



Religious Freedom and Faith's Consequences in the Qur'an: A Theological Analysis of Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 256

Haj Malik Setia^{1*}, Na'eem Jeenah²

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Indonesia

² University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

* Email Correspondence: hajmsi12@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between religious freedom and the consequences of faith in the Qur'an, with specific reference to Al-Baqarah 256. The discussion focuses on how the principle that faith emerges through voluntary choice relates to responsibility and divine recompense for human belief. The study aims to clarify the meaning of religious freedom and to explain how the consequences of faith operate within a coherent theological framework. This research applies a qualitative library-based method through close reading of the Qur'anic text and major exegetical literature as primary analytical sources. The findings show that religious freedom is presented as a fundamental principle in which faith develops through personal awareness and conscious commitment. Each act of belief carries moral responsibility and spiritual consequence. The study concludes that the Qur'an presents religious freedom in relation to human free will and accountability before God, forming a theological foundation that supports tolerance and harmonious social life within plural societies.

Keywords: Religious freedom; Faith consequences; Qur'anic theology; Religious tolerance.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious freedom remains one of the most widely discussed themes in contemporary religious and social discourse, especially within plural societies where diverse systems of belief coexist and interact in everyday life. Debates about belief, identity, and authority continue to shape public policy, interreligious engagement, and theological reflection across many cultural settings. Sacred texts play an important role in these discussions because they provide normative foundations for understanding human responsibility and moral choice. Within Islamic thought, the Qur'anic statement in Al-Baqarah 256 concerning the absence of coercion in religion has become a central reference point in conversations about belief, moral responsibility, and social

harmony. Its interpretation influences how faith formation, personal conviction, and divine authority are understood in religious life.

Scholarly discussions frequently highlight the principle of voluntary belief as a defining feature of religious commitment in Islam. Many works emphasize that faith develops through awareness, reflection, and conscious acceptance grounded in personal conviction. Qur'anic discourse also presents a strong emphasis on accountability, judgment, and recompense connected to human belief and conduct. This dual emphasis invites careful theological reflection because it brings together human freedom and moral evaluation within a single religious framework. A central question therefore emerges concerning how freedom of belief is understood alongside responsibility for the consequences of that belief. The relationship between human choice and divine accountability forms a major theme in theological inquiry and calls for sustained conceptual clarification.

Previous studies have examined religious freedom from various perspectives, including human rights discourse, social coexistence, and exegetical interpretations of specific Qur'anic passages. A number of scholars treat Al-Baqarah 256 as a foundational text for understanding tolerance and the recognition of individual belief. Other works explore the ethical and spiritual dimensions of faith within broader theological frameworks that address moral responsibility and divine judgment. Many of these studies provide valuable insights into particular aspects of belief and accountability. Yet the relationship between voluntary faith and its consequences often appears in fragmented form, with each theme discussed in separate analytical contexts. An integrated theological explanation that connects both dimensions within a single interpretive framework remains limited.

This study addresses that conceptual gap by examining religious freedom and the consequences of faith as interconnected dimensions of Qur'anic theology. The analysis approaches voluntary belief and moral accountability as elements that operate within the same moral and theological structure. The paper focuses on clarifying how freedom of belief functions within the ethical order described in the Qur'an and how responsibility emerges from the exercise of that freedom. By examining these themes together, the study seeks to illuminate the internal coherence of Qur'anic teaching on human choice and moral consequence. The discussion therefore centers on the conceptual relationship between freedom, responsibility, and divine judgment as expressed in scriptural discourse.

The purpose of this paper is to explain the concept of religious freedom in the Qur'an while situating the consequences of faith within a balanced theological perspective. The analysis concentrates on Al-Baqarah 256 and related exegetical interpretations that address belief, responsibility, and divine recompense. Through close textual examination and thematic interpretation, the study explores how human choice operates within a divinely ordered moral framework. The research also aims to clarify how faith is understood as a conscious commitment that carries ethical and spiritual implications. By articulating these relationships, the paper contributes to scholarly discussions on belief, accountability, and the theological foundations that support social harmony within religiously diverse communities.

This study advances the argument that the Qur'an presents religious freedom in direct relation to moral responsibility and spiritual consequence. Human beings possess the capacity to choose belief, and that choice holds significance within a moral order shaped by divine

authority. The analysis seeks to demonstrate that freedom of belief and accountability before God form a coherent theological structure grounded in scriptural teaching. This framework provides a foundation for understanding the ethical dimensions of faith and the responsibilities that accompany human decision making. By clarifying this relationship, the study offers a theological perspective that supports responsible belief, mutual recognition, and harmonious coexistence in plural social environments.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a library research approach. The qualitative method is selected because the object of analysis concerns the concept of religious freedom and the consequences of faith in the Qur'an, which are textual and theological in nature. The research focuses on examining Qur'anic verses and their interpretations in order to understand the relationship between voluntary belief and moral responsibility. The study is conducted through systematic engagement with written sources that are directly related to the research topic. Data collection is carried out through literature search, critical reading, note-taking, and documentation of relevant materials that support the analytical focus of the study.

The data sources are divided into primary and secondary materials. Primary data are obtained from the Qur'anic text, particularly Al-Baqarah 256 and other verses related to faith, accountability, and divine recompense. These verses function as the main unit of analysis. Secondary data consist of exegetical works by Indonesian scholars, especially *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by Hamka and *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* by Quraish Shihab, which provide contextual and interpretive explanations of the selected verses. Additional supporting materials include journal articles, books, and academic publications that discuss religious freedom, the nature of faith, and moral responsibility within contemporary Islamic thought.

Data analysis is conducted through qualitative textual and thematic analysis. The collected materials are systematically organized and classified according to the two principal themes of the study: religious freedom and the consequences of faith. Each primary and secondary source is examined through close reading to identify key concepts, interpretive arguments, and theological patterns related to belief and accountability. Relevant statements are coded and grouped into thematic categories to clarify the relationship between voluntary faith and moral responsibility. Comparative analysis is applied to examine how selected exegetical works interpret Al-Baqarah 256 in connection with verses concerning reward, punishment, and divine judgment. The findings are then synthesized to construct a coherent theological explanation that reflects conceptual clarity, internal consistency, and alignment with the objectives of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Concept of Religious Freedom in Al-Baqarah 256

Al-Baqarah 256 is widely regarded as a central Qur'anic reference in discussions of religious freedom in Islam because it explicitly affirms the absence of coercion in matters of faith. In contemporary academic discourse, the verse is interpreted as a normative foundation for protecting human dignity and safeguarding individual freedom of conscience. It establishes that belief must arise from personal conviction rather than external pressure, reinforcing the moral agency of each individual. Furthermore, the verse is often linked to broader human rights

discussions within Islamic thought, particularly concerning freedom of belief and protection from religious compulsion. The affirmation of non-coercion reflects a theological recognition of personal responsibility before God and the ethical limits of authority in matters of faith (Wardani, Hidayah, & Suwandi, 2021).

As stated in the Qur'an:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ
لَا أَنْفَصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unfailing hand-hold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (Q.S Al-Baqarah: 256)

This verse declares that there is no compulsion in religion because the path of guidance has been clearly distinguished from error. Whoever rejects false authority and believes in God is described as holding firmly to an unbreakable bond, while God is fully aware of all human intentions and actions. The structure of the verse links freedom of belief with clarity of truth, indicating that faith is grounded in recognition and conscious acceptance rather than external pressure.

This formulation demonstrates that the prohibition of coercion is directly connected to the clarity of divine guidance. Since truth has been made evident, there is no justification for forcing belief upon others. Faith emerges through awareness, understanding, and voluntary commitment. Compulsion would undermine the moral and spiritual meaning of belief because it replaces personal conviction with external force. The verse therefore establishes a foundational principle that religious commitment must arise from conscious choice, and that the legitimacy of faith depends upon the freedom of the individual to recognize and respond to truth.

Latansa's study deepens this understanding by emphasizing that religious freedom in Al-Baqarah 256 is closely related to the inner dimension of human existence, particularly consciousness and spiritual awareness. Belief is described as a personal act that emerges from reflection, moral intention, and inward conviction, making it inseparable from the individual's spiritual experience. Because faith is rooted in inner awareness, it cannot be authentically formed through external pressure. Latansa further argues that the principle of religious freedom in this verse aligns with contemporary human rights discourse, which recognizes religious choice as an individual right that must be protected. In the Indonesian context, this interpretation suggests that Qur'anic teaching provides a normative foundation for safeguarding and implementing religious freedom within the national legal framework (Latansa, 2020).

In addition, the study conducted by Kuswanto and Alfi within the interpretive framework of *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* emphasizes that the central message of Al-Baqarah 256 lies in its firm rejection of coercion in matters of religion. They argue that religious freedom in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* includes the individual's right to determine belief without coercion (Kuswanto & Alfi, 2022). Their analysis highlights that the verse safeguards the authenticity of faith by ensuring that belief remains a conscious and voluntary commitment grounded in personal conviction. Although classical exegetical discussions do not always explicitly address contemporary debates on religious conversion, their research stresses that the protection of individual conscience is a fundamental principle embedded in the verse. This interpretation affirms that Islamic teaching upholds inner spiritual freedom as essential to genuine belief, and that coercion undermines the ethical and theological foundation of faith.

In a study examining the ethics of moderate da'wah, Ansari and Alzamzami explain that in Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Al-Baqarah 256 functions as a theological foundation for

rejecting coercion in religious propagation and strengthening the principle of dialogue. They argue that Hamka interprets this verse as guidance for conveying religious teachings through wisdom, persuasive communication, and ethical engagement rather than force (Ansari & Alzamzami, 2022). Their analysis shows that da'wah must respect the listener's freedom of conscience, since faith gains meaning through sincere personal acceptance. Coercive approaches are viewed as inconsistent with the spiritual character of belief and potentially harmful to social harmony. Such methods may produce shallow expressions of faith and generate tension within plural communities. The verse therefore becomes an important reference in the discourse on religious moderation, particularly in the Indonesian context where interreligious interaction shapes everyday social life.

The study by Abdillah explains that Qur'anic teachings on religious freedom and tolerance extend beyond personal belief into social and legal dimensions, shaping ethical interactions in diverse communities (Abdillah, 2023). It highlights that the Qur'an emphasizes respect for pluralism, prohibits coercion, and upholds human dignity as core principles for both social relations and legal frameworks. These ethical guidelines form a foundation for peaceful coexistence, showing how societal norms and legal institutions can protect freedom of religion while ensuring justice and mutual recognition among different faith communities. Understanding these principles demonstrates that religious freedom in Islam is meant to be exercised responsibly, balancing individual rights with collective obligations, promoting social harmony, and fostering constructive interfaith engagement.

In addition to the Qur'anic verse, hadith literature also reinforces the principle of religious freedom. A number of prophetic traditions emphasize that faith cannot be produced through coercion and that belief formed under pressure lacks genuine spiritual value. These traditions are frequently cited in scholarly discussions as supporting the conceptual meaning of Al-Baqarah 256 by affirming that faith must arise from awareness, intention, and personal conviction. Academic studies on religious freedom in the hadith tradition explain that the prohibition of compulsion reflects a consistent theological position in which belief is understood as an inward act of conscious acceptance. Within this framework, coercion contradicts the spiritual nature of faith because it removes the element of voluntary commitment that gives belief its moral and religious significance.

Taken together, these scholarly interpretations indicate that Al-Baqarah 256 establishes religious freedom as an individual right grounded in Qur'anic teaching. The verse rejects coercion in matters of religion because faith is understood to emerge from conscious awareness and voluntary choice. Academic studies consistently conclude that the principle of religious freedom expressed in this verse holds strong relevance in contemporary discussions of human dignity and social coexistence. The verse therefore functions as a normative foundation for understanding religious life within plural societies, providing theological support for the recognition of individual belief and the ethical management of religious diversity in social and institutional contexts.

Limits of Religious Freedom in Qur'anic Interpretation

The discussion of religious freedom in the Qur'an cannot be separated from the question of its limits. In exegetical scholarship, religious freedom is interpreted within a framework of theological and moral responsibility, emphasizing that it is not an unrestricted autonomy detached from consequence (Wardani & Hidayah, 2021). Research by Wardani and Hidayah explains that while Al-Baqarah 256 clearly rejects coercion in matters of faith, the verse should not be understood as endorsing religious relativism. The freedom to choose belief is recognized, but it remains embedded within divine values and accompanied by spiritual and moral consequences before God. Human beings possess the capacity to

decide, yet their choices function within an ethical order defined by accountability, responsibility, and adherence to transcendental principles that govern moral and social life.

The limits of religious freedom in Qur'anic interpretation can also be identified in verses that affirm individual responsibility for belief. The Qur'an states:

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ طَفَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ

“And say, O Prophet, “This is the truth from your Lord. Whoever wills let them believe, and whoever wills let them disbelieve.”

This verse is frequently cited in academic studies as affirming that human beings are granted the freedom to choose faith or disbelief (Latansa, 2020). At the same time, it explicitly conveys the consequences associated with that choice. Latansa's analysis emphasizes that the verse acknowledges human volition while placing it within a framework of eschatological accountability. The freedom to believe is therefore inseparable from ethical responsibility and the reality of ultimate judgment before God. This understanding highlights that religious freedom in Islam is not absolute but is intrinsically linked to moral awareness, personal responsibility, and the recognition that every choice carries spiritual and ethical implications that extend into the afterlife.

In contemporary interpretive scholarship, Kuswantoro and Alfi explain that the limits of religious freedom in Islam are defined by the distinction between personal belief and social order (Kuswantoro & Alfi, 2022). Religious freedom is fully recognized within the realm of individual conviction; however, when beliefs are expressed publicly, they must align with principles of public welfare (maṣlaḥah) and the maintenance of social order. Their study highlights that Qur'anic interpretation does not legitimize actions that disrupt communal harmony under the banner of religious freedom. Consequently, the exercise of religious freedom in Islam is inseparable from social responsibility, emphasizing that personal liberty must coexist with ethical engagement and consideration for the rights and well-being of the wider community.

The study by Ansari and Alzamzami on the interpretation of Buya Hamka affirms that limits to religious freedom exist within the context of da'wah and social life (Ansari & Alzamzami, 2022). According to Hamka, religious freedom does not extend to actions that insult, demean, or undermine the beliefs of others. His Qur'anic interpretation emphasizes the importance of tolerance while upholding propriety and ethical conduct in the face of religious differences. As a result, the boundaries of religious freedom are defined by the prohibition of provocative behavior that could generate conflict or weaken social cohesion. This perspective highlights that exercising religious freedom responsibly requires sensitivity to others' rights, the maintenance of communal harmony, and adherence to ethical principles in social interactions.

In the context of interreligious relations, research by Hasyim and Fauzan demonstrates that Qur'anic verses on religious freedom are consistently linked to principles of justice and the prohibition of wrongdoing (Hasyim & Fauzan, 2022). Their study shows that religious freedom in Islam operates within an ethical social framework that upholds human dignity. They emphasize that such freedom cannot be used to justify oppression, discrimination, or harm toward others. From a Qur'anic interpretive perspective, individual freedom is constrained by the obligation to respect the rights of others, meaning that liberty ends when it violates the rights, honor, or dignity of fellow human beings. This approach underscores that ethical limits are essential to Islamic teachings on religious freedom, ensuring that personal faith choices coexist with social responsibility, mutual respect, and the maintenance of peaceful interfaith relations.

In addition, the boundaries of religious freedom are affirmed in Qur'anic passages that prohibit coercion and violence in da'wah, as expressed in the divine statement: “And if

your Lord had willed, all those on earth would have believed entirely. So would you then compel people so that they become believers?" This passage is widely understood in academic interpretation as a clear rejection of forced belief. It indicates that even the Prophet was not granted authority to compel faith upon others. Human responsibility is limited to conveying the message, while the acceptance or rejection of faith rests with individual choice before God. Religious freedom therefore includes the firm rejection of coercion.

This verse is understood in academic scholarship as an affirmation that even the Prophet Muhammad was not granted the authority to compel people to believe. In contemporary Qur'anic interpretation, the verse further indicates that the human role is limited to conveying the truth, while the outcome of faith ultimately rests with individual responsibility before God. Belief, therefore, cannot be produced through external pressure but must arise from personal conviction and awareness. In this sense, the boundary of religious freedom lies in the rejection of coercion, alongside the recognition that faith carries consequences that are ultimately transcendental and accountable in the divine realm.

In Utami's study, the limits of religious freedom in the Qur'anic perspective are understood as a balance between freedom of will and moral responsibility (Utami, 2024). She emphasizes that although the Qur'an recognizes human capacity to choose belief freely, it does not absolve individuals from accountability for the consequences of their choices. Religious freedom, therefore, is not absolute but functions within the boundaries of divine norms, social ethics, and the principle of justice. This framework demonstrates that freedom of belief is inseparable from responsibility, as human choices are always situated within a moral order that requires answerability before God. Understanding this balance highlights that exercising religious freedom responsibly entails respecting both ethical obligations and spiritual accountability, ensuring that individual liberty harmonizes with communal welfare and divine guidance.

Based on these various interpretive studies, the limits of religious freedom in the Qur'anic perspective can be understood through three primary dimensions: theological responsibility before God, social ethics within communal life, and respect for the rights and dignity of others. Religious freedom is clearly affirmed, yet it is never detached from moral values or the consequences of faith. In this way, the Qur'an situates religious freedom within a balanced framework that integrates individual liberty with collective responsibility, aiming to cultivate a religious life that is both harmonious and grounded in justice.

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Consequences of Faith and Disbelief

QS. Al-Baqarah verse 256 contains a profound theological dimension concerning the consequences attached to the choice between faith and disbelief. In exegetical scholarship, this verse is interpreted as a clear affirmation that human beings are granted the freedom to determine their beliefs without coercion. However, this freedom operates within a moral and spiritual framework established by divine guidance. The decision to embrace faith leads to spiritual clarity, inner peace, and ultimate success in the hereafter, while the choice of disbelief results in spiritual loss and accountability in the life to come. Thus, religious freedom in the Qur'an is inseparable from responsibility, as every individual remains answerable before Allah for the convictions and commitments they choose to uphold.

After affirming *lā ikrāha fī al-dīn* (there is no compulsion in religion), QS. Al-Baqarah 256 continues with the statement:

فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا

"So whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unshakable hand-hold."

This passage shows that faith involves a deep and steadfast commitment. It requires the rejection of *ṭāghūt*, understood as false objects of worship or illegitimate authority, and sincere belief in Allah. The expression *al-ʿurwat al-wuṭṭqā* (the firmest handhold) conveys the image of a strong and secure bond. In the study of Wardani, Hidayah, and Suwandi, this phrase is interpreted as a symbol of unwavering faith that provides spiritual stability and certainty. It represents a lasting connection with divine guidance and reflects the positive consequence granted to those who believe in Allah after renouncing *ṭāghūt*.

The consequences of faith in exegetical perspective significantly influence a person's overall life orientation. Latansa's research explains that faith in QS. Al-Baqarah 256 is understood as a conscious and deliberate choice that shapes one's worldview, moral awareness, and sense of social responsibility. Faith forms the foundation of how individuals perceive truth, authority, and purpose in life. By choosing faith, a person becomes committed to divine values that require consistency between belief and action. This commitment encourages integrity, justice, compassion, and accountability in daily conduct. Faith therefore functions as a guiding principle that integrates spiritual conviction with ethical practice, directing both personal character and social engagement.

Conversely, the choice of disbelief in Al-Baqarah 256 is understood to carry clear and significant consequences (Kuswanto & Alfi, 2022). Disbelief is described as an existential stance that involves consciously rejecting divine truth after it has been conveyed with clarity. It represents a deliberate distancing from divine guidance and the moral responsibilities that accompany it. Kuswanto and Alfi emphasize that the Qur'an acknowledges the human freedom to disbelieve as part of personal agency, yet this freedom is consistently framed within the context of theological consequences. These consequences are particularly important concerning accountability in the hereafter, where individuals are held responsible for their response to divine revelation and their ethical conduct in worldly life. This understanding highlights that freedom of belief, whether toward faith or disbelief, is inseparable from moral and eschatological responsibility.

The dimension of consequences related to faith and disbelief is further emphasized in other passages of the Qur'an, such as QS. Al-Kahfi 29:

فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ

"This is the truth from your Lord. Whoever wills let them believe, and whoever wills let them disbelieve."

In academic discussions, this statement is often understood as an acknowledgment of human free will and moral agency (Utami, 2024). It affirms that individuals possess the capacity to determine their own stance toward belief. At the same time, the continuation of the passage describes the recompense prepared for wrongdoers, indicating that freedom of choice operates within a framework of divine justice. Utami's study emphasizes that the freedom to choose faith or disbelief is inherently connected to accountability. Every decision carries proportional consequences, reflecting the principle that divine justice responds to human actions with fairness and certainty. This perspective underscores that religious freedom in the Qur'an is inseparable from ethical responsibility and eschatological awareness, ensuring that individual choices are always aligned with moral and spiritual obligations.

From a contemporary exegetical perspective, the consequences of faith and disbelief are closely linked to both inner peace and life orientation (Ansari & Alzamzami, 2022). Research on Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* demonstrates that faith arising from conscious awareness produces a profound sense of tranquility and moral stability. In contrast, disbelief often generates existential anxiety and unrest, as it distances individuals from transcendental and divine values that provide guidance and meaning. The consequences of faith therefore extend beyond spiritual or eschatological realms, influencing attitudes, behavior, and ethical decision-making in daily life. Faith functions as a comprehensive framework that harmonizes personal conduct with higher moral principles, promotes psychological balance, and shapes an integrated life orientation grounded in awareness, responsibility, and spiritual integrity.

The teachings of Prophet Muhammad reinforce the understanding that faith and disbelief are deliberate choices with meaningful consequences. According to a widely cited hadith, the value of deeds is determined by the intentions behind them, highlighting that genuine faith must originate from conscious awareness and sincere commitment. Academic analyses of this hadith confirm that faith imposed on a person does not carry spiritual benefit, and therefore, the consequences of faith apply only to those who believe voluntarily and with full understanding. This perspective emphasizes the centrality of free will, moral responsibility, and spiritual accountability in Islam, showing that authentic belief is inseparable from conscious choice and ethical action, which together shape both worldly life and ultimate outcomes in the hereafter.

Studies on religious tolerance in Islam indicate that awareness of the ethical and doctrinal implications of faith supports peaceful coexistence in diverse societies (Ghazali, 2016). Ghazali's research explains that Islam upholds peace and harmony by teaching tolerance (*tasamuh*) as a fundamental value rooted in compassion, wisdom, universal benefit, and justice, encouraging Muslims to respect religious diversity and live in harmony with others. Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings are interpreted as guiding principles that foster mutual respect and dialogue among different faith communities, helping to reduce tensions and conflict. Understanding these ethical foundations encourages individuals to act respectfully, avoid coercion or discrimination, and engage constructively with people of different faiths. This approach strengthens social cohesion, promotes harmony in pluralistic societies, and ensures that freedom of belief is exercised responsibly, balancing personal conviction with communal welfare and ethical conduct.

Within the framework of Islamic theology, the consequences of faith and disbelief are closely linked to the concepts of divine justice and mercy (Wardani, Hidayah, & Suwandi,

2021). The Qur'an grants humans the freedom to choose their beliefs while simultaneously providing clear guidance to prevent deviation and error. Wardani and colleagues emphasize that Allah's justice is reflected in granting this freedom while ensuring that every choice carries appropriate consequences. This dual principle illustrates how divine wisdom balances human agency with accountability, demonstrating that freedom of choice is meaningful only when accompanied by responsibility and awareness of its moral and spiritual implications. Consequently, the interplay of divine guidance, justice, and mercy highlights the ethical and spiritual coherence inherent in human life, showing that true freedom is inseparable from moral and eschatological responsibility in Islam.

Based on various exegetical studies and academic articles, it can be concluded that QS. Al-Baqarah 256 presents faith and disbelief as deliberate human choices with theological, moral, and eschatological consequences. Religious freedom is clearly recognized, yet it is inseparable from the principle of accountability. The verse emphasizes that every individual bears responsibility for their spiritual decisions, linking personal choice with divine justice. In this way, it highlights a balance between human free will and Allah's fairness, serving as a foundational framework for understanding the relationship between religious freedom and the consequences of faith in Islam. This balance underscores that freedom of belief carries both rights and responsibilities, guiding ethical and spiritual conduct.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that QS. Al-Baqarah 256 affirms religious freedom as a normative principle inherent in Islamic teaching, yet this freedom is not unlimited and operates within a framework of theological and moral responsibility. Analysis of the verse and various tafsirs reveals that the prohibition of coercion in religion is grounded in the nature of faith as a conscious choice arising from inner awareness rather than external pressure. Every choice of belief carries spiritual, ethical, and eschatological consequences that must be accounted for before Allah. Religious freedom in the Qur'anic perspective is therefore not absolute but closely linked to personal and social responsibility. In individual life, freedom of faith is fully recognized, while in social life it is constrained by principles of justice, welfare, and respect for others' rights. The balance between human free will and divine justice provides a theological foundation for tolerance, religious moderation, and harmonious social life in pluralistic societies. However, this study is limited by a small number of cases, restricted locations, and limited sample diversity, indicating that further research with broader, more varied cases is needed to deepen understanding and support more effective Islamic education policies and practices.

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