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MAGILL BOOK REVIEWS

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The Inner Journey: Views from the Islamic Tradition

Edited by William C. Chittick

Spirituality/Philosophy

Reviewed by Jean C. Fulton

Part of the *Parabola Anthology Series*, which focuses on the spiritual traditions of the world, this collection illuminates the inner dimensions of the Islamic tradition.

Not so long ago, the Islamic tradition likely seemed remote to the typical Westerner. With today's global politics and 24/7 news coverage, however, distance is collapsing, and some key concepts and terminology--or what passes for them in the popular press--have entered the general conversation. Since superficiality tends to thrive in the world of sound bites, *The Inner Journey: Views from the Islamic Tradition* is a timely counterweight. Individual selections--interviews, poetry, and articles--were originally published in the *Parabola Anthology Series*.

In one article, Seyyed Hossein Nasr focuses on the spiritual significance of *jihad*, typically translated into Western languages as "holy war" based on legal usage rather than the more universal meaning in the Quran. Citing "distortions and even total reversals of the meaning...over the ages," Nasr investigates a Muslim's duty to "seek to establish peace and justice within, and...to establish justice in the world about him through an effort, or *jihad*, that must avoid outward war and confrontation except when absolutely necessary and in defense." In another article Gai Eaton, former British diplomat and prominent convert to Islam, explains the principal rites of the *hajj* or "spiritual pilgrimage" in ways that non-Muslims can understand without reducing their significance, without "poking at them obtrusively with a scholar's finger."

Some may read this collection straight through; others focus on one selection at a time, working with it, digesting it, perhaps even struggling with it for a while. In the process, readers also have an opportunity to rethink the values of modern secular society. The volume includes full-color Islamic imagery, a glossary of Arabic terms, chapter notations, contributor profiles, and material for further reading.

(Morning Light Press, 2007, 318 pages, paperback \$22.95, ISBN-10: 1-59675-016-2; ISBN-13: 978-1-59675-016-6)