

TOLERANCE IN ISLAM

An Abridged Version of the 1927 Lecture

by

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall

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Introduction

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall was an Englishman, an orientalist, and a Muslim who translated the meaning of the Holy Qur'an. His translation was first published in 1930 and he was supported in this effort by His Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad (the ruler of Deccan, in the South), India. Pickthall traveled extensively to several Muslim countries, including Syria, Palestine, Turkey, Egypt, Arabia and India. He spent several years in India and had interacted with the Muslims of India.

The 1920s was a period of great intellectual and political activity for the Muslims, particularly in India and Turkey. It is an interesting coincidence that the two most popular translations of the meaning of the Holy Qur'an into English were published from India or with the support and encouragement of Muslims of India. Pickthall's translation was published in 1930, which was followed by Abdullah Yusuf Ali's in 1934. Yusuf Ali's translation was published in parts as they became available over a period of many years ending in the complete translation and commentary in 1934. Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali was a native of India who later lived in England and Pakistan. As with Yusuf Ali's translation, Pickthall's translation has gone through many reprints and several publishers in the U.K., U.S.A., Pakistan and India.



Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall

Several Muslims of international fame visited India in the 1920s. Muhammad Asad (former Leopold Weiss of Austria) also exchanged views with internationally renowned Muslim poet and philosopher (Sir) Allamah Muhammad Iqbal. As a result of his exchanges with Iqbal and Indian Muslim leaders, Muhammad Asad later served as Pakistan's alternative representative in the U.N. Asad wrote two famous books "Islam at the Crossroads" and "Road to Mecca," which became very popular in the West, and translated the meaning of the Qur'an. [Muslims in India - An Overview](#)

In 1927 Pickthall gave eight lectures on several aspects of **Islamic civilization** at the invitation of The Committee of "**Madras Lectures on Islam**" in Madras, India. This was the second in the series, the first one was held in 1925 on "The Life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)." Parts of Pickthall's lectures were made available in India at various times. All of his lectures were published under the title "The Cultural Side of Islam" in 1961 by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Lahore from a manuscript provided by M.I. Jamal Moinuddin. The book has gone through several reprints since then.

An abridged version of his fifth lecture on the "Tolerance in Islam" is presented below. His long lecture frequently used quotations from the Holy Qur'an to emphasize many points and to support his analysis and conclusions. The major theme of his lecture is retained here. All of Pickthall's eight lectures draw upon his vast knowledge of Islamic history, the Western religious, political and intellectual history through the ages, and their reasons for rise and fall. His lectures are very enlightening, analytically useful, and of great value even today. The curious reader is encouraged to refer to the book "Cultural Side of Islam (Islamic Culture)," published by Sh. M. Ashraf, Lahore.

An Abridged Version of Pickthall's Lecture

In the eyes of history, religious toleration is the highest evidence of culture in a people. It was not until the Western nations broke away from their religious law that they became more tolerant, and it was only when the Muslims fell away from their religious law that they declined in tolerance and other evidences of the highest culture. Before the coming of Islam, tolerance had never been preached as an essential part of religion.

If Europe had known as much of Islam, as Muslims knew of Christendom, in those days, those mad, adventurous, occasionally chivalrous and heroic, but utterly fanatical outbreak known as the Crusades could not have taken place, for they were based on a complete misapprehension.

Innumerable monasteries, with a wealth of treasure of which the worth has been calculated at not less than a hundred millions sterling, enjoyed the benefit of the Holy Prophet's (Muhammad's) Charter to the monks of Sinai and were religiously respected by the Muslims.

The various sects of Christians were represented in the Council of the Empire by their patriarchs, on the provincial and district council by their bishops, in the village council by their priests, whose word was always taken without question on things which were the sole concern of their community.

The tolerance within the body of Islam was, and is, something without parallel in history; class and race and color ceasing altogether to be barriers.

One of the commonest charges brought against Islam historically, and as a religion, by Western writers is that it is intolerant. This is turning the tables with a vengeance when one remembers various facts: One remembers that not a Muslim is left alive in Spain or Sicily or Apulia. One remembers that not a Muslim was left alive and not a mosque left standing in Greece after the great rebellion in 1821. One remembers how the Muslims of the Balkan peninsula, once the majority, have been systematically reduced with the approval of the whole of Europe, how the Christian under Muslim rule have in recent times been urged on to rebel and massacre the Muslims, and how reprisals by the latter have been condemned as quite uncalled for.

In Spain under the Umayyads and in Baghdad under the Abbasid Khalifas, Christians and Jews, equally with Muslims, were admitted to the Schools and universities - not only that, but were boarded and lodged in hostels at the cost of the state. When the Moors were driven out of Spain, the Christian conquerors held a terrific persecution of the Jews. Those who were fortunate enough to escape fled, some of them to Morocco and many hundreds to the Turkish empire, where their descendants still live in separate communities, and still speak among themselves an antiquated form of Spanish. The Muslim empire was a refuge for all those who fled from persecution by the Inquisition.

The Western Christians, till the arrival of the Encyclopaedists in the eighteenth century, did not know and did not care to know, what the Muslim believed, nor did the Western Christian seek to know the views of Eastern Christians with regard to them. The Christian Church was already split in two, and in the end, it came to such a pass that the Eastern Christians, as Gibbon shows, preferred Muslim rule, which allowed them to practice their own form of religion and adhere to their peculiar dogmas, to the rule of fellow Christians who would have made them Roman Catholics or wiped them out.

The Western Christians called the Muslims pagans, paynims, even idolaters - there are plenty of books in which they are described as worshiping an idol called Mahomet or Mahound, and in the accounts of the conquest of Granada there are even descriptions of the monstrous idols which they were alleged to worship - whereas the Muslims knew what Christianity was, and in what respects it differed from Islam. If Europe had known as much of Islam, as Muslims knew of Christendom, in those days, those mad, adventurous, occasionally chivalrous and heroic, but utterly fanatical outbreak known as the Crusades could not have taken place, for they were based on a complete misapprehension. **I quote a learned French author:**

“Every poet in Christendom considered a Mohammedan to be an infidel, and an idolater, and his gods to be three; mentioned in order, they were: Mahomet or Mahound or Mohammad, Opolane and the third Termogond. It was said that when in Spain the Christians overpowered the Mohammadans and drove them as far as the gates of the city of Saragossa, the Mohammadans went back and broke their idols.

“A Christian poet of the period says that Opolane the “god” of the Mohammadans, which was kept there in a den was awfully belabored and abused by the Mohammadans, who, binding it hand and foot, crucified it on a pillar, trampled it under their feet and broke it to pieces by beating it with sticks; that their second god Mahound they threw in a pit and caused to be torn to pieces by pigs and dogs, and that never were gods so ignominiously treated; but that afterwards the Mohammadans repented of their sins, and once more reinstated their gods for the accustomed worship, and that when the Emperor Charles entered the city of Saragossa he had every mosque in the city searched and had "Muhammad" and all their Gods broken with iron hammers.”

That was the kind of "history" on which the populace in Western Europe used to be fed. Those were the ideas which inspired the rank and file of the crusader in their attacks on the most civilized peoples of those days. Christendom regarded the outside world as damned eternally, and Islam did not. There were good and tender-hearted men in Christendom who thought it sad that any people should be damned eternally, and wished to save them by the only way they knew - conversion to the Christian faith.

It was not until the Western nations broke away from their religious law that they became more tolerant; and it was only when the Muslims fell away from their religious law that they declined in tolerance and other evidences of the highest culture. Therefore the difference evident in that anecdote is not of manners only but of religion. Of old, tolerance had existed here and there in the world, among enlightened individuals; but those individuals had always been against the prevalent religion. Tolerance was regarded of un-religious, if not irreligious. Before the coming of Islam it had never been preached as an essential part of religion.

For the Muslims, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are but three forms of one religion, which, in its original purity, was the religion of Abraham: Al-Islam, that perfect **Self-Surrender** to the Will of God, which is the basis of Theocracy. The Jews, in their religion, after Moses, limited God's mercy to their chosen nation and thought of His kingdom as the dominion of their race.

Even Christ himself, as several of his sayings show, declared that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and seemed to regard his mission as to the Hebrews only; and it was only after a special vision vouchsafed to St. Peter that his followers in after days considered themselves authorized to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Christians limited God's mercy to those who believed certain dogmas. Every one who failed to hold the dogmas was an outcast or a miscreant, to be persecuted for his or her soul's good. In Islam only is manifest the real nature of the Kingdom of God.

The two verses [\(2:255-256\) of the Qur'an](#) are supplementary. Where there is that realization of the majesty and dominion of [Allah](#) (SWT), there is no compulsion in religion. Men choose their path - allegiance or opposition - and it is sufficient punishment for those who oppose that they draw further and further away from the light of truth.

What Muslims do not generally consider is that this law applies to our own community just as much as to the folk outside, the laws of Allah being universal; and that intolerance of Muslims for other men's opinions and beliefs is evidence that they themselves have, at the moment, forgotten the vision of the majesty and mercy of Allah (SWT) which the Qur'an presents to them.

In the Qur'an I find two meanings (of a Kafir), which become one the moment that we try to realize the divine standpoint. The Kafir in the first place, is not the follower of any religion. He is the opponent of Allah's benevolent will and purpose for mankind - therefore the disbeliever in the truth of all religions, the disbeliever in all Scriptures as of divine revelation, the disbeliever to the point of active opposition in all the Prophets (pbuh) whom the Muslims are bidden to regard, without distinction, as [messengers of Allah](#).

The Qur'an repeatedly claims to be the confirmation of the truth of all religions. The former Scriptures had become obscure, the former Prophets appeared mythical, so extravagant were the legends which were told concerning them, so that people doubted whether there was any truth in the old Scriptures, whether such people as the Prophets had ever really existed. Here - says the Qur'an - is a Scripture whereof there is no doubt: here is a Prophet actually living among you and preaching to you. If it were not for this book and this Prophet, men might be excused for saying that Allah's guidance to mankind was all a fable. This book and this Prophet, therefore, confirm the truth of all that was revealed before them, and those who disbelieve in them to the point of opposing the existence of a Prophet and a revelation are really opposed to the idea of Allah's guidance - which is the truth of all revealed religions. Our Holy Prophet (pbuh) himself said that the term Kafir was not to be applied to anyone who said "Salam" (peace) to the Muslims. The Kafirs, in the terms of the Qur'an, are the conscious evil-doers of any race of creed or community.

I have made a long digression but it seemed to me necessary, for I find much confusion of ideas even among Muslims on this subject, owing to defective study of the Qur'an and the Prophet's life. Many Muslims seem to forget that our Prophet had allies among the idolaters even after Islam had triumphed in Arabia, and that he "fulfilled his treaty with them perfectly until the term thereof." The righteous conduct of the Muslims, not the sword, must be held responsible for the conversion of those idolaters, since they embraced Islam before the expiration of their treaty.

So much for the idolaters of Arabia, who had no real beliefs to oppose the teaching of Islam, but only superstition. They invoked their local deities for help in war and put their faith only in brute force. In this they were, to begin with, enormously superior to the Muslims. When the Muslims nevertheless won, they were dismayed; and all their arguments based on the superior power of their deities were for ever silenced. Their

conversion followed naturally. It was only a question of time with the most obstinate of them.

It was otherwise with the people who had a respectable religion of their own - the **People of the Scripture** - as the Qur'an calls them - i.e, the people who had received the revelation of some former Prophet: the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians were those with whom the Muslims came at once in contact. To these our Prophet's attitude was all of kindness. The [Charter which he granted to the Christian monks of Sinai](#) is extant. If you read it you will see that it breathes not only goodwill but actual love. He gave to the Jews of Medina, so long as they were faithful to him, precisely the same treatment as to the Muslims. He never was aggressive against any man or class of men; he never penalized any man, or made war on any people, on the ground of belief but only on the ground of conduct.

The story of his reception of Christian and Zoroastrian visitors is on record. There is not a trace of religious intolerance in all this. And it should be remembered - Muslims are rather apt to forget it, and it is of great importance to our outlook - that our Prophet did not ask the people of the Scripture to become his followers. He asked them only to accept the Kingdom of Allah, to abolish priesthood and restore their own religions to their original purity. The question which, in effect, he put to everyone was this: **“Are you for the Kingdom of God which includes all of us, or are you for your own community against the rest of mankind?”** The one is obviously the way of peace and human progress, the other the way of strife, oppression and calamity. But the rulers of the world, to whom he sent his message, most of them treated it as the message of either an insolent upstart or a mad fanatic. **His envoys were insulted cruelly, and even slain. One cannot help wondering what reception that same embassy would meet with from the rulers of mankind today**, when all the thinking portion of mankind accept the Prophet's premises, have thrown off the trammels of priestcraft, and harbor some idea of human brotherhood.

But though the Christians and Jews and Zoroastrians refused his message, and their rulers heaped most cruel insults on his envoys, our Prophet never lost his benevolent attitudes towards them as religious communities; as witness the **Charter to the monks of Sinai** already mentioned. And though the Muslims of later days have fallen far short of the Holy Prophet's tolerance, and have sometimes shown arrogance towards men of other faiths, [they have always given special treatment to the Jews and Christians. Indeed the Laws for their special treatment form part of the Shari'ah.](#)

In Egypt the Copts were on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims in the first centuries of the Muslim conquest, and they are on terms at closest friendship with the Muslims at the present day. In Syria the various Christian communities lived on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims in the first centuries of the Muslim conquest, and they are on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims at the present day, openly preferring Muslim domination to a foreign yoke.

There were always flourishing **Jewish** communities in the Muslim realm, notably in Spain, North Africa, Syria, Iraq and later on in Turkey. Jews fled from Christian persecution to Muslim countries for refuge. Whole communities of them voluntarily

embraced Islam following a revered rabbi whom they regarded as the promised Messiah but many more remained as Jews, and they were never persecuted as in Christendom. The Turkish Jews are one with the Turkish Muslims today. And it is noteworthy that the Arabic-speaking Jews of Palestine - the old immigrants from Spain and Poland - are one with the Muslims and Christians in opposition to the transformation of Palestine into a national home for the Jews.

To turn to the **Christians**, the story of the triumphal entry of the **Khalifah Umar ibn al-Khattab** (ra) into **Jerusalem** has been often told, but I shall tell it once again, for it illustrates the proper Muslim attitude towards the People of the Scripture.... The Christian officials urged him to spread his carpet in the **Church (of the Holy Sepulchre)** itself, but he refused saying that some of the ignorant Muslims after him might claim the Church and convert it into a mosque because he had once prayed there. He had his carpet carried to the top of the steps outside the church, to the spot where the Mosque of Umar now stands - the real Mosque of Umar, for the splendid Qubbet-us-Sakhrah, which tourists call the Mosque of Umar, is not a Mosque at all, but the temple of Jerusalem; a shrine within the precincts of the **Masjid-al-Aqsa**, which is the second of the Holy Places of Islam.

From that day to this; the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has always been a Christian place of worship, the only things the Muslims did in the way of interference with the Christian's liberty of conscience in respect of it was to see that every sect of Christians had access to it, and that it was not monopolized by one sect to the exclusion of others. The same is true of the **Church of the Nativity of Bethlehem**, and of other buildings of special sanctity.

Under the Khulafa-ur-Rashidin and the Umayyads, the true Islamic attitude was maintained, and it continued to a much later period under the Umayyad rule in Spain. In those days it was no uncommon thing for Muslims and Christian to use the same places of worship. I could point to a dozen buildings in Syria which tradition says were thus conjointly used; and I have seen at **Lud (Lydda)**, in the plain of Sharon, a Church of St. George and a mosque under the same roof with only a partition wall between. The partition wall did not exist in early days. The words of the Khalifah Umar proved true in other cases; not only half the church at Lydda, but the whole church in other places was claimed by ignorant Muslims of a later day on the mere ground that the early Muslims had prayed there. But there was absolute liberty of conscience for the Christians; they kept their most important Churches and built new ones; though by a later edict their church bells were taken from them because their din annoyed the Muslims, it was said; only the big bell of the Holy Sepulchre remaining. They used to call to prayer by beating a naqus, a wooden gong, the same instrument which the Prophet Noah (pbuh) is said to have used to summon the chosen few into his ark.

It was not the Christians of Syria who desired the Crusades, nor did the Crusades care a jot for them, or their sentiments, regarding them as heretics and interlopers. The latter word sounds strange in this connection, but there is a reason for its use.

The great Abbasid **Khalifah Harun ar-Rashid** had, God knows why, once sent the keys of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre among other presents to the Frankish Emperor,

Charlemagne. Historically, it was a wrong to the Christians of Syria, who did not belong to the Western Church, and asked for no protection other than the Muslim government. Politically, it was a mistake and proved the source of endless after trouble to the Muslim Empire. The keys sent, it is true, were only duplicate keys. The Church was in daily use. It was not locked up till such time as Charlemagne, Emperor of the West, chose to lock it. **The present of the keys was intended only as a compliment**, as one would say: "You and your people can have free access to the Church which is the center of your faith, your goal of pilgrimage, whenever you may come to visit it." But the Frankish Christians took the present seriously in after times regarding it as the title to a freehold, and looking on the Christians of the country as mere interlopers, as I said before, as well as heretics.

That compliment from king to king was the foundation of all the extravagant claims of France in later centuries. Indirectly it was the foundation of Russia's even more extortionate claims, for Russia claimed to protect the Eastern Church against the encroachment of Roman Catholics; and it was the cause of nearly all the ill feeling which ever existed between the Muslims and their Christians Dhimmis.

When the Crusaders took Jerusalem they massacred the Eastern Christians with the Muslims indiscriminately, and while they ruled in Palestine the Eastern Christians, such of them as did not accompany the retreating Muslim army, were deprived of all the privileges which Islam secured to them and were treated as a sort of outcasters. Many of them became Roman Catholics in order to secure a higher status; but after the reconquest, when the emigrants returned, the followers of the Eastern church were found again to be in large majority over those who owed obedience to the Pope of Rome. The old order was reestablished and all the Dhimmis once again enjoyed their privileges in accordance with the Sacred Law (of Islam).

But the effect of those fanatical inroads had been somewhat to embitter Muslim sentiments, and to ting them with an intellectual contempt for the Christian generally; which was bad for Muslims and for Christians both; since it made the former arrogant and oppressive to the latter socially, and the intellectual contempt, surviving the intellectual superiority, blinded the Muslims to the scientific advance of the West till too late.

The arrogance hardened into custom, and when Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt occupied Syria in the third decade of the nineteenth century, a deputation of the Muslims of Damascus waited on him with a complaint that under his rule the Christians were beginning to ride on horseback. Ibrahim Pasha pretended to be greatly shocked at the news, and asked leave to think for a whole night on so disturbing an announcement. Next morning, he informed the deputation that since it was, of course, a shame for Christians to ride as high as Muslims, he gave permission to all Muslims thenceforth to ride on camels. That was probably the first time that the Muslims of Damascus had ever been brought face to face with the absurdity of their pretentions.

By the beginning of the Eighteenth century AD, the Christians had, by custom, been made subject to certain social disabilities, but these were never, at the worst, so cruel or so galling as those to which the Roman Catholic nobility of France at the same period subjected their own Roman Catholic peasantry, or as those which Protestants imposed on

Roman Catholics in Ireland; and they weighed only on the wealthy portion of the community. The poor Muslims and poor Christians were on an equality, and were still good friends and neighbors.

The Muslims never interfered with the religion of the subject Christians. (e.g., [The Treaty of Orihuela, Spain, 713.](#)) There was never anything like the Inquisition or the fires of Smithfield. Nor did they interfere in the internal affairs of their communities. Thus a number of small Christian sects, called by the larger sects heretical, which would inevitably have been exterminated if left to the tender mercies of the larger sects whose power prevailed in Christendom, were **[protected and preserved until today by the power of Islam.](#)**

Innumerable monasteries, with a wealth of treasure of which the worth has been calculated at not less than a hundred millions sterling, enjoyed the benefit of the Holy Prophet's Charter to the monks of Sinai and were religiously respected by the Muslims. The various sects of Christians were represented in the Council of the Empire by their patriarchs, on the provincial and district council by their bishops, in the village council by their priests, whose word was always taken without question on things which were the sole concern of their community.

With regard to the respect for monasteries, I have a curious instance of my own remembrance. In the year 1905 the Arabic congregation of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or **Church of the Resurrection** as it is locally called, rebelled against the tyranny of the Monks of the adjoining convent of St. George. The convent was extremely rich, and a large part of its revenues was derived from lands which had been made over to it by the ancestors of the Arab congregation for security at a time when property was insecure; relying on the well known Muslim reverence for religious foundations. The income was to be paid to the depositors and their descendants, after deducting something for the convent.

No income had been paid to anybody by the Monks for more than a century, and the congregation now demanded that at least a part of that ill-gotten wealth should be spent on education of the community. The Patriarch sided with the congregation, but was captured by the Monks, who kept him prisoner. The congregation tried to storm the convent, and the amiable monk poured vitriol down upon the faces of the congregation. The congregation appealed to the Turkish government, which secured the release of the Patriarch and some concessions for the congregation, but could not make the monks disgorge any part of their wealth because of the immunities secured to Monasteries by the Sacred Law (of Islam). What made the congregation the more bitter was the fact that certain Christians who, in old days, had made their property over to the **Masjid al-Aqsa** - the great mosque of Jerusalem - for security, were receiving income yearly from it even then.

Here is another incident from my own memory. A sub-prior of the Monastery of St. George purloined a handful from the enormous treasure of the Holy Sepulchre - a handful worth some forty thousand pounds - and tried to get away with it to Europe. He was caught at Jaffa by the Turkish customs officers and brought back to Jerusalem. The poor man fell on his face before the Mutasarrif imploring him with tears to have him tried by

Turkish Law. The answer was: "We have no jurisdiction over monasteries," and the poor groveling wretch was handed over to the tender mercies of his fellow monks.

But the very evidence of their toleration, the concessions given to the subject people of another faith, were used against them in the end by their political opponents just as the concessions granted in their day of strength to foreigners came to be used against them in their day of weakness, as capitulations.

I can give you one curious instance of a capitulation, typical of several others. Three hundred years ago, the Franciscan friars were the only Western European missionaries to be found in the Muslim Empire. There was a terrible epidemic of plague, and those Franciscans worked devotedly, tending the sick and helping to bury the dead of all communities. In gratitude for this great service, the **Turkish government** decreed that all property of the Franciscans should be free of customs duty for ever. In the **Firman** (Edict) the actual words used were "Frankish missionaries" and at later time, when there were hundreds of missionaries from the West, most of them of other sects than the Roman Catholic, they all claimed that privilege and were allowed it by the Turkish government because the terms of the original Firman included them. Not only that, but **they claimed that concession as a right, as if it had been won for them by force of arms or international treaty instead of being, as it was, a free gift of the Sultan;** and called upon their consuls and ambassadors to support them Bly if it was at all infringed.

The Christians were allowed to keep their own languages and customs, to start their own schools and to be visited by missionaries to their own faith from Christendom. Thus they formed patches of nationalism in a great mass of internationalism or universal brotherhood; for as I have already said the tolerance within the body of Islam was, and is, something without parallel in history; class and race and color ceasing altogether to be barriers.

In countries where nationality and language were the same in Syria, Egypt and Mesopotamia there was no clash of ideals, but in Turkey, where the Christians spoke quite different languages from the Muslims, the ideals were also different. **So long as the nationalism was un-aggressive, all went well; and it remained un-aggressive - that is to say, the subject Christians were content with their position - so long as the Muslim Empire remained better governed, more enlightened and more prosperous than Christian countries.** And that may be said to have been the case, in all human essentials, up to the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Then for a period of about eighty years the Turkish Empire was badly governed; and the Christians suffered not from Islamic Institutions but from the decay or neglect of Islamic Institutions. Still it took Russia more than a century of ceaseless secret propaganda work to stir up spirit of aggressive nationalism in the subject Christians, and then only by appealing to their religious fanaticism.

After the eighty years of bad government came the era of conscious reform, when the Muslim government turned its attention to the improvement of the status of all the peoples under it. But then it was too late to win back the Serbs, the Greeks, the Bulgars and the Romans. The poison of the Russian religious-political propaganda had

done its work, and the prestige of Russian victories over the Turks had excited in the worst elements among the Christians of the Greek Church, the hope of an early opportunity to slaughter and despoil the Muslims, strengthening the desire to do so which had been instilled in them by Russian secret envoys, priests and monks.

I do not wish to dwell upon this period of history, though it is to me the best known of all, for it is too recent and might rouse too strong a feeling in my audience. I will only remind you that in the **Greek War of Independence in 1811**, three hundred thousand Muslims - men and women and children - the whole Muslim population of the Morea without exception, as well as many thousands in the northern parts of Greece - were wiped out in circumstances of the most atrocious cruelty; that in European histories we seldom find the slightest mention of that massacre, though we hear much of the reprisals which the Turks took afterwards; **that before every massacre of Christians by Muslims of which you read, there was a more wholesale massacre or attempted massacre of Muslims by Christians**; that those Christians were old friends and neighbors of the Muslims - the Armenians were the favorites of the Turks till fifty years ago - and that most of them were really happy under Turkish rule, as has been shown again and again by their tendency to return to it after so called liberation.

It was the Christians outside the Muslim Empire who systematically and continually fed their religious fanaticism: it was their priests who told them that to slaughter Muslims was a meritorious act. I doubt if anything so wicked can be found in history as that plot for the destruction of Turkey. When I say "wicked," I mean inimical to human progress and therefore against Allah's guidance and His purpose for mankind. For it has made religious tolerance appear a weakness in the eyes of all the worldlings, because the multitudes of Christians who lived peacefully in Turkey are made to seem the cause of Turkey's martyrdom and downfall; while on the other hand the method of persecution and extermination which has always prevailed in Christendom is made to seem comparatively strong and wise.

Thus religious tolerance is made to seem a fault, politically. But it is not really so. The victims of injustice are always less to be pitied in reality than the perpetrators of injustice.

From the expulsion of the Moriscos dates the degradation and decline of Spain. San Fernando was really wiser and more patriotic in his tolerance to conquered Seville, Murcia and Toledo than was the later king who, under the guise of Holy warfare, captured Grenada and let the Inquisition work its will upon the Muslims and the Jews. And the modern Balkan States and Greece are born under a curse. **It may even prove that the degradation and decline of European civilization will be dated from the day when so-called civilized statesmen agreed to the inhuman policy of Czarist Russia and gave their sanction to the crude fanaticism of the Russian Church.**

There is no doubt but that, in the eyes of history, religious toleration is the highest evidence of culture in a people. Let no Muslim, when looking on the ruin of the Muslim realm which was compassed through the agency of those very peoples whom the Muslims had tolerated and protected through the centuries when Western Europe thought it a religious duty to exterminate or forcibly convert all peoples of another faith than

theirs - let no Muslim, seeing this, imagine that toleration is a weakness in Islam. It is the greatest strength of Islam because it is the attitude of truth.

Allah (SWT) is not the God of the Jews or the Christians or the Muslims only, any more than the sun shines or the rain falls for Jews or Christians or Muslims only.

Allah: Allah is the proper name in Arabic for The One and Only God, The Creator and Sustainer of the universe. It is used by the Arab Christians and Jews for the God (Eloh-im in Hebrew; 'Allaha' in Aramaic, the mother tongue of Jesus, pbuh). The word [Allah](#) does not have a plural or gender. Allah does not have any associate or partner, and He does not beget nor was He begotten. SWT is an abbreviation of Arabic words that mean 'Glory Be To Him.'

s or pbuh: Peace Be Upon Him. This expression is used for all [Prophets of Allah](#).

ra: Radiallahu Anhu (May Allah be pleased with him).

"The Meaning of the Glorious Koran," An Explanatory Translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, a Mentor Book Publication. (Also available as: **"The Meaning of the Glorious Koran,"** by Marmaduke Pickthall, Dorset Press, N.Y.; Published by several publishers since 1930).

Pickthall writes in his foreword of 1930: "...The Qur'an cannot be translated....The book is here rendered almost literally and every effort has been made to choose befitting language. But the result is not the Glorious Qur'an, that inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy. It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Qur'an-and peradventure something of the charm in English. It can never take the place of the Qur'an in Arabic, nor is it meant to do so...."

For the serious readers of the meaning of the Qur'an in English, it is recommended that it should be read along with a good [commentary](#) to comprehend the essential meaning and scope of verses. Either Yusuf Ali's or Mawdudi's commentaries are a good starting point. The former presents the meaning Ayah (verse) by Ayah with footnotes and includes a detailed index of the topics mentioned in the Qur'an, while the latter presents commentaries for each Surah (chapter) of the Qur'an.

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Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall

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