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THE QUESTION OF THE TRANSLATABILITY OF THE
THE QUR'ĀN, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
SOME ENGLISH VERSIONS.

BY

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*To my wife EQBAL,
and my daughters, ASEEL,
HADEEL and the late, four
day old, RAHEEL.*

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I owe a great debt and deep appreciation to my supervisor, Professor J.N. Mattock. His guidance, valuable discussions and sincere interest have made this study possible in its present shape.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(iii)
TABLE OF CONTENTS	(iv)
KEY TO TRANSLITERATION	(vii)
INTRODUCTION	(ix)

PART ONE - Essential foundation-work.

<u>SECTION ONE:</u>	1
The Qur'ān: A Traditional Islamic View.	
<u>SECTION TWO:</u>	39
Is it permissible to translate the Arabic Qur'ān into a foreign tongue?	
<u>SECTION THREE:</u>	72
Tafsīr al-Qur'ān.	
<u>SECTION FOUR:</u>	100
Is the Qur'ān translatable?	

PART TWO - A contrastive analysis of some
translations of the Qur'ān.

SECTION ONE: 193

A conspectus of some problematic elements.

SECTION TWO: 297

Principles and problems of translating the
Qur'ānic terms and concepts.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 336

APPENDIX A: Order of the Qur'ānic Suras. 340

APPENDIX B: A brief bibliography of the 345
principal English translations
of the Qur'ān.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

REMARKS

1. Transliteration of words, in general, is made in accordance with their written form and not as they are pronounced, eg. al-tafsīr not at-tafsīr .
2. Tā' marbūta is not indicated unless in mudāf , in which case it is transliterated as t .
3. The Islamic tradition of blessing the Prophet ḡallā Allah ʿalayh wa sallam each time his name is mentioned is not followed in this dissertation. The expression may, however, be understood as being present.
4. In relevant sections of the thesis, the preferred versions of those presented are marked with an asterisk.
5. For reasons of convenience longer passages of Arabic have not been transliterated.

KEY TO TRANSLITERATION

The following system is employed for transliterating Arabic in this thesis.

A. Consonants.

Transliteration	Arabic letter
Not shown initially; otherwise: '	ء
b	ب
t	ت
th	ث
j	ج
h	ح
kh	خ
d	د
dh	ذ
r	ر
z	ز
s	س
sh	ش
ṣ	ص
ḍ	ض
ṭ	ط
ẓ	ظ
ḡ	غ
gh	ف
f	ق
q	ك
k	ل
l	م
m	ن
n	ه
h	و
w	ي
y	ح

B. Vowels.

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INTRODUCTION

Many aspects of Qur'ānic studies have received wide-ranging and comprehensive attention from different scholars at different times. Yet despite its vitality, the issue of the translation of the Qur'ān has always been approached from a narrow angle.

This study aims to investigate the principles and problems of translating the Qur'ān by means of a close analysis of various problematic elements pertaining to its form and content.

The present work consists of two parts. Part one lays down some essential foundation-work necessary for a systematic and constructive approach to the main issue. Section one of this part provides a general background to the subsequent sections.

Section two specifies the nature of the problem being investigated, namely the claim that it is impermissible to translate the Qur'ān. This claim is touched upon with reference to the Qur'ānic text, the sunna and the views of ancient as well as modern Muslim scholars. A survey of these views indicates that the only permissible type of translation is that of tafsīr al-Qur'ān .

Section three, therefore, is devoted to an investigation of the discipline of tafsīr in its wider sense, with particular emphasis on its role in translation.

In order to understand the nature of obstacles posed by the language of religious texts, section four provides an overview of religious language in general, and that of the Qur'ān in particular in an attempt to outline its influence in translation.

In this last section of part one, a close study is also made to investigate the issue of the translatability of the Qur'ān. Focus is also put on the main characteristic features of its form and content which are essential to bring about constructive improvements in further Qur'ānic translations. The last pages of this section offer a practical method to achieve such improvements.

As regards part two of this study, it is concerned with a contrastive analysis of some problematic elements which the translator of the Qur'ān encounters. Section one deals with a conspectus of those problematic elements, including those connected with vocabulary and syntax, in an attempt to show how they are tackled by different translators with different backgrounds and approaches.

Section two of this part concentrates on one of the aspects of the Qur'ān that is most often claimed to render it untranslatable: Qur'ānic terms and concepts, which create much controversy not only in translation, but also in works of Qur'ānic exegesis in Arabic.

It is hoped that this study will help clarify the problem of translating the Qur'ān, and suggest guidelines for further research on the practicality and adoptability of its findings.

It must be emphasized, at the outset, that what is envisaged here as the ideal is the production of a translation that conforms to the orthodox theological doctrines of Islam as agreed on by the consensus of 'ulamā'. This is to be a practical translation. Literary considerations, although not to be neglected, as far as possible, are secondary.

PART ONE

SECTION ONE.

The Qur'ān: A traditional Islamic view:

The Qur'ān, a Book held in reverence by Muslims world-wide, is regarded as a divine revelation sent to the Prophet Muḥammad through the angel Jibrīl over a period of about twenty-three years. This revelation which began in the early part of the seventh century A.D. took place in both Makka and Madina over the above mentioned period. In due course Muslims began to use it in public and private devotions; thus it became part of their lives, or, indeed, the whole of their lives, and not merely a book. To Muslims the Qur'ān is "neither a treatise on theology, nor a code of laws, nor a collection of sermons, but rather a medley of all three, with other things thrown in". (1)

The Prophet, describing the Qur'ān, is quoted by 'Ali b. Abī Tālib as having given the following definition: "The Book of Allah. In it is the record of what was before you, the judgement on what is currently going on among you, and the prophecies of what will come after you. It is the decisive pronouncement, not a case for levity....The Qur'ān is the unbreakable bond of

connection with Allah, a reminder full of wisdom, and the straight path....it never becomes dull, even with repeated study...and its wonders are never-ending". (2)

One traditional view is that the use of the term Qur'ān in the text is not restricted to the written book-form as we have it today, but rather refers to the revelations received by the Prophet Muḥammad. (3) On the other hand, other Scholars hold that the word Qur'ān is exclusively a proper name peculiar to the book of Allah. (4)

The word Qur'ān occurs in various places in the text and apparently has several distinct meanings. In 17:93, for example, it denotes the act of reciting or reading, in 13:30 it refers to a single passage in 73:20 to a collection of passages and in 55:2 to the complete collection of the revelations.

There are also other designations used internally to refer to the Qur'ān, such as nūr (light), furqān (criteria) and tanzīl (sending down). Al-Suyūṭi (5) quotes al-Zamakhshari as distinguishing fifty-five titles and epithets of the Qur'ān all of which are drawn from its text.

One of the basic beliefs of Muslims is that Muḥammad brought the final divine message, completing the mission

of previous Prophets, whose basic teachings were one and had the same purpose, ie. to declare the unity of God, as asserted in 16:36. A number of stories concerning those Prophets occur in the Qur'ān, together with mention of the scriptures associated with them, the Tawrāt of Mūsā, in 5:47-8, the Zabūr of Dawud in 17:55, and the Injīl of 'Īsā, in 48:29. Muslims also believe that the message of the Qur'ān is a universal and an eternal one, eg. 34:28 and 21:107, and that one of its aims is to confirm previous revelations, eg. 10:37-8. It is also stated in the Qur'ān that its teachings are to be found in these, eg. 26:196 and 87:18. Another purpose of the Qur'ān, as asserted in 5:48, is to act as a muhaymin, that is to say, as a criterion for deciding what is genuine and what is false in the earlier scriptures.

(6)

Muslim theologians define the Qur'ān as follows:

"The words of Allah, which were revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad. Its form and content are inimitable, and its recitation (reading) constitutes a form of worship".(7)

As stated earlier, the angel Jibrīl was the medium of revelation. The term wahy is usually used to designate God's communication with man. Al-Qaṭṭān observes five distinct meanings of the root WHY employed in the Qur'ānic text:

1. Ilhām fitri Lil-Insān , ie. guidance as natural intuition, eg. 28:7.
2. Ilhām gharīzī Lil-hayawān , ie. guidance as natural instinct, eg. 16:68, where the recipient of wahy is neither a Prophet nor a human being. Wahy here is the natural instinct that God has put into the Bee.
3. Ramz wa'īhā' , ie. guidance through signs and indications, eg. 19:11.
4. Waswasat Shayṭān , ie. evil incitation, eg. 6:112.
5. Amr Ila al-Malā'ika , ie. commands to angels eg. 8:12. (8)

However, the WHY root generally denotes the concept of sudden and inner illumination, which is commonly associated with God's communication with Prophets.

Like other Prophets, Muḥammad received a divine message, eg. 4:163. The means of revelation through which these Prophets received their messages are four.(9)

1. A direct address, as when Allah, spoke to Mūsā, eg. 4:164.

2. A flash of inspiration in the heart of the recipient who recognizes it for what it is.
3. An inspiration through a true vision, eg. 37:102, where it is related that the Prophet Ibrahim received guidance in a dream.
4. A communication through an angel, who may contact the recipient either in his true angelic form, in the shape of a human being, or invisibly, perceived only by the recipient, as in the case of the Prophet Muḥammad which is called wahy jalī (clear inspiration). (10)

Something that has been the object of attention and study on the part of both Muslim and non-Muslim Scholars is the question of the collection and writing down of the text of the Qur'ān. As described by al-Suyūṭī, the general method of recording the Qur'anic revelations was as follows:

"When he received a revelation, Muḥammad would call his scribes and say: Put this passage in such and such a place in such and such a sūra". (11)

This may indicate that the Prophet himself was responsible for the arrangement of the text, again, of course, on the basis of divine inspiration. One may also assume that Muḥammad was the first to learn the Qur'an by heart; he then conveyed it to the Ṣaḥāba, among whom there were not a small number who themselves learned it

by heart. Al-Bukhārī, for example, mentions more than twenty well-known Huffāz during the life time of the Prophet. (12)

The widely accepted term for the process of collecting the text of the Qur'ān is jam' al-Qur'ān. This term, broadly speaking, denotes "bringing together the Qur'ānic revelations". According to al-Qaṭṭān, (13) the process of jam' al-Qur'ān involves both the oral memorization of the revelations and the bringing of it together in a written form.

It is widely accepted as true that at the death of the Prophet there was not in existence any complete written collection of the Qur'ānic revelations in book form. Al-Suyūṭī elaborates on this by stating that "during the life time of the Prophet, it had all been written, but it was not yet compiled in one single volume". (14)

As regards the actual process of collecting the written material of the Qur'ān, three stages can be identified. The first covers the Prophet's own life time; here the term jam' refers to both the memorization of the Qur'ānic revelations and writing them down. As stated above, in addition to the Prophet himself, there were a number of Ṣaḥāba who committed the Qur'ān to memory, a fact which later played a major role

in the process of jam⁶ al-Qur'^{ān}. On the other hand, the art of writing was not then a wide-spread practice in Arabia, nor were writing materials plentiful. Nevertheless, it is believed that much of the Qur'^{ān} was written down in some form during Muḥammad's life time, even at the very early stages of his mission in Makka.

(15)

The Qur'^{ān} during this stage was not only written down by those who did so on their own initiative. The Prophet himself had a number of official scribes to whom he used to dictate the revelations that he received. Zayd b. Thābit was the most prominent of those. ⁶Azmi (16) states that there were forty-eight scribes who used to write for the Prophet.

Some Muslim scholars (17) conclude that the Qur'^{ān} could not have existed in final book form during this stage since new revelations continued to come down; these had to be added to the earlier ones; the Prophet is said, owing to severe illness, to have lived only nine days after the last revelation. It may be assumed that the main purpose of this type of collection at this stage, was to prevent the Qur'^{ān}ic text from being promulgated in too haphazard a fashion.

The most popular view holds that the second stage became an urgent necessity because of the realisation of

the unfortunate fact that a number of those who had memorized the Qur'ān had been killed at the battle of Yamāma. This aroused in ʿUmar the fear that unless immediate measures were taken, some of the revelations might be lost. Consequently, he convinced Abū Bakr to begin the collection; this task was entrusted to Zayd, who collected everything available in both written and oral form, and then put it down in an organized way on separate leaves (Suḥuf), which after completion were handed to Abū Bakr. This copy was later kept by ʿUmar, who on his death left it in the possession of his daughter Ḥafṣa, one of the Prophet's widows. It is this very copy of Zayd which constituted the basis of the work of standardization which was undertaken by ʿUthmān as the third stage.

The third and final stage of collection, which is considered to be the most important one, took place in the reign of the third Caliph, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān. It appears that there were already in existence four other traditions of the Qur'ānic text, each of which found acceptance in a particular region: that of Ubayy b. Kaʿb in Damascus, Miqdād b. ʿAmr in Hims, Ibn Masʿūd in Kūfa, and that of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿari in Baṣra.

In response to disputes arose among Muslims about the correct manner of reciting certain passages of the

Qur'ān, 'Uthmān, after consulting other Ṣahāba, decided to unify the Muslims by promulgating one standard text. Four copies of this were made, of which one was kept in Makka while the other three were sent to Kūfa, Baṣra and Damascus. These copies were later unanimously acknowledged as representing the authoritative text by Muslims. 'Uthmān's text has remained the authorised edition to the present day.

The two features that principally assisted the establishment of the canonical text of the Qur'ān were tashkīl (vowelling) and i'jām (diacritical marks).

Apparently, tashkīl was unknown in the pre-Islamic period despite its importance for the correct pronunciation of words and for the avoidance of Lahn (solecism), which was considered a major demerit in one's speech. With the spread of Islam and the conversion of many non-Arabs, incorrect pronunciation of the Qur'ān became common to the extent of producing divergent meanings, owing to the absence of tashkīl in the Qur'ānic text. A famous example is quoted from the time of al-Du'ulī (69 H/638), when someone read 9:3 namely, inna Allaha barī'un min al mushrikīna wa rasūluhu, instead of employing ḍamma on the word rasūl, he used Kasra, which very considerably altered the original meaning of the verse. To prevent such incorrect practice, certain diacritical marks were introduced. However,

accounts differ as to when and by whom these marks were invented. According to Hughes (18), they were introduced in their original form not long before the i⁶ jām or naqt (other diacritical marks serving to distinguish letters of the same shape from one another); they later assumed their present form. The corresponding old and new forms are:

	Mark	Old style	New Style
<u>fatha</u>	a	ب̣	ب̣
<u>damma</u>	u	ب̣	ب̣
<u>kasra</u>	i	ب̣	ب̣

I⁶ jām is a means of distinguishing between letters of the same shape from one another by placing one, two or three dots over or under them. It is believed that these marks were rarely used in early Arabic script, despite their existence. The consonantal combination بب, for example, might be ambiguous, but with the help of I⁶ jām, it could be established that بيت was intended, rather than, for example بنت or نبت. It seems probable, that Qurān'ic manuscripts did not have these marks until the reign of the fifth Umayyad Caliph, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (66-86H/685-705.) (19)

The Qur'ān is divided in two different ways. For purposes of recitation, it is divided into thirty

approximately equal parts (juz'), as opposed to the formal division into suras. The latter number 114, and are sub-divided into verses (āyāt). The number of āyāt in each sura ranges from three in al-Kawthar to 286 in al-Baqara; The suras are arranged roughly in order of length, except for the first sura, al-Fātiḥa. The Qur'ān in total comprises roughly 80,000 words. Attempts have been made to present the suras in chronological order, but the traditional arrangement has continued to prevail.

There is some controversy as to the origin and the status of the language of the Qur'ān. Most Muslim linguists are of the traditional view, that it was revealed in the dialect of Quraysh. On the other hand, a number of western Scholars hold that the language of the Qur'ān stands somewhere between the 'poetical standard koiné' and the Hijāzī dialect. It is widely accepted now that the poetical standard Koiné constituted, in the late 6th century A.D., a purely literary dialect, distinct from all spoken idioms, super-tribal and wide-spread throughout Arabia.

Chejne, who is partly quoting from al-Muzhir of al-Suyūṭī observes that:

"Traditions abound which claim that the Quraysh dialect was by far the purest of all Arabic dialects.... and that God has chosen for the Prophet the choicest,

purest, clearest and most correct Arabic". (20)

In the Qur'ān itself, eg. 16:103 and 26:195 it is asserted that the revelations are sent down in (a clear Arabic), which consequently led later Muslim Scholars to hold the view that the language of the Qur'ān was the purest of Arabic, a dogma which springs primarily from theological and secondarily from linguistic considerations.

Opinions differ among Muslim Scholars as to whether or not the Qur'ān contains words of non-Arabic origin. Scholars throughout the ages have held three separate views concerning this: some have entirely rejected the idea, since it contradicts numerous Qur'ānic proclamations that it is an Arabic Qur'ān eg. 12:2. Other Scholars have been of the opinion that this vocabulary represents only a small proportion of the Qur'ānic text and hence does not prevent it from being essentially an Arabic Qur'ān. Others again, among whom is al-Suyuti, consider that these terms of foreign origin had already been incorporated into Arabic and therefore were regarded as part of the Arabic vocabulary.

Early Scholars as well as modern Scholars, have treated this subject, in an attempt to trace the origin of this vocabulary. Al-Suyūtī, for example, wrote a book entitled al-Mutawakkili, (21), in which he listed

about 120 of these items that occur in the Qur'ānic text. The following are among the many examples given in this book: qistās in 17:35, is derived from Greek, sijjīl in 15:74, is derived from Persian and tūr in 2:63, is derived from Syriac.

A more comprehensive approach was made by Arthur Jeffrey, an English scholar, who in his book The foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ān lists about 275 words, other than proper names, which have been regarded as of non-Arabic origin. (22)

The Arabic language undoubtedly owes its preservation in very much the same state as in the dawn of Islam to the rhetorical style of the Qur'ān.

Nicholson had this in mind when he wrote:

"If the pride and the delight of the Arabs in their noble language led them to regard the maintenance of its purity as a national duty, they were generally bound by their religious convictions to take measures for ensuring the correct pronunciation and interpretation of that miracle of Divine Eloquence, the Arabic Koran". (23)

Prose or Poetry (Verse):

It is clear that the Qur'ānic style is distinguished from that of all other Arabic literary works, whether they be poetry or rhymed or non-rhymed prose; it even differs from the style that appears in the ḥadīth of the Prophet.

Ibn Khaldūn (d.1406) makes a distinction between secular literary style and the style of the Qur'ān in general, and between sajʿ and the form of some Qur'ānic verses in particular. He points out that literary form in Arabic is essentially divided into two types: rhymed poetry and prose. He speaks of sajʿ as "rhymed prose which consists of cola ending with the same rhyme throughout, or sentences rhymed in pairs". This is in contrast to nathr mursal 'straight prose', which is straightforward and is not divided into cola. Ibn Khaldūn establishes that the Qur'ān is in prose, which does not, however, belong to either 'straight prose' or 'rhymed prose'; it is divided into āyāt and there is no contrived rhyming. Thus the ends of āyāt are called fawāsil 'dividers'. (24)

However, the Qur'ān is written, to a certain extent, in rhyming prose. For example, in individual parts of a sentence, in a complete sentence or in a combination of sentences, it may follow one rhyme eg. sūra 101. On the

other hand, the longer suras do not have this feature. Generally, it appears that, in the Qur'ānic text as a whole, there is no consistent attempt to produce strict rhyme; what one finds rather is an intermittent, almost involuntary, accommodation of the ends of the clauses, or phrases, handled with freedom throughout the text.

Rhymes:

As far as the rhymes themselves are concerned, the first thing one may observe is the absence of short end-vowels which are normally employed in poetry. In sura 105, for example, we find the words: Fīl (i), tadlīl (in), abābīl (a), sijjīl (in) and ma'kūl(in) all rhyming with each other (given the generally accepted equivalence of ū and ī). However, when no pause is observed after each āya, these endings should be pronounced. In certain other passages, such as 33:4, the final a is lengthened to ā, perhaps to preserve the rhyme. In 90:6, probably for the same reason, we find the an ending is pronounced ā, thus lubadan becomes lubadā .

In a number of the later sūras, the use of rhyme appears to be less frequent and is generally restricted to ā ; a good example of this is sura 38, where we find words such as shiqāq (in), manās (in), kadhhab(un),

ujāb (un) and jurād (u). The three ayat of sura 110 do not rhyme at all.

On some occasions, one can hardly find a systematic rhyme scheme at all, as in 109, where the following words occur: al-Kāfirūn(a), ta⁶budūn(a), a⁶bud(u), abadum, a⁶bud(u) and dīn(i); this may be the result of an intention to give a very particular emphasis to the sense. On the other hand, in a number of other passages it seems that the choice of words is determined by the rhyme itself, eg. 98:5, where we find, for the sake of the rhyme, dīn al-Qayyima instead of the more common al-Dīn al-Qayyim; another example occurs in 37:130 where Ilyās becomes Ilyasīn, for the same reason. Also worth noting is the use of the perfect form instead of the imperfect in, for example, 53:43 and 48; whereas, at the end of 5:70 one finds the imperfect in place of the perfect, mainly, presumably, for rhetorical reasons.

A prominent rhetorical feature is the repetition of certain rhyming refrains; an example of this is Inna allaha⁶ alā kulli shay'in qadīr which occurs six times in sura 2, four times in sura 3, four times in sura 5, etc; another example is waylun yawma'idhin li-l-mukadhdhibīn which occurs ten times in sura 77. Yet more frequent is the refrain fabi ayyi alā'i rabbikumā tukadhdhibān occurring thirty-one times in the 78 āyāt of

sūra 55. This means that this refrain occupies about half of the whole sūra; it occurs in every other verse of the sūra.

Dramatic impact and forceful expression:

There are certain forms of oath, or rather asseveration, that are employed in the Qur'ān. This stylistic device is often used to prepare the way for subsequent rhetorical statements, which are sometimes difficult to comprehend and hence constitute a barrier for interpreters; an example of this can be found in sūra 89. The main aim of most of these oath-like expressions is to emphasize the suggested efficacy which often comes after them. These aqṣām (pl. of qasam) are generally initiated by wa (by) or the phrase Lā 'uqsimu (literally, I do not swear; but may roughly be rendered as 'indeed I swear'). Sometimes these oaths are sworn by God Himself eg. 4:65, by His Creation eg. 91:1-7 or by sacred places eg. 90:1. (25) One may also observe that in later revelations, these expressions are less frequent.

Another common feature is the employment of unattached temporal clauses, which are introduced by idhā (when) or yawma (the day when). These serve as reminders of events in the past that are assumed to be

known about, or events in the future that have already been foretold eg. 79:6, 83:6 and 82:1-4; their main function in the Qur'ān is as devices to make the hearers think more about the stories, or prophecies.

Another characteristic of the Qur'ānic style is the elliptical nature of many passages. A number of statements are introduced baldly by detached, or partially detached, temporal clauses beginning with conjunction: idh ([in the day] when), referring to events in the past or future. Generally, these passages require something to be supplied. An example of this is to be found in 2:133: "or were you present, when Jacob reached the point of death...". What has to be supplied here is something like [so that you can give an authentic account of it]. Thus careful consideration should be given by the interpreter, for the sake of clarity; square brackets may be used for this purpose.

Passages with qul:

More than 200 passages in the Qur'ān are introduced by the word qul (roughly rendered as "say"): a divine command to the Prophet to convey what follows to his audience. These statements are of various kinds; they may answer questions, clarify a specific position, or emphasize particular articles of belief or legal rulings eg. 9:51, 5:62 and 8:1. One may assume that the use

of gul presupposes that the text was originally meant to be read aloud to an audience. Elsewhere, direct plural vocatives, such as yā ayyuha-l-ladhīna āmanū (o you believers) and yā ayyuha-n-nās (o you people) are employed in passages with a similar intention, eg. 49:12 and 2:21. The Prophet himself or the audience are often directed by an introductory interrogative statement, such as ara'ayta or ara'aytum (what do you think (about this)?) to adopt a critical attitude to a particular subject eg. 25:34 and 6:46.

Narratives:

The Qur'ān contains a number of 'narratives' qaṣaṣ the longest of which is that of Yūsuf in sura 12. The purposes of these narratives are, in general: to provide the Prophet and his followers with moral support, to explain the general message of Islam and to give examples of the results of piety and impiety.

These narratives concern earlier Prophets, their followers and messages revealed to them eg. sūra 26, which contains the story of the Prophet Nūh; sūra 28, which contains the story of the Prophet Mūsā; and sūra 19, which contains the story of the Prophet ʿĪsā. We also find narratives about other persons such as aṣḥāb al-Kahf (The companions of the cave) in sūra

18; reference is also made to events that took place during the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad, such as that of the battle of Badr in 3:13, and that of al-Aḥzāb in 33:9-27.

In these narrative passages, direct speech is used freely; a number of dialogues take place, the speakers in which are very varied, even Hell itself taking part on the Day of Judgement, as in 50:30. In passages such as 37:50-60, it is not always possible to say who the speaker is or who is being spoken to. Even more striking is the employment of impersonal phrases before direct speech, such as thumma yuqālu (then it is said) and wa qīla lahum (and they were told). In the original oral delivery, however, the identity of the speaker might have been indicated by a change of voice or a gesture.

The frequent use of the dramatic feature of dialogue is mainly for homiletic purposes; the narrative passages are usually interspersed with statements explaining the purpose of their introduction.

The mathal is another didactic form employed in the Qur'ānic text. The material of most of these amthāl is drawn from the sphere of natural phenomena: thunderstorms (2:19), gales (3:117) and a spider's web (29:41). The short life of plants is very often employed as an edifying example eg. 39:21.

Some amthāl are really parables, eg. 18:32, while others are, in effect, expanded similes, eg. 3:117 and 14:24:27.

Images, similes and metaphors:

The language of the Qur'ān is rich in images, which occasionally become metaphors. Objects and events are spoken of in terms of other things; the imagery used may throw light upon these objects and events. Thus the verb kasaba, "to acquire, earn", for example, is used to indicate the performing of moral actions. eg. 4:111. Words like dalla 'to lose one's way' and hadā 'to lead along the right path', are also employed as expressions of religious conduct, as are terms referring to the behaviour of the birds, such as khafda-l-Janāh 'to fold up the wing' signifying compliance and gentleness, eg. 15:88 and 17:24. In certain other cases, however, such an image appears to have become divorced from the original concept, eg. 20:22 where janāh refers to the arm-pit.

The Qur'ān has numerous similes throughout its text. In 101:4-5, for example, in a description of the Last Day, "men will be like moths blown about" and the mountains will become "like carded wool". In another

example, namely 62:5, a vivid and even humorous comparison is made: the Jews who have the Torah but do not profit by it are compared to an ass loaded with books. Polytheists are like a spider weaving its own frail house in 29:41. Other comparisons, such as these found in 2:171, 3:117 and 57:20, reflect some aspects of the cultural background of the time; on the other hand, in passages like 30:28 and 39:29 the imagery is more generalized and abstract.

However, it is not always easy to distinguish between 'natural' images, which occur spontaneously and those that are self-consciously artistic.

Metaphors are even more frequent than similes. Al-Ṣabbāgh, for example, a modern Arab Scholar, has collected over 400 metaphorical uses of words in the Qur'ān. However, it cannot be said for certain to what extent the Qur'ān added new metaphors to the Arabic language.

Among these is the use of metaphors from bodily functions to describe spiritual matters; thus the unbelievers are ṣumm (unable to hear), bukm (unable to speak and ʿumy (unable to see); this, of course, indicates their inability to discern the truth eg. 2:18.

Much has been written, by ancient and modern

Scholars, on the peculiarities of the style and syntax of the Qur'ān. Furthermore, the Arabic of the Qur'ān, as observed by Paret (26), for example, "displays certain peculiarities, not only in vocabulary, verbal forms and syntax, but also in pronunciation". The study of these last later formed the basis of ʿIlm al-Tajwīd (the science of the correct pronunciation of the Qur'ān).

Qur'ānic diction has been described by al-Zarqāni as "combining the elegant simplicity of nomadic diction, without its crudity, with the refinement of modern diction, without its preciousity". (27)

The concept of Iʿjāz:

From here on we shall be mainly concerned with the principal aspect of our study, namely the principles and problems of translating the Qur'ān. However, our discussion can only be understood when placed within a wider historical and linguistic context, which will show how the present situation has evolved and how it relates to other aspects of Qur'ānic studies.

Our aim in the following account is to provide a brief discussion of one of the main elements on which traditional and modern Scholars based their views regarding the translation of the Qur'ān, that is the

doctrine of I⁶ jāz (inimitability).

The Qur'ān itself, in various places, proclaims not only the purity and clarity of its language, but also its miraculous as well as its inimitable nature. At first, for example, its opponents were challenged to produce a whole book similar to it, (eg. 17:88); subsequently they were challenged to produce even ten comparable suras, (eg. 11:13) and then, again, to produce even one comparable sura, (eg. 2:23-4). These challenges were made not only to the people of Muḥammad's own time but to man and jinn in perpetuity, (eg. 17:88).

Even those who strongly opposed Muḥammad in public were apparently fascinated by the language and style of the Qur'ān. It is reported that 'Utba b. Rabī'a, for example, one of the strongest enemies of the Prophet, was attracted by the recitation of the Qur'ān. On one occasion he described what he had heard as something that was "neither poetry nor soothsaying but a unique utterance". Some other opponents are also said to have continued to listen clandestinely to the recitation of the Qur'ān either by the Prophet himself or by the Ṣaḥāba. (28)

However, there have been a number of attempts made by different people at different times to produce something equivalent to the Qur'ān, such as that of

Musaylima, in the Prophet's own life time, and those later of Ibn al-Muqaffa⁶, al-Mutanabbī and Abul-⁶Alā' al-Ma⁶arri. These attempts, however, have generally been regarded as unsuccessful. (29)

Muslim Scholars unanimously agree that the Qur'ān constitutes a mu⁶jiza which bears witness to the truth of Muḥammad's mission, and that it is not something novel, for previous messengers too had their own miracles - the rod of Mūsā eg. 7:160; the fire of Ibrāhīm eg. 21:69; the various miracles of Īsā eg. 3:49. Most of these miracles involved something tangible which, according to al-Suyūṭī (30), was limited to the time of these messengers themselves. Muḥammad's miracle, on the other hand, will never cease to exist, eg. 15:9. It is also stated in tradition that Muḥammad once said: "Every Prophet has been vouchsafed miracles to support his mission, and I was vouchsafed a divine inspiration. (31)

The actual term mu⁶jiza occurs in the Qur'ānic text only implicitly referring to this doctrine eg. 29:22. However, a number of terms having the same connotation as I⁶jāz are frequently used, such as āya (2:118) burhān (28:32) and sultān (11:96).

The root ĴZ has the general sense of "powerlessness" and the af⁶al form appears to mean "to render someone powerless (here, to imitate): Lisān

al-ʿArab defines muʿjiza as "A miracle performed by a Prophet, as distinct from karāma, which signifies one performed by a saint or righteous person not claiming to be a Prophet". Muslim theologians define muʿjiza as follows:

"An event, at variance with the usual course of nature, produced by a Prophet in contending with those who dispute his claims, in such a manner as to render them incapable of producing the like of it". (32)

According to al-Qurṭubī, the following conditions must be met before an event can be accepted as a miracle:

1. That no one else apart from Allah should be able to perform it.
2. That it should break the usual norms and laws of nature.
3. That it should occur in accordance with its producer's claims. (33)

A large number of studies have been devoted to the doctrine of Iʿjāz; al-Wāsiṭī's (d.306H) Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān is among the earliest works, and later works are principally based on it. This work is assumed to have been written towards the end of the third century of the Hijra or early in the fourth.

As far as the traditional Islamic view is concerned

regarding the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, it springs from two main elements; the first is concerned with the messenger himself being ummī, traditionally interpreted as 'unlettered', a claim asserted in various places in the Qur'ān, eg. 7:157, and more clearly in 29:48, which runs as follows:

"Never have you [Muḥammad] read a book before this, nor have you ever transcribed one with your right hand; had you done either of these, the unbelievers might have justly doubted". (34)

The second element is concerned with the nature of the message itself; its assertion in 2:23-4 of its incomparability remains valid for all time. Despite the criticisms made of this assertion, Muslims believe, as put by Denffer, that "none has succeeded in disproving its inimitability". (35) Thus the concept of I'jāz, in the words of al-Ṭabarī, "will remain valid regardless of the changes of men and time". (36)

On the other hand, some Scholars have suggested that imitation of the Qur'ān is possible but has never been practicable, because of God's 'turning away' (sarf) people from attempting it. Al-Bāqillānī (d.403H), however, totally rejects this view: that I'jāz al-Qur'ān is only due to God's 'turning away' people from imitating it rather than to its inherent inimitability. Moreover, the Qur'ān itself, in several places, rebuts

the idea of sarf eg. 17:88, where there is no suggestion of such a thing. (37)

In the introduction to his tafsīr, al-Qurṭubī identifies various aspects of I⁶ jāz al-Qur'ān "the inimitability of the Qur'ān", such as that of its language and style, that of the comprehensiveness of its legislation and that of its manifold prophecies, many of which have been fulfilled. (38) Numerous other works have been devoted to these aspects by different Scholars, with different approaches, at different times.

In the following pages an attempt will be made to sketch briefly the development of this concept throughout Islamic history.

I⁶ jāz al-Qur'ān appears as a technical term in its own right only in the third century of the Hijra. It was at that time that most of the ideas concerning I⁶ jāz seem to have been introduced. According to al-Bāqillānī, Nazm al-Qur'ān of al-Jahiz is the first book devoted to I⁶ jāz. (39) The style of the Qur'ān is also treated in al-Dīn wal-Dawla by ⁶Ali b. Ribn al-Ṭabarī at this period. During the 4th century of the Hijra other aspects were touched upon, such as the unique lexical composition of the Qur'ānic text; al-Khaṭṭābī is one of the most eminent Scholars of this century. Al-Bāqillānī and al-Jurjānī hold this position in the 5th

century of the Hijra; during this century, in addition to the topics treated by earlier Scholars, topics such as Qur'ānic prophecies come under discussion. Also in the 5th century a new approach to the investigation of the question appears; Scholars such as al-Ghazālī and al-Zamḳhshari claim that, in addition to Divine Knowledge, the Qur'ān also touches upon various basic scientific facts.

The Scholars of the 6th-9th centuries, such as al-Bayḏāwī, were more or less simply commentators on, and editors of, the views of their predecessors; citation of earlier works virtually displaced any original contributions.

In the 10th Century, more elaborate studies on both form and content of the Qur'ān appeared. This century is particularly remarkable for the appearance of al-Suyūṭī, a major figure in this field. The most significant among his various works on Qur'ānic studies is al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān, which is still an important work of reference.

During the eleventh century, more emphasis than *before* was placed on detailed study of the grammatical features of the text of the Qur'ān. Al-Saylakūnī for example, made an extensive grammatical analysis in his super-commentary on al-Bayḏāwī's tafsīr;

he also paid special attention to the investigation of al-Muqatta'āt - "the mysterious letters".

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, detailed citation of earlier works continued to become more frequent than the composition of original works, al-Shawkānī and al-Iskandarānī are just two among many scholars of these centuries.

Finally, the fourteenth century witnessed an increased interest in scientific topics in the Qur'ān; this century was the one in which the concept of scientific I'jāz was most closely studied, owing to the advances that it saw in experimental science. Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī, for example, was one of the most eminent scholars of this century. He produced a specialized work of tafsīr dealing with scientific facts touched upon in the Qur'ān; in this work, he claims that these facts are alluded to in some 750 āyāt, and he provides numerous examples of this. (40)

Maurice Bucaille, another scientist, has worked in the same field; in his La Bible, le Coran, et la science he discusses a large number of scientific facts hinted at in the Qur'ān but ignored in the Bible. In his conclusion he claims that "the Qur'ān did not contain a single statement that was assailable from a modern scientific point of view". He also points out that

certain Qur'ānic passages dealing with such matters were previously obscure, owing to the non-availability of knowledge which could help interpret them. This, in his view, is clear evidence of the divine origin of the Qur'ān. (41)

However, Denffer (42) in his Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān, questions whether, if these scientific 'facts', which are apparently alluded to in the Qur'ān, were later to be found not to be valid, and if science, which is after all a human perspective, came to describe its findings entirely differently from the way in which it now does so, this again would disprove the divine origin of the Qur'ān. In answer to these questions, he, like many other scholars, puts forward the view that the Qur'ān is not basically intended to be a book of scientific facts, for its principal message is one of divine guidance for all circumstances. Whether or not its statements are supported by science is another question. (43)

It seems probable that the details of the doctrine of I'jāz, the inimitability of the language, the style and the content of the Qur'ān are developments from the basic consideration of the Book as a mu'jiza in its very essence. The majority of scholars have taken an objective line on the subject; some have been somewhat extravagant in their approach, to the extent of straining

the sense of the text very considerably to prove their points.

From this account it is apparent that the doctrine of I⁶ jāz has received close attention from Muslim Scholars throughout history. Thus one may safely assume that it is on the basis of this dogma that most efforts at evaluating the status of the translation of the Qur'ān have operated.

Of the various aspects of the concept of I⁶ jāz, Muslim Scholars' approaches to the issue of translating the Qur'ān seem to have concentrated on the linguistic aspect, although they have differed as to what actually constitutes I⁶ jāz. In the following account we will discuss, briefly, the impact of these approaches on the issue of translating the Qur'ān and attempt to establish the most common standpoint among Muslim Scholars.

The first of these Scholars is al-Khaṭṭābī (d.388 A.H.) who considered balāgha (eloquence) as the principle element in constituting I⁶ jāz al Qur'ān. He holds that the inimitability of the Qur'ān derives from the fact that it employs aḥsan nuzum al-ta'līf (the most eloquent words in the best forms of composition). (44) Al-Khaṭṭābī also asserts that balāgha is made up of three elements: words, concepts and nazm (arrangement). For him, nazm is the element

that plays the most significant part in rendering the Qur'ānic text inimitable; thus a poor arrangement of appropriate words will not adequately convey the sense of the original.

On the other hand, al-Bāqillānī (d.403) defines nazm in terms of the unique relationship that the Qur'ān establishes between form and content; his approach is largely from a rhetorical standpoint. He also asserts that the Qur'ān is characterized by badi', that is, that it employs certain literary devices in such a way as to convey its message in the most effective manner. (45)

Like al-Khaṭṭābī and al-Bāqillānī, al-Jurjānī (d. 471 A.H.) explains I'jāz in terms of the relationship between form and content, which, in his view, is determined by what he calls Ma'ānī al-naḥw (the concepts of grammar)". In this respect he differs from al-Khaṭṭābī in his approach; the latter considers nazm to be at the level of syntax (surface structure), whereas al-Jurjānī's view is that the determining factor of nazm is at the level of semantics, that is, the order in which concepts are formed in the mind of the speaker. For al-Jurjānī, knowledge of ma'ānī al-naḥw is indispensable for the appreciation of nazm. (46)

At all events, the element of I'jāz in the Qur'ān, whether it consists in words, concepts,

arrangement or all three together, is regarded as constituting an unsurmountable barrier to the process of translation; for once the originals of these are replaced by substitutes, I⁶ jāz will no longer be present and the Qur'ān will be deprived of one of its principal characteristics.

On the other hand, Scholars such as al-Shāṭibī (d.790 A.H.) explain I⁶ jāz al-Qur'ān in terms of its relation to the Arabic language; if it is translated into another language, it will lose the element of I⁶ jāz. The Arabic language is so rich and diverse that only those who master it to the extent of being able to appreciate its richness and diversity will be able to comprehend the ma⁶ ān of the Qur'ān.

Unlike other Scholars, al-Shāṭibī asserts that "the Arabic language consists of two levels; on the first level Arabic words convey ma⁶ ān mutlaqa (absolute meanings), which have dalāla asliyya (denotation); he sees this feature as common to all languages, so that this level can be conveyed in translation with no difficulty. On the second level, however, Arabic words convey ma⁶ ān khādima (auxiliary meanings), which have dalāla tābi⁶ a (connotation); this, in his view, is a characteristic peculiar to the Arabic language. This unique second level makes Arabic in general, and the Qur'ān in particular, impossible to translate into any

other language. (47)

As stated earlier, the Qur'ān is held to have been revealed in pure Arabic in the highest literary form. Scholars, therefore, believe that to translate it might detract from this unique property.

It is necessary, at this point, to investigate, in a more systematic way, the claim that it is impermissible to translate the Qur'ān. This will be the topic of the next Section.

NOTES

- 1) Watt, p.xi
- 2) Al-Qurtubī, Volume I., p.4.
- 3) Al-Mawdūdī, P.18; Watt, p.141.
- 4) Al-Suyūṭī, Volume 1., p.68; Al-Isfahānī, p.402.
- 5) Al-Suyūṭī, Volume 1., p.67.
- 6) Asad, p.153.
- 7) See for example
 Al-Zarqānī, Volume 1., pp7-14;
 Al-Suyūṭī, Volume 1., pp.67-70;
 Al-Qaṭṭān, pp.20-23.
- 8) Al-Qaṭṭān, pp.32-33.
- 9) Al Zarqānī, Volume 1., p.75
- 10) Ibid
- 11) Al Suyūṭī, Volume 1., p.141
- 12) Al Bukhārī, Volume 6, Hadīth No.521;
 AlSuyūṭī, Vol. 1., p.124.
- 13) Al-Qaṭṭān, pp.118ff.
- 14) Al-Suyūṭī, Volume 1., p.41.
- 15) Ibn Hishām, Volume 1., pp.165-7.
- 16) M.M.⁶ Azmi, Kuttāb al-Nabi, Beirut, 1974.
- 17) Denffer, p.36.
- 18) Hughes, pp.682-4.
- 19) Denffer, p.59.
- 20) Chejne, pp.1-9;
 Paret, p.196.
- 21) See The Mutawakkili of al-Suyūṭī, translated by

W.Y.Bell, Yale University Dissertations, 1942.

- 22) See A. Jeffrey, The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an
Baroda, 1938.
- 23) Nicholson, p.342.
- 24) See Ibn Khaldūn, Volume 3., pp.368-9.
- 25) See for example, Ibn Qayyim al Jawziyah, Aqsām
al-Qur'ān, Beirut, Dar al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, n.d.
- 26) Paret, p.196.
- 27) Al-Zarqānī, Volume 2. pp.208-9.
- 28) Ibn Hishām, Volume 1.
- 29) See for example, Drāz, pp.81-83;
Ibn Hishām, Volume 2., p.599.
- 30) Al-Suyūṭī, Volume 2., p.198.
- 31) Al-Bukhārī, Volume 6., No. 504.
- 32) Al-Ḥimṣī, p.7;
Al-Qaṭṭān, p.259.
- 33) Al Ḥimṣī, p.9
- 34) Dawood, p.200
- 35) Denffer, p.151
- 36) Al-Qurṭubī, Volume 1., p.3.
- 37) Al-Ḥimṣī, p.54.
- 38) Ibid.
- 39) Ibid, p.450.
- 40) Ibid, pp.223ff
- 41) Bucaille, pp. viii ff.
- 42) Denffer 156-8.
- 43) Al-Qaṭṭān, p.270;
Al-Ḥimṣī, p.219.

- 44) Ḥusayn, pp.108-111.
- 45) Al-Jurjānī, pp.117-8.
- 46) Ibid.
- 47) Al-Shāṭibī, pp.46-48.

SECTION TWO

Is it permissible to translate the Arabic Qur'ān into another tongue?

The issues of whether the Qur'ān can be translated, and whether this is permissible from the Islamic juridical view point might not be controversial, if no attempts at translation had been made. Since the case is that there exists a number of translations of the Qur'ān, some by Muslims themselves, the question of permissibility has to be dealt with; the predominant dogma regards the translation of the Qur'ān as prohibited.

It seems, however, that Scholars who hold this view do not often distinguish between permissibility and translatability, and that they have simply inherited the view from their predecessors, without any further consideration of why it is impermissible to translate the Qur'ān and in what way it is untranslatable.

It is, therefore, the purpose of this section to investigate the question of impermissibility to determine its validity or otherwise. As for the issue of untranslatability it will be studied in a later section.

The issue will be studied with particular reference

to the Qur'ān and the Sunna, which constitute the main source of Islamic Law. Our aim will be to find out whether or not they provide any explicit statements on this issue. Reference will also be made to the four orthodox madhāhib to determine their views. The views of other Scholars, on both sides of the question, will also be presented.

A historical survey of the basic sources of Islamic Law:

A. THE QUR'ĀN.

Muslims hold that the Qur'ān is a literal transcript of the word of God which was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad in Arabic. Muḥammad's mission was a universal one and not only to the Arabs. This belief is clearly and frequently referred to in the Qur'ān itself, eg.

"We have sent you forth as a blessing to mankind"

21:107.

"We have sent you forth to all mankind"

34:28 (1)

However, the question of how the Prophet and his successors were to convey this Divine message to the non-Arabic speaking audience is not tackled in the text of the Qur'ān. The need to find a solution to this question, however, did not become pressing until the Muslims came into close contact with non-Arabs. The most

relevant indication, in this regard, is perhaps to be found in the Sunna.

B. THE SUNNA (TRADITIONS):

On the question of permissibility of translating the Qur'ān, two incidents during the Prophet's own life-time are often adduced. The first concerns Persian-speaking Muslims; one version is that "the people of Persia asked Salmān al-Fārisī to translate al-Fātiḥa (the first chapter of the Qur'ān) into Persian for use in their prayers, which he did" (2). A second version of this report adds that "he submitted what he translated to the Prophet and that they used to recite it in prayer until their tongues became used to it" (3). However, there are a number of arguments against the authenticity of this report, particularly the second version. (4)

The second incident, which strongly suggests that some Qur'ānic passages had already been translated during the life-time of the Prophet himself, is the incorporation of some verses in the missionary letters sent by the Prophet to various rulers whose native language was not Arabic; such as that sent to Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor who, on receiving the Prophet's message brought to him by Abū Sufyān, called on his interpreter to put its contents into Greek; these included a passage from the Qur'ān, namely, 3:64. (5)

A similar incident occurred when a translation of a passage from sūra 19 was recited to the Negus of Abyssinia by missionaries sent to him by the Prophet. (6)

It is assumed that all of the missionaries of the Prophet were well-versed in the language of the country to which they were sent; this, in fact, would seem to be a necessary qualification for the proper transmission of the message of Islam. (7)

It may also be noted that Abū Hurayra relates that the Jews used to read the Torah in Hebrew and interpret it to Muslims in Arabic, and that the Prophet did not disapprove of this (8). Al-Bukhārī dedicates a section of al-Sahīh to the question of whether it is permissible to translate the Torah and other sacred books into Arabic and other languages. Ibn Hajar indicates his approval, on the basis of 3:92; he also indicates that it is permissible to render into Hebrew what is in Arabic. (9)

Thus it is clear that the sending of the missionaries did not raise any question regarding the translation of the general content of the message they carried or of the Qur'ānic passages incorporated in these. One may assume, then, that neither during the Prophet's life-time nor during the period of his

immediate successors was the question of permissibility touched upon.

The issue in the main orthodox madhāhib:

The issue does not appear to have aroused much controversy in any of the early works on Islamic Law. It did not assume the status of a separate topic; most Scholars make a passing reference to it as a secondary issue when they discuss matters concerned with prayers. It is not until the time of Abū Ḥanīfa (b.80 A.H.) that this issue develops into one that is at all controversial. The following will provide a sketch of the views held by each of the four orthodox madhāhib; these will be presented in chronological order.

A. The Ḥanafī School:

This school was founded by Imām Abū Ḥanīfa who was born at al-Kūfa in 80 A.H., at which time four of the Ṣaḥāba were still alive. His fiqh was compiled in book form by his two students Abū Yūsuf (d.183 A.H.) and al-Shaybānī (d.189 A.H.). Abū Ḥanīfa's view was not related to the translation of the Qur'ān as a whole, but was rather a response to an obvious difficulty faced by non-Arabic speaking Muslims in using the Qur'ān, particularly sūrat al-Fātiḥa, in their daily prayer.(10)

Abū Ḥanīfa's view is that "it is permissible to read in Persian in prayer" (11). It is also believed that his chief disciples both gave permission to recite the translated fātiḥa on condition that one is unable to recite it in Arabic, for the Qur'ān itself asserts that 'obligation is according to ability'. (12)

On the other hand, al-Nawawī and al-Suyūṭī state that according to the view of Abū Ḥanīfa this permission is an absolute one, ie. it applies whether or not the reader knows Arabic (13). But whether absolute or conditional, the permission implies that there is room for flexibility in communicating the message of the Qur'ān. This, in fact, sets the Hanafi school in sharp contrast with the other schools on the issue.

Abū Ḥanīfa's view on this issue, as stated by al-Shaybānī, is based on the report of Salmān. (14) Later jurists of this school had recourse to the Qur'ān as further support for Abū Ḥanīfa's position, citing verses such as 87:18-19, the interpretation of which, according to al-Zamakhsharī, is that the meaning of the Qur'ān can be found in previous scriptures. (15)

It is often claimed that Abū Ḥanīfa recanted his unconditional permission and adopted the view of his two disciples (16). However, one cannot find any such

suggestion in al-Mabsūt, which expounds the Ḥanafī fiqh in thirty volumes. (17)

B. The Mālikī School:

This school was founded by the Imām Mālik, who was born at al-Madīna in 95 A.H. He was a close friend of Abū Ḥanīfa. Imām Mālik was considered the most learned Scholar of his time.

His view regarding the translation or rather the recitation of the Qur'ān in a foreign tongue is implied in al-Mudawwana, where he expresses his distaste for anyone who says his prayer in a foreign language:

"akrahu an yad⁶ū al-rajul bi-l-a⁶jamiyya fī al-Salāt". (18)

It is the view of al-Shāṭibī (d.790 A.H.), a Mālikī Scholar, that represents a departure from the position of the Shāfi⁶ī, Ḥanbalī and the other Mālikī jurists who unanimously agree on the prohibition of reading a translation, whether in prayer or otherwise. Al-Shāṭibī's starting point was not the issue of impermissibility, but rather the nature of the Arabic language. The much quoted passage under the heading of "the impermissibility of translating the Qur'ān" in his al-Muwāfaqāt states that "the Arabic language has two levels: on the first level, Arabic words convey ma⁶ān mutlaqa (absolute

meanings), that is dalāla asliyya (denotation), a feature which is common to all languages.... thus could be expressed in any language without great difficulty".

On the second level, Arabic words "convey ma'ān khādima (auxiliary meanings), that is dalāla tābi'a (connotation); this is a unique feature of the Arabic language" (19). He also assumes that, when Ibn Qutayba (d.276 A.H.) affirms the untranslatability of the Qur'ānic text, he, in fact, is referring to this second level of the Arabic language.

It is, however, possible, according to al-Shāṭibī to translate the first level, ie. the absolute meanings. Thus, he states, "it is possible to interpret the Qur'ān - tafsīr al-Qur'ān. Since this is unanimously agreed upon by Muslim Scholars, it renders the translation of the Qur'ān valid on the level of absolute meanings". (20)

In tafsīr, it is possible to convey most of the connotations of the original than it is in straight translation, even though some may still be lost. Moreover, in tafsīr, the original divine text may be preserved in Arabic, whereas in tarjama it is replaced. However, no jurist of any madhhab permits the use of tafsīr in Salat (prayers), while that of a translation is conditionally allowed according to some members of the

Ḥanafī school.

C. The Shāfi'ī School:

This school was founded by the Imām al-Shāfi'ī who was born at Palestine in 150 A.H. In al-Majmū', a principal source for Shāfi'ī Law, it is asserted that it is impermissible to use a translation of the Qur'ān, whether or not one has difficulty with Arabic, and whether it be in prayer or otherwise. (21)

According to al-Shāfi'ī, this prohibition is established on the basis of I'jāz of the Qur'ān, whether it be in terms of nazm (arrangement) or lafz (individual words). Since in translation both are altered, the result is no longer the Qur'ān and hence may not be used in prayer. (22)

D. The Ḥanbalī School:

This school was founded by Imām Ibn Ḥanbal who was born at Baghdad in 164 A.H. He used to attend lectures by the Imām al-Shāfi'ī, particularly those on hadīth. In al-Mughnī, Ibn Qudāma (d. 620) expounds on this issue. He states that since the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic, as frequently asserted in the Qur'ān, it is, therefore, totally prohibited to use a translation in prayers; to do

so would render them invalid. (23)

In al-Muḥallā of Ibn Ḥazm al-Ḥanbalī, he states that if one finds it difficult in prayer to read the Qur'ān in Arabic he may praise Allah in his own language, for Allah indicated in the Qur'ān in 2:286 that "obligation is according to ability". (24)

Ibn Qudāma seems to agree with Abū Ḥanīfā's understanding of the verse 6:19, that the message has to be preached to other nations each in its own tongue. What may be translated, however, is the tafsīr and not the original text. (25)

The views of some modern Muslim scholars:

The issue of the permissibility of using a translation for ritual purposes, or, more precisely, of translating the Qur'ān at all, has continued to be raised in modern times in most major works on Qur'ānic studies. Some articles and books deal exclusively with this matter, many of which represent either a reproduction or an amplification of the views of the early jurists. Only a very few of them investigate the validity of this issue on a basis other than a religious one.

Meanwhile many attempts have been made to translate the Qur'ān, the first as early as 1143 A.D. (528 A.H.)

This was a Latin translation, made by Robert of Retina and Hermann of Dal matia at the request of the monastery of Cluny. This translation was printed at Basle in 1543 by Theodor Bibliander. It was subsequently rendered into Italian, German and Dutch. A more accurate Latin translation appeared in 1698, by an Italian monk Ludovico Maracci whose access to the Arabic commentaries enabled him to do so. (26)

It was not until 1649 that an English translation of the Qur'ān appeared. This was made by Alexander Ross from the French translation of du Ryer in 1647.

An English translation by George Sale appeared in 1734, and has since passed through a number of editions. It acquired great popularity among Western Scholars over a period of a century or more. More recently many translations have been produced in many languages.

The first authoritative response to the early translations was in the 1920's, when Muslim religious leaders in Egypt and Syria expressed their condemnation of Turkish and English translations of the Qur'ān which were consequently confiscated and their circulation was prohibited. (27)

The general view of these religious leaders may be represented by that of Muḥammad Shākir (1866-1939) a

strong opponent of the idea of translating the Qur'ān into a foreign language. He condemned such a practice as a heresy. He expressed his concern for the possible outcome of these translations in creating conflicts among Muslims. He also touched upon the prohibition of using a translation in prayers. He asserted that "Muslims should follow the lead of Imām al-Shāfi'i who made it incumbent on every Muslim to learn the Arabic language". (28)

It is this idea of Shākir's that seems to have obsessed the minds of the majority of modern authors. Several of these took the matter for granted and gave little or no evidence in support of their assertions. However, our main concern in the following is to refer to some of these authors, whether they be in favour of the translation of the Qur'ān, or otherwise.

In his valuable work on Qur'ānic studies, which appeared in 1943, al-Zarqānī devotes a full chapter to the issue of translating the Qur'ān. His approach to it appears to be an unprecedented one, in its objectivity and comprehensiveness. He first of all stresses the importance of this issue. He then expounds on the implications of the term tarjama in Arabic, finding four connotations:

1. Transmitting material to someone to whom it was not originally transmitted.
2. Interpreting by means of the same language.

3. Interpreting by means of a foreign language.

4. Translating.

He also remarks that tarjama has the secondary meaning of "biography".

He then identifies two types of translations: the first is tarjama harfiyya or lafziyya or musāwiya which involves strict adherence to the original text in terms of the arrangement of words, and simple substitution of one word or expression for another. In this type of translation, al-Zarqānī indicates that, there is no consideration of the implications of the text. Thus to render 17:29, for example, the translator may put it as follows:

"And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck
nor open it with a complete opening". (29)

By so doing, the translator indeed misses the point indicated in this verse, and his rendering will, certainly, be a mis-representation of the original; for what is implied in this verse is a metaphorical reference signifying miserliness and, in particular, unwillingness to help others. (30)

The second type of translation is tarjama tafsīriyya or ma⁶nawīyya in which the aim is to reproduce the sense of the original in an adequate manner

without strict adherence to the original words, constructions and arrangement. The same verse may be used here; thus in tarjama tafsīriyya, after grasping the metaphor, one should try to replace it with an equivalent expression in the target language that will produce the same impression as the original in the mind of the reader:

"Be neither miserly nor prodigal, for then you should either be reproached or be reduced to penury". (31)

Al-Zarqānī then discusses the requirements for both tarjama ḥarfiyya and tarjama tafsīriyya; he emphasizes the importance of mastering both the source and target languages with their general and particular characteristics, and that a translator should convey adequately in an independent form all the nuances of the original.

He then maintains his agreement with the view of al-Shaṭībī regarding the two levels of maʿān: asliyya and tābiʿa.

However, the most interesting part of his study is the analysis of the four distinct senses he gives of the expression tarjamāt al-Qur'ān, and their validity as far as permissibility is concerned: (32)

1. tablīgh alfāzih, ie., the transmission of the words

of the Qur'ān in its original form, by means of reciting it in Arabic. This sense of tarjama is not only permissible but it is also recommended in both the Qur'ān itself and in the Sunna.

2. tafsīr al-Qur'ān in Arabic, ie., the exegesis of the Qur'ānic text in Arabic. Again this is legally approved and possible to undertake.

3. tafsīr al-Qur'ān in a foreign language. Although this is rejected by some conservative Muslim Scholars, it is generally regarded as legal by analogy with tafsīr in Arabic. This, however, is not an easy task to undertake. The result will be only commensurate with the interpreter's grasp of the Qur'ānic text. Undertaking this type of translation requires adequate knowledge of the disciplines of tafsīr. This kind of tarjama he says should more properly be called tarjamat tafsīr al-Qur'ān, or tarjama tafsīriyya, rather than tarjamat al-Qur'ān (33). Al-Zarqānī also asserts that it is improper to write the Divine words in the characters of a different language or system, ie. transliteration; this, he explains, may distort the original text. (34)

4. naqluh ilā lughā ukhrā, ie. the word-for-word translation of the Qur'ān into a foreign language, which involves the replacement of the Arabic words by

equivalent foreign words; tarjama ḥarfiyya, lafziyya or musāwiya. This type of translation is, in fact, commonly regarded as impossible (istiḥāla ʿādiyya) and legally prohibited (istiḥāla sharʿiyya).

As regards istiḥāla ʿādiyya it is based on the following:

- i. It is impossible for a translator to undertake a tarjama ḥarfiyya since he cannot reproduce both the primary and secondary maʿān of the Qur'ān, for it is its secondary maʿān that constitute its balāgha ("eloquence"), which is what largely contributes to its iʿjāz. Moreover, through a translation one cannot realise the three main maqāsid (objectives) of the message of the Qur'ān: hidāya (guidance), iʿjāz (inimitability) and ʿibāda (a means of worship).
- ii. tarjama ḥarfiyya is an imitation, mathal, of the original Arabic; this is impossible owing to the reasons mentioned in (i) above and the challenge put forward by the Qur'ān itself in various places, eg. 17:88. The failure of those who have attempted to produce a Qur'ān in Arabic entails an even more dismal failure when it comes to imitating the Qur'ān in a foreign language. (35)

As regards istihāla sharʿiyya, it is substantiated by the following:

- i. since tarjama harfiyya is an impossible task, any attempt at achieving it is regarded as harām (prohibited).
- ii. on the basis of 10:15 which (implying the prohibition of translation) condemns the request of those who asked the Prophet for another Qur'ān or for changes in the original, al-Zarqānī indicates that translating the Qur'ān is nothing less than tabdīl (change) and therefore it is harām sharʿan (legally prohibited).
- iii. in the long run, translations of the Qur'ān in various tongues might be conceived of as the original Qur'ān. Thus, the original divine words of God will be neglected, which is prohibited; what leads to something prohibited is itself prohibited.
- iv. the proliferation of different translations throughout the World will produce diverse interpretations. This in turn will lead to conflicts and disagreements among Muslims; anything that does this is forbidden in Islam.
- v. encouraging the use of translations will result in a

diminution of interest in learning Arabic, the language which has played an important role in unifying Muslims in the past. The first effective step towards the protection of this language is to prohibit translations of the Qur'ān.

- vi. the majority of Scholars in the various madhāhib consider the translating of the Qur'ān to be prohibited. (36)

Al-Zarqānī seems to be in favour of the tarjama tafsīriyya which, he asserts, must incorporate the Arabic text of the Qur'ān. This he considers the only permissible type of translation, for the following reasons:

1. The tarjama tafsīriyya is not imitation nor does it result in any alteration of the original. What is conveyed is not the whole of what is to be found in the original Qur'ānic text. It is no more than 'an attempt' by 'an exegete'.
2. It is possible to translate exegesis, because it lacks the element of i'jāz.

Abdullah Shihāta is another modern Scholar who agrees with al-Zarqānī that the translation of the Qur'ān is prohibited, owing to the element of i'jāz which

cannot be conveyed in translation. He also asserts that it is not possible for any translator to transfer into another language all the shades of ma⁶ān contained in the Arabic text of the Qur'ān. (37)

Al-Qaṭṭān also holds the above mentioned views. Furthermore, he considers the encouragement of the use of translations to be a symptom of the weakness of the Muslims. For him, re-Islamization is a more important issue, which if fulfilled will certainly lead to Arabization; the translation of the Qur'ān then will no longer be a problem. (38)

After establishing the differences between tarjama ḥarfiyya and tarjama tafsīriyya, Abū Fīrākh asserts that it is impossible to undertake the task of tarjama ḥarfiyya, mainly on linguistic grounds, such as the unavailability of identical equivalents on both syntactical and semantic levels.

He also adduces the āyāt which assert the element of i⁶jāz in the Qur'ān as further evidence for the impossibility of translating the text.

As far as the tarjama tafsīriyya is concerned, he holds that it is possible to undertake it. In tarjama tafsīriyya, he points out, the translator deals with the ma⁶ān of the divine words and not the words

themselves. This task, in his view, can only be achieved by a specialized committee combining experts in tafsīr and professional translators. He then substantiates the permissibility of this type of translation by quotations from works of celebrated Muslim Scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya.

To achieve such a goal Abū Firākh suggests that the following steps be followed:

1. It should be stated from the very beginning that the translation is concerned with the maʿān of the Qur'ān and not with its individual words or their arrangement, owing to its inimitable nature.
2. The translator should be familiar with the language of the Qur'ān and its nuances, likewise those of the target language.
3. The translator should interpret, as far as possible, problematic vocabulary, particularly that which appears to be used metaphorically.
4. Transliteration should not be employed.
5. The translator should refer to other Qur'ānic passages, ḥadīth, etc. in his interpretation.

6. The translator should indicate that his translation is meant to convey what the exegetes understand from the Qur'ānic text. Any shortcomings are to be attributed to the exegete and the translator and not to the original text or its author.

7. The translator should use one particular work of tafsīr that is clear and easy, and should avoid reference to differences of opinion, as far as possible. (39)

Abū Firākh's acceptance of the tarjama tafsīriyya reflects his awareness of the importance of the propagation of the message of Islam among non-Arabic speakers, and the necessity of expounding the merits of the Qur'ān in its original Arabic, even if this has to be done by exegesis in a foreign language.

In his book al-Furqān, Ibn al-Khaṭīb devotes a comprehensive study of the translation of the Qur'ān, under the title wujūb tarjamat al-Qur'ān li sā'ir al-lughāt (the imperative task of translating the Qur'ān into foreign tongues). On the basis of 41:44, he asserts that since it is unwise to send a non-Arabic Qur'ān to the Arabs, and since the message of the Qur'ān is a universal one, it is equally unwise not to offer the

message of the Qur'ān to non-Arabic speakers in their own language.

Ibn al-Khaṭīb also holds that if tarjama harfiyya were possible it would be permissible, but since such is not the case, the only thing that can be achieved is tarjamat ma'ānī al-Qur'ān. This is identical with tarjamat al-Qur'ān, since the propagation of the ma'ān of what it says is one of the principal purposes of its revelation. It was intended not only to be recited, but also to be understood and acted upon.

He comes to the conclusion that without translations of the Qur'ān there will be no effective way of propagating its message either to non-Muslims or to non-Arabic speaking Muslims. The translation of the Qur'ān, therefore, is not only permissible but it is also an obligation upon Muslims. (40)

The position of al-Azhar:

Since 1929, the issue of translating the Qur'ān has created differences of opinion among Scholars of al-Azhar. Those who reject the idea of translating the Qur'ān have written books and articles to substantiate their view: M. R. Riḍā, M. S. al-Bānī and M. S. al-Qādī. On the other hand, Scholars such as M. al-Marāghī, who headed al-Azhar for several years; and M. F. Wajdī

consider the translation of the Qur'ān to be an obligation in the propagation of Islam.

After several sessions headed by the rector of al-Azhar Sheikh Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, who took the initiative in recommending translation of the exegesis of the Qur'ān, most of them agreed that it was impossible to translate the Qur'ān so as to produce the effect of the original; some did not accept that an adequate translation could not be produced, but the majority held that the only thing that could properly be undertaken was the translation of the ma'ān of the Qur'ān.(41)

The opponents of the translation of the Qur'ān itself presented two principal arguments:

- i. that the inimitability of the Qur'ān cannot be reproduced in translation.
- ii. that, owing to the lack of absolute equivalents in other languages, much of the connotation of the Arabic would be lost, and that a tarjama harfiyya is therefore impossible.

In April 1936, the translation of the exegesis of the Qur'an was officially approved by al-Azhar. The following process was recommended:

1. The ma'ān of the Qur'ān should first be carefully considered by experts from al-Azhar after

consulting authoritative sources for tafsīr.

2. These experts should then produce a precise and concise exegetical compendium.
3. Professional translators should undertake the task of putting this tafsīr into foreign languages.
4. The translation should incorporate the original text and also a statement that this was not a translation of the Qur'ān itself and that it did not cover all the ma'ān of the Qur'ān.

Despite this, no organized co-operative translation of an exegesis appears yet to have been produced from al-Azhar or from any other Islamic authority. (42)

The issue in its true perspective:

The issue of translating the Qur'ān seems to have emerged from a specific context, ie., the use of a translation of a passage of the Qur'ān in prayers. The report concerning Salman might have provided a permanent solution, if its authenticity had not been contested by several Scholars. Moreover, it has been argued that this and the other reports should not be regarded as implying the permissibility of translating the whole of the Qur'ān, because they deal only with a few verses.

Muslim Scholars, ancient and modern, generally relate their view of the impermissibility of translating the Qur'ān to two main arguments; the element of I⁶jāz and the essential Arabicity of the Qur'ān.

In our brief survey of the views of the four orthodox madhāhib and the views of some modern Scholars, it is claimed that since the Qur'ān is inimitable, whether in form, content or both, translators cannot achieve this element in their work, and attempts at translation are thus prohibited. The views of these Scholars regarding the element of i⁶jāz may be summarized as follows:

1. It is the balāgha ("eloquence") of the Qur'ān that principally gives it its i⁶jāz. The Qur'ān employs the most balīgh words in an unsurpassed form of composition, which embodies the truest ma⁶ān.
(43)
2. This balāgha is made up of three components: words, ma⁶ān, and the manner in which these two are linked. Thus a different compounding of words would result in the conveyance of different ma⁶ān.

As regards Arabicity, opponents of the translation of the Qur'ān have always justified their position on the

basis of references in the Qur'ān itself to its being an Arabic Qur'ān; consequently, to alter it from this language into another is prohibited:

- a. "We have revealed the Koran in the Arabic tongue so that you may understand it". 12:2
- b. "We have revealed it in the Arabic tongue, a Koran free from all faults". 39:28
- c. "We have revealed the Koran in the Arabic tongue that you may grasp its meaning". 43:3 (44)

Some scholars, such as al-Shāfi'ī, consider that these verses affirm the essential Arabicity of the Qur'ān and that non-Arabic speakers should learn Arabic in order to understand its message. (45) Furthermore, some other scholars hold that since the Qur'ān itself insists on its having been revealed in Arabic, its translation might vitiate this insistence.

Ibn al-Khaṭīb provides a detailed argument rebutting this claim; he uses the same verses to argue that the Arabicity of the Qur'ān implies not only the permissibility of translation, but that "it renders it incumbent upon Muslims". (46)

He also maintains that the significance of this insistence is that of contrast: previous revelations have been in other languages; this one is in Arabic, for the

benefit of those destined to be its first audience. This should not be misunderstood as meaning that it should not be translated for non-Arabic speakers, for they also are accountable before God.

Some opponent, he says, may enquire why then the task of translation was not undertaken by the Prophet or his successors?

Ibn al-Khaṭīb states that Islam was at that time not yet well established and deeply rooted among the Arabs themselves. How, then, should anyone have contemplated making a translation of the Qur'ān for the benefit of non-Arabs, rather than concentrating on Arabia? But now, since Islam is firmly established in Arabia and its surroundings, the task of propagation should be undertaken.

He suggests that either non-Arabic speakers should be regarded as non-Muslims who should be called to Islam; this call should be made in a language which they understand, as asserted in the Qur'ān 14:4; or that non-Arabic speakers should be regarded as non-Muslims who are unaccountable before God, which is inconceivable.

Another verse which may be adduced as an argument is 9:6, which indicates the obligation of reciting the Qur'an to non-Muslims. This verse, in fact, does not

imply the mere recitation of the Qur'ān in the original; a non-Arabic audience will gain nothing from recitation, unless it is made in a language they can comprehend.

He also points out that it is the Muslims' responsibility to translate the Qur'ān for non-Arabic speakers; if this is not done, the blame for their ignorance of the message of the Qur'ān will fall not on them, but on the Muslims.

Had Muḥammad not presented the Qur'ān as evidence of his Prophethood, he would not have been followed. As it was, some Arabs did not believe in him, even though they knew Arabic. How, then, can present-day non-Arabs be expected to believe in Islam without even having access to the Qur'ān?

Equally unfeasible is the demand that non-Arabs learn Arabic in order to read the Qur'ān; the impracticality of this becomes more obvious when "we imagine an Englishman asking the Arabs to learn English for the same purpose, ie., to have access to his message". (47)

In the Qur'ān itself, namely 30:22, it is asserted that the variety of languages is one of the signs of God's greatness; why then should it make a barrier to the conveying of His message?

As regards the element of i⁶ jāz, Ibn al-Khaṭīb asserts that it is not restricted to the words and their arrangement; it also covers the ma⁶ ān and the Laws prescribed in the Qur'ān. If these are adequately represented they will attract many non-Muslims.

To achieve an effective translation of the Qur'ān he makes the following suggestions.

- i. since a tarjama harfiyya is not possible, the practicable course is to reproduce the ma⁶ ān of the Qur'ān; the result may be called tarjamat al-Qur'ān, because the words are but symbols of ma⁶ ān.
- ii. that a tafsīr should be prepared by competent mufassirūn.
- iii. that certain topics should receive more exegesis than others, these being the ones that might be culturally alien, such as "polygamy".
- iv. that a conference of specialists in Qur'ānic studies should be held, and that any suggestions or recommendations emerging from this should be carefully considered.

v. that this tafsīr should be most scrupulously translated and disseminated among non-Arabic speakers. (48)

When this has been done it can be claimed that the message of the Qur'ān has been propagated. Those who see the verses that proclaim the Arabicity of the Qur'ān as implying the prohibition of translation are, in fact, defeating the purposes of Islam. Moreover, the i'jāz of the Qur'ān should not function as something that creates physical i'jāz.

There is almost unanimous agreement that the only permissible type of translation is the exegetical type. This means that an exegesis of the Qur'ān should be prepared first and then translated. If this is undertaken, it will greatly further the propagation of the Qur'ān.

It is not, however, altogether clear what purpose will be served by the inclusion of the Arabic text, other than satisfying the pious.

NOTES

- 1) N J Dawood, The Koran.
- 2) Al-Nawawī, p.342.
- 3) Ṭībawī, p.73; al-Zarqānī, Volume 2., p.55.
- 4) see for example, Ṣāfī, p.101;
al-Zarqānī, Volume 2., p.55-56.
- 5) al-Bukhārī, Volume 3., No. 215; Volume 8., No.200.
- 6) Ibn Hishām, Volume 4., p. 152.
- 7) see for example, H. al-Jāsir, "al-Silāt al-Khārijiyya fī ʿahd al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya, al-Ūla," in al-Jazira newspaper, No. 3712, November 1982.
- 8) Ibn Hishām, Volume 4., p.188
- 9) al-Bukhārī, Volume 8., Nos. 150 and 200; Ibn Ḥajar, Volume 8., No. 442.
- 10) al-Bundāq, pp.55 ff
- 11) see for example, al-Sarakhsī, Volume 1., p.36;
al-Nawawī. p.342.
- 12) see for example, al-Sarakhsī, Volume 1., 36-37;
the Qur'ān 2:286.
- 13) al-Nawawī p.342; al-Suyūṭī, p.109.
- 14) al-Sarakhsī, Volume 1., p.37.
- 15) al-Zamakhsharī, Volume 2., p.1009.
- 16) al-Suyūṭī, Volume 1., p.86.
- 17) al-Sarakhsī, kitāb al-Mabsūṭ, 30 Volumes,
ed. M. R. al-Ḥanafī, Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifa, n.d.
- 18) al-Mudawwana, Volume 1, p.62; al-Zarqānī, Volume 2.,
pp. 56-65.

- 19) al-Shāṭibī, Volume 2., pp.45 ff; Safi, p.85;
al-Zarqānī, Volume 2., p.61.
- 20) Some Scholars consider this conclusion as invalid since there is no explicit statement in any authoritative source regarding the permissibility of translating tafsīr; see for example Ṣāfi pp.90 ff.
- 21) al-Majmū⁶, Volume 3., pp. 341-2.
- 22) Ibid, pp.343.
- 23) al-Mughnī, Volume 1., p.526.
- 24) al-Muḥallā, Volume 3., p.254.
- 25) al-Mughnī, p.426.
- 26) for a survey of translation in foreign languages, see al-Nadawī, pp.27 ff; al-Bundāq, pp.65 ff; and Pearson, in Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period, pp. 502-520.
- 27) Muḥammad Shākir, "al-Qawl al-faṣil fī tarjamat al-Qur'ān al-Karīm ila al-Lughāt al-A⁶ jamiyya" trns. T. W. Arnold, in Muslim World, Volume 16., pp. 161-165, 1926.
- 28) Ibid, p.164.
- 29) Pickthall, p.206.
- 30) al-Qaṭṭān, pp.312 ff.
- 31) Dawood, p.235.
- 32) al-Zarqānī, Volume 2, pp.27 ff.
- 33) Ibid, p.32.
- 34) Ibid, p.29.
- 35) Ibid, p.41.
- 36) Ibid, pp.43-49.

- 37) ʿAbdullah Shihāta, Tarjamat al-Qur'ān.
Cairo, Dār al-Iʿtiṣām, 1979.
- 38) al-Qaṭṭān, pp.312 ff.
- 39) "Tarājim al-Qur'ān M. Abū Firākh, in Majallat Kulliyat Usūl al-Din, Volume. 5., Imam M. Ibn Saūd Islamic University, Riyadh, 1403-4 A.H.
- 40) Ibn al-Khaṭīb, pp.170-236.
- 41) al-Bundāq, pp.73 ff
- 42) for further details of the position of al-Azhar, see, for example, ʿAbdullah Shihāta, op. cit., al-Bundāq p.73.
- 43) Khalafallah and Sallam, eds. Thalāth Rasā'il fī Iʿjāz al-Qur'ān, p.24, Egypt:Dār al-maʿārif, 1968.
- 44) Dawood, The Koran.
- 45) M. I. Al-Shāfiʿī, al-Risāla, ed. M.A. Shākir, p.45, Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1979.
- 46) Ibn al-Khaṭīb, pp.137 ff.
- 47) Ibid, p.207.
- 48) Ibid, p.231.

SECTION THREE

Tafsīr al-Qur'ān.

It is apparent from the discussion in section two, that there is an almost unanimous agreement among Muslim Scholars that the only permissible type of translation is the exegetical translation; which means that an exegesis of the Qur'ān should be prepared first and then translated. Since this task can only be undertaken within the framework of tafsīr literature, the following account will be devoted to this discipline which is considered to be of great importance as providing guidelines for the correct understanding of Islam in general and the Qur'ānic laws in particular.

In our treatment of this discipline, the traditional view will be represented. I am aware of other views of this matter, but I have preferred to adhere to the orthodox one.

The term tafsīr is derived from fassara (to explain) or perhaps from safara of which the verbal form is asfara (to shine) or (to uncover) (1). Ta'wīl is another term often associated with tafsīr and frequently used by mufassirūn (commentators) (2). The distinction made between these two terms varies between Muslim Scholars. Some hold that tafsīr deals with the

zāhir (obvious) meanings, while ta'wīl deals with the bātin (hidden) meanings (3); others are of the opinion that tafsīr is concerned with what is clearly stated in the Qur'ān and the sunna (tradition), while ta'wīl is concerned with what can be deduced from them (4); others again consider tafsīr and ta'wīl to be synonymous, meaning explanation or exegesis of the Qur'ānic text. (5)

The discipline of tafsīr, according to Muslim theologians, may be technically defined as follows:

"The knowledge through which the meaning of the Book of Allah, its laws and wisdoms, may be understood. This knowledge comes through the study of the Arabic language, the principles of jurisprudence and the correct manner of reciting (reading) its text. The knowledge of the circumstances of revelation and of abrogation and abrogated verses is also necessary in tafsīr". (6)

Al-Zarqānī, however, holds that the discipline of tafsīr cannot give the final word on the meaning of every aspect of the connotations of certain verses of the Qur'ān, such as those of mutashābihāt (verses the meanings of which are either not clear or not completely agreed upon, so that they may have two or more interpretations). (7)

In the Qur'ān itself the terms tafsīr and ta'wīl occur in various places, in most of which they have different meanings. In 25:33, for instance, the term tafsīr signifies "the proper explanation of the Qur'ān". Ta'wīl in 4:59 signifies "the best outcome of something in the end"; in 12:45, however, it corresponds in meaning with tafsīr. The term ta'wīl also refers to mutashābihāt in 3:7.(8)

It is clear, from certain incidents, both during the Prophet's own lifetime and later, that even the Ṣahāba themselves had some difficulties concerning the proper understanding of some Qur'ānic passages. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, for example, asked, concerning 80:31; "we know the meaning of fākiha, but what is abbā?" Ibn Kathīr, however, points out that this should be understood as meaning that 'Umar certainly knew that abbā meant 'green pastures', and that he was enquiring about the exact nature of those pastures.(9)

Thus, despite the fact that the mother tongue of the first audience of the Qur'ānic revelations was Arabic, they sometimes needed to ask the Prophet for explanations. A tradition reveals that the Prophet himself realized that certain Qur'ānic passages had been misunderstood and would clarify them spontaneously, without being asked to do so. When the verse 2:187, for example, was revealed, 'Adī ibn Ḥātim took the verse

literally, not appreciating its metaphorical nature. He took two threads, one white and one black, in order to determine the exact time of the beginning of fasting, when he could distinguish between them. The Prophet explained to him that this was a metaphorical reference to the first streaks of light at dawn. So, "if the ṣaḥāba were in need of these explanations, notwithstanding their closeness to the Prophet, our need for tafsīr is certainly greater than theirs".(10)

After the Prophet's death it was his interpretations and those made in accordance with these that the ṣaḥāba and, subsequently, later generations handed on. Once the ṣaḥāba began to become sparse, a need for more systematic tafsīr on the Qur'ān made itself felt. Eventually, this task grew into one that occupied a large number of Scholars and constituted a discipline in its own right. In due course these Scholars separated into different madhāhib and had different doctrinal view points, which often make themselves apparent in their work, sometimes, to the extent of producing rather farfetched interpretations. Consequently, careful Scholars appeared, who sifted out the accounts which might be regarded as authentic, showing how, why and when a particular passage was revealed, a practice which later became a subdivision of the discipline, known as asbāb al-Nuzūl (circumstances of revelation).

Muslim scholars consider the Qur'ān itself to be the first and foremost source of tafsīr, for one passage of it may serve to explain another. When various related verses are compared a mujmal (general) Qur'ānic statement is elucidated in the light of a mubayyan (specific) one, or vice-versa(11). An example of this is 5:2 which states, in general, what animals may not be consumed for food by Muslims. This āya, however, is elaborated upon specifically in a later one, namely, 5:4, where these animals are listed. Similarly, mutlaq (absolute) terms are explained by muqayyad (restricted); and ʿāmm (general) are explained by khāṣṣ (particular). By applying these and other methods, Muslim scholars have also made numerous attempts to resolve problems posed by apparently contradictory verses and passages.

The various qirā'āt (readings), too, provide useful clues for tafsīr: Ibn Mas'ūd's reading, for example, of 17:93, namely, the word dhahab instead of the common reading zukhruf, which conveys a general sense of 'ornament'. Other qirā'āt of certain divine glosses, where explanatory additions occur, also help clarify various textual ambiguities. An example of this can be found in the reading of Sa'd b Abī Waqqāṣ of 4:12, where the additional phrase 'on the maternal side' explains the common reading of this āya. (12)

The literature of the sunna is considered to be the next best authority for explaining the Qur'ān, for one of the main tasks of the Prophet's mission was to make the Qur'ān clear and understood, as indicated in 16:44. Muḥammad himself may be considered the first mufassir (exegete) of the Qur'ān. He used to explain, as mentioned above, difficulties that people encountered in understanding the text. When 6:82, for example, was revealed, the Ṣaḥāba found the word zulm (injustice or evil doing) very problematic. They asked the Prophet about its significance in this particular context, whereupon he glossed it by means of another verse, namely, 31:13, as meaning polytheism. (13)

There are several other instances in hadīth literature where the Prophet's exegesis on the Qur'ān is quoted. However, Scholars differ as to whether or not he left behind a full exegesis on the Qur'ān as a whole. ʿĀ'isha is reported to have said that the number of traditions concerning the explanations made on the Qur'ān by the Prophet himself 'are very limited'. (14)

The sunna, therefore, whether derived from the Prophet's own actions (fiʿliyya), words (qawliyya) or approval or disapproval (taqrīr) of those of others, is considered by Muslims to be a complementary source to the Qur'ān; both were subjects of divine inspiration, as asserted in 53:3-4. Moreover, the Qur'ān and the sunna

are regarded by Muslims as forming a divine constitution, without which a Muslim cannot, any more than a non-Muslim, properly and comprehensively understand the implications of the message of Islam; the Qur'ān itself asserts this point in many places, such as 2:51 and 4:80.

According to Ibn Kathīr (d.774 A.H.) (15), if insufficient information can be found in the above sources, recourse is to be had to the akhbār (reports) of the Ṣaḥāba and the tābi'ūn (later generations). A number of Scholars maintain that tafsīr should come from the Prophet through the authority of the Ṣaḥāba, otherwise it may not be valid (16), whereas other Scholars, such as al-Zarkashi, hold that the views of the Ṣaḥāba themselves are acceptable as an authority for the abrogation of certain verses and the circumstances of revelation, although, of course their views are most authoritative when based on what they heard from the Prophet. (17) It is, however, generally accepted among Scholars that one is not obliged to accept all the Ṣaḥāba's views regarding tafsīr, particularly those reports of Isrā'īliyyāt (of Jewish and Christian) origin.

One may also add that in the case of differences of opinion between the Ṣaḥāba and the tābi'ūn, the views of the Ṣaḥāba are thought to be preferable, because they were less influenced by the people of the Book (Jews

and Christians) (18). Materials of the above two origins are also used to elaborate on certain passages of the Qur'ān, provided that they are authentic and do not contradict Islamic doctrines.

The first great name in Qur'ānic exegesis, and probably the founder of this discipline, is held to be Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/686), who was also known as Hibr al-Umma (the rabbi of the community), and Turjumān al-Qur'ān (the interpreter of the Qur'ān), and other appellations indicating his wide knowledge and prestigious status in this field. His views on tafsīr are to be found in most books of Qur'ānic exegesis. There is even a book entitled Tanwīr al-Miqbās fī tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās which exists in several recensions. This is assumed to include his exegesis on the Qur'an. However, al-Dhahabī in his comprehensive work al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssirūn strongly rejects its being the work of Ibn ʿAbbās. (20) The authenticity and reliability of many of the links of the isnāds of this work are also disputed and rejected by other Scholars, such as al-Shāfiʿī, who was unwilling to credit more than one hundred traditions reported by Ibn ʿAbbās. (21) In fact, it seems unwise to judge the authenticity of Tanwīr al-Miqbās before a comparative study of its contents has been undertaken.

Little is known with certainty about the first book

to be written on tafsīr. It appears, however, to be that which Sa'īd b. Jubayr (d.94/712) wrote at the request of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (d.86/704); this work was later discovered by 'Atā' b. Dīnār (d.126/744). However, it has not been preserved. (22)

The earliest important extant work on tafsīr, which is frequently consulted by scholars, is Jāmi' al Bayān of al-Ṭabarī (d.310 A.H.). It belongs to the period during which tafsīr became a discipline in its own right. This work is considered to be 'unique of its kind'. It comprises thirty volumes; it was first printed at Cairo in 1903; it has been reprinted several times and has always been widely disseminated. It is regarded as a leading example of tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr (traditional exegesis). He comments on the ayat in turn, referring in what he says to the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth and the views of the Ṣaḥāba and the tābi'ūn, and giving full isnāds, which he sometimes evaluates. He also formulates the aḥkām (legal prescriptions) that can be deduced from these āyat.

It must be admitted, however, that in this work al-Ṭabarī includes a number of akhbār (reports) that are not generally accepted as ṣaḥīḥ (sound). Some of the sources he quotes such as those transmitted by al-Suddī al-Ṣaghīr are da'īfa (weak); he also derives some of his information from reports of Jewish and

Christian origin, most of which are rejected by Muslim Scholars. Nevertheless, he gives full isnāds for all those reports, so that they may be duly evaluated. (23)

There are numerous other exegeses of the Qur'ān, representing the two main categories, tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr and tafsīr bi-l-ra'y -the significance of which will be discussed shortly - a full list of which may be found in al-Dhahabī's al-Tafsīr wa al-mufasssīrūn. We shall refer only to a few of them.

As Islam developed, there was a growing tendency to employ ra'y in tafsīr. Some exegetes, like al-Rāzī (d.606 A.H.), who was interested in ʿilm al-kalām, produced works of tafsīr that discuss contemporary issues, sometimes at the expense of the traditional topics of tafsīr. Others were interested in specific topics, such as the natural sciences, and approached the Qur'ānic text accordingly.

Al-Kashshāf of al-Zamakhsharī (d.539 A.H.) represents the school of tafsīr bi-l-ra'y. This work comprises two large volumes, in which he sets out grammatical and lexicographical analyses of a considerable number of Qur'anic passages. Muslim Scholars consider al-Kashshāf to be a standard source for muʿtazilī doctrines. However, despite al-Zamakhsharī's muʿtazilī leanings, which are apparent in a number of

passages of his tafsīr (eg. 41:46 and 53:39), his work is highly valued for its unique treatment of the linguistic features of the Qur'ān.

Several super-commentaries were later made on al-Kashshāf, such as that of Ibn Munīr (d. 680/1185); other Scholars edited the hadīths included in it, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d.852/1357).

A number of the exegeses based on ra'y are somewhat vitiated by their specialist approaches and idiosyncratic views, which sometimes lead to serious misinterpretations. In spite of this, there is much good material to be found in some of them.

Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-ta'wīl of al-Bayḍāwī (d.685/1286) has often been regarded, especially by European Scholars, as the standard exegesis of the Qur'ān.(24) This work, too, belongs to the school of ra'y. Some Scholars consider it to be a summary of al-Kashshāf, with certain modifications of al-Zamakhsharī's muṭtazilī views in order to accommodate it to sunnī doctrines.(25) It comprises two volumes; a European edition was published at Leipzig in 1846 and 1848. Only sūras 3 and 12 have been translated into English. A number of super-commentaries were made on this tafsīr, the best of which is that by al-Shihāb al-Khafājī. It must, however, be asserted here

that al-Bayḍāwī's work includes a number of unsound hadīths, particularly those demonstrating the virtues of the Qur'ān mentioned at the end of each sūra. (26)

Later periods saw the beginning of tendencies that have continued until the present time, namely, the increasing abridgement of tafsīr literature, the neglect of isnād, and the further use of ra'y, which sometimes twists the meanings of certain words or passages to fit in with the authors' beliefs. Modern approaches have also been used in which social, cultural and even political issues are dealt with. An example of this may be found in Fī zilāl al-Qurān by Sayyid Quṭb, an eminent Egyptian Scholar.

We turn now to the two main categories referred to earlier: tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr (traditional exegesis) and tafsīr bi-l-ra'y (rational exegesis). These two main categories, from which others branched out, seem to have emerged essentially from both theological and political backgrounds.

Traditional tafsīr draws upon passages from the Qur'ān itself which serve to interpret other passages, the traditions of the Prophet and those of the Ṣaḥāba and the tābi'ūn. According to this school, these are the only proper sources for an adequate understanding of the

Qur'ān. Hence, the exercising of mere individual opinion (ra'y) is forbidden.

We find that some of the Ṣaḥāba, out of piety, abstained from commenting on the Qur'ān or expressing their individual views on the meaning of its text; (27) others however, allowed themselves to develop their study of the Qur'ān, reaching conclusions on the basis of the traditions of the Prophet, circumstances of revelation, verses of pre-Islamic poetry and free discussions with Muslims of Jewish and Christian origin. Ibn ʿAbbās is a good example of this. As mentioned earlier, he deduces verses of pre-Islamic poetry to explain about 200 Qur'ānic verses. (28)

Over the first eight centuries, the literature of traditional exegesis increased considerably. Large numbers of works were produced, such as those of al-Wāḥidī (d.468, A.H.) Ibn ʿAṭīyya (d.542 A.H.) and Ibn Kathīr (d.774 A.H.).

The question was bound to arise as to whether traditional tafsīr on its own was sufficient for a comprehensive and proper understanding of the Qur'ānic text. Some Scholars adopted the position expressed by al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī: "Those who rely only on the traditions certainly leave out a large part of tafsīr". (29)

Tafsīr bi-l-ra'y (rational exegesis) grew up, it seems, as a reaction against the traditionalists' total objection to the exercising of individual judgement. Rationalists and free-thinkers felt that the use of judgement in studying the Qur'ān was ultimately indispensable, especially when sufficient information was not forthcoming from the application of the traditional methods.

In defending the attitude of this school, al-Ghazālī remarks that if the traditionalists maintain that there is no place in tafsīr for istinbāt (deduction) or ra'y (individual judgement), the views of Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd, for example, should be rejected, since they often paraphrase the dicta of the Prophet. If the traditionalist stance is taken, he says, the differing views of the Ṣaḥāba concerning certain Qur'ānic verses would have no significance; every view would be totally rejected except that of the Prophet himself. Al-Ghazālī also quotes 4:83, where deduction by Scholars is encouraged. In conclusion, he asserts that in interpreting the Qur'ān one should not try to find support there for one's own preconceived ideas, whether consciously or unconsciously, and that it is better for those who lack proper knowledge of the Qur'ān to refrain from interpreting it. (30)

There are two main types of rational tafsīr, namely, that which is generally rejected and that which is generally accepted, provided that certain conditions are satisfied. The first is that stigmatized by al-Ghazālī above; in the second, individual judgement may be exercised, provided that it is based on a good knowledge of the sources of traditional tafsīr. In addition to this, the mufassir himself must have certain qualifications which will be discussed later in this study. Equally, important in tafsīr is the exposition of the maqāsid (aims) of the revelation of the Qur'ān as a divine message: hidāya, i'jāz and ibāda, referred to earlier in this study.(31)

After the death of the Prophet, the only people who were in any position to attempt to elucidate obscure or disputed passages of the Qur'ān were the Ṣaḥāba. Some were willing to apply their understanding and knowledge of the Prophet's interpretations to doing this; others were reluctant to do so, considering it to be a privilege granted only to the Prophet. Thus, there was opposition to the practice of tafsīr even at the very moment of its emergence. However, it seems rapidly to have become religiously acceptable, and many of those who initially rejected it appear soon to have changed their minds, for example, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.

Tafsīr in its early stages took the form of

explanatory notes within the Qur'ānic text itself. These notes received close attention from later Scholars and were regarded as one of the main sources of tafsīr literature. However, these explanatory notes did not deal with the whole text of the Qur'ān; moreover, they were included by those who first collected them in hadīth literature, and not systematically arranged in tafsīr form as they were subsequently.

As the Ṣaḥāba died off the need for a more systematic approach to Qur'ānic exegesis made itself felt. Eventually, this enterprise grew into one in which a large number of Scholars became involved and developed into an independent and important discipline.

By the end of the first half of the first century, there were three main schools of tafsīr. The first was that of Makka, under the leadership of Ibn ʿAbbās, several of whose disciples, such as Mujāhid (d.104/722) and Saʿīd b. Jubayr (d.94/712), became prominent in the field. Ibn Taymiyya considers this school to be the most learned in tafsīr literature. (32) The second was that of Madina; this city, being the first capital of the Islamic Caliphate, had numbered among its inhabitants many of the Ṣaḥāba and the Tābiʿūn. This school was looked upon as an important source of maghāzī (expeditions) literature. Finally, there was the school of Iraq, whose head and main authority was Ibn Masʿūd.

This produced famous Scholars such as 'Alqama b. Qays (d.102/220) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.121/738). (33)

Al-Ṣawwāf, a modern Scholar, holds that these Schools "were not in rivalry with each other, nor was there any marked difference in their methods of tafsīr" (34). However, the school of Makka and that of Madina were rather closer to one another than to that of Iraq, which became famous as the school of ahl al-ra'y. This, however, does not mean that the other two schools did not employ ra'y. Mujāhid, for example, is said to have used ra'y in his tafsīr. (35)

Quite soon after the death of the Prophet different sects began to split off from the main body of Islam. This in turn had its effects on the various Islamic disciplines, including tafsīr. Each sect attempted to justify its views by quoting from the Qur'ānic text. The situation later became serious, to an extent that may best be illustrated by the words of Goldziher:

"It could be said about the Qur'ān, what the Evangelist theologian, who belonged to the new Church, Peter Wernfels said: 'Everyone searches for his view in this Holy Book'." (36)

During the time of the Ṣaḥāba differences in tafsīr were clearly small in comparison with those of later generations. Moreover, the differences among the Ṣaḥāba

and among others of the early period were mainly concerned with legal matters; they were ikhtilāf tanawwu⁶ la ikhtilāf tadādd (differences of variety rather than of contradiction). (37)

There were a number of factors which gave rise to differences in tafsīr throughout its development. Al-Kilbī (d.741/1340), for example, lists twelve in the introduction to his tafsīr entitled Kitāb al-Tashīl. (38). We shall point out only the most important ones. In the view of Denffer(39), they seem to emerge from two main sources: external, for example, the disregard of isnāds, the use of unsound material such as Isrā'īliyyāt and conscious misinterpretation, based on preconceived ideas or other ulterior motives; internal, for example, genuine mistakes in comprehension, which led to the misinterpretation of the text. (40)

Asbāb al-nuzūl may also be considered a source of difference in opinion; Scholars differ in specifying, for instance, the audience addressed in certain passages in the Qur'ān. The context sometimes offers clues to the interpretation of a given verse.

Another source of difference of opinion is the frequent use of homonymic lexis. Interpreters are often baffled as to which meaning a word bears in a particular text. To take some examples: qaswara in 74:51 may mean

either "a lion" or "a hunter who shoots or casts"; ʿasʿas in 81:17 may mean either "nightfall" or "night retreat". (41)

Synonyms may also be included among the reasons which gave rise to differences of opinion in tafsīr. Ibn Taymiyya, however, holds that synonymy is rare, or perhaps does not occur at all, in the Qur'ān; in his view, there is no such thing as identical synonymy. (42) On the other hand, some Scholars consider some Qur'ānic vocabulary to be synonymous; an example of this is jawf in 33:4, and batn in 3:35. However, these Scholars assert that the existence of slight differences in the so-called synonyms has no significant effect on the principal doctrines of Islam. (43)

A number of Scholars took advantage of differences of opinion and adopted an approach that is not generally accepted. These may be classified into two categories: the first is those who attempt to strip particular Qur'ānic words of their original intended meanings; the second is those who misconstrue Qur'ānic words by over interpretation. Examples of both categories may be found in the following account.

Al-Qāḍi ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d.415/1025), a muʿtazilī mufassir, is an example of the first category. The main purpose of his tafsīr is to deal with passages that do

not agree with the mu⁶tazili doctrines. Thus, commenting on 75:23 he rejects the view held by the sunnīs regarding the seeing of God on Judgement Day. He maintains that it is impossible to see God and that "the above verse should be interpreted in such a way that the word nāzira should mean a "reward that the eyes of man are looking forward to " and not "seeing God with the eyes". (44)

The sūfī attitude towards Qur'ānic exegesis may also be considered as belonging to the second category, ie. the twisting of words and meanings by over-interpretation. Sūfī tafsīr is generally looked upon by sunnī Muslims as heretical. (45) In their exegesis of the Qur'ānic text, the sūfīs lay particular stress on the spiritual significance of the Qur'ānic teachings. They also believe that true understanding of the Qur'ān can only be acquired through love of God and elimination of one's fleshly desires. Sūfī exegesis is often referred to as symbolic tafsīr, al-tafsīr al-ishārī or al-ramzī. (46)

Al-Tusturī (d.383/896), a sūfī mufassir commenting on 7:148, interprets the word ʿijl (golden calf) as referring to anything that keeps man from serving God, whether it be his family or anything else to which he is attached. Al-Sulamī (d.412/1021), another leading sūfī mufassir, writing on 2:54, for example, explains that

the command given by the Prophet Mūsā to the innocent of his people concerning those guilty, fa uqtulū anfusakum, indicates the renunciation of their evil desires and the removal of worldly love from their hearts, and not the actual act of killing.(47)

It must, nevertheless, be noted here that there are certain verses and passages of the Qur'ān which should be understood in the light of and in combination with, others. For example, the Qur'an appears to support the ideas of both free will and predestination; 11:34 and 76:30, for instance, imply predestination in their surface meaning, whereas 53:38-9 and 99:7-8, for example, imply free will. This apparent confusion may best be resolved by means of other Qur'ānic verses and the literature of hadīth.

In fact, orthodox Muslim Scholars do not object to this kind of tafsīr, provided that:

- a) it does not contradict the generally accepted meanings of the Qur'ānic text.
- b) it is not claimed to be the one and only valid interpretation.
- c) it does not go against any common Islamic laws stated in the Qur'ān and the Sunna. (48)

The problem of differences of opinion in tafsīr

has led Muslim Scholars to adopt a number of methods for dealing with it. Wujūh al-tarjīh (criteria for preference) as al-Kilbī calls them, are numerous, the most important being:

- 1) That a verse or passage may be understood by comparing it with another from the Qur'ānic text.
- 2) That a ḥadīth, to be used for interpretation, must be ṣaḥīḥ (sound).
- 3) That the views generally accepted by the ijmā' (consensus) of Scholars and mufassirūn should be adopted.
- 4) That, after the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, preference should be given to the sound akhbār of the Ṣaḥāba, particularly of the four orthodox Caliphs.
- 5) That any interpretation should comply with the accepted conventions of the Arabic language.
- 6) That literal meanings, in general, should be preferred to metaphorical ones, although in some cases metaphorical interpretations may be permitted. (49)

To avoid misinterpretations, Ibn 'Abbās indicates

that one should be aware of the four aspects of tafsīr:
 the first aspect is concerned with those verses and passages the sense of which may be extracted with the help of pre-Islamic poetry; this is something that can really be tackled only by someone with specialist qualifications. The second aspect is a general one, that is to say that it applies equally to the layman and the specialist, and neither can be excused ignorance of it: the knowledge of basic Islamic doctrines, e.g. 47:19, where divinity and Lordship are strictly confined to Allah alone. The third aspect, again, is one that is applicable only to Scholars with a firm command of the Sharīʿa, and that is the use of ijtihād (logical deduction on a legal or theological issue), by means of istinbāt (the eliciting of judicial statements by intelligence and laborious study). The fourth aspect is the acceptance of that which can be known only to Allah (ghayb) such as the matters referred to, for example, in 74:31, 3:7 and 17:85, where there is no room for ijtihād or istinbāt. (50)

In order to prevent any infiltration of alien interpretations into tafsīr material, Muslim Scholars have laid down a number of conditions, any neglect of which may render an interpretation suspect. In the case of translating the Qur'ānic text, these conditions should be no less carefully observed, for a translation of the Qur'ān is a kind of interpretation. These conditions are:

1) That the mufassir should abstain from preconceived notions; thus a biased mufassir (or translator) may be concerned only to support his own views, regardless of what the original text implies. Scholars, therefore, often emphasize the necessity of sound ‘aqīda (belief) on the part of the mufassir.

2) That he should have a profound knowledge of the Arabic language and its subtleties. Al-Suyūṭī maintains that a mufassir should have a considerable knowledge of grammar, morphology, etymology, and rhetoric, without which the implications of certain verses and passages cannot be fully appreciated.

3) That he should have a good background in Islam in general, and the disciplines of the Qur'an in particular, which include ‘ilm al-qirā'āt, nāsikh and mansūkh, asbāb al-nuzūl, fiqh and hadīth.

4) That, in the process of interpreting, the mufassir should seek the required meaning first from the Qur'ān itself, then from the Sunna and the sound akhbār, and then from the views of the Ṣaḥāba and those of later generations. (51)

Tafsir has been, and is, a crucial element for the understanding of the text and message of the Qur'ān. The above account indicates how profound its effect has been

on attitudes towards its interpretation in Arabic;
attitudes towards its translation are no less affected by
it.

NOTES

- 1) Lisān al-⁶Arab, vol.6, p.361 Tāj al-⁶Arūs, Vol. 3., p.470.
- 2) al Zarkashī, Vol. 1., P.13
- 3) al-Suyūṭī, vol.2, p.221
- 4) Muqaddimat jāmi⁶ al-Tafāsīr, pp.47-51
- 5) al-Iṣfahānī, pp.380 ff.
- 6) Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, p.33
- 7) al-Zarqānī, Vol. 1., P.471.
- 8) Mu⁶ jam alfāz al-Qurān al-Karīm.
- 9) Ibn Taymiyya, p.109-110.
- 10) al-Suyūṭī, Vol.2, p.174
- 11) al-Kilbi, pp.8-10
- 12) al-Dhahabī, Vol. 1., p.40
- 13) al-Zarkashī, Vol. 1., p.14
- 14) al-Khaṭīb, Vol. 13., p.253
- 15) Ibn Kathīr, Vol. 1., p.3
- 16) Abu Ḥayyān, Vol. 1., p.5
- 17) al-Qaṭṭān, P.337
- 18) al-Suyūṭī, Vol. 2., p.178
- 19) Ibn Taymiyya, pp.98-100
- 20) al-Dhahabī, Vol. 1., p.82
- 21) al-Sharabāshī, P.68
- 22) al-Ṣabbāgh, P.141
- 23) al-Qaṭṭān, p.364
- 24) Watt, P. 169
- 25) Ibid.

- 26) al-Zarqānī, Vol. 1., p.535
- 27) Tafsīr al-Ṭabāri, Vol. 1., p.78
- 28) al-Suyūṭī, Vol. 1., p.40
- 29) al-Anṣārī, Vol. 10., p.679
- 30) al-Ghazālī, Vol. 3., pp.142 ff.
- 31) al-Zarqānī, Vol. 1., pp.538 ff.
- 32) Ibn Taymiyya, p.61
- 33) al-Dhahabī, Vol. 1., p.101
- 34) al-Ṣawwāf, p.141
- 35) Ibn Taymiyya, pp.102-5
- 36) Goldziher, I., Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung; Arabic translation by: AlNajjar, madhāhib al-tafsīr al-Islāmī, p.3.
- 37) Ibn Taymiyya, p.38
- 38) al-Kilbī, p.9
- 39) Denffer, pp.134-5
- 40) for example, see Ibn Taymiyya, p.38-55
- 41) al-Iṣfahānī, p.403 and 334
- 42) Ibn Taymiyya, p.51
- 43) Ibid., p.54
- 44) Tanzīh al-Qurān, p.358
- 45) al-Suyūṭī, Vol. 2., pp.235-7; al-Zarqānī, Vol.2., pp.546-556.
- 46) Khulayf, pp.138-142
- 47) Jullandārī, p.107; for more examples see al-Zarqānī Vol. 1., pp.550-556
- 48) al-Zarqānī, Vol. 1., p.549

- 49) See, for example, al-Kilbī, pp.9ff. Ibn Taymiyya p.101 and al-Zarqānī, Vol. 1., p.529.
- 50) al-Suyūṭī, Vol. 2, p.232.
- 51) See, for example: al-Qaṭṭān, pp.329; Denffer p.125; and al-Suyūṭī, Vol.2., pp. 231 ff.

SECTION FOUR.Is the Qur'ān translatable?

The following section offers a brief review of some issues involved in the translation of the language of religious texts in its wide sphere with particular reference to the language of the Qur'ān.

Certain elements that contribute to the issue of untranslatability will be discussed together with their implications in the translation of the Qur'ān.

Although a translator's aim must always be to transfer the content of the text into another language as accurately as possible, his approach is determined by the nature of the text. Casagrande identifies four major aims which may lie behind the translator's attempt: aesthetic-poetic, ethnographic, linguistic and pragmatic. In aesthetic-poetic translation the attention is centred on the aesthetic and literary form of both the target language and the source language; the content, however, is also important. The main concern in ethnographic translation is to convey the cultural context of the message and to point out differences in meanings of equivalent elements in both the SL and TL. As far as linguistic translation is concerned, its primary focus is on grammatical form, which requires special treatment in

order to adhere to the word-order of the original. Finally, pragmatic translation, which is the ultimate form, has as its goal the conveying of a completely accurate replica of the original, by means of a combination of the elements that are involved in achieving the first three aims; this, of course, requires genuine talent in order to produce a work which comprehensively and accurately matches the original.

(1)

In conclusion, Casagrande points out that a good translation is one "in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work". (2)

Difficulties encountered in translation are, to a great extent, common to all types of texts. It is important, however, to bear in mind that each type has its own characteristics which pose particular difficulties. Religious texts have specific features that pose challenges to the translator.

What is religious language?

Followers of most major religions make use of a

certain kind of language through the medium of which they practise their faith. In some religions, moreover, an actual language is held in reverence and used in worship even by those who do not speak it. Thus Sanskrit is the sacred language for all Hindus and Hebrew for all Jews, as Latin was once for Roman Catholics, and Arabic is for all Muslims. One may also perhaps add the English of the Book of Common Prayer and the Authorized Version of the Bible as constituting a "sacred language", until recently, for adherents of the Church of England. Such languages remain unchanged from one age to another and from one place to another and, potentially, convey the same message to all those capable of understanding them.

It may be assumed that the purpose of most religious writings is to convey information about a sacred message as accurately and impressively as possible. Despite the diversity of the languages used in religious texts, much of their content will have a common flavour, if not connotation.

In Islam, we encounter a phenomenon that used also to be present in many Christian communities, but is nowadays far less wide-spread: the style and vocabulary of the language of the scriptures and actual quotations from these are the common currency also of everyday speech, outside any specifically religious observance. Thus, the language of the Qur'ān is used unself-

consciously, as the language of the Bible can no longer be, in many secular situations. This presents particular problems in translation, if the aim is, as it must be, to evoke the same effect as that of the original.

The language of religious texts frequently has the following characteristics:

1. A formal style which comprises complex sentences and concentrative stylistic forms.
2. The employment of archaic expressions on both lexical and grammatical levels.
3. The use of specific religious terms and statements peculiar to the religion and culture in which they originate.
4. A richness of figurative language. (3)

Religious texts, in any case, pose a number of unique challenges to the translator, some of which we shall attempt to investigate.

To begin with, since the language of religious texts is generally regarded as sacred, tampering with its original form is generally regarded as an act of violation. This attitude, in turn, has always constituted an obstacle in the field of translating religious texts. Sheed, for example, observing this, says:

"Human language is not adequate to utter God, but it is the highest we have and we should use its highest

words. The highest words in human speech are not high enough, but what do you gain by using lower words? or no words? It is for us to use the highest words we have, realise that they are not high enough, try to strain upwards from them, not to dredge human speech for something lower". (4)

This issue has often been dealt with cautiously, both by Muslims in connection with the Qur'ān, and by Christians in connection with the Bible. In fact, it has alarmed many of those who are concerned with scriptures, who claim that it must be left to these scriptures to speak for themselves in their original forms. The fear of distortion of the original has always been behind this kind of approach. This attitude is not an unreasonable one, but an interpretation of the original has always proved to be indispensable, not only for the followers of a religion who do not speak the language in which its scriptures originally appeared but also for many of those who do.

Another obstacle which translators of religious texts encounter is the employment of the language of imagery. Caird believes that "a translator of ancient texts cannot succeed in his task merely by a transference from one language to another; he must also undertake the thought forms and presuppositions of the ancient world, from all its mental furnishings, to those of the present

day. In this larger task of translation he runs the double risk either of modernizing or of archaizing: to modernize is to ignore the culture gap and ignore the similarities between the biblical world and our own".
(5)

Ambiguity is a common barrier in religious texts. Even for one experienced in such matters, certain terms may prove difficult to comprehend, let alone to convey. One observer of religious language puts this problem as follows:

"suppose I am told of a new theological discovery, namely, that the Brahma wears a hat, and then I am told that it is a divine hat and worn infinitely, since Brahma has neither head or shape. In what sense, then, is a hat being worn? Why use these words? I am told that God exists, but in a 'different sense' of existence. Then if he doesn't exist 'in the plain sense', why use that word?" (6)

However, one may assume that a certain proportion of expressions used in religious texts are used metaphorically. That God 'sees', 'speaks' and 'hears' is common to us, but in certain contexts such assertions do not have the same connotations as in our earthly understanding; rather they denote some particular sense, with particular characteristics. Even when religious texts employ ordinary language this is often extended

beyond its normal sense.

Most religious texts contain archaisms, at any rate from a later viewpoint, even if they were not already archaic when originally employed. It is sometimes believed that archaism in translation may add a sense of reverence and solemnity; however, some translations of religious texts are more archaic than the original texts themselves.

Religious statements, in general, may be divided into two main types:

1. Statements which refer to an objective reality above and beyond them, and which are true in terms of that reference. Thus, they do not have their meanings in themselves, but in that which is intended, ie. they have 'extrinsic meaning'.
2. Statements which are related to one another in a coherent framework of knowledge and which have their truth in their inter-relations, ie. they have 'intrinsic meaning'.

For purposes of translation, these two types must be accurately differentiated and rendered appropriately.

These and other factors have to be taken into consideration in the translation of any religious text. Our main concern here is to discuss some of these

factors and their implications for translating the Qur'ānic text. Is the Qur'ān translatable?

The issue of impermissibility discussed in a previous section shows that this is always associated with untranslatability. Many scholars have approached the question on the basis that the Qur'ān may not be translated, and from there have reached the position of declaring that the Qur'ān is untranslatable.

Generally speaking, the claim of untranslatability may apply to any well-written and meaningful piece of literature, either owing to the lack of lexical and syntactical equivalents in the target language, or to cultural diversity.

A striking statement appears in many of the introductions to translations of the Qur'ān: the Qur'ān is untranslatable! Readers of these translations may find it difficult to grasp this paradoxical claim. (7) In many cases, it may well be linked to the issue of impermissibility. To a non-Muslim, it does not appear convincing, since no objective approach is made. (8) We shall, therefore, investigate the features of the Qur'ān that may give validity to this claim. In our study of these features we shall identify their functions in the text that may prove problematic for the process of

reproducing them in another language and thus justify the claim.

The relationship between the form and content of the Qur'ān:

As stated earlier in this study, the language of the Qur'ān is regarded as inimitable, owing to its peculiar linguistic features whether these involve lafz (words), nazm (arrangement) or (rhetoric) balāgha. These features are usually reiterated in most works on i'jāz al-Qur'ān. To convey its message the Qur'ān employs a unique blend of literary devices, which is frequently at variance with the manner of presentation of other works.

The Qur'ān does not set out information, ideas and arguments on specific topics in any familiar way. It is a mixture of doctrine, moral instruction, legislation, examples drawn from history and/or legend, often in an allusive manner. One topic may be touched on in a number of different ways, and one topic may appear to follow another at random. God is not the speaker in every passage; angels or the Prophet himself may be represented as the medium of locution. Abrupt changes of person and number further complicate matters. This may well prove baffling even in the original; it is likely that in translation it will prove even more so.

A number of scholars have been disturbed by this feature of the Qur'ānic text, to such an extent that some described it as being in 'a perplexed state'; 'a wearisome jumble'; and its verses as being 'wrongly assembled'. Others have described it as having clumsy syntax and unjustifiable pleonasm with ellipsis and hysteron proteron in many of its parts. (9) The characteristic arrangement applies to the original just as much as to a translation. It does not really affect the issue.

In view of this, al-Mawdūdī, in his introduction to the Qur'ān, suggests that a thorough and proper understanding of it can only be achieved through apprehension of its central theme and object. He adds that it is essential to develop a familiarity with its peculiar style and terminology and the expository technique in which these are employed. (10)

As a starting point towards a proper approach, he says, whether or not one believes it to be a Divine revelation, one should see it as constituting guide-lines for an integrated way of life; its subject is Man. The central theme that runs through it is the exposition of various aspects of reality. Its object is to direct Man's awareness towards this reality. Thus, for instance, the story of the creation of the heavens, the earth and man is referred to frequently throughout, for

the purpose of emphasizing its message and the Unity of God. A similar approach is also apparent in the presentation of other doctrines, in some passages in a detailed manner and in others more cursory; once again, the central theme has to be appreciated, in order that the relationship of details to the whole may be grasped. (11)

Thus, with this in mind, the reader "will no longer be dismayed by the apparently random nature of many of the suras...each sura will then, be seen to be a unity within itself, and the whole Koran will be recognized as a single revelation, self-consistent to the highest degree". (12)

The Qur'ānic revelations did not, of course, come down as a complete book all at once, nor was the Qur'ān handed over to the Prophet as a complete written text at the beginning of his mission. Rather, the Qur'ān continued to be revealed throughout the initial development of Islam, over a period of approximately 23 years, according to the requirements of particular circumstances. The style of the Makkī revelations differs considerably from that of the Madanī, reflecting perhaps, the different attitudes of the recipients and the different atmosphere and cultural and political situation.

Once the reader has accustomed himself to the Qur'ānic styles, it becomes fairly easy to split up the suras into their separate constituent parts and this is a great step towards a proper interpretation of the Qur'ān.

Despite the attempts that have been made to present the suras in chronological order, (13) the traditional arrangement has continued to prevail. This, again, affects the reader both of the original and of a translation, more considerably so the latter. The accepted arrangement, whether made by the Prophet himself, as most would accept, or not, may be regarded as better suited to the complete revelation, in view of its overall object, than a chronological arrangement which would perhaps have been more appropriate while the revelation remained incomplete.

One may assume that if we follow the traditional arrangement, then we receive the Prophet's essential message; while if we use a revised arrangement, then we follow his historical mission.

When cultures differ it is not easy to communicate meaning, not only because of the unfamiliarity of the content of a given text but also because of the manner in which this text offers its content. Thus it is indispensable that the translator should be fully aware of the nature of both the content and the form of the

text he is dealing with no less than the style of the author of the original.

Elements of untranslatability:

In many places in the Qur'ān, it is asserted that its message is one of universal application; however, most scholars hold that its language is untranslatable, mainly on theological grounds: that the Qur'ān is a mu⁶ jiza and that its language has peculiar characteristics which cannot be conveyed in another tongue. Apart from theological claims, there are certain aspects that contribute to this claim:

- a. features pertinent to form.
- b. features pertinent to content.
- c. features pertinent to style.

In discussing the peculiar features of the form of the Qur'ān one has to refer to the relationship between the semantic and syntactic components of the text which is indicated in most verses asserting the Arabicity of the Qur'ān (eg. 41:3 and 44), these verses are generally taken as meaning that i⁶ jāz applies to both form and content. That is, the form in which the content is presented is essentially one in which there is an interaction between the text and its reader. This is achieved by the effect produced by its language on the levels both of sound and of sense; these are, in fact,

inseparable, since form is the tool for communicating content. The element of untranslatability consists, therefore, in the relationship of the lexical items with the unique manner in which they convey their sense.

Observing this, al-Jurjānī asserts that the relationship between syntax and semantics is one in which the order of concepts in the mind of the speaker determines the order in which words are arranged. He maintains that once the ideas are formed and arranged, exact and unambiguous expressions may be produced easily. For al-Jurjānī, words are vessels and vehicles of concepts, and it is only through firm understanding and appreciation of the concepts that the choice of words may be properly achieved. Thus balāgha (rhetoric) is said to be constituted by a perfect accord between words and concepts. (14)

This approach, however, is in contrast with that of some Western linguists, who consider grammar as independent of meaning, or, as put by Chomsky, "grammar is autonomous and independent of meaning". (15)

Features pertinent to the content:

As made clear earlier, the content of the Qur'ān offers a challenge to the reader even in its original

form, let alone in translation. Unravelling the concentration of ideas is not an easy task.

There are certain additional factors that contribute to the apprehension of and response to the Qur'ānic text. These factors, in general, do not depend upon matters external to the text itself, such as asbāb al-nuzūl, and do not depend upon the receiving of special insight into it. They are, in a sense intrinsic to the text itself and are intimately connected with its untranslatability.

a. The process of reading/recitation and the role of the text in guiding this process: the process of reading/recitation of the Qur'ān is not only an art but also a science which has been continuously developed by its readers since its revelation. This involves specific techniques which are alluded to in the first aya revealed, ie. "read/recite" 96:1. These techniques are also referred to in works of tradition, in which it is stated that the act of reading/recitation transcends the limitations of the written words.

The Qur'ān specifically instructs the Prophet and his followers how it should be read/recited, eg. 17:106, 20:114, 73:4 and 75:16-18. These passages include instructions such as slow deliberate recitation, correct articulation and consideration of the melodic

aspect. The above verses also provide the primary source for the development of the discipline of Tajwīd "perfect reading/recitation".

In its requirements of such rules of recitation, the Qur'ān demonstrates the inseparability of the text from the Arabic language.

Correct recitation, it is claimed in the Qur'ān, creates in the reader/reciter and his audience a response in the form of submission. The reader of a translation, and his audience can scarcely be affected in precisely the same way as those exposed to the original.

- b. Response: This comes through the exercise of qirā'a, reading/reciting eg. 47:24, tadabbur (understanding), eg. 47:24 tafakkur (consideration), eg. 6:65, and then actualizing the message involved.
- c. The reader: the process of reading/reciting and the nature of the text may fully and properly be appreciated only from the viewpoint of an exemplary reciter, who in this case is the Prophet himself. The response created in the Prophet by his recitation and understanding and then actualizing the message of the Qur'ān is considered as a source of interpretation of the Qur'ān, as frequently asserted in the Qur'ān

itself, (eg. 3:132 and 33:21).

To sum up the issue of the translatability of the Qur'ān, we can say in the words of Kharrāma that:

"To master one's own language and culture is something difficult; to master a foreign language with its cultural furnishings is much more difficult; however, mastering two languages with their cultural furnishings is something inconceivable". (17)

Features Pertinent to Style:

It is, as is generally, acknowledged, difficult enough to render into another language a simple, straightforward unadorned piece of Arabic prose. When rhetorical elements are involved, the difficulty becomes very much greater. The translations that have been made of epistles of al-Jāhiz, for example, give very little idea of the direct yet subtle style of his writing; even al-Ghazali, whose Arabic, in Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn and al-Munqidh min al-dalāl, for instance, is perhaps the finest example of plain Arabic prose yet achieved, has never found a translator capable of representing in another language the limpidity of his language. One of the highest peaks of decorative writing in Arabic, the Maqāmāt of Badī' al-Zamān

al-Hamadhānī, has been translated numerous times into various languages, yet every translation has provided only an artificial, wooden version of the original.

The Qur'ān has its own type of balāgha, of "fine" writing, which it combines with an idiosyncrasy of expression and, one may say, a deceptive simplicity of diction. Its rhetoric is both repetitious and unexpected, cumulative and direct, explicit and elliptical. Let us examine, in some detail, the style of the two examples, one from a Makkī sūra and one from a Madanī sūra, taking account of the emphasis of each āya, the development of the argument, or the rhetoric, within each passage, the force of the particles, the reason for the use of particular tenses, the statement or otherwise of objects of the verbs - in other words what is actually said, and what is implied, what may be considered to be implied, and what the tafāsīr say is implied. Above all, let us endeavour to see what the total effect of each passage amounts to, and how the constituent parts contribute to this effect.

Stylistic differences can be discerned between the Makki and the Madanī sūras. Further, the Makkī sūras have been divided into three groups. The general themes of the Makkī suras in these three groups are: the fundamentals of Islam, the unity of God, accounts of various men of God from earlier times, and certain rudimentary aspects

of legislation.

The first group is distinguished by its passionate and forceful style. The diction, as put by Paret, is grand, noble and full of bold images. The impassionate verve, which is not unfrequently interrupted by simple but powerful, measured maxims and colourful descriptions, is reflected in the short verses; the whole manner of speaking is rhythmical and often of considerable, though completely artless euphony.

As for the second Makki group, we notice a gradual transition to a more serene reflection. Examples from nature and history, that are meant to serve the unbelievers as a warning and the faithful as edifications and comfort, are depicted in detail. An angry tone, however, of polemic against the incorrigible representatives of polytheism and their worldly philosophy now makes itself felt. These characteristics become more and more prominent in the sūras of the second Makkī group, and reach their peak in those of the third.

The style of the Makkī sūras may be characterised by the following prominent features:

1. The use of the short rhymed verses, eg. 108 and 112.
2. The frequent use of imagery, eg. 70.
3. The use of the particle Kallā, eg. 102.
4. The use of oath-like expressions, eg. 91.

5. The use of the mysterious letters, eg. 19, 42 and 68.

To illustrate the style of the Makkī verses let us examine, in some detail, one of them, namely al-⁶alaq (96).

Although the exact date cannot be established with certainty, it is traditionally believed that the first five verses of this sūra represent the very beginning of the revelation. Al-⁶alaq was revealed before sūra 68 with which it is connected in mood and message. These two sūras recognize the fact that the art of reading, or literacy in general, forms the basis for civilized life and culture. The remaining verses of this sūra show a subtle though quite apparent change in mood which is directed against the opposition to the Prophet's public prayers. These verses also explain the main obstacle to the delivery of the message to man: man's own obstinacy, vanity and insolence.

Verses 1-5 Directions are given for reading/reciting the Qur'ān, and in connection with this and with the miraculous creation of man, glad tidings are given to him that he has been blessed with a wealth of real knowledge.

The imperative iqra' in the first āya may be rendered as either "read" or "recite", implying both the concept of the oral delivery and the understanding of

something committed either to writing or to memory. Although there is no explicit subject to the verb, it seems that what is alluded to must be the divine revelation, the Qur'ān, as it will be revealed. It is also suggested that igra' signifies the proclamation aloud of God's message with full devotion to the Sole Creator and no one else, as established from the direct nexus between the source of the message and the one addressed.

The past tense in which the verb khalaq appears in the first and second āya is meant to indicate that the act of divine creation has been and is being continuously repeated. It also alludes to the primitiveness and simplicity of man's biological origins, in contrast to the complexity of his intellectual and spiritual potential. Simplicity is also symbolized by the rhyme of these two verses.

In verses 3, 4 and 5 a reiteration of God's bounties is made. Emphasis is placed on God's being beneficence in not only creating man from the meanest of materials but also inspiring him with intellect to distinguish between right and wrong. In view of this, how can he be so arrogant as to indulge himself in notions such as self-sufficiency and disobedience. These verses prepare the way for the ideas of the next two.

The statement "Teaching man the use of the Pen" in verse 4 symbolizes the divine inspiration of knowledge which is **unceasing**, so as to augment this knowledge continuously throughout man's life; both material and spiritual knowledge are implied.

It also seems clear that these references to reading/reciting, knowledge and Pen embody the notion of committing the Qur'ān to writing for its preservation. Furthermore, they, perhaps, also allude to the great contribution which the "Pen" is to make in the propagation and dissemination of the Divine message carried by a person who himself is unlettered. Again the rhyme in these three verses signifies their unity of theme.

The symbolic summons in the first āya is explained in aya 4, where man's God-given ability to use the Pen to transmit knowledge further ensures that this shall be cumulative. Thus, from man's utter dependence on God, whether in respect of his existence or of his knowledge, it follows that God alone knows what is best for him. The divine revelation is simply in his own best interests.

Verses 6, 7 and 8 portray man's attitude towards God. Aya 6 begins with a negative particle, denoting man's lack of appreciation of God's gifts and favours.

He goes astray and is recalcitrant. The root T. gh. Y may imply all manner of transgression. As the sura proceeds, however, the particular type of transgression of which man is guilty is particularized; man thinks he is independent of his Creator. If he accumulates wealth and attains important worldly position, his mentality becomes that of a conceited man and further increases his transgression.

Aya 8 signifies that in adopting such an attitude, man forgets that being independent does not excuse him from being accountable in the Court of God, where he will certainly discover the extent of his transgression against his Creator.

These three āyāt also rhyme, again to emphasize the pervading theme. The unusual syntax of ra'āhu, as indicating man's thinking himself independent, may be taken as ironical; its use in place of ra'ā nafsahu implies, by its compression, the defectiveness of the thought.

Most of the classical commentators see in this passage, namely from verse 9 to 19 an allusion to Abu Jahl, the Prophet's bitterest opponent in Makka, who persistently tried to prevent Muḥammad and his followers from praying and proselytizing. However, it seems probable that it is of much more general reference; that

it goes beyond any specific historical incident or situation and applies to any attempt, at any time, to deny to religion, represented here by "praying", its legitimate functions in man's life.

It is also emphasized in this passage that the ungodly always attempt to avoid truth and, if faced with it, deny it and turn their backs. This, however, takes place before the eyes of God, who sees all. Verses 15-19 constitute a threat and a challenge to those taking such an attitude. Part of the threat is that they will be dragged by the forelock; this signifies their utter subjection and humiliation. It is used here metonymically for the place on which the forelock grows, i.e. the forehead, referring forward to wa-sjud in verse 19. This forelock is already stained with lies and sins, because its bearer has never bowed before his Creator, and has, at the same time, prevented others from bowing before Him.

The challenge comes in verse 17, where the chief opponent is asked to call on his supporters. It is implied here that all the combined forces of evil, though they may have worldly appearances in their favour, and though they may seem to be successful for a time, cannot stand against God. He has but to command His forces of punishment, zabāniya "angels of hell", to subdue evil and to protect the servants of God. This passage ends

with a divine command to the righteous to have no fear, because God can disregard all evil forces. Let the righteous then bow in prostration to their Creator and seek nearness to Him. In the state of prostration sujūd, man places his forehead on the ground, as a token of his acknowledgement of the greatness of God. Verses 16-17 mention the sinful forelock (forehead), which has never carried out its obligations and is therefore doomed to hell. This contrast aims at showing how honourable is the forehead of the righteous.

This sūra started with the command to read/recite the Qur'ān and ended with the command to seek nearness to God in the form of worship. One may conclude that the outcome of man's reading and understanding the message of the Qur'ān is his desire to draw near to his Creator.

In this sūra there are a number of features characteristic of the style of the Makkī revelations, such as short rhymed verses and the use of the particle Kallā. A figurative usage suggests itself in verse 15. Ellipticism, as a common feature of Qur'ānic style, appears in the very first āya, where the object of iqra' is omitted. Emphasis throughout the sūra is made by means of the repetition of certain words, such as iqra', khalāq, ʿallama and a-ra'ayta. The connection of each āya with the next and other subsequent āyāt can be detected once the central theme is grasped, namely man's

arrogance in feeling self-sufficient. The argument is initiated by the concept of man's origin, then this is contrasted with his attitude towards God's favours towards him; the argument is brought to its conclusion with the assertion of the ultimate aim of man's creation, namely complete devotion and worship to his Creator. The denunciation of false aims and attitudes, and the insistence on divine truth is pointed by the use of particles as kallā and inna.

The use of the imperative both at the beginning and at the end of the sūra implies that it is only by accepting the divine commands that man will prosper and realize God's objectives for him, that is, achieving his salvation in the hereafter. The circular variation of moods in the sūra enhances the presentation of the central theme by linking the various effects created by the language and rhetoric of each individual verse.

While the basic themes of the Makkī phase are still present in the Madanī phase, the development of the Muslim umma and the variety of its constituents clearly have their effect. The community of Madīna comprised four kinds of people:

1. Those who migrated from Makka to Madīna.
2. Those who were native to Madīna and helped the migrants.

3. Those who were native to Madīna and pretended to support the Muslims.
4. Jews and Christians who could not be included in categories 2 or 3.

It is apparent that the environment as well as the audience is different from that of Makka. Thus, in addition to pursuing the aims of the Makki phase, the Madani phase introduces those that are connected with the establishment of the Islamic state, such as the promulgation of detailed legislation, debating with non-Muslims, rebutting doubt and exposing those who cast them.

In order to serve these objectives, the style of the Madani suras is modified. The most prominent features of the Madani style are:

1. Longer verses and longer suras.
2. Longer sentences with less compressed expression.
3. Fewer rhymes.
4. A more generally settled mood.
5. The absence of the particle kallā.
6. A scarcity of oath-like expressions and mystical letters.

From the Madanī sūras, we shall deal with three verses of sūra 24, entitled al-Nūr. A large part of

this sūra deals with the mutual relations of the sexes and with certain ethical rules to be observed in the context of this relationship. The first nine verses lay down definite legal injunctions concerning illicit sexual intercourse, while verses 27-29 and 58-59 stress each individual's right to privacy and the due respect that should be shown to this.

The general impression given by these verses concerning privacy is that its strict observance is essential to a well-ordered social life.

In verse 27 the believers are commanded to observe others' rights of privacy in dwelling-houses. Thus no-one is allowed to enter the dwellings of others unless he has obtained permission. Furthermore, when permission is given he should pay formal respects to the inmates. The prescriptions of such etiquette are designed for the person's own good, so that he may bear in mind his rights vis-à-vis others and vice-versa. In its wider significance, it postulates the inviolability of each person's home and private life.

The expression tasta'nisū, according to the commentators, implies tasta'dhinū, i.e. to ask permission. Tasta'nisū, perhaps, also implies that if he feels that his presence is not pleasing to people of the house he should withdraw himself, because the element

of uns (pleasure) is absent.

As the sūra proceeds, more details are given; thus verse 28 explains that even if no-one is within the dwelling, one may not enter without express permission. If, however, one is refused admission, then he must go away. This will be most conducive to goodness and purity, for God has full knowledge of all that one does. On the other hand, one will incur no sin if one freely enters buildings not intended for living in, which serve some other use, such as premises of a more or less public nature, one should always remember that God knows all that we do openly, and all that we would conceal.

It seems clear that, as a matter of common-sense, even in places of public resort implied permission from the owner is also necessary, for the issue here is one of privacy and not one of rights of ownership.

While all these details of domestic privacy are being brought to our attention, we are clearly reminded that the main object we should hold in view is spiritual as well as social welfare, symbolized in this passage by individual, domestic and even public right of privacy. This is also implied in the concluding statements of each of the three verses. Man's awareness of God's omniscience is his principal inducement to observe these prescriptions and the many others formulated in the

Qur'ān.

The Madanī sūras are characterized by length, both as suras and in their āyāt. Verse 282 of sūra 2, for example, comprises over 120 words; this in itself exceeds the average length of the Makkī sūras.

Because of the detailed legislation that occupies so much of the Madanī sūras, it is natural that individual āyāt should be of greater length than those of the Makkī suras. The pauses, at which āyāt are considered to be divided, do not occur so frequently, because a paragraph tends to contain more material. Although the āyāt themselves may be longer, the information conveyed in each is greater, and the expression, as is appropriate to dealing with detailed exposition, as opposed to impressionistic exhortation or admonition, is of a simpler, more analytic nature, with far less compression than is evident in the Makkī sūras. This is illustrated by 2:282.

The evident decrease in the use of rhyme and of magniloquent vocabulary in the Madanī sūras is probably a result of the establishment of Islam on a firmer and broader basis. There is no longer the necessity for compelling the attention of the uncommitted or the positively hostile by means of the vivid and exuberant phrase; what is now required is the down-to-earth

presentation of legal prescriptions. To such everyday matters the insistent rhyming of the Makkī sūras is no longer appropriate. Rhyme is by no means totally abandoned, but now occurs only occasionally, and frequently only in alternate verses. Thus verse 26 ends with īm, verse 27 with ūn, verse 28 again with īm and verse 29 again with ūn. Verses 35-48 of the same sura, on the other hand, have no consistent rhymes. In contrast to the Makkī style, the Madanī style verses may not rhyme, even if they deal with one single theme, eg. 24: 39-43.

A more generally calm mood is also one of the characteristics of the Madanī style. This is perhaps due to the fact that the Prophet in Madīna has become much stronger; his preaching is now in public, and opposition, which in Makka was overt and general, in Madina is covert and limited. His new freedom to propagate Islam is also reflected in the lengthy disputations format of some of the Madanī sūras.

Threats and warnings, couched in violent language, are also less necessary, and so less frequent. The particle kallā disappears, and there is a marked decrease in the incidence of oath-like expressions and mystical letters.

Translating the Qur'ān: A practical approach.

The following account is mainly concerned with the principal aspect of our study, namely the present situation and the practical problems involved in translating the Qur'ānic text. However, our discussion can only be understood when placed within a wider linguistic context touching upon the external as well as the internal form of the Qur'ānic text which will show how these problems may be resolved.

A general review of some versions under analysis:

Despite the fact that the Qur'ān is held to be both inimitable and untranslatable, many attempts have been made to translate it, even by Muslims themselves, most of whom regard this as an act of sacrilege. The first translation of the Qur'ān into a Western language, namely Latin, was made in 1143 at the request of Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny. This translation was carried out by an English Scholar, Robertus Kettenensis, and was published at Basle in 1543 by Theodor Bibliander of Zurich. Although this work contained inaccuracies and misunderstandings, and, as put by Arberry, "was inspired by hostile intention; nevertheless it served as the foundation of the earliest translation into modern

European idioms". It enjoyed a considerable circulation in manuscript. Afterwards, this Latin version was rendered into Italian, German and Dutch. The first French translation was made by Andre du Ryer in 1647; two years later an English version of this appeared, made by Alexander Ross. (18)

The second Latin version was made directly from the Arabic text by Ludovico Marracci and issued first in 1698, and later, with additions and annotations by Reineccius, in 1721. (19)

The eighteenth century saw a translation into English directly from an Arabic original, by George Sale; this was first published in 1734 and was reprinted many times. Sale seems to have followed Marracci's method of studying the Arabic commentaries. He frequently quotes, in his footnotes, that of al-Bayḍāwī. In the first pages of his version, Sale states his position clearly regarding the religion of Islam in general and the Qur'ān in particular:

"I imagine it almost needless either to make an apology for publishing the following translation, or to go about to prove it a work of use as well as curiosity. They must have a mean opinion of the Christian religion, or be but ill grounded therein, who can apprehend any danger from so manifest a forgery... But whatever use an impartial version of the Koran may be

of in other respects, it is absolutely necessary to undeceive those who, from the ignorant or unfair translations which have appeared, have entertained too favourably an opinion of the original, and also to enable us effectually to expose the imposture..."(20)

Such was the introduction to the version of the Qur'ān with which the English Public had to be content for some 150 years. Its influence was enormous in producing an impression of Islam in the minds of readers throughout Europe, since this "preliminary discourse" was translated into several European languages and published either in company with the translation into that language, or separately. It was even translated into Arabic, by Protestant missionaries in Egypt. (21)

Undeniably Sale's translation of the Qur'ān contains a large number of inaccuracies, each one indicating that he could not have fully grasped the Arabic of the Qur'ān; examples will be given later in this study. But despite this, his version was the foundation for many other English and European translations and was not supplanted for nearly two centuries. In Arberry's words, "the superiority of Sale to Ross is evident in every line" and his English style "is more elegant and mature". (22)

With the rise of oriental studies, the interpretation of the Qur'ān inevitably engaged the

interest of scholars, who applied different approaches to this field. The next English translation of the Qur'ān, made by Rodwell, first published in 1861, and taken up by Everyman's library in 1909, had the sūras arranged in chronological order. Rodwell gives the following justification for this somewhat arbitrary procedure:

"The arrangement of the suras in this translation is based partly upon the traditions of the Muhammadans themselves, with reference especially to the ancient chronological list printed by Weil in his Mohammad der Prophet, as well as upon a careful consideration of the subject matter of each separate sūra and its probable connection with the sequence of events in the life of Muhammad. Great attention has been paid to this subject by Dr Weil in the work just mentioned; by Mr Muir in his Life of Mohamet, who also publishes a chronological list of Sura's, 21 of which he admits have "not yet been carefully fixed"; and especially by Nöldeke, in his Geschichte des Qorans ... from the arrangement of this author I see no reason to depart regarding the later Sura's. It is based upon a searching criticism and minute analysis of the component verses of each, and may be safely taken as a standard, which ought not to be departed from without weighty reasons". (23)

Thus, in order to find a particular sūra in Rodwell's version, one first has to consult a comparative table of contents.

Rodwell criticized Sale for having followed Maracci too closely, "especially by introducing his paraphrastic comments into the body of the text" and "his constant use of Latinized instead of Saxon words". He also attempted in his translation to imitate the style of the Arabic original. As regards "the more brief and poetical verses of the earlier suras" he translated them "with freedom from which I have altogether abstained in the historical and prosaic portions; but I have endeavoured nowhere to use a greater amount of paraphrase than is necessary to convey the sense"; he also has "nowhere attempted to represent the rhymes of the original". Observing the considerable merits of this work, Margoliouth asserted that Rodwell's translation "aims at correctness without sacrificing the right effect of the whole to over-insistence on small details". (24)

In 1880, E H Palmer produced his English translation of the Qur'ān, which was published in Sacred Books of the East for Oxford University Press. It comprises two volumes and demonstrates a considerable poetic talent. In his translation, he did not adopt the chronological rearrangement attempted by his predecessor; instead, he divided the text into paragraphs of varying length, abandoning the italics used by Sale and Rodwell.

The most significant of English translations, is

that made in 1937-9 at Edinburgh, by Richard Bell, who in his two-volume work took the Qur'ān to pieces and put it together again. He attempted to analyse the methods employed by the 'collectors' of the text and illustrated these by means of various typographical devices. His reconstruction of the text extends to individual verses and even parts of verses, and his translation is set up in a kind of tabular form, in order to show the original composition of the work; consequently it is extremely difficult to use for someone with no knowledge of the original. This, perhaps, calls attention to the problems raised by certain features of the external form of the Qur'ānic text, which will be discussed later.

The Koran interpreted, by A. J. Arberry, appeared in 1955. His work is distinguished for its literary qualities and style. His approach to the text was so conscientious as to cause him to agree with those who held that it was untranslatable; this is apparent even from the title he gave to his work. In his introduction, he says:

"the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendour of the original".

His main aim in this new version was to:

"imitate, however imperfectly, those rhetorical and rhythmical patterns which are the glory and the sublimity of the Koran". (25)

Accordingly he divides each *sūra* into rhetorical units that terminate with a rhyming word; these terminations are indicated by a short line. However, when there is no room for determining these units, he takes the liberty of "making corresponding variations in my own rhythmical patterns". (26) A close study of his translation will show that Arberry overemphasizes the aspect of rhyme in the original text, at the expense of its structure and the relation of this to the content. For example, he re-arranges a number of *sūras* (eg. 1-8) in such a way that verses are renumbered; verses 30-55 of *sura* 3 in Arberry are, in fact, verses 33-63 of the original text, while verses 109-120 of *sura* 5 are verses 112-123. Thus, his translation seems to be unbalanced which in turn distorts the syntax and the thematic-structural unity of the original text, which may be looked upon by a target reader as lacking logical harmony.

It was not until the 20th century that the first English versions of the Qur'ān made by Muslims appeared. It is believed that it was of 'Abdul Ḥamīd which was introduced in 1962-8, at Decca, comprising three volumes, the second edition of which appeared in 1965-8. However,

one may assume that the most prominent English versions of the Qur'ān are those made by 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali and Marmaduke Pickthall. Unlike some other previous translations, these versions are not, of course, characterised by any preconceived hostile attitude.

In 1930, Pickthall produced his version, The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān, which was published in London. He had achieved a certain repute as a novelist, with distinct literary gifts. In the preface to his work he indicates that he is presenting to English readers what Muslims hold to be "the meanings of the words of the Qur'ān, and the nature of the Book, in not unworthy language and concisely with a view to the requirements of English Muslims". (27)

However, this very statement gives rise to not a little confusion between what he terms the "meaning of the words" and the title, "the meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān"; secondly, no clues are provided to clarify in what sense the nature of the book is explained by the translation, even in the introduction; finally, he makes no specific mention of the requirements of English Muslims.

He also asserts the untranslatability of the Qur'ān, while translating it. He maintains, on religious grounds, that what he has produced is to be called 'the meaning of

the Qur'ān' and not 'the Qur'ān'. However, it is not clear in what way The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān is not a 'translation' or in what way this demonstrates its untranslatability; such an assertion, in fact, is paradoxical since it appears in an actual translation of the original text.

A translation by A. Y. 'Ali first appeared in 1934 in Lahore and is frequently reprinted all over the World. His English interpretation appears together with the original Arabic text in parallel columns, keeping the original numerical markings of the verses. By making a verse by verse rendering, he produces a rather uneasy structure, in which he divides each section into paragraphs indicated by flowery initial letters, as a further aid to the reader. For 'Ali, these sections and paragraphs indicate the logical divisions of the sura. This, in fact, indicates his awareness of how problematic a sura may appear to be in a translation. (28)

Generally speaking, his translation seems to operate on two levels: the first is that he translates on a verse by verse basis, guided by the original Arabic text on the right side of the page; the second is that he indicates a division into sections and paragraphs. However, these two levels seem to be unrelated, for it is not very clear how these sectional divisions can help the reading and the comprehension of the message of the original. These

divisions are not part of the original and may, in fact, cause difficulties to the reader in his approach to the sura; the situation is not improved by these sections being preceded by what⁶Ali calls "a running commentary in rhythmic prose or free verse".

In the past 60 years, over 20 English translations of the Qur'^{ān} have been produced. We include four of these in our study.

The first of these was made by Dawood. His translation of The Koran, the first in contemporary English, was published as Penguin No. 1001 in 1954 and has since been printed in over fifteen editions. Dawood claims that the Koran is the earliest and by far the finest work of classical Arabic prose. For him, the Koran is not only one of the greatest books of prophetic literature but also a literary masterpiece of surpassing excellence. He describes previous translations as having practically failed to convey both the meaning and the rhetorical grandeur; this in his view was a consequence of adhering to a rigidly literal rendering of the Arabic idioms.

Throughout his rendering, Dawood often refers to the commentaries of Al-Zamkhsharī, al-Bayḍāwī and al-Jalālayn.

Like some other translators, Dawood does not follow the traditional arrangement of the Qur'ānic sūras, rather he begins with the more Biblical and poetic revelations and ends with the much longer, and often the more topical, chapters. This kind of arrangement, he claims, is primarily intended for the uninitiated reader who, understandably, is often put off by such mundane chapters as "The Cow" or "The Table", which are traditionally placed at the beginning of the Book.

Unlike his predecessors, Dawood attempts to a great degree to imitate the style of the Arabic original, but with more brevity and abstinence from paraphrastic expressions and archaism. He thus conveys the sense of the original appropriately and brings out much of the "wild charm" of the Arabic. One's overall impression of this translation is that it aims at correctness without sacrificing the effect of the whole to over-insistence on small details.

Born in 1900 as Leopold Weiss in a Jewish family in Poland, Asad embraced Islam in 1926. He crowned his lifetime's research with an ingenious translation into English of the Qur'ān, published in 1980 as The Message of the Qur'ān. In his translation, Asad always looks for the most intelligent and most direct manner of explanation, applying the latest insights of linguistics and natural science.

This work is based on a life time's study of the Qur'ān and, in Asad's words is "perhaps the first attempt at a really idiomatic explanatory rendering of the Qur'anic message into a European language".

In his translation he often refers to various Arabic exegeses and lexicons. His style is simple and lucid. Because of his extensive knowledge of Arabic and Islam, Asad sometimes uses ideas of his own which may not be prevalent in other translators works. Most of his comments are supported by classical exegetes. In many instances he makes comparative criticisms of Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

He is primarily addressing his work to Western readers. He therefore adopts certain attitudes, some of which one may accept as convincing, but others of which one may reject. For example, he considers references to miracles or supernatural phenomena as allegories. For example, he denies the miracles of Jesus, accepted by Muslims, stating that resurrecting the dead and healing are allegorical references to spiritual salvation.

In his translation, Asad introduces a number of new terms and expressions, such as "God-conscious", "denyers of truth" and "reality which is beyond the human perception". The reason he gives for introducing such new

terms and expressions is that the conventional translations of the Arabic terms and expressions that they represent do not adequately render their comprehensive connotations.

As regards the style of his translation, Asad avoids using unnecessary archaisms, which, he claims, would confuse the contemporary reader.

One of the famous translations produced by the Qadyanis is that of M. G. Farid. The edition of 1981 contains comprehensive linguistic as well as religious comments. Farid makes not a small number of comparative analyses at points where most of the Qadyani members differ from the orthodox; such as in footnote number 2359 on 33:41 where he considerably stretches the meaning of the word khātam to fit in with the Qadyani belief, ie. that Muhammad is not the last Prophet and that there can be divine revelation to people other than Prophets.

Farid also uses many archaic expressions and much paraphrasing. The explanations of many important Arabic words and expressions he gives are based on lexicons of the Arabic language such as Lisān al-⁶Arab and Lane's lexicon. As regards the translation, his procedure is to take the meaning of every word on both the individual and the contextual level. He uses italicized words to elaborate on certain verses where a literal

rendering appears to be inadequate.

Each sura is preceded by an introduction where he discusses the place and date of its revelation. Farid also gives a summary of the contents of each sūra and its relation with that preceding or following it.

The general impression given by his work is most favourable in its systematic approach and its comprehensive use of material. However, the Qadyani tenor of many of his footnotes rather detracts from its general usefulness.

The Qur'ān by T. B. Irving is claimed to be the first American version ever produced. For Irving, the Qur'ān is untranslatable into any tongue, owing to the divine nature of its form and content. Its message, however, may be interpreted. This interpretation, claims Irving, cannot express the whole range of connotations of any one verse; it can only illuminate some aspects of the sense of the original.

The general style he adopts in his translation is, as he claims, reverent yet contemporary American English. His work is mainly aimed at the new generation of English speaking Muslims, particularly the younger ones.

In his translation, Irving tries to find the

simplest equivalent words for the sake of easy understanding. Therefore, he avoids archaic expressions in order to appeal to present-day readers.

He aims to create a version which represents good American English prose and, as he claims, can be used confidently by English-speaking people. Irving maintains that Arabic is paratactic in its structure while English syntax involves a large number of subordinates; he does not, therefore, use a paratactic form of expression in his translation.

In his introduction he provides a brief study of particular technical terms used in the Qur'ān such as Islam , kufr and birr; he suggests new equivalents that represent more adequately the Qur'anic implications, as they may be understood on the basis of traditional commentary. Irving also holds that fresh words and concepts should be introduced to the English-speaking mind, in order to bring out, more appropriately, the connotations of the Qur'ān.

His work is arranged either in prose form or as rhythmic free verse, depending on the nature of the Arabic original. He puts the more lyrical sections in the form of free verse and rough stanzas.

The layout on each page of his translation is paid

particular attention, for, as Irving claims, it may seem more important than rhyming today. Thus adjectives which refer to the Deity are capitalized, as are other key words such as Path and Truth. All pronouns: We, He, You, etc., representing the Deity are also capitalized, including their possessive forms, (His, Your, Our, etc.,) this capitalization is employed mainly to achieve a mood of reverence.

Instead of numbering each *āya*, Irving uses an asterisk to mark the beginning of a verse; two asterisks indicate the fifth, tenth etc., verses; triple asterisks mark the 100's. He also employs marginal headings in the outside margin.

In the conclusion to his introduction, Irving describes most of the previous approaches to Islam in general and the Qur'ān in particular as so antiquated that they appear to have little connection with present circumstances. Finally, he declares that his work is not a translation; rather it is a version and a modest tafsīr.

Generally speaking, unacceptability of translations of the Qur'ān is due either to inaccuracy in the translation itself or to tendentious interpretation. The English of some translations employs extra explanatory words which sometimes affect the sense of the passage.

The archaic English of translations such as Pickthall's often causes a certain amount of difficulty to the modern reader. On the other hand, the simplicity of certain other translations occasionally becomes merely a prosaic paraphrase which, does not convey the spirit of the original either.

Some versions are difficult to work with, owing to the lack of numbering of the verses, as in Sale's, inconsistency of numbering, as in Arberry's, and re-arrangement of the suras, as in Dawood's.

In my view, Dawood's version is better than most. This is because of his literary taste in choosing precise yet comprehensive equivalents, in using simple yet expressive language and avoiding archaism. However, more commentary would have been welcome, either as introductory matter or as footnotes.

In the above rapid review of the history of translating the Qur'ān into English by both Muslim and non-Muslim Scholars, a number of other versions have been left out of account; their mention would add little to our discussion. It appears, however, that most of these translations were made by Scholars whose mother-tongue was other than Arabic, while those made by Muslims were by Scholars whose mother-tongue was neither Arabic nor English, except in the case of Pickthall and Irving.

It may be suggested, at this point, that the problems in these and other translations is the lack of determining, in advance, meaningful units in which the transference may be performed. These translations differ only visually, whether in the case of re-arranging the suras, or using rhymed units, or dividing the text into sections and paragraphs. The level of transference remains, and will remain, on that of adherence to the structures of the original. The main aim of each translator seems to have been to achieve an improvement on his predecessors rather than to produce a version based on a better apprehension and closer analysis of the original text.

There are a considerable number of factors to be taken into consideration when setting out to translate the Qur'ān. Firstly, the Qur'ān belongs to a culture with which we are not quite familiar; the time, as well, of the Qur'ānic revelations is far removed from ours. It is written in a language that few of us have fully and comprehensively mastered. This gap of culture, time and language is great, which in turn increases the element of interpretation and paraphrasing required; in fact, there is no way round this if a maximum degree of faithfulness is sought.

Generally, a translator of religious texts faces various questions: are the actual words of the original to be rendered word-for-word? or must the subject matter over-rule the words so that the full significance of the original is brought out? Is it according to his own apprehension of the original that he conveys the message? Does he act as a stylist or a Prophet? What about obscure terms of high doctrinal significance? Should he seek the guidance of a theologian?

Presumably, the golden rule for a translator of religious texts in general and the Qur'ān in particular, is that he should adopt a middle-of-the-road attitude, ie. he should not employ an extreme word-for-word method, neither he should adhere to the free type of translation. Indeed, a word-for-word rendering is not often applicable, for undoubtedly there are many Arabic words which do not have exact equivalents in English or any other language. What should be aimed at is not a series of exact equivalents that do not make sense in the context, but rather the production of an impression which is similar or nearly similar to that produced by the original.

Thus, in dealing with the Qur'ānic text for translation purposes one should ask oneself:

- a. what is said?
- b. how is it said?

c. what is meant?

These three questions constitute a firm base on which a translator should set out to work. The result may be evaluated as to whether it is:

- a. accurate,
- b. intelligible,
- c. readable.

To be accurate in rendering any passage of the Qur'ān one has to be fully aware of the exact meanings of the Arabic words in order to produce their English equivalents. Of course, there are occasions where no sufficiently accurate equivalent can be found. In such a case, additional information may be put in a footnote. Intelligibility, on the other hand, requires that, when translating, it is not enough to produce a series of sentences each of which has its own meaning, the argument should run smoothly throughout the translation; transition from one sentence to the next must be made logically clear, even if it requires introducing words which are not there, but, of course, implicit in the original. Sentences must be presented in a form which will preserve not only the meaning but also, as much as possible, the rhetoric of the original. As far as readability is concerned, the translation should attempt to produce an acceptable literary style in English which

will be interesting not only to the learned but also to the layman reader.

However, it is undeniably true that the art of translation is one in which to attain complete success for ever is impossible. No translation is final even if it is very accurate, intelligible and readable, this may be evidenced by the proliferation of translations of the Qur'ān. A final version is impossible to achieve; it is difficult to imagine how a work could come into being that suits all men who belong to a specific time and place. This is where the Qur'ān must meet them.

As mentioned earlier in this study, there have been different approaches to the actual process of translation which reflect the focus of loyalty that the translator adopts while undertaking his task, whether it be to the source language or the target language.

In modern linguistics these traditional types are replaced by newer ones, in some cases the term "type" is substituted by the term "equivalence". The following are some of the new types of translation touched upon in modern translation studies.

1. A type based on the translator's aim:

As stated earlier, there are four types of

translation which may be determined by the aim of the translator: the aesthetic-poetic, the linguistic, the ethnographic and the pragmatic. These types were suggested by Casagrande who also asserted that "the same material approached with those various goals in mind may yield different translations, but given the translator's aim they may nevertheless be equally valid". However, he holds that these four aims occur in a mixed rather than a pure form. (29)

2. Dynamic equivalent type:

Although this type is directly linked with Bible translation, Nida indicates that it is "all inclusive", in the sense that it is applicable to all types of texts. By establishing a comparison between dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence, Nida explains how they operate in the actual process of translating. As regards formal equivalence, he points out that it is "designed to reveal as much as possible the form and content of the original message". He maintains that formal equivalence translation helps in explaining less intelligible passages in the original; these are supplemented in marginal notes. On the other hand, dynamic equivalence involves certain adjustments in terms of both the target reader and culture. It also involves linguistic appropriateness on both grammatical and lexical level. Grammatical adjustments are not difficult to undertake

since they are "dictated by the obligatory structures" of the target reader. (30)

However, Nida asserted that it is on the level of lexical adjustments that most problems emerge, for "no translation that attempts to bridge a wide cultural gap can hope to eliminate all traces of the foreign setting", owing to the occurrence of:

a. functional equivalents, which involve the supplying of footnotes; this is a characteristic procedure in formal equivalence translation.

b. Optional and obligatory equivalents where, as Nida indicates, loss of meaning is inevitable through a number of elements in both source and target language; these include such features as morphological (tense, gender ...etc) or formal as word order, arrangements of attributes, etc. This loss of meaning in turn requires the addition of some semantic elements to provide a roughly equivalent message. For Nida, this provides a justification for a certain amount of expansion in formal elements (eg. word order and arrangement of attributes) for a translation to be meaningful. (31)

In fact, the application of the dynamic equivalent type depends upon a variety of considerations, including the nature of the original message, types of receptors,

the setting of the communication and the purpose of the translation. Nevertheless, this seems to be inapplicable in actual practice, because the extent of either adding or eliminating these features in a translation is not specified and somewhat abstract. This in turn shows that dynamic equivalence, as a type of translation, involves a certain amount of problems in its application. (32)

3. Overt/covert types:

These two types were suggested by House, who divided texts into:

a. Interpersonal texts such as religious texts. For these texts, she suggested what she called "overt translation", in which a translation must overtly be a translation, not a "second original".

b. Ideational texts which are not source-culture linked, such as scientific texts. For these texts, House suggested what she called "covert translation", in which a translation should enjoy the status of an original source text in the target culture. (33)

In practice, the overt and covert types of translation are, to some extent, somewhat indistinguishable, for there are a large number of texts which require the application of both in an

inter-connected manner in order to produce an adequate representation of an original source language text.

4. Semantic/Communicative types:

Newmark suggested two types of translation, which, unlike other types of translations (such as the literal, the interlinear and the free, that serve special purposes), are appropriate to any text. These two are:

- a. Communicative translation, in which the translator attempts to produce the same effect on the target language readers as was produced by the original on the source language readers. He describes this type as clear, smooth and simple, and untranslatable.
- b. Semantic translation, in which the translator attempts to produce the precise contextual meaning of the author within the syntactic and semantic constraints of the target language. This type, according to Newmark, is more complex, awkward and detailed; thus it overtranslates. (34)

However, Newmark stated that there is no one communicative nor one semantic method of translating a text. There are, in fact, a widely overlapping band of methods. He also compared these two types with House's overt and covert types indicating that they correspond to his communicative and semantic types respectively.

In the above brief discussion of translation types the actual procedure of translating may best be achieved within the framework of the dynamic and the communicative/semantic types. In the dynamic equivalence translation the procedure consists of analysis, transfer and restructuring stages. The analysis stage involves studying closely the surface structure in terms of grammatical relationships and the meaning of words and combination of words. As regards the transfer stage, Nida considers it as an undefinable one because the manner in which language data are stored in the brain is unknown. In the restructuring stage the concern is with producing an appropriate style, which depends, to a great extent, on the purpose of the translation that underlies the choice of ways to render a particular message. The purpose may be to convey information, to suggest a particular mode of behaviour or to make an action explicit and compelling. Nevertheless, the final rendering will be informative and fully intelligible.

(35)

According to Newmark the actual procedure of translating consists of two stages:

a. **Cognitive or analytical:** a pre-translation procedure which may be performed on the SL text to convert it into the target language.

b. Final translation: where the translator should respect the conventions of the target language in terms of reproducing the thought-content of the TL. This stage emerges in such a way that the exact meaning or function of the words become apparent as they are used. (36)

Newmark's two stages may perhaps be further divided or defined; there are three essential procedures, of which the second belongs partly to the first and partly to the second stage. This is what Nida and Taber appear to have in mind when they state that the translator "will constantly swing back and forth between the analytical and restructuring process by way of the transfer ... which is done in split-second fashion." (37)

These three procedures are: comprehension, processing, and transference.

A good translation of any text is, of course, the outcome of a full and accurate apprehension of the original message. The translator should attempt to reach the spirit and tone of the original text through an adequate knowledge of the SL conventions, nuances and culture; and to be fully acquainted with its subject matter. The translator should also carry out a detailed literal translation, as far as possible, necessarily in short units, but looking out for links between one and the next.

Lexis and syntax must be determined, as far as possible at this stage, independently of any considerations except those of the text itself. The external factors may now be applied, in order to modify the purely textural version. In the case of the Qur'ān there are a large number of matters that require consideration; this is where commentaries and works on Qur'ānic studies should be consulted. Some of the factors that have to be dealt with at this stage, since they will not necessarily have emerged in the previous stage, are:

Muhkamāt and Mutashābihāt Verses:

Although there has been constant dispute on the subject, it has generally been accepted that the Qur'ān itself states that its verses are of two types, both of which are fundamental components of its text, eg. 3:7. These two types are called Muhkamāt and Mutashābihāt. The Muhkamāt verses are those verses which are clear by themselves and have only one dimension of meaning; thus they are independent. The Mutashābihāt verses, on the other hand, are unclear verses, which can have more than one dimension of meaning and hence require further exegesis.

It is generally accepted among Muslim Scholars that Muḥkamāt verses deal with topics such as ḥalāl and ḥarām, rules of inheritance and punishment; those that deal with more complex topics such as life after death, the true nature of the Day of resurrection and the divine attributes, are Mutashābihāt.

The mutashābihāt verses may be briefly classified as follows:

a. those that present difficulty owing to obscurity of vocabulary, eg. 80:31 (abbā) and 37:94 (yaziffūn), or ambiguity of vocabulary, eg. 48:10 (yad) and 39:67 (yamīn).

b. those that present difficulties in syntax, such as the elliptical quality of 4:3 and the word order of 18:2.

c. those that have specific connotations, such as verses pertaining to divine attributes, eg. 20:5.

d. those combining both lexical and semantic obscurity owing to:

i - uncertainty as to whether they should be regarded as general or specific, eg. 9:5.

ii - uncertainty of the significance of the sequence in which they occur, eg. 4:34.

iii - particular cultural references that they contain, eg. 2:189 and 9:37.

ʿĀmm and Khāṣṣ Verses:

It is also important to distinguish between verses classified as ʿāmm and those classified as khāṣṣ. ʿĀmm verses are those which have a wide general application. Khāṣṣ verses are those which are restricted in their application to particular people, times or circumstances. There are basically three types of ʿāmm verses:

- a. Those with general timeless application, eg. 4:176 and 18:49.
- b. Those apparently general, but actually specific in application, eg. 3:173, where uās (people) refers to one person, namely Naʿim b. Masʿūd, and 3:39, where the Archangel Jibrīl is referred to as malā'ika (angels).
- c. Those often referred to as al-ʿĀmm al-Makḥṣūs, (specified general), such as 3:97 where the word nās includes in its legal ruling all Muslims - but certain exceptions are made. (38)

Khāṣṣ verses are of two main types: muttasil (connected) and munfaṣil (detached). The muttasil type has the following forms:

- i. Istithnā' (exceptions), eg. 24:4-5 and 5:33-4.
- ii. Sifa (description), eg. 4:23.
- iii. Shart (condition), eg. 2:180 and 24:33.
- iv. Ghāya (objective or aim), eg. 2:196 and 222.
- v. Badal al-baʿd min al-kull (specification), eg.

3:97. (39)

The munfasil type requires its exegetical material from the Qur'an itself: eg. 2:228 is made more specific by 65:4 and 33:49; from hadīth : 2:275, for example, permits trading in general while a tradition in al-Bukhārī excludes certain types of trade; from ijmā' (consensus): eg. 4:11, the ruling of which is confined to the free-born, thus excluding slaves, and from qiyās (analogy): eg. 24:2 is made more specific by means of analogy with 4:25.

Mantūq and Mafhūm of Verses:

Also important is differentiation between mantūq (surface meaning) and mafhum (deeper meaning). Mantūq is of the following types:

- i - Nass (clear and decisive) in its wording and meaning, eg. 2:196.
- ii - Zāhir (clear) in its wording but (ambiguous) in its meaning, eg. 2:173.
- iii- Mu'awwal (ambiguous) in its wording and meaning - terms used metaphorically, eg. 17:24.
- iv - Dalālat al-iqtidā' (elliptical) meaning but (clear) wording, eg. 2:184.
- v - Dalālat al-ishāra (clear) meaning but (elliptical) wording, produced by stylistic devices such as the word-order, eg. 2:187. (40)

Mafhūm is of two main types. The first is called mafhum muwāfaqa, in which the implication agrees with the wording of the text and what may be deduced by analogy from it, eg. 17:23 and 4:10. The second type is called mafhum mukhālafā, where the implication is at variance with, and even the opposite of, what is stated in the text, eg. 49:6 and 5:95.

Rules of Waqf and Ibtidā':

A knowledge of al-waqf wa-l-ibtidā' is also important. In 18:2, for example, a pause is essential after the word iwaja, resuming the passage with qayyimā. Al-Suyūṭī, in this connection, identifies another feature, that is al-mawṣūl lafza wa-l-mafṣūl ma'nā. (The lexically connected and semantically detached); 7:189 provides an example. The story of Ādam and Hawwā' (Eve) is immediately followed by a passage concerning Shirk, which seems to have become attached to the Adam and Eve story owing to similarity of phraseology. However, a careful reader can detect this because of the change of verbs and pronouns from dual to plural at this point.

Pronouns:

Pronouns generally in the Qur'an are a fertile

source of ambiguity. Their frequent use, sometimes with a phrase, rather than a noun, as referent, is a unique feature of the style of the Qur'ān. In 33:35, for instance, the pronoun lahum (for them) refers to twenty nouns mentioned several verses earlier. 24:31 contains the largest number of pronouns in any single verse, namely 25. These, of course, have to be appropriately allocated for a proper understanding.

Third person pronouns, which are common in the Qur'ān, are frequently ambiguous in their reference, eg. 2:178, where it is not altogether clear to which person the pronoun of ilayhi refers. A pronoun may refer to a hidden noun, as in 56:83 and 38:32. Again, it may refer to one of a number of nouns mentioned earlier in the text, eg. 2:45. In some cases a pronoun is in the dual, while actually referring to one noun, eg. 55:22. In other cases it is simply difficult to see what the referent of a pronoun is, eg. duhāhā in 79:46.

Definite and Indefinite Nouns:

Another feature that affects comprehension is the idiosyncratic usage of definite and indefinite nouns. The indefinite rajul in 28:20, for example, refers to a perfectly regular undefined noun. In 2:96, hayāt refers to a particular class of thing as does mā' in 24:45, where one might well expect the definite article.

Indefinite nouns are generally used for emphasis, eg. harb in 2:279, and to indicate abundance, eg. ajr in 26:41, or both, eg. rusul in 35:4.

Repetition of a Noun:

Repetition of a noun frequently occurs, either in the same verse or in adjacent verses. Certain conventions may be remarked on in such cases of repetition:

- i. when the repeated nouns are definite, eg. 1:6-7 and 40: 36-7, the second noun generally has the same referent as the first.
- ii. when the repeated nouns are indefinite, eg. 30:54, the referents are generally different.
- iii. when the first repeated noun is indefinite and the second is definite eg. 24:35, both have the same referent.
- iv. when the first repeated noun is definite and the second is indefinite, the referents may be the same or different, depending on the context. In 30:55, for example, the referent of the second noun is different from that of the first, whereas in 39:27-8 both nouns have the same referent. (41)

Singular and Plural forms:

The use of singular and plural forms is another feature of the Qur'ān. A number of words occur only in their plural form, with different words, although with similar connotation, being employed for the singular. Albāb, for example, is used throughout the Qur'ān to indicate "(men of) understanding", as in 39:21; for the singular of this concept qalb is used, eg. in 50:37. The context in which ard is used, in 65:12, indicates clearly that it is treated as a plural here.

Moreover, singularity and plurality have additional connotations. The word samā' (heaven), for example, when used in the plural form samāwāt, as in 59:1, connotes "abundance and greatness," whereas in its singular form it merely indicates location, eg. 67:16. Another example is the word rīḥ (wind) whose singular connotes "punishment", eg. 30:51, while its plural form connotes "mercy", eg. 2:164 and 15:22.

Nominal and Verbal forms:

I. The use of nominal or verbal forms also has considerable significance. The nominal bāsīt, for example, in 18:18, is meant to emphasize the posture of the dog of aṣḥāb al-Kahf; yunfiqūn in 3:134 denotes continuous action. The accusative salāmā in 51:25 acts

as a form of indirect speech, while the Prophet Ibrahim's reply in the nominative is direct speech, thus making his return of the angels' greeting more vivid than theirs. Al-Suyūṭī thus concludes that the nominal form is more emphatic and effective than that of the verbal form.

(42)

Conjunctions:

The use of conjunctions should also be noted. For instance, the employment of wa-, fa- and thumma in 26:79-81 has a specific significance; according to the tafsīr, wa implies that the provision of food and drink was not necessarily in that order, fa connotes the passage of an insignificant period of time between illness and cure, and thumma connotes the passage of a large period of time between death and resurrection.

(43)

The Verbs Kāna, La⁶alla and ⁶asā:

Another problematic feature is the employment of particular verbs such as kāna, la⁶alla and ⁶asā. Kāna is the most frequently used of these; it belongs to the nāqis (incomplete) class, because it cannot constitute a complete proposition with the subject which it comprises, or to which it relates. (44) Kāna is often divested of all signification of time, where it

functions as a copula. Al-Rāzī identifies a number of uses of kāna in the Qur'ān:

- i - To indicate timelessness, eg. 4:170 and all verses dealing with divine attributes.
- ii - To indicate an action that has taken place, definitely in the past, eg. 27:48.
- iii - To indicate a natural, and persisting attitude, eg. 3:110.
- iv - To indicate the end result of a certain attitude, eg. 2:34.
- v - To indicate a general negative truth, eg. 8:67.(45)

La-⁶alla is a verb denoting possibility, hope or fear; however, in the words of God it often expresses certainty. It also frequently signifies something approaching "in order to". ⁶Asā is another verb denoting possibility, desire, hope or fear, and, in the words of God, often expressing certainty, eg. 2:216. (46)

There is a number of other features of language and usage that present particular problems in the interpretation of the Qur'ān and hence the procedure of comprehension; these will be discussed later.

In the next stage, the translator has to decide on the type of language in general, and in particular the

rendering of problematic terms, expressions and idiosyncrasies of language and style. This can best be achieved through the provision of relevant information to guide the target reader through the translated text by means of:

a. The provision of an introduction which prepares the target reader to approach the translated text with full awareness of the peculiar features of the original and their implications in the translated form. In certain cases these implications cannot be fully indicated in the body of the translation, thus the information provided in the introduction will elucidate them. This principle of "introduction" is common in most of the available translations of the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, some of these introductions appear to be inspired by hostile intentions, eg. Sale's introduction. Such introductions, in fact, may be considered of no great help to the target reader. Introductions, in general, should be informative in a way that acquaints the target reader with not only the principles underlying the translation but also with the message in its original form. One of the best introductions is that made by al-Mawdūdī, included in the translation of A.Y. Ali. The provision of an introduction to each sūra may also be helpful to the target reader; this should give a general summary of the sūra under discussion, such that it helps the reader to connect the ideas embodied in each sūra

separately so as to form an apprehension of the Qur'ān as a whole. This introduction should include an outline of the central theme of the sūra and its relationship with the subsidiary themes touched upon therein. The reader should be advised to focus on the central theme and make an attempt to see how each subsidiary theme helps in expounding it while reading the sūra individually or in connection with the other sūras.

b. The provision of footnotes for each sūra.

c. The provision of appendices for the more detailed topics that need further elaboration.

These three suggested aids to an approach to the meaning of the text as a whole should contain information relevant to the history of the Qur'ānic revelation. It should explain how the text presents its doctrines; how the text was originally understood and how it should be understood now; how the text should be interpreted; how the translation compares with the original; and why a translation is not enough for purposes of interpretation.

While the above analysis is concerned with the text as a whole (content, central theme, etc.) and helps the translator determine what to include in the introduction, footnotes and appendices, the interpretational analysis, being the second stage, helps in selecting the method of

translation, in determining the appropriate unit on whose level the translation should be undertaken.

At this point, it may be prudent to consult other versions, in various languages, in order both to avoid similarities of rendering and to see if there are any points that have been missed or any errors that have gone unnoticed. If they are consulted at any earlier stage, there is a risk of their influencing the present version, particularly in expression.

The final stage is to revise the version as a whole, in order to render the language as homogeneous as possible, as far as this is appropriate, and to ensure that the same terms and expressions are, if practicable, translated in the same way on each occurrence.

The early English translations of the Qur'ān, such as those of Sale (1734), Rodwell (1861), Palmer (1880) - and even that of the Muslim Pickthall (1930) - adopt a verse by verse rendering, which in general excludes any reflection of the spirit of the original. They are thus rightly described by Arberry as being of "a certain uniformity and dull monotony". (48) He also maintains that by adopting such an approach - a verse by verse rendering - we end up with a "mysterious inconsequence of the Qur'ānic rhetoric". To avoid such a "mystic approach", he suggests that a rendering should capture

the rhythmical patterns which are the glory and the sublimity of the Qur'ān. (49)

It is, then, most important that the translator should determine this unit on the level at which the translation is to be made. This unit is essentially different from that used in tafsīr, in that the latter is too restricted for a translation, and also that the mufassir has, to some extent, the freedom of recourse back and forth in order to establish a proper relationship between the verses on one hand, and the suras on the other. The translator's task is considerably different, for his main purpose is to reproduce the material, as briefly as possible, in units that clearly demonstrate their significance in a particular context. In order to achieve this, the translator should consider the nature of the link of a single verse or a group of verses taken together with the central theme of the sura.

In determining the unit of translation, the first step, therefore, is to identify the central theme of the sura to be translated. An attempt will be made in the following to analyse the longest sura in the Qur'ān, namely al-Baqara, which consists of 286 verses. Most of the available works on tafsīr do not consider, in a systematic manner, the importance of such an approach,

let alone the translations.

This sūra derives its title from the story of al-Baqara occurring in vv. 67-73. Al-Mawdūdī asserts that this title is not used to indicate the subject of the sura. Therefore, he maintains that "it will be as wrong to translate the name al-Baqara as 'The Cow' or 'The Heifer' as to translate any English name... into their equivalents in other languages, or vice versa, because this would imply that the sūra dealt with the subject of 'The Cow'. Many more sūras of the Qur'ān have been named in the same way because no comprehensive words exist in Arabic (in spite of its richness) to denote the wide scope of the subject discussed in them. As a matter of fact all human languages suffer from the same limitation". (50)

Although al-Baqara is a Madanī sūra, it follows a Makkī sūra, namely al-Fātiha, which ends with the prayer "Guide us on the straight path". Thus, al-Baqara begins with the answer to that prayer "dhālika-l-kitāb...hudan li-l-muttaqīn (This book... is guidance for those who fear God).

The central theme of this sura is an invitation to follow Divine Guidance. Drāz states that the sura as a whole has four main objectives:

1. To offer a universal divine invitation to Islam.

2. To make a specific invitation to the People of the Book (ahl al-kitāb) (the Jews and Christians).
3. To expound the message of Islam.
4. To propound measures protective against, and preventative of, evil and conducive to good. (51)

The central theme, together with these four objectives, constitute the pivot round which revolve the diffuse elements of the sūra, which derives its distinctiveness from the atmosphere, mood and style in which these elements are expressed.

With this in mind and the realization that what is intended is neither to produce a second original nor a tafsīr, the translator may turn to the step of determining the unit of translation, on the basis of examining the role of the verses, whether individually or in groups, in the exposition of the central theme, and the four objectives. This may be undertaken as follows:

1. Verses 1-20. These introductory verses declare the Qur'ān to be a Book of ultimate Guidance, focusing on the articles of Faith in Allah, Prophethood and life after death; They then classify mankind into three main categories with regard to their acceptance or rejection of these articles: believers, unbelievers and hypocrites.
2. Verses 21-25. These five verses emphasize the first

objective of this sūra: inviting mankind to Allah's Guidance through the acceptance of tawhīd (unity). This, of course, comes as a consequence of accepting His Guidance, the rejection of which will incur punishment.

3. Verses 26-39. These verses represent an elaborate reversion to the first group of verses in an attempt to illustrate the supremacy and unity of Allah and His Divine and inimitable message of Guidance. In this connection, examples are provided: The story of Adam as Allah's vicegerent on Earth, of his life in the Garden, of his falling prey to the temptations of Satan, of his repentance and its acceptance, is alluded to in order to show mankind (Adam's offspring) that the only means of salvation is to adopt the Guidance of Allah. Again, reference is implicitly made to the first objective; and the unit ends with an implication similar to that of the previous unit, in preparation for the next one.

4. Verses 40-162. In this unit of 123 verses the concern is with the second objective; the invitation to Guidance has particularly been extended to the children of Israel. Their past and present attitude is criticized, in order to show that their degradation is mainly due to their deviation from Allah's Guidance. The issues in these verses may be divided as follows:

- a. verses 40 - 48 General invitation.
- b. verses 49 - 73 the situation of the Jews in the past.

- c. verse 74 the connecting link between the past
 and the present
- d. verses 75 - 121 the contemporary situation of the Jews.
- e. verses 122 -134 the relationship between the Guidance
 brought by Muḥammad (a descendant of
 Ibrāhīm) and that of Ibrāhīm, whom
 they regard as their ancestor.
- f. verses 135-162 the contemporary situation of the
 Muslims and their relationship with
 the Guidance of Ibrāhīm as subseq-
 uently transmitted to Muḥammad.
 Certain doubts have also been
 clarified.

5. verses 163-177. These verses represent an introduction to the third objective of this sura. In this portion of 15 verses, practical measures have been prescribed for the promulgation of this Guidance; this may be of three stages:

a - Establishing the fact that the sole important issue is the Unity and Lordship of Allah, from which the attention of believers may have been diverted towards preoccupation with His individual prescriptions. Asserting that it is to Allah alone that devotion is due, and that the prescribed observances are no more than symbolic; that the end of worship is nothing other than

Allah. This stage, then, functions as a foundation for the next.

b - In addition to the above, in which association in Worship is totally forbidden in Islam, equally forbidden is the submission to laws contrary to His, for, since He is the Creator and Sustainer, it would be unjust to serve anyone else.

c - A unique connection is established in this stage, where the past and present are blended in such a manner as to link the first two stages. The reminiscence of the incident when the qibla was changed from the Temple (Jerusalem) to the Ka⁶ba (Mecca) indicates the change of pre-eminence from the children of Israel to the Muslims, the latter are also warned to guard against those transgressions against the Guidance that have led to the deposition of the Jews. It is also indicated here that this change of qibla must not be overemphasized and exaggerated. Thus it functions as a test in one of the aspects of submission to the will of Allah. The general basics of Islam are touched upon and their Divine origin, which has come through angels and subsequently transferred to mankind by Prophets; again adhering to these Divine prescriptions will lead to Guidance.

6. vv 178-283. These 106 verses emphasize and expound the third objective of the sūra. After establishing the

foundation in terms of external form, now comes the internal construction. Thus the rectification of faith is established, in general; what remains is the enlightenment of the followers of this particular faith (Islam) and the expounding of its laws and prescriptions and how the method of discharging the responsibilities that are imposed upon its followers; these are the practical details of this Guidance, in connection with the individual, the family and the whole Muslim community on the social, economic, political and international levels.

Ṣalāt, Ṣiyām, Zakāt, Hajj and Jihād are prescribed for the moral training of the Muslims. They are also exhorted to obey authority, to be just, to fulfil pledges, to observe treaties, to expend their wealth, etc. in the way of Allah. On the other hand, drinking, gambling, etc, are prohibited, in order to keep them safe from disintegration. At intervals, the basic articles of faith are reiterated since they are the support required for adherence to Guidance.

The concept of life after death is also emphasized, in order to sustain a sense of accountability. Instances from the past are employed to illustrate the power of Allah and the certainty of His recording and punishing any transgression on the part of the Muslims. They are again exhorted to comply with His prescriptions and, in

particular, to refrain from evil in one of its manifold aspects, namely the lending of money on interest. Instructions are also given on a linked issue, ie. the proper conduct of day-to-day business transactions.

7. verse 284. This verse constitutes one of the crucial elements in guarding against evil and fulfilling instruction; thus it is central to the fourth objective of the sūra. The basic articles of faith are, therefore, recapitulated in this verse, as enunciated earlier.

8. verses. 285-6. These two concluding verses represent a fulfilment of the promise, made at the beginning of the sūra, of success and salvation to the righteous, in the form of a prayer for Divine support. (52)

From this analysis it is clear that this sura may be divided into eight main units, each representing a thematically meaningful and coherent statement or message. Each of these units functions as a means of expounding and varying the thematic organization of the sūra. This analysis suggests that this thematic organization cannot be represented in a simple though surface translation, but only in one that depends on a critical examination of how the structure, of the sūra is designed to present its theme to the maximum effect. This brief analysis of al-Baqara, and the function of its verses is an attempt to provide an example of how a sūra

may first be analysed, in order to facilitate its translation.

From an analysis such as this, the appropriate unit of translation may be determined. What the translator is concerned with now is the thematic content of the unit and its function in relation to the broader context of the sura. Before translation, the unit has to be analyzed to determine the meaning of individual lexical items, and the grammatical relationships between them. In view of this, works of exegesis and concordances provide an indispensable aid to any translation. The main aim of this analysis is to prepare for the transference into the target language.

There are various categories of obscurity and ambiguity of the SL text when words and sentences have multiple meanings or several understandings. This linguistic obscurity may be grammatical or lexical. In the Qur'an ambiguity is mostly lexical, though in some cases it can be grammatical involving sentences. In the case of lexical ambiguity the context constitutes the criterion in determining the meaning, thus in dealing with words in contexts the concern is with the contextually derived meaning of the word; this should take into account both the explicit and implicit contexts. The former is the linguistic context represented by the whole unit of translation, while the

latter consists of all the interpretational material concerning the unit in its relation to the sura as a whole.

Ambiguity may also be grammatical, due to certain characteristics of the Arabic language such as the free-word-order. However, such structures may not be of great problematic nature in the source text due to the diacritical marks, which specify the grammatical function of such a word-order. In translation, however, they pose a problem in transference where such features are not familiar in other languages, thus they might be rendered in ambiguous structures.

Equally important for the translator is to consider carefully certain complicated syntactic structures which, according to Newmark, are employed to lay emphasis on certain elements of particular constructions. (53) This in turn might create a certain amount of difficulty not only to the translator but also to the reader of the original text in a number of cases such as in 9:120-1.

These two main factors that pose certain problems in translation will be further discussed with illustrations later in part two. A clarification will also be provided regarding how to tackle ambiguity and complex syntactic structures.

In most of the English translations it appears that the tendency has been to translate with strict adherence to the form of the source text regardless of the target language structures. As is well known, languages differ considerably as to the manner in which they express their semantic structures. There are also certain systematic vocabulary gaps, such as the presence or absence of morphemes, particularly grammatical; it is these gaps that pose a problem in the conversion procedure. Thus, the target reader should be presented with such a translation that take into account such a problem, and that the translator should come up with not only an acceptable translation but also a congenial one. Considering this, Daryābādī summed up these impediments confronting the translator of the Qur'ān under six main elements:

1. Compared to Arabic, the English language lacks several aspects such as:
 - a. Arabic verbs to be translated as English verbs such as bakhila, Ṣadaqa, Istawā, Asrafa, abtala, manna, and taghā, thus to render these into English a combination of words are introduced, (compared to the Arabic single word): bakhila becomes (is niggardly), sadaqa (to be truthful), ...etc.

- b. There is no equivalent for the Arabic mudāriʿ (aorist) in English. Mudāriʿ in Arabic indicates both present and future tenses combined, whereas in English a tense is either present or future, thus most Arabic verbs in mudāriʿ are to be rendered in English only incompletely.
- c. In English grammar there are only two 'numbers' singular and plural, and there is no single word to convey the sense of the Arabic (dual) tathniya in nouns as well as verbs, both in the second and the third persons.
- d. There is comparative dearth of asmā' al-fā'il (nomina agentis) in the English language, whereas they abound in Arabic: muflihūn, mushrikūn, muttaqūn, muʿjizūn ...etc have to be rendered as adjectives or participles, not as substantives.
- e. In Arabic, the feminine plural in the second and third persons is always distinguishable from the masculine. In English both genders are covered by 'you' and 'they'.
2. Repetition of synonyms, mainly for the sake of emphasis, is of frequent occurrence in Arabic, sometimes its application is of considerable literary

merit and beauty. In the English language there is no sanction for it. Thus many such expressions as Innā nahnu nuhyī al-Mawtā (literally: verily, we! we! we quicken the dead) has to remain only partly translated.

3. Another difficulty is caused by the ease with which ellipses occur in the style of Arabic and both words and even phrases have to be supplied by the reader to make the sense complete. At one time, it is only the subject that is mentioned and the predicate is entirely suppressed, and at another, the reverse is the case. The translator, therefore in such cases has to supply the elliptical side, which is often not an easy task.
4. Another perplexity, the translator may encounter is the abrupt grammatical transition, in one and the same sentence:
 - a. of person, as from the first and second person to the third, or vice versa;
 - b. of number, from plural to singular, or vice-versa.
5. A further complication is caused by what is called Intishār al-Damā'ir, ie. a personal or relative pronoun having different antecedents in one and the same sentence. The translator cannot afford to allow such ambiguities; he has to make his choice.

6. Finally, there is no real equivalence in the import of many of the Arabic and English words generally, considered as synonyms. The Arabic word Zinā, for instance, has no equivalent in English, both 'adultery' and 'fornication' being of much narrower import. Similarly English has few words to express such closely related (mutaqārib al-ma⁶nā) Arabic terms as khawf, khashya, ishfāq and taqwā. (54)

Observing these nuances of the Arabic language, Alfred Guillaume points out:

"Arabic is fitted to express relations with more conciseness than the Aryan languages because of the extraordinary flexibility of the verb and noun. Thus, the ideas in break, shatter, try to break, cause to break, allow to be broken, break one another, ask someone to break, pretend to break, are among many variations of the fundamental verbal theme which can, or could, be expressed by vowel changes and consonantal augments without the aid of supplementary verbs and pronouns which we have to employ in English. The noun, too, has an appropriate form for many diverse things, such as the time and place of an action, bodily defects, diseases, instruments, colours, trades, and so on. One example must suffice. Let us take the root DWR, which in its simplest form, means to turn or revolve (intransitive).

<u>dawwara,</u>	to turn a thing round.
<u>adāra,</u>	to make go round, and so; to control.
<u>dawr,</u>	turning (noun).
<u>dawarān,</u>	circulation.
<u>dawwār,</u>	pedlar or vagrant.
<u>madār,</u>	axis.
<u>mudīr,</u>	controller.
<u>dāwara,</u>	to walk about with someone.
<u>tadawwara},</u>	
<u>Istadāra }</u>	to be round in shape.
<u>dawrah,</u>	one turning.
<u>duwār,</u>	vertigo.
<u>dawwārah,</u>	mariner's compass.
<u>mudārah,</u>	round water-skin. "

Guillaume maintains that "none of these forms is fortuitous, but is predetermined by the structural genius of the Arabic language". (55)

The level at which transference is performed is the group of verses (the unit) determined in the above manner. In the process of translation the translator has to preserve the content of the source unit while observing the rules of the target language; this may be undertaken within the framework of the following suggested stages:

1. The first stage involves determining, with reference to the first and second types of analysis, the words in the unit such as verbs, nouns and adjectives, which can exactly or approximately be translated into the target language. Problematic expressions, such as those pertaining to religious concepts and figurative usage, have also to be determined.

2. The second stage involves transferring the individual words of the source unit in an exact or approximate one-to-one rendering, or by two or more words, according^{as} the target language allows.

3. The third stage consists of approaching the net outcome in an independent manner, that is to say, is restructuring the unit according to the requirements of the target language. It is apparent that it is almost impossible to maintain the structures of the source unit in a target language. Certain adjustments, therefore, are essential; this, however, can only be undertaken by someone who is quite familiar with the peculiar features and nuances of the Qur'ānic text expounded in reference works on I'jāz al-Qur'ān where topics such as the word-order, taqdīm and ta'khīr, ellipsis and other features that pose a large amount of problems to the reader of the

original let alone the translator.

It is true that most of the available English translations of the Qur'ān have to a certain extent paid attention to these features. However, as is to be expected in most works of translation, there are a number of errors on various levels, some of which will be dealt with in the next part of this study. Furthermore, a common feature of most of these translations is the strict adherence to the word, phrase and complete verse order, with no real consideration of the structure of the target language. The language used in these translations generally tends towards archaism. This, perhaps, is based upon "a fundamental error, ie. that of conveying remoteness of time and place through the use of a mock antique language". (56)

This should not be misunderstood as advocating complete freedom of translation, involving the rendering of the text according to the structures of the target language by adding or omitting various features. Rather, it should be performed on the basis of a balanced consideration of the source text, the readers and the target language, in an attempt to convey what the original is trying to communicate, whether it be in the actual body of the translation, the introduction, the footnotes or even in the appendices.

However, it is not suggested that the translators, at any rate the more scholarly ones, did not pay any attention to the works of tafsīr, but only that they did not incorporate all the interpretations of these into their translations.

So much for the declared intentions of the study; as its title suggests, the following part is devoted to a consideration of some inaccuracies that generally occur in several English translations of the Qur'ān.

NOTES

- 1) Casagrande, pp. 335-340.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) For more details see, for example, W Schwarz, Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation;
F Grant, Translating the Bible;
D Crystal, Linguistics, Language and Religion.
- 4) Sheed, p.31
- 5) Caird, pp.2. ff.
- 6) Donovan, p.7.
- 7) See, for example, the introduction to the translations of Ali, Asad and Arberry.
- 8) Shellabear, p.288-9.
- 9) Khalīfa, pp. 114-240.
- 10) al-Mawdūdī's introduction to the Qur'ān.
- 11) Ibid.
- 12) Arberry, p.xi.
- 13) See, for example, the translations of Rodwell, Bell and Dawood.
- 14) al-Jurjānī, p.93.
- 15) Chomsky, p.17.
- 16) See, for example, Ali and Pickthall.
- 17) Kharma, pp.63-64.
- 18) See Arberry, p.7; Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 15, p.345, 1973.
- 19) Ibid.

- 20) Sale, P.V.
- 21) Pearson, P. 505.
- 22) Arberry, p.12.
- 23) Rodwell, p.3.
- 24) Ibid. pp.16-18.
- 25) Arberry, pp.24-25.
- 26) Ibid. p.26.
- 27) Pickthall, pp. vii-viii.
- 28) Ali, p.5.
- 29) Newmark, pp. 38 ff.
- 30) Casagrande, The Ends of Translation, p.335, 1954.
- 31) Nida, Towards a Science of Translation, p.165.
- 32) Ibid, pp. 173-5.
- 33) Ibid.
- 34) House, pp. 189 ff.
- 35) Nida and Taber, p.33 and p.157.
- 36) Newmark, pp. 40-43.
- 37) Nida and Taber, p.104.
- 38) al-Qaṭṭān, p.224.
- 39) Ibid. pp.226-7.
- 40) Ibid. pp.250-5.
- 41) See, for example, al-Suyūṭī, Volume 1., pp.250 ff;
al-Qaṭṭān, pp. 200 ff.
- 42) al-Suyūṭī, Volume 2., p.261.
- 43) al-Dāmaghānī, p.95.
- 44) al-Iṣfahānī, p.444; Lane, P.3004.
- 45) al-Zarkashī, Volume 4., p.127.
- 46) Cantarino, Volume 3., p.88 and p.258; Lane, p.2636.

- 47) al-Qaṭṭān, p.213.
- 48) Arberry, Volume 1., p.24.
- 49) Ibid, Volume 2., pp.10-25.
- 50) al-Mawdūdī, Volume 1., p.37.
- 51) Drāz, p.163.
- 52) For more details see, for example, al-Ṣābūnī, Volume 1. pp. 29-81; al-Mawdūdī, Volume 1., pp.42-44; Drāz, pp.163-211.
- 53) Newmark, p.27.
- 54) Daryābādī, Volume 1., pp. ix-xii.
- 55) Arnold and Guillaume, The Legacy of Islam, pp. vi-vii.
- 56) Cohen, p.24.

PART TWOA contrastive Analysis of Some Translations of the Qur'an.

SECTION ONEA CONSPECTUS OF PROBLEMATIC ELEMENTS .CONNECTIONS:

The syntactic and semantic relationship between verses within the unit as well as across the units is often established by connectives which connect the verses and the units. It can be explicit and syntactically expressed through conjunctions eg. wa (and), li (for), thumma (then)....etc; or through pronouns, eg., al-ladhī (who).

The Qur'ān also employs implicit connections where it omits transitional expressions providing explicit connections between the verses. In the absence of such conjunctions and transitional expressions, the relationship between verses and units is determined by thematic interdependence. Explicit connectives offer no great problems; It is the implicit thematic relationships that pose a serious problem in translation. This, in fact, suggests that a unit to unit, rather than a verse to verse, translation may be more practical, in order to establish some of these connections.

1. 2:2 dhālika is primarily used in the sense of "that"; but it is also sometimes used in the sense of "this", indicating the high rank and dignity of the subject to which it refers. In this context it signifies that the "Book" or "Divine Writ" is, as it were, remote from the reader in eminence and loftiness of merit. Thus, it could be interpreted as:

"This is a perfect Book" or "This Divine Writ". (1)

2. 2:133 am

The conjunction am, which stands at the beginning of this verse, is not always used in the interrogative sense "is it that...?"; sometimes, and especially when it is syntactically unconnected with the preceding sentence, as in this case, it is an equivalent of bal "rather" or "nay, but"; it has no interrogative connotation. (2)

3. a. 5:93 thumma

In this context the conjunction thumma, literally, "then", signifies a sequence of growth and intensification. Occurring twice in this verse, it should therefore be interpreted in the first instance as "they continue to be" and in the second instance, as "they grow ever more". (3)

3. b. 6:38 thumma

Here, thumma, has the significance of repetitive

stress, alluding to something that has already been stated and is now again emphasized. This particular usage of thumma is best rendered by the words "and once again," followed by a colon. (4)

3. c. 11:113 thumma

According to al-Zamakhsharī, thumma at the beginning of this clause does not signify a sequence in time, "and then" or "afterwards", but, rather, a stress on the impossibility istib⁶ād of their being succoured by God. (5)

3. d. 19:70 thumma

Again, this is another usage of thumma, as a conjunction explanatory of the preceding statement. Thus it may best be rendered as "for". (6)

3. e. 63:3 thumma

In this particular context, thumma has the function of "whereas". (7)

4. a. 23:6 aw

The particle aw in this context does not denote an alternative "or" but is, rather, in the nature of an explanatory amplification, more or less analogous to the phrase "in other words" or "that is". (8)

4. b. 2:74 aw

In this particular context, aw has the function of bal "rather" or "indeed it is". (9)

5. a. 27:1 wa

The conjunction wa in this case has a function more or less similar to the expression "namely". (10)

5. b. 48:27 wa

Again, another usage of wa in the Qur'ān is to signify an alternative: "or", which is its sense in this context. (11)

5. c. 4:34 wa

wa in this particular context denotes a sequence in order. Thus it may best be rendered as: "...first; then...; then...", rather than simply "and". (12)

6. 106:1 li

As li is a particle and in Arabic a new sentence never begins with a particle, a sentence or clause must therefore be understood before this verse. The verse prefixed by the understood expression may read something like this: "let Quraysh worship the Lord who protected them in their summer and winter journeys". Thus, the li in verse 1 refers to the verb in verse 3, namely falya⁶ budū. (13)

DUPLICATIVES: (INTENSIVE EXPRESSIONS).

The use of duplicatives in the Qur'ān for emphasis is frequent; this is not always brought out in the translations.

1. 5:42 sammā⁶ūna and akkālūna

These two intensives denote "those who eagerly listen to....and greedily swallow (or devour)...", (14), Thus they should not be rendered merely as: Pickthall: "listeners for....Greedy for...", Dawood: "They listen to...practice....", or Sale: "who harken toand eat...."

The closest rendering seems to be that of Ali: "They are fond of listening....of devouring...."

2. 12:23 ghallaqat

This is the intensive form of ghalaqat or aghlaqat "to shut or close". Thus it should be rendered as "firmly closed". (15) or "to lock or bolt firmly", and not as it is generally translated:

Ali: "fastened"

Asad: "bolted"

Rodwell: "shut"

Arberry: "closed"

3. 2:222 tataharna

This expression has been inadequately rendered by

many of the interpreters. It is preceded by yathurna, which is not in the intensive form. The verse deals with the menstrual period and its relation to sexual intercourse. It states that intercourse is not allowed until two conditions are met:

- a) yathurna: the blood discharge ceases to flow; and
- b) yataṭaharna: the women purify themselves by performing ghusl, the prescribed washing of the body. (16)

We may then venture:

"....until menstruation is over and they duly wash themselves; only then...."

rather than:

Asad: "....until they are cleansed, and when they are cleansed..."

Dawood: "...until they are clean again...", seeming to disregard tataḥarna.

Arberry: "...till they are clean. When they have cleaned themselves...". This is the most accurate though still incomplete. There is no obvious means of preserving the tajnīs in translation.

COGNATE OBJECT: (Maf'ūl Muṭlaq).

This kind of syntactic relation, where the object is semantically dependent upon the action of the verb, is employed for emphasis and elaboration.

1. 73:4, rattil al-Qur'ān tartīlā

The term tartīl primarily denotes, the "putting [of something] together distinctly, in a well-arranged manner, and without any haste". When applied to the recitation of the Qur'ānic text, it signifies a calm, measured utterance with thoughtful consideration of the meaning to be brought out. A somewhat different significance attaches to a variant of this phrase in 25:32, applying to the manner in which the Qur'ān was revealed. Thus rattil al-Qur'āna tartīlā implies something like: "recite the Qur'ān calmly and distinctly, with your mind attuned to its meaning". (17)

The following versions demonstrate the problems presented by such constructions. Ali's is the closest.

Rodwell: "with measured tone intone the Koran",

Sale: "repeat the Koran with a distinct and sonorous voice",

Arberry: "chant the Koran very distinctly",

Pickthall: "chant the Qur'ān in measure",

Farid: "recite the Qur'ān a good recital",

Ali: "recite the Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tones".*

2. 76:28, baddalnā amthālahum tabdīlā

The function of the cognate object in this verse is to signify a threat and menace. Thus, it connotes something like:

"we can replace them entirely with others of their kind" or "we can substitute the like of them by a complete change." (18)

not merely:

Dawood: "we can replace them by other men".

Sale: "we will substitute others like unto them, in their stead".

Arberry: "we shall exchange their likes".

3. 18:100 ʿaradnā jahannama... ʿard an

In this particular context the cognate object has the function of intensifying the description of Hell as a terrible reality to the unbelievers (19). This is hardly realised in the following renderings:

Arberry: "we shall present Gehenna to the unbelievers"

Asad: "we shall place hell, for all to see".

However, some interpreters are somewhat closer to the original:

Farid: "we shall present hell, face to face to the .."

Dawood: "Hell shall be laid bare before the unbelievers".

Ali: "we shall present Hell...for unbelievers to see, all spread out (that they will see the terrible reality)". *

EXPRESSIONS OF NON-ARABIC ORIGIN: (20)

1. 18:31 sundusin wa istabraḡin

These two words, according to al-Suyūṭī, are of Persian origin. Most lexicographers and exegetes consider both words to signify two types of silk: sundus refers to a thin or fine silk while the latter refers to silk of a thick texture: (21)

Sale: "fine silk and brocades",

Pickthall: "finest silk and gold embroidery",

Arberry: "silk and brocade".

The above renderings do not express fully the implication of sundus and istabraḡ, for 'brocade' according to Oxford Dictionary signifies "ornamented rich material" which does not essentially include silk. However, paraphrasing may be feasible in this context; thus it may, for instance, be rendered as: "fine silk and rich thick silk". (22)

2. 2:104 rā⁶inā

Vocalised thus, this word signifies "listen or pay attention to us". It is claimed, however, that the Jews at the time of the Prophet modified this to ru⁶ūna, either "our evil one" or "saying foolishness", thus producing a derisive pun; consequently, the Qur'ān suggests another expression, namely unzurnā, in order to avoid the possibility of the Prophet's being insulted in this way. (23)

Sale: "Raina" ✖

Pickthall: "listen to us"

Ali: "words of ambiguous import" ✖

Arberry: "observe us"

Since both words mean "listen to us", it seems that transliteration may be the best way to render them. "Listen to us" or "observe us" does not convey the sense, since it is not with the meaning of the word as it stands that the Qur'ān is concerned, but, rather, the possible distortion to which it may be subjected. Ali, on the other hand, while appearing to see the point, gives too general and vague a rendering.

3. 2:260 Ṣūrhunna

According to al-Suyūṭī, this expression is either of Byzantine or Nabatean origin, and means "to cut to pieces" (24)

Sale: "divide them"

Rodwell: "cut them in pieces" ✖

Pickthall: "cause them to incline unto thee"

Ali: "Tame them to turn to thee"

Arberry: "Twist them to thee"

Rodwell's rendering is the closest to the meaning of the original.

4. 59:5 Līnah

According to al-Suyūṭī (25) the word Līnah is of Hebrew origin. It signifies a palm-tree in al-Madinah that produces the best kind of dates. Al-Rāghib asserted that "tenderness" is a characteristic of this tree, a characteristic which seems to have been disregarded by most interpreters except Ali, whose version is not exactly happy in English:

Sale: "Palm-trees"

Rodwell: "Palm-trees"

Arberry: "Palm-trees"

Ali: "tender palm-trees" *

OBSCURE VOCABULARY:1. 22:29 tafathahum

According to Penrice, two interpretations are given of this word; the first signifies "filth", the second the observance of certain rites and ceremonies imposed upon the Pilgrims at Mecca, cleansing the person, shaving, etc. Thus in this context, it means "let them put an end to their want of cleanliness", or "let them complete the rites" which are incumbent on them during pilgrimage: the prohibition of enjoying certain bodily comforts like cutting or shaving one's hair (2:196), wearing any clothing but the simple, unsewn Pilgrim's garb (ihrām).

indulging in sexual intercourse (2:193), etc. (26)
 These implications of this rare expression are not very
 adequately conveyed in the following renderings:

Sale: "the neglect of their persons"

Pickthall: "their unkemptness"

Arberry: "their self-neglect"

Dawood: "spruce themselves"

The closest to the original is that of Ali:

"let them complete the rites prescribed"* Even
 this, however, needs some comment in a footnote.

2. 34:11 qaddir fī al-sard

According to Lane, this expression means "make a due
 adaptation of the rings in the fabrication of the coats
 of mail", or "to properly adapt the nails, or pins, and
 the holes of the rings [in the fabrication] not making
 the former thick and the latter small, nor the reverse".
 (27)

The various renderings do not altogether do justice to
 this:

Sale: "rightly dispose the small plates which compose the
 same"

Rodwell: "arrange its plates"

Pickthall: "measure the links (thereof)"

Ali: "balancing well the rings of chain armour"

Arberry: "measure well the links"

Asad, for his part, has a rather strange interpretation:
 "do good deeds lavishly, without stint, and give deep
 thought to their steady flow".

3. 55:35 shuwāz min nār

This term, according to Lane, refers to a flame
 without smoke, which implies extreme heat of fire (28).
 The following renderings seem to have variously
 overtranslated or undertranslated it:

Sale: "a flame of fire without smoke, and a smoke without
 flame". *

Rodwell: "a bright flash of fire"

Ali: "a flame of fire (to burn) and a smoke (to choke)"

Arberry: "a flame of fire and molten brass".

4. 38:31 al-sāfināt al-jiyād

According to Penrice, this expression signifies "to
 stand on three feet - as a horse- with the toe of one of
 the hind feet just touching the ground; thus, it refers
 to horses standing as above". This posture it seems, is
 characteristic of nobly-bred, swift-footed steeds.
 (29). The only close rendering among the following is
 that of Sale:

Sale: "the horses standing on three feet, and touching the
 ground with the edge of the fourth" *

Rodwell: "The prancing chargers"

Pickthall: "light-footed coursers"

Ali: "coursers of the highest breeding, and swift of foot"

Arberry: "the standing steeds"

5. 56:55 al-hīm

This expression refers to camels raging with thirst from disease, which results in that the more they drink the more thirsty they feel, until they die. Thus it might be expressed as "diseased camels raging with insatiable thirst". (30)

Sale: "a thirsty camel"

Rodwell: "the thirsty camel"

Pickthall: "a camel"

Arberry: "thirsty camels"

Dawood: "thirsty camel"

SYNONYMY :

1. Terms referring to forgiveness: Although the implications of these terms appear to be synonymous, al-Maydānī considers them to be of various stages, having different denotations:

a. yaghfir 33:71

b. yukaffir 2:271

c. ya⁶fu 42:25

d. laysa ⁶alaykum junāh 33:5

e. yubaddil allah sayyi'ātihim hasanāt 25:70 (31)

He maintains that the first term signifies a general sense of pardoning, the second implies a higher degree of forgiveness, by an intensive erasing of one's sin; the third indicates the utmost degree of erasing one's sin by obliterating all its traces, the fourth denotes that it is as if one's sin had never been committed, the fifth signifies the replacement of one's sin with good deeds. Translations have tended to disregard such distinctions:

Pickthall a. "forgive"

b. "atone for"

c. "pardoneth"

d. "there is no sin for you"

e. "will change their evil deeds to good deeds"

Arberry: a. "forgive"

b. "will acquit you of your evil deeds"

c. "pardons"

d. "there is no fault in you"

e. "will change their evil deeds into good deeds".

2.30 ru'yā and hulm

Both words normally refer to what one seems to see or experience during sleep. However, ru'yā occurs seven times in the Qur'ān, each time indicating denoting real visions. On five of these seven occasions it is associated with Prophets, and on two associated with an

ordinary person. (32)

Hulm, on the other hand, occurs three times, in the plural (ahlām), always indicating something unreal.

(33) The two words are, therefore, not synonymous and should be rendered accordingly. (34) This has not been done in the translations:

	<u>ru'yā</u>	<u>ahlām</u>
Sale:	"vision"	"dream"
Rodwell:	"vision"	"dream"
Asad:	"dream"	"dream"
Arberry:	"vision"	"nightmares"
Pickthall	"vision"	"dreams"
Dawood	"dream"	"dream"
Ali	"vision"	"dreams"

3. ānasa eg. 20:10 and absara, eg. 6:104.

ānasa signifies "to be familiar and pleased with something or to become glad at the presence of something, (35) while absara signifies "to see", which, of course, may encompass things that one is not familiar or pleased with. (36). Ānasa occurs five times in the Qur'ān, each time in the above sura, whereas absara occurs once in the sense of "to perceive", and many other times in the sense of "to see". (37) The two are often rendered as though they were interchangeable:

	<u>ānasa</u>	<u>absara</u>
Sale:	"perceive"	"seeth"
Rodwell:	"perceived"	"seeth"
Pickthall:	"spy afar off"	"seeth"
Asad:	"perceive"	"chooses to see"
Dawood:	"candescry"	"sees"
Ali:	"perceive"	"will see"

4. halafa and aqsama

These two words for "to swear" are frequently used in the Qur'ān. halafa occurs in thirteen passages, all of which implying an intention of breaking the oath. Aqsama is usually associated with keeping one's oath. Thus, according to Bint al-Shāṭi', they are not synonymous: (38)

	<u>halafa</u>	<u>aqsama</u>
Sale:	"swear"	"swear"
Asad:	"swear"	"affirmation"
Pickthall:	"swear"	"oath"
Arberry:	"swear"	"swear"
Dawood:	"swear"	"swear"

Almost all translators have rendered both as "swear". The difference between them may be brought out by rendering aqsama as "to swear a solemn oath" or the like, thus distinguishing it from "swearing an [ordinary] oath".

POLYSEMY:

A large proportion of the language of the Qur'ān is polysemic; this may be problematic in translation. The commentators say that the following words occur in the Qur'ān in various senses:

1. Umma

- a. 2:213 "a particular type of nation"
- b. 12:45 "a certain time"
- c. 16:120 "an exemplar or a leader in religion"
- d. 43:22-23 "a denomination" (39)

Sale:

- a. "of one faith"
- b. "a certain space of time"
- c. "a model of true religion" *
- d. "practising a religion"

Asad:

- a. "one single community"
- b. "after all that time",
- c. "who combined within himself all virtues"
- d. "agreed on what to believe"

Rodwell:

- a. "one people"
- b. "...had been set at large"

c. "a leader in religion" *

d. "persuasion"

Arberry:

a. "one nation"

b. "after a time"

c. "a nation"

d. "community"

2. Dalil:

a. 93:7 "perplexity"

b. 18:104 "cancelled or nullified"

c. 2:282 "forget"

d. 32:10 "dead or buried"

e. 12:30 "to err or go astray" (40)

Sale:

a. "wandering in error"

b. "vain"

c. "mistake"

d. "lie hidden"

e. "error"

Arberry: a. "erring"

b. "astray"

c. "errs"

d. "gone astray"

e. "error"

- Dawood:
- a. "in error"
 - b. "lose"
 - c. "commit an error"
 - d. "lost"
 - e. "gone astray" *

- Pickthall:
- a. "wandering" *
 - b. "goeth astray"
 - c. "erreth (through forgetfulness)" *
 - d. "lost"
 - e. "aberration"

3. F.T.N

- a. 29:3 "test, trial"
 - b. 6:23 "reply, excuse"
 - c. 85:10 "prosecution"
 - d. 5:49 "seduction"
 - e. 57:14 "disbelief, sin"
 - f. 10:85 "an example of admonition for others"
- (41)

- Sale:
- a. "proved"
 - b. "excuse" *
 - c. "prosecute" *
 - d. "swerving from"
 - e. "seduced"

f. "suffer us not to be afflicted by"

Pickthall: a. "tested" *

b. "contention"

c. "prosecute" *

d. "seduce" *

e. "tempted"

f. "lure"

Arberry a. "tried" *

b. "proving"

c. "prosecute" *

d. "forsake"

e. "tempted"

f. "temptation"

4. rūh

a. 26:193 "Jibrīl"

b. 40:15 "revelation"

c. 12:87 "mercy"

d. 21:91 "to imply honour and nobility"

e. 17:85 "breath of life in all living creatures". (42)

Sale: a. "spirit"

b. "spirit"

c. "mercy" *

d. "spirit"

e. "spirit"

Ali: a. "spirit"

b. "spirit of inspiration"

c. "soothing mercy"

d. "spirit"

e. "spirit of inspiration"

Arberry: a. "spirit"

b. "spirit"

c. "comfort"

d. "spirit"

e. "spirit"

Asad: a. "Divine inspiration"

b. "inspiration"

c. "life-giving mercy"

d. "spirit"

e. "divine inspiration"

5. Z-L-M

a. 6:82 "polytheism or idolatry"

b. 18:33 "injustice"

c. 17:59 "denial"

d. 2:35 "sinful transgressor" (43)

Sale: a. "injustice"

- b. "failed"
- c. "dealt unjustly with"
- d. "transgressors" *

- Rodwell:
- a. "error"
 - b. "failed"
 - c. "maltreated"
 - d. "transgressors" *

- Arberry:
- a. "evil doing"
 - b. "failed"
 - c. "did wrong"
 - d. "evil doers"

- Asad:
- a. "wrong doing"
 - b. "failed"
 - c. "sinned against"
 - d. "wrongdoers"

EXPRESSIONS WITH TWO CONTRARY DENOTATIONS:

1. gurū', (sing. qir') 2:228.

According to Ibn Qayyim, qir' refers to the period of a woman's monthly courses and its opposite, that is to say the ceasing of a woman's monthly period and her performing, afterwards, the prescribed washing; or as Lane puts it, it refers to "menstruation: and a state of

purity from menstrual discharge: thus having two contrary meanings". (44)

Sale: "their courses"
 Rodwell: "their courses"
 Pickthall: "monthly courses"
 Ali: "monthly periods"
 Arberry: "periods"
 Dawood: "menstrual courses"
 Asad: "monthly courses"

2. warā'ahum 18:79

Al-Iṣfahānī considers this term, too, as having contrary meanings: "before" and "behind". Lane maintains that although warā', generally signifies "behind", it implies "before" in this and some other contexts. Jalāl al-Dīn explains this by saying: "there was behind them when they returned, and before them now, a King." (45)

Sale: "behind"
 Rodwell: "in rear"
 Pickthall: "behind"
 Ali: "after"
 Arberry: "behind"
 Dawood: "rear"
 Asad: "behind"

EXPRESSIONS REFERRING TO TIME:1. sā⁶a 7:34

The term sā⁶a (literally 'hour') signifies not merely the astronomical hour - ie. the twenty-fourth part of a mean solar day - but also 'time' in an absolute sense, or any fraction of it, whether large or small. In 7:34, for example, it is used in the sense of 'the least fraction of time' or 'a single moment'. (46)

Sale: "an hour"

Rodwell: "an hour"

Pickthall: "an hour"

Ali: "an hour"

Arberry: "a single hour"

Dawood: "one moment" *

Asad: "a single moment" *

2. yawm (pl. ayyām)

The term yawm, commonly translated as 'day', is used in the Qur'an to denote any period, whether extremely long ("aeon") or extremely short ("moment"): its application to an earthly "day" of twenty-four hours is only one of its several connotations. In 2:184 it signifies yawm shar⁶ī, ie. the period from sunrise to sunset which should be observed in fasting; in 41:12 it denotes a period of time the length of which is only known to God (or perhaps it refers to a period of time of

fifty thousand earthly days, as asserted in 40:49).

Yawm may also refer to the Day of Judgement, as in 2:48; or to an event in the past, eg. 3:155, or in the future, eg. 77:35. Two of the above denotations may be considered here: (47)

A. yawm as indicating an unknown period of time, eg.

41:12.

Sale: "days"
 Rodwell: "days"
 Pickthall: "days"
 Arberry: "days"
 Ali: "Days"
 Asad: "aeons" *

B. ayyām as indicating momentous historical events, eg.

14:5.

Sale: "favours"
 Rodwell: "days"
 Pickthall: "days"
 Arberry: "Days"
 Ali: "Days"
 Dawood: "favours"

3. qarn (pl. qurūn)

The term qarn in Qur'ānic usage does not always denote "century" or "generation" but - rather more frequently - "an epoch", or "people belonging to one particular epoch", as well as, "a civilization" in the historical sense of the word. (48)

Qarn 6:6, as "people belonging to one particular epoch".

Sale: "generations"
 Rodwell: "generations"
 Pickthall: "a generation"
 Ali: "generations"
 Arberry: "a generation"
 Dawood: "generations"

4. hīn and dahr 76:1

The term hīn signifies an unlimited period of time; dahr, on the other hand, refers to the duration of time from the beginning till the end. It differs from zamān in denoting only a long period; the latter may imply both a short and a long period.

The expression hīn min al-Dahr implies, according to the commentators "an immensely long (or 'endless') span of time". (49)

Sale: "a long space of time" *
 Rodwell: "a long time"
 Pickthall: "any period of time"
 Ali: "a long period of time"
 Arberry: "a while of time"
 Dawood: "a space of time"

Asad: "an endless span of time" *

CONCISE EXPRESSIONS REQUIRING ELABORATION:

1. khalasū najiyyā 12:80.

According to Lane this expression signifies that "they retired conferring privately together". (50)

Sale: "they retired to confer privately together" *

Rodwell: "they went apart for counsel"

Pickthall: "they conferred together apart"

Ali: "they held a conference in private"

Arberry: "they conferred privily apart"

Dawood: "they went aside to confer together"

Asad: "they withdrew to take counsel [among themselves]".

2. wa lakum fi-l-qisās hayāt 2:179

According to the commentators, the term qisās is almost synonymous with musāwā, ie. making a thing equal to another thing: in this instance, making the punishment equal (or appropriate) to the crime; a meaning which is best rendered as "just retribution", rather than as "retaliation", for the taking of life for a life, as implied in the term "retaliation" would not in every case

correspond to the demands of equity, eg. in 4:92, where legal restitution for unintentional homicide is dealt with. The term ḥayāt implies that there is a safeguard for men, as a community, so that they may be able to live in security. Thus the objective of qisās is the protection of Society, and not "revenge". (51)

Sale: "And in this law of retaliation ye have life"

Rodwell: "But in this law of retaliation is your security for life"

Pickthall: "And there is life for you in retaliation"

Ali: "in the Law of Equality there is (saving of) life to you"

Arberry: "In retaliation there is life for you"

Dawood: "In retaliation you have a safeguard for your lives"

Asad: "for, in the [law of] just retribution...there is life for you". *

3. fa-nbidh ilayhim 'alā sawā' 8:58.

Literally, this expression means "renounce the covenant to them in an equitable manner". Al-Qurṭubī explains it thus: "Before making war with them, inform them that because of the clear evidence of their treachery, you have renounced the treaty which existed between you and them, so that both you and they should know that you are at war with them"; so that they should

not be under the false impression that you have renounced the treaty after having started the war. Thus, the concluding sentence of this verse "Allah does not love the treacherous" is a warning against this kind of treachery. (52)

Sale: "throw back their league unto them, with like treatment"

Rodwell: "throw back their treaty to them as thou fairly mayest"

Pickthall: "then throw back to them (their treaty) fairly"

Ali: "throw back (their covenant) to them (so as to be) on equal terms"

Arberry: "dissolve it with them equally"

Dawood: "you may retaliate by breaking off your treaty with them"

Asad: "cast it back at them in an equitable manner"

4. khā'inat al-a⁶yun 40:19

According to Lane, this expression, as used in this particular context, implies taking a surreptitious look at a thing at which it is not allowable to look; or looking in a manner that induces suspicion or evil opinion; or making a sign with the eye to indicate a thing that one conceals in the mind; or the contracting of the eye, or eyes, by way of making an obscure indication; or the looking intentionally [at a thing at

which it is not allowable to look]. (53)

- Sale: "the deceitful eye"
 Rodwell: "the deceitful of eye"
 Pickthall: "the traitor of the eyes"
 Ali: "(the tricks) that deceive with the eyes"
 Arberry: "the treachery of the eyes"
 Dawood: "the furtive look" *
 Asad: "the [most] stealthy glance" *

DUBIOUS AND PROBLEMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND STATEMENTS:

Mushākala, as al-Suyūṭī calls it, occurs when an expression is used dubiously, that is to say in a somewhat metaphorical way, by means of applying two similar expressions in a particular context, the meaning of one differing from the other. (54)

1. 5:116

ta⁶lamu mā fī nafsī wa lā a⁶lamu mā fī nafsika

According to al-Bayḍāwī and al-Jalālayn, the above expression means "You know what I know, and I know not what you know", or as interpreted in Tāj al-⁶arūs and al-Qāmūs: "You know what is in your place of being". However, it may best be explained as meaning: "You know my hidden things, (or what is hidden from me), and I know

not yours", which is testified to the concluding words of this verse "You alone fully know all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being's perception".

(55)

Sale: "thou knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in thee"

Rodwell: "Thou knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in Thee.

Pickthall: "Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind"

Ali: "Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine"

Arberry: "knowing what is within my soul, and I know not what is within Thy soul"

Dawood: "You know what is in my mind, but I cannot tell what is in Yours"

Asad: "Thou knowest all that is within myself, whereas I know not what is in Thy Self"

2. 3:54

wa makarū wa makara Allah wa Allāhu khairu-l-mākirīn

The general sense of makara is "to plot against" or "to deceive", as in several passages in the Qur'ān, such as 10:21 and 13:33. However, when it is applied to God it signifies "God requited"; according to Tāj al-⁶arūs and

al-Misbāh, makr Allah signifies God's granting a man respite or delay, enabling him to accomplish his worldly aims, so as to bring upon himself the punishment due to his evil actions. Al-Rāghib further explains this expression by saying that it denotes God's taking men by little and little, so that they do not reckon upon it: bestowing upon them renewed favours for acts of obedience which are imagined to be accepted whereas they are rejected. (56)

Sale: "And the Jews devised a stratagem against him; but God devised a stratagem against them; and God is the best deviser of stratagems"

Rodwell: "And the Jews plotted, and God plotted: But of those who plot is God the best"

Pickthall: "And they (the disbelievers) schemed, and Allah schemed (against them): and Allah is the best of schemers"

Ali: "And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and God too planned, and the best of planners is God" *

Arberry: "And they devised, and God devised, and God is the best of devisers"

Dawood: "They plotted, and Allah plotted. Allah is the supreme plotter"

Asad: And the unbelievers schemed [against Jesus]; but God brought their scheming to nought: for God is above all schemers"

3. 24:33 in aradna tahassunan

According to al-Suyūṭī, the particle in in this context does not function merely as a conditional particle but rather implies a sense of "though" or "despite". Other scholars, however, interpret it as meaning "whether or not" or "even if". (57)

- Sale: "if they be willing to live chastely"
 Rodwell: "if they wish to preserve their modesty"
 Pickthall: "if they would preserve their chastity"
 Ali: "when they desire chastity" *
 Arberry: "if they desire to live in chastity"
 Dawood: "if they wish to preserve their chastity"
 Asad: "if they happen to be desirous of marriage"

4. 4:23 al-lātī fī hujūrikum

According to al-Ṣābūnī, this expression is not meant to be defining, for the ruling prescribed in this context is a general one, and this is applied on the basis of what is generally common practice, as an example and not a restriction: thus whether or not the daughter-in-law is in the custody of her step-father, it is unlawful for him to marry her. This verse, therefore, should be interpreted accordingly, ie. "whether or not they be". (58)

- Sale: "which are under your tuition"

- Rodwell: "who are your wards"
 Pickthall: "who are under your protection"
 Ali: "under your guardianship"
 Arberry: "who are in your care"
 Dawood: "who are in your charge"
 Asad: "who are your foster-children" *

TRANSITION IN THE SAME SENTENCE (ILTIFĀT):

Many passages of the Qur'ān employ what is termed iltifāt, ie. transition from one mode of speech to another, often in the same sentence. This linguistic device is of various types; Ibn Qayyim, for example, identifies the following types: (59)

1. A change from indirect to direct speech, eg. 1:1-5.

” بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ . الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِیْنَ . الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ .
مَالِكِ یَوْمِ الدِّیْنِ . اِیَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِیَّاكَ نَسْتَعِیْنُ .”

2. A change from direct to indirect speech, eg. 10:22.

” هُوَ الَّذِی یَسِّرْکُمْ فِی الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ . حَتّٰی اِذَا کُنْتُمْ فِی الْفُلِکُمْ وَجَرَّیْنِ اِیَّھُمْ
 بِرِیْحٍ کٰثِرَةٍ وَرَیَّھُمْ بِھَا جَآءَتْھُمْ رِیْحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَآءْھُمُ الْوَجْهُ مِنْ کُلِّ مَکَانٍ
 وَظَنُّوْا اَنْھُمْ اُحْیِطَ بِھُمْ دَعَوْا اللّٰهَ فَلَھِیْنَ لَھُ الدِّیْنِ لَیْسَہُ اَنْجِیْتِنَا مِنْ حَظِّہُ
 لَنَکُوْنَنَّ مِنْ الشّٰکِرِیْنَ .”

3. A change from the future to the imperative, eg. 11:54.

” قَالَ اِنِّیْ اَشْھَدُ اللّٰهَ وَاَشْھَدُوْا اَنِّیْ بَرِیٌّ مِمَّا تَشْرَکُوْنَ ”

4. A change from the dual to the plural, and from the

plural to the singular, eg. 10:87

« وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ أَنْ تَبَوِّءَا لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بَيْوتًا وَأَجْعَلُوا
بَيْوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَابْتَئِرُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ . »

5. A change from the past to the imperative, eg. 7:29.

« قُلْ أَمْرٌ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنِيعُوا رُجُوبَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ
وَأَرْعُوا مَخْلَصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَقُودُونَ . »

6. A change from the past to the future and vice-versa,
eg. 22:31.

« وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخَطَفَهُ الطَّيْرُ
أَوْ تَهَوَّىٰ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَعِيدٍ . »

In general, illifāt in the Qur'ān is employed for particular emphasis or for pointing certain assertions.

(60)

1. 10:22 A change from direct to indirect speech.

Sale: "It is he who hath given you conveniences for travelling by land and by sea; so that ye be in ships, which sail with them with a favourable wind, and they rejoice therein. And when a tempestuous wind overtaketh them, and waves come upon them from every side, and they think themselves to be encompassed with inevitable dangers; they call upon GOD, exhibiting the pure religion unto him, and saying, verily if thou

deliver us from this period, we will be of those who give thanks.

Dawood: "It is He who guides you by land and sea. You embark: and you set sail, rejoicing in a favouring wind, a raging tempest over-takes you. Billows surge upon you from every side and you fear that you are encompassed by death. You pray to Allah with all fervour, saying: 'Deliver us from this peril and we will truly be faithful'".

2. 10:87 A change from dual to plural and from plural to singular.

Sale: "And we spake by inspiration unto Moses and his brother, saying, provide habitations for your people in Egypt, and make your houses a place of worship, and be constant at prayer; and bear good news unto the true believers".

Rodwell: "Then thus revealed we to Moses and to his brother: 'provide houses for your people in Egypt, and in your houses make a kebla, and observe prayer and proclaim good tidings to the believers".

Pickthall: "And We inspired Moses and his brother, (saying): Appoint houses for your people in Egypt and make your houses oratories,

and establish worship. And give good news to the believers".

Asad: "And [thus] did we inspire Moses and his brother: "set aside for your people some houses in the city, and [tell them], Turn your houses into places of worship, and be constant in prayer!' And give thou [O Moses] the glad tidings [of God's succour] to all believers".

3. 7:29 A change from indirect to direct speech.

Sale: "Say, My LORD hath commanded me...; therefore set your faces to..."

Rodwell: "Say: My Lord hath enjoined...Turn your faces therefore towards...."

Pickthall: "Say: My Lord enjoineth justice. And set your faces, upright (towards Him)..."

Ali: "Say: "My Lord hath commanded justice; and that ye set your whole selves (to Him)"

Arberry: "Say: 'My Lord has commanded justice. Set your faces..."

Dawood: "Say: My Lord has ordered you to act justly. Turn to Him whenever you...."

Asad: "Say: "My Sustainer has [but] enjoined the doing of what is right; and [He desires you to] put you whole being...."

REPETITION:

The repetition of certain expressions and even āyāt occasionally occurs in the Qur'ānic text. It is believed that this repetition does not function simply stylistically, but principally to emphasise certain truths. Ibn Qayyim identifies three types of repetition in the Qur'ān: (61)

1. repetition with similarity of meaning, eg. 74:19-20
2. repetition with difference of meaning, eg. 3:7
3. repetition of meaning with different wording, eg. 55:68.

In attempting to render some of these instances, a surface translation of the repetitious elements may not be sufficient.

1. 69:1-2 al-hāqqa ma al-hāqqa

Sale: "THE infallible! what is the infallible?"

Rodwell: "The INEVITABLE!
 What is the Inevitable?"

Pickthall: "The Reality!
 What is the Reality?"

Ali: "The Sure Reality!
 What is the Sure Reality?"

Arberry: "The Indubitable!

What is the Indubitable?"

Dawood: "The Inevitable: and What is the Inevitable?"

Asad: "OH, THE LAYING-BARE of the truth! How awesome that laying-bare of the truth!". *

2.74:18-20 qaddar...qaddar...qaddar

Sale: "for he that devised and prepared [contumelious expressions to ridicule the Koran]. May he be cursed: how [maliciously] hath he prepared [the same 1] And again, may he be cursed: how [maliciously] hath he prepared the same!"

Rodwell: "For he plotted and planned!
May he be cursed! How he planned!
Again, may he be cursed! How he planned!"

Pickthall: "For Lo! he did consider; then he planned -
(self-) destroyed is he, how he planned!
Again (self-) destroyed is he, how he
planned!-"

Ali: "For he thought and he plotted;-
And Woe to him! How he plotted!-
Yea, woe to him: How he plotted!-"

Arberry: "Lo! He reflected, and determined - death
seize him, how he determined! Again, death
seize him, how he determined"

Dawood: "He pondered, and he schemed. Confound him,
how he schemed! Confound him, how he

schemed!"

Asad: "Behold, [when Our messages are conveyed to one who is bent on denying the truth,] he reflects and meditates [as how to disprove them] - and thus he destroys himself, the way he meditates! Yea, he destroys himself, the way he meditates!". *

ELLIPTICISM:

Ellipticism (ḥadhf) is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the language of the Qur'ān, so much so that it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand its method and inner purport without being able to reproduce in oneself something of the same quality of elliptical, associative thought of the original. The translator has to take fully into account this inimitable feature, in which deliberate omissions occur in the intermediate clauses of a train of thought, in order to express the final stage of an idea as concisely as possible. In order to render the sense into a language which does not function in a similarly elliptical manner, the thought-links which are missing - deliberately omitted - in the original must be supplied by the translator in the form of interpolations, between brackets; for, unless this is done, the result loses its coherence and may indeed become a "meaningless jumble".

Ellipticism occurs in the Qur'an in various forms, the following of which are the most common:

1. Ellipsis pertaining to the jumlah eg. 27:28-9 and 20:91.

« اذْصَبْ بِلْتَابِي هَذَا... [فَاخُذِ الْكِتَابَ نَالِقَاهُ فَرَأْتَهُ
بَلْقِيسَ] . قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا... »

2. Ellipsis pertaining to the fā'il, eg. 75:26.

« كَلَّمَآ إِذَا بَلَغَتِ [الرَّوْحَ] التَّرَاقِي . »

3. Ellipsis pertaining to the maf'ul bihi, eg.

7:152. « إِنَّ الَّذِينَ إِتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ [الْإِهْلَامَ] سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ
فَنَضَّبَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ... »

4. Ellipsis pertaining to the mudāf, eg. 12:82.

« وَإِسْرَآنَ [أَصْدَ] الْقَرْيَةِ... »

5. Ellipsis pertaining to the mudāfilayh, eg. 30:4.

« ... مِنْ قَبْلِ [ذَلِكَ] وَمِنْ بَعْدِ [ذَلِكَ]... »

6. Ellipsis pertaining to the ṣifah, eg. 18:79.

« ... يَا خُذْ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ [صَالِحَةٍ] غَضَبًا . »

7. Ellipsis pertaining to the jawāb al-shart the (consequence of a conditional clause), eg. 34:51, 13:31, 3:106 and 36:45. (62)

« وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ فَزِعُوا فَلَا فَوْتَ وَأُخِذُوا مِنْ مَكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ [لِرَأْيِكَ
أَمْرًا صَائِرًا فَظِيحًا] . »

1. 27:28-9, ellipted jumlah: "When she had read Solomon's letter". (63)

Sale: "Go with this my letter, and cast it down unto them..., (and when the queen of Saba had received the letter), she said...." *

Rodwell: "Go with this my letter and throw it down to them...., she said,..."

Pickthall: "Go with this my letter and throw it down unto them....., (The Queen of Sheba) said (when she received the letter)....." *

Ali: "Go thou, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them...., (The Queen) said,..."

Arberry: "Take this letter of mine, and cast it unto them....She said,...."

Dawood: "Go and deliver to them this message of mine.. The Queen of Sheba said....."

Asad: "Go with this my letter and convey it to them....., (when the Queen had read Solomon's letter) she said,..." *

2. 75:26, ellipted fā⁶il: "al-rūḥ" (64)

Sale: "When (a man's soul) shall come up to his throat, (in his last agony)" *

Rodwell: "Aye, when (the soul) shall come up into the throat" *

Pickthall: "Nay, but when the life cometh up to the throat".

Ali: "Yea, when (the soul) reaches to the collar-bone (in its exit)" *

Arberry: "No indeed; when it reaches the clavicles"

Dawood: "But when a man's soul is about to leave him" *

Asad: "Nay, but when (the last breath) comes up to the throat (of a dying man)" *

3. 7:152, ellipted maf⁶ūl bihi: "'Iīlah" (65)

Sale: "Verily as for them who took the calf (for their god)"

Rodwell: "Verily as to those who took the calf (as a god)" *

Pickthall: "Lo! those who chose the calf (for worship)"

Ali: "Those who took the calf (for worship)"

Arberry: "Surely those who took to themselves the calf"

Dawood: "Those that worshipped the calf"

Asad: "(And to Aaron he said:) 'Verily, as for those who have taken to worshipping the (golden) calf"

4. 12:82, ellipted mudāf: "Ahl al-Qarya" (66)

Sale: "and do thou inquire in the city..."

Rodwell: "Enquire for thyself in the city..."

Pickthall: "Ask the township...."

Ali: "Ask at the town..."

Arberry: "Enquire of the city..."

Dawood: "Ask the townsfolk...." *

Asad: "And ask thou in the town...."

5. 30:4, ellipted mudāf ilayh: "Before and after

(victory)" (67)

Sale: "Unto GOD (belongeth) the disposal (of this matter), both for what is past, and for what is to come"

Rodwell: "First and Last is the affair with God". *

Pickthall: "Allah's is the command in the former case and in the latter - "

Ali: "With God is the Decision in the Past and in the Future:"

Arberry: "To God belongs the Command before and after,"

Dawood: "such being the will of Allah before and after."

Asad: "(for) with God rests all power of decision, first and last". *

6. 18:79, ellipted sifah: "good, attractive". (68)

Sale: "(sound) ship" *

Rodwell: "ship"

Pickthall: "ship"

Ali: "boat"

Arberry: "ship"

Dawood: "ship"

Asad: "boat"

7. Ellipted jawāb al-shart is the most problematic of all the above types.

✓ a. 34:51 the consequence of the conditional law:

Sale: "If thou couldst see, when the (unbelievers) shall tremble, and (shall find) no refuge, and shall be taken from a near place,...)

No apodosis is provided for the condition, which is thus left incomplete.

Rodwell: "Couldst thou see how they shall tremble and find no escape, and be taken fourth from the place that is so near;"

Pickthall: "Couldst thou but see when they are terrified with no escape, and are seized from near at hand,"

Ali: "If thou couldst but see when they will quake with terror; but then there will be no escape (for them), and they will be seized from a position (quite) near".

Arberry: "Ah, if thou couldst see when they are terrified, and there is no escape, and they are seized from a place near at hand,"

Dawood: "If you could only see the unbelievers when they are seized with terror! They shall not escape, but shall be taken from their graves".

Asad: "IF THOU couldst but see (how the deniers of the truth will fare on Resurrection Day,) when they will shrink in terror, with nowhere

to escape - since they will have been seized from so close nearby -" *

The rendering of Asad seems to be the nearest to the meaning of the original, where, according to al-Ṣābūnī, the consequence of the conditional law is ellipted, with the implication:

"You (Muḥammad) would see a terrible scene". (69)

b. 13:31, is another example of the ellipted consequence of the conditional law.

Sale: "Though a Koran (were revealed) by which mountains should be removed, or the earth cleared in sunder, or the dead be caused to speak, (it would be in vain)".

Rodwell: "If there were a Koran by which the mountains could be set in motion or the earth cleft, or the dead be made to speak...!"

Pickthall: "Had it been for a lecture to cause the mountains to move, or the earth to be torn asunder, or the dead to speak, (this Qur'an would have done so)". *

Ali: "If there were a Qur'an with which mountains were moved, or the earth were cloven asunder, or the dead were made to speak, (This would be the one!)" *

Arberry: "If only a Koran whereby the mountains were set in motion, or the earth were cleft, or

the dead were spoken to - "

Dawood: "And what if this Koran were to move mountains, rend the earth asunder, and make the dead speak?"

Asad: "Yet even if (they should listen to) a (divine) discourse by which mountains could be moved, or the earth cleft asunder, or the dead made to speak - (they who are bent on denying the truth would still refuse to believe in it)!"

According to the commentators the ellipted clause in this verse is either the one supplied by Pickthall, or that supplied by Asad; the renderings of Rodwell, Arberry and Dawood are almost more elliptical than the original itself. (70)

There are many other elliptical statements in various places in the Qur'ānic text-according to Ibn Jinni, more than a thousand. Examples may be found in 9:30, 10:71, 11:20, 14:22, 51:38...etc. (71)

TENSE, ASPECT AND MOOD:

As regards the idiosyncratic usage of tenses in the Qur'ān, Ibn Qayyim maintains that it takes the following forms:

a. The mādi for the mudāri⁶, to insist upon the

occurrence of something eg. fazī⁶ā in 27:87.

b. The mudāri⁶ for the mādi⁶, perhaps partly to convey a sense of actuality and continuation, and partly to avoid breaking the succession of consistent endings. eg. taqtulūn in 2:87.

c. The indicative for the jussive, to lay particular emphasis on certain commands, eg. yurdi⁶na in 2:233. (72)

Examples:

1. The sudden transition from the past tense in the verb kadhhabtum, to the present tense, in the verb taqtulūn, in 2:87:

Sale: "reject...slay..."

Rodwell: "treat... slay..."

Pickthall: "disbelieve...slay..."

Ali: "called...slay...."

Arberry: "cry to... slay..."

Dawood: "charging with...slaying..." *

Asad: "gave...would slay" *

The significance of the transition from the past tense to the present tense in this verse is the conveying of a sense of deliberateness and also persistence, particularly in the latter action. This denotation may best be expressed as done by Dawood and Asad. (73)

2. One of the most problematic sūras to interpret, in terms of tenses, is 109, in as much as there appears to be transition from the present to the future and vice-versa: verses 2-3 describe the conditions as they were at the time when the sura was revealed, thus in the present tense; while 4-5 refer to the future, implied by the noun-agent (fā'il). However, the second part of both 4 and 5 indicates the present tense. The essence of this sūra, in brief, may be put as:

"Neither do I (Muḥammad) nor ever will I worship your idols,

Nor do you (unbelievers) nor ever will you worship my Lord"

109:2-5

« لَا أُعْبِدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ .
 وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أُعْبِدُ .
 وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ .
 وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أُعْبِدُ . »

Sale: ".... I will not worship that which ye worship; nor will ye worship that which I worship. Neither do I worship that which ye worship; neither do ye worship that which I worship...."

Rodwell: "... I worship not that which ye worship,

And ye do not worship that which I worship; I shall never worship that which Ye worship, Neither will ye worship that which I worship...."

Pickthall: ".... I worship not that which ye worship; Nor worship ye that which I worship. And I shall not worship that which ye worship. Nor will ye worship that which I worship....."

Ali: "... I worship not that which ye worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship"

Arberry: "... I serve not what you serve and you are not serving what I serve, nor am I serving what you have served, neither are you serving what I serve ..."

Dawood: "... I do not serve what you worship, nor do you serve what I worship. I shall never serve what you worship, nor will you ever serve what I worship"

Asad: "... I do not worship that which you worship, and neither do you worship that

which I worship. And I will not worship
 that which you have (ever) worshipped, and
neither will you (ever) worship that which
I worship ..."

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. 9:62

" وَاللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهُ اَهْلَقُ اَنْ يَّرْضُوْهُ "

According to al-ṣābūnī, the pronoun hu refers both to Allah and His Messenger. 1:545. Lit, they should seek His pleasure.

Many commentators point out that there is no juxtaposition of God and His Apostle in the use of the singular pronoun in yurdūh; this is meant to bring out in an elliptical form the idea that God's pleasure is but an outcome of following the guidance of the Prophet, cf. 4:80 and 3:31.

Sale: "but it is more just that they should please God and his apostle". *

Rodwell: "but worthier is God, and His Apostle, that they should please Him".

Pickthall: "but Allah, with His Messenger, hath more right that they should please Him".

Ali: "But it is more fitting that they should please God and His Apostle". *

Arberry: "but God and His Messenger - more right is it

they should please Him".

Dawood: "But it is more just that they should please Allah and the Apostle". *

Asad: "the while it is God and His Apostle whose pleasure they should seek above all else". *

Farid: "but Allah with His Messenger has greater right that they should please Him".

Irving: "It is more correct to please God and His messenger". *

2. 20:39

« أَنْ أَعْدِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَأَقْدِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ
تَمِيلِقِيهِ الْيَمِّ . بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذُهُ عَدُوٌّ
لِي وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ . »

According to al-Suyūṭī the first pronoun refers to Mūsā, the second refers to the ark, the third to the ark and the fourth to Mūsā.

Thus this verse could be interpreted as:

lay him in the ark and place it in the water and the river will deposit it upon the bank....will pick him up.

Sale: "Put him into the ark....cast him...shall throw him....shall take him".

Rodwell: "Cast him....cast him....shall throw him... shall take him up".

Pickthall: "Throw him....throw it.....shall throw it....

shall take him".

Ali: "throw (the child)...throw (the chest)...will cast him....he will be taken up by....".

Arberry: "cast him....cast him....throw him...shall take him".

Dawood: "Put your child...let him be carried away by the river...will cast him...he shall be taken up by..."

Asad: "Place him....throw it....will cast him.... will adopt him".

Farid: "Put him....place it...cast it....will take him up".

Irving: "cast him...toss it...will throw him...will pick him up".

48:9 لَتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتوقِّرُوهُ
وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ ... "

According to al-Qurtubī the first and second pronouns refer to the Prophet while the third must refer to Allah. This mixture of pronouns should therefore be clarified by, for example, the use of capitalization of the Pronoun when referring to Allah; many translators seem either to have missed this or to have put it in an unclear way, except for Dawood, who reproduces best the accepted meaning.

Sale: "that ye may believe in God and his apostle; and may assist him, and revere him, and

praise him".

Rodwell: "That ye may believe on God and on His Apostle; and may assist Him, and honour Him, and praise him".

Pickthall: "That ye (mankind) may believe in Allah and His messenger, and may honour Him, and may revere Him, and may glorify Him".

Ali: "In order that ye (O men) may believe in God and his Apostle, that ye may assist and honour Him, and celebrate His praises".

Arberry: "that you may believe in God and His Messenger and succour Him, and reverence Him, and that you may give Him glory".

Dawood: "so that you may have faith in Allah and His apostle and that you may assist him, honour him, and praise Him". *

Asad: "so that you (O men) might believe in God and His Apostle, and might honour Him, and revere Him, and extol His limitless glory.

Farid: "That you should believe in Allah and His Messenger, and may help him, and honour him, and that you may glorify Allah.

Irving: "So you may (all) believe in God and His messenger, and revere and honour Him, and glorify Him".

18:22

« وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا »

According to al-Suyūṭī the first pronoun refers to ahl al-kahf and the second pronoun to those who talk about them. A translation should be somewhat more explicit on this point:

Sale: "and ask not any of (the Christians) concerning them".

Rodwell: "and ask not any (Christian) concerning them".

Pickthall: "and ask not any of them to pronounce concerning them".

Ali: "Nor consult any of them about (the affair of) the sleepers".

Arberry: "and ask not any of them for a pronouncement on them".

Dawood: "do not ask any Christian concerning them".

Asad: "and do not ask any of those (story-tellers) to enlighten thee about them".

Farid: "nor seek information concerning them from anyone of them".

Irving: "nor seek anyone else's opinion about them".

11:78

« هُوَلَاءُ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطَهَرُ نَسَمٍ »

Most of the commentators are of the opinion that the phrase hā'ulā'i banātī signifies here the women in his

community rather than his daughters. The implication of atharu lakum points to the natural relationship between man and woman through marriage and not as it might appear in the first instance as an alternative for the perverse desires of the men of Sodom. However, this sense can only be brought out by adding something referring to marriage, as done by Ali, for example.

Sale: "these my daughters are more lawful for you".

Rodwell: "these my daughters will be purer for you".

Pickthall: "Here are my daughters! They are purer for you".

Ali: "Here are my daughters: they are purer for you (if you marry)!" *

Arberry: "these are my daughters; they are cleaner for you".

Dawood: "here are my daughters: they are more lawful to you".

Asad: "(Take instead) these daughters of mine: they are purer for you (than men)!"

Farid: "these are my daughters; they are purer for you".

Irving: "these are my daughters; they are purer for you".

93:7

« وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ »

According to Abu Ḥayyān dalla here signifies perplexity and wandering in search of ways and means to

attain to God; it should never be misunderstood as meaning "gone astray" or "in sin" or "error". This does not and cannot apply to the Prophet, since according to other verses (53:2-3) he was immune to error or going astray. Thus it may be interpreted in the sense of "one who sought God's help in order to be guided to Him, or to be provided with guidance and truth".

Sale: "And did he not find thee wandering in error, and hath he not guided (thee into the truth?)"

Rodwell: "And found thee erring and guided thee".

Pickthall: "Did He not find thee wandering and direct (thee)?"

Ali: "And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance". *

Arberry: "Did He not find thee erring, and guide thee?"

Dawood: "Did He not find you in error and guide you?"

Asad: "And found thee lost on the way, and guided thee?"

Farid: "And found thee lost (in love for thy people) and provided thee with guidance (for them)".

Irving: "He found you lost and guided (you)".

21:87

نظّمَ أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَقْدِرْ عَلَيْهِ.

According to al-Rāzī, the verb naqdir in this context should not be associated with "ability"; rather

it implies "fate". It is inconceivable that an Apostle could ever imagine that his Master might lose power over him. What al-Rāzī and most other commentators suggest here is that naqdir means "to cause hardship and difficulty". Thus Ibn ʿAbbās says that it refers to "qadr and not qudra", as is mentioned in 65:7.

Sale: "and thought that we could not exercise our power over him".

Rodwell: "and thought that we had no power over him".

Pickthall: "and deemed that we had no power over him".

Ali: "He imagined that we had no power over him".

Arberry: "and thought that We would have no power over him".

Dawood: "thinking We had no power over him".

Asad: "thinking that We had no power over him".

Farid: "and he was sure (in his mind) that We would not cause him distress. *

The version of Farid seems to represent the original best. Moreover, he explains in a footnote that this expression means "We will not straiten him" or "We will not decree against him any distress".

Irving: "and thought We would never have any power over him".

55: 31

” سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ ... ”

According to Ibn ʿAbbās the expression sa nafrughu lakum signifies a threat and not, as it might appear, that God is pre-occupied with one thing, at the expense of another. The concept of God's capability to concern Himself with all the affairs of His creatures simultaneously is beyond doubt, as often indicated in the Qur'ān itself. Sale's version in this respect is the most appropriate.

Sale: "We will surely attend to judge you...(at the last day)". *

Rodwell: "We will find leisure to judge you".

Pickthall: "We shall dispose of you".

Ali: "Soon shall we settle your affairs".

Arberry: "We shall surely attend to you at leisure".

Dawood: "We shall surely find the time to judge you".

Asad: "(One Day) We shall take you to task".

Farid: "Soon shall We attend to you".

Irving: "We shall finish off both loads for you".

10:65

” إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ”

al-ʿizza comprises the concepts of superior might as well as of honour and glory. Its rendering into another language depends on the context, and sometimes - as in this case - cannot be simply expressed in one word.

- Sale: "all might belongeth unto God".
- Rodwell: "all might is God's".
- Pickthall: "Lo! Power belongeth wholly to Allah".
- Ali: "all power and honour belong to God".
- Arberry: "the glory belongs altogether to God".
- Dawood: "all glory belongs to Allah".
- Asad: "behold all might and glory belong to God alone".
- Farid: "surely all power belongs to Allah".
- Irving: "prestige rests entirely with God".

48:29

« أَشِدَّاءٌ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِ ... »

The term ashiddā' as opposed to ruḥamā' signifies here the state of the believers towards the deniers of truth. It denotes in this context a particular attitude namely, firmness and unwillingness to compromise.

- Sale: "fierce".
- Rodwell: "vehement".
- Pickthall: "hard".
- Ali: "strong".
- Arberry: "hard".
- Dawood: "ruthless".

Asad: "firm and unyielding". *

Farid: "hard".

Irving: "strict".

90:4

« لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ »

According to Ibn 'Abbās, the term kabad denotes the concepts of pain, distress, hardship, toil, trial, etc. which are experienced by man throughout his life. It can best be represented by more than one word.

Sale: "verily we have created man in misery".

Rodwell: "surely in trouble have we created man".

Pickthall: "we verily have created man in an atmosphere".

Ali: "verily we have created man into toil and struggle".

Arberry: "trouble".

Dawood: "We created man to try him with afflictions". *

Asad: "Verily We have created man into (a life of) pain , toil and trial". *

Farid: "We have surely created man (to toil and) struggle".

Irving: "We have created man under stress". *

2:180

” إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا ”

According to al-ṣābūnī the word khayr in this verse denotes "much wealth" and not simply "property". He claims that this interpretation of khayr is supported by the sayings of ʿĀ'isha and ʿAli.

Sale: "if he leave any goods".

Rodwell: "if he leave goods".

Pickthall: "if he leave wealth".

Ali: "if he leave any goods".

Arberry: "he leaves behind some goods".

Dawood: "that leave property".

Asad: "he is leaving behind much wealth". *

Farid: "if he leave much wealth". *

Irving: "if he leaves any property".

The word hanīf occurs twelve times in the Qur'ān, two of these instances being of the plural hunafā'. The basic usage of this term is as description of the devout Muslim in his submission to God. A hanīf is one who is inclined to the way of Allah and firmly upholds the faith; thus it differs from the Syriac hanpe 'unenlightened'. It is claimed that Muhammad adopted the religion of Ibrahim, hanīfiyya, and changed its name to Islam.

In the Qur'ān itself the term is often associated with Islam, eg. 3:67. Hanīf is an adjective denoting "leaning towards right and away from wrong", used almost exclusively to connote a devoted clinging to faith in Allah and a rejection of other beliefs.

3:67

« كَانْ حَنِيفًا ... »

Sale: "he was of the true religion".

Rodwell: "sound in faith".

Pickthall: "upright man".

Ali: "true in faith".

Arberry: "prime of faith".

Dawood: "upright man".

Asad: "one who turned away from all that is false". *

Farid: "ever inclined to God".

Irving: "a seeker (after truth)".

48:4

« أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ »

It is said that the word sakīna in this verse is the Hebrew shekinah which describes the invisible glory of Jehovah resting over His mercy-seat. Some Scholars argue that this concept of "rest" in Jewish theology is totally unacceptable in Islam; thus sakīna cannot be synonymous with shekinah.

In the Qur'ān the term denotes the concept of peace, reassurance and tranquility as opposed to anxiety.

Sale: "He Sendeth down secure tranquility into the hearts of the true believer". *

Rodwell: "He sendeth down a spirit of secure reposesh to the hearts of the faithful".

Pickthall: "He sent down peace of reassurance into the hearts of the believers". *

Ali: "He sent down tranquility into the hearts of the Believers".

Arberry: "He sent down the Shechina unto the hearts of the believers".

Dawood: "He sent down tranquility into the hearts of the faithful". *

Asad: "He has bestowed inner peace upon the hearts of the believers".

Farid: "He sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers" *

Irving: "He sends down serenity on believers' hearts".

3. 5:90

" الخمر "

According to all lexicographers, the word khamr is derived from the verb khamara "he concealed" or "obscured"; it denotes any substance, the use of which obscures the intellect, ie., intoxicants, and is not restricted to wine.

- Sale: "wine".
 Rodwell: "wine".
 Pickthall: "strong drink".
 Ali: "Intoxicants". *
 Arberry: "wine".
 Dawood: "wine".
 Asad: "intoxicants". *
 Farid: "wine".
 Irving: "liquor".

4. 76:5 إِنَّهُ الذَّبْرَارُ بِشَرِبُونَ مِمَّ كَأْسِي كَانِ زِاجِهِ كَاخُورًا.

The Lisān al-⁶Arab gives "the calyx (kimm) of the grape before its flowering" as the primary significance of kafūr. Other lexicographers are of the view that it denotes "the calyx of any flower". Al-Jawharī applies it to the "spathe of a palm tree". Hence, this - and not "camphor" - is evidently the meaning of kafūr in this context: an illusion to the sweet, extremely delicate fragrance of a divine drink.

- Sale: "the just shall drink of a cup (of wine),
 mixed with (the water of) cafur."
 Rodwell: "a wine cup tempered at the Camphor fountain,
 the just shall quaff".
 Pickthall: "the righteous shall drink of a cup whereof

- the mixture is of water of Kafur".
- Ali: "The righteous shall drink of a cup (of wine) mixed with kafur".
- Arberry: "The pious shall drink of a cup whose mixture is camphor".
- Dawood: "The righteous shall drink of a cup tempered at the Camphor Fountain".
- Asad: "The truly virtuous shall drink from a cup flavoured with the calyx of sweet-smelling flowers". *
- Farid: "The virtuous shall drink of a cup, tempered with camphor".
- Irving: "The virtuous will drink from a cup which will be mixed with Camphor".

5. 28:82

” وَيَأْتِيَنَّ اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ”

According to al-Zamakhsharī this word is composed of an interjection "Oh! or Ah!", and كَأَنَّ. It signifies "alas"; the closest interpretation is that of Asad.

- Sale: "Aha; verily God bestoweth abundant provision on such of his servants as he pleaseth".
- Rodwell: "Aha! God enlargeth supplies to whom he pleaseth of his servants".
- Pickthall: "Ah, well a day! Allah enlargeth the provision for whom He will of His slaves".

- Ali: "Ah! it is indeed God who enlarges the provision to any of His servants He pleases!"
- Arberry: "Ah, God outspreads His provision to whomsoever He will of His servants".
- Dawood: "Behold! Allah gives abundantly to whom He will and to whom He pleases".
- Asad: "Alas (for our not having been aware) that it is indeed God (alone) who grants abundant sustenance, unto whichever He wills of His Creatures". *
- Farid: "Ruin seize thee! it is indeed Allah who enlarges the provision for such of His Servants as He pleases".
- Irving: "Since it is God who extends sustenance to anyone He wishes from among His servants".

5:48

لَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا

The term shir⁶a (or sharī⁶a) signifies literally the "way to a watering-place", from which men and animals derive the element indispensable to their life. It is used in the Qur'ān to denote a system of law necessary for a community. The term minhāj, on the other hand, denotes an "open road", usually in the abstract sense, ie. "a way of life".

- Sale: "Unto every of you have we given a law and an open path".

- Rodwell: "To every one of you have we given a rule and a beaten track".
- Pickthall: "For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way".
- Ali: "To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way".
- Arberry: "To every one of you We have appointed a right way and an open road".
- Dawood: "We have ordained a law and assigned a path for each of you".
- Asad: "Unto everyone of you have We appointed a (different) Law and way of life". *
- Farid: "For each of you We prescribed a (clear spiritual) Law and a (manifest way in secular matters). *
- Irving: "We have given each of you a code of Law plus a program (for action)".

22:36.

« وَأَطِيعُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ »

According to al-Rāzī these two nouns refer to different types of the poor. The first signifies one who is content with what he gets without asking, while the latter signifies one who asks.

Sale: "and give to eat (thereof both) unto him who is content (with what is given him without asking), and who asketh. *

- Rodwell: "and feed him who is content (and asketh not),
and him who asketh". *
- Pickthall: "feed the beggar and the suppliant".
- Ali: "and feed such (beg not but) live in
contentment, and such as beg with due
humility".
- Arberry: "feed the beggar and the suppliant".
- Darwood: "and feed with it the poor man and the
beggar".
- Asad: "and feed the poor who is contented with his
lot (and does not beg), as well as him who is
forced to beg. *
- Farid: "feed him who is (needy but) contented and him
(also) who supplicates".
- Irving: "and feed both the (poor man who is) carefree
and the one who insists on it". *

8.

4:49	<u>fatīlā</u>
4:124	<u>naqīrā</u>
35:13	<u>qitmīr</u>

According to the commentators these three nouns are used metaphorically to denote a thing of no value or significance. All three are associated with the date-stone, literally:

1. fatīlā: the filament that is in the cleft, which extends along one side of the date-stone.

2. naqīr: a little spot on the back of a date-stone.

3. qitmīr: the thin integument upon the date-stone; the thin skin which is upon a date-stone, between the stone and the date itself.

It seems more appropriate to render these three terms metaphorically than literally.

4:49

4:124

35:13

Sale: "a hair". "the least". "the skin of a
date-stone".

Rodwell: "the husk of "the skin of a "the husk of a
a date-stone". date-stone". date-stone".

Pickthall: "the hair upon "the dint in a "the white spot
a date-stone". date-stone". on a date-stone".

Ali: "the least "the least "the least
little thing".* injustice".* power". *

Arberry: "a single "a single "the skin of a
date-thread". date-spot". date-stone".

Dawood: "the husk of "the least "nothing".
a date-stone". injustice".*

Asad: "a hair's "the groove of "the husk of a
breadth". a date-stone". date-stone".

Farid: "a whit". "the little "a whit".
hollow in the
back of a
date-stone".

Irving: "one bit". "a speck". "a wisp".

10:5

« صُوَّ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً
وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا »

The nouns diyā' and nūr are often interchangeable, inasmuch as both denote "light"; but many philologists are of the opinion that the term diyā' (or daw') has a more intensive connotation, and is used to describe 'a light which subsists by itself, as that of the sun and fire' - that is, a source of light - while nūr signifies "a light that subsists by some other thing" in other words, light due to an extraneous source or - as in the case of the moon - reflected light.

Sale: "It is he who hath ordained the sun to shine (by day), and the moon for a light (by night)".

Rodwell: "It is He who hath appointed the Sun for brightness, and the moon for a light."

Pickthall: "He it is who appointed the sun a splendour and the moon a light".

Ali: "It is He who made the sun to be a shining glory and the moon to be a light (of beauty)".

Arberry: "It is He who made the sun a radiance and the moon a light".

Dawood: "It was He that gave the sun his brightness and the moon her light".

Asad: "He it is who has made the sun a (source of) radiant light and the moon a light (reflected). *

Farid: "He it is who made the sun radiate a brilliant light and the moon reflect a lustre". *

Irving: "He it is who has placed the sun for radiance and the moon for (reflected) light". *

74:10

« الكافرون »

It is believed that this is the earliest Qur'ānic occurrence of the expression kāfir. Its sense in the Qur'ān is determined by that which it had in the speech of the Arabs before the advent of Muḥammad. Therefore, it cannot be simply equated - as is often the case - with terms such as "unbeliever" or "infidel" in the specific sense of one who rejects the system of doctrine and law promulgated in the Qur'ān and amplified by the Sunna; it must have a wider, more general meaning. This meaning is to be found in the root meaning, kafara "he covered (a thing)". Thus in 57:20, the tiller of the soil is called, without any pejorative implication, kāfir, ie., one who covers the sown seed with earth. The sense of "covering" or "concealing" takes on the metaphorical sense of "denying" something that is true. Thus, it is more appropriate if kāfir, with the exception of one instance in 57:20, is rendered as "one who denies or refuses to acknowledge the truth", in the widest spiritual sense of the term, whether it relates to a cognition of the supreme truth, namely the existence of

God, or to a doctrine enunciated in the Divine Writ.

Sale: "unbelievers".

Rodwell: "Infidels".

Pickthall: "disbelievers".

Ali: "those without Faith".

Arberry: "unbelievers".

Dawood: "unbelievers".

Asad: "all who deny the truth". *

Farid: "disbelievers".

Irving: "disbelievers".

2:2

" المتقين "

Some scholars are of the view that the conventional translations of al-muttaqīn, as "God-fearing" or "pious", do not adequately render the positive content of this expression, namely the awareness of God's all-presence and the desire to mould one's existence in the light of this awareness. Other interpretations, such as "one who guards himself against evil" or "one who is careful of his duty", do not give more than one particular aspect of the concept of taqwā, which may perhaps be rendered "consciousness of God".

Sale: "the pious".

Rodwell: "God-fearing".

Pickthall: "those who ward off (evil)".

Ali: "those who fear God".
 Arberry: "godfearing".
 Dawood: "the righteous".
 Asad: "the God-conscious". *
 Farid: "the righteous".
 Irving: "those who do their duty".

22. 2:3 al-ghayb

The word ghayb, commonly translated as "unseen", is used in the Qur'ān to denote all those sectors or aspects of reality which lie beyond the range of human perception and cannot, therefore, be proved or disproved by scientific observation or even adequately comprised within the accepted categories of speculative thought. These include such concepts as the existence of God, life after death and the existence of other forces and their inter-action.

Sale: "the mysteries".
 Rodwell: "the unseen".
 Pickthall: "the unseen".
 Ali: "the Unseen".
 Arberry: "the Unseen".
 Dawood: "the unseen".
 Asad: "that which is beyond the reach of human perception". *

Farid: "the unseen".

Irving: "the Unseen".

23. 2:30

khalīfa

” إِنْ يَّ جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ”

The term khalīfa is derived from the verb khalafa "he succeeded another". It is used in this context to denote man's rightful supremacy on earth, which is most suitably expressed in the concept of "inheriting the earth" in the sense of being given possession of it, as in 6:165, 27:62 and 35:39, where all human beings are spoken of as khalā'if al-ard.

Sale: "I am going to place a substitute on earth".

Rodwell: "I am about to place one in my stead on earth".

Rickthall: "I am about to place a viceroy on the earth".

Ali: "I will create a vicegerent on earth".

Arberry: "I am setting in the earth a viceroy".

Dawood: "I am placing on the earth one that shall rule as My deputy".

Asad: "I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it". *

Farid: "I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth".

Irving: "I am placing an over Lord on earth".

24. 4:34

Qawwām ۛ
 « الرَّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ »

Qawwām is an intensive form of qā'im "one who is responsible for" or "takes care of". Thus qāma ʿalā al-mar'a signifies "he undertook the maintenance of the woman" or "he maintained her". The form qawwām is more comprehensive than qā'im, and combines the concepts of physical maintenance and protection as well as of moral responsibility; it may appropriately be translated as "one who takes full care of".

Sale: "Men shall have the pre-eminence above Women".

Rodwell: "Men are superior to Women".

Pickthall: "Men are in charge of Women". *

Ali: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of Women". *

Arberry: "Men are the managers of the affairs of Women".

Dawood: "Men have authority over Women".

Asad: "Men shall take full care of Women". *

Farid: "Men are guardians over Women".

Irving: "Men are the ones who should support Women".

25. 12:108

ʿalā baṣīra
 « ادْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ »

This is one of the expressions that are difficult to translate in a concise manner. It is derived from the verb baṣura or baṣira "he became aware of" or "he

perceived (usually by means of sight)". The noun basira has the abstract connotation of "seeing with one's mind" and thus signifies "the faculty of understanding based on conscious insight" as well as, tropically, "an evidence accessible to the intellect" or "verifiable by the intellect". Thus, in this context the "call to God" is to be understood as the outcome of a "conscious insight accessible to, and verifiable by, man's reason".

Sale: "I invite (you) unto God, by an evident demonstration".

Rodwell: "resting on a clear proof, I call you to God".

Pickthall: "I call on Allah with sure knowledge".

Ali: "I do invite unto God on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes".

Arberry: "I call to God with sure knowledge".

Dawood: "with sure knowledge I call on you to have faith in Allah".

Asad: "Resting upon conscious insight accessible to reason, I am calling (you all) unto God". *

Farid: "I call unto Allah standing on sure knowledge".

Irving: "I appeal to God through insight". *

26. 11:18

la⁶na

The Qur'ānic term la⁶na is usually - but inexactly - translated as "curse". In its primary meaning it denotes ib⁶ād ("alienation", "estrangement" or "banishment"), in the moral sense, from all that is good. Whenever it is attributed in the Qur'ān to God with reference to a sinner, it signifies the latter's "exclusion from God's grace" or his "rejection by God".

- Sale: "the curse of God".
 Rodwell: "the malison of God".
 Pickthall: "the curse of Allah".
 Ali: "the Curse of God".
 Arberry: "the curse of God".
 Dawood: "Allah's curse".
 Asad: "God's rejection". *
 Farid: "the curse of Allah".
 Irving: "God's curse".

27. 17:23

uff

« فَدَرَّتْ رِعَابًا مِنْ تَلْعَافٍ »

In its primary sense, uff denotes one's blowing at something that falls upon him, such as dust or ashes, in order to remove it. Thus people say it on the occurrence of anything troublesome, displeasing or hateful. According to Lane it is synonymous in sound and meaning to the

English word "Ugh"; and in meaning like the interjections "foh" and "faugh". In this context the prohibition of the use of the expression uff signifies that one should not say to his parents anything expressive of the least disgust.

- Sale: "say not unto them fie (on you)!"
 Rodwell: "say not to them, (Fie)".
 Pickthall: "say not (Fie) unto them".
 Ali: "say not to them a word of contempt". *
 Arberry: "say not to them (Fie)".
 Dawood: "show them no sign of impatience". *
 Asad: "never say (Ugh) to them".
 Farid: "never say to them as much a' gh".
 Irving: "never say to them: (Naughty!)"

28. 17:32

al-zinā

« وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّانَا »

The term zinā in Islam signifies voluntary sexual intercourse between a man and a woman not married to one another, irrespective of whether or not one or both of them are married to other persons. Hence, it does not - in contrast with the usage prevalent in most Western languages - differentiate between the concepts of "adultery" (ie., sexual intercourse of a married man with a woman other than his wife, or of a married woman with a man other than her husband) and "fornication" (ie. sexual

intercourse between two unmarried persons). Thus, the use of either "adultery" or "fornication" should be further explained in this wider sense; the translators do not do this.

Sale: "Draw not near unto fornication".

Rodwell: "Have nought to do with adultery".

Pickthall: "Come not near unto adultery".

Ali: "nor come nigh to adultery".

Arberry: "approach not fornication".

Dawood: "you shall not commit adultery".

Asad: "do not commit adultery".

Farid: "go not nigh unto adultery".

Irving: "Do not commit adultery".

29. 2:171

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي
يَنعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً.

This simile describes the attitude of those who are bent on denying the truth. They are likened to a shepherd driving his flock. He cries and calls to them, but they cannot understand his words; they hear only the sound of his voice. The verb na⁶aqā here is mostly associated with an inarticulate cry with which the shepherd drives his flock. The, simile, therefore, may be rendered as "the parable (simile) of those who are bent on denying the truth is as that of him who cries unto what

hears nothing but a cry and a call", thus indicating the heedlessness of those to whom the call is made.

Sale: "The unbelievers are like unto one who crieth aloud to that which heareth not so much as (his) calling, or the sound of (his) voice".

Rodwell: "The infidels resemble him who shouteth aloud to one who heareth no more than a call and cry".

Pickthall: "The likeness of those who disbelieve (in relation to the messenger) is as the likeness of one who calleth unto that which heareth naught except a shout and cry".

Ali: "The parable of those who reject Faith is as if one were one to shout like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries".

Arberry: "The likeness of those who disbelieve is as the likeness of one who shouts to that which hears nothing, save a call and a cry".

Dawood: "In preaching to the unbelievers the Apostle may be compared to one who calls on beasts that can hear nothing except a shout and a cry".

Asad: "the parable of those who are bent on denying the truth is that of the beast which hears the shepherd's cry, and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice and a call".

Farid: "The case of those who disbelieve is like the case of one who shouts to that which hears naught but a call and a cry".

Irving: "Those who disbelieve may be compared to those who bleat away at something that only listens to calls and cries.

30. 3:36

« وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنثَى »

Literally these words denote "and the male is not (or could not be) like the female. Zamakhsharī reads these words as forming part of the parenthetical sentence relating to God's knowledge, and explains them thus: "The male (child) which she had prayed for could not have been like the female which she was granted". This implies that Maryam's excellence would go far beyond any hopes which her mother had ever entertained.

Sale: "and a male is not as a female".

Rodwell: "a male is not as a female".

Pickthall: "the male is not as the female".

Ali: "and nowise is the male like the female".

Arberry: "the male is not as the female".

Dawood: "the male is not like the female".

Asad: "no male child (she might have hoped for) could ever have been like this female". *

Farid: "the male (she desired to have) was no like

the female (she was delivered of)". *

Irving: "a male is not like a female".

31. 18:11

فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَى آذَانِهِمْ

The Qur'ānic expression darabnā ʿalā ādhānihim means, according to the commentators, that the people of the cave were made to sleep by preventing any sound from penetrating into their ears in consequence of which they would have awakened. Thus they remained wholly isolated from the affairs of the outside world. It was, therefore, as if they had died; their knowledge and ideas remained as they had been when they entered the cave.

Sale: "wherefore we struck their ears (with deafness, so that they slept without disturbance)".

Rodwell: "Then struck we upon their ears (with deafness)".

Pickthall: "Then We sealed up their hearing".

Ali: "Then We draw (a veil) over their ears.. (so that they heard not)".

Arberry: "Then We smote their ears".

Dawood: "We made them sleep".

Asad: "and thereupon We veiled their ears".

Farid: "So We prevented them from hearing".

Irving: "We struck them with drowsiness".

32. 49:1

« لَا تَقْدَمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ »

The believers, in this verse, are enjoined not to pursue their desires or wishes, in any case, whether in word or deed, before receiving the judgement of God and His Prophet on them. Nor should they be presumptuous, or make themselves conspicuous.

Sale: "anticipate not (any matters) in the sight of God and his apostle".

Rodwell: "enter not upon any affair ere God and His Apostle permit you".

Pickthall: "Be not forward in the presence of Allah and His Messenger".

Ali: "Put not yourselves forward before God and His Apostle".

Arberry: "advance not before God and His Messenger".

Dawood: "do not behave presumptuously in the presence of Allah and His Apostle". *

Asad: "Do not put yourselves forward in the presence of (what) God and His apostle (may have ordained)".

Farid: "be not forward in the presence of Allah and His Messenger".

Irving: "do not press forward in the presence of God and His Messenger".

33. 6:143

ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ مِّنَ الضَّأْنِ إِثْنَيْنِ
وَمِنَ الْعِزِّ إِثْنَيْنِ

According to some commentators this expression literally means "eight (in) pairs - of sheep two and of goats two"; the two other pairs are mentioned in the next verse. Zawj denotes each of the two constituents of a pair, as well as a whole pair, hence it may appropriately be rendered as "four kinds of cattle of either sex".

Sale: "Four pair (of cattle hath) God (given you); of sheep one pair, and of goats one pair".

Rodwell: "You have four sorts of cattle in pairs: of sheep a pair, and of goats a pair". *

Pickthall: "Eight pairs: of the sheep twain, and of the goats twain".

Ali: "(Take) eight (head of cattle) in (four) pairs: of sheep a pair, and of goats a pair".

Arberry: "Eight couples: two of sheep, of goats two".

Dawood: "He has given you eight kinds of livestock. Take first a pair of sheep and a pair of goats".

Asad: "four kinds of cattle of either sex (is unlawful to man): either of the two sexes of sheep and of goats". *

Farid: "(And of the cattle He has created) eight mates - of the sheep two, and of the goats two".

Irving: "Eight exist in pairs: two (pairs) of sheep and two of goats".

34. 6:151

” قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّي
 عَلَيْكُمْ... وبالوالدين إحسانا ... ”

According to most of the commentators, what is implied by including وبالوالدين إحسانا among the things which God has (forbidden) is to lay more emphasis on the duty of being good to one's parents; because this is not only not forbidden, but, on the contrary, enjoined over and over in the Qur'ān. Thus it is necessary, either to modify the interpretation of the verb harrama as done by Dawood, or to interpolate a phrase as in Asad's version.

Sale: "I will rehearse that which your LORD hath forbidden you; (that is to say)....and (that ye show kindness to (your) parents....".

Rodwell: "I will rehearse what your Lord hath made binding on you.....; and that ye be good to your parents....".

Pickthall: "I will recite unto you that which your Lord hath made a sacred duty for you:.....and that you do good to parents".

Ali: "I will rehearse what God hath (really) prohibited you from:...Be good to your parents".

Arberry: "I will recite what your Lord has forbidden you:....to be good to your parents".

Dawood: "I will tell you what your Lord has made binding on you: that you shall show kindness

to your parents". *

Asad: "let me convey unto you what God has (really) forbidden to you:....and (do not offend against, but, rather), do good unto your parents". *

Farid: "I will recite to you what your Lord has forbidden,...and (that you do) good to parents".

Irving: "I will recite what your Lord has forbidden you:....and (show) kindness towards both (your) parents".

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:

The Qur'ān employs a good deal of figurative language, the main purpose of which is to present to the listener and the reader a more vivid sense of its message. This, however can only be fully appreciated in the context of the culture in which it was originally revealed. The most common figures of speech in the Qur'an are tashbīh 'simile' and isti'āra 'metaphor'. (74)

Although simile in many works on the language of the Qur'an is treated as a single category, ie. tashbīh, yet with a close analysis of all the similes in the text it becomes apparent that these may be classified into the following types; These types are:

1. Simple simile, where the word indicating 'like' and the point of similarity is omitted, thus leaving only the thing with which comparison is made. An example of this type can be found in 2:187, where the chastity and protection of husband and wife achieved through marriage is compared to the protection from all kinds of weather provided by clothes. (75)

Like many other statements in the Qur'ān, this type of simile requires interpolation in order to establish literal translation may leave it obscure; this is true of most of the following renderings:

« هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ »

- Sale: "they are a garment unto you, and ye are a garment unto them".
- Rodwell: "they are your garment and ye are their garment".
- Pickthall: "They are raiment for you and ye are raiment for them".
- Ali: "They are your garments and ye are their garments".
- Arberry: "they are a vestment for you, and you are a vestment for them".
- Dawood: "they are a comfort to you as you are to them".
- Asad: "They are as a garment for you, and you are as a garment for them".

Despite the fact that Sale, Rodwell and Ali provide explanation in the footnotes to this verse, indicating that this is a metaphorical expression referring to the mutual comfort between husband and wife, this does not help much in the actual body of the text, nor does it convey the effect the original expression.

2. Dramatic simile, in which a number of elements are combined and in a compound picture. The reader has to determine the point of similarity and the link involved. An example of this can be found in 24:39, where the deeds of the unbelievers are rendered vain in the Hereafter;

thus they will be disappointed. This picture is compared with a thirsty person in an arid desert deceived by a mirage, the link here is that the unbelievers are that person, and their deeds are a mirage. Let us see how this is put in translation: (76)

« وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالَهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيَعَتِهَا
يَجْتَسِبُوا الظَّأْنُ مَاءٌ »

Sale: "But (as to) the unbelievers, their works are like the vapour in a plain, which the thirsty (traveller) thinketh to be water,...."

Rodwell: "But as to the infidels, their works are like the vapour in a plain which the thirsty dreameth to be water,...."

Pickthall: "As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are as a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one supposeth it to be water....."

Ali: "But the Unbelievers, - their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water..."

Arberry: "And as for the unbelievers, their works are as a mirage in a spacious plain which the man athirst supposes to be water...."

Dawood: "As for the unbelievers, their works are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty traveller thinks it is water....."

Asad: "But as for those who are bent on denying the truth, their (good) deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty supposes to be water...."

3. Reversed simile, in which the thing compared and the thing with which comparison is made change places. The point of such a reversal is perhaps ironical. An example of this type can be found in 2:275, where the clause runs as: "trading is like usury" instead of what the context implies, "usury is like trading", the main theme of the verse is 'usury' and not 'trading'.

” إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا ”

- Sale: "selling is but as usury".
 Rodwell: "selling is only the like of usury"
 Pickthall: "Trade is just like usury"
 Ali: "Trade is like usury"
 Arberry: "Trafficking is like usury"
 Dawood: "usury is like trading". *
 Asad: "Buying and selling is but a kind of usury" *

The renderings of Dawood and Asad are those in which the implication of the original is best conveyed.

Unlike similes, metaphors are expressed without letters or words - as is the case with similes - rather, they are somewhat difficult to explain and usually require recourse to works of exegesis where they can be fully apprehended and hence interpreted accordingly. A number of these usages are classified as mutashābihāt. Without the proper grasp of what is implied by this term and its implication to the relevant verses, a number of

the Qur'ānic verses has often been misunderstood, and hence interpreted both by Muslims and non-Muslims. However, an appreciation of what is meant by certain metaphorical uses in the context of the Qur'an is, by itself, not enough to make one fully understand its world-view. This can only be achieved if we relate the Qur'ānic use of these terms to a concept touched upon at the very beginning in the Qur'an itself, namely, the existence of a realm which is beyond the reach of human perception, ie. al-ghayb. (77)

There are, in addition, certain problems concerned with the questions of, for example, God's Being or His divine attributes and adjuncts that are frequently referred to in the Qur'an, such as 'arsh Allah in 10:3, yad Allah in 98:10; and wajh Allah in 2:272. Muslim scholars themselves have differed on whether or not these references should be taken metaphorically. A further investigation of this issue will be provided in section two of this part.

The Qur'ān also employs a number of euphemistic expressions, as in the following two examples:

1. Instead of the plain term jimā' 'sexual intercourse' the Qur'an employs several expressions such as:
 - a. bāshirūhunna, as in 2:187. (78)

Sale: "go in unto them"
 Rodwell: "go in unto them"
 Pickthall: "hold intercourse with them"
 Ali: "associate with them"
 Arberrry: "lie with them" *
 Dawood: "lie with them" *
 Asad: "lie with them" *

b. taghashshāhā, as in 7:189. (79)

Sale: "he had known her"
 Rodwell: "he had known her"
 Pickthall: "he covered her"
 Ali: "they are united"
 Arberrry: "he covered her"
 Dawood: "he had lain with her" *
 Asad: "he has embraced her"

2. According to al-ṣābūnī, the purport of the expression kanā ya'kulāni al-ta'ām in 5:75 is that Jesus was but a mortal like all other prophets. The implication of "eating" in this context is that as a human being, Jesus was subject to the natural laws of hunger and thirst and was subject also to the natural ensuing phenomena; thus it is used euphemistically. (80)

kanā ya'kulāni al-ta'ām, as in 5:75.

- Sale: "They both ate food"
 Rodwell: "They both ate food"
 Pickthall: "they both used to eat (earthly) food"
 Ali: "They had both to eat their (daily) food"
 Arberry: "They both ate food"
 Dawood: "They both ate earthly food"
 Asad: "they both ate food (like other mortals)" *

A final feature of the figurative language in the Qur'ānic text is the use of personification: an object or quality or ideal is given human attributes. This, in fact, is a kind of metaphor that is common in the Qur'ān. We shall therefore, give some examples and find out how they are treated in translation. (81)

1. 11:74 ...dhahaba al-raw⁶u, wa jā'athu al-bushrā ...

Both raw⁶ (fear) and bushrā (glad tidings, good news) are intangible objects used with verbs implying tangible sense, namely dhahaba (left) and jā'athu (came to him, received), respectively. (82)

- Sale: "...his apprehension had departed...the good tidings had come unto him...."
 Rodwell: "...fear had passed away...glad tidings had reached him..."
 Pickthall: "...awe departed from...the glad news reached him"
 Ali: "...fear had passed from...the glad tidings

had reached him...."

Arberry: "...awe departed from...the good tidings came to him..."

Dawood: "...he heard the good news and was no longer frightened...." *

Asad: "...the fear had left...the glad tidings had been conveyed to him..."

2. 81:18 al-subhi idhā tanaffas

Another use of personification where tanaffasa (breath) is attributed to subh (dawn); thus implying 'it became clear day', 'it shone forth', 'it rose' or according to Mujāhid: 'its dusky hue shone at the approach of a gentle wind'. (83)

Sale: "The morning, when it appeareth"

Rodwell: "the dawn when it brighteneth" *

Pickthall: "the breath of morning"

Ali: "the dawn as it breathes away the darkness" *

Arberry: "the dawn sighing"

Dawood: "the first breath of morning"

Asad: "the morn as it softly breathes"

There is no practical difference between similes and metaphors; the problem, if there is one, is the same: that of identifying both the point of similarity and the particular function alluded to of the thing with which comparison is made, or which is substituted for the

thing described. These may well be as obscure in the original as they are in translation; on the other hand, they may be obvious in the light of the cultural circumstances of the original. In either case, they will require rather more than bald translation.

In general, in English translations of the Qur'ān, the tradition has been to preserve the figurative language intact. There are arguments for and against this practice. On the one hand, it will be urged that the literary quality of a translation will suffer if this is not done; on the other, it has to be said that the message of the Qur'ān may be obscured, and, indeed, debased, by injecting into it an element of "quaintness" inescapable if it is done. The "quaintness" and the "incoherence" that has been remarked on as a feature of many of the translations are foreign to the original - at least, so we may presume. The form in which the Qur'an was revealed was one suited to the first recipients, even if a certain amount of exegesis was still required; the imagery and the literary presentation were essentially native to them.

The object of making a translation has to be taken into consideration. In the case of the Qur'ān, it is assumed for present purposes that this object is to enable those who wish to read the scriptures of their religion with the fullest possible understanding to do

so; it is not, or at any rate, not primarily, to satisfy the curiosity of the non-Muslim as to the outward form in which the fundamentals of Islam were revealed.

To this object figurative language may constitute a hindrance, certainly without explanation. This explanation must, as far as possible, be incorporated into the text itself; annotation is, clearly, still necessary, but is best kept to a minimum. There are many Christians who maintain that the language of the older versions of the Bible constitutes a stumbling-block to the faithful. The use of such language in translating the Qur'ān is even less appropriate, since it does not even satisfy the kind of nostalgia to which the language of the Authorized and Revised Versions appeals.

Immense tact is, of course, required in producing a version that will present the message with the greatest possible clarity, while preserving a sense of the majesty of the diction of the original. Banality would offend against the text as much as would orotundity. Granted, though, that "no translation, however faithful to the meaning has ever been successful", (84) an attempt might clearly be made to produce a translation as faithful, and as popular, as the New English Bible.

NOTES

- 1) Ghulam Farid, p.12; al-Sabuni (i), Volume 1., p.32.
- 2) Lane, p.88; Asad, p.28; al-Sabuni (i) Volume 1,p.97.
- 3) Asad, p.162; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.364.
- 4) Asad, p.177.
- 5) Ibid, p.333.
- 6) Ibid, p.465; al-ṣābūnī (i) Volume 2., p.224.
- 7) Asad, p.866.
- 8) Asad, pp.520-1.
- 9) al-Dāmaghanī, p.56; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.69.
- 10) Asad, p.576.
- 11) Ibid, p.790; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.227.
- 12) Asad, p.109; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1, p.274.
- 13) M.G.Farid, p.1405.
- 14) Lane, p.1429.
- 15) al-Iṣfahānī, p.364.
- 16) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.142.
- 17) Mu⁶ jam, p.238; Penrice, p.55.
- 18) Ali, p.1660; Asad, p.918.
- 19) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 2., p.207.
- 20) al-Suyūṭī, Volume 1., pp.178 ff.
- 21) Penrice, page 5, 16, 73.
- 22) al-Ṭabarī, Volume 15., p.243.
- 23) al-Mawdūdī, Volume 1., p.91; Lane, p.1107.
- 24) al-Suyūṭī, Volume 1., p.182.
- 25) al-Iṣfahānī, p.457.
- 26) Mu⁶ jam, p.82; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 2., pp.286-8.

- 27) Lane, p.1347; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 2., pp.544-7.
- 28) Penrice, p.80; Mu⁶ jam, p.340.
- 29) Penrice, p.84; Asad, p.698.
- 30) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.305.
- 31) A. al-Maydānī, Qawā'id al-Tadabbur al-Amthal, Beirut, Dar al-Qalam, 1980, pp.117-121.
- 32) See the Qur'ān,
ru'yā: 12:5, 12:43 (twice), 12:100, 17:60, 37:104-5, 48:27.
aḥlām:12:44 (twice), 21:5.
- 33) Bint al-Shāṭi', pp.198-200.
- 34) Ibid.
- 35) Ibid, p.201.
- 36) Lane, p.113, 210.
- 37) Mu⁶ jam p.31, 51; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 2., p.402.
- 38) Bint al-Shāṭi', pp.204-7.
- 39) al-Dāmaghānī, pp.42-44; Penrice, pp.9-10.
- 40) al-Dāmaghānī, pp.292-3; Ibn Qutayba, pp.457-8.
- 41) Mu⁶ jam, pp.468-9; Penrice, pp.107-8; al-Dāmaghānī pp. 347-9; Ibn Qutayba, pp.472-4.
- 42) al-Dāmaghānī, p.212; Ibn Qutayba, pp.485-8; Mu⁶ jam, p.263; Penrice, pp.60-61.
- 43) al-Dāmaghānī, pp.308-310; al-Iṣfahānī, pp.315-6; Mu⁶ jam, pp.400-402; Ibn Qutayba, pp. 467-8.
- 44) Ibn Qayyim, pp.230-2; Lane, p.2503; al-Iṣfahānī, p.401-2.
- 45) al-Iṣfahānī, p.520; Mu⁶ jam, p.720; Lane, p.2933.
- 46) Asad, p.207, Mu⁶ jam, p.318.
- 47) Mu⁶ jam, p.753-5; Asad, pp.211, 371, 731, 800;

- al-Iṣfahānī, p.553.
- 48) Asad, p.172; al-Iṣfahānī, p.401; Mu⁶ jam, p.504.
- 49) Penrice, p.40; Mu⁶ jam, pp.162, 212; al-Iṣfahānī, p.138; Lane, p.923.
- 50) Mu⁶ jam, p.182; al-ṣābūnī (i) Volume 2, p. 63; al-Suyūṭī, Volume 2., p.119.
- 51) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., pp. 118-20; Asad, p.37.
- 52) Lane, p. 2756; Asad, p.249; Penrice, p.143; Mu⁶ jam p.644; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.511.
- 53) M.G.Farid, p.1009; Lane. p.827.
- 54) al-Suyūṭī, Volume 2., p.120; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., pp. 36-7.
- 55) Lane, pp.2827-8; Mu⁶ jam, p.674.
- 56) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1, pp.204-5; Lane, p.2728; al-Iṣfahānī, p.471; Penrice, p.139.
- 57) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 2., p.337; Ali, p.906; al-Suyūṭī, Volume 2., pp.41 ff; Lane, p.106.
- 58) Ali, p.186; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1, p.269.
- 59) Ibn Qayyim, pp.143-151.
- 60) Ibid, p.144.
- 61) al-Maydānī, pp.99-108; Ibn Qayyim, pp.159-167.
- 62) For more details on this subject see,
al-Suyūṭī, Volume 2., pp. 80-83;
Ibn Qayyim, pp.111-23;
al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.100;
Asad, pp. iv-vi.
- 63) Ibn Qayyim, p.112.
- 64) Ibid.

- 65) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.474.
- 66) Ibn Qayyim, p.110.
- 67) al-Suyūṭī, Volume 2., p.80.
- 68) Ibid, p.81.
- 69) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 2., p.561.
- 70) Ibid, p.83.
- 71) al-Suyūṭī, Volume 2., p.80.
- 72) Ibn Qayyim, pp.60-5.
- 73) Tafsīr al-Manār, Volume 1., p.377.
- 74) See for example;
 A.Ḥussain, al-Qur'ān wa al-Ṣuwar al-Bayāniyya, Egypt
 Nahḍa press, 1969;
 A. Badawī, min Balāghat al-Qur'ān, Egypt, Nahda
 Press, n.d. ;
 F.A. Farid, Funūn al-Balāgha bayna al-Qur'ān wa Kalām
al-ʿArab, Riyad, Dar al-liwa', 1980.
- 75) Ḥussain, al-Qur'ān, iʿjāzuh wa balāghatuh, pp.143-5.
- 76) Farid, p.68; Ḥussain, pp.129-42.
- 77) Ibid, pp.179-214.
- 78) Lane, p.207; Muʿjam, p.51; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1
 p.122; Penrice, p.17.
- 79) al-Iṣfahānī, p.361; al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.486.
- 80) al-ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.358.
- 81) Ibn Qayyim, pp.79 ff; Ḥussain pp.205-212.
- 82) Ibid.
- 83) Lane, p.2827.
- 84) A.J. Williams, ed. Islam, Washington Square Press,
 1963, p.2.

SECTION TWOPRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING
QUR'ĀNIC TERMS AND CONCEPTS.

In the previous section we have dealt with some lexical, structural and cultural problems involved in the translation of the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, our discussion was limited to a general perspective that applies to any work of a secular nature. In this section, we will focus our attention on one of the crucial issues, namely Qur'anic terms and concepts, as being an example of a typically problematic issue in translation, not only in the case of the Qur'ān but also in almost all other scriptures.

The religious terms used in the Qur'ān later became 'institutionalized' within a definite system of laws, tenets and articles. However legitimate this 'institutionalization' may be in the context of Islamic religious history, it is obvious that the Qur'ān cannot be properly understood if we read it merely in the light of later ideological developments, depriving it of its original purport and the meaning which it had - and was intended to have - for its first audience. (1)

According to Ibn Fāris, "with the revelation of Islam, a considerable number of terms in the Arabic language underwent a semantic shift in their connotations. Certain words were created. Others were given new dimensions different from those used in the Jahiliyya period, eg. Salāt, Zakāt and wuḍū'. (2)

These conceptual terms are difficult to transfer in translation. Newmark has noted that "concepts when translated (or transliterated) often narrow or deflect their meaning or develop a secondary meaning". For him "a better procedure would be to analyse the semantic features of the concept and include its main ones in a TL collocation, which may be shortened to its head noun where the reference is unmistakable". (3)

Irving has made a short critical study of the problems involved in translating Qur'ānic concepts, and other terms like the Divine attributes. In this connection, he describes his predecessors' renderings as "shopworn terms which have their connotations in other fields". The problem in translating concepts, he maintains, is "one of the proper choice between equivalents; one derived from the Latin and the other from either the Germanic or Anglo-Saxon roots". (4)

In most of the studies treating this issue, scholars come to the conclusion that the best way to translate

conceptual terms in the Qur'ān may be achieved by a co-operative effort of competent translators and specialized Muslim theologians. Of course, in the process, they will encounter some problematic expressions which may be impossible to translate. Transliteration with the necessary explanation in footnotes may be necessary.

In the introduction to his translation, Asad points out that when the Prophets' contemporaries heard the words "Islam" and "Muslim", for example, they understood them as denoting man's "self-surrender to God" and "one who surrenders himself to God", without limiting these terms to any specific community or denomination - eg, 3:67, where the Prophet Ibrāhīm is spoken of as having "surrendered himself unto God", Kāna musliman, or in 3:52, where the disciples of ʿIsa say, "Bear witness that we have surrendered ourselves unto God", wa-ishhad bi annā muslimūn.

Asad further maintains that in Arabic, this original meaning has remained unimpaired, and no Arab scholar has ever become oblivious of the wide connotation of these terms. Not so, however, the non-Arab of our day, Muslim or non-Muslim alike: to him, "Islam" and "Muslim" usually imply a restricted, historically circumscribed connotation, and apply exclusively to the followers of the Prophet Muḥammad. Similarly, the term kufr, "denial

of the truth" and kāfir 'one who denies the truth" have become, in the conventional translations of the Qur'ān, unwarrantably simplified into "unbelief" and "unbeliever" or "infidel", respectively, and have thus been deprived of the wide spiritual meaning which the Qur'ān gives to these terms. (5)

In conclusion, Asad asserts that, if it is to be truly comprehensible in another language, the message of the Qur'ān must be rendered in such a way as to reproduce, as closely as possible, the sense which it had for the people who were as yet unburdened by the conceptual images of later Islamic developments. (6)

In the following account the issue of Qur'ānic terms and concepts will be approached from various angles:

- A. Terms pertaining to rituals,
- B. Islamic judicial terminology,
- C. Epithets of the last day,
- D. Names and Epithets of al-Nar (Hell),
- E. Divine Names and Attributes.

A close contrastive study of some translations will reveal how accurately or otherwise the original implication of these terms and concepts is brought out.

A. TERMS PERTAINING TO RITUALS:

1. Ṣalāt: This term is often translated as 'prayer', "Prayer" which refers to any communication with whatever is taken to be one's god, whether it be an idol or the Divine Being. This 'prayer' may be performed at any place or time, in any position or under any condition; all these connotations conform with the common usage of the term. In Islam, ṣalāt refers to a supreme act of worship, which must be performed five times a day. It consists of precise recitations, prostrations, standings and sittings, with orientation towards the Ka⁶ba. This act of worship can only be performed after a specific type of ablutions, wuḍū' and perhaps a solemn declaration of intention. These and other entailments are not encompassed by 'prayer'. The word 'prayer', in fact, corresponds more with another term used in the Qur'an, namely du⁶ā', eg. 17:11, than with the formal ritual Ṣalāt, eg. 2:3 and 17:78. Ṣalāt is often associated with the verb aqāma, which signifies the performance of this act of worship in a comprehensive and constant manner. (7)

2:3 yuqīmūna al-Ṣalāt.

Sale: "observe the appointed times of prayer"

Rodwell: "observe prayer"

Pickthall: "establish worship" *

Ali: "steadfast in prayer"
 Arberry: "perform the prayer"
 Dawood: "steadfast in prayer"
 Asad: "constant in prayer" *

2. Zakāt: This term is often translated as "charity alms", "poor-due" or "alms-giving". All these English terms imply an act of voluntary, altruistic giving of anything useful in any amount, made with the intention of helping those in need. Such connotations would rather correspond to another Qur'anic term, namely Sadaqa eg, 2:271. Zakāt, on the other hand, is something different. It is more of the nature of a public welfare tax, to the specific amount of 2½% of appropriate wealth beyond a certain minimum amount (including capital goods, lands, residence, personal house furnishings and consumer goods for domestic use). Its payment is religiously obligatory for all Muslims without exception; and it is also levied on all inheritances before distribution. As the etymology of the word indicates, Zakāt is 'purification' or 'sweetening' of the total income of the year and of the owner's continued holding of accumulated wealth. Obviously Zakāt is not the equivalent of any of the commonly suggested English terms, and should, therefore, be interpreted accordingly, (8) for example, by transliterating it with adequate elaboration in the introduction or in the footnote.

2:110 Zakāt

- Sale: "give alms"
 Rodwell: "pay the legal impost"
 Pickthall: "pay the poor-due"
 Ali: "be regular in charity"
 Arberry: "pay the alms"
 Dawood: "pay the alms-tax"
 Asad: "render the purifying dues"

3. Janāba: the term junub is derived from the verb janaba. It signifies a person under the obligation of performing a total ablution, by reason of sexual intercourse and discharge of the semen and of other similar pollutions; it is used alike of male and female. The term used for total ablution here is ghusl, (9) which is peculiar to certain specific kinds of defilement.

4:43 Junub

- Sale: "polluted by emission of seed"
 Rodwell: "polluted"
 Pickthall: "polluted"
 Ali: "A state of ceremonial impurity"
 Arberry: "defiled"
 Dawood: "polluted"

Asad: "a state requiring total ablution". ✧

4. Tayammum: this term refers to a form of ablution one may have to resort to owing to the unavailability of water. This symbolic ablution consists in touching the earth, or anything supposed to contain dust, with the palms of one's hands and then passing them lightly over the face and hands. This practice is not only applicable when water is not within reach, but also when one cannot use water, for example, because of illness. When tayammum is performed it, in fact, takes the place both of total ablution (ghusl) and of the partial ablution before prayers (wudū'). In both instances where it occurs in the Qur'ān, the term tayammum is associated with ṣa'īd ṭayyib (an earthen surface whether there is dust or not); thus it signifies to strike one's hands upon the surface of the earth. (10)

5:6 fa tayammamū ṣa'īdan ṭayyibā....

«... فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ ...»

Sale: "take fine clean sand, and rub your face and your hands therewith"

Rodwell: "take clean sand and rub your faces and your hands with it"

Pickthall: "go to clean, high ground and rub your faces and your hands with some of it"

Ali: "take for yourselves clean sand or earth and rub therewith your faces and hands"

- Arberry: "have recourse to wholesome dust and wipe your faces and your hands with it" *
- Dawood: "take some clean sand and rub your hands and faces with it"
- Asad: "take resort to pure dust, passing therewith lightly over your face and your hands".*

B. ISLAMIC JURIDICAL TERMINOLOGY.

1. 2:226, Īlā'.

This verse deals with one of the social problems involved in married life, namely al-Īlā'; one of the forms of divorce in Islamic Law. According to al-Ṣābūnī, this verse signifies that when one takes a vow not to have sexual intercourse with his wife, the wife should wait for a maximum period of four months. If, at any time during this period, the husband changes his mind and retracts what he has said and the dispute is settled, then no further measures are to be taken and; Allah will forgive him for such behaviour. However, if the situation is otherwise, that is, no agreement has been reached between husband and wife, divorce will automatically take place. (11)

Ṣa'īd b. al-Musayyab points out that this law abrogates a pre-Islamic custom, whereby the wife is left

in a position that renders her neither married nor divorced; she may be left indefinitely in an indeterminate state, by reason of another's vow directed against her interests. (12)

Thus the term ilā' is not a mere act of abstention, rather it signifies a particular form of divorce in Islamic Law, and should therefore be either paraphrased or transliterated, with further elaboration in a footnote.

” لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِن نِّسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ
أَشْهُرٍ فَإِن فَاءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ .”

- Sale: "They who vow (to abstain) from their wives, are (allowed) to wait four months; but if they go back (from their vow), verily God is gracious and merciful"
- Rodwell: "They who intend to abstain from their wives shall wait four months; but if they go back from their purpose, then verily God is Gracious, Merciful"
- Pickthall: "Those who forswear their wives must wait four months; then, if they change their mind, Lo! Allah is forgiving, Merciful"
- Ali: "For those who take an oath for abstention from their wives, a waiting for four months is

ordained; If then they return, God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful" ✱

Arberry: "For those who forswear their women a wait of four months, if they revert, God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate"

Dawood: "Those that renounce their wives on oath must wait four months. If they change their mind, Allah is forgiving and merciful" ✱

Asad: "Those who take an oath that they will not approach their wives shall have four months of grace; and if they go back (on their oath) - behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace".

Farid: "For those who vow (abstinence) from their wives, the (maximum) period of waiting is four months; then if they go back to (their normal relationship), surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful" ✱

Irving: "Those who fail to (have intercourse with) their wives, should lie low for four months longer. If they should then change their minds, well God is Forgiving, Merciful".

2. 58:2, Zihār

This verse refers to a pre-Islamic Arabian custom called Zihār, whereby a husband could divorce his wife by simply declaring: "You are (henceforth as unlawful) to

me as my mother's back", the term Zahr ('back') being in this case a metonym for 'body'. In pagan Arab society, this mode of divorce was considered final and irrevocable; but a woman thus divorced was not allowed to remarry, and had to remain forever in her former husband's custody. The revelation of this verse abolished this cruel pagan custom, (13).

« الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْكُمْ مِهْرًا يُنْسَوْنَ لَهُمْ ... »

- Sale: "...who divorce their wives by declaring that they will thereafter regard them as their mothers"
- Rodwell: "...who put away their wives (by saying, "Be thou to me as my mother's back")"
- Pickthall: "such of you as put away your wives (by saying they are as their mothers)"
- Ali: "Divorce their wives by Zihar (calling them mothers)" *
- Arberry: "...who say, regarding their wives, 'Be as my mother's back'",
- Dawood: "who divorce their wives by declaring them to be their mothers"
- Asad: "who (henceforth) separate themselves from their wives by saying, 'Thou art as unlawful to me as my mother'" *
- Farid: "who put away their wives by calling them mothers"
- Irving: "who back away from their wives"

3. Kalāla

A term used in the Islamic Law of inheritance signifying a deceased person who has left as heir neither a descendant nor an ascendant, ie, neither offspring nor parent. (14)

Kalāla, 4:176.

- Sale: "the more remote degrees of kindred"
 Rodwell: "distant kindred"
 Pickthall: "distant kindred"
 Ali: "those who leave no descendants or ascendants as heirs" *
 Arberry: "the indirect heirs"
 Dawood: "those that die childless"
 Asad: "the laws concerning (inheritance from) those who leave no heir in the direct line"
 Farid: "Kalalah" *
 Irving: "indirect heirs"

4. al-Ghulūl,

According to Lane, the verb ghalla signifies 'to act unfaithfully' and 'to take a thing and hide it among one's goods'. In the Qur'ān this term is used to imply a specific act of unfaithfulness, namely 'to steal from the

spoils'; hence it does not merely signify the general sense of 'deception', 'stealing' or 'defrauding', as implied in words such as khada'a, saraga or ghashsha. The term ghalla, therefore, may perhaps be rendered as "to act dishonestly in taking from the spoils". (15)

3:161, yaghull

Sale: "to defraud"

Rodwell: "defraud"

Pickthall: "to deceive (mankind)"

Ali: "be false to his trust (misappropriate)"

Arberry: "to defraud"

Dawood: "rob, steal"

Asad: "deceive"

Farid: "to act dishonestly"

Irving: "hold back anything (withhold)"

5. al-Fay'

According to lexicographers, the sense of the term fay' is different from that of ghanīma; fay' signifies 'spoils', 'booty' or 'the possessions of the unbelievers' that accrue to the Muslims without a fight, either by means of their laying down their arms, their quitting their homes and leaving them vacant for the Muslims, or their making peace on condition of paying a

poll-tax or other money or property to save themselves.

Ghanīma, on the other hand, signifies spoils taken by force. Thus they are not synonymous and hence should be rendered accordingly. Nevertheless, most translators treated fay' and ghanīma as synonymous. (16)

afā'a, 59:7.

Sale: "The spoils...granted wholly to"

Rodwell: "The spoils...assigned to"

Pickthall: "gave as spoil unto"

Ali: "bestowed on...(and taken away)"

Arberry: "spoils of war...given unto"

Dawood: "The spoils...assigned to"

Asad: "spoils...turned over to"

Farid: "spoils...given to"

Irving: "Anything...assigned to"

C. EPITHETS OF THE LAST DAY.

The Qur'ān frequently alludes to the total, cataclysmic change, on the Last Day, of all natural phenomena, and thus of the Universe as known to man, eg. 20:105-107. This change will be beyond anything that man has ever experienced or the human mind can conceive. Thus, in the eschatology of the Qur'ān, the 'end of the World' does not signify an annihilation, ie. a reduction into nothingness, of the physical universe but, rather,

its fundamental transformation into something that men cannot now visualize, eg. 14:48. It is hardly to be expected that a precise definition of these epithets should be given in works of Qur'ānic exegesis; it is correspondingly difficult to represent them in translation. (17)

1. 37:21, yawm al-Faṣl

This expression alludes to the oft-repeated Qur'anic statement that on the Last Day man will gain a perfect, unflinching insight into himself and the innermost motivation of his past attitudes and doings. According to Lane, the expression yawm al-Faṣl means the day on which a judicial distinction will be made between what is true and what is false; it also signifies the day on which a distinction will be made between the doer of good and the doer of evil, and each shall be required for what he has done. (18)

Sale: "The day of distinction (between the righteous and the wicked)" *

Rodwell: "the day of decision"

Pickthall: "the Day of Separation"

Ali: "This is the Day of Sorting Out"

Arberry: "the Day of Decision"

Dawood: "the Judgement-day"

Asad: "the Day of Distinction (between the true and the false)" *

- Farid: "the day of the final Decision"
 Irving: "the day for sorting things out"

2. 56:1 al-Wāqī'a

This is a forceful term, signifying the inevitability suddenness and calamitous nature of this event. The full connotation of al-wāqī'a, Sale maintains, "cannot be expressed by a single word in English". (19)

- Sale: "the inevitable (day of judgement)"
 Rodwell: "the day that must come"
 Pickthall: "the event"
 Ali: "the Event Inevitable"
 Arberry: "the Terror"
 Dawood: "that which is coming"
 Asad: "That which must come to pass (at last)"
 Farid: "the Inevitable Event"
 Irving: "the Inevitable"

3. 69:1 al-Hāqqa

Another epithet of the Last Day is al-Hāqqa, which signifies the state in which all falsehood will vanish, and the true nature of everything will be manifest and tangible, such as that of the Resurrection and the Requital. It also implies that man will then become fully aware of the real quality (haqīqa) of his past life and will be freed from all self-deception. (20)

Sale: "The infallible!"
 Rodwell: "THE INEVITABLE!"
 Pickthall: "The Reality!"
 Ali: "The Sure Reality!"
 Arberry: "The Indubitable!"
 Dawood: "The Inevitable:"
 Asad: "OH, THE LAYING-BARE of the truth!" *
 Farid: "The Inevitable!"
 Irving: "Reality!"

4. 79:34 al-Tammāt al-Kubrā

Tamma signifies a calamity that will overwhelm and predominate over everything; it will surpasses every other calamity. Moreover, it is here further qualified by an relative, al-Kubrā, in order to insist on its absolute nature. (21)

Sale: "the prevailing, the great (day)"
 Rodwell: "the grand overthrow"
 Pickthall: "the great disaster"
 Ali: "The great, overwhelming (Event)" *
 Arberry: "the Great Catastrophe"
 Dawood: "the supreme day"
 Asad: "the great, overwhelming event (of resurrection)" *
 Farid: "the great calamity"

Irving: "the greatest calamity"

5. 80:33 al-Sakhkha

al-Sakhkha qualifies a sound or a cry that will deafen the ear by its vehemence. This will occur on the occasion of the resurrection; ears will be deafened so that nothing but the call to life will be heard. (22)

Sale: "the stunning sound (of the trumpet) shall be heard"

Rodwell: "the stunning trumpet-blast shall arrive"

Pickthall: "the Shout cometh"

Ali: "the Deafening Noise" *

Arberry: "the Blast shall sound"

Dawood: "the dread blast is sounded"

Asad: "the piercing call (of resurrection) is heard" *

Farid: "the deafening shout comes"

Irving: "the uproar comes"

6. 40:18 yawm al-Āzifa.

The verb azifa combines the notion of inexorably approaching and arriving suddenly. (23)

Sale: "the day which shall suddenly approach" *

Rodwell: "the approaching day"

Pickthall: "the Day of the approaching (doom)"
 Ali: "the Day that is (ever) drawing near"
 Arberry: "the Day of the Imminent"
 Dawood: "the approaching day"
 Asad: "that Day which draws ever nearer"
 Farid: "the day (that is) fast approaching"
 Irving: "the day of the Approach (of Doom)"

7. 101:1 al-Qāri'a

This is an epithet of the Last Day signifying a sudden sharp striking, which will leave all creatures in a state of unbearable shock and terror.

Sale: "THE striking!"
 Rodwell: "The BLOW!"
 Pickthall: "The Calamity!"
 Ali: "The (Day) of Noise and Clamour"
 Arberry: "The Clatterer!"
 Dawood: "THE Disaster!"
 Asad: "OH, the sudden calamity!"
 Farid: "The Great Calamity!"
 Irving: "The stunning (blow)!" *

D. Names and Epithets of al-Nār (Hell):

According to Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 745 A.H.), the concept of Hell (Nār) is referred to in the Qur'ān under seven different names; these probably refer to 'seven stages', implying seven different degrees of suffering. These are in the order of severity and depth:

Jahannam, eg. 2:206, Lazā, eg. 70:15; al-Huṭama; eg. 104:4; al-Sa'īr, eg. 4:10; Saqar, eg. 74:26; al-Jahīm, eg. 2:119 and al-Hāwiya, eg. 101:9. However, he points out that these stages may be, to some extent, interchangeable, in indicating the general sense of Nār. (25)

Obviously, the real designation of each of these epithet is necessarily related to what the Qur'ān describes as al-ghayb, ie. something that is beyond the reach of human perception, hence only their approximate connotation can be brought out.

1. 2:206 Jahannam

If, as supposed by some, Jahannam is a Hebrew word, it would signify simply "Hell", in a very unspecific way. Some say that it is a native Arabic word, meaning "the fire of the World to come".

It is also said that jahannam is the Christian Purgatory, eg. 19:68-71. In al-Qāmūs, the word is said to apply to a deep well, in which all who fall into it perish. Farid derives it from jahuma (his face became frowning, contracted or ugly), the letter nūn being an addition. Jahannam, according to this interpretation, signifies a place of punishment which is dark and waterless and makes the faces of its inmates ugly and contracted. (26)

Sale: "hell"
 Rodwell: "Hell"
 Pickthall: "Hell"
 Ali: "Hell"
 Arberry: "Gehenna"
 Dawood: "Hell"
 Asad: "Hell"
 Farid: "Hell"
 Irving: "Hell"

2. 70:15 Lazā

This is said to signify a fierce, continuous raging blaze. (27)

Sale: "hell fire"
 Rodwell: "the fire"
 Pickthall: "the fire of hell"

Ali: "The Fire of Hell"
 Arberry: "a furnace"
 Dawood: "the fire of Hell"
 Asad: "a raging flame"
 Farid: "a flame of Fire"
 Irving: "it would flare up"

3. 104:4 al-Huṭāma

Al-Huṭāma is a vehement fire that destroys everything that is cast into it, and consumes it in a insatiable manner. (28)

Sale: "al-Hotama" ✱
 Rodwell: "the Crushing Fire"
 Pickthall: "the Consuming One" ✱
 Ali: "That which breaks to pieces"
 Arberry: "the Crusher"
 Dawood: "the Destroying Flame" ✱
 Asad: "crushing torment"
 Farid: "the crushing torment"
 Irving: "the Boncrusher"

4. 4:10 Sa⁶īr

This signifies "that which burns brightly and fiercely with a huge blaze". (29)

Sale: "raging flames" *
 Rodwell: "the flame"
 Pickthall: "burning flame"
 Ali: "a blazing Fire"
 Arberry: "a Blaze"
 Dawood: "the flames of Hell"
 Asad: "a blazing flame"
 Farid: "a blazing fire"
 Irving: "a blaze"

5. 74:26 Saqar

Some commentators are of the view that the word saqar is of foreign origin. It is said to signify a scorching heat that destroys the skin, and causes pain to the brain; or a heat that melts both bodies and souls.
 (30)

Sale: "hell"
 Rodwell: "Hell-fire"
 Pickthall: "the burning"
 Ali: "Hell-Fire"
 Arberry: "Sakar"
 Dawood: "the fire of Hell"
 Asad: "hell-fire"
 Farid: "the fire of Hell"
 Irving: "Scorching" *

6. 2:119 al-Jahīm

This signifies a fire that burns brightly and fiercely, living off live fuel and producing great and vehement flames. (31)

Sale:	"hell"
Rodwell:	"Hell"
Pickthall:	"hell-fire"
Ali:	"the Blazing Fire" *
Arberry:	"Hell"
Dawood:	"Hell"
Asad:	"the blazing fire" *
Farid:	"Hell"
Irving:	"Hades"

7. 101:9 Hāwiya

According to Ibn Ḥayyān, Hāwiya refers to the lowest stage of Hell. It signifies a bottomless pit in which is the utmost degree of suffering. (32)

Sale:	"the Pit (of hell)"
Rodwell:	"the pit"
Pickthall:	"The Bereft and Hungry One"
Ali:	"a (bottomless) pit" *
Arberry:	"the Pit"

Dawood: "the Abyss" *

Asad: "an abyss" *

Farid: "Hell"

Irving: "a Pit"

E. Divine Names and Attributes:

The issue of al-Asmā' wa al-Sifāt has engaged a large number of Muslim theologians, who, naturally, adopt different standpoints regarding the precise connotations of these Divine names and attributes. These have to be considered in the light of certain concepts that were developed by these theologians:

- a. Tanzīh: To declare God to be far removed, or free, from every impurity or imperfection; or from everything derogatory from His Glory. Thus nothing which resembles a human quality should be attributed to God.
- b. Tashbīh: Contrary to tanzīh, tashbīh signifies the ascription of divine attributes to human attributes, thus God sees and hears, as described in 42:11, in the same manner as Man does. However, according to the orthodox view, despite the literal resemblance between divine attributes and human attributes, the former should be taken without knowing 'how' bi-lā kayf, in order to conform with the Qur'anic pronouncement laysa kamithlihī shay', "there is nothing like Him".
- c. Ta⁶tīl: The mu⁶atīla totally discountenance the ascribing of any attribute to God. For them, any such thing is inconceivable. (33)

It is apparent that each of the above three concepts implies that man is incapable of comprehending the Divine Being in its True nature. As Martin Buber says: "Man's capacity to apprehend the divine in images is lamed in the same measure as his capacity to experience a reality absolutely independent of himself". (34)

References, for instance, to God's Being 'in the heavens', eg. 67:16; or 'on His throne', eg. 20:5, are utterly beyond any creature's comprehension. Far from being able to imagine Him, we can only realize what He is NOT. Hence, only very generalized notions can convey to us, though most inadequately, His existence and activity.

In the following account an attempt will be made to investigate how some of the Divine names and attributes have been translated, in the hope of verifying the validity of the claim put forward by Newmark, namely, that "concepts when translated (or transliterated) often narrow or deflect their meaning or develop secondary meanings". (35)

1. 1:1 ALLĀH

Allah is the name of the Supreme Being Who is the Sole Possessor of all perfect attributes and the excellent divine names. The word Allah is never used for any other thing or being; it is never used in the plural

form. According to all commentators, the word Allah is a proper name applied to the Being who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all attributes of perfection, and embracing all the divine names. Ilāh, on the other hand, is a designation which applies both to Allah and to other entities regarded as gods in other religions. (36)

It is apparent that there is no precisely corresponding word in English, and perhaps any other language. This, in fact, has led some translators to retain the original word in transliteration.

Sale: "GOD"
 Rodwell: "God"
 Pickthall: "Allah" *
 Ali: "God"
 Arberry: "God"
 Dawood: "ALLAH" †
 Asad: "GOD"
 Farid: "Allah" †
 Irving: "God"

2. 1:2 al-Rahmān al-Rahīm

al-Rahmān al-Rahīm are intensive forms referring to different aspects of Allah's attributes of Mercy. Al-Rahmān and al-Rahīm are often found together in

the Qur'ānic text to add intensity to each other. Nevertheless, the former is applicable only to Allah, and implies the utmost degree of 'mercy' rahma, whereas al-Rahīm is applicable to both Allah and man. The expression al-Rahmān al-Rahīm, therefore, signifies unceasing mercy, love, sympathy, concern, solicitude and compassion. (37)

- Sale: "the most merciful"
 Rodwell: "The compassionate, the merciful"
 Pickthall: "The Beneficent, the Merciful"
 Ali: "Most Gracious, Most Merciful"
 Arberry: "the All-merciful, the All-compassionate" *
 Dawood: "The Compassionate, the Merciful"
 Asad: "the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace"
 Farid: "the Gracious, the Merciful"
 Irving: "the Mercy-giving, the Merciful"

3. 59:24, al-Khāliq

This and the following two names and epithets refer to particular aspects of the Divine activities. The first is al-Khāliq which signifies "the One who brings into existence what has not previously been in existence". (38)

- Sale: "the Creator"
 Rodwell: "the Producer" *

Pickthall: "the Creator"
 Ali: "the Creator"
 Arberrry: "the Creator"
 Dawood: "the Creator"
 Asad: "the Creator"
 Farid: "the Creator"
 Irving: "the Creator"

4. 59:24 al-Bāri'

al-Bāri' signifies "the One who develops". Some scholars hold that al-bar' is a stage between al-khalq and al-taswīr, as is clear from the word order in this verse. Thus bar' implies a process of developing from a previously created matter or state.

(39)

Sale: "the Maker"
 Rodwell: "the Maker"
 Pickthall: "the Shaper out of naught"
 Ali: "The Evolver" ✱
 Arberrry: "the Maker"
 Dawood: "the Originator"
 Asad: "the Maker"
 Farid: "the Maker"
 Irving: "the Maker"

5. 59:24, al-Musawwir

This term refers to the last stage of creation in its final form. It signifies that Allah is the Former or Fashioner of all existing things, who has established them, according to His will, and given to all of them a special form and a particular manner of being, whereby they are distinguished, in all their variety and multitude. (40)

- Sale: "the Former"
 Rodwell: "the Fashioner"
 Pickthall: "the Fashioner"
 Ali: "The Bestower of Forms (or Colours)"
 Arberry: "The Shaper"
 Dawood: "the Modeller"
 Asad: "who shapes all forms and appearances" *
 Farid: "the Fashioner"
 Irving: "the Shaper"

6. 2:255, al-Qayyūm

Al-Qayyūm signifies the Being who is self-Subsisting and on whom others are dependent for their subsistence. (41)

- Sale: "the self-subsisting"
 Rodwell: "the Eternal"
 Pickthall: "the Eternal"

Ali: "The Self-Subsisting, Eternal"
 Arberry: "the Everlasting"
 Dawood: "the Eternal One"
 Asad: "the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being"
 Farid: "the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining" ✱
 Irving: "the Eternal"

7. 112:2, al-Samad

This epithet is said by some to signify that Allah is the Creator of everything, of Whom nothing is independent. The One to whom recourse is to be had for any need; Who is independent of everything. Other commentators hold that al-Samad also refers to the Being Who takes no nourishment, for He is High and Elevated. "Eternal", "everlasting" is also a possible interpretation. (42)

Sale: "the eternal"
 Rodwell: "the eternal"
 Pickthall: "the eternally Besought of all!" ✱
 Ali: "the Eternal, Absolute"
 Arberry: "the Everlasting Refuge"
 Dawood: "the Eternal"
 Asad: "the Eternal, the Uncaused cause of All Being"
 Farid: "the Independent and Besought of all" ✱
 Irving: "the Source (for everything)"

8. 13:13 Shadīd al-Mihāl

This compound epithet occurs only in one place in the Qur'ānic text. It refers to Allah as having the utmost degree of power in contriving, in a manner hidden from man. It also implies that His punishment is severe and unbearable. (43)

- Sale: "mighty in power"
 Rodwell: "Mighty in prowess"
 Pickthall: "mighty in wrath"
 Ali: "the strength of His power (supreme)"
 Arberry: "mighty in power"
 Dawood: "Stern is His punishment"
 Asad: "He alone has the power to contrive whatever His unfathomable wisdom wills" *
 Farid: "Severe in punishing" *
 Irving: "Stern in strategy"

9. 7:54 Istawā ʿala al-ʿArsh

This is one of the most problematic expressions, not only in translation, but also in the original form. This is owing to differences of opinion among commentators as whether to take it literally or metaphorically. Some consider the verb istawā as meaning istawlā "gain mastery or victory over"; and that ʿarsh signifies

"dominion". Thus the expression istawā ⁶ala al-⁶arsh means that "Allah gained the mastery and dominion of All" or "He reigned as King". In this interpretation, all three words are taken metaphorically.

On the other hand, most scholars take the expression literally, that is to say that:
 "Allah settles Himself upon His throne". However, there is unanimous agreement that the manner of istiwā' and the reality of ⁶arsh are among the things that cannot be apprehended by the human mind; that they pertain to ghayb (45)

This expression has received great attention from both Muslim linguists and theologians (46). Perhaps, the most useful approach to this and similar anthropomorphisms is that of Imām Mālik, who says that "the denotation of istiwā' is known, but the kayf ("reality") of it cannot be perceived. It is wājib ("obligatory") to believe in this concept, whereas insistence on finding out its reality is a bid'a ("condemned practice)". (46)

Imām Ibn Ḥanbal maintains that 'how' and 'why' cannot be applied to such expressions. According to Yāsīn, they should be taken with no tashbīh, ta⁶tīl or tahrīf. (47)

Like istawā ʿala al-ʿarsh, expressions such as yad Allah, eg. 48:10, and wajh Allah, eg. 2:115, may best be rendered by means of transliteration, of course, with further explanation in the introduction or in the footnotes. An example of how translators have treated such expressions is:

7:54 istawā ʿala al-ʿarsh

Sale: "ascended (his) throne"

Rodwell: "mounted the throne"

Pickthall: "mounted He the Throne"

Ali: "is firmly Established on the Throne (of authority)"

Dawood: "ascended His throne"

Arberry: "sat Himself upon the Throne"

Asad: "is established on the throne of His almightiness"

Farid: "He settled Himself firmly on the Throne"

Irving: "He mounted on the Throne"

As is clear from the above account, Qur'ānic terms and concepts may prove impossible to translate. However, in the co-operative effort, the competent translator and the specialized theologian will be able to balance and adjudicate, as best they can, the connotations of the rival terms and concepts. As expected, when some 'untranslatable' expressions emerge, transliteration with the necessary explanation in footnotes might seem indispensable.

NOTES

- 1) al-Mubārak, pp.282-3.
- 2) Ibn Fāris, pp. 78 ff.
- 3) Newmark, pp.167-7.
- 4) Irving, p.121-134.
- 5) Asad, pp. vi-vii.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) See for example, Farūqi, p.11; Sābiq, Volume 1., pp.123-132.
- 8) Mu⁶ jam, p.271; Sābiq, Volume 1. pp.327-429.
- 9) Lane, p.466; Sābiq, Volume 1., p.64-69.
- 10) al-Ṣābūnī (ii), Volume 2., pp.485-489; Sābiq, Volume 1., pp.76-82; Lane, p.1689.
- 11) al-Ṭabarī, Volume 2., p.235; Penrice, p.9 and 54; Sābiq, Volume 2., p.196-9; Lane 84.
- 12) al-Rāzī, Volume 6., p.85; M.G.Farid, p.93.
- 13) Sābiq, Volume 2., pp.309 ff; al-Rāzī, Volume 8.,p.149; al-Ṣābūnī (ii), Volume 2., pp.512-534; Lane 1926-7.
- 14) al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1. pp.262-4; al-Iṣfahānī, p.437.
- 15) Sābiq, Volume 2, pp.682-4; Mu⁶ jam, p.458; al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.240; Lane, p.2277.
- 16) Sābiq, Volume 2., p.692; al-Ṣābūnī (ii), Volume 1., p.603-4.
- 17) Asad, p.380 and 482.
- 18) al-Bayḍāwī, Volume 2., p.138; Mu⁶ jam, p.478; al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.30.
- 19) Mu⁶ jam, p.734; al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.305.

- 20) Lane, p.609; Asad, p.888.
- 21) al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.516; Mu⁵ jam, p.390.
- 22) Lane, p.1657-8; al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.521.
- 23) al-Iṣfahānī, p.17; Mu⁶ jam, p.18.
- 24) al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.595; Mu⁶ jam, p.504; M.G.Farid, p.1393.
- 25) al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.314; Asad, p.387.
- 26) Hughes, p.170-1; Penrice, p.30; Lane, p.478, M.G.Farid, p.85.
- 27) al-Iṣfahānī, p.450; al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.442.
- 28) al-Kilbi, Volume 4., p.217; Abu Ḥayyān, p.82; al-Iṣfahānī, p.123.
- 29) al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.260; Lane, pp.1363-4.
- 30) Hughes, p.564; Mu⁶ jam, p.299; Lane, p.1379.
- 31) al-Iṣfahānī, p.88; Mu⁶ jam, p.97.
- 32) al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.595; Mu⁶ jam, p.705; Hughes, p.171; Lane, p.3046.
- 33) For further details see for example,
 al-Bayhaqī, al-Asmā' wa al-Sifāt, Egypt, al-Sa⁶āda Press, n.d.;
 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Usūl al-Īmān, Makka, Makka Press, n.d.;
 al-Tahawī, sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Tahawīyya, Damascus, al-maktab al-Islami, 1971.
- 34) Martin Buber, Eclipse of God, London, 1952, p.22.
- 35) Newmark, pp.166-7.
- 36) al-Mubārak, pp.23-31; al-Jamal, pp.50-55; Lane, p.82-83; al-Qurtubī, Volume 1., p.133.

- 37) al-Kashshāf. Volume 1., p.11; M .G. Farid, p.3;
al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.25.
- 38) al-Ḥimṣī, p.438; al-Jamal, p.132; Lane, p.802.
- 39) al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 3., p.357; al-Jamal, p.134.
- 40) al-Ḥimṣī, p.438; Lane, p.1745.
- 41) Mu⁶ jam, p.533; Da⁶ wat al-Qur'^ān, Volume 1., p.140
al-Jamal, p.182.
- 42) Lane, p. 1726-7; Mu⁶ jam, p.363; al-Ṣābūnī (i),
Volume 3., p.620-1.
- 43) al-Iṣfahānī, p.464; Mu⁶ jam, p.612.
- 44) al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1., p.450.
- 45) Mahāsin al-Ta'wīl of al-Qāsīmī, Volume 7., p.2708.
- 46) For more on the same subject see for example,
al-Sayyid Sābiq, al-⁶Aqā'id al-Islamiyya, Egypt,
Dar al-Nasr Press, 1967.
- 47) Imām Mālik, as quoted by al-Ṣābūnī (i), Volume 1.,
p. 450.
- 48) Mahāsin al-Ta'wīl, Volume 7., p.2708; M .N .Yāsīn,
al-Īmān, Kuwait, al-Falāḥ Bookshop, 1983, pp.13-36.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is the firm conviction of Muslims that the Qur'ān comprises the very words of Allah, and that it is inimitable in its form and content. The translation of the Qur'ān is generally regarded as sacrilege. Our main concern in this study, therefore, has been to investigate the claim that it is impermissible to translate the Qur'ān, and to see to what extent this issue is related to the problem of untranslatability.

Although the claim of untranslatability may be legitimately applied to any well-written meaningful text, it is mainly based on theological grounds when it is associated with the Qur'ān. Moreover, our investigation shows that there is no explicit binding statement in either the Qur'ānic text or the sunna, regarding impermissibility or untranslatability. The only real criterion on which this matter has always been judged is ijtihād; thus, a flexible approach may still be considered legitimate.

It seems that traditional Muslim scholars, with the exception of a very few, agree that the dogmas of impermissibility and hence untranslatability emerge from two basic elements inherent in the text of the Qur'ān: Arabicity and Inimitability.

Some Muslim scholars, on the other hand, being aware of the pressing need of the translation of the Qur'ān for the propagation of its message, have modified the above two claims and have reluctantly accepted a particular type of translation, namely tarjamat tafsīr al-Qur'ān.

In our discussion of ancient and modern positions of Muslim scholars regarding both impermissibility and untranslatability, it is clear that the supposed obstacles to the translation of the Qur'ān presented by the elements of Arabicity and Inimitability have not been thoroughly investigated. Moreover, it is because of these two elements that the task of translating the Qur'ān should be undertaken, on the basis of the same verses used to declare both impermissibility and untranslatability.

Our analysis of the issue of untranslatability further maintains that, as with other religious texts, although the language of the Qur'ān poses a certain number of difficulties, these do not necessarily entail the utter impossibility its being translated; they rather demand a considerable degree of tact in translators.

The practical approach suggested in this study shows that any strategy for translating the Qur'ān should pay particular attention to the incorporation of the

ancillary exegetical literature at the appropriate point.

The most important part of the present study is the contrastive analysis provided in Part two. For this analysis, a number of passages has been selected, in which the Qur'ān displays a unique, pregnant treatment of irony, imagery and rhetoric.

In translation, fidelity has often been given more to the literal sense of the words than to their associative connotations. Thus, in not a small number of instances, the translations hardly capture the full evocations of the original.

There is no reason why an acceptable translation should not be produced. This would combine an essential loyalty to the text with an imaginative use of tafsīr material, incorporated explicatively where appropriate, and conveniently situated in relation to the text where incorporation is impracticable. Ideally, such a translation should be the work of an appointed committee of experts, working in collaboration.

At the present, there are no bright prospects for a co-operative effort to produce such a translation. Most of the available versions, if not all, are a result of individual efforts. Accordingly they present diverse interpretations. No organized body for either revision,

evaluation or production of an authorized translation exists such as those, for example, which produced the New English Bible.

In addition, proposals put forward by individuals seem to receive only scant attention by the authorities concerned. This is bound to arouse controversy, in view of the huge amount of resources devoted to the propagation of the message of the Qur'ān worldwide.

There is an urgent need to set up such a specialized body. When this has been done, Muslim authorities engaged in the propagation of Islam among both non-Arabic speaking Muslims and non-Muslims, can claim that the message of the Qur'ān has been properly and comprehensively disseminated.

APPENDIX A

ORDER OF THE QUR'ĀNIC SŪRAS:

Present Order	Chronological Order	Traditional Order Suggested By:		
		Nöldeke	Rodwell	Dawood
1	5	48	8	1
2	87	91	91	105
3	89	97	97	112
4	92	100	100	106
5	112	114	114	108
6	55	89	89	113
7	39	87	87	87
8	88	95	95	103
9	113	113	113	104
10	51	84	84	45
11	52	75	75	65
12	53	77	77	31
13	96	90	90	66
14	72	76	76	52
15	54	57	57	86
16	70	73	73	102
17	50	67	67	85
18	69	69	69	51
19	44	58	58	29

Traditional				
Present	Chronological	Order Suggested By:		
Order	Order	Nöldeke	Rodwell	Dawood
20	45	55	55	84
21	73	65	65	101
22	103	107	107	111
23	74	64	64	83
24	102	105	105	82
25	42	66	66	81
26	47	56	56	80
27	48	68	68	48
28	49	79	79	47
29	85	81	81	79
30	84	74	74	78
31	57	82	82	77
32	75	70	70	76
33	90	103	103	100
34	58	85	85	75
35	43	86	86	74
36	41	60	60	73
37	56	50	50	72
38	38	59	59	99
39	59	80	80	98
40	60	78	78	71
41	61	71	71	70
42	62	83	83	69

Present Order	Traditional			
	Chronological Order	Order Suggested By:		
		Nöldeke	Rodwell	Dawood
43	63	61	61	68
44	64	53	53	67
45	65	72	72	64
46	66	88	88	63
47	95	96	96	62
48	111	108	108	97
49	106	112	112	96
50	34	54	54	61
51	67	39	43	60
52	76	40	44	59
53	23	28	46	58
54	37	49	49	57
55	97	43	48	6
56	46	41	45	56
57	94	99	99	55
58	105	106	106	95
59	101	102	102	94
60	91	110	110	93
61	109	98	98	54
62	110	94	94	53
63	104	104	104	50
64	108	93	93	49
65	99	101	101	107
66	107	109	109	114

Traditional		Order Suggested By:		
Present	Chronological	Nöldeke	Rodwell	Dawood
Order	Order			
67	77	63	63	46
68	2	18	17	44
69	78	38	42	43
70	79	42	47	41
71	71	51	51	7
72	40	62	62	92
73	3	23	3	42
74	4	2	2	40
75	31	36	40	39
76	98	52	52	5
77	33	32	36	38
78	80	33	37	37
79	81	31	35	36
80	24	17	24	35
81	7	27	32	4
82	82	26	31	3
83	86	37	41	34
84	83	29	33	33
85	27	22	28	32
86	36	15	22	30
87	8	19	25	28
88	68	34	38	26
89	10	35	39	14

Present Order	Traditional		Order Suggested By:		
	Chronological Order		Nöldeke	Rodwell	Dawood
90	35		11	18	27
91	26		16	23	25
92	9		10	16	13
93	11		13	4	12
94	12		12	5	15
95	28		20	26	11
96	1		1	1	16
97	25		14	92	17
98	106		92	21	24
99	93		25	30	2
100	14		30	34	8
101	30		24	29	23
102	16		8	15	18
103	13		21	27	19
104	32		6	13	20
105	19		9	19	88
106	29		4	20	89
107	17		7	14	21
108	15		5	9	22
109	18		45	12	109
110	114		111	111	110
111	6		3	11	90
112	22		44	10	91
113	20		46	6	9
114	21		47	7	10

APPENDIX B

A brief bibliography of the principal English Translations
of the Qur'ān:

- 1649, Alexander Ross.
- 1734, George Sale.
- 1861, J. M. Rodwell.
- 1880, E. H. Palmer.
- 1905, M. A. Khan.
- 1917, M. Ali.
- 1929, H. G. Sarwar.
- 1930, M. Pickthall.
- 1934, A. Y. Ali.
- 1937, Richard Bell.
- 1955, A. J. Arberry.
- 1956, N. J. Dawood.
- 1957, A. M. Daryabadi.
- 1964, M. Asad.
- 1967, A. A. Mawdudi.
- 1969, M. G. Farid.
- 1971, Zafrulla Khan.
- 1974, Hashim Amir Ali.
- 1985, T. B. Irving.

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القاهرة : دار الأنوار
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بيروت : مؤسسة الرسالة
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