MEANING OF DHIKR

Q : 5- A non-Muslim studying Islamics at a university is writing a project on the Tablighi Jamaat. Since I got to know him because of this, he frequently asks a thing or two concerning his project. One question is this:

"As far as I know `Dhikr" is not used in the Tablighi Jamaat in the same sense as Sufis use it, who use it often for mystical and spiritual exercises to attain a state of ecstasy. What is meant by "Dhikr" in Tablighi Jamaat and what is the difference between "Dhikr" and the prayer (Salah)?"

The latter part of the question specially is beyond me. Could you give me an answer as quick as possible?

A: Dhikr is a special type of Islamic worship which means remembrance of Allah Almighty. Although remembrance is an act of heart yet the recitation of some words or sentences glorifying the names of Allah is also a part of Dhikr because such recitations may ultimately inculcate an inner state of perpetual remembrance of Allah.
It is totally erroneous to presume that the Sufis undertake Dhikr to attain a state of ecstasy. In fact any kind of ecstasy is not an objective of any Islamic worship, rather the acts of worship on their own are commendable because they demonstrate one's total submission to the commands of Allah Almighty. Whether or not a state of ecstasy is attained has no importance with regard to Dhikr or any other type of worship.

The true Sufis as well as other Muslim scholars undertake Dhikr only to demonstrate their submission to Allah and not to create ecstasy. Those who claim that the basic purpose of Dhikr is to attain ecstacy are either ignorant of the true teachings of Islam or have a confusion about it, because they cannot fortify such a notion with any statement in the Holy Qur'an or in the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet saw.

As for the difference between Dhikr and prayer, it can be summarized by saying that Dhikr is a general remembrance of Allah while prayer in the meaning of Salah is a particular type of worship, and in the meaning of supplication is to put one's request before Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala, and both of these are specific kinds of Dhikr.

Contemporary fatawaa