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## Part 3: Branches

### 1) Minor Ritual Ablution (wudhu')

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

All, both the common and the elite, are familiar with the meaning of *wudhu'*. It may be classified in three ways: obligatory, recommended, and meritorious. We have no need here to refer to the last two, but rather we shall consider the first, namely the obligatory, which may be divided into two aspects: the actions performed and the manner in which they are performed.

There are five obligatory actions: intention, washing of the face, washing of the hands, wiping over the head, and wiping over the feet. There are ten obligations with regard to the manner of their performance: the making of the intention at the time of the *wudhu'*; maintaining the intention until completion of the *wudhu'*; washing the face from the point of growth of the hair above the forehead to the lower point of the beard – from the top of the face to the bottom reaching those parts of the face which may be covered when the thumb and middle finger are outstretched – washing both arms from the elbow to the tips of the fingers, the wiping of the front part of the head just enough for it to be recognized as wiping, wiping both feet from the ends of the toes to the point above the ankles, in a specific order – that is beginning with the washing of the face, then the right hand, then the left, then the wiping of both feet, the performance of each action in a continuous motion, not allowing any significant time to elapse between the washing of each limb such that one does not allow the part previously washed to dry before going on to the next part – wiping the head and both feet using the wetness and drops of water which remain (and not using any further water). This method is that used by the people of the House of the Prophet. There are many differences of manner with regard to the *wudhu'* of other groups, besides the Shi'ahs,

but this is not the appropriate moment to enter upon a discussion of them; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise.

## ii) According to the people of tariqah

The purification of this group occurs after their performance of the above-mentioned ablution; it is an expression for the purification of the self from any base aspects of behaviour, the purification of the intellect from the impurity of wicked thoughts or ideas of a dubious nature which lead one or other astray, purification of the inner heart and mind of envy or rivalry and the purification of the limbs from actions unacceptable to the intellect or the code of the *shari`ah*. The intention of this kind of *wudhu`* is that the person intends with his heart and innermost secret not to do any action which would conflict in any way with the pleasure of Allah and to make all his acts of worship purely for Allah and no other; this is referred to in His words, `Say surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds; no associate has He; and this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit.'

As for the washing of the face, it is that the person washes the face of his heart clean of any impurity connected to the world and that contained therein, for `Surely the world is carrion and those who seek it are dogs.' It is for this reason that the Prophet has also said, `Love of this world is the source of all wrong action and abandonment of the world is the source of all worship'. 'Ali, may peace be upon him, has said, `O world! Go and deceive other than me for I have pronounced divorce on you three times and there is thus no possibility of a remarriage.' As for the washing of the hands, it refers to washing them free of whatever is in their grasp – of money and the like and of the world and the hereafter; indeed the reality of this purification is nothing but the dismissal of whatever is at their disposal. As for the wiping of the head, it means wiping over one's `true' head, namely one's intellect or perceiving self, that is one inspects it to ascertain whether there remains any trace of love of this world (and all this implies of wealth and honour).

As for the wiping of the feet, it means preventing them from walking anywhere that is not for the pleasure of Allah and in obedience to Him, whether outwardly or inwardly. As for what the two feet means according to the inner dimension, then, according to some, they symbolize man's perceptive faculty and his ability to carry out actions; according to others, they symbolize the sexual instinct and the power of anger.

The Prophet has referred to the person who performs this kind of *wudhu`* in addition to the previous *wudhu`* when he says, `The performance of one *wudhu`* on top of another is light upon light;' that is to say, the radiance of the outward is added to the radiance of the inward. 1In this way it is light upon light, namely the light of inner perception on top of the light what is legally prescribed and it is this which

brings about the firm establishment of the spiritual wayfarer in the straight way, both in this world and the next. This is referred to by Allah when He says, 'Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter;' may Allah bestow on us the (station of) joining between them and our firm establishment in both; He it is whose help is sought and it is on Him that we place our trust.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

The *wudhu*' of these people, which is expressed as a purification, refers to the purification of one's inner secret from the witnessing of other-than-Him – under any circumstances. As for the intention of this *wudhu*', it is that the spiritual traveler makes the intention in his innermost heart not to witness anything in existence as other-than-Him and not to move in any direction but that of Him; anyone who does aim for other-than-Him is a *mushrik* (idolater, polytheist) and guilty of hidden *shirk*, as we have already explained above; this is referred to by Allah's words, 'Have you not considered him who takes his low desire for his god' and His words, 'And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him).' The *mushrik* is ritually impure as attested by Allah's words, 'The idolaters are nothing but unclean;' thus their purification can only come about with this intention, an intention which rejects all kinds of *shirk*.

It is evident that freeing oneself of idolatry, be it manifest or hidden, is only possible by means of a divine or existential unity (*tawhid*). The washing of the face symbolises the purification of the face of reality and the cleansing of the inner heart from the vision of other-than-Him – such that one does not contemplate anything but His noble face, referred to in His words, 'Any way you turn to, there is the face of Allah'. Moreover this person does not recognize anything but His encompassing Essence, indicated in His words, 'Now surely He encompasses all things.' Allah has also referred to this kind of turning to Him when He inspired Abraham to say, 'Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists.'

As for the washing of the hands, it symbolizes one's lack of concern for any of the comforts of this world or the next which are at the disposal of one's hands – such as wealth, position, family and children which are of this world and knowledge, doing without, and obedience which are other worldly, including whatever appears as a result of the next world, like the reward, the Garden, the maidens and the palaces.

This is because undue consideration and praise for one's acts of worship and obedience is considered an act of disobedience by the people of Allah. Thus it has been said, 'A bad action which causes you regret is better than a good action which makes you conceited;' it has also been said, 'The best of actions is a wrong action which causes you to turn for forgiveness and the worst of actions is an act of obedience which results in conceit.' The Prophet has also referred to this when he says: 'This world is forbidden the people of the hereafter and the hereafter is forbidden the people of this world and both are

forbidden the people of Allah.'

As for the wiping over the head, it symbolizes the elevation of one's secret and innermost heart – that it is the `real' head – above the impurity of egotism and otherness, which acts as a barrier between him and his Beloved. One of the gnostics refers to this matter in the following verse:

Between me and You is individual existence conflicting with me,  
So remove individual existence by Your grace from between us.

It has also been said: `Your very existence is a wrong action which is greater than any other wrong actions.' We have already established that anyone who sees other than Him is an idolater and that all idolaters are unclean; that for such people there is no access to the world of sanctity and the divine presence is testified by the words of Allah, `Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases.'

As for the wiping over the feet, it symbolizes the elevation of the two powers of action and knowledge above any undertaking other than by Allah, for Allah and in Allah. This is because they are as the two legs and feet of the outer: it is by means of them that one strives in search of the Real and it is by means of them that one reaches Him.

On investigation one realizes that Allah's words (to Moses), `Therefore put off your shoes; surely you are in the sacred valley' is an indication of this too, meaning that if a person arrives at Allah, he should remove his shoes, for he will have no further need of them; this is evident since, on arrival, one must jettison everything in existence, especially physical strength, the physical senses and all that these imply. Some, however, believe that what is meant by the two shoes is this world and the next and some say that they refer to the world of the outer and that of the inner; still others say that they refer to the body and the soul, and in fact all express the truth.

A sacred *hadith* refers to this state and this station: `The slave continues to draw closer to Me by his supererogatory acts of worship until I love him; and if I love him, then I become his hearing and his sight and his speech and his hand and his foot; thus he hears by Me and he sees by Me and he speaks by Me and he strikes by Me and he walks by Me.' This *hadith* refers, in fact, to a way of acting by Allah which is the station of perfection just below that indicated by His words, `Why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may apply themselves to obtain an understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them to be cautious?'

As to the washing of the hands and arms, it expresses the station described in His words, `And you did not smite when you smote (the enemy), but it was Allah Who smote.' There are other studies on this subject and secrets too numerous to mention, but this present investigation will be enough for the man of

intellect and perception; and Allah says the truth and guides to the correct path.

## **2) Major Ritual Purification (ghusl)**

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

The *ghusl* of the people of this group is defined by the various degrees of the legal code, that is, the obligatory, the recommended, the forbidden and the disliked actions. A description of all these would be very lengthy so we shall confine ourselves to the obligations, the performance of which ensures purification according to the outer law of the *shari`ah*. These obligations are six in number, three of them involving actions and three involving the manner of performance of these actions. As for the actions, it is the ensuring that all urine has been passed – in the case of men, to make sure that the penis is free of the sperm of sexual intercourse – and to make the intention, that is, the pronouncement on the part of the person in a state of ritual impurity, together with an undertaking from his heart, namely: 'I am about to perform the *ghusl* in order to remove the major ritual impurity so that I may make the prayer, which is obligatory for me, and I do this in order to draw closer to Allah.' Thereafter he washes the whole of his body from head to foot such that water reaches to the roots of the hair covering his body and his washing is so thorough as to merit the name *ghusl*. The manner in which these actions should be performed has three aspects: the intention should be made immediately before the *ghusl* is performed; the intention should remain in force throughout the *ghusl*; and the appropriate order of performance should be respected, that is, one must begin with the head and then with the right side of the body and then with the left.

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

The *ghusl* of this group refers to their performance of the abovementioned *ghusl* in order to purify themselves from the real state of ritual impurity, namely that state which distances one from Allah (rather than from the superficial state of ritual impurity, namely that arising from any of the legally specified physical causes of pollution). The real state of ritual impurity may be divided into two parts: the first relates to the people of this group and the second to the people of *haqiqah*. An explanation of the second will follow immediately after this section.

As for the first, it refers to the impurity which arises from love of this world: truly the world is like a

woman who takes another husband every hour, as the Imam has indicated in his words, 'I have pronounced divorce on you three times and so there is no possibility of remarriage.' It is evident that if the world were not like a woman, then the Imam would not have addressed it in these terms; thus anyone who keeps her company and who makes loves to her with the self, the soul or the heart becomes ritually impure in the true sense. This state of ritual impurity is, as we have said, distancing oneself from Allah, for anyone who loves the world in the manner we have described above will of necessity distance himself from Allah. Indeed, love of Allah and intimacy with Him is the very opposite of love of and intimacy with the world and the two can never be joined together.

This is referred to in the words of Allah, 'Whoever desires the reward of the hereafter, We will give him more of that again; and whoever desires the reward of this world, We will give him of it, and in the hereafter he has no portion.' The Imam has also referred to this in his words: 'Truly this world and the next are enemies to each other and are two completely different paths: whoever loves this world and pays allegiance to it will anger the hereafter and make it an enemy of him;' the two are in fact as the east and the west, and whenever the person walking between the two comes closer to one, he will necessarily distance himself from the other – in fact they as far apart as wives in a plural marriage. Thus purification from this ritual impurity is attained by the abandonment of the world and all it contains, such that one is not even connected to it by so much as a hair's breadth. Even if so much as one hair remains untouched by water during the legally prescribed *ghusl*, then the whole *ghusl* is invalidated. Thus attachment to the world, however little, has the same effect, namely the invalidation of one's *ghusl*. This same notion is expressed in the phrase: 'Whoever is veiled is veiled, whether it be by one or a thousand veils.'

The manner in which this particular *ghusl* is performed is that the spiritual traveler washes first his 'real' or 'true' head, that is his heart in this instance, with the water of the gnosis of reality, which descends from the ocean of sanctity; he washes it clean of the impurities of worldly desires and empty opinion, which cause man to enter the Hawwiyyah, that is (one of the levels of) the Fire. This is so since if the desires of the self gain the upper hand, then they draw the person concerned towards the worship of idols and cult objects, be it in his thoughts or his actions.

The meaning of outward idolatry is evident and that of inner idolatry has already been discussed in the light of Allah's words, 'Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for a goal.' Anyone who obeys his low desire will of necessity enter the Fire, for as Allah says: 'And as for him whose measure of good deeds is of little weight, his abode shall be the abyss (of Hawwiyyah);' what is meant here is that if one's measure of knowledge and righteous action (which both arise as a result of a sound intellect and perfected self) weighs little, then he will enter the abyss of Hawwiyyah. The root cause of these desires is the 'soul which commands (to evil)' (*al-nafs al-ammarah*) and this soul or self stems from the animal instincts, physical appetites and anger; these are the armies and supporters of the commanding self. This abyss is 'the lowest of the low' indicated in Allah's words: 'Certainly We created man in the best image, then We render him the lowest of the low.'

Allah takes man to the lowest world of natural desire by means of his actions, which cause the person to follow his desires and thus oppose the will of Allah. This is indicated by the speech of the people of the Fire: 'Had we but listened or pondered, we should not have been among the inmates of the burning fire.' Thus the people of Allah are always the people of true knowledge, righteous action and sound intellect and are described as those of tranquility, honour and peace of mind. Allah Himself says of them, 'Then as for him whose measure of good deeds is heavy, He shall live a pleasant life' and he will be 'in the highest states of the garden.' The people of low desires and of innovation are described as being frivolous, of weak intellect and without peace of mind or honour; Allah says of them: 'like him whom the devils have made to fall down perplexed to the ground.' The reply to all questions related this subject may be found in Allah's words, '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 his abode.'

Thus the people of this station to this goal by constantly forbidding their soul from low desires and by always urging their souls to that which will bring them into the Garden, the true abode and the final refuge. 'All, may pace be upon him, has indicated the people of this station in his words: 'Disencumber your heavy actions, that is, your actions which arise from following your desires and from love of this world, and you will reach (the Real and the Garden), for surely the last of you will arrive by the example of the first.' Attainment of the Real and the Garden is dependent upon the disencumbrance or removal of wrong actions. Allah refers to this in His words, 'Most surely this is the mighty achievement, for the like of this then let the workers work.'

Then he washes his right side, that is, he purifies his spirit and innermost secret, his love of the higher manifestations of the hereafter and the Garden, for the people of the hereafter are characterized as the people of the right and of the higher realities. This is indicated in Allah's words, 'And the companions of the right hand; how happy are the companions of the right hand! Amid thornless Tote-trees and banana trees (with fruits), one above the other... and water flowing constantly.'

Thereafter follows the washing of the left side, that is, he purifies his soul and body (which are contained in the left side and are referred to as the physical realities) from love of base objects and selfish desires expressed as a totality by the term 'the world'; he performs this washing with the water of abandonment, stripping away and lack of concern. The world is the particular domain of the people of the left, just as the hereafter is the domain of the people of right, as is expressed in Allah's words, 'And those of the left hand, how wretched are these of the left hand! In hot wind and boiling water and the shade of black smoke.' It is by means of this purification that they merit critering into the Garden and are prepared to approach the Presence of His Power.' This is indicated 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.' May Allah grant us attainment of these stations for surely that is a grace from Allah, He gives it to whom He wishes and Allah is of mighty grace.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

*Ghusl* for the people of this group represents their purification from the real ritual impurity, that is, the witnessing of other than Allah in an absolute sense. As we have explained above, this impurity is the distancing of oneself from Allah: anyone who witnesses other-than-Him is far from the Real; it is not possible to remove this distance but one may approach the contemplation of the Real as He actually is. Allah indicates this when He says, 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining His creation with justice; there is no god but He, the Mighty the Wise.'<sup>1</sup> We have already commented upon this kind of unified vision (*tawhid*) on several occasions.

The order of performance of this *ghusl* is that he washes his 'real' or 'true' head, that is his spirit, alone and stripped of all else, with the water of the *tawhid* of essence; he washes it clean of the witnessing of other-than-Him. Just as love of Allah is the duty of the inward and is expressed as the 'tranquil soul' (*al-nafs al-mutmainnah*), knowledge of Allah is the duty of the heart and contemplation of Him is the duty of the spirit; moreover arrival is the duty of the innermost secret, which in turn is the inner dimension of the spirit. Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq has referred to this in one of his supplications, namely 'O Allah, make radiant my outwardness by obedience to You and my inwardness by love of You and my heart by knowledge of You and my spirit by my witnessing of You and my innermost secret by my constancy in striving to join with Your Presence, O Possessor of Majesty and Nobility.'

This *ghusl* is only possible by the annihilation of the knower in the known and the witnesser in the witnessed. This annihilation is expressed as the annihilation of unity (*tawhid*) and is attained by witnessing the Real as He really is, that is, the witnessing of Him alone and no other with Him; by this I mean that he does not witness anything in existence but His existence and One Essence, stripped of all the transient physical phenomena. As Allah says, 'Everything is perishable but He; His is the judgment, and to Him you shall be brought back;'<sup>2</sup> 'And there will endure for ever the person of your Lord, the Lord of glory and honour.'<sup>3</sup> (We have already investigated these two *ayat* on more than one occasion and it would not be appropriate to discuss them again here).

As we have already established, this kind of *tawhid* is the true and straight path which man has been commanded to in the words of the Prophet, 'Continue then in the right way as you are commanded;'<sup>4</sup> it is the middle way, referred to by Allah in His words, 'And (know that) this is My path, the right one, therefore follow it, and follow not other ways for they will lead you away from His way; thus He has enjoined you with that you may guard (against evil).'<sup>5</sup> We have also established that this way has two sides or borders, namely that of excess and that of negligence. Purification from the impurity of excess, expressed as that of the right hand border of the way, is attained by freeing oneself of the all-encompassing *tawhid*, while purification from the impurity of negligence, expressed as that of the left, is attained by freeing oneself of the *tawhid* of the individual parts. Thereafter one is able to persevere

along the above-mentioned path, namely the middle way, which is attained by the joining of the two types of *tawhid* and is called the greater purification. It also necessitates that one cease to witness other than Him in any way whatsoever; rather one contemplates Him in the realm of gatheredness, and this is expressed as the oneness of the separate parts after the gathering together. Such a vision is extremely difficult and it is for this reason that the Prophet described it as being 'sharper than a sword' and 'finer than a hair;' Allah has also referred to it in His words, 'The eye did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the limit' and also 'So he was the measure of two bows or closer still;' these words indicate the gathered *tawhid* of Muhammad, a *tawhid* which encompasses all the other kinds of *tawhid*.

In short, ritual impurity in the spiritual realm is nothing but the witnessing of other-than-Him, in whatever form this takes; thus attainment of purification in the spiritual realm can only occur after freeing oneself from this vision of otherness. Thus it is that the poet has said:

I was content with the whim of fancy that you evoked in me;  
But I was not content when I joined with you,  
For when a glance of Laylah fell from afar,  
It seized my inside from the heart to the bowels.  
Women say that the living .yearn to see.  
O Laylah, your eyes have caused me to die from the sickness of yearning  
And how can you see Laylah when your eye sees  
Other than her and you have not cleansed it with tears?

There are numerous examples of this kind and the reader is advised to seek them in the appropriate places; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise and He it is that says the truth and guides to the correct path.

### **3) Purification with Earth (tayammum)**

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

*Tayammum* for the people of this group is purification by means of dust; this is used when water is absent or when one is excused its use. *Tayammum* takes the place of *wudhu'* or the *ghusl* and is only permitted according to the following three conditions: the absence of water after having undertaken a search for it, or absence of the means whereby one may reach it (not possessing the price of the water, or a bucket, rope or the like), or because one fears for one's health or one's wealth (because of its excessive price) if one were to use it. *Tayammum* is not correct unless done with earth or whatever is

commonly called earth (thus it includes the natural forms of dust, clay and stone).

As to the manner of its performance it is that the person strikes the earth once with both hands. If it is being done instead of the *wudhu'*, he should then brush off the excess dust and wipe his face with both hands from the point where the hair begins to grow at the top of the forehead down level with the nose; then he should wipe over the back of his right hand with the palm of his left, from the wrist to the ends of the fingers and then over the back of his left hand with the palm of his right, likewise from the wrist to the ends of the fingers. If the *tayammum* is done instead of the *ghusl*, then one should strike the earth twice, once for the face and once for the hands, the manner of performance being the same as above. The same things which invalidate the *wudhu'* and the *ghusl* also invalidate the *tayammum* (the only essential difference between the two being the capacity to use water or not); likewise all acts of worship permitted with *wudhu'* are also permitted by means of *tayammum*, the two being exactly equal as to their validity – and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise and He it is Who says the truth and guides to the correct path.

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

Before beginning this section in detail we should first define the meaning of the water of reality and the earth of reality.

According to the judgment of the intellect and the judgment contained in the narrated sources (of the Qur'an and the traditions), the water of reality symbolizes the divine knowledge and gnosis or 'the life of reality.'<sup>1</sup> This is explained on examination of the words of Allah which affirm that the life of everything issues from water, 'And We have made from water every living things.'<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that the life of every thing does not come from the water of the form (with which we are familiar): the angels, the jinn, the celestial spheres and planets are all recognized as things although their life does not issue from water, that is, they are not made up of the 'water of form.'<sup>1</sup> Likewise, although it may be said that all composite things contain a certain proportion of the water of form, the same may not be said about many other existent beings, like, for example, the simple elements and the higher, sublime realities. What in fact is being said is that just as the degree of perfection in knowledge differs in rank and quality, so too water varies in its degrees of saltiness and sweetness and in other specific qualities.

We have already mentioned in our investigation of tawhid that every existent being has speech, life and knowledge. What is meant by knowledge is knowledge of Allah, His Names, His Attributes and His Actions; indeed there is no existent being that is devoid of these different degrees of knowledge, for they are possessed in accordance with the capacity, merit and receptivity of each; this (as we have already

explained) is indicated in Allah's words, 'And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification.' Glorification of anything can only take place after gnosis of that thing and affirmation of that thing's existence. Thus our statement that everything in existence possesses three things – knowledge, gnosis and life – is correct.

According to most commentators, Allah's words, 'He sends down water from the cloud, then watercourses flow (with water) according to their measure' also reflects this meaning since the water here refers to knowledge, the watercourses the hearts and 'to their measure' to the capacity and capability to which every existent being may attain. Likewise Allah's words, 'And His Throne (dominion) extends on the water' also indicates this meaning, since there is no link or relationship between the throne of form and the water of form, either with respect to the legal judgments and the nature of existent beings or with respect to the dictates of the intellect. Thus the meaning of knowledge – which is a universal reality pervading all things in a measure specific to each thing – is referred to in His words, 'That is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing.' This is the best and most accurate of explanations, since the Throne and other realities besides the Throne are not established except by means of life and real life is nothing else but knowledge. The throne is one of the mightiest bodies or entities and the closest of things to the highest celestial realities; thus if the mightiest of things is described as possessing some of those qualities shared by other things in general, then of necessity this principle is applicable to other things lower than it. This is affirmed in Allah's words, 'The Beneficent Who ascended the Throne (and established His power);' by His Power over the mightiest of things He of necessity has dominion over everything below. There are numerous studies of a rational and logical nature on the subject but it would be inappropriate to include them here.

The 'real' or 'true' earth is the antithesis of this water according to both the judgment of the intellect and that contained in the narrated sources: the 'real water' is spiritual knowledge and sacred gnosis and the 'real earth' tangible, acquired knowledge and speculative and cognitive gnosis. If every time it was mentioned, the meaning of earth were pure dust (as the meaning of the Arabic would imply on the first reading), then Allah would not have said of Adam, 'Surely the likeness of Jesus (Isa) is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust'.

Although the word dust is used, it is clear that Adam was not created purely from dust, rather he was created from this, together with other elements; thus the dust is just one part of the various component elements of his body, but the whole is referred to as dust because it forms the major part in comparison to the other elements. This principle also applies to the animals, indeed to every existent being. Iblis (Satan), for example, was not created from fire alone (despite his saying, 'You have created me from fire') but rather from the four elements. He describes himself as having been made from fire because it constitutes the major element of the different components (fire is the dominant element of composition of the jinn of which Satan is a member).

Thus what is meant by dust, with respect to the creation of Adam, is in fact earth, together with all the

other elements commonly associated with earth. Similarly, it is the knowledge of the outer acquired through the senses, with the aid of the speculative faculty, that is referred to as true earth. Thus it is apposite to connect all knowledge whose source springs from the outward and inward senses with the dust, and all knowledge whose source springs from unveilings and divine outpourings – like the divine knowledge and gnosis (known variously as revelation, inspiration or knowledge from His presence) – to this water. Allah refers to this in His words, 'And if they had kept up the Torah (tawrah) and the Gospel (*injil*) and that which was revealed to them from their Lord, they would certainly have eaten from above them and below them and from beneath their feet.'

What is here referred to as 'above' is an indication of the spiritual world and the knowledge which is revealed from this world; what is referred to as 'below' is an indication of the knowledge of the physical realm and all the other knowledge which may be acquired from this realm. What some commentators have said, namely that the eating from above refers to the rain and from below to the plants, is not true, however, since the water and the plants are obtained not only by those who abide by the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an but also by all other men and animals as well. Thus to infer that the obtaining of these two types of food is conditional upon the keeping up of the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an is rationally untenable to anyone who reflects upon this matter.

If the people of *tariqah* are not able to purify the inner with the water of the gnosis of reality (because of the existence of some kind of obstacle), then it is permissible for them to use the above-mentioned knowledge of the outer in order to purify their inner self – in a measure appropriate to the degree of their outward knowledge. The knowledge of the outer is thus related to the *shari'ah*, the knowledge of the inner to the *tariqah*, and the gnostic knowledge (which occupies a position above these two) to the *haqiqah*. Thus if the spiritual traveler is not able to obtain purification, with respect to the *tariqah*, by means of the real or true water, then he is permitted to purify his outer knowledge by means of the *shari'ah*. This is because the gradual purification of the outer leads to a purification of the inner; thus it is that Allah refers in detail to the reason for *tayammum* when He says, 'And if you are sick, or on a journey, or one of you come from the privy or you have touched the women, and you cannot find water, betake yourselves to pure earth, then wipe your faces, and your hands therewith. Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favour on you, so that you may be grateful.'

Allah also refers to another aspect of this matter by His commanding the slave to purify the self by means of the element of pure earth; in doing so He is commanding the person who is unable to purify the self by means of the intellect to fulfill the duties of the *shari'ah*, since the intellect corresponds to water in its ability to purify in the realm of reality. Outer purity is a necessary prerequisite of inner purity (as we have seen above). Allah refers to this with His words, 'And your garments do purify and uncleanness do shun;' here the garments indicate the body and all its outward actions, 'do purify' the purification of the *shari'ah* and uncleanness here indicates man's attachment to the world and his

becoming sullied by it.

Thus it is permissible to understand these words as words of guidance and instruction for the spiritual traveler, telling him to return to the original state of annihilation and non-existence. This state is here called the dust on the one hand, since it is from this that man originally comes, as is evident from his outward and physical existence, and water on the other, since he is also originally from water. Hence Allah says, 'He has created you from dust' and 'I created you before when you were nothing.' This means that if the spiritual traveler is not able to use the water of reality, he may use dust, the substance out of which he was formed and the basest and lowest of things, to attain to a state of total humility; by means of this state he may attain to a state of poverty and absolute submission, which in turn are the two prerequisites for entry into the Presence of His Power. This Presence of Power is also known as the Garden of the Essence as indicated in His words, 'I am with those who possess hearts of humility' and in the words of the gnostic slave, 'When poverty is perfected then that is Allah.' This station may also be expressed as a submersion in the ocean of the water of eternal life, whereby true purity is attained together with entry into the House of Allah, the al-Aqsa Mosque and Masjid al-Haram which are all forbidden of access to other than those in this state of purity.

Shaykh Muhyi al-Din has indicated the aspect connected to dust, poverty and humility in a section devoted to this topic in his *Futuhat*: 'The earth becomes the goal because by its nature it is in a state of humility. In an absolute sense it is this humility which is the aim of slavery and worship; thus the purification of the slave is by fulfilling that which is expected of a slave, namely humility, poverty, respect of His Lord's rites, laws and commands. If it is forgotten that one's worship takes place on the earth, then one is reminded again by the fact that *tayammum* can only be done with the dust which is a part of this earth, that man and his progeny is from earth and that he remains close to it of necessity by his poverty and neediness. This notion is reflected in the saying of the Arabs, "The hand of the man becomes dusty when he is in need."'

When the slave of Allah recognizes that dust is the lowest of the elements and that it is part of his own origins, then he is purified of any impurity which might cause him to leave this station. But this only applies in the case when water cannot be found. Water, as we have said, is knowledge: it is by knowledge that the hearts are given life, just as it is by water that the body and earth are given life. This is like the state of the person who imitates the dictates of his intellect with respect to his perception of Allah. Just as the *tayammum* of the person who finds water, and is able to use it, is invalidated, so too, if the legal code of the *shari`ah* commands to something, is one's obedience to the intellect and one's reflection upon Allah's intent with respect to that matter invalidated. This rule applies in particular when the intellect is unable to find a sufficient proof it is the intellect itself which demands that one turn back to the legal code for affirmation. In this case the intellect and the legal code work in harmony; when this is realized, then one benefits greatly with respect to one's understanding of the secrets of worship.

Shaykh Muhyi al-Din has also indicated how water may be sub-divided according to the various levels of knowledge of truth and reality. We shall not discuss this matter here for fear of making this section too lengthy and of incommodating the reader. The overall purpose of this discussion, however, is as we have outlined above.

It is obligatory for the spiritual traveler to do *tayammum* (as we have mentioned above) in order that he may be able to use the above-mentioned water, that is, attain to the knowledge of truth and reality. The manner of this *tayammum* is that the person first wipes his face with the above-mentioned dust. In doing so, he purifies his secret and his reality of any impurity arising from attachment to this world and from loving any other but Allah; he then adorns his outward aspect with acts of obedience in accordance with the prophetic laws; he then wipes his right side, that is his heart, in order to purify it from attachment to the next world and from all associated with it, whether it be the blessings of the Garden, maidens or palaces; he then wipes his left side, that is his soul, in order to attain purification from this world and all associated with it, be it wealth, position and general benefit. Moreover, purification of the right and left side is only obtained by abandoning this world and the next (as we have already explained above). It is for this reason that we must wipe over the back of the right hand with the palm of the left and the back of the left with the palm of the right – such that the person does not oppose or contradict his outer with his inner and his inner with his outer. Thus purification of the one is achieved by means of the other.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

The *tayammum* of this group refers to their annihilation from the world itself and all contained therein, including all the simple elements and compounds; in this way they are purified from egotism and otherness, which of necessity accompanies their attachment to the world and all contained therein. This is so since the world of the outer, which is also called the *mulk* or kingdom is equivalent to dust and the world of the inner, called the *malakut* or spiritual realm, is equivalent to water. This is shown by the fact that when Allah talks of the kingdom, He usually does so by referring to it as the earth and when He speaks of the spiritual realm, He usually does so by referring to the sky. The earth is obviously related to dust by the density and opaqueness of its nature, indeed the earth is composed of dust itself. The sky is related to water by the subtleness and lightness of its nature, indeed the sky is composed of water itself, this is confirmed by the consensus of the people of *shari`ah* and by a comparison of the cosmic and the individual dimensions. We shall now enlarge on this in more detail.

The difference between the people of *tariqah* and the people of *haqiqah* with respect to this purification is that the former purify themselves from blameworthy behaviour and from base characteristics by taking upon themselves praiseworthy characteristics and good qualities; the latter, however, purify themselves from the ego and any traces of themselves that might lead to duality and (seeing) other-than-Him. This is affirmed in the words of the Prophet when he says, `Surely it is a covering on my heart and surely I

seek forgiveness from Allah seventy times every day and night.'

This is also reflected in the words of the gnostic, 'Between You and me there is an individual existence which is in conflict with me so remove, by Your grace, this individual existence from between us.' The covering which is indicated in the saying of the Prophet is his return to the world of multiplicity in order that he may call and guide the people. This is indicated by his words in the Qur'an, 'Say: I am only a mortal like you' and also Allah's words, ' (it is) only a delivery (of communications) from Allah.' The complete stripping away of the self and the utter solitariness which he attains at certain times is also an indication of this state. The Prophet's saying 'I have times with Allah that I do not share even with the most intimate angel or prophet' demonstrates that he was in the world of arrival at Allah and total intimacy; it is the station of abiding after annihilation, expressed in His words, 'Two bows' lengths or closer still.'

The shaking off of the excess dust from one's hands after striking them on the ground during performance of the *tayammum* is an indication of one's hands shaking off their attachment to the two worlds. This kind of purification is performed by the gnostic striking his hands – which here represent the intellect and the self – on the world of the outer and that of the inner and preventing them from 'paying attention' to these worlds in any way; he then shakes his hands to remove the sight of this total annihilation; he then wipes over his true or real face – which is sometimes expressed as the secret and sometimes the spirit – in order to ascertain whether there remains any trace of love of the two worlds or not; he then wipes the back and palms of both hands (which are also expressions of the intellect and self), using the back and palm of both hands, in order to establish whether in reality there remains any trace on them of attachment to the two worlds. If there is attachment to other than Him in any way, be it strong or weak, then he is prevented from attaining the true purification of reality, be it by means of water or earth. Thus the spiritual traveler must inspect his outer and inner at the time of their annihilation in order to see if there remains any trace in them of attachment to the two worlds. This notion is supported by the words of the Prophet, 'This world is forbidden to the people of the hereafter and the hereafter is forbidden to the people of this and both are forbidden to the people of Allah.'

Love of this world and the next is a veil and is a kind of *shirk* of something else with Allah. The existence of a veil, or of *shirk*, renders attainment of purification impossible, since the person who is veiled or quality of *shirk* is unclean, according to Allah's judgment: 'Surely the idol worshippers, are nothing but unclean.' It is evident too that purity and uncleanliness are two opposites which can never be reconciled. Thus it is necessary to remove uncleanliness before beginning the purification in the manner we have already explained. Allah has referred to this with His words, 'O you who are clothed! Arise and warn, and magnify your Lord, and purify your garments and shun uncleanliness.' The words 'and purify your garments' refer to the purification of the outer; the words 'and shun uncleanliness' refer to the purification of the inner by distancing oneself from the uncleanliness of idolatry, veiling and seeing other – than – Him.

There are many other examples of a similar nature in the Qur'an and the body of *ahadith*, and the reader is advised to investigate them in the appropriate sources. At this point we shall conclude our study of the three types of purification, namely *wudhu'*, *ghusl* and *tayammum*, in the light of this particular station; and Allah says the truth and guides to the correct path.

Knowledge of the *qiblah* (direction of prayer) and the time and place of the prayer should be sought in the appropriate books of jurisprudence, as it would not be fitting to continue the study thereof in a work of this kind (although we shall be obliged to discuss the matter in due course, as the reader shall see). We shall now begin a study of the nature of prayer.

## 4) The Nature of Prayer

### In the light of the intellect, the Prophetic traditions and the unveilings of the heart

The reader should realize that all divine laws are based upon a consideration of time, place and the duty to the brotherhood of Muslims, be it in the realm of form or of inner reality. Examples of time-related events are the prayers, the fasting, *zakat* (the alms tax), *hajj*, the *jihad* and the various times of the recommended visits to graves and shrines and the social meetings incumbent upon Muslims. As for the place-related events, there are those which are set in Makkah, Madinah, the Haram Mosque and the Ka'bah, the al-Aqsa mosque and its sacred rock, the mosques of Kufah and Basrah, the graves of the prophets and saints, and the places of martyrdom of the infallible Imams of the family of the Prophet. The brotherhood of Muslims refers, for example, to the prophets, the messengers, the saints, the spiritual guardians, the messengers 'endowed with constancy', the Imams of guidance and the caliphs of Allah in both worlds and all the companions and followers may Allah be content with them all, the angels and in particular Gabriel, Michael, Isra'fil and 'Izra'il and their like from amongst the angels and the righteous slaves of Allah.

Time, when measured in respect to itself is one single entity; however time becomes particularized with respect to the abovementioned acts of worship – such that the latter cannot be performed except in relation to a particular time. This particular time possesses superiority over the rest of time – as the prophet or messenger was aware of by way of his special inspiration from Allah. Thus the obligatory prayer, for example, is neither valid before nor after its appropriate time. Indeed the same applies to all acts of worship.

The likeness of this is that of someone who dies leaving to his sons some treasure hidden in a particular place; he then tells them that they should take a certain number of steps from a certain wall in order to

determine the location of the treasure. If the sons were to count one step more or one less, then they would not find the treasure. Thus, in order to find their treasure, they must respect the number indicated. The same is true for the various acts of worship and the times prescribed for them. If they are performed outside their times, then they are not accepted and the person who offers them will in no way be rewarded.

The same principle may be applied to the notion of place: with respect to itself, place is one single entity, but from another aspect, each locality possesses certain features which distinguish it from other places. Certain acts of worship are only acceptable when performed in a certain place. The Ka'bah, the Masjid al-Haram and the al-Aqsa mosques are examples of these special places.

The same principle applies with respect to the concept of brotherhood: with respect to itself, the notion of brotherhood is an all-encompassing entity; from another aspect, however, certain brothers of the brotherhood are distinct from the rest. The prophets, messengers, saints, spiritual inheritors and the like are examples of this.

On investigation we see that the daily prayers, the Friday prayers, the `Id (feast-day) prayers and the *hajj* have been prescribed in order that these three aspects be joined. The daily prayers are undertaken by a group of people in a particular locality, the Friday and congregational prayers in a particular town, and the *hajj* and the visits to the sacred shrines in a site which attracts people from a particular region or country. The *hajj* occurs in a particular place, known as the House of Allah and the House of His slave, and its prayers are performed at a particular time; its rites join together the brotherhood of Muslims. In one event, therefore, place, time and brotherhood are brought together. By virtue of the hidden wisdom of this event, Allah grants whatever blessing or benefit the slaves may request in their supplications; He does this by His outpouring of divine grace on the souls of the slaves, in accordance with the merit of each and in relation to their essences and the various capacities with which they have been endowed.

Moreover, His bestowal and granting does not depend on the intensity of each individual's prayer but rather on the event itself every gathering possesses its own inherent wisdom and benefit which is shared by no other event. We may cite the theory of numbers as an example of this. Thus we see that in the number three there is a particularity which is not shared by four and vice-versa. The same principle can be applied to all numbers, from ten to a thousand and any number between them. This principle, as some have pointed out, is a principle of existence in general and one which accords exactly with the Muhammadi reality – a reality which encompasses all these numbers and levels, both in the realm of form and inner reality. The Prophet refers to this when he says, 'I have been given all the names' and 'I have been sent to perfect good behaviour.'<sup>1</sup> These words are in accordance with the triads of truths which form the dominant feature of his reality, like for example the triad of prophethood, messengership and saintliness (*wilayah*), the triad of submission, faith and certainty, and that of revelation, inspiration and unveiling.'

There are also other examples which demonstrate this same symbolic pattern, such as his love of perfume, women and prayer, as we know from his words, 'I love three things of your world; perfume, women and the coolness of the eye in prayer.'

The nature of the essence of the prophet requires this gathering together of things and the establishment of intimacy and friendship between the various existent beings – in particular with respect to mankind as a whole. It is for this reason he established certain places and events in order to guarantee this friendship and intimacy, the ultimate aim of his mission and indeed that of all the prophets being nothing but this. It is clear that the gathering of a particular group, at a particular place, in a particular manner several times a day will of necessity result in an increase of love between the members of the group and an increase in their firmness and resolution – in accordance with their capacity and merit. Examples of this are the congregational prayers undertaken in a particular locality, the Friday prayers in the prescribed place in a town, and the *hajj* once a year in Makkah.

There is no disagreement among persons of intellect that such gatherings increase love and friendship; the Qur'an also provides numerous examples in proof of our words. Thus, just as this friendship is established during the five gatherings of the daily prayers in each locality, so it is also established in the Friday gatherings of each town, on the various days of the prescribed feasts, and on the occasion of the visits to the shrines and amongst the people of the different countries during the Hajj. Indeed, these places and events have only been described with this in mind. Other benefits and advantages arise – other than that of the joining of the people in friendship – like, for example, the social, commercial and marriage contracts which are undertaken during these gatherings. These social gatherings and events contain matters of hidden wisdom which are worthy of investigation; suffice it to say that they are all based on this triad of realities, namely time, place and the brotherhood of Muslims.

We shall now discuss the ascent of the Prophet (*mi`raj*), which expresses these above-mentioned realities; we shall examine this subject first in relation to the world of form and then in relation to the world of inner reality. It should be noted that there are many differences of opinion among the scholars, the common people and the philosophers concerning the matter.

## **5) The Ascent of the Prophet (mi`raj)**

### **i) In the realm of form**

The title of this section refers to the Prophet's will and intent to attain to this triad of gatherings in the realm of form – just as he attains to them in the realm of inner meaning (in the various stations of

sublimity between the heavens and the earth). Thus his movement in the realm of form from the Haram mosque to that of Kufah, then to the al-Aqsa Mosque and then his ascent to the seven heavens, the Throne and the Footstool (as is related in the Qur'an) was for this purpose, namely for the three above-mentioned gatherings. Such gatherings are a means whereby the Prophet's perfections may flow out to the people. The Prophet in fact draws them out of their state of imperfection and allows them to attain their own specific perfection, in accordance with their receptivity and capacity.

This ascent is related in the various Prophetic sayings of the 'night journey' and is referred to in the Qur'an by Allah's words, 'Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the al-Aqsa Mosque (or 'remote mosque') of which We have blessed the precincts, so that We may show you some of Our signs; surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing.' It has been narrated that all the prophets ask for this form of ascent from Allah – a form which encompasses all the above-mentioned gatherings.

Allah has also commanded His Prophet Muhammad to this, namely a crossing and ascent to these heavenly places by means of his body, in the realm of form; it is even reported that during his ascent to the sky he wanted to take off his sandals, just as Moses had done when he went up the mountain of Tur and the angel said to him, 'O Prophet of Allah, do not take them off for surely we desire that the blessing of your sandals may reach our places (of abode).' Such things are by no means impossible for Allah, for He is the One Who renders everything possible and the One Who determines events.

Moreover, it has been established in the divine wisdom that the prophets, saints, perfected ones and spiritual poles possess great power in both the earthly and spiritual worlds: when a person becomes perfected and merits being the caliph of Allah in His earthly and spiritual kingdoms, then he is able to do anything he wishes within the realm of these two worlds – consider, for example, the way in which some of the saints, of Allah are able to travel huge distances (within a space of time not normally possible) and are able to rise people from the dead.

There is also the example of Asaf (Solomon's vizier) who was able to cover a vast distance across the earth when he went to fetch the Throne of Bilqis (the Queen of Sheba). Moses, too, was able to separate the sea in order to drown the Pharaoh and save his own people. Solomon controlled the winds, riding them and journeying where he willed (according to the Qur'an). Abraham was able to render the fire (into which he had been thrown) cool such that he was untouched by its flames. The Prophet himself, when desiring to demonstrate a miracle, was able to wield power in the lunar realm when he split the moon in the presence of the disbelievers and a number of other persons who were Muslims. Sham'un (one of the spiritual inheritors of Jesus) was able to wield power in the solar realm by moving the sun from the east to another position of his choosing. 'Ali, on whom be peace, also exercised authority in the solar realm when he twice caused the sun to move back to the place of prayer, once in Madinah and once in the region of Babul (as is described in the books of both the Sunnis and the Shiah). There is also the example of Idris (Enoch) who ascended to the realm of the heavens where he

has remained until the present time. Jesus himself also ascended to the heavens. It has been shown how the angels and the jinn are able to take whatever form they desire and that they are able to enter into whatever world they wish.

It is commonly agreed that man is more noble than they; indeed the angels have been commanded to make prostration before them and to serve and obey them in all matters. One may thus ask the question why man is unable to do the things of which the angels are capable. The truth of the matter is that man is in fact more capable than they are. This is evident when we consider the nature of the *abdāl* (the spiritual guardians who hold sway over the world), and the way in which they change from one form to another, and how they may appear in more than one place at the same time. This is similar to the way in which the angel Gabriel appeared in this world in the form of (the Prophet's companion) Dahiya al-Kalbi on several different occasions, as did other angels (when they appeared, for example, in aid of the Prophet on the day of the Battle (if Badr and that of Hunayn)).

When we accept the truth of the above and we realize that man is the noblest of creatures, then it is difficult for us not to accept too that all perfected men are capable of expressing special powers (in the manner described above); it would be difficult, too, for us not to accept that the noblest of prophets and saints were likewise capable of this and of greater things. Muhammad's ascent to the heavens is, in fact, of a lesser dimension than his influence over events in the lunar and solar realms and over Gabriel (when he wished to begin the ascent). It is most important that one understands and believes in these matters for any attempt to explain them away is of no use.

## **ii) In the realm of inner meaning**

Most people agree that the ascent of the Prophet in the realm of inner meaning refers to his arrival at the Real during the time of the night journey and by means of the unification of essence (which is also known as the 'unity of the separate after the gathering'). It also refers to his perception of the reality of things; this is reflected in his words, 'We were shown things as they actually are' and 'During that night I learnt the knowledge of the first and subsequent (peoples).' This station is connected to that of Abraham for Allah says of the latter, 'And thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure.' This special relationship between the Prophet and Abraham is affirmed by the Qur'an and may be demonstrated by means of other proofs.

It is clear that this ascent (and other similar spiritual events) has no need of movement in the realm of form or of any notion of physical distance. When we talk about the movement of a particular person, then we are referring to his going from one place to another in the phenomenal world; the *mi`raj* that we are discussing, however, does not imply this kind of movement. When we talk about the movement of ideas in the mind, then we are referring to the way in which one can rationalize from principles to

conclusions by means of thoughts.

According to the general consensus, however, such a way of thinking is a kind of veil. 'Ali has affirmed this when he says; 'I have come to know Allah by abandoning thought.' Thus this station of the *mi`raj* is only attained by abandoning both these approaches and by no longer considering anything which inherently implies other-than-Him as valid. It is for this reason that ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, who was the Pole of the Age and the Imam of his time, said, 'Whoever understands separation, as distinct from arrival and movement as distinct from stillness has reached a point of establishment in the vision of divine unity (*tawhid*).'

What is here meant by separation is the first separation of multiplicity, necessary by the inherent nature of creation; by arrival is meant the joining or gatheredness which is antithetical to it; by movement is meant the spiritual wayfaring; and by stillness one's establishment in the source of solitariness of the Essence. This arrival is also expressed as the annihilation of the slave in the Attributes of the Real by his abandonment of the attributes of his self; it is the realization of the station of the Names to which the Prophet refers with his words, 'Whoever can enumerate these names will enter the Garden.' The separation is also expressed as the veiling of the slave by his own attributes and those of creation and by his attaching an absolute reality to them; those who veil themselves by seeing the outer (and what is other than Him) are of necessity far from the Real and the contemplation of Him although they may claim to be established in the station of *tawhid*.

All are agreed that there are four kinds of travel in the realm of inner meaning. The first is the traveling 'to' Allah from the various stations of the self it is the arrival at the 'clear horizon,' which is the final station of the heart and the beginning of the emanations of His Names. The second is the traveling 'in' Allah by assimilating His Attributes and His Names; this kind of journey leads to the 'higher horizon' which is the final point of the Presence of Oneness. The third is ascent to the source of gatheredness and the Presence of Solitariness: this is the station of the 'two bow's lengths' as long as duality remains; when duality is removed then it is the station of 'or closer still' and the final station of saintliness (*wilayah*). The fourth is travel 'by' Allah 'from' Allah in order to achieve perfection: this is the state of abiding after annihilation and separation after gatheredness.

Each of these different ways of travel has a beginning and an end; the beginning of each is clear from the beginning and end of each stage as we have described above. As for the end, that of the first is the removal of the veils of multiplicity from the face of Oneness. The end of the second is the removal of the veils of Oneness from the various aspects of multiplicity in the inner realm of gnosis. The end of the third is the removal of the limitation or restriction of the duality of outer and inner, by attaining to unity in gatheredness. The end of the fourth is the return from the Presence of the Real to creation in the station of constancy and perseverance; it is the station of reconciling gatheredness and separation by witnessing now the Real manifests throughout the various levels of creation and how the creation eventually disappears into the Real. In this station one sees the source of Oneness in the forms of

multiplicity and the forms of multiplicity in the source of Oneness.

There are no further ways of travel or spiritual destinations beyond these four. Thus the *mi`rajas* a whole, be it with respect to a prophet, a messenger, a saint or a spiritual inheritor, is contained in the above four divisions. Any variations in the mode of travel which occur are connected to the capacity and receptivity of each particular person. Moreover, a *mi`raj* may take place during a whole night, a single hour or even a blink of an eyelid. Indeed, it may occur after striving for forty years or even forty thousand years since this kind of travel has no specific limits as to its nature and no specific time; `and that is the grace of Allah; He bestows it on whom He wishes and Allah is of mighty grace.'

With this in mind, we should now examine Allah's words, `Glory be to Him Who made His servant go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque (of al-Aqsa) of which We have blessed the precincts, so that We may show to him some of Our signs; surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing' for they are pertinent proof of the truth of what we are saying. The meaning of `Glory be to Him, Who made His servant to go on a night' is glory be to Him Who made His real or `true' slave, namely Muhammad, go by night, that is, during the night of the multiplicity of form in the realm of creational and phenomenal realities; the meaning of `from the Haram Mosque' is from the heart of reality which is *haram*, that is forbidden to others to enter; the meaning of `to the remote mosque' is to the Presence of the Spirit and the world of witnessing which is the furthest or highest level of witnessing; Allah's words `of which We have blessed the precincts' refer to His bestowal of the blessings of gnostic realities; and the words `So that We may show to Him some of Our signs' refer to Allah's showing him of his *ayat* which all point to His Essence, His Attributes, His Names and His Actions, indeed to a contemplation of Him in His worlds of spirituality and corporeality. His words, `He is the Hearing, the Seeing' refer to the fact that Allah is the only True Hearer of the servant's prayers and the only One Who sees that each is answered.

One may express this still more lucidly by saying that the Haram Mosque is his true or real heart which is forbidden of access except to the Real Himself. The heart is the abode or the station of Allah; this is affirmed in His words, `Neither the earth nor the heavens can contain Me but the heart of the believing slave (contains Me).' This heart is connected to the Haram Mosque since the latter is the *qiblah* (direction of prayer) of the people of the earth and the former is the *qiblah* or focus for all the physical limbs and inner organs of man, as well as being the centre of man's capacity both in the realm of form and inner meaning or spirit.

Moreover, the heart is the first thing to appear as the form of man takes shape from the sperm, the blood clot and the lump of flesh in the womb; similarly, the Ka'bah was the `First House established for the people in the blessed place of Bakka.' The al-Aqsa Mosque which is his spirit which has been `added' to him, as the following words of Allah testify: `And breathed into him of My spirit.' The spirit in the station of al-Aqsa is in the highest station of witnessing and unveiling as the words of 'Ali affirm when he says, `And my heart (lives) by my knowledge of You and my spirit by my witnessing of You;' this is also affirmed in

the words of his grandfather, 'If the veil were lifted, it would not increase my certainty.' This station is connected to the al-Aqsa mosque, which is the *qiblah* of the east for the people of Jesus; the spirit is also the *qiblah* of the heart of man, just as the heart is the *qiblah* of the whole body.

The Ka'bah is related to the concept of the mosque just as the mosque is connected to the Haram, and likewise the body may be seen to represent the Haram and the heart the mosque and the spirit the Ka'bah. His words: 'of which We have blessed the precincts' is an indication of the spirit and that which surrounds it. We should understand from these words that Allah has blessed the area around it with the blessings of gnostic realities, secret wisdom and subtle intelligences.

The reason for the ascent and arrival at the Divine Presence is so that Allah may show him – from His signs within the realm of the individual self, rather than from within the cosmic dimension – a vision of His Essence and of His Qualities in the essence and qualities of Muhammad by way of an actual witnessing of the pre-creational Source-Forms; the reason too, is so that Allah may make him hear, or render him receptive to His words and His secrets and may make him perceive the meaning of His indications and His subtle hidden communications. This is because Muhammad is the caliph in Allah's *mulk*, or world, and in His *malakut*, or spiritual domain. It is he who fulfils Allah's command, both in His cosmic dimension and His realm of the self. The meaning of 'His is the judgment, and to Him you shall be brought back' is that Muhammad holds judgment over these two domains; he alternately works with or withdraws from the inhabitants of these two domains; it is they who turn to Him for their needs and problems, that is, for whatever is of benefit to them, with respect to their religion and their daily life in this world. The following verse seems to indicate the words of such a caliph:

My pen and my table in existence are given life  
By the Divine Pen and the Guarded Tablet.  
My hand is the right hand of Allah in his spiritual domain;  
I carry out what I wish and the principles and  
duties are my pleasure and blessing.

A *hadith* of the Prophet reflects this idea: 'Allah created Adam in His image;' again the import of the words of the gnostic, 'I am the Truth and all those like me' and 'Is there other than me in the two abodes?' is not lost on those who understand this science. This concludes our study of the *mi'raj* with respect to the self and the realm of inner meaning.

## **6) Different Aspects of Prayer**

We shall now return to our study of the various aspects of prayer. We have already explained that the five roots (off-principles) and the five branches (or pillars of Islam) are established by the prophets and

the messengers by the command of Allah, in order that what is deficient may be made up and that each may attain to its own specific (as specified in His divine knowledge). We have also explained how this is facilitated by a perfection of the twin forces of knowledge and action. We have further explained that, had mankind been in need of more than this in order to attain to this perfection, it would have been incumbent upon Allah to communicate this and the prophets and messengers would have had to expound it in more detail.

Mankind has, however, no need of more than this: thus Allah does not command to more than this, nor does He order His prophet to command to mankind to more than this. He is like the astute physician who gives only the amount of medicine needed by the sick person, neither more nor less. We have demonstrated how there may be individual differences of judgment amongst the physicians of the outer, but this is only in accordance with the varying circumstances of time and place; on investigation, we realize that there is a basic consensus and harmony; this notion is reflected in Allah's words, 'And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy.'

The reader should also realize that the greater the prophet or messenger, the more intense is his inculcation of these roots and branches. By common agreement our Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the greatest and noblest of the prophets – and thus of necessity establishment of these principles is of the highest order. It is for this reason that his prayer encompasses the totality of the acts of worship stipulated in the *shari`ah* (and established by all the prophets and messengers); indeed his prayer encompasses all the acts of worship which have been made incumbent upon creation as a whole. This is affirmed in Allah's words, 'And there is no animal that walks upon the earth nor bird that flies with its two wings but (they are) creatures like yourselves; We have not neglected anything in the Book; then to their Lord they shall be gathered.'

At this point a more detailed explanation will be necessary to show that the person who is in a state of prayer is not only in prayer but also fasting, paying *zakat* (the alms tax), performing the *hajj* (pilgrimage) and fighting *jihad*. This aspect of prayer is affirmed in the words of Allah, 'He knows the prayer of each one and its glorification, and Allah is cognizant of what you do.' Each existent being has its own prayer and glorification of Him; thus the person in a state of prayer is in harmony with the totality of existent beings and in accord with their different situations and obligations.

Up to this point we have been considering the prayer as supplication and an act of obedience. If we now consider it as a particular form of worship which embraces the various movements of standing, sitting, bowing, prostrating, together with the words of praise and glorification, and which all take place within a specific time, then it is also true to say that the person praying is in harmony with the totality of creatures and that by his worship he embraces all acts of worship. This is true since all creatures, both spiritual and corporeal, have their own specific forms of praise, glorification, bowing, prostration, standing, and sitting (as we have demonstrated above with an *ayah* from the Qur'an and we as have already explained at the beginning of this work).

If we consider the standing in prayer, then this is in harmony with mankind in general since men's movements are in an upright fashion. If we consider the bowing and the movement towards the horizontal position, then this accords with the pattern of all animals since, as all agree, their movements are in a horizontal plane. As for the prostration and downward movement, then they accord with the pattern of all plants. There are no other kinds of movement, apart from these three, and all the composite existent things both of the plant and animal kingdoms, together with man, are encompassed by them.

One may, if one wishes, express this in another way by saying that the standing is in accordance with those angels whose duty it is to stand constantly, the bowing is in harmony with those angels whose duty it is to bow constantly, and the prostration is in accord with those angels whose duty it is to prostrate constantly. The same may be said for all the specific movements of the prayer. Allah has referred to this in its totality when He says, 'Do you not see that Allah is He to Whom make prostration whoever is in the heavens and the earth and the sun and the moon and the stars and the mountains and the trees, and the animals and many of the people ... .' What is meant by prostration here is none other than the prayer itself here the word refers to the whole rather than the specific part, just as when someone says a given person is prostrating, he means he is in a state of prayer, or when one says such and such a person is given to prostration, meaning he is constantly praying. It is also permissible to understand this word as meaning obedience or submission, since Allah says elsewhere, 'And the herbs and the trees prostrate to Him' meaning adore or do obeisance to His command and will. Moreover there are many instances of the use of this word in different ways both in the Qur'an and the language of the Arabs.

As for the saying of the *takbir al-haram* – the *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great) – at the beginning of the prayer, indicating one has entered the sanctity of the prayer and all else is excluded, then this applies to all in their worship and in particular to pilgrims and those making for the Haram, the House of Allah.

As for the intention, that is the goal which is, established in the heart, then this also applies to all in their worship, since all are aiming for His presence: if this were not so, then Allah would not have said, 'And if you were to ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they would certainly say: Allah...' and nor would He have said, 'And everyone has a direction to which he should turn, therefore hasten to (do) good works ... .'

As for the praise and glorification of Allah, then this is in harmony with all existent things as the words of Allah testify: 'And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification.' This praise accords in particular with the angels since Allah says 'And we celebrated Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' The same applies to all the states of remembrance of Him, all supplications and associated movements and periods of stillness.

As for wishing blessings on the Prophet, then this is in harmony with Allah, with the angels and all the believers, as is stated in His words, `Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet: O you who believe! Call for (divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation.'

As for the number of cycles (*raka`at*) contained in the prayer, be it two, three or four, then this is in accord with the peoples of each of the prophets who came to establish a particular *shari`ah*. Thus it has been narrated that some of the prophets used to pray two cycles of prayer, some three and some four. It is said that Adam would pray two cycles, Noah three and Abraham four. This notion of number also accords with the prayer of the angels, expressed in the following *ayah* as `flying on wings;'

`All praise is due to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Maker of the angels, messengers flying on wings, two, three and four; He increases in creation what He pleases; surely Allah has power over all things.' This perception of the nature of prayer is true since the prayer of every existent thing is in fact that very capacity or receptivity (which we have explained earlier) and which is indicated in Allah's words, `Say: Everyone acts according to his manner' and `He knows the prayer of each one and its glorification and Allah is cognizant of what they do.'

The wings, the mode of prayer of the angels, is the power that they exercise in both the higher and lower worlds. Mawla alA'zam Kamal al-Din `Abd al-Razzaq has referred to this in his interpretation of the Qur'an saying, ` "The Maker of the angels, messengers flying on wings" is an expression for their cosmic influence both in the spiritual or celestial sphere and in the earthly domain by means of these wings. Allah has made them messengers sent to the prophets with revelation, to the saints with inspiration and to others among mankind who have the capacity to direct and order their affairs; that which maintains this influence amongst these people or things is the medium of the wings.

Thus every dimension is subject to the influence of a specific wing: the twin faculties of the intellect, the active and the perceptive, give the rational soul two wings; the understanding (or memory), the stimulant (of this understanding) and that which motivates action give three wings to the animal soul; the means of drawing sustenance, the impulse towards growth, regeneration and a specific shape or form give four wings to the vegetative soul. The number of wings of the angels is not restricted but rather corresponds to the various kinds of influence that they possess. It is for this reason that the Messenger of Allah has related that he saw Gabriel with six hundred wings on the night of the *mir`aj*; it is also reported that "Gabriel bathes morning and evening in the river of life, shaking off the excess water from his wings when emerging; Allah then created countless angels from these drops." Allah refers to these numerous wings when He says at the end of the *ayah*, "He increases in creation what He pleases; surely Allah has power over all things." These words also demonstrate that such a thing is possible and that Allah is capable of it.'

Up to this point we have been discussing how the person praying shares with the totality of creation every time he performs a prayer. The way in which the person praying shares with the Real in all

aspects may be seen from a consideration of the *hadith*, related from the Prophet who in turn relates it from Allah, which says: `I have divided the prayer between Me and My slave; one half of it is for Myself and one half is for My slave, and My slave receives whatever he asks for. When the slave says, "In the name of the Beneficent, the Merciful", Allah says, I (too) praise My slave. When the slave says, "Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds", Allah says, "My slave has praised Me." When the slave says "the Beneficent, the Merciful", Allah says, "My slave has extolled Me." When the slave says "Master of the Day of judgment", Allah says, "I delegate the management of affairs to My slave." When the slave says, "Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help", Allah says: "This is between Me and My slave." When the slave says: "Keep us on the right path... ," then Allah says, "This is for My slave and My slave shall have what he asks for."`

One of the gnostics has expressed the same notion; we shall mention it here in order to expand our vision and to stimulate our investigation of this matter. The mutual desire and harmony which exists between the soul and the body necessitates the ascent of the bodily form to the soul and the descent of the spiritual form to the body. Reflection on the meaning of gnosés and spiritual realities, mention of the Beloved, perception of His attributes of beauty and majesty, and the witnessing of His vastness and radiance cause the body to quiver by the force of its feelings and the trembling of its limbs. Similarly, mention of the enemy, of the stratagems he employs to his evil ends which are abhorred by the soul, stirs one to anger, causes one's face and eyes to flush red, swells one's veins, and causes one's body to heat up and one's movement to become uncoordinated.

But the submission of the limbs, the humility of the body, the protection and purification of the latter from any evil influence, the remembrance, glorification and praise of Allah on the tongue, the harmony of the inner with the outer by means of one's intention, the avoidance of the pleasures of the senses, the remembrance of the states of the angelic realm and the domain of power, the approach of the bodily form to these two realms and to the most intimate of the righteous slaves of Allah, causes the ascent of the heart and the spirit to the Presence of Sanctity, a drawing near to the Real, an imbuing from the world of lights, attainment of gnosés and spiritual realities and sustenance from the angelic realm (*malakut*) and the domain of power (*jabarut*).

Thus prayer is established as a form of worship which encompasses the postures of submission and humility; the discomfort and hardship of the limbs which have been duly distanced and purified from evil, the determination to come closer to Him, the sincerity of one's intention, the acts of remembrance which evoke His blessings, which glorify and extol Him in a manner befitting His Presence, the extreme abasement before His might, and obeisance to His command and judgment are all part of the prayer.

This prayer is repeated each day and night the same number of times as the five senses. These senses are the means whereby the soul of man perceives the various states of the world of darkness; they are a means of exit away from the Real to the world of abasement. By these senses the soul gains entry to the

forms of overspreading darkness existing at the material level and to the base corporeal states, impurities and ever-changing modes; by them the heart is darkened and polluted and it becomes veiled from the world of light. It becomes confused and its aware heart which perceives the generality of things and to lead it away from perception of the parts. This awakening is like the emergence of the dawn of inner meaning by means of the sunlight of the spirit and its return to the eastern horizon.

The time of the morning prayer is the point of the joining between the night and the day: it consists of two cycles of prayer related to the spirit and the body – just as man before puberty was one entity, one natural body becomes two with the appearance of the intellect.

The principle and the form of this prayer have a specific order: the standing in the first cycle symbolizes the natural state of man and the form of the rational soul, standing upright amongst the other existent beings; this is affirmed in Allah's words, 'Certainly We created man in the best image. Then We render him the lowest of the low'.

The bowing symbolizes the station of the animal soul, since an animal is in a state of bowing. And the coming to the upright position again symbolizes its becoming another type or kind of being by means of the light of rationality. This other type possesses particularities of uprightness and aspects of perfection by which it achieves harmony and takes on praiseworthy characteristics; in this way the qualities of superiority and excellence particular to man are acquired. The prostration symbolizes the vegetative soul; this is so since the plants are in a state of prostration. The meaning of the raising of the head after prostration becomes clear in the light of the above-mentioned description of the standing straight and the bowing. The second prostration indicates that this particular soul, despite becoming a more noble species in man, and despite being superior to the rest of the plant species by its raising itself from the earth, contributing to the production of the four humors, does not attain to a higher degree than this; rather it remains in its own state, lacking perception and will, and concerned only with those activities which are natural to it as a plant.

The standing in the second cycle symbolizes the world of the intellect and its entry to the way of the *jabarut* (the domain of power) by the perfection of divestment from otherness obtained by a reasoning process. As for the bowing of this soul, it represents its entry to the path of the *malakut* (the angelic realm); this is obtained by a withdrawal from sexual desire, anger and any influence from the lower aspects of the soul. The raising up of this soul to the position of standing straight indicates an increase in its rank, by way of its readiness to receive saintliness (*wilayah*) and the perfection of gnosis. As for the prostration of this soul, it symbolizes the nobility of the vegetative souls together with their bodily forms, which is referred to by Allah when He says, 'And the herbs and the trees do adore (Him).'

The sitting up after the prostration is as we have described above. The returning to the position of prostration symbolizes abiding in the state wherein it exercises influence over the corporeal world; it also symbolizes the movement of this soul, in its nobility, towards this particular world. The saying of the

*shahadah* (witnessing that Allah is One and that Muhammad is His Messenger) symbolizes the soul's arrival by way of this true worship to the state of witnessing, that is perception and awareness of what is contained in the two worlds. It also symbolizes final arrival at a position of intimacy and establishment in that which is arrived at; it is the state of fulfilling his desire by remaining obedient to the Prophet; it is the station associated with the words, 'May the peace and mercy and blessings be on you, O Prophet; and may peace be on us and on the righteous slaves of Allah.' The peace referred to here is an overflowing of Allah which emanates and sustains from the world of sanctity; it reaches these souls when they divest themselves of imperfection and sickness and array themselves in the perfections of divine character and attribute. By way of these emanations, these souls become manifestations of one of His Names in accordance with the capacity of each.

It is at this point that the words of the gnostic come to an end, may Allah sanctify and purify his spirit and the light of his grave. They demonstrate his attainment of total perfection and his station of unveiling such that he was able to discover the secrets of prayer. He has thus transmitted these realities of unveiling and subtleties of 'tasted' physical experience to the generations living after him. It was thus by means of him and others like him from among the perfected ones and the spiritual poles that these secrets became manifest and the veil surrounding them was lifted.

Up to this point we have been considering the wisdom behind the various conditions and stages of the prayer. We shall now consider prayer in relation to fasting and, in particular, the position of the person praying who in effect enters into the same state as the person who is fasting. We shall consider too the rest of the above-mentioned acts of worship. We shall do this by including them in a general explanation of why prayer takes priority and is preferred over all the other acts of worship; we shall also include them in our explanation of why the acts of worship, which are the branches of Islam, are five in number. This necessitates the establishment of another method of classification which contains and defines in a specific way all these points.

## **7) A Method of Classification**

**7) A Method of Classification: the five branches or pillars of Islam, the reason for the priority given to prayer, how the person praying encompasses the totality of worship, the reason why one act of worship takes preference over another**

It should be realized that there are differences of opinion with regard to the divisions of this subject. This is because some have added the question of purification to that of the prayer, the subject of *i'tikaf* (withdrawal into the mosque, in particular during the last ten days of Ramadan) to that of fasting, the subject of *khums* (a fifth part of wealth payed in tax) to that of *zakat*, the *'umrah* (or minor *hajj* to Makkah) to the *hajj* (the major pilgrimage) and the subject of *ribat* (withdrawal of the group for the

purpose of remembrance of Allah and physical training in preparation for *jihad* ) and 'the forbidding of evil and the enjoining of good' to that of *jihad*. These systems of classification are not accepted by all; however, we shall begin by dealing with the most famous and obvious of these, indeed with those points agreed upon by the majority namely the prayer, the fasting, *zakat*, *hajj* and *jihad*. The truth of the matter is that the branches of Islam are contained within these five classifications and it is not fitting that they be divided into any more or less.

Proof that they are contained within this number can be seen in the fact that the religious obligations prescribed by law are either related to the soul and wealth, like, for example, prayer and fasting, or they are related purely to wealth, like, for example, *zakat*, or they are related to the soul and wealth combined, like, for example, the *hajj* and *jihad* (making five in all). Since the Muslim has no need of more than this in order to attain to his perfection and since it is not possible to achieve this perfection with any less, then it must be that this number is correct – in this way we may establish the proof of our argument.

At this point it would be desirable to introduce a fitting metaphor: Allah is the Perfect Physician and the prophets and the messengers, as we have already explained, are like doctors of the soul and healers of the heart. The precepts and laws which they prescribe by means of the *shari`ah* are comparable to the potions and medicines given to sick persons and indeed anything which is conducive to their health. If they had known of any cure for their sickness more effective than this, they would have commanded the people to use it and would have shown them what course of 'treatment' they should follow. This is so since it is incumbent upon them and indeed upon Allah Himself – by virtue of His kindness and grace. As we have explained on numerous occasions, it is inconceivable that the prophets of Allah should fail to be kind or should fail to bestow their grace on the people. Thus one realizes that the 'cure', expressed here in the form of the five branches, is sufficient to dispel the sickness of ignorance, disbelief, doubt and hypocrisy, and 'this is the ordinance of the Mighty, the Wise.'

Just as it is not permitted to increase this number, so it is not permitted to reduce it. So, for example, if the medical doctor prescribes a potion or medicine to remove a physical illness, the sick person is not permitted to increase, or reduce the potion or medicine in any way; if he were to do this, it would either aggravate the disease or would result in the death of the person concerned. Similarly, in the case of the spiritual doctor, that is the prophet, if he prescribes something in the form of a duty of the *shari`ah* or a divine law in order to get rid of some ignorance, disease of disbelief or hypocrisy, it is not permitted for the spiritually sick person to add anything to, or subtract anything from, what has been prescribed. If he or she were to do this, then it would only result in making the spiritual disease worse or would result in eternal torment and death.

Thus it is useless to increase or reduce the roots and branches; any addition to them will only worsen the person's disease or will even result in this death; any reduction in them has similar results. The same

also applies in the case when just one of these is added to them or subtracted from them; thus whoever prays five cycles for the midday prayer (instead of four) will receive no benefit as a consequence, this is because to do this would be to overstep the bounds stipulated by the *shari`ah*. The same rule may be applied to the rest of the roots and branches. This matter must be fully understood for it is of great importance; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise: `As for these examples We set them forth for men, and none understand them but the learned.'

We shall now discuss the reason why each of these branches has an order of priority and preference with respect to the rest; thus prayer has priority over fasting and the fasting over *zakat* and so on. This is so since the prayer, (unlike the other branches), encompasses all the other four acts of worship. Thus the person who is praying is also in a state of fasting, *zakat*, *hajj* and *jihad*. He is in a state of prayer as long as he is facing the *qiblah* (the direction of the Ka'bah) and engaged in the movements of bowing, prostration, standing and sitting. He is also in a state of fasting as long as he is praying since the latter state requires of necessity that he abstain from food, drink and anything which would result in a fast being broken.

As for the *zakat*, it is the giving of one's wealth or of anything one possesses, including one's physical strength and capacity: this is in accordance with the meaning of the Prophet's words, `All of you are guardians and all of you are responsible for what you are guarding' and `For everything there is a *zakat* and the *zakat* of the body is obedience.' Thus as long as the person is bowing, or prostrating, standing or sitting, reading the Qur'an or praising Allah, expressing the intention by a conscious determination of the heart to perform the prayer and make the various accompanying movements of the body and the limbs, then he is truly giving out *zakat*.

As for the *hajj* of this person praying: as long as he is facing the *qiblah*, in the direction of the Ka `bah, protected from any other action that might invalidate his prayer, as long as he has as his object the pleasure and obedience of Allah, as long as he is going round his own heart (like the circumambulation of the Ka'bah), making sure that nothing other than Allah enters it (in accordance with the Prophet's words, `Prayer is not acceptable but by the presence of the heart'), then he is like the person performing the *hajj*. There is no disagreement about this, since the exterior *hajj* is the journey to the House of Allah, the Haram, in order to carry out the rites in the realm of form, while the person who is praying is also journeying to the House of Allah, namely the heart and its precincts, in order to fulfill the rites in the realm of inner meaning. Because of this he is counted as one of the true pilgrims rather than one of those confined to the superficial realm of appearances.

As for the *jihad* of the person praying, it is by virtue of the fact that *jihad* refers to the struggle against the enemies of Islam in order to make them submit to Islam and obey the commands and prohibitions of Allah. The person praying is also engaged in the struggle with his self, with the soul that commands to evil, and it is the self which is considered the real enemy and the true source of disbelief with regard to

the true way of Islam in the realm of inner meaning.

This is reflected in the words of the Prophet: 'Your worst enemy is your *nafs* (self) between the two sides of your body' since it is the self which obeys the person whose body it inhabits and which accepts his commands and prohibitions. This notion is also reflected in the words of the Prophet: 'We have returned from the minor *jihad* to the major *jihad*.' When he was asked the meaning of these words, he replied, 'The major *jihad* is the *jihad* against the self.' Thus anyone who is engaged in fighting his self or ego is undoubtedly one of those of whom it is true to say that they are in *jihad*. There are numerous other commentaries upon the meaning of *jihad*; what we have presented to the reader is a concise summary of these meanings. The reader is urged to pay great attention to this matter so that he may understand this secret – a secret which is under the protection of Allah.

The reason for the preference of fasting over the paying of *zakat* is that the former is above all connected to the soul and *zakat* is connected above all to wealth, and the soul is nobler than wealth. It is for this reason that Allah says, 'Fasting is for Me and I am its reward' since it is an action in which doubt, ambiguity, vanity and conceit have no part. Indeed, it issues from the purest sincerity; if this is not the case, then the person fasting is not really fasting. Thus we realize that it is from his fear of Allah and his desire for His pleasure that he is undertaking this action. It is obligatory to give preference to this action because it is based on the soul, rather than on wealth.

*Zakat* is given preference over the *hajj* because it is dependent only on the giving of wealth and because it is repeated every year, indeed every hour, and because of the continual process of the business of buying and selling. The *hajj*, on the other hand, is only obligatory once in a lifetime, and only then on condition that one is able. It is thus obligatory to give preference to something which is obligatory every year, even every hour, over something which is obligatory only once in a lifetime.

*Hajj* is given preference over the *jihad* since the former necessitates great expense and is obligatory on all who are able: it is possible that the *jihad* may not be obligatory on every person and may not involve great expense. *Jihad* is bound by many conditions; when these conditions are not fulfilled, then the *jihad* is not realizable and nor, in this case, is it obligatory. If, however, what we mean by *jihad* is the true *jihad* (mentioned above), then this *jihad* is given priority over everything, even the prayer – since anyone who does not struggle against his self (or the whims of the ego) will not even be able to get up in order to perform the *wudhu*' and the prayer. It is simply a matter of awareness: any person who uses his intellect will see the truth of this. Many studies have been made on this subject, for it contains illuminating secrets of wisdom, hidden to all but the people of this science. Most of these secrets will be explained individually later in this work.

Up to this point we have been examining the matter from the point of view of the people of Allah and spiritual realization. There is, however, another viewpoint which we must also take into consideration,

namely that of the people of the outer and of imitation. According to the latter, the reason why priority is given to the prayer over the fast is that prayer is obligatory on all persons (in the Muslim community) and in all circumstances, whereas fasting is not like this, being rather a special kind of worship occurring at a particular time.

Moreover, the prayer is obligatory on every Muslim of sane mind who is capable of performing it; furthermore, it is obligatory in health and in sickness, on the person who is bed-ridden, or who is obliged to lie down, or the one who can only do the prayer in a sitting position; it is also obligatory in war, on land and at sea, remaining obligatory whatever the place or events. The fast, however, is excused those advanced of years, those who suffer from excessive thirst, pregnant women who fear their milk will be decreased as a result of the fast and women at the time of menstruation. Another reason for this preference is that the prayer is repeated five times (very day, whereas the fast is only performed once a year).

The reason why the fast is given preference over *zakat is* because the *zakat is* obligatory on wealth; moreover, not everyone possesses sufficient wealth for it to become obligatory on him. Everyone, however, possesses a soul on which the fast is obligatory and it is for this reason, because of its application to all people, that it is given priority.

The reason why the *zakat is* given priority over the *hajj is* that the *zakat* must be paid on several occasions throughout the year by those who are not obliged to calculate the payment on a yearly basis and once a year by those who are. The *hajj*, however, is only obligatory once in a lifetime, on condition that one is able, and for this reason that *zakat* is given preference.

The reason why the *hajj is* given priority over *jihad is* that the *hajj is* obligatory on every person, whereas the *jihad is* obligatory on the Muslim community as a whole (although, it is fulfilled for the whole by the action of just some of its members). There is clearly a great difference between the two. Moreover, *jihad* is only obligatory when the infallible Imam is present, or when he gives the order to fight. Understanding of the meaning of this condition is usually lacking and this is particularly evident in our times. Thus the *hajj is* given preference by its more general applicability.

There are many other secrets with regard to this particular subject since it is possible to interpret the matter from other angles. We shall however conclude here our explanation of the branches of Islam and the reason why one is given preference over the other. Allah seems to refer to these five roots and five branches when He says, 'These make ten complete.' It is by means of these ten that eternal happiness in the Garden is obtained. We ask Allah to bestow upon us arrival there by means of Muhammad, peace be with him, and his chosen family.

We have now come to the end of our study of the roots and the branches together with introductory

explanations of these two matters; it has included a study of the wisdom contained in the nature and circumstances of the prayer and *mi`raj* (both in the realm of appearance and reality) together with the reason why one branch may be given priority over another; finally this study has considered other matters of a subtle and hidden nature. We shall therefore now begin an investigation of the prayer with regard to the three groups, namely the people of the *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* and then go on to the rest of the branches in the same manner.

## 8) Prayer

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

According to the people of this group, the prayer is composed of three sub-divisions, namely actions or movements, the method of their performance and those things from which one should abstain. Each of these sub-divisions may be further divided into two aspects, namely the obligatory (*fard*) and the strongly recommended (*sunnah*). The total number of combinations of the above amounts to five thousand three hundred and sixty-three; we are not in a position to enumerate them all here. We shall, however, describe these divisions and aspects in relation to what is demanded of the Muslim in just one of the cycles of the prayer and with respect to just the movements and their manner of performance. The rest may be deduced upon a moment's reflection.

The obligatory movements in the first cycle of the prayer are thirteen in number: the standing, when able (or another position which takes its place when one is unable), the intention, the saying of the *takbirat al-ihram* (*Allahu Akbar*) which signals the beginning of the state of the prayer, the reciting of the Qur'an, the bowing, the first prostration and the *tasbih* during it proclaiming the glory of God (the saying of the *subhan Allah...*), the raising up of one's head, the second prostration and the remembrance of Allah during it, and finally the raising of the head again. The manner and aspects of the performance are eighteen in number: the making of the intention immediately before the *takbirat alihram* and the keeping in mind of this intention until the end of the prayer, the correct pronunciation of the words *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great), the reading of the *al-Hamd surah* (the *Fatiha* or opening) together with another *surah* (if one is able to recite one) of one's choosing, the reading aloud when the recitation should be done aloud and the reading silently when it should be done silently, the remaining at ease for a moment during the bowing and the like when standing up straight again, the prostrating in such a way that one is touching the ground with seven points of the body – the forehead, both hands, both knees and the toes of both feet – the remaining at ease for a moment in the first prostration and the straightening up after it, the like for the second prostration. In this way the total number of movements and aspects amount to thirty-one.

The second cycle of the prayer is the same except for the making of the intention and the *takbirat al-ihram*, together with the manner and aspect of the performance of these two, which are four in number – leaving twenty eight for this cycle. This number together with the number for the first cycle makes a total of fifty-eight different movements and aspects of performance. To this number, six things are added, namely the sitting for the saying of the *tashahhud* (the witnessing that Allah is One) and the being at ease in this, the two (the bearing of witness that Allah is One and that Muhammad is His messenger) together with the sending of blessings on the Prophet and his family.

Thus, with the above-mentioned the total becomes sixty-four movements or actions. If the prayer is that of the morning, then the saying of the *taslim* or salutation is added to this; if it is the midday, the afternoon or the evening prayer, then the like is also added. The reading of another *surah* apart from the *al-hamd* is also omitted, thus leaving sixty actions and aspects of performance. The total thus becomes one hundred and twenty-four actions and aspects of performance. This is the nature of the prayer according to the people of the *shari`ah*, with respect to the way of the Shiahs and with regard to the exoteric. The inward dimension is connected to the people of *tariqah* and will now be considered.

## ii) According to the people of tariqah

According to this group, the prayer is proximity or a drawing near to the Real. It has been reported that the Prophet has said, 'Prayer is the sacrifice whereby every believer comes closer to Allah.' What is meant here is the proximity of spiritual station rather than the proximity of physical place. It has also been narrated that 'the prayer is service and drawing closer and joining; the service is the *shari`ah* and the drawing closer is the *tariqah* and the joining is the *haqiqah*.' It has also been said that 'The *shari`ah* is that you worship Him, the *tariqah* that you come into His presence and the *haqiqah* that you witness Him.'

The coming close to the Real requires real prostration, which is the station of prayer known as annihilation – either by way of the annihilation of the attributes in those of the Real; this being particular to the people of *tariqah*, or by way of the annihilation of the essence in that of the Real, this being particular to the people of *haqiqah*. Allah refers to this when He says, 'And make obeisance and draw near (to Allah)', that is, 'Annihilate your essence and your existence in the Essence and Existence of the Real and abide with Him for ever and ever; and this is the station of the people of *haqiqah* (which we shall describe immediately after this section). We shall now consider what one of the gnostics has said with respect to the 'form' of the prayer before returning to the question in hand.

Know that the prayer has been given a specific form by the Lord of Lords, just as He has given a specific form to the animals. The soul or spirit of the prayer is the intention, sincerity, and awareness of the heart; the various actions or movements represent the body of the prayer; the original or basic 'limbs of the

prayer' are the pillars or principles and the 'limbs of perfection' are the parts or divisions. Sincerity and intention are analogous to the spirit; standing and the sitting are analogous to the body; the bowing and the prostration are analogous to the head, the hand and the legs; the bowing and prostration are perfected by the stillness of the heart and limbs; the words of remembrance and glorification prescribed in the prayer are analogous to the organs of perception.

Know that your drawing nearer to Allah in the prayer is comparable to the approach of some attendants of the sultan to offer him a young servant lad. Thus the lack of intention or sincerity in prayer is like offering a servant who lacks the breath of life: the gift of a dead person would be an insult to the sultan and would merit the death penalty. Omission of the bowing and the prostration is analogous to the lack of limbs; omission of the pillars or principles is analogous to the loss of both the servant's eyes and truncation of his nose and ears; lack of awareness of the heart and the paying of no heed to the meanings of the Qur'anic recitation is like the loss of the faculties of sight and hearing, although the eye socket and ears remain.

The reader is hardly unaware of what' would happen to the person who gives a lad of such a description to the sultan. Know then that prayer which is deficient is not acceptable as a means of drawing closer to Allah and of obtaining the noblest of spiritual ranks; indeed the one who offers such a prayer would almost certainly be refused or hindered in his goal. Moreover, the basis of the prayer is veneration and respect of the Real Sultan; neglect of the courtesies of prayer contradicts the nature of veneration and respect. How can a person's prayers be accepted and how may that person draw closer and attain a spiritual rank of distinction if these things are neglected?

Thus it is incumbent upon every person to perform the prayer as we have indicated above, that is in such a way as to preserve the spirit of the prayer. In other words, sincerity and awareness of the heart should be maintained throughout the prayer and the heart itself should take on the very qualities mentioned in the Qur'anic recitation. Thus no prostration or bow is made without the heart of the person praying being humble and submissive, in harmony with his outer reality. What is desired is submission of the heart rather than of that which contains the heart. The person praying should not say *Allahu Akbar* while there still remains something greater than Allah in his heart; he should not say 'I have directed my face... unless his heart is fully facing Allah and turned away from that which is other-than-Him; he should not say 'Praise belongs to Allah' unless his heart is overflowing with gratitude for His blessings on him and full of happiness on account of these blessings; he should not say 'Thee alone I worship and Thee alone do I ask for help' unless he feels his own weakness and incapacity and that neither he himself nor anyone else is of consequence. This is referred to by Allah when He says to His Prophet: 'You have no concern in the affair.' One should thus be in a similar state for all the words of remembrance and the movement of the prayer; 'Allah does as He wills; He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned.'

If the above has been fully understood, then the reader should also realize that what is meant by the

prayer of the people of this group is that they first direct their hearts to the real *qiblah* and the Ka'bah of inner meaning; these latter are in fact expressions for the real or true heart, which is also called the House of Allah or the Haram. Allah refers to this in His words, 'Neither the earth nor the heavens can contain Me but the heart of the believing slave;' likewise the Prophet said: 'The heart of the believer is the House of Allah.' Perfect spiritual awareness is mentioned in the words of the Prophet, 'Prayer is only acceptable when the heart is aware;' Allah also refers to this when He says, 'Now surely, sincere obedience is due to Allah (alone)' and further with His words, 'Say: surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds.'

The person praying then says the *takbirat al-ihram*, thereby forbidding his self from doing anything which 'Might conflict with the command of Allah or go beyond the bounds of His pleasure, be it in speech or in action. He then begins the reading of the Qur'an, namely 'All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;' with these words he gives thanks for His blessings and favours by making fitting praise of Him; he is also thereby affirming his duties of worship – in all their different forms – and affirming Oneness in the station of gatheredness, neither straying to the way of excess nor to the way of negligence. The words 'Thee alone do we worship' express the unity of action and 'Thee alone do we ask for help' express the unity of attribute. It is for this reason that following these two statements are the words, 'Guide us to the straight path, the path of those You have blessed': blessings are here associated with the prophets and saints, indeed with all who follow the way of Islam – and this is perfection of real unity in Allah (*tawhid*). This straight path of those blessed by Allah, namely the prophets and the messengers, is emphasized by contrasting it with the way of those with whom Allah is angry and those who have gone astray. It has been said that these words refer to the Jews and Christians; this is correct in the first instance, but they also apply to all those who are astray from the straight path, which is the middle way, neither tending to excess, on the one hand, nor negligence on the other. It is the middle way because it is based on the principles of wisdom, chastity, courage and justice. If these words did not mean 'Keep us firmly established... on, the straight path we are now on', then they would be devoid of meaning and even flippant, since all are in agreement that the prophets and the saints are on the straight path, as are all the believers and Muslims who follow them. This is affirmed in the words of Allah, 'And We chose them and guided them into the right way.' If these words referred to a request for guidance towards the straight path, it would necessarily imply that they were already astray and this would inevitably lead to a fallacious interpretation. This, however, is not permissible with respect to the prophets and messengers and so we are left with the above-mentioned explanation.

The person performing the prayer then makes the bow, thereby indicating his submission to Allah; in doing so, he also returns to his self with humility, submission and need. This is because the bowing is a return backwards to his original state of non-being and its essential contingency: the horizontal movement is associated with the animals just as the standing position is associated with man. It can mean nothing other than a return backwards to his original creational form.

Thereafter follows a more pronounced movement downwards, namely that of prostration, since this latter is associated in particular with the plant kingdom, the plants of their nature always inclining downwards. This downward inclination is an indication of the return to origins. Thus the person praying descends from uprightness and the movement associated with man to the station and movement of the animals and finally to the station and downward inclination of the plants. This is so since in the world of form, man has ascended from the plant to the animal and finally to the station of man.

This is referred to in Allah's words, 'Certainly We created man in the best image. Then We render him the lowest of the low.' The 'best image' according to the consensus of opinion is the true form of man and the 'lowest of the low' is the return to the level of the animals and then to that of the plants. This return is also referred to in His words, 'Turn back and seek light.' The light mentioned here is situated 'backwards', because perfection is only attained after a return to its source, both in the realm of form and inner meaning. The following words of Allah bear witness to this, 'O soul that art at rest! Return to you Lord, well pleased (with Him), well pleasing (Him).' Man reaches this station by witnessing of the self-dependency and humility, through annihilation in the outer and inner.

Thus when the person witnesses the grandeur of the Creator and the baseness of his self in comparison, he sets about magnifying the glory of Allah to the utmost degree – both by his spiritual state and in his outward speech saying 'Glory be to my noble Lord and all praise is His.' The fruit of this glorification, after witnessing his humility and submission and his original state of non-existence, is firmness and uprightness. He witnesses his state with the Real and the state of the Real with him through an exchange of his qualities with those of the Real and by a refinement of his behaviour by His influence. This station continues until the person says 'Allah hears the one who praises Him' which signals his witnessing of the Real together with all created beings; thus Allah hears the speech of all things without let or hindrance – especially speech addressed to Him. He Himself hears the words of this person praying in the same way as the person praying hears Him, as in the saying of the Imam: 'I would repeat the *ayah* until I could hear the One who had said it;' the words of the Prophet, 'Whoever knows Himself knows his Lord' clearly bear witness to this mutual contact.

There are other secrets concerning this direct relationship between man and Allah, although it would not be fitting to mention them here. Suffice it to say that Allah has described this matter in His Generous Book: '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' and it is expressed in a *qudsi hadith*: 'I was his hearing and his sight and his tongue and his hand and his foot ...' This notion is in no way far-fetched in the light of the words of Allah, 'And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.' When we consider that this mutual communication was permitted the bush of form – in His words, 'And when he came to it, a voice was uttered from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot of the bush, saying: O Moses! Surely I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds' – we realize that this bush and blessed spot are none other than man and his essential form. This meaning is also contained in the words of the

Prophet, 'Whoever sees me has seen the Truth;' this is because witnessing the Truth in a fitting manner is not possible except in the form of man. Shaykh Shibli with his words, 'I say and I hear and is there anyone in the two worlds besides me?' thereby affirms that he too was in this station. The words of the gnostic Ibn al-Farid also bear witness to this:

If my state were as low as the point of the (Arabic letter) 'ba'  
I would have risen to a point never reached by you despite your skill.

These words indicate annihilation and return to the original state of non-existence and then arrival and abiding in the world of sanctity, also known as the Divine Presence, which is described in His words, 'Surely those who guard (against evil) will be in gardens and rivers, in the seat of honour with a most Powerful King.'

The person praying then prostrates, that is, he returns again to his origin in a backward descent until he reaches the rank of the plant world. The prostration involves the covering of the noblest and most exalted part of man, namely his face, with the basest of things in existence, namely the earth; this covering in dust indicates the breaking of the prostrating self and its humility. The submission and humility of the second spiritual level is annihilation of the annihilation after the annihilation: the first annihilation was of the attributes and human characteristics, but this annihilation is of existence and the essence. just as the drawing close in the realm of Truth is dependent upon the annihilation of attribute, so arrival in the realm of Truth is dependent upon the annihilation of the essence – which is particular to the people of *haqiqah* as we have already indicated. As long as the spiritual traveler remains in the station of multiplicity, witnessing the outward manifestations of the Attributes, then he is distant from Allah; he is worshipping Allah in a restricted sense, rather than worshipping Him, the Absolute.

When, however, he arrives at the Unity of the Essence, he frees himself of this and says with the tongue of the spiritual station, 'Glory be to my Lord, the Sublime and all praise is due to Him.' The word 'sublime' here indicates his worship of a Lord; higher than the Lord worshipped in a restricted sense. It is evident that this notion of restricted Lords is dependent upon the Absolute Lord. It is for this reason that Allah says to His Prophet, 'And that to your Lord is the goal.' Thus, in reality, his Lord is none other than the Absolute Lord, the goal of all other lords and the goal of all things. This is so because the Absolute Lord is the manifestation of the name Allah, which itself is the Greatest Name; it follows, therefore, that the manifestation of what is the greatest must be the greatest. This point must be carefully considered and understood: if this were not the case, then it would not be true to say that He was 'the Lord of the lords' nor the 'Best of Creators.' Other studies of this matter have been made and may be investigated with respect to the Names and their manifestations.

The person praying then says the *taslim* or salutation, thereby surrendering the whole affair to Allah and moving on from an advance of his self to an advance in Him; this is the station of abiding which is

obtained by contentment and submission and by joining the unity of action with that of attribute. The Real Himself indicates this with His words, `But no! By your Lord! They do not believe in (reality) until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them and they do not find any straightness in their hearts as to what you have decided and they do not submit with entire submission.' The following verse also bears witness to the truth of this matter:

I have handed over all my affairs to the Beloved.

So if He wishes, He may give me life,  
and if He wishes, He may destroy me.

Consider also the words of Allah: `And it behooves not a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in the matter when Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter and His words: `You have no concern in the affair.' Further proof of the validity of this notion is found in the words: `And all We relate to you of the accounts of the apostles is to strengthen your heart therewith; and in this has come to you the truth and an admonition and reminder to the believers;' and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise; He it is Who says the truth and guides to the straight path.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

The prayer of the people of this group refers to the station of arrival and witnessing in the realm of truth. This station is higher than that of drawing near mentioned above. We have already shown this to be the case in the classification of the people of this science which states that `the prayer is service, intimacy (or drawing close) and arrival.' We have shown too that service is analogous to the *shari`ah*, intimacy to *tariqah* and arrival to *haqiqah*.

There is also a still clearer definition of these three divisions, according to the language of the people of this science: they divide worship in three ways and attribute to each group a particular way, namely `Worship is utmost humility for the common people, it is servitude for the elite who have made good their relationship with Allah by the sincerity of their journey along His path towards Him, and it is bondage for the elite of the elite who have witnessed themselves as existing only by Him in their worship.' The latter worship Him in the station of the `Oneness of separation after the gathering' and are the people of *haqiqah* in the station of bondage rather than servitude – a term reserved for the people of *tariqah* who are among the elite and the people of the middle way.

There is obviously a great difference between the people of servitude and the people of bondage and between the elite and the elite of the elite. Briefly, the prayer of the people of this group refers to their contemplation of the Beloved with the eye of the Beloved Himself and no other. This is affirmed in the words of the Prophet, `I saw my Lord with the eye of my Lord and I knew my Lord by my Lord.' When the

Prophet was asked about the meaning of *ihsan* (beneficence), he replied, '*Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him, for even if you do not see him, He sees You.*'

One of the gnostics has spoken about the real meaning of the prayer and the attainment of the station of witnessing thereby; since it is relevant to this station, we shall mention it before going on to other matters: 'The words of the Prophet: "I have been given coolness of the eye in prayer" refer to divine contemplation. This is because the prayer is a spiritual dialogue between Allah and His slave, as His words "Therefore remember Me and I will remember you" affirm. Moreover, the prayer is an act of worship which is divided between Allah and His slave; this is referred to in the authentic *qudsi hadith* mentioned earlier, namely "I have divided the prayer between Me and My slave, one half being for Myself and one half for My slave and the slave is given what he asks for. When the slave says, 'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful,' Allah says, 'My slave is making remembrance of Me.' When the slave says, 'All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds,' then Allah says, 'My slave is making praise of Me.' When the slave says, 'The Beneficent, the Merciful,' Allah says, 'My slave is extolling Me.' When the slave says, 'Master of the Day of Judgment,' Allah says; 'My slave is glorifying Me.' When the slave says, 'Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we ask for help,' Allah says, 'This is between Me and My slave and My slave shall be given what he asks for.'" Thus there exists in this ayah an interrelationship which is not present in those preceding it which are purely directed to Allah. When the slave says; 'Keep us on the straight path. The path of those upon whom Thou has bestowed favours. Not (the path) of those upon whom Thy wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray,' then Allah says: 'These are for My slave and my slave shall be given what he asks for.' Thus these *ayat* are reserved for the slave just as the first are reserved for Allah. It is because of this that the reading of *al-Hamd* is understood to be obligatory; whoever does not recite it, has not performed the prayer which is shared between Allah and His slave. Since the prayer is a dialogue it is also a remembrance; whoever makes remembrance of the Real keeps company with the Real and the Real keeps company with him. There is an authentic *qudsi hadith* in which Allah says: "I am sitting with the one who remembers Me." Thus whoever sits with the One he is invoking and is keen of sight will see the One with whom he is sitting; this seeing is witnessing and vision. If, however, the person is not of keen sight, then he will not see Him. It is in this way that the rank of the person praying is known – on the basis of whether or not he sees the Real during the prayer.'

The gnostic goes on to say: 'In the words, "I have been given coolness of the eye in prayer" we learn that the Prophet is being given this coolness and does not give it to himself; indeed this emanation of the Real within the person praying is dependent upon Allah and not upon the person praying. Allah does not specifically mention that this quality of coolness emanates from him since the Prophet is commanded to perform the prayer irrespective of whether he receives this emanation from Allah.'

Thus just as this emanation is a gift from Him, so too the witnessing is obtained in the same way. His words "I have been given coolness of the eye in prayer" refer to nothing else but the contemplation of the

Beloved by the eye of the lover who draws near in the stillness of prayer. On seeing the Beloved, the eye too becomes stilled and it ceases to look at anything other than Him in all things. It is for this reason that the person praying is forbidden to turn away (from the *qiblah*) during the prayer: it is during this turning away that Satan (Shaytan) is able to furtively steal away the heart of the slave who is praying and thus prevent him from witnessing his Beloved. Indeed if the lover were heedful in the prayer, he would never turn his face from the *qiblah*.

‘Every man knows his own state: he knows whether or not he is of this spiritual rank and station. Man is surely aware of his own self "even though he presents excuses (to the contrary)." Thus the person praying is aware when he is being sincere or not within himself – indeed no existent being is unaware of its own state – and the state of the person praying is that of spiritual tasting.’

The gnostic then goes on to say: ‘Know that the seeing, hearing and witnessing of the Real on the part of the slave in prayer can occur by virtue of the strength of his faith and certainty. His certainty may be so clear that it resembles the faculty of sight and hearing. It can also occur by the sight of the heart that is by the light of insight or discernment and understanding, or by the light emanating from the Divine Attributes within the heart such that knowledge becomes actual and experienced. It can also occur by vision of physical perception whereby the Real appears to him by emanation and is witnessed with his own eyes; when this happens the Real also shares the prayer between Himself and His slave. We have knowledge of these various states by way of the narrations telling of the divine emanations on the Day of Resurrection and how they vary in accordance with the belief of each believer.’

The gnostic then says: ‘Examine the exaltedness of prayer and where it may lead the person praying; anyone who does not attain to the rank of vision in prayer has not reached its final goal and has not felt the coolness of the eye.’ This is because he does not see the One with Whom he is having the spiritual dialogue. Whoever does not hear what the Real is communicating to him during the prayer is not of those "who lend an ear." Thus whoever is not present with his Lord during the prayer – inasmuch as he neither hears nor sees Him – cannot in any circumstances be considered to be in a state of prayer, nor is he of those "who lend an ear while he is witnessing." The Real Himself has indicated this kind of witnessing with 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." The Prophet has also referred to it with his words, "You will see your Lord as (clearly as) you see the full moon at night." The Commander of the Faithful (‘Ali) likewise indicates this station of witnessing when he says; "Should I then worship something I cannot see?" and with his words, "The Truth is clearer and more manifest than that which is seen by the eye," then with his words, "And he shall be of a certainty as (clear as) the light of the sun" and with his words, "Even if the veil were lifted, it would not increase my certainty." ’

Thus it is true to say of them that in such evident states of witnessing and in a state of true prayer, they

are witnesses during their prayer. This is because on investigation we realize that continuous prayer is nothing but the witnessing of the Real in the above-mentioned manner, namely the prayer particular to the greatest of the slaves and the elite of the saints (*awliya*). We ask Allah by His generosity to make us one of them for it is He who has gathered all these states in the perfect slave, the slave of Oneness. Therefore we ask Allah to bestow upon us arrival at the rank of these slaves and pray that He join us with those of His slaves upon whom he has bestowed other, even greater perfections.

Having established that what is meant by the prayer of the people of *haqiqah* is a witnessing of the Beloved, we shall now begin a study of the order of their prayer and the nature of its principles, in the light of their special rank.

Know that their prayer – given that they establish the prayer of *shari`ah and tariqah* – refers to the gnostic carrying out that which he has been commanded to do, namely to persevere upon the path of uprightness in the realm of divine unity (*tawhid*). This is referred to in Allah's words, 'So persevere (upon the straight path) as you have been commanded.'

This perseverance and uprightness in the station of perfection and the journeying by Allah after completion of the journey to Allah and the journey in Allah – that is the oneness of separation after the gathering – is a sign that he has moved on from the presence of action and attribute (called the Presence of Oneness and the Presence of Lordship) to the Presence of the singleness of Essence which is the *qiblah* of the gnostics and the Ka'bah of the man of realization.

The *takbirat al-ihram* (uttering the words *Allahu Akbar*) means that he is forbidding himself from approaching any door but His door and from doing any action without His pleasure. This is referred to in His words, 'Say, surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds; surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists.'

He then reads the *al-Hamd* in the manner we have indicated, namely with the awareness that the prayer is shared between Allah and His slave. During the recitation he should also see with the clear witnessing, indicated in Allah's words concerning Abraham and other prophets, 'And thus did we show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those who are sure.'

He then makes a bow – that is he humbles himself before Allah – and in doing so the mulk (the earthly realm) and the *malakut* (the spiritual or angelic realm) humble themselves with him, since man is entrusted with the caliphate of Allah in both these realms and everything in existence needs, and indeed follows, him by virtue of the perfections contained within him.

He then makes a prostration, and in doing so the existence of all existent and created beings together

with his own creation is annihilated. This very annihilation is brought to annihilation when he actually witnesses the meaning of 'Everything (in creation) must pass away and there will endure for ever the face of you Lord, the Lord of glory and honour.'<sup>1</sup> He then magnifies Allah with praise and reverence in the above-mentioned movements, thereby elevating Him above all imperfection. In doing so he actually witnesses the meaning of 'Glory be to my Lord, the Almighty, and to Him all praise is due', in the first movement and the meaning of 'Glory be to my Lord the High' in the second.

He then performs the *shahadah*, or profession of faith, attesting that the Absolute Essential Oneness and Pure Solitary Existence necessarily negates all phenomenal and contingent existences. This is in accordance with Allah's words – and those of the most perfect of His slaves – 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining His creation with justice, there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise.'

He then submits to this vision of unity from his heart and his spirit in accordance with the words of Allah, mentioned above, 'And they do not find hardship in themselves concerning that which You have decreed and they submit with a total submission' and His words, 'Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe! Call for (divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation.'<sup>1</sup> Submission to Allah is only valid by means of a submission of His Prophet. Likewise, submission to His Prophet is only valid by submission to His deputy or *wali* referred to in the Qur'an as one of those in authority: 'Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you.'<sup>1</sup> Allah refers to the Prophet in the words, 'Say: if you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you.'<sup>1</sup> A great deal more space would be needed to enumerate all the secrets connected with this subject. However we shall restrict our study to the above and trust others will discover the rest of these secrets from the people of Allah – for surely such secrets are not hidden from the people of Allah.

Thus there is a group of people whose belief in the roots and branches of Islam is of the intensity we have been describing to the reader. It should be realized that their perception and understanding of divine realities is truly to a most profound degree and their establishment of the *shari'ah*, the *tariqah* and *haqiqah is* to a most elevated level.

How, one may ask, can one possibly attribute to them any lack of belief with respect to the roots and branches? How can one attribute to them any lack of observance of the divine ordinances and prophetic laws? May they be elevated above such a notion! Such an idea has in fact come about because the majority of the scholars of the exoteric and all those of imitation amongst the common people have only to listen to the ignorance Sufis talking about unrestricted license and the neglect of religious duties for them to believe that this is also what the people of *tawhid* believe; on hearing such things, they immediately think that anyone who arrives at Allah is exempted the duties of the *shari'ah* and the acts of worship prescribed in Islam. May Allah protect us from such things; we seek refuge in Him from attributing such things to these people.

All are in agreement that anyone who arrives at Allah or to a certain rank within His presence possesses a greater degree of obedience and his worship is sublimer and his striving correspondingly more intense, as was the case with the Messenger of Allah. This is evidence from the narration of `A'ishah which demonstrates that the Prophet would rise in the night and pray until his feet become swollen from standing. `A'ishah said, `O Messenger of Allah, has it not been revealed to you "that Allah may forgive your past faults and those to follow?" ' The Messenger then replied to her saying, `Am I not then a grateful slave?' meaning "If Allah's blessings on me are so great, then surely I should be a grateful slave." ' The words of Surah al-Muzzammil `O you who have wrapped up in your garments! Rise to pray in the night except a little... or lessen it a little' were only revealed to the Prophet as a result of struggle and spiritual striving, standing in prayer, enduring thirst and rising before dawn. Moreover, it will be well known to the reader that the spiritual stations of the other prophets and messengers were similar.

If we now consider the matter with respect to the saints (awliya) and spiritual inheritors, then we may understand their station by considering that of the Commander of the Faithful. The latter would immerse himself in prayer and in the witnessing of the Real during the prayer. So intense was his state that if his children wanted to draw an arrow-head from his leg, they would wait until he was engaged in prayer' before drawing it; although they would pull it (hard), he would feel no pain, so deep was his immersion. Again, on three occasions, the sun was brought back from its position of setting in the west – twice in Madinah and once in the region of Babul – in order that he might perform the prayer at the right time. To this day there exists a Mosque dedicated to him called the mosque of the Sun. The sun was also sent back for Sham'un, the spiritual inheritor of Jesus. It is clear that were it not for the great importance they attached to the prayer, they would not have possessed this extreme degree of yearning to perform it and Allah would not have accepted their supplication to the degree He did. It has been narrated that one the progeny of 'Ali, the infallible imam Zayn al-`Abidin used to pray a thousand cycles of prayer every day and night and used to say, `I would be content if all these prayers equalled just two cycles of prayer of the Commander of the Faithful.' The like has also been narrated from every single one of his progeny.

Up to this point we have been discussing the matter in relation to the saints; if we now consider the matter in relation to the shaykhs of the people of Allah and their elite, then the reports about them may be divided into two categories: namely with respect to their speech and with respect to their actions.

As for their speech, then some have said that the perfect person is he who does not extinguish the light of his gnosis by his scrupulousness; his direction is towards complete perfection, namely that attained by combining true gnosis and total scrupulousness. It is absolutely necessary for the one of perfection to combine these two for it is only by doing so that he achieves perfection. Whoever arrives at complete gnosis, and then goes astray because his light burns up his knowledge, is not a man of perfection, nor has he fully realized perfection or the light of gnosis. In this way the light of scrupulousness, obtained by carefully avoiding that which Allah has forbidden, is extinguished by the light of gnosis.

The same applies to anyone who relies on the light of scrupulousness to the detriment of the light of gnosis: if he abandons gnosis for the perfection of scrupulousness – without arriving at the realities of witnessing – he is also not one of the perfected, nor has he attained to the station of perfection. The secret of this combination derives from the coordination of the outer and the inner and the knowledge obtained as a result of this joining. This procedure which has been expounded by the gnostic whose words we have already cited, demonstrates the falsehood of the accusations leveled at the people of this science.

The gnostic goes on to say, 'The final point of arrival at Reality is abandoning any perception of action.' The gist of his words is that the one who arrives at Reality does not recognize any action as his own nor any Actor other than Allah. This does not mean that action must be avoided, for the gnostic's perception of non-action does not negate the actions of others. It would not be appropriate to go into details at this point; and we have deliberately omitted them for fear of overburdening the reader. However, one should pay great attention to this idea since by it all the false claims of the libertines and the heretics may be rejected.

Concerning the actions of the saints, it has been narrated that Shaykh Junayd has said, 'Uncertainties have vanished and all signs have disappeared; the only thing of benefit to us is the prayer we perform in the depth of the night.' It has been reported that the perfect Shaykh Sa'ad al-Din al-Hamawi would pray each day and night a large number of cycles of prayer; the truth of this may be known from his famous *awrad* (litances of invocations) performed at the end of each prayer.

The same is true of Shaykh Shihab al-Din al-Kabir al-Suhrawardi and Abu Yazid al-Bastami, who was a cup-bearer in the house of Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq. The same is also true of Shaykh al-A'zam Muhyi al-Din 'Arabi who would pray two cycles of prayer for every prophet and saint, after performing all the obligatory cycles of prayers. He would also do this during his visits to the shrines of Morocco, Sham (Syria, Lebanon and Palestine), Egypt (and in particular) Alexandria, Makkah, Madinah and the al-Aqsa Mosque; this we know from the section entitled 'The secrets of prayer' in his work *Al-Futuhah*.

Our aim in all this is to show that the people of this gnostic science are in no way like the scholars of the exoteric and the ordinary people of imitation suppose. In fact those who make false accusations about them are the descendants of men from the time of the Messenger of Allah who would make fun of the people of Allah and the masters of divine unity and Qur'anic exegesis. Such people would wink at each other in jest at the people of Allah; they would deny the validity of their way, in those days as in the present age. This is affirmed in the Qur'an when they say 'Surely we found our fathers on a course and surely we are followers of their footsteps.' We seek refuge in Allah from them and from those like them. This is most pertinently expressed by the poet of the following verse:

If you knew what I was saying, you would excuse me;  
If you knew what you were saying, I would rebuke you.

You are not aware of what I am saying, so you rebuke me;  
And having discovered that you are unaware, I excuse you.

One of the gnostics has noted that anyone who is devoid of a certain quality of excellence will not even admit the existence of that quality, rather he will firmly deny it. The people of Allah are in the station of perfect adherence to the Prophetic exemplar, indicated in His words `Certainly you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar.' By its nature the notion of an excellent exemplar does not admit of any difference of opinion: thus how one may ask can anything come pass by the hand of the people of Allah, that is in opposition to this exemplar? And how is it that the ignorant and common people suppose the things they do about them? – `And that was as a result of your evil thoughts which you entertained about your Lord that you tumbled down into perdition, so are you become of the lost ones.' On investigation we realize that the relationship between these people of Allah and this particular group is analogous to that of Abraham with the people of Moses and Jesus – since the latter claimed that Abraham was one of them and not of the Muslims. Allah, however, rejects their claims saying: `Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian but he was an upright man, a Muslim.'

Some people associate such gnostics with deviation, disbelief and heresy, while others associate them with belief in incarnation, union with the divine and the ascription of human characteristics to Allah. The truth of the matter, however, is that they are far removed from such false assumptions and lying fantasies – just as Abraham was far removed from the assumptions and fantasies of the Jews and Christians. The words of Allah in the *qudsi hadith* `My saints (*awliya*) are hidden beneath My dome, no one knows them but Myself' allude to these gnostics.

They are also referred to in Allah's words, `Then Allah will bring a people, He shall love them and they shall love Him, modest before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.' Again they are referred to in the saying of the Commander of the Faithful, `O Allah, surely the earth will never be without those who maintain (living) proof of the (truth) of Allah, either in a manifest way and known amongst the people or hidden for fear (of the injustice of men).' They exist in order that Allah's proofs and guidance – as – expounded in the Qur'an – be protected from corrupt interpretation or negligence.

How many are they and where do they exist? By Allah these people are few in number and vast in rank; by them Allah preserves His proofs and words of guidance, until they in turn entrust these proofs and words of guidance to men like themselves, implanting this knowledge in their hearts. It is by way of them too that one may grasp the true meaning of reality; they possess the spirit of certainty and find easy

what those living in ease and luxury find difficult; they gain intimacy and friendship with that which arouses horror in the ignorant; physically, they keep company with the world while spiritually, they are connected to the higher realm; they are the caliphs of Allah on His earth who call others to His way.

The poet has said the following about them:

To Allah beneath His dome of glory belongs a group of men  
Whom He has hidden from the eyes of others out of reverence to them.

They are the sultans in tattered garments  
Who have drawn apart from the kings of the earth.

They have accepted other clothes and abstained from food,  
Moving with humility across this green sphere.

Not even the prophets or messengers of Allah have escaped from the tongues of the detractors. The latter have accused them of being, amongst other things, poets, magicians, soothsayers and madmen: 'Said he: Most surely your Apostle who is sent to you is mad' and also: 'This is most surely a manifest enchanter.' Thus it is not surprising that the gnostics have failed to escape their criticism. Indeed the prophets are also exemplars in this respect for as those of this science have pointed out, 'Tiial is a part of (the life of the) prophets, of the saints and also of those like them.' This idea is also expressed in following verse:

No one, not even the purified Prophet, can escape their tongues.

Thus if a person is courageous, they call him reckless.

If a person is generous, they call him wasteful.

If a person is quiet, they call him dumb;

And if he is loquacious, they call him a prattler.

If a person stands in prayer at night while fasting,

They call him an exhibitionist and reject him.

If a person stands in prayer at night while fasting,

They call him an exhibitionist and reject him.

Thus do not worry if the people rebuke you or praise you but rather fear no one but Allah for Allah is greater than all.

Thus we come to the end of our study of the prayer with respect to the three groups. We shall now begin on the subject of fasting with respect to these same groups; and by Allah is all security and success.

## 9) Fasting

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

What is meant here is abstention from certain things for a specific period of time. Among the conditions of fasting is that of the validity of intention: if the fasting is for a specific period, then it is necessary under all circumstances – like, for example, the month of Ramadan and fasting undertaken when a specific vow has been made. It is sufficient, however, that an absolute intention covering the whole period of the fast be made in the case of Ramadan rather than the individual, daily renewal of intention; all fasting other than that of the month of Ramadan, be it supererogatory or obligatory, must be accompanied by an intention to perform a specific fast. When undertaking a fast purely with the intention of coming closer to Allah, it is permissible to make the intention some time before the fast; the intention for a specific fast, however, must be made at the same time as the beginning of the fast. If the time passes through forgetfulness, such that morning breaks, it is permissible to renew the intention up to the time of the sun's zenith. If, however, the sun has passed its zenith, then such an intention is no longer valid. If this happens during the fast of Ramadan, then one should fast that day and make up a day instead.

Various conditions and laws govern the fast, classified according to whether it is recommended, as in the case of a specific vow, or whether, for example, it is performed for a non-specific reason. However we do not have room to deal with all these questions here. We shall restrict ourselves to a discussion of what necessitates the making up of the fast and the payment of the *kaffarah* (expiatory compensation) and of what necessitates the making of a fast but without payment of the *kaffarah*. There are nine things which render the making up of the fast and the *kaffarah* obligatory: eating, drinking, intercourse in which penetration takes place, deliberate emission of semen, submersion in water (according to some), deliberately allowing thick dust to enter the throat, such as particles of earth or flour, deliberately waiting until the sun has risen before rising when one is in a state of ritual impurity, or relapse into sleep after having awoken twice previously, such that the sun has time to rise. The *kaffarah* for this is to free a slave or fast for two consecutive months or to feed sixty poor people – and one may choose as to which of these three one performs.

As for those things which make the making up of the fast obligatory without *kaffarah*, they are nine in number: eating, drinking or indulging in sexual intercourse instead of watching for the dawn (in the case when one is able), not accepting that the sun has risen when someone says so and when in fact it has, the imitation of others in assuming that the sun has not yet risen when one is capable of looking out for it oneself and when in fact it has risen, the imitation of others in assuming that the night has fallen while being able oneself to watch for it, and breaking the fast when in fact the night has not fallen or breaking

the fast because of something which happens to darken the sky (although it subsequently becomes clear that the night has not in fact begun), the relapse into sleep after waking once (before doing the *ghusl* and in the case when one does not wake again until after the sun has risen), water entering the throat of someone taking it into his mouth in order to cool himself (although this does not apply to the rinsing of the mouth prior to the performing the prayer), and finally the injection of fluids into the body. The above is the fasting of the people of *shari`ah* according to the way of the Shiah.

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

The fasting of the people of this group, after they have performed the above-mentioned fast, refers to their abstaining from anything which might be in opposition to Allah's pleasure, command or prohibition, be it in speech or by action, be it in the realm of knowledge or the application of that knowledge. We have already mentioned these points above and we shall now discuss the matter in more detail.

Know that the Messenger of Allah has narrated from Allah Himself `For every good deed there are ten similar to it (in reward from Allah) or up to seven hundred times in number, except, that is, the fasting, for the fast is for Me and I am its reward.' The Prophet has also said, `Everything possesses a door and the door of worship is the fast.'

The point of describing the fast in this particular way and in attaching such importance to it is for two reasons: the first is that the fast requires abstention from the forbidden things and prevention of the self (*nafs*) from indulgence in desire and passion – thus the fast is a hidden act seen only by Allah, unlike prayer, *zakat* and the other acts of worship which are seen by others and therefore may cause vanity and conceit to enter a person's worship.

Moreover, vanity and conceit are two of the major reasons for making prayer invalid and bringing acts of obedience to nought. Hence Allah's words: `Therefore whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds and, he should not, in the service of his Lord, join any other with Him.' What is meant by joining in service,' according to the consensus of the commentators is the performance of any action for the sake of being seen.

But the Prophet has said, `The creature of *shirk* (idolatry or associating another with Allah) is more hidden than a black ant on a smooth rock in a dark night.' According to the scholars of the esoteric, the *shirk* referred to here and in the *ayah* quoted above is the seeing of otherness with the Real. Imam 'Ali has also said, `The subtlest form of *shirk* is the performance of actions for the sake of others;' this type of conceitedness is only possible when one deliberately lets others witness one's worship. We have already investigated this matter in the sections concerning *tawhid* and *shirk* (and the corresponding subdivisions of manifest and hidden *shirk* and divine and existential *tawhid* ).

The second point about the fast is that it is a means of overwhelming the enemy of Allah. In truth Satan (Shaytan) is the enemy. His strength lies in his use of man's desires. Hunger, however, destroys all those desires which are Satan's instruments to lead man astray. When no such means exist, then he is incapable of action. It is for this reason that the Prophet has said; 'Truly Shaytan courses within the son of Adam as the blood courses, so therefore curb his coursing by means of hunger.' In this lies the secret of the Prophet's words, 'When Ramadan begins, the Garden is opened, the gate of the Fire are closed, Shaytan is bound in chains, and a caller calls: "Come forward, O you who desire good and retreat, O you who desire evil!"' What is meant here is that Satan, the cause and source of evil, is weakened together with his supporters. Thus it is up to the reader to strive towards good deeds and avoid evil actions, desires and passions.

Abstention during the fast may be classified in two ways: the first aspect relates to the outer and the second to the inner. As for the outer, the first kind of fasting concerns that of the tongue from superfluous speech and from anything which is contrary to the pleasure of Allah and His will with respect to His commands and prohibitions. Allah, with respect to the fast of Mary (Maryam), only commands her to abstain from speech: 'Say: surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent God, so I shall not speak to any man today.' The truth of this is shown from His words, 'And shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates.' Since this latter *ayah* is commanding her to eat and drink and the former to avoid superfluous speech, we realize that the greater of fasts is keeping silent and avoiding superfluous speech. If this were not so, then the Prophet would not have said, 'Whoever keeps silent gains success.' The hidden wisdom of this is that this abstention from outer speech produces an inner utterance, that is a speech of the inner soul. Thus when Mary keeps silent with her tongue, Jesus speaks words of clear meaning in the cradle and claims to be the caliph of the Merciful.

One must reflect well upon this matter for it is subtle in meaning: by it one may understand the secret of the words of the Prophet, 'The springs of wisdom will appear from the heart on the tongue of the one who devotes forty mornings purely for Allah.' The following has also been narrated from the Prophet: 'If speech turns to the nature of Allah, then refrain.' What is meant here is that one should refrain from any speech, word, allusion or indication of Allah for none of these can adequately express Him. Since words do not correspond to the reality of Him, there is no use in talking about Him with the tongue; indeed to do so would be harmful, as, for example, in the case of the inexpressible sciences of spiritual tasting. Thus the Prophet has said on another occasion, 'Whoever knows Allah curbs his tongue from speaking about Him or expressing Him, since this kind of knowledge cannot be contained in speech.' For example, a person may be incapable of describing honey even after having tasted it. It has been narrated from the Prophet that he said, 'When the stars are mentioned, then refrain! from speech and when my companions are mentioned, then refrain (from speech).' Thus realization of the secret of the cosmic decree is a matter of spiritual tasting and witnessing, just as the secret of his companions was a matter of taste, witnessing and inner awareness. The Prophet has also said, 'Is there anything that pitches the

people on their noses into the Fire more than the harvest of their tongues?' What is usually understood by 'the harvest of the tongue' is superfluous speech. The Prophet has also said, 'Whoever increases his speech increases his anger, and whoever increases his anger diminishes his modesty, and whoever diminishes his modesty diminishes his scrupulousness and whoever diminishes his scrupulousness will enter the Fire.'

All of the above is summed up in the words of Allah: 'And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy in this world and the hereafter, a grievous chastisement would certainly have struck you on account of the discourse which you entered into, when you received it with your tongues and spoke with your mouths about that of which you had no knowledge, and you deemed it an easy matter while with Allah it was grievous. And when you heard it, why did you not say: It does not beseem us that we should talk of it; glory be to Thee! This is a great calumny. Allah admonishes you that you should not return to the like of it ever again if you are believers. And Allah makes clear to you His communications and Allah is Knowing, Wise.' By Allah, by Allah, if there were only these ayat in the Qur'an on this subject, it would be sufficient proof of the need to keep silent rather than make superfluous speech or talk when one has no knowledge about what one is saying.

Furthermore, whoever truly believes that each person has two angels watching over him, assigned to him by Allah in order to record everything he does, be it good or bad, will not speak except when necessary and will not say anything but good. The truth of this is affirmed in the words of Allah: 'And when the two receivers receive, sitting on the right and on the left.' When the reader realizes this, when he knows he must hold his tongue and refrain from superfluous speech – for he knows that there is more harm than good in it and the evil it works is worse than any good which might come out of it.

The second kind of fasting is to abstain from looking at what has been forbidden and to refrain from looking at what is permissible, except of necessity; this is because scrupulousness and piety do not lie in mere abstention from the forbidden things but also in avoiding that which is permissible – except when one is obliged to look at something through force of circumstance or need. Allah has indicated this in His words, 'Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts.' What is meant here is that one must, of necessity, lower the eyes in order to protect the private parts: when one does not see something, the self does not demand that thing and feels no inclination towards it – like, for example, the blind person who has no concern for colours because he does not distinguish between them, rather he is concerned with the realm of hearing and listening. This matter may be intuitively perceived and understood by the intellect.

Thus the lowering of the eyes is of great significance, since not to do so leads to all kinds of evil and corruption. Allah speaks of this, saying that those who guard their private parts will be caused to enter the Garden with the company of the righteous and God-fearing amongst His slaves: 'Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers and who keep aloof from what is vain and who pay the poor-rate and who guard their private parts, except before their spouses and those whom their right

hands possess, for surely they are not blameworthy, but whoever seeks to go beyond these transgresses the limits;' moreover, His words, 'except before their spouses,' indicate the truth of what we have said above with respect to that which is permissible, namely that it should be in case of necessity only.

The third kind of fasting is to refrain from listening to that which is forbidden – like, for example, listening to someone backbiting another Muslim, listening to singing and music of a forbidden nature, listening to the words of misguided people, and the evil speech of the people of innovation, all of which might lead someone away from the straight path. This is affirmed in the words of Allah, 'And when you see those who enter into false discourses about Our communications, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse' and also His words, 'And when they hear idle talk they turn aside from it.'

Indeed Allah's words 'Surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that' comprehends these meanings. The heart referred to above is not an outward organ of perception, rather it is a mode of perception from the realm of reality and all true perception is dependent upon it since most faculties of perception have no feelings or sensitivity in themselves; rather they are instruments of the self, which is sometimes referred to as the heart, sometimes as the intellect and sometimes as the soul. Thus the heart is the true or real source of perception. The faculty of sight, for example, has no capacity of itself to see that the orb of the sun is in fact so many times bigger than the sphere of the earth and that even the smallest of the stars in the heavens is many times larger than the earth. The faculty of sight can only perceive in respect to its capacity and perceives the star as a small orb or shield-shaped sphere. This phenomenon is explained in detail in the books dealing with this science and those interested in this subject may investigate the matter further therein.

The fourth kind of fasting is to refrain from smelling anything, be it odious or sweet. It is evident that one is naturally repelled by any odious smell; indeed such a smell produces a bad effect on the liver, the brain and heart and may even lead to what is sometimes referred to as 'the sudden death.' One should also refrain from smelling even pleasant odors since they stimulate desire, be it forbidden or otherwise – like the perfumes musk, ambergris and amber. It has been narrated that the Prophet used to dislike the smell of garlic and onions and like the smell of the rose and the narcissus.

The fifth kind of fasting is to refrain from taste, for whoever tastes something is drawn towards the realm of desire and loses the sharpness of his intellect. An example of this is the tasting or consumption of the orphan's wealth or usury. The first is referred to in Allah's words, 'And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner' and the second in His words, 'Those who swallow down usury cannot rise except as one whom Satan has prostrated by his touch' and 'Eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant.' This latter ayah of Allah's also indicates that one should be moderate in one's eating and drinking, such that one neither exceeds the limits nor neglects to respond to one's bodily needs for to err in either of these directions is blameworthy in all circumstances.

This is described in the saying of the Prophet as erring to the right or the left: 'The right and the left are both ways of error and the straight path is the middle way.'

The sixth kind of fasting is to abstain from the sense of touch which leads one to forbidden and blameworthy things, or to excess in what is permissible and to that which is outside the limits of moderation. This is referred to in Allah's words when He talks about this and the other senses: 'And you did not veil yourselves lest your ears and your eyes and your skins should bear witness against you... and they shall say to their skins, "Why have you borne witness against us?" They shall say, "Allah Who makes everything speak has made us speak"' and also His words: 'On that day We shall set a seal upon their mouths and their hands shall not speak to Us, and their feet shall bear witness of what they earned.'

The Prophet has mentioned that these senses are under the guardianship of each person: they are, as it were, his helpers, actions and speech, and a means to attainment of perfection: 'Everyone of you is a guardian and everyone of you shall be questioned about that which you are guarding.' What is meant here is that every man is a guardian, a ruler and sultan in relation to his subjects which are his senses and faculties of perception and that each man will one day be made to account for the way he employed them. If he employs them in the manner for which they were created, then he will be reckoned amongst the people of justice and equity and he will be of those whose final end is the Garden and Allah's mercy. If, however, he employs them in a manner for which they were not created, then he will be reckoned one of the people of oppression, injustice and tyranny and he will be of those whose final end is the wrath and punishment of Allah in the hell fire. Oppression and injustice are the placing of something where it does not belong, just as justice is the placing of something in its rightful place; thus anyone who employs his bodily organs and limbs in a manner for which they were not created is unjust, and he who is unjust is cursed and merits the punishment of the fire.

Allah – may He be exalted – has prescribed the purification (by *wudhu'*, *ghusl* or *tayammum*) in order to cleanse the senses and in order that they be properly employed: 'O you who believe! When you rise up to prayer, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet to your ankles ... .' Allah orders His slave to do this so that he does not neglect the duties of purification, in accordance with the outer law and the inner meaning, as we have explained earlier. Allah wishes that His slave should employ every bodily member in the purpose for which it was originally created so that he may be said to be amongst those who place things in their proper place and hence amongst the people of justice and equity – in words, deeds and knowledge. In this way such a person will enter into the path of the people of Allah, His angels and those amongst His bondsmen of knowledge. This is affirmed in His words, 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining his creation with justice; there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise. Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam ... . And I am of those who bear witness to this.'

Up to this point we have been considering the matter in relation to the five outward senses. In one respect, the tongue should not be included amongst them since it is specifically for the purpose of expression and speech and hence not directly to be included with the senses; but if we consider it in a more general way, it is evident that it has a bearing on the subject of taste. Thus it can be said that from one aspect it is included in this subject and yet from another it is not (in which case the senses may be treated as one subject and the tongue as another); and by Allah comes success.

The first fast with respect to the five inner or psychic senses is to abstaining from using the faculty of thought for useless matters or for that which is detrimental to the return of the soul and the final reckoning after death. The faculty of thought has only been created so that men may progress from the beginnings of things to general conclusions: it is the practice of 'theoretical examination' in the language of the theologians.

Thus it is better and more beneficial that one employs this faculty for that purpose for which it was created. If someone were to use it for other than that, then one would necessarily have to describe him as unjust; and we have already examined the nature of the unjust person and how he is cursed and refused entry to the door of Allah. The power and capacity of the faculty of the intellect is shown in Allah's words: 'Most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect' and in the Prophet's saying: 'Reflection for a moment is better than action for seventy years.'

The second kind of inner fast is to abstain from employing the faculty of memory except for that for which it was created. Since the faculty of thought has only been created to reflect upon divine gnosis and intellectual knowledge and the like, things other than these should not exist in its storehouse. Indeed it is forbidden for the faculty of memory to retain other than these things – such that those in possession of such a faculty are referred to by Allah as 'those who keep the limits of Allah.' The best way to keep these limits is to employ each faculty in the proper way; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise.

The third kind of inner fast is to abstain from employing the faculty of imagination in that for which is not created. This faculty is employed, for example; in fixing in the imagination the form of a particular person, that is, his outward physical form and color. But just as the faculty of conjecture is employed in the supposition of the existence of enmity or love between particular people, so the faculty of imagination projects within the person in whom this faculty resides, at every moment, numerous pictures of particular persons and various imaginative constructs. In this way it prevents the person from employing his imagination for that purpose for which it was created. This is demonstrated in Allah's words: 'Then lo! their cords and their rods – it seemed to him on account of their magic as if they were running ... . So Moses conceived in his mind a fear.'

If the faculty of imagination had the capacity to perceive the meaning of this event, he would not have imagined that they were serpents, rather he would have realized that it was mere magic and that it was not real or true. On investigation, we realize that this faculty has only be created to exhibit the ideal

world, also known as the world of absolute imagination. The truth of this may be seen if we compare the cosmic dimension with that of the individual souls in the light of Allah's words, 'We will soon show them our signs in the Universe and in their own souls, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth.'

The shaykh of divine knowledge, Shams al-Din al-Shahrūzi (author of the *al-Shajarat al-ilahiyya* or the Divine Tree) has referred these matters in his treatise saying: 'One should realize that everything in the sublime and spiritual realm has a reflection in the lower realm. Thus the light of the sun is symbol of the divine light of Lordship. Allah has said: "And His are the most exalted attributes (or symbols) in the heavens and the earth" – meaning here the sun. The light of the moon is analogous to the light of the intellect, mentioned in the Prophet's words, "The first thing created by Allah was the intellect." The light of the stars is analogous to the light perceived by the senses – as is shown in Allah's words, "Surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these shall be questioned about that." ' The Shaykh then goes on to demonstrate the truth of what we were saying in the first instance, saying, 'Know that the thickest veil which blinds the self from its own essence is that of the faculty of imagination – by its projection of images, on the one hand, and of interpretation, on the other, and its positing of an amalgamation and joining of the two in addition to this.

Furthermore, by its constantly presenting all these things to the self never letting up either in sleep or in the waking state, the self becomes engrossed in them instead of reflecting on its essence and becomes veiled from its essence. However its essence is not veiled from the reality of its own essence, the divine manifestation, since the means of manifestation cannot veil Manifestation of Him; 'yet it does veil the person from reflection and real perception such that he becomes engrossed in other things.'

The shaykh's words, 'by its projection of images, on the one hand, and of interpretation, on the other, and its positing of an amalgamation and joining of the two in addition to this' does not accord with the words of some of the religious scholars and the majority of the philosophers since the latter are of the belief that the projection on the part of the faculty of imagination is of images only and the projection of the faculty of conjecture is concerned solely with meaning; it is the imaginative faculty of *sensus communis* which is concerned with image and meaning together – as the word clearly indicates. Thus it appears that the shaykh has confused the faculty of the *sensus communis* with that of the imaginative faculty; indeed this is perfectly possible on his part, man being human and as such exposed to error – just as it is possible on our part. Only Allah knows the unseen and 'Allah is more Knowing and more Wise; He it is Who says the truth and guides to the straight path.'

Shaykh al-A'zam Muhyi al-Din 'Arabi, the master of unveiling and pole of those of arrival, says something in his account of the way Divine Commands impinge on the realm of man which contradicts the words of Shahrūzi: 'Know that the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand, the stomach, the private parts and the feet are the faithful agents of man entrusted with the discharge of their duties; each of them is the ruler and the keeper of the particular part of man's wealth. The chief and leader of these senses is

that upon whom all the other senses depend and this chief sense is subject to the authority of the imagination. The imagination, containing as it does both the good and evil aspects of projection, is subject to the authority of memory and memory is subject to the authority of reflection and reflection is subject to the authority of the intellect and the intellect is the vizier or man and man is the supreme head, known as the sacred spirit.' We mention this in particular because of his words, 'The imagination is subject to the authority of memory and memory is subject to the authority of reflection,' since, if imagination were able to influence the interpretation as well as the projection of images, it would not have been subjected to memory and reflection – 'And as for these examples, We set them forth for men, and none understand them but the learned.'

The fourth kind of inner fast is to restrain the faculty of conjecture from the projection of forms inimical to the self at one moment and things beloved of the self at another, since this only prevents the self from progressing along the straight path. This path, the *tawhid* of reality, prevents the perception of enmity and love, the enemy and the beloved – for such things are the business of the soul or self which commands to evil, with the support of the twin forces of anger and passion. The person whose soul is content is allowed to return to his Lord after death free of this and other similar things, since he is in the station of witnessing the Beloved and His actions.

Whatever the Beloved does is beloved of him, and so he feels no enmity towards anyone and he is not bound by the love and the things beloved of men for he is in the realm of the absolute and the witnessing of the existence of the One, the Absolute and such a realm is devoid of all such things. Allah's words, 'Say Allah, then leave them sporting in their vain discourses' specifically refer to this and other similar circumstances. Thus the person who is truly fasting must be in possession of a tranquil soul and not a soul which commands to evil – in order to merit a return to His Lord: 'O soul that art at rest! Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with him), well-pleasing (Him), so enter among My servants and enter My garden.' The command to enter amongst the slave is only possible for a person in the station of serenity and tranquillity. Therefore Allah says, 'The fast is for Me and I am its reward.' Such a reward is only possible by means of a contemplation of His manifestation in the cosmos and in the individual soul. The Prophet has indicated this when he says, 'You will see your Lord as you see the full moon at night.' Some of the gnostics have spoken about the secrets of fasting which also belong to this station.

There are three levels of secrets with respect to the fast, the lowest being an abstention from that which would break the fast without restraining his bodily limbs or organs from that which is disliked; this is the fast of the common people and it is known as temperance or moderation. The second level is when there is added to this the abstention of the bodily organs: thus one prevents the tongue from backbiting, the eye from looking with doubt or suspicion, and likewise for the rest of the organs. This is the fast of the elite amongst the people of Allah. The third level is when one adds to the above the safeguarding of the heart from excessive thought and evil whisperings and the rendering of the heart submissive' to the remembrance of Allah and the witnessing of Him in His manifestations; this is the fast of the elite of the

elite and this is perfection and the sought-after goal. There are numerous other descriptions of this nature and the reader is urged to study them from the appropriate sources; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise.

The fifth kind of inner fast is to refrain from taking notice of the *sensus communis* which combines conjecture and imagination and which is constantly projecting form and meaning on to the soul. This *sensus communis* prevents one from advancing on the spiritual path, since anyone who is engrossed in form, as perceived of by this sense, veils himself from the spiritual form and anyone who is engrossed in meanings in the realm of conjecture veils himself from the inner meanings in the realm of reality and the intellect. Besides anyone who is veiled is veiled, be it by one single veil or a thousand. Thus it is obligatory upon the one fasting to abstain from this 'combined sense' so as to rid himself of such veils and so as to witness the Beloved in the manner we have described.

The people of Allah and their elite have established that the soul is like a tree possessing ten branches. Each branch takes water as required from the trunk of the tree, which in turn takes up water from the earth. This is a natural and self-evident phenomenon. If we then suppose that nine of the branches be cut, then of necessity their strength and the water consumed by them will go up the one remaining branch, which will then grow, become bigger and produce better, sweeter, finer and more beautiful fruit as a result. The same principle may be applied to the soul of man and his ten branches or senses: if one of these branches is cut off – by severing its attachment to the world – then the remaining branches are bound to grow bigger as a result and its fruit will be sublimer, profounder, finer and nobler: 'And certainly We have set forth to men in this Qur'an similitudes of every sort that they may heed.'

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

Having established the two above-mentioned kinds of fasting, then the people of this group establish this particular fast which is the fast of the gnostic who abstains from witnessing other than the Real whatever the circumstances – in accordance with the judgment of the men of this science: 'There is nothing in existence but Allah, His Names, Attributes and Actions; all is He, by Him, from Him and to Him.' This is because anyone who does not prevent his soul from witnessing other-than-Him in all circumstances is one who associates others with Allah (*mushrik*); and neither fasting nor prayer are accepted of a *mushrik*. The basis prayer is purification from the impurity of associating others with Allah by means of the water of divine unity (*tawhid*) and the light of faith. Just as the prayer and most of the other acts of worship are only valid with this kind., of purification together with the more familiar kind of (physical) purification, it is also evident that the prayer and the other acts of worship are not only invalid without this physical purification but are invalidated when offered by a *mushrik* or an unbeliever (*kafir*).

Moreover, the same applies to the fasting and so that fast of the *mushrik* is invalid irrespective of

whether his *shirk* is manifest or hidden. Every *mushrik* is an unbeliever and every unbeliever a *mushrik*; this is affirmed in the words of Allah, 'And whoever associates anything with Allah, he indeed strays off into remote error.' This is the basic principle of the path of *tawhid* and the masters of *tawhid* and it is not permissible to talk openly about it except to the people of this science; this is in accordance with the words of Allah: 'Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners' and the Prophet's words: 'Do not give wisdom to other than the people of wisdom for you will be doing the wisdom an injustice, and do not prevent the people from obtaining it and so do them an injustice.' The poet has also said:

Whoever bestows knowledge on the ignorant is throwing it away,  
And whoever denies it of those who merit it is being unjust.

The words of Jesus, 'Do not hang pearls around the necks of swine' are also an indication of this meaning.

Just as *shirk* may be manifest or hidden, the same is true of *tawhid*, the two being related to each other. Thus neither the prayer or the fast of the person of manifest *shirk* – which is the antithesis of divine *tawhid* – nor the fast or the prayer of hidden *shirk* – which is the antithesis of the *tawhid* of existence – is valid. Allah has indicated the person of hidden *shirk* with His words: 'Therefore whoever hopes to meet his Lord should do good deeds and, in the service of his Lord, he should not associate any other with Him.' If this were an indication of the persons of manifest *shirk*, He would have said simply, 'and do not associate anyone with his Lord'; since, however, He has said, 'in the service of his Lord,' we realize that it refers to the person of hidden *shirk*. Allah's words, 'And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating (others with Him)' also refer to the person of hidden *shirk*.

It has been narrated that, 'the *tawhid* of a moment destroys the unbelief (*kufr*) of seventy years and a moment's unbelief destroys seventy years Islam.' This is true since their coming together is something impossible and unimaginable, both with regard to the intellect and with respect to the sources of the Qur'an and the *ahadith*.

Thus it is the duty of the gnostic, in the first instance, to refrain from witnessing any action that is from other-than-Him, whatever the circumstances, so that he may arrive thereby at the station of the *tawhid* of action. It is likewise his duty to refrain from witnessing the attributes of other-than-Him, whatever the circumstances, so that he may arrive thereby at the station of the *tawhid* of attribute. It is then his duty to refrain from witnessing any existence other than Him, whatever the circumstances, so that he may arrive thereby at the station of the *tawhid* of essence; that is the absolute object and goal of the spiritual wayfaring or rather, of the whole of existence. When this is achieved, then the person may truly be said to be undertaking the real fast and abstaining from all things which would invalidate the reality of this fast.

This is the fast mentioned in the *hadith*: 'Every good action will be rewarded by its like – up to seven hundred times over – except the fast, for this is for Me and I am its reward,' since no other kind of fast would merit Him as the reward. The reward of the two previously mentioned fasts is the Garden and its blessings, the maidens and palaces or the drawing close to Allah, arrival at Him, unveilings and witnessing. However, this fast's reward is Him and no other, and so it is greater and of a higher order than the other two. This is because the greater the action and exertion, the greater the reward. There is no greater fast than this and so there can be no other reward but Him. It is this which is referred to in the *ayah*, 'Most surely this is the mighty achievement for the like of them, so let the workers work.' It is also mentioned in Allah's words, 'Whoever does this seeking Allah's pleasure, We will give him a mighty reward.'

The difference between the fast of the people of *tariqah* and that of the people of *haqiqah* is that the former results in the refinement of behaviour and the taking on of the Attributes of Allah (affirmed in the words of the Prophet: 'Make your character the character of Allah'), while the second results in the annihilation of Allah's slave and his abiding with the Real in the station of pure *tawhid*. This station is also known as the annihilation in *tawhid*, referred to in the sayings of the gnostics and also in the *qudsi hadith*: 'Whoever seeks Me, finds Me, and whoever finds Me, comes to know Me, and whoever comes to know Me, loves Me, and whoever loves Me, then I kill that person, and whomsoever I kill, then I must pay the blood money, and to whomsoever I owe the blood money, then I am the recompense for the blood money.' All these words are an indication of the annihilation of the slave in Him and his abiding in the station of pure *tawhid*, also known as the joining of the separate after the gathering – and referred to in His words: 'And you did not smite when you smote (the enemy) but it was Allah Who smote' and in the words of the Prophet: 'Whoever sees me (in a dream) has seen the truth.' 'Glory be to Him and how great is His affair.'

The people of Allah and their elite have given a striking metaphor in reply to the ignorant, who suppose their words to be untrue: 'Imagine the fire with the properties of light and heat and the capacity to burn and cook food, for example, and then imagine some charcoal which is dark and black and lacks heat and the capacity to cook food; then imagine that this charcoal is slowly brought closer to this fire such that it acquires all the properties of the latter, and itself ends up by becoming fire with the capacity to do all that the fire does.

Thus the one becomes the other. Is it not permissible for the charcoal to say, "I am the fire?" just as the gnostic said, "I am the Truth." ' Evidently it is permissible for him to say this if he is sincere in what he is saying. It has also been said, 'I am from my passions and my passions are from I,' and consider the words of Allah: 'And (as for) these examples, We set them forth for man, and none understands them but the learned.' It is not permissible to disclose any more of these secrets and Allah it is Who says the truth and guides to the correct path. Having concluded this section on fasting in relation to the three different groups, we shall now begin in the same manner on the subject of *zakat*.

## 10) Zakat

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

According to the people of this group, *zakat* is obligatory on nine things: camels, cows, sheep and goats, gold, silver, wheat, barley, dates, and dried grapes; it is not obligatory on anything other than these. These nine may be divided in two ways: the first division includes those things for which the *zakat* is paid on completion of the full year, and the second when this does not apply. Those things for which the elapse of a full year is a condition are the first five commodities (that is, not including the grain crops and fruits), and those things for which the elapse of the year does not apply are the four latter commodities (namely the grains and the fruits).

There are two conditions with respect to those things governed by the elapse of a year, one dependent upon the owner and one dependent upon the commodity itself. The condition dependent upon the owner is of two types, the first being the condition of obligation and the second relative to his liability (*daman*). The condition of obligation is of two divisions: that the person be a free man (and this applies in the case of all five commodities) and of sound intellect, in all except the cattle which are evaluated; this is so since those who are not of sound or mature mind (such as mad persons or children) are still obliged to pay the *zakat* on their cattle. The condition of liability (on property or animals owned, rented or held in security or trust) are two in number: that the person be Muslim and that he has the ability to pay the *zakat*. There are two conditions with respect to the commodities themselves: the elapse of the year and the reaching of the *nisab* (or prescribed minimum levels at which the *zakat* is payable).

With respect to those things for which no account is taken of the elapse of the year, then the conditions are two in number, the first being dependent upon the person upon whom the *zakat* is obligatory and the second dependent upon the commodity itself. As for the condition dependent upon the person, it is only that he be a free person. *Zakat* on grains is not obligatory, for someone who is not of sound mind, although there is no liability on the wealth of someone who is not of sound mind). As for the condition dependent upon the commodity itself, it is that the full *nisab* is reached. There are numerous other studies of the laws governing each of these different divisions; we have no need for further explanation of this in a work of this nature; and Allah is more-Knowing and more Wise.

## ii) According to the people of tariqah

The *zakat* of the people of this group – after the giving of the above-mentioned *zakat* – is the obligation upon them to purify the soul from the baseness of miserliness and to cleanse the heart from the filth of meanness. This is indicated in the words of Allah, 'And whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, these it is who are the successful.'<sup>1</sup> He also indicates how this *zakat* increases the fruits of one's knowledge, realities and gnoses and makes them grow and become full of blessings: 'The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is that of a grain growing seven ears with a hundred grains in each ear; and Allah multiplies for whom he pleases.'<sup>1</sup> The meaning of this requires some more explanation: it refers to the spiritual wayfarer who, by removing the qualities of miserliness and meanness and planting in their place the qualities of magnificence and generosity, obtains other qualities whose branching fruits of gnoses and realities are countless in number, the least of them being deliverance from the baser qualities and blameworthy deeds which cause a person to enter the interior Gehanna. The comparison to the grain and the ear of corn is fitting in that every quality acquired by the spiritual traveler, be it praiseworthy or blameworthy, is also accompanied by other acquired qualities too many to enumerate, indeed, as numerous as the grains in an ear of corn – thus if one grain of corn falls to the ground, many ears of corn are produced, each containing so many grains.

With respect to the *zakat* of wealth, the following has been said: 'The secret of man's duty to pay *zakat* – over and above the benefit to the country as a whole, to the individual slave and to those in difficulty and need – is that wealth is loved by mankind and mankind has been commanded to love Allah and has been invited to do so with the same intensity. This wealth has been established as a measure of their love and as a test of their sincerity with respect to their claim of love, for any lover spends on the one most beloved to his heart.'<sup>1</sup> It has also been said, 'The one who gives should be careful not to reproach or be patronizing towards the one who receives.'<sup>1</sup> It is patronizing to look upon yourself as the generous benefactor of the person. The sign of this is that you expect thanks from him, or you feel dislike for him because of his lack of reverence for you, or because of his affection for an enemy of yours – to such an extent that your dislike increases far beyond any feeling of disgust that you may have previously had for the poor person. The reason for this is that you consider yourself more excellent than him. Therefore Allah warns, 'Do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury.'<sup>1</sup> The cure for this is to realize that in fact the poor person is doing a kindness to you in accepting what Allah has made a right for, him from you.

Among the secrets of *zakat* is that it cleanses the heart and purifies it from miserliness and the degradation of meanness. If, however, you cleanse the heart of these qualities but render it full of conceit and haughtiness and thereby cause harm to others, then it is as if you have not cleansed it of anything; rather you have increased its degradation and impurity – and we seek refuge from Allah from such a state.

Thus the zakat is His means of purification since by it purification is attained; it is as if the zakat is a means of *ghusl* or greater purification, whereby the major impurities are washed away from the inner dimension of the person concerned. It is for this reason that the Messenger of Allah and the members of his family receive zakat. Indeed it has been reported, 'Surely it (zakat) is the filthiest of people's wealth.' Thus if the poor man receives it from you, your purification is the excess received by the poor man from you. Have you not noticed that when you have a vein bled and the blood which you fear will cause you worldly harm flows out, was there not an unnecessary excess of blood within you? Thus that which draws out meanness together with the harm it would cause in the next world is even more of a noxious excess than the blood.

Up to this point we have been considering the matter with respect to the outer realm. If we now consider the matter with respect to the inner, since the people of tariqah do not possess any wealth on which to pay zakat, their zakat is paid by the purification of their selves of blameworthy and despicable characteristics and thereafter by their giving out, in the way of Allah and for His pleasure, that which is most beloved to them, namely the self. This is affirmed by Allah when He says: 'By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love.' It is evident that the dearest thing to man, indeed to all creatures, is his soul or self; thus it is obligatory for him to give charity in the way of Allah so that he obtains the real purification of zakat and the complete cleansing mentioned above.

This is affirmed in the words of Allah, '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.' The meaning of this ayah is that one should not think that those killed in the way of Allah are non-existent and without reward; rather the one who has been killed in the realm of form receives in the next world a reward and portion of the Garden, its blessings and palaces, and intimacy and honour with Allah. The one who has been killed in the realm of inner meaning is in a similar situation since he possesses wisdom, knowledge, fine behaviour and courtesy in this world as well as unveilings, witnessings and awareness of the realities of the spiritual domain and the realm of power.

In short, he witnesses the Real in His manifestations on the horizon and in the self, that is, he experiences the highest level of witnessing and he also gains the Garden with its blessings and palaces in the hereafter. Above all this is the arrival at the Beloved and at the ultimate goal and attainment of what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and what the heart of man has never thought of.'

Allah refers to the persons of this station when He says, 'Surely those who guard (against evil) shall be in gardens and rivers, in the seat of honour with a most Powerful King' and also his words, 'It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the east and the west, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives and keep up the prayer and pay the poor-rate;, and the

performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts – these are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil).<sup>1</sup> The above *ayah* refers to all the persons of this group and in particular defines the nature of righteousness which is the goal of this station.

Another aspect of this station concerns the fact that *zakat*, according to the law of the *shari`ah*, is payable with respect to the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, the gold and silver belonging to the realm of the mineral, the wheat, barley, dates and dried grapes to the realm of the vegetable, and the camels, goats and sheep to the realm of the animal. The Prophet has said, 'For everything there is a *zakat*; the *zakat* of the body is obedience.'

Thus every slave who acts in obedience to his Lord, in accordance with what he has been commanded to do, is in effect paying his *zakat* (and thereby purifying himself in the manner we have mentioned). This is so since the people of Allah and their elite, in their comparison of the macrocosm and the microcosm, remember that the bones in their body are analogous to the realm of the mineral, and that their hair and nails are analogous to the realm of the vegetable, and that their animal self and inner and outer senses are analogous to the realm of the animal. Whoever acts in obedience to his Lord of necessity brings fatigue to his limbs, organs and the other physical components of his body; on investigation, we realize that this fatigue is a kind of *zakat*. The fruit of fatigue in this world is that one becomes purified of filth and one rises above natural impurities and baseness of character, in accordance with the words of Allah, 'O you who are clothed! Arise and warn, and your Lord do magnify and your garments do purify and uncleanness do shun.' Then the mirror of his heart shines bright such that the lights of the angelic *malakut* and the traces of the *jabarut* or realm of power manifest therein; indeed his soul becomes an inhabitant of these two realms – which denote the two realms of the pure intelligible substances and the purified souls (or as they are also known according to the *shari`ah*: the realm of the intimate angels, indicated in the Qur'an as 'the sublime abode').

It is for this reason that the Messenger of Allah would always say the following in his supplications: 'O Allah, place light in my heart and light in my hearing and light in my sight and light in my flesh and light in my blood and light in my bones and light in front of me and light below . me and light in my grave, O Allah increase me in light and give me light by the truth of Your reality, O most Merciful of the Merciful.'<sup>1</sup> The secret of this prayer is that it removes any darkness, obscurity, impurity and stain from him and gives light, clarity, purity, refinement and courtesy in their place; by means of this prayer he becomes of the people of the *malakut* and *jabarut* – by the strength of the spiritual link – and he attains to what the inhabitants of these abodes attain to, namely direct witnessings and unveilings. We have already mentioned this supplication once before; the reader should not imagine that its inclusion here is mere idle repetition, rather it is important as an example of the Prophet's guidance and instruction for the rest of his people out of his concern that they should also share such stations. If this were not so, then this supplication would have no meaning, given that the Prophet is infallible and free from all impurities.

The above remarks may also be applied to the three kinds of soul rather than the body and its physical members. Just as there exists in man the three kingdoms on a cosmic level, so there also exists the soul of the mineral realm, the soul of the vegetable realm and the soul of the animal realm. The *zakat* of these three kingdoms may be extracted of these three souls by the expulsion of the baser and blameworthy qualities of behaviour from each of them and their replacement with the finer attributes of good behaviour. The soul is one reality and multiplies in accordance with contingent phenomena. For every quality the soul acquires there is a corresponding name: by its detachment, it is called the human soul and by its attachment to the body, in the first instance, it is called the plant soul, and in the second, the animal soul, and in the third instance, the selfish soul.

The *shari`ah* and the Qur'an have described the four souls or selves as self-accusing, commanding to evil, the tranquil soul, and the inspired soul. As to the soul which commands to evil, it is referred to in Allah's words: 'Surely man's soul is wont command (him to do) evil.' As for the self-accusing or self-reproaching soul, it is referred to in His words: 'Nay I swear by the day of resurrection; nay I swear by the self-accusing soul.' As for the inspired self, it is referred to in His words: 'And the soul and Him who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it.' As for the soul at rest it is referred to in His words: 'O soul that art rest! Return to your Lord, well pleased (with Him), well pleasing (Him). In the first instance the soul, because of the weakness of its intellectual power and its lack of will to prevent it from doing what is harmful, takes command over the body, its physical forces and the like. If, however, the self-accusing soul dominates by the power of their intellect and prevents it from doing what is blameworthy, then it reproaches the soul such that it turns away from what it is engaged in. When this quality of self-reproach becomes an inherent part of the soul, then the soul becomes inspired, and thus merits inspiration from Allah with regard to its actions and states. In becoming the inspired soul, it becomes aware of the difference between what is good and what is bad, what is beneficial and what is evil. When this quality becomes an integral characteristic of the soul, it thereby witnesses the world of the unseen. In this way it merits a witnessing of its Lord and becomes tranquil and is able to return to its own world. How good is the *zakat* whose fruit is such a return; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

The *zakat* of this group is established after their fulfillment of the two above-mentioned types of *zakat*. Their particular *zakat* refers to the removal of the awareness of limitation from everything in existence and causing each to arrive at the world of the unrestricted or absolute, such that it becomes purified of the stain of otherness and the impurity of duality. Every imaginable existence is in fact Absolute Existence in a particular state of limitation. The manner in which the limit or restriction is removed from the three realms (of vegetable, mineral and animal) is, in the first instance, by the elevation of each realm above the restriction of composite elements so that it arrives at the purely simple elemental state.

In the case of these simple elements, the limitations of this particular state are overcome by removing the restriction of simple individual elements and causing it to arrive at the celestial plane of the heavens and the planetary bodies. The limitations of the latter are removed by releasing it from the restriction of the celestial and planetary and by causing it to reach the universal body of natural forms. The latter is released from the limitation of its corporeality such that it reaches the level of universal substance. The latter is released from its own restriction of substance by its arrival at the level of universal nature. The latter is released from its restriction of nature and caused to arrive at the level of the simple or pure soul. The latter is released from its spiritual particularity and caused to arrive at the level of the sacred souls and that of the universal souls which is the level of the pure intelligences. From these latter it is caused to arrive at the Presence of Oneness and Absolute Existence or Reality. This releasing from limitation and particularity is the true purification and the universal *zakat* in relation to every existence from among the existent beings in the realm of the possible.

We have already shown how the perfection of the mineral is its arrival at the realm of the vegetable, and the perfection of the vegetable is its arrival at the station of the animal, and the perfection of the animal is its arrival at the station of man, and the perfection of man is his arrival, in the first instance, at the station of the earthly realm (*mulk*) and then to that of the divine caliphate, and then to the station of pure creation. This is a kind of *zakat* in that it purifies man and indeed all existent beings of the impurity of limitation and the stain of specificity which, as we have seen, is a kind of hidden *shirk*. It is this that is the true *zakat* and the true goal, since there is no other kind of purification which is greater than this. Purification of the existent beings from the restriction of limitation and contingent phenomena is the greatest and sublimest of purifications; indeed it is the ultimate purpose of Allah's imposition of *zakat* on His slaves. We ask Allah to give us success in arriving at this station of *zakat* and similar stations; He it is from Whom the slaves seek help and on Whom they rely.

## 11 ) Hajj (pilgrimage)

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

According to the people of this group, the word *hajj* refers to the journey towards the actual goal of the *hajj* itself. According to the law of the *shari`ah*, it specifically refers to the journey towards the House of Allah, the Haram, in order to perform the prescribed rites at the prescribed time; and there are two legal divisions to the term: the obligatory and the recommended.

The obligatory is of two types, the absolute and the restricted. As for the absolute, it is the pilgrimage of Islam, which is obligatory when eight conditions are fulfilled: that the person has reached puberty, is of

perfectly sound mind, is a free man, is healthy, that the provision (for the journey) is available, that the means of conveyance to and from the place of pilgrimage exist together with adequate funds or means of support from one's own industry or profession, the absence of obstacles on the route and the possibility of travel. When any of these conditions is not fulfilled, then the *hajj* is no longer obligatory, although the judgment of the *hajj* as a recommended or desirable act of worship remains in force.

Among the things which make for the perfection of the conditions is that it is obligatory to perform it at least once in a lifetime; any more than this is desirable, and this obligation demands that it be performed as soon as the conditions are fulfilled. As for the restricted type of *hajj* it becomes obligatory for specific reasons. Thus it becomes an obligation after the making of a vow or a contract with Allah, and it should be undertaken in accordance with the number of vows made. Thus if once, then one pilgrimage is made and if many, then many; two pilgrimages which have become obligatory may not be exchanged when one, for example, seems more important, so that if two are to be performed then the performance of one does not do for the other as well. It has, however, been narrated that if a person performs the pilgrimage with the intention of fulfilling a vow, then this may be counted as the Islamic *hajj* (or the main *hajj*, obligatory once in a lifetime); the first of these judgments is surer as a precautionary measure. A vow should not be made except by a free person of perfectly sound mind; the rest of the conditions, however, need not be fulfilled.

There are three kinds of *hajj*: *tamattu*; *qiran* and *ifrad*. The *hajj tamattu`* is obligatory on whoever has no family resident in the proximity of the Haram Mosque. The *ifrad* and *qiran* pilgrimage are an obligation on persons residing in the proximity of the Haram: the prescribed distance is twelve miles between the person's residence and the Haram Mosque, extending in all four directions from the House; this is equivalent to four *farasikh*, each *farsakh* (parasang) being four thousand cubits and each cubit being of twenty-four inches.

There are two types of action undertaken during the *hajj*, those which are obligatory and those which are *sunnah* – after the example of the Prophet. There are two divisions to what is obligatory: that which is a pillar and that which is not, and they apply to all these above-mentioned kinds of *hajj*. The pillars of the *tamattu` hajj* are ten in number, four of them being for the `umrah (or minor hajj) and six for the *hajj* itself. As for those belonging to the `umrah, they are the intention, the donning of the ihram (two pieces of seamless white cloth) at the prescribed limits and the prescribed times, the tawaf (the circumambulation of the Ka'bah) of the `umrah and the running between Safa and Marwah. As for those belonging to the *hajj*, they are the intention, the standing at 'Arafat, the standing at the place of the rites and sacrifice, the *tawaf of hay*, and the running between Safa and Marwah.

The things which are not pillars are eight in number: the pronouncing of the *talbiyah*: 'Here I am at your service' four times when possible, or doing whatever takes its place when one is incapable of the above; the two cycles of prayer for the tawaf of `umrah; the cutting of hair after running between Safa and Marwah; the pronouncing of the *talbiyah* when donning the ihram for the *hajj*, or when donning whatever

may take its place; the sacrifice of an animal, or whatever takes its place (that is the fast) if one is unable to slaughter; the two cycles of prayer for the *tawaf* of *hajj*; the *tawaf* of the women and the accompanying two cycles of prayer. As for the pillars of the *qiran* and the *ifrad* pilgrimages they are six in number: the intention, the donning of the *ihram*, the standing at the places of the rites and sacrifice, the *tawaf* of the visit (to the Ka'bah) and that of running between Safa and Marwah.

The things other than the pillars with respect to these two types of *hajj* are four in number: the *talbiyah* or whatever takes its place – when the animal is garlanded at the prescribed rites and sacrifice – and the two cycles of prayer for the *tawaf* of the visit and the *tawaf* of the women together with its accompanying two cycles of prayer. The *qiran hajj* is distinguished from the *ifrad* by the driving of the sacrificial animal. It is desirable in both these kinds of *hajj* to renew the *talbiyah* while beginning each *tawaf*. The things which are *sunnah* are many in number and may be learned from the appropriate books; and may peace be on those who follow the guidance. Herewith we conclude the section the *hajj* of the people of *shari'ah* according to the manner of the Shiahs.

## ii) According to the people of tariqah

The *hajj* of this group occurs after the establishment of the abovementioned *hajj*, this *hajj* refers to journeying towards the real House of Allah and the inner Ka'bah by means of spiritual wayfaring. According to this group, the House of Allah has different dimensions: there is that of the cosmos and that of the individual souls. As for the cosmic Ka'bah, it refers to the heart of the Great Man, also known as the Universal Soul and the *Bayt al-Ma'mur* (the House in heaven above the Ka'bah) or the Guarded Tablet; as for that of the individuals souls, it refers to the heart of man as the microcosm, also known, for example, as the rational individual soul. The first is related to the people of *haqiqah* since it is their *qiblah*; the second is related to the people of *tariqah*, for it is also their *qiblah* (We shall consider the journey of the people of *haqiqah* after our present discussion).

To understand the manner of journeying towards the *qiblah* of the people of *tariqah*, which is their journeying towards their own heart, a preliminary: introduction is necessary. It has been narrated that the first house to extend over the water and to appear on the surface was the Ka'bah and this happened before the earth and all centres of civilisation. This is affirmed in the words of the Prophet: 'The Ka'bah was the first house to appear on the surface of the water during the creation of the heavens. Allah created it a thousand years before the earth. It was like a white foam on the surface of the watery and the earth was laid out beneath it.' The following words of Allah also bear witness to the truth of these words: 'Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for the nations. In it are clear signs, the standing place of Abraham and whoever enters it shall be secure, and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, above any

need of the worlds.<sup>1</sup> Our intention in quoting the saying of the Prophet and the Qur'anic ayah is to demonstrate to the reader that there exists a Ka'bah of the phenomenal realm and a Ka'bah of the noumenal realm.

Moreover, each may be classified in two ways: as for the former it may be divided firstly into the phenomenal mosque, also known as the House of Allah or the Haram, and secondly, the phenomenal heart, also known as the House of Allah, or the Haram. As for the latter, on the one hand it is the heart of the Great Man, also known as the Universal Soul and, on the other, the heart of man as the microcosm, also known as the rational individual soul. Just as the saying of the Prophet and the ayah apply to the first two divisions, so they also apply to the latter two divisions – since the first reality which appeared within the world of the soul from the soul of the Great Man was his true heart (which is also known as the Universal Soul) and is referred to in Allah's words, 'O people! Be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, Who created you from a single being.'<sup>1</sup> Likewise the first form to appear in the world of corporeality, also known as the earth, was the outer form of Bakkah; this is referred to in Allah's words, 'Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance.'<sup>1</sup> The first reality to appear in the world of the soul from the soul of the lesser man or microcosm – referred to by Allah in His words: 'So when I made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit' – was his true heart in accordance with Allah's words, 'Nothing in the earth and the heavens contains Me but the heart of the believing slave (contains Me)'<sup>1</sup>.

The first form to appear in the world of corporeality, that is the body of man, was the form of the heart, referred to by Allah as the breast: 'Have We not expanded for you your breast?' Just as one demonstrates the existence of the noumenal Ka'bah, that is the heart of the Great Man, by the phenomenal Ka'bah, so one may demonstrate the noumenal Ka'bah within the heart of the lesser man. This is affirmed in Allah's words: 'We will soon show them Our signs in the Universe and in their own souls until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth.'<sup>1</sup> Up to this point we have been considering the matter in a general way: we shall now look at it in more detail.

The Universal Soul, which is known as the Greater House of Allah, occupies a position above that of all other things. Allah's words, 'And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods and His throne (dominion) extends on the water'<sup>1</sup> also demonstrate that the Throne ('arsh) occupied a position above the spiritual spheres of the intelligences and souls, before the creation of the heavens and the earth in the corporeal realm – assuming that the throne is understood to refer to the noumenal Throne, the First Intellect. If, however, what is meant by the throne is the phenomenal Throne, which is the greater sphere of the Atlas, the ninth sphere, then what is meant by water is the phenomenal water, according to one of the commentators, namely Nasir al-Din Baydawi; this, he says, is because since there is no obstacle between the throne and the water, it is possible to say that it is above or on it.

If we now consider the matter from another point of view, then it can be said that water is the divine knowledge on which everything has always been firmly established – and will continue likewise forever.

It is specifically referred to as the Throne because of its vastness and might. Thus if we assume, with regard to the realm of form, that this water on which the Throne rests is the sperm of the Great Man, as has been determined by the people of Allah, then it refers to the water of form and the sperm from which the whole form of the world came existence. The people of the outer law are in agreement that the world began from water and they base their judgment on the saying of the Prophet, 'The first thing created by Allah was matter. He then looked upon it and it melted away in modesty (or because of the force of the gaze, according to a different narration), half of it becoming fire and the other half water. He then created the heavens from the water and the planets from fire, or He created the Garden from water and Hell from fire, or He created the spiritual realities from the water and the corporeal realities from the fire' (the basic meaning is the same, despite the difference of terms). The proof of this is the correspondence between the cosmic world and that of the individual souls. The beginning of the microcosm and its creation in the realm of form was from water, that is the drop of sperm, and the microcosm is a model for the macrocosm in all aspects. Thus it follows that the latter must also have been created from water.

The Prophet's words: 'during the creation of the heavens' is an indication of the priority of the spiritual realities over the corporeal realities. His words, 'a thousand years before the earth' is an indication that Allah created the Universal Soul, that is, the Ka'bah of the spiritual realm a thousand years before the bodily forms, that is, the earth and all contained therein. Moreover, what is meant by a thousand years is the two complete ages, first that of the Intellect and then that of the Soul – since they both precede the souls and bodily forms by a long period; that is by two cycles of the orbits of the seven planets, since each planet has an orbit particular to itself which lasts for a thousand years, and an orbit which it shares with the others lasting six thousand years. Thus the world of bodily forms was created two complete cycles – in term of the orbits of the seven planets – after the creation of the souls. It has been established that during the period of Saturn's orbit the earth was still a wilderness. It was during the beginning of Jupiter's orbit that it became inhabited, and it was during the final stage of this orbit that the animals appeared, culminating in the appearance of man.

Thus what is meant by a thousand years is the cycle of these two planets in the manner we have described – or the two ages of the Intellect and the Soul – and in our opinion, this latter notion is closer to the truth. The priority of the souls over the world of bodily forms is so clear and evident that there is no need of any further explanation, especially given the fact that there are *ahadith* and *ayat* from the Qur'an which testify to the truth of this matter. The words, 'And it was a white foam on the surface of the water' is an indication of the purity of the Universal Soul and its transparency and subtlety in relation to the other realities of the angelic realm (*malakut*) – which lies beneath it and is referred to as the water. This is so since everything which is of a higher position, whether it is spiritual or corporeal, is finer and subtler.

As for the correspondence of the House of Allah to the lesser man in the light of the above-cited *hadith*, the appearance of the Ka'bah on the surface of the water may symbolize the attachment of the soul to

the sperm in the creation of man, otherwise the words may be interpreted at the literal level. The creation of the Ka'bah 'during the creation of the heavens' refers to the creation of the soul of man or the heart, as it is also known, before the animal soul, which is also known as the heavens; 'a thousand years before the earth' symbolizes the creation of the soul of the lesser man two complete ages before his body. The words, 'white foam' symbolize the purity of its substance and its subtlety before its attachment to the body, that is the earth. The words, 'on the surface of the water' symbolize the sperm which is the original matter making up the body and the general form of man. What is meant here is the attachment of the soul when it was created and made manifest in the world of the unseen and the world of the Divine Command. The words, 'then the earth was laid beneath it' alludes to the body: what is meant here is that when the soul is directed to the sperm, the body extends in accordance with the judgment and command of the soul until the station of man's form comes into being as a result of the joining of these two.

The bodily limbs and parts all turn in the direction of the heart so that they may attain to their goal and the knowledge appropriate to them. The blessed Bakkah in the above-cited *ayah* symbolizes the breast which surrounds the heart in the same way as Makkah encompasses the Mosque and the Ka'bah; this is because the Ka'bah is analogous to the heart, the breast to the mosque, and the body to the Haram or Makkah. The words 'blessed' indicates the blessing obtained from the heart in the way of divine graces. The words, 'and a guidance for the nations' indicate that the House is a guidance to the various groups around it – that is, the twin forces of the spirit and body for example, or the human, animal and vegetative souls. The words, 'in it are clear signs, the standing place. of Abraham' are an indication of the presence of the acquiring intellect, that is, the presence of sanctity and the station of drawing close; this is one of the greatest of Allah's signs and one of the sublimest.

The words, 'whoever enters it shall be secure' imply that whoever enters this house, that is the heart, in a fitting manner, will be secure from the Satanic guiles of the soul which commands to evil, from the Satanic guiles of the demon imagination, from seizure by the armies of false conjecture and from the influence of brigand jinn and men. The meaning of the words, 'and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it' is that the pilgrimage to the house is incumbent upon those whom we have mentioned above who should journey to it and circumambulate it so that they may perceive its signs, secrets and realities and so that they may arrive by means of it to Allah, to His Gardens and to His Presence. The meaning of everyone who is able 'to undertake the journey to it' is everyone who is able to follow this spiritual path and to persevere in constancy along it, that is. by means of the provision from the realm of reality, through the knowledge of certainty and total annihilation and the death of the will. The above is true, since anyone who does not possess this capacity is no longer obliged to perform this *hajj*, as has already been determined in the case of the *hajj* of the *shari`ah* law. Whoever denies the truth of this *hajj* and disobeys the command of Allah, whoever strays from its path and from fulfillment of its rites, then 'surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, above any need of the worlds'. Anyone who relies solely on Allah in his travelling along this path and

who progresses thereon with complete devotion will be guided to the straight path in the direction of the inner House of Allah.

Up to this point we have been examining the *hajj* of spiritual travel in relation to the self; we shall now begin on the subject of the *hajj* of the cosmic realm and the perception of the realities of the angelic realm (*malakut*) and the realm of Absolute Dominion (*jabarut*) and the circumambulation of them. Know that whoever wishes to undertake this *hajj* and to travel to this House, then it is incumbent upon him, in the first instance, to don the *ihram* or invest himself in the state of prohibition. What this means is that the person must forbid himself any indulgence in the sensual desires, be they of a forbidden or permitted nature; that is, he should only permit himself what is absolutely necessary in accordance with Allah's words, 'And whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring, nor exceeding the limit'. It also means that the person refrains from harming any animal or human being, be it through his action or intention, so that he may witness his own state. In this way he may attain to knowledge and gnosis. Moreover, it is incumbent upon him in this state to busy himself with the four *talbiyas* and their meaning, which is that his Lord has no need of his obedience or his worship, or indeed of the obedience or worship of any person; rather he realizes that every existent being is in need of Him, by reason of their essence, their very existence and their strength.

The person then faces Allah saying the *talbiyah* 'Here I am at your service' in the tongue of the state rather than by actual speech, such that the reality of slavery becomes clear to him. He then enters into the mosque of the breast, that is, the Mosque of the Haram around the heart, which in turn is the Ka'bah of the realm of reality. He then circumambulates it seven times, that is, he examines it seven times so that he may know his own state and so that the veils may be lifted from him. These veils are the blameworthy qualities of behaviour and his base actions, for the seven veils corresponding to the number of the gates of Gehenna, namely conceit, pride, envy, greed, miserliness, anger and excessive sensual desire. These seven things are removed by the making of the seven *tawaf*, each of the latter being the cause of removal of one of the former. These seven *tawaf* are also the cause of the heart's taking on the corresponding praiseworthy qualities, namely knowledge, wisdom, chastity, courage, justice, generosity and humility. The person then prays the prayer of gratitude at the station of Abraham in the realm of the intellect and is thereby brought to this station, by the purity of spiritual capacity and the vision which opens to him from his fear of Allah.

The person then runs between Safa and Marwah, that is, he travels between the world of the outer and that of the inner in order to witness his Beloved in them both and to examine the signs contained in them both, in accordance with Allah's 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.'

He then cuts his hair at Marwah, that is, he causes to fall from his head any remaining trace of I-ness or

duality; in doing so, he comes out of the state of *ihram* (ritual purity) and the actions of the *`umrah*, (the lesser pilgrimage) which are analogous to the ablution and the prayer, and all things which were previously forbidden to him then become permitted. This is so since the slave who is in the station of 1-less and otherness is not permitted anything according to the way of the gnostics. If he comes out of this station, and becomes annihilated in the *ha,,Tj* and in the state of abiding therein, then everything becomes permissible for him; indeed, he is forbidden or permitted something in accordance with his own speech, since he is the caliph and has the authority to command and prohibit.

The reader should take great care to understand this point: by it one may obtain gnosis of the station of prophethood and saintliness (*wilayah*) – *since* after the Truth, there is no other source of authority but them. He then takes on another *ihram* (the pilgrim's apparel) from the presence of the intellect which lies beneath the water-course of the heart. (The intellect is a water-course in relation to the heart since wisdom flows from the sea of the heart by way of the water-course of the intellect. Hence the words of the Prophet 'Whoever devotes forty mornings to Allah, springs of wisdom will appear from within his heart,' that is, on the tongue of the intellect which is the interpreter of the heart.)

He then makes his way to the *`Arafat* of the mind and the mountain of gnosis, in order to gaze on the signs, gnosés and realities thereabout; this is so since the mind in relation to the body is sometimes like the mount of Abu Qabis or the Mount of Hira' and sometimes like the Throne of His Majesty or the Throne of the Generous. It is in this station that gnosés descend between the spiritual Adam, which is the soul or spirit, and Eve, the Universal Soul. It is for just this reason that this station is called 'Arafat (from the Arabic root *`arafa* meaning knowledge); this is affirmed in the words of the Prophet, 'Whoever knows himself knows his Lord.'

The person then returns to the place of the rites and sacrifice, that is, he stands in the proximity of his own feelings and sensations both in the realm of form and inner meaning, in order to gaze upon the state of each one of them and to cause each to be brought under the authority of its Creator and its Lord, in accordance with the words, 'I was his hearing and his sight and his tongue and his hand and his foot...'; this is because as long as the senses are under the authority of the slave then they are obedient to the soul which commands to evil and they follow the rebellious Satan of passion and desire. If they come under the authority of the Lord and are obedient to that which He has ordered, then they become obedient to the tranquil soul and follow the intellect: the intellect then becomes the emir and ruler in the city and region of the senses.

Then the person returns to Mina, to the realm of the breast and the heart, in order to throw the stones of his own blameworthy and base qualities of behaviour at the three *jamrat'* (places of the devil), that is, the three realms of the mineral, vegetable and animal. This latter is the realm of the compound realities and all that is related to these realities; it is the state of sincerity and the station of great rank and risk, in accordance with the saying of the Prophet, 'All men are doomed to perish except those of action; those

of action will perish except for the sincere and the sincere are in great risk.'

Thus the person of this station, having discarded his bad qualities of behaviour during the taking on of the *ihram*, must take care not to return to them when he returns to the station of final perfection, attested to in the words of the people of this science, 'The final goal is a return to the beginning;' the reason for this is also evident in the words, 'The good actions of the righteous are the bad actions of those who have achieved the station of intimacy.' The person then goes on to cut the hair of his head, that is, to remove the 'I-ness' from the head of his self so that action, power and strength are perceived as coming from Allah (which is a higher station than the first cutting of the hair). He then continues towards the removal of the veils of the sacrifice of his self once more, such that no name or trace remains of his self.

Then he goes back to the Ka'bah to perform the second *tawaf*. What this means is that he inspects his heart once again in order to purify it from the impurity of seeing otherness in any way. This is the station contained in the saying of the Prophet, 'Surely trouble and vexation come over my heart and surely I seek forgiveness of Allah seventy times every day and night;' this is so since the Prophet is infallible and has none of the faults recognized as punishable by the *shari'ah* for which he must seek forgiveness of Allah. The only wrong action of the people of this group in their traveling along this spiritual path is the witnessing of otherness, even if it is only be !for a moment and this occurs when the world of man and the corresponding force of the animal soul overcomes this spiritual station.

Then he goes on to pray two cycles in the station of Abraham, in gratitude for his arrival at the Beloved and at his goal. He then runs once more, that is between the Safa of the world of the soul and the Marwah of the world of corporeality, or we may say between the Safa of the heart and Marwah of the self, in order to witness therein the perfect signs of His manifestations and to witness the signs of His beauty and majesty. He performs the cutting of the hair in the Marwah of the self. By abandoning whatever remains therein of the witnessing of multiplicity in the world. of Oneness.

He then returns to Mina to stone the devils during the three days following 'Arafat, that is, he returns from the Ka'bah of the heart once more to the Mina of the breast in the *ayyam al-tashriq*, which are the different days of divine unity (the *tawhid* of action, attribute and essence) in order to abandon everything which is other than these, such that nothing remains with him but the Real. In this station he rises up above perception of all creation, such that no trace at all of the existence of its creatures remains with him and existence remains with him; thus he witnesses the Real as the Real, sometimes in the world of His Oneness, stripped of all phenomenal manifestation, some times in the world of multiplicity in the guise of His Names, Attributes, beauty and majesty, and sometimes in the world which combines the two above-mentioned realms, that is, in the Muhammadi *tawhid* of gatheredness. It is this that is the goal of the *hajj* in the realm of meaning according to the masters of *tariqah*. If this is clear to the reader we shall now begin on a commentary of the *hajj* of the people of *haqiqah*.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

The *hajj* of the people of this group refers to the spiritual journey in the esoteric realm towards the heart of the Great Man, which is the Greater House of Allah, also known as the *Bayt al-Ma`mur*, the Presence of Sanctity and the Universal Soul – just as the *hajj* of the people of *tariqah* refers to the journey towards the heart of the lesser man or microcosm. An explanation of this requires some introductory explanation, including the commentary of one of the gnostics with regard to the correspondence between the two worlds.

Know that just as the sultan of the individual soul, the soul of the lesser man, resides only in the brain, so too the sultan of the Universal Soul, the soul of the Great Man – also called the world – resides only in the Throne which is analogous to the brain in relation to us just as its first manifestation in the lesser man is the phenomenal heart, the source of life, so too its first manifestation in the Great Man is the fourth planetary sphere, the sphere of the sun and the source of life in this world.

As for the heart in the realm of reality, it is the Universal Soul, also called the Preserved Tablet, the Clear Book and the Real Adam, referred to in the words of Allah, 'O people! Be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, Who created you from a simple being and created its mate in the same (kind) and spread of these two, many men and women.' The soul of the fourth planetary sphere is analogous to the animal or vital soul which resides in the heart whereby all the bodily limbs receive life; it is the *Bayt al-Ma`mur*, recognized in the *shari`ah* as being in the fourth heaven. It is by this that the revelation of Allah swears in the following *ayah*: 'I swear by the Mountain and the Book written in a fine outstretched parchment and the House (Ka'bah) that is visited and the elevated canopy and the swollen sea'. It is for this reason that the station of Jesus was made that of the Soul of Allah; indeed, among his miracles was the raising of the dead. The 'Mountain' referred to in the *ayah* is the Throne and the 'Book' is the Universal Soul, that is, the heart of the world. The words 'in fine outstretched parchment' refer to the eighth planetary sphere, being the manifestation thereof; 'the elevated canopy' may be either the Throne or the sky of this world; and 'the House (the Ka'bah) that is visited' may be either the fourth sphere or the Universal Soul – for the eighth planetary sphere is also the manifestation of the Universal Soul. 'The swollen sea' is the sea of the substance, flowing full of forms; it is possible that it is the world of the first interspace, composed of the worlds of the soul and the body, also called the Absolute Imagination and full of the forms of all existent beings. We shall now begin to explain this matter again in more detail.

The meaning of the *hadith* 'The Ka'bah was the first house...' has already been discussed in the section concerning the *hajj* of the people of the *tariqah*, namely that the Ka'bah is the Universal Soul, also known as the Greater House of Allah. The appearance on the surface of the water refers to worlds of the souls which issued from this Universal Soul before the worlds of corporeal realities: anything which is above anything else is of necessity on top of it and thus there is no doubt that the Universal Soul is above the

individual souls and so it may also be said to be on top of them. The *ayah*, 'And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods – and His dominion (extends) on the water' also points to this same meaning.

It may be said that the water refers to the universal substance which is analogous to the water in relation to the Universal Soul. It is also possible that it refers to a time before the split took place when things were still in the closed-up state. This state of being closed, in one entity, comprised the totality of all material things: the Intellect, the Soul, the Throne and the Footstool were one reality and a universal matter. This is referred to in Allah's words: 'Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed but We have opened them.'

The gnostics have commented upon the meaning of being closed up, saying it comprises the totality of matter in the state of oneness, also known as the greater and absolute element which was closed-up before the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is also applied to the Presence of Oneness in relation to itself, before its subsequent manifestations, and to the esoteric realities hidden in the Essence of Oneness before separation; there are many examples of this, one among them being the likeness of the tree which is contained as a latent force within the seed.

Whoever disbelieves in this *hajj*, who does not perform it and does not aver its validity, then he is of the *mushrikun*, the people who associate others with Allah, the people who are veiled – surely Allah has no need of such people, be they man or jinn or from wherever they may be. This is because Allah is Self-Sufficient in relation to all the worlds and has no need of their obedience and worship, since He is He. Indeed, the benefit of obedience and worship is confined to the one whose duty it is to obey and to worship none other than Allah, Who is Self-Sufficient with respect to the worlds, their obedience and their worship. It is not permissible to say that this implies a completion of His perfection by what is other-than-Him because this benefit cannot return to Him.

Moreover, no action on the part of the All-Wise, the Perfect, is done in jest and any action which issues from an actor without a purpose must be in jest – and jest is impossible of Allah, in accordance with His words, 'And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them for sport' and His words, 'What! Did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?' Thus, of necessity, this creation has a specific purpose; since it is impossible that the benefit be for Him, it must be that it is for the sake of His slaves, and thus we may arrive at a satisfactory conclusion to this argument. It is for this reason that Allah says in various places in the Qur'an, 'Whoever does good, it is for his own soul and whoever does evil, it is against it' and His words, 'Indeed there have come to you clear proofs from your Lord; whoever will therefore see, it is for his own soul and whoever will be blind, it shall be against himself and I am not a keeper over you.' We shall conclude this particular topic at this point, although there are many other matters which may be taken into consideration. We shall now begin a detailed study of the nature of the pilgrimage, the manner of its performance and the arrival at the goal.

Know that whoever wants to go and visit this house, that is, to arrive therein, it is incumbent upon him in the first instance to take upon himself the *ihram*, namely the prohibition upon himself against witnessing the world of the sensory or the material forms and all the desires and sensual pleasures connected to them. The person must then go forward towards the world of the souls, that is, the realities which are analogous to the Haram, to Makkah, Bakkah and the other corresponding stations in the phenomenal world – until he actually arrives. On arrival, he must take on the qualities of these realities so that they become part of his own character. The person then goes towards the Ka'bah of the realm of reality, that is the Universal Soul, and circumambulates it twice.

On completion of each tawaf, he attains to a gnosis of each of the seven spheres and the seven Qur'anic gnos<sup>2</sup> indicated in the Prophet's words: 'Truly the Qur'an has an outward and an inward dimension and this latter has its own inward dimension – and so on up to seven inward dimensions.' The person then goes to the place of standing of Abraham, that is the station of oneness and the presence of oneness, also known as the First Intellect and the greater soul. The person prays therein two cycles of prayer out of gratitude for his arrival at that presence. These two cycles of prayer are an expression of his annihilation, in the first instance from the outer world and in the second from the inner world and all contained therein, including even himself.

He then goes to the place of running between Safa and Marwah, between the two worlds of the outer and inner, in order to perceive them once more by means of his running and striving; he eliminates any vision of multiplicity by perceiving every thing contained therein as the existence of the One. He then becomes established in the state of gatheredness, which is the true goal, in accordance with the words of the Prophet, 'This world is prohibited the people of the next world and the next world is forbidden the people of this world and they are both forbidden to the people of Allah;' the truth of this may be recognized in the division of the people into those of the left, those of the right and those of intimacy, as we have already mentioned above.

The gnostic has also referred to this with his words: 'Awareness of these two things (this world and the next) is incumbent upon you; for surely the person who joins them both is the person who attains to true unity (*tawhid*) and is the one who gathers gatheredness; he reaches a sublime station and the ultimate goal.' The person does the cutting at Marwah, that is the elimination of the world of the outer and the end of multiplicity by removing from himself any trace of duality and the seeing of otherness. This then is the completion of the actions of the *'umrah of tamattu'* within this hajj.

He then makes for the Ka'bah once again in order to witness the Universal Soul and to apprise himself of its realities and to take the *ihram of hajj*, beneath the water-course of the intellect in the above-mentioned manner. He then moves to the station of the 'Arafat of the soul and the intellect, at the mountain of truth, which is the Throne of the phenomenal realm, and the manifestation of the First Intellect. In doing so, he unites with them both by the power of the gnosis obtained from his awareness

that all is One. Beyond this presence there is no other, except for that of the Essence, forbidden of access to all; to arrive there and take on the Attributes of the Presence of Oneness with the Essence is impossible. Of this station therefore it has been said, 'There is no further village beyond Abadan (forever).'

Here the Muhammadi *tawhid*, the unity of gatheredness, is obtained once again; the difference between the two is that in the first *tawhid*, creation as a whole is removed from his gaze, in accordance with Allah's words, 'Everything is perishable but He', and in the second *tawhid*, all the attributes are removed, in accordance with the words of the divine gnostic: 'The first part of the way is gnosis of Him, and the perfection of gnosis of Him is affirmation of Him, and the perfection of affirmation of Him is recognition of His Oneness, and the perfection of this recognition is sincerity to Him, and the perfection of sincerity to Him is the negation of the attributes from Him, by bearing witness on the part of each attribute that it was something without attribute, and the bearing witness on the part of each thing possessing an attribute that it is without attribute. In this station man becomes a (true) man, the perfect man becomes (truly) perfected and the gnostic (truly) gnostic.' It is for this reason that a return to a completion of perfection and the world of multiplicity becomes necessary, in accordance with the words of Allah, 'and that they may warn their people when they come back to them that they may be cautious' and in accordance with the reply of the Shaykh Junayd when asked about the meaning of the end: 'It is a return to the beginning.' It is this that is the secret of the return of the one who is performing the *hajj* from 'Arafat to Mina; indeed there are still more secrets beyond those revealed here.

He then returns to Mina, the world of multiplicity, that is, the world of rites and sacrifice in the realm of the spheres, the planetary bodies, the elements and the three kingdoms; he perceives them with the perception of Oneness and he witnesses them as divine manifestations contemplating them as created from one aspect and as real from another aspect. He then becomes occupied with the execution of the rites and ceremonies of this station, by performing the stoning, the sacrifice and the cutting; he first of all stones the *Jamrat al-`Aqabah* (places of the devil), namely this world and its pleasures, comprising the seven levels of elemental and natural kingdoms. This stoning is the stoning in the visionary realm, not physical stoning.

Thus when he returns to the above-mentioned worlds it is incumbent upon him to act with authority and certainty. He then sacrifices his self again, such that he is hardly alive any more with the superficial life of this world; rather he becomes alive with the life of the realm of reality, indicated in Allah's words, 'And reckon' not those who are killed in Allah's way are dead; nay, they are alive and are provided sustenance from their Lord' and His words, 'Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walked among the people like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness, whence he cannot come forth?'

He then shaves the head of his self from love of this world and its pleasures; he shaves it such that he hardly returns to the world at all. The goal is to remove any belief in the reality of this world, since an

investigation of this world reveals that it is nothing but pure non-existence and a figment of the imagination; indeed it is maintained in existence by false conjecture which is mentioned in the saying of the Prophet, 'This world is maintained in existence by illusion' and in the words of the Imam, 'The destruction of what is imaginary comes with the sobriety of the Known'. Jesus has said: 'O seeker of this world, to behave correctly therein is to abandon it; this is more correct behaviour, this is more correct.'

He then returns from this station to the station of abiding in Allah after the annihilation. He also makes another *tawaf* of the Ka'bah, that is, he perceives it again from seven directions as demanded by the source of his own soul, that is the seven levels of his coming into being, in accordance with Allah's words, 'Indeed He has created you through various grades.' In this way he attains influence in the seven regions of the earth and the seven regions of the spheres, also known as the *malakut* and the *jabarut*. He then performs the two cycles of prayer for the two 'id festivals, namely the 'id *al-Adha* festivals, and that of *al-Fitr*, in the station of Abraham: one for his taking on of the attributes in the annihilation from all existence and one for his abiding in Allah after this annihilation. Moreover, the 'id prayer must be performed in a place specially reserved for this purpose, which is the station of Oneness in the realm of reality. The reader should mark this point well as it is subtle in character.

He then returns to Mina and the world of multiplicity within the three realms of the mineral, vegetable and animal; therein are three divine days for the perfection of higher aspirations: it is station of the final goal and ultimate aim of the spiritually noble. The following ayah refers in particular to this: 'This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion.' We ask Allah to grant us arrival to the like of this *had* by the truth of the Real. Herewith we conclude the commentary on the *hay* of the people of *haqiqah*. We shall now begin with subject of *jihad*; and praise belongs to Allah alone and it is from Him that all help is sought and in Whom the people trust.

## 12) Jihad

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

According to the people of this group, the *jihad* (striving in the way of Allah or holy war) is one of the obligations of Islam, that is, it is an obligation of communal responsibility, so that if it is only performed by some, the obligation ceases to be binding on the rest.

There are seven conditions to this obligation: being male, having reached the age of puberty, being of

perfectly sound mind and health, being a free man, and not being an elderly person on whom sustenance of all the family depends, and that there be a just Imam or someone who represents him. If one of these conditions is not fulfilled, then there is no longer any obligation. The disbelievers against whom the *jihad* is obligatory are of two kinds. The first are those whom one must fight until they surrender or are killed or until they accept the *jizyah* tax.

As for the second kind, the *jizyah* is not accepted of them and they are fought until they surrender or are killed. If the *jizyah* is accepted then there is no fixed amount to be exacted according to the soundest opinion; rather the amount is to be determined by those of the Shiah *fuqaha'* (men of law) skilled in this science – and collected in accordance with the judgment of the Imam. The *jizyah* is either exacted per head or in accordance with the amount of land held by them; but it cannot be demanded of these two things together. Moreover it may be increased or reduced according to the judgment of the Imam. If the *jizyah* is exacted on land and they submit and become Muslims, then the obligation is no longer binding. *Jizyah* may not be taken from four groups of persons: children, mad persons, the foolish and women. Fighting should not be begun until they (the enemy) are invited to Islam, by way of the science of *tawhid*, justice and the establishment of the pillars. If they refuse to accept all or any of these things, then it is permitted to fight them. The person entrusted with inviting them to Islam should be the Imam or whoever is delegated by him; and Allah is more Knowing and more Wise.

## ii) According to the people of tariqah

The *jihad* of this group refers to the *jihad* or the struggle against the self in accordance with the saying of the Prophet, 'We have returned from the lesser *jihad* to the greater *jihad*.' What is meant by the lesser *jihad* is fighting of unbelievers and the greater *jihad* the struggle against the self (*nafs*). When asked about this, he replied: 'It is the struggle against the soul (or self) which commands to evil.' It has also been related from the Prophet: 'Your greatest enemy is the self contained between the two sides of your body.' Any person of sound intellect would consider that the struggle against the greater of enemies is more important than the struggle against just the enemy, in particular when it exists between the sides of his own body. The *jihad* of the self is to oppose it in anything which contradicts the intellect and the *shari'ah*, in accordance with Allah's words, '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 his abode.'

This is because the self is always calling to evil in accordance with its inherent nature, described by Allah in His words: 'Most surely (man's) self is wont to command (him to do) evil.' Therefore opposing this kind of self is the source of goodness and perfect justice. This is reflected in the *hadith* of the Prophet with respect to women who are considered similar to the self. 'Take counsel of them and oppose them therein.' The people of Allah have established, in their study of correspondences, that the self of man is analogous to women in the cosmic realm: thus just as it is obligatory to oppose women in

most states, it is also obligatory to oppose the self in most states. If it were not so, then opposing the self would not be the cause of immediate entry into the Garden.

This same meaning is reflected in the *hadith*, 'The Fire is surrounded by desires and the Garden is surrounded by hated things' since the desires literally issue from the self and the Fire of necessity accompanies these desires; moreover, the hated things and opposition to them are dependent upon a sound intellect and the divine code of law and it must be that the fruit of this opposition is the Garden. Allah refers to this when He says, 'And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good', and His saying that it is 'for Us' indicates that if the struggle against the self is not for Allah and in His way, then it is of no use and will not cause the person to enter the Garden and will not be a cause of guidance to Allah and to His straight path.

The Shaykhs are agreed that the spiritual wayfarer should be prevented from traveling the path on his own without a shaykh of perfection. These shaykhs, by their perception of the realities of gnosis, by their knowledge of the stations and the manner in which each may be crossed and how transfer may be effected from a lower to a higher one, are able to instruct the spiritual wayfarer and cause him to stand in the places of standing so that he may arrive at the desired goals without great hardship and difficulty.

Undoubtedly a shaykh is well-equipped to do this because he himself has traveled along this path and therefore knows by experience which path is the easiest and quickest. The seeker cannot do this on his own: he needs help since there are numerous routes to travel and he must find out which of them will bring him to the goal. He may begin to travel one path when he encounters another, with the result that he leaves the former and is at pains to arrive at his destination; if he does arrive, then it is only after great trouble and after spending far more time in a particular station than the Imam or the Prophet had spent therein.

The reason for this is that when the person begins the path on his own, he is not able to free himself of the tendency to yield the demands of the self. Since travel on the path of Allah is based on constant opposition to the self, how then, one may ask, will this person travelling the path of Allah arrive at the goal by himself? Allah alludes to this in His words, 'And could you but see when the guilty shall hang down their heads before their Lord.'

The movement of the one obedient to his self is always downwards; the person who hangs his head down and the person who stands in an upright position are as two distinct persons, the one moving upwards and the other downwards. Movement on the part of either of them only increases the distance between them. This downward movement is like the movement particular to the plants, as we have already mentioned; this is self-evident and there is no need for any other rational proof: We therefore ask Allah by His grace for protection from this downward movement towards the lowest level of the natural world, that is the level of Gehenna, known as 'the lowest of the low' in the Qur'an. The following

versed ?'scribes this kind of self

If the self is neglected, then it keeps company with meanness,  
And if it is urged on then, it longs for nobler qualities.

We have already discussed the manner in which the self ascends from its level of 'commanding to evil' to the 'reproachful' and from there to the 'inspired' and finally to the station where it is tranquil or 'at rest'; it then goes on from this station to the Divine Presence by the law of return in accordance with 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.' This entering means that they should accept the jurisdiction, authority, instruction and guidance of the Prophet, the Imam or the shaykh without any further argument. There are other secrets connected with the manner of arrival, although it would not be appropriate to include them here; we shall mention them, if Allah wills, at the end of the work in the final instructions.

The *jihad* of the people of *tariqah* is the struggle against the self and nothing else. Such people are always in a state of struggle and they never forget their vigilance even for a moment. Just as *jihad* is a communal obligation for the people of the *shari`ah*, so for the people of this group it is an individual obligation, such that no one can perform it on one's behalf, and with them it is the first of obligations. This because it is impossible to set out on this path without it – and thus we arrive at the desired conclusion of our argument.

### iii) According to the people of haqiqah

The *jihad* of the people of this group refers to their struggle against the theorising of the intellect: their struggle is overcoming its doubts and misgivings. This speculative intellect is always restricted to contingencies. What is desired, indeed, the constant goal, is freedom from such restrictions: this is a state which is in accordance with the demands of passion and spiritual tasting. What a difference there is between the intellect and passion or yearning. It has been narrated from the Prophet that Allah has created the intellect to fulfil the claims of slavery, not for the perception of the reality or Lordship.

Thus it is an obligation to use the intellect to carry out what is demanded by the state of slavery and not to speculate on the reality of Lordship. It is for this reason that the gnostic has said the following, which is not understood by the speculative intellect and its theorizing because it is a science based on divine unveiling: 'It is a science whereby one may know the source of the world of forms which receives the souls.' Thus Fakr al-Din al-Razi has said:

The ultimate perception of the intellect is limited

And most men's striving is misguided.

We will never benefit from our investigations throughout our life,  
Whether we fill it with argument or speculation.

On investigation we realize that intellect is to divine yearning as the faculty of conjecture is to the intellect: conjecture is never able to arrive at the level of perception of divine yearning and its gnoses; rather it usually seeks to deny it and obstruct its influence, just as the spirit of conjecture usually tries to deny the intellect and prevent it from functioning. It is for this reason that differences have arisen between the science of rhetoric and intellectual proof and the science of spiritual tasting. Indeed most of the laws of the *shari'ah* issue from the realm of spiritual tasting and yearning, that is, from a prophet or messenger, and they do not accord with the workings of the intellect and intellectual judgments. The doubts and misgivings of the philosophers and brahmins all arise from this source.

Thus the philosophers deny the return and resurrection after death of the body in a physical way and they deny knowledge of the partial or individual entities existing in time; moreover, they ascribe certain attributes to Allah which have not been recorded in the law of the *shari'ah* and whose existence is not even possible in terms of the intellect, such as their assertion of divine simplicity and that God's existence is necessary by virtue of mere logical proof. They also believe that the world has existed since eternity and that the Real – may He be exalted – is the cause of this. All these matters are a result of the judgment of their shallow intellects which are incapable of grasping the secrets of the divine code of law and its subtleties. The same is true of the brahmins who deny the return and resurrection of man; they also oppose the prophets and their miracles and contradict the revealed texts and the divine codes of law, believing in the power of action and whatever issues from action.

They persist in denying the prophets and following the dictates of their shallow intellects, claiming that if the prophets came with a message in harmony with the intellect, then there was no need for the prophets in the first place; if, however, they brought a message which was in opposition to the intellect, then they are not prepared to accept this message, arguing that their intellects are sufficient to find the best and most beneficial manner of living.

However, all these claims are incorrect. If the intellect were sufficient we would have no need of the revealed Books and the messengers; indeed the revelation of such Books and the sending of these messengers would be an act of jest and we have already shown that Allah is not capable of such a jest. Thus we realize that the intellect is in need of another kind of faculty of perception, known as logic by the philosophers and as divine light and justice by those who affirm and act according to the science of divine unity.

Accordingly, just as *jihad* with the literal sword must be made against those who believe in a god other than Allah, so *jihad* with the symbolic sword must also be made against those who affirm an existence other than the existence of Allah. The former arises when a person follows the desires of his self and the

latter when he follows the intellect, the resulting judgment being pure speculative thought. Indeed the first is an expression of manifest idolatry (*shirk*) and the second of hidden idolatry; the rejection of each is obligatory upon every man.

Thus there is never a time or period when these two kinds of *jihad* are absent, whatever the circumstances, for just as the Muslims are always fighting the unbelievers in the different regions of the earth with the literal sword, so those who affirm the oneness of Allah are also constantly striving against the philosophers and brahmins in the different regions of the world with the symbolic sword.

The *jihad* of the people of the *haqiqah* is thus the struggle against the scholars of the intellect to destroy their dubious arguments and reject their misgivings; they strive to make them abandon intellectual speculation that they may follow the true way of tasting and divine passion, namely the way of revelation and inspiration. Similarly, the *jihad* of the people of *tariqah* is never anything other than the struggle against the self by removal of its doubts and misgivings and by overcoming its desires. The result of the first *jihad* is firm establishment on the path of the unity of gatheredness and arrival at the world of oneness after freeing oneself of the hidden idolatry; the result of the second is the journeying towards Allah by means of a sound intellect and the following of His command both outwardly and inwardly, after freeing oneself from manifest idolatry. It is exactly this which Allah intends by the term *jihad* since the goal of the literal *jihad* is also the figurative *jihad*.

Allah mentions those who struggle to establish the proof of Allah, saying they are above those of His slaves who are guilty of associating others with Him (*shirk*): `Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the holders back a (high) degree and to each (class) Allah has promised good; and Allah shall grant to the strivers above the holders back a mighty reward: high degrees from Him and protection and mercy, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.' What is meant by `the holders back' are those who abandon these two kinds of *jihad*. What is meant by `the strivers' are those who establish the *jihad* by way of those two things. Allah also refers to them in His words, `And whoever does this seeking Allah's pleasure, We will give him a mighty reward.' We ask Allah to make us of those strivers by His grace and generosity.

As for our promise to describe the rest of the secrets of spiritual travel, secrets which are instrumental in bringing the traveler to the Real, His Sacred Presence and the worlds of light, then we would say the following: to accustom the self to beneficial things and to acquire the qualities of perfection such that they become inherent in your being is the first of your stations and your first contact with perfection. This then disappears with the rapidity of the station and what enters the self is the consciousness of thought; if this is from conjecture, then the thought occurring to the mind is Satanic or negative and its source are the passions and anger of the self which impede right action, whereas if this consciousness is consciousness of the Real then awareness of what has passed and regret for its passing leads one to turn to Him for forgiveness.

The movement of the self when seeking is the will; the seeker of true purification is a murid or aspirant, a person who possesses will the excitement of the self with what it finds pleasant is hope; the pain it suffers for what is disliked is fear; its abstention from becoming engrossed in sensuality is doing without; its remaining unshaken by contingent events is patience; its perception of the blessings of Allah is gratitude; its perception of the judgment and the degree beyond the natural realm is trust; its acceptance of the judgment and decree is contentment; its vision of the realities in the mirror of this decree is gnosis; its pleasure in what it feels is love; its inhaling of the passing pleasure contained therein is a breath of freshness and the pleasure which lasts for some time is tranquility; the presence of secrecy by way of His presence and seizing His word from the senses of the self is ecstasy; the secret manifestations which annul movement is intoxication; the perception of the origin and source is awe; the extinction of the word with respect to the beginnings is intimacy; its isolation from the physical world, such that the perception of the beginning of creation is contained in the vastness of His self-reliant existence, is divine unity; that which is dependent upon partial manifestations from the unseen is unveiling; and the bodily forms of the spheres, which cause a form to be given to the rational self and which manifests with its sudden appearance and vanishes with its disappearance, is time – it is for this reason that on many occasions a form gives rise to a state without great exertion or involvement; if it occurs frequently then it should be opposed.

It is for this reason that the Prophet has said, 'Truly your Lord blows breaths of fragrance on certain days of your earthly time – during other than these days oppose such (manifestations).'<sup>1</sup> The world is concealed in the perception of its essence by way of its Beloved and it is so utterly submerged in Him that all other sensations vanish. This station, that is, the station of annihilation, is the last of the levels and the highest of the stations of the path. In this concise description of the station of the spiritual wayfarers we have fulfilled the promise made earlier in the book. It should be remembered, however, that these paths to Allah, as the Messenger has said, are 'as many as the souls of creation'<sup>1</sup> and they multiply or diminish in relation to one's intimacy or distance from the Beloved.

<sup>1</sup> It has also been said that this means that the life of all things is (by means of water); this however is not permissible with regard to the Arabic of the ayah for, if this were the case, then the word 'living' would be in the genitive case, yet it is in the accusative and describes 'thing'; thus the meaning of the ayah is that He created the creation from water. This is also affirmed by His words: 'And Allah has created from water every living creature.'

<sup>2</sup> These seven knowledges are: knowledge of tawhid, divestment, annihilation, abiding; knowledge of the essence, the attributes and the divine actions; knowledge of prophethood, the message, wilayah and refined manners; knowledge of revelation, inspiration and unveiling; knowledge of the beginnings, the return, the gathering and the division of men accordingly; the knowledge of behaviour, politics, courtesy and instruction therein; knowledge of the cosmos, the individual souls and the correspondence between the two; these are the greatest and noblest of the sciences. It has been said that what is meant by the seven celestial spheres is other than we have maintained at the beginning; what we have said is nevertheless true and in accordance with the subject of our book.

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