"Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with people in the best manner." (Holy Quran, 16:125)

The Light

AND

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for over eighty years

October - December 2006

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمديه انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاهور

The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. *The Islamic Review* was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

The main objective of the A.A.I.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the *hearts and minds* of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words *La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah* (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that **no** prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

U.S.A.	*Australia*
U.K.	*Canada*
Holland	*Fiji*
Indonesia	*Germany*
Suriname	*India*
Trinidad	*South Africa*
Guyana	

Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

1889: *Hazrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

1901: Movement given name *Ahmadiyya* after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name *Ahmad*.

1905: Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

1908: Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

1981–1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

1996–2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

Fraudulent Means in Spreading the Truth:

Statistical proof of Shakir's plagiarism of Maulana Muhammad Ali's 1917 edition of the English Translation of the Holy Quran

Compiled by Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

The English translation of the Holy Quran attributed to M.H.Shakir is well known in the western Muslim world. It would not be an exaggeration to state that in recent years it is probably the most widely available and most proliferated English translation in the U.S.A. All major bookstores sell it, many Islamic organizations distribute it and numerous websites managed by Muslim student societies display it. Interestingly, though, from the beginning, the personality named 'Shakir' was clouded in mystery. Only scant information could be found about him; some sources claimed he was a former Egyptian judge with some connection to Al-Azhar Universtiy. It soon became a matter of curiosity as to why no definitive information was available about this now-famous 'scholar'.

Notwithstanding, many members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement could surmise why the identity of 'Shakir' was being hidden. We knew, for several years now, that the translation attributed to Shakir was nothing more than a plagiarised work, an almost wholesale reproduction of Maulana Muhammad Ali's first edition English translation of the Holy Quran. Where the facts reveal that it was only under the guise of producing an independent, scholarly work that the Shakir 'translation' surfaced, it becomes clear why so little information existed about the 'scholar' behind this work.

Recently, the 'Shakir' plagiarism story became public: Dr. Zahid Aziz published an article about it on one of the Lahore Ahmadiyya websites. Therein, Dr. Aziz not only argued a case of plagiarism, but also revealed that 'Shakir' was not even the real name of any person involved in the fraudulent scheme but rather a pen-name used by a Pakistani financer who supervised a group of persons that 'compiled' this translation. In order to conclusively settle this matter and assure all, including the publishers of the Shakir 'translation', that the claim made by the Lahore Ahmadiyya community about the Shakir 'translation' being a plagiarized version of Maulana Muhammad Ali's first edition is legitimate, the U.S.A. branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement commissioned the *Forensics Linguistics Institute* to perform a statistical analysis comparing several English translations of the Holy Quran. This analysis compared a representative sample of chapters and verses in nine popular English translations of the Holy Quran in terms of unique lexicons and identical strings.

The results were astounding. It was shown that on average 'Shakir' uses *89%* of the unique lexicon in each chapter and section that Maulana Muhammad Ali does in his first edition. Moreover, 'Shakir' uses identical strings to that used by Maulana Muhammad Ali in his first edition on average *almost twenty times more* than such occurrences appear in a corpus of nine tested English translations. In its Report, the *Forensics Linguistics Institute* forcefully concluded that the Shakir 'translation' was a plagiarised version of Maulana Muhammad Ali's first edition translation, thereby substantiating the claim made by the Lahore Ahmadiyya community. The Report included the following express statements:

> "… the high degree of similarity shown here between Shakir and MM Ali is far beyond co-incidence or chance. Although we expect translations of a scriptural work to contain some common material, it is clear that the Shakir translation must have arisen as a result of plagiarism."

> "This yields an extremely minute probability of the Shakir texts having been produced independently."

> "… the above demonstrates absolutely overwhelming evidence in favour of extensive, almost total, plagiarism by MH Shakir. It is simply not possible to doubt that MM Ali's translation was plagiarised by Shakir."

> "The extent to which MH Shakir has plagiarised from MM Ali and, to a lesser extent from the Maulana version, is both breathtaking and blatant. No other conclusion is possible. It was a deliberate plagiarism, which in parts he has attempted to disguise by the use of Arabic names and terminology. The use of such names gives the text a superficial air of authenticity, but I suggest their use is no more than a heartless and cynical ploy to disguise what was actually going on. The MH Shakir version cannot be called a translation at all: it is no more than a copy of MM Ali's work."

It is noteworthy that the publishers of the Shakir 'translation' have, since being presented with the Report, conceded that fairness dictates putting an end to the deception promulgated by those passing this plagiarised product off as an independent, scholarly work. However, justice is far from done. The Shakir 'translation' has been hailed as an excellent English translation. As already mentioned, its prevalence in the U.S.A. – through bookstores, mosques and websites – is exten-

sive. Those accepting the 'Shakir' publication as their translation of choice must now reconsider not only whether their continued use of a plagiarised work is desirable, but also whether their participation in the continued stratagem to marginalize Maulana Muhammad Ali's literary works is justified.

Maulana Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Holy Quran was the first of its kind. No complete English translation by a Muslim was published and made available on a wide-scale, as were those translated by non-Muslims, until Maulana Muhammad Ali's epic 1917 translation. Aside from the fraudulent copying by 'Shakir', it is well known that Maulana Muhammad Ali's work became the basis and standard from which all future translations were created. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the famous translator of the Holy Quran, refers to it as a "*scholarly work*" in the preface to his English translation of the Quran. Marmaduke Pickthal goes further and argues: "*Probably no man living has done longer or more valuable service for the cause of Islamic revival than Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore*". Other translators of the Quran have proclaimed: "*To deny the excellence of Muhammad Ali's translation, the influence it has exercised, and its proselytising utility, would be to deny the light of the sun*" (Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi) and "*The first work published by any Muslim with the thoroughness worthy of Quranic scholarship and achieving the standards of modern publications*" (Amir Ali).

Is it not time that fair minded Islamic organizations and individual Muslims in the west give due credit to <u>the</u> standard English translation that has influenced millions of persons towards a better understanding of the peaceful, tolerant, rational and inspiring teachings of Islam? There was a time not too long ago when criticisms of Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation included arguments such as 'it denies the religious duty of *jihad*,' because the Maulana explains this Islamic concept as a primarily internal struggle for self-betterment and not synonymous with 'holy war'. Or that 'it denies miracles,' because the Maulana provides additional alternative explanations, fully supported by evidence mind you, to traditionally understood 'supernatural' events. Can criticisms like these, in our post-911 world, be taken seriously? Can Muslims afford to suppress a literary treasure the like of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Holy Quran – a work that provides the scholarly ammunition to fully equip each Muslim to defend his/her faith in the Islamophobic culture we currently live in – because of biased and outdated opinions about the Ahmadiyya Movement? If Sheikh Tantawi, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, finds it conducive to read Maulana Muhammad Ali books and even quote him in his writings, is it not time for all Muslims in the west to reassess their views on the authenticity of Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation? If the Council on American and Islamic Relations (CAIR) can formally endorse the English translation of the Holy Quran by Muhammad Asad, wherein verses regarding Prophet *Isa's* birth, crucifixion/death and other alleged miracles are explained exactly how Maulana Muhammad Ali interprets them in his commentary, is it not time for western Muslims to re-evaluate the importance of Maulana Muhammad Ali's contributions to modern Islamic thought and its manifest utility in educating non-Muslims about Islam as well as rebutting extreme/radical ideologies within the ummah itself?

The Report by the *Forensics Linguistics Institute* is, with some editing done for formatting purposes, reproduced below. We hope this Report will provide an occasion for Muslims the world over to ponder over an obvious contradiction: on the one hand it is claimed that Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation is not of much value, and on the other we see it being fraudulently copied under false pretences and being accepted by mainstream Islam as a worthy addition to modern Islamic literature. Surely the time is ripe for a reassessment of Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation and his other literary masterpieces.

A Report into Several Translations of the Holy Quran

By John Olsson, BSc, MA, MPhil, of the Forensics Linguistics Institute

This report has been commissioned by Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, (Lahore) USA, the publishers of Maulana Muhammad Ali's various literary works, including his translations of the Holy Quran. The publishers claim that the alleged translation by Mr. 'MH Shakir' is a direct and extensive plagiarism of the 1917 Maulvi Muhammad Ali translation into English from the original of the Holy Quran in the Arabic language.

Report Findings

In this report I will show that the publishers' claim is valid. The MH Shakir version of the text cannot realistically be anything more than an almost literal copy of the 1917 text, with some minor borrowings from other translations, especially the 1951 revision by Mr Maulvi Mohammad Ali of his earlier translation.

MM Ali's first translation was published in 1917. He had been working on it since 1909. He then issued a revised translation in 1951 which he said was the result of extensive further study. This revision is generally known as the 'Maulana' translation (here referred to as

'M' for the sake of brevity). As far as I can judge, MH Shakir's translation first appeared in 1983. The Shakir translation is in the main a verbatim copy of the MM Ali 1917 translation, although there is also some material taken verbatim from the 1951 translation. It is intriguing to wonder why Mr Shakir depended so heavily on two versions by just one translator.

As a potential complication to this picture it should be noted that the Shakir version (here referred to as 'Q', *i.e.* 'questioned document') occasionally reverts to a more traditional interpretation of the Quran[1], but does not do so consistently[2]. Inconsistencies appear in regard to some items of doctrine, for example the belief that Jesus was taken to heaven alive (a doctrine of ascension). Whereas MM Ali has "but when thou didst cause me to die", reflecting a strictly literal translation, others have "when you took me up", "when thou tookest me", *etc.*, Shakir fails to revert to the traditional interpretation, but copies MM Ali. However, this contradicts what he did earlier in 3:54/3:55 where he has already made precisely this change, because whereas at this point MM Ali has 'I will cause you to die' Shakir has 'and cause you to ascend unto me'. Thus, whereas MM Ali has confined himself to a strict literal translation from the Arabic, Shakir – at this point – reverts to a traditional interpretation.

In other words, the Shakir translation seems to adopt two contradictory doctrinal positions[3]. If I have interpreted what has happened correctly between the two texts, then it is worth reflecting that this kind of inconsistency is not uncommon in the plagiarism process, where the usual practice is to copy blindly – and hence carelessly – thus producing incompatible or contradictory text. A plagiarised text is almost always logically and ideationally inferior to the source text, especially in the case of a scholarly document.

Method of Sampling

The Quran consists of over 6,000 verses, divided into 114 chapters. This makes it a work of substantial length, and therefore, rather than testing each verse in each version, a sample of verses was taken. The sample was produced by building a random generator program in Visual Basic 6. The generator first produces a chapter number (between 1 and 114), then the number of sections in the chapter are input into the program – for example some chapters have as many as a dozen sections, while others have only one section. Once the section number has been chosen, the number of verses for that section is recorded and this is added to the list of verses to be tested. In this way a list of the following randomly selected chapters and sections, given with the number of verses in the relevant section, was created[4]:

Table 1: List of randomly selected chapter sections to be tested for plagiarism

Chapter	Section	No of Verses
14	3	9
17	5	13
19	6	16
22	5	5
27	3	13
28	4	14
30	2	9
38	5	24
53	1	25
65	2	5
66	1	7
77	2	10
79	1	26
81	1	29
86	1	17
90	1	20
90	1	20
96	1	19
100	1	11
101	1	11
107	1	7
108	1	3

In all, 313 verses were randomly selected in this way, representing approximately five per cent of the total number of verses. As can be seen from the above table, chapters throughout the Quran have been chosen, and it is believed that this sample is likely to be representative of the work, in terms of the respective styles and vocabularies of the two texts. It should therefore provide ample possibility for testing whether the Shakir text (Q) was plagiarised from the Ali text/s (E and M).

It can be argued that the above method means that not every Quranic verse has an equal chance of being selected. However, the alternative would have been to number each verse individually, regardless of its chapter or chapter section. This would have been an onerous task and, on balance, it was felt that the method used did at least provide some chance for each verse to be selected.

What is Plagiarism and how can it be detected?

Several ways of defining plagiarism exist. A moral definition could be: 'The theft of another's work or ideas presented as one's own'; on the other hand a legal definition could encompass ideas such as: 'The intellectual infringement of the work of another constituting a copyright violation'. For linguists plagiarism is the presence in one text of substantial amounts of another text or the ideas contained in it, where the plagiariser's text has been claimed to have been produced independently. All texts rely on other texts for their genesis and production. Novels in the same genre,

for example, often have many similar features, such as scenes, characters, plots, *etc*. Research papers in a particular discipline also share many common features. The linguistic term for this phenomenon is <u>intertextuality</u>. We expect works of the same genre and of the same text type to share lexis (vocabulary) and elements of structure, such as, for example, headings in the case of an academic paper or plot in the case of a novel. In itself the process of intertextuality does not constitute plagiarism. It is an entirely normal process. However, plagiarism goes beyond intertextuality because it copies either the ideas of the source work or the language (or, sometimes, both) and, crucially, does not acknowledge its source, thereby falsely representing itself as an independently authored work.

In the case of translation we cannot really consider the notion of theft of ideas, except where a plagiarist copies an error from his/her source. So, for example, we may suspect plagiarism if the first translator misinterprets an idea expressed in the source language and the second translator copies this idea, but uses different language from the first translator: we would especially suspect plagiarism in such an instance if the first translator had been the first writer/translator to produce this specific error, which had then itself been copied in error. Previously we gave an example of apparent doctrinal inconsistency[5] in the case of Mr Shakir's text. Here we appear to have something bizarrely like the theft of ideas: in this case the plagiarist sees what he considers to be a doctrinal error and reverts to what he believes to be a non-heretical view. Later, he comes across another instance of the apparent doctrinal error, but fails, in the copying process, to 'correct' this error, and in this way inadvertently copies, not just the text, but a fundamental idea within the text, thus exposing the plagiarism.

Aside from the theft of ideas, and the inconsistencies which almost inevitably follow when a copyist attempts to avoid borrowing a specific error in one instance, but fails to do so in another, we also have word-for-word, or literal, plagiarism.

In any analysis the aim is to <u>demonstrate</u>, on the basis of *probability*. Even though a probability in a given case may be 99.99999999999999% (or, depending on the analysis, its counterpart of 0. 00000000000001) it is still classed as a probability. Generally, a five-point probability scale is used, given as follows: Scale 1 = very low probability; Scale 2 = low probability; Scale 3 = medium probability; Scale 4 = high probability; Scale 5 = very high probability.

In the Shakir translation of the Quran there are literally thousands upon thousands of word-for-word passages which are identical with their counterparts in MM Ali's translation. Below I will detail how these can be measured, and that as a result, (through the use of statis-

tical analysis) a <u>very high probability</u> of plagiarism is proposed. Moreover, it will be seen that the plagiarism is at saturation levels, that is to say it is comprehensive, occurring across the entire work.

Preliminary Steps: MM Ali's text in the context of Quranic Translations

As far as I have been able to judge MM Ali's translation of the Quran into English is the earliest of those under consideration here. Sarwar's translation did not appear until three years later in 1920. The next major translation was that of Pickthal (or Pickthall), which appeared in 1930. Yusuf Ali's translation appeared in 1934, and was re-issued in 1937. Sherali's work first saw the light of day in 1955, and Rashad's work was not published until about 1970. The translation referred to as by Khan, is in fact a joint work by Al Hilali and Khan and is of relatively recent date, 1995, although there was a translation by a Khan in 1905 (to which I can find no further references). Because MM Ali's translation is the earliest of those under detailed comparison, it is clear he could not have depended on any of the above texts. However, I wondered whether there were any earlier translations that he might have depended on.

In the notes to MM Ali's 1917 translation, I found mention of three earlier translations for comparative purposes: those by JM Rodwell (1861), George Sale 1734 and Palmer (1876). Research appears to confirm that these were the best-known translations of the Quran into English which were available at the time that MM Ali began his own translation.

Even a cursory glance shows Palmer's translation to be derivative of Sale's and closer examination leads me to believe that the scholarship of these three editions was not high. Furthermore, none of these translators was a Muslim, and therefore, given MM Ali's preoccupation with rendering the message of the Quran faithfully for the benefit of western believers who did not speak Arabic, my first impression was that he was unlikely to have depended on any of these translations to any extent, although he was familiar with them – given his references to them.

I have looked at verses from each of these three works, Sale, Rodwell and Palmer, and below I quote Chapter 14 Verse 13 from each of them, followed by MM Ali's own version. I will comment on these translation excerpts below.

TEXT EXCERPTS 1

Sale

And those who believed not said unto their apostles, we will surely expel you out of our land; or ye shall return

unto our religion. And their LORD spake unto them by revelation, saying We will surely destroy the wicked doers;"

Rodwell

And they who believed not said to their Apostles, "Forth from our land will we surely drive you, or, to our religion shall ye return." Then their Lord revealed to them, "We will certainly destroy the wicked doers,"

Palmer

And those who misbelieved said to their apostles, "We will drive you forth from our land; or else ye shall return to our faith!" And their Lord inspired them, 'We will surely destroy the unjust;'

MM Ali

And those who disbelieved said to their apostles: we will most certainly drive you forth from our land, or else you shall come back into our religion. So their Lord revealed to them: most certainly we will destroy the unjust:

I believe MM Ali's translation differs quite clearly from these earlier versions[6]. Ali's translation is less archaic, for instance there are no instances of 'ye', although he does use the slightly archaic place adverbial 'forth from' (as Palmer does). All of these translations, including that by MM Ali, use 'apostles', while most of the translations after him refer to 'messengers'. Ali's use of 'disbelieve' is interesting: he appears to use the word as meaning actively *not* believing, rather than failing to believe. Having read through many different translations of these verses, it does indeed seem that the Quran at this point is commenting on those who refuse to believe, who effectively actively (*sic*) *dis*-believe rather than those who simply fail to believe. Therefore, despite its unusual appearance as a verb (the noun *disbelief* is more common), I can understand why MM Ali would have used 'disbelieve'. Moreover, this word does not occur in any translation earlier than that of MM Ali. I cite his use of *disbelieve* as one example of MM Ali's apparent efforts to search out the meaning of the text, rather than simply render it into English without considering its implications within the context of the type of work he was translating and its particular contextual significance[7].

While looking at MM Ali's notes accompanying his translation, it seemed to me that, though he did not have any formal linguistic training, he nevertheless appears to have used sound translation principles. For example, he cross-references verses to other verses where the same or similar words, or words derived from the same etymological root are given; he cross-references verses where the same or similar ideas are expressed; he gives alternative interpretations of phrases, synonyms for words, and – most crucially for a scholarly work – he cites the work of other translators and scholars, and in some cases gives reasons for accepting or rejecting their interpretations.

For the above reasons, it seems to me likely that MM Ali's scholarship is genuine, and that he carried out his work as an authentic translation, rather than as a process of borrowing from other translations. This has been verified by many Muslim scholars and although some may disagree with a few of his interpretations, the quality of his scholarship has never, as far as I can tell, been in question.

My intention in this section has been to demonstrate MM Ali's work as a genuine translation. I summarise my reasons for this view here:

The English translations which occurred before MM Ali's translation were written in a more archaic style, and with less sensitivity to nuances of meaning, *e.g.* the use of 'disbelieve' by MM Ali shows considerable attention to meaning.

The other major English translations, *e.g.* Pickthal(l), occurred after MM Ali's 1917 translation was published.

MM Ali shows not only sensitivity to meaning, but scholarship with regard to choice of word, synonyms used, consideration of previous translations, and attention to the original text.

By definition, a work which is not in itself original or genuine cannot be plagiarised from. It would simply itself be a copy, and any simulation of it would be little more than a distorted reflection of the true, but obscured, original. Since, in my view, MM Ali's work is genuine, then it follows that it can be plagiarised from.

Methods of plagiarism detection used in the present instance

1. Lexical identity comparisons

Explanation: Lexical identity comparisons measure the number of lexical (or content words) in common between two texts. The present test goes one step further and measures *unique* lexical words in each text. Unique words are also called hapax legomena – and because they only occur once in a text, the chances of finding a high number of hapax legomena in two texts which were produced independently are very low: how low will depend on the genre and the text type, whether the text is a translation, and also the length of the text.

What happens is that the words unique to one text are matched with the unique words found in the test text. The higher the match, the greater the probability that the

two texts were *not* independently produced. This approach, namely the comparison of unique lexical words across source and target text is well attested (see above references).

For a valid comparison to be made the two texts being measured should be of a similar length. It should be borne in mind that texts of the same type and genre will have a higher common lexis (vocabulary) than texts of different genres or types.

It was decided to treat the individual chapters of the nine different translations of the Quran as a corpus, and the chapters taken as samples as the sample of the corpus. The aim was to establish what norms of similarity exist across this sample corpus, on the basis that this could be extrapolated to the entire corpus. As previously stated, given that these are scriptural translations, we would expect relatively high baselines, especially since it seems to be the case that scriptural works tend to have a somewhat narrow lexical focus.

The nine different translations used are as follows: 1) Khan (Hilali-Khan); 2) Maulana (the 1951 revision of MM Ali's 1917 translation); 3) MM Ali (the 1917 translation); 4) Pickthal; 5) Rashad; 6) Sarwar; 7) Shakir 8) Sherali; 9) Yusufali. A comparison of every sample chapter or section across each author-pair was undertaken. Thus, for example, Sherali was compared with Khan, Maulana, MM Ali, Pickthal, Rashad, Sarwar, Shakir, and Yusufali. The same applied to all of the other translators. In all 22 chapters or chapter sections were thus compared, obtaining over 400 possible pairwise comparisons.

Two measurements were taken. For the first measurement translations from MM Ali and Shakir were excluded. This would establish, for each chapter or section, what the 'norm' across the group would be. For the second measurement, *only* translations from MM Ali and Shakir were included. This would establish the degree of similarity between MM Ali and Shakir and it would be immediately apparent if this were very different from the proportion of similarity for the group.

The null hypothesis is that the 2 proportions are identical. The alternative hypothesis is that the MM Ali-Shakir proportion is higher and therefore it is a one-tailed test. A two proportions Z test was used as both samples are large and the combined p is fairly close to 0.5.

To describe the findings technically, I paraphrase from correspondence and discussions I had with my statistician: the null hypothesis was rejected in all 22 chapters because the Z value was usually much higher than the critical value of 1.645 for a 1 tailed 5% significance. The actual p value in many instances was actually below 0.01 and so the null hypothesis would be rejected under much more stringent significance values than the 5% value adopted for this test.

In plain language what this means is that there is a significant difference between the MM Ali-Shakir comparison and all the other comparisons across the corpus of nine Quran translations of 22 chapters and chapter sections:

Results of lexical identity tests of sample chapters/sections

Chapter	MMAli-Shakir	Rest	Prob.
14	.92	.37	.001
17	.99	.39	.0001
19	.91	.32	.0003
22	.96	.27	.00005
27	.93	.3	.00004
28	.85	.36	.001
30	.86	.28	.0009
38	.9	.36	.001
53	.95	.34	.0001
65	.89	.41	.004
66	.93	.38	.0009
77	.94	.36	.007
79	.83	.3	.0006
81	.83	.33	.001
86	.87	.28	.0009
90	.96	.29	.0001
94	.8	.27	.01
96	.93	.32	.0007
100	.9	.33	.004
101	.95	.44	.02
107	.86	.24	.001
108	.67	.23	.04

The first column above gives the chapter number. This is followed by the density of identical, unique, lexical words found in Shakir in a given chapter which are also found in MM Ali. The third column gives the mean density of similarity across all the other translations. The final column gives the probability that the degree of similarity could have arisen by chance, *i.e.* that Shakir could have arrived at this degree of similarity across so many chapters and sections independently. What do we notice from this table? The degree of similarity between Shakir and MM Ali is so high that it can safely be described as 'overwhelmingly similar'. On average Shakir uses 89 per cent of the <u>unique</u> lexicon in each chapter and section that MM Ali does. The average across the other translators is 33 per cent. This is roughly in line with predictions: recall, that earlier Clough (2000) was quoted as saying that 40% was normal. We then find that the average of all the probabilities is below 1 per cent, i.e. that p (probability) < 0.01.

I suggest that the high degree of similarity shown here between Shakir and MM Ali is far beyond co-inci-

dence or chance. Although we expect translations of a scriptural work to contain some common material, it is clear that the Shakir translation must have arisen as a result of plagiarism.

Opinion 1: For reasons given in this section it is my professional opinion that the author known as MH Shakir has extensively plagiarised the translation of the Quran by MM Ali.

2. Word for word plagiarism

A more powerful method than the common unique lexical identity mentioned in the previous section is to search for identical strings of language across two texts. Identical strings of six words are considered to be unlikely to occur independently across two texts, unless consisting of fixed phrases, which are common in all languages. Tests I have previously carried out (see Olsson 2004) show that identical strings greater than 31 letters and spaces (excluding punctuation) are highly unlikely to occur independently.

However, as with the number of lexical words in common, as per the previous test, with scriptural text we must at least anticipate a higher than average occurrence of identical strings. Therefore, as before, we need to establish what the corpus of Quran translation excerpts reveals in terms of what is found across all the translations except MM Ali and Shakir.

As with the lexical identity tests reported in the previous section, the string tests revealed very high degrees of similarity between MM Ali and Shakir and, conversely, much lower degrees of similarity between the rest of the translations.

This is how the string test works: the first six words of a text are taken and searched for in the target text. If a match is found the count is incremented by 1, and the target string is deleted. The software then takes the next six words, searches for them, and increments and deletes, as before, if there is a match. If no match is found the software moves onto the next six words in the text. It is discrete strings that are searched for: the software does not take, for example words 1-6, 2-7, 3-9, etc., but 1-6, 7-12, 13-18, *etc*. This means that there may be many matches which are missed: the point is we are taking a sample of the available population of strings, not measuring the entire population.

In a text of, say, 100 words, if there are 16 identical discrete strings across two texts, then the similarity is calculated as 16 X 6 = 96/100 = 96% or 0.96, in other words 96% of possible discrete strings measuring from the first word, not all possible strings, or even all possible discrete strings. Below, I will describe the statistical tests used to calculate the significance of the findings.

It was noticed that for all their similarities the Shakir and MM Ali texts do have some important differences. Shakir always writes names in their Arabic original. Thus, for example, Moses is Musa, Jesus is Isa, Mary is Miriam, and so on. MM Ali, on the other hand, uses the English versions, most of which have arrived in the language through Hebrew and Greek, rather than Arabic. Shakir will also use Arabic religious terms, like – for example – 'kausur', rather than their English equivalents. Also, Shakir uses US spellings, whereas MM Ali uses UK spellings. Other differences arise when, for instance, Shakir will differ in his interpretation of an issue, event or doctrine, from that of MM Ali. We also expect to find a lower level of similarity when the chapter being tested is very short. In such instances, we find Shakir will use Arabic terms not found elsewhere in the text. It seems possible he was highly aware that identicality of text is more easily observed when chapters are short. By using Arabic words and terms he is able to reduce, at least superficially, the risk of detection.

The above reasons all contribute to some chapters exhibiting a lower level of similarity than one would expect where plagiarism is literal: however, we must not lose sight of the fact that the plagiarism *is* by and large literal – but that this is on occasion obscured by the activity of resorting, I believe somewhat cynically, to the above devices.

Genuine proportions, which is to say the proportions found across the rest of the corpus, were also estimated. For this purpose, all of the MM Ali and Shakir excerpts were excluded. For Chapter 14 this gives a total of 42 6-word strings, comprising 252 words out of a total of 5487 words, yielding what we may term a 'sample identical string density' of 252/5487 or 0.045. For this chapter, the MM Ali sample is 281 words in length and Shakir has 37 identical 6 word strings, comprising 222 words in total (almost as much as the entire rest of the sample population for this chapter). This yields the 'sample identical string density' of 222/281 = 0.79. The probability of these two works being arrived at independently is then calculated.

The corpus appears to tell us that there is a 0.045 probability of a common string occurring. The probability of obtaining 42 strings over a text of the same length is thus much more remote. SPSS[8] gives it at 0.0000000000000432. The statistics department suggests that this is right on the limits of SPSS precision, but that it is likely that the probability is of the order of 1×10^{-14} – on the assumption that the probability of a common string is 0.045. The full results for this test are given in the document 'Six String Calcs with macro.xls', the layout of which is similar to that

described for the previous Excel document. A summary of these data are given below:

Summarising the results of the sample identical string test

Chapter	MMAli-Shakir	The Rest	Probability
14	.79	.06	0.000000000000000E+00
17	.97	.05	0.000000000000000E+00
19	.77	.04	0.000000000000000E+00
22	.94	.02	0.000000000000000E+00
27	.88	.05	0.000000000000000E+00
28	.72	.07	0.000000000000000E+00
30	.9	.05	0.000000000000000E+00
38	,86	.04	0.000000000000000E+00
53	.88	.03	0.000000000000000E+00
65	.83	.05	0.000000000000000E+00
66	.9	.03	0.000000000000000E+00
77	.91	.01	0.000000000000000E+00
79	.77	.03	0.000000000000000E+00
81	.75	.02	0.000000000000000E+00
86	.74	.04	0.000000000000000E+00
90	.94	.04	0.000000000000000E+00
94	.71	.01	0.000000000000000E+00
96	.9	.05	0.000000000000000E+00
100	.77	.02	0.000000000000000E+00
101	.79	.02	0.000000000000000E+00
107	.89	.01	0.000000000000000E+00
108	.44	.02	0.000000000000000E+00

As can be seen the sample identical string density (the number of identical strings per length of text for MM Ali-Shakir) is on average almost twenty times the sample identical string density found across the rest of the corpus. This yields an extremely minute probability of the Shakir texts having been produced independently.

Opinion 2: I believe the above demonstrates absolutely overwhelming evidence in favour of extensive, almost total, plagiarism by MH Shakir. It is simply not possible to doubt that MM Ali's translation was plagiarised by Shakir.

Did Shakir copy from Maulana (i.e. 1951 revision)?

There is some evidence that Shakir copied not only from the 1917 translation, but also from its 1951 revision. Below I give some examples of this copying. It should be noted that I have not looked through all of the sample chapters for this exercise, but only a few:

In Chapter 22 Verse 38 (hereafter, for example, 22:38) MM Ali has 'Surely Allah will repel from those who believe...' whereas Shakir has 'Surely Allah defends those who believe'. This is very close to Maulana's 'Surely Allah defends (present tense) those who believe'. This

has some similarities with some of the other translations, but it is closer to Maulana than MM Ali.

In 27: 38 Shakir has '...which of you can bring to me her throne...' whereas MM Ali has 'Which of you can bring to me a throne for her...'. Again the Shakir version is closer to Maulana's version: 'Which of you can bring me her throne...'

In 28: 39 the copying from Maulana is identical for the entire verse, even punctuation and case. I reproduce the three versions here:

SHAKIR
028:039 And he was unjustly proud in the land, he and his hosts, and they deemed that they would not be brought back to Us.

MAULANA
028:039 And he was unjustly proud in the land, he and his hosts, and they deemed that they would not be brought back to Us.

MM Ali
And he was unjustly proud in the land, he and his hosts, then we cast them into the sea, and see how was the end of the unjust.

As can be seen from the last example given above, it is the MM Ali version in 28:39 which stands out as different in this group of three. Moreover, none of the other versions (Khan, Sarawar, Pickthal, *etc*.) is identical with this version.

A close investigation of the entire text for each author would doubtless yield further results, but I believe this section has shown that there is little doubt that some direct plagiarism has occurred from the Maulana text by Shakir. The last example given above, for example, represents a 24-word string: elsewhere in this report I have spoken about the statistical significance of 6-word strings. It is well observed (Olsson 2004) that with every additional word the string becomes less and less likely to be reproducible under independent conditions. By the time we reach the length of a 24-word string we are stretching credibility far beyond possibility. For a more comprehensive picture of the Maulana-Shakir progression of borrowings it would be necessary to do a separate study from the present, since the primary task of the present study was to assess the level of plagiarism from the 1917 version. However, I believe such an analysis would paint a very similar picture to that of the present study.

Did the other translators copy from MM Ali?

I took the unique lexical word matches from the first five sample chapters (Ch/s 14, 17, 19, 22, and 27). As

previously noted we regularly have borrowings by Shakir from MM Ali at around 90 per cent. However, many other borrowings are above 50 per cent, but it is not always easy to follow the provenance of these borrowings. For example, with regard to 14: 13-21, Khan matches 56 per cent with Pickthal and 54 per cent with Maulana. The Maulana-Pickthal match is 45 per cent. Do we conclude that Maulana borrowed from Pickthal? It is possible, but we note that the Maulana-MM Ali match is 69 per cent, while the MM Ali-Pickthal match is 37 per cent. It therefore seems that MM Ali may have consulted Pickthal's version when revising his translation in 1951, but Pickthal will already have consulted MM Ali's earlier translation for his own 1930 publication. In fact Pickthal and Yusufali, the two translators who were closest to MM Ali in time, and were – as far as I understand – actually acquainted with him – appear to have borrowed least from him, their matches averaging not much more than 40 per cent for unique lexical words – which is about the figure suggested by earlier researchers as being 'normal' when same-genre, same-topic texts are under consideration. If there is a name which seems to recur at above the 50% level, it is that of Khan who appears to have a close lexical relationship with MM Ali, Pickthal and Yusufali. However, I do not suggest – without further analysis – that this is statistically significant. Certainly, more research would be required to establish the exact nature of the translation history of the Quran with respect to plagiarism. Moreover, other translations than those mentioned here have also appeared in the last 80 years, and these would all need to be taken into account. From what I have seen, however, the greatest debt among all of them seems to be to MM Ali, Pickthal and Yusufali. However, it is possible that in this context the notion of plagiarism would not be entirely appropriate. Many of the translators were/are not native speakers of English and would have felt bound to consult other editions. Few were/are native speakers of Arabic – Rashad, for example, was one of the few Arabic native speakers, being an Egyptian who then spent many years in America, where he appears to have acquired a virtual native speaker competence in that language.

The extent of the borrowings from MM Ali and between other translators is, as I suggest, not likely – without further research – to prove significant, except, as noted, with regard to MH Shakir[9]. The extent to which MH Shakir has plagiarised from MM Ali and, to a lesser extent from the Maulana version, is both breathtaking and blatant. No other conclusion is possible. It was a deliberate plagiarism, which in parts he has attempted to disguise by the use of Arabic names and terminology. The use of such names gives the text a superficial air of authenticity, but I suggest their use is no more than a heartless and cynical ploy to disguise what was actually going on. The MH Shakir version cannot be called a translation at all: it is no more than a copy of MM Ali's work.

Conclusion

I simply repeat here my earlier observations, based on the textual and statistical analyses of the similarities between MM Ali and MH Shakir presented in the accompanying documents. It is concluded that MH Shakir plagiarised almost the entire translation from MM Ali (1917) and from the 1951 revision of that translation. I estimate that on average he plagiarised 90 per cent of the text from each chapter, whereas the average amount of common material between the other translators was below 40 per cent, which I believe to be normal for same-genre, same-topic works, whether translated or in the language of the original. ■

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1. Shakir gives the Arabic names for prophets *e.g.* Suleiman instead of Solomon, Isa for Jesus, Musa for Moses, whereas MM Ali/Maulana give the English versions of these and other Quranic names. This does sometimes make the Q text (*i.e.* the questioned text) appear to be less verbatim (of E/M) than it is.

2. In this report I will refer to the translations as follows: the 1917 translation by MM Ali will be termed the Earlier text (abbreviated 'E'); the 1951 revision will be referred to, as it is commonly known, the Maulana translation (abbreviated 'M'), and the Shakir translation will be referred to as Q, (*i.e.* the Questioned) text.

3. I am grateful to various websites for pointing this information out.

4. Given here in ascending numerical sequence, not in the sequence in which they were generated.

5. I should stress that I am not proposing that Mr MM Ali's idea regarding Jesus' death was 'mistaken' or 'heretical' in any way. I am not passing any opinion regarding doctrinal views. From my limited research on this subject, it appears that many leading Islamic authorities throughout history have also held this view. See www.muslim.org/bookspdf/deathj.pdf

6. We note that these earlier versions, at least with respect to Chapter 14, Verse 13, do not always differ from each other. Rodwell's translation, for example, seems to have several similarities to Sale's work.

7. Interestingly of the eight other translations which I will be comparing with that of MM Ali, seven also use either 'disbelieve' in Chapter 14, verse 13, or 'disbelievers'. Only Yusufali differs by using 'Unbelievers'.

8. A well known statistical package.

9. Although borrowings in terms of lexical words may not be significant, it appears that later translators may have benefited from MM Ali's understanding and interpretation of the Quranic verses. Pickthal's translation, particularly, has been viewed by some as a mere "revision" of MM Ali's work because of his apparent following MM Ali's understanding of Islamic principles. See for example the Rev Samuel Zwemer's references to this on the Internet. Even so, this issue requires further linguistic research to establish as full a picture as possible and should not be prejudged.

An Uninformed and Unfair Assessment:

Response to Khaleel Mohammed's Critique of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran

By Dr. Mohammed Ahmad

[This article is a reply to a critique of various English translations of the Holy Quran written by Khaleel Mohammed. Dr. Ahmad, President of the U.S.A. branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, responds, in particular, to the criticisms Mr. Khaleel Mohammed makes about Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation. In a truly objective manner, Dr. Ahmad simply provides portions of the source text to show the invalidity of Khaleel Mohammed's contentions. Not only is it plain that Khaleel Mohammed's article comprises an uninformed assessment, but, interestingly, it is quite apparent that Khaleel Mohammed is guilty of 'sectarian bais', the very charge he unfairly levels against Maulana Muhammad Ali.]

I recently came across an article in the Middle East Quarterly (spring 2005) written by Khaleel Mohammed (K.M.) entitled "Assessing English Translations of the Quran". In this article, K.M. critiques various popular English translations of the Quran, including that by Maulana Muhammad Ali. Leaving aside commenting on the many unwarranted assumptions made by K.M. in his section titled "Contextualizing the Quran", which I intend to address in a separate article, I would like to discuss here the points raised by K.M. about Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation. Interestingly, no real rebuttal is required other than quoting from the source text itself. Each objection raised by K.M. is found unwarranted when one simply follows up on his critique by checking the references he cites and re-examining the validity of the point he is trying to make. Accordingly, this response primarily comprises quotations from Maulana Muhammad Ali's English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran to show that the arguments made by K.M. are simply unsound.

K.M.'s Critique

K.M. writes the following about Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran:

> In 1917, an Ahmadi scholar, Muhammad Ali (1875-1951), who later would become the leader of the Lahori subgroup, published his translation. He constantly updated his work and had published four revisions by his death in 1951. Contemporary reviewers praised Muhammad 'Ali both for his excellent English and explanatory notes. Importantly, the Muhammad 'Ali translation became the version adopted by the Nation of Islam, both under the stewardship of Elijah Muhammad and current leader Louis Farrakhan.

> Muhammad 'Ali's biases show through, however. Consistent with his Lahori-Ahmadi creed, Muhammad 'Ali sought to eschew any reference to miracles. He sometimes departed from a faithful rendering of the original Arabic, as in the second chapter in which the Qur'an replicates the Biblical story of Moses striking the rock for water, and states "*idrib bi asaka al-hajr*," literally, "strike the rock with your staff." Muhammad 'Ali, however, changed the text to "March on to the rock with your staff," an interpretation for which the Arabic construction does not allow.

> Both Muhammad 'Ali's disbelief in the miraculous and his disdain for Judaism and Christianity undercut his work in other ways. The Qur'an makes frequent mention of *jinn* (spirits), from which the English word "genie" is derived. Muhammad 'Ali, curiously, argues that the Qur'an equates *jinn* with Jews and Christians. While the Qur'an supports the story of Jesus' virgin birth, Muhammad 'Ali denies it, providing a footnote to deny that the Qur'an was referring to anything miraculous.

> Despite its blatant sectarian warp, Muhammad 'Ali's translation — now in its seventh edition — has formed the basis for many later works, even if

the majority of both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims avoid directly acknowledging or using an Ahmadi translation. Nevertheless, among the Lahori Ahmadis, many of whom live in the United States, Muhammad 'Ali's work remains the definitive translation."

Response to K.M.'s Critique

As already mentioned, K.M.'s unwarranted charges and bias are clearly shown by simply checking the source material.

Miracles

In his critique, K.M. alleges that Muhammad Ali's bases his translation and commentary on sectarian biases. As support for this contention, he refers to 2:60 and alleges that Maulana Muhammad Ali attempts to deny "miracles" and goes so far as to depart from a faithful rendering of the original Arabic in order to do so.

As a preliminary point, it should be noted that K.M.'s lack of understanding of Islamic concepts, such as the significance of "miracles" in Islam, should not excuse him from at least conducting a preliminary assessment of the validity of his arguments. By making the argument that Maulana Muhammad Ali "denies" miracles in the Quran, it is clear that K.M. is quite unaware of established Islamic views on what miracles in fact entail and, moreover, that K.M. has not afforded Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation and commentary any serious review.

First, Maulana Muhammad Ali, primarily for persons like K.M., explains the significance of the word "miracle" as used in the Holy Quran by stating in his commentary of 2:39:

The word *ayat* (plural form), which occurs for the first time in 2:39 [And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject Our messages they are the companions of the Fire; in it they will abide] is of very frequent occurrence in the Holy Qur'an and **conveys a number of significances**. The **primary meaning** of *ayat* is *an apparent sign* or *mark* (R), by which a thing is known. Hence it comes to signify *a sign* as meaning *an indication* or *evidence* or *proof* (T, LL). In this sense it signifies what is called a *mu'jizah* or *a miracle*, instead of which the Holy Qur'an always uses the word *ayat*, thus showing that the miracles of which it speaks are not *wonders* but actual *evidence* or *proof* of the truth of a prophet. But **the most frequent use** of the word *ayat* in the Holy Qur'an is to signify *a message* or *a communication* and it is in this sense that the word is applied to a verse of the Holy Qur'an, i.e., *a collection of the words of the Holy*

Qur'an continued to its breaking, or *a portion of the Qur'an after which a suspension of the speech is approvable* (T, LL). But it **generally retains the wider significance** of *a sign* or *a mark*, or *a Divine message* or *a Divine communication*.

Second, the particular verse K.M. cites as support for his contention that Maulana Muhammad Ali denies miracles is 2:60, which reads:

2:60 And when Moses prayed for water for his people, We said: March on to the rock with thy staff. So there flowed from it twelve springs. Each tribe knew their drinking place. Eat and drink of the provisions of Allah, and act not corruptly, making mischief in the land.

One may judge for themselves whether K.M.'s argument is valid after reading Maulana Muhammad Ali's commentary on this verse:

"The words *id?rib bi'aca ka-l-hajara* **may be translated in two ways**, *strike the rock with thy staff*, or *march on* or *go forth* or *hasten, to the rock with thy staff. Darb* means *striking, smiting, marching on, going from place to place, setting forth a parable*, and carries a number of other significances. In fact, *?darb* is used to indicate all kinds of actions except a few (T). When *ar?* (*land* or *earth*) is its object, it carries the significance of *going about* or *seeking a way*. Thus *?daraba-l-ar?a* or *?daraba fi-l-ardi* both signify *he journeyed in the land* or *went forth* or *hastened in the land* (LL). The object of *id?rib* here is *al-hajar* which means *a rock* or *a mountain* to which there is no access, as explained by *Tha'labi* (LL). *'Aca* ordinarily means *staff* or *rod*, but its primary significance is *a state of combination* (T, LL), and the word is metaphorically used to speak of a community. Thus of the *Khwarij*, a Muslim sect, it is said, *shaqqu'asa-l- Muslimsna* (lit., *they broke the staff of the Muslims*) which means that *they made a schism in the state of combination and union*, or *in the community of the Muslims* (LA).

Hence the words may mean *strike the rock with thy staff*, or *march on to the mountain with thy staff* or *thy community*. The story that Moses carried a stone with him and that twelve springs flowed from it whenever, placing it in the wilderness, he struck it with his staff, has no foundation in the words of the Holy Qur'an or any saying of the Prophet. **What the words of the Qur'an signify is either that Moses was commanded by God to smite a particular rock with his staff from which water flowed forth miraculously, or to march on to a mountain from which**

springs flowed. The Bible does not contain any contemporaneous record of the events, and what it contains does not render much help. In Exod. 17:1–6 we are told that Moses went with the elders to the rock of Horeb, and on his smiting the rock with his rod water flowed out, but there is no mention of twelve springs there. But as Marah (Exod. 15:23) is now known by the name of *'uyon Mosa*, i.e., the springs of Moses (Bib.Dict., Cambridge Press, Art. "Wilderness"), it is very doubtful whether the incident referred to in Exod. 17:1–6 is correctly recorded, the more so as there is hopeless confusion about the other incidents related to have occurred at Rephidim, the scene of the smiting of the rock.

The number of springs is in accordance with the number of the Israelite tribes. **It is very probable that the reference in this verse is to the twelve wells at Elim (Exod.15:27), to which place the Israelites had gone from Marah.** Moreover, the twelve tribes could settle on twelve springs apart from each other only if the springs were situated at a distance from each other and did not flow from one source. Compare also the next verse, according to which the demand for a variety of foods is granted by pointing out the natural course of settling in a town and tilling the ground."

It can be clearly seen from Maulana Muhammad Ali's comments that he has not only discussed the different possible interpretations, including a miraculous occurrence, he has also provided valid authorities and given sound reasoning for his arguments and, finally, has left it up to the reader to make a rational decision. His discussion of linguistic nuances and supplying of authorities in support are typical of his commentary throughout. For K.M to ignore all this evidence and summarily label Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation and commentary as 'rejecting miracles' indicates a certain degree of bias and intellectual deception on his part.

Disdain for Christians and Jews

Surprisingly, seemingly out of nowhere, K.M. puts forth the allegation that Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation reveals his "disdain for Judaism and Christianity". No specific citation is provided by K.M. for one to assess the validity of this charge. In response, I quote a passage from the Introduction to Maulana's work to show his position on this issue and to reveal how meritless K.M.'s contention is:

It is sometimes asserted that the Qur'an forbids relations of friendship with the followers of other religions. How could a Book which allows a man to have as his comrade in life a woman following

another religion (5:5), say in the same breath that no friendly relations can be had with the followers of other religions? The loving relation of husband and wife is the friendliest of all relations and, when this is expressly permitted, there is not the least reason to suppose that other friendly relations are forbidden. The fact is that, wherever there is prohibition against making friends with other people, it relates only to the people who were at war with the Muslims, and this is plainly stated in the Qur'an: "Allah forbids you not respecting those who fight you not for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice. Allah forbids you only respecting those who fight you for religion, and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends of them; and whoever makes friends of them, these are the wrongdoers" (60:8, 9).

Usage and Explanation of the word Jinn in Holy Quran

Another one of K.M.'s criticism of Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation is as follows: "The Qur'an makes frequent mention of *jinn* (spirits), from which the English word "genie" is derived. Muhammad 'Ali, curiously, argues that the Qur'an equates *jinn* with Jews and Christians."

As is the case with K.M.'s critique of Maulana Muhammad Ali's interpretation of "miracles", this contention too reveals K.M.'s lack of understanding of basic Islamic concepts. In rebuttal, I simply reproduce the verses of the Quran in question and Maulana Muhammad Ali's exhaustive commentary

"Say: It has been revealed to me that a party of the jinn listened, so they said: Surely we have heard a wonderful Qur'an," (72:1)

"The existence of *jinn*, or ethereal beings like the angels (the former being the spirits of evil and the latter the spirits of good), is a question quite distinct, **but it is clear that the jinn spoken of here** did not belong to this class; see 6:128*a* for full explanation of the word. The jinn are also referred to in 46:29–31, where they are made to say: "O our people we have heard a Book revealed after Moses, verifying that which is before it". This shows that they were Jews. The jinn spoken of here are evidently Christians, as v. 3 shows (72:3: And He — exalted be the majesty of our Lord! — has not taken a consort, nor a son). The words of this verse are a clear indication that the persons spoken of here are Christians. That both Jews and Christians living outside Arabia accepted the mes-

sage of Truth brought by the Prophet is a fact. But from what is stated further on it appears that the reference here is to future Christian nations, and the words here are prophetical, speaking of some future time when Christian nations forming *the bulk of mankind* — such being one of the significances of the word *jinn* (LL) — will accept the truth of the message brought by the Prophet. At any rate the prophetical in these words, whether relating to the near or distant future, is clearly hinted at in the opening words of the chapter — *It has been revealed to me that a party of the jinn listened.*

72:6 And persons from among men used to seek refuge with persons from among the jinn, so they increased them in evil doing.

The jinn and men of this verse are undoubtedly the leaders of evil and iniquity and the weaker ones in intellect who followed them blindly; see 6:128*a*.

6:128: And on the day when He will gather them all together: O assembly of jinn, you took away a great part of men. And their friends from among men will say: Our Lord, some of us profited by others and we have reached our appointed term which Thou didst appoint for us. He will say: The Fire is your abode — you shall abide therein, except as Allah please. Surely thy Lord is Wise, Knowing.

6:129 And thus do We make some of the iniquitous to befriend others on account of what they earn.

6:130 O community of jinn and men, did there not come to you messengers from among you, relating to you My messages and warning you of the meeting of this day of yours? They will say: We bear witness against ourselves. And this world's life deceived them, and they will bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers.

6:128*a* The word *jinn* is derived from *janna*, meaning *he covered* or *concealed* or *hid* or *protected*. **The class of beings that goes under this name stands in the Holy Qur'an for** the spirits of evil or the beings that invite man to evil, as opposed to the angels, who invite him to good, both being alike invisible to the human eye. **But there is a wider use of the word in Arabic literature as well as in the Qur'an**. **One signification of the word** is explained in 72:6 and I would refer the reader to that footnote. But the word is also applied in the Qur'an to great potentates or powerful leaders who, through their importance and detachment from the masses, do not mix freely with them, so they remain distant or "hid-

den from their eyes". In Arabic literature such a use was permitted. A verse of Musa Ibn Jabir in which the word *jinn* occurs, is thus explained by LL on the authority of Tabrezi on Ham: "*And my companions, who were like the jinn, did not flee* when I came to them and informed them", where the word *jinn* is translated as meaning *companions who were like the jinn*. And Tabrezi says further that *the Arabs liken a man who is sharp and clever in affairs to a jinni and a shaitan*, and hence they say, *nafarat jinnuhu* (literally, *his jinn fled away*), meaning *he became weak and abject*. Therefore a man's companion, without whose help he would be weak and abject, was called a *jinni*

What is meant by the assembly (*ma'shar*) of *jinn* here and by *jinn* in v. 130? This is made clear if we read this verse with those following. In this verse *jinn* are spoken of as *friends of men*, and v. 129, which continues the subject, speaks of the iniquitous as befriending one another, while in v. 130 men and jinn are spoken of as a single *ma'shar* or community, for which see 130*a*. Again in v. 131, those very jinn are spoken of as being no others than dwellers of the cities which were destroyed on account of their sins, and we know that the *jinn* who dwell in cities are only *men*. The context thus makes it clear that by the *jinn* here are meant the leaders of evil, just as by *shayatin* (devils) in 2:14 are meant *leaders*, for which see 2:14*a*.

130*a* *Ma'shar* means *a community whose affair is one and the same — jama'at-un amru-hum wahid-un* — thus you say *ma'shar al-Musliimin*, which means the community of the Muslims (L). Thus by calling the jinn and men as a single community, the Holy Qur'an has made it clear that the jinn and the men spoken of here are not two different classes of beings. Again, the jinn and the men are told that messengers had come to them *from among them*, i.e. from among jinn and men. But as the only messengers spoken of in the Qur'an and other reliable histories of prophets are those who belong to mankind, it follows that the jinn spoken of here belong to mankind, and not to any other class of creation.

After reviewing these verses and footnotes it is quite apparent that Maulana Muhammad Ali has done a detailed and scholarly analysis of the word *Jinn*. He also pays specific attention to the context in which it appears and the full breadth of the various meanings that the Arabic language allows. K.M's cursory critique is not only uninformed but also displays a level of bias for it is hard to believe all this evidence could have been simply overlooked by him.

Critique regarding Birth of Jesus

K.M further remarks: "While the Qur'an supports the story of Jesus' virgin birth, [3:46] Muhammad Ali denies it, providing a footnote to deny that the Qur'an was referring to anything miraculous."

Aside from referencing the wrong chapter and verse, in fact 3: 44 and 3:47 are the verses in question, K.M. again unfairly assesses Maualana Muhammad Ali's exhaustive discussion on this matter. In rebuttal, I simply quote the verses and commentary below:

3:44 This is of the tidings of things unseen which We reveal to thee. And thou wast not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Mary in his charge, and thou wast not with them when they contended one with another.*a*

3:45 When the angels said: O Mary, surely Allah gives thee good news with a word from Him (of one) whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and the Hereafter, and of those who are drawn nigh (to Allah),

3:46 And he will speak to the people when in the cradle and when of old age, and (he will be) one of the good ones.

3:47 She said: My Lord, how can I have a son and man has not yet touched me? *a* He said: Even so; Allah creates what He pleases. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, Be, and it is.

44a The commentators think that the reference is to v. 37 when Mary as a child was dedicated to the temple and that lots were then cast as a result of which Mary was given into the charge of Zacharias. But this is quite out of place. The Holy Qur'an has described her history in the natural order. Her mother conceives her (v. 35); she is born and named (v. 36); she is dedicated to and resides in the temple under the charge of Zacharias (v. 37). Here follows the narration of Zacharias praying for a righteous son when he sees the devoutness of Mary and vv. 38–41 are, as it were, parenthetical. The story of Mary is again taken up in v. 42 where her election is spoken of, which is undoubtedly the time when she attained to the age of discretion (vv. 42, 43). V. 44 cannot therefore refer back to her history as a child in the temple. In the natural order it refers to a much later period. It will be noted that when Mary's mother prayed for her at her birth (v. 36), she also prayed for her offspring and therefore she had evidently in mind the time when Mary would be married and become a mother. V. 45 clearly gives Mary news of the birth of a child and therefore the particular incident referred to in v. 44 is

the incident of her espousal. The casting of lots and the contention as to who should have her in his charge could not mean anything but her charge as a wife. Luke 1:26, 27 makes it clear that Mary received the news of the birth of Jesus after her espousal with Joseph. In view of all these considerations, v. 44 cannot be taken but as referring to the espousal of Mary. Lots were evidently cast because as a child she had been dedicated to the temple, and it was now by a lot only that she could be given away in marriage. Mary's history as narrated in the Gospels casts no light on these circumstances and hence the verse starts with the statement that this was an announcement relating to the unseen. In fact, the whole history of Mary and Jesus was enveloped in darkness until the Holy Qur'an announced their right position as two righteous servants of God and rejected both extreme views, the Jewish view that Jesus was conceived in sin and was illegitimate and the Christian view that he was God or Son of God Who had entered Mary's womb. He was only what the Prophet described him to be in his controversy with the Najran deputation when he said to them: "Do you not know that Jesus was conceived by a woman in the manner in which all women conceive? Then she was delivered of him as women are delivered of their children? Then he was fed as children are fed. Then he ate food and drank water and answered the call of nature (as all mortals do)?" The deputation replied to all these questions in the affirmative, on which the Prophet said: "Then how can your claim (that he was God or Son of God) be true?" (IJ). The Prophet's clear argument which even the Christian deputation could not question settles the matter that Jesus was conceived in the ordinary manner and that Mary became a wife and mother in the ordinary way.

47a Only her espousal had yet been decided, and perhaps she had not been informed of this when she was given the good news of a son being born to her. Hence she says that man had not touched her yet. And she was told in reply, "Even so"; i.e., the child will be born by God bringing about the circumstances which result in the birth of a child. The words do not show that she would conceive out of the ordinary course of nature, for there is no doubt that Mary had other children, which no one supposes to have been conceived out of the ordinary course of nature. Nor do the words that follow prove anything beyond the simple fact that Mary must give birth to a son in accordance with the prophecy. The whole of creation is brought about, we are told again and again, by the Divine word *Kun* ('Be'), yet no one supposes that creation is not brought about according to the laws of nature."

Maulana Muhammad Ali, contrary to what K.M. appears to purport, provides proof from the Holy Quran and Hadith to support his view regarding the birth of Jesus. His exhaustive discussion on this matter is informative and enlightening. Furthermore, it is curious that K.M. does not make note of the same criticism in other translations that have also provided a 'natural' birth view as a possible interpretation of the verses in question.

In spite of his bias, K.M. begrudgingly admits the popularity of Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation and commentary by stating: "Despite its blatant sectarian warp, Muhammad 'Ali's translation — now in its seventh edition — has formed the basis for many later works, even if the majority of both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims avoid directly acknowledging or using an Ahmadi translation." As is shown from the portions of Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation and commentary reproduced above, K.M. needs to reassess his understanding of what "blatant sectarian warp" comprises. Far from it, Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation and commentary provides an inclusive approach of various possible interpretations on certain issues and where he shows a preference for one interpretation over another, it is fully supported by the most authoritative of sources. ■

Interest on Bank Deposits

And it's Expenditure on Propagating Islam

By Maulana Muhammad Ali

[First published in the Light on August 1, 1922, in this article Maulana Muhammad Ali explains how "interest" accrued from banking, which is generally prohibited, can be utilized for a beneficial cause. In doing so, he relates how lawfulness and unlawfulness is dependent upon one's "intentions" and how the positive results from one's action should be considered when determining the right course of action.]

Those who swallow usury cannot arise except as he arises whom the devil prostrates by (his) touch. That is because they say, trading is only like usury. And Allah has allowed trading and forbidden usury (2: 275).

O you who believe, devour not usury, doubling and redoubling, and keep your duty to Allah, that you may be successful (3:130).

And whatever you lay out at usury, so that it may increase in the property of men, it increases not with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure—these will get manifold (30:39).

While inviting the attention of my Muslim Brethren to various ways in which they can financially help the cause the propagation of Islam, I wrote:

> *Muslims who deposited money in banks for the sake of safe custody could spend the interest received thereon, on such charitable purposes as the preaching of Islam.* (Supplement to *The Light*, June 1, 1922.)

Upon this I have received from various quarters the question as to how interest, which is not lawful can be spent on such purposes. In the following lines I propose to throw more light on this point.

It must be borne in mind that there is a great difference between: (1) advancing money on interest, and (2) depositing it in a bank for the "sake of safe custody". The first is absolutely unlawful; although some of the Muslim Theologians in India have decreed its legality under the plea that India is *Dar al Harb*. Yet, I think that a thing, which is unlawful on principle, is unlawful even in *Dar al Harb*. I may at the same time add that India does not come under the definition of *Dar al Harb*.*

The second case in which money is deposited for the sake of safe custody is quite different, although the depositor may get something over and above his principal amount. The difference is quite apparent. Such a depositor does not intend to take interest, nor does he deposit money with the view of getting interest. And if there is no intention on the part of the creditor to take interest, or something over and above his original amount, but the debtor at the time of repayment gives, of his own accord, some amount in addition to the principal amount, it is quite lawful to accept this additional amount, provided it is not pre-fixed. The reports of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, (may peace and blessings of God be upon him) show that he used to pay something in addition to the original amount, to his creditor. This was according to the Quranic principle, "the reward of goodness is nothing but goodness." Neither the creditor had an idea of taking the amount, nor the debtor was bound to give it, nor was the amount pre-determined.

Now, the money, which is deposited in banks for the sake of safe custody, resembles the case cited above in one respect, and differs from it in another. The resemblance is that the depositor, who stands here for the creditor, does not deposit money with the intention of taking interest, and the difference is that the bank, which represents the debtor, binds itself to give a fixed sum. If both the creditor and the debtor did not fix any amount to be paid over and above the original deposit, the use of the additional sum (if any) would have been quite lawful. But the difference to which I have alluded above has made the additional amount unlawful for the depositor's own use, yet there is no harm or sin in spending it on a charitable purpose, especially the *propagation of Islam*, for the depositor had no intention of taking interest on

his money. However, if the depositor utilizes the interest on his own account then it cannot be said that he did not intend to take interest, as his action in utilizing the interest establishes the fact that the money was not deposited for the sake of safety, but for interest.

What distinguishes the interest on bank deposits from the interest on money advanced on usury is the depositor's intention of not taking interest. He has no intention of taking interest when depositing the money, and if when withdrawing the money he receives an additional sum, which he does not utilize it personally, he has obeyed the commandments of Allah.

Now to spend the interest which he has received without any intention on his part for charitable deeds is not against any ordinance of law (*Shariat*) because such money does not come under the real definition of *Riba* (usury) unless the depositor has the intention of taking interest. Such, intention, can only be proved by his utilizing the amount on his own personal account, otherwise such money cannot fall into the category of usury which is prohibited.

It is sometimes said that people deposit money in banks with a view to get interest. I agree that generally such is the case, but how can we attribute such a motive to a Muslim, who submits to the commandment of Allah and His Apostle, and who practically gives a proof of the fact that it was not his object to get interest. And it is a fact that there are hundreds and thousands of Muslims of this type.

Sometime ago I read that the sum representing the interest, which the Muslims refused to receive from the Post office Saving Bank amounted to about 3 *lacs***. It is evident from this that these people deposited the money only with a view of safe custody, and did not want to take interest. I think it was a mistake on their part to refuse the interest money which could then have been spent for the welfare of the Muslim Community. It was not an insignificant amount for our poor community. And this amount pertains to the Saving Bank of the Post Office only; God knows how much money of the same kind is wasted in other banks of the country. I think that just as the refusal of the depositors to accept the amount of interest absolves them of disobedience to the Command of Allah, though they deposited their money in banks, similarly its expenditure on charitable purposes is enough to establish their innocence. But in the latter case the advantage is that the community can benefit by it.

In case of their not accepting the interest money, it is also possible, that the same is utilized on some negative propaganda. Thus the wealth of the Muslims, which could have been a means to strengthen the cause of the community, is perhaps used to weaken it. In these circumstances, I hold that it is better to take and use the money in furthering the cause of Islam, than to refuse it.

There is a report from the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be upon him) which shows that when the verse, "The Romans are vanquished in a near land, and then after their defeat will gain victory" (30:2-3) was revealed, Hazrat Abu Bakr asserted that the Romans would be overcome within three years, and Ubayy Bin Khalif denied it. On this ten camels were bet on the issue. This was of course done before the verses disallowing gambling were revealed The matter was reported to the Holy Prophet who told Hazrat Abu Bakr that the time limit was incorrect, as the word *Bida* (the original Arabic word in the verse) signified from three years to ten years. Accordingly the time limit was changed into ten years and the bet was raised to one hundred camels. The prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Badar and Hazrat Abu Bakr actually took one hundred camels from Ubayy bin Khalif. There is a report in the Tirmizi to the effect that when Hazrat Abu Bakr came with these one hundred camels to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the latter told him to give them in charity. According to another report, the Holy prophet said, "This is unlawful property, give it away as alms." This shows that wealth of dubious character should be spent on charitable purposes. Of course it does not mean that men should go on acquiring wealth by illegitimate means and spend it as alms. The case was only this: the bet was made before gambling was disallowed, but the time of its receipt came after it. The Holy Prophet took the property and spent it for the welfare of the Muslims. Had he refused it, the same would have been instrumental to strengthening the cause of the unbelievers.

This shows that under such circumstances one should keep in view the furtherance of the cause of Islam. That is why I have written that in the circumstances when it is not the intention of the depositor to get interest, but to keep the money in safe custody, the interest may be accepted and spent for strengthening the cause of Islam. Otherwise the same money instead of being the means of strength to Islam will be a cause of strength to anti-Islamic entities. I have already proved that interest on bank deposits falls under the category of usury only in case the depositor intends to get interest or receives it for his own use. The report referred to above also shows that if one has received some wealth through illegitimate means and he repents for the future, it is lawful to spend that money in the way of Allah. ■

*   *Dar al Harb* literally means the abode or seat of war. The use of *dar al harb* in the sense of a place actually at war with the Muslims, is unobjectionable. But the jurists apply the word to all states and countries which are not *dar al Islam*, or under the Muslim rule, though they may not be at war with the Muslims.

** 3 *lacs* would be currently equivalent to approximately U.S. $1,600.

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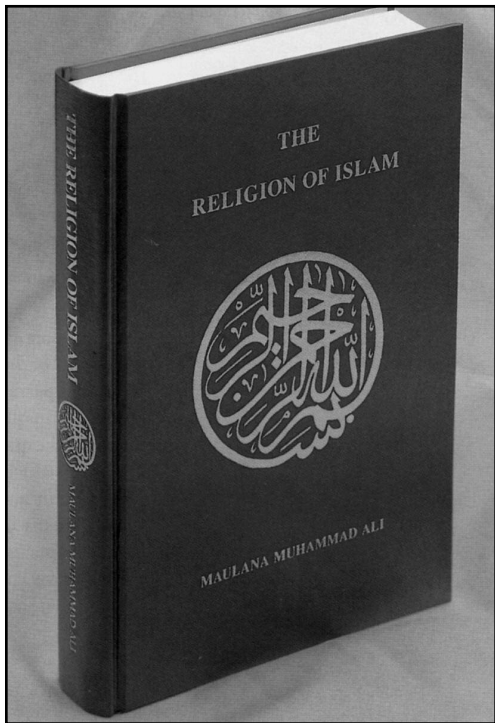
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