

The Foundations of the Articles of Faith; Al-Ghazali's Book of Fear and Hope



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the student in the use of the dictionary rightly insisted upon in the first reader, but now justified on the principle of ease through speed. The educational validity of these concessions to painless and rapid reading is arguable; what they result in is an otherwise promising series of readers (of which we have all too few) being priced beyond the reach of the majority of British students.

JOHN BURTON

NABIH AMIN FARIS (tr.): *The foundations of the articles of faith; being a translation with notes of the Kitāb qawā'id al-'aqa'id of al-Ghazzālī's Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. viii, 144 pp. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963. Rs. 8.

WILLIAM MCKANE (tr.): *Al-Ghazzālī's Book of fear and hope*. xx, 104 pp. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962. Guilders 18.

These volumes are translations of the second and thirty-third books respectively of al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyā'*. In both cases the task has been accomplished with a high degree of competence. Yet both illustrate in different ways the snags and difficulties of translating material of this type.

On the whole the former must be judged the more successful, especially in view of the fact that a part of it, the *Risāla Qudsiyya*, consists largely of technical theological arguments. It reads well, on the whole, and is much more satisfactory than the same translator's version of *The Book of knowledge*. The relatively frequent insertion of the Arabic technical terms, and the index of these, are commendable features. This partly offsets infelicities in the choice of English equivalents for these terms. The renderings 'freedom' and 'will' for *qudrah*, and 'voluntary' for *maqḍūrah* (pp. 77-9) are not seriously misleading, but imply that the distinction between *maqḍūr* and *murād* is neglected. More serious is the translation of *qadīm* by 'ancient' (56, 62), and of *baqā'* as 'subsistence' (60); these are linked with the failure to make clear that in Islamic thought there are two senses of 'eternal', namely, 'without beginning' (sometimes rendered 'pre-eternal') and 'without end'. The translator does not seem to have had the courage of his convictions, for he realizes that *qidām* (60, etc.) means 'eternity', not 'ancientness'.

Some other small points may be noticed. *Akwān* (31) is a technical term whose explanation may be found in al-Juwaynī's *Irshād* (ed. Luciani, 10, tr. 28) or al-Taftazānī's *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-nasafiyya* (Cairo, 1939, 190); it might be rendered 'primary modes'; since the

akwān are *ijtimā'*, *iftirāq*, *haraka*, and *sukūn*, 'transmutations' is not possible. On p. 56 'unbearable obligations' for *taklīf mā lā yuṭāq* and 'punish' for *ilām* are inaccurate. 'Non-existence' is usually a better rendering than 'extinction' for 'adam' (61, etc.). *Mūjīb* (81) is not 'sole cause' but 'source of obligation'; this word (with *ījāb*, etc.) does not seem to have conveyed a precise meaning to the translator and he has tended to paraphrase it in ways that lose some of the point. On p. 82 the words translated 'he would then be a Muslim' should be pointed *fa-huwa musallam* 'then that is admitted'. The Ṣābiāns (90, n.) are normally at this period identified with the semi-philosophical sect in Ḥarrān to which Thābit ibn Qurra belonged (cf. al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, *bāb* LXVII). 'Magnificent' (115) for *takbīr* is presumably a misprint, perhaps for 'magnificat'.

The translator of the second volume modestly admits in his preface that 'there are a few places where I am not entirely satisfied with the translation nor convinced that the sense of the Arabic has been pierced'. One such passage which the present reviewer has noticed is on p. 28 f. The words which he translates 'And the course of the most ultimate rank in relation to what precedes it is from the most general to the most particular', mean rather: 'The relation of the last rank to what precedes it is similar to that of the more particular to the more general'. He has not altogether understood the example, a series of descriptions of increasing particularity namely, Arab, Qurashī, Ḥāshimī, Alid, Ḥasanī. His translation concludes: 'when you have mentioned, for example, that a man is Ḥasanī, you have described him totally'; but *bī-l-jamī'* means simply 'by all (these terms)'. The following words, which are translated 'if you describe him as Alid, you describe him by what is above him—what is more general than he', should rather be '... you describe him by a higher and more general (category) than that (sc. Ḥasanī)'.

This passage also illustrates the great fault of this translation. The translator is satisfied to set down English which seems to mean something, but which on closer examination has no clear sense. To say a man is a Ḥasanī does not describe him 'totally'. The earlier sentence about 'the course of the most ultimate rank' might almost mean something, but it is not in fact what al-Ghazzālī says, for the phrase *tajrī majrā* has not been understood. On the whole, however, there are probably not many passages that have been so imperfectly understood. The discussion of the subject-matter in the introduction is good, and indeed one of the best bits of the book. The more serious weakness is that even where passages have been adequately understood they have been expressed in English which is far from clear.

At times the translator seems to have tried to render each Arabic word by the nearest corresponding English word. This leads to an excessive use of verbal nouns, and an unnecessary adherence to Arabic sentence-structure; e.g. 'This is so, because, from the conditional character of hope and fear, their interdependence is with an object of doubt, since whatever is specified is not hoped for nor feared. Therefore the object of desire whose existence is possible its non-existence is also possible—indubitably'. The meaning of this will probably eventually reach the reader, but it could be conveyed much more clearly and elegantly. An irritating feature is the commencement of sentences with 'And'. A paragraph on p. 40 has six sentences all beginning with 'And'. The impression is given that in every single instance *wa* has been faithfully represented by 'and'—even where it is circumstantial, as in the verse on p. 5. Quite apart from the question of English style, it would seem that *wa* in its normal connective use is often misrepresented by 'and', since the English word indicates a closer connexion than the Arabic. This clinging to the literal produces the translation of a saying of Muḥammad, 'The head of wisdom is the fear of God' (p. 40), when the more natural translation of *ra's* by 'beginning' is amply justified by dictionaries.

In many cases the English rendering of a technical or semi-technical term is injudicious. A short list of renderings at the end helps, but one would have liked to see the inclusion of far more Arabic words in the text, especially at the first occurrence. Resort to the Arabic is necessary to discover that 'alienation' (p. 53 f.) represents *firāq*, 'modernism' (62) *bid'a*, and so on. (On the latter page 'imprints' suggests an inferior reading of *rusūm* instead of *rusūkh*.) For *tawḥīd* 'Unitarian' is unhappy; 'monotheist' would have been more intelligible. *Khātma* (62-6) is not 'seal' in any usual sense, but 'a man's final acts and state' (Wensinck, *Muslim creed*, 139).

The test of a good translation is the adequacy and accuracy of an intelligent reader's comprehension of the original. How much would such a person, not unacquainted with Islam and al-Ghazālī, get from the present volume? 'Not as much as he should have got', must be the answer. It has regretfully to be concluded that this translation, despite many merits, was not ready for publication. An Arabic writer like al-Ghazālī has something sensible to say, and the English reader ought to be able to understand most of it without too much trouble; but this makes much greater demands on the translator than is commonly realized.

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR: *Three Muslim sages: Avicenna, Suhrawardī, Ibn 'Arabī*. (Harvard Studies in World Religions, 1.) [xiv], 185 pp. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964. (Distributed in G.B. by Oxford University Press. 32s.)

Professor Nasr's book sets out to be a general introduction to the study of the three Muslim writers mentioned in the title. It achieves, however, rather more than its modest aim. It does not merely present each of the writers discussed as an isolated phenomenon, but also gives some idea of the tradition in which he was embedded and especially how his work was absorbed and continued by his successors. It thus presents a picture of how the three streams of thought which centre round the figures of the three sages merged to form one esoteric tradition in the school of the later Shī'a of Iran.

The scope of the book is naturally very limited, it being based on a series of open lectures delivered at Harvard University. The three chapters of which the book consists are therefore bare sketches of outline. The effect of the restriction of scope is particularly evident in the treatment of the extremely rich and complex thought of Ibn 'Arabī. Despite the fact that the exposition must necessarily consist of fairly general statements, it does contain a number of interesting remarks. Here and there one might object to some minor point. One feels uneasy at generalizations such as the association of the science of letters with the 'spirituality . . . of the Semitic nomad' (p. 31).

The deficiency in detail in the main text of the book is partly balanced by an extensive body of notes, placed at the end, which contain numerous references to texts, and particularly studies, and will serve as a good guide for anyone interested in the subject. They also often contain further discussions of points of detail which had to be left out of the main text, though in one or two cases they merely repeat ideas already stated in the text. A 'selected bibliography' placed before the notes will also prove to be useful.

The production of the book is not entirely satisfactory. A fairly large number of printing errors can be noticed, especially as regards the spelling of Arabic and Persian words written in transcription. Some examples are: al-Matiwakkil (p. 10), *ra'i* (for *rai*', p. 15), *mā hīya* (p. 25), *mutaallih* (p. 64), *al-anwār al-mudabbarah* (for *mudabbarah*, p. 73), 'the tribe of Ṭā'i' (p. 92), *Ṣadr al-mutī'allihīn* (p. 151).