

12634 - How did Christianity become mixed with polytheistic beliefs?

the question

If true Christianity brought the message of the Oneness of God (Tawheed), and stated that He alone is to be worshipped to the exclusion of anyone else in His creation, whether that is 'Eesa (Jesus) or anyone else, then how did this religion become mixed with polytheistic beliefs (shirk) and how did they take 'Eesa (Jesus - peace be upon him) and his mother as gods besides Allaah?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There can be no doubt that the call to believe in Allaah alone (Tawheed) and to worship Him alone to the exclusion of anyone else, is the basic message that was brought by the Prophet of Allaah 'Eesa (peace be upon him), as it was the basic message brought by all the Prophets. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And verily, We have sent among every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): ‘Worship Allaah (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Taghoot (all false deities, i.e. do not worship Taghoot besides Allaah).’ Then of them were some whom Allaah guided and of them were some upon whom the straying was justified. So travel through the land and see what was the end of those who denied (the truth)”

[al-Nahl 16:36]

“And We did not send any Messenger before you (O Muhammad) but We revealed to him (saying): Laa ilaaha illa Ana [none has the right to be worshipped but I (Allaah)], so worship Me (Alone and none else)”

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[al-Anbiya' 21:25]

'Eesa will bear witness to this call against his people, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when Allaah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): 'O 'Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Did you say unto men: “Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allaah?”’ He will say: ‘Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, You would surely have known it. You know what is in my inner-self though I do not know what is in Yours; truly, You, only You, are the All-Knower of all that is hidden (and unseen).

117. ‘Never did I say to them aught except what You (Allaah) did command me to say: “Worship Allaah, my Lord and your Lord.” And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them, but when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them; and You are a Witness to all things’”

[al-Maa'idah 5:117]

With regard to how the followers of this religion deviated after that from pure Tawheed to idolatrous beliefs and the worship of Jesus and his mother besides God, this is something which happened early on in Christian history. We will quote here some evidence to that effect from their own people's words. Let whoever has ears listen.

It says in the American Encyclopedia:

The belief in the Oneness of God – as a theological movement – began at a very early stage in history, and in fact it preceded the belief in trinity by many decades. Christianity developed from Judaism, and Judaism firmly believes that there is one God.

The path that led from Jerusalem (the home of the first disciples of Christ) to Nicea (where it was decided in 325 CE that Christ was equal to God in essence and eternal nature) can hardly be

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described as a straight path.

The doctrine of trinity which was affirmed in the fourth century CE bears no resemblance to the original teachings of Christ concerning the nature of God. Au contraire, it is the opposite, a deviation from that teaching. Hence it developed in opposition to the belief in One God...

(27/294).

You can refer to the views of some of those Christians who still believe in the Oneness of God in the same American Encyclopedia, 27/300-301

Will Durant says:

When Christianity conquered Rome, the new religion (i.e., Christianity) was infused with the blood of the old idolatrous religion: the title of archbishop, worship for the great mother, and an innumerable number of lords who gave peace of mind and were like who exist in all places and cannot be detected with the senses. All of this came into Christianity as the blood of the mother comes into her child.

The civilized empire handed over power and administration to the papacy and the impact of the word replaced the impact of the sword. The preachers of the church started to assume positions of power.

Christianity did not put an end to idolatry, rather it reinforced it. The Greek mind came back to life in a new form, in the doctrines and rituals of the church. The Greek rituals appeared in the rituals of the monastic saints. From Egypt came the idea of the holy trinity, the day of reckoning, eternal reward and punishment, and man's eternal life in one of the other. From Egypt also came the worship of the mother and child, the mystical union with God, the union which led to Platonism and agnosticism, and the erasing of Christian doctrine. And from Persia came the belief in the return of the Messiah and his ruling the earth for 1000 years.

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Qissat al-Hadaarah, 11/418 (The Story of Civilization)

Despite the element of atheism in the words of Durant, which is something that he is known for, and which is apparent in his claim that the idea of eternal reward or punishment came from the Egyptians, tracing the origins of deviant idolatry in Christianity is no longer a secret, and he is not the only one who has researched them. In his book Christianity and Idolatry, Robertson states that Mithraism, which is a religion of Persian origin, flourished in Persia approximately six centuries before the birth of Christ, and it reached Rome around the year 70 CE, where it spread throughout the Roman lands. Then it reached Britain and spread to a number of British cities. What concerns us here about this religion is that it says:

-That Mithras, after whom it is named, was an intermediary between God and man (for a similar doctrine in Christianity, see Acts 4:12).

-He was born in a cave or in a corner of the earth (cf. Luke 2:8)

-His birthday was December 25 (which is the day celebrated by the Christians as the day when Jesus was born)

-He had twelve disciples (cf. Matthew 10:1)

-He died to save the world (cf. I Corinthians 15:3)

-He was buried but he came back to life (cf. I Corinthians 15:4)

-He ascended to heaven in front of his disciples (cf. Acts 1:9)

-He was called "Saviour" (cf. Titus 2:13)

-Among his attributes is that he is like a peaceful lamb (cf. John 1:29)

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-The "Divine supper" was held in his memory every year (cf. I Corinthians 11:23-25)

-One of his symbols was baptism

-Sunday was sacred to them

The French Orientalist Leon Joteh, in his book "An Introduction to Islamic philosophy" is of the view that the origin of the Christian trinity is to be found in Greek philosophy, specifically in the ideas of modern Platonism, which took the basis of the idea of trinity as a view of the Creator of the universe from Plato, then developed it to a great extent, so that the resemblance between this idea and Christianity became greater. So (in their view) the Creator, the One Who is absolutely perfect, appointed two intermediaries between him and mankind, who emanated from Him, and were also part of Him at the same time, meaning that they are contained in His essence. These two entities are reasoning and divine spirit. Then he said:

The marriage of Jewish belief and Greek philosophy did not only produce philosophy, rather it produced a religion too, namely Christianity which imbibed many ideas from the Greeks. The Christian concept of divinity is taken from the same source as modern Platonism. Hence you see many similarities between the two, although they may vary in some details. They are both based on a belief in trinity, in which the three "persons" are one.

This is what the American writer Draper refers to:

Idolatry and polytheism entered Christianity through the influence of the hypocrites who occupied positions of influence and high positions in the Roman state by pretending to be Christians, but they never cared about religion and were not sincere at all. Similarly Constantine had spent his life in darkness and evil, and he did not follow the commands of the church except for a short while at the end of his life. (p. 337)

Although the followers of Christianity gained some power, to the extent that they managed to

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have Constantine appointed as ruler, they failed to eradicate idolatry completely. As a result of their struggle, their principles became fused with idolatry, from which point there developed a new religion in which Christianity and idolatry were manifested equally.

Thus the Christians followed the same path of those disbelievers who had come before them, step by step, as their own Book testifies. And Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And the Jews say: ‘Uzayr (Ezra) is the son of Allaah, and the Christians say: Messiah is the son of Allaah. That is their saying with their mouths, resembling the saying of those who disbelieved aforetime. Allaah’s Curse be on them, how they are deluded away from the truth!”

[al-Tawbah 9:30]

And Allaah is the Source of strength.