

Is it polytheism or heresy to invoke the Divine guardians

Supplication is to resort to an intermediary to act between man and God in order to elevate his soul.

In his book, entitled ‘Lesan Ul-Arab’, Ibn Manzur writes:

توسل اليه بكذا، بقرب اليه بحرمة أصره تعطفه عليه¹

(To supplicate him through so and do means he managed to hold one close to him through respect and what could attract his attention.)

The holy Quran in this regard says:

يا ايها الذين آمنوا اتقوا الله وابتعوا اليه الوسيله وجاهدوا في سبيل الله لعلكم تفلحون

(O you who have belief! Be in awe of Allah and seek the means of nearness to him, and strive hard in His way so that you may be prosperous.)²

Juhari in his book, ‘Sahah Ul-Loggah’ defines the term ‘means’ as such:

الوسيله ما يتقرب به الي الغي

(The term ‘means’ signifies what we hold ourselves close to the other one through it.)

Thus, the worthy means through which we can hold ourselves close to God is whether our own good deeds and sincere worship or the reverend individuals who are held in high esteem and great honor before God, the Almighty.

1- Lesan Ul-Arab, vol, 11,p.724

2- Maedeh Sura, verse no, 34

The Kinds of Supplication:

The Supplication falls into three categories:

1- Supplication to good deeds; as Jalal Ul-Din Suyuti writes in the commentary of the above-mentioned verse:

عن قتاده في قوله تعالى: (و ابتهغوا اليه الوسيله) قال: تقربوا الي الله بطاعته و العمل بما يرضيه
(*With regard to the verse و ابتهغوا اليه الوسيله Ghatadeh says, it means to hold one close to the Lord through obeying Him and performing the deeds that pleases Him.*)³

2- Supplication to the sincere prayers of the pious men of God; as the holy Quran with regard to Joseph's brothers states:

قالوا يا ابانا استغفر لنا ذنوبنا انا كنا خاطئين قال سأستغفر لكم ربي انه هو الغفور الرحيم
(*Jacob's sons said to their father, "O father! Ask forgiveness for us for the sins we have committed, because we were surely sinners". He answered, "Nearly, I shall ask forgiveness for you from my Lord; verily, He is the Merciful, the Forgiving".*)⁴

The above-mentioned verse clarifies that Jacob's sons supplicated their father for forgiveness and knew it as the best means for their forgiveness. In this condition, Jacob not only did not object to their supplication, but also vowed that he would ask for their forgiveness.

3- Supplication to the reverend nobilities who are held in high esteem by Allah in order to achieve the Divine nearness.

3- Dor Ul-Manthur, vol.2. p.280, Beirut edition, below the verse.

4-Yousef Sura, verses no.7-8

It is noteworthy to say that the Prophet's disciples had adopted this kind of supplication at the advent of Islam. Now, let us study the reasons of this fact under the auspices of the traditions, the Prophet and the Islam nobilities' practice as follows:

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal quotes Othman Ibn Hanif as such:

ان رجلا ضرير البصر اتي النبي صلي الله عليه {و آله} و سلم فقال ادع الله ان يعافيني، قال: ان شئت دعوت لك و ان شئت اخرت ذاك فهو خير، فقال: ادعه. فامرته يتقضا فيحسن وضوءه فيصلي ركعتين و يدعو بهذا الدعاء، اللهم اني اسئلك و اتوجه اليك بنبيك محمد نبي الرحمة يا محمد اني توجهت بك الي ربي في حاجتي هذه، فتقضي لي اللهم شفعه في

*(Once, a blind man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) and implored him as saying, “ask God to cure me”. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) replied, “I pray for you right now if you want. But if I postpone it to some other time that is better for you”. He asked the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) to do it now. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) ordered him to take ablution carefully and then perform a two-Rakat prayer and then pray as such: “O, my God! I ask you and resort to you under the auspices of Mohammed, the Prophet of lenience. O, Mohammed, I supplicate God through you to grant my need. O God, make him my intercessor.”)*⁵

The narrators have all agreed on the authenticity of this hadith so that Hakem Neishaburi in his ‘Mostadrak’ describes it as a sound hadith, and Ibn Majeh quotes Abu Ishaq as saying, “this is an authentic hadith”. Also, Tirmizi in his book, ‘Abvab Ul- Asiyeh’, believes that the authenticity of

5- Mosnad, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, vol, 4, p.138, section of Othman Ibn Hanif's narrations.

6- Ibid, p. 158, first edition, Beriut

this hadith is beyond doubt. In this regard, Mohammed Nasib Refaee in ‘Al-Tavasulel Haghight Ul-Tavasul’ writes as such:

لا شك ان هذا الحديث صحيح و مشهور... و قد ثبت فيه بلا شك و لاريب ارتداد بصر الاعمي
بدعاء رسول الله صلى الله عليه {و آله} و سلم له

(No doubt, this is a sound and famous tradition... and in it, it has been proven that a blind man regained his eyesight by the Prophet’s prayer.)⁶

The mentioned tradition clearly proves the permissibility of supplication to the holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) in order to grant our needs. Moreover, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) obliged the blind man to pray and implore God’s blessing through putting the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) as an intermediary between him and God. This is considered as the real meaning of supplication to the Divine guardians.

2- Abu Abdollah Bokhari also writes:

ان عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه كان اذا قحطوا استسقى بالعباس بن عبدالمطلب فقال : اللهم انا
كنا نتوسل اليك بنبينا فتسقينا و انا نتوسل اليك بعم نبينا فاسقنا قال فيسقون

(Whenever there occurred a draught, Omar Ibn Khatab asked Abas Ibn Abdul Motaleb, the Prophet’s uncle, to supplicate to God for rain. He then said, “O, God! We used to supplicate to God through the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) in his lifetime, and You always sent us the rain of mercy. Now we supplicate to the Prophet’s uncle for your blessings.)⁷

3- The issue of supplication to the Divine guardians at the advent of Islam was so prevalent that the Muslims even in their poems introduced the

7- Sahih, Bokhari , Section 20, a book on Friday, chapter Estesgha , p.27 Egypt edition.

Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) as an intermediary between their selves and God.

Sawad Ibn Ghareb has composed an ode to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) wherein he says,

و اشهد ان لا رب غيره و انك مامون علي كل غالب
و انك ادني المرسلين وسيله الي الله يا بن الاكرمين الاطائب

(I bear witness that there is no god save Allah, and you are trustworthy to all secrets and hidden, and I bear witness that you- O, the son of the pure- are the closest means to Allah amongst the other Divine prophets.)⁸

Although the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) heard this poem from Savad Ibn Ghareb, he neither criticized him, nor accused him of polytheism or heresy.

Shafei also points to this fact in the following couplet as saying:

ال النبي ذري عي هم اليه وسيلتي
ارجوبهم اعطي غدا بيدي اليمين صحيفتي

(The Prophet's descendants are my means toward Allah, and I hope to receive my book of deeds in my right hand on behalf of them.)⁹

Although there exist an abundant number of traditions on the permissibility of supplication to the Divine guardians, this issue has been also specified in the Prophet and his disciples' practice as well as the great Islamic scholars, and there is no need for further discussion. As a

8- Aldorar Ul-Saninah,, Seyed Ahmad Ibn Zeini Dahlan, p.29,quoted by Tabarani

9-Al-Savaeq Ul-Moharaghah, Ibn Hejr Asghalani) , p.178, Cairo edition.

consequence, the baselessness of this claim, i.e., supplicating to the Divine guardians is polytheism and heresy, is proven.