

## Book Review

***The Scientific Muslim: Understanding Islam in a New Light.***  
By Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz. New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt Ltd  
ISBN: 9788194201847. pp. 208

ABDUL ALI<sup>1</sup>

This book is a product of more than three decades of the author's experience in teaching and research as Professor of Botany, side by side with his relentless efforts to understand and interpret the Qur'an in original Arabic by applying his knowledge of science. Its central theme is encapsulated in its very title *The Scientific Muslim: Understanding Islam in a New Light*. The new light mentioned here is in fact the original, intrinsic light of Islam which has got blurred through centuries of deviation of a vast majority of Muslims from its true spirit, particularly in the later periods of Islamic history. It was mostly because of their ignorance of the Qur'anic texts and lack of cultivation of scientific knowledge. It is indeed an irony that they read the Qur'an without understanding it, despite the fact that the revealed Book puts the greatest possible emphasis on acquisition of knowledge. Needless to reiterate that scientific knowledge based on the spirit of enquiry, observation, experiment, measurement, mathematical calculations, intellect and critical analysis has the potential to serve as a tool to comprehend properly both explicit (*ayat bayyinat*) and non-explicit (*ayat mutashabihat*) verses of the Qur'an. That is the main reason why Muslims are exhorted in the Qur'an time and again to pursue this knowledge. As rightly maintained by Prof. Abdus Salam, about 750 verses of the Qur'an, almost one-eighth of the Book, emphasize reflection on natural phenomena with examples drawn from such diverse fields of science as cosmology, physics, biology and medicine. Moreover, this Qur'anic injunction is not optional. It has been made mandatory for them. Otherwise, in the event of their non-compliance and failure to do so, they are branded in the Qur'an itself as ungrateful, even inmates of Hell (VII: 179; XXXVIII: 27; LXVII: 23).

The visionary author has successfully recaptured in his book the missing original light of Islam. This, in my assessment, is his greatest contribution in producing the pioneering work. His thoughtful examination of Muslim society will deliver for the committed reader a refreshing and revitalizing perspective by communicating to him the bright face and core of the religion of Islam, independently of the ritualistic mould it has been set into. That way he has not only bridged the gap between religion and science, but also made them complementary to each other in the service of humanity at large, thereby further enhancing faith in the famous quote of the 20th century greatest scientist Albert Einstein: "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind".

Further, in his discourse on biotechnology from an Islamic perspective, the author has thrown illuminating light on the Qur'anic environmental ethics in the light of modern scientific discoveries. The inherent equilibrium and balance maintained in Nature by the Creator is emphasized repeatedly in the Qur'an which unfortunately is not taken seriously by man. As a

---

<sup>1</sup>Abdul Ali, Ph.D. Professor and Former Chairman, Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, AMU Campus, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh 202002, India Email: [abdulali0123@gmail.com](mailto:abdulali0123@gmail.com)  
<https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.19.2021.204>

consequence, man is facing today the worst kind of environmental pollution, which if not halted and corrected without further loss of time, is bound to render human life on earth utterly miserable by heaping upon him a wide range of problems and risks like increase in global warming, sea level rise, rise in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere leading to depletion of the ozone layer and related diseases and disasters. The solution suggested by the author in the light of the Qur'anic measures in this regard is worthy of consideration and implementation.

While applauding the merits of the book, the reviewer is of the opinion that it should have included a brief introductory chapter on the role played by the scientific verses of the Qur'an in inspiring its early followers to study and assimilate the ancient scientific legacy scattered in different parts of the then civilized world and enrich it with valuable contributions of their own in almost all branches of scientific knowledge which ultimately led to what is known as the Western Renaissance. That would have further highlighted the concept of unification of knowledge promoted by Islam in a more tangible manner, as it does not compartmentalise knowledge into the religious and the secular. Besides, transliteration of some Arabic words do not conform to the international norms. Some such words along with their correct versions in brackets are as follows: *Saum* (*Sawm*); *Saleem* (*Salim with a small dash on i*); *Taj-ul-Uroos* (*Taj al-'Arus*); *Muheet-ul-Muheet* (*Muhit al-Muhit*); *Maqayees al-Lughah* (*Maqayis al-Lughah*); etc.

On the whole, the book is well-researched and well-written. It is also well-designed. Its pioneering scientific approach to understand the Qur'anic texts is laudable, for which the author will be remembered and appreciated for a long period of time. The precise, penetrating insights given by him into different theoretical and practical aspects of Islam in the totality of its teachings are enlightening and praiseworthy. He has dealt with all important aspects of the topic and related matters in an organised and lucid manner. He has substantiated his viewpoints and perceptions with relevant Qur'anic verses quoted in the proper context. He has also delved deep into the root-words of different terms used in the Qur'an with a view to finding out their correct connotations by consulting such authentic dictionaries as *Muhit al-Muhit* by Butrus al-Bustani, *Taj al-'Arus Min Jawahir al-Qamus* by Al-Murtada al-Zabidi and *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah* by Ibn Faris.

The main focus of the author in this book is that Muslims must understand, follow and practice the totality of the teachings of the Quran: 'O you, who have believed, enter into Islam completely' (II: 208). He is justified in concluding that if they do so, they would become true practicing Muslims, following which they would no longer engage in emotional and peripheral issues which do them no good. They would rather concentrate on becoming model servants of Allah by acquiring holistic education and offering service to the needy and humanity at large. The glowing tributes paid to the author at the end of the book by both modernists and *ulama* (religious scholars) is a clear indication of the acceptability of his scientific approach to understand the Qur'an even among traditional scholars who rarely adopt new ideas in such matters propounded by the products of modern educational system. All these positive points ensure that this book will never become obsolete. It will remain a constant source of guidance to the inquisitive readers. Electronic version of the book is also available. I strongly recommend it to both students and scholars of Islam. Even general educated people interested in getting acquainted with the genuine image of Islam will find it useful and rewarding.