Clarion Review

Religion

The Qur'an: A Pure and Literal Translation

The Monotheist Group
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Translating the sacred scripture of any religious tradition is never an easy task. The translators must remain faithful to the sense and meaning of the ancient languages while rendering them into a dynamic and accessible language for contemporary readers. Every new translation courts controversy, either because of its lack of careful attention to the nuances of the original text or because the contemporary idioms used by the translators are poor choices of expression or, at worst, fail to translate the original words or phrases altogether.

The history of the translation of the Qur'an, like the history of the translation of the Bible, is fraught with controversy. Many translators of the Qur'an have over the years added comments and footnotes to their translations to reflect their own understanding of various passages, a practice that has long been regarded by many Muslim groups as anathema.

In this new translation of the Qur'an, the Monotheist Group—which professes to belong to no denomination and is composed of a group of people seeking to live their lives according to a focus on God Alone—provides a literal translation of the Qur'an, eliminating any footnotes or comments about the text itself. The translators have helpfully eliminated the traditional chapter titles so as not to prejudice the reading of each chapter.

One of the verses that mentions jihad—which is mistakenly interpreted by many to mean "holy war," but which in fact simply means to strive toward holiness—shows in a straightforward manner the way that jihad is connected to God's mercy: "Those who believe, and those who have immigrated and strived in the cause of God; these are seeking God's mercy, and God is Forgiving, Merciful" [19; chapter 2, verse 218].

The translators have provided a helpful introduction that discusses their method of translation and offers a useful section on "how to read the Qur'an." A full index helps readers locate passages dealing with specific topics.

Although literal translations are often wooden—and this one is no exception—this new

translation offers a nice introduction to non-Muslims interested in Islam and at the same time offers Muslims fresh insights into their faith.

Henry L. Carrigan