

# Reflections on THE QUR'ĀN

UNDERSTANDING SŪRAHS  
AL-FĀTIḤAH AND AL-BAQARAH

Irfan Ahmad Khan

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## TRANSLITERATION TABLE

### Consonants. Arabic

initial: unexpressed medial and final:

ء '      د d      ض ḍ      ك k
ب b      ذ dh      ط ṭ      ل l
ت t      ر r      ظ ḏ      م m
ث th      ز z      ع '      ن n
ج j      س s      غ gh      ه h
ح ḥ      ش sh      ف f      و w
خ kh      ص ṣ      ق q      ي y

### Vowels, diphthongs, etc.

Short:      َ a      ِ i      ُ u

long:      َـ ā      ِـ ī      ُـ ū

diphthongs:      َؤ aw

   َئ ay

## FOREWORD



As part of its mission to promote a better understanding of the meaning and message of the Qur'ān among the English-speaking people, the Islamic Foundation takes pride in publishing this work. Written by an eminent contemporary Muslim activist and thinker, Irfan Ahmad Khan, it will help readers appreciate better the eternal Divine guidance offered by the Qur'ān. Over the years Professor Khan has been engaged, mostly in the US, in *Da'wah* and interfaith work bringing the various faith groups together on many common issues. During the course of his interaction with both Muslims and non-Muslims he realized the need for presenting the message of the Qur'ān in an idiom best suited for them. His elucidation of the Qur'ān has been enriched by his deep study of philosophy, both Islamic and Western varieties.

Although the present work focuses on *Sūrah al-Baqarah* in terms of studying the import of its each and every verse and key terms, it succeeds remarkably in projecting the entire Qur'ānic worldview. Reading this work one thus gains a fairly clear idea of the quintessence of the whole Qur'ān, particularly of *tawhīd*, the Hereafter (*Ākhirah*) and Messengership (*Risālah*). This is illustrated best by his masterly and extensive exposition of the two salient verses *Āyah al-Birr* and *Āyah al-Kursī* (verses 177 and 255-257 of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* respectively). While bringing out their meaning in full, the author provides an abundance of cross references to and paraphrasing of other relevant Qur'ānic verses, as a result of which the readers become familiar with the overall, broader framework of the entire Islamic worldview.

**IRFAN AHMAD KHAN** (b.1931) in India, graduated in Islamic Sciences and Classical Arabic from Rampur and received his M.A. in Philosophy from AMU (1958) where he taught Western Philosophy, and Theology (1958 – 1973). In 1974, he moved to USA, where he obtained Ph.D. in Philosophy from University of Illinois at Chicago and taught Western and Islamic Philosophy at various institutions in USA. During the last fifty years Dr. Khan's reflections upon Qur'anic *ayat* continued with his own involvement with the problems of the humanity and the *Ummah*. And mainly during the last thirty years he has been working with the graduates of the Western universities in developing a methodology of understanding the Qur'an.

"...the author's approach to figure out the logic which binds certain verses in *surah* to one theme, and all the themes of the *surah* to each other, represents a genuine and valuable contribution to the library of *Tafsir*, which makes the Qur'an and its message more comprehensible to the readers: Muslims or non-Muslims..." *Dr. Fathi Osman.*

"With a deliberate informality of style, Dr. Khan helps the reader along by drawing attention to the principal issues, by explicating key terms, by bringing out aspects of conceptual coherence, (and) by pointing out trajectories of reflection..."  
*Professor Mustansir Mir, Youngstown State University, USA.*

"...Your commentary...has provided me with insight into the nature and purpose of Qur'anic revelation, into the main values and crucial perspectives of the Islamic faith, and into the meaning of what it means to be human..." *Dr. A. H. Mathias Zahniser, Professor Emeritus of World Religions, Asbury Theological Seminary; Wilmore, KY, USA.*

"...In his textual study of the verses of the Qur'an, in his detailed exegetical notes Dr. Khan meticulously studies the significance, importance, meaning and suggestiveness of the specific Qur'anic words and expressions." *Dr. Fazlur Rahman, Professor of Tafsir and other Islamic Sciences, AMU Aligarh, IUIU Kuala Lumpur and Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arabia.*

**THE ISLAMIC FOUNDATION** aims to achieve excellence in academic research, education, publications, training and building bridges between Muslims and others. Since 1973, the Foundation has developed its national and international standing through the character, variety and scope of its activities. It has, at present, over 300 published titles, and houses one of the largest private Islamic libraries in Western Europe. It publishes three academic journals: *The Muslim World Book Review* (quarterly), *Encounters: Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives* (biannually) and *Review of Islamic Economics* (biannually). Its academic wing the **MARKFIELD INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION** awards MA/MPhil/PhD degrees, Post-Graduate Diploma and Certificate in Islamic Studies in partnership with the Loughborough University, UK.



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