

NUQTAH Journal of Theological Studies

Editor: Dr. Shumaila Majeed

(Bi-Annually)

Languages: Urdu, Arabic and English

pISSN: 2790-5330 eISSN: 2790-5349

<https://nuqtahtjts.com/index.php/njts>

Published By:

Resurgence Academic and Research
Institute, Sialkot (51310), Pakistan.

Email: editor@nuqtahtjts.com

Alexander Ross's Translation of the Holy Quran and Analysis of the References, Terms, and Errors in his Rendition

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Published online: 30th June 2023



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ABSTRACT

As we know, in the process of translation the terms play a very vital role in rendition and many times it becomes challenging to find the appropriate equivalent in the target language. In this article, we will analyze the translation of the terms by Alexander Ross in his rendition. I will evaluate how much a process of translation is affected by the knowledge and context of the translator. It becomes even more important when any rendering of the Holy Qur'an takes place from a language other than Arabic as Ross had translated the Holy Qur'an from the French language, thus he had made many mistakes in his translation, almost on every page of his rendition. Therefore, the objective is to examine his rendition for errors and mistranslations. I will further investigate the references given by Ross to validate the authenticity of his translation of the Qur'an and highlight the omissions, and additions with examples.

Keywords: Translation, Terms, References, validation, TL (Target Language) and SL Source Language), omissions, and additions in translation, spellings etc.

Introduction and Historical Background:

Alexander Ross² lived in the age of Renaissance in Europe which influenced all aspects of their lives.

Religious scholars were struggling to counter the ideas received from other parts of the world specifically from the Ottoman Empire or Muslims. It was a time when English was also evolving from classical to modern.³ It had also posed a challenge to Ross in rendering the Holy Qur'an. To draw a comprehensive picture of his life, time, and efforts, we need to have an overview of the history of England between the 16 and 17 centuries, when the civil wars occurred in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Church and monarch were confronting each other and fighting the battle of survival and sovereignty. Meanwhile, the Puritan movement emerged in England to reform the Church of England more

closely to the protestant church of Europe. It was a time when a growing body of English Calvinists⁴ drew strength from communication with Geneva.⁵ On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire was a haven for all the communities therefore, suppressed Europeans were fleeing there as they were free to perform their rituals and have a prosperous life. This atmosphere compelled Ross to do the translation to help his people and explore the reason why Christians and other communities were inclining toward Muslims and why Turks were leading the world. For this reason, it was important for them to learn about the derived principles of success from the Qur'an in their opinion. Therefore, Ross took the responsibility to translate it from the French Translation of the Qur'an. Though he faced opposition amongst his community for a variety of reasons, he was able to do the translation of the Holy Qur'an to serve his community⁶. He was a largely forgotten figure⁷, but his translation of the Holy Qur'an made him familiar to the scholars. His other works for the betterment of the Christian community are evidence of his loyalty and faithfulness to his community.

Without any hesitation, it can be said that his persistence and constant efforts made him able to do this historical task and stand out first among English translators of the Quran. He opened the door for other orientalist to do the translation of the Holy Qur'an into English. Even in response to this, Muslim scholars did the English translation of the Qur'an that continues till modern times.

The seventeenth century was considered the early modern period of the English Language; thus, he blended and combined the classical style with the emerging modern style of the English Language. Readers can also find some archaic words in his translation. It seems that he ignored the style of SL which was French or Arabic and focused only on TL and made many mistakes.

When we go through the literature, we find out that little is written about Ross and most researchers focused his efforts on a rendition of the Qur'an and his notes or little about the references. Overall, they commented on the thematic errors. We will dig further into his rendition, its style, language, omissions, mistranslations, and some reasons for errors in his rendition of the Qur'an.

Ross’s Translation of the Quran, common errors its style, language, and difference in spellings:

Overall, he used modern language along with the archaic language wherever necessary such as “*thou, thy, didst, destroyeth, publique, etc.*”⁸ We find such examples in every other page of his translation. He had used the punctuations (comma, semicolon, colon, full-stop, brackets, parenthesis, asterisk, etc.) according to the TL and ignored the signs of source language like “sign of Ayat and its number”. It gives the impression that he had not even tried to learn the Arabic language or its signs, diacritical marks, or “*Rumūzay Auqāf*” and only relied on English punctuations according to his understanding of the source text. He also was not keen to get familiar with the signs of “*Ruku*” and “*sajdah*” which is why he had not indicated the “*Āyat Sajdah*” (the verse of prostration)⁹ or even not commented on it.

Ross has used the words and phrases of old as well as middle or early modern English along with Greek, and Latin words and terminologies. With some effort, readers can realize that some spellings are changed over the period¹⁰, see some examples in the table given below: (Keep these differences in view while reading this article).

It was hard, time-consuming, and tedious to remember and keep the spellings of the words as they appeared in old English as the computer kept highlighting them as incorrect spellings and would also confuse the reader. Due to the same reason, I have made old words in italics and in red color.

Spellings of the words in Ross’s translation (Archaic/old Language)	Spellings in modern language	Page number in Ross’s translation	Spellings of the words in Ross’s translation (Archaic/old Language)	Spellings in modern language	Page number in Ross’s translation
<i>Poyson</i>	Poison	A3 (folio)	<i>Cloath</i>	Clothe	93
<i>Doe</i>	Do	27, 85	<i>Prodigall</i>	Prodigal	93
<i>Usurie</i>	Usury	28	<i>Devill</i>	Devil	107

<i>Oratorie</i>	Oratory	33	<i>Thou didst not</i>	Thou did not	107
<i>Mecca</i>	Makka or Makkah	38	<i>Spoyle</i>	Spoil	109
<i>Alcoran</i>	Al Qur'an	35	<i>Poore</i>	Poor	109
<i>Farre</i>	Fear	34	<i>Deferre</i>	Defer	127
<i>Preferre</i>	Prefer	34	<i>Subtilty</i>	Subtlety	127
<i>Forsook</i>	Forsake	40	<i>Carkases</i>	Carcasses/Crops/Corpse	139
<i>Beder</i>	Badr	40	<i>Contemne</i>	Contemn	139
<i>Tiths</i>	Tithes	53	<i>Foure</i>	Four	114
<i>Majestie</i>	Majesty	69	<i>Moneth</i>	Month	114, 171, 313
<i>Messiah the son of Mary.</i>	Messiah	71	<i>Yeers</i>	Years	171
<i>Evill</i>	Evil	73, 76	<i>Contemn</i>	Contempt	173
<i>Equall</i>	Equal	75	<i>Almes</i>	Alms	243
<i>Sonne</i>	Son	75, on page 253 spellings are given "Son"	<i>Burthened</i>	Burdened	242
<i>Sinnes</i>	Sins	76, 86, 112	<i>Abhorreth</i>	Abhors	242
<i>Errour</i>	Error	76	<i>Accompt</i>	Accompany/accept	243
<i>Lyars</i>	Liars	85	<i>Publique</i>	Public	243
<i>Spak</i>	Spoke	88, 253	<i>Shew</i>	Show	252
<i>Mokari</i>	Bukhari	91	<i>Arabique</i>	Arabic	343
<i>Entitled</i>	Entitled	91	<i>Forrest</i>	Forest	324
<i>Dispoyled</i>	Despoiled	92	<i>Correl</i>	Corel	335
<i>Citie</i>	City	97			
<i>Goe</i>	Go	107			

Spellings of the words in Ross's translation	Spellings in	Page number in Ross's	Spellings of the words in Ross's	Spellings in modern language	Page number in Ross's
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(Archaic/old Language)	modern language	translation	translation (Archaic/old Language)		translation
<i>Poyson</i>	Poison	A3 (folio)	<i>Cloath</i>	Clothe	93
<i>Doe</i>	Do	27, 85	<i>Prodigall</i>	Prodigal	93
<i>Usurie</i>	Usury	28	<i>Devill</i>	Devil	107
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<i>Goe</i>	Go	107			

It is evident that Ross had not learned the Arabic Language and had limited command over the French language, and thus, made many errors in finding the

equivalents in the target language. See examples of some errors in finding equivalents in the translation of Surah 17 and verse 1:

“Praise be to him, that cause his servant to goe in one night from the Temple of Mecca to the Temple of Jerusalem; we have bless that Temple, and whatsoever about it, in token of our omnipotency.”¹¹

The word “*Aqsā*” (the farther place) is missing in the translation and it is the direct and interpreted translation of the verse. He used the noun “Temple” with the capital “T” as it is associated with the proper nouns “Mecca” and “Jerusalem” keeping the target language in view. Might it have occurred under the influence of any of the commentaries mentioned before Surah 17 or due to indirect translation from the French Language? He has also used layman expressions of TL such as “token of our omnipotency” and here, the word “token” is deemed inappropriate and reflects the translator’s perception or limited ability to choose an appropriate word(s).

The adjectival noun “*Ṣubḥān*” (سبحان) has been translated as “Praise” whereas it means “Glory” or “above of any error”. The pronoun for God has been used with the small letter “him” whereas it is used with the capital letter “Him” which shows that Ross had no or very little knowledge of Islamic manners of expressing God or the Belief System.

When we see his translation of verse 7 of Surah 17, we find that he had again mentioned the words “Temple of Jerusalem” additionally and rendered this verse incorrectly:

“The good and the evil that shall you do, shall be for your souls. We stirred up the wicked against you, because of your sins, to afflict you through the murther, and bondegae of your persons; and they destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem, as they have ruined it first time.”¹²

Ross rendered the verb “*Yad’khulū*” (يدخلوا) as “destroyed” which is incorrect.

The correct translation of the verb “*Yad’khulū*” is “they entered” or it can be said that the translation of this verb is omitted, and he rendered this verse based on his limited knowledge of Islam or one can say it is an incomplete and biased translation of the verse as it is not closer to the accurate translation of the verse.

He has also translated the word “*Millah*” (the Ummah or Nation) as “Law of Abraham”¹³ which can be considered a thematic translation and not the equivalent or literal translation.

Such linguistic errors, inaccurate equivalents, and thematic mistakes can be found in every other verse of his rendition. It is obvious evidence that Ross was not familiar with the common terminologies of the source language such as the meaning and implication of the terms “*Masjid, Islam, Iman, and Kufir*” and like these terms “*Muslim, Mu'min, Kafir*” which are the adjectival nouns. Such terms could have been learned from any Muslim scholar of his time or even from ordinary Muslims. It shows that he had not tried to acquire adequate knowledge of Islam that could have helped him to render the Qur'an near to accurate translation.

Language of Translation, Characteristics, Punctuations, and Some Errors:

Ross's translation is not a literal translation of the Holy Qur'an. Inaccurate equivalents have been used and, in some places, it appears a narrative translation. If we further evaluate it overall, we will find that it is a free translation of the Holy Qur'an as mentioned earlier or it can be said that it is an amalgamation of different styles, therefore, it is difficult to comprehend in some places. Incorrect translations of many verses are rendered, and it is very difficult to detect the correct or closer translation as well as incorrect renderings. It becomes challenging or difficult to tally with the source language as he had not given the verse numbers. It is not as fluent as a narrative translation should be and incorrect punctuations are used.

We find some errors in the translation in which he puts a sign of interrogation at the end of some verses, but their structure is not according to interrogative sentences in the source language. With the comparison of Arabic text and its translation, one can find out that he puts the sign of interrogation against the translation keeping the grammatical pattern of Arabic verse, for instance “... **and understand what thou speakest to them?**”¹⁴

Analyze the following translation of verse 3 of Surah 17 (الإسراء) as well:

“...to forbid them to adore the lineage of Noah, or the lineage of them that we preserved in his Ark. Noah is my creature, and my servant, acknowledging my benefits.”¹⁵

When we tally it with ST/SL (Source Text or Source Language) “*Zurriyata man Ḥamalnā ma’a Nuḥin innahū kāna ‘Abdān Shakurān*” (ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا), we find out that Ross made many mistakes as he seemed to follow his perception or misinformation he had regarding the history of Islam and Islamic teachings. The noun “Ark” should be mentioned in parentheses if it has been translated from the original language which is Arabic. And the “Noah is my creature and servant” is excessive and an example of interpolation by Ross.

In verse 17 (وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ) of the same Surah number 17, the proper noun “*Al-Qurun*”¹⁶ (الْقُرُونِ means ages or generations) has translated as “cities” which is an example of mistranslation.

Likewise, “*Al-Qurbā*” (الْقُرْبَى the kin/relatives/relations) has been translated by Ross as “parents” which is an incorrect or incomplete translation.¹⁷ See the given translation of verses 26-28 for further analysis and clarity:

“Give to your parents what appertaineth to them, do good to the poor, and to pilgrims, be not prodigal, the prodigal are brethren of the Devil, ingrateful for the favors of their Lord. Contemn not the poor, if ye desire to obtain the mercy of God, speak to them with mildness, and endeavor to content them;”¹⁸

Ross has chosen improper words for translating the proper nouns for instance, he has translated “*Al-Miskīn*” (الْمَسْكِينِ (needy) as poor, and “*Ibn al-Sabīl*” (ابْنِ السَّبِيلِ (traveller) as pilgrims. The term “Ibn al-Sabīl” is very generic, but Ross had rendered it specifically as a pilgrim which is not equivalent.

He had not even tried to learn about the context of the Surahs. It is common knowledge that verse 3 of *al-Māidah* was revealed on the day of ‘*Arafah* during the Prophet’s farewell pilgrimage and marks the completion of divine revelation. Similarly, the Qur’anic expression, “*Ayyām Allah*” (the Days of Allah) is misinterpreted.

Terminologies and their translations:

It was challenging for Ross to understand and translate some terms, therefore, he used some Greek, Latin, and Roman words, names, and terminologies which made his translation difficult to understand. It is even difficult for scholars to understand without keen interest and painstaking reading with focused attention.

In modern times, Muhammad Asad has indicated the importance and challenge of the translation of terms, pronouns, and other grammatical expressions, he states:

“One must beware of rendering, in each and every case, the religious terms used in the Qur’an in the sense which they have acquired after Islam and become “institutionalized” into definite set of laws, tenets and practices.¹⁹

These terms have no direct counterpart in English, compelling the translator to convey them in a communicative manner. The following are some examples of these terms.

***Al-Ḥurūf Al-Muqāṭa’āt*: (الحروف المقطعات)**

*Al-Ḥurūf Al-Muqāṭa’āt*²⁰ are ignored or not mentioned in the translation conferring to the traditional methods of writing them as (*Alif Lām-Mīm* الم) without rendering them in the target language. In some places, Ross attempted to translate them. He has given his opinion about these letters (حروف) based on speculations and unauthentic narrations in the introduction of his translation. He tried to establish the argument based on differences of opinion regarding “*Al-Ḥurūf Al-Muqāṭa’āt*” and did not refer to an authentic source. Consequently, Ross has stated:

“Thou shalt finde at beginning of some Chapters letters of the *Arabick* Alphabet, which some Men will not expound: They fear to utter things that may displease their false Prophet: Most of their Doctors affirm those

letters to be the first letters of the Names of God. Thou shalt find the exposition in this version: Thou wilt wonder that such absurdities have infected the best part of the World, and wilt avouch that the knowledge of what is contained in this Book, will render that Law contemptible.”²¹

Alif Lām-Mīm has been translated as “I am the most wise God”²² “*Alif Lām Rā*” is translated as “I am the merciful God”²³

Whereas, according to Hazrat Abubakar (RA), the meanings of these *Hurūf* (حروف) had been kept hidden from the whole of mankind and the universe. It is a test for those who believe or for those who doubt the Qur’an and its message about the unseen.²⁴ Abdullah bin Abbas and Ali (RA) said that it is Allah’s greatest name (*Ism-al-A’zam*) and also it means “I am the Allah know the best” (*Ana Allāhu A’lam*)²⁵.

It is a strange fact that Ross generally omitted the *Al-Hurūf Al-Muqāṭa’āt* or brought them in the translation without indicating in his translation, but he had rendered them before Surah Maryam, the 19th Surah of the Holy Qur’an. He has given the translation of “*Kāf hā yā ‘aīn ṣād كَيْبَعص*” which is “God is the rewarder, conductor, (of the righteous) liberall, wise, true:”²⁶. When we analyze the translation, we find out that these are the attributes of God and express the glory of God in particular the attributes of “wise’ and “true”²⁷ to designate the miraculous birth of Jesus (AS) and to highlight that the birth of Jesus was the will of God who was true and wise, whereas in other places he did not use such attributes.

He seemed biased when he translated and commented on the “*Al-Hurūf Al-Muqāṭa’āt*” which usually are considered to refer to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). For instance, “*Tāhā طه*”²⁸ at the beginning of the 20th Surah of the Holy Qur’an has been translated by Ross as “Beatitude and Hell” and he referred to *Tafsīr Bayḍāwī* (بيضاوي) and *Jalālayn* (جلالين) to support his opinion. But when we consulted these commentaries, we found out that both commentators had not commented on it the way Ross referred or claimed to support his rendering.

In Tafsīr *Jalālayn*, it is mentioned that “Allah knows its meanings (*Allāhu A’lamu bi-Murādihī* الله اعلم بمراده)²⁹ whereas in *Bayḍāwī*, it is defined as “O! strong man”³⁰. And even it is not mentioned in any other commentary the way Ross defined it in his translation. It clearly shows his bad intentions to create confusion and spread misinformation about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).³¹

References and Unauthentic marginal and subsidiary Notes:

Some references and explanatory notes are given on both sides of the margin of the pages wherever necessary according to Ross’s own opinion. Some references are given at the start of the Surahs like Surah number 17 (الاسراء). These references are incomplete and very general and simple, without page number and writer name such as “See Gelaldin” It is written on the margin, and not clear to whom he is referring, and no other necessary details are given about the citation. Some examples are given below:

“Gelaldin”:

It might refer to *Tafsīr Jalālayn* (جلالين) written by *Jalāl-al-Dīn Maḥallī* (1389-1459 AD) and *Jalāl-al-Dīn Suyūṭī* (1445-1505 AD) which is widely spread and read in modern times as well by the Muslims. Ross had not given the necessary details regarding it to whom he was referring.

“Kitab al Tenoir”:

Likewise, another reference “Kitab al Tenoir” might reference the commentary by *Al-Qāz Abādī* who commented on the *Tafsīr Bayḍāwī* titled “*Tanwīr al Basāir bianwār al-tanzīl*” (تنوير البصائر بأنوارالتنزيل). Might scholars base their assessment on the other reference given in the translation, for instance, “Bedaoi” This assessment is incorrect as it was published in 1749. When it was investigated further, it could be “*Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*” by ‘*Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbās* (d. 687 AD) edited by *Majd-al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ya’qūb al-Fīrūz Abādī* (d. 1414 AD)³² or he might have referred to “*Kitāb at-Tanwīr fī isqāt al tadbīr* by *Ibn ‘Aṭa Allāh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Iskandarī* (d. 1309 AD). I wish Ross had given some details to exactly know about the “Kitab al Tenoir”³³.

“Bedaoi”:

“Bedaoi” which refers to the *Tafsīr* by “*Nasir al-Din al-Bayḍāwī*” (d. 1319 AD) (أنوار التنزيل وأسرار التأويل/تفسير البيضاوي) as mentioned above.

“Mokari”:

Ross has referred to “Mokari” in the introduction of chapter 7 of the Holy Qur’an³⁴. It refers to “*Saḥīḥ-al-Bukharī*” (صحيح البخاري) by *Muḥammad ibn Isma’īl al-Bukhārī* (810-870 AD).

“Tafsīr anf Giauhoir”:

This reference was given in the introductory note to Surah number 17³⁵. I made an effort to discover this reference but could not be able to detect and access it.

“Ekterir”:

It is difficult to know exactly about this reference mentioned on page 230. However, when I focus on the connotation of “Ekterir” I think it refers to *Ibn Kathīr* or *Ibn Athīr* (ابن كثير او ابن اثير). It is quite hard to say something about this citation precisely and exactly. These references could have been more useful for the reader if they had been mentioned with the necessary details. These references become less important as these had been mentioned in the margins without any indication of the cited work. See the example below:

“Erpenius and his grammar”:³⁶

Ross has referred to the grammar of Thomas van Erpe, known as Thomas Erpenius (September 11, 1584 – November 13, 1624), a Dutch Orientalist, who was born at Gorinchem, in Holland. He was the first European to publish an accurate book of Arabic grammar. After completing his early education at Leiden, he entered the university of that city, and in 1608 took the degree of Master of Arts.³⁷

These references would have become relevant and important for the reader if these had been quoted with more details like the writer’s name, and page

number, or at least the complete name of Tafsīr could have been mentioned by Ross. Thus, these references become the least important.

Even these references become more confusing when no indication of cited verse(s) exists. I think Ross mentioned such references or citations to give the impression of the authenticity of his rendering.

It is a historical fact that in the early 16th century Europe was keenly interested in knowing the Qur'an and its contents because they were increasingly encountering Muslims through trade or combat and confront with Muslims. They attempted to explore the force and inspiration behind the Islamic civilization; therefore, they started learning about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Holy Qur'an. Their interest resulted in the translation of the Holy Qur'an into different European languages³⁸. The "Talio"³⁹ in the verse 178 of *Surah al-Baqarah* means "طالوت" (*Talūt*).

"Talūt and Jalūt" (Goliath or Goliath):

In verses 249-251 of Surah 2 (Baqarah), two characters are mentioned one is "Talut" and the other is "Jalut" These have been rendered as "Saul" and "Gliah"⁴⁰ by Ross as these characters have been mentioned in Bible. He had rendered it under the influence of the Bible.⁴¹ this name appeared thrice in Surahh number two. Most of the Muslim translators mentioned the transliteration of these characters except Yusuf Ali who also rendered "Jalut" as "Goliath".⁴²

"Grotius":

In the summary of religion, Ross referred to this historical character "Grotius" (1583-1645 AD.), who was Dutch and known as a humanist, and jurist, and his philosophy of natural law provided the basis for political thoughts and enlightenment.⁴³ "Samaritans"⁴⁴ "gracious and merciful"⁴⁵ "*wallazīna kafarū*" is translated as "such as shall be impious" He rendered certain terms and words under the influence of Christian doctrine such as "Its Creator and King"⁴⁶ in Surah 23. Some other translators have also translated it according to Ross's rendering.

The English translations of these terms only give approximate meanings and they do not convey the full semantic and liturgical scope of the Quranic terms. There are some errors of omission and addition in his translation. The “Omission” of some of the Arabic words, phrases, or verses is one of the topographies of Orientalists’ renderings. And in some places “Additions” are also presented. Ross’s rendering of the Holy Qur’an is full of the “Omissions” and “Additions”⁴⁷. Nouns are also given additionally for instance “Mecca” and “Madina” etc. The translation of *Asmā’ al-Husnā* is also not correct and is even given differently in different places for example the translation of “*Al-'Azīz*”⁴⁸ In some places he has rendered incomplete translation for example, verse 60 of Surah number 9 in which categories of persons who deserve “*Zakāt*” are mentioned.⁴⁹ *Allāha Ma'anā* (اللَّهُ مَعَنَا) has been rendered as “Succoured us” which is an incorrect translation.⁵⁰ Such errors can be traced in every other verse of his rendition.

Omissions, additions, and interpolations, or incorrect translations:

We find additions and omissions on every other page of the translation. In some verses, certain words or phrases of the original text are omitted from the translation, and in some places, unnecessary additional words or phrases have been given which questioned the validity and authenticity of the translation. In some places, Ross rendered incorrect translations and only he had kept the needs of TL which is English and the Arabic text as he had not learned Arabic.

“*in kuntum Ṣādiqīn*” has been rendered as “if you are good men” in verse 24 and “if you know them”⁵¹ in verse 31 of Surah Baqarah, which are out of context and incorrect translation and Ross only kept the needs of English Language in view while translating the Qur’an.

Some other examples are given below:

Arabic verse and its transliteration	Surah and verse#	Ross’s translation and its page number.	Analytical Comments
“ <i>Lā Yubṣirūn</i> ” لَا يُبْصِرُونَ	2:17	“and left them in darkness” p. 2	Mistranslation and example of

			interpolation by Ross.
<p>“<i>Lā Yu'minūn</i>” لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ</p>	2:6	<p>“...they will not be converted.” P,2</p>	While translating it, he kept the political and religious situation of his times in view and not the SL.
<p>“<i>Lā Yarji'ūn</i>” لَا يَرْجِعُونَ</p>	2:19	<p>“never be converted” p.3</p>	It is another example of mistranslation.
<p>“<i>La'allakum Tahtadūn</i>” لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ</p>	2:53	<p>“perhaps you will be converted” p.5</p>	“converted” is not accurate translation of “Tah'tadoon”.
<p>“<i>in kuntum Ṣādiqīn</i>” إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ</p>	2:14 2:31	<p>“if you are good men” “if you know them” 2:31 p. 3, 4.</p>	The adjective “Sadiqin” means the truthful but Ross rendered it as “if you are good men” or on another place “if you know them” which are wrong translations.
<p>“<i>minal Kafirīn</i>” مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ</p>	2:34	<p>“..in the number of the wicked”.</p>	“Wicked” is an incorrect translation of “Kafirīn”
<p>“<i>minal Zālimīn</i>” مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ</p>	2:35	<p>“ in the number of the unjust” p. 4</p>	It seems thematic translation of the noun “Zalimin”
<p>“<i>Al-tawwāb al-Raḥīm</i>” التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ</p>	2:37	<p>“most gracious and merciful” p. 4</p>	He ignored the meaning of “Atawab” and did the out-of-context translation.
<p>“<i>Yuzabbihūna abnā'akum wa Yastahyūna Nisā'akum</i>” يُذَيِّبُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ</p>	2:49	<p>“who murdered your children, abused your wives;” P. 5</p>	He wrongly translated the verb “Yas'tah'yona” as abused. Its meaning is to spare your women and keep them alive.
<p>“<i>Al-yaūm al-ākhir</i>” الْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ</p>	2:62	<p>“at the day of the resurrection,” p.6</p>	“And the last day” is more closer translation instead of

			the day of resurrection.
<p>“Azizun Ḥakimun” عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ</p>	8:67	“he is omnipotent and wise” p.111-112.	He translated Allah’s names keeping the TL sense in view and ignored the SL theme and context.
<p>“Wallāhu ‘alā kullī shaiy’in Qadīr” وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ</p>	9:39	p. 117	Its translation is not given.
<p>“iz Akhrajahū allazīna kafarū” إِذْ أَخْرَجَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا</p>	9:40 9:42	“he went out of Mecca”	The additional noun “Mecca” is given keeping the historical event of migration in view and rendered it incorrectly that “he went out of Mecca” whereas the correct translation is that he was compelled to migrate by pagans of Makkah.

Above mentioned examples show that Ross made mistakes in translating, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, etc. Many additions and deletions can be identified in every other rendition of Qur’anic verses. He did the exegetical translation and gave preference to the target language (TL) and not the context of the source language as he was not familiar with Arabic.

He went out of context under the obsessive geopolitical situation and thoughts of his time and did incorrect translations. His rendering is full of additions, omissions, interpolations, mistranslations, and incomplete translations of the Qur’anic verses.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

We can conclude that overall, Ross has made similar mistakes in the notes of his rendition as his predecessor orientalist have done, they have based their arguments on unauthentic sources, or they create delusion by referring to the unauthentic and primary sources without properly citing them. It seems that every translator formed his methodology of translation though their approach

remained the same to refute Islam, denouncing Muslims and undermining the Qur'anic teachings. Their omissions and additions in the target language are evidence of their biased and partial approach to the Qur'an or their limited knowledge about the Qur'an.

Ross's knowledge of the Qur'an, its message, and terms was little, shallow, and based on speculations. Therefore, he was unable to bring the closer words or equivalents into the target language and transfer the accurate or closer meaning into the target language.

After this discussion, a conclusion can be drawn that Ross has made mistakes due to three basic reasons:

1. He translated the Qur'an from an indirect source which is the French language.
2. He has very little knowledge of Islam and has not studied Islam in-depth to do a closer to accurate translation.
3. He has rendered his translation with predetermined objectives which he had revealed in the "Caveat".⁵²

Due to these reasons, he was not able to translate Qur'anic verses accurately. He just translated the Qur'an not following any specific methodology of translation and did not have adequate knowledge of the target as well as the source language. He was not familiar with Arabic and was not considerably good at the French language from which he translated. He had used layman's language and not the academic language for his translation and in some places used Roman and Greek terms unnecessarily. Verse numbers have not been given by him. A full stop, semi-colon, or comma is used to indicate the thematic end of any verse or verses. The given references are not correct or incomplete references have been given by him to create delusion that his translation is based on authentic sources. Most of the marginal notes are based on speculations and not on authentic sources or information. Biased, disrespectful, and non-academic language and methodology have been used by him in the introductory notes and Caveat⁵³.

These points specifically prove that Ross did not follow the prerequisites and any explicit methodology of translation, therefore, it can be concluded that his translation is not valid or reliable by any definition or according to any

standards and translation methodologies of his time or the modern times when the terminologies and methodologies have become clearer and formulated, henceforth, it is easier to measure the validity and reliability of any translation.

On the other hand, no one can take his credit for doing the first English translation of the Holy Quran and paving the way for other scholars to render the Qur'an into the English language during the discussion of whether the Holy Qur'an can be translated. He had faced prosecution to complete this task and remained faithful catholic.

REFERENCES:

¹ I am pleased to dedicate this article to my PhD supervisor, Dr. Muhammad Hammad Lakhvi, Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, PU, who is very generous to me and all his students.

I want to thank Dr. Robert Wetmore, Professor of Religious Studies at FC College University for his openness and kindness in providing me with the citation from the "Dictionary of National Biographies" regarding Ross's biography. It is also available in the library of the University of the Punjab.

² Alexander Ross (1590- 1654) was a Catholic Christian cleric and a Scottish Orientalist who did the ever-first English translation of the Holy Quran in 1649. The name of his translation is "The Alcoran of Mahomet".

Read the Biography of Ross:

G.A. Aitken, The Dictionary of National Biography, Leslie Stephen, Sir Sidney Lee (editors) New York: The Macmillan Company; London: Smith, Elder Company, 1909), XII/251-52.

Historians must pay tribute to Ross for his rendition of the Qur'an as he had made a marvellous effort in rendering the Holy Qur'an into English from the French translation of the Qur'an by Du Ryer to learn about the prosecution and trial he faced as a result of his translation of the Holy Qur'an as it was taken threat to the Christendom.

Read about the petition filed against Ross by Colonel Anthony Weldon: read details in "Journal of House of Commons" vi, 1648-1651 AD:

"House of Commons Journal Volume 6: 16 November 1649," in *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 6, 1648-1651*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1802), 167-169. *British History Online*, accessed August 21, 2023, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol6/pp323-324>.

and also, page 171.

See details in the article:

MATAR, NABIL. "A NOTE ON ALEXANDER ROSS AND THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE QUR'ĀN." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2012): 76–84. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26201013>.

- The Alcoran of Mahomet: see the details about its editions (1649-1856) and history: <https://quran-archive.org/explorer/alexander-ross>
- The Turkish Alcoran": New Light on the 1649 English Translation of the Koran by Mordechai Feingold see details: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/hlq.2012.75.4.475>

See the author's article in *Al-Qalam* (V.26, issue 1, 2021, pages 274-287) to learn about the Format and given notes in Ross's Translation:

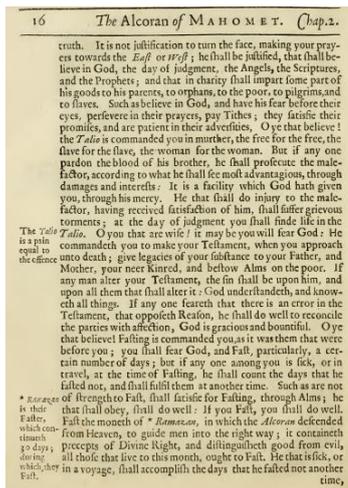
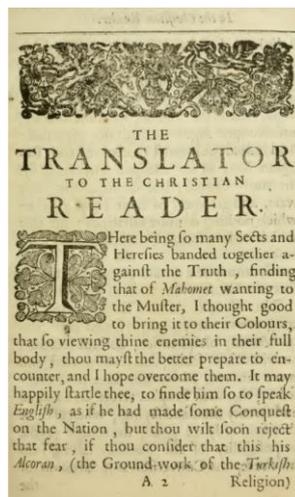
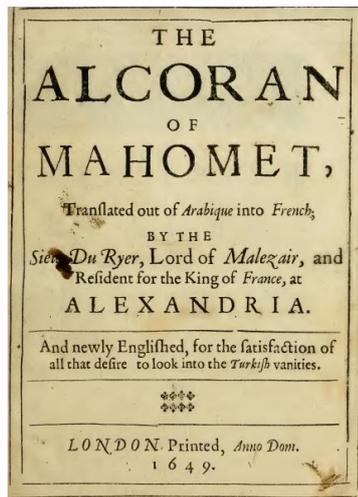
- <http://www.alqalamjournalpu.com/index.php/Al-Qalam/article/view/2192>
- The title page is comprised of the following information:
 "The Alcoran of Mahomat, translated out of Arabick into French by The Sieur Du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and the Resident for the French King at Alexandria. And Newly Englished (1688), for the satisfaction of all that desired to look into the Turkish Vanities."
 "To which is prefixed the Life of Mahomet, The Prophet of the Turks, and Author of the Alcoran."
 "London Printed, and to be sold by Randal Taylor near Stationers Hall. MDC LXXXVIII. Anno Dom 1688".

The Format and contents of Ross's Translation are as follows:

- Title page
- The translator to the Christian Reader.
- The French Epistle to the Reader.
- A Summary of the Religion of the Turks.
- To Mr Du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, Gentleman in Ordinary of the King's Chamber at Constantinople.
- A Translation of the Command of the Grand Seignior, concerning Mr. Malezair.
- A Table of contents. (Sura number, Chapter and Folio)
- The AICORAN OF MAHOMET.
- Chapter 1 starts from page 1 and continues till the last chapter of the Quran till Page 394. (Printed version by EEBO. continues till 511)

- The Life and Death of Mahomet, The Prophet of the Turks, and Author of the Alcoran. (Page 395-407)
- A Needful Caveat of Admonition for Them Who Desire to Know What Use May Be Made of, or If There Be Danger in Reading the *Alcoran*," by Alexander Ross.
- Some pages are also given of French translation for sample, perhaps.

Impression of Ross’s letter to Christian Reader:



³ When Ross rendered his translation into English was the time immediately after the Shakespearian age. Linguistics divide the developmental phases of the English Language into three phases: classical English, middle, and modern English. William Shakespeare (26 April 1564- 23 April 1616). See details; <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/william-shakespeare-born> ; <http://jworldtimes.com/others/general/william-shakespeare-26-april-1564-23-april-1616/>

⁴ Calvinists were those who believed in the “Doctrine of Faith and Predestination”, the religious doctrine of John Calvin (10 July 1509 – 27 May 1564), which maintains that salvation comes through faith in God, and also that God has already chosen those who will believe and be saved. See the entry under the word “Calvinism” in the Encarta Dictionary.

⁵ The New Encyclopedia Britannica (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 15th ed., 2005 AD), 26/213.

⁶ See details regarding the prosecution of Ross and its reasons: Journal of House of Commons vi, 1648-1651:

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol6/pp167-169>

⁷ See details: Allan, David, “An Ancient Sage Philosopher: Alexander Ross and the Defense of Philosophy”, *The Seventeenth Century*, vol. 16.1, 2001 pp 68-94; published online Jan 2, 2013.

- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0268117X.2001.10555484>

G.A. Aitken, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, XII/251-52.

- Matat Nabil, “Alexander Ross and the first English translation of the Quran” *The Muslim World*, Jan 1998 v. 88 No.1 8 & 83.; *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 26/214-15.

⁸ Ross, pp. 106-107.

⁹ Ross, p. 106 (see verse number 206 of surah number seven)

¹⁰ I have mentioned the example of Ross’s translation with the same spellings, signs and language. Readers are requested to keep it in mind while reading the article.

¹¹ Ross, p170 (See verse number 1 of surah number 17) He uses the small ‘h’ in the pronoun “him” for God and not the capital ‘H’ as it is being used by other translators.

¹² Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, 171.

¹³ *Ibid*, 170 (see the verse 123 of Surah 16)

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 222.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 171 (see the verse 3 of Surah 17)

¹⁶ *Ibidem* (see the verse 17 of surah 17; “*kam ahlaknā minal Quruni mim ba'di Noahin*”)

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 172 (see verse number 26 of Surah 17)

¹⁸ *Ibidem* (see verse number 26-28 of surah 17)

¹⁹ Asad, p.vi.

²⁰ The *Muqatta'at* (Arabic: الحروف المقطعات *Al-Hurūf Al-Muqāṭa'āt* "disjoined letters" or "disconnected letters"; also "mysterious letters" are combinations of between one and five Arabic letters figuring at the beginning of 29 out of the 114 Surahs (chapters) of

the Quran just after the *bismillah*. The letters are also known as *fawātih* (فواتح) or "openers" as they form the opening verse of their respective Surahs. Four Surahs are named for their *muqatta'at*. The original significance of the letters is unknown. *Tafasīr* have interpreted them as abbreviations for either names or qualities of God or for the names or content of the respective Surahs.

²¹ Ross, The Alcoran of Mahomet, A.-4 (folio)

²² Ross, The Alcoran of Mahomet, 2.

²³ Ibid, 134

²⁴ Abu 'Abd Allah Muḥammad bin Aḥmad Al-Anṣari Al-Qurtubi, Al-Jami' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān (Lebanon: Dār-al-Kitāb-al-'Arabī Liṭabah wal-nashr, 2nd ed., 1967) 1/154; Abu Ja'far Muḥammad bin Jarīr Al-Ṭabri, Jāmi' al Bayān 'an Tawīl Aay-al Qur'ān (Lebanon: Dār-al-Ehyā al-Torath al-'Arabī, 1st ed., 2001) 1/100-103.; Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm al-ma'rūf tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, taḥqīq: Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah (Saudi Arabia : Dār Ṭaybah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2nd ed., 1420 AH/1999 AD) 1/56.

²⁵ Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, 1/157.

²⁶ Al-Qur'an 19:1; Ross, The Alcoran of Mahomet, 185.

²⁷ The First letter of the attributes of God is being written capital to denote the Almightyness of God but Ross does not use the first letter capital for the attributes of God and he writes small alphabets.

²⁸ Al-Qur'an 20:1; Ross, The Alcoran of Mahomet, 190.

²⁹ Jalāl-al-Dīn Suyūṭī, Jalāl-al-Dīn Maḥallī, Tafsīr Jalālayn (Egypt: Maktaba Muṣṭafā Al-Banna, 3rd ed., 1954), 2/22.

³⁰ Naṣir al-Dīn Abi Saīd 'Abd Allah bin 'Umar Bayḍāwī, Tafsīr Bayḍāwī (Lebanon: Dār-al-Kutab Al-'Ilmiyyah, 1st ed., 1999), 2/42; 'Abd Allah bin 'Abbās, Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās (Lebanon: Dār-al-Kutab Al-'Ilmiyyah, 1st ed., 1999) 1st ed., 1992) 328.

³¹ Read the "Caveat and Life of Mahomet" in his translation, where he refuted the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

³² <https://www.altafsir.com/Books/IbnAbbas.pdf>

³³ Ross, The Alcoran of Mahomet, 31, 159 etc.

³⁴ Ibid, 91.

³⁵ Ibid, 170

³⁶ Ibid, 2.

³⁷ See details: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_van_Erpe retrieved on Oct 25, 2017.

³⁸ By 1640 AD Professor Abraham Wheelock at the University of Cambridge began to translate the Qur'an but never completed his translation of the Qur'an until Alexander Ross began his translation under the English King Charles I and completed it under the reign of Oliver Cromwell the Lord Protectorate of England in 1649. Therefore, it is the first complete English translation of the Holy Qur'an and published by EEBO for its importance in the series of "Early History of Religion".

See my article as well. The link is given above.

³⁹ Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 24-25

⁴¹ 1 Sam 21: 1-9 see details on <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Goliath-biblical-figure>

⁴² Yusuf Ali, pp 99-100 (see details given in the notes from Biblical references)

⁴³ Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, A2; See details: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hugo-Grotius> and also see the link of IEP: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/grotius/>

⁴⁴ Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, 71.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 4. (See the translation of verse 37 of Surah Baqarah)

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 212 (See the translation of verse 89 of Surah 23)

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 77 (Omission) and 117 (17:7) example of additional translation.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 112 (8: 75)

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 118.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 70 (See the translation of verse 40 of Surah Taubah)

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 3-4 (see translation of verse number 24 and 31 of surah Baqarah)

⁵² *Ibid*, Ee – Ef3 (read "Caveat" at the end of Ross's translation in the online version).

See the details about different versions of Ross's translation: See the author's article in *Al-Qalam*:

<http://www.alqalamjournalpu.com/index.php/Al-Qalam/article/view/2192>

⁵³ Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, (Caveat pp. Ee-Ef3)