

Another Translation of the Quran is Out

Whenever a new translation of the Quran is published I buy it in hopes that, finally, someone has discovered that Islam's sacred text was misinterpreted, that it is really about equality, justice, and peace. It was with the same anticipation that I opened the new English translation by Tarif Khalidi, said to be an American English translation "that captures the startling, exquisite poetry of one of the world's most beloved religious texts."

Of course, the true test of the word of God is not whether it is poetic, but rather whether it is worthy of the all-knowing creator of all humanity. There is a simple test, that I have developed for assessing the humanitarian content of any translation of the Quran. It consists of ten topics which are now governed by national and international laws as to their legal status. I have listed the 1955 translation of these verses by A. J. Arberry on the left, along with Dr. Khalidi's new interpretation.

Inequality of women: God charges you, concerning your children: to the male the like of the portion of two females. (Surah 4: 11) And call in to witness two witnesses, men; or if the two be not men, then one man and two women, such witnesses as you approve of, that if one of the two women errs the other will remind her. (Surah 2:282)

Physical abuse of women: And those [women] you fear may be rebellious admonish; banish them to their couches, and beat them. (Surah 4:34)

Protection of children: O Prophet, when you divorce women, divorce them when they have reached their period . . . As for your women who have despaired of further menstruating, if you are in doubt, their period shall be three months, and *those who have not menstruated as yet*. (Emphasis added.) (Surah 65:1 – 4)

Inequality of non-Muslims: Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden – such men as practice not the religion of truth, being of those who have been given the Book -- until they pay the tribute [*jizya*] out of hand and have been humbled. (Surah 9:29)

Cruel and abusive punishment: And the thief, male and female: cut off the hands of both, as a recompense for what they have earned, and a punishment exemplary from God. (Surah 5:38)

Beheading captives: When you meet the unbelievers, smite their necks, then, when you have

God commands you regarding your children: to the male what equals the share of two females. (Surah 4:11) Summon two witnesses from among your men. If two men are not at hand, then a man and two women from witnesses of whom you approve. If one woman forgets, the other will remind the other. (Surah 2:282)

And those [women] you fear may rebel, admonish, and abandon them in their beds, and smack them. (Surah 4:34)

O Prophet, if you divorce women, divorce them in accordance with their periods of waiting, and compute that period. . . As for those among your women who have abandoned hope of menstruation, if you are in doubt, their waiting period shall be three months – so too for women who have not yet menstruated. (Surah 65:1 – 4)

Fight those who do not believe in God or the Last Day, who do not hold illicit what God and His Messenger hold illicit, and who do not follow the religion of truth from among those given in the Book, until they offer up tribute, by hand, in humble mien. (Surah 9:29)

The male thief and female thief: cut their hand as a penalty for what they reaped – a punishment from God. (Surah 5:38)

When you encounter the unbelievers, blows to the necks it shall be until, once you have routed them, you are to tighten their fetters. (Surah 47:3)

made wide slaughter among them, tie fast the bonds. (Surah 47:3)

Taking of hostages and booty: It is not for any Prophet to have prisoners until he make wide slaughter in the land . . . Eat of what you have taken as booty, such as is lawful and good. (Surah 8:70)

Freedom of thought, including religion: [Hypocrites] wish that you should disbelieve as they disbelieve, and then you would be equal; therefore take not to yourselves friends of them, until they emigrate in the way of God; then, if they turn their backs, take them, and slay them wherever you find them. (Surah 4: 89)

Intolerance of other religions: O believers, fight the unbelievers who are near to you, and let them find in you a harshness; and know that God is with the godfearing. (Surah 9:125)

Separation of religion and politics: That which you serve, apart from Him, is nothing but names yourselves have named, you and your fathers; God has sent down no authority touching them. Judgment belongs only to God. (Surah 12:40)

It is not fitting for a prophet to hold prisoners until he has achieved supremacy in the land. . . So consume what booty you gained, lawfully and well, and fear God. (Surah 8:70)

[Hypocrites] long for you to blaspheme as they have blasphemed, thus becoming like them. Do not take them for friends until they emigrate in the cause of God. If they refuse, seize them and kill them wherever you find them . . (Surah 4:89)

O believers, fight the unbelievers near you, and let them find you harsh, and know that God stands with the pious. (Surah 9:125)

What you worship instead of Him are merely names that you and your ancestors coined, and for which no authority has come from God. Sovereignty belongs solely to God. (Surah 12:40)

So this new translation may be more poetic and may use more contemporary words, but the draconian commands are still plain to see. So it is really true, as stated in Surah 18:27, “None can change His words.”

When one sees how hostile the Quran is to 21st Century concepts of equality, justice, and peace, this is truly unfortunate.