

Warning against the Fitnah of Takfīr

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Author: Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Din al-Albānī

Translator: Abbas Abu Yahya

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By

Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Din al-Albānī

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Translator's Foreword

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds. May His prayers and blessings be upon the final prophet, Muhammad, his family, his companions and all those who follow his way.

From amongst the greatest blessings of Allah (تعالی) upon this nation is that He has placed wisdom in the hearts of the people of knowledge, just as one of the Salaf said, "Whoever has many narrations, then he speaks with wisdom."

And from amongst the people of knowledge of our time was the great Ḥadīth scholar, the jurist, the religious authority, Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Din al-Albānī – may Allah have mercy on him.

This book is an amended transcript of one of the many, many sittings with the illustrious scholar where he was asked about the issue of Takfīr. The sitting took place in Jordan. The transcript was amended by the scholar to make it suitable for print.

We ask our Lord (عزَّ وجلَّ) to make this work a beacon of light illuminating the path for those who have lost the way. We also ask Him to reward our noble scholar, al-Albānī, and place him in the hereafter among the ranks of the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, and they are the best of companions.

The Translator

(Abbas Abu Yahya)

Author's Introduction

Indeed all praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him, we seek His aid, and we seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Him from the evil of our selves and the evil of our actions. Whomever Allah guides there is none to misguide him, and whomever Allah leaves astray then there is none that can guide him.

I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), alone without any partner, and I testify that Muhammad is His slave and messenger.

Indeed the issue of *Takfir* (excommunication, condemnation) generally is not only for the rulers, but it is also for the ruled. It is an old and extensive *Fitnah* (tribulation, evil) that was germinated by a sect from the Islamic sects of old who were known as the *Khawārij* (Kharijites).

It is with great sadness that some of the callers to the religion, or those who are too enthusiastic, have fallen outside the realm of the Book and the Sunnah, yet in the name of the Book and the Sunnah! The reason for this goes back to two points:

The first reason is that they are shallow in knowledge.

The second reason is - and this point is very important - that they never understood the regulations of the Sharia, the Islamic legislation. The Sharia is the foundation of the true Islamic propagation. All those who are outside the true Islamic call are regarded as being from the deviated sects away from the mainstream community of Muslims which the

messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) praised in more than one *Hadith* (prophetic narration).

Regarding this mainstream community of Muslims, even our Lord (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) mentioned it and explained that whomsoever left this community has indeed broken away from Allah and His messenger. That is the statement of Allah:

﴿ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴾

And whosoever contradicts and opposes the messenger after the right path has been clearly shown to him and follows other than the path of the believers, We shall keep him in the path he has chosen and burn him in

Hell – what an evil destination.

[Sūrah al-Nisā', 4:115]

So indeed Allah (تعالى), for a reason that is very clear to the people of knowledge, did not summarize His statement by saying, **“And whosoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger after the right path has been clearly shown to him, We shall keep him in the path.”**

Rather, Allah associated contradicting and opposing the messenger with following a way other than the believers' path. So, He said:

﴿ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴾

And whosoever contradicts and opposes the messenger after the right path has been clearly shown to him and follows other than the path of the believers, We shall keep him in the path he has chosen and burn him in Hell – what an evil destination.

[Sūrah al-Nisā', 4:115]

The Principle of Understanding the Book and the Sunnah

So, following or not following the path of the believers is a very important matter in relation to complying with or denying that path. Whosoever follows the path of the believers, then he is successful with the Lord of the worlds, and whosoever differs from the path of the believers, then Hell is sufficient for him and what an evil destination.

From this point, numerous groups, old and new, deviated because they never sufficed themselves with adhering to the path of the believers. Instead, they rode on their own intelligence. They followed their own desires in trying to understand the Book and the Sunnah. Then they built upon their desires some very dangerous consequences, and with that they left what the Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ, the righteous preceding Muslims – may Allah be pleased with all of them – were upon.

The messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) emphasized this section of the noble verse: “**...and follows other than the path of the believers.**”

He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) emphasized it in eloquent terms in more than one authentic prophetic Ḥadīth. These Ḥadīth, of which I will mention some, are well-known amongst the general Muslims, not to mention the Muslim scholars. But what is unknown about these Ḥadīth is that they direct one towards the obligation and necessity of adhering to the path of the believers in their understanding of the Book and Sunnah.

This point has been forgotten and its importance and necessity have been forgotten by many people specializing (in Ḥadīth), not to mention those who have become known in these modern times as “Jamā`at al-Takfīr” or by some of those kinds of groups who attach themselves to Jihad, whereas in reality they are simply the scattered, defeated remnants of the Takfīr (of old).

From amongst these types of people, there may be some who may very well in the depths of their hearts be righteous and sincere people. However, this alone is not sufficient for its possessor to be successful and for one to prosper with Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).

For this reason, it is necessary for a Muslim to combine two points:

- Having truthful sincerity in ones intention with Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).
- And following correctly what the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was upon.

It is not only sufficient for a Muslim to be sincere and serious in respect to acting with the Book and the Sunnah and calling towards it. But in addition to this, his methodology should be correct, good, and upright, and his methodology cannot be complete in itself

except by following what the righteous Salaf of this nation were upon – may Allah be pleased with them all.

From these well-known and established Ḥadīth that make up the foundation for what I have said and touched on previously is the Ḥadīth of the seventy-three sects, and it is none other than the saying of the messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم):

إِفْتَرَقَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى إِحْدَى وَسَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً وَأَفْتَرَقَتِ النَّصَارَى عَلَى اثْنَتَيْنِ
وَسَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً وَسَتَفْتَرِقُ أُمَّتِي عَلَى ثَلَاثِ وَسَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً كُلُّهَا فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا
وَاحِدَةً

“The Jews had split up in to seventy-one sects, and the Christians had split up into seventy-two sects, and my nation will split up into seventy-three sects – all of whom will be in the fire except one.

The companions asked, “And which one is it, oh messenger of Allah?” He replied:

الْجَمَاعَةَ

“The main community (of believers).”

And in another narration:

مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي

“What I am upon and my companions are upon.”

So we find the prophet's answer in perfect agreement with the previous verse:

﴿ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

...and follows other than the path of the believers.

[Sūrah al-Nisā', 4:115]

Therefore, those who primarily enter into the generality of this verse (for the meaning of “the believers”) are: the companions of the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) since the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was not content in the previous Ḥadīth with just saying, “What I am upon...”

Perhaps this would actually be sufficient for the Muslim who truly understands the Book and the Sunnah. But he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) became a practical application of Allah’s saying, when Allah characterized His prophet that he was:

﴿ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾

With the believers, (he is) full of kindness and mercy.

[Sūrah al-Tawbah, 9:128]

It is from his (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) perfect kindness and his complete mercy for his companions and his followers that he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) clearly illustrated for them the distinction of the saved sect and indicated that they are those people who are upon (the same methodology) the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was upon and what his companions were also upon after him.

Therefore, it is not allowed for Muslims generally and the callers to Islam specifically to remain content with simply understanding the Book and Sunnah by the means of understanding which are well known such as knowledge of the Arabic language, the knowledge of abrogated and abrogative texts and other such rules. But it is also necessary to refer all of this back to what the companions of the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ) were upon. This is because they were, as is clear from their traditions and their biographies, the most sincere to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) in worship. They had more of an understanding of the Book and the Sunnah than us, and many other praiseworthy characteristics with which they were shaped and cultivated to exquisite manners.

Also what resembles this Ḥadīth perfectly in respect to its fruits and benefits is the Ḥadīth of the rightly-guided caliphs which is narrated in the books of Ḥadīth from the narration of al-'Irbāḍ Ibn Sāriyah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ). He said that the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ) gave the people an admonition which caused hearts to tremble and eyes to shed tears. So he (al-'Irbāḍ Ibn Sāriyah) asked, "It is as if this is a farewell speech, so advise us, oh messenger of Allah." He said:

أَوْصِيكُمْ بِالسَّمْعِ وَالطَّاعَةِ وَإِنْ وَلِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَبْدٌ حَبَشِيٌّ وَإِنَّهُ مَنْ يَعِشْ مِنْكُمْ
فَسِيرَىٰ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِي وَسُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الرَّاشِدِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِي عَضُّوا
عَلَيْهَا بِالنَّوْاجِذِ

"I advise you to listen and obey even if an African slave rules over you, and indeed whomsoever from you lives will see many differences, so hold on to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly-guided caliphs after me. Bite onto it with your molar teeth."

The proof from this Ḥadīth is also the same evidence from the answer of the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) to the previous question (about the seventy-three sects) in that he compelled his nation to follow the characteristics of his companions due to their adherence to his Sunnah, and he said, "...and the Sunnah of the rightly-guided caliphs after me."

Therefore, it is necessary for us – especially with the circumstances as they are – to constantly repeat always and forever this fundamental principle if we intend to understand our *'Aqīdah* (our creed and faith), understand our worship, and understand our manners and behavior.

It is necessary for us to refer back to our righteous predecessors to understand all these matters which are necessary for a Muslim to sincerely actualize within himself that he is from the saved sect.

From this point, many of the sects of old and new have deviated when they did not pay heed to the evidence in the previous verse and to the significance of the Ḥadīth of the Sunnah of the rightly-guided caliphs and likewise the Ḥadīth of the splitting of the nation. Therefore, it was completely natural that they deviated like those who deviated previously from the book of Allah and the Sunnah of the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and the methodology of the righteous predecessors.

From those who deviated were the Khawārij of old and of recent times.

Indeed the foundation of the evils of Takfīr in this era, rather since long ago, is concerning the verse in the Quran which they always keep mentioning. It is the statement of Allah (تعالى):

﴿ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴾

And whosoever does not judge with what Allah has revealed, they are the disbelievers.

[Sūrah al-Māi'dah, 5:44]

So they take this verse without a deep understanding and they present it without detailed knowledge.

We know that this noble verse has been repeated and ends with three different wordings:

﴿ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴾

And whosoever does not judge with what Allah has revealed, they are the disbelievers.

[Sūrah al-Māi'dah, 5:44]

﴿ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴾

And whosoever does not judge with what Allah has revealed, they are the oppressors.

[Sūrah al-Māi'dah, 5:45]

﴿ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴾

And whosoever does not judge with what Allah has revealed, they are the
sinners.

[Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5:47]

It is complete ignorance when those people use only this verse with its first wording which is, “...**they are the disbelievers.**” They have not become acquainted with, at the very least, some of the other texts of the Sharia, whether from the Quran or the Sunnah, in which the same (Arabic) word (الكُفْرُ - *al-Kufr*) is mentioned. Instead they have taken the verse without any understanding to mean that thereby someone totally leaves the religion, and that there is no difference between the one who fell into this form of disbelief and between the polytheists from the Jews and the Christians and followers of faiths other than Islam.

However the word al-Kufr in the language of the Book and the Sunnah does not always carry this meaning which they constantly repeat and by which they attempt to impose their wrong and erroneous understanding.

The issue of this word (al-Kufr) not necessarily always having one meaning is also the case with the other two words, “...**they are the oppressors,**” and, “...**they are the sinners.**” In other words, someone characterized as an oppressor or sinner does not necessarily mean that he is someone who has committed total apostasy from the religion of Islam. Similarly, the same goes for the one characterized with disbelief in that it does not necessarily mean that he has become a complete apostate from the religion.

So, this diversity in the meaning of one word is indicated by the (Arabic) language and the Islamic legislation which came in the Arabic language, the language of the Noble Quran. Due to this, it is incumbent upon those who want to pass judgment on the Muslims, regardless if it is regarding the ruler or the ruled, that they be upon knowledge of the Book and Sunnah and in the light of the righteous predecessors.

It is not possible to understand the Book and the Sunnah and what they contain except by way of the Arabic language and its literature, knowing it specifically and precisely. If the student of knowledge has a deficiency in the understanding of the language, what will help him in rectifying this deficiency is returning to the understanding of the scholars before him, especially if they are the people from the first three generations that have been certified with goodness.

A Disbelief Less Than Disbelief

Now we return to this verse:

﴿ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴾

And whosoever does not judge with what Allah has revealed, they are the disbelievers.

[Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5:44]

So what is the intent of the word “disbelief” here? Does it take one outside of the Muslim nation or does it mean something else?

I say that it is necessary to be very precise in understanding this verse. The verse could mean the disbelief of action which is to leave off some of the actions from the rulings of Islam. In addition, what helps us in this understanding is the famous scholar of the nation and the interpreter of the Quran, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنه). He was one of those companions that all Muslims are in agreement – except those who are from the deviant sects – that he is an unparalleled leader in Tafsīr, the understanding of the Quran.

It is as if he heard in those days the likes of what we hear today exactly – that there are people who will understand the verse on its apparent meaning without its explanation. Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنه) said, “It is not the disbelief which you understand it to mean. Indeed it is not the disbelief which takes you outside the fold of the nation; it is a form of disbelief less than (the absolute) disbelief.”

Perhaps he was referring to the Khawārij who rebelled against the Leader of the Believers, ‘Alī (رضي الله عنه), and as a result of that they spilled the blood of the believers and did to them what was not done even by the idol-worshippers. Ibn ‘Abbās said, “The matter is not like what they have said or what they presume, but indeed it is a form of disbelief less than disbelief.”

This is a clear, precise answer from the explainer of the Quran. This is the explanation of the verse other than which it is not possible to have any other understanding (i.e. a form of disbelief less than the absolute disbelief) from the texts of the Quran and the Sunnah. This is what we indicated towards previously in the beginning of this speech.

Indeed the word “disbelief” which is mentioned in many texts of the Quran and Ḥadīth is not possible to explain concerning all these texts that the meaning is equal to leaving the religion. Like this is the example of the well-known Ḥadīth which is in the two authentic books of Ḥadīth (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim) on the authority of ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas’ūd (رضي الله عنه) who said that the messenger of (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

سِيَابُ الْمُسْلِمِ فُسُوقٌ وَقِتَالُهُ كُفْرٌ

“Cursing a Muslim is sinful and fighting him is disbelief.”

So the disbelief mentioned here is sinning and disobedience and the messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who is regarded as the most eloquent in expression was intense in condemning this sin, saying, “...and killing him is disbelief.”

From another angle we can question: Is it possible for us to understand the word “sin” from the first section of this Ḥadīth, “Cursing a Muslim is sinful,” in the same way we understand the word “sin” that is mentioned in the aforementioned verse with the third wording:

﴿ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴾

And whosoever does not judge with what Allah has revealed, they are the sinners.

[Sūrah al-Māi’dah, 5:47]

The answer is that it could mean that the word “sin” also corresponds in its meaning to the word “disbelief” which means to leave the religion. It could also be that the word “sin”

corresponds in meaning to the word “disbelief” which does not mean to leave the religion, but rather means just what the interpreter of the Quran (Ibn ‘Abbās) said, “It is a form of “disbelief” less than “disbelief”.

This Ḥadīth emphasizes that the “disbelief” here could be with this meaning (that it is not the total disbelief causing a person to leave the religion) because Allah (عزَّ وجلَّ) said:

﴿ وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتَ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ﴾

And if two parties among the believers fall into fighting, then make peace between them both, but if one of them rebels against the other, then fight against the one that rebels until it complies with the command of Allah.

[al-Hujurāt, 49:9]

Here, our Lord has mentioned the rebel sect which fights the truthful believing sect and along with this Allah did not judge upon the rebel sect that they were disbelievers, even though the Ḥadīth says: “...and fighting him is disbelief.”

Therefore fighting him is a type of disbelief less than the absolute disbelief exactly like Ibn Abbās said in the explanation of the previous verse.

A Muslim fighting a Muslim is oppression and aggression against him and evil and disbelief, but this meaning of disbelief could be the disbelief of action or perhaps the disbelief in one’s belief.

From here comes the precise detailed exposition that was explained in the commentary by the Imam of truth, the famous scholar of Islam, Ibn Taymiyyah – may Allah have mercy on him – and then after him, his devoted student Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah who took on this responsibility. They were blessed in making aware and explaining the division of disbelief into these two divisions, whose banner was raised by the interpreter of the Quran (Ibn ‘Abbās) with his concise and complete words. Ibn Taymiyyah and his student and companion Ibn al-Qayyim always repeatedly mentioned the necessity of distinguishing between the disbelief of action and disbelief in belief. Otherwise a Muslim would unknowingly fall into the evil of rebelling against the community of Muslims, into that which befell the Khawārij of old and some of their adherents of today.

The summary of this point is that his (the prophet's صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saying, “...and fighting him is disbelief,” does not mean he has absolutely left the entire religion. There are many Ḥadīth regarding this point. All these Ḥadīth are irrefutable evidences against those who adhere only to their own deficient understanding of the previous verses and cling to the explanation that this is a disbelief in one's belief.

For now, this Ḥadīth is sufficient for us because it is a definitive proof that a Muslim fighting his brother Muslim is a form of disbelief with the meaning of disbelief of action and not the disbelief in one's creed and belief.

Now, we return to the sect of Takfīr, or to those who branched off from them, and their accusation that the rulers are complete disbelievers as are those who live under their custody and leadership and those appointed by them (to various positions) – all guilty of

disbelief and apostasy! This is built upon their evil view that these people have perpetrated a sin thereby becoming disbelievers because of it.

The Relationship between Takfīr and Rebellion

From the general matters which are beneficial to mention and narrate is that I met some of those who used to be from the Takfīr sect, then Allah (عزَّ وجلَّ) guided them.

I said to them: Here you call some of the rulers disbelievers, so what do you think, for example, of making all of the Imams of the mosques disbelievers as well as those who give the sermons, those who give the call to prayer in the mosques, and those who render services to the mosques? What about making Takfīr of the teachers of Sharia in schools and other places, for example?

They said: They are disbelievers because they are pleased with the rule of the rulers who judge by other than what Allah has revealed.

I said: If this “being pleased” with judging by other than what Allah revealed was in agreement with one’s heart (i.e. belief), then the disbelief of action is altered to the disbelief in one’s creed. So, any ruler who rules with other than what Allah has revealed and considers and believes that this ruling is the appropriate ruling to be applied in this time, and that the ruling of the Sharia from the texts of the Book and Sunnah is not appropriate to be applied, then there is no doubt that this ruler’s disbelief is the disbelief

in creed and belief and is not the disbelief of action alone. And whoever is pleased with this and believes in it then he also falls into the same group.

Then I said to them: First, it is not possible for you to make a judgment upon every ruler who rules with the Western laws of unbelief or with even some of them. If they were questioned about why they judge with other than what Allah has revealed, perhaps they would answer that ruling with these laws is the truth and correct in this time, and it is not applicable to rule with the laws of Islam. In this case, if they say this they would truly become disbelievers without doubt.

Then, if we look to the people who are ruled – and from amongst them there are the scholars, the righteous, etc. – how can you then pass judgment upon them with disbelief just because you see them living under these laws, the same laws that encompass you too just as they do them? But you declare only them to be disbelievers and apostates, insisting that ruling by what Allah has revealed is obligatory! Yet you make an excuse for yourselves and contradict yourselves by stating that differing with the judgments of the Sharia by mere actions does not necessarily hold the ruling that the one who does it is an apostate from his religion.

This is exactly what people other than you are saying, those you accuse wrongly with the ruling of Takfir and apostasy!

And from amongst the general discussions which reveal their mistakes and uncover their deviation is that if they were asked, “When is a judgment given upon a Muslim that he has committed apostasy from his religion? A Muslim who testifies that there is none

worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and perhaps he prays? Is it sufficient just one time (to say he has disbelieved) or is it an obligation to announce that he has left the religion?"

They would neither know of an answer (to these questions) nor would they be guided to the truth thereof. So we are forced to give them the following example:

A judge judges with the Sharia and this is his usual practice and his system. But in one judgment he misjudged and gave a judgment against the Sharia. For example, he ruled in favor of the rights of an oppressor and sustained the rights of the oppressed. This is most certainly not judging by what Allah has revealed. So do you say that his disbelief is the disbelief of apostasy?

They will say: No, because this occurred by him only one time.

We say: What if the same judgment was issued from him a second time or a different ruling by which he also conflicted with the Sharia, has he then committed disbelief?

If we repeat this to them that such a judge does this three times, four times – when do you say that he has committed disbelief? It is not possible for them to place a limit on the number of his judgments in which he has gone against the Sharia by which he can be declared a complete disbeliever.

The opposite of this is completely possible; if it is known from him that he, in his first judgment, deemed it correct to judge without Allah's revelation, believing it is permissible

to do so and disapproving of judging with the Sharia, then it would be correct to judge him with apostasy, even for this one single judgment.

Contrary to this, if we saw several judgments from him in a number of decisions in which he went against the Sharia and if we were to ask him, "Why did you judge by something other than what Allah revealed?" He may reply, "I was frightened and afraid for myself," or "I was bribed," for example, and that is worse than the first example. In this case, it is not possible to say he is a disbeliever until he declares what is in his heart – that he does not believe in what Allah (عزَّ وجلَّ) has revealed. Only then can we say that he is a disbeliever with the disbelief of apostasy.

In summary, it is necessary to know that disbelief, like sinning and oppression, is divided into two types:

- The type of disbelief, sin, and oppression which places one outside the religion, and this type refers to considering it (the sin) permissible in one's heart.
- The type that does not place one outside of the religion, and this type refers to allowing it only by one's actions.

Making Takfir of Sinners is Not Permissible

Every type of sin, specifically what is widespread in this time and even regarded as permissible such as dealing in usury, illegal sexual relations, drinking alcohol amongst

them; these are all forms of disbelief by action. Yet it is not allowed for us to make Takfīr of these sinners who have been deceived by some of these sins just because they have perpetrated a sin and allowed themselves to do it. (This is the case) unless it becomes apparent to us with certainty and it is revealed that their inner selves, from their own creed and belief, do not prohibit what Allah and His messenger have prohibited. So, if we know they have fallen into this level of opposition with their hearts, then we can judge that they have committed disbelief, the disbelief of apostasy.

But if we do not know this for sure, then there is no way for us to judge them with disbelief because we fear we will fall into the prophet's threat (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

إِذَا قَالَ الرَّجُلُ لِأَخِيهِ : يَا كَافِرٍ فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِهَا أَحَدَهُمَا

“If man says to his brother, ‘You disbeliever!’ then indeed it returns to one of them.”

There are many Ḥadīth mentioned with this meaning and I will mention one such Ḥadīth which is a great evidence. It is in the story of the companion who killed one of the idol-worshippers. When the idolater saw that he was about to come under the blow of the Muslim companion's sword, he said, “I testify that none is worthy of worship except Allah!” The companion took no interest in that and killed him. When the news reached the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), he disapproved of it severely. The particular companion mentioned as an excuse that the man did not say what he said except from fear of being killed, but the reply of the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was:

هَلَا شَقَّقْتَ عَنْ قَلْبِهِ؟

“Did you open up his heart?!”

Therefore the disbelief in creed and belief does not have a fundamental connection with just actions, but it has a connection with the heart.

It is not possible for us to know what is in the heart of the sinner or the adulterer, the thief, the fornicator, or the one who deals in usury unless he confesses with his tongue what is in his heart. As far as his action is concerned, then it is an indication that he has opposed the Sharia with a differing of action.

So, we say (to such a person) that no doubt you have opposed the Sharia and you have certainly committed a sin and deviated. But we do not say, “You have become a disbeliever and left your religion!” until there manifests from him something which will be an excuse for us before Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) in judging him with apostasy, because following that comes the known ruling in Islam, the statement of the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

مَنْ بَدَّلَ دِينَهُ فَاقْتُلُوهُ

“Whoever changes his religion, then kill him.”¹

I have said and I continue to say to those who constantly make Takfir of the Muslim rulers: Let us suppose the disbelief of these rulers is in fact the disbelief of apostasy. And suppose there was a ruler who was above them it would then be obligatory in this situation on that higher ruler to implement the Islamic punishment on them (the lower leaders).

¹ This is to be applied only by legitimate authorities and is not unconditional. [Editor]

However, how do you benefit yourselves practically if we agree for the sake of argument that all of these rulers are disbelievers and their disbelief is the disbelief of apostasy? What can you possibly do and establish?

If the Takfir is, say for the sake of the issue of allegiance and enmity – loyalty to the believers and disassociation from the disbelievers, then we reply by pointing out that loyalty and disassociation are connected to friendship and hate, by the heart and by actions, and this is dependent on the extent of one's capability. Therefore it is not a condition that you publicly proclaim Takfir and declare someone's apostasy just because the issue of allegiance and enmity is present. Rather, friendship and hate could both take place with the case of an innovator, sinner, or an oppressor.

Then I say to these people that here we have the non-Muslims having occupied many of the lands of Islam. Sadly, we are being tested with the occupation of Palestine by the Jews. What can you and we possibly do about it? Is it really important to stand up, alone, against those rulers whom you claim and consider to be disbelievers?

If only you had left this issue alone, and started laying down the foundation for the structure on which the essentials of an Islamic government stands. This structure is following the Sunnah of the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and this is how he educated his companions. From this source, they built such a system and foundation.

We mention and emphasize a lot that it is necessary for all Muslim organizations to work in truth in order to bring back the rule of Islam, not only in the Islamic lands but on the whole earth and that is the fulfillment of His (تبارك وتعالى) statement:

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴾

It is He who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth to make it superior over all other religions even though the idolaters may hate it.

[Sūrah al-Şaff, 61:9]

What has been mentioned by prophecies in some of the prophetic Ḥadīth is that this verse will be realized at a later time.

To be possible for the Muslims to implement this Quran passage and this divine promise, it is necessary to follow an evident path and a clear way. Is this evident path by announcing a revolution against these rulers of whom it is thought that their disbelief is the disbelief of apostasy? With their mistaken suspicion, they (the people of Takfīr) can do nothing!

So what is the methodology? What is the path? No doubt that the correct path, which is an exemplary path, is what the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) used to constantly talk about and remind his companions about in every sermon:

وَأَخَيْرُ الْهَدْيِ هَدْيُ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

“And the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.”

So it is upon all the Muslims without exception, and specifically those who busy themselves with the “return of Islamic rule”, that they begin from where the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) began. We have labeled this (beginning) with two concise words: purification and education.

Purification and Education

We know that the firmly-established reality which is neglected or, more accurately, purposely neglected is that those extremists have nothing (of evidence) except their public assertion of Takfīr against the rulers and nothing else. And they continue to proclaim Takfīr of the rulers when nothing stems from it except discord and strife.

The calamities in these past few years have occurred by the hands of these people, beginning with the discord of the sacred mosque in Mecca to the dissension in Egypt and the killing of Sadat. Now in Syria and in Egypt and Algeria, everyone witnesses the shedding of blood of many innocent Muslims because of these evils and tribulations and the many resulting calamities. All of this because they opposed many texts from the Book and the Sunnah, the most important of which is:

﴿ لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ
وَدَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴾

Certainly, in the messenger of Allah, you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for the meeting with Allah and the last day and remembers Allah much.

[Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:21]

If we really want to establish the rule of Allah on earth in reality and not just by claim, then do we start by making Takfīr of the rulers while it is not possible for us to confront them, let alone fight them? Or do we start with the same obligation the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى) (اللهُ عليه وسلّم) started with? No doubt, the answer is:

﴿ لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ ﴾

Certainly, in the messenger of Allah, you have a good example to follow.

[Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:21]

But what did the Allah's messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عليه وسلّم) begin with?

It is known with certainty to anyone who has even smelled the fragrance of knowledge that he began with the call and propagation among individuals whom he thought were ready to accept the truth. So, whoever of the noble companions was ready to respond to him did so as is well-known from the prophetic biography. Then, punishment and harshness befell these Muslims in Mecca. After that came the command for the first migration, and later the second, until Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) consolidated Islam in *al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah* – the city of Medina. From there began the skirmishes and the opposition. At that time too, fighting began between the Muslims and the disbelievers on one side, and between Muslims and Jews on the other...

Therefore it is necessary for us to begin by teaching the people the true Islam just as the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) began. However, we cannot just confine ourselves to teaching alone because certain aspects having no association with the religion have crept into Islam such as foreign, religious innovations which were the reason for the apparent downfall of Islam's once lofty status.

Because of this, it is obligatory upon those inviting to Islam to begin with the purification of Islam from what has entered into it.

So the first principle is "purification" and the second is "education". Associated with the purification is the education of the young, active Muslims traversing on this pure Islam.

If we study the reality of the (modern) Islamic groups which have existed for nearly a generation and their ideas and the practice of such ideas, we find that many of them have brought about no benefit to themselves nor have they benefited others with anything that can be remembered. This is so despite their outcry and noise that they want an Islamic government. This was their reason for spilling the blood of the innocent based on such a baseless argument – all this without having actualized anything from it (their false call).

And so we continue to hear of their beliefs which are opposed to the Book and Sunnah and actions which are negated by the Book and Sunnah. They try again and again with futile attempts that oppose Islamic legislation.

Finally, I say that there is a statement which one of the propagators of Islam said which I used in hope that his followers would adhere to it and fulfill it; that statement is, "Establish the Islamic state in your heart, it will then be established for you on earth."

If a Muslim corrects his belief and creed built upon the Book and Sunnah, then there is no doubt that from this he will correct his worship, correct his behavior and his manners.

Yet with regret, these fine words have not been acted upon by these people; they persist with outcries to establish the Islamic state yet with no purpose or benefit. It is said about them, and I swear by Allah it is true of them, what a poet once said:

You hope for success but do not follow its path,

Indeed a ship does not sail on dry land.

Perhaps in what I have mentioned is (evidence) persuasive enough for every just person and a prevention enough for every oppressor.

We seek Allah's help.