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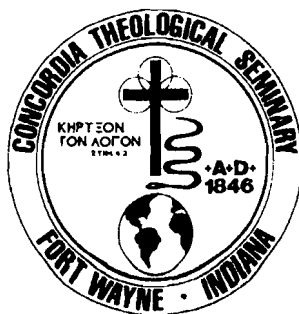
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Book Reviews

I. Systematic — Historical Studies

THE BOOK OF WISDOM. By Ibn 'Ata' illah Iskandari. Translation and Introduction by Victor Danner. Preface by Annemarie Schimmel.

INTIMATE CONVERSATIONS. By Kwaja Abdullah Ansari. Translation and Introduction by Wheeler M. Thackston, Paulist Press, New York, 1978. Paper. 233 Pages. \$6.95.

As a major world religion, Islam is a complex institution with many components. Among them are a highly developed body of theology (evident in the Scholasticism of an al-Ghazzali), an intricate and all-encompassing code of law (the *Shariah* as expounded by several schools of jurisprudence), and a form of spirituality, often called simply "the Path," which occupied the attention of a great variety of mystical orders. For decades Orientalists have debated which element — Truth, Justice, or Mercy — or which faculty — Mind, Will, or Emotion — or which tradition — Rationalism, Legalism, or Mysticism — has been most important for Islam. Undoubtedly the discussion will continue. It will be better informed, however, because of the appearance of this "double volume" which contains two classics of Muslim mysticism from the Middle Ages.

The first of these is *The Book of Wisdom* by Ibn 'Ata' illah Iskandari, a Sufi sage and saint of thirteenth century Egypt (Muslim mystics were called Sufis, apparently because of their habit of wearing garments of wool, *suf* in Arabic). Living in an age of physical distress for Islam (Mongol invasions from the East, Crusader assault from the West), Ibn 'Ata' illah saw it as a time of spiritual success, as Mysticism provided "a Second Revelation" for the Muslim world. His major work, *The Book of Wisdom*, is known in Arabic as *Kitab al-Hikam*, literally, "The Book of Aphorisms." *Hikam*, the plural of *hikmah* can mean "wisdom," or "aphorism," or "maxim," or "gnome" and refers to a teaching method of the Sufi masters. These aphorisms, such as this one on worship,

Do not abandon the Invocation because you do not feel the Presence of God therein. For your forgetfulness of the Invocation of Him is worse than your forgetfulness in the Invocation of Him,

originated in oral recitations by the teacher to his students. Dr. Victor Danner, Associate Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at Indiana University, has done a good job translating, introducing, and annotating this material. Because of his labors we have a much better understanding of the thought of a major Egyptian Sufi master of the thirteenth century whose influence is still very much alive.

The second of these writings is *Intimate Conversations* by Kwaja Abdullah Ansari (1006-1089), the Pir of Herat, a major Persian mystic. His *Munajat*, or "Intimate Conversations (with God)" is one of the foundational pieces of Persian literature. Because of the Sufi's mastery of intricate forms of Persian formal expression (as the rhetorical device called *tarsi*, where the sequence of vowels in two or more parallel lines is the same), this is a particularly difficult work to translate. Wheeler McIntosh Thackston, Jr., Assistant Professor of Iranian

Languages and Literatures at Harvard, is to be commended for his translation, as well as his introduction and annotation of this crucial contribution to Persian Muslim Mysticism.

Dr. Annemarie Schimmel, with doctorates from Berlin and Marburg, now of Harvard, has introduced these two classics of Muslim spirituality. Reading these writings reinforces recent opinion that Sufism was not necessarily a reaction against Muslim Scholasticism, for often (though not always) the most articulate mystics were also the most ardently orthodox in theology.

This volume is but one in a projected series of sixty to be published by the Paulist Press. Though called "The Classics of Western Spirituality," it is obvious from this contribution that it will include non-Western religious literature as well.

I recommend this "double volume" to the student of Islam as a good introduction to some primary source material from Medieval Sufism. Certainly reading this text balances out one's picture of Islam as a Way of Law or a School of Theology, revealing it to also be a Path of Contemplation.

C. George Fry

CLASSIC PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS. Edited by James A. Gould. Third edition. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, Ohio, 1978. 671 pages. Paper. \$8.30.

In this volume Professor James A. Gould of the University of South Florida has prepared a very fine reader for classes in philosophy on the academy, college, and seminary level.

This book consists of some thirty perennial questions of philosophy which are posed under eight main categories — Value of Philosophy, Methodology, Ethics, Knowledge, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Political Philosophy, and Aesthetics. Each of these sections raises certain issues, posing the problems in a positive-negative dichotomy. Each position is illustrated with an excerpt from a representative thinker. For instance, under the heading "Philosophy of Religion," one can find such questions as: "How Can God Be Proven to Exist?" (with St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, and William Paley providing respectively the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments, while Blaise Pascal wagers that "The Existence of God is a Good Bet" and Soren Kierkegaard contends that "God Can't Be Proven to Exist"), "Does the Idea of a Good God Exclude Evil?" (Fyodor Dostoevsky replies "Yes," John Hick "No"), and "Are Religious Ethics Adequate?" (with excerpts from the Bible — as Exodus 20, Psalm 15, Isaiah 33, Matthew 5:22,25 and 1 Cor. 13 — arguing the affirmative, Bertrand Russell the negative). Similar issues are treated in the other seven sections of the book, on topics ranging from "Why Do We Laugh?" and "Why Do We Enjoy the Tragic?" to "What is Freedom?" "Are Women Free?" and "Are Ethics Relative?" Answers are provided by such sages as Plato, Charles Peirce, William James, Jeremy Bentham, Immanuel Kant, Rene Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, Alfred Whitehead, Leo Tolstoy, and Aristotle — among others.

Teachers of philosophy will find this an especially helpful volume not only because of the variety of problems and philosophies represented, but also because the editor has provided a brief biographical sketch of each contributor, study questions for each citation (suitable for either classroom discussion or as topics for term papers), as well as "thought questions" at the conclusion of each section, along with suggested readers. Cross references to the standard secondary texts in philosophy are also very helpful.

Charles E. Merrill is to be commended for compacting so much significant material into such a useful and attractive volume (a brilliant silver color). A teacher's manual for this anthology is also available. I recommend this work to all those concerned with the recurring issues of philosophy — both as teachers and learners, professionals and amateurs.

C. George Fry

II. Practical Studies

APOSTLES TO THE CITY. By Roger S. Greenway. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978. Paper. 96 pages, \$3.95.

Originally delivered as a series of Baker Mission Lectures at Reformed Bible College, the author makes application to the ministry of the church to the city from the ministries of Jonah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Barnabas, and Paul.

His underlying assumptions are: 1) a Biblical urban apostolate is vitally needed today; 2) the church must move quickly to make its impact on the city; 3) we must take a wholistic approach to urban mission; 4) the world at the feet of Jesus is the ultimate goal of apostolate.

Challenging Christians to be "city saints," the author says: 1) live in the city; 2) support programs designed to help inner-city people; 3) get involved in city mission work; 4) become acquainted with inner-city people of a minority race; 5) encourage open housing; 6) urge your church to show Christian concern for inner-city people 7) support adult education, literacy programs, and social services offered by the community; 8) pray for the city (pp. 41f.).

Encouraging Christians not to confuse contemporary needs with eternal priorities (p. 76), Greenway says, "If the church loses touch with Paul's doctrine of reconciliation, then it has lost its message for the world, and whatever it may say about social and communal relationships will amount to nothing. When the Christian mission stops talking about God; when it stops talking about Christ, His death, and His resurrection; when it stops calling men to repent from their sins and be reconciled to their Maker, then everything else it says will be valueless" (p. 74).

This volume is both a sobering and a Christian approach of the church to the city.

Henry J. Eggold

THE LITERATURE OF THEOLOGY: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND PASTORS. By John A. Bollier. The Westminster Press, 1979. 208 pages. \$5.95. Paper.

John A. Bollier, Acting Divinity Librarian, Yale Divinity School has compiled a valuable time-saver for persons engaged in academic study or the practice of the ministry. No serious student of theology will want to be without it, once knowing of its availability. It is estimated that each year in the United States and Great Britain the number of books published is in the neighborhood of 120,000. Add to this huge quantity journal articles, reports and proceedings of learned societies and other serial literature and most students will despair as to what to read in this ocean of literary production.

Bollier states the purpose of this guide to be the following (p. 17):

The purpose of this work is to help the reader become independent in finding books, the journal articles, or the information needed in the pursuit of either academic study or professional ministry. It lists and annotates over 540 reference tools, such as bibliographies, encyclopedias, dictionaries,

indexes, abstracts, handbooks, guides, manuals, catalogs, and commentaries, all of which provide the information or literature citations for any subject required. There are also extensive sections on English-language Bible versions and translations.

The author believes that he has furnished pastors and professors tools by means of which they will be able to gain what librarians call "bibliographic control" of the literature dealing with any topic. Drawing on eighteen years of parish experience and seven years as theological librarian, Bollier believes that he has gathered together a bibliographical help which will meet both the pastor's and the professional theologians' needs. Very few foreign works are included in this help. For those interested in German books Bollier recommends Gerhard Schwinge, *Bibliographische Nachschlagewerk zur Theologie und ihren Grenzgebieten*. Other compilers might have selected other books, but the author believes he has chosen important and significant works. The descriptions of the books chosen are not critically evaluated but objective statements are given concerning contents, purpose, scope and arrangement, depth, and perspective of each work, which ought to provide the reader with enough information for making a judgment about the book's usefulness to him. The four divisions of the theological curriculum (Biblical studies, systematic theology, historical studies, and practical theology) are covered.

This will prove to be a valuable reference volume for students and pastors for years to come!

Raymond F. Surburg