

جذور الإسلاموفوبيا فى ترجمات القرآن الكريم فى القرنين السادس عشر والسابع عشر نحو ترجمات مُرضية فى الألفية الثالثة

(ملخص)

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تؤكد هذه الدراسة الدور الخطير الذى تلعبه ترجمات القرآن الكريم فى تشكيل رؤية المتلقين عن الإسلام، وتحاول الدراسة فى الجزء الأول منها، من ناحية، بيان أن الإسلاموفوبيا - أى كراهية الإسلام أو الخوف من الإسلام - التى بلغت أوجها فى الغرب فى الأونة الأخيرة تترسخ جذورها فى الصورة السلبية والمفاهيم الخاطئة التى قامت بنشرها ترجمات غير المسلمين للقرآن الكريم إلى اللغة اللاتينية فى القرنين السادس عشر والسابع عشر، والتى صارت كالمسلمات فى أذهان الغربيين الآن. ومن أمثلة تلك الترجمات ترجمة روبرت أوف كيتون (تم الانتهاء منها عام ١١٤٣ وإن لم يتم نشرها حتى عام ١٥٤٣)، وترجمة لودوفيكاس ماراتشى (١٦٩٨) اللتان كانتا تحفلان بالأخطاء والتشويه المتعمد. ومنذ ذلك الحين شاع التجنى على الدين الإسلامى، وازداد العداء المستحکم ضد المسلمين من قبل "الأخر". ولم تكن الترجمات الإنجليزية التى ظهرت فيما بعد أفضل حالاً. فقد ظلت تعكس الاتجاه المناهض للإسلام والذى تجلّى فى ترجمات ألكسندر روس (١٦٤٩) وجورج سيل (١٧٣٤) وجيه. إم. رودويل (١٨٦١). ومن ناحية أخرى توضح الدراسة أن بعض ترجمات المسلمين أضافت مشكلات جديدة، فمثلاً ترجمة يوسف على (١٩٣٤) وترجمة محمد تقى الدين الهلالى ومحمد محسن خان (١٩٩٦) اشتملتا على كثير من التحامل على اليهود والمسيحيين، مما يعطى انطباعاً خاطئاً عن عدم تسامح الإسلام تجاه "الأخر". كذلك فإن ترجمات الشيعة، مثل ترجمة إس. فى. مير أحمد على (١٩٦٤)، وترجمات المتأثرين بالمذهب العلمى العقلانى، مثل ترجمة أحمد زيدان وديننا زيدان (١٩٧٩)، ومحمد أسد (١٩٨٠)، وأحمد على (١٩٨٤)، تنشر بعض المفاهيم التى تتنافى مع العقائد الإسلامية الأصيلة.

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وفي هذا الصدد لا يمكننا أن نغفل المفاهيم المشوهة التي تروج لها ترجمات الحركات القاديانية والأحمدية.

وفي ضوء كل تلك الترجمات التي نجحت في تشويه صورة الإسلام أو عكس صورة غير دقيقة عنه تطرح الدراسة تساؤلاً عن الشروط التي يجب توافرها في الترجمة التي يمكن اعتبارها ترجمة مرضية. وقبل الإجابة عن هذا التساؤل في الخاتمة من خلال طرح بعض التوصيات في هذا الصدد، تستعرض الدراسة في الجزء الثاني منها ثماني ترجمات (سبأً للمترجمين مسلمين، واثنين لمترجمين غير مسلمين) شهد ظهورها العقد الأخير من القرن العشرين وبدايات الألفية الثالثة، وقد بدا في تلك الترجمات تغير ملحوظ. فجاءت ترجمات المسلمين تنأى عن المفاهيم الطائفية، وترجمات غير المسلمين تكاد تخلو من النزعات التحيزية التي عكستها الترجمات السابقة. ولا شك أن ذلك يمثل خطوة على طريق إنجاز ترجمات أفضل في المستقبل، إلا أن مهمة إنجاز ترجمة مرضية بالنسبة لأغلب المسلمين لم تتحقق بعد؛ نظراً لوجود بعض الأخطاء والتحفظات التي سوف يلاحظها كل من يحاول مراجعة هذه الترجمات.

وأولى ترجمات المسلمين التي تستعرضها الدراسة هي ترجمة كولين تيرنر (١٩٩٧) الذي يشغل منصب أستاذ للدراسات الإسلامية في جامعة ديرهام. وتختلف ترجمته عما سواها في كونها تجمع بين النص القرآني والتفسير، ولكن مع الأسف دون تمييز بينهما. وثاني تلك الترجمات هي ترجمة عائشة وعبد الحق بيولي (١٩٩٩) التي تعد من أفضل الترجمات، إلا أنها تقتصر إلى حواشٍ لتفسير بعض المعاني الغامضة التي قد يتعذر على القارئ فهمها. وثالث تلك الترجمات هي عمل جماعي قامت به لجنة تركية مكونة من أربعة مترجمين وثلاثة محررين، وتم نشرها عام ٢٠٠٠ بعد إجراء تعديلات على عمل سابق ظهر لأول مرة عام ١٩٩٢. ورابع تلك الترجمات هي ترجمة د. محمد محمود غالي، أستاذ اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية اللغات والترجمة، جامعة الأزهر، والتي تمثل آخر طبعة منقحة للعمل الذي ظهر لأول مرة عام ١٩٩٧. وأهم ما يميز هذه الترجمة هي أمانة المترجم الشديدة في الالتزام بحرفية اللفظ والتراكيب في النص الأصلي إلى حد يفترض أنه ربما يحول دون فهم المتلقي الأجنبي للمعنى في بعض الأحيان، غير أنه يحسب لهذا المترجم اهتمامه بالتفريق بين المترافات التي يزخر بها القرآن. وخامس ترجمات المسلمين هي ترجمة تم إصدارها

عام ٢٠٠٣، وهى عمل جماعى قام به مجموعة من دارسى القرآن، ولم يعتمدوا فيه على أية تفاسير، بل اعتمدوا على المعنى المعجمى للكلمات. والجدير بالذكر أيضا أن هؤلاء المترجمين لهم فلسفة خاصة بشأن المحكمات والمتشابهات، مما ينعكس على تفسيرهم لبعض الآيات، وبالتالي على ترجمتها، ومن ثم ينبغى على القارئ أن يتوخى الحذر حيث تنأى ترجمتهم فى بعض المواضع عن المعانى الشائعة للآيات. وتشارك هذه الترجمة مع ترجمة بيولى فى اعتمادها - بخلاف كل الترجمات الأخرى - على قراءة الإمام ورش. أما الترجمة السادسة فهى النسخة المنقحة (٢٠٠٥) لترجمة د. محمد عبد الحليم، أستاذ اللغة العربية والدراسات الإسلامية بجامعة إنجلترا المصرى الأصل، والتي ظهرت عام ٢٠٠٤. وأهم ما يميزها قيام المترجم فى المقدمة بتوضيح بعض أسباب إساءة فهم الإسلام والقرآن. أما ترجمتا غير المسلمين فأولاهما هى الطبعة المنقحة (٢٠٠٠) لترجمة اليهودى نسيم جوزيف داوود التى ظهرت أصلا عام ١٩٥٦. وهو يقر فى مقدمته أن "القرآن لا يعتبر من أكثر الكتب تأثيراً فحسب"، بل أنه "تحفة أدبية فى حد ذاتها"، كما أنه يدعو إلى ضرورة تناول النص بنظرة موضوعية. وثانى تلك الترجمات هى ترجمة واحد من أشهر مترجمى النصوص الدينية فى العالم، ألا وهو توماس كليرى. ورغم أن تلك الترجمة (٢٠٠٤) لا تحتوى على مقدمة أو أية حواشى فإن مقدمة كليرى لمختارات من القرآن عام ١٩٩٣ تعكس تأثيراً بالغزالي، وافتاناً غير مسبوق بالقرآن.

وبشكل عام تبرز مراجعة تلك الترجمات استراتيجيات مختلفة للمترجمين تتراوح ما بين أقصى التزام بالحرفية فى ترجمة محمود غالى، بغية التركيز على النص الأصيل خشية التحريف، إلى أقصى تحرر من الحرفية فى ترجمة داوود بهدف تقديم ترجمة تزيل أوجه الغموض كى يتسنى فهمها للقارئ المعاصر. والمطلوب الموازنة بين الاتجاهين، وهو الأمر الذى حققته ترجمة اللجنة التركية إلى حد كبير.

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Presenting an entirely objective translation seems hardly possible; however, some criteria should be set for translators to constrain subjectivity from creeping in in future translations. Second, in an era where growing hostility against Islam reached an unprecedented level, a satisfactory translation is one that makes it possible for the "other" to grasp the true spirit and instructions of Islam, on the one hand, and not to demote the beauty and meaning potential of the Qur'an through dispensing with the text complexities and ambiguities for readers' convenience on the other. How this can be realized, however, merits another complete study.

Besides, sections in the prefaces of future translations should be devoted to clarifying the controversial issues and misconceptions that are always taken against Islam, e.g. explaining the original context of the call for *jihad*, holy war, and the status of women in Islam ... etc. – an issue that is touched upon by Abdel Haleem in his introduction.

Further, the misconception that Prophet Muhammad was the author of the Qur'an should be dispelled through highlighting the miraculous sides of the Qur'an that enjoins the conclusion that it cannot be but a divine revelation – an initiative that, ironically, was embarked on by a non-Muslim, Dr. Maurice Bucaille.

structure of the original text. He declares avoiding "unnecessary close adherence to the original Arabic structures and idioms, which almost always sound unnatural in English. Literal translations of the Arabic idioms often result in meaningless English" (xxx). To some degree, he tries to present the idea without sticking to the exact Arabic wording. In addition, he abandoned the common rendering of separate numbered verses. His translation is rather presented in paragraph form with verse numbers superscripted. He sometimes breaks a long sentence into shorter units and does not necessarily stick to verse boundaries. As he says, "it happened that a new paragraph was even started mid-verse in an attempt to solve stylistic difficulties" (p. XXXV).

After this broad review of major trends in Qur'an translations since the inception of their publications in the sixteenth century till the most recent translation in the twenty first century, we can sum up and conclude with few points.

The foregoing discussion highlighted the fact that the vicious outlook and negative image of Islam and Muslims with which westerners are currently overwhelmed can be traced back to the effects of the early renditions of the meanings of the holy Qur'an into foreign languages by missionaries centuries ago. However, this is not to deny that some sectarian translations by Muslims contributed to spreading some misconceptions about Islam as well. Despite this gloomy situation, a glimpse of hope can still be aspired for on account of the amelioration in some of the translations that emerged in the last decade of the twentieth century and the turn of the new millennium. It can be argued that the translations surveyed in this paper are to a satisfactory extent free from both the calumnious attacks and sectarian deviant biases encountered in earlier translations by non-Muslims and Muslims respectively. One even longs that the fascination with the Qur'an and the favourable attitude towards Islam, expressed by Cleary in his 1993 introduction, could find its way to western media as a response to the libels launched against Islam.

Now, let us try to attempt an answer for the question posed earlier about what constitutes a satisfactory translation. The first prerequisite is impartiality.

Among his strange renditions are the use of "scoffers" for "disbelievers")
 (نو "The Master of the Two Centuries" for "Dhu'l Qarnayn" and الكافرون)
 (القرنين) (18:83). However, he should be credited for translating the title of *surat*
An-Naml, chapter 27, as *The Ants* while the other translators unjustifiably
 translate it as *The Ant*.

The last translation to review here is the revised edition of M.A.S. Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'an*, published May 2005 by Oxford University Press. Abdel Haleem is an Egyptian who got a B.A. in Arabic and Islamic Studies from Cairo University and a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. He taught Arabic and Islamic Studies first at Cambridge and then at the Centre of Islamic Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. Since 1995, he has been working as a professor of Islamic studies at the University of London, Director of SOAS, and Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*. Abdel Haleem's translation is intended for Muslims and Non-Muslims, and it is meant to surpass previous translations in clarity, accuracy and modernity of language so as "to make the Qur'an accessible to everyone who speaks English" (p. xxix).

The translation is supplemented with a chronology of the Qur'an, a selected bibliography, an index, and a useful introduction in which he discusses, among other things, some important stylistic features of the Qur'an, issues of interpretation as well as decontextualization and misinterpretation of Qur'anic verses. Introductions for *suras* are used in addition to short footnotes that are meant to "explain allusions, references, ... cultural background, ... reasons for departing from accepted translations[;] give alternatives, or make cross-references" (XXXV).

The translator made use of some classical Arabic dictionaries and depended on some commentaries, most important of which is that of Razi. Nevertheless, he does not seem to be influenced by Razi's movement of scientific exegesis of the Qur'an. Abdel Haleem took some liberties with the exact wording and

an illuminating introduction as well as extensive endnotes that he states "should be viewed as an intrinsic part of the translation itself" (p. XIII), the 2004 translation includes nothing whatsoever but the text. The page is divided into two columns, and the layout gives a poetic touch. The verses are numbered singly.

All that is known about this translator is that he got a Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from Harvard University, and that he is such a prolific translator who produced a great number of works related to religious traditions such as Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam. Cleary's religion is not known; however, he seems to be a non-Muslim as he states in his 1993 translation, "the very least advantage *we* can derive from reading the Qur'an is the opportunity to examine *our* own subjectivity in understanding a text of this nature" [my emphasis] (p. X). Nevertheless, his words in that introduction betray a matchless infatuation with the Qur'an and quite a positive attitude towards Islam. Cleary (1993) argues that "[the] observation that the Qur'an distinguishes the differences within the adherents of each religious dispensation, rather than among the dispensations themselves per se, seems to be a key to approaching the Qur'an without religious bias" (p. X). Further, he acknowledges the "unique and inimitable literary qualities of the Qur'an" (p. XIII). He intended to present his non-Muslim readers to "the essential wisdom, beauty, and majesty of this sacred book" (p. VII).

Cleary seems to be much affected by Al-Ghazali, and the quotes he cites in his 1993 edition show that he has a Sufi leaning. In the 2004 edition, direct speeches by God are written in a different font. Pronominal references to God are replaced with the noun "God" as there "is no third person pronoun perfectly well suited to making reference to the transcendent God beyond all human conceptions" (p. XV).

In general, Cleary's language is clear, and he is honest in being close to the expression of the Arabic text. However, this approach without the use of footnotes makes the intended meaning ambiguous to target readers in some places. The reader can find some errors in his translation like 18:29 and 18:30.

'goodness' " (p. 5). Progressive Muslims believe that the initial *basmalah* was part of the revealed text in old manuscripts; hence, like Turner, they count it in the verses numbered singly.

Progressive Muslims do not use names for *suras* as they believe that these names were man-made. Hence, they removed them "to maintain authenticity of the revealed text" (p. 4). Further, according to one of the translators, the translation is intended for "all English speaking people ... It defies the established hierarchy of religion which is man made and requests people to discover their own personal link with God without the need for any scholar or sheikh or interpreter" (personal communication, October 3, 2005).

Thus, the translators do not depend on any authorized exegesis. They rather rely on the dictionary meanings or the surface meanings of words. This sometimes yields an odd translation, e.g. "the amount of ages" for "طور سينين" (95: 2), or one that differs from other translations. For instance, in the following verse, they render the word "ينسخ" as "duplicate" rather than "abrogate" that is stated by exegetes:

"ما ننسخ من آية أو ننسها أتى بخير منها أم مثلها" (البقرة، 106)

Progressive Muslims: We do not duplicate a sign, or make it forgotten, unless We bring one which is like it or even greater.

Besides, they have a certain philosophy regarding the letters with which twenty nine *suras* of the Qur'an are initiated, and they link them to identifying the *muhkamat* (clear) and *mutashabihat* (open to interpretation) verses mentioned in 3:7 in the Qur'an. This philosophy affects their interpretation and hence their translation of certain verses (cf. 55:2, 5: 38). Thus, readers who are interested in this translation should beware that it deviates from the mainstream understanding of verses in some places.

Turning to Thomas Cleary's translation, it was published in 2004 by Starlatch Press. In 1993, Cleary produced a translation of only selected verses of what he considers to be the essential Qur'an. While the 1993 version included

contemporary readers using modern idiom, in his preface Ghali emphasizes "strict adherence to the Arabic text, and the obvious avoidance of irrelevant explanations and explications" (p. xii). Like the Bewleys' translation, some Arabic words, e.g. *Tawrah* (Torah), *Injil* (the gospel), *Zakat* (alms), *Nasâra* (Christians) etc., are used in transliterated form within the text; however, they are explained in footnotes rather than in a glossary. Ghali also sticks to the Arabic pronunciation of proper names, e.g. Ibrâhîm for Abraham, Mûsâ for Moses ... etc. and explains them in footnotes. He uses special transcribed symbols in writing to represent certain Arabic sounds. Even the pages in Ghali's translation run from right to left like the system in Arabic books.

Ghali is to be credited for his admirable honesty in fidelity to the original text. Most of the time, though sometimes needlessly, he follows the word order of the original which is sometimes a marked structure meant for a certain purpose, thus keeping its effect. The same approach is followed in maintaining imagery and parallel repetitive structures that are unique Qur'anic styles. However, wooden adherence to the Arabic idiom in other places renders the style unnecessarily unnatural -- an aspect which may slow down comprehension by target readers.

The other 2003 translation is *The Message: A Literal Translation of the Final Revealed Scripture*, published by iUniverse, Inc. It is also available online at the site: www.ProgressiveMuslims.Org. As the title indicates, it is a literal translation of the Qur'an. However, it is more flexible than Ghali's translation as regards word order and adherence to the Arabic idiom and structure. It is meant as an attempt "to reintroduce people to God's words with authenticity and objectivity" (p. 4).

Like the translation by the Turkish committee, *The Majestic Qur'an*, it is a collective work by a group of Arab and non-Arab students of the Scripture. Similar in a way to the Bewleys' translation, it is based on the Warsh verse count. As for the readings, the translators compare all variations in the acceptable readings and "follow the 'best' meaning in light of the overall spirit of the Scripture and our knowledge regarding the essence of God being

professor of Arabic; then, he became a fellow of St. Anthony's College in Oxford. Professor Abdal Hakim Murad was educated at Cambridge University and Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Perhaps this combination made the end product indeed a distinguished work. The translators strive for close adherence to the original text while the language is lucid and smooth. To a great extent, they managed a balance between fidelity to the original and readability through giving explanatory additions that are marked within square brackets.

This translation is supplemented with translator and publisher prefaces, an introduction, a transliteration key, introduction for *suras*, extensive footnotes that betray a Sufi leaning in a number of places as well as an index. Besides the first *sura*, *Al-Fatiba (The Opening)* is supplemented with transliteration for the convenience of readers as it is part and parcel of the daily prayers. The book includes both the Arabic and English texts side by side. The team of the work seems to be extremely reader-oriented. It is their aim, in the different editions, to refine the language to suit the modern readers, and they take into consideration all the observations the readers bring to their attention.

The first translation we are concerned with in 2003 is the third revised edition of *Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Qur'an* by Muhammad Mahmoud Ghali, an Egyptian professor of English at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Al-Azhar University. It was published by Dar Al-Nashr lil Game'at and revised by Ali Ali Ahmad Shaaban, Ahmad Shafiq Al-Khatib and Ælfwine Acelas Mischler. The book is supplemented with a preface, an introduction, a table for Arabic sound transcription and short footnotes. It includes both the Arabic and English texts side by side. Verses are numbered singly.

Ghali's translation is unique in a number of respects. He defines as his methodology "the differentiation between synonyms" which "has not been strictly observed before" though "it can reveal many areas where shades of meaning should be kept distinct" (p. xi). Besides, the translation differs from all the other translations in being extremely source-language oriented. Unlike the other translators who are mainly concerned with rendering a translation for

In this edition, Dawood corrected one often cited mistranslation in 7:31 replacing "Children of Allah" with the correct "Children of Adam" (بني آدم). However, the mistranslation of 2:191, rendering "idolatry is more grievous than bloodshed" instead of "persecution is worse than killing" (والقتنة أشد من القتل), still exists. Besides, his translation of the names of *suras* in a number of instances is strange and inaccurate. For instance, he translates *Al-Takwir*, rolling up or darkening, as Cessation; *Al-Nasr*, victory, as Help; *Al-Sajda*, prostration, as Adoration; *Al-Hashr*, mustering or gathering, as Exile, and surprisingly *Al-Rum*, the Romans, as The Greeks.

Despite being a Jew, in his introduction, Dawood does not launch the earlier fierce polemics against Islam. He seems to be advocating an objective attitude towards the Qur'an as he states that "it is the text itself that matters; and the reader should be allowed to approach it with a free and unprejudiced mind" (p. xi). Moreover, contrary to earlier critics who think that the Qur'an is a wearisome disconnected jumble, he admits that it is "by far the finest work of classical Arabic prose" (p. ix), and that it "is not only one of the most influential books of prophetic literature but also a literary masterpiece in its own right" (p. xi). In general, this work does not reflect the earlier missionary religious biases, and it is meant to "to present the modern reader with an intelligible version of the Koran in contemporary English" (p. X).

The other translation that appeared in 2000 is that of *The Majestic Qur'an*, published by Al-Nawawi and Ibn Khaldun foundations. It is a huge bulky expensive revised fourth edition of a work that originally appeared in 1992 under a different title, namely *The Holy Quran with English Translation*. Unlike all the other translations reviewed, except Progressive Muslims' *The Message*, it is a collective work of a Turkish committee consisting of four translators – Ali Özbek, Nureddin Uzunoğlu, Mehmet Maksutoğlu and Tevfik R. Topuzoğlu – and three editors: Abdal Hakim Murad, Mostafa Badawi and Uthman Hutchinson. The first three translators are specialized in Islamic studies while the last is a professor of Arabic. Mustafa Badawi was originally an Egyptian

prolific translators, is "to allow the meaning of the original, as far as possible, to come straight through with as little linguistic interface as possible so that the English used does not get in the way of the direct transmission of the meaning" (p. iii). Hence, they do not provide any intermediary explanation and hardly use footnotes. Moreover, there are no introductions to *suras*. The translators also preferred to keep key Islamic terms, whose translation would be misleading as there are no exact equivalents in English, as they are in transliterated form within the text. However, the book is supplemented with a glossary at the end providing definitions for such terms. Through a special page layout and use of rhythm, the translators attempt to be "faithful to the original" rendering "at least a taste of [its] essential attribute" (p. iv). They number the verses singly.

The Bewleys seem to have a Sufi leaning as they pay homage to their "guide and teacher" Shaykh 'Abdalqadir as-Sufi in their preface, yet this is not obviously reflected in the translation itself. Besides, though they do not abstain, like the Mu'tazlites, from using anthropomorphic references to God in their translation, they assert that such references "are not to be taken literally referring to any sort of physical characteristics but rather to an attribute or quality indicated by the expression used" (p. v). A distinctive feature of this translation is that it is based on the reading of Imam Warsh rather than that of Imam Hafs on which almost all other translations are based except that of Progressive Muslims. Due to slight variations between the readings of these two Imams, few differences appear in the translations. For example, based on the reading "ساحران", *sahiran*, rather than "سحران", *sihran*, in verse 48 of *sura* 28 (*Al-Qasas, The Story*), the translations of Bewley and Progressive Muslims differ from the other translations:

... قالوا سحران نظاهرا وقالوا إنا بكل كا فرون" (الفصص، 48).

Bewleys: They say, "Two magicians who back each other up."
Progressive Muslims: They had said: "Two magicians assisting one another."

Abdal Haleem: They say, 'Two kinds of sorcery, helping each other,'
Cleary: They have said, "two sorceries, assisting one another."
Dawood: They say: 'Two works of sorcery complementing one another!'

وَأَقْدَفْنَا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَقْنَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جِسْدًا ثَمَّ نَابٍ (ص، 34)

that is normally translated as something like:

Pickthall: And verily We tried Solomon, and set upon his throne a (mere) body. Then did he repent.

Yusuf Ali: And We did try Solomon: We placed on his throne a body (without life); but he did turn (to Us in true devotion).

is rendered by Turner as:

In truth We tried Solomon: in his dream We placed a blindingly bright Star-of-David on his throne; so marvelous was this spectacle that men, jinns and birds flocked to witness it. Solomon thought that this was a sign that his favourite wife would soon give him a son, and that the son would attain kinship and majesty without parallel. But the son that was born to his favourite wife came into the world still-born, and when We placed the lifeless infant on his throne, Solomon realized that he misinterpreted the dream. And so he turned to God and asked his forgiveness. (p. 273)

In a translation like that of Turner, the reader can by no means realize where the translation ends and the exegesis begins. The problem is that it does not satisfy the needs of Muslims who seek to read the Qur'an through a translation due to the language barrier. Such Muslims need to find a rendition of the *exact wordings* of the original as far as the translation process allows rather than a commentary with additions or omissions.

Within the context of this approach, Turner enforces on the reader in many places unduly additions. For instance, in *sura 18 – Al-Kahf (The Cave)* – Qur'anic verses themselves express people's surmises about the exact number of the young people of the Cave and do not specify it for certain. Turner, however, translates the second part of verse 13:

... إِيَّاهُمْ فَتِيَّةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزَيْنَاهُمْ هُدًى (الكهف، 13)

as "...they were *four* eloquent young men ..." (p. 172).

The Bewleys' translation (1999), published by Madinah Press, is the culmination of twenty five years of grappling with "arriving at the best way of expressing the meaning of its ayats in English" (p. iii). The book includes only the English translation without the Arabic text. It is basically intended for English speaking Muslims. Aisha Bewley was originally a Christian and converted to Islam in 1968. The goal of Aisha and her husband, who are

the Ever-Glorious Qur'an (2003), originally published (1997); Progressive Muslims' *The Message: A Literal Translation of the Final Revealed Scripture* (2003), Thomas Cleary's *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (2004), M. A. S. Abdel Haleem's revised edition of *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (2005), originally published (1994).

It is worth mentioning that in his essay "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Qur'an", Robinson (1997) discusses a number of issues supplemented with verses that can help judge the theological leaning of translators. Testing the above mentioned new translations in the light of these issues, they seem to be free from the major theological tendencies that characterized other translations. This is a good step on the way towards presenting satisfactory translations. It bridges one gap so that we can focus our attention on the degree of their closeness to the original text while rendering the meaning accessible to target readers. Checking these eight works reveals that they follow different approaches to translation as will be shown in due course below.

Colin Turner is a Muslim lecturer of Islamic Studies and Persian at the University of Durham. Through his translation, published by Curzon, he aimed at conveying "the meanings of the Quran in as lucid and readable and English style (*sic*) while preserving the integrity of the original text" (p. xvi). The book contains both the Arabic text and the English translation but not side by side. It is rather divided into two parts. Turner uses transliteration for the names of *suras* (chapters), and he uses neither footnotes nor introductions for each *sura*. He writes the verses singly, each preceded with its number; however, he deviates from the common tradition as he counts the initial *basmalah* in the verses of each *sura* – a feature shared by the so-called "Progressive Muslims" translators as will be mentioned in due course. Besides, his translation is unique among all other translations as it encompasses interpretation within the verses themselves. He depended on the textual exegesis entitled *Ma'ani al-Quran* (*Meanings of the Qur'an*) by Muhammad Baqir Behbudi and "opened out" the verses to "reveal some of the layers of meaning expounded by the prophet ..." (p. xvi). For example, verse 34 of *surat Sack*

contain interpretations which are eccentric and speculative and do not reflect the mainstream understanding of the text, which most readers wish to know" (VIII).

Apart from the aforementioned works, some other moderate translations by Muslims appeared. However, it was thought crucial to shed light on the previous cases to stress that translations are not always a reliable source to judge Islam. Any translator brings to his work the beliefs, inferences and doctrines that are the substance of personal biases, theological leaning, and even tactical scheming. Hence, the only criterion for judgment is the text in Arabic. It should be borne in mind that translations, no matter how accurate, can hardly be objective.

It was only natural in the late eighties of the twentieth century, on account of the abovementioned shortcomings coupled with the failure of most well-intentioned translators to convey the intended meaning smoothly, that A. R. Kidawi (1987) would state, "[t]he Muslim Scripture is yet to find a dignified and faithful expression in the English language that matches the majesty and grandeur of the original". Similarly, Abdul Hakeem Tabibi (1986) asserted, "till now, there is no complete consensus on a satisfactory translation. Hence, Muslims strive to produce a complete satisfactory translation ..." (p. 44). This raises the question: what makes a satisfactory translation?

Before attempting an answer, let us first briefly survey a few important translations that appeared since that time till the present moment. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed the appearance, among others, of the following works: *The Qur'an: A New Interpretation* by Colin Turner (1997), *The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English* by Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley (1999), a new edition of *The Koran* by N. J. Dawood (2000), and *The Majestic Qur'an: An English Rendition of Its Meanings* by a Turkish committee (2000), which is a revised edition of an earlier work. At the turn of the century, there was no sign of cascade subsidence. Similarly, a number of brand new translations appeared in addition to new editions of some already available translations from the previous century. Among the most important of these are the last revised edition of Muhammad Mahmoud Ghali's *Towards Understanding*

verses in some places to reflect their own doctrinal biases rather than give an accurate presentation of the Muslims' Scripture.

Second, other controversial translations are those influenced by scientific rationalism like those of Ahmad Zidan and Dina Zidan (1979), Muhammad Asad (1980), and Ahmad Ali (1984). They reject any miraculous references mentioned in the Qur'an and tend to interpret them on rational or figurative basis. For example, while Muslims believe that Abraham, peace be upon him, was saved by God's grace from the fire in which he was plunged by disbelievers, Asad (1980) argues that the reference in the Qur'an is "apparently an allegorical allusion to the fire of persecution which Abraham had to suffer" (p. 496). Similarly, he believes that Jesus Christ's miraculous talk in his cradle is "a metaphorical allusion to the prophetic wisdom which was to inspire Jesus from a very early age" (p. 73). Similar tendencies are perceived in reference to the other miracles of Christ, Moses, Solomon ... etc., peace be upon them, in Asad's translation and the other similar translations.

Third, the most serious distortions by far, however, emerged on account of the translations of the members of the Indian Qadiyani and Ahmaddeyya communities. These sects were declared as apostates by major Islamic institutions. Their translations are marred with verses twisted to serve their own crooked needs. They disseminate ideas that contradict with basic Muslim beliefs. A prime example is their claim that Jesus Christ, peace be upon him, was truly crucified and was not raised alive to God – an idea that is reflected in their translations as Neal Robinson (1997, p. 266) points out. They meant to give support, on the basis of such perverted translations, to the claims of their leader Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that he was the Promised Messiah and *Mahdi*.

Indeed, the dissemination of such doctrines that drift far away from the common Muslims' beliefs did severe injustice to Islam. Sadly, in these works lies the utmost danger – even more than those by orientalis. Being supposedly by Muslim translators, their distortion and misguidance sail under the banner of Islam. However, as the translator committee of the *Majestic Qur'an* (2000) state, they "often

as a polemic against Jews". In like manner, the translation of Muhammad Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (1996), which was meant to replace Yusuf Ali's translation, "reads more like a supremacist Muslim, anti-Semitic, anti-Christian polemic than a rendition of the Islamic scripture" (Mohammad, 2005). A famous example that is often cited in this regard is the reference to Jews and Christians that the translators added to the seventh verse of *surat*, chapter, *Al-Fatiha* (*The Opening*). In Arabic, the verse reads:

صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين" (الفتحة، 7)

Hilali and Khan rendered it as:

The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace,
not
(the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews),
nor
of those who went astray (such as the Christians) [emphasis mine].

Indubitably, Ali as well as Hilali and Khan managed to solve part of the problems of previous translations. Being free of hostile intentions, having a much better mastery of the Arabic language, targeting close adherence to the original text, and providing elaborate explanatory notes, they provided a better understanding of the Qur'an. However, the type of comments they sometimes added about Jews and Christians gives the unfair impression that Islam is intolerant of "the other", a notion that gives support to the alleged claims that have been widely propagated by westerners and Israelis lately.

On the other hand, some translations project sectarian views that are not representative of the common Muslim beliefs. First, with Shi'ites' translations, e.g. that of S. V. Mir Ahmad Ali (1964), the basic concern is that some of the verses are peculiarly translated in accordance with the Shi'ites' queer imposed interpretations on some general verses that they mean to make particularly referring to Ali, Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, and his household, may God be pleased with them. On the basis of these interpretations, they support their tendency to confer unbounded glory on Ali. Thus, Shi'ite translators digress from the mainstream understanding of the

taken from the Bible... , while setting forth the principles and rules of the religion he himself had founded.

Besides, at the International Seminar on Islam in Paris, held under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Bucaille explains:

When I started my in-depth research on the reality of Islam, for the first time, I started to study its scripture, the Qur'an and I was obliged to use translations done by various *Islamologues* or *orientalists*. Alas, the script under these conditions was not self-explicative, and I remember having found in several translations of the same paragraph such differences that it was evident that these interpretations were due to translators and their commentaries, often added to the text.

Later on having acquired the knowledge of the Arabic language, enabling me to read the Qur'an in the original text, I ... discerned the evident desire to camouflage or to willfully change the meaning, evidently in order to adapt the text to a personal point of view. (p. 10)

These translations distorted the spirituality of the holy Qur'an and damaged the concepts of Islam. Unfortunately, as Sir Edward Denson Ross (1940) asserts in his introduction to George Sales' translation:

[for] many centuries the acquaintance which the majority of Europeans possessed of Mohammedanism was based almost entirely on distorted reports of fanatical Christians which led to dissemination of a multitude of gross calumnies. What was good in Mohammedanism was entirely ignored, and what was not good, in the eyes of Europe, was exaggerated or misinterpreted. (as cited in Sales, 1940, p. 7)

The unfavourable image propagated by westerners' translations prompted Muslims to translate the Qur'an themselves even though the legitimacy of such action was the subject of a heated debate for such a long time. Hence, the twentieth century witnessed the publication of a plethora of translations, mostly by Muslims. The axiomatic supposition is that these translations should have provided a genuine representative image of the spirit of Islam and an accurate version of its Scripture. However, the situation is not as simple as that. With some of these translations further new complications have emerged.

On the one hand, the translation of Yusuf Ali (1934), despite being one of the classics and the most favourable till recently, is sometimes claimed to be launching anti-Christian propaganda. Moreover, Khaleel Mohammed (2005) argues that writing "at a time both of growing Arab animosity toward Zionism and in a milieu that condoned anti-Semitism, Yusuf 'Ali constructed his oeuvre

statement of his goal in the introduction, "I thought good to bring it to their colours, that so viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou must the better prepare to encounter ... his Alcoran." (p. A3) Besides, the title of this translation, *The Alcoran of Mahomet ... newly Englished for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities*, is self-explanatory, and it underlines one of the basic misconceptions prevalent in the West, namely that Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was the author of the Qur'an. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Maurice Bucaille (1986), an eminent French surgeon and scientist who defends the Qur'an in his book *The Bible, Qur'an and Science*, states that some western translations meant to deliberately mistranslate the word "أمى" *ummei* (unlettered), referring to Prophet Muhammad in some Qur'anic verses, so as to hide the fact that it could have never been possible for an unlettered person to be the author of the Qur'an that encompasses historical events, that he did not witness, as well as meticulous scientific facts that were discovered long after his death and could not have been thought of at the time of revelation (pp. 94-96). This fact about the Prophet used to shock westerners whenever Bucaille revealed it to them. In 1734, Sale's translation came out based on Marracci's earlier notorious work. Then, in 1861, J. M. Rodwell's work provided a further example of a writer "gunning for Islam" (Turner, 1997, p. xii).

The wide circulation of these early unfair translations, essentially predetermined to discredit Islam, led to embedding distorted facts in the western mentality that have now become like axioms despite the appearance of a few subsequent somewhat better translations by non-Muslims. Bucaille (1981) stresses the existence of mainstream inaccurate ideas that brainwash westerners stating, "as most people in the West have been brought up on misconceptions concerning Islam and the Qur'an; for a large part of my life, I myself was one such person". He adds:

As I grew up, I was always taught that 'Mahomet' was the author of the Qur'an; I remember seeing French translations bearing this information. I was invariably told that the 'author' of the Qur'an simply compiled ... stories of sacred history

The fact that the defamation of Islam has been on the rise in recent years can be endorsed by many. Western media have been propagating the alleged claim that Islam is a religion that cultivates violence and promotes terrorism. However, some may not be aware that the commencement of this movement is deeply rooted in the past. Perhaps one of the most important factors that spread a lot of misconceptions about Muslims' religion goes back to the early renderings of the meanings of the holy Qur'an into western languages.

Mofakhar Hussain Khan (1986) points out that the first attempt was a Latin translation made by Robert of Ketton in 1143, yet not published till 1543, at the request of the Abbot of the monastery of Cluny. According to Afaf Ali Shukry (2000), the basic goal behind this translation was to find out the differences that shook the foundations of Christian beliefs so as to find ways to support Christianity and discredit Islam (pp. 21-22). This first Latin translation was the first spur that prompted further translations into other languages like Italian, German and French in 1547, 1616 and 1647 respectively (pp. 82-83). Hussein Abdul-Raof (2001) asserts that it "abounds in inaccuracies and misunderstandings, and was inspired by hostile intention" (p. 19). In 1698, another Latin translation by Ludovicus Marracci was published, and it was supplemented with quotes from Qur'an commentaries "carefully juxtaposed and sufficiently garbled so as to portray Islam in the worst possible light", as Colin Turner (1997, p. xii) points out. The title of the introductory volume of such translation, *A Refutation of the Quran*, leaves no room for questioning the intention of the translator.

Ma'ayergi (1984) highlights the crucial role these translations played in forming a negative image about Islam. He argues, "[after] the first glimpse of Islam through these translations, Europeans grew all the more aggressive in their fight against Islam. Various attacks were launched against Islamic culture and heritage" (p.442). What aggravated the problem is that such translations formed the foundation for a number of subsequent works.

The first English translation was that of Alexander Ross published in 1649. There is no better evaluation of the type of work it is than the translator's

The Roots of Islamophobia in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Holy Qur'an Translations

Towards Satisfactory Third Millennium Translations

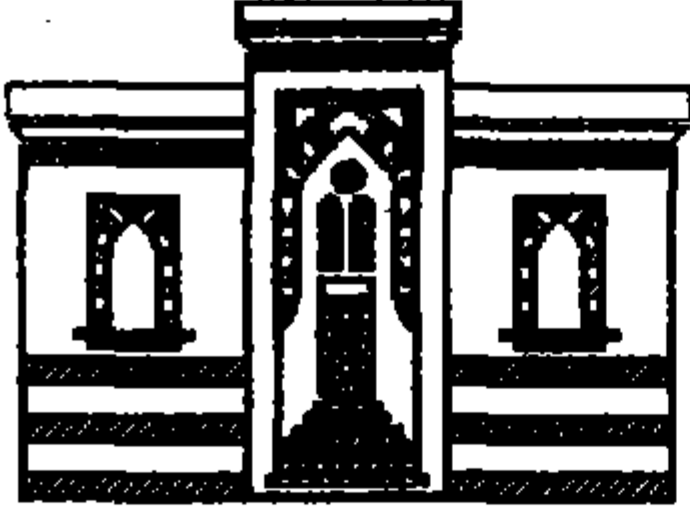
Dahlia Sabry*

Qur'an translations can be said to be extremely important yet gravely serious. Their crucial importance stems from the fact that they represent the primary source of information for those who do not know Arabic – Muslims and non-Muslims – and who want to fathom the depths of Islam through reading its very revealed word. They are the major recourse of the former who, due to the language barrier, are deprived of approaching their revealed Book in Arabic, and those of the latter who are curious to pursue familiarity with Islam through first-hand knowledge instead of simply "imbibing received opinions and attitudes without individual thought and reflection", as Thomas Cleary (1993) puts it (p. X). Their seriousness lies in the great role they play in formulating recipients' opinion about Islam. About the benefit of reading the Qur'an by non-Muslims, Cleary (1993) states:

For non-Muslims, one special advantage in reading the Qur'an is that it provides an authentic point of reference from which to examine the biased stereotypes of Islam to which Westerners are habitually exposed. Primary information is essential to distinguish between opinion and fact in a reasonable manner. This exercise may also enable the thinking individual to understand the inherently defective nature of prejudice itself ... (1993, p. VIII).

However, for Cleary's benefit to be realized, translations should be accurate and objective. This has not always been the case since sometimes, as Hassan Ma'ayergi (1984) points out, "[translating] the meanings of the Quran offered an opportunity to distort and misinterpret its meanings or to divert Muslim minorities living under non-Muslim rule away from the Quranic text and to reconcile them to [distorted] translations ..." (p. 442).

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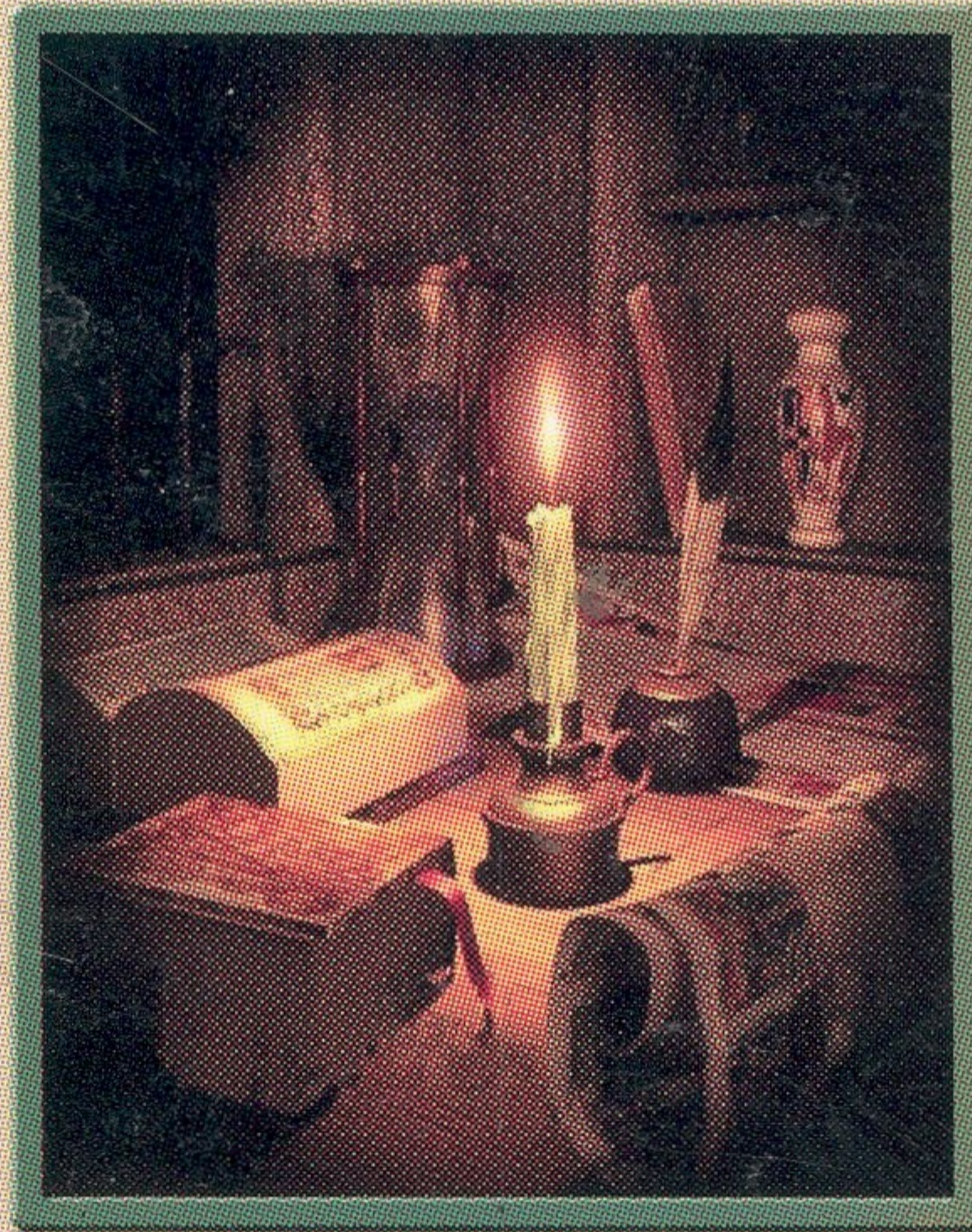
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