

Aḥmadīs(Lahore Faction) on Translating and Interpreting the Qur’ān:

A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

The Holy Qur’an has been rendered into English by many Muslim and non-Muslim, Eastern and Western, British and indigenous translators. Among them, there are a number of Ahmadi or Qadiani translators and commentators who believe in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani as the Promised Messiah and coming Mahdi. In Indian subcontinent, the foremost Ahmadi translation was undertaken by Dr. Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan who rendered the Holy Qur’an into English in 1905 but he abandoned Qadianism soon after publication of this work. After the death of the Mirza Qadiani and his first khalifa Maulawi Nuruddin the Ahmadiya community split in two factions: Qadian Party led by Mirza Qadiani’s son Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad and Lahore Party led by Maulvi Muhammad ‘Ali. Both factions undertook translation of the Holy Qur’an and wrote exegeses on it. Maulvi Muhammad ‘Ali, the head of Lahore faction, published his translation and commentary in 1917. Another Qadiani translator and commentator was Dr. Khadim Rahmani Nuri who put the explanatory words and sentences in brackets within the translation avoiding footnotes or exegetical comments. ‘Ali and Nuri are only two Lahori Ahmadis who have published complete rendering of the Holy Qur’an in English language. Some incomplete works were published by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din and Ch. Mohammad Manzoor Ilahi. Dr. Basharat Ahmad’s Urdu translation of and commentary on Part (juz) 27 and 30 of the holy Qur’an was retranslated into English. This paper presents a critical study of renderings of some verses which Lahori Ahmadis misinterpret to prove their particular beliefs.

Keywords: Translation, peculiarity, transliteration, symbolism, allegory, mystic approach, surah, paraphrase.

The founder of Aḥmadiya Movement, Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī, was born in 1839 in the village of Qadian in the Punjab (now in India). He studied some Arabic and Islamic education and served the British Government as a clerk for four years in Sialkot. He got fame due to his writings on Islam and debates with religious leaders of different other religions. Soon he developed in him heretical tendencies and announced that he was both the ‘Promised Messiah’ and the ‘Coming Mahdī’ in 1891.¹ Though denied by his followers, yet he claimed to be a prophet in the latter half of 1900 or in the early 1901.² In 1908, Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad died in

Lahore on May 26, 1908 and was buried at Qāadian. He was neither physically nor mentally a sound person. He himself states that he had chronic diabetes and vertigo. He was also frequently subjected to hallucination and visions.³ The famous scholars of his time considered him an apostate and issued *fatwa* for his infidelity. Because of prophetic qualities ascribed by Ghulām Aḥmad to *mujtahidīn*, even his claim to *tajdīd* could have rendered him a deviant from accepted orthodox norm.⁴ Mirzā Qāadianī wrote a number of books in which he tried to prove his claim by misinterpreting various Qur’ānic verses and *aḥādīth*.⁵

Anyone who is the follower of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qadian is called an *Aḥmadī* or *Qāadianī*. After Mirzā’s death, Aḥmadī community was led by Ḥakīm Nūr al-Dīn of Bhera (1841-1914).

Thereafter, the community split up into two factions.....the Qadian Party led by Mirzā’s son Mirzā Bashīr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad (1889-1965) and the Lahore Party led by Maulvī Muḥammad ‘Alī (1874-1951). The heads of both the factions of Aḥmadiya worked on the exegesis of the Holy Qur’ān in Urdū language. Mirzā Bashīr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad wrote the *Tafsīr-i-Saghīr*⁶ (Short Commentary of the Qur’ān) and *Tafsīr-i-Kabīr*⁷ (Large Commentary of the Qur’ān) whereas Maulvī Muḥammad ‘Alī published his commentary under the title of *Bayān al-Qur’ān*.⁸ However, the founder of Aḥmadiya, Ghulām Aḥmad Qāadianī did not write exegesis of the Holy Qur’ān in any language but he commented on many verses of the Qur’ān in his writings in his own way. His followers have compiled a Qur’ānic commentary in Urdū derived from Mirzā’s writings and speeches.⁹ It is pertinent to mention here that the Qāadian Party shifted its headquarters to Rabwah (Pakistan) after partition of the sub-continent.

In 1974, the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan declared both factions of the community as non-Muslims.¹⁰ Most of the early Aḥmadīs were highly educated and some of them had been educated in Great Britain. They considered the English translation of the Holy Qur’ān as a necessity for propagation of their religion in the West. So, their scholars rendered the Holy Qur’ān into English and tried to spread their point of view through such translations.

How to spot an Aḥmadī(Lahore Faction)translation of the Qur’ān or Commentary on it?

The Aḥmadī translators have tried to render the Holy Qur’ān into English or any other language in such a way so that they could prove their particular beliefs from its text. Even if they have not done so in their rendering, they have added footnotes with the same intention. They have been deviating from the literal meanings of the Islamic scripture especially in the translation

and interpretation of the verses pertaining to Jesus Christ or the finality of Prophethood. So, it is very important to lay down criteria by which the rendering or commentary by any Aḥmadī can be recognized.

The Aḥmadī translators or commentators have usually translated the word *mutawaffika* as ‘I shall cause you to die’ instead of ‘I shall take you back’ or ‘I shall cause you to attain to your full term of life’ in verse 3:55. They have translated the word *tawaffaytanī* in verse 5:117 as ‘Thou didst cause me to die’ instead of ‘You took me back to You’. Actually the word *tawaffa* comes from the root-letters *w-f-y* (past tense: *wafā*) meaning ‘to fulfil’. *Tawaffā* signifies the act of ‘taking the self back’ either in sleep, or in death or as in case of Jesus being taken back into the presence of Allah. Similarly, they have interpreted *wa mā qatalūhu wa mā ṣalabūhu* (verse 4:157) as ‘they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross’ but he escaped the death being caused by crucifixion and took refuge on a plateau with flowing springs accompanying with his mother (verse 23:50) where he died a natural death and was buried in Kashmir. According to their view his grave is in Sri Nagar (capital of Kashmir). According to Aḥmadīs (Lahore Faction) Mirzā Qāḍianī was a *muhaddath* that is a stage lower to prophet but they accept him a recipient of divine communication. Both factions have some difference over the issue of prophethood of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qāḍianī but they accept him as a renovator of Islam. Most of the Aḥmadī translators have included *basmalah* in all sūrah as the first verse. They have regarded the disjointed letters in the beginning of different sūrahs as the abbreviations of certain Arabic words and they have also given the translation of such supposed words. Like their Qadianī counterparts Aḥmadīs do not accept any abrogation (*naskh*) in the text of the Holy Qur’ān.

The following translations and commentaries of the Holy Qur’ān have been published by Aḥmadīs who belonged to Lahore Faction:

1. The Holy Qur’ān Containing the Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary by Maulvī Muhammad ’Alī:

Maulvī Muhammad ’Alī,¹¹ the head of the Lahore Party of Aḥmadiya community, completed his translation and commentary in 1916 and it was published in 1917 for the first time. Its second edition appeared in 1920 published by Aḥmadiya Anjuman-i-Ishā‘at-i-Islām, Lahore. It is a widely circulated version of Aḥmadiya translation of the Qur’ān. It had been consulted by all readers before the publication of translations of Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall and

‘Abdullāh Yūsuf ‘Alī. The translator proclaimed his affiliation with the founder of Aḥmadiya Movement in these words:

“The greatest religious leader of the present time, Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī, 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 Aḥmadiā Movement – has made to flow.”¹²

The translation has some linguistic merits but the translator has rendered some verses into English keeping in view the particular Aḥmadiya beliefs. Some examples are quoted here:

Al-Nisā 4:157-58 [And for their saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah, and they killed him not, nor did they cause him the death on the Cross, but he was made to appear to them as such. And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for certain: Nay, Allah exalted him in His presence. And Allah is ever Mighty, Wise.]¹³

Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī has mistranslated and misinterpreted these verses. According to him, both the Jews and the Christians necessarily believe in the death of Jesus on the Cross, whereas according to the Holy Qur’ān they really have no sure knowledge of it. The Jews reject his claim to the Messiahship on the basis of Deut 21:23: “He that is hanged is accursed of God.” Their belief is that since Jesus died on the Cross, he was accursed and no one who is accursed of God can be a prophet. Following quite a different line of argument, a Christian believes that Jesus died on the Cross and was accursed. He admits the truth of Deut. 21:23. But he says that unless Jesus was accursed he could not take away the sins of those who believe in him. As in Gal. 3:13: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” Hence, the fundamental principle of the beliefs of both Jews and Christians is that Jesus died on the Cross, and the meaning of the verse is clear, viz. Every Jew and Christian, notwithstanding that he has no sure knowledge at all, must believe before his death that Jesus died on the Cross.¹⁴

In the above referred verses, the Qur’ān has clearly underlined *wa mā qatalūhu wa mā ṣalabūhu*, meaning ‘they did not kill him nor did they crucify him’. Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī’s translation and interpretation is absolutely wrong and the fiction of Jesus Christ’s ‘though being hanged yet dying a natural death’ was an innovation of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī and later explained by his followers.

Al-Mā’idah 5:117 [I said to them naught save as Thou didst command me: Serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord; and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die Thou **wast** the Watcher over them. And Thou are Witness of all things.]

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Al-Imrān 3:54 [When Allah said: O Jesus! I will cause you to die and exalt you in My presence.]¹⁶

Al-Mu’minūn 23:50 [And We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign, and We gave them **refuge** on a lofty ground having meadows and springs.]¹⁷

In the footnote, Maulvī Muhammad ’Alī has misinterpreted the verse in the following way:

“There has been much discussion as to the land spoken of in this verse. *Rabwah* is a lofty ground and *qarār* means cultivated land, and a place where water rests in a meadow. Jerusalem, Egypt, Palestine or Damascus, which are the names suggested, do not answer the description, which applies exactly to the valley of Kashmir. Part of the lost ten tribes of Israel is also traced to Kashmir, where a large number of towns and villages bear the names of the towns and villages of Palestine. The presence of a tomb known as ‘the tomb of Nabī Sāḥib (i.e. the prophet), or ‘Isā Sāḥib (i.e. Jesus), or Yus Asaf Nabī (the prophet of Yus Asaf), in the Khān Yār street of Sri Nagar, the capital of Kashmīr, lend additional support to this story.” The fact that the chapter deals with the final triumph of prophets and their followers and deliverance from the hands of their enemies also gives us a clue to the mystery attending the circumstances of the disappearance of Jesus Christ after the event of the Cross; for, as shown in 4:157, Jesus did not die on the Cross. According to a saying of the Holy Prophet, Jesus lived for 120 years (Ibn Kathīr, vol. II, p. 246). This verse tells us that, being delivered from the hands of his enemies, he was given shelter at some other place, and the description of that place, as indicated in this verse, along with the fact that Kashmīr has a tomb which every available evidence shows to be the tomb of Jesus himself, leads us to the conclusion that Kashmīr is the land referred to in this verse.¹⁸

Al-Aḥzāb 33:40 [Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things.]¹⁹

According to Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī, the word *khātām* means a seal or the last part or portion of a thing, the latter being the primary significance of the word *khātim*. 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 Qur’ān has adopted the word *khātām* not *khātim*,

because a deeper significance is carried in the phrase *Seal of the Prophets* than mere *finality*. In fact, it indicates *finality* combined with the *perfection of prophethood*, along with a *continuance* among his followers of certain *blessings of prophethood*. He 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 Qur'an*, and he is the *Seal of the Prophets* because *certain favours bestowed on prophets were forever to continue among his followers*. The office of the prophet 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 servants 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 recognised by Islam that the Divine Being speaks to His chosen ones even now as He spoke in the past. What is stated above is corroborated by a saying of the Holy Prophet: *Nothing has remained of prophethood except mubashsharāt, i.e. good news*. And being asked what was meant by *mubashsharāt*, he said: "True visions". According to another Hadīth, he is reported to have said: "The vision of the believer is one of the forty-sixth parts of the prophethood". . . Prophethood itself has gone, but one of its blessings remains, and will exist forever among the followers of the Holy Prophet.²⁰

Ahmadi translators and commentators who belonged to Qadian Faction like Maulawi Sher 'Ali, Ghulam Farid and others have misinterpreted the above-mentioned verse in such a way to make room for the so-called prophethood of Mirza Qadiani.

Al-Nūr 24:55 [Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will surely make them rulers in the earth as He made those before them rulers, and that He will surely establish for them their religion, which He has chosen for them, and that He will surely give them security in exchange after their fear. They shall serve Me, not associating aught with Me. And whoever is ungrateful after this, they are the transgressors.]²¹

Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī has misinterpreted the verse to prove the false claim of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qāḍianī. In footnote, he exclaimed:

“This verse not only prophesises the establishment of the kingdom of Islam, but also its permanence, so that successors will be raised to the Holy Prophet and the Muslims will be made a ruling nation on the earth. . . . Though the promise contained in this verse refers clearly to the establishment of the kingdom of Islam and to the Muslims being made successors to the Israelites as regards the promised Holy Land, there is also a reference here to the Divine promise to raise reformers among the Muslims as prophets were raised among the Israelites.” Such is the clear promise contained in a saying of the Holy Prophet: “Surely, Allah will raise up this people (i.e. the Muslims) in the beginning of every century one who will revive for it its religion.” (A. D. 36:1) The promise given in the verse may therefore refer not only to the temporal successors of the Holy Prophet, but also to his spiritual successors or reformers. The analogy of the Israelites, to which the verse refers, points to the appearance of a Messiah among the Muslims as a Messiah was raised among the Israelites, and it was on this verse that the claim of the late Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qāḍianī, the founder of the Aḥmadia movement, was based. He claimed to be a reformer for the fourteenth century of the Hijrah and the Messiah whose advent among the Muslims was foretold.”²²

Muhammad ‘Ali’s supra-mentioned interpretation clearly seems forced as the verse talks about true believers performing virtuous deeds would be bestowed with the authority as ruler on the earth. The verse cannot be applied to Mirza Qadiani because neither he nor his followers became rulers anywhere in the world since advent of Ahmadism.

He has given the supposed translation of disjointed letters as follows:

Sr. No	Hurūf Muqatta’āt	Sūrah Numbers	Supposed Meanings
1.	Alif -Lām-Mīm	2,3,29,30,31,32	I, Allah, am the best Knower ²³
2.	Alif-Lām-Rā	10,11,12,14,15	I, Allah, am the Seeing ²⁴
3.	Alif-Lām-Mīm-Sād	7	I, Allah, am the best Knower, the Truthful ²⁵
4.	Alif-Lām-Mīm-Rā	13	I, Allah, am the best Knower, the Seer ²⁶
5.	Kāf-Hā-Yā-Ain-Sād	19	Sufficient, Guide, Blessed, Knowing, Truthful One ²⁷
6.	Tā-Hā	20	O man ²⁸
7.	Tā-Sīm-Mīm	26-28	Benignant, Hearing, Knowing God, ²⁹
8.	Tā-Sīn	27	Benignant, Hearing God ³⁰
9.	Yā-Sīn	36	O man ³¹

10	Sād	38	Truthful God ³²
11	Hā-Mīm	40, 41, 43 44,45, 46	Beneficent God ³³
12	Hā-Mīm- 'Ain-Sīn-Qāf	42	Beneficent God, Knowing, Hearing, Powerful God, ³⁴
13	Qāf	50	Almighty (God) ³⁵
14	Nūn	68	By the inkstand ³⁶

Maulvī Muhammad 'Alī translated the Holy Qur'ān into Urdu and wrote a detailed exegesis entitled "*Bayān al-Qur'ān*" in three volumes wherein he has discussed some Aḥmadiya beliefs like crucifixion of Jesus but not dying on the Cross. He has also mentioned the names of the founder of Aḥmadiya and his successor Maulvī Nūruddin.³⁷ According to Professor Dr. Muhammad Nasim 'Uthmani, Muhammad 'Ali rendered his translation and commentary into Urdu for its circulation on large scale.³⁸

Some scholars have praised Maulvī Muhammad 'Alī's translation for its linguistic worth and have enumerated its merits. Hāfiz Ghulām Sarwar, Maulvī Muhammad 'Alī's class-fellow at Government College Lahore, says: "There is no other translation or commentary of the Holy Qur'ān in the English language to compete with Maulvī Muhammad 'Alī's masterpiece."³⁹

Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī has criticised the language of his translation in the following words:

"Its (Aḥmadiya sect) Lahore Anjuman published Maulvī Muhammad 'Alī's translation first in 1917, which has passed through more than one edition. It is a scholarly work, and equipped with adequate explanatory matter in the notes and Preface, and fairly full index. But the English of the text is evidently weak, and not likely to appeal to those who know no Arabic."⁴⁰

S. Habīb ul Haq Nadvi has pointed out distortion made by Maulvī Muhammad 'Alī in the meaning of the Holy Qur'ān thus:

"He first projected and amplified the death of Jesus in order to justify the claim of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad to the prophethood. The existence of angels and jinns was denied by him. They, according to him, symbolise the forces of good (Khair or the Will of God) and the forces of evil (Sharr) respectively. Paradise is not real: It signifies the pleasure of God and Hell is his wrath."⁴¹

Hāfiz Ghulām Sarwar, another translator of the Holy Qur'ān, has also commented on the language used by Maulvī Muhammad 'Alī:

“The English of the Preface and of the notes is unimpeachable and Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī has corrected the mistakes of the previous translators in scores of passages; and whenever he differs from them his rendering is either the correct and more authoritative one or has at the back of full support to be found in the standard dictionaries of Arabic.”⁴²

The language used by Maulvi Muhammad ‘Ali in the translation of the text is criticized by Ghulam Sarwar in the following way:

“The English in scores of passages in the body of the translation has very poor construction and is left hanging in mid-air, or is so involved as to be unintelligible without unduly prolonged consideration. And pity of it is that it could have been easily put in into proper shape. Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī is able to do that quite easily but either respect for literal translation , or lack of time, or both combined, have induced him to leave a good many of his passages in a state of splendid isolation. Those who know Arabic can easily understand what Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī means, but the translation is generally intended, or ought to be intended, for those who are not master of Arabic.”⁴³

Another contemporary scholar ‘Abdullah Sa‘īd observes:

“Written by a key figure in Aḥmadiyya sect, this translation is criticised by many for its sectarian slant. ‘Alī considerably departs from a traditional rendering in several areas, including verses referring to a ‘Messiah and to the Prophet Muhammad as the *Seal of the Prophets* . ‘Alī puts forward rationalistic interpretations of verses referring to miracles and appears to have a negative view of Judaism and Christianity.”⁴⁴

Neal Robinson points out Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī’s rationalism and denial of miracles when he tries to misinterpret supernatural events mentioned in the Qur’ān. Robinson observes:

“The earlier translation by the Aḥmadi scholar Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī was likewise fairly literal, but it was accompanied by extensive notes explaining that the miracles are to be understood figuratively: The story of the bird is a parable of how by breathing the truth into his disciples, Jesus made them rise above their earthly cares; the statement about the healing of the spiritually blind and the sick; and the statement about raising the dead refers to reviving the spiritually dead.”⁴⁵

Neal Robinson has further elaborated his misinterpretations based on rationalism, ignoring altogether the literal meaning of the Qur’ānic text. He points out such lacunae of the Aḥmadiya translation as follows:

“Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī retains the references to the armies of ‘jinn’ and ‘birds’, but explains in his notes that the former were mountain tribesmen whom Solomon had subjugated, whereas the latter were probably his cavalry who were called ‘birds’ because of their swiftness. Solomon’s knowledge of the speech of the birds is explained as a metaphor for his use of birds for conveying messages. His ability to communicate with the ants is disguised in Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī’s translation because the words ‘the valley of ants’ and ‘ant’ in v. 18 are rendered as ‘valley of Namal’ and ‘a Namlite’ respectively, and there is a note suggesting a reference to a tribe. Similarly, the Arabic word for ‘hoopoe’ is simply transliterated as Hudhud and treated as the name of a person.”⁴⁶

Since this translation is the official Ahmadi translation by the founder of Lahore faction Maulvi Muhammad ‘Ali who has interpolated his views that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a promised Messiah. Rightly did Dr.A.R.Kidwai write, “Being a spokesperson of Qadianism, Ali distorts the import of the Quranic verses on the finality of Allah’s Last Messenger.”⁴⁷

Amir Aziz al-Azharī, an Ahmadī writer, has recently tried to distort the fact by saying that Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī was the first Muslim who translated the Holy Qur’ān into English. This honour cannot be snatched from him and Jama’at-i-Ahmadiyah Lahore.⁴⁸ It is to be clarified that Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī was the founder of Lahore Faction of Ahmadiya community. The adherents to this sect have been declared non-Muslim by the Government of Pakistan like their Qadiani counterparts. So, Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī is not believed to be a Muslim by majority of Pakistani citizens. Secondly, he was not the first to render the Holy Qur’ān into English. Prior to him, a number of Muslims have published their translations. Among them are included Dr. Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan of Patiala who was an Ahmadī but repented from Ahmadism while Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī was still alive, Mirza Hairat and Mirza Abul Fadl.

2. The Running Commentary of the Holy Qur-an with Under-bracket Comments by Dr. Khādim Ramḥānī Nūrī:

The translator was from Assam and belonged to Aḥmadiya community. He has been called renowned scholar by his co-religionists like Nasir Ahmad⁴⁹. According to Maulvi Muhammad ‘Ali, he translated the Qur’ān into Khasi language (an Austroasiatic language spoken in the hills district of Assam) and also translated many other books and booklets.⁵⁰ The title of the

commentary reads about Dr. Nūrī as “the author and translator of over 150 books in various languages.” His translation was first published in 1964 and was revised by his son Dr. Zahūrul Haque.⁵¹ It contains literal translation of the Arabic text and contains 25,000 under-bracket comments. The main feature of this translation is that he put the explanatory words and sentences in brackets within the translation and, in that way, it is a running translation. The readers do not need to consult the footnotes. All additional words and comments are put under brackets in smaller types. In other words, it is a two-in-one commentary:

- (1) reading without brackets gives literal translation;
- (2) reading with brackets gives the added explanation.⁵²

References to the verses of the Holy Qur’ān, the Hadīth, the Bible, the Bhagwat Gita and scriptures of other religions referred to in plenty for the sake of comparative study.

The arrangement adopted by Dr. Nūrī has also been censured by critics. Dr. Abdur Raheem Kidwāi has detracted Dr. Nūrī saying that he introduced an odd feature in his translation, which he refers to as ‘under-bracket comments’ and accordingly his work is paraded as the ‘running commentary’. This arrangement has, however, rendered it into a very clumsy, reader-unfriendly work.⁵³

Dr. Nūrī started publishing his commentary in a weekly that was an organ of Aḥmadiya community as he himself has said: “This commentary of mine is being published in ‘The Light’ of Lahore, West Pakistan, every week since the year 1958.”⁵⁴

The translation and commentary clearly manifests the interpretation of the Holy Qur’ān as believed by Aḥmadiya community. The following examples are an ample proof of it:

Al-Nisā’ 4:157-8 [And (a wagger being a fool’s argument) their saying (boastfully): “Surely, we have killed Masīh,” --- ‘Isa, son of Mar-yam (2:87), the rasūl of Allah (, ---” and thereby have proved him to be an accursed one, Deu. 21:23”); and(the fact is that) they killed him not (rather they were victims of delusion), nor did they cause his death by crucifixion (as he expired not on the cross, though they nailed him to it), but he was made to resemble (one crucified) to them (because his fainted state in the cross-incident appeared to them as his death, Joh. 19:32-33; 20:25-8; Mark 15:44; 16:4; Luke 24:39-43; Matt. 28:10, Heb. 5:7). And verily those who differ with regard to him are (themselves) in a certain doubt about him. They have no (true) knowledge about it (i.e. this escape of ‘Isā from death on the cross) but are merely following a guess; and they killed him not for certain (and thus they failed to prove him to be accursed; rather he lived to a good old age, 3:45, and died a natural death, 3:45 and was buried in Kashmīr,

23:50) On contrary, Allah exalted him (3:45) towards Himself (in honour and dignity). And Allah ('who was able to save him from death of the cross, Heb 5:7) is Exalted in power, Most Wise (in making him fainted which helped in the way of his escape, John 19:32-33)]⁵⁵

Al-Mu'minūn 23:50 [And We made the son of Mar-yam (2:87) and his mother a sign (for the guidance of the nations, 21:91, particularly the Jews, the Christians, and the later day Muslims, 3:54); and (after their deliverance from the hands of their enemies, 4:157) We sheltered them in (the valley of) a plateau (of Kashmīr, the only plateau in the world) having (plenty of) meadows (as well as places of security) and springs (and, therefore, called the Heaven on Earth wherever their tombs are existing).]⁵⁶

Al-Aḥzāb 33:40[(O mankind!)Muhammad is not the (spiritual) father of any of your men (of Elevated Places, i.e. your nabīs 7:46; so,no nabīs, new or old, will ever appear after him as his spiritual offspring, as they appeared after your father Ibrāhīm, 22:78); but (he is) a Rasūl of Allah and the Seal of the Nabīs (, therefore, the institution of sending nabīs has been closed and a seal has been set with Muhammad, who is the Last or the Final Nabī and with whom religion has reached the peak of perfection, 2:213;5:3). And Allah is Ever Knower of all things (including that any imposter claiming to be a Nabī after Muhammad will be digging his own grave. 69:44-47)]⁵⁷

Al-Nūr 24:55 [Allah promised (three things) to those among you who believe (obeying His Law) and do good deeds (2:25) that (i) He will make them successors (in both temporal and spiritual fields) in the (whole) earth (by sending *Mujaddids* or Reformers at the head of each century, A.D. 36:1, who will make them true Believers by cleansing them of their dross), as He made successors those (chain of Isrā'īte Nabīs in the dispensation of the Law-giver, Mūsā) before them (,similarly, as Mūsā was succeeded after 1300 years by Isā Masīḥ, so also Muhammad who is like unto Mūsā, 73:15, is to be succeeded 1300 years later by the Promised Masīḥ who will be like unto 'Isā, with a chain of 12 *Mujaddids* in between; and that (every generation needing regeneration) .(ii) He will establish for them their religion (of Islam in its full glory like the full moon of the fourteenth night), which He has approved for them (5:3, superseding other outdated religions where interpolations have crept in, 9:33); and that (iii) He will most surely change them from their (state of) fear (of their total annihilation by their bitter opponents, 33:9-20) into (a state of) security (and thus he that is master of himself will be master of others). They will worship Me (alone), not associating aught with Me. And whoever

is ungrateful thereafter, then these themselves are (to be dealt as) the transgressors (or as the disobedient ones to My commandments).]⁵⁸

Unlike other Qāḍianī or Aḥmadī translators, Dr. Nūrī has not included “*Basmalah*” in every *surah* and retained disjointed letters as such but he has given their meanings in the brackets e.g. *Alif-Lām-Mīm* (I, Allah, am the Best Knower).⁵⁹ Dr. Nūrī has prepared a detailed index that can be helpful for the researchers.⁶⁰

Dr. Kidwai observes that Dr. Nūrī’s work is marred by the poor level of English. It is disfigured by an overuse of idioms which may not be readily comprehensible for an average reader. The use of ‘Thou’ and ‘Thine’ etc is another stumbling block in drawing freely upon his work.⁶¹

Nasir Ahmad, a Lahori Ahmadi writer and translator, has showered praises on Nuri’s work as : “No doubt the English translation of Dr. Nuri is a good attempt to provide explanatory notes along with the translation making things easier for the reader to understand it, still it is more or less a compilation based on the English translations of Maulana Muhammad ‘Ali and Prof.(?) Ghulam Sarwar.”⁶²

Dr. Khadim Rahmani Nuri has distorted the meanings of the verses by interpolating not only words but lengthy sentences. His remarks in brackets have changed the text of translation altogether from the renderings by Muslims.

3. A Running Commentary on the Holy Qur’ān by Khāwja Kamāl ud Dīn:

Khāwja Kamāl ud Dīn (1870-1932) was a member of the Lahore Aḥmadiya Movement. He received his education at F.C. College, Lahore. After L.L.B, he started legal practice in Lahore but proceeded to England in 1912 and founded ‘Working Muslim Mission and Literary Trust’. He started a monthly journal from London entitled ‘The Islamic Review’.⁶³ After bifurcation of Ahmadiya community, he affiliated himself to the Lahore Party. He was an active preacher of Aḥmadiya beliefs and penned many books. He published ‘Brief Notes of the Qur’ān: The Last Seven Chapters’.⁶⁴ It was his first work towards the English rendering of the Holy Qur’ān. He translated Sūrah al-Kausar as follows:

In the name of Allah, Beneficent, the Merciful

1. Surely, We have given you abundance of good,
2. Therefore, pray to your Rabb (Creator, Nourisher and Maintainer) and make sacrifice.
3. Surely, your enemy is the one cut off.⁶⁵

Later on, Khāwja Kamāl ud Dīn’s translation and commentary was also published. Its first part contained 16 chapters. In the preface, Āftāb ud Dīn, the editor of ‘The Islamic Review’ says: “He conceived the idea of this commentary during his South African tour in the year 1926. He undertook the task on his return to India in the year 1928. But the attack of Tuberculosis came simultaneously, and his failing health would not allow him to proceed with the work in English. He, therefore, hurried on with Urdu as the vehicle of expression. Much of what is being presented to the reader in these pages is translated from his Urdu MSS.”⁶⁶

In this commentary, an extract from the Qur’ānic text is given, followed by the English translation and a detailed commentary. His methodology resembles to that of Muhammad ‘Alī’s. It is reflected from his exegetical notes that he has misinterpreted the Divine message to prove his false beliefs as true. The followers of Ahmadism (Lahore faction) believed that Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī was not a prophet but a *muḥaddath*. Khāwja Kamāl ud Dīn, while commenting on the verse 2:129, says:

“Below the position of a prophet, there is a lower stage which, however, is itself above the mere reception of Divine communication. This lower stage is that of *Muḥaddathiyya*. Every recipient of Divine communication cannot be called a *muḥaddath*. He alone can be called a *muḥaddath* who receives these communications copiously and frequently. One may call such a person ‘one having semblance of a prophet’.”⁶⁷

The Ahmadī exegete is very clever because he avoids mentioning the name of his so-called *muḥaddath*. Similar to other writers of his community, he had tried to restrict ‘jihād’ only to self-defence. He writes, “Islam abhors warfare except in extreme cases of self-defence.”⁶⁸ This stance is completely in accordance with Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī’s teachings who endeavoured to stop Indian Muslims from fighting against the British Government in India.

This translation contains the meaning of the disjointed letters e.g. Alif-Lām-Mīm has been translated as ‘I am Allah, the best Knower’.⁶⁹ He has referred to different books of the Bible like Genesis⁷⁰, Exodus⁷¹, Deuteronomy⁷², Matthew⁷³, John⁷⁴, 1Kings⁷⁵ and 2Kings⁷⁶. He has alluded to Arabic dictionaries like *Tāj al-‘Urūs*⁷⁷, and referred to orientalist like George Sale⁷⁸ and Edward William Lane.⁷⁹

Khāwja Kamāl ud Dīn’s work was completed by his son Khāwja Nazir Ahmad⁸⁰ (1897—1970) but it is not available even in the Khilafat Library Rabwah and Dar us-Salam Library Lahore.

4. English Translation of the Holy Qur’ān with Arabic Text and Transliteration, compiled by Nasir Ahmad

Nasir Ahmad’s father Maulana Aftab ud Din Ahmad(d.1956) received his religious education at Deoband. In 1924,he joined Ahmadiya Anjuman Lahore and later served as Muballigh to Woking Muslim Mission. He also served as the editor of the *Light* and *Islamic Review*.⁸¹ Like his father ,Nasir Ahmad has served Lahore Faction of Ahmadiya community in various capacities. He worked as the secretary of the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust Lahore and also as Assistant Editor of the weekly *Light* of the Ahmadiya Anjuman *Ishā‘at-i-Islam*.⁸² He has published translation and transliteration of some parts of the Holy Qur’ān. About this work, Nasir Ahmad has himself told the following story:

“This is, actually, the translation and transliteration of some parts of the Holy Qur’an compiled by Nasir Ahmad. During the course of years, he has been making improvements in the method of transliteration since he first started the work while preparing it for the Qur’an page in ‘The Light’ in 1958. The idea in his mind has always been to help the reader to recite each syllable of the Arabic text correctly and to show him how much it is represented in the transliteration. It is also free from the intricacies of the Orientalist method of transliteration. With the help of this transliteration, a person having ordinary knowledge of English can easily recite the Arabic text. Similarly, he has taken full advantage of allowance provided by the rules of stoppage (*wuqūf*) to avoid conjoining of the words and to facilitate easy recitation of the Arabic text. In fact, he has tried to transliterate the Arabic text in accordance with the vocal expression of the words and have not strictly followed alphabetic characters of the words. This transliteration is meant, mainly, for those who are not at all conversant with Arabic and still desire to read the Arabic text of the Holy Qur’an.”⁸³

Nasir Ahmad has elucidated that he has not rendered the Holy Qur’an himself; he has rather included the English translation from Maulvī Muhammad Alī’s. He has stated: “Presently, I am bringing out part 30 of the Holy Qur’an as these chapters are recited, mostly, in the five daily prayers. The translation and introductory notes to each chapter have been taken from the most renowned and a masterpiece English translation of the Holy Qur’an by the Maulānā Muhammad ‘Ali of blessed memory.”⁸⁴

Nasir Ahmad has also published the first three parts of the Holy Qur’an entitled “English Translation of the Holy Qur’an with Arabic Text and Transliteration”.⁸⁵ On enquiry, he

clarified that he has not rendered the Arabic text of the Qur’ān and used the translation of Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī. He has merely transliterated the Arabic text so that such people who are unable to read Arabic text of the Qur’ān can recite it.⁸⁶

5. The Holy Qur’ān Simplified by K. S. Ch. Mohammad Manzoor Ilāhī:

Ch. Mohammad Manzoor Ilāhī, a member of Lahore Party of Aḥmadiya, published the literal and idiomatic incomplete English translation of the Holy Qur’an under the title “The Holy Qur’ān Simplified”. It is in parts, the first contains *al-Fātiḥah* and seventy-eight verses of *al-Baqarah* in 85 lessons⁸⁷ and the second comprises verses 79-151 of *al-Baqarah* in 65 lessons.

⁸⁸ Both constitute the first part (jūz) of the Holy Qur’ān. Mohammad Manzoor Ilāhī belonged to Lahore faction of Ahmadiya community. He wrote a number of books in Urdu and English for propagation of Ahmadism.⁸⁹ Another book entitled “The English Translation of the Holy Traditions with Short Notes” bears his name with the addition of these words: “Member of the Aḥmadiya Anjuman Ishā‘at Islam, Lahore (India)”. In the introduction to this book, he has mentioned Maulānā Muhammad Alī whose English translation has given impetus to the progress of Islamic literature in European languages.”⁹⁰

“The Holy Qur’an Simplified” contains Arabic text, transliteration, word for word translation followed by the meaning of the verse in the end. Some examples of his translation are quoted below:

Al-Baqarah 2:129 [Our Lord! And raise up in them an apostle from (among) them who shall recite on them Thy communications and teach them the book and the wisdom, and purify them; sure, Thou (art) the Mighty, the Wise.]⁹¹

Sometimes his rendering is quite different from other translators. For instance:

Al-Baqarah 2:138 [(Receive) baptism (of) Allah, and who (is) better than Allah (in) baptising and we for Him (are) worshippers.]⁹²

The word ‘Baptism’ used in the rendering of above-mentioned verse is inappropriate. It is a [sacrament](#) of admission to the [Christian church](#). The forms and rituals of the various churches vary, but baptism almost invariably involves the use of water and the [Trinitarian](#) invocation, “I baptize you: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The candidate may be wholly or partly immersed in water, the water may be poured over the head, or a few drops may be sprinkled or placed on the head.⁹³

At a few places, the translator has also appended additional notes/explanation as footnotes:

Al-Baqarah 2:78 [And from them are illiterate who know not the book but (only) lies and they do not but conjecture] ⁹⁴

Explaining the meaning of word” Ummiyyīn”, he adds in footnote:

“It is plural of ‘Ummee’ which means one who is unable to read or write. Here, it refers to illiterate Jews.”⁹⁵

Mohammad Manzoor Ilāhī’s Qadianī beliefs can also read in footnotes. Like other translators and commentators, he has also repeated the story of Jesus Christ who was hanged on the Cross but he could not be killed and escaped the death.

- **Al-Baqarah2: 73**[So, We said liken his affair with somewhat of it, thus Allah brings to life the dead and shows you His sign (that) you may understand.] ⁹⁶

The note added to this verse reads:

“As there is no other case of a murder in Jewish history in which the whole nation may have been guilty which might answer to the description of these two verses except their attempt on the life of Jesus Christ which “matter was made dubious “and the act of murder was not completed in his case, for after he was taken down from the Cross, his legs were not broken, as in the case of thieves.”⁹⁷

Al-Baqarah2:106 [Whatever We abrogate from communication or cause it to be forgotten, We bring better than it or like it. Dost thou not knowest that Allah has power over all things.]
⁹⁸

Aḥmadīs do not believe in abrogation of any verse and Manzoor Ilāhī’s has expressed his views in a footnote added to this verse:

“All through this section, the followers of the Book (i.e. the Jews) are addressed. Hence, no question arises as to the abrogation of any verse of the Holy Qur’ān itself, there being not a single report tracing the abrogation of a single verse to the Holy Prophet.”⁹⁹

6. English Translation of the Anwār al-Qur’ān by Dr. Bashārat Aḥmad

Dr. Bashārat Aḥmad (1876-1943) studied at the King Edward Medical College Lahore and served as physician and surgeon in East Africa and various cities of the Punjab. In 1901, he joined Ahmadiyya Movement by taking oath of allegiance to Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad. Being the father-in-law of Maulvi Muhammad ‘Alī, an Ahmadi translator and commentator of the Qur’ān, he sided with Lahore faction after bifurcation of the community.¹⁰⁰ He was a devout Ahmadi

and wrote the biography of Mirza Ghulam Qadianī, entitled “Mujaddid-i A’zam”.¹⁰¹ He published his “Quranic View of Human Freedom” in which he repeated Ahmadī beliefs. According to him “No verse of the holy Qur’ān has been or shall ever be, abrogated”.¹⁰² Towards the closing years, he wrote commentary of the 30th and then the 27th part of the Holy Qur’ān in Urdū, entitled Anwār al-Qur’ān¹⁰³ (The Blessings of the Qur’ān). It has been translated into English by Imam Kalamazad Mohammed. Later on, it was revised and edited by Nasir Ahmad syed.¹⁰⁴

Unlike other Ahmadī translators and commentators, Dr Basharat has not included *basmalah* in the chapters(sūrahs) .For instance, the retranslation of the Sūrah 95 (*al- Īn*---The Fig)runs as follows:

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. By the fig and the olive!
2. And Mount Sinai!
3. And this City made secure!
4. Certainly We created man in the best make.
5. Then We render him the lowest of the low,
6. Except those who believe and do good; so theirs is a reward never to be cut off.
7. So who can give the lie to thee after this about the Judgement?
8. Is not Allah the Best of the Judges?"¹⁰⁵

The commentary by Dr.Bashārat Aḥmad manifests that he has twisted the meaning of the Qur’ān to prove his peculiar beliefs. He has referred to Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī, the founder of the Aḥmadiya Movement in his commentary. Commenting on verses 95:1-3, he observes:

“The question may arise in the minds of readers: Instead of mentioning the names of the prophets, why were the names of the places where they appeared used? It is one of the rules of eloquence and rhetoric that, in order to add force to a statement, sometimes the place is used when the people are really meant. For example, look at what the Mujaddid of the Age (Hazrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad) writes concerning the martyrdom of Sahibzadah Abdul Latif: "God has looked down contemptuously on Kabul." Here Kabul does not refer to the city itself but to those people who took part in that horrendous crime.”¹⁰⁶

Consider another example of misinterpretation by the Qāḍianī commentator who has referred to Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qāḍianī in the commentary of Sūrah 105 (*Al-Fīl*-The Elephant): “So Allah let loose on them His birds – the Promised Messiah (Hazrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Sāhib of Qadian) and his small band of followers - who rained heavenly stones on them in the form of literature which annihilated their elephants, that is, their objections, to such an extent that even famous Christian leaders in Europe itself are disenchanted with the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement. Today the breaking of the Cross is no longer hidden from the eyes of the wise....This, too, is the meaning of the *ḥadīth* in which it is written that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) saw in a vision that the Dajjāl was circumambulating the Ka‘bah and so, too, was the Promised Messiah. This means that the Dajjāl was going around the Ka‘bah just as a thief would go around a house with the intention of breaking in and stealing. On the other hand, the Promised Messiah was making the rounds of the Ka‘bah like a watchman on guard intending to catch and punish any thief that may be hovering about. Thus the mischief of the Christian Fathers is called the Dajjāl, who is going around the Ka‘bah in order to damage in some way the edifice of Islam, and to steal its treasures and carry off its people with him. However, the purpose of the Promised Messiah’s circulation of the Ka‘bah is to guard the building of Islam, and to preserve it by Allah’s grace from being captured by the Dajjāl.”¹⁰⁷

He has referred to the first Qāḍianī khalifa in the commentary of the same Sūrah:

“In regard to the verse: *Arsala alaihim tairan abābīl* (He sent on them flocks of birds), *Hazrat Maulānā Nūruddīn*, the world-renowned commentator of the Holy Qur’an, says that it refers to a common saying among the Arabs and which means "bringing destruction to." That is why in the pre-Islamic poetry of the Arabs, we find the proud boast of the poets who used to say that flocks of birds accompanied their armies. This is the origin of this terminology, because it is a fact that where there are dead bodies vultures will abound.”¹⁰⁸

The commentary of some Sūrahs like *Al-Raḥmān*¹⁰⁹ and *Al-Qamar*¹¹⁰ has been translated into English and published separately whereas the translation of commentary on chapters 102 to 114 of the Holy Qur’an by Dr. Bashārat Ahmad¹¹¹ has been published in a single volume. The commentary of Surah al-Raḥmān is full of praises that Dr. Bashārat has showered upon his so-called ‘promised messiah’. For instance:

“This is the unique excellence of the Holy Qur’ān which the Mujaddid of the Age, Hazrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad presented to the world with exceeding force and vigour.”¹¹²

He has also praised Khwajah Kamāl-ud-Dīn who was the first preacher of Ahmadism in Great Britain. He observes:

“When the late Khwajah Kamāl-ud-Dīn went to England to spread Islam, the pure and holy tenets of this religion aroused such a consternation in the minds of the people of that country that the Christian priests raised a big uproar. Particularly affected was Father Zwemer who was a very hostile enemy of Islam and as a result, with great pomp and flourish, he went to confront the Khwajah in a debate. Just at that time, Khwajah Kamāl-ud-Dīn had a vision in which he saw pieces of iron falling from heaven and entering his body. Simultaneously, he heard a voice announcing, “We sent down iron wherein is great danger and advantages to men” After this, the Khwajah received such profound knowledge and insight from the Holy Qur’ān that Father Zwemer had to flee from the debate in disappointment and total disarray. This is the just one aspect of the Holy Qur’ān’s advantages to men.”¹¹³

From the examples quoted above it became clear that Dr. Bashārat Aḥmad has misinterpreted the Holy Qur’ān to prove his Ahmadi beliefs. He has eulogized the founder of Ahmadiya community and other prominent Aḥmadi personalities like Maulānā Nūruddīn and Khwajah Kamāl-ud-Dīn.

Conclusion

The Aḥmadi translators and commentators from Lahore Faction have deviated from the Muslim orthodoxy in their renderings and exegeses. The meanings of a number of verses especially those concerning with Jesus Christ have been distorted to prove the claims of so-called the Promised Messiah. They have not faithfully translated the text of the Qur’ān and the commentary of certain verses aims at proving particular Aḥmadi beliefs rather than presenting their exact meanings. They have ignored the rules of interpretations laid down by the experts of Qur’anic Sciences. They have mistranslated some particular verses to prove the Aḥmadi beliefs by interpolating such words for which no Arabic equivalents occur in the text. The Aḥmadi beliefs have been derived from the writings of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī, Hakīm Nūruddīn and Maulvī Muhammad ‘Alī and inserted them in the interpretation of the Qur’ān. They have endeavoured to twist the meanings of Arabic words to get the wishful interpretation. They have quoted some Muslim commentators out of context to prove what their ‘Promised Messiah’ has fabricated in his writings. The Lahori Ahmadīs say that Mirzā

Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiānī is not a prophet but put him at a lower stage of *Muḥaddath*. In other beliefs like crucifixion of Jesus Christ, his escape of death at the cross, his arrival in Kashmir along his mother, his natural death and burial in Sri Nagar are not different from Qadian Faction of Aḥmadiya community. They try to distort the meaning of *nabī* and *rasūl* as used by the founder of their community. The English renderings of the Holy Qur'ān and exegetical literature produced by them are not only criticized by the Muslim orthodoxy but also by western critics.

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 - d. Government Angrezī aūr Jihād (The British Government and Jihād)
 - e. Tauzīḥ al-Marām (A Clarification)
 - f. Aik Ghalatī Kā Izālah (A Correction of an Error)
 - g. Paighām-i-Sulḥ (A Message of Peace)
 - h. Zarūrat ul-Imām (Need of Imām of the Age)
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