# Science and religion

Science considers any fact established through empirical methods to be scientific. Therefore, assertions not established through observation and experiment are only theories or hypotheses.

As science cannot be sure about the future, it does not make definite predictions. Doubt is the basis of scientific investigation. However Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, who was taught by All-Knowing, made many decisive predictions. Most have come true already; the rest are waiting for their time to come true. Many Qur'anic verses point to recently discovered and established scientific facts. As pointed out earlier, the Qur'an mentions many important issues of creation and natural phenomena that even the most intelligent person living fourteen centuries ago could not have known. Furthermore, it uses the Prophets' miracles to allude to the farthest reaches of science, which originated in the Knowledge of the All-Knowing One.

Does the Qur'an contain everything? The Qur'an describes humanity and the universe. It declares:

*With Him are the keys of the Unseen. None but He knows them. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf falls but with His Knowledge, not a grain amid the darkness of the earth, nothing of wet or dry but (it is noted) in a Manifest Book. (6:59)*

Ibn Mas'ud says that the Qur'an provides information on everything, but that we may not be able to see everything in it. Ibn 'Abbas, the “Interpreter of the Qur'an” and “Scholar of the Ummah,” asserts that if he loses his camel's rein, he can find it by means of the Qur'an. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, a major scholar who lived in Egypt in the 15th century CE, explains that all sciences or branches of knowledge can be found in the Qur'an.

How can a medium-sized book, which also contains a great deal of repetition, contain everything we need to know about life, science, conduct, creation, past and future, and so on?

Before explaining this important matter, we should point out that to benefit from the Qur'an, which transcends time and location and is not bound by its audience's intellectual level, we have to prepare ourselves to do so. We should have firm belief in it and do our best to implement its principles in our daily life. We must refrain from sin as much as possible. As the Qur'an declares we only get what we strive for (53:39), we should, like a deep-sea explorer, dive into its “ocean” and, without becoming tired or bored, continue studying it until we die.

Moreover, we need a good command of Arabic and sufficient knowledge of all branches of the natural and religious sciences. A good interpretation necessitates cooperation among scientists from all natural and social sciences, and religious scholars who are experts in Qur'anic commentary, Hadith, fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), theology, and spiritual sciences. While reciting and studying the Qur'an, we should regard it as being its first addressee, consciously aware that each verse addresses us directly. If we consider, for example, its historical accounts of the Prophets and their peoples as unrelated to us, we will derive no benefit.

According to its nature and significance, worth and place in existence, everything has its own place in the Qur'an:

The Qur'an contains everything, but not to the same degree. It pursues four purposes: to prove the existence and Unity of God, Prophethood, bodily resurrection, and worship of God and justice. To realize its purposes, the Qur'an draws our attention to God's acts in the universe, His matchless art displayed through creation, the manifestations of His Names and Attributes, and the perfect order and harmony seen in existence. It mentions certain historical events, and establishes the rules of personal and social good conduct and morality, as well as the principles of a happy, harmonious social life. In addition, it explains how to worship and please our Creator, gives us some information about the next life, and tells us how to gain eternal happiness and be saved from eternal punishment.

Everything is contained in the Qur'an, but at different levels. Therefore, not everything is readily apparent. The Qur'an's main duty is to teach about God's perfection, essential qualities, and acts, as well as our duties, status, and how to serve Him. Thus, it contains them as seeds or nuclei, summaries, principles, or signs that are explicit or implicit, allusive or vague, or suggestive. Each occasion has its own form, and is presented in the best way for making each Qur'anic purpose known according to the existing requirements and context. For example:

Human progress in science and industry has brought about such scientific and technological wonders as airplanes, electricity, motorized transport, and radio and telecommunication, all of which have become basic and essential for our modern, materialistic civilization. The Qur'an has not ignored them and points to them in two ways:

* The first is, as will be explained below, by way of the Prophets' miracles.
* The second concerns certain historical events. In other words, the wonders of human civilization only merit a passing reference, an implicit reference, or an allusion in the Qur'an.

For example, if an aircraft told the Qur'an: *“Give me the right to speak and a place in your verses,”* the aircrafts of the sphere of Divine Lordship—the planets, the Earth, the moon—would reply on the Qur'an's behalf: *“You may take a place here in proportion to your size.”* If a submarine asked for a place, the submarines belonging to that sphere—the heavenly bodies “swimming” in the atmosphere vast *“ocean”* would say: *“Compared to us, you are invisible.”* If shining, star-like electric lights demanded the right to be included, the electric lights of that sphere—lightning, shooting stars, and stars adorning the sky's face—would reply: *“Your right to be mentioned and spoken about is proportional to your light.”*

If the wonders of human civilization demanded a place based on the fineness of their art, a single fly would reply: *“O be quiet! Even my wing has more of a right than you. If all of humanity's fine arts and delicate instruments were banded together, the delicate members of my tiny body would still be more wonderful and exquisite. The verse: Surely those upon whom you call, apart from God, shall never create (even) a fly, though they banded together to do it (22:73), will silence you.”*

The Qur'an's viewpoint of life and the world is completely different from the modern one. It sees the world as a guest-house, and people as temporary guests preparing themselves for eternal life by undertaking their most urgent and important duties. As that which is designed and used mostly for worldly purposes only has a tiny share in servanthood to and worship of God, which is founded upon love of truth and otherworldliness, it therefore has a place in the Qur'an according to its merit.

The Qur'an does not explicitly mention everything necessary for our happiness in this world and the next for another reason: Religion is a divine test to distinguish elevated and base spirits from each other. Just as raw materials are refined to separate diamonds from coal and gold from soil, religion tests conscious beings to separate precious “ore” in the “mine” of human potential from dross.

Since the Qur'an was sent to perfect us, it only alludes to those future events pertaining to the world, which everyone will see at the appropriate time, and only opens the door to reason to the degree necessary to prove its argument. If everything was explicit, the test would be meaningless, for the truth of the Divine obligations would be readily apparent. Given that we would then be unable to deny or ignore them, the competition behind our testing and trials would be unnecessary, for we would have to confirm their truth. “Coal” spirits would remain with and appear to be no different from “diamond” spirits.

As the great majority of people are always “average,” the Qur'an uses a style and language that everyone can understand. An ordinary person and a great scientist can benefit from the Qur'an, regardless of his or her specialization. A most suitable way to do this is through symbols, metaphors and allegories, comparisons and parables. Those well-versed in knowledge (3:7) know how to approach and benefit from the Qur'an, and conclude that it is the Word of God.

Earlier civilizations would neither have benefited from nor understood Qur'anic accounts of modern scientific and technological discoveries, so why mention them? Also, scientific “truths” change constantly and therefore are not eternal.

God Almighty gave us intelligence, and the Qur'an urges us to use it to study ourselves, nature, and surrounding events. If it mentioned modern scientific and technological discoveries or everything pertaining to life, nature, history, and humanity, creating us in our present form would have been pointless. God created us as the best pattern of creation, and gave us many intellectual faculties. But if everything were clear, we would not need these, for we would already know everything.

Finally, if the Qur'an contained explicit references to everything we want to know, it would be so large that its complete recitation would be impossible. We would be unable to benefit from its spiritual enlightenment, and would become really bored while reciting it. Such results contradict the reasons for the Qur'an's revelation and its purposes.