

Pioneering Quran translation published in England — 100 years ago

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A Vital Resource for Muslim Reform in the 21st Century

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In September this year, it will be one hundred years since the celebrated English Translation of the Holy Quran with Commentary by Maulana Muhammad Ali was published in 1917 — from Woking in Surrey, under the auspices of the Woking Muslim Mission.

This was the first ever widely accessible English translation by a Muslim and has had a pronounced effect on the way Islam is viewed in the West.

Without denying the greatness or utility of the work of earlier Muslim commentators, Maulana Muhammad Ali produced a translation and commentary presenting detailed refutations of the many misconceptions about Islam that were prevalent then, but which still persist and continue to impede rational public discourse.

In the light of these features, the contemporary relevance of the work of Maulana Muhammad Ali could not be more evident.

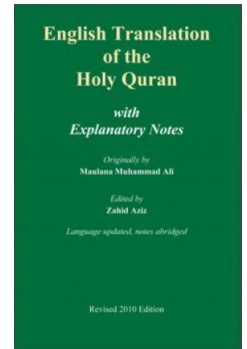
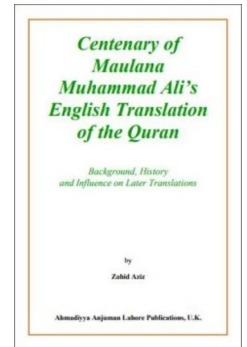
All subsequent translators have followed the path that he set. The second edition, published in 1951, featured an updated commentary reflecting the circumstances of the time. A [further revision](#) was recently undertaken by Dr Zahid Aziz (author of [Islam, Peace and Tolerance](#)) to simplify the language for contemporary readers, and was published in 2010.

Before and during the civil rights era it was mainly on account of this translation that African Americans began to embrace Islam. In 1978 the African American Muslim leader, the late Warith Deen Muhammad travelled to Lahore in order to pay his respects to the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and express his gratitude for the legacy of Maulana Muhammad Ali.

In today's world this work is valued as an authoritative presentation of Islam which effectively rebuts extremist ideologies and is effective in reviving the true spirit of the faith.

- To mark its centenary [a special publication is available](#) detailing its background, history and influence on later translations.
- A [Dutch-language version](#) of the First Edition was published in 1934. For the Spanish-speaking world, a [Spanish translation of the Second Edition was published in 1986](#) and a [French edition appeared in 1990](#).
- The [Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam](#) (*Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam*) was established in Lahore in 1914 to promote the informed understanding of Islam in the West. In the UK it operated the [Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking](#) until the early 1960s. Its new UK headquarters is at *Dar-us-Salaam*, 15 Stanley Avenue, Wembley, HA0 4JQ, UK. In 1924, in Berlin, it built the first mosque in Continental Europe of the modern era. The [Berlin Mosque](#) is now recognised by the German government as part of the German national heritage. From its European and other centres around the world this organisation has taught that Islam promotes peace, harmony and mutual respect between all communities and nationalities.

Media:



4. LIBERAL VIEW OF OTHER RELIGIONS

Faith in all prophets
There is a general misconception that the Quran preaches intolerance, and that Muhammad preached his faith with the sword in one hand and the Quran in the other. The basic principle of Islam, a faith in all the prophets of the world, is enough to give the lie to this allegation. The great and liberal mind that preached not only love and respect for the founders of the great religions of the world but much more than that, faith in them, could not shrink to the narrowness of intolerance for those very religions. Tolerance is not, in fact, the word that can sufficiently indicate the breadth of the attitude of Islam towards other religions. It preaches equal love for all, equal respect for all, and equal faith in all.

No compulsion in religion
Again, intolerance could not be ascribed to a book which altogether excludes compulsion from the sphere of religion.
"There is no compulsion in religion." — 2:256

In fact, the Holy Quran is full of statements showing that belief in this or that religion is a person's own concern, and that he is given the choice of adopting one way or another; that, if he accepts truth, it is for his own good, and that, if he sticks to error, it is to his own detriment. Given below are just two of these quotations.

"The Truth is from your Lord; so whoever wishes, let him believe, and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve." — 18:29

"Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever sees, it is for the good of his own soul; and whoever is blind, it is to his harm. And I am not a keeper over you." — 6:104

Why fighting was allowed
The Muslims were allowed to fight indeed, but the object was not to compel the unbelievers to believe in Islam, for it was against all the broad principles in which they had hitherto been brought up. It was to establish religious freedom, to stop all religious persecution, to protect the houses of worship of all religions, mosques among them.

Relations of friendship with others
It is sometimes asserted that the Quran forbids relations of friendship with the followers of other religions. How could a Book which allows a man to have as his comrade in life a woman following another religion (2:5), say in the same breath that no friendly relations can be had with the followers of other religions? The loving relation of husband and wife is the friendliest of all relations and, when this is expressly permitted, there is not the least reason to suppose that other friendly relations are forbidden. The fact is that, wherever there is prohibition against making friends with other people, it relates only to the people who were at war with the Muslims, and this is plainly stated in the Quran:

"Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice. Allah forbids you only with regard to those who fight you for religion, and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends of them; and whoever makes friends of them, these are the wrongdoers." — 60:8-9

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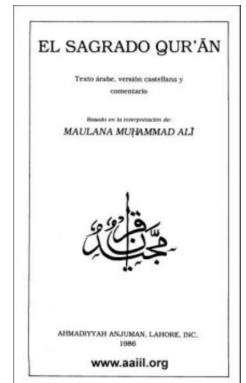
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No punishment for apostasy
It is generally thought that the Quran provides a death sentence for those who desert the religion of Islam. Anyone who reads the Quran will see that there is not the least ground for such a supposition. The Quran speaks repeatedly of people going back to unbelief after believing, but never once does it say that they should be killed or punished. For example:
"And whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever — these it is whose deeds are fruitless in this world and the Hereafter." — 2:177
"Those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in disbelief, their repentance is not accepted, and these are they that go astray." — 3:90



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