

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > Are you Free or Slave? > Chapter 3: Research in Ideology > The Ignorant Kafir

Chapter 3: Research in Ideology

In previous discussions we have while proving that *Taqlid* in fundamental beliefs is wrong from the points of view of reason and Islam. and at the same time we proved the necessity for earring out investigation and research into such matters. In this chapter the importance that Islam ascribe to research including research into Islam itself and the view that persons engaged in this task cannot be called infidels. will also be examined. Three main aspects of research will therefore be looked at: a) the Islamic view, b) the relationship between science and faith, c) the relationship between ignorance and *kufr*. 1

The Islamic View Of Research

In order to establish what the Islamic view is of the importance of research and investigation into convectional matters we must first study such terms as 'Ilm (science) 'aql (reason) m'arafat (knowledge), fikr (thought), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) Hikmah (wisdom, tadabbor (foresight) tazakkor (reminding), tabyin (explanation) and ro'yat (observation) in the Quran and the hadith hadith.

Such a study conclusively proves that no school of thought attaches such importance to research into the foundations of belief and investigation of the truth or to the eradication of obstacles as well as the creation of circumstances conducive to this end as docs Islam.239

With astonishing insistence Islam invites people to investigate and think for themselves about their fundamental beliefs. The extent to which Islam appreciates the importance of science and knowledge is well illustrated by numerous hadith such as: 'Science is the highest attainment.3 'the veil of calamity.'4 'the most valuable of treasures.5 'the basis of all goodness.6 the soul of the self.7 'man is judged by the extent of his knowledge.8 'it is incumbent on every Muslim, both male and female, to seek knowledge in all circumstances.9 'those who seek knowledge are closest to the rank of prophet hood.10 'the angels place their wings beneath their feet.11 'forgiveness is implored for the student'.12 'paradise seeks the student."13 scholar is heir to the prophets.14 'the scholar's pen is mightier than the blood of martyrs.15 regard for scholars is an act of worship';16 Islam ascribes dozens, perhaps hundreds, of other virtues to knowledge. studying and scholarship, and all this respect is to encourage people to study, so that by the aid of knowledge they can be freed from the tyranny of *Taqlid*, and base their beliefs and actions on

reasonable and scientific standards., and base their beliefs and actions on reasonable and scientific standards.

In the Islamic view, even the slightest indications of a person's intentions should be carefully weighed and coordinated in accordance with reason. Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, gave his disciple Kumayl the following advice: 'O Kumayl, in everything you do there is a need for knowledge. 1754

In other words Islam does not permit a person to perform an action without prior investigation and assurance that it is correct. If he does so, not only is he not free from fault, but such an action is itself a grave error. Islam thus endeavor to persuade people that before embarking on any action they should carry out an investigation and acquire the requisite knowledge, and considers the ideal Muslim to be one whose cognition and knowledge, not acts of worship, exceed those of others. The Prophet Muhammad is reported as saying: 'The best of you in terms of faith is the person among you with the greatest knowledge, 1855

Another version of this *hadith* describes the ideal Muslim in these words: 'Some of you are superior to others in prayer, some in pilgrimage, some in almsgiving, some in fasting, but the best of all of you is the person who is superior in terms of knowledge. 19 This is why Imam Baqer, the Fifth Imam. advising his successor Imam Sadeq says: 'My son, Know the real value of our followers by the extent of their knowledge of the traditions for verily knowledge is understanding the traditions.'My son, Know the real value of our followers by the extent of their knowledge of the traditions for verily knowledge is understanding the traditions.

By traditions the Imam meant the words of the Prophet and the Imams and by knowing the traditions he meant research and investigation and expounding on the real meaning of these sayings. By traditions the Imam meant the words of the Prophet and the Imams and by knowing the traditions he meant research and investigation and expounding on the real meaning of these sayings.

In other words. he is referring to the preservation and transmission of *hadith*, 'knowledge' of the traditions is jurisprudent (faqih) & the science of *hadith* & a jurisprudent (faqih) is one who has studied and understands the *hadith.hadith*.

In this *hadith*, Imam Baqer first advises his son to judge the Shi'a and followers of the Prophet's Household by the criterion of their knowledge, that is understanding of hadith. He then goes on to say': It is understanding of the *hadith* that ralses a believer to the highest levels of faith'. In other words, what 'really matters is a deep understanding of the *hadith* and a more knowledge of many *hadith* without fully Understanding them is of little value.

Continuing. the Imam quotes a *hadith* of Imam Ali. He says: 'I was studying the book of Ali and in it I came across this sentence:' "The value of every person is the extent of his understanding". 20 On another occasion Imam Sadeq has this to say on the importance of understanding *hadith*: 'One *hadith* that you understand is worth a thousand that you merely relate'. that you understand is worth a thousand that you

merely relate'.

Narating a *hadith* may be useful. 21 and instructive for those to whom it is related, but for the narrator a *hadith* is only useful if he understands it, otherwise as Imam Baqer says. he derives little advantage from his knowledge. In fact. sometimes it may even be harmful both for the narrator and his audience alike, since when the narrator is not knowledgeable about *hadith* more often this may cause *hadith* to be distorted.

This is the reason for the commander of the Faithful words: 'Understanding of hadith is incumbent upon you, not narrating them'. 22 And on another occasion Imam Ali is quoted as saying: 'The ignorant devoute their efforts to narrating traditions. but the wise to understanding them.' 23 In these *hadith* and other similar ones. 24 There are two points to be noted: The first is that Islam attaches the utmost importance to research and understanding of the truth and the avoidance of *Taqlid* in ideological matters. in ideological matters.

It is a religion that stresses the need for a full understanding of its precepts, and not its ill-understood and unconsidered transmission. In other words faith must be based on knowledge and understanding not blind devoutness. It is a religion that stresses the need for a full understanding of its precepts, and not its ill-understood and unconsidered transmission. In other words faith must be based on knowledge and understanding not blind devoutness.

The second point is the confidence shown by the leaders of Islam that this religion is fully compatible with the most stringent scientific and rational standards, to the extent that scholars, if they are fair—minded, they will conclude that Islam is the true religion: otherwise why would so much emphasis be placed on study and research?placed on study and research?

The Relationship Between Science And Faith

For scholars, the native of the relationship between science and faith, in the Islamic view, is indeed an interesting question. Pseudo-intellectuals who lack religious-faith and are opposed to religious beliefs claim that there is no link between science and faith, and that in principle religious convictions are opposed to science and vice versa. They therefore, think that in every society where science flourishes there is no room for religion, and wherever religion flourishes there can be no room for science to grow and develop, for science to grow and develop.

Let us see what Islam has to say on this subject. Let us see what Islam has to say on this subject.

In the Islamic view, there is an inseparable link between science and faith: faith is seen in principle, as the fruit of science, the scientist is a true believer, and a lack of faith stems from ignorance! See how profoundly and beautifully the Quran expounds this truth: ignorance! See how profoundly and beautifully the Quran expounds this truth:

'Those to whom knowledge has been given can clearly see that what your lord has revealed to you is the truth.' (34:6). 'Those to whom knowledge has been given can clearly see that what your lord has revealed to you is the truth.' (34:6).

'... So that those to whom knowledge has been given may know that this Quran is the truth revealed by your Lord and thus believe in it.' (22:54).

We may note that these verses clearly and explicitly state that there is a relationship and inseparable link between science and faith, and that scholars and scientists undoubtedly understand the truth of Islam. In other words, when ignorance is eradicated from human society) Islam will embrace the whole world because it is a scientific and logical religion with rational standards.world because it is a scientific and logical religion with rational standards.

In other words, these verses teach us that a person cannot be a scientist or have reached– a state of true knowledge and understanding without being a firm believer in Islam. To be sure, the possibility exists that, a person may think of himself as a scientist and having acquired an understanding of the truth, yet not be a believer. Pseudo–science certainly is compatible with a lack of faith, but real science is necessarily accompanied by faith, since science and faith, as these two verses tell us, are inseparable. In the Islamic view, science and faith are like a pair of Seamese twins, born together and die together.

Now see what a beautiful expression Imam; 'Ali has left us. inspired by the Quran'. Now see what a beautiful expression Imam; 'Ali has left us. inspired by the Quran'.

'Faith and science are like twin brothers or inseparable companions.'2562

'Ali is saying in other words that just as if a person comes across one of a pair of Seamese twins or a pair of inseparable companions he really has visited and recognized the other. If a person reaches a high degree of knowledge he will also have reached a high degree of faith, and if a person acquires faith, he will also hate attained knowledge and understanding of the truth degree of knowledge he will also have reached a high degree of faith, and if a person acquires faith, he will also hate attained knowledge and understanding of the truth.

In this connection an interesting hadith of the prophet has been recorded that explains the link between science and faith in a different way: 'Knowledge is the very life-force of Islam and the pillar of faith.2663

This hadith compares the link between science and faith to two things: the relationship between body and soul, and that of between a pillar and the ceiling it supports. This hadith compares the link between science and faith to two things: the relationship between body and soul, and that of between a pillar and the ceiling it supports.

If a body lacks life or soul it is incapable of movement or growth, and a ceiling without a pillar to support

it cannot remain in its position for a single moment. Islam likewise has such inseparable links with science and knowledge: bon from and approved by knowledge, Islam can' only thrive and develop in a scientific environment. scientific environment.

Which Science?

Here is two important questions presents themselves: Which science is twinned with faith? Which branch of learning is the vital force of faith and the pillar of its support?branch of learning is the vital force of faith and the pillar of its support?

The brief answer to these questions is this: the science which is inseparable from faith consists of a specific world view that presents the universe to man as it is, and gives all branches of science and knowledge their direction. validity and worth presents the universe to man as it is, and gives all branches of science and knowledge their direction. validity and worth.

This brief answer will be more fully explained in the discussion of the *Nobovat khasa* (proper prophet hood) in a later chapter, accompanied by a commentary on the Quranic verses quoted at the start of this section. *1–The relationship between ignorance and Kufr*

Next we will discuss the third aspect of our present topic, namely the relationship between ignorance and *Kufr*. Is the relationship between ignorance and *kufr* the same as that between science and faith. and is every: *kafir* an ignorant? Or do ignorance and *kufr* have a different mutual relationship? have a different mutual relationship?

The faith of the matter is that the relationship between ignorance and *Kufr* is not like that between science and faith. i.e. ignorance and *Kufr* are not linked or twinned inseparably together. since it is possible for someone to be ignorant without being a *Kafir* and it is also possible for a person to be a *Kafir* without being ignorant. without being ignorant.

To explain this brief statement more fully two introductory discussions are necessary: first what do we mean by *Kufr* and *Kafir*? and second, what are the practical positions a person can adopt in relation to facts which are either known or unknown to him?? and second, what are the practical positions a person can adopt in relation to facts which are either known or unknown to him?

The Meaning Of Kufr And Kafir

The original sense of *Kufr* is that of concealing, and a person who concealing something, or a thing which conceals something else, is termed a *Kafir*. Concealment is of two kinds literal and metaphorical putting a seed in the ground is an example of the first kind and hiding the truth by means of falsehood or vice versa, is an example of the second kind 2764

So if a person states something which is contrary to his knowledge and belief his action is a form of *Kufr*

and he himself is termed a Kafir...

Someone who knows the truth and claims not to know it, is a *Kafir*, and so is someone who does not know the truth, but claims to do so. since the first person is concealing his knowledge and the second his ignorance: whereas someone who does not know the truth and admits that he does not, is not a *Kafir* but merely ignorant.but merely ignorant.

Positions Be Adopted In Factuals

When confronted with facts that are either known or unknown to him a person can in practice adopt one of four position: one of four position:

- 1) he may know the truth and state that he knows it.28
- 2) he may know the truth and state that he does not know it.
- 3) he may not know the truth and state that he does not know it or state nothing at all.3) he may not know the truth and state that he does not know it or state nothing at all.
- 4) he may not know the truth and state that he does know it.4) he may not know the truth and state that he does know it.

A person who knows the truth and states that he knows it, is a person of knowledge and faith. A person who knows the truth and states that he does not know it is a person of knowledge and a *kafir* because he is concealing his knowledge. A person who does not know the truth yet claims to do so is a person of ignorance and a *kafir*. And finally a person who does not know the truth and does not claim to do so is ignorant but not a *kafir*.

In his attitude towards the truths of existence a person may therefore be knowledgeable and a believer, knowledgeable and a *kafir*, ignorant and a *kafir* or ignorant but not a *kafir*..

Form these explanations it is obvious that in the case of ignorance and *kufr* there is no such link as that between knowledge and faith. In the language of the logicians between ignorance and *kufr*, there is a relationship known as partial overlapping i.e. a person may be a *kafir* but not ignorant, or he may be ignorant but not a *kafir*. or he may be both ignorant and a *kafir*.

The Kafir Who Is Not Ignorant

A person who denies something he knows to be true is a *kafir*. but he is not ignorant, since he is aware of the truth. It is like someone who is fully aware of the existence of God but for some private reason denies this in his public utterances or in the Imam 'Ali's expression. `His heart confesses while his tongue denies.2966

This category includes such people as Pharaoh and his followers. According to the Quran. despite the fact that Moses had provided clear proofs of the existence of the Creator of the Universe and his own prophetic mission. the truth of which they fully realized. they were unable to acknowledge this truth because of their egotistical, ambitious, cruel and criminal character, which caused them to denounce Moses and deny God. As the Quran tells it: As the Quran tells it:

`In their wickedness and pride (Pharaoh and his followers) denied (God's undoubted signs), although their souls knew them to be true.' (27:14). their souls knew them to be true.' (27:14).

As a result of the clear proofs and powerful logic that Moses gave them, and the miracles he performed in their presence, they were convinced that Moses was telling the truth and that the God of whom he spoke, whose prophet be claimed to be and who' summoned the people to worship, was the creator of the world and all therein. But despite this inner certainty they denied the signs of God, denounced Moses, and called his God a fable. Why did they do this? the creator of the world and all therein. But despite this inner certainty they denied the signs of God, denounced Moses, and called his God a fable. Why did they do this?

The Quran provides us with the answer. The reason for this denial was their wickedness and the desire to be superior. They knew that if they acknowledged the truth of Moses and the God of whom Moses claimed to be the prophet they would have to put an end to their wickedness and wrong-doing, and their pride and ambition. And since they were loath to do so they concealed their knowledge, covered the face of truth with the veil of *kufr*, and denied the signs of God.3067

This concludes our examination of the case where *kufr* exists but without ignorance, or the case of the *kafir* who knows. Now for the second case. who knows. Now for the second case.

The Ignorant Non-Kafir

A person who does not know the truth and does not claim to know it, is an ignorant *non–kafir*. In other words, someone, who does not express an opinion about what he does not know, or who admits not knowing, is ignorant, but is not a *kafir*, because he has not concealed anything. and *kufr* lies in the act of concealment. lies in the act of concealment.

Imam Sadeq is reported to have said: "If people when they do not know something pause and do not deny they have not committed *kufr*."31 This shows that this form of *kufr* resuts from denying something the essence of which the speaker does not know if person does not express an opinion about something he does not know, and does not deny the truth of it, he is not a *kafir* in respect to that truth, since by acknowledging his ignorance or by simply pausing and saying nothing he has not concealed the truth. An ignorant person of this type is therefore not a *kafir*, although at the same time he is not a believer either., although at the same time he is not a believer either.

One of Imam Sadeq's followers, a certain Muhammad bin Muslim relates that one day when he was sitting on the Imam's left side and Zurara was sitting on his right *Abu Basir* entered and asked: "What is your opinion about someone who has doubts about the existence of God?" entered and asked: "What is your opinion about someone who has doubts about the existence of God?"

The Imam replied: "Such a person is a *kafir*." A few moments later, to amplify his answer, the Imam added: "Verily, he is a *kafir* if he denies the existence of God.3269

That is to say that if a person, has doubts about the existence of God but does not actually deny His existence he is not a *kafir*. A *kafir* is someone who although he has doubts and cannot produce any proofs that God does not exist nevertheless denies His existence. is someone who although he has doubts and cannot produce any proofs that God does not exist nevertheless denies His existence.

Regarding the question of whether or not an ignorant person who does not claim knowledge is a *kafir* or not there is another *hadith*, this time from the *Imam 'Ali* which raises an interesting point. The text of this hadith is as follows: 'If people who do not know about something refrain from commenting on it they will not be committing *kufr* nor straying from the true path'.3370

What is of special interest in this *hadith* is that according to the Imam if ignorant people refrain from commenting on truths of which they are not aware, they will avoid not only being afflicted by the disease of *kufr*, but also going astray, that is to say an ignorant person who pauses and refrains from comment will gradually be drawn towards enquiring and investigation to discover the truth. Once he has entered the path of enquiring, with the goal of discovering the truth, he will be saved from error and deviation in his beliefs and will ultimately, through divine grace, discover the truth discovering the truth, he will be saved from error and deviation in his beliefs and will ultimately, through divine grace, discover the truth.

In other words it seems that the Imam is implying that the root–cause of ideological error and deviation is comments made by ignorant and non–specialist persons, and that if such people refrained from expressing their opinions on matters they are ignorant of *kufr* and deviation would be eradicated from human society. and deviation would be eradicated from human society.

The Ignorant Kafir

A *kafir* who knows the truth is not ignorant, and the ignorant person who does not conceal his ignorance is not a *kafir*, but if an ignorant person conceals his ignorance then ignorance and *kufr* are united in him. united in him.

An ignorant *kafir* is therefore someone, who expresses his opinion about something he is ignorant of. In the discussion which we will later have about understanding God we will see that people who deny the existence of God assuming that their reasoning is sound, can at the very most prove that man has no way of knowing the metaphysical world, that is to say he is not able to understand whether or not

anything exists beyond the world which we know from the evidence of our senses.existence of God assuming that their reasoning is sound, can at the very most prove that man has no way of knowing the metaphysical world, that is to say he is not able to understand whether or not anything exists beyond the world which we know from the evidence of our senses.

If such people confess their ignorance, they are not committing *kufr*. But so often they not only refrain from making such a confession but even claim to reap scientific results from their ignorance! They use their lack of knowledge as the basis of their theories about the metaphysical and transcendental world and claim that nothing exists beyond the world of our senses!. But so often they not only refrain from making such a confession but even claim to reap scientific results from their ignorance! They use their lack of knowledge as the basis of their theories about the metaphysical and transcendental world and claim that nothing exists beyond the world of our senses!

This is the true meeting-place of ignorance and *kufr*, that is to say that such people conceal their ignorance with scientific claims., that is to say that such people conceal their ignorance with scientific claims.

In concluding this chapter we must have two important questions.

The first is whether the result of research in all cases leads to truth and an understanding of reality? In other words does the researcher always arrive at an understanding of what he is searching for? Or is it possible that a person could carry out his research and not reach a conclusion, or perhaps imagine that he has reached a real understanding when in fact has not done so?searching for? Or is it possible that a person could carry out his research and not reach a conclusion, or perhaps imagine that he has reached a real understanding when in fact has not done so?

The second question is whether the criteria for understanding the correctness of a theory or opinion actually exist or not? The second question is whether the criteria for understanding the correctness of a theory or opinion actually exist or not?

The answer to the first question is that there are obstacles to and conditions affecting understanding. and if the researcher can eliminate these and create conditions conducive to understanding then he wilt undoubtedly reach a conclusion. The obstacles and conditions will be discussed in the second book of the present work, and the second question will be deal with in the chapter that now follows. The answer to the first question is that there are obstacles to and conditions affecting understanding, and if the researcher can eliminate these and create conditions conducive to understanding then he wilt undoubtedly reach a conclusion. The obstacles and conditions will be discussed in the second book of the present work, and the second question will be deal with in the chapter that now follows. The answer to the first question is that there are obstacles to and conditions affecting understanding, and if the researcher can eliminate these and create conditions conducive to understanding then he wilt undoubtedly reach a conclusion. The obstacles and conditions will be discussed in the second book of

the present work, and the second question will be deal with in the chapter that now follows. The answer to the first question is that there are obstacles to and conditions affecting understanding. and if the researcher can eliminate these and create conditions conducive to understanding then he wilt undoubtedly reach a conclusion. The obstacles and conditions will be discussed in the second book of the present work, and the second question will be deal with in the chapter that now follows.

- 1. Kufr is a comprehensive Islamic term that includes blasphemy'. Disbelief, atheism and the like and has no exact equivalent in the European languages. A person practicing kufr is a Kafir. i.e. an infidel, unbeliever, atheist and so on. The author gives a more deviled definition of this concept later in this chapter (IV)
- 2. This point is discussed more hilly in the second and third parts of understanding (pp --to -)
- 3. Mizan Hadith No. 13330
- 4. Ibid. No. 13338.
- 5. Ibid No. 13352.
- 6. Ibid. Chapter 2832.
- 7. Ibid. Chapter 2833.
- 8. Ibid. Chapter 2836.
- 9. Ibid. Chapter 2864 and 2847.
- 10. Ibid. Chapter 2837.
- 11. Ibid. Chapter 285I.
- 12. Ibid. Chapter 2853.
- 13. Ibid. Chapter 2852.
- 14. Ibid Chapter 2838.
- 15. Ibid. Chapter 2839.
- 16. Ibid. Chapter 2845.
- 17. Ibid. Hadith No 7421
- 18. bid. hadith No 1873
- 19. Ibid. No. 11873.
- 20. Mu'ani al-akhbar. p. 2
- 21. Mizan.hadith No3351
- 22. Miran. Hadith No. 3355
- 23. Ibid Hadith No. 3356.
- 24. Ibid. Chapter 719.
- 25. Mizan. Hadith No. 19457.
- 26. Ibid. Hadith No. 19456.
- 27. A more complete definition of Kufr is contained in a later section of this book 'bars to Understanding'.
- 28. It alludes to devotees.
- 29. Mizan, Hadith No. 4093.
- 30. Today, most of the leaders of the tiny groups that in various ways are in opposition to the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran are fully aware who is in the right and who is the real supporter of the people. Where wise all the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran know that in all matters of principle the Islamic Republic is in the right. The United States knows this, as does the Soviet Union. as well as their satellites and the tiny opposition groups affiliated to them. But their Pharaonic natures. in other words their oppressive nature and pride. Prevent them from acknowledging the truth.
- 31. Mizan. Chapter 3493. "Causes of Kufr".
- 32. Ibid. Hadhith No. 17401.
- 33. Bihar-ol-Anvar. Vol. 2. P 120.

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/are-you-free-or-slave-muhammadi-reyshahri/chapter-3-research-ideology#c omment-0