

Translators' Foreword

In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the East nor of the West, whose Oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: light upon light! God doth guide whom He will to His Light: God doth set forth Parables for men: and God doth know all things.

[The Holy Quran: Nur, or Light 24:35]

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ مِّصْبَاحٌ لِّمِصْبَاحٍ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ زُجَاجَةٌ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ
دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارُ جَنُورٍ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي
اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ جَوْيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ قَلِيًّا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

القرآن الكريم؛ سورة النور آية 35

First of all, we thank God the Almighty for granting us the blessed opportunity to undertake such a rewarding task. Understanding Islamic teachings to a great extent depends upon the availability of authentic documents expressed in words that are easy to comprehend.

After the Holy Quran that is the *Book Of Revelation*, and the master reference for all Muslims, traditions which are- in short- the sayings of the Prophet of God (may God bless him and his household) and the

Immaculate Imams (May God Bless) are considered to be the next reference for Muslims.

Many of the verses of the Quran and the concepts of Islam can be understood better using authentic traditions. The book *The Lamp Niche for the Best Traditions* is a translation into English of the book *Mishkat ul-Anwar Fi Ghurar il-Akhbar* authored by Hassan ibn Fazl ibn Hassan Tabarsi in the 12th century A.D. This book, which has been based on many authentic documents, is an authentic document on traditions. It is organized into several chapters and sections.

The present research and translation is based on a recent publication of this book by the Dar ul-Seqlayn Publishers in Qum, Iran. The book has been translated by Mr. Abdullah Muhammadi and Mr. Mehdi Hooshmand, and presents the original traditions in Arabic along with their translation into Farsi.

The translators of the Farsi-Arabic version have made an extensive effort to provide exact references and notes for researchers who may be interested in details. May God the Almighty reward them for their efforts. For those respectable readers who may be more interested, for research purposes perhaps, or to gain more in-depth knowledge, we refer you to the Arabic-Farsi version of this book.

The project that we have undertaken has a different goal. We intend to offer the average interested English speaking reader an opportunity to study the traditions. Therefore we have left out all the detailed notes and references, except for those of the Holy Quran, which we have exactly cited for coherency using an available translation of the Quran into English by Mr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (May God Reward Him).

However, we have presented a list of the main references at the end of the book that shows you the many highly authentic sources used by the author of the original book. The translation of the Holy Quran that we used is the following:

The Holy Quran: Text, Translation, Commentary and Notes Large Size (1 Volume); Abdullah Yusuf Ali (English & Arabic)

This is what Yusuf Ali stated regarding his translation:

“What I wish to present to you is an English interpretation side by side with the Arabic text. The English shall be, not a mere substitution of one word for another, but the best expression I can give to the fullest meaning that I can understand for the Arabic text.

The rhythm, music and exalted tone of the original should be reflected in the English interpretation. It may be but a frank reflection, but such beauty and power as my pen commands shall be brought to its service.

Every earnest and reverent student of the Quran, as he proceeds with his study, will find, with an inward joy difficult to describe, how this general meaning also enlarges as his own capacity for understanding increases. It is like a traveler climbing a mountain; the higher he goes, the farther he sees....”

You can obtain a copy of this translation of the Holy Quran from the following sources:

Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Publishers & Booksellers at No. 7 Aibak Road (New Anarkali) Lahore, Pakistan, Phone: (9242) 735-3489/ (9242) 735-3171, Fax: (9242) 735-3171, Email: ahashraf@brain.net.pk [1], URL: www.alifzee.com [2]. Or form the following address:

The Islamic Center, 2551 Massachusetts Avenue, Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20008

We have also used various dictionaries including the Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, the Lane Arabic-English Lexicon, the "Al-Mawarid Al-Qareeb by Darel-ilm lil-Malayen among others, and are partly indebted to their authors- may God reward them.

Undertaking such a tremendous task requires a lot of effort, God's Favor and Support, and the readers' forgiveness for any mistakes. Unfortunately there are several places in the Farsi translation where the traditions are not properly translated. So we had to refer to the original Arabic text of the traditions for a more precise translation. This is where the research effort started.

The problem we ran into when referring to the original Arabic text of the traditions is that the language used is that of many centuries ago, and in addition to being very eloquent, it is quite different from modern Arabic. There are many words and expressions that are no longer in use. Thus we had to do a lot of research to understand many of the traditions.

It is very possible to make errors in trying to understand the original traditions in Arabic, their translated form in Farsi which were not free of errors, and then trying to convert them into a form which an average English speaking interested reader could possibly comprehend. You must also note the vast difference between the spiritual content of the traditions, and the present mostly materialistic-oriented context of the English language and Western culture. This great gap is also another reason for some difficulty in making the real meaning of the traditions understood.

There are many valuable things we can learn from reading this book, among which we can mention is an understanding of the Unseen, the relationship between the life of this world and the Hereafter, and a great deal of ethics. We have to admit that by God's Grace we have vastly benefited ourselves from the spiritual contents of this work, and have been somewhat transformed through receiving some of the rays of light radiating from this Lamp Niche.

We have also added some words in parentheses or in the footnotes to help better relay the meaning of the original tradition as Yusuf Ali has done in his translation of the Holy Quran. We have also added some translators' notes to clarify some fine points.

There may also be typing errors that are almost unavoidable in any publication effort, no matter how hard you try, as only God is perfect. We apologize for any shortcomings in this effort, and hope that you will forgive us, and hope that God will also forgive us our shortcomings in trying to convey the proper

meaning of His words, and those of His Prophet (May God bless him and his holy household) and the Immaculate Imams (May God bless them) .

If we did not have this possibility of forgiveness by Him, and could not rely on Him for His Support and Favor, we could not, and would not dare undertake this blessed task.

May God Favor one of our brothers in Islam, a servant of God who prefers to remain anonymous, and Mr. Saber al-Masri for the many suggestions which helped us understand the rough spots (for us) in the Arabic traditions, and a few of the faculty members of the School of Theology of the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, and our son Mehdi Peiravi for the typing and layout of this book.

May God reward the many others who helped us undertake this project, and also reward the generous support of the publisher for this work. In conclusion, we like to dedicate this work to the spirits of our fathers, the late Mr. Charles Henry Morgan and Mr. Mohammad Mehdi Peiravi, both of whom we, and our children sincerely love and deeply miss. We ask God to forgive and honor them in Paradise.

Our work surely affects our children. To express the effect of living in an Islamic society on our children, and with parents who believe in God, and practice their religion and try to propagate the Islamic beliefs, we present the poetry they write based on Islamic thought. This is just an example of our children's works:

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Links

[1] <mailto:ahashraf@brain.net.pk>

[2] <http://www.alifzee.com>