Christmas
Fact or Fiction?

The Christmas season is here or on its way once again! Let us look at this season - the West’s most commercialised and profitable time of the year and try to find out where all the rituals originate from. Did they come from Christianity? Well, let’s find out!

Christmas Day
The word Christmas comes from the old English Word ‘Cristes maesse’ or ‘Mass of Christ'. The world’s earliest celebration of Christmas by the Christian church occurs in a Roman almanac (Philocalian calendar) on the year 336 CE. In Jerusalem it did not become a tradition until 430 CE when it was introduced by Bishop Juvenal. Yes, that’s right about 300 to 400 years after the ‘death’ of Jesus Christ (Muslims do not believe that Jesus was crucified - instead they believe Jesus was lifted to the heavens alive). Jesus never celebrated Christmas, neither did his disciples, neither did the early Church. For 300 years, the Christians believed 25th December just to be another day. Even an early Catholic father, Origen, states, “In the scripture no one is recorded to have kept a day to commemorate the birth of Jesus, he was born on 25th December.

So where did it come from, if not the Bible or Christianity? It came from Pagan Rome. From the depths of idolatry. The Romans believed in many gods amongst which one was called Saturn, or Saturnis in Latin, the god of sowing the seeds. The Saturn or ‘Saturni dies’ became known as Saturday. Well every year the Romans used to celebrate the festival of Saturnalia (Pagan) times. Merrymaking and the exchanging of gifts were part of the ceremony of Saturnalia amongst the Romans. So once again from the Pagans customs. But ask yourself if you wanted to honour someone on his birthday, would you lavishly buy gifts for everyone else and ignore any sort of gift for the one whose birthday it is. So, on the so called birth of Jesus, people scrimp and save so as to be able to trade gifts, but when you talk to priests they will tell you that Christmas is the worst time for donations etc. Many people use the Kings or Wise men as evidence. But according to the Gospel they gave gifts donations etc. Many people use the Kings or Wise men as evidence. But according to the Gospel they gave gifts, born on 25th December.

The Christmas Lights & Candles
Fire and lights were the symbol of everlasting life and warmth. The Pagans used to light up their areas to try and encourage the waning (fading) Sun god as it reached the lowest place in the skies.

Exchanging Gifts
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The Holly Tree
These were considered sacred to the Sun-god. The Encyclopedia Americana states: The holly tree, the mistletoe, the Yule...are relics of pre-Christian (Pagan) times.

The Yule Log
The word “Yule” means ‘wheel’, which was the symbol of the sun-god. And so many times you hear people saying, “the sacred Yuletide season!” The Germanic and Celtic tribes used to get a Yule tree and place it at the entrance to their homes and barns. When the Teutonic tribes penetrated Gaul, Britain and the Central Europe, the Pagan customs went with them.

The Mistletoe
Amongst ancient Pagans, the mistletoe was used by Druids because it had magic healing powers. Especially if found from an oak, and the fact that it was sacred to the sun, custom of kissing under it was developed in England because it was felt that its magic powers would lead to the marriage of two persons!

The Holly Tree
The ever green tree, especially the Balsam and the Douglas Fir, has been used by many Pagan societies in the ancient world (namely, the Egyptians, Chinese and Hebrews) as symbol of eternity, or everlasting life. Tree worship was also very common amongst the Scandinavian Norseman. This worship survived after conversion to
Christianity and was adapted to decorating the home with evergreens because it was believed they would somehow keep the Devil away. The evergreen tree was also a prop for popular town plays of Adam and Eve, representing the tree of Paradise and often apples would be attached to it. These were usually played on about the 24th December which became the feast day of Adam and Eve. As years passed, the tree got decorated with wafers (which was the symbol of the host, the Christian sign of redemption) and later cookies, and then candles. In those days, they also used to have a Christmas pyramid a pyramidal shelf to hold Christmas figurines and various decorations and a star! By the 16th century, the Christmas pyramid and the evergreen had merged to give a modern Christmas tree in a shape of a pyramid and with a star. This became popular in England by the German Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, who first introduced it here.

**Christmas Cards**

Jesus never sent any Christmas cards to anyone. In fact this is the most recent of all traditions and began in 1843 in London when the first card was printed. By 1870s they had been introduced to America and over the century developed into the multi-million industry it is today.

**Father Christmas**

He was Bishop of Myrna called Nicholas who lived around 300 CE. No document of his exists today, except we know that he was imprisoned and persecuted by Emperor Diocletius. After his death, he became a saint. As stories and myths became rampant about Saint Nicholas, his grave in Myrna also became a popular shrine. By the 10th century his shrine was one of the most popular in Christendom with thousands of pilgrims flocking there. The Italians got jealous and in 1078 they dug up his body and took it to a town called Bari where it lies today. And so Bari became the centre of pilgrimage. Anyway, the legends continued and another festival began in his name - the Boy Bishop Ceremony. Basically a boy was made a Bishop for 22 days, from 6th to 28th December (Holy Innocent Days). Over the years, these combined with old Nordic folktales of an old magician who punished naughty children and gave gifts to good ones to form the modern Santa Claus, which later came to England as Father Christmas. Why is he red and white? Well in 1930s Coca Cola company brought the franchise and their cans are red and white.

**Conclusion...**

The whole concept of Christmas is one big expensive farce. Indeed so much of the essential principles of Christianity have been borrowed from pagan culture. In comparison, worship in Islam must strictly confirm to the sources of Islam, namely, the Holy Qur’ân and the Sunnah. Any deviation from this is completely forbidden. That is why over fourteen centuries after the death of Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ the worship of Allâh (God) is exactly same in essence throughout the Islamic World from China to Morocco, as that practiced by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Anything extra that may have come from old wives tales, folklore, traditions, ancient customs, or anywhere else for that matter, has always been discarded as ‘Bid’ah’ or innovation. Thank Allah I say, what a muddle we’d have been in otherwise.

The Muslims should not participate in any function or activity related in anyway to Christmas or any other non-Muslim festival. Christmas parties at school, workplaces, etc, sending Christmas cards and giving Christmas presents/gifts to fellow workers, teachers and friends all fall within this category.