

Foreword

BALIL ABD AL-KARIM'S *Qur'anic Terminology: A Linguistic and Semantic Analysis* is a detailed work aiming to provide a broad glossary of key Qur'anic terms and set forth these terms' meanings, both semantically and linguistically, within their Qur'anic context.

There is no way to understand the Qur'an properly, or elucidate as accurately as possible the meaning of its verses, without studying Qur'anic terminology and concepts. Taken together these not only sum up the universal truths of the religion (the great moral code), but also animate the text and give it incredible life, precision, and flexibility, enriching the communication of the Qur'anic message through their beautiful and comprehensive nature.

The IIT has undertaken in recent years to produce abridged versions of its key publications, and this translation is taken from the abridged Arabic edition *Al-Mafāhīm al-Miftāhiyyah li Nazariyyah al-Ma'rifah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.

We live in an age in which time is at a premium in virtually all spheres of life, including those of writing and production. Copious intellectual, cultural and informational output continues unabated as part of efforts to keep pace with changes in the public and private spheres alike, while publishing houses and websites vie to provide people with the latest, and most up-to-date information in the easiest, most effective manner. The knowledge economy that now dominates the world requires a process of 'creative adaptation' of information as one of the building blocks of the world community at large, hence the IIT's series of abridged works. The aim is to help readers benefit from available information as easily, effectively, and efficiently as possible and to further develop their critical faculties so they become better able to contribute to the development of humanity.

The abridged texts have been written in a clear, easy to read style, and while the essential contents of the original works have been preserved, readers will note that, in the interests of space, the abridged editions contain far fewer endnotes than do the original works. The

Foreword

only notes retained are those needed for clarification or the proper establishment of an idea, since the principle aim of this endeavor is to facilitate rapid absorption of the content being conveyed. Readers who wish to go more deeply into the topics of concern or to find full documentation of quotes may refer to the original works, which contain all necessary citations.

The work is being published to widen discourse, and increase awareness of the question of Islamic artistic expression and its ultimate aims and objectives. No doubt the subject is a specialized one, but it is hoped that for the most part both general and specialist readers alike will benefit from the perspective offered and the overall issues examined.

Where dates are cited according to the Islamic calendar (hijrah) they are labelled AH. Otherwise they follow the Gregorian calendar and labelled CE where necessary. Arabic words are italicized except for those which have entered common usage. Diacritical marks have been added only to those Arabic names not considered modern. English translations taken from Arabic references are those of the translator. Qur'anic verses are quoted either in part or in their entirety.

Since its establishment in 1981, the IIIT has served as a major center to facilitate serious scholarly efforts. Towards this end it has, over the decades, conducted numerous programs of research, seminars and conferences as well as publishing scholarly works specialising in the social sciences and areas of theology which to date number more than four hundred titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into other major languages.

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Introduction

PRAISE BE TO GOD, who revealed the Qur'an from on high as a balance in which to weigh truth and falsehood. He has commanded us to reflect on the Qur'an, bearing in mind that it can only be properly understood by those firmly established in knowledge, and will only be kept in remembrance by those who are endowed with insight.

The epistemological aspect of the Qur'an deals with the act of reflecting and investigating (*al-nazar*), which jurists and philosophers alike agree to be human beings' foremost duty. This process is essential in order for people to know their Creator, themselves, and the world around them. Knowledge of the Creator and of ourselves leads us to search for satisfying answers to life's pressing questions. The better we understand the sources, types and purposes of knowledge, ways of applying and benefitting from knowledge, and the ways in which knowledge is compiled, transmitted and developed, the better able we will be to test the knowledge we have and to link it to the laws and patterns of the cosmos.

The Qur'anic Revelation sets forth a set of concepts which, taken together, sum up the universal truths of the religion. However, there is no way to understand the Qur'an properly without studying its terminology, which is key to accessing the will of God. Consequently, this study contains a glossary of key terms that sets forth these terms' meanings within their Qur'anic context.

The meaning of a given Qur'anic term will vary depending on the manner and the context in which it is used, and on the issues and questions in relation to which reference is made to it. Just as a concept gives rise to a term, so also does the term and its usage act to shape the concept. As a terminological analysis of the Qur'an, this study examines terms within their respective semantic and linguistic contexts.

Sound communication can only take place when the concepts being discussed are clearly defined and understood, and when terms are used precisely. Unless terms are defined with precision, discussions and debates will revolve not around facts, but around mere words. It is not acceptable to employ terms that are ambiguous or overly general; hence, those who do use such terms should be asked to explain and clarify them in order to make dialogue constructive and genuine. Differences among debaters are often attributable to their use of words, either because various terms are being used to refer to the same entity, or because the same word is being used to refer to more than one entity. But if intended meanings are explained and ambiguities clarified, it becomes possible to distinguish true from false, and what is meant from what is not meant.

BALIL ABD AL-KARIM