
Modern Western scientific worldview, which grew out of the Age of Enlightenment, Reformation and the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century, is now a dominant force in most of the world. This dominance has been achieved, in large part, by the technological advances which have created an illusion of reality apart from Reality in such a forceful manner that to most people the marvels of the modern technological achievements appear as miracles: instant transmission of voice across continents, live coverage of events as they take place thousands of miles away, trips to the distant planets and the like are all perceived as the fruits of the developments which have been possible because of a fundamental transformation in the worldview of the pioneers of modern scientific thought. Science, today, is not limited to the study of nature; it is attempting to replace traditional epistemological and ontological foundations of knowledge. This encroachment of science in a domain traditionally held by Religion has given rise to the debates about the relationship of science and religion, their mutual points of convergence and divergence and other related issues. These questions have been and are being debated by the followers of all religions as science keeps on encroaching further and further into the belief systems of contemporary human beings through rapid advances in such areas as biotechnology, embryology and genetic engineering. These are not merely philosophical debates; these are real-life issues forcing human beings to make choices which affect the most fundamental aspects of existence. Modern science has created a belief system in which there is no room for the Divine. This belief system comes with its own values and ethics and attempts to create a *weltanschauung* parallel to and in competition with the religious worldview.

The discourse on the relationship between Islam and modern science is now more than hundred years old if one takes the debate started by Ernest Renan (d. 1892) in Paris in 1883 as a starting point. Jamāl al-Dīn Aflāḥī’s (d. 1897) response to Renan’s polemic against Islam is the first Muslim response, in the modern era, to the claim that Islam and science are incompatible. But since then, the discourse has become far more complex. During the second half of the
twentieth century, Islam's relationship with not only science but the whole of modern knowledge along with its methodologies and premises has become the focus of a discourse which has far-reaching implications because the positions taken in this debate affect, replace or undermine the very foundations of Islamic worldview. That this discourse is not merely a philosophical luxury for some Muslim scholars is clear from the fact that the thrust of modern science is not restricted to the technologically imposed images and sounds brought to millions of Muslim homes but its myriad forms go much deeper and penetrate the very fabric of the belief system on which Islam is based. Modern science not only claims to provide answers to the physical phenomena, it is also claiming to provide "answers" to such fundamental matters as the origin and destiny of the universe and human life.

Leif Stenberg's book is the first attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the recent developments in Islam and science debate. It is a "descriptive and analytic undertaking", written in a lucid language with remarkable clarity of thought and intent. The study is based on the assumption that the current debate on Islam and science can be presented through the description and analysis of "positions" centred around the ideas of their exponents. The four exponents whose positions have each been presented in separate chapters are: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Maurice Bucaille, Ziauddin Sardar and Ismail al-Faruqi. Each of these four chapters has inter-related themes and structures and a conscious effort has been made to use similar headings so that analysis of comparative positions becomes easy. By establishing contacts with the exponents and/or their supporters, the author has been able to include the most up-to-date information about the life and works of the exponents and their supporters.

But the study is not merely a presentation of the debate; it attempts to analyze the contours of emerging Islamic modernity through these four positions. The analysis, presented in a separate chapter, highlights the similarities and differences of the four positions. It also attempts to place these positions in the context of history of ideas and discusses the relationship between the discourse and phenomenon of modernity.

Within this overall framework, ideas of each exponent are presented through their works, personal conversations and critiques of their works. For an unspecified reason, Ziauddin Sardar (b. 1951) and a few other individuals who more or less share similar ideas are introduced first in a chapter entitled "Reinterpreting Islam — Sardar and the Ijmalis". This chapter contains a concise account of Sardar's early life and works, as well as brief notes on Munawar Ahmed Anees, Merryl Wyn Davies, S. Parvez Manzoor and Sardar's "Maimonide", Jerome R. Ravetz. Although Sardar was associated with the Hajj Research Centre, Jeddah for two years (1977–79) and he has held a part-time position as Director at the Center for Policy and Future Studies at the East-West University, Chicago during the early 1980s and at present he is a visiting professor of science and technology policy at the Middlesex University, England, he has generally remained outside the established institutions as far as his career is concerned and has charted an independent course for the expression of his ideas. By remaining outside the academic institutions and other established forums, he has been able to view the problem of science and the Muslim world as if from the
edge. This has allowed him to develop a unique understanding of the problems associated with both the ideological as well as practical aspects of science in the Muslim world. His fierce criticism of the fossilized institutions and modes of thinking prevalent in the Muslim world is also a reflection of this independence.

In the 1980s, the heterogeneous group of Sardar and his associates coined the word *Ijmali* as a symbol of their ideas and approach to the questions associated with the debate. The word, taken from Rumi's *Dhuwan-i Shams*, is used to reflect the holistic nature of their approach. *Ijmalis'* position is characterized by the awareness that the West (its civilization, culture, economic and military power) is a threat to the Muslim world. The claim of universality of ideas produced by the Western civilization is seen by this group as a threat to the Islamic worldview. Western science and technology are seen as a tool for the propagation of West's economic and political agenda. This awareness is reflected throughout Sardar's works which deal with a wide range of subjects, encompassing science, technology, development issues, culture and futurology. He is aware that "during the course of the development of the discourse on Islam and Science, the term 'Islamic Science' has run into problems because different exponents propagating the idea of Islamization of science had different perceptions". For Sardar, science is connected with the scientist and his worldview. For him, science is not an objective phenomenon or activity but a cultural activity. Modern science is seen as too deeply rooted in the Western civilization which in turn is seen as a threat to the Muslim culture and civilization. "The Ijmali position is similar to that of al-Ghazzali", Sardar wrote in *Explorations in Islamic Science* (1989), "the essence of Ijmali thought is reconstruction, complexity and interconnection".

Sardar and other members of the *Ijmali* group have more recently used television as a tool for the expression of their ideas. Their activities have also shifted locale during the course of this discourse. Now they are partly based in Malaysia. There is also a shift in Sardar's own interests; he is now more interested in postmodernism, racism, futurology and Muslim-Christian relations.

In the discourse on Islamization of science, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933) appears as the foremost academician who has advanced the notion of a "Sacred Science". Author of more than twenty books in English and many others in Persian, Nasr was born in Tehran and now lives and teaches in the United States. Professor Nasr has untiringly advocated a reconstruction of Islamic scientific thought on the basis of the revealed knowledge. His many books attempt to outline the philosophical foundations of a sacred science which will not be based on conquering nature but which will attempt to function within the limits set by Divine Commands. Nasr's sources of inspiration range from the traditional Sufi doctrines to the European traditionalists such as René Guénon (d. 1951) and Frithjof Schuon.

In addition to the attempts at reconstruction of a science based on Islam's perennial teachings, Nasr has also written extensively on the malaise of science in the Western world. Having lived in America for so long, he has seen the effect of secularization of science from close quarters. Modern man's obsession with domination of nature and power has produced a science which has clearly harmed the ecological system to the extent that the very existence of the planet is in danger. Nasr is one of the important Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century who
has consistently tried to make his Western readers aware of the lack of spiritual aspects in the present-day society. At the same time, Nasr is aware of the inroads made by the Western thought in the Muslim countries and he has repeatedly written on the destructive effects of this penetration of secular ideas in the Islamic polity.

Aware of the power of the Word in a traditional sense, Nasr is very careful with his constructions. His works contain carefully crafted terms based on the traditional meanings of the words. This usage has given his opponents a basis for calling him elitist. However, Nasr is conscious of the fact that most of the problems and confusions in modern thought have arisen from the misuse of traditional terminology through a kind of corruption and secularization of language.

Professor Nasr’s position is presented in the book through brief summaries of the central ideas in his important works including his famous works such as *Science and Civilization in Islam* (1987) and *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (1979) as well as the more recent *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993). His use of certain Islamic terms in a modern context has been pointed out time and again throughout the chapter.

The third position discussed by Stenberg is that of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). This position is borne out of the experiences and reflections of many professional Muslims working in academic and research institutions in North America. Their formal education and training was generally based on secular theories of knowledge and their professional careers also developed in institutions which had very little to do with their belief systems. This created an inner need to look into the deeper issues involved, and resulted in the establishment of several organizations such as the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS, established in 1971/72), Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE) and Islamic Medical Association (IMA). In 1983, Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) was established as an umbrella organization.

IIIT was founded in 1981 following the Lugano Conference held in Switzerland in 1977 and organized by AMSS. The Conference was attended by thirty leading Muslim intellectuals and they unanimously agreed that “the contemporary crises of the Ummah was intellectual — a crisis of thought — and that the remedy was to be found in that framework”. Thus IIIT was founded in Herndon, Virginia, in 1981. This was followed by a series of activities, which included, among others, a second conference held in Islamabad, Pakistan in 1982 and the publication of a book, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*.

This position is based on the premises that Muslim Ummah is in a state of malaise; the roots of this malaise are to be found in influences from a world of ideas based on a vision foreign to Islam. Exponents of this position are more concerned with social sciences than natural sciences and their inclusion in the book is somewhat problematic. No doubt, there are some statements about the natural sciences and how various branches, such as Biology, have theories which are alien to the Islamic worldview but, on the whole, the main thrust of IIIT and the various scholars associated with the movement has been in the domain of
social sciences. However, since science cannot exist in a vacuum or in total isolation from the historical and cultural conditions therefore Islamization of knowledge, in a general sense, can be taken as including the Islamization of science as well.

According to this position, the fundamental premises for establishing an Islamic science is based on the worldview which recognizes that the Word of God is relevant in each and every sphere of human activity, that God has created this universe with a purpose and he has made Man his viceregent for an appointed term. The model and example to be followed is that of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). Nature is not to be exploited but should be understood and treated as a trust given to mankind by the Creator.

The inclusion of the IIIT’s position in the book can be somewhat justified on the basis that Science is, after all, part of Knowledge and the Islamization of Knowledge project seeks to Islamize all branches of modern knowledge. The inclusion of Maurice Bucaille's position, however, in the book is more problematic for Bucaille's concern is not to find an Islamic epistemological base for science nor is he concerned with moral or ethical issues of modern scientific research. He is simply interested in correlating certain scientific "facts" with the Qur'anic verses. Since the publication of the English translation of his book, La Bible, le Coran et la Science (1976) as The Bible, the Qur'an and Science (1978), Bucaille has become the pioneer of an unfortunate trend in modern times and several studies have been devoted to "prove" the divine origin of the Qur'an on the basis that the Qur'an contains certain scientific facts which were unknown to humanity at the time of its revelation. As far as Bucaille is concerned, his work is perfectly understandable. He grew up in an environment hostile to Islam and his initial knowledge of Islam came from the ill-informed critiques of the French Orientalists who declared that "Mohmet was the author of the Qur'an". He grew up to become a surgeon and retired as the chief of the Surgical Clinic at the University of Paris. In his late forties, Bucaille became interested in Islam, he learned Arabic and studied the Qur'an in its original language. In due course of time, the miraculous nature of the Qur'an had its effect on Bucaille and he became conscious of certain scientific facts mentioned in the Qur'an which were not known to humanity until recently. This proved to him that the Qur'an was the Word of God and that it could not have been written by the Prophet (upon whom be peace). On November 9, 1976, he presented his ideas in a lecture entitled "Physiological and Embryological Data in the Qur'an" held at the French National Academy of Science. This lecture became the seed from which La Bible, le Coran et la Science grew. Publication of the English translation in 1978 made Bucaille famous in the Muslim world. Since then the book has been translated into all major languages; it has also been the basis of a film (The Book of Signs). Bucaille has been invited to various Muslim countries by kings and heads of states and many scientists have published works on similar lines, finding all kinds of "scientific facts" in the Qur'an. This unusual response is a good measure of the deep rooted malaise of the crisis of the modern educated Muslims. Raised on secular education, these Muslims have grown up with a shaky faith, inferiority complex about their religious and cultural heritage and with a constant need to find reassurance of their beliefs. And when such a "reassurance" comes through
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a Westerner who is also a scientist, their "faith" seems to have been validated. As far as Bucaille himself is concerned, his search for the true religion, his doubts about the divine nature of Bible and his fascination with the Qur'an — all are legitimate facets of his own spiritual quest. However, neither The Bible, the Qur'an and Science nor his other works, Mummies of the Pharaohs — Modern Medical Investigations (1987) and Réflexions sur le Coran (1989) form the basis of a discourse on Islamization of Science, and inclusion of this position in the book seems unjustified. Bucaille merely represents a trend in the discourse, not a 'position'. In Bucaille's own words, his aim is to examine "the Scriptures themselves in the light of modern scientific knowledge".

The last two chapters of the book, "Communication and Interaction Between the Positions" and "Analysis" present well-documented and well-informed thematic links and points of convergence and divergence among various Positions. The book is a valuable source for further research.

Muzaffar Iqbal


Islam is a comprehensive way of life; it provides in the Qur'an and in the Hadith what is lawful (halāl) and unlawful (harām) for Muslims. Among the lawful things in Islam are trade and commerce. Islam permits private enterprise and private possessions. But it does not allow Muslims to pursue their financial activities along the lines of selfishness and greed. Islam and lawful trade are almost intertwined, in the sense that where there is Islam, there is also commerce. The early Muslim traders such as the Mande traders (or Djula) in Western Sudan (now West Africa) were also Islamic teachers, preachers, and religious guides. The book under review is about the role of Muslims in the development of Sierra Leone, with special emphasis on trade and commerce as well as politics and culture. In the introduction, the editors, Professors Jalloh and Skinner inform the reader about their work as a product of a seminar on Islam and the influence of Muslims in the Sierra Leonean society. The discourse took place at Howard University in 1994.

The Muslim community in Sierra Leone has been an enterprising force both during and after the British colonial rule. Like any other Muslim country, commerce and Islam went hand in hand in Sierra Leone and facilitated contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims. The book is published at the time when Sierra Leone had just inaugurated its first democratically elected Muslim head of state and ousted him through a military coup d'etat.

In the foreword of the book under review, an eminent Muslim scholar, Professor Sulayman S. Nyang, talks about the rapid growth of Islam in Africa,