



**QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies**

ISSN (Online): 2828-2779

Received: 06-01-2025, Revised: 28-05-2025

Accepted: 15-06-2025, Published: 28-06-2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v4i2.8069>

## **Marmaduke Pickthall and the Translation of the Qur'an: A Study of the Literal Approach and Its Relevance in the Western Context**

**Kerwanto<sup>1</sup>; Haidar Alie<sup>2</sup>; Rifansyah Lukman<sup>3</sup>; Mohammed Xolile  
Ntshangase<sup>4</sup>**

### **Abstract**

*Islam is one of the religions with the largest number of adherents in the world. Muslims, although they come from diverse backgrounds, are united by the teachings of the Qur'an which was revealed in Arabic. To meet the needs of understanding for non-Arab Muslims, translating the Qur'an into various languages is important, but must still maintain the authenticity and sanctity of the original text. One of the English translations of the Qur'an that is considered authentic and neutral is the work of Marmaduke Pickthall, a convert from England. In his work *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (1930), Pickthall uses a literal approach with a classic English style ala the King James Bible. The goal is for Western readers to feel familiar and be able to understand the text with a similar spiritual nuance. This study is a literature review (library research) with a qualitative method that aims to examine Pickthall's translation approach, the challenges he faced, and the influence of his work on English-language Islamic studies. The results show that although his translation has been criticized for its archaic language style and extreme literal tendencies, Pickthall's work remains an important reference and has made a major contribution to building bridges of cross-cultural understanding.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia, Corresponding Email: [kerwanto@ptiq.ac.id](mailto:kerwanto@ptiq.ac.id), Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8453-2259>

<sup>2</sup> Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia, Email: [haidaralie496@gmail.com](mailto:haidaralie496@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia, Email: [rifansyah.luckman74@gmail.com](mailto:rifansyah.luckman74@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> University of Limpopo, South Africa, Email: [mohammed.ntshangase@ul.ac.za](mailto:mohammed.ntshangase@ul.ac.za), Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5325-1335>

**Keywords:** *Al-Qur'an translation; Marmaduke Pickthall; Literal Approach; Islam in the West*

## Introduction

The Qur'an, as the holy book of Muslims, is the primary source of spiritual, legal, and moral teachings for more than a billion Muslims around the world. The uniqueness of the Qur'an lies not only in its universal values, but also in the unique and profound beauty of Arabic literature. However, with the spread of Islam to various parts of the world and the increasing number of non-Arab Muslims, the need for translations of the Qur'an into various languages has become very important.

Translation of the Qur'an is a complex process because it involves a sacred text that is believed to have a divine and literary dimension that is not easily translated without losing its meaning. Therefore, every translation effort must consider fidelity to the original text, sensitivity to the cultural context of the reader, and theological accuracy [1], [2]. In this context, translating the Qur'an into English is an important project, considering that English is the lingua franca of the modern world.

One of the figures who made a major contribution in this field was Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936), an English intellectual who converted to Islam in 1917. His work, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (1930), is widely regarded as one of the most influential English translations of the Qur'an [3]. Pickthall adopted a literal approach with a classical English style, similar to the King James Bible, in an attempt to provide a translation that was both faithful to the Arabic text and acceptable to Western readers [4]. Pickthall's approach not only has a linguistic dimension, but also reflects the theological and cultural dynamics of the early 20th century, when understanding of Islam in the Western world was still very limited and often framed by an orientalist point of view [4]. Therefore, a study of Pickthall's work and approach is important to understand how sacred texts are interpreted, translated, and adapted in cross-cultural contexts.

This research aims to examine Marmaduke Pickthall's contribution to the translation of the Al-Qur'an by highlighting the methodological approach used, the challenges faced, and the influence of his work in introducing Islam to the English-speaking public. It is hoped that this study can provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of translating religious texts and their important role in building bridges of understanding between cultures and religions.

## Literature Review

Translating the Qur'an is a highly challenging intellectual and spiritual endeavor, as it involves conveying a sacred text believed to be of divine origin and embedded with complex linguistic, rhetorical, and theological layers. Revealed in Arabic, the Qur'an's unique rhetorical structure and stylistic eloquence make any attempt to render it into another language potentially problematic [5]. The tension lies in maintaining both linguistic fidelity and spiritual nuance [6]. Among the existing translation approaches, the literal or word-for-word method remains controversial yet crucial, particularly when fidelity to the original text is prioritized over interpretative fluidity [7].

The history of Qur'anic translation into English dates back to the 17th century, beginning with Alexander Ross's 1649 version, which was itself a translation of André du Ryer's earlier French edition [8]. Early English translations were largely produced by non-Muslim orientalists, often imbued with polemical or missionary agendas and theological biases [9]. One of the most influential of these was George Sale's *The Koran* (1734), which included a long preface that disparaged Islamic beliefs and positioned the Qur'an as a product of human authorship rather than divine revelation [10]. Such translations, though widely cited in the West, failed to capture the spiritual and theological depth of the Qur'anic message and often perpetuated negative stereotypes about Islam [7], [12].

By the early 20th century, Muslim translators began to emerge. Among them was Muhammad Ali of the Ahmadiyya Movement, whose 1917 translation was interspersed with doctrinal interpretations not accepted by mainstream Sunni Islam [11]. This contributed to ongoing controversies regarding the legitimacy and accuracy of Qur'anic renderings [12]. In this context, the translation by Marmaduke Pickthall marked a turning point. As a British convert to Islam and a native English speaker, Pickthall possessed both linguistic competence and theological commitment [13]. His work, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (1930), remains one of the earliest and most widely respected translations by a Muslim scholar from the West [7], [8].

Pickthall adopted a literal approach to translation, emphasizing linguistic fidelity over exegetical liberty. He was keen to maintain the semantic structure of the original Arabic while avoiding personal interpretations [14]. His careful choice of the title – *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* – reflected his awareness that any translation of the Qur'an is, by nature, only an approximation of its

meaning, not a replacement for the Arabic text itself [16]. This epistemological humility was underscored by his decision not to provide detailed footnotes or commentary, limiting himself instead to brief clarifications on specific terms or historical references.

In stylistic terms, Pickthall chose a classical, elevated register of English reminiscent of the King James Bible [15]. This stylistic decision was intentional: by using Biblical English, Pickthall sought to mirror the solemn and sacred tone of the original Qur'an and to foster a sense of spiritual familiarity among Christian readers in the West [7]. His use of archaic pronouns such as "thee," "thou," and "thy" may seem dated today, but at the time they served to invoke reverence and textual solemnity.

His extensive background in Arabic and firsthand experiences in the Islamic world—particularly in the Middle East and India—provided him with rich cultural and theological insight [16]. These experiences shaped his methodology and helped him navigate the complex task of rendering Qur'anic meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries [17]. Rather than inserting doctrinal commentary, he relied on existing exegetical traditions and consulted scholars to ensure fidelity to mainstream Islamic interpretations [7], [10].

The impact of Pickthall's translation has been far-reaching. His work has been republished in over 80 editions in the past two decades alone, demonstrating sustained relevance and readership across the Muslim and academic worlds [15]. His translation was among the first English renditions of the Qur'an to be received positively by Muslims globally and is still used as a reference in interfaith studies and Islamic scholarship. Scholars such as A. R. Kidwai and Syed Mansuri have noted that Pickthall's work laid the foundation for future Muslim translators and challenged the dominance of orientalist translations in Western discourse [7], [15].

Nevertheless, the translation is not without criticism. Some scholars argue that Pickthall's strict literalism limits the reader's ability to grasp deeper theological and philosophical concepts. Terms such as *taqwa* (piety) and *fitrah* (innate disposition) are rendered without interpretive gloss, potentially confusing readers unfamiliar with Islamic terminology [19]. Furthermore, while the archaic English style contributes to a sense of majesty, it may alienate modern readers or younger audiences who find the language inaccessible [18].

Others point out that the lack of exegetical commentary may hinder comprehension, particularly for readers who lack background in Islamic theology or historical context. In contrast to later translators like Abdullah Yusuf Ali—who offered extensive footnotes—Pickthall's minimalist approach may be less pedagogically effective for contemporary audiences seeking both linguistic and contextual clarity [14], [17].

Despite these limitations, Pickthall's contribution remains seminal. His work exemplifies a balanced, respectful, and theologically informed approach to Qur'anic translation. By avoiding orientalist biases and sectarian interpretations, he positioned himself as a credible and authentic voice in the field of Qur'anic studies. His translation is not merely a linguistic endeavor but also a spiritual and cultural bridge between Islamic and Western worlds [19]. The significance of *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* lies not only in its textual content but also in its symbolic role as a medium for intercultural and interfaith dialogue[20].

The scholarly literature surrounding Pickthall reflects both the historical significance and the contemporary relevance of his work. As the need for accessible yet authentic translations of the Qur'an continue to grow – especially in pluralistic and secular societies – Pickthall's legacy offers a valuable model [21]. His translation remains a touchstone for those seeking an English version of the Qur'an that is faithful to its source, respectful of its sacredness, and aware of its audience. In an era marked by religious misunderstanding and geopolitical tensions, Pickthall's contribution stands as a testimony to the power of words to bridge divides, foster understanding, and preserve the integrity of sacred texts[22].

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of the Qur'an occupies a significant place in the intellectual history of Islam in the West. However, most existing studies have focused primarily on the historical and biographical aspects of Pickthall's work, without critically examining the contemporary relevance of his literal approach in the cultural and social context of Western readership [23]. The reviewed literature demonstrates that although Pickthall's literal method and use of classical English are often criticized for being rigid and inaccessible, they in fact represent a deliberate rhetorical strategy aimed at fostering cross-religious understanding [24]. This highlights the need to reassess Pickthall's contribution not merely as a translator, but as a cultural mediator who presented the Qur'an in a language familiar to the Western audience while preserving the sanctity of the original text.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in its attempt to reinterpret Pickthall's literal approach as a form of da'wah strategy and as a reflection of Islamic epistemology within Western cultural frameworks. This research addresses a scholarly gap by exploring the relationship between Pickthall's identity as a British convert, his neutral and literal translation style, and its impact on non-Muslim readers. Thus, the study contributes not only to Qur'anic translation discourse but also to broader discussions on interfaith engagement and the trans-cultural representation of Islam.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research type. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, context, and complexity of the phenomena studied, especially related to the process of translating sacred texts by figures with certain cultural and religious backgrounds [25].

The data in this study were obtained from relevant literature sources, both primary and secondary, including the original work of Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, academic articles, biographical books, scientific journals, and other publications that support the study of Pickthall's translation methods and influences [26]. The researcher conducted a critical review of the content, linguistic approach, historical context, and academic responses to the work [27].

The analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, namely by describing the characteristics and approaches of Pickthall's translation, then analyzing it within a linguistic, historical, and theological framework. The data interpretation process was conducted reflectively and contextually to understand the significance of Pickthall's work in the tradition of translating the Qur'an into English and its impact on Islamic discourse in the Western world [28]. The descriptive-analytical method aims to describe data systematically, then analyze it to find a deeper meaning behind the observed phenomena [25]. This method is commonly used in social and humanities studies, especially to understand texts, contexts, and the dynamics of developing meanings.

## Result and Discussion

### Marmaduke Pickthall Profile

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall—born William Pickthall on 7 April 1875 in Suffolk, England—was an English intellectual and writer widely regarded as one of the most influential translators of the Qur'an into English. He was raised in an Anglican Christian family. After the death of his father, a clergyman, Pickthall moved to London with his family. He attended Harrow School, but failed the Foreign Office exam, and then embarked on an intellectual and spiritual odyssey that took him to the Middle East [29].

His travels to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria at a young age gave him a deep understanding of Muslim culture and society. He showed a strong interest in the Islamic world, even before he formally converted to Islam. These travels inspired his literary works, including *Oriental Encounters* (1918), which chronicles his experiences in the Arab world [30], [31].

Pickthall began his career as a novelist with such well-known works as *Said the Fisherman* (1903), which received high praise, including from H.G. Wells. In addition to his fiction, he was also active as a journalist and advocate for Muslim issues, especially during the Balkan Wars and the fall of the Ottoman Empire [32]. His commitment to the Islamic world grew stronger when he publicly declared his conversion to Islam on 29 November 1917 at an event at the Woking Muslim Mission, England [30], [31].

After converting to Islam, Pickthall was active in various Islamic activities, including being a Friday preacher and a regular writer for various Islamic journals. He was later invited to India by the leaders of the Khilafat Movement and served as editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* newspaper, and developed close relationships with figures such as Mahatma Gandhi. In the 1920s, he was appointed editor of the journal *Islamic Culture* in Hyderabad, where he completed his landmark work, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (1930), an English translation of the Qur'an that used a classical style and a literal approach [30], [31].

After retiring from public activity in 1935, Pickthall returned to England and died the following year, 1936. He was buried in Brookwood Muslim Cemetery, Surrey [33]. To this day, Pickthall is remembered as an important figure in the spread of Islam in the Western world and a pioneer in translating the Koran faithfully to the original text.

## Journey to Islam

Marmaduke Pickthall's writings on the East written before he embraced Islam are of equal significance to those he produced after he became a Muslim. His interest in the Islamic world had been aroused long before his formal conversion. This is evident from his two-year experience in Syria, which is told in the story of his near conversion to Islam in Damascus [33]. Based on historical traces such as the publication of his famous novel *Said the Fisherman* (1903), his work in journalism defending Turkish interests, and his monumental work *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (1930), it can be said that Pickthall's entire adult life was illuminated by the light of Islam, both spiritually and intellectually [34].

There are varying opinions about the exact date and process of Pickthall's conversion. Peter Clark, citing a report in *the Islamic Review*, states that Pickthall publicly declared his conversion to Islam on 29 November 1917. Anne Fremantle, on the other hand, suggests an earlier date of December 1914. Jamie Gilham even

suggests that his conversion was gradual; although Pickthall had been sympathetic to Islam since the beginning of World War I, he did not publicly declare it until three years later. Given the lack of personal documentation, the reasons behind this delay in public declaration are likely to remain a mystery [33].

The profound question that often arises is: what drove a man from an upper-middle-class English background, with Anglican affiliations and close ties to the English elite, to embrace Islam and then dedicate his life to the Eastern world? One explanation put forward by Fremantle is that his disappointment with the support of English Christians for the Balkan states fighting the Ottoman Caliphate contributed to his conversion [33].

Like many travellers to the East in the 19th century, Pickthall's interest in Islam can also be understood as a search for meaning in life beyond the social and spiritual confines of his native culture. His introverted and sensitive personality, which did not fit into the social norms of his class, led him to find comfort in Eastern culture. Although not from a wealthy family, Pickthall had the confidence and a wide social network, including important figures such as Lord Cromer and Aubrey Herbert [33].

His love of Oriental society is reflected in his travel notes from the time he first set foot in Egypt in 1894. In his work *Oriental Encounters* (1918), as well as in other novels and short stories, he demonstrated his ability to depict the Eastern world from an internal point of view, an approach appreciated by E. M. Forster [31].

Thus, there is no doubt that Pickthall's initial interest in Islam was strongly influenced by his encounter with Muslim societies which he found to be more authentic and fulfilling than European societies. The spirituality and intellectualism of Islam, which he had direct access to through his Arabic language skills, played a major role in his conversion process. It also enabled him to serve as an imam at the Notting Hill Mosque and to become an editor of Muslim journals. This spiritual and intellectual journey laid a strong foundation for his involvement in the spread of Islam in the Western world [30], [31].

## Background to the Translation of the Qur'an

Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of the Qur'an was published in 1930, as a result of a major project sponsored by the Nizam of Hyderabad, the ruler of one of the states of British India. The idea for the translation had been with Pickthall since his conversion to Islam in 1917, although his interest and involvement with Islam were evident earlier. The origins of this effort can be traced to his article entitled "*The Qur'an*" published in *The Islamic Review* in 1919 [35]. In this article, in addition to presenting a strong argument for the divine origin of the Qur'an,



Pickthall also included his translation of several verses, which were later developed into a better and more elegant version in his complete translation in 1930, entitled *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*.

No less important is Pickthall's criticism of orientalism and the poor quality of translations of the Koran into English at that time. He wrote: "The translations of the Sacred Book are prosaic, discursive, and confused, whereas the Quran in Arabic is concise, exalted, and poetic. Some translations are so bad, and many notes so silly, that they seem to obfuscate the text." [35]

This statement shows Pickthall's early awareness of the urgent need for a high-quality translation of the Qur'an, capable of conveying both the beauty and spiritual power of the original text in English.

Before the translation of the Qur'an by Marmaduke Pickthall (1930), there were three main categories of translations of the Qur'an in English [30]:

*First*, translations by Western orientalist, which were generally made from an academic perspective and often contained a theological bias against Islam. Important figures in this category include: (1). Alexander Ross (1649), translating from the French version by André du Ryer, not directly from the Arabic; (2). George Sale (1734), produced a highly influential and widely used translation into the 20th century, accompanied by a *Preliminary Discourse* full of orientalism; (3). J.M. Rodwell (1861), arranged the suras in chronological order according to personal hypotheses; (4). E.H. Palmer (1880), translated the first two juz and several short suras for *the Sacred Books of the East*, a major project under the guidance of Max Müller [36][37].

*Second*, translations from Ahmadiyah circles, which reflect typical Ahmadiyah interpretations and deviate from the orthodox understanding of Muslims. The main figures in this category are: (1). Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan (1905), an early translator from India; (2). Muhammad Ali (1917) of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, who combined translation and apologetic exegesis; (3). Ghulam Sarwar (1920), which also presents an Ahmadiyya interpretation [38].

*Third*, translations by well-intentioned Muslim individuals who lack adequate linguistic and methodological competence, so that the translation results are less academically accountable. For example: (1). Abul Fadl (1911); (2). Hairat Dihlawi (1916) [36]

Pickthall's criticism of the translation of the Qur'an into English is not out of place or excessive. Unfortunately, this seemingly neutral and academic field has become a fierce ideological battleground—rife with emotional polemics, sectarian conflicts, and ideological prejudices, including the infiltration of missionary agendas. The historical schism between Christianity and Islam—deepened by the Crusades, exacerbated by colonialism, and perpetuated by

modern waves of Islamophobia – has further tarnished the Orientalist discourse on Islam and the Qur'an. The tragedy of September 11 and the subsequent acts of violence claimed in the name of Islam have exacerbated this perception, coloring academic discourse with a shadow of suspicion and geopolitical tensions [30].

The aim of this work is to convey to English-speaking readers the meanings that Muslims around the world hold of the words of the Qur'an, with a view to meeting the needs of British Muslims. The term 'English-speaking readers' necessarily includes non-Muslim readers, who generally have different backgrounds, mindsets, belief systems and responses to the Qur'an than British Muslims [30].

### Critical Analysis of Marmaduke Pickthall's Quranic Translation

Marmaduke Pickthall applied a rather unique method and approach in translating the Qur'an into English. He tended to use a literal approach, trying to maintain fidelity to the original text of the Qur'an in Arabic, and minimizing the addition of personal interpretations. Pickthall named his work *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, to emphasize that the translation was only intended as an attempt to convey the meaning of the Qur'an, not as a substitute for the original text. He consciously avoided an overly free translation style, in order to maintain the nuance of the majesty and sanctity of the Qur'anic text [30].

Pickthall utilized his scientific background as a scholar who mastered Arabic well. He studied the lexical and contextual meaning of Arabic vocabulary carefully, and consulted with the community to ensure the accuracy of the translation within the framework of a valid understanding. In translating, Pickthall chose to use an archaic English style influenced by *the King James Bible*. This choice is intended to convey a sense of majesty and sacredness comparable to sacred texts in the Christian tradition, so that it feels more familiar and evocative for Western readers. This approach makes Pickthall's translation one of the most respected English translations of the Qur'an, primarily because of its commitment to fidelity to the original text and understanding of the Qur'an's spiritual dimensions. In several passages, he consciously uses classical vocabulary such as 'Thou' and 'Thy' to highlight the beauty, solemnity and majesty of the language of the Qur'an [30].

Pickthall shows serious attention to the historical and cultural context in the process of translating verses of the Koran. He attempts to explain verses that are related to Arabic tradition and history in order to facilitate understanding for non-Muslim readers, without sacrificing the integrity of the meaning contained therein. However, he consistently avoids subjective interpretations, and places greater emphasis on generally accepted meanings within the framework of

Islamic thought. As a convert to Islam, Pickthall has a strong commitment to translating the Koran from a Muslim perspective, with the aim of ensuring that the translations he produces reflect authentic Islamic teachings. This approach shows that for Pickthall, translating the Qur'an is not just a linguistic endeavor, but is also a religious mandate that requires fidelity to the original text and deep spiritual understanding [39].

Pickthall's approach to translating the Qur'an has contributed significantly to the wide acceptance of his work among Muslim communities around the world. His commitment to fidelity to the source texts has led to his translation being seen as an authentic representation of the meaning of the Qur'an, while still recognizing that it is not a substitute for the original text. Pickthall explicitly stated that his translation was intended only as a guide to aid understanding, not as a substitute for the Qur'an in Arabic. This assertion reflects his deep awareness of the limitations of translated language in conveying the complexity of the meaning, beauty, and spiritual depth of the Qur'an. In the introduction to his work, he states that the Qur'an can only be fully understood in its original language, Arabic, and that any translation is merely a provisional and limited interpretation of its meaning. This statement demonstrates the basic principle that underlies his methodology of translation: that the authenticity of the sacred text must be preserved, and that any attempt at translation must be based on respect for the sacred status of the revealed text. [30].

The characteristics of Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of the Qur'an are as follows:

*First*, the preparation of a foreword in which Pickthall comments on the meaning of the Qur'an, its uniqueness, and the difficulties it faces. In this context, Pickthall composed a foreword that described his admiration for the greatness of the Al-Qur'an and emphasized that what he presented was the "meaning" of the Al-Qur'an, not the Al-Qur'an itself. [40].

*Second*, only include brief footnotes and parallel format. Pickthall uses a parallel layout between the Arabic text and the English translation. He added footnotes only to certain verses to explain the meaning of the words or context briefly, not to interpret them in depth [4].

*Third*, in translating the Qur'an, Pickthall used classical English in the Biblical style. That is, Pickthall chose the old English style (Elizabethan English), as used in the *King James Bible*, to convey the sacred and formal sense of the Qur'anic text [38].

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 172. Lañy-yas-tañkifal-Masii-<br>hu 'aňy-yakuuna 'Abdal-lil-<br>laa-hi wa lal-malaaa-'ikatul-<br>mu-qarra-buun. Wa maňy-<br>yas-taňkif 'an 'ibaa-datihii wa<br>yastakbir fasa-yah-shuruhum<br>'ilayhi jamii-'aa.  | لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ<br>عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ وَمَنْ<br>يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ<br>فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمُ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا ۝١٤٢   | 172. The Messiah will never<br>scorn to be a slave unto Allah,<br>nor will the favoured angels.<br>Whoso scorneth His service<br>and is proud, all such will He<br>assemble unto Him;  |
| 173. Fa-'ammal-laziina<br>'aama-nuu wa 'amiluṣ-ṣaali-<br>ḥaati fa-yu-waffiihim<br>'ujuurahum wa yazii-duhum-<br>miñ faḏliḥ; wa 'ammal-<br>laziinas-taňkafuu was-<br>takbaru fayu-'azzi-buhum<br>'aḏaaban 'aliimaa; Wa laa<br>yaji-duuna lahum-miñ-duunil-<br>laahi waliy-yañw-wa laa<br>naṣiiraa. | فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا<br>الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَ<br>يَزِيدُهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ<br>اسْتَنْكَفُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ<br>عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۖ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ<br>لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا<br>وَلَا نَصِيرًا ۝١٤٣ | 173. Then, as for those who<br>believed and did good works,<br>unto them will He pay their<br>wages in full, adding unto them<br>of His bounty; and as for those<br>who were scornful and proud,<br>them will He punish with a<br>painful doom. And they will not<br>find for them, against Allah, any<br>protecting friend or helper. |
| 174. Yaaa-'ayyu-hannaasu<br>qad jaaa-'akum Bur-haanum-  | يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ  | 174..O mankind! Now hath a   |

Figure 1. Translation sheet

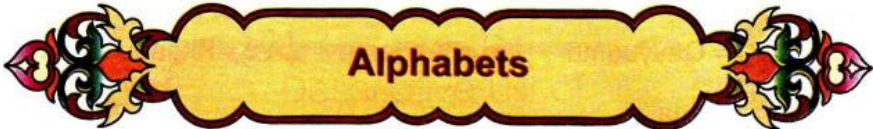
|  |  |
|--|--|
|    |  |
| <p>ء (hamza)=' (apostrophe) ب = b ت = t (as 'th' is pronounced in 'bath') ث = s ج = j ح = h<br/>         خ = kh د = d (as 'th' in 'thou-thee') ذ = z ر = r ز = z س = s (as in sir,sister) ش = sh ص = s<br/>         ض = z ط = t ظ = z ع = ' (inverted apostrophe) غ = g ف = f ق = q ك = k ل = l م = m<br/>         ن = n ء (gunna)= n̄ (nasal sound as 'n' is pronounced in uncle) ه = h و = w ي = y.<br/>         I (Alif) is not be confused with ء (hamza). If it has diacritical marks (as ا ا ا ا ا ) it<br/>         is hamza. Alif is always followed by another letter as ب = ba با = baa.</p> |  |

Figure 2. Latin Spelling

Those image is taken directly from Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of the Koran. The translation consists of Latin spellings, verses from the Koran, and translations in English. He translated literally without much interpretation or personal opinion put into his translation. he also embedded a transliteration on the first page to help readers understand the Latin spelling.

## Influence and Reception of the Work

Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* has had a significant influence on Islamic studies in the Western world. As one of the first translations of the Qur'an by a native Western Muslim, it opened the door to understanding Islam among non-Muslim readers. Before Pickthall, translations of the Qur'an into English were mostly done by non-Muslims, which were sometimes biased or inaccurate. Pickthall's translation presents an authentic Muslim perspective, providing a more objective and closer understanding of the essence of Islamic teachings [39]. The translation has made a major contribution to Islamic studies in the West. There have been 80 editions in the last 20 years. Many scholars have been helped by the translation [39].

In general, the translation of the Al-Qur'an carried out by Marmaduke Pickthall received a positive response from Muslims, especially because it was considered to reflect honesty, sincerity and accuracy in conveying the messages of the Al-Qur'an. Despite criticism of his language style and literal approach, his work remains recognized as one of the most respected and influential English translations of the Qur'an to date [36]. Pickthall's translation has become a benchmark for translations of the Qur'an in the Western world and has had a significant influence on subsequent translations [41]. Not only did this translation have an impact on the perception of Islam among Westerners, it also contributed to the development of Islamic studies globally. Pickthall's honesty in maintaining the integrity of the Qur'anic text, coupled with his background as a Muslim from the West, provides a unique perspective and helps build a bridge of understanding between different cultures and religions [42].

## Criticism and Appreciation of the Pickthall Translation

Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of the Qur'an is appreciated for its honest approach and commitment to maintaining fidelity to the original text of the Qur'an without introducing excessive interpretive bias. The use of a classical English style resembling *the King James Bible* not only provides a nuance of literary beauty, but also creates a sense of familiarity for readers of his time, thus facilitating the understanding and acceptance of the holy text [1]. This translation then became an important reference for non-Muslim readers who were looking for a neutral and free depiction of the Qur'an from an orientalist perspective, thus playing a significant role in Islamic studies in the West and becoming the main source for Muslims and non-Muslims in understanding the text of the Qur'an authentically [41].

Apart from the various appreciations received, Pickthall's translation also received criticism. The main criticism of Pickthall's translation is its overly literal approach. Some readers and scholars feel that this literal approach sacrifices the

contextual meaning and deep message of the verses of the Qur'an. For example, key terms such as *taqwa* or *fitrah* are translated literally without additional explanation, so their philosophical meaning may be difficult for ordinary readers to understand. Pickthall chose not to include footnotes or commentary explaining the context of the verse. This makes readers less likely to understand the historical or social background of certain verses. In some cases, this approach makes the translation seem dry to readers who need more in-depth guidance [43].

Despite the beauty of the classical language, many modern readers find it difficult to access. The use of words such as *thee*, *thou*, and *thy* is considered outdated, especially for the younger generation.

## Conclusion

Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* is a milestone in the history of Qur'anic translation into English. As a convert to Islam with a deep understanding of Islam, Pickthall endeavored to translate this sacred text with great sincerity and respect for the sacredness and authenticity of its meaning. This translation not only serves as a bridge of understanding for non-Muslim readers, but also becomes a means for the English-speaking Muslim community to strengthen its religious identity in the midst of Western society.

Pickthall's literal approach reflects his commitment to academic rigor and fidelity to the source text. Although this approach has been criticized for its perceived lack of contextual clarity, he nevertheless manages to preserve the spiritual essence and lofty style of the Qur'an through his choice of classical English inspired by *the King James Bible*. This style adds an aesthetic dimension and religious formality that was acceptable to Western audiences of his time, though less relevant to some modern readers.

Pickthall's choice not to include commentary or footnotes allows the reader to approach the Qur'an directly without interpretive intervention. On the other hand, this opens up the challenge of understanding the historical and theological context for those without a background in Islamic scholarship. However, this approach emphasizes that his translation is intended as a starting point for understanding the meaning of the Qur'an, not as an authoritative substitute for the original Arabic text.

Overall, Pickthall's work has made a major contribution to the field of Islamic studies in the West. He not only pioneered the Muslim perspective on the Qur'an in English, but also played a role in shaping a more just and representative narrative of Islam amidst the dominance of orientalist discourse. Pickthall's translation remains relevant today, both as an academic resource and as a symbol of cross-cultural efforts to bridge global religious understanding.

## Author Contributions

**Haidar Alie:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Rifansyah Lukman:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Kerwanto:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, Indonesia, for its support in the preparation of this research. We also extend our appreciation to the anonymous reviewer and the editorial team for their constructive feedback and valuable suggestions, which have significantly improved the quality of this paper.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.

## Bibliography

- [1] M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- [2] N. Baidan, "Problematika Penerjemahan Al-Qur'an dalam Bahasa Indonesia," *Indones. J. Islam. Lit. Muslim Soc.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1–20, 2017, doi: <https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v2i1.787>.
- [3] J. Gilham, "Marmaduke Pickthall and the British Muslim Convert Community," in *Muslim Minorities*, vol. 21, N. G.P., Ed., Brill Academic Publishers, 2017, pp. 47–71. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597\\_004](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597_004).
- [4] A. R. Kidwai, *Translating the Untranslatable: A Critical Guide to 60 English Translations of the Qur'an*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2011.
- [5] M. B. A. Abdelkarim, A. A. M. Alhaj, and A. H. Hakami, "Semantic Loss in Some Selected Verses of Sūrat Yā-Sīn: A Comparative Study of Three Trustworthy English Translations," *Theory Pract. Lang. Stud.*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 216–223, 2025, doi: <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1501.24>.
- [6] A. A. M. Alhaj, "Exploring Stylistic Problems Encountered in Translating Qur'anic Aphoristic Expressions in Surahs Al-Baqarah and Al-Imran to English," *World J. English Lang.*, vol. 14, no. 5, pp. 359–371, 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n5p359>.

- [7] J. Shearmur, "The Woking Mosque Muslims: British Islam in the Early Twentieth Century," *J. Muslim Minor. Aff.*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 165–173, 2014, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2014.911584>.
- [8] G. Nash, "Abdullah Quilliam, marmaduke pickthall and the politics of christendom and the Ottoman empire," in *Victorian Muslim: Abdullah Quilliam and Islam in the West*, Qatar University, Qatar: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 79–96. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190688349.003.0006>.
- [9] F. Kökoğlu, "Becoming Woman and Gender Typologies in Marmaduke Pickthall's Oriental Fiction," in *Muslim Minorities*, vol. 21, N. G.P., Ed., Brill Academic Publishers, 2017, pp. 196–215. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597\\_011](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597_011).
- [10] G. Nash, "W. H. Quilliam, Marmaduke Pickthall and the window of British modernist Islam," in *Postcolonialism and Islam: Theory, Literature, Culture, Society and Film*, English, University of Sunderland, United Kingdom: Taylor and Francis, 2013, pp. 157–168. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315884813>.
- [11] A. C. Long, "Oriental Eyes, or Seeing and Being Seen: Popular Culture and the Near Eastern Fiction of Marmaduke Pickthall," in *Muslim Minorities*, vol. 21, N. G.P., Ed., Brill Academic Publishers, 2017, pp. 159–181. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597\\_009](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597_009).
- [12] I. Savaskan, "Interpersonal metadiscourse in the English translations of the Holy Quran," *Br. J. Middle East. Stud.*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 405–418, 2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2019.1623011>.
- [13] J. Canton, "'Throwing Off the European': Marmaduke Pickthall's Travels in Arabia 1894-96," in *Muslim Minorities*, vol. 21, N. G.P., Ed., Brill Academic Publishers, 2017, pp. 216–230. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597\\_012](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597_012).
- [14] G. Nash, *FROM EMPIRE TO ORIENT: Travellers to the Middle East 1830-1926*. Department of Culture, University of Sunderland, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2005. [Online]. Available: <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85203380732&partnerID=40&md5=329170d5755e0f2bf72ebe1b11dd96fb>
- [15] N. J. Delong-Bas, "Bridging the 'Orient' and the West: Arabia, the British Empire in India, and English Translations of the Qur'an in the Early Twentieth Century," *J. Qur'anic Stud.*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 96–127, 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2024.0585>.
- [16] A. Ashraf, "A Vehicle for the Sacred: Marmaduke Pickthall's Near Eastern Novels," in *Muslim Minorities*, vol. 21, N. G.P., Ed., Brill Academic Publishers, 2017, pp. 182–195. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597\\_010](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597_010).



- [17] A. R. Kidwai, "Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's English Translation of the Quran (1930): An Assessment," in *Muslim Minorities*, vol. 21, N. G.P., Ed., Brill Academic Publishers, 2017, pp. 231–248. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597\\_013](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597_013).
- [18] R. Geaves, "Abdullah Quilliam (Henri De Léon) and Marmaduke Pickthall: Agreements and Disagreements between Two Prominent Muslims in the London and Woking Communities," in *Muslim Minorities*, vol. 21, N. G.P., Ed., Brill Academic Publishers, 2017, pp. 72–88. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597\\_005](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004327597_005).
- [19] A. A. M. Alhaj, "A Comparative Study of Loss and Gain in Three English Translations of the Qur'ānic Arabic Words of l-fadli)A Semantic and Cultural Perspective," *J. Lang. Teach. Res.*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 1303–1312, 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.17507/JLTR.1504.28>.
- [20] A. A. M. Alhaj, "EXPLORING SYNTACTIC AND CULTURAL PROBLEMS FACED BY TRANSLATORS IN TRANSLATING THE QURANIC ARABIC HOPE WORD L-AMALU لَمَالًا IN SURAHs AL-HIJR AND AL-KAHF INTO ENGLISH," *QiST J. Quran Tafseer Stud.*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 116–133, Mar. 2023, doi: <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v2i2.1679>.
- [21] Y. E. Gördük, "An Analysis on the Relation of Qur'ānic Interpretation (Tafsīr) - Qur'ān Translation: The Example of Transferring the 184th Verse of Surat al-Baqara To Turkish," *Cumhur. Ilah. Derg.*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 1455–1474, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.18505/cuid.780369>.
- [22] M. Ayyıldız, "According to Elmalılı, The Possibility of Translation of the Qurān in Terms of the Unity of Order and Meaning," *Islam Tetkikleri Derg.*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 541–563, 2023, doi: [10.26650/iuitd.2023.1295512](https://doi.org/10.26650/iuitd.2023.1295512).
- [23] A. Brigaglia, "Two published Hausa translations of the Qur'ān and their doctrinal background," *J. Relig. Africa*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 424–449, 2005, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006605774832225>.
- [24] E. Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Malay Translations in 18th-Century Banten Qur'ans A.51 and W.277," *Indones. Malay World*, vol. 48, no. 141, pp. 169–189, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2020.1724469>.
- [25] L. J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif (Edisi Revisi)*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2019.
- [26] A. N. AN, "Metode Riset Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir," in *Metode Riset Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 1st ed., M. Muthoifin, Ed., Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press, 2025, pp. 1–485. [Online]. Available: <https://mup.ums.ac.id/shop/agama/metode-riset-al-quran-dan-tafsir/>
- [27] N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman, 1995.
- [28] A. Nirwana AN, F. Arfan, F. Dolles Marshal, C. Maulana, and N. Fadli, "Methods of Qur'an Research and Quran Tafseer Research its implications

- for contemporary Islamic thought," *Bull. Islam. Res.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 33–42, Jun. 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v2i1.34>.
- [29] C. Mundzir, "Islam di Inggris (Tinjauan Historis Dinamika Kehidupan Muslim)," *Rihlah J. Sej. Dan Kebud.*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2015, doi: <https://doi.org/10.24252/rihlah.v2i01.1369>.
- [30] A. R. Kidwai, *Marmaduke Pickthall: A Centenary Tribute of His English Translation of the Holy Quran*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2017.
- [31] M. Seddon, *The Life of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall*. Leicester: Kube Publishing, 2014.
- [32] K. Gaanoun and M. Alsuhaibani, "Sentiment preservation in Quran translation with artificial intelligence approach: study in reputable English translation of the Quran," *Humanit. Soc. Sci. Commun.*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2025, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-04181-0>.
- [33] G. P. Nash, "Introduction: Pickthall, Islam and the Modern," in *Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World*, Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- [34] A. R. Kidwai, "Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's English Translation Of The Quran (1930): An Assessment," in *Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World*, Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- [35] M. Pickthall, "The Quran," *Islam. Rev.*, vol. 7, no. 6, pp. 213–216, 1919.
- [36] A. R. Kidwai, *Bibliography of the Translations of the Meanings of the Glorious Qur'an into English: 1649–2002*. Madinah: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, 2007.
- [37] A. A. (ed. . Dahlan, *Ensiklopedi Hukum Islam*. Jakarta: Ichtiar Baru van Hoeve, 1997.
- [38] S. H. et al. Nasr, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*. New York: HarperOne, 2015.
- [39] S. Mansuri, "Two Major Translators of the Qur'an: Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, & Pickthall, Muhammad Marmaduke," *Int. Index. Ref. Res. J.*, vol. 04, no. 46, 2013.
- [40] M. Pickthall, "Introduction," in *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, London: George Allen & Unwi, 1930.
- [41] G. Mohammad, "The Influence of Marmaduke Pickthall's Translation of the Qur'an on Subsequent English Translations," *Islam. Stud.*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 409–426, 2005.
- [42] S. H. Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*. New York: HarperOne, 2002.
- [43] S. Elhajahmed, "Impact of Semantic Loss in the Holy Quran with Reference to Yusuf Ali's and Pickthall's Translations of Al-Nur Surah," *مجلة الجامعة الإسلامية للبحوث الإنسانية*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 315–331, 2022, doi: <https://doi.org/10.33976/iugjhr.30.2/2022/14>.