

Is Islam a Religion?

by David Solway

The status of Islam should be clarified if the debate on how to defeat terrorism is ever to bear fruit. Islam, I would argue, is not a religion in the common acceptance of the term as a community of believers dedicated to the loving worship of the Divine, the sanctity of life, and the institution of moral principles governing repentance for sins and crimes, making life on earth a stage toward a higher reincarnation, an ineffable peace, or a confirmatory prelude to eternity in the realm of a righteous and merciful God.

In fact, Islam is an unrepentant politico-expansionist movement clothed in the trappings of religion and bent on universal conquest by whatever means it can mobilize: deception (*taqiyya*), social and cultural infiltration, or bloody violence, as its millennial history and authoritative scriptures have proven. (See Koran 13:41, which is meant literally despite the attempt of apologists to launder its purport: "Do they not see that We are advancing in the land, diminishing it by its borders on all sides?")

There are several ways in which Islam differs from all other major religions. For starters:

It sanctions militant proselytization, mandating forcible imposition on other peoples by coercion, threat and overt violence (Koran 8:39, 9:29, etc.), a practice unique among religions today

- It punishes apostasy with death (Koran 4:89; Hadith, Bukhari 9.84.57), also a practice unique among religions today.
- It countenances no separation between church and state, that is, it cannot render unto Caesar what is

Caesar's. The scope of its ambition is [khilafil](#), that is, the establishment of a Caliphate requiring that a state—ultimately a universal state—be ruled by Islamic law. As Muslim scholar [Jaafar Sheikh Idris explains](#), “Secularism cannot be a solution for countries with a Muslim majority or even a sizeable minority, for it requires people to replace their God-given beliefs with an entirely different set of man-made beliefs. Separation of religion and state is not an option for Muslims because it requires us to abandon Allah’s decree for that of man.”

- The “religion” itself takes precedence over the transcendent values it should strive to attain: the flourishing of the individual soul, the love of God’s Creation, the grace and miracle of life, the conversation with the Divine, freedom of conscience and the inviolability of personal choice in determining one’s redemption. Instead, it elevates conformity to a set of stringent rules, down to the smallest detail, as a prerequisite to salvation, whose effect is primarily to perpetuate the faith itself at the expense of the individual votary. Admittedly, this is a literalist practice common to most restrictive and comparatively minor orthodoxies, but regarding the massive following enjoyed by Islam and its susceptibility to violence and the subjugation of other faiths and peoples to its hegemony, we are remarking a radically greater economy of scale and the havoc it can wreak.
- The propensity to violence is not an aberration but an intrinsic element of the Islamic corpus. As Lee Cary has [written](#), Islamic terrorists are “legacy, Koranic literalists” who use terror “to enforce a dogma that defines behavioral practices that comply with the Koran and [defines] the regulations of daily life.” The much-bruited notion that there is such a thing as “Islamism,”

a form of extremism that has nothing to do with Islam proper, or is a perversion thereof, is a pure canard, another in a series of timorous progressivist memes bleaching the blood out of the Islamic ideological jalabiyya. Islam, not “Islamism,” promises paradise for martyrs and jihadis killed in battle (Koran 3: 157), thus palliating and even inciting feral attitudes and fanatical actions—a patently non-spiritual way of earning beatitude.

- As Howard Kainz points out in an illuminating essay, “[Islam and the Decalogue](#),” Islam reverses the Golden Rule, which is central to Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Koran 48:29, 2:191, 3:28, etc.). For this reason, Kainz concludes, “Islam may best be understood,” not as a religion, but “as a world-wide cult.”

The standard rebuttal that all faiths have at one time or another shown themselves prone to violence and repression misses the essential point. All the major religions have reformed themselves, reducing or eliminating the all-too-human tendency to sanctimonious oppression—and none of these faiths, let us remember, endorsed oppression as a *universal* creedal or Divine imperative. Such is not the case with Islam, a communion that since its inception in the 7th century has seldom strayed from its sanguinary path of carnage and subdual. Its incendiary prescriptions and commands, as many scholars have noted, are open-ended and contain no “sunset clause.” They are perpetual and mandatory, feeding what essayist Bill Kassel [calls](#) “religious-themed barbarism.”

Others might argue that world-historical numbers are sufficient to constitute the legitimacy of a belief system. An *umma* comprising a billion-and-a-half adherents is no trifling matter. Numbers, however, do not in themselves determine what qualifies as an ethically reputable, socially harmonious or

spiritually viable religion or political grouping. Nazism and Communism counted in the millions of devout believers, but no reasonable person would consider such covenants as morally justifiable. Not coincidentally, both of these totalitarian movements found a natural home in Islam: Communism in the pan-Arab nationalist movement (see Eric Davis, [Memories of State](#), and the purpose of the [Eisenhower Doctrine](#)) and Nazism in a canonical Islam already richly manured with anti-Semitic beliefs and tropes. With respect to the latter, we recall the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem [Haj Amin al-Husseini](#)'s infamous collaboration with Hitler to further the aims of the Axis powers and facilitate the Nazi "final solution" of the "Jewish question." Islam plainly shares the same septicemic tendencies and imperial ambitions as its two erstwhile political allies, as it does their popular appeal.

Islam is, consequently, not a "religion of peace," as our weak-minded and complicit "leaders"—politicians, intellectuals, academics and journalists—tirelessly and tiresomely claim. "Islam is not terrorizing the West because it *can*," [writes](#) Raymond Ibrahim, "but because it is being *allowed* to"—legally as well as sentimentally, we might add. In the name of avoiding so-called slanderous stereotypes and of promoting "diversity," the powers-that-be refuse to recognize that Islam is, in effect, a triumphalist political theology of conquest and colonial subordination wherever and whenever it manifests itself, and has shown itself to be largely immune to doctrinal retrofitting.

In response to an article I recently posted on PJ Media, titled "[How to Defeat Terrorism](#)," a number of commenters objected to the litany of harsh measures I proposed to check the depredations of Islam, on the grounds that they violated the provisions of the First Amendment. Among the freedoms it guarantees, the First Amendment specifies that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." If, these skeptics

fear, one creates an exception to the Constitution and allows the government to certify what clerics are permitted to preach, such an intervention could be misused in the future against any person or institution the authorities deem unacceptable. This caveat must be acknowledged and taken into consideration, but, as we will see in the ensuing, the issue is not as definitive as it might initially appear.

Rebecca Bynum, publisher and managing editor of the [New English Review](#), has brilliantly analyzed the doctrinal nature of Islam in connection with the extent and the limits of the First Amendment in her masterful 2011 study [Allah Is Dead: Why Islam Is Not a Religion](#). The book is a must-read for anyone interested in examining the theological-and-political orientation of Islam, in particular for anyone who is unclear or apprehensive about the legislative purview of the First Amendment. The fundamental questions Bynum addresses are whether or not Islam “should rightly be classified as a religion, let alone an ‘Abrahamic religion’ or one of the ‘world’s great religions,’” and whether or not the Constitution protects freedom of religion “but only within certain bounds.”

An important precedent, she continues, involved the status of polygamy in the Mormon faith, a usage rejected by the federal government, which threatened Utah with military invasion unless it repudiated the practice, [the Supreme Court having ruled in 1878](#) that it is not just to tolerate polygamy in the name of religious freedom. The ruling [read](#), in part: “The government cannot make laws regarding religion, but can reach actions when the principles are a violation of ‘social duties or subversive of good order’.” The state complied, officially banning polygamy in the territory. As a result, “[T]he Mormon Church now has protection under the religious liberty clause, but it did not while...its members practiced polygamy.” Curiously, although polygamy is permitted in Islam (Koran 4:3, Bukhari 62.2,6), the government has not moved to prohibit it

among its Muslim citizens as a violation of moral and religious principle. What's not good for Mormonism is apparently good for Islam, the historic interpretation of the First Amendment be damned.

The Founders, Bynum asserts, "clearly meant to define religion in a Judeo-Christian context." Islam, however, "is self-segregating, fosters ideas of Muslim supremacy and thereby sows seeds of social discord." What kind of religion, we might ask, degrades women as second-class citizens, approves anti-Semitism, preaches hatred against "infidels," sponsors terrorist attacks on an almost daily basis with Koranic warrant, and wishes to impose Sharia, "a parallel legal system based on inequality," on its Western host countries?

Furthermore, as we have seen, Islam insists on territorial sovereignty and does not distinguish between theology and politics, which is why its definitional status as a "religion" is or should be moot. Its rituals, edicts, directives and precepts impact culture, politics and society as a whole on both the macro and micro levels. Bynum gets to the heart of the matter: "If Islam continues to be classified as a religion and given the full protection and benefits religions receive in America, then we will be helpless to contain it."

Similarly, Charles Moore's argument in [*The Spectator*](#) concerning terror-embattled France—that "it must close the gulf between church and state"—pertains equally to us. I would modify his statement by suggesting that the gulf should not be closed, as in Islam, but it must certainly be narrowed, which is probably what he meant to say. "[W]hat happens," he asks, "when, in the name of one religion, men in France enter the temple of another and slit the throat of a priest, as happened this week near Rouen? The historical justification for *laïcité* [secularism] has been that it is necessary to ensure peace and liberty for believers and unbelievers alike. It does not seem to work in modern France, where the political resistance to the discussion of religion is such that a policy against

Islamism [sic] cannot be formulated.”

It doesn't work here either. “Free societies,” [observes](#) Bret Stephens in *The Wall Street Journal*, articulating a historically validated truism, “cannot survive through progressive accommodations to barbarians.” In the same vein, Ibrahim [alludes to](#) the statistical reality of Islam's [rule of Numbers](#) (which refers not to the world-wide Islamic census, but to the rise of violence proportionate to Muslim immigration figures): “The more Muslims grow in numbers, the more Islamic phenomena intrinsic to the Muslim world—in this case, brazen violence against ‘infidels’—appear.”

I would therefore agree with Bynum that, as historically and scripturally constituted, Islam is not entitled to the protectionist provisions of the First Amendment. Its exclusion would solve the problem of potential abuse of the Amendment's terms and stipulations. Islam's tenets and articles of belief, undeniably unjust, tyrannical and socially disruptive in their practical effects and moral implications, should be construed constitutionally inadmissible, in line with the determination of the Supreme Court in its 1878 decision. Indeed, the issue is far graver today than it was a century and a half ago.

Bynum's final chapter furnishes a compendious list of categories that define the true nature of religion, and makes it clear that Islam does not pass muster. As she summarizes, “Just because Muslims are convinced Islam is a religious faith, doesn't mean the rest of us have to accept it as such under our laws, laws that were meant to foster religions that exalt value, advance morality, nurture the individual, preserve wisdom, promote peace, strengthen the family and have a transcendent purpose.” I can't but assume that [Chief Justice Waite](#), who delivered the opinion of the 1878 court, would have concurred.

As Bynum writes in her more recent (2014) [The Real Nature of Religions](#), “the belief system of Islam is currently the final

bastion sustaining war and conquest *as a religious obligation*" (italics mine). Its spiritual nature and moral vision are antithetical to both the idea and the ideal of a genuine religious communion. On the contrary, its drive and aspiration are khilafil. As a result, I believe it is fair to say that Islam, which she describes as "the duck-billed platypus of belief systems," is a theological-political hybrid intent on domination—the conversion, taxing (*jizyya*) or annihilation—of the non-Muslim world, defined in Islam as the [Dar-al-Harb](#) (House or Land of War). It's there in the holy books for anyone to read. It's there in the calls from the [minbar](#) and the [khutbah](#) for anyone to hear. It's there in the diktats of the [ulema](#) for anyone with the stamina to comb the literature to find. It's there in the historical annals for anyone to study. It's there among the bodies of the murdered and the mutilated for anyone, who has the stomach for it, to witness.

To conclude. In the words of the Supreme Court judgment, the "principles" of Islam are a violation of "social duties and good order." As such, Islam does not merit the legal shelter of the First Amendment. Measures to limit its influence—a halt to unvetted immigration, restrictions on subversive preaching, dead-bolting dissident mosques, de-licensing inflammatory imams, prohibiting the establishment of no-go zones, invigilating Muslim schools, preventing Muslim conversion tactics in prisons, and decreeing Sharia in contravention of common law and incompatible with pluralistic Western democracies—are fully justified.

We can be sure that as things now stand the Democratic Party (like the Liberal Party in my own country) will do nothing of significance to combat the growing demographic weight of Islam and the terror that flows from it—as *National Post* columnist Rex Murphy [says](#), "The attacks come at such speed...[w]e need a terror spreadsheet"—but will continue to cater to the Muslim voting bloc while engineering the collapse of the classical liberal traditions that have guaranteed our freedoms and

prosperity. Progressivism and Islam go hand in hand—until, that is, the day when Islam is strong enough to destroy its collaborator. Refusing to meaningfully resist the Muslim incursion into the body social can lead only to the formation of a dhimmified culture, at which point it may be too late to reclaim our patrimony. Islam is a civilizational enemy that has no business claiming asylum under the aegis of the First Amendment and our political establishment has no business giving Islam a constitutional waiver. If Pope Francis is correct when he [proclaims](#) that “religions don’t want war,” then Islam is not a religion.

Commenting on the Danish People’s Party’s call to shut down Muslim immigration, American Thinker editor Thomas Lifson [writes](#): “As the West grapples with the threat of violent jihad, I suspect we will be seeing more consideration of whether Islam is merely a religion or rather a totalitarian political doctrine.” Let’s hope he’s right.

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