

## Qur'anic Perspectives on Interfaith Marriage: A Comparative Interpretation between Ibn Kathir and al-Munir

### Pernikahan Beda Agama dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an: Analisis Komparatif atas Penafsiran Ibn Kathir dan Wahbah al-Zuhayli dalam Tafsir al-Munir

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#### Abstract

This study investigates the complex issue of interfaith marriage through a comparative analysis of two prominent Tafsir works: Tafsir Ibn Kathir and al-Munir by Wahbah al-Zuhayli. Ibn Kathir's exegesis adopts a conservative stance, strictly prohibiting marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims, emphasizing the preservation of faith, religious identity, and adherence to traditional legal rulings. In contrast, al-Zuhayli's al-Munir offers a more contextual and flexible perspective, acknowledging the social realities, pluralistic dynamics, and interreligious interactions characteristic of contemporary societies. Using qualitative content analysis, this study examines the underlying principles, interpretive methodologies, and hermeneutical reasoning employed by each scholar, highlighting the interplay between textual fidelity and contextual considerations. The findings suggest that while Ibn Kathir prioritizes legal and doctrinal certainty, al-Zuhayli emphasizes social cohesion and pragmatic ethics, illustrating how exegetical thought evolves in response to historical, cultural, and societal changes. This comparative framework underscores the importance of fostering dialogue between rigid and contextual interpretations, advocating for approaches that harmonize religious adherence with the principles of tolerance, mutual respect, and coexistence. Beyond legal discourse, interfaith marriage is thus framed as a potential avenue for enhancing interreligious understanding, promoting social integration, and enabling individuals to exercise agency in choosing life partners while navigating the delicate balance between faith and pluralism. This study contributes to ongoing debates in Islamic jurisprudence, modern ethics, and interfaith relations, offering insights for scholars, policymakers, and communities seeking to reconcile tradition with contemporary social realities.

**Keywords:** *Comparative Exegesis, Interfaith Marriage, Ibn Kathir, al-Munir, Islamic Law*

#### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji persoalan kompleks tentang pernikahan beda agama melalui analisis komparatif terhadap dua karya tafsir terkemuka, yaitu Tafsir Ibn Kathir dan Tafsir al-Munir karya Wahbah al-Zuhayli. Penafsiran Ibn Kathir

menunjukkan corak yang konservatif dengan menegaskan larangan pernikahan antara Muslim dan non-Muslim secara ketat, dengan penekanan pada penjagaan akidah, identitas keagamaan, dan kepatuhan terhadap ketentuan hukum Islam klasik. Sebaliknya, al-Munīr karya al-Zuḥaylī menawarkan perspektif yang lebih kontekstual dan fleksibel dengan mempertimbangkan realitas sosial, dinamika pluralisme, dan interaksi antarumat beragama yang menjadi ciri masyarakat kontemporer.

Dengan menggunakan metode analisis isi kualitatif, penelitian ini menelaah prinsip-prinsip dasar, metodologi penafsiran, serta argumentasi hermeneutis yang digunakan oleh kedua mufasir, sehingga memperlihatkan hubungan antara kesetiaan terhadap teks dan pertimbangan konteks sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Ibn Kathīr lebih mengutamakan kepastian hukum dan doktrin keagamaan, sementara al-Zuḥaylī lebih menekankan kohesi sosial dan etika pragmatis, yang menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran tafsir berkembang seiring perubahan historis, budaya, dan sosial masyarakat.

Kerangka komparatif ini menegaskan pentingnya membangun dialog antara penafsiran yang rigid dan penafsiran yang kontekstual, dengan mendorong pendekatan yang mampu mengharmoniskan komitmen keagamaan dengan prinsip toleransi, saling menghormati, dan koeksistensi. Di luar diskursus hukum, pernikahan beda agama dipahami sebagai salah satu jalan potensial untuk memperkuat pemahaman antaragama, mendorong integrasi sosial, serta memberikan ruang bagi individu dalam menentukan pasangan hidupnya sambil tetap menavigasi keseimbangan yang sensitif antara iman dan pluralitas. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada perdebatan yang terus berkembang dalam bidang fikih Islam, etika modern, dan relasi antaragama, serta menawarkan wawasan bagi akademisi, pembuat kebijakan, dan masyarakat dalam upaya **merekonsiliasi tradisi dengan realitas sosial kontemporer**.

**Kata Kunci:** Tafsir Komparatif, Pernikahan Beda Agama, Ibn Kathīr, al-Munīr, Hukum Islam.

## Intruduction

Marriage represents a process of mutual belonging and responsibility between a man and a woman. Within society, this union is regarded as sacred and serves as a fundamental means of establishing a family grounded in harmony, stability, and shared happiness in domestic life.<sup>1</sup> Human beings naturally follow their innate instincts when choosing a life partner. This tendency is evident in both intra-faith and interfaith marriages. In the context

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<sup>1</sup> Dwi Darsa Suryantoro and Ainur Rofiq, —Nikah Dalam Pandangan Hukum Islam,|| Ahsana Media 7, no. 02 (2021), h. 40-41.

of interfaith unions, religious differences are often no longer perceived as insurmountable barriers, as compatibility, emotional comfort, mutual commitment to tolerance, and support from close relatives or community members can play a more decisive role in sustaining the relationship.<sup>2</sup> Interfaith marriage remains a subject of frequent controversy and debate in many societies, particularly in countries with a dominant religious majority such as Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, marriage is regarded as a highly respected institution across nearly all religious traditions; yet, on the other hand, many faiths impose restrictions that limit marriage to partners of the same belief system. Within this context, interfaith unions are often perceived as a challenge to the sanctity of religious teachings and, in many cases, are considered invalid under religious law. However, as societies become increasingly pluralistic and interactive, accompanied by a growing awareness of religious freedom and human rights, there is a pressing need to re-examine and critically evaluate these long-held perspectives.

The terminology of marriage (*nikāḥ* or *zawāj*) in the study of Islamic jurisprudence is derived from Arabic, where both terms carry meanings that extend beyond their legal connotations. These expressions are commonly used in the daily life of Arab societies and are also widely found in classical Islamic sources, particularly the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.<sup>4</sup>

It is further explained that the term *nikāḥ* carries the meaning of "union" or "coming together." From a linguistic perspective, both definitions emphasize the notion of gathering or uniting. In a broader sense, this conveys the idea of two entities that were once separate becoming joined together through the bond of marriage.<sup>5</sup> From the various definitions presented above, it becomes clear that there is no essential difference in meaning, but rather only in wording. At its core, *nikāḥ* refers to a binding contract, regulated by religion, which provides a lawful framework for a man and a woman to engage in conjugal relations and physical intimacy, while also serving the higher purpose of establishing a family.<sup>6</sup>

Indonesia's Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974 stipulates that marriage must be conducted in accordance with the religion and beliefs of each partner. In

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<sup>2</sup> Restu Adhie Charisma, —Penyebab Dan Akibat Perkawinan Beda Agama Di Indonesia|| (Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Masjufuk Zuhdi, *Masail Fiqhiyyah* (Jakarta: PT. Toko Gunung Jati, 1997), h. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Jamaluddin dan Nanda Amalia, *Buku Ajar Hukum Perkawinan* (Uniml Press, 2016). Hal. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Zainuddin Ibnu Abdul Aziz Al Malibari, *Fathul Muin* Jilid 3, trans. oleh Abul Hiyadh, (Surabaya: Al- Hidayah, 1993). Hal. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Atabik dan Mudhiyah, "Pernikahan dan Hikmahnya Perspektif Hukum Islam." Hal. 288.

practice, this regulation implies that unions between individuals of different faiths—although recognized within certain cultural traditions or religious communities—are often not legally acknowledged or registered by the state. As a result, couples entering into interfaith marriages may face restrictions on their legal rights and protections. This situation generates a sense of inequality and injustice for those who wish to marry but are hindered by religious differences. Consequently, the issue of interfaith marriage continues to provoke controversy within Indonesian society, where such unions are still widely regarded as socially taboo.<sup>7</sup>

The challenges surrounding interfaith marriage in Indonesia extend beyond the legal sphere and are deeply embedded in social dynamics. In a society predominantly composed of Muslims, such unions are frequently perceived as invalid or even taboo. This phenomenon highlights the difficulty of reconciling religious teachings with the realities of an evolving social context. For instance, in many regions, a Muslim who marries a non-Muslim may face rejection or discrimination from family members and the wider community. In numerous cases, couples are compelled either to conceal their relationship or to marry abroad in unofficial or unrecognized ceremonies, thereby forfeiting their legal rights as citizens.

Perspectives on interfaith marriage remain controversial. Some views are more positive, emphasizing two main aspects: (1) tolerance and pluralism, and (2) universal love. Within the framework of tolerance and pluralism, interfaith unions are perceived as an embodiment of mutual respect, in which partners acknowledge religious differences while striving to live together harmoniously (Silfanus & Artikel, 2022). Meanwhile, the concept of universal love underscores the belief that love transcends religious boundaries, thereby strengthening the bond between partners regardless of their faith traditions. This perspective is grounded in the understanding that all religions uphold universal values such as compassion, peace, mutual assistance, respect, opposition to injustice, and the rejection of oppression and arbitrariness.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, Qur'anic exegesis plays a crucial role in addressing the phenomenon of interfaith marriage. Interpretations developed by Muslim scholars and intellectuals provide varying perspectives on the permissibility

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<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Rizqi Romdhon et al., "Beda Agama menurut Hukum Indonesia Nusantara 's Exegesis Studies of Interfaith Marriages According to Indonesian Islamic Law Compilation," h. 1–23.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad Fauzi, Kemas Muhammad Gemilang, dan Darmawan Tia Indrajaya, "Analisis Nikah Beda Agama dalam Perspektif Maqashid Syari'ah," *Madania: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Juni 2023): 75, UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, P-ISSN: 2088-3226; E-ISSN: 2620-8210.

and implications of such unions. For instance, Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reflects a more conservative stance, viewing interfaith marriage as incompatible with Islamic teachings. In contrast, Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's al-Munīr, representing a more contemporary approach, offers a more inclusive and socially responsive interpretation that takes into account the complexities of modern pluralistic societies.

Within the Islamic tradition, Qur'anic verses that address prohibitions on marriage with non-Muslims—such as Q. 2:221, Q. 5:5, and Q. 60:10—have often been interpreted in an exclusive manner, thereby restricting the possibility of unions between Muslims and non-Muslims. Classical exegesis generally emphasizes the preservation of religious purity and doctrinal boundaries. However, contemporary interpretations tend to situate these verses within their historical and socio-cultural contexts. From a more progressive perspective, the purpose of such teachings is not limited to safeguarding doctrinal integrity, but also to promoting peace, tolerance, and the overall well-being of humanity.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the phenomenon of interfaith marriage has given rise to divergent opinions among Qur'anic exegetes, resulting in strong resistance toward its practice within Muslim communities. Beyond the theological debate, statistical evidence indicates a steady increase in the number of interfaith marriages in Indonesia. According to data from the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), there were 1,645 recorded cases between 2005 and 2023. Similarly, Percik Salatiga, an institution that provides support for interfaith couples, has reported approximately 300 cases since its establishment. These figures highlight not only the persistence of interfaith unions but also the social and legal challenges that accompany them in the Indonesian context.<sup>10</sup>

The phenomenon of interfaith marriage is often perceived as lacking a foundation in the sacred principles of religion and reduced merely to a matter of formality. A prominent example is the marriage of Kartika Ayu Dewi, a special staff member to President Joko Widodo and a Muslim, to Gerald Sebastian, a Christian, in 2022. Their union was conducted through both Islamic and Christian rites, beginning with an Islamic ceremony followed by a Christian service. Such cases have attracted scholarly attention and prompted further

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<sup>9</sup> Mahmudah Emha, Rifa'atul, Kritik Wacana Tafsir tentang Pernikahan Beda Agama (Pernikahan Muslimah dengan Laki-laki Musyrik). , al-Burhan: Kajian Ilmu dan Pengembangan Budaya Al-Qur'an, Vol. xx, No. xx.

<sup>10</sup> Agung Waskitoadi, et.al, Proses Menjadi Indonesia (Negara, Kebebasan Beragama, Dan Pernikahan Beda Agama) (Perpustakaan Nasional: Katalog Dalam Terbitan (KDT), 2017), 71.

analysis of interfaith marriage, particularly because, in Islamic jurisprudence, one of the essential conditions for a valid marriage is the sharing of the same faith between spouses.<sup>11</sup>

With the advancement of thought and the increasing interaction among religious communities, religious pluralism in Indonesia has become an undeniable reality. The diversity of faiths and cultures constitutes part of the nation's social and cultural richness, which must be both respected and celebrated. This condition calls for a deeper understanding of how religion can be interpreted within the framework of pluralism without compromising the sanctity of its core teachings.

From the perspective of pluralism, interfaith marriage can be seen as a means of strengthening tolerance and mutual understanding among religious communities. In a plural society, marriage between individuals of different religious backgrounds is not merely a private matter, but also holds the potential to enhance relations between different faith groups. Interfaith unions highlight the importance of peaceful coexistence, respect for diversity, and the building of bridges between communities that are often separated by doctrinal boundaries.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research design through textual analysis and an extensive review of relevant literature. The analysis of Qur'anic exegesis is conducted using both textual and contextual approaches in order to capture religious perspectives on interfaith marriage. In addition, the concepts of religious pluralism and tolerance are examined to assess the relevance of interfaith unions within plural societies. A socio-cultural approach is also applied to explore the challenges faced by interfaith couples in Indonesia. By synthesizing religious, social, and legal perspectives, this article aims to present a progressive and inclusive argument on interfaith marriage, advocating for interpretations of Islam that are supportive of pluralism and tolerance.

## **Ibn Kathīr's and Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's Interpretations of Qur'anic Verses on the Law of Interfaith Marriage**

### **The Concept of Interfaith Marriage**

Etymologically, the term *nikāḥ* is derived from the root *nakaha–yankihu–nikāḥan*, which conveys several meanings such as *al-dammu* (union), *al-jam'u*

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<sup>11</sup> Ulfa Mufidatul, *Pernikahan Beda Agama Menurut Ibnu Katsir*, Skripsi: Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogo, 2023, 5-8

(gathering), al-waṭ' (sexual intercourse), and al-'aqd (contract or covenant). From a terminological perspective, marriage (nikāḥ) refers to a legal contract that legitimizes marital relations, commonly expressed through the terms nakaha or zawwaja. The use of the word 'aqd highlights that marriage is not merely a physical or social bond but rather a binding covenant mutually agreed upon by both parties, serving as the legal and spiritual foundation of the marital relationship.<sup>12</sup>

Interfaith marriage refers to a marital union between two individuals who adhere to different religions or belief systems. The term denotes a situation in which each spouse maintains their own faith and religious identity without undergoing conversion. This type of marriage not only reflects personal choices but also embodies broader issues of religious diversity, identity, and negotiation of values within a pluralistic society.<sup>13</sup> Interfaith marriage refers to a marital bond formed between two individuals who profess different religions or belief systems. The concept reflects a circumstance in which both partners retain their respective faith commitments without undergoing religious conversion. Rather than signaling a shift in religious identity, such unions highlight the coexistence of distinct beliefs within a single marital framework.<sup>14</sup> In this context, interfaith marriage refers specifically to a union between a Muslim man or woman and a non-Muslim partner. In other words, such a marriage constitutes both a physical and spiritual bond between two individuals who adhere to different religions, thereby involving two distinct religious legal systems, each with its own requirements and stipulations regarding matrimony. The divergence in faith renders the marriage not merely a private matter but also a complex legal and social issue. Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of such a union remains consistent with that of marriage in generalnamely, the establishment of a complete and harmonious family life, grounded in spiritual and theistic values.<sup>15</sup>

In the discourse on interfaith marriage, Ichtianto presents several arguments in favor of its acceptance:

1. The Indonesian state, founded upon the principles of Pancasila, was established by a people adhering to diverse religions;

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<sup>12</sup> Jalil, —Pernikahan Beda Agama Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam Dan Hukum Positif Di Indonesia.], 48

<sup>13</sup> Agus Miswanto, —Agama Keyakinan Dan Etika,|| Magelang: Pusat Pembinaan Dan Pengembangan Studi Islam Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, 2012, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Amin Suma, Kawin Beda Agama Di Indonesia (Telaah Syariah Dan Qanuniah), ed. Faiq Ihsan Ansori (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2015), 121.

<sup>15</sup> 1 O.S Eoh, Perkawinan Antar Agama dalam Teori dan Praktek, (Jakarta : Raja Grafindo Persada, 1996) hal 35-36

2. The Constitution (Article 29, paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution) guarantees the freedom of every citizen to embrace and practice their religion and faith, thereby acknowledging the existence of multiple religions within the nation;
3. The right to religious belief is regarded as one of the most fundamental human rights;
4. The state bears the responsibility of regulating the legal relations among its citizens in the context of social, national, and state life;
5. As a Pancasila-based state, Indonesia is obliged to regulate marital laws not only for those who share the same religion but also for those of different faiths; and
6. Given the reality of religious plurality in Indonesia, a corresponding plurality in marital law naturally exists, as reflected in Article 2(1) of the Marriage Law.<sup>16</sup>

### Profile of the Tafsīr

Two major works of Qur'anic exegesis Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm by Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr al-Munīr by Wahbah al-Zuhaylī hold authoritative status in the scholarly tradition of tafsīr. Ibn Kathīr's Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm (d. 774 AH/1373 CE) is widely recognized as one of the most influential commentaries in classical Islamic scholarship. The work has gained lasting scholarly recognition for its interpretive method, which begins with explaining the Qur'an through the Qur'an itself, then drawing upon authentic ḥadīth, and further incorporating the insights of the Companions (ṣaḥābah) and the early generations of Muslim scholars (salaf).<sup>17</sup> In Zayl Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz, Imam al-Suyūṭī highlights the exceptional scholarly value of Ibn Kathīr's Tafsīr, emphasizing its high academic quality. This exegetical work has also received praise from prominent scholars such as al-Zarqānī and Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, who regarded it as one of the most reliable and authoritative contributions in the field of Qur'anic interpretation.<sup>18</sup>

Another significant strength of this exegesis lies in Ibn Kathīr's profound expertise in ḥadīth, demonstrated through the inclusion of transmission chains (isnād) and critical evaluation of the reliability of narrations, which makes it a

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<sup>16</sup> Ichtianto, Laporan Akhir Analisis dan Evaluasi Hukum 20 Tahun Pelaksanaan Undang-Undang Perkawinan, Proyek Pusat Perencanaan Pembangunan Hukum Nasional, (Badan Pembinaan Hukum Nasional Departemen Kehakiman RI Tahun 1994/1995), h. 198-200.

<sup>17</sup> [https://bincangsyariah.com/khazanah/imam-ibnu-katsir-ulama-tafsir-dan-hadits-yang-alim-sejak-usia-muda/?utm\\_source=](https://bincangsyariah.com/khazanah/imam-ibnu-katsir-ulama-tafsir-dan-hadits-yang-alim-sejak-usia-muda/?utm_source=)

<sup>18</sup> Mohd Zawawi bin Abdullah, Ibn Kathir dan ketokohnya dalam bidang tafsir, kolej university islam antar bangsa sultan ismail petra, 2024.

valuable reference for students of ḥadīth studies. Since this work belongs to the classical era of tafsīr, its dominant approach is tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr. Ibn Kathīr interprets the Qur'an by means of the Qur'an itself, the Prophetic traditions, as well as the judgments of the Companions and the Successors. The methodological framework applied in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr follows an analytical (taḥlīlī) style, proceeding systematically from Sūrat al-Fātiḥah, then al-Baqarah, and continuing in sequence until Sūrat al-Nās.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, the exegesis authored by al-Ustādh al-Duktūr Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī (d. 1436 H/2015 CE), entitled al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdah wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj—widely known as Tafsīr al-Munīr—represents a contemporary contribution to Qur'anic interpretation. In this work, al-Zuḥaylī provides a sequential commentary following the order of the muṣḥaf, elaborating on the meanings of key vocabulary, the occasions of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl), as well as the interconnections between verses. These features reflect the characteristics of the taḥlīlī (analytical) method of exegesis.<sup>20</sup> Al-Zuḥaylī integrates the method of tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr (interpretation based on transmitted reports) with tafsīr bi al-ra'y (interpretation through reasoned analysis). His approach incorporates ḥadīth, reports from the Companions, and the views of early scholars, while simultaneously offering rational and argumentative analysis when addressing contemporary issues.<sup>21</sup>

Tafsīr al-Munīr is widely recognized as one of the most comprehensive and contextually grounded exegeses of the modern era. Beyond providing a detailed explanation of the Qur'anic text, it situates interpretation within contemporary social, political, and legal contexts, thereby ensuring its continued relevance for today's Muslim community.<sup>22</sup> Tafsīr al-Munīr has been highly regarded for its use of clear and accessible language while maintaining scholarly rigor and systematic structure. This quality makes it particularly suitable not only for students and academics but also for the wider Muslim community.<sup>23</sup>

### **Qur'anic Verses on Interfaith Marriage and Their Interpretation According to Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr al-Munīr**

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<sup>19</sup> Skripsi di UIN Salatiga, Pernikahan beda agama, Yusi Dwi Cahaya Ningsih, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Mar'atus Sholihah, Ana. (2022). Analisis Metode Tafsir Wahbah az-Zuhaili dalam Tafsir al-Munir. Jurnal Ulil Albab Institute.

<sup>21</sup> In the Muqaddimah of Tafsīr al-Munīr, al-Zuḥaylī explains it.

<sup>22</sup> Lubis, Saiful Akhyar, The Existence and Form of Tafsir al-Munir by Wahbah al-Zuhaili. ResearchGate. 2023

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad Muhajir, NU Onlione.

The Qur'an addresses the issue of interfaith marriage in three primary verses. These passages establish the fundamental principles regarding marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims. The first is Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:221), which explicitly prohibits marriage between Muslim men or women and polytheists (*mushrikīn*), emphasizing that faith must take precedence over social or worldly considerations. The second is Sūrat al-Mā'idah (5:5), which introduces a limited exception by permitting Muslim men to marry chaste women from among the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book), while maintaining the prohibition for Muslim women. The third is Sūrat al-Mumtahanah (60:10), which provides guidance regarding women who migrate to the Muslim community after embracing Islam, affirming the annulment of their previous marriages to non-Muslim husbands.<sup>24</sup>

1. QS. Al Baqarah : 221

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنَ ۖ وَالْأَمَةُ مُؤْمِنَةٌ حَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنُوا ۗ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ حَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِآيَاتِهِ ۗ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Ibn Kathīr's Interpretation<sup>25</sup>

Through this verse, Allah prohibits believers from marrying polytheist women among idol worshippers. In a general sense, this includes all polytheist women, whether from the People of the Book or idolaters. However, an exception is made for women of the People of the Book, as stated:

وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ  
 "And lawful to marry are chaste women from among the People of the Scripture who were given the Book before you, provided that you give them their due compensation (dowry) with the intention of marriage, not for illicit relations."

Ibn Abbas explained that Allah made an exception for women of the People of the Book. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) prohibited marrying women outside Islam except believing women among the *Muhajirun*. Allah stated: "Whoever disbelieves after believing—then their deeds are nullified." (Al-Mā'idah: 5). Talhah ibn Abdullah and Huzaifah ibn al-Yaman married Jewish and Christian women. Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, though displeased, acknowledged their permissibility, fearing Muslims might neglect marrying believing women.

<sup>24</sup> Syamruddin Nasution, *Pernikahan Beda Agama dalam Al-Qur'an*, (Pekanbaru: Yayasan Pustaka Riau, 2011), h. 267.

<sup>25</sup> All interpretations of Ibn Kathīr are taken from the original source, namely *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, Dār al-Ṭayyibah.

Al-Khalal narrated Umar said: "A Muslim man may marry a Christian woman, but a Christian man may not marry a Muslim woman." Ibn Umar considered it makruh (disliked) for a Muslim to marry women of the People of the Book. He also cited:

وَلَأَمَّةٌ مُؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكَةٍ وَلَا أَعْجَبْتَكُمْ

"Indeed, a believing slave is better than a polytheist, even though he may please you." (Al-Baqarah: 221)

This guidance is illustrated by Abdullah ibn Rawwahah, who freed and married his believing female slave despite criticism. Allah commands not to marry believing women to polytheist men, emphasizing spiritual over worldly gains, while inviting to Paradise and forgiveness through His Shariah.

Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's Interpretation<sup>26</sup>

This verse explicitly prohibits believers from marrying polytheists. Believers are instructed not to marry women who associate partners with Allah until they embrace faith in God, the Last Day, and the Prophet Muhammad. Polytheists, or idolaters, are spiritually dangerous because they may lead others toward disbelief and morally harmful behaviors. Faith, rather than wealth or social status, is the ultimate criterion in marriage, making a believing slave preferable to a free polytheist woman, regardless of social rank or appearance (Al-Baqarah: 221). Similarly, male polytheists should not marry believing women.

Islam permits Muslim men to marry chaste women from among the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), as stated in Al-Mā'idah 5, provided the marriage is sincere and not for illicit purposes. The distinction is that polytheist women do not follow any true faith, while women of the People of the Book share core beliefs with Muslims. Conversely, Muslim women are strictly prohibited from marrying non-Muslim men, as such unions risk spiritual harm and disharmony.

Scholars agree that marriage with polytheist women is absolutely prohibited, while marriage with People of the Book women is an exception, not a general rule. This caution is supported by historical examples and scholarly consensus, highlighting potential negative consequences of interfaith marriage, such as disputes, loss of religious adherence, and impact on children's Islamic upbringing. The Qur'an distinguishes between disbelievers among the People of the Book and polytheists, indicating they are separate groups (Al-Baqarah 2:105; Al-Bayyinah).

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<sup>26</sup> All interpretations of Wahbah Zuhaili are taken from the original source, namely Tafsīr Munir, Dār al-Fikr.

Wahbah al-Zuhaili emphasizes that these rulings preserve spiritual integrity and ensure that faith remains the primary criterion in marital decisions, protecting believers from moral and religious deviation. Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men is strictly invalid, with children considered illegitimate, reinforcing the seriousness of adhering to divine guidance in marital choices.

## 2. QS. Al-Maidah : 5

الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ ۖ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَلَلٌ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حَلَلٌ لَهُمْ ۗ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَحْدَانٍ ۗ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

### Ibn Kathīr's Interpretation

The events surrounding the migration (hijrah) and the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah illustrate the foundational principles regarding faith and marital relations in Islam. During this period, some Quraysh polytheists demanded that any of their people who embraced Islam be returned, even if they had migrated. In response, Allah revealed guidance emphasizing that believing women who migrated should not be returned to their non-Muslim spouses, affirming the primacy of faith over worldly or marital ties. The sincerity of the migrating women's faith was tested to ensure their intention for migration was motivated by devotion to Allah and His Messenger, rather than personal or worldly gain.

Regarding marital regulations, Allah permits Muslim men to marry chaste women from among the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), provided the marriage is legitimate, the dowry is given, and the intention is marital commitment rather than illicit relations. Conversely, Muslim men are forbidden from marrying polytheistic women, as highlighted in Qur'an 2:221, and chaste believing women may not be married to immoral or polytheistic men ( Qur'an 24:3). The term al-muhsanat refers specifically to women who uphold their chastity and moral integrity, whether free or enslaved, emphasizing that spiritual and ethical qualities take precedence over social status or worldly considerations.

The underlying wisdom of these injunctions is to guide believers toward relationships grounded in faith and morality, preventing attachment to those who may lead them toward sin or worldly excess. By prioritizing spiritual integrity, Islam encourages the faithful to seek divine pleasure and ultimate salvation, rather than temporary material or social advantage.

### Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's Interpretation

Marriage in Islam is permitted in a one-sided manner: Muslim men may marry women from the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), but the reverse is not allowed. This distinction is deliberate, as permitting Muslim women to marry men from the People of the Book would grant those men legitimate authority over their wives, which Allah does not allow for non-believers over the faithful. Allah further permits believing men to marry free women from among the believing women and the People of the Book, whether they are dhimmi (living peacefully under Islamic rule) or harbi (from hostile territories), provided that the dowry (mahr) is given. The emphasis on providing a dowry in the verse is to underline its obligatory nature, not as a condition for the validity of marriage.

The term "free women" encourages the selection of virtuous partners, though it does not prohibit marriage to female slaves. Marriage to believing female slaves is permissible according to the consensus of scholars and is recognized as valid by Abu Hanifah. Allah permits marriage to free women who maintain chastity, not for the purpose of fornication or clandestine relationships. In other words, permissible marriages are with women who protect themselves from adultery, with the intention of forming a righteous family, rather than satisfying mere sexual desire either openly or secretly.

The verse also contains a stern warning against deviation from divine law: "Whoever disbelieves in faith, their deeds will be nullified." This implies that anyone who denies the Shariah, neglects religious duties, or rejects essential and secondary elements of faith will lose all reward, suffering both in this world, where their deeds yield no benefit, and in the Hereafter, where they face eternal loss. Here, "faith" serves metaphorically to represent adherence to Shariah and religious obligations, or alternatively, it may denote recognition of God as the source of faith.

The primary purpose of this verse is to emphasize the significance of Allah's legal injunctions and to provide a clear warning to those who violate them, while sanctioning marriage with free, chaste women among Muslim and People of the Book communities. According to Mujahid and the majority of scholars, al-muhshanat refers to free women, while Ibn Abbas interprets it as women who are pure and of sound intellect. The verse underscores that denial of divine law nullifies the merit of deeds, depriving their practitioners of reward in both this world and the Hereafter, affirming that adherence to God's commands is central to moral and spiritual accountability.

### 3. QS. Al- Mumtahanah : 10

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مُهَاجِرَاتٍ فَأَمْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ۗ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ ۗ فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ ۗ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ ۗ وَأَتَوْهُنَّ مَا أَنْفَقُوا ۗ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ

إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ وَاسْتَسْأَلُوا مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلَيْسَتْ سَأَلُوا مَا أَنْفَقُوا ۗ ذَلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللَّهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

### Ibn Kathīr's Interpretation

The Qur'anic injunction regarding marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims clearly prohibits Muslim women from marrying polytheist men, while allowing Muslim men to marry women from the People of the Book (Jews and Christians). Historically, there were exceptions during the early Islamic period. For instance, Zainab bint Muhammad, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, was married to Abu Al-As ibn Al-Rabi', a non-Muslim man. During the Battle of Badr, Abu Al-As was captured, and Zainab sent a ransom in the form of her mother Khadijah's necklace to secure his release. The Prophet Muhammad accepted the ransom and freed Abu Al-As on the condition that Zainab return to Madinah. After Abu Al-As embraced Islam in the eighth year of Hijrah, the Prophet returned Zainab to him based on the original marriage contract without requiring a new dowry. This event is narrated by Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and Imam Ahmad, and it demonstrates that a valid marriage remains intact as long as the waiting period ('iddah) has not ended.

This historical incident provides the context of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl) for the relevant Qur'anic guidance. Allah states in Surah Al-Mumtahanah (60:10):

"And give the women their due compensation... and do not hold on to marital bonds with disbelieving women."

This verse was revealed when some Muslim women migrated from polytheist tribes to the Muslim community, in the context of the peace treaty at Hudaibiyyah. Allah instructed that the dowries of these women should be returned to their former husbands and reinforced the prohibition of retaining marriages with disbelieving women, emphasizing legal and moral principles in interfaith marital relations.

The narrative illustrates Allah's guidance for upholding religious integrity, moral conduct, and the rights of spouses, while clearly defining the limits of interfaith marriages. The prohibition ensures that non-believers do not hold legal authority over believers and maintains social and religious order. This ruling continues to be a foundational principle in Islamic family law, stressing the importance of lawful unions and the preservation of faith in marital matters.

### Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's Interpretation

The command *famtahinuhuunna* can imply an obligation, a recommended action, or a permissive act. This ruling was revealed during the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, in which the Prophet Muhammad was required to return any Quraysh who came to him after the agreement. When women migrated to him, Allah prohibited their return to the polytheists and commanded their testing. They swore by Allah that their migration was not out of hatred toward their husbands, personal gain, or worldly desire, but solely for the love of Allah and His Messenger and commitment to faith. Upon such a sworn affirmation, the Prophet returned the dowry and maintenance to their non-Muslim husbands without returning the women.

“Allah knows best about their faith” indicates that the test evaluates outward evidence only; the true state of belief is known only to Allah. If outward evaluation confirms faith, the women are not returned to their non-Muslim spouses. The use of “certainty” in this context refers to strong conjecture and informed judgment, equated to knowledge. Ibn Kathir notes that this verse demonstrates that faith can be reliably assessed.

Subsequent rulings clarify that Muslim women are not lawful for non-Muslim men, and vice versa, indicating that conversion to Islam dissolves a marriage with a non-Muslim spouse. Historically, such marriages were initially permitted, as in the case of Abu Al-‘Ash and Zainab, the Prophet’s daughter. When Abu Al-‘Ash was captured at Badr, Zainab’s loyalty led to her husband’s release and eventual conversion, reaffirming the original marriage without new dowry. Variations in the narration exist, but the majority of scholars agree the precedent was specific to the circumstances of the time.

From the interpretations of Ibn Kathir (*Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*) and Wahbah Zuhayli (*al-Munir*), several conclusions emerge: interfaith marriages with polytheistic women are strictly prohibited (QS. Al-Baqarah 2:221), while marriage to People of the Book is permitted but discouraged due to potential risks to faith, family integrity, and the religious upbringing of children. Both scholars emphasize that the prohibition protects the religious identity of Muslim women and the next generation. In the context of global secularization, these rulings are preventive measures ensuring the preservation of Islamic faith and family structure.

### **Comparative Analysis of Ibn Kathir and Wahbah Zuhaili’s Thoughts on Interfaith Marriage**

The thoughts of Ibn Kathir and Wahbah al-Zuhaili regarding interfaith marriage, particularly between Muslim men and non-Muslim women, show convergence in terms of the basic legal rulings, yet reveal fundamental differences in approach, context, and emphasis on social aspects and the

maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Ibn Kathir, a classical mufassir who lived in the 8th century AH, in his exegesis of Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:221, explicitly prohibits marrying polytheist women. According to him, this prohibition is absolute and leaves no room for ijtiḥad, as polytheist women are considered likely to negatively influence the faith of their husbands and children. In his tafsir, Ibn Kathir frequently references Prophetic traditions (ḥadith) and the opinions of the Companions, including Umar ibn al-Khattab, who reportedly discouraged some Companions from marrying women of the People of the Book, despite the textual allowance found in Q.S. Al-Ma'idah [5]:5. For Ibn Kathir, marriage to women of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) is legally permissible according to the text, but it is not necessarily recommended. He cautions that such permissibility carries serious risks, including domestic discord, conflicts in belief, and the likelihood that children may gravitate toward the mother's different faith. His approach is textualist and tradition-oriented, with a focus on protecting the faith and social structure of the Muslim community.

In contrast, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, a contemporary mufassir living in the globalized 21st century, offers a more contextual reading that takes into account the complexities of modern society. In Tafsir al-Munir, he interprets Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:221 and Q.S. Al-Ma'idah [5]:5 using a thematic and maqāṣidī approach, weighing the primary objectives of sharia, such as safeguarding religion, lineage, and family stability. He firmly asserts that marrying a polytheist woman is prohibited based on definitive textual evidence and scholarly consensus (ijma'). While marriage to a woman of the People of the Book is technically permissible, Wahbah al-Zuhaili critically notes that this allowance must be considered in the social and demographic context of contemporary Muslim communities. He argues that in situations where Muslims are a minority or reside in secular societies, such marriages may undermine family resilience, disrupt the Islamic upbringing of children, and create potential religious identity confusion. In this view, Wahbah al-Zuhaili emphasizes considerations of maslahat (benefit) and mafsadat (harm) in determining rulings, prioritizing the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah as a guiding principle. He stresses that textual permissibility does not equate to recommendation, and that greater benefit lies in marriage between Muslims, which ensures doctrinal purity, household harmony, and continuity of Islamic values for future generations.

Thus, while both scholars agree that marriage to a polytheist woman is forbidden and marriage to a woman of the People of the Book is permissible, neither encourages such practices socially. Ibn Kathir emphasizes the dangers and potential corruption arising from interfaith marriage with a reliance on classical narrations and jurisprudence, whereas Wahbah al-Zuhaili evaluates it

through the lens of maqāṣid and contemporary realities. Their differences illustrate the interpretive paradigms between classical and contemporary scholars in responding to social change. Both, however, concur that interfaith marriage is not the ideal choice for building spiritually and socially robust families, and for preserving and transmitting Islamic values within the community.

### **Conclusion**

The exegesis authored by Ibn Kathir represents a classical tafsir, while the tafsir written by Wahbah al-Zuhaili is a modern one, with a chronological gap of approximately 642 years between them. Despite this significant temporal difference, the opinions and rulings regarding verses discussing interfaith marriage are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Both scholars agree that it is strictly forbidden for a Muslim man to marry a polytheist woman, except in the case of a woman from the People of the Book; however, even in that case, it is not considered preferable and is discouraged. Conversely, it is haram for a polytheist man to marry a Muslim woman, even if she is from the People of the Book.

Therefore, Wahbah al-Zuhaili's Tafsir al-Munir reinforces the absolute prohibition of marriage with polytheists while permitting marriage with women from the People of the Book, albeit recommending caution. This caution stems from the concern that Muslim men might increasingly choose to marry non-Muslim women over Muslim women. Both Ibn Kathir and Wahbah al-Zuhaili prioritize intra-faith marriage because it maximizes familial welfare, preserves religious values, and ensures proper upbringing and education for children within the family.

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