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JOHN C. PLOTT

with

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WALLACE GRAY

Volume V

(Part Two)

The Period of Scholasticism

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FOREWORD

It is always interesting to find out who one's neighbors are, especially in a place of old-time residents. Those who have visited or lived in the areas of philosophy and religion have usually been to a few homes besides their own, but have seldom tried to get to know the entire neighborhood. Often it is ignorance of our neighbors that keeps us from meeting each other, and it is not until someone does us the favor of introductions that the barriers come down.

John Plott's ambitious *Global History* is an excellent introduction to our neighbors. Actually it is more accurate to say that he creates a neighborhood by bringing together in a single text the major figures of the Western and Asian traditions. This volume covers the 200 years from 1150 to 1350, and, in assigning places according to age, it presents us with the likes of Peter Lombard next to Hemaçandra, Chu Hsi next to Maimonides, Madhva next to Nichiren, and on and on from one juxtaposition to another. With Plott and his assistants as our guides, we go from house to remarkable house, and marvel at the existence of such a neighborhood.

The excitement of meeting so many great thinkers in such a small space, however, is tempered by the fact that each visit must necessarily be short. In some cases we leave only with impressions and generalizations, but these introductions are best understood as invitations to further inquiry. For many of us, specialists and beginners alike, a visit to Plott's gathering of thinkers will provoke an interest in studying at homes we would otherwise not visit.

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INTRODUCTION

It was initially hoped that the Period of Scholasticism (800-1350) could have been treated in one volume as the other periods have been. That being not possible due to length and circumstances, the period has been presented in two volumes. Admittedly we have not been able to find subdivisions for this period which are to our satisfaction. Therefore we have used those subdivisions which seem to fit the history of philosophy, although by no means do we propose that periodizing only according to philosophical developments is desirable. Thus, for the Period of Scholasticism (800-1350) we suggest the following divisions: the Earlier Period of Scholasticism or "Monism in Many Moods" (800-900); the Middle Period of Scholasticism or "Exfoliation and Elaboration" (900-1150); and the Later Period of Scholasticism or the "Great Summas" (1150-1350). What we intend by "Monism in Many Moods" and "Exfoliation and Elaboration" should not necessarily be taken in any strict technical sense, but rather as indicating the dominating *trend* in contrast with the architectonic structuring of the "Great Summas" of the Later Scholastic Period. The reader is referred to Volume II of this study for an overview of our periodization scheme, "The Problem of Periodization."

The basic problem for the ninth century is that implicitly set by St. John of Damascus, namely the Formlessness or Indescribability of God and His relation with nature and man. In Erigena, this relation is basically contingent on God's drawing all things back to Himself; in Saadia, it rests primarily on the Semitic doctrine of God's transcendent position as Creator; in al-Ash'ari, primarily on the Unicity of the Godhead; in Śaṅkara, on the unavoidable inference that since everything experienceable must be within *māyā*, there must be That upon which all rests as *adh-yāsa*, superimposition; in Kūkai, on the experience of mystical enlightenment or that level of consciousness wherein all things and all possible ideas are seen as fragmentations of a single Continuum of ever-changing Process. A completely synoptic view of these together is our end.