

Bucaille, Maurice

021483

01 Aralık 2021

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## Bucaille, Maurice

**Maurice Bucaille** (1920–98) was a French gastroenterologist and author and an advocate of the so-called “scientific accuracy” of the Qur’ān. Independent biographical sources on him are scarce. In his books, he hints at his studies in a Catholic high school and his early misconceptions about Islam. Encouraged by Muslim patients to read the Qur’ān, he began studying Arabic around 1970. In the mid-1970s, as a member of a medical commission, he examined the mummies of the thirteenth-century B.C.E. pharaohs conserved in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. He attained celebrity with *La Bible, le Coran et la science* (1976), presented as a dispassionate, interdisciplinary, critical, and scientific reading of what he calls the sacred scriptures. In the book, Bucaille discusses scientific inaccuracies and logical inconsistencies in the Old and New Testaments, claiming that such errors do not discredit the Bible’s divine inspiration but are proof of human interference in its transmission. Bucaille referenced multiple Christian authors who, in confessional veil, pointed out and discussed imprecisions

in the Bible and the multiplicity of its sources. Making reference to (unspecified) Muslim authors, Bucaille emphasises that the Qur’ān contains no such errors and that some verses accurately describe scientific notions unknown in the time of the prophet Muḥammad, a fact that, according to him, can be explained only by the book’s divine origin. Even so, he denies the occurrence of similar passages in the Prophetic traditions (*ḥādīth*). This claim of divine origin is the core idea of the so-called “scientific miracle” (or *ijāz ‘ilmī*), a term that Bucaille himself did not in fact employ but that is commonly used for the exegetical trend he represents. In *L’homme d’où vient-il?* (1981), mainly relying on the work of neo-Lamarckian zoologist Pierre-Paul Grassé (1895–1985), Bucaille rejects Darwinist evolution theory as resulting from what he sees as the ideologically biased over-interpretation of the fossil record: in his opinion, chance and time are insufficient to explain biological complexity, and humans and apes are more different than Darwin believed. According to Bucaille, God intervenes periodically to modify living beings (“creative evolution”), and such a notion is compatible