

Is appealing to other beings than Almighty God construed as polytheism?

Apropos of the Word of logic and revelation, the human beings- like the whole phenomena in the world- need God not only for their creation, but also in all facets of their lives. With regard to this fact, the holy Quran states,

يا ايها الناس انتم الفقراء الي الله و الله هو الغني الحميد*

(O, men! You are all in need of Allah and Allah is the praiseworthy Independent".)

And somewhere else, it ascribes all the triumph to Allah, the Almighty, as saying,

وما النصر الا من عند الله العزيز الحكيم**

(And indeed, there is no victory except from Allah, the Source-Wisdom Supreme Power.)

According to this Islamic indisputable principle, the Muslims recite the following verse in all their daily prayers:

اياك نعبد و اياك نستعين***

(You alone do we worship, and Your aid alone do we seek.)

Now, to clarify the question, it should be stated that asking others for help is of two distinctive types:

1- The first type is to consider an individual or a phenomenon free from want and independent of God and then beg for his blessings. This type of plea for mercy from someone is, no doubt, polytheism, and the holy Quran rebuts it as saying,

* Fatir Sura, verse no. 15

** Ale-Imran Sura, verse no. 126

***Hamd Sura, verse no. 5

قل من ذا الذي يعصمكم من الله ان اراد بكم سوءا او اراد بكم رحمة ولا يجدون لهم من دون الله وليا ولا نصيرا*
(Say, “Who can shelter you against Allah’s wrath? If it be Allah’s Will to punish you or to bestow grace upon you nothing can bar His command to be fulfilled; and they, the people cannot find any guardian and supporter but Allah”.)

2- The second type is to consider an individual as God’s creature and entirely dependent on him and then beg him for help, owing to the fact that God has bestowed him this gift so as to solve some of men’s problems.

According to this view, he to whom we plead for assistance is, indeed, the intermediary God, the Almighty, has appointed as a means to fulfill some of their needs. This kind of seeking for help, one, in fact, asks for the Divine mercy, because it is he, who has dedicated this potential to and enabled him to fulfill the people’s needs.

These means principally lay the foundations of man’s life, so that without them, man’s life is disturbed. Now, looking at this matter from this angle, we clearly see that this kind of plea has definitely no inconsistency with monotheism.

If a god-fearing farmer makes use of some factors, such as the land, water, light, etc to produce high-quality crops, he, in fact, has made an appeal to God for help, because it is He, who has granted him with power, talent, and the natural factors. It is evident that this kind of plea for help is entirely compatible with monotheism. With regard to this fact, the holy Quran orders man to plead some phenomena, such as prayer and resistance, for help when it says,

واستعينوا بالصبر والصلوة**

(And seek my help with perseverance and prayer.)

As a consequence, man can keep his patience and perseverance as a means to achieve his end, and it has no inconsistency with the verse, which goes,

واياك نستعين

* Ahzab Sura, verse no. 17

** Baqarah Sura, verse no.45

(And Your aid alone do we seek.)

Does calling upon somebody necessitate his worship?

What cause this question to arise are some of the verses of the holy Quran, which apparently prohibit us from appealing to others, save God:

و ان المساجد لله فلا تدعوا مع الله احدا *

(The mosques are worshipping places for Allah; so do not worship others besides Allah at all.)

ولاتدع من دون الله ما لا ينفعك و لا يضرک **

(And do not worship instead of Allah those that neither profit you nor harm you. If you do so you shall certainly be of those who do wrong.)

Under the pretext of these verses, some ones have regarded the call upon the Divine guardians and the pious men after their demise as polytheism and the act of worship to them.

The answer:

To answer this question, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the terms الدعاء and العباده

There is no doubt that the term دعا in Arabic signifies ‘to call’ and the term العباده denotes ‘to worship’; therefore, they are not synonyms, and one cannot say that to call is an act of worship, because:

Firstly, the term الدعوه has been employed for several times in the holy Quran, but it never means ‘worship’, such as:

قال رب اني دعوت قومي ليلاً ونهاراً *

(Noah said, “O, my Creator! Truly, I called my people by night and day constantly”.)

* Jin Sura, verse no. 18

** Yonos Sura, verse no. 106

* Noah Sura, verse no. 5

Does Noah mean that he has worshipped his nation night and day? Therefore, the term الدعوة [call] and العباده [worship] are not synonyms, and when someone pleads with the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) or the infallible Imams (a.s) for help, in fact, has not worshipped them.

Secondly, the term دعا in these verses implies a special invitation and can be accompanied by the term ‘worship’, because all these verses as a whole were revealed about the idolaters who knew the idols as their small gods.

There is no doubt that the idolaters supplicated the idols’ forgiveness and mercy, as they had been entitled as the possessors of the intercession right, forgiveness, etc. They also know them as the absolute in the worldly and over- worldly affairs, and evidently, this type of supplication to the idols is a service of worship. The following verse is the most evident testimony to the fact that they called upon the idols to help them as their divinities:

فما اغنت عنهم آلتهم التي يدعون من دون الله من شريه*

(And their gods upon whom they called except Allah, did not avail them aught.)

Hence, the verses at hand are irrelevant to our subject, which mainly is about a man’s appeal to another for help while knows him neither as God, nor as the Absolute in his worldly and over- worldly affairs but as the Divine reverend servants whom Allah has pledged to fulfill their prayers about other servants. The holy Quran in this regard says,

ولو انهم اذلموا انفسهم جاؤك فاستغفروا الله واستغفر لهم الرسول لوجدوا الله توابا رحيماً**

(If they had come to you when they had wronged themselves and had begged Allah’s forgiveness and the Messenger had begged forgiveness for them, indeed they would have found that Allah is the Merciful Repentance Acceptor.)

Thirdly, the aforementioned verses clearly testify the fact that the term الدعوة does signify man’s invitation to worship God. Due to this fact, in the following verse, the holy Quran employs the term عبادت [worship] after the term ادعوني [to invoke], which belongs to the family of the term دعوت (invitation).

و قال ربكم ادعوني استجب لكم ان الذين يستكبرون عن عبادتي سيدخلون جهنم داخرين*

* Hood Sura, verse no. 101

**Nesa Sura, verse no. 64

(And your Creator has stated, “Invoke to Me! I will answer your invocation by fulfilling what you have prayed for. But those who out of vain arrogance avoid worshipping Me, they will surely enter the Hell while they are disgraced”).

The employment of the terms *ادعوني* and *عبادتي* testify that the idolaters called upon the idols which had been marked with Divine features.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the main purpose in these verses is to prohibit the invitation of the idolaters, who knew their idols as Allah’s partners and intercessors. They implored the idols’ forgiveness and begged them for their needs due to the fact that their small gods could fulfill the Divine accomplishment. They also believed that God has taken over a part of their worldly and over-worldly affairs to the idols.

What is the relationship between these verses and beseeching to a pure spirit, who is counted as Allah’s honored and reverend servant?

According to the holy Quran,

وان المساجد لله فلا تدعوا مع الله احدا*

(The mosques are the worshipping places for Allah; so do not worship others besides Allah at all.)

It prohibits the Arabs at the Age of Ignorance from worshipping idols, angels, Jinnee, or the galaxies, and instead, invites them to worship God, the Almighty. There is no relationship between these verses and imploring a person’s prayer, while we consider him as Allah’s reverend and honored servant and not as the Divine.

One may assert that calling upon the Divine guardians is permitted when they are alive, but after they have passed away, it is polytheism.

Below are printed the answer to this question:

Firstly, we implore the holy spirits of Allah’s infallible servants, such as the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) and Imams (a.s), for assistance (and not their

* Ghafir Sura, verse no. 60

* Jin Sura, verse no. 18

corpses). And if we seek help from them when visiting their tombs, it is because this status causes our more attention to their holy spirits. In addition, as stated in the Islamic traditions, they grant our prayers.

Secondly, their life or death cannot be a criterion for polytheism or monotheism. Our topic is about the criterion for the distinction between polytheism and monotheism, as the usefulness or uselessness of our supplications to them is not related to our discussion, and this issue will be discussed in detail later.