

Church dogma. The Gospel of Barnabas was among the books that were banned in 325 C.E by the Nicean Council; it was forbidden by the Decree of the Western Churches in 382 C.E; it was again banned by Pope Innocent in 465 C.E, and then by the Glasian Decree in 496 C.E. To this day, Christian authorities refuse to accept the Gospel of Barnabas as authentic, despite striking similarities between this Gospel and the documents discovered in 1947 in the caves of Qumran, popularly called as the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is because the Gospel of Barnabas proclaims absolute Divine Unity, criticizes the pagan innovations of St. Paul, declares the truth about the myth of Crucifixion, and, above all, contains unambiguous prophecies regarding the advent of Prophet Mōhammad (Peace be upon him), all of which is enough to destroy the very foundations of the Christian faith as it exists today. However, any unbiased comparative study of the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Gospel of Barnabas is bound to reveal that this gospel is the correct and genuine account of the life and teachings of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him), the flimsy doubts being created by the Christians notwithstanding.

To be continued

بقیہ : امام مسلم بن حجاج

- (۱۳) عبد الرشید نعمانی، ماتمل الیہ الحاجہ، ص ۳۶۔ (۱۴) طاہر الجزائر، توجیہ النظر، ص ۱۸۵۔
 (۱۵) ابن خلکان، وفيات الاعیان، ج ۲، ص ۱۲۷۔ (۱۶) شبیر احمد عثمانی، مقدمہ فتح الملہم، ص ۱۰۰۔
 (۱۷) امام مسلم، صحیح مسلم باب التمشد۔ (۱۸) نووی، مقدمہ نووی۔
 (۱۹) شبیر احمد عثمانی، مقدمہ فتح الملہم، ص ۹۔ (۲۰) نووی، مقدمہ نووی، ص ۱۳۔
 (۲۱) شبیر احمد عثمانی، مقدمہ فتح الملہم، ص ۹۶۔ (۲۲) صدیق حسن خان، اتحاف النبلاء، ص ۲۸۔
 (۲۳) شبیر احمد عثمانی، مقدمہ فتح الملہم، ص ۹۹۔ (۲۴) عبد السلام مبارکپوری، سیرت البخاری، ص ۴۱۳۔
 (۲۵) عبد السلام مبارکپوری، سیرت البخاری، ص ۲۶۲۱۵۔ ضیاء الدین اصلاحی، تذکرۃ المحدثین، ج ۲، ص ۲۳۹۔
 (۲۷) صدیق حسن خان، اتحاف النبلاء، ص ۵۰۔

revived; the Christ then met with his disciples, and, after giving them some instructions, ascended into the heaven.

On the other hand, the Holy Qur'an strongly rejects the idea of Jesus having been crucified, and according to the most authentic traditions of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him), Jesus Christ was saved from such an accursed and humiliating death by direct Divine intervention, and raised up alive into the heavens. It has also been unequivocally explained in A'hadith that Jesus will reappear on earth to live out the rest of his life and to fulfill his Divinely ordained mission, and then he will die like any other mortal.

The only void left in this Islamic tradition, however, concerns the "when" and "where" of Jesus' ascension, and the question regarding "who" actually got crucified in his place. This vacuum can be satisfactorily filled with the help of the narration in the "Gospel of Barnabas" according to which, when the traitor Judas Iscariot came ahead of the Roman soldiers and entered the garden where Jesus Christ was hiding, Almighty God caused his face and voice to be changed so that he looked and talked exactly like Jesus, while in the meantime the prophet himself was raised up into the heavens. Thus it was the traitor who was crucified, and Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) was miraculously saved by Almighty God.

It may be pointed out here that, unlike Barnabas who was a close disciple and companion of Prophet Jesus, none of the writers of the four so-called authentic gospels — i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John — ever met with the prophet himself. These gospels were written between 70 C.E and 115 C.E. but their earliest available manuscripts date back to the fourth century C.E, making their authenticity rather dubious. Throughout the early period of Christianity, a number of different gospels were in circulation, the manuscripts of which were freely altered and amended by the copyists in order to suit the doctrines of their particular sect. The four gospels that are included in the New Testament were accepted as genuine by the Church — and the rest were rejected as apocryphal, and their possession prohibited — not on the basis of authenticity, but only because these four books were in conformity with the official

new community. However, preaching in the name of Jesus Christ, the actual founder of Christianity, St. Paul, simply abrogated the Mosaic law (Romans 4:15). Michael Hart has the following to say in his book "The Hundred":

Paul, more than any other man, was responsible for the transformation of Christianity from a Jewish sect into a world religion. His central ideas of the divinity of Christ and of justification by faith alone have remained basic to Christian thought throughout all the intervening centuries ... Indeed, the influence of Paul's ideas has been so great that some scholars have claimed that he, rather than Jesus, should be regarded as the principal founder of the Christian religion.

(2) According to the Holy Qur'an, Jesus Christ was appointed a prophet only for the Israelites (3:49 & 61:6), and this is confirmed by his sayings which appear in the Gospels (Matthew 10:5,6 & 15:24), where he forbids his disciples from extending their evangelistic activity outside that circle. However, a controversial step was taken in this respect by St. Paul, who persuaded the small number of early followers of Jesus — after a period of serious dispute — to preach among the non-Jews as well. As it happened, Paul had met with little success among the Israelites, but his sweeping innovations made the new faith much more palatable for the neighboring pagan people, and thus his brand of Christianity rapidly gained popularity among these nations.

The Myth of Crucifixion

Last, but not the least, is the matter of the alleged crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him), regarding which there is a crucial disagreement between the Islamic belief and the account of the four Canonical Gospels. According to the latter, the supreme Jewish authority in Roman Palestine — the Sanhedrin — convicted Jesus of blasphemy and insisted for a death sentence, which was carried out by the Roman governor Pilate Pontius by way of crucifixion. Afterwards, on the third day, the dead body of Jesus was miraculously resurrected and

corruption. He severely criticized the pretentious religiosity, the emphasis on hollow but legally spotless rituals, and the servile adherence to the letter of the law with no regard to its spirit - the hallmark of the religious establishment of his time. (Matthew 23, and the Holy Qur'an 5:78). As a result, he became the target of the acrimony and malevolence from the rabbis, the priests, and the pharisees.

(4) The message and proclamation of Jesus Christ attracted the attention of the population both in and around Jerusalem, but it was accepted only by a very minute section of the Jews, of which even fewer became his dedicated companions. The number of these close comrades, according to the Gospels, was twelve, although the matter of their names is controversial.

(5) Jesus was raised up alive from the earth, and he will reappear some time before the end of the world. This has been mentioned in Matthew 28:6,7; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51, John 20:17. Ascension and reappearance of Jesus Christ has also been alluded to in the Holy Qur'an (4:157, 158 and 43:61), but these hints are explained more explicitly in the Hadith.

Innovations by Paul

Then we have a couple of very important points, regarding which the Qur'an and Hadith as well as the four Gospels are unanimous, but which have been radically tampered in fact transformed by St. Paul during the period immediately following the departure of Jesus Christ. These innovations have changed what was only a reform movement among the Jews into a philosophical religion full of pagan conceptions.

(1) It is abundantly clear from Matthew 5:17-19, Luke 16:17 and Mark 13:31, that Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) had no intention whatsoever to give any new law, nor to rescind and abolish the Mosaic law, as he was sent by Almighty God only to renew and reinforce the law of the Torah, to purify his people from spiritual and moral degeneration, and to revive the authentic spirit of *Deen*. He was, obviously, one of the Jews and was not supposed to become the founder of a new religion and a

Although the myth of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ is narrated in all the four Gospels, there is absolutely no substance whatsoever in them for the doctrine of Trinity or that of the Divine Sonship of Jesus. The earliest evidence of the last two doctrines first appeared in the writings of St. Paul, and these were adopted as official beliefs of Christianity only after extensive debate, and following a long-standing controversy which included, at times, violent episodes between Unitarians and Trinitarians. These dogmas were confirmed as official beliefs of the Church, after much deliberation, during the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, almost three centuries after the departure of Jesus Christ.

Five Points of Convergence

As far as the personality of Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) is concerned, we find that there are at least five significant points which are common between the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith on the one hand, and the four Canonical Gospels on the other. It is indeed significant that more than half of the world's population is in agreement regarding these points, three of which are in clear opposition with the normal physical laws of the universe. We shall discuss them one by one.

(1) The Gospel of Matthew (1:18-24) and Luke (1:26-38) mention that Jesus was conceived without a human father, as a miracle from Almighty God; so does the Holy Qur'an (3:45-47 & 19:17-21)

(2) Jesus Christ performed the most astonishing of miracles — unparalleled in the history of Prophethood with respect to their unambiguous and explicit nature. These miracles are described in various sections of the Gospels (See, for example, Matthew, Chapters 8 & 14) as well as in the Holy Qur'an (3:49 & 5:110)

(3) Jesus Christ forcefully and incisively called upon his fellow Israelites to mend their perverted ways, to give up sinful and unethical practices, to repent with the true spirit of repentance, and to purify themselves from all spiritual and moral

although a very significant initial role will be played by the Christian nations. In order to correctly interpret and fully comprehend these prophecies, it is imperative for us to understand the nature and history of Christian faith.

A set of three doctrines is common to the followers of most of the Christian denomination, viz., the Trinity, Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and Atonement. The most basic creed of modern Christianity is, of course, the belief that the God is one, in three persons, and in one substance: God the father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit are not three gods, but one God. The Holy Qur'an emphatically rejects and condemns this polytheistic view.

O People of the Book, do not be fanatical in your faith, and say nothing but the truth about God. The Messiah who is Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger of God, and a command of His which He sent to Mary, as a mercy from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and do not call Him 'Trinity'. For God is only one God. (4:171)

They are surely infidels who say: "God is the Christ, son of Mary" ... Disbelievers are they surely who say: "God is the third of the Trinity"; but there is no god other than God the one. (5:72,73)

The Holy Qur'an also contradicts their belief that Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) was humiliated and executed on the cross, and thus indirectly refutes the theory of Atonement — the belief that the great sacrifice from the "Son of God" was necessary to remove the burden of the Original Sin from the shoulders of humanity. According to the Qur'an:

And (the Jews were punished, among other things, because) of saying, "We killed the Christ, Jesus, son of Mary." — who was a Messenger of God — but they neither killed nor crucified him, though it so appeared to them. They have no knowledge about it, other than conjecture, and surely they did not kill him. (4:157)

Muslims, as was done before and during the Crusades. This process of brainwashing is exemplified by the recent campaign to inculcate the idea, with reference to the writings of Nostradamus, that the "Anti-Christ" is going to be a Muslim ruler from among the Arabs.

The very idea of Muslims going back to their roots — the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) — is being depicted as a dangerous combination of extremism, terrorism, and fanaticism. Unfortunately, after the end of Cold War and the demise of Communism, Islam and Muslims are increasingly being used to fill the vacuum of the "Great Menace" against which the West can test her powers. With ever rising zeal, Islamic Fundamentalism is being portrayed as the ultimate evil against which the forces of decency must unite. Despite all this continuing disinformation about the horrible hazard of Islam, the fact remains that, in the history of Muslim-Christian relationship, it was always the Muslims who suffered heavily at the hands of the Christian nations and not the other way round. And it seems that the history is likely to repeat itself in an other "Clash of Civilizations."

A B C Of Christianity

According to the Qur'an, there has been only one true religion throughout human history, i.e., Islam; all other systems of belief and worship, as they exist today, are nothing but corrupted and distorted replicas of the originally pure and simple teachings of various messengers of God. Most versions of these teachings have been perverted beyond recognition, and the historical continuity and doctrinal similarity of only two of them — Judaism and Christianity — can at present be linked with Islam. Among these three major faiths, as mentioned earlier, only the followers of Judaism and Islam can be described as Ummahs: Jews or the Israelites as the previous Muslim ummah, and the followers of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) as the present and final Muslim Ummah. According to the prophecies as they appear in the Hadith, the ultimate conflict of the future is going to take place between Jews and Muslims,

Confucianism, — instead of the domain of Revealed religions like Judaism and Islam.

Coming back to the original topic of our discussion, it is significant to note that Christian nations have played a crucial role vis-à-vis the second phase of decline with regard to both the Jews and the Muslims. Thus the torture, persecution, genocidal killings, and exile suffered by the Jews during the last sixteen hundred years were executed exclusively by the Christians. Ever since the conversion of Romans to Christianity in the fourth century C.E., Jews have continuously been made the target of various allegations, and killed by the thousands on one pretext or the other. Similarly, it was the Christians who were responsible for the brutal massacre suffered by the Muslims during the Crusades, and then the subjugation and exploitation of the Muslim Ummah at the hands of Western Imperialism. From even a superficial survey of Jewish and Muslim histories, therefore, it becomes clear that God the Almighty has been using the Christian nations as an instrument of His punishment — the whip of His retribution, so to speak — for both the Jews and Muslims of the world.

However — and this is vital for us to remember — there has been a profound metamorphosis in the nature of the relationship between the Jews and Christians during the present century. As a result of this radical change, the Christian world — particularly the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants or WASP — have become devoted comrades and staunch supporters of the Jewish nation, although they are, in fact, only being cleverly used and manipulated by the latter. On the other hand, the highly ruthless historical role of the Christians in relation to the Muslim Ummah is still very much intact. As such, there is a clear possibility of another massive assault, à la Crusades, that can work havoc upon the Muslims, particularly the Arab world. Such an event can obviously result in killings and destruction on a huge scale, a minor glimpse of which has already been witnessed in the Gulf War.

The way in which the “threat” of militant and fundamentalist Islam is being hyperbolized by the Western media betrays an attempt to create public hatred against the

acquiescence. It seems, therefore, that there is no power on earth that can prevent the establishment of "Greater Israel."

Under these apparently hopeless circumstances only the predictions of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith can reassure us. According to these predictions, the third phase of rise for the Muslims will be accompanied by the global domination of Islam, which will last till near the end of the world, whereas the present rise of the Jews is going to prove ephemeral. Moreover, as mentioned before, the conflict between the Jews and the Muslims is going to result, ultimately, in the total extermination of the former, according to the Divine law of "annihilation of the worst." The most significant role in this conflict — which is gradually warming up to its grand finale — is going to be played by a third power, the Christians.

Third of the Trinity: The Christians

An interesting theme that is common to all pagan religions is the idea of "henotheism"; whenever there has been a group of people that worshipped a number of divine beings, we find that there is always a Supreme Deity which is considered superior to all other gods and goddesses. This trend is most prominent in Hinduism, in the Greek and Roman mythologies, and among the pagan Arabs of the pre-Islamic era. However, what is really important to note in such religions is that, in actual practice, the smaller gods and goddesses always get the lion's share in the attention and devotion of their worshipers, while the Supreme God disappears in the background, as He is carelessly ignored and casually brushed aside by the worshipers.

Applying this analogy to the three Abrahamic faiths, we can say that although Christianity is the biggest among them in terms of the number of adherents, yet in reality — except for the name and personality of Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) — there is hardly any thing in this religion that can be described as "Christian." The doctrines and practices of Christianity, as they exist today, have more to do with the innovations of St. Paul than with the real teachings of Jesus Christ. Christianity, in the form in which it exists today, actually belongs to the realm of the philosophical religions — along with Hinduism, Taoism, and

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LESSONS FROM HISTORY VI

Based on the Urdu Columns by: Dr. Israr Ahmad

Jewish Revival

As mentioned before, the beginning of the third and final phase of rise for the Muslims is coincidental with the temporary upswing of the Jews. It can be seen that, at the present moment, the upward trend in the history of the Muslim Ummah is not only very slow and gradual, but that it is still in its initial stages. On the other hand, the same trend among the Jews has not only started much earlier, but theirs has been far more rapid and swift. Thus, the ingenious scheme prepared by the "Elders of Zion" in 1897, and the political Zionism of Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), bore fruit within a short period of twenty years, resulting in the Balfour Declaration by the British Government on November 2, 1927, that paved the way for the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." Finally, the illegitimate state of Israel was born on May 14, 1948, with the British Government acting as midwife.

The situation at the moment is that not only Israel herself is a formidable military power, but the entire Western world is also there to support and patronize her, both economically and with respect to arms supply. The sole Super Power of our time — the United States — is practically in the tight grip of a small Jewish minority, who is able to exert an immense amount of control over the international policies of US. This last mentioned fact has been forcefully proved by former US Congressman Paul Findly, in his best-selling book "They Dare to Speak Out." More importantly, the global financial system is virtually in the hands of Jewish bankers, who, through the institution of interest or usury, have become powerful enough to command the obedience of entire governments. Finally, the monarchs and rulers in most of the Arab countries have either made their peace with Israel or are desperately looking for opportunities to demonstrate their servile