

THE CALL OF THE MINARET. By Kenneth Cragg. (Oxford University Press, New York; 38s.)

This book is strongly to be recommended to Christian readers who wish to form a sympathetic and understanding notion of the strength and appeal of the Islamic religion. It is written primarily for American and Protestant (Episcopalian) readers, and English Catholics may find the idiom, both in thought and language, a little alien: 'all history is experienced fact and cannot escape the interpretative element'. Continental readers might notice that the author's experience seems exclusively Anglo-Saxon. He has a profound knowledge of contemporary Islam, but shows only a limited interest in Christianity outside the Anglican communion, and practically none at all in the Catholic Church. The book does not set out to be an original contribution to Islamic scholarship. Yet about one third of it constitutes a most admirable presentation of the Muslim religion from a consciously Christian and spiritual point of view, which more specialized scholars have not attempted. This section, called 'Minaret and Muslim', will explain, to any Christian who cares, how it is that so many good and religious men would never dream of living and dying outside Islam.

The longest section of the book is called 'Minaret and Christian'. Its special virtue is its understanding of the Islamic attitude to the world at the present day, and the author's awareness that things look quite different when they are viewed from different points. This sounds trite, but to reflect upon the interaction of different Christian denominations is to recognize its importance. Very few people are prepared to treat the alien attitudes of others seriously, if these conflict with their own attitudes in matters they believe important. An example, cited by the author, is that some Muslims think the medical and educational work of missions to be, not only so much 'propaganda', but also 'a calculated "exploitation" of the poor through their poverty, or the sick through their disease'. If we react with impatience and irritation to such opinions, as we often do, we finally inhibit any possibility of confidence between Muslims and ourselves.

Dr Cragg never forgets what Islam really does hold. His apologetic is concerned with reality and he is incapable of making those elementary mistakes which can seal up even the possibility of communication between believers of the two religions. How far he succeeds in his 'Call to Interpretation' is another matter. It is not likely that he would claim that he had finally interpreted the Christian faith to Muslims. Dr Cragg is in the ancient Christian polemic tradition, and stresses an important truth, when he wishes to explain to Muslims that it is precisely the doctrine of the Trinity that safeguards the Unity of God, 'expresses and illuminates the Unity'. Yet sometimes Catholics may

think that doubtful statements have crept in, in the course of too much interpretation. It is not clear to this reviewer that Dr Cragg believes in the divinity of Christ in the same sense that the Catholic Church does.

Islam in the past has been a danger to Christian souls, and Christian writers, from St John Damascene to Muir and Lammens, have adopted an aggressive attitude to it. This presumably is why Dr Cragg dismisses so easily both the Oriental Christian and the traditional European contributions to his subject. Yet useful and serious study of Islam has been continuous from the beginning, and, if we ignore its often pejorative tone, we can greatly benefit from the detailed definitions of its comparative theology. Dr Cragg in fact does so, apparently without always realizing that he does.

It is true that Christian hostility has engendered a similar hostility among Muslims, which Western technical and political superiority has exacerbated. We may all ponder this sentence: 'we have a responsibility toward the concepts others form of our institutions in so far as we can affect and shape those concepts'. All Christians, and not least Catholics, must realize that inherited prejudice closes the minds of millions to the Gospel; what such people are taught about the Christian Church from infancy ineradicably prevents them from ever hearing the Gospel, and most prevents them when it is loudest shouted. Only the dissolution of the prejudice against a falsely imagined Christianity can free such minds. There is hope in substituting for proselytism the exchange of exact information, from which the Church cannot lose: we acquire a sympathetic knowledge of error, but they a sympathetic knowledge of truth.

Dr Cragg is anxious to see visible results from missionary endeavour. He recommends, for example, the formation of 'Lovers of Jesus', a society of converts who would not be baptized. Certainly converted Muslims must preserve their characteristic virtues—for example, 'hospitality, cleanliness, moderation, simplicity, discipline, dignity, family affection, sensitivity to the poor'—in forms familiar to them; obviously we must hope for understanding of Christ within Islam itself; but is it not quite another thing to encourage the deferment of individual baptism in the hope of ultimate corporate baptism? It has been said (by a French Catholic) that Islam will not turn to Christ until it realizes its poverty without him; 'in the meantime it is for us to show it that this Christ lives in us by love and justice'. There must be a 'witness of love' that is 'humble and discreet'. Monastic life in Morocco has been renewed since French rule ended; in Africa and Asia the *Petits Frères* witness to Christ without thought of results; and there

are Protestant missionaries of whom the same may be said. We must be plainly seen to put our trust in Providence. The final illumination of Islam waits until Christians show forth Christ more clearly.

NORMAN DANIEL

CHRISTLICHER STAND. By Adrienne von Speyer. Edited by Hans Urs von Balthasar. (Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln.)

Adrienne von Speyer, mainly known for her reflections and interpretations on the Gospel of St Matthew, St Paul and the formidable four-volume work on St John, has written a book for young people, born and brought up in the Catholic tradition, who are seeking guidance in their major decisions for life. The problems she is dealing with are manifold: how to find out and follow a vocation to the priesthood, decision for marriage or a single life, etc.; she deals with possible difficulties and complications, the way to overcome them, and is essentially concerned to give a lead for a life in the spiritual fullness of the Catholic faith.

E.W.

QUELLGRUND DIESER ZEIT. By Friedrich Heer. (Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln.)

This collection of essays and lectures is a vigorously expounded attempt at a Christian interpretation of history in terms of the author's highly personal brand of philosophical idealism. The book finishes with a kind of diagnostical survey of the European situation in the years 1945-1955 with special regard to man's position at the dawn of the atomic age. Although the author's meaning is occasionally obscured by the richness of his language the book makes nevertheless rewarding and stimulating reading.

E.W.

PLATO AND THE CHRISTIANS. By Adam Fox. (S.C.M. Press; 21s.)

Christian thinkers have always felt the fascination of Plato. Whatever the influence of Greek thought on Scripture itself, and in recent times the tendency has been to soften the sharp contrast sometimes made between Jew and Greek, the eclectic Platonism of the Graeco-Roman philosophical schools undoubtedly formed the background of many patristic writers and thus passed into the tradition. Yet to read this selection from Plato's religious thought, well selected and freshly translated by Canon Fox, is only to be reminded once again of the gulf that separates Jerusalem and Athens. It is not merely the contrast between scriptural certainty and the urbane hesitations of Plato; it is rather that in pagan thought nothing can correspond to the fact of grace. This is clearly brought out by the incongruity of some of the scriptural texts placed above each extract from Plato. What bearing,