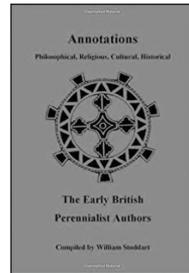


Annotations: Philosophical, Religious, Cultural, Historical / The Early British Perennialist Authors

Compiled by William Stoddart, CreateSpace, 2019, 112 pp.

Reviewed by Samuel Bendeck Sotillos



...the encounter of the world religions was inevitable and, given the special needs of our time...positive...for 'the greater glory of God'; in other words, not for the loss of souls, but for their salvation.¹

- William Stoddart

The title of this work will intrigue readers and cause them to wonder how all these themes can be unified. William Stoddart (b. 1925) brings us not only the wisdom of having lived the integrative framework of the perennial philosophy and one of its divinely revealed paths, but also the broad panorama of human encounters as a wayfarer on the spiritual path.

From the outset of the book Stoddart diagnoses the spiritual crisis of the present day and its historical antecedents with a striking *tour de force*:

¹ William Stoddart, 'Part II—Bernard Kelly,' in *Annotations: Philosophical, Religious, Cultural, Historical / The Early British Perennialist Authors* (CreateSpace, 2019), p. 101.

The first blow to traditional religion came with the 15th - century Renaissance. Three centuries later, an even more brutal blow was dealt by the so called 'Enlightenment'. Worse still came in the 1960s with ... Vatican II. Finally, the most lethal blow of all came with the 'political correctness' of the 21st century. The 'end times' are indeed cruel—but, come what may, religion cannot be extirpated from the heart of man. (p. 9)

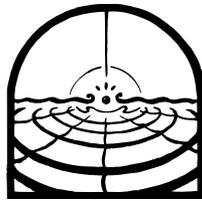
Stoddart informs readers of his orientation for his preparing this work: 'The underlying philosophy of my Annotations is, of course, that of the *Religio Perennis*.' (p. 9)

Part I of the book contains notable chapters such as 'The Priority of Principles,' and 'The Tyranny of Political Correctness,' and Part II provides an overview of 'The Early British Perennialist Authors.' Although readers may be familiar with the seminal exponents of the perennial philosophy, such as René Guénon (1886–1951), Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947), Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998) and Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984), they may be less familiar with others documented in this section such as: Martin Lings (1909–2005), Peter Townsend (1910–1995), Donald Macleod Matheson (1896–1979), Lord Northbourne (1896–1982), Marco Pallis (1895–1989), Richard Nicholson (1905–1995), Gerald E.H. Palmer (1904–c. 1984), Bernard Kelly (1907–1958) and Angus Macnab (1906–1977).

Stoddard articulates the consequences of the loss of the sense of the sacred of the human collectivity as a whole, which is no longer living in accordance with perennial spiritual principles: 'When law and order break down, all hell is let loose. On the world scene, we have seen example after example of this dreadful consequence. What we must clearly understand is that it is exactly the same when, in our lives—private or public—principles are forgotten.' (p. 11) The only antidote to this decline is, according to Stoddart, 'a whole-hearted reversal of false attitudes and sentiments; in other words, a scrupulous return to principles.' (p. 11) He presents these essential principles as 'objectivity, charity, and humility: the implacable objectivity of the sages, and the charity and humility of the saints. These principles must be our guidelines; the sages and sins must be our ideals and our models.' (p. 11)

The author makes a significant point contrasting the traditional world with the contemporary world that is often overlooked: 'The common man of yesteryear may have lived in material poverty, but he was sur-

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