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## **The Center for Islam & Science: A New Initiative**

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Science

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The Center for Islam & Science (CIS) is dedicated to a creative exploration of the Islamic view of science and to a renewal of links with the intellectual tradition of Islam. The CIS supports research and activities aimed at enhancing our Islamic and scientific understanding of nature and the human condition. Recognizing an underlying unity in all domains of knowledge, the CIS does not construe 'Islam' and 'science' as two unrelated entities that need to be artificially linked through an external methodology. This fundamental unity stems from *tawhid* (unicity of God), the foundation of Islamic epistemology. The CIS, therefore, recognizes, honours and builds its vision and strategy on this unifying principle. Accordingly, it considers the physical world (the subject matter of natural sciences) a part of the hierarchy of beings which must be studied in relation to other parts as well as to the greater whole.

The Center takes the religious, cultural and historical matrix in which science operates as a fundamental component of scientific inquiry and hence an integral part of its operative methodology. Lying outside the domain of experimental science, these deeply rooted theoretical constructions inform all branches of contemporary science – from cosmology to genetics and from neuroscience to artificial intelligence. The Center, therefore, pays special attention to these epistemological underpinnings and explores the foundations of contemporary science from an Islamic perspective in relation to these deeply imbedded precepts. In particular, the Center is interested in examining the underlying principles of those branches of contemporary science which have direct bearing on our notions of the cosmos and the human person.

CIS considers the reconstruction and renewal of the Islamic scientific tradition a fundamental aspect of its mission. Taken as a whole, this tradition provides the framework for articulation of Islamic perspectives on contemporary issues. The CIS, therefore, endeavours to renew links with the traditional sources that once gave birth to and nurtured the Islamic scientific tradition. The Center considers the renaissance of the Islamic tradition of learning as the key element in this process of renewal, for it was this tradition of learning that had given birth to the Islamic scientific tradition. Based on *tawhid*, this tradition of learning takes God as the source and origin of all branches of knowledge. The Center, therefore, carries out and supports activities that

# The Center for Islam & Science: A New Initiative

use an integrated approach to learning both the transmitted as well as the intellectual sciences (*culum al-caqliyah wa culum al-naqliyah*).

The Center serves as a catalyst for this process of renewal through objective studies that focus on the broad matrix in which the Islamic scientific tradition was born, and through study projects that focus on the relevance of this tradition to the contemporary issues dealing with the notions of cosmos and human person. The Center also considers articulation of Islamic perspectives on contemporary issues a part of this process of renewal and hence it supports activities that seek to inform the general public and engage academic community in creative ways which explore contemporary science from Islamic perspectives.

CIS takes for its motto the Prophetic supplication, 'O God, show me the nature of things as they really are.' This prayer, which reverberates throughout the history of the Islamic intellectual tradition and which was encapsulated by the 10<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century Persian poet and scholar 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492) in his *Lawa'ih* (Flashes of Light), eloquently captures the *raison d'être* of the Center for Islam & Science: 'O God, deliver us from the preoccupation with worldly vanities, and show us the nature of things as they really are. Remove from our eyes the veil of ignorance, and show us things as they really are. Show us not the non-existence as existent, nor cast the veil of non-existence over the beauty of existence. Make this phenomenal world the mirror to reflect the manifestation of Thy beauty, not a veil to separate and repel us from Thee. Cause these unreal phenomena of the Universe to be for us the source of knowledge and insight, not the causes of ignorance and blindness. Our alienation and severance from Thy beauty all proceed from ourselves. Deliver us from ourselves, and accord to us intimate knowledge of Thee.'

## Research and publications

The research and publication plan of the Center grows out of its fundamental goals. The Center envisions two distinct but complementary series of publications.

The first, 'Islamic Perspectives on Contemporary Science', explores those fundamental contemporary scientific notions that seek to redefine our understanding of the nature and purpose of cosmic and human existence. This involves, but is not limited to, investigation of ideas, theories and concepts, which have arisen through advance scientific research in areas such as cosmology, evolutionary biology, neuroscience and genetics, from Islamic perspectives.

The second series, 'Studies in Islamic scientific tradition', is designed to produce contemporary editions of major works from this tradition. These are not mere reproductions or translations; rather, the aim here is to provide scholarly editions of these classics for a creative rebirth of the ambience in which these works were produced in the first place.

## Bibliographic resources

The CIS is compiling bibliographic resources to facilitate research on all aspects of Islamic scientific tradition. These periodically updated web-based resources include annotated bibliographies of major works, book reviews, biographical studies and databases designed to provide global access to a wealth of literature that has hitherto remained inaccessible. Interlinked summaries, annotations and cross-references facilitate the use of these databases. Work is also in progress on a source guide to the available translations of the classical works which deal with various aspects of Islam and science.

## Conferences / workshops

The CIS organizes and supports conferences and workshops to promote academic research and scholarship on various dimensions of Islam and science. These conferences and workshops are geared towards the emergence of a fraternity of scholars and scientists who are interested in the goals of the Center and who wish to interact and collaborate on various projects.

## Branch offices

Envisioned in the strategic plan of the Center is a network of branch offices in various regions of the Muslim world. The objectives of these branch offices are (i) to establish closer ties with various institutions and scholars of that particular region and (ii) to produce material suitable for local needs. This will include translations of various CIS publications, sponsorship of regional seminars, and workshops and conferences. ◆

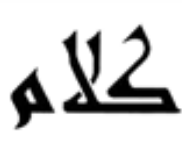
## The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS)

The mission of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) is to promote the creative mutual interaction between contemporary theology and the natural sciences. The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) strives to bridge these two disciplines. CTNS is a non-profit international membership organization dedicated to research, teaching and public service. It focuses primarily on the relation between contemporary physics, cosmology, technology, environmental studies, evolutionary and molecular biology and Christian theology and ethics. As an affiliate of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California, CTNS offers courses at the doctoral and seminary level in order to bring future clergy and teachers to greater awareness of this important interdisciplinary work.

Founded in 1981, the Center is supported by grants and donations. Members receive the quarterly scholarly publication, the CTNS Bulletin, the quarterly CTNS News, and discounts on CTNS-sponsored conferences and audio tapes.

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