

Review Article

Effects of *Takfir* on the Religious Life of the Muslim Society in Hausaland

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Article History

Received: 14.08.2019

Accepted: 27.08.2019

Published: 30.08.2019

Abstract: This paper deals with the issue or act of condemning Muslims as unbelievers and its effects on *Islam* and Muslims. The Prophet [SAW] has condemned the act of *Takfir* in strongest term. It was found that the usage of the word *kafir* in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* sometimes does not mean an unbeliever, as there is *kufr* of lesser degree which does not take a Muslim out of *Islam* if he commits it. The paper also found that calling the Muslims who commit major sins unbelievers was started by the *Khawarij*. It was also found that there was *takfir* in Hausa land long before the period of the *Jihad* leaders and also during their period. The study also found that there are various factors responsible for calling a Muslim *kafir*. These include little knowledge, extremism, love for material gain, dependence solely on human sense to explain the *Qur'an* bad intention of some non-Muslims against *Islam*, ignorance among others.

Keywords: *Takfir*, religious life, Muslims community, *Khawarij*, *Shi'ahl* and Hausaland.

INTRODUCTION

The religion of *Islam* like other previous revealed religions has witnessed many problems leading to the divisions among the Muslim *Ummah* and emergence of number sects. The major causes of these crises could be traced to the problems of lack of proper understanding of *Islam*, misinterpretation of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* texts, extremism, impatience, etc. The problem of *Takfir* is part of the major causes of the crises and divisions in *Islam*. This refers to the situation where a Muslim is declared as apostate or unbeliever by his fellow Muslim.

The first time difference was occurred among the Muslims was after the demise of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) on the issue of his succession. Muslims further witnessed another differences during the Caliphate of 'Uthman b. Affan when people recited the *Qur'an* differently according to the style or dialect of their teachers. It was the quick intervention of Caliph 'Uthman b. Affan (R.A), when the matter was reported to him by Hudhayfah bn Yaman, who ordered for the compilation of the *Qur'an* that saved the situation from getting out of hand [i]. However, the circumstances which led to the assassination of Caliph Uthman b. Affan (R.A) and the impatience of those who demanded for the immediate identification and execution of his assassins made the Muslims and *Islam* to witness crises in which some Muslims used the word *kafir* on one another. *Takfir* had since continued to have serious effects on *Islam* and the Muslims. *Shaykh al -Islam* b. Taymiyyah said;

Khawarij were the first group to regard the Muslims as *Kafirun* (unbelievers). They used to declare the Muslims who commit major sins and anyone who did not agree with their stand as unbelievers. They made legal shedding of blood of their fellow Muslims and confiscation of their properties [ii].

The *khawarij*, out of emotion and misinterpretation of the *Qur'an* put the Muslims in the same footing with the Jews, Christians and unbelievers for not using the *Qur'an* in their judgement. Their major and only evidence is a verse in *Surah al- Maidah* where Allah says:

And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed such are the *Kafirun*" [iii].

Based on their understanding of this verse, they considered anybody that judges or accepts a judgement different from that of the *Qur'an* as having gone out of *Islam* and therefore, declared as a *Kafir* [An unbeliever]

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Consequently, they revolted against Caliph Ali b. Abi Talib, murdered him and many Muslims who differed from them.

Similarly, the *Shi'ites* denounced all the companions and by extension all the Muslims of that period as unbelievers, and they said that Muslims committed *Riddah* after the demise of the Prophet (SAW) with the exception of a few [iv]. Subsequently, after this period, the *Islamic* religion also experienced the cases and crises of *Takfir*. For example, Imam Ahmad was called *Kafir*, and he was brutally beaten and imprisoned and some of his followers were killed for rejecting the creed of the creation of the *Qur'an*. Ibn Taymiyyah was also called *Kafir* and was beaten in Egypt by *Shaykh* Ali b. Ya'kub al-Bakri for writing a book called "*al-Istighathah* [v]".

The *Mu'tazilah*, in their attempt to analyze the concept of *Iman* [belief], regarded the Muslims who commit major sins as having gone out of *Islam*. Although, according to them, that Muslim is in-between the two positions of *Islam* and *kufr* in this world, the person will dwell forever in the Hell. This is based on their description of the term *Iman* as one indivisible entity. Once a Muslim does any act of disobedience, he becomes a *Kafir*. According to them there is nothing like minor or major *kufr* and nothing like weak or strong *Iman* [vi]. This is despite that Allah has affirmed that a person can be a Muslim without having *Iman* which means in *Islam*, someone can be a Muslim but not a *Mu'min*. Allah says

The Bedouins say: "We believe." Say: you believe not, but only say: we have surrendered (in *Islam*), for faith has not yet entered your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not decrease anything in reward for your deeds. Verily, Allah is oft-forgiving [vii].

Ahmad Fareed quoted Al-Qasimi in his *Tafsir* as saying:

When there occurs in a *Hadith*: he who does so and so has committed *Shirk* or *kufr*, then what is not meant is the *Kufr* which takes a person out of the *Deen*, nor the greater *Shirk* which takes person outside *Islam* and cause the rulings of apostasy to apply [viii].

Shaykh al-*Islam* b. Taymiyyah [*Rahimahullah*] was reported to have said:

Apparent *Iman*, upon which rest of the *Islamic* rulings applied in this world, does not necessarily mean *Iman* is present on the inside and the *Munafiqun* who said that "We believe in Allah and in the last day but they do not [really] believe." Then outwardly they appeared as believers, praying with the Muslims, marrying them and inheriting from them just like the *Munafiqun* in the time of the Prophet [SAW] and the Prophet [SAW] did not give them the same judgement as the *Kuffar* who were open in their *kufr* neither in marriage nor inheritance etc. Rather, Adullah b. Ubayy, one of the most famous *Munafiqun* died and his son, Abdullah, who was one of the best believers inherited from him.... [ix].

Sometimes, *Takfir* is made directly through verbal declaration. This is by calling a Muslim *kafir* for one action or the other without giving him any benefit of the doubt. For example, the *Khawarij* declared the *Sahabah* as *kuffar* and treated them as such for accepting judgement of men and not judging with *Qur'an*. *Takfir* can also be indirect. This is by regarding or believing that a Muslim will live forever in the hell-fire for committing certain sin that is tantamount to *kufr*. This is the view of the *Mu'tazilites*. Another example of indirect *Takfir* is the way some *Hanafi* school of law adherents regarded *Shafi'i* school adherents by saying that *Hanafi* members should not marry from or give out in marriage their daughters to the *Shafi'is* and if male *Hanafi* should marry a *shafi'i's* daughter he should regard her as *Ahl_Kitab* [x]. This, indirectly means taking them out of the fold of *Islam*.

In Hausa land particularly in the northern part of Nigeria where large population are Muslims, many cases of and crises caused by *Takfir* have been witnessed particularly among different *Islamic* groups. *Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah wa Iqamatis Sunnah* for example, describes *Tariqah* group as *kuffar* and vice versa. The *Qur'aniyyun* group regards the rest of the Muslims as *kuffar* and attempt to kill Muslims who disagree with them. The recent tragedy of *Jama'atu Ahlu al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah li al-Da'wah wa al-Jihad*, popularly known as *Boko Haram* in Nigeria is also part of the dangerous trends of *Takfir* in Northern Nigeria [xi].

Meaning of *Takfir*

Takfir is an Arabic word which means anathematization or excommunication. It is taken from the word *kufr*, which literally means hiding. For example, a farmer who hides his seeds in the ground for sprouting is called *kafir*. This meaning has been used only once in the *Qur'an* [xii]. *Kufr* also means unbelief, godlessness, infidelity, atheism, blasphemy. etc. *Takfir*, therefore, means to anathematize a Muslim as *kafir*.

The *ahl-al-sunnah* use the word *kufr* as the opposite of belief in relation to deeds or actions [xiii].

They based their evidence on the *Hadith* of the Prophet [SAW] which says:

A fornicator\ an adulterer is not a believer while fornicating or committing adultery..... [xiv].

And another *Hadith* which says;

None amongst you believes till one likes for his brother or his neighbour that which he likes for himself [xv].

According to them, the Prophet [SAW] in the above *Hadith* has negated belief from the fornicators or adulterers and he who does not wish his neighbor or brother well. However, this does not mean that he is a *kafir* because the *kufr* he committed is in relation to deeds [*amal*] as against the mind or creed.

Classification of *Kufr*

Based on the above explanations, it is clear that *kufr* is of different types and does not mean only one thing. Therefore, according to the traditionists, *kufr* could be divided into two; *kufr* of belief [*aqeedah*] and *kufr* of deeds [*amal*]. The *kufr* of belief is also called *kufr al-Akbar* greater *kufr* and that of deeds is called *kufr al-Asghar* lesser *kufr*.

The jurists also share the view of the traditionists about the word *kufr*. Abu 'Umar bn Abdul Barr was reported saying: The jurists and traditionists have a consensus that all acts of obedience to Allah such as *Salat*, *Zakat*, *Sawm* are described as acts of belief, while acts of disobedience are described as acts of *kufr* [xvi].

However, while a Muslim who commits major sin is regarded by the *ahl-al-sunnah* as a believer but with a weak faith, the *Khawarij* sect consider him as *kafir* whose blood is allowed to be shed.

The view of the traditionists and the jurists [*fuqaha'*] on *kufr* is in line with the teachings of the Prophet [SAW] and the pious predecessors that a man can have in him the combination of both *kufr* and *Iman*. The Prophet [SAW] was reported to have said; *Iman* comprises of seventy –odd branches, the highest of them is saying: *la ilaha illa Allah* and the lowest is removing harmful object from the road [xvii].

Ahmad Fareed also quoted Ibn Qayyim [*rahimahullah*] as follow:

Since *Iman* is a root having many branches and each of its branches is called *iman*, so prayer is from *Iman* and likewise *Zakat*, *Hajj*, *Sawm* and inner actions such as modesty, reliance on Allah, fear of Allah etc. So also *kufr* has a root and branches. Just as the branches of *iman* are called *iman*, the branches of *kufr* are also called *kufr*. So modesty is a branch of *Iman* and immodesty is a branch of *kufr*, Judging by that which Allah revealed is a branch of *iman*, while judging by other than that is a branch of *kufr* [xviii].

Ibn Qayyim was also quoted saying:

A person may have in him both *kufr* and *Iman*, *shirk* and *Tawhid*, *Taqwa* and sin as well as hypocrisy and *Iman*. This is one of the greatest principles of *Ahl al-Sunnah* and this is in contrast with the principle of the people of innovation such as the *Khawarij*, the *Mu'tazilah* and the *Qadariyyah*. In fact the question of coming out of those who committed major sins from the fire and not residing therein forever is built upon this principle and it is shown by the Qur'an, the *Sunnah*, the *Fitrah* and the *Ijma'* of the *Sahabah* [xix].

All what the above quotations try to establish is the fact that *kufr* is of two types as mentioned earlier; Greater *Kufr* [*kufr al-Akbar*] and Lesser *kufr* [*kufr al-Asghar*]. *Kufr al-Akbar* refers to the act of disbelief which takes a Muslim out of *Islam* and causes the rulings of apostasy to apply on him and makes him live forever in the hell-fire in the hereafter. It is also referred to by some scholars as *kufr al-I'tiqad* [*kufr of creed*]. *Kufr al-Akbar* is to reject intentionally or willfully what or part of what the Prophet [SAW] has come with, and which is known in *Islam* by necessity. For instance, if one denies or rejects the fundamentality of *salat*, the person will be judged to be a *kafir*.

Factors Responsible for the Emergence of *Takfir* among the Muslims

Many factors have been attributed to the emergence of the ideology of *Takfir* among the scholars. Shaykh Nasirud-din al-Albani and Shaykh Salih Al-'Uthaymin have summarized the factors into four as follows:

Inadequate Knowledge of *Islam*

Right from the emergence of the *Khawarij* up till today, those who carry the ideology of *Takfir* are usually the most devoted of the *Ummah* to the acts of worship, but are not all that knowledgeable. In other words, they are always known for devotion and worship but are not known for knowledge or striving for it. For example, when a *kharijite* [Abdur-Rahman bn Muljam] who killed Caliph 'Ali bn Abi Talib was caught and his limbs were being cut, he remained calm as if nothing was happening until his tongue was about to be cut then he shouted. He was then asked why he did not shout before. He said "I did not shout because of pain but because you wanted to cut what I used in performing *Ibadah*" [xx].

'Ali bn Abi Talib was asked regarding the *Khawarij*, whether they should be considered as *kuffar* [unbelievers] for their acts against the Caliph. He replied "It was *kufr* they wanted to run away from." This means that their little knowledge of *Islam* derailed them from knowing how to run away from the forbidden acts of *kufr*.

Lack of Sound Knowledge of Islamic Principles of Shari'ah

Muslim scholars noted that the *Khawarij* and those who share their ideology lack the understanding of the principles of *Shari'ah*, which are the foundation for the authentic *Islamic* propagation [Da'wah]. Anybody who goes out of these principles is considered to have gone out of the only Muslim group that is called *firqatun-najiyah*, which the Prophet [SAW] had described in many *Ahadith* as the only successful group in the Day of Judgment. The Prophet [SAW] has been reported to have said;

The Jews have divided into seventy-one sects and the Christians have divided into seventy-two sects. The Muslims will divide into seventy-three sects all of them will enter Hell-fire except one [xxi].

The Prophet [SAW] explained that, that only one is the one which is on the same practice with the Prophet and his companions. Also in the Qur'an, Allah Says:

And whoever contradicts the Messenger [Muhammad] [SAW] after the right path has been clearly shown to him and follows other than the believers' way We shall keep him in the path he has chosen and burn him in Hell; what an evil destination [xxii].

Al-Albani explained further that the believers' way in this verse is the same as the practices of the Prophet and his companions referred to in the above *Hadith*. So, the *Khawarij*, having gone out of this way, declared the Muslims who commit major sin as *kuffar*. They made legal shedding the blood of the Muslims and confiscation of their properties. They also believed that those Muslims will live forever in the Hell-fire. Al-Albani concluded by quoting the only verse which the *Khawarij* used in declaring the Muslims as *Kuffar*;

And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, such are the *kafirun* [unbelievers] [xxiii].

He commented that, this verse has been explained by the most knowledgeable of the companions on *Tafsir*, Ibn Abbas, to mean the *kufr* which does not take a Muslim out of *Islam* and make him *kafir*. So, it is *kufr* of a lesser degree [xxiv].

Over Dependence on Human Sense to explain the Qur'an

One of the factors which lead to *Takfir* as explained by the scholars is for one to subject the interpretation of the Qur'an solely to his sense. This was what led the *Khawarij* to declare 'Ali bn Abi Talib as *kafir*. A Muslim must always refer to the understandings of the companions of the Prophet [SAW] in explaining the Qur'an. Although the use of sense [*ra'y*] is allowed in *Islam* to explain the Qur'an, it has to conform to the explanations of the pious predecessors who learnt it from the Prophet [SAW]. This is the type of the Qur'anic explanation that is called *al-ra'y al-mahmud* [the praiseworthy reasoning] by the scholars, while the one which does not conform with the understanding of the pious predecessors is called *al-ra'y al-madhmun* [blameworthy reasoning] [xxv].

Similarly, quotation and usage of only one verse or *Hadith* on a topic which has a number of texts talking about it has also been identified as one of the factors that led to *Takfir*. This was typical of what the *Khawarij* did. They quoted only verse 44 of *Suratul Ma'idah* and passed judgement of *kufr* based on it on the Muslims without taking into consideration what *Ahadith* of the Prophet [SAW] and other similar verses of the Qur'an say about *kufr*, which are supposed to be consulted before arriving at the conclusion.

Evil Intention against the Muslims

The scholars of *Islam* have also attributed bad intention of the enemies of *Islam* against the Muslims as one of the factors leading to calling a Muslim *kafir*. This is because the hypocrites, who were among the Muslims when the *Khawarij* started it, played a significant role in fueling the crisis which led to their emergence. Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul and his associates did not only make the reconciliation among the Muslims impossible at the battle of *siffin*, which eventually led to *Tahkim* [judgment by men] and which the *Khawarij* regarded as *kufr* and those who participated in and accepted it as *kuffar*, but also managed to, through their purported love for the Prophet [SAW] and his immediate family, poison the minds of some Muslims to establish what is today known as *Shi'ah* [xxvi]. The emergence of Maitatsine in Northern Nigeria has also been attributed to the plot by the non-Muslims against *Islam*.

In his own contribution, Nayif Abdul Aziz gave the factors that led to *Takfir* in *Islam* as follows:

Lack of the Sound Knowledge on the Rights of the People

A Muslim has a number of rights which should be given to him by his fellow Muslims. Some of these rights are: not to meet him with frown face, to love and inform him that he loves him for the sake Allah, to share with him his good and bad feelings and most importantly, to protect the sanctity of his life and property. This was what formed considerable part of the Prophet's [SAW] Farewell Sermon. The blood, property and the personality of the Muslims had been made forbidden for another Muslim by the Prophet [SAW] [xxvii]. Ignorance of these rights could lead Muslim into violating the rules of Allah and thereby committing offence against his fellow Muslim brother.

Love for Leadership and Worldly Materials

This means that some Muslims declare others as *kuffar* for what they stand to gain materially such as position, fame and wealth. Nayif gave example of this by saying: 'if not for the love of leadership and worldly materials, the *khawarij* would not have risen

against and killed the best persons of their period. In fact, 'Uthman bn Affan was killed while he was reciting the Glorious Qur'an [xxviii].

Bigotry\Extremism

This is lack of observing moderation in the matters of religion. It has been established by the scholars of *Islam* that extremism [Guluww] is one of the major causes of *Takfir* in *Islam*. To buttress his point on this, Nayif quoted a *Hadith* of the Prophet [SAW] where he says:

I warn you of going to extreme for what destroyed those before you is their going to extreme" [xxix].

Effects of *Takfir* on the religious life of the Society

Withdrawal of all Religious Rights

The fundamental difference between the *Islamic* society and non-*Islamic* societies is that while the latter are based on the ties of colour, race, language and country, and perhaps on certain interests, the former is based only on the bond of *Islam* [1]. In non-*Islamic* societies, differences of belief and thought do not bring any obstacle because such differences do not remove people from the bonds which are based on race, country, language or colour. Views may be as far as apart as heaven and earth, but neither the relationship of blood, the ties of country, the link of language, nor the unity of colour is cut off [xxx]. Therefore, differences of belief pose no danger to non-*Islamic* societies. However, in *Islam* the factor which unites persons of different races, colours, languages and countries is unity of belief. Therefore, a Muslim as a member of the Muslim community, when he is cut off unjustly from the community by another of its members in form of declaring him as *kafir*, his exclusion from the Muslim community will undoubtedly be felt by the rest member of the community. Just like the body will feel when a limb is cut off from it.

A Muslim has some religious rights, which *Islam* has given him and which Muslims must protect as a duty. In the same vein, some privileges are also accorded the Muslim by *Islam* and are expected to be respected by the Muslim community. However, once a Muslim is judged in the society to have apostatized, he stands the risk of losing all of these rights and privileges. This is why al-Maududi said that *Takfir* is a violation of the rights of an individual. These rights and privileges include.

Animals Slaughtered by him are Forbidden for the Muslims

This is one of the manifest religious effects of *Takfir*. It is very clear in *Islamic* law that eating the animal slaughtered by the unbelievers is not allowed for the Muslims. So, if a Muslim is termed to be a *kafir*, all other Muslims in the society are to desist from eating meat slaughtered by *Mushrik/Kafir* [xxxi].

His Dead Body is not Washed and Funeral Prayer is not said on him

One of the religious rights a Muslim has over his fellow Muslims is that when he dies, he be properly washed and funeral prayer be said on him. However, if he is considered to have died as *Kafir*, this right is automatically removed [xxxii].

He is not buried in the Muslim Cemetery;

Certainly, a *kafir* is not allowed to be buried in a Muslim cemetery by *Islamic* law. It therefore, follows that a person that is judged to have died as a *Kafir* by the Muslims is also not allowed to be buried in a Muslim Cemetery [xxxiii].

***Istighfar* (asking Allah's forgiveness) is not allowed to be said for his soul;**

Allah has forbidden for the Muslims to ask for forgiveness for the soul of the unbelievers after their death, even if it is their fathers or other relatives, it is supposed to be a right of the dead if he is a Muslim [xxxiv].

The Possibility of the Accuser to lose Faith

Takfir is one of the most dangerous acts prohibited by *Islamic* law as said earlier. This is because the person pronouncing it may not be a hundred percent sure of what he says since he cannot open the heart of people and know whether they really believe or not. If a Muslim, who professes faith in *Islam* and is within the borders of *Islam*, should be declared by someone as non-Muslim, it is tantamount to a negation of what the Almighty Allah has approved. Thus, while the law of Allah passes a decree about a man that he is a Muslim, a creature of Allah issues a decree of *kufir* on the same man. It is for this reason that the Prophet (S.A.W) seriously warned and cautioned his followers against that [ie branding Muslim as *kafir* or wrong-doer]. He went as far as saying that if a Muslim calls another Muslim *kafir* and the accused is not so in reality, the verdict of *kufir* shall rebound on the accuser. He said:

If a man calls his Muslim brother *kafir*, it applies to one of the two [xxxv].

In another Haadith, he said;

Whenever a man accuses another of being a *kafir* or a wrong – doer, the accusation will rebound on him, if the one accused is in reality not a *kafir* or wrong –doer [xxxvi].

In yet another narration, the Prophet [SAW] said;

The man who calls another *Kafir* or enemy of God and the latter is not such, this charge will indeed turn back upon the accusers [xxxvii].

He [SAW] was also reported to have said;

He who curses a believer; it is as if he has killed him. And he who accuses a believer of *Kufr*, it is as if he has killed him [xxxviii].

Therefore, *Takfir* and calling others wrong-doers is not merely a violation of their rights, but also a crime against the society. It is an act of injustice against the entire *Islamic* society. This is why *Islam*, as a religion of justice, has to punish the perpetrator of injustice by making him share from the bad taste of his action.

Creation of Confusion in the Fold of *Islam*

One of the major effects of *Takfir* on the religious life of the society is the creation of confusion among Muslims particularly the new converts. A new convert is definitely thrown into confusion as to which organization or group, i.e. *Tariqah* or *Izala*, he should belong to. Many ordinary Muslims are also confused as to which Imam to follow in congregational prayers as a result of which some would prefer to pray alone at home. This is because each of the conflicting parties supports its accusation of *kufr* against the other with evidences from the Qur'an and or *Hadith* of the Prophet (S.A.W.). This kind of confusion has been witnessed in many parts of Northern states. For example, Aminu Usman reported that many Muslims were thrown into confusion in Gusau Local Government Area as a result of addressing the *Tijjaniyya* followers *kuffar* by the *Izala* group. Also in Kano, some members of the *Izala* followers have been reported to have regarded the followers of the *Qadiriyyah* order as unbelievers [16]. This was said to be as a result of a book entitled *Tafrih al- Khatir* (The Edification of the Thought) which was ascribed to Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, which according to the *Izala* group, contains a statement that ascribed a position of God to Abd al-Qadir. This mutual throwing of *kufr* by the groups certainly confuses the common Muslims as to which of the groups is really on the right path and which of them deserves to be followed.

The confusion brought to *Islam* by *Takfir* is not only limited to the Muslims. Even the non-Muslims are also in confusion about what *Islam* really stands for. This is because by seeing the Muslims openly accusing one another on religious matters, threatening one another, attacking, fighting and even killing one another, the non-Muslims are made to think that *Islam* promotes discord and internecine strife among its adherents [xxxix]. For example, the *Maitatsine* unrest, even though not *Islamic* in nature, was alleged by non-Muslims to be a religious phenomenon. More so, 'Some atheists view religion as the sources of all our ills while others assume that it is incapable of dealing with our contemporary problems. Some even believe that *Islam* in particular is a religion of terrorism, all because of the activities of some Muslims against the others.

More so, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) had through his practice, warned against the acts which could cause confusion among the Muslims. It was reported that:

Ali bn Abi Talib sent some gold to the Prophet (S.A.W.) from *Yaman* and the Prophet distributed them among four Muslims, then a man said to the Prophet (S.A.W.) fear Allah and be just, so the Prophet was very annoyed and said who will be just if the Prophet is not just; then a companion stood and said O Prophet, permit me to behead this man. Then the Prophet said: "maybe he prays" so the companion said: many people say what is not from their minds. Then the Prophet (S.A.W.) replied: "I am not commanded to open people's heart" [xl].

From the foregoing, it is understood that the offence committed by the man who confronted the Prophet (S.A.W.) had been regarded by some companions as *Kufr*. But the Prophet disallowed the companions from executing him as *kafir* because he did not want to kill a Muslim who prays or did not want to create confusion in the minds of others who would say that the Prophet [SAW] was killing his followers.

It can therefore be said that those who rush to declare Muslims as *kuffar* are defying the warnings of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and consequently creating confusion in *Islam*.

Lack of Progress in *Islamic* Awareness

Backwardness is often concerned with less progress than normal particularly in term of growth. Development means improvement in the growth in order to better the lives of humanity. Development and progress always come about as a result of factors such as education, research, unity, commitment, obedience and most especially peace. The progress of any society or its backwardness is dependent on its adherence or other wise to the factors of progress and development. *Islam* is the pioneer of development in the world. For example, Ibn Khaldun is regarded as the father and originator of the social discipline [sociology] in the world today. He has developed and written many works on society, the group, the individuals and the crisis involving them in Arabic Language before these works were translated into Western Languages by the likes of August Comte, a French national in 1833 and others [xli].

Apart from Ibn Khaldun, there were many other Muslim scholars who had contributed immensely to the development of the world through knowledge, such as Ibn Rushd Ibn, Sina, Imam al-Ghazali and so many others. However, there seems to be dearth of this kind of scholars among the Muslims nowadays particularly, in this part of the world, for so many reasons. *Takfir* and mutual strife

among Muslims is one of the factors responsible for this. This is because seeking for *Islamic* knowledge which used to be obtainable from any competent scholar without restriction, has been restricted to organisations and sects. For example, it is very hard to see a member of *Tariqah* group going to seek for knowledge from a competent scholar of *Izala* group and vice versa. Likewise, children of *Izala* members can hardly attend schools established by the *Tariqahs* even if it is the best in the area. This may affect not only the quality of the students produced by the Muslims, but also on their emotional stability in general.

It is also a sign of backwardness to see the Muslims begging for charity in order to build mosques. It is disheartening when one travels from one state to another, e.g Sokoto, Kebbi/Niger to see First Aid Group Members “Yan Aagaji” of different Muslim organizations or groups soliciting for alms to complete building of their long-standing uncompleted mosques from the unknown motorists, be they Muslims or non-Muslims. This is because every group wants to have its own mosque by all means for praying behind other groups is like praying behind non-Muslims.

Furthermore, immediately after the 2009 *Boko Haram* uprising in Northern Nigeria, the Northern governors attempted to further take a more strict steps to regulate *Da'awah* activities in the states. It is unimaginable how it will be if a competent scholar has to take order from one corrupt leader before he can preach *Islam* to the people. It will certainly affect the progress of *Islamic* enlightenment in the area.

From the forgoing, it can be understood that *Takfir* has a tremendous negative effects on the religious life of the Muslims. It confuses the ordinary Muslims, it leads the one who pronounces it to the wrath of Allah, particularly if the accused does not really commit *kufir* in the sight of Allah and it also affects the progress of *Islam* in many cases. It is therefore expected that Muslims should avoid regarding their fellow Muslims as *kuffar*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having identified the various factors which led to *Takfir* in *Islam* and particularly among Muslims in North West, the following recommendations are, therefore, provided:

- Strict adherence to the Qur'an and *Sunnah*: it has been explained that the Prophet did not use the word *kafir* for any Muslim during his life time. He was so careful in dealing with the matters of *Takfir* that even the unbelievers who said *Kalimatush-shahadah* in the face of death or for the fear of sword were still considered as Muslims by him (S.A.W). So, Muslims should adhere strictly to his *Sunnah* by not rushing to regard any Muslim as *Kafir* except with the evidence which is as clear as the broad day light.
- Combination of the texts: it is clear that one of the factors which lead to *Takfir* is to base one's Judgement on only one verse of the Qur'an or *hadith* without searching for other similar verses on the same matter before arriving at the conclusion. Since the whole verses of the Qur'an are from Allah alone and the authentic traditions of the Prophet (S.A.W) have divine guidance, *Islamic* Scholars are expected to know the meanings of all the verses and *Ahadith* which are related to any matter they deal with before they can pass judgement on the particular issue.
- Avoidance of extremism: Muslims have been warned in many *Ahadith* of the Prophet [SAW] and verses of the Qur'an to shun extremism in their affairs, as doing so can ruin the *Ummah*. One of the major characteristics of the Muslims is *Wasatiyyah* (Moderation), a Muslim should be moderate in his religious as well as mundane matters so as to live according to the way Allah intends him to live i.e. to be moderate servant. Extremism makes a Muslim lose his common sense of thinking and thereby denying others their rights which *Islam* gives to them. It also leads a person to go beyond his position as human being and assume the position of the Creator and the Judge by giving himself the power to take or fix people in and out of *Islam* at will.
- A Muslim is expected to be full of fear of Allah and to always try to correct his own shortcomings first before correcting others. Anyone who is always concerned with his own faults hardly gets time to be busy with other peoples' faults and he will be very careful not to speak evil about others because he will be afraid of taking from his good deeds to settle those he might have, in one way or the other, wronged through his mouth on the Day of Judgment.
- Seeking for useful knowledge: Muslims, particularly, the youths, should devote their time in seeking for *Islamic* and other types of beneficial knowledge instead of searching for peoples' faults. It has been said by the Prophet (S.A.W) that the best Muslim is he that sought for the Qur'anic knowledge and cared to teach others⁸. By learning and teaching *Islamic* knowledge, one will be among the builders and not the destroyers of the *Ummah*. More so, the knowledge will empower the Muslim to be able to know the rights of Allah and those of the creatures so that he can make a demarcation between the two. He will also be able to leave behind after his death something that will continue to benefit him and others till the Day of Judgment.

Finally, all the above suggestions if properly studied and adhered to are capable of solving the problems of *Takfir* in our society and beyond.

End Note

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