

A Muslim-Christian Spiritual Anthology: Common Prayer

Excerpts, Edited by Kenneth Cragg

Praise be to God who feeds us and give us to drink, who suffices for us and shelters us. How many there are who have none to be to them either sufficiency or haven. In Thy Name, O God, I live and in Thy Name I die.

O Lord, I ask of thee, from thy Presence, a mercy by which thou wilt guide my heart and order my concern, a mercy by which thou wilt repair my distractedness and bring back my alertness, a mercy cleansing my works and inspiring my ways, a mercy ennobling what I mean to others and reuniting me with those to whom I belong, a mercy whereby thou preservest me from every evil.

This, O God, is my prayer. Thine it is to hear. This is my yearning.
On Thee is my reliance.

- Prayer of the Prophet Mohammed, via Abu Hamid al Ghazali (Cragg, p.22)

My God and my Lord, eyes are at rest, stars are setting, hushed are the movements of birds in their nests, of monsters in the deep.

And thou art the just who knowest no change, the equity that swerveth not, the everlasting that passeth not away.

The doors are locked, watched by their bodyguards.
But thy door is open to him who calls on thee.

My Lord, each lover is now alone with his beloved.
Thou for me art the beloved One.

- Abd Al-Aziz Al-Dirini: Purity of Heart (Cragg, p.30)

My God, how can you recoil back upon us our sins - we in our poverty yearning after what befits you?

We who have repaired to your door, take us into your pity with your beloved ones. It is the utmost grace to us that we should be your servants: it suffices us for honor that you should be our Lord.

O my God, you are to us in the measure of your love, make us to be yours by that measure of our being loved.

O my God, all joy save with you fades away, all employ save yours is empty. To rejoice in you is joy indeed, while happiness without you deludes. (p. 42)

- Abd Al-Aziz Al-Dirini: Taharat al-Qutub

I looked at myself as I then was. Worldly interests encompassed me on every side ... When I considered the intention of my teaching, I perceived that instead of doing it for God's sake alone I had no active motive but the desire for glory and reputation. I realized that I stood on the edge of a precipice. (p. 44)

- Abu Hamid A;1-Ghazali: The Deliverer from Wandering

O my God, thou art my confidence: of thee I seek protection lest there be in me any source of thy displeasing. O my God, save me from all inadequacies and let all my doings be to thy own good pleasure. O thou Lord of glory and honor, grant me the crown of knowledge, knowledge of thy unity and thy divine nature, so that I may be occupied with thee alone.

Make real to me, O God, the glory, the beauty, the excellence, the majesty, the perfection that are thine, the light and the splendor. Let me know the sweetness thereof in my own soul that I may be precluded from self-preoccupation. Let the vision of thee keep me from the thought of myself and let me thus depart never from the keeping of thy divine laws granted by revelation. (p. 54)

- Ahmad Ibn-Idris: Prayers

Should any among you see evil activities, he should change them with his hand. If he cannot do that he should change them with his tongue. And if he cannot do that he should change them with his heart. (p. 65)

- Tradition of the Prophet, noted by Muslim and Ibn Khaldun

Lord, there are many such,
Dwelling in narrow resentments,
Embittered by wrongs that others have inflicted,
Confined to harsh enemies,
Imprisoned in spirit by despair at evil deeds,
Drained of hope and bereft of peace,
Left to great hatred in this world.
Have mercy, good Lord, upon all these
Whose world, through human malice,

Despairs of human kindness.
Judge and turn their oppressors,
Release again, for the fearful,
The springs of trust and goodness.
Give them liberty of heart
The liberty of those who leave room
For the judgement of God.
Enlarge our hearts, O God,
That we may do battle against evil
And bear the sorrows of the weary,
And seek and serve thy will.
Great art thou, O Lord.
There is nought that is a match for thee. Amen.
O my Lord, enlarge my heart. (p. 73)

- Surah of Ta Ha 26

Some Christians. .. will be strenuously repudiating Islam even while protesting that they must “love Muslims”. Such will not let the “love” interrogate the repudiation. Others will not even stay for the scruples of “love” but make their anathemas complete. Surely, they will say, the finality of God in Christ is decisively against any positive significance in a subsequent religion. (Cragg, p. 121)

The place for dogma is not always prior in the things of the Spirit. Nor are faiths necessarily most loyal when they are the most assertive. What matters is to read “the mind of Christ”, the Christ who was no stranger to controversy yet perceived potential where the right credentials were hidden from normal sight. (Cragg, p. 123)

“Room to turn in” - the inner meaning of metanoia - is what “parties to common prayer” may afford to one another. (Cragg, p. 131)