

Those of us who are interested in finding out what it is that gives Islam its attraction and its apparent coherence will here find no answer, for the subject is, I fear, treated with dislike and contempt. These sentiments are quite comprehensible but are not likely to increase our understanding of a very persistent and fanatically held heresy. As a collection of heterogeneous facts the book is a success, and perhaps this is what it sets out to be. For a humble attempt to interpret the facts, the reader will still find that Prof. H. A. R. Gibb's *Mohammadanism* has not been superseded.

R. C. ZAEHNER

AVICENNA ON THEOLOGY. By A. J. Arberry. (John Murray; 4s. 6d.)

The matter of this book represents something of a new departure both for the Wisdom of the East Series, of which it is the latest, and for its author, most of whose numerous publications have been in the field of mystical speculation and poetry. Faithful to its title, it is precisely a compilation of selected passages from Avicenna's writings bearing broadly on theological questions: The Nature of God, Predestination, Prophecy, Prayer, and The After-Life. It makes no claim to exhaustiveness—the present state of Avicenna scholarship and the enormous volume of his known writings would both effectively prohibit such a claim, even did the Series allow of its being put forward—but offers, in a most palatable form, matter of the greatest interest and importance to Orientalists and students of religion alike. The translation, in all its sureness and accuracy of terminology, might well have been made in all but perhaps one instance ('evil is annihilated' on page 40) by a professional theologian; but only one who has striven with Avicenna's stiff Arabic style will appreciate the transmutation that has been effected into charming English prose. While dealing, on this occasion, in somewhat sterner stuff, neither publisher nor author have sacrificed the wonted attractiveness of their wares.

In addition to the body of the text, there is a most helpful Introduction, albeit somewhat marred in my opinion (page 6) by a regrettably exultant failure to appreciate the fundamental reasons for Avicenna's attitude (and ultimately that of any non-Christian thinker) towards the 'paradox of a physical resurrection'; also a translation of Avicenna's intriguing little Autobiography, and of its continuation by his pupil Jûzjânî; further, a translation in Professor Arberry's best manner of the Poem on the Soul, and, in keeping with the work's scholarly character, an indispensable little index. One unfortunate omission, from the point of view of the many Orientalists who are certain to use this work, regards the *locus* of the passages translated.

Triumphing over current publication hazards, the work appears in

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.

G. M. WICKENS

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.