

CHAPTER X.

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING.

PRAISE is the very essence of prayer. The fact of praising God shows the inward appreciation of God's already vouchsafed mercies, and is a clear indication of the desire for a continuation or repetition of those mercies, and it thus becomes the most exalted form of prayer. It stipulates for nothing, mentions nothing, but leaves all to God who knows all our wants. This is the quintessence of the Muslim's faith.

“ When prostrate at Thy feet I fall,
 Fresh wisdom to acquire,
 All Thy past favours I recall :
 Nor do I now desire
 To ask from Thee what Thou must know,
 In Thy omniscient mind,
 Is really best for us below
 And infinitely kind.”

There is always a touch of the sordid element in prayer when merely regarded as supplication for worldly treasure or advantage, and it has sometimes struck me that the writer of the Christian prayer in which occurs the line “ Who knowest our necessities before we ask and our *ignorance* in asking,” was aware of this, otherwise he could not have used a word implying want of knowledge. The inference is that those who are sensible of God's infinite power will not be so ignorant as to ask Him for what He has already arranged to give them. Gratitude for

past favours can never be regarded as selfish or sordid or mean.

Again, that "need of reminders" which is so observable in many Christian churches is altogether absent in the mosques where, save for verses from the Koran and the simple Crescent—pure and sweet emblem of the birth of Life—there is nothing to catch the eye or distract. There is no need of the praying wheel, the rosary, the music and the incense. No idols and no images. "Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God and Him only shalt Thou serve." It is the spirit of God alone which directs, and the true Muslim sees the evidences of his Father's power and love in every blade of grass, in every breath of air, and he is as happy when saying his prayers on the desert sands or mountain top as he would be in the most beautiful building made by man's hands.

The following is the text of a prayer which I wrote for use at our services at the Lindsey Hall, and at the Mosque at Woking:—

(Especially written for all earnest followers
of Islam.)

The first portion of this prayer was read at our meeting at the Lindsey Hall on December 5th; the concluding portion was offered up at the same place on December 12th. In the composition I have earnestly tried to bring out our desire for increased powers of toleration, forgiveness and endurance, and begged God's assistance in driving away all fear of consequences, because I am convinced that FEAR is at the bottom of nearly all the troubles of life.

"With joy unspeakable I feel
Thy presence ever near.
I know that when to Thee I kneel
There is no thought of fear.

- “ For love and fear can never dwell
 Within a human breast,
 Since love is strong and will expel
 All fear and bring sweet rest.
- “ Not rest as understood down here
 By human minds and laws,
 But everlasting labour fair
 Which struggles in Thy cause.
- “ Unselfish love brings glad rewards
 A million times more sweet
 Than any treasure earth affords,
 Or human beings meet.”*

There are many similar verses in the little book referred to; it was written at times of very dreadful persecution and suffering, but I am thankful to say that my confidence in God's mercy never wavered for one moment, even in the times of direst distress, and I *never felt fear on one single occasion*. This is the prayer above referred to:—

“ O Almighty and Ever-present God, Thee alone do we look to. Thee alone do we adore and worship; accept our loving offerings of praise and thanksgiving, and increase our power of understanding Thy infinite wisdom, Thy infinite love and Thy infinite compassion. Thou art our Creator and Thou knowest that since we love Thee we also hate and loathe the devil and his miserable devices to take our thoughts from Thee.

“ Dear Father of Heaven and God of the Universe, make us beneficent towards all those of our fellow-creatures who may not think of Thee as we ourselves do: May we show a spirit of toleration and

* “Thoughts for the Future.” By “A. W.” (Walter Scott Publishing Co., Felling-on-Tyne, Durham.)

may we beg of Thee to so direct the hearts of all our brethren in this world that they may appreciate our earnest desire to welcome them into that fold where the Shepherd, in Thy Almighty, Glorious, and Merciful Presence, is ever to be found.

“ May we, O God our Preserver and Comforter, endeavour to follow in the footsteps of Thy Holy Prophets, Moses, Christ, and Mahomet, and, from their teachings, may we learn humility and patience. We are now entering upon a new era in which we shall have to combat the demon of Atheism, born of intolerance and superstition, and the demon of idolatry and all that tends to obscure our view of Thee, O Blessed God our Father.

“ Give us courage to follow in the footsteps of Thy Prophet, the Divinely inspired Mahomet, whose memory, do Thou, O God, keep fresh and green in our hearts. May we emulate his sincerity and charity, and may we try to be like him in our desire to do justice to all mankind. May we never forget what our Lord Jesus Christ said of the Pharisees and Hypocrites, but, as Thou art All-Merciful, we implore Thee to forgive and change the hearts of those who are hostile to Islam, especially those who have wilfully misrepresented our Faith to the Western World. We pray for Thy Divine guidance to Thee alone do we look. Thou art our Leader and Guide, our Ever-present Councillor and Protector. Islam is our only watchword, and we feel safe in Thy Almighty Arms.

“ Dear Father, Thou art very near—
 We feel Thy presence everywhere—
 In darkest night, in brightest day,
 To show the path, direct the way.

“ *El Farooq,*

“ AMEN.

“ *Friday, December 5, 1913.*”

“ O Almighty God, may it please Thee, in Thy infinite power and love, to remove from our hearts all those feelings of fear which may stand in the way of our obvious duty to Thee. Give us fortitude to endure without a qualm all adverse criticism, and may we ever look with leniency and toleration on those who have not yet quite understood our creed. Do Thou, Almighty and loving Protector, give courage to the waverers to openly confess the all-conquering powers of Islam, and may their increased self-respect be a portion of their reward. Praise be to Thee, O God our Protector and Comforter.

“ AMEN.

“ *El Farooq,*

“ *Friday, December 12, 1913.*”

The above appeared in the January, 1914, number of the “Islamic Review,” and I also quote the following lines, which I wrote to illustrate the Brotherhood of Islam and Muslim Equality :—

Dear Father, 'twas Thy loving care
Which did into our minds instil
The love for all Thy creatures here
And made us seek to do Thy will.

When we our anthems raise to Thee,
When foes around us press us sore,
O may we seek Thy face to see,
And learn to love Thee more and more.

O Father, may we live in Thee,
Do Thou our loving hearts enshroud,
We long Thy loveliness to see,
When we have to Thy wishes bowed.

'Tis not alone in open fight
In which we prostrate fall to Thee,

But it is when we do the RIGHT—
The outcome of Thy Majesty.

At certain times we fall before
The mercy seat that Thou hast raised,
And then we do Thy Name adore
And seek to see Thee loved and praised.

*The King and beggar side by side
Sing the glad song of gratitude,*
For Thou dost love them both the same
And giv'st them Thy Beatitude.

With Moses, Christ and Mahomet
Who gave to us Thy message sweet,
O may our steps towards Thee be set
And long Thy loving arms to greet.

Some seven years ago, when I was in very deep sorrow and distress, I wrote the following Hymn of Praise, and that portion in inverted commas, commencing "O Blessed God . . ." came into my head very suddenly, and I at once wrote it down in pencil on a scrap of paper.

The deepest love for Thee and Thine
Refulgent in my heart will shine ;
Thy slightest wish shall ever be
My care throughout Eternity.

Thou art my God, my Lord, my King ;
Without Thee could not anything
I now enjoy be mine to-day,
And I should not have lived to say—

" O Blessed God, Almighty King,
Open Thy heart and let me in ;
I know Thy grace, Thy power, Thy love,
Altho' Thou dwellest in Heaven above.

“ Thy glorious prophets, led by love,
Directly sent from Heaven above,
Did strive to show that only one
Great God above in Heaven shone.

“ With Moses, Christ, and Mahomet,*
O may our steps towards Thee be set ;
Of mortal birth, they all proclaim,
Thy one eternal, glorious Name.

“ And when of life is known the source,
Dark evil will have run its course ;
No mysteries will then appear,
For we shall be with God most dear.

“ Death then no more shall touch with fears
Our hearts, or from our eyes draw tears ;
Great Allah, God our Lord and King,
Will banish every thought of sin.

“ Jehovah, Father, we must now
Record the noblest human vow :
To struggle here as Michael strove
Successfully in Heaven above.”

Our love for God is a thing apart, inexplicable to our finite human mind, and known only to the dear Father Who made us and gave us the power to praise Him unceasingly.

* It is impossible to be a good Mahomedan without being a good Christian. Why are they at war?