

Volume 1: Methodology

Methods of Enquiry

Before embarking on this volume, it is necessary to caution readers about the potential perils of comparing modern science to The Quran. It is important to keep these precautions in mind when considering any opinion pertaining to this subject. These precautions have been used to frame the narrative and structure of this book.

1 First Precaution: Which verses should be compared?

Which verses should be compared to scientific facts? Before answering this question, I would like to draw attention to two important points. First, the Quran's primary purpose is not scientific education. In that, I mean that though there are a number of verses which discuss scientific matters or observations, these verses do not make up the majority of the book. The Quran's purpose was not to unveil scientific knowledge. Instead, the purpose of the Quran was to convert the people from polytheism to monotheism. It also unveiled a moral code that aimed to ensure justice, protect citizens and communities and maximize their welfare.

Second, the Quran's style is one of its most important features; the beauty and eloquence of its language and poetic-like style and words were not only meant to provide proof of the text's divinity, but more importantly, to arouse exceptional feelings capable of strengthening belief and creating a divine connection with the Almighty. In fact, the Quran's style is arguably its most powerful feature and has led to the conversion of millions of Arab speaking people.

I mention that we must keep these two points in mind because unfortunately, both skeptics of Islam and some religious scholars have lost sight of these facts in their analysis of the Quran's compatibility with Science. Often, they attempt to compare every verse to some scientific fact resulting in some of the most questionable outcomes.

From a religious scholar's perspective, the desire to prove that every verse in the Quran is based on some scientific knowledge has led to a number of very farfetched assumptions and conclusions built on the shakiest of grounds that have discouraged many readers from seeking and appreciating the wonderful verses that were designed for the purpose of comparison.

From a skeptic's side, the comparison of verses that were not meant to convey scientific observations has led to outrageous criticisms of the Quran's scientific accuracy. An example of this are verses that link belief or love with the heart. From a critic's point of view, belief or love is an emotion generated by the brain. Thus, a statement such as "I believe with all my heart" is scientifically inaccurate. The presence of similar verses in the Quran would thus deem it incompatible with science, or so the argument goes.

I hope that the reader can see how absurd this argument is. I would like to see the day when a reporter or observer criticizes the US president as "inaccurate" for using the same rhetoric, or the millions of books that have used some variation of this statement, many of which have been authored by prominent scientists

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The reason presidents, scientists, and authors are not criticized for this nor is a man telling his wife that he loves her with all his heart is because we all realize that such a statement is not intended to convey scientific information. Such a statement is the common and appropriate way of expressing emotion from a linguistics perspective that is understood by both parties involved. The reason this is so is because the heart is the source of life, pumping blood to the rest of the body. Thus, believing in something or loving someone with all your heart is a poetic way of saying that belief or love moves every fiber in your being and drives your very existence as it is centered in the organ that acts as your primary sustainer. It is not meant to convey that love or belief is actually created in the heart.

I for one fail to see the appeal that a verse from the Quran would generate if it mentioned believing or loving someone or something with all our brains. In fact, such a statement, though maybe scientifically accurate, is neither effective nor accurate from a linguistics point of view.

I hope that this example shows that we cannot apply scientific analysis to verses that were not meant to convey scientific information especially when the Quran verses' style have been specifically constructed to master the art of expression and language.

The reader might wonder then how I have chosen the verses presented in this book. Is it arbitrary? Not at all. If you are familiar with the Quran, you will realize that there are various verses who's clear purpose is to discuss nature, organisms, and the universe through observations. The primary purpose of these verses is to display the complexity of the universe and life, and by doing so, provide proof of the existence and power of the creator.

On occasion, they are also there to leave us with some evidence of the Quran's divinity by displaying advanced scientific knowledge. In such instances, you will notice that a stunning feature of the Quran is that it literally points you towards these verses. Usually they are in the form of Oaths, dismay at the human ignorance, or words that demand the reader's attention. Examples of these smoking gun phrases include "I swear by.." or "if you only knew what is.." as you will see in future chapters. It is these verses that are the focus of this study.

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Second precaution: Comparing facts, not hypothesis with the Quran

Second, in order to ensure that a proper comparison is made, we must also point to the fact that a significant number of scientific hypothesis are often superseded by better theories at a later stage. In other words, some of our scientific knowledge is not complete and will most likely be replaced by more accurate or different theories in the future. Thus, it is not wise to compare such "knowledge" with the Quran's verses as a conclusion may be drawn based on false information.

It is thus imperative to compare scientific facts that are not seriously disputed by scholars. In light of our infinite ignorance on scientific matters, this can be tricky. But there are some instances where theories were directly observed (like the shape of our Earth) and thus can be used with confidence for comparison purposes. Similarly, other theories like the Big Bang's details may change from time to time, but their general concept is accepted as fact.

The perils of comparison can also be seen in how the Quran's text is translated or interpreted. The most important rule is to ignore anything that doesn't resemble the real text which includes English translations and ancient scholar interpretations of scientific verses. We must thus look at the original verse and study its true meaning before comparing it to established scientific facts..