

The History of the Idea of a Literal Connection between the Words “Ahmad” and “Paraclete” in the Qur’an and the Gospel of John

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In recent years, some people, comparing the word “Ahmad” in a Quranic verse speaking of Jesus’ prophecy about Prophet Muhammad (Qur’an 61:6) with the word “Paraclete” in the Gospel of John (14:26, etc.), have tried to make a connection between them. They have ascribed to Muslims (and even to the Prophet himself) the idea that the word “Paraclete” is a distorted form of the word “*periclete*,” the meaning of which, in turn, is approximately equal to the Arabic word “Ahmad,” to which the Quranic verse refers. In this article, we examine this idea and conclude that the claim has stemmed from a mistake in the writings of some western scholars during the eighteenth century, and does not have any actual basis in Christian or Islamic literature.

Keywords: Ahmad, Muhammad, Paraclete, gospel, the Qur’an.

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Introduction

As we know, the Qur'an explicitly states that the advent of Prophet Muhammad (s) was predicted by Jesus Christ, who referred to the Prophet with the name "Ahmad":

And when Jesus son of Mary said: "O Children of Israel! Verily, I am the apostle of God sent unto you, confirming the law which was delivered before me, and bringing good tidings of an apostle who shall come after me, and whose name shall be Ahmad." (Qur'an 61:6)

The words "Ahmad" and "Muhammad" both are derived from the Arabic root *h-m-d*, which means to praise. While "Muhammad" means one who is greatly praised, the "Ahmad" has two meanings: in the subjective form, it means one who praises more, and, as an accusative, it means one who is the most praised (the second meaning is most commonly used). The only non-Islamic text which mentions the name Ahmad (or more precisely "Ahmat") is *Ginza Rabba*, the holy scripture of Mandaean religion (apparently compiled around the eighth century CE) (*Ginza der schatz* 1:203).

In the Gospel of John, we have the word "Paraclete" (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 20, 22), which means comforter and is used in a famous prophecy by Jesus Christ about one who would come after him, regarded by most Muslim scholars to have been Prophet Muhammad. The word, which is the koine Greek "παράκλητος" (*paraklētos*), is derived from the infinitive root "παράκαλεῖν" (*parakalein*) which means "to invoke."¹ Literally, the word means "one who is called alongside," particularly one called to help in a legal situation, such as a defense attorney. Though the word has an objective form, it is usually considered with a subjective sense, referring to one who is called to do helpful work. Accordingly, the word is often considered to mean one who intercedes on behalf of another one, a comforter, or an advocate.²

1. The word is composed of two parts: *para-* (to the side of) + *kalein, klē* (to call).
2. For further details about the word, see Karimpur (2014, 73-75).

Paraclete in Early Islamic Sources

Some Muslim scholars, who believed that the relevant verse of the Qur'an has to do with a prophecy about the Prophet in the Four Gospels, tried to find the equivalent of "Ahmad" therein, so they settled on the word "Paraclete," which was written as a transliteration in both the Syriac and Arabic versions of the Gospel, notably without translation.

In earlier times, some Muslim scholars who could not read the Gospels in their original Greek language and, thus, only had access to its Syriac and Arabic versions, thought the Syriac word "Paraqlita" or the Arabic "Faraqlit" meant Muhammad or Ahmad. They thought the Christians had not translated it in order to hide its real meaning and to give another interpretation for it (mostly as the Holy Spirit). The oldest Christian document which introduces Paraclete as the Holy Spirit is a letter attributed to Emperor Leo III (d. 741 CE), who sent it to the Muslim caliph 'Umar II (d. 720 CE) in the eighth century CE. Some of the material is probably from the late eighth or early ninth centuries (Hoyland 1997, 499). Emperor Leo III writes, in the version of letter recorded by Ghevond, that the word "*paraclete*" is a name for the Holy Spirit, and since its meaning is not equal to the name Muhammad, it cannot be a reference to him:

[God] has chosen the way of sending [the human race] Prophets, and it is for this reason that the Lord, [...] having fore-announced His incarnation by way of His prophets, yet knowing that men still had need of assistance from God, promised to send the Holy Spirit, under the name of Paraclete, (Consoler), to console them in the distress and sorrow they felt at the departure of their Lord and Master.[...] It was for this cause alone that Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, since He sought to console His disciples for His departure, and recall to them all that he had said, all that He had done before their eyes, all that they were called to propagate throughout the world by their witness. Paraclete thus signifies "consoler," while Muhammad means "to give thanks," or "to give grace," a meaning which has no connection whatever with the word Paraclete. (Jeffery 1944, 292-93)

Another source in which we find a reference to the equivalence of the words “Paraclete” and “Ahmad” is a letter attributed to Abu Rabi‘ Muhammad ibn Abi Layth, the secretary of Caliph Harun al-Rashid (d. 809). The letter is sent to Constantin VI to invite him to Islam. In this letter, Abu Rabi‘ brings up a series of biblical “prophecies” where ancient prophets predict the coming of Prophet Muhammad, and after mentioning the prophecy in the Gospel of John, he states: “Paraqlita (Paraclete) means: Ahmad” (Safvat 1937, 264).

These documents show that the idea of similarity between the meanings of the two words can be traced back to the eighth century. However, it seems that most of the early Muslim scholars did not suppose any connection between the words Paraclete and Ahmad. Al-Mu‘ayyad bi-Allah, a Zaidi Muslim scholar (d. 1020 CE), and his pupil al-Muwaffaq bi-Allah, in their books *Ithbat al-nubuwwah* and *al-Ihatah*, never claim any literal connection between the words “Paraclete” and “Ahmad” or “Muhammad” (Schmidtke 2012, 246, 263).

After a while, Muslim scholars more seriously examined the idea of a literal connection between the two words. It seems that the Palestinian-Syriac versions of the Gospel strengthened this idea, because in these versions the true meaning of the word “Paraclete” (comforter) is mentioned with a pronunciation of its Syriac and Hebrew equal Monahhema or Munahhemana (*menahhemana*). Because the latter word seems very similar to the Arabic word “Muhammad,” some Muslim scholars supposed that it is indeed the Prophet’s name. Ibn Ishaq (d. 767), the great Muslim historian, in his famous book *The Life of Muhammad*, gives a somewhat inaccurate paraphrase of John 15:18-27:

It is extracted from what John [Yuhannis] the apostle set down for them when he wrote the Gospel for them from the Testamant of Jesus Son of Mary: “When the Comforter [Munahhemana] has come whom God will send to you from the Lord’s presence, and the spirit

of truth [*ruh al-qist*] which will have gone forth from the Lord's presence he (shall bear) witness of me and ye also, because ye have been with me from the beginning ..." The *Munahhemana* (God bless and preserve him!) in Syriac is Muhammad; in Greek he is the Paraclete [*al-baraq̄litis*]. (Ibn Hisham 1955, 103-4)

Scholars argue that Ibn Ishaq's source must have been a Palestinian-Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels (Guillaume 1950, 292-93). According to the scholars of linguistics, the only Aramaic dialect in which *menahhemana* is used for "παρακλητος" is the Palestinian Dialect (Ragg 1907, xxxii). It seems that in the prior centuries, even before Islam, the gospels were translated into Palestinian-Syriac which had differences with the usual Greek and Syriac versions of the Gospels, both in regard to this phrase and some other phrases (Guillaume 1950, 292-93). It is noteworthy that the Palestinian-Syriac Lexicons give the secondary meaning "to console, comfort" for *nhem, nahhem* (Schulthess 1903, 122a). Therefore, Ibn Ishaq's quotation from the Gospel is merely a mistake about the meaning of the word "Paraclete" and does not refer to any distortion in the Gospel of John.

Some other Muslim scholars who were more familiar with Syriac knew that the Syriac "Paraqlita" cannot be translated as Ahmad or Muhammad. Nevertheless, it appeared to be a mysterious word to them, such that they tried to find another meaning for it. As a result, some of them went so far as to argue that the numerical value of its letters showed a description of the Prophet. Ali ibn Rabban Tabari (d. 870), the converted Muslim scholar, says:

When I examined carefully the word "Paraclete" and searched deeply for the meaning of the saying of Christ, I found another wonderful mystery in it: if somebody counts the total of the numerical value of its letters, it will be equivalent to the same total as that of the letters of the words "Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah al-Nabbi al-Hadi" (Muhammad son of 'Abd Allah, the rightly guiding Prophet). (Tabari 1922, 142)

However, arguably because the idea of a connection between the word “Paraclete” and the Prophet’s names was more attractive, it became popular amongst Muslim scholars during the Middle Ages. Ibn Taymiyya¹ (d. 1328) provides a full discussion of this word and its different possible meanings:

Of this word Paraclete in their language several accounts are given. Some say it “Hammad” (greatly praising); some “Hamed” (praising); some “Mu’izz” (perhaps “Mu’izzi” or “consoler”; strengthener): some say it means “praise”; The last is preferred by some, who aver that it is proved by the words of Joshua: “[w]hoso does well shall have a good Paraclete,” i.e., “good praise.” And also by their well-known phrase in accosting ... Those who say it means “Saviour” urge that it is Syriac, and derived from parak, “to save,” with “lit” a Syriac expletive particle. Those who interpret it “fortifier” say it is Greek. (Ragg 1907, xxxi, fn.1)

Later, some Muslim scholars, through western scholarship, learned that the idea was incorrect and avoided repeating it in their works. For example, Mir Muhammad Baqir Husayni Khatunabadi, an Iranian Shi‘ite scholar of the eighteenth century, in his commentary on the Persian translation of the Gospel of John, mentioned only three meanings for the word Paraclete: “teacher, consoler, and intercessor”; he never argues for “Ahmad” or “Muhammad” as meanings of the word, or for the existence of the explicit name of the Prophet in any of the versions of the Gospel of John. Moreover, he does not claim any relationship between the Jesus’ prophecy in the Qur’an and the prophecy in the Gospel of John (Husayni Khatunbadi n.d., 306).

1. In an earlier document, Ibn Babawayh (d. 991), a prominent Shi‘ite Muslim scholar, claims that in the Gospel of John there is a prediction about Muhammad which mentions his explicit name. Ibn Babawayh attributes to Imam al-Rida (d. 818) a debate between him and some non-Muslim religious scholars, in which the Imam says that the Gospel of John quotes a word from Jesus Christ about Arabian Muhammad (Ibn Babawayh 1378 AH, 142). But later, this same document refers to the prophecy of a “coming Paraclete” with the word “Faraqlita” (145), which shows that, even in the first prophecy, the author was discussing something other than the case of Paraclete.

Islamic sources before the nineteenth century, contain only an incorrect supposition about a similarity of meanings between the word "Paraclete" and the words "Ahmad" and "Muhammad," but no further analysis. However, since the nineteenth century, a new idea appeared in Islamic writings. Scholars began to argue that the word "παράκλητος" (Parakletos) was a distorted form of the original word "περικλυτος" (Periklutos, Pericylyte or Periclete in some western scholars' writings), whose meaning was equal to the meanings of "Ahmad" and "Muhammad."¹ This new idea became very popular in the Islamic world.

It is improbable that the Muslim scholars who claimed, for the first time, that a distortion had occurred in the Gospel and who suggested the supposedly correct Greek word "περικλυτος" (Periklutos), had enough knowledge of Greek to even know the meaning of the original word. It is also improbable that such an idea could have been cultivated in the minds of the first Muslim scholars, such as Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Hisham (Guthrie and Bishop 1951, 253-54). So, in order to find the origin of the idea, we must examine its history and search for its scholarly background.

The Background of the Idea of a Literal Connection between the Words "Ahmad" and "Paraclete"

But what was the main cause of searching for an alternative for the word "Paraclete"? On the one hand, the Greek word "παράκλητος" (Parakletos), which is supposed to be taken from the infinitive "παράκαλειν" (parakalein), does not have the letter "α" (with long

1. The word "περικλυτος" (Periklutos) can be translated as "much praised one": "περι" (a prefix which means very or much) + "κλυτος" (a infinitive which means to praise) + "-τος" (a suffix showing objective form of the verb). So, the exact meaning of the word is "much praised," or "glorious" (Liddell and Scott 1966, 628), which is equal in its meaning to the Arabic word "Muhammad."

pronunciation) after “κ” in the infinitive root (Keldani 1987, 209). The word is not a commonly used word in Greek literature either, and its technical application is rare (Bauer 1958, 1226). Mentioning the word in Syriac and Arabic versions of the Gospel without translation made people think that it had a special meaning. The unusual structure in the mysterious and rarely used word “παράκλητος” led some scholars to suggest that it was originally another word. On the other hand, the Arabic word “Ahmad”, too, had an unusual feature: it was a rarely used name for Prophet Muhammad, and in the Qur’an, it was mentioned only once and in the context of Jesus’ prophecy (Qur’an 61:6), while the name “Muhammad” was used four times (Qur’an 3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29). Although using two names for a person (especially for a prophet) has precedence in the biblical tradition,¹ this unusual usage led some scholars to think that it was related to the word “Paraclete” in the Gospel of John; that is, to the “original” word Periklutos.

Examining the Idea of a Literal Connection between the Words “Ahmad” and “Paraclete”

While the idea of a distortion in the Gospel in the case of Paraclete found wide acceptance in the Muslim world, a thorough examination does not confirm it. In fact, there are many reasons that show its inaccuracy and lead us to reject it. The verse of the Qur’an only says that Jesus, addressing the people of Israel, predicted the coming of a prophet with the name Ahmad (i.e., prophet Muhammad), but it does not explicitly attribute it to the Gospel of John or any other Gospels. So, we do not have a firm reason that the Qur’anic verse refers to this specific prophecy in the Gospel of John. Indeed, there are many reasons for us to assume that the Qur’anic verse does not refer to that prophecy:

1. Abraham and his wife Sarah are similarly named in the Bible as Abram and Sarai (Gen. 17:5, 15), Jackob is called Israel (Gen. 35:10), and Joseph is also called *Zephnath-paaneah* (Gen. 41:45).

(1) Difference between the audiences. In the Qur'anic verse, Jesus addresses his audience by the following words: "O Children of Israel!" This indicates that the Jews (and not the Apostles) were his audience. However, in the prophecy of the Gospel, Jesus is speaking only to his nearest disciples in a private meeting (John 13:1-2). The expression "*Banu Isra'il*" (Children of Israel) in the Qur'an is always used to refer to the Jews as a whole, and not the Apostles. The term used throughout the Qur'an to refer to the Apostles of Jesus is "*al-Hawariyyun*," a special group of people who believed in him and were his nearest disciples (e.g. Qur'an 61:14). So, if, in the Qur'anic prophecy of Jesus (Qur'an 61:6), the Apostles had been the audience (as in the Gospel of John), the above-mentioned term would have been used. Therefore, the Qur'anic reference to Jesus' prophecy about a prophet with the name "Ahmad" cannot refer to the prophecy of Jesus about the coming Paraclete as reported in the Gospel of John.

(2) Difference between special words. Another indication showing that the Qur'anic verse does not refer to the prophecy in the Gospel of John is the difference between the words they have used for the coming prophet. The Qur'an emphasizes that Jesus Christ predicted the coming of Prophet Muhammad with his proper name Ahmad. However, such an explicit word is not mentioned in the prophecy of the Gospel, and the word "*περικλυτος*" (Periklutos), as is suggested by some scholars instead of the word "*παράκλητος*" (Parakletos), is not a proper name for a particular person. Because the word is an adjective, it can only be assumed to be a translation of a name. If the writer of the Gospel wanted to record a prediction of Jesus about the coming of the next prophet, he would have to introduce that coming prophet with his proper name, Muhammad (or Ahmad, as is mentioned in the Qur'an), not its translation. It is difficult to accept that a prophet, especially if informing his people about the next prophet is his duty, predicts the coming of the

next prophet, not with his proper name, but with a translated word. Moreover, we cannot accept even the word “περικλυτος” (Periklutos) as a translation for the name Ahmad, because Ahmad in Arabic, means “the most praised,” while the Greek word means “much praised,” which is only equal to the name Muhammad, not the name Ahmad.

(3) Incoordination of the idea and the text. Another reason is the lack of coordination of the proposed Greek word “περικλυτος” with the structure of the sentences in the text. The following is an example of one of the phrases in which the word “Paraclete” appears: “And I will ask the father, and He will give you another Paraclete who will remain with you forever” (14:26). The word “another” in this phrase clearly shows that the word before it is not a proper noun. Certainly, it could have never been meant as the proper name of Prophet Muhammad or its Greek translation, because this would make the phrase meaningless. Also, it would be possible that besides Prophet Muhammad as “Periclete,” we would have many other Pericletes too.¹

(4) Absence of related versions. Another reason confirming that the word “περικλυτος” (Periklutos) was never mentioned in the ancient Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of John is the total absence of this word in our existing ancient documents. There are around five-thousand ancient Greek manuscripts, which contain all or parts of the New Testament (Metzger 1968, 36), and there exist a plethora of known Christian documents which have mentioned or referred to the prophecy. All of these documents have recorded the word solely as “παράκλητος” (Parakletos) or its transliteration or translation. All of these documents belong to pre-Islamic centuries and are written by different individuals

1. Benjamin David Keldani, the famous convert, who was convinced that the original word in the prophecy might have been “Periclete,” could not solve the problem. Instead, he suggested a new construction for the phrase: “I shall go to the Father, and he shall *send* you another *apostle whose name shall be* Periqlutos, that he may remain with you forever” (Keldani 1987, 211). But there is no evidence supporting such a change.

belonging to various Christian sects in a vast geographical range, from Rome to Mesopotamia and from Egypt to China, and in different languages, such as Greek, Syriac, Pahlavi (ancient Persian), Coptic, and Latin. Since these documents are written based on former manuscripts, the mentioned word was indeed the same in those manuscripts as well. Even the sects who regarded the word to be a reference to a prophet regarded it only as Paraclete, and did not mention any other word like "περικλυτος" (Periklutos) or "Ahmad" in its stead.

Based on the above points, there is no evidence that confirms the existence of the proper (or even translated) name of Prophet Muhammad (s) in the ancient manuscripts of the Gospel of John. Recently, some scholars have attributed this mistake to the time of the Prophet. They argue that in the time of the Prophet, in which the majority of Christians in Arabia were Syriac-speaking, some of their ignorant translators, who wanted to translate the word "Paraqlita" (Paraclete) from Syriac into Arabic, thought it originated from the Greek "περικλυτος" (Periklutos). Relying on this mistake, these Christian scholars cited the word "Ahmad" as its equal in their translation. Some scholars argue that the Prophet heard this translation from some heretic Christian monks and incorporated it into the Qur'an (St. Clair Tisdall 1905, 190-91).

The Original Source of the Idea of a Literal Connection between the Words "Ahmad" and "Paraclete"

As we said, the claim that the Gospel was distorted in the case of Paraclete has no precedence in the early Islamic sources, and can be found only in the works of Muslim scholars after the nineteenth century. Given that Muslims' knowledge of Greek was never so strong to develop such an idea, we should try to find its origin outside the Islamic world.

The earliest traces of the idea can be found in the writings of George Sale, the great British scholar of the early eighteenth century. George Sale was the first one who brought up the idea of the similarity between the Greek words “παρακλητος” and “περικλυτος,” and, without any evidence, attributed to Muslims the belief in a distortion in the Gospel of John in this case. It seems that what led Sale to assume such an idea was the Gospel of Barnabas. In his study of the Gospel of Barnabas, Sale found phrases which referred to Prophet Muhammad (s) not only with his explicit name but also with its meaning. He writes:

The Muhammadans (Muslims) have also a Gospel in Arabic, attributed to St. Barnabas, wherein the history of Jesus Christ is related in a manner very different from what we find in the true Gospels, and correspondent to those traditions which Muhammad has followed in his Koran... instead of the Paraclete or Comforter they have in this apocryphal Gospel inserted the word Periclyte, that is famous or illustrious, by which they pretend their prophet was foretold by name. (Sale 1877, 53)

Later, when he comes to his footnote on the Qur’anic verse (61:6), he refers to an interpretation by an Iranian commentator, which implies a relation between the verse and the prophecy of Paraclete in the Gospel. He then repeats his former claim and writes:

For Mohammed also bore the name of Ahmed; both names being derived from the same root, and nearly of the same signification. The Persian paraphrast, to support what is here alleged, quotes the following words of Christ, “I go to my Father, and the Paraclete shall come” [John 16: 7] ... [T]he Mohammedan doctors unanimously teaching, that by the Paraclete (or, as they choose to read it, the Periclyte, or Illustrious), their prophet is intended, and no other. (Sale, 1877, 449).¹

But Sale’s Opinion was not based upon an examination of the Gospel of Barnabas, because in that time he had not yet seen the text:

1. However, he never mentions the names of these “Mohammedan doctors” in this book or any of his other works.

[B]ut of the gospel of St. Barnabas (which I had not seen when the little I have said of it in the Preliminary Discourse, and the extract I had borrowed from M. de la Monnoye and Mr. Toland, were printed off), I must beg leave to give some further account. (Sale 1877, ix)

But such a thing does not exist in the works of de la Monnoye and Toland, and it seems that the idea was merely a misunderstanding of their works by Sale.

When Sale wrote his glossary on the English translation of the Qur'an, by which point he had seen the Gospel of Barnabas, he repeated his words there too without correction. However, it is not known from which part of the Gospel of Barnabas he derived the idea. The Gospel of Barnabas has no Greek manuscripts, but only two Italian and Spanish manuscripts. Thus, none of the two claimed Greek words "παρακλητος" and "περικλυτος" (Paraclete and Periclete) can be found therein. So, what was the basis of Sale's supposition? As some scholars have shown, there are only two phrases throughout the Gospel of Barnabas which can be assumed as the possible places upon which Sale's idea is established: first, where the Gospel (introducing Prophet Muhammad as the Messiah), in one place, mentions his name as "Machometo" (Muhammad) and says that his name is "Admirable" (synonymous to the name "Ahmad"): "The name of the Messiah is admirable, for God himself gave him the name when he had created his soul, and placed it in a celestial splendour" (The Gospel of Barnabas 1907, 225); second, the Gospel introduces him as "a splendor": "I therefore say unto you that the messenger of God is a splendor" (The Gospel of Barnabas 1907, 105). Splendor is another meaning of the same word, and the Arabic glossator of the Italian manuscript, who saw here a reference to the Paraclete of the Gospel of John, brings the Arabic word "Ahmad" for it: "In the Arabic tongue Ahmed, in the Amran (Hebrew) tongue Messia, in Latin Consolator, in Greek Paracletus" (The Gospel of Barnabas 1907, 105, footnote f).

But the words “admirable” and “splendor” in these phrases of the Gospel are only adjectives, and, despite what Sale has supposed, are not mentioned as proper names for the Prophet. Also, it is confusing that the gloss in the Italian manuscript contains the word “Ahmad.” It makes the word “splendoure” equivalent to the Arabic word “Ahmad,” but also to the Hebrew word “Messiah,” the Latin word “Consolator,” and the Greek word “Paracletus.” It seems that the glossator only provides some titles for Prophet Muhammad in different languages, and never claims that the word Paraclete is a distorted form of another word. Generally speaking, the glossator of the Gospel of Barnabas, like other Muslims, has only incorrectly assumed that the word Paraclete in the Gospel is equal to the Arabic word Ahmad. But it is in no way what Sale has claimed.

What was the actual opinion of the Muslim author of the Gospel of Barnabas¹ about the word “Paraclete” in the Gospel of John? For an answer, we must examine a phrase that puts these words in the mouth of Jesus:

But my consolation is in the coming of the messenger (i.e. Muhammad), who shall destroy every false opinion of me, and his faith shall spread and shall take hold of the whole world, for so hath God promised to Abraham our father. And that which giveth me consolation is that his faith shall have no end, but shall be kept inviolate by God. (The Gospel of Barnabas 1907, 225)

This phrase, which regards Prophet Muhammad as a “consolation giver” to Jesus, is an explicit reference to the prophecy in the Gospel of John, which regards the coming prophet as Paraclete or “Consolator.” So, the author of the Gospel of Barnabas, much like his Christian and Muslim contemporaries, related it to the word Paraclete in the Gospel of John, with this same form, the same meaning of consolatory, and

1. For further discussion on how the Gospel of Barnabas has been written by a Muslim author, see the author’s introduction to the new Persian translation of the Gospel (Karimpur 2015, 1-241).

without exchanging it for another word. Thus, he included the parenthetical phrase in his Gospel to clarify why Jesus gave this title to him in the Gospel of John. So, Sale's attribution of the belief in the distortion of the Gospel to the Muslim author of the Gospel of Barnabas is not correct. To be sure, if he had examined the Gospel carefully he would have never developed such an incorrect idea.

Sale's supposition, however, made him believe that the Qur'anic verse, which mentions Jesus' prophecy about the advent of Prophet Muhammad by the name Ahmad, refers to this supposedly original Gospel of John and the Greek word "περικλυτος" (synonymous with the words Ahmad and Muhammad). Since this claim could not be originally from a divine source, Sale assumed that Prophet Muhammad had heard this part of the Gospel from a Christian monk in Arabia and then put it in the mouth of Jesus in order to claim that the prophecy in the Gospel was about him. This idea later on became accepted amongst modern scholars, especially those who denied the divinity of the Qur'an and were looking for a human origin for it. However, as we have already described, not only is there no evidence to confirm such an idea but there are many reasons that lead us to reject it, reasons which in turn reveal the inadequacy of modern scholarship on this topic.

Conclusion

(1) In Muslim writings, prior to the nineteenth century, the only linguistic relation assumed between the two words "Paraclete" and "Ahmad" was the wrong assumption that the latter is a translation of the former.

(2) The origin of the idea of a distortion in the Gospel of John is not Islamic sources; rather, its first traces are found in the works of George Sale, who attributed to Muslims the belief that the word Paraclete is a distorted form of the word Periclete.

(3) The main cause of Sale's supposition was his inaccurate study of the Gospel of Barnabas.

(4) A careful study of the Gospel of Barnabas shows that, despite what Sale supposed, the author of the Gospel of Barnabas never believed "Paraclete" to be a distorted word. In fact, even the Muslim writer of its Arabic glosses did not propose such an idea, as Sale has claimed.

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