BACKGROUND

This document comprises the
Background section to:

The Qur'an: A Complete Revelation

by Sam Gerrans

PREFACE

The Qur'an claims to be a complete revelation to mankind from the creator of the heavens and the earth. Within that framework,

The Qur'an: A Complete Revelation has two principal objectives. The first is to provide the technical and legal platform for my book *The God Protocol*. That work shows that the Qur'an repeatedly demonstrates a formal protocol of warning as the mechanism by which aberrant ruling elites are held to account before God. It catalogues how former messengers followed this protocol, as did Muḥammad himself. That protocol of warning was in each case the legal prerequisite — the switch, if you will — for the punishments of God thereafter to become binding upon a community resulting in its total destruction, absent a meaningful change of direction by the elites of those times.

The principal intended audience for both works is the ruling caste of our time, which comprises a small coterie of elites united in purpose to degrade, enslave, and then to eradicate most of those over whom they rule. Their policies over the last century or more have resulted in such debasement of the human stock that there can be no doubt that, left to their present course, they will be entirely successful in effecting a profitable genocide and a total and unending tyranny over those whom leave alive to serve them.

Most historical implementations of the *protocol* I mention pertained to areas ruled by elites with limited geographical reach. The ensuing destructions were, likewise, local in nature. Today, as at no other time in history, the world comprises a single community with a single ruling elite. Thus, the application of the same *protocol* in our time has worldwide implications. While potentially providing the detonator to the Eschaton is an unenviable task, the consequences of not doing so will be infinitely worse for all but the elites themselves.

Identification of the *protocol* is no way dependent upon my translation, but it was necessary to clear away some of Traditionalist Islam's more unhelpful impositions upon the Qur'an before proceeding to the main task. A legal protocol is a matter of meeting certain requirements, beginning with the fact that persons served under a protocol must have full access to the legal foundation upon which that protocol rests, even if they choose not to acquaint themselves with its details. The legal foundation in this case is the text of the Qur'an. As the language of the present ruling elite is English, the Qur'an must be presented in English. To import the meanings of certain key words as the Traditionalist does from an extraneous literature would compromise the validity of the English text as the basis for the application of the protocol. Thus, a hermeneutic was developed which treats the Qur'anic text itself as the source of definitions for important key terms. Additionally, norms of due process require that documentation and annotations attend principal legal texts in order to ensure maximum transparency. *The Qur'an: A Complete Revelation* meets these both these requirements.

The elites are most particular about the legal processes they use against the general population; they understand the principle

of *culpability*: once one has been formally warned on the basis of a body of laws, he enters a fresh context legally, a context in which he is either newly culpable, or still culpable but in new way. But no one ever uses the same principles against the elites themselves. This denotes a lack of strategic awareness given that the elites' observance of legal conventions itself demonstrates that they recognise them as binding. Therefore, what is sauce for the goose may be sauce also for the gander.

The second principal objective behind *The Qur'an: A Complete Revelation* is to offer the Qur'anic text to a wider audience free of the impositions made upon it by what I call brand Islam. I am not on a crusade against the Traditionalist Muslim, but I am obliged to critique his claims and check his excesses in order to illustrate where and how they are at unambiguous variance with the book he claims as his foundational scripture. I accept that righteous Traditionalist Muslims exist, as I accept that righteous men exist in a number of religions. But since the Traditionalist's religion is the principal obstacle to meaningful access to the Qur'an, I am bound to address it on that basis.

TRADITIONALIST ISLAM

I was not predisposed to reject the Traditionalist's arguments for his religion, but nor did I have a pre-existing allegiance to them. I listened to them. I studied them. And then I rejected them.

Traditionalist Islam claims — and is typically supported tacitly in its claim by the Orientalist scholar and mainstream media — that the Qur'an may be fully understood only via the Traditionalist and his recourse to a vast later literature called the ḥadīth; it also maintains that, taken together, the Qur'an and the ḥadīth provide the foundation of what is called Islam; it further maintains that Islam is a religion (in the sense of prescribed dogma, rite and custom) and that by following the Traditionalist's presentation of that religion one aligns oneself with the core Qur'anic imperatives. I reject each one of these claims on the basis of the Qur'anic text.

I believe in God. I have analysed the Qur'an with great care, and have become convinced thereby that it is from God. And on the basis of the same analysis I reject Traditionalist Islam. I do so for many of the same reasons I reject Trinitarian Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: I reject any religion founded on writings, opinions and events which post-date their respective revelations in which I find little general (to say nothing of *exclusive*) correspondence between the resultant dogmas and the revelations to which they lay claim. Like the Karaite Jew, I take the guidance I hold in my hands from God to be sufficient for the business of knowing how to obey God, and take responsibility for the exercise of my intelligence on that basis.

The present work not only demonstrates that a full and satisfactory understanding of the Qur'an is possible without ḥadīth — or any other interloping literature claiming canonical status for that matter — it shows the religion commonly known as Islam to have, at best, vestigial correspondence with the Qur'an, and no claim to a monopoly over it whatever.

I provide evidence throughout, marshalling Qur'anic, etymological, contextual and historical data, as well as

comparing a number of established translations, which expose as spurious, specious and extraneous those assertions which the Traditionalist insinuates between the reader and the text — assertions made solely to lend credence to the Traditionalist's claim to find confirmation in the Qur'an for his religion when, in truth, his religion has its genesis elsewhere. I also draw the reader's attention to some of the many instances where a plain reading of the text militates against that cultural narrative which today is called Islam.

While the energy expended in addressing the Traditionalist's claims defines the tone and content of much of this work, my dominant interest is neither in brand Islam nor in those who espouse it; nor am I writing for the edification of academia, or even for those who participate in online Muslim forums which de-emphasise *ḥadīth*. I will be glad no matter who reads, reflects on, and benefits from what is presented here. My intended audience is the elites, as stated in the Preface.

The Traditionalist's claim is that his secondary (in fact, *supplanting*) literature explains the Qur'an. The truth is that his religion has been decided upon on the basis of the aforementioned literature — one entirely removed from the Qur'an — and that the Qur'an serves only as a wall at which he throws those extracts of this supplanting literature which form the sum and substance of his religion in the hopes that some of them will stick, which some of them seem to do if the reader accepts assertions on a generalised or piecemeal basis and puts his faith in authorities and cultural conventions.

A key feature of the Traditionalist's method is the arbitrary assignment of specialised values to ambiguous or general statements. He claims that such statements mean whatever he likes in order to achieve his predetermined ends, and the laity assumes he is right. Should one challenge the merits of his assertions, his motives are called into question, or he is accused of impiety or heresy.

The Traditionalist's intellectual process, if one can call it that, features such logical fallacies as the contention that since his preferred literature says that a particular word means *x*, the fact that his externally derived expectations of *x* are not met in the Qur'an constitutes proof that his preferred literature is necessary in order to understand the Qur'an.

This is the logic of children.

When I have questioned the Traditionalist's assumption that *x* necessarily has the value his extra-Qur'anic stories claim for it — especially given the context of a revelation he himself acknowledges as both consistent and complete — he has typically either flown into a rage or denied the premise of my point by reference to nebulous, superior knowledge held by wise specialists, one to which he himself has no access and about which he knows nothing.

I came to the conclusion that in order to understand the Qur'an, I would have to do the spadework myself.

In one sense, of course, the Traditionalist is right: his religion can only be understood by reference to this other literature; he

is right to such an extent that one can remove the Qur'an entirely from the construct within which he operates to no measurable effect.

My position is not that the Traditionalist should not follow his religion — he can follow what he likes no matter how little sense it makes to me; it is that he should cease conflating his religion with the Qur'an and claiming monopoly rights over a book for which he demonstrably has so little use.

My thoughts on the *ḥadīth* literature, in a nutshell, are as follows: The Qur'an itself claims to be from God and complete. If this is true, there is no good reason to follow anything else. And if it is not true, there is no good reason to follow the Qur'an.

The *ḥadīth* literature is, both by universal consent and by dint of the genre itself, hearsay. And hearsay has no place, to my mind at least, in the business of establishing the facts about God.

Close to the root of what divides the two major sects of what is today called Islam lies conflict between their competing bodies of *ḥadīth* literature. If they cannot agree among themselves on what they accept, I see no reason why I should accept any of it.

The so-called science of *ḥadīth* (that system by which a particular chain of narrators is established and assessed) is predicated on obvious foolishness and a sophistic method; there is no such thing as reliable hearsay. All hearsay is unreliable.

The Qur'an says that God sent down the best *ḥadīth* (39:23). If that is the case, I can see no scenario in which one would look to *ḥadīth* other than that which is best.

The Traditionalist's proselytising efforts are an amalgam of two related deceits: the first is the common bait-and-switch method (using the Qur'an primarily as a means to shoehorn a religion entirely of his own contrivance into the mind), and the second is the conflation of the Qur'anic revelation with another literature. Such a presentation leverages revelation rather than rests upon it, and insinuates a cultural mythology into the space created by an individual's engagement with that revelation — a revelation over which he, the Traditionalist, then claims expert, exclusive and exhaustive knowledge.

The religion the Traditionalist is so attached to has an emotional appeal — especially for those tired of both the tyranny of moral relativism and the undeclared religion of fraudulent science (among which number I certainly count myself) — yet it is, when viewed dispassionately, a cultural construct and mythical narrative, one with little or no direct foundation in revelation.

I am a white northern European. If it is simply a matter of finding an old mythology as a bulwark against the advancing nihilism and utilitarianism of a scorched-earth cultural policy agreed upon by the current ruling elite, there are better traditions to choose from than what brand Islam has to offer, ones much closer to my own cultural heritage and racial memory.

The question, then, for me is not about electing to believe something I like in order to fight a rear-guard action against something I do not. It is about responding appropriately to a

preserved revelation from the creator of the universe.

I disregard the Traditionalist's understanding of the Qur'an not only because I am highly sceptical of his preferred sources, but also because I am not much impressed with his results. Nor am I much impressed with the rest of what he has done. Of course there have been some generative thinkers within the cultures in which the Traditionalist has prevailed, but that fact does nothing to mitigate for me the dominant tendency towards intellectual osteoarthritis in all places where the Traditionalist gains the ascendency. Those vigorous boosts which cultures today called Islamic received in the past were due in large part to the influence of the Qur'an, and intellectual and cultural progress was made despite the Traditionalist and his stock of fictions, not because of them.

While many people are afraid of criticising the religion of Islam, I regard such concerns in a broader context. For me, brand Islam is just one among many streams of human energy being directed towards confluence and useful conflict by those who understand *Realpolitik*. If it were not required as an agenda item, Islam would not have been given its present form or imported into the West. I do not regard brand Islam as a cause, but almost entirely an effect. It is an effect like feminism, the cult of sexual license and perversion, the destruction of the family, the institution of dumbed-down education, mediocrity as the new excellence, the degeneration of cultural standards, or the promotion of distractions such as Hollywood and sports. If there is one thing of which I am completely sure as concerns the Traditionalist, it is that when it comes to the larger game, he is a pawn and not a player. And I have greater concerns than how one particular group of unthinking people allows itself to be manipulated given a world in which there are so many such groups of pawns that we are drowning in them. I am not looking to reform or influence Islam; but neither will I be intimidated out of using my mind by people who cannot or will not use theirs. The strategists who have given brand Islam some time on the playing field run a great number of projects, some of which seem contradictory, but enough of which have the extermination of the majority of the world population as a mid-term goal for a sensible man to consider it a credible threat. And if I do not fear such people or their plans more than I do God, the Traditionalist may rest assured that being individually killed by him and his intellectually mediocre co-religionist pawns is no more intimidating to me than is the prospect of being caught up in a planned mass cull at the hands of the highly organised, interlocking cabals of those extremely intelligent men who do control strategy.

In short, there is a line of men with murderous agendas which have me in their sights, as they do billions of others, and the Traditionalist, if he wants a piece of me, should join the end of it.

Much of the Traditionalist's difficulty with others like himself lies in the fact that interpretive efforts are assessed, in the final analysis, on perception of the authority of the personality behind them. When it comes right down to it, it is simply a question of who has the longest beard. And the question of who has the longest beard is nothing if not a reliable source of frustration and conflict. And while such a dynamic provides intelligent men with a reliable constant for evolving strategies of *Realpolitik,* it does nothing to provide other intelligent men with a reliable constant for evolving questions of hermeneutics. And it is for this reason that the majority of the intellectual overhead in the present work was spent on the creation and testing of an intrinsically Qur'anic system of hermeneutics – one larger and, I hope, more enduring and interesting than the question of the length of my particular beard.

MEANINGS OF WORDS

The values men ascribe to words are a means to govern how they may interpret the world and, therefore, limit what they will do in it.

This fact is understood by ruling elites in all ages, and they employ clever men trained in the sciences of how we work to ensure that this reality serves their interests. They have had millennia to practice their craft; they keep records, and they are continually learning more.

When I was a child gay meant happy. Today gay is the sanctioned nomenclature for what my father's generation called *homosexual,* my grandfather's generation called *queer*, and my great-grandfather's generation called *sodomite*. The day may come when any connection between *gay* and *happy* will be expunged from the lexicons and popular memory altogether.

Unthinking adoption of the new word value I am using to illustrate my point is become almost universal. Potty-training the herd in the use of this new, fluffy euphemism was a necessary though minor line-item in a larger plan — one of many such plans which have as their combined object political and cultural goals which the population not only had no part in deciding, it will never be apprised of their existence.

The masses think of their lives as individually significant, and they plan in hours, days, weeks and months. The ruling elite regards the masses as a herd with no individual significance at all, one which needs to be managed by its betters; and it plans in decades and centuries.

The transition from *sodomite* to *gay* took a few decades. That is a long time for the man in the street, but not for those who rule him.

The Qur'an is many centuries years old. It is natural that key Qur'anic word values should have attracted the attention of previous ruling elites and that such elites should have assigned intellectual capital under their direction to the task of making those values work for them. It is equally as predictable that this should have been achieved by stealth and have gone largely unnoticed by — and with the unthinking complicity of — the masses.

It was interesting to me as I began to apply myself to the Qur'an in earnest that it contains — as part of its DNA as it were — a number of inbuilt defences against the imposition of arbitrary values upon its components, by means of which the original values of key terms may be recovered should they be corrupted. Among these is what is simply a feature of that system of roots which underpins the Arabic language. This system is useful in that it allows words to be analysed and assessed on the basis of

predictable and consistent criteria.

I will give the reader without access to Arabic a taste of what I am referring to by means of an illustration, albeit an imperfect one, by taking what I will call for these purposes the English root *h-s-p*. From this root we get *hospital*, *hospice*, *hospitable*, and *hospitalise*. Because we are speakers of English we recognise that these words are connected. But let's say everyone in the world starts to agree that *to hospitalise* means *to give money to the priesthood*. We can go along to get along, which is what most people do when the world agrees upon something. But we can also choose to demonstrate, even decades or centuries later, on the basis of the broader milieu of the language why *to hospitalise* does not and cannot mean *to give money to the priesthood.* And more than that, we can provide a strong case for what it does mean.

Arabic allows one both to expose and to clarify cases where values have been twisted, and it allows one to do so to an extent far greater than is possible in English. And the interlocking root structure of Arabic I have just mentioned is but one of the mechanisms we have now at our disposal. There are others, and I will touch upon those in due course.

We do not have to guess at what the Traditionalist thinks the Qur'an means. He is quite open about it. His exegesis is implicit in his translation. His process is, in the main, eclectic, erratic, and unblushingly outcome-based; that is, he knows what he wants the text to mean and, by God, he intends to bludgeon it into the required shape no matter what problems are created in the process — and there are many. I have read many translations and refer in this work to common Traditionalist assertions and assumptions in the process of exposing and dismantling them.

For my part, I did not begin with a fixed idea of what the text means. I began with a number of precepts, certainly – such as the precept that the Qur'an is from God, complete and preserved – but I have treated the text itself as a perfect structure, something the mechanics of which may be learnt, applied and tested; I sought to understand what it means rather than to tell it what it means. And the process of rendering the Arabic into English, while demanding high levels of attention, was, in the end, largely a technical one, a function of that hermeneutic method which grew out of my extensive preliminary investigations.

There were two breakthroughs which informed my process which deserve mention, both derived, although by different routes, through unconnected reading on the Hittite civilisation. The first came about when I became interested in the brilliant Czech linguist Bedřich Hrozný who translated the Hittite libraries which were discovered early in the twentieth century. The texts were written in cuneiform which, of course, was known to scholars. However, the Hittite language itself was not. Hrozný, undaunted, undertook the translation of these works from an unknown language with no dictionaries and no source materials other than his knowledge of languages in general and a lively intelligence. He first went through the entire body of texts and found the most commonly occurring word. He reasoned that this word must mean *bread* (which it did). And working on this basis he pieced the entire language together like a giant jigsaw puzzle. I reasoned that it must be possible to apply something of

Hrozný's approach to the Qur'an in at least some of those cases where the Traditionalist's claims for word values are neither consistent nor in harmony with the totality of the language or available contexts. And this insight informed part of my eventual method.

My task was far easier than that which Hrozný faced since the meaning of the broader context is known. But where the Traditionalist's treatment of a word causes a disconnect for any reason, or he claims a value which he imports from elsewhere, I searched the entire text for every instance or form of that word, and it was only when I had both investigated that word and its root and identified a meaning which was acceptable in the totality of contexts (that is, one which brings all instances into alignment) that I allowed that value. And not only did I allow such a value, I insisted that its feet be held to the fire in terms of consistency. And on that basis I translated the text; not in linear fashion but iteratively, traversing the entire text to determine key values before allowing them, a process I repeated many thousands of times.

There are cases where I use a synonym by virtue of the requirements of the English language, but none in which I leap erratically from one value to another for the same source item. Where a source item objectively has more than one sense, notes

are added where necessary. The Traditionalist on the other hand hops shamelessly across entire lexical categories to ascribe to the same word the values he requires it to bear in order to justify his religion – some of which process I expose both *in situ* and in related parts of the Appendix. My experience in such contexts is that where a value is correctly identified, it fits all cases; where it is contrived, comparison of all instances across the entire set exposes where and how the Traditionalist has done violence to the language to achieve his aims.

My second breakthrough connected with the Hittites came by reading an article on Hittite history. The Hittites were a successful civilisation, I was interested to learn, less by force of arms than by the wisdom of their treatises. As I studied the format of a Hittite suzerainty treaty it dawned on me that *al fātiḥah* (the first chapter of the Qur'an) comprises a contract between lord and vassal with much in common with the conventions found in the Hittites' suzerainty treaty.

Having had some experience of contracts in my working life, I knew that contracts typically define their terms in the preamble. I approached the opening pages of *al baqarah* (the second chapter of the Qur'an) with this awareness in mind and found that they indeed contain exact definitions for some of the most common key terms found in the Qur'an. I then took those values and applied them across the entire text and found that not only do they make consistent sense, they make full and illuminating sense in many places where the Traditionalist's current values are redundant or at odds with the context, or both.

The other methods by which meaning is demonstrated are outlined *in situ* or in the Appendix.

There are a few things I wish to say before moving to the topic of translations.

Firstly, I would be remiss in my duty not to say that over the course of my extensive analysis of and work with the Qur'an I have acquired a professional respect for the men who constructed the religion known as Islam. As I have unpicked what they contrived so long ago (as they, quite clearly, set out to neutralise and emasculate what they must have seen as the threat of a nascent, burgeoning Qur'an-fuelled movement), I have grown sincerely impressed at their ingenuity, knowledge of human foibles and mastery of subtlety. The fact that I do not condone what these men did does not prevent me from respecting their minds. These were men of insight and genius, used to planning over centuries, and accustomed never to fight head on what they could direct towards other purposes.

They had to be both vigilant and subtle. They knew that the Qur'an was universally read — and had been committed to memory — by sincere and careful students. Their influence had to be at once minimal but effective.

Yet, now that I have finished my process of reverse-engineering the influence of their work, I am even more impressed — overwhelmed, in fact — by the integrity of the Qur'anic text, something which the Traditionalist himself has worked to preserve. This process has made the Qur'an proof against later cultural interference, and allowed the deciphering and unpicking of a barrage of misdirection, and the recovery of much, if not all, of the original sense, even after so many centuries.

Secondly, I should be clear that this project is not the product of a desire to engage academics, theory tourists or novelty seekers. My principal purpose is set out in the Preface. But over and above that, I wanted also to complete my own due diligence upon the text of the Qur'an, to satisfy my own desire to understand it, and to do so free of brand Islam, a *Weltanschauung* born of a literature both extraneous to the Qur'an and obviously, to me at least, originating in political interests, both mediaeval and recent.

Having completed that process of due diligence to my own satisfaction it is my hope that the result will provide a comprehensive, intellectually robust, and accessible resource to sincere people who, like myself, feel the impetus to do something meaningful with their lives.

EXISTING TRANSLATIONS

What follows is an overview of translations of the Qur'an into English; I have tried to include a representative selection of the most influential translations within three broad categories: Traditionalist, Orientalist, and Independent.

I refer frequently to five translations in the Notes in order to illustrate certain points. Those which feature in this way in my work are marked by an asterisk below.

TRADITIONALIST TRANSLATIONS

Muhammad Asad*

Muhammad Asad (1900-1992) was an Austrian Jew. He was a journalist, diplomat and accomplished linguist who converted to the religion called Islam.

While he states in the introduction to his translation that the Qur'an can be understood independently he, lamentably, does not pursue that end. Nevertheless, his work is, for me, one of the least troubling among the Traditionalist translations. His rendering is fanciful and flighty, suggestive to me of a good man rather more, perhaps, than of a fastidious translator. However, his comments are intelligent, well researched, and insightful in many places, and I have included a considerable number of them in the Notes.

Asad was a man of letters, an intellectual, a refined man, and perhaps also just a little naïve. He threw his impressive energies and talents behind the Islamic experiment in post-Partition Pakistan, but was likely more enamoured of the idea of what it might become than of what it, in fact, became.

Chastened, I suspect, by reality, he withdrew to Andalusian Spain to live out the remainder of his days.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953) was born in Bombay, India, and later removed to England where he lived to the end of his life.

The impression one gains from his translation and commentary is of an intellectual, fair-minded writer, and gentle soul.

His was the first translation I read. In it, he attempts to tip his hat in the direction of King James English, with varying degrees of success.

He sets out to interpret the Qur'an in the light of orthodoxy (namely, Sunni orthodoxy) rather than to investigate or to reason from first principles. His translation is the one recommended by the Saudi authorities, which is perhaps a reason to be careful of it, although I understand that they have modified his original work.

He makes some interesting points in a number of his comments, a few of which I have included.

Marmaduke Pickthall

Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936) was the son of an English clergyman and became a novelist esteemed by many contemporary writers, as well as a journalist and headmaster.

His translation, which followed his conversion to Islam, is subordinate to Traditionalist orthodoxy. Its style is dated and a little stilted to the modern ear.

Drs. Hilali and Muhsin Khan*

Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din bin Adil-Qadir al-Hilali (1893-1987) was a 20th-century Islamic scholar from Morocco, and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan is a Pakistani with Afghan Khattak heritage.

If Muhammad Asad's translation can be thought of as representing the side of contemplation, reason, compassion and intellect within the Traditionalist spectrum, the Hilali-Muhsin Khan work is firmly dug in at the opposing end. It attempts to

force the entire Qur'anic narrative through a filter of *ḥadīth* literature and is full of interpolations and footnotes based on the same. Its value lies in the insight it provides the outsider into a vocal and dominant mindset within the church of Islam.

If the Hilali-Muhsin Khan rendition truly represented the message of the Qur'an, my own engagement with the Qur'an would have lasted no longer than a short perusal.

Saheeh International*

The Saheeh International translation was produced by a small team. The idea appears to have been to bring together Traditionalist orthodoxy — presumably as intoned by a group of Pakistanis or Arabs — with native-English editing capabilities. It follows without apology or question the standard Traditionalist line and, like all other translations I have seen, unabashedly switches values for key terms in order to achieve predetermined outcomes.

I use this version frequently to represent the Traditionalist position. While the reader may form the opinion that I am picking unduly on the Saheeh International translation, the fact is that I use it because it represents a consistent and fair demonstration of the Traditionalist view; a middle ground between the erudite and mystical Asad on one hand and the problematic Hilali-Muhsin Khan on the other. It is also useful because it generally indicates by means of square parenthesis where words have been inserted into the text to reach the foregone conclusions Sunni orthodoxy requires of it.

ORIENTALIST TRANSLATIONS

N. J. Dawood*

Born in 1927 in Iraq, N. J. Dawood grew up bilingual in Arabic and English. His translation of the Qur'an broadly follows the thrust of Traditionalist orthodoxy though with a number of creative flourishes of his own. His style is economical, well-crafted and generally pleasing to read.

Since he is a Jew and not a convert to Sunni Islam, his translation tends to be snubbed by Muslims. It is, however, one of the best-selling versions among the non-Muslim population having been published by Penguin since 1956.

A. J. Arberry*

A. J. Arberry (1905-1969) was a British Orientalist. His translation of the Qur'an makes no historic interpretative strides but then neither does it offend. His style is quiet and careful, pleasing in parts, and more exact in many cases than other renderings.

INDEPENDENT TRANSLATIONS

Ghulam Ahmad Parwez

Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (1903-1985) was a Pakistani, the son of a prominent Sufi, and a civil servant. He was denounced as a heretic by the Traditionalist mullahs for refuting the *ḥadīth*. He is incorrectly credited by some Traditionalists today with founding the movement for the Qur'an alone. He was friend and mentor to Abdul Wadud, author of *Conspiracies Against the Qur'an.*

His rendering of the Qur'an into English comprises a highly subjective and lengthy exposition of Qur'anic themes, one which gives voice to his view that the Qur'an's primary mission is to institute a form of socialism in the name of God.

Rashad Khalifa

Rashad Khalifa (1935-1990) was an Arab-American biochemist who achieved notoriety on the basis of his computational work with the Qur'an focused on the number nineteen. He rejected the *ḥadīth* literature entirely.

Khalifa later claimed to be a messenger of God which move brought down the wrath of the Traditionalist Islam upon his head, and he was murdered.

His translation itself is unremarkable and a Traditionalist would find in it little to enrage him. Khalifa was not a native speaker of English and, without wishing to be unkind to him, his translation suffers as a result.

Edip Yuksel

Edip Yuksel (b. 1957) is a Turkish-American university lecturer. He was born in Turkey and as a young man was an active Sunni radical and imprisoned by the Turkish authorities as a consequence. While in prison, he was befriended by Rashad Khalifa by letter, after which Yuksel became convinced of many of Khalifa's arguments against sectarian Islam.

As a student of Khalifa it is natural that Yuksel places a heavy emphasis on mathematical proofs. I am neither a mathematician nor temperamentally inclined to concentrate on the type of numerical patterns such as Yuksel discerns within the Qur'an; for me, such an emphasis is of limited relevance or application. However, I both admit and embrace the fact that people bring different talents to their study of the Qur'an.

I reviewed this work only in part but was unable to identify a coherent and consistent hermeneutic system apropos key word values, and it is that which is my primary focus.

The Monotheist Group

The Monotheist Group grew out of the free-minds.org website, and members of that group created a translation called *The Qur'an: A Monotheist Translation*.

The foreword to the translation contains an interesting article on pan-Qur'anic exegesis. The translation itself adopts the rendering of *raḥmān* as *almighty* (as do I), but does not explain why it does so, a point which has left some readers perplexed. Its assumptions, so far as I can tell, comprise a composite of the views of Khalifa, Yuksel and perhaps one or two of the more vocal contributors to the free-minds.org site.

There is no system in the application of terms across the greater text, which renders the result as subjective as any other translation.

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There exist many other translations, not all of which I have read. However, I am confident that I have presented a fair and representative selection of those translations (or, rather, translators) pertinent to my broader thesis. I will now turn to the question of motivations and results.

The Orientalist translators are easiest to deal with. They are typically unconcerned with Eternity; they are concerned with royalties, with their professional standing among their peers, and with not having to check under their cars before backing out of the garage. They have taken what they consider the safest route: to turn a Sunni orthodox reading into something digestible in English which the publisher will like.

The translators of the remaining two categories are, like myself, ideologically motivated. However, they both fall at the same fence to varying degrees in that acceptance of their readings boils down to a question of personal authority.

The authority for the Traditionalist's translations derives from a perception of his traditions and of those who wrote and expounded upon them. The authority for what I have called independent translations — while deriving from a different historical basis — rests, in the end, upon a similar type of foundation: one must choose to believe or not believe that Parwez, Khalifa, Yuksel or the authors of the Monotheist Group are sufficiently wise, clever or competent to make their work reliable.

The point I am making is not that these people are not wise, clever or competent. For all I know they are superlatively so. I am saying that, at bottom, the same mechanism is at work in the mind of the reader regarding the non-*ḥadīth* readings as with Traditionalist translations: in both cases the reader has no choice but to make an assessment based upon a perception of the personal competence of the translator.

THIS TRANSLATION

Certainly, I have a worldview, and I regard the Qur'an within the framework of that worldview. For example, I dismiss many popular coincidence theories of history and current affairs, and in terms of *Realpolitik* have much in common with aspects of the Patriot Movement, the Truth Movement, some historical revisionism, libertarianism and anarchism.

However, my textual approach was not actuated by my worldview. And acceptance by the reader of my findings is not contingent upon his worldview and mine corresponding. I have developed and applied a method of linguistic hermeneutics which can be picked apart or utilised by anyone prepared to take the time to do so no matter what his worldview. This allows the emphasis to be taken off how wise or foolish I may be personally, and placed on a methodology.

While I have certain preferences, I am ultimately interested less in who is right than in what is right, so I am not blindly or unreasonably protective of my efforts. If someone more talented than myself can produce a cogent and integrated demonstration of the total Qur'anic corpus — not just some small part of it — which both proves my presentation wrong and his right, I will

thank him and henceforth read his translation and not my own. But I am principally interested in what I touch on in the Preface and discuss in detail in *The God Protocol*; that is, in the Qur'an as a guidebook for checking a miscreant ruling elite. Any serious work on the Qur'an which misses this focus strikes me as little more than a parlour game and, considering the present reality, a waste of time.

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I summarise the postulates and other bases upon which this work is founded below.

HERMENEUTICS

Postulates

- The Qur'an is not invented by men (10:37-38, 11:13-14, 11:35, 12:111, 32:1-3, 42:24, 46:8-9, 52:33-34)
- The Qur'an is guidance for mankind (2:185)
- The Qur'an is free of inconsistency or deviation (4:82, 18:1, 39:28)
- The Qur'an requires careful consideration and full attention (4:82, 7:204, 47:24)
- The Qur'an can only be from God (10:37, 17:88)
- The Qur'an is in Arabic so that we should use reason and understand (12:2, 43:3)
- The Qur'an contains the best *ḥadīth* (39:23)
- The Qur'an was sufficient for Muḥammad (10:15)
- The Qur'an guides to that which is most upright (17:9)
- The Qur'an was both divided and compiled by God (17:106, 75:17)
- The Qur'an would be abandoned by its original recipients (25:30)
- The Qur'an is that by which Muḥammad warned (27:92, 50:45)
- The Qur'an is wise and guides to sound judgment (36:2, 72:1-2)
- The Qur'an is taught by God (55:1-2)
- The Qur'an is guarded by God and accessible only to those who are clean (15:9, 56:77-79)
- The Qur'an is complete (6:38, 6:114-115)
- The Qur'an needs no supplement (18:109)

Qualifications

- The Qur'an was sent down as guidance for all mankind — a group to which I belong (2:185)
- I have taken the time to give the Qur'an careful consideration and full attention (4:82, 7:204, 47:24)
- I have studied the Arabic of the Qur'an and use reason (12:2, 43:3)

Resources

- Definitions found within the Qur'anic text (6:114-115, 16:89, 75:19)
- The principles and norms of the Arabic language (12:2, 43:3)
- Arabic usage across the totality of the Qur'an (39:28)
- Reason (8:22, 13:4, 21:10, 23:80, 45:5)
- Historical evidence (16:43, 21:7)

Approach

- Where a definition for a word is identified within the Qur'an itself, that value is adopted and sustained – either overtly in the translation or by means of elucidation in corresponding notes – across the entire text and documentation supplied.
- Values derived by means of pan-textual analysis are held to be binding across the text in the function in which they are identified (e.g. with a following preposition), or in the collocation in which they are identified, and documentation supplied in the Notes.
- Where historically accepted word values cause no tension or dissonance either within local contexts or across the totality of instances they are considered potentially acceptable and if found to be so are applied consistently subject to the criterion which follows.
- Where there are insufficient instances of a word to identify its value by comparing contexts, human reason is deemed sufficient to identify from lexicons which available value best fits the local context given consideration of the broader narrative. Where appropriate, either for the purposes of full disclosure or in the interests of the broader perspective of the reader, documentation is supplied in the Notes.

COMMON CONVENTIONS

- There are cases where the work of other translators is imported into the Notes in order to supply perspectives to the reader that would not otherwise be possible.
- Usages which differ from established norms are supported by documentation supplied either in the Notes or in Notepads or Articles.
- I use the commonly accepted anglicised versions of names in the Translation where possible, preferring transliterated Arabic in the Notes; I am aiming for readability in my translation and clarification in the Notes.
- In places I include some comments which I find intelligent and reasonable (but not all of which I fully agree with) by previous translators in order to furnish the reader with a broader perspective.
- Where a note will not permit full explanation on any point reference is made to the appropriate part of the Appendix.
- I include relevant notation pertaining to *the mysterious letters* for a given sūrah at the top of the page of the Translation (for my full analysis, see Article II).
- The bare Qur'anic text has no punctuation; rather, the narrative force implies punctuation. For example, the Qur'an does not use an exclamation mark, but where the context requires one by convention in English, I provide it accordingly.
- While my use of parenthesis is more extensive than that of other translations, I make no interpolations. I have no need of them. The Qur'an clearly contains nested statements; by revealing them as such, the need for interpolation beyond ellipsis falls away. All comments or explanations are found in the Notes.
- The Qur'an makes use of ellipsis (where the narrative trails off and intimates rather than explicitly states a conclusion, a convention widely recognised to exist and employed by the majority of translators and commentators). I accept and use this convention and indicate what I take to be the implicit text by means of scilicet which is then accompanied by a note.
- I identify a number of cases where one speaker cuts off the preceding speaker which action I indicate by means of double dashes.
- I use *chapter* and *sūrah* interchangeably in the Notes.
- I use the archaic *thou* form for the second person singular since it identifies easily what is addressed to the Prophet as well as — by extension — to the individual believer in many cases.
- I render the first letter of God's attributes in lower case where they occur without the definite article and in upper case where they occur with the definite article in those instances which denote titles.
- I render *allāh* as *God* which is the correct nomenclature in English; the Arabic *allāh* is not a proper noun and making it one in English contributes to the conceit that the Qur'anic revelation is an exclusively or specifically Arab matter.
- I stay as close to the original word order as I can without unduly offending the English ear.
- The common *idh* is rendered as *when* (or occasionally as *then* where it provides a complement to a preceding adverb). After *ba'da* it is elided.
- I treat *wa idh* as *and when* in all cases.
- Such stylistic devices and flourishes as *inna* (often rendered *lo!*) and the double *nūns* found in certain verbs indicating intensity of degree (often rendered *indeed*) are almost entirely elided since they add little in contemporary English, and the attempt to accommodate them clouds rather than clarifies.
- Devices such as *balā* and *bal* are observed, and the function of the former as a pan-textual indicator identified.
- I treat *fa* as a comma, a colon, *for*, *then*, *so*, *and* or *but* depending on context, which is standard.
- I treat *wa* typically as *and* or *but* depending on context; and sometimes as *when* or *so*, which is standard.
- I include comments on grammar, word order, or the literal meaning of certain phrases both to assist the serious student and to aid potential future translators of this work into other languages achieve a high level of consistency in their target language.
- Modern English confuses the nominative and accusative personal pronoun in certain circumstances (*There is no god but him* and *There is no god but he*). I hold to the latter, more correct form when the personal pronoun is not an object of any kind.
- In those cases where I have made pan-textual comparisons and reached conclusions which require comment I apply the appropriate value and supply a note for all instances of that term.
- Where a word forms part of a collocation (that is, it works predictably in combination with another word or words to create a consistent compound meaning) I strive to stay true to the rendering of that collocation throughout to the extent that English usage will allow.
- Where a particular word objectively has more than one meaning — and more than one of the available meanings fits the context (for example, some instances of *imām*, *ummah*, or *azwāj*) — a note tends to be supplied in relevant contexts.
- I pay close attention to grammatical constructions and other formulæ, enforcing maximum consistency throughout

— again, to the extent that English usage will allow — and deriving values on the basis of pan-textual comparison, much in the same way as is done with vocabulary.

LAYOUT CONVENTIONS

Translation

- Page numbers are found on the inner edges at the top of each page.
- Sūrah and verse numbers indicating the verse in force in the Arabic text at the top of each page are found at the outer edge of the top of the page and are intended to facilitate speedy navigation across the text.
- I include the *juz'* convention of text division (i.e. the marking of the Qur'an into thirty equal parts) each of which is subdivided into eight, as found in most Arabic Qur'ans. This convention is a useful means of planning one's reading of the entire text over, say, a month. The star symbols marking each of these divisions are found on the right-hand side of the Arabic text column, while the numbers which track them over the course of the text are directly above at the top of the page. These numbers follow a convention of, for example, 21:3 meaning: the twenty-first *juz'*, the third eighth). This allows the reader to know at all times where he is in his reading of the text.
- There exists more than one convention of subdividing sūrahs into segments known as *ruku*'s. These are used to produce manageable segments for use in prayer and to divide longer sūrahs into digestible segments (the shorter sūrahs from 80 through 114 do not feature them). I have taken an existing methods of thus punctuating the text and modified it slightly. These segments are indicated on the left-hand side of the English text column, and directly above them at the top of the page. The convention within the text is: Pilcrow followed by sūrah number and the *ruku*' number within that sūrah, e.g. ¶30.5 means sūrah thirty, *ruku*' five. The first *ruku*' in any sūrah is assumed, and its boundaries are between the first verse of the sūrah and the point at which the second *ruku*' of that sūrah begins.
- Where a sūrah is headed by an instance of *the mysterious letters* (Arabic: *al ḥurūf al muqaṭṭaʻāt*) these letters are included at the top of the page for the duration of the sūrah, with the Arabic letters above the centre of the Arabic text column and the English transliteration equivalent above the centre of the translated text. The reasons for their significance and a logical breakdown of their meaning are found in Article II.
- I do not believe the *bismillah*s to be native to the Qur'anic revelation beyond *al fātiḥah*, a view which is supported by the fact that *bismillah*s beyond that which opens *al fātiḥah* are not numbered as verses by longstanding convention. It is my view that their inclusion distracts from the obvious narrative connections which exist between a number of contiguous sūrahs, and I have elected to minimise their visual intrusion in the print version of this work. Having reviewed some of the earliest codices, I have come to the view that chapter divisions are of no more moment than are paragraph breaks today.

Notes & Commentary

- Page numbers are found on the inner edges at the top of each page.
- Sūrah and verse numbers indicating the verse note in force at the top of each page are found at the outer edge of the top of the page and are intended to facilitate speedy navigation across the text.
- Each sūrah number and its *ruku*' divisions are emphasised within the text to facilitate speedy navigation across it.

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

I became aware in the course of this work that my understanding fell at a common fence in that it assumed much of the unproven though dominant Judaeo-Christo-Zionist narrative (hereafter: the Egypt-Palestine thesis) and even some parts of that highly suspect narrative advanced by Traditionalist Islam.

I had been cognisant of tensions between the Qur'anic narrative and the Egypt-Palestine thesis, and was aware of arguments advanced by such people as Kamal Salibi, but I did not place any emphasis on those assertions — or confront those of the Egypt-Palestine thesis — since I wanted to remain within the boundaries of what I could *reasonably* prove. It is only more recently that I have come to recognise that I cannot *reasonably* prove the Egypt-Palestine thesis — its popularity, ubiquity and enforcement constituting neither proof nor good reason to assume its conclusions. As a result, in this edition while retaining the dominant nomenclature in the translation, I treat the Egypt-Palestine thesis as one among competing theses in the Notes.

I remain generally convinced of the rightness of much of the Petra thesis as advanced by Dan Gibson in his book *Quranic Geography* concerning his identification of Petra as the place of the Arab pilgrimage (i.e. *al masjid al ḥarām*) referred to in the present work as the Petra pilgrimage thesis. I remain generally neutral on many of his other claims.

I did, however, previously rather allow by association that Gibson's further assertions regarding the location of ʻĀd, Thamūd, and so on, as geographically local to *al masjid al ḥarām*, were correct. And they may be. But I want here to make a distinction between my support for the Petra pilgrimage thesis (i.e. that Petra was the location for *al masjid al ḥarām*) and any other theses Dan Gibson presents.

Independently of my assessment of Gibson's excellent book, I have come to question the assumption that the location of *al masjid al ḥarām* and the city of Muḥammad's origin and initial locus of action are necessarily one and the same. I do not refute the claim; I have simply chosen to allow that it may not be so. And if that point is granted, it is not necessarily the case that *al masjid al ḥarām* was local to the historical peoples just mentioned; and that being the case, it would be fairer for me to present those parts of Gibson's work which treat of the location of previous peoples in the same light as I present comparable points from those other theses which have much to recommend them but which require (as I'm sure Gibson himself would both accept and welcome as concerns his own thesis) further extensive and

diligent work on the ground.

Of course, for most, the Egypt-Palestine thesis (augmented for the Traditionalist Muslim by Traditionalist Islam's addenda) is the answer and we should stop there. I would be prepared to acquiesce if I genuinely thought it was correct, but I do not; at least, conclusive evidence is yet to be produced.

FINAL WORD

I make no apology for my role as self-appointed irritant to the established order.

The function of the histories of key messengers in the Qur'an from Nūḥ (Noah) to Muḥammad is to impel the believer to follow the prophetic example: to warn the dominant ruling elite and call it to turn to God alone. Despite the seemingly insurmountable branding problem the Qur'an has by longstanding association with the Traditionalist's commitment to an unrelated cult, such remains the Qur'anic model for overthrowing tyranny. But this call has nothing to do with promoting or enforcing that religion which is today called Islam.

The present ruling elites are close to their goal of a perfected and total tyranny. I see no means of defeating their agenda but by following the protocol the Qur'an supplies.

This subject is discussed in full in my work *The God Protocol*.