contains only such information as is necessary for the moral guidance of man. There are numerous verses which refer to axiomatic truths lately discovered and explained by science. But the purpose of these verses is to indicate in the creation of this world the signs of will, might, knowledge, wisdom, certainty and balance which point to the existence of God and to deny the emergence of life by mere chance.

The author appears to possess a very good knowledge of contemporary theories in physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, astronomy and other physical sciences as they affect human thought, as is clear from the way he quotes the verses of the Qur'an relevant to the creation of the heavens and the intricate mechanism of the human body. He treats of space, time and the theory of relativity as one who is conversant with them. But he handles all this knowledge in the light of the Qur'an and argues therefrom that in these great discoveries, to which the Book of God refers again and again, there are the greatest signs of His existence.

The aim of the book is to establish the excellence of Islam in the light of the latest knowledge that man possesses, and to prove that faith in God and in His work as indicated by the Qur'an can stand the highest test of reason. In this mission the author has largely succeeded. He has discussed the most difficult and intricate problems of philosophy and science in a most lucid and elegant style and these discussions are marked by a striking coherence and consistency. The book, as a whole, is a very commendable effort towards telling the story of faith from the Islamic viewpoint and is written in a pleasant but serious style. In fact, it is meant to be read by all intelligent people and not by Muslims alone. The book is not copyright and everyone, who so desires, is free to translate it or otherwise make use of it. The printing and the get-up are both excellent.

KARACHI

QAMARUDDIN KHAN


"Onlookers see more of the game than the players." In addition to this initial advantage, the Western orientalists are equipped with the tools of the modern knowledge and the techniques of scientific research. They also have access to the source materials and the necessary climate for academic work. These facilities, when properly used, help produce excellent books.

One such book is Islamic Philosophy and Theology. It initiates a series of Islamic Surveys of which Dr. Watt is the General Editor. The Surveys are intended "to extend and deepen the understanding and appreciation of this great segment of mankind, the Muslims." As explained in the Foreword, the series is "designed to give the educated reader something more than can be found in the usual popular books. Each work undertakes to survey a special part of the field and to show the present stage of scholarship here. Where there is a clear picture, this will be given; but where there are gaps, obscurities and differences of opinion, these will also be indicated". It will comprise at least fifteen volumes which include important titles: Contemporary Trends in Islam; Islamic Law and Islam in China.
The usefulness of such surveys can hardly be overestimated. They provide books of reasonable size which can give the full range of facts, in proper perspective, and with sound interpretation. Risks are, however, involved. Dr. Watt has the calibre to say so: "Most of the general statements about Islamic philosophy made at present time must be regarded as in part provisional. The scholar who would write about Islamic philosophy is in a dilemma. If he is careful he will hesitate to say anything at all. If he is concerned to try to meet the world’s desire to know a little about Islamic philosophy, he will give some account, while knowing that what he says is based on inferior editions." He recognises that his book is open to such criticism.

This book is divided into five parts entitled: "The Umayyad Period"; "The First Wave of Hellenism"; "The Second Wave of Hellenism"; "The Period of Darkness" and "The New Dawn". This emphasis on Hellenism in the early phase has been rather overplayed. Like very progressive people, the Muslims took advantage of all that was available. Iranians probably contributed as much to the intellectual equipment of the Muslims. Apart from this bias, there is another viewpoint which considerably influences the book. The author clearly states that the survey has been written with the assumption that all theological and philosophical ideas have a political or social reference. Special efforts have, therefore, throughout been made to bring out political or social factors which led to the evolution of various sects and theological controversies. In places, this has resulted in overemphasis.

In matters of detail and socio-historical explanations of certain phenomena in Islam, however, many people will differ from the conclusions of Dr. Watt. His account of the genesis of the Shi‘ite and Khārijite sects affords a pertinent illustration. While explaining the Shi‘ite belief in an infallible, "charismatic" leader, Dr. Watt says that for the Shi‘ah, the old Arab belief that special qualities of character were handed down in certain families justified them in taking "Ali as a leader of infallible wisdom" (p. 5). Now, where is the requisite evidence for this fantastic assertion about the Arabs? When did the Arabs believe in the infallible wisdom of the leader? The Arabs undoubtedly believed in certain qualities like generosity, manliness, wisdom and others. But these are acquired human qualities. When an Arab speaks of these qualities as belonging to a noble house, he means no more than the fact that a family which is high and influential is more likely to breed good men than an ordinary family. Indeed, the Arab is even actually aware that this is not a universal law. For the rest, many Arabs believed in soothsayers (Kāhins) but a soothsayer's qualities were hardly hereditary. Obviously, Dr. Watt has given primacy to a theological position, whereas what has actually happened is that a certain politico-moral attitude was taken up by a group, which was later given a theological base (on the basis of certain old Iranian concepts) which was, in turn, projected back to the contemporaries of 'Ali. The same, mutatis mutandis, must apply to the Khārijī position.

Keeping these limitations in mind, the book provides informative and useful reading. It gives flashes of insight into Muslim history, intellectual as well as political. For an average reader, the book provides a very rewarding reading. It opens up the entire panorama of Islamic philosophy and theology. Accounts are brief but penetrating. There is a bias or rather a preference for certain
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approaches. An allowance has to be made for this fact. A clearer perspective emerges if this book is supplemented by a reading of H. A. R. Gibb's Mohammedanism.

Part V is extremely important. Dr. Watt considers that the impact of Europe on the Muslim world might prove the Third Wave of Hellenism. He remarks: "What is needed is a set of ideas which is both a development of traditional theological conceptions and also relevant to contemporary problems and this relevance must go hand in hand" (p. 175).

Referring to the contemporary challenge to the great religions, Dr. Watt writes: "There are strong pressures urging men towards a unified world religion. Ideally, all that is of value in the several religions should be taken up into one religion; but it is possible that to begin with, humanity may fall far short of this ideal and in this way much of value may be lost. The new problem of Islamic theologians, as for those of all the religions (including Christianity) is to present what they see of value in their religions in such a form that it is capable of being assimilated by others. The present survey has been written from the standpoint that there is much of value in Islam and it would thus be a loss for the whole world if what is valuable is not transmuted and sublimated and so made suitable for inclusion in the unified religion for the whole world" (p. 178).

To this challenge, Muslims have to respond; and they must try to transmute and sublimate all they consider is of value in Islam.

Such books as the present one may help create consciousness among the Muslims about the critical times through which they are passing. It is the result of serious study and thought and has set a high standard for the series. For the non-Muslim reader, it is no doubt useful; but for the Muslim reader, it has an important message. It helps him develop the historical sense which is so necessary for an appreciation of what happened to Islam. It enables him to see in proper perspective the development in Islam in which he is wholly involved. This book is a welcome and a valuable addition to the literature on Islam.

KARACHI

ASLAM SIDDIQI

Ugo Monneret de Villard, LE PITTURE MUSULMANE AL SOFFITTO DELLA CAPPELLA PALATINA IN PALERMO (The Muslim Paintings on the Ceiling of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo), Rome 1950, pp. 82 +250 plates.

Although published thirteen years ago, this book by Prof. Ugo Monneret de Villard is still considered to be one of the best works on the subject of Muslim Art. A splendidly illustrated publication, it deals with a matter which was practically ignored because of the difficulty experienced by scholars and art historians in acquiring suitable reproductions and designs from the Muslim paintings of the Cappella Palatina.

Prof. Monneret de Villard has divided his work into seven chapters with over 300 notes. There are also 250 black and white illustrations taken from the same ceiling.

The first chapter describes in outline the history of Muslim monumental painting up to the Fatimid period. The author mentions the scarcity of documents and relics of the Fatimid period in Egypt. This is why this only complete cycle