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passages — a procedure that might, if carried out on a large scale, give significant results.¹⁶ (His own examples seem to suggest that the scribes were rather indifferent to rhythmic notation; and hence that the same music was differently performed by different singers, or that ligature-grouping was not intended to be a primary clue to the rhythm.) But in the end, he is reduced to a system that requires the transcriber first to differentiate between “structural” and “subsidiary” tones in the melismas, and then to apply the consonance-rule (with some important exceptions) to the structural tones only. It is perhaps a measure of Reckow’s confidence in his system that he gives no examples of his own in modern rhythmic notation. In practice, Waite’s transcriptions will doubtless continue to be used, since Reckow’s alternative remains rather vague.

Nevertheless, this is an important and illuminating book. Whatever the ultimate verdict on its conclusions may be, Reckow has produced not only an excellent edition of a major treatise, but also a commentary containing many insights into the problems of thirteenth-century theory and twelfth-century practice. Every student of these and related topics will be grateful for his thorough, painstaking, and imaginative labors.

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D. W. ROBERTSON, Jr, *Chaucer’s London*. (New Dimensions in History: Historical Cities.) New York, London, Sydney and Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1968. Pp. xii, 241; 20 illustrations. \$7.95 (cloth); \$3.95 (paper).

THE five chapters of this small volume, one of the Historical Cities series, are closely packed with factual detail concerning London of the second half of the fourteenth century, the London of Chaucer. Having asserted in his preface that people in the late Middle Ages, as well as the world they lived in, were quite different from what we know today and that in general human nature has changed a great deal since Chaucer’s time, Professor Robertson lays down in his introductory chapter certain basic concepts which define some of these differences: (1) the organization of mediaeval society was by “degrees,” not by classes; (2) individuals in that society might be possessed of moral character but they lacked personality, — a distinction described as having elusive implications; (3) mediaeval people “tended to locate reality outside themselves . . . in an hierarchical realm of abstractions”; (4) they accepted Providential Order as explicated by Boethius; (5) their attitude towards life held no room for humanitarianism, “the great religion of the modern world”; and (6) they did not think of their world as divided into religious and secular realms.

From the above list of prefatory concepts we might infer that this volume is going to deal mainly with the ideals and beliefs of the age. We might even suspect that we are to be enlightened by examples of patristic exegesis and by exposition of *caritas*, familiar to readers of earlier Robertsonian works. But this is not the

¹⁶ A recent dissertation, not available to me at the time of writing, might be of relevance to this — and indeed to the problem as a whole: Raymond R. Erickson, “Rhythmic Problems and Melodic Structure in *Organum purum*: A computer-assisted Study” (Yale University Dissertation 1970).

case. For the most part the book is as factual and objective as a tourist's guide or a historical syllabus, although at intervals one or another of the basic concepts may be alluded to, of course as a fact, and these allusions may be somewhat digressive.

In "A Visit to the City" we are taken on a kind of Cook's tour of chief architectural and topographical features, going from west to east within the walls, then to important places without the walls, such as Westminster, London Bridge, and Fleet Prison. We see London as a city of parish churches, 110 in all, dominated by the lofty Gothic spire of old St Paul's. There is little room here for a discussion of basic concepts. Generally history has to be substituted for description, aided by a few well chosen illustrations and by a map, unfortunately so small and crowded as to be very difficult to use. Even though descriptive detail is lacking, this chapter leaves the armchair traveler with a fresh sense of familiarity for the city Chaucer knew, comparatively little of which survives today.

The chapter on city customs opens with excerpts from two fourteenth-century London sermons reflecting a strong sense of hierarchy, which must be maintained by individual morality. These two concepts are used as the basis of chapter organization, and in their light we are to view the structure of the city government, its laws, and its social conventions. Hierarchy is well illustrated in the feudal form of city government, with the mayor at the top supported by ninety-six councillors elected usually by the wards, which were in turn governed by aldermen elected at the wardmote. The qualifications expected of a citizen demonstrate moral, as well as economic, concepts. In this exceedingly long and complicated chapter the initial bases of organization are in the end virtually lost sight of as we proceed to brief commentaries on trades, guilds, apprentices and their masters, fraternities, confraternities, mysteries, the Pui, festivals, official processions, merchants, prices, wages, the Black Death and population estimates, crimes and punishments and regulations for the same, religious orders, schools, sports and pastimes, gardening, attitudes toward love, sex, contraception, and prostitution, and finally the civic spirit of Londoners as shown in their wills. Yet with all this, customs pertaining to many aspects of everyday life, such as birth, courtship and marriage, the family, death and burial, are scarcely touched upon.

"A Brief Chronicle," which comes next, presents a fast-moving narrative of the chief historical events occurring in London during Chaucer's time. As the Preface states, this chapter does not pretend to be a short history of fourteenth-century England. It is so highly condensed, nevertheless, that there is little room for underlining basic concepts or even for giving human interest detail. Large space is allotted to the Peasant's Revolt, which does illustrate a basic concept inasmuch as Robertson maintains it was in no sense a "class struggle," society at that time having no classes in the modern sense. Also, much space is given here to the conflict between Richard II and the lords appellants.

The concluding chapter, on London as an intellectual center, is described in the Preface as "breaking new ground." It turns out to be largely evidence of the intellectual life of the times rather than an exposition of intellectual ideas. More,

to be sure, could hardly be expected in so brief a treatment, and Robertson does not claim to do more than hope at least to "convince historians that there may be such a thing as the intellectual history of the city." Intellectual Londoners of Chaucer's time are named and the nature of their contributions briefly indicated in the fields of theology, philosophy, law, medicine, music, the theater, bibliophilism, and literature, the last represented primarily, of course, by Chaucer, with some attention to Gower.

Throughout the volume the author seldom misses an opportunity to connect his account with Chaucer's life or his writings, the index showing over one hundred such references. For example, in the tour of the city, special attention is paid to the Thames Street tenement of John Chaucer, father of the poet, and we are reminded that Chaucer, when Clerk of the Works, had an office in the Palace grounds and later attended Parliament, as a member from Kent, in magnificent Westminster Hall. In the discussion of rape, among various crimes and their penalties, Chaucer's experience with Cecily Champain is reviewed. The chronicle of London has numerous Chaucerian references, usually of a factual kind, but in the chapter on intellectual life occur several Chaucerian literary references that illustrate well Robertson's allegorical methods of exegesis, and often these may be regarded as controversial. For example, the much debated *sententia* of the *Knight's Tale*, we are told, is that Venus and Mars, or concupiscence and wrath, are to be cured by marriage, or by the establishment of proper hierarchy. In the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole Chaucer is said to be prescribing Penance as a remedy for the weaknesses of a newly acquisitive society, and the pilgrimage in search of "the hooly blisful martir" is to be thought of as a reminder to Londoners "of their highest ideals and an invitation to renewed dedication." *Troilus and Criseyde* is interpreted as a warning to the chivalry of England, and the *House of Fame* is said to present a contrast between the fickleness of earthly fame and true fame of a kind "pleasing to God," this despite the fact that the missing conclusion of the poem can be supplied by speculation only. These kinds of interpretations, granted that in some ways they may be attractive, provide grounds for repetition of earlier accusations of the author's forcing interpretations of texts into preconceived external patterns.

Yet the role of textual exegesis in this book is minor. We have here a very learned compilation of factual detail, based, it is true, almost wholly on printed sources only, many of these being well known, e.g., Riley's *Memorials*, *Liber Albus*, calendars of various rolls, wills, and letter-books, the Rolls of Parliament, Chaucer Life-Records, Stow's *Survey*, and the Victoria County Histories. In addition the author has examined an extensive list of recent and specialized publications and has interspersed his text with a selection of delightful miniatures mainly from British Museum manuscripts. Always one is reminded that this is a survey, highly condensed, and that for full treatment of any topic discussed one needs to consult the numerous references in footnotes and in the appended bibliography, where helpful commentary is supplied. If studied carefully, with recommended parallel readings, this book cannot fail to give the Chaucer student a background that will aid him greatly in understanding Chaucer's world and the

people in it as well as Chaucer's portrayal of them. But the more differences that are pointed out between human nature of Chaucer's day and of ours, the more it seems to me to be much the same. Despite Robertson's strong exhortation to the contrary, I am still inclined to think of mediaeval people as being more or less "human like ourselves."

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FRANZ ROSENTHAL, *Knowledge Triumphant: the Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*. Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1970. Pp. ix, 356. Glds 64.

ADMIRERS of Professor Rosenthal's books, which is to say practically the whole world of Orientalism, will welcome his new *Knowledge Triumphant*, which gives a survey and sampling of Islamic religious thought under a particular aspect, on the lines of his well-known *History of Muslim Historiography*. The resemblance extends to the format of the two books, both having appeared under the aegis of the house of Brill. The scope of the new book is theoretically wider, for what we have here is an investigation not of a single branch of knowledge but of knowledge itself ('ilm), i.e., a far-reaching examination of the sense in which knowledge has been understood by Arabic authors before and after Islam.

The first two chapters deal with the early period, including knowledge in the Qur'ān, the third and fourth with the several 'ulūm (plural of 'ilm) and definitions of knowledge respectively. The subsequent chapters present extensive discussions of Islamic theology and religious science, sufism, philosophy and education in Islam, each sustained by a wealth of learned allusion to works new and old, printed and in manuscript, in the manner which we have come to associate especially with Professor Rosenthal and which in another generation was characteristic of his great predecessor, Ignaz Goldziher. 'Ilm is doubtless rightly rendered throughout by "knowledge" rather than by "learning" (cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, Anchor Books, 1968, p. 118).

The kernel of the discussion is a penetrating analysis in Chapter 2 of knowledge in the Qur'ān. Professor Rosenthal notes the frequency of derivatives of the root '-l-m in the Qur'ān (p. 20). This, as he says, is not a matter of chance, and corresponds to the great significance of "knowledge" for Muḥammad. The knowledge spoken of in the Qur'ān is both divine and human: God knows man and all about him, knows all things; man knows much less than this, yet he knows, or ought to know, about God (pp. 28-9, cf. 130). For the source of this concept Professor Rosenthal is inclined to look to Christian gnosticism, and points to the possibility that the gnostic phrase *he gnosis tes aletheias*, i.e. "the knowledge of the truth," may have 'found its way into the Qur'ān' (p. 25) in the form 'ilm *al-yaqīn* (Sūr. 102, 5). Knowledge includes religious insight and is also to be equated with the divine revelation. All human knowledge of any value is religious knowledge (pp. 29-30).

We may express the matter thus. Muḥammad has discovered in a miraculous manner the existence of the true God, and thus possesses knowledge ('ilm). It is knowledge of the real (though not apparent) facts of the world (universe), and