

WHATEVER THE RELIGION WE ASK FOR THE SAME THINGS © ASIA HALEEM 2014

Comparisons between the Muslim Fātiḥa and the Christian Lord's Prayer have often been made by orientalist academics in scholarly mode. Despite seeming differences between Muslim and Christian attitudes, it is worth setting them in parallel to bring out the core areas of common ground that are particularly obvious. We do it just relying on oral tradition, avoiding footnotes and sources, and going by what the average Muslim or Christian knows by heart without thinking twice).

The Lord's Prayer

Recorded in the Bible as recited in Aramaic by Jesus Christ to his followers when instructing them how to pray - apart from the last three phrases added from 1549 to the reformed Protestant Common Prayer Book in the reign of the young Tudor King, Edward VI not long after the death of his father, Henry VIII.

Our Father
Which art in Heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy Will be done
On Earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from Evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom,
The Power and the Glory,
For ever and ever,
AMEN

The Fātiḥa

The wording is given in Arabic as the first chapter of the Qur'ān (a Semitic language similar to Aramaic) its wording direct from God (Allāh) and to be used as the standard prayer five times a day.

We first give the prayer in transliterated Arabic, followed by its translation, phrase by phrase.

Bi 'Ismi Llāhi, ir-Raḥmāni `r-Raḥeem

Al-Hamdu l'illāhi, Rabbi 'l'ālamēen, ar-Raḥmāni `r-Raḥeem, Māliki yawmi d-Dīn.

IyyāKa na'budu wa IyyāKa nasta'een. Iḥdinā 's-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqeem,

As-Ṣirāṭ aladhina an'amta 'alaihim - ghair il-maghdūbi 'laihim wa lā 'd-Dāleen, Ameen

In the Name of God, Merciful and Compassionate:
Praise be to God
Lord of all Worlds,
The Merciful, the Compassionate,
Ruler of the Day of Judgement.
To Thee only do we give service,
From Thee only do we seek help.
Direct us along the Straight Path,
Paths you give permission for,
Not the ones of those who fall by the wayside, bringing down Your Wrath
So be it

Our next step was to copy each phrase from the Lord’s Prayer into the main left-hand column and in the right-hand one matched the phrase expressing a more or less parallel concept from the Fātiḥa:

		To Thee only do we give service
1	Hallowed be thy Name	In the Name of God Praise be to God
2	Our Father, Which art in Heaven	Lord of all Worlds
3	Lead us not into temptation	Direct us along the Straight Path
4	But deliver us from Evil	Paths you give permission for, Not the ones of those who fall by the wayside, bringing down Your Wrath
5	Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done On Earth as it is in Heaven; For Thine is the Kingdom, The Power and the Glory, For ever and ever	Ruler of the Day of Judgement
6	Give us this day our daily bread,	From Thee only do we seek help
7	And forgive us our trespasses	Merciful and Compassionate/ The Merciful, the Compassionate
8	Amen	Amen
	As we forgive them that trespass against us	

Tellingly, the only two phrases that could not be squared, one from each prayer and typed in bold at the beginning and end of the table, underline one underlying difference between the two religions. Part of being a Christian is to be able to forgive each other human to human as well as asking it from God. The default Semitic attitude is revealed in the phrase, ‘to Thee only we turn’

signifying that immediate jump for reliance between the human direct to the Divine World alone, without an intercessor (such as Christ). This tends to mean, culturally, that on the human level both Judaic and Islamic society has revenge and retribution written into their DNA. When it comes to thoughts of revenge, even for Christians the Semitic habit of reliance only on God makes a similar leap in the Biblical phrase, “Vengeance is *Mine*”, saith The Lord’ - meaning that it is His job to bring people to book through the karmic mechanism of ‘As ye sow, so shall ye reap’ - but it underlines that vengeance is not up to humans to wreak. If a Christian wants revenge they remember that phrase and more or less say ‘Over to you, God’. Can the Judaeo-Islamic habit of personal revenge learn from this? Muslims make much of the fact that God is both Merciful and Compassionate whilst Christians make much of the virtue, as human beings, of turning the other cheek and offering forgiveness.

How interesting that all this dovetails with the sole evident difference between the two prayers - that Christians must seek to forgive, rather than take revenge - that they seek to cultivate mercy and compassion individually *by channelling it down from God, All-Merciful, All-Compassionate* - as well as relying on it direct from God, as would a Muslim or Jew. In broad terms this difference of emphasis can be seen playing out in the present-day politics of East-West conflict situations.



KNOW THYSELF