

Prayer

The fact that Moslems pray often, early, and earnestly has elicited the admiration of many travelers, who, ignorant of the real character and content of Moslem prayer, judge it from a Christian standpoint. What the Bible calls prayer and what the Moslem calls by the same name are, however, to a degree, distinct conceptions. The devotions of Islam are essentially vain repetitions, for they must be said in the Arabic language by all Moslems, whether in Canton or Calcutta, in Sokoto or Singapore. Three fourths of the Mohammedan world pray five times daily in an unknown tongue. Yet their prayers are persistent and often sincere. Mohammed used to call prayer "the pillar of religion" and "the key of paradise."

**Facing
Toward
Mecca**

The first requirement of correct prayer is that it be in the right direction, that is, toward the Kaaba at Mecca. Because of this, private houses, as well as mosques, all over the Mohammedan world, are built accordingly, and not on meridian lines. It is often pathetic to hear a wayfarer or a Moslem who travels on an ocean steamer ask which is the proper direction to turn at the hour of prayer. To pray with one's back to Mecca would be unpardonable. Many Moslems carry a pocket-compass on their journeys to avoid all possible errors of this character.