of human relation all over the world and knit mankind into a single family, the family of God, as the Prophet of Islam styled it . . . " (p. 57).

The last article “God’s Oneness” (pp. 61-70) by Prof. T. B. Irving illustrates the Qur’anic concept of Divine Unity.

All in all, one should hope for better performance in future by a journal which has high and noble aims to fulfil.

KARACHI

RAFIQ AHMED


This book is a revised version of a dissertation submitted to the University of London for the degree of Ph. D. The author, a keen student of Indo-Muslim history, is on the teaching staff of the Department of General History, University of London, and is at present Visiting Professor of History, University of the Panjab, Lahore. As stated in the Preface the author has “attempted no more than an examination of the motives and techniques of five historians of the period of the Delhi Sultanate. Ziyā’ al-dīn Barānī, Shams al-dīn Sirāj ‘Afīf, Yaḥyā bin Ṭamīm Sirhindī, Amir Khusrau and Iṣāmī: a brief explanation of some of those characteristics . . . and . . . the presentation of certain considerations proceeding from the previous analysis of the historians, in re-inforcement of the present trend towards the study of the cultural history of Medieval Muslim India” (p. iv).

Had the author’s survey and examination been purely objective and unbiased there would have been no quarrel with him, but unfortunately he proceeds with the task he voluntarily sets himself by characterising the writings of these historians as “involuntary distortions” inherent in the manner in which they treated the past. How anachronistic and unmethodological it would be to judge these medieval Muslim historians of India by the advanced standards of the modern age and its highly-developed techniques of research! Historiography as a science is an extremely vulnerable discipline and naturally the most bitterly criticised one. It is exceedingly difficult, rather super-human, to maintain strict neutrality and observe undiluted impartiality while writing history. The personal feelings and convictions of the author, in spite of his best efforts to the contrary, are bound to reflect in his writings. As long as human beings are human beings they cannot be expected to behave like angels. If one sets oneself the rather unpleasant and unsavoury task of detecting ‘involuntary distortions’ in the works of even established historians, none is likely to escape the beam of the radar. This one inherent human weakness has been responsible for painting the ill-starred Umayyads in the blackest of colours and showing, by contrast, only the bright aspects of the equally black rule of their rivals—the ‘Abbāsids, although in so far as the hostility toward the ‘House of ‘Ali’ and the perpetuation of the hereditary rule in Islam is concerned, both were equally guilty. So long as the sceptre and the orb continue to command men and rule over their destinies partial and biased accounts of the reigns of ruling heads are bound to appear in books on history. It is a sad story of the human race that no historical account of any of its sections may be regarded as nothing but truth, absolute truth.
What is or may be true of the five historians subjected to a post-mortem by Mr. Hardy may be true, with only slight variations of degree and force, of the entire tribe of historiographers—ancient, medieval and modern.

The inclusion of the two Persian poets—Amir Khusraw and 'Iṣāmī—among the professional historians seems rather strange and will, notwithstanding the efforts of the author, remain a matter of controversy. Both Khusraw and 'Iṣāmī have been rightly recognised as poets and whatever they "wrote about the past was to fulfil not a practical or a moral, or a religious, or an academic purpose, but to fulfil an aesthetic purpose" (p. 92). One, therefore, cannot but agree with the author's observation that "Amir Khusrau did not write history—he wrote poetry" (p. 93). Similarly the Fuṣḥā al-Salāfīn of Iṣāmī, which has been examined by the author "is, to sum up, not a critical history, not a theology, not an ethic, but an epic" (p. 110). In view of these frank and categorical statements how far can one be justified in crowning these two bards with the appellation of a historian.

There is much controversial matter contained in the chapter "Some General Characteristics Analysed". Limitations on space do not permit a detailed critical examination of the various statements made by the author. The following excerpt will, however, fully illustrate the technique, method and approach of Mr. Hardy and we purposely leave it to the discerning readers to draw their own conclusions:

"There would appear to be three main characteristics for which the Islamic or the didactic religious framework of Muslim historiography, as exemplified by the five writers discussed, was responsible. First, an almost exclusive concentration of the deeds of Muslim in Hindūstān. For Barānī, 'Afiī, Yāḥyā bin Aḥmad and Iṣāmī, non-Muslims are as the furniture and properties for the stage on which the drama of the Muslim destiny and the Muslim political achievement in Hindūstān is played. The Hindus are not mentioned, for the most part, except as the passive material on which Muslims impose their will. It is the function of the Hindus to provide opportunities for the practice of Muslim virtue; they are never interesting in themselves, but only as converts, as capitation tax-payers or as corpses. Even Amir Khusrau, who in his Nuh Sipiḥr shows considerable interest in the languages, music and sciences of the Hindus, does so much to illustrate the interesting environment in which the Muslims in Hindūstān live than to understand Hindu civilization. Even he cannot resist pointing out that Hindus live, metaphysically, in error and ignorance of the truth. Although none of the five authors examined prefaces his account of the fortunes of Muslims in Hindustān with a brief conspectus of general Islamic history from the time of the Prophet (as do for example, the Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī by Minhāj al-Sirāj or the Ta'rikh-i-Muḥammadī by Muḥammad Bihāmid Khānī), that does not betray them as indifferent to the history of their community. For them, indeed as for Muslim historians outside India, the only significant history is the history of the Muslim community; they are historians of the res gesta of the politically prominent members of a group united by ties of common faith rather than historians of the whole people of the area controlled by the Delhi sultan. They are, so to speak, the first Muslim communalists in India" (pp. 113-14).
This one passage alone is likely to do more harm to the Muslims of India than the most venomous speeches and writings of the Hindu Mahāsabhaites—the avowed enemies of the Muslims.

KARACHI

A. S. BAZMEE ANSARI

CORRECTION

In the article entitled “Banū Isrā‘īl in the Qurʾān” by Professor John Bowman, published in our issue, ii/4 (December, 1963), a small error has crept in. In the opening paragraph, please read “... the Qurʾān (II: 140)” for “... the Qurʾān (II: 135)”.

We are grateful to Professor Bowman for this correction. The editorial footnote appearing on the same page may be treated as withdrawn.—(Ed.)

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