121170 - Guidelines on forms of the cross that are prohibited

the question

I want to ask about the cross and what its forms are. Are the plus and multiplication signs regarded as being forms of the cross? Because I am confused about this matter, as are many other brothers, and I cannot find any answer to this question.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Making crosses, buying them, or weaving them into garments or putting them on walls, and so on come under the heading of prohibited actions that it is not permissible for the Muslim to commit. So he should not make them himself or help anyone else in doing that; rather he should fear Allah, may He be exalted, and avoid the symbols of disbelief that the Christians have fabricated in their religion.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is not permissible to make crosses, whether for payment or otherwise, or to sell crosses, just as it is not permissible to sell or make idols, as it is proven in as-Saheeh that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: Verily Allah has forbidden the sale of alcohol, dead meat [that which is not slaughtered in the prescribed manner], pork and idols." End quote.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (22/141). See also: al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (12/84-88)

Secondly:

The cross has many forms and types, that vary according to time and place, among various Christian sects. It takes many forms, which you can see on the following link:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cross

What appears to us to be the case with regard to the ruling on drawing or wearing these types and forms of crosses is the following:

1.

If it is drawn on the basis that it is a cross, it is not permissible for the Muslim to carry it, wear it, buy it, sell it or draw it, because the reason for the prohibition on drawing or wearing crosses is to avoid imitating the Christians and venerating their false religious symbols. This reason is applicable to all forms of the cross that are known to various Christian sects, if it is made on the basis that it is a cross so that it may be venerated and taken as a symbol for whatever they want.

2.

If it is drawn as a kind of decoration, or some household items and utensils are manufactured and happen to have one of the kinds of crosses mentioned above on them, then it depends:

(a) If it is obvious at first glance that it is the kind of cross that is well known today, as it appears in the majority of churches and among most Christians, and it is composed of two lines, one of which is vertical and the other is horizontal, and the horizontal line intersects with the vertical line, and the upper portion is shorter than the lower portion, which is the most famous form of the cross since it was adopted by the Christians, based on the wooden apparatus on which those who were to be executed were crucified – if it appears at first glance to be like this, then it must be removed or altered so that it no longer looks like a cross. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would not leave anything in his house on which there were crosses but he would alter them.

(b) But if the shape of the cross is not obvious, and it is only part of the design and is unintentional, or if the designer of a structure decided that crossed lines were more appropriate, or it is used as a mathematical symbol, such as the plus sign and multiplication sign in arithmetic, then in this case it does not have to be altered or removed, and there is nothing wrong with making it or selling anything that contains it, because the reason for prohibition – which is

imitating the disbelievers and venerating their symbols – is not present in this case, and the symbol of the cross in this case is subtle and is not noticeable.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Firstly: it is essential to determine whether this is a cross, because there are some things that some people think are crosses, when in fact they are not.

Secondly: we should determine whether it has been made because it is a cross, and not because it is a design on a garment, for example, because the Christians venerate the cross, so it is not possible that they would make it a decorative feature on a garment; rather they would treat it with respect.

It is essential to note these two points, then if we determine that it is indeed a cross, then it is obligatory, or at least Sunnah, to cut it up, and we should boycott these garments on which there are crosses, because if we boycott them and the traders do not benefit from them, they will also boycott them.

Something similar may be said regarding the six-pointed star which is said to be the symbol of the Jews; it comes under the same ruling as the cross, even though the Jews do not take it for worship, because it is something that is unique to them.

We asked some Christians who became Muslim about it (i.e., the cross) and they said: In our view the cross is the well-known cross, composed of two lines, one of which is horizontal and the other is vertical, and the vertical line is longer than the other.

We even asked them about the watch that they call the cross watch, and they said: This is not meant to be a cross; it is only the trademark of the company, because what they say about the Christian cross is that it is a long vertical line intersected by a horizontal line, and one part of the vertical line is longer than the other. And this reflects reality, because when a person was crucified, a piece of wood was placed horizontally so that his arms could be tied to it, so how could the piece of wood for his arms be placed halfway down the vertical piece? Rather it should be

higher up. Hence we have our doubts about what was published two years ago which showed various forms and said that they were all crosses! Moreover, is the plus sign (+) a cross? It is not a cross.

Similarly, in times past there was the bucket with which water would be brought up from the well, which was attached by a rope to a structure composed of two pieces of wood, one horizontal and the other vertical. Such things do not come under the heading of crosses.

What is regarded as a cross is that which is made on the basis that it is a cross. End quote.

Liqa' al-Baab al-Maftooh (no. 21, question no. 7)

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said:

As for that which is obviously not intended to be a cross, so it is not venerated and is not a religious symbol, such as some mathematical signs, or what is seen on some electronic wristwatches of plus signs, there is nothing wrong with this, and it is not regarded as being a cross at all. End quote.

Majmoo' Fataawa wa Rasaa'il Ibn 'Uthaymeen (vol. 18, 114, 115, answer to question no. 9)

In Liqaa'aat al-Baab al-Maftooh (no. 199, question no. 9) he (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

I came across a building in one of our cities, and this building has windows in the shape of crosses; every window has this shape, and the building is ten stories high. It is very similar to the buildings designed by Westerners.

He replied:

Actually we need to go and see the building you are talking about. Not everything that appears in the shape of a cross is a cross, otherwise this will lead us to say that the plus sign is haraam, or in the West, where the people used to irrigate their land by drawing water from a well, at the top of which there were two intersecting pieces of wood, we would say that this is haraam! The cross has

a specific shape, and other indications that it is really a cross, so we need to actually see the building you are talking about. End quote.

And Allah knows best.