

**BE SALAFEE ON THE PATH
OR BE A SERIOUS SALAFI?!?
UNAUTHORISED TRANSLATION
(AT AN EXORBITANT PRICE TO BOOT!!!)
NOW GOES VIRAL!**

FACTS

**FOR THE BENEFIT OF
BROTHER BIN BATTS!**

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Beneficent, Most Merciful

Indeed all praise is due to Allāh, we praise Him, we seek His Aid and ask for His forgiveness, whomsoever Allāh guides there is none to misguide and whomsoever Allāh misguides there is none to guide. I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allāh and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger, to proceed: Shaykh, Dr 'AbdusSalām as-Sihaymī (*hafidhabullāh*) wrote in Muharram 1433 AH/December 2011 when informed of a plan (by a well-known Toronto-based Islamic Publishers - ?!) to translate one of his books with neither consultation or contact with him:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وعلى آله وصحبه أما بعد

فقد بلغني أنّ بعض الإخوة قاموا بترجمة كتابي (كن سلفياً على الجادة) إلى اللغة الإنجليزية ونشره ، عليه فإنني أؤكد أنني لم أذن لأحدٍ بترجمة كتابي إلى اللغة الإنجليزية ونشره إلا للأخ عبدالحق بن كوفي الأشانتي ، وبإشراف ومتابعة الأخ الشيخ / محمد بن عبدالله المالكي.

وفق الله الجميع لما في رضاه،،،

كتب ذلك

أ.د. عبدالسلام بن سالم بن رجاء السحيمي
الاستاذ بقسم الفقه بكلية الشريعة بالجامعة الإسلامية
وعضو مجلس مركز التميز البحثي في قضايا الفقه
المعاصرة بجامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية

[TRANSLATION]

12th Muharram 1433 AH/10 December 2011 CE

Bismillāhi 'r-Rahmān ir-Raheem

All praise is due to Allāh and may prayers and peace be upon Allāh's Messenger, his family and his companions. To proceed:

It has reached me that some brothers have translated and published my book *Kun Salafiyyan 'ala'l-Jāddah* [Be a Serious Salafi].

Based on this I certify that I have not permitted anybody to translate and publish my book except for brother 'AbdulHaq bin Kofi al-Ashanti with the supervision of the brother, Shaykh Muhammad al-Mālikī. May Allāh grant success to all to what pleases Him.

Signed by Professor 'AbdusSalām bin Sālim bin Rajā' as-Sihaymī

**Professor at the Fiqh Department, Shari'ah College, Islamic University of Madeenah;
and Member of the Centre for Research Excellence in Contemporary Fiqh Issues, Imām
Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, KSA**

The above was subsequently sent to the Toronto-based Islamic Publishers on **August 26th 2012 CE** by Abū 'Ubayd Khalid ibn Fitzroy Knight, the admin of SalafiManhaj.com. However, not only does it appear that the above request from the author was completely ignored and utterly disregarded (**as evidenced by the release in January 2014 of another version – priced at an exorbitant and astounding \$15/£9.74! – not even including postage and packaging!?**), but also some remarks have reached us from a brother named **'Raha ["Azeezuddeen'] bin Donald Batts'** regarding its alleged mistranslated title by myself, the miskeen one in need of Allāh's Aid, 'AbdulHaq ibn Kofi ibn Kwesi Addae ibn Kwaku al-Ashanti al-Britānī. Thus, it is pertinent to address some of the issues therein:

One: Perfection is only for Allāh, and Allāh's Book is only that which is free of mistakes. Any other work is bound to have mistakes found within it so this is something that we should be aware of. It is in this light that many later editions of books include 'errata', which details the translation errors of prior prints and editions.

Two: May Allāh reward those who wish to correct what they perceive as being erroneous, as long as they have an aspect of relevance in their observations and it is not merely borne out of envy, malice, anger, frustration, financial considerations (!!?) and the likes.

Three: There have been a plethora of suggested titles for the book, all of which indicate not only the difficulties in translation but also the variant views of translating. However, for Brother bin Batts to *dictate* that his translation is somehow *the* correct one, while all others erroneous 'mistranslations', is problematic. For example, some suggested translations for the title have been:

- *Be a Serious Salafi*
- *Be a Salafi Serious on the Path*
- *Be an Earnest Salafi*
- *Be a Salafi in Earnest*
- *Be a Salafi in Earnestness*
- *Be a Salafi Earnest on the Path*

Four: The word ‘Jādah’ means ‘street; main street; path, main road’ and also ‘the right path’, and brother bin Batts does have a point and is absolutely right about the literal meaning of that particular word itself. Yet brother bin Batts appears to believe that I saw the word ‘jaadah’ and mistook it for ‘jaad’ and then translated it as such! Though there was an aspect of the similarity and proximity of the words which did influence my translation of the title, and more on this will be explained in this section. What I attempted to do, as is a well-known method in translation, was to render the original Arabic title into English in a way that still maintains the imperative of the original Arabic but also maintains the meaning of the title and the theme of the book itself. So that when rendered into English there is no ambiguity as to the topic of the book. However, bin Batts’ *suggested* translation, which he believes is the correct one based on a rather naïve approach to translation, is far too literal and translationese: **‘Be Salafi on the Path’**, or ‘Be a Salafi on the Main Street’ – these are weak translations and poor in communicating the meaning into the target language of English, for the benefit of English-speaking audiences. It could potentially distort the meaning of the message of the book to an English readership and result in mockery of Salafiyyah. Thus, it is no surprise that from Allāh’s favour the translated title which I selected is immediately clear with no ambiguity as to the topic of the book and hence has been quite well-received. Dickens et al., experts in Arabic and English translation, noted in *Thinking Arabic Translation: A Course in Translation Method, Arabic to English* in regards to communicative methods of translation:

This is true of very many culturally conventional formulae that do not invite literal translation. Public notices, proverbs and conversational clichés illustrate this point...¹

I opted for a more communicative translation method which facilitated the meaning of the *theme* of the book in a way which would be immediately understood by the average English reader, and still maintain the expressive function and convey the brevity, direct style and imperative of the original Arabic. This is what Arabic to English translator James Dickens et al. also refers to as a ‘partially overlapping translation’ which is used so as to avoid any ambiguity when rendering a sentence, phrase or expression into English and a more contextually acceptable overlapping

¹ James Dickens, Sándor Hervej, Ian Higgins, *Thinking Arabic Translation: A Course in Translation Method, Arabic to English* (Routledge, 2013), p.17

expression is used in the translation. Professor AB Safi, a translation theorist at Petra University in Jordan noted in his paper *Translation Theories and Strategies: Basic Theoretical Issues* (2011) that (p.35):

The TT [translated text] of an expressive text should transmit the aesthetic and artistic form of the ST [source text]. The translation should use the ‘identifying’ method, with the translator adopting the stand point of ST author.

Safi (p.42) also states that of the characteristics which an aesthetically communicative and dynamic translation must possess are: dynamic rather than static; creative and aesthetically informative/communicative; comply with the target linguistic system; be appropriate, i.e. fit the context of the message; be natural and free from translationese; be acceptable to the target audience or literary readership. While Aldebyan, another Arabic and English translation expert in the field also notes that:

This could pose a working translation strategy; translators may add to their translation a similar phrase referring to the culture or nation that says a certain idiom or expression in a specific way to justify their literal foreignized translation of that idiom. The translator, by doing so, hits two birds with one stone, so to speak. First, he/she covers himself against criticism, which might be orientated against his/her literal translation or use of foreignization; second, the cultural specificity would be kept intact.²

Safi highlights (p.51) that:

If an equivalent expression cannot be located, he [i.e. the translator] must find some parallel expression that will yield approximately the same kind of effect produced by the original. Idioms, and figures of speech, such as allegory, metaphor, parable or simile, are cases in point.

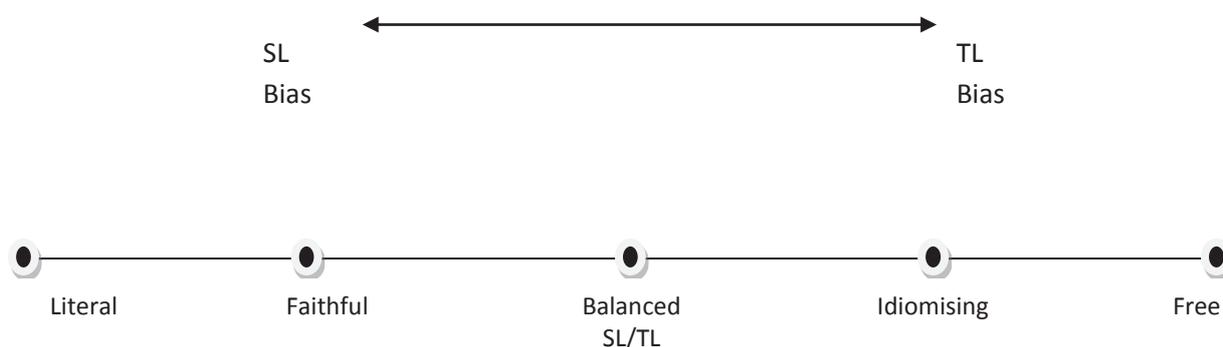
² Qusai Anwer Aldebyan, *Strategies for Translating Arabic Cultural Markers into English: A Foreignizing Approach* (ProQuest, 2008), p.448

Be Salafee on the Path or Be a Serious Salafi?! Unauthorised Translation Now Goes Viral!
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For the Benefit of Brother Bin Batts

Trying to translate something literally from Arabic does not always come off right when rendering it into English, and at the same time one has to strike a balance to ensure that there is not too much of a departure from the original text. Safi explains (pp.51-52):

And as Adams (1973: 100) puts it, “a proper literary translation does not simply convey to us the elements of the original in such fullness as may be, but conveys them to us in something of the same order and structure of relatedness as the original”. **If the product sounds mediocre, in other words, if it reads as THE original and not AN original, the translator has not gone far enough in fulfilling his function, that is, his product is lacking in aesthetic values, as it has failed to transmit the literariness and felicity of the original. The ideas may have been accurately reproduced but aesthetically wanting. On the other hand, he will have gone too far should his translation depart too radically from the semantic content and/or literary values of the original.** This very delicate yet difficult equilibrium intensifies the plight of the literary translator, for his ‘recreation’ of the original should not render translation as a mere imitation or an artistically embellished ‘edition’. Besides his literary or rhetorical competence, he has to be very tactful and eclectic in his approach.

Dickens et al. (p.17), Arabic and English translation experts, present the following adaptation of a scale originally drafted by Newmark (1981) which detail the degrees of translation and the grades for a target text:³



³ SL = source language.
TL = target language.

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An idiomizing translation is that which respects the ST message content but prioritises TL naturalness over confinement to detail and it will typically use idioms or familiar phonic or rhythmic patterns to give an easy read, even if it involves sacrificing some nuances of tone, meaning and vocab.

It could be argued that Bin Batts' suggested literal translation 'Be Salafi on the Path' carries meaning as the prepositional adverbial phrase 'on the path' answers the questions "how should I be Salafi?" However, such a translation sounds rather redundant when rendered into English along with its hint of tautology because in English 'to be Salafi' is "to be on the path". The English language does not cater for *Jawāmi' ul-Kalim* like Arabic does so in many instances we have to supplement the English rendition with a word, or words, so as to bridge the gap in translation. Aldebyan highlights in his *Strategies for Translating Arabic Cultural Markers into English*:

A literal translation might not be a working one unless it is accompanied by an explanation set in a footnote or glossary.⁴

It is also very ambiguous, which occurs in translation when bad translation styles are used. There has to be a clear and concise style used in the target language. Brother bin Batts holds, and this is the naivety in his translation approach, that the same exact word order and vocabulary of the original Arabic should have been confined and merely transmitted into English for the title, hence his suggested '**Be Salafi on the Path**', when translators from Arabic to English understand that this cannot always be followed. There can be times when a translator can have the privilege of utilising a literal translation strategy, yet not when that will cause a degree of ambiguity in the target language.

Translation therefore is not a mere matter of an individual secluding himself with an Arabic to English dictionary, and merely putting the Arabic words into English without any regard of the target language and its meanings, syntax, semantics and stylistic literary methods. Such an approach to translation can lead to absolutely nonsensical translations which de-value the original textual language and its core message. Translation itself has its own study, academic research and investigation, which cannot be undermined, as we have already seen. Some Arabic to English translators have noted that in maintaining the denotative meanings, i.e. the literal wordings, the

⁴ Qusai Anwer Aldebyan, *op.cit.*, p.445

connotative meanings were inevitably altered and hence difficulties in the syntax and semantics of Arabic and English posed difficulties in translation.

Five: Based on the above, it can be conceded that a more balanced translation, which captures the word and does not lead to anything getting lost in translation, would be **‘Be Salafi with the Right Course of Action’** (as suggested to me by one of the Salafi translators in the UK – yet even this could be open to criticism) or ‘Be an Upright Salafi’, or ‘Be a Steadfast Salafi’, or even better **‘Be a Serious Salafi on the Right Path’**. Though ‘Be a Serious Salafi’ does capture the essential intended meaning and intent. **I am entirely ready and happy to review the title for future prints if a sound equilibrium can be achieved, which is the case with ‘Be a Serious Salafi on the Right Path’, and of course any suggestions will be considered and I have already been taking that up with the more experienced Salafi translators in the UK and also the US.**

Six: In conceding that my translation not be released without prior checking, which brother Bin Batts either ignorantly believes to have been the case, or is feigning ignorance of that being the case, then my translations, based on Shaykh ‘AbdusSalām as-Sihaymī’s⁵ own recommendation- thus I actually attempted to notify the Shaykh and keep him updated as to the progress of the translation, and other works of his which I have translated- was fully submitted to Shaykh Muhammad al-Maliki, one of the Saudi Shaykhs and students of knowledge, Imām of Masjid Barā’ ibn Mālik Masjid in Jeddah, for his review and edit.

Seven: Shaykh Muhammad al-Maliki being in the unique position of being a native Arabic speaker, student of knowledge, Shaykh in his own right, Imām in Saudi, known personally to the Shaykh for his da’wah activities in the English-speaking world, and highly fluent in the English language – **most of which brother bin Batts would have to concede neither he, nor I, possess whatsoever.** Professor AB Safi, a translation specialist at Petra University in Jordan notes in his paper *Translation Theories and Strategies: Basic Theoretical Issues* (2011) that competent translators need

⁵ Note that brother Bin Batts refers to the Shaykh as ‘as-Suhaymee’ though the Arabic on the book itself clearly shows that there is a kasra on the letter seen! If being pedantic, one could argue that the book being released is not faithful to the Arabic vowelisation of the author’s surname which clearly appears on the book, and on all of the Shaykhs books.

to possess proficiency of the two languages they are working with, thorough knowledge of source and target cultures, familiarity with the topic/register and vocabulary wealth.⁶

Eight: Shaykh Muhammad al-Maliki expressed, and still does, that there are no issues with the translated title as it conveys the intended meaning in its translation. **If he did have any issues with it then by Allāh I would not have hesitated at all to change the title as he had been commissioned by Shaykh 'AbdusSalām to fully review the translation at his request. It would be out of respect to them both to amend anything which they did not deem fit.**

Nine: Brother Bin Batts also made a comment wherein he asserted, in regards to a footnote from Shaykh 'AbdusSalām in which he relayed the statement from Shaykh Bakr Abū Zayd that:

“All of the footnotes within the Arabic version of the book are from the Shaykh himself (Shaykh Abdus-Salām As-Suhaymee); but perhaps the translator missed this one.”

However, this is a clear misreading from brother Bin Batts as I fully translated the footnote as can be seen on p.29 of the translated and published book! Refer to ftn. no.3, p.21 of the 1426/2005 Dar ul-Menhaj Print. So that footnote was not missed out as brother bin Batts has suggested, despite presenting himself as being

أبصر من الوطواط بالليل

“More observant than a *bat* at night”

Yet one would have to be as blind as *bats* (!) in the day, or have been beaten around the head one too many times with baseball *bats* (!!), or, as is said, ‘have *bats* in the belfry’ (!!!) to fail to miss that clear translation. So if brother bin Batts could actually bring himself to read the translation he would have seen that it was completely translated!

Ten: Rage has emitted from some elements, who have deluded themselves into thinking that they have some sort of monopoly in the English-speaking world on the ascription “Salafi” and that this

⁶ AB Safi, *Translation Theories and Strategies: Basic Theoretical Issues* (2011), p.14

allows them full control over the noble and blessed ascription, in a manner that is reminiscent of the hostile plans of the partisan Hizbī groups. Thus, we have experienced on several occasions, that over the last eight years or so, some people have become enraged when their hostile plans to translate books – **without any coordination, permission or approval from the Shaykhs who author these works and are still alive and being provided for by Allāh**, become jeopardised. Two and a half years on, with people benefiting from a translation encouraging adherence to the Salafī method, it still appears that the enmity has not been fully removed from the hearts of some.

Eleven: Then, it appeared that the comments of brother Bin Batts were to herald his own translation a few months later! **In utter disregard of the author’s own written request – this is complete disrespect to the author.**

Twelve: Thus, brother bin Batts’, and the publishers in question, totally ignored this and still went ahead to print – **if he had any observations he could have contacted me directly, yet nothing from him or anyone else was forthcoming to us.** Batt’s method of promoting his own translated choice of title is somewhat odd. If only brother bin Batts took it upon himself to contact me personally regarding his own view of the translated title, then of course it would have been considered and discussed. We are not like those in the UK who, when contacted about published books, with *clear* problematic publishing issues, and in cases clear plagiarism and hiding of authors’ names out of fear (!), reply with comments such as **“this information is not available to you, refer back to the website”** (!?) as has occurred in our experience with those who at the same time claim to be championing Salafiyyah in the UK.

Thirteen: The above then leads us on to another point which is where is the *gheerah* (protective jealousy) when it comes to clear cases of academic theft, hiding of authors’ names, admitted counts of plagiarism and the likes – committed by those who claim to be championing the da’wah Salafiyyah in the UK? Where are the exquisite “tweets” regarding such clear plagiarism and theft, yet one rushes out like *bats* out of a tree (!) over this issue?!

Lastly: Brother Bin Batts argued that the translation was conducted by: **“a group who fights against the Salafis in the UK”**. At this juncture it is apt to usher in the Noble verse wherein Allāh Says,

﴿تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَى﴾

“That, then, is an unjust division”

{*an-Najm* (53): 22}

The Muslim should remember that he will be taken to account by Allāh for wicked words, and those who live on the other side of the Atlantic within abodes of disbelief should not release the tongues on matters that they know nothing about. The Prophet (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam*) also said:

«إن العبد ليتكلم بالكلمة ما يتبين فيها، يزل بها في النار أبعد ما بين المشرق والمغرب»

*“A servant may say a word without thinking about its implications, and because of it he will plunge into the Hellfire the distance between the East and West.”*⁷

Indeed, Allāh says,

﴿وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا﴾

“And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart – about all those [one] will be questioned.”

{*al-Isrā'* (17): 36}

Ibn Katheer stated about this noble ayah:

'Ali bin Abī Talhah reported that Ibn 'Abbās said: “(This means) do not say (anything of which you have no knowledge).” **Al-'Awfi said: “Do not accuse anyone of that of which you have no knowledge.”** Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyah said: “It means bearing false witness.” Qatādah said: “Do not say, ‘I have seen’, when you did not see anything, or ‘I have heard’, when you did not hear anything, or ‘I know’, when you do not know, for Allāh will ask you about all of that.” **In conclusion, what they said means that Allāh forbids**

⁷ Bukhārī and Muslim from Abū Hurayrah (*radi Allāhu 'anhu*).

speaking without knowledge and only on the basis of suspicion, which is mere imagination and illusions. As Allāh says:

﴿اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ﴾

“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin.”

{*al-Hujurat* (49): 12}

The people whom we fight against, for the benefit of brother Bin Batts, over there in North Carolina or wherever he is, are the following people of innovation, misguidance and desires:

- The Rawāfid
- The Mu'tazilah
- The Khawarij – and their modern offshoots widespread in the UK ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jihadis, the Qutbīs and Surūrīs, HT and Muhajiroun, the followers of Anwar al-Awlaki, 'Abdullah el-Faisal al-Jamaykī, Abū Qatādah, Omar Bakri etc.
- The Sufis – and their modern offshoots
- The modernists and liberalists
- Those who commit oppression and speak without knowledge in their ignorant lectures, and make tremendous blunders in front of the masses. Unlike Brother Bin Batts, we are not selective in whom we desire to correct when faced with errors.

These are the categories of people whom we are interested in fighting against, and have been doing so whilst certain individuals were still ignorant of the basics of the Sunnah, and engaging in sins that we feel shy to mention. We do not “fight” anyone from Salafiyyah to which we ascribe. So we request the one who wrote such nonsense to *be a serious salafi* (!) and remove that unjust utterance with immediate effect and not render himself among the oppressors.

The one in need of Allāh's Aid,

'AbdulHaq ibn Kofi ibn Kwesi Addae ibn Kwaku al-Ashanti al-Britānī

22 Dhu'l-Hijjah 1434 AH/27th October 2013 CE

- Amended on 25th Rabī' al-Awwal 1435 AH/26th January 2014 CE

South London, UK