George Sale and His Translation of the Holy Qur'an, A Critical Analysis[1]

Dr. Atiq-ur-Rehman
Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies/ Head of Faculty Advising, FC College University, Lahore:
atiqrehman@fccollege.edu.pk

Dr. Muhammad Hammad Lakhvi
Professor & Dean Faculty of Islamic Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore:
hammad.is@pu.edu.pk

Abstract
It is a historical fact that George Sale's translation of the Holy Qur'an naming, "The Koran: Translated into English from The Original Arabic" remained a prominent English translation till the twentieth century and even after 9/11 it remains among the best-sold translations of the Quran. He was a protestant and proud to translate the Quran directly from Arabic. He claimed that the translations of his predecessors were not accurate and some of them were not familiar with Arabic like Alexander Ross who first rendered the Qur'an into the English Language. Thus, it becomes an academic need to analyze his translation, learn about its format, and identify the reasons behind the hostile views and why he considered the Qur'an as heresy. A lot has been written on Sale's translation, I will investigate the purpose of his translation and highlight some of the mistranslations, omissions, additions, format, numbering of the verses, and interpolation. Furthermore, will analyze the impact of other translations of the Qur'an on his rendition.
Keywords: *Translation, Prominent, format, discourse, interpolations, omissions, comparison, objectives*

Introduction:

Life of George Sale and his translation of Qur'an into English:

During the seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, numerous translations were rendered into different languages such as Latin, French, and English, etc. After Alexander Ross who rendered ever first English translation of the

[1] Special thanks to Dr. Robert K. Wetmore, Professor of Religious Studies at FC College University, for his valuable suggestions.

Holy Qur'an in 1649[2], George Sale became the leading translator of the Qur'an translating it directly from the Arabic text into English. Ever since 1734, his translation is considered among the leading translations of the Holy Qur'an – despite the unfortunate incident of 9/11 which degraded and spoiled the image of Muslims across the world, his translation sold out far more rapidly than any other translation. Though a lot has been written on his rendition[3], there is still room to analyze its structure, format, numbering of the verses, and thematic errors or interpolations. Further, the purpose would be to analyze the impact of Alexander Ross's Translation of the Holy Quran, etc.

George Sale (1697-1736)[4]

George Sale was prominent among Orientalists and was known for his expertise in the Arabic Language. The Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), London, had selected him as a member of their team engaged in the evaluation of the Arabic translation of the New Testament and evaluated it in light of the Christian doctrine. Consequently, he took the task of translating the Qur'an into the English Language[5] as Ross's translation was not meeting the needs of Christian readers.

He was also familiar with some of the European languages and had studied the translations of the Qur'an in English, French, and Latin languages. He was aware of the deficiencies in the existing European translations of the Qur'an in his time. Therefore, he took the responsibility of translating the Qur'an. One of his core motives was polemical as is evident from his statement mentioned at the beginning of his translation in his section titled "To the Reader" he says:

"I imagine it almost needless either to make an apology for publishing the following translation, or to go about to prove it as work of use as well as

---

[2] G.A. Aiken "Ross, Alexander. *"The Dictionary of National Biography*, *Robinson-Sheares,* edited by Sydney Lee (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909) 17/251-52.

[3] See interesting analysis: Muhammad Sultan Shah, "A Critical Analysis of Quranic Translation of George Sale", Islamic Quarterly, vol. 54 ii pp. 103-121, (2010)

- see also: https://englishqurantranslations.wordpress.com/2014/12/03/sale-george/
  - https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/01/02/complicated-history-thomas-jeffersons-koran/
  - See details related to editions: https://quran-archive.org/
  - https://quran-archive.org/explorer/george-sale

[4] Dictionary of National Biographies, 17/668; Abdur Rahim Kidwai, "Mustashreqeen Aur Angrezi Tarajim-e-Qur'an", (New Delhi: Al-balagh Publications, 2015) 14-15.

[5] Ibid.

curiosity, it is absolutely necessary to undeceive those who, from their ignorant or unfair translations which have appeared, have entertained too favorable an opinion of the original, and also to enable us effectually to expose the imposture for the Koran being so manifest a forgery."[6]

When we evaluate his statements specifically "I imagine it almost needless to make an apology for publishing translation …" gives an impression that he was a critic of his predecessors particularly 'Ross' for being apologetic and adding the sections "Caveat" and "To the Christian Reader" in his rendition.[7]

He further takes the credit for translating the Qur'an uncompromisingly as Ross (a Catholic) had done in his opinion. He has stated in his introduction entitled "To the Reader", that, "The Protestants alone are able to attack the Koran with success, and for them, I think providence has reserved the glory of its overthrow."[8] He gives suggestions to Christian missionaries on how to convert Muslims to the Christian faith[9].

Sale's translation became a huge success in the West. American editions set a record in publication history as over 160 editions of Sale's work were published, ever since the first edition published in November 1734 - a dedication to 'Lord Carteret'.[10] The copies of his translation are kept by the Libraries in the West as the translation became rapidly popular and successful.

Until the publication of Dawood and Arberry's translations, Sale's work remained the sole source of Islamic and Qur'anic knowledge for the Western world. On the other hand, English–speaking Muslims have switched over to the translations carried out by Muslim scholars.

Sources of George Sale's Translation:

The section called "Preliminary Discourse" prefaced his translation, and also contributed much to its popularity. It offers readers the opportunity to gain or renew their acquaintance with Islam. Edward Denison Ross, the editor of Sale's translation, criticized and charged Sale for unacknowledged

---

[6] Sale George, The Koran: commonly called Alkoran of Mohammed, (London: Frederick Warne and Co.) v.

[7] See the author's article to learn about the "Caveat" and the section "To the Christian Reader" and notes in Ross's Translation in Al-Qalam (V.26, issue 1, 2021, pages 274-287): http://www.alqalamjournalpu.com/index.php/Al-Qalam/article/view/2192

[8] Ibid. (Sale George, p v)

[9] Ibid, v-vi (Suggested four rules for missionaries to follow).

[10] Dictionary of National Biographies, 17/698; https://quran-archive.org/explorer/george-sale

borrowings from Marracci's Latin translation of the Qur'an, asserting this he says:

"I do not wish to imply that Sale did not know Arabic, but I do maintain that his work as it stands gives a misleading estimate of his original research and that his tribute to Marracci falls far short of his actual indebtedness."[11]

Sale's successor Rodwell also criticized and condemned him for his heavy reliance on Marracci and his "parasitic comments into the body of the text."[12]

About 86 manuscripts enlisted in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian languages were present in his library. The books he referred to were not present in his library except for Baiḍāwī. His commentaries and work were based on secondary sources and not primary sources as it is evident from the list of manuscripts in his library.[13]

When we analyzed the sources mentioned in his translation with rigor, we discovered that he had not given the details of the references taken from the Arabic commentaries whereas he had given the page number of secondary or English sources.[14] For instance, he only mentions the books or commentaries' names; "Al Beidawi or Beidawi, Jallalo'ddin, Al-Zamakh or Al Zamakhshari, etc., and does not mention the page numbers. On the other hand, he gives the page number along with the book's names of the non-Arabic books, see the examples:[15]

Vide D'Herbel p. 675, & Eutych p34.

Heidegger, Hist, Patriarchar. Vol. I, p 409.

Benjamin, Itiner p.61.

Such examples can be seen in the notes on every other page. He has given the transliteration of some Arabic terms and spelt them differently in different places. An example would be the variant spellings of Tagut and Taghut[16].

---

[11] Edward Denison Ross, An Introduction to The Koran by George Sale, (London: Frederick Warne and Co.) ix.; George Swan, Review on The Sale's Koran, Muslim World 20:2 (April 1930), 208; Shella bear, G.W. "Is Sale's Koran Reliable?" Muslim World 21 (1931), 126-142; See the analysis of Sarwar, Ghulam "A Review of the Previous Translations of the Holy Qur'an" (Pakistan: National Book Foundation, 1973) vii-xxvii.; J. M. Rodwell, "The Koran Translated from the Arabic" (Introduction by Margoliouth M.A.), London: Everyday Man's Library, 1950) xi. (A list of early English Translations is given)

[12] Rodwell, The Koran Translated from the Arabic, xvi.

[13] Edward Denison Ross, An Introduction to The Koran by George Sale, viii (The British Museum possesses a copy of this list housed in Bodleian Library)

[14] Sale, 34, 35, 383 & 583; Denison's version, 47 etc. (read the translation of the verse and their citations)

[15] Sale, The Koran, 214, 215, 273, 316, 317, 333 etc.

[16] Ibid, 37 & 108 respectively.

In notes, he mentions his own references as well which are helpful for the reader to connect and learn more deeply. In some places, he gives Arabic terms and their transliteration in the notes for example *Ḥawāriyyūn*. (حواريون)[17]
And on other places, he mentions the names as mentioned in the original text and gives transliteration like *"Jālūṭ"* (جالوت)and in notes gives its similar name in English and mentions "or Goliath".[18]
There are some mistakes in citations in both editions. The edition by Chando Classics includes an introduction entitled "To the Reader" and a Preliminary Discourse. The other edition is edited by Edward Denison Ross who included his introduction and did not include the introduction and preliminary discourse written by Sale. Denison mentioned the page number of one of the citations given in the notes "Reland p. 383[19] and in the older edition, the page number of the same citation is different Reland p 583.[20]
Though a lot of mistranslations can be observed in his rendition, it is a historical fact that Sale was among the pioneering translators of the Qur'an who are still famous for their translations and Western scholars prefer to read and refer to his translation. This claim is backed by Karen Armstrong's statement: "In 1734 George Sale had published a remarkable English translation of the Qur'an, which is still regarded as accurate, though it is a trifle dull."[21]
Sale is critical of Islam and Islamic literature such as the Hadith. His comments are strictly related to these sources and not the character of The Holy Prophet (PBUH) as his predecessors had done. Sale is critical of selected passages of the Qur'an and Hadith and cites a few inconsistencies, as per his opinion. For instance, he considers how the Hadith claims the miracles of Muhammad (PBUH) while the Qur'an is silent about it. He also argues and describes how the Qur'an was influenced by Jewish and Christian sources, without citing any authentic sources supporting his claim[22]. His opinion is based on mere speculations and assumptions.
Rod Well's comments regarding the shortcomings of George Sale's translation are clear. He criticizes Sale's claim for following the source text

[17] Ibid, 50. (Sale)
[18] Ibid, 38. (Sale)
[19] Ibid, 47 (Denison Ross's edited version)
[20] Ibid, 34-35 (older edition which includes Preliminary Discourse)
[21] Karen Armstrong, Muhammad: A Western attempt to understand Islam, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1st ed., 1991) 36.
[22] Rodwell, The Koran Translated from the Arabic, 7. (J.M. Rodwell, The Koran, *Guernsey Press*, 1992 ISBN-0 460 87134 X)

too closely and using "Latinized instead of Saxon words."[23] Therefore, he stated the reason for translating the Qur'an, he says:

"A line of argument to be adopted by a Christian missionary in dealing with a Muhammadan should be, not to attack Islam as a mass of error, but to show that it contains fragments of disjointed truth - that it is based upon Christianity and Judaism."[24]

One can clearly hear Rodwell's bias against Islam, claiming that Islamic truth is derived from Judaism and Christianity, and seeking to create doubts in the minds of the readers concerning the authenticity and truthfulness of Islam. He studied the early translations of the Qur'an and criticized that Sale had "followed Marracci too closely"[25] on one hand and on the other hand, he admired Sale for his criticism on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He states, "I agree with Sale in thinking that, how criminal soever Muhammad may have been in imposing a false religion"[26]

The last page of the introduction of Rod Well's translation contains comments regarding previous translations. George Sales is described as an "eminent scholar"[27] and the success of his translation has been praised by Palmer. He then criticizes Sale's translation for its language styles and incorporation of a large amount of exegetical material and states that the translation can barely be regarded as a fair representation of the Qur'an.

In the preface of his translation, Sale states the following:

"It is necessary to enlighten those who had been deceived by the Qur'an, those who have positive towards it because of incorrect translations. We must be educated and aware enough to be able to discover the lies around it."[28]

This statement is in complete conjunction with the other orientalists' approach towards the Qur'an. According to them, they intended to correct the misunderstanding and perplexities that surrounded Christianity because of Islam. They also distorted the translation of the Qur'an to create confusion about it and refute it so that their community might not be inclined towards Islam.

George Sale's Translation, its format and components:

- To the reader

[23] Ibid, 17. (Rodwell)
[24] Ibid, 14. (Rodwell)
[25] Ibid, 17. (Rodwell)
[26] Ibid, 16. (Rodwell)
[27] Ibid, ixxix. (Rodwell)
[28] Sale, The Koran, xvi.

- Contents

A Table of the eight Sections of the Preliminary Discourse is also given.
The Table of the Chapters of the Koran is given.

- The Preliminary Discourse comprises 150 pages, the longest introductory discourse of other translations of the Qur'an.
- The Koran: translation starts, and new page numbering is given. Pages 1- 460
- Explanatory notes have been given in the footnotes and for these footnotes, their brief and incomplete citations are also given, therefore, it is very difficult to trace and check them from the cited reference books.
- A general index and some notes are also given at the end of the translation.
- Verse numbers are not given. But in Densen's version, numbering is given to indicate the range of verses which is not accurate and some mistakes can easily be identified.

After the comparison of the first English translations of the Quran by Ross and Sale, one can notice certain similarities among their renderings. The format of Sale's translation is similar to predecessors, specifically Alexander Ross. He had added the longest preliminary discourse and footnotes like his predecessors in English as well as in other European languages like Ross and Marracci. However, he did not admire them for their work as they deserved and criticized their translations for being faulty renderings. One of his objectives was to criticize and defame the Qur'an and Islam by all means. On one hand, he criticized predecessors' faulty and flawed translations and considered other translations faulty and inaccurate as he mentioned the objectives of his translation in his discourse. Ironically, Sale himself, although he knew Arabic as the SL (source language),[29] committed equally serious mistakes and mistranslations!

Sale made clear his adherence to the protestants' cause and how can he be "less critical" and also be "hostile to it"? thus he stated:

"The Protestants alone are able to attack the Koran with success, and for them, I think providence has reserved the glory of its overthrow."[30]

Succeeding generations of translators depended on Sale's translation. He set a trend of refutation and polemic against the Qur'an which influenced the

[29] Sale, The Koran, v-x. (Introduction by Denison Ross)
[30] Ibid.

translators till modern times Karen Armstrong mentioned that Sale's translation is still regarded as accurate though it is a trifle and dull.[31]

Although Sale's use of English is comparatively simple, the complexity of the format and its unclear notes make it difficult to understand. Typically, the pattern of SL language has not been followed into TL (Target Language), and Arabic verse numbers were not given which had made the translation very complex and difficult to tally and understand. It almost becomes a challenge for readers to find translations of the Arabic verses/text. Omissions and deletions are more frequent in translation which causes confusion and misunderstanding for readers. The middle language was used, and Sale was not able to set them apart from biblical influence. He intended to defend Christianity and prohibit its followers from inclining towards Islamic civilization. He criticized the Qur'an for defaming Islam and Muslims to confuse the readers and create doubts about the theology so that the adherents of Islam get confused and unsecured about their religion. Furthermore, he refuted the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and questioned the authenticity of the Qur'an and Hadith in his discourse.

The 18th and mid-19th centuries may be named as the developmental phases in the English translation of The Qur'an. Rodwell and Palmer were the leading translators during this time, both of whom had their own style and features of translation, and both of whom had mixed feelings about Sale's rendering.

Some examples of distorted translations are as follows:

There are certain words or phrases that appear in Qur'an-e-Karim more frequently, for instance, يَاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ (*Yā Ayyūhā al-nās*) and يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا (*Yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū*) are rendered differently by different translators. For effective comparison, some examples of distorted translation are given below in comparison with other translators where necessary.

"*Yā Ayyūhā al-nās*" and "*Yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū*":

Among the phrasal clauses or verbs "*Yā Ayyūhā al-nās*!"[32] and "*Yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū*"[33] are the phrases used most in the Qur'an and "Orientalist refer to classify between the Makkan and Madni suras. In their opinion wherever the phrase "*Yā Ayyūhā al-nās*!" appears, they classify it as Makkan surahs, and on the contrary, wherever the phrase "*Yā ayyuhā alladhīna aāmanū*!" appears, they consider it as a Madani surah.

---

[31] Karen, Muhammad: A Western attempt to understand Islam, 36.
[32] Al Qur'an 2: 21; 4:1, 22:1; 31:23.
[33] Ibid 2:104, 178

George Sale had translated these phrases as "O men of Mecca."[34] Here the words "of Mecca" (preposition and proper noun) are unnecessary additions that distort the sense of the original text. These words are put in by Western writers to show the distinction between Meccan chapters of the Qur'an from those supposedly revealed at Medina. They are of the view that where the words "O men" occur in the Qur'an the address is to the men of Mecca, and where the words "O ye who believe!" occur the address is to the believers of Medina[35].

This is an incorrect interpretation because this chapter (Surah number 2) was revealed at Medina. Sale says, "Partly at Mecca and partly at Medina," but that is not so. If it truly were the case, Sale ought to prove this claim.

The point is put beyond dispute because Chapter 4 of the holy Qur'an, which is revealed entirely at Medina, as admitted by Sale himself, begins with this very phrase:

"*Yāā Ayyūhā al-nās*!" ("O men!")[36] And even Sale has not tried to translate it as "O men of Mecca." There are many places where the word "*nās"* ("men") is translated by Sale himself as men and not "men of Mecca"; and wherever he does put in his addition of the word "of Mecca" it is with the positive intention of distorting the sense and creating confusion among the readers.

When we see the predecessor and successor of George Sale, we find that Ross had rendered above mentioned phrasal words as "O! Ye People"[37] and "O! Ye that believe"[38] respectively. He also rendered the same phrases differently whereas he translated verse number 104 of Surah Baqrah "*Yā ayyuhā alladhīna aāmanū*!" as "O! Ye that fear God"[39] and also "O People!"[40] in verse number 21 of the same Surah. This shows that he found it challenging to find the most appropriate equivalents of these phrases in the English language.

---

[34] Sale, The Koran" with an introduction by Sir Edward Denison Ross, 4 (see the translation of verse 21 of Surah al-Baqarah)

[35] See for details; *Encyclopedia of Islam,* article: "Koran" (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers) v.

[36] Sale, The Koran, 71 (see the translation of the first verse of Surah An-Nisa)

[37] Ross, An Introduction to The Koran by George Sale, 46 (see 4:1) and page 203 (see 22:1)

[38] Ibid, 16 (see 2:178).

[39] Ibid, 10. (Ross)

[40] Ibid, 3. (Ross)

In comparison to other orientalists such as Rodwell, Sale attempted in the same way and translated these phrases as "O! Men"[41] ; "O! Men of Mecca"[42] and "O! Ye who Believe"[43]. Likewise, N.J David rendered it as "You People"[44] and "O! Believers"[45], while the Arberry translated "nas" as "Mankind"[46] and "*Yā Ayyūhā al-nās*" as "O! believers" in verse 21 of Surah Baqrah.[47]

George Sale made the same kind of mistakes and interpolations as his predecessors and in some places, more serious mistakes had been made in finding equivalents. For instance, he rendered "*Fakhallū sabīlahum*" (فَخَلُّوْا سَبِيْلَهُمْ) as "***dismiss them freely"*** and made an idiomatic mistake whereas its meanings are "leave their way". He had also written the pronoun for God with the small letter "him" and used archaic language.[48]

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۢ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اَلَّا نَعْبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُوْلُوا اشْهَدُوْا بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ [49]ــ

"Say, O ye **who have received the scripture**, come to a **just determination** between us and you, that **we worship not any except God** and associate no creature with him; and that the one of us take not the other for lords **beside God.** But if they turn back, say, Bear witness that **we are true believers."** [50]

George Sale followed Ross's pattern in rendering some of the words of this verse such as "**believe in God**." [51] He followed Ross in rendering certain phrases and made some other mistakes, for instance, "*Kalimatin sawā'im baynanā wa baynakum*" (كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۢ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ) has rendered as "Just determination between us and you" and made a thematic mistake and the noun "*Kalimatin*" is missing in the translation, whereas the term determination is not equivalent. In the last part of the verse "true" is an

---

[41] Rodwell, The Koran Translated from the Arabic (London: Everyman's Library, 1992) 410 (see the translation of Surah an-Nisa verse number one)

[42] Ibid, 33 (see translation of verse 21 of Surah al-Baqarah).

[43] Ibid, 349. (See verse 104 of Surah al-Baqarah)

[44] N.J. Dawood, The Koran (London: Penguin Books, revised edition 2006) 60 (see verse 1 of Surah an-Nisa); p. 12 (2:21); p. 20 (O! Believers see 2:104)

[45] Ibid, 20 (see 2:104).

[46] Arthur John Arberry, The Koran: Interpreted (UK: Oxford University Press, 1988) 72. (A. J. Arberry, The Koran, *Oxford University Press,* 1983 ISBN-0 19 281628 4)

[47] Arberry, The Koran: Interpreted, 13.

[48] Al Qur'an 5:5.

[49] Al-Qur'an 3: 64.

[50] Sale, The Koran, 53 (Quran 3:64)

[51] Ross, An Introduction to The Koran by George Sale, 35.

excessive word the noun "believer" is usually considered equivalent to "Momin" and not "Muslim."

When we compare Sale with the work of other translators such as Rodwell, we find that his rendering is closer to the original text "قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ" than that of Sale's rendering. For comparison, the translation of the same verse has been given below:

"Say: **O people of the Book** come ye **to a just judgment** between us and you—That we worship **not aught but God,** and that we join no other god with Him, and that the one of us take not the other for lords, **beside God**. Then if they turn their backs, Say: Bear ye witness that we are Muslims."[52]

It can be observed that Rodwell brought the same term for "*Muslimūn*" and the rest of his rendering is comparatively better than that of his predecessors.

وَاِنْ جَنَحُوْا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَي اللهِ ۭاِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ[53]ــــ

The sale has rendered it as follows:

"And if they incline unto peace, do thou also incline thereto; and put thy confidence in God, for it is he who hearth and knoweth."[54]

Every translator was successful in rendering "*In janaḥū lissalmi*" (اِنْ جَنَحُوْا لِلسَّلْمِ) closer to the original text but failed to understand the importance of "*Innah huwa*" (اِنَّهٗ هُوَ). The double pronouns for one person are placed to emphasize the intended meaning and show the importance of the message of the respective sentence or statement and we find such a pattern in the Qur'an as well, but the Western translators did not realize the importance of it and rendered the Qur'anic verses according to the needs and pattern of the target language.

ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ[55]ــــ17

Sale's rendering:

---

[52] Rodwell, The Koran Translated from the Arabic, 392 (Quran 3:64)

[53] Al-Qur'an 8:61.

[54] Sale, The Koran, 175.

(Rodwell's rendering is as follows:

"And if they lean to peace, lean thou also to it; and put thy trust in God: for He is the Hearing, the Knowing."

Arberry's rendering:

"and if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it; and put thy trust in God; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing."

Dawood's rendering:

"if incline to peace, make peace with them, and put your trust in God. It is surely He who hears all and knows all.")

[55] Al-Quran 90:17.

"Whoso doth this, and is one of those who believe, and recommend perseverance unto each other, and recommend mercy unto each other"[56]

Although Sale's translation technique seems to have rendered the text communicatively in some places according to current translation methodology, understanding depends on reading the verses in sequence. The proper noun "*Al-marḥamah*" (الْمَرْحَمَةِ) has been translated as "mercy" by Sale and Davood and "merciful" by Arberry, whereas Ross's rendered is concerned, is incorrect, as he rendered it as "charity" which is not equivalent to the original text. But Rodwell succeeded in bringing a closer equivalent by translating it as "compassion". Modern translators also rendered it as "compassion" as Karen Armstrong referred to it in her letter to Pakistan.[57]

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ فَرِيْقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيْقٌ فِي السَّعِيْرِ[58]

Sale's rendering:

"Thus, have we revealed unto thee an Arabic Koran, that though mayest warn the metropolis of Mecca and the Arabs who dwell round about it; and mayest threaten them with the day of the general assembly, of which there is no doubt: one part shall then be placed in paradise and another part in hell."[59]

He used the closer equivalents for the verb and nouns in the first part of the verse "*Aawḥáynā iláyka Qurānan 'arabīyan*" (اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا) as they have rendered it as "We have revealed", "Arabic Koran" though they have spelled Qur'an with "K" and not with "Q" which is incorrect according to the equivalent letters of the source language.

The use of metaphor[60] along with other rhetorical usages, is one of the distinctive feature and quality of the Qur'anic text. For reference, read the following verse:

---

[56] Ross, An Introduction to The Koran by George Sale, 582.

- Two different copies of George Sale's translation are referred to in this article. For Preliminary Discourse and some errors referred to "The Chandos Classic" Dalziel Brothers, Camden Press N.W. and page numbers given accordingly, whereas, for translation of the verses referred to The Koran, Denison Ross, Edward, An Introduction to The Koran, by George Sale, Ed. Frederick Warne and Co. Ltd. And New York and page numbers are given accordingly.

[57] Kren Armstrong, A Letter to Pakistan (UK: Oxford University Press, 2011) 5-10.

[58] Al-Quran 42:7.

[59] Sale, The Koran, 468-469.

[60] Metaphor is a word or phrase used to describe something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make

وَتَرَى الْاَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَاِذَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَاَنْۢبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۢ بَهِيْجٍ [61]

Sale's rendering:

"Thou seest the earth sometimes, dried up and barren: but when We sent down rain thereon, it is put in motion, and swelleth, and produceth every kind of luxuriant vegetables"[62]

He rendered most of the metaphorical words literally and did not follow the true sense or intentions of the verse. He seemed to be unfamiliar with the importance of metaphors or allegories in the source language. Therefore, he ignored them and rendered these above-mentioned verses literally which somehow can be categorized as nearly free translation.

The literal translation cannot convey the exact meaning of the verse to the reader. To show how the earth (stirred and swells) these features for animals, it would be better to use the communicative translation methodology or paraphrasing to convey the intended meanings, the features, and the context of the verses having such metaphorical words in the source language. It does not convey the true sense of the verse.

He found that the appropriate way to translate the metaphor is to explain or paraphrase the translation to make it more comprehensible in the target language. Such kind of mistakes can be observed in other Western translators too.

Now consider this example of metonymy from the Holy Qur'an. See Verse 6 of Surah number 6 (Al-Anam),

The sale had rendered it as "we sent the heaven to rain"[63] which is not closer equivalent to the original text and Rodwell rendered it in nearly literal meaning and somewhat succeeded in translating its communicative sense; "and we sent down the very heavens upon them in copious rains,"[64], see Arberry's rendering of this part of the verse; "...and how we loosed heaven upon them in torrents..."[65] he has adopted a merely literal translation to convey the Verse but fails to express the metonymic phrase (وَاَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَآءَ), which does not mean (loosed heaven) as he translated it.

---

the description more powerful, (Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary (UK: Oxford University Press, 2010) 965.

[61] Al-Qur'an 22:5.

[62] Sale, The Koran, 327.

[63] Ibid, 118.

[64] Rodwell, The Koran Translated from the Arabic, 317.

[65] Arberry, The Koran: Interpreted, 121.

Whereas, N.J. Dawood has succeeded in conveying the intended meaning of the clause "*Wā arsalnā assamā'a 'alayhim mmidrāran*" as he has rendered it as "sent down for them abundant water from the sky"[66].

We observe such mistranslations in many places in the translations of the Qur'an by orientalists, specifically seen in Sale's translation. Such as in verse 82 of Surah Yusuf. In this verse, there is a deletion of the word (people). The complete sentence can be formed as (- ask the people in the town), but the word people is deleted, as its deletion will not affect or change the meaning of the verse. However, in English, it is better to retrieve the deleted word to understand the deep meaning of the verse.

The words "يوم التغابن" in Surah "التغابن" (*Al-taghābun*) the surah 64 and this annexed composition is mentioned in verse 9, Ross rendered it as the "day of Deceit"[67] and the Palmer has also rendered it as if it meant "deception" while these two words (annexed composition) means the "Dooms Day" or the day of Loss and gain". Sale rendered it as "the day of mutual deceit"[68] and further explained it in the notes that "when the blessed will deceive the damned…and the contrariwise." Rodwell has also followed him in rendering it and even has written it with capital letters "the day of MUTUAL DECEIT" to highlight it for the reader to create delusion in rendering it. This trend continued among other Orientalists too and they have been making such mistakes frequently.

[69] قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوْا لَهٗ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَبْصِرْ بِهٖ وَاَسْمِعْ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا يُشْرِكُ فِيْ حُكْمِهٖٓ اَحَدًا

and Sale rendered it as "do thou make him to see and to hear."[70] Arberry has rendered it as "How well He sees! How well He hears!"[71]. Ross and other translators have rendered it somewhat near to original text and Arberry's rendering seems even closer to the original text whereas, Sale has made an awful mistake in rendering it.

Palmer translated the word (السَّمَآءَ) in the verse 65 of Surah 22:

---

[66] N.J. Dawood, The Koran, 93. (N. J. Dawood, The Koran, *Penguin books*, 2006. ISBN-13: 978-0-140-44920-4)

[67] Ross, 352. (Ross has spelt deceit as "Deceipt" and it is due to the usage of old/middle language)

[68] Sale, The Koran, 538.

[69] Al-Qur'an 18:26.

[70] Sale, The Koran, 288.

[71] Arberry, The Koran: Interpreted, 291.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِىْ فِى الْبَحْرِ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۗوَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَآءَ اَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِهٖ ۗاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ)[72]

He translated the noun "As-sama" as 'rain' while it means 'the Heavens' and not the rain. It is contextually closer to the original text.

Sale has rendered it as "and made the night a garment to cover you;"[73] He has made mistakes in rendering the Names of Surahs or some have spelled them differently. There are some mistakes in rendering idiomatic phrases/expressions.

He focused largely on the target language (English) and in some places ignored the source text altogether. Furthermore, the attitude and approach of the translators were influenced by their respective geo-political contexts and by their own backgrounds.

Omissions and additions can be observed. Verse numbers are not given, or a range is indicated which proves to be faulty when the reader tallies them with the numbering of the original text.

He had made mistakes in rendering parts of speech, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, and specific Arabic words or letters.

The translator's approach and capability are the key to the authenticity of the translation and their religious affiliation as we know most of the translators of the Holy Qur'an are Christian Priests. Mastery of the SL and TL and awareness of the culture and history of SL.

He Emphasis on the composition of the Qur'an that was composed by Muhammad.

They claim that the Qur'an is based on the Bible and that its historical events are taken from the Bible.

Most of the translators depend on the translations of their predecessors and have not followed the Arabic text even though they claim to do so.

We may conclude our discussion that although Sale claims that he has made "splendid efforts" in understanding Islam through his translation of the Qur'an. The analysis of his and others' renderings exposes common problems that undermine such claims. These, no doubt set the early trends of methodologies used in the translation process and revealed underlying bias against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

We can see examples of this bias in words or phrases such as; "perhaps", "might be", "seems", or "ought to" clearly indicate their intentions to create doubts and confusion in the minds of the reader.

---

[72] Al-Qur'an 22:65

[73] Sale, The Koran, 567.

Another aspect of the Qur'an that Orientalists unfairly consider is the seven styles of Qiraat (recitation) of the Qur'an as the different versions of the Bible as George Sale said;

"Having mentioned the different editions of Qur'an it may not be a miss here to acquaint the reader that there are seven principles editions. If I may so call them as ancient copies of the book two of which were published and used at Madinah, a third at Makkah, a fourth at Kufa, a fifth at Basra, a sixth at Syria, and a seventh called the common or vulgar editions".[74]

Focus on the words mentioned in the statement above; "seven editions", "published", and "vulgar edition" is sufficient proof of the hostility, enmity, ignorance, and short-sightedness of the translators.

Therefore, it is evident that the primary objective of Sale and other orientalist or Western translators was to impart doubts among the readers of their translations and to defame Islam and Muslims. To accomplish this goal, they did a translation of the Qur'an as it is the Holy Book on which the whole of Islam lays down its foundation. They translated Islamic heritage and in particular the Holy Qur'an to manipulate the message mentioned in verses.

Sale analyzed and deconstructed the Islamic teachings by manipulating them with his translation to give different meanings rather than the original and real meaning to mislead the reader.

Thomas Carlyle admitted to this antagonism and hostility against Islam in his foreword in the translation of the topically selected verse of the Qur'an entitled, "What an Unlettered Arab Uttered in his Trances" by Bennett and Brown, Thomas admits:

"The lies which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only… it is really time to dismiss all that."[75]

He seems to condemn the Western approach to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and considers it a disgrace to their intellect to deny the contribution of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the betterment of mankind - at least for the betterment of the Arabs. Thomas was among the few orientalists who brought the Muslim perspective into discussions and challenged fellow orientalists and translators.

Sale's Quran translation is free and exegetical, omitting verse numbers, overlooking Arabic language features, and ignoring Jumla Ismiyya and fi'liyya (جمله الاسميه والفعلية) He sometimes includes Arabic expressions in his

[74] Ibid.

[75] Bennett & Brown, What an unlettered Arab uttered in his trances, (India: Owais and Bros) 4.

notes that are not in the Quran, leading to mistranslations. Which distorted the message and caused misunderstanding.

Keeping the above-mentioned discussion in view, it can be concluded that he had made serious mistakes in rendering the Holy Qur'an, some of the highlights are given below:

In some places, repetition of the words can be observed and he has used Biblical Terms and Ancient Words too, as mentioned before.

He seemed to mislead the reader as he had based his discourse and notes on secondary sources as he admitted in the introduction[76]. He mentioned false and unauthentic historical events and ignored the moral and ethical teachings of the Qur'an.

He modulated his translation to create more confusion and mislead the reader. That is why, he added the words "To the Reader" and wrote a long preliminary discourse.

Conclusion:

It is evident that his translation is still among the leading renditions and appropriate his efforts to render the Holy Quran and pave the way for other orientalists and Muslim scholars to translate the Qur'an.

After comparison, it can be said that George could not have kept his translation free from errors and was influenced by the approach of Ross and other European scholars who have had hostile and polemic styles of translation.

In fact, for the next four centuries whoever rendered the Qur'an into English followed his format as almost everyone had given the introduction to the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and some of them had given the brief history of Islam following the example of Ross and Sale's format. The verse numbers are not given by Sale in following Ross's pattern. Sale's style, approach, and methodology are being followed in certain ways though in the twentieth century, this trend and format are getting changed.

Like Sale, every orientalist or Western scholar followed the same hostile approach while translating the Qur'an and undermining the truth revealed in the Qur'an. Though they claim to bridge the communities, it is difficult to find any suggestions in their renderings or notes. On the contrary, a bundle of polemical notes can be traced on every other page of their translation or notes if given.[77]

[76] Sale, The Koran, ix.

[77] See for interesting discussion around Orientalist's approach: Armstrong Karen, "Muhammad: A Western Attempt to understand Islam, 1-44.; Arthur John Arberry, Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars, UK: Curzon Press, 1960) 233-256.

The objectives mentioned by translators are the same, words or style could be different. Some of them have learned Arabic[78] but not have given due importance to it and followed their predecessors and secondary sources. Sale and his successors only have referred to Arabic text or language where it suits their objective or point of view.

Therefore, researchers need to have a deep analysis of Sale's preliminary discourse and rendering keeping the Western mind, their context, and objectives in view. It will help readers across the world to better understand the Qur'an and its teaching and bridge the gaps to create a peaceful and positive academic environment.

[78] Gradually Orientalists have realized the importance of Arabic for Biblical as well as Qur'anic studies as Simon Ockley admitted this fact:

"Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac were certainly essential to biblical exegesis; but whereas these were dead languages, Arabic was still a living tongue and assisted us to understand rare Hebrew words otherwise merely of conjectural meaning more over many of the Jewish commentators in the Middle Ages had written in Arabic.

Another use of this language is that we may read the Koran. It is by no means unsuitable that the theologian should read this book, which has subjugated so large a portion of the globe; his duty to know not only the things that are true but the false also, in order that he may be able to refute and contradict them." (See details: "Oriental Essays", 14.)

.