

Muslims and scientific thought

One of the lights of Islamic morality that illuminated humanity's path was scientific thought. Pre-Islamic Arab and some other Middle Eastern societies had never been concerned with the universe and how nature came to be or how it works. But this attitude changed with the Qur'anic revelation, for Allah tells people to inquire into the origins of the heavens and Earth:

[People with intelligence are] those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and Earth [saying]: "Our Lord, You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! So safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire." (Surah Al `Imran, 191)



This awareness started the scientific rise of Islamic civilization, and it then embarked upon a scientific journey like none ever seen before that time. Its powerhouse was Baghdad, capital of the Abbasid Empire and the Islamic world. Scientists, thinkers, researchers, and other scholars from all over the Islamic world came together in Baghdad's famous Dar al-Hikmah ("House of Wisdom") to research and investigate the secrets of Allah's universe. This awareness that Muslim scientists acquired by adhering to the Qur'an's morality enabled history's most rapid leap in scientific progress until that time. Open-mindedness, a wisdom Muslims are taught by the Qur'an, enabled them to analyze and then develop further the scientific achievements of other civilizations without prejudice. Muslim scientific records were full of observations, experiments, calculations, and research on various subjects. In the schools of science, women were entitled to the same education as men and made their own scientific contributions.

Muslim mathematicians developed the decimal number system and invented algebra and trigonometry. Muslim scientists were very keen on astronomical observations, and thus discovered and established the principles of modern astronomy. Muslim scholars calculated the moon's orbit around Earth and recorded the formulas. The spectacular works of architecture throughout the Islamic world were made possible only by the scientific infrastructure put in place by the Muslims.

Some of the Muslims' greatest achievements were in the field of medicine. Back then, ignorant Europeans considered illnesses to be a curse of evil spirits and so did not even have the concept of treating or actually curing the afflicted people. Muslim scientists, however, reached the research-based conclusion that illnesses were caused by tiny creatures invisible to the naked eye and that patients needed to be isolated from healthy people during their treatment. The world's first modern hospitals were



conceived in this way. Muslim hospitals had different wards for different illnesses, and Muslim doctors had scientifically developed methods of treatment. Muslims treated mental illnesses with music and therapy, while Europeans believed that the mentally ill were Satan's slaves and so burned them at the stake. Muslim reference works on the human anatomy were so accurate that they were used for 600 years in Europe's faculties of medicine.

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