

Geologists have a convincing explanation: major earthquakes occur when tectonic plates beneath large mountains shift and snap. A great deal of seismic activity takes place beneath the mountains but remains unnoticed by everyone except a handful of experts, until the earth quakes. And when it quakes, it takes its toll, devastating millions of lives. This explanation is self-sufficient, objective, scientific; none of this has anything to do with the One Who created the mountains, the earth, and those affected by the event. Scientific explanations have removed God from the equation.

Despite their pervasive presence, these are relatively new explanations. They have emerged only in the wake of the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century, and have since been adopted as the official religion of the scientific community, rendering all other explanations “unscientific” and thus somehow flawed. Until their appearance, humanity believed in a Creator Who was actively present in earthly affairs. Modern science calls this belief superstition. This reigning scientific orthodoxy has not only removed the hand of God from human and natural affairs, it has also led humanity to a state of despair—for, if earthquakes can be explained away in terms of the movement of tectonic plates, and all that happens on earth in terms of randomly occurring processes, then life on this ravaged planet itself becomes a *terminus ad quem*, without any hope of a future life.

Millions of intelligent human beings now believe in this “scientific religion”. Caught in their daily routines, they live out their lives in a universe whose incredibly vast and complex systems are present in their consciousness only to the extent allowed by a pervasive scientism which conceives the beginning of the universe as a remote, nebulous, and indeed unascertainable affair. Once formed, this original matter somehow starts

to cool and eventually this primal matter gives birth to simple forms of organic life which, in time, become complex through innumerable random chance processes, leading to the evolution of *Homo sapiens*. This explanation, in the sense that it provides at least some semblance of a rational account for existence, is deemed to be a satisfactory account—at least until the earth quakes, shattering the belief-system based on the pseudo-religion of science. And when the earth quakes, many of those who gaze into the void left by the scientific account realize a hidden spiritual anguish, perhaps as reaction to physical carnage or an immediate recognition of fundamental mortality, which calls out for a more substantive explanation to the basic questions.

This realization, transcending the mundane realm and opening another plane of consciousness, then directs our attention to the presence of a spirit within the ephemeral bodies, a spirit capable of feeling pain and anguish at the departure of loved ones, reflective remorse, despair, and fear of the unknown. Once realized, this consciousness leads to an awareness of something higher than physical needs, emotional desires, and survival demands dictated by hormones or organs. At such times, human beings know with certainty that they have a spiritual life which originates in their innate nature. And those who are receptive to this higher truth also realize that inherent in their innate nature is an awareness of the Creator Who fashioned us out of clay and infused us with Spirit (*rūh*), giving life to earthly creatures.

This consciousness also opens a small window through which we can revisit the vast and complex processes of the universe that not only cause the earth to quake and hurricanes to arise, but also provide compelling evidence for the presence of a Wise, Powerful, Majestic, and Merciful Creator Who designed the universe and all that it contains for a purpose and for a fixed duration. The teleological argument of the ancients, then, appears with a new meaning, a meaning that is reinforced and supplemented with copious new data that our ever-more sophisticated instruments have generated, but data that was never before looked at by hearts yearning for solace in the wake of an earthquake or hurricane. Now the calamities which are visiting humanity with increasing frequency do not seem to be the work of nature, for in such a state of receptivity human beings understand that nature has no independent authority to cause anything. Likewise, they now realize that what they had previously called “laws of nature” are, in fact, laws created by the One Who created nature.

This realization not only shatters the house of cards that scientism has been unceasingly building for the last three hundred years, it also inspires us to seek afresh the real nature of earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and tornados by refocusing our attention to something beyond the secondary causes which ascribe these processes to the movement of tectonic plates, or to warm and cold currents of water and winds. Now we come face to face with primary questions beginning with a “why”, and leave aside the “how”.

Suffering softens hearts, an ancient proverb tells us, and softened hearts not only yearn for kindness and solace but also become receptive to an understanding of the universe and life that provides real answers about the nature of this universe and, indeed, about the nature of life itself. These questions can no longer be confined to the cold realm of reason, but now arise from the deep recesses of the heart: why? Why was this calamity sent to us? Why did the earth quake? Why did the hurricane rage with such ferocity? Why do we suffer?

Of course, each one of us has to find our own answers to these primary questions, for no man can carry the burden of another and no amount of rational persuasion can lead to that gnosis which yields certainty in the heart, but at such moments of truth we can at least be sure of one thing: the reductive explanations of scientism are no longer adequate to deal with the most fundamental questions about the universe and the human condition.

Wuddistān

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