

# DHIKR and the Wisdom behind it\*

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*In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

## I. Introduction

### I.1 Remembrance of God

The worship of God, which is manifested in a variety of forms, is particularly expressed in the form of *dhikr* to the extent that *dhikr* of the Almighty is one of the clearest examples of worshipping Him.

*Dhikr* of God, similar to other types of worship, can be categorized in multiple ways. One such way is to divide it into general *dhikr* and specific *dhikr*. General *dhikr* is that which, not belonging to any particular species, is found in all things—that is, all things spend their existence remembering God. In contrast, specific *dhikr* is that which only belongs to a specific type of creation and is found within a particular community, such as the *dhikr* specific to an angel or that specific to a human being.

Another categorization for *dhikr* is with regards to its inwardness and outwardness. In this division, the two categories are sometimes labelled ‘the *dhikr* of the heart’ and ‘the *dhikr* of the tongue,’ though such a distinction is not specific to the domain of human beings. This is because other conscious beings sometimes contemplate God, which could be termed *dhikr* of the heart, and sometimes remember Him in their own special language, which would be their *dhikr* of the tongue.

At times, the term ‘*dhikr*’ is contrasted to negligence, error, forgetfulness and such, and in these cases, it is used to mean remembrance, recollection and its like. At other times, it is contrasted to obscurity and extinction, in which case it is used to mean that which is renowned, esteemed and distinguished. *Dhikr* is sometimes

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\* This article appears in chapter 10 of the book *Hikmat-e 'Ibādāt* by the respected author. As noted by the publishers, this chapter, unlike previous chapters in the book which are based on delivered lectures, “is one of the written works of Āyatullah Jawādī Āmulī – may God continue his presence amongst us – and has a distinctive flavor; the difficulty of the passages and their depth and richness relative to other chapters require particular attention on the part of the reader.”

We have translated the word *hikmah* used in the chapter title: “*Dhikr* and its *hikmah*”, which is also used in the book title: “The *hikmah* of acts of worship”, as *wisdom* (e.g. see verse 2:269 of the Holy Qur’an), in contrast to the restricted word *philosophy* which is more related to a particular scholastic discourse. [Tr.]

used in the infinitive and descriptive sense such as “to remember God” and “to invoke the name of God.” At other times, it is used to define a thing or a person that is the embodiment and personification of the remembrance of God, in which case, it itself becomes a reminder of God. In this case, not only is the thing or person notable in itself, but it results in others to become distinguished as well. An example of this is the application of the title ‘*dhikr*’ to the holy Qur’ān or the person of the blessed Prophet (*s – peace be upon him and his progeny*) such that these luminous beings are not only the embodiments and personifications of *dhikr*, but they also become the cause through which the verbal invocation of the name of God as well as His remembrance in the hearts is revived. Hence, the ensuing society, through the remembrance of God, also becomes distinguished.

### 1.2 DHIKR of the tongue

While the *dhikr* of the tongue is distinguished from the *dhikr* of the heart, it can also be contrasted with the *dhikr* of actions and deeds; that is, sometimes an action too—in so far as it serves as a reminder for God—is referred to as *dhikr* even if it is performed with one’s hands or feet or other organs. This is because *dhikr*, as an invocation of God, is not specific to the heart; rather, any deed that exhibits remembrance of God is a *dhikr* of Him. It may even be that keeping silent becomes a *dhikr* of God. By this, we do not mean to imply that since silence is accompanied with thought, reflection and contemplation, and since these things result in the remembrance of God, then the application of *dhikr* to being silent is a valid one; this is not the case because if it was such, then the application of *dhikr* to being silent would be an adjective of an accompanying state of the one being described [i.e., the one being silent] and not a direct adjective for him/it. What we mean instead is that keeping silent is often necessary or preferred in a situation such as when speaking would lead to trouble and disturbance, or [in the case of women] when speaking would result in strangers to hear what they are not suited to hear. In these cases, keeping silent is in itself a *dhikr* of God. At the same time, if keeping silent results in a state of reflection, contemplation, observation and the like, then from the perspective that it is a means to achieve perfection and is counted as a step towards transcendence, it will also be—as a preliminary step and not in and of itself—a true instance of *dhikr*.

### 1.3 Varieties of DHIKR

*Dhikr* can be evaluated based on its existential position and ontological ranking from a variety of perspectives: (i) Sometimes it is evaluated based on the one that is

remembered (*madhkūr*) in which case the most complete *dhikr* is the servant's remembrance of God and of His most magnificent Name (*ism al-a'zam*) because no *madhkūr* is more complete than God Almighty. (ii) Sometimes, the evaluation is based on the one that remembers (*dhākir*) in which case the most complete *dhikr* is God's remembrance of the servant, since no *dhākir* is a match to God Almighty. Not only is He "the best of the remembered," He is also "the best of those who remember" [see Sec. 7]. (iii) Sometimes this evaluation is on the basis of the quality of *dhikr* in terms of the degree of its sincerity (*ikhblās*), in which case again the most complete *dhikr* is God's remembrance with respect to a specific thing or a particular individual; this is because His remembrance is beyond any contamination with falsehood and anything that is manifested from the pure and unadulterated Truth is immune from being polluted with impurities and falsehood. (iv) Finally, the evaluation is at times based on the magnitude (quantity) of *dhikr* in which case again the best *dhikr* is the remembrance by God with respect to a specific thing or a particular individual.

God, who is pure and unadulterated witnessing (*shuhūd*), is immune from any error, negligence, forgetfulness and the like, and such shortcomings never find a path to His Majestic Sanctuary:

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا

And your Lord never forgets (19:64).

وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

And not an atom's weight in the earth or in the sky may escape your Lord (10:61).

The aforementioned four-fold aspects by which *dhikr* is evaluated—namely (i) the remembered, (ii) the rememberer, (iii) the quality of *dhikr* and (iv) the magnitude of *dhikr*—are present and invoked by all manifestations of the names and attributes of God. Therefore, whichever of these manifestations, whose position of vicegerency of God is more complete and whose nearness to God Almighty is greater, then the most appropriate *dhikr* would, according to the first perspective, be the *dhikr* of all lower manifestations towards it and, from the other three perspectives, its *dhikr* towards lower manifestations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All things owe their existence utterly and thoroughly to God Almighty, and are manifestations of His names and attributes. It then follows that any attribution of greatness to God at the level of His names and attributes is also applicable to His creation, especially those in whom God reveals more of His names and attributes. This gives rise to a hierarchy of beings or manifestations which can be compared to one another from an ontological point of view

Even though each specific act of worship, such as prayer, fasting, charitable acts of *zakāh* and *khums*, pilgrimage, enjoining the good, forbidding the evil, supplication and the like are rightly considered as *dhikr*, and even though the broad meaning of *dhikr* and the general wisdom behind it encompasses all the aforementioned acts, yet *dhikr* in its own place is a special act of worship and carries with it its own specific effects [discussed in this work].

#### 1.4 Pivotal elements of DHIKR

The pivotal elements of *dhikr* are those which were briefly referred to, and they are ultimately related to the analysis of the essence of *dhikr* from the point of view of the efficient, final and material origins<sup>2</sup> [i.e. by whom, for whom and how *dhikr* is performed; or in other words the subject, object and quality/quantity of *dhikr*]. There are other aspects which pertain to the requirements of correctly performing the *dhikr* such as the specific time at which *dhikr* is performed, the particular location, the manner of standing or sitting, being in a state of motion or rest, being alone or with a group, reciting in a high, low or minimal tone, the language used, the specific number or types of recitations, the manner in which the Qur'ān is put in front of or over the head and whether it is closed or open, *tawassul*<sup>3</sup> to a particular infallible or seeking intercession from a specific *walī* (saint) of God, the cleanliness of the performer of *dhikr* and the purity of his inner consciousness; these and other aspects have been especially visited and elaborated upon by the blessed household (‘*a*) of the Prophet (ﷺ) as reported in collected works of ḥadīth. While any act of *dhikr* will leave a particular footprint on the worshipper (*athar-e ‘ibādī*) and will bring about nearness of the rememberer to the Remembered God, in obligatory acts of worship (*farā’id*) or in specific recommended rituals (*nawāfil*) in which an exact and specified *dhikr* has been narrated, its replacement or modification is not permitted, meaning that one will not obtain the desired result from that obligatory or recommended act without the specified *dhikr* [see Sec. 10 for some examples of this].

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depending on how close they are to their Source—i.e. Allah. It must however be kept in mind that the level of the Essence (*Dhāt*) of God is altogether a different realm, to which His creation have no access, and which can never be comprehended and is constantly glorified. [Tr.]

<sup>2</sup> The efficient (*fa’ili*) cause or origin is that by which a thing comes to be, the final (*ghā’i*) cause is the end purpose for which a thing comes to be, and the material (*qābili*) cause is that from which a thing comes to be. For instance, in the example of a house, the efficient cause is the carpenter, the final cause is to provide shelter and comfort, and the material cause is typically wood, nails, drywall, etc. [Tr.]

<sup>3</sup> *Tawassul* is a religious practice in which one seeks nearness to God Almighty, often via seeking nearness to a chosen servant of Him. [Tr.]

Of course, sometimes, even when a particular *dhikr* has been replaced or modified, a small portion of the sublime goals of the *dhikr* will still be obtained due to the multitude of its desired benefits (though other aspects of it will be lost). At other times, however, no effect from the unique effects of that particular act of worship—which has been structured with a specific *dhikr*—will be achieved due to it having only one desired benefit.

That which was said about the recommended acts of devotion—which was based on the multitude of desired benefits—pertains to some recommended acts of devotion and not all; this is because some preferred customs and recommended acts are not realized in the least without performing their specified *dhikr*, and therefore, no effect whatsoever will be produced [by changing the *dhikr* formula]. At the same time, the general effect of *dhikr*—which is a general form of worship—will still be obtained. For instance, if an individual's ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*) is nullified due to the intentional leaving out of a *dhikr*, even though the effect of performing the ritual prayer has not been obtained (i.e., one is still not relieved from its duty) yet the individual will still derive some benefit—a partial reward for reciting the Qur'ān, for instance.

### 1.5 The quintessence of DHIKR and the essence of supplication and asking

As mentioned previously, the quintessence of *dhikr* is different than the essence of supplication (calling upon) or asking (requesting); this is because mere paying attention to God is itself *dhikr* of Him even if it is not accompanied with the act of addressing Him, or of demanding or requesting from Him. In other words, even though calling upon God or requesting something from Him is accompanied by His *dhikr*—or rather this very act of calling upon or asking Him is *dhikr* in itself—yet it is very possible for an act of *dhikr* to be realized when it is not accompanied by any act of calling upon or requesting, each of which is a specific type of non-declarative expression. In such a case, *dhikr* is rewarded in itself, and receiving a response or solution is not what is sought after. *Dhikr qua dhikr* is distinct from a supplication or request, and hence is in a different domain from that of calling upon or requesting, since at this realm there is no call or request in the first place for them to be answered. Even though it is possible upon performing a particular *dhikr* for a specific need or difficulty to be resolved, a wrong to be forgiven or a blessing to be granted, yet none of these matters or their likes have been qualified in the essence of *dhikr*. Since *dhikr* has a specific meaning compared to other acts of worship, whenever a seeker of the path (*sālik*) becomes acquainted and keenly associated with the specific meaning of an act of worship, persists upon it, strongly

abstains from diminishing and neglecting it, and implements it in his heart more strongly than other pillars of worship, he becomes the possessor of that station (*maqām*). For this reason, the status of the people of *dhikr* is distinct from that of other worshippers and they maintain their own invocations.

The meaning of an effective *dhikr* of the heart is that very *dhikr* which is truth-affirming and faithful and which necessitates the oblivion (*nisyān*) or [at least] the pretension of oblivion (*tanāsī*) towards falsehood, in the same way that it brings about negligence (*ghaflat*) or a pretension of negligence (*taghāful*) to any error. In contrast, a *dhikr* which simply occurs in the imagination can be accompanied by the preoccupation with falsehood and predisposition towards error, since no real aversive, protective and repelling effect can be expected from a purely imaginative source for *dhikr* (though at times, it can act as the preliminary step towards true affirmation).

Certainly, that which will have an effect is faithful affirmation, i.e. to believe the conclusion of a proposition and to have faith in the essence of the subsistence of the predicate for that subject; otherwise mere mental acceptance, which only has one [figurative] tie or knot—i.e., it only ties the predicate of a proposition to its subject without the implication of the proposition becoming truly tied to the heart of the knower in a way that would result in an affirmation based on belief—has no effect in repelling error or preventing sins. This is because that which matters is faith, not [mere mental] knowledge; in other words, as long as knowledge based on the theoretical intellect does not find a way to a belief based on the practical intellect<sup>4</sup>, it will not be productive.

The separation of knowledge and action is not only theoretically possible but it is a certainty [in reality] for the same reason that the separation of knowledge and faith is also a certainty as demonstrated from the following verses:

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا

And they rejected those signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced of them (27:14).

قَالَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَمَا أَنْزَلَ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ بِصَائِرٍ

<sup>4</sup> The intellect (*'aql*) is divided into two types: (i) the theoretical intellect (*'aql-e nazari*) also known as speculative reason, which is involved with gaining knowledge, and (ii) the practical intellect (*'aql-e 'amali*), also known as willing reason, which is involved with believing in and inclining towards one's pure knowledge (i.e. is the action of the heart) and leads to the action of the other faculties. This distinction is further explained in Sec. 2. [Tr.]

Moses said (to Pharaoh), “You know well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth, as eye-opening evidence ...” (17:102).

In other words, no obstacle exists for the theoretical intellect to understand the truth of something; however it is the practical intellect, being consumed with lust and anger, that has difficulty in believing in and having faith in that thing.

Now that some of the underlying fundamentals of the discussion have been outlined, we turn the attention of the rememberers of God and the people of *dhikr* to a number of points in the course of the following [ten] sections.

## 2. DHIKR and the theoretical and practical Intellects

*Dhikr* of God—that is, the remembrance of His most beautiful names and His manifestations—is expressed in the theoretical intellect as divine thought, and in the practical intellect as religious inclination. In the same way that having knowledge of God is His *dhikr*, so is loving Him, and just as divine knowledge is His remembrance, so is obtaining His morals, following His orders and avoiding his prohibitions. Put another way, anything that brings about the consciousness of God and His names and attributes [in the mind or heart of the rememberer] is *dhikr* of God, and both the theoretical and practical branches of the intellect play a significant role in this regard.

According to what we said, *dhikr* is the common factor between the two wings of ascension—i.e., knowledge and action; subsequently, with regards to the commandment to perform abundant *dhikr* in the verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

O you who believe! Remember God, an abundant remembrance (33:41),

it is possible to obey this command through the constant engagement with divine knowledge or through persistent involvement with religious rituals and morals, or through both—that is, by distributing one’s time both in gaining religious knowledge as well as acquiring moral habits and practical virtues. In this spirit, it is possible to consider these verses of the Qur’ān—which name or praise those that perform abundant *dhikr* of God—to encompass the aforementioned three groups as its referents, i.e. the group that with sincerity spends a considerable component of its time in learning the religious sciences, the group that utilizes a significant portion of its opportunities to attain moral virtues, and the group that distributes

its time, devoting a part to religious knowledge and the other to achieve virtues and to perform acts of worship.

Put another way, one may expand [the applicability of abundant *dhikr*] to both the non-declarative (*insbā'*) and declarative (*ikhbār*) senses in so far as all the above-mentioned groups are either (i) the performers of abundant *dhikr* (which appears in a descriptive and declarative manner) or (ii) the referents of the ones who obey the command to perform abundant *dhikr* (which appears in an imperative and hence non-declarative manner).

This [i.e., the link between *dhikr* and the intellect] is why with regards to the following ḥadīth by the blessed Prophet (ﷺ) as narrated in the collection of ḥadīth, *Man-Lā-Yab'ḍarah al-Faqīh*<sup>5</sup>:

ارتعوا في رياض الجنة فقيل له (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) و ما رياض الجنة فقال (صلى  
الله عليه وآله وسلم): حلق الذكر

“Travel and eat in the gardens of Heaven.” They asked him, “What are the gardens of Heaven.” He answered: “the circles of *dhikr*”

Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (‘first Majlisī’), in his commentary of the above ḥadīth, has said, “What is known as circles of *dhikr* are circles of transmitting knowledge, and it has been said that what is meant [by these circles] may be the gatherings in which sermonizing and preaching takes place since they are intended to bring about reminder; yet, the more general and inclusive meaning that includes both aspects is more appropriate, with the condition that pursuing knowledge should be with the intention of performing *dhikr* of God and gaining His pleasure.”<sup>6</sup> Then he goes on to mention the importance of consciously and aptly listening to and being present in circles of scholarship, and recites the poem:

این سخن شیر است در پستان جان بی کشنده شیر کی آید برون<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This book is one of the four most important ḥadīth collections known as “the Four Books” (*kutub-e arba'ah*), which were compiled by three important scholars. These books are:

- 1) *Al-Kāfi* by Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb Shaykh Kulaynī (16199 ḥadīths).
- 2) *Man-Lā-Yab'ḍarah al-Faqīh* by Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Bābwayh, known as Shaykh Ṣadūq (5963 ḥadīths).
- 3) *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām* by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan known as Shaykh Ṭūsī (13590 ḥadīths)
- 4) *Al-Istibṣār* also by Shaykh Ṭūsī (5511 ḥadīths).

The aforementioned scholars attempted to include in these collections only those ḥadīths which were reliable (*ṣaḥīḥ*) according to their own criteria. [Tr.]

<sup>6</sup> *Rawḍah al-Muttaqīn*, vol. 5, p. 512.

<sup>7</sup> This poem by Rūmī has also been recited as:

این سخن شیر است در پستان جان بی مکندہ خوش نمی گردد روان

This speech is [like] milk from the bosom of the soul  
Without being drawn, when will the milk ever come out?

That is, the preparedness of the listener, as well as his conscious presence, the emergence of his illuminating talent and his thirst [for knowledge], is like the drawing and absorbing of the sapiential milk flowing from the life and soul of the instructor and mentor. To achieve such plentiful praise and admiration, there is no way except for the seeker involved with *dhikr* to place all his perceptive faculties—such as his sensory, imaginative and estimative powers—under the leadership of the theoretical intellect, and similarly, to place all his stimulative faculties—such as attraction and repulsion, lust and anger, devotion and aversion, love and enmity, and eventually attachment (*tawallā*) and detachment (*tabarrā*)<sup>8</sup>—under the special supervision of the practical intellect, so that all his intellectual testimonies and practical inclinations are obtained with the name and remembrance of God. Such a seeker is a constant performer of *dhikr*. Moreover, every constant performer of *dhikr* is a constant performer of prayer (*ṣalāh*) and every constant performer of *ṣalāh* will be protected and saved from the harm of being covetous (*balūʿ*) and the damage of being anxious (*jazūʿ*) and miserly (*manūʿ*).<sup>9</sup> The evidence for these two statements will be provided later [see Sec. 8.5] with its necessary explanations.

In summary, the faculties of knowledge and action of the remembering seeker, under the leadership of the intellect, should take on the task of putting into order his thoughts and efforts. In such a case, the leadership of the rememberer's intellect and the stewardship of his intellectual faculty—which affirms and negates, adjoins and disjoins with the criterion of the remembrance of God Almighty—unfolds the *dhikr*'s spirit across the bodies of the lower powers. In this way, all the faculties of knowledge and action of the remembering seeker become like a unified community under the leadership of an unrivalled, remembering leader (*imām*). As such, their unified foundation will be immune from the breaches of the devil of intellectual ignorance and the demon and wild beast of practical foolishness. Surely, the high station of the remembering seeker—who has collected in himself both correct knowledge and virtuous deeds—will be the source of both the manifestation of the theoretical intellect and the presence of the practical intellect. Moreover, firstly, the highest stage is the guarantor of the annexation of the two aforementioned

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with a very similar meaning. [Tr.]

<sup>8</sup> *Tawallā* and *tabarrā* are the most sublime forms of attachment to and love of all that is good, and detachment from and enmity with all that is bad. They are sometimes classified as two of the ten required branches in observing faith (the other eight being: prayer, charity (both *zakāh* and *khums*), fasting, pilgrimage, enjoining the good, forbidding the evil, and struggle (*jihād*) in the way of God). [Tr.]

<sup>9</sup> Qurʾān 70:19-23.

intellects, and secondly and subsequently, each of the two mentioned intellects takes on the responsibility of leading and guiding all that is below them.

In other words, the peak of the [existential] pyramid of such a remembering seeker comprises that very station of total comprehensiveness (*jam‘ al-jam‘i*), which is the underlying state of his divine life: it is the comprehensive reality which is the leader of all leaders, and which is followed by all the significant faculties of man; and in turn, the lower powers—with the leadership of the other significant faculties and via their mediation and seeking their intercession—are connected to that transcendental station of human life. In this state, such a seeker is the manifestation of God, who while being elevated and having eminence, has closeness, humility and humbleness, and who while being near and proximate, is entirely exalted, lofty and distant:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ... الَّذِي بَعُدَ فَلَا يُرَى، وَفَرَّبَ فَشَهِدَ النَّجْوَى

All praise belongs to God ... Who is so far away that He is not seen, and is so near that He is fully aware of the whispered secret.<sup>10</sup>

الداي في علوه والعالى في دنوه

The Close in His highness and the High in His closeness.<sup>11</sup>

Since the seeking performer of *dhikr* is the vicegerent of God (and the vicegerent is the manifestation and sign of the One he represents), and since the One who is being represented possesses the status of total comprehensiveness and [hence] He is in possession of all the aspects that fall within [this totality], His vicegerent therefore will also inevitably be like that.

### 3. The Revitalizing Nature of DHIKR

*Dhikr* of God and remembrance of His most beautiful names and most exalted attributes is, like the ‘blowing of the Spirit’ (*nafkh ruh*)<sup>12</sup>, revitalizing. A prominent example was the breath of Christ which rendered alive any bird or man who had died when Prophet Jesus (‘a) breathed upon it with the permission of God. If a thing, whether related to knowledge or action, is alive then it has certain effects, but if dead, not only is it devoid of effects, but it leaves a negative and foul odour.

<sup>10</sup> The supplication of *Ifitāh*; this beautiful supplication, filled with remembrance of God and the blessed prophet and his household, and with particular remembrance of the Mahdī (‘a) is recommended to be read in the nights of the month of Ramadan. [Tr.]

<sup>11</sup> *Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, supplication 47.

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Qur’an 38:72.

As such, any thought that is dead or action that is lifeless, will leave absolutely no effect but harm, and it is because of this that we read in some religious statements that if something is begun without the name of God, it will be severed and fruitless.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, with regards to the slaughter or hunting of animals (on land or in the air), it has been transmitted that while performing the slaughter or releasing the arrow or sending the hunting dogs with the intention of killing the prey, one must mention the name of God so that the sacrificed or hunted animal does not become an [unlawful] corpse and may instead be benefitted from. Even though, from the jurisprudential perspective, this is a specific act of worship [to be performed even if not understood], yet its wisdom, from a deeper and inner perspective, is present in all facets of human knowledge and action. In other words, any act that is not with the name and remembrance of God is a foul-smelling corpse and the adverse effect of it being such will reveal itself at some point in time.

More elaborately, there is a consistent message when one considers the secrets of the verses from the Qur'an such as:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ

Eat not of that on which God's name has not been pronounced, and verily that is impiety (6:121),

فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَافَّ

Then pronounce the name of God over them as they line up [for sacrifice] (22:36),

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ

Then eat what they [hunting animals] catch for you, and pronounce the name of God over it (5:4),

The message is that if the one who slaughters is not a monotheist or intentionally does not mention the name of God [in the act of slaughter], the animal will be considered a corpse, and eating from it will not be permitted (even if the animal is of a rare and precious variety!). Thus, it becomes clear that the remembrance of

<sup>13</sup> "كل امر ذى بال لا يذكر بسم الله فيه فهو ايتى"

Any matter of significance not initiated with "in the name of God" will be fruitless (*Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 7, p. 170, Ḥadīth 4) [narrated from the holy prophet (ﷺ)].

God is like the breath of Christ, and that this revitalizing breath is the vicegerent (*khalifah*) of the Divine Breath which assures the emergence of life in the locus of manifestation of:

وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي

When I breathed into him of My spirit (15:29).

By contrast, anything in which the name of God and His remembrance is not displayed, even if appearing as a beautiful gazelle within the desert of imagination, will be nothing more than a life-less corpse within the valley of truth and the awakened intellect.

The person with knowledge but no action, the one with awareness but no sense of responsibility, the one with thought but no goodness or salvation, is like a walking corpse. He is similar to the one who sets aside the duty to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, who neither with his hand nor tongue nor heart, enlivens that which is good, nor eradicates that which is evil. It is as if outwardly they are alive, but inwardly they are dead just as Imām ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (*‘a*) has said about both of these types of people:

و ذلك ميت الأحياء

And these are the dead of the living.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.1 Note: Confining oneself to the transmitted DHIKR

The meaning of *dhikr* of God is not the mere clause “in the name of God”; rather, mentioning any name amongst the most beautiful names of God, whether in the form of “in the name of God”, or in the form of *tablīl* (“there is no god but God”), *takbīr* (“God is the greatest”), *tasbīḥ* (“glory be to God”), *taḥmīd* (“praise belongs to God”), and the like, is sufficient for the slaughtered or hunted animal to become *ḥalāl* (permissible to eat), just as it is beneficial for the protection of knowledge or action from becoming corpse-like. Yet, if a specific prescription regarding a particular *dhikr* has been narrated, such as that of the ritual daily prayer, it is necessary for that explicit and transmitted *dhikr* to be used. We shall discuss this issue—namely the necessity of confining oneself to the transmitted *dhikr*—in a separate section [see Sec. 10 regarding not altering, replacing or going beyond the form of the *dhikr*].

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<sup>14</sup> *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Hikmah 374.

#### 4. The Grades of DHIKR and the Levels of its Performers

As recounted in the earlier discussion of *dhikr*, there exists a number of grades for *dhikr* and levels for its performers. Though each of these is desired on its own plane, it is the highest stage that is the most sublime aim of the remembering seeker, so that by passing through the lower stages he may reach the peak of its extent.

*Dhikr* is sometimes [performed] with respect to God's bounties, sometimes in regards to His name and in some cases with regards to God Himself. Consider:

فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

So remember Allah's bounties so that you may be felicitous (7:69).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ

O you who have faith! Remember Allah's blessing upon you (33:9).

In these cases, remembrance of God's bounties, including the material and the spiritual, has been mentioned. Now, consider the following verses:

فَدَأْفَلِحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى \* وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

Felicitous is he who purifies himself, and remembers the Name of his Lord, and prays (87:14-15).

وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا

So remember the Name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him wholeheartedly (73:8).

وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

And remember the name of your Lord morning and evening (76:25).

In these places, it is the remembrance of the name [and not the bounty] of God that has been conveyed, and includes not only His Greatest Name (*ism al-a'zam*) but any of His names. Moreover, its selection [i.e., choosing which of the names of God to remember] is in the hands of the remembering seeker, in the same way that the choice of the bounty to remember will depend on the level of the performer of *dhikr*. Of course, to consider *both* the material bounties as well as the spiritual blessings of perfection is the most desired approach, just as choosing the Greatest Name, which contains [all other] great names, is the most elevated aim.

And then there are verses such as:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who have faith! When you meet a host [in battle], then stand firm, and remember Allah greatly so that you may be felicitous (8:45).

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ

Those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and [lying down] on their sides (3:191).

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ

When you have finished the prayers, remember Allah, standing, sitting and [lying down] on your sides (4:103).

In these verses, and similar ones, it is the remembrance of the title of “Allah” that is mentioned, and not the remembrance of His bounty or His name, even though the title of “Allah” itself is one of the most beautiful names of God. However, since from the divine and spiritual perspective, the “status” of the Absolute Being (*Huwiyyat-e Mutlaq*)<sup>15</sup>—which actually cannot be defined as a ‘status’ or ‘stage’ or the like—is more elevated than the name of “Allah”; therefore the verses which portray the *dhikr* of that Being are more sublime than all others. An example is the following verse:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ

Therefore remember Me and I will remember you (2:152).

Such an expression is very rarely provided in the Qur’ān, and is similar to the last verse of the blessed chapter of *al-Fajr* in which the possessor of the satisfied soul (*nafs al-muṭma’innah*)—after obtaining the station of (i) contentment with regards to all levels of divine decree (*qaḍā*) and divine measure (*qadr*) and (ii) of God’s contentment with Him—is addressed with such a tone such that with the blessing of the Absolute Being, he returns unto Him, becomes included in the circle of servants in that transcendental stage (although using the term ‘stage’ for it is only figurative), and enters His particular heaven which is more elevated and eminent than any imaginable heaven:

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<sup>15</sup> This term refers to the realm of the Essence (*Dhāt*), prior to its manifestation into the divine names and attributes: the one who performs *dhikr* of the Absolute Being has moved beyond recognition of God merely through His individual names and attributes. [Tr.]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ \* ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً \* فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي \*  
وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

‘O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, well-pleased [yourself] and pleasing [unto Him]. Then enter among My servants. And enter My paradise’ (89:27-30)

Of course, verses in the noble Qur’an which mention the Absolute Being are extremely rare.

In short, while the aforementioned four stages of *dhikr* [i.e. *dhikr* (i) of the bounties of Allah, (ii) of the name(s) of Allah, (iii) of Allah, and (iv) of the Absolute Being] with regards to their different levels are all praiseworthy and laudable, yet each lower degree will be a rung on the ladder toward a higher stage, and the ultimate aim of the various phases of *dhikr* is indeed to be in the remembrance of the Absolute Being.

#### 4.1 Note: The differences in the mode of address due to differences among the addressees

Following the above discussion of the stages of *dhikr* of God, it is possible that the invitations for performing *dhikr* extended by the blessed Qur’an to the various audiences may be due to the difference of these levels that the addressees occupy. To elaborate, all things and beings in the contingent world have emanated from God, yet they are not all the ‘first emanation’ (*ṣādir al-awwal*), and similarly, while they are all returning to God, they are not all the ‘ultimate returner’ (*ṣāir al-nahāī*), who has reached the status of

دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ \* فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ

Then he [the Prophet] drew nearer and nearer, until he was within two bows’ length or even nearer (53:8-9)

and the stage of

وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنتَهَىٰ

And that the terminus is toward your Lord (53:42).

Additionally, while all are commanded to remember God and to perform His *dhikr*, not all are asked to remember the Absolute Being so as to [be able to] remember Him without the veils of identity (*ta’ayyun*). In fact, from the different addressee titles, it is possible to infer the signs of the different modes of address

because some have been addressed as “O mankind,”<sup>16</sup> others as “O people of the Book,”<sup>17</sup> some as “O you who believe,”<sup>18</sup> a few as “those who have eyes”<sup>19</sup> and “those with understanding”<sup>20</sup>, and a group as “O messengers.”<sup>21</sup> Finally, the unique address and the sole attention of the One (*Aḥad*) God becomes directed towards the greatest (*ūlū al-‘aḡm*) from among the prophets and apostles, ultimately ending with the ‘sole address of the contingent universe’<sup>22</sup> which is the attention to the station of the seal position [i.e., the station of the Prophet (*ṣ*)]. In fact, not only is the holy Prophet more excellent in position than all the prophets and apostles, but even with regards to the greatest [*ūlū al-‘aḡm*] of them, he is also more eminent (*a’lā*), more noble (*anbal*), more beautiful (*ajmal*) and more glorious (*ajall*). Of course, what we mean by the limitations of address and the restriction of attention is that the addressee himself is veiled [from ‘partaking’ in the address]; but as for the Addresser, He does not have any type of veil [blocking Him from] any being.

#### 4.2 Remark: the four-fold division of that which is remembered for the rememberer

Sometimes the special mercy of God is what is remembered (*madhkūr*), and the remembering (*dhākir*) seeker becomes attentive to that particular mercy of God; in the same way, sometimes the special mercy of God becomes the *dhākir* and in turn makes the particular servant the *madhkūr*. What we mean to say is that the previously mentioned four-fold division which was outlined with regards to the *madhkūr* is also applicable with regard to the *dhākir* [i.e. a servant may be remembered by (i) the bounty of God, (ii) the name of God, (iii) God, and (iv) the Absolute Being]. As an example, one may mention the second verse of the chapter *al-Maryam* in the Blessed Qur’ān in which we read:

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<sup>16</sup> يا أيها الناس

<sup>17</sup> يا اهل الكتاب

<sup>18</sup> يا أيها الذين آمنوا

<sup>19</sup> اولى الابصار

<sup>20</sup> اولى الالباب

<sup>21</sup> يا أيها الرسل

<sup>22</sup> The status of Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*) is that of the medium of grace. His glorious position is such that he receives all grace directly from the Absolute Being and channels that to all of creation. Thus, he is ‘the mercy onto the worlds’ as asserted by the Qur’ān. In this sense, he is the ‘sole address of the contingent world’ as the sole venue through which God, at the level of the Essence, addresses and blesses the contingent world. [Tr.]

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا

The remembrance of your Lord's mercy with respect to His servant Zakariyyā  
(19:2).

In this verse, a particular mercy of God was assigned to remember Prophet Zakariyyā ('a), while Zakariyyā ('a) himself became the remembered (*madhkūr*), the regarded (*manzūr*) and the object of compassion (*marḥūm*) of that specific mercy.

Along the same line, with regards to the verse,

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

Indeed the prayer prevents indecencies and wrongs, and surely the  
remembrance of Allah is greater (29:45),

in which the remembrance and name of God is mentioned to be greater [than anything], two points may be extracted: God being greater (i) from the aspect that He is the *Madhkūr* [remembering God is greater than remembering anything else], and (ii) from the aspect of Him being the *Dhākir*; i.e., when God remembers one of His servants, such a remembrance is greater than the servant's remembrance of God as the One Remembered. It must be noted, however, that the accurate meaning of this [verse] is that God's *dhikr* is so magnificent that it cannot be described, not that the remembrance of the servant with respect to God is great and His remembrance of the servant is [merely] greater [see Sec. 4.3 for elaboration]. This is because under the statement that "the Uncompounded Truth is all things,"<sup>23</sup> the remembering seeker is not even a dim shade (*ḥay*), let alone a shadow (*ẓill*) or a thing (*shay*) [in itself independent from God]. In any case, there is no problem with the blessed verse implying all of the above meanings since the issue of using a phrase to imply more than one meaning has been completely resolved, and according to the people of insight, such an objection [of how God's words can have more than one meaning] cannot be raised.

#### 4.3 Note: Narrations on the TAKBĪR

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<sup>23</sup> "بسيط الحقيقة كل الأشياء" This significant statement appears within the transcendental philosophy of *Mullā Ṣadrā*. It has been demonstrated that God's attribute of being uncompounded will only be valid and consistent if all things come from Him and are not independent entities, but rather His manifestations. Thus, all things in the heavens and the earth *belong* to God, as mentioned in the Qur'ān, in the deepest meaning of the word! At the same time, God Almighty is not incarnated in any thing, and rather it is His names and attributes that are manifested in them, and therefore "He is none of those things" as mentioned following the above statement: ("... و ليس بشيء منها"). [Tr.]

Since the understanding of all the monotheists with respect to God Almighty is not alike, the narrated statements about *takbīr* [witnessing that “God is Greater”] are also different. In some we read that “God is greater than to be described,”<sup>24</sup> in others it has been narrated that “God is greater than His creation,”<sup>25</sup> and in numerous ḥādīths it has been narrated that “God is greater than anything.”<sup>26</sup> Those ḥādīths which have been narrated in the first category are the most deep and compelling of them, and even within themselves, they are not of the same status; for instance, in a ḥādīth it has been narrated that in the presence of Imām Ja’far al-Ṣādiq (‘a) a man once said, “God is greater”. The Imām (‘a) asked the man, “What thing is God greater than?” to which the man replied, “All things.” The Imām (‘a) said, “*Ḥaddadtabu*” which means “You have limited Him”. The man asked, “Then what should I say?” The Imām replied, “Say ‘God is greater than to be described’”, and in a different narration, the Imām (‘a) replied: “Is there anything<sup>27</sup> so that God is greater than him?”

## 5. The Degrees of Remembering God

One of the issues put forth in the beginning of the discussion of *dhikr* was that there are many degrees for the remembrance of God, depending on the intentions of the performer of *dhikr* and his inner aims. This is because, similar to other acts of worship, *dhikr* of God is sometimes performed for fear of hellfire, sometimes for hope of paradise, and sometimes to express gratitude for bounties and for the love of the One who is Remembered—which is devoid of any type of fear or covetousness.

At the same time, as was previously mentioned, as long as the core of sincerity is intact as well as the heading of ‘servanthood’ for the *dhākir* and ‘masterhood’ for the *Madhkūr*, and as long as it does not come out in the form of a transaction between two mutual sides, equals or parallels, the act of worship is valid and its desired effect will be achieved. Yet, it must be kept in mind that any lower stage is a rung on the ladder of progress for the remembering seeker so that he may transcend and rise above the level of remembering fearfully and covetously to a

<sup>24</sup> "الله أكبر من أن يوصف" *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 81, p. 254.

<sup>25</sup> "الله أكبر من خلقه"

<sup>26</sup> "الله أكبر من كل شيء" *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 90, p. 218.

<sup>27</sup> Thus, it is not correct to consider other things to be ‘things in themselves’ nor to compare God Almighty with them; rather they are mere manifestations of God Almighty, and do not even exist aside from consideration of the existence of God Almighty. [Tr.]

level where he remembers in a loving and grateful manner which, in reality, is the remembrance that is done freely and that is unique to the Liberated<sup>28</sup>. Those acts of *dhikr* which are helpful and effective in freeing one from certain [worldly] difficulties and animosities, or to arrive at certain comforts and companionships, do not transcend the realm of fear and hope; rather, that *dhikr* which is performed in order to witness the pure Beauty and sheer Majesty of God and in order to face the pure Splendour and untainted Light of the Divine is the one which is able to surpass the realm of fear and greed. Such a *dhikr* will lay the groundwork for reaching a station in which neither the *dhākir* nor the *dhikr* is taken into account, and instead only the *Madhkūr* is considered in such a way that the seeker is cleared from the impurity of trinity (of the *dhākir*, the *dhikr* and the *madhkūr*) and relieved from the contamination and filth of duality (of the *dhākir* and the *madhkūr*, or of the *dhikr* and the *madhkūr*). As such, his presence is with the pure milk<sup>29</sup> and the pure Madhkūr, and this is uncontaminated monotheism.

#### 5.1 Note: The enclosing of the DHĀKIR'S DHIKR with two DHIKRS of God

The *dhikr* of the remembering seeker with respect to the bounty of God brings about the very *dhikr* of the bounty of God with respect to him, just as *dhikr* of the servant with respect to God Himself results in *dhikr* of God with respect to the servant:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرُكُمْ

Therefore remember Me and I will remember you (2:152).

Yet, any *dhikr* that emanates from the servant is actually enfolded [before and after] with two *dhikrs* by God, similar to the enfolding of the *tawbah* (return/repentance) of the servant with two *tawbahs* by the Master. To explain: initially, it is God Who grants His servant the success to perform *dhikr* of Him, and this very bestowal is actually the *dhikr* of God with respect to the servant. Then, the servant succeeds to remember God, and yet again, upon accepting the *dhikr* by the servant, God will remember him and will bestow upon him the necessary favour.

<sup>28</sup> The original term is *ahīr* and is quite distinct from the expression 'liberated' in the modern, political sense of the word. It has a very deep application in Islamic literature, and refers to those that have elevated themselves from the fears and hopes of this world and the next, and who bow their heads to none but God Almighty Himself. [Tr.]

<sup>29</sup> An allusion to the blessed verse of surah al-Nahl (16:66): "...We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies from between waste and blood, as *pure milk*, pleasant to those who drink it." In the same way that milk from cattle is pure and untainted by the impurity of waste and blood, so too is the aforementioned rememberer relieved from the impurity of duality and trinity, and is only nourished by the pure milk of the Remembered. [Tr.]

Up to this point, the topic is one which has been repeatedly expressed in the speeches and writings of the authoritative scholars and those of deep insight, such as Allāmah Tabātabā'ī—may God have mercy on him—with regards to the enfolding of the *tawbah* of the servant with two *tawbahs* by the Master, as arrived at by the verses of the Qur'ān.<sup>30</sup>

What this writing wishes to present is that the remembering seeker, whether in a state of [performing] *dhikr* or being the object of the *dhikr* of God, is in a state of *dhikr* [in both cases]. This is because receiving the blessing of the remembrance of God by the servant, and his pursuing the *dhikr* of the Truth in its proper time, is accompanied by the divine presence and expression, and this very presence of God is *dhikr* even if ostensibly it does not appear to be so. The evidence for this is that the duty of the seeker, when hearing the recital of the Honourable Qur'ān, is to be silent:

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

And when the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it with attention, and become silent that you may receive Mercy (7:204),

Since such a silence and listening with attention is by the commandment of God Almighty, it follows that such a silence will be *dhikr* and remembrance of God, even if not accompanied with a verbal remembrance. Therefore, recitation of divine verses is a *dhikr* of God as is receiving them through silence and listening; or in other words, both speaking and listening are acts of *dhikr*. Therefore, if a person, as a result of remembering God, brings forth in himself the aptitude to become the object of *dhikr* by God so that God remembers him, then surely within the private chambers of his soul and the core of his heart, he will bring together the states of listening and silence, as well as the acceptance of God being the Rememberer. And this very condition of listening, as well as the state of silence, the receptive quiet, and the awaiting stillness is [all] the *dhikr* of God, and according to the firm statement: “His overflowing charity does not increase in Him except [even more] generosity and kindness,”<sup>31</sup> this very receptive *dhikr* will be the cause of even further and repeated *dhikr* by God. Moreover, this remembering seeker who is entirely aware will become one of the persistent performers of *dhikr*, and ultimately, one of the persistent performers of prayer:

<sup>30</sup> *Tafsīr al-Mizān* (see commentary for verses 2:37 and 9:118. [Tr.]).

<sup>31</sup> “و لا تَزِيدُهُ كَثْرَةُ الْعَطَاءِ إِلَّا جُوداً وَكِرَاماً” ; Supplication of *Ifitāh*.

طُوبَىٰ لَهُمْ وَحَسَنُ مَاٰبٍ

Happy are they and good is their [ultimate] destination (13:29).<sup>32</sup>

## 5.2 Positive vs. negative silence

Given the previous explanation, the benefit of positive silence as compared to negative silence will reveal itself. This is because a still, attentive and probing silence when reciting the ‘book of compilation’, in a way that the divine message is heard by the auditory senses, is itself an act of *dhikr*. And similarly, a receptive, awaiting and probing silence—in one’s reading of the ‘book of existence’<sup>33</sup>, such that the sound of the glorification of the angels and other beings of the existential order is heard with the hearing of the heart—is also an act of *dhikr*, contemplation and gratitude towards God. By contrast, a stagnant, dull and inert silence brings about nothing but error and oblivion, and is devoid of any positive effect.

Note: From the previous discussions, it becomes apparent that the *dhikr* of God, in its comprehensive meaning, can be apprehended through the rational, imaginative, estimative and sensory faculties, and in the latter case, can be both seen and heard. Therefore, with regards to the following:

الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَن ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَمْعًا

[Unbelievers] whose eyes had been under a veil from My remembrance and who had been unable even to hear (18:101),

وَمَنْ يَعْشُ عَن ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ

Whoever turns a blind eye to the remembrance of the All-beneficent, We assign him a devil who remains a companion to him (43:36),

such verses include both the outward and inward senses, and they can be understood and accepted without adjustments or taking recourse to metaphors [e.g. *dhikr* of the eyes].

<sup>32</sup> Along with the previous verses: “The faithless say, ‘Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?’ Say, ‘Indeed Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and guides to Himself those who turn penitently [to Him]—those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah.’ Look! The hearts find rest in Allah’s remembrance! Those who have faith and do righteous deeds—happy are they and good is their [ultimate] destination.” (13:27-29)

<sup>33</sup> In Islamic literature, parallel references are sometimes made to two ‘books’: the book of compilation (*tadwīn*), which refers to the Qur’ān, and the book of existence (*takwīn*), referring to the universe (and particularly to the Perfect Human which contains the elements of the universe within him; also see Sec. 8.2). One implication is that just as the Qur’ān is a text that is recited, God’s creation is also to be thought of as a book to be read by individuals of insight and understanding in order to approach the Writer of the text of creation. [Tr.]

## 6. Benefits of the DHIKR of God

*Dhikr* of God has numerous benefits, some of which will be alluded to. In the sense that the act of *dhikr* finds an ontological unity with the performer of *dhikr*, and also since *dhikr* of God is accompanied by His presence, it then follows that the performer of *dhikr* finds himself present in the ‘courtyard’ (*mashhad*, lit. ‘place of witnessing’) of God, and as such, benefits enormously from the perfection of this nearness and presence. Consequently, being in a domain of modesty and guard (*hayā*), he will avoid many disgraceful thoughts, blameworthy morals and reprehensible deeds:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ

Does he not know that God sees? (96:14)

Moreover, in his struggles with the inner and outer demons, which call the servant towards desires and open up such avenues in front him, he achieves victory over them in such a manner that (i) to avert any danger of being polluted with sins, he keeps himself protected in a righteous manner, or (ii) to eliminate those perils which have already befallen him and those sins that have already been committed, he exerts himself penitently and remorsefully.

فَدَا فَلَاحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ \* وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّىٰ

Felicitous is he who purifies himself, and remembers the Name of his Lord, and prays. (87:14-15).

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاجِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ  
الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

And those who, when they commit an indecent act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, and plead [Allah’s] forgiveness for their sins—and who forgives sins except Allah?—and who do not persist in what they have committed while they know (3:135).

Here, the first verse may be stating the first mentioned issue of averting sins, while the second verse affirms the removal of committed sins by repenting and returning to the shade of the remembrance of God.

Since Satan—who is the agent of oblivion and the cause of both slipping from the Truth and forgetting it—is damned (made *rajīm*, lit. ‘stoned’) by the *dhikr* of God, then the remembrance of God Almighty will result in one of two positive impacts: first, it will prevent the occurrence of error and inattentiveness, or in

other words, it carries an aspect of averting danger; and second, it will transform the already-occurred oblivion into attention and awareness, or in other words, it carries an aspect of removing danger [from oneself]:

وَمَا أُنْسَانِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أذْكُرَهُ

None but Satan made me forget to remember (and mention) it (18:63).

وَأِمَّا يُنَسِّئَنَّ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِىٰ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

And if Satan ever makes you forget, then after remembering, do not sit in the company of those who do wrong (6:68).

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ

Indeed Satan seeks to cast enmity and hatred among you through wine and gambling, and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you, then, relinquish? (5:91).

اسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَأَنسَاهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ

Satan has got the better of them: so he has made them forget the remembrance of God (58:19).

In these verses, the origin of the phenomenon of forgetfulness has been attributed to Satan, and in the verse,

وَأذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ

And remember your Lord when you forget (18:24),

the remembrance of God eliminates oblivion and removes any encroaching danger.

Satan never neglects from afflicting the human being since he is the 'evident enemy', and nothing but persistent coercion and harassment can be expected from the evident enemy. Consequently the means for defending against him or repelling him must also be continued, which is why we have been ordered to perform frequent and abundant *dhikr*, whether generally or specifically:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

O you who believe! Remember God, remembering abundantly (33:41),

وَأذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا

And remember your Lord abundantly (3:41).

In the latter verse, Prophet Zakariyyā ('a) has been specifically commanded to perform abundant *dhikr*, and [we know that] with regards to any guidance which has been awarded to the prophets and God's special people, others are also commanded to pursue and follow such guidance. The only exception to this is if there is a reason which has been brought forth to maintain the specificity of the command. However, in the case of abundant *dhikr*, not only do we not have any such reason to maintain its specificity, but in fact evidence exists for its generality [i.e., it should be followed by all].

### 6.1 The outcome of pure sincerity

Certainly, the continuance of divine *dhikr* and the persistence upon remembering Him has a considerable effect; however, the effect of pure sincerity is more than that of abundant *dhikr*, and in fact, *dhikr* performed sincerely is 'abundant *dhikr*' (*dhikr kathīr*) itself. By contrast, insincere *dhikr*, even if quantitatively abundant, is petty *dhikr*. As evidence for this, first consider the verse:

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَى يُرَآءُونَ  
النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

The hypocrites indeed seek to deceive Allah, but it is He who outwits them.  
When they stand up for prayer, they stand up lazily, showing off to the  
people and not remembering Allah except a little (4:142)

In the context of this verse, a ḥadīth has been narrated from Imām 'Alī ('a) in which he said:

من ذكر الله عزّ وجل في السرّ فقد ذكر الله كثيرا ، إنّ المنافقين كانوا لا يذكرون الله  
علانيةً ولا يذكرونه في السرّ

Whoever remembers God Almighty in secret has verily remembered Him  
abundantly; the hypocrites used to remember God in public and not  
remember Him in secret.<sup>34</sup>

The essence of this radiant ḥadīth is that since this world is an insignificant commodity, and the people of hypocrisy perform *dhikr* for this world and not to be liberated from it—[the love of this world] being the root of all transgressions—then their *dhikr*, though quantitatively plentiful, will in reality be little and insignificant.

<sup>34</sup> *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 7, p. 164, ḥadīth 3.

Since any *dhikr* is like an arrow into the dark heart of the army of Satan, then upon (i) invasion of the enemy from the outside, and (ii) the attacks of Satan, the requests of the lower self (*ammārah*) and the movements of the deceiving self (*musawwalah*) from within, it is necessary to seek help through abundant remembrance of God and to seek refuge through it, similar to what has been said about the lesser struggle<sup>35</sup>:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who have faith! When you meet a host [in battle], then stand firm, and remember Allah greatly so that you may be felicitous (8:45).

Since performing abundant *dhikr* is the commandment of God and since it is only in submitting to this commandment that there is benefit, therefore, when describing those who have been saved and those pious ones who have been brought up and freed from danger, God Almighty refers to their plentiful remembrance and praises them for abundant *dhikr*:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

... barring those who have faith and do righteous deeds and remember Allah abundantly (26:227).

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

In the Apostle of Allah there is certainly for you a good exemplar, for those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day, and remember Allah abundantly (33:21).

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ ... وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Indeed the Muslim men and the Muslim women . . . the men who remember Allah abundantly and the women who remember [Allah greatly]—Allah holds in store for them forgiveness and a great reward (33:35).

## 6.2 Note: The benefits of remembering the manifestations and signs of God

<sup>35</sup> The lesser struggle (*jihād al-aṣghar*) refers to the battle with outside enemies, while the greater struggle (*jihād al-akbar*) refers to the struggle with the lower self (as indicated by a famous prophetic ḥadīth). In the aforementioned text, both struggles are mentioned. [Tr.]

In order to gain victory against the inner foe or the outer enemy, the remembrance of divine manifestations and the *dhikr* of specific signs of God have their own particular benefit. This is why God commands [with the imperative *udhkur*] the blessed Prophet (ﷺ) to keep the leaders of the past in mind, each of whom was—to his own extent—a manifestation of a Name amongst the most beautiful divine Names, and to recall their traditions, ways of life and inner aspects so that [like them] he too would succeed:

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

And mention in the Book [the case of] Abraham: He was a man of truth, a prophet (19:41).

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا

And mention in the Book [the case of] Moses: for he was exclusively dedicated [to Allah], and he was an apostle, a prophet (19:51).

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا

And mention in the Book [the case of] Ismā‘il: He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was an apostle, a prophet (19:54).

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

Also mention in the Book [the case of] Idrīs: He was a man of truth, a prophet (19:56).

In these verses of the Qur’ān, and numerous ones like them, God has reminded the revered Prophet of Islam to remember the previous prophets and friends of God, and has indicated their remembrance as a source of strength for the blessed Prophet in fulfilling the covenant of delivering the message in the same way that the very act of remembering God, and sincerity and perseverance in this regard, is effective in achieving victory over His enemies. This is why God Almighty said the following to Moses and Aaron (‘a) when sending them to invite Pharaoh and his courtiers [towards Allah]:

اذهب أنت وأخوك بآياتي ولما تنبأ في ذكري

Go, you [Moses] and your brother, with My signs, and slacken not in My remembrance (20:42).

That is, you (Moses) and your brother (Aaron), go forth to the Pharaoh along with the miracles and signs which have been given to you by Me, and do not allow any

laxity, frailty, weakness and slackness to infiltrate you in reviving My name and remembrance. Prophet Moses (‘a) had considered the performance of abundant *dhikr* as an important reason for him to request the participation and viziership of his brother Aaron (‘a):

وَأَشْرِكُهُ فِي أَمْرِي \* كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا \* وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا

And make him [Aaron] share my task; that we may glorify You abundantly, and remember You abundantly (20:32-34).

The import of the remembrance of God is such that God has commanded, in some cases, to uphold and retain power, strength and vigour [to establish His *dhikr*] such as in the following verses:

خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ

Hold on, with power, to what We have given you (2:63),

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ

O Yahya! Hold on, with power, to the Book (19:12),

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ

Prepare against them whatever you can of power (8:60).

However, at other times, He has prohibited weakness and slackness such as in the above-mentioned verse:

وَلَا تَنِيَّ فِي ذِكْرِي

And slacken not in My remembrance (20:42).

It was in order to seek help from this type of unseen power—i.e., to take aid from the remembrance of God while paying attention to the loci of manifestations of power—and in order to present the might of the Divine, that Prophet Moses (‘a) was commanded to acquaint and remind his community of the days when God’s might would be manifested:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْ أَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِأَيَّامِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ

فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ

Certainly We sent Moses with Our signs: ‘Bring your people out from darkness into light and *remind* them of Allah’s days. There are indeed signs in that for every patient and grateful [servant].’ (14:5).

Any stage in which an uncommon grace of God is manifested, where some of the hidden secrets of the universe are revealed and a fraction of the concealed truths are brought to light, that stage—in its own capacity—is a day amongst the special days of God. And if the above verse has been interpreted to refer to the issue of the appearance of Imām Mahdī ('a), the Return (*Raj'ab*) and the Resurrection (*Qiyāmah*), this is done so to provide examples [of the referents of the verse], and not to explain the verse or to limit its referents to only the above-mentioned cases.

### 6.3 The hazard of forgetting God

From the previous discussion it becomes clear that the danger of forgetting God and to slip from His remembrance is to be defeated by the enticements of the outer and inner enemies:

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَىٰ

But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him blind (20:124).

فَأَعْرَضْ عَن مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا

So avoid those who turn away from Our remembrance and desire nothing but the life of the world (53:29).

The negative results of becoming oblivious of God and forgetting His name and His remembrance can be intellectually analyzed as follows: God Almighty is not only the Creator and Initiator of man, but He is also the Upholder of man's relational (*rabtī*) identity and the Substantive meaning of man's prepositional (*barfī*) nature<sup>36</sup> so much so that knowledge of man is impossible without knowledge of his Upholder, that is God. This is because to comprehend a relational and prepositional meaning without having knowledge of its essential and independent meaning [by which it is maintained], which is God, is not feasible. Hence, by losing sight of that Upholder and forgetting that Substantive meaning, the identity of man himself will also be forgotten; upon forgetting one's identity, one will not be able to perceive in any way the trespassing of the plunderers of identity, and by not sensing any such danger, no form of rebellion and resistance will take place

<sup>36</sup> In Arabic grammar, prepositional (*barfī*) clauses are ones which do not carry an independent meaning and are always dependent on substantive or verbal clauses. Whenever the substantive or verbal clause changes, the significance of the preposition also changes. The author is likening man's existence to a prepositional clause in that it is only when his Substantive meaning—that is, God Almighty—is taken into account, that he is granted some semblance of identity; otherwise, on his own accord, he is devoid of any meaning and hence devoid of identity. [Tr.]

against the invading enemy. In the end, all the perceptive and stimulating faculties of man [see Sec. 2] will be captured by Satan, and will, from then on, comprehend things and act with respect to them according to the desires originating from the bloodthirsty nature of that malicious and egocentric ruler. Any type of good act will be considered evil, and any form of evil will be counted as good!

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

And do not be like those who forget Allah, so He makes them forget their own souls. It is they who are the transgressors (59:19)

Some have said with regards to the famous narration: “Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord,”<sup>37</sup> that its relation with the aforementioned verse is the same type of relation [in logic] that an initial proposition has with its contrapositive; that is, if knowledge of God arises from knowledge of one’s self, then one can deduce [its contrapositive] that forgetting God and lacking knowledge of Him is a result of forgetting one’s self and lacking knowledge of it.

In any case, *dhikr* of God results in remembrance of one’s identity and attaining its transcendence, and forgetting God will result in forgetfulness of one’s identity and abandoning it within the easy grasp of every invader, oppressor and deviator; in the latter case, nothing of ‘human identity’ will remain. Instead, it will be replaced with something else, and he will impose upon himself all of his selfish and satanic securities, inclinations and instincts in the guise of civilization, happiness and perfection!

## 7. The Best Rememberer and Remembered

From the perspective that the *dhikr* of God is an existential excellence, and any such existential excellence, in its highest and most perfect form, is most applicable to God Himself, He will then have the most perfect *dhikr* of the Truth. As was determined in the elucidation of the principles on the discussion of *dhikr* [Sec. 1.3], God Almighty—from the aspects of being the Rememberer, the Remembrance and the Remembered, and from the perspectives of sincerity, continuity and other aspects relevant to the perfection of *dhikr*—is the Possessor of all ranks. This is why, in prayers narrated from the Blessed Household (‘a), God has been acclaimed as the Best Rememberer and the Best of those who are Remembered, examples of which will be shown from the invocation of *Jawshan al-Kabīr*. Thereafter, that

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<sup>37</sup> "من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه"; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 32.

which appears in the whispered prayer of *Sha'bāniyyah*, the whispered prayer of *al-Dhākirīn* and the invocation of *Kumayl* will be mentioned, with regard to the quality and quantity of *dhikr* that is requested in the presence of that Presence.

In the prayer of *Jawshan al-Kabīr*<sup>38</sup>, which has been narrated by Imām Sajjād ('a) from his revered fathers from the blessed Prophet (s) from the trustworthy Angel Jibra'il ('a), we read:

(1) يَا خَيْرَ الدَّاكِرِينَ (2) يَا خَيْرَ الْمَذْكُورِينَ (3) يَا مَنْ ذِكْرُهُ حُلُوٌّ (4) يَا مَنْ لَهُ ذِكْرٌ  
لا يُنْسَى (5) يَا مَنْ ذِكْرُهُ شَرَفٌ لِلدَّاكِرِينَ (6) يَا أَعَزَّ مَذْكُورٍ ذِكْرٌ (7) يَا خَيْرَ ذَّاكِرٍ  
وَمَذْكُورٍ

(1) O Best of those who remember; (2) O Best of those who are remembered; (3) O He Whose remembrance is sweet (4) O He Whose remembrance is not forgotten (5) O He Whose remembrance is an honour for those who remember Him (6) O Most exalted of all who are remembered (7) O Best Rememberer and Remembered.<sup>39</sup>

From these expressions, one can infer that one of the most beautiful names of God Almighty is the Rememberer<sup>40</sup> and the other is the Remembered.

The conception of God being the Best of those who remember and of those who are remembered is not contrary to the unity of actions (*tawhīd al-af'āl*), just as it is not contrary to the unity in attributes (*tawhīd al-awṣāf*) and in essence (*dhāt*); this is because if one remembers something 'aside' from God and it is accompanied with negligence and oblivion of God, then it is not even *dhikr*; but if it is accompanied with God's remembrance, then there exists no 'otherness' [that is, there is no 'aside'] except in the sense of being signs, expressions, manifestations, reflections, and the like, in which case, remembrance of each one of them is the remembrance of a sign from among the signs of God.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup>The magnificent prayer of *Jawshan al-Kabīr* transmitted by 'Ali ibn al-Husayn is a very powerful prayer consisting of 100 sections, each with 10 names of God, and is narrated to have been taught to the blessed Prophet in one of his battles. It is said to contain the greatest Name of God (*ism-e a'zam*). It is especially recommended to read this prayer at the beginning of the blessed month of Ramadan, with the benefit that God will provide the servant with sustenance in the Night of *Qadr*. [Tr.]

<sup>39</sup> The following seven invocations occur in sections 3, 39, 48, 71, 75, 86 and 95 of the prayer of *Jawshan al-Kabīr* respectively. [Tr.]

<sup>40</sup> In fact, in section 40 of the aforementioned prayer, God is explicitly invoked as "O Rememberer" (*Yā Dhākir*). [Tr.]

<sup>41</sup> If one considers God merely as one rememberer and one remembered amongst many other ones who remember and are remembered (even if the best of them), then this is *not* consistent with the unity of deeds, attributes and essence. By contrast, the correct view is that things other than God that remember or are remembered are merely His manifestations, and are not independent entities. Thus remembrances by and of God are the best acts of *dhikr* in

The secret behind the sweetness of His remembrance and the mystery of the praiseworthiness of *dhikr* as well as the continuity of His remembrance was already mentioned in previous sections, and what we would like to add at this point is that if we consider the rememberer to be God then He is never forgetful:

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا

And your Lord never forgets (19:64).

And if the rememberers are His existential signs, then since the entire universe is in a state of constant remembrance of Him, and no being exists that even momentarily retracts from submission, glorification, prostration and return to Him, then it is appropriate to say:

يَا مَنْ لَهُ ذِكْرٌ لَا يُنْسَى

O He Whose remembrance is not forgotten.<sup>42</sup>

### 7.1 Continuity of DHIKR

Now that it has been affirmed that *dhikr* of God is an existential excellence and perfection (because *dhikr* is other than supplication and asking) and that this applies to God Almighty in the best possible manner, then the worshipping seeker strives to be perfumed with a divine disposition and to be described with the mark of God and [in so doing] to be a rememberer of the Truth. This is why one of the most important things we ask of God in our supplications is the very thing which He has ordained for the believers and that is the all-important issue of *dhikr*, which, of course, includes its abundance, using it as a means [to God], being fervently devoted to it and its continuity even if it be a single *dhikr* (since continuity is different than abundance).

In the whispered prayer of *Sha'bāniyyah*<sup>43</sup> we read:

(1) إلهي و ألهمني و لَهَا بِذِكْرِكَ إِلِي ذِكْرِكَ (2) و أن تجعلني ممن يُدبّر ذِكْرِكَ

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comparison with remembrances by and of His manifestations, while still preserving conceptions of unity. And God knows best. [Tr.]

<sup>42</sup> *Jawshan al-Kabīr*, sec. 71

<sup>43</sup> This supplication is one of the most beautiful heritages left by the household (*'a*) of the Prophet (*s*). It is narrated that Imām 'Alī and his holy descendants (*'a*) used to recite it in the month of Sha'bān. In fact according to the Shi'a scholar and mystic—Mirzā Jawād Malikī Tabrizī—in his book *al-Murāqibāt*: “those affiliated with this invocation become close with the month of Sha'bān because of it, and it is because of this invocation that they eagerly await the arrival of this month”. [Tr.]

(1) My Lord, inspire me through Your remembrance with a fervent love of Your remembrance; (2) And make me one who perseveres upon remembering You.

And in the supplication of *Kumayl*<sup>44</sup> we read:

(1) أتقرب اليك بذكرك (2) ثلهمني بذكرك (3) لهج به لساني من ذكرك (4)  
أن تجعل اوقاتى من الليل و النهار بذكرك معمورة (5) و ذكره شفاء

(1) I seek nearness to You with Your remembrance; (2) Inspire me with Your remembrance; (3) My tongue has repeatedly remembered You with praise; (4) Make my time, day and night, utilized in Your remembrance; (5) (O He) Whose remembrance is a sure cure.

And in the supplication of *Abu-Hamzah Thumālī*<sup>45</sup> one comes across:

(1) أَللّهُمَّ اشغَلنا بِذِكْرِكَ (2) أَللّهُمَّ خَصَّنِي مِنْكَ بِخَاصَّةِ ذِكْرِكَ

(1) O Allah engage us in Your remembrance; (2) O Allah, of Yourself make me specially chosen with a special remembrance of You (i.e., let me be in remembrance of You specifically, and You too remember me particularly).

In these instances, many requests have been made with regards to *dhikr* of God, and aside from perseverance in the act *dhikr*, fervent love (*tawallah*), intense devotion, passion, ecstasy, and restlessness in God's Name and remembrance are of the most perfect of stages pertaining to the *dhikr* of the servant with respect to God.

## 7.2 The most comprehensive attributes of *DHIKR*

Such aforementioned *dhikr* will certainly lead to a constructive existence, a restored time of life and a period of prosperous living; this is because a life spent in oblivion is a ruined one and moments spent in heedlessness are destroyed. The most comprehensive attributes of *dhikr* are [mentioned in] 'the whispered prayer of the rememberers' (*Dhākirīn*), which is one of the fifteen invocations attributed to Imām 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sajjād ('a). In it one reads:

(1) Among Your greatest favours to us is the running of Your remembrance across our tongues; (2) Inspire us with Your remembrance alone and in

<sup>44</sup> This remarkable supplication was taught by Imām 'Alī ('a) to his faithful companion Kumayl ibn Ziyād, and is commonly recited on the eve of Friday. [Tr.]

<sup>45</sup> *Abū-Hamzah Thumālī* was a close companion of Imām 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn (*al-Sajjād*) and has narrated a long supplication which the Imām used to recite, after having spent most of the night performing prayers. [Tr.]

assemblies, by night and day, publicly and secretly, in prosperity and adversity, and make us intimate with the silent *dhikr*; (3) My God! love-mad hearts are enraptured by You, and disparate intellects are brought together by knowing You, thus hearts find no serenity except in remembering You, and souls find no rest except in seeing You; (4) And I pray forgiveness from You for every pleasure other than remembering You; (5) My God! You have said—and Your word is true—“O you who have faith, remember God with much remembrance and glorify Him at dawn and in the evening”; and You have said—and Your word is true—“Remember Me, and I will remember you”; thus You have commanded us to remember You, and promised us that You will remember us thereby, in order to ennoble, respect, and honour us. And here we are, remembering You as You have commanded us. So recompense what You have promised us, O Rememberer of the rememberers!

### 7.3 Note: the manner to perform DHIKR

*Dhikr* of God is sometimes in the form of supplication (*du‘ā*) which is an *inshā‘ī* (non-declarative)<sup>46</sup> matter. At other times, it takes the form of attributing qualities to God, or [invoking] proofs of the existence of the essential attributes [of God], as well as the identity of these attributes with each other, and their identity with the Essence of God; and these all belong to the domain of the *khabarī* (declarative) and are not of the same type as the *inshā‘ī*. In this sense, it becomes clear that *dhikr* is more general than the act of supplication [since the former includes both *khabarī* as well as *inshā‘ī* matters, while the latter is limited to the *inshā‘ī only*]. Moreover, both *dhikr* and supplication have their own specific characteristics which distinguish them from one another, though sometimes it is possible for a *khabarī* sentence to be issued in an *inshā‘ī* sense and to take on the shade of supplication. Yet, supplication as opposed to asking (*su‘āl*) has its own meaning, which is “calling upon God” and not [simply] the “act of requesting” which is the [basic] meaning of asking.

### 7.4 Remark: The ultimate serenity of the remembering seeker

When the remembering seeker brings to life the remembrance of God on his tongue initially, and later in his heart, since the One Remembered overpowers the performer of *dhikr*, His mighty presence overwhelms the rememberer, and this

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<sup>46</sup> In the sciences of Arabic grammar and logic, normative (*inshā‘ī*) statements are often juxtaposed with declarative (*khabarī*) statements since their rulings often differ. Declarative statements are those in which something is being declared (or predicated). All other statements are normative, which include the imperative, the interrogative, and the exclamatory. *Du‘ā* is usually a specific type of imperative whereas *dhikr* is much wider in scope. [Tr.]

unrest and praiseworthy awe is the context for ultimate serenity. Hence, the remembering seeker, searching for help, bears the heavy burden of His Name and Remembrance with His favour, since His bounties will not be carried except by His means.

The Blessed Qur'an too, while providing admiration for remembering believers whose hearts beat with the remembrance of God, narrates their eventual outcome which is the stage of obtaining serenity:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا  
وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

Verily believers are those who, when God is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put their trust in their Lord (8:2).

And in the sense that the Holy Qur'an is itself the remembrance of God (as we will later explain), the following has been revealed with regards to this divine book:

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِي تَتَشَعَّرُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُضَلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ

Allah has sent down the best of discourses, a scripture [composed] of similar motifs, whereat quiver the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and hearts soften to Allah's remembrance. That is Allah's guidance, by which He guides whomever He wishes; and whomever Allah leads astray, has no guide (39:23).

From these and similar verses one can construe that the seeker, at the beginning of the journey, becomes fearful upon remembrance of God and a sacred fear overtakes his heart; gradually, upon becoming more intimate with the One Remembered, and reading and hearing His word, his faith intensifies and this intensification of faith results in his entrance into the fort of safety, the stronghold of providence and the guard of liberation from fear and its like. Then, his outward and inward, his heart and body, both find comfort and soften towards the remembrance of God. Therefore, if it has been said that:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Look! It is with Allah's remembrance that the hearts find rest! (13:28),

perhaps this refers to the journey at its end; otherwise, at the beginning of the journey it is possible that the seeker be overcome with shivers and trembling, just as diving into the ocean is sometimes preceded with an initial fear. Of course, it is possible for some ocean-hearted divers, even at the beginning stages of trial and practice, to become guests of the ocean with serene hearts, yet such courage is only the share of a very rare group of ocean-divers. Additionally, to bring about the stage of serenity, there is much benefit to remember the traditions and ways of life of the friends of God in the bitter occurrences in history, and their patience and endurance in the struggle against evil. Such remembrances all return to the remembrance of God, and the outcome of such patience, endurance and serenity is the result of the remembrance of God.

#### 7.5 Reminder: The initial fear of the hardhearted and the negligent

The panic that overtakes the heart of the cruel and negligent due to forgetfulness of God is different from the fear that belongs to the remembering seeker at the beginning of the path, similar to how the calmness that befalls the forgetful as a result of being oblivious of God is different than the serenity that the seeker is granted at the end of the path. This is because one is genuine and the other is false; one is a reward and the other, a punishment.

The Blessed Qur'an has said the following with regards to the genuine and false senses of security, and the true and untrue senses of serenity:

أَفَأَمِنُوا مَكْرَ اللَّهِ فَلَا يُأْمِنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

What! do they then feel secure from God's scheme? But none feels secure from God's scheme except the people who shall perish (7:99).

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

Those who believe and obscure not their belief by wrongdoing, for such there is security; and they are rightly guided (6:82).

According to this, [the sense of] security of the non-believer is a false sensation and an imaginary perception, whereas the security of the believer is a genuine sensation and a discerning perception.

#### 7.6 Note: The effect of God's remembrance on the heart

*Dhikr* of God does not produce genuine serenity until it becomes ingrained in one's soul. This is because the [mere] verbalizing of God's name on the tongue is

like splashing water on the branches of a tree whose only effect is to clean the tree; in contrast, the remembrance of God in the heart is equivalent to watering the root of the tree which will result in its growth and fruitfulness. This is why God Almighty has said:

وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ  
مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

And remember your Lord within your self beseechingly and reverentially, without being loud, morning and evening, and do not be among the heedless (7:205).

Thus, what is important in the removal of heedlessness is the remembrance of God in the heart, while accompanied with inner crying and expressions of need.

Such a remembrance has as its benefits the following: (i) it forces the man who is a remembering seeker to be involved in active production, work, occupation, and efforts to satisfy the requirements of the Islamic society and its like, such that he is relieved from any laziness and idleness due to the excuse of a false and reprehensible form of piety (*zuhd madhmūm*); and (ii) it prevents any profitable work from distracting him from the remembrance of God which would cause him to abandon a permissible (*ḥalāl*) line of work or initiate an impermissible (*ḥarām*) one or become tainted with any other misdeed; this is as God has said:

رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا  
تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ

[Allah is glorified] by men whom neither trading nor bargaining distracts them from the remembrance of Allah, the maintenance of prayer and the giving of zakāh. They are fearful of a day wherein the hearts and sights will be transformed (24:37).

Such men of God, as a result of the penetration of the remembrance of God [into their hearts and souls], not only are they not negligent of their physical acts of worship such as the ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*), but they are also not heedless of the fiscal acts of worship, and hence they pay the regular charity (*zakāh*).

Consider the following: the most noble mosque on the face of the earth after the Sacred Mosque in Mecca is the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina, and the master of all days and the Eid of the Muslims is the day of Friday; furthermore, the ritual prayer has been described as an act of *dhikr*, and particularly the Friday prayer has been mentioned in the Qur'ānic chapter of *al-Jumu'ah* as *dhikr* of God

(as will be discussed later God-willing); nevertheless, some people who were deprived of God’s remembrance in their hearts, though they had it on their tongues, upon praying behind the Leader that has never had and will never have any equal, i.e. the Seal of the prophets (ﷺ)—despite all these benefits and honourable aspects in terms of the location and act of their worship, their hearing of the Friday prayer sermon, and [the very status of] the sermon-giver himself—they abandoned all of these, and when they heard the sounds of the trumpets of trade, they escaped from the prayer in order to purchase a merchandise at a cheaper rate or to increase their supply!

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا انفَضُّوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِوِ وَمِنَ  
التِّجَارَةِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

But when they saw some bargain or some amusement, they dispersed headlong to it, and left you standing [in the Friday prayer]. Say: “What is with God is better than any amusement or bargain and God is the Best of providers.” (62:11).

### 7.7 Remembrance of the contents of religious texts

In order for God’s Name to be accompanied by the remembrance of His teachings, commandments and aphorisms, God Almighty has issued the order to his servants to remember the contents of religious texts throughout history, past and present:

خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

Hold on with power to what We have given you, and remember that which is in it, so that you may be Godwary (2:63).

وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا

And remember what is recited in your homes of the signs of Allah and wisdom. Indeed Allah is all-attentive, all-aware (33:34).

And to this end, opportune times have been selected for ensuring the remembrance of God:

فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ

Then when you pour down from (Mount) Arafat, remember God at the Sacred Monument, and Remember Him as He has guided you, even though before this, you were lost (2:198).

The reason for gaining little or no benefit from some of the Divine Names is because the weaker one's attentiveness becomes to the *dhikr* of God, the more that void is filled with negligence of God, and the effect of negligence of God is that very preference of this world to the next, or abandoning the blessed Prophet (ﷺ), or other such things. This is because one's inner attributes and one's external deeds mutually influence one another; and similar to how a genuine prayer—which is the pure *dhikr* of God, as He says “establish the prayer for My *dhikr*,”<sup>47</sup>—prohibits one from indecency and bad deeds, [by the same token] committing indecency and evil deeds also prohibits one from prayer and the *dhikr* of God.

#### 7.8 Mutual influence of the remembrance of truth and oblivion to falsehood

The essential effect that focussing on this world and falling victim to its deception has on the decline and erosion of the remembrance of God can be found in compilations of religious narrations, particularly that of the *Nahj al-Balāghah*. Imām ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (‘a) has said:

واعلموا أنّ الأمل يُسهي العقل، ويُنسي الذكر فاكذبوا الأمل فإنه غرور وصاحبه مغرور

And know that having expectations makes one oblivious of the intellect and makes one forget remembrance. So falsify [such] expectations for surely it is a deception whose possessor has been deceived.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, long and fallacious hopes are the cause for the errors of the intellect and the forgetfulness of God's remembrance. Therefore, consider fallacious hopes as lies because those who have expectations from false hopes have [only] been deceived. He [the Imam] has also said:

...أما والله ليمنعني من اللعب ذكر الموت وإنه ليمنعه من قول الحق نسيان الآخرة

By God, surely the remembrance of death has kept me away from play and amusement, while obliviousness about the next world has prevented him (‘Amr ibn ‘Āṣ) from speaking the truth.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> "وأقم الصلاة لذكري" (20:14).

<sup>48</sup> *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 86.

Of course, it must be noted that what is meant by “remembrance of death” is that very life after death and the reckoning, and the reward and punishment, which [in reality] is the return towards God, the Reckoner (*al-Ḥasīb*); a brief exposition of this will come later.

Another example of the mutual influence of the remembrance of truth and oblivion to falsehood and [conversely] the remembrance of falsehood and oblivion towards truth, can be understood from the famous saying of Imām ‘Alī (‘a):

إِنَّ أَخَوْفَ مَا أَحَافَ عَلَيْكُمْ اثْنَانِ، اتِّبَاعَ الْهَوِيِّ وَطُولَ الْأَمَلِ، فَأَمَّا اتِّبَاعَ الْهَوِيِّ فَيُصَدِّعُ عَنِ الْحَقِّ  
وَأَمَّا طُولَ الْأَمَلِ فَيُنْسِي الْآخِرَةَ

Surely, the most feared things that I fear for you are two: i) the pursuit of desires and ii) lengthy expectations. As for the pursuit of desires, it prevents one from the truth and as for lengthy expectations, it makes one forget the next world.<sup>50</sup>

That is, in the same way that the remembrance of truth prevents becoming centred on desires, following desires too prevents the remembrance of and the inclination towards the truth. It has been narrated from Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (‘a): Abundance of wealth (*takāthur*) results in obliviousness towards one’s sins, and separation from the remembrance of Truth results in the hardening of hearts.<sup>51</sup>

## 8. Instances of DHIKR

### 8.1 The Perfect Human (INSĀN AL-KĀMIL)

*Dhikr* of the Truth, its remembrance and its reminder, is of the beautiful Names of God Almighty, and a number of affirmative proofs for this have already been recounted.<sup>52</sup> What we wish to describe in more detail in this section is that whatever is a rememberer of God and a reminder of Him is a locus of manifestation of the Name: ‘the Rememberer’ (*Dhākir*). Amongst the manifestations of the remember of God, the Perfect Human—particularly the pure and infallible Household of the Prophet—as well as the heavenly books—

<sup>49</sup> *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 84.

<sup>50</sup> *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 42.

<sup>51</sup> *Wasā’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 15, p. 280, ḥadīth 1.

<sup>52</sup> In the previous section, the author has discussed that (i) God is the Best Rememberer, and that (ii) the worshipping seeker strives to enact this and other attributes of God in himself (Sec. 7.1). In the present section, the latter point is elaborated. [Tr.]

particularly the Blessed Qur’ān—are perfect mirrors and complete, all-encompassing signs of the *dhikr* of Truth. This is why God Almighty has identified some things or individuals as *dhikr*, and has esteemed them with this attribute. For instance:

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا \* رَسُولًا يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ  
آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

So be wary of Allah, O you who possess intellect and have faith! Allah has already sent down to you a reminder (*dhikr*)—a messenger reciting to you the manifest signs of Allah—that He may bring out those who have faith and do righteous deeds from darkness into light (65:10-11).

In this verse, the possibility of the application of the title of *dhikr* on the person of the blessed Messenger of God (ﷺ) has been stated. In other words, the word ‘messenger’ (*rasūl*) [in this verse] is used under the heading of *dhikr* so that we can conclude that what is meant by *dhikr* here is the very Prophet (ﷺ). Moreover, the reference to ‘sending down’ (*inzāl*) [in the same verse] does not negate this; this is because just as the expression of ‘sending forth’ (*irsāl*) is applicable to the blessed Prophet—given his status of ‘being with God’ [and hence, being sent forth from Him]—the expression of ‘sending down’ is applicable to his descent and manifestation in the lower world of nature.

In some other verses, the term ‘sending down’ (*inzāl*) has also been utilized with this very meaning; for example:

فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

Those who believe in him [i.e., the Prophet], honour him, help him and follow the light that has been sent down with him, they are the felicitous (7:157).

In this verse, the following has been expressed: the Qur’ān (the light) was sent down with the blessed apostle (ﷺ); i.e. both have been sent down by and from God Almighty. Therefore, both the Qur’ān and the Perfect Human have a status of ‘being with God’ and have descended from there. In short, the term ‘sending down’ in Surah Talāq (Surah 65) does not contradict the application of *dhikr* to the person of the blessed Prophet (ﷺ).

Further evidence implying that the Perfect Human is a manifestation in relation to the Divine Name of ‘the Rememberer’ is a narration in which Imām Ja’far al-Šādiq (‘a) said, “No group ever congregated in a gathering in which they did not remember God Almighty and us [the Household of the Prophet] except

that that gathering will become a source of regret for them on the day of Judgment!” Then the Imām narrated from his blessed father, Imām al-Bāqir (‘a): “Indeed the mentioning and remembrance of us is from the mentioning and remembrance of God, and the mentioning and remembrance of our enemy is from the mentioning and the remembrance of Satan.”<sup>53</sup>

The secret of this ḥadīth in providing evidence for our claim is that if the Perfect Human—such as one of the pure and infallible members of the Household of the Prophet—is not a locus for the mentioning and remembrance of God, then remembering him will never be a remembrance of God. This is because the only “Truth” is God, and only the mentioning and remembrance of Him is *dhikr* of the “Truth”, and since the Perfect Human is a locus for the remembrance of Truth, then mentioning and remembering him is [inevitably] the *dhikr* of God. Perhaps, from the perspective of him being a complete locus of [God’s] manifestation and also from the perspective of the annihilation of the Perfect Human in the Divine Beauty and Glory that the late Ṣadūq has narrated with a *mussalam*<sup>54</sup> chain:

He [the Imam (‘a)] said, “Sending blessings upon Muḥammad and his progeny is equal in the sight of God Almighty to *tasbīḥ* (performing glorification), *tablīl* (invocation of His unity) and *takbīr* (declaration of His greatness).”<sup>55</sup>

The proof for our view and support for our explanation is that, according to some Islamic narrations, just as God has no equivalent, *tablīl* (invocation of His unity) also has no equal<sup>56</sup>; and if something such as sending blessings upon the pure and infallible Household (‘a) has been made equal to *tablīl*, the explanation of such a comparison is that the Perfect Human has nothing of himself, just as he sees nothing aside from God and His beautiful names and exalted attributes. Thus, he is nothing but the mentioning and remembrance of the Truth, and in this sense, sending blessings upon them is equal to that which has no equal; that is, the Perfect Human is nothing outside of [the domain] of the Divine Names. Attention should be paid here.

## 8.2 The compiled DHIKR of God

<sup>53</sup> *Wasā’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 7, p. 153, ḥadīth 3.

<sup>54</sup> The term used is *irsāle musallam*: this is a kind of narration for which the complete chain of narrations leading to the infallible has not been recorded, but a level of certainty exists which substantiates attribution to the infallible. [Tr.]

<sup>55</sup> “الصَّلوة على مُحَمَّد و آله تعدل عند الله عز وجل التَّسْبِيح و التَّهْلِيل و التَّكْبِير” *Wasā’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 7, p. 194, ḥadīth 8.

<sup>56</sup> *Wasā’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 7, p. 208, ḥadīths 1 and 5.

So far, instances of the application of *dhikr* to the Perfect Human—who is the ‘existential book’<sup>57</sup> of God, the Rememberer—has been outlined, and with further inquiry, more evidence can be found to this end.

A second example of the instances of *dhikr* is the ‘compiled book’ of God, including both the Qur’ān and other than it. The divine compilation—aside from its ontological foundation which is the objective *dhikr* of God—from the perspective of its contents, invitation and claim, is also the verbal, written and mental *dhikr* of the Best of Rememberers. God’s expression with regards to the message and books given to previous apostles such as Noah and Hūd is worth pondering upon:

أَوْعَجِبْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

Do you consider it odd that a *dhikr* from your Lord should come to you through a man from among yourselves, to warn you so that you may be Godwary and so that you may receive His mercy? (7:63)<sup>58</sup>

With regards to the Qur’ān, God refers to it (i) sometimes as ‘the *dhikr*’ in an absolute sense, (ii) sometimes as ‘the wise *dhikr*’, (iii) in some cases as ‘the *dhikr* for the universe and its inhabitants’, and (iv) in other instances as ‘the possessor of *dhikr*’, etc.

(i) The first type of reference occurs in verses six<sup>59</sup> and nine of the chapter *al-Hijr*:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

We have, without doubt, sent down the *dhikr*; and We will assuredly guard it [from corruption] (15:9),

and also in the following verse:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

We have sent down unto you the *dhikr*; that you may explain clearly to the people what is sent down to them, and that they may give thought (16:44)

<sup>57</sup> See footnote 33. [Tr.]

<sup>58</sup> This is the saying of Prophet Noah; the text of the first part of the verse also appears again in 7:69 which is the saying of Prophet Hūd. [Tr.]

<sup>59</sup> وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ

They said: “O you to whom the *dhikr* is being revealed! Truly you are mad (and possessed)! (15:6)

(ii) Use of the heading ‘the wise *dhikr*’ for the Qur’ān appears in verse 58 of the chapter *Al-i ‘Imrān*:

ذَلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ

These that We recite to you are from the signs and the Wise *Dhikr* (3:58).

(iii) The Qur’ān as ‘the *dhikr* for the inhabitants of the world’ has been mentioned in verse 104 of the Chapter Yūsuf (Joseph):

وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ

You do not ask them any reward for it: it is just a *dhikr* for all the nations (12:104).

(iv) And the Qur’ān as the ‘possessor of *dhikr*’ can be seen in such verses as the first verse of the chapter *Ṣād*:

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ

*Ṣād* - By the Qur’an, bearing the *dhikr* (38:1).

Since the harmony of the message of the Qur’ān is in consonance with the inner, sublime nature (*fiṭrah*) of human beings as well as the objective order of the cosmos, God has prepared this book as a reminder for all mankind to what they find within themselves and what they see on the outside, and on this matter, He has said in a number of refrains:

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

Certainly We have made the Qur’ān simple for *dhikr*. So is there anyone who will be admonished? (54:17,22,32,40)

Note: The use of the term *dhikr* in the sense of being noteworthy, notable, distinguished and the like, as applied to the Perfect Human (the existential book) and to the Heavenly Book, particularly the Qur’ān (the compiled book), requires its own discussion which will be alluded to at the appropriate time [see Sec. 9].

### 8.3 The ritual prayer (ṢALĀH)

A third example of the clear instances of *dhikr* is the ritual prayer, particularly the Friday prayer. The significance of prayer, described as the pillar of religion, has made it take on a special position in all faiths and schools of the divinely inspired prophets.

God Almighty has instructed the followers of Prophet Moses (‘a) to make the Torah and the prayer the bases for their own deliverance and to hold on to them. And He had commanded the seekers in the way of Prophet Jesus (‘a) to make the Bible and the prayer the foundations of salvation from error and to hold fast to them. And He ordered the journey-goers in the path of the Blessed Prophet (ﷺ) to recognize the Qur’ān and the prayer as cornerstones of liberation from every harm and to maintain a firm grasp on them. From this generality, one can conclude that the universal message of God to all nations is that the Heavenly Book and the prayer are the foundations of salvation. Even though the divine books—including the Torah, the Bible and Qur’ān—also encompass the prayer, yet from the aspect of mentioning the more specific after the more general (or the part after the whole) [in order to further emphasize a particular issue], the issue of prayer has been separately mentioned side-by-side along with the Heavenly Book:

وَالَّذِينَ يُمْسِكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّا لَا نَضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُصَلِّحِينَ

As for those who hold fast to the Book and maintain the prayer—indeed We do not waste the reward of those who bring about reform (7:170).

This verse embraces all nations in all times and places, and it means: “those who hold fast [i.e., they do *tamsīk* and *tamassuk*] to the Divine Book and establish the prayer (and they are virtuous (*sāliḥ*) and of those who reform (*muṣliḥ*)), We will not waste the rewards of those who bring about reform.” Since the aforementioned verse appears in the midst of the story of the children of Israel, and at the same time considers the Muslims as its audience, thus [one can say that] it embraces all divine compilations.

#### 8.4 Remark: the difference between IMSĀK and TAMSĪK

The difference between *imsāk* and *tamsīk* (including *tamassuk* and *istimsāk*) is that with *imsāk*, the thing that is associated with *imsāk*—i.e., that which is being grasped onto—is protected from falling, whereas with *tamassuk* [and *tamsīk*], the one who does the grasping is saved from falling. God performs *imsāk* of the heavens so that they do not fall:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا

Surely, Allah upholds the heavens and the earth lest they should cease [to exist and to function] (35:41).

The individual that is devoted and obedient to the Qur'an and the Household of the Prophet—both of which are instances of divine *dhikr*—performs *istimsāk*, *tamassuk* and *tamsik* so that he does not fall himself. Since God is the Absolute Truth, and the mentioning and remembrance of the Truth results in obliviousness towards falsehood, lies, oppression and all other horrid acts [Sec. 7.8], and since the ritual prayer is an unbreakable connection between the servant and God, therefore the duty to perform prayer was decreed for this very purpose.

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

Indeed I am Allah—there is no god except Me. So worship Me, and maintain the prayer for My *dhikr* (20:14).

With regards to the above verse, one can clearly conclude that the main purpose of enlivening the prayer is to revive the remembrance of God as it drives all falsehood into oblivion. And because the Friday Prayer has a characteristic which other prayers do not have, and it is recommended in the first *rak'ah* to recite the chapter of *Jumu'ah* after the opening chapter, and in the second, to recite the chapter of *Munāfiqūn* after the chapter of *Hamd*, then upon closer observation, we find the following: in the chapter of *Jumu'ah*, the Friday prayer has been referred to as the *dhikr* of God:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا  
الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

O you who have faith! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, hurry toward the *dhikr* of Allah, and leave all business. That is better for you, should you know (62:9).

As for the chapter of *Munāfiqūn*, it is also very likely that the Friday Prayer has been intended as the *dhikr* of God:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ  
هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

O you who have faith! Do not let your possessions and children distract you from the *dhikr* of Allah, and whoever does that—it is they who are the losers (63:9).

### 8.5 Note: Abundant *DHIKR* is abundant prayer

What has passed so far in this section is that the prayer—and in particular, the Friday Prayer—is the *dhikr* of God. The concomitant to this premise [as studied in Logic], in the form of an i-type proposition (i.e., a particular affirmative), is that “some acts of the *dhikr* of God are prayer”; hence, individuals who are in a constant state of *dhikr* of the Truth are only sometimes in a state of prayer. In other words, an a-type proposition (i.e., a universal affirmative) in the form: “everyone who is in a state of *dhikr* is also in a state of prayer” or “the collective states of *dhikr* is the state of prayer” [as a converse of the original premise] is not the case. The reason for this is because the converse of a universal affirmative is a particular affirmative. However, if there is valid reason that a complete conversion takes place, then the converse of a universal affirmative will be another universal affirmative. In the case of the *dhikr* of Truth, there is an independent reason which points to the fact that all the states of *dhikr* is the very state of prayer; this reason is a ḥadīth on this matter, which is narrated by Imām Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Bāqir (‘a):

لا يزال المؤمن في صلاة ما كان في ذكر الله عزوجل، قائماً كان أو جالساً أو مضطجعاً؛  
 إن الله عزوجل يقول: "الذين يذكرون الله قياماً و قعوداً و على جنوبهم"  
 A believer is always in a state of prayer as long as he is in a state of *dhikr* of  
 God Almighty, whether he is standing, sitting or lying down; [for] God  
 Almighty says: “Those that remember God standing and sitting and on their  
 sides”.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, abundant *dhikr* is abundant prayer, and constant *dhikr* is constant prayer, and whatever effect results from the continuity of prayer will also result from the continuity of *dhikr*.

The most apparent benefit of the continuity of prayer is the very one recounted in verses 19 to 23 of the chapter *al-Ma‘ārij*:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا \* إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا \* وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا \* إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ \*  
 الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

Indeed man has been created covetous: anxious when an ill befalls him and grudging when good comes his way—[all are such] except the *muṣallīn* (the prayerful), those who are constant in their prayers (70:19-23).

Since ‘*muṣallīn*’ has been explained as those that remain constant in their prayer, it can be deduced that the word ‘*muṣallī*’ is a verbal adjective (*al-sifah al-*

<sup>60</sup> *Wasā’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 7, p. 150, ḥadīth 5.

*mushabbahah*) and not an active participle (*ism al-fā'il*).<sup>61</sup> In any case, the continuity of *dhikr* is tantamount to the state of continuous prayer. Of course, this is only in select cases in which generally such a specification is warranted and the specification for this universal principle is valid; otherwise, with the mere act of *dhikr*, it is not permissible to abandon the act of ritual prayer, since the jurisprudential decree of the ritual prayer has its own particular right and place.

### 8.6 Remark: the difficulty of abundant *DHIKR*

Abundant *dhikr*, or the continuity of *dhikr*, necessitates continuous vigilance, attentiveness and assessment, and such a state is difficult [to maintain]. It has been reported from Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) that people do not have the ability for three things: (i) pardoning (blunders, mistakes, bad deeds of) people, (ii) observing equality and parity in wealth on the part of a brother with his brother [in faith], and (iii) abundant *dhikr* of God.<sup>62</sup>

What is meant by the difficulty of abundant *dhikr* is the very presence of the heart, and the remembrance of God in the inner core of the heart and in secret; otherwise, *dhikr* in public for the sake of gaining people’s attention, even if frequent, is easy and trifling, and even if continuous, is intermittent only; this is because this world is a small merchandise (*matā’un qalīlun*) and what is for this world is petty and insignificant. This statement can be construed from the ḥadīth by Imām ‘Alī (‘a) as previously narrated [Sec. 6.1]:

من ذكر الله عزّ وجل في السرّ فقد ذكر الله كثيرا ، إنّ المنافقين كانوا لا يذكرون الله علانيةً ولا يذكرونه في السرّ، فقال الله عزّ وجل: " يراؤن الناس و لا يذكرون الله إلّا قليلاً"

Whoever remembers God Almighty in secret has verily remembered Him abundantly; the hypocrites used to remember God in public and not remember Him in secret, then God Almighty said, “[When they stand up for prayer, they stand up lazily] showing off to the people and not remembering Allah except a little.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> In Arabic morphology, the active participle and the verbal adjective both signify a person or thing possessing a particular attribute derived from its root verb. However, unlike the active participle, the attribution of a quality in a verbal adjective is a permanent attribution. With regards to word *muṣalli*, both possibilities exist—that is, it can be an active participle or a verbal adjective. However, based on the Qur’anic description, the author is suggesting that the verbal adjective in this context is more appropriate. Hence, the word *muṣalli*, as a verbal adjective, does not simply signify one who performs prayers, but one who can be described with the permanent quality of praying—i.e., one who is continuously in the state of prayer. [Tr.]

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 157, ḥadīth 12.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 164, ḥadīth 3; the Qur’anic verse quoted appears in *An-Nisā* 4:142.

## 9. The Way to Becoming Notable

*Dhikr*, meaning to be noteworthy, distinguished and notable (*sāhib-e nām*, lit. ‘possessor of the name’), is not possible without *dhikr* of the Truth; this is because that which is devoid of the Truth has no share of permanence and continuity:

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ

What is with you vanishes and what is with God is enduring (16:96).

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Everything is perishing except His Face. All judgement belongs to Him, and to Him you will be brought back (28:88).

Those that had no association with the name and remembrance of God have ultimately joined the ranks of those forgotten and have become [only] idle talk in history; in other words, what will be said of them is the following: “In the past, so-and-so used to be a king, a chief, a leader, ...”, which really means that no sign of them remains today and that they only exist in the midst of historical memory and buried inside a grave pit of pages. God Almighty describes this group as those that were tales in history:

فَاتَّبَعْنَا بِعَصْمِهِمْ بَعْضًا وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ

So We made them follow one another [to extinction] and We turned them into folktales (23:44).

فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَرِّقٍ

So We turned them into folktales and caused them to disintegrate totally (34:19).

It should be clear that a thing when shredded, dismembered, disintegrated, slashed and torn apart by God will never return to its original form; therefore, a thing or person will become noteworthy only after having established a profound attachment to the remembrance of the Truth and the name of God. This is the reason why, with regards to the messengership of the blessed messenger—who not only had and continues to have an unbreakable bond with the remembrance of God, but also was and continues to be the manifestation of the name of the Truth and the greatest sign of the divine remembrance—it has been said:

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ

Did We not exalt your *dhikr* (name)? (94:4)

God not only made the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) have a name, but He exalted and elevated his name. In the same way that the rank of a believer is exalted, and the ranks of the believing scholars—which are higher than those believers who are not scholars—will also be exalted, so too the name of the most noteworthy of humanity—such as the Holy Prophet (ﷺ)—has also been made elevated. The Blessed Qur’ān, which is notable due to the effects of carrying God’s Remembrance, will also make its true followers notable, which is why God Almighty has said the following in this regard:

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

We have revealed towards you [O people] a book in which is your *dhikr*, will you not then contemplate? (21:10)

This verse, while inviting mankind to the remembrance of Truth, also gives glad tidings of the grace and bounty of becoming notable and esteemed (and it is possible to construe this meaning from a number of other verses as well). This is because true fame and noteworthiness is a sign of linking with God and connecting with the Truth.

Hence, in the invocation of *Abu-Hamzah Thumālī*, as a legitimate request based on knowledge and insight, we read the following: “And exalt my *dhikr*”<sup>64</sup>; meaning, O Allah! Exalt and elevate my name, as you exalted the name of the Blessed Prophet (ﷺ). The origin of this request is that the community of the Blessed Prophet (ﷺ) takes him as an exemplar to follow [including in asking God for their name to be exalted]:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ  
كَثِيرًا

You have indeed in the Messenger of God an excellent (beautiful) exemplar for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day, and who engages in abundant *dhikr* of God (33:21).

Therefore, [by taking the Prophet as an exemplar], the community benefits itself in religious favours and divine graces [as the Prophet did], though the disparity between the essential and the subsidiary, the distinction between the leader and the follower, the difference between the infallible and the fallible, and the divergence between the perfect and the deficient, is still valid in its own place.

<sup>64</sup> "وَأَعْلَى ذِكْرِي"; The invocation of *Abu-Hamzah Thumālī* (see footnote 45).

## 10. God's Remembrance Being a Sure Cure

In the same way that the Name of God is like medicine, his remembrance is like a sure cure: "O He Whose Name is medicine and His *dhikr*, a cure."<sup>65</sup> To remedy any pain, a specific medicine with a specified amount and instruction is required. Similarly, to become cured from any illness there exist specific boundaries crossing which carries with it a threat of danger. This is why the remembering seeker, in order to cure his own illness, must suffice himself with the narrated *dhikr* and its quantitative and qualitative boundaries; otherwise, there is no benefit in a disorderly *dhikr*, except from the aspect of [having performed] general *dhikr* and the hope of reward, which is a matter on its own and does not require a specific directive. In this context—i.e. the fact that a specific *dhikr* is *tawqīfī* (fixed-in-prescription)<sup>66</sup> and that it is necessary to abstain from adding to or subtracting from it—a number of narrations have been related, a few examples of which will suffice here.

### 10.1 Evidence for *DHIKR* being *TAWQĪFĪ*

1) Ismā'īl ibn Fuḍayl inquired from Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) about the meaning of the verse:

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا

And glorify with praise of Your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting... (20:130).<sup>67</sup>

The Imām replied that it behooves every Muslim to say the following ten times before the rising of the sun and before its setting:

<sup>65</sup> "يا من اسمه دواء و ذكره شفاء"; The supplication of *Kumayl* (see footnote 44).

<sup>66</sup> Of the various rites in Islam and the elements contained within them, some are *tawqīfī* (i.e., they have been pre-assigned from above) and others are *takhyīrī* (i.e., man can exercise an element of choice regarding them). As for those that are *tawqīfī*, if man is to carry out any one of them, he must do so according to the way it has been prescribed. It is not only a matter of conformity at the level of the will—man simply obeying a particular command under the spirit of obedience—but it also pertains to the plane of knowledge for man has a capacity to understand the relationship between certain *tawqīfī* matters and their existential reality. After all, that which is pre-assigned in a particular manner is not arbitrary but it is based on the existential order of creation and hence carries with it a certain reality with specific effects. When man exercises his own choice regarding these matters without understanding their existential reality, it can alter their effects, and hence their intended efficacy. [Tr.]

<sup>67</sup> A nearly similar verse appears in chapter *Qāf* 50:30. Also, for related verses in a similar context, see *Hūd* 11:113 and *al-Isrā* 17:78. [Tr.]

لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له، له الملك و له الحمد، يُحيى و يُميت و هو حيُّ لا يموت، بيده الخير و هو على كل شيء قدير

There is no deity but Allah; He is Alone and has no partner; His is the Kingdom [of all the worlds] and all praise is due to Him; He gives life and causes death; and He is ever-living and death will never come to Him; in His hand is all good and He has absolute power over everything.

The narrator reported, “I said the following: ‘There is no deity but Allah; He is Alone and has no partner; His is the Kingdom [of all the worlds] and all praise is due to Him; He gives life and causes death, *and causes death and gives life.*’ The Imām said, “O you! Verily there is no doubt that ‘He gives life and causes death, and causes death and gives life’, but say it the way I have said it.”<sup>68</sup>

From this ḥadīth, it becomes apparent that whatever belongs to God, and what He is named and attributed with, should not enter the domain of transmitted *dhikrs* except that which has been mentioned in the Blessed Qur’an—which is the Word of the Best of Rememberers—or mentioned by the embodiments of the beautiful names of God—i.e., the Perfect Human Beings such as the Prophets and the Infallibles Imāms (‘a)—who do not speak on their accord and whatever they present us with under the banner of Islam is from the hidden guidance of God Almighty. Therefore, in the aforementioned ḥadīth, it has been commanded that even though God gives life and causes death, and causes death and gives life, yet in this specific *dhikr* one ought only to mention the first part—i.e., that God gives life and causes death.

2) ‘Alā ibn Kāmil said that he heard Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a) saying with regards to the verse:

وَأذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ

And remember your Lord within your heart beseechingly and reverentially, without being loud (7:205),

in order to adhere to it in the evening, one is to say:

لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له، له الملك و له الحمد، يُحيى و يُميت و يُحيى،  
و هو على كل شيء قدير

There is no deity but Allah; He is Alone and has no partner; His is the Kingdom (of all the worlds) and all praise is due to Him; He gives life and

<sup>68</sup> *Wasā’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 7, p. 227, ḥadīth 4.

causes death, and causes death and gives life; and He has absolute power over everything.

The narrator then reported, “I said: ‘*In His hand is all good*’.” The Imām (‘a) replied, “indeed ‘in His hand is all good’, but say it the way I have said it ten times; and [also say] the following ten times: ‘I seek refuge in God, the All-hearing, All-knowing’<sup>69</sup> when the sun is rising and when it is setting.”<sup>70</sup>

This means that even though all good is in God’s hand, and it is from the extent of his power that anything reaches any other thing, yet to say it in this particular *dhikr* is not necessary or beneficial, and for the purpose of attaining the aim of this specific *dhikr*, one must avoid adding anything to it.

3) In the context of learning one’s responsibility in the era of the occultation of the Remnant of God (i.e., Imām Mahdī)—may the souls of all other than him be sacrificed for him—Zurārah, while narrating the famous prayer from Imām al-Ṣādiq (‘a): “O God let me know You ...” (which is actually at the level of an a priori argument on prophethood, messengership and the authority or *hujjah* of each age) was also taught an expression on this matter:

يا الله، يا رحمن، يا رحيم، يا مقلب القلوب ثبت قلبي على دينك

O Allah! O Compassionate! O Merciful! O Transformer of the hearts!  
Establish my heart firmly on your religion.<sup>71</sup>

Zurārah altered it through an addition: “O Transformer of the hearts *and eyes*”; the Imām said, “Although God is the Transformer of the eyes, but in this supplication say what I have taught you to say [no more and no less].”

Reminder: The present discussion is about *dhikr* and not supplication although each supplication, in its own context, carries with it the *dhikr* of God. Hence, that which was mentioned in the third example above is related to the topic of supplication which is outside the present discussion, and narrating it in the matter of *dhikr* being *tawqifi* was only to support that claim.

## II. Generality of DHIKR

As mentioned in the introduction to the topic of *dhikr*, anything that revives the Name of God and His remembrance is His *dhikr*, be it in the common form of reciting *dhikr* amongst those that perform *dhikr*, or in the form of thoughts that is

<sup>69</sup> اعوذ بالله السميع العليم

<sup>70</sup> *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 7, p. 227, ḥadīth 6.

<sup>71</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 148, ḥadīth 73.

common amongst the scholars; in other words, the realm of scholarship is a session of *dhikr*, and the teacher and learner are both occupied with the divine *dhikr*. This statement—other than what was concluded from the analysis of the meaning of *dhikr* and other general inferences—can be further established from some narrations regarding this topic.

Luqmān<sup>72</sup> told his son:

O my dear son! Choose the company you keep based on your discernment! If you see a group of people performing *dhikr* of God Almighty, sit with them, since if you are a learned man, your knowledge will benefit you [in that gathering], and if you are ignorant, they [i.e., those performing *dhikr*] will increase you in knowledge, and it may be that God covers them with His shade of mercy such that you too are covered with them; but if you see a group of people not performing *dhikr* of God Almighty, then do not sit with them, since if you are learned, your knowledge will not benefit you [in that gathering], and if you are ignorant, they will increase you in ignorance, and it may be that God covers them with the shadow of punishment such that you too are covered with them.<sup>73</sup>

What is evident is that to be in the *dhikr* of God is to be conversant [*mudhākirah*] in the divine sciences; the reason for this is not only the contextual evidence in this narration, but also the fact that Luqmān [clearly] stated that sitting with the rememberers of God makes an ignorant person knowledgeable. This is why the compiler of the book of ḥadīth, *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*<sup>74</sup> has said that the great scholars of ḥadīth in the Imāmi school of thought—such as Kulayni (*r*) and others—have interpreted such narrations to refer to scholastic circles of *dhikr*; as a result, they have narrated these in chapters dealing with “the excellence of scholastic gatherings and discussions.” The aforementioned compiler of *Wasā'il* further states that in many narrated instances, *dhikr* has the meaning of ‘knowledge’.<sup>75</sup>

## II.I Remark: The domain of the DHIKR of God

<sup>72</sup> Chapter 31 of the Blessed Qur'ān is also named after *Luqmān*. [Tr.]

<sup>73</sup> *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 7, p. 231, ḥadīth 2.

<sup>74</sup> This monumental work, by Shaykh Ḥurr 'Āmili, is a vast collection of important ḥadīths in the school of the Household of the Prophet, as compiled over an 18 year period. It has been organized under 50 headings, and at the end of the work, a thorough discussion has been provided by the compiler with regards to the chains of narration, and related topics in the science of ḥadīth. This work contains 35,868 ḥadīths in various areas (particularly in jurisprudence), and its works of reference, aside from “the Four Books” (see footnote 5), consist of 170 other sources. [Tr.]

<sup>75</sup> *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 7, p. 231, ḥadīth 2.

Since *dhikr* means remembrance and is not specific to a name, and since scholastic discussions in the area of divine knowledge and commandments are clear instances of remembrance of God, then the field of teaching and learning falls within the domain of *dhikr* of God. As a result, any benefit applicable to *dhikr* in general—which is not particular to any one specific *dhikr*—is also equally valid for scholastic circles. For instance, what has been narrated about God being the companion of those that remember Him is also applicable to those in circles of teaching and learning.

*Abū-Ḥamzah Thumālī* has narrated from Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (‘a): in the original and untampered Torah, it has been inscribed that Prophet Moses (‘a) asked God, “Are You close that I may whisper to You, or are You far that I should call out to You?” God revealed onto him:

أنا جليسٌ مَنْ ذكّرني

I am the companion<sup>76</sup> of one who remembers Me.<sup>77</sup>

This ḥadīth encompasses any *dhikr* of God, be it *dhikr* in the form of whispering or calling out, or *dhikr* in the form of knowledge, thoughtful discourses or [being part of] a religious-milieu.

## II.2 Note: The harmony between the remembrance of God and scholarly contemplation

Remembrance of God (*dhikr*) is in complete harmony with deep scholarly contemplation—which is also *dhikr* of God—and each of them supports and seeks aid from the other. To explain, the remembrance of God aids in strengthening one’s intellectual capability and allows for the intellect to blossom, while scholastic activity makes the spirit remember and reverberate with the remembrance of God; and whenever one of them withers, the other one refreshes and revives it, allowing it to flourish. Rūmī [referring to one side of this relationship] likens *dhikr* to the Sun which hoists up the sullen and withered thought [or intellect] and gives it motion:

این قدر گفتیم باقی فکر کن      فکر اگر جامد بود رو ذکر کن

<sup>76</sup> The Arabic word used is *jalis* which literally means one who sits with another person! Thus, this ḥadīth emphasizes the extreme proximity and companionship of the Lord of the Universe with the one that rememberer Him. [Tr.]

<sup>77</sup> *Wasā’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 7, p. 49, ḥadīth 2.

ذکر آرد فکر را در اهتزاز      ذکر را خورشید این افسرده ساز

We said this much so far; the rest go contemplate,  
If thought be congealed, towards *dhikr* take your gait.  
For *dhikr* incites thought to pulsate and flicker  
For this shrivelled thought, let your Sun be *dhikr*.<sup>78</sup>

To conclude, it is appropriate to say:

سُبْحَانَ مَنْ جَعَلَ الْإِعْتِرَافَ بِالْعِجْزِ عَنِ الذِّكْرِ ذِكْرًا

Glory be unto Him Who has made one's confession of not being able to  
perform *dhikr*, a *dhikr* [in itself]!<sup>79</sup>

O Lord! Bestow the sweetness of Your remembrance upon Your eager devotees.

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<sup>78</sup> Rūmi's Mathnawī Collection, 6<sup>th</sup> book.

<sup>79</sup> Inspired from what has been said about [the inability to] give thanks to God (*Ṣaḥīfab al-Sajjādiyyah al-Jāmi'ah*, supplication 6).