

Celebrating Valentine's Day

﴿ الاحتفال بيوم فالانتاين ﴾

[English – إنجليزي]

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Praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds, and blessings and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad and upon all his family and companions.

Allaah has chosen for us Islam as our religion and He will not accept any other religion from anyone, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“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.”[Aal 'Imraan 3:85]

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told us that groups of his ummah would follow the enemies of Allaah in some of their rituals and customs, as it says in the hadeeth of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (may Allaah be pleased with him), who narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:

“You will certainly follow the ways of those who came before you, span by span, cubit by cubit, until even if they were to enter a lizard's hole, you would follow them.” We said, “O Messenger of Allaah, (do you mean) the Jews and Christians?” He said, “Who else?!”(Narrated by al-Bukhaari in al-I'tisaam bi'l-Kitaab wa'l-Sunnah, Baab Qawl an-Nabi (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) La tattabi'unna Sanan man kaana qablakum, 8/151; and by Muslim in Kitaab al-Ilm, Baab Ittiba' Sanan al-Yahood wa'l-Nasaara, 4/2054)

What the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) spoke of has indeed come to pass and has become widespread in recent times, in many of the Muslim countries. Many of the Muslims follow the enemies of Allaah in many of their customs and ways of behaving, and imitate them in some of their rituals and in celebrating their holidays.

The matter has been made even worse by the opening up of mass communications between peoples, whereby the rituals and customs of the kuffaar are now transmitted with the glamorous adornment of sound and image from their countries into the Muslim countries, via satellite TV and the World Wide Web (Internet). Many Muslims have been deceived by their glamour.

In recent years, a new phenomenon has spread among the Muslim youth – males and females alike – which does not bode well. This is manifested in their imitation of the Christians in their celebration of Valentine's Day, which has led the scholars and daa'iyahs to explain the rulings of sharee'ah concerning that, out of sincerity towards Allaah, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk, so that Muslims may have a clear understanding of this issue and so that they will not fall into that which will undermine the belief ('aqeedah) with which Allaah has blessed them.

This is a brief discussion of the origins, development and purpose of this holiday, and what the Muslim should do with regard to it.

The Story of the Festival of Love (Valentine's Day)

The Festival of Love was one of the festivals of the pagan Romans, when paganism was the prevalent religion of the Romans more than seventeen centuries ago. In the pagan Roman concept, it was an expression of "spiritual love".

There were myths associated with this pagan festival of the Romans, which persisted with their Christian heirs. Among the most famous of these myths was the Roman belief that Romulus, the founder of Rome, was suckled one day by a she-wolf, which gave him strength and wisdom.

The Romans used to celebrate this event in mid-February each year with a big festival. One of the rituals of this festival was the sacrifice of a dog and a goat. Two strong and muscular youths would daub the blood of the dog and goat onto their bodies, then they would wash the blood away with milk. After that there would be a great parade, with these two youths at its head, which would go about the streets. The two youths would have pieces of leather with which they would hit everyone who crossed their path. The Roman women would welcome these blows, because they believed that they could prevent or cure infertility.

The Connection between Saint Valentine and this Festival

Saint Valentine is a name which is given to two of the ancient "martyrs" of the Christian Church. It was said that there were two of them, or that there was only one, who died in Rome as the result of the persecution of the Gothic leader Claudius, c. 296 CE. In 350 CE, a church was built in Rome on the site of the place where he died, to perpetuate his memory.

When the Romans embraced Christianity, they continued to celebrate the Feast of Love mentioned above, but they changed it from the pagan concept of "spiritual love" to another concept known as the "martyrs of love", represented by Saint Valentine who had advocated love and peace, for which cause he was martyred, according to their claims. It was also called the Feast of Lovers, and Saint Valentine was considered to be the patron saint of lovers.

One of their false beliefs connected with this festival was that the names of girls who had reached marriageable age would be written on small rolls of paper and placed in a dish on a table. Then the young men who wanted to get married would be called, and each of them would pick a piece of paper. He would put himself at the service of the girl whose name he had drawn for one year, so that they could find out about one another. Then they would get married, or they would repeat the same process again on the day of the festival in the following year.

The Christian clergy reacted against this tradition, which they considered to have a corrupting influence on the morals of young men and women. It was abolished in Italy,

where it had been well-known, then it was revived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when in some western countries there appeared shops which sold small books called "Valentine's books", which contained love poems, from which the one who wanted to send a greeting to his sweetheart could choose. They also contained suggestions for writing love letters.

It was also said concerning the origins of this holiday that when the Romans became Christian, after Christianity had become widespread, the Roman emperor Claudius II decreed in the third century CE that soldiers should not get married, because marriage would distract them from the wars they used to fight. This decree was opposed by Saint Valentine, who started to perform marriages for the soldiers in secret. When the emperor found out about that, he threw him in jail and sentenced him to execution. In prison, he (Saint Valentine) fell in love with the jailer's daughter, but this was a secret because according to Christian laws, priests and monks were forbidden to marry or fall in love. But he is still regarded highly by the Christians because of his steadfastness in adhering to Christianity when the emperor offered to pardon him if he forsook Christianity and worshipped the Roman gods; then he would be one of his closest confidantes and he would make him his son-in-law. But Valentine refused this offer and preferred Christianity, so he was executed on 14 February 270 CE, on the eve of February 15, the festival of Lupercalis. So this day was named for this saint.

In *The Story of Civilization*, it says that the Church devised a calendar in which every day was designated as the feast day of one of the saints. In England, Saint Valentine's Day was to come at the end of winter. When that day came, according to them, the birds mated enthusiastically in the forests, and the young men would put flowers on the windowsills of the homes of the girls whom they loved. (*The Story of Civilization* by Will Durant, 15/23)

The Pope designated the day of the death of Saint Valentine, February 14, 270 CE, as a festival of love. Who is the Pope? He is the "the archbishop, the supreme pontiff of the universal church, the successor of Saint Peter." Look at this "archbishop" and how he prescribed for them the observance of this festival which was an innovation in their religion. This reminds us of what Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"They (Jews and Christians) took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allaah (by obeying them in things which they made lawful or unlawful according to their own desires without being ordered by Allaah)..."[al-Tawbah 9:31]

It was narrated that 'Adiy ibn Haatim said:

"I came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) wearing a gold cross around my neck. He said, 'O 'Adiy, cast aside this idol.' And I heard him reciting from Soorat Baraa'ah [al-Tawbah] (interpretation of the meaning):

'They (Jews and Christians) took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allaah.'

He said: 'They do not worship them, but when they permit them something they accept it as permitted, and when they forbid them something they accept it as forbidden.'" (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi and it is a hasan hadeeth).

Among the most important symbols of this holiday:

1 – Expressing joy and happiness on this occasion, as on their other major festivals.

2 – Exchanging red roses, which are an expression of love, the "spiritual love" of the pagans or the "love" of the Christians. Hence it is known to them as the Feast of Lovers.

3 – The sending of greetings cards. On some of these cards are pictures of "Cupid", who appears as a child with two wings, carrying a bow and arrows. This was the god of love of the pagan Romans – exalted be Allaah far above their fabrications and their association of others with Him.

4 – Exchange of words of love and desire in the greetings cards which they send to one another, in verse, prose and short phrases. Some of the cards contain comical pictures and funny words, and they often contain the phrase "be my Valentine". This represents the Christian concept of this festival after it was taken from the pagan concept.

5 – In many western countries, parties are held during the day and in the evening, where there is mixing of men and women, and dancing. Many of them send gifts such as roses and boxes of chocolates to their wives, friends and those whom they love.

Anyone who looks at what is said above about the myths surrounding this pagan festival will clearly understand the following:

Firstly:

That its origins lie in the pagan beliefs of the Romans, where it was an expression of the spiritual love of the idols which they used to worship instead of Allaah. Whoever celebrates it is celebrating an occasion of shirk on which the idols are venerated. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, whosoever sets up partners (in worship) with Allaah, then Allaah has forbidden Paradise to him, and the Fire will be his abode. And for the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers) there are no helpers"[al-Maa'idah 5:72]

Secondly:

That the development of this festival among the Romans was connected to myths and legends which no sound mind can accept, let alone the mind of the Muslim who believes in

Allaah and His Messengers (peace be upon them). Can anyone of sound mind believe that a she-wolf suckled the founder of the city of Rome and gave him strength and wisdom. Moreover, these myths go against the belief ('aqeedah) of the Muslim because the One Who bestows strength and wisdom is the Creator, may He be glorified and exalted, not the milk of a she-wolf! The same applies to the myth that their idols could protect them from evil or keep wolves away from their flocks.

Thirdly: Among the ugly rituals of the Romans on this day was the sacrifice of a dog and a goat, the daubing of their blood onto two youths then washing the blood off with milk, etc... This is something that would cause revulsion in anyone of a sound nature, and it is unacceptable to the sound mind.

Fourthly:

The connection between Saint Valentine and this festival has been questioned by many sources, and it considered to be far from definite. It would have been better for the Christians to reject this pagan festival in which they imitated the pagans. So how about us Muslims, who are commanded to be different from the Christians and the pagans before them?

Fifthly: This festival was denounced by the Christian clergy in Italy, the bastion of Catholicism, because it was spreading bad attitudes and having an adverse effect on the minds of young men and women. So it is better for the Muslims to reject it, warn others against it and to fulfil their duty towards it of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil.

Someone may ask: why do we Muslims not celebrate this festival? This question may be answered in several ways:
1. In Islam, the festivals are clearly defined and well established, and no additions or subtractions may be accepted. They are an essential part of our worship and there is no room for ijtihaad or personal opinion. They have been prescribed for us by Allaah and His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

"Festivals are part of the laws, clear way and religious ceremonies of which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

'To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way.'[al-Maa'idah 5:48]

'For every nation We have ordained religious ceremonies which they must follow.'[al-Hajj 22:67]

... like the qiblah (direction faced in prayer), prayer and fasting. So there is no difference between joining them in their festival and joining them in their other rituals. Agreeing with

the whole festival is agreeing with kufr. Agreeing with some of their minor issues is the same as agreeing with them in some of the branches of kufr. Festivals are the most distinctive things by which religions are told apart, so whoever celebrates their festivals is agreeing with the most distinctive rituals of kufr. Undoubtedly going along with them in their festivals may in some cases lead to kufr. Dabbling in these things, at the very least, is a sin. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) referred to the fact that every nation has its own festivals when he said:

[‘Every nation has its own Eid and this is our Eid.’ \(al-Bukhaari , 952, Muslim, 1892\).”](#) (al-Iqtidaa’, 1/471-472)

Because Valentine’s Day goes back to Roman times, not Islamic times, this means that it is something which belongs exclusively to the Christians, not to Islam, and the Muslims have no share and no part in it. If every nation has its own festivals, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said – [“Every nation has its Eid,” \(Narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim\)](#) – then this means that every nation should be distinguished by its festivals. If the Christians have a festival and the Jews have a festival, which belongs exclusively to them, then no Muslim should join in with them, just as he does not share their religion or their direction of prayer.