

such, those by the most knowledgeable of the *ṣaḥābah* and *tābi'ūn* as quoted by Ibn Kathir.¹

English word order was chosen to conform more closely with that of the Arabic text. This facilitates comparison for the student, and the reader is brought somewhat closer to the feel of the original expression. Transliterated Arabic terms have been avoided wherever an English definition could serve, keeping exceptions to a minimum. Necessary clarifications or additions are given in footnotes. Care has also been taken to avoid the definitions of modern Arabic dictionaries, which are often variant with the language of the Qur'ān and reflect the degree of change which has crept into the understanding of certain concepts with the passing of time. Instead, classical definitions were applied.

In compliance with standard regulations, words not derived from the Arabic text but added for the purpose of clarification or the completion of English meaning have been enclosed in brackets. The exception is in regard to the frequently occurring expressions of "association of another with Allāh" (*shirk*) and "fearing Allāh" (*taqwā*), where the divine name, although not always included in the Arabic text, is understood to be an integral part of that concept. Throughout this work there is an endeavor to be consistent in the translation of oft-repeated words and phrases from the text. There are, however, specific instances where some adjustment is required for accuracy, necessitating exceptions to the rule.

¹The *ṣaḥābah* (companions) were those most familiar with the time, place and circumstances of each revelation due to their close contact with the Prophet (ﷺ) and their eagerness to understand its every aspect. At the same time, acute awareness of their accountability before Allāh prevented them from answering any questions or making assertions about that of which they were not completely certain.

The *tābi'ūn* (followers) were students of the *ṣaḥābah* who mentioned the sources for whatever commentaries they offered. Of their statements only those based upon knowledge taken from the *ṣaḥābah* and upon the literal and logical meanings understood in the Arabic language have been accepted. Explanations from other sources, such as Jewish and Christian narratives, are disregarded as unreliable.

It is to be noted that Arabic is a richer language than most. One well versed therein automatically perceives the multiple shades of meaning contained in particular words and phrases. Both early and later scholars emphasized some aspects more than others in their commentaries according to their own understanding, especially in the absence of a relevant and authentic prophetic *ḥadīth*. Any translation, which can reflect but one emphasis, must necessarily appear as a severe limitation. Although additions in brackets and explanatory footnotes are a partial remedy, it remains to be said that nothing can take the place of an in-depth study through the Arabic medium itself.

Arabic is richer not only in vocabulary but also in grammatical possibilities. Again, English is hardly comparable in this respect. While precise and logical, Arabic grammar is free of many limitations found in that of other languages, allowing for much wider expression. For this reason, undoubtedly, it was the most suitable of human tongues for conveyance of the Creator's message to mankind. Due to the flexibility of Arabic tenses, the Qur'ān is unique in its graphic portrayal of occurrences in the Hereafter. Through use of the past tense the feeling is given that one is already there, having experienced what is described. Much of this is lost in English, where such descriptions are confined to "will" of the future.

Those unfamiliar with Qur'ānic style might question the shifting of pronouns in many verses, which is again, alien to English. This cannot be eliminated in translation, however, without loss to intended meanings. Far from showing inconsistency, such variations are not only correct in the original language but are the source of its beauty and precision, which unfortunately cannot be captured in another tongue. It must be remembered that the Arabic Qur'ān, being the words of Allāh, the Exalted, far surpasses any human endeavor in linguistic excellence and is indeed the standard of perfection for all Arabic expression.

As for the names and attributes of Allāh, their translation is surely an impossibility, for even in Arabic they cannot represent