

The Controversy of *Mu`min* and *Kāfir* Meaning: How to Build Faith and Religious Tolerance?

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Abstract—The study aims to describe the meaning of *mu`min* and *kāfir* in the Qur`an and its implications for Islamic education. The study method uses the thematic digital Qur`an approach. The study found that, the meaning of *mu`min* and *kāfir* refers to the main character of a person. If he is characteristically obedient to God, he is a *mu`min* (believer). On the contrary, if he has the character of disobeying against God's main command, then he is a *kāfir* (infidel). So far many Muslims have been wrong. They claim every Muslim is automatically *mu`min* while everyone outside of Islam is an infidel. Even those who radically accuse Muslims of being outside of the mainstream as infidels too. So, it could be a Muslim who rejects the main commandment of the Prophet sentenced as an infidel by God while an *Ahl al-Kitāb* assessed as a *mu`min*. The implication is that religious education needs to be done to build true faith and religious tolerance.

Keywords—religious tolerance; *mu`min*; *kāfir*; thematic digital Qur`an

I. INTRODUCTION

The term *kāfir* (infidel) is the opposites of *mu`min* (believer) and Muslim [1]. Who are the believers and who are the infidels? Muslim students tend to view Muslims as *mu`min* while adherents of non-Muslim religions as *kāfir*. The results of the research in 2018, from a sample of 150 UPI students, over one third responden refer to adherents of religions outside Islam as infidels. Over one third responden argue that they can call it an infidel; and less than one third responden seemed unable to judge whether they were all infidels or they are some of them believed [2]. The other research, from a sample of 190 UPI students, more than half rejected the madhhab Shia. A quarter are neutral and another quarter accept this madhhab [3]. Because of these, various rejections and violence against religion other and minority madhhab often occur in Indonesia. Began a massive demonstration against Ahok as a candidate for governor of DKI Jakarta until burn churches in many places and Buddhist temples in Sumatra lately. Likewise, the violence against the minority Shiites and Ahmadis happened massively. In 2010, the Shiites near the city of Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) were attacked by the masses [4]. In 2011, they expelled Shia people in Sampang Madura. Mosques, pesantren (traditional Islamic education institutions) and their homes were burned down by the masses [5]. Also in this year, the Ahmadya in Pandeglang Banten (Indonesia) were driven out by the mob, and they burned their homes.

Why do students think so? Their views are thus allegedly influenced by the writings on Google and social media which lately are massive mentioning non-Muslims, Ahmadiya, and Shia as *kāfir*. But the blog nu.or.id mentions that there are among the *Ahl al-Kitāb* who are straight, humble, prostrate at night, and do *amar makruf nahyi munkar* during the day [6]. These writings are of course influenced by the Qur`anic Tafseer which tent view non-Muslims as infidels. The reason is that non-Muslims reject the apostolate of the Prophet Muhammad [7]. It standardizes this view in the classical laws of the Islamic state that divide citizens into Muslims and *dhimma* (the kafir who the state protects them). It knows the non-Muslims in the *Fiqh* as infidels. The implication is that the *dhimma* are minority citizens whose rights are different from those of Muslims. Such discriminatory legislation is caused by his view of non-Muslims as infidels. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi in 2010 developed a new *fiqh* that is justist where Muslims and non-Muslims have the same civil and political rights [8]. Previously Sheikh Muhammad Abduh and Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Rida argued that the *Ahl al-Kitāb* basically have faith in Allah and the earlier Prophets [9]. It must be distinguished between Muslims, infidels, and non-Muslims [10]. The Indonesian state officially recognizes the existence of the world's major religions. This shows that Islam in Indonesia supports the existence of religions [11]. That is, if there are Muslim groups that discriminate against other religions this is an aberration. To judge which view is more appropriate, it is necessary to refer directly to the Qur`an, who are the *mu`min* and *kāfir* according to the Qur`an? What are their characteristics?

II. METHOD

Study of the characteristics of people who *mu`min* and *kāfir* using the thematic digital Qur`an method. For Indonesian researchers, install the digital Qur`an ver 3.1 complete with its translation in English and Indonesian [12]. The object of research is the verses of the Qur`an which describe the characteristics of *mu`min* and *kāfir*. The verses are analyzed by using a five-column table: Sequence number, (Quran: Surah verses ..., Translation of the Qur`an, message of verses, and temporary conclusions. The first column just needs to write No. 1, 2, 3, etc.; the second column lives write the verse number of the Qur`an/the translation quoted, the third column copies the selected verse (from the Qur`an digital program); the fourth column, arranges the verse message from the Qur`an

translation; and the fifth column, composes sentences that are easier to understand from the message of verse. It takes conclusions (general) about the meaning or characteristics of a term from all temporary conclusions [13]. So, conclusions (general) about the characteristics of *mu`min* and *kāfir* are taken from all temporary conclusions (column five).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Meaning and Characteristic of *Mu`min*

The word of *mu`min* (faith/believer) with all its derivatives is 589 items (about 589 verses). But the expression of faith in the Qur'an is mostly related to the commandments and prohibitions for believers, as well as praise for believers. The meaning of faith can be clearly identified after recognizing the characteristics of believers in the Qur'an. By using the digital thematic digital Qur'an approach, the characteristics of the faiths are in table 1.

TABLE I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF *MU`MIN*

No.	Quran, Surah: Ayat	Translate the Qur'an	Message the Ayat	Tentative conclusion
1	2: 165	Yet there are men who take (for worship) others besides Allah, as equal (with Allah): They love them as they should love Allah. But those of Faith are overflowing in their love for Allah. If only the unrighteous could see, behold, they would see the penalty: that to Allah belongs all power, and Allah will strongly enforce the penalty.	Those of <i>mu`min</i> are overflowing in their love for Allah.	The characteristic of <i>mu`min</i> is overflowing in their love for Allah.
2	2: 285	The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers. "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers." And they say: "We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys."	All of them (believers and believers) believe in Allah, His angels, His books and His apostles. (They say): "We make no distinction between any of the messengers of His messenger", and they say: "We hear and we obey."	The characteristic of <i>mu`min</i> are to believe in Allah, His angels, His books and His apostles, not distinguishing a Messenger with other Apostles, and they say: "We hear and we obey."
3	3: 113-114	Not all of them are alike: Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (For the right): They rehearse the Signs of Allah all night long, and they prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: They are in the ranks of the righteous.	Among the People of the Book are those who are righteous, ... They believe in Allah and the Last Day.	Among the People of the Book there is a believer.
4	3: 179	Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which ye are now, until He separates what is evil from what is good nor will He disclose to you the secrets of the Unseen. But He chooses of His Messengers (For the purpose) whom He pleases. So believe in Allah. And His messengers: And if ye believe and do right, ye have a reward without measure.	Allah will never show you (Himself, the substance of God) the Almighty, but Allah chooses who He wants from His messengers. Therefore, believe in Allah and His apostles.	The characteristic of <i>mu`min</i> can know the Substance of God (<i>ma`rifatullah</i>). He know by asking to His Apostle.
5	8: 2	For, Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put (all) their trust in their Lord;	Those who <i>mu`min</i> are those who, when Allah called, their hearts tremble, and when their verses are read to them their faith increases.	The characteristics of <i>mu`min</i> are: Those who, when Allah called, their hearts tremble, and When their verses are read to them their faith increases.
6	23: 1-11	1. Successful indeed are the believers, 2. Who are humble in their prayers, 3. And who keep aloof from what is vain, 4. And who are givers of poor-rate, 5. And who guard their private parts, 6. Except before their mates or those whom their right hands possess, for they surely are not blameable, 7. But whoever seeks to go beyond that, these are they that exceed the limits; 8. And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant, 9. And those who keep a guard on their prayers; 10. These are they who are the heirs, 11. Who shall inherit the Paradise; they shall abide therein.	The person who <i>mu`min</i> get good luck because: Establishing prayer with <i>khusyu`</i> (constantly staring at God); Keep away from words and disgraceful deeds; Paying zakat; Keeping his cock, except to his wife; Maintain orders and promises.	The characteristics of <i>mu`min</i> are: Establishing prayer with <i>khusyu`</i> (constantly staring at God); Keep away from words and disgraceful deeds; Paying zakat; Keeping his cock, except to his wife; Maintain orders and promises.

From some conclusions while in the table above can be concluded the characteristics of people who faith as follows:

- Loving God (Quran: Surah Albaqarah, 2: Ayat 165). The main condition for loving Allah is to obey the Messenger of Allah (Quran: Surah Ali Imran, 3: Ayat

31). Thus the most important characteristic of faith is to obey the Messenger of Allah;

- *Ma`rifat billah* (Quran: Surah Ali Imran, 3: Ayat 179), namely knowing the substance of God whose name is Allah. Therefore, if God whose name is Allah is called his heart trembles, and if God's verses are read out, his faith is strengthened (Quran: Surah Alanfal, 8: Ayat 2);
- Believe in His Angels, His Books, and His Apostles. They did not discriminate between an Apostle and another Apostle, and they said: "We heard and we obeyed " (to the Messenger)! and believe in the Last Day (Quran: Surah *Albaqarah*, 2: Ayat 285; Annisa, 4: Ayat 136);
- Establishing prayer with *khusyu`* (constantly staring at God), keep away from words and disgraceful deeds, paying zakat, keeping his cock, except to his wife, and maintain orders and promises (Quran: Surah Al-Mu`minun, 23: Ayat 1-11);

- Among the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the People of the Book) there are also those who faith (Quran: Surah Ali Imran, 3: Ayat 113-114).

B. The Meaning and Characteristic of *Kāfir*

The word infidel with all its derivatives is 439 items (about 439 verses). However, the expression of faith in the Qur'an is mostly related to threats to unbelievers, the prohibition on acting and behaving like the unbelievers, the prohibition of obeying the unbelievers, the command to abstain from disbelief, the prohibition of making pagans as guardians and helpers by leaving believers, and the need to be aware of the deceit of the unbelievers. The *kāfir* meaning can be clearly known after recognizing the characteristics of those who disbelieve in the Qur'an. By using the thematic digital Qur'an approach, the characteristics of infidels are in table 2.

TABLE II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF *KĀFIR*

No.	Quran, Surah: Ayat	Translate the Qur'an	Message the Ayat	Tentative conclusion
1	2: 6	As to those who reject Faith, it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> are given a warning or not given a warning. They still will not believe.	The characteristic of <i>kāfir</i> do not need to be commemorated because they will not believe.
2	2: 34	And behold, We said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam" and they bowed down. Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: He was of those who reject Faith.	Iblis (satan) was convicted of infidelity for refusing to prostrate (obey) Prophet Adam (as an Apostle).	The characteristics of a <i>kāfir</i> is to reject the Apostle.
3	2: 212	The life of this world is alluring to those who reject faith, and they scoff at those who believe. But the righteous will be above them on the Day of Resurrection; for Allah bestows His abundance without measure on whom He will.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> look beautifully at the life of the world and despise the believers.	The characteristics of a <i>kāfir</i> are: Looking beautiful to the life of the world. Viewing the despicable of believers.
4	2: 264	O ye who believe! cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury,- like those who spend their substance to be seen of men, but believe neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. They are in parable like a hard, barren rock, on which is a little soil: on it falls heavy rain, which leaves it (Just) a bare stone. They will be able to do nothing with aught they have earned. And Allah guideth not those who reject faith.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> , if giving alms he mentions (almsgiving), hurts (the recipient's alms heart), and <i>riya</i> .	The characteristics of a <i>kāfir</i> , if giving alms he mentions (almsgiving), hurts (the recipient's alms heart), and <i>riya</i> (to be seen of men).
5	3: 21	As to those who deny the Signs of Allah and in defiance of right, slay the prophets, and slay those who teach just dealing with mankind, announce to them a grievous penalty.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> will get a painful punishment because they: Reject the verses of Allah. Kill the Prophets. Kill the person who upholds justice.	The characteristic who <i>kāfir</i> are: Refusing Allah's commands and prohibitions in the Qur'an. Killing the Prophets, both physically and teachings. Killing people who uphold justice, either physically killed or the value of justice.
6	3: 32	Say: "Obey Allah and His Messenger": But if they turn back, Allah loveth not those who reject Faith.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> refuse to obey Allah and His Messenger.	The characteristics of who <i>kāfir</i> is reject Allah and His Messenger.
7	4: 167	Those who reject Faith and keep off (men) from the way of Allah, have verily strayed far, far away from the Path.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> obstruct (humans) from the path of Allah.	The characteristics of who <i>kāfir</i> obstructing (man) from the path of Allah.
8	6: 25	Of them there are some who (pretend to) listen to thee; but We have thrown veils on their hearts, So they understand it not, and deafness in their ears; if they saw every one of the signs, not they will believe in them; in so much that when they come to thee, they (but) dispute with thee; the Unbelievers say: "These are nothing but tales of the ancients."	The person who <i>kāfir</i> view the Qur'an as merely a tale of the ancients.	The characteristics of the <i>kāfir</i> view the Qur'an as a tale of the ancients.
9	8: 36	The Unbelievers spend their wealth to hinder (man) from the path of Allah, and so will they continue to spend; but in the end they will have (only) regrets and sighs; at length they will be overcome: and the Unbelievers will be gathered together to Hell:-	Spend their wealth to hinder (humans) from the way of God.	Spend their wealth to hinder (humans) from the way of God..

Table 2. Cont.

10	22: 55	Those who reject Faith will not cease to be in doubt concerning (Revelation) until the Hour (of Judgment) comes suddenly upon them, or there comes to them the Penalty of a Day of Disaster.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> doubt the Qur'an.	The characteristics of the <i>kāfir</i> doubt the Qur'an.
11	38: 2	But the Unbelievers (are steeped) in self-glory and Separatism.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> is arrogant.	The characteristics of the <i>kāfir</i> is arrogant.
12	54: 3	They reject (the warning) and follow their (own) lusts but every matter has its appointed time.	The person who <i>kāfir</i> belied the Apostle and followed his desires.	The characteristics of the <i>kāfir</i> are: Denied the Apostle. Following his desires.

From some conclusions while in the table above can be concluded the characteristics of people who *kāfir* as follows:

- Refusing to obey Allah (Quran: Surah Albaqarah, 2: Ayat 34; Ali Imran, 3: Ayat 32), in the sense of rejecting His commands and prohibitions;
- Arrogant, feeling himself better than the Messenger of Allah, finally refused the Messenger (Quran: Surah Albaqarah, 2: Ayat 34; Ali Imran, 3: Ayat 32; Shad, 38: Ayat 2), even denier and kill the Apostle (Quran: Surah Ali Imran, 3: Ayat 21, 32; 54/Al-Qamar: 3), either to kill their person or teachings, because it is more obedient to his lust (Quran: Surah Alqamar, 54: Ayat 3);
- Looking at the world as the beautiful life (Quran: Surah Albaqarah, 2: Ayat 212);
- Obstructing humans from the path of Allah (Quran: Surah Annisa, 4: Ayat 167; Alanfal, 8: Ayat 36); Doubting and debasing the Qur'an (Quran: Surah Alan'am, 6: Ayat 25; Alhadjj, 22: Ayat 55);
- Therefore, there is no need to invite unbelievers to faith (Quran: Surah Albaqarah, 2: Ayat 6).

C. Discussion

The meaning of faith is addressed to people who obey God, in the sense of obeying His commands and prohibitions. The core of faith is knowing the Lord (*ma`rifatullah*) and being willing to obey the Messenger. While the pagan meaning is rejecting God, in the sense of rejecting His commands and prohibitions. The pagan core is arrogant. That is, feeling better than the Apostle. As a result, he refused the Apostle, began to deny him until kill him, either his person (their self) or his teachings.

The question is, are the criteria of *mu`min* and *kāfir* attached to adherents of certain religions? Certainly not. People of any religion and from any school can believe and can also be infidels. However, adherents of Islam are more potential to faith. Even people from the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (adherents of religions) can also believe.

Can adherents of non-Islamic religions be accused of being infidels? Absolutely not. Unbelievers can come from adherents of religions outside of Islam and can also be from Islam if there are signs of disbelief in them (rejecting God, arrogant, feeling himself better than the Apostle, more obedient to his passions, and doubting the Qur'an). This view is in line with several great scholars and the results of previous studies. The adherents of the book (*Ahl al-Kitāb*) are basically believers, namely believing in the previous Prophets [14]. Those who believe and

do good deeds, even though they are non-Muslims, are *mu`min*. An example of a non-Muslim as a believer is Descartes [10]. Nurcholis Madjid, Muslim scholars, states they have the right to heaven [15]. Harun Nasution, Muslim scholars, exemplifies Mother Theresia as an expert on heaven. So, if someone has the characteristics of faith, regardless of religion (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.), then they are categorized as believers. Likewise, if someone has characteristics of disbelief, whatever their religion (Islam or non-Muslim) it can categorize them as infidels. However, we must not sentence someone as an infidel because of this verdict as God's prerogative. However, if someone does not have the characteristics of faith and there are no characteristics of disbelief, then he is not a *mu`min* nor a *kāfir*. The more appropriate term for them is as a *jahiliyah* (laity people) [16]. The bad result of seeing non-Muslims as infidels is to impose the dominance of the truth of Islam. This is absolutely not true. Allah in several verses continuously reminded His Messenger that his duty is just to convey the message and that he has no authority over people to force them to embrace Islam; and also declared that there is no compulsion in the religion, therefore people should embrace the faith of their choice. Moreover, Allah enjoins Muslims to co-operate and interact with people of other faiths in good things and in fear of Allah, meaning in obedience of Allah. Despite of the misunderstanding between Muslims and non-Muslims and the bad things done to Muslims by non-Muslims previously; Muslims should not oppress non-Muslims and infringe on their rights, to the contrary, they should treat them with justice and avail to them their rights and opportunities. At the same time, Allah declared that he does not prohibit Muslims from doing good to non-Muslims who are not fighting or oppressing Muslims because Islam is treating people with justice and being kind and humble [17].

IV. CONCLUSION

Mu`min (faith, believer) and *kāfir* (infidel) cannot be related to adherents of a religion or madhhab (schools). If someone believes in Allah, in the sense of obeying His commands and prohibitions, then that person is a *mu`min*. The core of faith is knowing the Lord (*ma`rifatullah*) and being willing to obey the Messenger. While the *kāfir* meaning is rejecting God, in the sense of rejecting His commands and prohibitions. The *kāfir* core is arrogant. That is, feeling better than the Apostle. As a result, he rejected the Apostle, began to deny him until kill him, either his person (his self) or his teachings. If someone has *kāfir* characteristics, then that person, whether Muslim or other than Islam, they can be called infidels.

A devout Muslim is more potential to faith. However, even *Ahl al-Kitāb* can also faith. As for humans in general, it is more appropriate to be called *Jahiliyah* (laity, not believers and not infidels). The decision for them is up to God. Humans cannot accuse someone of being an infidel, because a pagan verdict is only God's authority. We must strengthen faith. However, in social life, we must build a religious life that is peaceful, moderate and tolerant.

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