

felt, but on the whole his personality does not obtrude. The third part is a collection of texts almost entirely concerned with the spiritual life, and largely with mysticism. If you grant that an attempt to anthologize Islamic religion in less than a hundred pages is impossible, it does very well.

The middle part, the 'Islamic Tradition' is much less satisfactory, although essential information for the general reader is duly conveyed. It is fair to say that the later chapters are a survey, not of contemporary Islam, but of what it looks like from the viewpoint of a Frenchman living in Algiers. What he says about Algerian religious and social-moral problems is interesting and valuable, but they occupy his attention disproportionately. This fault is even reflected in the illustration of three modern religious pictures of which the style is interesting but which are without aesthetic value. Why not have varied the interest with, for example, modern Iranian holy pictures, no more beautiful, but different in style?

The real weakness of this part is the failure to estimate the importance of religion in the life of modern Muslims. There is no mention of the ways in which Islam has modified their approach to the secular problems that really interest them. From Egypt to Iraq Arabs are pre-occupied by ideas of Arab unity, elimination of corruption, self-help; these secular ideas are much influenced by religious ideas characteristic of Islam, the unity of the religious community, simplicity of life, pride of religion. To the present reviewer who has spent the past year in Iraq it seems that there is no reflection of the ideas really agitating millions of Muslims, although most Muslim countries are referred to from time to time. Child marriage, polygamy and divorce, three subjects that pre-occupy the author, are fast disappearing in much of the Muslim world under the pressure of secular development. There is an air of parochial unreality in consequence about these modern sections—indeed there are signs that the book was written some years ago and recently brought up to date. For example, the reference to the harem of the King of Saudi Arabia seems likely to refer to the late king, Abdul Aziz, rather than to the present monarch.

It remains true that there can be few books about Islam at once so complete and so accessible. The select bibliography is good.

NORMAN DANIEL

ABBOT EXTRAORDINARY. A Memoir of Aelred Carlyle. By Peter Anson. (The Faith Press; 25s.)

'The plane appeared out of the clouds and landed on the tarmac runway. The first passenger to descend the gangway was a clergyman of youthful aspect in a smartly tailored suit. It was almost impossible to realize that he had reached the age of seventy-four as he ran towards

me.' Mr Anson's genial and racy narrative is exactly suited to the telling of the life of a man who had made so many surprisingly effective descents from the clouds of his imagination, appearing with his invariable sense of style, and his unbounded confidence that the next adventure would be more exhilarating than the last. It was Aelred Carlyle's unusual talent for involving other people in these astounding flights that enabled him, for periods of varying length, to make so many of his dreams come true. The monastic buildings on Caldey are an abiding witness to it. As an old man he had not changed. 'He still day-dreamed. He appeared to possess almost unlimited funds upon which he could draw, and talked as if he were in the happy position of being able to assist anybody.' It would be easy to represent as an almost unmitigated scoundrel the man whose imagination had in the past found so many ways of being magnificent with other people's money, were it not for this redeeming quality of spontaneous personal generosity towards others which enabled the ex-abbot eventually to find himself in work in the docks in Vancouver and the Oakalla Prison, of which one or two moving stories are told towards the end of Mr Anson's book. This is a biography which has more than a family interest for those who have connections with Caldey or with the Benedictine community of which Fr Carlyle was the founder, for it deals with one of the personalities of a unique phase in the history of the Church in England. The book's reticences are perhaps dictated by a more than ordinary discretion (Mr Anson clearly does not tell us all he knows) for, apart from the hidden workings of grace, there was probably no way of explaining how a career which must often have come close to personal disaster should seem in the end to have turned out so well. As Aelred himself said: How curiously mixed are all our lives, and what adventures we have, and hair-breadth escapes, known only to ourselves, but never to be truly understood until all the secrets are revealed.

ÆLRED SQUIRE, O.P.

T. S. ELIOT: A SYMPOSIUM FOR HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY. Edited by Neville Braybrooke. (Hart-Davis; 21s.)

This symposium, which is well-intentioned and cordial, perhaps raises the question again: how suitable is *Festschrift* (that the word must still go into italics expresses the idea's reluctance to become domiciled amongst us) to English ways and manners? And what does it accomplish—and particularly when the object of homage is not a *savant* but a poet? But if, forgetting the German in the name of another language, we conclude that we can drink together to the health of Mr Eliot in this fashion (as well as, of course, quite literally), even welcoming it as one of 'the gifts reserved for age', we might still feel that the taste of two of the members of this party is doubtfully good and that one