

PREFACE

The Attitude of the Quran and the Prophet toward Knowledge

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"He has taught you that which [heretofore] you knew not." (Quran, Surah [2: 239])

Introduction

Islam is a religion based upon knowledge for it is ultimately knowledge of the Oneness of God combined with faith and total commitment to Him that saves man. The text of the Quran is replete with verses inviting man to use his intellect, to ponder, to think and to know, for the goal of human life is to discover the Truth which is none other than worshipping God in His Oneness. The Hadith literature is also full of references to the importance of knowledge. Such sayings of the Prophet as "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave", (Hadith). and "Verily the men of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets", (Hadith) have echoed throughout the history of Islam and incited Muslims to seek knowledge wherever it might be found. During most of its history, Islamic civilization has been witness to a veritable celebration of knowledge. That is why every traditional Islamic city possessed public and private libraries and some cities like Cordoba and Baghdad boasted of libraries with over 400,000 books. Such cities also had bookstores, some of which sold a large number of titles. That is also why the scholar has always been held in the highest esteem in Islamic society.

Historical Footprints

As Islam spread northward into Syria, Egypt, and the Persian empire, it came face to face with the sciences of antiquity whose heritage had been preserved in centers which now became a part of the Islamic world. Alexandria had been a

Integrating Islam and Knowledge: Social Sciences and Technology
Perpustakaan Nasional RI: Katalog Dalam Terbitan (KDT)

Integrating Islam and Knowledge: Social Sciences and Technology
Dewi Candraningrum (Editor)

Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press 2011
lxxxvi, 398 hlm; 16 x 21 cm.

ISBN : 978-979-636-134-2

1. Prosiding I. Judul II. Dewi Candraningrum

Editor : Dewi Candraningrum

Desaign Cover : Arba' Grafika

Lay Outer : Arba' Grafika

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Muhammadiyah University Press

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