

Sutherland, Rattner, and Rothko, and many others. How can one explain this? Chagall's personal statements that Christ was a Jew and that this is a most meaningful symbol to him is but a private explanation.

And yet one remains puzzled—here and elsewhere. Chagall grew up in a shtetl; he portrays the shtetl and its people. And yet he depicts the most particular of Jewish persecutions with a symbol that in this setting forcefully reminds the Jew of the historical violence of Christendom toward him. Is it sufficient to hear from Chagall and others that just this symbol of Jewish suffering was a way to convey the universality of the event? Since Chagall knew authentic Jewish symbols, one wonders why these were not enough. I have pondered the matter with Samuel Bak, whose paintings show remarkable uses of Jewish images, and yet are also not without occasional cruciform elements. Are these strong attempts to resist parochialism in art? The answers of the artists remain personal. Amishai-Maisels has given us the evidence. We must ponder the question.

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MURATA, SACHIKO, and CHITTICK, WILLIAM C. *The Vision of Islam*. Vision of Reality Series. New York: Paragon House, 1994. xxxix+368 pp. \$18.95 (paper).

In keeping with the stated aims of the series in which it appears, the authors of this textbook introduction to Islam have "focused on bringing out what Islam has thought of itself" (p. x). This sentiment is frequently expressed by authors of textbooks, but it is immediately problematic: which Muslims and which historical period may be taken as defining the "Islam" which will speak for itself? The authors' response here is "to portray Islam from the perspective of those great Muslims of the past who established major modes of Koranic interpretation and Islamic understanding" (pp. x-xi). Beyond that, the aim is to look at Muslim views of "reality," understood as providing more than simply what Muslims think about the status of the Qur'an and their beliefs about God and the afterlife, but rather trying to show what this all means "in actuality." Theological discussions, as much of this comes down to, must make sense not simply in historical terms (as introductory textbooks often explain them) but in terms of the entire vision of Islam: the conclusions of the discussions must make sense when viewed in the entire context. Islam must be understood within its own methodologies of its classical tradition and not that of the "alien perspective" of "modern Western intellectuals" (p. xiii).

Organizing any introductory textbook, regardless of its aims, is always the first and perhaps the biggest challenge to be faced. The authors decided here to use what is known as the "*hadith* of Gabriel" to provide an outline; this *hadith* was also used for such purposes in classical Muslim works. It details an encounter between Muhammad and a man, who is later disclosed to have been the angel Gabriel, who asked the prophet about all the crucial issues in Islam: "submission" (*islām*, described as a series of activities), "faith" (*īmān*, here a series of objects in which one must have faith), "the beautiful" (*ihsān*, the motivation behind the activities), and "the Hour" and its "marks" (i.e., its signs). Elaborating and explaining these elements, then, becomes the task of the book. The first three, referred to as the "dimensions" of Islam, structure the main discussion; ideas of the final judgment (the Hour) are explored, especially for their implications regarding the view of history, in the last part of the book.

In dealing with *islām* in part 1, the authors first treat the standard "five pillars" along with consideration of *jihād* and the *sharī'a* in general, and then turn to the development of Islam in history, including the emergence of the idea of the *sunna* and jurisprudence. The Qur'an is used throughout in order to illustrate the major points as they arise.

Part 2, *īmān*, is far more extensive and speaks of the objects of faith, those truths in which Muslims feel confidence (as the authors explain the sense of the word *īmān* in Arabic). The core objects of faith are defined as the assertion of divine unity, prophecy, and eschatology. Each of these topics is expanded on at length in the sections which follow. Here, the direct character and refreshing openness of this book becomes apparent. For example, the first question which is addressed is "Who or what is God?"—that is, what do Muslims understand by the word God? This is explored primarily through an exposition of the attributes of the divine, but is connected in logical sequence to ideas of the angels and the "measuring out" (*qadar*) of human destiny. In this way, the authors are quite successful in guiding their readers through complex material and providing a good sense of the internal coherence of Muslim religious life. In parallel to the presentation in part 1, part 2 concludes with a sketch of the intellectual development of theological thinking in Islam through history.

Part 3, dealing with *ihsān*, highlights the mental attitude or intention that goes along with faith and action. It is here that the sense of the way that being Muslim affects every aspect of life becomes clear. The naming of children is provided as an example in passing, interestingly illustrated by Hasan and Husayn, the grandsons of Muhammad, whose names are related to the word *ihsān*. The full working out of Muslim life becomes described in topics which are typical of descriptions of the mystical path (sincerity, God-wariness, love, wholesomeness), but the discussion of the historical manifestations of *ihsān* extends further than Sufism, also taking into account personal supplication, art, and poetry.

The book concludes with part 4, "Islam in History," which emphasizes the Islamic attitude of the past being valuable for what it teaches of God and his signs. The stories of the prophets of the past illustrate the point, for the authors, that ultimately only God survives the passage of time; God alone is real.

This is an excellent presentation of Islam, of that there is no doubt. Every reader will gain much from it. Whether it would be appropriate for every classroom context as a textbook is another matter which will depend on one's conception of the aim of teaching about religions and religious studies; the question remains of whether conveying the internal coherence of the worldview of the believer is the goal of studying Islam (or any other religion). As well, potential users of the book will need to think about their own point of view toward modernity and traditional values because the authors' disdainful attitude toward the ignorance of spiritual matters within modern life—whether on the part of Muslims or anybody else—pervades the book. In assessing the state of Islam today at the end of the book, for example, the authors assess Muslim modernism in the following way: "Massive economic development and industrial pollution become God's approved way to establish the 'Islamic' goal of a rational society" (p. 334). The concluding sentences of the book are: "We all know what is important in the eyes of the modern world, and we all know that the very nature of the modern media demands noise and tumult. Peace, harmony, and equilibrium do not make news" (p. 335).

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