

15) Piety in Worshipping

One of the other subjects that have been ordered in the Holy Quran and the Sunna to observe Taqwa in is worshipping. It means that we should know Whom we are worshipping and Who deserves to be worshipped. It is then that we will find out the only being before whom we should be humble, to be devoted sincerely, and whom we should obey is God. Can human beings arbitrarily worship God? Can man bow to anyone and anything he relishes? Should the act of worshipping be done with sound motivation? Does an idol made by man, a tree planted by him, a cow fed by him, the sun and stars which appear and disappear, Satan or a human who cannot keep a fly or gnat away from himself deserve to be worshiped?

All the prophets have been ordained to remind human beings not to worship anything other than the All-wise, the All-knowing, the All-Powerful and the Ever-living God. The prophets' calls were to worship God': ***"And to Ad (We sent) their brother Hud. He said: O my people, serve Allah! You have no God other than Him. Will you not then guard (against evil)?"***¹ or ***"And certainly We sent Noah to his people and he said: O my people, serve Allah! you have no God other than Him. Will you not then guard (against evil)?"***

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: "So fear Allah Who benefits you with His advice, preaches to you through His Messenger, and endowed you with His favors. Devote yourselves to His worship, and fulfill His rights on you as He deserves."²

Truly, only God deserves to be worshipped as we recite in our prayer: ***"Thee (alone) do we serve and thee (alone) do we beseech for help."***³(1:5)

The worshipping of God should be practiced sincerely. In this relation, Lady Fatima (AS) says: "One who sends up his sincere devotion to God, God the Honored the Glorified will send down what is best for him."⁴

Worshipping God should be based on love and gratitude. In this relation, Imam Sadiq (AS) has reported the Holy prophet (SAW) as saying: "The best of people is one who is a real lover of the worship of God, one who hugs it, one who loves it from the bottom of his heart, who attends it mindfully, who seeks relief

in it, and is not afraid of ease and hardship of the world.” [5](#)

Imam Sadiq (AS) has divided worshippers into three groups; “The first group are those who worship God out of fear, and this is the worship of slaves. The other group are those who worship God for reward, and this is the worship of employees. And the third group are those who worship God out of love for Him, and this is the worship of the free and this is the best of worships.” [6](#)

The master of the monotheists, Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as addressing God in this way: “O Lord, I have not worshipped You out of fear, nor have I worshipped You out of desire for paradise, but I have worshipped You because You deserve to be worshipped.” [7](#)

A true worshipper offer his worship secretly, for the reward is the highest. In this relation, Imam Sadiq (AS) has reported the Holy prophet (AS) as saying: “The best worshipping in terms of reward is the most hidden.” [8](#)

Imam Reza (AS) narrated from his fathers that Imam Ali (AS) said: “To hide good deeds, be patients with calamities, and hide (one’s) calamities are from the treasures of paradise.” [9](#)

A true worshipper should choose moderation and avoid extremes, for he will be deviated. In this connection, Imam Baqir (AS) has reported the Holy prophet (SAW) as saying: “For every worship, there is an intensive desire, then it will languish. Hence, one whose desire for worshipping is based on my Sunnah, will be guided, and whoever challenges my Sunnah will be misled and his deed will be in vain. Know that I offer prayer, sleep, fast, break my fasting, laugh, and weep. Whoever deviates from my Sunnah is not from me.” [10](#)

Worshipping should be based on full acknowledgement of God. The worshipper should know whom he is worshipping and what he is worshipping for. He should not be like an ascetic who worshipped God for a long time and when an angel asked God to show his reward, it seemed very little to the angel. Addressing the angel, God said: ‘Go to him to know that We reward men according the extent of knowledge and deeds.’

The angel went to the ascetic who was busy offering prayer. When he completed his prayer, the angel asked: ‘Do you have any desire or wish to be fulfilled?’ The ascetic said: ‘Yes, I wish that God might send His ass to eat from this grass, for it is being wasted.’ [11](#)

Another ascetic had made Iblis angry. Iblis called all the devils, saying to them: ‘Which one of you can mislead this ascetic?’ Each of the devils offered a way of misleading, like gambling, adultery, sodomy and others. Iblis said: That is not a right way. One of the devils said: ‘I will mislead him through worshipping.’ Iblis said: ‘That is the way.’ The devil went to the ascetic and offered so much prayer that the ascetic man became infatuated by his prayer. The ascetic came to him to talk with him, but the devil ignored him in order to make him more eager.

Finally, when the ascetic managed to ask him what he had done that he had achieved such a position, the devil said: ‘I have committed adultery!’ The ascetic asked: ‘what is adultery?’ The devil elaborated on it. The ascetic said: ‘But I have no money.’ The devil gave him money. He went to a brothel, but a prostitute found that he was not of such bad things. She noticed that he had been deceived. The devil had deceived him indeed! The woman said: ‘This is an act of Satan. Leave this place!’ The ascetic man left the brothel and did not see the devil. Because of this act, God forgave the woman and she died the same night. In the morning, the following was seen written on the top of her house: “Attend the funeral of so-and-so, for she is from the people of Paradise.” Prophet Moses (AS) was inspired by God to offer prayer for her and to tell people to attend the prayer.”¹²

The act of worshipping should be done as God, the Holy prophet (SAW), and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt have recommended. A true worshipper should never interpret Islamic rules due to his personal opinion. He should know that the only way for the correct implementation of religious rules is the path of prophets and their successors. Anyway, piety has to be exercised in all cases.

1. Qur’an, 7:65.
2. Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 2, p. 636.
3. Qur’an, 1:5.
4. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 249.
5. Ibid., vol. 68, p. 253.
6. Safeenat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 113.
7. Mostadrak Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 165.
8. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 251.
9. Ibid.
10. Safeenat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 13.
11. Ibid.
12. Safeenat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 114.

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