

good time for the celebrations attending the millenary (by the Islamic Calendar) of the birth of this philosopher and physician, whose intrinsic worth does not ill justify the powerful and pervasive influence he exercised on Medieval and later Europe.

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SUFISM. By A. J. Arberry. (Allen and Unwin; 8s. 6d.)

It is becoming a pleasure increasingly rare, even in the field of scholarly publication, to be able to review a book that is accurately appraised by its own sub-title and jacket-notice. But this, the third in the series of Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West, falls as completely into this select category as did Nicholson's inaugural volume on *Rûmî*, for the posthumous editing of which the same author was responsible.

The sub-title, 'An Account of the Mystics of Islam', modestly but straightforwardly describes a work of impeccable scholarship, sympathetically and charmingly conceived in twelve compact chapters, the several themes of which represent in themselves a masterpiece of critical selection from material of infinite complexity.

Nor are these qualities, now more or less inevitably associated with such names as Arberry and Allison Peers, all that the work has to offer. The publishers' notice judiciously alludes to three further characteristics of the present book, which endow it with especial value, not only for the general reader but for the scholar as well. In the first place, it is, in its conception, altogether original, and that not only in English; in this connection, the author's own *History of Sufism* might perhaps be more justly regarded as a history of Sufi Studies. Secondly, it treats the subject's development analytically and structurally: it is still common to find even respected scholars speaking and writing as though Sufism, in all times and places, and to all individuals, represented something precise and unchanging—something, moreover (to judge from the tone usually taken), pretty disgusting at that! In fact, Ghazâlî is as different from 'Alî Wahîsh as is St Teresa of Avila from Mrs Eddy. Here at any rate, for the first time, is presented a broad general view of the relative, diverse contributions of such men as Muhâsibî, Junayd, Sarrâj, Qushayrî, Ibn al-Fârid, Ibn al-Arabî, Rûmî and the rest, while a striking degree of clarity is introduced into the baffling tangle of overlapping and unstable terminology. Thirdly, there is, for the work's size, a remarkable proportion of quotation and condensed paraphrase: here again, not only will the general reader have the all too rare satisfaction of actual contact with a mystic's own writings, but the scholar, too, will in some cases meet crucial passages from works still unedited or untranslated.

While it is difficult to accept without serious qualifications Professor Arberry's initial remark, that 'it has become a platitude to observe that mysticism is essentially one and the same, whatever may be the religion professed by the individual mystic', there can be no doubt of the rightness of his decision to present Sufism, so to say, *in vacuo* (though even his imaginative sympathy has inevitably failed to preserve the tone of objective anonymity in some of the later chapters). In a field still so imperfectly known to Orientalists as Sufism, too much energy has already been expended in attempting to trace nebulous influences reputedly acting on, and emanating from, the Islamic Mystics. To one for whom religious experience is an objective reality, such an approach must seem as nonsensical as attempting to explain by 'influences' mankind's (more or less) general regard for the basic natural and mathematical laws.

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THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH. By R. M. French. (Hutchinson's University Library; 7s. 6d.)

In his latest book, *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, R. M. French who has already published a translation from the Russian of *The Way of a Pilgrim* and a study in *Serbian Church Life*, sets out 'to give a picture of the Orthodox Church for use of the general reader who wishes to know something about Orthodoxy and the significance of the Orthodox Church in Christendom'. In accordance with this programme the book is divided into two parts, the longer of which contains a brief survey of Orthodox Church history, which for centuries was closely connected with the history of the Byzantine Empire. Thorny problems such as the origins of the schism involving the positions of Photius and Caerularius are treated with delicacy and tact, and the desire for the impartial representation of facts is everywhere in evidence. The second part of the book is devoted to a study of Orthodox spirituality as manifested in the ritual, the veneration of icons, and the high position accorded to the monastic order. Translations of some characteristic prayers and descriptions of church ceremonies add to the interest of the book. There are a few inaccuracies: e.g. the statement that neither Advent nor Trinity Sunday exist in the Orthodox Calendar. In fact, Pentecost is regarded as the revelation of the Blessed Trinity, while the Advent forty days' fast begins on November 14th, and liturgical texts from November 21st onward point towards the mystery of the Incarnation. The Catholic will also be astonished that the *mandatum* should be regarded as a typically Orthodox service. However, such *errata* do not impair the intrinsic value of the work as an introduction to the Orthodox Church and its spirituality. A bibliography of books written in or translated into English is appended.

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