

128148 - In the beginning, humanity believed in the oneness of Allah (Tawhid) and polytheism developed among them later on

the question

I read some books by people who specialize in comparative religion, and I found that they say that idolaters originally did not believe in many gods; rather they believed in one God and that this God is present in all that He created, so these created things became divine. In other words, they had attributes of divinity, because the one God became present in them (righteous people or some parts of physical and non-physical creation). My question is: is it possible that these (idolatrous) religions were originally monotheistic, then they deviated, as happened with Christianity?

Detailed answer

In the beginning, humanity believed in the oneness of Allah, and they were guided and followed true teachings, and deviation from that occurred later on and is not something inherent in human nature. Adam, the father of humanity (peace be upon him) was a prophet, a believer and a monotheist, as were his sons, then shirk arose among the people of Nuh ten generations later, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed}[Al-Baqarah 2:213].

Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, commenting on this verse: Between Nuh and Adam there were ten generations, all of whom were monotheists who followed the path of truth, then they differed, so Allah sent the prophets as bringers of glad tidings and warners.

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said, after narrating this report from Ibn `Abbas and classing it as authentic (sahih): That is because the people were following the religion of Adam (peace be upon him), then later on they began to worship idols. Then Allah sent Nuh (peace be

upon him) to them, and he was the first messenger whom Allah sent to the people of earth.
(*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 1/569).

Muslim (2865) narrated from `Iyad ibn Himar al-Mujashi`i that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said one day in his khutbah: “Verily my Lord has commanded me to teach you that which you do not know of what He has taught me this day: All the wealth that I have bestowed upon a slave (of Mine) is permissible. I have created all My slaves with the inclination to worship Me alone, but the devils come to them and turn them away from their religion. They forbid to them that which I have permitted to them, and they tell them to associate others with Me for which I have not sent down any authority.”

Most of those who associated other gods with Allah and worshipped them only did that because they believed that they would bring them closer to Allah, may He be Exalted, and intercede with Him; they did not believe that they took part with Him in creating or granting provision, as Allah, may He be exalted, says:

{They worship, besides Allah, that which has no power either to harm or benefit them, and they say: These are our intercessors with Allah. Say: Do you presume to tell Allah of something that He does not know in the heavens or on earth? Glorified and exalted be He far above the partners they ascribe

Humankind was but one nation, but then they differed. Were it not for a prior decree from your Lord, a decisive judgement would already have been passed between them concerning that wherein they differ}[Yunus 10:18]

{Verily, sincere devotion is due to Allah alone. As for those who take others besides Him as protectors [they say]: We only worship them so that they may bring us nearer to Allah. Allah will surely judge between them concerning that wherein they differ. Verily, Allah does not guide anyone who persists in lies and disbelief}[Az-Zumar 39:3].

Some of them worshipped other gods on the basis that they were images of the righteous or the angels, or that Allah was present in them, as you mention, but there is no proof that any of the ancients believed in two equal lords.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The belief that there are two lords (*rabbs*) of the universe is something that none of the sons of Adam ever believed in, and no one believed in two gods that were identical or equal in terms of their attributes or deeds. No one believed in equal eternal beings, or in two necessary existent beings. Rather the shirk that emerged among the people appeared when some people started to regard some created beings as partners with Allah in terms of divinity, and they began to worship gods other than Allah and take them as intermediaries and call upon them in supplication, seeking to draw near to them, as was done by the worshippers of the sun, the moon, the stars and idols, and by the worshippers of the prophets and angels, and their statues and so on. As for belief in two equal creators of the universe, no human being ever suggested that. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{And if you asked them, Who created the heavens and earth? they would surely say, Allah. Say, [All] praise is [due] to Allah; but most of them do not know}[Luqman 31:25]

{Say [O Muhammad]: To whom does the earth and all that is on it belong, if you know [the answer]}?

They will say: To Allah. Say: Will you not then pay heed?

Say: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Mighty Throne?

They will say: [They belong] to Allah. Say: Will you not then fear Him?

Say: In Whose Hand is the dominion over all things, and He protects, while against Him there is no protection, if you know [the answer]}?

They will say: In Allah's [Hand]. Say: Then how can you be so deluded? } [al-Mu'minun 23:84-89].

{And most of them believe not in Allah except that they ascribe partners to Him} [Yusuf 12:106].
(*Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa'n-Naql*, 5/156).

In conclusion, humanity originally believed in the oneness of Allah and submitted to Him (and were Muslims), and shirk is something that developed later on. There are no monotheistic

religions; rather there is only one religion with which Allah is pleased, namely Islam, which is the religion of all the prophets and messengers and their followers.

Please see also the answer to question no. [116826](#).

And Allah knows best.