The importance of Tafsīr in Qur’ān translation

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The importance of *Tafsīr* in *Qurʾān* translation

By

Abdulilah Lahmami

A thesis submitted to The University of Durham

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

Department of Arabic

in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

2016
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Transliteration

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I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Paul Starkey for his valuable support, time and advice throughout my research especially in the area of translation. I would like to thank Durham University for taking me on as a PhD student.
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Other Symbols: ☪ 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 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 Qur’ānic 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 Qur’ān. 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 Qur’ān 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-maṭn al-bāṭīn*) and the allegorical meaning (*al-maṭn al-majāzī*). Hence, they perform their own *taʾwīl* (opinion based interpretation), which means to change the apparent meaning of a verse without clear proof from the Qur’ān 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 Qur’ān is used as a basis by many translators of the Qur’ān.
Among the most famous scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* are al-Ṭabarî (d.AH310), al-Baghawî (d.AH516), Ibn Taymiyyah (d.AH728), Ibn Kathîr (d.AH774), Şiddîq Ḥasan Khân (d.AH1307/1890), al-Saʻdî (d.AH1376) and more recently al-Shanqîtî (d.AH1393) and al-ʻUthaymîn (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-Qurṭubî’s (d.AH671) *tafsīr* and al-Suyūtî’s (d.AH911) *tafsīr*. Both al-Qurṭubî and al-Suyūtî were influenced by the Ashʿarite2 sect in understanding the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Al-Qurṭubî 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-Suyūtî, 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 Muʿtazilî3 scholars such as al-Bâqillânî (d.AH403), al-Juwaynî

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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 Abû al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarî (d.AH324) who was a Muʿtazilite for forty years. Thereafter, he refuted them and followed his new teacher Ibn Kullâb but his teacher did not assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh except a few. Later, Abû al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarî left the teachings of Ibn Kullâb 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-Islamiyyîn, al-Risālah ila Ahl al-Thagar* and *Al-İbnânah*. However, many followers of Abû al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarî did not abandon the teachings of Ibn Kullâb 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 Wâṣîl b. ʻAṭa al-Ghazzal. The sect stemmed from the Jahmîte sect since the Jahmites negated the Names and Attributes of Allāh while the Murtazâlîtes only asserted the Names of Allāh but negated the Attributes of Allāh. Wâṣîl b. ʻAṭa disagreed with the famous scholar of his time, Ḥasan Al-Bâsîr (d.AH1100). (“Awâjî 2005/1163-1166) *Firaq Muʿāṣirah Tantasis ib ila--Islâm*. [My translation] and (Al-Fawzan 2003/44.45) *A Glimpse At The Deviated Sects*. 

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(d.AH478), Zamakhsharī (d.AH538), al-Bayḍāwī (d.AH685), al-Rāzī (d.AH925), Muḥammad ʿAbduh (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 Shiʿite sect include al-Qummī (d.AH307) and al-ʿAyyāshī (d.AH320) [Yaʿqub T.(AH1431:257)]. These books of tafsīr mainly relied on the interpretations from either the Ashʿarite or the Jahmite⁴ and Muʿtazilite sects regarding the belief in Allāh. Al-Qummī and al-ʿAyyāshī were used by the Shiʿite⁵ translators of the Qurʾān, Shakir and Mir Ahmad Ali. Al-Qummī and al-ʿAyyāshī were influenced by the Muʿtazilites 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.

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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 Shiʿite 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 concepts...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 Muḥibbudīn The Reality of Shiʿism 2009:13/57/59).
Al-Rāzī’s *tafsīr* follows the Ashʿarite creed while at the same time borrowing from the philosophers and Muʿtazilites. Other translators selected were influenced by the Brelvī⁶ (Sufī) and the Qāḍyānī⁷ 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, ʿAbdullāh Yusuf ʿAlī, Marmaduke Pickthall, Muḥammad Asad, Rashad Khalīfah, Mir Ahmad Ali, M. H. Shakir, Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī, Sher ʿAlī, Dr. A.Majid A. Auolakh, Dr. Muḥammad Ẓahir-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 Shiʿite (Mir Ahmad Ali, M. H. Shakir), Qāḍyānī (Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī, Sher ʿAlī), Brelvi (Dr. A.Majid A.

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⁶ The Brelvī sect of Ahmad 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 Sufism, Shiʿism 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 Qurʾānic verses. (Ehsan Elahi Zahīr 2011) *The Reality of Bareilaviism* edited and adapted from the original work.

⁷ “The Qāḍyānī sect is one of the Bāṭinī 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 Qāḍyānīs and in Africa they became known as Ahmadis. Their founder Ghulām ʿAbdul is from Qāḍyān in India. He claimed to be a Prophet. (ʿAwājī 2005/744) *Firaq Muʿāṣirah Tantasib ilā al-İslām*. [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 ʿAbdullāh Yusuf ʿAlī, 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 Qurʾān with regards to the Muslim belief in Allāh and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Mainstream scholars of tafsīr show that the Qurʾān is first understood by the Qurʾānic 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾānic information will
always be the by-product of any Qurʾān 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 Qurʾānic translations that are representative of mainstream and non-mainstream schools of tafsīr. Whenever quotations of the Qurʾān 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 (Sahih International) was used when a simplified translation was required. I have also chosen to translate some verses in the main text where a clearer, simplified translation is more appropriate.

*Layout of thesis*

This thesis consists of six major chapters:

Chapter One: Translating the meaning of the Qurʾān
Chapter Two: The use of *Tafsīr* in the context of translating the Qurʾān
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 Qurʾān* by Auolakh (1994:Title page) reads, "The Holy Qurʾān 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-Qurṭūbī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Kathīr, Ṣiddīq Hasan 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 Qurʿānic *tafsīr*. In order to justify whether the Qurʿān is translatable, quotes from scholars have been provided from scholars that followed mainstream *tafsīr* explanations of verses from the Qurʿān. 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 Qurʿān, a historical discussion of various Qurʿānic 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 Qurʿān. 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 Sufī 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 Qur’an 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 *tafṣīr* and its usage will aid towards a positive compensation in understanding the context of the Qurʾānic 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 *tafṣīr* and types of *tafṣīr*. Selected examples from Qurʾān 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 Qurʾānic translations are addressed. Such differences are due to the influence of sectarian backgrounds and also due to the specific *tafṣīr* 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." [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 نَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْئٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنتُمْ نُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآٓخِرِ 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 Sahīḥ 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 الْعَدَىٰ وَيَهْبِعِ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِيَّ نُوُلْهُ ما تَوَلَّىَ 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 Sahīḥ International]

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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 - ‘الظَّاهِر’ (Highest) and Bāṭin - ‘البَاطِن’ (Nearest) and the Attributes of Allāh: Istawā (Allāh rising above the Throne), His ‘Face’ - وجهه, ‘Hands’ - يَدِين 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, Muʿtazilites and Ashʿarites 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 Prohet Muḥammad is presented. This research also discusses verses showing that after Prophet Muḥammad, 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 Qurʾān 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.
Chapter One - Translating the meaning of the Qurʾān

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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān.

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 mis-translate, 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

10 Cited from Tāhirī (2005: 352), Al-Qu'rān Bayna Al-Salaf wa al-Khalaf.
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


\(^{12}\)See Bleyhesh al-Amri (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" (Ba'labakī 2003:1022). But to translate:

زید 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 Isrā‘:29:

وَلا تََْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلََ عُنُقِكَ وَلا تُبْسُطْهَا كُلَ الْبَسْطِ فَتََْمُعُّدَ مََْسُورًا

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 ʿAlī, 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 Qurʾān. Some translators captured this while others only conveyed the literal meaning. Although it is important to keep the imagery conveyed in the Qurʾān, 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:

> أحسب الناس أن يتركوا أن يقولوا آمنا وهم لا يفتنون
> "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:

> واحذرهم أن يفتونك عن بعض ما نزل الله اليك
> "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:

> ثم جاهدوا وصبروا إن ربك من بعدها لغفور رحيم
> "Then lo! thy Lord - for those who became fugitives after they had been persecuted."
> (Al-Nahl:110)
> [Pickthall]

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

> ولكنكم فتنة أنفسكم وتبصعتم وارتبتم وغرتكم الأماني
> "But you led yourselves into temptations, you looked forward for our destruction; you doubted (in Faith); and you were deceived by false desires."
> (Al- Hadid:114)
The translator of the Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān. Particular attention should be paid to each different context. The scholar of manstream *tafsīr*, al-ʿUthaymīn (AH1421:27) showed the different meanings that some of the different contexts portray:

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

   "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':

   "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’:

   "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':

"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:

فعل - فاعل - مفعول به

Verb + Agent + Object

مبدأ - خبر

Nominal structural sentence: Subject + Predicate

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 hadith:


cالسلم من سلم المسلمين من لسانه ويده

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 Qur'ān, 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:

إِيهاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيهاكَ نَسْتَعِيَُّ

"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 وَنَسْتَعِيَُّ ِبَكَ

"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 نعْبُدُ is delayed and object pronoun إِيَّاك has been brought forward to show the pragmatic function of ḥāṣr (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 ḥāṣr in the Arabic language.

If we look at the following translations of the Qur'ān, we can see that not all of the translations captured the syntactic restrictive phrase of ḥāṣr. Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī, 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 سَبِيل

"Towards Allāh (alone) upon the people is the pilgrimage to the house (Kaʿbah) for whosoever is able."

(Āl-ʿImrān: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.
"And Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) to the House (Ka‘bah) is a duty that mankind owes to Allāh alone, those who can afford the expenses (for one's conveyance, provision and residence)."

(Āl- ʿImrān: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 ‘هـ’ meaning that Allāh is deserving of this worship. Rodwell, Palmer, Yusuf ʿAlī, 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'.

ʿAbdelwali (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 decipher 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 according to what tense it is followed by. In the explanation of Ibn Ajurrum’s Arabic grammar book *al-Ajurrumiyyah* explained by Abdullāhīmīd (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:

قد 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 Qurʾān:

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 Qurʾān 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."

Abdelwali (2007:11) discusses this loss in the translation in the Qur’ān using the following example:

"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-“Imrān:3)

[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Abdelwali (2007:11) says:

"The word ‘nazzala’ (نزّل) creates a semantic challenge as it signifies the piecemeal revelation of the Qur’ān 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 Qur’ān and the singular revelation of the Torah and the Gospel. To appreciate the nuances of Qur’ānic 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 نزَل should therefore be distinguished in the translation from أُنزِل because the former shows that the Qur’ān was revealed **step by step** in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ. If we compare the translations chosen of the Qur’ān to see if they have differentiated between نزَل and أُنزِل 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-Hilālī "It is He Who has sent down the Book (the Qur’ān) to you (O Muhammad 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 ‘Ālī "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 ʿAlī's and Asad's translations. Both have captured this grammatical difference.

Yusuf ʿAlī 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 Qurʾān need to also differentiate between different semantical meanings of vocabulary used in the Qurʾān to give a clearer meaning to each word.

ʿAbdelwali (2007:11/no.2) gives another example from the Qurʾān (Yūnus:5) of how important it is to translate each word accurately with its semantic meaning:

هو الذي جعل الشمس ضياءاً والقمر نوراً

"It is He who made the sun to be a shining glory and the moon to be a light."

(Yūnus:5)

[Yusuf ʿAlī AH1403:983:484].

ʿAbdelwali (2007:11/no.2) mentions the difference between the usage of ‘ضياء’ for the sun and ‘نور’ for the moon. He further says, "Although the words Diyāʾ ʿan (ضياء) and Nūran (نوراً) seem to be synonymous, the two signify distinct, semantic properties in this Qurʾānic statement. Diyāʾ ʿan 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 Diyāʾ ʿan 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 *Diyāʿān* (ضياء) and *Nūran* (نورة) 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 ʿAlī  "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  "It is He who hath ordained the sun to **shine by day**, and the moon for a **light by night**;"  

Rodwell  "It is He who hath appointed the sun for **brightness**, and the moon for a **light**."

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

Rashad  "He it 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 ʿAlī  "It is He who made the sun a **radiance** and the moon a **light**."

We can deduce that only Asad, and Sher ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī  "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 *Diyāʿān* (ضياء) and *Nūran* (نورة). The word *Diyāʿān* (ضياء) 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 Ālī
showed this distinction by clarifying that the sun’s light is radiant which signifies heat
from within itself. Only Asad and Sher Ālī 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 Qurʾān have made errors by not being detailed enough to show exactly what words
really mean in their linguistic and Islamic contexts. This is why Qurʾānic 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 Shuʾaib ﷺ in the Qurʾān. Capturing the manner in which something
is said is a linguistic feature that is not portrayed in many translations of the Qurʾān. If
we take the following verse with regard to the Prophet Shuʾaib ﷺ being mocked by the
people around him, we can see the sarcastic manner in how they spoke to him:

"They said: 'O Shuʾaib! 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 Shu‘aib tas. 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 ʿAlī, Palmer and Rodwell all captured the feature of sarcasm, using an exclamation mark at the end of the verse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translator</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maulana</td>
<td>&quot;Forsooth thou art the forbearing, the right-directing one!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall</td>
<td>&quot;Lo! thou art the mild, the guide to right behaviour.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf Ali</td>
<td>&quot;thou art the one that forbeareth with faults and is right-minded!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>&quot;Thou art, forsooth, the clement and straightforward one!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell</td>
<td>&quot;Thou forsooth art the mild, the right director!&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

"They said: "O Shu‘aib! 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 Qurʾān being studied. It is important to highlight this linguistic feature to give a better picture as to how the people of Prophet Shu‘aib tas 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."

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### 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 Qur’ān. 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."\(^\text{13}\)

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: ‘atha‘ja ṣadrī’ ‘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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\(^\text{13}\) 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:
"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 Sahīḥ International]

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

"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 Sahīḥ 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:

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

The belief in the Basin of Allah’s Messenger (may we bless and peace of Allah be upon him) his nation comes towards it to drink from it, and whose 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 (Baʿalbākī 2003:560) of the root word ‘ذاد’, it means:

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to drive away, chase away

to defend, protect
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The translator above chose the second meaning which is in the wrong context in the narration. The word ‘ذاد’ is further clarified in another wording of the hadīth 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 ليُذَادَنَ رجال عن حوضي ؛ كما يُذَادَ البعير الضال، أناديهم: ألا هلم ! فيقال: إنهم 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 (1540/1997:95-14

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."

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 فَأَتِنَا بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِيََّ فَإِنْ لََْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّهَا أُنْزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ لا إِلَهَ إِلا هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنْ تُمْ 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."

And if they do not respond to you - then know that the Qurʾān 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 Saḥīḥ 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 فِِ رَيْبٍ ممِها نُزلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِنْ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِيََّ (23) قَالُوا مَنْ تَفْعَلَ وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأَنَا النُّورُ الَّذِي قَوْفُهَا النَّاسُ وَالحِجَارَةُ أُعِدهتْ 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 Saḥīḥ International]

The scholar of tafsīr, al-Qurtubi (d.AH671) in (AH1413:15/230) said, "If this Qurʾān were to be translated it would not be called the Qurʾān." 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.Šāmir F. S. (2007: preface), an Arabic linguist, states,

"Every time I looked at the balance of the Qurʾānic texts, it only increased me in certainty and insight that the Qurʾān, 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 Qurʾān have conceded that the Qurʾān cannot be translated. For example, Pickthall (2002) states in his foreword to his Qurʾān 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 Majmūʿal-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 hadīth 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 Qur’ān 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 Yūhannā Ibn al-Baṭrīq and Ibn Naʿīma al-Ḥimṣī which was unsuccessful (Baker and Hanna) to the more successful 'sense for sense' shown in Ibn Ishaq's and al-Jawhari's translations. Ibn Ishaq 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 Qur’an. 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. Maḥayergy (1984) explains this by showing the animosity
present against the Muslims at that time. Ma‘ayergy 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 Qur’an 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 1\textsuperscript{st}. He translated the Qur’an as a political reaction towards the Ottoman Empire in Turkey. He included in his translation introductions stating that the Qur’an 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 Qur’an 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

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

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 Qur‘ān' (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).

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-ʿAlaq. Rodwell only put the first five verses of Sūrat al-ʿAlaq 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*.

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) criticises 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 ʿAbdul Hakim Khān and published in 1905, a time near the apogee of missionary activity in India" (Bleyhesh al-ʿAmri 2010:103). "ʿAbdul 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 Shiʿite 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].

The Meaning of the Holy Qurʾān or The Holy Qurʾān Translation and Commentary is by ‘Abdullāh Yusuf ‘Alī. "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 ‘Alī 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-ḍīn 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 ‘Alī (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
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, Shi‘ite, Ahle hadith 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 Mu‘tazilite 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‘ān by Dr. Muḥammad Tahir-ul-Qadrī*

A more recent Brelvī translation of the Quran is by Dr. Muḥammad Tahir-ul-Qadrī (2012). Again, Tahir-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 ‘ʿAlif, 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 Qurʼān by Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlî

Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlî was the founder of the Lahori sect of the Qādyānis in Pakistan. The Holy Qurʾān by Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlî was published seven times in England. The first edition was in 1916/17. The translator belongs to the Qāḍyānī sect. Qāḍyānīs 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

whereby no prophet will follow him. The Qāḍyānī sect also believes that Allāh did not raise Prophet Īṣā (Jesus Christ) to Himself but that he (Jesus Christ) died (contrary to the mainstream Sunni belief). Yet, Maulana Muḥammad Ālī (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 ālī gives his own interpretation of the Qur’ānic verses related to the Promised Messiah and the Prophet Muḥammad as the seal of the prophets. Maulana Muḥammad ālī 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 Qur ān (al-Jinn:01) and the stoning of Abraha’a’s army by the birds (al-Fil:3) when Abraha tried to attack the Ka’ba in Makkah.20 Maulana Muḥammad ālī also does not define the apparent meaning of some of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. Maulana Muḥammad ālī (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 Qur’an by Sher Ālī

The Qāḍyānī sect has another translation based on the Qāḍyānī teachings of Ghulām Aḥmad (d.1889). This is portrayed in Sher Ālī’s official Qāḍyānī translation which he

called *The Holy Qur ān* 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 ʿAlī's translation, Sher ʿAlī interpolated more blatantly the Qādyānī doctrines of Mirza Ghulām Ahmad (1835-1908). Sher ʿAlī affirmed the Prophethood of his teacher Mirza Ghulām Ahmad 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 Qur ānic 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 Qur ān. He published his translation on eight separate occasions and initially called it, *The Glorious Qur ān: Standard Translation* and published from 1978 to the year 2001. He boasts that he is the first Arab to translate the Qur ān. His translation claimed to use computers to show the numerical miracle of the Qur ān, namely pointing out that number 19 is the number that the Qur ānic 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 ‘Ulūm 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.⁴¹

12. The Message of The Qur’ān by Muḥammad Asad

The Message of The Qur’ān 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 Qur’ān by translating their texts in a metaphorical way. His translation contains serious departures from the mainstream Muslim viewpoint on a number of Qur’ānic statements. Asad appears to be reluctant to accept the literal meaning of some Qur’ānic 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 Qur’ān 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:i-x) 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,

²¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5puPkJc1us [Accessed 22nd July 2015].
al-Baghawī and al-Ṭabarī. Muḥammad Asad was also influenced by the translation of Muḥammad ʿAlī Lahori of the Qādiyānī sect. Muḥammad Asad (1997:v) said, "As has been pointed out by that great Islamic scholar Muḥammad ʿAbduh, 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 ʿAbduh (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. Muhammad 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-Qurtubī (d.AH671) and Ibn Kathīr in addition to Sahīh 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 "Alī. 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-Qurtubī'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 Qurʾān and that of his Companions. Although Khān and al-Hilālī acknowledged that they used al-Ṭabarī's, Ibn Kathīr's and al-Qurtubī's tafsīr, they mainly relied on the first two in asserting the apparent meaning of Allāh's Names and Attributes since al-Qurtubī'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 ‘Abdullāh Yusuf’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 Shi‘ite translations of the Qur‘ān. The likes of "M.H. Shakir’s first translation of the Qur‘ān was published in Pakistan in 1968 then reprinted in 1974 under Shi‘ite supervision. It was without doubt that Shakir wanted to display the Shi‘ite belief in his translation. He would show that the fourth Caliph, ‘Alī, was the successor to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who has complete knowledge of the Book. He then went on to claim the infallibility of the twelve Imāms and they alone had the capability of explaining the Qur‘ān. His translation was published forty three times." (Kidwai 2007:265-282).

15. The Holy Qur‘ān by Mir Aḥmad Ali

In the Shi‘ite influenced translation, The Holy Qur‘ān by Mir Aḥmad Ali, the translator relies heavily on Tafsīr al-Qummī and Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī, as well as the tafsīr of his
spiritual advisor, Ayatollah 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 Shi‘ite-audience with instructions on Shi‘ite doctrine. The tafsīr used has a heavy sectarian bias and there is disparagement of the Companions of the Prophet except for his family. For example, Ayatollah Mirza Mahdī Pooya Yazdī states, in his introduction, that neither of the first two Caliphs was an authority on the Qurʾān and that there are "authentic evidences of their ignorance of it." He says this even though the Prophet himself said, "And follow the two Caliphs after me, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar."23

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

Mir Ali (1988:6a) claims that the only medium to understand the Qurʾān through the Prophet, is by way of the Companion and fourth Caliph ʿAlī 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

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.” Mîr 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 tafsîr. All of the Companions are praised in the Qurʾān and those who follow them have also been praised,

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الأوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالذِّينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ رضِيَ اللَّهُ عنْهُمْ 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 (Ṣābiqūn) 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:

24 The narrators of this ḥadîth have been criticised by ḥadîth scholars found in Khaṭīb al-Baghdādî’s compilation Tarîkh Baghdâd (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 الرسُولَ مِن بعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْبَيَانَ وَيَتَبَيَّنُ عَلَيْهِ مَا نَوَلَّى مَا نَوَلَّى وَنَصِيرَ 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-Nisā:115)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ 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 \textit{tafsīr} of al-Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, Thaʿlabī and al-Baydāwī.

The Shiʿites also refer to their sectarian \textit{tafsīr} called \textit{Tafsīr al-Qummī} by Abū al- Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d.AH307). Thus, Shiʿite translators digress from the mainstream \textit{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).

\textit{Conclusion}

\(^{25}\) \textit{Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī} (no. 2652) and \textit{Saḥīḥ 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."(My translation)

These statements of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim clearly show there is a battle for interpretation. Ma‘ayery (1984) stated, "[translating] the meanings of the Qur‘ān 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 Qur‘ān. 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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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.
Chapter Two - The use of *Tafsīr* in the context of translating the Qurʾān

Translations of the Qurʾān, 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 Qurʾān. 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān and Prophetic narrations while non-mainstream *tafsīr* rely on one's own *tawil* (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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In Islamic terms, *tafsīr* refers to uncovering the meaning of the Qurʾān. As Ibn Taymiyyah claims, "*Tafsīr* is to have encompassing knowledge [of the Qurʾān]."[30] The word *tafsīr* is also found in the following verse:

وَلا يَأْتُونَكَ بَِِثَلٍ إِلاَ جِئ ْنَاكَ بِالحَْق ِ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِير ا

"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 Qurʾān it means its explanation. The use of *tafsīr* helps elucidate the meaning of the Qurʾān 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 ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd , 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 Qurʾān is required sincerely to give the meaning of the Qurʾān and not their own biased meaning based upon their sectarian ideology.

### 2.2 *Tawīl* as *Tafsīr*

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Ta’wil 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, ta’wil of speech refers to the end result as Allāh said,

هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلا تَأْوِيلهُ

"Do they await except its result?"
(Al-A‘rāf:53).  
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]


"In the earliest stages of Qur’ānic exegesis, the term ma‘ani (lit. 'meaning') was the one most frequently used to denote exegesis. Around the third Hijrī century this term was supplanted by ta’wil (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 ta’wil, became a technical term employed by both the traditionalists and those outside the ‘mainstream’ such as the Isma‘ili, Mu‘tazili and some Sufis to denote an interpretation which dispensed with tradition and was based on reason, personal opinion, research and/or intuition."

The second meaning of ta’wil in the Arabic language means tafsīr or interpretation.  

Ta’wil 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 ta’wil refers to tafsīr stems from the following verse:

سَأُن َبِئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَالََْ تَسْتَطِع عهلَيْهِ صَب ْرًا

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

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32 Ibn al-Fāris (AH1429:1/159-162).
33 Ibn Manzūr (AH1300:1/172).
Ibn Kathîr (1999:646) said, "Ta’wil here means tafsîr (interpretation)". This is similar to the statement of the Prophet ﷺ to Ibn ‘Abbâs ﷺ, "O Allâh, give him the understanding of the religion and teach him ta’wil (tafsîr - interpretation)." [My translation].

The Prophet's Companion Jâbir b. ‘Abdullâh ﷺ said, "The Messenger of Allâh ﷺ is amongst us, and the Qur’ân is being revealed to him and he knows its' ta’wil " [My translation]. Also Ibn al-Qayyim (1988:1/181) said, "The Prophet's ﷺ knowledge of its ta’wil is the knowledge of its tafsîr and what it refers to." [My translation].

According to non-mainstream tafsîr, amongst the philosophers and later generations, ta’wil means explaining a word to mean other than its apparent meaning, this is the 'opinion-based ta’wil'. This type of ta’wil was used to interpret the Book of Allâh with an esoteric underlying meaning (al-ma’nâ al-bâţîn). Al-Qûsi (2002: 147-148) [My translation]. Through this type of ta’wil, texts were explained away from the mainstream Sunni tafsîr and towards an allegorical meaning (al-ma’nâ al-majâzî). Ibn al-Qayyim in Sawâ’iq al-Mursalah (1988:1/13) mentioned this type of ta’wil is to take a word away from its apparent meaning. He also is quoted in Fat’h al-Bârî by Ibn Hajar where he says that this is the way of the Mu’tazilites, the Jahmites and philosophers.

The Jahmites negated the Names and Attributes of Allâh outright and replaced their apparent meaning with other interpretations. The Mu’tazilites asserted the Names of Allâh but not the Attributes. Even when the Mu’tazilites asserted the Names of Allâh, they said they are without meaning. The Ash’arites asserted the apparent meaning of

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35 Saîkî 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 ta’wīl 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 ta’wīl 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 ta’wīl’ 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 Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite tafsīr are those shared by Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad 'Abduh, al-Bayḍāwī and others from amongst the non-mainstream tafsīr.

The Shi'ite commentary called Tafsīr al-Qummī, the Qāḍyānī commentary based upon the claimed messiah Ghulām Aḥmad's tafsīr and the Bre włos 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-Rifaʿī (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." [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,

لا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنه السهمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولاً

"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-Isrā’: 36)

[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

And,

قُلْ إِنَّهَا حَرهمَ رَبّ َِ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِن ْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالإِْثمَْ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيرِْ الحَْق ِ وَأَن تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لََْ ي ُن َز ِلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَن ت َقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لاَ ت َعْلَمُونَ

"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-A‘raf:33)

[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

The first Caliph, Abū Bakr al- Ṣiddīq  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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36Musnad 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 ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ☪ 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, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ☪ and said, "What about the opinion of… what about the opinion of…” so ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ☪ 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 Qurʾān 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 ʿArabī, a Sufī,

39 Ibn Baṭṭa (2002:143) in al-Ībānah ʿalā Uṣūl Sunnah wa al-Dīyyāna. Al-Bukhārī has a similar wording.
"It is clear that in the *tafsīr* of Ibn ʿArabī, he did not assert the apparent meaning of the Qurān 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 ʿArabī, 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-Biqāʿī (d.AH885) in his book *Tanbīh al-Ghābī alā Takfīr Ibn ʿArabī*.\(^{42}\) [My translation]. For example, regarding the following verse,

\[
\text{"And your Lord has decreed that you do not worship except Him."}
\]

(Isrā: 23)

[Umm Muḥammad Sahīḥ International]

Ibn ʿArabī, 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 ‘قضه’ (commanded) that it has the same meaning as ‘القضاء 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 ‘قضه’ 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-Maʿthūr* (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

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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-Maʿthūr*." This is in opposition to Saleh (2012:23/1) who says, "...the


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ideological division of the exegetical tradition into *tafsīr al-Ma’thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra’y* 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-Jāmiʿ 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 ʿAbdulHādī (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-İfaqān*, 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 *Ash'arī*, 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 Muḥaffar al-Samʿānī (d.AH489), al-Baghawī (d.AH516) and they were not *Ash'arītes* 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, Śiddīq Ḥasan Khān, al-Shanqīṭī, al-Saʿdī, al-ʿUthaymīn 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 *Ash'arītes* 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 *Ash'arītes* did not actually adhere to the one they claim to follow, since Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ārī (d.AH330) repented from following the Muʿtazilite 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 *Ash'arītes* position) of Allāh's Attributes. The *Ash'arītes* claim to be followers of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ārī 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-Hasan al-Ashʿarī – The way of the Muʿtazilites, (Taʿtil) denying the Attributes of Allāh

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī initially followed the Muʿtazilites 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-Shafiʿī 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 Khalīf al-Muʿallīm (d.AH371) of the Malikī scholars that he said, "Imām al-Ashʿarī was upon the way of iʿtizāl (Muʿtazilites) 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 ʿAlī al-Jubāʾī al-Muʿtazīlī. He then turned away from the statements of the Muʿtazilites" [My translation].

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

Then the second stage of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī saw him following the path of Ibn Kullāb who did not reject the Attributes of Allāh like the Muʿtazilites 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 ‘Alām al-Nubalā* (1993:14/380) as saying, "Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal was amongst the sternest of people in warning against ʿAbdullāh b. Saʿīd ibn Kullāb and his companions such as al-Ḥārith and others." Ibn Taymiyyah in *al-Istiqāma* (n.d.: 12/368) said, "The Kullābiyyah are the teachers of the Ashʿarites…"

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

The third stage of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī 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 Predecessors⁴⁴ and mainstream *tafsīr*. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī 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-Ashʿarī’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 ‘an Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī* (2006) illustrating clearly that *al-Ibāna* of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī 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-Ashʿarī’s last three books were not forged.

The scholars of mainstream *tafsīr* continue to refute Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī’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." *Sahīḥ 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 Thaʿlabī and the tafsīr of al-Wāhidī. The latter is actually a student of Thaʿlabī 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:

![Verse Image]

"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

![Verse Image]

"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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Al-Ālusī (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 Qurʾān by the Qurʾān since there is not anyone who knows the meaning of the Qurʾān (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 Qurʾān according to mainstream Sunni tafsīr which translators of the Qurʾān should be aware of. An example of this is the verse in Āl-ʿImrān:130:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّهُ 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 Qurʾān which clarifies it, then the correct understanding is reached,

الذين يأكلون الزبأ لا يعومن إلا كما يقوم العبد الذي يخيفه الشيطان من الإسلام ذلك بأنهم قالوا إنما الزبأ

"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 Ė‘Ā’isha, "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,

وَأَنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّبِينٌ لِّلْأَمْسِيَاتِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَعِلَّهُمْ يُفْكِرُونَ

"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]

46 Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī no.4547 and Sahīḥ Muslim (2005) no.2665.
Imām Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shafīʿī (d.AH204) cited in Aḥkām al-Qurʿān (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,

إِنها أَن ْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالحَْق ِلِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَائِنِيََّ خَصِيفَهَا

"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 Sahih International]

Allāh said,

وَأَن ْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذَّكَرَ لِتُبَيَّنَ لِلنُّهْـاسِ مَا نُزِلْ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَـْـلا يُفَكِّـرُونَ

"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 Sahih International]

Allāh said,

وَمَا أَن ْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيَّنَ لَهُمَا الَّذِي اخْتَلَفَوا 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." (Nahl: 64) [Umm Muḥammad Sahih 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]

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 hadīth (Prophet's sayings), if their tafsīr is known by way of the Prophet then there is no need to look into the statements of the linguists." [My translation]. The language itself does not oppose what the Prophet said. However, some words can have more than one meaning and therefore the Prophet 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. Al-Zarkashī B. (d.AH794) says, "...(when) reporting from the Prophet…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 آَتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَانيِ وَالْقُرْأَنَ الْعَظِيمَ

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

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

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repeated49 because every Muslim recites it at least seventeen times a day in their five daily prayers. Another example is in Yūnus: 26:

"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. Ka‘b 51, Ibn ʿAbbās  and recorded by the scholars of tafsīr such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim. Also al-Ṭabarī recorded it from the ḥadīth of Ka‘b b. ʿUjah. There is also a  ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (no.448) narrated by the Prophet's Companion Ṣuhaib b. Sinān from the Prophet  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  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 Qurʾān means looking at the ‘Face’

49 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (no.4474).
50 Ibn Abī Ḥātim recorded it in his Tafsīr (1999:61945), ḥadīth (no.10341) and by al-Lālikāʾi in Sharḥ Usūl Fiqhād 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, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās and the Successors ʿAbdulrahmān b. Abī Lailā ʿIkrimah, ʿAmīr b. Saʿīd, Ḥasan al-Baṣri, Mujāhid, Qatādah, al-Dahhāk and al-Sudī 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 Qurʾān by the Qurʾān, the Prophetic statements and the explanations of the Companions.

"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-Māʾīdah:6)

[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ 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-ʿAtf (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 وآرجلكم (with a fatha 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

(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 ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān narrated that ʿUthmān 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, ʿUthmān 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 who said that the Prophet ﷺ once made ablution. "I moved to

54 Saḥīḥ 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.”  

However, the Shi‘ites 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,

وأرجلكم إلى الكعب

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-Māʾīdah:6)  

[Mir Ali]

In the Shi‘ite 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

authentic sources. The scholars of ḥadīth such as Ibn Ḥajar al- ʿAsqalānī (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 Ḥanbali 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-Qurtubī in (AH1399:209-211) said, "The false narrations by the liars and

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, ۧAbdullāh b. ۧAbbās 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 knowledge 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.

وَيَتَّبَعُ غَيْرَ سَبَيلٍ وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرِّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْغَيْبَ» ﴿۱۸۹﴾ 

"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-Shafī‘ī (d.AH204) in (1990:50), commenting on the verse (al-Nisā':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-Shafī‘ī held regarding this verse (al-Nisā':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-Shafī‘ī was speaking about the area of Uṣūl al-Fiqh (fundamental principles in Islamic Jurisprudence), he used this verse (al-Nisā':115) to show the validity of Ijmā‘—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. Abdul ʿAzīz (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 أَمْنَثُم is referring to the Prophet's Companions,

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِِِثْلِ 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)
Regarding the verse in al-Baqarah:121:

"Those to whom We have given the Book recite it with its true recital. They (are the ones who) believe in it."

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, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās Unauthorized said, "بِتَلُونَهُ حَقَّ تَلَوَتَهَ 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, ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd Unauthorized as saying, "بِتَلُونَهُ حَقَّ تَلَوَتَهَ 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-Ashʿarī  Unauthorized 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 Wāqīd al-Laythī  Unauthorized 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 Muʿādh b. Jabal (a Companion of the Prophet)  Unauthorized who said, ‘Do you not listen to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ?’ They said,

57 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2005) no.2531.
‘What did he say?’ Muʿādh then repeated to them what he said. So they in turn said, ‘What is the way out of it (trials), O Messenger of Allāh’? He said, ‘You should return to your original state of affairs’” [My translation].

The original state of affairs mentioned in the above hadīth 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.” [My translation].

The next hadīth shows once again the importance of the Companions of the Prophet in deriving the mainstream Sunni path in understanding the Qurʾānic that the mainstream scholars of tafsīr adhered to. The Prophet 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 said, "That which I and my Companions are upon.” [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.” [My translation].

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Awzārī 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." [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 مِّنْكُمْ مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَا مَسْتُمُ النَّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تََِدُوا مَاءً 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 Sahih International]

The phrase ‘لا مَسْتُمُ النَّسَاءَ’ 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 ‘لا مَسْتُمُ النَّسَاءَ’ has been explained by the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ʻAbbās, to mean – ‘having relations with one’s spouse and not just merely touching women’ [63]. Similar

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meanings are reported from the fourth Caliph ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ubay b. Kaʿb64. 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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Whenever the Prophet's Companion, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAmr (Activity) mentioned ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd (Activity), an elder amongst the Prophet's Companions, he would say, "I shall forever love this man, for I heard the Prophet (Activity) saying, 'Take (learn) the Qurʾān from four: ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd, Sālim, Muʿadh and Ubay b. Kaʿb (Activity).'" 65

ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd (Activity) reported that the Prophet (Activity) said to him, "Recite (the Qurʾān) to me." He replied, "O Allāh's Messenger (Activity), shall I recite (the Qurʾān) to you while it has been revealed to you?" He (Activity) said, "Yes." So I recited until al-Nisāʾ (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 (Activity) said, "Enough for now." I looked at him and behold! His eyes were overflowing with tears." 66

The Prophet's Companion, ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd (Activity) 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. ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās (Activity)

Being a young cousin of the Messenger (Activity), ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās (Activity) 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.
Umar, Abū Hurayrah, 'Abdulraḥmān b. Auf, Zayd b. Thabit, Ubay b. Ka'b, Usāmah b. Zayd and others. He was close to the Messenger. He was raised by the Messenger. The Messenger even supplicated for him to gain wisdom and to have understanding of the Qur'ān. Due to this, he was one of the great scholars of tafsīr and Islamic jurisprudence. The Prophet said,

"O Allāh, give him the understanding of this religion and teach him the understanding of this (Qur'ān)." 68

He would strive to learn with patience and perseverance. The second Caliph Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb would call others to go to him and take from his statements. The migrants would say to ‘Umar, "Why do you not call our sons (to accompany you) just as you call Ibn ‘Abbās?" 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 ‘Abbās's 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 Sahīh 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 ‘Umar al-Khaṭṭāb asked Ibn ‘Abbās as to what it meant. Ibn ‘Abbās replied, "This [Sūrat] signifies the death of the Messenger of Allāh, whereby Allāh is informing him of the

68 Ṣaḥīh 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 Mas'ūd  said, "What a blessed
explainer of the Qurʾān Ibn ʿAbbās is." When Ibn ʿUmar  was asked regarding a
verse, he said, "Go to Ibn ʿAbbās  as he is the most knowledgeable of those alive, of
what has been revealed to Muḥammad .

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

A Companion of the Prophet  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 .

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

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

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَّ لَكُمُ الْحَيَّاطُ الأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْحَيَّاطِ الأَسْوَدَ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

"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 Sahīḥ International]

ʿUdayy  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 Muhammad 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 ‘Udayy ﷺ without knowing that in this case it had another meaning referring to the thread of the horizon. This caused ‘Udayy 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 Qur’an as it has been explained by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and his Companions.

وَأَن ْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نَزَلْ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعْلَهُمْ يَفْكَهُونَ

"And We revealed to you the message (i.e. the Qur’ān) that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them." (Al-Nahl:44)

[Umm Muḥammad Sahīḥ International]

The above incident shows that ‘Udayy ﷺ 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 Qur’ān (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.

⁶⁹ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (1916), Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (2005) no.1090.
2.4.3.3 The Ijmā' (consensus) of the Prophet's Companions in tafsīr

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

Ibn Hazm said, "Ijmā' is one of the principles of Islam and should be returned to." [My translation]. Ibn Hazm also said, "Whoever opposes it - meaning Ijmā' - 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 الرهسُولَ مِن بعَدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْدَيْنِ وَيَتْبَغِ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"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-Nisā’: 115). [Umm Muhammad Sahîh International]

The second Caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb wrote to Shuraih 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 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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74 He is Shuraih b. al-Ḥārith al-Kindī, the judge of Kūfah. He became a Muslim in the time of the Prophet 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." [My translation]. Ibn Mas'ūd  said, "Judge with the Book of Allāh then the Sunnah then with Ijmā'." [My translation].

Ibn ʿAbbās  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 ʿUmar . [My translation]. This was due to the saying of the Prophet ﷺ, "Follow the example of the two after me, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar ." Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:19/201) said, "These narrations from ʿUmar, Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn ʿAbbās  are authentic." [My translation]. "The scholars have unanimously agreed that Ijmā' is a legislated proof which must be followed" (al-Shanqīṭī AH1426a:231), [My translation]. Abū Mu‘āla al-Juwaynī (AH1400:1/679) said, "Ijmā' is a definite proof." [My translation].

Al-Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā (AH1410:4/1058) said, "Ijmā' 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 Ijmā':

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمهةً وَسَطًا لَّتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النهاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرهسُولُ 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]
Al-'Uthaymīn (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 لِلْإِنْسَانِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتْوَلَّوْنَ 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-‘Imrān: 110)

[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

And Allāh said:

فَإِن تُنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ

"And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allāh and the Messenger."

(Al- Nisā': 59)

[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Al-'Uthaymīn (AH1423a:65) said, "This is proof that whatever you unite upon is truth."

There are some examples showing how Ijmā’ of the Prophet's Companions was implemented as proof of its validity. For example, when the second Caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb 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 should be the next Caliph. As another example of Ijmā’, when the Prophet passed away, there was consensus among the Companions of the Prophet to gather the Qur’ān 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 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 Qur’ān and the Prophetic texts. Al-'Uthaymīn (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 Shafī’ī 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 ʿAbdulrahmān al-Sulamī (ʿAbdullāh b. Ḥabīb) as saying, "The ones who used to teach us the Qurʾān, such as (the Prophet's Companions) ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd 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..."

\(^79\) Al-Shanqīṭī (AH1426: 243).
and explains the Qur˒ân from other than their *tafsir*, then he is mistaken in his proof and what it entails." [My translation].

Among the most famous Successors who had commentaries on the Qur˒ân were the followers of Ibn ˒Abbās  in Makkah such as Mujāhid (d.AH104), ˒Ikrima  (d.AH104) and ˒Aṭa b. Rabah  (d.AH114). As for those in Madīnah, they were the followers of Ubay b. Ka'b  such as Zayd b. Aslam (d.AH136), and Abū ˒Aliyah (d.AH90) and Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraḍī (d.AH120). As for those in Kūfah, Iraq, they were the followers of Ibn Mas˓ūd  such as Qatadāh (d.AH118), ʾAlqama (d.AH61) and Sha'bī (d.AH104). Al-˒Uthaymīn (AH1423a:42,43) [My translation].

"The methodology of the Successors in *tafsir* was to return to fundamental principles, such as the Qur˒ân explained by the Qur˒ân, the Qur˒ân explained by the Sunnah, the Qur˒ân explained by the Prophet's Companions, the Qur˒ân explained by the Arabic language... This is clearly apparent in the *tafsir* of the Successors such as Mujāhid and Ḥasan al-ʾBaṣrī. For example, Ḥasan al-ʾBaṣrī would mainly quote the Prophet's Companions ʾAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ʾ, Anas, b. Mālik ʾ and ʾAbdullāh b. ʾAbbās ʾ" (al-Khālidi 2008:260,267) [My Translation].

2.6 *The explanation of the Qur˒ân linguistically*

The Qur˒ân 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 ʾ and the Successors used the Arabic language, where appropriate, to explain the Qur˒ân. Allāh said,

> إنّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ قُوْرَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

"Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur˒ân in order that you might understand."
(Yusuf:2)
[Umm Muḥammad Sahīḥ International]
The scholar of *tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr (1999:519), said that the Qurān 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 Ramaḍān."

Allāh said,

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رهسُولٍ إِلاه بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيَّن لَهُمُ الْكَلِمَ

"And We did not send any messenger except speaking in the language of his people, to state clearly for them..."

(Ibrāhīm:4)

[Umm Muḥammad Sahīḥ International]

فَإِنَّهَا يَسهرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

"And indeed, We have eased it (i.e. the Qurān) in your tongue, that they may be reminded."

(Al-Dukhān:58)

[Umm Muḥammad Sahīḥ 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."^[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 Qurān. However, using the language cannot be independent of the aforementioned *tafsīr* principles. Where there is no conflict, then the language
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-Shaṭḥī mentions that knowing the reasons for revelation clarifies every problem in this matter and it is important in understanding the Book (Qurʾān), Al-Shaṭḥī (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 ʿAlī al-Madīnī (d.AH234), the teacher of the hadīth scholar al-Bukhārī. In the fifth century, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Wāḥidī (d.AH487) wrote a book entitled Asbāb al-Nuzūl. Much later, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (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-Wādiʿī (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 Ṣafīḥ 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 ʿAbīdah 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 Asḥāb 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:

وَللَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَي ْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمه 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)

"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. Khattāb ☪ 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 ʿAbbās  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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾānic verses to prove that major sinners were disbelievers. For example, Allāh said:

من كسب سِيَةً وَاحْتَضَلَّ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰٓئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَايِلُونَ

"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]

81 Ṣalāḥ 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 ʿAbbās  ﷺ, and Successors Aṭṭār, Ad-Daḥḥāk, Abū ʿĀliya, Rabīʿa 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:

إِنَّهَا 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 لَهْ يََْكُم بَِِا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰٓئِكَ 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;
"And whosoever does not rule by what Allāh has revealed then they are disbelievers."
(Al-Mā‘īdah: 44)
[My translation]

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

"And whosoever does not rule by what Allāh has revealed then they are sinners."
(Al-Mā‘īdah: 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, Ḥāfiz ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar , 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 يِنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْذِّينَ لَمْ يَفْتَأِلُواْ فِي الْدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُقْتِلُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبْرُوْهُمْ وَتَعْفَوْهُمْ 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."
(Mumṭahāna:8)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

Allāh also said:

إِنَّهَا يِنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْذِّينَ فَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الْدِّينِ وَخُرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهِرُواْ عَلَى إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلُّوْهُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلُّوْهُمْ 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."
(Mumṭahāna:9)
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ 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.”

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 Qutb, 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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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.
Chapter Three - Mainstream and non-mainstream books of tafsīr

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 Qurān 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-maṣāḥīḥ 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 Hasan Khān (d.AH1307), Tafsīr of al-Saʻdī (d.AH1376), Tafsīr of al-Shanqīṭī (d.AH1393) called Aḍwā al Bayān, Tafsīr of al-Saʻdī (d.AH1376) and Tafsīr of al-ʻUthaymīn (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 *tafsîr* have been chosen because most are cited in the introductions and footnotes of many of the Qurʾân translations that this research covers. A brief description is given about the authors of the *tafsîr* and a summary of their beliefs and methodologies.

3.1.1 *Tafsîr of al-Ṭabarî (d.AH310)*

"Perhaps the oldest complete compilation in *tafsîr* is *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan taʾwīl Ayyil Qurʾān*, compiled by Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarî. 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-Ṭabarî memorised the Qurʾān and did not begin his *tafsîr* until he reached the age of sixty, after having written many books. He was a scholar of ḥadīth and had already collected many *tafsîr* 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-Khalīlī 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-Ṭabarî’s book is among the best and most honourable of *tafsîr*..."

"His *tafsîr* 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 Maḍīnan 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 *ta ḡwīl* 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-Baghawi (2002:1/7). In general, though, al-Baghawi "...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-Baghawi (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 ḡwīl*), 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-Qurʿān*. 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 Muʿtazilites, Qadariyah, Shiʿites, the philosophers and extreme Sufis. He died in the year AH671” (al-Dhahabi 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 ʿImad al-Dīn b. Kathīr who lived in Başrah then Damascus, where he learned from the scholars of his time such as Ibn Taymiyyah. He was a scholar of the Shafiʿī 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 Maʾṭūr (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 Kathir 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-Qur'anic interpretation and that which can be grounded in the statements of the Prophet ﷺ and his closest Companions."

3.1.5 Tafsīr of al-Sa'ūdī (d.AH1376)

*Tafsīr al-Sa'ūdī* by ʿAbdulrahmān b. Naṣr al-Sa'ūdī 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 Qur'ān 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 Qur'ān and his intention was to make the explanation of the Qur'ān easily understood with clear explanations in a summarised way. (ʿAbbās 2007:589) [My translation].

*Tafsīr al-Sa'ūdī* refuted the Ash'arite, Jahmite and Sufī creeds. It included benefits from Ibn al-Qayyim's *tafsīr* found in his books. Al-Sa'ūdī, 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:
"Then He *Istawā* (rose over) the Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)."

(Al-Hadid:4)  
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Al-Saʿdī (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:

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

Al-Saʿdī 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" (ʿAbbās 2007, 590-592).

3.1.6 *Tafsīr of al-Shanqī† (d.AH1393) - Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān*

*Aḍwāʾ al-Bayān* by Muḥammad Amīn al-Shanqī† (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 Shanqī† 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-Shanqī† 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 Ḥasan 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 Ṭaqāsīm fi maʿādir al-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 Muʿtazilites 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 Muʿtazilite 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 ‘Muʿtazilite 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. ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (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 Muʿtazilites, Zamakhsharī asserted the Names of Allāh but without asserting their apparent meanings. The Muʿtazilites 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 Muʿtazilite creed. (Ibn al-Qayyim in Flām al-Muwaqīṭīn (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.

الرَّحْمُ 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)

Zamakhsharī said (2009:651) that, "'استَوَى' - 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 Ārsh but does not elaborate on this.

Ibn Munayyir (d.AH683), a Malikī scholar, wrote a book called al-Intisāf where he criticised the Muʿtazilite 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-ʿItidāl.

Ibn Taymiyyah (1951:53) said of al-Rāzī, regarding the explanation of the Prophetic tradition about the Prophet's ascension to the Aqṣa 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 Ashʿarite creed regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh. He relied on the Muʿtazilite, Zamakhsharī for tafsīr. He performed taʿwil 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-Maghrībī 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 ḍwil), 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 ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar 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 Zamakhshāri’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 opinion-based ta ḍwil following the methodology of the Ashʿarites. 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 *istavā*, 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 ʿAbduh (d.AH1323/1905)

"Muḥammad ʿAbduh 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" (ʿAbbās 2007:13) [My translation]. Muḥammad ʿAbduh has been described as an Egyptian reformer who sought to ‘modernise’ Islam and rectify it through reason. In several matters he was untraditional.

"Muḥammad ʿAbduh’s student, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, mentions his teacher's opinions in his book *Tafsīr al-Manār*. Muḥammad ʿAbduh 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)” (ʿAbbās 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 ʿAbduh 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 Muʿtazilites. Rashīd Riḍā commented on Muḥammad ʿAbduh's *tafsīr* and said in certain places that, "This is similar to what Imām Ghazālī (the Sufi Scholar) held." (ʿAbbās 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 ʿAmma (last 30th part of the Qurʾān). He was also influenced by other Muʿtazilite *tafsīrs*." (ʿAbbās 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" (ʿAbbās 2007: 65) [My translation]. This is actually one of the influences from the Muʿtazilite 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" (ʿAbbās 2007:71). [My translation].

"Muhammad ʿAbduh’s 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 opinion-based *taḥwīl* 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 ā‘Abduh 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 Zīlal 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." (Abbās 2007:360) [My translation]. He joined the 'Muslim Brotherhood' and became its’ 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 Zīlal 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-maʿālūr (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:
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 Qur’ān and Prophetic traditions. When he embarked upon the project of explaining the Qur’ān, 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-Zālāl* (AH1412:4/2478) wrote, commenting upon the following verse:

قُلْ : مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاءِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

"Say: Who is Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Great Throne?"

(Al-Muʿminūn:86) [Umm Muḥammad Sahih 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-Ẓālīl (AH1412: 6/3872), he wrote, commenting upon the following verse:

ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ. ف َعهالٌ لِما يُرِيدُ

"Honourable owner of the Throne, Effector 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-Ẓālīl (AH1412:6/3680), he wrote, commenting upon following the verse:

وَيََْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَب ِكَ ف َوْق َهُمْ ي َوْمَئِذٍ ثََانِيَةٌ

"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 ʿArsh is, We also do not know how it is carried."

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

ثمُه 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 ʿArsh is a symbolic allusion for His loftiness (in status, rank) over all the creation. As for the ʿArsh 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-Zilāl.

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 Mu'tazilites. 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 Qurān, in al-Zilāl, he made taʿwil (opinion-based explanation) of the '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 Qurān 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 Qurān to reflect this. He followed through the Sufī belief83. He died in the year 1921."84 "He took allegiance to the Qadrī order of the Sufī

83 Ibn al-Jawzī said in Talbis Iblīs, "Sufism is a way whose beginning was complete avoidance of worldly affairs, then those who attached themselves to it became lax in allowing singing and dancing.” Cited al-Madhkhali M. (1995: 16).
sect in the year 1876," (Auolakh 1994:1013). His tafsîr also includes the ta ḻāwil of Allâh’s Attributes following the Ash'arite path. This is portrayed in the Brelvî translation by Auolakh (1994). He wrote many books in Arabic and Urdu.

3.2.7 Tafsîr by Al-Suyûṭî (d.AH911)

"Abu Faḍl Jalāl al-Dîn al-Suyûṭî was born in Cairo in the year AH849 and lived as an orphan. He memorised the whole Qur’ân before the age of eight. He studied under one hundred and fifty scholars in tafsîr, hadîth, 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 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 Allâh was that of the Ash'arite sect, that is to not assert the apparent meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allâh. Al-Suyûṭî, himself, perfomed ta ḻâwil of about twenty attributes of Allâh. That is, distorting the apparent meaning for another meaning that is allegorical" (al-Suyûṭî: AH1426:1/11-24). An example of this is when al-Suyûṭî explains the Attribute of Allâh, 'Hand' to mean 'power' (al-Suyûṭî: AH1426:4/1364).

Al-Suyûṭî has two different tafsîr; one of them is al-Jalâlayn, of which half is his (From Chapter al-Kahf to al-Nâs) and the first half is by his teacher Jalâl al-Dîn al-Maḥallî. In Tafsîr al-Jalâlayn, a lot of ta ḻâwil without proof from the Qur’ân and Prophetic traditions is used also. Al-Suyûṭî’s other tafsîr is al-Durr al-Manthûr, which is mainly based upon the narrations of the Predecessors. However, he also has a book on the

science of Qur‘ān called al-İtqān fī Ulūm al-Qur‘ān where there is more of his opinion-based ta‘wil. “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)

Shi‘ite 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 Shi‘ite sect has many distorted explanations of verses. The Shi‘ites are also referred to as Rāfiqah which means 'rejecters' since they rejected the leadership of the two Caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. They claimed that the leadership after the death of the Prophet ﷺ should have been given to his cousin, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. They then said that all the leaders should come from the lineage of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. They consider the Qur‘ān 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 death except for his family (Ahlul Bayt)" (Shahrastāni AH1404:1/50) [My translation].

"The Shi‘ites did not find in the Qur‘ān all that would help them spread their interpretations. Hence, they started to claim that the Qur‘ān's main focus is the esoteric underlying meaning (al-ma‘nā al-bāṭīn) so that the people could rely on their Imāms' distorted interpretations of these deep meanings" (Al-Dhababī 2003:2/28) [My
translation]. An example of this manipulation of the Qur'ānic text to suit their belief can be found in the explanation of the Opening Sūrat of the Qurʾān. Al-Qummi (1968:1/28-29) explains the following verse:


dignānī al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm

"Show us the straight way."

As:

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

وَإِنهُ فِِ أُمِ الْكِتَابِ لَدَي ْنَا لَعَلَي حَكِيمٌ

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

They say that ‘عَلَي’ does not mean exalted referring to the Book but refers to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. They changed the meaning of the verse to:

"And indeed it is, in the Mother of the Book with Us,  
Indeed it is ʿAlī, 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 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib:

|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 ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib Ḥ. 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 اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الْهُذِينَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِم مَّنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّدِيقِينَ وَالشَّهَداَءَ وَالصَّانِعِينَ

"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,

ولَكَن رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمُ 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 ʿAzm**) are the highest level of the Messengers, whereby Prophet Muhammad 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

86 The Prophets of firm resolve are Nūḥ (Noah), Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Mūsā (Moses), ʿĪsā (Jesus) and Muhammad 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. The Prophet's Companions used to say at the time of the Messenger that the best of them was Abū Bakr and then ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Even ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib used to openly proclaim this on the pulpit in Kūfah after he became the khalīfah (successor), "The best of this Ummah is Abū Bakr then ʿUmar." Shiites claim that Abū Bakr is not a successor (Caliph) and that he is an oppressor to ʿAlī since, to them, ʿAlī is the first Caliph. It is said, "Why did ʿAlī not declare that he was oppressed?" Rather, he acknowledged openly that Abū Bakr was the best of this nation. This acknowledgement shows the superiority of Abū Bakr and that he had the right to be the successor after the death of Prophet Muḥammad. Therefore, the truthful ones are the second blessed people mentioned in this verse. The third description of those whom Allāh blessed are the Shuhadā. They are those who bear witness to the truth, are martyrs and are not restricted to one person such as ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as the Shiites 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-ʿUthaymīn 2002). Therefore, ‘الص           ِرَاطَ الْمُس          ْتَقِيمَ’ (the straight path), refers to those

87 A place in Iraq.
88 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib said: "The best of this nation after its' Prophet is Abū Bakr, then after Abū Bakr is ʿUmar..." see Kitāb al-Sunnah (no. 1201 by Ḥāfīz Ibn Abī ʿĀsim authenticated by al-Albānī (1993:556).
Allāh has blessed and is not restricted to only ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib or the family of the Prophet ﷺ.

Furthermore, regarding the verse,

وتحمل عرش ربك فوقهم يومئذ ثَانية

"And there will bear the Throne of your Lord above them, that Day, eight (of them)."

(Al-Hāqah:17)

[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]

This verse actually refers to the eight angels carrying the ‘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 ‘‘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, Īsā 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 ‘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-‘Ayyāshī (d AH320)

Muḥammad b. Masʿūd b. Muḥammad al-‘Ayyāshī 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-‘Ayyāshī’s tafsīr is another Shi‘ite tafsīr pushing forward the Shi‘ite agenda. As early as the Opening Sūrat of the Qurʾān, al-‘Ayyāshī puts forward his own interpretation to carry forward the Shi‘ite creed. For example, regarding the following verse:

الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
"the straight path."
[My translation]

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

وَآمِنُوا بِاَنَّ اَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلِينَ كَافِرِينَ
"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 Sahīḥ International]

Al-‘Ayyāshī says it means, "Abū Bakr ﷺ and ālī 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-‘Ayyāshī (1:42) cited in Maḍkhalī R. (2007:25) [My translation].
“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 Muhammad Sahīḥ International]

Al-ʿAyyāshī said, "The first part (of the verse) refers to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, ʿAlī ﷺ and the Imāms from the children of ʿAlī ﷺ. As for the last part of the verse, then it refers to Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān ﷺ being oppressors." Al-ʿAyyāshī (1:57) cited in Maḍkhalī R. (2007:57) [My translation]. This is another political and theological manipulation of the Qurʾān by al-ʿAyyāshī. He tries to use the Qurʾān to give victory to his own Shiʿite 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-ʿAyyāshī’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 ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib ﷺ was the first Successor to the Prophet ﷺ. For example,

"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 Sahīḥ International]

Mir Ali (1988:733), commenting on the above verse, says "al-ʿAyyāshī 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 ʿAlī 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 Kathîr (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 Allâh came."

Al-ʿAyyāshî's tafsîr follows the path of the Muʿtazilites when commentating on the Attributes of Allâh. Al-Shahrastânî elaborates further that, "A strict form of anthropomorphism had existed amongst the Jews; but in a section of them…some of the Shiʿites also fell into one of the two extremes: one was to make some of the Imâms like God, the other to make God like a man. When the Muʿtazilites and scholastic theologians arose, some of the Shiʿites abandoned their extreme views and adopted Muʿtazilism;" (Kazi, Flynn 1984: 78).
3.2.10 *Tafsīr by Ayatollāh Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdī (1973)*

Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdī’s *tafsīr* of the Quran is quoted in the footnotes in Mir Ali’s translation of the Quran. His notes are extensive and many times heavily sectarian towards the Shi‘ite 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 Quran. He refers to the *Ahlul-Bayt* and their Successors as the *ma‘ṣūmīn* (infallible) or free from error.

Mir Ali (1988:24) quotes Yazdī as saying, "Such ones of the ideal purity and innocence are called the *ma‘ṣūmīn* 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 الْوَى 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 Sahīḥ 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 ʿAbdulMuṭṭalib, his grandfather (Al-ʿAbbad A. 2006:85). The Shiʿītes 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-ʿAbbad 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, ʿAlī b. Abī Talib ﷺ. He was a partner with him in knowledge" (Kulaynī in al-Kāfī AH1381:1/263 cited in al-ʿAbbad 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-ʿAbbad A. 2006:126).

In Yazdī’s tafsīr, there is clear reliance on the interpretation of the Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān, 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 ʿAlī, 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 Qurʾān 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 ʿAlī mentioned, but the rest of the four Caliphs are also mentioned and they are not on the list of the twelve

\(^{90}\) *Saḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (1988) no. 4607.
Imāms of the Shiʿites. 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, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalib ﷺ. There are other rightly guided Caliphs such as ʿHasan b. ʿAlī 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, Muʿāwiyyah b. Abī Sufyān has been supplicated for to be a guide for the people even though the Shiʿites criticize him severely: The Prophet ﷺ supplicated for Muʿāwiyyah b. Abī Sufyān, "O Allāh make him a guide who is guided, guide him and guide by him."

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 ṣaḥīb-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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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 Qur’ān commanded Muslims to supplicate for those who have preceded them in faith, especially the Companions without restriction:

وَالذِينَ جَآءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يُقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الذِينَ سَبِّقُونَا بِالإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَعْلُو فِي قُلُوبِنَا غَيْبَتٌ ﷺ

"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 Sahih 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 (Aḥṣār). 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 Muhājirīn (Migrants from Makkah to Madinah) and the Aḥṣār (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 saḥābī 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."[My Translation].

The scholar of hadith, Imām Aḥmad (Ibn Ḥanbal) in his Usūl 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 hadith scholar Abū Zurʿa 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 Sahih 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 `Uthmān al-Sābūnī in his book Āqīdah 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 Fath al-Bārī (2000:4/459) mentioned the sayings of Abūl-Muzzaffar Ibn Samānī, "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-Āqīdah al-Wasīṭiyah, "From the foundation of Ahlu-Sunnah wa Jamā’ah (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:

وَالذِينَ جَآئِهِمْ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبِّ نَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالإِيمَانِ وَلاَ تَعَلِّمْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غَيْرَ اغْفِرْنَا إِنَّكَ رَحِيمٌ رَحِيمٌ

"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 Sahīḥ International]

Likewise, in the obedience to the Prophet ﷺ in his saying,

93 See al-Saḥīḥah (1972) no.34.
94 Fath 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 الأَوْلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالذِّينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْقَرْءَاةِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ 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 Rawāfīdh (Shi'ites) 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 Qurānic if they revile those whom Allāh is pleased with?"

The Tafsīr by Pooya Yazdī also contains claims that the Shi'ite Imams know the hidden meanings of various truncated letters found at the beginning of some chapters of the Qurān. 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 Qurānic verses. They are the esoteric significance as keynotes to the higher secrets reserved for higher minds."

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*. 
Chapter Four - Translating the verses concerning the belief in Allāh

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

قَطْنَاهُمُ أَنَّهُ لا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

"And know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh."
(Muḥammad:19)
[My translation]

The article of faith 'none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh (الله لا إل إل)’ 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 Jinn⁹⁶ and Mankind were created, i.e. to worship Him without associating partners with Him.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجَنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيُعْبُدُونِ

"And I did not create the Jinn and Mankind except to worship Me."
(Dhariyāt:56)
[My translation]

The Messengers were sent to call the people to this fundamental belief, that none should be worshipped with Allāh as partners or intermediaries.

وَمَا أُرْسِلْنَا مِن قَبْلَكَ مِن رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

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-Anbiyā’: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 hadīth 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 لا إِلَٰهَ إِلا اللَّهُ

"And know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh."
(Muḥammad:19)

⁹⁷ Sahīḥ Muslim, Book of Faith (2005:1/32) no.23.
⁹⁸ Ibid. and in Musnad Imām Ahmad (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. The Prophet said, "Whoever dies and he knows that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh will enter paradise."

The Prophet Muḥammad explained the article of faith to mean worshipping Allāh alone and to not associate partners with Allāh. The Prophet Muḥammad informed his Companion Muʿādh b. Jabal, when he sent him to the land of Yemen, ‘You are going to some of the People of the Book. 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 Anī Rasūllullāh)…’

In another wording, the Prophet Muḥammad 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…"

Therefore, the Prophet Muḥammad 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 and that it means worship belongs to Allāh alone:

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِِ عَقِبِهِ لَعَلهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

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.
103 Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of Tawḥīd no.8372.
"And he (Ibrāhīm) made the statement (i.e. Lā ilāha Illā 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 ʿAbbās  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.’ Some scholars have mentioned that there is consensus upon this. 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 ﷺ, 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 ﷺ) 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...’

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.

105 Qāsim (AH1417:53) in Hashiyat Thalathat al-ʾUṣūl.
without any partners. Many translators of the Qurʾān did not translate the article of faith according to this context bearing in mind the foundation and context of Prophet Muḥammad’s 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:

\[
\text{قَاعِلُهُمُ أَنَّهُ لا إِلَٰهَ إِلا اللَّهُ}
\]

"And know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh."  
(Muhammad:19)  
[My translation]

Al-Ṭabarī (2001:21/208) said, "Know, O Muhammad, 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*, Śiddīq Ḥasan Khān (d.AH1307) said in (1965:9/18), regarding the verse:

\[
\text{قَاعِلُهُمُ أَنَّهُ لا إِلَٰهَ إِلا اللَّهُ}
\]

"And know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh."  
(Muhammad: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*, ʿAbdulrahmān al-Saʿdī (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 worshipped 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':

"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-Nahl:36)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

"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]
"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]

"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 إل (Lā ilāha) None has the right to be worshipped
2. الل إله (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 معبود ‘الحق’ (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 SAW, 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.

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) Mu‘jam Maqāyyīṣ al-Lуга, said the three letters of ’الله’ 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 ’الله’ refers to worship, quoting the Prophet’s Companion, Ibn ʿAbbās  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:

"Say, "Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth?" Say, "Allāh"."

(Saba: 24)

[Umm Muḥammad Sahīḥ 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:

"Has he made the gods [only] one God? Indeed, this is a curious thing."

(Sād:25)

[Umm Muḥammad Sahīḥ International]

Even when Abū Jahl, the disbelieving uncle of the Prophet , was about to die, the Prophet  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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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 ʿAbdullaṭīf (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 Qūṭb (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 Qūṭb does not mention that the context of the article of faith is actually worship being for Allāh alone. Sayyid Qūṭb, 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:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>Muhammed:19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khán and al-Hilálti</td>
<td>So know (O Muhammad SAW) that La ilaha ill-Allāh (none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used mainstream tafsīr</td>
<td>Know, therefore, that there is no god but God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf ‘Alī</td>
<td>So know (O Muḥammad) that there is no God save Allāh,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed Muʻtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>You shall know that: &quot;There is no other god beside GOD,&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
<td>Know, then, [O man,] that there is no deity save God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad</td>
<td>Know, then, that there is no god but God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mainstream Muʻtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
<td>So know thou that there is no god but God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad</td>
<td>So know that there is no god but Allāh,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mainstream Muʻtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>So know that there is no god but Allāh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Ali</td>
<td>Know, therefore, that there is no god other than ALLĀH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrays Shi‘ite beliefs</td>
<td>Know that there is none worth worshipping except Allāh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir</td>
<td>Know that there is no god but God,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrays Shi‘ite beliefs</td>
<td>Know thou therefore that there is no god but God,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muhammad ʻAlī Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>Know that there is no God except Allāh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher ʻAlī</td>
<td>Know thou that there is no god but God;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>Know, therefore, that there is no god but God:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Ahmad Raza Khán Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td>Know, therefore, that there is no god but God:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Muhammad ʻTahir-ul-Qadrī M. Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arberry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many translators translate deity ‘الله’ as ‘god’ using a small ‘g’ while for Allāh - ‘اللٰه’ 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-Baqarā: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 قال رَبُّكُمُ الدَّعُوَيْنِ أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَتَّجِبُ عَنِ عِبَادِي سَيَدَخُلُونَ 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:

"Allāh! none is worthy of worship but He."
(al-Baqarah:255)
[Tahir-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 Shiʿite 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:
"There is nothing like unto Him and He is the Hearing, the Seeing."
(Al-Shûrâ:11)
[Umm Muhammad Sahîh International]

"Nor is there to Him any equivalent."
(Ikhlâs: 4)
[Umm Muḥammad Sahîh International]

The other Shiʿite 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 Shiʿite Tafsîr al-ʻAyyâshî and Tafsîr al-Qummî regarding the meaning of the article of faith, there was no mention that it meant worshipping Allāh alone.

The Qâḍyānī translator Maulana Muḥammad ʻAlî 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 Qâḍyānī translator Sher ʻAlî 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-Hilâlî. 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 ʻAlî 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-ʻIfta, 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:

هو الأول والآخر والظاهر والباطن وهو بكل شيء عليم

"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 الأَوْلِي لَيْسَ قَبْلَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الآَخِرُ لَيْسَ بَعْدَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ لَيْسَ فَوْقَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الْبَاطِنُ لَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ اقْضِ عَنها الدهيْنَ 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 Zāhir – 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 Zāhir 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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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 'Arsh with His Essence, and He is everywhere by His knowledge" (Abbad A. 2002:74). [My translation].

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī (2001:22/385) said that, "Zāhir means that He is above all, that is other than Himself, He is the Highest above everything, there is nothing above Him… Baṣīn means there is not anyone closer to anything other than Allāh as he said,

وَنَّعَلَّى أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

"And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein (by our knowledge)."

(Qaf:16).

(Khān and al-Hilāfī)

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 ʿAbbās.

"[My translation]. Here, the mainstream *tafsīr* scholar Al-Baghawī defines the apparent meaning of the attribute Zāhir 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-Ḥadīth: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

[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 ‘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 السَّمَاءَ (fi samā’)’ 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 ‘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:

"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.

The scholar of mainstream *tafsīr*, Şiddīq 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-Saʿdī (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-ʿUthaymīn (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-ʿUthaymīn (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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>Al-Ḥadīd:3</th>
<th>Translation according to the explanation from the Sunnah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream <em>tafsīr</em></td>
<td><em>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.</em></td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf ʿAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td><em>He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things.</em></td>
<td>Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the ḥadīth that explains it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
<td><em>He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward: and He is Knower of all things.</em></td>
<td>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 <em>tafsīr</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
<td><em>He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the Outermost and the Innermost. He is fully aware of all things.</em></td>
<td>Similar to Pickthall above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td><em>He is the First and the Last, and the Outward as well as the Inward: and He has full knowledge of everything.</em></td>
<td>Similar to Pickthall above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Ali Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td><em>He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (over all) and the Knower</em></td>
<td>Only the first part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only the first part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muhammad ʿAlī Qādyānī translation</td>
<td><em>He is the First and the Last</em> and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is Cognizant of all things.</td>
<td>Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the ḥadīth except in the footnote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher ʿAlī Official Qādyānī translation</td>
<td><em>He is the First and the Last</em>, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and HE has full knowledge of all things.</td>
<td>Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the ḥadīth that explains it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes</td>
<td><em>HE is the First, HE is the Last</em>, HE is the Manifest, HE is the Hidden and HE knows everything</td>
<td>Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the ḥadīth that explains it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Muhammad Ẓāhir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td><em>He is the One Who is the First (of all) and the Last (of all).</em> And HE is Manifest(as for His Power) and Hidden (as goes His Essence). And HE knows everything full well.</td>
<td>Only the first part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arberry Non-Muslim</td>
<td><em>He is the First and the Last</em>, the Outward and the Inward; HE has knowledge of everything.</td>
<td>Similar to Pickthall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer Non-Muslim</td>
<td><em>He is the first and the last;</em> and the outer and the inner; and HE all things doth know!</td>
<td>Similar to Pickthall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale Non-Muslim</td>
<td><em>He is the first, and the last;</em> the manifest, and the hidden: And HE knoweth all things.</td>
<td>Only the first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the ḥadīth that explains it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell Non-Muslim</td>
<td><em>He is the first and the last;</em> the Seen and the Hidden; and HE knoweth all things!</td>
<td>Only first part, the rest is literal without resorting to the ḥadīth that explains it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. Interestingly, Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī mentioned the ḥadīth explaining the verse in the
footnote but left the literal translation in the main text. Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī said, "Thou art the Manifest, or the Ascendant over all, so that there is nothing above Thee…" Here, Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī could have just translated the name of Allāh - Ẓāhir- as he has in the ḥadīth to mean, ‘the Highest.’ (Maulana 2002:1059).

Sher ʿAlī, Auolakh, Sale, Mīr Alī, and Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī translated the Names of Allāh Ẓāhir and Bāṭīn 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 Bāṭīn 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 Bāṭīn. 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 Bāṭīn 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 states and this is the Muʿtazilite, Ashʿarite belief. Therefore, Zamakhsharī's interpretation of Ẓāhir is not in accordance with mainstream tafsīr which shows that Ẓāhir means the ‘Highest’ in terms of Essence, 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 Žāhir, that is, 'the apparent.'

As for the meaning of Bāṭīn, 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 Bāṭīn as: "the Knower of hidden things."

Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M. translates Allāh’s name Žāhir as, "And He is Manifest (as for His Power)." His translation has the additional interpretation (taʿwil) 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 Bāṭīn as, "Hidden (as goes His Essence)."

When Mir Ali translates Žāhir as 'Manifest' and Bāṭīn 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 Žāhir as 'Evident' and Bāṭīn 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 traditions that have specifically explained the verses from the Qur’ān. Relying on just the Arabic language to translate verses from the Qur’ān 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 Qur’ān.
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 Qurān; Surah al-A'rāf:54, Yūnus:3, al-Ra'd:2, al-Furqān:54, Ṭaha:5, al-Sajda:4, Al-Ḥadīd:4. For example,

الرَّحْمَٰنُ 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]

The translation above by Khān and al-Hilālī is in the context of other verses in the Qurān which clearly show that Allāh rose or ascended above the 'Arsh (Throne) in a way that befits His Majesty:

اللهُ إِلَيْهِ رفَعَهُ بَلْ
"But Allāh raised him ['Isa] up unto Himself."
(Al-Nisā':158)
(Khān and al-Hilālī)
"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:

"They fear their Lord above them."
(Al-Nahl:50)
Khān and al-Hilālī]

"And He is the Irresistible, above His slaves."
(Al-An'ām: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.' The apparent meaning of istawā preceded by عَلَى - ‘Alā as in the original verse,

"The Most Beneficent (Allāh) istawā (rose over) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)."
(Taha:5)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

by consensus of the Arabic linguists means ارتفع - 'to ascend over' or 'to rise above'

Also, the Successor, Abū al-ʿAlīyah (d.AH110) said: "Istawā means 'to ascend' or 'to

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rise' ('ارتفع")". Mujāhid (d.AH103), the student of the Prophet's Companion, Ibn Ābbās said, "istawā means 'to be above' ("Alā")".

The scholar of mainstream tafsīr, al-Ṭabarānī (AH1374,11/288), commenting on the following verse:

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الحَْكِيمُ الخَْبِير

"And He is the Irresistible (Supreme) above His slaves and He is the All-Wise, Well-Acquainted with all things."

(Al-An'ām: 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-A‘rāf:54,

ثمُه اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

"And then He Istawa (rose over) the Throne (really in a manner that suits His Majesty)."

114 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (1993), Book on Tawḥīd no.7317.

115 Ibid.
Ibn Kathîr, in his *tafsîr* (1999:384) added, "We follow, regarding this, the path of the righteous Predecessors such as Mâlik, al-Awzâ‘î, al-Thawrî, al-Laith b. Sa‘d, al-Shâfî‘î, Aḥmed, Ishâq 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 Allâh to creation then this is rejected since nothing is similar to Him from His creation..."

The mainstream *tafsîr* scholar, al-‘Uthaymîn (2006b:207) said, "*Istawâ‘ alâ ‘Arsh* 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-Qayyîm, after mentioning four possible meanings of *istawâ‘*, concluded that, "What is apparent is that *istawâ‘* and its reality refers to rising above and ascension just as all of the scholars of the language and scholars of (accepted) *tafsîr*, have mentioned" (Muḥammad b. Al Muwṣâfî 2004:933) [My translation].

Even *istawâ‘* with the preposition ‘*ilâ*’ after it as in ‘يَسْتَوِى إلى’ has been mentioned by Ibn Qayyîm to mean *al-‘Ulûw* (ascension) and *irtifa‘* (rising above) by consensus of the righteous Predecessors (Muḥammad b. al-Mawṣâfî 2004:889) [My translation].

The scholar of *hadîth* Ishâq b. Rahwayh (d.AH238) said regarding the following verse:

"The scholars have consensus that Allâh rose above the ‘Arsh and He Knows everything in the lowest of the seven earths."¹¹⁶

(Ţaha:5)  
[Khân and al-Hilâlî]

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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)."
(Taha: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-istiwā (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 Muqadmat al-Qayrawāniyyah118 stated,

لا يتبَّلُغُ كنية الواقفون، ولا يحيطُ بأمره المتفکرون، يعتبرُ المتفکرون بآياته، ولا يتفکرون في ماهية ذاته، وأنه فوق عرشه المجيد بذاته، وهو في كل مكان بعلمه.
"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 ‘Arsh 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 ‘Arsh’ and further clarified that it is His Essence that is above the Throne as opposed

117 Related in al-Bayhaqī in al-Asma’ was-Sifāt (1993:408) by way of ʿAbdullāh b. Wahb from Mālik. Ibn Ḥajar said in Fath al-Bārī (13/406-407) that its isnād (chain of narrators) is (good). It was authenticated by al-Dhahabī in al-Ulung (1420: 103).
to the Ashʿarite 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 ʿAbd 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 ʿUmar 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" (ʿUthmān 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 Muʿtazilite, Ashʿarite and Jahmite jurists have done in the past.

As for istawā ʿalā ʿArsh 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-ʿUlūw 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:

<table>
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<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>Istawā [Ṭaha:5]</th>
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<tr>
<td>Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream tafsīr</td>
<td>The Most Beneficent (Allāh) Istawā (rose over) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translator</td>
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<td>Yusuf 'Ali</td>
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<td>Arberry Non-Muslim</td>
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<td>Palmer Non-Muslim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rodwell Non-Muslim</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The translators, Maulana Muḥammad Ṭāhir-ul-Qadrī, Pickthall, Asad and Yusuf Ṭāhir-ul-Qadrī 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 *ta ḫwil*, 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 Qurʿān have followed the *tafsīr* of the Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite 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 ‘استوِ’ - *istawā* from the non-mainstream scholar of *tafsīr*, Zamakhsharī, who said (2009:651) that ‘استوِ’ - *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:

"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 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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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 ʿwīl of Allāh’s Attributes by interpreting and then translating the Attributes of Allāh to mean something different from the apparent meaning. For example in ُتَا: ٥:

الرَّحْمَٰنُ 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 ʿAlī’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:

الطَّلِمُ 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 ‘استوى’ 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 Mu’tazilite, Ash’arite and Jahmite interpretations which do not assert that Allāh is above the creation.

Mir Ali translated it as, "The Beneficent (God) on the ‘Arsh is firm’. In the footnote, Mir Ali explained that ‘Arsh 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 Mu‘āwiyyah b. Ḥakam Al-Sulamī knew where Allāh is when the servant was asked. The Companion of the Prophet, Mu‘āwiyyah 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 Uhud 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 samā‘)." 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 samā‘' does not literally mean ‘in the sky’ as in the verse:

قُلْ سِيرًا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظِرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَا الْخَلْقُ

"Say: travel through(over) the land and observe how He began creation."

(Ankabūt:20)
[Umm Muḥammad Sahīḥ International]

Here في الأرض does not mean travel 'in the land' but rather 'above/over the land.' Similarly, 'fī samā‘' 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 samā‘) 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 Qur’ān 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 Qur’ān according to the correct context. In this section, it is

120 Sahīḥ Muslim (2005:33/537) no.1199, Book of Prohibition of speaking in the prayer.
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)

"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 ‘Arsh (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 Tamimī, an Islamic Professor from the Islamic University of Madīnah, said in his notes to al-Dhahabi’s Kitāb al- ʿArsh (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 Qurʾān, 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 ʿAbbās and Ibn Masʿūd, Abū Mūsā Al-Ashʿarī, Mujāhid and others. Many scholars have said there is a consensus of the righteous Predecessors about this."
Concerning the verse:

وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السهمَاوَاتِ وَالأَْرْضَ

"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-Qurṭūbī, 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-Ashʿarī mentioned in (2007:200) al-Risāla ilā Ahl al-Thagr, that there is consensus that Allāh has a Kursī which is other than the ʿArsh. 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 ʿAbbās 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."

Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz Al-Ḥanafi (d.AH792), the judge of Damascus in his time, in (AH1400:313) *Sharḥ ʿAqīdah al-Ṭahawiyah*, said that the *Kursī* is in front of the Throne.

4.4.2 *The Kursī is different from the ʿArsh - 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 ☪ said, I heard the Messenger of Allāh ☪ 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 Masʿūd ☪ 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

\(^{123}\) Al-Albānī (1972:1/175,176) in *al-Ṣābihah* 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 ☪. 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 ☪, 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 ʿArsh 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 ʿAbbās ☪ 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 ﷺ 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 ﷺ (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 whose chains go back to the Prophet ﷺ. Also, Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ is not known to have taken anything derived from previous scriptures (the 'People of the Book')."

The narration of Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ 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


\( ^{125} \)Being separate from creation means that He is not part of creation but above it. This is the belief of Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaʿah which was expressed by consensus of the scholars in the early centuries. For example, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d.AH277) and Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī (d.AH264) from the third century both stated in their treatise “Allāh is separate (Baʿth) from His creation”. Al-Maḍkhālī 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 Kursi encompasses the heavens, it must be above them, and because the Throne encompasses the Kursi, 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-Ṭabarî quoted the narrator Juwaybir that the successor Ḥasan al-Baṣrî (d.AH110) said the Kursî is the Throne.126 However, the ḥadîth scholar Ibn ἦajar said this is a very weak report, meaning that it is not authentic. Likewise, Ibn Kathîr (2003:1/13) said, "Ibn Jarîr al-Ṭabarî narrated this from Juwaybir but he is a weak narrator, so this report is not authentic from Ḥasan al-Baṣrî. Rather, what is authentically reported from him and other Companions of the Prophet and the Successors is that the Kursî is something other than the Throne."

Al-Bayhaqî said regarding al-Ṭabarî's statement from Ḥasan al-Baṣrî, "This is not pleasing to be accepted. The Prophetic traditions confirm that the Kursî is a creation in front of the Throne and the Throne is greater than it."127

The mainstream scholar of tafsîr, al-ʻUthaymîn, (AH1423b:3/254) said, "The Kursî is the place of the Feet of Allâh, the Most High and in front of the Ārsh as has

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authentically been reported from the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ʿAbbās. What has been reported that Ibn ʿAbbās has taken from the People of the Book is not authentic. What is authentically reported in al-Bukhārī (Chapter Al-ʿĪtsām bi Sunnah no.7363) is that Ibn ʿAbbās 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 ‘Arsh; however, the ‘Arsh 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 ʿAbbās which is also not authentic and opposes what is originally narrated from him. 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 ʿAbbās."

[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.

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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greatness of the Sovereignty and noble Authority. They negate the existence of the Kursī and the ‘Arsh and consider them to be nothing. The people of truth assert the apparent meaning of these (Kursī and the ‘Arsh) 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 ‘Arsh is like a ring in a desert. That would mean that the ‘Arsh 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 ʿAbbās 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, extending over the heavens and the earth. They did this so that they could deny that Allāh is above the Kursī and the ‘Arsh. They quote Ibn ʿAbbās 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 Jaʿfar al-Ahm and he is not one of the narrators that is relied upon because many of the reliable narrators opposed him."132

Al-Ṭabarî in his *tafsîr* reported two meanings of *Kursî*; one that it refers to ‘His Knowledge’ and the other he said refers to the ‘Arsh but leaned towards the *Kursî* being ‘His knowledge’. However, the scholar of *tafsîr* Maḥmûd Shâkir in al-Ṭabarî (AH1374:5/401) said these two statements of al-Ṭabarî in his *tafsîr* are both incorrect.

Ibn Taymiyyah (2001:6/584) said, "It is reported from some of them that *Kursî* refers to ‘His Knowledge’ and this is a weak position to hold since the Knowledge of Allâh extends over everything not just as far as the heavens and earth as Allâh said:

رَبَّنَا وَعِلْمًا وَرَحْمَةً وَكُلًا شَيْءًا نَّصِيبَتَنَا

"Our Lord, You have comprehended all things in Mercy and Knowledge."

(Al-Ghafir: 7)

[Khân and al-Hilâlí]

4.4.5 *The meaning of Kursî is not just to show Allâh's Greatness, Pride and Honour*

As for the *Kursî* referring to the greatness of Allâh and His Pride and Honour, this has been mentioned by al-Râzî (2005:7/12) in his *tafsîr*. Firstly, al-Râzî himself after mentioning it said it was a weak statement, "Leaving the apparent without proof is not allowed and Allâh knows best."

Secondly, this statement was clarified by the scholar of *tafsîr* al-Ālûsî (AH1431:3/397/398). He said that many who opposed asserting the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allâh used this explanation for the *Kursî* as they, according to themselves, did not want to liken Allâh to creation. Rather, *Kursî* is a real creation, as the authentic Prophetic reports confirm, as well as the explanation of the Prophet's Companions. However, Zamakhsharî (2009:1/481) in his *tafsîr* asserted that the *Kursî* is actually not real. Below is a table showing how the fifteen translators tackled the translation of *Kursî*:

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<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>Al-Baqarah: 255</th>
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<td>KHAN and al-Hilali Used mainstream <em>tafsir</em></td>
<td>His <em>Kursi</em> extends over the heavens and the earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf Alī Followed Mu'azzili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>His <em>Throne</em> doth extend over the heavens and the earth</td>
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<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
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<td>Rashad Non-mainstream Mu'tazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
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<td>Maulana Muhammad Alī Qadyānī translation</td>
<td>His <em>knowledge</em> extends over the heavens and the earth</td>
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<td>Dr. A. Majid A. Auolakh with notes from Ahmad Raza Khan Brelvī – Sufi interpretation</td>
<td>His <em>authority</em> encircles all the heavens and earth</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dr. Muhammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufi interpretation</td>
<td>His <em>Throne</em> (of Empire and Power and Authority) encompasses the heavens and the Earth</td>
</tr>
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<td>Arberry Non-Muslim</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell Non-Muslim</td>
<td>His <em>Throne</em> reacheth over the Heavens and the Earth</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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 ‘Arsh (Throne) mentioned in 7:58, 10:3, 85:15 and elsewhere. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "The *Kursī* in relation to the Throne is like an iron ring thrown out upon an open space of desert." If the *Kursī* extends over the entire universe, then how much greater is the ‘Arsh. Indeed Allāh, the Creator of the *Kursī* and the ‘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 ʿAlī, 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 Masʿūd and Ibn ʿAbbās 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 Qurʾān urges Muslims to go back to the Qurʾān and the authentic Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*) as Allāh said:

فَإِن تَنَازِعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلََ اللَّ ِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ

"If you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allāh and His Messenger if you believe in Allāh and the Last Day."

(Al-Nisāʾ:59)

[Khān and al-Hilālī]

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133 Al-Albānī (1972:1/175,176) in *al-Saḥīḥah* no.109.
Yusuf ʿAlī (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 ʿKursī 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 ʿKursī.

Although Mir Ali translated ʿKursī 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 ʿKursī. Rashad and Asad mentioned that ʿKursī 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 ʿKursī and the ʿArsh. All of these are creations of Allāh. The heavens are above the earth. The water is above the heavens. Above the water is the ʿKursī and above the ʿKursī is the Throne. The Throne is the highest of creations… And Allāh is above the Throne. The ʿKursī is under the Throne…and cannot mean knowledge because the ʿKursī 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:

وَصَمَّمَ عِرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَََ
"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.  

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." 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.

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4.5 Translating the Attribute ‘Face’

The Attribute of the 'Face' ascribed to Allāh occurs more than once in the Qur’ān. For example, Allāh mentions the Attribute of 'Face' in:

وَاصْبرِ ْنَفْسَكَ مَعَ الهذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَب ههُم بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِي ِ 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 Qur’ān clarifying that Allāh does not resemble any of His creation:

لاِيِّس كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السِّمِّيعُ 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:
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:

"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 ‘Arsh, said, "This and similar to it is among the Attributes of Allāh which the Qur’ān 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 (*ta ṭwil*),

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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:

"لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السُّمِيعُ السَّمِيعُ الْبصِيرُ"
"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:

"إِنَّهَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ"
"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-Ash'arī 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:

135 Sahīh Muslim (Book of Faith 78/79, no.446).
"I seek refuge in Allāh the Mighty (al-ʿAzīm) 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 Qurʾānic 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 Qurʾānic 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:

\[
\text{لِلهذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الحُْسْنََٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ} \\
\text{"Those who have done good, for them is the best reward (paradise) and something more."} \\
\text{(Yūnus: 26)} \\
\text{[My translation]}
\]

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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\(^{137}\) \textit{Sahīḥ Muslim} (2005:1/163).
*ḥadīth*, al-Bukhārī (d.AH256), asserts the apparent meaning of the Attribute ‘Face’ in his *Ṣaḥīh* compilation regarding the verse:

"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-Qaṣṣās: 88)

[Khān and al-Hilālī]

Al-Bukhārī states, "Chapter: The Statement of Allāh, 'Everything shall perish save His ‘Face’"."^{138}\(^{138}\)

Another Prophetic tradition asserting the apparent attribute of Allāh, 'Face' is the following narration: Jābir b. Abdullāh  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:

"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:

138 Kitāb al-Tawḥīd at the end of his *Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī*
"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 traveller 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-ʿUthaymīn (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’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>al-Kahf :28</th>
<th>Does the translation assert the apparent Attribute ‘Face’ of Allāh</th>
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139 Authentically reported in *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb* (2000) no.555.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Translation</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream <em>tafsīr</em></td>
<td>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, <strong>seeking His Face</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf ʿAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, <strong>seeking His Face</strong>;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
<td>Restrain thyself along with those who cry unto their Lord at morn and evening, <strong>seeking His Countenance</strong>;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
<td>You shall force yourself to be with those who worship their Lord day and night, <strong>seeking Him alone</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>And contain thyself in patience by the side of all who at morn and at evening invoke their Sustainer, <strong>seeking His countenance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Ali Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td>And restrain thou thyself with those who call unto their Lord morning and evening <strong>seeking His pleasure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td>And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening <strong>desiring His goodwill</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>And keep thyself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening <strong>desiring His goodwill</strong>,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher ʿAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>And keep thyself attached to those who call on their Lord morning and evening, <strong>seeking HIS pleasure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Ahmad Raza Khān Brelvī –</td>
<td>And keep yourself familiar to those who call upon their Rubb (Sustainer) in the morning and evening <strong>seeking His Pleasure</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Khān and al-Hilālī, Palmer and Rodwell all asserted the Attribute ‘Face’ for Allāh in their translation of:


as, "seeking His ‘Face’.

Yusuf ʿAlī actually translates لَيْرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ (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-Rahman:27, ًو يبقى وجه ربك’. Yusuf ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī 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:

وَيُبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْمَجْهَدِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ
And the 'Face' of your Lord full of Majesty and Honour will abide forever.
(Al-Raḥman:27)

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلاَّ وَجْهَهُ
Everything will perish save His 'Face'. His is the Decision, and to Him you (all) shall be returned.
(Qaṣṣaṣ:88)

فَأَيْنَمَا تُولُو فَتُمِّن 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-Baqrā:115)

Asad translates the following verse:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلاَّ وَجْهَهُ
"Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] self."
(Qaṣṣaṣ:88)

This is similar to Rashad’s translation and Yusuf ‘Alî’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) ‘وَيِبْقَى وَجْهٌ رَبِّكَ’. 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 ṭafsîr al-Suyūtî explains the Attribute of Allāh, 'Face’ to mean 'Self' as well and this could be the source of why translators chose this meaning (Al-Suyūtî: 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 ‘َيِرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ’ (al-Kahf:28) as "seeking Him alone." In another verse (al-Insān:9) Rashad translates the verse ‘ُلوَجَهَ اللَّه’ as, "for the sake of Allāh." In Al-Raḥman:27, ‘وَ بَقِيَ وَجْهُ رَبِّك’ 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 ‘ُواحِ’ (‘Face’) to mean 'Self: ' فِأيْنَ مَا تُؤْلِنَ فَلَوَجْهَ اللَّه’ 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, ‘ُوَ بَقِيَ وَجْهُ رَبِّك’ - '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 āAlī, Mir Ali, Auolakh, Shakir, Maulana Muḥammad āAlī, Tahir-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 Ashʿarites, Muʿtasilites and Jahmites since these groups did not assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh.

Mir Ali translates the verse, "يَرِيد وَنَ وَجْهُهُ" (al-Kahf: 28) as, "seeking His pleasure." He also translates 'وَ يَبْقِي وَجْهُ رِبْك' (al-Raḥman:27) as, "But remain forever the ‘Face’ of thy Lord." In his footnote 2459, on page 1604 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 Shiʿite translation by Shakir also does not assert the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh, ‘Face’. For example, in the verse, "يَرِيد وَنَ وَجْهُهُ" above in (al-Kahf:28), Shakir translates it as, "desiring His goodwill" and not, "seeking His Face." Another example is in (al-Raḥman:27) - "وَ يَبْقِي وَجْهُ رِبْك" 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 Shiʿite tafsīr by al-Qummī (1968:2/392) explained the verse in (al-Kahf:28) "يَرِيد وَنَ وَجْهُهُ" 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 ʿAlī translated, "يَرِيد وَنَ وَجْهُهُ" (al-Kahf:28) as, "desiring His goodwill" and in another verse (Insān:9), "لَوَجِهِ اللَّهُ" as, "for Allāh’s pleasure only." In (al-Rahman:27), Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī translates it as, "And there endures forever the person of thy Lord," All of these translations show that Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī did not assert the apparent meaning of
the Attribute ‘Face’ for Allāh as was asserted by Allāh and His Prophet ﷺ. The other Qāḍyānī translation by Sher ‘Alī is similar to Maulana’s. Sher ‘Alī translated 'يَرِيدَ وَنَ وَ جْهَة' (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 'يَرِيدَ وَنَ وَ جْهَة' (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-Rahman:27) ‘وَيِبَقَى وَ جْه رَبِّك’, 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, 'يَرِيدَ وَنَ وَ جْهَة' (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 ‘كل شيء هالك إلا وجهه’.

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 ‘كل شيء هالك إلا وجهه’.

Sale: "Everything shall perish, except Himself"
Rodwell: "Everything shall perish except Himself!"

However, Rodwell does assert the Attribute ‘Face’ for Allāh in 'يَرِيدَ وَنَ وَ جْهَة' (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'.
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:

وَلاَ تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ الْسَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولاً

"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."

(Isrā':36)
[Umm Muḥammad Sāḥīḥ International]

The mainstream scholar of tafsīr, Ibn Kathīr (1999:1126), explains the verse in (Mulk:1):

نَبَارِكَ 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:

وَقَالَ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلِّبَ أَيْدِيهِ وَلَعَنُوا بَِِا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَاتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ

"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-Mā‘idah:64)

[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ 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 مَن َعَكَ أَن تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيه أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْعَالِيََّ

"[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 Saḥīḥ 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 (biḻā kayf)’. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Asḥārī (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 Saḥḥ 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 taḥsīr, al-Sa‘dī (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 وَالأَرْضُ جََِيعًا قَبْضَتْ تُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسُّهُمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيهاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالََٰ عَمها 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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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-ʻUthaymīn (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.

أَوَلََْ ي َرَوْا أَنها خَلَقْنَ أَن ْعَامًا ف َهُمْ لََْا مَالِكُونَأَوَلََْ ي َرَوْا أَنها خَلَقْنَ أَن ْعَامًا ف َهُمْ لََْا 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 *ta’wīl*. 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 attribute 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-ʻUthaymīn (1995:20) states the apparent meaning of the verse:

بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ

"both His hands are extended."

(Al-Māʾidah:64) [Umm Muḥammad Sahīh 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-ḥabīb Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Suraij, Ḥarb al-Kirmānī (d.AH280), Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿAshʿarī (d.AH324), al-Ajurri (d.AH360), 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-Sijzi (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.

146 Cited from al-Dhahabī (AH1420:2/1216).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>al-Mulk: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kān and al-Hilālī</td>
<td>Blessed is He in Whose <strong>Hand</strong> is the dominion, and He is Able to do all things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used mainstream <em>tafsīr</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf ʿAlī</td>
<td>Blessed be He in Whose <strong>hands</strong> is Dominion; and He over all things hath Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
<td>Blessed is He in Whose <strong>hand</strong> is the Sovereignty, and, He is Able to do all things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad</td>
<td>Most exalted is the One in whose <strong>hands</strong> is all kingship, and He is Omnipotent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad</td>
<td>HALLOWED be He in whose <strong>hand</strong> all dominion rests, since He has the power to will anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Ali</td>
<td>Hallowed is He in Whose <strong>Hand</strong> is the kingdom (of the heaven and the earth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir</td>
<td>Blessed is He in Whose <strong>hand</strong> is the kingdom, and He has power over all things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muhammad ʿAlī Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>Blessed is He in Whose <strong>hand</strong> is the Kingdom, and He is Possessor of power over all things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher ʿAlī</td>
<td>Blessed is HE in Whose <strong>hand</strong> is the Kingdom, and HE has power over all things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from ʿAḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td>Blessed is He in Whose (Mighty) <strong>Hand</strong> is the kingdom (of all the worlds). And He enjoys perfect command over everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arberry</td>
<td>Blessed be He in whose <strong>hand</strong> is the Kingdom -- He is powerful over everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>Blessed be He in whose <strong>hand</strong> is the kingdom, for He is mighty over all!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>Blessed be He in whose <strong>hand</strong> is the kingdom; for He is almighty!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell</td>
<td>BLESSED be He is whose <strong>hand</strong> is the KINGDOM! and over all things is He potent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 ‘يَدَ’ 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 Qur’an as well as in authentic ahađīth, of the clearly metaphorical use of the term ‘Hand’ in allusion to God's absolute power and dominion." It is possible Asad took his meaning from the non-mainstream scholar of tafsīr al-Suyūṯī since al-Suyūṯī said that the Attribute of Allāh, 'Hand', refers to 'power' (al-Suyūṯī: AH1426:4/1364) and in (al-Suyūṯī: 2002:467). This could be the source of why some of the translators performed ta ḵwīl such as Asad.

Regarding the verse in (al-Mā’īdah:64), ‘ب لْ ي د اه  م بْس وط ت انِ’, 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 ta ḵwīl 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 *tafsîr* believe that Allâh has two ‘Eyes’ that befit His Majesty. As with all the Attributes of Allâh, Mainstream *tafsîr* scholars claim that these Attributes should not be imagined or compared to those of the creation. The Attribute of ‘Eyes’ for Allâh has been mentioned in the Qur’ân and the authentic Prophetic narrations as well as the consensus of the righteous Predecessors. Allâh said:

وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا

"And construct the ship under Our Eyes and with Our Revelation,"

(Hud: 37)

[Khân and al-Hilâlî]

وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِ

"in order that you may be brought up under My Eye."

(Ṭaha:39)

[Khân and al-Hilâlî]

وَاصْبِرِْ لحُِكْمِ رَبِكَ فَإِن كَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا

"So wait patiently (O Muḥammad SAW) for the Decision of your Lord, for verily, you are under Our Eyes."

(Ṭur:48)

[Khân and al-Hilâlî]

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, "Allâh 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.  

The scholar of mainstream *tafsîr*, al-Ṭabarî (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-Ṭabarî asserted the Attribute 'Eye' for Allâh. Likewise, the scholar of mainstream *tafsîr*, al-Qurṭubî, M. said that,

----

ٌ" means, "under our sight." He also said it means, "under our protection and knowledge." Furthermore, the scholar of tafsîr, al-Suyûtî (2003) said that ٌ" means "under our 'Eye'" but also said 'Eyes' meant, 'under Our Protection' (al-Suyûtî: AH1426:4/1363).

The scholar of mainstream tafsîr, al-Baghawî (2002:2/399), mentioned the explanation of the verse, ٌ" (Hud:37) "The Prophet's Companion Ibn ʿAbbâs said, ‘under Our Sight’..." Al-Baghawî (2002:3/121) mentioned the explanation of the verse ٌ" (Taha:39), that it means, "that you may be cultivated under Our Sight."

The scholar of mainstream tafsîr, Ibn Kathîr (1999:1049), mentioned the explanation of ٌ" (Ṭur:48), "Under our Sight and Protection and Allâh will protect you (Prophet Mûsâ /Moses) from the people." Here, the Prophet's Companion, Ibn ʿAbbâs گ, and the scholars of tafsîr, al-Baghawî and Ibn Kathîr, all assert the Attributes 'Eyes' for Allâh when they mentioned that ٌ" means, "under Our Sight." Ibn Kathîr mentioned the context of the verse which refers to Allâh protecting Prophet Mûsâ from Pharoah, who wanted to kill all the newborn males. However, Ibn Kathîr had asserted initially the Attributes of 'Eyes'.

The scholar of mainstream tafsîr, al-Saʿdî (2002:372), also asserted the Attributes of 'Eyes' for Allâh 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 Allâh. This is not opinion-based taʿwîl as this was mentioned by some of the righteous predecessors and other mainstream taʿwîl scholars based upon the context while still asserting 'Eyes' for Allâh.
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-Ash‘arī (AH1411:129), Abū ʿUthmān al-Sabūnī (1994:165) and later al-ʿUthaymīn (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 ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd (2012:183,184) said, "In the explanation of the Messenger of Allāh  that Allāh is not one-eyed, is an indication that He sees and has two ‘Eyes’ in opposition to the blind."

Likewise, Ibn-Khuzaímah (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 . Allāh sent the Prophet  to clarify the Qur‘ān. Allāh said, "We revealed to you the Remembrance (Qur‘ān) that you may clarify to them what has been revealed to them."(Naḥl:44) The Prophet  clarified that Allāh has two ‘Eyes’ and his clarification was in accordance to the Qur‘ān."

The fourth-century scholar Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘ari(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."

151 See also Magālāt 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 Qādiriyah 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-Ḥ⪯iṣād Ahlī Sunnah Wal Jamāʿah, "The Chapter on the texts from the Qurʾān and the Sunnah of His Prophet ⲥ⪯ 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 Arbaʿin fi dalaʿ il 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, "واصنع اللَّهُ اصْنِعِ الْف لْكِ بِأ عْي نِن ا يَصِنِعُ يَالْغِنِيْنَا 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".

152 Cited in al-ʿUthaymīn (AH1413) Fatāwā al-ʿAqīdah (90-96).
Non-mainstream scholar of *tafsīr*, Al-Bayḍāwī (2013:638) said, "وَلَتَصْنَحْ 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 Qurʾān being compared:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>Taha:39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream <em>tafsīr</em></td>
<td>And I endued you with love from Me, in order that you may be brought up under My Eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf ʿAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>But I cast (the garment Of) love over thee from Me. And (this) in order that Thou mayest be reared Under Mine eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
<td>And I endued thee with love from Me that thou mightiest be trained according to My will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
<td>I showered you with love from Me, and I had you made before My watchful eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>And [thus early] I spread Mine Own love over thee - and [this] in order that thou might be formed under Mine eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Alī Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td>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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td>and I cast down upon you love from Me, and that you might be brought up before My eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muhammad ʿAlī Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>And that thou mayest be brought up before My eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher ʿAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>And I wrapped thee with love from ME; and this I did that thou mightest be reared before MY eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majid A. Auolakh with notes from Ahmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td>And I endued you with love from Me so that you may be brought up before My Sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Muhammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadr M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
will be fascinated). And (this was done) so that you may be brought up before our eyes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Non-Muslim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arberry</td>
<td>And I loaded on thee love from Me, and to be formed in My sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>For on thee have I cast my love, that thou mayest be formed under my eye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>Bestow on thee love from me, that thou mightest be bred up under my eye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell</td>
<td>And I myself have made thee an object of love, That thou mightest be reared in mine eye.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maulana Muḥammad ʾAlī and Sher ʾAlī of the Qāḍyānī 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 ʾAlī, 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 Tur: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-€Uthaymīn (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 Shi‘ite translation by Mir Ali (1988:971) translates لِت صْن ع  ع ل ىٰ ع يْنِي as, "brought up under My eyes" with a small ‘e’, and then adds in brackets, ‘as I will’. He then quotes the Shi‘ite *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 €Alî 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 Pharaoh.

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 Attributes '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:

"Say (O Muḥammad ﷺ): "I am only a man like you.""

(Al-Kahf: 110)  
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Prophet's Companion, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās 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 Allâh blessed me with that." [Al-Baghawî (2002:3/70)].

"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 tafsîr, al-Baghawî (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 Banû Hâshim. Another verse showing the human nature of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is,

"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), Allâh mentioned that the Prophets ate food and walked in the markets, al-Saʿdî (2002:578), scholar of mainstream tafsîr, 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:

"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 Allâh. For every term is a decree."  
(Al-Raḍ:38)  
[Umm Muḥammad Saḥīḥ International]
The next verse clearly shows that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not an angel:

وَلَا أُوْلُوْكَمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنَ الْلَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ َالْغَيْبَ وَلَا أُوْلُوْكَمْ إِلَّا مَلَكُ وَلَا أُوْلُوْكَمْ يَتَزُّرُونَ أَمَّنْ يَتَزُّرُونَ لَنَبْيُتُوهُمَّ الْلَّهُ خَيْرًا الْلَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ إِذَا أَذَّنَ عِندَ النَّارِ

"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:

قَالَتُ رُسُلُهُمْ إِن نَهْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مُثْلُكُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمْنُ عَلَىٰ مَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الرِّيكَانُونَ 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 Sahīḥ International]

Therefore, the Qur'ān clearly states that all Messengers on earth that were sent are humans and not angels. The scholar of mainstream tafsīr, al-Sa'ūdī (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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>al-Kahf:110</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream <em>tafsīr</em></td>
<td>Say (O Muḥammad ﷺ): 'I am only a <strong>man</strong> like you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf cAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>Say: &quot;I am but a <strong>man</strong> like yourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
<td>Say: I am only a <strong>mortal</strong> like you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translator</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad</td>
<td>Say, &quot;I am no more than a <strong>human</strong> like you&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad</td>
<td>Say [O Prophet]: &quot;I am but a <strong>mortal man</strong> like all of you&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Ali</td>
<td>(And) say thou: &quot;I am only a <strong>man</strong> like you...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir</td>
<td>Say: I am only a <strong>mortal</strong> like you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muhammad ṢAlī Qāḍyānī</td>
<td>Say: I am only a <strong>mortal</strong> like you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher ṢAlī</td>
<td>Say, I am but a <strong>man</strong> like yourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh Khan Brelvī</td>
<td>Please declare, <strong>(apparently in outlook)</strong> I (Muḥammad ﷺ) am a <strong>person</strong> like you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Muhammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī</td>
<td>Say: &quot;<strong>I look like you only</strong> (by virtue of my visible creation) as a <strong>man</strong>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arberry</td>
<td>Say: 'I am only a <strong>mortal</strong> the like of you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>Say, 'I am only a <strong>mortal</strong> like yourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>Say, verily I am only a <strong>man</strong> as ye are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell</td>
<td>SAY: In sooth I am only a <strong>man</strong> like you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Sufi, Brelvi belief is being used to obscure the clarity of this verse to show that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is not really human. The second Brelvi 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 ‘ق لْ’ 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 Sufi, Brelvi 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 Sufi, Brelvi interpretation? They consider him to be ‘nür’- light. They use various verses to justify this such as:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنِّي أُرْسِلْتُكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا َوَدَايِعًا 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 Sahīḥ International]

However, this refers to the Prophet Muḥammad’s 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-Saʿdī (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-Ahzāb: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 Qur‘ān 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:

بيَّّ لَكُمْ كُنتُمْ تُُْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كُتْبِ يُبَيِّنَ لَكُمُ كُتِّبَاءُ، وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كُتْبِ يُبَيِّنَ لَكُمُ كُتِّبَاءُ،

"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 Sahih 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 Sahih 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 Qur‘ān, 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 أَلْوَانَ ما زِلُوَّا مِنَ السِّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَحِيمًا، وَهُوَ الْمَلَكُ الْقَيِّمُ، وَهُوَ الْمَلَكُ الْقَيِّمُ。

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."

(Isrā’:95)

[Umm Muḥammad Sahih 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,

\begin{align*}
\text{"Verily, you (O Muḥammad) will die, and verily, they (too) will die."} \\
(Al-Zumur:30) \\
[Khān and al-Hilālī]
\end{align*}

He also recited,

\begin{align*}
\text{"Muhammad 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]
\end{align*}

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,

\begin{align*}
\text{"(Am I anything but) a Messenger like other messengers, (a man) like you."}
\end{align*}

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

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154 Sahīh 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."\textsuperscript{155}

The scholar of hadith al-Albānī (1985:458) 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 Sufi, Brelvī translators’ Ţahir-ul-Qadrī and Auolakh. These translators did not derive this interpretation from mainstream \textit{tafsīr} but from their own sectarian belief.

\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim} (2005), no. 2996.
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 Qāḍyānī sect, for example, holds this belief and their translation of the Qurʾān portrays this. They hold that Ghulām Ahmad 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:

> مَا كَانَ مَهَدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِن رَجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رهسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَََ النهبِي ِيََّ 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-Ahzāb: 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]
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:

الْي َوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَِْمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِِ وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الإِْسْلَمَ 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

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, ۱٣ّUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ, 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,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>al-Ahzāb:40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream tafsīr</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf ۱۳ّAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>Muhammad 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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translator</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rashad Non-mainstream Mu'tazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad Non-mainstream Mu' tazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>[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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Ali Portrays Shi‘ite beliefs</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir Portrays Shi‘ite beliefs</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muhammad Ḥalī Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>Muḥammad is not the father of any of you men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher Ḥalī Official Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Aḥmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufi interpretation</td>
<td>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 cognizant of all the things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufi interpretation</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arberry Non-Muslim</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer Non-Muslim</td>
<td>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!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale Non-Muslim</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Rodwell Non-Muslim</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī (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 Qurʾān 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 خَاتََامُ in the verse, it shows the following linguistic meanings:


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-ʿArab (1997:4/24) of Ibn Manẓūr] and [Tāj al-ʿArūs (AH1306:8/266) of al-Zabīdī].

3. It also means - the end of something or the end result of something, such as the verse: خَاتََامُ مِسْكٍ – "Whose seal is musk" [(al-Muṭafifīn:26) al-Muḥkam al-Muḥīṭ al-Aʿẓam 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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī (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 Qurʾān, 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 Muhammad ʿAlī (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

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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī (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 hadīth, 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 ʿAlī 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 ﻫ، "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:

\[
\text{يمَمهدِ أَبَأ أَحَدٍ مَن رَجَالِكُمْ وَلَّا كُنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَََ النهبِي ِيََّ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا}
\]

"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 ﻫ was the final Prophet but not the final Messenger. He said, "Despite this clear definition of Prophet Muḥammad ﻫ, 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-ʾImrān:81) and (Aḥzāb: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 ﻫ the final Prophet but also the final Messenger. Prophet Muḥammad

\(^{163}\) Sahīḥ 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 تَحْمِدَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ فَدَخَلَ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أُفَانِيَةٌ فَأَفَإِن مُهَادَتُكُمْ عَلَى أَعْمَاقِكِمْ وَمِنْ يُقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقِبِهِ فَلَن يُصَرِّ الَّذِينَ مِنْهُ شَيَّ، وَسَيَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَشْهَكُونَ

"Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him."

(Āl-Imrān:144) [Khān and al-Hilālī]

Allāh mentioned Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as being a Messenger and a Prophet in one verse:

الذين يتقبّلون الرسول النبى الأسمى الذي يجدونه مكتوبًا عندكم في التوراة والإنجيل

"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-A‘rāf: 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 Qurʾān 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:

وَأَذَّ أَحْذِرَ الَّذِينَ يَمِنَقُو تَبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مِن كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمُ رُسُولٌ مُتَّبَعٌ لَمَّا مَعَكُمُ الْمُتَّبَهَّينَ يَهْدِيْهِمْ فِي الْثِّيَابِ وَالْجَمِيعِ

"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-ʾImrān: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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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,

الْي َوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَِْمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِِ وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الإِْسْلَمَ 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.

\^{167} Sahīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd (1988) no.4291.
5.3  Translating the verse:

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالاًّ ف َهَدَىٰ

"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 ﷺ 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-Ṭabarānī [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 'ضالاً' unaware before revelation and then was guided by Allāh. The following scholars of mainstream tafsīr suggested similar meanings to each other for the word 'ضالاً'. 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 مِنْ أَمْرِنَا

"And thus We have sent to you (O Muḥammad 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 'ضالاً' 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-Baghwā (2002:4/633) said, "ضَنُّالِ, unaware of what you were upon and He guided you to *Tawḥīd* and Prophethood". The Successors to the Prophet's Companions, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḍhahhāk and Ibn Keysan said, "ضَنُّالِ, 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:

"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-Baghwā suggested a similar meaning to Ibn Kathīr and al-Saʿdī but by using a different verse (Yūnus:3) as proof. Imām al-Baghwā (2002:4/633) continued with the same verse as Ibn Kathīr and al-Saʿdī:

"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):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>Duḥā:7</th>
<th>And He found you unaware (of the Qurʾān, its legal laws and Prophethood) and guided you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KHĀN and al-HILĀLĪ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation And He found thee wandering, and He gave The guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used mainstream <em>tafsīr</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf ʿAlī</td>
<td></td>
<td>Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation And He found thee wandering, and He gave The guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(convert to Islam)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall</td>
<td></td>
<td>Did He not find thee wandering and direct thee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad</td>
<td></td>
<td>He found you astray and guided you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad</td>
<td></td>
<td>And found thee lost on thy way, and guided thee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Ali</td>
<td></td>
<td>And (He) found thee in loss and immediately guided thee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir</td>
<td></td>
<td>And find thee lost (i.e. unrecongnised by men) and guide thee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muhammad ʿAlī</td>
<td></td>
<td>And find thee groping, so He showed the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher ʿAlī</td>
<td></td>
<td>And found thee lost in love for thy people and provided thee with guidance for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Ahmad Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td>He found you deeply moved in His search so He guided you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Muḥammad Ṭahir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufī interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td>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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arberry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Did He not find thee erring, and guide thee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td></td>
<td>and find thee erring, and guide thee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td></td>
<td>And did He not find thee wandering in error, and hath He not guided thee into the truth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell</td>
<td></td>
<td>And found thee erring and guided thee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arberry, Palmer, Rodwell and Sale chose to translate the word, ‘ضَلَالٌ’, 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 ‘ضَلَالٌ’ 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 ʿAlī 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 liii.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, نُضِلَّ '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 ضَلَّ 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

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' [Dalla] has been used in the Qurān with different meanings such as in (53:2), (12:8), (12:95), (32:10)."

These different contexts show the different meanings that 'ضال' can have. However, to suggest (Duḥā:7) refers to the people being lost means that the pronoun should be in the plural form and not the singular form as in:

\[
\text{وَوَجَدَكُمْ ضَالًا فَهَدَىٰ}
\]

"He found you lost and guided you."

(Ḍuḥā:7)

If the pronoun in Arabic had been:

\[
\text{وَوَجَدُ}
\]

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:

\[
\text{وَوَجَدُ كُمْ فَهَدَاكُمْ}
\]

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):

\[
\text{وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيَ ْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنَ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنتَ تَدْرَي مَا الْكَتَابُ وَلاَ الْيَمَانُ}
\]

"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?"

Tahir-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 ʿAlī'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 ضَلََلَكَ الْقَدِي

"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 ʿAbbās Ḥ., as saying it means, "upon your old error" of preferring his son Yusuf over his brothers. Therefore, ضَلََلَكَ 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 Qurʾān. This is also similar to other verses in the Qurʾān which give the context of the verse (Ḍuḥā:7) as we shall see later.

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 ersive 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 ʿAlī (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 Qurān 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 'ضههه ال' - 'dāllan' as astray, rather, the verse should be translated according to the other verses in (al-Shūrā:52):

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَي ْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنتَ تَدْرَي مَا الْكَتَابُ وَلاَ الْيَمَانُ

"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):

ثقة نقصه على يك أحسن الفصص بما أوحيني إليك هذا القرآن وإن كنت من قليله لمن والقين
"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, especially 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 Tahir-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:

"Your Lord (O Muhammad (Peace be upon him)) has neither forsaken you nor hated you."
(Ḍuḥā:3)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

"Did He not find you (O Muhammad (Peace be upon him)) an orphan and gave you a refuge?"
(Ḍuḥā:6)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

"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.
5.4 Translating the verse:

"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-Fath: 2)

[Khān and al-Hilālī]

This particular verse has been problematic for some translators of the Qur'ān 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.

"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 Sahīḥ 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 Sahīḥ 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
"Abasa: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 وَتَوَلَّهٰ

"The Prophet (Peace be upon him)) frowned and turned away,"

أَنَّ جَآءَهُ 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)."

(ʻAbasa: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 committed 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-Qurṭūbī 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 Shi'ites believe. The Shi'ites 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:

لا يُغفِرُ لِلَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنْبٍ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ

"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 ‘Iyyadh169 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:

قال يا نوح إلهي ليس من أهلك إله عمّال غيّر صالح فلا تسألني ما ليس لك به علم

إني أعطاك أن تكون من الجاهليين

"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 إِلََ 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:

فُعَفَّنَا لَهُ ذَٰلِكَ وَإِنه 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, Siddīq 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) cʿAṭṭa170 said, 'your past sins' refers to the sins of

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 Sahih
Al-Bukhārī and Sahih Muslim: It it is reported that the Prophet would pray until his feet
swelled. So ʿĀʾishah (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-Fath:2) and that ʿĀʾishah 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 Fath:2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>al-Fath: 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Khān and al-Hilālī Used mainstream tafsīr</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf ʿAlī Followed Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickthall (convert to Islam)</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation who later claimed to be a Prophet.</td>
<td>Whereby GOD forgives your past sins, as well as future sins, and perfects His blessings upon you, and guides you in a straight path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asad Non-mainstream Muʿtazili allegorical interpretation</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir Ali Portrays Shiʿite beliefs</td>
<td>(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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translator</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir</td>
<td>That <strong>Allāh may forgive your community their past faults and those to follow</strong> and complete His favor to you and keep you on a right way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Muhammad Ṭāhir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufi interpretation</td>
<td>That <strong>ALLĀH may cover for thee thy (alleged) shortcomings in the past and those to come</strong>, and complete His favor to thee and guide thee on a right path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sher ʿAlī Official Qāḍyānī translation</td>
<td>That <strong>ALLĀH may cover up for thee thy shortcomings, past and future</strong>, and that HE may complete HIS favor upon thee on a right path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Majīd A. Auolakh with notes from Ahmād Raza Khān Brelvī – Sufi interpretation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Muḥammad Ṭāhir-ul-Qadrī M., Brelvī – Sufi interpretation</td>
<td>So that *<em>Allāh forgives, for your sake, all the earlier and later sins (of all those people) of your Umma ([Community]</em> 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)**.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arberry Non-Muslim</td>
<td>that <strong>God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins</strong>, and complete His blessing upon thee, and guide thee on a straight path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer Non-Muslim</td>
<td>that <strong>God may pardon thee thy former and later sin</strong>, and may fulfil His favour upon thee, and guide thee in a right way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale Non-Muslim</td>
<td>That <strong>God may forgive thee thy preceding and thy subsequent sin</strong>, and may complete his favour on thee, and direct thee in the right way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodwell Non-Muslim</td>
<td>In token that <strong>God forgiveth thy earlier and later faults</strong>, and fulfilleth His goodness to thee, and guideth thee on the right way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Khān and al-Hilālī, Yusuf Ali, Picktall, Asad and Rashad all said that the verse referred to the Prophet Muḥammad's ḥus past and future errors. One of the Qāḍyānī translators, Sher ʿAlī also agreed. The four non-Muslim translators, Arberry, Palmer, Sale and Rodwell believed that the verse referred to the Prophet's past and future errors.
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 Shi‘ite 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 Shi‘ite 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 Shi‘ite 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 Shi‘ites 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 Shi‘ite 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 Shi‘ite \textit{tafsīr} by al-Qummī in (1968:3/437) relates the following from Amer b. Yazīd Biya‘ al-Sābri who mentioned, "I said to Abū Abdillāh regarding the verse in His Book:

\begin{quote}
\textit{لَيْغَفْرُ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنَ ذُنُوبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا}
\end{quote}

"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-Fath:2)

[Khān and al-Hilālī]

He said, "He (the Prophet Muhammad) didn't have sins nor intended them but Allāh placed as a weight on him, the \textit{sins of his nation} then He forgave them for him"."

This, again shows how the Shi‘ite \textit{tafsīr} has been used to influence the Shi‘ite translations by both Shakir and Mir Ali.

Similar to the Shi‘ite translations, the Sufi translation by Tahir-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 Tahir-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 ʿAlī (2002:995) of the Qāḍyānī sect, translated the verse in (al-Fath: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 ʿAlī (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 ʿAlī 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."

Likewise, the Qāḍyānīs believe that their Prophet Ghulām Ahmad 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;

171 Nasafi, Qurtubī in Al-Jaami’ li Ahkam Al-Qur‘ān.
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:

فَأَكَلَ مِنْ هَٰذَةِ فَبَدَتْ لَٰمَا سُوَّاَتُهُما وَطَفَقَا يَكُصُفُّانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنَ 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."
(Taha:121)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

ثمُه اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ

"Then his Lord chose him, and turned to him with forgiveness, and gave him guidance."
(Taha:122)
[Khān and al-Hilālī]

فَتَلَقِّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كِلَمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْمُهْتَدِيَ الْمُهْتَدِيَ الْمَلِكُ الْعَزِيزُ

"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.

مَنْ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدُي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهِ وَلَا تُزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَ

"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 another's burden."
(Al-Isrā: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:

فَلَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِنَّهُمَا عَلَيْهِمَا مَا حَيَّلَ وَعَلَيْكُم مِّنْ عِلْمِهِمَا مَا حَيَّلَ

- 275 -
"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 إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا إِلَّهُ (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-Fath:2) was revealed, the Prophet Muḥammad's Companions asked "this verse is for you but what about us?" Then the verse was revealed:

"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-Fath:4) [Khān and al-Hilālī]

The Prophet's Companions knew that the (earlier) verse (al-Fath: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-Fath: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?

وَلاَ تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلاَّ عَلَيْهَا وَلاَ 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-An'ām: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.
**Chapter Six - Conclusion**

Translation from any language to another is not an easy task, especially when translating sensitive texts such as the Qur’ān. 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 Qur’ān 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 Qur’ān by many translators. Some translators of the Qur’ān 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 Qur’ān. Mainstream *tafsīr*, in general, agree to the principles of *tafsīr*, that is, the Qur’ān explained by the Qur’ān, the Sunnah and the views of the Prophet’s Companions and their Successors. Many translators of the Qur’ān 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 Qur’ān.

This research suggests that the Arabic language is an important tool used to understand the Qur’ān. 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, Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite sects. Mainstream Sunni scholars of tafsīr asserted the apparent meaning of the Attributes of Allāh while non-mainstream 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 ʿAlī 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 Shi'ite 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 apparent 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 Shi'īte translations were influenced by their own sectarian tafsīr as well as other non-mainstream tafsīr.

As for the Qāḍyānī translations offered by Maulana Muḥammad ʿAlī and Sher ʿAlī, 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 ʿAlī 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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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 Shi‘ite 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, Baydāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, 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 Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite 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.
### Appendix 1 - Translations and their Commentaries

<table>
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<th>Translators and their background</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
<th>Tafsir al-Tabarî (d.AH310)</th>
<th>Tafsir al-Baghwî (d.AH516)</th>
<th>Tafsir Ibn Kathîr (d.AH774)</th>
<th>Tafsîr by al-Suyûfî (d.AH911)</th>
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Appendix 2

How the Qurʾān is understood based on mainstream *Tafsīr*

Qurʾān understood by:

- the Qurʾān

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Sunnah (Prophetic narrations)

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Companions' deductions

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Successors' deductions

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Arabic Language
Appendix 3

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