

# DIVINE KINGDOM IN SYRIAC MATTHEW AND THE QUR'ĀN

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The “Christian influence” on the Qur’ān is a discourse which has involved many scholars. Richard Bell was among the first to explicitly discuss the Qur’ān’s earliest Christian environment.<sup>1</sup> John Trimmingham similarly addressed the issue of Christianity in pre-Islamic Arabia.<sup>2</sup> The “Christian influence” discourse proved to be especially interesting, as well as controversial, with respect to Syriac, or more generally Aramaic.<sup>3</sup> As a Nestorian Christian, Alphonse Mingana, had the advantage of being one of the first to specifically examine the Syriac-Christian influences on the Qur’ān.<sup>4</sup> Many subsequent studies on the Qur’ān followed; some of these studies stressed the important role Syriac literature and religious expression played in shaping the Qur’ān,<sup>5</sup> but most did little to take the Syriac milieu of the Qur’ān into account.<sup>6</sup> More recently, Günter Lüling<sup>7</sup> and subsequently Christoph

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment* (London: Macmillan, 1926).

<sup>2</sup> John Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (Beirut: Longman, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this study the words Aramaic and Syriac will be used interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> Alphonse Mingana, *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Qur’ān* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1927).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Tor Andrae, *Der Ursprung der Islams und das Christentum* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1926); translated as *Les origines de l’islam et le christianisme* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1955).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Karl Ahrens, ‘Christliches im Qoran’, *ZDMG*, 84 (1930), pp. 148-190; Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1961); Denise Masson, *Les trois voies de l’Unique* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1983); Johann-Dietrich Thyen, *Bibel und Koran* (Köln: Bohlau, 1989); Ugo Bonanate, *Bibbia e Corano* (1995); John Wansbrough, *Quranic studies: sources and methods of scriptural interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> Günter Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation: The Rediscovery and Reliable Recon-*

Luxenberg,<sup>8</sup> despite their very different techniques in “de-coding” the Qur’ān, have re-constructed a pre-Canonical Christian Qur’ān on a purely linguistic basis. Lüling’s claim that the Qur’ān was originally a collection of Christian strophic hymns that later went through a series of Islamicizing editorial stages,<sup>9</sup> and Luxenberg’s claim that the Qur’ān was originally a Syriac Christian lectionary (Syriac *qeryānā*) largely misunderstood by traditional Muslim interpreters,<sup>10</sup> have certainly been controversial.<sup>11</sup> One concern regarding the methodologies of Lüling and Luxenberg is that both of them believe the Qur’ān to be originally an entirely Christian document, with little regard for the Qur’ān ‘as a literary text...that has to be de-coded and evaluated historically’.<sup>12</sup> The other concern is that their studies, like Mingana before them,<sup>13</sup> take the liberty of freely changing the canonical text of the Qur’ān in order to forge unique interpretations to fit their argument. Despite these problems, some of their conclusions can nonetheless prove beneficial to this discourse. Thus, the present study addresses the Qur’ānic verses more conservatively in tracing Christian elements. By reading select unchanged Qur’ānic verses alongside verses of the Syriac version of Matthew’s Gospel,<sup>14</sup> whole phrases or partial clauses appear to have the same origin. These parallels are especially distinct in verses discussing matters of divine kingdom. The present paper will examine some further evidence in this vein. And in acknowledging the vast and ambiguous applicability of words like “Christian” and “influence,” this study will ultimately better inform us, not that there were indeed theological and linguistic

*struction of a Comprehensive Pre-Islamic Christian Hymnal Hidden in the Koran under Earliest Islamic Reinterpretations* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003; English version of his *Über den Ur-Qur’ān*, originally published in 1971).

<sup>8</sup> Christoph Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran: Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache* (Berlin: Das Arabische Book, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, pp. 9-10. Mingana makes the same point: *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur’ān*, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran*, p. 81.

<sup>11</sup> Angelica Neuwirth, ‘Qur’ān and History – A Disputed Relationship. Some Reflections on Qur’ānic History and History in the Qur’ān’, *Journal of Qur’ānic Studies/Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Qur’āniya*, 5.1 (2003), pp. 8-9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Alphonse Mingana, *An Ancient Translation of the Kur’an Exhibiting New Verse and Variants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922).

<sup>14</sup> However, where variant readings (all of which are early) can further shed light on the canonical verse, they will be cited accordingly.

elements of Christian origin inherent in the milieu of the Qur'ān, but what kind of Christian tendencies made up this milieu. However, the present study would rephrase the question of inquiry away from seeking “Christian influences” on the Qur'ān to investigating the audience and milieu of the Qur'ān.<sup>15</sup> First, we set the historical foundation upon which to begin our analysis.

## 2. SYRO-ARABIA: HISTORY AND SOURCES

The Arabian and Aramaean spheres of the Near East demonstrated a close and fluid relationship in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE through the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.<sup>16</sup> More specifically, this was so in the region dubbed “Syro-Arabia” (Appendix E). This region subsumes the Hijaz-Najd region, or Arabia and areas to the north, as far as northern Syria. Other scholars have acknowledged this geographical entity.<sup>17</sup> In the extreme south of this region lie cities like Ta'if and Mecca. In the extreme north is Edessa, the birthplace of Syriac. Even so, this is only one of several geographical constructions of the late antique Near East.<sup>18</sup>

Long before Christianity and Islam, Syro-Arabia existed as a cohesive social entity – an amalgamation of Aramaean peasantry and Arabian nomads. This produced border dialects, neither fully Aramaic nor Arabic, but a blend of the two. Thus, an ideal paradigm exhibiting the mixed nature of Aramaic-Arabic speech and writing is clearly evident in some inscriptions, especially the Raqush Inscription dating back to 267 CE (Appendix G).

<sup>15</sup> Sidney Griffith, ‘Syriacisms in the Arabic Qur'ān: Who were those who said “Allah is third of three”’, in *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Medieval Exegeses of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'ān*, eds. Meir Bar-Asher, Simon Hopkins, Sarah Stroumsa, Bruno Chiesa (Jerusalem: The Ben-Zvi Institute, 2007), p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> century is the time in which the Syrian Orthodox Church comes to flourish with such authors as Ephrem (d. 373 CE) and Aphrahat (d. 345 CE).

<sup>17</sup> Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran*, p. 15; Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, p. 41. Not only does Trimmingham talk about the “Syro-Arab Region”, he also mentions the “Aramaico-Arab Peoples” (cf. pp. 7-20).

<sup>18</sup> Given the close commercial, cultural, and religious exchanges of the Ethiopia with Arabia of the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, it is valid to posit an analogous “Ethiopic-Arabian” region. One must further be aware of the general Irano-Semitic realm formulated by Hodgson. Cf. Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, 1: The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 1, pp. 61-62.

Syro-Arabia was bound together by, among other things, political alliances.<sup>19</sup> Such alliances were not pacts exclusive to Aramaean and Arabian tribes. Other Semites, such as Assyrians, Phoenicians, and Israelites, were part of such alliances as well. Syro-Arabia was also linked by kinship ties through marriage,<sup>20</sup> and general ties created by nomadism.<sup>21</sup> The region was also perpetually connected through commercial relations.<sup>22</sup> In addition, religious cults, belief systems, and institutions were constantly renewing and reinforcing social relations.<sup>23</sup> These had many forms, not the least of whose examples were the spread of various pagan cults by Arab tribes,<sup>24</sup> the conversion of certain Arab tribes to Judaism,<sup>25</sup> and the Christian proselytizing of nomad Arabs by Palestinian and Syrian missionaries.<sup>26</sup> Centuries of Aramaean-Arabian intermingling<sup>27</sup> evolved into the intimate relationship between Syriac speaking Christian groups and the tribal and urban centers of Arabia, like the Hijaz.

Christianity became widespread in Syro-Arabia long before the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>28</sup> Christian teaching or scripture (whether oral or written) was therefore widely circulated therein. The Qurʾān as well was produced in this Syro-Arabian realm. Therefore, it is with little surprise that one finds parallels in Aramaic and Arabic canonical religious expression at the advent of

<sup>19</sup> Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 132, 177.

<sup>20</sup> Javier Teixidor, *The Pantheon of Palmyra* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), pp. 40, 82. Predictably the same is so for cults and even priests. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 8, 34; Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, p. 174.

<sup>21</sup> Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, p. 286.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 218; John Healey, *The Religion of the Nabataeans* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), p. 32. Cf. also Qurʾān 106:2.

<sup>23</sup> Teixidor, *The Pantheon of Palmyra*, pp. 13-14; Meir Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), p. 39. Cf. also Qurʾān 53:21; 71:23.

<sup>24</sup> Teixidor, *The Pantheon of Palmyra*, pp. 17-19, 22, 24, 64; Han Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), pp. 146-176.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Katsh, *Judaism in Islam: Biblical and Talmudic Backgrounds of the Koran and its Commentaries* (New York: Sepher-Hermon, 1980), pp. xxi-xxii.

<sup>26</sup> Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, pp. 243-255. Cf. also Galatians 1,17.

<sup>27</sup> Sidney Griffith, 'Christian Lore and the Arabic Qurʾān: The "Companions of the Cave" in Sūrat al-Kahf and in Syriac Christian Tradition', in *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 116.

<sup>28</sup> Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, p. 33.

Islam. This is generally why the Gospel of Matthew in Syriac bears much in common with the idiom of the Qur'ān.

Unfortunately, no original Aramaic account exists from the time-period of Jesus and his earliest Palestinian ministry. The theory of an Aramaic origin to the Syriac Gospels is a matter of debate.<sup>29</sup> Robert Murray's *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* is informative regarding not only Syrian Christian origins, but early Christian Aramaic language, theology and institutions.<sup>30</sup> Since Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, Murray proposes, as other scholars before him,<sup>31</sup> that some passages claimed to be the teachings of Jesus are better replicated in the Syriac translation of the Gospels than the Greek.<sup>32</sup> Thus the Syriac Gospels, and especially Matthew, provide the hope and rare opportunity of being more precise than the Greek text itself.<sup>33</sup> The *Diatessaron* by Tatian (d. c. 165 CE), being perhaps the earliest translation of Syriac Gospels, is only available in an Arabic translation as the Syriac version is lost. The earliest extant Aramaic translations of the Gospels are called the Old Syriac Gospels, of which there are two, Sinaiticus and Curetonius. The New Testament Peshitta is a 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century Syriac revision of the Old Syriac Gospels.<sup>34</sup> These older versions of the New Testament are themselves popu-

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Sebastian Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), pp. 31-34, 108; Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 269-271; Jan Joosten, *The Syriac Language of the Peshitta and Old Syriac Versions of Matthew* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 22-27.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

<sup>31</sup> Francis Burkitt, *Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire: Two Lectures Delivered at Trinity College, Dublin* (Glasgow: Cambridge University Press, 1899), pp. 17-21. Burkitt states this generally, as he was an avid proponent of the supremacy of Semitic (Aramaic) translations of Christian scripture.

<sup>32</sup> Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition*, p. 34. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 4, 193-194. He prefers, in this example, the Syriac *rab baytā* ('master of the house') to the Greek translation.

<sup>33</sup> Whether the Gospels were "originally" written in Greek or Aramaic is not significant herein. What is of greater import is that many critical passages of Matthew especially, such as the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes and the parable of the Mustard Seed, exhibit some sort of rhymed prose. For an in depth analysis of such phenomenon, cf. Raphael Lancaster, *Was the New Testament Really Written in Greek?* (published privately, 2006). Furthermore this is not unlike the *saj'* of the Qur'ān, where the concluding rhyme of the longer Qur'ānic verses, what Neuwirth calls "cadenza," is an oral mechanism to delineate the ending of a verse. Cf. Neuwirth, 'Qur'ān and History', p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), p. 285. The old

larly believed to be a slightly earlier translation of the Greek gospels. The Aramaic designation *pshîttâ* (Arabic *baṣīṭah*; “simple/vulgar”) comes into effect much later in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the Peshitta remains the official testament of Semitic-Aramaic Christian tradition. Variant readings of the Aramaic gospels are available in George Kiraz’s *Comparative Edition to the Syriac Gospels*, which provides the text for all the extant Syriac Gospels: the Sinaiticus (4<sup>th</sup> century), Curetonius (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century), Peshitta (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century), and Harklean (7<sup>th</sup> century; revised 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century) versions.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst the early Greek Church was linguistically and culturally estranged from the atmosphere in which Jesus lived, the communities of Syro-Arabia inherently shared his native Aramaic idiom. The early Greco-Roman world that came to accept Jesus as the Christ, was dependant on the Greek Gospel accounts to familiarize itself with and understand Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>37</sup> Their Syro-Arabian counterparts would come to know him through daily custom and common speech, not least because Arabs and Syrians regularly encountered Jesus personally in first-century Galilee.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the content of the New Testament, aside from Matthew’s Gospel, certain passages of Mark and Luke likewise resemble verses of the Qur’ān. This is a result of Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s inter-relatedness due to the Biblical source reconstruction of their content. Mark is popularly accepted as the earliest of these three “Synoptic” Gospels.<sup>39</sup> All the Synoptic Gospels are believed to have been authored sometime in the late first century CE.<sup>40</sup> The author of Matthew is believed to have drawn upon material from three sources: (1) Mark; (2) a unique source called M; and (3) a source shared with Luke called Q. ‘Matthew used these sources to create a distinctive portrayal of Jesus as a new Moses who provides the authoritative

Syriac manuscripts date from the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Rabbula (d. 435 CE) has customarily been credited with translating-transcribing the Peshitta into its present state, and destroying variant copies.

<sup>35</sup> Burkitt, *Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire*, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> George Anton Kiraz, *Comparative edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshîttâ and Harklean versions: 1* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. xxi-xxxii.

<sup>37</sup> Burkitt, *Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire*, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, pp. 41-41.

<sup>39</sup> Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 73.

<sup>40</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament: Other Early Writings* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 92.

interpretation of the Jewish Law.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Matthew's Gospel can therefore not only be considered a Christian text, but a Jewish one as well. Furthermore, first-century CE Judaism which contributed to the Gospel of Matthew had been an Aramaic religious phenomenon for six centuries. The post-Exilic shift of Near Eastern Jewry from using Hebrew to using the Near Eastern *lingua franca*, Aramaic, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, settled immigrant Jewish communities more widely in Syro-Arabia.

Thus, if Matthew is the most Mosaic, or more generally Jewish, of the canonical Gospels, it stands also as the most Syro-Arabian. Matthew's ascription of an Old Testament-like genealogy of Jesus at the opening of his account,<sup>42</sup> his restraint from stating "God" and substituting it with "Lord,"<sup>43</sup> placing Jesus' sermon on a "mount" analogous to that of Moses', and insistence that Jesus came to "fulfill the Law"<sup>44</sup> are all examples of his Jewish, Syro-Arabian predisposition. Additionally the Gospel of Matthew was likely the most widely read in the late antique world.<sup>45</sup>

Regarding the Qur'ān, elements of its diverse and complex origins have been studied for some time by Muslim authors. Books like *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*<sup>46</sup> by Ibn Abī-Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 888 CE) are evidence that the early Muslims were aware that the written text of the Qur'ān, whilst divine revelation, was as a text subject to human handling. This is one factor that led some prominent medieval Muslim scholars, like Abū Maṣṣūr al-Jawālīqī<sup>47</sup> (d. 1145 CE) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī<sup>48</sup> (d. 1505 CE), to dedicate separate monographs to the study of the foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ān. Along with this foreign vocabulary came foreign contexts: Judeo-Christian scrip-

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 1.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 5-7.

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 5,17.

<sup>45</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament: Other Early Writings*, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān: The Old Codices/Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* (Leiden: Brill, 1937).

<sup>47</sup> Abū Maṣṣūr al-Jawālīqī, *al-mu'arrab min al-kalām al-'arab 'alā ḥurūf al-mu'jam*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (s.l.: Dār al-Kitāb, 1969/1389).

<sup>48</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān: 1-2*. ed. Fawwāz Zamīlī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1999/1419). A chapter of this text was eventually published by Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muḥadḍḥab fīmā waqa'a fī al-Qur'ān min al-Mu'arrab*, ed. Muḥammad al-Tunji (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1995). For more, cf. A. Rippin, s.v. "Foreign Vocabulary", in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*.

tural verses, apocryphal narratives, and old Syro-Arabian rhymes.<sup>49</sup> This diverse context constituted a critical part of the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah*, and therefore the Qurʾān.

Insofar as the classical Muslim interpreters understood or misunderstood (as Lüling and Luxenberg often claim) such foreign vocabulary, consulting the *tafsīr* literature is an essential foundation. Yet, due to the vastness of the *tafsīr* literature and limited scope of this study, we shall suffice with using those of Ṭabarī (838-923)<sup>50</sup> and Qurṭubī (d. 1273).<sup>51</sup>

In addition, Abraham Katsh's *Judaism in Islam*,<sup>52</sup> has the special status of being principally a 'Jewish-*tafsīr*' of the Qurʾān. Tracing various Qurʾānic passages back to Talmudic and Biblical references, such a feature is most beneficial in comparing the Qurʾān with a 'Jewish Gospel' like Matthew.

Lastly, various collections of Syrian and north Arabian inscriptions are beneficial, insofar as they may expose the presence or absence of certain key words pertaining to divine kingdom in Syro-Arabia.<sup>53</sup> Such documentary evidence can at times explain how words, and therefore ideas concerning divine kingdom, were exchanged in late-antique (c.4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE) Syro-Arabia.

### 3. DIVINE KINGDOM

The Syriac word *malkūtā* meaning kingdom, sovereignty, reign,<sup>54</sup> is used in the Gospel of Matthew 51 times in total. All instances of the word refer in

<sup>49</sup> This may not go back exclusively to Arab pagan *jāhili* poetry, but maybe even go back to Syriac Christian hymns.

<sup>50</sup> Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (s.l.: Wizārat al-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Awqāf wa al-Daʿwah wa al-Irshād, s.d.). Along with Qurṭubī's text, this is an electronic edition. Therefore instead of page numbers, I shall refer to sura and verse citations.

<sup>51</sup> Abū ʿAbd-Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li ahkām al-Qurʾān* (s.l.: Wizārat al-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Awqāf wa al-Daʿwah wa al-Irshād, s.d.).

<sup>52</sup> Abraham Katsh, *Judaism in Islam*.

<sup>53</sup> H.J.W. Drijvers and J. F. Healy, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999); Albertus vanden Branden, *Les inscriptions thamoudéennes* (Louvain-Heverlee, Bureaux du Muséon, 1950); F.V. Winnett, *Inscriptions from Fifty Safaitic Cairns* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978); Ḥusayn al-Ḥasan, *Qirāʾat li katābāt liḥyāniyyah min Jabal ʿAkmah bi mintaqat al-ʿAlā* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd al-Waṭaniyyah, 1997).

<sup>54</sup> Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 240.



some manner to the divine kingdom ushered in by Jesus.<sup>55</sup> This divine kingdom has two names in Syriac: *malkūtā dashmāyā*, “the kingdom of heaven”;<sup>56</sup> and *malkūtā dalāhā*, “the kingdom of God”. Unlike the other Synoptic Gospels,<sup>57</sup> the latter is much more sparingly used, as it occurs only five times.<sup>58</sup> This may be ascribed to the author of Matthew’s Jewish background and his subsequent reluctance to overuse the word *alāhā*, God. Thus, to the author of Matthew, “heaven” is a metaphor for “God”. In the two instances where *malkūtā* refers to worldly kingdoms, these instances occur in parables that Jesus uses to contrast the divine kingdom with the fractious kingdoms of men.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, in Matthew kingdom appears exclusively in conjunction with the divine, whether it be God directly or heaven as an equal but alternate divine representative. This is furthermore, a direct implementation of the classical Syriac meaning of kingdom. Similar phrases including *malkūtā* occur in earlier Syriac literature like the *Odes of Solomon*. The meaning of the word in the *Odes* may be construed, depending on the original author’s intent, as a heavenly and/or apocalyptic kingdom.<sup>60</sup> This duality in meaning is also made clear in Matthew, as Jesus preaches his fundamental message, “repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”.<sup>61</sup> It is difficult to discern exactly what the author of Matthew means in this verse, but the apocalyptic overtone is clear nonetheless. Moreover, this apocalyptic theme is ostensibly a product of the still closely inter-related Judeo-Christian community of the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. This is especially the case in the Targum literature, where the divine kingdom is directly related to *malkā mshīhā*, “the King Messiah”.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, the Gospel writers, and especially Matthew, retain this Jewish notion.

Similarly, the phrase *malakūt al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ*, “the kingdom of the heavens and the earth”,<sup>63</sup> occurs twice in the Qur’ān,<sup>64</sup> and *malakūt kull*

<sup>55</sup> Matthew 3,2.

<sup>56</sup> This phrase never occurs in the other canonical gospels; all translations of biblical passages are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

<sup>57</sup> Mark 1,5; Luke 4,43; etc.

<sup>58</sup> Matthew 6,33; 12,28; 19,24; 21,31; 21,43.

<sup>59</sup> Matthew 12,25-26.

<sup>60</sup> Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 239-240.

<sup>61</sup> Matthew 3,2; cf. Mark 1,15.

<sup>62</sup> Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 284.

<sup>63</sup> All translations of Qur’ān passages are my own.

<sup>64</sup> Qur’ān 6:75; 7:185.

*shay*, “the kingdom of all things” occurs twice as well.<sup>65</sup> As in Matthew, the notion of kingdom here is divine. The word *malakūt* is clearly a form of the Aramaic construct noun *markūt*, and unlike *mulk* (see below) which can be associated with either God or human beings, exclusively connotes divine kingdom.<sup>66</sup> Rabin adds that the word, and all Arabic words ending in *-ūt*, were an archaic absolute state preserved in the dialect of the Hijazi Jews in Arabia.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, early attestation of *mlkt* is supported by ancient north Arabian inscriptions. However, how the ancient north Arabian *mlkt* was vocalized is of secondary importance, for it does not exclusively denote a female noun based on the final *t*, like “queen”. Both Thamudic and Safaitic inscriptions use the word to mean a variety of abstract nouns,<sup>68</sup> some of which are, “possession,” and “royalty”, which are furthermore at least once used in conjunction with “force”.<sup>69</sup> These connotations are virtually synonymous with “kingdom”. This would further establish the antiquity of a word like *malakūt*, as one form of the ancient *mlkt*, in the Syro-Arabian region as a notion of kingdom. At any rate, the word, in its *-ūt* form, seems to have entered the Qur’ān from an Aramaic source.<sup>70</sup> Mingana adds that the author of the Qur’ān adopted the word explicitly from Matthew’s “kingdom of heaven”.<sup>71</sup>

The word *mulk* occurs 38 times in the Qur’ān, but with different meanings.<sup>72</sup> At least one of these meanings does indeed coincide with that of the Qur’ānic *malakūt*, and ultimately Matthew’s *markūtā*. This is especially evident in the common phrase *mulk al-samāwāt wa al-ard*, “kingdom of the heavens and the earth”.<sup>73</sup> In passing, Lüling asserts that the unification of

<sup>65</sup> Qur’ān 23:88; 36:83.

<sup>66</sup> L. Marlow, s.v. “Kings and Rulers”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*. Geiger has mistakenly posited its Hebrew origin: cf. Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Islam* (Madras: MDCSPCK Press, 1898), p. 44. English translation of *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (Bonn: F. Baaden, 1833).

<sup>67</sup> Chaim Rabin, *Ancient West-Arabian* (London, Taylor’s Foreign Press, 1951), p. 109.

<sup>68</sup> Van den Branden, *Les inscriptions thamoudéennes*, p. 515; Winnett, *Inscriptions from Fifty Safaitic Cairns*, p. 613.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>70</sup> Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’ān* (Baroda, India: Oriental Institute, 1938), p. 270.

<sup>71</sup> Mingana, *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Qur’ān*, p. 86.

<sup>72</sup> Two of these meanings are “authority” (Qur’ān 2:247) and “power” (Qur’ān 2:248, 251; 3:26).

<sup>73</sup> Qur’ān 2:107; 5:40; 5:120; 9:116; etc.

the *ummah* by the Arabs in the 7<sup>th</sup> century was the implementation of “the kingdom of God on earth”.<sup>74</sup> This explanation is only possible if we consider the pre-Islamic Arabians to be Christians as Lüling does. Katsh provides a more likely explanation, given the volume of rabbinical teachings in the Qur'ān, by relating the phrase to the Midrash.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, this phrase is evidently no different in meaning than *malakūt al-samāwāt wa al-ard*. Thus, the early Qur'ān interpreters were correct, as far as the mentioned verses are concerned, in equating *malakūt* with the Arabic infinitive *mulk*, sovereignty.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, as will be evident throughout this study, the expression, [*X*] *al-samāwāt wa al-ard*, is a formulaic expression in the Qur'ān embodying divine kingdom. We thus read, *rabb*<sup>77</sup> *al-samāwāt wa al-ard*, “Lord of the heavens and the earth”. Likewise in Matthew, when speaking about God as the master of divine kingdom, Jesus explicitly includes the earth in the expression, *mārā dashmāyā wadar'ā*, “Lord/Master of the heavens and the earth”.<sup>78</sup> Ultimately, the above Qur'ānic formula and Matthew 11,25 likely originated from Hebrew scripture. This is explained in the Psalms, where it states for example, ‘The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it – you have founded them’.<sup>79</sup>

Still it remains striking that the Qur'ānic divine kingdom always encompasses both the heavens *and* the earth, whereas Matthew excludes the latter (save for Matthew 11,25). Perhaps this is so because the author of Matthew considered the heavens as the more significant component worthy of mention. Lüling suggests by etymological derivation that *smw*, literally “sky”, in the Semitic languages means, “that one which causes water” (i.e. rain).<sup>80</sup> The

<sup>74</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, p. 358.

<sup>75</sup> Katsh, *Judaism in Islam*, p. 96.

<sup>76</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, Q 6:75; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, Q 6:75; M. Plessner, EI<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “Mulk”.

<sup>77</sup> Whilst Jeffery and Lüling ultimately trace the Qur'ānic usage of *rabb* to Aramaic, each scholar derives its meaning differently. Jeffery prefers the more conventional meaning, “lord” or “master”. Cf. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, pp. 136-137. Lüling, on the other hand, prefers “leader” or even “archangel”. Cf. Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, pp. 72-73. The Qur'ānic use of *rabb*, however, most resembles that which Murray claims when speaking about the Aramaic term *rab baytā* (Arabic *rabb al-bayt*), “master of the house”. Cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 193-194; see also Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran*, p. 166.

<sup>78</sup> Matthew 11,25.

<sup>79</sup> Psalms 89,11. Cf. also Psalms 108,5; 135,6; Deuteronomy 10,14.

<sup>80</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, p. 460 n. 31.

great dependence of rural Near Eastern communities on rain may itself have been sufficient for the author of Matthew to express divine kingdom. On the other hand, perhaps his exclusion of the earth may be attributed to a verse in the Gospel of John where Jesus says, ‘my kingdom is not of this world’.<sup>81</sup> In other words, God’s kingdom includes all existence (the heavens and the earth), but Jesus’ share is limited to the heavens. This is critical. For the purpose of Matthew’s kingdom of heaven is to designate a religious community on earth such as a church, or at least the symbolic heavenly authority over such a community.<sup>82</sup> The divine kingdom of the Qur’ān on the other hand, is more basically the manifestation of God’s absolute possession, royal power, and authority.<sup>83</sup> It therefore also lacks the immediate apocalyptic connotation of Matthew and earlier Judeo-Christian texts. Therefore, whilst Matthew’s *malkūtā dashmāyā* and the Qur’ān’s *malakūt al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ* are philologically and textually related, they serve two relatively different purposes.

In another verse of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciple Peter: *lak etal qlīde dmalkūtā dashmāyā*, ‘I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven’.<sup>84</sup> It was rather common in the Semitic world, and therefore in Syro-Arabia, for keys to symbolize the “binding and loosening...of legal or moral authority”.<sup>85</sup> Matthew is no exception. The key (Syriac absolute *qlīd* or *iqīlīd*;<sup>86</sup> from Greek *kleis*) symbolizes “authority”, a concept that shall be discussed in more depth shortly. The use of keys in this manner, especially after the writing of Matthew, is carried on in Syriac by prolific fourth-century Syriac authors like Ephrem and Aphrahat. Its influence was even more far reaching, as it appears in the Qur’ān. For it states about God, *lahu maqālīd al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ*, ‘He possesses the keys of the heavens and the earth’.<sup>87</sup> Qur’ān interpreters, *mu’arrabāt* scholars, and western scholars, take *maqālīd* as an Arabic broken plural of *iqīlīd*.<sup>88</sup> By using the word *maqālīd*, as opposed

<sup>81</sup> John 18,36.

<sup>82</sup> Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 240-241.

<sup>83</sup> M. Plessner, s.v. “Mulk”, in *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

<sup>84</sup> Matthew 16,9.

<sup>85</sup> Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 182.

<sup>86</sup> J. Payne-Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 506.

<sup>87</sup> Qur’ān 39:63; 42:12.

<sup>88</sup> Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi’*, Q 39:63; Jawālīqī, *Mu’arrab*, pp. 68, 362; Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’ān*, p. 268.

to the standard Arabic word for keys, *mafātīḥ*,<sup>89</sup> the verse of the Qur'ān seems to be directly adopting Matthew's notion of "keys to the kingdom of heaven", but reading the plural, "the heavens and the earth". This also informs us about the difference in the meaning of each verse. In Matthew, the verse explicitly entrusts divine authority (symbolized by keys) to a man, the disciple Peter. This further agrees with another verse in Matthew, that Peter was the foundation, literally "rock", of the church.<sup>90</sup> The Qur'ān, in contrast and perhaps even in response to this Christian position, never explicitly grants the intermediacy of divine authority to any human being, but rather keeps it with God alone.<sup>91</sup>

In the Gospel of Matthew, the divine kingdom is to be inherited by those at God's right hand. It states, *yartū malkūtā da'ūdā*, 'they will Inherit the kingdom prepared'.<sup>92</sup> In this instance, the divine kingdom comes close to resembling a paradise – not unlike the paradise of the Qur'ān.<sup>93</sup> Yet the divine kingdom is not the only realm that is inherited in Matthew, so is the earth. It states, *ṭūbayhūn lamkikā dhānūn nertūn lar'ā*, 'blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth'.<sup>94</sup> This verse is one of the Beatitudes (from Latin *beatudo*, "happiness").<sup>95</sup> The other gospels never mention the inheritance of a kingdom or the earth, but rather "eternal life".<sup>96</sup> In spite of this, the actual interpretation of this Beatitude is immaterial. What is of more significance, is the trace(s) of it that we can find in the style of certain Qur'ānic verses.

Thus we read in the Qur'ān, *al-arḍ yarithuhā 'ibādī al-ṣāliḥūn*, 'the earth shall be inherited by My good servants'.<sup>97</sup> Although this Qur'ānic verse does not match Matthew's text as closely, it is from among those that Mingana considers related to the content of Matthew's Beatitude in terms of its sentence structure.<sup>98</sup> In other words, there is a semblance in ideas, which in this

<sup>89</sup> Ṭabarī makes this equation as well in his *Tafsīr*, Q 39:63.

<sup>90</sup> Matthew 16,18.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Qur'ān 55:33 and Matthew 28,18.

<sup>92</sup> Matthew 25:34.

<sup>93</sup> Qur'ān 7:49; 56:27-31, 90-91; compare with Matthew 2,26.

<sup>94</sup> Matthew 5,5.

<sup>95</sup> An alternate translation to the Beatitude style of writing is, 'happy are...', instead of 'blessed are...'

<sup>96</sup> Mark 10,17; Luke 10,25; 18,18.

<sup>97</sup> Qur'ān 21:105.

<sup>98</sup> Mingana, *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'ān*, pp. 91-93.

case goes back to the Hebrew Bible. For earlier in the verse, the Qur'ān acknowledges this maxim as coming from previous scripture (*dhikr*), in which case it may refer to the literature of the Prophets or Psalms.<sup>99</sup> For example Psalm 2,8 states, 'I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession'. Therefore, the earth, as a divinely gifted or inherited reward, is a motif of Hebrew scripture, one that was likely known by the authors of Matthew and the Qur'ān. What makes the Qur'ānic verse more closely related to that of Matthew (and less so the Psalms) is the common use of the root *yrt*, to inherit. The root *yrt* is used in the same manner in earlier Syro-Arabian inscription will-testimonies left by kings and nobles for their heirs.<sup>100</sup> This is primarily because many occurrences of the root *yrt* are used in conjunction with the name of a god and otherworldly phrases like, *lyomat 'ālmā*, 'till eternity'. Another trace of Matthew's Beatitude occurs in the Qur'ān as follows, *tūbā lahum*, 'blessed are they'.<sup>101</sup> Although the root *tyb*, from which *tūbā* comes from, is common to the Semitic languages in general,<sup>102</sup> two features of this Qur'ānic verse compel us to draw its connection with Matthew's Beatitudes. One is the final long *ā* vowel (*alif maqṣūrah*), which corresponds to the Aramaic emphatic or definite state (functioning like the Arabic definite article, *al-*) and which is otherwise foreign to Arabic. The other indicator is *tūbā's* conjunction with *lahum*, which is equivalent to the Aramaic of Matthew, *tūbayhūn*, 'blessed are they'.

At another juncture, albeit more subtly, the use of light as another manifestation of the divine or divine kingdom, appears to relate the text of Matthew to the Qur'ān. The "light verse" of the Qur'ān states: *allāh nūr al-samāwāt wa al-ard*, 'God is the light of the heavens and the earth'.<sup>103</sup> Certainly, the doctrine of God as light is extremely common in ancient Semitic, Iranian and Hellenistic religious thought.<sup>104</sup> It is even used in *jāhili*

<sup>99</sup> Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, Q 21:105.

<sup>100</sup> Drijvers and Healy, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osroene*, pp. 151, 163, 178.

<sup>101</sup> Qur'ān 13:29.

<sup>102</sup> Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, p. 206.

<sup>103</sup> Qur'ān 24:35a.

<sup>104</sup> Tj. de Boer, s.v. "Nūr", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.); Chaim Rabin, 'Islam and the Qumran Sect', in *The Qur'ān: Style and Contents*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Aldershot, Brookfield, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate, 2001), p. 3; Han Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co, 1966), p. 205.

poetry.<sup>105</sup> However, two factors may relate this Qur'ānic passage to a Judeo-Christian source. One of these is that in Matthew, Jesus publicly tells his followers in the 'sermon on the mount,' *antūn nūhreh d'ālmā*, 'you are the light of the world'.<sup>106</sup> In the Gospel of John similarly, Jesus states, 'I am the light of the world'.<sup>107</sup> As in the previous instance where Jesus delegates heavenly authority symbolized in the key to human beings, and the author of the Qur'ān seemingly responds by reclaiming the keys as the possession of God alone, this verse ostensibly delegates a divine manifestation (light) onto mankind or even Jesus himself. In a like manner, Muhammad most likely found this proximity of mankind with the divine problematic once again. Thus, besides the similarity in wording between, "light of the heavens and the earth" and "light of the world", there appears to be a conscious effort on the part of Muhammad's mission to "correct" the Christian verse in Matthew by distancing God from mankind/Jesus. This corrective tendency is certainly not unheard of in the Qur'ān.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, the remainder of the light verse carries on magnifying and distancing God,

'His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as if it were a brilliant star that is being kindled by a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western. Its oil would light up, even though no fire touched it. Light upon light. God guides to His light whomsoever He wishes. And Allah narrates parables for people. And Allah is knowledgeable about everything.'<sup>109</sup>

The other factor that lends the lamp-light verse as distinctly Judeo-Christian, and possibly related to Matthew (although John remains a possibility,

<sup>105</sup> Nawāl Zarzūr, *Muḥjam alfāz al-qiyam al-akhlāqīyah wa-taṭawwuruhā al-dalālī bayna lughat al-shi'r al-jāhili wa-lughat al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, 2001), p.130.

<sup>106</sup> Matthew 5,14. The Qur'ān does, of course, make use elsewhere of the Aramaic 'ālmā, namely as 'ālamīn which is derived from the Aramaic plural absolute noun 'ālmīn. Most significant is the phrase *rabb al-'ālamīn*, 'Lord of the world/universe'. Cf. Qur'ān 1:2; 2:131; etc. Cf. also Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, pp. 209-210.

<sup>107</sup> John 8,12; 9,5.

<sup>108</sup> Certainly the Qur'ān is quite critical of Christian doctrine, especially because of its fondness to intimately associate God with the earth, mankind, and Jesus. Cf. Qur'ān 2:116; 5:116; 72:3; etc.

<sup>109</sup> Qur'ān 24:35.

though written later than Matthew), occurs in the immediate subsequent verse, Qur'ān 24:36. It states:

‘[It shines] within buildings which God has allowed to be erected and in which His Name is commemorated. Therein He is glorified mornings and evenings – by men who are neither distracted by commerce or business from the remembrance of God, nor from establishing prayer or giving charity.’

These “buildings” might well be churches as some have suggested,<sup>110</sup> or perhaps given the tenets of remembrance, morning and nightly prayer (vigils?), and charity, some other non-pagan Judeo-Christian house of worship.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore in 2 Samuel, “the house for God’s name” is established to forever bless David’s kingdom,<sup>112</sup> which is a divine kingdom mandated by God unto Israel.<sup>113</sup> Thus the lamplight verse of the Qur’ān, and the related subsequent passage concerning buildings of remembrance, whilst augmenting the verse in Matthew, ultimately hearkens back to early Israelite notions of divine blessing and divine kingdom.

While some of the discussed intricacies like church, community, delegation of authority, and apocalypticism, set Matthew’s notion of divine kingdom apart from that of the Qur’ān, there is complete agreement regarding the nature of divine authority. As in the other Synoptic Gospels, Matthew uses the word *shūltānā* generally to mean “authority”.<sup>114</sup> Like Arabic *sultān*, this authority can be secular<sup>115</sup> or religious, human or divine.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, most instances in which authority is mentioned in the Qur’ān denote divine authority and the early interpreters customarily associated it with “proof” or “argument”.<sup>117</sup> It is consequently a mysterious force, usually signifying ‘the moral or magical authority supported by proofs or miracles

<sup>110</sup> Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, p. 265.

<sup>111</sup> Luke 13,35.

<sup>112</sup> 2 Samuel 7,13.26.

<sup>113</sup> 2 Samuel 22,51.

<sup>114</sup> Matthew 9,6.8; 10,1; 21,23-24.26; 28,18. Compare Mark 2,10; 10,42; Luke 4,6; 22,25; etc.

<sup>115</sup> A different form of the word is used this way in 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE Edessan inscriptions. Cf. Drijvers and Healy, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions*, pp. 232-235.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Qur’ān 3:151; 4:153; 12:40; 55:33; etc.

<sup>117</sup> W. Kadi, s.v. “Authority”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*.



which afford the right to make a statement of religious import'.<sup>118</sup> In any case, the Arabic *sultān* is etymologically derived from Aramaic *shūltānā*.<sup>119</sup> The earliest Muslim interpreters differed regarding its meaning, whether it could mean, "permission," "sovereignty", or something else.<sup>120</sup> Another view is advanced by Lüling, who equates the term *sultān* with an actual person. He takes this a step further and discerns in it traces of Jewish and Christian angelology.<sup>121</sup> This he does especially regarding Qur'ān 30:35, 'or have We sent down upon them an authority/power'. This becomes even more intriguing and compelling should we find such a statement in the Gospel of Matthew. In due course, Matthew 9,8 states, *shbahū lalāhā dyahb shūltānā dak hānā labnaynāshā*, 'they glorified God who had given such authority to human beings'. In a similar manner, Matthew and the Qur'ān consider authority as a power that is endowed by God unto mankind.

Consequently, in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Jesus' followers frequently glorify God (*shbahū lalāhā*),<sup>122</sup> who is the source of all authority. The same is the case in the Qur'ān, where dozens of times *sabbah* or *subhān* are mentioned, all of which exclusively invoke God. The phrase *sabbah/ yusabbih lillāh ma fī al-samāwāt wa (mā fī) al-ard*, 'all that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God', occurs 6 times in the Qur'ān. It follows the traditional Qur'ānic formula for divine kingdom, namely *[X] al-samāwāt wa al-ard*. The phrase *subhān allāh* occurs 9 times. However, it is worth mentioning that as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the root *sbh* is attested in ancient north Arabian Lihyanite.<sup>123</sup> It occurs in *jāhili* poetry as well, and conveys the meaning of "speed" and then "distance".<sup>124</sup> Nawāl Zarzūr makes only the most cursory mention of the evolution of *sbh* into the normative religious distancing of God from man;<sup>125</sup> she does not mention how this

<sup>118</sup> C.E. Bosworth and J.H. Kramers, s.v. "Sultān", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

<sup>119</sup> Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, p. 176.

<sup>120</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, Q 3:151.

<sup>121</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, p. 73.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Matthew 15,31; Luke 2,20.

<sup>123</sup> Drijvers and Healy, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions*, pp. 140, 193. One attestation is dated 7 CE, the other 73 CE.

<sup>124</sup> Zarzūr, *Mu'jam alfāz al-qiyam al-akhlāqīyah*, p. 206.

<sup>125</sup> For more information on this see D. Gimaret, s.v. "Subhān", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

shift occurs.<sup>126</sup> In addition, the root *sbḥ* is attested as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, in old pagan Aramaic inscriptions as *yeshbah*, “give praise” (*i.e.* glorify) to God.<sup>127</sup> In discerning two distinct meanings to the root *sbḥ*, an Arabian one (speed, distance) and an Aramaic one (glorifying), the Qur’ānic use of the word *sabbah/yusabbih/subḥān* most closely resembles the Aramaic usage.<sup>128</sup> The sentence, ‘all that is in the heavens and the earth glorify God’, therefore may indeed be related to Matthew by virtue of its vocabulary and context of divine kingdom, although it is impossible to be certain in this instance. Given the evidence of the inscriptions, it may not be exclusively Christian, or even Judeo-Christian for that matter.

Elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew, we read about Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan river. Jesus looks skyward and, *iptahū leh shmaya*, ‘the heavens were opened up for him’.<sup>129</sup> That the opening of the heavens relates to divine kingdom is not explicit in this verse. It seems rather to be a precursor to the next time the heavens are opened for Jesus in his second coming. This is narrated in the Gospel of John, where Jesus descends through the opened heavens amidst throngs of angels and God Himself.<sup>130</sup> The wording (namely the passive voice of the verb *pth*, “to be opened,” + *shmayā*) and apocalyptic connotation of both Matthew and John is made evident in a verse of the Qur’ān. Correspondingly we read, *futihat al-samā’ fakānat abwāban*, ‘the heavens were opened as doorways’.<sup>131</sup> The first part of the verse matches Matthew’s wording precisely, the passive voice of the verb *ftḥ* + *al-samā’*. In addition, the Qur’ān is here narrating apocalyptic events, which Lüling sees as a part of earlier Christian content. In his analysis, he deduces that Qur’ān 78:18-19 is part of an “original” Christian strophe.<sup>132</sup> If indeed this is the case, this strophe may have likely originated from the Gospel of Matthew. Yet another passage in the Qur’ān states concerning the wretched who reject

<sup>126</sup> Zarzūr, *Mu’jam alfāz al-qiyam al-akblāqīyah*, p. 207.

<sup>127</sup> al-Ḥasan, *Qirā’āt li katābāt lihyāniyyah*, p. 430.

<sup>128</sup> Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’ān*, pp. 161-162; Mingana, *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Qur’ān*, p. 86; Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, p. 51.

<sup>129</sup> Matthew 3,16. Compare with Mark 1,10; Luke 3,21. Mark’s wording is more noticeably different from that of Matthew and Luke.

<sup>130</sup> John 1,51.

<sup>131</sup> Qur’ān 78:19.

<sup>132</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, pp. 419-420.

God's signs, *lā tufattaḥ lahum abwāb al-samā'*,<sup>133</sup> 'the doorways of heaven will not be opened for them'.<sup>134</sup> The interpreters understood this verse to mean either, that a wretched one's deeds would not be accepted by God, or that the soul of a wretched one does not enter paradise.<sup>135</sup> Lüling prefers the latter interpretation and likens it to various passages of the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>136</sup> Still we must keep in mind once again that Hebrew scripture might be ultimately responsible for this semblance.<sup>137</sup> However, that this verse (Qur'ān 7:40) seems to emerge from a Christian background, and perhaps Matthew, is made eminently clearer by what follows it, 'and they will not enter paradise (*al-jannah*) until the camel goes through the eye of a needle'.<sup>138</sup> This is an almost word for word reproduction of its Christian counterpart, '...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God'.<sup>139</sup>

One of the most salient features of divine kingdom is the notion of divine judgment. Moreover, this takes an apocalyptic form in Matthew's *yawmā ddīnā*, 'the day of judgment'.<sup>140</sup> This notion is attested in Hebrew scripture,<sup>141</sup> from whence it made its way into Matthew's Gospel. Consequently, whether via Matthew or other Judeo-Christian sources, the phrase *yawm al-dīn*<sup>142</sup> occurs in the Qur'ān 13 times as well. However, it is completely absent from the other gospels. As such, this serves as yet another reason why the content and authorship of the Qur'ān are more in line with the Gospel of Matthew, to the exclusion of the other gospels. The use of *dīn*, in and of itself, in the Qur'ān is rather diverse. Therefore, the Qur'ānic phrase *yawm al-dīn* has been interpreted differently. Some Qur'ānic inter-

<sup>133</sup> It is interesting to note how this verse relates to Qur'ān 55:33, 'Oh throngs of jinn and mankind... you will not penetrate [the heavens] except with authority (*sulṭān*)'.

<sup>134</sup> Qur'ān 7:40.

<sup>135</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, Q 7:40; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, Q 7:40.

<sup>136</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, p. 110. He cites Matthew 19,24 and the parallels in Mark 10,25 and Luke 18,25.

<sup>137</sup> Malachi 3,10 states, 'See if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.'

<sup>138</sup> Qur'ān 7:40.

<sup>139</sup> Matthew 19,24 parr. Mark 10,25; Luke 18,25.

<sup>140</sup> Matthew 11,22-24; 12,36.

<sup>141</sup> Psalms 81,4-5; Malachi 4,1-2. Cf. also indirect references in Isaiah 66,15-17.

<sup>142</sup> Qur'ān 1:4; 15:35; 26:82; etc.

preters believed it to mean, ‘the day of reward (*jazāʾ*)’.<sup>143</sup> Other scholars like Gaudefroy-Demombynes define the phrase as ‘the day when God gives a direction to each human being’.<sup>144</sup> Some claim that the word is a merging of two similar late antique terms, the Hebrew-Aramaic *dīn*, “judgment,” and the Pahlavi *den*, “religion”.<sup>145</sup> Still others have traced its origin to three sources, adding the Arabic *dayn*, “debt”.<sup>146</sup> That the Qurʾānic *yawm al-dīn*, however, was inherited from Aramaic is clear, and that it was acquired from the Syriac Gospel of Matthew, is likely.<sup>147</sup> It may have been particularly appealing and relevant to Qurʾānic vision for its preservation of what Hodgson calls the late-antique “mercantile impulse”, that was latent in Syro-Arabia; this is namely “justice and populism”.<sup>148</sup> There is another similarity in the way in which the day of judgment is perceived in both Matthew and the Qurʾān. Both perceive it as a day of horrific punishment, yet also a day of promise, and one in which God shows favor.<sup>149</sup>

Divine judgment brings about the apocalypse – the end of the world. In relation to divine kingdom and the end of the world, Matthew writes, ‘this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations (*li sahdūtā dkuhūn ʾamme*); and then the end will come’.<sup>150</sup> Again, this passage is unique to Matthew and not present in the other Gospels. Nevertheless, once the divine kingdom has covered all the nations of the world, the end will come. In the Qurʾān we read, ‘Thus, We have made of you a balanced nation, that you might be witnesses over (all) people (*li-takūnū shuhadāʾ ʾalā al-nās*)’.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, Ṭabarī and Qurṭubī promptly interpret this act of testimony as occurring on the day of resurrection (*yawm al-qiyaamah*), which represents ‘the end.’ Ubayy b. Kaʿb’s (d. c. 29 AH/649 CE) Qurʾān codex makes this duality of ‘testimony’ and ‘the end’ explicit. His version states, *li-takūnū shuhadāʾ ʾalā al-nās yawm al-*

<sup>143</sup> Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, Q 1:4.

<sup>144</sup> L. Gardet, s.v. “Dīn”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.); I. Hasson, s.v. “Last Judgment”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*.

<sup>145</sup> Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*, pp. 132-133; P. Brodeur, s.v. “Religion”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*.

<sup>146</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

<sup>147</sup> Mingana, *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kurʾān*, p. 85.

<sup>148</sup> Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1, pp. 117, 130.

<sup>149</sup> Lūling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, pp. 201, 262, 323.

<sup>150</sup> Matthew 24,24.

<sup>151</sup> Qurʾān 2:143; 22:78.

*qiyāmah*, 'that you might be witnesses over (all) people on the day of resurrection'.<sup>152</sup> It would seem therefore that Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, and other Qur'ān interpreters, reproduce Ubayy b. Ka'b's passage of the Qur'ān, which is absent from 'Uthmān's official codex of the Qur'ān, and which resonates most with the Gospel of Matthew.

This is not the only place where widespread testimony occurs in both the Gospels and the Qur'ān. In Matthew it is said,

'Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets (*msahdīn antūn 'al nafshkūn dabnayā antūn daqṭalū lanbīye*) ... How can you escape being sentenced to hell?'<sup>153</sup>

Sinaiticus has *mawdīn antūn 'al nafshkūn*, 'you confess against yourselves'.<sup>154</sup> This passage is unique to Matthew, although Luke's Gospel contains oblique parallels.<sup>155</sup> Two phrases in the Qur'ān appear to reproduce the content in Matthew. One of these occurs as follows, 'and so they testified against themselves (*shahidū 'alā 'anfusihim*) that they were rejecters of truth (*kāfirūn*)'.<sup>156</sup> The other phrase occurs in the following verse:

'Verily, as for those who deny the signs of God, and kill the prophets (*yaqtulūn al-nabiyīn*) without just cause, and kill people who command good, announce unto them an excruciating punishment.'<sup>157</sup>

In addition to the phrases *shahidū 'alā 'anfusihim* and *yaqtulūn al-nabiyīn* which clearly seem to replicate *msahdīn antūn 'al nafshkūn dabnaya antūn daqṭalū lanbīye*, there is another attribute that points to an origin in Matthew. This is namely the parallel at the end of Matthew 23,31, 'how can you escape being sentenced to hell', and Qur'ān 3:21, 'announce unto them an

<sup>152</sup> Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān*, p. 120.

<sup>153</sup> Matthew 23,31.

<sup>154</sup> Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels*, 1, p. 361.

<sup>155</sup> Matthew 23,34-37 and par. Luke 11,49 ('Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute'); and 13,34 ('Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!').

<sup>156</sup> Qur'ān 6:130; 7:37.

<sup>157</sup> Qur'ān 3:21. Cf. also Qur'ān 3:181; 4:155.

excruciating punishment'. The authors of Matthew and the Qur'ān both aim to rebuke the Jews in such verses. Furthermore it is from Hebrew Scripture itself that "testifying against oneself" and "killing the prophets" conceptually first arises.<sup>158</sup>

Apocalyptic imagery is part of divine kingdom, insofar as it ushers it in. Such imagery and language is common to the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and the Qur'ān. Consequently, the final moment of earthly existence is sometimes called "the last day", "the day" or "the hour". In Matthew we read: *'al yawmā deyn hu w'al sha'tā hay anāsh lā īda' āplā malāke dashmayā elā ābā blahūd*, 'but about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven,<sup>159</sup> but only the Father'.<sup>160</sup> The verse is unique to Matthew amongst the Gospels, save another oblique reference in Luke.<sup>161</sup> Likewise in the Qur'ān, it states: *yas'aluk al-nās 'an al-sā'ah qul innamā 'ilmuhā 'ind 'allāh*, 'they ask you about the hour, say verily its knowledge is with God'.<sup>162</sup> Aside from the apparent parallels in the texts, three more subtle relationships can be noted. One is that Matthew's passage reveals that the angels lack the knowledge of the hour. This seems to be related to the Qur'ānic passage elsewhere that emphasizes the limited knowledge of angels.<sup>163</sup> Secondly the use of *deyn* in Aramaic as a particle of contrast meaning "but," "however", is preserved in Arabic *innamā*. Thirdly, the Qur'ān's verse follows the pattern found elsewhere, 'they will ask you about... Say...'. Such verses are traditionally questions people asked Muhammad, to which he responded to via these Qur'ānic passages.<sup>164</sup> However, Qur'ān 33:63 seems more likely to have been a reproduction of Matthew 24,36. Given that the verses of both texts seem to be written in the style of didactic Jewish tales like the *haggadah*,<sup>165</sup> the knowledge of the final hour seems likely to preserve a *topos* of Jewish-style wisdom.

<sup>158</sup> Deuteronomy 31,19; Nehemiah 9,26.

<sup>159</sup> The NRSV adds 'nor the Son' which is not present in the Syriac versions.

<sup>160</sup> Matthew 24,36.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Luke 12,46, 'The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and put him with the unfaithful'.

<sup>162</sup> Qur'ān 33:63.

<sup>163</sup> Qur'ān 2:30-31.

<sup>164</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, Q 2:215; Q 33:63.

<sup>165</sup> Katsh, *Judaism in Islam*, p. 28.

The last hour, or kingdom of heaven for that matter, are not the only things ushered in once Jesus appears and is killed; so too is the apocalypse. Therefore, in the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus dies on the cross, devastation of apocalyptic magnitude takes place.

'At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.'<sup>166</sup>

Parts of this scene are replicated in the apocalyptic imagery of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān's chapter 101, entitled *al-qāri'ah*, was understood by the Qur'ān interpreters generally to connote the upheaval of the apocalypse.<sup>167</sup> It is commonly translated as "the calamity" (Pickthall), "the day of noise and clamor" (Yusuf Ali), and other similar epithets. But the root *qr'* may well indeed be understood as the Aramaic word, "to rend, to tear in two".<sup>168</sup> This would allow us to translate *al-qāri'ah* as "the rending one", an image that corresponds to the scene in Matthew. Other apocalyptic verses of the Qur'ān correspond to this scene as well, such as those that mention the sky and moon being torn/split in two.<sup>169</sup> Yet other passages state, 'when the earth is shaken its (final) quake',<sup>170</sup> and 'when the graves are overturned'.<sup>171</sup> This is aside from the numerous references the Qur'ān makes to the resurrection of the dead.<sup>172</sup> In general, Lüling makes a compelling case when suggesting that such verses are related to the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>173</sup> However, references to the quaking of the earth, splitting of the sky, and resurrecting of those in the grave do occur in the Hebrew Bible as well.<sup>174</sup> Thus it remains a possibility that such apocalyptic language made its way into the Qur'ān without passing through Matthew at all, but through a different source.

<sup>166</sup> Matthew 27,51-52. In comparison, Luke 23,45 reads, 'While the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two'.

<sup>167</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, Q 101:1; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, Q 101:1.

<sup>168</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>169</sup> Qur'ān 19:90; 54:1; 84:1.

<sup>170</sup> Qur'ān 99:1.

<sup>171</sup> Qur'ān 82:4.

<sup>172</sup> Qur'ān 17:49-50, 98; 23:16; etc.

<sup>173</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, p. 194.

<sup>174</sup> Job 26,11; Psalms 75,3; Isaiah 62,4; Nahum 1,5; Isaiah 24,19; 1 Samuel 2,6; etc.

Lastly, in Matthew we find another reference to the nature of divine kingdom, also mentioned in the other Synoptic Gospels. Jesus says,

‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed (*fardtā dkhardlā*) ... it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’<sup>175</sup>

Later in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus similarly says,

‘For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed (*fardtā dkhardlā*), you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.’<sup>176</sup>

In the former example, clearly the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual, non-physical entity. In conjunction with the latter example, the kingdom of heaven represents a party of the faithful. The mustard seed in Matthew therefore, embodies the crux of faith and membership in the divine kingdom. In the Qur’ān however, the mustard seed is used to exhibit the absolute microscopic reach of God. This phrase occurs twice in the Qur’ān.

‘We shall set up the just scales for the day of judgment, and no soul will be prejudiced at all, and if there were the weight of a mustard seed (*mithqāl ḥabbah min khardal*), We would extract it; and enough are We as a jury.’<sup>177</sup>

The second occurrence of the phrase follows.

‘If there be the weight of a mustard seed (*mithqāl ḥabbah min khardal*) found within in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth, God would extract it; verily God knows secrets and is well-informed.’<sup>178</sup>

The use of *mithqāl ḥabbah min khardal*, ‘the weight of a mustard seed’ matches that of *mithqāl dharrāh*, ‘the weight of an atom/particle’, which is

<sup>175</sup> Matthew 13,31-32. Cf. Mark 4,31; Luke 13,19.

<sup>176</sup> Matthew 17,20. Cf. Luke 17,6, where one commands a tree (not this mountain) to move.

<sup>177</sup> Qur’ān 21:47.

<sup>178</sup> Qur’ān 31:16.



used elsewhere in the Qur'ān most often signifying God's equitable justice.<sup>179</sup> There exists a one to one correspondence of *fardtā dkhardlā* and *ḥabbah min khardal*, both of which literally mean, 'a seed/grain of mustard'. And other than the parallels in the Synoptics, this phrase is not explicitly attested in earlier Hebrew Scripture. Nonetheless, certain passages of Hebrew Scripture speak of planting seeds and bearing great fruit.<sup>180</sup> If the mustard seed is indeed a Jewish concept that was incorporated into the Gospels, then it is most likely to have originally come from the most "Jewish" Gospel – Matthew. Jeffery seems to agree with this derivation.<sup>181</sup>

Several other common passages, too numerous and less relevant for the present discussion of divine kingdom, exist between Syriac Matthew and the Qur'ān. Along with the passages discussed above a complete glossary of such phrases, in Syriac and Arabic script, are appended at the end of this text (Appendices C and D).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This essay has focused on discussing the relationship of the Qur'ān to the Syriac Gospel of Matthew, specifically under the over-arching guise of divine kingdom. It is impossible to speak of the Qur'ān's audience specifically or the setting of the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah* generally without addressing Matthew's Gospel, especially insofar as Matthew represents a "Christian" Mosaic or even Judeo-Christian presence. I hope to research this matter further in forthcoming studies.

The implications of our present research, nonetheless, demand some manner of conjecture regarding Qur'ānic origins. Consequently, the spectrum of scholars who have theorized the impact of Christianity on the Qur'ān is sizeable. Lüling's claim that pre-Islamic central Arabians of the Peninsula were Christians and that ancient Arabian Christian hymns made up the core of original Arabic scripture – the *Ur-Qur'ān* – represents one extreme in such a spectrum. It is certainly clear that several Arabian tribes did profess Christianity, at least nominally, but to say with complete certainty that Muhammad or his tribe were formally Christians seems to be far

<sup>179</sup> Qur'ān 4:40; 34:22.

<sup>180</sup> Daniel 4,10-12.20-22; Ezekiel 17,22-23; 31,1-9.

<sup>181</sup> Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, p.122.

fetched, at least unless further evidence comes to light. For precisely this reason other scholars who verged on agreeing with Lüling's radical views, most notably Gerald Hawting, never explicitly did so.<sup>182</sup> That Muhammad was a *hanīf* or of Arabian pagan origin is much more likely.<sup>183</sup> Bell makes no single conclusive statement about the Qur'ān and its relationship to Christianity in his study. However, he notes that Arabian tribes, indeed those that were nominally Christian, had only a loose grasp of Christianity.<sup>184</sup> His subsequent downplaying of the Christian content in Arabian Christian odes and poetry further contrasts Lüling's reliance on them as the fundamental Christian source of the Qur'ān.<sup>185</sup> Luxenberg, through his primarily philological study, concludes that the abundance of Aramaic loanwords (which he ultimately attributes to Christian prayer lectionaries) in the Qur'ān exhibits the mixed Aramaic-Arabic dialect (*Mischsprache*) of the Hijaz.<sup>186</sup> This statement seems somewhat too simplistic. Perhaps a more likely statement would posit the following: in view of the sizable Christian audience of the Qur'ān, the long-standing ancient relationships between the Aramaean and Arabian people of Syro-Arabia, and the later influx of ambient Judeo-Christian expressions enriched the vocabulary of the Qur'ān with technical-religious terminology which was mainly Aramaic. Thus Mingana estimates that about 70% of the Qur'ān's foreign vocabulary is Aramaic.<sup>187</sup> Although given the long history of Aramaic in Arabia, from the earliest Nabataean age till the revelation of the Qur'ān (approximately 1000 years), one could scarcely call Aramaic "foreign" to Arabia at all. Furthermore, it would behoove many an academic to posit more accurately that the Aramaic and Arabic served as grades of dialects (Appendix E), open to cultural-linguistic free-flowing exchanges between communities. This interpretation need not be problematic in the least.<sup>188</sup> That being said, the case is put forth that between the Aramaic and Arabian continuum, there existed ever-more degrees

<sup>182</sup> Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>183</sup> Hishām Al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-aṣṅām*, trans. Nabih A. Faris (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 16-17.

<sup>184</sup> Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-51, 53.

<sup>186</sup> Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran*, p. 299.

<sup>187</sup> Mingana, *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'ān*, p. 80.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Salikoko Mufwene, *The Ecology of Language Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

of transitional dialects. One need not strain oneself to find examples of this phenomenon, such as the common development of *ā* to *ō* vowels, or even sporadic *ṣ* to *z* changes in North-West Semitic (Hebrew, Aramaic, etc) and Arabian dialects like that of Kalb as well.<sup>189</sup> This, of course, is an innately linguistic phenomenon, and not dictated solely by the presence of Jewish or Christian sources. This too should be considered. Trimmingham, aside from enumerating several Arab-speaking tribes that adopted Aramaic upon resettling elsewhere, generally believes that Muhammad was influenced by Christians in writing the Qur'ān in the Medinan period.<sup>190</sup> However, to think of Muhammad as intimately familiar with Christian sources *and* subsequently authoring the Qur'ān would appear both simplistic and erroneous. It is David Cook who shows convincingly that the Arabian environment, even as late as the first two centuries after the *hijrah*, was overwhelmingly Christian. But he adds that in the Hijaz, 'Christianity was known by repute, but not intimately'.<sup>191</sup> It is ultimately this position, that Christianity in north Arabia was ambient but not dominant, that is most realistic.

The diverse scholarly perspectives, nevertheless, complement one another to some degree insofar as they emphasize the different historic, linguistic, and other dimensions pertaining to the discourse of Christian influences and the Qur'ān. We should refrain, however, from making radical conclusions. We should also distinguish between Christianity, as a native Syro-Arabian phenomenon, from the Hellenistic<sup>192</sup> or at least "Orthodox" brand. Orthodox Christianity was composed of those churches and sects that accepted the creeds of the church councils under the Roman Empire: Nicaea (325 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE), both geographically estranged from the Syro-Arabian populace of which Jesus was part of centuries earlier. For he was an "Aramaean peasant", whose Galilean ministry involved, above all, Arab peasantry rather than Hellenized elites.<sup>193</sup> The clear and prominent doctrine of divine kingdom in Matthew reflects the reformist inclinations

<sup>189</sup> Rabin, *Ancient West-Arabian*, pp. 107, 111, 195.

<sup>190</sup> Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, p. 259.

<sup>191</sup> David Cook, *The Beginnings of Islam in Syria during the Umayyad Period* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2002), pp. 64-65.

<sup>192</sup> Unlike many areas of the Mediterranean, Hellenism had extremely little effect on most of classical Syro-Arabia. For more on this see Teixidor, *The Pantheon of Palmyra*, p. 79; Healey, *The Religion of the Nabataeans*, p. 71.

<sup>193</sup> Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, pp. 8, 42.

of Jesus that were explicitly antithetical to worldly empire, wealth,<sup>194</sup> and oppressive administration.<sup>195</sup> Divine kingdom represented one of many Semitic cultural symbols implemented by Jesus<sup>196</sup> that, above all, extricated the populace from the repression of the physical world to a world of religious and spiritual authority. This produced varying theologies in the Near East and, by extension, Syro-Arabia. Such theologies not only included varieties of Christology,<sup>197</sup> but also ones of stern monotheism styled after Hebrew Scripture adopted by Matthew and the Qur'ān, where God was 'the Lord of the heavens and the earth.'

Yet Matthew's Gospel is quite unique in another respect. For it was both widespread in Syro-Arabia and the Mediterranean, and (ironically for that precise reason) firmly established in the earliest Canons of the Greek Church. This is most exceptional. Most of the Christian literature that influenced critical passages of the Qur'ān were not the celebrated letters of Paul, Clement, or Ignatius, but rather apocryphal, heretical, if not altogether obscure Syro-Arabian sources that were marginal in the Greco-Roman world. These include *the Infancy Gospel of Thomas*,<sup>198</sup> *Protovangelium of James*,<sup>199</sup> *the Apocalypse of Peter*,<sup>200</sup> local Arabic Christian traditions, and other such modest sources. If we are to call this myriad of non-canonical, non-Orthodox, apocryphal, and local Syro-Arabian sources "Christian", then indeed the Qur'ān was part and parcel of a Christian milieu. However, the more "orthodox" doctrines of Christianity, particularly the doctrine of the Trinity, dictated primarily by the councils of Nicea and Chalcedon, severely repulsed Muhammad and furthermore did not fit within the Qur'ānic vision of strict monotheism, which clearly preferred various ambient "un-orthodox" alternative Christian positions regarding Jesus' nature and being.<sup>201</sup> The peasant and nomadic Syro-Arabian culture, and even that

<sup>194</sup> Matthew 19,23.

<sup>195</sup> Mark 12,17.

<sup>196</sup> Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 346.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Qur'ān 2:261.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Qur'ān 3:35-36; 19:19.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Qur'ān 4:157.

<sup>201</sup> Several unorthodox Christian doctrines are manifested in the Qur'ān, such as Jesus' infancy traditions (19:29-31), Doceticism (3:55; 4:157), Christ's sole human nature (3:59; 5:116), Christ styled as a Hebrew prophet (2:87), and a pronounced anti-Trinitarian stance (4:171; 5:73). Therefore it is little surprise that some seventh-century

of Egypt in great measure,<sup>202</sup> was simply incompatible with the imported Hellenistic one,<sup>203</sup> especially once it dominated all of Christian doctrine and canon. In addition, what would become Orthodox Christianity was predominantly limited to select urban centers of Syro-Arabia, such as Antioch, Jerusalem and some coastal cities of Palestine<sup>204</sup> – major Mediterranean metropolises nearer to Constantinople and Rome. Non-Orthodox Christian groups like the Monophysites were far more widespread in the deserts and countryside of Syro-Arabia. Their literature consisted of more reticent Syriac writing, not the more fashionable Greek. Their ecclesiastical organization was weaker and fragmented, as would be probably be most conducive to Arabian tribes and nations. The Qur'ān's audience, and Muhammad himself, may have been most familiar with this branch of Christianity.<sup>205</sup>

Still, even Syro-Arabian Christianity was not the single or dominant component of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān was as inclined, if not more so, to incorporate expressions from Jewish sources and laws into the Qur'ān as Christian ones, especially during the Medinan period. These too represent a myriad of sources, and perhaps Judaisms. Not least amongst such sources that influenced the Qur'ān are canonical works of the Hebrew Bible (especially the legal books of the Torah, the Psalms, and the Prophets) and the Talmudic literature. Still other, lesser, apocryphal Jewish sources that are find echoes in the Qur'ān are *Enoch*,<sup>206</sup> *Jubilees*,<sup>207</sup> and sources from Qumran.<sup>208</sup> Far beyond the reach of Constantinople and Rome, it was almost exclusively the Ethiopians of Axum (who were evangelizing Arabia as late as the fifth century<sup>209</sup>), Essenes of Qumran, and pre-Islamic Syro-

Syrian Christian Churches first perceived the Arab-Muslim conquerors as Christian heretics, such as the Arians. Cf. Daniel Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The Heresy of the Ishmaelites* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), p. 26. The very fact that John of Damascus (d. 749) considers Islam a “heresy” may reflect this as well.

<sup>202</sup> The theological and even commonplace scuffles between the Coptic populace and Greek Orthodox colonials is most evident in Severus b. al-Muqaffa', *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, ed. B. Evetts (Paris, 1903).

<sup>203</sup> Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>204</sup> Cook, *The Beginnings of Islam in Syria during the Umayyad Period*, p. 69.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Qur'ān 15:39; 38:82.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Qur'ān 2:102. Also *tafsirs* of Qur'ān 5:27-31, especially b. Kathīr.

<sup>208</sup> Rabin, 'Islam and the Qumran Sect', p. 200.

<sup>209</sup> Stuart Munro-Hay, *Axum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 209.

Arabians who were familiar with these texts. This may in turn explain why the Gospel of Matthew, with its clearly Mosaic and Rabbinical style, from all the books of the New Testament, most resembles the Qur'ān.

The notions of divine kingdom, particularly the Qur'ānic phraseology and references to '[X] of the heavens and the earth', the keys of the heavens, divine inheritance, divine authority, and divine judgment, are indirect echoes of passages in Matthew that the Qur'ān picked up, most likely over centuries of proselytizing by Syriac speaking churches and groups. In employing such verses the Qur'ān was implementing the technical and religious terminology of its day and locality, which was principally Aramaic. Therefore, this Aramaic vocabulary, and Matthew's notions of divine kingdom, had seeped into the Qur'ānic milieu and Muhammad's community long before either of them existed.<sup>210</sup> As a result, it becomes hard to avoid the fact that not just Aramaic, but Syro-Arabian Christianity too was a phenomenon local to late antique, pre-Islamic Hijaz. Muhammad was in all probability not a Christian, but rather, as other Arab nobles, knowledgeable of Syro-Arabian Christianity, which in contrast to the Orthodox Christianity of his day, emanated principally from Syriac sources and was closely tied to Hebrew scripture. In the final analysis, it is in the Syriac Gospel of Matthew, accordingly, that this confluence of Syro-Arabian features became enmeshed, and from which the Qur'ān realized critical notions of divine kingdom.

| <sup>210</sup> Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, pp. 52-53.

APPENDIX A  
ARAMAIC-ARABIC PHRASES

Phrases in the Gospel of Matthew	Phrases in the Qur'ān
<p>ܕܝܘܡ ܕܕܝܢܐ (<i>yawmā ddīnā</i>) Day of Judgment (Matthew 11,22-24; 12,36) ܕܝܢܐ (<i>dīna ← dyn</i>) Judgment, sentence,... (Matthew 5,21- 22)</p>	<p>يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (<i>yawm al-dīn</i>) Day of Judgment (Qur'ān 1:3)</p>
<p>ܠܘܫܢܐ ܕܐܠܡܐ (<i>nūhreh d'ālmā</i>) Light of the World (Matthew 5,14)  ܠܘܫܢܐ (<i>nūhrā</i>) Light (shine before others) (Matthew 5,16)</p>	<p>نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ (<i>nūr al-samāwāt wa al-ard</i>) Light of the Heavens and the Earth (Qur'ān 24:35) يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ (<i>yas'ā nūrubum</i>) Their light flows forth (Qur'ān 57:12)</p>
<p>ܘܥܒܕܘܗܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ (<i>shbahū lalāhā dyabb shūltānā dak hānā labnaynāshā</i>) They praised God who gave authority like this to mankind (Matthew 9,8)  ܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ (<i>shūltānā</i>) Authority</p>	<p>يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ ... لَا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ (<i>ya mā'shar al-jinn wa al-ins... la tanfudhūn illa bi sulṭān</i>) Oh throngs of jinn and mankind... you will not penetrate [the Heavens] except with authority (Qur'ān 55:33) سُلْطَانٍ (<i>sulṭān</i>) Authority</p>
<p>ܕܥܒܕܘܗܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ (<i>tā'bdūneh qdām bnay anāshā ak dtithzūn lhūn</i>) You (<i>pl</i>) do it before people in order to be seem by them (Matthew 6,1; 23,5)</p>	<p>الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ (<i>aladhīna yunfiqūn amwālahum ri'a' al-nās</i>) Those who donate their wealth showing-off to people (Qur'ān 4:38)</p>
<p>ܩܫܝܘܬܐ ܕܠܒܝܢܐ (<i>qashyūt labkūn</i>) Hardness of your hearts (Matthew 19,8)</p>	<p>فَسَتْ قُلُوبِكُمْ (<i>qasat qulūbikum</i>) Your hearts hardened (Qur'ān 2:74; see also 4:155)</p>

Phrases in the Gospel of Matthew	Phrases in the Qur'an
<p>ܡܫܒܕܝܢܢܐܢܬܘܢ ܥܠ ܢܦܫܝܚܝܚܝܢ (<i>msahbdīn antūn 'al nafshkūn</i>) You (<i>pl</i>) bear witness against yourselves (Matthew 23,31)</p>	<p>شَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ (<i>shahadū 'ala 'anfusihim</i>) Bore witness against themselves (Qur'an 6:130; 7:37)</p>
<p>ܩܪܝܒܝܢܐܝܢܝܗܘܢ ܩܪܝܒܝܢܐܝܢܝܗܘܢ ܥܝܢܝܗܘܢ ܥܘܩܘܒܝܢܐܝܢܝܗܘܢ (<i>bidnayhūn yaqīrayūt sham'ū wa 'aynayhūn 'amsū</i>) They hear with heaviness in their ears and their eyes are shut (Matthew 13,15 + see 13,16)</p>	<p>فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقُفْرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمَىٰ (<i>fī ādhānihim waqr wa hu 'alayhim 'amā</i>) There is deafness in their ears and it is a blindness over them (Qur'an 41:44 + see 7:179, 195)</p>
<p>ܩܬܠܘ ܠܢܒܝܐ (<i>daqtalū lanbiye</i>) That they killed the prophets (Matthew 23,31 + see 23, 35-37)</p>	<p>يَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ (<i>yaqtulūn al-nabiyyīn</i>) they kill the prophets (Qur'an 3:21, 181; 4:155)</p>
<p>ܢܝܬܡܘܬܝܢ ܡܘܬܐ (<i>niṭ'mūn mawtā</i>) Will taste (<i>pl</i>) death (Matthew 16,28)</p>	<p>ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ (<i>dhā'iqaṭ al-mawt</i>) Tastes (<i>f</i>) death (Qur'an 3:185; 21:35; 29:57)</p>
<p>ܐܦܬܘܚܝܬ ܠܗ ܫܡܝܐ (<i>iptahū leh shmayā</i>) The sky was opened up for him (Matthew 3,16)</p> <p>ܐܦܬܘܚܝܬ ܠܚܘܢ (<i>niṭptah lakūn</i>) Will be opened for you (<i>pl</i>) (Matthew 7,7)</p>	<p>لَا تُفْتَحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ (<i>lā tufattaḥ lahum abwāb al-samā'</i>) The doors/gates of heaven will not be opened for them (Qur'an 7:40)</p> <p>وَفُتِحَتِ السَّمَاءُ (<i>futiḥat al-samā'</i>) Sky opened up (Qur'an 78:19)</p> <p>فُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا (<i>futiḥat abwābuhā</i>) Their (Paradise/Hellfire) doors opened (Qur'an 39:71, 73)</p>
<p>ܠܝ ܐܬܐ ܠܝܬܝܢ ܕܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ (<i>lak etal qlidā dmalkūtā dashmāyā</i>) For you I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16,19)</p>	<p>لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ (<i>lahu maqālīd al-samāwāt wa al-ard</i>) He possesses the keys of the Heavens and the Earth (Qur'an 39:63; 42:12)</p>



Phrases in the Gospel of Matthew	Phrases in the Qur'ān
<p>ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܠܗܐ (<i>malkūtā dalāhā</i>) Kingdom of God (Matthew 19,24 parr. Mark, Luke)</p> <p>ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ (<i>malkūtā dāshməyā</i>) Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew only)</p>	<p>مَلَكُوتٌ (<i>malakūt</i>) Kingdom</p> <p>مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ (<i>malakūt al-samāwāt wa al-ard</i>) Kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth (Qur'ān 6:75; 7:185)</p>
<p>ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ (<i>mārā dāshməyā wadar'ā</i>) Lord of the Heavens and the Earth (Matthew 11,25)</p>	<p>رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ (<i>rab al-samāwāt wa al-ard</i>) Lord of the Heavens and the Earth (Qur'ān 13:16)</p>
<p>ܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ (<i>yartū malkūtā da'ūdā</i>) They will Inherit the kingdom prepared (Matthew 25,34)</p> <p>ܒܠܝܝܢ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ (<i>tūbayhūn lamkikā dhānūn nertūn lar'ā</i>) Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth (Matthew 5,5)</p>	<p>الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ (<i>al-ard yarithuhā 'ibādī al-ṣāliḥūn</i>) The earth will be inherited by My good slaves (Qur'ān 21:105)</p>
<p>ܥܒܩܝܢ ܠܟ ܫܒܝܩܝܢ (<i>shbīqīn lak shbīqayk</i>) Your sins have been forgiven (Matthew 9,2.6; 12,31)</p>	<p>نُغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَاتِكُمْ (<i>naghfir lakum khatī'ātikum</i>) We will forgive your sins (Qur'ān 7:161)</p>
<p>ܥܒܫܘ ܠܠܗܐ (<i>shbahū lalāhā</i>) They glorified God (Matthew 9,8; 15,31)</p> <p>ܥܒܫܘ (<i>shbah</i>) Glory</p>	<p>سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ (<i>subhān allāh</i>) Glorified is God (Qur'ān 30:17)</p> <p>سَبَّحَ (<i>sabbah</i>) Glorified</p>

Phrases in the Gospel of Matthew	Phrases in the Qur'an
<p>כל מה שאתם יודעים ואתם רואים ... אצל אבא  אבל אצל אבא לבד  אבל אבא</p> <p>(<i>al yawmā deyn hu w'al sha'tā hay anāsh lā īdā' ...elā ābā blaḥūd</i>)  As for the day and the hour no man knows ...except the Father alone  (Matthew 24,36)</p>	<p>يَسْأَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا  عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ</p> <p>(<i>ya'saluk al-nās 'an al-sā'ah qul innamā 'ibmuhā 'ind allāh</i>)  They ask you about the Hour, say verily its knowledge is with God  (Qur'an 33:63)</p>
<p>לעדה כל העמים  (לי שבדוטא דקולחון אממה)  As a testimony to all nations  (Matthew 24,14)</p>	<p>لَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ  (литакуну шухадā' alā al-nās)</p> <p>That you may be witnesses over all people (Qur'an 2:143)</p>
<p>שלחו שלמה בבית  (shalū shlāmeh dbaytā)</p> <p>Greet the House (Matthew 10,12)</p>	<p>فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ  (fa'idhā dakhaltum buyūt(ā) fa sallimū 'alā 'anfusikum)</p> <p>And if you enter a house greet yourselves (Qur'an 24:61)</p>
<p>שלום לכם  (shalām lakīn)</p> <p>Peace be upon you (<i>fpl</i>) (Matthew 28,9)</p>	<p>سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ  (salām 'alaykum)</p> <p>Peace be upon you (Qur'an 28:55; 39:73)</p>
<p>אנחנו  (hab lan)</p> <p>Give us (Matthew 6,11)</p>	<p>هَبْ لَنَا  (hab lanā)</p> <p>Give us (Qur'an 25:74)</p>
<p>אכרדל  (fardtā dkhardlā)</p> <p>Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31)</p>	<p>حَبَّةٌ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ  (ḥab ah min khardal)</p> <p>Mustard Seed (Qur'an 21:47; 31:16)</p>

APPENDIX B

SECONDARY ARAMAIC-ARABIC TERMS

Words in the Gospel of Matthew	Words in the Qur'ān
<p>ܙܕܝܩܐ ܢܢܐܒܪܝܢ ܐܟ ܫܡܫܗܐ (<i>zdiqā nnabrūn ak shamshā</i>) The righteous will shine like the sun (Matthew 13,43)</p> <p>ܙܕܝܩܐ (<i>zdiqā</i>) The Righteous/faithful (coupled with prophets) (Matthew 13,17)</p>	<p>صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ (<i>ṣādiq al-wa'd</i>) Promise fulfiller (Qur'ān 19:54)</p> <p>الصَّٰدِقِينَ (<i>al-ṣṣiddīqīn</i>) The sincere (coupled with prophets) (Qur'ān 4:69)</p>
<p>ܥܒܕܝ ܫܠܡܐ ('<i>abday shlāmā</i>) Peace-Makers (Matthew 5,9)</p>	<p>مُسْلِمٍ (<i>muslim</i>) Submitters عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ('<i>abd allāh</i>) Slave of God</p>
<p>ܕܟܝܢ ܒܠܒܗܘܢ (<i>dakīn blabhūn ← dka</i>) Pure in Heart (Matthew 5,8)</p>	<p>زَكِيًّا (<i>zakiyyā ← zka</i>) Pure (Qur'ān 19:19)</p>
<p>ܐܝܪܗܡ ܠܝܗܘܢ (<i>irham layhūn</i>) He showed them compassion (Matthew 14,14)</p>	<p>الرَّٰحِمِينَ (<i>al-rāḥimīn</i>) Those who show mercy (Qur'ān 12:64, 92; 23:109)</p>
<p>ܫܒܪܐܓܐ (<i>sbrāgā</i>) Lamp/candle (Matthew 5,15)</p>	<p>سِرَاجًا (<i>sirāj(ā)</i>) Lamp (Qur'ān 25:61; 33:46; 78:13)</p>
<p>ܥܒܕܐ (<i>'abdā</i>) Maker/doer (Matthew 6,24)</p>	<p>عَبْدٌ ('<i>abd</i>) Slave</p>
<p>ܡܫܟܝܢܐ (<i>maskīnā</i>) Poor (Matthew 5,3)</p>	<p>مَسْكِينٍ (<i>miskīn</i>) Poor</p>
<p>ܢܝܫܘܢܐ (<i>nesyūnā</i>); ܢܝܬܢܫܐ (<i>nītnasā</i>) Temptation/Trial (Matthew 6,13; 4,1)</p>	<p>نَسِيَ (<i>nasī</i>) Forgot/went astray (Qur'ān 20:115)</p>
<p>ܒܪܗ ܕܢܐܫܐ ... ܗܘܐ (<i>breh danāshā</i>) Son of Man/Mankind (Matthew 8,20)</p>	<p>بَنِي آدَمَ (<i>banī ādam</i>) Son of Adam (Qur'ān 17:70) أَنَاسٍ (<i>unās</i>) People (Qur'ān 7:82)</p>

Words in the Gospel of Matthew	Words in the Qur'an
<p>تَلَوَّ (t'ā) Astray (Matthew 18,12; 24,4.11.24)</p>	<p>طَغَى (taghā) Gone astray (Qur'an 79:37) طَاغُوتٌ (tāghūt) Evil/Error</p>
<p>قَارِبَات (qarbat ← qrb) Has come near (Matthew 3,2; 4,17; 10,9; 12,9)</p>	<p>اِقْتَرَبَتْ (iqtarabat ← qrb) Has come near (Qur'an 54:1)  قَرِيبًا (qarīb(ā)) Near (Qur'an 33:63; 34:50; 17:51)</p>
<p>جَهَنَّمَ (ghenā) Hell (Matthew 5,29-30 + see 25,41b.46)</p>	<p>جَهَنَّمَ (jahannam) Hell-fire (39:70-75)</p>
<p>آيَات (atā) Sign (Matthew 12,38-39; 16,3-4; 24,24)</p>	<p>آيَةٌ (āyah) Sign</p>
<p>يَمِينِهِ (ymīneh) His Right Hand (Matthew 25,34)</p>	<p>أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ ('aṣḥāb) Companions of the Right Hand al-yamīn (Qur'an 56:8, 26)</p>
<p>شِمَالِهِ (semāleh) His Left Hand (Matthew 25,41)</p>	<p>أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ ('aṣḥāb al-shimāl) Companions of the Left Hand (Qur'an 56:9)</p>
<p>بَشِيرَات (sbartā) Good news (Matthew 4,23; 9,35; 23,31; 26,13)</p>	<p>بُشْرًا بُشْرَى (bushrā) Good news (Qur'an 7:57; 12:19)  بَشِيرٌ (bashshir) Give good news بَشِيرٌ (bashīr) Bringer of good news</p>
<p>كُرْسِيِّ دَالِيهِ (kursiyā dalāhā) Throne of God (Matthew 23,22)</p>	<p>كُرْسِيِّهِ (kursiyuh) His Throne (Qur'an 2:155)</p>
<p>اِنْبَشَرَ (glayt ← gla) Revealed (Matthew 11,25)</p>	<p>تَجَلَّى (tajallā ← jly) Revealed oneself (Qur'an 7:143) ذِي الْجَلَالِ (dhī al-jalāl) The Bountiful (God) (Qur'an 55:78)</p>

Words in the Gospel of Matthew	Words in the Qur'ān
<p>ܒܪܐܘܗܝܘܢ... ܡܝܢܐ (<i>bar alāhā</i>)                      Son of God (Matthew 4,3)</p> <p>ܒܪܐܘܗܝܘܢ ܕܠܐܗܐ                      (<i>banūhī dalāhā</i>)                      Sons of God (Matthew 5,9)</p>	<p>NA</p> <p>أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ                      (<i>abnā' allāh</i>)                      Sons of God (pejorative) (Qur'ān 5:18)</p>
<p>ܫܘܒܘܢ (<i>sged</i>)                      Worshipped (Matthew 14,33)</p>	<p>سَجَدَ (<i>sajad</i>)                      Prostrate (several kinds) (Qur'ān                      2:125; 3:43; 3:113; 7:120; 12:4;                      13:15;15:30)</p>
<p>ܬܘܒܘܢ (<i>tūbu</i>)                      Repent (<i>pl</i>) (Matthew 3,2)</p>	<p>تُوبُ (<i>tūb</i>)                      Repent</p>
<p>ܒܪܟܐ (<i>brk</i>)                      Blessed (Matthew 14,19)</p>	<p>تَبَارَكَ (<i>tabāarak</i>)                      Blessed is (Qur'ān 25:1; 37:113;                      55:78)</p>
<p>ܬܘܒܘܢ ܠܗܘܢ (<i>tūbayhūn</i>)                      Blessed are they (Matthew 5,3ff)</p>	<p>طُوبَىٰ لَهُمْ (<i>tūbā lahum</i>)                      Blessed are they (Qur'ān 13:29)</p>
<p>ܢܒܝܐ (<i>nabīyā</i>)                      Prophet (Matthew 1,22)</p>	<p>نَبِيٍّ (<i>nabī</i>)                      Prophet</p>
<p>ܡܬܠܐ (<i>matlā</i>)                      Parable (Matthew 13,18)</p>	<p>مَثَلٌ (<i>mathal</i>)                      Example/likeness</p>

## APPENDIX C

## OTHER RELATED PARALLELS IN QUR'ĀN/HADITH

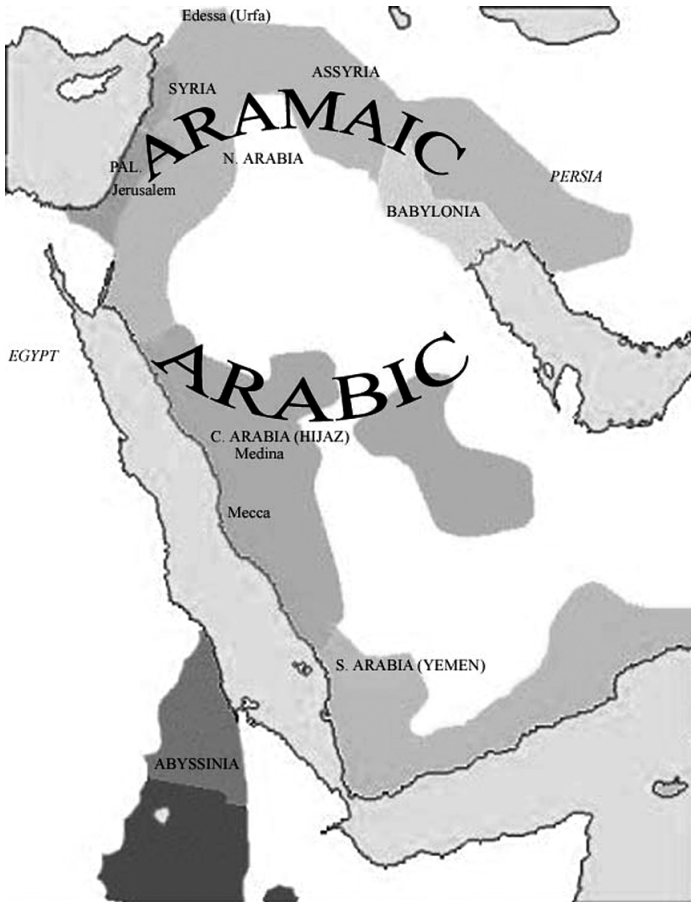
The Gospel of Matthew	The Qur'ān and Hadith Literature
<p>ⲃⲁⲗⲓⲩⲁ (daglūtā ← dgl) Lie/False teaching (Matthew 5,11; 24,24)</p>	<p>المسيح الدجال (al-masīḥ al-dajjāl) False Messiah (Muslim, Bukhari, Abū-Dāwūd, Malik, ...)</p>
<p>If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away (Matthew 5,29)</p> <p>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5,28)</p>	<p>Say to the believing men [and women] that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty ... (Qur'ān 24:30-31)</p>
<p>Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 19,24)</p>	<p>To those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance, no opening will there be of the gates of heaven, nor will they enter the garden, until the camel can pass through the eye of the needle... (Qur'ān 7:40)</p>
<p>Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom (Matthew 21,43)</p>	<p>...If you turn back [from the Path], He will substitute in your stead another people; then they would not be like you (Qur'ān 47:38)</p>
<p>...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave</p>	<p>...O son of Adam, I fell ill and you visited Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so had fallen ill and you visited him not? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I feed You when You are the Lord of the</p>

you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" (Matthew 25,26-39)

worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so asked you for food and you fed him not? Did you not know that had you fed him you would surely have found that (the reward for doing so) with Me? O son of Adam, I asked you to give Me to drink and you gave Me not to drink. He will say: O Lord, how should I give You to drink when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: My servant So-and-so asked you to give him to drink and you gave him not to drink. Had you given him to drink you would have surely found that with Me. (Muslim 32:6232 – Hadith Qudsi)

APPENDIX D

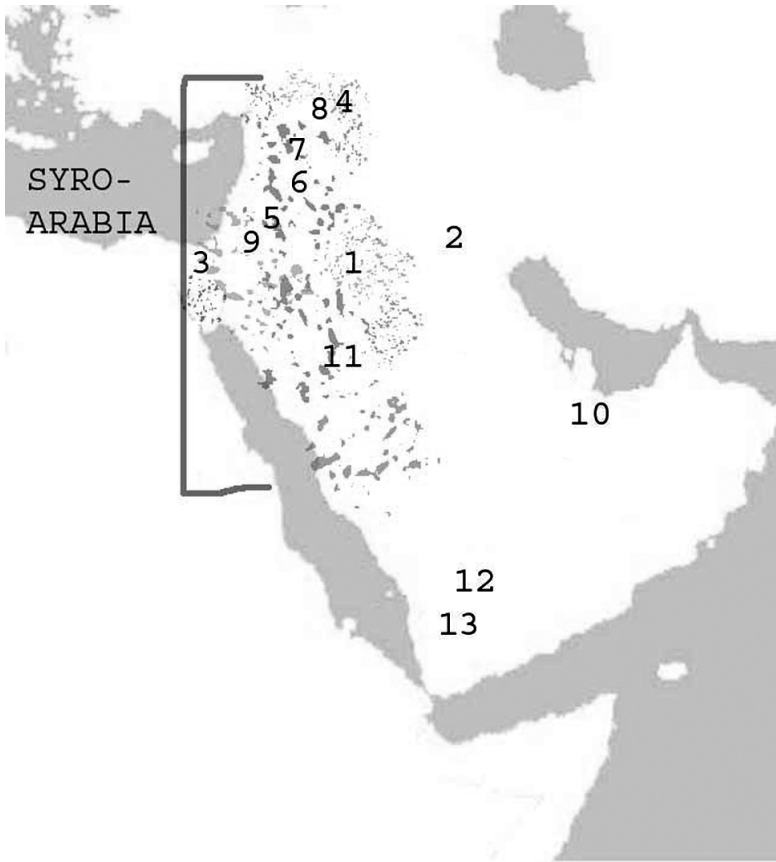
LANGUAGE MAP OF THE LATE ANTIQUE NEAR EAST





APPENDIX E

ARAB SETTLEMENTS ATTESTED IN ANTIQUITY<sup>211</sup>



<sup>211</sup> Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, pp. 578-579: 1. Dūmah/al-Ḥijr 2. South Nippur (Lower Mesopotamia) 3. Palestine-Egypt 4. Khābūr-Euphrates 5. Transjordan (many settlements) 6. Damascus 7. Hims 8. Aleppo 9. Gilead/Ajlūn 10. al-Ḥasā' 11. Hijaz-Thamūd 12. Najran 13. South Arabia

## APPENDIX F

RAQUSH INSCRIPTION DEMONSTRATING MIXED DIALECT<sup>212</sup>

ذ قبرو صنعہ كعبو بر  
 حرثت لرقوش برت  
 عبدمنتو امه وهي  
 هلكت في الحجر  
 سنة منه وستين  
 وترين بيرخ تموز ولعن  
 مري علما من يشنا القبر  
 ذا ومن يفتحه حشى [و]  
 ولده ولعن من يقبر و [يع] لي منه

## ABSTRACT

The terminology of the Qur'an regarding certain key religious aspects demonstrates an intimate relationship with the Syriac translation of the Gospel of Matthew. This paper's discussion focuses on perhaps the most salient of these religious aspects shared by both texts, namely 'divine kingdom.' By studying and comparing both the Syriac and Arabic texts firsthand, examining old Syriac and Arabian inscriptions, and reflecting upon the theories of previous scholars who addressed the Christian or Syriac influences upon the Qur'an, I come to a preliminary conclusion as to how and why such a relationship exists. Based on the gathered evidence, the paper argues that within the realm dubbed 'Syro-Arabia,' intimate socio-cultural-religious interaction and continuity persisted between Syriac/Aramaic and Arabic speakers from the early first millennium BCE through the period of late antiquity (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE). This resulted in the Qur'an addressing an audience that was part of the Syro-Arabian milieu, and that was familiar with the Syriac Gospel of Matthew.

<sup>212</sup> Healey and Smith, 'Jausen-Savignac 17 – The Earliest Dated Arabic Document (A.D. 267)', *Atlat*, 12 (1989), pl. 46. The inscription reads, 'This is a grave K b. H has taken care of for his mother, Raqush bint 'A. She died in al-Hijr in the year 162 in the month of Tammuz. May the Lord of the World curse anyone who desecrates this grave and opens it up, except his offspring! May he [also] curse anyone who buries [someone in the grave] and [then] removes [him] from it! May who buries....be cursed!'