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The importance of Tafsīr in Qur'ān translation

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The importance of *Tafsīr* in *Qurʾān* translation

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Contents

Arabic Transliteration System

Throughout the present work, the Library of Congress transliteration system has been consistently employed whenever an Arabic expression is quoted. The following table explains the Arabic transliteration system for Arabic consonants and vowels:

Arabic	Transliteration	Arabic	Transliteration
أ	a	ط	ṭ
ء	ʾ	ظ	ẓ
ب	b	ع	ʿ
ت	t	غ	gh
ث	th	ف	f
ج	j	ق	q
ح	ḥ	ك	k
خ	kh	ل	l
د	d	م	m
ذ	dh	ن	n
ر	r	هـ	h
ز	z	و	w
س	s	ي	y
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ		
ض	ḍ		

Arabic short/long vowels, case endings and diphthongs:

Arabic	Transliteration	Arabic	Transliteration
ا	ā	ً—	-an
و	ū	ٌ—	-un
ﯿ	ī	—ٍ	-in
—َ	a	وَ	aw
—ُ	u	ﯩَ	ay
—ِ	i		

Other Symbols:　ﷺ　May he be honoured and protected

　　　　　　　　﵁　May Allāh be pleased with him

　　　　　　　　﵂　May Allāh be pleased with them

Introduction

The Qurʾān is considered to be the word of God for Muslims and was "revealed in word and meaning," (Abdel Haleem M. 2011:8). It is a rich source of guidance and contains in-depth information on beliefs and practices. It is the last revelation for Muslims all over the world. The original Arabic is considered unchanged throughout history but what has changed over time is how it is interpreted by different sects and religious groups. Its' interpretation and translation is manipulated by many translators in the hope to achieve what they think the Qurʾān means or what they want it to mean according to their diverse sectarian or religious backgrounds. This diverse interpretation of the original text is found in diverse books of *tafsīr* (exegesis) and has found its way into translations of the Qurʾān that use *tafsīr* as a basis for interpretation.

Rationale and main conceptual themes

The aim of this research is to show the importance of *tafsīr* as a context for the translation of the Qurʾān, in particular regarding the Muslim belief in Allāh and His Prophet ﷺ. Translators of the Qurʾān are influenced by their own doctrines and interpretations. Fifteen translations of the Qurʾān from different religious and sectarian backgrounds have been selected for analysis in the present thesis. The translators use *tafsīr* (exegesis) and their opinions to translate the Qurʾān according to their beliefs [see appendix 1]. This thesis, therefore, fills a gap in Qurʾānic translation research. It focuses on the theological aspect of the differences found in these translations of the Qurʾān that stem from the tug of war of interpretation between the different types of *tafsīr*. This thesis also explores how and why different translations of verses from the Qurʾān vary specifically regarding the Muslim belief in Allāh and the last Prophet ﷺ.

This thesis shows how the Qurʾān is understood and translated according to mainstream [1] and non-mainstream *tafsīr*. It shows the importance of *tafsīr* as a foundation for translating the verses of the Qurʾān. This topic was selected after reading many Qurʾānic translations which claim to be the best. Some of these translations of the Qurʾān clearly mention they are based on *tafsīr* as is noticeable from their introductions and footnotes. Therefore, *tafsīr* plays a vital role in portraying the contextual meaning of the Qurʾān. However, through examination of these translations of the Qurʾān, it was noticed that many translators use their own selected *tafsīr* or opinions to portray their own beliefs. Abdel Haleem M. (2011:xxvi) said, "The Qurʾān itself predicts in 3:7 that some people will deliberately interpret certain verses in a skewed way, the Arabic of the Qurʾān is very concise and attracted a sophisticated body of exegesis and commentary, including interpretations by those wishing to derive authoritative foundations for their sometimes extremist ideologies."

There are two categories of *tafsīr* discussed; mainstream *tafsīr* (exoteric) and non-mainstream *tafsīr* (esoteric) (Abdul-Raof 2010 and Abdul-Raof 2012:32). Mainstream *tafsīr* are those whose exegetes reflect the exoteric apparent meaning (*al-maʿnā al-ẓāhir*) of the Qurʾānic verses according to the Qurʾān, the Sunnah (standard practice of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ) and the deductions of the Prophet's Companions and their Successors. In this thesis, differences in translation regarding the belief in Allāh, His Names and Attributes and His last Prophet, Muḥammad ﷺ have been discussed. This

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[1] Mainstream *tafsīr* refers to those *tafsīr* that stem from the Prophetic narrations as well as the narrations from His Companions and their Successors. In addition, it refers to those *tafsīr* that have asserted the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Therefore, Non-Mainstream *tafsīr* do not mention the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh but rather they mention the underlying esoteric meanings.

research illustrates Qurᵓānic meaning based upon the major canons of *tafsīr*. Mainstream *tafsīr* scholars who are from the Sunni background interpret the text using principles clarified by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ on how to understand the Qurᵓān. They rely heavily on the Prophetic narrations as well as narrations from the Prophet's Companions and their Successors. With regard to the verses concerning the belief in Allāh, the mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* compilations clarify the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh.

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:6/394) said, "Indeed the verses referring to the Attributes of Allāh in the Qurᵓān were understood correctly by the Prophet's Companions in their explanation. There was no differing amongst them… I have gone through both large and concise books numbering more than one hundred books of *tafsīr*. However, I did not find, until now, that any of the Prophet's Companions had given their own opinion (by changing their apparent meaning) about the verses or Prophetic traditions regarding Allāh's Attributes other than what is understood and apparent." [My translation].

Non-mainstream *tafsīr* refers to those exegetes whose main focus is the esoteric underlying meaning (*al-maᶜnā al-bāṭin*) and the allegorical meaning (*al-maᶜnā al-majāzi*). Hence, they perform their own *taᵓwīl* (opinion based interpretation), which means to change the apparent meaning of a verse without clear proof from the Qurᵓān and the Sunnah or from the Prophet's Companions. To elaborate further, this means that there are ideological differences within *tafsīr* of the same text. One of these two different approaches (non-mainstream *tafsīr* and mainstream *tafsīr*) to interpreting the Qurᵓān is used as a basis by many translators of the Qurᵓān.

Among the most famous scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* are al-Ṭabarī (d.AH310), al-Baghawī (d.AH516), Ibn Taymiyyah (d.AH728), Ibn Kathīr (d.AH774), Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (d.AH1307/1890), al-Saʿdī (d.AH1376) and more recently al-Shanqīṭī (d.AH1393) and al-ʿUthaymīn (d.AH1422). These *tafsīr* compilations assert the apparent Names and Attributes of Allāh such as Face, Hands, Eyes and Rising above the Throne without likening Allāh to creation. Examples of other *tafsīr* compilations quoted by translators of the Qurʾān that have followed the principles of *tafsīr* by way of narrations but did not always assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh; are -those such as al-Qurṭubī's (d.AH671) *tafsīr* and al-Suyūṭī's (d.AH911) *tafsīr*. Both al-Qurṭubī and al-Suyūṭī were influenced by the Ashʿarite[2] sect in understanding the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Al-Qurṭubī did not assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh in his *tafsīr* except *Istawā* (Allāh rising above the Throne) and other Attributes of Allāh such as 'Knowledge', 'Will', 'Hearing' and 'Seeing'. Al-Suyūṭī, likewise, did not assert the apparent meaning of Allāh's names and attributes.

Some translators of the Qurʾān, with regards to many Attributes of Allāh, would refer to other Ashʿarite or Muʿtazilite[3] scholars such as al-Bāqillānī (d.AH403), al-Juwaynī

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[2] The Ashʿarite sect asserted the Names of Allāh but only seven of the Attributes of Allāh which were acceptable to the intellect (Knowledge, Power, Will, Life, Hearing, Sight and Speech). It branched off from the Muʿtazilite sect and the ascription is to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿari (d.AH324) who was a Muʿtazilite for forty years. Thereafter, he refuted them and followed his new teacher Ibn Kullāb but his teacher did not assert the apparent meaning oft the Attributes of Allāh except a few. Later, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿari left the teachings of Ibn Kullāb and followed the path of mainstream Sunni belief in asserting the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. He wrote three books before he passed away proving his retraction, *Maqālat al-Islamiyyīn*, *al-Risālah ila Ahl al-Thagr* and *Al-Ibānah*. However, many followers of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿari did not abandon the teachings of Ibn Kullāb until today. Al-Fawzan S. (2003/46-48) *A Glimpse At The Deviated Sects*.

[3] "The Muʿtazilite sect appeared between the years AH105 and AH110 from their founder Wāṣil b. ʿAṭa al-Ghazzal. The sect stemmed from the Jahmite sect since the Jahmites negated the Names and Attributes of Allāh while the Muʿtazilites only asserted the Names of Allāh but negated the Attributes of Allāh. Wāṣil b. ʿAṭa disagreed with the famous scholar of his time, Ḥasan Al-Basri (d.AH110)." (ʿAwājī 2005/1163-1166) *Firaq Muʿāṣirah Tantasib ila al-Islām*. [My translation] and (Al-Fawzan 2003/44,45) *A Glimpse At The Deviated Sects*.

(d.AH478), Zamakhsharī (d.AH538), al-Bayḍāwī (d.AH685), al-Rāzī (d.AH925), Muḥammad ᶜAbduh (d.1905), Sayyid Quṭb (d.1966) and others. This led them to not assert the apparent meaning of these Attributes because if they had, they believed that this would be likenening Allāh to creation. Therefore, secondary, allegorical meanings of Allāh's Attributes were used in these translations that were not in line with mainstream *tafsīr*. These *tafsīr* collections and others are used by many translators of the Qurʾān.

Other famous non-mainstream *tafsīr* scholars from the Shiᶜite sect include al-Qummī (d.AH307) and al-ᶜAyyāshī (d.AH320) [Yaᶜqub T.(AH1431:257)]. These books of *tafsīr* mainly relied on the interpretations from either the Ashᶜarite or the Jahmite[4] and Muᶜtazilite sects regarding the belief in Allāh. Al-Qummī and al-ᶜAyyāshī were used by the Shiᶜite[5] translators of the Qurʾān, Shakir and Mir Ahmad Ali. Al-Qummī and al-ᶜAyyāshī were influenced by the Muᶜtazilites with regards to the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Hence, in general, they did not assert the apparent meanings of many Names and Attributes of Allāh in their *tafsīr*.

[4] "The Jahmites are named after their founder Jahm b. Safwān who did not assert the Names and Attributes of Allāh [but rather other metaphorical meanings were used for them]. They claim that Allāh is an Essence devoid of names and attributes."(Al-Fawzan 2003:41).

[5] "The Shiᶜite sect originated in the first century of Islam as an exaggerated affection for and partisanship of *Ahlul-Bayt* (the family and descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ). Later, it developed into a sect of beliefs and concep ts...they claim that knowledge of the unseen belongs only to their Imāms. They consider all but a few Companions of the Prophet, to have left Islam." (Al-Kanadi in Al-Khatīb Muhibbudīn *The Reality of Shiᶜism* 2009:13/57/59).

Al-Rāzī's *tafsīr* follows the Ashᶜarite creed while at the same time borrowing from the philosophers and Muᶜtazilites. Other translators selected were influenced by the Brelvī[6] (Sufī) and the Qādyānī[7] interpretations.

The selected translations of the Qurʾān illustrate the differences in their translations with regards to the Muslim belief in Allāh and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. The fifteen translations chosen are: Dr. Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān and Dr. Muḥammad Taqi-ud-din al-Hilālī, ᶜAbdullāh Yusuf ᶜAlī, Marmaduke Pickthall, Muḥammad Asad, Rashad Khalifah, Mir Ahmad Ali, M. H. Shakir, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī, Sher ᶜAlī, Dr. A.Majid A. Auolakh, Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī, Arthur John Arberry, Edward Henry Palmer, George Sale and J.M. Rodwell.

I chose these translations as I wanted a variety of sectarian translations that showed clearly how each used either Mainstream or non-Mainstream *tafsīr* (or both) in defining either the apparent or esoteric underlying meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Additionally, how they either used Mainstream or non-Mainstream *tafsīr* to give meanings of verses supporting their doctrine regarding the belief in the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. A comparative analysis was conducted with Shiᶜite (Mir Ahmad Ali, M. H. Shakir), Qādyānī (Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī, Sher ᶜAlī), Brelvi (Dr. A.Majid A.

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[6] The Brelvī sect of Aḥmad Raza Khān al-Brelvī, stemmed from the Indian sub-continent in the nineteenth and twentieth century. They over exaggerated their love for the Prophet ﷺ. They claim he is not human. They were heavily influenced by Sufīsm, Shi'ism and Hinduism. Some of their other ideas include: seeking help from other than Allāh (polytheism), claiming others beside Allāh know the unseen, grave worship, saint worship, seeking blessings from figures, images and talismans, spreading superstitious fairy-tales and distorting the meaning of Qurʾanic verses. (Ehsan Elahi Zahīr 2011) *The Reality of Bareilawi ʾism* edited and adapted from the original work.

[7] "The Qādyānī sect is one of the Bāṭini sects (that use their own opinion to interpret the Qurʾān) that claim there are hidden meanings to various legislated texts that only their founder knows. It appeared at the end of the nineteenth century in India, where they call themselves Qādyānīs and in Africa they became known as Aḥmadis. Their founder Ghulām Aḥmad is from Qādyān in India. He claimed to be a Prophet. (ᶜAwājī 2005/744) *Firaq Muᶜāṣirah Tantasib ilā al-Islām*. [My translation].

Auolakh, Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī) translations. The comparative analysis also included three similar translations that relied on the esoteric underlying meaning such as that of ᶜAbdullāh Yusuf ᶜAlī, Marmaduke Pickthall and Muḥammad Asad. A translation by Rashad Khalifah that used a number system and on two occasions quoting two non-mainstream *tafsīr* to push his agenda of Prophethood was also added. Finally, four non-Muslim translations (Arthur John Arberry, Edward Henry Palmer, George Sale and J.M. Rodwell) were added to see which side of the Mainstream or non-Mainstream *tafsīr* influenced their translations.

Methods used to analyse evidence and ethical issues considered

After presenting some of the principles of *tafsīr*, this thesis puts forward a critical analysis of these fifteen translations of the Qurᵓān with regards to the Muslim belief in Allāh and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Mainstream scholars of *tafsīr* show that the Qurᵓān is first understood by the Qurᵓānic text, the Sunnah, followed by the narrations of the Companions and their Successors. Thereafter, the Arabic language and scholarly reasoning through researched deduction are considered. Mainstream *tafsīr* compilations mainly asserted the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh, whereas non-mainstream *tafsīr* do not.

Many translators already have an agenda as to how they want their translation of the Qurᵓān to be understood. "A Muslim translator, too, may undergo the influence of his own beliefs and cultural background and hence distort his role as a neutral mediator (particularly if he is in favour of the doctrines of a particular sect)" (Ilyas 1981:394). Hussein Abdul-Raof (2001:1), former Professor in Translation and Linguistics at Leeds University, U.K. said, "Inaccuracies and skewing of sensitive Qurᵓānic information will

always be the by-product of any Qurᵓān translation." Some translations are 'market driven' or 'client driven' and therefore do not actually refer to the original intended meaning. Hatem and Mason (1990:12) hold the view that "translation is a matter of choice, but this choice is always motivated..."

In this research, the discussion will primarily be based on examples of different Qurᵓānic translations that are representative of mainstream and non-mainstream schools of *tafsīr*. Whenever quotations of the Qurᵓān are used, the name of the translator has been mentioned. Khān and al-Hilālī's translation have been quoted when a more direct translation was required and Umm Muḥammad's translation (Saḥīḥ International) was used when a simplified translation was required. I have also chosen to translate some verses in the main text where a clearer, simpified translation is more appropriate.

Layout of thesis

This thesis consists of six major chapters:

Chapter One: Translating the meaning of the Qurᵓān

Chapter Two: The use of *Tafsīr* in the context of translating the Qurᵓān

Chapter Three: Mainstream and non-mainstream books of *tafsīr*

Chapter Four: Translating the verses related to the belief in Allāh

Chapter Five: Translating the verses related to the belief in the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The selected translations have noticeable differences especially in matters of Islamic belief. Some translators even claim their translations are free from any sectarian influence. The title page to *The Holy Qurᵓān* by Auolakh (1994:Title page) reads, "The Holy Qurᵓān with non-sectarian modern and simple translation, including precise

transliteration and authentic explanation base *Kanzul Imān*."[8] However, the reality is otherwise as will clearly be seen in this Brelvī translation.

In order to justify my preference or objection to a particular translation, Muslim exegetes that refer back to the original stages of *tafsīr* (mainstream) have been used. These include the classical works of al-Ṭabarī, al-Baghawī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Kathīr, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, al-Saʿdī, and more recently al-Shanqīṭī and al-ʿUthaymīn. However, I have at the same time pointed out any differences that may have occurred in these above Qurʾānic *tafsīr*. In order to justify whether the Qurʾān is translatable, quotes from scholars have been provided from scholars that followed mainstream *tafsīr* explanations of verses from the Qurʾān. Before discussing the major canons of *tafsīr*, a critical analysis of what constitutes *tafsīr* and what is meant by both mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr* is presented. In order to build the foundation and understanding for reading different translations of the Qurʾān, a historical discussion of various Qurʾānic translations is provided. This will highlight to the reader the background of different translators and provide a historical context for certain interpretations.

 The first research challenge encountered, was to provide a theoretical foundation about translation studies and how context plays an integral part. This study examines the *tafsīr* context for the translation of the Qurʾān. Translation from one language into another is not just the transfer of information. Rather, it implies that the translation should be understood in the context of the first language. This should be in a clear manner which is comprehended and conveyed in the second language. The context in this case is the

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[8] *Kanzul Imān* is a Brelvī *tafsīr* in Urdu inclined to the Sufi doctrine.

appropriate *tafsīr* which contributes to the understanding of each verse. Translators should strive to portray the context of what is translated to the best of their ability. However, there will always be compensation and loss in the process of transferring information from one language into another.

The principles of translation used in the thesis include the importance of context as a means to translate appropriately. Context refers to cultural, semantical, linguistic and religious factors. These factors and others determine the meaning of the text in the context understood in the first language. The culture of any society usually differs from that of others. The people, the settings, their belief and practices are unique. The translator needs to bear this in mind when approaching a text. This thesis discusses linguistic features that may add to the contextual meaning when explored. Furthermore, slight changes in syntax and lexis make the task of the translation process a challenge for any translator. Add to that the religious or *tafsīr* context which will give the background of a given text with many variables to deal with. This thesis tries to open up these areas of discussion and in particular the *tafsīr* context. Many cultural, linguistic and historical factors are found in the *tafsīr* compilations. This is why it is imperative for the translator of the Qurʾān to delve into the books of *tafsīr* and extract meaning to a given verse.

This thesis also explores the importance given to the receiver understanding the translation in their language and context. The translator will need to either delete or compensate words in the translation for the receiver to understand the context portrayed.

Knowledge of *tafsīr* and its usage will aid towards a positive compensation in understanding the context of the Qur°ānic verses discussed. The history of how language and translation has been an integral part of manipulating religious texts since the fourth century is also highlighted. Language and translation was and still is a powerful tool used by different religious denominations to influence their followers into their own interpretation of the text. Furthermore, these religious denominations also used their manipulated translated texts to restrict other interpretations as these, according to them, would be considered blasphemy. A historical, relevant discussion on how language was used as a tool for power in the Church is also mentioned as a comparison. The struggle for control of interpretation and translation is therefore not a new phenomenon found amongst sects in Islam but is also found, for example, amongst other religious denominations in Christianity. Different sects use their own translation of religious texts as a protection of their faith and a tool to propagate their interpretation of texts.

This thesis constitutes various theoretical discussions, views of Muslim scholars of *tafsīr* and types of *tafsīr*. Selected examples from Qur°ān translations are used to provide a theoretical and practical analysis of these translations.

In the literature review, a description of fifteen translations is given. Some differences present in Qur°ānic translations are addressed. Such differences are due to the influence of sectarian backgrounds and also due to the specific *tafsīr* used.

The subject of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (reasons for revelation) and its importance has been included in this research. The basis with which to evaluate and compare translations

has been referred back to a foundation with which to access the mainstream Sunni understanding of a verse. The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said,

"I have left amongst you two things, if you hold fast to them you will never stray: the Book of Allāh (Qurʾān), and my Sunnah."[9] [My translation].

It has been recognised that each sectarian translation claims to be the best in terms of correct belief. However, the argument that many sects ignore or choose to ignore is that the fundamental mainstream principles of *tafsīr* and the Qurʾān are primarily explained by the Qurʾān, followed by the Sunnah (including the narrations of the Companions and then their Successors). In this case, principles of mainstream *tafsīr* are adhered to, thereby going back to the original sources. This follows the command of Allāh when differences occur:

فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

"And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allāh and the Messenger, if you truly believe in Allāh and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result."
(al-Nisāʾ:59)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

The importance of going back to the understanding of the Companions is illustrated in the following verses:

وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

"And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and **follows a path other than the way of the believers [the Companions]**, We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination."
(al-Nisāʾ:115)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

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[9] Reported in *Al-Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim (1990:2/310) and explained to be authentic by al-Albānī M. (2000). See *al-Saḥīḥah* (1761).

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنتُم بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوا

"So if they believe in the same **as you [Companions - plural] believe in, then they have been [rightly] guided;**"
(al-Baqarah:137)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

This thesis analyses first how translators have translated the article of faith concerning the Muslim belief in Allāh. It shows how this vital article of faith has been mistranslated without taking into consideration the context of the Prophet's call (or the *Asbāb al-Nuzūl)* and *tafsīr*. Thereafter, the Names and Attributes of Allāh are looked at. The following names of Allāh; *Ẓāhir* - الظَّاهِرُ" (Highest) and *Bāṭin* - الْبَاطِنُ ' (Nearest) and the Attributes of Allāh: *Istawā* (Allāh rising above the Throne), His 'Face' - وجــه, 'Hands' -اليدين and 'Eyes'عينين- will also be looked at. These particular Attributes have been chosen since they are among those that the sectarian sects such as the Jahmites, Muᶜtazilites and Ashᶜarites have negated and/or distorted and these distortions are reflected in non-mainstream *tafsīr* and sectarian translations. This research also includes different translations of the *'Kursī'* (footstool) mentioned in *'Āyat al-Kursī'* (al:Baqarah:255). Finally, a discussion regarding the translations referring to the belief in the Prothet Muḥammad ﷺ is presented. This research also discusses verses showing that after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, revelation has ceased, in opposition to some sectarian based translations. These examples are used to show which translators have either conformed to mainstream *tafsīr* or which have opposed it.

Having designed my research plan in view of the above, numerous examples are provided to demonstrate that sectarian beliefs are mirrored in Qurᵓān translations. Reasons for these differences in translation are given and an alternative towards a translation based upon mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* is presented. This is achieved by adhering closely to the principles of mainstream *tafsīr*.

<u>Chapter One - Translating the meaning of the Qurᵒān</u>

This chapter introduces various definitions, processes and types of translation. A discussion on literal versus free translations is highlighted with a review on whether equivalence in translation can actually be achieved. Thereafter, some of the difficulties encountered by translators in grammar, linguistics, semantics and cultural issues are examined. Translation is not innocent and the battle for interpretation is not a new phenomena. Historical struggles in translation are shown, whereby sects and religions have battled for interpretation throughout centuries. Finally, this chapter ends by introducing a review of fifteen translations of the Qurᵒān as a springboard for analysis in the struggle for interpretation. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the importance of 'context' in translation. This paves the way for *tafsīr*, as a context, in the translation of the Qurᵒān.

1.1   What is translation?

Translation has aroused much discussion as to its problems and parameters. Linguists have attempted to try and define the process of translation. The problem is magnified when one realises how the same text is understood differently from the author's intention to the reader's digestion. Translation is the study of complex variables and a discussion of these is presented. The process of what constitutes the context in translation is explored.

The Arab linguist, Ibn al-Athīr (AH1421:106) states that translation is, "Transferring speech or text from one language to another." Is it as simple as that? The question that arises from this explanation is how and what is transferred? What are the factors involved in this transfer? Farghan and Shunnaq (1999:2) state that, "Translation is often regarded as a project for transferring meaning from one language to another."

It is thus not just speech or text that is being transferred, but also meaning. To mistranslate, therefore simply means, "to translate incorrectly" (Webster 1976:1446). Can it be really said that translation is only the transfer of speech or text? The Arab linguist, Ibn Manẓūr (1997:2/26), stated that translation means, "the explanation of speech or text in another language." [My translation].

However, Venuti (1995:17) states, "translation is a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitute the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of interpretation." Venuti highlights the importance of interpretation being understood just as it was in the source language. The Arab linguist, al-Fayyūmi (p.74) adds that translation is to "transfer meaning of speech or text in the language of one who wants to access it by way of clarification in their language."[10] However, Arabic, for example has a different structural system and syntax than English. Arabic and English belong to different linguistic families. The cultural aspects are also different between the two languages. Meaning involves the totality of the information conveyed in a particular message. It necessitates references to linguistic characteristics such as lexical, grammatical and phonological meaning. It also includes the use of language, thought, situation, intentions and knowledge. We are therefore left with many factors that the translator has to contend with. Ghazala (1995:Introduction) notes four main factors: grammar, words, style and sounds.

The words in the target language may not relate exactly to those in the source text and the style of the translator may differ from that intended by the author of the original

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[10] Cited from Tāhirī (2005: 352), *Al-Qurʾān Bayna Al-Salaf wa al-Khalaf.*

source text. There are numerous factors involved in the representational understanding of the source context derived from the language showing how it works and how it does what it does. McRae & Vethamani (1999: xii) discuss various terms in how to analyse a text (in the first place) that is received such as lexis, syntax, cohesion, graphology, phonology, semantics, dialect, register, period, function and style. What are the key words, ideas and what effect does the text have in the first language before it is translated? These are questions that translators need to ask themselves, and in turn, answer in a translation that is suitable within the confines of the context. The source text is made up of words that are not in isolation but rather interacting with other words to bring meaning. Each sentence is not isolated from the context of other sentences. The syntax or word order shows which words are emphasised and this adds to the overall meaning. There is also the added challenge of knowing the cultural meaning behind a text and the perceived meaning made by the reader. Abdul-Raof (2001:9) stated that, "languages differ considerably from one another syntactically, semantically and pragmatically. At the heart of translation lies the problem of meaning." Abdul-Raof added that it is meaning which is transferred not just text. Also, it is important to bear in mind the receiver's understanding the translation in their own language and context.

Therefore, translating one language into another is a process of communication which is complex. It represents many variables used to transfer meaning similar to the source language (L1). Layachi (1987:12) states, "Translation is considered as a complex process of communication." This process of translation is primarily dedicated to transferring meaning in its correct context. Hatim (1997:9,10) states, "Language varies according to the context and it is this variation, incessant and almost seamless, with which the translator has to contend in texts that are essentially multifunctional." This is a complex task requiring the translator to understand and relate in the target language

the many variables involved and then to transfer that into another language that is understood by the target audience. Hence, resulting in an end product that resembles the initial meaning portrayed in the target language as though it was not a translation in the first instance (Nida E. 1964:163). Likewise, Newmark (1995:5) clearly shows the importance of knowing the author's context when he describes translation, "It is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended in the text." Here, he shows the importance of actually conveying the author's own meaning in the translation.

These definitions describe the aim and objectives of what is sought from translation. Other definitions describe the actual process of how to decode the original source text. However, this decoding of what is actually intended by the author of the written text requires precision and awareness of both languages; the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). The process of translation contains many difficulties. One difficulty stems from the fact that most words have more than one meaning. A translation based on a one-to-one substitution of words is seldom acceptable as the context of the communication may not be conveyed. There are also specialised terminologies used for specific contexts that need explaining.

For Forster (1958:1), translation is, "the transference of the content of a text from one language to another...the perfect translation is one which fulfils the same purpose in the new language as the original did in the language in which it was written, not a mere approximation." This shows that translation should have the same impact, style and impression on the target readers as the original. Hence, the purpose of the author's original text is portrayed in the final translated text.

Robert Johnson defines translation as, "The closest natural equivalent of the source language message in the target language, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style."[11]

Translations are, therefore, attempts by translators to portray the meaning that the original author intended using the same style. All of these factors and more have a role to play in the translator's mind when choosing appropriate words to give as close a meaning of the source text.

The meaning must be known in the source language, its history, its general meaning, the lexical meaning of each word, areas of loss and compensation, semantic and cultural meaning of the text.[12]

1.2 *Literal Translations and Equivalence*

In literal translations Dickins et al. (2002:16) stated that, "the standard grammar and word order of English are respected; however, everything which might be transferred on a simple word by word basis from the Arabic is so transferred." This, sometimes results in out of context translations. Tāhirī (2005:354) states that "Translation is divided into two categories, literal and meaningful or explanatory." This means that literal translations require one to preserve the word order as close as possible with the general meaning that each and every word necessitates. As for the 'meaningful translation', he says it is to explain the meaning in another language without particular attention to the word order of the source text and without encompassing the meaning of each and every word from the source text. However, literal translations do not take into account the context as Layachi (1987:25/26) states, "The aim of literal translation

[11] Robert Johnson, "Cultural Implications for translation," at: http://www.proz.com/translation-articles/. [Accessed 28 November 2013].
[12]See Bleyhesh al-ᶜAmri (2011:44).

is to render the meaning of the lexical items of SL text without taking into account the context… Consequently, this kind of translation leads to misinterpretation and probably to nonsense."

Implicit information must be added to the translation to compensate what is lost in mere literal translations (el-Hadary 2008:30). Literal translations, therefore, transmit the text as close to the original without emphasis on the general meaning conveyed. In fact, meaning can be totally lost in literal translations. Interestingly, Dickins et al. (2002:21) mention that this, "translation loss is not a loss *of* translation but a loss *in* the translation process. It is a loss of textual effects." Thereafter, Dickins et al. further state that the translator should look towards reducing this loss in translation.

Literal translations can have the form of sentence by sentence or word for word. However, word for word literal translations pose a problem if context is ignored. For example, in *al-Mawrid* Arabic English dictionary, the word 'مركز' could mean; "centre, focus, position, post, status or rank" (Baᶜalbakī 2003:1022). But to translate:

زيد يعمل في المركز

as: 'Zayd works in a rank', is meaningless and would be incorrect due to the context of the sentence. Similarly, 'Zayd works in a status', 'Zayd works in a position' etc. would also not make sense. What is appropriate and correct is to say: 'Zayd works in a centre.' Similarly, the word 'موقع' in Arabic could mean; area, position, rank, site or status. Again, it would be incorrect to translate the following sentence in Arabic:

زيد يسكن في موقع جيد

as: 'Zayd lives in a good position,' or 'Zayd lives in a good rank' or 'Zayd lives in a good status.' All these previous sentences do not make sense. What would be more appropriate is to say: 'Zayd lives in a good area or site.' From this, it becomes clear that some words in Arabic have more than one word that can replace them in English. However, it is the appropriate word that is used in context of the sentence that is important. Context plays an important part in the translation of L1 to L2. The correct translated word is based on the context of its usage. Context necessitates knowing the author's intent behind a text. Therefore, source oriented translations should focus on the author's intent and context and should reflect this meaning in the translation. However, the translator must also consider how the message is received in the context of the target language. An example of mere literal translations can be seen in the translation of Chapter Isrāʾ:29:

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَى عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَحْسُورًا

Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī translates it literally without mentioning the contextual meaning:

> "And make not thy hand to be shackled to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, lest thou sit down blamed, stripped off."

Likewise, Pickthall does the same:

> "And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked, denuded."

Shakir, likewise, chooses to translate the verse literally:

> "And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, lest you should (afterwards) sit down blamed, stripped off."

Both Shakir and Maulana's translations have difficulty in the flow of the text with the repetition of "nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth". It would have been sufficient to say:

> "And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit…"

However, they both chose to translate literally and rigidly, this causes the sentences to be elongated. What is intended in a translation is, as Mustapha (2000:8) stated, "the idea from the text is clearly portrayed in the translation."

Khān and al-Hilālī (along with Rashad) keep to the literal translation with the meaning in brackets:

> "And let not your hand be tied (like a miser) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift), so that you become blameworthy and in severe poverty."

Rashad:

> "You shall not keep your hand stingily tied to your neck, nor shall you foolishly open it up, lest you end up blamed and sorry."

Yusuf ᶜAlī, like Khān and al-Hilālī, chose to keep a literal translation with the meaning in brackets:

> "Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute."

These translations clearly show a variation of styles and approaches towards translating the contextual meaning of examples used in the Qurᵓān. Some translators captured this while others only conveyed the literal meaning. Although it is important to keep the imagery conveyed in the Qurᵓān, it is of paramount importance to give the correct meaning taking into account of the passages before and after.

Choosing the appropriate lexis is also an area of context that requires appropriate transfer from source text into the target text. Dickins et al. (2002:97) state that, "In any text, words acquire associative overtones on top of their denotive meaning." For example the word *fitnah* has many different meanings in different contexts, and

translators of the Qurʾān have an enormous task deciphering which meaning is implied. According to (Baʿalbakī 2003:815) in *al-Mawrid*, *fitnah* is translated according to its particular connotation. If the context is 'magic' then it means: "Charm, glamour, magic, spell, charisma, enchantment, fascination, captivation, bewitchment, infatuation." If the context is 'temptation' the following words are suggested, "seduction, seducement, temptation, enticement, appeal, attraction," However, if the context is regarding 'problems being caused', Baʿalbakī (2003:815) states that '*fitnah*' in this case, means: "sedition, riot, disturbance, trouble, unrest, disorder, strife, tumult, commotion, turmoil, trial, ordeal, affliction, distress." The word *fitnah* is mentioned thirty four times in the Qurʾān in different forms. In the Qurʾān, *fitnah* in its verb form could mean a test as in:

<div dir="rtl">

أحسب الناس أن يتركوا أن يقولوا آمنا وهم لا **يفتنون**

</div>

"Do people think that they will be left alone because they say: "We believe," and will not **be tested**."
(Al-Ankabūt:2)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Fitnah in its verb form could also mean an obstacle on the path to Allāh as in:

<div dir="rtl">

واحذرهم أن **يفتنوك** عن بعض ما أنزل الله اليك

</div>

"But beware of them lest **they turn you (O Muhammad SAW) far away** from some of that which Allāh has sent down to you."
(Al-Māʾidah:49)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Fitnah in its verb form could mean punishment as in:

<div dir="rtl">

ثم إن ربك للذين هاجروا من بعد ما **فتنوا** ثم جاهدوا وصبروا إن ربك من بعدها لغفور رحيم

</div>

"Then lo! thy Lord - for those who became fugitives after they had been **persecuted.**"
(Al-Naḥl:110)
[Pickthall]

Fitnah in its verbal form could mean to fall into sins and hypocrisy as in:

<div dir="rtl">

ولكنكم **فتنتم** أنفسكم وتربصتم وارتبتم وغرتكم الأماني

</div>

"But you led yourselves **into temptations**, you looked forward for our destruction; you doubted (in Faith); and you were deceived by false desires."
(Al- Ḥadīd:114)

The translator of the Qur°ān has to choose the appropriate word that suggests a close meaning, taking into account the passages before and after so as not to translate literally. Therefore, it is possible for the same word to have different meanings according to different contexts. It is imperative for the translator of the Qur°ān not just to use dictionaries for only the surface meaning as shown in the example above. Another example whereby words must be translated in context, otherwise there will be clear translation loss, can be found in translating the word *ummah*. *Ummah* is mentioned forty seven times in the Qur°ān. Particular attention should be paid to each different context. The scholar of manstream *tafsīr*, al- ᶜUthaymīn (AH1421:27) showed the different meanings that some of the different contexts portray:

1. In the first verse, it refers to 'community' or 'nation':

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ **أُمَّةٍ** رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

"And verily, We have sent among every ummah (**community, nation**) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allāh (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Taghūt (all false deities, etc. i.e. do not worship Taghūt besides Allāh)"."
(Nahl:36)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

2. In the second verse, it refers to 'leader':

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ **أُمَّةً**

"Verily, Ibrāhīm (Abraham) was an Ummah (**a leader** having all the good righteous qualities), or a nation, obedient to Allāh."
(Nahl:120).
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

3. In the third verse it refers to 'a way' or 'religion':

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ **أُمَّةٍ** وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّهْتَدُونَ

"Nay! They say: "We found our fathers following a certain **way and religion**, and we guide ourselves by their footsteps"."
(Zukhruf:22)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

4. In the last verse, it refers to 'time':

وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا أُنَبِّئُكُم بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ

"Then the man who was released (one of the two who were in prison), **now at length**
remembered and said: "I will tell you its interpretation, so send me forth"."
(Yusuf:45)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

As can be seen from the various contexts of the word *Ummah*, the meanings are
different. Therefore, one should adhere as close to the meaning of the context as
possible. Khān and al-Hilālī were able to capture each of the four meanings above in
their quoted translations.

Cruse (2000), states there is no such thing as 'the meaning of a word' in isolation from
particular contexts (cited in Kalakattawī 2007:49). Nida's theory of translating
developed from his own work from the 1940's onwards, when he was translating and
organising the translation of the Bible. He suggests that there is a need for the translator
to have a technique for decoding the source text and a procedure for encoding the target
text (Nida 1964:60).

The surface structure of the source text is analysed by the translator into the basic
elements of the deep structure. These are transferred into the translation process and
restricted semantically and stylistically into the surface structure of the target text.

The translator sometimes needs to look for other words to add as compensation in order
to give a more accurate rendition of the source text. Ilyas (1981:11) said, "It is an
established fact that the translation tends to be longer than the original (particularly

when it takes place between languages that belong to different linguistic families and cultures such as between Arabic and English)."

Nida (1964:156) said, "Since no two languages are identical, either in meaning given to corresponding symbols or in the ways in which such symbols are arranged in phrases and sentences, it stands to reason that there can be no absolute correspondence between languages."

If total equivalence is not possible, what is it the translator is striving for? It seems that meaning is at the heart of the discussion but whose meaning? Therefore, light should be shed on this process of interaction, negotiating between text and cultural understanding of the context. Many Arabic words can have two or more overlapping meanings in English and the translator must decide which one to choose according to the context. This can also include knowledge of how language works with collocations; words that collate in the context of other words.

Translators must take into account the many ways in which word meanings interact when they occur in discourse. Translators, therefore, should interpret and understand thoroughly the meaning of the original text. The naive person may think to translate by putting equivalent words, one by one. However, the message would be distorted and maybe left with isolated words that make no sense. This type of mechanical translation does not preserve the form and meaning of the original text. Catford (1965:20) suggests that translation is "the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another." Catford considers translation as a branch of comparative linguistics. Catford upholds Jakobson's (1959:233-244) earlier ideas whereby comparative linguistics and translation are inter-related. Some linguists hold that total

and absolute equivalence between two languages is not possible. Abdul-Raof (2001:7) holds the view that, "a translator who aspires to achieve total lexical and/or textual equivalence is chasing a mirage: total equivalence at any level of language is impossible, relative equivalence at any level is possible." Therefore, relative equivalence necessitates that words and sentences are translated in context. Loss in translation is compensated for with word and grammatical arrangements since grammatical differences are especially clear due to differences in verb systems.

1.3   Grammatical and Linguistic Contexts

Translating texts from Arabic to English, considering the different grammatical structures of the two languages, can be difficult. Layachi (1987:21) suggests, "Translation does involve an operation on the linguistic elements of the text, i.e., a linguistic analysis, before involving the meaning."

 Knowing the differences and similarities between Arabic and English grammatical structures is imperative for the translator. For example, the system of tenses of Arabic is quite different from English.

In Arabic, there are also two sentence structure types; a nominal structural sentence and a verbal structural sentence:

Verbal structural sentence: Verb + Agent + Object   فعل - فاعل - مفعول به

Nominal structural sentence: Subject + Predicate   مبتدأ - خبر

If the translator were to translate literally using the verbal structural sentence then it would not make sense as in: أكل أحمد التفاحة   =   ate Ahmed apple

Therefore, grammatical structural changes must be made for the sentence to be translated intelligibly. Nominal structural sentences in Arabic are similar to English except that there are differences on how a subject and predicate is defined. In Arabic the subject can be either definite or indefinite. To know whether the subject is definite or indefinite, articles are used. The additional article 'an' is used in English infront of vowel-sounding nouns. Sometimes, though, even if a definite (ال) article is used in Arabic, what is intended in the context is indefinite. This poses problems for translators since if you translate grammar literally without knowing the context, this could result in mis-translation. For example, the *ḥadīth*:

<div dir="rtl">المسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه ويده</div>

If we translate the subject literally then it would result in: "The Muslim..." Whereas, what is intended is not 'the Muslim', but " '**A true Muslim**' is he whom other Muslims are free from their harm in terms of their tongue and hand." As can be seen, grammatical adjustments must be made in line with the context and in the above example an additional adjective is added to the subject to give the correct meaning. This brings us to the discussion of compensation and loss. Dickins et al. (2002:49) state that, "Translators are therefore best advised to assess as precisely as possible what the loss is and why it matters, both in the immediate context and in the ST as a whole."

There are numerous examples to show differences between Arabic and English grammatical structures and how they affect translation. However, only some examples will be mentioned along with linguistic features.

In the context of the Qurᵒān, the following example shows how comparative linguistics and translation are inter-related. The verse below shows the importance of knowing the context of word order as well as the grammatical features between Arabic and English:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

"You (only) we worship and You (alone) we seek help (from)."

Normally, it would be in the following form:

Verb then Agent and then Object:

نَعْبُدُكَ و نَسْتَعِينُ بكَ

"We worship You and we seek help from You."

However, in the original verse, this has been changed to:

Object, then Verb and then Agent.

The verb نَعْبُدُ is delayed and object pronoun إِيَّاكَ has been brought forward to show the pragmatic function of *ḥaṣr* (restrictive phrase). If the translator did not know this syntactic linguistic feature, the emphasis portrayed in the Arabic could not be shown in the translation. In the above verse, the restrictive phrase, therefore shows the importance of worshipping Allāh alone as this is the context of the verse. The wider implication shows the importance of monotheism in Islam through this feature of *ḥaṣr* in the Arabic language.

If we look at the following translations of the Qurᵒān, we can see that not all of the translations captured the syntactic restrictive phrase of *ḥaṣr*. Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī translated the original verse above as,

"Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help."

Shakir also translated it as,

"Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help."

Yusuf ᶜAlī replicated the same deficiency with,

"Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek."

Amongst the non-Muslim translators Palmer and Sale also did not give importance to the syntactic restrictive phrase in their translations with,

"Thee we serve and Thee we ask for aid" and
"Thee do we worship, and of Thee do we beg assistance." respectively.

The other translations by Khān, Asad, Pickthall, Rashad, Sher ᶜAlī, Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh, Arberry and Rodwell all added the syntactic restrictive phrase in their translations.

Syntactic restrictive phrases are also used with sentences that begin with the second type of sentence structure in Arabic which is the nominal structure:

Subject ----------**Predicate**.

 In the following verse, the predicate precedes the subject again showing that worship belongs to Allāh alone:

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلا

"Towards Allāh **(alone)** upon the people is the pilgrimage to the house (*Ka ᶜbah*) for whosoever is able."
(Āl-ᶜImrān:97)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

This sentence in Arabic normally would begin with the subject first:

حج البيت لله على الناس

Subject --------- **Predicate**

However, the word order has been changed to give the syntactic restrictive feature of '*ḥaṣr*'. This context shows the importance of monotheism in Islam, ie. that only Allāh alone should be worshipped. This is why the translation should reflect this restriction. In this case it is worship (the pilgrimage) which is for Allāh alone.

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلا

"And Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) to the House (*Ka^cbah*) is a duty that mankind owes to Allāh **alone**, those who can afford the expenses (for one's conveyance, provision and residence)."
(Āl-^cImrān:97)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Although some of the translations chosen have kept the word order from Arabic to English, they have not restricted the meaning of worship being for Allāh **alone** in the pilgrimage to the House of Allāh. The addition of the word 'alone' illustrates the restrictive phrase whereby the predicate precedes the subject. Most translations have translated only the fact that the pilgrimage to the House is 'owed to God', 'due to Allāh', 'unto Allāh' and for the 'sake of Allāh,' but they did not add that it is for Allāh **alone**. What is interesting is that there is another linguistic feature that is captured by some of the translators called: 'لام الإستحقاق' - Lām of deserving' in 'لِلّه' meaning that Allāh is deserving of this worship. Rodwell, Palmer, Yusuf ^cAlī, Asad, Shakir, Rashad, Pickthall, Maulana and Khān have all used the following words to show that Allāh is deserving of the worship alone: 'due to God', 'owe to Allāh', 'for the sake of Allāh', 'owe it to God', 'unto Allāh' and 'owes to Allāh'.

^cAbdelwali (2007:11/no.2) states that, "A survey of existing English versions of the Qurʾān shows that the most a translator aims at is the communication of the message without considering the idiosyncrasies and prototypical features of the Qurʾānic discourse." The Qurʾān is a challenge for many who try to dicipher its' detailed meanings in comparison with ordinary prose. The versatility of Qurʾānic lexemes and styles was not captured in most of the English versions of the Qurʾān.

There are also losses in the translations of the Qurʾān with regards to the differentiation and translation of specific verbal structures. If the translator does not distinguish between these verbal structures then much loss will be a consequence in the translation.

Having knowledge, for example, of the tenses is paramount in order to be aware of the time factor of the sentence being translated. An example of this difficulty is shown when using the particle 'قد - (*qad*)' which has different meaning acording to what tense it is followed by. In the explanation of Ibn Ajurrum's Arabic grammar book *al-Ajurrumiyyah* explained by ᶜAbdulḥamīd (1997:12) who mentioned that the particle 'قد – *qad*' has different meanings according which tense comes after it. If it is followed by a present continuous tense, it could mean 'most likely' or 'less likely' according to the context, for example:

فد ينجح الكسول – The lazy one is **less** likely to pass

قد ينجح الذكي - The intelligent one is **more** likely to pass.

If 'قد – *qad*' is used with the past tense, it could mean definite as in the verse in the Qurᵓān:

قد أفلح المؤمنون - The believers are successful (al-Muminūn:1).

Or it could mean an action is about to happen as in:

قد قامت الصلاة - The prayer is now commencing.

However, when the particle is used for Allāh, it could only be definite without any chance or possibility, for example:

قد يعلم الله - Allāh knows (and not 'most likely He knows').

Therefore, the translator of the meaning of the Qurᵓān should be aware of these grammatical features, structures and differences in tenses of both Arabic and English. They should also know the exceptions to the rules of grammar when speaking about Allāh. The translator should also be aware of the linguistic aspect of the text such as word order.

Baker (1992, 4) asserts:

> "Linguistics is a discipline which studies language both in its own right and as
> a tool for generating meanings. It should therefore have a great deal to offer to

the budding discipline of translation studies; it can certainly offer translators valuable insights into the nature and function of language."

ᶜAbdelwali (2007:11) discusses this loss in the translation in the Qurᵓān using the following example:

نزّل عليك الكتاب بالحق مصدّقا لما بين يديه وأنزل التوراة والإنجيل

"It is He who **sent down to you (step by step)** in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it, and He **sent down the Law** (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus)."
(Āl-ᶜImrān:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

ᶜAbdelwali (2007:11) says:

"The word 'nazzala' (نــزّل) creates a semantic challenge as it signifies the piecemeal revelation of the Qurᵓān that lasted 23 years. This verb form denotes repetitiveness in the action. By contrast, the verb form 'anzala' (انزل) means 'to reveal in one go and at once'. Thus, a distinction is made between the two kinds of revelation; the piecemeal revelation of the Qurᵓān and the singular revelation of the Torah and the Gospel. To appreciate the nuances of Qurᵓānic discourse on the lexical level, consider the following verse in which the semantic subtleties are vividly expressed through two lexical items which may look similar to the reader but whose componential features are drastically distinct."

The verb نزّل should therefore be distinguished in the translation from أنزل because the former shows that the Qurᵓān was revealed **step by step** in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ. If we compare the translations chosen of the Qurᵓān to see if they have differentiated between نزّل and أنزل in the verse above (3:3) then we can see that most failed to do so.

Maulana	"He has revealed to thee the Book with truth"
Khān and al-Hilali	"It is He Who has sent down the Book (the Qurᵓân) to you (O Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) with truth,"
Pickthall	"He hath revealed unto thee (Muḥammad) the Scripture with truth,"
Rashad	"He sent down to you this scripture, truthfully,"
Shakir	"He has revealed to you the Book with truth,"
Sher ᶜAlī	"HE has sent down to thee the Book containing the truth and fulfilling that which precedes it;"
Auolakh	"He sent down to you this truthful book"
Arberry	"He has sent down upon thee the Book with the truth,"
Palmer	"He has sent down to thee the Book, in truth,"
Sale	"He hath sent down unto thee the book of the Koran with truth,"

Rodwell   "In truth hath He sent down to thee "the Book,"

The exception to these is only found in Yusuf ᶜAlī's and Asad's translations. Both have captured this grammatical difference.

Yusuf ᶜAlī translated the verse,

"It is He Who sent down to thee **(step by step)**, in truth, the Book."

Asad translated the verse,

"Step by step has He bestowed upon thee from on high this divine writ, setting forth the truth which confirms whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations]."

Translators of the Qurᵓān need to also differentiate between different semantical meanings of vocabulary used in the Qurᵓān to give a clearer meaning to each word. ᶜAbdelwali (2007:11/no.2) gives another example from the Qurᵓān (Yūnus:5) of how important it is to translate each word accurately with its semantic meaning:

هو الذي جعل الشمس **ضياءً** والقمر **نوراً**

"It is He who made the sun to be a **shining glory** and the moon to be a **light.**"
(Yūnus:5)
[Yusuf ᶜAlī AH1403:983:484].

ᶜAbdelwali (2007:11/no.2) mentions the difference between the usage of 'ضياءً' for the sun and 'نور' for the moon. He further says, "Although the words *Diyāᵓan* (ضياءً) and *Nūran* (نوراً) seem to be synonymous, the two signify distinct, semantic properties in this Qurāᵓnic statement. *Diyāᵓan* is not captured by the translation 'shining glory' because its meaning 'the generation of heat' is not echoed; hence the requirement for an informative periphrastic translation. The word *Nūran* however, is appropriately rendered as 'light', perhaps by coincidence, signifying, no generation of heat but light only. The word *Diyāᵓan* also suggests that the sun radiates with its own light, but *Nūran* suggests that the moonlight is a reflection of the 'sunlight'."

Most translations did not capture the different semantic meaning of the words *Diyā ʾan*

(ضياءً) and *Nūran* (نوراً) from the verse above (Yūnus:5):

Maulana	"He it is Who made the sun a **shining brightness**, and the moon **a light.**"
Khān and al-Hilali	"It is He Who made the sun **a shining thing** and the moon as a **light.**"
Pickthall	"He it is Who appointed the sun a **splendour** and the moon **a light.**"
Shakir	"He it is Who made the sun a **shining brightness** and the moon a **light.**"
Auolakh	"It is He Who made the sun shine and the moon light."
Yusuf ᶜAlī	"It is He Who made the sun to be a **shining glory** and the moon to be a **light (of beauty).**"
Palmer	"He it is who made the sun for a **brightness**, and the moon for **a light.**"
Sale moon	"It is He who hath ordained the sun to **shine by day**, and the for a **light by night**;"
Rodwell	"It is He who hath appointed the sun for **brightness**, and the moon for a **light**."

Three of the translations translated the first part of the verse in the correct context and

they are:

Rashad	"He is the One who rendered the sun **radiant,** and the moon a **light**,"
Arberry	"It is He who made the sun a **radiance**, and the moon a **light**,"
Mir Ali	"It is He who made the sun a **radiance** and the moon a **light**."

We can deduce that only Asad, and Sher ᶜAlī below have made the appropriate

semantical meaning of distinguishing the sun's light from the moon's light in their

translations:

Asad	"He it is who has made the sun a **[source of] radiant light** and the moon a **light [reflected]**."
Sher ᶜAlī	"HE it is WHO made the sun **radiate** a **brilliant light** and the moon reflect a **lustre**."

We can see from the above, that most of the translators have not distinguished between

the semantic meaning of *Diyā ʾan* (ضياءً) and *Nūran* (نوراً). The word *Diyā ʾan* (ضياءً)

should portray that the sun generates heat from within itself and illuminates its

brightness thereafter, whereas the moon only borrows light from the sun and the light does not actually come from within itself. Asad, Rashad, Arberry, Mir Ali and Sher ᶜAlī showed this distinction by clarifying that the sun's light is radiant which signifies heat from within itself. Only Asad and Sher ᶜAlī showed that the light from the moon is actually reflected light and not light made by itself. Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī's translation also showed the semantic meaning of the sun being a source of light.

Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī   "He is the One Who has made the sun (**a source of**) **light** and (with that) made the moon **luminous**"

This precise semantic distinction between words is important for a clearer reflection of the appropriate meaning of words in their correct context. Some of the translators of the Qurᵓān have made errors by not being detailed enough to show exactly what words really mean in their linguistic and Islamic contexts. This is why Qurᵓānic translation still needs developing in the context of *tafsīr* and the linguistic meaning of words in their correct contexts.

Another example of capturing the appropriate linguistic context of words is found in the story of Prophet Shuᶜaib ﷺ in the Qurᵓān. Capturing the manner in which something is said is a linguistic feature that is not portrayed in many translations of the Qurᵓān. If we take the following verse with regard to the Prophet Shuᶜaib ﷺ being mocked by the people around him, we can see the sarcastic manner in how they spoke to him:

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ أَصَلَاتُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَن نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا أَوْ أَن نَّفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ لَأَنتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ

"They said: "O Shuᶜaib! Does your Salat (prayer) (i. e. the prayers which you offer has spoiled your mind, so you) command that we leave off what our fathers used to worship, or that we leave off doing what we like with our property? Verily, you are the forbearer, right minded!" (They said this sarcastically)."
(Hud: 87)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The tone of this verse signifies that the polytheists were being sarcastic to Prophet Shuᶜaib ﷺ. This was commented on by the scholar of the Arabic language and linguist al-Zamakhsharī (2003:2/403), who states that the expression, "Does your praying compel you" indicates sarcasm.

If we compare the various translations below, we can see that the translations by Maulana, Pickthall, Yusuf ᶜAlī, Palmer and Rodwell all captured the feature of sarcasm, using an exclamation mark at the end of the verse:

Maulana	"Forsooth thou art the forbearing, the right-directing one**!**"
Pickthall	"Lo**!** thou art the mild, the guide to right behaviour."
Yusuf Ali	"thou art the one that forbeareth with faults and is right-minded**!**"
Palmer	"Thou art, forsooth, the clement and straightforward one!"
Rodwell	"Thou forsooth art the mild, the right director!"

Khān and al-Hilālī actually mentioned the word sarcasm in brackets in their translation:

"They said: "O Shuᶜaib! Does your Salat (prayer) (i.e. the prayers which you offer has spoiled your mind, so you) command that we leave off what our fathers used to worship, or that we leave off doing what we like with our property? Verily, you are the forbearer, rightminded!" **(They said this sarcastically).**"

However, this linguistic feature of sarcasm in not portrayed in the rest of the translations of the Qurᵒān being studied. It is important to highlight this linguistic feature to give a better picture as to how the people of Prophet Shuᶜaib ﷺ spoke to him which was sarcastically. The examples above show that translation involves far more than just the replacement of words and grammatical structures. Bassnett (2002:34) states, "Translation involves far more than replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages... Once the translator moves away from close linguistic equivalence, the problems of determining the exact nature of the level of equivalence aimed for begin to emerge."

1.4   Cultural and Islamic contexts

The correct equivalent, whether at word or sentence level, is very difficult to achieve due to lexical, grammatical, semantic and cultural lack of equivalence. When these thoughts are the concern of religion, dangers become real threats to intelligibility of the original text such as that of the Qurʾān. The translator has to know the situational, historical and cultural context within which the word or sentence occurs. Translators need to first understand the word, the sentence, the paragraph and then the cultural context of the text. Translators should not translate words in isolation but rather the whole meaning of phrases so that the message is clear. Hence, we translate meaning and meaning is not just the product of words. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:11) hold that, "Translation, like all (re)writings is never innocent. There is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed."[13]

The cultural contexts of words which are remote from the English language, with completely different cultures and conventions, pose difficulties for translators. Therefore, a clear exchange of ideas, messages and not merely words, is what is translated. Ābi & Megrab (2003:43) referring to the Arabic metaphor: ʿ*athlaja ṣadrī*ʾ 'It froze my heart' state, "This Arabic metaphor indicates a state of relief and content because of the positive attitude towards snow in a hot region like the Arab World. On the contrary, the English translation refers to a state of frustration and disappointment due to the fact that freezing is a sign of bad weather."

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[13] Cited in el-Hadary (2008:11).

A good translation should preserve the idea of the original. Nida & Taber (1974:106) summarise this as follows, "Obviously in any translation there will be a type of 'loss' of semantic content, but the process should be designed as to keep this to a minimum." Also, one must be sensitive regarding the SL culture. Cultural specific expressions require further explanation to understand the attempted translation. "Semantic translation is an attempt to render as closely as possible, the semantic and the syntactic structures of the second language, the exact contextual meaning of the original…where the style of the writer is as important as the content" (Layachi 1987:30/31). Despite the difficulties that are encountered in the translation process, the procedures must still aim at the essence of the message. Faithfulness to the meaning of the source language text being transferred to the target language is also important.

Cultures from where languages are spoken around the world differ. This can pose a problem to the translator as to the correct context of what is said? Why it is said? And why in the manner it is said? Layachi (1987:25/26) states, "It is sometimes argued that translation difficulties are mainly the result of the differences between SL and TL cultures…" This will require grammatical and lexical adjustments to fill the vacuum caused by just mere literal translation. Nida and Taber (1974:12) state that, "To produce the message one must make a good many grammatical and lexical adjustments…"

There are also difficulties with words in the Qurʾān that culturally and religiously refer to something that cannot merely be replaced with one word. The translator must know whether the linguistic meaning is intended or whether it is the cultural and religious meaning that is referred to. If we take, for example, the word *tayammum,* which linguistically means 'to intend' or 'to aim' as in the verse:

يا أيها الذين آمنوا أنفقوا من طيبات ما كسبتم ومما أخرجنا لكم من الأرض

ولا تيمموا الخبيث منه تنفقون

"O you who have believed, spend from the good things which you have earned and from that which We have produced for you from the earth. **And do not aim** toward the defective there from…"
(Al-Baqarah:267)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

However, in another context, it is referred to as the act of performing ablution when water is not present as in:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً **فَتَيَمَّمُوا** صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ

"And if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women (had sexual intercourse) and find no water, then **seek clean earth** and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]…"
(Al-Nisā:43)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

El-Hadary (2008:209) states,

> "*Tayammum* is another example of Qurʾānic cultural voids and *tayammum* as such does not lend itself to natural translation because, simply, English does not have an equivalent for *tayammum* or similar cultural voids."

With this in mind, it is essential that, first and foremost, the context is known. Secondly, additional words might have to be included in the translation to compensate for that which is lost in mere word-for-word translations or for words that do not have an obvious equivalent replacement. These adjustments require awareness as to the language cultures for both source and target language. Nida's great achievement is to have drawn translation theory away from the stagnant 'literal' versus 'free' debate and into the modern era whereby he places the receiver in the centre of the equation (Munday 2012:82).

An example showing the importance of knowing the context and background of an Islamic text on belief by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qirwānī from the fourth century (AH) is portrayed below:

وَالإِيمَانُ بِحَوْضِ رَسُولِ اللهِ ﷺ تَرِدُهُ أُمَّتُهُ لَا يَظْمَأُ مَنْ شَرِبَ
مِنْهُ وَيُذَادُ عَنْهُ مَنْ بَدَّلَ وَغَيَّرَ.

This was incorrectly translated by Matrajī (1994:6) as:

> The belief in the Basin of Allah's Messenger (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) his nation comes towards it to drink from it, and whoso drinks from it will never feel thirsty again and that who leaves or changes his religion is defended.

Here, the error lies in the understanding of the word يذاد which was translated by Matrajī as 'defended'. If we look at the different meanings from the Arabic/English dictionary (Baᶜalbakī 2003:560) of the root word 'ذاد', it means:

to drive away, chase away	ذَادَ: دَفَعَ، طَرَدَ
to defend, protect	ذَادَ عن: دافَعَ عن، حَمَى

The translator above chose the second meaning which is in the wrong context in the narration. The word 'يُذاد' is further clarified in another wording of the ḥadīth to mean that those people who changed their religion will be driven away from being interceded for on the Day of Judgment and not defended, as the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

"ألا لَيُذَادَنَّ رجال عن حوضي ؛ كما يُذاد البعير الضال، أناديهم: ألا هلمّ! فيقال: إنّهم قد بدلوا
بعدك، فأقول: سحقاً سحقاً! ".

"Indeed people will be driven away from drinking from my pool just like a lost riding beast is driven away. (Initially) I will call them, "come!" It will be

said: "indeed they have changed after you." I will say "Be off! Be off!"[14] [My translation].

This example shows the importance of knowing the context and not just translating words that are not intended in the source language. Therefore, translations that focus on the meaning of the original context are closer to the original, as Kyomya (2010:15) stated, "The goal of interpretation is to go beyond the lexical or dictionary meaning to the 'referent' – the thing or person to whom the text refers."

In summary, translators should be aware that meaning is not only conveyed by words. Hence, adequate decoding and re-coding is a matter that must be properly considered to identify the message, the kind of discourse and be aware of how it sounds "translating with the ear." Part of de-coding is to identify the cultural implications surrounding the text that need to be re-coded in a manner that is understood in the target text. Translators constantly make choices, in each paragraph, sentence or translation unit. Newmark (1995): points out some essential characteristics that any good translator should have:

1. Reading comprehension ability in a foreign language.
2. Knowledge of the subject.
3. Sensitivity to language (both mother tongue and foreign language).
4. Competence to write the target language dexterously, clearly, economically and resourcefully.

Newmark points out knowledge of the subject being translated, no doubt, both cultural and historical knowledge of the background of the text is vital. Dolet (1540/1997:95-

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[14] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:1/150-151).

97), whose objective was to clarify classical teaching and to contribute to the development of the French language, set out five principles for the translator in order of importance as follows:

1. "The translator must perfectly understand the sense and material of the original author, although his (sic) should feel free to clarify obscurities.
2. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both the source language and the target language so as not to lessen the majesty of the language.
3. The translator should avoid word for word renderings.
4. The translator should avoid latinate and unusual forms.
5. The translator should assemble and liaise words eloquently to avoid clumsiness."

The aim is to avoid word-for-word translation and emphasise sense translation with clear eloquence and natural target language. In the eighteenth century, a study by Tytler (1797:209) emphasized the importance of the target language reader and added three more principles for the translator:

1. "The translator should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.
2. The style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original.
3. The translator should have all the ease of the original composition." [15]

1.5 *The miracle of the Qurʾān and the validity of translating it*

The Qurʾān, to Muslims is considered a miracle, in its style and context. The polytheists (idol worshippers) in Makkah were challenged in the Qurʾān to produce something similar to the Qurʾān and they were not able to, a challenge that still stands until today:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أُنْزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ لا إِلَهَ إِلا هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

"Or do they say, "He invented it"? Say, "Then bring ten chapters like it that have been invented and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allāh , if you should be truthful."

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[15] Extracted in Robinson (1997b:208-12). Cited in Munday (2012:44).

And if they do not respond to you - then know that the Qurˀān was revealed with the knowledge of Allāh and that there is no deity except Him. Then, would you [not] be Muslims?"
(Hud: 13,14).
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

When they were not able to produce ten chapters like it, they were challenged by Allāh to produce only one chapter like it and even if they tried, they would never able to do so.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِنْ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (23) فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

"And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muḥammad], then produce a Chapter the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allāh, if you should be truthful.
But if you do not - and you will never be able to - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers."
(Al-Baqarah: 23,24)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

The scholar of *tafsīr*, al-Qurṭubī (d.AH671) in (AH1413:15/230) said, "If this Qurˀān were to be translated it would not be called the Qurˀān." Therefore, what we are left with are translations of the meaning as close to the original text as possible, using the various tools that are available.

Dr.Sāmirī F. S. (2007: preface), an Arabic linguist, states,

> "Every time I looked at the balance of the Qurˀānic texts, it only increased me in certainty and insight that the Qurˀān, in my view, cannot be considered the speech of man nor of any of creation. The first and last of them, if they were to gather together to bring something similar to it, they would never be able to do so." [My translation].

Previous translators of the Qurˀān have conceded that the Qurˀān cannot be translated. For example, Pickthall (2002) states in his foreword to his Qurˀān translation, "The Koran cannot be translated. That is the belief of old fashioned sheykhs and the view of the present writer…It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Koran and pre-

adventure something of the words in English. It can never take place of the Koran in Arabic, nor is it meant to do so."

Likewise, Arberry J. (2008:ix) in his introduction to his Qurʾān translation writes: "Since the Koran is to the faithful Muslims the very word of God, from earliest times orthodox opinion has rigidly maintained it is untranslatable, a miracle of speech which it would be blasphemous to attempt to imitate." He further elaborates (2008:xii), "All the previous versions of the Koran, like the original text itself having been printed as continuous prose, the rhapsodic rational of its composition has been largely lost to ear and sight;…I have called my version an interpretation conceding the orthodox claim that the Koran is untranslatable."

Translations of the Qurʾān also lose the effect upon the heart. The Arabic recitation of the Qurʾān affects the heart that is mindful and receptive to the words heard. Furthermore, Rodwell (1978:introduction p.ix) in his translation of the meaning of the Qurʾān, also agrees with the proposition that the style alone is nothing less than a miracle according to some Arab writers. "That the best of the Arab writers has never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qurʾān itself is not surprising. In the first place they have agreed beforehand that it is inapproachable and they have adopted its style as the perfect standard." (Palmer 1988:vol.6/p.iv).

As regards the validity of explaining the meaning of the Qurʾān, then al-Qurṭubī in (AH1413:1/27) said, "The *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān by clarifying and exemplifying its' meaning is allowed by consensus." [My translation]. If this *tafsīr* is in Arabic then it is called 'tafsīr of the Qurʾān'. However, if this *tafsīr* is in other than the Arabic language then it is called, 'The translation of the meaning of the Qurʾān' (Tāhirī 2005:353) [My

translation]. Translation is actually used to convey the meaning of the Qurʾān. Therefore, there is no doubt as to its translation being allowed.

Ibn Taymiyyah said in *Majmūᶜal-Fatāwā* (2001:5/256) "…it is allowed to translate the (meanings of the) Qurʾān just as *tafsīr* is allowed." Also, he said, "The Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* are translated for whoever needs to understand them by way of their translation." (Ibn Taymiyyah 2001:3/306) [My translation]. He further elaborated, "Translation of the Qurʾān is for the one who does not understand it in Arabic and needs it in his language such as Farsi, Turkish and Roman (Latin)." (Ibn Taymiyyah 2001: 8/205) [My translation]. However, the Qurʾān cannot be translated word for word as the Qurʾān is considered a miracle in the Arabic language and therefore no translation can replace the Qurʾān word for word.

1.6   Historical struggles of interpretation in translation

Writings on the subject of translation go far back into recorded history. For example, religious and cultural texts needed to be translated to cater for the spread of a particular belief and/or culture. In the fourth century (CE), the most famous of all western translators St. Jerome (347-420CE), translated the Greek *Septuagint* Bible into Latin. The Greek *Septuagint* Bible is itself already a translation and once translated again, it later became known as the 'Latin Vulgate'. St. Jerome decided to return to the original Hebrew version of the Bible for accuracy and to gain a more complete picture of the context. He moved away from the 'word for word' style of translating to a more meaningful 'sense for sense' translation (Munday 2012:30). This later initiated the numerous discussions on what is known as 'literal' versus 'free' translation. Jerome rejected the 'word for word' approach as he considered this resulted in an 'absurd translation'. He emphasised the 'sense for sense' approach as it allowed for the content

of the source text to be transferred with better understanding of the meaning. The conflict between 'literal translations' and 'free translations' exists until today with added variables surrounding the text accordingly and how that text is received by the reader. Jerome, himself, clarifies the distinction between how to approach different texts accordingly. He saw that translating the Bible was different due to it being a sensitive text and therefore needed to be approached from another angle. He observed that careful attention should be given to the special nature of both the meaning and syntax of religious texts. He said that the Bible should begin with a literal approach but one needs to pay close attention to the words, syntax and ideas of the original. Munday (2012:31). This is probably why he went back to the original text in Hebrew to gain a greater awareness of the original cultural atmosphere and context.

Similarly, the Qurʾān should be translated by adhering as closely as possibly to the text for sensitive reasons with a greater awareness of the context. The general meaning of the original context is found by adhering to mainstream *tafsīr*. This should be outlined and finally conveyed to readers in a manner they understand.

Another prominent translator in the fourth century, the religious leader Daoan (312-385CE), was influential in directing the translation of religious scriptures from the Buddhist Sutras found in various Indic and Central Asian languages into literary Chinese. The dilemma was whether to translate them using the free, polished, shortened style to please the Chinese public or whether to be faithful to the literal, repetitious and almost unreadable originals. Daoan suggested that special care must be given to directing the message to a new audience while preserving the sacredness and status of the source text. Munday (2012:34/35). Daoan was one of the first to have highlighted the importance of contrastive linguistics in translation. Contrastive linguistics is a

practice-oriented linguistics approach that seeks to describe the differences and similarities between two languages. This approach of looking at the differences between the style and structure of Arabic and English is particularly interesting in helping to understand the meaning of a text. Differences occur in syntax, grammar, style, lexis and many other areas.

From the seventh century up until the thirteenth century, translation activity was intense in the Abbasid period. Translators in the Arab world and especially in Baghdad were translating language and topics of Greek scientific and philosophical materials into Arabic (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995:112). Again, in this period, methods of translation shifted from the equivalent 'word for word' approach such as that of Yūḥannā Ibn al-Baṭrīq and Ibn Naʿīma al-Ḥimṣī which was unsuccessful (Baker and Hanna) to the more successful 'sense for sense' shown in Ibn Isḥaq's and al-Jawharī's translations. Ibn Isḥaq is credited with translating some one hundred manuscripts into Syriac and thirty nine into Arabic. Al-Jawharī created fluent target texts which conveyed the translated word of Greek manuscripts into Arabic without distorting the original meaning (Baker and Hanna 2009:330).

Language and translation were used as a tool for power struggles between religious movements and those that called for change. Latin was controlled by the Church in Rome until the fourteenth century AD. Then they were challenged by the European Humanist movement who sought liberation from the Church. In the early fifteenth century, the Protestant Reformation of northern Europe challenged Latin through the translation of the Bible. There were some translators who were tried and executed for having dared to translate the Bible using languages other than Latin to reach a wider public. It was also a challenge to the status quo and norm; the power base of an elite

establishment. This meant the Church would lose total control over the exclusive meaning which it wanted to convey of the Bible. One such example is the execution of the English theologian-translator William Tyndale (1490-1536CE). His mastery of Hebrew meant he could translate direct from one of the earlier source languages of the Bible rather than from Latin which the Church emphasized. The Church had already translated the Bible into Latin according to their outlook. After translating the Bible in exile, Tyndale was captured, tried and executed. His translation, though, was later used as the basis for the Geneva Bible (1560CE) and the popular King James version (1611CE). The struggle continued as non-literal or translations that were not accepted were used as a weapon against the Church (Munday 2012:37).

This struggle shows that language, translation and meaning (interpretation) are powerful tools that have been used to manipulate masses of people into a particular belief system, way of thinking and feeling. This is similar to the struggles found in the translation of the Qurʾān. Different translations from different sectarian backgrounds have also used translation as a means to push forward their own beliefs, cultural attachments and political purposes. Long (2005:8) states, "Historically, translation has been used as a way to manipulate doctrine and shift exegesis."

In seventeenth-century England, translation had often been about creative imitation or recreating the 'spirit' of the source text. By the mid-eighteenth century, the translator's duty moved towards an approximation of the style of the author (Munday 2012:47).

A more systematic, and mostly linguistic-oriented, approach to the study of translation began to emerge in the 1950s and 1960s. This more 'scientific' approach in many ways began to mark out the territory of the academic investigation of translation. The word

'science' was used by Nida in the title of his 1964 book *Towards a Science of Translating*. It is important to point out, however, that the relationship of translation studies to other disciplines is not fixed. This explains the changes over the years, from a strong link to contrastive linguistics in the 1960s to the present focus on more cultural studies perspectives (Munday 2012:14,47).

Elewa (2015:38) states, "In this respect, translation is not a closed linguistic process which requires only knowledge of lexis, syntax and semantics. Conveying a message from one language into another involves the translator's knowledge of linguistic and extra-linguistic disciples." He further states, "Translation should deal with cultural and ideological differences and present them to the reader/listener in a plausible way."

In summary, struggles to bring forward one's ideology and cultural interpretation in translation were not only found in Bible translation but also in the translation of the Qurʾān.

1.7   *Review of fifteen translations of the Qurʾān*

In this section, background details of fifteen translations of the Qurʾān are illustrated. These translations have been chosen from different religious and sectarian backgrounds to discuss their translations regarding the Muslim belief in Allāh and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. I have selected two Shiʿite translations, two Brelvī Sufī translations, two translations based on the Muʿtazilite interpretation of Allāh's attributes (Yusuf ʿAlī and Pickthall), two Qāḍyānī translations and a translation based on numbers from a claimant to Prophethood (Rashad). Another translation has been added whereby allegorical interpretations of matters of the unseen are portrayed (Asad's translation) following the rationalistic school of thought similar to the ideology of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and one translation is chosen that is based on mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* (Khān

and al-Hilalī). Lastly, I chose four non-Muslim translations to see how they also translated verses regarding the Muslim belief in Allāh and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

There are numerous translations of the Qurʾān, each being distinct in one way or another. However, what is important in this thesis is to compare and analyse these translations for their belief implications using the principles of mainstream *tafsīr* and linguistic knowledge of the Arabic language in context. While searching for previous analysis in this area, I noticed that not much comprehensive research has been carried out on these translations as a comparison, in the context of mainstream *tafsīr* versus non-mainstream *tafsīr*. Translating the Qurʾān using knowledge of mainstream *tafsīr* gives a setting and background of the original meaning, leading to understand a verse according to its context. Furthermore, the translator needs to enhance the translation by capturing the style and linguistic features, adding richness to the text while keeping within the limits of *tafsīr*. However, some later translations did not depend on mainstream *tafsīr* but rather on non-mainstream *tafsīr* in order to uphold their beliefs.

I hope to fill the vacuum with this analysis by looking at the various translations past and present. A broad range of popular translations were chosen in order to see the various different outcomes of each translation. I have included early non-Muslim translators to show that they, too, used some of the *tafsīr* books as possible influence to their translations.

Early Non-Muslim translations

The first translations of the Qurʾān to appear were by non-Muslims in the eleventh century AD and were translated into Latin. However, the first English translations were in the seventeenth century. Maʿayergy (1984) explains this by showing the animosity

present against the Muslims at that time. Maᶜayergy H. (1984:142) says, "(After) the first glimpse of Islam through these translations, Europeans grew all the more aggressive in their fight against Islam. Various attacks were launched against Islamic culture and heritage." An example of this is seen in the first translation of the Qurʾān into the English language by Alexander Ross (1591-1654) in the year 1649.[16]

Alexander Ross was a poet, historian and religious advisor to Charles 1ˢᵗ. He translated the Qurʾān as a political reaction towards the Ottoman Empire in Turkey. He included in his translation introductions stating that the Qurʾān could not shake the Christian faith, with many slanders against the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Clearly, he was politically motivated to cause doubts about Islam. His translation was published eight times from 1649 to 1948 (Kidwai 2007:198).

"The real purpose of some early Qurʾān translators was to refute Muslim religious arguments. This stance continued with Sale's translation in 1734 and Rodwell in 1861 with a patronizing tone while Palmer was less religiously partisan. Ross (1649:A3) revealed his intentions in the introduction, "I thought good to bring it to their colours, so that viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou must the better prepare to encounter his Alcoran." He also said, "And Newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish Vanities. To which is prefixed, the Life of Mahomet, the Prophet of the Turks, and author of the Alcoran. With a Needful Caveat, or

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[16] France (2000: 142), *Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*.

admonition, for them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the ALCORAN"." [17]

1. The Koran, commonly called Alcoran of Mohammed by George Sale

The first English translation directly from Arabic was by George Sale, published in the year 1734, based on a Latin translation in 1689 by Maracci. Maracci, a confessor to Pope Innocent XI, introduced his Latin translation with an introductory volume containing what he calls a 'refutation of the Qurʾān' (Yusuf AH1403:XII).

Sale's translation was published a staggering one hundred and sixty six times. He studied law and the Arabic language to a high standard. His translation has gone through many editions and was reprinted as recently as 1973. It remained the only translation by a non-Muslim for a long time. Sale (1940:7), similar to Ross, wrote, "(For) many centuries the acquaintance which the majority of Europeans possessed of Muḥammedanism was based almost entirely on distorted reports of fanatical Christians which led to dissemination of a multitude of gross calumnies. What was good in Muḥammedanism was entirely ignored, what was not good, in the eyes of Europe, was exaggerated or misinterpreted." Sale (d.1736) himself wrote that what he intended was to expose Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as being an imposter. Sale even changed the verses beginning with "O mankind" to "O Arabs." Likewise, in chapter two, verse 143, he changes it to "O Arabs of Makkah"," (Kidwai 2007:206).

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[17] Arberry (1964:7), *The Koran.* Kindle edition (2009) from Evergreen Review, Inc. Accessed 26th April 2015.

Sale quotes many *tafsīr*, among them al-Bayḍāwī's, Zamakhsharī's, al-Suyūṭī's (*Jalālayn*), Hussaini's (Persian) *tafsīr* along with some European writers and Urdu commentaries (Sale 2002:Preface).

2. *Qurʾān by J.M. Rodwell*

The translation by J.M. Rodwell (d.1900) appeared in the year 1861. The chapters of the Qurʾān were reordered according to their revelation. Thereafter, other non-Muslims published translations such as Edward Henry Palmer, Richard Bell, Arthur John Arberry (who avoided the Biblical style of previous translations) and later Thomas Ballantine Irving (France 2000:143). Rodwell's translation was described as 'gunning for Islam' (Turner, C.P. 1997:xii). "Not only did Rodwell reorder the Qurʾān, he omitted various verses from Sūras on the basis that these verses were not revealed together such as Sūrat al-ᶜAlaq. Rodwell only put the first five verses of Sūrat al-ᶜAlaq together instead of nineteen." (Kidwai 2007:178). Rodwell refers to a number of western sources and on rare occasions, he quotes al-Bayḍāwī from his *tafsīr*.

3. *The Koran by Edward Henry Palmer*

"Edward Henry Palmer (d.1882), an Orientalist, was born in Cambridge in 1840. He studied Arabic, Persian and Urdu. His translation of the Qurʾān tried to cause doubt and paid less attention to the style of the Qurʾān as he himself admits in the introduction of his translation. His translation was printed twenty three times" (Kidwai 2007:68 – 79). Palmer used al-Suyūṭī and other unnamed commentators of the Qurʾān. He also referred to Sale's translation which used *tafsīr*.

4. *The Koran Interpreted by Arthur J. Arberry*

Arthur J. Arberry's translation of the Qurʾān, *The Koran Interpreted* has enjoyed immense popularity. It has been reprinted about thirty times. Arberry (1955: introduction) crticises other earlier translations, "A certain uniformity and dull monotony characteristic of all, from the seventeenth down to the twentieth century. A conscientious but slavish faithfulness to the letter, so far as the letter has been progressively understood has in general, excluded any corresponding reflection of the spirit, where that has at all been appreciated."

Arberry's translation follows more closely the repetitive phrasing of the original. Arberry set himself the task of reproducing the rhythmic qualities of the original. It is not clear that he used a specific *tafsīr* but he does allude to, "learned exegetes in every century down to the present day" (Arberry 2008:X). Arberry left no footnotes or commentary so it is difficult to determine which specific *tafsīr*, if any, he used. It is evident, though, that the introductions and conclusions to most of the translations analysed show that they relied on non-mainstream schools of *tafsīr* regarding some of Allāh's Names and Attributes, matters of the unseen and general Muslim belief.

Muslims embarked upon the pressing task of translating the meaning of the Qurʾān. "The first English translation by a Muslim was undertaken by Muḥammad ᶜAbdul Hakim Khān and published in 1905, a time near the apogee of missionary activity in India" (Bleyhesh al-ᶜAmri 2010:103). "ᶜAbdul Hakim Khān was not thoroughly versed in Islam nor did he have a strong grasp of the English language. However, he wanted his translation to include adequate replies to Christian missionaries and orientalists in his time. He also refuted some of the Shiᶜite beliefs in his translation. He did not fulfil his objective of only quoting authentic narrations and Prophetic traditions" (cited in Kidwai AH1428-2007:426-427) [My translation].

5. The Meaning of the Holy Qurʾān by ʿAbdullāh Yusuf ʿAlī

The Meaning of the Holy Qurʾān or *The Holy Qurʾān Translation and Commentary* is by ʿAbdullāh Yusuf ʿAlī. "It was first published in Lahore in 1934 and later published a staggering two hundred and four times. It had its own archaic style. Yusuf ʿAlī had many comments and footnotes that were different from the mainstream Sunni belief. His footnotes explaining the verses reached more than six thousand." (Kidwai 2007:300 -368) [My translation]. He claimed that Paradise and Hell were allegorical and not real, amongst other statements in line with the Muʿtazilite allegorical interpretations of the unseen and the Names and Attributes of Allāh. He claimed to have used a number of *tafsīr* compilations, combining mainstream *tafsīr* with non-mainstream *tafsīr*. He used *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* by Fakhr al-dīn Muḥammad al-Rāzī (d.AH606), *al-Kashshāf* by Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd Zamakhsharī (d.AH538), *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (d.AH310) and *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (d.AH774) amongst others [Yusuf ʿAlī (AH1403:X-XI)]. However, his translation swayed towards the non-mainstream *tafsīr* such as the *tafsīr* of Zamakhsharī (d.AH538) when he commented on the Names and Attributes of Allāh and the unseen.

6. The Holy Qurʾān by Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh

Tafsīr Kanzul Īman by Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī (d.1921), founder of the Brelvī sect was used by Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh in his translation of the Qurʾān. Dr. Auolakh completed it in New York in January, 1989. After delivering Islamic lectures in forty prisons of eleven states from September 1988 to January 1990, he saw the need for a modern integrated English translation which took him five years to complete. He claims to have assimilated nine translations of the Qurʾān, both from Sunni and Shiʿite backgrounds with the main base being Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī *tafsīr*. [Auolakh

(1994:6,8)]. He used these notes from this Urdu *tafsīr* known as *Kanzul Īman.* The Urdu *tafsīr* is printed on each page, side by side with the Arabic verses and English translation. This translation is full of beliefs in direct conflict with the mainstream Sunni, *tafsīr,* compilations. Dr. Auolakh completed his translation in the year 1994 with a claim that it is non-sectarian. However, his translation follows the Brelvī version of Islam which has many distortions with regards to the belief in Allāh, the Prophet ﷺ and the unseen according to mainstream *tafsīr*. He acknowledges that he also used, "Urdu, Persian and English translations of Sunni, Shiᶜite, Ahle ḥadith and independent scholars of Islam," in the compilation of his translation (Auolakh 1994:7). The end result is still a sectarian translation based on the Brelvī and Sufī creed. Auolakh in Sūrat Kahf:110 claims that the Prophet ﷺ is not a human being. As for the Names and Attributes of Allāh, Auolakh usually translates them with allegorical meanings and not, in many cases, the apparent meaning portrayed. Hence, he follows the Muᶜtazilite interpretation as in Sūrat Mulk:1. In terms of presentation, this translation has many mistakes in grammar and spelling and is not worthy of being printed in its current state.

7. The Glorious Qur ᵓān by Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī

A more recent Brelvī translation of the Quran is by Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī (2012). Again, Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī's translation is much influenced by the Brelvī, Sufī doctrines claiming that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is not human, which opposes mainstream texts, evidence and fundamental Sunni belief. He has opted to mainly leave out footnotes and include his commentary in the main text and in brackets. This lengthens the translation as he opts for a meaning-based translation according to his own belief. Sometimes he leaves the reader with more than one meaning to a verse. He claims that his translation ensures, "Its compatibility with the exegetic traditions laid

down by the Companions of the Holy Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him), their Successors and Followers and the Imāms that followed them in later centuries" (Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī 2012:1). This, the reader will see is far from reality since he has fallen short of following the mainstream principles of *tafsīr* whereby his many interpretations have opposed the Prophetic explanations as well as the statements of the Companions and their Successors. Later, in his introduction, he clarifies his main influence on the interpretation of the Qurʾānic verses where he said, "This process of spiritual purification leading ultimately to Gnosis has been termed *Tasawwuf* by the noble and classical authorities of Islam and this translation brings out the inherent spiritual, references contained in so many of the Qurʾānic verses" (Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī 2012:3). His over-exaggerated praise for the Prophet ﷺ is evident and is similar to Dr. Auolakh's Brelvī translation. For example, Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M. claims that not only does Allāh know the meaning of such letters as '*Alif, Lam, Mīm*' but also the Prophet knows them as well. He does not offer any proof for this. Likewise, in Sūrat al-Duḥa:1:

وَالضُّحَىٰ

" (O My Esteemed Beloved,) I swear by (your holy face glowing like) the growing morning bright, (the radiant face, whose effulgence has illuminated the dark souls,)"
Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī (2012)

Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī (2012) claims that the first line where Allāh swears by the morning, is actually Allāh swearing by the face of the Prophet ﷺ. This again is without proof.

Further to this, he translates the next verse about the night as it envelops to refer to the Prophet ﷺ:

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ

"By (the veil of your essence that is keeping under layered covers your real nucleus of radiance like) the dark night when it envelopes."

These are over exaggerated praises of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ that are not based upon mainstream *tafsīr*.

8. The Meaning of The Glorious Koran by Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall

The popular and widely distributed translation by Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930) adopted a verse-by-verse translation. It was printed an overwhelming one hundred and forty eight times. His translation included archaic words such as thou, thine, thy, thee, ye, lo and adding "th" instead of s/es to a verb in the present simple tense. He was the first English Muslim convert to translate the Qurʾān. His literary and historical articles were published in scientific newspapers issued in London and New York. His translation was under the influence of Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* which he mentioned as being a reference point in his introduction, hence his allegorical interpretation of some of the Names and Attributes of Allāh.

9. The Holy Qurʾān by Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī

Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī was the founder of the Lahori sect of the Qādyānis in Pakistan. *The Holy Qurʾān* by Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī was published seven times in England. The first edition was in 1916/17. The translator belongs to the Qādyānī sect. Qādyānīs claim that there is another Prophet after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ called Ghulām Aḥmad, who claimed,

"I alone have been endowed with all that was bestowed on the Prophets."[18]

"God's word descended on me in such abundance…" [19]

This belief, according to the mainstream Sunni scholars, contradicts the texts from the Qurʾān and the Prophetic traditions that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the last Prophet

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[18] *Haqiqatul Waḥy* p.87 cited in Ehsan Elahi Zahīr 'Qadiyaniat' (1984:114).
[19] *Haqiqatul Waḥy* p.87 cited in Ehsan Elahi Zahīr 'Qadiyaniat' (1984:118).

whereby no prophet will follow him. The Qāḍyānī sect also believes that Allāh did not

raise Prophet ᶜĪsā ﷺ (Jesus Christ) to Himself but that he (Jesus Christ) died (contrary

to the mainstream Sunni belief). Yet, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī (2002: introduction)

claimed that his translation did not contradict unanimously agreed opinions by the

scholars of *tafsīr* concerning Islamic belief. His translation includes claims that Hell-

Fire is not eternal and that the description of Paradise is only a parable. Maulana

Muḥammad ᶜAlī gives his own interpretation of the Qurᵓānic verses related to the

Promised Messiah and the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as the seal of the prophets. Maulana

Muḥammad ᶜAlī denies the occurrence of some miracles such as the gushing forth of

twelve springs as a result of the Prophet Moses' striking his staff (al-Baqarah:60); the

angelhood of Harut and Marut (al-Baqarah:102), the Jinns listening to the Qurᵓān (al-

Jinn:01) and the stoning of Abraha's army by the birds (al-Fil:3) when Abraha tried to

attack the Kaᶜba in Makkah.[20] Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī also does not define the

apparent meaning of some of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Maulana Muḥammad

ᶜAlī (2002) mentions in his introduction who his main influence was when he said,

"Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad of Qāḍyān, has inspired me with all that is best in this work. I

have drunk deep at the fountain of knowledge which this great reformer-*Mujaddid* of

the present century and founder of the *Ahmadiyyah* movement- has made to flow."

10. The Holy Qurᵓān by Sher ᶜAlī

 The Qāḍyānī sect has another translation based on the Qāḍyānī teachings of Ghulām

Aḥmad (d.1889). This is portrayed in Sher ᶜAlī's official Qāḍyānī translation which he

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[20] Bleyhesh al-ᶜAmri (2010) *Qurᵓān Translation and commentary: an unchartered relationship. Islam and Science Journal*, Vol. 8 (winter 2010) No.2.

called *The Holy Qurʾān* first published in 1947 in Qādyān, India and then published in Lahore, Pakistan in 1955 and later 1960. Apart from retaining the faults of misinterpretation and mistranslation found in Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī's translation, Sher ᶜAlī interpolated more blatantly the Qādyānī doctrines of Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad (1835-1908). Sher ᶜAlī affirmed the Prophethood of his teacher Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad and claimed that Prophet Jesus died and was not resurrected. He claimed that Satan was not in fact a being but just an evil thought (contrary to mainstream Sunni belief). His translation was printed thirteen times and later criticised by the orientalist Kenneth Cragg in the *Muslim World Book Review* (1957:47/4, pp.341-342) cited in Kidwai (2007:285-292).

11. Quran, The Final Testament by Rashad Khalifah

There are translators that made their own translations based upon computer calculations of numbers and quotes from the Bible such as Rashad Khalifah. He was obsessed with numbers and used numbers as a method of Qurʾān interpretation He used the number 'miracle 19' to try and prove that he himself was the last Messenger and that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was only the last Prophet. Rashad Khalifah was born in Egypt and spent most of his life in Arizona, America. He was known to doubt the Prophetic tradition and claimed that these traditions were mere differences that stemmed from enemies of the Prophet ﷺ who wanted to sway the people from the path of Allāh and the Qurʾān. He published his translation on eight separate occasions and initially called it, *The Glorious Qurʾān: Standard Translation* and published from 1978 to the year 2001. He boasts that he is the first Arab to translate the Qurʾān. His translation claimed to use computers to show the numerical miracle of the Qurʾān, namely pointing out that number 19 is the number that the Qurʾānic verses and words are based upon. To prove

his point, he claimed that the last two verses of Sūrat number nine (*Tawbah-*Repentance) were not from the Qurʾān. His miracle 19 claim was found to be false and later he claimed to be a messenger of God to the people of America. He also caused doubt regarding the authenticity of the Qurʾān. (Kidwai 2007:171-177) [My translation]. Rashad Khalifah's (d.1990) translation quotes *Tafsīr* of al-Bayḍāwī and al-Suyūṭī's *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* which is probably why he did not assert the apparent meaning of some of Allāh's Names and Attributes. He himself did not consider the Prophetic traditions to have any weight. The *tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr is criticized in the introduction as having nonsense statements in his commentary to 68:1 that, "the earth is carried on 40,000 horns of a giant bull, who stands on top of a giant whale"! (Rashad 1992:xix). Having checked this claim, there was no mention of this quote in *tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr (1999:1130) whatsoever! In the introduction to his translation, Rashad Khalifah said: "During my Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, and before sunrise on Tuesday Zul Hijjah 3, AH1391, December 21, 1971, I Rashad Khalifah, the soul, the real person not the body, was taken to some place in the universe where I was introduced to all the Prophets as God's Messenger of the Covenant. I was not informed of the details and true significance of this event until Ramadan AH1408" Rashad (1992:Preface). According to the mainstream Sunni belief, there was no need for another Messenger to come since the message was completed with the coming of the last Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Therefore, Rashad Khalifah is seen in the Muslim world as another imposter who claimed to be a Messenger as many before him have. This lack of referring to the principles of mainstream *tafsīr* has led many of these translators to use their own doctrine to influence Qurʾānic translation for either political influence or religious authority. "On January 31 1990, sometime before dawn, Rashad Khalifah was killed" (Rashad 1992:Preface). His interpretation of the Qurʾān based on a number system had

upset many people and he was receiving death threats from different sources until he was killed.[21]

12. The Message of The Qurʾān by Muḥammad Asad

The Message of The Qurʾān was translated by Muḥammad Asad (July 2, 1900 - February 20, 1992). "He was an Austrian Muslim who converted to Islam from Judaism. He completely denied the miracles performed by the Prophets mentioned in the Qurʾān by translating their texts in a metaphorical way. His translation contains serious departures from the mainstream Muslim viewpoint on a number of Qurʾānic statements. Asad appears to be reluctant to accept the literal meaning of some Qurʾānic verses. For example, he doubts the throwing of Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ into the fire and Jesus ﷺ speaking in the cradle. He refers to Prophet Khidr ﷺ and Dhul-Qarnayn ﷺ as mythical figures and expresses unconventional views on abrogation (*Naskh*) theory."[22]

Asad (1980:496) argues that the reference in the Qurʾān to Abraham ﷺ being thrown into the fire by the disbelievers was only an allegorical allusion to the fire of persecution which Abraham ﷺ had to suffer. Similarly, Asad (1980:73) believes that Jesus's miraculous ability to talk in his cradle is only a metaphorical allusion to the prophetic wisdom which was to inspire Jesus from a very early age. Muḥammad Asad's translation (1997:ix) relied mainly on the following non-mainstream *tafsīr* selections such as that of Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī and al-Bayḍāwī, with regards to the Names and Attributes of Allāh, hence his allegorical interpretations of these. He also quoted, in general, from mainstream *tafsīr* such as from Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Kathīr,

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[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5puPk7c1us [Accessed 22nd July 2015].
[22] Arfaque Malik's review in the *Muslim World Book Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1980), pp. 5-7. Cited in http://alhafeez.org/rashid/qtranslate.html [Accessed 13th May 2013].

al-Baghawī and al-Ṭabarī. Muḥammad Asad was also influenced by the translation of Muḥammad ᶜAlī Lahori of the Qādyānī sect. Muḥammad Asad (1997:v) said, "As has been pointed out by that great Islamic scholar Muḥammad ᶜAbduh, even some of the renowned, otherwise linguistically reliable Qurʾān-commentators have occasionally erred in this respect, and their errors, magnified by the inadequacy of modern translators, have led to many a distortion, and sometimes to a total incomprehensibility of individual Qurʾānic passages in their European renditions."

Muḥammad Asad (1997:vii) further states, "The reader will find in my explanatory notes frequent references to views held by Muḥammad ᶜAbduh (1849-1905). His importance of the context in the modern world of Islam can never be sufficiently stressed…The Qurʾān commentary planned and begun by him was interrupted by his death in 1905; it was continued (but unfortunately also left incomplete) by his pupil Rashīd Riḍā under the title *Tafsīr al-Manar*, and has been extensively used by me."

Muḥammad Asad, however, emphasizes living with the Arabic context in order to understand idioms, expressions and context. Muḥammad Asad (1997:iii) said, "No doubt, some of the translators of the Qurʾān whose works are accessible to the western public can be described as outstanding scholars in the sense of having mastered the Arabic grammar and achieved a considerable knowledge of Arabic literature; but this mastery of grammar and this acquaintance with literature cannot by itself, in the case of a translation from Arabic (and especially the Arabic of the Qurʾān), render the translator independent of that intangible communion with the spirit of the language which can be achieved only by living with and in it."

13. The Noble Qurʾān by Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān and Muḥammad Taqi-ud-din al-Hilālī

Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān is of Pakistani origin with Afghan heritage and Muḥammad Taqi-ud-din al-Hilālī is from Morocco. Their translation was first printed in 1977 and published nineteen times up to the year 2000. The two translators depended on the *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī (d.AH671) and Ibn Kathīr in addition to *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (which Muslims hold as the most authentic *ḥadīth* collection) to give a mainstream interpretation. "This translation indeed replaced the famous translation of Yusuf ᶜAlī. Khān and al-Hilālī translated some words through transliteration." (Kidwai 2007:410-418) [My translation]. Examples of this: 'The *Ilāh* (God) of mankind,' (Sūrat al-Nās:3), 'The night of *al-Qadr* (Decree) is better than a thousand months.' (Sūrat al-Qadr:3) and 'By the heaven, and *Ṭāriq* (the bright star)' (Sūrat Ṭāriq:3). The flow of this translation is disrupted due to numerous explanations in brackets which are part of the text. Khān and al-Hilālī's translation focuses on correcting the distortions with regard to the Muslim belief. For example, they rectify the incomplete translation of the article of faith in many other previous translations, 'There is no god but God' to 'none has the right to be worshipped but He.' Khān and al-Hilālī's translation is based on mainstream *tafsīr* such as al-Ṭabarī's and Ibn Kathīr's *tafsīr*. They also used al-Qurṭubī's *tafsīr* for the language and Islamic jurisprudence benefits contained in it.

Khān and al-Hilālī's translation mentions the apparent literal meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. They adhere closely to the Prophet's explanations of the Qurᵓān and that of his Companions. Although Khān and al-Hilālī acknowledged that they used al-Ṭabarī's, Ibn Kathīr's and al-Qurṭubī's *tafsīr*, they mainly relied on the first two in asserting the apparent meaning of Allāh's Names and Attributes since al-Qurṭubī's *tafsīr* did not assert some of these Attributes. Their translation, in some verses, follows the Arabic structure rather than the English structure and uses archaic words and

expressions similar to ᶜAbdullāh Yusuf ᶜAlī's translation. This also disrupts the flow of the text. For example, the following translations by Khān and al-Hilālī:

1. "The mothers shall **give suck** to their children…" could be better translated as, "The mothers shall **breastfeed** their children." (Al-Baqarah:233)

2. "And there is no sin on you if you make a hint **of betrothal** to women nor conceal it in yourselves," could be better rendered as, "and there is no sin on you if you make a hint **for engagement** to women or conceal it in yourselves," (al-Baqarah:235).

3. "Rivers of **clarified** honey…" could be better translated as, "rivers of **purified** honey." (Muḥammad:15)

4."When We saved him and his family, **all**" could be better translated as, "When We saved him and his family, **altogether**." (Al-Saffat:134).

14. The Holy Koran by M.H. Shakir

This century saw the influence of Shiᶜite translations of the Qurʾān.The likes of "M.H. Shakir's first translation of the Qurʾān was published in Pakistan in 1968 then reprinted in 1974 under Shiᶜite supervision. It was without doubt that Shakir wanted to display the Shiᶜite belief in his translation. He would show that the fourth Caliph, ᶜAlī, was the successor to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ who has complete knowledge of the Book. He then went on to claim the infallibility of the twelve Imāms and they <u>alone</u> had the capabillity of explaining the Qurʾān. His translation was published forty three times." (Kidwai 2007:265-282).

15. The Holy Qurʾān by Mir Aḥmad Ali

In the Shiᶜite influenced translation, *The Holy Qurʾān* by Mir Aḥmad Ali, the translator relies heavily on *Tafsīr al-Qummī* and *Tafsīr al-ᶜAyyāshī*, as well as the *tafsīr* of his

spiritual advisor, Ayatollāh Mirza Mahdī Pooya Yazdī (d.AH1317/1899). The latter was an Iranian Imām who focused on mysticism. This translation claims that their own twelve Imāms have knowledge of the unseen matters. This translation does not assert the apparent meaning of many Names and Attributes of Allāh in opposition to mainstream *tafsīr* (Kidwai 2007:265-282). Mir Ahmad Ali, an Indian competent in Arabic and Persian. His translation caters for a Shiᶜite-audience with instructions on Shiᶜite doctrine. The *tafsīr* used has a heavy sectarian bias and there is disparagement of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ except for his family. For example, Ayatollāh Mirza Mahdī Pooya Yazdī states, in his introduction, that neither of the first two Caliphs was an authority on the Qurᵓān and that there are "authentic evidences of their ignorance of it." He says this even though the Prophet ﷺ himself said, "And follow the two Caliphs after me, Abū Bakr and ᶜUmar."[23]

The Ayatollāh Mirza Mahdī Pooya Yazdī also makes the dubious claim that Zayd b. Thabit, deemed by many to be Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ scribe, had no 'academic' qualifications for the compiling of the Qurᵓān (Moḥammed Khalīl, Spring 2005: 58-71).

Mir Ali (1988:6a) claims that the only medium to understand the Qurᵓān through the Prophet ﷺ, is by way of the Companion and fourth Caliph ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, contrary to mainstream Sunni belief. Mir Ali continues, "If one sincerely desires to know the true, external as well as the internal meaning of the final word of God, one must accept only that which one can get from *Amirul Muminīn* (the leader of the believers) Alī ibne

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[23] Reported by Imām Aḥmad in his *Musnad* (2008:5/399) and in *Saḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417:5/610) and authenticated by al-Ḥākim (1990:3/79). Al-Albānī mentioned it in *al-Saḥīḥah* (1987:1233).

Abī Ṭāleb. Besides, to have anything of the knowledge of the Prophet - The only medium is ʿAlī ibne Abī Ṭāleb for the Holy Prophet has declared:- I am the city and ʿAlī is its gate." Mir Ali does not provide any reference for this.[24]

To restrict the religion to the interpretation of only one Companion of the Prophet, or to only the family of the Prophet ﷺ, is actually in clear contradiction to the Qurʾān and mainstream *tafsīr*. All of the Companions are praised in the Qurʾān and those who follow them have also been praised,

وَالسّابِقُونَ الأَوّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالأَنْصَارِ وَالّذِينَ اتّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ رّضِيَ اللّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُواْ عَنْهُ

"And the first to embrace Islam from the Emigrants (*Muhājirūn*) and the Helpers (*Anṣār*) and those that follow them upon righteousness, Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him."
(Al-Tawbah:100)
[My Translation]

The first to embrace Islam (*Sābiqūn*) does not refer to a group amongst the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, Rather, it refers to those who were the first to accept Islam and amongst them are those who migrated from Makkah to Madīnah such as the first two Caliphs, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. The *Anṣār* were the helpers of Madīnah who welcomed the Prophet ﷺ and the migrants. They were considered to be the best people in any generation after the Prophet ﷺ. The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, in general, were referred to for interpretation and not just the Prophet's family.

The Prophet ﷺ also said:

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[24] The narrators of this ḥadīth have been criticised by ḥadīth scholars found in Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's compilation *Tarīkh Baghdād* (n.d.:11/47-49).

"The best of people is my generation and then those who come after them (Successors) and then those who come after them (following Successors). After that, there will come a people whose witness will precede their oaths and their oaths will precede their witness."[25]

وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيرا

"And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and **follows a path other than the way of the believers [the Companions]**, We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination."
(Al-Nisāʾ:115)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

The '**way of the believers**' mentioned in the above verse is the way of the Prophet's Companions for they were the believers at the time of the Prophet ﷺ.

With regards to the Names and Attributes of Allāh, Mir Ali follows the path of the Muʿtazilites and Ashʿarites in not asserting their apparent meanings. This is most probably because he mentions (1988:9a) that he also refers to the non-mainstream *tafsīr* of al-Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, Thaʿlabī and al-Bayḍāwī.

The Shiʿites also refer to their sectarian *tafsīr* called *Tafsīr al-Qummī* by Abū al- Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d.AH307). Thus, Shiʿite translators digress from the mainstream *tafsīr* understanding of the verses, in some places, to reflect their own doctrinal biases rather than give an accurate presentation of the Muslim Scripture (Sabry D. 2007:4).

Conclusion

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[25] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (no. 2652) and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:211) no. 2533, on the authority of ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd.

The difficulties in translating the meaning of the Qurʾān are numerous and some have been discussed here. In this section, only some of the difficulties that translators of the Qurʾān face, are summarised and not all. One such difficulty is that there are words that are appropriate only for a particular context. However, some translators of the Qurʾān tend to concentrate on lexical accuracy rather than on conveying the communicative value of the source text. This, it may be argued, is due to the fact that, "Muslim translators of the Holy Qurʾān fear lest they should go astray in their translations of the meanings of the Holy Qurʾān which they accept as the very word of Allāh" (Al-Malik 1995:3). Therefore, knowing the context is of vital importance before trying to attempt to translate the meaning of the Qurʾān. Context in Qurʾān translation can be discovered through the knowledge of mainstream *tafsīr* and its' principles. Jamai (2012:468) states, "To give justice to a sacred translation, the sacred translator *must* have the required level of grasp and understanding of the Islamic exegesis or '*tafsīr'* as a prerequisite to fulfill the task at hand to the highest degree possible of faithfulness to the original sacred text."

Many differences in the translation of the meaning of the Qurʾān occur because of mere opinions expressed by the translators without a basis from the Qurʾān, Sunnah or from the Prophet's Companions. This has led many partisan groups to manipulate fundamental beliefs, through their translations of the Qurʾān, in order to give victory to their own ideology. They may even use diverse opinions made by scholars of *tafsīr* for the benefit of their own sectarian belief. Many translators of the Qurʾān have set goals leading the readers into different interpretations of beliefs and practices. Ibn Taymiyyah (AH1408:235) said, "They took the Qurʾānic and Prophetic statements and placed their own meanings in accordance with their beliefs. Then using these texts, they address others with what they seek."[My translation]

Ibn al-Qayyim (2004:2/496) adds,

> "When they heard anything from the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah, they presented it according to their own intellect. If it followed their way, it was accepted and if not, they rejected it. If they had no way but to accept it, they twisted the meaning far away from the truth, hence, they deviated and placed the religion behind them and the Sunnah under their feet."[26] [My translation]

These statements of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim clearly show there is a battle for interpretation. Maᶜayergy (1984) stated, "[translating] the meanings of the Qurʾān offered an opportunity to distort and misinterpret its meanings." He also stated that, "Some sectarian translations by Muslims contributed to spreading some misconceptions about Islam as well."[27]

Each sectarian translation chose its own model to rely upon, when translating the Qurʾān. These are found in the introductions of the various translations. They would explain which of the books of *tafsīr* they relied upon to derive the final meaning. Sometimes, the translators would refer to more than one book of *tafsīr* where there were clear differences between them in the methodology applied in reaching a meaning. These differences were sometimes contradictory, especially in the area of the Muslim belief.

The translator needs to be aware of the differences between mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr*, so as to be able to recognise why there are differences. Some non-mainstream *tafsīr* would deliberately support their own methodology and cast doubt on

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[26] Cited in *Mukhtaṣar As-Sawāᶜiq al Mursala ᶜalā al-Jahmiyyah wal Muᶜaṭila*, summarized by Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Mawṣilī (2004). Edited by Dr. al-Ḥasan al-ᶜAlawī.
[27] Cited in Dahlia Sabry (2007) Tracing Islamophobia in the Oldest Holy Qurʾān Translations http://www.quranicstudies.com/articles/language-of-the-quran/tracing-islamophobia-in-the-oldest-holy-quran-translations.html. [Accessed 2nd Feb 2013].

others. Mainstream and non-Mainstream *tafsīr* have been discussed in order to give a

background of those mentioned in the introductions to the translations of the Qurʾān.

<u>Chapter Two - The use of *Tafsīr* in the context of</u>

<u>translating the Qurᵓān</u>

Translations of the Qurᵓān, based on mere opinion and non-mainstream *tafsīr* without referring back to the context of mainstream *tafsīr*, have resulted in many diverse interpretations. Each sectarian translation battles for interpretation of what it considers to be the meaning of the Qurᵓān. In this chapter, a more detailed look at what constitutes *tafsīr* and the differences between mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr* will be defined and highlighted. Furthermore, the link between *tafsīr* and the translation of the Qurᵓān is illustrated. The importance of *tafsīr* in the field of searching for the meaning of the context is also elaborated upon.

Some translations of the Qurᵓān rely on mainstream *tafsīr* while others rely on non-mainstream *tafsīr* as a source of interpretation. Mainstream *tafsīr* rely upon principles of *tafsīr* from the Qurᵓān and Prophetic narrations while non-mainstream *tafsīr* rely on one's own *taᵓwīl* (opinion based interpretation). This chapter also discusses the principles whereby mainstream *tafsīr* is built upon.

2.1   What is tafsīr?

The term *tafsīr* is derived from *fassara* which means 'to clarify', 'to uncover', 'to show', 'to explain in detail.' Al-Jawharī's *al-Sihāh*[28]. It is also said that *tafsīr* stems from *asfara* meaning 'to uncover', 'to show'. The Arabs say:

أسفرت الشمسThis refers to the sun gradually being uncovered as it rises. A journey is

     also called *safar* because it uncovers the character of a person. (Fairuzābādī

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[28] Cited in al-ᶜAṭṭār (1990) Edited version of al-Jawharī's *al-Siḥāḥ*.

1995:1/78-79). [My translation]. Therefore, *fassara* means 'to explain' and *safar* of

which the verbal form is *asfara* means 'to shine' or 'to uncover'.[29]

In Islamic terms, *tafsīr* refers to uncovering the meaning of the Qurᵓān. As Ibn Taymiyyah claims, "*Tafsīr* is to have encompassing knowledge [of the Qurᵓān]"[30] [my translation]. The word *tafsīr* is also found in the following verse:

وَلا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلاَ جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا

"And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the truth
and **the best explanation**."
(Al-Furqan: 33)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

This shows that *tafsīr* refers to that which is explained and when used for the Qurᵓān it means its explanation. The use of *tafsīr* helps elucidate the meaning of the Qurᵓān and derive legal rulings. Primarily, it is concerned with the authentic narrations free from deviation and errors.

Masrūq, one of the famous students of the Prophet's Companion ᶜAbdullāh b. Masᶜūd ﷺ, said: "Be warned when dealing with *tafsīr* because it is to narrate what Allāh says, the Most High"[31] [My translation]. Therefore, the translator of the Qurᵓān is required sincerely to give the meaning of the Qurᵓān and not their own biased meaning based upon their sectarian ideology.

2.2   Taᵓwīl as Tafsīr

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[29] Ibn Manẓūr (1997:6/278) in *Lisān al-ᶜArab*.
[30] Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:17/370) in *Majmūᶜ al-Fatāwā*.
[31] Cited from Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:13/374) in *Majmūᶜ al-Fatāwā* (2001:13/374).

Taʾwīl in the Arabic language has two meanings. The first of them refers to taking things back to their origin. This leads to the final or end meaning. Therefore, *taʾwīl* of speech refers to the end result as Allāh said,

هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلا تَأْوِيلَهُ

"Do they await except its result?"
(Al-Aʿrāf:53).[32]
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Esack (2002:128) stated in his book, *The Qurʾān, a Short Introduction,*

> "In the earliest stages of Qurʾānic exegesis, the term *maʿani* (lit. 'meaning') was the one most frequently used to denote exegesis. Around the third *Hijrī* century this term was supplanted by *taʾwīl* (lit. 'to return to the beginning', 'to interpret' or 'to elaborate'). In the following century, this was gradually supplanted by the term *tafsīr* after a long period of interchangeable usage."

Esack (2002:129) continued,

> "Later *taʾwīl,* became a technical term employed by both the traditionalists and those outside the 'mainstream' such as the *Ismaʿili*, *Muʿtazili* and some Sufīs to denote an interpretation which dispensed with tradition and was based on reason, personal opinion, research and/or intuition."

The second meaning of *taʾwīl* in the Arabic language means *tafsīr* or interpretation.[33]

Taʾwīl in Islamic legislation, according to the usage of mainstream *tafsīr*, refers to *tafsīr* and this is similar to the meaning in the language above. The proof that *taʾwīl* refers to *tafsīr* stems from the following verse:

سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِع عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

"I will inform you of the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience."
(Kahf:78)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

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[32] Ibn al-Fāris (AH1429:1/159-162).
[33] Ibn Manẓūr (AH1300:1/172).

Ibn Kathīr (1999:646) said, "*Taʾwīl* here means *tafsīr* (interpretation)". This is similar to the statement of the Prophet ﷺ to Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ, "O Allāh, give him the understanding of the religion and teach him *taʾwīl* (*tafsīr* - interpretation)."[34] [My translation].

The Prophet's Companion Jābir b. ʿAbdullāh ﷺ said, "The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ is amongst us, and the Qurʾān is being revealed to him and he knows its' *taʾwīl* "[35] [My translation]. Also Ibn al-Qayyim (1988:1/181) said, "The Prophet's ﷺ knowledge of its *taʾwīl* is the knowledge of its *tafsīr* and what it refers to." [My translation].

According to non-mainstream *tafsīr*, amongst the philosophers and later generations, *taʾwīl* means explaining a word to mean other than its apparent meaning, this is the 'opinion-based *taʾwīl*'. This type of *taʾwīl* was used to interpret the Book of Allāh with an esoteric underlying meaning (*al-maʿnā al-bāṭin*). Al-Qūsi (2002: 147-148) [My translation]. Through this type of *taʾwīl,* texts were explained away from the mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* and towards an allegorical meaning (*al-maʿnā al-majāzī*). Ibn al-Qayyim in *Sawāʿiq al-Mursalah* (1988:1/13) mentioned this type of *taʾwīl* is to take a word away from its apparent meaning. He also is quoted in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* by Ibn Ḥajar where he says that this is the way of the Muʿtazilites, the Jahmites and philosophers. The Jahmites negated the Names and Attributes of Allāh outright and replaced their apparent meaning with other interpretations. The Muʿtazilites asserted the Names of Allāh but not the Attributes. Even when the Muʿtazilites asserted the Names of Allāh, they said they are without meaning. The Ashʿarites asserted the apparent meaning of

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[34] Al-Albāni in *al-Saḥīḥah* (1996: 6/173 no.2589).
[35] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:147/1218) no.2941 Book on Hajj.

the Names of Allāh and only some of the Attributes of Allāh which they could accept according to their intellect. All three groups used *taʾwīl* to interpret the Names and Attributes of Allāh away from their apparent meanings and this was considered unacceptable by mainstream *tafsīr*. This opinion based *tafsīr* found its way into most translations of the Qurʾān.

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001: 6/394) said, "Indeed the verses referring to the Attributes of Allāh in the Qurʾān were understood correctly by the Prophet's Companions in their explanation. There was no differing amongst them. I have looked at explanations of the statements of the Prophet's Companions and what they have narrated of the Prophetic traditions. I have gone through both large and concise books numbering more than one hundred books of *tafsīr*. I did not find, until now, that any of the Prophet's Companions had performed opinion-based *taʾwīl* on the verses regarding Allāh's Attributes or Prophetic traditions regarding Allāh's Attributes other than what is understood and apparent." [My translation].

'Opinion-based *taʾwīl*' is used by non-mainstream exegetes to make the Qurʾān commentary a political and theological platform, in order to advance their own beliefs [Abdul-Raof (2012:32)]. The Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite *tafsīr* are those shared by Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, Sayyid Quṭb, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, al-Bayḍāwī and others from amongst the non-mainstream *tafsīr*.

The Shiʿite commentary called *Tafsīr al-Qummī,* the Qāḍyānī commentary based upon the claimed messiah Ghulām Aḥmad's *tafsīr* and the Brelvī *tafsīr* called 'Kanzul īman' are also examples of non-mainstream *tafsīr* used by some translators as theological platforms to establish their beliefs and views. This is to enhance their position in society and is used as a canon to defend their theological beliefs.

Explanation of the Qurʾān by *taʾwīl* or one's own opinion has been criticised if the *taʾwīl* itself contradicts the Qurʾān or the authentic Prophetic texts with the understanding of his Companions. Al-Rifaʿi (1996) states,

"Explicating the Qurʾān through the mere exercise of personal opinion is forbidden. This is extrapolated from a *ḥadīth* related by Muḥammad b. Jarīr on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās who heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ say, "He who speaks about the Qurʾān from his own opinion, or from what he does not know should seek his abode in the Hell-fire"[36]." [My translation].

There are praiseworthy opinions according to mainstream *tafsīr* that are in accordance with the Qurʾān and the Prophetic texts within the understanding of his Companions and Successors. The opinion that is dispraised is based upon one's own desires and intellect that opposes the Qurʾān, the Prophetic texts and consensus of the Companions and the Successors.

Allāh said,

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

"**And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge.** Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned."
(Al-Isrāʾ: 36)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

And,

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَن تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَن تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

"Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed, sin and oppression without right, that you associate with Allāh that for which He has not sent down authority **and that you say about Allāh that which you do not know**.""
(Al-Aʿraf:33)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The first Caliph, Abū Bakr al- Ṣiddīq ﷺ was asked about a verse in the Qurʾān. He withheld from speaking about that verse without knowledge and said, "Which sky

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[36]*Musnad of Imām Aḥmad* (2008:1/269) and in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417) no.2951.

would cover me and which earth will allow me to walk over it, if I speak about the Book of Allāh without knowledge?"[37]

Similarly, the second Caliph ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ said, "Be warned from the people of (mere) opinion, the enemies of the Prophet's way. Memorising (and understanding) the Prophetic texts became difficult for them so they resorted to (mere) opinion, they went astray and lead others astray."[38] [My translation].

A man came to the Prophet's Companion, ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ and said, "What about the opinion of… what about the opinion of…" so ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ said to him, "Put 'the opinion of' in your pocket."[39] [My translation]. This means that he did not use as proof the opinion of anyone in precedence to the Book of Allāh, the Prophetic traditions with the understanding of the Companions.

The successor Ayyūb al-Sikhtiyānī (d.AH131) said that a successor before him, Abū Qilāba (d.AH104), told him, "O Ayyūb, memorise from me four things, "do not speak about the Qurᵒān with your opinion…"[40] [My translation].

Amongst those who chose to refer to their own opinion, away from the Prophet's Companions' understanding, is Ibn ᶜArabī, a Sufī,

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[37] Ibn Baṭṭa (2002:137) in a*l-Ibānah ᶜalā Uṣūl al-Sunnah wa al-Diyyāna*.

[38] Daraquṭni (2004:5/256) in his *Sunan* collection no. 4280. Al-Lālikāᵒī in *Sharh Uṣūl Iᶜtiqād Ahli Sunnah* (AH1418:1/138) no.201.

[39] Ibn Baṭṭa (2002:143) in *al-Ibānah ᶜalā Uṣūl Sunnah wa al-Diyyāna*. Al-Bukhārī has a similar wording.

[40] Ibn Baṭṭa (2002:154) in *al-Ibānah ᶜalā Uṣūl al-Sunnah wa al-Diyyāna*.

" It is clear that in the *tafsīr* of Ibn ᶜArabī, he did not assert the apparent meaning of the Qurʾān and all that the Prophet's Companions and Successors understood."[41] [My translation].

This turning away from the understanding of the Prophet's Companions and Successors, led Ibn ᶜArabī, in his book *Fuṣūs al-Ḥikam* to believe that Allāh is in everything and everything is in God (*Waḥdat al-Wujūd*). He was refuted by many mainstream Sunni scholars such as Shaykh Burhān Dīn al-Biqāᶜi (d.AH885) in his book *Tanbīh al-Ghabī ᶜalā Takfīr Ibn ᶜArabī*[42]. [My translation]. For example, regarding the following verse,

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوٓاْ إِلَّآ إِيَّاهُ

"And your Lord has decreed that you do not worship except Him."
(Isrā: 23)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Ibn ᶜArabī, a Sufī, states that the golden calf that was worshipped by the Children of Israel was actually God! The reason for this *tafsīr* is that he understood from the word 'قضــــى' (commanded) that it has the same meaning as 'القضــــاء والقدر' i.e Allāh has predestined that only He will be worshipped. Therefore, everything that is worshipped even if it is incorrect is Allāh. However, "the word 'قضــــى' has different meanings according to the context and here it means 'commands'" (Ibn Kathīr 1999:608).

2.3   Categorization of tafsīr as mainstream and non-mainstream

Saleh (2012:23/1) from the University of Toronto, criticises Hussein Abdul-Raof's categorization of what constitutes mainstream *tafsīr*. He says,

> "Mainstream exegesis, we have been told all along is nothing but *tafsīr al-Maʾthūr* (tradition-based exegesis), a purportedly analytical term that is used to classify *tafsīr* in the book. Apparently, only exegesis that follows this tradition-based method is proper and true exegesis. This is Ibn Taymiyyah

[41] Mehdi A. (2003:6) *Introduction to al-Jāmiᶜ Li Ahkām al-Qurʾān* (*Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*).
[42] Burhān Dīn al-Biqāᶜī (p.51,p.112) in his book *Tanbīh al-Ghabī ᶜalā Takfīr Ibn ᶜArabī*, cited al-ᶜAbbad A. (2006:7/490) *Kutub wa-Rasāʾil*.

served to us without the benefit of being told that we are drinking from his cup! The fact of the matter is that this is taken directly from the *Muqaddima fi Tafsīr* of Ibn Taymiyyah."

In response to Saleh's (2012:23/1) statement, firstly, Ibn Taymiyyah did not innovate new principles of *tafsīr*. Rather, he revived what was already known amongst the mainstream scholars of *tafsīr* before him. That is, the best way to understand the Qurʾān is by the Qurʾān, then the Prophetic traditions, then the statements of the Companions and those that followed them upon righteousness. If one refers to the introductions of many *tafsīr* books before and after Ibn Taymiyyah, one would realise that these principles were not innovated by Ibn Taymiyyah himself.

The famous *tafsīr* scholar in the third/fourth century, al-Ṭabarī, the earliest to compile a complete book on *tafsīr*, used as a basis these same principles that Ibn Taymiyyah later exemplified. Even Ibn Taymiyyah's own students such as the famous Ibn Kathīr, who compiled his famous *tafsīr*, has an introduction mentioning the same *tafsīr* principles as Ibn Taymiyyah. His other student, Ibn al-Qayyim, also commented on these principles[43].

For example, the scholar of *tafsīr* in the sixth century (before Ibn Taymiyyah), al-Baghawī (d.AH516) in (2002:introduction) mentioned similar principles of *tafsīr* that he used to explain the Qurʾān, the Qurʾān itself, Prophetic traditions, the statements of the Companions and those who followed them. Al-Baghawī (d.AH516) in (2002:introduction) ends his introduction with a chapter discussing, "The warning of speaking about the Qurʾān with one's own opinion and rather, one should adhere to the *tafsīr al-Maʾthūr*." This is in opposition to Saleh (2012:23/1) who says, "…the

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[43] See Ibn al-Qayyim (AH1433:4/155) *Iʿlām al-Muwaqiʿīn*.

ideological division of the exegetical tradition into *tafsīr al-Maʾthūr* and *tafsīr bi al-raʾy* has lost its usefulness now."

Another scholar before Ibn Taymiyyah, the scholar of *tafsīr* in the seventh century (AH), al-Qurṭubī, in his introduction to his book *al-Jāmiᶜ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (AH1413), also discussed the way to understand the Qurʾān is by way of the Qurʾān, the Prophetic traditions and the statements of the Companions. He also has a chapter where he speaks against the *tafsīr* by way of opinion without proof. However, it is important to note that al-Qurṭubī did not always use these principles in some areas. For example, he did not assert the apparent meaning of many of the Attributes of Allāh. Other scholars, in Ibn Taymiyyah's lifetime, praised Ibn Taymiyyah for his contribution to *tafsīr*. The great *Ḥadīth* scholar and linguist, Ibn ᶜAbdulHādī (d.AH744), another of his students, said of Ibn Taymiyyah in defence of him that, "He excelled in the science of *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*" (cited in Hindī AH1429:76). Another of Ibn Taymiyyah's students, al-Dhahabī said of him, "He was a sign from the signs of Allāh in *tafsīr*" (cited in Hindī AH1429:76).

Al-Suyūṭī, who wrote a book on the science of the Qurʾān called *al-Itqān,* actually took large sections of Ibn Taymiyyah's introduction and put it in his book. Al-Suyūṭī is a famous scholar of *tafsīr*, whose work is benefited from both mainstream and non-mainstream Muslims. He wrote the second half of the book, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* in one volume and also the book *al-Durr al-Manthūr* in fifteen volumes.

Saleh (2012:23/1) continues,

> "The exegetical tradition this book (Abdul-Raof H. (2010) *Schools of Qurʾānic Exegesis*) is arguing for is not the traditional Sunni mainstream one, but a *Salafi* view of *tafsīr*, a view that became mainstream only from the late 1950's."

Scholars before the 1950's referred to these same principles as Ibn Taymiyyah. The categorisation of *tafsīr* principles (which are discussed in detail later) that Ibn Taymiyyah and after him Ibn Kathīr categorise is not something new. However, Saleh (2012:23/1) stated,

> "*Salafi tafsīr* historiography has now learned to live with the fact that most of the exegetical tradition is *Ashᶜarī*, and has devised ways of appropriating it by pretending not to see how different it is from its own prescriptive understanding of 'proper exegesis';"

On the contrary, the mainstream *tafsīr*, that of Ibn Taymiyyah, is similar to those who came before him such as al-Ṭabarī (d.AH310), Abī Muẓaffar al-Samᶜānī (d.AH489), al-Baghawī (d.AH516) and they were not Ashᶜarītes since they asserted the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh. Later scholars who followed these mainstream principles of *tafsīr* are Ibn Kathīr, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, al-Shanqīṭī, al-Saᶜdī, al-ᶜUthaymīn and others. Even *tafsīr* taken from the *ḥadīth* scholars such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim and al-Tirmidhī, to name a few, followed these mainstream principles. They were not in the minority and these scholars were not Ashᶜarītes either. Rather, they asserted the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh just as Allāh asserted them for Himself without denying or distorting their apparent meanings. The later Ashᶜarites did not actually adhere to the one they claim to follow, since Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī (d.AH330) repented from following the Muᶜtazilite path of negating the Attributes of Allāh. Then he also repented from Ibn Kullāb's creed of performing *taʾwīl* (explaining the Attributes to mean other than the intended meaning which is the current Ashᶜarites position) of Allāh's Attributes. The Ashᶜarites claim to be followers of Abū al- Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī who himself went through three stages in his belief regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh. He was born in the year AH270 and died in the year AH330.

The First stage of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī – The way of the Muᶜtazilites, (Taᶜtil)
denying the Attributes of Allāh

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī initially followed the Muᶜtazilites who used to deny the Attributes of Allāh such as Allāh's ascension above the Throne as they saw that this went against their intellect. The fifth century al-Shafiᶜī scholar, Abū Nasr al-Sijzī (d.AH444) in his treatise to the people of Zabīd called *Radd man Ankara-al-Ḥarf was-Ṣawt* (1994:140), narrates from Khalf al-Muᶜallim (d.AH371) of the Malikī scholars that he said, "Imām al-Ashᶜarī was upon the way of iᶜtizāl (Muᶜtazilites) for a period of forty years. Then he repented…" [My translation].

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:12/178) said, "Abū al-Ḥasan came after him (Ibn Kullāb) and he was a student of Abū ᶜAlī al-Jubāʾi al-Muᶜtazilī. He then turned away from the statements of the Muᶜtazilites" [My translation].

The second stage of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī – The way of Ibn Kullāb – (Tahrīf)
distorting the meanings of the Attributes of Allāh to mean other that the apparent
meaning (taʾwīl - esoteric meaning).

Then the second stage of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī saw him following the path of Ibn Kullāb who did not reject the Attributes of Allāh like the Muᶜtazilites but gave them a meaning other than the apparent meaning. For example, Allāh's ascension above the Throne meant to him, conquering the Throne, which would imply there was another God that needed to be defeated. Also, in this, there is no assertion that Allāh is above the Throne. Ibn Kullāb believed that the Face of Allāh meant reward and the Hands of Allāh meant His power. This was called distortion by mainstream Sunni scholars such as Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d.AH241). Ibn Taymiyyah (1980:2/6) said, "Imām Aḥmad (d.AH241) used to warn against Ibn Kullāb and his followers."

Furthermore, al-Dhahabī quoted Abū Bakr Ibn Khuzaimah in *Siyar ᶜAlām al-Nubalā* (1993:14/380) as saying, "Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal was amongst the sternest of people in warning against ᶜAbdullāh b. Saᶜīd ibn Kullāb and his companions such as al-Ḥarith and others." Ibn Taymiyyah in *al-Istiqāma* (n.d.: 12/368) said, "The Kullābiyyah are the teachers of the Ashᶜarites…"

The third stage of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī - The way of the scholars of mainstream Sunnah

The third stage of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī showed that he turned away from distorting the meanings of the lofty Attributes of Allāh, which was the way of Ibn Kullāb. He then followed the way of the scholars of the righteous Predecessors[44] and mainstream *tafsīr*. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī clearly showed this by writing three books: *al-Ibāna*, *al-Risāla ilā Ahl al-Thagr* and *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn*, clearly asserting the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh in the manner He affirmed for Himself without misinterpretation or distortion.

Saleh (2012:23/1) claims that Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī's books were later forged. Ibn Dirbas who died in the year AH622, more than eight hundred years before Saleh, wrote a book called, *al-Dheb ᶜan Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī* (2006) illustrating clearly that *al-Ibāna* of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī is actually his book. Ibn Dirbas, who is from the seventh century, is proof that Saleh's claim is false since Ibn Dirbas came before Ibn Taymiyyah and therefore Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī's last three books were not forged. The scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* continue to refute Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī's first and

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[44] The Righteous Predecessors refer to the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and those that followed them upon righteousness. They have been mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ as the best people of this nation, "The best people are those in my generation, then those that followed, then those that followed." *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* no. 3451.

second stages of beliefs. This is in order that the Muslims do not follow him in his previous errors. They also clarify his return to the mainstream Sunni position in general.

Non-mainstream *tafsīr* books are mainly based on opinions and language derivations of the verses from the Qurʾān without relying firstly on the Qurʾān then on the Sunnah and then on the statements of the Prophet's Companions. These *tafsīr* books contain numerous differences in belief compared to mainstream *tafsīr* especially with regards to the meanings of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Likewise, these books of *tafsīr* do not distinguish between the authentic narrations, and on weak and fabricated ones such as the *tafsīr* of Thaᶜlabī and the *tafsīr* of al-Wāhidī. The latter is actually a student of Thaᶜlabī and he is more versed in Arabic but further away from following the way of the righteous Predecessors (Ibn Taymiyyah 2001:13/354,386).

2.4   Sources of tafsīr

This section aims to examine the process of how *tafsīr* works in the field of interpreting the Qurʾān. The sources of *tafsīr* are used as a platform to reason what a particular verse means. *Tafsīr* is built upon a foundation, that being the sources from which it is derived (See appendix 2). This section shows how verses are understood using these sources and many examples will be given of various verses and their translations using these sources.

2.4.1   The 1ˢᵗ source - The explanation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān

The eighth-century scholar al-Shaṭbī (d.AH790) mentions that the best way to explain the Qurʾān is by the Qurʾān itself. Thereafter, the Qurʾān is explained by the authentic Prophetic traditions and then by the explanation of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Finally, the Qurʾān is explained by the Successors and then by the Arabic language (Al-Shaṭbī 1994:3/369) [My translation].

The *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān is first derived from the Qurʾān itself where the meaning is portrayed in the context of other verses. That is, Allāh would reveal and clarify general verses. For example, the verse in Yūnus:62:

<div dir="rtl">أَلَآ إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ</div>

"No doubt! Verily, the **Auliya of Allāh** (i.e. those who believe in the Oneness of Allāh and fear Allāh much (abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden), and love Allāh much (perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained)), no fear shall co me upon them nor shall they grieve."
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The term *Awliyāʾ* is explained in the next verse, Yūnus:63

<div dir="rtl">الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ</div>

"Those who believed (in the Oneness of Allāh - Islamic Monotheism), and used to fear Allāh much (by abstaining from evil deeds and sins and by doing righteous deeds)."
[Khān and Hilālī]

Ibn Taymiyyah (p.78) said, "if it is asked, 'what is the best form of *tafsīr*?' The answer is that the most authentic form of *tafsīr* is to explain the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān. What is ambiguous in one place is clarified in another. Likewise, what is left summarised in one place is shown in detail in another place."[45] [My translation].

Ibn Wazīr al-Yamānī (d.AH840) in (AH1404:125,126) refers to those who do not go back to the fundamental sources in understanding the Qurʾān, "They over exert themselves to find meanings which differ greatly. All of them differ with their own interpretation and none of them refers their interpretations to the Qurʾān and Sunnah." [My translation].

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[45] Cited al-ʿUthaymīn (2003:78).

Al-Ālūsī (d.AH1270) in (AH1431:1/55) said, "Know that the reference point for the Muslims with regards to the fundamentals of this religion and its branches is the Book of Allāh, the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ and the consensus of the righteous Predecessors from amongst the scholars of this nation." [My translation].

The scholar of *tafsīr*, al-Shanqīṭī (d.AH1393) in (AH1426b:1/8) argues that, "The scholars have unanimously agreed that the most honourable and noble types of *tafsīr* is the *tafsīr* of the Qurᵓān by the Qurᵓān since there is not anyone who knows the meaning of the Qurᵓān (more) than Allāh." [My translation]. If this type of *tafsīr* has this lofty status then there is no doubt that it is part of a fundamental methodology in understanding the Qurᵓān according to mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* which translators of the Qurᵓān should be aware of. An example of this is the verse in Āl-ᶜImrān:130:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

"O you who have believed, do not consume usury, doubled and multiplied, but fear Allāh that you may be successful."
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

If one were to take this verse without looking at other verses that explain it, then one could derive an incorrect ruling on usury. This is because the verse suggests that doubled and multiplied usury is not allowed. This may cause one to believe that some usury is allowed so long as it is not doubled and multiplied. However, if one were to explain this verse with another verse in the Qurᵓān which clarifies it, then the correct understanding is reached,

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

"Those who consume interest cannot stand [on the Day of Resurrection] except as one who is being beaten by Satan into insanity. That is because they say, "Trade is [just] like interest." But Allāh has permitted trade and has forbidden interest. So whoever has received an admonition from his Lord and desists may have what is past, and his

affair rests with Allāh. But whoever returns to [dealing in interest or usury] - those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein. "
(Al-Baqarah: 275)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The scholar of *tafsīr*, Dr. Bazmūl (2008:27) said, "Whoever uses the first verse as proof that usury is allowed then he has used the unclear verses of the Qurʾān. However, this goes against the clear verse and authentic texts prohibiting usury whether it is a lot or a little." [My translation].

The Prophet ﷺ himself said to his wife ʿĀʾisha, "If you see a people following the unclear (verses) then they are the ones that Allāh named, so be warned from them." [46]
They were those causing strife and confusion as mentioned in the following verse,

"Those who in their hearts is a deviation (then) they follow the unclear (verses) seeking to cause strife and confusion along with its *tawīl* (to explain away the verses from other than their apparent meaning)."
(Al-Māʾidah: 7)
[My translation]

2.4.2 The 2nd source - The explanation of the Qurʾān by the Sunnah

The second source of *tafsīr* is the speech of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ or the Prophetic traditions. The Qurʾān is explained by the Messenger ﷺ because he was responsible for conveying the message. He is the most knowledgeable person with regards to Allāh's speech,

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought."
(Al-Nahl:44)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

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[46] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* no.4547 and *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.2665.

Imām Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shafiʿī (d.AH204) cited in *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (1990:1/21) said, "Whatever the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ gave a ruling for, then it was what he understood from the Qurʾān,"

Allāh said,

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَائِنِينَ خَصِيمًا

"Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muḥammad], the Book in truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allāh has shown you. And do not be for the deceitful an advocate."
(Al-Nisāʾ:105)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Allāh said,

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought."
(Al-Naḥl: 44)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Allāh said,

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

"And We have not revealed to you the Book, [O Muḥammad], except for you to make clear to them that wherein they have differed and as guidance and mercy for a people who believe."
(Naḥl: 64)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

This is why the Messenger ﷺ said, "Indeed I have been given the Qurʾān and that which is similar to it,"[47] (meaning the Sunnah). [My translation].

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:21/131) said, "The Sunnah explains the Qurʾān and shows what it means and explains it further…the authentic Sunnah does not contradict the Book of Allāh but rather it agrees to it and affirms it. It clarifies and shows further [its meaning]

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[47] *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (1988) no.4604 and *Musnad Imām Aḥmad* (2008:17213).

to those who fall short in understanding the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān has subtle meanings that are obscure to many people and in it are topics referred to in the general sense and the Sunnah explains them." [My translation].

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:13/27) suggests "The Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* (Prophet's sayings), if their *tafsīr* is known by way of the Prophet ﷺ then there is no need to look into the statements of the linguists."[My translation]. The language itself does not oppose what the Prophet ﷺ said. However, some words can have more than one meaning and therefore the Prophet ﷺ explained which meaning was more appropriate. The Prophet explained the general verses and the verses that the Prophet's Companions questioned. When using Prophetic narrations to explain each verse, one must be careful not to use those narrations that are not authentically reported by the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Zarkashī B. (d.AH794) says, "…(when) reporting from the Prophet ﷺ…one must be careful not to use unauthentic and fabricated reports and they are many."[48] [My translation].

An example of where the authentic Prophetic narrations explain the meaning of the Qurʾān is the ambiguous meaning to the verse in al-Hijr: 87:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ

"And We have certainly given you (O Muhammad) **seven of the oft-repeated (verses)** and the great Qurʾān."
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The Prophet ﷺ taught these seven verses to his Companion Abū Saʿīd b. Muʿalā. He explained that it refers to the Opening Sūrat (al-Fātiḥah) of the Qurʾān which is oft-

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[48] Cited al-Mansour (2005:379).

repeated[49] because every Muslim recites it at least seventeen times a day in their five daily prayers. Another example is in Yūnus: 26:

$$\text{لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَى وَزِيَادَةٌ}$$

"Those who have done good, for them is the best reward (paradise) and **something more**."
[My translation]

This **'something more'** has been explained to mean seeing Allāh's 'Face' based upon the Prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*). It was reported by the Prophet's Companions Abū Mūsā [50], Ubay b. Kaᶜb[51], Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ and recorded by the scholars of *tafsīr* such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim. Also al-Ṭabarī recorded it from the *ḥadīth* of Kaᶜb b. ᶜUjrah. There is also a *ḥadīth* in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (no.448) narrated by the Prophet's Companion Ṣuhaib b. Sinān from the Prophet ﷺ who said, "When those deserving of Paradise will enter Paradise, the Blessed and the Exalted will ask, 'Do you wish Me to give you anything more?' They will say, 'Have you not brightened our faces? Have you not made us enter Paradise and saved us from Fire?' He (the narrator) said, 'He (Allāh) will lift the veil, and of all the things given to them nothing will be dearer to them than the sight of their Lord, the Mighty and the Glorious'." He then recited the verse, {For those who do good is the best reward and **something more**} in Yūnus:26."[52] Within this latter *ḥadīth* is the statement of the narrator that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Then the covering will be removed and they will not have been given anything more beloved to them than **looking at their Lord**." Other Companions of the Prophet and their Successors also reported that '**something more**' in Yūnus:26 of the Qurᵓān means looking at the 'Face'

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[49] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (no.4474).
[50] Ibn Abi Ḥātim recorded it in his *Tafsīr* (1999:6/1945), *ḥadīth* (no.10341) and by al-Lālikāᵓī in *Sharh Uṣūl Iᶜtiqād* in (AH1418:3/ 458-459), *ḥadīth* no.785.
[51] Al-Ṭabarī recorded it in his *Tafsīr* (AH1374:15/69), *ḥadīth* (no. 17633).
[52] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.448, Chapter 80 - The confirmation of the believers seeing their Lord in the Hereafter.

of Allāh. Furthermore, the Prophet's Companions; Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, Hudayfah b. al-Yaman, ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAbbās and the Successors ᶜAbdulraḥmān b. Abī Lailā ᶜIkrimah, ᶜAmir b. Saᶜīd, Ḥasan al-Baṣri, Mujāhid, Qatādah, al-Daḥḥāk and al-Sudī ﷺ had also reported similar.[53]

The following verse is an example where the interpretation differs considerably from mainstream *tafsīr* and non-mainstream *tafsīr* whereby mainstream *tafsīr* goes back to the explanation of the Qurᵓān by the Qurᵓān, the Prophetic statements and the explanations of the Companions.

يا أيها الذين آمنوا إذا قمتم إلى الصلاة فاغسلوا وجوهكم وأيديكم إلى المرافق وامسحوا برءوسكم وأرجلَكم إلى الكعبين

"O you who have believed, when you rise to (perform) prayer wash your faces and forearms to the elbows and wipe your heads **and wash your feet to the ankles.**"
(Al-Māᵓidah:6)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

This verse concerns the ablution which every Muslim is required to perform before they pray. Muslims wash their face, arms, hands and feet if water is present. Muslims can wipe over their socks if they have already washed their feet and put their socks on while in a state of ablution. The importance of knowing Arabic grammar here is not enough as to know whether the feet must be washed or the socks wiped. The grammatical rule of 'al-ᶜAṭf' (and/or conjunction) means that a noun must follow the same vowel endings as a previous noun and hence take on its verb. In this case, if the word وأرجلَكم (with a *fatḥa* vowel) is written like this, then it would follow the previous command at the beginning of the verse and be an object of the previous verb. Therefore, it would take the command of washing the feet similar to washing the face and hands. If it is written

[53] Ibn Abi Ḥātim recorded it in his *Tafsīr* (1999:6/1945), *ḥadīth* no.10341.

وأرجلكم (with a *kasra* vowel)¸ then it would follow the preposition ب which would mean the command to wipe over the socks similar to wiping over the head. Therefore, there are two modes of recitation above and each has its own situation. Both are in accordance to the explanation given by the Prophet ﷺ himself. That is, to wash the feet before prayer as part of the ablution or to wipe over the socks (and not feet, as the Shi°ites hold) if one has already put them on while in a state of purity. In translating this verse, the translator must be aware of the Prophetic narrations that explain these modes of recitation. Among the many reports describing the manner in which the Prophet ﷺ performed ablution is for example:

"Ḥumrān, the freed slave of the Prophet's Companion and third Caliph °Uthmān b. °Affān ﷺ narrated that °Uthmān once asked for a tumbler of water in order to perform ablution. When it was brought to him, he poured water from it over his hands and washed them thrice. Then he put his right hand in the water container and rinsed his mouth and washed his nose by putting water in it and then blowing it out. Then, he washed his face thrice and then his forearms up to the elbows thrice. Then, he passed his wet hands over his head and **then washed each foot thrice.** After that, °Uthmān ﷺ said, "I saw the Prophet ﷺ perform ablution like this and the Prophet ﷺ said, "If anyone performs ablution like this and offers a two unit prayer during which he does not think of anything else (not related to the present prayer) then his past sins will be forgiven".""[54] This narration, therefore, explains the first mode of recitation, that is, the command to wash the feet. As for the second mode of recitation then it refers to wiping over the socks and not the feet as in the narration of the Prophet's Companion al-Mughīrah b. Shu°bah ﷺ who said that the Prophet ﷺ once made ablution. "I moved to

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[54] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* no.159.

remove his leather socks, but ﷺ he said, 'Leave them, for indeed I was in a state of purity when I wore them.' So he ﷺ wiped over them."[55] However, the Shiᶜites do not follow any of these Prophetic narrations, but rather explain the verse to mean wiping only a part of the feet as in Mir Ali's translation,

يا أيها الذين آمنوا إذا قمتم إلى الصلاة فاغسلوا وجوهكم وأيديكم إلى المرافق وامسحوا برءوسكم وأرجلكم إلى الكعبين

" O ye who believe! When ye get ready unto prayers, wash ye your faces and your hands with the elbows, and **wipe a part of your heads** and **a part of your feet to the ankles**,"
(Al-Māʾidah:6)
[Mir Ali]

In the Shiᶜite *tafsīr* of this verse, Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdī adds, "Washing the feet instead of wiping them, is to discard God's commandment in this passage." Mir Ali (1988:451). If he had taken the Prophetic tradition above to explain the verse, he would not have said this. This clearly shows the importance of the explanation of the Prophet ﷺ regarding ambiguous verses. If these narrations are not known by the translator of the Qurʾān then mistranslation will occur and knowledge of the Arabic language itself would not be sufficient. Likewise, this is an example where sectarian translations translate according to their exegesis rather than being based on the Prophetic narration in accordance with mainstream *tafsīr*.

The translator of the Qurʾān should also be aware of authentic Prophetic narrations as opposed to the fabricated and weak ones. Weak and fabricated Prophetic narrations are those that cannot be attributed to the Prophet ﷺ since there is a defect in the narrators narrating them or the text contradicts what is known from the Qurʾān and other

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[55] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* no.206, *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no. 631.

authentic sources. The scholars of *ḥadīth* such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ᶜAsqalānī (d.AH852) point out five main conditions for the authenticity of a Prophetic tradition,

1. "The narrators must be precise.
2. The narrators must be upright and trustworthy.
3. There must be no disconnection in the chain of narration.
4. The narration must not contradict that which is more reliable.
5. The narration must not have a hidden defect."[56]

If the narrators of a Prophetic tradition are known to be liars, then the narration they convey is considered to be fabricated. If the narrators are known to have a weak memory then their narrations are considered weak and therefore cannot be used to explain the Qurʾān unless there are other supporting narrations. Some scholars of *tafsīr* err in using weak narrations to base their opinions of the meaning of a particular verse. This may be because they did not know that these narrations were weak or fabricated in the first place. These weak and fabricated narrations will obscure the mainstream Sunni understanding of a verse. Therefore, it is imperative to be aware of these false narrations in order to understand the mainstream Sunni position especially in matters of belief.

The Ḥanbalī scholar from the seventh *Hijrī* century, Ibn Qudāmah (AH1414: 47) said, "As for the fabricated *ḥadīth* which the heretics deliberately lied about such that those narrations could be included as part of Islam to cause confusion amongst the Muslims. Also the weak *ḥadīth* which are weak either due to weakness in the narrators, or due to unknown narrators or hidden defects. It is not allowed to use them (these fabricated narrations), nor believe in them. Rather, they are as if they do not exist." [My translation]. The scholar of *tafsīr*, al-Qurṭubī in (AH1399:209-211) said, " The scholar of *tafsīr*, al-Qurṭubī in (AH1399:209-211) said, "The false narrations by the liars and

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[56] See *al-Nukat ᶜalā Nuzhat al-Nadhr* of Ibn Ḥajar (1998:82), edited by Abdulhameed A. H.

false producers are not to be given any value." [My translation]. Ibn Taymiyyah (2001: 1/250,251) said, "It is not allowed to rely on weak narrations in the Islamic legislation. Nor can a ruling and belief be derived from weak narrations" [My translation].

Later in this thesis, I have given an example where the Prophet's Companion, ꜥAbdullāh b. ꜥAbbās is supposed to have said that the *Kursī* (Footstool) in al-Baqarah:255 refers to knowledge but this was based on a weak narration and differs from what was authentically reported from him that it refers to the Footstool and not knowledge. Not having knowedge of these weak narrations has led some translators to translate the word *Kursī* (Footstool) with other meanings not given by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

2.4.3   *The 3ʳᵈ source - The explanation of the Qurʾān by the Prophet's Companions*

The third source of *tafsīr* is the speech of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, especially those who were known for their knowledge and understanding of *tafsīr*. This is because the Qurʾān was revealed in their language and during their life time.

The scholar of *tafsīr,* Ibn Kathīr (1999:introduction), wrote in the preface of his *tafsīr*, "If we are unable to find a suitable *tafsīr* in the Qurʾān or in the Sunnah, we refer to the opinions of the Prophet's Companions. They knew the Qurʾān better than anyone else. This is due to their knowledge of the circumstances of its revelation, their complete and accurate understanding of it and due to their righteous deeds." [My translation].

The following verse shows the importance of following the path of the believers who were primarily the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ in his time,

وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

"And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and **follows a path other than the way of the believers [the Companions]**, We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination."

Imām al-Shafiʿī (d.AH204) in (1990:50), commenting on the verse (al-Nisāʾ:115) above said, "This is proof of the consensus of the Companions (in understanding the Islamic legislation)." Ibn Kathīr (1999:introduction) said, "After I pondered for a long period of time, over what Imām al-Shafiʿī held regarding this verse (al- Nisāʾ:115), I realised it is amongst the best of understandings even if some have spoken against it and were unconvinced of its use as proof" [My Translation].

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001: 19/178,179) said, "And when Imām al-Shafiʿī was speaking about the area of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (fundamental principles in Islamic Jurisprudence), he used this verse (al-Nisāʾ:115) to show the validity of *Ijmāʿ*–consensus (of the Companions). Likewise, Imām Mālik and others would mention the validity of this consensus from [the Muslim leader in his time] ʿUmar b. AbdulʿAziz (d.AH102)."

Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d.AH241) who said in his book *Uṣūl al-Sunnah* in the first line, "The foundation of the Sunnah with us is to hold on to what the Companions were agreed upon" (cited in al-Jābirī (2011:23).

The numerous statements of previous scholars clarify the importance of referring back to the statements of the Companions in *tafsīr*. Understanding the Qurʾān has not been left to mere opinions which oppose the mainstream *tafsīr* in understanding Islam, especially concerning the Muslim belief. The importance of referring back to the statements of the Companions in *tafsīr* is also shown in the following verse whereby the plural you آمَنتُم is referring to the Prophet's Companions,

<div align="center">

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنتُم بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوا

"So if they believe in the same as **you** believe in, then they have been (rightly] guided."

(Al-Baqarah:137)

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Regarding the verse in al-Baqarah:121:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ

"Those to whom We have given the Book **recite it with its true recital**. They (are the ones who) believe in it."
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

What does it mean to recite it correctly? The scholar of *tafsīr,* al-Ṭabarī (AH1374:2/567) mentioned that the cousin of the Prophet ﷺ ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAbbās ؓ said, "يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ means they follow with true adherence and make lawful its lawful matters and make prohibited its prohibited matters. They also do not distort its subject matter." Al-Ṭabarī (AH1374:2/566) also mentioned the Prophet's Companion, ᶜAbdullāh b. Masᶜūd ؓ as saying, "يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ means they do not distort the speech from its subject matter nor do they distort its explanation from other than its' meaning."

The importance of following the Prophet's Companions is further elaborated in the following Prophetic tradition whereby the Prophet's Companion, Abū Mūsā al-Ashᶜarī ؓ said that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The stars are a guidance in the sky so if the stars go, then what will befall it will happen. I am a guide to my Companions so if I go then what will befall my Companions will happen. The Companions are a guide for my nation and if they go then what will befall it will happen."[57]

The Prophet's Companion, Abū Wāqid al-Laythī ؓ said, "We were sitting in the company of the Prophet ﷺ. So he said, 'Indeed, a great trial and calamity will occur.' The Prophet's Companions did not pay attention so Muᶜādh b. Jabal (a Companion of the Prophet) ؓ who said, 'Do you not listen to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ?' They said,

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[57] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.2531.

'What did he say?' Muʿādh ﷺ then repeated to them what he said. So they in turn said, 'What is the way out of it (trials), O Messenger of Allāh ﷺ?' He ﷺ said, 'You should return to your original state of affairs' "[58] [My translation].

The original state of affairs mentioned in the above *ḥadīth* is the understanding of the Prophet's Companions as explained by al-Dhahabī, who said, "If you want to be justly balanced then restrict yourself to the Qurʾānic and Prophetic texts, look to what the Prophet's Companions and their Successors conveyed. Look to the scholars of *tafsīr* with regard to these verses and what they narrated of the methodology of the righteous Predecessors. Either you speak with knowledge or remain silent patiently."[59] [My translation].

The next *ḥadīth* shows once again the importance of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ in deriving the mainstream Sunni path in understanding the Qurʾān that the mainstream scholars of *tafsīr* adhered to. The Prophet ﷺ said,
"My Islamic nation will split into seventy three sects. All are threatened to be in the fire except one." The Companions said, "Which one is it O Messenger of Allāh?" He ﷺ said, "That which I and **my Companions** are upon."[60] (My translation).

The second century scholar, al-Awzāʿī (d.AH157) said, "Upon you is to hold onto the path of the righteous Predecessors even if the people were to leave you. Be warned of the opinions of men (that oppose the Predecessors) even if they were to beautify their opinions."[61] [My translation].

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[58] *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Related by al-Ṭabaranī in *al-Awsat* (1996:8/355) no.8679.
[59] Introduction to the book *al-ʿUlūw* of Imām al-Dhahabī (AH1420).
[60] See *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417) no.2641. See *al-Saḥīḥah* (1987) no.1348.
[61] Al-Ājurrī (1996:193) in *al-Sharīʿah*.

Awzā°ī also said, "Be patient upon the Sunnah and stop where the people (Prophet's Companions) stopped. Say what they said and keep silent about what they kept silent over. Take the path of the righteous Predecessors, for what was sufficient for them is sufficient for you."[62] [My translation].

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:4/149) said,

"There is no blame upon the one who outwardly professes the methodology of the righteous Predecessors, ascribes and relates to it. Rather, it is obligatory to accept that from him by agreement. The methodology of the righteous Predecessors will not be except the truth." [My translation].

An example showing the importance of following the Prophet's Companions is the verse:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ

"And if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have **contacted women** and find no water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]."
(Al- Nisā°:43)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The phrase 'لامَسْـتُمُ النِّسَـاءَ' refers to having relations with one's spouse, not just mere contact with women. This verse shows the permissability to perform *Tayammum*, which is a legislated way of using the earth (soil or stone) to purify oneself when no water is available instead of using water for bathing while in a state of impurity. The phrase 'لامَسْـتُمُ النِّسَـاءَ' has been explained by the Prophet's Companion, Ibn °Abbās, to mean – 'having relations with one's spouse and not just merely touching women'[63]. Similar

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[62] Al-Ājurrī (1996:306) in *al-Sharī°ah*.
[63] *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (1374:8/392). Edited by Aḥmad Shakir Cited in Ibn Kathīr (1999.236).

meanings are reported from the fourth Caliph ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ubay b. Kaʿb[64]. If one did not know the statements of the Prophet's Companions here, then they would say that merely touching a woman requires one to take a bath, which would entail much hardship. This is why it is of paramount importance in *tafsīr* to look at what the Prophet's Companions conveyed along with the Prophetic narrations to understand the context of each verse.

2.4.3.1 Examples of famous Prophet's Companions and their tafsīr

Among the most famous Companions who wrote commentaries on the Qurʾān were the four Caliphs, and other famous Companions of the Prophet ﷺ such as ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd ﷺ and ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās ﷺ. The fourth Caliph, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, used to say, "Ask me, ask me, ask me concerning the Book of Allāh, I swear by Allāh there is not a verse except that I know whether it was revealed in the night or day." Al-ʿUthaymīn (AH1423a:38/39) [My translation].

1. ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd ﷺ

He was among the first to embrace Islam and took part in the two migrations (Ethiopia and Madīnah). He directly took knowledge from the Prophet ﷺ about seventy Sūras out of one hundred and fourteen Sūras of the Qurʾān. The Prophet ﷺ said to him that, "You are indeed a young man who is learned." And the Prophet ﷺ also said, "Whoever wants to read the Qurʾān as though it had just been revealed then let him recite it from Ibn Umm ʿAbd (ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd)." Al-ʿUthaymīn (AH1423a:39/40) [My translation].

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[64] *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (1374:8/392-393) Cited in Ibn Kathīr (1999:236).

Whenever the Prophet's Companion, ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAmr ﷺ mentioned ᶜAbdullāh b. Masᶜūd ﷺ, an elder amongst the Prophet's Companions, he would say, "I shall forever love this man, for I heard the Prophet ﷺ saying, 'Take (learn) the Qurᵓān from four: ᶜAbdullāh b. Masᶜūd, Sālim, Muᶜadh and Ubay b. Kaᶜb ﷺ.' "[65]

ᶜAbdullāh b. Masᶜūd ﷺ reported that the Prophet ﷺ said to him, "Recite (the Qurᵓān) to me." He replied, "O Allāh's Messenger ﷺ, shall I recite (the Qurᵓān) to you while it has been revealed to you?" He ﷺ said, "Yes." So I recited until al-Nisāᵓ (The Women). When I reached the verse: 'How (will it be) then when We bring from each nation a witness and We bring you (O Muḥammad) as a witness unto these people.' (4.41) He ﷺ said, "Enough for now." I looked at him and behold! His eyes were overflowing with tears."[66]

The Prophet's Companion, ᶜAbdullāh b. Masᶜūd ﷺ said,

"By the One whom none has the right to be worshipped but Him, no verse from the Book of Allāh (that has been revealed) except that I know whom it was revealed for and where it was sent down. If I knew that there was a place where there was a person, [who is] more knowledgeable of the Book of Allāh than me, then I would go to him/her."[67] [My translation].

2. ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAbbās ﷺ

Being a young cousin of the Messenger ﷺ, ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAbbās ﷺ narrated from the Messenger directly. He, also narrated by way of other Prophet's Companions such as

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[65] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* no.4999.
[66] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* no.5050.
[67] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* no.5002.

ʿUmar, Abū Hurayrah, ʿAbdulraḥmān b. ʿAuf, Zayd b. Thabit, Ubay b. Kaʿb, Usāmah b. Zayd and others ﷺ. He was close to the Messenger ﷺ. He was raised by the Messenger ﷺ. The Messenger ﷺ even supplicated for him to gain wisdom and to have understanding of the Qurʾān. Due to this, he was one of the great scholars of *tafsīr* and Islamic jurisprudence. The Prophet ﷺ said,

"O Allāh, give him the understanding of this religion and teach him the understanding of this (Qurʾān)."[68]

 He would strive to learn with patience and perseverance. The second Caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭab ﷺ would call others to go to him and take from his statements. The migrants would say to ʿUmar, "Why do you not call our sons (to accompany you) just as you call Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ?" He said, "He is a young man who displays maturity and has a tongue that asks beneficial questions and a heart that understands." Then one day he called the migrants to witness Ibn ʿAbbās's ﷺ understanding. He asked them, "What does the following Sūrat signify?"

"When the victory of Allāh has come and the conquest,
And you see the people entering into the religion of Allāh in multitudes,
Then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is
ever Accepting of repentance."
(Al-Nasr: 1-3)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Some of the Companions said, "We have been ordered to praise Allāh and seek forgiveness when we are given victory." Others remained silent. So ʿUmar al-Khaṭṭab ﷺ asked Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ as to what it meant. Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ replied, "This [Sūrat] signifies the death of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, whereby Allāh is informing him of the

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[68] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (75), *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.2477.

close victory (referring to the victory over Makkah). This being a sign of his end, so he should praise Allāh and seek forgiveness." Ibn Masʿūd ﷺ said, "What a blessed explainer of the Qurʾān Ibn ʿAbbās is." When Ibn ʿUmar ﷺ was asked regarding a verse, he said, "Go to Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ as he is the most knowledgeable of those alive, of what has been revealed to Muḥammad ﷺ." Al-ʿUthaymīn (AH1423a:39/41) [My translation].

2.4.3.2 A Companion of the Prophet may be corrected in his understanding by the Prophet ﷺ

A Companion of the Prophet ﷺ may err in the understanding of particular verses. Therefore, what is intended by referring to their commentary is where there is agreement in the general interpretation of verses. These must not contradict with the interpretation of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

A clear example of this is when ʿUdayy b. Ḥātim ﷺ, a Companion of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, understood the verse about Fasting literally, until the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ himself showed him the correct meaning.

When the following verse was recited to ʿUdayy b. Ḥātim ﷺ,

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ

"And eat and drink until the **white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread of night.** Then complete the fast until the night (i.e. sunset)."
(Al-Baqarah:187)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

ʿUdayy ﷺ gathered two pieces of string (one white and one black) and tried to distinguish between the two at night. This was in order to know when he should stop eating and begin to fast in Ramadan (to begin that day). However, he was corrected by

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ who told him that it did not mean that. Rather, it meant the black and white thread of the night on the horizon.[69]

The word 'خيط' was understood literally by ʿUdayy ؓ without knowing that in this case it had another meaning referring to the thread of the horizon. This caused ʿUdayy to have this misunderstanding. However, one must point out that a literal translation of a particular word does not necessarily mean the word is translated incorrectly. What is intended is that one understands the Qurʾān as it has been explained by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and his Companions.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And We revealed to you the message (i.e. the Qurʾān) that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them."
(Al-Naḥl:44)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The above incident shows that ʿUdayy ؓ had misunderstood what was meant by 'خيط'. However, he was corrected by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ showing the correct context of the verse.

There were also differences in *tafsīr* between the Prophet's Companions, but these were few and not regarding the fundamentals of Islam such as the belief in Allāh and His Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:13/331,332) said, "The differences between the Prophet's Companions ؓ in the explanation of the Qurʾān (*tafsīr*) were very few." [My translation]. There are those differences that unintentionally oppose the Prophetic narrations and there are those that do not. The Companion's opinion that reflected the Prophet's explanation would be taken as being the most correct.

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[69] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1916), *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.1090.

2.4.3.3 The Ijmāᶜ (consensus) of the Prophet's Companions in tafsīr

Ijmāᶜ has two meanings in the Arabic language. The first of them is 'to intend to do something,' such as in the *ḥadīth*, "Whoever does not intend to fast before *fajr* (dawn) then there is no fast for them."[70] The second meaning refers to 'consensus or agreement' such as the *ḥadīth*, "My nation will not unite upon misguidance."[71]

Ibn Hazm said, "*Ijmāᶜ* is one of the principles of Islam and should be returned to."[72] [My translation]. Ibn Hazm also said, "Whoever opposes it - meaning *Ijmāᶜ* - after having knowledge of it or after the proof has been established upon him then he is deserving of the punishment mentioned in the verse,

وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

"And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and
follows other than the way of the believers - We will give him what he has taken
and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination."
(Al- Nisāʾ: 115).[73]
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The second Caliph, ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb wrote to Shuraiḥ[74] advising him, "Judge with what you find in the Book of Allāh. If you do not find the ruling in there then by the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ and if you do not find it there, then judge with what the righteous before you have judged with." [My translation]. In another wording, "Judge

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[70] *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (1988) no. 2118 and no.4253, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417) no.2167, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah* (AH1417) no.3950.
[71] *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah* (AH1417) no.1999.
[72] Cited al-Khudayrī (1999:31).
[73] Cited al-Khudayrī (1999:31).
[74] He is Shuraiḥ b. al- Ḥārith al-Kindī, the judge of Kūfah. He became a Muslim in the time of the Prophet ﷺ but did not meet him. He lived for 120 years. He died in the year AH78, see al-Dhahabī (1993: 4/100).

with the consensus of the people."[75] [My translation]. Ibn Masᶜūd ﷺ said, "Judge with the Book of Allāh then the Sunnah then with *Ijmāᶜ*."[76] [My translation].

Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ used to judge using that which is in the Book of Allāh, then by the Sunnah, then by the agreement of the two Caliphs Abū Bakr and ᶜUmar ﷺ.[77] [My translation]. This was due to the saying of the Prophet ﷺ, "Follow the example of the two after me, Abū Bakr and ᶜUmar ﷺ."[78] Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:19/201) said, "These narrations from ᶜUmar, Ibn Masᶜūd and Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ are authentic." [My translation]. "The scholars have unanimously agreed that *Ijmāᶜ* is a legislated proof which must be followed" (al-Shanqīṭī AH1426a:231), [My translation]. Abū Muᶜāla al-Juwaynī (AH1400:1/679) said, "*Ijmāᶜ* is a definite proof." [My translation].

Al-Qāḍi Abū Yaᶜlā (AH1410:4/1058) said, "*Ijmāᶜ* is a proof without doubt, it is a must to follow and unlawful to oppose it. It is not allowed for the nation to have consensus upon an error." [My translation].

In addition to the previous verse, the following verses show the validity of *Ijmāᶜ*:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

"And thus We have made you a median (i.e. just) community that **you will be witnesses over the people** and the Messenger will be a witness over you."
(Al-Baqarah:143)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

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[75] *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah* (AH1390:7/240).
[76] *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah* (AH1390:7/242).
[77] *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah* (AH1390:7/241,242).
[78] *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417) no.3805.

Al-ʿUthaymīn (AH1423a:65) said, "'**Witnesses over the people**' includes bearing witness to their actions and rulings over their actions. Furthermore, the statement of the witness is accepted."

Likewise, Allāh said,

كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

"You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is
right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allāh."
(Āl-ʿImrān: 110)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

And Allāh said:

فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ

"And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allāh and the Messenger."
(Al- Nisāʾ: 59)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Al-ʿUthaymīn (AH1423a:65) said, "This is proof that whatever you unite upon is truth." There are some examples showing how *Ijmāʿ* of the Prophet's Companions was implemented as proof of its validity. For example, when the second Caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ passed away, the Prophet's Companions gathered to form a consensus as to who would be his successor. Then they arrived at a consensus that ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān ﷺ should be the next Caliph. As another example of *Ijmāʿ*, when the Prophet ﷺ passed away, there was consensus among the Companions of the Prophet to gather the Qurʾān in one book as previously it had been memorised and only written on parchments etc. There were some of the Prophet's Companions who came forward to give evidence from the Prophet ﷺ for the particular order and there was acceptance of it being compiled in one book in that order. It is important to note that when the Companions of the Prophet achieved consensus on a matter it was impossible for this consensus to contradict the Qurʾān and the Prophetic texts. Al- ʿUthaymīn (AH1424:67) [My Translation].

There are cases where a Companion or a few Companions of the Prophet ﷺ explained a verse without any other Companion contradicting them. This is the silent consensus which some of the scholars, such as Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, most of the Malikī and Shafiᶜī scholars have mentioned as being a source for *tafsīr*.[79] The majority of the scholars hold that it is used as proof. (Al-Khudayrī 1999:53).

2.5   The explanation of the Qurʾān by the Successors

Ibn Taymiyyah (2003:16/17) quotes one of the Successors to the Prophet's Companions, Abū ᶜAbdulraḥmān al-Sulamī (ᶜAbdullāh b. Habīb) as saying, "The ones who used to teach us the Qurʾān, such as (the Prophet's Companions) ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān, ᶜAbdullāh b. Masᶜūd ﷺ and others, used to mention that when they learned from the Prophet ﷺ ten verses, they would not proceed until they learned what it entails of knowledge and action. So we learned the Qurʾān, knowledge and action together. This is why they would take a long time to memorise a Sūrat." [My Translation].

Ibn Taymiyyah (2003:84) adds,

"If they did not find the explanation in the Qurʾān or the Sunnah or from the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ then many of the scholars turned to the statements of the Successors." [My translation].

Ibn Taymiyyah (2006:119) further stated,

> "In general, whoever turns away from the methodology of the Prophet's Companion, the Successors and their *tafsīr* towards that which opposes it, is mistaken…What is intended is to show the path of knowledge, its proof and the correct path. We know the Qurʾān was read by the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and the Successors. They are the most knowledgeable of its *tafsīr* and explanation just as they are the most knowledgeable of the truth which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was sent with. Whoever goes against their statements

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[79] Al-Shanqīṭī (AH1426: 243).

and explains the Qurʾān from other than their *tafsīr*, then he is mistaken in his proof and what it entails." [My translation].

Among the most famous Successors who had commentaries on the Qurʾān were the followers of Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ in Makkah such as Mujāhid (d.AH104), ᶜIkrima ﷺ (d.AH104) and ᶜAṭa b. Rabaḥ ﷺ (d.AH114). As for those in Madīnah, they were the followers of Ubay b. Kaᶜb ﷺ such as Zayd b. Aslam (d.AH136), and Abū ᶜAliyah (d.AH90) and Muḥammad b. Kaᶜb al-Quraḍi (d.AH120). As for those in Kūfah, Iraq, they were the followers of Ibn Masᶜūd ﷺ such as Qatadāh (d.AH118), ᶜAlqama (d.AH61) and Shaᶜbī (d.AH104). Al-ᶜUthaymīn (AH1423a:42,43) [My translation].

"The methodology of the Successors in *tafsīr* was to return to fundamental principles, such as the Qurʾān explained by the Qurʾān, the Qurʾān explained by the Sunnah, the Qurʾān explained by the Prophet's Companions, the Qurʾān explained by the Arabic language... This is clearly apparent in the *tafsīr* of the Successors such as Mujāhid and Ḥasan al-Baṣri. For example, Ḥasan al-Baṣri would mainly quote the Prophet's Companions ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, Anas, b. Mālik ﷺ and ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAbbās ﷺ" (al-Khālidi 2008:260,267) [My Translation].

2.6   *The explanation of the Qurʾān linguistically*

The Qurʾān was revealed in the Arabic language. Therefore, there is no doubt that the language can be used as a tool to understand it. The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and the Successors used the Arabic language, where appropriate, to explain the Qurʾān. Allāh said,

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إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

"Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qurʾān in order that you might understand."
(Yusuf:2)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

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The scholar of *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr (1999:519), said that the Qurʾān was revealed in Arabic because, "The language of the Arabs is the best and most eloquent of languages. One that is most clear and vast. It is the language that would most likely draw out the meanings that touch the souls. This is why He sent the best Books in the most honourable of languages, upon the most honourable of Messengers. He sent them the best of angels, Angel Jibrāʾīl in the best place on earth. He began its revelation in the best month of the year which is Ramaḍan."

Allāh said,

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ

"And We did not send any messenger except speaking in the language of his people,
to state clearly for them..."
(Ibrāhīm:4)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

"And indeed, We have eased it (i.e. the Qurʾān) in your tongue, that they may be
reminded."
(Al-Dukhān:58)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Mujāhid, who is one of the Successors said, "It is not allowed for anyone who believes in Allāh and the Last Day, to speak about the Book of Allāh, if he is not proficiently knowledgeable of the Arabic language.."[80] [My translation].

 There is a broad spectrum of areas in the Arabic language such as style, grammar, eloquence and the knowledge of the cultural context which can be used as tools to bring additional meaning to the Qurʾān. However, using the language cannot be independent of the aforementioned *tafsīr* principles. Where there is no conflict, then the language

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[80] Al-Zarkashī (AH1415: 1/396) *Burhān fī ᶜUlum al-Qurʾān* cited in Al-Jarallāh (2008: 102) *Naqd Ṣaḥāba wa Tābiᶜīn lil-Tafsīr*.

opens up areas of meaning that portrays the magnificence of the Qurʾān. Without a strong base in the Arabic language, the translator is handicapped.

2.7   Asbāb al-Nuzūl - The Reasons for Revelation

Knowing the reasons a particular verse was revealed helps the translator of the Qurʾān to understand the context. Al-Shaṭbī mentions that knowing the reasons for revelation clarifies every problem in this matter and it is important in understanding the Book (Qurʾān), Al-Shaṭbi (1994: 4/146). [My Translation].

Many books have been written on the topic of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. The first to compile a book solely on the topic was ᶜAlī al-Madīnī (d.AH234), the teacher of the *hadīth* scholar al-Bukhārī. In the fifth century, Abū al-Ḥasan ᶜAlī al-Wāḥidī (d.AH487) wrote a book entitled *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. Much later, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyuṭī (d.AH911) compiled his book on the topic of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* called *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fi Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. Many of these writings have both authentic and non-authentic narrations which obscured some of the correct reasons for revelation regarding a particular verse. More recently, the scholar from Yemen, Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādiᶜī (d.2001) in (2012:7,8) tried to separate the fabricated and weak narrations from the authentic ones on this topic by authoring his book called *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad min Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. He explained the reason as to why he authored this book by saying,

"Another reason that prompted me to choose this topic is that false information has crept into the subject of 'reasons for revelation' as has occurred in the other sciences. Al-Wāḥidī said in the preface of his book *Asbāb al-Nuzūl,* after he mentioned the statement of ᶜAbīdah al-Salmānī, when he was asked about a verse in the Qurʾān and said, "Fear Allāh and speak the truth!" Al-Wāḥidī said, "As for today, many make up things and invent lies throwing themselves into ignorance without contemplating the

threat in store for the ignorant in relation to the verse. It is what compelled me to write this book which comprises of the 'Reasons for Revelation,' so that those studying this topic, as well as those who talk about why the Qurʾān was revealed, can come to know the truth and do without the distortions and lies."

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī used, as an example, to show the importance of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* in understanding the Qurʾān, the following verse referring to a traveller being allowed to face any direction other than that of Makkah. This is when they want to pray the non-obligatory prayers while sitting on a riding beast or on any other form of transport:

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ

"And to Allāh belongs the east and the west. So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face of Allāh."
(Al-Baqarah:115)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

"If we did not know the reason for revelation for this verse then it would mean that the praying person does not have to face the direction of Makkah whether they are on a journey or resident and this is in opposition to the consensus. When we know the reason for revelation, then it becomes clear that this verse refers to a person on a journey and not a person who is resident" (cited in al-Jarallāh 2008/386) [My translation].

The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ also affirmed that not knowing the reason why a verse was revealed could lead to deviation from understanding the Qurʾān. The second Caliph ʿUmar b. Khaṭṭāb ؓ asked the young cousin of the Prophet ﷺ, Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ, "How can this nation differ when their Book is one, their (last) Prophet is one and their direction for prayer is one?" Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ replied, "O leader of the believers, indeed the Qurʾān was revealed to us, we read it and we know the reason for its revelation. After us will come a people who read the Qurʾān but they do not know the reason for

the revelation (of each verse) so they give their opinion whereby, due to their varied opinions, they end up fighting (in disagreement), (Al-Qāsim b. Sallām AH1415:1/281) [My translation].

The Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ was referring to the innovators who distorted the texts' correct meaning to suit their personal beliefs and motives. One of the first sects to appear in Islam, the Kharijites, used to distort the meaning of texts to aid their beliefs without referring back to the reasons for revelation of verses.

The Kharijite sect fought the third and fourth Caliphs. The Prophet ﷺ prophesised that they, the Kharijite sect, will, "Read the Qurᵓān but it will not go beyond their throats…"[81] This means that they do not have the correct understanding of the text.

 "The Kharijite sect is known for revolting against Muslim leaders due to claiming that they are disbelievers. They pass this judgment on the Muslim leaders because they (the leaders) fell short in implementing some of the religious obligations." (Shahrastānī AH1404:1/50) [My translation].

 The Kharijites used 'opinion based *tawīl*' of Qurᵓānic verses to prove that major sinners were disbelievers. For example, Allāh said:

مَن كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

"Whosoever earns evil and his sin has surrounded him (is immersed in his sin), they are the dwellers of the fire (i.e. Hell); they will dwell therein forever."
(Al-Baqarah:81)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

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[81] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* no.4094.

However, dwelling in Hell forever was known to Sunni mainstream scholars to be only for those who die as polytheists, not for any other major sin. To support this, the scholar of *tafsīr*, al-Baghawī, reports that, "The view of the Prophet's Companion Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ, and Successors Aṭṭāʾ, Ad-Daḥḥāk, Abū ᶜĀliya, Rabīᶜa and the majority of scholars agree that this verse refers to the one who dies in a state of *shirk* (polytheism)" (al-Baghawī 2002:71) [My translation].

This shows that many of the early scholars considered that this verse, after knowing the real reason for revelation, is to be applied to the one who dies as a polytheist, and does not repent before he dies. Unlike the Kharijites, as they believed that sinners, in general, upon other major sins were destined for the Hell-Fire eternally, regardless of whether they committed *shirk* (associating partners with Allāh) or not. They understood the above verse literally without knowing the reasons for revelation. Another Qurʾānic verse that the Kharijites use as a proof to expel the major sinner from Islam is:

إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

"Verily, Allāh accepts only from those who are *al-Muttaqun*
(Righteous)"
(Al-Māʾidah:27)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Kharijites used mere intellect to understand this verse. They did not refer back to other verses in the Qurʾān, the Prophetic narrations, consensus of the Prophet's Companions and reasons for revelation. The Kharijites conclude that the person upon a major sin, his deeds will not be accepted, thus becoming a disbeliever. However, Sunni mainstream belief holds that he still has faith even though he is in sin, and that faith increases with obedience to Allāh's commands and decreases with His disobedience.

Many mainstream *tafsīr* scholars like Ibn Kathīr and some of the Prophet's Companions like Abū al-Ḍardāʾ ﷺ, explained that this verse shows the importance of sincerity in

one's worship of Allāh. Also, the sincere, repentant one will have his repentance accepted (Ibn Kathīr 1999:298) [My translation].

Another clear example of the Kharijites's 'opinion based *tafsīr*' of the Qurʾān and ignoring the reason for revelation is the verse in which Allāh said:

وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

"And whosoever does not rule by what Allāh has revealed then they are disbelievers."
(Al-Māʾidah 5:44)
[My translation]

Ibn ʿAbbās ⁕, the cousin of the Prophet ⁕, explained the verse by saying, "This verse was revealed regarding the People of the Book (the Jews and Christians)." Other Companions of the Prophet ⁕ and Successors, such as Barāʾ b. ʿAzib, Hudhayfa b. Yaman, Abū Mijliz, Abū Rajāʾ al-ʿAṭṭārī. ʿIkrimah, ʿUbaydullāh b. ʿAbdullāh and Ḥasan al-Basri agreed with him (Ibn Kathīr 1999:305) [My translation].

Ibn ʿAbbās ⁕ added that, "Whoever rejects what Allāh revealed is a disbeliever and the one who believes in it but does not rule by it, then he is an oppressive sinner," (Ibn Kathīr 1999:305) [My translation].

However, this verse was understood by the Kharijites to mean that all sinners with major sins are disbelievers because they are not following divine law when they commit a major sin other than associating partners with Allāh (*shirk*). This is why they openly call all Muslim rulers disbelievers and why they even fought and killed the second and third Caliphs. They considered any leader that failed to implement the divine law completely, even if they believe it is the truth and fell short, to be disbelievers. There are three similar verses in the fifth Sūrat of the Qurʾān, al-Māʾidah, regarding the details of those who do not rule by Allāh's law;

وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

"And whosoever does not rule by what Allāh has revealed then they are disbelievers."
(Al-Mā°idah: 44)
[My translation]

وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

"And whosoever does not rule by what Allāh has revealed then they are oppressors."
(Al-Mā°idah: 45)
[My translation]

وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

"And whosoever does not rule by what Allāh has revealed then they are sinners."
(Al-Mā°idah: 47)
[My translation]

The three verses above clearly show that those that do not rule by what Allāh has revealed, they could either be disbelievers, oppressors or sinners. This clearly shows that the Kharijites only implemeted the use of the first verse for the rulers who did not rule by what Allāh revealed and ignored the other two verses. Since the other two verses show that those that rule by other than what Allāh has revealed can still be Muslim believers but that they have oppressed themselves and sinned only.

The importance of knowing the reasons for revelation is illustrated in the following statement of one of the Prophet's Companion, °Abdullāh b. °Umar ﷺ, who said, "Verily they (the Kharijites) rush to apply the verses that were revealed about the disbelievers and apply them to the believers." (Ibn Ḥajar 2000:12/350) [My translation].

In the Sūrat al-Anfāl and al-Tawbah, the war between the Muslims and the polytheists at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, is mentioned in detail. If someone did not know the reason for revelation, they may think that Islam wages war on all non-Muslims in any situation on a battlefield or otherwise. However, the context of the Sūrat al-Anfāl and Sūrat al-Tawbah is referring to the Muslims in a battlefield only, not any other place. There are other verses which show a different interaction one should

display with non-Muslims if they are not in a battlefield. For example, Muslims are advised to show good manners towards non-Muslims such as:

لا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (8)

"Allāh does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from **being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allāh loves those who act justly**."
(Mumtaḥana:8)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Allāh also said:

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَى إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Allāh only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers."
(Mumtaḥana:9)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Even on the battlefield, there are numerous Prophetic narrations that forbid the killing of women, children and those surrendering. Knowing the context of verses and their reasons for revelation shows the different interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims. Otherwise groups like the Kharijites try to manipulate the verses in Sūras al-Anfāl and al-Tawbah to harm innocent people in the name of their distorted Islam. Likewise, the non-Muslims who have a pact between themselves and the Muslims must not be harmed. Rather, they should be protected in a Muslim country for they entered in a state of security and therefore, are to be in that state until they leave. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Any person who gives agreement of security to a man to not spill his blood

and then kills him, then indeed I am free from the killer, even if the one killed was a disbeliever."[82]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever kills a non-Muslim under a pact will not smell the fragrance of paradise" [Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (3166)].

These mis-translations of the Qurʾān can be found in the interactions with non-Muslims by followers of the Kharijite sect such as the modern day *Takfīrīs*. Many of them follow the *tafsīr* of Sayyid Quṭb, in calling whole Muslim societies disbelievers. Hence, they call for political change in a non-Islamic way, even if it means using violence and causing more harm than good. Therefore, the importance of this study in determining the mainstream Sunni meaning of verses is paramount in answering the many doubts that are brought forward by this and other sects. Mis-translations and mis-interpretations of the Qurʾān has led to the bloodshed and killing of many innocent Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Therefore, it is vital to translate the Qurʾān based upon the principles of mainstream *tafsīr* whereby the context is portrayed and explained in detail by the Prophet ﷺ and His Companions ﷺ.

In this chapter, I have shown that before translators embark upon the translation of the Qurʾān, they must know the context of what they are translating. This context is found in mainstream *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān. I elaborate on the fact that *tafsīr* has principles and sources with which commentators use to understand the Qurʾān. Knowing these principles is of paramount importance in order for the translator to understand the background to each verse. Some translators have used these principles in their

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[82] *Musnad Imām Aḥmad* (2008:39/106) no.23702. *Al-Iḥsān fī Taqrīb Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* (1988:13/320) no.5982.

translations while others rely on their opinions and background sects to understand the Qurʾān. However, the subject matter of *tafsīr* itself is an enormous one. In the next chapter, I elaborate further on the different mainstream and non-mainstream books of *tafsīr* and the distinction between the two.

<u>Chapter Three - Mainstream and non-mainstream books of *tafsīr*</u>

This chapter gives details of biographies and backgrounds of some well known books of *tafsīr*, both mainstream and non-mainstream. These were selected as they were cited by the chosen translators of the Qurʾān that are being analysed. Other examples taken from influential books of *tafsīr* to show different interpretations of verses based upon the background of the scholars have also been added. This chapter also aims to illustrate the differences portrayed in the meaning of verses between mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr* sources. It sheds more light as to what are the dividing factors between mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr* in the belief in Allāh and His Prophet ﷺ. Numerous examples will be used to demonstrate this.

3.1 Mainstream books of tafsīr

The mainstream books of *tafsīr* are based on *al-tafsīr al-maʾthūr* meaning that they refer back to the narrations of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. These are some of the books of *tafsīr* that mainly followed the mainstream position with regard to the Muslim belief in Allāh, such as His Names and Attributes; *Tafsīr* of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d.AH310), *Tafsīr* of al-Baghawī (d.AH516) (with some slight errors detailed below), *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr (d.AH774), *Tafsīr* of Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (d.AH1307), *Tafsīr* of al-Saʿdī (d.AH1376)*, Tafsīr* of al-Shanqīṭī (d.AH1393) called *Aḍwā al Bayān, Tafsīr of al-Saʿdī (d.AH1376)* and *Tafsīr* of al-ʿUthaymīn (d.AH1422).

Some of the books of *ḥadīth* have allotted a whole chapter in their collection just to *tafsīr* such as: *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* of al-Bukhārī (d.AH256), *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* of Muslim (d.AH261) in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* of al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* of Ibn Khuzaimah in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* of al-Ḥākim in his *Mustadrak*. These *tafsīr*

chapters mainly were a collection of Prophetic narrations along with some commentary from his Companions and their Successors.

The following books of *tafsīr* have been chosen because most are cited in the introductions and footnotes of many of the Qurᵓān translations that this research covers. A brief description is given about the authors of the *tafsīr* and a summary of their beliefs and methodologies.

3.1.1 Tafsīr of al-Ṭabarī (d.AH310)

"Perhaps the oldest complete compilation in *tafsīr* is *Jāmiᶜ al-Bayān ᶜan taᵓwīl Ayyil Qurᵓān*, compiled by Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. He was born in the year AH224. He used to travel much and met many noble scholars. He died in the year AH310 in Baghdad" (al-Dhahabī AH1420:14/267) [My translation]. "Al-Ṭabarī memorised the Qurᵓān and did not begin his *tafsīr* until he reached the age of sixty, after having written many books. He was a scholar of *ḥadīth* and had already collected many *tafsīr* of the Successors, and their students, from the scholars who recorded them. He was a scholar of the Arabic language including poetry and eloquence. He was knowledgeable in the Islamic belief, rules and regulation of Islam. He had knowledge of the historical biography of the Prophet ﷺ" (cited by al-Khalidī 2008:350). Having knowledge of the Prophet's ﷺ biography enables one to understand the context with which the verses were revealed.

Al-Suyūṭī (AH1407:2/1235) said, "Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's book is among the best and most honourable of *tafsīr*..."

"His *tafsīr* book is one of the most well known. He mentioned many narrations and statements of the 'righteous Predecessors' with strong chains of narrations. It contains

no innovations in it. It is among the best books of *tafsīr*." Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:13/385) [My translation]. "If the verses that he was explaining had a particular reason for their revelation then he would mention that first before any narrations from the righteous Predecessors. There is hardly a verse except that he has mentioned its reason for revelation. Part of his methodology is that he would explain the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān, the Qurʾān by the Sunnah, the Qurʾān by the statements of the Prophet's Companions and the Successors. This was followed by the language. He also mentions the legal verdicts of some scholars in matters of jurisprudence. One of the criticisms is that he has not clarified whether the narrations are authentic or not" (al-Muzaynī AH1429:61) [My translation].

3.1.2   *Tafsīr al-Baghawī (d.AH516)*

"*Tafsīr al-Baghawī* was written by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Masʿūd al-Faraʾ al-Baghawī. He was a humble person who used to live simply. He died in Khurāsān in the year AH516 living for just over seventy years" (al-Dhahabī 1993:19/439) [My translation]. As for his methodology in *tafsīr*, then he would explain the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān, the Qurʾān by the Sunnah, the Qurʾān by the statements of the Prophet's Companions and their Successors after them. "His *tafsīr* is actually a summarised version of Thaʿlabī's *tafsīr* but he has taken out fabricated narrations and innovations which were present. He mentioned some benefits from the Arabic language and Islamic jurisprudence. He would specify at the beginning of each Sūrat whether it is a Makkan or Madīnan Sūrat. He would also mention the reason for the revelation of the verses concerned. Al-Baghawī makes several quotes but many times leaves the reader unsure of the mainstream Sunni position where there are differences" (al-Muzaynī AH1429:66) [My translation]. To clarify his correct belief further, he wrote an introduction to the *ḥadīth* collection he called *Sharḥ Sunnah* where he clarified the

mainstream Sunni belief about the righteous Predecessors regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh. However, in his *tafsīr*, he sometimes erred by falling into opinion based *taʾwīl* without proof, by explaining some of the Attributes with a meaning other than what was apparent. For example, see his explanation of the verse 1:7, regarding the Attribute of Anger found in al-Baghawī (2002:1/7). In general, though, al-Baghawī "...was one of the scholars of the righteous Predecessors, those who followed closely the Book and the Sunnah with regards to understanding the Muslim belief. This was especially concerning the Names and Attributes of Allāh" (al-Najjar et al. AH1430: 6). Al-Baghawī (AH1400:1/168) in *Sharḥ Sunnah* said, "Therefore, it is obligatory to believe in them [the Attributes of Allāh] and to narrate them upon their apparent meaning whilst keeping far away from interpreting them with a distorted interpretation (*taʾwīl*), keeping away from resembling Allāh to His creation, believing that nothing else resembles the Originator of creation neither in His Essence nor in His Attributes..."

3.1.3 Tafsīr of al-Qurṭubī (d.AH671)

Tafsīr by Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī is called *Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*. He was born in Andalus and most of his learning was in Egypt after fleeing from enemies of war in Andalus where his father was killed. His *tafsīr* includes many definitions in the Arabic language and this is most probably due to relying on Thaʿlabī's *tafsīr*. He did not assert the mainstream Sunni position of the righteous Predecessors when he spoke about the Names and Attributes of Allāh even though in some places he would refute the Muʿtazilites for negating the Attributes of Allāh. He is closer to the Ashʿarites in his belief regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh, which meant he would not assert the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes and would give another meaning without basis. However, with regards to the Attribute of Istawā (Allāh rising above the 'ʿArsh'), he asserts the belief of the mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* scholars.

His *tafsīr* also mentions the reasons for revelation of the verses and he explained difficult words using poetry. He refuted the Muᶜtazilites, Qadariyah, Shiᶜites, the philosophers and extreme Sufīs. He died in the year AH671" (al-Dhahabī 2003:2/457-464) [My translation]. In the introduction to his *tafsīr*, al-Qurṭubī mentions that he has taken from the Qurʾān and the authentic narrations from the Prophetic traditions and the statements of the scholars thereafter (al-Qurṭubī AH1413:introduction). However, he has mistakenly mentioned some weak narrations.

3.1.4   Tafsīr of Ibn Kathīr (d.AH774)

Perhaps, the most widely used *tafsīr* is by ᶜImad al-Dīn b. Kathīr who lived in Baṣrah then Damascus, where he learned from the scholars of his time such as Ibn Taymiyyah. He was a scholar of the Shafiᶜī school of jurisprudence. He was born in the year AH700. He was well versed with a good memory and good understanding. He died in AH774. His *tafsīr* is among the most beneficial books of the *tafsīr bil Maʾthūr* (by way of narrations) with additional commentary. He followed al-Ṭabarī's method in his *tafsīr* in explaining the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān, the Qurʾān by the Sunnah, the Qurʾān by the statements of the Prophet's Companions and Successors. He was known to have good knowledge of history and this is shown in a separate, huge compilation called *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* (which details history from Prophet Adam and wife Eve and other Prophets and Messengers followed by the historical accounts regarding the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). He would also mention the reason for revelation of the verses concerned and Arabic definitions. His *tafsīr* was free from error regarding the explanation of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Likewise, his *tafsīr* is free from innovation (al-Muzaynī AH1429:67) [My translation]. Ibn Kathīr clarifies the belief of the Prophet's Companions and their Successors in his *tafsīr*, in most cases asserting the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. McAuliffe (2006:199) states,

"Like his esteemed teacher (Ibn Taymiyyah), Ibn Kathīr advocates a radical return to the beginnings, one that implodes the present into the past and extrudes the exegetical accomplishments and accretions of the intervening centuries. He puts far more emphasis on intra-Qurʾānic interpretation and that which can be grounded in the statements of the Prophet ﷺ and his closest Companions."

3.1.5 Tafsīr of al-Saʿdī (d.AH1376)

Tafsīr al-Saʿdī by ʿAbdulraḥmān b. Naṣr al-Saʿdī which is also called *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Rahmān fi Tafsīr kalām al-Mannān*, is a summary of previously mentioned mainstream *tafsīr* compilations. He was one of the scholars of Qasīm (central Saudi Arabia) and lived and taught in ʿUnaizah. He was eloquent and had skills in different areas of the Islamic field. He was born in the year AH1307 and grew up an orphan as his parents died when he was young. He memorised the whole Qurʾān by the age of fourteen. He continued learning Islamic Monotheism (*Tawḥīd*), *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, Islamic jurisprudence and the Arabic language at an early age. He died in the year AH1376.

He would primarily refer to the books of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim. Clearly, he asserted the mainstream Sunni belief in the Names and Attributes of Allāh. He took twenty-two years to complete the *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān and his intention was to make the explanation of the Qurʾān easily understood with clear explanations in a summarised way. (ʿAbbās 2007:589) [My translation].

Tafsīr al-Saʿdī refuted the Ashʿarite, Jahmite and Sufī creeds. It included benefits from Ibn al-Qayyim's *tafsīr* found in his books. Al-Saʿdī, in matters concerning Allāh's Names and Attributes, would follow the way of the Prophet's Companions and their Successors in asserting the apparent meaning. For example, regarding the verse:

$$\text{ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ}$$

"Then He *Istawā* (rose over) the Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)."
(Al-Hadid:4)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Al-Saᶜdī (2002:837) said, "This refers to Allāh rising (*istawā*) that suits His Majesty for

He is above all of His creation." [My translation]. Regarding the verse:

$$\text{لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ}$$

"Those who have done good, for them is the best reward (paradise) and **something
more**."
(Yūnus:26)
[My translation]

Al-Saᶜdī asserted the apparent meaning of the Attribute of 'Face' when he said, "They

will have paradise complete in its beauty and 'something more' refers to seeing His

'Face', hearing His Speech, succeeding in gaining His pleasure and delighted at being

close to Him" (ᶜAbbās 2007, 590-592).

3.1.6   Tafsīr of al-Shanqīṭī (d.AH1393) - Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān

Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān by Muḥammad Amīn al-Shanqīṭī (d.AH1393/1982) is one of the

clearest compilations written this century in clarifying the mainstream Sunni belief,

especially with regards to the Names and Attributes of Allāh. He was a teacher at the

Islamic University of Madīnah. He became a teacher at the Prophet's ﷺ mosque in

Madīnah, Saudi Arabia after travelling from Mauritania for the Hajj pilgrimage. He

grew up in Mauritania in a place called Shanqīṭ where he memorized the Qurʾān and

studied Islamic sciences under various scholars. He considered explaining the Qurʾān

by the Qurʾān as a fundamental principle and the best and most correct method to

understand the Qurʾān. Al-Shanqīṭī said that many of the scholars of *tafsīr* upheld this

position. He said, "Explaining the Qurʾān with the Qurʾān, by consensus, is the best

method for the *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān" (*Muqaddimah fi Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* p.93 cited by Āl-

Shalsh 2005:83). Al-Shanqīṭī also added that, "If there was a verse in the Qurʾān which was not clear from the Qurʾān then we complete its clarification from the Sunnah" (Āl-Shalsh 2005:136). Then he would explain the Qurʾān with the statements of the Prophet's Companions and the Successors. (Āl-Shalsh 2005:176-179).

He has also written extensively about the Names and Attributes of Allāh, clarifying the position of the mainstream Sunni *tafsīr*. He asserted the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh from the Qurʾān and Sunnah. The apparent meaning of these Attributes of Allāh, is not considered likening Allāh to the creation since the attributes are asserted without knowing how they are. Al-Shanqīṭī summarised that the righteous Predecessors (Prophet's Companions and their Successors) held three principles regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh. "The first, is negating any resemblance of His Names and Attributes to that of the creation. The second, is to assert all that Allāh and His Messenger ﷺ have asserted for Allāh. The third, is to recognise that there is no way of knowing how the Names and Attributes are. Whoever asserts the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh without likening them to creation, then he is a believer, free from negating them and resembling them to the creation" (al-Shanqīṭī AH1426b:2/272 in *Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān fi iḍāḥ al-Qurʾān bil-Qurʾān* cited in Āl-Shalsh 2005:268-2699). [My Translation]

There are other *tafsīr* compilations that portrayed the mainstream Sunni position with regards to the Muslim belief, such as *tafsīr* by Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, who quoted a lot from his teacher al-Shawkānī and in most cases clearly followed the mainstream Sunni position in asserting the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh.

3.2   Examples of Non-Mainstream Tafsīr

3.2.1   Tafsīr of al-Zamakhsharī (d.AH538)

Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd al-Zamakhsharī was born in the year AH467 in Zamakhshara, Persia and died in the year AH538 (al-Dhahabī 2003:1/429) [My translation]. *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf* of al-Zamakhsharī is full of innovations, following the way of the Muᶜtazilites in rejecting the Attributes of Allāh, and rejecting the belief that the believers will see Allāh in the Hereafter. He also said the Qurʾān was created (Ibn Taymiyyah 2001:13/354,386) [My translation].

Andrew J. Lane (2012: 47,48) from the University of Toronto said, "Zamakhsharī was a Muᶜtazilite man of letters and a grammarian from Khwārazm. The author of about fifty works, two-thirds of which have survived (many in print), his main fields of interest were poetry, grammar and lexicography, but he also composed works in theology and law, as well as works on the Qurʾān and the Tradition... *al-Kashshāf* has been described as a 'Muᶜtazilite interpretation of the Qurʾān'" (al-Dhahabī (d. AH748/1348) in 1963:4:78 (no. 8367)). Al-Dhahabī also warned readers to be wary of *al-Kashshāf* and even a century after that, the *ḥadīth* scholar of the eighth century, Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ᶜAsqalānī (d.AH846/1442) in (1995/96:6/651–3 (no. 8313)) repeated the same warning. He said that *Kashshāf* was off limits to all who wished to study it unless they were aware of its dangers (cited Andrew J. Lane 2012: 49).

 Like the Muᶜtazilites, Zamakhsharī asserted the Names of Allāh but without asserting their apparent meanings. The Muᶜtazilites claimed that they are Names without meaning. They rejected the Attributes of Allāh. (Shahrastānī AH1404:1/42) [My translation].

His *tafsīr* is still used today for its eloquence in the language but is full of the Muᶜtazilite creed. (Ibn al-Qayyim in *Iᶜlām al-Muwaqiᶜīn* (1/202) cited in al-Dhahabī 2003:1/467) [My translation].

Examples of this negation of Allāh's Attributes can be found in his interpretation of the following Attributes of Allāh such as Istawā.

الرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ

"The Most Beneficent (Allāh) *Istawā* (rose over) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)."
(Ṭaha:5)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

Zamakhsharī said (2009:651) that, "'اسْتَوَى' - istawā refers to the dominion or authority of Allāh." He continues to say that similar to this is the saying that the 'Hand' of Allāh is outstretched which means He is generous. Zamakhsharī does not assert the apparent meaning of these Attributes for Allāh but rather he mentions the esoteric meaning.

Regarding the *Kursī*, Zamakhsharī (2009: Qurʾān, al-Baqarah:255) said that there is no *Kursī*, negating it totally and later explaining it to mean knowledge or authority. He then said that some say that it is a creation in front of the *ᶜArsh* but does not elaborate on this.

Ibn Munayyir (d.AH683), a Malikī scholar, wrote a book called *al-Intisāf* where he criticised the Muᶜtazilite interpretations of Zamakhsharī regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Many times in his *tafsīr*, Zamakhsharī understood the Names and Attributes of Allāh based upon his own intellect rather than following the principles of *tafsīr* by mainstream scholars. In fact, he held that intellect preceded the Sunnah, Consensus and Analogy. He used his *tafsīr* to propagate his belief (al-Ghamdi AH1417:46).

3.2.2 Tafsīr al-Kabīr by Fakhr al-dīn Muḥammad al-Rāzī (d.606)

Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī was a leading rhetorician. The eighth century scholar (AH) al-Dhahabī said of him that, "He wrote many books and although very intellectual, he was not aware of narrations (of Prophetic texts and his Companions' statements). He doubted many matters related to the fundamentals of the religion which lead to confusion… He has a book also regarding hidden secrets in communicating with the stars, which I hope, God-willing he has repented from" (al-Dhahabī 1963:3/340) in *Mīzān al-ᶜItidāl*.

Ibn Taymiyyah (1951:53) said of al-Rāzī, regarding the explanation of the Prophetic tradition about the Prophet's ascension to the Aqsa Mosque and Heavens, "al-Rāzī followed the [philosophical allegorical] path of Ibn Sīnā (d.1037). He added to the Prophetic narrations strange names of a strange order that is not found in the books of Muslim writers, neither in the authentic traditions nor even in weak narrations from the scholars. Rather, he quoted from some devils or heretics. On top of that, he showed clear signs of ignorance with regard to the Prophetic narrations and *tafsīr*. He would refer to the story of the Prophet's ascension to the stars and claimed that the Prophets that he saw in paradise, on the night Journey, were actually stars and Adam was the moon! The Prophet Idrīs was the sun!"

"*Tafsīr* of *al-Rāzī* is considered an important reference point for the knowledge of rhetorical philosophy. It contains the Ashᶜarite creed regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh. He relied on the Muᶜtazilite, Zamakhsharī for *tafsīr*. He performed *taʾwīl* for all the Attributes of Allāh and tried to claim that the mainstream scholars of the Sunnah actually likened Allāh to a body." (cited in al-Maghrāwī 1985:47-50). This is because, to al-Rāzī, defining the apparent meaning of Allāh's attributes means actually describing them to be similar to that of the creation! However, he fell short of

understanding what mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* scholars meant since they have explained that this defining of Allāh's Attributes is without knowing how they are, therefore no resemblance is made to the creation. For example, from the Attributes of Allāh, is that He gets angry over those deserving of His anger but His anger is not like that of the creation. The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Al-Baghawī (AH1400:1/168) in *Sharḥ Sunnah,* said, "Therefore, it is obligatory to believe in them [the Attributes of Allāh] and to narrate them upon their apparent meaning whilst keeping far away from interpreting them with a distorted interpretation (*ta ʾwīl*), keeping away from resembling Allāh to His creation..."

3.2.3   Anwār al-Tanzīl by al-Bayḍāwī (d.AH685)

"*Tafsīr of al-Bayḍāwī* was written by Qaḍī Naṣrul-Dīn ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜUmar al-Bayḍāwī from Persia. He has written many books and he is among the scholars of Azerbaijan. He was a famous Imām and a judge for the area of Shīrāz. He died in the city of Tabrīz" (al-Dhahabī 2003:1/297). "Sometimes, he mentions benefits from the Arabic language regarding certain verses in his *tafsīr* and also discusses matters of Islamic Jurisprudence with regards to some verses. In the introduction to his *tafsīr,* he mentions that he has referred to some of the best of the Prophet's Companions and scholars of the Successors and those after them among the righteous Predecessors" (al-Dhahabī 2003:1/300-301). However, his *tafsīr* does not meet this condition with regards to the belief in Allāh's Names and Attributes. This is probably why those who used his *tafsīr* have not asserted the apparent meaning of Allāh's Names and Attributes. Al-Bayḍāwī (2013:9) summarised Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* and used it alongside al-Rāzī's *tafsīr* as a reference. The scholars of Azhar University, Cairo give much importance to his *tafsīr*. However, with regards to the Names and Attributes of Allāh, al-Bayḍāwī uses opnion-based *ta ʾwīl* following the methodology of the Ashᶜarites. This is, to not assert the apparent meaning

of the Attributes of Allāh, but to give them another meaning other than the apparent meaning. Regarding *istawā*, al-Bayḍāwī (2003:208) said, "The command of Allāh ascended." He does not assert the apparent meaning that Allāh ascended and rose above the Throne, which is the belief of mainstream *tafsīr* scholars.

3.2.4 Tafsīr by Muḥammad ᶜAbduh (d.AH1323/1905)

"Muḥammad ᶜAbduh was born in the year 1849. He memorised the Qurʾān by the age of fifteen while living in Egypt. He further continued his studies at al-Azhar University, Cairo where he graduated. Thereafter, he began to teach the Arabic language and history in local schools. He then became a judge and a committee member at Azhar University. Later, he was known as the Mufti of Egypt and became a member of the consultative committee in the year 1899. He died in the year 1905 in Alexandria" (ᶜAbbās 2007:13) [My translation]. Muḥammad ᶜAbduh has been described as an Egyptian reformer who sought to 'modernise' Islam and rectify it through reason. In several matters he was untraditional.

"Muḥammad ᶜAbduhʾs student, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, mentions his teacher's opinions in his book *Tafsīr al-Manār*. Muḥammad ᶜAbduh believed that the books of *tafsīr* which were already present did not fulfil the objectives because, according to him, they had swayed towards the interpreter's direction (of thought)" (ᶜAbbās 2007: 30) [My translation]. This is true regarding the non-mainstream *tafsīr* books that would use *tafsīr* as a canon to direct their own sectarian belief and methodology thus swaying from the clear explanations found in the authentic Prophetic traditions and the understanding of the Prophet's Companions. However, mainstream *tafsīr* scholars would adhere strictly to the Prophetic Sunnah and the explanation of his Companions. This is where Muḥammad ᶜAbduh did not make this distinction and therefore found

himself taking from all directions of *tafsīr*, whether mainstream or non-mainstream. In his *tafsīr*, he showed that he was influenced by the Muᶜtazilites. Rashīd Riḍā commented on Muḥammad ᶜAbduh's *tafsīr* and said in certain places that, "This is similar to what Imām Ghazālī (the Sufī Scholar) held." (ᶜAbbās 2007: 48) [My translation].

"He would use intellect to sway from the Prophetic explanations of the Qurʾān as can be seen in his *tafsīr* of *Juz ʾᶜAmma* (last 30th part of the Qurʾān). He was also influenced by other Muᶜtazilite *tafsīrs*." (ᶜAbbās 2007:60,61) [My translation]. He would also use his intellect to explain that magic is not real but, "just tricks or an invented hidden knowledge that some people know about while others are ignorant of" (ᶜAbbās 2007: 65) [My translation]. This is actually one of the influences from the Muᶜtazilite school, who held similar views to this. "When he also speaks about the story of Adam and the angels, he says that the incidents that took place are not real incidents but just an image to show something else! He also would doubt the true occurrence of miracles mentioned in the Qurʾān" (ᶜAbbās 2007:71). [My translation].

"Muḥammad ᶜAbduhʾs explanation of these matters of the unseen, is a negation of these incidents ever occurring in their real sense. For example, he claimed that the incident regarding the angels bowing down to Adam is not actually real and is referring to something else," (Rafiabadi 2007:25). This is opinon-based *taʾwīl* which has no basis in the Qurʾān, Sunnah and the consensus of the Companions. His *bāṭinī* (those who claim hidden knowledge) explanations of these events clearly show that he did not adhere to the principles of *tafsīr* of explaining the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān, the Qurʾān by the authentic Prophetic traditions and the Qurʾān by the understanding of the Companions and the Successors, in some of the matters of Muslim belief and especially

the belief in Allāh. "Muḥammad ᶜAbduh interpreted certain things mentioned in the Qurʾān such as the world of *Jinn* or the angels, to agree with modern discoveries. The *Jinn* became microbes and stories of astronomy were explained to be addressing simple people at their level of understanding," (Rafiabadi 2007:25).

3.2.5   *Fī Ẓilal al-Qurʾān by Sayyid Quṭb (d.1966)*

"Sayyid Quṭb Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn al-Shādhilī was born in the year 1907 in Upper Egypt and educated in the village Qurʾān school. He completed his secondary and university studies in Cairo. Quṭb's early writings were literary efforts but increasingly focused on Egypt's social and political problems. He travelled to America for some time and later returned to Egypt with an even stronger sense of the need for radical social renewal. Later, he used his Arabic writing skills to explain the Qurʾān based upon political and social injustice during his time." (ᶜAbbās 2007:360) [My translation]. He joined the 'Muslim Brotherhood' and became itsʾ most prominent, intellectual writer. Shortly after Gamal Abdel Nasser's ascent to power in 1952, Quṭb was imprisoned and tortured until he was hanged in 1966. In prison, he wrote his commentary called *Fī Ẓilal al-Qurʾān*. He wanted to explain the Qurʾān but with a difference, not relying on the principles of *tafsīr* but rather a more thematic commentary. However, he swayed from the mainstream Sunni belief especially with regard to Allāh's Names and Attributes. His *tafsīr* is evidently very different to the *tafsīr al-maʾthūr* (by way of narrations) such as that of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr. In his book *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī Fil-Qurʾān*, Quṭb repeatedly refers to the Qurʾān as 'magic', from the angle of showing its literary excellence. However, this would go against the mainstream Sunni understanding as the disbelievers of Makkah at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ would falsely claim that he was a magician. This was also negated by Allāh in the following verse:

إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا

"When the wrongdoers say, "You follow not but a man affected by magic"."
(Al-Isrāʾ:47)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Sayyid Quṭb's theme in his *tafsīr* was based upon political and social unrest in Egypt. This diverted him away from gaining Islamic knowledge from the source of the Qurʾān and Prophetic traditions. When he embarked upon the project of explaining the Qurʾān, his *tafsīr* lacked guidance and direction towards the mainstream Sunni belief in many aspects of the Islamic religion. This also had an effect upon his understanding of the belief in Allāh such as His Names and Attributes. "Today, the Muslims have been burdened with the books and methodology of Sayyid Quṭb. These were spread amongst and propagated such that it blinded many Muslims. They did not realise its danger nor its destructive harm." Al-Maḍkhalī R. (2000:2) [My translation].

 Growing up in Egypt in the twentieth century, Sayyid Quṭb was influenced by the current climate of the Ashʿarite, Muʿtazilite and Jahmite schools of thought. For example, Quṭb, in *al-Ẓilāl* (AH1412:4/2478) wrote, commenting upon the following verse:

قُلْ : مَنْ رَبُّ السَّماواتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

"Say: Who is Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Great Throne?"
(Al-Muʾminūn:86)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

... the following,

> "And the **Throne is symbolic allusion** to loftiness (in status, rank), and domination, control over the existence," [My translation].

This clearly shows that Sayyid Quṭb did not even consider the Throne to be real. Rather, he considered the Throne of Allāh to be just a symbolic illusion. In *al-Ẓilāl* (AH1412: 6/3872), he wrote, commenting upon the following verse:

ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ. فَعَّالٌ لِما يُرِيدُ

"Honourable owner of the Throne, Effecter of what He intends."
(Al-Buruj 85:15)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

"And these are Attributes that portray absolute domination, absolute control (al-haymanah), absolute power and absolute will."

And in *al-Ẓilāl* (AH1412:6/3680), he wrote, commenting upon following the verse:

وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمانِيَةٌ

"And there will bear the Throne of your Lord above them, that Day, eight (of them)."
(Al-Hāqah:17)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

"Just as we do not know what the *ᶜArsh* is, We also do not know how it is carried."

And in *al-Ẓilāl*, Quṭb commented on the the verse in al-Sajdah:4

ثُمَّ اسْتَوى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

"Then He *Istawā* (rose over) the Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)."
(Al-Sajdah:4)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]
Sayyid Quṭb (AH1412: 5/2807) said,

"*Istawā* upon the *ᶜArsh* is a symbolic allusion for His loftiness (in status, rank) over all the creation. As for the *ᶜArsh* itself then we have no way of saying anything about it. It is necessary to halt at its wording. But the *Istawā* is not like that. For what is apparent is that it is an allusion to loftiness (in status, rank)…" [My translation].

In the above quotes is a denial of the reality of the Throne which is confirmed by the Prophet's Companions and their Successors. It is also a denial based upon the doctrines of the Jahmites in negating Allāh being above the Throne. This is a recurring theme in *al-Ẓilāl*.

Allāh's ascension means that He is above the Heavens, above the Throne, with His Essence. This is a matter which all revealed Books and all sent Messengers have agreed upon. This opinion-based *tafsīr* appeared in history with the Jews and Christians and followed through with the appearance of the Jahmites and the Muᶜtazilites. They denied much of the Book and the Sunnah pertaining to Allāh's Names and Attributes. Quṭb fell into negating the Attributes of Allāh. In his commentary on the Qurᵓān, in *al-Ẓilāl,* he made *taᵓwīl* (opinion-based explanation) of the ᶜ*Arsh* and the *Kursī* (foot-stool). He rejected Allāh being above the Throne and hence rejected the Attribute '*Istawā*'. Sayyid Quṭb's *tafsīr* has been explained, published and distributed all over the world. It has reached a staggering sixteen editions over fifty or so years.

3.2.6 Tafsīr by Brelvī (d.1921)

"Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī was born in the year 1856 in the north of India. In 1910, his Urdu *tafsīr* of the Qurᵓān was published. In his writings on Islam, he exaggerated the permissible status of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ by claiming that he ﷺ knew the unseen and would distort the verses of the Qurᵓān to reflect this. He followed through the Sufī belief[83]. He died in the year 1921."[84] "He took allegiance to the Qadrī order of the Sufī

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[83] Ibn al-Jawzī said in *Talbīs Iblīs*, "Sufism is a way whose beginning was complete avoidance of worldly affairs, then those who attached themselves to it became lax in allowng singing and dancing." Cited al-Maḍkhalī M. (1995: 16)].
[84] Kidwai (2007: 30-31) - *Bibliography of the Translation of the meanings of the Glorious Qurᵓān into English* (1649–2002). Translated into English by Dr. Bleyhesh al-ᶜAmri Translation. Madīnah, Centre King Fahd Printing Complex.

sect in the year 1876," (Auolakh 1994:1013). His *tafsīr* also includes the *ta᾽wīl* of Allāh's Attributes following the Ash^carite path. This is portrayed in the Brelvī translation by Auolakh (1994). He wrote many books in Arabic and Urdu.

3.2.7 Tafsīr by Al-Suyūṭī (d.AH911)

"Abu Faḍl Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī was born in Cairo in the year AH849 and lived as an orphan. He memorised the whole Qur᾽ān before the age of eight. He studied under one hundred and fifty scholars in *tafsīr*, *hadīth*, Islamic jurisprudence and the Arabic language. He began writing books when he was only seventeen years old and his books numbered over six hundred titles[85] in different areas of Islamic science whereby about three hundred and thirty one are in print. He died in Cairo in the year AH911. His belief regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh was that of the Ash^carite sect, that is to not assert the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Al-Suyūṭī, himself, perfomed *ta᾽wīl* of about twenty attributes of Allāh. That is, distorting the apparent meaning for another meaning that is allegorical" (al-Suyūṭī: AH1426:1/11-24). An example of this is when al-Suyūṭī explains the Attribute of Allāh, 'Hand' to mean 'power' (al-Suyūṭī: AH1426:4/1364).

Al-Suyūṭī has two different *tafsīr;* one of them is *al-Jalālayn,* of which half is his (From Chapter al-Kahf to al-Nās) and the first half is by his teacher Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī. In *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, a lot of *ta᾽wīl* without proof from the Qur᾽ān and Prophetic traditions is used also. Al-Suyūṭī's other *tafsīr* is *al-Durr al-Manthūr,* which is mainly based upon the narrations of the Predecessors. However, he also has a book on the

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[85] Al-Mubarakfurī S., et al. mentioned that he authored five hundred books. Cited in al-Suyūṭī (2002:8)

science of Qurʾān called *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* where there is more of his opinion-based *taʾwīl. "*Al-Suyūṭī memorised two hundred thousand Prophetic narrations and he said had he came across more then he would have memorised them as well. His mother gave birth to him in the Library of their house amongst books and therefore al-Suyūṭī was known as 'Ibn al-Kutub' (the son of books). (Cited by al-Mubarakfurī S., et al. in al-Suyūṭī 2002:8)

Shiʿite tafsīr books:

3.2.8   Tafsīr al-Qummī

"*Tafsīr al-Qummī* by Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d.AH307/919) which was used by the Shiʿite sect has many distorted explanations of verses. The Shiʿites are also referred to as *Rāfiḍah* which means 'rejecters' since they rejected the leadership of the two Caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar ﷺ. They claimed that the leadership after the death of the Prophet ﷺ should have be given to his cousin, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ. They then said that all the leaders should come from the lineage of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ. They consider the Qurʾān to be distorted and they will not refer to the well known Prophetic texts (except by way of the Prophet's family). They considered the Companions of the Prophet to have disbelieved after his ﷺ death except for his family (*Ahlul Bayt*)" (Shahrastāni AH1404:1/50) [My translation].

"The Shiʿites did not find in the Qurʾān all that would help them spread their interpretations. Hence, they started to claim that the Qurʾān's main focus is the esoteric underlying meaning (*al-maʿnā al-bāṭin*) so that the people could rely on their Imāms' distorted interpretations of these deep meanings" (Al-Dhahabī 2003:2/28) [My

translation]. An example of this manipulation of the Qurʾānic text to suit their belief can be found in the explanation of the Opening Sūrat of the Qurʾān. Al-Qummī (1968:1/28-29) explains the following verse:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

"Show us the straight way."

As:

"The path to know the Imām" and then al-Qummī quotes from Jaᶜfar al- Ṣādiq that it refers to "knowing the leader of the believers" and that specifically being ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. In another verse (Zukhruf: 4), according to them, ᶜAlī ﷺ is referred to as the leader of the believers:

وَإِنَّهُ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيٌّ حَكِيمٌ

"And indeed it is, in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and full of wisdom."

They say that 'عَلِيٌّ ' does not mean exalted referring to the Book but refers to ᶜAlī b.

Abī Ṭālib ﷺ. They changed the meaning of the verse to:

> "And indeed it is, in the Mother of the Book with Us,
> **Indeed it is ᶜAlī**, full of wisdom."
> (Zukhruf:4)!

Analysing the context of the verse in Zukhruf:4 with the previous verses, it is clear the reference is to the Qurʾān and not ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ:

حم. وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ. إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآناً عَرَبِيّاً لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ. وَإِنَّهُ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيٌّ حَكِيمٌ
"HaMīm. By the clear Book, Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qurʾān that you might understand. And indeed it is, in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and full of wisdom."
(Zukhruf:1-4)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Likewise, "the straight path of those blessed and the Grace of Allāh is upon" is not restricted to ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ. Rather, it refers to the path of all the **Prophets, the truthful ones**, **those who bear witness to the truth and the righteous** as in the verse below:

وَمَن يُطِعِ اللهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

"Whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger will be in the company of those **whom the
Grace of Allāh is upon**, **amongst the Prophets**, **the truthful ones**,
the martyrs and the righteous. What a good companionship that is."
(Al-Nisāʾ: 69).
[My translation]

The above verse is a clear explanation of the Opening Sūrat of the Qurʾān whereby those whom Allāh has blessed and favoured refers to four categories of people. They are the ones Allāh has blessed and they are upon these levels: The first of them are the Prophets and these include the Messengers because a Messenger is also a Prophet.

For example, the Messenger is also described as a Prophet,

وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

"But he is the Messenger of Allāh and **the last (end) of the Prophets**."
(Al-Aḥzab: 40)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Messengers are the highest level of the Prophets. The Prophets of firm resolve (*Ulul ᶜAzm*) are the highest level of the Messengers,[86]whereby Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was the last of them according to the Qurʾān. The next category refers to the *Ṣiddīqūn*, the truthful ones. They are the ones who have reached the highest level of truthfulness, trusting that which Allāh has sent down to His Messenger ﷺ and remaining upright

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[86] The Prophets of firm resolve are Nūḥ (Noah), Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Mūsā (Moses), ᶜĪsā (Jesus) and Muḥammad peace be upon them all.

upon that. At the head of them is the first Caliph and leader of the Muslims, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ. The Prophet's Companions used to say at the time of the Messenger ﷺ that the best of them was Abū Bakr ﷺ and then ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ. Even ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ used to openly proclaim this on the pulpit in *Kūfah*[87] after he became the *khalīfah* (successor), "The best of this *Ummah* is Abū Bakr ﷺ then ᶜUmar ﷺ."[88]

Shiᶜites claim that Abū Bakr ﷺ is not a successor (Caliph) and that he is an oppressor to ᶜAlī ﷺ since, to them, ᶜAlī ﷺ is the first Caliph. It is said, "Why did ᶜAlī ﷺ not declare that he was oppressed?" Rather, he acknowledged openly that Abū Bakr ﷺ was the best of this nation. This acknowledgement shows the superiority of Abū Bakr ﷺ and that he had the right to be the successor after the death of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Therefore, the truthful ones are the second blessed people mentioned in this verse. The third description of those whom Allāh blessed are the *Shuhadāʾ*. They are those who bear witness to the truth, are martyrs and are not restricted to one person such as ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ as the Shiᶜites believe. The fourth description of the blessed ones are the righteous (mentioned in the verse). These include the righteous Muslims and believers. Therefore, in the Opening Sūrat, one is asking Allāh to guide them to the straight path, the path of those whom Allāh has blessed from amongst the Prophets, the truthful ones, those who bear witness, the martyrs and the righteous ones. All of these together are upon one way. That is, they all have knowledge of the truth and they act according to it (Al-ᶜUthaymīn 2002). Therefore, 'الصِّـرَاطَ الْمُسْـتَقِيمَ' (the straight path), refers to those

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[87] A place in Iraq.
[88] ᶜAlī b. Abi Ṭālib ﷺ said: "The best of this nation after its' Prophet is Abū Bakr ﷺ, then after Abū Bakr ﷺ is ᶜUmar ﷺ…" see *Kitāb al-Sunnah* (no. 1201 by Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Abī ᶜĀsim authenticated by al-Albānī (1993:556).

Allāh has blessed and is not restricted to only ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ or the family of the Prophet ﷺ.

Furthermore, regarding the verse,

ويحمل عرش ربك فوقهم يومئذ ثمانية

"And there will bear the Throne of your Lord above them, that Day, eight (of them)."
(Al-Ḥāqah:17)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

This verse actually refers to the eight angels carrying the ʿ*Arsh* (Throne) of Allāh as the Prophet ﷺ described in an authentic narration. However, al-Qummī (1968:2/384) says that the eight carrying the 'ʿ*Arsh*' are not actually angels but rather, "four from the early ones and four from the later ones. As for the four early ones, they are the Prophets Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Musā, ʿIsā and as for the later ones, they are Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (grandchildren of the Prophet ﷺ)." Based upon no Prophetic narrations, al-Qummī puts forward his own interpretation of the Qurʾān.

As regards to the belief in Allāh's Names and Attributes, it is also important to note that "the Shiʿite *tafsīr* has been influenced by the Muʿtazilite school in not asserting the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Many of the Shiʿite scholars studied under the Muʿtazilite scholars" (Al-Dhahabī 2003:2/25) [My translation]. Al-Qummī in his *tafsīr* does not assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh. For example, al-Qummī (1968:2/272), with regards to the verse al-Shūrā:7, states that the meaning of *istawā* over the ʿ*Arsh* is that Allāh conquers the heavens and angels. Here al-Qummī does not define *istawā* to mean that Allāh rose above the Throne which is the apparent meaning but gave it an esoteric underlying meaning similar to the Muʿtazilites.

3.2.9   Tafsīr by al-ᶜAyyāshī (d AH320)

Muḥammad b. Masᶜūd b. Muḥammad al-ᶜAyyāshī lived in the area of Samarqand and Bukhāra in the third century (AH). He died in the year AH320. His *tafsīr*, like that of al-Qummī, is full of the esoteric underlying meaning which he uses to lead the reader to believe that it is only the family of the Prophet ﷺ that is praised and that only they should be referred to when explaining the Qurʾān. By this, he ignores many authentic Prophetic traditions to explain the Qurʾān. Al-ᶜAyyāshī's *tafsīr* is another Shiᶜite *tafsīr* pushing forward the Shiᶜite agenda. As early as the Opening Sūrat of the Qurʾān, al-ᶜAyyāshī puts forward his own interpretation to carry forward the Shiᶜite creed. For example, regarding the following verse:

<div dir="rtl">الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ</div>

"the straight path."
[My translation]

Al-ᶜAyyāshī says it means, "the leader of the believers", referring to the fourth Caliph ᶜAlī ﷺ similar to what al-Qummī said above. The hatred towards the other Companions that preceded ᶜAlī ﷺ is evident in his *tafsīr* as in the explanation of the following verse:

<div dir="rtl">وَآمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ</div>

"And believe in what I have sent down confirming that which is (already) with you,
and **be not the first to disbelieve in it (The Qurʾān).**"
(Al-Baqarah:41)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Al-ᶜAyyāshī says it means, "Abū Bakr ﷺ and ᶜUmar ﷺ and whoever follows them and their religion." However, the context of the verse refers to the Children of Israel. Allāh orders them to believe in the Qurʾān, bearing witness to the previous scriptures such as the *Taurah* which was revealed to Moses." Al-ᶜAyyāshī (1:42) cited in Maḍkhalī R. (2007:25) [My translation].

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

"And (mention, O Muhammad), when Abraham was tried by His Lord with words
(i.e. commands) and he fulfilled them. (Allāh) said, "**Indeed, I will make you a
leader for the people.**" (Abraham) said, "**And of my descendants?**" (Allāh) said,
"**My covenant does not include the wrongdoers.**""
(Al-Baqarah:124)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Al-ᶜAyyāshī said, "The first part (of the verse) refers to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, ᶜAlī ؑ

and the Imāms from the children of ᶜAlī ؑ. As for the last part of the verse, then it

refers to Abū Bakr, ᶜUmar and ᶜUthmān ؓ being oppressors." Al-ᶜAyyāshī (1:57) cited

in Maḍkhalī R. (2007:57) [My translation]. This is another political and theological

manipulation of the Qurʾān by al-ᶜAyyāshī. He tries to use the Qurʾān to give victory

to his own Shiᶜite Imāms when the verse actually refers to Ibrāhīm ﷺ being an Imām

along with his progeny.   The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr (1999:78) said,

"the verse actually refers to Ibrāhīm being an example and an Imām for those after

him."

Al-ᶜAyyāshī's *tafsīr* is quoted many times by the translator Mir Ali in his translation of

the meaning of the Qurʾān. This is in order to show that ᶜAlī b. Abī Tālib ؑ was the

first Successor to the Prophet ﷺ. For example,

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ
أَن يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنزٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ إِنَّمَا أَنتَ نَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ

"Then would you possibly leave [out] some of what is revealed to you, or is your
breast constrained by it because they say, "Why has there not been sent down to him a
treasure or come with him an angel?" But you are only a warner. And Allāh is
Disposer of all things."
(Hud:12)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Mir Ali (1988:733), commenting on the above verse, says "al-ᶜAyyāshī in his

commentary said on the authority of Zayd b. Arqam, that the Messenger Angel Gabriel

arrived on the eve of Arafat (the day of the last sermon signifying the end of the Messenger's leadership and life) to convey the message of God's appointing ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ as the successor to the Holy Prophet." This story regarding this verse is without a reference and authentic chain. Rather, it goes against the context of the verse which refers to the polytheist mocking the Messenger ﷺ and that the Messenger was given words of assurance to be patient and encouragement to carry on with his call as Ibn Kathīr (1999:502) mentioned, "indeed you (O Messenger ﷺ) are a warner and you have a similar example (to be patient) from your brothers amongst the Messengers (before you). They (too) were belied and harmed and they were patient until the victory of Allāh came."

Al-ᶜAyyāshī's *tafsīr* follows the path of the Muᶜtazilites when commenting on the Attributes of Allāh. Al-Shahrastānī elaborates further that, "A strict form of anthropomorphism had existed amongst the Jews; but in a section of them…some of the Shiᶜites also fell into one of the two extremes: one was to make some of the Imāms like God, the other to make God like a man. When the Muᶜtazilites and scholastic theologians arose, some of the Shiᶜites abandoned their extreme views and adopted Muᶜtazilism;" (Kazi, Flynn 1984: 78).

3.2.10 Tafsīr by Ayatollāh Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdī (1973)

Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdī's *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān is quoted in the footnotes in Mir Ali's translation of the Qurʾān. His notes are extensive and many times heavily sectarian towards the Shiᶜite sect. He always refers to the *Ahlul-Bayt* (the family of the Prophet ﷺ) and their Successors and sees them as having the sole right to comment on the Qurʾān. He refers to the *Ahlul-Bayt* and their Successors as the *maᶜṣūmīn* (infallible) or free from error.

Mir Ali (1988:24) quotes Yazdī as saying, "Such ones of the ideal purity and innocence are called the *maᶜṣūmīn* who are only fourteen in number in Islam, viz, the Holy Prophet and his divinely chosen Successors called the Twelve Imāms (or the holy guides) and Lady Fatema, the holy daughter of the Prophet ﷺ." This claim of Mirza Pooya that they are all infallible is contrary to the teaching of Islam. As for the Prophet ﷺ, then no doubt there are clear verses illustrating that he does not speak of his own accord in matters of religion and therefore free from error in matters of the religion, as Allāh said,

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ وَحْيٌ يُوحَى

"Nor does he speak of (his own) inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed."
(Al-Najm:3/4)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Others besides the Prophets and Messengers have not been given this status since they are followers of the Prophets and not among those directly receiving revelation. To claim others are infallible goes against the Muslim belief as the Prophet ﷺ said, "All of

the children of Adam are prone to error and the best of them are those who turn to repentance." [89]

The *Ahlul-Bayt* have been given a high status in Islam and they include the wives of the Prophet ﷺ and his children and all Muslims from the lineage of ᶜAbdulMuṭṭalib, his grandfather (Al-ᶜAbbad A. 2006:85). The Shiᶜites do not include the wives of the Prophet ﷺ as being from his household. They have different views to the mainstream Sunnis regarding the family of the Prophet (*Ahlul-Bayt*). Among their views found in the book *al-Kāfī* (AH1381:1/260) of Kulaynī (d.AH329);

"Chapter: The Imāms have the knowledge of what occurred and what will occur and nothing will be hidden from them" (cited in al-ᶜAbbad A. 2006:126). [My translation].

"Chapter: Allāh did not only teach the Prophet ﷺ knowledge but He also ordered him to teach the leader of the believers, ᶜAlī b. Abī Talib ﷺ. He was a partner with him in knowledge" (Kulaynī in *al-Kāfī* AH1381:1/263 cited in al-ᶜAbbad A. 2006:126). [My translation].

More recently, al-Khumaynī said in his book, *al-Ḥukūmah al-Islamiyyah* (52), "Indeed among the necessary aspects of our methodology is that our Imāms' status will not be reached by close angels, nor a Messenger sent" (cited in al-ᶜAbbad A. 2006:126).

In Yazdī's *tafsīr*, there is clear reliance on the interpretation of the Qurᵓān by the twelve Imāms. He (24) quotes narrations such as, "I leave behind me two things of great importance: the Book of God and my *Ahlul-Bayt*. Should you keep yourselves attached

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[89] *Saḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah* (AH1417) no.4251, *Saḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417) no.2499.

to these two, never will you go astray. Verily, never will the Two be separated from each other and they both shall meet me at the spring in paradise."

Yazdī does not reference it (give it a chain of narration) but it is authentically reported in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (3788). However, in other Prophetic narrations and in the Qurᵓān, Muslims are commanded to follow the Prophet's Companions in general and are not restricted only to the family of the Prophet ﷺ. The problem of not referencing Prophetic sayings is also common in the *tafsīr* of Yazdī.

Mir Ali quotes (1988:36) Yazdī as clarifying further who he means by the twelve Imāms, "It is unanimously agreed and universally acknowledged by all schools in Islam that the Holy Prophet did not identify anyone with himself and himself with anyone, save ᶜAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and the other nine Imāms of his house.

Yazdī's statement is farfetched as there is no authentic statement from the Qurᵓān or the Prophetic text indicating twelve Imāms. Rather, there are clear texts indicating the Companions of the Prophets as guides and specifically the rightly-guided Caliphs after him. This can be seen in the following Prophetic text,

"Whoever lives amongst you after me, will see many differences so upon you is to follow my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided Caliphs after me. Stick to it and bite onto it with your molar teeth. Be warned of the newly invented matters for verily every newly invented matter is an innovation and every innovation is misguidance."[90] In this Prophetic tradition, not only is the fourth Caliph ᶜAlī ﷺ mentioned, but the rest of the four Caliphs ﷺ are also mentioned and they are not on the list of the twelve

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[90] *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (1988) no. 4607.

Imāms of the Shiᶜites. Not one is singled out as Yazdī suggests. However, according to mainstream *tafsīr*, when the term rightly-guided Caliphs is used generally, it refers to the four Caliphs who are the best of this Islamic nation after the Messenger ﷺ. They are Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān and ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭalib ﷺ. There are other rightly guided Caliphs such as Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī ﷺ who only ruled for a few months.

The *Ahlul-Bayt* (family of the Prophet ﷺ) were not the only guides but the Prophet's Companions in general are guides for the Muslims. Even the Prophet's Companion, Muᶜāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān has been supplicated for to be a guide for the people even though the Shiᶜites criticize him severely: The Prophet ﷺ supplicated for Muᶜāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān, "O Allāh make him a guide who is guided, guide him and guide by him."[91]

Mir Ali quotes (1988:25) Yazdī again, citing a *hadīth* without a reference, "The likeness of my *Ahlul-Bayt* is like the Ark of Noah, whoever boarded it saved himself and whoever turned against it, was drowned and lost."

Mir Ali criticises the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ in his saying (1988:3), "It must be known that all *ṣaḥābas* (Companions) were not equal in their faith in God and the faithfulness to the holy Prophet. Abū Jehl is also called a *ṣaḥib-e-Rasūl* and the Muslim world knows what kind of man he was and Salmān-e-Fārsī was also a *ṣaḥābī*. Can these two ever be compared as equals, by anyone with common sense amongst us?" In reply

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[91] See *Musnad Imām Aḥmad* (2008:4/216), *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417) no.3842, and *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (1968:7/418) of Ibn Saᶜd. Authenticated by al-Albānī in his *al-Saḥīḥah* (1988) no. 1969.

to this, Ibn Ḥajar (1995:1/8) states, "A Companion is one who met the Prophet, believed in him and died upon faith." This is not restricted to the Prophet's family.

Abū Jahl (Mir Ali writes it as Jehl) was not even a Believer, so how can he be called the Companion of the Messenger ﷺ? Also, Allāh in the Qurʾān commanded Muslims to supplicate for those who have preceded them in faith, especially the Companions without restriction:

وَالَّذِينَ جَآءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالإِيمَانِ وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلاًّ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ رَبَّنَآ إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

"Those who came after them say: Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts (any) resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed you are kind and Merciful."
(Al-Hashr:10)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The scholar of *tafsīr*, al-Shawkānī in (2005:5/268) said regarding the explanation (*tafsīr*) of the above verse, "Those who came after them, meaning after the Migrants (*Muhājirīn*) and the Helpers (*Anṣār*). They are those who follow them correctly until the Day of Judgement."

Then al-Shawkānī in (2005:5/268) said,
"Allāh ordered them that after seeking forgiveness for the *Muhajirīn* (Migrants from Makkah to Madinah) and the *Anṣār* (the Helpers of Madinah), that they ask Allāh to remove all malice from their hearts towards the believers in general. The Prophet's Companions are included in this first and foremost, since they are the most honorable of the believers and since the context refers to them. Whoever does not seek forgiveness for the Prophet's Companions in general and asks Allāh to be pleased with them, then he has opposed what Allāh has ordered in this verse...."

However, Mir Ali quotes (1988:36) Yazdī as saying, "Besides there can never be any comparison between the Holy *Ahlul-Bayt*, the Purified ones by God Himself, and the

(rest of the) Prophet's Companions, all of whom were once sinners before embracing Islam. Some of them were hidden enemies and some opportunists who deserted the Holy Prophet and left the Muslim ranks and took to their heels in the most trying and crucial phases of the battles for the faith. Hence, let not the title ṣaḥābī mislead anyone, to mean that whatever he says to be necessarily true or correct."

This is in direct contradiction to the Qurʾān, the Sunnah and consensus of the Companions. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, "The stars are a guidance in the sky so when the stars disappear then what will befall it will happen. I am a guide to my Companions so when I go then what will befall my Companions will happen. The Companions are a guide for my Ummah and when they go then what will befall it will happen."[92] [My Translation].

The scholar of ḥadīth, Imām Aḥmad (Ibn Ḥanbal) in his *Uṣūl al-Sunnah* (2007:68) said, "Whoever belittles any of the Companions of Allāh's Messenger ﷺ or hates any action stemming from them or mentions their faults, then he is an innovator, until he sends mercy on all of them and his heart towards them is tranquil (without any malice)." [My Translation].

Khaṭṭīb al-Baghdādī (d.AH463) quoted in his book *al-Kifāyah* (AH1432:176), the *ḥadīth* scholar Abū Zurᶜa al-Rāzī (d.AH264) as saying: "If you see a man defaming any of the Companions of Allāh's Messenger ﷺ then know that he is a heretic. That is because we believe the Messenger ﷺ and the Qurʾān as being true. It is the Prophet's Companions who have conveyed this Qurʾān and the Prophetic guidance to us. Yet they

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[92] Related in *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no. 2531.

(the heretics) seek to criticise our witnesses (to the revelation) so as to nullify the Book and the Sunnah. They are more deserving to be refuted and they are the heretics." [My translation].

Abū ʿUthmān al-Sābūnī in his book *ʿAqīdah al-Salaf wa Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth* (1994:55) said, "And their position is that people should withhold their tongues regarding what occurred between the Companions of Allāh's Messenger ﷺ and to purify the tongues from what is considered finding fault or deficiencies in them. They hold the position of having mercy and loving all of them."[93]

Ibn Ḥajar in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (2000:4/459) mentioned the sayings of Abūl-Muẓẓaffar Ibn Samʿānī, "Exposing the faults of the Prophet's Companions is a sign of betrayal from the one who does it and it is an innovation and misguidance."[94]

Ibn Taymiyyah (2005:235) said in *al-ʿAqīdah al-Wasīṭiyyah*, "From the foundation of *Ahlu-Sunnah wal Jamāʿah (*the scholars and people of Sunnah*)* is the purity of their hearts and tongues for the Companions of Allāh's Messenger ﷺ as Allāh described when He said:

وَالّذِينَ جَآءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالإِيمَانِ وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلاّ لَّلّذِينَ آمَنُواْ رَبّنَآ إِنّكَ رَءُوفٌ رّحِيم

"Those who came after them say: Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts (any) resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed you are kind and Merciful."
(Al-Hashr:10)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

Likewise, in the obedience to the Prophet ﷺ in his saying,

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[93] See *al-Saḥīḥah* (1972) no.34.
[94] *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (4/459) 64-Book of Buying and Selling *ḥadīth* no.2150.

"Do not revile my Companions, for by the One in Whose 'Hands is my soul, if any one of you gave the size of Mount Uḥud in gold as charity, he would not even reach a handful of their charity nor half of that."[95]

Regarding the following verse:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ رَّضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُواْ عَنْهُ

"And the first to embrace Islam from the Emigrants (*Muhājirūn*) and the Helpers (*Anṣār*) and those that follow them upon righteousness, Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him."
(Al-Tawbah:100)
[My Translation]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr (1999:468), said,
> "Allāh, the exalted, informed us that He is pleased with the first to embrace Islam among the Emigrants, the Helpers and those who follow them correctly. So accursed be those who hate them or revile all or some of them, especially the best of the Companions after the Messenger ﷺ. The best and most superior of them, I mean the great truthful one, the great Caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ, for the forsaken amongst the Rawāfidh (Shiʿites) have enmity towards the best of the Prophet's Companions and they hate and revile them, we seek refuge in Allāh from this. This shows that their intellect is upturned and their hearts are reversed. Where do these people stand in terms of the belief in the Qurʾān if they revile those whom Allāh is pleased with?"

The *Tafsīr* by Pooya Yazdī also contains claims that the Shiʿite Imams know the hidden meanings of various truncated letters found at the beginning of some chapters of the Qurʾān. Mir Ali quotes (1988:32) Yazdī as saying, "Alif Lam Mim (A.L.M.) the letter symbols- the meaning of which is only known to God, the Holy Prophet and his divinely chosen deputies and Successors, the Holy Imāms…There are traditions from the Holy Imāms which attach a code of significance to these letters as symbols and keys to the latent knowledge of the higher truth accommodated in Qurʾānic verses. They are the esoteric significance as keynotes to the higher secrets reserved for higher minds."

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[95] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.3673, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.2541, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, (1988) no.4658, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417) no.2541.

This claim to knowing the hidden meaning of these particular letters at the beginning of some chapters in the Qurʾān is without proof. Mainstream scholars of *tafsīr* such as Ibn Kathīr (1999:2) state that these letters at the beginning of some chapters of the Qurʾān are not known to anyone except Allāh.

In conclusion, the non-mainstream books of *tafsīr* seek to understand the Qurʾān using their own interpretations to push forward their belief. Each sectarian *tafsīr* carries forward its biased agenda. The translator of the Qurʾān should be aware of the differences found in the mainstream and non-mainstream books of *tafsīr* in order to be able to translate the meaning of the Qurʾān based upon its correct context. In the next two chapters, the translations of verses connected to the belief in Allāh and His Prophet ﷺ will be examined in light of the books of *tafsīr*.

<u>Chapter Four - Translating the verses concerning the belief in Allāh</u>

This chapter aims to look at the practical examples in translating verses concerning the belief in Allāh, taking into consideration the impact *tafsīr* has on their translation. Numerous examples are given to show how verses are understood according to the different translations that use, as a basis, either mainstream or non-mainstream *tafsīr* or their own interpretation. I begin by looking at the article of faith which every Muslim must utter and is the foundation of their belief. Then, I examine how some of the Names and Attributes of Allāh are translated.

4.1   Translating the meaning of the first article of faith

<div align="center">

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

"And know that none has the right to be **worshipped** except Allāh."
(Muḥammad:19)
[My translation]

</div>

The article of faith 'none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh (لا إله إلا الله)' is the statement that every person must utter to accept Islam. It is the first pillar in Islam that necessitates sincerity in worship. This, according to the Qurʾān, is the sole reason why the *Jinn*[96] and Mankind were created, i.e. to worship Him without associating partners with Him.

<div align="center">

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I did not create the Jinn and Mankind except to **worship** Me."
(Dhariyāt:56)
[My translation]

</div>

The Messengers were sent to call the people to this fundamental belief, that none should be worshipped with Allāh as partners or intermediaries.

<div align="center">

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

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[96] Jinn are created beings that cannot be seen and they too are commanded to worship Allāh.

"And We did not send any Messenger before you (O Muḥammad SAW) but We inspired him (saying): none has the right to be **worshipped** but I (Allāh), so worship Me (Alone and none else)."
(Al-Anbiyāʾ:25)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, "Whoever says the article of faith – None has the right to be worshipped except Allāh (Lā ilāha Illā Allāh) and disbelieves in those that are worshipped besides Allāh then their wealth and self become sacred and their accountability is with Allāh."[97] There is another authentic Prophetic tradition that explains the above *ḥadīth* further, "Whoever singles Allāh out in worship and disbelieves in those that are worshipped besides Allāh, his wealth and self become sacred and his accountability is with Allāh."[98] The narration above indicates that the meaning of the article of faith refers to worshipping Allāh alone.

According to Muslims, the article of faith is the key to enter Paradise and is salvation from the Hell-Fire. Ibn al-Qayyim (AH1429:456) said, "The article of faith is a statement upon which the heavens and earth were established and it is upon which the creation originated. The article of faith that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh is the foundation of this path…saying it will save the person from the punishment of the grave. No one will enter paradise except with it. It is the rope which if one does not have, then they will not be able to reach Allāh. It is the statement of Islam and depending on the people's belief, they will be either categorized as people of happiness or people of sadness…" If this is the status of the article of faith, then every Muslim must know its meaning as Allāh said:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلا اللَّه

"And know that none has the right to be **worshipped** except Allāh."
(Muḥammad:19)

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[97] *Saḥīḥ Muslim,* Book of Faith (2005:1/32) no.23.
[98] Ibid. and in *Musnad Imām Aḥmad* (2008:25/212) no.15875.

Knowing the meaning of the article of faith is the most important of matters for a Muslim. It is one of the seven conditions of the article of faith which are required for it to be complete[99]. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever dies and he knows that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh will enter paradise."[100]

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ explained the article of faith to mean worshipping Allāh alone and to not associate partners with Allāh. The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ informed his Companion Muʿādh b. Jabal ﷺ, when he sent him to the land of Yemen, 'You are going to some of the People of the Book[101]. Call them to bear witness **that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh (Lā ilāha Illā Allāh)**, and that I am the Messenger of Allāh (wa Annī Rasūlullāh)…"[102]

In another wording, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ explains the narration above,

"You are going to a people from the People of the Book. Let the first thing that you call them to be **the worship of Allāh alone**…"[103]

Therefore, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ himself explained the meaning of the article of faith '**Lā ilāha Illā Allāh'** that worship should be for Allāh alone and this should be conveyed in the translation of the Qurʾān. The following verse shows that the article of faith was said by Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ and that it means worship belongs to Allāh alone:

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِي عَقِبِهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

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[99] Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥakamī (2007: 25) *Majmūʿ Rasāʾil Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥakamī*. Dār Ibn Khaldūn, Alexandria. The seven conditions mentioned are: Knowledge, Certainty, Acceptance, Compliance, Truthfulness, Sincerity and Love.

[100] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:1/34) no.43. Book of Faith, Chapter: Whoever meets Allāh with true faith without doubt will enter paradise.

[101] The People of the Book are the Jews and the Christians.

[102] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.4347,1496. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (2005) no. 27,130.* Book of calling to the bearing of witness to the article of faith.

[103] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Tawḥīd no.8372.

"And he (Ibrāhīm) made the statement (i.e. Lā ilāha Illa Allāh (none has the right to be **worshipped** but Allāh Alone)) lasting among his offspring (True Monotheism), that they may turn back (i.e. to repent to Allāh or receive admonition)."
(Zukhruf:28)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Companion and cousin of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, Ibn ᶜAbbās ؓ and his Successors Mujāhid and Qatāda explained the statement made by Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ in the above verse that it refers to the article of faith 'Lā ilāha Illā Allāh.'[104] Some scholars have mentioned that there is consensus upon this[105]. The relevance of this context shows that worship belongs to Allāh alone and this should be portrayed in the translation of the article of faith.

To further show the context of the meaning of the article of faith, a prophetic tradition gives the story of the Byzantine emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, Hercules. While he was addressing one of the polytheists at the time (Abū Sufyān ؓ, who later became a Muslim) concerning the coming of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and what his main call was, Hercules said, "What does he order you to do?' I (Abū Sufyān ؓ) said, '**He tells us to worship Allāh and Allāh alone and not to worship anything along with Him, and to renounce all that our ancestors had said**. He orders us to pray, to speak the truth, to be chaste and to keep good relations with our kith and kin...'[106] [My Translation]

This clearly shows that even the Non-Muslims at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ knew the meaning of the article of faith and the context was to worship Allāh alone

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[104] Al-Suyūṭī (2000:13/199,200) in *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*.

[105] Qāsim (AH1417:53) in *Hashiyat Thalathat al-Uṣūl*.

[106] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.6.

without any partners. Many translators of the Qur'ān did not translate the article of faith according to this context bearing in mind the foundation and context of Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ call. This context, however, is found mainly in mainstream *tafsīr*. Many translators, on the other hand, translate the article of faith literally as, "There is no God but Allāh," without mentioning the aspect of worship being for Him alone.

The mainstream Sunni meaning of this article of faith is portrayed by the scholars of *tafsīr* such as al-Ṭabarī, regarding the following verse:

<div dir="rtl">

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَا اللَّهُ
</div>

"And know that none has the right to be **worshipped** except Allāh."
(Muḥammad:19)
[My translation]

Al-Ṭabarī (2001:21/208) said, "Know, O Muḥammad, no other worship is befitting or no one is deserving of this worship except Allāh, the One who is the Creator of creation, the Owner of everything." Here al-Ṭabarī mentioned the importance of worship in the meaning of lā ilāh illa Allāh.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (d.AH1307) said in (1965:9/18), regarding the verse:

<div dir="rtl">

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَا اللَّهُ
</div>

"And know that none has the right to be **worshipped** except Allāh."
(Muḥammad:19)
[My translation]

"This means, that if you come to know that the affairs of good are *Tawḥīd* (Monotheism) and obedience, and the affairs of evil are *Shirk* (to associate partners with Allāh) and disobedience then therefore know that none has the right to be worshipped but Him." [My translation]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, ᶜAbdulraḥmān al-Saᶜdī (2002:928) said, "This knowledge that Allāh commanded us with is the knowledge of affirming and worshipping of Allāh alone. It is obligatory upon every Muslim and no one is excused whoever they may be. Rather, each person has a need for it. The way to know that none has the right to be worshpped but Him is as follows: firstly, to ponder upon the Names and Attributes of Allāh and His actions which prove His Perfection. Secondly, to have knowledge that Allāh is the sole Creator and Planner which entails that He alone deserves to be worshipped."

The thirteenth century (AH) scholar al-Shawkāni (2005: 464) said in his *tafsīr* regarding the article of faith that it means none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Shanqīṭī (AH1426b: 4/505), said regarding the article of faith that it means, "The One who is worshipped on His own and that He has beautiful Names." Al-Shanqīṭī (AH1426b: 4/505) also quoted other verses to explain the verse in Chapter Muḥammad:19. What is interesting is that all the verses that al-Shanqīṭī quoted include the word 'worship':

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

"And verily, We have sent among every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "**Worship** Allah (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Taghoot (all false deities, etc."
(Chapter Al-Naḥl:36)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

"And We did not send any Messenger before you (O Muhammad SAW) but We inspired him (saying): La ilaha illa Ana (none has the right to be worshipped but I (Allah)), so **worship** Me (Alone and none else)."
(Chapter Al-Anbiyāʾ:25)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

وَاسْأَلْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رُّسُلِنَا أَجَعَلْنَا مِن دُونِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ آلِهَةً يُعْبَدُونَ

"And ask (O Muhammad SAW) those of Our Messengers whom We sent before you:
"Did We ever appoint aliha (gods) to be **worshipped** besides the Most Beneficent
(Allah)?""
(Chapter Al-Zukhruf:45)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

"Allah bears witness that La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be **worshipped** but
He), and the angels, and those having knowledge (also give this witness); (He is
always) maintaining His creation in Justice. La ilaha illā Huwa (none has the right to
be **worshipped** but He), the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."
(Chapter Āl-Imran:18)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

This shows that al-Shanqīṭī explained the article of faith to mean that worship belongs
to Allāh alone using other verses. It is evident that Khān and al-Hilālī's translations of
these verses show the emphasis on worship for the meaning of the article of faith. This
clearly portrays the influence of the mainstream *tafsīr* books on their translation.

Even in the Arabic language, the importance of the mainstream *tafsīr* meaning is
portrayed with regard to the article of faith. The article of faith has two parts to it, one
negating and the other affirming;

1. لا إله (Lā ilāha) None has the right to be worshipped
2. إلا الله (Illā Allāh) except Allāh.

This is further broken down by explaining that the 'لا' in ' لا إله' (Lā ilāha) is actually
'لا' of negating which in Arabic grammar is called 'لا نافية للجنس' which requires a subject
(اسم) followed by the predicate (خبر). The subject is already mentioned which is the
'إله' in 'لا إله'. However, the predicate is not mentioned but it is understood to be ' معبود
بالحق' (deserving of worship) because of the fact that this was the real call and context
of all the Prophets and Messengers. For example, in the time of the last Messenger,
Muḥammad ﷺ, the pagans of Quraish already believed there was a deity called Allāh
but the difference was they did not worship Him alone. This grammatical feature is

what the great Arabic grammarian Ibn Mālik referred to in his lines of poetry of a thousand lines which he called *Alfiyyah*.

وشاع في ذا الباب إسقاط الخبر   إذا المراد مع سقوطه ظهر

It is well known in this section that the predicate is dropped.
When the intended meaning is apparent.[107]

One of the greatest scholars in the Arabic language from the fifth century, Ibn Fāris in (AH1429:1/69) *Muʿjam Maqāyyīs al-Lugha*, said the three letters of 'أله' refer to worship. The deity here is Allāh because He is the One that is worshipped. Al-Ṭabarī (AH1374:1/122-123), likewise said that 'أله' refers to worship, quoting the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ and his successor Mujāhid.

In challenging the polytheist, Allāh mentioned that He was the One who created the heavens and the earth, therefore, He alone should be worshipped likewise:

قُلْ مَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالارْضِ قُلِ اللَّه

"Say, "Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth?" Say, "Allāh"."
(Saba: 24)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The polytheists believed in Allāh as the Creator and Lord, however they did not want to let go of their other intermediaries that they set up besides Allāh in worship. They wanted to worship all the gods along with Allāh. They said:

أَجَعَلَ الالِهَةَ إِلَٰهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ

"Has he made the gods [only] one God? Indeed, this is a curious thing."
(Sād:25)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Even when Abū Jahl, the disbelieving uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, was about to die, the Prophet ﷺ pleaded with him to say this article of faith, however, his peers said to him "will you abandon the path of ʿAbdulMuṭṭalib?"[108] They were referring to the path of

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[107] Cited in Ibn ʿAqīl in *Sharḥ Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik* (AH1429:2/24-26), Dār al-Turāth.
[108] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* Book of *Tafsīr* (1993) no. 4772, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:1/33) no.24, Book of Faith.

their forefathers, who had set up many idols for worship. It is clear from this story that the article of faith refers to worshipping only One deity and not to set up many deities that are called upon and relied upon besides Allāh. It was not enough to just believe that God exists alone as this did not make anyone a Muslim. However, what was required of the polytheists was to leave off all idols as intermediaries and partners set up along with the worship of Allāh.

Āl-Shaykh ᶜAbdullaṭīf (AH1427:38,39) said, "It becomes clear that a literal translation in this instance (there is no God but Allāh) is not correct as it gives the wrong message of the verse which is other than the reality of its meaning. Allāh addresses all of mankind to worship Him alone while recognising that He is the One who sends rain from the sky and brings forth vegetation and sustenance from the ground" [My translation].

Mainstream books of *tafsīr* are explicit in clarifying the contextual meaning of the article of faith to refer to worship. However, non-mainstream books of *tafsīr* such as that of Sayyid Quṭb (d.AH1385) in his explanation regarding the article of faith from his *tafsīr* (1412AH:2/1006) said, "La ilāha illā Allāh (as Arabs used to understand) means: no rulership except that it belongs to Allāh and no legislation except that it is from Allāh and no authority of anyone over anyone because authority all belongs to Allāh." This explanation from Sayyid Quṭb does not mention that the context of the article of faith is actually worship being for Allāh alone. Sayyid Quṭb, on the other hand, stressed mainly the Lordship and rulership aspect of the article of faith. This is probably due to the context of the political climate and struggle for power that he lived in while in Egypt in the 1950's and 1960's.

Below is a table showing how the various translators translated the article of faith:

Translators and their background	Muḥammad:19
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	So know (O Muḥammad SAW) that La ilaha ill-Allāh (none has the right to be **worshipped** but Allāh),
Yusuf ᶜAlī Followed Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	Know, therefore, that there is no god but God
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	So know (O Muḥammad) that there is no God save Allāh,
Rashad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	You shall know that: "There is no other god beside GOD,"
Asad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	Know, then, [O man,] that there is no deity save God.
Mir Ali Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	So know thou that there is no god but God
Shakir Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	So know that there is no god but Allāh,
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qādyānī translation	So know that there is no god but Allāh
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qādyānī translation	Know, therefore, that there is no god other than ALLĀH
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Know that there is none worth **worshipping** except Allāh
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Know then that there is no God except Allāh
Arberry Non-Muslim	Know thou therefore that there is no god but God,
Palmer Non-Muslim	Know thou that there is no god but God;
Sale Non-Muslim	Know, therefore, that there is no god but God:
Rodwell Non-Muslim	Know, then, that there is no god but God:

Many translators translate deity 'إله' as 'god' using a small 'g' while for Allāh - 'الله' they translate it as 'God' with a capital 'G'. However, most translators have not

captured the true meaning of the article of faith which is central to understanding the main call of the Prophets and Messengers. Khān and al-Hilālī translated the article of faith as:

> "Allāh! La ilāha illā Huwa (none has the **right to be worshipped** but He), the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists."
>
> [al-Baqarah:255]

Khān and al-Hilālī were able to capture completely the contextual meaning by adding the words '**right to be worshipped**' since there are many false gods that people set up as deities whom they worship but only Allāh has the right to be worshipped alone according to the Qurʾān and authentic Prophetic traditions.

Many of the translators in the previous table, translated the article of faith without the complete meaning. Only Khān and al-Hilālī and Auolakh translated the verse (Muḥammad:19) using the correct context of Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ call, that is, to worship Allāh without any partners.

Auolakh translated the verse according to mainstream *tafsīr* by including the necessary word 'worshipping' in his translation: 'Know that there is none worth worshipping except Allāh.' However, the Brelvī creed allows seeking help from the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ other than Allāh which is actually worshipping other than Allāh. They do not consider this as worshipping other than Allāh such as worshipping trees and idols. For example, a leading Brelvi cleric, Mufti Ahmed Naeemi (n.d.:1) said, "To call out (for help) to the Holy Prophet is permissible, whether this is done from far or near, during his life or after his demise." However, Allāh described that calling upon anyone else other than Himself for help in matters only He can help you in as actually worshipping that object whether it is a tree, stone, a prophet or an angel.

و قَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

"And your Lord says, "Call upon Me; I will respond to you." Indeed, those who **disdain My worship** will enter Hell [rendered] contemptible."
(Ghāfir:60)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The other Brelvī translation by Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī, did not translate the verse using the mainstream *tafsīr* meaning by including that worship only belongs to Allāh. However, in another verse (al-Baqarah:255) where the article of faith is mentioned, he does translate it with the emphasis of worship:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلا هُوَ

"Allāh! none is **worthy of worship** but He."
(al-Baqarah:255)
[Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī]

Likewise, Muḥammad Asad did not clarify the mainstream *tafsīr* meaning of the article of faith (Muḥammad:19) even though he has over five thousand footnotes, Like the other translators, he did not mention the conditions or the pillars of this most important statement for Muslims to know. He sufficed with, "Know, then, [O man,] that there is no deity save God."

The Shiᶜite translation by Mir Ali (1988:225) describes the article of faith (Muḥammad:19) to mean not only denial of the existence of false gods but also to believe in the absolute Unity of God and that this, according to him, is what the Prophet ﷺ preached. Then Mir Ali quotes from the Old Testament and New Testament to support his translation that this was the message of all the Prophets. This interpretation does not give the contextual main call of the Prophets mentioned in mainstream *tafsīr* and that is to worship Allāh alone. If Mir Ali means by the term 'Unity of God' that the creation is in unison with God then this would be in direct contradiction to the clear verses showing Allāh is not like any of His creation such as:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

"There is nothing like unto Him and He is the Hearing, the Seeing."
(Al-Shūrā:11)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

"Nor is there to Him any equivalent."
(Ikhlās: 4)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The other Shiᶜite translation by Shakir translated the article of faith as, "So know that there is no god but Allāh" (Muḥammad:19). Again, there is no mention of worship rightfully belonging to Allāh. After going through the Shiᶜite *Tafsīr al-ᶜAyyāshī* and *Tafsīr al-Qummī* regarding the meaning of the article of faith, there was no mention that it meant worshipping Allāh alone.

The Qāḍyānī translator Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī also did not translate the article of faith in accordance with the Prophetic explanation and translated it as, "So know that there is no god but Allāh" (Muḥammad:19). The other Qāḍyānī translator Sher ᶜAlī likewise translated the article of faith without showing the importance of worship being for Allāh alone, "Know, therefore, that there is no god other than ALLĀH" (Muḥammad:19).

The four non-Muslim translators in the previous table also did not translate the article of faith completely by using the addition 'right to be worshipped' as in Khān and al-Hilālī. Each of these four translators (Arberry, Palmer, Sale and Rodwell) have chosen the literal translation of the article of faith similar to the majority of the Muslim translators in the previous table.

Yusuf ᶜAlī translated the verse in the above table (Muḥammad: 19), "Know, therefore, that there is no god but God." However, in the revised edition by Dar al-Ifta, from the city of Riyaḍ, the translation was changed from 'God' to 'Allāh'. This is probably

because the word God in the English language can be made plural as in 'Gods' or feminine as in 'Goddess', whereas the name 'Allāh' cannot.

Likewise, Rashad and Pickthall did not translate the article of faith by emphasising worship being for Allāh alone. They chose the literal translation only.

In conclusion, the context of the article of faith in mainstream *tafsīr* was only portrayed by Khān and al-Hilālī and by Auolakh since they mentioned the significance of worship being for Allāh alone. Just to believe in the Lordship of Allāh was not enough to be Muslim during the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Rather the context of his call was to propagate the importance of worshipping Allāh alone without any partners.

4.2 Translating the Names of Allāh – He is The First, The Last, The Highest and The Nearest

In this section, four names of Allāh are studied as to how they were translated by the different sectarian and diverse translators. The *tafsīr* of these names from mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr* will also be compared. The following verse contains all four names discussed:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

"He is the First (nothing is before Him) and **the Last (nothing is after Him), the Most High (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him).** And He is the All-Knower of everything."
(Al-Ḥadīd: 3)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

Regarding the exact Names mentioned in the verse above, the Prophet ﷺ explained their meaning when he said:

أَنْتَ الْأَوَّلُ لَيْسَ قَبْلَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الْآخِرُ لَيْسَ بَعْدَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ لَيْسَ فَوْقَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الْبَاطِنُ لَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ اقْضِ عَنَّا الدَّيْنَ وَأَغْنِنَا مِنْ الْفَقْرِ

"…You are the First and there is no one before You and You are the Last no one after you and you are the *Ẓāhir* – Highest and there is no one above You and You are the *Bāṭin* - Nearest and there is no one nearer than You (by His knowledge)…"[109] [My translation]

Therefore, the context of what is meant by *Ẓāhir* is that Allāh is the 'Highest' and the meaning of *Bāṭin* is that Allāh is the 'Nearest.' Some literal translations of the opening verses of Sūrat al-Ḥadīd express that it means Allāh is 'apparent,' the 'secret,' 'the hidden' or 'the inner'. The latter translations are literal translations without looking at the context of mainstream *tafsīr* such as the Prophetic traditions.

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[109] *Musnad Imām Aḥmad* (2008) no.8960, 9247.

Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qirwānī (d.AH386), a Malikī scholar from the fourth century, explaining these Names, said,

"There is no beginning to Him being the First and no end to Him being the Last. He is above the Glorified ᶜArsh with His Essence, and He is everywhere by His knowledge" (ᶜAbbad A. 2002:74). [My translation].

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī (2001:22/385) said that, "*Ẓāhir* means that He is above all, that is other than Himself, He is the Highest above everything, there is nothing above Him… *Baṭin* means there is not anyone closer to anything other than Allāh as he said,

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

"And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein (by our knowledge)."
(Qaf:16).
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* al-Baghawī (2002:4/321) said, "He is the First before everything, He was present and nothing else was present. He is 'the Last' means, He will be present after the destruction of everything. He is 'the Highest' means that He is the Victor, **the Highest over everything**. He is 'the Nearest' means that He is the All-Knowing who knows everything. This is the meaning of the statement of Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ." [My translation]. Here, the mainstream *tafsīr* scholar Al-Baghawī defines the apparent meaning of the attribute *Ẓāhir* to mean Highest over everything. This is similar to al-Ṭabarī's definition.

Ibn Taymiyyah in his *tafsīr* [110] (AH1432:6/201,202) of this verse in al-Ḥadīd:3, mentioned the *ḥadīth* above to explain the verse and added, "More than one of the scholars of the righteous Predecessors believed that He descends to the lowest heavens

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[110] This was compiled from Ibn Taymiyyah's books by Iyyād b. Abdullatīf b. Ibrāhīm al-Qaysī (AH1432).

and yet He is still above the ^c*Arsh,* so He never is under the creation or inside it at all. Rather, His rising above creation is an Attribute asserted for Him. Allāh, the Lord, is always above His creation. When the Prophet ﷺ said that, ' في السـمـاء (fi samāʾ)' meaning 'ascension' or 'Highness', it did not mean that He is inside the stars and planets but rather, He is above the heavens. If He is above the '^c*Arsh*', then He is the Highest, the Most High. He is not in a direction of a created place, there is not any presence except for the created and the Creator. The Creator is separate from His creation and is above it. " [My translation]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr, in his *tafsīr* (1999:1078), mentioned the *ḥadīth*,

"…You are the First and there is no one before You and You are the Last and there is no one after You and You are the *Ẓāhir* – Highest and there is no one above You and You are the *Bāṭin,* Nearest and there is no one nearer than You (by His Knowledge)…"[111] [My translation].

To explain the verse:

هُوَ الأَوَّلُ وَالأخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

"He is **the First (nothing is before Him)** and **the Last (nothing is after Him), the Most High (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him).** And He is the All-Knower of everything."
(Al-Ḥadīd: 3)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

Ibn al-Qayyim (1993:383), likewise, mentioned the previous *ḥadīth* above to explain the same verse in al-Ḥadīd:3. He asserted that *Ẓāhir* means that Allāh is the Highest and no one is above Him.

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[111] *Musnad Imām Aḥmad* (2008) no.8960, 9247.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (1965:9/285) comments on the verse above in al-Ḥadīd: 3. "He (Allāh) is before everything without a beginning or before all of the things that are present in the sense that He is the One that brought everything else to exist. He is the Last after everything without an end. He is always present after everything else ends…He is the *Ẓāhir* meaning the One who is Higher than everything and the presence of His existence is known with clear proof. He is the *Bāṭin* meaning He knows everything that is hidden (in the language)…"

The mainstream scholar of *tafsīr*, al-Saᶜdī (2002:837) commenting on the verse in al-Ḥadīd:3 said: "You are 'the First' and there is no one before You and You are 'the Last' and there is no one after You. You are the *Ẓāhir* – 'Highest' no one is above You and You are the *Bāṭin* - 'Nearest' and there is no one nearer than Allāh (by His knowledge) to you."

The scholar of *tafsīr*, al-ᶜUthaymīn (2004:361,362) said in his *tafsīr* of the verse above, "He is 'the First' - means no one is before Him, there is no one with Him nor was there anyone before Him. He is 'the Last' - means there is no one after Him because if there existed after Him something then it would not be from the creation of Allāh. Rather, all of the creation is the creation of Allāh. He is 'the First' who has no beginning, He is 'the Last' without an end nor anything after Him. He is 'the Highest', as the Prophet ﷺ said, "without anything above him." All of the creation is below Him. There is no one above Him and He is 'the nearest' as the Prophet ﷺ said, "There is no one nearer to something than Him," meaning there is not anything closer to something than Allāh, for He is all aware of all things." Also al-ᶜUthaymīn (2009:1068) stated that, "All of the creation is below Him, the Most High, since there isn't anything above Him and *Bāṭin* means nothing comes between Him and His knowledge since He is All-Aware knowing

everything, no mountains, no trees, no walls nor other that these (can come between Allāh and His Knowledge of affairs)."

 Below is a table of various translations of the verse (Al-Ḥadīd:3) above:

Translators and their background	Al-Ḥadīd:3	Translation according to the explanation from the Sunnah
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	*He is the First (nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him)*, the Most High (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him). And He is the All-Knower of everything.	YES
Yusuf ʿAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation	*He is the First and the Last*, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things.	Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the *ḥadīth* that explains it
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	*He is the First and the Last*, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is Knower of all things.	Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the *ḥadīth* that explains it, also the description 'inward' was used by some of the philosophers to mean Allāh is in His creation' (*Hulūl*) portrayed by Ibn ʿArabī, the philosopher, which is rejected by mainstream *tafsīr*
Rashad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	*He is the Alpha and the Omega.* He is the Outermost and the Innermost. He is fully aware of all things.	Similar to Pickthall above.
Asad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation	*He is the First and the Last*, and the Outward as well as the Inward: and He has full knowledge of everything.	Similar to Pickthall above.
Mir Ali Portrays Shiʿite beliefs	*He is the First and the Last* and the Manifest and the Hidden: and He is the Knower of all things	Only the first part
Shakir Portrays Shiʿite beliefs	*He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (over all)* and the Knower	Only the first part

	of hidden things, and He is Cognizant of all things.	
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qāḍyānī translation	*He is the First and the Last* and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is Knower of all things.	Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the *ḥadīth* except in the footnote
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation	*HE is the First and the Last*, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and HE has full knowledge of all things.	Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the *ḥadīth* that explains it
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	*HE is the First, He is the Last*, He is the Manifest, He is the Hidden and HE knows everything	Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the *ḥadīth* that explains it
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	*He is the One Who is the First (of all) and the Last (of all)*. And He is Manifest(as for His Power) and Hidden (as goes His Essence). And He knows everything full well.	Only the first part
Arberry Non-Muslim	*He is the First and the Last,* the Outward and the Inward; He has knowledge of everything.	Similar to Pickthall
Palmer Non-Muslim	*He is the first and the last;* and the outer and the inner; and He all things doth know!	Similar to Pickthall
Sale Non-Muslim	*He is the first, and the last;* the manifest, and the hidden: And He knoweth all things.	Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the *ḥadīth* that explains it
Rodwell Non-Muslim	*He is the first and the last;* the Seen and the Hidden; and He knoweth all things!	Only first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the *ḥadīth* that explains it

From the translations above, Khān and al-Hilālī translated this verse taking into consideration the principles of mainstream *tafsīr* and in particular the Prophetic narrations that explain the verse. Shakir came close to Khān and al-Hilālī in agreeing to the meaning of *Ẓāhir*, that Allāh is the Highest, ascending over the Throne. Other translators chose a literal translation void of any reference to the Prophet's ﷺ statement. Ironically, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī mentioned the *ḥadīth* explaining the verse in the

footnote but left the literal translation in the main text. Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī said, "Thou art the Manifest, or the Ascendant over all, so that there is nothing above Thee…" Here, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī could have just translated the name of Allāh - *Ẓāhir*- as he has in the *ḥadīth* to mean, 'the Highest.' (Maulana 2002:1059).

Sher ᶜAlī, Auolakh, Sale, Mir Ali, and Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī translated the Names of Allāh *Ẓāhir* and *Bāṭin* as 'Manifest' and 'Hidden' respectively. Rodwell's translation was also similar. These are literal translations that do not take into account the Prophetic tradition that explains these Names of Allāh. These translators could have taken this literal meaning of *Ẓāhir* from al-Bayḍāwī (2013:1010) in his *tafsīr* since he mentioned that *Ẓāhir* refers to his His Manifest Presence.

Pickthall, Asad, Arberry, Palmer and Rashad chose the meaning of *Ẓāhir* as the 'Outer' and *Bāṭin* as the 'Inner' which is a literal translation.

Non-mainstream *tafsīr* of these verses show the different meanings of the two Names of Allāh *Ẓāhir* and *Bāṭin*. For instance, the *tafsīr* of Zamakhsharī (2009) in al-Ḥadīd:3, initially, he gives a literal translation when he said, "*Ẓāhir* means, the 'apparent'...whereas *Bāṭin* means that He is not recognised by our faculties." However, Zamakhsharī (2009) added, "It is said that He is the *Ẓāhir* means also that He is above everything and has authority over all." Zamakhsharī, though, does not mean that he believes Allāh is above in terms of His Essence but rather in terms of authority as he clearly statesand this is the Muᶜtazilite, Ashᶜarite belief. Therefore, Zamakhsharī's interpretation of *Ẓāhir* is not in accordance with mainstream *tafsīr* which shows that *Ẓāhir* means the 'Highest' in termsof Esssence, Status (Authority) and Rank, and this is in accordance to the Prophetic traditions. However, many translators who quoted

from Zamakhsharī chose the first literal meaning he gave of *Ẓāhir*, that is, 'the apparent.' As for the meaning of *Bāṭin*, then Zamakhsharī (2009) in al-Ḥadīd:3, further suggests, "The One who knows everything." Shakir's translation is similar to Zamakhsharī's meaning of Allāh's name *Bāṭin* as: "the Knower of hidden things."

Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M. translates Allāh's name *Ẓāhir as,* "And He is Manifest (as for His Power)." His translation has the additional interpretation (*ta'wīl*) that means His Power. He did not mention the meaning by the Prophet ﷺ that Allāh is above the creation being 'the Highest' in terms of His Essence. Qadrī translates Allāh's name *Bāṭin as,* "Hidden (as goes His Essence)."

When Mir Ali translates *Ẓāhir* as 'Manifest' and *Bāṭin as* 'Hidden', he, Mir Ali (1988:1624) quotes the *tafsīr* of Mirza Pooya who says, "This state of the Creator being with His creatures, in all circumstances, is another state which indicates His only presence of All-embracing nature and is a blow to all anthromorphic conceptions of the godhead." If he means by His presence being "All-embracing" that He is part of creation, then again this belief is similar to the Pantheistic doctrine of the first Sufīs who believed that the Creator is in creation. This is rejected by mainstream *tafsīr* scholars who say that Allāh is not part of his creation but separate, nor is the Creator everywhere in terms of His Essence. Anthromorphic belief is to believe God is similar to creation. This is rejected by mainstream *tafsīr* scholars.

Yusuf Ali translated *Ẓāhir* as 'Evident' and *Bāṭin as* 'Immanent' which again is a literal translation. Immanent could mean near or existing within creation which if not explained could relate to the pantheistic conception of God which is rejected by mainstream *tafsīr*.

In conclusion, this verse has posed difficulties for translators, especially those that relied on non-mainstream *tafsīr*. This is because the Prophetic text was not strictly adhered to in order to understand the verse. Mainstream *tafsīr* books have referred back to the Prophetic text that explains these four names of Allāh mentioned in the verse. Mainstream *tafsīr* books follow the order of understanding the context of each verse by other similar verses and likewise Prophetic tranditions that have specifically explained the verses from the Qurʾān. Relying on just the Arabic language to translate verses from the Qurʾān has led to diverse literal translations. Translating the Names of Allāh is a sensitive area and knowing them is fundamental to the Muslim belief since knowing Allāh is part of Monotheism. It is a sacred area of study that requires the foundations of mainstream *tafsīr* for a meaning and an understanding of what the Prophet, his Companions and their Successors believed in. Similarly, the Attributes of Allāh also caused difficulty for translators of the Qurʾān.

4.3 Translating the Attributes of Allāh - Istawā - Allāh rose above the Throne

In the previous section, four Names of Allāh were analysed that caused some difficulty to translators. This section studies one of the Attributes of Allāh that has also caused difficulty for translators. Even though the attribute *istawā* - rising above, could have many different meanings in the language, mainstream *tafsīr* scholars are in agreement that *istawā* is restricted in the explanation given by other verses and Prophetic traditions.

Allāh's *istawā* - rising above the Throne has been mentioned in seven places in the Qurʾān; Surah al-Aᶜrāf:54, Yūnus:3, al-Raᶜd:2, al-Furqān:54, Ṭaha:5, al-Sajda:4, Al-Ḥadīd:4. For example,

<div align="center">

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى

"The Most Beneficent (Allāh) *istawā* **(rose over)** the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)."
(Ṭaha:5)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

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The translation above by Khān and al-Hilālī is in the context of other verses in the Qurʾān which clearly show that Allāh rose or ascended above the ᶜArsh (Throne) in a way that befits His Majesty:

<div align="center">

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ

"The angels and the Rûh [Jibrael] **ascend** to Him."
(Al-Maᶜārij:4)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ

"To Him **ascend** (all) the goodly word*s*"
(Fātir:10)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللهُ إِلَيْهِ

"But Allâh **raised** him ['Isa] **up** unto Himself."
(Al-Nisāʾ:158)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

</div>

وَهُوَ **الْعَلِيُّ** الْعَظِيمُ

"And He is the **Most High**, the Most Great."
(Al-Baqarah:255)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

The translated meaning of *istawā* to mean 'above' is also in accordance with other verses

such as:

يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ **فَوْقِهِمْ**

"They fear their Lord **above** them."
(Al-Nahl:50)
Khān and al-Hilālī]

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ **فَوْقَ** عِبَادِه

"And He is the Irresistible, **above** His slaves."
(Al-An^cĀm:18)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

There are also many Prophetic traditions showing that Allāh is above such as, "When

Allāh created the creation, He wrote in His Book that is with Him **above the Throne**

'Verily My Mercy has overcome My Anger.'"[112] The apparent meaning of *istawā*

preceded by عَلَى - ^cAlā as in the original verse,

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى

"The Most Beneficent (Allāh) *istawā* **(rose over)** the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner
that suits His Majesty)."
(Ṭaha:5)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]
by consensus of the Arabic linguists means 'ارتفع' - 'to ascend over' or 'to rise above'[113]

Also, the Successor, Abū al-^cAliyah (d.AH110) said: "*Istawā* means 'to ascend' or 'to

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[112] Ibn al-Qayyim said in his book *Ijtimā^c Juyūsh al-Islamiyyah* p.107, regarding this *ḥadīth* "reported by al-Khallal in *Kitāb al-Sunnah* with an authentic chain similar to al-Bukhārī" (cited al-Saqqaf ^cAlawī 1994:52) in *Ṣifāt Allāh*.
[113] See al-Najjār (2011:257). *Al-Qawā^cid wa Dhawābiṭ al-Salafiyyah fī Asmā^ wa Ṣifāt Rabi al-Barriyyah.*

rise' (ارتـفـع)"[114]. Mujāhid (d.AH103), the student of the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ said, "*istawā* means '**to be above**' ('*ᶜAlā'*)"[115].

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī (AH1374,11/288), commenting on the following verse:

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرِ

"And He is the Irresistible (Supreme) above His slaves and He is the All-Wise, Well-Acquainted with all things."
(Al-Anᶜām: 18)
[Khān and al−Hilālī]

"This means that Allāh is **high above** His servants because Allāh described Himself by being above them…"

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Al-Baghawī, in his *tafsīr* (2002:3/133), clarified the mainstream Sunni position, regarding the same verse above by saying, that **Allāh is above** His slaves. This is an Attribute of ascension which Allāh solely specified for Himself.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr, in his *tafsīr* (1999:667) regarding the verse in Ṭaha:5 said, "The safest path is the path of the Successors, that is, to accept the apparent meaning of these attributes as they have come in the Book and the Sunnah without asking how, without distortion, without likening them to creation, without denying them and without resembling them." Regarding the verse in al-Aᶜrāf:54,

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

"And then He Istawa (rose over) the Throne (really in a manner that suits His Majesty)."

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[114] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993), Book on *Tawḥīd* no.7317.

[115] Ibid.

Ibn Kathīr, in his *tafsīr* (1999:384) added, "We follow, regarding this, the path of the righteous Predecessors such as Mālik, al-Awzāʿī, al-Thawrī, al-Laith b. Saʿd, al-Shāfʿī, Aḥmed, Isḥāq b. Rahwayh and other than them from the Muslim scholars, past and present; that is to accept the apparent meaning of these attributes as they have come without asking how, without likening them to creation and without denying them. As for likening Him to creation, as in the minds of those that resemble Allāh to creation then this is rejected since nothing is similar to Him from His creation..."

The mainstream *tafsīr* scholar, al-ʿUthaymīn (2006b:207) said, *"Istawā ʿalā ʿArsh* means 'to rise above' or 'ascend' in a manner that befits His Majesty and not in any manner similar to creation." [My translation]. Ibn al-Qayyim, after mentioning four possible meanings of *istawā*, concluded that, "What is apparent is that *istawā* and its reality refers to rising above and ascension just as all of the scholars of the language and scholars of (accepted) *tafsīr*, have mentioned" (Muḥammad b. Al Muwṣalī 2004:933) [My translation].

Even *istawā* with the preposition '*ilā*' after it as in استوى الى has been mentioned by Ibn Qayyim to mean **al-ʿUlūw** (ascension) and *irtifaʿ* (**rising above**) by consensus of the righteous Predecessors (Muḥammad b. al-Mawṣalī 2004:889) [My translation].

The scholar of *ḥadīth* Isḥāq b. Rahwayh (d.AH238) said regarding the following verse:

<div align="center">

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى

"The scholars have consensus that Allāh **rose above** the *ʿArsh* and He Knows everything in the lowest of the seven earths."[116]
(Ṭaha:5)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

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[116] Cited in al-Dhahabī (2003:2/1128).

Imām Mālik b. Anas from the second century (d.AH179) was asked about the same verse:

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى

"The Most Beneficent (Allāh) *istawā* (rose over) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)."
(Ṭaha:5)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Imām Mālik b. Anas was asked, "How has He ascended?" After Imām Malik asserted the apparent meaning of the Attribute *istawā* without explaining how it was, he replied, "How (*kayf*) cannot be comprehended by the intellect, and *al-istiwāʾ* (ascent) is known. One having faith in it is obligatory and questioning it is an innovation."[117] [My translation].

Also the Mālikī scholar of Qayrawān (an area in Tunisia), Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī from the fourth century (d.AH386) in his *Muqadimat al-Qayrawāniyyah*[118] stated,

لا يَبْلُغُ كُنْهَ صِفَتِهِ الواصِفون، ولاَ يُحِيطُ بأمرِهِ المُتَفَكِّرونَ، يَعتَبِرُ المُتَفَكِّرونَ بآياته، ولا يَتَفكَّرونَ في مَاهِيَةِ ذاتِهِ،**وأنَّه فوقَ عَرشه المجيد بذاته**، وهو في كلِّ مَكان بعِلمه.

"None is able to describe the true nature of His Attributes. His affair cannot be encompassed and comprehended by the thinkers...**He is above the Glorified ᶜArsh with His Essence.** He is everywhere by His Knowledge." [My Translation].

Here, like Imām Mālik, Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī asserted that *istawā* means 'above the ᶜArsh' and further clarified that it is His Essence that is above the Throne as opposed

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[117] Related in al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmaʾ was-Ṣifāt* (1993:408) by way of ᶜAbdullāh b. Wahb from Mālik. Ibn Ḥajar said in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (13/406-407) that its isnād (chain of narrators) is (good). It was authenticated by al-Dhahabī in *al-ᶜUlūw* (1420: 103).
[118] Cited in ᶜAbbad A. (2002:44,45) *Qaff al-Janal Dānī Sharḥ Muqaddimat al-Risālat Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī*.

to the Ashᶜarite who do not accept this. Rather they only accept that Allāh is above in terms of His Rank and Status but not in terms of His Essence.

Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr (1979:7/145) remarked that the righteous Predecessors had agreed upon asserting the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh which are related in the Qurʾān and the Sunnah, having faith in them and understanding them in their **real sense and not metaphorically**. (See appendix 3) [My translation]. Likewise, Abū ᶜUmar al-Talamankī, a Malikī scholar said, "The scholars of the Sunnah have unanimously agreed that **Allāh is above His Throne in the real sense and not in the metaphorical sense**" (ᶜUthmān 2009:183) [My translation]. This clearly shows that the translators who translated *istawā* (as being) only 'authority' have not followed the mainstream Sunni scholars of *tafsīr*. Instead, they have chosen a metaphorical meaning just as the Muᶜtazilite, Ashᶜarite and Jahmite jurists have done in the past.

As for *istawā ᶜalā ᶜArsh* to mean 'firmly established' (*istaqarra*) on the throne, as some of the righteous Predecessors mentioned and some translators asserted, then some of the mainstream Sunni scholars have negated it due to a possibility of having a negative connotation that Allāh has a need for the throne. Al-Albānī (1991:40) mentioned in *Mukhtaṣar al-ᶜUlūw* that there is no proof from the Qurʾān and Sunnah to mention that *istawā* means *istaqarra* (established).

In summary the table below shows the different translations of the verb *istawā:*

Translators and their background	*Istawā* [Ṭaha:5]
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	The Most Beneficent (Allāh) *Istawā* (rose over) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty).

Yusuf ᶜAlī Followed Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	(Allāh) Most Gracious **is firmly established** on the throne (of authority).
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	The Beneficent One, Who **is established** on the Throne.
Rashad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	The Most Gracious; He **has assumed all authority**
Asad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	the Most Gracious, **established on the throne of His almightiness**
Mir Ali Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	The Beneficent (God) **on the ᶜArsh is firm**
Shakir Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	**is firm in power**
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qāḍyānī translation	The Beneficent **is established** on the Throne of Power
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation	HE is the Gracious God Who **has settled Himself firmly** on the throne.
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Rehman (the most Affectionate Allāh) **well established in authority (befitting to His Dignity)**
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul- Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	(He is) Most Kind (Lord) **Who established (His sovereignty) on the Throne (of Power and Supreme Authority over all the systems of the universe befitting His Glory).**
Arberry Non-Muslim	the All-compassionate **sat Himself upon** the Throne;
Palmer Non-Muslim	the Merciful **settled on** the throne!
Sale Non-Muslim	The Merciful **sitteth on** his throne:
Rodwell Non-Muslim	The God of Mercy **sitteth on** his throne:

The translators, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī, Pickthall, Asad and Yusuf ᶜAlī who translated *istawā* to mean 'established' failed to clarify in the footnotes that this means 'He is above the creation' as portrayed by mainstream *tafsīr* and the consensus of the early generation of scholars.

Other translators such as Rashad and Shakir did not assert the apparent meaning of the Attribute *istawā* and hence their *taʾwīl*, distorting the apparent meaning for another meaning that is allegorical as can be seen:

Rashad: "The Most Gracious; He has **assumed all authority**."
Shakir: "The Beneficent Allāh **is firm in power**."

No doubt Sunni, mainstream *tafsīr* scholars agree that all authority belongs to Allāh and that He is firm in Power, but they hold, before that, that one must assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh. Similar to Rashad and Shakir is Auolakh, 'Rehman (the most Affectionate Allāh) **well established in authority** (befitting to His Dignity)' [Ṭaha:5]. These translators of the Qurʾān have followed the *tafsīr* of the Muᶜtazilite and Ashᶜarite interpretations of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. They did not assert the meaning conveyed by the Prophet's Companions and their Successors. The translations above may have taken their meaning of 'اسْتَوَى' - istawā from the non-mainstream scholar of *tafsīr*, Zamakhsharī, who said (2009:651) that 'اسْتَوَى' - istawā refers to the Dominion or Authority of Allāh. It may also be that they have referred to the non-mainstream *tafsīr* of al-Rāzī (2005:29/186) who said regarding the following verse:

هُوَ الاوَّلُ وَالاخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ

"He is the First (nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him), **the Most High (nothing is above Him)**."
(Al-Ḥadīd:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

"Know that this is another example which proves the completeness of the Power of Allāh and the completeness of His Wisdom and Authority. We have shown in the past that it is not allowed for the meaning to refer to Allāh being above in a place or direction but that it is obligatory to hold that 'being above' is in terms of Authority and Ability as

it is said the command of so and so is above the command of so and so. It means it is higher and more executable."

Al-Rāzī, intellectually argues that if one says that Allāh is above the creation then one is actually limiting Allāh to a place and direction. While it is true that the mainstream Sunni position is that they do not consider Allāh is contained in a place (*makān*), however, the scholars of mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* still believe that Allāh is above the creation in terms of His Essence, Rank and Authority (Ability). With this intellectual method of al-Rāzī in understanding the Book of Allāh, he has opposed the principles of mainstream *tafsīr*. He has done this by not taking the *tafsīr* of the verse back to the Qurʾān first, then Prophetic texts in the understanding of his Companions and their Successors.

Al-Rāzī only considers Allāh above, in terms of Authority and Ability, but not above in His Essence and Self. He believes this would require that Allāh is in a place which is rejected by the mainstream Sunni position. Mainstream Sunni scholars agree that all Authority belongs to Allāh and that He is firm in Power but they also agree that, first and foremost, the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh, in each particular verse, should be asserted as it is a matter of belief. Al-Dārimī said in *Radd ʿalā al-Jahmiyyah* (p.18), "We describe Allāh with that which He described Himself with and with that which the Messenger ﷺ described Him with."[119] This, no doubt, is without likening Allāh to the creation.

Similar to al-Rāzī is the non-mainstream *tafsīr* scholar, al-Bayḍāwī (2013:359) who said regarding the Attribute of Allāh, *istawā* to mean, " His Command was assumed or

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[119] Cited in al-Najjār (2011:29).

He Conquered (the throne)..." Again, al-Bayḍāwī, did not define *istawā* to mean that Allāh rose above the Throne which is the apparent meaning clarified in other verses and along with Prophetic traditions. If one does not assert the apparent meaning of *istawā* which means 'to ascend over' or 'rise above' then this is negation of the apparent Attributes; and further, to say that primarily *istawā* means only something else then this is to distort the original apparent meaning.

The non-mainstream scholar of *tafsīr* al-Suyūṭī explains, "*istawā* as 'giving justice.' (Al-Suyūṭī: AH1426:4/1361). None of the translations analysed used this particular explanation. This, again, is not asserting the apparent meaning of the Attribute of Allāh which mainstream *tafsīr* scholars adhered to.

There are translators of the Qurʾān who, likewise, have fallen into *ta ʾwīl* of Allāh's Attributes by interpreting and then translating the Attributes of Allāh to mean something different from the apparent meaning. For example in Ṭaha: 5:

$$الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى$$

The non-Muslim translators below are followed by their translations:

Arberry: "**sat Himself upon** the Throne"
Palmer :   "the Merciful **settled on** the throne!"
Sale :   "The Merciful **sitteth on** his throne"
Rodwell :   "The God of Mercy **sitteth on** his throne"

The non-Muslim translators are all in agreement that *Istawā* means 'to sit' or 'to settle' similar to Sher ᶜAlī 's translation: "HE is the Gracious God Who **has settled Himself firmly** on the throne." Even though some of the Successors have mentioned that *istawā* means 'to sit', they are a minority going against the majority of scholars without

established proof. The majority of the Successors said that *istawā* refers to 'rising above' and this was accepted by mainstream *tafsīr* scholars.

Khān and al-Hilālī go on to emphasise the belief of the mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* by saying:

Khān and al-Hilālī   "The Most Beneficent (Allāh) *istawā* **(rose over)** the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)."

Notice that Khān and al-Hilālī wanted to remove any thought of likening Allāh to creation when they added in brackets, 'in a manner that suits His Majesty.'

In another similar verse:

$$الرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى$$
(Al-Hadid:4)

Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī translates the verse as,

"then **unveiled His might taking the Throne of sovereignty** of the universe (i.e. organised the whole universe under His command befitting His Glory)."

Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī did not assert the mainstream *tafsīr* meaning of 'اسْتَوَى' which means 'to ascend' or 'to rise' but translated it as, "Unveiled His might taking the throne of sovereignty of the universe". This is similar to the Muʿtazilite, Ashʿarite and Jahmite interpretations which do not assert that Allāh is above the creation.

Mir Ali translated it as, "The Beneficent (God) **on the ʿArsh is firm**". In the footnote, Mir Ali explained that ʿArsh means the **throne of administration**. This is taken from the *tafsīr* of Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdī. Again, he does not translate it to mean that Allāh is above the Throne, but gives a metaphorical meaning that does not convey the mainstream Sunni belief of where Allāh is. Where Allāh is - is a point of belief which was taught by the Messenger ﷺ. For example, even a servant of the Companion Muʿāwiyah b. Ḥakam Al-Sulamī knew where Allāh is when the servant was asked. The Companion of the Prophet, Muʿāwiyah b. Ḥakam Al-Sulamī said,

"I said, Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. I was till recently a pagan, but Allāh has brought Islam to us…I had a maid-servant who tended goats by the side of Mount Uḥud and the area of Jawwaniya. One day, I happened to pass that way and found that a wolf had taken a goat from her flock. I am after all a man from the children of Adam. I felt upset as they (human beings) feel upset, so I slapped her. I came to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and felt (this act of mine) was something grievous. I said, "Messenger of Allāh, should I not grant her freedom?" He (the Prophet) said, "Bring her to me." So I brought her to him. He said to her, "Where is Allāh? She said, "**He is above the Heaven** (*fī samāʾ*)." He said, "Who am I?" She said, "You are the Messenger of Allāh." He said, "Grant her freedom as she is a believing woman."[120]

This narration shows that Allāh is above the Heavens. The answer '*fī samāʾ* does not literally mean 'in the sky' as in the verse:

$$قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ$$
"Say: travel through(**over**) the land and observe how He began creation."
(Ankabūt:20)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Here في الْأَرْض does not mean travel 'in the land' but rather 'above/over the land.' Similarly, '*fī samāʾ* does not mean 'in the sky' but rather 'above/over the sky.'

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī said in the explanation of the *ḥadīth*, "Know, may Allāh protect us and you with His Mercy such that we are protected from deviation, that Allāh, the glorified is above the sky (*fī samāʾ*) above everything, ascended over His Throne meaning that He has risen above it and the meaning of *istawā* is 'ascension'."[121] This explanation of al-Ṭabarī is similar to what the Successors mentioned.

Translators of the Qurʾān need to know and have a good knowledge of authentic Prophetic narrations and knowledge of mainstream *tafsīr* explanations to verses, so as to be able to translate the Qurʾān according to the correct context. In this section, it is

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[120] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:33/537) no.1199, Book of Prohibition of speaking in the prayer.
[121] Al-Ṭabarī in *Taʾwīl Aḥādīth Al-Mushkilah* (introduction/A-24) cited in Ṣadiq (2007:14) in *Takḥīl al-ʿAynayn bi Jawāz Suʾāl ʿan Allāh bī ʾAyn.*

apparent that those translators who relied on translating the Attribute of Allāh *istawā* from mainstream *tafsīr* were in agreement in its meaning, that is, to ascend, to be above or to rise. Whereas, those translators who relied on non-mainstream *tafsīr* had diverse meanings such as established, authority, power and to sit.

4.4   Translating the meaning of Kursī (Footstool)

وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

"His *Kursī* extends over the heavens and the earth."
(Al-Baqarah: 255)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The reason why this verse was chosen, is because one of the Attributes of Allāh is mentioned in its explanation. Likewise, this verse has been under much contention between mainstream and non-mainstream scholars of *tafsīr*. This has resulted in many different views regarding its translation. There seems to be five different meanings that are mentioned in the different books of *tafsīr*. Some said that the *Kursī* is 'the Throne' while others mentioned that the *Kursī* is the 'Knowledge of Allāh'. It is also said that the *Kursī* is 'the Footstool of Allāh' without likening Allāh to creation. It is a separate creation to the *ᶜArsh (the Throne)* and is smaller. Some mentioned that the *Kursī* is 'the sovereignty of Allāh' while others said it refers to His Pride and Honour. I will discuss all five meanings with their *tafsīr* and how it has been translated.

4.4.1   The Kursī is the Footstool without resembling Allāh to creation

Muḥammad Tamīmī, an Islamic Professor from the Islamic University of Madīnah, said in his notes to al-Dhahabī's *Kitāb al- ᶜArsh* (1999:1/306), "To say *Kursī* means *Footstool* is the position of the righteous Predecessors from the Prophet's Companions and the Successors and those that follow their path. This is what is based upon the Qurᵓān, Sunnah and the language of the Arabs. This is from the *ḥadīth* of Abū Dhar and statements of many of the Prophet's Companions such as Ibn ᶜAbbās and Ibn Masᶜūd, Abū Mūsā Al-Ashᶜarī, Mujāhid and others. Many scholars have said there is a consensus of the righteous Predecessors about this."

Concerning the verse:

وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

"His *Kursī* extends over the heavens and the earth,"
(Al-Baqarah: 255)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

Muḥammad b. Abdullāh b. Zamanayn (2010:109), the Māliki scholar from the fourth century (d.AH399), said in *Uṣūl al-Sunnah*, "Among the statements of the scholars of Sunnah is that the *Kursī* is in front of the Throne, the place of the two feet (*bilā-kayf* – without knowing how these Attributes are, nor likening Allāh to His creation)."

Al-Qurṭubī, M. (AH1423:3/266) said in his *tafsīr* regarding the above verse, "What the Prophetic narrations necessitate is that the *Kursī* is a great creation in front of the Throne and the Throne is greater than it."

The fourth century scholar (d.AH324) Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī mentioned in (2007:200) *al-Risāla ilā Ahl al-Thagr,* that there is consensus that Allāh has a *Kursī* which is other than the ᶜ*Arsh*. Muḥammad b. Abdullāh b. Zamanayn al-Mālikī (2010: 34,96-105) said that this is the statement of the Sunni scholars.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr in his *tafsīr* (1999:146) quotes the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ, as saying, "The *Kursī* is the footstool, and no one can comprehend how vast the Throne is except Allāh."[122]

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:6/584) said, "The *Kursī* is confirmed in the Book of Allāh, the Sunnah and consensus of the righteous Predecessors."

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[122] It was authenticated by al-Albānī (1991:102) in *Mukhtaṣar al-ᶜUlūw* of Dhahabī. Beirut, Al-Maktab al-Islamī. The *ḥadīth* scholar al-Haythamī (d.AH807/1404) cited in Ibn Taymiyyah's *Majmūᶜ* (2001:6/323) that all the narrators are narrators of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (referring to its authenticity).

Ibn Abī al-ᶜIzz Al-Ḥanafī (d.AH792), the judge of Damascus in his time, in (AH1400:313) *Sharḥ ᶜAqīdah al-Ṭahawiyah*, said that the *Kursī* is in front of the Throne.

4.4.2   The *Kursī* is different from the ᶜArsh - Throne

The *Kursī* has been specifically mentioned and distinguished from the Throne as a separate creation in the following text,

The Prophet's Companion, Abū Dhar ﷺ said, I heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ say, "The *Kursī* in relation to the Throne is like an iron ring thrown out upon an open space of desert."[123]

It was narrated that the Prophet's Companion Ibn Masᶜūd ﷺ said,

"Between the first heaven and the one above is (a distance of) five hundred years. Between each of the heavens is (a distance of) five hundred years. Between the seventh heaven and the '*Kursī*' is (a distance of) five hundred years. Between the '*Kursī*' and

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[123] Al-Albānī (1972:1/175,176) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* no.109 said: "There are many different narrations of this *hadīth* (that are not authentic) but what seems to be most authentic is the narration of Ibn Zayd from his father from the Companion Abū Dhar ﷺ. It is quoted by Imām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr* collection (5/399) Imām al-Ṭabarī narrated it by way of Yūnus, Ibn Wahb from Ibn Zayd. All of the narrators are trustworthy and even though there seems to be a disconnection just before the Companion Abū Dhar ﷺ, taking into account all the (supporting) narrations, the *hadīth* is authentic. The best chain is the last one (we mentioned). The *hadīth* is clear that the greatest of creation after the ᶜArsh is the *Kursī* and without the need to be carried nor is it something imaginary. That it is a clear rebuttal of those who say that the *Kursī* means Dominion or Authority as is found in some books of *Tafsīr*. As for those who quoted Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ as saying that it refers to 'Knowledge' then this is not authentic." [My translation and summary].

the water is (a distance of) five hundred years. The Throne is above the water. Allāh is above the Throne and nothing whatsoever of your deeds is hidden from Him."[124]

Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ had taken this from the Prophet ﷺ himself because it is a matter of the unseen. The Prophet's Companions would not speak about (the) unseen matters unless they took them from the Prophet ﷺ himself. The recent scholar of *tafsīr*, al-‘Uthaymīn, said in (AH1421: 2/540), "This *ḥadīth* stops at Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ (it is *mawqūf* meaning that is Ibn Mas‘ūd statement), but this matter of the unseen is one of the matters concerning which there is no room for personal opinion since they are definitive and must have come from the Prophet ﷺ himself. Therefore, it comes under the heading of those narrations that whose chains go back to the Prophet ﷺ. Also, Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ is not known to have taken anything derived from previous scriptures (the 'People of the Book')."

The narration of Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ clearly shows that the *Kursī* is not the Throne. The Throne is above the *Kursī*, and is above all of creation. Ibn al-Qayyim (1998:4/1308) said,

"If Allāh is separate from His creation[125], then either He is encompassing them or He is not. If He is encompassing them, then He must be above them, because that which

[124]Ibn Khuzaymah (d.AH311) in (1997:2/885) in *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. Also see al-Dārimī in *al-Radd ‘alā Bishr* cited in *‘Aqā ᵓid al-Salaf* (2007:336). Al-Bayhaqī (1993:401) in *al-Asmā ᵓ wal- Ṣifāt.* This report was classed as authentic by Ibn al-Qayyim (1993:87) in *Ijtimā‘ al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah*; al-Dhahabī (64) cited in al-Albānī (1991:103) with an authentic chain.

[125] Being separate from creation means that He is not part of creation but above it. This is the belief of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamā‘ah* which was expressed by consensus of the scholars in the early centuries. For example, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d.AH277) and Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī (d.AH264) from the third century both stated in their treatise "Allāh is separate (*Ba ᵓin*) from His creation". Al-Madkhalī R. (2012:53). This

encompasses must necessarily be above that which is encompassed. Hence, because the heavens encompass the earth, they must be above it. Likewise, because the *Kursī* encompasses the heavens, it must be above them, and because the Throne encompasses the *Kursī*, it must be above it. Whatever encompasses anything must necessarily be above it. This does not imply that there is physical contact with anything that He encompasses: Neither is there any similarity nor resemblance between Him and that which He encompasses." [My translation].

Al-Ṭabarī quoted the narrator Juwaybir that the successor Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.AH110) said the *Kursī* is the Throne.[126] However, the *ḥadīth* scholar Ibn Ḥajar said this is a very weak report, meaning that it is not authentic. Likewise, Ibn Kathīr (2003:1/13) said, "Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī narrated this from Juwaybir but he is a weak narrator, so this report is not authentic from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Rather, what is authentically reported from him and other Companions of the Prophet and the Successors is that the *Kursī* is something other than the Throne."

Al-Bayhaqī said regarding al-Ṭabarī's statement from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, "This is not pleasing to be accepted. The Prophetic traditions confirm that the *Kursī* is a creation in front of the Throne and the Throne is greater than it."[127]

The mainstream scholar of *tafsīr*, al-ᶜUthaymīn, (AH1423b:3/254) said, "The *Kursī* is the place of the Feet of Allāh, the Most High and in front of the *ᶜArsh* as has

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consensus was also mentioned by the third century scholar al-Dārimī (d.AH280) "The previous nation never doubted that Allāh is above the heavens separate from His creation" (*Al-Radd ᶜalā Bishr* p.64).

[126] Ibn Kathīr (1/310), al-Suyūṭī (1/328), Zamakhsharī (1/301). Cited in al-Dhahabī (1999: 1/305) in *Kitāb al-ᶜArsh*.

[127] See Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:6/584-585) in *Majmūᶜ al-Fatāwā*.

authentically been reported from the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ᶜAbbās.[128] What has

been reported that Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ has taken from the People of the Book is not authentic.

What is authentically reported in al-Bukhārī (Chapter *Al-Iᶜtṣām bi Sunnah* no.7363) is

that Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ used to forbid taking narrations from the people of the Book.

Mainstream Sunni *tafsīr* scholars believe that the *Kursī* is the place of the Feet of Allāh,

the Most High and this is what Ibn Taymiyyah asserted. Likewise, Ibn al-Qayyim and

other scholars said the same. It is said that the *Kursī* is the *ᶜArsh;* however, the *'ᶜArsh'*

is greater, wider and more vast in space than the *Kursī*. It is also said that the *Kursī* is

His 'Knowledge', reported from the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ᶜAbbās which is also

not authentic and opposes what is originally narrated from him.[129] Furthermore, to

claim that the *Kursī* is His 'Knowledge' is not known in the Arabic language nor in the

reality of the legislation so it is far away from being authentically reported from Ibn

ᶜAbbās ﷺ." [My Translation].

4.4.3   The Kursī is not the Mulk (Dominion) or Sovereignty

Concerning the Kursī, Allāh says, "His Kursī extends over the heavens and the earth"

(Al-Baqarah 2:255). It was said that this is the Throne, but the mainstream Sunni view

is that it is something else.[130]

The meaning of *Kursī*, according to al-Qurṭubī in his *tafsīr* (AH1413:4/277), "The

leaders of those who reject the existence of Allāh considered the *Kursī* to mean the

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[128]   See Al-Tabarānī's *Muᶜjam al-Kabīr* no.12404. al-Haythamī said: "The narrators are all reliable."
[*Majmaᶜ al-Zawāʾid* (6/326)]. See *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim (1990:1/172) who said it is authentic upon the
condition set by Imām al-Bukhāri and Muslim. Imām al-Dhahabī agreed.
[129] Shuᶜayb al-Arnāʾuṭ (2005:2/429) in *Sharḥ al-ᶜAqīdah al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah* said the statement of Ibn ᶜAbbās
ﷺ in the explanation of the *Kursī* being the footstool is the most authentic in its chain of narration.
[130] Cited in Shuᶜayb al-Arnāʾuṭ (2005: 2/427) in *Sharḥ al-ᶜAqīdah al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah*.

greatness of the Sovereignty and noble Authority. They negate the existence of the *Kursī* and the *ᶜArsh* and consider them to be nothing. The people of truth assert the apparent meaning of these (*Kursī* and the *ᶜArsh*) because the power of Allāh is vast and it is a must to believe in that." [My translation]

What is clear is that the Prophet ﷺ mentioned that the *Kursī* is greater than the heavens and the earth so the *Kursī* cannot be His Authority because in the next part of the Prophetic tradition the comparison of the *Kursī* to the *ᶜArsh* is like a ring in a desert. That would mean that the *ᶜArsh* is greater than the Authority of Allāh. Therefore, *Kursī* cannot mean the Authority of Allāh, based upon the clear authentic Prophetic tradition. Also, to say that the *Kursī* refers to the Authority of Allāh goes against the statement of the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ, who clearly said that the *Kursī* is the Footstool of The Most Merciful. This is what has authentically been reported.

4.4.4   The Kursī is not Knowledge

The Jahmites believed that the *Kursī* refers to the Knowledge of Allāh,[131] extending over the heavens and the earth. They did this so that they could deny that Allāh is above the *Kursī* and the *ᶜArsh*. They quote Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ as saying that the *Kursī* means the Knowledge of Allāh. This report was actually quoted also by Ibn Kathīr in his *tafsīr* of the *Kursī* verse (al-Baqarah:255) but it does not have an authentic chain of narration, as al-Dārimī (d.AH280) said, "It is by way of Jaᶜfar al-Aḥmar and he is not one of the narrators that is relied upon because many of the reliable narrators opposed him."[132]

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[131] Ibn Taymiyyah (2001: 5:60) in *Majmūᶜ al-Fatāwā*.
[132] Cited in al-Dhahabī (1999: 1/304) *Kitāb al-ᶜArsh*.

Al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* reported two meanings of *Kursī;* one that it refers to 'His Knowledge' and the other he said refers to the ᶜ*Arsh* but leaned towards the *Kursī* being 'His knowledge'. However, the scholar of *tafsīr* Maḥmūd Shākir in al-Ṭabarī (AH1374:5/401) said these two statements of al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* are both incorrect.

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:6/584) said, "It is reported from some of them that *Kursī* refers to 'His Knowledge' and this is a weak position to hold since the Knowledge of Allāh extends over everything not just as far as the heavens and earth as Allāh said:

$$رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا$$

"Our Lord, You have comprehended all things in Mercy and Knowledge."
(Al-Ghafir: 7)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

4.4.5   The meaning of Kursī is not just to show Allāh's Greatness, Pride and Honour
As for the *Kursī* referring to the greatness of Allāh and His Pride and Honour, this has been mentioned by al-Rāzī (2005:7/12) in his *tafsīr*. Firstly, al-Rāzī himself after mentioning it said it was a weak statement, "Leaving the apparent without proof is not allowed and Allāh knows best."

Secondly, this statement was clarified by the scholar of *tafsīr* al-Ālūsī (AH1431:3/397/398). He said that many who opposed asserting the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh used this explanation for the *Kursī* as they, according to themselves, did not want to liken Allāh to creation. Rather, *Kursī* is a real creation, as the authentic Prophetic reports confirm, as well as the explanation of the Prophet's Companions. However, Zamakhsharī (2009:1/481) in his *tafsīr* asserted that the *Kursī* is actually not real. Below is a table showing how the fifteen translators tackled the translation of *Kursī:*

Translators and their background	Al-Baqarah: 255
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	His *Kursī* extends over the heavens and the earth
Yusuf ᶜAlī Followed Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	His **Throne** doth extend over the heavens and the earth
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	His **throne** includeth the heavens and the earth
Rashad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	His **dominion** encompasses the heavens and the earth
Asad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	His **eternal power** overspreads the heavens and the earth
Mir Ali Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	His **Throne** extendeth over the heavens and the earth
Shakir Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	His **knowledge** extends over the heavens and the earth
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qādyānī translation	His **knowledge** extends over the heavens and the earth
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qādyānī translation	HIS **knowledge** extends over the heavens and the earth
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufi interpretation	His **authority** encircles all the heavens and earth
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufi interpretation	His **Throne** (of Empire and Power and Authority) encompasses the heavens and the Earth
Arberry Non-Muslim	His **Throne** comprises the heavens and earth;
Palmer Non-Muslim	His **throne** extends over the heavens and the earth
Sale Non-Muslim	His **throne** is extended over heaven and earth,
Rodwell Non-Muslim	His **Throne** reacheth over the Heavens and the Earth

From the translations above, there are clear differences with regards to the meaning of *Kursī*. Khān and al-Hilālī leave the word *Kursī* as it is in the translation but add a footnote saying,

"Literally a Footstool or Chair, and sometimes wrongly translated as Throne. The *Kursī* mentioned in this verse should be distinguished from the ᶜ*Arsh* (Throne) mentioned in 7:58, 10:3, 85:15 and elsewhere. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, "The *Kursī* in relation to the Throne is like an iron ring thrown out upon an open space of desert."[133] If the *Kursī* extends over the entire universe, then how much greater is the ᶜ*Arsh*. Indeed Allāh, the Creator of the *Kursī* and the ᶜ*Arsh* is Most Great."

Khān and al-Hilālī have used as their commentary, the mainstream *tafsīr* that explains *Kursī* to be the Footstool or Chair. The meaning that they have stated goes back to the Prophetic tradition and statements of the Prophet's Companions.

Yusuf ᶜAlī, Pickthall, Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī, Mir Ali, Arberry, Palmer, Sale and Rodwell all translated *Kursī* as 'Throne', either with a capital 'T' or small 't'. Even though this might have been one of the interpretations of the mainstream scholar of *tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī, it is still considered incorrect due to it opposing the Prophetic tradition and statements of the Prophet's Companions Ibn Masᶜūd and Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ discussed earlier. Furthermore, the scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr, clarified the error of al-Ṭabarī in this regard. In any dispute or difference, Allāh in the Qurᵒān urges Muslims to go back to the Qurᵒān and the authentic Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*) as Allāh said:

فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ

"If you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allāh and His Messenger if you believe in Allāh and the Last Day."
(Al-Nisāᵒ:59)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

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[133] Al-Albānī (1972:1/175,176) in *al-Saḥīḥah* no.109.

Yusuf ᶜAlī (AH1403) in his footnote to (2:255) adds, "Throne: seat, power, knowledge, symbol of authority." He mentioned all the translations discussed earlier other than the mainstream Sunni one. Auolakh translates *Kursī* as authority which is the metaphorical meaning. He said, "His **authority** encircles all the heavens and earth." Again Auolakh does not refer to mainstream *tafsīr* to translate *Kursī*.

Although Mir Ali translated *Kursī* as 'Throne' (1988:177), he added a footnote from the *tafsīr* of Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdī that this Throne is the comprehensive seat of Allāh's Authority and Knowledge. Hence, he leaned towards the metaphorical interpretation of *Kursī*. Rashad and Asad mentioned that *Kursī* means His 'Dominion' and 'Eternal Power' respectively; However, the Dominion of Allāh extends far beyond the heavens and the earth as al-Fawzan (2001:124,125) mentioned,

"Allāh created the heavens and the earth, the *Kursī* and the ᶜArsh. All of these are creations of Allāh. The heavens are above the earth. The water is above the heavens. Above the water is the *Kursī* and above the *Kursī* is the Throne. The Throne is the highest of creations… And Allāh is above the Throne. The *Kursī* is under the Throne…and cannot mean knowledge because the *Kursī* is created but the knowledge of Allāh is not created as it is an Attribute of His. We can neither say that the Throne is His Dominion since the Throne is created and eight enormous angels are carrying it as in the following verse:

<div dir="rtl">وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ</div>

"And eight angels will, that Day, bear the Throne of your Lord above them."
(Al-Hāqqah:17)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

How can it be said that the angels are carrying His Dominion?"

Shakir, Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī and Sher ʿAlī all translate the *Kursī* as His knowledge. This has been taken from the Jahmites (al-Dhahabī 1999:1/304) and the *tafsīr* such as by Zamakhsharī in *al-Kashshāf* and al-Rāzī based upon the unauthentic report ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ.

Furthermore, to show that the *Kursī* does not mean knowledge as is clear from the Prophetic narration, "Fifty thousand years before creation of the heavens and the earth, Allāh determined the fate (*Qadar*) of the creatures when His Throne was on the water."[134] We cannot say that His Knowledge was on the water and that restricts the Knowledge of Allāh. It may be that those who translated *Kursī* as knowledge or Dominion may have referred to the non-mainstream *tafsīr* of al-Bayḍāwī who says in his *tafsīr*, "It is not a *Kursī* in the real sense… it is said that it refers to His Knowledge and Dominion…and it is also said that it is an object in front of the Throne," (*Tafsīr* of al-Bayḍāwī 2003:1/134). This negation of the *Kursī* being real is not in accordance with mainstream *tafsīr* nor its principles.

[134] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.4803. Cited from Ibn Taymiyyah (1996:184) in *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīdah al-Wasīṭiyyah.*

4.5   Translating the Attribute 'Face'

The Attribute of the 'Face' ascribed to Allāh occurs more than once in the Qurʾān. For example, Allāh mentions the Attribute of 'Face' in:

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ
"And keep yourself patiently with those who call on their Lord, morning and afternoon, **seeking His Face**."
(Kahf:28)
[My translation]

Those translators that used mainstream *tafsīr* asserted the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face' as Allāh mentioned it for Himself. However, there are many translators who did not assert this meaning, possibly they feared falling into likening Allāh to His creation. On the other hand, mainstream *tafsīr* scholars show that asserting the apparent meaning of Attributes 'Face' or 'Hands' is in no way likening Allāh to creation as it is not known how these Attributes are (*bilā kayf*). These Attributes are left as they are without distorting them from the apparent meaning. Just as the apparent meaning of Allāh's Hearing, Seeing, *Istawā* was asserted by mainstream *tafsīr* scholars. Similarly, all other apparent meanings of Allāh's Attributes are asserted without likening Allāh to His creation. For example, our hearing is limited but Allāh's Hearing is unlimited. Our seeing is limited but His Seeing is unlimited. His *istawā* (rising above) does not resemble any of His creation rising up above something. Likewise, His 'Face' cannot be likened to creation according to mainstream *tafsīr*. This is in line with the verses in the Qurʾān clarifying that Allāh does not resemble any of His creation:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ
"There is nothing like Him; and He is the All-Hearer, All-Seer."
(Al-Shūrā:11)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

As for the verses that mention the Attribute 'Face,' there are many examples of them:

وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَام

"And the **Face of your Lord** full of Majesty and Honour will remain forever."
(Al-Rahman: 27)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr (1999:43/272), said, "Allāh mentions that all of the inhabitants upon the earth will perish, they will die altogether and likewise the inhabitants of the heavens except those whom Allāh wills. And none shall remain except His Honourable 'Face' for Allāh, the Perfect does not die, rather He is the All-living and does not die."

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Shanqīṭī (AH1426b:7/75), said, "The 'Face' is one of the Attributes of Allāh, the Most High which Allāh described Himself with. Upon us is to trust in our Lord and believe in that which He has described Himself with, with complete negation of any resemblance to His creation."

Another verse mentioning the attribute 'Face' of Allāh is:

إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَىٰ

"Except only the desire to **seek the Face of His Lord**, the Most High."
(Al-Layl:20)
[My translation]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Al-Baghawī (AH1400:1/168), in *Sharḥ Sunnah*, after mentioning some of the Attributes of Allāh including Face, Hands, descending and rising above the ᶜ*Arsh*, said, "This and similar to it is among the Attributes of Allāh which the Qurᵓān and Sunnah have mentioned. Therefore, it is obligatory to believe in them and to narrate them (the Attributes of Allāh) with their apparent meaning whilst keeping far away from interpreting them with a distorted interpretation (*taᵓwīl*),

keeping away from likening Allāh to His creation, believing that nothing else resembles the Originator of creation neither His Essence nor His Attributes, as Allāh said:

<div dir="rtl">لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ</div>

"There is nothing like Him; and He is the All-Hearer, All-Seer."
(Al-Shūrā:11)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The righteous Predecessors and scholars of Sunnah were upon this. They met these Attributes with acceptance and faith..." [My Translation]

Another verse asserting the apparent meaning of the 'Face' of Allāh is:

<div dir="rtl">إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ</div>

"We feed you only **seeking the Face of Allāh**."
(Al-Insān:9)
[My translation]

From the Sunnah, is the saying of the Messenger ﷺ, from the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī ﷺ, "His Veil is made of light and if He was to uncover it, the *subuhāt* (splendors, radiances) of His 'Face' would destroy everything of His creation that His Sight would reach."[135]

From this narration, it is apparent that the Attribute 'Face' does not refer to 'reward' nor other such interpretations. How is it possible for 'reward' to be described by 'Majesty and Honour' in the verse above? How is it possible for it to have 'splendors, radiances' that destroy everything in sight? Additionally, there are many different supplications where the Messenger ﷺ sought refuge with the 'Face' of Allāh and how he ﷺ distinguished between the Essence of Allāh (*dhāt*) and the 'Face' of Allāh (*wajh*) in the same supplication such as:

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[135] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (Book of Faith 78/79, no.446).

"I seek refuge in Allāh the Mighty (al-ᶜAẓīm) and in His Noble 'Face' and His Eternal Power from the accursed satan."[136]

Is it then correct to seek refuge in a 'Face' which means 'reward' or 'dominion' as suggested by some translators who did not assert the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face'? Reward and dominion are but created things and seeking refuge in something created is in fact an incorrect aspect of worship since Muslims are not permitted to worship anything created.

From the Qurᵓānic verse al-Insān:9, it is apparent that the Attribute 'Face' should not be translated as 'reward' in the first instance because this is not the apparent meaning of the Prophetic narrations above. There are other Prophetic narrations that explain the Qurᵓānic verses regarding the Attribute 'Face', showing that the believers will see Allāh's 'Face' in Paradise on the Day of Judgement and this is what is meant by 'seeking His 'Face''. For example:

$$\text{لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ}$$

"Those who have done good, for them is the best reward (paradise) and **something more**."
(Yūnus: 26)
[My translation]

It has been explained by the Messenger ﷺ that it means, "*Looking at His 'Face', the Most High*"[137] . Therefore, translators need to adhere to translating the Attribute '*wajh*' – 'وجه' - as 'Face' in accordance with the Prophetic tradition, otherwise it would be said that the believers in Paradise will be looking at something imaginary. The scholar of

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[136]*Saḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (1988) no.466.

[137] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:1/163).

ḥadīth, al-Bukhārī (d.AH256), asserts the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face' in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* compilation regarding the verse:

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلاّ هُوَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلاّ وَجْهَهُ

"And invoke not any other *ilah* (god) along with Allāh, *Lā ilaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He). Everything will perish **save His Face**."
(Al-Qaṣṣaṣ: 88)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Al-Bukhārī states, "Chapter: The Statement of Allāh, 'Everything shall perish save His 'Face''."[138]

Another Prophetic tradition asserting the apparent attribute of Allāh, 'Face' is the following narration: Jābir b. Abdullāh ﷺ said, "When this verse, 'Say (O Muḥammad): He has Power to send punishment on you from above' (6:65), was revealed, the Prophet ﷺ said, "I seek refuge with Your 'Face' ". Allāh revealed, "'Or from underneath your feet" (6:65), and the Prophet ﷺ repeated, "I seek refuge with Your 'Face'..."

As for the following verse:

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"To Allāh belongs the east and the west, so wherever you turn (yourselves or your faces), there is the **Face of Allāh** (and He is High above, over His throne)."
(Al-Baqarah:115)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The scholar of mainstream Al-Ṭabarī (2001:2/677) in his *tafsīr*, mentioned different interpretations of the above verse, but he did not himself interpret it to mean other than the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh in a way which befits His Majesty.

The scholar of mainstream al-Saʿdī (2002:63,64) said in his *tafsīr* regarding the verse:

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[138] *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* at the end of his *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*

<p style="text-align: center;">وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ</p>

"To Allāh belongs the east and the west, so wherever you turn (yourselves or your faces), there is the Face of Allāh (and He is High above, over His throne)."
(Al-Baqarah:115)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

"In it is an assertion of the 'Face' of Allāh, the Most High, befitting for Him, and Allāh has a 'Face' which no other faces are similar to."

Some scholars of *tafsīr* after asserting the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh added that the context was referring to direction.The context refers to which direction the travellor turns towards. So when a person prays and he errs in finding the right direction to pray, then wherever he turns he will be facing Allāh. The Messenger ﷺ said that, "Allāh continues to face the servant in his prayer so long as the servant does not turn away his face, so if he turns his face then Allāh likewise turns away from him."[139]

Al-ᶜUthaymīn (AH1423:13) said that the scholars of *tafsīr* differed regarding the above verse (Al-Baqarah:115). Some said that it refers to Allāh's 'Face' in reality and some said it refers to the direction of Allāh when you turn to Him in prayer because Allāh (His Knowledge) encompasses everything. Nevertheless, the mainstream *tafsīr* scholars are in agreement that the attribute 'Face' of Allāh must be asserted as a point of belief without likening Allāh to creation.

The table below shows some of the different translations of the Attribute 'Face'.

Translators and their background	al-Kahf :28	Does the translation assert the apparent Attribute 'Face' of Allāh

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[139] Authentically reported in *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* and *Saḥīḥ al-Targhīb* (2000) no.555.

Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	And keep yourself (O Muḥammad SAW) patiently with those who call on their Lord (i.e. your companions who remember their Lord with glorification, praising in prayers, etc., and other righteous deeds, etc.) morning and afternoon, **seeking His Face**	Yes
Yusuf ᶜAlī Followed Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, **seeking His Face;**	Yes but in the footnote he means the metaphorical meaning, he said: 'Face' is the symbol of Personality of Self. ᶜAlī. Y.(AH1403:737).
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	Restrain thyself along with those who cry unto their Lord at morn and evening, **seeking His Countenance;**	No
Rashad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	You shall force yourself to be with those who worship their Lord day and night, **seeking Him alone**.	No
Asad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	And contain thyself in patience by the side of all who at morn and at evening invoke their Sustainer, **seeking His countenance**	No
Mir Ali Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	And restrain thou thyself with those who call unto their Lord morning and evening **seeking His pleasure**	No
Shakir Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening **desiring His goodwill**,	No
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qādyānī translation	And keep thyself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring **His goodwill**,	No
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qādyānī translation	And keep thyself attached to those who call on their Lord morning and evening, **seeking HIS pleasure**	No
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī –	And keep yourself familiar to those who call upon their Rubb (Sustainer) in the morning and evening **seeking His Pleasure**.	No

Sufī interpretation		
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	(O My servant) Stay tenaciously in the companionship of those who remember their Lord morning and evening, **ardently seeking His pleasure** (keen on the glimpse of His sight, and eagerly aspiring to glance at His radiant Countenance).	No
Arberry Non-Muslim	And restrain thyself with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, **desiring His countenance**	No
Palmer Non-Muslim	and keep thyself patient, with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, **desiring His face;**	Yes
Sale Non-Muslim	Behave thy self with constancy towards those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, **and who seek his favour;**	No
Rodwell Non-Muslim	Be patient with those who call upon their Lord at morn and even, **seeking his face**.	Yes

Khān and al-Hilālī, Palmer and Rodwell all asserted the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh in their translation of:

يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ

(Al-Kahf:28)

as, "seeking His 'Face'."

Yusuf ᶜAlī actually translates يُـرِيـدُونَ وَجْــهَـهُ (al-Kahf:28) as, 'seeking His Face'. However, in the footnotes to this verse he says, "'Face' is the symbol of Personality or Self." Also, in his footnote to the verse al-Raḥman:27, 'و يبقى وجه ربك'. Yusuf ᶜAlī said, "'Face' expresses Personality, Glory, and Majesty, inner being, essence, self, all the noble qualities which we associate with the beautiful Names of God." Yusuf ᶜAlī explains the Attribute 'Face' to mean something else and this is similar to the interpretations given by non-mainstream *tafsīr* scholars such as Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, al-Bayḍāwī and others.

Khān and al-Hilālī also assert Allāh's Attribute 'Face' in other verses that mentioned 'الوجه' such as in:

وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

And the 'Face' of your Lord full of Majesty and Honour will abide forever.
(Al-Raḥman:27)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ

Everything will perish save His 'Face'. His is the Decision, and to Him you (all) shall be returned.
(Qaṣṣaṣ:88)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"And to Allāh belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn yourselves or your faces **there is the Face of Allāh** (and He is High above, over His Throne)."
(Al-Baqarah:115)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Asad translates the following verse:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إلا وَجْهَهُ

"Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] self."
(Qaṣṣaṣ:88)

This is similar to Rashad's translation and Yusuf ᶜAlī's footnotes. They interpret the Attribute 'Face' as 'His Self' or 'seeking Him'. Asad translates a similar verse mentioning the 'Face' of Allāh (al-Raḥman:27) 'ويبقى وجه ربك'. Asad said, "But forever will abide thy Sustainer's Self." In the footnotes to this verse, Asad added, "'face', or 'countenance', a term used metonymically in classical Arabic to denote the 'self', or 'whole-being' of a person – in this case, the essential Being, or Reality, of God." Asad also changes the meaning of 'وجه' to 'countenance' in al-Kahf:28 similar to Pikthall. The non-mainstream scholar of *tafsīr* al-Suyūṭī explains the Attribute of Allāh, 'Face' to mean 'Self' as well and this could be the source of why translators chose this meaning (Al-Suyūṭī: AH1426:4/1363).

However, both mainstream and non-maintsream *tafsīr* also agreed to interpreting the Attribute 'Face' in the above verse (Qaṣṣaṣ: 88) as 'Self or 'His Essence' due to the context of other verses asserting the apparent meaning of 'Face'.

Rashad translated يُريدُونَ وَجْهَهُ (al-Kahf:28) as "**seeking Him alone.**" In another verse (al-Insān:9) Rashad translates the verse 'لوجه الله' as, "**for the sake of Allāh.**" In Al-Raḥman:27, 'و يبقى وجه ربك'. Rashad translates it as, "**Only the presence of your Lord lasts.**" More than once he avoids asserting the apparent meaning of the Attribute of Allāh, 'Face'. The way of mainstream *tafsīr* is to assert the apparent Attribute 'Face' for Allāh without likening it to creation and without rejecting it.

Mir Ali and Yusuf Alī both refer to al-Baqarah:115 to justify their interpretation of the word '*wajh*'('Face') to mean 'Self': 'فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ', as, "so wherever you turn yourselves or your faces there is the **Face of Allāh**."

Mainstream *tafsīr* scholar Al-Ṭabarī (2001:2/677) asserts the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh but also mentions that in certain verses such as al-Raḥman:27, 'و يبقى وجه ربك' - 'Face' refers to the 'Self' or 'Essence of Allāh'.

As for translating the Attribute of Allāh 'Face' to mean 'His Pleasure', 'His Goodwill' or 'His Favour' which Sher ᶜAlī, Mir Ali, Auolakh, Shakir, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī, Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī and Sale have done, then that is not in conformity with mainstream *tafsīr* in asserting the apparent meaning of 'Face'. Rather, this is similar to what is found in non-mainstream *tafsīr* such as that of al-Bayḍāwī (2003:10/2), who does not assert the apparent Attribute 'Face', in his *tafsīr*, but says it refers to His Pleasure and Obedience.

It could be argued that the translations above give the context of those verses since they refer to one doing good seeking the reward and pleasure of Allāh. That being true, but it was common practice of the scholars of mainstream *tafsīr*, in the first instance, to

assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh so as not to follow the way of the Ashᶜarites, Muᶜtazilites and Jahmites since these groups did not assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh.

Mir Ali translates the verse, يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ (al-Kahf: 28) as, "seeking His pleasure." He also translates ' و يبقى وجه ربك ' (al-Raḥman:27) as, "But remain forever the 'Face' of thy Lord." In his footnote 2459, on page1604 he said, "the face stands for the cognisable part of a personality. Here it means the existence of God which is cognizant through His Attributes." Again, there is another avoidance of asserting the meaning of Allāh's Attribute 'Face.'

The other Shiᶜite translation by Shakir also does not assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh, 'Face'. For example, in the verse, ' يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ above in (al-Kahf:28), Shakir translates it as, "desiring His goodwill" and not, "seeking His Face." Another example is in (al-Raḥman:27) - و يبقى وجه ربك Shakir said, "And there will endure forever the person of your Lord." There is no mention of the Attribute 'Face' of Allāh at all. This shows that Shakir also did not assert the apparent Attribute 'Face' for Allāh as Allāh has described Himself with and as Prophet ﷺ has described Allāh with.

The Shiᶜite *tafsīr* by al-Qummī (1968:2/392) explained the verse in (al-Kahf:28) ' يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ' to mean, "seeking His Mercy."Again, this non-mainstream *tafsīr* chooses to avoid asserting the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face'.

The Qāḍyānī translation by Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī translated, يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ (al-Kahf:28) as, "desiring His goodwill" and in another verse (Insān:9), 'لوجه الله' as, "for Allāh's pleasure only." In (al-Raḥman:27), 'و يبقى وجه ربك', Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī translates it as, "And there endures forever the person of thy Lord," All of these translations show that Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī did not assert the apparent meaning of

the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh as was asserted by Allāh and His Prophet ﷺ. The other Qādyānī translation by Sher ᶜAlī is similar to Maulana's. Sher ᶜAlī translated ' يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ' (al-Kahf:28) as, "seeking HIS pleasure." Again, this avoids asserting the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh.

The Brelvī translation by Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī translated 'يُرِيدُونَ وَجَهَهُ' (al-Kahf:28) as, "ardently seeking His pleasure (keen on the glimpse of His sight, and eagerly aspiring to glance at His radiant Countenance)." Here, Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī does not assert the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh. In another verse in (al-Raḥman:27) 'ويبقى وجه ربك', Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī also does not assert the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh, "And the Essence of your Lord, Who is the Master of Glory and Splendour and the Master of Bounty and Honour will remain."

The other Brelvī translation by Auolakh, also does not assert the apparent meaning of the Attribute of Allāh, 'Face' as in, ' يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ' (al-Kahf:28) is translated as, "seeking His Pleasure."

The non-Muslim translators Arberry and Palmer both mentioned the Attribute 'Face' of Allāh in their translations respectively of 'كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلاَّ وَجْهَهُ'

Arberry: "All things perish, except **His Face**."
Palmer: "everything is perishable, except **His face**;"

Palmer also asserts the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh in (al-Kahf:28). However, Arberry does not and changes it to 'countenance' in (al-Kahf:28). Sale and Rodwell did not mention the Attribute 'Face' in the translation respectively of 'كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلاَّ وَجْهَهُ',

Sale: "Everything shall perish, **except Himself**"
Rodwell: "Everything shall perish **except Himself**!"

However, Rodwell does assert the Attribute 'Face' for Allāh in ' يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ ' (al-Kahf:28) as "**seeking his face**."

In conclusion, only three out of fifteen translators asserted the apparent meaning of Allāh's Attribute 'Face', two of whom are non-Muslim. The other twelve translators chose a wide variety of words instead of 'Face' including; 'His Pleasure', 'His goodwill', 'His presence', 'His countenance', 'His favour' and 'His Self' or 'His Essence'.

4.6   Translating the Attribute 'Hand'

Another Attribute of Allāh which has caused difficulty for translators is the Attribute of Allāh's 'Hands' which are mentioned in the Qurʾān either in the singular, dual or plural (sense). According to mainstream *tafsīr*, like *istawā*, this Attribute is asserted but without likening it to creation and without giving it another metaphorical meaning such as 'power' since this does not have a basis in the Qurʾān and Prophetic traditions. Rather, it is to speak about Allāh without knowledge, and that is prohibited in the Qurʾān:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

"And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned."
(Isrāʾ:36)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

The mainstream scholar of *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr (1999:1126), explains the verse in (Mulk:1):

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

"Blessed is He in Whose **Hand** is the dominion, and He is Able to do all things."
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

"The Attributes 'Hands' are clearly mentioned in the Qurʾān, the Sunnah and the consensus."

Ibn al-Qayyim said, "The Attribute 'Hand' has been mentioned in the Qurʾān, Sunnah and speech of the Prophet's Companions and their Successors in more than one hundred places with a variety of situations showing that the (Attribute) 'Hand' is real."[140] [My translation].

From the Qurʾān:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ

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[140]Cited from Muḥammad b. al-Mawṣilī (2004:3/984) in *Mukhtaṣar Ṣawāʿiq al-Mursalah*.

"And the Jews say, "The hand of Allāh is chained." Chained are their hands, and cursed are they for what they say. Rather, both His **hands** are extended; He spends however He wills."
(Al-Māʾidah:64)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī (AH1374:10/455) said regarding the verse above, "Others have said that the 'Hand' of Allāh is an Attribute of Allāh except that it is not similar to the hands of the children of Adam. This is because Allāh, the Most High, mentioned that He has distinguished Adam by creating him with His own 'Hands.' If the meaning of 'Hand' was blessing, power or kingdom, there would not be an understanding of what the distinction of the creation of Adam is, since all of His creation is created by His Power, His will and He is the Master over all of them."

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Baghawī (2002:1/694) said regarding this verse, "the 'Hand' of Allāh is one of His Attributes like 'Hearing', 'Seeing' and 'Face'."

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (1965:3/59), said, "The 'Hand' of Allāh is one of His Attributes like His 'Hearing', 'Seeing' and 'Face' so it is obligatory on us to believe in it, submit and assert it for Him and to read it as it is found in the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah without saying how (*bilā kayf*), without likening his 'Hand' to His creation and without denying it." Allāh said:

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَن تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ

"[Allāh] said: "O Iblees, what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My **hands**? Were you arrogant [then], or were you [already] among the haughty?""
(Ṣād:75)
[Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Baghawī (2002:1/694) said regarding this verse, "The Prophet ﷺ said, "Both his 'Hands' are right." Allāh knows His Attributes so the worshippers of Allāh should believe in them and submit. The scholars of the righteous Predecessors said regarding these Attributes, 'Leave them as they are, without knowing

how they are (*bilā kayf*)'." Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d.AH324) said, "If Allāh intended by this verse:

> ""O Iblees, what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My **hands**?" "
> (Ṣād:75)
> [Umm Muḥammad Ṣaḥīḥ International]

'Power' then Adam would not have any distinction from Satan (*Iblīs*) and Allāh wanted to show the superiority of Adam over Satan. If Allāh had also created Satan with His 'Hands' then he (Satan) would have also used this as proof that he is the same as Adam. Allāh wanted to show Adam's superiority over Satan. Allāh replied to Satan as a response to his pride over Adam for not prostrating to him (Ṣād: 75). This proves that the meaning of 'Hand' in the verse is not 'Power' because Allāh created everything with His Power but Allāh wanted to show the confirmation of His two 'Hands' and satan was not created by them."[141]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* al-Saʿdī (2002: 717), said, "Allāh honoured, blessed and specified Adam with this (creating him with His own 'Hands') over all of the creation. This necessitates not being arrogant towards him."

In another verse, Allāh said,

> وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

> "They made not a just estimate of Allāh such as is due to Him. And on the Day of Resurrection the whole of the earth will be grasped by His '**Hand**' and the heavens will be rolled up in His Right **Hand**. Glorified is He, and High is He above all that they associate as partners with Him!"
> (Zumar:67)
> [Khān and al-Hilālī]

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[141] Cited in Ibn Baṭṭa (2002:453,454), *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* of Ibn Khuzaymah (1997:1/199), *Al-Asmāʾ wa Ṣifāt* of al-Bayhaqī (1993:2/127), *Mukhtaṣar Ṣawāʿiq al-Mursalah* of Ibn al-Qayyim (2004:3/951,952).

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* Ibn Kathīr (1999: 948) said regarding this verse, "Many Prophetic texts explaining this blessed verse and the mainstream Sunni path regarding it and those like it (where Allāh's Attributes are discussed) is to follow the path of the righteous Predecessors (the Prophet's Companions and their Successors) and that is to read the Attributes as they are without delving into how they are and without distortion."

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* Al-ʿUthaymīn (2004:247) said that among the benefits of this verse is that Allāh mentioned 'His Hand' and that which is attributed to His Essence cannot resemble the creation just as His Essence cannot resemble the creation."

In another verse, the Attribute 'Hand' is mentioned in the plural sense.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُم مِّمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ

"Do they not see that We have created for them of what Our **Hands** have created, the cattle, so that they are their owners."
(Yasīn:71)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Some non-mainstream *tafsīr* compilations such as al-Suyūṭī (2002:476) have mentioned that the Attribute 'Hands' means Allāh's 'power' following the Ashʿarite creed of *taʾwīl*. Al-Suyūṭī did not assert the apparent meaning of the attribute 'Hand' in the Chapter Zumar:67. However, this is rejected by mainstream *tafsīr* because the attribue of Allāh, 'Hand' is sometimes mentioned in the dual sense and you cannot limit Allāh's power to being restricted to two. Regarding Allāh's Hands being mentioned in the dual sense, al-ʿUthaymīn (1995:20) states the apparent meaning of the verse:

بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ

"both His **hands** are extended."
(Al-Māʾidah:64)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

… is that Allāh has two real 'Hands' so one must assert that for Him. If one says that this means 'power', we reply to them and say this is taking away the speech from its apparent sense and therefore leads you to speaking about Allāh without knowledge."

Also, it would not make sense in the language to say that Allāh's power is only limited to two and that both his powers are extended.

There are numerous Prophetic texts asserting the apparent meaning of the two 'Hands' of Allāh without likening them to creation, for example,

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The just ones with Allāh will be upon the pulpits of light on the Right 'Hand' of the Most Merciful, and both His 'Hands' are Right."[142]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The Right 'Hand' of Allāh is full and charity does not decrease it in the night and day. Have you come to know what He has given in charity since creating the heavens and earth? It does not decrease what is in His Right 'Hand' and justice with His other 'Hand,' raising (people) and debasing (them) until the Day of Judgement (according to their faith)."[143]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The Lord will take the heavens and earth with his 'Hands' and will say, "I am the Most Merciful"."[144]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Indeed Allāh outstretches His 'Hands' (for forgiveness) in the night for those who sin in the day and He outstretches His 'Hands'(for forgiveness) in the day time or those who sin at night."[145]

[142] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (2005:2/886) no. 1827, Book of leadership.
[143] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (1993:4/386), Book of Tawḥīd no.7411.
[144] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (2005:2/1258) no.2788, Book of the characteristics of Paradise and Hell-fire.
[145] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (2005:2/1265) no.2759, Book of repentance.

As for the consensus of the scholars, then many scholars have confirmed this consensus showing the apparent meaning of the Attribute Hands for Allāh. Amongst them are: Abū al-ᶜAbbās Aḥmad b. ᶜUmar b. Suraij[146], Ḥarb al-Kirmānī (d.AH280)[147], Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī(d.AH324)[148], al-Ajurri(d.AH360)[149], al-Sijzi (d.AH444), Ibn Taymiyyah(d.AH728) and others.

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:3/174) said, "The scholars of Sunnah have all agreed as to the reality of these Attributes."

Al-Ajurri (1996:2/127) said, "It is said to the Jahmite, the one who denies Adam was created with the 'Hands of Allāh', that you have disbelieved in the Qurʾān and rejected the Sunnah and have opposed the Ummah (consensus of the Muslims)."

Al-Sijzī (d.AH444) in (1994:173) said, "The scholars of Sunnah are in agreement that Allāh has two 'Hands.' This has been reported in the texts and narrations, as Allāh said, "With what I have created with my own 'Hands'." and the Prophet ﷺ said, "both His 'Hands' are Right"."

In the table below we can see many of the translators translated 'يد' as 'Hand.' Most of the translators used a small 'h' while only Khān and al-Hilālī used a capital 'H', since Khān and al-Hilālī followed the mainstream *tafsīr* scholars and principles of *tafsīr* in asserting the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Khān and al-Hilālī wanted to emphasise that this is the belief of the scholars of Sunnah and so they capitalised the 'H' to assert what Allāh asserted for Himself and what the Prophet ﷺ asserted for Allāh in numerous narrations mentioned in this discussion.

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[146] Cited from al-Dhahabī (AH1420:2/1216).
[147] Cited in *Ijmāᶜ al-Salaf fi al-Iᶜtiqād* of al-Kirmānī Ḥarb (2011:61).
[148] Cited in *al-Risālah ilā Ahl al-Thagr of al-Ashᶜarī* (2007:193)
[149] Cited in *al-Sharīᶜah* of al-Ājurrī (1996:3/1178).

Translators and their background	al-Mulk: 1
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	Blessed is He in Whose **Hand** is the dominion, and He is Able to do all things
Yusuf ᶜAlī Followed Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	Blessed be He in Whose **hands** is Dominion; and He over all things hath Power
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	Blessed is He in Whose **hand** is the Sovereignty, and, He is Able to do all things
Rashad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	Most exalted is the One in whose **hands** is all kingship, and He is Omnipotent
Asad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	HALLOWED be He in whose **hand** all dominion rests, since He has the power to will anything
Mir Ali Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	Hallowed is He in Whose **Hand** is the kingdom (of the heaven and the earth)
Shakir Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	Blessed is He in Whose **hand** is the kingdom, and He has power over all things
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qāḍyānī translation	Blessed is He in Whose **hand** is the Kingdom, and He is Possessor of power over all things
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation	Blessed is HE in Whose **hand** is the Kingdom, and HE has power over all things
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Blessed is He in **Whose control is the total sovereignty** (of all the universe), and He has power over all things
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M**.,** Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Blessed is He in Whose (Mighty) **Hand** is the kingdom (of all the worlds). And He enjoys perfect command over everything
Arberry Non-Muslim	Blessed be He in whose **hand** is the Kingdom -- He is powerful over everything
Palmer Non-Muslim	Blessed be He in whose **hand** is the kingdom, for He is mighty over all!
Sale Non-Muslim	Blessed be He in whose **hand** is the kingdom; for He is almighty!
Rodwell Non-Muslim	BLESSED be He is whose **hand** is the KINGDOM! and over all things is He potent

On the outset, it seems fourteen out of fifteen translators translated the Attribute 'يَدَ' as hand. However, some of these fourteen translators have changed this to mean something else.

For example, in Asad's translation, even though he translated 'يد' as 'hand' (with an uncapitalised 'h'), he showed that he did not assert the apparent meaning of the Attribute in the footnotes. Asad said that it has different meanings: either it means power or kingdom/dominion or it refers to being generous. As a footnote, Asad added, "For this specific allegory of God's almightiness, see (21:104). There are many instances in the Qurʾān as well as in authentic ahadīth, of the clearly metaphorical use of the term 'Hand' in allusion to God's absolute power and dominion." It is possiuble Asad took his meaning from the non-mainstream scholar of *tafsīr* al-Suyūṭī since al-Suyūṭī said that the Attribute of Allāh, 'Hand', refers to 'power' (al-Suyūṭī: AH1426:4/1364) and in (al-Suyūṭī: 2002:467). This could be the source of why some of the translators performed *taʾwīl* such as Asad.

Regarding the verse in (al-Māʾidah:64), 'بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ', Asad also refers to the *tafsīr* of Zamakhsharī that the Attribute 'Hand' refers to 'His Generosity'.

Similarly, Mir Ali (1988:1712) states in the footnote, "The word '*yad*', i.e., 'Hand' stands for authority, power or might and '*Mulk*' means Kingdom or the Dominion."

Auolakh continued to perform *taʾwīl* by not asserting the apparent meaning of 'Hand' in the above verse by saying it means, "Blessed is He **in Whose control is the total sovereignty** (of all the universe), and He has power over all things" (al-Mulk:1). He changed the apparent meaning of 'Hand' to mean 'control', using the allegorical meaning which is a distortion of the text and without basis from mainstream *tafsīr*.

The third century (d.AH280) scholar, al-Dārimī, in (2010:122) said, "This is a big, newly invented matter in Islam and a great oppression; that your *tafsīr* of the Book of Allāh is followed without a narration while authentic narrations from the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, his Companions and their Successors in righteousness are abandoned."

It may be that those translators who translated 'Hand' to mean 'authority' or 'power' used non-mainstream *tafsīr* such as that of al-Bayḍāwī, who in his *tafsīr,* does not assert the 'Hand' of Allāh. Al-Bayḍāwī (2003:2/152) said, "It is not to be understood that what is meant is asserting the apparent meaning of His 'Hand'." Non-mainstream *tafsīr,* which some translators have used, is a source of many meanings for 'Hand' other than its apparent meaning. Mainstream *tafsīr* along with Sunni scholars throughout generations have asserted the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Hand' for Allāh without likening it to creation. This has been a basis for some of the translators to assert the Attribute 'Hand.'

In conclusion, only twelve of the fifteen translations of the verse in (Mulk:1) asserted the apparent Attribute of 'Hand' for Allāh. This is without likening it to the creation as has been mentioned by mainstream *tafsīr*.

4.7   Translating the Attribute 'Eyes'

The scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* believe that Allāh has two 'Eyes' that befit His Majesty. As with all the Attributes of Allāh, Mainstream *tafsīr* scholars claim that these Attributes should not be imagined or compared to those of the creation. The Attribute of 'Eyes' for Allāh has been mentioned in the Qurᵓān and the authentic Prophetic narrations as well as the consensus of the righteous Predecessors. Allāh said:

وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا

"And construct the ship under **Our Eyes** and with Our Revelation,"
(Hud: 37)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي

"in order that you may be brought up under **My Eye**."
(Ṭaha:39)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا

"So wait patiently (O Muḥammad SAW) for the Decision of your Lord, for verily, you are under **Our Eyes**."
(Ṭur:48)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, "Allāh is not hidden from you; He is not one-eyed.", and he [the Prophet] pointed with his fingers to his two 'Eyes', adding, while *al-Dajjāl* (the Antichrist) is blind in the right eye'[150].

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* al-Ṭabarī (AH1374), said that, 'وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا', means "under our Eye and revelation just as He has commanded since Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ did not know how to build the Ark." This shows that al-Ṭabarī asserted the Attribute 'Eye' for Allāh. Likewise, the scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* al-Qurṭubī, M. said that,

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[150] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.7407, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.2933.

'وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا' means, "under our sight." He also said it means, "under our protection and knowledge." Furthermore, the scholar of *tafsīr,* al-Suyūṭī (2003) said that 'وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا' means "under our 'Eye'" but also said 'Eyes' meant, 'under Our Protection' (al-Suyūṭī: AH1426:4/1363).

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* al-Baghawī (2002:2/399), mentioned the explanation of the verse, 'وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا' (Hud:37) "The Prophet's Companion Ibn ᶜAbbās said, 'under Our Sight'..." Al-Baghawī (2002:3/121) mentioned the explanation of the verse 'وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي' (Ṭaha:39), that it means, "that you may be cultivated under Our Sight."

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* Ibn Kathīr (1999:1049), mentioned the explanation of 'فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا' (Ṭur:48), "Under our Sight and Protection and Allāh will protect you (Prophet Mūsā /Moses) from the people." Here, the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ, and the scholars of *tafsīr*, al-Baghawī and Ibn Kathīr, all assert the Attributes 'Eyes' for Allāh when they mentioned that 'بِأَعْيُنِنَا' means, "under Our Sight." Ibn Kathīr mentioned the context of the verse which refers to Allāh protecting Prophet Mūsā from Pharoah, who wanted to kill all the newborn males. However, Ibn Kathīr had asserted initially the Attributes of 'Eyes'.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Saᶜdī (2002:372), also asserted the Attributes of 'Eyes' for Allāh when commenting on the above verses that they referred to 'His Sight'. He also mentioned the meaning in context, that the verses also refer to the protection of Allāh. This is not opinion-based *taʾwīl* as this was mentioned by some of the righteous predecessors and other mainstream *taʾwīl* scholars based upon the context while still asserting 'Eyes' for Allāh.

Many scholars have mentioned that there is consensus among the righteous Predecessors to assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of 'Eyes' for Allāh. Amongst them is Abū al- Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī (AH1411:129)[151], Abū ᶜUthmān al-Sabūnī (1994:165) and later al-ᶜUthaymīn (AH1407:12).

Earlier Sunni scholars asserted the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh, 'Eyes' and that He sees His creation. For example, the third century scholar, Al-Dārimī (d.AH280), in *Naqd ᶜUthmān b. Saᶜīd* (2012:183,184) said, "In the explanation of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that Allāh is not one-eyed, is an indication that He sees and has two 'Eyes' in opposition to the blind."

Likewise, Ibn-Khuzaimah (d.AH311) in (1997:1//97) *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* said, "It is the duty of every Muslim to assert for his Lord and Creator what Allāh has asserted for Himself, like the 'Eyes.' A non-believer is the one who negates what Allāh has asserted, in what He has revealed with the clarification of the Prophet ﷺ. Allāh sent the Prophet ﷺ to clarify the Qurᵓān. Allāh said, "We revealed to you the Remembrance (Qurᵓān) that you may clarify to them what has been revealed to them."(Naḥl:44) The Prophet ﷺ clarified that Allāh has two 'Eyes' and his clarification was in accordance to the Qurᵓān."

The fourth-century scholar Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜari(d.AH324), in (AH1409:129) said in his book entitled *al-Ibānah,* "Allāh, The Exalted, has mentioned that He has a 'Face' and 'Eyes', and we do not know how they are."

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[151] See also *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn* (AH1411:1/345).

When Allāh said, 'Floating under Our Eyes', he (Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī) in (AH1411:1/345), "The misguided sects like the Muʿtazilites, Jahmites, and the *Qādiriyyah* denied that Allāh has two 'Eyes' despite the saying of Allāh: 'Floating under Our Eyes' ."

The fifth-century (d.AH418) scholar, al-Lālikāʾī (AH1418: 2/457) entitled a chapter in his book *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Iʿtiqād Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamāʿah,* "The Chapter on the texts from the Qurʾān and the Sunnah of His Prophet ﷺ that prove the Attributes of Allāh such as 'Face', two 'Eyes' and two 'Hands'."; then he mentioned the Prophetic narrations regarding Allāh not being one-eyed.

The fifth century (d.AH481) scholar, Abū Ismaʿīl al-Harawī, in (2001:45) said in his book *Arbaʿīn fi dalaʾil al-Tawḥīd*, "Chapter asserting two 'Eyes' for Him (Allāh), the Exalted." Then he mentioned the *ḥadīth* that your Lord is not one-eyed.[152] The aforementioned scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* have shown that they asserted the apparent meaning of the Attributes 'Eyes' for Allāh.

In opposition to asserting the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh is the scholar of non-mainstream *tafsīr* scholar, al-Zamakhsharī (2009) who said that, " ' وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا' is as if Allāh has eyes with which He overlooks with (the building of the Ark)." Here, al-Zamakhsharī does not show certainty in asserting the 'Eyes' for Allāh in his explanation when he said "as if".

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[152] Cited in al-ʿUthaymīn (AH1413) *Fatāwā al-ʿAqīdah* (90-96).

Non-mainstream scholar of *tafsīr*, Al-Bayḍāwī (2013:638) said, " وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي '

(Ṭaha:39), that you be cultivated and cared for and I will look after you and watch over

you." This clarification is an assertion of the apparent meaning of the Attributes 'Eyes'

as Allāh will watch over Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ as he builds the Ark. This assertion is from

non-mainstream *tafsīr* which, in this case, has followed mainstream principles

regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh without denying or distorting them.

Below are the fifteen translations of the Qurᵒān being compared:

Translators and their background	Ṭaha:39
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	And I endued you with love from Me, in order that **you may be brought up under My Eye**
Yusuf ᶜAlī Followed Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	But I cast (the garment Of) love over thee from Me. And (this) in order that **Thou mayest be reared Under Mine eye**
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	And I endued thee with love from Me that **thou mightiest be trained according to My will**
Rashad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	I showered you with love from Me, and **I had you made before My watchful eye**
Asad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	And [thus early] I spread Mine Own love over thee - and [this] in order that thou might be **formed under Mine eye**
Mir Ali Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	I cast down upon thee love from Me (that everyone may love thee); so that **thou mightiest be brought up under My eyes (as I will)**
Shakir Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	and I cast down upon you love from Me, and that **you might be brought up before My eyes**
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qāḍyānī translation	**And that thou mayest be brought up before My eyes**
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation	And I wrapped thee with love from ME; and this **I did that thou mightest be reared before MY eye**
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	And I endured you with love from Me **so that you may be brought up before My Sight**
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	And I cast on you from My presence a reflection of My (exceptional) love (i.e. We have made you so lovely and charismatic that whoever glances at you

	will be fascinated). **And (this was done) so that you may be brought up before our eyes**
Arberry Non-Muslim	And I loaded on thee love from Me, **and to be formed in My sight**
Palmer Non-Muslim	for on thee have I cast my love, that **thou mayest be formed under my eye**
Sale Non-Muslim	bestow on thee love from me, that **thou mightest be bred up under my eye**
Rodwell Non-Muslim	And I myself have made thee an object of love, **That thou mightest be reared in mine eye**

Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī and Sher ᶜAlī of the Qādyānī movement asserted the Attribute 'Eyes' in their translation of all three verses (Hud:37, Ṭaha:39 and Ṭur:48). Khān and al-Hilālī asserted the attribute 'Eye' for Allāh when they translated the verse above (Ṭaha:39) as, "You may be brought up under My Eye."

Some translators such as Mir Ali, Shakir and Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī have asserted and translated the attribute 'Eyes' but some have translated it in the singular sense such as Yusuf ᶜAlī, Rashad,Asad, Palmer, Sale and Rodwell without clarifying that Allāh is not one-eyed like the Antichrist. Some translators asserted the Attributes 'Eyes' by mentioning Allāh's Sight such as Auolakh and Arberry. Three of the non-Muslim translators (Palmer, Sale, Rodwell) have translated and asserted the Attributes 'Eyes' in the singular form for Allāh without clarification. Whereas, Arberry used the noun sight which is an assertion of the 'Eyes' for Allāh. This is in line with mainstream *tafsīr*.

Asad translated the verses regarding the Attributes of 'Eyes' as in Hud:37. In the footnote he said it meant, "under Our protection." In Ṭaha:39, again Asad asserted the Attributes of 'Eyes' "that thou might be formed under Mine eye." However, in the footnote, Asad again said it means, "under My protection and in accordance with the destiny which I have decreed for thee." Similar to this is found in his translation and footnotes to al-Qamar:14. In Ṭur:48, Asad translated the Attribute 'Eyes' as 'under our Sight' and in the footnotes, he commented that it meant, 'under our protection'.

To say, 'under our eyes' means 'under our protection' based upon the context was also mentioned by mainstream *tafsīr*, but only after asserting the Attributes 'Eyes' in the first instance. The difference between this and the negators of the Attributes of Allāh is that the mainstream *tafsīr* scholars would assert the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Eyes' for Allāh and further may comment on the general meaning of a verse based upon the context. Whereas non-mainstream *tafsīr* scholars would hardly mention the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-ᶜUthaymīn (AH1419:1/314), said, "If it is said that some of the righteous Predecessors have said that, 'under Our eyes' means 'under our care' and that you say to distort the meaning of the Attribute is not allowed, so what is your answer? We say that they first asserted the Attribute, in this case the 'Eyes', then they mentioned the general meaning based upon the context. However, the negators of Allāh's Attributes would only mention the general meaning without asserting the Attributes ('Eyes') for Allāh."

The Shiᶜite translation by Mir Ali (1988:971) translates لِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي as, "brought up under My eyes" with a small 'e', and then adds in brackets, 'as I will'. He then quotes the Shiᶜite *tafsīr* of Mirza Pooya as saying that eyes actually means, 'attention and blessing.' This shows that the *tafsīr* he used did not assert the Attribute of 'Eyes' for Allāh and was a reason for Mir Ali's interpretation.

Pickthall (2002:309) did not even mention the Attribute 'eye' when he translated the above verse but rather interpreted it to only mean 'will', "that thou mightiest be trained according to My will."

Yusuf ᶜAlī translates Hud:37 as, "under Our eyes," with a small 'e' for 'eyes'. He also explains in the footnote to (Ṭur:48) that it means; 'under His loving care and

protection'. Auolakh asserts the Attributes 'Eyes' for Allāh and explains that Prophet Mūsā ﷺ will be under His Sight when he is brought up in the household of Pharoah.

As can been seen, there are diverse commentaries regarding whether to assert the apparent meaning of 'Eyes' for Allāh or just to interpret the 'Eyes' in context of the verse. Mainstream *tafsīr* usually asserted the apparent meaning of the Attributes 'Eyes' for Allāh but some also mentioned the context of those verses. Non-Mainstream *tafsīr* mainly avoided the apparent meaning of the Attibutes 'Eyes'.

Chapter Five -Translating the verses related to the
Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

This chapter aims at comparing the various translations of verses related to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. In particular, was he the last Prophet? Was he human? Did he err in matters of religion or just worldly affairs? This chapter shows how various translators have manipulated their translations and interpretations of verses based upon their ideologies and background.

The reason why the choice was made to analyse the translations regarding the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is that it is the belief of every Muslim to testify, that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the last Prophet, after the belief in the Oneness of Allāh. This is considered to fulfill the first pillar of Islam which is the testification of faith. It was discovered that some translators found certain verses regarding Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as problematic to their belief. These verses have been illustrated below with an analysis from the mainstream and non-mainstream books of *tafsīr*.

5.1   Is the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ human?

There are many verses indicating the human nature of the Prophet ﷺ. For example, he was ordered by Allāh to tell the people that he was a human being like themselves:

<div dir="rtl">قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ</div>

"Say (O Muḥammad ﷺ): "I am only a **man** like you.""
(Al-Kahf:110)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Prophet's Companion, ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAbbās ﷺ said, "Allāh taught His Prophet humility such that he does not tower in pride over Allāh's creation. Allāh ordered him

to accept and say, 'I am only a man like you,' except that I have been given revelation and Allāh blessed me with that." [Al-Baghawī (2002:3/70)].

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

"There has certainly come to you a Messenger **from among yourselves**. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful. "
(Al-Tawbah:128)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Baghawī (2002:2/347), said regarding this verse, "you know his lineage and status." Then Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ mentioned that he is from the Arabs, in particular the tribe of Banū Hāshim. Another verse showing the human nature of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is,

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا إِنَّهُمْ لَيَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُونَ فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ

"And We did not send before you, [O Muḥammad], any of the messengers except that **they ate food and walked in the markets**."
(Al-Furqan:20)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

In a similar verse (Al-Furqan:7), Allāh mentioned that the Prophets ate food and walked in the markets, al-Saᶜdī (2002:578), scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* said, "The polytheist mocked at the Prophets (who were human like themselves) and would say "he eats food!"

The following verse shows that all Messengers were human in nature:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَن يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ

"And We have already sent messengers before you **and assigned to them wives and descendants**. And it was not for a messenger to come with a sign except by the permission of Allāh. For every term is a decree."

(Al-Raᶜd:38)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The next verse clearly shows that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was not an angel:

وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِندِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَن

يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ إِنِّي إِذًا لَّمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

"And I do not say to you that with me are the Treasures of Allāh, "Nor that I know the Ghaib (unseen); "**nor do I say I am an angel**, and I do not say of those whom your eyes look down upon that Allāh will not bestow any good on them. Allāh knows what is in their inner-selves (as regards belief, etc.). In that case, I should, indeed be one of the Zalimoon (wrong-doers, oppressors, etc.)."

(Hud:31)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The following verse testifies to the Messengers telling their people that they were human:

قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِن نَّحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَىٰ مَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَن نَّأْتِيَكُم

بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

"Their messengers said to them, "**We are only men like you**, but Allāh confers favor upon whom He wills of His servants. It has never been for us to bring you evidence except by the permission of Allāh. And upon Allāh let the believers rely."

(Ibrāhīm:11)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Therefore, the Qurʾān clearly states that all Messengers on earth that were sent are humans and not angels. The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Saʿdī (2002:422) said;

"This verse means as if the Prophets are saying that, 'in true reality we are human beings like you and there is not anything that will repel what we have brought to you."

Below is a table showing how different translators interpreted a verse clearly showing the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was human.

Translators and their background	al-Kahf:110
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	Say (O Muḥammad ﷺ): "I am only a **man** like you
Yusuf ʿAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation	Say: "I am but a **man** like yourselves
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	Say: I am only a **mortal** like you

Rashad Non-mainstream Mu°tazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	Say, "I am no more than a **human** like you
Asad Non-mainstream Mu°tazili allegorical interpretation	Say [O Prophet]: "I am but a **mortal man** like all of you
Mir Ali Portrays Shi°ite beliefs	(And) say thou: "I am only a **man** like you…"
Shakir Portrays Shi°ite beliefs	Say: I am only a **mortal** like you
Maulana Muḥammad °Alī Qādyānī translation	Say: I am only a **mortal** like you
Sher °Alī Official Qādyānī translation	Say, I am but a **man** like yourselves
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Please declare, (**apparently in outlook**) I (Muḥammad ﷺ) am a **person** like you
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul- Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Say: "**I look like you only (by virtue of my visible creation) as a man**
Arberry Non-Muslim	Say: 'I am only a **mortal** the like of you
Palmer Non-Muslim	Say, 'I am only a **mortal** like yourselves
Sale Non-Muslim	Say, verily I am only a **man** as ye are
Rodwell Non-Muslim	SAY: In sooth I am only a **man** like you

Most of the translations above clearly follow mainstream *tafsīr* clarifying that the

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was a human being like all the other Prophets that came before

him. However, the two Brelvī translations clearly show that they do not consider

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to be human. For example, Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī translates the above

verse as:

> "Say: "**I look like you only (by virtue of my visible creation) as a man.
> (Otherwise just think what congruity you have with me).**""

From this translation, it is evident that his Sufī, Brelvī belief is being used to obscure the clarity of this verse to show that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is not really human. The second Brelvī translator, Auolakh, likewise tries to obscure the human nature of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ,

> "Please declare, (apparently in outlook) I (Muḥammad ﷺ) am a person like you."

Auolakh even translates 'قُلْ' which is a command throughout his translation as "please declare." This shows the extent that he has gone to translate a command as a polite request rather than a command from the Creator to His Prophet ﷺ. This is because in the Sufī, Brelvī belief, they try and raise the status of the Prophet ﷺ above being human but in this case at the expense of lowering the authority of the Creator who cannot command His Prophet ﷺ but only request him with 'please'. In the above verse, Auolakh hides the apparent meaning of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ being human with the additional words in brackets. The question is, if he is not human, what is he according to the Sufī, Brelvī interpretation? They consider him to be 'nūr'- light. They use various verses to justify this such as:

$$\text{يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا}$$

$$\text{وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيرًا}$$

"O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And one who invites to Allāh , by His permission, and **an illuminating lamp**."

(Al-Ahzāb:46)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

However, this refers to the Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ guidance not to his essence as is mentioned in mainstream *tafsīr*.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī, said about the above verse that it means, "he guides with it (light) whosoever follows him from his nation." [My translation]. Therefore, light does not mean that he was physically made out of light but actually guided towards light. To further explain this, the scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Baghawī (2002:3/572), regarding this verse (Al-Ahzāb:46) said, "He named him *siraj* (illuminating lamp) because others are guided through him just as they are guided by a lamp in complete darkness." [My translation].

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr (1999:871), commenting on the same verse (Al-Ahzāb:46) said, "Your affair is clear, in that what you have brought of truth is as clear as the sun in its splendour and brightness. No one rejects it except one opposing the truth." [My translation]. Again, asserting that there is no difference between mainstream *tafsīr* regarding the Prophet Muḥammad's human nature being guided towards light away from darkness.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Saᶜdī (2002:668), said about this verse,

> "it necessitates that the creation is in great darkness, no light was there to be used for guidance therein in the midst of its darkness. Nor any knowledge used as guidance in its state of ignorance until Allāh brought this blessed Prophet. Through him, Allāh lit this darkness and taught, by him, knowledge from ignorance and guided, by him, those misguided ones to the straight path. The (straight) path became apparent to the upright people, so they followed behind this leader. They realised, by him, the paths of good and evil and likewise distinguished between) the people of happiness from the miserable ones. They benefited from his light (guidance) to know the One they are worshipping. They came to know him through his praiseworthy characteristics and upright actions and his rulings based upon wisdom." [My translation]

The scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* clearly explain that the 'light' referred to in the above verse (Al-Aḥzāb:46) is the 'light of guidance', not that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was made of light and therefore not human.

Khān and al-Hilālī's translation reflected this mainstream *tafsīr* meaning of 'light',

"and as a lamp spreading light (through your instructions from the Qurʾān and the Sunnah the legal ways of the Prophet SAW)."

Some translators may have misunderstood the following verse to mean that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was actually made from light:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَن كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُّبِينٌ

"O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger **making clear to you much of what you used to conceal** of the Scripture and overlooking much. **There has come to you from Allāh a light** and a clear Book (i.e. the Qur'an)."
(Al-Māidah:15)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

However, the next verse gives the context of what is meant by light, that is the light of guidance.

"By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and **brings them out from darknesses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path**.."
(Al-Māidah:16)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

As for the belief that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is *Nūr* (light) in his essence, it would necessitate that he was an angel and not a human being since, according to the Qurʾān, it is angels that are created from light not humans. Had there been angels upon the earth, then Allāh would have sent angels as their example to be followed and not Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ who was human.

قُل لَّوْ كَانَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَّسُولًا

"Say, "If there were upon the earth angels walking securely, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel [as a] messenger."
(Isrāʾ:95)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

When the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ died, it was the first Caliph who reminded the people of the human nature of the Prophet ﷺ by saying, "No doubt! Whoever worshipped

Muḥammad ﷺ, then Muḥammad ﷺ is dead, but whoever worshipped Allāh, then Allāh

is Alive and shall never die." Then he recited Allāh's Statement,

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُم مَّيِّتُونَ

"Verily, you (O Muḥammad) will die, and verily, they (too) will die."
(Al-Zumur:30)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

He also recited,

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَن يَنقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ
عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَن يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

"Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger; and indeed (many) Messengers have
passed away before him, If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels
(as disbelievers)? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to
Allāh, And Allāh will give reward to those who are grateful."[153]
(Āl ʿImrān:144)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

If the Prophet Muḥammad was literally made from light and not human, why would he

supplicate for light to be placed in his heart, sight, hearing and limbs? The following is

a supplication of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, "O Allāh, place light in my heart, light in

my sight, light in my hearing, light on my right side, light on my left side, light above

me, light below me, light in front of me, light behind me, and enhance light for me."[154]

Even the non-mainstream scholar Zamakhsharī (A538) explained the verse regarding

the human nature of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as,

إَلاَّ { رسولاً كسائر الرسل { بَشَرًا } مثلهم{هَلْ كُنتُ

"(Am I anything but) a Messenger like other messengers، (**a man**) like you."

The next Prophetic tradition shows that it was angels that were created from light not

human beings. The Prophet ﷺ said, "The angels were created from light, and Iblīs

[153] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.333.
[154] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005), no.1671.

(Satan) was created from smokeless fire and Adam (peace be upon him) was created from what has been described to you."[155]

The scholar of *hadīth* al-Albānī (1985:no.458) said, "This *hadīth* clearly indicates that the angels are the only ones who are created from light, not Adam and his sons, so pay heed and do not be negligent."

In summary, most translators did not have a problem with the verse regarding whether the Prophet was human or not except for the Sufī, Brelvī translators' Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī and Auolakh. These translators did not derive this interpretation from mainstream *tafsīr* but from their own sectarian belief.

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[155] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005), no. 2996.

5.2   Will there be any Prophet after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ with revelation?

According to mainstream *tafsīr,* Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the last of the Prophets and no other Prophet will come after him. This is illustrated in clear verses and in Prophetic traditions. However, there are translators with sectarian backgrounds that hold that he ﷺ is not the last of the Prophets, but that there is an inspired one after him, a Prophet whom God spoke to. The Qādyānī sect, for example, holds this belief and their translation of the Qurʾān portrays this. They hold that Ghulām Aḥmad from Qādiyān was a Prophet in the twentieth century. However, according to mainstream *tafsīr* stemming from clear verses from the Qurʾān, the Prophetic traditions and consensus of his Companions all show that there is no one who will be given specific revelation after the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ himself and that, he is the last of the Prophets. The following verse clarifies that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the seal of all the Prophets:

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

"Muḥammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of
Allāh and **last (end) of the prophets**. And Allāh is Ever All-Aware of everything."
(Al-Aḥzāb: 40)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* al-Ṭabarī (2001:22/16), said, "Allāh mentions that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was not the father of Abū Zayd b. Ḥārithah nor the father of any man... Rather, he ﷺ is the Messenger of Allāh and the seal of the Prophets who completed the line of Prophethood and therefore was sealed. It will not be opened for anyone else after him ﷺ until the Day of Judgement." [My translation]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr,* Ibn Kathīr (1999:868), said, "Allāh has mentioned in His Book and the Prophet ﷺ mentioned in numerous reports that there is no Prophet after him. Therefore, one should come to know that anyone who claimed Prophethood

after the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, then he is a persistent, lying fraud, Dajjāl (evil liar), misguided and a misguider." [My translation]

Commenting on the following verse:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

"This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."
(Al-Māidah:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Ibn Kathīr (1999:285) continued, "This is the greatest blessing of Allāh upon this nation such that He completed their religion for them so they are not in need of any other religion nor Prophet. This is why Allāh made him ﷺ the seal of the Prophets and sent him to mankind and the Jinn." [My translation]

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said to his Companions, "I am the best of the children of Adam, do you know why?" Then he mentioned that on the Day of Judgement he will intercede for his nation. Then they added, "You are the Messenger of Allāh, the seal of the Prophets…"[156] [My translation] This shows that it was a known fact among the Companions of the Prophet that there was going to be no Prophet after him since they testified to this. The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ repeated this many times in his lifetime when he said, "I am the seal of the Prophets, there will be no Prophet after me."[157] [My translation]

To further illustrate this, is the Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ saying, "My likeliness in relation to the Prophets before me is like a man who built a house and beautified it except for an empty space for a brick in the corner and the surprised passers-by would

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[156] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.4712 *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:1/127).
[157] *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (1988) no. 4252, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (AH1417) no.2218.

say, if only you filled that (last) brick." He added, "I am that (last) brick and the seal of the Prophets."[158] [My translation]

These Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic narrations above show that the Sunni Muslim belief according to mainstream *tafsīr* is consistent in that there will be no revelation after the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Further to show this, is the Prophet's ﷺ statement, "The hour will not be established until…evil liars nearly thirty in number all of them claiming that he is the Messenger of Allāh."[159]

The Prophet's Companion and second Caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, re-affirmed that there is no Prophet after the Prophet's death when he said, "Indeed a people used to take (benefit from) the revelation at the time of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and now revelation has stopped."[160]

The following table shows what different translators have said regarding the verse about the finality of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ,

Translators and their background	al-Aḥzāb:40
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	Muḥammad (SAW) is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allāh and **the last (end) of the Prophets**. And Allāh is Ever All Aware of everything
Yusuf ʿAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation	Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of God, and **the Seal of the Prophets**: and God has full knowledge of all things
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	Muḥammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the messenger of Allāh and **the Seal of the Prophets**; and Allāh is ever Aware of all things

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[158] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.3535, *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:7/64).
[159] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.7121, *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:8/170).
[160] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.2641.

Rashad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	Muḥammad was not the father of any man among you. He was a messenger of GOD and **the final prophet**. GOD is fully aware of all things.
Asad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	[And know, O believers, that] Muḥammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is God's Apostle and the **Seal of all Prophets**. And God has indeed full knowledge of everything
Mir Ali Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but an apostle of God and the **seal of the prophets**; And God is of all things-ever the knower
Shakir Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allāh and the **Last of the prophets**; and Allāh is cognizant of all things
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qāḍyānī translation	Muḥammad is not the father of any of you men, but he is the Messenger of Allāh and **the Seal of the prophets**. And Allāh is ever Knower of all things
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation	Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of ALLĀH, and **the seal of the Prophets** and ALLĀH has full knowledge of all things
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Muḥammad (SAW) is not the father of any of your men. He is the Rasool (Messenger) of Allāh and the **last of the Umbia (Prophets)**. And Allāh is the cogniozant of all the things
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī **M.,** Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) is not the father of any of your men, **but he is the Messenger of Allāh and the Last of the Prophets (ending the chain of the Prophets)**. And Allāh is the Perfect Knower of everything
Arberry Non-Muslim	Muḥammad is not the father of any one of your men, but the Messenger of God, **and the Seal of the Prophets**; God has knowledge of everything
Palmer Non-Muslim	Mohammed is not the father of any of your men, but the Apostle of God, and **the Seal of the Prophets**; for God all things doth know!
Sale Non-Muslim	Mohammed is not the father of any man among you; but the apostle of God, and **the seal of the prophets**: And God knoweth all things
Rodwell Non-Muslim	Muḥammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of God, and **the seal of the prophets**: and God knoweth all things

Although all the translators have conformed to mainstream *tafsīr* in the translation of

the above verse, the interpretation that was given by some of the translators in their

footnotes illustrates a different picture. For example, the Qāḍyānī translator Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī shows that they still believe in another Prophet-like leader whom God speaks to just as He spoke to the Prophets. Therefore, the verse above posed a problem for them to translate. So they resorted to footnotes to re-explain the verse according to their belief. The Qāḍyānī sect believe that Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyān was inspired by God and set out laws to be followed. In the footnotes to his translation, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī (2002:836) states, "Though the Holy Prophet was admittedly the last of the Prophets, and even history shows that no prophet appeared after him in the world, yet the Holy Qurᵓān has adopted the word '*Khatam*' and not '*Khatim*', because a deeper significance is carried in the phrase 'Seal of the Prophets' than mere finality. In fact, it indicates finality combined with perfection of prophethood along with a continuance among his followers of certain blessings of prophethood. "

Firstly, on the issue of the mainstream Sunni meaning of the word -خَاتَم in the verse,

it shows the following linguistic meanings:

1. From its meaning is - to be sealed [*Lisān al-ᶜArab* (1997:4/24) of Ibn Manẓūr] and the last of something [*Qāmūs al-Muhīṭ* (2005:1099) of Fairuzabādī, M.] and [*Tāj al-ᶜArūs* of al-Zabīdī (AH1306:8/266)].

2. It also means - a covering, "the hearts were covered such that they do not understand anything, nothing comes out of it just like a seal. The meaning of covering and seal in the language is one." [*Lisān al-ᶜArab* (1997:4/24) of Ibn Manẓūr] and [*Tāj al-ᶜArūs* (AH1306:8/266) of al-Zabīdī].

3. It also means - the end of something or the end result of something, such as the verse: خِتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ – "Whose seal is musk" [(al-Muṭafifīn:26) *al-Muḥkam al-Muḥīṭ al-Aᶜẓam* of Ibn Sayyida (2000:5/156)].

These well-known Arabic dictionaries show that the linguistic meanings above are actually very similar. They refer to the meaning that there will be no other Prophet after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. However, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī states in his translation that it alludes to, "a continuance among his followers of certain blessing of prophethood." This is not found in any of these linguistic definitions and has been added by the translator himself to defend his sectarian belief.

Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī (2002:836) continues, "He (Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ) is the Seal of the prophets because with him the object of prophethood, the manifestation of Divine will in Laws which should guide humanity, was finally accomplished in the revelation of a perfect law in the Holy Qurᵓān, and he is also the Seal of the Prophets because certain favours bestowed on prophets were forever to continue among his followers."

The question to ask is, "which favours bestowed on the Prophets are to continue upon certain followers?" He is referring to the favours of revelation from God since his teacher Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyān himself said, "I alone have been endowed with all that was bestowed on the Prophets."[161] He said, "God's word descended on me in such abundance…" [162] Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī (2002:837) continues,

> "The office of the Prophets was only necessary to guide men, either by giving
> them a law or by removing the imperfections of a previously existing law, or
> by giving certain new directions to meet the requirements of the times,
> because the circumstance of earlier human society did not allow the revelation
> of a perfect law which should suit the requirements of different generations or
> different places. Hence, prophets were constantly raised. But through the Holy
> Prophet a perfect law was given, suiting the requirements of all ages and all
> countries, and this law was guarded against all corruption, and the office of the
> prophet was therefore no more required. But this did not mean that the Divine
> favours bestowed on His chosen servant were to be denied to the chosen ones

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[161] *Ḥaqiqatul Waḥy* p.87 cited in Ehsan Elahi Zahīr *Qadiyaniat* (1984:114).
[162] *Ḥaqiqatul Waḥy* p.87 cited in Ehsan Elahi Zahīr *Qadiyaniat* (1984:118).

among the Muslims. Men did not need a new law, because they had a perfect law with them, but they did stand in need of receiving Divine favours. The highest of these favours is Divine inspiration and **it is recognized by Islam that the Divine Being speaks to His chosen ones now as He spoke in the past**, but such people are not prophets in the real sense of the word."

Initially, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī mentioned favours are bestowed by God to certain followers in the plural and general sense, now he is mentioning Divine favours on His chosen servant, clearly justifying his sectarian belief that another Prophet or inspired one whom God speaks to called Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyān. However, there is no valid proof that God will speak to anyone after the final Prophet ﷺ. Anyone can claim that they spoke to God but without any proof to uphold their claim. This is another sectarian translation and interpretation manipulating the words of Allāh to suit their own agendas.

Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī (2002:837) continues,

"According to a most reliable *ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ said, "There will be in my community," i.e. among the Muslims, "men who will be spoken to (by God), though they will not be prophets" (B.62:6). According to another version of the same *ḥadīth*, such people are given the title *muhaddath* (B.62:6). What is stated above is corroborated by a saying of the Holy Prophet: Nothing has remained of prophethood except '*mubāsharāt*', i.e. good news. And being asked what was meant by '*mubāsharāt*', or good news, he (Prophet) said, "true visions of the believer is one of forty-six parts of prophethood." (B.91:4). Prophethood itself has gone but one of its blessings remains, and will exist forever among the followers of the Holy Prophet. "

What Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī describes as 'true visions' in the Prophetic narration above, are merely good dreams that anyone can have that could come true. There is nothing in those Prophetic narrations to suggest that Allāh will speak to certain people. The proof of these being only good dreams and not revelation is the authentic statement

of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, "O people, there are not any more glad tidings of Prophethood left except for good dreams that a Muslim sees himself or others see regarding him."[163]

The reality is that Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyān did not just claim to receive 'God's word' but he claimed to be the best of the Prophets and Messengers. He said, "The Prophet of God performed three thousand miracles but my miracles exceed a million."[164]

Similar to the Qādiyān translation in claiming Prophethood is Rashad Khalifah, in his translation of the Qurʾān, whilst translating this verse:

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

"Muḥammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allāh and last of the prophets. And ever is Allāh, of all things, Knowing."
(Al-Aḥzāb:40)

Rashad added footnotes to convey his own sectarian doctrine to say that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was the final Prophet but not the final Messenger. He said, "Despite this clear definition of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, most Muslims insist that he was the last Prophet and also the last Messenger. This is a tragic human trait as we can see in al-Ghafir:34. Those who readily believe God realize that God sends His purifying and consolidating Messenger of the Covenant[165] after the final Prophet Muḥammad (Āl-ʿImrān:81) and (Aḥzab:7)".

However, this is a clear contradiction to mainstream *tafsīr* stemming from the Qurānic verses and Prophetic traditions mentioned earlier showing that not only was Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ the final Prophet but also the final Messenger. Prophet Muḥammad

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[163] *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:2/48).
[164] Cited from Ehsan Elahi Zahīr (1984:80) in *Qadiyaniat*.
[165] Referring to himself.

himself is described not only as a Prophet in the Qurʾān but also as a Messenger. Therefore, to claim that he was only the last Prophet is indeed going against the Principles of *tafsīr* whereby the Qurʾān explains itself and the Prophetic traditions explain the ambiguous verses with detail. Take for instance the following verses:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَن يَنقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَن يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

"**Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger**, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him."
(Āl-ʿImrān:144)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Allāh mentioned Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as being a Messenger and a Prophet in one verse:

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِندَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالْإِنجِيلِ

"**Those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write (i.e. Muḥammad ﷺ)** whom they find written with them in the Taurat and the Injeel…"
(Al-Aʿrāf: 157)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

This clearly illustrates how Rashad has tried to select and manipulate verses to claim that he, himself, was the last Messenger and that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was only the last Prophet. In reality, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is addressed in the Qurʾan as the Prophet and Messenger and the last of them. I do not know of any *tafsīr* that claims there is another Messenger coming after the Prophet Muḥammad. Rashad uses two verses to base his:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُم مِّن كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُم مِّنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

"God took a covenant from the Prophets, saying, "I will give you the scripture and the wisdom. Afterwards, a Messenger will come to confirm all existing scriptures. You shall believe in him and support him." He said: "Do you agree with this, and pledge to fulfill this covenant?" They said: "We agree." He said: "You have thus borne witness, and I bear witness along with you.""

(Āl-ᶜImrān:81)
[Rashad]

In the footnote to this verse, Rashad claims that with his coming is a major Prophecy that has been fulfilled and that he is the Messenger of the covenant, "to purify and unify God's messages which were delivered by God's Prophets. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc have been severely corrupted. It is the will of Almighty God to purify them and unify them under the banner of worshipping him alone." (Rashad 1992:364).

This again is in clear contradiction to mainstream *tafsīr*. Although there are many sects that have strayed from the mainstream Sunni path, the original path of Islam will remain until the Day of Judgment. This claim of Rashad is in contradiction to clear Prophetic texts such as, "There will not cease to be a group upholding the truth, they will not be harmed by those who abandon them nor by those who oppose them until the command of Allāh comes and they are upon that."[166]

Therefore, since the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions did not make a distinction between Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ being a Messenger and a Prophet, therefore Rashad was incorrect to do so. Rashad's commentary is left to mere mathematical calculations as found in his numerous footnotes.

Rashad and Maulana are clear examples which show that if the Principles of mainstream *tafsīr* are not adhered to then anyone can claim what they desire when translating the Qurʾān. Rashad claims that he was to complete the final Message of bringing all the religions into one religion but that would mean the coming of Prophet

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[166] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.3640, *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (2005:140) no.1920.

Muḥammad ﷺ was in vain. Likewise, it would also mean that the clear verses showing that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ sealed the Message and completed it are not true also. Allāh said,

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

"This day, **I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you**, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."
(Al-Māidah:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Yusuf ʿAlī (AH1403:1119) mentions in his footnotes, "When a document is sealed, it is complete, and there can be no further addition. The holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ closed the long line of apostles. God's teaching is and will always be continuous but there has been and will be no Prophet after Muḥammad ﷺ. The later ages will want reformers and thinkers not Prophets…"

In this footnote, Yusuf ʿAlī has said that in later ages no Prophet will come but reformers who revive the religion as the Prophetic tradition mentions,

"Indeed Allāh will raise up at the head of each century those who will revive the religion (as a whole)."[167]

The religion of Islam consists of six articles of faith (to believe in Allāh, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day and the Pre-Decree) and five pillars of Islam (the Testification that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh and that Muḥammad is the Last Messenger of Allāh, to establish the Prayer, to give the obligatory Charity (Zakah), to fast the month of Ramadan, and to fulfill performing the Hajj pilgrimage)." It is not known that Rashad Khalifah revived the mainstream Sunni belief in any of these aspects of Islam to be called a reformer let alone a Messenger.

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[167] *Saḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (1988) no.4291.

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ

"And He found you unaware (of the
Qurʾān, its legal laws and Prophethood) and guided you?"
(Ḍuḥā:7)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr, mentioned (1999:1198) the background

to the above verse which was referring to the polytheists accusing Prophet Muḥammad

ﷺ of being forsaken by his Lord. This verse, he says, "Along with the whole chapter

was to reassure the Prophet ﷺ that His Lord was still guiding him. This was mentioned

by the Companion of the Prophet Jundub ؓ and reported by the ḥadīth collections;

Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī [1124,1125], *Saḥīḥ Muslim* [114/1797], *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* [3345],

and the *tafsīr* collection by al-Ṭabarī [30/148]."

This above verse addressed Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ before receiving revelation, but it

posed a problem for translators because it mentions that the Prophet Muḥammad was

initially 'ضَالًّا' unaware before revelation and then was guided by Allāh. The following

scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* suggested similar meanings to each other for the word

'ضَـالًّا'. Ibn Kathīr in his *tafsīr* (1999:1198) as well as al-Saʿdī in his *tafsīr* (2002:928)

said that this verse is similar to the verse in al-Shūrā:52:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا **مَا كُنتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ** وَلَٰكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ
مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا

"And thus We have sent to you (O Muhammad SAW) Ruhan (an Inspiration, and a
Mercy) of Our Command. **You knew not what is the Book, nor what is Faith?** But
We have made it (this Qurʾān) a light wherewith We guide whosoever of Our slaves
We will."
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Both Ibn Kathīr and al-Saʿdī chose to explain the verse in (Ḍuḥā:7) and especially the

word 'ضَالًّا' by using another verse in (al-Shūrā:52) first, since, according to mainstream

tafsīr, the Qurʾān explains itself by itself. Therefore, according to their *tafsīr*, it did not mean that the Prophet was misguided but rather that he was unaware of revelation before it was revealed. To add to this same meaning, the scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Baghawī (2002:4/633) said, " ضَالًّا', unaware of what you were upon and He guided you to *Tawḥīd* and Prophethood". The Successors to the Prophet's Companions, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḍaḥḥāk and Ibn Keysan said, " ضَالًّا', means unaware of or not knowing the signs of Prophethood and rules of the *Sharīʿah* (Islamic legislation), being unaware of it, and He guided you (the Prophet) to it as Allāh said:

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِن كُنتَ مِن قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

"We relate unto you (Muhammad SAW) the best of stories through Our Revelations unto you, of this Qurʾān. And before this (i.e. before the coming of Divine Inspiration to you), **you were among those who knew nothing about it (the Qurʾān)**."
(Yūnus:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Again, al-Baghawī suggested a similar meaning to Ibn Kathīr and al-Saʿdī but by using a different verse (Yūnus:3) as proof. Imām al-Baghawī (2002:4/633) continued with the same verse as Ibn Kathīr and al-Saʿdī:

كَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ

"And thus We have sent to you (O Muhammad SAW) Ruhan (an Inspiration, and a Mercy) of Our Command. **You knew not what is the Book, nor what is Faith?**"
(Al-Shūrā:52)
[Khān and al-Hilālī's translation]

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Saʿdī (2002:928) said, "He (Allāh) found you not knowing what is the Book nor faith, so He taught you that which you did not know and enlightened you to the best of actions and manners."

The following table shows how the various chosen translators translated the verse (Ḍuḥā:7):

Translators and their background	Ḍuḥā:7
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	And He found you **unaware** (of the Qurʾān, its legal laws and Prophethood) and guided you?
Yusuf ʿAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation	And He found thee **Wandering**, and He gave The guidance
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	Did He not find thee **wandering** and direct (thee)?
Rashad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	He found you **astray** and guided you
Asad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation	And found thee **lost** on thy way, and guided thee?
Mir Ali Portrays Shiʿite beliefs	And (He) found thee **in loss** (and immediately) guided thee
Shakir Portrays Shiʿite beliefs	And find you **lost (i.e. unrecognised by men)** and guide (them to you)
Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī Qāḍyānī translation	And find thee **groping**, so He showed the way
Sher ʿAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation	And found thee **lost in love** for thy people and provided thee with guidance for them
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	He found you **deeply moved** in His search so He guided you
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M**.,** Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	And He found you **engrossed and lost in His love** and then made you achieve the coveted objective And He found in you **(a leader) for a straying people** so He provided them guidance (through you)
Arberry Non-Muslim	Did He not find thee **erring**, and guide thee?
Palmer Non-Muslim	and find thee **erring**, and guide thee?
Sale Non-Muslim	And did He not find thee **wandering in error**, and hath He not guided thee into the truth?
Rodwell Non-Muslim	And found thee **erring** and guided thee

Arberry, Palmer, Rodwell and Sale chose to translate the word, 'ضَالًّ', as 'erring' or 'in

error'. Pickthall chose to suggest that the Prophet was **wandering** and directed by Allāh,

while Rashad chose to use the word "**astray**" and then guided by Allāh. Asad chose to

translate 'ضَالًّ' as, "**lost** on thy way."

However, some translators saw that to suggest the Prophet was astray or lost in error was an insult to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and chose to not portray him negatively such as Yusuf ᶜAlī who added in his footnotes,

> "The holy Prophet was born in the midst of the idolatry and polytheism of Mecca, in a family which was the custodian of this false worship. He wandered in quest of Unity and found it by the guidance of God. **There is no implication whatever of sin or error on his part**. But we may err and find ourselves wandering in mazes of error, in thought, motive, or understanding...The Arabic root 'dalla' has various shades of meaning, in i.7, I have translated it as being astray. In Iiii.2 the Prophet is defended from the charge of being 'astray' or straying in mind. Inxii.8 and xii.95 Jacob's sons use the word for their aged father, to suggest that he was senile and wandering in mind. In xxxii.10, it is used of the dead and I have translated it as 'hidden and lost' (in the earth)."

Translating the word, 'ضَــالًّ' 'dalla' as 'erring' unrestrictedly without explanation contradicts the Prophet's character since as the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was known to be truthful amongst his people even before the revelation of Prophethood. His first wife Khadija described him as follows (after he was seeking guidance alone in the cave of Ḥira in Makkah),

"You will not be forsaken at all, for you keep ties of kinship, help the needy, are kind to your guests and you help in the affairs to bring truth and justice."[168]

Mir Ali translated the word 'ضَالًّ' as 'loss' and he wrote in the footnote that this loss was not referring to the Prophet but rather the people being in loss in not knowing who the Prophet was. This is similar to Shakir's translation:

> "And find you **lost (i.e. unrecognised by men)** and guide (them to you)."

This shift in pronouns requires a valid proof. Mir Ali (1988:1872) in his translation states that, "The eight Holy Imāms interpret this to mean that the people did not know the actual position. i.e. though wert lost in their ignorance and God guided mankind to

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[168] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.3.

know thee and thus raised thee in their knowledge." Therefore, Mir Ali used non-mainstream *tafsīr* to justify this shift in pronouns in his translation.

Mir Ali (1998:1872) further states, "That the word 'Zall' [Ḍalla] has been used in the Qur'ān with different meanings such as in (53:2), (12:8), (12:95), (32:10)."

These different contexts show the different meanings that 'ضَالًّ' can have. However, to suggest (Ḍuḥā:7) refers to the people being lost means that the pronoun should be in the plural form and not the singular form as in:

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ

"He found **you** lost and guided you."
(Ḍuḥā:7)

If the pronoun in Arabic had been:

وَجَدَكم

Then, this would have referred to the plural form and could be translated as people in the literal sense, but then the rest of the verb forms in the verse would have had to change as:

وَجَدَكم

فَهَدَاكم

Therefore, Mir Ali's interpretation using the *tafsīr* of the 'eight Holy Imāms' is in clear contradiction to the grammatical rules of the Arabic language as shown above and in contradiction to the other verses that the scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* adduced to explain the verse such as in (al-Shūrā:52):

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ

"And thus We have sent to you (O Muhammad SAW) Ruhan (an Inspiration, and a Mercy) of Our Command. **You knew not what is the Book, nor what is Faith?**"

Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī who offers two possible meanings:

"And He found you engrossed and **lost in His love** and then made you achieve the coveted objective.
And He found in you **(a leader) for a straying people** so He provided them guidance (through you)."
(Ḍuḥā:7)

The first meaning Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī offers is similar to Sher ᶜAlī's translation of: "And found thee **lost in love** for thy people and provided thee with guidance for them." There is no mention of love in the Arabic text but this is their interpretation. This first meaning adduced by Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī suggests that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is actually "engrossed and lost in His love." This state, which is a common belief of the Sufis, implies that you can be lost in love of your Creator, in a state of extreme love which the Sufis call *kashf*. It could be, though, they have used the story of Prophet Jacob and Prophet Yusuf in (Yusuf:95), where Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī (2012:170) translates the verse as:

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي **ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ**

"They said: 'By Allāh, you are certainly in the **(same) ecstasy of (old) love**."

Auolakh, the other Sufī, Brelvī translation translated the verse (Yusuf:95) as:

"They (sons) said, "by Allāh, you are **erred with the same old love**"."

Ibn Kathīr (1999:534) quotes the Companion of the Prophet, Ibn ᶜAbbās ﷺ, as saying it means, "upon your old error" of preferring his son Yusuf over his brothers. Therefore, ضَلَالِكَ does not have to mean 'love'. Rather, looking at the context of the original verse, what becomes apparent is that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ had not received revelation and then was guided with the Qurᵓān. This is also similar to other verses in the Qurᵓān which give the context of the verse (Ḍuḥā:7) as we shall see later.

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The second meaning that Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī presents is similar to Mir Ali's translation of shifting pronouns. Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī shifts the focus on the people being astray and mentions nothing about the Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ state before revelation. This is

probably because Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī comes from the Brelvī sect and their Sufi background influences them to over-exaggerate their love for the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. However, this has caused both Brelvī translations to change the verse meaning from its apparent meaning.

Similarly, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī (2002:1221) stated,

> "Hence he was unable to see the way by himself, and the word *dall* signifies one who is perplexed and unable to see the way by himself, from *dalla*, he was perplexed and unable to see his right course...or *dall* signifies *one who becomes lost* in the pursuit of some object, as Jacob's sons speak of their father as being in *dalal*, i.e. lost in the love of Joseph (12:95), and thus the meaning may be that the Holy Prophet had so devoted himself to the quest of the right way for the world that he had lost himself in that quest;"

Auolakh further states that, "verse 7 has often been wrongly translated and misinterpreted by many scholars as if the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) was astray and Allāh showed him the right way. All the Apostles, Prophets and Messengers of Allāh are righteous, pious and on the straight path, being innocent by birth."

However, it is true, the Prophet was unaware of the Qurᵓān until he was given revelation and this is not a defamation of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Rather, that is what the other aforementioned verses testify to. It is therefore incorrect to translate the word 'ضَـالًّ' - 'dāllan' as astray, rather, the verse should be translated according to the other verses in (al-Shūrā:52):

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ

"And thus We have sent to you (O Muhammad SAW) Ruhan (an Inspiration, and a Mercy) of Our Command. **You knew not what is the Book, nor what is Faith?**"

and (Yūnus:3):

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِن كُنتَ مِن قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

"We relate unto you (Muhammad SAW) the best of stories through Our Revelations unto you, of this Qurʾān. And before this (i.e. before the coming of Divine Inspiration to you), **you were among those who knew nothing about it (the Qurʾān).**"
(Yūnus:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

These verses elaborate on the same context as (Ḍuḥā:7) and explain 'dāllan' to mean that the Prophet had not received revelation yet and was therefore guided to it. This is in the context of the Prophet's life, that he had not received revelation until Allāh guided him. This is why Khān and al-Hilālī chose a more appropriate translation for (Ḍuḥā:7) to be:

"And He found you **unaware (of the Qurʾān**, its legal laws and Prophethood) and guided you?"
(Ḍuḥā:7)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Khān and al-Hilālī stressed that it was the Qurʾān that Muḥammad ﷺ was unaware of since he had not received revelation yet.

The above verse in (Ḍuḥā:7) has caused difficulty for some translators of the Qurʾān, especiall y those that did not rely on mainstream *tafsīr* and similar verses with the same context. The other verses mentioned above show the importance of context when translating the Qurʾān. As for those translators such as Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī and Mir Ali (in his footnotes) who actually shifted the pronouns and from the singular to plural sense and to suggest that the verse (Ḍuḥā:7) refers to the people being lost looking for the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, then this is without proof and a clear distortion of the Arabic text. They probably did to escape saying that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ erred or is astray. This was done, most probably out of respect for Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ but there was no need to make a grammatical change when there is a context from other verses found in mainstream *tafsīr* to absolve the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ from error in the

religion. That being so, the verse in (Ḍuḥā:7) was revealed describing the situation before Prophethood as Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was unaware of revelation and therefore guided thereafter. Furthermore, in the same chapter (Ḍuḥā), it is clear that Allāh is addressing the state of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ not his nation:

مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ

"Your Lord (O Muhammad (Peace be upon him)) has neither forsaken you nor hated you."
(Ḍuḥā:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ

"Did He not find you (O Muhammad (Peace be upon him)) an orphan and gave you a refuge?"
(Ḍuḥā:6)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ

"And He found you poor, and made you rich (selfsufficient with selfcontentment, etc.)?"
(Ḍuḥā:8)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Still we find Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī avoiding the apparent meaning of these verses when he mentioned:

"And He found you seeking (closeness with your Lord), and (then blessed you with the pleasure of His sight and) freed you of every need (forever). Or And He found you compassionate and benevolent, then **(through you) made the destitute non-liable**.
(Ḍuḥā:8)

In Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī's second meaning, he claims that the verse refers to others being destitute but not the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Mainstream *tafsīr* scholars have shown that these verses refer to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and not his nation. Those translators that followed mainstream *tafsīr* in this regard did not sway from the apparent meaning.

However, those that used their own interpretation of these verses changed the apparent meaning and in some cases even shifting the pronoun from the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to his nation.

لِّيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا

"That Allāh may forgive you your sins of the past and the future, and complete
His Favour on you, and guide you on the Straight Path;"
(Al-Fatḥ: 2)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

This particular verse has been problematic for some translators of the Qurʾān since it

addresses a point of belief regarding the Messenger of Allāh, Muḥammad ﷺ, whether

he erred or not and whether this was referring to only worldly affairs. According to

mainstream *tafsīr*, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is considered to be guided by Allāh to speak

the truth with regards to religion and not say anything from his own opinion. Rather,

when he speaks about the religion of Islam, his speech is considered revelation and free

from error.

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ

"Nor does he speak of (his own) desire."
(Al-Najm:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

However, in worldly affairs, he is human and could make a mistake. He himself said

that to his Companions as reported in *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (no.6081) that the Prophet

Muḥammad ﷺ passed by people grafting trees and said, "It would be better if you did

not do that." So they abandoned the practice and there was a decline in the yield. He passed

by again and said, "What is wrong with your trees?" They said, "You said such-and-such."

So the Prophet ﷺ said, "You have better knowledge of your worldly affairs." It is reported

in *Saḥīḥ Muslim* (no.6080) that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ also said, "Verily, I am only

a human being. If I command you to do something in religion then adhere to it, but if I

command you to do something from my opinion, then verily **I am only a human being**."

Scholars of *tafsīr* have addressed the fact that he was corrected by Allāh when he made

a mistake so that the people did not follow him in that mistake. For example, in

ᶜAbasa:1, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was busy talking to influential men when a blind man came and interrupted him. Instead of addressing the blind man, the Prophet ﷺ frowned and turned away from him and Allāh corrected him as soon as that had happened. This shows that he was guided by Allāh as soon as he erred:

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ

"The Prophet (Peace be upon him)) frowned and turned away,"

أَن جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَىٰ

"Because there came to him the blind man (i.e. Abdullāh bin Umm-Maktoom, who came to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) while he was preaching to one or some of the Quraish chiefs)."
(ᶜAbasa:1,2)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Prophets and Messengers may fall into minor sins for which they are corrected. According to mainstream *tafsīr*, Prophets and Messengers are protected by Allāh from falling into major sins. Some scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* consider any errors commited by the Prophets to be before they received revelation such, al-Baghawī (2002:4/167), who quotes Sufyān al-Thawrī (d.AH161) as saying, "past sins refers to the sins committed in the days of ignorance (before Prophethood)."

Al-Baghawī (2002:4/167) also quotes al-Qurṭubī in his *tafsīr* (1/308/309) as saying, "The scholars have differed in this area, whether the Prophets fell into minor sins which they will be accountable for or not? This was after they all agreed that the Prophets are free from falling into major sins and every lowly action that is blameworthy and deficient, this is by consensus with Qadhī Abī Bakr."

Al-Baghawī (2002:4/167) also quotes al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* along with other scholars who say that,

> "Minor sins occur from them (the Prophets) in opposition to what the Shiᶜites believe. The Shiᶜites hold that their Imāms are free from error and also

according to them the Prophets are free from all major and minor errors...
Some of the later scholars, however, have said that Allāh has mentioned some
of their (Prophets') errors and called them to account for them. They (the
Prophets) themselves mentioned these errors that they fell into and how they
were remorseful towards these errors and that they repented from them. All of
these events have been mentioned in many areas and do not accept any other
interpretation. All of these errors, though, do not affect their status but they
were mistakes and out of forgetfulness..." [My translation].

Ibn Kathīr in his *tafsīr* (1999:1017) said regarding the above verse:

<div dir="rtl">

لِّيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ

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"That Allāh may forgive you your sins of the past and the future,"
(Al-Fatḥ: 2)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

"This is among those affairs specific to the Prophet (that his errors are forgiven, past

and present) and no one shares this with him...this is actually an honour for the Prophet

that in all his affairs, he is obedient, righteous and upright, whereby no man past or

present has reached his status." [My translation] Here, Ibn Kathīr agrees that there were

(minor) errors that Prophets fell into but that these errors did not affect their status.

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:4/186) clarified that the Prophets are free from error in what they

convey from revelation and it is not allowed for them to contradict themselves in terms

of the revelation. Like Ibn Taymiyyah, Qāḍī ᶜIyyadh[169] mentioned that the Prophets

were free from falling into major sins but minor errors were possible in worldly affairs

as they were human. Even so, they were corrected by Allāh as in the story of Nūḥ

(Noah), who supplicated for his unrighteous son to be forgiven:

<div dir="rtl">

قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ
إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَن تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

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[169] He is ᶜIyyadh b. Mūsā al-Yahsabī al-Malikī from Marakech. He died in the year AH544. See al-
Dhahabī (1993: 2/212) of *Siyar ᶜAlām al-Nubala*.

"He said: "O Nooh (Noah)! Surely, he is not of your family; verily, his work is unrighteous, so ask not of Me that of which you have no knowledge! I admonish you, lest you be one of the ignorants.""
(Hud:46)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

And likewise, in the story of Prophet Yūnus (Jonah) ﷺ who fled his people (because of their attitude) after being told by Allāh to call them to worship Him alone:

إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ

"[Mention] when he ran away to the laden ship."
(Ṣāffat: 140)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

And Prophet Daud (David) ﷺ repented for his minor error:

فَغَفَرْنَا لَهُ ذَٰلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ

"So We forgave him that, and verily, for him is a near access to Us, and a good place of (final) return (Paradise).""
(Ṣad:25)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)

These verses above clearly show that Prophets did fall into minor errors and were remorseful thereafter. Allāh accepted their forgiveness. Similarly, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ fell into minor human errors in worldly affairs and was corrected by Allāh.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (1965:35,36), said, "The scholars differed regarding the meaning of 'your past sins and future sins.' Some said 'your past sins' referred to sins before prophethood and 'future sins' means after prophethood as mentioned by (the Successors) Mujāhid, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, al-Wāḥidī and others. (The successor) ᶜAṭṭa[170] said, 'your past sins' refers to the sins of

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[170] He is from the scholars of the Qurʾān, lived in Makkah and died in the year AH115.

your parents Adam and Ḥawwa (Eve) and 'your future sins' refers to the sins of your nation **and far is this from the contextual meaning of the Qurān.**" [My translation].

What makes it even more clear that Prophets and the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ fell into minor errors (in which they were corrected by Allāh) is the following narration in *Saḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* and *Saḥīḥ Muslim*: It it is reported that the Prophet would pray until his feet swelled. So ᶜĀᵓisha (his wife) said, "Are not your past and future sins forgiven?" He said, "should I not be a grateful worshipper?" This last *ḥadīth* shows the context of the same wording from the verse in (al-Fatḥ:2) and that ᶜAᵓisha was affirming that his past and future sins were forgiven.

The following table shows how the different translators from their different backgrounds differed in their translation of the verse Fatḥ:2:

Translators and their background	al-Fatḥ: 2
Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream *tafsīr*	That **Allāh may forgive you your sins of the past and the future**, and complete His Favour on you, and guide you on the Straight Path
Yusuf ᶜAlī Followed Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	That **Allāh may forgive thee thy faults of the past and those to follow**; fulfil His favour to thee; and guide thee on the Straight Way
Pickthall (convert to Islam)	That **Allāh may forgive thee of thy sin that which is past and that which is to come**, and may perfect His favour unto thee, and may guide thee on a right path
Rashad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.	Whereby **GOD forgives your past sins, as well as future sins**, and perfects His blessings upon you, and guides you in a straight path
Asad Non-mainstream Muᶜtazili allegorical interpretation	so that **God might show His forgiveness of all thy faults, past as well as future**, and [thus] bestow upon thee the full measure of His blessings, and guide thee on a straight way
Mir Ali Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	**(So) That (O our Apostle Muhammad!) God, may grant protection for thy sake (against) that which hath gone before of thy (followers') shortcomings and that which hath to come later,** and thus He perfecteth His

	bounty unto thee, and guideth the (firm-footed) on the way straight (unto the Lord)
Shakir Portrays Shiᶜite beliefs	That **Allāh may forgive your community their past faults and those to follow** and complete His favor to you and keep you on a right way
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī Qāḍyānī translation	That **Allāh may cover for thee thy (alleged) shortcomings in the past and those to come**, and complete his favour to thee and guide thee on a right path
Sher ᶜAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation	That **ALLĀH may cover up for thee thy shortcomings, past and future**, and that HE may complete HIS favour upon thee on a right path
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	**That Allāh may forgive the sins of your formers and of the laters on account of you** and may complete His favors upon you and may guide you to the straight path
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation	So that **Allāh forgives, for your sake, all the earlier and later sins (of all those people) of your Umma ([Community]* who struggled, fought and sacrificed by your command)**, and (this way) may complete His blessing on you (outwardly and inwardly) in the form of Islam's victory and forgiveness for your Umma (Community), and may keep (your Umma) firm-footed on the straight path (through your mediation)
Arberry Non-Muslim	that **God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins**, and complete His blessing upon thee, and guide thee on a straight path
Palmer Non-Muslim	that God **may pardon thee thy former and later sin**, and may fulfil His favour upon thee, and guide thee in a right way
Sale Non-Muslim	That **God may forgive thee thy preceding and thy subsequent sin**, and may complete his favour on thee, and direct thee in the right way
Rodwell Non-Muslim	In token that **God forgiveth thy earlier and later faults,** and fulfilleth His goodness to thee, and guideth thee on the right way

Khān and al-Hilālī, Yusuf Ali, Picktall, Asad and Rashad all said that the verse referred

to the Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ past and future errors. One of the Qāḍyānī translators,

Sher ᶜAlī also agreed. The four non-Muslim translators, Arberry, Palmer, Sale and

Rodwell also agreed to translate the verse with similar wording. Asad (1980:785) in his footnotes to this verse said, "Thus indicating elliptically that freedom from faults is an exclusive prerogative of God, and that every human being, however exalted, is bound to err on occasions."

However, some translators, especially from Sufi and Shiᶜite backgrounds, were adamant that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ did not err at all and that the verse above in (al-Fath:2), refers to the sins of his nation not his. The Shiᶜite translator, Shakir translates the verse (al-Fath:2) as:

"That **Allāh may forgive your community their past faults and those to follow.**"

Here, Shakir has shifted the focus from the Prophet to the community's sins and the Prophet is commanded therefore to seek forgiveness for their sins not his. Likewise, the Shiᶜite translator, Mir Ali, shifts the focus from the Prophet's sins to that of his followers:

> "(So) That (O our Apostle Muhammad!) God, may grant protection for   thy sake (against) that which hath gone before of **thy (followers') shortcomings** and that which hath to come later."

Since the Shiᶜites believe their Imāms are infallible, it would be expected from them to also believe that their Prophets are infallible, even with regard to worldly errors. Mir Ali (1988:1525-1528), using the explanation of the Shiᶜite non-mainstream *tafsīr* of Pooya who said:

> "It is an undeniable fact under verse 33:33, the Holy Prophet is the divine personality and the Holy Members of whose House (i.e. family) are those purified by God Himself and divinely freed from the weakness of sinning. Those purified ones by God Himself could **never possibly commit any sin** whatsoever. And the Holy Prophet has been described as the one sent to purify the others 2:129, 3:163, 9:103, and 62:2. He who is himself polluted and corrupted can never possibly purify the others... ...He who has entirely submitted himself to God, can never be imagined to have ever rebelled against God's authority. Hence 'Istighfar' (seeking forgiveness) in the case of the Holy Prophet (and also the Holy Ahlul-Bait) would only mean to seek God's protection **from the evils of the others**. Here it would mean the protection

granted **against all the evils intended against him, in the past as well as in the future**."

The Shiʿite *tafsīr* by al-Qummī in (1968:3/437) relates the following from Amer b. Yazīd Biyaʾ al-Sābri who mentioned, "I said to Abū Abdillāh regarding the verse in His Book:

لِّيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا

"**That Allāh may forgive you your sins of the past and the future**, and complete
His Favour on you, and guide you on the Straight Path;"
(Al-Fatḥ:2)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

He said, "He (the Prophet Muḥammad) didn't have sins nor intended them but Allāh placed as a weight on him, **the sins of his nation** then He forgave them for him"."

This, again shows how the Shiʿite *tafsīr* has been used to influence the Shiʿite translations by both Shakir and Mir Ali.

Similar to the Shiʿite translations, the Sufi translation by Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī sees the meaning of past sins and future sins as referring to the community's sins. The shift is clear as can be seen by Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī:

"So that Allāh forgives, for your sake, **all the earlier and later sins (of all those people) of your Umma ([Community]*** who struggled, fought and sacrificed by your command),"

The other Sufi translation by Auolakh (1994) suggests:

"That Allāh may forgive **the sins of your formers and of the laters** on account of you."

Again, this is shifting the focus away from the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. In a similar verse in (Muḥammad:19), Auolakh translates the past sins and future sins of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ mentioned to mean:

"Ask forgiveness for the **sins of yours (foregone near ones)** and for the believers (Muslim), men and women."

Clearly, this is in order to avoid the idea that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ fell into minor mistakes (and was corrected by Allāh), which some of the mainstream *tafsīr* scholars affirmed.

From another angle, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī (2002:995) of the Qāḍyānī sect, translated the verse in (al-Fatḥ:2) as:

> "That **Allāh may cover for thee thy (alleged) shortcomings in the past and those to come**, and complete his favour to thee and guide thee on a right path."

This shows that, Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī (2002:995) too, does not agree with the idea that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ had fallen into minor errors but that these errors are only 'alleged'. Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī further commented:

> "the Prophet never committed a sin and his *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness) meant the asking of Divine protection against the mission of sins; See 40:55a. Even before he was raised to the dignity of prophethood, he was known in Arabia as *Al-Amīn* or the faithful one. **'Dhanbi-ka (your sins)' therefore, here, means not the sins committed by thee but the sin committed against thee,** or the shortcomings attributed to thee (just) as *ithmi* in 5:29 means not the sin committed by me but the sins committed against me. **'seek forgiveness for your sins' means the sins of your ummah**."[171]

Likewise, the Qāḍyānīs believe that their Prophet Ghulām Aḥmad Qadiyan is free from sins so this could be a reason for their translation in order to reflect this.

Ibn Taymiyyah (AH1432:6/6-11), though, explained in detail, "Some interpreted 'seeking forgiveness for your past sins' to mean the past sins of Prophet Adam ﷺ and the 'seeking forgiveness for your future sins' as to mean the sins of your nation. This is known to be futile for the following reasons;

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[171] Nasafi, Qurṭubī in *Al-Jaamiᶜ li Aḥkam Al-Qurˀān*.

1. Prophet Adam ﷺ already sought forgiveness for his own error (while in the heavens, let alone before this verse was revealed) and Allāh already accepted his repentance as mentioned in the following verse:

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِن وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ

"Then they both ate of the tree, and so their private parts appeared to them, and they began to stick on themselves the leaves from Paradise for their covering. Thus did Adam disobey his Lord, so he went astray."
(Ṭaha:121)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ

"Then his Lord chose him, and turned to him with forgiveness, and gave him guidance."
(Ṭaha:122)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

فَتَلَقَّىٰ آدَمُ مِن رَّبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

"Then Adam received from his Lord Words. **And his Lord pardoned him (accepted his repentance)**. Verily, He is the One Who forgives (accepts repentance), the Most Merciful."
(Al-Baqarah:37)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

2. These above verses show that Prophet Adam ﷺ made a mistake and in the following verse, Allāh mentioned that no one should be responsible for someone else's sin.

مَّنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

"Whoever goes right, then he goes right only for the benefit of his own self. And whoever goes astray, then he goes astray to his own loss. **No one laden with burdens can bear anothers burden**."
(Al-Isrāʾ:15)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

3. How can the sin of Prophet Adam ﷺ or Prophet Muḥammad's nation be passed onto the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ when Allāh said:

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُم مَّا حُمِّلْتُمْ

"Say: "Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger, but if you turn away, **he (Messenger Muhammad SAW) is only responsible for the duty placed on him (i.e. to convey Allāh's Message) and you for that placed on you.**""
(Nur:54)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

4. Also why is it not said that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ should seek forgiveness for all the Prophets' sins and their nations rather than just Prophet Adam ﷺ. This shows the futility of saying that seeking forgiveness for your past sins refers to Prophet Adam's sins?

5. In another verse, a distinction is made between the Prophet Muḥammad's minor mistakes and his nation's mistakes:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَاكُمْ

"So know (O Muhammad SAW) that La ilaha ill- Allāh (none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh), **and ask forgiveness for your sin, and also for (the sin of) believing men and believing women.** And Allāh knows well your moving about, and your place of rest (in your homes)."
(Muḥammad: 19)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

6. When the verse (al-Fatḥ:2) was revealed, the Prophet Muḥammad's Companions asked "this verse is for you but what about us?" Then the verse was revealed:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَّعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

"He it is Who sent down As-Sakinah (calmness and tranquility) into the hearts of the believers, that they may grow more in Faith along with their (present) Faith. And to Allāh belongs the hosts of the heavens and the earth, and Allāh is Ever All-Knower, All-Wise."
(Al-Fatḥ:4)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Prophet's Companions knew that the (earlier) verse (al-Fatḥ:2) was referring to the Prophet Muḥammad's (minor) mistakes and not his nation's mistakes."

Ibn Taymiyyah (AH1432:6/10,11) said, "Those who say that the verse (al-Fatḥ:2) refers to the past sins of Prophet Adam and the future sins of his nation have distorted the texts and how can the sins of sinners be attributed to him while Allāh showed that everyone is responsible for their own sins?

وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

"**No person earns any (sin) except against himself (only)**, and no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another"."
(Al-Anᶜām:164)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

In this section, it was made clear that certain verses regarding Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ were problematic for translators. It was also shown that there is a clear distinction between mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr* explanations of these verses. Translators of various sectarian backgrounds stood their ground in defending their religious beliefs by translating these verses using non-mainstream *tafsīr*. However, mainstream *tafsīr* contextualized these verses that caused problems for translators. Mainstream *tafsīr* gives the context of these verses that cause difficulty in understanding for some translators. The translators that used mainstream *tafsīr* managed to translate these verses without having to resort to shifts in subject matter and pronouns.

<u>Chapter Six - Conclusion</u>

Translation from any language to another is not an easy task, especially when translating sensitive texts such as the Qurʾān. Over the years, the translation of sacred texts has been used as a tool for power and control. Throughout history, there are many sects within different religions such as Christianity and Islam that have sought to use translation as a means to further their belief. This thesis has shown differences in the sectarian translations of the Qurʾān chosen regarding the Muslim belief in Allāh and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. This thesis has also shown that *tafsīr* is used as a context for the translation of the Qurʾān by many translators. Some translators of the Qurʾān relied solely on the language and their opinions while others relied on their chosen *tafsīr*. Differences have clearly occurred in the fifteen translations chosen from different backgrounds. Furthermore, different *tafsīr* books that were referred to by the translators also showed clear differences between mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr* regarding the Muslim belief in Allāh and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

This thesis clarifies what constitutes *tafsīr* and how mainstream *tafsīr* differs from non-mainstream *tafsīr* hence resulting in different translations of the Qurʾān. Mainstream *tafsīr*, in general, agree to the principles of *tafsīr*, that is, the Qurʾān explained by the Qurʾān, the Sunnah and the views of the Prophet's Companions and their Successors. Many translators of the Qurʾān take from their own selected *tafsīr* that are in agreement with their opinions. Some translators used more than one *tafsīr* and some relied on their own interpretation to further push forward their belief, in the translation of the Qurʾān.

This research suggests that the Arabic language is an important tool used to understand the Qurʾān. However, there are words that have more than one meaning in different

contexts and therefore translations would differ considerably if left to just the language alone. As a guide to this context, the research shows how mainstream *tafsīr* with the use of Qurʾān, Prophetic texts and the statements of the Companions and their Successors are essential in understanding each verse. However, relying on just language and linguistic features alone in the translation of the Qurʾān, is a limited view in translating the Qurʾān which leads to, in some cases, to a rigid, out of context translation.

An examination of the different sectarian and religious translations suggests a variety of influenced translations in the aspect of belief in Allāh and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. The first research analysed was the translation of the article of faith and this thesis has shown that all but two translations out of the fifteen, have translated this article of faith contextually. This context is in accordance to the main call of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ amongst the polytheists of Makkah which was to show the importance of worshipping Allāh alone. The context of the Prophet's call was not to just clarify to the people that Allāh is the Creator or Lord but to affirm that worship only belongs to Allāh alone. The research shows that Khān and al-Hilālī's translation along with Auolakh's translation have translated the article of faith with this context in mind. It was surprising that Auolakh's Brelvī translation should translate the article of faith with this context while, they, as a sect, call upon the Prophet ﷺ for help, which according to the Sunni belief is an act of worship to other than Allāh. The Brelvī sect, though, consider calling upon the Prophet ﷺ for help as an act of nearness to Allāh and not worship. They would only consider worshipping idols, trees etc as associating partners with Allāh. For Muslims, the article of faith is the core and foundation of one's belief. It was clear that many translations of the Qurʾān had not translated the article of faith in the context of

the Prophet's life to understand his main call and struggle. This is clearly shown in the mainstream books of *tafsīr* which have been used in this thesis. These differences in the translations regarding the article of faith only encouraged me further to look at other areas of the Muslim belief in Allāh, and in particular His Names and Attributes.

Another reason why the translation of the Names and Attributes of Allāh after the article of faith was chosen was because it is known that there are differences between the Sunni mainstream *tafsīr* scholars and those who ascribe to the Jahmite, Muᶜtazilite and Ashᶜarite sects. Mainstream Sunni scholars of *tafsīr* asserted the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh while non-mainstrem *tafsīr* scholars did not. It was discovered that the translators Khān and al-Hilālī have ascertained the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh according to mainstream *tafsīr* in the verses analysed. However, the translation by Yusuf ᶜAlī did not assert the apparent meaning of many of the Attributes discussed in this thesis, by giving other meanings to the apparent meaning in his footnotes. Pickthall also did not assert the apparent meaning of some of the Attributes of Allāh such as 'Eyes' which Pickthall translated as 'My will'. Asad's translation also gave alternatives to the apparent meanings of the Attributes of Allāh, such as 'Hand', in his footnotes. He went further to give alternatives to the apparent meanings of many of the aspects of the unseen such as the angels, the Jinn and events of the hereafter.

The Shiᶜite translations offered by Mir Ali and Shakir used their own *tafsīr* influence to establish their belief which in turn is portrayed in their translation. They did not assert the apparent meaning of some Attributes of Allāh that were analysed such as 'Face'. They asserted the aparent meaning of the Attributes 'Hand' and 'Eyes'. They differed on the attribute *Istawā* whereby Mir Ali asserted that Allāh is on the Throne whereas

Shakir avoided the apparent meaning by saying it means 'firm in power'. Regarding the analysed Names of Allāh, 'الظاهر' and 'الباطن', Mir Ali did not assert the apparent meaning of the Names 'Highest' and 'Nearest', respectively, that are based upon the Prophetic tradition, but rather chose another meaning in the language such as 'Manifest' and 'Hidden'. Shakir, though, did assert that 'Allāh is ascendant over all' for the Name of Allāh 'الظاهر' which is similar in meaning to the 'Highest' according to the Prophetic tradition discussed. However, Shakir did not assert Allāh's Name 'الباطن', the 'Nearest', according to the Prophetic tradition but rather he used another meaning found in the language when he said "Knower of hidden things." It was clear that the Shiᶜite translations were influenced by their own sectarian *tafsīr* as well as other non-mainstream *tafsīr*.

As for the Qādyānī translations offered by Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī and Sher ᶜAlī, then, likewise they did not assert the apparent meaning of some of the Names and Attributes of Allāh based upon Prophetic texts such as, the 'Highest', the 'Nearest', and the Attributes; *Istawā* (Allāh rising above the Arsh) and 'Face'. They asserted the apparent meaning of the Attributes 'Hand' and 'Eyes' but Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī only translated the attribute 'Eyes' in the singular sense which goes against a Prophetic tradition that mentions that, "The Dajjal (the anti-Christ) is one-eyed and your Lord is not One-Eyed."[172]

The Brelvī translations by Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh and Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī showed that they did not assert the apparent meaning of most of the Attributes of

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[172] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1993) no.3439.

Allāh researched in this thesis. They also exaggerated the belief that the Prophet was not human and could not make a minor error (which is corrected by Allāh). Clear additions found in their translations showed the fact that their own sectarian belief had been heavily propagated. They would use *tafsīr* according to what was in agreement with their belief.

Regarding the belief in the Prophet, both the Shiᶜite translations showed that the Prophet was infallible and never made any errors in worldly affairs. This is actually a belief they hold in relation to their Imāms so it is expected that they would say similar about the Prophets.

Rashad's translation mainly used non-mainstream *tafsīr* along with his own number system which he used for interpretation. His translation showed that he did not assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh. He tried to use the number 19 to conclude various meanings to canon forward his own belief.

The non-Muslim translations offered by Arberry, Palmer, Sale and Rodwell did not translate the Names of Allāh; 'Highest' and 'Nearest' according to the Prophetic tradition mentioned in this research, but rather chose another meaning in the language. All four non-Muslim translators translated the Attribute *Istawā* to mean 'sat or settled on the throne' again not according to the Prophetic traditions mentioned in this research. However, all four non-Muslim translators asserted the apparent meaning of the Attribute 'Hand'. Palmer, Sale and Rodwell asserted the apparent meaning of the singular Attribute 'Eye' for Allāh even though it is mentioned in the plural أعيننا in Chapter (Hud:37). Arberry chose the contextual meaning 'sight'.

In conclusion, the translations that followed the Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, Bayḍāwī, Muḥammad ᶜAbduh, sectarian *tafsīr* and other similar non-mainstream *tafsīr* have not asserted the apparent meanings of all the Attributes of Allāh analysed in this research. The non-mainstream *tafsīr* compilations followed the Muᶜtazilite and Ashᶜarite sects in using esoteric underlying meaning for the Attributes of Allāh and had not referred back to the Prophetic traditions that give the context of these verses. Likewise, those translations that referred to these commentaries also used the esoteric underlying meaning for the Attributes of Allāh. This study clarifies the position of mainstream *tafsīr* scholars versus non-mainstream *tafsīr* scholars whereby, mainstream *tafsīr* scholars would mention the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. This research, therefore, has aimed to show the important role that *tafsīr* plays when embarking on the translation of the Qurʾān as this allows for the context to be portrayed.

I believe that the current translations of the Qurʾān are not innocent. Each translation of the Qurʾān has an agenda and role in pushing forward, to the readers, the particular sect's own belief or the translator's own foundations. It is important for the reader to be aware of these varied translations of the Qurʾān and the differences found between mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr*. Some translations do not translate verses about Allāh and His Messenger according to clear Prophetic traditions along with mainstream principles of *tafsīr* as a foundation. In many of the translations, translators relied on the language only. This study also looked at the process of translation, in particular understanding the text first and then translating it bearing in mind there are additions and deletions required to portray the correct meaning. This research has aimed to show the relevance of word order and how it plays an important part in the final outcome of the translated text.

This research is concerned about the differences between various translations in two of the six pillars of the Islamic faith, namely, some of the beliefs in Allāh and His last Messenger. This study analysed a selection of Qurʾān translations from different sectarian and religious backgrounds. This study can be further elaborated upon to look at the rest of the six pillars of the Islamic faith; the belief in the Angels, the Messengers, the Hereafter and Predestination and how verses related to them are translated.

There are also other factors in *tafsīr* that were not taken into consideration. These factors can also aid in the context of how the Qurʾān is understood. In the field of *tafsīr*, Bashīr (AH1420:1/5) of the Islamic University of Madīnah showed (in the introduction of his compilation on what constitutes mainstream Sunni *tafsīr*):

a. "The reasons for revelation (Asbāb al-Nuzūl) as this would put each verse in its correct context.
b. The knowledge of abrogated verses and the verses that abrogated it as this would clarify, again, particular contexts.
c. The knowledge of the Makkan and Madīnan verses and the contrast between their styles since Makkan verses are short and to the point regarding the subject matter of belief, whereas the Madīnan verses emphasise the rules and regulations of Islam.
d. The knowledge of words that are not well known (*gharīb)*.
e. The knowledge of when to start and stop at a particular verse and how this may change the meaning.
f. The knowledge of different types of unanimously accepted recitations and their effect on the meaning of the Qurʾān.
g. The knowledge of authentic Prophetic traditions that clarify the general verses." [My translation].

These points clearly illustrate the importance for the translator of the Qurʾān to familiarise themselves with them, such that they are able to exemplify the meaning of the Qurʾān in the correct context. This thesis does not discuss all of the above contexts influencing the meaning of the Qurʾān. Another area not discussed is the different modes of recitation of the Qurʾān and how this affects meaning. These, amongst many, are areas of study that this thesis can expand upon to compare translations, past and

present. This thesis has encouraged me to partake in a paper delivered at the Cadi Iyyadh University in Marrakech, Morocco in 2012, regarding the Importance of knowing mainstream and non-mainstream *tafsīr* in the translation of the Qurʾān.

This thesis has also uncovered differences found in the present translations of the Qurʾān which were analysed. This has encouraged me to further develop a suitable translation of the Qurʾān that adheres to the mainstream principles of *tafsīr* context whilst adhering to the missed richness found in the Arabic language which many translations did not exemplify. Furthermore, the translation needs to be presented in a manner that is understood in the style of the target language and is accessible to the receiver in a fluent manner. A translation needs to be developed that is non-sectarian whilst at the same time covering important topics that are present in the modern context.
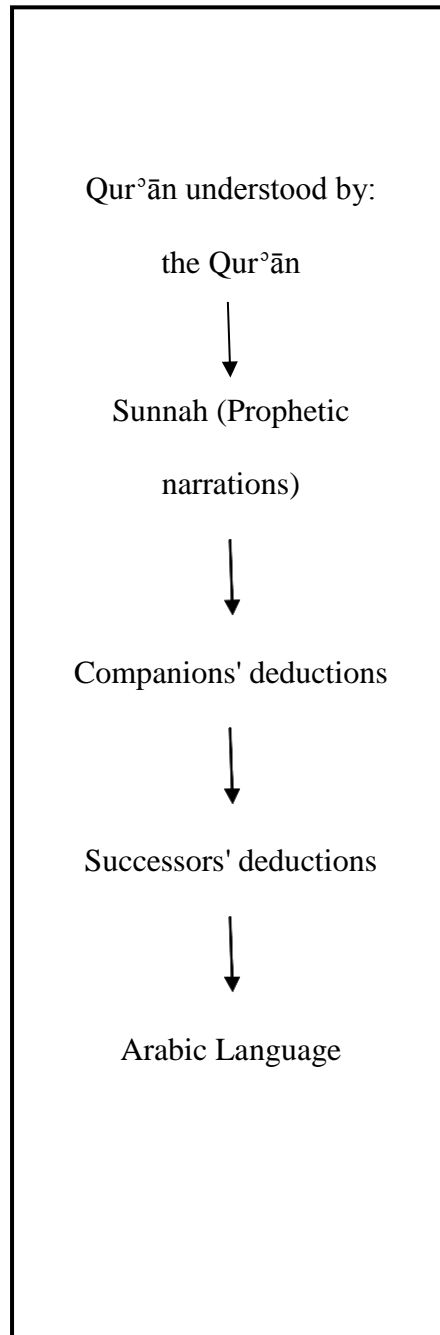
Translators and their background	NOTES	*Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī d.AH310*	*Tafsīr al-Baghawī d.AH516*	*Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr d.AH774*	*Tafsīr* by al-Suyūṭī (d.AH911)	*Tafsīr* by al-Qurṭubī (d.AH671)
Khān and al-Hilālī	Mainly mainstream	YES		YES		YES
Yusuf ᶜAlī	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh	YES		YES	YES	
Pickthall	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh					
Rashad	He mainly used numbers to explain his commentary				YES	
Asad	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh	YES	YES	YES	YES	
Mir Ali	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh	YES			YES	
Shakir	No mention of any *Tafsīr*					
Maulana Muḥammad ᶜAlī	on-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh	YES		YES	YES	
Sher ᶜAlī	No mention of any *Tafsīr*					
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh					
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh					
Arberry	Unnamed commentators used					
Palmer Mentions Sale and Rodwell	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh				YES	
Sale	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh					
Rodwell	Non-mainstream *Tafsīr* were his main influence in translating the Attributes of Allāh					

Translators	Tafsīr al-Qummī d.AH307 and Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī d.AH320	Tafsīr al-Agha Pooya	Tafsīr Zamakhsharī d.AH538	Tafsīr al-Rāzī d.AH606	Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī d.AH685	Tafsīr Muḥammad ʿAbduh d.1905	Tafsīr Ahmed Reza Brelvi
Khān and al-Hilālī							
Yusuf ʿAlī			YES	YES	YES	YES	
Pickthall			YES				
Rashad					YES		
Asad			YES	YES	YES	YES	
Mir Ali	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		
Shakir							
Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī			YES	YES	YES		
Sher ʿAlī							
Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh							YES
Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī			YES				
Arberry							
Palmer					YES		
Sale			YES		YES		
Rodwell					YES		

How the Qurʾān is understood based on mainstream *Tafsīr*

Qurʾān understood by:

the Qurʾān

↓

Sunnah (Prophetic

narrations)

↓

Companions' deductions

↓

Successors' deductions

↓

Arabic Language

Ibn ͨAbd al-Barr (1979:7/145) from his book al-Tamhīd regarding the position of the

mainstream Muslims on the Attributes of Allāh.

يفزعون منها، لأنها لا تصلح الا فيما يحاط به عيانا. وقد جل الله
وتعالى عن ذلك، وما غاب عن العيون. فلا يصفه ذوو العقول الا بخبر.
ولا خبر في صفات الله الا ما وصف نفسه به في كتابه، أو على لسان
رسوله صلى الله عليه وسلم. فلا نتعدى ذلك الى تشبيه أو قياس أو تمثيل
أو تنظير. فانه ليس كمثله شيء وهو السميع البصير.

قال أبو عمر :

أهل السنة مجمعون على الاقرار بالصفات الواردة كلها في القرآن
والسنة، والايمان بها، وحملها على الحقيقة لا على المجاز الا أنهم لا
يكيفون شيئا من ذلك، ولا يحدون فيه صفة محصورة. وأما أهل البدع
والجهمية والمعتزلة كلها والخوارج، فكلهم ينكرها، ولا يحمل شيئا منها
على الحقيقة، ويزعمون أن من أقربها مشبه. وهم عند من أثبتها نافون
للمعبود. والحق فيما قاله القائلون بما نطق به كتاب الله، وسنة رسوله،
وهم أئمة الجماعة والحمد لله. روى حرملة بن يحيى، قال، سمعت عبد
الله بن وهب، يقول، سمعت مالك بن أنس، يقول، من وصف شيئا من
ذات الله ، مثل قوله (وقالت اليهود يد الله مغلولة) (56) وأشار بيده
الى عنقه، ومثل قوله (وهو السميع البصير) فأشار الى عينيه أو أذنه،
أو شيئا من بدنه ، قطع ذلك منه، لأنه شبه الله بنفسه. ثم قال مالك ، أما
سمعت قول البراء حين حدث أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال « لا
يضحى بأربع من الضحايا» وأشار البراء بيده. كما أشار النبي صلى
الله عليه وسلم بيده. (57) قال البراء، ويدى أقصر من يد رسول الله صلى

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56) سورة المائدة ـ آية 64.
57) رواه مالك في الموطأ وأحمد والأربعة.

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