

Scientific Errors In The Qur'an

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If the Qur'an is the infallible Word of God, then it stands to reason that it would not contain factual errors of science. By "factual errors" we mean errors that can be physically examined. We are not talking about contradictions between scientific theories and the Qur'an. We are talking about hard evidence that can be checked out.

But first, there is a question we must answer: "is it legitimate to judge the Qur'an?" Many Muslims believe in the Qur'an as a blind leap of faith. They really do not care if it is filled with mistakes and contradictions. As far as they are concerned, they were born Muslim and they will die Muslim. The more closed minded they are, the more fanatical they become in their religion. When ignorance unites with arrogance, fanaticism is born.

We pity those whose religion is only the product of an accident of birth and culture. They blindly follow whatever religion they were born into. How sad it is to have an unexamined faith; a faith that cannot stand up to reason and science; a faith that merely shouts slogans, stamps its feet and beats its breast in a mindless mob. They do not believe in Islam because it is true. To them Islam is true because they believe it.

A poor player that struts and frets
his hour upon the stage and then
is heard no more; it is a tale told
by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
signifying nothing. (Macbeth Act
V, Scene 5)

Thankfully, there are millions of Muslims today who have received a university education and understand that an unexamined faith is a worthless faith. They are open minded to scientific facts and evidence. They want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The Setting of the Sun

One of the questions which puzzled the ancient Arabs was, "Where did the sun go when night time came?" The Qur'an gave them Allah's answer.

He [i.e. Zul-qarnain] followed,
until he reached the setting of the
sun. He found it set in a spring of
murky water.
(Surah XVIII (Kahf) vs. 85-86)

We agree with Muslim scholars that Zul-qarnain refers to Alexander the Great (see Yusuf Ali's appendix on this subject in his translation of the Qur'an). According to this surah, Alexander the Great traveled west until he found out what happened to the sun. It went down into and under the murky waters of a pond. When it was completely covered by the water, darkness fell upon the earth.

To the early Muslims, this surah gave the divine answer as to why darkness fell when the sun set in the West. They assumed that the sun, like the moon, was the size perceived by the human eye, about the size of a basketball. Darkness came when with a mighty hissing roar it went down under the dark waters of a pond. They boldly and proudly proclaimed that this marvelous answer proved that the Qur'an was indeed the Word of God.

Today, modern Muslims are quite embarrassed by this passage and try to ignore it or to quickly dismiss it as poetry. But the passage is not part of a poem. Thus it cannot be dismissed as figurative language or poetic license. In the context, it is part of a historical narrative which relates several historical incidences in the life of Alexander the Great.

The mistake was based on the erroneous assumption that the earth was flat. The authors of the Qur'an did not know that the earth was a sphere which revolved around the sun.

The reader must ask himself if he is prepared to believe and to defend the Qur'an in this passage. Either the sun sets in a pond or it doesn't. It is either one way or the other. There can be no middle ground, no compromise, no evading the issue. If you agree with us that the sun is shining on the other side of the earth and thus it does not go down into murky water, then you must also agree with us that the Qur'an contains scientific errors.

"So what?" you ask. "Who cares!" you cry. Only those who are brave enough to seek the truth will care. Those who are intellectually lazy or dishonest will close their eyes and pretend to see nothing.

It only takes one error to disprove the Qur'an. That's right. Just one little error and the whole book goes down in defeat! You have just discovered one irrefutable error in the Qur'an. What are you going to do about it?

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