

Ruling on Participating in Non- Muslim Religious Celebrations

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The conflict between truth and falsehood is ongoing and will last as long as this world remains. The fact that some groups among the Ummah (Muslim nation) of Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, are following the people of falsehood such as the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, idol-worshippers and others, whilst a group is remaining steadfast to the truth despite the pressures, is all part of the decreed system of the universe. However, this does not mean that we should give in and follow the ways of those who are astray, because the one who told us that this would inevitably happen, Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, also warned us against following this path, and he commanded us to adhere firmly to Islam, no matter how many people deviate from it and no matter how strong they become. He told us that the blessed one is the one who adheres steadfastly to the truth no matter what the distractions, at a time when the one who does righteous deeds will earn the reward of fifty men whose deeds are like those of the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them – as was reported in the Hadeeth (narration) of Abu Tha'labah al-Khushani, may Allaah be pleased with him.

Among the Ummah of Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, there will be people who deviated from the truth and went towards falsehood, changing and altering things. Their punishment will be that they will be kept away from the Hawdh (Cistern), whilst those who adhered to the Straight Path will come and drink from it. The Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *“I will precede you to the Cistern, and men from among you will be brought to me, and when I stretch forth my hand to them, they will be pulled away. I will say, ‘O Lord! My followers!’ and it will be said: ‘You do not know what they innovated after you were gone.’”* According to another report he, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *“I will say: ‘May he be doomed, the one who changed [the religion] after I was gone.’”*



One of the most obvious manifestations of this altering of Islam and treating the religion of Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, with disdain, is the way in which people follow the enemies of Allaah – may He be exalted – in everything, minor or major, in the name of "progress", "advancement and civilization", and under the banners of peaceful coexistence, human brotherhood, a new world order, globalization and other dazzling but deceitful slogans. The truly concerned Muslim can easily spot this dangerous problem among the majority of Muslims, except for those on whom Allaah has mercy; it is prevalent to such an extent that the Muslims even follow the enemies of Allaah in their religious rituals and in their most unique traditions and customs, such as their festivals, which are part of their belief systems.

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):

- *{and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you. To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way}* [Qur'aan 5:48]
- *{For every nation We have ordained religious ceremonies which they must follow}* [Qur'aan 22:67] – which means, a festival which is for them alone.

Many Muslims have been led astray by the alluring attractions of the enemies of Allaah, particularly the Christians with their major festivals such as Christmas, which is the celebration of the birth of the Messiah 'Eesa (Jesus, may Allaah exalt his mention) – and the Christian New Year. Muslims attend parties on these occasions in the Christians' countries, and some of them have brought these things back to Muslim countries – we seek refuge with Allaah. A great disaster is the huge preparations which are made on a global scale and at the level of the major Christian countries to celebrate the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the third millennium since the birth of the Messiah, son of Maryam



(Mary), may Allaah exalt their mention. If the world is teeming with Christian celebrations during a regular New Year, how will it be at the end of a Christian century (the twentieth century) and the end of a millennium (the second millennium)? It is a major event for which the Christians are preparing in a manner appropriate to its huge significance.

This Christian event will not be like a usual New Year's Eve celebration involving only the Christian countries and in their focal point, the Vatican. Preparations are afoot to make the focal point of the celebrations in Bethlehem, the place where the Messiah – may Allaah exalt his mention – was born. The political and religious leaders of the Christians will go there – evangelicals and moderates alike, and even the secularists, to celebrate this millennium of which the world media is talking more and more as it approaches day by day. It is expected that more than three million people will be present in Bethlehem, led by the Pope John Paul II. Some of the neighboring Muslim countries are also taking part in this global event, on the grounds that some of the symbols or major events of the Christian festival took place in their land – namely the baptism of the Messiah, may Allaah exalt his mention, when he was baptized by John the Baptist (Yahya, may Allaah exalt his mention) in the River Jordan. Indeed, many Muslims will also take part in these celebrations under the pretext that they are international events which concern all the inhabitants of earth.

These people do not know that the celebration of this millennium is the celebration of a Christian religious festival, that taking part in it involves taking part in the rituals of their religion, and that rejoicing in it means rejoicing in the symbols of Kufr (disbelief) when they are made manifest and when they prevail. This poses a great danger to the 'Aqeedah (belief) of the Muslim, because *“Whoever imitates a people is one of them”* as was reported in a



Saheeh (authentic) Hadeeth from the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam. So what about the one who actually joins in with them in the rituals of their religion? This makes it incumbent upon us to discuss the rulings on the festivals of the disbelievers, how the Muslim should deal with them and how they should distinguish themselves from them – which is one of the basic principles of our pure, unadulterated religion. Moreover, we need to know some details about their festivals and religious ceremonies so that we can avoid them and warn others about them.

Why do we need to know about the festivals of the disbelievers?

One of the things that the scholars agreed on is that the Muslim does not need to concern himself with the ways of the disbelievers, or their rituals and customs (unless he wants to call them to Islam), except when their customs and rituals are becoming widespread among ignorant Muslims, whether deliberately or inadvertently. In such cases, the Muslims need to know about them so that they can avoid them. In recent times this has become more of an issue for the following reasons:

Greater mixing with the disbelievers, because Muslims go to their countries to study, take vacations, for business purposes or for other reasons. Those who go there witness some of their rituals and may like them, so they follow them. This is especially the case with those who are suffering from an inferiority complex and who look at the disbelievers with strong admiration. This robs them of the power to resist, corrupts their hearts and weakens their commitment to religion. In addition to this, many westernized, educated people regard the disbelievers as



advanced, progressive and civilized even in their most mundane customs and habits. Another way that this imitation comes about is through the open celebration of these festivals in Muslim countries by some groups and non-Muslim minorities, which influences some ignorant Muslims.

The matter is exacerbated by the media which can transmit everything with sound and live pictures from the farthest corners of the earth. The media owned by the disbelievers is undoubtedly more powerful and more capable of transmitting their rituals to the Muslims than the other way round. Many satellite channels broadcast the rituals of other religions' festivals – especially Christian festivals. What makes this matter even more serious is the adoption of the celebrations of disbelievers and some of the people of Bid'ah by secular governments in some Muslim countries. Arabic satellite channels broadcast these celebrations to the world, and some Muslims are deceived by the fact that this is coming from a Muslim country.

Throughout their history, the Muslims have suffered from the problem of being influenced by the rituals of others through mixing with them. This prompted the scholars of Islam to warn the Muslim masses against imitating others in their festivals and rituals. Among these scholars are Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, his student Ibn al-Qayyim, al-Haafidh ath-Thahabi and al-Haafidh ibn Katheer, may Allaah have mercy on them all. They lived at the same time, when there was a lot of mixing between Muslims and others, particularly Christians, and ignorant Muslims were being influenced by their religious rituals, especially their festivals. Therefore, these scholars spoke a great deal about these things throughout their books, and some of them devoted entire books to this particular topic, such as Ibn Taymiyyah's *Iqtidaa' as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem li Mukhaalafat As-haab al-*



Jaheem and ath-Thahabi's Tashbeeh al-Khasees bi Ahl al-Khamees, and others.

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, spoke at length about their festivals and what they do on those occasions, and he described the extent to which the ignorant Muslims were influenced by this. He described their various festivals and the rituals and customs that were involved – which Muslims do not ordinarily need to know about, but now it is necessary because many Muslims are following the People of the Book in those same rituals.

Shaykh al-Islam, may Allaah have mercy on him, described their festivals and discussed them in the context of warning against them. After speaking in detail about them, he said:

“Our aims are not limited just to knowing the details of their falsehood, but it is sufficient for us to know what is Munkar (evil) in such a way that we can distinguish between it and that which is Mubaah (permissible), Ma’roof (good), Mustahabb (encouraged) and Waajib (obligatory), so that by means of this knowledge we will be able to protect ourselves and avoid it, just as we know (and avoid) other things that are Haraam, as we are obliged to do. Whoever does not know about what is Munkar, either in general terms or in details, will not be able to avoid it. A general knowledge is sufficient, unlike the case with Waajibaat (obligatory duties) [where it is essential to know details].”

He, may Allaah have mercy on him, also said:

“I have counted so many things that are Munkar in their religion when I noted that some groups of Muslims are influenced by some of them, and many of them do not



know that this comes from the Christian religion, which is cursed, it and its followers. I do not know all the things that they do, but I have mentioned what I have seen Muslims doing, which is taken from them.”

Nowadays, some of the festivals of the disbelievers revolve around large gatherings and still bear some of the features of their ancient festivals. Many Muslims take part in these events without realizing that. This is the case with the Olympic Games, whose roots lie in a festival that was celebrated by the Greeks, then the Romans, then the Christians; and with the “Mahrajaans” (“festivals”) which are organized to promote trade, culture etc., even though the Mahrajaan was originally a Persian festival. Most of those who organize these gatherings and call them “Mahrajaan” are unaware of this.

Knowing evil is a means of avoiding it and keeping away from it. Huthayfah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: “The people used to ask the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, about good things, but I used to ask him about bad things, fearing that I may fall into them.” It is a great problem that the Muslims fall into observing some of the rituals of the disbelievers without realizing that this is part of their own unique rituals and customs, which we have been commanded to avoid because it is an abomination and misguidance.

There are so many calls made by the strong voices of hypocrisy who want to cut the Ummah off from its roots, destroy its identity and assimilate it into the methodology of the disbelievers. These individuals want people to follow them step by step, under the banners of humanity, globalization, universalism, openness towards others and receptiveness towards other cultures. This makes it essential for us to know about the others’ (i.e. the



disbelievers') misguidance and deviation, so that we can expose it and point out the faults that lie beneath the attractive exterior that covers these abhorrent ideas; Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): *{so that those who were to be destroyed [for their rejecting the Faith] might be destroyed after a clear evidence, and those who were to live [i.e. believers] might live after a clear evidence}* [Qur'aan 8:42] – and so that proof may be demonstrated to the followers of Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, to prevent them from being deceived and taken in.

The festivals of the Pharaohs

Among the Pharaonic festivals is the festival of Shamm an-Naseem (literally, “smelling the breeze”), which involves venerating some days as a good omen or drawing nigh to the gods who were worshipped instead of Allaah – may He be exalted. Shaykh Mahfooth, may Allaah have mercy on him – during his own time – mentioned some of the shameful and immoral practices that would make one's hair stand on end, whereby farms and open spaces were filled with groups of immoral people of bad conduct, and groups of young and old, men and women, went to the orchards and rivers to commit Zina (fornication and adultery) and to drink intoxicants, thinking that on that day all evil actions were permissible for them.

Among the superstitions associated with this festival was the placing of onions beneath the head of a sleeping person, or hanging them in doorways, claiming that this would take away laziness and sloth. This event is counted as one of the Pharaonic festivals, and it was said that it was invented by the Copts; there is nothing to suggest that it did not belong to both of them, and that it was not passed down from the Pharaohs to the Copts. Many Egyptians – especially the Copts – still celebrate this



festival, and many Muslims join in with them. In recent years a number of secular writers have called for it to be made an official holiday, in order to revive the Pharaonic legacy, at the time when they describe the rituals of Islam as being backward, reactionary and uncivilized!

The festivals of the Greeks

The months of the Greek year were many and were named after the festivals. The costs of these festivals were financed by the rich among them. Most of their festivals were connected to the rituals of their pagan religion which was based on polytheism. They had many festivals which were aimed at reducing the tedium of daily life, and it reached the extent that no month was free of one or more festivals, except for one month which was called Mamkitrion.

Their festivals were characterized by obscenity, promiscuity, drunkenness and giving free rein to their animalistic desires, so that they did whatever they wanted, as is reflected in many of their misguided myths, such as their claim that they summoned the souls of the dead, then they sent them back or expelled them again after the festival was over. The most important of their festivals included the festival of the Olympiad, or the Olympic feast. This was held in Elis every four years. It was first officially recognized in 776 BCE. The Olympiad was one of their most important festivals and seasonal gatherings. From that far-off date, these games were historically called the Olympiad. It has nationalistic features and aims, so much so that it was said that the Greeks used to boast about their Olympic victories more than their conquests on the battlefield. This was the greatest festival of the Greeks at that time.



These games are still held and supported by the Christian nations under the same ancient name and inherited rituals, such as lighting the Olympic flame in Athens and bringing it to the country where the Games are being held, and so on. Unfortunately many Muslim countries also take part in these games and boast about doing so. Many of them do not know that their origin lies in the festivals of the disbelievers and the sacred days of their pagan religion. We seek refuge with Allaah from deviation, misguidance and blind following.

The Greeks also had other major festivals such as the festivals of the Hellenic league, the Ionic league and others.

The festivals of the Romans

One of the nations which had the most festivals was the Romans. They had more than one hundred holy days in the year, days which they regarded as festivals, including the first day of each month. Some festivals were devoted to the sanctification of the dead and the souls of the underworld, and on many of their festivals celebrations were held to placate the dead and appease their anger – or so they claimed.

As it is known, the Roman Empire prevailed after the Greeks, so they inherited many of the Greek rituals, customs and festivals.

Among the most famous of Roman festivals was the festival of love, which they celebrated on February 14 each year, as an expression of what they believed, in their pagan religion, to be divine love. This festival was invented more than 1700 years ago, at the time when paganism was still prevalent among the Romans. Whilst still in their idolatrous state, they executed Saint Valentine, who had converted to Christianity after having been a



pagan. When the Romans converted to Christianity, they made the day of his execution an occasion to celebrate the martyrs of love. This festival is still celebrated in America and Europe, to declare feelings of friendship and to renew the covenant of love between spouses and lovers. This festival now has great social and economic significance.

It seems that another practice stemmed from the concept of this feast, which is the anniversary celebrated by spouses or friends who love one another, where the couple celebrate the anniversary of their marriage each year, to confirm the love between them. This custom has passed to the Muslims because of their mixing (with the non-Muslims), so that couples celebrate the night of their marriage in a special way in many Muslim countries, imitating the disbelievers. There is no strength and no power except with Allaah, the Exalted and Almighty.

The festivals of the Jews

These include the (Jewish) New Year, which is called the festival of Heesha [Rosh Hashanah]. This is the first day of Tishreen al-Awwal. They claim that it is the day on which the Is-Haaq, may Allaah exalt his mention, was ransomed and thus not sacrificed. This is according to their mistaken belief – in fact the one who was to be sacrificed was Ismaa'eel, may Allaah exalt his mention, not Is-Haaq. This festival has a similar status to that of 'Eed al-Adh-ha for Muslims.

Another of their festivals is the festival of Sumaria or Yom Kippur, which for them is a day of forgiveness; and the feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) on the fifteenth of Tishreen, on which day they stay in the shade of the branches of trees. It is also called the Festival of the Fast of the Virgin Mary.



Another is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is the Passover, on the fifteenth of Nisan. This commemorates the flight of the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt in the thirteenth century BCE. This story is told in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Exodus. The festival lasts for eight days in occupied Palestine, and the Reform Jews celebrate it in their own countries for seven days. During this festival they have a celebration called the Seder, where they read the story of the flight of the Children of Israel in a book called the Haggadah and they eat unleavened bread, as a reminder that when the Children of Israel fled, they ate this kind of bread, because they did not have time to make leavened bread. The Jews still eat unleavened bread during this festival to this day.

Another festival of the Jews is the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Shavuot). They claim that this is the day on which Allaah – may He be exalted – spoke to Moosa (Moses, may Allaah exalt his mention). On the Day of Atonement, in the tenth month of the Jewish year, a person goes into seclusion for nine days to worship and fast; these are called the days of repentance.

The Jews also used to celebrate the birth of each new moon, when they would blow trumpets in Jerusalem and light fires in celebration, in addition to the Jubilee, which is described in the Book of Leviticus.

The Jews have other festivals, among which the most well known are: the festival of victory, or Purim, and the festival of Hanukkah, which is also known as the festival of blessing.

The festivals of the Christians



1. The festival of the resurrection, which is called Easter: this is the most important annual Christian festival, which is preceded by the long fast (Lent) which lasts for forty days before Easter Sunday. This festival commemorates the return of the Messiah, may Allaah exalt his mention, or his resurrection after his crucifixion, two days after his death – according to their claims. It marks the end of many different kinds of rituals, which include:

The onset of the long fast of Lent, which lasts for forty days before Easter Sunday. They start fasting on a Wednesday known as Ash Wednesday, where ash is placed on the foreheads of those present and they repeat the words: “From dust we came and to dust we shall return.”

Fifty days after Easter Sunday, they end with the Feast of Pentecost or Whitsuntide.

The Week of Sorrows (or Holy Week), which is the last week of the fasting period of Lent, which refers to the events that led up to the death and resurrection of Jesus, may Allaah exalt his mention – as they claim.

Palm Sunday, which is the Sunday before Easter. This is a commemoration of the triumphal entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem.

Maundy Thursday, which is a commemoration of the Last Supper of the Messiah, and his arrest and imprisonment.

Good Friday (“the Friday of Grief”), which is the Friday before Easter, which refers to the death of Jesus on the cross – or so they claim.



Easter Saturday (the “Saturday of Light”), which comes before Easter and refers to the death of the Messiah. It is a day of watching and waiting for the resurrection of the Messiah on Easter Sunday. The Easter festivities conclude with the Thursday of Ascension, when the story of the Messiah’s ascension into heaven is recited in all the churches. They have different kinds of celebrations and festivals, according to the different denominations in different Christian countries. The Thursday and Friday before Easter are known as the Great Thursday and the Great Friday, as was mentioned by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him. This is the Thursday (al-Khamees) referred to in the book of al-Haafidh ath-Thahabi, may Allaah have mercy on him, Tashbeeh al-Khasees bi Ahl al-Khamees. This Thursday is the last day of their fast, and is also known as the Thursday of the Table or the Feast of the Table. It is mentioned in Soorat al-Maa’idah, where Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *{Eesaa [Jesus], son of Maryam [Mary], said: “O Allaah, our Lord! Send us from the heaven a table spread [with food] that there may be for us – for the first and the last of us – a festival and a sign from You...”}* [Qur’aan 5:114]

They also do many strange things during these festivals, mentioned by many historians, such as gathering the leaves of trees, soaking them, then washing with the water, or putting kohl on their eyes. The Copts of Egypt used to bathe in the Nile on certain days, claiming that this was healing. Easter is the day when they break their long fast. They claim that on this day, the Messiah, may Allaah exalt his mention, was resurrected three days after the crucifixion, and Aadam, may Allaah exalt his mention, was saved from Hell, and other myths. Shams al-Deen al-Dimashqi ath-Thahabi, may Allaah have mercy on him, mentioned that the people of Hamah would stop working for six days on this occasion, and they would dye eggs and make Ka’k [a kind of biscuit], and perform other kinds of corrupt deeds and



mixing that they were engaged in at the time. He said that the Muslims used to join in that as well, and that they outnumbered the Christians. We seek refuge with Allaah.

Ibn al-Haaj, may Allaah have mercy on him, mentioned that they openly committed immoral actions and engaged in gambling, but no one denounced them for doing so. This is probably what prompted Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, to denounce what he saw of Muslims imitating Christians in their festivals and rituals, for he mentioned a great deal of this in his excellent book *Al-Iqtidaa'*. Ath-Thahabi also wrote a book on this topic, as mentioned above.

Until the present day, all Christians celebrate Easter on the first Sunday after the moon becomes full in the spring, in the period between March 22 and April 25. The Eastern Orthodox Christians observe it later than the other Christians. Its rituals, fasts and days occupy an entire season in the Christian year.

2. The festival of the birth of the Messiah, may Allaah exalt his mention: the Europeans call this Christmas, and it is on December 25 for the majority of Christians. For the Copts it is the day which corresponds to the twenty-ninth of Keehak (the fourth month of the Coptic year). This celebration is ancient and was mentioned in the books of the historians. Al-Maqreezi said: "The time of Christmas came whilst we were in Cairo, and it is a major event in all the regions of Egypt, when they sell candles in the shape of flowers, which they call lanterns."

For Christians, this festival is an annual reminder of the birth of the Messiah, may Allaah exalt his mention. They have many rituals and acts of worship at this time, when they go to the church and hold special prayers and services. The story of the



birth of the Messiah is mentioned in their Gospels – Luke and Matthew. It was first celebrated in 336 CE. The festival is influenced by pagan rituals, when the Romans used to celebrate the god of light and the god of the harvest. When Christianity became the official religion of the Romans, Christmas became the most important festival in Europe. Saint Nicholas became a symbol of gift-giving at this festival in the European countries, then Father Christmas (Santa Claus) took the place of Saint Nicholas as a symbol of the giving of gifts, especially to children. Many Muslims in different countries have been influenced by these rituals and customs, and the giving of gifts by Santa Claus has become well known in many Muslim-owned stores and shops. How many houses have these gifts entered, and how many Muslim children know about Santa Claus and his gifts! There is no strength and no power except with Allaah, the Exalted and Almighty.

The Christians have many rituals on this day. The Christians of Palestine and neighboring regions gather on the night of this festival in Bethlehem, the city where the Messiah, may Allaah exalt his mention, was born, to attend midnight mass. Among their other rituals, they celebrate the nearest Sunday to the date of November 30, which is the feast day of Saint Andrew. This is the first day of Advent – the advent of the Messiah, may Allaah exalt his mention. The festival reaches its peak when they stay up for midnight mass, when the churches are decorated and the people sing Christmas carols. The Christmas season ends on January 6. Some of them burn part of the trunk of the Christmas tree, then they keep the part that is not burned, believing that this burning will bring them good luck. This belief is widespread in Britain, France and the Scandinavian countries.



3. The feast of the Epiphany (Ghattaas), which is on January 19: for the Copts it is on the eleventh of Toobah. The origin of this festival, according to them, is that Yahya ibn Zakariyya, may Allaah exalt their mention, who they know as John the Baptist, baptized the Messiah son of Maryam, may Allaah exalt their mention, in the River Jordan, and when he was washed, the Holy Spirit came upon him. Because of this, the Christians dip their children in water on this day and immerse themselves in the water. Al-Mas'oodi mentioned that this day – during his time – was a major event in Egypt, attended by thousands of Christians and Muslims who would bathe in the Nile, believing that this healed them and offered them protection from sickness. This is what is celebrated by the Orthodox churches, but the Catholic and Protestant churches have a different concept of this festival, whereby they commemorate the “adoration of the Magi”, where the three men who came from the east venerated the infant Jesus.

The origin of the word Ghattaas (baptism) is Greek, meaning “emerging.” It is a religious term, referring to the emergence of an invisible being. It was mentioned in the Tawraah (Torah) that Allaah – may He be exalted – appeared to Moosa, may Allaah exalt his mention, in the form of a burning bush – exalted be Allaah far above what they say.

4. The Christian New Year celebration: this has become a major celebration in these times, which is celebrated by Christian countries and by some Muslim countries. TV broadcasts of these celebrations are transmitted live to all parts of the world; they appear on the front pages of newspapers and magazines and occupy a large part of the news broadcasts on satellite channels. It is noticeable that many Muslims in whose countries these Christian celebrations are not held travel to Christian countries to



attend them and enjoy the forbidden things that are involved in them, unaware of the sin committed by indulging in the rituals of those who disbelieve.

The Christians have many false beliefs and superstitions about New Year's Eve (December 31), as is the case with all their festivals. We hear of these beliefs from the makers of modern civilization and those who are described as civilized, those whom the hypocrites among our people want to follow in even the smallest detail, even in their superstitions and myths, so that we can be assured of a position in the ranks of those who are advanced and civilized and earn the approval of those who have blond hair and blue eyes!

Among their beliefs (with regard to New Year's Eve) is that the one who drinks the last glass of wine from the bottle after midnight will have good luck, and if he is single, he will be the first one among his friends who are present to get married. It is regarded as bad luck for a person to enter the house at New Year without bringing a gift; sweeping out the dirt at New Year means that one is also sweeping away good luck; washing clothes and dishes on this day will bring bad luck; they try to keep the fire burning all night on New Year's Eve so that it will bring good luck...and other such myths and superstitions.

They also have other festivals, some of which are ancient and others have been invented recently. Some of them were taken from the Greeks and Romans who came before them, and others were part of their religion but have now vanished. Some of these festivals are of major significance to them, and others are of limited importance, being confined to a few churches or denominations.



Each denomination and church has festivals which are unique to them, and are not celebrated by other denominations. The Protestants do not believe in the festivals of the other churches, but they do agree on the major festivals such as Easter, Christmas, New Year and the Epiphany, even though they differ as to the rituals and practices involved, or some of the reasons and details, or the time and place.

The festivals of the Persians

1. The festival of Nawrooz: the word 'Nawrooz' means new. The festival lasts for six days, when at the time of Chosroes they used to fulfill the needs of other people in the first five days, and the sixth day was devoted to themselves and the people to whom they were closest. This day was called the great Nawrooz, and was the most important of their festivals. The book As-haab al-Awaa'il mentioned that the first one to celebrate Nawrooz was Jamsheed the king, in whose time Hood, may Allaah exalt his mention, was sent, after the religion had been changed. When the king Jamsheed renewed the religion and established justice, the day on which he had ascended the throne was named Nawrooz. When he reached the age of seven hundred years, and he had never fallen ill or suffered a headache, he became an oppressive tyrant. He made an image of himself and sent it to the provinces for it to be venerated, and the masses worshipped it and made idols in its image. Adh-Dhahhaak al-'Alwaani, one of the 'Amaaliqah (Amalekites) attacked him in the Yemen and killed him, as is stated in the books of history. Some of the Persians claim that Nawrooz is the day when Allaah created light. Nawrooz is considered to be the festival marking the Persian solar New Year. It coincides with the twenty first of March in the Gregorian calendar. The masses used to light fires on this night and sprinkle water in the morning.



Nawrooz is also celebrated by the Baha'is, coming at the end of their fast which lasts for 19 days, on March 21. Nawrooz is also the first day of the year for the Copts, who call it Shamm an-Naseem. For them it lasts for six days, starting on the sixth of June. We have already discussed Shamm al-Naseem under the heading of Pharaonic festivals above. It is possible that the Copts took it from the Pharaonic legacy, since they were all in Egypt.

2. The festival of Mahrajaan: The word Mahrajaan is composed of two words: Mahar, meaning loyalty, and Jaan meaning authority or power. So the word means, the authority of loyalty. The origin of this festival was the celebration of the victory of Afridoon over adh-Dhahhaak al-'Alwaani, who killed Jamsheed, the king who started Nawrooz. It was also said that it was a celebration of the onset of cooler weather in the fall. It is possible that it originally started for the reason mentioned above, but as that coincided with the onset of cooler weather in the fall, they continued to celebrate that. It is celebrated on the twenty-sixth of the Syriac month of Tishreen al-Awwal. Like Nawrooz, it lasts for six days, the sixth of which is the Great Mahrajaan. On this occasion and on Nawrooz they used to exchange gifts of musk, amber, Indian 'Ood [a kind of perfume or incense], saffron and camphor. The first person to make this exchange of gifts official in Islamic times was al-Hajjaaj ibn Yoosuf al-Thaqafi, and this continued until it was abolished by the rightly-guided Khaleefah (Caliph) 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azeez, may Allaah have mercy on him.

One of the greatest problems that the Muslims are suffering from is the use of the word Mahrajaan to describe many social, cultural and economic gatherings, celebrations and events. The word is even used to describe Da'wah events. So people speak of Mahrajaan ath-Thaqaafah (cultural festival), Mahrajaan at-



Tasawwuf (shopping festival), Mahrajaan al-Kutub (book festival), Mahrajaan ad-Da'wah (Da'wah festival) and so on, as we see in advertisements and hear in many phrases which use this idolatrous term. Mahrajaan is the name of the festival of the fire worshippers.

Hence using this idolatrous Persian term to describe Muslims' gatherings is clearly one of the things that are prohibited. We must avoid doing this and tell others not to use this word. There are so many sufficient permissible expressions that we do not need to use this word, for the Arabic language is the richest of all languages in words and meanings.

Definition of imitation

Imitation (Tashabbuh in Arabic) means resembling. If we say that someone imitates someone else, it means that he looks like him and acts like him. Likening a thing to something else (Tashbeeh) means saying that it is like it. The word Tashabbuh has many counterparts in Arabic which carry meanings such as being like, imitating, looking like, following, agreeing with, taking as an example, copying, etc. They all have shades of meaning of their own, but they also overlap with the meaning of Tashabbuh. In terms of the terminology of Fiqh, al-Ghuzzi ash-Shaafi'i defined the word Tashabbuh as describing a person's attempt to be like the one whom he is imitating, in appearance, characteristics, qualities and attributes. It implies making an effort to achieve this and deliberately taking action for that purpose.

The ruling on imitating the disbelievers



One of the most important basic principles of our religion is that of al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa', loyalty (Walaa') to Islam and its people, and disavowal (Baraa') of Kufr and its people. One of the essential features of this disavowal of Kufr and its people is that the Muslim should be distinct from the people of Kufr, and he should feel pride in his religion and in being a Muslim, no matter how strong and advanced and civilized the disbelievers may be, and no matter how weak and backward and divided the Muslims may be. It is not permissible under any circumstances to take the strength of the disbelievers and the weakness of the Muslims as an excuse for imitating and resembling them, as some hypocrites and defeatist Muslims claim. The texts which forbid imitating the disbelievers do not make any distinction between whether Muslims are strong or weak, because the Muslim can be distinct in his religion and have pride in being Muslim even when he is in a weak position.

Allaah The Almighty calls us to be proud of Islam, and considers this to be the best of speech and the best kind of pride, as He Says (what means): *{And who is better in speech than he who says: "My Lord is Allah [believes in His Oneness], and then stands firm [acts upon His Order], and] invites [men] to Allah's [Islamic Monotheism], and does righteous deeds, and says: "I am one of the Muslims."}* [Qur'aan 4:33]

Because it is so important for the Muslim to be distinguished from the disbeliever, the Muslim is commanded to pray to Allaah The Almighty at least seventeen times each day to help him to avoid the path of the disbelievers and to guide him to the Straight Path in verses (which mean): *{Guide us to the Straight Way. The way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not [the way] of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray}* [Qur'aan 1:6-7]



There are very many texts in the Qur'aan and Sunnah (Prophetic tradition) which forbid us to imitate them, and which clearly state that they are misguided; whoever imitates them, imitates them in their misguidance. Allaah Says (what means):

- *{Then We have put you [O Muhammad] on a [plain] way of [Our] commandment [like the one which We commanded Our Messengers before you [i.e. legal ways and laws of the Islamic Monotheism]. So follow you that [Islamic Monotheism and its laws], and follow not the desires of those who know not.}* [Qur'aan 46:18]
- *{Were you [O Muhammad] to follow their [vain] desires after the knowledge which has come to you, then you will not have any Waliyy [protector] or Waaq [defender] against Allaah.}* [Qur'aan 13:37]
- *{And be not as those who divided and differed among themselves after the clear proofs had come to them.}* [Qur'aan 3:105]

Allaah The Almighty calls the believers to remember Him with humility and to recite His Verses, then He Says (what means): *{lest they become as those who received the Scripture [the Tawraat i.e. Torah] and the Injeel [i.e. Gospel] before [i.e. Jews and Christians], and the term was prolonged for them and so their hearts were hardened? And many of them were Faasiqoon [the rebellious, the disobedient to Allaah].}* [Qur'aan 57:16]

No doubt imitating them is one of the greatest indications that a person has befriended them and loves them, and this contradicts the idea of disavowal of the Kufir and its people. Allaah The Almighty has forbidden the believers to take them as Awliyaa' (friends, allies, etc.) and He has stated that taking them as such causes a person to become one of them – Allaah forbid.



Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):

- *{O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as Awliyaa' [friends, protectors, helpers], they are but Awliyaa' of each other. And if any amongst you takes them [as Awliyaa'], then surely, he is one of them.} [Qur'aan 5:51]*
- *{You [O Muhammad] will not find any people who believe in Allaah and the Last Day, making friendship with those who oppose Allaah and His Messenger [Muhammad], even though they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred (people).} [Qur'aan 58:22]*

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Imitation generates friendship and love, and regarding them as allies in the inside, just as loving them on the inside generates imitating them on the outside."

And he also said, commenting on the Aayah (verse) from Soorat al-Mujaadilah mentioned above: "Allaah tells us that there is no (true) believer who takes a Kaafir as a friend, for whoever takes a Kaafir as friend is not a believer. Imitation on the outside implies that a person loves (the one whom he imitates), and so it is forbidden."

It was reported that the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: ***"Whoever imitates a people is one of them."*** (Reported by Abu Daawood, al-Libaas, 1204; Ahmad, 2/05. Shaykh al-Islam classed its Isnaad as Jayyid (good) in Al-Iqtidaa', 1/042. See also al-Fataawaa, 25/133. Al-Haafith ibn Hajar provided corroborating evidence in al-Fat-h, with a Mursal report whose Isnaad is Hasan (6/89). As-Suyooti classed it as Hasan, and al-Albaani classed it as Saheeh in Jamee' as-Saheeh, 5206)



Shaykh al-Islam, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “This Hadeeth at the very least implies that it is Haraam to imitate them, even if it is only in external appearance, and it implies that the one who imitates them is a Kaafir, as Allaah says (what means): ***{And if any amongst you takes them [as Awliyaa’], then surely, he is one of them.}*** [Qur’aan 5:51].” (Al-Iqtidaa’, 1/732)

Al-San’aani, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “If a person imitates the Kaafir in his dress, and believes that by doing so he will be like him, then he is a Kaafir. If he does not believe this, then there is a difference of opinion among the Fuqahaa’ (jurists) in this case. Some of them say that he is a Kaafir, which is the apparent meaning of the Hadeeth; others say that he is not a Kaafir, but he should be disciplined.” (Subul as-Salaam, 8/842)

Shaykh al-Islam, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The reason behind the religion of Allaah and its rituals vanishing, and Kufr and sin prevailing, is imitation of the disbelievers; just as the means of preserving all good is by following the ways and laws of the prophets.” (Al-Iqtidaa’, 1/413)

There is much that could be said about imitation of the disbelievers, but what we have said above is sufficient.

The forms of imitating the disbelievers in their festivals

The various sects and groups of the disbelievers have many kinds of festivals, some of which have a religious basis whilst others have been newly invented. Some of their festivals are like customs and events for which they have invented festivals, such as national holidays and the like. Their festivals may be grouped into different categories as follows:



Firstly: Religious festivals, by means of which they seek to draw nearer to Allaah, such as the Epiphany, Easter, Passover, Christmas, etc. The ways in which the Muslims imitate them in these festivals are two:

1. Joining in with them in these festivals, such as when some non-Islamic groups or minorities in Muslim countries celebrate their festivals, and some Muslims join in with them. This happened at the time of Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Haafith ath-Thahabi, and it is what is happening now in many of the Muslim countries. What is even worse than that is what some Muslims do by travelling to the disbelievers' countries for the express purpose of attending these festivals and joining in the celebrations, whether the motive is to fulfill their physical desires or in response to the invitation of some of the disbelievers – as some Muslims do who live in disbelievers' countries and are invited to join the celebrations, or some other who have capital to invest or are owners of large companies, so they accept these invitations for the sake of being friendly to the person who invited them, or for a worldly interest such as winning a contract, and so on. All of this is Haraam (unlawful), and there is the fear that it may lead to Kufr, because of the Hadeeth in which the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *“Whoever imitates a people is one of them.”* And the one who does this is aiming to join in some of the rituals of their religion.

2. Bringing the celebration to the Muslim countries. Those Muslims who attend the festivals of the disbelievers in their countries and who like them due to their own ignorance, weak faith and little knowledge, may be prompted to bring some of those festivals and rituals to the Muslim countries, as is happening now in many Muslim countries, where the Gregorian New year is celebrated. This category is worse than the former



one for one reason, which is that the people who do this are not content merely to join the disbelievers in their rituals, but want to bring them to the Muslim lands as well.

Secondly: Festivals whose origins lie in the rituals of the disbelievers, and they have now become international customs and celebrations. This is like the Olympic festivals (the Olympiad) in Greece, which nowadays appears to be no more than an international sporting event in which participation takes two forms:

Taking part in the games with their rituals in the disbelievers' countries, as many of the Muslim states do by sending athletes to participate in the different games.

Bringing these festivals to the Muslim countries, such as some of the Muslim countries asking to host the Olympic Games in their countries.

In both cases, taking part or hosting the games in a Muslim country is Haraam, for the following reasons:

The origin of these Olympic Games is one of the pagan festivals of the Greeks, as mentioned above. This was the most important festival for the Greek nation, then it was inherited by the Romans and, in turn, the Christians.

It bears the same name as it was known by when it was a Greek festival.

The fact that it is now no more than a sporting event does not cancel out the fact that it is a pagan festival, because of its origin and name. The Daleel (evidence) for that is the Hadeeth Reported



by Thaabit ibn adh-Dhahhaak, may Allaah be pleased with him, who said:

“At the time of the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, a man vowed to sacrifice some camels in Bawwaanah. He came to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and said: ‘I have vowed to sacrifice some camels in Bawwaanah.’ The Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *‘Were there any idols there that were worshipped during the Jaahiliyyah?’* He said, ‘No.’ He, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *‘Did they hold any of their festivals there?’* He said, ‘No.’ The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *‘Then fulfill your vow, for there is no fulfillment of any vow which involves disobeying Allaah, or with regard to something that the son of Adam does not own.’*” (Reported by Abu Daawood in al-Aymaan wa'l-Nuthoor, 3133. According to another report, the one who asked the question was a woman (2133))

It was also Reported by at-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer (1431) Shaykh al-Islaam said: "Its Isnad is according to the conditions of the Saheehayn. All of its narrators are Thiqaat (trustworthy) and Mash-hoor (well known), and the chain is intact, with no 'An'anah [none of the links of the chain are connected with the word 'an, meaning 'from'].“ See *Al-Iqtidaa'*, 1/634. It was classed as Saheeh by al-Haafidh in al-Buloogh, 5041)

The Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, paid attention to the origins of things, and the origin of this particular sporting event is a (pagan) festival.

Shaykh al-Islaam, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

“This implies that the fact that that spot was the place where their festival was held would have been a reason to



forbid him to sacrifice there, as would also have been the case if it had been the place of their idols. Otherwise, how else can we interpret the Hadeeth? Of course it would only have been to venerate the spot which they venerated, by holding the festival there or by joining them in their celebrations there, or reviving the symbols of their festival and other things that can only be related to that action in that place or at that time...If merely choosing the place of the festival is forbidden, then how about the festival itself?"
(*Al-Iqtidaa'*, 1/344)

Our issue with the Olympic games does not have to do with the time or the place, but with the event itself and its original name, and the things that are done during the event, such as the lighting of the Olympic torch, which is one of the rituals of the games. There is also the timing of the event, because among the Greeks the games were held every four years, and nowadays too they are held every four years. This is a festival with regard to its origins, its name, the things that are done and the timing, so taking part in these games means taking part in a festival which was pagan and then Christian, and asking to hold these games in a Muslim country means bringing this pagan festival into a Muslim land.

Thirdly: The days and weeks that have been invented by the disbelievers. These may be divided into two types:

Those which have a religious origin and have now become customs connected to some worldly purpose, such as the workers' festival (May Day) which was invented by those who worshipped trees, then it became a pagan festival of the Romans, then it was adopted by the French who connected it to the church, until socialism came and propagated it, and it became an international and official holiday even in many Muslim countries.



Undoubtedly it is Haraam to adopt this day as a holiday and let workers take this day off, for the following reasons:

- Because in its origins and development it is a pagan festival
- Because it occurs on a fixed day each year, which is May 1st
- Because it involves imitating the disbelievers with regard to something that belongs exclusively to them.

Even if an event does not have a religious basis, such as World Health Day, or days for fighting drugs and eradicating illiteracy, and other invented days and weeks, one of the two following things will still apply:

Either it occurs on a fixed day each year and is repeated on the same day each year, like Bank Holidays and other fixed days. There are two things wrong with this:

- It is a fixed day which recurs on the same date each year
- It entails imitating the disbelievers because this is something that they have invented.

These international days, such as World Health Day and a day for fighting drugs, contain some benefit for humanity as a whole, which the Muslims cannot avoid taking part in because they may miss out on some benefits otherwise; they have nothing to do with religion and only resemble festivals in that they come every year and they are events that are celebrated and taken notice of – so can they be tolerated on these grounds? It seems to me that this matter needs research and Ijtihad to weigh the pros and cons, because the Muslims are not consulted concerning these days and their opinion carries no weight, on the contrary, these



things are forced on the entire world and the Muslims are in a weak and humiliated position, as is well known.

Or, it is not a day or week that comes at a fixed time each year, but is moved according to a particular system or certain needs. This does not have the character of a festival which is repeated at a fixed time, but there remains the problem of imitation, in that it is something that was invented by the disbelievers and then brought to the Muslims. Does this count as the kind of imitation that is Haraam? Or is it a kind of imitation that is permissible like other matters having to do with organization, administration, etc., and like the days of annual leave in companies, institutions, etc.? This too needs research and investigation, although initially it seems to me that there is nothing wrong with it, for the following reasons:

- It is not fixed on a specific date that is the same each time, so it does not have that festival-like character.
- These days are not called festivals, and they do not have the characteristics of festivals, such as celebrations and the like.
- The purpose of these days is to organize awareness campaigns, to achieve beneficial goals.

Those who want to stop them would have to stop many events and gatherings that happen from time to time, and I do not think that anyone would advocate this. These events are like family meetings, Da'wah meetings, workplace meetings, and so on.

There is nothing in them that would dictate that they be considered Haraam, apart from the fact that they originated with the disbelievers and were brought to the Muslims, and the problems they deal with are widespread among the disbelievers



and others. So the objection that they belong only to the disbelievers is cancelled by the fact that these things are also widespread among the Muslims.

In conclusion, these festivals are not part of the religion and beliefs of the disbelievers and they do not form part of their exclusive customs and traditions. There is no veneration or celebration involved, and they are not festivals on set days which are repeated regularly. They resemble other organizations in that they serve a useful purpose.

Fourthly: Another form of imitation of the disbelievers is turning the 'Eeds of the Muslims into something resembling the festivals of the disbelievers. The 'Eeds of the Muslims are distinguished by the fact that their rituals point to the expression of gratitude to Allaah, may He be exalted, and glorifying, praising and worshipping Him, while expressing joy for the blessings of Allaah, and not using these blessings for sinful purposes. This is in contrast to the festivals of the disbelievers, which are distinguished by the veneration of their false rituals and idols which they worship instead of Allaah, whilst indulging in their forbidden desires. It is most unfortunate that Muslims in many places are imitating the disbelievers in this way, and they have changed their 'Eed from an occasion of worship and thanksgiving into an occasion of committing sins and showing ingratitude towards Allaah's blessings, by spending the night of 'Eed listening to musical instruments and singing, indulging in immoral actions, organizing parties where Ikhtilaat (inter-mixing between men and women) is rife, and doing other things which they think help them express joy at the celebration of 'Eed, following the misguided ways in which the disbelievers spend their festivals engaging in immorality and sin.



Ways in which we must avoid the festivals of the disbelievers

✦ Avoid attending the festivals of the disbelievers:

The scholars have agreed that it is Haraam to attend the festivals of the disbelievers and to imitate them in their festivals. This is the Math-hab of the Hanafis, Maaliki's, Shaafi'is and Hanbalis. (See Al-Iqtidaa', 2/425; Ahkaam Ahl ath-Thimmah by Ibn al-Qayyim, 2/227-527; at-Tashabbuh al-Munhaa 'anhu fi'l-Fiqh al-Isaami, 533) There is a great deal of evidence for this, such as:

All of the evidence which states that it is forbidden to imitate them, some of which has been quoted above.

The consensus of the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, and the Taabi'een (the righteous predecessors) that Muslims should not attend the festivals of the disbelievers. The evidence of this consensus takes four forms:

- The Jews, Christians and Magians (Zoroastrians) who lived in the Muslim lands and paid Jizyah (tax paid by non-Muslims living under the protection of the Islamic state) were still observing their own festivals, so the motive for some Muslims to imitate them was present. No one among the early generations of Muslims would have refrained from joining them in any part of that, If there had not been something to stop them from doing so, such as it being either Makrooh (disliked) or prohibited, many of them would have fallen into that, for if the action and the motive are present and there is nothing to stop them, people would undoubtedly have done the thing. Therefore we understand that there was something stopping them from doing that, and this was



the religion of Islam. This is what was stopping them from going along with the disbelievers and this is the point that we are trying to make here. (Al-Iqtidaa', 1/454)

- The conditions set out by 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, which the Companions and all the Fuqahaa' after them agreed upon, that the Ahl ath-Thimmah (Jews and Christians living under the protection of the Islamic state, in return for paying the Jizyah) should not celebrate their festivals openly in the Muslim lands. If the Muslims have agreed that they should not celebrate their festivals openly, then how can it be alright for the Muslims themselves to celebrate them? Is it not worse for a Muslim to do this at all than for a disbeliever to do it openly? (Al-Iqtidaa', 1/454)

- 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: "Do not learn the language of the Persians, and do not enter upon the polytheists in their churches on the day of their festival, for the divine wrath is descending upon them." (Musannaf 'Abdur-Razzaaq, 9061; as-Sunan al-Kubra by Al-Bayhaqi, 9/432)

- 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr, may Allaah be pleased with them both, said: "Whoever settles in the land of the non-Arabs and celebrates their Nawrooz and their Mahrajaan, and imitates them until he dies in that state, will be gathered with them on the Day of Resurrection." (as-Sunan al-Kubra, 9/432; classed as Saheeh by Ibn Taymiyyah in Al-Iqtidaa', 1/754)

Shaykh al-Islaam, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

"Here we see 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, forbidding people to learn their language and to merely enter their churches on the [days of their] festivals, so what about actually doing some of the things they do, or



performing some of the rituals of their religion? Is not doing the things they do more serious than speaking the same language? Or is not doing some of the things they do in the festival more serious than merely entering upon them on the occasion of their festival? If the divine wrath comes upon them on the day of their festival because of what they do, then is not the one who joins them in all or part of that also exposed to the same punishment?" (*Al-Iqtidaa'*, 1/854)

He, may Allaah have mercy on him, also commented on the words of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr, may Allaah be pleased with him – "will be gathered with them", saying: "This implies that this makes him a Kaafir by his joining in what they do, or else it means that this is one of the major sins that doom a person to Hell, although the former is more apparent from the wording." (1/954)

1. Avoid doing the same things that they do.

Some Muslims may not be able to be present at the festivals of the disbelievers, but they do the same things as they do. This is also a part of the imitation which blameworthy and forbidden. Shaykh al-Islaam, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

"It is not permissible for the Muslims to imitate them in any part of the things that are exclusively part of their festivals, whether it be food, dress, bathing, lighting fires or changing their habits with regard to daily living, acts of worship, etc. It is not permissible to give a feast or give gifts or sell items that will help them to do that for that purpose, or to allow children and others to do any of that, whether it is playing, wearing new clothes etc. in conclusion, they should not make that day special by adopting any of their rituals; for the Muslims, the day of the Kaafirs' festival should be like any other day." (*Majmoo' al-Fataawa*, 52/923)



Ath-Thahabi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “If the Christians or the Jews have a festival that is exclusively theirs, the Muslims should not join them in that, just as they do not join them in their laws or their direction of prayer.” (Tashabbuh al-Khasess bi Ahl al-Khamees, in al-Hikmah magazine, p. 391) Ibn at-Turkmaani al-Hanafi mentioned some of the things that some Muslims did on the occasion of Christian festivals, such as spending more than usual and taking the family out, then he said: “Some of the Hanafi scholars said, whoever does any of the things mentioned here and does not repent, is a Kaafir like them.” One of the companions of Maalik, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Whoever cuts up a watermelon on the day of Nawrooz, it is as if he sacrificed a pig.” (al-Lam’ fi’l-Hawaadith wa’l-Bida’, 1/492)

2. Avoiding using the means of transportation that they use to go to their festivals

Maalik, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “It is Makrooh to travel with them in the boats which they use to go to their festivals, because the divine wrath and curse is descending upon them.” (al-Hawaadith wa’l-Bida’, 1/492)

Ibn al-Qaasim, may Allaah have mercy on him, was asked about travelling in the boats which the Christians travelled in to attend their festivals. He regarded that as Makrooh, fearing the descent of divine wrath upon them for the Shirk (polytheism) which they agreed upon. (Al-Iqtidaa’, 2/625)



3. Not giving them gifts or helping them to celebrate their festivals by either selling or buying.

Abu Hafs al-Hanafi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Whoever gives an egg to a Kaafir out of respect for that day has disbelieved in Allaah, may He be exalted.” (Fat-h al-Baari by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalaani, 2/315)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

“Ibn al-Qaasim regarded it as Makrooh for a Muslim to give a Christian anything on the occasion of his festival to congratulate him. He saw that as respecting their festival and helping them in their Kufr. Do you not see that it is not permissible for the Muslims to sell anything to the Christians that helps them to celebrate their festival? No meat, no food, no dress. They should not loan their riding-beasts to them or help them in any way with their festival, because that is like honoring their Shirk and helping them with their Kufr. The authorities should prevent Muslims from doing this. This is the view of Maalik and others, and I do not know of any dissenting opinion on this point.” (2/625-725)

Ibn at-Turkmaani, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The Muslim is sinning if he sits with them or helps them to slaughter animals or cook food, or he lends them a riding-beast to take them to their celebrations or festivals.” (al-Lama’ fi al-Hawaadith, 1/492)

4. Not helping the Muslim who wants to imitate them in their festivals to do so.

Shaykh al-Islam, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:



“Just as we should not imitate them in their festivals, so too we should not help the Muslim who wants to imitate them to do so. It is forbidden to do this. If a person issues an invitation on the occasion of their festivals that he would not ordinarily do, his invitation should not be accepted. If a Muslim gives a gift on this occasion that he would not ordinarily give at any other time, his gift should not be accepted, especially if it is something that would help a person to imitate them, as we have already stated. A Muslim should not sell anything that could help Muslims to imitate them in their celebrations, such as food, clothing and so on, because by doing so he is helping them in sin.”
(*Al-Iqtidaa'*, 2/915-025)

5. Not congratulating them on the occasion of their festivals.

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

“As for congratulating them for the symbols of Kufr that belong exclusively to them, this is Haraam according to scholarly consensus, such as congratulating them for their festivals and fasts, and saying, ‘A blessed festival to you’ and the like. Even though the person who says this might not become a disbeliever by saying this, it is still forbidden, and it is the same as congratulating them for prostrating to the cross. Indeed, it is an even greater sin with Allaah and is more hated by Him than congratulating them for drinking wine, killing people and committing adultery, and so on. Many of those who do not care about religion do this, and do not realize how abhorrent their actions are. Whoever congratulates a person for his sin, Bid’ah (innovation) or Kufr exposes himself to the wrath and anger of Allaah. The pious scholars used to avoid congratulating the tyrants when they were appointed to



official positions, or congratulating the ignorant when they were appointed as Qaadhis, teachers or Muftis, because they sought to avoid the wrath and anger of Allaah .”
(*Ahkaam Ahl ath-Thimmah*, 1/144-244)

Congratulating the disbelievers on the occasion of their religious festivals is Haraam as Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, stated, because this implies approval of their rituals and beliefs of Kufr. Even if a person does not accept this Kufr for himself, it is still Haraam for a Muslim to approve of the rituals of Kufr for someone else or to congratulate someone else for them, because Allaah The Almighty does not approve of this. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):

- *{If you disbelieve, then verily, Allaah is not in need of you; He likes not disbelief for His slaves. And if you are grateful [by being believers], He is pleased therewith for you.}* [Qur'aan 39:7]
- *{This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.}* [Qur'aan 5:3]

Congratulating them for that is Haraam, whether they are taking part with them in that or not. If they congratulate us on the occasion of their festival, we should not respond, because it is not our festival and because these are festivals with which Allaah The Almighty is not pleased, as they are either innovated in their religions, or they are prescribed, but they (their religions) have been abrogated by the religion of Islam, with which Allaah The Almighty sent Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, to all of humankind. And Allaah Says concerning Islam (what means):
{And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.}
[Qur'aan 3:85].



It is Haraam for a Muslim to accept an invitation on these occasions, because this is worse than merely congratulating them, since it involves joining in with them. Anyone who does any of these things is a sinner, whether he does it just to be friendly, or because he likes them, or because he is too shy to do otherwise, or for any other reason, because it is a kind of hypocrisy in the religion of Allaah The Almighty and is a way of making the disbelievers feel stronger and making them proud of their religion. (Majmoo' Fataawaa wa rasaa'il Fadeelat ash-Shaykh Muhammad al-'Uthaymeen, compiled by Fahd as-Salmaan, 3/45-46)

Question: What if a Muslim wants to celebrate like they do, but he does it a few days before or after their festival, so that he is not imitating them?

This is a kind of imitation and is therefore Haraam, because the prohibition of a thing, and the prohibition of celebrating their festivals also covers the days before and after the festival itself, when they do things that have to do with it. The prohibition also covers the places in which they do things that have to do with their festivals etc. The ruling on these things is the same as the ruling on the festival itself. These things should not be done, even if some people avoid doing any of these things on the days of their festival such as the Thursday (what is referred to here is Maundy Thursday or the Day of Ascension, which is one of the rituals of Easter for the Christians, who call it the Great Thursday) or Christmas, but they tell their families, I will do this for you next week or next month, and their motive is the fact that the disbelievers' festival is happening, otherwise they would not have done it at all. This is also one of the things meant by imitation. (Al-Iqtidaa', 2/315)



6. Avoid using their words and religious terminology.

If it is forbidden to learn their languages unnecessarily for fear of resembling them, then using the names they give to their festivals and rituals is even more forbidden. This is like using the word “Mahrajaan” to describe any large gathering, because this is the name of a religious festival of the Persians.

Al-Bayhaqi, may Allaah have mercy on him, narrated that ‘Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, was given a gift for Nawrooz and he said: “What is this?” They said: “O Ameer al-Mu’mineen (Leader of the Believers), this is the day of Nawrooz.” He, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: “Then make every day Fayrooz!” Abu Usaamah said: “He, may Allaah be pleased with him, did not even want to say ‘Nawrooz.’” (Reported by Al-Bayhaqi in *as-Sunan al-Kubraa*, 9/532)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “‘Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, did not even want to say the same name as they gave to their own festival, so how about doing the same things?” (*Al-Iqtidaa’*, 1/954)

We have already stated that this is not an Arabic term; the Arabic language is rich enough not to need such words, and has better words that can be used.

The ruling on accepting gifts on their festivals

We have already stated above that it is not permissible to give gifts on their festivals because this is helping them in their falsehood. It is also not permissible to accept a gift from a Muslim who is imitating them, because by accepting it one is helping him to imitate them and this implies that one approves of what he is



doing and that one is not rebuking him for doing this Haraam action.

With regard to accepting a gift from a disbeliever if he gives something to a Muslim at the time of the disbelievers' festival, this is like being given a gift at other times, because it does not involve helping them in their disbelief. There is some difference of opinion with regard to this matter, based on whether one should accept a gift from a disbeliever who is at war with the Muslims as opposed to a disbeliever who is living under the protection of Islamic rule.

It should also be noted that their gifts may be of two types:

1. Gifts other than meat that has been slaughtered for the occasion of their festival, such as sweets, fruits and so on: there is a difference of opinion based on the question of accepting gifts from the disbelievers in general. It seems that it is permissible because it was reported that 'Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, accepted their gifts, and it was reported that a woman asked 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her: "We have some birds from the Magians which they had during their festival and they gave them to us." She said: "If they were slaughtered for that occasion, do not eat them, but eat from their trees [i.e. fruits etc.]." (Reported by Ibn Abu Shaybah in *Kitaab al-At'imah* in his *Musannaf*, 5/521, no. 16342. In *Al-Iqtidaa'* it says: "We have some wet-nurses." The editor of *Al-Iqtidaa'* said: "Perhaps what is meant by this is relatives through Radhaa'ah i.e. breastfeeding.")

Abu Barzah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said that he had Magian tenants who used to give him gifts on Nawrooz and Mahrajaan, and he used to tell his family: "If it is, then you can eat it, but if it is anything else, then reject it." (*ibid.* no. 26346)



Shaykh al-Islam, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “All of this indicates that refusing to accept their gifts has no effect on their festival. The ruling on accepting their gifts at the time of their festival and at other times is the same, because this does not entail helping them in the rituals of their Kufr.” (*Al-Iqtidaa'*, 2/455-555)

2. A gift may be of meat that was slaughtered on the occasion of their festival: this should not be eaten, because of the reports of 'Aa`ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, and Abu Barzah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated above, and because it has been slaughtered according to the rituals of Kufr.

Singling out the festivals of the disbelievers for fasting so as to be different from them

The scholars differed with regard to this:

It was said that it is not Makrooh to fast on their festivals for the purpose of being different from them. This view is Dha'eef (weak).

The correct view is that it is not permissible to single out the days of their festivals for fasting, because their festivals are occasions which they venerate, and fasting on these days and not others coincides with them in their veneration.

Ibn Qudaamah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

“Our companions said: it is Makrooh to single out the day of Nawrooz and the day of Mahrajaan to fast, because these are two days which are venerated by the disbelievers, so fasting only on these days and not on others is agreeing with them in their



veneration of those days. This is like the case of Saturday, so by analogy this ruling applies to every festival of the disbelievers and every day which they venerate.” (Al-Mughni, 4/924; see also Al-Iqtidaa’, 2/975)

This ruling applies in cases where one singles out that day to fast because it is their festival. But if it happens to coincide with a vow or a voluntary fast, without intending to fast because it is their festival, then there is nothing wrong with that. (See Haashiyat Ibn Qaasim ‘ala ar-Rawdh al-Murabba’, 3/064) The guideline in being different from them with regard to their festivals is that one should not innovate anything at all; one should treat the days of their festivals as being like any other day. (See Al-Iqtidaa’, 2/815) So one should not take the day off work, or rejoice on that occasion, of single that day out for fasting, expressing grief, etc.

Shaykh al-Islaam, may Allaah have mercy on him, mentioned something which may be taken as guidelines with regard to the matter of imitation. He said:

“Tashabbuh (imitation) includes those who do something because they do it, which is rare; and those who follow others in what they do for some purpose of his own even though the action is originally taken from those others. As for the one who does something that happens to be done by others as well, but neither of them took it from the other, it is open to debate as to whether this is imitation or not. But the person who does this may be rebuked so that there will be no excuse for imitation, and because this will reinforce the idea of differing from them.” (Al-Iqtidaa’, 1/242)

On the basis of what Shaykh al-Islaam has said, actions that happen to coincide with what they do may be divided into two types:



One, imitation of them; this is where the person who imitates them wants to be like them, for whatever reason. This is Haraam.

Two, resembling them; this is when a person is not deliberately aiming to be like them. In this case it should be pointed out to him, and if he stops, all well and good; otherwise he is guilty of the kind of imitation that is Haraam. 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aas, may Allaah be pleased with them both, said: "The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, saw me wearing two garments that had been dyed with safflower. He, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *'This is the clothing of the disbelievers; do not wear them.'*" According to another report: "He, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *'Did you mother tell you to wear this?'* I said: 'Should I wash them?' He, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *'No, burn them.'*" (The two reports were reported by Muslim in al-Libaas wa az-Zeenah, 2077)

Al-Qurtubi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "This indicates that the reason he told him not to wear them was that by wearing them he was imitating the disbelievers." (Al-Mufhim lima Ashkal Min Talkhees Muslim 5/993)

It seems from the Hadeeth that 'Abdullaah, may Allaah be pleased with him, did not realize that he was imitating the dress of the disbelievers, but the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, still told him off for that and explained the ruling of the Sharee'ah (Islamic law) on this matter.

If something originated with the disbelievers, and it is done by them and by others, then this is not imitation, but Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, was of the opinion that it should be stopped so as to leave no room for excuses and so as to protect the Muslims from falling into



imitation of the disbelievers, and because this serves the purpose of differing from them.

The Munaafiqoon (hypocrites) and the festivals of the disbelievers

1. The socialist Baath party in one of the Arab countries tried to abolish Udh-hiyah (sacrifices for 'Eed al-Adh-ha) on the grounds of famine and drought. Their supporters put up a huge banner on which was written: "For the sake of the hungry and the poor and the naked, donate the value of the sheep for Udh-hiyah." (See *al-Istijaabah magazine*, vol. 4, *Rabee' ath-Thaani 1406 AH*)

'Eed al-Adh-ha came and went, and the Muslims in that country offered their sacrifices. Then when Christmas and New Year approached, preparations began to celebrate them. When Christmas and New Year came, they were official holidays in that country, and there were lavish parties and promiscuous soirees. Foremost among the people celebrating were the leaders of the socialist Baath party whose joy at the Christian festivals made them forget the needs of the poor, hungry and naked, whose plight they only remembered at the time of the Muslims' 'Eeds!

2. One of them wrote in his weekly column, under the title of "Tolerance" (see *'Ukaadh newspaper*, 28/8/1418, 5/9/1418, 12/9/1418 AH) words that indicate the sickness in his heart and the weakness of his religion. The tolerance to which he referred was with regard to the Christian festivals of Christmas and New Year. Among the things that this pseudo-Faqeeh said was:

"This human brotherhood includes all of humankind, and there is no division and enmity except when there is fighting and when the



Muslims are opposed by another group – then there will be fighting, enmity and legitimate self-defense, despite the fact that some extremists and terrorist groups are trying to extinguish this light by spreading interpretations and ideas which encourage hatred and boycotting the world. So they make noise on occasions which are celebrated by the entire world and consider congratulating others to be a deviation from Islam. But in fact, I tell you, these occasions spread love, not hatred, and bring people together, not divide them.”

The author went on, in his compliant and defeatist series on tolerance, which went on for three issues, to cover the Christians festivals for which his heart overflowed with love. In his second article, he said: “Its origin is kindness, (i.e. tolerance and justice).”

As for enmity, it is directed towards those who have declared hostility against us. The matter of difference of religion is something which will be up to the justice and mercy of Allaah The Almighty on the Day of Judgment.

