

Orientalists and the Holy Qur'an: Translation or Distortion

Part one

Definitions of the words: orient and orientalism:

Orientalism is the name of western thinking and its foundation is based on the ideology of racial division of east and west. According to it, the western people have a racial and cultural superiority over eastern people.

A very common definition of **Orientalism** is as follows:- “The involvement of non-eastern people in the eastern languages, civilization, philosophy, literature and religion and to get themselves busy in its study .”

The definition of **Orientalist** according to latest Oxford Dictionary is as follows:- “Orientalist is one who gets skill in the eastern literature and studies”.

The concept of **Orientalist** according to *Al- Manjid* is as follows: “The scholar of eastern languages, literatures and studies is called Orient and the name of its study is Orientalism”. (Al- Azhari, 1983) Means Orient is one who is the expert of eastern languages and history.

There are four main objectives for orientalism:

1. Religious objectives
2. Educational objectives
3. Economical objectives
4. Political objectives

I'm very much concerned here with the first objective as the paper concentrates on translating the Holy Qur'an which is the book of Islam.

Religious Objectives: Although Orientalism Movement is known as the educational movement, but it is not difficult to decide for the student of history of this movement that the actual purpose under which this movement was initiated was religious. There were three basic objectives they had in their mind regarding their religion while turning towards the Islamic knowledge.

(i) Islam should be stopped to spread, partly among the nations of world and especially in the Christian and Jewish nations.

(ii) Efforts should be paid to make Muslims convert to Christianity.

(iii) The third reason regarding the Christians to take interest in Arabic language and eastern knowledge was that some people appeared at that time among them who thought it better to trust the Hebrew translations of their holy book instead of other translations in European languages in order to know about the actual Christian belief (Al-Jabri, 1995)

Orientalism started as a religious and cultural movement searching in the Arab World to know about the Arab's religion, culture, history, and tradition. They tried hard to dig deeply in the Arab's religion through the Holy Quran, Sunnah, the history of the prophet's life and his friends, and in the Arabic Language and any other details related to their culture. Then it moved to be a political movement.

So orientalist at that time were very honest in terms of studying the Arabic Language, the ancient Siamese, and the history of Arab nations. Their main concern at that time was studying Arabic, its literature, syntax, and history. All those efforts were due to the strategic geographical position of the Arab world so as to be able to control them and achieve their ambitions of doing so, the wish that couldn't be achieved but by studying their religion and history.

Orientalists became very fluent in Arabic, so they were able to study ancient Arabic scripts, organize indexes of literary and historical works, study the history of the Holy Quran, verse by verse, and the history of Islam day by day.

They founded huge libraries where they kept scientific, historical, literary, and linguistic scripts, besides scripts of the Holy Quran that were unique, precious, and written in gold.

Definition of the word translation:

The word translation has four meanings:

1. It could mean telling who doesn't witness the speech what had been said.
2. It also could mean interpreting the words in the same language.
3. A third definition is that it means finding the equivalents of the words used in the source text in the target text.
4. A fourth meaning which is almost related to Qur'an is that it could mean interpreting one verse of the Holy Qur'an by using another verse of it. Verses could explain each other.

What knowledge and qualifications should the translator have?

A translator should have some qualification to do his/ her job perfectly:

1. Fluency and good knowledge of the two languages he works with: the source and the target languages in terms of vocabulary, rhetoric including metaphors, similes or sound effects.
2. Good knowledge in the styles and characteristics of the two languages he deals with
3. Keeping faithfulness to the source text in terms of implicit as well as explicit meanings
4. Ability to produce a target text that is faithful to the source text as well as independent from it.

All these conditions should be available if a translator wants to do his/ her job well; however, there are other demands for the translator or the orientalist who wants to translate the Holy Qur'an. The translator in this places needs to have good knowledge in the sciences of Qu'an and Sunna, and good knowledge in Arabic especially the language of Qur'an as it's a book that has unique characteristics in terms of vocabulary, metaphors, similes and implicit meaning that made it sometimes difficult for its language speakers to understand, so how can an orientalist whose mother tongue isn't Arabic understand it and then translate it?

The translator who wants to deal with this holy book (Qur'an) must be conversant with occasions on which the verses were revealed. S/he must have good knowledge in understanding the rules of it and the reasons behind such legislation. Also they must be able to understand the rhetoric of it in order to be very close of the source meaning when translating it.

With no doubts, some orientalist who claimed that they understood Arabic were unable to understand ancient Arabic Lit. and so they were unable to understand the language of the Holy Qur'an even though they claimed the opposite.

يقول الاستاذ محمد الأنصاري: " إذا كانت الأمة العربية التي نزل القرآن بلغتها في يوم لم يمر على العربية – من قبل و من بعد- مثله قوة و إبداعا عجزت عن خطوة واحدة لمعارضة القرآن و مناقضته مع ما لحقهم به في التحدي و إعلان الذلة و الجمود عليهم أمام صولته القاهرة و بيانه الساحر فكيف بلغات لا تذكر جانب العربية في واحدة من خصائص اللغات؟"

Part two:

History of translating the Holy Qur'an

History of translating the Holy Qur'an:

Some historians see that translating the Holy Qur'an started very early in the age of prophet Mohammed and his friends. It started when Ja'far Bin Abi Taleb read some verses from Mary Chapter in front of Negus as the latter friend translated such verses to him. Others mention that it also started when Persians wrote to Salman the Persian to translate Al-Fatiha Chapter to them to read it in the prayer, and he did.

Another early trial of translating the Holy Qur'an was translating it to the Syriac Language which was completed by some Christians in the age of Al-Hajjaj Bin Yousuf. Also, there was a translation into the Persian Language by Mosa Bin Sayyar in the beginning of the third century of the Hijri calendar.

Translating the Holy Qur'an into the European Languages:

The first translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an into a European language was that made by Rupertos Ritensas «in 1143 AD. It was translated into Latin (commissioned by Prime »Cluny« «Peter the Venerable«. Aim was to undermine Islam; It was this era which witnessed crusade wars crisis. In the middle of the thirteenth century »Alfons X« request from someone called »Abraham At-Tletily to translate some chapters of the Holy Qur'an into Spanish, and the latter did and translated seventy chapters.

In 1698 the Catholic Priest Ludovic Marache translated the Holy Qur'an into Latin, and this translation became the reference for many of the English translations later. Marache has presented his translation to the Rome Emperor Leopold the first. He introduced his translation in a full volum called the Refute of Qur'an . Then Abdullah Yusuf Ali who's famous for his English translation pointed that Marache included quotes from different Arabic interpretation of the Holy Qur'an choosing them very carefully, faking all quotes, changing meanings so as to produce a version which was weak and to give the Europeans the worst impression of Islam.

Spanish Orientalism and translating the Holy Qur'an:

After the Muslims were defeated in Spain, Christians worked hard to achieve two aims:

1. Correcting the misunderstanding that surrounded Christianity because of Islam. Thus, they wanted to know what the Holy Qur'an is in order to be able to reveal that misunderstanding.
2. Knowing Islam by reading its main source which is the Holy Qur'an so as to fight it, refute it in order to be able to build a barrier between it and Christianity. It can be inferred that the translation of Abbot Pierre le Venerable was the first adopted version of the translation. It has several characteristics:
 1. The first oriental translation of the Holy Qur'an ever.

2. Pierre le Venerable introduced his translation by using what's written to fight Islam before by Abd- Elmasih Alkindi who was a Jewish and converted into Christianity.
3. Such a translation was weak as it was only directed to those who spoke Latin

After this version, another translated version was adopted by a group of Monks of Clugny that was considered a little bit better.

In the 13th and 14th centuries which were considered the golden ages of the Spanish Orientalism, other translations of Qur'an appeared such as: the translation into Castilian, a Spanish dialect instead of Latin

German Orientalism and translating the Holy Qur'an:

German Orientalism was famous of the importance that it gave to the Holy Qur'an in specific. For example, Theodor Nöldeke who was a German Orientalist wrote his thesis to the University of Göttingen to get PHD titled the History Of Qur'an.

Another effort was paid in terms of German translation was the translation into German by Shviger the orientalist. He was a preacher in Frown Normberg Church. The translation was given a title that was completely directed to deny the fact that it's God's Words. The title was The Mohammedian Qur'an.

This translation has different characteristics:

1. There was an intended distortion which appeared by giving a title as the Mohammedian Qur'an so as to deny that it is God's words.
2. It was full of changes to prove that Islam in nothing but a section separated from Christianity.
3. It was translated directly from Arabic, the thing that opened the door for other translators who started translating from Arabic. For example, another orientalist translated it and called the translated version the Turkish Bible. Some orientalist gave titles for the translated versions to remove the words Holy Qur'an from the readers' dictionary. For example, some called it The Act of Muslims, The Mohammedian Qur'an or the Turkish Bible.

The English Orientalism and the Holy Qur'an:

The first trial to translate the meanings of the Holy Qur'an into English was at the end of the 17th century. The most famous translations were: the translation of Alexander Ross in 1688 AD. He translated the meanings from French into English. He adopted the work of

Rar ara, the French orientalist. Ross's work was considered the first English Andrada translation of the Holy Qur'an.

The first complete translation into the English language was done by Alexander Ross in 1749 AD. It was full of mistakes as it was translated not from the original version but the Council Andre Doribe. from the French translated version that was done by

Ross translation was done to fight Islam, Muslims and the Holy Qur'an. He introduced his weak translation by saying: Here I introduce it to you (the Holy Qur'an) and there was no effort needed from me but translating it from French. In other words, he wanted to say that it was easy to come up with equivalent verses; it was not that difficult. He also says: There is no doubt that this Qur'an which is like a poison that poisoned a lot of Muslims proves that Christianity is the true religion.

However, Samuel Zuwaimer, assured that Ross was ignorant by announcing such a claim. He said: he was neither knowledgeable in Arabic, nor was he a French scholar, so his translation was full of pitfalls.

Then, in the 18th century, the orientalist George Sale translated the Holy Qur'an into English, exactly in 1734. This translation was considered the most famous English translation ever at that time, and Sale was considered the head of translators then. Moreover, other translations into English appeared, all of which depended on Sale's translation.

In 1734 AD. George Sale (**George Sale** (1697, Canterbury, Kent, England–1736, London, England) was an Orientalist and practising solicitor, best known for his 1734 translation of the Qur'an into English). finished his translation. He dedicated to John Lord Carteret He depended on the Arabic version of Qur'an. His translation was published in Hamburg. It also had a lot of defects. Because Sale was not that knowledgeable of Arabic, he made use of Marache Latin translation.

Sale's translation had been the main source for western scholars for two centuries. It was retranslated into French, Russian, Swedish, Bulgarian. It was even reprinted more than 120 times.

Sales say: "It's necessary to enlighten those who had been deceived by Qur'an, those who have positive attitude towards it because of inaccurate translations. We must be educated and aware enough to be able to discover the lies around it". He wanted to refute the idea that says that the Holy Qur'an is God's book. Implicitly, he wanted to conceal any translation that might lead people to honor Qur'an.

Arthur Johns Arberry: **Arthur John Arberry** (Portsmouth, May 12, 1905 – Cambridge, October 2, 1969) FBA was a respected British orientalist. His translation of the Qur'an into English, *The Koran Interpreted*, is one of the most prominent written by a non-Muslim scholar, and widely respected amongst academics.^{[1][2]}

The most famous translation of Qur'an ever was Arthur Johns Arberry's translation which was finished in 1955 AD. He was very fluent in Arabic. He was the Head of Classical Literary Works Dept. in Cairo University. He also taught Arabic in Cambridge University. He translated so many Arabic literary works such as *Tawq El-Hamamah* for Ibn Hazm. Such a translation showed that Arberry mastered the Arabic Language as well as English. He also translated poems in the form of poems, the thing that could be very hard for translators to do. To admit: he was outstanding in the field of translation, except when it came to translating the Holy Qur'an. The rhetoric of Qur'an, metaphors, sounds, all of which made it difficult and hard for him to translate it the way he did when translating other literary works.

Arberry did not deny that he stood unable to do his job very well, rather he preferred to apologize by saying: "By calling my work the Interpreted Qur'an, I believed in the dominant Islamic belief that it's impossible to translate Qur'an. The rhetoric of Qur'an, its sound effects are unmatched. They are very effective and strong in terms of influencing the reader. Thus, any translation whatever it is, no matter how accurate it could be, won't be but a weak interpretation of the miraculous original book".

One year later, another translation was shown up that was done by N. J. David, who was an Iraqi Jewish. His translation was full of intended mistakes. For example, He translated: "You, sons of Adam" as "You, sons of God" the thing that couldn't be accepted in Islam and not originally found nor mentioned in Qur'an in such a way.

Furthermore, there was a fear from translating the holy Qur'an that had been dominant for centuries, so some saw that the first translation appeared five centuries after Islam. It was the first translation into Latin. After this translation, and after some encouragement from Martin Luther, translating the Holy Qur'an into different European languages started, but all such efforts were paid so as to fight Islam.

One translation followed another; they started to translate it into alive languages such as German, Spanish, French, and English. Thus, one can say every language, western or eastern one has a translation or translations of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an.

Latin is considered the first language into which the Holy Qur'an was translated. It was the translation of Pierre le Venerable the monk. He was the Abbot of Clugny in the southern part of France. His translation was adopted by others who retranslate the Holy Qur'an into their languages as Germany, Dutch, France, English, and Russian.

Part three

Objectives of translation:

Now, the important question: Why did they translate the Holy Quran?

Western people started learning Arabic in convents. They did so to translate the most important book which is the holy Quran. One of their main goals was fighting it, not as one might think that they wanted to translate it so as to understand the Holy Quran and thus understand the new religion "Islam".

يقول محمد بنداق: "إن الاستشراق كمنهج و كمحاولة لفهم الاسلام حضارة و عقيدة و تراث كان دافعه لأصيل العمل من أجل إنكار المقومات الثقافية و الروحية في ماضي هذه الأمة و التنديد و الاستخفاف بها" صفحة 89.

Despite their great efforts in translating a lot of great books into many different languages such as translating geography books, maps, medicine books, poetry volumes, literature, philosophy, their main goal was fighting Islam through translating the book of Islam (the Holy Quran).

Orientalists were objectively classified according to Mohammad Bundaq into two groups:

Most of them, from all nations, deserve respect and honor as they did good work in spreading science, knowledge, and culture. They did hard work in classifying and publishing different kinds of scripts, history books, culture books, civilization books, prophets' sayings; without their efforts, such books would have stayed unread and neglected as well.

The other group, most of whom were Jewish or figures who sympathized with them, studied Arabic, Arabic literature, and philosophy so as to stand against Islam and deny Arabs' origin, Arab's importance, and Arabs' vital role in the inspiration of European writers. They believed that Islam is nothing.

Aims that pushed orientalist to translate the Holy Qur'an:

Orientalists have presented several translations of the Qur'an into European, African, and even Indian languages. All orientalist have not translated the Qur'an with a single objective and motivation; rather, some are biased and strive to discredit the Qur'an. Thus, they have made unauthentic and fabricated translations of the Qur'an.

Accordingly, Muslim experts have expressed three views in relation to orientalist objectives. Some optimistically believe that they intend to do a service whereas others pessimistically hold that they treacherously seek to further their rule. Other Muslim experts think that while some orientalist and Western researchers are performing treachery through their publication and translation of the holy Qur'an and other Islamic literature, we should not denounce all of them in this regard. Some of them have been observed to be against Islam, starting their activities with spite, but after perceiving the truths of Islam and

the miracle and greatness of the holy Qur'an, they submitted to Islam, embracing it with pure hearts.

Even some who did not embrace Islam came to believe the Qur'an to be one of the wonders of the world, considering all other divine scriptures to come after the Qur'an in perfection and completeness.

The orientalist's objections after translating the Holy Qur'an:

Objection No-1 on the Holy Quran for Being the Book of Allah Muslims believe that Holy Quran is the book of Allah that was revealed in the heart of Holy Prophet (PBUH) through his angel Hazrat Jabriel (AS). The wordings and meanings of this holy book are all said by Allah not by any human being. Oriental refused to accept the Holy Quran as the book of Allah in order to spoil the character of Holy Prophet (PBUH). They openly said that Holy Quran is not the book of Allah. Rather it is a book of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Now just have a look on some of the pieces of writing of Oriental to see how cunningly they express the thoughts of non-believers of Makkah in their writings.

George Sale writes in his book: "I am apt to believe that few or none of the relations or circumstances in the Koran were invented by Muhammad, as is generally supposed, it being easy to trace the greatest part of them much higher" (George, 1890) Arthur Geoffrey writes in his book: "Muhammad's deliverances during the twenty odd years of his..... It contains the substance of public ministry. It is clear that he had been preparing a book for his community which would be for them what the old testament was for the Jews and the new testament for the Christians, but he dies before his book was ready, and what we have in the Quran is what his followers were able to gather after his death and issue as the corpus of his revelations" (Arthur ,1979)

Objection No2-Nothing New in Holy Quran: Orientalists have tried to spread this view against Holy Quran in the public that there is nothing new in the teachings of Holy Quran. George Sale says, "I am sure there is nothing new which the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has introduced. Rather whatever is said in the Holy Quran can be easily found in the old books". It is very common among Oriental that whatever is new in Quran is wrong and whatever is right is not new.

Objection No-3 = the Rejection of Qur'anic Verses

There are few verses in the Holy Quran which are quite contrary to each other. Muslim scholars deal with these verses through some proper rules. They are of the view that Allah had revealed some orders in the beginning but due to certain reasons, they were canceled (George,1890)

Objection No-4. the Forgetting of Qur'anic Verses Oriental do not accept Quran as the book of Allah and tried their level best to prove it as the book written by Holy Prophet

(PBUH). That's why one of their objections is that there are such indications in the holy Quran which show that some verses of Quran were slipped away from the mind of Holy Prophet (PBUH) by Allah. Just see the wordings of Montgomrey: "It is next to be noted however that is one or two passages of the Holy Quran envisages that Muhammad may forget verses and this of course is tantamount to revision by omission or deletion even though the forgetting is caused by God. Incidentally, this implies that the revelations were not written down. (Montgomrey , 1988)

Objection No-5. The Different Accents of Recitation of Holy Quran Oriental give different direction to the different accents of recitation of Holy Quran. They try to prove that as Bible has different versions. Similarly, these are different versions of the Holy Quran. That's why George Sale says that: "Having mentioned the different editions of Quran, it may not be a miss here to acquaint the reader that there are seven principal 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 Qufa, a fifth at Basra, a sixth at Syria and a seventh called the common or vulgar editions" (George, 1890)

The main and primary goal for orientalist who translated the Holy Qur'an was fighting Islam. In order to achieve such a goal, they must have searched deeply in the book of Islam, the Holy Qur'an, and translated it to manipulate in the verses and the deep meanings of them, to distort it, to remove rhetoric and other miraculous aspects, and above all to deny that it's God's Words.

A look over of orientalist's distortion of the Holy Qur'an:

Some orientalist translate this holy book to issue judgment about it, as if it was not enough to translate what they really didn't understand, they also dared to give their own opinions about it.

They tried to deconstruct Islamic rule and principles by manipulating with their translations to give different meanings rather than what's really meant.

Some adopted free translation method. This would be considered a crime in terms of dealing with sentences in the same way. None denies that Arabic language has different styles when it comes to the order of subject, verb and object order. Some sentences start with the object or the verb or finally the object for a certain purpose. Thus, it would be very wrong to deal with them when translation in the same way.

They deny that the language of the Holy Qur'an as it is today was in the days of Prophet Mohammad. Rather, it was a dialect of Al-Hijaz people, and then it was changed to the language that we have today.

Furthermore, some thought that there are some verses that should be transferred from one place to another to have a correct complete meaning. However, placing verses is a matter that was dictated by God.

Orientalists who were very much faithful to their religions worked hard to distort Qur'an when translation as a means to prevent westerners from converting into Islam i.e. when they read a distorted version, full of mistakes, they wouldn't accept it, and thus wouldn't convert into Islam.

When they translated, they adopted very ancient languages whose vocabulary might not be used anymore; all know the fact that languages as a vital organism that develop from time to time; the words may have certain connotations today, but have different ones tomorrow.

In translation, some translators depended on other translated versions. Very few were those who went back to read the source text and understand for the sake of translation. i.e. they depended on versions which were not really reliable.

They modulated the publications. In other words, what they used in one publication might be changed in the later one to mislead the readers.

They denied that the Holy Qur'an is Allah's book, yet they assured that it is the book that was composed by Mohammad, the prophet.

Not only that, they also claimed that Mohammad made use of the Bible taking historical events and stories and using the vocabulary of it. This claim was adopted by the Jewish orientalist Abraham Geiger.

They published introductions about the Holy Qur'an that contained fake information about Muslims, the prophet Mohammad and his friends, and about it itself, so that they could make people have a negative attitude towards it before they read it.

In addition, they claimed that they understood the book very well and they discovered that Al-Khulafa' changed it: either they added or deleted some verses.

Finally, they concluded that Qur'an is like a huge obstacle that prevents people from going ahead.

As I have earlier mentioned, all orientalist's efforts were exclusive in translating the Holy Quran from its original Language "Arabic" into different European and American languages.

The first translation of the Holy Quran into a European language was in the southern part of France, supervised by the Monk Pierre Le Venerable in 1143. Also other monks did

the same job; one of them is an English monk who was called Robert De Retina, and a German one who was called Herman.

All official Christian departments fought against publishing such translations as these efforts of publishing the translations might lead to the spread of Islam as it would be easy for the Europeans to know Islam by reading the translations of the book of Islam, the Holy Quran. Such a matter was against their main goal which was fighting Islam. Thus, those translations were kept hidden until 1543. Hundreds of years later, such translations were published in Bale city in Switzerland by the publisher Theodore Bibliander. This effort was a start to other late efforts of publications. However, some other translations were kept hidden as the church didn't allow publishing them until the age of Alexander the 7th between 1555 and 1567. Then, Non-Arab Muslims insisted on publishing as they wanted to know about Islam, the goal that couldn't be achieved without reading the Holy Quran in their western languages. And they insisted on that in the purpose of learning only.

Translators of the Holy Quran who mainly were orientalist at that time didn't learn Arabic well in terms of rhetoric and other aspects, or rather were unable to understand the Holy Quran well; this was a major difficulty that led to a lot of defects in the translated versions. The Holy Quran, to be understood, needs hard efforts from its language speakers, how could a foreigner translate such a book when s/he stands unable to understand it well?

Part Four

Examples of wrongly translated words:

In this part, I am going to show some evidences of the incorrect and inaccurate translations:

Here I will start by talking about the translation the Holy Qur'an into

The words **يوم التغابن في سورة التغابن** were translated by Palmer as if they meant deception while these two words mean the Dooms day.

George Sale translated **قل الله أعلم بما لبثوا له غيب السماوات والأرض أبصر به وأسمع ما لهم من دونه من ولي ولا يشرك في حكمه أحدا**

He translated the words **ابصر به و اسمع** as: Is it you who can make God see and hear?

While the correct meanings for these two words are:” He sees and hears every thing” as an evidence of his ability that He can see and hear everything in the Heaven and on earth.

Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall who was a Christian, and then he announced his conversion into Islam translated the words *بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ* in the verses *فَيَدْمَغُهُ* as slash his head (cause an injury; however, it means the truth defeats the falsehood until it's completely vanished).

Jacques Berque, the French orientalist translated the word *شعائر* in the verses

(إن الصفا و المروة من شعائر الله)

as effects of God; however, it means pillars that are needed when a Muslim is doing Hajj.

He also translated the word *(الأقصى)* in the verse *سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ* (سبحان الذي أسرى بعبده ليلا من المسجد الحرام) as the final mosque while it means Al-Aqsa Mosque, here He determines and specifies on mosque which is in Jerusalem.

Moreover, he translated the word *الألباب* in the verses *إِن فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاجْتِذَافٍ* (إن في خلق السماوات والأرض واختلاف) as core or marrow while it means here those who have sound minds.

Berque translated the word *المعلقة* in the verse *وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا لَ الْمِيلِ فَتَدْرُوهَا كَالْمَعْلُوقَةِ وَإِنْ تَصْلَحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مَانٍ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا*

He translated that word as Al-Mu'alaqat, the outstanding poetry that was hanged in Ka'ba before Islam; while it means something completely different; it means the woman who's neither divorced nor married.

Edward Henry Palmer, the English orientalist, translated the word *السماء* in the verse

(ألم تر أن الله سخر لكم ما في الأرض و الفلك تجري في البحر بأمره و يمسك السماء ن تقع على الأرض إلا بإذنه إن الله بالناس لرؤوف رحيم)

He translated that word as rain while it means the Heavens not rain.

Mason and Safari Kazimirska translated the word *لباسا* in the verse *(و جعلنا الليل لباسا)* as clothes while it means that night is like a veil that covers all people and include them all and give them peace.

Arthur Johns Arberry's translation:

Although Arberry's translation is considered a "better" translation comparing it with others versions, there are a lot of pitfalls and defects:

Here are some examples:

Arberry didn't have much luck when he chose certain equivalents and left the close ones.

Here are some examples:

In the verse in Al-'Imran Surah

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

(Let there be one nation of you, calling to good, and bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour; those are the prosperers.)

Instead he would better say "bid to good and forbid to the evil" as good for the word "معروف" is much more comprehensive than honor and evil for the word "منكر" is also more comprehensive than dishonor.

In the recently adopted version in translation: *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language*, Dr. Muhammad Musin Kanhan and Dr. Muhammad Tiqy-ud- Din Al-Hilali kept the words Ma'ruf and Munkar as they are. They transliterated them and gave the explanation as follows: they translated the word Ma'ruf as: (Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), word Mukar as (Polytheism and disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden).

The verse in Al-An'am Surah

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ
أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبَسَكُمْ شِيعًا وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ نَصَرْتُ
الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

Say: 'He is able to send forth upon you chastisement, from above you or from under your feet, or to confuse you in sects and to make you taste the violence of one another.' Behold how We turn about the signs; haply they will understand.

Better if he had said: (We explain the verses variously) for the word "تصرف" instead of turn.

It's written in Khan and Al-Hilali translation as (See how variously We explain the Ayat, (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.

And the word “أمي” in the verse in AlA'raf Surah:

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْنُوبًا
عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ
فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ
مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

(those who follow the Messenger, 'the Prophet of the **common folk**, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel, bidding them to honour, and forbidding them dishonour, making lawful for them the good things and making unlawful for them the corrupt things, and relieving them of their loads, and the fetters that were upon them. Those who believe in him and succour him and help him, and follow the light that has been sent down with him -- they are the prosperers.)

It's more appropriate if he translated that word as “The Prophet who is illiterate.”

In the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* the word is translated as “the prophet who can neither read nor write”

In another verse in the same Surah:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

(Take the abundance, and bid to what is honourable, and turn away from the ignorant.)

Instead of translating the words “خذ العفو” as it's already translated it should be “show forgiveness”. Also it's translated in the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* as (show forgiveness)

In Yusuf Surah the verse

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكِنًا وَهَاتَتْ كُلَّ
وَحِيدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ
أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

(When she heard their sly whispers, she sent to them, and made ready for them a repast, then she gave to each one of them a knife. 'Come forth, attend to them,' she said. And when they saw him, they so admired him that they cut their hands, saying, 'God save us! This is no mortal; he is no other but a noble angel.')

The words “حاشا لله” should be “God forbid us”

In the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* they are also translate like “Allah forbid”

In the same Surah:

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ نُصِيبُ
بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَّشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

So We established Joseph in the land, to make his dwelling there wherever he would. We visit with Our mercy whomsoever We will, and We leave not to waste the wage of the good-doers.

The word “أجر” doesn't mean wage, it means “reward”.

In the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language*, it's mentioned as “reward”.

In addition, the word “مكننا” is translated as “established” while it doesn't express the real meaning. In the *interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an* it's translated as (Thus did we give full authority to Yusuf (Joseph) in the land...) and I think the latter translation of the word is much more appropriate.

Actually there are so many examples that illustrate my point; unfortunately, there is no room to mention all.

Another kind of mistakes is deletion of the conjunction “و” that means “and” in the beginning of a lot of verses.

Here are some examples:

In Al_Baqara Surah:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(And perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and bow with those that bow.)

In this verse he kept the conjunction “and” while in a following one he deleted it.

وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

(Seek you help in patience and prayer, for grievous it is, save to the humble)

In the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* the conjunction “و” is kept and translated all the times whether in this verse or in others.

Moreover, Arberry translated the “و” as also in this verse in Yusuf Surah:

وَقَالَ يَبْنَى لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِن بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَادْخُلُوا مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا
أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ

وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

(He also said, 'O my sons, enter not by one door; enter by separate doors. Yet I cannot avail you anything against God; judgment belongs not to any but God. In Him I have put my trust; and in Him let all put their trust who put their trust.)

However, it's translated in the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* as “and” not also, as the word also is not mentioned at all in the source text.

Regarding this point “deletion” Arberry deleted the second person pronoun “you” in some verses and changed them from the form: subject and verb into the agent “doer of the action” in Al-Imra Surah as follows:

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

(O believers, be patient, and vie you in patience; be steadfast; fear God; haply so you will prosper.)

In the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* it's translated as “O you who believe”.

Arberry also deleted the phrase “مع الرَّاكِعِينَ” in the verse in Al-Imran Surah

يَمْرِيْمُ أَقْنِي لِرَبِّكِ وَأَسْجُدِي وَأَرْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(Mary; be obedient to thy Lord, prostrating and bowing before Him.)

While this phrase is kept and not deleted in the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* and it's translated as “...and bow down along with Ar-Raki'in (those who bow down”

A clearer defect in translating this verse in Al-Baqarah Surah:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ
مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾

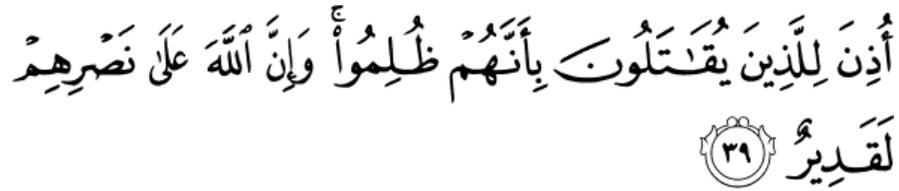
(When it is said to them, 'Do not corruption in the land', they say, 'We are only ones that put things right.)

The auxiliary verb “Do” should be followed by a verb not a noun:

Instead the translations should be like the following:

“And when it is said to them: “Make no mischief on the earth,” they say: “ We are only peace makers.”

A defect of different kind appears in this verse where he didn't notice the passive voice; thus he didn't catch the meaning and mistranslated the verse in Al-Hajj:



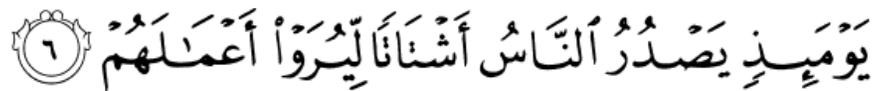
(Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged -- surely God is able to help them)

” as active voice. So it's wrong to “يقاتلون” as passive not “يقاتلون” The word is “say “who fight” and it would have been correct if Arberry translated the verb as “those who were fought against”.

Also the word “leave” is not appropriate equivalent for the word أذن.

This word is better translated as permission is given to those who were fought...

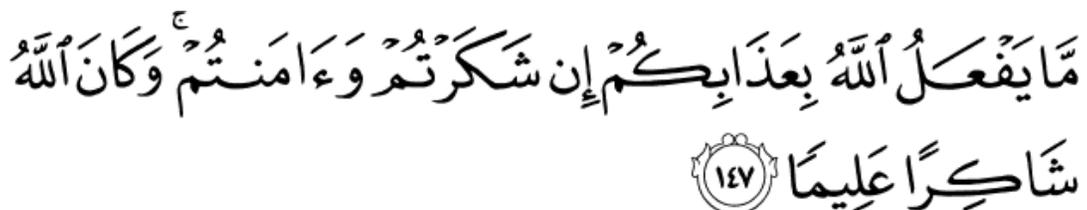
Another mistake of the same kind (using active instead of passive) is in the verse in Al-Zalzalah Surah:



(Upon that day men shall issue in scatterings to see their works,
Actually it should be as “to be shown their deeds” not “to see their works).

A defect of different kind is using “and” between an adjective and a verb.

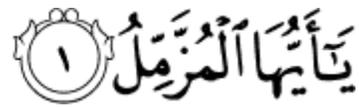
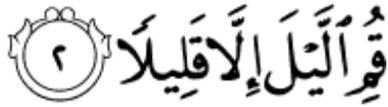
It's syntactically incorrect: the verse is in An-Nisa' Surah:



(What would God do with chastising you if you are thankful, and believe?
God is All-thankful, All-knowing).

Instead, it should have been “ if you thank Him and believe”

There are certain verses where the address is the prophet Mohammad (PBUH). In the source text itself it's not mentioned i.e Prophet Mohammad, while depending on the context and the authentic interpretation it's known that he's the addressee. When translating such verses, the translator should clarify that as the target text reader may not discover that. For instance:



(O thou enwrapped in thy robes,)

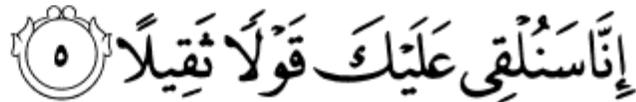
While in the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* it's clarified between brackets as (i.e Prophet Mohammad).

In following verse in the same surah, Arberry's translation was

(keep vigil the night, except a little)

He used “vigil” without explaining why. It should be according to the *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* “Stand (to pray) all night except a little”

Another example in the same surah is what follows:



(Behold, We shall cast upon thee a weighty word;)

But he didn't tell what are those weighty words, work that Muhsen Khan and Al-Hilali did in their translation like : (obligations, laws)

Giving the reason why he should stay awake is not mention in Qur'an, but it's interpreted in other books. That support my issue here that the translator of the Holy Qur'an should not only have fluency in both languages: Arabic and English, s/he should be conversant with the interpretation o the verses in order to be able to render the meanings perfectly.

However, if I keep examining the translations, I would have so many defects; rather I preferred to stop here.

الاختلاف في لفظ (ما) و (لا) في القرآن الكريم

وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُوا مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا
كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ
مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ
إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٦١﴾

(Thou art not upon any occupation, neither recitest thou any Koran of it, nor do you any work, without that We are witnesses over you when you press on it; and not so much as the weight of an ant in earth or heaven escapes from thy Lord, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but in a Manifest Book.)

And the other verse is:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ
عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٣﴾

(The unbelievers say, 'The Hour will never come to us.' Say: 'Yes indeed, by my Lord, it shall come to you, by Him who knows the Unseen; not so much as the weight of an ant in heaven and earth escapes from Him, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but it is in a Manifest Book)

In Arabic the word “لا” is different from the word “ما” when they are both used to negate something. The word “لا” is much more comprehensive than the word “ما”. In Arberry translations both verses are translated in the same way.

تعريف و تنكير لفظ السلام في سورة مريم:

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿١٥﴾

(Peace be upon him, the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he is raised up alive!)

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿٣٣﴾

(Peace be upon me, the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive)

In these two translations, Arberry used one word for two words as follows: peace as an equivalent to two words: "سلام" and "السلام"

In the source text, when the word "سلام" is used, it's used for a specific purpose that isn't achieved by using the word "السلام" and vice versa.

1. The word (سلام) is used to give two meanings: salutation and prayer.

However, the word "السلام" is used for three purposes:

2. The word "السلام" indicates one of the ninety nine names of Allah, as if Jesus asks for bless by using one of Allah's names.

"السلام" is used as a prayer when a person asks Allah to ensafe him in the life and in the life after.

3. It's used as a general salutation; when it's used as a salutation it's a general word.

So in the first verse where Allah used "salam", He didn't want to achieve these three goals as Allah doesn't need to get bless by mentioning His name, nor does He want to be asked to ensafe Yahya (John) in the life and in the life after, rather, He can do it without being asked to. Also Allah wants to salute Yahya in specific not a general salutation.

Actually, Jesus wants to achieve these three goals: he wants to be blessed by mentioning "السلام". He also wants to be ensafe in the life and in the life after. Moreover, he gives a general salutation upon himself. So Jesus asks for safety in three places: the day of birth, the day of death, and in the Dooms Day. While Allah gives safety to Yahya in these three places without being asked.

Also, Jesus, calls for peace to himself in specific and damn for his enemies.

So, the word "Salam" without the article is the gerund and it's much more general than the word "As-Salam" which is much more specific.

The other discussion will be upon the word “كَمِثْلِهِ” in the verse

(ليس كمثل شيء) سورة الشورى آية 11

This verse has the preposition “ك” that is attached to the word “مثل” while in other places where the word “مثل” is used, such a preposition is not used; for instance, the verses (قل إنما أنا بشر مثلكم...)

in Al-Kahf Surah, and (إنما البيع مثل الربا) in AlBaqarah Sura do not have this preposition; the preposition “ك” is not used for nothing. It’s used to indicate that there is no like to his like; in other verses, however, there are some similarities between the two items the one before the word “مثل” and the one after it. For example, in the verse "قل إنما أنا بشر مثلكم" and the addressee here is Prophet Mohammad, Allah asks Mohammad (PBUH) to tell the disbelievers that he is like them in terms of mortality except the fact that he receives revelation. In the other verse, there is also a similarity between the words “البيع و الربا” which is getting profits. So when Allah uses the word “مثل” in those places, He wants to ensure that despite there are some similarities between the two items, there are differences. On the other hand, when He uses the preposition “ك” with the word “مثل” talking about Himself, He wants to assure that there is no similarity at all between Him and any human whoever they might be, and even there would have been no like to His like if he had had a like. Unfortunately, Arberry translated the three words as “like”. The three verses as they are translated:

فَاطْرُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ
الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ
السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

(The Originator of the heavens and the earth; He has appointed for you, of yourselves, pairs, and pairs also of the cattle, therein multiplying you. Like Him there is naught; He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing.)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ
رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١١٠﴾

(Say: 'I am only a mortal the like of you; it is revealed to me that your God is One God. So let him, who hopes for the encounter with his Lord, work righteousness, and not associate with his Lord's service anyone.)

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ
الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ
اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا
سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ

(Those who devour usury shall not rise again except as he rises, whom Satan of the touch prostrates; that is because they say, 'Trafficking (trade) is like usury.' God has permitted trafficking, and forbidden usury. Whosoever receives an admonition from his Lord and gives over, he shall have his past gains, and his affair is committed to God; but whosoever reverts -- those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever.)

The other discussion will be upon differences in the morphology of some words and the how such differences achieve great aims:

Linguists in general and those who study the structure and the language of the Holy Qur'an believe in specific believe that Allah has used or deleted any letter as well does that for a purpose. There is no letters or words which are used with no purpose or no meaning. there is a rule in Arabic that says . الزيادة في المبنى زيادة في المعنى

So for example there are two verses in Al-Kahf Surah that have the words "تستطع و تستطع" and another verse that has the words "استطاعوا و استطاعوا" as follows:

(سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا)

(ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا)

(فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا أَنْ يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا)

The Arabic linguists say as long as there are differences in the morphology of the words, there must be a purpose for that as Allah never ys things Arbitrary.

In the first place the word “تستطع” is pronounced with a difficulty. So this difficulty indicates how Moses felt when he didn't understand what was going on. It was very difficult for him so He used a word to express that situation. Then, after his companion clarified why he did all those three actions, it became easy for Moses to understand and so Allah used the words “اسطاعوا” as its pronunciation is also very easy.

Concerning the other two words “اسطاعوا و استطاعوا” also there is a significant purpose. To climb over a barrier is much easier than digging through it. To indicate that easy action of climbing and the hard work by digging through the barrier, Allah used those two different words: “اسطاعوا” for the first meaning and “استطاعوا” for the other meaning.

The problem is that in the translations didn't deal with such differences, and the translator Arberry translated the two words as (couldst not bear patiently)

And concerning the words “اسطاعوا و استطاعوا” Arberry translated them as (So they were unable either to scale it or pierce it.), and also Dr. Muhammad Muhsen Khan and Dr. Muhammad Al-Hilali translated the verse as (so they could not scale it or dig through it)