

Nuh (Noah) - Various Hadith Describing the Origin of Idolatry

Thn Abbas explained: "Following upon the death of those righteous men, Satan inspired their people to erect statues in the places where they used to sit. They did this, but these statues were not worshipped until the coming generations deviated from the right way of life. Then they worshipped them as their idols."

These idols represented, respectively, manly power; mutability, beauty; brute strength; swiftness; sharp sight, insight. (Source: A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Quran: Translation and Commentary. Appendix XIII)

In his version, Ibn Jarir narrated: "There were righteous people who lived in the period between Adam and Noah and who had followers who held them as models. After their death, their friends who used to emulate them said: 'If we make statues of them, it will be more pleasing to us in our worship and will remind us of them.' So they built statues of them, and, after they had died and others came after them, Iblis crept into their minds saying: 'Your forefathers used to worship them, and through that worship they got rain.' So they worshipped them."

Ibn Abi Hatim related this story: "Waddan was a righteous man who was loved by his people. When he died, they withdrew to his grave in the land of Babylonia and were overwhelmed by sadness. When Iblis saw their sorrow caused by his death, he disguised himself in the form of a man saying: 'I have seen your sorrow because of this man's death; can I make a statue like him which could be put in your meeting place to make you remember him?' They said: 'Yes.' So he made the statue like him. They put it in their meeting place in order to be reminded of him. When Iblis saw their interest in remembering him, he said: 'Can I build a statue of him in the home of each one of you so that he would be in everyone's house and you could remember him?' They agreed. Their children learned about and saw what they were doing. They also learned about their remembrance of him, until they took him to be a deity and worshipped him instead of Allah. So the first to be worshipped instead of Allah was Waddan, the idol which they named thus."

It was narrated that 'Umm Salmah and 'Umm Habibah told Allah's Prophet Muhammad about the church called "Maria" which they had seen in the land of Abyssinia. They described its beauty and the pictures therein. He said: "Those are the people who build places of worship on the grave of every dead man who was righteous and then make therein those pictures. Those are the worst of creation unto Allah."

The essence of this point is that every idol from those earlier mentioned was worshipped by a certain group of people. It was mentioned that people made pictures and as the ages passed they made these pictures into statues, so that their forms could be fully recognized; afterwards they were worshipped instead of Allah.

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