New English Translations of the Holy *Qur'*7 n: A Brief Comparative Analysis of Peachy and Al-Johan's and *Kidwai*'s Translation

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ABSTRACT:

The review article presents, briefly but comparatively, an analysis and assessment of two newly published English translations of the holy Qur'_{1} n, viz. Dr. Peachy and Dr. Al-Johan 's The Qur'_{1} n: The Final Book of God - A Clear English Translation of the Glorious Qur'_{1} n (2012) published from Saudi Arabia and Prof. Abdur Raheem Kidwai's What is in the Qur'_{1} n? Message of the Qur'_{1} n in Simple English (2013), published from India. Both are similar in many aspects, and at the same time, both have some unique and distinct features as well. In this article, a comparison of some selected (somehow 'debatable' and 'variedly' translated) verses, from both works, with some other prominent English translations, like A. Y^{\perp} s^{\perp} f ' Al^{\perp} , M. M. Pickthall, and M_{1} jid $Daryab_{1}$ di are provided, to show both the similarities and to highlight the differences between them.

Introduction: English Translations of the Holly Qur' n

Muslim scholarship on the understanding of the $Qur' \ n$ in various ways has continued throughout history—from the classical period—and gained importance in medieval period; and during the 19^{th} and early 20^{th} centuries, it became popular and scholars have produced works, from different contexts and perspectives, on the holy $Qur' \ n$ —its translations, in various languages, and its interpretations, as well as works on the history of its interpretation, and various other aspects as well.

A great many new English translations of the $Qur' \ n$ appeared in the 20^{th} century. One study on printed translations published through 1980 revealed that only four new, complete English translations existed before the 1900s, and by 1980s, there were sixty-one more, mostly in English. For example, the first Latin translation of holy $Qur' \ n$ is reported to have produced by Robert of Ketton (d.1157), while as George Sale (d.1736) is credited for having produced the first published English translation of the $Qur' \ n$, made directly from Arabic. Although this process continued in the later centuries as well, but from the 20^{th} century, there has been an increase in the development of scholarship on $Qur' \ n$, its translations and its history of interpretation, and various aspects and themes related to the $Qur' \ n$ ic studies, and it is because of the reason that scholars have approached the study of the $Qur' \ n$ in a variety of ways.

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Certainly, in a nutshell, numerous English translations of the $Qur' \ n$ have been published in the 20^{th} century. Mainly, more intelligible and lucid translations appeared during the 2000s. That is, the vast majority of publications in all languages have occurred in the 20^{th} and 21^{st} centuries, the greatest number of translations and new editions are in English, and the rate of the appearance of new English translations is rising. Few examples are: $\|ar\| f Khalid (2002)$, Thomas Cleary (2004), M. A. S Haleem (2004 & 05), L $_1$ leh Bakhti $_1$ r (2007), Niy $_1$ z $_2$ Kahveci (2007), Maul $_1$ na Wahiduddin Khan (2013), etc $_2$.

In this direction, this review article presents very briefly and comparatively, an analysis and assessment of two newly published English translations of the holy Qur'n, viz. Dr Peachy and Dr Al-Johan 's The Qur'n: The Final Book of God—A Clear English Translation of the Glorious <math>Qur'n (2012) published from Saudi Arabia and Prof Abdur Raheem Kidwai's What is in the Qur'n ? Message of the Qur'n in Simple English (2013), published from India. In this article, it is highlighted that both these works are similar in many aspects, and at the same time, both have some unique and distinct features as well. Also, a comparison of some selected, 'debatable' and 'variedly' translated, verses, from both works, with some other prominent English translations, like A Y^{\perp} $s^{\perp} f'Al^{\perp}$, $M. M. Pickthall, and <math>M_{\uparrow}$ $jid Daryab_{\uparrow} di$ are provided, to show both the similarities and to highlight the differences between them.

Dr (s) Peachy and Al-Johan 's English Translation of the Glorious Qur' n: An Assessment

The Qur'¬ n: The Final Book of God—A Clear English Translation of the Glorious Qur'¬ n by Daoud William Peachy and Maneh Al-Johan—I differs from other translations in its writers' native language. In other words, other translations were produced by neither English nor Arab translators. In addition, unlike other translations, it is an outcome of two writers' co-operation. Moreover, many other translations are "superficial revisions or collations of [other] well-known translators". Although the primary audience of the considered translation is the "literate and unsophisticated English speakers", but an important goal of this work is "to reach a much wider audience".

This translation is done based on an earlier translation entitled "*The Meaning of Glorious Koran*" by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall—a British convert from Christianity. However, the predominant aim of the considered translation is "to eliminate the Biblical English [words] and modernize the vocabulary" of Pickthall's translation. Moreover, the contributions such as revisions, improvements, corrections, and modernizations of various scholars like, R_{7} *shid Sh* $_{7}$ *z* of Aligarh, India (who corrected and cleared, from read Pickthall's translation, all the outdated "second person singular pronouns and verbs") and UK based Anis and Daud Mathews (who modernized the idioms and corrected errors in Pickthall's text), AlJohani's revisions and corrections of Pickthall's mistakes in addition to Peachy's extensive work on a simpler version of the translation resulted into a novel translation which has been produced in recent years.⁸

The first language of Peachy and *Al-Johan* , English and Arabic respectively, along with their considerable teaching experiences, gave them this opportunity to

produce an exclusive and unique English translation of the $Qur' \ n$ among the other existing translations. However, Pickthall has no longer any responsibilities for this new translation due to many changes made in it. Their hard work, abilities, aims and efforts lead to publish a translation that is "the best, the most accurate and the nearest in conveying the meaning of the message of the $Qur' \ n$ to date" in English language. Moreover, compared to other translations which are without Arabic text, it is the most readable one from the start to the end, while it still has a general impression on the reader.

In the introduction chapter of this book, Daoud Peachy claims that their translation has been influenced by Pickthall's work and wordings. Especially in the introduction of S^{\perp} rahs, Peachy and Al-Johan followed Pickthall's style, except several minor differences. The following brief comparison, of the introductory passages of the various chapters as well as translations of diverse Arabic phrases, terms and verses, between these two translations make it clear.

For example, Pickthall started chapter 2 by these words: "Al-Baqarah (The Cow) [which] is so named from the story of the yellow heifer (vv.67-71). As is the case with many other s^{\perp} rahs, the title is taken from some word or incident which surprised the listeners". While, Peachy and Al-Johan made only a slight change in the words of the second sentence: "Like many other chapters, the title is taken from a word or incident impressing or surprising the listeners". Similarly, in the introduction of Q. 109 al-K \uparrow fir n, there is only a single change in using the words. Pickthall uses "idolaters" while Peachy and Al-Johan used "pagans": "al-K \uparrow fir n takes its name from a word in Verse 1. It was revealed at a time when the idolaters [pagans] had asked the Prophet to compromise in matters of religion". 12

In addition, this work has many features: such as the Introduction, wherein the translators presented a brief, but comprehensive and rich, sketch of the structure and the content, miraculous nature, revelation, preservation, and interpretation of the holy *Qur'* η *n*. In addition, they have highlighted the need for this translation, origin, development, process and the difficulties faced in this project.¹³ The brief explanatory footnotes, appendices, references, bibliography, further readings, and the extensive subject index of 58 pages are other features of this translation.¹⁴

Throwing light on the production of a new English translation and need for it, Peachy (in the introduction) writes that we, as the translators of this present translation, noted that:

Most *Qur'* nic translations were by those whose first language was neither English nor Arabic. We also noted that many other translations were the result of single efforts. Still others were seen to be superficial revisions or collations of [other] well-known translations. While the above perceptions became bases for motivation of this effort, the translators observed that all previous translations had stated or assumed audiences that could be identified. It emerged that the target groups of the efforts of others had not included a broad spectrum of readers, the vast majority of all in the world who used English. 15

According to the declared features of this translation, and the above mentioned facts, it can be undoubtedly assumed that Peachy and Al-Johan 's efforts clearly validates and rationalizes their translation's title and justifies their claim to have published the best and the most accurate translation which is thoroughly capable of conveying the meaning and the message of the Qur' η n. In conclusion, among all of the published English translations of the Qur' η n since 2000, The Qur' η n: The Final Book of God—A Clear English Translation of The Glorious Qur' η n, is unique in many ways, and indeed stands apart from others.

Prof. A. R. Kidwai's Translation of the Qur'_{7} n in Simple English: An Appraisal

Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai¹⁶—who has obtained higher degrees in English from both Aligarh Muslim University and University of Leicester, UK—is a well-known author of many works on the Qur'¬ n and Islam. He has published extensively on the English translations of the Qur'¬ n (in various forms: books, articles, review essays, reviews, etc.)¹⁷, literary Orientalism, English studies and Urdu literature. Moreover, Prof Kidwai's reviews on the books on Islam, especially the Qur'¬ n have appeared various such reputed journals, such as The Muslim World Book Review, Leicester, UK; Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies, UK; Islamic Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan; The Journal of Qur'¬ nic Studies, Madina, Saudi Arabia; Insights, Islamabad, Pakistan etc. He has also delivered lectures on the English translations of the Qur'¬ n at the Universities of Oxford, Birmingham, UK and Mauritius.

The work under review is actually an extension of his previous work(s) especially his *Daily Wisdom: Selections from the Holy Qur'* \mathbf{n} $(2011)^{18}$, which consists of 'selected' verses of the *Qur'* \mathbf{n} n, of 365 passages, covering the whole year, engaging the reader in a moment of daily reflection. It attempts to set out "meaning and message of the *Qur'* \mathbf{n} n in simple, understandable English for the general reader, Muslim or non-Muslim alike". The work under review—*What is in the Qur'* \mathbf{n} ?—is actually an extension of his previous work(s), with same approach and objective, intention and purpose, methodology and style, technique and fashion, as the title itself makes it understandable.

Prof. Kidwai—being a prolific author and researcher on the Qur'¬ n and Qur'¬ nic studies and translations especially—is well-aware, and of course points out as well, that around 70 complete English translations of the Qur'¬ n are currently available. But they are addressed, he claims on the basis of his experience of "having reviewed since 1985 around 70 translations of the Qur'¬ n"20 mostly, over and over again, to more specialist readerships, presupposing and taking for granted some background knowledge of comparative religion, theology, history, geography, and of Qur'¬ nic Arabic terms. The present work/ translation, rather than presenting a literal (actual and exact) translation of the Qur'¬ n, presents and paraphrases, as the sub-title of the work reveals, the "Meaning of the Qur'¬ n in Simple English"—or in an uncomplicated, unsophisticated and unfussy, easy, simple and straightforward English, while striving to retain its original message. This translation, being without the Qur'¬ nic Text in Arabic, is preceded by a "Preface" wherein Kidwai mentions, among others, that almost all the English translations "offer a literal translation" and thus does not provide a "coherent, fluent account of

things $Qur' \neg nic$ ". It also contains some notes, a bibliography, and a lengthy helpful Index. He emphatically points out that the present work is neither the literal meaning nor an English translation of the $Qur' \neg n$, and in his own words:

The present work is *not*, strictly speaking, an English translation of the $Qur' \gamma$ n. It attempts to present in simple, fluent English the paraphrase of the meaning ad message of the $Qur' \gamma$ n ... [T]his is a modest attempt at presenting the meaning and message of the $Qur' \gamma$ n in clear, easy to understand language, supplemented with brief explanatory notes especially for those [who are] new to the $Qur' \gamma$ n and Islam. ²³

Moreover, after going through the *Kidwai*'s translation, it becomes pertinent that he translates *Rabb* as Lord (1:2); R^{\perp} \vdash as spirit (70:4) and in 78:38 spirit as the angel Gabriel; N^{\perp} r as light (24:35-6): $Taqw_{\uparrow}$ as Fear of God (59:18-19). *Kidwai* occasionally adds parenthesis—to make clear the meaning of some terms and phrases—as well. For example, "So repent to your Creator and kill yourselves (the wrongdoers among you)" (2:54); "Do they (these Hypocrites)" not know even this much" (2:77); "(The guided ones are) in houses (mosques) which God has allowed to be raised for mentioning His name" (24:36).

In sum, keeping in view the other features of the work as well, especially the brief explanatory notes, bibliography, and the extensive subject Index, it may be said that Kidwai's book clearly validates and rationalizes its title as well as justifies his claim that it is not an English translation, but is the 'paraphrase of the meaning and message of the Qur'n' presented in simple and fluent English, that is easy to understand by both natives and non-natives. It, indeed, stands apart from other English translations of the Qur'n' n' $produced from the last many decades of last century and in <math> 21^{st}$ century as well. Thus, on the whole, Kidwai'sWhat is in the Qur'n' Messageof the Qur'n' in Simple Englishis unique in many ways and would be fully helpful for enthusiastic scholars and readers of the Qur'n' n' and particularly for new comers to Islam.

A Comparison:

A comparison, showing both the similarities as well as highlighting the differences, between these new and old translations, of some "selected" verses, between <code>Kidwai</code>'s translation and of Peachy and <code>Al-Johan-</code>'s translation with that of A <code>Y-</code> <code>s-</code> <code>f</code> 'Al-' , M. M. Pickthall, and <code>M¬</code> <code>jid Daryab¬</code> <code>di</code>'s—three prominent and best known and regarded English translations—is provided in the below table.

Surah: Verse	Kidwai's Translation	Peachy and Al- Johan 's Translation	Y [⊥] s [⊥] f 'Al [⊥] 's Translation	Pickthall's Translation	Daryab ₇ di 's Translation
2:233 / اَتَّشَاوُر (Tash wur	"after consultation, mutually decide"	"by mutual consent and (after) consultation"	"by mutual consent and after due consultation"	"by mutual consent and (after) consultation"	"by agreement between them and mutual counsel"
رْهٔمْشَاقِ) 3:159 /Shawirhum)	"Consult them in collective affairs"	"and consult with them on matters"	"and consult them in the affair"	"and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs"	"and take counsel with them in the affair"
42:38 (مُنُورَى Shura)	"they decide their matters by consultation"	"whose business is by consultation among them"	"who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation"	"and whose affairs are a matter of counse!"	"and whose affair being a matter of counsel among themselves"
4:34 (قوامون /وَاصْرِ بُو هُنَّ /وَصْرِ بُو هُنَ Qawamun; Wazribuhuna)	"men are the protectors and maintainers of women"; "and (at last) beat them (lightly)"	"men are in charge of women"; and "beat them" ²⁶	"men are the protectors and maintainers of women"; "(and last) beat them (lightly)"	"men are in charge of women"; and "scourage them"	"men are overseers over women"; "and beat them"
وأوليي) 4:59 (Ulil Amr /المامر	obey "those given authority among you"	"and those of you who are in authority"	"and those charged with authority among you"	"and those of you who are in authority"	obey "men of authority from amongst you"
9:20 (وَهَاجَرُوا hajaru / وَجَاهَدُوا wa jihadu)	"those who believe, emigrate and strive"	"those who believe, and have left their homes and struggled"	"those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main"	"those who believe, and have left their homes and striven"	"those who have believed and have emigrated and have striven hard"
/ أسرني) 17:1 Asra; or Mi'raj)	"Glory to God who carried His servant (Prophet Muhammad) by night"	"Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night"	"Glory (to God) who did take His Servant for a journey by night"	"Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night"	"Hallowed be He! Who translated His bondsman in a night"
2:187 / لِيَاسٌ) Libas)	"They are your garments and you there garments"	"They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them"	"They are your garments and ye are their garments"	"They are raiment for you and ye raiment for them"	"They are a garment for you and you are a garment for them"
3:54 (مَكُر / Makr)	"They (the unbelievers) plotted (against Jesus) and God too plotted"	"plotted (to kill Jesus), and God plotted"	"and(the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and God too planned"	"schemed, and Allah Schemed (against them)"	"and they plotted and Allah plotted"
غَنُّوهُ) 4:157-58 ژشُبَّهُ صَنْبُوهُ شُبَّهُ (مِسَنَّهُوهُ (مُعَنَّهُ (مُعَنَّهُ) (مُعَنَّهُ (مُعَنَّمُ) (مُعَنَّمُ (مُعَنِّمُ) (مُعَنَّمُ (مُعَنِّمُ) (مُعَنَّمُ (مُعَنِّمُ) (مُعَنَّمُ (مُعَنِّمُ) (مُعَنَّمُ (مُعَنِّمُ) (مُعَنِّمُ (مُعَنِّمُ)	"not kill or crucify him [Jesus], but the matter was made dubious to them"; "But God raised him (Jesus) to Him"	"They did not kill him or crucify him, but it appeared so to them"; "No! God raised him up to Himself"	"killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them"; "Nay God raised up unto Himself"	"slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them"; "But Allah took him up unto Himself"	"killed him not, nor did they sent him to the cross, but it was made dubious to them"; "But Allah raised him unto Him"
24:3 (مِنْ أَبْصَارَ هِنَّ /مِنْ أَبْصَارَ هِنَّ /هُرُوجَهُنْ وَيَحْفَظْنَ /yaghzuzna; min absarihim wa yahfuzna furujuna)	"lower their gaze and guard their private parts"	"and tell the believing women to lower their eyes and guard their privates"	"lower their gaze and guard their modesty"	"and tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest"	"lower their sights and guard their private parts"

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is safe to argue that among all of the published English translations of the Qur' n since 2000, Kidwai's and of Peachy and Al-Johan 's translation are unique in many ways, and indeed stand apart from others. According to its declared features and as the above brief assessment reveals, it can be undoubtedly assumed that Peachy and Al-Johan 's efforts clearly validates and rationalizes their translation's title and justifies their claim to have published the best and the most accurate translation which is thoroughly capable of conveying the meaning and the message of the $Qur'_{\mathbf{q}}$ n. Similarly, keeping in view all the features of Kidwai's work, it may be said that Kidwai's work clearly justifies his assertion that it is not an English translation, but is the 'paraphrase of the meaning and message of the Qur' n' presented in simple and fluent English, that is easy to understand by both natives and non-natives. It indeed would be fully helpful for enthusiastic scholars and readers of the Qur'_{\neg} n and particularly for new comers to Islam. Thus, as the above brief comparative analysis shows, their translations are different, among others, from that of Marmaduke Pickthall; Abdullah Y^{\perp} s^{\perp} f 'Al $^{\perp}$, and M₁ jid Daryabadi's translations, although there are many similarities between all of them.

Notes & References:

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³ Dr Daoud William S. Peachy and Dr Maneh Hammad Al-Johan . The Qur' n: The Final Book of God—A Clear English Translation of the Glorious Qur' n, Qasim, Saudi Arabia: World Assembly of Muslim Youth, 2012, pp. xiii+ 476+59. See my review on this work in Al-Bayan Journal, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 11(2): 155-7, December 2013.

⁴ Abdur Raheem Kidwai. What is in the Qur'¬ n? Message of the Qur'¬ n in Simple English, New Delhi, India: Viva Books Private Limited, 2013, pp. xii+ 415. See my review on this work in Al-Bayan 11(1): 106-8, June 2013.

⁵ Peachy and *Al-Johan* , op. cit., p. ix

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. x

Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall. The Meaning of Glorious Koran. 3rd Indian edition, New Delhi, Kitab Bhavan, 1992. Originally published in 1930 from London

⁸ Peachy and *Al-Johan* ¹ , *op. cit.*, p. xi

⁹ *Ibid*., p. xii

¹⁰ Pickthall, op. cit., p.3

¹¹ Peachy and Al-Johan, op. cit., p.4

¹² For comparison, see, Pickthall, op. cit., p. 693; Peachy and Al-Johan, op. cit., p. 451

¹³ See, Peachy and *Al-Johan* , op. cit., pp. ii-xiii

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 457-76; while as the index, "The *Qur'* η Subject Index" (pp.2-59) is numbered separately at the end.

- ¹⁶ For details, see my articles on Prof Kidwai's contribution to Qur'¬ nic studies; Tauseef Ahmad Parray, "The Mater Piece by the Master" in *Kashmir Images*, Friday, 14th Dec, 2012, p. 7; *Idem.*, "Introducing Prof Kidwai's New Masterpiece: What is in the Qur'¬ n? Message of the Qur'¬ n in Simple English, in Kashmir Images, Friday, 24th May, 2013, p. 7
- See, for example, Abdur Raheem Kidwai, Translating the Untranslatable, op. cit.; Idem., Daily Wisdom: Selections from the Holy Qur'¬ n (Markfield, Leics.: Kube Publishing, 2011); Idem., The Qur'¬ n: Essential Teachings, (London, UK: Islamic Foundation, 2005); Idem., Bibliography of the Translations of the Meanings of the Glorious Qur'¬ n into English, op. cit.; Idem., "A Survey of English Translations of the Qur'¬ n, op. cit.
- Kidwai. Daily Wisdom, op. cit. For details, see my review on this work in the Muslim World Book Review (MWBR), The Islamic Foundation, UK, vol. 32, no.4, Summer 2012, pp. 66-67; Cf. Tauseef Ahmad Parray, "The Mater Piece by the Master" in Kashmir Images, Friday, 14th Dec, 2012, p. 7
- ¹⁹ Kidwai, *Daily Wisdom, op. cit.* p. vii
- ²⁰ Kidwai, What is in the Qur' n?, op. cit., p. xi
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. ix-xii
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. xi
- ²³ *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xii; Italics are in original.
- ²⁴ Abdullah Y f 'Al , The Holy Qur' n: Text, Translation and Commentary, 2nd ed. (U.S: American Trust Publications, 1977)
- ²⁵ Abdul M¬ jid Daryab¬ di, *Glorious Qur'*¬ n: *Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leicester, Mark.: The Islamic Foundation, 2001)
- ²⁶ Here, Peachy and Al-Johan , add a footnote to this verse regarding the clarification for the term Wazribuhuna ("beat them"), which says: "From the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad [pbuh], it is clear that these three steps are not to be taken at the same time. As for the command to beat, the Prophet allowed it reluctantly. He commanded that the face not be touched, that it be done without cruelty and that no instrument that might mark the body be used". See, Peachy and Al-Johan , op. cit., fn.62, p.52

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ix