

see your good deeds and praise God." The addition of the Qur'anic phrase does not really enhance the meaning of Jesus' statement, but it does give Qur'anic flavor to the speech without distorting his teaching. After all, according to the Bible, God does hear and see everything that happens.

al-'a'lā (الأعلى "the Most High"): S 6:11, Q 79:24. This phrase "the Most High" comes at the end of the speech of the Jewish leaders who are complaining that Jesus "breaks the sabbath and makes himself equal to God." Here once again is a sensitive use of a Qur'anic rhyme word; God is also "Most High" in the Bible, especially in Old Testament thinking.

B. Words for Sin: A long list of words for sin is found in Sira. It is a characteristic of the Qur'an that a large number of rhyme words have a negative connotation, i.e., words of judgment passed on the contemporaries of Muhammad. Sira uses 13 of these to talk about the Jews who rejected Jesus.

yakfurūn (يَكْفُرُونَ) S "Kalima":4, Q 29:67 "they do not believe"
al-ḡālimīn (الضالِّينَ) S 7:44, Q 2:34. "the wicked"
al-fāsiqūn (الْفَاسِقُونَ) S 8:38, Q 2:98. "the corrupt"
al-fāsiqīn (الْفَاسِقِينَ) S 12:34, Q 2:25. "the corrupt"
tajhalūn (تَجْهَلُونَ) S 16:53, Q 7:38. "you ignore" (the truth)
mayyitīn (مَيِّتِينَ) S 16:71, Q 37:58. "the dead"
al-kadībīn (الكَاذِبِينَ) S 16:84, Q 3:60. "the liars"
yajhādūn (يَجْهَدُونَ) S 17:9, Q 7:50. "they deny" (Jesus' miracles)
kaḏiban (كَذِبًا) S 18:47, Q 18:15. "telling lies"
tunkirūn (تَنْكِرُونَ) S 19:15, Q 40:80. "you deny" (the truth)
yakḏibūn (يَكْذِبُونَ) S 24:28, Q 2:9. "they lie"
al-jāhilūn (الْجَاهِلُونَ) S 24:23, Q 39:61. "the ignorant"
ḡālimīn (ضَالِّينَ) S 24:32, Q 2:91 "wicked" (men)

Now all of these rhyme words fit their context very well indeed. In fact the condemnatory message of the Qur'an matches that of Jesus' outspoken attacks on the unbelieving Jews of his time. Sira has succeeded here in matching the mood of Jesus with that of the Qur'an.

C. The Day of Judgment: Another feature of the Qur'an is the repeated mention of judgment at God's tribunal. Six rhyming words or expressions used in the Qur'an reappear in Sira.

yawm al-dīn (يَوْمَ الدِّينِ) S 7:36, Q 1:3. "the day of judgment"
ʿaḏāb alīm (عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ) S 14:1, Q 2:103. "painful punishment"
yawm ʿazīm (يَوْمٌ عَظِيمٌ) S 19:12, cf. Q 2:6. "a terrible day"
al-jahīm (الْجَهَنَّمَ) S 20:50, Q 2:118. "hell"
la yunṣarūn (لَا يُنصَرُونَ) S 19:56, Q 21:39 "they will not be saved"
la tunṣarūn (لَا تُنصَرُونَ) S 12:24, Q 11:113 "you will not be saved"

Except for the second, where the Syro-phoenecian woman uses **ʿaḏāb alīm** to describe the condition of her son, these expressions of judgment are well-chosen in the context of Jesus' teaching.

D. Salvation: Just as judgment is prominent in Qur'anic teaching so is salvation. Eight different rhyming expressions from the Qur'an are found in Sira.

al-mansūrūn (المنصورون) S "Kalima":5, Q 37:172. "the victorious/successful ones"
 naṣīran (نصيراء) S 5:10, Q 4:74. "victorious/successful"
 sa-yunṣarūn (سينصرون) S 19:29, Q 7:192. "they will be saved"
 ajra l-muḥsnīn (أجر المحسنين) S 8:3, Q 3:171. "the reward of those who do good"
 al-fā'zūn (الفائزون) S 12:9, Q 9:20. "the successful"
 kalidīn (خالدین) S 12:25, Q 39:70. "living forever"
 al-kalidīn (الخالدين) S 13:36, Q 7:19. "the ones who live forever"
 jannat al-na'im (جنة النعيم) S 20:52, Q 5:67. "heaven"

Once again these rhyme words are carefully selected to demonstrate the concurrence of Qur'anic thinking with that of Jesus.

The phrase *ajra l-muḥsnīn* in Q 3:171 calls for comment. The full sentence reads *allāh lā yuḥī'u ajra l-muḥsnīn* (الله لا يضيع أجر المحسنين) "God does not waste the reward of those who do good." This phrase is repeated in *Sira* 8:3 at the close of Jesus' teaching, "When you give alms don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, and God will reward you--for God does not waste the reward of those who do good."

This illustrates the technique of the authors--to use phrases from the Qur'an where they enhance rather than alter the teaching of Jesus. The difficulty here is that Jesus never spoke these words; the phrase is not found in any of the gospels. In other words, rather than translating Jesus at this point, *Sira* puts Qur'anic language into his mouth. As we will see later, this can be problematic. On the whole, however, *Sira* has achieved a lot by using Qur'anic rhyme words. It has shown that there can be linguistic agreement between Jesus' teaching and that of the Qur'an to a much greater extent than has been realized in previous presentations of the gospels.

A Qur'anic Lord's Prayer

Apart from these rhyme words, countless other words and phrases from the Qur'an may also be found in *Sira*. It is not possible to try to examine all of these here. It will be far more instructive to take a piece of Jesus' teaching and compare how it reads in the standard Van Dyke translation (= VD) with the rendition of *Sirat Ul Masih* (= S). We shall look at Jesus' model prayer, known as "The Lord's Prayer," as found in Matt. 6:9-13 and in S 8:7-9.

VD - *abā-nā l-ladī fī s-samāwat* (أبانا الذي في السموات) "Our Father in Heaven" = S - *allāhumma, rabb al-'ālamīn* (اللهم رب العالمين) "O God, Lord of all being". The authors of *Sira* normally translate "Father" as "Lord" or "God" (see *Seedbed* IV/3:39f). As indicated there, this is an inadequate rendering of the New Testament concept of God as Father and represents *Sira* at its weakest. The expression *rabb al-'ālamīn* occurs in the Qur'an in the "Fatiha" and elsewhere, and *rabb* is frequently used in the Qur'an for addressing God. There is, however, no concurrence between Qur'anic thinking and Jesus' teaching at this point. Here is a case where "Father" should have been preserved.

VD - li-yataqaddas ismu-ka (ليتقدس اسمك "may your name be hallowed") = S - li-yurfa' dikru-ka l-'azīm (ليرفع ذكرك العظيم "may your great esteem [lit. = mention] be exalted." The root QDS is infrequently used in the Qur'an; the active verb qaddasa is used only once (Q 2:30) and the passive verb taqaddasa not at all. This may be why yurfa' was used instead. It means "raise high" or "exalt," a concept that is similar to some meanings of qaddasa, but lacks the idea of "holiness." More problematic is the use of the term dikr on the analogy of Q 94:4 rafa'-nā la-ka dikra-ka ("We raised high your [i.e. Muhammad's] esteem"). The term basically means "mention" or "reminder," and by extension "fame" or "esteem." However, it also has several very common uses in Islam which divert attention from what Jesus was teaching here. The Qur'an very frequently refers to itself as al-dikr; hence one could easily understand S 8:3 to refer to it. The term dikr is also used for the incessant repetition of the name of God in worship, common in Folk Islam. Hence, S 8:3 might also be understood to refer to this. In any case, what Jesus intended to teach is distorted and lost.

VD - li-ya'ti malakūtu-ka (ليأت ملكوتك "may your kingdom come") = S - li-yuqda amru-ka l-hakīm (ليقض أمرك الحكيم "may your wise command/decrees come to pass." The term malakūt only occurs in the Qur'an and Islamic usage with a different meaning, which is why the authors have opted for amr. This is close enough in meaning to convey Jesus' idea of God's rule being enacted.

VD - li-takun maṣī'atu-ka (لتكن مشيئتك "may your will be [done]" = S - li-yantaṣir dīnu-ka l-qawīm (لينتصر دينك القويم "may your true religion triumph"). The authors change "will" to "religion," possibly because Islam views God's will as always coming to pass; everything that happens is by His will. Such a request is natural for the Muslim. Here once again the authors of Sira are not willing to let Jesus' radical thinking overturn Islamic principles.

VD - kamā fī s-samā'i kaḍalika 'alā l-arḍ (كما في السماء كذلك على الأرض "in heaven just as on earth") = S - fī 'ālamī l-ḡaibī waṣ-ṣaḥādātī ajma'īn (في عالم الغيب والشهادة اجمعين "in both the world of the unseen and the seen"). The authors of Sira pick out the Qur'anic phrase 'ālimī l-ḡaibī waṣ-ṣaḥāda (Q 9:94) "Knower of the unseen and the seen [i.e. God]" to translate this idea. Interestingly, 'ālim - "knower" becomes 'ālam - "world," but communicates the idea with a Qur'anic flavor without disturbing the focus.

VD - kubza-nā kafāfa-nā a'ṭi-nā l-yawma (خبزنا كفنا أعطنا اليوم "give us today our daily bread" = S - rabba-nā w-arzuq-nā min ṭayyibāti-ka ḥajata yawmi-nā (ربنا وارزقنا من طيباتك حاجة يومنا "Our Lord supply us from Your bounty what we need today"). The word ṭayyibāt is used several times in the Qur'an to indicate the stores of food that God has for mankind. Its use here is a good choice.

VD - w-aḡfir la-nā ḍunūba-nā kamā naḡfiru naḥnu ayḍan li-l-muḡnibīna ilai-nā (وأغفر لنا ذنوبنا كما تغفر نحن أيضا للمذنبين إلينا "and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." = S - rabba-nā w-aḡfir la-nā ḍunūba-nā kamā naḡfiru naḥnu li-man yuḡnibun ilai-nā (ربنا وأغفر ذنوبنا كما تغفر نحن لمن يذنبون إلينا "Our Lord, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against

us." It is surprising that there is no change. But this is probably because ḡafara and ḡunūb have essentially the same meaning in the Qur'an as the terms used by Jesus.

VD - wa-lā tudkīlu-nā fī tajribatin (ولا تدخلنا في تجربة) "and don't bring us into temptation" = S - rabba-nā wa-a'izza-nā id tabtali imāna-nā (ربنا وأعزنا إذ تبتلي إيماننا) "Our Lord, strengthen us when you test our faith." The root JRB--"temptation" is absent from the Qur'an, so the verb tabtali--"to tempt" was used instead; at Q 3:151 it has the meaning "to put to the test." The Greek word can denote either a temptation to sin, or a testing. If the Hebrew causative is behind the sentence, the prayer has the meaning "do not cause us to succumb to temptation," which Sira has essentially reproduced.

VD - lakin najji-nā min aš-šarīr (لكن نجنا من الشرير) "but deliver us from evil/the evil one" = S - rabba-nā wa-najji-nā mina š-šaiṭān ir-raḡīm (ربنا ونجنا من الشيطان الرجيم) "Our Lord deliver us from the accursed satan." According to Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon (p. 697-8) the word translated "evil" could refer either to evil circumstances or the evil one. Hence the translation of Sira's is valid. Saiṭan ar-raḡīm--"Satan the accursed" is commonly used in the Qur'an.

Conclusion

This study of the Lord's prayer points up the strengths and weakness of the Qur'anic style of Sira. Where it enhances the meaning of the original Sira has succeeded admirably in contextualizing the gospel message for the Muslim audience. The problem is that it also alters and distorts the intended meaning of the original in places as well. One could call Sira "a mixed blessing". As I wrote in Seedbed IV/3 p. 40 "If the authors of Sira could see their Life of Jesus as more a biography than a translation, more an Islamic dramatization of Jesus than a faithful reproduction of the original, then they would be more just in their assessment of their work."

*The author's 3 page list of Qur'anic rhyming words used in Sira is not appended here, but those wanting it may request a photocopy.

ACCOUNTS OF MUSLIMS WHO HAVE BECOME CHRISTIANS

by Ernest Hahn

Accounts of converts should be viewed and used with discrimination. Are the contents true? Do they cater simply to the sensational, the dramatic? Are they used only to put down the Muslim and Islam? Do they glorify God or the convert?

Muslim response to convert accounts must also be reckoned with. Our own experience would suggest that Muslims of an Arab, Pakistani and Indian background are often angered by these accounts as their introduction to Christianity. On the other hand a Persian account of an