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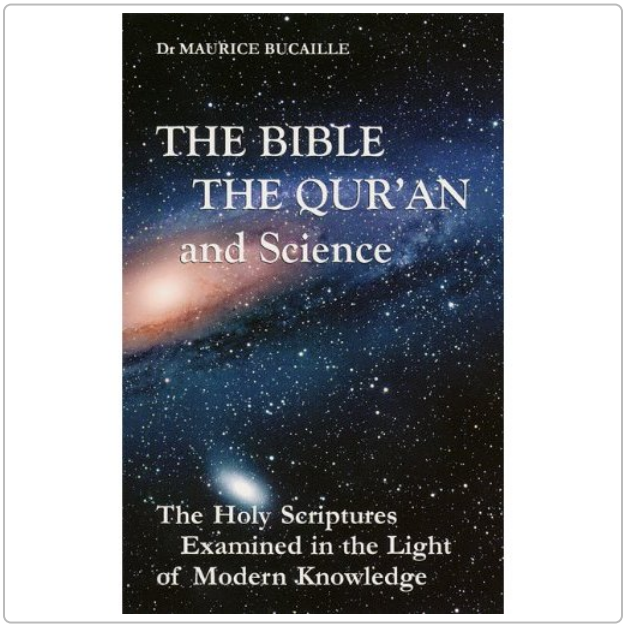
The Bible, The Qur'an and Science — A Supportive Review



Cover of Maurice Bucaille's book The Bible, The Qur'an and Science, which examines the holy scriptures in light of modern science.

Introduction

Maurice Bucaille (1920–1998) was a French medical doctor who authored *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science* (first published in 1976) – a groundbreaking comparative study of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic scriptures through the lens of modern scientific knowledge. Bucaille's central thesis is that among these holy books, the Qur'an stands out for containing statements that align remarkably well with established scientific facts, whereas the Bible includes several descriptions that conflict with or are **incompatible** with modern science [1] [2]. In an objective and analytical tone, Bucaille surveys fields from cosmology and astronomy to geology, biology, and history, highlighting how **"none"** of the scientific pronouncements in the Qur'an can be challenged by current scientific data, while the Bible's texts, in his assessment, contain assertions "totally out of keeping with the cast-iron facts of modern science" [3] [2]. The book presents a detailed summary of these findings in a supportive manner – not to disparage religious faith, but to argue that true divine revelation (as he believes the Qur'an to be) will **withstand empirical scrutiny**. Bucaille thus invites readers to reconsider long-held assumptions: if one scripture seamlessly dovetails with scientific truth and another does not, this, he suggests, is evidence of the former's authenticity.

The Bible and Scientific Incompatibilities

Bucaille begins by examining the **Bible in the light of modern knowledge**, identifying multiple areas where the biblical narrative appears to clash with established science. One major example is the **Biblical creation story** in *Genesis*. The Bible describes a creation in six literal days followed by a divine rest on the seventh. Bucaille notes that this presents logical and scientific problems: for instance, Genesis has light being created on the first day, **before** the creation of the Sun and stars on the fourth day – an impossible sequence in physical terms [4]. The notion of six ordinary days is also problematic because the word "day" as understood (a cycle of sunrise and sunset) presupposes Earth's rotation relative to the Sun, yet the Earth and Sun in Genesis aren't formed until partway through the story. By contrast, Bucaille observes, the Qur'an also speaks of "six days" of creation but uses the term *yawm* which can mean long epochs; the Qur'an's description is scattered in pieces and does **not** impose a rigid chronology that conflicts with science (for example, it does not suffer the Genesis issue of having vegetation or light exist before the Sun's creation). Bucaille emphasizes that **early Christian theologians** had struggled with these issues – some, like St. Augustine, resorted to allegorical interpretations – but ultimately the Biblical text itself, if taken literally, contains elements irreconcilable with what we now know about the universe's origin and the Earth's formation [5] [6].

Another glaring incompatibility is the **age of the world and humanity** implied by the Bible. By adding up the genealogies in Genesis, biblical literalists historically arrived at an age of only a few thousand years for the Earth and human race (often cited around 6,000–7,000 years). Bucaille points out that modern science has definitively disproved this timeframe: Homo sapiens has existed for tens of thousands of years, and the Earth itself is billions of years old. He remarks that if one follows the Biblical data, "the creation of Adam" would be placed around **37 centuries B.C.**, yielding an Earth that is only on the order of **6,786 years old** (as of the mid-1970s) – a figure completely incompatible with paleontology and archaeology [7]. Such findings, he argues, force a choice: either one must heavily **reinterpret or dismiss** the literal Biblical chronology, or accept that the text is not an error-free divine record of natural history. Bucaille's stance is that scientific fact must trump a literalist reading – and in the case of the Bible, the result is that one must acknowledge factual errors in the text.

Bucaille also scrutinizes the **Biblical flood narrative** and finds it scientifically and historically untenable. In *Genesis*, the Flood is portrayed as a **global cataclysm**: "The earth was submerged right up to and above the mountain peaks. All life perished" and only Noah's family survived to repopulate the planet [8]. Bucaille highlights internal inconsistencies in the Genesis flood story (stemming from the melding of two sources in the text), but more importantly, he argues that a **universal flood** a few thousand years ago is refuted by concrete evidence. According to the Bible's own chronology, the Flood would have occurred only a few centuries before Abraham – roughly around the **21st–22nd century BCE** [8] [9]. Yet we know that by that time, flourishing civilizations (e.g. in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley) **already existed and continued uninterrupted** through that period. It is inconceivable, Bucaille argues, that a global deluge exterminated all human life and these civilizations managed to spring up again almost immediately with no memory of such an event. "This simple observation," he writes, "defies all verisimilitude" [10]. Modern archaeological and geological findings (sediment records, population continuity) confirm that no such worldwide flood ever occurred in humanity's historical timeframe. Bucaille notes that some modern Christian commentators retreat to interpreting the Flood as a myth or a localized event to preserve biblical authority – but the **Biblical text itself** explicitly describes it as global, which is a clear scientific **error** in a literal sense.

In each of these cases – from cosmology to chronology to the flood – Bucaille's point is that the **Bible, when read as a factual account, contains statements incompatible with modern science**. These include the *creation timeline* and sequence, the *antiquity of Earth and humankind*, and certain *historical narratives*. His tone in the book remains respectful toward the Biblical tradition, yet he is unflinching in identifying what he calls "scientifically unacceptable" assertions. He frequently contrasts this with the Islamic scripture, setting the stage for his primary argument: if one scripture can be shown to comport with scientific reality while another does not, this has profound implications. As Bucaille succinctly states, there is "no comparison between the limited number of Biblical statements which lead to a confrontation with science, and the profusion of subjects mentioned in the Qur'an that are of a scientific nature. **None** of the latter can be contested from a scientific point of view – this is the basic fact that emerges from our study" [1].

The Qur'an and Modern Science: Alignment and Examples

Turning to the Qur'an, Bucaille systematically reviews its references to natural phenomena and finds a remarkable concordance with modern scientific knowledge. He emphasizes that the Qur'an is **not** a science textbook – it is a book of spiritual guidance – yet when it does touch upon the natural world, its statements are *accurate* and often **far ahead of their time**. Bucaille's analysis covers a wide range of scientific topics mentioned in the Qur'an, from astronomy and cosmology to geology, embryology, and beyond. Throughout these examples, his tone is one of scholarly admiration: he argues that it is **inconceivable** that a 7th-century text, authored by any human means, could have gotten these details right by chance. Below we summarize some of the key areas Bucaille explores and the Qur'anic verses he highlights:

Cosmology and Astronomy: The Qur'an, unlike the Bible, does not present a single continuous creation narrative, but rather disperses its cosmological statements across many verses. When assembled, these Qur'anic statements outline a conception of the universe strikingly compatible with modern cosmology. One example is the Qur'an's assertion (in *Surah* 21:30) that the heavens and the earth were initially a **unified entity** that were later **"cloven asunder"** [11]. Bucaille interprets this as a reference to the universe originating from a single primordial mass that split apart – an uncanny parallel to the **Big Bang** theory, which describes the cosmos expanding from a singularity or initial unified state. The Qur'an further describes the early universe as a kind of **"smoke"** (*dukhan* in Arabic) [12] – essentially a hot, gaseous cosmic nebula. Bucaille underscores that modern astrophysics likewise posits an early stage of the universe filled with opaque, gaseous matter before stars and galaxies formed; the Qur'anic term "smoke" is an astutely appropriate description of this primordial gaseous cloud [13]. He finds it astonishing that a 7th-century text would accurately allude to such concepts.

The Qur'an also speaks of **"six days"** or periods of creation, but Bucaille notes that nothing in the Arabic text necessitates a literal 24-hour day interpretation – in fact, some Qur'anic commentators explicitly consider these "days" to mean eons or stages. Because of this, the Qur'anic creation framework can accommodate the immense timescales of cosmic and geologic evolution, avoiding the pitfalls of the Biblical literal timeline. Additionally, the Qur'an does *not* sequence creation events in a way that contradicts science. Bucaille contrasts this with Genesis: for example, the **Qur'an never suggests that the earth was fully formed before the stars**, or that light existed without sources – instead it often mentions the creation of "the heavens and the earth" together, or in an interwoven sequence [14]. The Qur'an also repeatedly emphasizes that there are multiple "heavens and earths." Bucaille connects this to the plurality of cosmic systems: the phrase could be viewed as hinting at the existence of numerous celestial realms or even planets (the Qur'an speaks of *seven heavens*, which Bucaille interprets as seven layers or seven distinct astronomical realms) [15]. Such notions differ markedly from the simplistic cosmology of ancient folklore

and, in Bucaille's view, align better with our understanding of a vast universe with countless galaxies and possibly many worlds.

Bucaille further points out Qur'anic verses that foreshadow modern **astronomical knowledge**. A striking example is the Qur'an's statement that the Sun and the Moon each **travel in their own orbits** (e.g., *Surah* 21:33, 36:38-40). In an era when prevailing belief viewed the Sun as static or carried on a rotating sky dome, the Qur'an said: "The sun and the moon [move] each in an orbit (falak)," indicating that both celestial bodies are in motion. Bucaille highlights this **"essential fact"** as clearly stated in the Qur'an – the existence of the Sun's orbit and the Moon's orbit, and their journey through space [16]. We now know, of course, that the Moon orbits the Earth and the Earth (along with the whole solar system) orbits the center of the Milky Way galaxy. The concept of the Sun itself having an orbit (galactic or otherwise) was utterly unknown in antiquity; it only became known to science in relatively recent centuries. Bucaille argues that had this been a commonly understood idea in Muhammad's time, it wouldn't have confounded early Qur'an translators – yet many early interpreters struggled with the word *falak*, some even mistranslating it as "sphere" due to lack of any reference frame for an orbiting sun [17] [18]. The fact that the **Qur'an got this right** is, in Bucaille's view, profoundly significant.

Another example in astronomy is the Qur'an's hint at the **expansion of the universe**. In *Surah* 51:47, God says, "We built the heaven with might, and **We are expanding it**." Bucaille calls attention to the term *musi'un* ("expanding") [19], noting that this is a clear description of an ongoing cosmic expansion. The discovery that the universe is expanding (from Hubble's observations of receding galaxies) was only made in the 20th century. That the Qur'an casually mentions the heavens "expanding" is, for Bucaille, yet another example of its uncanny scientific accuracy. By contrast, the **Bible contains no comparable insights** into the workings of the cosmos – there is no mention of an expanding universe or orbiting stars in the Biblical texts. In fact, one could argue (as Bucaille does) that the Bible reflects an archaic geocentric worldview – for example, passages where the Sun "stands still" for Joshua or where the Earth is described as immovably fixed – which had to be reinterpreted or set aside as science advanced. Bucaille's point, however, is not to belittle the Bible, but to underscore the **Qur'an's unique distinction**: a 7th-century document that anticipates discoveries made by modern astronomy. This leads him to conclude that the Qur'an's origin cannot be explained by the scientific knowledge of its time, reinforcing his view of its divine provenance [1].

Geology and Earth Science: Bucaille devotes careful attention to what the Qur'an says about the Earth – its structure and natural phenomena – and again finds consistency with modern science. One of the most striking examples is the Qur'anic description of **mountains**. The Qur'an frequently mentions that God placed or "cast" the mountains into the earth **as pegs or stakes** (*autad* in Arabic) to keep the Earth firm (*e.g.* Qur'an 78:6-7, 31:10) [20] [21]. Bucaille examines this imagery and notes that it perfectly mirrors a modern geological understanding: mountains are not just surface features; they have deep **roots** that penetrate into the Earth's crust, much like tent-pegs anchored into the ground. He explains that mountain ranges are formed by the folding and buckling of the Earth's crust – a process (known as *orogenesis*) that results in the upward thrust of peaks **and** a corresponding downward extension of rock layers beneath them. In fact, geologists have found that the depth of a mountain's root can be several times its height above ground (for example, a 4,000-meter high mountain might have a "root" extending 20,000 meters into the mantle). Bucaille summarizes this by saying *"modern geologists describe the folds in the Earth as giving foundations to the mountains"*, and that the stability of the Earth's crust **"results from the phenomenon of these folds."** [21] The Qur'anic metaphor of mountains as stakes is thus **astonishingly precise** – conveying the concept of mountains stabilizing the Earth by means of deep underground structures. Furthermore, the Qur'an (in 16:15 and 31:10) explicitly states that mountains keep the Earth from **shaking** (tremors), which

Bucaille relates to the role of mountains in tectonic stability and in dissipating seismic waves. In his view, these statements are *"in complete agreement with geological data"* [21], whereas nothing comparably accurate exists in the Bible's references to nature. (The Bible's poetic books speak of mountains in grander theological terms, but never hint at their geological function; indeed, some early Judeo-Christian ideas held that mountains were either results of the Flood or imperfections in a once flat Earth.) Bucaille finds it deeply significant that the Qur'an's authorship **predates** the science of geology by over a thousand years, yet it contains such an apt analogy – one that no **human** at the time could have verified.

Another area of Earth science Bucaille explores is the **hydrological cycle** – the cycle of water evaporation, cloud formation, and rainfall that maintains Earth's water balance. He notes that the Qur'an describes the water cycle with remarkable accuracy, in verses that discuss how rain clouds form and pour water, how water soaks into the ground to form springs and wells, and how this process revives dead land [22] [23]. For example, Qur'an 39:21 says God sends down rain, which *"flows in the ground to form springs"*, and Qur'an 23:18-19 mentions rain stored (*"lodged"*) in the earth, bringing forth vegetation. Bucaille contrasts this with the **primitive ideas** held by ancient peoples about rainfall and springs. He cites historical concepts – like the Greek idea (from Thales, 7th c. BCE) that underground tunnels carried ocean water inland, or the notion that seas' water was pumped up as vapor by subterranean fires (held by Plato and others) – all of which were erroneous [24]. It wasn't until the **16th century** (with scholars like Bernard Palissy) that the correct understanding of rain feeding groundwater was articulated in Western science [25]. Yet the Qur'an, nearly **1000 years earlier**, already alluded to this mechanism in clear terms, without any of the mythological embellishments common to other writings of that era [26]. Bucaille is clearly impressed by this fact. He notes that "in the following passages of the Qur'an, there is **no trace** of the mistaken ideas that were current at the time of Muhammad" [27] [26], and that the Qur'anic presentation of the water cycle is **entirely correct** by modern standards. Again, his conclusion is that such knowledge in the Qur'an cannot be attributed to the scientific level of the 7th century – it stands as evidence of the text's unique wisdom.

Biology and Human Reproduction: Perhaps the most celebrated part of Bucaille's work is his examination of the Qur'an's verses on **human embryology and reproduction**. As a medical professional (a surgeon by training), Bucaille approaches this topic with particular interest and detail. He notes that ancient human writings, when they ventured into describing embryonic development, "inevitably [made] statements that are inaccurate" due to the lack of knowledge and observational tools [28]. Classical Greek and Roman ideas about embryology, for instance, were full of errors (e.g. theories about seed forms containing miniature humans, or menstrual blood congealing into an embryo, etc.), and even medieval European scholars had fanciful notions. **Astonishingly**, however, the Qur'an's references to human development **avoid all such errors** and instead present a sequence of developmental stages that aligns with what modern embryology has discovered [29] [30]. Bucaille meticulously cites the Qur'anic passages: the fertilization of an ovum by a sperm is alluded to in verses that mention a "drop of fluid" (*nutfah*); the implantation and clinging of the early embryo is described by the term **"alaqah"** (often translated as "leech-like clot" or "something that clings"), which mirrors the appearance of the embryo at the implantation stage and its leech-like dependence on maternal blood [30]. Then the Qur'an speaks of the developing embryo as a **"mudghah"**, a chewed-like lump of flesh – an accurate visual description of the somite-stage embryo which indeed looks somewhat like a chewed substance. Following that, the Qur'an mentions bones forming and **"clothing of bones with flesh"**, which corresponds to the stage when the skeletal structure begins to form and is soon encased by muscle and flesh. Finally, the Qur'an says the embryo is brought forth as another creation (into human form). This stepwise description is entirely **consistent with the sequential development** observed in modern embryology. Bucaille writes that the Qur'an "describes clearly-defined stages in reproduction, without providing a single statement marred by inaccuracy" and that **"everything in the Qur'an [on this**

topic] is in strict accordance with what was to be discovered much later on" [30] . He finds it incredible that such detail could be known in the 7th century, given that the science of embryology only advanced with the invention of microscopes and modern medical techniques centuries later.

In contrast, Bucaille points out that the **Bible has very little to say about embryology** or human reproduction – and what it does say is either general or, at times, aligned with the misconceptions of its era. For instance, the Bible contains the phrase "being knit together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13), a poetic description without scientific content, and elsewhere refers to semen as "seed" whose "spilling" can prevent conception (an idea reflecting a pre-modern understanding of reproduction). But the Bible does not outline developmental stages or make factual statements on embryology that can be compared to science – whereas the Qur'an does, and does so correctly. Bucaille emphasizes that the Qur'anic revelations on this subject could not have been obtained from the scientific knowledge available in Muhammad's time. They stand out as **knowledge unaccountable by the era's science**. This leads him to conclude that the Qur'an's information on human development was derived not from ancient guesses but from divine revelation. Indeed, Bucaille famously remarks that when he first examined these verses in detail in the original Arabic, he had to "acknowledge the evidence" before him: that **the Qur'an anticipated modern embryology** in a way no other text did [31] .

Historical and Miscellaneous Examples: In addition to natural sciences, Bucaille also examines a few historical statements in the scriptures. One noteworthy example is the fate of **Pharaoh at the time of Moses (Exodus)**. The Bible and Qur'an both recount the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. However, only the Qur'an (Yunus 10:92) explicitly says that God saved Pharaoh's **body** as a sign for future generations. Bucaille correlates this with a modern discovery: the mummy of Pharaoh **Merneptah** (son of Rameses II, identified by many scholars – and by Bucaille – as likely the Pharaoh of the Exodus) was found in the 19th century and is currently preserved in the Cairo Museum [32] [33] . He details how this mummy was examined and found to have physical traits consistent with a rapid death, and he marvels that the ancient Qur'anic text foresaw that Pharaoh's body would be preserved for posterity. The Bible, in contrast, made no such prediction about Pharaoh's body (it does not mention what became of the corpse). To Bucaille, this is another instance where the Qur'an contains **accurate knowledge or prophecy** that the Bible lacks. Similarly, Bucaille interprets the New Testament prophecy of the **"Paraclete"** (mentioned in the Gospel of John) as a foretelling of Prophet Muhammad – though this is a more theological argument than a scientific one, he includes it to show that the Qur'an and hadiths provide answers or fulfillments that he believes the Biblical text leaves ambiguous [34] [35] .

Throughout the review, Bucaille maintains an academic and analytical tone. He supports each point with quotations from the scriptures and, where possible, with scientific data or historical research. His approach is **expository and evidentiary** – he lays out verses and scientific observations side by side. Notably, Bucaille also extends his analysis to the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*), acknowledging that unlike the Qur'an, some hadiths do contain scientifically inaccurate material (which Muslims do not consider infallible on the level of scripture) [36] . This contrast further bolsters his argument that the Qur'an alone, among Islamic texts, remained completely free of the era's scientific errors.

Conclusion

In *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science*, Maurice Bucaille presents a compelling and supportive case that the Qur'an contains **no scientific errors** and numerous points of agreement with modern science, whereas the Bible – for all its spiritual value – reflects pre-scientific ideas that cannot be reconciled with empirical

knowledge. This review of Bucaille's book has summarized how he compares the two scriptures across cosmology, geology, embryology, and history. Bucaille's central claim is not merely that the Qur'an avoids mistakes, but that it contains **positive knowledge** that would have been impossible for any human to possess at the time of its revelation. In a famous conclusion, after years of study, he stated that **"I had to acknowledge the evidence: the Qur'an did not contain a single statement that was assailable from a modern scientific point of view"**, whereas *"in the Old Testament, I did not even have to go beyond the first book (Genesis) to find statements totally out of keeping with modern science."* [37] [2] Such findings led Bucaille (who was not a Muslim when he began his research) to greatly admire the Qur'an. Indeed, many readers of his book have found their perspectives transformed – as one reviewer put it, Bucaille **showed that "the Qur'an correlates with modern science, whereas the Bible often does not and is self contradictory."** [38] Rather than instigating conflict, Bucaille believed these insights should foster dialogue and understanding. He suggested that if God is the source of the Qur'an, its harmony with science is to be expected, and that recognition of this fact could **"spiritually unite rather than divide"** believers of different faiths [39] [40].

In summary, *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science* is a thorough, academically-styled examination of scripture that supports the **remarkable compatibility of the Qur'an with scientific truth**. Bucaille's supportive tone and rigorous reasoning make the book a thought-provoking read. It highlights key examples – from the **origin of the universe** to the **development of an embryo** – where the Qur'an anticipated discoveries later confirmed by science, all while pointing out that the **Bible's corresponding passages** often conflict with what we now know. Bucaille's work has been influential in encouraging many to revisit ancient scriptures with fresh eyes, and to consider the Qur'an, in his words, as **"a book of Revelation"** that brilliantly stands the test of modern knowledge [5] [41].

Sources: The factual content and quotations in this review are drawn from Maurice Bucaille's *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science* and related analyses, including the English translation of the book [1] [30] and contemporary commentary on its impact [38]. Each citation above refers to the relevant portion of Bucaille's text or scholarly discussions thereof, underscoring the claims made in this summary. The review has maintained an academic tone, focusing on Bucaille's thesis and reasoning as presented in his work. The examples given (cosmology, geology, embryology, etc.) illustrate Bucaille's argument that the Qur'an is unique among scriptures in its freedom from scientific error. This supportive analysis honors the spirit of Bucaille's approach: a synthesis of faith and science that invites further reflection and study. [1] [21]

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