

Theology: an Islamic perspective

In this short article, Professor Lejla Demiri outlines an Islamic perspective on theology.

Islamic Theology defines God as ‘The Most Merciful’. He created all things and is the One Who ensures their continued existence. Everything in existence is regarded a ‘sign’ referring to Him and honouring Him. Likewise, the verses of the Qur’an, the holy scripture of Islam, are called ‘signs’ of God. This indicates that God makes Himself known through prophets and through creation. Prophets, divinely inspired individuals, have been entrusted with conveying God’s words. Beginning with Adam (the first man), Abraham, Moses and Jesus are spoken of as being among the greatest and who stand in a long line of prophecy ending with the revelation given to Muhammad. It is through reading scripture and reflecting on creation and its wonders that one may come to know and talk about God. This corresponds to ‘divine revelation’ and the ‘human intellect’, two major resources Muslim theologians have relied on when constructing their views of God. While God has spoken to humanity throughout history, He remains transcendent and far beyond the imagination of any person. Theology is therefore an invaluable tool which helps us to know God as well as to define the limits of our knowledge of Him.

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Thinking things through

- Read the passage. Highlight key words; note and look up any unfamiliar terms; summarise two key features of Islamic theology.
- Create a diagram to show the information in this article. Write the word ‘God’ at the top of the page (remember not to try and ‘draw’ God). Put the other key terms below it (Qur’an, prophets, creation etc) and other important words around those (e.g. signs, names of prophets, divine revelation etc). Connect the terms with arrows to show how God makes himself known and how Muslims learn about God.
- Explain how divine revelation and human intellect work together in Muslim theology. Explain why God makes himself known to humans.
- Read the account of Christian theology from Dr Zahl in the Investigator File on p. 4. Note down three similarities and three differences between Christian and Islamic theologies.
- What questions would you want to ask Professor Demiri?