Chapter – 5

Contemporary Opinion Regarding Asad and his Contributions
Muhammad Asad as an author and intellectual had wide reach. Nowhere in the Muslim world was he a stranger? He lived among the Arabs and was friend of many leaders there. He had migrated to the Indo-Pak subcontinent, and lived there for remarkable period and was friend of Allamah Muhammad Iqbal. He was engaged in the attempts at giving ideological orientation to the emerging state of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. He produced in English, not his mother tongue, very impressive literature – the *lingua franca* of the modern Muslim intellectual class. Naturally he was approached for his understanding of Islam, of modern times and above all his approach in seeking the relevance of Islam to the contemporary times by Muslim intelligentsia in varying degrees. Muslim intelligentsia too is not a homogeneous class. There are people and people – who differ in their perspectives, preferences, tastes, intelligence and commitments.

Muslims in the West, have, naturally developed a special affinity with Asad – who basically belonged to the West, inherited its culture and social mores, had an outstanding command over its most prominent languages, yet was now a spokesman of Islam. Reverts are, it seems, at the forefront of looking at Asad, his life story, and his contributions. The reasons for such efforts on their part are understandable.

Internet has offered new opportunities for reaching unsuspecting quarters. Many non-Muslims, through this medium come into contact with the worthwhile material available on it. In the following pages are opinions of some persons, selecting randomly, yet showing a pattern too, who have differing perspectives in looking at Asad and his contribution. While most of them have dealt with the almost common basic data about Asad, yet their treatment of it makes them special and unique. While some have
discussed one aspect of Asad's life others have focussed on the other. Some comments are brief while others are exhaustive enough. Mostly there are direct comments but there are some which are oblique and indirect. Opinions of the individual commentators are their personal opinions only; their inclusion in this work does not necessarily mean any endorsement by the author. So the comments, in the following pages, reflect not only what they say about Asad, but also about their background, preferences and perspectives as well.
Hasan Zilur Rahim

"Hasan is the Conscience of Thinking Muslims"

Hasan Zilur Rahim is editor of the quarterly magazine IQRA, published in San Jose, CA. Three years after the death of Muḥammad Asad (1900-1992), Hasan in his article "Muḥammad Asad Visionary Islamic Scholar" (published in September 1995, pp. 45-46), carried by Washington Report on Middle East Affair, laments on state of affairs among the Westerners and the Muslims alike regarding Asad, his status and the contributions: Muḥammad Asad, writer, adventurer, diplomat, Muslim thinker par excellence, translator of the Qur’ān, and author of one of the most remarkable spiritual autobiographies ever, The Road to Mecca, isn’t as well recognized, even among Muslims, as he ought to be. It’s a pity. Three years after his death in Spain in 1992, Asad remains virtually unknown in the West and an enigma to an average Muslim. Those who have followed his career through his books and writings, however, know that no one had contributed more in our times to the understanding of Islam and awakening of Muslims, or worked harder to build a bridge between the East and the West, than Muḥammad Asad.¹

...The story of the years before his conversion reflects the spiritual odyssey of a man in search of a home, a man struck by wanderlust, unable to quell his restless spirit until embracing Islam.²...

A Saddening Experience

Travelling extensively throughout the Muslim world, Asads’ interest in Islam deepened. At the same time, he began to examine critically the decay he found among Muslims. Arabia was bogged
down in tribal warfare; foreign powers were conquering Muslim lands with the help of Muslim puppets; most Muslims were mired in the lowlands of self-righteousness, wallowing in intellectual stagnation by blindly imitating the West.

To understand how Muslims could regenerate themselves, Asad took a characteristic approach: he immersed himself in understanding the source of Islam, the Qur’ān. Embarking on an intensive study of classical Arabic, he began at the same time living among the bedouin of Central and Eastern Arabia whose speech and linguistic associations had essentially remained unchanged since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) when the Qur’ān was being revealed. It gave him insight into the semantics of the Qur’ānic language unknown to any Westerner and enabled him later to translate the Qur’ān into English as *The Message of the Qur’ān. Along with his commentary The Message is without parallel in conveying the holy book’s meaning and spirit to non-Arab readers.*

**Muslim Renaissance Became Asad’s Goal in Life**

In his study of the Qur’ān, Asad found that Islam gave “yes to action, No to passivity. Yes to life and no to asceticism.” In its pages, he found an intense God-consciousness that made no division between body and soul or faith and reason, but consisted of a harmonious interplay of spiritual need and social demand...

From that point on, Muslim renaissance became Asad’s goal in life. He traveled for and wide, conferred with kings, leaders and common man “between the Libyan Desert and the Pamirs, between the Bosporus and the Arabian Sea”, and began putting his ideas on paper. *Islam at the Crossroads,* first published in 1934, still stuns
the contemporary reader with its analysis of Muslim regression and its bold prescription for instilling self-assurance to an Islamic world suffering from lack of confidence under the onslaught of Western technology... 

...In the *Principles of State and Government in Islam*, published in 1961, Asad laid down in unambiguous terms the foundations of an Islamic state on the basis of Quranic injunctions and the Prophet’s sayings. Briefly, the two defining limits are that in an Islamic state the true sovereignty lies with God and that believers must conduct all businesses pertaining to the state and community through mutual consultation. Within this framework, Asad showed that an Islamic state had the flexibility to contain features of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, including the American institutions of presidency and the Supreme Court. The author hoped with this book to contribute “towards a better understanding of Islamic ideology by the non-Muslim West – an understanding so vitally needed in our time. “Considering the dark and extreme pictures orientalists and “Islamic experts” like Bernard Levis, Daniel Pipes, Steven Emerson and others paint about Islamic and Islamic states, Asad’s book should be required reading for these “experts” from the academe and the media.”

*The Message of the Qur’ān* was published in 1980; Asad meant to devote two years to completing the translation and the commentary but ended up spending 17. He dedicated *The Message* to “people who think.” The importance of using one’s own faculties to understand Divine text (*ijtihād*), a fact emphasized in the Qur’ān itself, was a theme Asad returned to again and again.

Without *ijtihād*, Asad was convinced Muslims would find it difficult, if not impossible, to practice true Islam in their lives,
and that they would become intellectual prisoners of others who were themselves prisoners of the past and had little to contribute to the resurgence of Islam in the modern world. It was only through *ijtihād*, he felt, that Muslims could grow, change and develop in accordance with the needs of the time and the growth of man's experience, while always remaining true to the Qur'ān and the practices of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). This was not to deny the importance of religious scholars, only that Muslims were obligated to understand their faith as best as they could using their own God-given faculties, before seeking help to enlarge their understanding. "Every Muslim ought to be able to say 'The Qur'ān has been revealed to me,'" he said in an interview a few years before his death. He was fond of quoting the Prophet; "If you use your reason and turn out to be wrong, God will still reward you. And if you are right, you will be doubly rewarded."  

**Timeliness and Timelessness**

In 1987, Asad published *The Law of Ours and other Essays*, a collection of articles on Muslim religious and political thought he had written over the years but had not published, including "Answers of Islam", "calling all Muslim", "A vision of Jerusalem." In fact, it was his wife, Pola Hamida, who recovered them after going through some of his old papers and, recognizing their importance, insisted that they be published. "I believe the reader will be struck, as I have been," she wrote in the foreword to the book, "not only by the extraordinary timeliness and the timelessness of these thoughts and predictions, but also by their consistency."  

I had the good fortune of corresponding with Muhammad Asad. In 1986, I read *The Road to Mecca* and was so moved and persuaded
by the author’s narrative that I resolved to somehow make contact. (The only other book to have similar impact on me, albeit from a different perspective, was the *Autobiography of Malcom X*.) Soon I came across an interview with Asad in a magazine called *Arabia*, published out of England. I wrote a letter to the editor of *Arabia* to forward to Asad. To my amazement, Asad soon replied from Spain. “I was deeply touched by your letter”, he wrote, “which was forwarded to me by Dr. Faithi Osman. Thank you for your appreciation of my work; it is for people like you I was writing.” In my letter I had expressed the hope that I would continue his life story from where he left off in *The Road to Mecca*. “I have promised my wife, who had been insisting for a long time”, he replied, “that I should continue and complete my memories. My next work will be just that and of course it will, of necessity, include my years in India ad Pakistan... Please pray that God will allow me to accomplish the work.” Our correspondence continued for a while until Asad became too ill to reply.¹¹

After Asad died in Spain in 1992, I wrote to Pola Hamida, who informed me that the sequel to *The Road to Mecca* was only partially completed by Asad – part one – and that she herself would complete part two. It would be called *Home Coming of the Heart*, “a title which he himself suggested.” (The book is not yet available in the United States).¹²

*Muhammad Asad* stood alone among contemporary Muslims for his extraordinary perception of, and contributions to, Islam. With his command of the English language, his knowledge of the Bible and biblical sources, as well as Jewish history and civilization, Asad was more successful than most in communicating to Muslim and non-Muslim readers the essence of Islam in both its historical and timeless context.¹³
But beyond words and books, Asad wanted to see the living body of Islam flourish in the modern world. Although distressed by the sad state of the Muslim world, its reactive agenda, he remained optimistic to the end that a new generation of Muslims eventually would rise to make his dream a reality.14

It is easy to imagine Asad approving of the peaceful yet vigorous activism of American Muslims in defending the tenets of their faith and in striving to bring a balance to American society. He would in particular, have invested high hopes on Muslims youth for their idealism and their ability and eagerness to think and reason. Asad abhorred extremism in all its forms. "And thus we have willed you to be a community of the Middle Way." was a Qur’anic verse he quoted often, explaining that in Islam, there was no room for revolution, only evolution. Asad was the conscience of thinking Muslims. “The door of *ijtihād* will always remain open”, he used to say, “Because no one has the authority to close it.” As Islam enters the most critical phase of its development in the West, Muhammad Asad’s legacy assumes an urgency no thinking Muslim can afford to ignore.15
Murad Hofmann

Dr. Murad Wilfried Hofmann was born in a catholic family in 1931. He received his education at Union College in New York and did his masters degree in German Law in Munich and took his doctorate from Harvard. He is a renowned German social scientist. He has worked in German Diplomatic Service, and was Germany’s ambassador to Algeria and Morocco. He embraced Islam in 1980.

What made Hofmann to embrace Islam, he writes: “For some time now, striving for more and more precision and brevity, I have tried to put on paper in systematic way, all philosophical truths, which in my view, can be ascertained beyond reasonable doubt. In the course of this effort it dawned on me that the typical attitude of an agnostic is not an intelligent one, that man simply can not escape a decision to believe, that the createdness of what exists around us in obvious; that Islam undoubtedly finds itself in the greatest harmony with overall reality. Thus I realize, not without shock, that step by step, is spite of myself and almost unconsciously, a feeling and thinking I have grown into a Muslim. Only one last step remained to be taken to formalize any conversion. As of today I am a Muslim. I have arrived.”

Murad now lives with his Turkish wife in Istanbul. His son from his late first wife is also a diplomat. His major contributions in academics among others include, his books, Islam: The Alternate, Islam 2000 (Amana Publications, Beltsville, Maryland, U.S.A). His first book on Islam was Diary of a German Muslim (1983); it carried an ‘Introduction’ by Muḥammad Asad.

Hofmann is at present one of the most noted European writers on Islam and is an author of international repute. Among other things,
Hofmann is known being candid and laconic in expressing his views. Notwithstanding Hofmann’s admiration for Asad, he gives due vent to his critical opinions.


In his review of The Message of the Qurʾān (2003), Hofmann introduces Asad, thus:

Muḥammad Asad alias Leopold Weiss (1900-1992), journalist, activist, diplomat, and writer, was undoubtedly the most influential Western intellectual Muslims of the past century – Rene Guenon, Marmaduke Pickthall, Frithjof Schuon and Martin Lings notwithstanding. Of Polish Jewish descent, a German citizen after 1938, and Pakistani one after 1952, he was a truly cosmopolitan figure.

Hofmann, in his article ‘Muḥammad Asad: Europe’s Gift to Islam, has thrown light on what he calls, the two extreme ends of the remarkable Asad Phenomenon: (i) His debut as a prodigal, self-made orientalist writer before his conversion to Islam; and (ii) the
reactions to his views in the West as well as in the Muslim World, before and after his death in Spain.\textsuperscript{17}

I

German readers are fortunate to have access to Muhammad Asad’s earliest book published under his original name: Leopold Weiss, \textit{Unromantisches Morgenland}\textsuperscript{18} - \textit{Aus dem Tagebuch einer Reise} – Frankfurt: Societäts-Druckerei G.m.b.H. 1924.

It was written at the end of 1922 for the Publishers \textit{Frank Furter Zeitung}, which was then and continues to be now the most prestigious German journal. Weiss wrote this book at the tender age of 22. Together with the paintress Elsa Schiemann, who would be his first wife, between March and October of that year he had visited Palestine, Transjordan (‘Amman, with only 6000 inhabitants), Syria, Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria), Turkey (Smyrna, just burnt down, and Constantinople) as well as Malta. The book is illustrated by 59 black-and-white photographs which are now of great historical importance. The sources of the photographs are not mentioned.\textsuperscript{19}

This small diary of just 159 pages amazes one in several ways. Most surprising, however, is the young author’s talent as a writer, in particular his powerful evocative, yet lyrical descriptions of countryside, moods, and people; they are often startling but never banal. The colour of light, for instance, may be “shell-like”, travelers may be “silent, as if wrapped up in the great landscape”. Forms and movements can be of an “intoxicating uniqueness” and “wind like a breath without substances”...\textsuperscript{20}

We ought to remember that the German literary genius, Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), at that time was at the peak of his fame
as trend-setter. Many a German soldier in the First World War had gone to battle with Rilke poems in his pocket. Young Leopold Weiss would naturally have been impressed by Rilke's penetrating, spiritualistic lyricism. The amazing thing is that young Weiss, born to be a master, showed neither indebtedness to Rilke nor Rilkian mannerism. His literary skills, so clear in his original English and German versions of The Road to Mecca, obviously were already mature in 1922.  

A second surprise comes with the realization that Weiss, even then, was enamoured of, and most semantically infatuated with, almost everything Arabic. He portrays himself as an uncritical, unconditional admire of the Arab race and culture. For him, the "Arabs are blessed" (44), and archetypically graceful. In his views, it was "a wonderful expression of the widely alert Arab being" that "it does not know of any separation between yesterday and tomorrow, thought and action, objective reality and personal sentiment" (77)...  

After talking to leading figure of Transjordan Weiss, in his idealization of the Arabs, indulged in prophetic lyrics: "you are timeless You jumped out of the course of World history... you are the contemporary ones until you will be invested by Will, and then you will become bearers of the Future. Then your power will be dense and pure..." (93). (Here, I must admit, Rilke had looked over his shoulders).  

... One more quote would suffice: "During several months, I was so impressed by the uniqueness of the Arabs that I am now looking everywhere for the strong centre of their lives... recognizing the eternally exciting, the stream of vitality, in such a great mass, in so strong a nation" (133). Against that astonishing affinity with all
things Arab but surprisingly not Islamic! — the young Weiss, in the book’s ‘Introduction’, muses: “In order to understand their genius one would have to enter their circle and live with their associations. Can one do that?”

Asad is one of those Westerners who, with extraordinary efforts, tried to turn into real Arab. Like all the others, he became a virtual Arab for the simple reason that neither a civilization (Islamic), nor a nation (Turkey), nor an individual (after about 16) can fully assimilate another culture to the point of erasing the previous one. Cultural transmigration was, and is, a futile attempt. Yet Muhammad Asad, fuelled by his youthful infatuation, was perhaps closer than anybody else to becoming a “real” Arab.

We know from The Road to Mecca that the process which ultimately led Leopold Weiss to Islam was triggered by his political opposition to Zionism in Palestine. Unromantisches Morgenland seems to tell that story much more precisely. For him, Zionism had entered into an unholy alliance with Western powers and thereby became a wound in the body of the Near East. However, Weiss, otherwise quite far-sighted, expected Zionism to fail because of the “sick immorality” of its Israel project (33). He considered the very idea that the plight of the Jewish people could be cured through a homeland, without first healing the malady of Judaism as such, as sick one. The Jews, so thought Weiss, had not lost Palestine without reason. They had lost it for having betrayed their moral commitment and their God. Without reversing this disastrous course, it was useless to build roofs in Palestine. Weiss, still declaring himself to be Jew (45), did not reject Judaism but political Zionism (56), and did so less on political than on religious grounds. This is the surprise no.3
There is another major insight to be gained from Asad’s first book: his virulent cultural criticism of the Occident as spent, decadent, exploitative (capitalist) and mindlessly consumerist. Weiss does not indicate in any way that World War One had just taken place. But he betrays some of the cultural contempt, typical of the pre-war intellectuals and of their longing for what is “natural”, risky and existential when complaining “how terribly risky is the absence of risk” Indeed, he contemptuously contrasts liberal utilitarianism against an Orient that is about to “regain from its own self what is grand and new” and “allows individuals the freedom to live a life without borders” (74)....

Thus, Unromantisches Morgenland reveals Leopold Weiss as a poet, a lover (of Arabia), an anti-Zionist, and a moralist. What amazes one in all these respects is the authority with which he speaks as political pundit, making bold forecasts. Being a gifted amateur, he successfully poses as an accomplished expert on Near Eastern affairs in general. Obviously still a beginner in Arabic inspite of his Hebrew background, Weiss, mentions only to one single occasion where he used an interpreter, as a back-up (92). In so posturing, Weiss showed himself, so gifted that one would hesitate to accuse him of imposture. Did he, for instance, not grasp correctly in 1922 that “Arab unity will only come long after Arab freedom has been achieved in the individual countries, and not before” (124)? Chutzpah, or an extraordinary degree of intuition?

There is one last amazing thing that we find, or rather do not find, in Asad’s earliest book: Islam is virtually absent. The only time when it is mentioned, Asad dismisses it as being non-essential for the Arab genius because that is “rooted in its blood” (91) – a statement somewhat smacking of racist Arbophilia. Thus, while
holding many promises, the book did not foreshadow Asad's conversion to Islam.  

The editors of Frankfurter Zeitung immediately recognized the promise of the greatness of the author. So it was only logical for them to order another travelogue from him. Weiss accepted the assignment, received the money, but was unable to deliver (and was fired). However, only two years after the appearance of Unromantisches Morgenland, in 1926 in Berlin, he became a Muslim.

II

Against this illustrious background, let us now turn to the other end, and beyond, and consider Muhammad Asad's eventful life in order to assess the impact he has had on Islam in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and to find out how his promise, so great in 1922, would materialize.

In 1901, in Leipzig, Max Henning – possibly a pseudonym for August Müller, an Orientalist professor at Königsberg University – published his well-known and much appreciated translation of the Qur'\textacuten into German. It is to be noted, however, that in his 'Introduction' he observed that "Islam has obviously played out its political role." This was, of course, the accepted view among the politicians and orientalists in Europe, and that too for understandable reasons: The entire Muslim world, except for a tiny part in the interior of Arabia, had been subjected to colonization. Both de-islamization and Christianization seemed to be making headway. The Islamic moorings of the Muslim elites who had been educated in the West had been weakened. In short, the Occident, more vigorous and dynamic and functionally more
impressive in great many respects and embodying rationality and progress, was seen to be achieving its mission civilisatrice world-wide.\textsuperscript{31}

Today we know that Henning and his fellow observers had made a misjudgment so crass that it amuses us today. By hindsight the question is whether they could have foreseen the enormous success of the Islamic Movements in revitalizing Islam throughout the world during the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{32}

This raises another question: What triggered these movements towards an Islamic awakening and rejuvenation? Could their effects have been foreseen then?\textsuperscript{33}

In my own view, Max Henning might have avoided his misjudgment if he had been aware of the Muslim intellectuals who were eventually instrumental in shaping Islam's contemporary upsurge: Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897), Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905), Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), Ḥasan al-Bannā (d. 1949), Muḥammad ʿIqbal (d. 1938), Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966), and Sayyid Abu‘l – A‘la al-Maūḍūdī (d. 1979). Muḥammad Asad too must be reckoned as belonging to this distinguished group of people and played a key role both as a thinker and as an activist who had an exceptional impact both horizontally and vertically.\textsuperscript{34}

Indeed, never since Karl May (1842-1912), the most popular author of adventure stories ever written in German, has anyone fascinated millions of German readers with things Arabic and Islamic as Muhammad Asad did with his Der Weg nach Mekka\textsuperscript{35} a book that became a best seller the very moment it appeared, first in English, as The Road to Mecca in 1954 and then in German in
Perhaps no other book except the Qur'ān itself led to a greater number of conversions to Islam.

...in The Road to Mecca Asad still appears as a friend of all things Arab, but now Arab virtues and Arab civilization are seen rooted in Islam. Even those passages with Asad took over from Unromantisches Morgenland and made it a part of his The Road to Mecca are not simply transposed; they have been presented as seen through Islamic prism. At the same time, one might venture to says that Asad's impact was not only horizontal. He has left his mark vertically as well in scientific depth, with a series of books each one of which is a pioneering effort if not a chef d'ouvre.

Let us cast a glance at them.

(i) The first of these is Islam at the Crossroads (Lahore: Ashraf 1934), showed Asad once more as a cultural critic with a political vision, as a sociologist of religion, and as a political thinker with analytical capabilities bordering on prophetic...

...Small in format and limited to 160 pages, Islam at the Crossroads is in fact a monumental historical, intellectual, and sociological critique of Christianity and the occident as a whole. It can be considered to be the first almost total rejection of Europe ("born out of the spirit of the Crusades"; 68) and Western ideology. This was later followed up by writers such as Sayyid Qutb and the trend has now caught on in my quarters. In this respect one may consider Asad as a predecessor even of William Ophuls, Requiem for Modern Politics and Michael Houllebeca, The World as Supermarket.

Equally important is the fact that Asad, in an entirely orthodox manner, defends the Sunnah from the attacks which were made by
Iqnaq Goldziher towards the end of the nineteenth century and those that would be made by Joseph Schact around the middle of the twentieth century onwards. At the same time, already in 1934, he envisages a revivification of Islamic jurisprudence (159) in order to overcome the "petrification of fiqh" and the "narrow-mindedness of the "ulama class". More reasonable than the later attempts at" Islamization of Knowledge", Asad urges to "Study exact sciences on Western lines, but not to concede to their philosophies" (92). The aim was not to reform Islam, "Islam as a spiritual and social institution cannot be improved" (154).

Even though Asad was realistic about the intensity of the Western prejudice against Islam, in this book he is on the whole remarkably optimistic about the future of his new religion. (Not much later this was to change somewhat in view of his interpretation of the developments in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan).

(ii) The second book of Asad was a translation, along with commentary, on parts of Imam Bukhārī's Ḥadīth collection, named Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī into English under the title The Early Years of Islam, first published in Lahore in 1938. In this work we meet, for the first time, Asad as a traditional 'ālim, entering a field normally reserved for the traditionally trained 'ulamā'.

...with his extensive notes on parts of the Sunnah, Asad followed up his view – first expressed in Islam at the Crossroads - that not Fiqh but the Qurʾān and the Sunnah must be refocused as the centre-pieces of Islam. With his work on the Ṣaḥīḥ, by giving the entire corpus of Ḥadīth a fresh credibility and respectability, Asad counted the dangerous trend to turn Islam into merely some form of a vague and amorphous Deism. It was a major effort indeed.
Even since, indiscriminate assaults on the *Sunnah*, as mounted by Goldziher and later by Schacht, look somewhat inept.\(^47\)

(iii) Asad’s *The Principles of State and Government in Islam* (1961),\(^48\) again a small book of 107 pages only, has become an essential foundation for most further efforts to rejuvenate Islamic jurisprudence and to develop a much needed Islamic theory of state.\(^49\)

...Asad concluded that a “government subject to the people’s consent is a most essential prerequisite of an Islamic state”, that “the leadership of the state must be of an elective nature”\(^36\), and that “the legislative powers of the state must be vested in an assembly chosen by the community for that purpose \(^45\). On the whole, Asad arrived at the conclusion that “a presidential system of government, somewhat akin to that practiced in the United States, would correspond more closely to the requirement of an Islamic polity” \(^61\).\(^50\)

We will run into follow Muslims who continue to claim that democracy is essentially incompatible with Islam. It is then that we realize how ground-breaking Asad was in his field some 40 years ago. But we also run into ‘*Ulama’ like Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī and Fathi Osman who maintain that such people neither know enough of Islam nor of democracy, indicating that Asad’s views are shared by a number of influential Islamic scholars.\(^51\)

(iv) *This Law of Ours and Other Essays* (1987)\(^52\) seems to be the latest book of Asad. Infact, however, it consists in part of some of his oldest writing. Asad’s struggle to delineate the boundaries between *Sharī’ah* and *fiqh* appear in an intensified form in this book. Asad drives home the point that the “real” *Sharī’ah* must be
identified (and possibly codified). Backed up by Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Ibn Ḥazm, he takes uncompromising stand that nothing merely based on *ijmāʿ* or *qiyyās* – qualifies to be reckoned as a divine norm. On the basis of the Qurʾān and the *Sunnah* and the Qurʾān and the *Sunnah* alone a new *ijtihād* was needed in order to develop a modern *fiqh*, responsive to contemporary issues. This modern *fiqh* should be much simpler than the highly complex traditional one. Asad hastened to add that, of course, no results of the new *ijtihād* could be admitted as part of the *Sharīʿah* either, otherwise modern *fuqahā* would repeat the mistake of their ancestors: to petrify their jurisprudence.\(^{53}\)

*This Law of Ours* is of particular interest to Pakistan; Muslims... He looked beyond official declarations of Islamism when he stated: Neither the mere fact of having a Muslim majority, nor the mere holding of governmental key positions by Muslims, nor even the functioning of the personal laws of the *Sharīʿah* can justify us in describing any Muslim state as an “Islamic State” (109). He made it clear that neither the introduction of *Zakāt*, nor outlawing *ribā*, nor prescribing *ḥijāb* or administering *hudūd* punishments *in and by themselves* will do the trick of turning a country into an Islamic one. For that, so Asad felt, there is only one way: to bring about “a community that *really* lives according to the tenets of Islam” and presently “there is not a single community of this kind in sight” (14).\(^{54}\)

It is in observations such as these that we encounter for the first time Muḥammad Asad the Muslim idealist who had begun to express bitter feelings about the ground realities of the world of Islam.\(^{55}\)
After working on it for decades, Asad’s oeuvre reached its peak with his translation into Shakespearean English and commentary of the Qur’ān, which appeared in 1980 under the title *The Message of the Qur’ān*. It was the best next only to Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s and Marmaduke Pickthall’s translations which are the most remarkable among the contemporary efforts to convey the message of the Qur’ān in English. Asad’s is perhaps the only translation which has been further translated into several languages such as Turkey and Swedish. His work is particularly appreciated for the lucidity and precision of its commentary, based on his stupendous command of Bedouin Arabic. Readers appreciate perhaps most that Asad treats them as grown-ups. He exposes the root of the translation problem, relates other options (and reasons given for choosing them), and then explains which reason(s) he preferred in his particular translation.

On two grounds, the style of Asad’s translation is debatable: On the one hand it does not reflect the terse, compact, even laconic style of the Qur’ān which Marmaduke Picthall caught so much better in his translation of 1930. The difference between the two results from Asad’s attempt to come as close as possible to nuances of meaning. Wherever, as in most cases, fully equivalent nouns and verbs are not available in both languages, Asad resorts to the use of qualifying adjectives and adverbs, absent in the Qur’ānic text, or even to the duplication of noun-renderings, for instance, *Shirʿah* in 5:48 as “Law and way of life.” As a result, Asad’s translation of a few Arabic words sometimes covers two whole lines.

The basmalah is a good case in point. Pickthall translates it as: “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful”; Asad as: “In the
name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace (emphasis added). Not only is the choice of ‘Dispenses’ unfortunate, the very idea of putting Al-Rahmān (or, in other places, Al-Ḥakīm, Al-ʿAzīz, Al-Qādir, etc.) into superlative form smacks of Christian vocabulary and violates the simplicity of the Qurʿānic language. Abdullah Yusuf Ali commits the same mistake.⁶⁰

Many translators of the Qurʿān can be faulted today for the use of a high classical language which sounds both dated, let alone the fact that it is biblical. Shakespeare simply is not contemporary. I am not pleading for an “American” version (āla Irving) or a pedestrian, “cool”, colloquial style. The language of the Qurʿān also in translation must reflect that it is Allah who is speaking. At the same time the readers must not be put off by a level of speech that sounds so stilted and artificial that it loses credibility. The difference can be slight, but remains relevant, as when in 17:40 we either read “Verily, you are uttering a dreadful saying!” (Asad) or “Verily, ye speak an awful word” (Pikthall).⁶¹

Yet, as we will see below, quite a few others, more substantial objections have been made against Asad’s translation. In fact, no other translation is as controversial and is as heatedly debated as his.⁶²

Many have written more books than Asad. Few, however, have left a comparable impact. On the basis of his writings alone, Asad was indeed Austria’s (and Europe’s) greatest gift to Islam in the 20th century, René Guénon, Marmaduke Pickthall, Frithjof Schuon and Martin Lings notwithstanding.⁶³
IV

However, Asad was not only an intellectual who was guided by reason and was skeptical of Sufism... in the Christian world, the Benedictine Order still goes by the idea of *ora et labora* (pray and work), today phrased as *contemplation et combat* by Frere Pierre of Taizé. This ideal corresponds to the Islamic one of *al-insān al-kāmil*, a Muslim striving for perfection both in piety and action. The Prophet of Islam (peace be on him) was such a personality – as a husband, a father, a military commander, a statesman, a judge, and a mystic. Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, Ibn Taymiyyah, ‘abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī were such personalities. Muḥammad Asad in his own way was a kindred spirit to these great men.

I had some idea of this combination of traits in Asad but was surprised, nevertheless, when he drove up to my hotel in Lisbon, through thick city traffic, he at the wheel, at 85 years of age!

V

Given this background, one might assume that Muḥammad Asad was appreciated everywhere in Muslim world for his high-level contribution to its renaissance; but this is not yet the case. Yes, in the West, particularly in the United States and Western Europe, Asad is much admired, and not only among the relatively recent reverts to Islam but also among the Muslim migrants from abroad. In the East, except where his friendship with Muḥammad Iqbal is recalled – as among some in Pakistan, India, and Malaysia – this perhaps is not so. Infact, in the Arab world it is perhaps not considered a lack of education not to know anything about Muḥammad Asad. That, in my view is for three major reasons:
(1) Some Arab Muslims tend to be somewhat skeptical if a non-native speaker of Arabic tries his hand at the translation of the foundational texts of Islam. One might ask: could al-Zamakhsharī, simply because he was a Persian, have been faulted in regard to his command of Arabic. Our brethren-in-faith should, of course, have made an exception also in the case of Asad, given that his command of Arabic put many a native speaker to shame.66

(2) As a revert from the Mosaic faith at times Asad ran into a certain prejudice. At least some Muslims succumbed to the suspicion that he might have chosen Islam in order to undermine and pervert it. This misgiving became intense when in 1952, after 22 years of marriage, Asad divorced his Arab wife, Munīrah bint al-Ḥusayn al-Shammaī, the mother of his son Talal, and took another wife Pola Hamida, an American woman of Polish descent.67

It was of little avail that in the past other Jewish converts had proved to be exceptionally good Muslims, like the former rabbi ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām whom Muḥammad (peace be on him), according to a tradition narrated by Muʿādh b. Jabal, had even promised a place in Paradise.68 Alas, the same traditionist also reported about a Jew in Yemen who had accepted Islam only to desert it.69 Each of Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Kathīr in their Sīrah gives a vivid account of a whole number of Jewish hypocrites, including Saʿd b. Ḥunayf, who had only feigned their Islam.70 Abu Ḥūrayrah transmitted the Prophet’s complaint that he had not even been able to win over 10 rabbis to Islam.71 At any rate, a number of Muslims not only feared, and still fear, that – as predicted72 - they will split up into more than 70 sects but that the Jews and former Jews will play a role in that disaster.73
(3) Such misgivings became more concrete when Asad in his translation of the Qurʾān departed from its orthodox interpretation on several questions in a rather serious manner:

(a) In some cases, he departed from orthodoxy in the text of the translation itself. For instance, Asad eliminated the word *jinn* in his translation in favour of notions like good or bad impulses (derived from psychology and even psychiatry so fashionable during his youth). This approach would have been more acceptable if it had been dealt with in footnotes only. That would have been easy, given that Asad in Appendix-III had explained in detailed what *jinn* (and *Shaytan*) might mean in a specific context: spiritual forces, angelic forces, satanic forces, occult powers, invisible or *kitherto* unseen beings (944f.) Thus in Sūrat an-Nās 114:6 Asad renders *jinn* as “invisible forces, in 41:26 and 55:33 as “invisible beings”, and in 72:1 and 46:29 as “unseen beings”. In the Appendix and in his footnotes to both 46:29 and 72:1 Asad goes so far as to imply that *jinn* here might refer to humans, i.e. strangers.

(b) As explained in Appendix IV (996-998), Asad saw in *Isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj* a mystical experience of purely spiritual nature, not a physical occurrence: a real vision and therefore an objective reality and not just a dream) performed by Muhammad’s soul without his body. This interpretation of miraculous events is not only supported by ‘Āʾishah’s view and the absence of substantial *ahādīth* to the contrary. Asad mainly argues that the entire occurrence happened in the non-material world. Given the popular embellishments of *isrāʾ*, and *miʿrāj*, Asad’s translation was most vehemently
attacked in this context. His opponents were fond of pointing out that 'Aishah was still a child and not yet married to the Prophet (peace be on him) when the Night Journey and Ascension took place in 621. in reply, Asad showed himself ready to accept the formulations of the traditional interpretation side by side with his own. But this comprise was not acceptable to his detractors.74

(c). On the whole, Asad was accused of dealing with the Qur'ān a bit too rationally, like a crypto-Mu'tazilī: an instance in point is his interpretation of Jesus speaking in the crib, the saving of Ibrāhīm from the fire, and his denial of the historicity of Luqmān, Khiḍr, and Dhu’l-Qarnayn. His critics saw Asad interpreting too many things as merely allegorical.75

In fact, Asad saw in Luqmān a “legendary sage” and “mythological figure”,76 in Khiḍr a “mysterious sage” and an allegorical figure, symbolizing mystical insight accessible to man”,77 and even in Dhu’l Qarnayn an unhistorical personality whose “sole purport is a parabolic discourse on faith and ethics”.78

As far as these three figures are concerned, one might be best off saying: “wa Allāhu a’lam”! But with Ibrāhīm (21:96; 29:24) Asad finds himself on thinner ice when he deduces that he was not only saved from the fire, but was never thrown into it. It is true that the Qur’ān does not explicitly state that Ibrāhīm was in the fire. But to say that the phrase “God saved him from the fire”(29:24) “points, rather, to the fact of his not having been thrown into it79 seems to place limits on Allah’s ways and power of intervention.80
The same is true of Asad’s approach to Jesus’ speaking in the crib (19:30-33). For him, these verses “seem to be in the nature of trope, projecting the shape of things to come using the past tense to describe something that was to become real in the future.” Alternatively, Asad suggests that Jesus’ declaration in 19:30-33 might have been spoken at a much later time, after he had reached maturity, so that these verses were “an anticipatory description...” Here again, a miracle is ruled out on merely rationalistic grounds.

(d) Many ‘ulamā’ took issue with Asad’s categorical rejection of the doctrine of nāsikh and mansūkh, his denial of the possibility of the abrogation of earlier Qur’ānic verses by later ones, admitting nask only between subsequent scriptures. For him 2:106, 13:39 and 87:6f. only deal with the previous divine messages, replacing “one message by another (16:101). This, for him, corresponds to an obvious linear progression and maturation from the Old Testament (and its addressees, the Jews) via the Evangel (and its addressees, the Christians) to the last revelation, the Qur’ān. In fact, it seems odd to him to assume that Allah might change His mind in the course of a few years since “there is nothing that could alter His words” (18:27).

Asad dismisses the opposite traditional views as erroneous and unsupported by the Sunnah, also pointing out that there is no unanimity about which verses had supposedly been abrogated. He even suspected that some ‘ulamā, faced with what they might have perceived to be “inconsistencies” in the Qur’ān, had all too eagerly resorted to abrogation instead of taking the trouble of seeking reconciliation at a higher level of interpretation.
Asad’s re-interpretation of the role and rights of Muslim women were categorized by many as too apologetic. In particular, he was criticized for his interpretation of 24:31 where he concluded from ḫīmaḥā Zāhara minḥā that the obligation of Muslim women to cover their hair depended on the prevailing civilizational mores. According to Asad, this verse allowed “time-bound changes necessary for man’s moral and social growth”, taking into account that what is considered decent or indecent “might legitimately change over time.”

Asad admits that most women in Arabia, during the time of revelation, wore a ḫīmāḥār (head-cover) as mentioned in 24:31. But for him the rationale of this verse is the injunction to cover a woman’s bosom, whether by ḫīmāḥār or in some other way. In other words, Allah did not order Muslim women to wear a head-cover, ensuring that their head was covered. The gist of 24:31 consists of the command to hide from view the primary and secondary female sexual organs, not a woman’s hair. Asad does mention that a women’s public exposure traditionally is restricted to her face, hands and feet, but he fails to indicate that this is based on a ḥadīth.

Asad’s interpretation of 33:59 jibes with his views on 24:31. In the injunction for women to draw upon themselves some of their outer garments (min jalābībihinna) he again sees a time-bound formulation, the issue being not the means (the garments) but the result (a decent dress), i.e. “a moral guideline to be observed against the ever-changing background of time and social environment.”
Many people seem to remember Asad mainly as the man who denied that Muslim women were obligated to keep their head covered in the presence of male strangers. Indeed, in the heated political debate on the question of *hijāb*, an issue on which he is mainly cited as an authority by those opposed to *hijāb*, be it in Turkey, France or Germany. On this particular issue Asad’s work on the Qur’ān has had a divisive effect on Muslims. Typically, after I had favourably mentioned Asad during a lecture in Washington D.C in April 2000, the immediate response of a Shaykh attending my lecture was: “Don’t you know what Asad wrote about *Sūrat al-Nūr*”?  

VI

It was because of Asad’s views on such contentious points that the first edition of Asad’s translation, which had been sponsored by some Arabs, could not see the light of the day. In consequence, Asad’s relations with them became strained. Even though some of them such as Shaykh Ahmad Zakī Yamanī maintained their friendship with Asad, nevertheless, the strain that had developed presumably endured.

Be that as it may, Asad’s prestige continues to grow among the present-day Muslims especially in Europe and the United States. There are some indications which give rise to the view that the world-wide revitalization and rejuvenation of Islam in the 21st century might come from the West: it might come from Los Angeles, Oxford or London rather than from Cairo or Fes or Islamabad. If this assumption is correct, the hour may come soon when appreciation of Muḥammad Asad’s thought will become a truly global phenomenon.
Arfaque Malik

The Message of the Qurʾān: A Useful Contribution to Islamic Exegesis

In his review article, Arfaque Malik, in the year of the publication of The Message of the Qurʾān, writes, in The Muslim World Book Review, no. 1, 1980, about Asad’s translation: The Translation is not literal. Wherever necessary, however, literal translation is provided in the footnotes. The translation is by any standards an improvement on existing English translation, but would have been better had the author avoided the use of Biblical forms such as thou, thee, thy etc. Unfortunately missing are a proper introduction to the Holy Qurʾān and an index for quick reference.

The commentary is unique in so far as it often differs from the accepted interpretation. A brief explanation is given for all such variation. Extensively quoted in Tafsīr al-Manār, a commentary started by Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) and completed by Muḥammad Rashīd Ridā (1865-1935)

However, there are some interpretations of events and history, where the author departs from the “traditional” convictions: The following, taken at random, are some of such examples:

(a) The first three verses of Sūrah ash-Sharḥ (chapter: The Opening of the Heart) are translated as:

“(1) Have we not opened up thy heart (2) and lifted from thee the burden (3) that had weighed so heavily on thy back” (94:1-3). We are told in the footnotes that the ‘burden’ apparently refers to the Holy Prophet’s “mistakes” committed “before his call to Prophethood” (p.960). The author does not mention the type of mistakes committed. In an event this interpretation is against the
character of the Holy Prophet, who has been designated by Allah as an "excellent Exemplar" (33:21). The truth, however, is that the Holy Prophet had been saddled with the nerve-racking and back-breaking assignment of raising a degenerate people form the depth of moral turpitude to the pinnacle of spiritual excellence, and bringing about through them a revolution to rescue the whole humanity from ignorance and superstition.95

(The remaining examples are listed without comments).96

(b) ABRAHAM WAS NOT THROWN INTO THE FIRE

While explaining verse 21:69, Muhammad Asad says: "Nowhere does the Qur’ān state that Abraham was actually bodily thrown into the fire" (page 495).97

(c) NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ADULTERY AND FORNICATION:

The author comments on verse 24:2 as follows:
"The terms Zina signifies voluntary sexual intercourse between man and a woman not married to one another irrespective of whether one or both of them are married to other persons or not" (page 53).98

(d) NO VERSE ABROGATED

The author dismisses the "Theory of Abrogation" as a fanciful assertion, "which calls to mind the image a human author correcting, on second thought, the proof of his manuscript, deleting one passage and replacing it with another – there does not exist a single reliable Tradition to the effect that the Prophet ever declared a verse of the Qur’ānic to have been abrogated"
(c) BOTH LUQMAN AND AL-KHIDR ARE MYTHICAL FIGURES

Luqmān, referred to in verse 31:12, is, we are told, "a mythical figure". The holy Qur'ān uses it as "long before the advent of Islam the person of Luqmān had become a focal point of innumerable legends, stories and parables expressive of wisdom and spiritual maturity... as it uses the equally mythical figure Al-Khidr in Sūrah 18" (p. 628).

(f) DHU'L QARNAYN IS ALLEGORICAL

"The allegory of Dhu'l Qarnyn", in verse 18:83, "is meant to illustrate the qualities of a powerful and just rule, it is possible to assume that this designation is an echo of the above-mentioned ancient symbolism, which being familiar to the Arabs from very early times - had acquired idiomatic currency in their language long before the advent of Islam" (p. 452).

(g) JESUS DID NOT SPEAK IN THE CRADLE

With regard to verse 3:45, we are told that this is a metaphorical allusion to the prophetic wisdom which was to inspire Jesus from a very early age" (p. 73).

(h) JESUS NOT TAKEN UP BODILY

We have the following comments on verse 4:15: "Nowhere in the Qur'ān is there any warrant for the popular belief that God has taken up Jesus bodily in his lifetime, into heaven. The expression
‘God exalted him unto Himself’... denotes the elevation of Jesus
to the realm of God’s special grace...” (p. 135).

At the end of the book, the author has added four useful
appendices wherein he discusses “symbolism and Allegory in the
Qur’ān, “Al-Muqatta‘āt”, “The Term and Concept of Jinn” and
“The Night Journey”. The book is, on the whole, a useful
contribution to Islamic exegesis.103
Ismā‘īl Ibrāhīm Nawwāb

‘A Matter of Love: Muḥammad Asad and Islam’

Ismā‘īl Ibrāhīm Nawwāb is an outstanding scholar from Saudi Arabia. He has taught at the University of Edinburgh and University of Malaya; had been general manager of Saudi Aramco, co-editor of the Foundation of Islam. His publications include a paper on "Muslims and the West in History." His article “A Matter of Love: Muḥammad Asad”, occupied 70 pages of the reputed research journal Islamic Studies [39:2 (2000) pp.155-231] thus the longest article ever published in the history of the journal. He is the author of Berlin to Makkah: Muḥammad Asad’s Journey into Islam.

About Asad’s journey to Islam, Nawwab writes: Two roads diverged in Berlin in the 1920’s: a well worn one to the West, the other, rarely travelled, to the east. Leopold Weiss, a young gifted Jewish writer, traveller and linguist with a thorough knowledge of the Bible and the Talmud and with deep roots in European culture took the road eastword to Makkah as Muḥammad Asad, a name that came to stand high on the roll of twentieth century English-writing Muslim scholars and thinkers.

...The bare outline of Muḥammad Asad’s life is no less intriguing than the twists and turns of an Agatha Christie mystery novel. It is an absorbing tale of an inquiring mind who set off on a career in journalism, proceeded to search for truth and ended his voyage of discovery by embracing Islam and interpreting it to its own adherents and the West.

Asad’s Magnum Opus: The Message of the Qur’ān
And it was God’s last message to mankind, the Qur’ān, which
seized Asad both for a moment and for a lifetime ever since that fateful Berlin subway ride on an autumnal day in 1926.\textsuperscript{107}

Many years of Asad's young and mature life were spent in contemplating the Qur'an's meaning and dreaming of producing a new rendering of the Holy Book with a commentary in the tradition of the great commentators whose scholarship enriched Qur'anic studies. Even the ten years that he had spend labouring on a translation of the entire \textit{Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī} that was to be irretrievably lost in the waters of Ravi were a necessary part of his attempt to comprehend the divine message: full familiarity with the Prophet's traditions was a requisite for understanding the Qur'an.\textsuperscript{108}

In \textit{The Message of the Qur'ān}, an English language translation of, and commentary on, the Muslim Holy Writ, Asad realized his lifelong dream at the age of 80...\textit{It was the creative eruption that capped his scholarly contributions and long service to Islam.}\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{The Holy Qur'ān and its Translation}

...As there were already some thirty renderings of the Muslim scripture in English, why did Asad undertake yet another translation of the Qur'ān in today's premier international language? Muslims believe that the Qur'ān is the Word of God revealed in Arabic and untranslatable into any other tongue. Can, therefore, the Word of God be adequately translated at all? What challenges face its interpreter and how can his success be measured? Furthermore, Asad not only rendered the Qur'ān into English. He assumed another heavy burden: he also wrote a \textit{tafsir}, or a commentary, on it. But can any time-bound commentary penned by a mere mortal do justice to God's eternal Word? These
are some of the questions which arise when considering the translation and exegesis of the Muslim Holy Book.\textsuperscript{110}

\textit{Traductor Traditor}

A translator of any literary text is faced with two immediate problems: rendering the meaning of the original faithfully in a language that is idiomatic and in a style that resonates with the unique linguistic traits and flavour that are the particular grace of every language....the Latin adage, which dubs translators as traitors, \textit{traductor traditor}, illustrates pointedly the age old agonizing dilemma of the craft of translation.\textsuperscript{111}

In the case of rendering Arabic into English the problem is greater because of the vast gap that has to be bridged between the different syntactical, rhetorical, and linguistic words of Arabic, a Semitic language, and a Western, Indo-European tongue. As for the Arabic of the Qur'ān the challenge to the translator is multiplied manifold for a variety of reasons. First of all the beauty and power of its language, rhythm and cadences are inimitable. Second, though Qur'ānic diction is highly elliptical and condensed, and expresses a world of meaning with pungent brevity, it is comprehensible to those who understand Arabic. But the translator of such elliptical constructions which are foreign to most other languages is forced to add linking phrases to clarify his rendering without resorting to a profusion of unwelcome interpolations into the Qur'ānic text. Third, as the most vigorous extant Semitic language, Arabic has preserved a lot of the hard— to—translate everyday imagery of an ancient world. Fourth, and not least important, the Qur'ān has coined numerous usages and terms to express new religious and moral concepts; it thus gave novel meanings to old, familiar words. For all these reasons, it is a
formidable task for even the most talented bilingual scholars to translate the Divine Word into language such as English.\textsuperscript{112}

**The Eternal Word of God Versus the Ephemeral Word of Man**

...The Qur’an is the Word of God, and hence immutable, perfect, and eternal; commentaries by scholars are the work of men whose vision must necessarily be a reflection of their time, environment and personal bias, and hence subject to error and change. While the work of objective translators and commentators of the Qur’an deserve respect, it is not sacrosanct or above criticism.\textsuperscript{113}

**Asad’s Translation and Exegesis of the Qur’an**

Among the recent Western interpreters of the Qur’an, Asad was certainly the most eminently qualified for the task. He had spent over three decades studying the Qur’an, the *Hadīth* and other allied Islamic disciplines. He had lived in Arabia and gained familiarity with Arabic through daily contact with its people more extensively than any other Western translator of the Qur’an had ever done. He had been in contact with some of the most perceptive Muslims of his times. An earnest convert, he treated the Qur’an’s text with the veneration and humility of a believer and its message with the passion of an intellectual on a mission.\textsuperscript{114}

Of the primary aim of his translation, Asad says in the foreword to *The Message of the Qur’an*: “...it is an attempt—perhaps the first an attempt – at a really idiomatic explanatory rendition of the Qur’ānic message into a European language.”\textsuperscript{115}

Another of the main aims of Asad’s translation was to penetrate the veil that over the years has enveloped the meanings of some Arabic words due to semantic change and to reveal them in their
original connotations at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an. He documented these semantic changes by careful reference to the work of classical lexicographers and philologists and earlier commentators and thus brought a rare freshness and accuracy to his rendering. He was also helped in this effort by the "intangible communion" he had acquired with the spirit of the Arabic language through first hand contact with its people. While not going along with the fashion of translating the Qur'an into a modern idiom that may jar the solemnity or nobility of the Sacred Book, he tried to minimize the use of archaisms.

In his exegesis, Asad was eclectic. He benefited from the great classical and modern commentators who represent a broad range of exegetical approaches... Asad also supported his interpretations by the use of the most authoritative lexicographical and philological resources... The wealth of material that Asad quotes from the classical authorities... is one of the fortes of his renderings: in no other translation of the Holy Book in English there is as much commentation and interpretation from the giants of exegesis whose original work is normally accessible only to scholars of Arabic.

Though he was eclectic, Asad's bias is clear as is shown by the authority he most often quoted, the Mufti of Egypt Muhammad 'Abduh, whose great learning is unquestioned, but who did lean towards the rationalistic school of al-Zamakhsharî. This bias occasionally exposes Asad's translation to the faults that the followers of this school are heir to. What perhaps impressed Asad most about 'Abduh was that for the first time in the modern era a very erudite scholar and reformer viewed the Qur'an primarily as a book of divine guidance for Muslims in matters concerning their life in this world and in the Hereafter when many for a long period
had regarded it merely as a source of theology or a model for illustrating the finer points of Arabic rhetoric or grammar...

Yet, Asad at times maintained his intellectual independence and disagreed with his distinguished predecessors whenever he felt it was necessary to do so to elucidate his own interpretations. However, thorough scholar that he was, in such cases Asad was not unfair to other views than his own: he would mention the alternative interpretations in his notes and give reasons to explain his choices.

...Asad gracefully combines the personal and intellectual humility characteristics of inspired interpreters of the Divine Word with the promise of the perennial spiritual effulgence and the ever-expanding world of human knowledge beckoning to the devout exegete.

The challenge of Qur'ān tafsīr will continue to confront the scholars of succeeding generations. As did Asad, some of them will navigate their own lengthy individual routes to reach the shores of understanding. Only time will tell which interpretations of the Divine Word are likely to benefit their readers. Certainly, only God can truly judge their ultimate worth.

But The Message of the Qur'ān was not only a prodigious work of exegesis but also of translation into international language of the day par-excellence. Moreover, English was not Asad's mother tongue and his rendering appeared after The Koran Interpreted (1955), a two-volume elegant version by the versatile and fair-minded scholar A.J. Arberry (d.1969), the doyen of Orientalist translators of modern times. This reminds us of the Polish Joseph Conrad (d.1924) who learned his English as a seaman but turned
out consummate novels in English that, after a hundred years, are still fascinating...

But there will never be unsurpassable rendering of the Qur'ān... in fact, had the meticulous Asad lived longer it is certain that he would have kept on improving his rendering, for as he said: “The longer I worked on this holy task, the more I realized how distant any human intellect is – and always be from a complete understanding of the Word of God.” This is also borne out by comparing the verses he had translated in The Road to Mecca with the same verses when he came to render them in The Message of the Qur'ān. Asad’s translation, like all other Muslim translations of the Qur'ān in any language, are sincere, dedicated – yet only transient and in no way completely satisfactory, attempts at interpreting what is essentially uninterruptable: the word of God revealed in Arabic.

Asad’s Legacy to Posterity

...It is no easy task to summarize his many astounding accomplishments without doing him injustices. Asad was the foremost Paladin of the sharī‘ah among Western converts. His life story, work and thought filled many educated Muslims with the fine aromatic spirit of his faith and genius. He was a man who received his chief nourishment from the Qur’ān and Sunnah of the Prophet and spent his energy on the preservation of the ideals of Islam and the identity of Muslim Ummah. He held that Islam’s spiritual and cultural achievements remain across the centuries a brilliant and moving spectacle, but he was interested in Muslims carrying an aura not of past glory but of continuing greatness and serving as model for all nations.
Often he seemed to be ahead of his contemporaries in forcefully pointing up the necessity of a dynamic approach to solving the problems of the Muslims by the use of *ijtihād* based on the two ultimate authorities in Islam: the Qur’ān and authenticated traditions of the Prophet. He argued passionately following this rugged path was the only way to ensure a successful revival in the Muslim world. In his insistence on the recourse to independent thinking he drew inspiration from ...luminaries of the classical, medieval and modern periods... He was deeply respectful of the achievements of the great scholars of the past, but was critical of blind deference to individual opinions which according to Islamic principles cannot be regarded as infallible. ...Today, many distinguished scholars endorse the concept of *ijtihād* enthusiastically.\(^{126}\)

Asad's disenchantment with secularism and materialism was the child of his very intimate, personal experience of the West. This disappointment was deeply felt, searchingly scrutinized and trenchantly expressed. *The impact of his devastating iconoclastic critique of these trends reoriented many Muslims away from defeatism to pride in their Muslims identity and heritage.* Asad's cautionary and trailblazing examination of the debilitating effects of secular and materialistic thought on society has led to the appearance of several excellent studies on the subject. Also, the predictions Asad made some sixty-five years ago on the effect of this thought on Muslims have not been wide of the mark.\(^{127}\)

**Conclusion**

Though Asad did not leave an organization or disciples, posterity will continue to benefit from his radiant thought through the written legacy he left in many fields: travel and autobiography.
Sunnah and shari'ah, jurisprudence and Qur'anic exegesis, secularism and westernization, political theory and constitutional law. Sadly, as is the case with most writings, which can only be a portrait of their author's age, Asad's too, will eventually be dated. Asad's translations and interpretations of the Qur'an and Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī will in time be supplanted, his views on secularism and westernization will be reexamined and modified, his successful espousal of ijtihād will become passé, and his proposals for political and constitutional reform will be enacted. But one work of Asad's promises to escape the earthly oblivion that is the frequent fate of almost all human endeavour — his unequalled, dazzling masterpiece: *The Road to Mecca.*

But only God knows the future. Meanwhile, the passionate love affair of a great and splendid European with Islam is indelibly inscribed into the annals. For, once upon a time, two roads diverged in Berlin, and he, Muḥammad Asad, took the one less traveled by. He took the road to Makkah — "and that has made all the difference."
Abdur Raheem Kidwai

Prof. Abdur Raheem Kidwai is a professor of English literature at Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh. He is well known for his reviews on English Translations of the Holy Qur'ān. His review articles are almost a permanent feature of world renowned The Muslim World Book Review, U.K. His brief comments on a good number of English Translations of Holy Qur'ān is being presented in Appendix 2 of this work. Following are Kidwai’s comments on Muḥammad Asad’s The Message of the Qur’ān (1980):

The Message of the Qur’ān by Muhammad Asad (Gibraltar, 1980) represents a notable addition to the body of English translation couched in chaste English. This work is nonetheless vitiated by deviations from the viewpoint of the Muslim orthodoxy on many counts. Averse to take Qur’ānic statements literally, Asad denies the occurrence of such events as the throwing of Abraham into the fire, Jesus speaking in the cradle, etc. He also regards Luqman, Khizr and Zulqarnain as ‘mythical figures’ and holds unorthodox views on the abrogation of verses. These blemishes apart, this highly readable translation contains useful, though sometimes unreliable background information about the Qur’ānic Surah and even provides exhaustive notes on various Qur’ānic themes.\footnotemark
Chapter-5

Charles Le Gai Eaton (Hassan Abdul Hakeem)

Charles Le Gai Eaton was born in Switzerland and educated at Charterhouse at King’s College, Cambridge. He was brought up as an agnostic. He worked for many years as a teacher and journalist in Jamaica and Egypt (where he embraced Islam in 1951) before joining the British Diplomatic Service. After retirement he was associated with the Islamic Cultural Center in London. Now he works as a journalist, author and lecturer on religious topics.

Eaton’s aim is to present the Islamic concept and discipline to those whose minds have been shaped by Western culture. He is of the opinion that there has been a singular failure on the part of Muslims to communicate their religion across cultural frontiers. Traditional Muslims have altogether no understanding of the Occidental mind. The defence of religion by modernist Muslims has been erratic as they sought to prove that Islam contained nothing incompatible with the best contemporary fashions of thought. Eaton pleads that the faith has to be protected by an intellectual armour suited to the condition of this age. Therefore, Muslims are under obligation to deepen and develop the intellectual bases of faith.¹³¹

Gai Eaton, a leading British Muslim thinker and author of Islam and the Destiny of Man, one of major works which explore and illuminate many aspects of Islam, says of The Message of the Qur’ān after pointing out some of the limitations of the rationalist approach:

“In practical terms this is the most helpful and instructive version of the Qur’ān that we have in English. This remarkable man has done what he set out to do, and it may be doubted whether his achievement will ever be surpassed.”¹³²

Gai Eaton’s prologue, which includes a short biography of Asad, is extraordinarily perceptive. He concludes that ‘no one has succeeded [better] – or come closer to succeeding in conveying the meaning of the Qur’án (p. iii). Eaton manages to convey beautifully the awe this unique divine revelation commands, clearly spelling out why the Qur’án is a scripture without equal: semi genesis, an aliud.¹³³ Murad Hofmann raises an objection on some comments of Eaton appearing in the prologue to The Message of the Qur’án: I warn only against revelling in a supposed symmetry between Jesus as incarnation and the Qur’án as in liberation of God (p. iii). This is not only a doubtful but theologically dangerous importation of a thoroughly Christian concept. Eaton strangely mistakes the book’s title ‘The Message of the Qur’án for ‘The Meaning of the Qur’án (p.iv). His remark that the Frankfurter Zeitung was edited by a relative when Asad worked there is incorrect.¹³⁴
Mawlana Sayyid Abu’l A’la Mawdūdī (1903-1979)

Mawdūdī was one of the most influential and prolific and contemporary Muslim thinkers. His interpretive reading of Islam has contributed greatly to the articulation of Islamic revivalist thought and has influenced Muslim thinkers and activists from Morocco to Indonesia. His impact is evident in the exegesis of Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, as well as in the ideas and actions of Algerian, Iranian, Malaysian, and Sudanese revivalist activities. In South Asia, where Mawdūdī’s ideas took shape, his influence has been most pronounced. Jama’at-i-Islami (the Islamic party), the organization that has embodied his ideology over the course of the past six decades, has played a significant role in the history and politics of Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the South Asian communities of the Persian Gulf States, Great Britain and North America.\(^{135}\)

In response to a query from Maryam Jameelah, on Asad’s book, *Islam at the Crossroads*, Mawdūdī responds:\(^{136}\) You have asked me about the book, *Islam at the Crossroads*, I have read that book along with other writings by Muhammad Asad and I had the opportunity of personal acquaintance with him when after accepting Islam, he settled in Indo-Pak sub-continent. Perhaps you may be interested to know that he is also of (Austrian) Jewish origin. *I have great respect for his exposition of Islamic ideas and especially his criticism of Western culture and its materialistic philosophies. I am sorry to say, however, that although in the early days of his conversion, he was a staunch, practicing Muslim, gradually he drifted close to the ways of the so-called “Progressive” Muslims just like the “reformed” Jews. Recently his divorce from his Arab wife and marriage to a modern American girl hastened this process of deviation more definitely.*
Although these melancholy facts cannot be disputed, much less justified, yet I cannot blame him too much for this. At the time we met during the first years after his conversion, very welcome and pleasant changes were brought about in his life. But once a man begins to live the life of a true Muslim, all his capabilities lose their "market value". It is the same sad story with Muhammad Asad, who had always been accustomed to a high and modern standard of living and after embracing Islam, had to face the severest financial difficulties. As a result, he was forced to make one compromise after another. Still I hope that despite these adverse changes, his ideals and convictions have not altered even though his practical life has suffered many modifications. Our Holy Prophet (God's blessings be upon him) once said that a time would come when to follow his ways would be like holding a live coal in one's hands. This prophecy has been fulfilled. Now-a-days if a man or woman tries to practice the teachings of Islam, stiff resistance is encountered by materialistic civilization at each and every step. The whole environment turns hostile to such a Muslim. Either he must be forced to compromise or he will constantly be at loggerheads with society. The strongest and most steady nerves are indispensable for such a resolute and unremitting struggle.  

Mawdūdī has in numerous of his writings criticized the modernists for their approach and inferences. As many of conclusions of Asad and his approach resemble modernists, Mawdūdī's comments on them would be worthwhile. Again in response to a query from Maryam Jameelah, Mawdūdī writes about the apologetics: I completely agree with all you have written about apologetics. There are two underlying causes for this sort of reasoning. Either it results from faulty understanding and ignorance of Islam or it is the natural results of the defeatist mentality which blindly accepts the values of the dominant culture as the supreme criterion.
Consequently, Western Civilization has become the judge of the merits and "faults" of Islam — not vise-versa. The pioneer of apologetics in the Indo-Pak sub-continent was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his colleague, Chiragh Ali, Later Sayed Ameer Ali followed suit. (Ameer Ali and Chiragh Ali were both Shiahs). Finally the entire Aligarh School raised its chorus to tender apologies on behalf of Islam to the West.\textsuperscript{139}

...In Egypt, Shaikh Muḥammad ‘Abduh adopted a similar line of compromise and thus opened the door wide for the Westernizers in the Arabic-speaking world who came after him.\textsuperscript{140}

One they began to proceed along this path, they found it almost impossible to set any limits for their extravagant sophistries. \textit{Jihad} was interpreted as only a "defensive" war. Islamic teachings pertaining to war prisoners (slaves) were given the most strange and absurd meanings. Polygamy was half-heartedly conceded as only an emergency measure, the sooner declared unlawful, the better. Miracles mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān were either denied outright or fantastic attempts were made to explain away as natural phenomena. Angels were said to be merely 'forces of nature" and Revelation (\textit{Wahy}) the subjective result of extraordinary mental activity projected outward resembling the hallucinations of the insane. Vanquished politically, the Muslims suffered no less serious defeat in the realm of thought and because of their mental paralysis; they could not grasp the guidance of Allah to His last Prophet.\textsuperscript{141}

Mawlana Mawdūdī is reported to have appreciated Asad's translation of \textit{Ṣahīh Bukhārī} — a feat accomplished by him in earlier years after his migration to the Indo-Pak subcontinent, most part of which was lost during the upheavals of 1947, when India and Pakistan emerged as two sovereign nation-states.
Mushtaq Parker

In an article published in The Independent, Monday 23, March 1992, Mushtaq Parker highlights some of the obscure points of Asad's biography and brings to the fore some ideas of him, particular of the last phase of Asad's life. He introduces Asad, thus: Buried in the small Muslim cemetery is Granada in Spain is one Muhammad Asad, one of the most prominent Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century. His life was one of the great adventure, whether as a teenage soldier in the Austrian army in 1918 or as a young journalist in the Berlin of Twenties. His travels in Middle East far surpassed the ventures of Burton and Doughty in their range and in their close involvement with the peoples and cultures of the region.

Asad was Pakistan's ambassador at the United Nation in the early Fifties, and the confidant of many major Muslim figures including King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia, and his son King Faisal; Omar Mukhtar, the Libyan mujahid who rebelled against the Italian occupation; and Mohammad Iqbal, the great Pakistani poet and philosopher. Yet Asad died in near obscurity in Mijas on the Costa del Sol last month. News of his death filtered out only weeks later, but it has left a profound sense of loss among his many admirers.

...His almost insatiable “urge to wander” and “inner restlessness” were evident from his teens...invited to Jerusalem by his uncle, Dorien Weiss, a prominent psychiatrist and early pupil of Freud, he left the news agency that year for a journey to Middle East which was to change his life.

In Jerusalem he encountered the Zionist Committee of Action but
from the outset conceived a strong objection to Zionism – the objection which he personally conveyed to Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the leader of the Zionist Movement. At the same time he became a special correspondent for Frankfurter Zeitung, making a name for himself with his dispatches; from Palestine which were later published in a book entitled Unromantisches Morganland (1924).\textsuperscript{147}

He travelled extensively in the Mashreq and Maghreb, and Transjordan, where he befriended the Emir. He briefly returned to Europe where he worked under Heinrich Simon, editor of the Frankfurter Zeitung, who sent him on his second journey to the Middle East, in 1924, after he had seen his parents, in Vienna, for the last time. In Cairo he met a prominent Islamic thinker, Mustafa Al-Maraghi, a pupil of the great Egyptian reformer Mohammad 'Abduh, and attended Arabic classes at Al-Azhar University.\textsuperscript{148}... it was only in late 1930s that he discovered that his parents had died in a Nazi concentration camp.\textsuperscript{149}

Asad’s sojourn in the Muslim world was, as he put it, not a “mere outward accommodation of a European to a Muslim community in which he happened to live”... [but was rather]\textsuperscript{150} “A conscious, whole-hearted transference of allegiance from one cultural environment to another”.\textsuperscript{151}

After two years in New York, the Asad’s travelled extensively before returning to Pakistan in 1955, where Ayub Khan, then commander-in-Chief of the Army was keen for him to settle. (Years later President Zia-ul-Haq made a similar request but Zia was killed before Asad could decide.) However, Asad’s chief ambition was to translate the Koran into English. First Switzerland and then Morocco provided the setting for the preparation of his magnum opus The Message of the Qur’an (1980) dedicated to
“people who think”. In its intellectual engagement with the text and in the intimate, subtle and profound understanding of the pure classical Arabic of the Koran, Asad’s interpretation is of a power and intelligence without rival in English. However, its distribution has been limited because of controversy among a minority of Muslim extremists who dispute Asad’s interpretation of one or two verses.\textsuperscript{152}

Much of the translation work and writing was done at the Villa Assadiya, near Tangiers, where the Asads lived for 19 happy years.\textsuperscript{153} ...But, disillusioned with the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979, the war between Iran and Iraq and the ‘fundamentalist’ chaos in the Muslim world in general, the Asad moved to Lisbon.\textsuperscript{154}

Asad was saddened by the intellectual insularity of the Muslim World, the intolerance of the extremists, and was a powerful advocate of the rights of Muslim women. It was Asad’s insistence that the constitution of Pakistan allow for the election of a woman leader that opened the way for Benazir Bhutto. “The great mistake [of the Fundamentalists]”, he once explained, “is that most of these leaders start with the hudud, criminal punishment. This is the end result of the Shari‘ah [Islamic Law], not the beginning. The beginning is the rights of people. There is no punishment in Islam which has no corresponding right.” He called for the codification of Shari‘ah, suggesting a methodology in The Principles of State and Government in Islam.\textsuperscript{155}

To Asad, the only real Islamic society existed during the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. The Shari‘ah, ‘as it is conceived today together with Fiqh (Jurisprudence), he argued, cannot be implemented because “it is too huge a structure. But... codified
and reduced to its proper scoop [it] can be implemented." This view, together with his attack on the Islamic revolution of Islam (he refused to acknowledge Khomeini as "the Inām"), which he considered a disaster for the Muslim world, made him a few powerful enemies.  

His self-imposed "exile" from the Muslim world (echoing the frustrations in his first book, *Islam at the Crossroads*, 1952) was, in retrospect, a mistake and the Asad's move to Mijas was really to be nearer their Arab friends who visited Marbella regularly. The former Saudi Oil Minister Sheikh Yamani was a patron for Asad for many years and the Emir Salman, Governor of Riyadh and brother of king Fahd of Saudi Arabia, invited Asads to live in Saudi Arabia – the "Homecoming of the Heart" for which Asad had been longing for many years and which would have been the title of the second half of his autobiography on which he was working till his death.
Numerous websites carry the advertisements of books pertaining to Islam and the Muslims. Some offer the readers opportunities to share their reviews with other readers through their portals. Muḥammad Asad along with other scholars occupy fairly good space in such reviews. Here a review from Polo.com and amazon.com is reproduced to have a feel of how a non-Muslim (here Hindu) educated person, who, it seems through his other comments, not included here, that he is familiar with other tafāsīr written in the modern times, is impressed by Muḥammad Asad’s *The Message of the Qurʾān*. He writes:

*I find Asad’s interpretation to be the most bona-fide and coherent, it is scrupulously referenced* so he does not give his opinion rather quotes some of the great scholars after the manifestation of the Qurʾān such as Zamakhsharī, Ibn Kathīr as well as al-Qurtubi to name a few.

Asad’s translation is the best; undoubtedly this version supercedes all others. I have read this particular version and as I know there are various in circulation (esp. with Yusuf Ali) I suggest you get this version. If you are interested in Qurʾān, or anyone for that mater even one who understands proper Arabic I still suggest you get this book. *It is a key in understanding the Qurʾān Regardless of whether you know or are oblivious to the Arabic tongue.* The Qurʾān is a legacy of humanity. Regardless of whether you are Muslim or not it has impacted on human thought and has changed social norms as we once knew it. It is a piece of history and very much an inlay in the fabric of humanity. The final text of the Semitic religions which is said to be the synergy of all that preceded it.
I have personally read various scriptures and I find that the Qur’ān has its valid standing. People often claim it is a copy of Torah/Tanakh or the Bible, however, I feel although it has inherent qualities from the preceding scriptures it does have a nature and spirit of its own. Regardless of how others see it or portray it, it is your own opinion that should matter to you. So instead of finding and agreeing to the opinion of others of whether or not it is a valid scripture or a militant propaganda I suggest that you, yourselves have a read and read that which does in fact reflect the authentic creed.

I personally found this scripture to be inspiring, to increase the level of human consciousness inside of me and finally understanding that the Qur’ān is a source of divine inspiration as opposed to a tool of destruction (as I, prior to reading it so perceived).

My perception has changed, and I carried a study of Qur’ān as I did with Bhagwad Gita. Both these books are beautiful in their composition and their message. I would strongly recommend any individual to give this book a read.
Zafar Ishaq Ansari

He has served as Professor of History, University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dehran, Saudi Arabia, the subject of his doctoral thesis was "The Early Developments of Islamic Jurisprudence in Kūfah: A Study of the Works of Abū Yūṣuf and al-Shaybānī. He is the coeditor of the famous book Islamic Perspective. Studies in honour of Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdūdi (The Islamic Foundation, London, 1979). He has been engaged in the translation of Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi’s Magnum Opus Tafheemul Qur’ān into English – many volumes of which are already out. He is an outstanding scholar of Islamic Studies engaged in numerous academic projects; in addition he edits academic journal Islamic Studies (Islamabad, Pakistan). It is under his editorship, two important articles on Muḥammad Asad were published in a single issue of the journal (volume 39, no.2, 2000); one ‘A Matter of Love: Muḥammad Asad and Islam’ (by Ismā’īl Ibrāhīm Nawwāb) and another ‘Muḥammad Asad: Europe’s Gift to Islam’ (by Murad Hofmann).

In his editorial note, titled ‘communication’ Zafar Ishaq Ansari writes: In recent weeks, as we were going to the press, we received two successive articles on Muḥammad Asad which adorn the present issue.158

To cast a bird’s-eye-view on Asad’s life, he was born in 1900 as Leopold Weiss in the city of Lvov in Galicia in Jewish family. In his twenties Weiss spent several years in the Near East as a journalist and embraced Islam on his return to Germany (in 1926), choosing Muḥammad Asad as his Muslim name.159

Not only after his conversion to Islam, Asad returned to the Near
East and spent many years in Arabia. These years were devoted to mastering Arabic, studying Islam, and integrating himself with the Muslim Unmah. In 1932 Asad moved to the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent where he lived until the early fifties and where his first book after his conversion to Islam was published under the title *Islam at the Crossroads* (Lahore: 1934). Since then, Asad kept enriching the literature on Islam in English (and, to less degree, in German) almost till his death in Spain in 1992. His two impactful books after *Islam at the Crossroads* are *The Road to Mecca* (first published in 1954) and then his magnum opus, *The Message of the Qur'ān*. This later ranks among the most significant works of the twentieth century devoted to explaining the Qur'ānic message in English.¹⁶⁰

In short, ever since Asad made his debut in 1934 as a writer on Islam, he has remained on the intellectual scene as a major interpreter and spokesman of Islam for more than half a century. Apart from addressing questions pertaining to basic ideological orientation, one of Asad’s main concerns has been — as he was wont to say — to translate Islamic ideals into terms of practice in the present times. This led Asad to pay special attention to articulate the blue prints of an Islamic polity.¹⁶¹

...*Islamic Studies* pays its tribute to Muḥammad Asad for the many services he rendered to the cause of Islam. Many Allah accept all the good he did and grant him an exalted position in Paradise.¹⁶²
Martin Kramer

'The Road from Mecca: Muhammad Asad (Born Leopold Weiss)' From The Jewish Discovery of Islam

While Muhammad Asad’s most famous book remains The Road to Mecca, and he died (in 1992) working on Homecoming of the Heart – demonstrating his life long allegiance and devotion to Islam, yet his detractors – Jew Scholars (Martin Kramer, for instance) do not hesitate to show him somewhat a frustrated man – so he titled his article “The Road from Mecca”… Martin Kramer is the editor of the book. The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honour of Bernard Lewis (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1999). The book is comprised of the proceedings of a conference held at Tel Aviv University in 1996, to honour Bernard Lewis on his 80th birthday. The volume is out of print. Martin Kramer’s article ‘The Road from Mecca: Muhammad Asad (born Leopold Weiss)’ has been included in the book.

Martin Kramer in his long article, after discussing his early life, family and different stages in his long journey, under a subheading ‘Struck no root’ writes:

Few in the Muslim world took notice of Asad’s passing. He had argued for a rational Islam; he had sought to reconcile Islamic teaching and democracy; he had tried to make the Qur’an speak to modern minds. His project, in fact, encapsulated ideals that drove the reform of Judaism, which by his parents’, generation had largely served to ease Jews out of their faith altogether. Islam provided the last chance to achieve that ideal – the reform of a religion of law so that it could be made to live in a modern age, as
a liberal force of continuing faith.\textsuperscript{163}

Unlike so many other Western converts to Islam, Asad chose also to live in Muslim societies, and worked to give Islam direction. But by advocating this reform, Asad remained a foreign body in contemporary Islam, a transplant rejected time and again by his hosts. Saudi Arabia declined to keep him as a journalist; Pakistan, which he served as an official and diplomat, also broke with him; and the self-proclaimed guardians of Muslim Orthodoxy shunned him as a Qur'ān translator and commentator. Paradoxically, Asad won genuine acclaim in the West. There he found minds open to his ideas, and opportunities to publish and lecture. And there he ultimately found refuge from the late twentieth century reality of Islam.\textsuperscript{164}

Asad's road to Mecca was the shorter journey, made headlong in the enthusiasm of youth. His road from Mecca was the longer journey, made painstakingly in an awareness of the contradiction between the promise of Islam and its contemporary practice – and his own unequivocal position in it. For all Asad's fervor and belief, his Muslim answer never satisfied his Jewish question, put most poignantly by Asad to Asad: "Why is it that, even after finding my place among the people who believe in things I myself has come to believe, I have struck no root."\textsuperscript{165}
Chapter-5

Talal Asad

He is a professor of anthropology in the United States of America. He is Muhammad Asad’s son form Munira, divorced by Asad in 1951, after 22 years of companionship. Israeli journalist Amir Ben-David has published a long feature in the Haaretz newspaper (English edition), relying in part on recollection by Asad’s son, Talal Asad. Here we reproduce some excerpts from the article which are based on Talal’s recollections:

When the ‘The Road to Mecca’ was published in New York in the mid-1950s, Habib Kena’an, a correspondent for Ha’aretz, spoke with Weiss’s uncle, Prof. Aryeh Feigenbaum, an ophthalmologist in Jerusalem. Feigenbaum told him that Weiss’s conversion to Islam was due to his hatred for his religion and his people, which stemmed from his disdain for his father during his childhood and youth.”

Talal Asad, Leopold Weiss’s son, refutes this thesis vehemently: Of course I do not know my grandfather, only from stories. But I do know that he loved my father very much. Always. He was his beloved son. I remember that my father always carried a small photograph of his father wherever he went, and he always spoke of him and about his sister with the greatest fondness. During World War II, when we were in the detention camp in India, he also made tremendous efforts to save them. My father was, of course, very anti-Zionist. He thought the establishment of the State of Israel was an act of gross injustice. He was extremely critical of Israel. But he never hated the Jewish religion or the Jewish people.

“One of the things I am proud of in connection with my father is his awareness of an immense need to reach understanding between
the three great monotheistic religions. I always knew he had been a Jew in the past, I never heard him speak disparagingly about Judaism. Never. He thought Islam was a more open religion, but from many points of view, he considered Islam a religion that was very close to Judaism.”167

... “He often spoke about how the Muslim culture, and especially the Bedouin, with whom he connected, was to a large degree a healthier culture than the one in which he was raised in Europe,” says his son, Prof. Talal Asad. “I think there are significant differences between his views and the views that prevail nowadays in New Age circles. To begin with, he was drawn to an existing, established community, and to a religion, as he construed it, which was not ‘fabricated’ or ‘invented’, like most of the New Age viewpoints.168

“But I can see the connection, at least where the attachment to nature is concerned. From what I remember, both from the period of war and the time afterwards, he was drawn to honesty, simplicity and naturalness. Those are the things he talked about a great deal. Those were the things he valued greatly – and we have to remember that we are talking about a time when it did not exert a powerful influence on the region.”169

...“He was restless once more, and when he was invited to India by kinds of people who were in contact with him, he decided he wanted to be on the move again”, Talal explains. “My mother came from a family in northern Saudi Arabia. She was 15 when she married father, and 17 when had me. When my father decided to leave, she joined him. Because my mother’s family would never have permitted her to join him, they were forced to flee.”170
During the later years in Spain; "To a certain extent he was very bitter", recalls Prof. Asad. "He was not sufficiently aware of the influence of politics on life. He did not take great interest in the details that constitutes politics. He was interested mainly in ideas. But he continued to say that Islam is a wonderful religion, which is responsible for great developments. He was always careful to draw a distinction between governments and ordinary people, who continue to be decent and good despite the actions of their leaders. He was bitter at the waste and the injustice, but maintained optimism."  

The Road to Mecca concludes with a passage that now, in the wake of September 11 and its aftermath, seems almost prophetic: "Above all, [there is] that question for which as yet not answer has been found: How will Arab life - Muslim life - fare and develop in this century dominated by technology - the technology of other people’s making?"  

Talal Asad, which is worried about what will happen when he has to leave his well protected academic shell in Manhattan and show his passport at the airport, has no doubt what his father would have thought about the situation: "Father was always vehemently opposed to any display of violence. I remember when I was a boy, I once frightened someone making shadow behind them at night. The kinds of thing kids do, you know. When I got home and told my father about it, he raised his hand and hit me, something he never did. He told me 'Don’t ever frighten people; it is a terrible thing to cause fear.'"
Abu’l Hasan Ali Nadavi (1914-1999)

Mawlana Syed Abu’l Hasan was indisputably one of greatest exponents of Islam in the second half of the 20th century and because of his command over Arabic, through his writings and speeches, he had a wide area of influence extending far beyond the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, particularly in the Arab World.

A prolific writer, his works have been prescribed in the courses of study in a number of Arab Universities. His notable work Madha Khaseera al-‘Alam b’inhitatil-Muslimin was not only widely acclaimed but also carved a place for him in the literary circles of the Arab World. Several of his books have since been translated into Arabic, Turkish, Bhasha Indonesia, Persian, Tamil and some other languages.

Born in Rae bareili India, his influence reached far and wide throughout India and abroad.

Mawlana Nadavi’s personal acquaintance with Muḥammad Asad and his works is well established. Mawlana Nadavi says he had first met Asad in Makkah and second time in Damascus and Lebanon where Asad was busy getting his book The Road to Mecca translated into Arabic under his personal supervision. And Asad had given a complimentary copy of the book personally to Mawlana Nadavi. During Nadavi’s visit to Europe, on the invitation of Dr. Sa‘id Ramadhan in 1963 to attend the yearly conference of Geneva Islamic Center, Muḥammad Asad was there attending his lecture, delivered in the London University on “between East and West”.

In his ‘Foreword’ to the Urdu translation of Muḥammad Asad’s The Road to Mecca, titled Tofan se Sāhil Tak (by Muḥammad Al-
Hasani, editor *Al-Ba’th al-Islami*), Mawlana Nadavi is all praise for the book, for its contents and presentation:

It possesses all the qualities one looks for in a beautiful travelogue, it far exceeds all others in many senses.\[^{175}\]

Mawlana Nadavi seems to be highly impressed by the concerns of Asad which are discernable by his writings and says he has immersed himself with all his capabilities and energies in the present issue of the *Ummah* as a gentleman immerses his interests with the interests of his family. However, sensing the tilt of Asad towards modernist trends, Mawlana Nadavi expressed his disapproval of Asad’s apologetic approach as is evident from the ‘foreword’ to Mawlana Abdul Mājid Daryābādī’s English translation and commentary of the Qur’ān, published under the auspices of ‘Islamic Research Academic’, Lucknow. Mawlana Nadavi’s is all praise for Mawlana Daryābādī, who he says is unlike Asad not over impressed by the Western scientific and technological development. One can easily surmise from the above that Nadavi considers Asad’s being over impressed by the West as a negative point for the faithful rendering of the meanings of the scripture and also commentary on it. Prof. Sayyid Salman Nadavi (Prof. of Islamic Studies in South Africa) has, however, indicated that Mawlana Nadavi considered Asad’s translation the best among the available English translations of the Qur’ān. He conveyed it to me (AMK) directly in one of our meeting in 2003 in the department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

\[^{175}\]
Sayyid Ameenul Hasan Rizvi

Delhi based, late Sayyid Ameenul Hasan Rizvi edited the prestigious Islamic magazine, ‘Radiance views weekly’ for many years in 70’s and 80’s. In his book, *three Major Errors in Twelve English Translations of the Qur’ān* (New Delhi, Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, 2001), he has identified and commented upon what he considers as the three major errors in the English translation of some key terms of the Qur’ān. Among the twelve English translations, Rizvi has consulted, is included Muhammad Asad’s *The Message of the Qur’ān*.

Though the name of the book suggests that all the twelve translations of the Qur’ān, Rizvi has listed, do necessarily suffer from all the three what he calls ‘major errors’, but it is not so. There are exceptions. The first error as per Rizvi is erroneous translation of verse 231 of the second sūrah. Here Asad is exempted from the list of those who have wrongly translated the verse. The second error, Rizvi point out is the translation of the Qur’ānic term ‘riba’ which means ‘interest’. Asad along with the others has translated ‘riba’ as ‘usury’. Rizvi elaborators: In Arabic language there is only one word – *riba* – which covers the English words “usury” and “interest” both. But Islam brooks no such distinction and strictly forbids changing any amount over and above the principle, even of it be just one straw over ten thousand gold coins (the ration given is just by way of illustration). Interest in all its varied forms, be it just nominal exorbitant/exploitation, simple or compound, and regardless of the loan being of a consumer (personal) or productive (commercial) nature, is completely the word ‘usury’ in translating “*riba*” is not inadvertent but in deliberate preference to “interest”.

309
Rizvi comments as Asad in this regard:

It appears that Muḥammad Asad was quite conscious the dilemma and therefore he has given a very lengthy explanatory note (No. 35) to verse 30:39 (this because sūrah 30 is earlier 2 and 3 in chronological order of revelation). At one place in the footnote he says “considering the problem in terms of economic conditions prevailing at or before their time, most of the early Muslim jurists identified this unlawful addition with profits obtained through any kind of interest – bearing loans irrespective of the rate of interest and the economic motivation involved” (emphasis added).

Asad is not right in attributing the above view to ‘most’ of the early Muslim jurists’. That was, in fact, the opinion firmly held by all the early Muslim jurists. Besides, what is important to note is that Asad does not give any hint of his being in agreement with the early jurists in the matter.

On the other hand, his holding a contrary view (that it is only the exorbitant and exploitative rate of interest which the Qur’ān prohibits) is clearly reflected in his observation in the same footnote. “The opprobrium of riba...attached to profits obtained through the interest – bearing loans involving an exploitation of economically weak by the strong and resourceful...” (emphasis added by Asad himself).

About the third error of mistranslation of the Qur’ānic verses, Rizvi points out that verses 17:32 and 24:2-3 deal with important law of Islam. In this regard Asad’s role is described as:

What Muḥammad Asad had done is quite strange. While translating 24:2 he has erroneously used the words “adulteress” and “adulterer” for Zānīah and Zānī, in the explanatory note has
correctly set out the difference between adultery and fornication. And then he has proceeded to say “for the sake of simplicity I am rendering Zinā throughout as adultery and the person guilty of it as an adulterer or adulteress respectively”. Asad’s inexplicable perception of simplicity apart, this explanatory note would have been of some use for the readers if he would have clarified that 24:2 refers specifically to the fornicatress and fornicator only. Absence of this classification has rendered this explanatory note almost meaningless.

Yet another deficiency this explanatory note suffers from is that Asad has explained fornication as “sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons”. This is not wholly correct and again given misinformation about the Islamic law on the subject. Actually, fornication simply is sex by an unmarried person, not necessarily between two unmarried persons. It can be that one of the parties to Zinā is unmarried and the other married. In that case both will not be treated equally under Islamic law; the unmarried partner to zinā will be treated as fornicator/fornicatress and punished with one hundred lashes while the married partner will be treated as adulterer/adulteress and shall be punished with death. Muḥammad Asad has failed to clarify this point also. (pp. 27, 28)
Maryam Jameelah

Maryam Jameelah (b. 1934), revivalist ideologist. Maryam Jameelah was born Margaret Marcus to a Jewish family in New Rochelle, New York on 23 May 1934. She grew up in a secular environment, but at the age of nineteen while a student at New York University she developed a keen interest in religion. Unable to find spiritual guidance in her immediate environment, she looked to other faiths. Her search brought her into contact with a array of spiritual orders, religious cults, and world religious; she became acquainted with Islam around 1954. She was then greatly impressed by Marmaduke Pickthall’s *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* and by the works of Muḥammad Asad, himself a convert form Judaism to Islam. Maryam Jameelah cites Asad’s *The Road to Mecca* and *Islam at Crossroads* as critical influences on her decision to become a Muslim. Through her readings on Islam she developed a bond with that religion and soon became its spokesperson, defending Muslim beliefs against Western criticism and championing such Muslim causes as that of the Palestinians. Her views created much tension in her personal life, but she continued to pursue her cause. On 24 May 1961 she embraced Islam in New York, and soon after began write for the *Muslim Digest* of Durban, South Africa. Her articles outlined a pristine view of Islam and sought to establish the truth of the religion through debates with its critics. Through this journal she became acquainted with the works of Mawlama Sayyid Abu al-‘A‘la Mawdūdi (d. 1979), the founder and leader of the Jamā‘at-I Islāmī (Islamic Party) of Pakistan, who was also a contributor to the journal. Maryam Jameelah was impressed by Maudūdi’s views and began to correspond with him. Their letter between 1960 and 1962, later published in a volume entitled *Correspondences between*
Maulan Mawdoodi and Maryam Jameelah, discussed a variety of issues from the discourse between Islam and the West to Maryam Jameelah’s personal spiritual concerns. Maryam Jameelah’s attachment to Islam created great difficulties for her family and community; her anguish was relayed to Mawdūdī, who advised her to move to Pakistan and live among Muslims.

Maryam Jameelah traveled to Pakistan in 1962 and joined the household of Mawlana Mawdūdī in Lahore. She soon married a member of the Jamāʿat-I Islāmī, Muḥammad Yusuf Khan, as his second wife. Since settling in Pakistan she has written an impressive number of books, which have adumbrated Jamāʿat-I Islāmī’s ideology in a systematic fashion. Although she never formally joined the party, she became one of its chief ideologists. Maryam Jameelah has been particularly concerned with the debate between Islam and the West, an important, albeit not central, aspect to Mawdūdī’s thought. She sharpened the focus of the Muslim polemic against the West and laid out the revivalist critique of Christianity, Judaism, and secular Western thought in methodic fashion.

Her acquaintance with Asad, and the nature of his influence on the formative years of Maryam Jameelah has been very significant. Before her reversion to Islam, she had come to know of Asad’s book.

Asad’s book found a place on the shelves of the public library in Mamaroneck, New York, near her home. Her parents would not let her take out the book, so she read it in the library over and over. “What he could do, I thought I could also do, only how much harder for a single women than for a man! But I vowed to Allah that at the first opportunity, I would follow his example.”

176
Unlike Muḥammad Asad, Maryam Jameelah has not followed the modernist trend of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and his ilk. The logic of her discursive approach has led Maryam Jameelah away from revivalism and Jamāʿat-i Islāmī. Increasingly aware of revivalism's alleged 'own borrowings from the West', she has distanced herself from the revivalist exegesis and has even criticized her mentor Mawdūdī for his alleged 'assimilation of modern concepts into Jamāʿat-i Islāmī's ideology'. Her writings in recent years embody this change in orientation and several the influence of traditional Islam.

About the English translations of the meaning of the Qur'ān, she has found Pickthall's and Abdul Mājid Daryābādī's renderings closer to the Qur'ānic purport.

Thus Muḥammad Asad and Maryam Jameelah, which share the background of being Jewish reverts to Islam, pursued different routes for the actualization of Islam's goals – Asad following the Modernist Trend and Maryam Jameelah that of the Traditional Islam.
Muzaffar Iqbal

Dr. Muzaffar Iqbal the founder-president of Center for Islam and Science (CIS), Canada (www.cis-ca.org). Most of his published work is related to Islam and Islamic intellectual tradition, though he has his doctorate and post-doctorate in the subject other than Islamic studies.

Born in Pakistan (1954), he came to Canada in 1979 and since then. During 1990-1999, worked in Pakistan, first as Director (Scientific Information) for the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)

Dr. Iqbal was also the editor of Islamic Thought and Scientific Creativity (1991-96)—an international journal in the field of Islam and science. He is the founder-editor of Islam & Science, an international journal of Islamic perspectives on science, published twice a year in June and December. He was the Guest Editor for the winter 2000 special issue on Islam and Science of Islamic Studies, the quarterly journal of the Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. He is the author of two novels, Inkhila (Uprooting, 1988) and Inqta (Severance, 1994), a book on the history of the Independence Movement of Pakistan (1977).

Dr. Iqbal has lived and travelled in almost all regions of the Muslim world. His areas of specialization include intellectual history of Islam, metaphysical and philosophical aspects of the relationship between Islam and science, Islam and the West and Islam and the contemporary world.

Dr. Iqbal is the moderator of Kalam (www.cis-ca.org/kalam), an edited and moderated listening and news service dedicated to the
promotion of a constructive discourse on Islam and science. His fortnightly column, "Quantum Note", appears on every second Friday in Pakistan's largest English language newspaper, The News. He also writes monthly columns in the Impact International (London) and Crescent International (Toronto). Between 1980-83, he was the producer of a weekly radio show (Saaz aur Awaz) from the University of Saskatchewan FM radio station.

His most recent publications include Islam and Science (Ashgate, 2002) and God, Life and the Cosmos: Christian and Islamic Perspectives (co-ed.) (Ashgate, 2002).

In his article titled 'ABDULLAH YÜSUF 'ALI & MUHAMMAD ASAD: Two approaches to the English translation of the Qur'ân. (Journal of Qur'ânic Studies 2(1) (2000), pp. 107-123). Muzaffar Iqbal has the following conclusion:

In the final analysis we have two excellent translations, each with its peculiarities. Of the two works, Yusuf 'Ali's has proven to be more popular than Asad's, perhaps - at least in part - due to its easy availability. But Asad's translation is also gradually drawing a faithful readership. Both translations employ a number of techniques to make the translation accessible to a variety of readers. Asad uses extensive notes which refer back to classical commentaries and lexicons, Yusuf 'Alî uses running commentaries and notes, though without references to historical sources. Both know that in the final analysis their efforts are but a human endeavour which can never reach perfection. Even their choices of title reflect their basic concerns. Asad chose the word 'message' for his main preoccupation was with the message of the Qur'ân which he saw as the main vehicle for an Islamic renaissance. All his works are reflective of this main concern. While in Pakistan,
he devoted his time and energy to religious reconstruction, later he wrote a book on the political aspects of Islam, and his numerous speeches and articles in the monthly 'Arafāt – in fact all of his writings – are indicative of this main concern. Yusuf 'Alī, on the other hand, was more interested in the inner meaning of the Divine Word. He saw the Qur’ān more as an ethical and moral code. Therefore the key word in his title is 'meaning'. This is also reflective of the dilemmas of his own life.

These general conclusions are not meant to be a reductive summary of the two works. They remain outstanding, both in scholarship as well as in spiritual insight, among all the English translations of the Qur’ān. Indeed, one could say that both translations must have been helped by a force from beyond the human realm.
Scoop from Press Reviews of Asad’s Contributions

The Message of the Qur’ān

“In its intellectual engagement with the text and in the subtle and profound understanding the pure classical Arabic of the Koran, Asad’s interpretation is of a power and intelligence without rival in English”... *The Guardian*

... The great strength of Asad’s rendering, however, lies in its elegant and powerful prose, fluent and highly enjoyable. That is also its weakness, if and when, in the course of its long journey, the language happens to take a swing, the enchanted reader is unlikely to discern any gap between words and meaning... *Impact International (10th April-7th May 1992)*

The Road to Mecca

Excerpt

“A very rare and powerful book, raised completely above the ordinary by its candor and intelligence... should permanently affect our view of the world”... *New York Post*

“A narrative of great power and beauty... [Asad’s] knowledge is profound”... *Times Literary Supplement*

“As revelatory a human document as ever has been put together, persuasive and thoughtful, altogether fascinating”... *St. Louis Globe Democrat*

“...intensely interesting and moving book” ... S.C. Chew... The *New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 15 August 1954.*

“Not since Freya Stark, has anyone written so happily about Arabia as the Galician now known as Muḥammad Asad”... Robert Payne ...*The New York Times, 15 August 1954.*
Endnotes


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.; As the author offers his specific comments on Asad and his contributions, so this portion of his article is put in bold letters to get special attention. (AMK)

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.


18 “Unromantic Oriet.”


20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.; In 1927, Asad married Elsa in Cairo and formally confirmed his conversion to Islam there.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
37 Murad Hofmann, op.cit, p. 237.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., pp. 238-239.
44 The standard Arabic-English version is the translation in nine volumes by Muhammad Muḥsin Khan, Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1976.
45 Arafat Publications; later reprinted in Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1981.
46 Hofmann, op. cit. p. 239.
47 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, p. 195
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1980, 999pp. (large format).
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., p. 243.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.

Alfred Guillaume, The Life of Muḥammad (Oxford University Press, 1955), 246; Ibn Kathīr, the Life of the Prophet Muḥammad (Reading: 1980, 231.

Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘il al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Manāqib, Bāb Ityān al-Yahūd al-Nabī Ḥīna Qadima al Madīna. (The words of the Prophets) (Peace be on him) in this Ḥadīth reads as follows: “If ten Jews would believe in me, the Jews [as a whole] would believe in me”. Quoted by Zafar Ishaq Ansari)

Abū Dāwūd, Sunnan, 3: 1290, Ḥadīth, No. 4579.

Hofmann, op. cit., p. 244.

Ibid.

Ibid.

See 31:12, n.12.

See 18:65, n.73.

See 18:83, n.81.

See 1:69, no. 64.

Hofmann, op. cit., p.245.

See 9:30, nn 23 and 24.

Hofmann, op. cit., p. 246.

See 2:106 n.87 and 87:6 n.4.

See for example. A.R. Kidwai’s article in The Muslim World Book Review, Vo. 7, No.4 Summer 1987, p.70 and Vol. 9, No.3, Spring 1989, p.15

See 24:31, n.37.

See 24:31, n.38.

Hofmann, p. 246.
See 33:59, n.75.

Hofmann, p. 247; The reason for mentioning this Sūrah in the present context is that it has a large number of injunctions on ḥijāb and related issues. Zafar Ishaq Ansari.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Pages 5-7; (with due acknowledgment to Maulana Mushtaq Tijarvi, fellow centre of Religious Studies, Aligarh for obtaining a photocopy of this review for me).

Muslim World Book Review, 1. no. 1, 1980, p.5; Emphasis is supplied by the compiler (AMK).

Ibid., p.6.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Editor, Islamic Studies [39:2 (2000)], p.152


Ibid., pp. 155-156.

Ibid., p.178.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 179.

112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Asad, “Foreword”, The Message of The Qurʾān, P.V
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid., pp. 182-183.
118 Ibid., p. 183.
119 Ibid., p.184.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid., p. 185.
122 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid., pp. 187-188.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 The Muslim World Book Review, 7, no. 4, 1987; p.68.
132 Gai Eaton, Review of The Message of the Qurʾān in Spectator, 7 June, 1980, p. 18. Quoted by Ismāʿīl Nawwāb,


134 Ibid.


136 Mawdūdī in his letter addressed to Miss Marcus (later Maryam Jameelah) dated February, 1961, Lahore, had presented his ideas about *Islam at the Crossroads* and Asad’s personality. Maryem Jemeelah’s earlier letter, seeking Mawdūdī’s comment on the Asad’s book was written by her from New York, January 31, 1961. Both these letters now appear in Maryam Jameelah, *Correspondence between Maulana Maududi and Maryam Jameelah*, Delhi, Crescent Publishing company, 1966, p.416.

137 Ibid.


139 Ibid., p. 57-58.

140 Ibid., p. 58.; Shaikh ‘Abduh (d. 1905) has remained main force of inspiration for Muḥammad Asad.

141 Ibid.

142 *http:77mail.malaysia.net*; 21 April, 2005, titled ‘Muḥammad Asad’

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
150 Supplied by the compiler (AMK) to give sense.
151 Mushtaq Parker, op. cit., quoting Asad.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid., p. 152.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
173 Ibid.
175 Ibid., p. 33-34.