

the most recent in a long tradition of revealed wisdom. It presents an overview within which all other ways of seeking scientific knowledge can be guided, toward a fuller and more complete understanding of this life.

An Islamic renaissance is possible. It will occur when a knowledgeable faith in Allah replaces blind faith in tradition, when tolerance replaces puritanism, when free inquiry replaces repression, when love of truth replaces love of material wealth, when realization of the transcendence of Allah replaces mindless mysticism. Some may shake their heads and say that these things will never happen. They do not know the power of Allah, Who turns to man again and again. In the Quran, the doctrine of resurrection is supported by the following argument: How can anyone doubt that Allah Who made man in the first place can make him again? Similarly, if the original Islamic scientific civilization is possible, why doubt that another can arise?

“Read!” This is a mighty command. It tells a people who are up to their chins in a spiritual and worldly quagmire to pull themselves up to a level where they will be fit to be Allah’s vicegerents on Earth and take up the task of developing their world. This is a daunting task that requires knowledge, strength, industry, love and faith to carry out. This command to read addresses our minds. It stresses to us the importance of knowledge. How wondrous it is that the first word of the Quran to be revealed was the command to “Read!” How equally startling it is that the Muslims are the people farthest removed from reading. All the studies and surveys that have been conducted on global literacy show that the Muslims have the highest degree of illiteracy in the world. As for those who can read, the general scope and depth of their reading is the poorest. This culture of undervaluing the sciences and regarding them as contrary to the Islamic spirit is the reason why Muslim civilization is lagging so far behind the rest of the world today in science & technology

Considering the importance that the Quran gives to the sciences, it is bewildering to find that Muslim societies are the farthest removed of all the world’s civilizations from the atmosphere of technological competitiveness. Though we possess a rich heritage that affords us every reason & every means to develop our civilization, we are regrettably the least prepared of all the world’s peoples for

boarding the train of progress that is moving forward at an ever-increasing pace and that waits for no one.

Islam has a highly favourable attitude to knowledge and all forms of scientific enquiry. The Quran is very clear in its encouragement for learning. At the same time, it encourages our reading & our contemplation to be supported by Allah’s remembrance, so that we will be able to **steer clear of moral & material deviance**, which can result from human weakness & a tendency to pursue vested interests & vain personal desires.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille, a French scientist involved in scrutinizing the Bible & the Quran to see what they had to offer, has written two books that should be of interest to Muslims. “The Bible, the Quran and Science” and “What is the Origin of Man.” He has stated: “...The answer to the question, ‘What is the origin of man?’ Will undoubtedly depend to a great extent, not only on the strength of the faith that people possess, but also on their degree of knowledge in the fields included in the study. In spite of what people may think, such knowledge is **not** always to the detriment of spiritual values.” He goes on to say: “In modern times, a scientific background may indeed contribute reasons that, far from causing people to reject the idea of God, may in fact bring them nearer to it by inducing man to reflect on certain discoveries that science has allowed us to make.” During his studies in the field of microbiology he then made this stunning remark: “It is first and foremost the prodigious organization and perpetuation of life that leads us to acknowledge, not only as possible, but as highly likely that there exists a Creator.”

Albert Einstein, the German-American physicist, has offered us an insight into his thinking: “The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when one contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.” It is as if Einstein were quoting the Quran. Allah uses phrases like “For the one who **reflects**,” “For the one who **thinks**,” “For the one who **understands**,” and “for the one who use **Common Sense**.” Quranic verses strongly imply that “contemplating” the world around us is an integral part of faith. Go on...peer farther & farther out to the edge of the universe, and look deeper & deeper into the structure of the human body. It is in these two areas that will be found the “signature” of Allah’s creative power at its strongest.

“Only those servants, **who possess knowledge**, stand in awe of Allah.”

INTO THE WONDER

DISPERSING THE FOG OF IGNORANCE

**The dichotomy
between
science & religion
is a fallacious
argument.
All true great
men of science
were (are) deeply
conscious of God.
They have peered
at the wonder
closer than most,
& they stand back in**

Awe

**My religiosity consists in a humble
admiration of the infinitely superior spirit
that reveals itself in the little that we, with
our weak & transitory understanding,
can comprehend of reality**

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Iqra is the first word of Allah's Revelation to the Ummi, the unlettered man of forty, peace be upon him, chosen to be His Messenger in the time of ignorance. "Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from that which clings. Read & your Lord is Most Honourable, Who taught with the pen, Taught man what he knew not." (96:1-5)

What he knew not...The Quran is the whole of every science past & future in 114 Surahs (Chapters), speaking to the creatures whom alone in His creation Allah endowed with the intellect to see it shimmer. To whom alone He gave eyes and ears which could function beyond seeing or hearing; which could lead all the way to understanding. Eyes and ears to reflect on His signs, and choose to be thankful or unthankful. (76:2-3)

The signs He offered were everywhere to be seen and to heard and to be learned. They were in the heavens and upon earth and in the deep and in the day and in the night. They were in birth and in death and in worship. The very hours marked out for prayer, Salat, the measuring of our most basic human daily span: rising sun, zenith, mid-course, setting, night; each entered upon in pause and remembrance of Allah. Wudu: marking reverence to the Creator by respecting the body He fashioned so carefully for us to use and to enjoy. Purifying hands, mouth, nose, arms, head, ears, feet: our wondrous "tools" for learning, or teaching, for survival, for discovery. And for worship.

That knowledge & the pursuit of knowledge constitutes worship is the hallmark of Islam. That science is wonder is reflected in the eyes of every infant's new discovery, as they sparkle in perplexed curiosity, then delight: precisely, then, in "wonder." And the Islamic revolution, when it burst upon the world, spread science like a leaping wildfire. In very many and very real ways, Islam taught the world how to learn again, when the Mediterranean was a Muslim lake, and the "civilized" earth a swamp of stagnation and regression. Islam taught man to think again, when persecuted knowledge smothered in prisons of stone or ideas. [2:269] **Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases; and he to whom wisdom is granted**

indeed receives a benefit overflowing."

Glory days, long gone, some could mutter. And yet: with each entrancing new scientific breakthrough, with each supercollider, atom-smasher, Hubble telescope, the Quran's Revelation is proven ever more profoundly. Time and space are relative, science has confirmed. But of course a Surah had told us so 1400 years ago, in language suited to the non-technological society they first addressed (Surah 70:4, 8-9; 76:1). The universe, born in explosive gases, is expanding (Surah 41:11; 51:47). This blue planet, this unique planet of water: water is the matrix of all life, animal and vegetable (Surah 24:45, only one example). The genetic reproduction code functions through the pairing of genes (Surah 10:4; 27:64; 29:19). Electricity catalyzes creation (Surah 24:43). Radiation and light, matter and energy and both at the same time (quantum mechanics/photons), the basic stuff of Allah's universe (Surah 24:35). Heady science, up to the minute. Just set back the date, roughly a millennium and a half, to read about it in the Quran. The dichotomy between science & religion is a fallacious argument. All true great men of science were (are) deeply conscious of God. They have peered at the wonder closer than most, and they stand back in awe. Now this world of ours follows, unbeknownst to it, the guidance of the Quran in one way at least. Knowledge is valued. But Values, here is the twist, are set on their head. Science rules & Western hegemony was built on the bricks of applied science, technology. This is its chief seduction, as it is its chief weapon. But like the unbelievers of old, the technocrats have subverted & perverted the message, time & again. They have turned the message into an idol. They have forgotten or denied the Sender.

The landscape of modern science is topsy-turvy. "Good" science must compete with a greedy twin, manipulated for gain or for power, harnessed for destruction or the feeding of human arrogance. It often seems like a tower of Babel reaching for a realm that never can or should be ours. Modern science needs the steadying hand of the Quran's spiritual and ethical guidance. Muslim scientists can restore that lost balance. Once, the scientists of Islam transformed the fabric of living through their discoveries, ushered in "modernity." They can do it again.

The hungry predators of capitalism and Communism prowled, and the wasteland grew; the new knowledge-saturated age of ignorance. But Muslims

possess Divine mandates to follow and, if necessary, to enforce. The Khalifa (deputy) of Allah on earth, the "green" workers in the way of Allah can water this troubled ecosphere. Islam pioneered and perfected the science of societies, and of Society. We need no experts to tell us time is short, it is now or it is irreversible.

"If I have been able to see farther than others, it was because I stood on the shoulders of giants," Isaac Newton (a god-fearing scientist) said. He stood in fact on the shoulders of many Muslim giants, scientists who tore off the curtains of ignorance for all. In the 14th century Ibn Khaldun of Tunis, the first sociologist, remarked: "The future resembles the past like two drops of water resemble one another." To duplicate and to surpass the past, one need only be prepared for the future, and heed the parables of the Lord of the Worlds. "Light upon Light, Allah guides to His Light whom He pleases, and Allah sets forth parables for men, and Allah is cognizant of all things."

We have learned about many of nature's infinite mechanisms. When we think about the remarkable organization presiding over the birth & maintenance of life, it becomes less & less possible to consider it as a chance occurrence. As scientists delve deeper into the subatomic world and outwards into the mysteries of the universe they reach new & baffling frontiers of knowledge. And scientists are confronted with questions that have traditionally been seen as belonging to the spiritual & the religious. It is certain that science, being a relative form of knowledge, will never be able to answer all these questions. By realizing the truth the Quran holds we may reach unknown destinies in the search for scientific knowledge. Fourteen hundred years ago people did not understand the scientific facts we find in the Quran. What more does the Quran have to offer us in the scientific field? What will our descendants discover that has been revealed to us & lies yet hidden before our very eyes?

The realization that life can only be truly understood in terms of its interrelatedness and interdependence is the starting point of all religious and spiritual knowledge. The Quranic revelation is

The fact is that only those of His servants, (Quran 35:28)
who possess *knowledge* stand in awe of Allah

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