

Part II

Moments of the Muslim's Religious Life

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Shahādah (The Confession of Faith)

THE Muslim confesses that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Prophet of God. This confession is called *shahādah* or “witness.” It is not only his legal passport into the Muslim community; it is the quintessence of his faith and expression of his identity, which he recites many times a day on many different occasions. Besides the principles its first half implies (justification by works, humility and submission to God, defiance of tyrants and other gods, vicegerency of man on earth, and self-fulfillment, which we discussed in chapter 2), the *shahādah* asserts the prophethood of Muhammad. This means that the witness accepts what Muhammad has conveyed from heaven as truly what God has sent down. These revelations collected together in the order the Prophet himself has directed them to be recited, constitute the Holy Qur’an, the scripture of Islam. To witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of God is tantamount to witnessing that the Qur’an is the holy word of God, complete, *verbatim* and in the order it has been collected; that its commandments and directives are normative, incumbent on the Muslim as God’s ever-present pronouncement.

The Prophet enjoys a second kind of authority, beside that of conveying the holy word of God *verbatim*. That is the authority of actualizing the revelation in his own life. His life, with its deeds and

decisions, approbations and condemnations, constitutes the perfect embodiment of the Islamic message. The Prophet's Sunnah ("trodden path," or "example") is therefore normative to the Muslim and constitutes the exemplary "how" for the "what" of revelation. From it, the Muslim derives all his liturgy as well as a fair measure of the precepts of Islamic law and ethics. The Sunnah has come down to us as reports carried by the Prophet's companions and passed to the generations after them. These reports are called hadith(s).

The authenticity and integrity of the text of the Qur'an stand beyond question. The Qur'anic revelations came in the full light of history, were both written down and memorized by the thousands among a people with the most developed memory in the world. Ever since they were revealed, they were continuously recited in public, in front of people who were perfectly familiar with them throughout the Muslim World. Believing that he is reciting the *ipissima verba* of God, the Muslim gave his recitation and his copying of the Qur'anic text absolutely the greatest care. Even the very act of worship, the formal prayer, which may not be interrupted for any reason – not even by a threat to the worshipper's security – because in prayer the Muslim is supposed to stand in the presence of God, may be interrupted and the worship leader corrected aloud by anyone listening, whenever a fault occurs in the recitation of the Holy Qur'an. Finally, at the very time the Caliph 'Uthmān (644-656 CE) was collecting and promulgating the present text of the Qur'an as a book, internal strife and contest for power split the community asunder. For decades and centuries since, the factions continued their bloody strife, each justifying its case with arguments and quotations from the Holy Book. Never has anyone claimed or accused the other of tampering with the text. This was a final test of fire which the Qur'anic text has passed with flying colors. That is why Sir William Muir reported von Hammer's scholarly judgment approvingly that, "we [scholars] are as certain that the Qur'an is the historical word of Muhammad as the Muslim is certain it is the word of God."

The texts of the Sunnah do not enjoy such unquestionable authority. Muslims are perfectly aware that the Sunnah has been tampered with as it was transmitted between the first four generations. Hence,

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they are careful always to qualify the Sunnah with the word *al-ṣaḥīḥah* (i.e., “veritable” or “verified”). To sift the veritable from the weak or spurious hadiths, Muslims have perfected the sciences of textual criticism and elaborated the most sophisticated disciplines to criticize and ascertain the historical veritability of the chains of narrators, of every hadith, of the form or language, of the redaction of the text, of the coherence and rationality of the content of the text and its correspondence with the Holy Qur’an, with otherwise known historical reality and the accumulated wisdom of mankind. Their love and respect for the hadiths of the Prophet knew no bounds. Hence, they preserved all the materials claimed to come from the Prophet, but they classified them into a long series of categories of ascending or descending levels of authenticity.

The Prophethood of Muhammad, restricting itself to the *verbatim* conveyance of the word of God, presents us with a perfection of the whole phenomenon of prophecy in Semitic culture. Certainly Moses represented another apex in that history, after which prophecy degenerated in Israel to the point of there being hundreds of pseudo-prophets running in the market places without any being able to prove his prophethood conclusively. Islam restituted prophecy to its place of high honor. The change in times however prescribed that prophets no longer justify themselves with miracles which boggle the mind, or reason, of man. Hence, Islam believes in no miracles and Muslims claim none for Muhammad. In their view, what proves Muhammad’s prophethood is the sublime beauty and greatness of the revelation itself, the Holy Qur’an, not any inexplicable breaches of natural law which confound man’s reason or pass his powers of understanding. The Qur’anic revelation is a presentation to man’s mind, to reason. It makes its claim critically. It is not a “scandalon” or “stumbling block.” Instead of commanding blind belief, it invites man to consider the evidence, to compare and contrast the claims and the data, and to judge only in certainty and conviction of the truth.

This is why Islam never had a religious synod or council or church empowered with the right of *magisterium*, the right to make *ex cathedra* pronouncements about Islam. In Islam, religious truth is a matter of argument and conviction, a cause in which everybody is entitled to

contend and everybody is entitled to convince and be convinced. To witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of God means in final analysis that one is convinced of the truth and viability of the claim that religious truth is critical, arguable and self-convincing. This categorically affects the first part of the *shahādah*, namely, “There is no god but God.” It tells us that this is a rational claim; and we can convince ourselves of its truth neither by authority nor coercion. We have to reason, to think and consider all the evidence, in seriousness and responsibility. Even if we were tentatively to deny it, we can do so only under the proviso that truth is possible to know, that it is, like God, one and not many. But isn’t God the truth?

Salah (Worship, Prayer)

THE word *salah* is better translated as “worship” than “prayer.” Prayer, it is well known, is not necessarily formal. It has no prescribed style, and can be recited almost anywhere, anytime. It is not obligatory, like the sacrament of communion in Christianity, or indispensable like baptism. Islam knows a form of communion with God which fits the appellation “prayer,” and it is called *du‘ā’*, literally invocation or calling. Like “prayer,” it varies according to the content, as in prayer of thanksgiving, of praise, of supplication, of forgiveness, etc.

Unlike *du‘ā’*, *salah* has a definite and precise form. It has to be recited five times a day at given intervals. If the time assigned to it is missed, it can be made up, but under the express consciousness that one is only making up what has been missed. It is an absolute commandment of God imposed upon all adult Muslims, male and female. There is no Islam without it, if it is denied defiantly. If it is neglected, the Muslim has committed a grave sin which must be repented and made up. However, no Muslim has authority to force an adult to hold it; and no one may prosecute or charge with heresy, a Muslim for delinquency in its performance unless that delinquency is accompanied by public defiance of the commandment enjoining it.

Salah is preceded by ablution. This is both real and symbolic, and both levels of meaning are required in Islam. The Muslim may not

approach the divine Presence, as he does in salah, with a dirty body or appearance. Just as the place where he prays is required to be clean (and hence the ubiquitous “prayer” rug throughout the world of Islam), so his clothing and body must be equally clean. Soiled clothes have to be changed. Hands, mouth and teeth, nose, face, head, neck and ears, arms to the elbows and feet to the ankle, have to be washed in clean, preferably running, water. The whole operation must be preceded with a silent declaration of intention to oneself that one is entering into it for the sake of God.

As far as physical cleanliness is concerned, ablution is a welcome exercise. We can appreciate its prophylactic value when applied to desert people where dust abounds, and to farmers in irrigated lands where mud is the order of the day, everyday. But we can also appreciate its blessings in our industrial cities where soot and other air polluting agents threaten to choke us. Psychologists everywhere would applaud its refreshing and rejuvenative effect as it comes at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and night. As to its symbolic meaning, it is a ritual whose purpose is self-preparation for communion with God. The *niyyah*, or declaration of intent, which precedes it, sets the mood for seriousness and gravity, as man approaches the precincts of the Holy.

Salah can be performed anywhere; for wherever the Muslim stands, there is God present. No ground is holy; and the mosque is only a place dedicated for worship, but not “consecrated.” Salah can be performed by the worshipper alone, since there is no sacrament and no priesthood in Islam. Performing it with one’s fellows is desirable, not obligatory; but obligatory is the Muslim’s performance of congregational salah on Friday (*jum‘ah*). The congregational salah is led by an imam (leader) whose function is to synchronize the movements of beginning and ending, of genuflection and prostration. Any Muslim may lead the salah, provided his recitation of the Qur’an is correct. On Friday, the imam delivers a *khuṭbah*, or sermon, in addition to these duties. The subject of the sermon should be a living issue in Muslim life; and the imam should try to relate the relevant passages of the Qur’an and hadith to the issue at hand.

Salah (Worship, Prayer)

For the congregational salah, the Qur'an advises that beautiful clothes be worn with decorum. Before starting it, the imam makes sure that the lines of worshippers are full and solid and straight. All face in the direction of the Ka'bah in Makkah. The sight of Muslims in salah, whether standing in their straight rows or kneeling and prostrating themselves, is indeed a forcefully expressive and deeply moving sight. The straight line bespeaks the equality of all, and the solid fullness, brotherhood and the community's cohesiveness.

The night ends at dawn and the day begins. Islam prescribes that the day begin with salah, where God is praised, His guidance is sought and His blessing and mercy are prayed for. Between dawn and the noon salah, there is usually a stretch of 7-8 hours which can and should be used to do the day's work. Where the work is of a heavy nature, this period is adequate to satisfy the needs of a progressive, well organized economy. Where the work is light, it can be resumed after the noon salah, which can also constitute a refreshing break. No one needs work beyond the mid-afternoon salah, unless it is for an emergency situation or for his own pleasure and desire. The sunset salah terminates the day, and the night salah marks the Muslim's retirement.

Salah is a discipline. Its ablution, its form, its movement, timing and number of genuflections and prostrations – all these constitute, exercises in self-attunement to the call of God. The Qur'an says that salah is futile unless it conduces to moral action. The fact is that salah properly performed does conduce to moral action and self-exertion in the greater cause, the cause of God. It does not only remind man of God. For its duration, five times a day, it causes man to live for a time face to face, as it were, with his Lord, Master and Creator. There can be no greater or more direct route to righteousness.

Zakah

(Wealth Sharing)

LITERALLY, al-zakah means the sweetening. The idea it expresses is that it consists in justification, or making *ḥalāl* (legitimate, innocent, good) that which it is supposed to affect. The term can be used with a human being as object, in which case it means recommendation or acclamation. When used with wealth as its object – and that is the greater usage – it means making that wealth just, legitimate, innocent, good and worthy. Obviously, the worth zakah adds to wealth is not utilitarian, but moral.

Islam regards all wealth as belonging to God. Man may appropriate as much of it as he pleases, by all means which economic life makes possible, as long as such means do not infringe the moral law. Wealth gathering is legitimate activity as long as it implies no theft, no cheating, no coercion. Indeed, the pursuit of wealth is one of the primal concerns of man, demanded by survival (where it consists of the search for food, shelter, clothing and comfort) as well as by man's *khilāfah* or vicegerency (where its object is the planned satisfaction of one's own material needs and those of humanity.) Engagement in it fills the greatest portion of life and exhausts the greatest energies of all men, everywhere and at all times. It is the very stuff of which living consists. Its subjection to the moral law, i.e., its governance by the laws

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prohibiting the appropriation of any part of it without the free and deliberate consent of the other person involved in the transaction, is an absolute requirement. Without it, human life sinks to the level of the animals, of materialism and exploitation.

But even if every requirement of the moral law has been strictly observed in every step and stage of the process of wealth acquisition, the wealth achieved still needs justification on another level. This is what the institution of zakah seems to require. Granted, then, that I have violated no moral law in acquiring my wealth, *why* does Islam hold such wealth nonetheless illegitimate until I have justified it by means of zakah?

The answer is that whereas the moral law governs the acquisition of wealth, there is need for another law to govern its consumption and/or continued possession. Had there been no purpose to our life except its existence, no meaning to personal existence except the pleasure, comfort and satisfaction derivable therefrom, no demand could be made of the owner of wealth. *Laissez-faire* in wealth acquisition was the conclusion of political liberalism. *Laissez-faire* in the consumption of wealth is a necessary dictate of hedonism, utilitarianism, eudemonism and all moral theories which define the good in worldly or relative terms. Since Islam does define the good in terms of absolute laws which refer to a divine will and commandment, to a transcendent pattern which is the ultimate purpose of all moral action, it found necessary to regulate the consumption and possession of wealth.

Islam's tenet in this regard is that wealth, once acquired, ought to be shared with others in some proportion. This is equally the requirement of charity; and charity is as old as man. Is it all that Islam requires? Certainly, it is charity, answers Islam; but it is more. Charity has always been regarded as a high moral value by all mankind. Its proportion, nay its very observance, has been left to the personal discretion of the giver. True, morality has always taught that the greater the portion one shares with his fellows, the greater the merit. Jesus moved charity to higher moral grounds when he taught that the purer the motivation with which the giver gives his wealth, the greater the moral worth of the deed. With all this Islam fully agrees, recognizing this teaching of Jesus as genuine revelation from God. It called the institution *ṣadaqah*, a

derivative from the act of faith itself by which man acknowledges God to be God.

No religion or morality before Islam has made charity itself obligatory in the sense of institutionalizing it and empowering somebody to levy, collect and distribute it. It is nice to have charity as a moral ideal. But what would be its worth if it remained an unobserved ideal? An ideal satisfiable by the millionaire's giving of a few pennies to the poor on the sidewalk? An ideal whose observance is subject only to one's conscience, or to God in the Hereafter, but to no regulation by man's peers in this world?

This is the need to which Islam addressed itself by the institution of *zakah*. You may give of your wealth to your fellow men as much as you please, when you please, in the manner you please. That is your *ṣadaqah* of which your conscience and God are the only judges. But you may not escape the requirement of giving every year 2.5 per cent of your total wealth to a corporate institution, the Islamic state, for distribution to the less fortunate, to those in need. Thus, Islam sought to preserve the moral value of charity, and to add to it the equally moral value of wealth-sharing or *zakah*. Its purpose was dual: to convince the wealthy that the title to his very wealth is mitigated by the title of his fellow man to life and subsistence, and to assure the needy that his fellow men will not passively see him suffer his misfortune. A bond of humanity, of fellowship, of brotherhood binds both the wealthy and the poor together. The Prophet said: "Men are like the organs of a body. When an organ suffers the whole body responds to repel the cause of suffering." The Qur'an went as far as to quote the consciousness of the need for altruistic self-exertion with religion itself. "Who is the denier of religion itself? It is he who repulses the orphan, who does not enjoin the feeding of the poor. Woe to those who observe the rituals of religion but are insensitive to the moral side of those rituals, and hence to the need of the miserable for assistance." (Qur'an 107:1-7)

Sawm (Fasting)

FASTING is an old religious custom. It was practiced by lay persons and clergy in ancient religions, as well as by Jews, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists. Though its purposes differed from religion to religion, there was general agreement that fasting was a self-preparation for communion with divinity.

Islam has prescribed for all healthy adult Muslims a rigorous fast: total abstention from food, drink and sex from dawn to sunset during every day of the month of Ramadan, the ninth month in the lunar year. The body may not partake of anything in any way or contact another of the opposite sex without breaking the fast. Exempted from this duty are children, persons suffering from sickness, or undergoing travel. In such cases, the exempted person was not to forego the fast but to postpone it to another, more healthy or restful time before recurrence of the following Ramadan.

Long before Islam, the month of Ramadan was regarded by the Arabs as a holy month. Its occasion imposed upon them the proscription of war and hunting, and brought about an uninterrupted peace during which travel and movement of goods across the desert were safe from attack by anyone or any tribe. The Arabs reckoned Ramadan as the month of spiritual stocktaking. Throughout its duration, they were

especially keen to please, to settle old debts and disputes, to do good to their neighbors. The more morally sensitive natures among them underwent a retreat within the temple, or into their homes, in order not to disturb their concentration and meditation. Before his commission as Prophet, Muhammad was in the habit of retreating during Ramadan to Hira, a cave outside of Makkah, where he would spend several days in meditation. His wife used to send him a daily provision with a servant, knowing that her husband was devoting himself exclusively to worship.

Islam continued the tradition of dedicating the month of Ramadan to religious pursuits. Besides the fast, the Islamic tradition regarded moral and religious action during Ramadan as especially meritorious, and urged Muslims to increase their service to God during the month. It was during Ramadan that Muhammad received his first revelation.

Islam assigned to fasting two purposes; self-discipline and commiseration with the hungry of the earth. We have seen that Islam repudiates self-mortification and asceticism. In consequence, it cannot regard fasting as an ascetic self-denial valuable in and for itself or when done for the sake of God. For Islam does not believe that righteousness requires that mankind deny itself. God wishes for mankind to be free, healthy, fulfilled and happy. As philosophers might put it, going to the dentist is certainly a painful experience. One does not perform it for its own sake without assuming that suffering is the end of human life. One performs it willingly, however, if it is taken to lead to the realization of the purpose of health and well being which are the opposite of suffering. Accordingly, there is no denying that fasting is a hardship, and the question is, to what purpose did Islam impose it? It is in this purpose that the meaning of Ramadan must be sought.

Self-discipline through fasting is a religiously novel idea. Food and sex, which are the pivotal instincts of life, and whose satisfaction is a capital requirement of any social order, are precisely the most sensitive areas of human life. No threat to any other area could be more central or dangerous, more prone to alert man's consciousness in full, except the threat of death itself. Prohibition of food and sex does constitute such threat, the former to individual life and the latter to group life. Deliberate abstinence from food and sex stirs up the consciousness of

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imminent death to both the individual and the group, and provides ample opportunity to mobilize consciousness and launch it into combat, in defense of life.

Islam has prescribed total abstinence from food and sex from dawn to sunset precisely in order to stir up consciousness, to think of life and death, and to train the individual to resist the threat. The threat to individual and group life must be resisted; and the Muslim must be taught and trained in the art of resistance. Patience, forbearance, perseverance, steadfastness in suffering and privation, these are the qualities Islam seeks to cultivate through fasting. Conversely, the areas of food and sex are man's weakest spots as far as morality and righteousness are concerned. Almost all vice and immorality find their way into the world through these two avenues. To learn how to block them in the face of immoral use, to fortify the individual against temptation and make one's moral house impregnable through them, is equally the purpose of Islam.

For these reasons, Islam looks upon fasting as the best exercise in the art of self-mastery and discipline. To make the exercise pedagogically fruitful, Islam prescribed that the fast be broken promptly at sunset, even before the performance of the sunset salah. That is why Islam regarded every day in Ramadan as a fresh exercise or trial which, if carried successfully to sunset, may be ended with celebration, food and joy, that the abstinence and hence the exercise may be started all over again at dawn, the next day. A little indulgence at night, the Legislator seems to have thought, might even make the daytime abstinence more effective as an exercise in self-mastery than continuous denial which can quickly become habitual and hence of diluted effect. The alternation of abstinence and indulgence every day and night is far more forceful and effective.

Throughout the Muslim World, the month of Ramadan is received with joy. People uphold the fast and literally change their countenances. No time is better for articulating the social bond uniting Muslim to Muslim. At night, Muslim towns and villages are alive with togetherness and merrymaking. Lest the latter get out of hand and to keep the moral-religious lesson ever present to consciousness, Islam prescribed a special salah for the nights of Ramadan, namely, *tarāwīḥ*.

Ideally this salah, which is at least as long as all the *ṣalawāt* (plural of salah) of the day, would involve the recitation of the whole Qur'an in successive parts during the 29 or 30 days of the month.

The end of Ramadan is a feast called *ʿId al-Fitr* (feast of the breaking of the fast) which Muslims celebrate in one congregational salah in the first morning after Ramadan, and with gifts, visits with relatives and friends, food and joyful events. New clothing for young and old is imperative for salah of the *ʿId al-Fitr*, which is to be held in as few places as possible in order to congregate together the greatest possible number of Muslims. The joy of the feast is a culmination of moral success at the daily fast of the previous month. If the trial of the month of Ramadan has been a success in its totality, the feast is well deserved. The Muslim would have emerged “proven” in his ability to bend the pivotal forces of nature, the instincts for food and sex, to the demands of morality and religion. After a successful Ramadan, the Muslim must feel more capable and more ready to undertake any duty, any task. Like a bow, he has become more taut for the arrow.

The second purpose of fasting is commiseration with the hungry, the deprived of the earth. There is no teacher more eloquent or effective than experience. Privation is without doubt humanity's constant and greatest affliction. To undertake the fast of Ramadan is to empathize in live manner with the deprived everywhere. To enhance this lesson, Islam recommended the feeding of the neighbor, especially the poor, every day of Ramadan. It declared Ramadan the month of charity, of altruism, of neighborly love and kindness. It prescribed, as personal atonement, the feeding of sixty men for every day of Ramadan on which the fast is broken deliberately; and of two men in addition to making up the fast on other days if the fast was broken legitimately. Finally, it prescribed that no Muslim may attend the *ʿId al-Fitr* salah unless he has extended his charity to the poor the previous night. This is *zakāt al-fitr* (charity of fast-ending). Its amount is prescribed to be the equivalent of two meals on behalf of every member of the household. This measure helped to bring the joys of the feast to the poor and hungry as well.

This philosophy of fasting in Islam illustrates Islam's humanism and world-affirmation. Fasting, the art of self-denial *par excellence*, practiced

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by the ascetics of all religions, has here been transformed into an instrument of self-mastery, the better to conduct human life in its will and striving for the world and for life, but raised to higher levels of nobility and righteousness. The bitterness of denial, the morbidness of self-mortification, the antagonism to life, to space, to time and this world of men and women, of food and sex, are all wiped out in the Islamic experience. From his fast, the Muslim emerges refined and cleansed, the better to immerse himself in the discharge of his vicegerency in God's creation.

Hajj (Pilgrimage)

PILGRIMAGE is the last of the five pillars of Islam, the religious duties which constitute the fundamental duties of Islam. Whereas the first, the *shahādah* is the “entrance ticket” to Islam, salah and fasting are incumbent upon all Muslims unless they are physically incapable. Zakat is a “must” on all wealth whether it is possessed by a minor or an adult. Pilgrimage to Makkah is incumbent only upon the adult Muslim who has earned the wealth needed for the trip, has paid the zakah due on it, has fulfilled all his debts to his fellowmen, and has provided adequately for all his dependents during his projected absence.

Once the decision to undertake it is reached, pilgrimage begins with many celebrations and preparations at home. When the time comes for travel, the whole community goes out to bid the pilgrim farewell and wish him a pilgrimage acceptable to God. Upon arrival in the Hijaz and before entering Makkah al-Mukarramah (the blessed), the pilgrim sheds all his clothes and ornaments, takes a purifying ablution, and declares to God his *niyyah* or intention to perform the pilgrimage. He dons two pieces of unsewn white linen or cotton, one to cover his body from the waist down, the other from the waist up leaving the head bare. Henceforth he is not to shave or cut his hair, not to clip his finger nails, not to wear anything to distinguish him from the rest. He can, of course, change his wraps for clean ones whenever he

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wishes. Women wear normal dress in form of long robe, covering the body from head to foot, leaving face and hands exposed.

This clothing requirement is charged with religious meaning. The pilgrim is here to meet his Creator. He does so as a creature on par with all other human creatures of God. His wealth and social class, his political power as aristocrat, governor or king, his knowledge, wisdom and previous piety – none of these qualifications is allowed to show itself. All men are creatures, equally creaturely before God. The distinctions of history are wiped out. God is equally the Master of all, the merciful Benefactor of all, and the absolutely just Judge of all.

Pilgrims begin their ritual with a visit to *al-Haram al-Sharīf*, “the noble sanctuary.” They have to do so immediately upon arrival, taking no more time than what is necessary to settle down somewhere and deposit their belongings. At this first visit, they circumambulate the Ka’bah seven times reciting a *du‘ā’* (invocation) taught to them by the Prophet, and perform a short salah. They then proceed to Safa, whence they cover the distance to Marwah at trotting pace seven times (*al-Sa‘y*), reenacting the experience of Hājar (Hagar), mother of Ismail, in her search for water after she was deposited there with her infant by Ibrāhīm, as he was bound for another migration. Hājar did eventually find water which tradition tells had sprung miraculously under Ismail’s little feet. The fountain, called *Zamzam*, still gives its water to the pilgrims, many of whom take it in bottles to their distant relatives. On the second day, the pilgrims begin their journey to Arafat, a plain a few miles N.E. of Makkah where they camp. On the day of Arafat, the pilgrims stand together in prayer from the noon to the sunset salah, gathering around the very spot where Muhammad stood to deliver his farewell sermon on his last pilgrimage in the year 10 AH (632 CE).

The pilgrims then proceed to Mina where they sacrifice an animal and give its meat to the poor. They return to Makkah, stopping en route at Jamrah where they throw pebbles at a pillar symbolically representing their condemnation of the devil and his ways and reaffirming their resolution not to fall to temptation. At the sanctuary in Makkah, they repeat *al-Sa‘y*, circumambulate the Ka’bah seven times as they did at the beginning, and shed their *ihrām*, or sacral condition by clipping their nails and hair and putting on their usual clothes. They join one

another in the greatest celebration, the *Id al-Adha* (feast of the sacrifice) and prepare to visit al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah (the illuminated city of the Prophet) to pay their respects to the Prophet, buried within its mosque, who conveyed the message of God to them and led them to the life of Islam. At this time they prepare to return home. Their relatives and communities would be waiting for them with wishes of welcome and prayers that their pilgrimage has been accepted.

Failure to perform any of the rituals of pilgrimage because of sickness, accident or death, would not vitiate it; but failure to attend the standing at Arafat would. Obviously then, that ritual is the core and essence of the pilgrimage. Its meaning is simple, and is evident in the invocation which the pilgrim recites then, as well as throughout the pilgrimage. Its refrain is *Labbayka Allāhumma, Labbayka!* (At your call, O God, Here I come). God has called man to recognize God as his One Creator and Lord, to obey His commandments and serve Him. The whole ritual is nothing but the pilgrim's affirmative response to the divine call.

Since the pilgrim's affirmation of his recognition of God's Creatorship is at once his affirmation of all men's creatureliness and hence equality before God, the pilgrimage is the greatest and most eloquent embodiment of Islam's egalitarianism and universalism. Presently, every year nearly 2 million Muslims perform the pilgrimage. 1432 times since Muhammad's farewell pilgrimage, Muslims have gathered for the same rituals from the four corners of the earth. Here, in their naked human creatureliness before God, Muslims come from all races, classes, cultures, peoples, ways of life to reaffirm and renew their obedient and affirmative response to God's call. No religious event anywhere, has ever been so spectacular as Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah. None has attracted as many people; and none has expressed its religious meanings so obviously and so successfully. It was this sight that convinced Malcolm X that his black racialism was not the answer to white racialism; that a black identity asserting itself in contradistinction from Anglo-Saxon Christianity remained empty until it included the positive submission to God and to His will, to the Shari'ah (Law).