

## BLACKFRIARS

own. A metaphysical evaluation of evidence is impossible, just as any genuinely intellectualist approach to a given subject is impossible, unless some attempt is made to render that network explicit. This attempt remains unsuccessful until every link of the rational chain has been explicitly treated so that we can rapidly reconstruct the entire logical sequence, ending with our *secus ens esset non ens*. Affective jumping of gaps is pointless in pedestrian speculation, and is against the rules of the game.

Catholic apologetics claims to be able to make that difficult analysis of Christian evidences by showing how these rest upon an articulated organism of metaphysical first principles. The definitive utterances of the Church, concerning the certitude with which we can know God's existence from creatures and the fact of His revelation from miracles, are no oracular proclamations sprung as bombshells on a sceptical world, but conclusions presupposing the whole complex structure of that traditional approach, and intended as a sympathetic aid to reason in an age of doubt.

It is not therefore the fault of the Roman Church if inquisitive minds are turned back from further enquiry, as is often the case, in face of these unsympathetic-seeming decrees. An impression of reactionary harshness can only arise from a total ignorance of the vast architectural vault of Christian rationalism upon which they rest as proved conclusions. But, although it cannot be the fault of the Roman Church, it may indeed be the fault of some of her apologists. For such decrees are only too frequently quoted glibly and without sensibility to the difficulties of non-Catholics in their regard or a shred of clear indication of the rational principles on which they stand. One can only recommend Mr. Baker to go to our sources.

NORBERT DREWITT, O.P.

CHRISTENDOM AND ISLAM: Their Contacts and Cultures down the Centuries. By W. Wilson Cash, D.S.O., D.D. (S.C.M. Press; 5/-.)

Dr. Cash tells us in his preface how his experience of missionary life in Moslem countries convinced him of the uselessness of controversy as a method of approach to Mahometans. He saw the need of some common ground and decided that this was to be found in mystical doctrine. His interest in this problem led to his being invited to give the Haskell Lectures in 1936 at Oberlin, Ohio. The book under review is composed of these lectures.

He has given us a stimulating and, for general students, in many ways an enlightening survey of some of the points of contact between Islam and Christianity. He has consulted a number

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of authors and seems in fact to depend a great deal on their not very imposing authority. A visit to the Jesuit Library at Beyrouth, for instance, would have shewn him that there was no lack of pre-Moslem Arabic literature by Christian authors, so that, in this respect at least, Christianity could certainly claim to be indigenous in Arabia.

When he writes, basing himself upon the opinion of Miguel Asin Palacios, that "the architecture of the Inferno has its source in the religious traditions of Islam" he is trusting too implicitly to the skilful but not entirely convincing argumentation of the Spanish orientalist. Dr. Cash relies also on cheap Protestant information on "mystical" subjects, as is evident on p. 99, where, as an example of Christian mysticism, he drags in the unfortunate Madame de Guyon.

Even when he depends on his own reasoning, Dr. Cash is sometimes not much happier. Thus, in dealing with the problem of Mahomet's sincerity as a prophet, he maintains that the patriotic and the prophetic motives were combined and amalgamated in Mahomet's mind, which is only to elude the problem and introduce a new obscurity into it.

Dr. Cash's dislike of Catholicism is evidently at the bottom of the discrepancy we notice between his references to monasticism on p. 65 and on p. 80. On page 65: "The monastic system was a serious stumbling-block to Moslems who gloried in the fullest expression of human instincts[sic]." Compare, on p. 80: "Perhaps we do not attach enough importance to the influence of monks and monasteries on the thought-life of the Prophet. There seems to be no doubt that he had close and intimate touch with these Christian centres of religious life and that they have left their mark upon Islam for all time." In this second passage, Dr. Cash is evidently relying, to his benefit, upon Dr. Margaret Smith.

There are too many instances of careless proof-reading: p. 89, "Bakhtashiyeh" should be "Bektashiyyeh"; p. 90, "madhi" should be "mahdi"; p. 133, "The Bosphorus pointed a way to the North Sea"! There is, nevertheless, much to praise in the book. Where the author fails, is in any serious attempt to discern the originality of Moslem mysticism or to determine with accuracy what it has borrowed from Christian mystics. For a searching study of this kind, however, Dr. Cash is prepared neither by his special studies nor by his diffident attitude—often revealed in these pages—towards the Catholic Church, where Moslem seekers would be impressed to find, not only an imposing accumulation of mystical experience and doctrine, but also an impressive concordance between the highest mystical experiences and the loftiest and most mysterious dogmas of the Catholic Faith.

CYPRIAN RICE, O.P.