145893 - What Celebrations Can Muslims Attend?

the question

I am writing because there are some Muslims in some mosques who did something strange. I was one of those who attended a private meeting with a Christian minister last week, and Allah willed that I should be there. In this meeting, a Shaykh and three of the sisters tried to organise a religious celebration, by carrying candles and walking with followers of other religions, then they walked around the lake where the celebration was held.

Hence I hope that you can explain how I can tell them that this is Bid`ah (innovation) and how can I prove to them that this is not correct according to the Quran and Sunnah? May Allah reward you with good.

Summary of answer

• It is not permissible for the Muslim to take part in the religious celebrations of the non-Muslims and it is not permissible for them to congratulate them.
• It is permissible for Muslims to attend celebrations of the non-Muslims on their special occasions such as marriage, recovering from sickness and return from travel on condition that it serves a legitimate Shar`i interest.
• It is not permissible for the Muslim to attend celebrations of the non-Muslims or the Muslims in which there is propagation of any false religion or ideology.
• It is not permissible for the Muslim to attend any celebration of the non-Muslims or the Muslims if it is done in the manner of a repeated festival every year or every month and so on, like birthdays and Mother’s Day.
• It is not permissible for the Muslim to attend any celebration of the non-Muslims or the Muslims that is a prohibited celebration in terms of the occasion, such as Valentine’s Day.
• It is not permissible for the Muslim to attend any celebration of the non-Muslims or the Muslims in which there is mixing with women, or music, or where forbidden food is eaten.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Celebrations are of different types , and the rulings on them vary accordingly, whether those celebrations are held by Muslims or non-Muslims. In discussing this matter we may note the following points:

- It is not permissible for the Muslim to take part in the religious celebrations of the non-Muslims and it is not permissible for them to congratulate them on those occasions at all. This is the most serious kind of celebration in terms of sin, because it may lead the one who does that to disbelief.

Ibn Al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"Congratulating the non-Muslims on the rituals that belong only to them is prohibited by consensus, as is congratulating them on their festivals and fasts by saying `A happy festival to you' or `May you enjoy your festival,' and so on. If the one who says this has been saved from falling into disbelief, it is still forbidden. It is like congratulating someone for prostrating to the cross, or even worse than that. It is as great a sin as congratulating someone for drinking wine, or murdering someone, or having illicit sexual relations, and so on." (Ahkam Ahl Adh-Dhimmah)

Adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "If the Christians have a festival and the Jews have a festival, then that is exclusively for them, so no Muslim should join them in that as he does not join them in their religion or their direction of prayer." (Tashbih Al-Khasis bi Ahl Al-Khamis, in Majallat Al-Hikmah, issue 4, p, 193)

- The scholars differed concerning the ruling on attending celebrations of the non-Muslims on their special occasions such as marriage, recovering from sickness and return from travel. The most correct scholarly opinion is that it is permissible on condition that it serves a legitimate Shar`i interest, such as opening their hearts to Islam or calling them to the faith.

- On occasions and celebrations that are unique to the non-Muslims, it is not permissible for the Muslim to imitate the non-Muslims in dress, eating certain types of food or activities that are exclusive to these occasions. That includes lighting candles and walking around with them.

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“It is not permissible for the Muslims to imitate them in any way that is unique to their festivals, whether it be food, clothes, bathing, lighting fires or refraining from usual work or worship, and so on. And it is not permissible to give a feast or to exchange gifts or to sell things that help them to celebrate their festivals, or to let children and others play the games that are played on their festivals, or to adorn oneself or put up decorations.

In general, (Muslims) are not allowed to single out the festivals of the non-Muslims for any of these rituals or customs. Rather the day of their festivals is just an ordinary day for the Muslims, and they should not single it out for any activity that is part of what the non-Muslims do on these days.” (Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 25/329)

- It is not permissible for the Muslim to attend celebrations of the non-Muslims or the Muslims in which there is propagation of any false religion or ideology , or in which there is praise for any deviant idea or belief.
- It is not permissible for the Muslim to attend any celebration of the non-Muslims or the Muslims if it is done in the manner of a repeated festival every year or every month and so on, like birthdays and Mother’s Day.
- It is not permissible for the Muslim to attend any celebration of the non-Muslims or the Muslims that is a prohibited celebration in terms of the occasion, such as Valentine’s Day, the birthday of an evildoer or tyrant, or the anniversary of the founding of any group or party that is based on disbelief or immorality.
- It is not permissible for the Muslim to attend any celebration of the non-Muslims or the Muslims in which there is mixing with women , or music , or where forbidden food is eaten.

Once you understand what is stated above, it will be clear to you that this gathering is prohibited, as is what happened in it, because of the mixing and the imitation of the non-Muslims by lighting candles and walking around with them, as well as veneration of that false religion and propagation thereof, not just because of keeping quiet about it, but also because of joining in and showing respect for its rituals in that prohibited gathering.

And Allah knows best.