Study of the Word, “Mu-ta-waf-fi-ka”

For any practitioner of using the Al-Imran 3:54-55 as a bridge to sharing the Gospel with Muslims, it is vital to understand the true meaning of the word, “Mutawaffika”. Many Muslims will do their best to cover up and misdirect from the true meaning of this word.

A prime example of this cover up is found in the first and second editions of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan’s English translation of the Qur’an. In the first edition (left), he translated the word, “Mutawaffika” correctly. In his second edition (right), he translated it incorrectly. When asked why he made this change, the Maulana replied, “I was pressured to make the change.”
The Arabic correct translation of the word “Mutawaffika” found in the Qur’an in Surah Al-Imran 3:55 has been debated by scholars. The significance of the outcome of the debate is important to both sides. Those who do not want Isa to die contend that “Mutawaffika” refers to Isa’s second trip to the earth. On this trip, Isa will die. Others argue that “Mutawaffika” in 3:55 cannot be translated as “to cause to die” simply because they do not believe that he died.

This paper pulls together information from multiple Islamic scholars and sources who argue that Isa died. They contend that if Isa died and was raised alive to Allah, then it should not be seen as a threat to any prophets and their writings. The fact that Isa died was foretold by previous prophets and reveals to us Allah’s divine plan (Quran, Al-Imran 3:54) of substituting Isa in our place. Our punishment of eternity in hell was placed upon a substitute, Isa. Allah performed Korbani Himself and used Holy Isa as the sacrifice.

Let’s examine arguments in favor of “Mutawaffika” being translated as “to cause to die” or “to kill.”

Surah Al-Imran 3:55 (Arabic pronunciation)

3:55 “Iz qa_lalla_hu ya_ ‘isa_ inni mutawaffi ka wa ra_ti’uka ilayya wa mutahhiruka minal lazina kafaru_ wa ja_ ‘ilul lazinattaba’u_ka faqaul lazina kafaru_ ila_ yaumil qia mah(ti), summa ilayya marji’ukum fa ahkumu bainakum fima kuntum fihi takhtalifu_n(a).”

Arabic translations in English (from www.quranbrowser.com). The Arabic Mutawaffika’s translation into English is underlined.

Pickthall  (And remember) when Allah said: O Jesus! Lo! I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto Me,

Yusuf Ali  Behold! God said: "O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself

Shakir  And when Allah said: O Isa, I am going to terminate the period of your stay (on earth) and cause you to ascend unto Me

Sher Ali  Remember the time when ALLAH said' `O Jesus, I will cause thee to die a natural death and will raise thee to Myself,

Khalifa  Thus, GOD said, "O Jesus, I am terminating your life, raising you to Me,

Arberry  When God said, 'Jesus, I will take thee to Me and will raise thee to Me

Palmer  When God said, 'O Jesus! I will make Thee die and take Thee up again to me

Rodwell  Remember when God said, "O Jesus! verily I will cause thee to die, and will take thee up to myself

SaleWhen God said, o Jesus, verily I will cause thee to die, and I will take thee up unto me,

by Nadeem Quraishi

Interpretation of the word ‘wafat’: The key word here is "wafat". The most correct meaning of "wafat" is death, or take away soul. If soul is taken away from a person, it is nothing but death. The problem arises with regards to this verse, when Muslims refuse to interpret the meaning of "wafat" as death. Irony is that all scholars who translated the Holy Quran do agree "wafat" means death. Each and every scholar translated the word "wafat" as death in at least 20 different instances in their translations. However, in this particular verse, they interpreted the meaning as ‘take away’ and insinuate physical ascension. These translators did not hesitate to twist the actual meaning of the word of Allah to support Christian faith and to some extent weak Hadith narrated by Wahab bin Munnabba, Kab Akbar and one isolated Hadith by Abu Hurairaa.