author of this book also wrote that Azrael the angel was one of the angels who carried the Lord Christ from the window in the room next to the garden of Gethsemane and ascended with Him to heaven. Judas, who came with the soldiers coming to arrest the Lord Christ, was the one arrested.

If he claims that all the disciples believed that the Lord Christ was the one arrested, except Peter, then Peter is the only one who knows the truth. If this is true, then why did Peter not say, although he was first, according to the order of Christ’s election of His disciples?

Then, who is this Azrael who carries Christ and ascend with Him to heaven?

The holy church rejects anything against the Christian doctrine, and the true gospels affirm that Christ is the one who was crucified, who rose, and that He is the Word of God incarnate.

**Evidence To The Falsity of This Book:**

*The gospel of Barnabas* is full of false legends of which we shall only mention a few.

**The Story of the Creation:**

When begin with the story of the creation of Adam, as it was written on chapter thirty-five of this gospel and continue with chapter thirty nine, we find that it is a story full of legends.

Jesus answered: “God having created a mass of earth [Later he will show that he intends to create Adam from it.], and having left it for twenty-five thousand years without doing aught else; Satan, who was as it were priest and head of the angels, by the great understanding that he possessed, knew that God of that mass of earth was to take one hundred and forty and four thousand signed with the mark of prophecy.”

God will create of this lump of earth one hundred and forty our thousand prophet. No one ever said there were one hundred and forty four thousand prophet in the history of humanity. We speak of the twelve Major Prophets and the twelve Minor Prophets, but never these great numbers… Even if we multiply twelve times twelve we come up with one hundred and forty-four, not one hundred and forty-four thousand; if we add twelve plus twelve we come up with twenty-four. The numbers are slippery here.

**The Devil Spittle and Man’s Navel:**

In the same chapter, after a debate between God and Satan, Satan was upset and left. In the same chapter, in section four it continues:

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

First: How could Satan have spittle; while he is originally an angel! Claiming that Satan spits makes him as if human.

Second: it is improper for Satan to spit upon the creation of God and depart while God just sits there watching.

Third: how is the author of the book claiming that this spittle, when angel Gabriel lifted it up with debris of earth, in its place there was created a hole, the navel? Adam, and likewise Eve, were not born of a mother; the umbilical cord is what produces the navel in the belly. Neither Adam nor Eve had navels, but their children thereafter had. The biological mistake is clear here.

What does the author mean by “God having created a mass of earth”?!

This sentence in meaningless.. Either he says that God created Adam from earth, or formed a lump of earth and water, but to say God created a mass of earth —earth already existed, therefore, what did He create? It is an unfamiliar expression. What comes hereafter reveals the linguistic, mental, and doctrinal corruption in the formation of this book.

**The Horses Arouse and the Creation of the Dog:**

They asked the Lord Christ of what happened thereafter, and of the fall of man and the struggles that occurred. In Chapter thirty-nine sections one and two:

Jesus answered: “When God has expelled Satan, and the angel Gabriel had purified that mass of earth whereon Satan spat, God created everything that lives, both of the animals that fly and of them that walk and swim, and he adorned the world with all that it has. One day Satan approached to the gates of paradise, and, seeing the horses eating grass, he announced to them that if that mass of earth should receive a soul there would be for them grievous labour; and that therefore it would be to their advantage to trample that piece of earth in such wise that it should be no more good for anything. The horses aroused themselves [On whom were they aroused, against God?] and impetuously set themselves to run over that piece of earth which lay among lilies and roses;. Whereupon God gave spirit to that unclean portion of earth upon which lay the spittle of Satan, which Gabriel had taken up from the mass; and raised up the dog, who, barking, filled the horses with fear, and they fled.

This would mean that the dog is the savior of humanity! Satan aroused the horses against man, saying that when man is being created, this will be a cause of grief to the horses. The horses rose up.. Would God just sit there and watch the horses dash at the mass of earth He created? Could He not drive away the horses? Blow them away, or send Gabriel to drive them away? Even if we assume that the horses could rouse themselves against God’s will, God is omnipotent. Could God create out of the unclean spittle of Satan?

Moreover, it says,

“Whereupon God gave spirit to that unclean portion of earth upon which lay the spittle of Satan.” How could God give spirit to an unclean portion of earth? How could God create a spirit for an unclean portion of earth while divine creation is pure. And, what will be the condition of the dog thereafter? The spirit is from God, the spittle is from Satan, and earth is from prior creation — the situation is jumbled.

Then it says that God,

“…raised up the dog, who, barking, filled the horses with fear, and they fled.”

Assuming that Satan spit, and Gabriel lifted up the spittle, then this spittle should be part of Hades for example, or a skid for the wicked, but God would never create of it a creation. The writer by saying this makes the dog be better than the horse, meanwhile, the gospel says, “*The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord*.”[[3]](#footnote-3) In the book of the Song of Solomon the following is said of the bride (symbolic of the church), “*I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh’s chariots*.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

What would arouse the horses against God, while the dog is obedient to Him? On the contrary, people describe horses as gallant, powerful, and bold, while they avoid dogs if they intend a holy event. Therefore, here, there is reverse of facts: the dog is the one who rescues Adam, while the horses are the ones who wanted to destroy him. And why would they destroy him?

Obviously, no one would accept the dog as the savior of humanity. If Christianity says that the Word of God who incarnated in the fullness of time is the savior of humanity, while the gospel of Barnabas says that the dog is the savior of humanity, then let the whole world judge which is truthful, the four gospels or this false alleged gospel.

**Another point:**

Among the strange matters is that according to the author, God, when He came to create Adam, after the twenty-five thousand years, he said:

“The angel Gabriel had purified that mass of earth.”

What does he mean by *earth*. Does he mean mud, or simply a mound of dirt? And, how does Gabriel purify it, does he wash it with water? Could earth be washed with water? This is impossible. If it were a lump of mud how could the water penetrate into the mud in order to wash it?

How did Gabriel purify the mass of earth whereon Satan spat? It would have sufficed for him to have removed the spittle of Satan, which does not even have an existence. But, how did he purify it, by what understanding, and by what means?

For us purification is through baptism, by water, and also Jews have purifications with water, along with commands in the Torah of Moses that for a person to be purified of any uncleanness he must be washed with water. Likewise, for Muslims, purification is by water. Therefore, what is this purification of which the alleged gospel of Barnabas speaks?

**The Jubilee**

This gospel abounds with historical and geographical mistakes, as the interpreter commented that he spoke of the Jubilee being every one hundred years, while the Jubilee was every fifty years, as mentioned in the laws of Moses. It did not begin being every one hundred years, except after the pope of Rome’s decision in the year 1300AD, at the start of the fourteenth century. This is why the interpreter, Khalil Saadah, decided that the author must be someone who lived in a later era, not the first centuries of Christianity, because until 1300AD the Jubilee was celebrated every fifty years, not every one hundred years. The pope of Rome ordered that the celebration occur every one hundred years, therefore, the first time they celebrated the Jubilee in the centennial year was 1400AD. Therefore, the person who wrote these words is one who did not live when the Jubilee was every fifty years, but when it was every one hundred years, after 1300AD.

Aside from geographical mistakes, and weight and measure mistakes, there are innumerable mistakes..

**Every Louse Turns into a Pearl:**

In Chapter fifty-seven, section two he writes,

“Every louse a man shall have borne for love of God shall be turned into pearl,”

The writer is encouraging people to be lice-infested! By this, does he refer to a certain sect, or, generally to those who are lazy and do not care about cleanliness, to the point that their cloths and hair are lice-infested, assuming that this is for religious reasons? Strange!

If he wants to say that the poor person will be rewarded for his poverty, or the poor person will find joy in eternal life, that would be acceptable, as the Lord Christ said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

What is this hair lice blessing, and does religion not call to cleanliness? I know that all religions in the Middle East call to human cleanliness. Even if one is poor, it is not shameful, but it is shameful to be unclean, especially when intending to practice religious rituals. There is a call to cleanliness in all the religions of our region.

**A Camel Rejects Seeing its Ugly Face**

In chapter seventy-seven section three we find the following:

“True is the proverb of the camel, that it likes not clear water to drink, because it desires not to see its own ugly face.”

He is assuming that the camel has a mind to differentiate hideousness from beauty. If it had such a mind, it would also realize that the pure water is more beneficial than the muddy.

Concerning the issue of a camel, or any other animal, becoming disturbed when looking at clear water, perhaps the clarity of the water reflects a clear image, which makes the animal think that there is another animal located inside the water, and therefore fears nudging its head into the water, so as not to hit into this other animal, since it does not know what it personally looks like.

Also, how could someone say that the camel sees itself as ugly. When a camel comes to choose a mate, will it choose a gazelle, or a beautiful human female? Will it not rather choose a female camel? The author of this book considers the face of the camel ugly, but this is not the viewpoint of the camel itself . If he does not like the image of the camel, perhaps others do.

Why should the author accuse camels of ugliness? Every type of animal or being considers the standard of beauty according to its own kind. The camel considers the female camel most beautiful when compared with a mare or a filly (which it might consider disturbing). How then does he say that the camel refuses to drink because it does not want to see its own ugly face?

How does the camel realize that what is reflected on the face of the water is its own face?

A human realizes because he knows that a mirror reflects his image, and yet, many people, when sitting in a large mirrored dining room, for example, perceive other occupied tables in an anteroom. Sometimes, they move in that direction, only to collide into the glass. Even humans sometimes do not realize that this is a mirror, then, will the camel realize?

Also, the camel might be disturbed by clear water because it sees a great depth and therefore fears drowning in the water. Perhaps the surface of the water is reflecting a great light (muddy water does not reflect light as clear water does), and the light irritates its eyes. Why does the author wedge himself into issues of which he is ignorant?

All the impartial Muslim scientists and renowned academicians washed their hands of this book as full of mistakes and legends. If this is their opinion, how much more is it the opinion of the church, because, aside from these mistakes, it denies fundamental Christian doctrines? Likewise, the Jews did not accept this book.

The partial academicians are the ones who try to cause commotion around this book, claiming it as the real gospel, while our gospels in the Holy Bible are claimed falsified gospels.

We are ready to put fact before anyone who would like debate with us. If anyone could accept that Satan spits, that the dog saves humanity, and all that we have mentioned as acceptable, please let us know. No rational being would accept such claims. Many people get worked up over certain cases without studying the issues, or else, they want to put darkness for light, and light for darkness. Our Lord spoke of this, “*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness*.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

I warn against twisting the truth or overturning it. Nonetheless, if you find someone making these claims, do not argue with him, because rational debates are what could present the truth in a way acceptable to others, meanwhile inflexibility and hurtful words lead to further divisions and rifts. We, as Christians, have an advice and commandment which says, “*Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Meekness in dealing with humans and fear of God, because a person should walk in the fear of God and not human fear.

1. Jn 1:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gl 4:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Pro 21:31. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sol 1:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Mt 5:3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Is 5:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 1 Pt 3:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)