

The Categories of Infidelity in the Qur'ān Kategori Kufur di Dalam Qur'an

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Abstract

In the Qur'ān, infidelity (i.e. the state of being an infidel or non-believer) is related in general to the term *kufr*, which denotes the denial of the Articles of the Islamic faith. This paper is an attempt to understand the various categories of *kufr* by exploring the contextual interpretation of selected passages of the Qur'ān that are related to the concept of *kufr*. The study shows that the concept of *kufr* is implied in different terms and contexts, such as *shirk*, *ẓulm* and *fiṣq*. *Shirk* is applied to those who ascribe partners to Allah in word or action, as in the case of idolatry. Christians, who are regarded as People of the Book, are considered *shirk*, unbelievers equivalent to polytheists, due to their belief in the doctrine of the Trinity. Jews, the other category of People of the Book, are also considered *kāfirūn*, unbelievers in the Qur'ān – despite their belief in the concept of monotheism (*tawhīd*) – because they are deemed to have changed the laws of God in the Torah. The term *ẓulm* is directly related to the acts of preventing people from worshipping Allah, deviating from the truth of Islam, and preaching against the teachings and messages of the Messengers of Allah. Finally, the term *fiṣq* is used in relation to those who, of their own volition, do not abide by what Allah has revealed.

Keywords: The Qur'ān, *Kufr*, *Shirk*, *Zulm*, *Fisq*

Abstrak

Di dalam Qur'an, kekafiran berkaitan dengan kufur secara amnya. Perkataan Kufur yang disebut dalam istilah dan konteks yang berbeza seperti syirik, Zulum dan Fisq. Kufur menandakan penafian Tataurusian agama Islam. Bila berkenaan dengan syirik, ia digunakan untuk orang-orang yang mempersekutukan sesuatu dengan Allah dalam perkataan atau tindakan, seperti orang-orang yang menikmati keberhalaan. Oleh itu, orang-orang Kristian yang dianggap sebagai Ahli Kitab dianggap sebagai orang kafir sama dengan orang-orang musyrik kerana kepercayaan mereka dalam Doktrin Trinititi. Kaum Yahudi, kategori yang lain dari kalangan ahli Kitab, walaupun kepercayaan mereka dalam konsep tauhid (*tawhid*), juga dianggap sebagai orang kafir

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(kafirun) di dalam Quran kerana akibat daripada perubahan undang-undang Allah di dalam Taurat. Istilah Zulum secara langsung berkaitan dengan kes menghalang orang ramai daripada menyembah Allah, menyeleweng daripada kebenaran Islam, dan berdakwah bertentangan dengan ajaran Rasul-rasul Allah dan mesej mereka. Bagi fisq, ia berkaitan dengan orang-orang yang, dengan kerelaan mereka sendiri, tidak mematuhi apa yang telah diturunkan oleh Allah. Kajian ini cuba meneroka tafsiran mengikut konteks beberapa ayat-Qur'an yang berkaitan dengan istilah kufur untuk memahami berbagai-bagai kategori kufur.

Kata Kunci: Qur'an, Kufur, Syirik, Zulum, Fisq

Introduction

It is generally accepted that people who do not believe in the Articles of Faith in Islam, as well as idol worshipers, and polytheists are infidels. But the word *kufir* has various connotations in the Qur'anic usage. For instance, the unbelievers are referred to as *kāfirūn*, the idol worshipers are regarded as *mushrikūn* and the people who are against the truth, and prevent others from practicing Islam are labeled as *zālimūn*. This article is largely a response to the difficulties that many people face in explaining the meaning of the concept of infidelity or *kufir*.

The Definition of *Kufr*

Kufr is derived from the word *kafara* in the form of infinitive noun. *Kafara*, *kaffara*, *kaffār* and *kafūr* are the words derived from the root KFR. *Kafara* is a verbal form. In the Qur'ān, in the form of perfect active *kafara*, it appears 228 times. In the form of the imperfect active *yakfuru*, it is used 56 times. In the form of the imperative *ukfur*, it is used once. The word *kufir* appears in the Qur'ān 37 times. The basic meaning of the word *kafara* is 'to cover, to deny the grace and the existence of God, and to disbelieve (with *bi*)'¹.

There are two opinions regarding the word *kafara*. The first opinion says: "Kafara in the infinitive noun *kufrān*, *kufūr* and *kufir* means he covered or concealed, and denied the favor or benefit (conferred upon

¹ John Penrice, *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran*, (London: Curzon Press Ltd, 1970), p.126.

him), he was ungrateful, opposite of *shakara* (thankfulness)². The word *kafūr* means very ungrateful, or unthankful, especially to God. It appears in the Qur'ān 13 times³. According to al-Bayḍāwī, the word *kafūr* is an exceeding degree of *kufr* and denotes the type of man who is forgetful of all the benefits he has enjoyed⁴. This category of *kufr* is termed *al-kufr al-ni'mah* (the ungratefulness: disbelief) or *al-kufr al-aṣghar* (the minor disbelief). This type of *kufr* denies the perfection of *īmān* (faith) but does not reject it absolutely; it is *kufr 'amalī* (action wise disbelief) which is not in contrast with the utterance of the heart, its performance and adherence⁵.

The second opinion of the word *kafara* says: “The infinitive noun of *kufr* (*kafara*) means he disbelieved, he became an unbeliever, or infidel; it is the opposite of *āmana* (he believed: infinitive noun, *īmān*). For example, *kafara billah* means ‘he disbelieved in God’, because he who does so conceals, or covers the truth and the favors of the Liberal Dispenser of favours⁶.”

The active participle of the word *kafara* is *kāfir*. In the Qur'ān, this word is mentioned 158 times. *Kāfir* is one who denies the favors of God or who denies and refuses to acknowledge the unity of God, the prophetic office of His prophets and His law. According to the common conventional acceptance, *kāfir* is an unbeliever, an infidel, the opposite of *mu'min* (believer)⁷. This type of *kufr* is also known as *al-kufr al-akbar* (the major disbelief). This *kufr* is completely excluded from the faith; it

² Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Beirut: Librarie de Liban, 1980), part 1, vol.7, p.2620.

³ Ibid., p.2622.

⁴ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran*, (Montreal: McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, 1966), p. 121.

⁵ Ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥukmī, *A'lām al-Sunnah al-Manshūrah*, (n.p.: Maktabah li'l-Tawzi', 1988), p.147.

⁶ Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Beirut: Librarie de Liban, 1980), part 1, vol.7, p. 2620.

⁷ Ibid., p.2622.

is *kufr* where one rejects the Articles of Faith absolutely, both inwardly and outwardly⁸.

Many of the passages of the Qur'ān clearly show that *al-kufr al-akbar* (the major disbelief) is related to the rejection of the Articles of Faith. For example, 2:89 reads:

And when there comes to them a Book from Allah, confirming what is with them, although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without faith, when there comes to them that which they (should) have recognized, they refuse to believe (kafarū) in it, but the curse of Allah is on those without faith.

Another aspect related to *kufr* is *fujūr*. It is the nominal form of the word *fajara*. *Fujūr* is formally contrasted with *taqwā* (the fear of God), but its meaning has much to do with the aspect of *kufr* which is directly opposed to the fear of God⁹. Sometimes the word *fājir* appears alongside with *kāfir*. For example, the Qur'ān says:

“And Noah prayed: ‘O my Sustainer, leave not on earth any of those who deny the truth (al-kāfirīn), for behold. If You do leave them, they will (always try to) lead astray those who worship You, and will give birth to nothing but wickedness (fājir) and stubborn ingratitude (kaffār)’” (71: 26-27).

Various Forms of infidelity

The Qur'ān has used the term *kufr* in various shades of meaning. Below is the identification of those various categories of infidelity as mentioned in the Qur'ān.

1. Infidelity in Relation to *Shirk* (Polytheism)

Shirk or polytheism literally means associating partners with Allah. The infidelity of the polytheists is related to *shirk*. There are different types of *shirk*. The first form of *shirk* consists in worshipping besides God, other things, or beings, such as idols, stones, heavenly bodies, forc-

⁸ Ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥukmī, (1988), *A'lām al-Sunnah al-Manshūrah*, (n.p.): Maktabah li'l-Tawzi', 1988), p.147.

⁹ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, p.164.

es of nature, tombs, animals or human beings. These things are believed to be demigods, or incarnations of God, or sons and daughters of God¹⁰. The second form of *shirk* is the associating with Allah other things or beings that are supposed to possess attributes in a similar way as the Divine Being such as Dogmatic Trinity of the Christians, duality of the Zoroastrians, Paganism and Hindu polytheism¹¹. The third form of *shirk* consists in taking other human beings as gods and lords¹².

a. Worshipping Creatures of God

The Arabs before Islam believed in gods and goddesses and made their idols on their own whims and fancies. Some of their gods and goddesses were *Hubal* (the greatest idols of Quraysh), *al-Lāt*, *al-'Uzzā*, *al-Manāt*, *Wadd*, *Suwā'*, *Yagūth*, *Ya'ūq*, *Nasr*, *Usāfa* and *Nā'ilah*. The Arabs regarded *al-Lāt*, *al-Manāt* and *al-'Uzzā* as the daughters of God. In relation to this, The Qur'ān refers to the belief of the Arabs in 71:23: “*And they have said (to each other) 'Abandon not your gods. Abandon neither Wadd, nor Suwā', neither Yaghūth, nor Ya'ūq, nor Nasr'*”; and in 53:19-22: “*Have you seen al-Lāt and 'Uzzā, and another, the third (goddess), Manāt? What! For you the male and for Him the female?*”¹³.

The Arabs also worshipped the sun, the moon, the stars, the *Jinn*, animals and plants such as the gazelle, the horse, the camel, the palm tree, the rocks and stones, etc. For example, *Dhāt Anwāt*, a big tree near Makkah, and *Dhul Khalsah*, a house situated in a village known as *Tharūq*¹⁴. Some of the Arab tribes who believed that the angels were daughters of God were al-Quraysh, Juhmiyah, Banū Salmah, Khuzā'ah and Banū Malayh. They worshipped angels in the form of deities. Their statues were in the form of women¹⁵. Regarding their belief in angels as daughters of God, it is stated in 53:27: “*Those who believe not in Hereaf-*

¹⁰ Abdul Jalil Mia, *Concept of Unity*, (Dacca: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1980), p.97

¹¹ Ibid., p.97.

¹² Ibid., p.98.

¹³ Muhammad (s.a.w.) Ibrahim H.I. Surty, *The Qur'ān and Al-Shirk (Polytheism)*, (London: Ta Ha Publishers, 1990), pp.79-81.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.81.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.81.

ter, name the angels with female name”. In relation to belief in *Jinn*, God says in 6:100: “*Yet they make the Jinns equal with Allāh, though He did create the Jinns, and they falsely, having no knowledge, attribute to Him sons and daughters”*”.

b. Belief in the Concept of Trinity

The Christians are well-known as the People of the Book, but their faith is considered as *shirk* because they regard Jesus as son of God. The creation of Jesus without a father cause the Christians to not believe that he was a human being. They argue that Jesus was born without human father; and that it is impossible for a child to be born without a father hence Jesus must be the son of God¹⁶.

The Christians claim that they believe in the Oneness of God even though they regard Jesus as the son of God. In order to show that their religion is a monotheistic religion they interpret God through the concept of trinity. According to them, the Trinity or the Holy Trinity is the union of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in One God. They say that they do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, ‘the consubstantial Trinity’. The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God, whole and entire. They add that the Father is that which the Son is, the Son is that which the Father is, the Father and Son are that which the Holy Spirit is¹⁷.

The Qur’ān claims that the concept of Trinity is *kufr* (unbelief), and it is related to *shirk* (polytheism). It is impossible for God to be ascribed with Jesus because He is the Creator of the world; Jesus and Mary were His creations, as stated in 5:17:

*In blasphemy indeed are those that say Allah is Christ,
the son of Mary. Say, who then has the least power against
Allah, if His Will were to destroy Christ, the son of Mary,
his mother, and all-everyone that is on the earth? For to Allah
belongs the dominion of the heaven and the earth, and all that is*

¹⁶ Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ṣābunī, *Ṣafwah al-Tafāsīr*,(Beirut: Dār al-Qur’ān al-Karīm, 1980), vol. 1, p.531.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Chapman, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (London: Geoffery Chapman, a Cassel Imprint, 1994), p.60.

between. He creates what He pleases. For Allah has power over all things.

This verse shows that the Nature and the Essence of God are different from that of Jesus. Jesus is creation with the command of God (*kun*). It rejects the belief of the Christians that the body of Jesus was that of a human being but his nature was absolute God¹⁸.

There are other passages of the Qur'ān rejecting the concept of trinity. For example, in 5:72 God stresses that those who say God is Christ/Jesus, the son of Mary are *kufir* (unbelief). In this passage, God also points out that Jesus called people to worship Allah, his Lord and their Lord. He warned his people that whoever ascribes God with others he is prohibited from entering paradise. In 5:73 God states that whoever says that Allah is one of the three in the trinity is *kufir* (unbelief). The above passages call Christians to erase the belief that Jesus is God. The passages also stress that Jesus was a human being who was bound to be equipped with human nature like eating and drinking. How could, then, the Christians deny the human nature of Jesus, or claim him as someone who is above his nature¹⁹?

In the Qur'ān, *shirk* (polytheism) is not only included in the category of *kufir* but it is also mentioned as a case of *ẓulm* (wrong doing). In the Qur'ān, the relationship between *kufir*, *shirk* and *ẓulm* occurs side by side in 5:72:

They surely disbelieve (kafara) who say: Lo, Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said, 'O children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord'. Lo, whoso ascribes partners yushrik) unto Allah, for him Allah has forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil doers (Ẓālimūn) there will be no helper.

c. Claiming 'Uzair as the Son of God

The Jews are those who believe in the Oneness of God like the Muslims. They are the followers of a monotheistic religion. But, the Qur'ān (9:30) refers to the Jewish in 'Uzayr as son of God:

¹⁸ 'Abd al-Wahab 'Abd al-Salām Ṭawīlah, *al-Masīh al-Muntaẓir wa Nihāyah al-'Alām*, al-(Qāhirah: Dār al-Salām, 2002), p.185.

¹⁹ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *'Aqīdah al-Muslim*, (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1979), p.51.

The Jews call ‘Uzayr a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the Son of God. That is a saying from their mouth (In this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah curse be on them how they are deluded away from the truth.

The Jews who believed that ‘Uzayr was a son of God constitute a small group among the Jews who lived between the time of Prophet Solomon and the time of Prophet Zachariah. According to al-Qurṭubī, this pronunciation is general but its meaning is specific because not all the Jews then said that °Uzayr was a son of God. There were Jews who were astonished over the miracle that was given by God to ‘Uzayr and said that he must be a son of God²⁰.

2. Infidelity Connected to *Takdhīb* (Telling Lies) about God and the Truth

The infidelity of the *mushrikūn* (polytheists) is also related to telling lies (*takdhīb*) about God and the truth. According to the Qur’ān, speaking lies about God and the truth is included in the category of *kufr*. The People of the Book are those who not only reject the Articles of Faith but they also tell lies (*takdhīb*) about God and the truth. In the verse 39:32, God regards he who tells a lie against Allah (*mimman kadhaba ‘alā Allāh*) and denies the truth (*kadhhaba bi’l-ṣidq*) as the one who did greater wrong (*aẓlam*) and as *kāfir* (unbeliever). The verses 83:7-12 show that telling lies about the Day of Judgment is *kufr*; and it is a characteristic of all the wicked (*fājir*).

Sometimes the terms *takdhīb* and *iftirā’* (forging a lie against God) are labeled as *ẓulm* as in 6:21:

And who could be more wicked than he who attributes his own lying inventions (iftarā) to God or gives the lie (kadhib) to His message? Verily, such evildoers (al-zālimūn) will never attain to a happy state.

²⁰ Abī ‘Abdullah Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li- Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā’ al-Turath al-‘Arabīyy, 1967), vol.8, pp.116-117; and see also Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ṣabbūnī, *Ṣafwah al-Tafāsīr*, vol.1, p.531.

This verse shows that those who invented lies about God are called the liars and wrong-doers. This verse is related to the polytheists who said the idols were God, and to the Christians who said God has a son²¹.

3. Infidelity Related to Telling Lies about the Signs of God and the Position of Prophets

Infidelity is also applied to those who tell lies about God's sign (*takhdhīb āyāt Allāh*). Crying lies about God's signs is called *ẓulm*. It is one of the most characteristic features of *kufr*. This category of *kufr* is related to those who tell lies about the Scripture of God. For example, in the verse 62:5, God regards those who were charged with the obligations of the Torah (Mosaic Law) but subsequently failed to carry them according to God's Will as evil-doing folks (*ẓālimūn*) because they told lies about God's messages.

The words *kadhhaba* and *ẓulm* are not only related to inventing lies to God's signs but are also linked to prophethood. Many passages of the Qur'ān are related to the People of the Book who lied about the truth of God especially regarding the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad. As a way of influencing the people to refuse the Prophethood of Muḥammad and his messages, Jews and Christians claimed that the prophets were only from among themselves. That is why they were called unbelievers and wrong-doers because they turned the people from the path of God and Islam²².

The attitude of the People of the Book in hiding the truth in relation to the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.) which was mentioned in the Injīl and the Torah is regarded as preventing people from the way of God. This act is considered as *kufr* and *ẓulm*. This is mentioned by God in 4:167-168. In this verse God stresses that those who are bent on denying the truth and on turning others away from the path of God (*ṣaddū 'an sabīl'l-Allāh*) have gone astray (*ḍallū ḍalālan ba'īda*). Regarding this passage, Qatādah said that the People of the Book knew about the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.) and of Islam as the religion of God

²¹ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āyy al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo: Maṭba'āt al-Ḥalabī, 1954), vol. 7, p.165.

²² Ibid., vol.6, p.19.

because these were mentioned in their books (Injil and Torah). Therefore, they were called liars and the people who prevented others from the path of God²³.

God reminds the People of the Book regarding their concealment of the truth in 3:99:

O People of the Book! Why do you (endeavor to) bar those who have come to believe (in the divine writ) from the path of God by trying to make it appear crooked, when you yourselves bear witness (to its being straight) for, God is not unaware of what you do.

The way the People of the Book rejected the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) (s.a.w.) is regarded as arrogance, jealousy and haughtiness. These characteristics are considered as major sins and similar to the attributes of Iblīs who refused to prostrate before Adam (2:34). God commanded all angels and Iblīs to prostrate before Adam. All of them obeyed God's order except Iblīs who refused and glorified in his arrogance. As a result, he became an unbeliever. God describes Iblīs in such a way as to make him a metaphor for arrogance, jealousy and haughtiness²⁴.

The verse 2:34 also serves as a rebuke to the people who have attitudes and characters similar to Iblīs such as being too arrogant to follow the commands of Allah and to acquiesce in obedience of His law and regulation. The Jews, who inhabited Medina to which Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) migrated, arrogantly refused to affirm the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.) and submit in obedience to him, revolting against him and envying him although they knew about him in their Scriptures²⁵.

Jews and Iblīs share characteristic features in denying God's blessings and favors towards them. The Jews denied the blessings which God had bestowed upon them and their forefathers, such as feeding their an-

²³ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āyy al-Qur'ān*, vol.4, p.22, 'Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl Ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1986), vol.7, p.395, and see also Ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1987), vol. 6, p.19.

²⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āyy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1, p.228.

²⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, p.228.

cestors with *manna* (food like honey) and *salwā* (quails) and shading them with clouds, and innumerable other blessings. And Iblīs denied God's blessings and favors towards him by opposing Him and His command to him to prostrate before Adam²⁶.

4. Infidelity Regarding Doubting or Lacking of Conviction in the Articles of Faith in Islam

Conviction in the Articles of Faith in Islam is an important requirement to become Muslim. Doubting or lacking of conviction in the six Articles of Faith is related to *al-kufr al-akbar* (the major disbelief). According to the Qur'ān (40:34), a person who doubts the revelation of God and His Apostle is called a prodigal doubter (*musrif murtāb*):

And verily Joseph brought you of old clear proofs, yet you ceased not to be in doubt concerning what he brought you until, when he died, he said, 'Allah will not send any messenger after him'. Thus Allah deceives him who is a prodigal doubter (musrif murtāb).

The term *musrif* does not here show clearly that it is synonymous with *kufr*, but in certain contexts such grave doubt concerning God's revelations, vain disputes about God, too much pride and insolence to believe in Him, are well-known marks of the *kāfir*, especially when the term *musrif* is applied to those who ascribe partners to God (*shirk*), that is, those who indulge in idolatry²⁷. The following verse (40:35) shows that the unbelievers not only doubt the revelation of God but also wrangle with the Messenger. Such conduct is regarded as greatly hateful in the sight of Allah and the believers.

5. Infidelity Concerning Prevention of People from Accepting Islam or Way of God

Any activity which prevents people from accepting Islam or the way of God is included in the category of *al-kufr al-akbar* (major unbelief). This act is also related to *ẓulm* (wrong doing). In the Qur'ān, there are many passages where occurs the phrase '*ṣaddu 'an sabīl-Allāh*' (pre-

²⁶ Ibid. , vol.1, p.228.

²⁷ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran*, p.176.

vent people from the way of God) referring to various actions. For example, in 2:217 God says:

They question you (Muhammad) with regard to warfare in the sacred month. Say: Warfare therein is a great (transgression) but to turn (men) from the way of Allāh (ṣaddu ‘an sabīl-Allāh) and to disbelieve in Him and in the Inviolable Place of Worship, and to expel its people thence, is a greater (transgression) with Allāh), for persecution is worse than killing.

In relation to the above verse, some of the commentators say that the phrase ‘ṣaddu ‘an sabīl-Allāh’ is related to the action of preventing the people from believing in God and Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.); restraining the Muslims from accepting the Prophet, by imprisoning, torturing and arresting them; preventing them from Masjid al-Ḥarām in the time of *haj* (pilgrimage) and *‘umrah* (minor pilgrimage) and performing prayers therein; expelling the believer from Makkah; and causing dissent from the religion. All these actions are referred to as major unbelief²⁸.

Another verse of the Qur’ān (2:114) which clearly stresses that preventing people from the mosque is related to the act of *ẓulm* reads:

And who does greater wrong (aẓlam) than he who forbids the approach to the sanctuaries of Allāh lest His name should be mentioned therein, and strives for the ruin? As for such, it was never meant that they should enter them except in awe. Theirs in the world is ignominy and theirs in the Hereafter is an awful doom.

6. Infidelity in Relation to the Act of Deviating from the Truth of Islam

This type of *kufir* (7:45 & 86; 11:18-19; 14:3; and 47:32) is also related to hindering people from accepting Islam and against the

²⁸ Fakr al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Umr al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥf al-Kabīr*, (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Bahiyah al-Miṣriyyah, n.d.), vol. 5, pp.35-36; and see also Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ṣābūnī, *Ṣafwāt al-Taḥf al-Kabīr*, vol.1, p.138; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1987), vol.3, p.43; and Muḥammad ‘Amārah, *al-‘Amāl al-Kāmilah li’l-‘Imān Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, (Beirut: al-Mu‘assasah al-‘Arabiyah li’l-Dirāsāt wa’l-Nashr, 1972), vol.4, p.579.

Prophethood of the Messengers of God and their messages. The verse 7:45 reads:

Who debar (men) from the path of Allāh (ṣaddu 'an sabīl Allāh) and would have it crooked (yabghūnahā 'iwajā), and who are unbelievers in the Last Day.

The phrase *yabghūnahā 'iwajā'* means they digressed from the right path of God²⁹.

7. Changing and Modifying the Revelation of God and His Laws

The Qur'ān (5:44) regards those who change the revelations of God and His laws as *kāfir* and *zālim*:

Lo, We did reveal Torah, wherein is guidance and a light, by which the Prophet who surrendered (unto Allāh) judge the Jews and rabbis and the priests (judged) by such of Allāh's Scripture as they were bidden to observe, and there unto were they witnesses so fear not mankind, but fear Me. And barter not My revelations for a little gain (lā tashtarū bi āyātī thamanan qalīlan). Whoso judges not by that which God has revealed such are unbelievers (wa man lam yaḥkum bimā anzala Allāh fa 'ulūika hum al-kāfirūn).

According to some of the Qur'anic commentators, the phrase '*la tashtarū bi āyātī thamanan qalīlan*' (and barter not My revelation for a little gain) shows the attitude of the people who do not judge according to Allah's revelations. The phrase means, God prohibited *aḥbār* (rabbis) from consuming illegal possessions due to their alteration of His Book and modification of His regulations including the judgment of adultery and fornication (*al-zāniyain al-muḥsinain*) and so on³⁰. Ibn Zayd, a Qur'anic commentator adds that the phrase means 'do not consume illegal possessions and bribes'³¹.

²⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol.8, p.187.

³⁰ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āyy al-Qur'ān*, vol.6, p.251; and see also Abū'l-Qāsim Maḥmūd Ibn 'Umār al-Zamaksharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), vol.1, p. 615.

³¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol.6, p.252.

The phrase ‘*wa man lam yaḥkum bimā anzala Allāh fa’ulāika hum al-kāfirūn*’ (whoso judges not by that which God has revealed such are unbelievers) means those who do not judge according to what God has revealed in His Book, change and modify His revelations and conceal the truth which He has revealed in His Book are the unbelievers. They are regarded as unbelievers because they hide the truth which they must explain to the people. The Jews who condoned adultery and fornication by not carrying out the stoning (*al-rajm*) were referred to in the phrase³².

There are different interpretations of the word ‘*al-kāfirūn*’ (the unbelievers) in relation to the verse 5:44. First, those who do not judge according to what God has revealed are unbelievers because they reject the revelation of God with intention, resistance and premeditation³³. Ibn ‘Abbās, states that *kufṛ* in this passage is not related to the *kufṛ* of God, His Angels, His Books and His Apostles³⁴. He says that *kufṛ* in this passage is related to those who do not judge with what Allah has revealed³⁵. According to him, this passage is generally related to the Jews and others³⁶. He adds that the passage was revealed about the People of the Book because they were witnesses to the authenticity of the Prophet in the *Tawrāt* (Torah)³⁷.

Second, he who does not judge according to what Allāh has revealed he is an unbeliever³⁸. Ṭāwūs and others hold the view that *kufṛ* in the passage is not to depart from the religion (*al-millah*), but it is disobedience short of unbelief (*kufṛ dūna kufṛ*). Al-Suddī says that the phrase ‘who does not judge according to what Allāh has revealed’ refers to the one who renounces the will of Allah with premeditation and he is among the unbelievers³⁹. Others claim that this passage was revealed about the People of the Book, yet it refers to all the people including the believers

³² Ibid., vol.6, p.252.

³³ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol.2, p.64.

³⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, vol.6, p.252.

³⁵ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 6, p.189

³⁶ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, vol.1, p.616.

³⁷ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol.6, p.189; and see also Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol.2, p.63.

³⁸ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol.6, p.189.

³⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol.2, p.63.

and unbelievers⁴⁰. Ibn Mas'ūd and Ḥasan hold that the passage generally deals with all those who do not judge according to what Allāh has revealed, whether Muslims, Jews or Christians.⁴¹ Al-Sha'bī views that it was revealed only about the Muslims⁴².

Conclusion

There are three categories of infidelity: (1) worshipping idols, stones, heavenly bodies, forces of nature, tombs, animals or human beings beside God; (2) associating with Allah other things or beings that are regarded as possessing attributes in similar ways as the Divine Being, such as Dogmatic Trinity of the Christians, duality of Zoroastrians, Paganism and Hindu polytheism; and (3) taking other human beings for gods and lords. Infidelity includes *takdhīb* (telling lies) about God and the truth in relation to the signs of God and the prophethood of Prophets. Doubting or lacking of conviction in the Articles of faith in Islam is also related to infidelity. The activities of preventing people from accepting the way of God and making people deviate from the truth of Islam are connected to infidelity. Infidelity also consists in changing and modifying the laws and revelation of God.

⁴⁰ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āyy al-Qur'ān*, vol.6, p.252.

⁴¹ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 6, p.189 .

⁴² Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, vol.2, p.63.