

## ESTABLISH REGULAR PRAYER:

HOW ISLAM SEEKS TO CONQUER VICE AND CULTIVATE VIRTUE

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*Editor's Note: This is David's third article in a series on Islam. The first, "Judge Righteous Judgment: Appreciating What Islam 'Has,'" appeared in Volume 4 Number 1 of Perspective. The Second, "Chaining the Demons, Liberating the Soul: Fasting in Islam" appeared in Volume 4 Number 2.*

The observance of prayer exercises an extraordinary influence on Muslim civilization and culture. The daily cycle of prayer-related activity is governed and regulated by five obligatory prayers: morning, noon, mid-afternoon, evening, and night. Muslims thus rise with the call to prayer, often in the pre-dawn twilight, and pray again at night prior to sleep. The bounds of daily life are circumscribed by devotion to Allah.

The influence of prayer extends beyond obligatory ritual (discussed in detail later) to include customary blessings. Devout Muslims pronounce a blessing upon rising, before eating, and before undertaking any serious or strenuous activity: "In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate." In countries where Islam predominates, legislation, royal decrees, and city ordinances often begin with the same blessing, which is called the *bism'allah* ("in the name of Allah"). Muslims greet each other with blessings and prayers such as "May the peace [of Allah] be upon you" and "God be praised." They practice, in their own custom, the equivalent of an LDS scriptural precept:

That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord; that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord; that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with hands unto the Most High. (Doctrine and Covenants 88:120)

Common blessings are more than the mere invocation of the name of God, serving to consecrate one's performances unto God, aligning one's activity with the will of God. The same concept has roots in the LDS tradition: "Ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul" (2 Nephi 32:9). The regular invocation of common blessings serves to reinforce the believer's remembrance of God and his or her dependence upon God.

Prayer is more than an individual's ritual worship. It is a communal event, thus extending its influence into the collective culture at large. The day begins with a ritual call to prayer. The call reminds Muslims that God is Supreme, and that Muslims received a prophet's guidance

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through Muhammad’s ministry. Congregations meet in mosques, places of sociality and education as well as of worship. Mosques cover the globe, often located where people scarcely grow enough food to maintain life. The construction and maintenance of mosques represents a collective sacrifice worthy of respect. In addition to communal worship in mosques, family worship is common, where parents and children join in worship and petition the Almighty. At nearly every turn, prayer unites diverse elements of Islamic society in a single purpose: rich and the poor, parent and child combining in common religious cause.

Given the pervasive influence of prayer, it is fitting that the name “Islam” signifies “peace” through the humble submission of one’s own will to the will of God: “Whoever submits [*islama*] his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he will get his reward with his Lord” (Qur’an 2:112).<sup>1</sup> Likewise:

Seek Allah’s help with patient perseverance and prayer! It is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit—who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him. (Qur’an 2:45-46)

Prayer is an act of submission to divine will. Islam is a religion that teaches frequent, humble prayer.

#### CONQUERING VICE, CULTIVATING VIRTUE

The three monotheistic religions couple love of God with charity, or love of neighbors. Moreover, both great commandments have ritual manifestations. For example, fasting in Christianity is often accompanied by a required act of charity. In Mormonism, fasting is thus accompanied by a voluntary fast offering. Islam likewise requires a ritual offering for the poor in connection with fasting. Moreover, in Islam, the commandment to pray frequently is joined with the injunction to practice charity:

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Be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity; and whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah, for Allah sees well all that you do. (Qur’an 2:110)

The quranic phrase “whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah” has its parallel in the New Testament: “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Likewise, both the Qur’an and the New Testament teach that the vain works of the foolish and disobedient are like a false treasure, one “where moth and dust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal”:

But the unbelievers and their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until, when he comes up to it,

he finds it to be nothing; but he finds Allah ever with him, and Allah will pay him his account: and Allah is swift in taking account. (Qur'an 24:39)

The verb used for prayer (*salata*) means “worship.” The believer therefore sends forth two kinds of works to heaven while in the flesh, works performed in the worship of God, and acts of charity demonstrating love of fellow man.

The Qur'an invariably joins prayer with charity, often enjoining the true believer to constancy, transforming mere belief into active faith. Muslims are commanded not only to accept what Muhammad revealed in the Qur'an but must accept “what was revealed before” as prelude to unremitting worship through prayer and charity (Qur'an 4:162). The words “steadfast” and “regular” inform and define the quranic text with respect to prayer and charity. Steadfastness and regularity are a part of the Islamic doctrine of “remembrance,” or *dhikr*. The Qur'an praises those whose daily activities cannot divert them “from the remembrance of Allah, nor from regular prayer, nor from the practice of regular charity” (Qur'an 24:37). *Dhikr* teaches that all activities of life must be organized around prayer and charity, that the remembrance of Allah is “wider than prayer: it includes silent contemplation and active service of Allah and His creatures.”<sup>2</sup> Prayer serves as a source of divine grace that the believer must transform into spontaneous charity, blessing the community at large. The practice of prayerful charity is akin to the LDS concept of anxious engagement, in which Saints must spontaneously bring to pass much righteousness, drawing upon the power, or grace, found within (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27).

Not only is prayer associated with the cultivation of charity, but prayer is tied directly to the cultivation of other virtues. For example, the virtue of fortitude (or enduring strength) is frequently associated with prayerful supplication, both in LDS teaching and in Islamic doctrine. “Pray often,” the Lord admonished, “that ye may not faint, until I come” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:126). Paul exhorted Christians to “[Pray] always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance” (Ephesians 6:18). President Heber J. Grant proclaimed his confidence in the spiritual fortitude of the prayerful saint: “I am sure that when the temptation comes they will have the strength to overcome it by the inspiration that shall be to them [as a consequence of their prayers].”<sup>3</sup> The Qur'an enjoins: “O ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.... Who say, when afflicted with calamity: ‘To Allah we belong, and to Him we return’...and they are the ones that receive guidance” (Qur'an 2:153).

Prayer is likewise purposed to overcome vice, as a preparatory step in the cultivation of virtues. The vices of covetousness, acquisitiveness,

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greed, lust, and anger are present in virtually every society, particularly in materialistic ones. If the satisfaction of these vices becomes the object of prayer, the spiritual condition of the people is in peril. Occasionally, petitioners behave as in Janis Joplin's song: "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz?" Although this may be a manifestation of natural man, the objects of petition should be pure and unselfish. Unholy prayer, like conspicuous consumption, has severe consequences, as described by James: "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2-3). Prayer for the gratification of vice is an offense to God and the foundation of much anger, war, and violence. The Qur'an similarly declares the spiritual consequences of misused prayer:

The prayer that man should make for good, he maketh for evil; for man is given to hasty deeds.... Every man's fate We have fastened on his own neck; on the day of judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will spread open. It will be said to him: "Read thine own record; sufficient is thy soul this day to make out an account against thee." (Qur'an 17:11, 13-14)

Abdullah Yusuf Ali noted, commenting on this passage, "Man in his ignorance or haste...desires what he should not have. The wise and instructed soul has patience and does not put its own desires above the wisdom of Allah...and prays to be rightly guided in his desires and petitions."<sup>4</sup> The secret to proper petition consists of examining and rectifying the otherwise hidden purposes for which we pray. Do we pray in order to consume God's gifts upon our lusts, or to use His gifts in developing personal virtue and in blessing our acquaintances; do we pray to cash-in on "[God's] signs for a miserable price" (Qur'an 2:41) or to "celebrate the praises of [the] Lord...that thou mayest have joy" (Qur'an 20:130)? Prayer, in Christianity and in Islam, is an essential component to the development of godly attributes, the conquest of vice and the cultivation of virtue through critical self-examination, and thus to securing eternal joy.

## DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

Non-Muslims frequently wonder about the origins of the five daily prayers. Tradition holds that Muhammad, during his night visit to the heavens, received Allah's command to conduct community prayers fifty times a day. Returning from heaven, Muhammad met Moses, who asked him what sort of burden Allah imposed on his people. Having experience in leading spiritually weak peoples, Moses said, referring to those who would follow Muhammad: "I know those people."<sup>5</sup> He advised Muhammad to return and negotiate a reduction in the number of regular

prayers. The process repeated itself as Muhammad returned first with twenty-five required prayers, then ten, and finally five daily prayers. There the story ends: Allah, Moses, and Muhammad were presumably content with five. Being a successful spiritual leader of peoples apparently requires experience and a lot of patience.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Muslims fulfill Allah's directive by praying at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, dusk, and night.

Each daily prayer begins with the call to prayer, or *adhan*. The form of the call varies slightly between Sunni Orthodox Islam and Shi'ism, but the core remains the same. Anyone who has spent significant time in a Muslim country has heard the call, most notably in the early hours of the morning. Once the call begins, other activities should cease while the faithful congregate to pray.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps a personal anecdote would best illustrate this. I was a student at the University of Tunis in 1983. As I was shopping with a Muslim friend in the old city, the call to prayer began. The shopkeeper stopped our negotiations and invited us to pray. I entered the mosque but only observed from the back. During prayers the streets of the *suq* were emptied and commerce stopped. Upon returning to the shop, the keeper paused for a moment, pronounced a blessing and then resumed where we had left off. The call is itself a prayer, or rather it is the first part of the prayer. Conducting new business during the *adhan* is considered inappropriate. The *adhan* is the clock that regulates all human activity, sending a social signal stronger than the Western clock, which keeps a strict schedule for commercial and material Babylon and its daily round of profits.

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The text of the call serves several important doctrinal purposes. The *mu'azzin*, who performs the call, bears testimony from the mosque tower, or minaret, that there is no Allah but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. The believer is reminded of the spiritual power of prayer and the dispensation of grace that attends prayer. The text of the Sunnite prayer illustrates this:

- Allah is Greatest (proclaimed four times).
- I bear witness that there is no god except the One God ("Allah," proclaimed twice).
- I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah (twice).
- Come to prayer (or "Arise for prayer," twice).
- Come to success (or "Arise for Salvation," twice)
- Allah is Greatest (twice)
- There is no god except the One God ("Allah," twice)

The *adhan* has special symbolic significance apart from doctrinal considerations. For example, the first two lines and the last two lines stand in stark juxtaposition. God is greatest of all, period. After this affirmative declaration regarding the status of God, it is restated in a negative formulation order to draw attention to God's uniqueness: there is no god

but God, no allah but Allah. This is a symbolic equivalent of the Alpha and Omega, commencing and terminating all things yet transcending all things in pure being. Additionally, the Arabic word *hayya* begins the instruction to “Come to Prayer” as well as the instruction “Come to Salvation.” *Hayya* means, in this context, “Come to Life,” indicating that the believer comes alive spiritually through prayer. Furthermore, the “h” in *hayya* is a hard “h,” much like the sound we make when breathing on a pair of glasses before cleaning the lenses. This sound symbolizes the breath of life administered by Allah to Adam (inspiration). It is also the sound of the Holy Spirit (*Ruh al-Qadissi*), signifying that the breath of life, or man’s spirit, is joined with the Holy Spirit through prayer and charity (expiration, or the spirit at work in the world). The auditory symbolism of the *adhan* is so powerful that Muslims whisper the call to prayer into the right ear of a child shortly after birth, summoning the newborn to life, linking the spirit of the child to the Spirit of Allah in the context of prayer.<sup>7</sup> The literal birth is linked to a figurative spiritual birth, a summons to faith and devotion, a child’s first blessing.

Muslims gather for communal prayer in the *masjid*, or mosque (literally the “place of prostration”). Upon arrival, they exchange warm greetings, embrace, kiss the cheek, bless each other saying “*salaamu ‘alaykum*” (peace be upon you). They assemble around a well or fountain (called a *sahn* in Arabic) and perform ritual washings, or “ablutions,” cleaning the body in preparation for prayer. Prayer rugs cover the ground, establishing a clean place for worship. Without any formal direction, Muslims form ranks of equal length, and await the *imam*’s signal to begin the prayer. Should believers arrive late, he performs a quick private prayer and then joins in prayer with the rest of the congregation. The end of prayers signals yet another time to greet and bless prior to exiting the *masjid*. At each step key doctrinal principles are reinforced. Prayer is associated with charity, which in turn is impossible in the absence of community. The first act of charity is pronouncing a blessing upon one’s immediate neighbors in the congregation. Washing the arms, feet, neck, and face gives the believer time to contemplate the solemnity of the coming prayer, reinforces the idea that one should not approach God unclean or in disorder. Washing off the earth, the dust of which we are made and into which we must all eventually descend, Muslims symbolically move from the mundane to the spiritual. Praying in rows, joined at the elbow when prostrated, fosters communal worship. A detailed examination of the prayer ritual reveals a profound spiritual depth to what might appear on the surface to the uninformed observer as “vain repetitions” (3 Nephi 13:7). Mere repetition does not constitute vanity if the prayerful person is sincere in all utterances.

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## ABLUTIONS

History indicates that Muslims are among the cleanest people the world has ever known. During the Middle Ages, when devout Christians thought that strong body odor kept disease away, Muslims were taking a full bath at least once a week and washed themselves up to five times each day before prayers. The Prophet Muhammad led the way in practicing fastidious personal hygiene, declaring: “purification is half the faith.”<sup>9</sup> Muhammad was known to wake in the morning, pronounce the *bism’allah*, and brush his teeth. He then performed ritual washings, called *ablutions*, and said his morning prayers. Brushing one’s teeth was the prelude to morning prayers, serving as “a means of seeking the pleasure of the Lord.”<sup>10</sup>

Muslims ritually clean themselves prior to worship, in a ceremony called *wudu*, meaning “purity.” This ritual begins by forming the intention to purify oneself and by the *bism’allah*. The *wudu* must be performed, according to Muhammad, with Allah in mind: “That man has not performed ablution who does not remember Allah in doing it.”<sup>11</sup> The *wudu* consists of washing the hands three times (beginning with the right hand), rinsing the mouth three times, washing the face three times with both hands, washing the forearms, washing the face, cleaning out the ears, and washing the feet (again beginning with the right side).<sup>12</sup> The ritual of ablution is concluded with another blessing, the *alhamulillah* (the praise belongs to Allah). In order to facilitate ablutions, mosques customarily have a courtyard fountain. The running water in the fountain provided not only a necessary ritual component but also symbolized the fountains promised to those who enter paradise. The sound and feel of cool, fresh, running water was a welcome relief to desert peoples, a blessing on earth typifying the greater blessings of heaven.

## THE *MASJID* (MOSQUE)

The *masjid* is the preferred forum for ritual communal prayer. Mecca, home of Muhammad and the birthplace of Islam, was also the site of the first mosque. This first mosque, called *al-masjid al-haram* (or “sacred place of prostration”), consisted of the immediate vicinity of the *ka’ba*, or black cube of Mecca.<sup>13</sup> The origins of the *ka’ba* are tied to Abraham and Ishmael. When Ishmael and Hagar departed due to the quarrel between Hagar and Sarah, the Qur’an records that Abraham himself traveled into the desert to rescue them from death. The young Ishmael and Hagar were at the point of death from thirst. Abraham prayed to Allah,<sup>14</sup> and a spring appeared. Ishmael and Abraham rebuilt the ruined *ka’ba*, known in Abraham’s time as “the ancient house” (Arabic, *bayt al-’atiq*) and renamed it the House of God (Arabic, *bayt allah*). In Muhammad’s

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day it became the first “place of prostration” for the fledgling Muslim community. All subsequent mosques are patterned after the *al-haram al-masjid* in terms of their basic elements and composition.

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The mosque provides a sacred place for the purified believer to pray. Each mosque has two essential parts: the *mihrab* and the *minbar*.<sup>15</sup> Mosques customarily have other optional elements, notably the Minaret, from which the call to prayer is performed. The *mihrab* should mark the *qibla*, the exact direction toward the *ka'ba*, so far as it can be determined. The designation of a direction for prayer was not unusual in the Ancient Near East. I Kings 8:44 records the commandment given to Solomon that prayers were to be oriented toward the temple under certain circumstances: the people “shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and *toward* the house that I have built for thy name.” Daniel, residing in Babylon, faced westward toward Jerusalem when he prayed: “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Daniel 6:11). Muhammad established the custom of facing the *ka'ba* in prayer, replacing Jerusalem as the preferred orientation for devotion. The custom makes sense, both to Israelites and to Muslims, since the House of God is the abode of God on earth, the focal point of worship.<sup>16</sup>

The *minbar* is essentially a pulpit, an elevated place for public address. Muhammad used a simple three-step *minbar*, and subsequent leaders stood on lower steps to indicate their inferiority to Muhammad. The custom is still followed today in many places although the number of steps and the design vary widely. The *minbar* is used for the sermon delivered during the Friday noon prayer. The *imam* (the spiritual leader for a given mosque) customarily delivers the sermon although he may designate another to speak in his place. The primary function of the *imam* is to lead prayer in organized fashion at the times designated, although any male Muslim may lead prayer for a community. A woman may lead the prayer for the household, in the absence of the husband or other appropriate male spiritual leader. The qualifications for an *imam* are somewhat informal, although some Muslim communities seek qualified applicants who hold degrees or have received formal training. Imams are chosen based upon their age (maturity), dignity in knowledge (particularly knowledge of the Qur'an), or social leadership.

Islamic literature is filled with stories, some humorous, involving the *minbar* and the Friday Sermon, which served as the weekly public event *par excellence*. For example:

One Friday, Nassreddin Hoja, a familiar character from Islamic folktales who is known as a “wise-fool,” ascended the *minbar*, and asked the congregation:

“Do you know what I’m going to tell you?” “How could we know?” they respond. Hoja says, “If you come unprepared to hear me, what’s the use of my speaking to you?”

The next Friday, he ascends and asks another question, but this time the congregation comes prepared. “Do you know what I’m going to tell you?” They reply: “Yes, we know.” Hoja declares “If you already know, why should I waste my breath?” and descends from the *minbar*.

The following Friday, Hoja ascends once more. The members of the congregation have already agreed how to answer him. “Do you know what I’m going to say?” Hoja asks. ‘Some of us know, and some don’t.” Hoja replies: “In that case, I won’t waste your time. Let those who know tell those that don’t,” and he exited the mosque.<sup>17</sup>

What appear to be little more than humorous folktales hide deeper truths. A congregation unprepared will learn little, a congregation that thinks it knows all is beyond the preacher’s reach, and a congregation divided is distracted by know-it-alls who insist on correcting the speaker (or inserting their own brilliant observations). One should come to Friday services aware of upcoming religious and communal events, alert to the needs of the community, so that they may absorb and thereafter act upon the sermon’s teachings. A recent example illustrates this.

In September 2004 members of my Religion 351 class attended a Friday service at the *masjid an-noor* in Salt Lake City. Before arriving at the mosque, they studied the doctrinal and ritual aspects of Islamic prayer, cultivating a sense of appreciation for what they were about to witness. Ramadan would begin on October 15, 2004. Attendees at the September Friday services should therefore expect sermons preparing them for Ramadan. Our students were not disappointed. Tarik, a local Muslim from Kurdistan in northern Iraq, gave the sermon under the direction of *Imam* Jama Barkatle Mohamed, an African Muslim. Tarik not only focused his comments on the arrival of Ramadan, but he asked the congregation to assess their individual preparation for the fast. “Are you ready to receive more faith through fasting?” he asked. “Are you prepared to read the Qur’an with your heart as well as with your eyes? Are you going to serve others and generously share your food?” He concluded that if they could affirmatively answer these questions, then they were ready for the upcoming fast. The sermon proved insightful for the students as well as for the congregation: They talked about sincere fasting and prayer during the balance of the afternoon. The Friday sermon serves best those prepared to receive the message. Above all, however, the mosque is a place of worship, and worship in Islam is grounded firmly in prayer.

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SALAT: THE ISLAMIC ORDER OF PRAYER

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1. Place the right and left hands, palms forward, and behind the corresponding ear, and say "Praise and glory be to thee, O Allah. Blessed be Thy Name, exalted be Thy Majesty and Glory. There is no god but Thee. I seek Allah's shelter from Satan, the condemned.<sup>18</sup> In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds; most Gracious, most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose portion is not wrath, and who go not astray."<sup>19</sup>
2. Hands on knees, bow from the waist, say "Glorified is my Lord, the Great."
3. Hands at the side, say "Allah listens to those who praise Him. Our Lord, praise be for Thee only."
4. Kneeling, with head placed on the floor between the hands, palms down, say "O Lord, forgive me and have mercy on me."
5. Sitting in a kneeling position, say "All our verbal, physical and monetary ways of worship belong to Allah alone. Peace, mercy and the blessing of Allah be upon you, O Prophet. May peace be upon us and upon the devout servants of Allah. I testify that there is no god but Allah and I testify that Muhammad is his Servant and Messenger." [Note: the *imam* commonly pauses the prayer at this point, for a significant amount of time, for the congregation to offer personal devotion and petition.]
6. Kneeling again, with head placed on the floor between the hands, say "O Lord, forgive me and have mercy on me."
7. Standing, repeat the *fatihah* (number 1, above).

8. Kneeling in a sitting position, repeat again the text of number 5, and add, “O God send Thy mercy on Muhammad and his posterity as you have blessed Abraham and his posterity. Thou art the Most Praised, the Most Glorious.”

9. Looking to the right at those believers joining in prayer, say, “Allah’s Peace and Mercy be upon you.” Repeat this looking to the left.

10. Arise, and repeat the prayer as indicated by the *imam*. [If the *imam* feels that the community is in need of repentance or more devotion, the prayer may be repeated several times.]

After the Friday noon prayer, Muslims often spend social time, since this prayer is for the entire family. Hymns of praise may be sung, or they may listen to recitations of the Qur’an. I estimate, given the requirements of prayer, that devout Muslims spend at least one hour each day praying, a practice that merits respect.

#### VISITORS ARE WELCOME

LDS chapels customarily display a sign saying “visitors welcome.” Although mosques do not display the message so prominently, visitors are welcome at most mosques, so long as dress is modest and behavior is mature. Our September visit to *masjid an-noor*, referenced earlier in the article, confirmed this. We were warmly welcomed. Several Muslim families attended noon prayer. The men and women separated upon arrival, each to pray in different places (Muslims believe that both men and women may be distracted unless the sexes pray in distinct areas). The females greeted one another by exchanging kisses on the cheek and blessing each other. Men embraced and blessed each other. We took off our shoes, the ladies donned head scarves, and we entered. Inside the mosque, several men were preparing to pray, reading the Qur’an. Others greeted and conversed in reverential tones. The man who would later deliver the sermon, Tarik, greeted us (Professor Chris Wilson, student Eric Katschke, and me). He pronounced a blessing upon us in Arabic, which I returned on behalf of us all. Tarik thanked us for coming and began sharing information about Islam in America. He repeatedly said: “I hope that you will see that we Muslims are not a violent people. We are good Americans. We love to worship Allah. We try to be generous and kind. Please don’t believe what you see on television. We want to be friends.” I later discovered that our student sisters also received a warm welcome and pleas to disregard the distortions of media images. Eric, Chris, and I put Tarik’s anxiety to rest. We told him that we were there to learn about Islam and that we knew the media couldn’t possibly account for the conduct of a billion people by examining the behavior of extremists.

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The *imam* arrived and began the call to prayer. I noticed that no one brought prayer rugs. The mosque is a converted church, and the carpet was laid in diagonal stripes of light and dark green, about four feet wide. The angle of the stripes was unusual in that there seemed to be no reason for the exact orientation of the stripes. Their purpose became clear. The men lined up in ranks along the carpet stripes, the angle pointed them toward the *qibla*, a rather ingenious design, one that I had never heard of before. I recognized Safiullah (he came to America from the Indian subcontinent), who had attended graduate school with me. He had his sons with him and lovingly helped them form ranks and pray. Here was a patriarch at work, guiding his family in worship. I met with Safiullah and his sons. He proudly introduced his children and asked why I had come. Having renewed our acquaintance, they pronounced a blessing of peace on us, and we left. Once in the university vans, and on our way to the hotel, the students excitedly shared what they felt. Without exception they were impressed by the devotion displayed during the prayer. They never forgot the importance of a testimony of the restored gospel, of course, but they realized that both Islam and Mormonism advocate a life of worship, obedience, and virtue. The students made new friends, and they also left a positive impression of LDS conduct on the Muslim congregation.

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#### CONCLUSION

Although doctrinal differences exist concerning prayer for Latter-day Saints as compared to Muslims, there are a number of correlations. Prayer binds communities as the faithful greet and bless each other, it helps sanctify the individual, it attacks pride and encourages humility, and God is confirmed as the sole legitimate object of worship and veneration. Prayer encourages charity and generosity. Prayer unites families in devotion, where fathers teach their sons with kindness and mothers instill faith in their daughters. Surely, these are moral lessons that Latter-day Saints can appreciate even though there are differences of doctrine and priesthood authority. ∞

## NOTES:

- 1 All quotations from the Qur'an are taken from Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Beltsville: Aman Publications), unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 The Qur'an teaches that all creation naturally praises Allah: "Seest thou not that it is Allah whose praises all beings in the heavens and on the earth do celebrate, and the birds of the air with wings outspread? Each one knows its own mode of prayer" (Qur'an 24:41).
- 3 *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002), 176.
- 4 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 676.
- 5 Huston Smith, *The Illustrated World's Religions: A Guide to Our Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), 162.
- 6 *Salat*, in *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, eds. (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 492.
- 7 Women often pray in the mosque only during the Friday noon prayer but at other times customarily pray at home or in a special room set aside in apartment complexes. This is not a manifestation of gender discrimination in western terms but an acknowledgement that requiring mothers to take children to church five times each and every day of the year would impose an impossible burden.
- 8 *Adhan* in the *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, 16.
- 9 Maulana Muhammad Ali, *A Manual of Hadith* (Lahore: The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore), 37.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 41-42. The toothbrush is known in Arabic as *matara lilfam*, or "purifier of the mouth," referencing its use in purification as well as in mere cleaning.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Wudu* in *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*, Cyril Glassé, ed. (New York: Altamira Press, 2001), 478.
- 13 *Ka'bah* in *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*, 244-245.
- 14 A reminder for the reader: "Allah" is the name used by the LDS Church in Arabic publications to designate God the Father. The Arabic version of the Book of Mormon and the sacrament prayer made this usage canonical and liturgical. The name "Allah" is derived from the same Semitic root word for God ("El") and is related closely to the words "Eloh" and "Elohim." Thus, to say the Abrahamic prayer to Allah is consistent with LDS doctrine and ritual.
- 15 See each of the Arabic terms as listed in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* and *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* for details.
- 16 Physical orientation is used scripturally to denote spiritual orientation. Thus, the people of King Benjamin oriented the door of their tent toward the temple (Mosiah 2:6), while Lot oriented his tent toward the city of Sodom (Genesis 13:12), amid the cities of the plain. The spiritual consequences for Lot's family reflect their physical orientation.
- 17 Talat Halman, *The Tales of Nasrettin Hoca as Told by Aziz Nesin* (Istanbul: Dost Yayinlari), 43.

- 18 Islam teaches that Allah has ninety-nine names, and this accounts for the use of capital letters in English on such titles as “Majesty” and “Glory.” Other names include “The Compassionate,” “The Merciful.”
- 19 This portion of the prayer, beginning with “In the Name of God...” is called the *fatihah* and is the opening chapter of the Qur’an. It is a prayer, much the same as the Lord’s Prayer, a ritual and formulaic prayer in much of Christianity but nevertheless powerful when delivered from the heart.