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## Part 2: Roots

### 1) The First Foundation

**The First Foundation: the five roots of religion, namely divine unity (*tawhid*), divine justice (*adl*), prophethood, imamate and the events of the hereafter (*ma`ad*) according to the three degrees of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*.**

Know that the aim of the prophets and *awliya*; as we have already explained above on various occasions, is to convey each creational reality to its own specific perfection, in accordance with its capability and receptivity, and to elevate them above the darkness of their imperfection and ignorance through their own measure of striving and exertion. The prophets and the saints are aware that achievement of their aim is only feasible by a perfection of the twin forces of knowledge and action in the roots of the religion (*usul*), on the one hand, and in the branches (*furu`*), on the other.

They establish the roots to purify their inward life and to perfect their system of belief, and they establish the branches to purify their outward life and to perfect their actions. They inform the people of the roots and branches of religion by the twin blessings of the outward and inward on the command and with the permission of Allah. Allah refers to this in His Book when he says, 'and made complete to you His favours outwardly and inwardly' and thereafter 'And if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them;' thus the slave realizes that the blessings bestowed upon him by Allah are innumerable, both in this world and the next.

The meaning of inner purification is the purification of the impurities of manifest and hidden *shirk* (associating other than Allah with Allah). The polishing of the mirror of the self from the rust of disbelief and misguided actions is only possible with correct belief in the unity of Allah, in His justice, in imamate and the final day of reckoning. This is indicated in the words of the prophet when he says, 'Islam has

been built upon five (pillars)<sup>1</sup> and the words of Allah, 'Surely Allah does not forgive that anything be associated with Him and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases.'

Both the words of Allah and those of the Prophet refer to the two kinds of *shirk* which stand diametrically opposed to the two kinds of *tawhid* – namely the divine unity and the unity of existence, (which will be described later). The five principles are based upon these two kinds of unity and upon purification from actual or assumed impurity, including the cleansing of the body. But this purification is only possible by means of the five branches, namely prayer, fasting, *zakat* (payment of the purifying tax), *hajj* (pilgrimage) and *jihad*. Hence the Prophet's words: 'Islam is built on cleanliness,' and the words of Allah: 'Surely Allah loves those who turn much to Him and He loves those who purify themselves.'

The Commander of the Faithful has explained the meaning of purification: 'Allah has imposed belief (on the Muslims) as a purification from idolatry (*shirk*), the prayer as a way of freeing oneself from pride, *zakat* (the alms–tax) as a means of provision, fasting as a test of sincerity, *hajj* as an act of worship which brings one closer to the *din* (complete life–pattern) of Islam, the *jihad* as a glorification of Islam, the enjoining of good for the benefit of the common people, the forbidding of evil as a restriction on the foolish, the maintaining of good family relationships as a means of increase in numbers, retribution as a means of sparing people's blood, application of the punishments as a means of maintaining respect for what is forbidden, abstention from drinking wine as a protection for the intellect, withholding from theft as a means of preserving one's integrity, abstention from adultery as a means of maintaining and protecting good lineage, abstention from homosexuality in order that man may go on multiplying, death as a martyr (*shahid*) to overcome the perverse and the rebellious, abstention from lying as a means of revering the truth, peace as a heaven from whatever inspires fear, imamate as a way of establishing order within the nation of Muslims and obedience as a mark of respect for the Imams.'

Thus, anyone who wishes to purify the outward and the inward in the way outlined above should establish these roots and branches and all they imply, within the framework of the three levels of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*. The roots and branches of the people of each of these levels differs from the next – as we have already explained and shall further explain by God's will. Therefore, in the light of this, we must first define the roots and then the branches according to the way of the people of truth and reality; thereafter, we must investigate how they are both applied and define the pillars or the foundation of knowledge and action; we must then explain how they are both contained in the three above–mentioned levels.

## [2\) An Investigation of the Roots](#)

## **An Investigation of the Roots: according to the way of the people of truth**

Know that there are great differences of opinion concerning this matter: some believe that the roots of faith are two in number, that is, affirmation of Allah and His Prophet and certainty of belief with regard to the laws (and the fact that the Prophet ruled by these laws), while the people known as the Ash'arites withhold affirmation of that about which there is disagreement and ambiguity. According to others, the roots of the faith are three in number: affirmation with the heart, the manifestation of this belief on the tongue, and the actions of the limbs – and this opinion is shared by some of the Shi'ahs. The Shi'ahs say that the roots of the faith are three in number: affirmation of the Oneness of Allah in His Essence and justice of His actions, affirmation of the prophethood of all the prophets, and the imamate: of the infallible Imams.

Other Shi'ahs believe that the number of (the roots of the faith are four in number: divine unity, divine justice, prophethood and imamate. According to the Mu'tazalites, the roots of the faith are five in number: divine unity, divine justice, affirmation of prophethood, the promised reward and retribution, and the enjoining of good and the forbidding of evil. Some of the later Shi'ahs also believe this, although they express their belief in (slightly) different terms, namely that the roots of belief are five in number: divine unity, divine justice, prophethood, imamate and *al-ma`ad*, the resurrection and return of man to his Creator to face judgment. This is in fact the correct system of belief it is what I prefer and what is preferred by most of the scholars of the people of Allah.

The one who possesses a correct system of belief and perfect faith must also believe in the unity of Allah so that he may free himself from associating others (or other things) with Allah. Moreover, as well as belief in His unity, he must also believe that He is just and Wise, that He does not commit any hateful action and that He is not negligent in carrying out what is incumbent upon Him; by this belief he frees himself from fatalism and the attributing of good and bad actions to Allah, for any such notion would imply oppression of the slaves on the part of Allah – may He be exalted above such a notion. He Himself has rejected this when He says, 'And your Lord is not in the least unjust to His servants.' As these two beliefs are dependent upon the existence of the Prophet and the manifestation of his miracle (namely the Qur'an, in order that false belief may be distinguished from correct belief), it is also necessary to believe in the prophet and his prophecy.

The claim of certain people that knowledge of the roots need not be based upon the evidence of the Qur'an and the body of traditions, but rather that it is enough to acquire knowledge of them by means of the intellect, is not true: if the intellect were sufficient in acquiring knowledge of Islam and its roots, every man of sane mind would acquire correct belief and this is not the case. We should not, however, despise the Brahmins and the philosophers who believe only in the validity of the intellect and so do not take into consideration what has been transmitted by narration; (from revelation).

The way of the dutiful Muslim is to know the roots by means of his intellectual faculty, after having established the truth of these roots from the (sayings of the) infallible Prophet or Imam. Moreover, it is not necessary that in doing so he incline towards the way of the Isma'ilis or any other group since this is the true and valid method, the way of the infallible Imams and the early scholars (although not the later scholars). On his death a prophet of necessity leaves his religion and *shari`ah* in the hands of a perfected and infallible Imam who preserves the *shari`ah* and establishes its pillars either by coercion, by giving guidance or by instruction. These are referred to as 'those in authority' – in Allah's words: 'Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you.'

It is also necessary to believe in the Imam, just as the prophet is a source of grace for the dutiful Muslim, so the Imam is also a source of grace. Moreover, just as the sending of the messenger and prophet is incumbent upon Allah, so too is the appointment and establishment of the Imam incumbent upon Him in the sense that if He did not appoint someone it would imply deficiency on His part. These two roots are dependent upon Allah, that is, His appointment of the Prophet and the Imam; comprehension of these two roots is by reference to the Qur'an and the narrated traditions – and not by means of the intellect, as we have explained above.

There are numerous works on this subject, but it is not appropriate that we discuss the matter any further in this study. These works are to be found in particular in the sphere of theological debate (*'ilm al-kalam*) about the nature of life after death in the section dealing with the roots of religion (*usul al-din*). The whole of this topic is nothing but an expression of the prophetic reminder to man of the Day of Return, of guidance for man so as to know how to prepare for the day of standing (before Allah) and of news of the promised reward and punishment.

Thus it is necessary for him also to believe in the Day of Return and all that it implies of reward and punishment, which may also be expressed as attainment of perfection, on the one hand, or deficiency, on the other; he must believe in this so that he does not neglect any part of the roots or principles (mentioned above) or the branches (to be explained later). The roots are confined to these five and the dutiful Muslim has no need of any more than these. Moreover it is not permissible that he base his worship on less than these, and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise – He it is Who says the truth and He it is Who guides to the correct path.

We shall now begin to comment upon each of these roots within the parameters of the three levels, namely *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*.

### **3) Divine Unity (tawhid)**

The science of divine unity, *tawhid*, despite its various divisions and types, may be contained within two general divisions: firstly, the *tawhid* of the prophets and secondly, the *tawhid* of the saints or friends of

Allah. As for the *tawhid* of the prophets, it is a divine *tawhid* which is contained in the realm of common or general knowledge; it is therefore the *tawhid* which is concerned with the calling of men to the worship of an Absolute God and away from worship of a limited and dependent god; it is the *tawhid* of calling man to the affirmation of One God and the rejection of many gods.

The first kind of *tawhid* is referred to in Allah's words: 'Say O followers of the Book! Come to an equitable proposition between us and you, that we shall not serve any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah' and also His words: 'What! Makes he the gods a single god? A strange thing is this to be sure! The second kind of *tawhid* is expressed in His words: 'Surely your Lord is One God' and 'So know that there is no god but Allah'; moreover, the phrase *la ilaha illa'llah* – there is no god but Allah – has the same meaning, that is, it is a rejection of many gods and an affirmation of One God. The words of the Prophet also testify to this: 'I have been commanded to fight the people until they say 'There is no god but Allah'; indeed these words express the perennial mission to mankind of the prophets and messengers from Adam to Muhammad.

As for the *tawhid* of the saints (*awliya'*), it is a *tawhid* of His existence and of the inward: it is a *tawhid* of the elite and calls man to witness Absolute (Existence which belongs to Allah) rather than to witness limited or dependent existences. In other words, it calls to the affirmation of the One Existent, the True, the Necessary of Existence – by His Essence – and to the negation of multiple existences which are only possible by His Essence and are at the same time, by their nature, doomed to non-existence.

This is referred to by Allah's words: 'Everything is perishable but He; His is the judgment and to Him you shall be brought back' and also by His words: 'Everyone must pass away. And there will endure for ever the Person of your Lord, the Lord of glory and honour.' The words of all the gnostics also reflect the same truth: 'There is nothing in existence but Allah, His Names, His Attributes and His Actions. Thus everything is Him, by Him, from Him and to Him' – such is the call of the Saints and the Imams from Seth to the Mahdi.

There are no other kinds of *tawhid* besides these two because idolatry or polytheism (*shirk*), which stands in opposition to it, is also confined to two kinds: that is, manifest and hidden *shirk*. A person may either outwardly or inwardly associate others with Allah: if he or she does so outwardly, as in the worship of idols, cult-objects, stones, earth, the sun or the moon then it is manifest *shirk*, since it is so conspicuous to the people of the world.

This is referred to by Allah when He says, 'And they have taken besides Him gods, who do not create anything, for they themselves are created and they do not in themselves cause any harm or profit, and they control not death, nor life, nor raising (the dead).' This *shirk* is the antithesis of divine *tawhid*. If, however, he or she inwardly bears witness to the existence of other than Him and outwardly affirms this – witnessing contingent existences such as the intellect, the self (or soul), the planets and heavenly

bodies, the elements, the various mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms – then it is called hidden *shirk* because of its inconspicuousness; it is referred to by Allah when he says, 'O my two mates of the prison! Are sundry lords better or Allah the One, the Supreme? You do not serve besides Him but names which you have named, you and your fathers' Allah has not sent down any authority for them; judgment is only Allah's. He has commanded that you shall not serve aught but Him; this is the right religion but most people know it not.' This *shirk* is the antithesis of the *tawhid* of existence: there is no other *shirk* besides these two.

Know that the appearance of all the prophets and messengers is only for the purpose of calling mankind to the divine *tawhid* and freeing him from manifest *shirk*. The appearance of all the Saints and Imams is only for the purpose of calling man to a *tawhid* of existence and of ridding him of hidden *shirk*. All those who set out for the Absolute God, leaving behind the dependent or finite gods all those who turn from worship of the creation to worship of the Creator and who utter the words of divine *tawhid*, 'There is no god but Allah' free themselves from manifest *shirk*, become, according to the *shari`ah*, Muslims, who believe and affirm the Oneness of Allah. Moreover, both their outward and their inward aspects become purified of the impurity of manifest *shirk*. This is referred to in the words of Allah when He says, 'The idolaters are nothing but unclean.' If he does not do so then he is a *mushrik* – guilty of *shirk* – an unbeliever and impure both outwardly and inwardly.

All those who set out in the direction of the Absolute Existent leaving behind the dependent and finite existence, all those who turn from witnessing of the contingency of existence to a witnessing of the Necessary of Existence and who utter the formula of the *tawhid* of existence, namely that there is nothing in existence but Allah, rid themselves of hidden *shirk* and truly affirm the Oneness of Allah; they become gnostics and men of spiritual realization. Moreover, both their inward and outward aspects become purified of the impurity of hidden *shirk*. This is in accordance with the words of Allah, 'And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others with Him.' If a person does not do this, then he is inwardly impure. Some scholars, however, would say that such a person is both outwardly and inwardly impure and their opinion is supported by the words of Allah: 'Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him and forgives what is besides that to whomever He pleases.' This judgment applies to man in general and not to a particular group: thus anyone who is a *mushrik* or idolater, irrespective of whether he is guilty of manifest or hidden *shirk*, will not be forgiven. But this is an extremely difficult matter to come to terms with for only very rarely will someone be able to free himself of both types of idolatry.

Allah Himself says, 'And very few of My servants are grateful' and 'And very few are they.' It is for this reason that a gnostic has said: 'Freeing oneself from manifest *shirk* is easier than freeing oneself from hidden *shirk*. Similarly, arrival at divine *tawhid* is easier than arrival at the *tawhid* of existence. This is because the one who commits hidden *shirk* reckons himself to be among those who affirm the Oneness of Allah – and he reckons this because of his affirmation of divine *tawhid*. At the same time, however, he

overlooks the hidden *shirk* which is veiling him from Allah. The Prophet alludes to this when he says, 'The creatures of *shirk* from amongst my people are more hidden than the black creatures of the ant world crawling over a hard rock on a dark night.'

It is clear that hidden *shirk* is particular to the *mu'minun* (the believers) and the *muslimun* (those who have submitted to the will of God); it cannot be ascribed to the hypocrites and the unbelievers. Hence the words of Allah 'And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him)'. Moreover, the Prophet must have intended to ascribe this kind of *shirk* to his people because manifest *shirk* cannot co-exist with faith. The Qur'an refers to hidden *shirk* as 'low desire' when Allah says, 'Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god and Allah has made him err having knowledge.' Allah thus causes him to go astray from the path of knowledge since a person becomes an unbeliever, an idolater and a hypocrite by way of his low desire; it has been said, 'If it were not for "low desire", idols would never have been worshipped.'

It has also been said; 'No god, other than Allah, has ever been worshipped that is greater than one's base desire.' This is because the unbeliever tends to the religion of his fathers and forefathers by way of his low desire – becoming thereby one of the idolaters. They are referred to by Allah when He says, 'They say: "We found our fathers on a course and surely we are guided by their footsteps."'

We have presented the above principles by way of a brief introduction; we shall now begin a description of each of the different kinds of *tawhid* particular to each of the three groups.

### **i) According to the people of shari`ah**

This *tawhid* is divine *tawhid*, that is, the rejection of many gods and the affirmation of one God (or to express it in other terms the rejection of finite gods and the affirmation of the One Absolute God). This kind of *tawhid* may be divided into two kinds: one kind which is connected to those of *taqlid* (imitation of others more learned than they in matters of religion) from amongst the common or ignorant people, and a second kind which is connected to those of perception and intellectual reasoning from amongst the elite and the scholars.

As for the first group, their way is to believe that God is One, that He has no associate to His divinity and no rival or equal in existence, that there is nothing like Him and that He is the One Who hears and the One Who sees. They hold strongly to their belief, aware of Allah's words: 'If there had been in them any gods except Allah, they would both have certainly been in a state of disorder' and His words: 'Say He, Allah is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him.' They also believe that He is the Living, the Knower, the All-Powerful, the One Who hears, sees and wills, the Possessor of speech and that 'not the weight of an atom escapes His knowledge in the

heavens or in the earth and He is Cognizant of all things.'

They also believe that any gods other than Him are mere idols ('They do not in themselves cause any harm or profit and they control not death nor life') and that the worshippers of these idols are unbelievers, *mushrikun*, and cursed wherever they be found. They believe too that it is obligatory to stay well clear of any association with such persons both in this world and the next – as Allah Himself has commanded with His words: 'O you who believe! Do not take your fathers and your brothers for guardians if they love unbelief more than belief; and whoever of you takes them for a guardian, these it is that are the unjust' and by His words: 'You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His Apostle, even though they were their (own) fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kinsfolk.' People who have such a system of belief live within the protection of Islam in this world, they are safe from themselves, secure in their wealth and in their honour; in the next world their return will be to the generosity and mercy of Allah – truly Allah is the Possessor of vast bounty.

The perfect shaykh Abu Isma'il al-Harawi has indicated this in his book called *Manazil al-Sa'irin*: 'There are three aspects of *tawhid*, the first being the *tawhid* of the common people: this *tawhid* is made valid by the profession of faith (*shahadah*); the second kind is the *tawhid* of the elite which is established by means of the spiritual realities; the third kind is the *tawhid* which has its source in pre-creational reality and is the *tawhid* of the elite of the elite.'

As for the *tawhid* of imitation (*taqlid*), it is to bear witness that there is no god but Allah, that He is One and has no associate, that He is One and 'He upon whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten and none is like Him.' This is the manifest *tawhid* which rejects the greater *shirk*; by it is established the *qiblah* (the direction of Makkah faced while praying) and the inviolability of life and property; by it lives and property are spared and by it the House of Peace is made distinct from the House of Disbelief; by it the worship of ordinary Muslims is made valid – even if their action and belief is not based on proofs and reasoning.

As for the *tawhid* of reasoning, it is to establish the Oneness of God by intellectual proofs, showing that to admit of the existence of more than one god is logically inadmissible. If there were two independent gods in existence, then each would be distinct from the other by their essence, while sharing in each other's attributes: each would therefore be compounded of one part which separates and discriminates (from the other) and one part which joins and shares (with the other part). Any compound, however, is a contingency because it is in need of its own part and the part of something else; and if this is the case then it would mean that the Necessary of Existence was a contingent being and this is false, for of necessity He is the One God.

The people of this group are of the station of the *tawhid* of proofs and scholarly research and not of the station of unity through actual experience. It would be true to say that they are aware of the truth by

certain of its aspects only; they will be of the people who are saved (from the Fird) and who will enter the exterior Garden, as promised (to the believers) on the Day of Resurrection. This *tawhid* is called the *tawhid* of action because they demonstrate the (existence of the) Actor by the action and the Creator by the creation. They have no greater aim or destination but this, for such are the limits of their knowledge: 'They know the appearances of this world's life, but of the hereafter they are absolutely heedless.'

## ii) According to the people of tariqah

After arrival at this *tawhid*, the people of this group bear witness with the eye of inner vision that God is One, that there is no other than Him in existence and that there is no other Actor but Him. This is referred to in their words, 'There is no Actor but Allah' and 'There is no Actor other than Him in existence.' The people of this group cease to look to the causes and the chain of events arising from such causes; they rely on Him with a true reliance; they hand over their affair to Him entirely; they are pleased with what comes to them from Him and they are content with it. Hence Allah says, 'Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Allah.'

In this way they attain to the stations of reliance, of submission, of contentment and the like. Allah refers to this when He says: 'And whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him; surely Allah attains His purpose; Allah indeed has appointed a measure for everything.' In this way they arrive at the rank of the *tawhid* of attribute after the *tawhid* of action; by it they merit the station of the garden of attributes and the station of contentment – which is the highest station in the *tawhid* of attributes. Allah Himself says, 'And the best of all is Allah's goodly pleasure' and the Prophet refers to this with the words, 'Contentment is the greatest of Allah's doors.' Shaykh Abu Isma'il al-Harawi has also referred to this, saying: 'As for the second kind of *tawhid* – namely that which is established by truths and realities – it is the *tawhid* of the elite; it is the *tawhid* of the abandonment of manifest causes, rising above intellectual arguments.

This means that there is no bearing of witness based on rational proof, there is no seeking of causes for one's reliance on Allah and no seeking of means in the attainment of one's salvation. Thus the people of this group witness the supremacy of the Real in His Power and Knowledge; they bear witness to His placing of all things in their rightful place, His connection to these things by their longing for Him, and His invisibility with respect to them by virtue of their form and structure. This *tawhid* lends to the inner knowledge of causes and the abandonment of the phenomenal world.

The difference between this kind of *tawhid* and that of the people of *shari`ah* is that that of the latter is a *tawhid* of factual knowledge belonging to the common people and the former is the *tawhid* of actual experience belonging to the elite. The first allows one to rid oneself of manifest *shirk* and the second of hidden *shirk* – which is the greater and more difficult of the two. As for the vast difference between this

*tawhid* and the *tawhid* of the elite from amongst the people of Allah, it is that the *tawhid* particular to the people of *tariqah* is based on reliance, submission and contentment, together with the attainment of the corresponding stations, the taking on of the character of Allah and the adopting of His qualities. This way is connected to the *tawhid* of attributes and this way implies a Giver of attributes, an object which may be described as possessing those attributes and the attributes themselves. Yet this notion in turn denotes multiplicity, or rather it is multiplicity itself. In the same manner the multiplicity may be seen in the notion of the Relied upon and the one who relies, likewise in the One who is content with and the contented. It is clear that between multiplicity and *tawhid* there is a great distance.

The *tawhid* of the elite of the elite is based on total annihilation, complete extinction and a passing beyond all stations, levels and all manifestations of the contingent or phenomenal world, even beyond existence itself and all that it implies. This is referred to by their words: '*Tawhid* is the abandonment of anything which is extraneous (to His sole existence).' What a difference then between this kind of *tawhid* and that! What a difference between the one who continues by himself and the one who is annihilated in his Lord: 'That is Allah's grace; 'He grants it to Whom He pleases and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.'

In His noble Book Allah also speaks about 'the knowledge of certainty', 'the source of certainty' and 'the truth of certainty', thus indicating thereby these three kinds of *tawhid*. And they are indicated by the terms 'submission', 'faith' and 'certainty' or the terms 'companions of the left', 'companions of the right' and 'those who strive (by their good deeds) for His proximity'. The Prophet has also referred to the people of these different levels when he says, 'This world is forbidden to the people of the next and the next world is forbidden to the people of this and they are both forbidden to the people of Allah.'

This means that the station of *taqlid* has placed the people of the first group among the people of this world: they do not go beyond it because of the greed with which they seek after this world and because of their miserliness and cupidity with respect to the material comforts of this world. Moreover, it is well known that 'love of this world is the source of all wrong actions.' Thus it is correct to associate the people of this group with this world – for this is the reality of their situation. Allah refers to them saying, 'They know the appearances of this world's life, but of the hereafter they are absolutely heedless.'

The station of realization, the spiritual rank and the *tawhid* of experience – a degree superior to that of mere factual knowledge – places the people of the second group amongst the people of the next world: they have gone beyond outward appearances, witnessing the object of their desire – as it actually is – by the eye of inward vision. This is referred to by Allah Who says: 'Say: this is My way: I call to Allah, I and those who follow Me being certain.'

As for the people of the third group, their station of annihilation, their rank of the inward within the inward, their membership of the elite of the elite and their *tawhid* of the essence places them among the people of Allah and His chosen ones. This is because they have gone beyond the outward and the inward; by

this I mean the material and angelic worlds, the world of the unseen and that of witnessing, and they have arrived at the goal by the Essence of all things – which is the Real, the Truth. They witness Him by His light, in a manner befitting (His majesty), and, like the gnostic, they say, ‘Praise to the One, whom no one reaches except by Him.’ Likewise they would say, like the Prophet, ‘I saw my Lord by my Lord’ and ‘I know my Lord by my Lord.’ As Salman was of this station, the Prophet said of him, ‘Surely the Garden yearns more strongly for Salman than Salman for the Garden;’ this is because the Garden is of the next world and Salman is of the people of Allah, who are many ranks above the people of the Garden. Thus it is not surprising that he does not yearn after that which is lower than him, for to descend from something higher to something lower indicates imperfection. This is referred to by the Prophet when he says, ‘The good actions of the righteous are the wrong actions of the intimate.’

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

The arrival of the people of Allah at the station of the two kinds of *tawhid* mentioned above means that they do not witness other than Allah in existence and that in reality they know no other but Him: this is because His existence is true and essential and the existence of other than Him is contingent, phenomenal and exposed to destruction at any moment. Allah refers to this in His words: ‘Everything is perishable but He; His is the judgment and to Him shall you be brought back,’ and His words: ‘Everything on it must pass away. And there will endure forever the Person of your Lord, the Lord of glory and Honour.’

This destruction and disappearance is not dependent upon a particular time or period – as some of those who are veiled from these realities have claimed – rather it has always been happening from before endless-time and will continue to happen to eternity in exactly the same manner – just as the waves disappear back into the sea and the drops of rain dissolve into the ocean despite our intellectual conception of them as distinct entities since, in reality, the waves and droplets have absolutely no separate existence; the true existence is only that of the sea and the waves are in a state of self-destruction and disappearance. Such a notion is entirely rational and may be understood by every sane person, indeed, it is also a phenomenon that may be perceived by the senses of everyone. The following lines of verse also express this idea:

The sea is as the sea of old; truly the action of the waves and the rivers  
Does not veil you from their real *form*, for the very *forms* therein are veils.

Thus, just as the one who realizes that in reality there is no existence but that of the sea (the waves and raindrops being non-existent and time-bound and thus doomed to extinction and disappearance), will say that there is nothing in reality nor in outward manifestations but the sea, so he who witnesses the Real, the creation and the creational manifestations for what they actually are, he who realizes that the

creation and all phenomena are in fact non-existent (since at any moment they are doomed to destruction and disappearance), is also permitted to say that, in reality, there is no existence save that of the Real. This is the meaning of their words, 'The one who continues (in Allah) continues forever and the one of annihilation is still in a state of annihilation.'<sup>1</sup> Allah refers to this when He says, 'Yet are they in doubt with regard to a new creation.'

According to the gnostic, contingent existence is maintained by the Spirit of the Merciful, by the input from real existence at every moment (into the manifest world of disappearing forms) and by a corresponding moment by moment acceptance of this existence (on the part of the existences of this world).

The reality of this contingent existence is difficult to comprehend for it is of an extremely subtle nature. Allah refers to this when He says, 'And you see the mountains, you think them to be solid, and they shall pass away as the passing away of the cloud.'<sup>1</sup> Contingent existence may be understood from the way in which fruits grow bigger at every moment although the senses are not able to perceive this growth (likewise the imperceptible coming into being of the fruit, its existence prior to ripeness and its eventual disappearance from the tree).

There is a similar likeness in the way water moves to form waves: at every moment they are also in a state of disappearance; moreover, others like them are simultaneously coming into being by the power of Allah and the perfection of His handiwork. Every time contingent existence is in need of continuing its outward existence the Real extends existence to it from the Spirit of Mercy such that its existence outweighs its non-existence; moreover, this existence is in accordance with its own essence and not with that of its causer or bringer into being. This bestowal of existence manifests to sensory perception in the disappearance one form, its subsequent transformation by nourishment and food into another, and by the faculty of breathing. As for the mineral world, the celestial spheres and the domain of the spirits, the intellect judges them to be of continued unbroken life by the predominance of the existence lent to them. Man's inner vision, however, judges every contingent existence to be a new creation at every moment. Thus, in the vision of the gnostic who witnesses the Real or existence as it actually is, there exists nothing but the Real Himself.

This vision of the Real is sometimes expressed as existence and sometimes as essence. This notion is lent support by the consensus of the gnostics who say, 'There is nothing in existence but Allah, His Names, His Attributes and His Actions; everything is Him, by Him, from Him and to Him.'<sup>1</sup> On investigation we realize that this same meaning is expressed in the words of Allah, 'He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (over all) and the Knower of hidden things, and He is Cognizant of all things'<sup>1</sup> and His words, 'Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things? Now surely they are in doubt as to the meeting of their Lord, now surely He encompasses all things.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, the person or thing which encompasses is in no way separate from that which is encompassed

and that which is encompassed is not separate from the encompasser. Allah emphasizes this when He says, 'Any way you turn there is the face of Allah;' by consensus the 'face' referred to here is the essence and thus we may read: 'Anywhere you turn in the contingent phenomenal world, there is His essence and His existence,' This is evident since the encompasser only encompasses by the presence of the thing encompassed – 'And Allah encompasses all things.'

The *tawhid* of action means the removal from one's vision of any actor or action, such that one arrives at the One True Actor, the Originator of all actions. In this way one establishes the intellect in the unity of action. The *tawhid* of attribute is an expression of the removal of every attribute and object possessed of attributes from one's vision until one arrives at the One True Possessor of attributes – the Originator of all attributes and objects possessed of attributes. In this way one establishes one's inner vision in the unity of attribute. As for the *tawhid* of essence, it is an expression for the removal of any essence or existence from one's sight, such that one arrives at the One Absolute Existence, the Pure and Immaculate Essence, that is the Bringer into existence of all existences and the source of all essences. In this way one establishes one's spiritual vision in the unity of existence and essence – becoming thereby a perfected gnostic, a man of realization and arrival, at the station of abode and firmness, above which there is no station. This station is referred to in their words, 'There is no other village after Abadan.'

The Prophet has referred to these three kinds of *tawhid* in his supplication, which is well known to the elite and the common people: 'O Allah I seek refuge from Your punishment by Your mercy, I seek refuge from Your wrath by Your contentment and I seek refuge from You by You.' The first part of the supplication refers to the *tawhid* of action, the second to the *tawhid* of attribute and the third to the *tawhid* of essence. The people of this science have also divided *tawhid* into three types, calling the person of the first 'the possessor of intellect', the person of the second 'the possessor of sight' and the third 'the possessor of intellect and; sight.' This is because the third gathers and comprises the other two and takes precedence over them.

We shall finish this study by mentioning another of the gnostic sayings, namely: 'The possessor of intellect is he who sees creation in a manifest way and the Truth in an inward way, the Truth being for him a mirror of creation: by the veiling of the mirror with the manifest pictures it contains, the Absolute is veiled by limited and dependent creation. The possessor of sight is the one who sees the Truth in a manifest way and the creation in an inward way. Thus for him creation is the mirror of the Truth: by the appearance of the Truth in creation and the disappearance of the creation in the Truth, the mirror disappears by means of the picture. The possessor of intellect and sight is the person who sees the Truth in creation and the creation in the Truth. He is veiled from neither of them by the other, rather from one aspect he actually sees the existence of the Inventor of existence in a real way and from another aspect he sees the creation; he is not veiled by multiplicity from witnessing the aspect of the Inventor of existence, the One, and is not disturbed from witnessing, in the multiplicity of the creational

manifestations, the Oneness of the Essence which emanates from them. The perfect shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi says in the following verse:

Thus in creation is truth itself, if you possess sight,  
And in the truth is creation itself, if you possess intellect.  
If you possess both sight and intellect, then you see  
Nothing therein but One thing, albeit in different forms.

Since, as we have already indicated, there is no station above this noble station Shaykh ibn 'Arabi has also said in his *Fusus*; 'If you have tasted of this, you have tasted the goal above which there is no other goal for those of creation. Thus do not hunger or tire yourself out in trying to rise higher than this level, for there is absolutely nothing above it: there is only pure non-existence after it – may Allah bestow upon us and your arrival at this station, by (the blessing of) Muhammad and his noble family.' We shall now conclude our description of the three kinds of *tawhid*; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise; He it is Who says the truth and guides to the correct path.

#### 4) The Justice of Allah (ʿadl)

What is meant by *ʿadl* is that Allah is incapable of committing an offensive action and that He does not fail to fulfill that which is incumbent upon Him. Offensive action is any action for which the intellect feels revulsion and which is not consistent with its judgment of how something should be – actions such as lying, oppression and theft. The intellect of a sane man feels revulsion for these things and never judges them to be favourable courses of action. As we have seen above, it is incumbent upon Allah, since it is He Who has created man and imposed upon him specific duties, to send someone from Himself to teach man the nature of these duties and to guide him to the correct path. Allah affirms this when He says, 'Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised an Apostle from among themselves, reciting to them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error.' If this were not the case, it would imply that He was negligent in teaching whatever was necessary for correct performance of the duties; this in turn would contradict His purpose and it is impossible for the Wise, the Perfect to contradict His own purpose.

Thus it was incumbent upon Him to send someone to mankind to teach them their duties that they might fulfill the purpose for which He had created them. This He affirms with the words, 'And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me' and His words in a sacred *hadith*, 'I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known: so I created the world.' This is what is known as *lutf* (divine grace or kindness), which we have already explained above: the slave comes closer to His grace by his

obedience and is distanced from it by his disobedience.

According to most scholars, the question of what is good and what is bad is a matter for the intellect and is not dependent upon what is mentioned on the subject in the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions (*ahadith*). Some, however, believe the opposite to be true, that is, that this matter depends on the judgment contained in the Qur'an and *ahadith*.

Thus disagreement has arisen in this matter: the Mu'tazalites and their followers believe that it depends on the intellect and the Ash'arites and their followers believe that it depends on the Qur'an and the *ahadith*. In fact the Mu'tazalites are correct. The Qur'an and the *ahadith* have no influence in this matter: if it depended on the Qur'an, the *ahadith* and the code of the *shari`ah*, then the unbelievers and idol-worshippers would not be able to distinguish between good and bad conduct. In fact, however, truth is considered good and lying bad, justice is considered good and oppression bad – and likewise for the rest of the qualities admired or abhorred by the intellect.

Moreover, most men of intellect agree that the question of good and bad is something which is judged to be so by the intellect and does not depend on the evidence of the Qur'an and *ahadith*.

The Mu'tazalites and their followers have provided irrefutable proofs of the validity of what we are saying. We shall mention them here so that the reader may decide for himself between the truth of our claim and theirs. What they say is that our purpose in the creation of Allah is to be just and upright; in this way Allah does not commit any bad action (by His intent) and does not fail in what is incumbent upon Him. When judging what is good or bad according to the dictates of the absolute intellect (or conscience), we may argue in the following way: Know that when anyone (who is responsible for what he does in terms of the *shari`ah*) performs any action of his own choice, then that action will either be disliked by the intellect or it will not; if the former is the case, then it is an obligatory action.

Again with regard to the second, either the doer of the action merits praise or he does not; if he does, then this is a meritorious action. Again with regard to the second, either it is better to do the action or it is not; if the former is the case, then it is a good action. Again with regard to the second, either it is better to avoid doing the action or it is not; if the first is the case, then the action is disliked. Finally there are actions which are allowed. There are no actions performed by a Muslim which fall outside these classifications. Thus, on investigation, we are left in no doubt that our intellect is either repulsed by certain of our actions (like oppression, lying, idle jesting, and evil scheming) or it is attracted to them (like acts of gratitude for the Bestower of blessings, the quality of trustworthiness and the prompt repayment of debts). Moreover, knowledge of good and bad may be obtained by every person of sane intellect himself he has no need of the law of the *shari`ah* or the Qur'an or the narrated *ahadith*. Even those who reject divinely inspired legal codes (like the unbelievers, the brahmins and the scholars of other religions) are aware of this distinction (between good and bad). Whoever denies the validity of this argument is both arrogant and ignorant and is not worthy of being spoken to (on this matter). We shall now begin to

explain the question of divine justice with relation to the three levels.

### i) According to the people of shari`ah

All that is contained in this section may be expressed in the notion that Allah does not commit any action which is odious (to the intellect) and He does not fail in fulfilling what is incumbent upon Him. Since He is aware of what (action) is repulsive and what (action) odious, and since He is aware of His being elevated above any dependence on such action, His awareness always safeguards Him from such action. Moreover, nothing urges Him to such action because He is devoid of need and transcends such action. Therefore, since there is nothing to urge Him to such an action and yet there is something which prevents Him from such an action, it is impossible that such actions issue from the All-Powerful, from the One Who elects.

As it is established that Allah never commits any odious action and never fails in what is incumbent upon Him, the existence of dangerous animals; poisonous plants, noxious substances and other harmful things together with the cruelty of certain animals without apparent reason in the world of created phenomena is all for the good; whenever any action of oppression, lying or corruption, for example, occurs in the world, then it is because of other-than-Him and not because of Him. He never wills anything which is odious;

indeed, the very desire for something odious is odious. Allah refers to this when He says: `And when they commit an indecency they say: We found our fathers doing this and Allah has enjoined it on us. Say: Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency. Do you say against Allah what you do not know? Say: "My Lord has enjoined justice", and raise up your faces at the time of the prayer and call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience as He brought you forth in the beginning, so shall you also return. A part has He guided aright and (as for another) part, error is justly their due; surely they took the devils for guardians beside Allah and they think that they are followers of the right way.' This *ayah* is the best of proofs for the validity of what we are saying.

Another *ayah* is further proof, namely: `And if benefit comes to them, they say: "This is from Allah". And if misfortune befalls them, they say: "This is from you". Say: "All is from Allah", but what is the matter with these people that they do not make approach to understanding what is told (them)? Whatever benefit comes to you (O man!), it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself, and We have sent you (O Prophet!) to mankind as an apostle and Allah is sufficient as a witness. Whoever obeys the Apostle, he indeed obeys Allah and whoever turns back, so We have not sent you as a keeper over them." These words bear witness to the fact that bad actions issue from the slave of Allah, as do good actions, albeit with the accord and guidance of Allah; thus any praise or criticism falls on the slave and no other person. However we interpret this matter, there is nothing to suggest any injustice or

actions of an odious nature on the part of Allah. It is this that is meant by *`adl* by the people of *shari`ah* – in accordance with the judgment of the intellect and the relevant sources within the Qur'an and *ahadith*. This is referred to by Allah when He says: 'Whoever does good, it is for his own soul and whoever does evil, it is against it, and your Lord is not the least unjust to His servants.'

## ii) According to the people of tariqah

The justice of the people of *tariqah* is attained after their firm conviction that Allah has bestowed upon every created thing certain rights, perfections, inherent qualities, instincts, states and actions – in accordance with what is just and harmonious and without injury, loss, imperfection or negligence. This must be so since He is the One of Absolute Generosity and as such He not only bestows generously upon those created beings that are in a state of receptivity but he does so in the most perfect manner. If this were not the case, then He would not be described as Generous. Allah refers to this when He says, 'Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it to its goal' and also when He says, 'And He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them.' Allah's blessings are beyond the bounds of number. Moreover, His words, 'Say nothing will afflict us save what Allah has ordained for us; He is our Patron; and on Allah let the believers rely,' clarify the meaning of the above; they also demonstrate again that any action issuing from Him is always in accordance with justice, wisdom and equity.

Thus it is the duty of Allah's slave to trust and rely upon the actions or words issuing from Him: it is his duty to act only in accordance with His command directives and not to pay attention to any other. He Himself has said, 'Is not Allah sufficient for His servants?' and 'And whosoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him; surely Allah attains His purpose; Allah has appointed a measure for everything.'

In this way the people of *tariqah* and gnosis become established in the station of firmness and constancy, that is, they attain the station of trust, submission and contentment: this station is referred to by Allah with the words, 'Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter.' The slave of such a station cannot transgress the bounds (of this station): he realizes that the All-Wise, the Perfect in His Essence, the One Who is Cognizant of all things both past and to come, does not act but in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom and that nothing issues from Him which is in opposition to what actually happens; thus there is no alternative but to trust in and be content with one's own actions – be they good or bad – since this station is within the knowledge of Allah.

Allah indicates that the contentment of the slave results in the contentment of his Lord with him: '(as for) those who believe and do good, surely these are the best of men, their reward with their Lord is gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein for ever; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him; that is for him who fears his Lord.' Again Allah refers to those of this station of

contentment, submission and trust free of concern for the past or the future or for the affairs of this world when He says, 'Now surely the friends of Allah – they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.' Such persons are free of grief and regret for what has passed or fears for what is to come because they know that it is all within the knowledge of Lord and that He does not do anything but in the most appropriate manner. The Commander of the Faithful ('Ali) says in this respect, 'I have found all renunciation of the world (*zuhd*) in just two phrases from the Qur'an: "So that you may not grieve at what escaped you, nor be joyous at what He bestowed on you."'

The aim of the slave of Allah is thus to attain to an equilibrium in all states irrespective of whether these states be liked or disliked, easy to deal with or difficult. He ('Ali) has referred to this in a still more direct way with the words, 'Know with a certainty of knowledge that Allah does not bestow upon the slave more than that which has been allotted to him in His Wise Remembrance, irrespective of the intensity of his efforts, striving and cunning. Moreover, He does not prevent a slave from reaching what has been allotted to him in His Wise Remembrance, irrespective of the slave's weakness, or lack of cunning. Whoever is aware of this and acts by his knowledge will be among those who enjoy the greatest ease and benefit.

As for the one who abandons this course of action or doubts its validity, then he will be among those most active in bringing about harm to themselves. Many a time it happens that one person is blessed with a continual flow of bounty and many a time another is afflicted with trial and hardship. Therefore, 'O you who enjoy benefits, increase your thanks, make less haste and be content when your provision comes to an end.' These words are conclusive evidence of the truth of all we have said on this subject. We have mentioned this saying in order to lend weight and clarity to the matter in hand and although we have used this quotation earlier on in the work, we feel justified in the repetition, given the variety of interpretations possible at the different levels of our investigation.

It has been narrated that Ibn 'Abbas has said: 'I was riding mounted behind the Prophet when he said to me: "O youth! O my son! shall I teach you some words (of wisdom) which Allah will cause to be of benefit to you?" I replied: "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said: "Take care (to be aware) of Allah and He will take care of you; be mindful of Allah and you will find Him in front of you; if you come close to Allah in times of ease, He will come close to you in times of hardship; if you ask for something, then ask for it of Allah and if you seek help, then seek help from Allah – for the (writing of the) Pen has dried concerning what is to be until the Day of Resurrection. Even if men wanted to favour you in a way which Allah had not decreed for you, they would not be able to and if they wanted to harm you in a way which Allah had not decreed for you, then they would not be able to. Thus work for Allah with gratitude and certainty and know that there is great good in being patient in the face of those things you dislike; know too that victory comes with patience and relief after trial and that with hardship comes ease."'

It is clear that no one will be able to attain to this station unless he becomes aware of what we have

mentioned above: namely that Allah is cognizant of things before and after their coming into existence and that actions undertaken by Allah are in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom. It has also been narrated that one of the great companions Jabir ibn `Abdullah al-Ansari, afflicted by weakness and frailty in his old age, was visited by Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Baqir. The latter asked him about his state and he replied, `I am welcoming old age after (the passing of) youth, illness after health and death after life.' Al-Baqir then said, `As for myself, if Allah were to place old-age upon me, then I would love old-age; if, however, He were to place youth upon me, then I would love youth; if He were to cause me to be ill, I would love illness and if He cured me, then I would love the cure; if He caused me to die, I would love death and if He caused me to carry on living, I would love carrying on living.' When Jabir heard these words he kissed his face saying: `The Messenger was right when he said to me: "Surely you will meet one of my sons, his name will be the same as mine; he will penetrate to the depth of knowledge, just as the ox cleaves the soil (while ploughing)."<sup>1</sup> From these words we realize that Jabir was of the station of patience and that Muhammad al-Baqir was of the station of contentment: between these two stations the difference is manifest.

In short, these stations are only attained by way of the slave's knowledge that his Lord is aware of his state and the state of all creatures from before endless-time until eternity and by the slave's knowledge that He is just in His actions and states, elevated above oppression or transgression, whether it be against Himself or others. This is as He Himself has said: `Surely Allah does not do any injustice to men, but men are unjust to themselves.' If you have grasped this, then you should learn and acquire this belief for yourselves, together with the accompanying states mentioned above – and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise; He it is Who says the truth and He guides to the correct path.

### **iii) According to the people of haqiqah**

This station occurs after firm establishment in the two abovementioned stations of justice. It is the station of knowing that Allah is just in His bestowal of existent on every existent being and that He is just in His bestowal of a behaviour-pattern and certain attributes on these beings after ascertaining the essential capacity and inherent receptivity of each. This is so because every existent, being, irrespective of whether it is assigned to the phenomenal world or not, has a specificity and reality in the knowledge of its Lord before it actually comes into outward existence.

If He were to bestow an existence which was in opposition to its nature, then He would be guilty of injustice. Such an action is not permissible coming from Him, since He is just in His actions and His speech and equitable in His bestowal of withholding of anything as we have already mentioned. Thus it is incumbent upon Him to give existence to every existent being in a way which is concordant with the state of that being in itself neither adding to nor detracting from that specific measure of existence. This then is true justice since justice is the placing of something in its rightful place.

Many things have been related with respect to this matter, for example: `Say: "Every one acts according to his manner."` These words of Allah mean that everyone acts according to his outward manner and physical form and these in turn are in accordance with his inward manner and his spiritual form. When David asked, `O Lord, why have You created the creation?` He replied: `For the very condition that they find themselves in,` meaning in the different states of receptivity and readiness. When seen in this light, one can understand why there is no one who raises his voice in objection to Allah and no one who demands to know why he has not been created in a different form. Each existent being knows that Allah could reply with the tongue of spiritual inspiration saying: `I have not bestowed existence on you except in a measure concordant with your receptivity and your readiness and in accordance with your essence and substance, not in accordance with Myself. I am the Actor and you are the receiver, and receptivity is on the part of the one who receives, not on the part of the Actor.

Rather your existence is in accordance with your own essence and receptivity; thus you are objecting to your own receptivity and readiness, not to Me: this is because the Actor has no influence over the one receiving, only over the measure of his receptivity. Now if you are aware that I am Cognizant of you, then (it should be remembered that) knowledge does not impinge upon what is known until the latter actually appears. Besides, conformity is a necessary condition in the relationship between knowledge and the known: this is so because knowledge follows from what is known, so what follows is not aware of that which precedes apart from being aware of that thing out of which it was created.

Furthermore I am the Wise, the Just, the Knower and the Perfect, nothing issues from Me except in an aspect which is fitting. My words: "He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned" demonstrate that I am the All-Knowing and the Wise and the actions of the All-Knowing and the Wise are not open to question, rather they will be questioned because of their ignorance of the truth and on account of their inability to place each thing in its correct place. If you, like Me, were cognizant of the realities of all things, both past and present, then you would not be of those whom are questioned about what they do. As for Myself, I am the All-Knowing, the Wise, the Perfect and as such it is not fitting at all that questions be asked as to My actions: this is because I do not do anything except in accordance with My knowledge and wisdom and in the manner which is most fitting. Thus it is that I have said: "Not a weight of an atom becomes absent from Him in the heavens or in the earth, and neither less than that nor greater, but (all) is in a clear book" and also "that is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing."

Thus we exhort the reader to reflect upon this matter for surely it will reveal to him all the secrets contained in the subject we are now considering. This is the highest of stations, there being no rank above it – and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise; He it is Who says the truth and guides to the correct path.

## 5) Prophethood

Prophethood is a term used to express the act of receiving the realities of gnosis and intellectual knowledge from Allah on the part of the Purified Soul by means of the essence of the First Intellect, known sometimes as Gabriel and sometimes as the Holy Spirit. It is also used to express the transmission of this gnosis and intellectual knowledge to those who listen and benefit thereby and to the followers of the prophets and messengers.

### i) According to the people of shari`ah

The prophet is the man sent from Allah to His slaves: he is sent in order to perfect them by making them aware of the manner in which they need to worship Him and by teaching them about that which will safeguard them from any acts of disobedience. His prophethood is recognized by three things. The first is that he does not establish anything which is contrary to the rational workings of the intellect (like his saying, for example, that the Creator is more than one in number). The second is that he calls creation to obedience of Allah and to an abstention from acts of disobedience. The third is that, as a result of the call of the prophet, there appears a *mujizah* (miracle) and a corresponding challenge to his call. A *mujizah* is any action which breaks normal patterns and which ordinary human beings are incapable of performing and a challenge is that a prophet says to his people: 'If you do not accept my message, then such and such will happen to you;' his people then say exactly the same thing to him in disbelief of his message and they exhort him to do something that they may believe in his prophecy – like their calling on him to split the moon or make the stones speak. An (extraordinary) action which does not occur specifically in response to a challenge or a denial of a message (on the part of a prophet) is called a *karamah* – an act of wondrous proportions – and it belongs to the saints rather than the prophets.

The reason for sending a prophet or a messenger is because it becomes incumbent upon Allah – given His aim in bringing the slaves to their own specific perfection from before eternity in accordance with their essence and substance – to teach His slaves the manner of their duties and worship and the gnosis whereby they may attain to His purpose. We would clarify this by saying that Allah has, by their various sense faculties and physical strength and by their differences of judgment and opinion enabled them to commit evil action or righteous action.

Thus it is incumbent upon Allah to send a prophet to them in order to direct them to the correct manner of behaviour and social contract (that is the code of the *shari`ah*). This lutf is incumbent upon Him as we have already mentioned above. Moreover, since Allah cannot be perceived by the senses, since not everyone has the power to receive this understanding from Him himself and since instruction of His slaves without an intermediary is not possible, it is incumbent upon Him to appoint a group of

messengers as a connecting link between Himself and them. In this way the messengers take (instructions) from Him and deliver them to His slaves.

It is necessary too that the prophets or messengers who take on the pattern and qualities of Allah be infallible, that is, be free from any minor or major misdeed from the very beginning of their lives until the end. In this way, their words and actions gain the trust of the people. Thus it has been said that it is not permissible for the messengers to commit bad actions or to fail in their obligations, but that they still live in a manner which does not put them beyond the realm of free choice. In this way the intellect of the people are not alienated from them and they trust in that which is being brought by them as a kind of divine grace. This divine grace is an obligation on Allah and it is called (in this case) *'ismah* – or infallibility.

No one sent from His Presence to the people will be believed unless he confronts opposition and challenges to his call with an action which breaks the normal patterns of reality. It is this that is known as *mu'jizah*, and by necessity it is incumbent (upon Allah) to make these miracles appear at the hand of the messengers. It is necessary so that their mission is not invalidated and so that they do not fail in the purpose which Allah has assigned for them. Allah refers to this when He says, 'Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them an Apostle from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error.' Such is the nature of this station with respect to the people of the *shari'ah*, and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise.

## ii) According to the people of tariqah

Prophethood for the people of the spiritual path means knowledge of the divine realities and secrets of Lordship. It may be divided into two types, the prophethood of instruction in knowledge and the prophethood of instruction in the code of laws. The first means a transmission of gnosis of the Essence, Names and Attributes, and the second means all of the aforesaid together with a transmission of the laws, inculcation of courtesy and moral behaviour, instruction of wisdom and the establishment of a political framework, which are covered by the term of *risalah* or divine message. We shall now comment upon this term in more detail.

Know that there is an outward and an inward aspect to the Real. The inward contains the Divine Solitude of Truth which is in the realm of the Absolute Unseen. Multiplicity is in the realm of knowledge and the pre-creational source-forms. The outward is always dependent on multiplicity and there is no way that it can free itself of this. This is because manifestation of the Names and Attributes is only possible when each is assigned its own particular form; thus, of necessity, multiplicity exists. Since each of these particular forms is seeking its own relevant manifestation, area of authority and code of law, there arises

conflict and strife among these specific forms. For this reason a manifestation of wisdom and justice becomes necessary in the form of an arbiter to judge between them and to maintain order in this world and the next. The arbiter rules by its Lord (who is the Lord of all lords) over the various Names in a just way and brings each of the names to its own perfection, both in the realm of the outward and the inward. Such an arbiter is the Prophet of Reality, the Pole of pre-endless time, the first, the last. He is the Muhammadi reality mentioned by the Prophet Himself in his words: 'I was a prophet when Adam was (in a state) between water and clay', that is, in a state between knowledge and corporeal form.

As for the one who judges between the manifestations other than the Names, it is the prophet who attains to prophethood after his manifestation as the vicegerent of the Prophet of Reality. This prophet is sent to creation as a guide and a teacher who indicates the way to their perfection – a perfection which is prescribed beforehand with respect to each in the realm of knowledge and in accordance with the respective capacities of their pre-creational source-forms. This prophet is either one who brings and establishes a particular code of law or one from among the prophets of the tribe of Israel (who reaffirmed the already established code). The prophetic mission is an expression of the special treatment of man by God. This special relationship issues from Him by means of His revelation.

This revelation is in the form of those divine emanations or unveilings which cause the bringing into being of the source-forms in the realm of knowledge; these emanations are also known as the most sacred divine outpourings. Since these outpourings, on becoming manifest, all seek by their nature to attain to the highest station – according to the natural law whereby things of like quality strive to outdo each other – Allah has elevated the rank of prophethood by means of the manifestation of miracles and supernatural events together with the corresponding challenge or opposition (from the opponents of the prophet) and has thus distinguished real prophethood from false prophethood. Thus the prophets are manifestations of the divine Essence by their authority over the other manifestations and by their standing in judgment between them.

Prophethood is particular to the realm of the outward; all prophets of necessity share the task of calling people to worship, guiding them and living among them. Prophethood is as a complete cycle which includes in it various finite cycles within the perfect enclosed space – like, for example, the *ulu'l-`azm* (those in authority) and the messengers and various prophets of the tribes of Israel within the enclosed dimensions which are not (in themselves) perfect. This then is the station of the people of *tariqah* with respect to prophethood, the message, the prophet and the messenger; and success is by Allah.

### **iii) According to the people of haqiqah**

The station of this group occurs after establishment in the two above-mentioned stations. It is the rank of absolute divine caliphate, although it has different ranks according to the rank of the person who is the

manifestation of this caliphate. We have already explained some aspects of these ranks and we shall now continue to comment upon the rest.

Know that the prophethood of this group is an expression of the good news or revelation from the divine: the prophet is the one who is informed of the Essence of Allah and of His Attributes, His Names, His laws and His wishes. The real and essential prophetic announcement is nothing other than that. The Greater Spirit was sent by Allah to the First Universal Soul and from there to the particular individual soul in order to inform it, in the language of the intellect, of the Unity of Essence, the Attributes from before endless time, the divine Names, the illustrious laws and His revered will. Every prophet from Adam to Muhammad is a manifestation of the various manifestations of the prophethood of the Greater Spirit: the prophethood of the latter is essential and eternal; the prophethood of the various other manifestations is incidental and interrupted – except that of the prophethood of Muhammad whose prophethood is eternal and uninterrupted since his reality is the reality of the Greater Spirit and his form includes the various forms in which this reality manifests.

The rest of the prophets manifest by means of some of the names and qualities: each manifestation is an emanation of one of the qualities, or one of the names, except that of the Muhammadi manifestation which emanates from the essence of the Greater Spirit and by means of all its qualities. Moreover, in this manifestation prophethood comes to a close. The Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, preceded all the prophets with respect to the reality of prophethood, yet comes after them with respect to outward form. He himself has said: 'We are the last and the first' and also 'I was a prophet when Adam was (in a state) between water and clay.'

As for the description of the caliphate and the caliph, this has also been given in terms of the people of this station. When the authority of the eternal essence and that of the higher attributes demand an expansion of the divine kingdom and the unfurling of the banners of Lordship, it occurs by means of the manifestation of creational realities and their subsequent subjugation by the executing and management of (creational) affairs, by the maintenance of the various ranks of existence and the elevation of the stations of witnessing.

The beginning of this whole affair issues from the original pre-creational Essence and is therefore far removed from creation because of the distance of the relationship between the might of original pre-creation and the abasement of the transient-contingent world. In order for all this to occur, the All-Wise commands a vicegerent to take His place in matters of action, governance, maintenance and care. This vicegerent possesses an aspect based in pre-creational existence whereby he gains assistance from the Real and an aspect in contingent creation whereby he is assisted by creation. Thus Allah makes him his vicegerent or deputy.

He also invests him with the robe (the knowledge) of all His Names, empowers him by way of the authority of the caliphate with the governance of affairs and transfers rule of the people to him. He also

hands over the execution of His commands within the spheres of His earthly kingdom and spiritual kingdoms and responsibility for the subjugation of creation to His rule and dominion. He named man *insan* (from the Arabic word for human being, whose root implies intimacy and friendship) because of the possibility of intimacy between him and the rest of creation. He also placed in him, by virtue of His two names – the Outward and the Inward – an inner reality and an outward form which thereby enables him to act in both the earthly and spiritual worlds. His inner reality is the Greater Spirit and by it man merits the role of the caliphate: the First Intellect is his vizier and his interpreter and the Universal Soul his treasurer and bondsman; Universal Nature is his agent and the head of the natural forces. As for his outward form, it is the form of the world from the Throne to the surface of the earth together with all the simpler and compound elements contained therein. This outward form is also the Cosmic Man, referred to by the scholars when they say, 'The world is the greater man;' as for their words, 'Man is the micro-cosm,' they are here referring to man as an individual type and as the caliph of Allah on earth. As for the Cosmic Man, he is the Caliph of Allah in the heavens and the earth; the lesser man or microcosm is the selected copy of him, just as the son is the copy of the father.

The lesser man also has an inner reality and an outward form, the former being the individual spirit, the soul and the temperament and the latter a select copy of the form of the world: in it is contained in corresponding proportions every part of the world, be it of subtle or gross nature. Glory be to the One who made the whole in one of the parts. It has also been said: It is hardly something beyond belief if Allah were to gather the world in man – as a faithful reflection of the whole – and if he were to choose one particular person for this role. Indeed the forms of all persons result from the forms of Adam and Eve – and by this we imply that they too in turn have issued from the Greater Spirit and the Universal Soul. The Cosmic Man is a manifestation of the Evident Reality and the lesser man attains to this by the annihilation of his individuality and the obliteration of his dependent or limited nature. From this state it will then be correct for him to declare that which certain persons would find obscure:

Even if I am known simply as Adam's son,  
Therein lies meaning for me, as witnessed by my forefathers.

The reader should pay particular attention to this point, for it is the source of many finer points which in turn lead to an understanding of many truths; and Allah says the truth and guides to the correct path. With this we conclude our study of prophethood and the message within the framework of the three levels; we shall now begin our investigation of imamate.

## **6) Imamate**

In an absolute sense imamate refers to a religious governance which includes an exhortation to the

common people to safeguard what is of benefit to them (with respect to their religion and their worldly affairs) and aims to protect them from that which might harm them.

### i) According to the people of shari`ah

For the people of the *shari`ah* Imamate is an obligatory matter both with respect to the intellect and in the light of the legal code, in the same way as prophethood is an obligatory matter for a person in a state of *fitrah* (the natural harmonious condition of man) and in the state of Islam, both from the point of view of the intellect and in the light of the narrated evidence. As for the obligation with regard to the intellect, it arises from the people's need of an Imam who is necessarily infallible and who preserves the laws of the *shari`ah* for them, exhorts them to respect these laws by means of the promised reward and the threatened torment, and who carries out the legally prescribed punishments in this world. This need is similar to their need for a prophet who discriminates between that which is permissible and that which is forbidden. Just as men were in need of the establishment of the *shari`ah* in the beginning, so they are also in need of its continued maintenance and preservation.

Likewise, if the sending of the prophet is a divine obligation – a necessary act of grace by the Deity and a necessary means of establishing certainty of faith – then so too is the establishment of the Imam: it is necessary so as not to invalidate Allah's proofs and demonstrations (which were made manifest originally by way of the prophetic message and revealed books).

One may express this in another way by saying that the establishment of the Imam is a divine grace and grace is incumbent on Him. Thus the Muslim who chooses the way of obedience to the Imam possesses divine grace. If he does not choose this way, then there will be no grace for him, despite his firmness in both states; moreover, by his choice of obedience, evil ceases to exist in his life.

There is no doubt that when there exists a respected leader who unwaveringly carries out that which is necessary for correct governance, who aids the ignorant and the weak and treats the oppressed justly, then all corruption and injustice disappears (or at least the greater part of it). Thus it is necessary that his existence be full of grace just as others are full of such grace. We have said that this grace and kindness is incumbent upon Allah. If He were not full of grace, and the duties still remained in force then the duty bound Muslim would have no rational reason to comply: the Real would then be defeating His purpose and this is impossible with respect to Him. Since we have demonstrated the truth of the two premises, we have also shown that the establishment of the Imam is obligatory upon Allah – this with respect to the intellect and rational proofs.

If we now examine the narrated evidence, we may refer to Allah's words: `O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you.'<sup>1</sup> These words may be used as proof

– in the sense that Allah has commanded the Muslims to be obedient to those in authority, just as He has commanded to obedience of Himself and to His Messenger. If obedience to Himself and to His Messenger is obligatory, then obedience to 'those in authority' is likewise obligatory. Either this phrase refers to particular persons or it does not: the second of these two possibilities is invalid since, if it were true, then the term used would refer to all people and would thus be devoid of meaning. As for the first of the two, it either refers to all the nations of Muslims or to some of them. The first of these is necessarily false; the second stands and thus it must be that there exists within the nation of Muslims a particular infallible person, for whom it is not permissible to make mistakes and who is known as one of 'those in authority'.

We thus arrive at the point of our argument: that it is necessary that the imamate be an obligatory religious doctrine both with respect to the intellect and to the *shari`ah*. This, however, is in opposition to the majority of the Muslim nation. Most, because of their lack of understanding of religion and Islam, do not count imamate as one of the pillars of Islam. They claim that it is permissible for the person from 'those in authority' to be any person from among the sultans or kings of this world, even if they are known for their oppression and corruption.

Moreover, this majority do not permit that this person be the infallible Imam from the family of the Prophet, despite the validity of the Imam's claim, supported as it is by textual evidence from the Qur'an and from the Messenger. They do not recognize that because 'those in authority' from among the sultans and kings rule by force and coercion, it is not then permitted for Allah to command His creation to absolute obedience of them: to command to obedience of an oppressor or evil person is in itself an act of oppression and evil, may Allah be exalted above such a notion. It is for this reason that the Imami sect believe that the prophet and the Imam must be infallible: if they were not, then the commanding of obedience to them would imply evil and oppression on the part of Allah, may Allah be elevated above such a description of Himself. We have clear evidence from both narrated sources and from the intellect that He is in a state of sanctity and holiness, far removed (from the impurities of creation).

It is necessary that the Imam be exempt of all wrong action, just as the prophet is infallible. This is so because the reason for the necessity of infallibility for the prophet and the Imam is one and the same: if the infallibility of the prophet is obligatory, then so too must the Imam be infallible; the reason for this has already been mentioned. It is necessary that the prophet be free of all wrong action, both minor and major, both before the beginning of his prophethood and after it (the question of whether an action is done knowingly or inadvertently is therefore irrelevant); if he were permitted to commit wrong action, then the intellect would be repulsed from following him.

Furthermore, it is not fitting that the Wise should make obedience necessary to someone disdained by the intellect. And the person who is known as being from 'those in authority' must be appointed and established in authority at the time of the Prophet – so the term is not applied to all: if the Imam were not appointed, then it would mean that Allah were deficient in that which was incumbent upon Him, as would

the Prophet. Such a notion may not even be entertained according to the consensus of scholars. Indeed Allah has appointed him in clear terms when He says, 'Only Allah is your Wali and His Apostle and those who believe, those who keep the prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow;' no other person but the Commander of the Faithful ('Ali) has given the poor-rate while bowing, according to the consensus of the commentators, thus it is he who is meant by 'those in authority' – by Allah's appointment of him and no other.

Likewise, no others may become Imam but his infallible sons and progeny: infallibility is a condition of imamate and wilayah and there are no others but these who may be described as possessing infallibility, even according to their opponents. The Real has also indicated them when He says, 'Allah only desires to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying' and also His words, 'Then Allah will bring a people, he shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of the censurer; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to who He pleases and Allah is Ample-giving, knowing.'

These words refer specifically to the future and to no other time. Likewise His words: 'And we desired to bestow a favour upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams and to make them the heirs:' none other than they merit the prophetic inheritance and divine graces. An indication of the truth of Allah's words is their weakness at the time of the Marwan and 'Abbasid dynasties and even up to the present day, in view of the number of their enemies and their lack of supporters. If the Mahdi did not fear his enemies, then it would be incumbent upon him to become manifest. If he were not to become manifest, then he would be failing in his obligation; yet this is not possible as is explained in the books of theology.

Allah also mentions the Imams when he says: 'Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this, that they shall have the Garden; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain; a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an; and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Rejoice therefore in the pledge which you have made; and that is the mighty achievement. They who turn to Allah, who serve (Him), who praise (Him), who fast, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the limits of Allah; and give good news to the believers.' On examination we realize that the qualities referred to belong to no others – but the Imams. There are numerous examples of this in the Qur'an and the body of Prophetic traditions and the reader should look for them in the appropriate places. Allah it is Who says the Truth and guides to the correct path.

## **ii) According to the people of tariqah**

According to the people of this station, imamate refers to the caliphate which issues from Allah and the Pole of the Age. The Imam is the possessor of that caliphate and is called the wali. There are two types of wali: there is the wali whose wilayah (governance) is real and essential and which issues from before endless-time, as such he is called the Absolute Wali; he is the Greater Pole. The other kind is he whose wilayah draws its power from the Absolute Wali, by this I mean an acquired wilayah, received by inheritance and incidental (with respect to the absolute): the wali of such a wilayah is called the dependent wali; he is the Imam or the caliph. Both types are dependent upon our Prophet and upon whoever of the people of His House inherits from him – that is the Commander of the Faithful and his progeny. In the light of this we may say that this station is recognized by three signs: the first, the designation of wilayah, the second, the appointment of the Absolute Wali and the third, the appointment of the dependent wali.

As for the first, wilayah is the act of living among created beings after annihilation in the Real and subsistence in Him: in reality, it is nothing but the inward dimension of prophethood whose outward manifestation is the bringing of news and whose inward is their imposition of the laws. Prophethood is sealed, since there are no new tidings from Allah and no prophet after Muhammad. Only wilayah continues among men until eternity; the souls of the awliya' (plural of wali) from the people of Muhammad are the bearers of responsibility for the execution of the wilayah; thus wilayah is executed by them in creation until the Final Day or rather, forever without end. An indication of the authenticity of the wali is that he outwardly confirms with the Prophet: both derive their pattern of behaviour from one source, the wali being a manifestation of the behaviour of the Prophet. Some have spoken of themselves as having the qualities of a prophet in a poetic sense: they see themselves as descending upon the station of the prophet in a divine way; thus Ibn al-Farid has said:

I was sent from myself as a messenger to myself  
And my essence testified to myself by my signs.

Prophethood, in the exoteric sense, is a cycle which is composed of a line of points marking the lives of the prophets. This line is perfected by the Muhammadi point, since prophethood is like a wall of bricks which is completed, except that it needs one more brick, that brick being the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad. In a similar way wilayah, in the exoteric sense, is also a cycle composed of a line of points marking the lives of the awliya` this line is completed by the point which seals the wilayah, namely the existence of Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, the master of the age, also known as the Mahdi.

One of the agnostics, after demonstrating the truth of this by means of the intellect, the Prophetic sayings and unveilings, says, `The station of the Greater Pole is the rank of the pole of the poles and it corresponds to the inward aspect of the prophethood of Muhammad; it does not exist but by inheritance from him and by the fact that Muhammad is the perfection (of the prophetic cycle). The seal of the wilayah and the pole of the poles do not exist but by the inward aspect of the seal of prophethood.' The

same gnostic has also said, 'The seal of prophethood is the person by whom Allah has sealed prophethood: it is one person alone, namely our Prophet Muhammad. The matter is similar in the case of the seal of wilayah: by it the good of this world and the next is brought to final perfection; with his death the order of this world is plunged into disorder. He is the Mahdi, whose return is promised for the end of time.'

Another aspect of the wilayah of the wali has also been described in the following way: 'Wilayah is the establishment of the slave by means of the Real after annihilation of the self. This takes place by the turning of the Real to him and by His bringing him to the furthest station of intimacy and certainty. The *wali* is the person whose affairs have been taken over by the Real, Who safeguards him from disobedient action and does not leave him nor his soul until He brings him to the highest perfection in the realm of man.' Allah has said, 'And He befriends the good' and also, 'Thou art my guardian in this world and the hereafter. Make me die a Muslim and join me with the good.'

The Shaykh al-A'zam (Ibn 'Arabi) has divided the subject of *wilayah* into different sections; his own words on the matter provide a clearer description than any other: 'Know that *wilayah* may be divided into absolute and dependent *wilayah*, in other words common *wilayah* and *wilayah* of the elite. If we consider *wilayah* with respect to itself, then it is a divine attribute in an absolute sense; if we consider it as being related to the prophets and the *awliya'*, then it is dependent. Moreover, the dependent is fortified and given validity by the absolute and the absolute finds manifestation in the dependent: thus the *wilayah* of all the prophets and the *awliya'* is part of the absolute *wilayah*, just as the prophethood of the prophets is part of the absolute prophethood. Since absolute prophethood from the outset is particular to Muhammad and his reality, and this is a continuation of the original reality particular to the prophets and the messengers from Adam to Jesus (who are in fact different manifestations of the Muhammadi reality), so absolute *wilayah* is particular to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and to his reality (by way of the essential and inherited spiritual legacy from pre-eternity) and thereafter (by way of a continuation of the original reality) to his infallible progeny. This spiritual line extends until Allah seals it with the Mahdi.'

The reason why 'Ali is singled out for the absolute *wilayah* may be found in the saying of the Prophet related with an authentic chain of narration by Akhtab Khawarazam and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, they being amongst the most eminent and trusted of the jurists (*fuqaha'*) and narrators respected by the majority of the Muslims, 'Allah has created my soul and the soul of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib a thousand thousand years before He created Adam.'

Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi also refers to the Prophet after a long study of the matter in this *Futuhat*: 'He was the lord of the whole world and the first manifestation in existence; his existence was from the divine light, motes of dust and the Universal Truth; his very being came into being in these motes of dust as did the world in its entirety; the closest person to him was 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the secret embracement of the secret of all the prophets.'

As for the second and the third of the above-mentioned divisions, that is, the appointment of the absolute seal of the *awliya'* by means of the absolute *wilayah* and the appointment of the seal of the dependent *awliya'* by dependent *wilayah*, these will be explained in the following chapter. It is thus necessary to recapitulate: the *wali* and the Imam according to the people of *tariqah* are the dependent *wali* and the Imam who follows the absolute *wali*; moreover, according to them, the prophet is both the dependent prophet and the messenger who follows the absolute prophet. Thus we reach the aim of this study, namely to establish the inter-relationship of the rank of prophethood with the rank of *wilayah* and the rank of the absolute with that of the dependent; and Allah is more Knowing and more-Wise – He it is Who says the truth and guides to the right path.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

According to this group the Imam and the *wali* are the Great Imam and the Absolute Wali, also known as the Pole and the Imam of the Imams who is responsible for the ordering of existence, the establishing of the *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*. The ranks of all, from the prophet, the messenger and the *wali* have their source in him. Shaykh al-A'zam (Ibn 'Arabi) has referred to him in his *Fusus*: 'This knowledge only belongs to the Seal of the Messengers and the Seal of the Saints (*khatim al-awliya'*); none of the prophets or messengers imbibe it anywhere else than in the niche of the messenger who is their Seal. Again, none of the saints imbibe it elsewhere than in the niche of the saint who is their seal; indeed even the messengers only imbibe it, in so far as they do imbibe it, from the niche of the Seal of the Saints.'

*Risalah* – messengership – and prophethood (by this I mean the prophethood which is concerned with the establishment of the *shari`ah* and the corresponding message or calling of the people) are interrupted; *wilayah*, however, is never interrupted. Thus those sent as bearers of the message, being by nature saints (*awliya'*), do not imbibe this knowledge except from the niche of the Seal of the Saints or Walis. It is not surprising that those of the Saints beneath them imbibe less, despite the fact that, with respect to governance and judgment, the Seal of the Walls follows the *shari`ah* – namely that which is brought by the Seal of the Messengers. This does not imply any criticism of his station and does not contradict what we have been describing: from one point of view he is inferior and from another superior.

Thus he (Ibn 'Arabi) continues after a few words by saying: 'All prophets, without exception, since Adam to the last, take from the niche of the Seal of the Prophets: even if the clay of the latter was formed after them, he is no less present by his spiritual reality. It is for this reason that it has been said: "He it is Who bestows on all the prophets, messengers and saints, their stations in the world of light, the world of the souls and the world of forms." Hence the saying of the Prophet, "I was a Prophet when Adam was still in a state between water and clay" means that Adam and all the prophets were only prophets at the time of their mission. In the same way, the Seal of the Saints was a *wali* when Adam was still in a state

between water and clay;' whereas other saints only became saints after having realized the conditions of saintliness (*wilayah*), that is, when they had assimilated the divine qualities of Allah expressed in this Names, the Saint (*al-Wali*), the Adored.

Thus the relationship of the Seal of the Messengers to the Seal of the Saints is similar to that of the saints and the messengers with respect to him: he is simultaneously the saint (*wali*), the messenger and the prophet. As for the Seal of the Saints (*awliya*), he is the saint, the heir, who imbibes his strength from the source; he is the one who contemplates all ranks, this contemplation being just one of the good qualities from among the bounty and blessings of the Seal of the Messengers, Muhammad, the leader of this group, the lord of the progeny of Adam and the one responsible for the task of mediation (on the Final Day).<sup>1</sup>

These words, occurring as they do after his demonstration of the existence of the Seal of the Saints and the truth of all that we have said on the matter, show that the absolute Seal of the Saints, is the Commander of the Faithful `All: he is described with the same good qualities ascribed to the Lord of the Messengers. Such qualities as are mentioned by the commentator of the *fusus* with respect to the Lord of the Messengers can only be ascribed to him. As we have now concluded our investigation of imamate with respect to the three levels, then we shall now begin our study of *ma`ad*, namely the last of the five principles outlined above; and success is by Allah.

## **7) Events of the Hereafter (ma`ad)**

Know that the Day of Judgment, in an absolute sense, denotes the return of the world and all contained therein to whence it came. This return is both with respect to the form and the inner meaning or spirit and also in relation to the three different levels of resurrection – that is the minor, the intermediary and the final. Moreover, they all take place at either a cosmic or an individual dimension; all told this amounts to a total of twelve separate days of resurrection, both with respect to the form and the inner meaning and containing the minor intermediate and final levels. This is arranged such that there are three days of resurrection of form and three of spirit with respect to the cosmic dimension; this is repeated with respect to the individual dimension and there is thus of necessity twelve days of resurrection in all. We shall now explain each in brief, as there is not space to go into more detail.

### **i) According to the people of shari`ah**

According to the people of this group, the Day of judgment is a term for the gathering together of the

parts of the dead body, their recomposition into their previous form and the return of the soul to this body. This is also referred to as the assembling of the bodies (into one place). Such a thing is possible and Allah is capable of doing all possible things and is also cognizant of them; moreover, the body is capable of recomposition and so therefore He is capable of this – and this is the point of our argument.

This point is based on rational premises: they are that Allah has created man and has bestowed knowledge, power, will, perception and various other capabilities upon him. He has also placed the reins of choice in his hands and has imposed upon him difficult duties; He has singled him out by His grace and blessings – both of a hidden and manifest nature – for a purpose related to this grace and these blessings. Since this world is the abode of hardship, it is also the abode of gain and acquisition, and He causes man to live therein for a length of time which allows him to attain his own perfection. He then goes to the abode of punishment and reward, known as the hereafter.

All the prophets have given news of the gathering of the bodies – and this for the benefit of all. This news must be true by virtue of their infallibility and the impossibility of their telling any lies. Likewise the Garden and the Fire, which are both experienced by physical sensations and which they promise are to come, are true. They are true because they are possible and because there is trustworthy news of their coming.

Some have said that the return of something (essentially) nonexistent is impossible: if this were so, it would imply entry into and disturbance of the one existence and would mean that the one was in fact two. To this the scholars (of this station) have replied: `Since the gathering of the bodies is true, it is necessary that no part of the body or the souls of the Muslims become non-existent; rather they change their composition and nature. The passing away referred to by Allah in "Everyone on it must pass away and there will endure for ever the Person of your Lord, the Lord of glory and honour" is referring to this in a metaphorical way.'

Some have also said that the reality of man is incidental or phenomenal, and to this they have replied, `If man were an incidental-phenomenal existence, he would need a place which took on his qualities. Nothing, however, takes on the qualities of man of necessity, rather, he takes on the qualities of things other than him.' Thus he is an essence; if he were merely a body or some part of its limbs, then he would not be able to take on the qualities of knowledge. He does however of necessity take on these qualities of knowledge: he is an essence, possessed of knowledge, and the body and the rest of the limbs are the instruments of his actions. This essence is what is known as the soul in the divine shari`ah; it must be added, however, that there is a great difference of opinion with regard to this matter.

The Dahriyyah (whose god may be said to be Time) reject this belief and claim that man becomes non-existent at the time of his death and say that there is no return to existence for him. Those who say that the non-existent is actually something say that he becomes non-existent when he dies and then he returns to existence, whence he is either punished or rewarded. His non-existence is referred to by

Allah with his words: 'Everyone on it will pass away;' as for his return and his inevitable reward and punishment in the hereafter, this is referred to in numerous places in the Generous Qur'an.

But those who reject the belief that his being is corporeal say, 'His extinction and annihilation express the disintegration of the parts and evanescence of the limbs as a composite form and the return of all the parts of the body and all the bodily functions present before death.' This latter is the true statement from amongst the above-mentioned statements. Those who believe in the existence of the original parts and their necessary recomposition after a change in state and that the self is a simple essence are nearer to the truth than others since they free themselves of all ambiguity and contentious belief.

Most of these arguments have been taken from the works of Khawaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, from those sections dealing with the roots of the religion and other sections. In the course of his writings, he mentions the dubious nature of the beliefs of the philosophers. We shall conclude our study with his reply to those philosophers, who claim that the resurrection of the body is an impossibility: 'They argue that when the constitution of each body attains to a balanced harmony and is prepared, then it has a right to receive the emanations of the soul of the active intelligence; they claim that if the parts of the dead body take on the qualities of harmony and disposition, they therefore have a right to a self or soul from the intellect and that its first self or soul would also be returned to him. This would imply the joining of two selves or souls in one body and that is impossible.' We too would reply to this that since we have established the existence of an Actor Who chooses of His own free will, we thus invalidate the very basis of the argument and we have no need to reply to this foolish talk; and Allah says the truth and guides to the correct path.

## **ii) According to the people of tariqah**

Those of this group, as well as believing in the Day of Judgment as mentioned above, understand it to be an expression of the return of the manifestation of some of the Names to the manifestation of other Names; this is referred to in Allah's words: 'The day on which We will gather those who guard (against evil) to the Beneficent God to receive honours.'

Know that the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Final Return is, as a general principle, an expression of the manifestation of the Real in the form of the two Names, the Inward and the Last, together with other Names such as the just, the Real, the One who brings to life and the One who brings death. The world and the beginning of creation are expressions of His manifestations in the form of the two Names of the Outward and the First together with the other Names such as the Bringer into being, the Bringer into existence, the Creator and the Provider. In this way He fulfils the claims of each of His never-ending Names. His manifestation in an absolute sense by way of the forms of the Names – which are also known by such terms as 'the creation' and 'the world' – is indicated in His words: 'I was a hidden

treasure and I desired to be known so I created the world.' These words refer also to the fulfillment of the claims and rights of each of His Names.

It has been established by the people of Allah and their elite that when each of the individual and particular manifestations of His Names is taken into account, then they are endless; if, however, His Names are considered according to general kinds and types of manifestation, then they are finite in nature. Of necessity Allah is constantly manifest in the outward forms of His Names and Attributes, irrespective of whether these be in relation to this world or the next. It is for this reason that some of the gnostics believe that this life and the hereafter are two manifestations from amongst the rest of

His manifestations; thus it must be that they are constantly actual and `happening', rather than fixed and static at a particular time or period. It is impossible to separate these manifestations from existence: this means that resurrection on the Day of judgment is an expression for the constantly changing state of the exterior world and its constant return to the interior world – just as this world is an expression for the constant appearance of the inward by means of the outward and likewise its continual return. Although the Names are many in number, they are all governed by just four: `He is the First and the Last and the Outward and the Inward.' The First and the Last and all the related Names are associated with this world, and the various levels of beginning, the Inward and the Last and all the related names are associated with the hereafter and the various levels of ending.

This notion is permissible from one point of view, but not from another. The truth of this matter is that each of Allah's Names has specific laws and `exigencies': thus, for example, the hereafter is a necessary implication of the Names the Subduer, the Alone, the One, the Eternal, the Single, the One who causes to return, the One who obliterates and the One who causes death. Similarly, this world is a necessary implication of the Name the Outward, the Originator, the First and the Bringer into existence. Each, however, on investigation is the same as the other, the difference being in their sphere of influence.

Allah, the Real – may His remembrance be made more splendid by this beginning and return, by the outward manifestation and inner dimensions, by the ascent and the descent, by the multiplicity and singularity, by this world and the hereafter – has talked about the Divine Command on various occasions in the Generous Qur'an. On one of these occasions He says, `He regulates everything from heaven to the earth; then shall it ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is one thousand years' and on another, He says, `To Him ascend the angels and the Spirit in a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years.'

These numbers may be worked out in accordance with mathematical calculations such that the orbits of the planets are seven in number, some (of these orbits) being shared with others and some single and alone. For those single and alone, the orbit for each of the planets is one thousand years and for those shared with others, the span is seven thousand years: seven times seven is forty-nine – a figure which is completed by addition to it of the leap years, which amount during this period to one thousand years,

to make fifty thousand years exactly. This latter is called the Greater Day of Resurrection; the seven particular to each of the individual stars is the intermediate resurrection; and the special span of a thousand years refers, in particular, to the Minor Day of Resurrection.

If you have understood this, then know too that the purpose of these investigations is to demonstrate that Allah has described the Divine Command governing the ascent, descent, appearance. and disappearance, the bringing into being and the return to creation of all these cosmic phenomena in His words, 'Allah is He Who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them; the decree continues to descend among them, that you may know that Allah has power over all things and Allah indeed encompasses all things in (His) knowledge' and also in His words, 'Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see and He is firm in power and He made the sun and the moon subservient (to you); each one pursues its course to an appointed time; He regulates the affair, making clear the signs that you may be certain of meeting your Lord.'

The decree and the affair (referred to in these two ayat) are always under His control because this world and the hereafter are two manifestations from amongst the totality of manifestations. Like the numerical relationship between a hundred or a thousand and the number one, the latter appearing in both the former, the number a thousand or a hundred count as some of the 'greater manifestations' of the number one. However, although the one is fully contained in each of the numbers as a whole, it is not contained when counted as a separate entity; in this case it is never ending and extends both forwards and backwards for ever and ever.

The Real and His manifestations are similar because although this world and the next are among His 'greater manifestations', they do not contain all His manifestations. When seen in relation to these two manifestations (and others like them), then His manifestations are contained therein in a general way; when, however, we treat each of His manifestations in an individual way, then they are seen to be never-ending and continuing to eternity.

Whichever way we look at it, it must be that the manifestation returns to the outward in the countless abodes encompassed by this world and the next: this, in reality, is the *ma`ad* and no other; by this I mean the return of the manifestations to the outward and the encompassing to the encompassed. Allah refers to this with the words 'the ordinance' and 'the state': 'That is the ordinance of the Mighty, the Knowing' and 'Every moment He manifests Himself in a different state (of glory)'. By these words Allah is indicating that every day of His 'divine' days – each lasting fifty thousand years, or every day of the days of this world, each lasting seven thousand years – He is occupied by this state or ordinance.

In other words, He is occupied with fulfilling the 'rights' and 'claims' of each of His Names by means of one of His manifestations or one of His ranks in the various abodes of descent and ascent and stations of appearance and disappearance; this is so since the cosmos and whatever occurs therein are never-ending manifestations of actions, and actions are manifestations of the Attributes, and Attributes

are manifestations of Names, and the Names are manifestations of the Essence and its essential Perfections.

Since it has been established that the actions, Attributes, Names and Perfections are never-ending, it may also be established that the return of these manifestations is also never-ending – that is, from the individual rather than the universal point of view. If, for example, the individual manifestation returns to the totality of manifestations or the compound returns to the state of simple elements, the return of the part to the whole and the compound to the simple element is permissible a second time without presupposing any idea of infinite pre-existence with respect to any phenomenal or incidental occurrences in the realm of the possible, or without presupposing any inconsistency in the laws of the *shari`ah*, or with respect to the Quran or *ahadith*. The amalgamation of some of the Names into others or some of the manifestations into others does not in any way cause this to happen: the One who goes on goes on for ever and the One in annihilation is still in a state of annihilation.

In Allah's words, 'Most surely there is a reminder in this for him who has a heart or he who gives ear and is a witness'<sup>1</sup> and his words, 'This is a day on which the people shall be gathered together and this is a day that shall be witnessed. And We do not delay it but to an appointed term. On the day when it shall come, no soul shall speak except with His permission, then (some) of them shall be unhappy and (others) happy. So as for those who are unhappy, they shall be in the fire; for them shall be sighing and groaning in it; abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases; surely your Lord is the mighty Doer of what He intends. And as for those who are made happy, they shall be in the Garden, abiding in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord please; a gift which shall never be cut off.'

These *ayat* are irrefutable proof of the meaning (that we have expounded) and of the authenticity of the three kinds of resurrection (in the manner we have described above). This will only be understood by those who understand the meaning of Allah's words, 'As long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases.'<sup>1</sup> Many secrets are contained in these words but we have already mentioned the gist of their meaning.

If you have already understood these principles and have realized the meaning of the true return of the totality of Names, then know the following: The divine Names possess spheres of governance and influence and also cycles, states, dominions, beginnings and ends. An explanation of this is complex in character: the sound intellect judges that the sphere of influence of those Names which indicate injury and loss (to man) is other than that of those Names which indicate benefit and good (to man); likewise the sphere of influence of the Name 'the Giver of life'<sup>1</sup> is other than that of 'the Bringer of death'<sup>1</sup>; moreover, the dominion of the Names 'the One who guides'<sup>1</sup> is other than that of the Name 'the One who leads astray'<sup>1</sup> – the same may be said for 'the First'<sup>1</sup>, the Last, the Outward and the Inward and all the countless other names (with opposite meanings). Thus, just as this world is a necessary requirement of the Name 'the First'<sup>1</sup> and 'the Outward'<sup>1</sup> and their other related Names, so the hereafter is a necessary

requirement of the Names 'the Last' and 'the Inward' and their other related Names.

Likewise, just as the existence of this world and the appearance of its laws of influence and governance are obligatory by the nature of divine wisdom and in accordance with the requirements of those Names related to the world and its laws, so too the existence of the hereafter together with the laws of governance and influence are also obligatory by the nature of divine wisdom and in accordance with those Names which are related to the hereafter and its laws. From these general laws many other laws may be construed. Nevertheless we shall give the reader an example of what is meant which will facilitate a rapid understanding of this secret.

Existence and true authority in the realm of inner meaning occur according to the same pattern of superficial authority in the realm of form. I mean by this that just as authority in the exterior world is organized by means of sultans, viziers, amirs, armies, subjects and all other citizens (living within their jurisdiction), so real or true authority is also organized in the same way. Thus the essential Names correspond to the vizier, the names of Attributes to the amir, the names of action to the army and the result of compounding various Names corresponds to the subjects.

Furthermore, just as each person from the court of authority, in the outward realm is delegated a particular role and task shared by no other, so too to each of the names of the real Sultan is delegated a particular role and task which is also shared by no other. Accordingly every existence in the outward is a manifestation of the Names of Allah and a locus of His influence and governance, and its return is only to that particular Name, since the Name is the lord and the manifestation is the 'lorded over'. The following words of Allah testify to this notion: 'The day on which We will gather those who guard (against evil) to the Beneficent God to receive honours' and also His words: 'And that to your Lord is the (final) goal.'

With respect to the inner realm of reality and truth, the return of the totality of manifestations is only to Allah, just as on investigation (we realize that) each subject in fact is turning to the sultan (of the outward), despite the presence of the vizier, amir, chamberlain, representatives and the subjects who come to them. Again we would clarify this by giving the example of the person who comes to the sultan of the outward seeking a favour: of necessity this favour is actually bestowed by one of his treasurers.

Likewise, the person who comes to him requesting authority to rule over a certain city deals not with the Sultan himself but with his wazir; similarly, the person who comes to ask for help in overcoming an enemy or oppressor only deals with one of his amirs. Countless examples such as these may be found with respect to the various assistant courtiers, armies and subjects: this is so because the affairs of authority and their organization are all undertaken by such people. Thus the totality (of something) with respect to the totality (of its separate parts) can only function by means of this totality.

The same may be said for the real or true Sultan: if a poor man comes to Him or stands in His Presence

saying 'O Allah' and seeks wealth, then of necessity he turns only to the Name 'the One of riches and independence;' likewise, the sick person who goes before Allah saying 'O Allah' and requests good health, then he of necessity turns only to the Name 'the One who cures'; likewise, the person who is astray who goes before Him saying 'O Allah' and seeks guidance, then of necessity he turns only to the Name 'the One who guides.' Countless other examples may be given with respect to the rest of His names. True Authority only functions in this way. This is reflected in the following verse:

How much is everything in need, how much is all dependent!  
This is the truth, as we have said, so do not conceal, it  
Everything is mutually related, there is no separation from Him,  
So take what I have said from me!

On investigation we realize that this has the same meaning as that expressed by the gnostics when they say: 'Truly there is a secret to Lordship, which, if it became manifest, would invalidate Lordship.' This is so because lordship is a matter which only functions by way of two related aspects, the first being the Names and the second, the pre-creational Source Forms. The Source Forms are in fact non-existent, only existent by the existence accredited to them: thus anything which functions by means of a non-existent thing must in fact not be functioning in reality. This is because lordship is based on the lording-over and the lording-over are dependent on the Lord. If we assume the lording-over (existence) to be non-existent, then there is no valid basis for lordship, despite the fact that the Lord exists; the reverse of this also applies, even if this supposition is in itself impossible. Some scholars have commented on this secret by saying that the secret of lordship is that it is based on the lording-over. Since this matter implies a relationship between two things, there are of necessity two aspects, one of these being the lording-over.

Yet the Source Forms are in non-existence and that which is based on something non-existent is itself non-existent. Others have said the opposite of this, that is, that the secret of lordship is the appearance of the Lord by means of the (outward) manifestation of the Source Forms: He is the Lord Who is manifest by His maintenance of these outward manifestations, which only exist by His existence. As such these manifestations are lording-over slaves and the Real, the Truth, is their Lord. In fact lordship is not attained except by way of the Real. By their very state, the Source Forms are non-existent from pre-endless-time, thus there is a secret of lordship which is revealed but which nevertheless does not invalidate it. Other subtle secrets are contained in this point and all are related to the point we have already mentioned, that is, the *Ma`ad*, the Final Day of Return, which is an expression of the return of each manifestation to the Name by whose rule and dominion it became manifest.

Despite the fact that the matter is as we have described, it should be noted that the Names possess cycles and spheres of dominion and influence and that it is permissible that some of the Names together with their respective spheres of dominion may dominate to the exclusion of others; thus the appearance

of the Day of Resurrection is a result of the defeat of the Names connected to this world, and the victory of the Names connected to the next. The rest of the names can also be appraised in a similar manner, with respect to all the different periods and times (of divine reckoning). Some scholars have referred briefly to this matter in the following manner: Know that the Names of the divine actions may be divided according to their different spheres of influence and dominion. Of these, there are some whose rule and influence are never interrupted, from before endless-time to eternity – like, for example, the Names which have dominion over the purified spirits and the angelic souls and over that which is not of the age of created realities and yet which is nevertheless a part of (cosmic) time as a whole. There are also some whose rule is not interrupted with respect to eternity, although it is interrupted with respect to the age of before endless-time – like, for example, the Names which have dominion over the hereafter. That they and their rule are eternal is testified by the Qur'anic *ayat*: they do not extend to pre-endless-time by virtue of their non-manifestation; indeed, their manifestation only commences with the ceasing of the activity of this world.

All the Names have a sphere of governance in accordance with their manifestations and the appearance of their rule of influence. Indeed it is on these spheres of governance that the courses of the seven planets are based (each course lasting a thousand years); likewise, in the case of the different codes of law such that for each *shari`ah* there is a Name and the duration and sphere of governance of each *shari`ah* is dependent upon its Name, just as its authority lasts as long as that of the Name and is annulled on the disappearance of that Names. The pattern is analogous in the case of the emanation of the Attributes, such that when a particular Attribute manifests its sphere of influence, other Attributes below it become concealed.

Furthermore, each of the divisions of the Names calls up a particular manifestation in which the rule and influence (of this division of the Names) appear: this rule and influence is in fact (a manifestation of) the Source-Forms. If these latter are capable of receiving all the various spheres of rule and influence of the Names, then they appear, as in the case of the Source-Forms of man, as a particular manifestation and expression of one of their many activities. If they are not capable of receiving all the various spheres of rule and influence, then they are confined to some of the Names, as in the case of the Source-Forms of the angels. The duration of the Source-Forms in the outward (or the lack of duration in it with respect to this world and the next) is dependent upon the duration of the cycles of dominion connected to the Names (or their lack of duration). This matter must be understood well, and by Allah comes success. We shall now begin to classify the Final Day of Return, both in the realm of form and that of the spirit of inner meaning according to the people of *tariqah* and *haqiqah* and in the light of the triad of days of resurrection, namely the minor, intermediate and final.

**The minor, intermediate and major days of resurrection in spirit for the people of *tariqah***

## a) The minor day

This particular day of resurrection describes the awakening and rising after the deliberate death of the will; it corresponds to the saying of the Prophet, 'Die before you die' and the words of the Wise Himself, 'Die the death of the will and you will live naturally (by your essence) as a result.' The words of the Prophet 'Whoever dies, then his day of rising up has arrived' affirms the above notion, both with respect to death both in the exoteric and esoteric sense.

This death is divided into four types according to the people of this group: the red, the white, the green and the black. As for the death in an absolute sense, it is the removal of the desires of the self: the life of the self (*nafs*) is by means of these desires and the self does not incline to the passions and the demands of the body's natural instincts except by means of these desires.

Whenever the self tends to this lower aspect, then the heart, which is the rational soul, withdraws to its centre and loses the true life of gnosis as a result of ignorance. If, however, the self dies by removal of its desires, then the heart moves naturally and by way of the original motion of love to its own world, namely the world of purity, light and essential life – which is totally incapable of 'receiving' death.

Allah has referred to this life and death with His words, 'Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth? In other words, 'Is he who was dead by his ignorance, then We raised him to life by knowledge and made for him a light by which he walks among the people in a state of gnosis and perfection and full of eternal life, like him who is still in the utter darkness of ignorance whence he has not yet emerged?'

Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq has said, 'Death is turning (for forgiveness to Him).' Allah has said (in the words of Moses), 'Therefore turn to your Creator in penitence and kill (or mortify) yourselves;' thus whoever turns for forgiveness, kills himself. This idea is also referred to by Allah when He says, 'And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord. Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace.' It is for this same reason that the Prophet, on returning from the *jihad* against the non-believers, said: 'We have returned from the lesser *jihad* to the greater *jihad*.'

They then said, 'O Messenger of Allah, what is the greater *jihad*?' He replied, 'The *jihad* against the self which is opposing with its desires and demands.' It is also narrated that the Prophet said, 'The *mujahid* is the one who does *jihad* against his self, for whoever kills his desires comes alive by his discovery of guidance (instead),' that is, by arriving at guidance and gnosis after being astray on the path of ignorance. It is this death which is known as the red death by the people of this science: it is one of the four above-mentioned deaths; it has also been called the death which gathers all other deaths, since if it

occurs, all other types of death also occur. The following verse illustrates further this relationship of life and death:

Kill me my trusted companions, for in killing me is my life  
And my death is in my life and my life is in my death.

It is called the red death for two reasons: the first is that blood, which is red, appears when someone is killed, and secondly, the face then turns red (after the killing) by the infusion of divine light.

As for the white death, it is an expression for hunger, for hunger illuminates the inward and whitens the face of the heart. Thus if the spiritual traveler does not eat his fill and remains in a state of hunger, then he dies the white death and thereby gives life to his intelligence. This is because gluttony kills sagacity: whoever kills the desire for gluttony gives life to his intelligence.

As for the green death, it alludes to the discarded patched robe. If the traveler is content to wear this as his adornment and covers his private parts and makes sure that his prayer, while wearing the robe, is acceptable, then he dies the green death. This is because he comes alive by his contentment and by the illumination of his face with the radiance of the Essential Beauty and by his having no need of the transient adornment of this world. The following verse emphasizes this:

If a man is not sullied by blame of his honour  
Then any robe he wears will be beautiful.

As for the black death, it alludes to the traveler's patient endurance of the injustice done by others. This is because he only becomes a truly beloved person in the eyes of Allah if he experiences pain and constriction caused by their injustice towards him. This person, however, finds delight in this time of trouble, knowing that it comes from the Beloved; everything which issues from the Beloved, be it good or bad, becomes a desirable thing (for as the people of this group say: 'All from the Beloved is beloved'). It has been said:

In my passion for You I find censure pleasurable,  
And out of love for Your remembrance, may they reproach me with blame.  
I have become like my enemies and most beloved of them  
Because my portion from them was my portion from You.  
You disdain me, so I deliberately disdain myself;  
Whoever disdains You, is not treated generously.

In this way he dies the black death, which is annihilation in Allah by witnessing that the pain and trouble is from Him and experiencing the annihilation of actions in the action of his Beloved, or rather seeing

himself and others annihilated in the Beloved. At this point he comes alive by the existence of the Real by way of the Real by way of His assistance which emanates from the Presence of Absolute Existence.

The garden attained by this resurrection after death is called the Garden of the Senses. Allah describes it saying, 'And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul from low desires, then surely the Garden is the abode.'

He also says that 'therein shall be what their souls yearn after and (wherein) the eyes shall delight;' this is because it is a garden which is experienced physically: in it is overflowing food and drink which is to be enjoyed by the senses. It is for this reason that He says, 'And you shall abide there forever.' We ask Allah that He may grant us provision and bestow on us arrival at this garden, for it is a place of countless and boundless blessings: 'And if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to count them.'

## **b) The intermediate day**

This day of resurrection alludes to the death of man with respect to base behaviour, evil character and vile qualities and his coming alive by way of praiseworthy behaviour, generous and excellent character and fine qualities – all things which were at the very core of the Prophet's message and purpose. This is reflected in his words, 'I have been given all the names' and 'I have been sent to perfect good behaviour' and 'Make your qualities the Qualities of Allah.'

Know too that if there were a blessing greater than good behaviour and the taking on of the qualities of good behaviour, then Allah would have bestowed it upon His Prophet. As He Himself says, 'And most surely you conform yourself to sublime morality.' When one takes on the character of Allah and takes on His qualities, then this brings eternal happiness and causes one to arrive at the Enduring Presence.

It is not possible, however, to arrive at these two things without a means to them and it is for this reason that He has commanded us to take on His Qualities. Proof of this is to be found also in His words, 'Neither the heavens nor the earth can contain Me but the heart of the believing slave (contains Me).'

Thus it has also been narrated that 'The heart of the believer is the Throne of Allah' and 'The heart of the believer is the abode of Allah' and 'The heart of the believer is between the fingers of the Merciful.'

All these sayings refer to the subject of our investigation, namely the taking on of the Qualities of Allah, and the only creature in existence capable of this is man. Man is, as it were, the heart of the world, and the very heart of man occupies a similar position within man as man's position in relation to the world as a whole. The truth of this first statement is testified by Allah's words, 'Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains...' and the second by his words, 'Neither the heavens nor the earth can contain Me ... .'

The garden attained after this particular death is called the Garden of the Spirit: it is reserved for the spiritual inheritors from amongst His slaves. This is referred to by His words, 'Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers and keep aloof from what is vain' and also 'These are they who are the heirs, who shall inherit the Paradise; they shall abide therein.' If man exchanges his baser behaviour for that which is praiseworthy and extricates himself from the dark depths of natural instincts, if he frees himself from mean and evil behaviour and takes on fine qualities so that he may be described as having a beautiful and harmonious temperament, if he takes on all these qualities by means of the Divine Qualities, and if, having attained all this, he establishes and maintains the duties of the *shari'ah* and the religion, then his soul will enter the interior Garden before entering Exterior Garden. Thus he becomes a lord of two gardens and two ranks. This is referred to by Allah: 'And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord, there are two gardens', that is the Garden of the Senses and Garden of the Spirit. We shall now describe this matter in more detail.

If we examine this subject from another angle, then we see that when the soul or self devotes its energy to true spiritual exercises which are based on real knowledge, then the person loses all of the viler features of his self – in particular, the seven most fundamental of them, namely vanity, arrogance, miserliness, envy, cupidity, excessive sexual desire and anger – and takes on all of the finer qualities – in particular, the seven most fundamental of these, namely, gnosis, wisdom, forbearance, humility, generosity, chastity and courage. In this way the self attains to the rank of harmony and evenness of temperament which marks for man the highest station of perfection on the path to Allah. It is with respect to the hierarchy of these stations that the Generous Book refers to the seven gates and ranks of Gehenna (*Jahannam*): 'It has seven gates; for every gate there shall be a separate party.' These ranks are called (in order of descent): Jahannam, Ladha, Hatamah, Saqar, Jahm, Sa'ir and Hawiyah.

It has been narrated that 'Ali (peace be upon him) was asked about the meaning of Allah's words, 'for every gate there shall be a separate party' and he said to his companions, 'Do you know what the gates of the Fire are like?'; they replied, 'Are they like these doors?' He answered, 'No, rather they are like this' and he placed one hand over the other. Allah has placed the different gardens in ranks one above the other; it is this which is referred to when He says, 'and a Garden, the extensiveness of which is (as) the heavens and the earth.' Similarly He has placed the different degrees of the Fire one above the other: the lowest is the Jahannam of the hypocrites; above this is the Ladha of the idolaters (*mushrikun*) from amongst the Arabs; above this is the Hatamah for the Fireworshippers; above this is the Saqar for the Sabaeans; above this is the Jahm for the Christians; above this is the Sa'ir for the Jews; and above this the Hawiyah for those believers who are rebellious. Thus it extends upwards to the different ranks of the Garden, and its eight abodes called the Jannat al-Na'im, the Jannat al-Firdaws, the Jannat al-Khuld, the Jannat al-Ma'wa, the Jannat al-Adnin, the Dar al-Salam and the Dar al-Qarar, since the seven stations belonging to the base qualities all become spiritual gardens when they are exchanged for the seven stations belonging to the praiseworthy qualities. In this way there appears \*the rank of justice which encompasses the totality of stations and becomes in turn the eighth of these gardens.

Allah has referred to these spiritual gardens and their wealth and blessings in a *hadith* when He says, 'I have prepared for My slaves from amongst the righteous that which the eye has not seen, what the ear has not heard and what the heart of man has never conceived?' Likewise, the Prophet has described them with his words, 'Truly Allah possesses a garden in which there are no maidens and no palaces, in which there is no honey and no milk; rather therein our Lord manifests smilingly.' This is not the Garden of the Senses but rather the Garden of the Spirit:

the difference between the two is evident. He has also referred to this kind of garden with His words, 'By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad: truly the Garden and the Fire are closer to each other of you than the lace of your sandals'. Here He refers to the interior paradise and to the transience of the world in comparison with the world to come.

The Commander of the Faithful ('Ali) has also indicated all of these matters with his words: 'He has brought life to his intellect, and brought death to his self, until he has worn down his roughness and made smooth his coarseness and a great radiance of exceeding brightness has shone out, lighting for him the path so that he may journey by it; he is driven from gate to gate until he reaches the Gate of Peace and the Abode of Rest; therein his feet come firmly to rest and his body feels ease and security by virtue of that with which he busied his heart and contented his Lord.'

These words serve our purpose in that they refer as a whole to the subject under discussion. His words, 'he is driven from gate to gate until he reaches the Gate of Peace and the Abode of Rest,' refer in particular to what we have in mind. In effect they show how, as we have said, the gates of Jahm, in the esoteric sense, become the gates of paradise with the transformation of the baser qualities into the good. In fact the totality of these ranks are based on the greater Gate, namely the Gate of Contentment which is referred to by the Prophet when he says, 'Contentment is the greater gate of Allah, as revealed in the Qur'an'. Allah has also referred to this rank together with its people with His words, '(As for) those who believe and do good, surely they are the best of men. Their reward with their Lord is gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein for ever; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him; that is for him who fears his Lord.'

He also indicates this Garden and the sight of it together with its delights and blessings when He says, 'And when you see there, you shall see blessings and a great kingdom. Upon them shall be garments of fine green silk and thick silk interwoven with gold, and they shall be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord shall make them drink a pure drink. Surely this is a reward for you and your striving shall be recompensed.' There are also many other ayat and Prophetic sayings on this same subject but we shall content ourselves with these and now turn to another matter; and by Allah is success and He it is Who says the truth and He it is Who guides to the correct path.

### c) The major day

This day of resurrection expresses their annihilation in the Real and their bidding by Him. This station is also called the annihilation in divine unity and the proximity which comes through supererogatory action. It is referred to in Allah's words, 'A slave does not continue to come closer to Me by his acts of supererogatory prayers unless I love him; if I love him, then I become his hearing and his sight and his tongue and his hand and his foot such that he hears by Me and he sees by Me and he speaks by Me and he walks by Me.' The result of this resurrection, after the annihilation described above – which is the real or true death – is the Garden of Witnessing. This garden is above the Garden of Inheritance and the Garden of the Soul.

Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi has indicated three interior gardens which result from these kinds of resurrection in his Futukat saying: 'Know that there are three gardens: the garden which is particular to the divine, namely the garden into which go, among others, the children (who die and) who have not reached the age of action (from the time of their first cry to the end of their sixth year).

Allah also gives to certain of His slaves (who desire it) whatever they wish for of this particular garden: these slaves are the people who belong (of necessity) to these gardens, namely the mad who are incapable of rational thinking, the people of gnostic unity and the people living between the ages of two prophets, including all those whom the divine message has not reached. The second garden is the Garden of inheritance: it is attained by all those who are mentioned above together with the believers and those who are (rescued) from the Fire. The third garden is the Garden of Actions: the people of this garden take up residence therein according to their actions. Whoever surpasses others by the excellence of his actions has a greater portion of this garden.

Thus there is no good action without is a corresponding garden. Superiority in excellence between the people of this garden is in accordance with what is required by their stations.

Ibn 'Arabi then goes on to say: 'Know that the people of the Garden are of four kinds: the messengers or prophets, the saints or followers of the messengers who have a certainty of knowledge and clear evidence from their Lord, the believers or those who affirm the former and the scholars who declare, on the basis of rational proofs, that there is no god but Allah. .Allah has said, "Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge." These are the scholars to whom I refer; Allah mentions them when He says, "Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees."'

Ibn 'Arabi continues: 'The ways leading to knowledge of Allah are two, not three in number. Whoever affirms the Oneness of Allah, by means other than these two ways, then lies is a *muqallid* (a person who imitates those more knowledgeable). The first of these is the way of unveiling: it is a knowledge which

descends by destiny such that a person finds this knowledge within his self. It is a knowledge which admits of no doubt or ambiguity and which cannot be denied; however, the person knows of no proof for this knowledge save that which he finds within himself.

The second of these is the way of reflection and evidence based on rational proof it is a way which is inferior to the first for it may be that the person of investigation and rational proofs is exposed to a doubt which leads to a refutation of his argument – and it is here that the way of unveiling may take over the task found too burdensome by means of rational proofs. There is no third way since it is this very realization within the realm of the Real which is the desired goal: thus the people of knowledge are those who bear witness to the unity of Allah by means of proofs and investigation. Any further knowledge of divine unity is by means of the *tawhid* of the essence and is not given to all of those of unveiling but rather to certain of them.'

Ibn 'Arabi continues: 'The four groups (mentioned above) are distinguished from each other in the Gardens of 'Adnin by their witnessing of the Real in the "proximity of whiteness". They exist therein according to four stations. One group are the lords of the raised platforms and they are of the highest level – that is, for the messengers and the prophets; the second group are the saints, the inheritors of the prophets by their speech, action and state – they have clear evidence from their Lord and they are the masters of the divans and throne; the third group are the scholars who demonstrate the existence and nature of Allah by intellectual proof – they are the masters of the footstools; the fourth group are the believers who imitate others more knowledgeable than they concerning the unity of Allah – they occupy different ranks on the Day of judgment and take precedence over those of rational proofs. As for those outside these four groups, Allah knows best as to their state.' At this point the words of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din come to an end on this subject.

With the above in mind, we should point out that although this classification is correct and indeed is the best of its kind, other gnostics from amongst the people of Allah have given other definitions with regard to the totality of these groups. One of these is as follows: 'Know that the people as a whole are either non-believers or Muslims. As for the non-believers they are of three kinds: the worshippers of idols and cult objects (who are originally intended by the term non-believers), then the People of the Book, who believe in Allah, His Names and His Attributes, but, who deny the Prophet and the revelations brought by him – like, for example, the Zoroastrians, the Jews and the Christians – and finally the Magians and those who possess scriptures resembling sacred books – like the fire-worshippers. These groups may also be divided according to the common, the elite and the elite of the elite, and their station in the Jahim is in accordance with their rank and the corresponding levels of the Jahim. These three groups may further be classified according to the high, the low and the intermediate: each of the levels corresponds to a particular group from among them; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise. As for the Muslims, they are divided according to three types: the first being the prophets, the messengers and the spiritual inheritors who follow them, known as the saints (*awliya'*), from Seth to the Mahdi; secondly, those

possessing knowledge of Allah either by unveiling or by rational argument, like the various ranks of the Sufi shaykhs and the scholars who establish and maintain jurisdiction according to the divinely inspired legal codes; and thirdly, the people of certainty of faith and imitation. All of these – groups may also be divided according to the common, the elite and the elite of the elite. Thus their stations in the Garden are in accordance with their ranks (each occupy a corresponding level and chamber in the Garden). Likewise these three groups may be classified in terms of low, high or intermediate, each of these ranks and divisions having a particular group assigned to it; and Allah is more knowing and more Wise.'

It is with these words that the gnostic concludes this particular subject. It would not be fitting to include more on the subject in a work of this nature: it will be clear to those of knowledge and spiritual tasting that such divisions and classifications as have been described are correct; and `All Praise is due to Allah Who guided us to this, and we would not have found our way had it not been that Allah had guided us.'

Here we conclude our discussion of the three days of spiritual resurrection with respect to the people of *tariqah*. As for the people of *haqiqah*, their resurrection occurs after the three stations mentioned above: it may be expressed as annihilation in the unity of action, attribute and essence, and their abiding in the Real, in accordance with their different ranks therein. This resurrection is also based on the three days of rising, namely the minor, intermediate and the major, in accordance with the three types of unity and annihilation therein.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

The minor, intermediate and major days of resurrection in spirit for the people of *haqiqah*

#### a) The minor day

This day of resurrection expresses their annihilation in the unity of action and their arrival at the witnessing of the One Actor in all things. It is the station of those from whom the veil of actions is lifted by the opening of their inner vision. Indeed, the veil is lifted from all things such that they do not see any actions at all but that they issue from One Actor and One Governor – while taking care to respect the twin aspects of the decree and the delegation of trust placed in them by Allah and while preserving the twin aspects of submission to His will and free choice. Such persons become freed of any perception of otherness or awareness of their own actions such that they reach a level of witnessing whereby all actions issue from One Actor, namely the Real. In this way they become firmly established in the *tawhid*

of action. Their witnessing takes place in the arena of the minor resurrection in His presence such that they are as dead persons being washed for burial. The signs of their station are reliance on Him, submission, the handing-over of affairs and the affirmation, by action rather than words, that there is no actor but Allah.

This subject has already been discussed with respect to the people of *tariqah*, although the two groups are not exactly the same. Whereas prayer, for example, is the same in its outward form, not everyone who prays is on the same spiritual level: there is a great difference between prayer which issues from knowledge, certainty and presence of mind and prayer which issues from ignorance, doubt and negligence. Allah refers to the first when He says, 'Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers and who keep aloof from what is vain... who are diligent about their prayers, these are they who are the heirs, who shall inherit paradise and shall abide therein' and with regard to the second: 'And their prayer before the House is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands.'

The result of this resurrection after annihilation in the abovementioned manner is the Garden of Actions and its corresponding pleasures and blessings – that is the witnessing of the Real Actor in each of one's actions, whether physical or spiritual. The real esoteric garden reserved for this group also has three divisions: the Garden of Actions, the Garden of Attributes and the Garden of the Essence. The Garden of Actions, with respect to this group, is the first of these in the hierarchy of the gardens. Detailed descriptions of these gardens have been narrated and we shall now describe them in the language of the people of this group.

The Garden of Actions is the garden of form containing delicious foods and drinks and beautiful maidens – these things are the reward for righteous actions. It is called both the Garden of Actions and the Garden of the Self. At the esoteric level this garden refers to the same place of foods and sensual pleasures but as a result of witnessing the actions as issuing from the One Actor, the Beloved by His essence. He is to this world as the spirit is to the body. This is so since the contemplation of the Actor in the unity of action is exactly the same as contemplation of the reality of man in relation to his body and the movement of its limbs. The prophets, saints and gnostics are all agreed that the relationship of the Real to the world is analogous to the relationship of the soul of man to his body and physical form. This notion is supported by the words of the Prophet who says, 'Whoever knows himself knows his Lord' and the words of Allah, 'We will soon show them Our signs in the universe and in their souls, until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.' The following verse also expresses this idea:

All that you witness is one action alone, although concealed by veils.  
When the cover disappears, then you do not see other than Him,  
And nothing remains at any level of the different forms.

The Garden of the Attributes is the interior garden from the divine emanations of the Names and the

Attributes: it is the garden of the heart (which has already been mentioned as the station of the purification of behaviour and the heart's assimilation of the Divine Qualities).

The Garden of the Essence is the witnessing of the Beauty of Oneness in the totality of manifestations, be it with regard to one individual manifestation or phenomena in general. This latter is the Garden of the Soul: it is attained by the unity of essence and the placing of eye shadow on the eye of the soul with the eye shadow of the solitude of the Real so that one never witnesses anything but the Beloved. Thus the result of the annihilation of the slave in the unity of action and the minor esoteric resurrection is the Garden of Actions – in accordance with its various ranks and levels, and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise.

## **b) The intermediate day**

This station expresses their annihilation in the divine unity (*tawhid*) of attribute and their arrival at a witnessing of the one attribute which pervades all things. In other words, whenever the veil of the totality of attributes is lifted from someone and the veil of witnessing other-than-Him disappears completely, then the person sees only one real attribute in the whole of existence like, for example, the perception of the attribute of life, as pervading the body of man, or perception of the strength and capacity for action which pervades both man and animals – I mean by this that he witnesses this one attribute as an extension or addition to the Essence of Oneness which has authority over all things. Thus such a person sees all things as possessing this particular attribute; he sees this in the same way as one may see that every limb of the body possesses the attribute of life and strength. In this way one dies the real death and Allah's words, 'But We have removed from you your veil so your sight today is sharp' becomes a reality for him. The following has also been said:

The eye is one and the forms are many,  
This is the secret revealed to the people of gnosis.

It has been narrated that Abu Yazid al-Bastami was asked, 'How are you this morning, O Abu Yazid?' He replied; 'There is no morning as far as I am concerned, for morning and evening are for those who are dependent upon form and attribute, and I possess no attribute.' These words are clear proof of the firmness of his establishment in the *tawhid* of attribute after that of action by way of unveilings and spiritual tastings. It is this that is meant by the gnostic's words, 'The essence is veiled by the attributes and the attributes by the action,' for all those from whom the

veil of actions is not raised do not attain to the *tawhid* of actions; all those from whom the veil of attributes is not raised do not attain to the *tawhid* of attributes; and all those from whom the veil of the

essence is not raised do not attain to the *tawhid* of essence. Moreover all those who do not attain to these different states of *tawhid* are not judged (favourably) with respect to their Islam and faith; indeed they are hardly considered to be human beings. This is attested by Allah's words, 'Surely the vilest of animals, in Allah's sight, are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand' and also by His words, 'They are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors!' What results from this witnessing in the minor resurrection is the Garden of Attributes (which we have already described above) and arrival at its pleasures and blessings – namely the witnessing of the attribute of the Beloved in the form of every single one of the lovers, be they spiritual or corporeal. One who has arrived at this station declares:

The Beloved manifested to me from every direction  
And I witnessed Him in all meaning and forms.

Yet another declares:

Every fine thing takes its beauty from His splendour.  
This beauty is lent to this thing, indeed to all fine things.

May Allah grant us and you arrival at this point of witnessing at the various levels of this garden, both by way of spiritual tasting and unveilings. It is from Him that all seek help and upon Him that all rely – He it is who utters the truth and guides to the correct path.

### c) The major day

This resurrection expresses the abiding of all the essences in the Essence of the Real – after their annihilation therein. This annihilation is a gnostic annihilation and not an actual experiential annihilation: Allah refers to it with His words, 'Everyone (in creation) must pass away and there will endure for ever the face of your Lord' and His words, 'Everything is perishable but He; His is the judgment and to Him you shall be brought back.' This is the station of unveiling of the Essence of Reality, the unveiling of one's existence, from the veils of divine splendour and might, and the disappearance of the veil of seeing other-than-Him in any way whatsoever: the one of this station witnesses one single Essence which emanates in the various countless manifestations. Such a station is indicated in the verse which says:

Your beauty pervades all realities;  
Indeed it is nothing but a veil of Your splendour.

This notion is also expressed in the gnostic's words: 'There is nothing in existence but Allah, His Names and His Actions; all is Him, by Him, from Him and to Him.' Thus he arrives at the *tawhid* of essence and comes to the arena of the major resurrection; he witnesses the meaning of Allah's words, 'To whom

belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah the One, the Subduer (of all).'

This is because by his unified gaze, by his belief in the judgment that there is nothing in existence but Allah, he subdues all the essences; he follows the advice given by Allah: 'Say: Allah; then leave them sporting in their vain discourses' and 'And do not associate any other god with Allah.' This then is what is called the *tawhid of essence*, of the elite of the elite, above which there is no higher *tawhid*. This is expressed in the phrase: 'There is no village beyond Abadan and in Allah's words: 'He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant (over all) and the Knower of hidden things.'

These words are an indication of this station of witnessing, since if it is established that there is nothing in existence but Him, then of necessity He is the First, the Last, the Ascendant and the Knower of hidden things; however, this does not imply that there is any change in His Essence or Attributes, since He is the First within the Last and the Last within the First, and likewise with respect to the Ascendant and the Cognizant (as we have already explained). The same may be said with respect to His words, 'Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things? Now surely they are in doubt as to the meeting of their Lord; now surely He encompasses all things,' for these words are also an indication of this same station of witnessing.

The sign of the witnessing and the mark of this *tawhid* is firm establishment in the station of constancy and the perseverance referred to in His words, 'Continue then in the right way as you are commanded.' Firmness and constancy in real *tawhid* has been described as a state awareness sharper than a sword, finer than a hair and a station of the utmost difficulty. As the Prophet said, 'The *surah* Hud made my hair turn white.' As for the true meaning of the above, it is that you continue on the straight path, which itself is an expression for the point of balance between excess and negligence – that is, a point where there is no further tendency to either separation or convergence or to either manifest or hidden *shirk*. This firmness and constancy is mentioned with reference to the Prophet's spiritual ascent, (*mi'raj*), in His words, 'The eye did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the limit.'

This is so since if one's sight turns aside from the point of gathered and balanced unity, which is a necessary basis for a truly harmonious existence, then one is transgressing the bounds of truth. If these bounds are not respected, then one goes astray from the straight path and one enters into the company of those who associate others with Allah – who are also astray from the real and His path – and this applies equally to those guilty of manifest or hidden idolatry (*shirk*). His words 'the measure of two bows or closer still' is an indication of this point.

Allah's words, 'And do not utter your prayer with a raised voice, nor be silent with regard to it, but seek a way between these' is also an indication of this. It means that 'you should not turn to your right or your left when your attention is fixed on Us' and here what is being referred to is this world and the next, on the one hand, and to gatheredness and separation, on the other. This was the way followed by your fathers and forefathers from amongst the prophets, messengers, saints and spiritual heirs, and in

particular by Abraham and his sons. One of the gnostics has said, 'Beware of merging and separation for the first causes heresy and the negation of one's Islam, and the second rejection of the truth that He (Allah) is the Absolute Actor; you should respect both however, for the one who joins them is the one of true affirmation.' Such a person has the highest of stations in return for his firmness and balance and his avoidance of either of the two extremes. There are numerous references to this state, especially in the Qur'an and the traditions. The noble however, will be content with our indication of this.

The result of this esoteric resurrection is the Garden of the Essence, which is the highest of stations; it is the garden reserved for those who affirm the Oneness of Allah and who, by means of their *tawhid*, rise above any witnessing of otherness. It is they who are mentioned in His words, 'Surely those who guard against evil shall be in gardens and rivers, in the seat of honour with the most Powerful King;' anyone who witnesses other-than-Him in existence is neither of those who affirm His Oneness nor of those who guard against evil.

It is for this reason that Allah says: 'O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah with the care which is due to him, and do not die unless you are Muslims'. The 'care which is due to Him' is nothing other than taking care not to witness other than Him in the path of unification. Allah emphasizes this when He says, 'and do not die unless you are Muslims' – that is, do not die the real esoteric death unless you have submitted to this kind of Islam, namely the *tawhid* of essence rather than the *tawhid* of attribute and action. Indeed the testimony of Allah, His angels and those of knowledge from amongst His slaves is sufficient: 'Say: May Allah be sufficient as a witness between me and you and whoever has knowledge of the Book.'

This is the last of the three days of spiritual resurrection particular to the people of *haqiqah*. We must now begin to consider the six days of resurrection in the literal sense or the realm of form with respect to the horizons – that is, the cosmic dimension. In this way the totality of stations will be twelve in number. Since the divisions we have mentioned earlier are different from this division, we should begin by mentioning the three days related to form at the individual level in order that no contradiction should appear in our argument.

The minor day of resurrection at this level expresses the liberation of the individual from the veil of the body and worldly activity by the natural death, referred to in the saying of the Prophet, 'Whoever dies, than his day of rising up has arrived.' The intermediate day of resurrection expresses his exit from the world and his sojourn in the barrier or interspace known as the grave, referred to by Allah when He says; 'And before them is a barrier until the day they are raised' and the words of the Prophet, 'The grave is either a meadow from amongst the meadows of the Garden or a pit from amongst the pits of the Fire.'

The major day of resurrection expresses the gathering of the people on the Great Day which is also known as the 'Day of Calamity' and their standing on the vast plain of the Day of Resurrection as attested by Allah in His words, 'And We will gather them and leave not any of them behind.' In this way

each person arrives at that particular station reserved for him, be it in the Garden or the Fire; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise. Let us now begin our description of the six days related to the cosmic dimension and their corresponding classification with respect to the realms of form and the spirit or inner meaning.

#### iv) The minor, intermediate and major days of resurrection in form with respect to the cosmic dimension

##### a) The minor day

This title expresses the destruction of the physical world and the compound material forms contained therein and the return of all this to the world of simple corporeal elements. This is referred to by Allah when He says, 'And when the mountains are made to pass away and when the camels are left untended and when the wild animals are made to go forth and when the seas are set on fire and when the souls are united.'

Some, however, consider that this title refers to the appearance of the Mahdi at the end of time when he comes to pass judgment over those living in his age. He is the Great Caliph of Allah and the Pole around which the whole world revolves; it is also by him that *wilayah* is sealed and all duties, divine codes of law, spiritual paths and religions are concluded; it is by him that the whole world returns to what it was before it was brought into existence; it is by him that the beginnings of creation are related to the Final Day and by him that the cycle of creation thus comes to an end. The following words of Allah attest to this: 'And on the day when We will gather from every nation a party.' If Allah had meant the Greater Gathering, He would not have said, 'a party from every nation;' rather He would say as He says elsewhere, 'And We will. gather them and leave not one of them behind.'

Moreover, He has also said, 'Say: The first and the last shall most surely be gathered for the appointed hour of a known day' and it is this 'known' day which is different from the above: thus we know that this minor day of gathering is a part and not the whole, that is, not the Greater Day of Gathering. Some of the Shi'ahs believe, however, that this particular day of gathering is called the day of *rajah* – *returning* to life after death – and they take the above mentioned *ayah* as their evidence. We do not wish to linger on the topic and the reader should pursue the matter for himself in the appropriate places. Indeed a whole book devoted to this question has been written entitled *Kitab al-Rajah* (The Book of the Return).

## **b) The intermediate day**

This title expresses the return of the simple elements to the Universal Essence: the latter receives back all the forms of the world of material bodies, including the planets, the stars and the plant, mineral and animal kingdoms. This is affirmed in Allah's words, 'On the day when We will scroll up heaven like the rolling up of a writing—scroll; as We originated the first creation, (so) We shall reproduce it; a promise (binding on Us); surely We will bring it about' and in more detail in His words, 'When the sun is covered and when the stars darken... and when the books are spread, and when the heaven has its covering removed, and when hell is kindled, and when the Garden is brought nigh.'

For some, however, this title expresses the transformation of the tangible material world into the interspace prior to the Final Day of Return, not to the world of absolute beginnings. For these people it refers to the time spent therein and the pain or pleasure which is experienced by the inhabitants of this interspace, in accordance with what they are due.

Thus some undergo the torment of the grave and some the blessings of the next world. This meaning is contained in the words of the Prophet, 'The grave is either a meadow from amongst the meadows of the Garden or a pit from amongst the pits of the Fire' and also in Allah's words, 'And most certainly We will make them taste of the nearer chastisement before the greater chastisement' and likewise His words, 'and before them is a barrier (interspace) until the day they are raised.' It is in this world that they are gathered together to proceed to the vast plain of assembly, the arena of the Great Day of Resurrection. Indeed neither of these two aspects can be denied by those who consider this matter with care and clarity.

## **c) The major day**

This title expresses the return of the forms of the spiritual worlds, that is, the return of the various intellects and souls to the First Essence, from which all these realities and forms were originally created by Allah. This is affirmed in the words of the Prophet, 'The first thing to be created by Allah was the Essence; He then looked upon it and it dissolved in awe of Him, such that half of it became water and half of it became fire; from this water Allah created the souls and from the fire the bodies ... .'.

However, with respect to the language of unveilings and the way of those of spiritual tasting, this title refers to the material from which Allah opened up all the forms of the world: this material is sometimes called the primeval notes or particles and sometimes the major elements. The wisdom of this meaning is contained in Allah's words, 'As We originated the first creation, (so) We shall reproduce it; a promise (binding on Us); surely We will bring it about.' Also, according to those of unveilings and tasting, it refers

to the bringing into being of the form of the hereafter from that essential material, such that this continues uninterrupted and unchanged for eternity: this is expressed in Allah's words, 'remaining there for ever.'

A likeness of this is the likeness of a lump of wax which may appear in different shapes – either of its own volition (as happens in the case of the growth point of the seed) or from other-than-itself (as in the case of outside influence from Allah, or the angels, or any of the various forces which manifest in nature). Then follows the disappearance of all these forms and the return to their previous state of receptivity and their appearance in corresponding forms in the worlds of the hereafter and the abodes of the Garden and the Fire. The truth of this is attested by the resurrection of man to the same physical form and with the same limbs as he possessed before his death: this is mentioned in Allah's words, 'Yea! We are able to make complete his very fingertips' and various other ayat.

We have already mentioned the belief of the people of the external law, from amongst the scholastic theologians (mutakallimun), who affirm that the individual or partial forms are the original forms and deny the possibility of the annihilation of anything in existence under any circumstances. They believe that this annihilation is rather a term for a change from one form to another. As rational proof, they maintain that existence, being existent cannot ever be non-existent, and that non-existence, being non-existent, can never become existence and that the bringing into existence or non-existence can only be applied to possible things – and this only in respect to an alteration of form or change of one form into another. They believe in the necessity of the return of all creation to the hereafter and the return is to the forms that they previously possessed which will continue in this manner in the Garden and the Fire; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise and He it is Who says the truth and guides to the correct path.

## **v) The minor, intermediate and major days of resurrection in spirit with respect to the cosmic dimension**

### **a) The minor day**

This title expresses the return of the individual souls or selves to the Universal Soul such that they ascend towards it. This is stated in Allah's words, 'O soul that art at rest! Return to your Lord, well pleased (with Him), well pleasing (Him), so enter among My servants, and enter into My garden' and also His words, 'And when souls are united.' This joining of the souls is the arrival of the individual souls at the Universal Soul– from which they originally came, in the same way as Eve came originally from Adam. This is referred to in Allah's words, 'O people! Be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men

and women.' Adam and Eve are counted as two separate forms; it is they who are our father and mother. They are also counted as two separate spiritual entities, since they are also our mother and father in the realm of reality and truth. The validity of this is affirmed by the application of the word fathers (in Arabic) to the planets and the celestial forms and the word mothers (in Arabic) to the various elements and terrestrial forms. Shaykh Muhyi-al-Din has indicated this in a verse from his *Futuhat* (at the beginning of the eleventh chapter):

I am the son of the fathers of the purified spirits  
And of the mothers of the elemental souls.

These souls are an expression, in the first instance, of the celestial souls and thereafter of the angelic, jinn, elemental, mineral; animal and finally the human souls; from another aspect the human souls are the principal and most noble of the souls. Moreover each of these divisions may be further subdivided; an example (from among others too numerous to mention) is that of the human soul which may be classified into the commanding, reproaching, inspired and contented self (and other classifications besides).

All the various souls of the world together with the inhabitants of this world are charged with duties. This, however, is a separate subject and it would not be suitable to include it here; indeed the words of Allah are sufficient, 'And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise.' It is clear that whatever has been commanded to praise the Creator is of necessity charged with a specific duty. The import of the above *ayah* must be fully understood, for it includes the praise of the stones and the earth and not just the souls and the selves; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise – He it is Who says the truth and guides to the correct path.

## **b) The intermediate day**

This title expresses the return of the individual spirits to the Universal Greater Spirit: this return takes place by their spiritual ascent towards this Spirit, while remaining connected to the body which they use and direct. The Greater Spirit is mentioned in the *hadith*: 'The first thing created by Allah was the spirit.' And Allah says: 'And when I fashioned him and blew into him of My spirit.' It is also linked to Allah by relationship of possession when He says, 'My slave,' 'My abode,' 'My earth' and 'My sky'; but this link does not imply either separation or connection – may He be exalted above this. It has also been narrated that Allah created the spirits many thousands of years before the bodies: one *hadith* of the Prophet reports that 'Allah created my spirit and that of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib a thousand thousand years before He created creation.' Likewise, it has been narrated that the spirits are like mustered armies: those that come to know each other unite in harmony and those that have no knowledge of each other separate in discord.

The subject of these spirits is a vast one, and it is not fitting that we continue it here in a work of this nature. The reader is urged to pursue the matter in the appropriate texts. We would simply add here that the whole world is like one person, as is indicated in words of the gnostics, 'The world is the Great Man and the relationship of all beings to him is like the relationship of the limbs and bodily organs to man himself;' as the gnostics say, 'Man is a microcosm.' Man is entrusted with duties as are all his limbs and physical capacities. Allah refers to this when He says, 'And He did not create you or raise you up but as one soul' and also His words, 'Certainly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of men' and His words, ' (So He said to the heaven and the earth): Come both, willingly or unwillingly.'

If these duties had not been taught and imposed upon man at all, then it would not have been right to command, forbid, or censure him. The following words of Allah serve as a final reply to any questions that one may raise about this matter: 'And there is no animal that walks upon the earth nor bird that flies with two wings but (they are) creatures like yourselves; We have not neglected anything in the Book, then to their Lord they shall be gathered;' and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise.

### **c) The major day**

This title expresses the return of all the intellects, by way of an ascent, to the First Intellect referred to by the Prophet in his words, 'The first thing created by Allah was the intellect; He then said to it: "Come forward" and it came forward; He then said to it, "Go back" and it went back; He then said, "By My power and My majesty I have not created a more noble creation than you; by you I give, by you I take, by you I reward and by you I punish ... ."'

It is evident that there are various intellects and because of their number there exist differences between them. Most scholars from amongst the philosophers affirm that Allah is One in all respects and that from this One there issues another one and it is this which is the First Intellect. From this intellect issues another intellect and another soul together with a celestial sphere composed of a form and an essence: in this way (the chain) continues to the last celestial sphere (or planet). I mean by this that these philosophers have established the existence of an intellect, a soul, a form and an essence for each of these spheres; this also applies to the angels for they are the lords of the intellects, and likewise to the jinn and mankind, according to some.

According to the scholars of this particular science, every being possesses an intellectual perception in accordance with its own particular capacity. One may call this inspiration, perspicacity, intuitive awareness, revelation, or simply knowledge or, indeed, by any other name one wishes – for what is being referred to is one thing's perception of other things. It is for this reason that the subject of the

intellect has been classified in four divisions: the essential intellect, the acquired intellect, the intellect of action (or the potential intellect) and the inferring intellect. The intellect possesses various names in Arabic, among them words meaning 'core,' 'acumen,' 'discernment' and 'mind.' This supports the view that some kind of correlation must exist between the cosmic and the individual dimensions.

In the light of the above, it may be shown that anything which may be assumed to exist with respect to the lesser man should (in this context) also be assumed to exist with respect to the Great Man himself. Indeed the whole of our commentary throughout this book (with respect to the three different aspects of resurrection) is based on the application of this principle. Thus, just as life, death and resurrection, both in the realm of form and that of inner meaning, are true for the lesser man so they are also true for the Great Man.

Just as death, both literal and figurative, is a cause of happiness for the lesser man, both in this world and the next, so the destruction and death of the Great Man is also a cause of his happiness and his eternal life; his abiding is for ever and it is in the form which he has attained in the previous world; his death is his exit from the abode of annihilation to the abode of continuing forever, from the abode of darkness and obscurity to the abode of light and radiance. It is for this reason that the gnostic 'All, when struck by Ibn Muljam al-Muradi said, 'By the Lord of the Ka'bah I have gained victory;' it is for this reason too that he also said: 'By Allah, surely the-son of Abu Talib is more intimate with death than the child with the breast of its mother.' Allah too addressing the slaves says, 'Then invoke death if you are truthful' for He knows that death results in their happiness and brings about arrival at their own perfection.

If one wishes, one may also consider the three days of resurrection, in the literal and figurative sense with respect to the cosmic dimension, as the return of the world of action, namely the world of Lordship, to the world of the Names and Attributes, namely the world of Divinity, and the return of the world of divinity to the world of the Essence and the Presence of Solitude. If we consider the matter in this way, then it is also accords with the above-mentioned classification; in this way all aspects are given their due consideration – as is indicated by the following verse:

Our terms are various but Your beauty is One  
And everything is indicating that very beauty.

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<sup>1</sup> It is for this reason that he is called al-Baqir – meaning literally the one who cleaves or seeks out the knowledge of past and later generations.

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