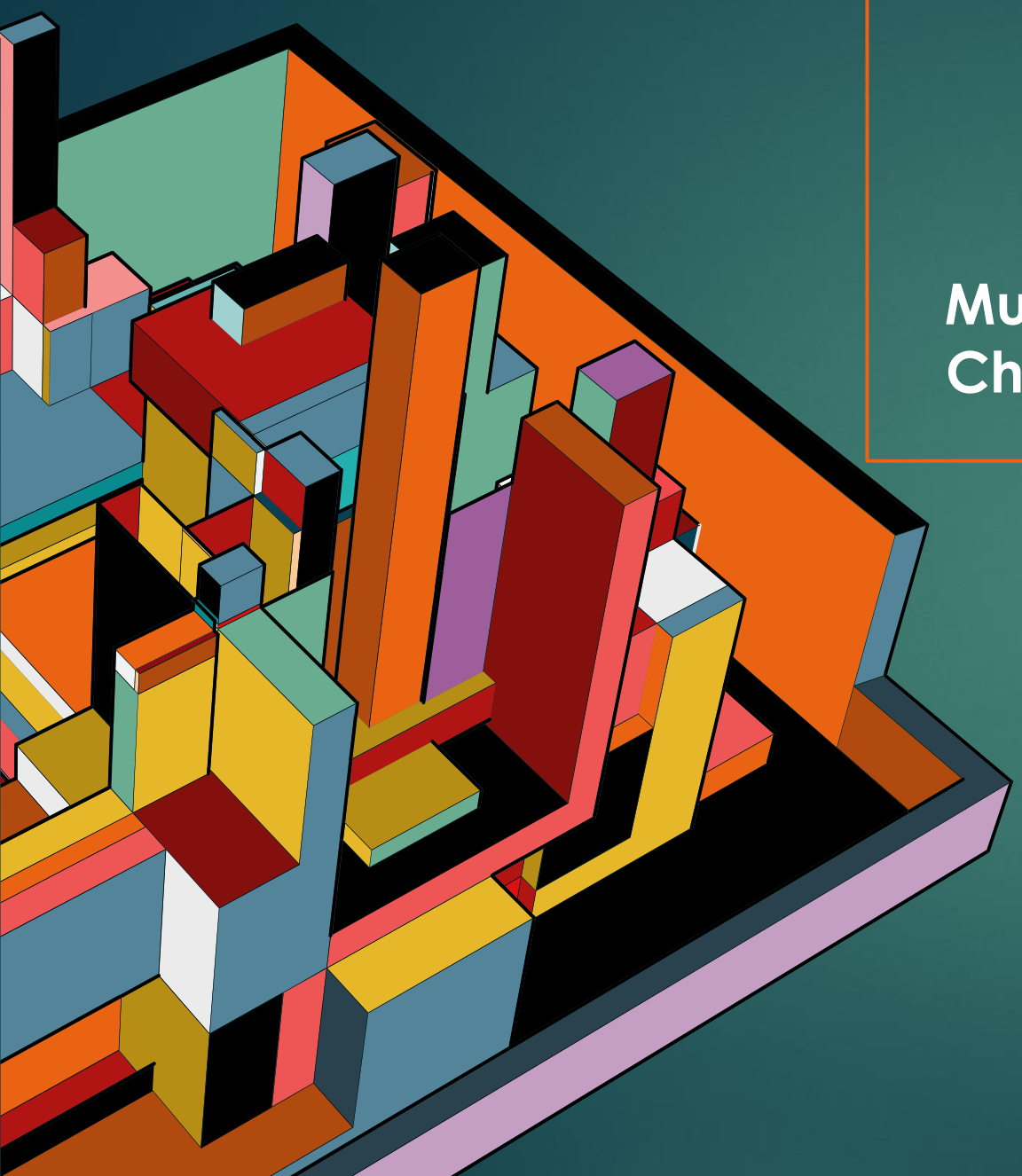




**Muslims &
Christmas**

Dr Rizwan Syed

Theology



Muslims & Christmas

2

Eid!!

Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, arrived in Medina during two days in which they were celebrating. The Prophet said, “What are these two days?” They said, “We would celebrate these two days in the time of ignorance.” The Prophet said, “Verily, Allah has replaced these two days with two better days: Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr.”

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 1134

Sahih (authentic) according to Al-Arna'ut



Muslims & Christmas

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “**Whoever imitates a people is one of them**” (narrated by Ahmad, 2/50; Abu Dawood, 4/314).

And he said, “**Be different from the mushrikeen**” (narrated by Muslim, 1/222, no. 259)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Majmoo' al-Fataawa (2/488):

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.



Muslims & Christmas

But wait!

What does “differing from Mushrikeen” mean?

Prophet (s) shared the following with the mushrikeen of his time:

- Clothes
- Food
- Language
- Poetry
- Hajj
- Sacred months



Muslims & Christmas

5

5 Rules of Halal and Haram

1. **THE FIRST PRINCIPLE IS THE PERMISSIBILITY OF THINGS** (in mundane issues, all is permissible unless clearly stated as haram)
2. **HALAL AND HARAM ARE THE RIGHT OF ALLAH ALONE** (don't call things haram casually)
3. **LEAVE THAT WHICH MAKES YOU DOUBT UNTIL THE DOUBT IS REMOVED** (i.e. when you have sought the opinion of scholars)
4. **AFTER ALL THE FATWAS, STILL CONSULT YOUR HEART** (i.e. what feels right in your heart)
5. **JUDGE YOURSELF; BE EASY ON OTHERS**

Sufyan al-Thawri said:
'If you see a man doing something over which there is a debate among the scholars, and which you yourself believe to be forbidden, you should not forbid him from doing it.'



Muslims & Christmas

<https://dawahinstitute.org/brave-tan/greetings-for-religious-festivities-merry-christmas-happy-easter/>

“The First Principle in Islam is permissibility - all things are allowed unless they are specifically forbidden by Qur'an or the Prophet (S).

According to Hatim bin 'Arif al-'Awni therefore, **“The premise with regards to congratulating the unbelievers for their festivities is that of permissibility,**

except if such is done to show pleasure with their religion or where there is harm in it (i.e. where it could indicate an agreement with their disbelief).”



Muslims & Christmas

“Some scholars believe that wishing people well during their festivals implies endorsement of their beliefs. e.g. Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Taymiyyah and a number of contemporary scholars such as Bin Baz, Ibn Uthaimin, Safar al-Hawali amongst others.

“Others permit them as just expressions of courtesy and kindness (ihsan and berr) as taught by Islam, especially to those who are relatives, neighbours, friends, colleagues, school mates and those who are peaceful in general.

This is the view of a number of scholars such as Abdullah bin Bayyah, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Mustafa Zarqa, Rashid Rida, Hatim bin ‘Arif al-‘Awni, Gibril Fouad Haddad, Ali Gomaa, amongst others.

Some scholars in this category also assert that this greeting may even become encouraged for Muslim minorities living among people of other faiths.



Muslims & Christmas

Specific fatwas

Summary of Sh. Qaradawi's fatwa – emphasis on Islam's central teaching to be fair, nice and kind to non-Muslims that you are living peacefully with:

<http://ilmuislamuallaf.blogspot.com/2015/12/congratulating-christian-during.html>

Sh. Hussein Halawa – Gen Sec of European Council of Fatwa & Research – even as Muslim employers or managers, we should support employees to celebrate their festival, e.g. party or Christmas tree, just as if you can marry Christians, you will wish them to be happy in their lives:

<https://www.memri.org/tv/european-council-fatwa-research-sec-gen-halawa-no-problem-christmas-greetings-muslims>

Imam Muzammil Siddiqi and Sh. Ahmed Kutty comment on the permissibility of well-wishing people on their festivals but advise that we should not join in as Christmas is not a secular festival – it is still a Christian celebration:

<https://www.muslim-library.com/dl/books/English-Christmas-Jesus-Islam.pdf>

[Note that these scholars are American. 90% of Americans believe in God, 70.6% identify as Christian]

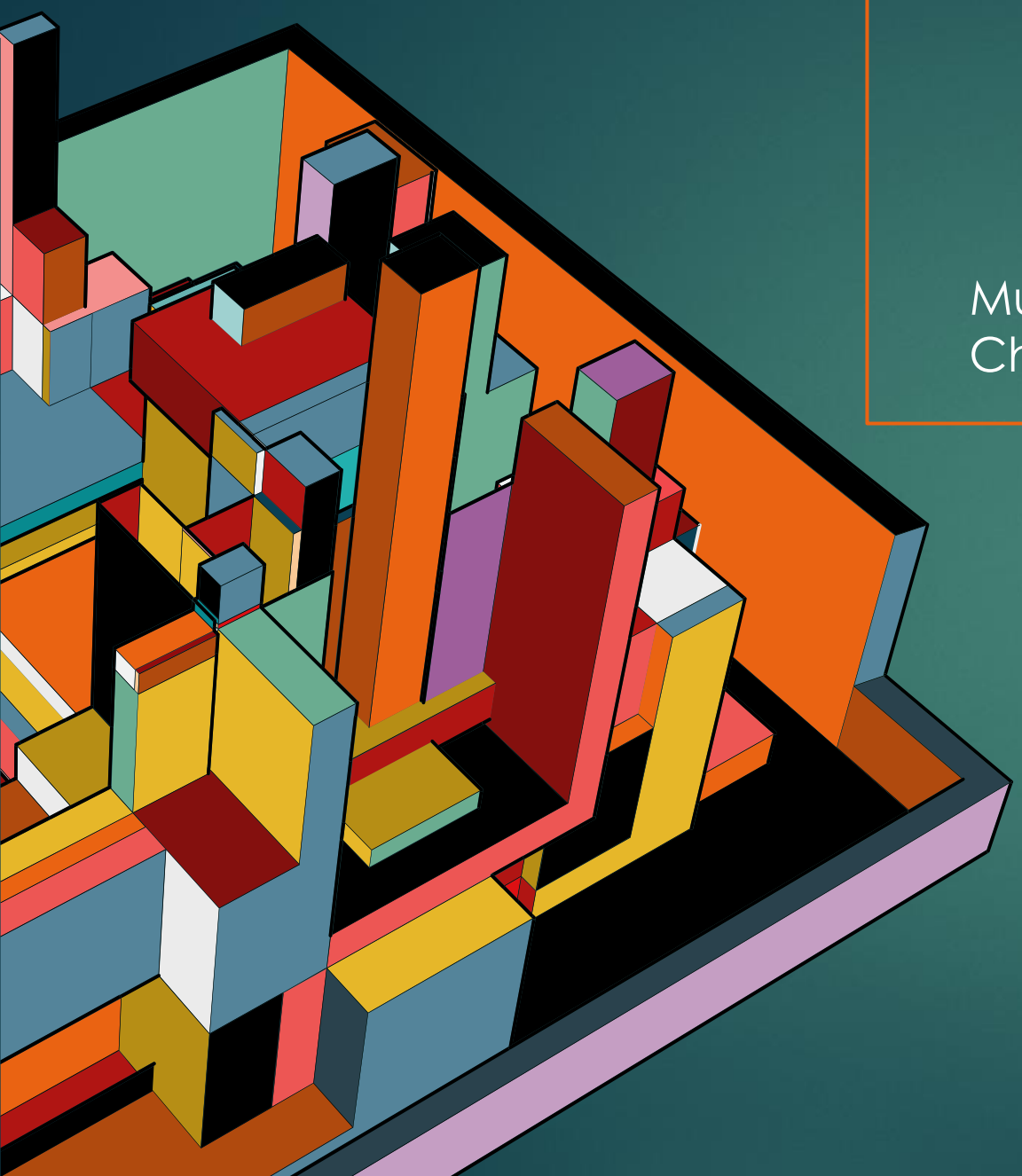


Muslims & Christmas

But across the world, Muslims have also celebrated

- New Year
- Birthday of the Prophet (S)
- Nawruz (Persian New Year)
- National independence days
- **(with a difference of opinion)**

However, there is a prevailing opinion that there are only two days **celebrated with religious ritual**



Muslims &
Christmas

Does that
cover
everything?



Muslims & Christmas

There seem to be at least four issues around “celebrating Christmas”:

1. **Wishing people “Happy Christmas”**
2. **Involvement in a secular end of year festival, that just has a label “Christmas”** (food, dinners, ‘Christmas specials’, bank holidays)
3. **Indulging in the religious rituals of Christmas**
4. **Doing Christmas ourselves at home**

Is 'Christmas' still a 'Christian celebration' in Britain?

Census

England and Wales now minority Christian countries, census reveals

Data shows Leicester and Birmingham have become UK's first 'minority majority' cities in new age of 'super-diversity'



Shoppers on New Street in Birmingham. Minority ethnic people make up 51.4% of the population in the UK's second largest city, where 20 years ago seven out of 10 people were white.
Photograph: Jacob King/PA

Robert Booth, Pamela Duncan and Carmen Aguilar García

Tue 29 Nov 2022 13.07 GMT

2021 Census

Most people in Britain are not Christian (54%)

So, is the end of year celebration really to do with religion – or is it culture now?

- Whatever label it happens to be given?

Across UK companies, end of year celebrations are sometimes called "Christmas parties", sometimes called "Winter Wonderland party", etc.



Muslims & Christmas

You hold a monthly study circle and usually label it by the month,

The poster is about to go out:

“January Study Circle:

Making a Fresh Start”

Or, “January Prayer timetable”

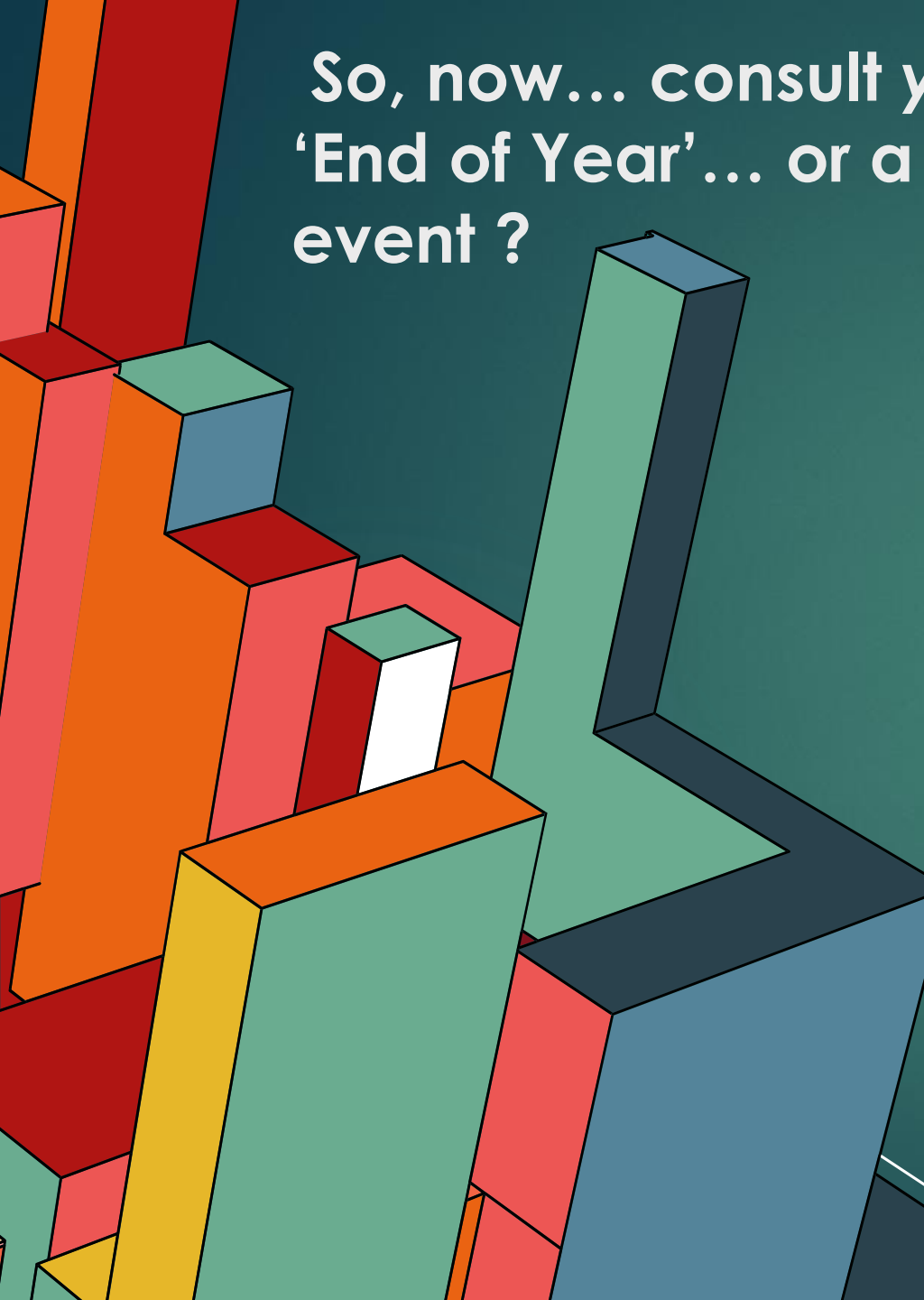
“But sister, naming a study circle after January is haram!”

Religion... or just culture now?



Remember,
Our lives run around months of
the year, but they have pagan
names

E.g. January
'(month) of Janus'
Roman god who presided
over doors and beginnings.



So, now... consult *your* heart: Are these
'End of Year'... or a genuinely religious 'Christmas'
event ?

- ❖ Midnight Mass
- ❖ Mince Pies
- ❖ Christmas Carols
- ❖ "Merry Christmas"/ Christmas cards
- ❖ Family Christmas tree and decorations
- ❖ Organising the work Christmas dinner
- ❖ 'Christmas special' qiyam
- ❖ School Christmas quiz
- ❖ Santa's Grotto / Secret Santa
- ❖ King's Christmas message
- ❖ Watching Dr Who 'Christmas Special'

Lessons

- ✓ A label is a label
- ✓ What is it *actually* about?
- ✓ Many contemporary scholars say it's ok to wish people happiness at their festivals
- ✓ Should not indulge in their *religion*