Islam
A Living Faith

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Natana J. DeLong-Bas

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Dedication

For John L. Esposito and John O. Voll,
finest of mentors and dearest of friends,
for teaching me everything I know about Islam

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Contents

Introduction

As the faith tradition of 1.6 billion people globally, Islam is the second largest and fastest-growing of the world's religions and is expected to be the world's largest religion by the end of the twenty-first century.[1] Islam represents about 23% of the global population today, so that one out of almost every four people on this planet identifies as Muslim. That percentage is expected to grow to nearly 30% by 2050.

Numbers alone suggest the need for accurate information about Islam as a religion, about how Muslims live out that faith in their daily lives, and how this belief system impacts systems of government and law, women's and minority rights, and international relations. Many in the West question Islam's compatibility with the core concepts of Western civilization—democracy, human rights, and secular law—and ask whether Muslims can fully integrate into non-Muslim societies.[2]

These are important questions. Finding answers will require looking beyond stereotypes and popular, but often inaccurate, perceptions to facts and allowing Muslim voices and actions to define their faith as they live and know it. Although the stereotypical image of a Muslim is one of an Arab man with either a beard or a turban or an Arab woman covered from head to toe in black, only about 20% of the world's Muslims are Arab and live in the Middle East. Most of the world's Muslims (62%) live in the Asia-Pacific region. The largest Muslim populations today are found in Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria, not the Middle East. India's population is growing the fastest and is expected to overtake Indonesia's

1. Statistics are from *www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/22/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/*.

2. For one of the most influential analyses of this type, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011). Although ultimately calling for an international order based on the recognition of and cooperation between civilizations, Huntington's thesis has been challenged for its insistence on civilizational difference and for Othering, which result in claims of Western superiority.

claim as home to the world's largest Muslim population by 2050. Yet Muslims are currently a minority population in India at just under 15% of the total population.[3]

By contrast, Muslims constitute less than 1% of the American population and 6% of the European population. Although the Muslim population is growing at a rate of about 1% per decade in Europe, it is expected to remain a minority.[4] Similarly, the American Muslim population is expected to grow minimally by 2050 to about 2% of the population. About half of the growth of the American Muslim population between 2010 and 2015 was due to immigration. The other half was due to natural increase. There has been little net change due to religious conversion.[5]

The small number of Muslims in the United States, in particular, means that most Americans do not personally know and have never interacted with a Muslim. A 2015 YouGov poll in the United States found that 74% of respondents did not personally work with a Muslim, 68% did not have a friend who was Muslim, and 87% had never been inside a mosque. Yet, despite that lack of personal experience and encounter, fully 40% said they supported the creation of a national database to track Muslims. This suggests that Americans' lack of exposure to and knowledge of Muslims may promote fear of them as the Other.[6] This is particularly true when that Other is often seen engaged in violence, whether in news coverage or other media

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3. Statistics are from *www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/21/by-2050-india-to-have-worlds-largest-populations-of-hindus-and-muslims/*.

4. Statistics are from *www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/19/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/*.

5. Statistics are from *www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/06/a-new-estimate-of-the-u-s-muslim-population-/*.

6. Mona Chalabi, "How Anti-Muslim Are Americans? Data Points to Extent of Islamophobia," *The Guardian*, December 8, 2015. On the question of whether Muslims are truly different from non-Muslims, including with respect to fusing religious and political authority and being prone to mass political violence, see the social scientific analysis by M. Steven Fish, *Are Muslims Distinctive? A Look at the Evidence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Fish finds, e.g., that although Islamists are responsible for a disproportionate share of terrorist bombings in the contemporary world, a large portion of those attacks occur in seven countries, none of which are in the West and most of which occurs in the context of larger conflicts, such as civil wars or insurgencies. See Fish, "Large-Scale Political Violence and Terrorism," chapter 5 in *Are Muslims Distinctive?*, 133–71, esp. 170–71.

portrayals that tend to focus on exceptional stories of tragedy and terror, rather than normal, everyday life.[7]

Such images are powerful, particularly when combined with ongoing terrorist attacks and violence targeting Europe and the United States. Yet such images can also be misleading in portraying what appears to be a pervasive and exclusive "radical Islamic threat" to Western public safety. The reality is that, between 2008 and 2016, there were twice as many terrorism incidents in the United States perpetrated by right-wing extremists, often white supremacists, than by those claiming inspiration from a radical interpretation of Islam, such as that espoused by ISIS.[8] More Muslims than Americans or Europeans have been killed in terrorist attacks.[9] Most terrorist attacks do not occur on American or European soil, but in Muslim countries—60% in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan alone between 2004 and 2013.[10] Terrorist attacks by Muslims account for less than 0.33% of all murders in the United States: a total of 54 in 2016,

7. While the media should report terrorist incidents, some question why incidents perpetrated by Muslims seem to be automatically labeled as terrorist, while descriptions of other terrorist cases pay more attention to the personal psychology and history of the attacker, who may be described as "deranged" or a "mass murderer" rather than as a "terrorist." See, e.g., the report by Erin M. Kearns, Allison Betus, and Anthony Lemieux, "Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More Media Attention than Others?" March 5, 2017, *https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2928138*. For a broad analysis of religiously inspired terrorism and cultures of violence, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). For an analysis of negative media portrayals of Arabs in particular and their impact on perceptions and policies, see Jack G. Shaheen, *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch, 2008).

8. A breakdown of the 201 designated terrorism incidents can be found at *http://www.theinvestigativefund.org/investigation/2017/06/22/home-hate/*. Of these incidents, 115 were perpetrated by right-wing extremists, compared to 63 by "Islamist domestic terrorism." Most of these 115 incidents—76%—were foiled, meaning that no attack took place, as compared with only 35% of those involving right-wing extremists. Though there were more attacks by right-wing extremists that produced fatalities (about 33%) than by those claiming Islamic inspiration (13%), the total number of fatalities was slightly higher for those claiming Islamic inspiration (90) than for right-wing extremists (79).

9. Official statistics indicate Muslim casualties accounted for 82% to 97% of total casualties between 2007 and 2012, according to the *National Counterterrorism Center Report on Terrorism, 2011* (Washington, DC: National Counterterrorism Center, 2012), *https://fas.org/irp/threat/nctc2011.pdf*.

10. Ruth Alexander and Hannah Moor, "Are Most Victims of Terrorism Muslim?" *BBC News Magazine*, January 20, 2015, *http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30883058*.

as compared with 11,000 Americans killed by other individuals or groups that year from gun homicides alone. Since the tragedy of 9/11, a total of 123 fatalities have been caused by Muslim-American extremists, as compared with 240,000 murders by other individuals or groups over the same time period.[11]

While these tragedies should not be underplayed, the statistics raise serious questions as to whether Muslim Americans as such constitute a genuine threat to American public safety, particularly given their long history in the United States.[12] They also suggest that allowing a minority of dangerous and violent individuals and organizations to speak for an entire faith tradition with a 1,400-year-long history is a slippery slope. While the forty-six Muslim Americans who were linked to violent extremism at home or abroad in 2016 should be regarded as a security concern, that concern should not be applied wholesale and without justification to the entire population of 3.3 million Muslim Americans, many of whom are highly educated professionals, making valuable contributions to society as doctors, computer scientists, engineers, technicians, and researchers and professors, among other fields.[13] For many, these contributions reflect their devotion to Islam as a living faith.

Many polls have found the overwhelming majority of the world's Muslims reject terrorism and extremism.[14] Instead, they

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11. Of those 123, 49 occurred at a single event—the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida in 2016. See Charles Kurzman, "Muslim-American Involvement with Violent Extremism, 2015," Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, Duke University, February 2, 2016, at *https://kurzman.unc.edu/files/2016/02/Kurzman_Muslim-American_Involvement_in_Violent_Extremism_2015.pdf*.

12. For a history of Muslims in the United States dating to the sixteenth century and including immigrants, beginning with slaves and native-born populations, see Edward E. Curtis, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

13. Muslim Americans have the second-highest education levels among major religious groups in the United States. "Muslims in the United States," Council on Foreign Relations, September 19, 2011, at *www.cfr.org/united-states/muslims-united-states/p25927*.

14. For general Muslim views on terrorism and extremism, see, e.g., John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (New York: Gallup, 2008.) For specific Muslim views on ISIS, which are overwhelmingly negative, see *www.pewresearch.org//fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/*.

seek constructive channels for living out their faith—prayer, charitable giving, disaster relief, community activism, care for the poor and marginalized, and, not least, dialogue—dialogue between individuals, between countries, and between religions. Through dialogue, community programs, billboard campaigns,[15] op-ed pieces, books, articles, and social media efforts such as Muslims Against ISIS,[16] #NotInMyName,[17] #MuslimsAreSpeakingOut,[18] and MyJihadInc@MyJihadOrg,[19] Muslims hope to reclaim their own voices and speak for themselves, rather than having extremists claim media headlines and airwaves, claiming to speak for them.

This book aims to contribute to constructive dialogue, to explore Islam as a living practice, not just a belief system, of individuals and communities. Chapter 1 introduces the Five Pillars, which all Muslims are expected to fulfill throughout their lives. Chapter 2 offers the life and legacy of Muhammad. The Qur'an and its role in the lives of Muslims is explored in chapter 3. Next, some of the tougher issues that have led to unrest, such as the development of sectarian identities (Sunnis and Shia) are considered in chapter 4; Shariah and Islamic law, which are implemented in different ways across time and space, are presented in chapter 5; chapter 6 examines the mystical tradition of Sufism as both protest and inner spirituality; and chapter 7 considers competing visions of jihad as personal discipline and nonviolent struggle for change versus militancy. The final chapters turn to the meaning of Islam for Muslim women and state policies related to gender in chapter 8 and the history Muslim-Christian encounters in chapter 9. The goal is to help twenty-first-century readers place contemporary events in a broad context, to encounter Islam as a faith tradition that both holds certain core beliefs and values as eternal and yet remains a living faith that requires reinterpretation in changing contexts and circumstances. It is hoped a critical approach to these topics will provide a more nuanced foundation for

15. See the "ISIS Sucks" campaign begun by SoundVision at *https://www.soundvision.com/isis_sucks*.

16. See *https://www.facebook.com/Muslims-Against-ISIS-1444672609121662/*.

17. See *http://isisnotinmyname.com.*

18. See *http://www.ffeu.org/muslimsarespeakingout/*.

19. See *https://twitter.com/MyJihadOrg*.

policy considerations, domestic and international, as well as for individual encounters in an era of interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

If there is ever to be global peace, understanding, and cooperative coexistence, it must begin with knowledge, rather than fear, of the religious Other. It is in that spirit that this book was written. Readers are encouraged to set aside the fearful headlines and consider Islam in its entirety as a living faith.

1

CHAPTER

The Five Pillars

Living Islam as an Individual and as a Community

As a living faith, Islam is more than a belief system; it is a "path" for living a righteous life centered on love of God and love of neighbor.[1] This "path" is marked by the Five Pillars—a common set of practices that unite the faith community (*ummah*). Muslims of every time and place, women and men, are expected to fulfill the Five Pillars, which give practitioners a strong sense of individual and communal identity. While local practices may vary in the specifics, the Five Pillars are always central to Muslim life and faith. They also keep Islam solidly grounded as a faith focused on orthopraxy (correct behavior), not just orthodoxy (correct belief).

Although the Five Pillars are a starting point for understanding Islam, they do not hold all of Muslim belief and practice.[2] All Muslims respect and are expected to adhere to the Five Pillars, but some Muslims are more dedicated to their complete fulfillment than others. Yet, even when Muslims fall short, there remains a sense that the Five Pillars represent the ideal Muslims should strive to achieve.

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1. As stated in "A Common Word," a 2007 letter signed by 138 Muslim leaders and scholars and sent to Christian religious leaders as an invitation to dialogue between Islam and Christianity. See *http://www.acommonword.com* and chapter 9 in this book for more information.

2. For concerns on the use of the Five Pillars in a reductive way that risks neglecting other important aspects of Islam, as well as for variations in the Five Pillars across time and space, see Daniel Varisco, "Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation," in *The Anthropology of Islam Reader*, ed. Jens Kreinath (London: Routledge, 2012), 322–43, esp. 325.

A Brief History of the Pillars

The Five Pillars are

1. *Shahadah*—declaration of faith
2. *Salat*—five daily prayers
3. *Zakat*—charitable giving
4. *Sawm*—fasting during the month of Ramadan
5. *Hajj*—pilgrimage to Mecca

These are the core expressions of Islam, practices that have been central to Muslim identity and practice since the lifetime of Muhammad. Note that jihad is *not* one of the Five Pillars, however much some extremists today may try to make it one.[3]

Although the Five Pillars are all mentioned in the Qur'an, they do not appear together in a single verse. Qur'an 4:162 specifies belief in God, the Last Day, and Muhammad's revelation, prayers, and *zakat*. Fasting during Ramadan is specified in Q 2:183–85, and Hajj is required in Q 2:196. All of the pillars are believed to have been implemented in their current form during Muhammad's life and appear in the earliest hadith collections (accounts of Muhammad's sayings and deeds) as essential obligations. They were placed together in a famous hadith declaring, "Islam is built upon five pillars."

The Qur'an describes the pillars as a framework for worship and a commitment to faith (responsibilities to God) and moral responsibility (responsibilities to other people), rather than as a formal, systematic statement of faith or creed. The mechanics and meanings of the pillars are discussed extensively in legal and theological writings and play an important role in popular piety.

Key to the practice of the pillars is the worldwide Muslim faith community, or *ummah*. Although it is up to the individual to carry out the pillars, this is done as a member of a broader community. Qur'an 2:143 teaches that God has established the *ummah* for its members to serve as witnesses of God's guidance to all people. The *ummah* is intended as the chief source of identity and belonging for the Muslim; it transcends all other identities—tribal, ethnic, or

3. This topic will be addressed in chapter 7, "Jihad: The Struggle to Live Islam and Its Teachings."

national—and is inclusive and diverse by nature. In Q 9:71, God specifically commands members of the *ummah* to protect one another, call each other to good and forbid what is evil, observe regular prayers, regularly give alms, and obey God and God's Messenger. In return, God promises to shower the *ummah* with God's mercy. This indicates God had a specific purpose in forming the *ummah* as a community, rather than simply creating individuals. This *ummah* is intended to live in relationship—with God and with each other.

Practically speaking, membership in the *ummah* indicates an acceptance of God's sovereignty and of the prophethood and leadership of Muhammad as key parts of Muslim identity. Muslims often refer to the *ummah* in everyday speech to foster a sense of connection to other Muslims that transcends geographic, ethnic, and other boundaries. This concept became particularly important in the European colonial era (the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), when Muslims sought ways to draw together to keep their identity, particularly when competing with European concepts such as nationalism and state borders. Islamic resistance movements called for the *ummah* to defend itself against European intrusions, invoking the *ummah* to reinvigorate Islamic solidarity. The concept was so powerful even secular nationalists tapped into it for nation-building after the colonial era.

Today most Muslims think of membership in the *ummah* as a social identity that fosters a sense of connection to other Muslims. This is particularly the case when Muslims appear to be suffering injustice or oppression, with Muslims in Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosovo, Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria being the most frequently cited cases. Nevertheless, a minority of extremists, such as ISIS, project a vision of the *ummah* as a political rather than a social identity for Muslims. Their goal is to assert leadership of a global caliphate that eliminates borders between countries and "reunites" the *ummah* under a single leader. They claim this represents a "return" to the past; however, as will be discussed later, this idealized vision of the past has little grounding in history.[4]

4. Details can be found in chapter 4, "Sunnis and Shia: The Origins and Evolutions of Sectarianism in Islam." Briefly, most of the world's Muslims—the Sunnis—often look to the Abbasid Empire (750–1258 CE) as a golden age in Islamic history, a time when all Muslims were united under a single leader. However, the historical record is far more complex, with rival caliphates and leaders in different places at different times; indeed, memories of this "unity" might be best described as invented memories.

The sense of community fostered by membership in the *ummah* has been critical to the development of Islam as a global religion that transcends time and space. This sense of community is also reflected in the focus of each of the Five Pillars.

Shahadah: The Declaration of Faith and Membership in the *Ummah*

> "*Ashhadu 'an la illahah illa Allah wa ashhadu 'anna Muhammad rasul Allah*"
>
> "I witness that there is no god but The God and I witness that Muhammad is God's Messenger."

Proclaiming this statement, or witnessing, is the first of the Five Pillars and marks an individual's entry into the broader Muslim faith community.[5] The statement consists of two phrases—the first focused on God and the second confirming Muhammad's role as the bearer of God's message to humanity. This makes two things clear. First, God is the only God—a statement of God's uniqueness known as *tawhid*; nothing and no one are to be associated with God. Second, Muhammad is neither God nor a divine figure; he is simply a man who carried a divine message. Just as the Ten Commandments in Christianity and Judaism assert the believer's obligations to God first and to the community second, so the order of the phrases of the *shahadah* indicate the primary importance of God followed by membership in the *ummah*.

Although declaring the *shahadah* marks the moment of one's conversion to Islam, the *shahadah* is not a one-time declaration or event. Rather, it begins an ongoing attestation of faith throughout a Muslim's life. The *shahadah* is proclaimed during prayer, community

5. In this sense, it can be compared to the Christian sacrament of baptism, when *baptism* is defined as entry into the faith community (church) with the intent of pursuing a lifelong relationship with God and the church. Similar to evangelical understandings of baptism as the declaration of a personal decision to accept God/Jesus into their lives, declaration of the *shahadah* expresses belief in God. However, the similarities end there. The *shahadah* is not associated with the concept of sin in Islam, whereas Roman Catholic and many mainstream Protestant Christians believe baptism is necessary for forgiveness of original sin, passed down from Adam and Eve. Muslims do not believe in original sin, so have no theological need for baptism.

events and gatherings, and often as part of the repetitive phrases used by Sufis in their devotional practices. The first half can also be used as a response to surprising, shocking, or tragic news or as a means of greeting others. The *shahadah* is a frequent subject of calligraphy, used in artwork ranging from simple pen and ink to more elaborate illuminations, from carved wood to marble, as sculptures or as adornment for mosques, homes, and other buildings. Keeping the *shahadah* central to daily life is a means of assuring daily attention to God and remembering the main tenets of the faith.

For those born into the faith, the *shahadah* is simply a part of normal worship and cultural practice. Those who convert to Islam must make a formal, public declaration in the presence of two adult witnesses. This shows the decision is not simply a private one about personal spiritual matters but also one that carries a sense of social responsibility to the community.

People living in non-Muslim majority countries seeking to convert to Islam sometimes find it hard to find a local mosque or local Muslims in order to make a formal conversion.[6] The Internet has come to the rescue with sites like IslamiCity.com offering to arrange multiparty phone calls for witnessing purposes. Many sites offer additional services to create the sense of being part of the online *ummah*, bringing an ancient concept into virtual reality.[7]

Salat: Prayer and Remembrance of God Five Times per Day

"*Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!*"—"God is the Greatest! God is the Greatest!" Five times per day, this call to prayer (*adhan*) is issued from minarets and sound systems of mosques around the world, inviting the faithful to pause amid the busyness of daily life to remember the Divine.

Like many faith traditions, prayer is central to Islamic worship. Prayer is an opportunity to regularly remember God's power, presence, majesty, and mercy, as well as to re-center one's life on

6. Today, there are apps such as Near Mosques Finder that can help locate mosques.

7. For more on Islamic uses of cyberspace, see Gary R. Bunt, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

God. Muslims are supposed to pray five times per day—at sunrise, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening. The exact times vary daily, based on the rising and setting of the sun, which changes paths throughout the year. In the past, people had to rely on personal observation or wait for the calls to prayer, which marked the appropriate times. Today, believers can find daily times for prayer listed online, based on their country of location, as well as apps and special alarms that can be set through computers, watches, mobile phones, and other devices.[8]

While five daily prayers may sound like a huge time commitment, prayers generally last only ten to fifteen minutes.[9] In addition, because people are sometimes unable to complete five separate prayer sessions, such as while traveling, it is possible to consolidate the prayer times into three sessions.[10] A famous hadith records Muhammad saying that Islam did not come to be a burden to people, but a blessing. Thus, rather than a list of obligations to check off on a daily basis, the five daily prayers are designed to encourage believers to begin and end their days with remembrance of God and to remember God at different moments throughout the day. In other words, rather than relegating God to a once-a-week formal worship service, prayer incorporates remembrance of God into the daily routine, making God a real presence in the believer's life.

Islamic prayer is a spiritual and physical endeavor that combines meditation, devotion, and physical exercise. While it can be performed individually, Muslims prefer to pray in groups, again

8. Examples include iPray Lite, which keeps track of prayer times and also offers options from the sound of clicking prayer beads to the turning wheel of a handheld metal counter to keep track of prayer repetitions.

9. The exception is the Friday noon prayer, which takes longer because of the inclusion of a sermon/homily (*khutbah*). Friday prayers can last from twenty minutes to an hour, depending on the length of the sermon.

10. In practice, many Muslims find the demands of daily life, particularly in the workplace, can make five daily prayers challenging. Some make accommodations, including by routinely praying during three occasions during the day, such as first thing in the morning, during lunch breaks, and before bed at night. Many Shia routinely pray during three occasions per day, combining the noon and mid-afternoon and then the sunset and evening prayers. They nevertheless pray five sets of prayers. Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 178.

emphasizing the importance of community. Once a week, for the Friday "noon" prayer, Muslim men must attend communal prayers (*jumaa*) in the mosque.[11] Although women are not required to attend the mosque, they did so during Muhammad's lifetime and many increasingly choose to do so today to express their devotion to God and to be part of the community of faith.[12] The Friday service at the mosque includes a sermon/homily (*khutbah*) by the prayer leader (*imam*) that relates the teachings of the Qur'an to contemporary issues and circumstances faced by the local community.

Traditionally, the prayer leader was the person recognized as the most pious and knowledgeable among those gathered. While this still happens in some places today, particularly in informal gatherings, many mosques have one or several people specifically hired to fulfill this position. In many places, a full-time *imam* is also expected to provide counseling and guidance outside of prayer times, as well as to oversee other mosque activities, such as education and community outreach.[13] Although the *imam* is typically a man, women are permitted to lead other women in prayer, and there are some women-only mosques.[14] Some Muslim women, particularly in the West, have called for women to lead mixed-gender prayer services to better reflect the face of the Muslim community. In support, they cite Muhammad's appointment of a woman, Umm

11. Although called the "noon" prayer, the service typically takes place closer to 1 or 1:30 pm. Some Shia hold communal prayer on Thursday night, rather than Friday noon, to distinguish themselves from Sunnis.

12. There are some mosques that do not admit women worshipers, making access to the mosque a central focus for activists concerned about Muslim women's rights.

13. Unlike Christianity, Islam has no ordained clergy, in part because there are no sacraments in Islam. (See the section on "Pillars versus Sacraments" at the end of this chapter.) Nevertheless, throughout Islamic history, there has been a need for faith community leaders with a greater depth of knowledge in scripture, history, ritual, law, and so on. Although there is no ordained clergy in Islam, imams often fulfill comparable roles to Christian priests and pastors, serving as leaders of their congregations and surrounding communities, particularly in the West.

14. Examples include China's Muslims, who have a history of women-only mosques in the Henan, Shanxi, and Hebei provinces dating to the seventeenth century, and, more recently, the founding of the first American women-only mosque in Los Angeles, California, in 2015. Women-only mosques can also be found in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, the Maldives, Indonesia, Lebanon, the Sudan, Northern Somalia, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Waraqa, to serve as the prayer leader for her household, which included women and men.[15]

Preparation for prayer involves cleaning body and mind from the "dirt" of the outside world. Muslims leave their shoes at the entrance to the mosque, so as not to track dirt into sacred space. They perform ablutions[16] before prayer, beginning with cleansing the heart and mind from worldly thoughts and concerns and proceeding to literally washing away the physical dirt of the world from the hands, face, arms up to the elbows, and feet, all with the intent of focusing exclusively on God. Many mosques have fountains or other water-access points to facilitate this process.[17] When water is not available, sand may be used. The focus is more on the symbolism of the ablutions—that cleanliness is preparation for godliness—than the mechanics.

Muhammad said the entire earth should be considered a mosque, reminding Muslims of the sacredness of the earth itself as God's creation. Practically speaking, this means prayer need not be confined to a particular building; rather believers can engage in prayer wherever they are at the appointed time. Prayer is supposed to be made in a clean space. Muslims typically use prayer carpets to create that clean space at their convenience. Some Muslims keep a carpet in their briefcase or desk drawer at work. Foldable carpets that fit inside a wallet also exist for ease of transportation.

Muslims always pray facing Mecca, no matter where on earth—or off the earth—they are. This practice provides a central focus for the faith community and symbolizes global unity as Muslims throughout the world all face the same location. As home to

15. Despite significant opposition by conservatives and traditionalists to women fulfilling this position in a mixed-gender setting—ranging from criticism to death threats—some women have publicly led Friday prayers, beginning with Amina Wadud. See her biography in chapter 8 on women and gender.

16. There are two kinds of ablutions that may be performed. Major ablutions (*ghusl*) of the entire body and hair must be performed after sex, menstruation, or childbirth. Minor ablutions (*wudu'*) are described above and would also be required before touching or reading the Qur'an.

17. A Malaysian company, AACE Technologies, has invented an Automatic Wudu Washer to help save water, given that many Muslim-majority countries face chronic water shortages. See *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s557KuEZttk*. The device also plays recorded Qur'an verses.

A Muslim child at prayer on a prayer rug with an open Qur'an and prayer beads. Open hands for *du'a* (prayers of personal petition) symbolize humility before God in asking for help and openness to God's presence and blessings.

the Grand Mosque, believed to house the original altar built to the One God by Abraham and Ismail (Ishmael), Mecca is considered the holiest city in Islam.[18] So vital is this concept that Muslims are buried facing Mecca to symbolize ongoing prayer.

Inside a mosque, the direction of Mecca is indicated by a special marker called a *miḥrab*, typically a niche or brick or stone of a different color on a main wall. If the structure was originally built as a mosque, the building is oriented to position believers in the correct direction for prayer. Sometimes, this creates unusual placement for the building when seen from the outside. If the structure was not originally built as a mosque, the interior is laid out to position worshippers in the direction of Mecca, even though the orientation inside the building may seem odd. The presence of a *minbar*, the pulpit from which the Friday sermon is given, also indicates the location of the *miḥrab*. Many hotels in the Muslim world have a *miḥrab*

18. The second holiest city is Medina, the birthplace of the *ummah* and where Muhammad died. The third is Jerusalem, which was the original direction for prayer. According to Muslim tradition, God changed the direction of prayer during Muhammad's Night Journey, reflecting Islam's shared origin as an Abrahamic faith and the particularity of Islam. See Omid Safi, *Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 169.

HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (b. 1956)

The first Muslim and Arab astronaut, HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud flew as a payload specialist with the STS-51-G Space Shuttle *Discovery* in 1985. Born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, he completed his undergraduate education in mass communications at the University of Denver and holds a master's degree in social and political science from Syracuse University. Prince Sultan's time in outer space raised some challenging questions with respect to the five daily prayers: how to calculate prayer times, how to determine the direction of Mecca from outer space, and how to prostrate in zero gravity. Solutions for these challenges required blending ancient ritual with modern technology. Because calculating prayer times requires a location on earth to track the relative position of the sun, it was decided that prayer times would be based on the location of takeoff. Traveling meant the five prayers could be consolidated into three time slots. To find Mecca, the prince simply looked out the window and calculated the position of Mecca from there. Prostration proved the greatest challenge. Special shoes were built and anchored to the floor to provide a stable position. The prince was then assisted by other astronauts in the physical challenge of prostration in zero gravity. Prince Sultan reportedly recited the entire Qur'an in outer space and provided the first live Arabic commentary for viewers. In sharing his experiences, he hopes to revive Islam's long heritage of exploration of science and technology.

NASA/Otis Imboden

Prince Sultan, seated right foreground, is an accomplished pilot and a scientist. While in space, he conducted experiments on the effects of zero gravity on the separation of different types of oil from water in order to combat oil spills on water.

marker inside individual rooms to help believers find the appropriate direction for prayer. There are also a variety of online and phone apps, keyrings, and prayer rugs that include compasses always pointing to Mecca.[19]

Prayer is the ultimate expression of the word *Islam*, which means "submission." During prayer, Muslims repeatedly prostrate, taking a kneeling position and touching their foreheads to the ground. Some Muslims make so many prostrations over a lifetime, they form a callus on their foreheads.[20] Prostration is a position of supreme ultimate vulnerability, as it exposes the back of the neck—the area where the spine meets the skull. In many past civilizations, a subject was expected to prostrate before a ruler when making a request, particularly when asking pardon for a crime. This symbolized the powerlessness of the one making the request and their absolute submission to the power of the ruler. If the request was granted, the ruler would invite the subject to rise. If not, the subject was already in position for punishment. Transferring this position to prayer signifies the believer's unbounded submission to the will of God, expressing hope of receiving mercy but acknowledging that only God can and will judge and that punishment might be deserved.

During prayer, believers are expected to stand in straight lines, shoulder to shoulder. This highlights that prayer is a collective and unified activity and symbolizes the equality of all those gathered to pray, with no distinctions based on race, tribe, socioeconomic status, and so on. Although the prayer leader (*imam*) is respected for knowledge and piety, even the prayer leader is considered equal to everyone else and stands in line.

Men and women stand in separate locations during prayer. In most places, men are in the front lines and women are in the back. This is supposed to protect the modesty of women, so that men do not look at them inappropriately during prayer. In other locations,

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19. Sites facilitating this include *http://www.qibla.com.br*, *http://qib.la* and *http://www.al-habib.info/qibla-pointer/*. There are also apps such as Find Mecca, which is a digital GPS that works with iPads and iPhones.

20. Muslims who are public figures trying to present themselves as particularly pious may seek to draw attention to such calluses. One example is former Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, who sought to portray himself as the "Believer President," in part by the prominence of his callus.

men gather on one side of the room and women on the other, similar to an Eastern Orthodox Church or an Orthodox synagogue. This allows for a sense of gender equality while respecting the tradition of gender separation. In still other places, women pray behind a barrier or even in a separate room or balcony. Some Muslim women today consider this last arrangement objectionable, because they do not have direct access to the *imam* and the full prayer experience, particularly when sound systems are subpar or live-screen broadcasts are not available. Equal access to the mosque and prayer space is a frequent focus of Muslim women's rights activists.

Prayer begins standing upright, raising the hands, and declaring "*Allahu Akbar!*" "God is the Greatest!" The worshipper then either folds their hands over their stomach or chest or leaves their arms at their side and recites the opening chapter of the Qur'an and another verse of personal choice. This is followed by bending at the waist with their back and neck straight, while making additional proclamations of God's greatness. The worshipper then again stands upright, declaring praise to God, before prostrating and proclaiming God's glory three times. Following that, the worshipper sits back on their heels, asking for forgiveness and proclaiming God's greatness. This full cycle is called a *raka*. The number of *rakas*, which varies between two and four, depends on the time of day. The prayer ends with the invocation of peace, with each worshipper turning their head right and left to greet the angels believed to be sitting on each shoulder. After completing these obligatory prayers, worshippers may then make prayers of personal petitions (*du'a*), such as those for health, safety, or help with personal matters such as upcoming exams, having a child, or finding a marriage partner.

Muslims in the West often find the Friday noon prayers the most challenging to attend because they fall in the middle of the workday. Some companies offer a designated space to Muslim employees to accommodate this religious requirement. Muslims who have the option often use their lunch breaks to attend prayers at a mosque, provided there is one close enough. This explains why many people show up for Friday prayers at staggered times and dressed for work. Joining communal prayer already in progress is not considered disruptive. Each person simply completes the required prayers on their own to catch up with the group.

Zakat: Charitable Giving and Charitable Living

Charity is an important obligation in Islam and is an expected way of life. Muslims believe all things, including wealth, belong to God; thus human beings must use wealth entrusted to them for the benefit of the community, not just themselves. Regular giving to charity is intended to keep the giver detached from wealth as a personal possession and to view it, instead, as an opportunity for community cohesion. Both the Qur'an and Muhammad's example insist on charity as an obligatory act of faith. Charity takes place on two levels: *zakat* as obligatory charity and *sadaqah* as voluntary charity.

As a pillar, *zakat* requires once a year the distribution of 2.5 percent, or 1/40, of a believer's entire wealth to the less fortunate members of the community. Although many Muslims prefer to pay *zakat* during the month of Ramadan, this is not required. *Zakat* can be paid any time of the year.

Calculating *zakat* follows specific guidelines outlined in the hadith and includes not only income and revenues, but all of a believer's assets, including real estate, investments, stocks and bonds, livestock, gold, currencies, jewelry, and other commodities. Because of the breadth and complexity of *zakat* calculations, legal and theological commentaries give much attention to what is and is not included, based on amounts and methods of calculation set in Medina in Muhammad's lifetime. Today, Muslims can find *zakat* calculators online as well as apps to determine what they owe.

Because charity is intended for the less fortunate, Muslims whose financial assets do not reach a certain level are not obliged to pay *zakat*. Just as the five daily prayers are not designed to burden the individual believer, so *zakat* is not intended to bankrupt those already struggling to get by. Although there is no shame associated with being the recipient of charity, in practice, often even the poorest of the poor will make some contribution to *zakat* in recognition that there is always someone worse off and to keep focused on caring for others, rather than only oneself.

Annual payment of *zakat* works to redistribute wealth within the Muslim community. Symbolically, *zakat* is intended to solidify a sense of community that goes beyond one's immediate family. Many

Muslims prefer to give their contribution to a specific organization or family. Today, some countries, including Saudi Arabia, require payment of *zakat* through an authorized mosque to prevent money laundering or charitable contributions ending up in the hands of extremist organizations.

In addition, *sadaqah*, or voluntary charity, is strongly encouraged, although not obligatory. *Sadaqah* does not have a set amount or number of times it must be paid during the year. Parallel to the Jewish custom of *tzedakah*, it is considered a righteous act and is left to the individual's conscience.

Sawm: Fasting during Ramadan as Piety and Remembrance of the Less Favored

Just as charitable giving highlights awareness of the less fortunate, fasting during the month of Ramadan keeps Muslims mindful of those who regularly go without food or access to a clean, safe water supply. This yearly experience of hunger and thirst are intended to create a sense of empathy within the Muslim, which he or she is then expected to direct outward, for example, in charitable contributions to alleviate poverty.

Many religious traditions use fasting to encourage a spiritual connection between the believer and the Divine. Lack of caloric intake can lead to an altered state of mind and greater spiritual openness, as the believer sets aside physical, bodily needs in favor of personal discipline. Fasting reminds believers of their ultimate dependence on God for their needs. Among acts of worship, God places the highest importance on fasting. The eleventh-century scholar al-Ghazali (d. 1111) described fasting as half of the patient forbearance (*sabr*) Muslims are expected to demonstrate as part of their faith.[21]

Ramadan is the ninth month of the lunar calendar. During this month, Muhammad received the first revelation of the Qur'an. Unlike the solar calendar used in the West, which marks months according to particular seasons, the shorter lunar calendar's months

21. The other half is gratitude (*shukr*), according to the hadith.

rotate throughout the seasons. Thus, in some years, Ramadan falls in winter; in others, it falls in summer. While fasting from sunrise to sunset is never "easy," Muslims find the shorter, cooler days of winter less demanding than the long, hot days of summer, particularly in desert countries where temperatures have reached as high as 129 degrees Fahrenheit.[22]

The Ramadan fast requires abstaining from food, drink, sexual activity, impure thoughts, and smoking from sunrise to sunset. Traditionally, dawn is considered to have arrived when one can distinguish between a white thread and a black thread with the naked eye. From this time until sunset, all those physically able observe the fast. As with the other pillars, even the fast of Ramadan is not intended as a burden. Young children and the elderly are not expected to fast, though many choose to participate, if only for a short time, to be part of the collective experience. Young children grow into fasting as they mature, beginning with short fasts and gradually building up to the full fast. Those with medical conditions that require regular intakes of food, such as diabetics who must regulate their blood sugar or pregnant or nursing mothers, are exempt from the fast, either temporarily until the condition has resolved or permanently in the case of a permanent condition or illness. Those with temporary conditions can make up the fast at a later time. Those unable to fast or who do not wish to make it up at a later time can fulfill the obligation by providing meals to two hungry people for each day of the fast. This assures that the symbolism of Ramadan remains intact, keeping the focus on hunger and poverty, while not overburdening the individual.

In Muslim-majority countries, following the fast is eased by the sense of social solidarity that comes when everyone around you is doing the same thing. In some countries, day and night are essentially reversed during Ramadan because most people are fasting. Particularly in the Gulf countries, many people sleep during the day and are awake at night to eat, visit with friends and, sometimes, work. School can be challenging for both students and teachers, as lack of food, water, and sleep can be detrimental to a person's ability to

22. See *https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/capital-weather-gang/wp/2016/07/22/two-middle-east-locations-hit-129-degrees-hottest-ever-in-eastern-hemisphere-maybe-the-world/?utm_term=.4b06d09ba00e*.

concentrate and retain information. Muslims may find fasting more challenging in a non-Muslim-majority setting, such as the West, where an individual Muslim may be the only person observing it. The realities of work, school, and even sports have made questions about fasting popular topics of discussion among Muslims, in the real world and online. Some athletes, such as Hakeem Olajuwon, have become famous for their dedication to fasting, even in the midst of NBA playoffs. Others have chosen to postpone fasting out of respect for their team or once-in-a-lifetime events, such as the Olympics.[23]

Traditionally, Ramadan begins with the sighting of the new moon. Families and communities often gather together to look for this sign, although they still depend on a religious official to make the formal declaration. Planning to take time off from work at the end of Ramadan can prove challenging, as one can only predict when Ramadan will begin and end generally, rather than knowing precisely in advance.

Muslims rise early in the morning during Ramadan to eat a hearty breakfast, called *suhur,* to get them through the day. When the sun has set, a light meal called *iftar* breaks the fast. *Iftar* traditionally begins with a glass of water and some dates, in accordance with Muhammad's example, followed by prayer. This tradition has some medical benefit because it marks a small introduction of hydration and sugar back into the body, allowing the digestive juices to start flowing, followed by a break before a larger late evening meal is eaten. Family and friends typically gather together for the evening meal, continuing the strong sense of family and community. Food for the meal is prepared during the day, making fasting an even greater challenge to those in charge of the cooking. Special acts of piety during Ramadan include extra prayers at the mosque and recitation of the entire Qur'an.

The celebration of Eid al-Fitr, or the feast of the breaking of the fast, marks the end of Ramadan. The three days of Eid are a

23. Fasting became a particular concern during the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. Athletes had to choose whether to fast or postpone the fast until after their competition. Choices varied with some fasting and others choosing to make it up later. The issue was covered by the media with comparisons to Christian and Jewish athletes when qualifying events or events have taken place on days of worship. In the Muslim case, the challenge was more extensive not only because of abstention from food and water but also because the issue lasted longer than one day.

celebration comparable to Christmas, with special foods and sweets unique to this time of year, visits from family and friends, and gift giving. In Muslim-majority countries, Eid is a national holiday. In keeping with the community spirit of the pillars, Eid often marks a time for repairing broken relationships, including amnesty for prisoners and debtors.

Hajj: Pilgrimage of a Lifetime

Once in his or her life, every Muslim, woman and man, who is physically and financially able, is expected to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Hajj is the largest annual religious gathering in the world with about two million participants every year. Muslims look forward to and often save for a lifetime to make this pilgrimage. Officials in charge of administrating the Hajj have described the logistics as comparable to planning for thirty Super Bowls, with the main difference being that everyone who comes expects to play the game.

The Hajj is the ultimate expression of community, with Muslims from throughout the world gathered in Mecca at the same time to engage in the same rituals together. It visibly demonstrates the unity found within the diversity of global Islam, as Muslims of all different ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds travel, stand, walk, and pray together in a massive worship session.

The Hajj takes place between the eighth and twelfth or thirteenth days of the last month of the Islamic calendar, Dhu al-Hijjah. Although one can certainly travel to Mecca and participate in the same rituals outside of this time frame, such a pilgrimage would count as an *umrah*, or lesser pilgrimage, rather than as the Hajj itself.[24] Limiting proper Hajj to the last month of the year follows the example set in Muhammad's lifetime. It also symbolically marks the culmination of the religious experience by drawing Muslims together in what is often described as a dress rehearsal for Judgment Day in which one is stripped bare of worldly trappings and concerns and stands in God's presence to answer for how one's time on earth was spent and to repent and ask for forgiveness for those times when one did not behave as one

24. Muslims are encouraged to go on *umrah* as an expression of piety, but it does not replace the religious obligation of Hajj.

should have. Many Muslims describe Hajj as a life-changing moment of rededication to living a more righteous existence. Some deliberately delay going on Hajj until they feel spiritually worthy.

Ideally, the Hajj serves as the great equalizer among Muslims. Believers enter a state of ritual purity called *ihram* on Hajj, setting aside worldly concerns and preoccupations to focus on the Divine and the eternal. Pilgrims are expected to be patient and to help each other, even in the midst of the most grueling and dangerous rituals. Loss of temper, rudeness, refusal to help someone in need, or selfish behavior could invalidate one's entire Hajj experience in God's eyes.

To symbolize the absolute equality of all pilgrims and utter humility before God, pilgrims wear simple clothing, also called *ihram*. For men, this consists of two seamless pieces of white cloth, one wrapped around the waist and the other across the chest. Women do not have a specific dress code in terms of color or design but are expected to wear simple, modest, flowing garments that cover the body and hair and leave the face and hands visible. The simple clothing emphasizes setting aside worldly concerns and socioeconomic status symbols as a reminder that the only "adornment" God cares about is piety (Q 7:26). Regardless of whether a believer is rich or poor, black or white, male or female, God cares about what is in the heart, not appearance, personal wealth, or social status. Grooming, such as trimming one's nails or wearing jewelry or perfume, is forbidden during the Hajj, as is sexual activity or hunting. Pilgrims are expected to maintain ritual purity in body and heart, focusing exclusively on worshipping God. Many pilgrims save their Hajj garments for burial.

Hajj rituals are complex and exacting. Knowing what to do and say and when requires study and preparation in advance. Because pilgrims are required to go on Hajj in groups, many will gather together beforehand to prepare.

Pilgrims begin by approaching Mecca[25] and declaring their arrival to God. They enter Mecca and go to the Grand Mosque, home to the Kaaba, which contains the Black Stone that Muslims believe Abraham and Ismail used to build the first altar to God. Many pilgrims try to get close enough to the stone to kiss it, although this is impractical and dangerous given the sheer number of pilgrims.

25. Mecca is located in Saudi Arabia. Access to Mecca is restricted to Muslims to maintain its sanctity.

Muslims circumambulate the Kaaba, covered with a black silk cloth embroidered with verses from the Qur'an. Some worshippers, dressed in *ihram*, are observing the lesser pilgrimage for *umrah*, while others, in everyday clothing, are present simply for prayer.

The Kaaba is the focal point of Muslim prayer and enjoys pride of place in the Hajj. In imitation of the angels circumambulating God's throne in heaven, pilgrims move in circles around the Kaaba seven times to symbolize their entry into God's presence.

Many of the Hajj rituals recall events in the life of Abraham, particularly related to his two sons, Ismail (Ishmael) and Isaac. Muslims consider Abraham the first monotheist and the common faith ancestor of Muslims, Jews, and Christians alike. Interestingly, much of the textual material related to these rituals does not appear in the Qur'an, but in the Old Testament. Hajj rituals include running between the hills of Safa and Marwa in imitation of Hagar's[26] desperate search for water after Abraham abandoned her and their son, Ismail, in the desert. Hagar's search ended when, after crying out to God for help, God sent the angel Gabriel, who struck the ground with his wing, sending

26. Although the book of Genesis in the Bible describes Hagar as a slave in Abraham's home, Muslims consider her a wife. Abraham's other wife, Sarah, was long unable to bear children. When she was finally given a son, Isaac, Sarah insisted on banishing Hagar and Ismail. This history is replayed during these rituals.

forth water. Muslims still drink from this well, known as Zamzam, as part of the Hajj ritual. Many believe this water contains special curative powers, so they bottle it and take it back home.

Another important ritual that recalls Abraham's life is the ritual stoning of the devil. Pilgrims throw stones at three stone pillars that represent the devil/temptation. Abraham is said to have thrown stones at the devil to drive him away when he tried to tempt Abraham away from God. Pilgrims today use the stoning ritual to not only drive away evil but also throw sin, temptation, and negative thoughts out of their lives. This ritual is often the most dangerous moment of the Hajj because pilgrims throw stones and other objects, such as shoes, from all directions.

Most pilgrims agree, the most important moment of the Hajj is the day of reckoning on the Plain of Arafat, where Muhammad gave his Farewell Sermon shortly before his death. Here, in preparation for Judgment Day, believers stand before God, pray, repent for their sins, and ask for forgiveness. Many pilgrims reflect back on this as the moment when they felt closest to God. It is common to make personal requests, such as healing for family members or for courage to change what they feel is wrong in their lives or to persevere amid hardship.

Following completion of the Hajj rituals, Muslims celebrate the second major Islamic holy day, the Eid al-Adha, or Feast of the Sacrifice,[27] which again commemorates an event in the life of Abraham: the near sacrifice of his son in obedience to God's command. Muslims believe this son was Ismail, rather than Isaac as in the Old Testament, but the story still ends with God's replacement of the intended son with a ram. In commemoration of this event, pilgrims pay to have an animal slaughtered, ranging from a sheep to a camel, depending on their financial means and whether they pay individually or in a group. Men also either shave their heads or have a symbolic tuft of hair cut off after the sacrifice, before the three days of Eid festivities begin.

The symbolism of the sacrifice is twofold. First, it shows that Hajj pilgrims, like Abraham, obey God's commands and hold nothing dearer than God. In a desert environment, livestock represented wealth and survival, so sacrificing an animal represented a significant loss to the family. Secondly, unlike Old Testament sacrifices in which the meat from the animal was either burned or reserved

27. This holiday is celebrated by all Muslims, regardless of whether they are on Hajj.

for consumption by high priests and their families, the meat from animals sacrificed after Hajj is redistributed to poor people, again emphasizing Islam's commitment to community.[28]

Completion of the Hajj entitles the pilgrim to use the honorific title Hajji for men and Hajja for women. Many pilgrims visit the Prophet's Mosque and tomb in Medina[29] before returning home.

At a time when the global Muslim population tops 1.6 billion, some question the viability of maintaining traditional Hajj rituals in the future. Already, the Saudi government uses a quota system to limit the number of pilgrims who can attend annually from each country because of the sheer logistical challenges of such enormous numbers and the accompanying safety issues. The Saudi government has spent billions of dollars expanding the spaces where rituals take place, including the construction of a "pedestrian superhighway" to facilitate travel between locations, but, every year, some pilgrims are trampled to death or are injured or die from being struck with objects flying during the ritual stonings. Fireproof tents have helped reduce fire hazards in pilgrim lodging areas. Despite the dangers, Muslims take the obligation to undergo Hajj seriously, meaning that demand for access rises with each passing year. Some have suggested using modern technology to provide other means of fulfilling Hajj obligations, such as by going on a "virtual Hajj" online,[30] but most cling to the ideal of the genuine physical experience.

Pillars versus Sacraments

On many levels, the Five Pillars fulfill functions similar to the sacraments in the Christian tradition: they bring believers into the faith

28. In the past, because of the intense heat and lack of refrigeration, distribution of meat could occur only within a limited geographic range. Today, however, the Saudi government, which oversees the Hajj, maintains a fleet of airplanes that can deliver the meat anywhere in the world, giving global significance to this ancient ritual.

29. Literally "the city of the Prophet," Medina is about 200 miles north of Mecca.

30. Examples include the video game Second Life, which allows you to create an avatar to go on virtual Hajj and the app Mecca 3D: An Interactive Journey to Islam. These simulated experiences do not "count" as the official Hajj, but can provide a sense of walking through the rituals that many might not experience physically; but they cannot capture the full experience, particularly the sense of community and solidarity that many Muslims describe after making the physical Hajj.

community, encourage an ongoing relationship with the community of believers, call believers to live moral and ethical lives and avoid sin and temptation, and draw them closer to God. However, Islam does not have sacraments in the complete Christian sense of the word. Christians view their sacraments as rituals that channel God's grace to all who receive them with the proper disposition. They are often associated with particular life events, such as birth, marriage, and death, and represent moments of grace throughout a person's life.[31] They may also fulfill an important theological purpose, such as forgiveness of original sin[32] through baptism or taking holy orders in ordination. The Pillars, on the other hand, are not specific to any particular life event or moment. They do not provide forgiveness of sins[33] or commemorate the lifetime of any individual or significant moments in anyone's ministry. They do not establish a particular group of leaders within the faith community. Instead, the Five Pillars emphasize individual accountability—the idea that a person can only be responsible for their own actions, not those of another. Not only do Muslims believe each believer will be judged individually by God but also that each person can personally and directly engage with God through prayer. There is no need for intermediaries.[34]

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31. Roman Catholics believe in seven such sacraments, instituted by Jesus and entrusted to the Church: three sacraments of initiation: baptism, the Eucharist, and confirmation; two sacraments of healing: Penance and reconciliation, and anointing of the sick or extreme unction; and two sacraments of service: matrimony and holy orders. Protestants define as a sacrament only those rituals instituted by Jesus: baptism and Holy Communion. Protestants believe that the other five do not have sufficient biblical evidence to be considered sacraments, although they still have symbolic value.

32. Original sin is the Christian belief that the sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden has been passed down to all human beings, requiring God's forgiveness, which is given through baptism.

33. Although Muslims ask for forgiveness while carrying out certain pillars, such as the Hajj and prayer, they recognize that whether or not to forgive is entirely God's choice. Consequently, the focus is more on what Muslims owe to God than it is on what they hope to gain.

34. This differs from Roman Catholic belief in the role of priests and saints as intermediaries between believers and God. It is closer to Protestant belief in the need for clergy as leaders and administrators of sacraments, but not intermediaries. In the Islamic tradition, only Muhammad is believed to serve as an intermediary, based on a hadith, but even then only with God's approval. Sufis are an exception to this belief, as they consider those recognized as "saints" to serve as intermediaries. See chapter 6, "Sufis: Saints and Subversives in the Quest for the Divine," for details.

Review Questions

1. Identify and discuss the significance of each of the Five Pillars. What overall vision do they provide of Islam as a faith tradition? Are there any important aspects of religious faith or observance that are missing from the Five Pillars?
2. How do the Five Pillars contribute to building a sense of community (*ummah*) among Muslims? What rights and responsibilities does membership in the Muslim community bring?
3. How do the Five Pillars help Muslims set priorities in personal, family, and community life? What do they indicate about the importance and prioritization of a believer's relationship with God compared to relationships with other people?
4. What purposes does prayer fulfill in Islam?
5. Discuss the impact of science and technology on the practice of the Five Pillars. Does the use of science and technology enhance or detract from the experience? Why?

Discussion Questions

1. What do the Five Pillars indicate about the importance of belief versus practice in Islam? Is it possible to live as a faithful Muslim if faith is kept as a strictly private belief system?
2. What impact do the Five Pillars have on Muslim identity as individuals and as part of a community of believers?
3. What role might the Five Pillars play with respect to citizenship and community involvement for Muslims? Is it possible to live as both a faithful Muslim and a fully participating member of a non-Muslim society? Why or why not?

For Further Study

Readings

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Films

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Ramadan Mubarak. Islamic Circle of North America. Chicago: Sound Vision, 1997.

A Muslim children's program made by Pakistani American Muslims designed to introduce various practices for Ramadan from around the world, using puppets, music, cartoons, and humor. Available at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Hv95fGrUZo*.

Nawaz, Zarqa, and Joe MacDonald. *Me and the Mosque*. [Montreal]: National Film Board of Canada, 2010.

Addresses issues related to mosque access for women in Canada and the United States. Written and directed by a Canadian Muslim woman who was also the creative inspiration for the popular Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television series *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. Available at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sder6fD_Kp8*.

Links

Islam for Catholics 101, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kh_QiApASRQ*—Features the author's discussion of the Five Pillars and their role in the lives of Muslims.

IslamiCity, *IslamiCity.com*—Offers a variety of services related to the Five Pillars and beyond to the creation of a virtual *ummah.*

IslamicFinder, *islamicfinder.org*—Provides a daily and monthly schedule for the five daily prayers by geographic location.

Mecca 3D: An Interactive Journey to Islam, *mecca3d.net*—App designed to allow for a virtual 3D Hajj.

Muslim Aid America, *muslimaidusa.org*—Provides both a *zakat* calculator and options for donation geared toward development projects.