



REASON VERSUS RELIGION: HOW DOES ISLAM FARE?

By Aisha Stacey (© 2018 IslamReligion.com)

Religion, or faith, is often considered to be directly opposed to reason. Many people see reason and religion as completely different concepts. Faith is usually defined as confidence or trust in a person or thing, not necessarily based on proof, while reason is described as sound judgement, good sense, and the ability to think a problem through logically. However, we need to look beyond these basic definitions because only then will we discover that Islam considers the faculty of reason to be a fundamental and necessary part of faith.

The first verses of the Quran revealed to Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, urged him to read, thus establishing a link to literacy, and throughout the Quran the reader is constantly advised to think.

"Read! In the name of your Lord who has created all that exists."

(Quran 96:1)

"It is a Book We have sent down to you, full of blessings, so let people of intelligence ponder its verses and take heed." (Quran 38:29)

"...such are the parables that we put forward to humankind so that they may reflect." (Quran 59:21)

Being able to use our reason, and come to logical conclusions is a God-given blessing, and in addition to this, thinking, reasoning and contemplation are essential parts of faith. Thus, a person is reminded to use rational thought processes to come to logical conclusions. Without knowledge and understanding a person may not recognize God or worship Him in irrational or forbidden ways.

Irrationality could be described as one of the characteristics of unbelief, idolatry, or hypocrisy. Lack of reason hinders a person's ability to recognize the truth, and the value of religion.

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YOUTH CORNER

DUA FOR PROTECTION AGAINST DISEASE

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْبَرَصِ، وَالْجُنُونِ
وَالْجُذَامِ، وَمِنْ سَيِّئِ الْأَسْقَامِ.

OH ALLAH I SEEK YOUR REFUGE FROM LEPROSY, INSANITY,
MUTILATION AND FROM ALL SERIOUS ILLNESS.

SUNAN IBN DAWOOD 1556

"ALLAHUMMA INNI AUDHUBIKA MINAL BARSII, WAL JUNOONI,

WALJUZAAMI, WA MIN SAYYIL ASQAAM"

INFECTION CONTROL IN ISLAM

By Aisha Stacey (© 2009 IslamReligion.com)

In recent years, health professionals around the world have become increasingly concerned with the spread of infectious diseases. Outbreaks of swine flu, avian (bird) flu, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) have meant that infectious diseases have taken on a global [context](#) and are now on the agenda of world leaders and health policy makers alike. In developed and developing countries, health officials are focusing on infectious disease research and linking it to policymaking and infrastructure.

The scope of infectious diseases is progressively more challenged by globalisation. Easy and frequent air travel allows diseases to spread rapidly between communities and countries. Infectious disease control will continue to be confronted by 21st century issues including global warming, conflict, famine, overpopulation, deforestation, and bioterrorism.

Due to ongoing media attention, most of us are aware of the dangers associated with swine flu and bird flu and in 2003 -2004 the world held its collective breath when 8098 people became sick with SARS, before the global outbreak was contained.[1] These three diseases have led to renewed interest in infectious diseases by the public; however, Gideon Informatics[2], the world's leading global infectious disease database, has tracked and documented more than 20 major infectious diseases since 1972.

Some basic measures are appropriate when trying to control the spread of any or all infectious diseases. These include meticulous hand washing, covering the mouth when sneezing or coughing, proper disposal of tissues, staying at home and away from public places, and in extreme cases such as SARS, quarantine. In the series of articles entitled Health in Islam, we explained in some detail that Islam is a religion concerned with creating a community of healthy believers.

Islam is a holistic belief system and it takes into [account](#) the physical, emotional, and spiritual well being of individuals and societies. Although care of the individual is important, safeguarding communities, including its weakest members, is of paramount importance. More than 1400 years ago, Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, was teaching his followers hygiene practices that are still applicable in the 21st century.

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THE PROPHECIES OF THE QURAN

(By Imam Mufti(Reproduced with permission from islamreligion.com)

The Quran contains many prophecies that have been fulfilled, but in this discussion, we will limit ourselves to only five.^[1] The first two prophecies are noteworthy: unlike any other world scripture, the Quran prophesizes its own preservation under divine care, and we will demonstrate how it actually occurred.

The Protection of the Quran from Corruption

The Quran makes a claim no other religious text makes, that God Himself will keep its text safe from alteration. God says:

"Behold, it is We Ourselves who have gradually revealed this reminder, and, behold, it is We who shall truly guard it [from all corruption]." (Quran 15:9)

The Ease of Memorizing the Quran

God has made the Quran easy to memorize:

"And in truth We have made the Quran easy to remember; who, then, is willing to take it to heart?" (Quran 54:17)

The ease with which Quran is memorized is inimitable. There is not a single scripture or religious text in the world that is as easy to memorize; even non-Arabs and children commit it to memory easily. The entire Quran is memorized by almost every Islamic scholar and hundreds of thousands of ordinary Muslims, generation after generation. Almost every Muslim has some portion of the Quran memorized to read in his prayers.

The Twofold Prophecy

Before the rise of Islam, the Romans and the Persians were two competing superpowers. Romans were led by Heraclius (610–641 CE), a Christian Emperor, whereas the Persians were Zoroastrians led by Khosrow Parviz (reigned 590–628 CE), under whom the empire achieved its greatest expansion.

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In 614, the Persians conquered Syria and Palestine, taking Jerusalem, destroying the Holy Sepulcher and the 'True Cross' carried to Ctesiphon. Then, in 619, they occupied Egypt and Libya. Heraclius met them at Thracian Heraclea (617 or 619), but they sought to capture him, and he rode madly back to Constantinople, hotly pursued.[2]

The Muslims were grieved by the Roman defeat as they felt spiritually closer to Christian Rome than Zoroastrian Persia, but the Meccans were naturally buoyed up by the victory of pagan Persia. To Meccans, the Roman humiliation was a sinister omen of the defeat of the Muslims at pagan hands. At the time God's prophecy comforted the faithful:

"The Romans have been defeated - in a land close by; but they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious- within ten years. With God is the Decision, in the past and in the future: on that Day shall the believers rejoice with the help of God. He helps whom He will, and He is the Mighty, the Most-Merciful." (Quran 30:2-4)

The Quran made a prophecy of two victories:

- (i) The future Roman victory within ten years over Persians, something unimaginable at the time
- (ii) The joy of the faithful on a victory over the pagans

Both of these prophecies actually occurred.

In 622, Heraclius left Constantinople as prayers rose from its many sanctuaries for victory over the Persian Zoroastrians and the reconquest of Jerusalem. He devoted the next two years to campaigns in Armenia. In 627, he met the Persians near Nineveh. There, he killed three Persian generals in single combat, killed the Persian commander, and scattered the Persian host. A month later, Heraclius entered Dastagird with its stupendous treasure. Khosrow was overthrown by his son, who made peace with Heraclius. Returning to Constantinople in triumph, Heraclius was hailed as a hero.[3]

Also, in the year 624 AH, Muslims defeated the Meccans in the first and decisive Battle at Badr.

In the words of an Indian scholar:

"...a single line of prophecy was related to four nations and the fate of two great empires. All this proves the Holy Quran to be the Book of God."[4]

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"They will say: If only we had been listening or reasoning, we would not be among the dwellers of the blazing Fire." (Quran 67:10)

"...Their violence among themselves is severe. You imagine they are united, but their hearts are divided. That is because they are people who do not understand." (Quran 59:14)

The fundamentals of Islam are in complete harmony with sound reason. Islam is not a blind faith. A non-Muslim is not expected to believe without proof, rather they can look at the proofs Islam offers, use critical thinking and take an informed decision. Rational thought and logic are essential for understanding God and His relationship to us and the world. Even for a Muslim, indulging in illogical or irrational thinking could quite possibly lead to sin and destruction.

The power of rational thought, reasoning teaches us that humankind has inherent limitations. Thus, there are many things that we cannot intellectually grasp. There are things that God refers to as the unseen, things that we must take as truths simply because God has informed us about them. However, it is also reasoning that allows us to know with certainty that God created the world and has subjected it and all who dwell in it to universal laws, His Laws.

"Verily, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships which sail through the sea with benefits for people, and what God has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every creature, and in His directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason." (Quran 2:164)

And it is through reasoning we conclude that if we are convinced that Islam is the true religion of God based on its fundamental teachings and the proofs it offers, then that implies accepting all that it teaches even if we are not able to understand certain things or the wisdom behind them due to our limitations.

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For a Muslim it is through reasoning that we understand the laws of God coupled with sincere effort and intention. Laws that we know have been established in order to make our path to a blissful afterlife clear. Islamic scholar, Sheikh Ibn Taymiyah (1263 - 1328 CE) explained the link between reasoning and faith.

Reason is a requirement for acquiring knowledge and performing righteous deeds, through which knowledge and deeds are perfected, but it is not enough on its own. Rather, it is a faculty of the soul and ability like the ability within the eye to see. If it is connected with the light of faith and the Quran, then it is like the eye receiving the light of the sun and torch. If it is left to itself, it cannot gain insight into matters that it cannot know alone... Thus, the circumstances resulting from the denial of reason are defective, and ideas that contradict reason are false.[1]

It was the power of reasoning and logic combined with unwavering faith that allowed the Muslim world to prosper in what is now termed its Golden Age. In the 8th to 14th centuries CE science, economic development, and culture flourished. Scientific developments were applauded and investigated with the understanding that they were blessings from God. Compare this with the way scientific advancement was considered by Christianity in the same period. The rule of faith dominated reason, and unlike Islam, reason and faith were not thought to complement each other.

Even now in the 21st century there are aspects of faith and reason, in religions other than Islam that do not bear up well under close scrutiny. Take for instance the Trinity, one of the core beliefs in Christianity. The idea that God is a man or that a man is God, is so illogical that it has been the touchstone of many Christians turning to Islam.

When our reasoning is based on logical conclusions, God's commandments, and our own moral compass, we feel comfortable and confident in our faith. Islam allows us to live and thrive in an ever-changing world because God tells us to think. He tells us to use our own powers of deduction, improve our faith and improve our world through reason and religion.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Majmu' al-Fatawá 3/338

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The Prophecy of Pagan Defeat

The Quran predicted the defeat of unbelievers in Mecca while Prophet Muhammad and his followers were still being persecuted by them:

"Or do they (the Meccan disbelievers) say: 'We are a great multitude, and we shall be victorious?' Their multitude will be defeated, , and they shall turn their backs [in flight]!" (Quran 54:45)

The prophecy was revealed in Mecca, but was fulfilled at the Battle of Badr, two years after the Prophet's migration to the city of Medina.

The Fate of Specific Individuals

Waleed ibn Mugheera was a staunch enemy who openly ridiculed the Quran:

"Then said he: "This is nothing but magic, derived from of old; this is nothing but the word of a mortal!" (Quran 74:24-25)

The Quran prophesized he will never accept Islam:

"Soon will I cast him into Hell-Fire! And what will explain to thee what Hell-Fire is? It leaves naught nor does it spare aught." (Quran 74:26-28)

Waleed died in a state of disbelief as prophesized by the Quran.

Also, concerning Abu Lahab, a fiery opponent of Islam, the Quran foretold he will die opposing the religion of God:

"May the hands of Abu Lahab perish, and [indeed] he has perished. His wealth and gains will not profit him. He will be plunged in flaming Fire." (Quran 111:1-3)

Specifically, three prophecies were made about Abu Lahab:

(i) The conspiracies of Abu Lahab against the Prophet would not succeed.

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(ii) His wealth and children would not benefit him.

(iii) He would die opposing God's religion and enter the Fire.

Abu Lahab also died in a state of disbelief as prophesized by the Quran. Had Waleed or Abu Lahab accepted Islam even outwardly, they would have disproved its prophecies and thus its heavenly source!

In addition, Abu Lahab had four sons, two of whom died at a young age during his lifetime. The other two sons and a daughter embraced Islam and frustrated his hopes! Finally, he died of a plague; people would not touch his body out of fear of contamination and dumped mud and stones on him where he died to make it his grave.

A key foundation to believing that a scripture is actually a revelation of God is internal truth, whether it be in regards to occurrences in the past, to come in the future, or in contemporary ages. As one can see, there are many prophecies mentioned in that which is to come, some of which were fulfilled in the Prophet's lifetime, or have been fulfilled since his death, while others are yet to appear.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]For more Quranic prophecies please see 'Mercy For the Worlds,' by Qazi Suliman Mansoorpuri, vol.3, p. 248 - 313.

[2]"Heraclius." Encyclopædia Britannica from Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service. (<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9040092>)

[3]"Heraclius." Encyclopædia Britannica from Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service. (<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9040092>)

[4]'Mercy For the Worlds,' by Qazi Suliman Mansoorpuri, vol.3, p. 312.

Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Amr:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a Muhajir (emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all what Allah has forbidden."



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From the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, we find evidence that clearly indicates Islam's stance on coughing and sneezing openly. Prophet Muhammad instructed the believers to cover their faces when sneezing.[3] The most obvious effect of sneezing and coughing without covering the mouth is the spread of airborne bacteria and viruses, in addition, droplets invisible to the naked eye, may fall onto surfaces or other people.

According to the Centre for Disease Control in the USA, the [virus](#) that causes SARS is thought to be transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. What is known as *droplet spread* can happen when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled a short distance (up to 3 feet) through the air and deposited on the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, or eyes of persons who are nearby. The virus also can spread when a person touches a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eye. The SARS virus might spread more broadly through the air (*airborne spread*).

Islam is referred to as the religion of cleanliness. **“Truly, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves.”** (Quran 2:222) In the traditions of Prophet Muhammad cleanliness is mentioned as half of faith, therefore, it is important to keep the body fresh and clean and Islam insists on several practices to facilitate this. The private parts are washed after using the toilet and Muslims must pay particular attention to being clean before praying. They wash their hands, faces, (including rinsing the mouth and nose) arms and feet, a minimum of five times per day. Prophet Muhammad insisted that the believers wash their hands, before praying, before and after eating[4] and upon waking up in the morning[5].

When trying to stop the spread of any type of influenza, including swine flu and bird flu, the first line of defence is frequent hand washing. Both the World Health Organisation and CDC recommend the following precautions. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and dispose of the tissue in the trash after use. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, germs spread that way. Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Infection control in Islam includes isolation and quarantine. Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, instituted strategies that are today implemented by public health authorities. He commanded his followers not to travel to places known to be afflicted with illness and he advised those in the contaminated areas or communities not to leave and spread the disease further afield. He said, **“If you hear that there is a plague in a**

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land, do not enter it; and if it (plague) visits a land while you are therein, do not go out of it".
[6] He also counseled ill people not to visit healthy people.[7]

During the worldwide outbreak of SARS, quarantine officials arranged for appropriate medical assistance, which sometimes included medical isolation and restricted travel movements. The CDC says isolation is necessary not only for the patient's comfort but also to protect members of the public. Many levels of government around the world are legally able to compel sick, infectious people to remain in quarantine or in isolation in order to stop the spread of disease.

The teaching and principles of Islam are designed to benefit all of humankind. Rules and recommendations for personal hygiene and cleanliness promote the well-being of individuals and communities. Infection control is inherent in Islamic hygiene behaviour. Washing the hands, covering the mouth when sneezing or coughing, voluntary isolation, when one is feeling unwell, and restricted travel is an effective and comprehensive public health strategy. Measures taken in the 21st century to prevent the spread of infections and viruses conform almost exactly to the hygiene and infection control practices taught by Prophet Muhammad.

FOOTNOTES:

[1](<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/basics.htm>)

[2](<http://www.gideononline.com/index.htm>)

[3]Mustadrak Haakim

[4]Abu Dawood

[5]Saheeh Al-Bukhari

[6]Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim

[7]Saheeh Muslim





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