Hagar’s tale involves multiple interruptions of our links to the world. The more emphatic the interruption, the more terrible it seems. Becoming accustomed to it, in oblivion and descent into ever darker precincts of the self, we depart on a journey towards a goal beyond finitude. In the dark, we can only feel this unknown goal, but the mercy and knowledge of the universal Creator and Guide comprehend it, secretly illuminating the darkness. If we are not our own principle, neither is our redemptive goal contingent on anything outside us.

Our connection to our goal lies in order and ritual, which we enter upon as migrants out of impurity. We must first seek purification. The break between the perfect cosmic order of Eden and the world’s actual condition is in the consciousness of the traveller bound to and healed by recollection: at the heart of the self is the Ark of the Covenant, the fullness of knowledge, the original promise, the table at which all guests are pure and God the Host. The ritual of ascent requires admission of our impurity, compared to our original purity,1 as well as ablutions and preparations for the feast to come.

The call to prayer is a call to consciousness of the balance between separation and return. We think in terms of pairs, by comparison or analogy, and the call to worship begins by reminding us of a quantity without pair, to which nothing can be compared.

The unity of contraries is important here — quantity in the minute, duration in the moment, sublimity in humility, wealth in poverty, life in death, and mastery in service. The things of the world and self, of the physical world of duality, are preformed towards the confession of no god but God.

We are thus reminded of His unity, though our entire existence takes place in duality. We are established so that we look on duality as the revelation of the One, achieved insofar as we accept the perfection sent down in a pure image of the One and expressed by confessing the Praised as His apostle, our link with Him and our salvation from this disjointed state. Calls for ritual incorporation and redemption in the fullness of majesty and unity suggest this. Nothing on our path is worth stopping for and lingering, as there is no god but God.

Worship and revelation were both sent down to us. The Praised received them at the summit of his ascension, while the Holy Spirit sent down the Recitation to him. Recognizing the true nature of the lowest depth, signified

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1 See Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 209.
by ritual purification, is a precondition for embarking on ritual and recitation. Turning towards the house in the Valley, the inviolable place of self-abnegation, is to affirm the link between Eden, as our original home, and the earthly realm of migration. This vertical connection is between earth and heaven, body and spirit. The human drama of separation takes place on the path between these extremes.

That we were created on the most beautiful height and sent down to the depths entails that belief and doing good deeds are a way to maintain our link with our original condition and to recover it. Nothing else in creation is ever said to have been sent down or to have a condition set to its redemption. In most beautiful uprightness, we have no impurity. Absolutely pure, we bring together all the most beautiful names of the One and are revealed in our authentic condition. Beauty reveals eternity and infinity within finite time and space. It is quality’s victory over quantity. When we recognise beauty in the horizons of the world, amongst the signs of heaven and earth and what lies between them, we discover our self in it, as in our original and yearned-for absolute closeness to the Creator. This reflects our acceptance of confidence, offered to us as to every other thing. Everything else in existence rejected the offer of confidence, recusing themselves of free will and remaining only what the Creator’s will made them: their will is His, and they are at absolute peace in and with Him.2

We accepted the offer and can therefore relate to the Faithful through faith. As a result, we have free will, but based upon a knowledge that is always limited, as it has been received out of eternity and infinity in a world of temporal and spatial limitations. Given that we make our decisions on the basis of this free will, it is always possible for us to commit evil and to oppose the will of God. It is of this aspect that God said in the Recitation: “Surely he is sinful, very foolish.”3 One may be redeemed from such a condition only by voluntary obedience to the Creator’s will, the Hagaric heart in which are to be found the unknown ways of the Lord comprehended only in His knowledge and mercy.

Although always little,4 our knowledge links us to God, Whose knowledge comprehends all.5 Every sign bears a revelation of this knowledge, since creation served the Creator’s love to be known.6 The sign is both separate from

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2 See Qur’an, 33:72.
3 Qur’an, 33:72.
4 See Qur’an, 17:85.
5 Ibid., 4:176.
6 In a well-known sacred tradition, frequently cited in the texts of the Muslim intellectual tradition, God says: “I was a hidden treasure so I loved to be known. Hence I created the