

Shaykh Ahmad al-Alawî ®

On Permissibility of Using The Unique Name of Allah in Dhikr

Praise belongs to Allah and it is sufficient, and peace on His chosen slaves. From the slave of his Lord, Ahmad ibn Mustafa al-'Alawi al-Mustaghanami. Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah and His blessings. As for our subject, esteemed brother, I recall the discussion between us during your short visit when I saw you angered at your brothers the 'Alawiyun, as it seemed to me then, not for any wrong they do but just because they are infatuated with having the solitary name on their tongues, and that is their saying ALLAH.

It seemed to you that this requires reproof - we might even say punishment. And this, because they are committed to dhikr of that Name, with cause or without cause. It is the same for them in a dilemma or without one, in a situation not demanding invocation, so that when one of them knocks on the door he says, 'Allah,' and when he stands up he says, 'Allah,' and when he sits down he says 'Allah,' and so on.

You are of the opinion that it is improper to use this name as a dhikr, it not being a form of structured speech according to you - based on what grammarians stipulate as the necessities of grammatical construction in their definition of informative speech. There is no point in my answering you unless it is with the object of seeking mutual understanding and investigating whether what they do is right and proper, and whether it is permissible or not. I present you with this note that through it there may be healing for the breasts and cure for the hearts.

As for your stand on what grammarians lay down as the necessities of grammatical construction in what is considered speech, it is correct, except that the fact escapes you that in this decision of theirs the grammarians are

concerned with discursive speech and are far from applying their definition to dhikrs and what distinguishes them from the point of view of lawfulness or unlawfulness, and then what results from that of rewards and the like. If you asked them in their day or this, they would certainly reply, "What we decide is merely a technical term on which we rely in our practice and there is no dispute in a technical term." You must be aware of the fact that the language of the grammarians is not the same as that of the scholars of kalam, and theirs is not the same as that of the fuqaha, nor theirs in turn that of the scholars of hadith and so on, for every group has its technical terms. For us, it follows from this that grammarians are simply concerned with defining informative speech, and are not concerned with distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate dhikrs. In other words, what grammarians stipulate as the requirements of grammatical construction is particularly for someone who intends to communicate with someone else by his speech. As for someone who does dhikr, he only intends to benefit himself and establish the meaning of that noble Name in his heart through his dhikr, or a purpose of a similar nature.

Second, grammarians have not laid down the existence of grammatical construction for one groaning or sighing in what he expresses, for his purpose is not that of grammarians and it is unlikely that grammarians would say to a groaning or sighing man, "I really do not understand your purpose in sighing since it is a word without construction, lacking a predicate or anything like that." None of this is relevant to someone groaning, because his intention is not communication with another but simply to have relief by it from himself.

You must realise, brother, that every name, even if it is not one of the Divine Names, has an effect which adheres to the person of someone who mentions it. Thus when a man repeatedly mentions death, for example, he really experiences its effect, and it clings to the being of someone who mentions that name, especially if he persists in it. There is no doubt that that effect is not the same as the effect of mentioning wealth or power, or authority. Even without considering the effect, it is reported in the noble hadith, "Increase in dhikr of the destroyer of pleasures," meaning death. There is no doubt that it is a single word, and some say that it was a word for the first communities.

Generally speaking, each man, if he has subtle perception, is aware of the relationship to the self of the effect of the name mentioned whether the matter is serious or light. If that is the case we must believe that the Name of Majesty creates an effect on the self just as any other name creates an effect, and that each has an effect particular to it.

The fact will not escape you, brother, that the Name ennobles you through the nobility of naming Him, because of what it holds of His impression in the concealment of its secret and meaning. Let us cut short our consideration of all that we have set out and restrict ourselves to standing by the judgement of the Lawgiver concerning the use of that Name on the tongue. It certainly comes under one of the five evaluations of the shari'ah, that is - obligatory, permitted, forbidden, disliked, and recommended. Since there is no question of there being either a word or an action that does not come under these preceding evaluations it seems to us that before opposing the one who pronounces that Name we should see under which evaluation it comes. If we find it under the categories of forbidden or disliked things then opposing the one who pronounces it is obligatory on us, because he utters something which is rejected. If not, however, and we find it in another category, then to reject him is disapproved, for its pronunciation is permitted. On this assumption, even if neither obligatory nor authorised, if the work is within the limits of the permissible, what is to prevent us repeating something which is permissible, and what makes one who pronounces it worthy of reproach or even punishment?

However we use it, we are not led to a position where we join it to the categories of forbidden or disliked things, and it retains its character as regards its status as the Name of Majesty. This leaves you in the position of one who stays where it suits him - but, "If someone honours Allah's sacred things, that is better for him in his Lord's sight" (Qur'an, Surat al-Hajj, ayah 28), "As for those who honour Allah's sacred rites, that comes from the fear of Allah within their hearts" (Qur'an, Surat al-Hajj, ayah 30).

Now, all that we have set out so far is with respect to the fact that it is a single name not associated with anything even by way of implication. If we investigate the truth and uncover the matter we may say that its dhikr is possible even according to those who define grammatical construction.

It is, in effect, a noun in the vocative case. Among grammarians the vocative is of the category of informative speech because they have vocative particles with the meaning "I call out", and the omission of these is permissible and very common in the language of the Arabs. Often the situation calls for its omission by necessity, as in this case, because of what Qur'anic courtesy and Islamic teachings demand of us, courtesy and teachings of which, perhaps, sufic masters have more than others. I implore you, brother, not to consider far-fetched our saying to you that 'the folk' allow themselves to be guided by the courtesy of the Qur'an, and that they are devoted to taqwa which gives discrimination. He said, may He be exalted, "If you show fear of Allah, He will give you discrimination" (Qur'an, Surat al-Anfal, ayah 29). They inwardly listen to that until Allah shows them what He does not show others. Thus, in relation to this case - the dhikr of the single Name with the omission of vocative particles - they hold to what they are commanded in His saying, may He be exalted:

"Say, 'Call on Allah or call on the Merciful, whomever you call on, His are the most beautiful Names'." (Qur'an, Surat al-Isra, ayah 110)

They concern themselves with the former which they are commanded to call on, which is our saying, "Allah". In the absorption of their zeal in retreats and seclusion, standing, sitting, and on their sides, some keep dutifully to the commanded dhikr, and the divine granting of success forces on them the need to drop the vocative particle when the Presence of Nearness seeks them - because vocative particles are used for distance, not for One who is "nearer than the jugular vein."

There are ayats found in the Book of Allah which show the sincerity of their inspiration, and they are in the vocative category. They are of two sorts, one from the slave to his Lord, and another from the Lord to His slave. In numerous examples of the first kind they occur with the omission of the vocative particle and in those of the second kind they occur with the vocative particle. What do you think is the reason for that? How were the people guided to it? Oh how glorious is Allah!

The master Abu Ishaq ash-Shatily has this to say in his book of Analogies: "The Qur'an brings the message of Allah ta'ala to humanity and [the response] of humanity to Allah. As for the lesson when it shows the address of Allah ta'ala to humanity, it sets it out with the vocative particle required

by distance and invariably without curtailment, as in His saying, 'O my slaves who believe, My earth is truly vast ? (29: 56) 'Say, "O My slaves who squander themselves ? ' (39: 50) 'Say, "O men, I am truly the Messenger of Allah to all of you".' (7: 158) 'O you who believe...'. When it shows mankind addressing Allah ta'ala it is invariably without a vocative particle because originally vocative particles are for admonition and Allah is beyond admonition. Also, most of the vocative particles are for distance, for example, 'Ya - O,' and Allah ta'ala makes clear that He is near, especially to the supplicant, in His saying, "And when My slaves ask you about Me, then, I am near," (2: 185) and in general near to the creation, as in His saying, "There are not three talking confidentially but He is the fourth of them, and not five but He is the sixth of them." (58: 7) He said, "And We are closer to him than his jugular vein" (50: 16), so they take admonition from this through the men of knowledge, first by omitting the vocative particle, and second in consciousness of His nearness.

Similarly, with the inclusion of the particle in the other category they take admonition through the men of meaning, and reinforcement of warning to the negligent, and pointing to the elevation of the One who addresses, and that He is free of nearness such as human nearness, since He in His nearness is exalted and in His exaltedness near, how glorious is He. Second, the address of a slave to the Lord is one of longing and seeking once he has corrected himself. He uses in Qur'anic address the word 'Lord', admonishing and instructing, since in his supplication the slave uses the name fitting the condition of the One supplicated, and 'the Lord' is the one who carries out what rectifies the 'lorded one', as He says, in the statement of mankind's supplication:

"Our Lord do not punish us if we forget or make mistake, our Lord do not impose on us a burden such as You imposed on those before us."

I have demonstrated how the cry of the slave in particular appears with the vocative 'O' dropped, and that is on account of the preceding. If you have understood this, then tell me, by your lord, are the people still to be blamed if we hear that they omit the vocative 'O' in their supplications and cries to their Master? Is this from their discernment in the deen of Allah or from complete lack of understanding of Allah?

Legislating for others and compelling men to follow is one of the prerogatives of the one who is protected from error. No one else can say 'this is permitted and this is not', and the one whose business it is, it is better for him to lower his voice in the areas where his ignorance is greater than his knowledge. That is a principle which adheres in every situation. The Sufi is obliged like others to lower his head and negate his choice before the noble Law and the pure Divine ordering of affairs.

Certainly it is likely that our opponent will come against us from another quarter, saying that we are not allowed to worship with something which it is uncertain that our predecessors used, or make use of it as a means of seeking nearness expecting reward for it. We say to him, Yes, the matter is just as you say and we hope from Allah that we and you are in unison on a point such as this. I presume, brother, that you do not forget and that it has not escaped you that the Divine Names are legitimate for use in worship by recitation, according to His saying, "Allah has the most beautiful Names so call on Him by them" and they are each single, and although they are single, neither this generous ayat nor any other ayat stipulates the manner of their invocation in respect to form or construction. I believe this is out of consideration for the states of the travellers and those turned towards Allah, since they differ in strength and weakness, desire and awe, yearning and eagerness. Men are in classes and yearning has degrees and the secrets of creation differ as to their relationship with Allah, powerful and majestic is He. From that point of view no restriction can be derived from the forms of supplication and dhikr that were used by the first communities to the extent that we are able to say absolutely, 'this Name was not a dhikr of the first communities' or 'they did not consider this Name an invocation,' because we cannot be familiar with all that was on their tongues in their seclusions and retreats, in sickness and health. It is unlikely that we can believe that the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did not have the Name of Majesty on their tongues repeatedly, Allah, Allah.

We should set before you what is almost a proof in this matter, in order that you might realise that the truth of the matter is vaster than you suspected. Muslim has it in his Sahih from Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that he said, "A sick man was groaning in his presence, blessings of Allah and peace be upon him, so one of them forbade the man and told him to be patient. The Prophet said, may Allah bless him and give him peace,

'Let him moan, for he is invoking one of the Names of Allah ta'ala'." Al-Bukhari and at-Tirmidhi stated also from Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, "Leave him to moan for the moan is one of the Names of Allah by which the sick man finds rest." Some negligence occurred at the time of transmission by ascribing the report to someone other than the one who related it, and the truth is that ar-Rafi'i Imam ud-Din related it in Tarikh Qur'un from 'Aisha and, my valued friend, established that it is a good hadith (hasan).

Then, to develop the matter, what do you think? If the sick man had voiced the Name of Majesty repeatedly, 'Allah, Allah,' instead of saying 'Ah, Ah,' - would it have been correct for that Companion to oppose him? Never! For the situation evidently contradicts that. His opposition was only when he failed to grasp the meaning of the word 'Ah', and the fact that it is one of the Names of Allah ta'ala, until the Prophet, may Allah bless him and give him peace, directed him by saying "Let him moan for he is invoking one of the names of Allah." I believe that is enough. It is proof of what is obvious. We also relate it to the fact that the word 'Ah,' is single, so the Prophet, may Allah bless him and give him peace, agreed to its use as a supplication in that manner. This is over and above what we have inferred from the fact that it is one of the Names of Allah. Without doubt it is a valuable lesson, inducing men to have a good opinion of those who do dhikr, however they may do so.

Assuming that what we set out as a proof to you by way of demonstration is not correct, it is only fair to you and to us that we say that the problem is controversial and it is important that it is resolved because the problem is one of independent judgement (ijtihad). Brother, what is the meaning of your compelling us to accept your word or submit to your ijtihad on the spot when we do not force you to ours? This is from one point of view. From another point of view, however much you may have persisted in denial of your brothers, the 'Alawiyun, in this case, you cannot make them less than forerunners among those who call on that Name singly and also charge the imams of the deen and guides of the Muslims with its dhikr.

Look! I will cite a passage to you from someone who will put you at ease, insha'Allah, a passage of his which in all probability has not reached you. If it has reached you, then why, when you see the 'Alawiyun singled out by it,

do you look on them with disdain? In the Mufeed ar-Rawi of Shaykh Sidi Mustafa Ma' al-'Aynayn, from Ibn Jarir in his commentary on Qur'an there is: "...he would say, wanting the murid to confine himself to invocation of the Single Name during his travelling the way, 'It occurs in tradition that when the worshipper says "Allah," there arises from within him a shaft of light, which spreads out on the horizons, then rises to the height of the Throne, filling the cosmos completely so that Allah says to it, "Stop!" It says, "By Your glory and majesty! I will not stop until You forgive the one who called on this Name." Then He replies, "By My glory and My majesty, I vowed to Myself before I created the world - I only set it moving on the tongue of My slave because I have already forgiven him".' "

It is mentioned in the Sharh al-Mabahath al-Asliyya (The Basic Research) of Ibn 'Ajiba, may Allah have mercy on him, that Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, may Allah be pleased with him, said "I wanted in the beginning to travel this way by means of many awrad, fastings and prayers, so when Allah knew the sincerity of my intention, He sent one of His friends to me who said to me, 'My son, detach your heart from each relationship except that with Allah alone, and go into solitude and gather your himmah (yearning) and say, "Allah, Allah, Allah".'" He said, I mean al-Ghazali, in the Mishkat al-Anwar in his own words "As long as you are soiled with what is other-than-Allah, then you have no alternative but the negation - 'la ilaha', but when you withdraw from all things in witnessing the Owner of all things, you can find rest from the negation and reach the affirmation:

'Say Allah! Then leave them to their plunging and their playing'." (6: 92)

Then He said, "When you rid yourself of remembrance of what never was, and busy yourself with remembrance of the One Who has never ceased, say 'Allah', then find rest from what is other-than-Him." He also said, "Open the door of your heart by the key of your saying La ilaha illa'llah, the door to your spirit by saying Allah, and draw down the bird of your secret by saying Hu, Hu."

In his book Maqsad al-asna fi sharh asma'llah al-husna in a passage on the Name of Majesty he said: "It appears that the slave's portion from it, meaning dhikr of this Name, is the gift of Allah, and we mean by that, that his heart and himmah become absorbed in Allah ta'ala, not seeing other-than-Him and not paying attention to other-than-Him."

Al-Ghazali chose this for each believer to have his share of this Name, and if you choose what al-Ghazali chose for you then this is it. If not, do not expect your lack of choice to be a proof for one whose choice agrees with Imam al-Ghazali's.

Suppose that your argument is effective as a proof against the 'Alawiyun and their like, would it also be a proof against distinguished scholars and commentators of Qur'an who have preceded them, such as al-Fakhr ar-Razi and others? For he himself undertook the dhikr of this Name and states it explicitly in his great commentary. We find in the passage on the Bismillah that he says: "...and know, O men, that for the length of my life I have been saying 'Allah', and when I die I will say 'Allah', and when I am questioned in my grave I will say 'Allah', and on the Day of Rising I will say 'Allah', and when I take the Book I will say 'Allah', and when my actions are weighed I will say 'Allah', and when I travel on the sirat I will say 'Allah', and when I enter the Garden I will say 'Allah', and when I see Allah I will say 'Allah'.

" Ar-Razi said all that in defiance of the one who does not say 'Allah'. We really would not have used these passages over and above hadith except for you to realise the fact that the 'Alawiyun are not innovators in their saying 'Allah', as you imagine them to be. You must be aware that the Sufis are generally concerned with this business and believe that it is the Mightiest Name, by which if He is supplicated, He answers, glorious and exalted is He, and if He is asked, He gives. This is not the choice of the Sufis only but the choice of more than one of the imams, outstanding narrators of hadith, and men learned in the sources. One of them, Shaykh Muhammad Bayram the fifth, may Allah be merciful to him, was of those who supported the permissibility of dhikr of the Name of Majesty. He mentioned in *The Prophetic Assistance*, ". . . that it is said in *Rudd al-Muhtan li's-sadat al Hanifiyya* that Hisham transmitted from Muhammad ibn Abi Hanif, may Allah be pleased with him, that it is Allah's mightiest Name, may He be exalted, and that at-Tahawi and many scholars stood by it, and the Shaykh of the community Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadir ibn Yusuf al-Fasi quoted it, may Allah be pleased with him, in his cases as to the legitimacy of dhikr of the Name of Majesty, singly." He further said, "? And in the *Sahih* it is stated that the Hour will not come until there no longer remains on the face of the earth one who says 'Allah, Allah'."

That is perfect evidence for dhikr of this alone especially in the version which is in the accusative (Allaha, Allaha). There is no dispute concerning speaking the Noble Name singly. Since that is the case what is the harm in a man repeating it many times, and what is the purpose of rejecting it?

In relation to the wording of the preceding hadith, according to the way the Imam related it in his Musnad and Ibn Majah in his Sahih from Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, he said: "The Hour will not arise until 'Allah, Allah' is not said on the earth." Here is the strongest and most dependable evidence in this hadith for the repetition of the word of Majesty. Its purpose clearly indicates dhikr of that Name, because if it had not been repeated it could have implied, "there no longer remains one on earth who believes in the existence of Allah." Because of the repetition this is not possible.

There is proof in the Noble Law of the permissibility of the repetition of that Name, and nothing to justify prohibition of repeating it orally or in the heart. Since there is nothing in the Law to demonstrate the prohibition of repeating any of the names of created things and, if that is permitted, how can there be anything to prohibit giving voice to one of Allah's most beautiful Names, unless there were aberration and pig-headedness in the Law which prevented the believer from turning the name of his Master upon his tongue by saying 'Allah, Allah' or one of His other Names, because Allah says, "And Allah has the most beautiful Names, so call Him by them," that is, ask Him and remember Him by them. This is what we understand and choose for ourselves, and you have the right of choice for yourselves, but it is not your business to force us to stand by your choice since we have not forced you to ours.

Assume the surrender and generosity of those who say that this Name is disliked - I seek forgiveness of Allah - for it is laid down about that in which there is dispute as to whether it is disliked or recommended, that it is of a higher grade than being permissible in the Law. Khalil mentions this in his Sharh with this explanation: "When there is dispute over something as to whether it is recommended or disliked, its enactment is preferable. As a result, when the dispute is over the status of something as a sunnah, then its being disliked is not lower in rank than the permissible, rather they

stipulate about that over which there is dispute concerning its lawfulness, that it is higher in rank than the permissible."

Now, as to what you mention, or we might say disown, of the 'Alawiyun voicing the Name of Majesty and employing it on their tongues fittingly and unfittingly, as you say, on highways and similar unsuitable places, it appears that you think they abandon the reverence desired for Divine Names and that their action is not a stipulation of the Law. When one of them knocks on a door and says, 'Allah', and when the man answers him calls 'Allah', it is unacceptable in your eyes. I feel compelled to say that you have failed in your study of the hadith relating to this case of ours, or else you merely imagine that the matter among the first community was contrary to our action. I cannot believe that if you had come across the relevant texts, after serious examination you would not have set them above your personal opinion - I have to believe that this would be the case with you.

Our holding unrestrainedly to the dhikr is not outside the Sunnah nor in conflict with it. This dhikr is suitable, not just now and then, or here and there, but at all times and in all places, in order to build up the times and remove the qualities of negligence from controlling the senses and overpowering the intellect. In other words, dhikr is praiseworthy in every state and negligence is blameworthy in every state. Without doubt, recourse to the Book and Sunnah is the proper thing for you and for us in this matter.

The command to do dhikr and the cautioning against its neglect contained in the Book are clear and do not need to be set out in detail, especially among people such as you. Since there is no conflict between what is contained in the Sunnah and the Book, we can cite prophetic ahadith and judgements from the madhhabs to clarify what the Lawgiver wants from us and how to act upon it, if Allah wills. Abu Ya'la related in his Musnad from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, "You must have as much taqwa of Allah as possible and remember Allah at every tree and stone" - the ultimate intention is generalisation of time and place. What Imam Ahmad published in his Musnad from Anas, with a sound line of transmission, is comparable to this. A tradition from 'Aisha is similar to it, that "he would remember Allah at every opportunity, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him."

'Alqama said that ad-Damiri said that the meaning of this tradition is that he remembered Allah whether in a state of ritual purity or impurity, standing, lying down, walking or mounted. An-Nawawi mentions in his Commentary on Muslim something comparable to this, that the meaning of this tradition is that in his dhikr he would not distinguish between states or places, may Allah bless him and give him peace.

Whoever studies the scholars' records in this section will find what will help the consensus of the community to absolute acceptance in the question of dhikr. What is quoted from the Hanifi masters pertains to this, according to what is said in *The States of the Rightly Guided Ones* by the Qadi Khan - "Dhikr in the markets and in negligent and outrageous assemblies in the markets is permissible given the intention that one is busy with glorification and declaring the unity of Allah and they are busy with the world." Consider carefully, may Allah have mercy on you, his saying "Negligent and outrageous assemblies" - you will not find the 'Alawiyun carried recklessly to that extreme.

Dhikr is approved even in the hot baths. Over and above the fact that they are places where dirt is removed, they are places of negligence and uncovered imperfections. In *Collected Cases*, the author says that "reading Qur'an in the hot baths loudly is disliked, but softly it is not disliked, and glorification and declaring the Divine Unity are not disliked even when spoken aloud." If the dhikr of Allah is permissible even in the baths, what is the fault of the 'Alawiyun, for example, if one of them remembers Allah on the roadway? If some individual unaccustomed to hearing this dhikr recoils upon hearing it, and he is fair and desires a decision regarding another person, it is his duty to judge according to the judgement of Allah and His Messenger, not according to his own personal opinion. His judgement must be free of the influence of the approval or disapproval of others. It is our duty not to resort to this source of approval and not to be content with options other than those of the Law. It is the duty of the one who accepts Allah and the Last Day to think about the stipulation of the Law and behave according to it, without choosing anything except what Allah chooses for him: "When Allah and His Messenger have decided something it is not for any mumin man or woman to have a choice about it." (Surat al-Ahzab: 36)

However noble your purpose in examining texts and passages relevant to this problem, still perhaps what we have written, although it is only a little, is enough. Assuming you need something over and above this, (and the believer often needs increase in good), I say to you that more than one of the imams have made clear the permissibility of dhikr even in the toilet. This is mentioned only that you might grasp the significance of the permissibility of dhikr near the dirt of the highways, which you thought unlikely. Qadi 'Iyad said in the conclusion of the book of prayer, "the schools of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As, ash-Shafi'i, Malik and ibn Bashir, permit dhikr of Allah in the toilet." It is also understood from the words of Ibn Rushd Sama'i Suhanin and from the words of al-Barzili, which Abu'l-Fayd ash-Shaykh al-Katani quoted in his treatise in commentary on His words, may He be exalted - "O you who believe, do not enter houses other than your own until you ask permission and extend greetings to its people." Also from him, in Customs of the Rightly Guided, al-Lakhamy said, "The one who relieves himself remembers Allah before entering the place where he relieves himself." 'Iyad also reported its permissibility, "Some of them acknowledge the permissibility of dhikr of Allah in the toilet, and that is the teaching of Malik, an-Nakha'i and 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As." He also said, "If Ibn al-Qasim sneezed while urinating, he would praise Allah."

If you ask if Shaykh Khalil did not say "in the toilet we are ashamed to mention Allah" and it was 'because of its being excluded' and that the immediate understanding of the words of Ibn Abi's-Salam and Khalil in their clarification is that its exclusion is because of prohibition, then we must say that just as one understands from the words of these two that its exclusion is because of prohibition, so one understands from the words of Ibn Rushd, 'Iyad and the author of at-Taraz that its exclusion means its 'being disliked' in their opinion; that is the clear position of al-Jazuli and the author of Conduct. The imams found fault with anyone who understood it as prohibition - for example, Imam Abu 'Abdillah al-Hatab said "? And it is not obvious because it is not consistent with the words of any of our predecessors, who were not explicit concerning its prohibition," and "? The burden of their argument is that it is disliked, in order to be consistent with the words of the earlier generations."

Our intention in using these passages is not to give more emphasis to one of the schools with respect to the permissibility of dhikr in the toilet or its

being forbidden - rather we quote them in order that you might realise how the imams permitted dhikr even in such a place, which is acknowledged absolutely as the worst place. If you find someone in a similar situation mentioning Allah, do not look on him as strange and consider him an innovator gone astray, because ash-Shafi'i and Malik supported its permissibility and both of them are adequate examples of holding to the rope of Allah and holding to the Sunnah of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and give him peace. Without doubt, it follows from this passage and the like of it that the 'Alawiyun have been wronged by your reproach, provided that recklessness does not lead them to extremes in dhikr, which permissibility ultimately leads to, so that someone mentions that he does not stop dhikr even in the toilet. The most that is reported of any of the 'Alawiyun is that when someone sees him he says 'Allah', and when he sees someone else he says 'Allah' and so on. According to my understanding, the like of this does not bring one nearer to what is disliked. We do not say to you that it is of importance to the Sunnah, and even if on appraisal it is not of the Sunnah, it still resembles the truth more than the false.

Someone might say, "Surely the Names of Allah are too exalted to be used to gain access to anything other than the things of the next life, so it is not permissible to use them for stimulation and attracting attention or the like." This would be true if it were not that the Law concedes, or we could say commands, its like. If you search out the most likely areas of resemblance in these cases you will find what the Lawgiver wants from us and what is nearer to straightforwardness. For example, consider the form of the call to prayer. You will find it used to make known the beginning of the time of prayer and to command attendance to the performance of a duty - yet it is nearer or more appropriate to the situation that one should call, "the prayer is now" or, "the time of prayer has begun". Why does the call to prayer reproduce the shahadah completely instead of some succinct words which could represent it? Do you ask, "Why are the names of Allah used to summon those who pray?" Questioning the legitimacy of calling out "Subhanallah" to make the imam aware of a mistake in the prayer is comparable to this. That some of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would arouse others by means of the takbir is also relevant to this. This is testified to by what is said in the two Sahih collections concerning the river valley. When they slept through the dawn prayer, the

first to awaken was Abu Bakr, and 'Umar was the fourth, and he took to calling out "Allahu akbar" until the Prophet awoke, may Allah bless him and give him peace. Consider, may Allah have mercy on you, how they used dhikr to awaken those asleep and the like.

What Ibn Rushd specified in Khalil's account resembles this, "Boasting is permitted when shooting arrows, naming and in the outcry (of battle) - and the preferable thing is dhikr of Allah." Ibn 'Arafah adds, "? A and when shooting arrows, if a direct hit on the target is achieved, it is preferable to mention Allah." Just consider how they chose dhikr of Allah for drawing attention to the striking of the target - they only chose it because they knew the desire of the Lawgiver is increase in dhikr in all conditions.

Since it is possible that you will consider what we deduce from the texts insufficient in clarity or proof, I must mention some of what is said concerning asking permission to enter, which is demanded by the Law, by means of dhikr of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, so that by it the noble brother might realise the desire which necessitates his study of the terms of the Lawgiver in this case. His saying, may Allah bless him and give him peace, "When you reach the doors of your houses make yourselves known by dhikr of Allah," is one of the clear traditions met with in this field. The distinguished as-Sanusi, author of Tenets, transmitted it in his book, Assistance of the Needy One. What most of the commentators have mentioned as the meaning of 'asking permission' is His saying, may He be exalted, "Oh you who believe, do not enter houses other than your own until you ask permission and greet its occupants," which reinforces this passage. Fakhr ar-Razi, after speaking about 'asking permission' from many aspects in his commentary al-Kabir, said, "? And 'Ikramah said it means magnification and glorification and their like," meaning other dhikrs. What is in the commentary of an-Naisaburi, Gharib al-Qur'an, is exactly the same as what ar-Razi transmitted. From Abu Ayyub, and published by Ibn Abi Shaibah, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Mardawiyah, and at-Tabrani, there is, "I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, how do you see the saying of Allah, '? Until you ask permission and greet its occupants?' We know about this greeting, so what about asking permission?" He said, "The man glorifies, magnifies and praises, and clears his throat, thus letting the occupants of the house know'." As-Suyuti transmitted it in his book, The Published Pearls in Commentary on the Qur'an by what has been transmitted.

By citing the preceding we are saved from pursuing the clear proofs of the legitimacy of seeking permission by means of dhikr of Allah which showed up in this chapter. It is undisputed among the imams that dhikr in seeking permission is preferable to calling out and knocking loudly on the door.

O brother, when you created a great distance between the Sunnah and us, however closely and justly you examined what we have set out, in our view you typified the form of innovation. For this reason we rose to combat it, and Allah inspired us, without any knowledge on our part, and may He guide us and you. Amin.

Before the conclusion of this essay, blessed for us and you if Allah wills, I will mention some traditions relevant to this area - I hope you will give them due attention as is your business. Each of these two noble traditions, among other things, summarises all that we have set out concerning the necessity of filling one's time and place, and the structure of all moments, with dhikr of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.

First, a tradition which Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Ibn Abi'd-Dunya, an-Nasa'i, and Ibn Habban published. In the wording of Abu Dawud, "He said, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, 'If someone remains in an assembly without remembering Allah, it is counted against him as being frivolous towards Allah'." Al-Hafidh 'Abd al-'Adhim said, "At-tirah (being frivolous), ta' with a kasra and a single ra', is a defect and something to be answerable for." Second, the tradition which Abu Dawud and al-Hakim published from Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, "He said, 'If any people stand up from a gathering in which Allah was not remembered, they stand up from something like the corpse of a donkey, which will be a source of regret for them on the Day of Resurrection'."

Here the answer is concluded - success is in the hand of the One to Whom one turns, and returns. May Allah bless Sayyiduna Muhammad and his family and companions and give them peace. Praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all creatures.