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pp. 139
147

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Obviously Capps's answer is "No." But he has been careful throughout to make clear that Robertson and others are welcome participants in the American political process, that their views can be legitimately expressed alongside contending views about America's purpose and identity. The common themes of the movement—especially its indictment of America's moral weakness and of the humanist philosophy seen as the cause of that weakness—provide a springboard for Capps's argument that what they have created is an "alternative civil religion." They have created an "Americanized version of the Christian faith as well as a Christianized version of the national creed" (195). But they have also, he claims, been a "revitalization movement." At a time of collective disintegration, they were an "attempt to breathe new life into traditional values while reestablishing a basis of national identity" (203). What Capps suggests, however, is that they could not be both. He faults the movement for being more interested "in revitalizing the life of the nation than in having an impact within the church . . ." (208). But then he declares as "misadventure" the attempt "to insert a salvation religion into the heart of government" (216). It is here that we may see this author's inability finally to grasp from the inside the mind of a movement that refuses to see "religion" and "politics" as separate categories. What he is able to grasp is that these people are needed as part of the continuing conversation about America's moral legitimacy, even if they are wrong.

This is a valuable book both for its "summing up" quality and for the new interpretive themes it sounds. Capps reminds us of why this movement was important, what it was about, and what lessons in democracy we might learn from it.

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The Sufi Path of Knowledge. By William C. Chittick. State University of New York Press, 1990. 478 pages. \$74.50 cloth; \$24.50 paper.

Whatever the meanings of "popular" and "elite" Islam, Ibn al-ʿArabi (d. 1240) and his thought have been a part of both. This great thirteenth-century theosopher must be numbered among Islam's intellectual elite, and his ideas have certainly been popular and popularized, whether by his students and commentators, by poets—such as Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), or by sovereigns—like the Mughul emperor Akhbar (d. 1605)—in their search for political and religious legitimation. But to gauge the size and force of Ibn al-ʿArabi's impact on Islam in its many dimensions, we need to have a firm grasp of his methods of approach and his system of thought. In short, we need a map of his universe.

Although there are a number of fine studies on specific ideas and works by Ibn al-ʿArabi, surveys of his thought have been incomplete due largely to the *al-Futuh al-Makkiyah*, Ibn al-ʿArabi's *magnum opus*. This massive mystical com-

pendium with its abstruse subject matter and concomitant convoluted and associative Arabic style has loomed for centuries as a formidable barrier to anyone wishing to understand Ibn al-ʿArabi's teachings in any depth. However, today, a few more students may cross over this barrier with *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*.

This book is the first part of Chittick's two-volume survey of Ibn al-ʿArabi's configuration of the world and, quite frankly, it is the clearest exposition of Ibn al-ʿArabi's metaphysics that I have read in any language. The tone of this work resonates with that of the classical commentaries on Ibn al-ʿArabi, such as those by al-Farghani (d. 1300), al-Kashani (d. 1334), and al-Qaysari (d. c. 1346). Chittick briefly reviews Ibn al-ʿArabi's life and writings, and previous Western scholarship on them, and he provides a concise overview of prominent and recurring subjects in the *Futuhat*. Within this framework, Chittick then examines a number of related themes in the seven substantial chapters that follow.

He begins each of these chapters and their sub-sections with short introductions stating the issues at hand, and he insightfully defines the specific technical terms involved. This allows him to clarify a number of obscurities in the text while drawing his readers' attention to Ibn al-ʿArabi's intentional ambiguity, especially this mystic's free-flowing, often playful, style with its multi-level discourse. For example, a simple pronoun or its suffix may refer to "it," "he," or the divine "He," and, frequently, to all three, as the pronoun becomes a sliding referent in the context of Ibn al-ʿArabi's on-going monologue. Yet, despite such difficulties, only occasionally did I feel that Chittick should have provided more analysis as in the case of Ibn al-ʿArabi's ideas concerning the Arabic alphabet.

Using four passages from the *Futuhat*, Chittick explains that the creative breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-rahman*) is the vehicle for God's words, and that Ibn al-ʿArabi draws an analogy between this breath and the human one. Since the Arabic Alphabet has twenty-eight letters, which combine to produce the names of all things, so, too, are there twenty-eight "letters" or "realities" in the cosmos, which articulate Being in all of its forms. Chittick mentions that Ibn al-ʿArabi phonetically analyzed the alphabet in detail and ranked the letters accordingly, beginning with *ha'* and ending with *waw*. But what Chittick does not tell us—and what those uninitiated in the study of Sufism would not know—is that *ha'* and *waw* together spell *huwa*, "he," meaning the divine "He" and, perhaps, the word most often voiced in Sufi *dhikr* or "remembrance" rituals. Between the exhaling *ha'* and the inhaling *waw* All is said, and just as Ibn al-ʿArabi finds all other letters between the *ha'* and the *waw* so, too, does he find all existence in the breath of this one word, *huwa*.

Chittick has promised us a more detailed discussion of these and related matters of cosmology in his second volume of the *Futuhat*, and it must be noted that his intention in *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* is to provide only tentative explanations of Ibn al-ʿArabi's intricate and inter-connected metaphysical thoughts. This, in turn, is one of the book's many strengths, as Chittick mini-

mizes his words to allow Ibn al-ʿArabi to speak for himself through frequent and often extensive quotations, numbering over six hundred in all. Occasionally, passages are repetitive and tedious, but this is due to the complexities of their subjects and the Arabic originals, which attempt to express the inexpressible, and not to Chittick's fine translations, which are literally accurate and often stylistically crisp.

While *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* reflects much of the best in classical commentaries, it has the distinction of being organized thematically, and, following the overview, we move through chapters on theology, ontology, epistemology, hermeneutics, and soteriology. This thematic approach permits Chittick to probe Ibn al-ʿArabi's teachings in detail and to discuss the intimate relations between ontology and epistemology and, above all, the pivotal role played by revelation and divine law in Ibn al-ʿArabi's metaphysics.

Whether by accident or intentional neglect, this crucial aspect of Ibn al-ʿArabi's thought has remained largely unexplored, thus skewing views of him and his work. But, as Chittick conclusively shows, Ibn al-ʿArabi's theosophy is dependent on the Qur'an and *hadith* not only for its interpretation and expression but for its fundamental inception and conceptualization as well. Following age-old Muslim consensus, Ibn al-ʿArabi held that knowledge of God and the next world can be found only in the *shari'ah*, the revealed law, which determines correct knowledge and proper conduct. Not surprisingly, then, mystical experience, or "unveiling," does not create new law or overturn the old; rather, it corresponds to and verifies the *shari'ah*.

Further, and again holding to the Qur'an and latter Islamic opinion, Ibn al-ʿArabi bears witness that Muhammad was the "seal" of the prophets as he brought the all-comprehensive revelation, the Qur'an, which is to be the final arbiter in all matters of religious dispute. Though all things manifest Being in some way, some things reveal It more sharply than others, and among religions, Islam and its law are the surest and straightest path to the truth. While Ibn al-ʿArabi has been credited with holding the doctrine of *wahdat al-adyan*, or the "unity of religions," in light of the *Futuhat* and other works, one suspects this doctrine is the product of recent ecumenical notions and not due to any "anti-nomian" tendencies or ideas of religious equality on the part of Ibn al-ʿArabi, who issued legal opinions against Christian activities in Anatolia.

That revelation and the law should be so important and fundamental to Ibn al-ʿArabi's theosophy vividly demonstrates just how "Islamic" Sufism is in fact. Despite modern reactionary religious trends, Sufism has long been an integral part of Islam, hence Sufism's popularity and that of Ibn al-ʿArabi. Yet many contemporary scholars—Muslim and non-Muslim alike—seem to have forgotten that Ibn al-ʿArabi's and other Sufis were recognized religious scholars (*ulama'*) whose main area of expertise was mysticism. But, usually, this was not their only specialty. The great mystical poet Ibn al-Farid (d. 1235) was also a *hadith* specialist; Rumi was a legal scholar like Ibn al-ʿArabi, while his eighteenth-century commentator al-Nabalusi (d. 1731) was a historian and chronicler. On the other end of the scale, we find the conservative legist and

theologian Ibn Taymiyah (d. 1328) who, though he virulently attacked Ibn al-^ʿArabi and his disciples, nevertheless appreciated and valued Islam's mystical dimensions and belonged to a Sufi order.

When speaking of Islam prior to this century, whether in Morocco or Egypt, Turkey, Iran or India, and, I suspect, in Malaysia and Indonesia too, it makes little sense to posit a "normative" Islam as distinct from—let alone as opposed to—Sufism. Very few of the *'ulama'*, or Muslims for that matter, were not "Sufis" in some very real sense of the term. Stated simply, Sufism was, and for many still is, a vital part of any normative Islam.

It is essential that we remember this fact as we explore the rich Islamic heritage of various Muslim communities, and it is of particular importance if we are to understand and appreciate Ibn al-^ʿArabi's very creative imagination, which, through his writings, especially the *Futuhat al-Makkiyah*, continues to influence the lives of many Muslims. William Chittick's immaculate and magisterial exposition *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* clearly demonstrates that in Islamic scholarship, too, Ibn al-^ʿArabi's thought is not only alive, but very well indeed.

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The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God. By Rebecca S. Chopp. Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989. 167 pages. \$17.95.

Feminist theology faces a "mid-life" crisis. Efforts made by churches in the past thirty years to accommodate women's concerns remain inadequate: "correction" too often means "cooptation." Increasingly, feminists realize that Christians are called not merely to include previously marginalized groups in their midst, but also to subvert the very foundations of the social-symbolic order on which policies of inclusion and exclusion have rested.

Accepting this challenge as her own, in *The Power to Speak* Rebecca Chopp engages the resources of pragmatism and poststructuralism to criticize the assumptions, configurations, and rules of dominant practices that, running through language, subjectivity, and politics, serve the powerful and silence those who speak of freedom. Chopp asks Christianity and theology "to take seriously language as a site of transformation in subjectivity and politics." She submits that discourses of gender, which create a culturally specific form of subjectivity for women and confine them to the margins of the social order, fail to silence women. A Word remains that, escaping from women's bodies and bridging nature and culture, enables women to speak "of body and earth, of connection and transformation, of difference and specificity."

This "shackled and hidden Word" proper to the space of women is, in fact, the repressed ground of language. More than that, as both matrix and abyss, embodied and creative, this Word establishes a space for a discourse of emancipatory transformation. Describing this Word as "the perfectly open