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**"Gradualism Jurisprudence" in Islam (*Fiqhut Tadarruj*) and  
Translating the Quran for Non-Muslims**

**by**

**Manar Abd ElAty AbdElrahman**

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**Abstract:**

The present paper tackles the problem of the incomprehensibility of Quran translations for non-Arabic-speaking non-Muslims. Translating the Quran is a challenging task. Some scholars argue that the Quran is untranslatable. However, non-Arabic-speaking Muslims are in dire need for reading the Quran translated. Even if the translations are difficult to understand, they do their best to overcome this incomprehensibility and communicate with their holy book as far as they can. The case with non-Muslims is quite different. The majority of non-Muslims have no any motive to read such difficult translations. It is the Muslim translators who need to perform the duty of communicating (tablīgh) the Quran for them. Nevertheless, the too many retranslations of the Quran are still unable to make the Quran clear for readers in general and for non-Muslim readers in particular. The researcher addresses the problem of the need for differentiating between translating the Quran for Muslims and for non-Muslims. There should be special translations of the Quran to introduce its content to non-Arabic-speaking non-Muslims in a way that suits their minds. The study suggests drawing on the method of Prophet Muhamed in calling non-Muslims to Islam; namely "gradualism" to solve the problem. Introducing Islam to non-Muslims, Prophet Muhamed used to start with the fundamental teachings of belief and then arrange the detailed applications according to their priorities. Some years after the death of Prophet Muhamed, Muslim scholars deduced all the relevant jurisprudential rulings of the prophetic principle of "gradualism" and gave them the name of "*fiqhut tadarruj*" or "jurisprudence of gradualism". This research explains the evidences, principles, and sub-branches of "jurisprudence of gradualism" and suggests how they can be applied to produce simplified versions of Quran translations suitable for non-Muslim target readers.

**Keywords:** Jurisprudence of gradualism, Quran translation, non-Muslim target readers.

## Introduction

The Quran is a universal message that God sent to mankind at all times and all places. After delivering the Quran to the people of his time, Prophet Muhamed entrusted Muslims to keep communicating it to all human beings all over the world, regardless of their races, colors, cultures, or languages. With the spread of Islam in non-Arabic-speaking countries, translating the Quran became a duty that many Muslim translators strived to perform. For other cultural and academic purposes, also non-Muslim translators exerted much effort in translating the book. The Quran, as a result, got translated into most human languages and readers nowadays can easily find its translations available in bookstores and websites. However, the problem of the untranslatability of the Quran has long been a battleground for scholars with differing schools of thinking. The challenging nature of the text forces translators to retry translating it every now and then. In some languages, like English for example, there are too many "translations" or, more accurately, "*re-translations*" of the Quran that all try, in vain, to overcome the untranslatability of the miraculous book. The translators' endless repetitions of retranslating the Quran remind of the myth of Sisyphus; the tyrant that gods forced to roll an immense rock up a hill to roll back down every time it neared the top and repeat this action for [eternity](#).

Despite their valuable efforts, the majority of translators of the Quran adhere to the source text and imprison themselves in its form and style. The language of those source-oriented translations sounds strange and incomprehensible to the target readers after all. The translators of the Quran do not give the expectations and backgrounds of the target readers the due attention they deserve. They ignore the

fact that a translator should know who is addressed by his translation in order to decide which choices can best communicate the message of the source text to her. The translators of the Quran seem totally oblivious of the difference between Muslim target readers and non-Muslim target readers. If a Muslim reader has difficulty with the language of the Quran translation, a non-Muslim reader has difficulties with both its language and content. Having a different language, different culture, and first of all, different religion, a non-Muslim should not be expected to understand, or even read, a source-oriented translation of the Quran. To put it frankly, she has no drive at all to read any of those so-called "Quran translations".

Actually, Muslim translators are legally responsible for communicating (tablīgh) the message of the Quran to non-Muslim target readers. In order to perform their duty of Da'wah , Muslim translators need to do something more than just translating the Quran. If Quran translations are incomprehensible for Muslim target readers, they are completely opaque for non-Muslim ones. Even if Muslim target readers have different language and culture, they, as Muslims, are familiar with the Quran, the teachings of Islam and the rulings of Sharia. Most importantly, they have a motive to read the Quran. By their very nature, translations are less valuable than source texts. No one chooses to read a translation unless she is obliged to do this, in order to communicate with a more important source text. Non-Arabic-speaking Muslims, accordingly, take the pains of reading strange and incomprehensible translations of the Quran because they realize that the source text is more valuable. Non-Arabic-speaking non-Muslims, on the other hand, have different language, different culture, and different religion. They do not need to read the Quran. Even if they try to take a look at any of those translations, they will be faced with unfathomable language and complicated content that will force them to discontinue reading:

: e.g.

يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثِيَيْنِ ۚ فَإِن كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَإِن كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ ۚ وَلِأَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ إِن كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرِثَتْهُ أَبَوَاهُ فَلِأُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ۚ فَإِن كَانَ لَهُ إِخْوَةٌ فَلِأُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ ۚ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۚ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفَعًا ۚ فَرِيضَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (سورة النساء: ١١)

Allah (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters two or more their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one her share is a half. For parents a sixth share of the inheritance to each if the deceased left children; if no children and the parents are the (only) heirs the mother has a third; if the deceased left brothers (or sisters) the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases is) after the payment of legacies and debts. Ye know not whether your parents or your children are nearest to you in benefit. These are settled portions ordained by God and God is All-Knowing All-Wise. ('Alī, 2008)

This shows that translating the Quran is not the best way to introduce the book for non-Muslim target readers. If translating the Quran for non-Muslims is a task of Daw'ah, it is most relevant here to draw on the method Prophet Muhamed (PBUH) adopted to introduce Islam to non-Muslims for the first time; namely "gradualism". Prophet Muhamed was very patient with people who were not familiar with the teachings of Islam. He wisely realized that an abrupt change of people's deep-rooted beliefs is unthinkable. Preferring to stick to their religious comfort zone, people would immediately refuse any new religion, if it is not introduced to them bit by bit. This is why Prophet Muhamed (PBUH) recommended gradualism as the best strategy for communicating "tabligh" Islam/Quran to non-Muslims. Accordingly, His companions and their successors used to apply gradualism in calling non-Muslims for Islam. Some centuries later, Islamic scholars

studied the principle of gradualism in Islam and deduced different applications and rulings from it in a branch of jurisprudence known as "jurisprudence of gradualism" (*fiqhut tadarruj*).

### **Question of Research**

Can "gradualism jurisprudence" provide solutions for the problem of the incomprehensibility of Quran translations for non-Muslims? Can Muslim translators apply its principles to communicate the Quran for non-Muslim target readers more effectively?

### **Review of Literature**

Reading an ocean of researches about Quran translations, one can comfortably say that the challenges of translating the Quran divide researchers into two contradicting extremes. The first argue that the Quran is completely untranslatable. The other imprison themselves in a vicious circle of minor detail studies about issues like: translating the oath in Quran, translating prepositions in the Quran, translating the disjointed letters in the Quran, etc. Those who confidently say the Quran is untranslatable overlook the responsibility of Muslim translators to communicate the Quran to non-Muslim target readers. Those who study the details of Quran translations take the famous Quran translations for granted and keep analyzing their pros and cons endlessly. They do not ask themselves whether those translations succeeded in communicating the Quran to non-Muslim target readers or not.

The present study suggests applying the principles of "gradualism jurisprudence" on translating the Quran for non-Muslim target readers. It tries to find out how gradualism principles in Islam can help create an alternative process of communicating (*tablīgh*) the Quran to non-Muslim target readers other than translation. The paper gives a brief account of the evidences and principles of gradualism in Islam. It then tries to deduce from them the possible applications on translating the

Quran for non-Muslims. It, finally, gives a suggested sample of application of principles of "gradualism jurisprudence" on translating the Quran for non-Muslims.

### **What is "gradualism jurisprudence" in Islam (*fiqhut tadarruj*)?**

The term "*fiqh*" in Islam means the human understanding of the divine Islamic law as revealed in the [Quran](#) and the teachings and practices of Prophet [Muhammad](#) and his companions (Vogel, 2000). The word "*tadarruj*" in Arabic denotes gradualism. It is derived from the word '*darajah*' that means a stair. In Islamic literatures, the term "*tadarruj*"; i.e. gradualism " refers to adopting a policy of social reform that depends on gradual change rather than sudden revolution (Qaderi, 2021). There are many evidences that show how Islam recommends gradualism as the best policy for inviting non-Muslims to change their deep-rooted beliefs.

### **Evidences of gradualism (*tadarruj*) in Islam**

#### **1-Evidences from the Quran**

The Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammed gradually throughout 23 years; 13 years in Mecca and 10 years in Madina:

وقرأنا فرقناه لتقرأه على الناس على مكث ونزلناه تنزيلا (الإسراء: ١٠٦)

And we have sent down this Quran piecemeal so that you may recite it to the people gradually piece by piece, and We have sent it down by gradual Revelations (to suit particular occasions). (Maududi)

The Meccan verses of the Quran are different in form and content from the Madinan ones. Inviting the ignorant polytheist Meccans to adopt a new religion, the Quranic verses revealed in Mecca came brief and direct. They mainly address the fundamental principles of Islam; like monotheism, prophets, morals, resurrection, heaven and hell:

e.g.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (1) اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (2) لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (3) وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (سورة الإخلاص)

Say: He is God, The One and Only ; 2. God, the Eternal, Absolute ;3. He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten ;4. And there is none Like unto Him. (‘Alī, 2008)

After 13 years of Da'wah in Mecca, Prophet Muhamed and his companions immigrated to Madina. The diverse and civilized society there was broadminded enough to absorb the more sophisticated legislations of Islam. Accordingly, the Quranic verses revealed in Madina are longer and more detailed than the Meccan ones. They address the rulings of Sharia concerning issues like fasting, almsgiving, and inheritance: e.g.

وَأَكْمَرُ نَصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمْ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكَنَّ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِيَنَّ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۗ وَالَهُنَّ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكَنَّ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ ۗ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثُّمُنُ مِمَّا تَرَكَنَّ ۗ مَنْ بَعْدَ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوصُونَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۗ وَإِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُورَثُ كَلَالَةً أَوْ امْرَأَةٌ وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ ۗ فَإِنْ كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ فِي الثُّلُثِ ۗ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصَىٰ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ غَيْرِ مُضَارٍّ ۗ وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿النساء: ١٢﴾

In what your wives leave your share is a half if they leave no child; but if they leave a child ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. In what ye leave their share is a fourth if ye leave no child; but if ye leave a child they get an eighth; after payment of legacies and debts. If the man or woman whose inheritance is in question has left neither ascendants nor descendants but has left a brother or a sister each one of the two gets a sixth; but if more than two they share in a third; after payment of legacies and debts; so that no loss is caused (to anyone). Thus is it ordained by God and God is All-Knowing Most Forbearing. (‘Alī, 2008)

Even in Madina, the old habits of people at that time, like drinking; gambling and slavery, were also prohibited in the Quran gradually.

For example, drinking and gambling were first considered unadvisable in the Quran, and then, some years later, they got completely prohibited: e.g.

• يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا<sup>٢١٩</sup> (البقرة ٢١٩)

They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: "In them is great sin and some profit for men; but the sin is greater than the profit." They ask thee how much they are to spend; say: "What is beyond your needs." Thus doth God make clear to you His Signs: in order that ye may consider. ('Alī, 2008)

• يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (المائدة ٩٠)

O ye who believe! intoxicants and gambling (dedication of) stones and (divination by) arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork: eschew such (abomination) that ye may prosper. ('Alī, 2008)

### 1- Evidences from Sunnah

There are many situations in Prophet Muhamed's life that show how he adopted gradualism in inviting people to Islam. He used to take the invitees' religious beliefs into consideration and try to explain to them the teachings of Islam step by step. When he sent his spokesman to invite people in Yemen to Islam, his first priority was just to preach them monotheism:

عن ابن عباس أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بعث معاذًا إلى اليمن فقال إنك ستأتي قوما من أهل الكتاب فادعهم إلى شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله وأني رسول الله فإن هم أطاعوا لذلك فأعلمهم أن الله افترض عليهم خمس صلوات في كل يوم وليلة فإن هم أطاعوا لذلك فأعلمهم أن الله افترض عليهم صدقة تؤخذ من أغنيائهم فترد في فقرائهم...

Ibn ‘Abbās reported that Prophet Muhamed sent Mu‘ādh to Yemen, he said to him: “You are going to meet people who received a Scripture. So, let the first thing to which you invite them be to admit the Oneness of God. If they obey you in this, then inform them that God has enjoined five prayers in every day and night upon them. If they obey you in this, then inform them that God has enjoined a charity, to be taken from the rich and given to the poor of them. ... (as cited in Qaderi, 2021)

Prophet Muhamed was also keen on simplifying the teachings of Islam for them:

بَعَثَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جَدَّهُ أَبَا مُوسَى وَمُعَاذًا إِلَى الْيَمَنِ فَقَالَ: «يَسِّرًا وَلَا تُعَسِّرًا  
وَبَشْرًا وَلَا تُنْفِرًا»

When the Prophet sent his grandfather Abu Musa and Mu'adh to the Yemen he said, “Make things easy and do not make them difficult; gladden and do not scare; ....” (as cited in Şuwayş, 2020)

Prophet Muhamed used to avoid shocking non-Muslims with a lot of religious obligations that would sound for them too difficult to accept. When the people of Thaqif refused "Zakat" and "Jihad" at the beginning of Da'wah, Prophet Muhamed agreed most patiently. He farsightedly said that they would perform both "Zakat" and "Jihad" later; when they become Muslims:

حَدَّثَنَا الْحَسَنُ بْنُ الصَّبَّاحِ ... قَالَ سَأَلْتُ جَابِرًا عَنْ شَأْنِ، تَقِيفٍ إِذْ بَايَعَتْ قَالَ اشْتَرَطَتْ  
عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنْ لَا صَدَقَةَ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا جِهَادَ وَأَنَّه سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ  
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ يَقُولُ " سَيَتَصَدَّقُونَ وَيُجَاهِدُونَ إِذَا أَسْلَمُوا " .

Al Hasan bin Sabbah ... reported that he asked Jabir about the condition of Thaqif when they took the oath of allegiance. He said: They stipulated to the Prophet that they would neither give sadaqah nor participate in Jihad. He then heard the Prophet saying: Later on they will perform both sadaqah and Jihad when they embrace Islam. (Sunnah.com)

Prophet Muhamed used to respect the customs and traditions of people who were not yet familiar with Islam. He refused, for example, to change anything in the Ka'bah to avoid hurting the feelings of the polytheist Meccans at that time. In the pre-Islamic era, the Ka'bah was considered a holy place in Mecca where the Arabs used to keep their idols and practice their polytheist pilgrimage:

كقول النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: "يا عائشة؛ لولا أن قومك حديث عهدهم \_ أي بكفر \_ لنقضت الكعبة فجعلت لها بابين، باباً يدخل منه الناس، وباباً يخرجون منه"

Once the Prophet said, 'O `Aisha! Had not your people been still close to the pre-Islamic period of ignorance (infidelity)! I would have dismantled the Ka`ba and would have made two doors in it; one for entrance and the other for exit." Later on Ibn Az-Zubair did the same. (Sunnah.com)

Finally, and most importantly perhaps, Prophet Muhamed urged people in all places and all times to follow the teachings of Islam gently and gradually. He argued that Islam is too strong to be adopted all at once:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إن هذا الدين متين فأوغلوا فيه برفق

"Verily, this religion is firmly solid, so come into it gently." (As cited in Daily Hadith)

## 2- Evidences from the lives of Aṣ-Sahābah

### • Lady 'Ā'ishah

Lady 'Ā'ishah mentions that the first Surahs of Quran revealed in Mecca, while she was still a child, were only about fundamental issues of Islam; like Heaven and Hell. She explained that if the Meccans were asked to abide by strict rulings before they adopt Islam, they would never accept that. The sophisticated Surahs that tackle the detailed rulings of Islam were not revealed, according to Lady

‘Ā’ishah, until she grew up and became a wife of Prophet Muhamed's in Madina:

عن عائشة -رضي الله عنها- قالت : إنما نزل أول ما نزل منه سورة من المفصل فيها ذكر الجنة والنار حتى إذا ثاب الناس إلى الإسلام نزل الحلال والحرام، ولو نزل أول شيء ألا تشربوا الخمر لقالوا: لا ندع الخمر أبدا. ولو نزل، ألا تزنوا. لقالوا : لا ندع الزنا أبدا. لقد نزل بمكة على محمد - صلى الله عليه وسلم - وإني لجارية العيب "بل الساعة موعدهم والساعة أدهى وأمر" (القمر: ٤٦) وما نزلت سورة البقرة والنساء إل وأنا عنده. ...

Lady ‘Ā’ishah mentioned that “the first thing that was revealed of the Quran was about the description of Heaven and Hell. When the people embraced Islam, the verses regarding legal and illegal issues were revealed. If the first thing to be revealed was: 'Do not drink alcoholic drinks', people would have said, 'We will never leave alcoholic drinks', and if the first thing to be revealed was, 'do not commit illegal sexual intercourse, 'they would have said, 'We will never give up illegal sexual intercourse.' While I was still a child, the following verse was revealed in Mecca to Prophet Muhammad: 'Nay! But the Day of Judgment is their appointed time, and that it is more horrible and more painful.' (54.46), while Sura Al-Baqara (The Cow) and Surat An-Nisa (The Women) were not revealed until I became his wife....(Qaderi, 2021)

This means that gradualism was important in introducing Islam to non-Muslims in order to avoid receiving negative reactions from them. The Quran addressed first matters of monotheism and resurrection without imposing rigid legislations on the people at that time. Only when a lot of people got familiar with the principles of Islam, the time was ripe for revealing Quran Surahs that specify the detailed rulings of Shar'iah for people.

- **'Umar ibnul Khattāb**

During his reign as the second Orthodox Caliph of Muslims, 'Umar ibnul Khattāb applied gradualism in reverse order. When a severe famine took place in Arabia, he decided to halt some rulings of Shari'ah concerning issues like almsgiving and the penalty of theft. By so doing, he showed that emergency circumstances entail flexibility in applying religion. It is a necessity in hard times to alleviate the religious legislations and put more emphasis on the fundamental principles of belief. (Qaderi, 2021)

- **'Alī ibnu Abī Tālib**

'Alī ibnu Abī Tālib has a famous saying concerning applying gradualism in teaching people new matters. He said that not everything is suitable for all people in all times:

عن سيدنا علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه قال (ليس كل ما يُعْرَف يُقال، وليس كل ما يُقال حَضَرَ أهله، وليس كل ما حَضَرَ أهله حان وقته، وليس كل ما حان وقته صحَّ قوله).

'Alī ibn Abī Tālib said "Not everything known should be said. Things that should be said may find no audience. If they find audience, the time can be unripe to say them. If the time is ripe to say them, perhaps it is better to keep them unsaid". (Al-Darmakī, 2018)

- **Ibnu Mas'ūd**

The revered companion ibnu Mas'ūd warned of the danger of shocking people with new facts without preparing their minds to accept them gradually. He explained that telling people anything that they find too difficult to understand will definitely lead to strife:

عَنْ ... عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ، قَالَ مَا أَنْتَ بِمُحَدِّثٍ قَوْمًا حَدِيثًا لَا تَبْلُغُهُ عُقُولُهُمْ إِلَّا كَانَ لِيَعْضِبَهُمْ فِتْنَةً.

'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd said "if you tell people something they cannot understand, it will certainly lead to strife". (Sunnah.com)

### 3- Evidences from the lives of at-Tābi‘īn

- Umar ibn 'Abdul Azīz

When the pious Caliph Umar ibn'Adul 'Azīz was asked by his enthusiastic son 'Abdul Malik' to execute all the rulings of Islam most strictly, the father advised his son to be patient. He told him that God forbade drinking gradually. If he imposed all rulings on people all at once, they would refuse them violently and fell into confusing strife:

دخل عبد الملك بن عمر بن عبد العزيز على أبيه يوماً وقال: (يا أبت ما لك لا تنفذ الأمور؟!، فوالله ما أبالي لو أن القدور قد غلّت بي وبك في الحق) فأجابته: (لا تعجل يا بني؛ فإن الله قد ذمّ الخمر في القرآن مرتين، وحرّمها في الثالثة، وإني أخاف أن أحمل الحقّ على الناس جملةً، فيدفعوه جملةً، ويكون من هذا فتنة).

'Abdul Malik ibn Umar ibn Abdul Azīz said to his father: "O my beloved father, why do not you execute the matters? I swear I do not care if the fire of reaction boils me and you". Umar said to him: "Do not hurry my beloved son; God dispraised intoxicants in the Quran twice, and forbade it in the third time. I am afraid if I impose God's commands on people abruptly, they may refuse them completely. Then that will lead to strife". (Islamweb, 2012)

### 4- Evidences from the lives of renowned Muslim scholars

- Ibn Taymīyah

The venerable theologian ibn Taymīyah explained that sometimes good deeds are unadvisable because they can lead to harm

قال الإمام بن تيمية (العمل الواحد يكون فعله مستحباً تارة وتركه تارة، باعتبار ما يترجح من مصلحة فعله وتركه بحسب الأدلة الشرعية، والمسلم قد يترك المستحب إذا كان في فعله فساد راجح على مصلحته).

Ibn Taymīyah said: "one deed can be sometimes advisable other times unadvisable, depending on the possible results of doing or leaving it according to Shari'a evidences. A Muslim may not do an advisable deed if it is more likely to cause harm than cause benefit". (Al-Khinn)

• **Al-‘Izz ibnu ‘Abdus Salām**

The great scholar Al-‘Izz ibnu ‘Abdus Salām – also known as Sultān al-‘Ulamā – explained that in case good deeds are inapplicable, they should be arranged according to priorities

قال العز بن عبد السلام ( إذا اجتمعت المصالح الآخروية الخالصة، فإن أمكن تحصيلها حصلناها، وإن تعذر تحصيلها حصلنا الأصلح فالأصلح والأفضل فالأفضل )

Al-‘Izz ibn ‘Abdus Salām said "In case there are many afterlife true benefits, we should do our best to get all of them. If it is impossible to get all of them all at once, we have to arrange them according to priorities). (Al-Khinn)

**The importance of gradualism (*tadarruj*) in Islam?**

**1- Gradualism is important for changing deep-rooted beliefs:**

Gradualism is the best strategy to help people change their deep-rooted beliefs. It is impossible to radically change the religious beliefs of a society within the blink of an eye. An old Arabic proverb goes “what comes in short never lasts long”. This means that all reckless attempts to erase peoples' religious beliefs and abruptly replace them with new ones will definitely end in failure. (Qaderi, 2021)

**2- Gradualism is important for making matters easy for people (*taysīr*):**

Gradualism is in line with the Quranic principle of "removal of hardship" (*raf‘ul-ḥaraj*) (Kamali, as cited in Hassan). The Quran affirms that God wants to make matters easy for people:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمْ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ  
وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (البقرة: ١٨٥).

“God intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship” (Q 2:185 trans. Saheeh Intl.).

Making matters easy for people (*taysīr*) and alleviating hardship was the prophetic precedent according to numerous Hadith, such as "إن الدين يسر" "يسرا ولا تعسرا" "verily, the religion is of ease," "Make things easy for the people and do not make things difficult for them" (Bukhari: 39, 220 & 4314). The prophetic methodology (*minhāj an-nabī*) was to implement religious matters gradually in order to facilitate religious matters and not impose difficulty (*mashaqqah*) upon people (Auda, 2019).

### 3- Gradualism is important for avoiding strife (*fitnah*)

Shocking people with matters, religious matters especially, too difficult for them to understand is so dangerous. It can lead to either hasty refusal or terrible misunderstanding. In both cases, people can get confused and divided in a way that can increase and end up as strife. A primary objective (*maqṣad*) of the principle of gradualism in Islam is the alleviation of hardship through which strife (*fitnah*) is mitigated (Kamali, 2015). According to Islamic Shari'ah, "warding off evil (*mafsadah*) is prior to obtaining interest (*maṣlaḥa*)" (Awkafonline, 2017).

### Issues related to "jurisprudence of gradualism"

The "jurisprudence of gradualism" (*fiqhut tadarruj*) has four overlapping sub-branches; namely "jurisprudence of reality" (*fiqhul waqī'*), "jurisprudence of priorities" (*fiqhul awlawīyāt*), "jurisprudence of balances" (*fiqhul muwāzanāt*), and "jurisprudence of results" (*fiqhul ma'ālāt*). This means that in order to apply gradualism (*tadarruj*) on Dawah, there should be first a clear understanding of the reality (*waqī'*) of the society it addresses; e.g. its beliefs, its culture, its problems. According to this understanding, priorities (*awlawīyāt*) should be arranged in a way that harmonizes with the realities of that society. The arrangement of priorities should balance (*muwāzanāt*) the

benefits (*maṣālih*) against the harms (*mafāsīd*) according to the expected results (*ma'ālāt*) of every decision.

- **"Jurisprudence of reality" (*fiqhul wāqi'*) and describing the context of *Da'wah***

Prophet Muhamed used to describe the reality of a community before inviting them to Islam. A famous example from his life is when he sent Mu'ādh ibn Jabal to Yemen. He described them as People of the Book who need much emphasis on the principle of monotheism (revise "Evidences from Sunnah"). According to the "jurisprudence of reality" (*fiqhul wāqi'*), the reality of a situation should be studied from all perspectives depending on the most accurate information before issuing any legal opinion (Wikipedia). The pioneer of "jurisprudence of reality" (*fiqhul wāqi'*), Ibn al-Qayyim, explained:

The jurist, as well as the ruler, cannot issue a *fatwa* or make a just judgment except through two types of understanding. The first type is understanding the reality and having jurisprudence in it, deducing the true knowledge of what has occurred through evidence, indications, and signs until he comprehends it thoroughly. The second type is understanding the duty in that reality, which is understanding the divine rulings that have been decreed in the Quran or spoken by the Prophet concerning that reality. Then, one of these types is applied to the other." (Hajer, 2023)

There needs to be description of the time and the recipients of Daw'ah in a way that decides how priorities should be arranged. Concerning the time of Daw'ah, Da'wah has four phases each of which has different priorities: (1) "establishment phase" (*takwīn*), (2) "communication phase" (*tablīgh*), (3) "inability phase" (*istid'āf*), and (4) "empowerment phase" (*tamkīn*) (Ad-Demīrī, 2012). The "duty of time" (*wajibul waqt*) means that every time has different priorities according to its circumstances (Qaderi, 2021). For example, at the

"establishment phase" (*takwīn*) of Daw'ah, Prophet Muhamed called for Islam only amongst his relatives and intimate friends. Then, he began a "communication phase" (*tablīgh*) to deliver the message of Islam to all people in all places. (Qaderi, 2021). In phases of "inability" (*istid'āf*), the duty of time is that preachers should be patient with non-Muslims and should wisely try to invite them to know just the fundamental principles of Islam rather than the complicated rulings. If they choose to embrace Islam, preachers should prepare those "freshers" to change their old habits and apply the rulings of Islamic Shari'ah bit by bit. Fresh Muslims are like newly-born babies. They need care and patience. Prophet Muhamed used to tell them very few easy things to do at the first stage of Daw'ah. (Assaif)

This needs the second kind of description; the description of the beliefs and habits of the recipients of Da'wah. Muslim preachers need to arrange the priorities of Da'wah according to descriptions of the recipients' beliefs, habits, customs, traditions, culture, language, etc. They should respect peoples' traditions that they are familiar with across long ages and successive generations. In a chapter entitled "leaving some options for fear of causing misunderstanding that can lead people to something worse", Al Bukhary narrates Hadith of Prophet Muhamed when he refused to make doors in Kaaba just to respect the habits of the polytheist Meccans (revise "Evidences from Sunnah"). There should also be description of realities of societies in emergency situations like pandemics, wars, drought, etc. There needs to be alleviations of many rulings that become too difficult to apply during such exceptional circumstances (Al-Khinn). If a preacher did not base Da'wah on accurate descriptions of the recipients, they may teach people more or less than what they can realize. As a result, people will either turn their backs on those preachers, or get confused and fall in strife "*finah*". (Assaif)

- **"Jurisprudence of priorities" (*fiqhul awlawīyāt*)**

"Jurisprudence of priorities" (*fiqhul awlawīyāt*) means achieving the most important and beneficial benefits, warding off the evils or choosing the lesser of harms, as well as observing the results that maybe caused by these rulings (El-Seoudi et al., 2012). Adopting gradualism in dealing with non-Muslims and fresh Muslims, Prophet Muhamed used to arrange the priorities of Da'wah from the most important to more important and from the easiest to easier and so forth (Qaderi, 2021). (Revise "Evidences from Sunnah"). The difference between "gradualism" and "priorities" in Islam is that "gradualism" arranges the major stages of Daw'ah, while "priorities" arrange the minor steps of Daw'ah in every stage (Ad-Demīrī, 2012).

- **"Jurisprudence of balances" (*fiqhul muwāzanāt*)**

The "jurisprudence of balances" (*fiqhul muwāzanāt*) is the juristic methodology of prioritizing benefits and harms according to the objectives of Islamic law (Ibrahim N. 2002). It aims at inhibiting the means of harm and facilitating the means to benefit. The jurisprudence of balances has three fundamental balances. First, balancing a harm (*mafsada*) against another harm (*mafsada*) to exclude the most harmful of the two. Second, balancing a benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) against another benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) to prioritize the greater of the two. Third, balancing a harm (*mafsada*) against a benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) to prioritize warding off the former to obtaining the latter (Hassan). A primary objective of Islamic Shari'ah is that warding off a harm (*mafsada*) is prior to obtaining a benefit (*maṣlaḥa*). It is clear in the Quran that balances are very important for deciding the rulings of Shari'ah (Şuways, 2020).

e.g.

(يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا) [البقرة: ٢١٩].

They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: "In them is great sin and some profit for men; but the sin is greater than the profit." They ask thee how much they are to spend; say: "What is beyond your needs." Thus doth God make clear to you His Signs: in order that ye may consider. ('Alī, 2008)

- **"Jurisprudence of results" (fiqhul ma'ālāt)**

The "jurisprudence of results" (*fiqhul ma'ālāt*) deals with the outcomes of actions from the perspective of the possibly resulting harms (*mafāsīd*) and benefits (*maṣāliḥ*). It aims at realizing benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) and removing harms (*mafāsīd*) (Al-Raisuni 1995). All rulings in Shari'ah are revealed to ward off harms (*mafāsīd*) and achieve benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) for all people; both in life and afterlife (Al-Kailani 2000). There are many examples from the life of Prophet Muhamed, ṣaḥāba, and tābi' īn that show how they postponed good benefits for Da'wah to ward off the harm of hurting people or confusing them (Revise Hadith of doors of Kaaba/ Umar bin Khattab in famine/ and Umar ibn 'Abdul Azīz) (Qaderi, 2021).

- **The two wings of "jurisprudence of gradualism"**

"Gradualism jurisprudence" has two wings: gradualism of quantity and gradualism of quality. **Gradualism of quantity** means teaching people a quantity of knowledge that goes with their intellectual and cultural levels. According to the proverb 'grasp all, lose all', if a teacher teaches students a huge quantity of knowledge at a time, they will lose everything at once. Imam Ibni Shihab Az-Zuhri advised one of his students saying "Do not learn the knowledge at once, because, who wanted to earn it at a time it will go away from him in no time but the thing after thing will come by days and nights" (Qaderi, 2021). **Gradualism of quality** aims at simplifying knowledge for people;

especially if they have different language or different culture. A teacher, for example, should teach his students according to their ages, maturity, levels, and power of understanding. Accordingly, preachers should apply the principle of gradualism at both wings of quantity and quality to communicate Islam to foreign non-Muslims. They should prepare summarized and simplified material for them that suit their different culture and make matters easy for them to understand.

- **The role of institutions in applying gradualism on Da'wah**

Describing societies and deciding the stages of gradualism of Da'wah should not be done by individual persons. It should be done by institutions that have constellations of scholars and experts from all walks of life (Al-Khinn). For example, there should be religious scholars, scientists, sociologists, linguists, etc. to be able to give accurate descriptions of the realities of societies and diagnose all their different problems. After describing the target societies of Da'wah, the experts should depend on the resulting descriptions to arrange the priorities of D'awah according to the principles of jurisprudences of: "gradualism "(of quantity and quality), "priorities", "balances" and "results". Afterwards, they need to find mechanisms to follow up the responses of the recipients of Da'wah, and get feedback from them in order to improve the process of Da'wah continuously (Assaif).

**The application of "jurisprudence of gradualism" (*fiqhut tadarruj*) on translating the Quran for English-speaking non-Muslims**

The present paper suggests applying the principles of "jurisprudence of gradualism" to solve the problem of the incomprehensibility of Quran translations and help Muslim translators perform the duty of communicating (*tabligh*) the Quran to non-Arabic-speaking non-Muslims (e.g. English-speaking non-Muslims). Applying gradualism

on translating the Quran for non-Arabic-speaking non-Muslims is important for three reasons. (1) It can help target readers change their deep-rooted religious habits; their familiarity with their glorified Scriptures, and read a book of a different religion. (2) It will clarify the content for them (*i.e. taysīr*) and provide them with target-oriented simplified versions of Quran translations. (3) It wards off the harm (*mafsada*) of incomprehensibility of Quran translation that sometimes lead to strife (*fitna*) caused by distorting or misunderstanding the teachings of Islam.

The role of institutions here is so crucial. Only trusted Islamic institutions should be entitled to apply gradualism on Quran translation. They need to have experts in different branches of knowledge to provide accurate descriptions of the realities of the target societies; their beliefs, their culture, their language...etc. The selected experts should not be neophobic; they need to be flexible enough to think outside the box and develop untraditional simplified versions of Quran translation. They should first describe the realities and problems of society to decide the duty of the present time. For example, if the target society is suffering from racial discrimination, the version of Quran translation presented to that society should stress Quran verses that urge equality and explain how God honoured all human beings alike. Secondly, they should depend on those descriptions to arrange the priorities of the translation; e.g. which teachings need to be emphasized and which should be postponed? Thirdly, they should balance the harms (*mafāsīd*) and the benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) of every decision; e.g. what are the harms or benefits of translating the whole content of the Quran all at once? Fourthly, they should consider the possible results of every step; e.g. translating the whole content of the Quran for non-Muslims leads either to refusal or misunderstanding of the Quran. The application of gradualism should go at the levels of quality and quantity; the modified versions of Quran translation should be simple and concise in order to make the

fundamental teachings of the Quran reader friendly for non-Muslim target readers. Also, there should be channels for receiving feedback from readers to know their problems, questions, and suggestions and keep improving the provided translations continuously.

However, applying all the above mentioned principles of gradualism on Quran translations for non-Arabic-speaking non-Muslims does not guarantee that they will have vast readership. The popularity of a work, especially a translated one, is affected by many factors other than its content and language. Therefore, further research is needed to tackle the problem of promoting those simplified translations of the Quran and increasing their readership amongst the target society.

## **Suggested Model of Application of Gradualism on Translating the Quran for English-Speaking Non-Muslim Target Readers.**

### **A Simplified Version of the Quran**

*Note:* this simplified version introduces for beginners JUST the fundamental teachings of Islam as mentioned in the Meccan verses of the Quran. It follows neither the form of language nor the order of ideas of the source text. For reading the whole content of the Quran, a reader can find many complete translations of the Book available online.

### **Index: (1) God, (2) Prophets, (3) Resurrection and Day of Judgment.**

(1) **God:** God is the Only Creator of everybody and everything. He is everywhere. God is merciful and loving to all mankind. He wants to guide them to wellbeing. He sent messengers and books to tell people His commands. The people who obey God's commands will be supported in life and rewarded in afterlife. Those who disobey Him, God will patiently give them chances to repent. If they insist to disobey His commands, He will not help them in life and will torture them in the afterlife.

(2) **Prophets:** God sent a long line of prophets and messengers to humanity beginning with Adam and ending with Muhamed. Every messenger and prophet used to be sent to certain people in a certain time. Only Prophet Muhamed was sent to all humanity from his time till the end of life. This is why no messengers followed him. He is the seal of prophets, and the Quran is the last of heavenly books. It is a universal book that God sent to all mankind all over the world.

(3) **Resurrection and Day of Judgment:** at the end of time, God will resurrect all dead people for judgment. Good people will be rewarded by heaven and evil people will be tortured in hell.

## Conclusion

The above study concludes that "gradualism jurisprudence" can have very inspiring applications on translating the Quran. It shows how God recommends gradualism and how Prophet Muhamed applied it when communicating the meanings and teachings of Islam to non-Muslims. The researcher, accordingly, suggests making simplified target-oriented versions of the Quran for non-Muslim target readers. They should include only the fundamental principles of the Quran in a simple language that follows neither the form of language nor the order of ideas of the source text. Before writing those versions, there needs to be accurate descriptions of the target non-Muslim societies done by institutions and specialists in all branches of knowledge. Then, those institutions should arrange the priorities of translation according to the descriptions of the target society. Besides, the concerned institutions should follow up the reactions and comments of readers of those translations and receive feedback from them to keep modify and improve those versions continuously. However, this effort is not supposed to guarantee that non-Muslim target readers will read those simplified versions of the Quran. This is why further research is needed to discuss how to promote those versions among non-Muslim target readers and attract wider readership for them.

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**الخلاصة**

تتناول هذه الورقة مشكلة غموض ترجمات القرآن الكريم للقراء الغير المسلمين الغير الناطقين بالعربية. فترجمة القرآن مهمة صعبة للغاية حتى أن بعض العلماء يرون أن القرآن غير قابل للترجمة بالمرّة. ومع ذلك، فإن المسلمين غير الناطقين بالعربية في حاجة ماسة لقراءة القرآن الكريم مترجما. وحتى لو كان من الصعب فهم ترجمات القرآن، فإنهم يبذلون قصارى جهدهم للتغلب على هذه الصعوبة والتواصل مع كتابهم المقدس بقدر ما يستطيعون. أما الوضع مع غير المسلمين فهو مختلف تماما. فغالبية غير المسلمين ليس لديهم دافعا لقراءة مثل هذه الترجمات الصعبة أساسا. إن المترجمين المسلمين هم من يحتاجون للقيام بواجب تبليغ القرآن لهم. ومع ذلك، فإن الترجمات الكثيرة جدا للقرآن لا تزال غير قادرة على توضيح القرآن للقراء بشكل عام وللقراء غير المسلمين بشكل خاص. يتناول الباحث هنا مشكلة ضرورة التفريق بين ترجمة القرآن الكريم للمسلمين وغير المسلمين. يجب أن تكون هناك ترجمة خاصة للقرآن الكريم لتعريف محتواه لغير المسلمين غير الناطقين بالعربية بما يناسب عقولهم. تعتمد الدراسة على منهج النبي محمد في دعوة غير المسلمين إلى الإسلام؛ وهي "التدرج". إذ كان النبي محمد يبدأ بدعوة غير المسلمين لمعرفة تعاليم العقيدة الأساسية أولا ثم يرتب التطبيقات التفصيلية بعد ذلك حسب أولوياتها. بعد عدة سنوات من وفاة النبي محمد، استنتج علماء المسلمين جميع الأحكام الفقهية ذات الصلة بمبدأ "التدرج" النبوي وأعطوه اسم "فقه التدرج". يشرح هذا البحث أدلة "فقه التدرج" ومبادئه وفروعه ويقترح كيفية تطبيقها لإنتاج نسخ مبسطة من ترجمات القرآن الكريم مناسبة للقراء المستهدفين غير المسلمين.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** فقه التدرج، ترجمة القرآن، القراء المستهدفين غير المسلم