

THE IDOL OF 'AMR IBNU'L-JAMUH'

When they came to Medina they openly professed Islam there. Now some of the shaykhs still kept to their old idolatry, among whom was 'Amr b. al-Jamuh b. Yazid b. Haram b. Ka'b b. Ghanm b. Ka'b b. Salama whose son, Muadh, had been present at al-'Aqaba and had done homage to the apostle there. 'Amr was one of the tribal nobles and leaders and had set up in his house a wooden idol called Manat as the nobles used to do, making it a god to reverence and keeping it clean. When the young men of the B. Salama Muadh b. Jabal and his own son Muadh adopted Islam with the other men who had been at al-'Aqaba they used to creep in at night to this idol of 'Amr's and carry it away and throw it on its face into a cesspit.

When the morning came 'Amr cried, "Woe to you! Who has been at our gods this night?" Then he went in search of the idol and when he found it he washed it and cleaned it and perfumed it saying, "By God, if I knew who had done this I would treat him shamefully!" When night came and he was fast asleep they did the same again and he restored the idol in the morning. This happened several times until one day he took the idol from the place where they had thrown it, purified it as before, and fastened his sword to it, saying, "By God, I don't know who has done this; but if you are any good at all defend yourself since you have this sword".

At night when he was asleep they came again and took the sword from its neck and hung a dead dog to it by a cord and then threw it into a cesspit. In the morning 'Amr came and could not find it where it normally was; ultimately he found it face downwards in that pit tied to a dead dog.

When he saw it and perceived what had happened and the Muslims of his clan spoke to him he accepted Islam by the mercy of God and became a good Muslim. He wrote some verses when he had come to a knowledge of God in which he mentioned the image and its impotence and thanked God for having delivered him from the blindness and error in which he had lived hitherto:

"By Allah, if you had been a god you would not have been tied to a dead dog in a cesspit. Phew! that we ever treated you as a god, but now we have found you out and left our wicked folly. Praise be to God most High, the Gracious, the Bountiful, the Provider, the Judge of all religions who has delivered me in time to save me from being kept in the darkness of the grave."

Suhayli explains that the idol was so called because blood was shed (muniyat) by it as an offering and that is why idols are said to be bloody. But the explanation of the name is to be found outside the Arabic language in the goddess of Fate. See S.H. Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, 1931, pp. 19 ff.

(From "The Life of Muhammad")