

**IN THE NAME** of God, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate.

O God, we are incapable of praising You; You are as You have praised Yourself. All praise belongs to You alone. We ask You by Your Beautiful Names that You shower Your beloved Prophet with prayers and peace. May the blessings and peace of God be upon our master Muhammad, the unlettered Prophet, his family and wives, the mothers of the believers, and his descendants and Companions. May God's peace and blessings be upon all of them, as long as He is remembered by those who remember Him.

There is a well-known tradition related in Imam Malik's *Muwatta* that Jesus, the son of Mary, peace be upon them both, said, "Do not sit in a gathering without remembering God, for if you do, your hearts will harden, and a hard heart is distant from God." The hardening of the physical heart occurs from lack of the spiritual heart is hardened by lack of spiritual exercise and eating the dead flesh of other humans (which is the metaphysical reality of the act of backbiting and slander).

The spiritual exercise of the heart is called "*dhikru'Llah*," which simply means, "remembering God." The practice of remembrance is a practice of recollecting another world and another time. When Odysseus came upon the Island of the Lotus-Eaters, some of his crew took one bite of the Lotus flower and were overcome with lethargy. As humans from all eras are wont to do, his crew forgot from whence they had come and that their journey was a return home. But one day all lotus-eaters must leave their dreams and wake up.

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا مِنْ مَرْقَدِنَا <sup>سَقَطَ</sup> هَذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ

[36:52]

"Woe to us! Who has woken us from our sleep. This is just as the Most Merciful has promised, and the messengers have spoken the truth" (36:52), say the sleepers of this world when they are finally and forcibly removed from the poppy field of pleasure and forgetfulness. The newly awoken come to the realization that they were in fact accountable for every God-given breath, but they have squandered their entire lives foolishly or, worse still, spent them in malevolent deeds.

Breath is a Divine gift, and the tongue is the plane upon which the breezes of the breath blow. To speak, we need a tongue, lips, and breath. To remember God, we need a heart. We have been given all four and reminded by God in every Book of revelation that the reason we are created is to worship Him. In fact, everything in existence is initially created in a state of worship. However, because of their free will, humans can forget the reason for their existence. "And if you forget, remember," says the Quran.

It is through remembrance that equilibrium is established in the soul.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ <sup>عَلَىٰ</sup> أَلَّا يَذْكُرَ اللَّهُ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ [13:28]

"Is it not by the remembrance of God that hearts are stilled?" the Quran (13:28) rhetorically asks. This *stillness* is a result of several phenomena. The first is that when remembering God, one often feels His presence. While this may be true with the remembrance of anyone, the presence of God, as well as that of

the Prophets and saints, brings a stillness of the heart without comparison.

Another cause for this *stillness* is the actual presence of angelic beings and the absence of the demonic, brought about by remembrance of God. In our modern world, we tend to shy away from mentioning unseen beings, such as angels and demons; but lack of belief in something does not necessitate its non-existence. Angels are real; they love the remembrance of God and will actually seek out places where He is being remembered in order to join in. Though unseen, their presence is felt by the worshipper. Furthermore, the actual words themselves that are invoked to remember God bring stillness to the soul. Ancient languages produced an effect that more newly developed languages have not. For instance, when one hears Arabic, or sacerdotal Greek for that matter, one is struck by the power of the sounds even if the meanings are lost. This is certainly not true for most modern tongues. Arabic, in particular, has a special effect on the heart.

For example, the simple yet most profound Islamic statement of creed, *La ilaha illa'Llah*, is composed of only three Arabic letters: *alif*, *lam*, and *ha'*. From these three letters, the words for "no," "god," "except," and the Divine name "Allah" are derived.

These letters are pronounced simply by moving the tongue up and down, lightly touching the roof of the mouth. In ancient Chinese medicine, this action of the tongue was believed to unify all of the meridian channels in the body and engender good health. In addition, throughout the first few years of life, an infant will commonly place its tongue on the roof of its mouth and bring it back down.

While these are interesting facts, there is a more fundamental reason why remembrance of God effects us in such a positive way. Simply stated, the entire body craves Divine remembrance more intensely than anything else. Every cell in the body is individually in a state of remembrance. When the heart and its translator, the tongue, join in, harmony occurs.

There is no doubt that meditation and prayer from traditions other than Islam also have an effect. Many people experience physical benefits, such as lower blood pressure, less stress, and better sleep. What Islamic spiritual practice offers additionally is a pure, unadulterated tradition. Its authenticity is guaranteed due to its direct connection to its original sources preserved by an unbroken chain of transmitters.

When I was a young student of the New Testament at a Jesuit high school, my teacher, a brilliant Jesuit priest, Father Daugherty said, "I can guarantee only two words in the entire New Testament were uttered by Jesus," upon him be peace, "and they are *Abba* and *Amen!*" However, the primary sources of Islam have been rigorously authenticated and are unlike those of other religions in this respect. Thus, we can be absolutely certain that the formulas found in this book were uttered by our beloved Prophet (saw) and were passed on to us, his community, for protection and peace. We need these prayers for our sanity and for our protection from the evils of the world.

The compiler of this text is the great Imam, Shaykh `Abdallah Ibn `Alawi al-Haddad, a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), from both sides of his family as well as from the well-known and loved clan of Ba Alawi of Hadramawt, Yemen. Our Prophet (saw) said, "Toward the end of time, take to the people of Sham (Greater Syria), and if not them, then the people of Yemen." Today,

it is acknowledged that the last two great bastions of traditional Islam on the Peninsula of Arabia Felix are Yemen and Sham. While there are some great scholars left in the Indian Subcontinent and in the Western lands of Islam, such as Chinqit (Sub-Saharan Africa) and Mali, the majority of traditional scholars lie buried in the earth, and their books remain neglected.

This text is small but powerful in that it draws its words from the pure *sunna* (words, deeds, and actions) of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) who remembered God in all of his states. The Quran, in turn, praises those who remember God:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونَ [٢:١٥٢]

رَجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ ۗ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا

تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ \* لِيَجْزِيََهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ

وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ [٣٧-٢٤:٣٨]

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا

وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ [٨:٢] الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ [٨:٣] أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ

الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۗ لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ [٨:٤]

*Remember Me, and I will remember you (2:152); Those who let neither buying nor selling divert them from the remembrance of God ... God shall reward them for the best of what they did, and increase them in reward from His bounty (24:37-38); The believers are those who when the name of God is mentioned their hearts tremble ... They will have degrees of rank with their Lord and forgiveness and generous provision (8:2-4).*

There is not a page in the Quran that does not have some reminder for us; indeed, the entire Quran is a reminder.

The text is a *wird*, which is commonly translated as "litany." *Wird* literally means "a place of water," and this meaning is telling. A watering place is visited regularly not out of mere fondness but out of necessity. The spiritual aspirant should approach his *wird* with the same thirst and regularity he would his watering place. As water satisfies the body's physical demand, so too does the *wird* bring the soul to a state of contentment and, eventually, delight. The Quran is itself a *wird*, a portion of which should be recited by Muslims daily.

This edition is distinguished by the fact that its translator, Dr. Mostafa al-Badawi, spent a large part of his adult life in the company and under the guidance of Shaykh Ahmad Mashhūr al-Haddad, who was a direct descendent of the compiler of this *wird* and also himself a master of the inner and outer sciences

of Islam. While this is a general *wird* that can be used without the supervision of a spiritual physician, I personally had the blessing of taking this *wird* from Shaykh Ahmad al-Haddad, may God

be pleased with him, during his blessed life of scholarship and spiritual guidance. In one blessed gathering held by the Shaykh, may God be pleased with him, he told me that now is the age of *hawsat*. I did not know the meaning of this word and asked him what it meant. He replied, "Mental instability as a result of leaving the remembrance of God."

This *wird* is a healing and Prophetic medicine from a doctor of the hearts, Imam 'Abdallah al-Haddad, who learned his craft from true scholars of knowledge and deeds, until he himself became a master. According to an authentic hadith, "Scholars are the heirs of the prophets," and an heir, as any Islamic jurist knows, is able to use the inheritance according to his own discretion. Thus, the scholars of this Islamic community are the heirs of the last of God's prophets, the paragon of His creation, our master Muhammad is. Imam 'Abdallah al-Haddad was such an heir and has presented this text, blessed by virtue of being composed entirely of Divine and prophetic revelation, and arranged as none but a master physician can be trusted to arrange. What is left for us is only to take the medicine.

As the poet said: "*We heal ourselves with Your remembrance, and should we forget, we are in relapse.*"

—HAMZA YUSUF