

should clearly be discussed. For similar reasons, one can question why the authors strive for maximum fidelity to the original scriptural traditions of Buddhism, since much that is of relevance in the contemporary context derives from later innovations and developments. It would, for example, have been illuminating to refer to the thought of contemporary Buddhists, such as Buddhadasa Thera, with whom Fernando has studied.

Dr Peter Fenner, Deakin University, Victoria Australia.

CRAGG, Kenneth, *The Call of the Minaret*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books/Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1985, 2nd edn, x + 358 pp US\$13.95.

To have a completely new edition, after 30 years of Kenneth Cragg's classic Christian interpretation of Islam, is indeed a great gift, not least in Melanesia, where, under the shadow of Muslim neighbours, the presence of Islam is slowly but surely beginning to be felt in Papua New Guinea, as it has long been felt in Fiji. Both missionaries and Melanesians may be expected to react defensively, even with hostility, to this new presence: the missionaries, because they have had the Pacific field to themselves in the conviction that Christianity is the superior religion; the Melanesians, because of their age-old and deep-seated suspicion of outsiders. A careful reading of Cragg's book, at this early stage, might be just the right antidote to prevent another evangelistic disaster of the kind that has unhappily been so frequent elsewhere.

“Come yet to prayer, come to your true well-being. God is most great, Muhammad is his Apostle. There is none save God” – *la ilaha illa Allah*: the muezzin's call from the minaret of mosques large and small is addressed not only to that one-sixth of the world's population – 835 million people – who embrace the faith of Muhammad, but to all men and women, including Christians. Every word in it, taken separately, is familiar to us, yet its cadences are alien. How are we to react? Can we afford to ignore the call?

Cragg unfolds the meaning of the muezzin's call, phrase by phrase, with admirable sympathy, but he also explains its implications for the echoing call of the Christian evangelist, who offers “the restoration to Muslims of the Christ whom they have missed” (p. 220). The muezzin's

call, he interprets as a summons to acknowledge the sovereign unity (*tauhid*) of God, and his revelation, together with the necessity and excellence of prayer (*salat*, embracing fasting, devotion, and the pilgrimage to Mecca) and good works (*falah*, implying the well-ordered social and political life, which flows from Islamic law). The call-within-the-call, addressed to Christians, is an invitation to meet, understand, and participate in Islam; to help Muslims retrieve the Christ, who is obscured for them by mountains of prejudice and ignorance, learning in the process to interpret the Christian scriptures in their true relationship to the Qur'an; and finally – impossible as it may seem – to share hope and faith without mutual enmity and cultural alienation.

Out of the richness of the book one can only highlight certain insights, which may have a particular relevance to our situation in Melanesia. It is law, not metaphysics (p. 42), or theology (p. 51), which gives Islam its distinctive cohesiveness, even to the extent of “a general tendency toward authoritarianism, and away from intellectualism” (pp. 191-192). This applies equally to worship and to right social order: “The law that defines the one also establishes the other. . . . This is the ultimate meaning of law in Islam, and of Islam as law” (p. 129). There is, thus, no such thing as a “higher” revelation, which may be re-interpreted contextually without regard for the literal meaning of the Qur'an, and the particularities of everyday life: “The basis of human conduct and organisation is revelation” (p. 130). Counterbalancing this juridical fundamentalism is the principle of enterprise and initiative (*ijtihad*) in adapting the law to new situations, which issues in consensus (*ijma'*), the conviction “that truth is safe with the community” (p. 132), possibly “a principle of development in Islam, whereby a new attitude, or a new requirement, can gather the force of law, and, hence, the sanction of “revelatory” status, through its acceptance, in general, by those who believe” (p. 133). But what a far cry from the Christian dialectic of Law and Gospel, the freedom with which Christ has set us free!

Muhammad's decision to defeat his opponents on the battlefield, and impose his new faith by force is the very contrary of Christ's decision to submit to the cross (cf. pp. 85, 271). Indeed, the Qur'an explicitly denies the reality of the crucifixion (Surah 4.158, cf. pp. 265ff.). The result is that Islam is the supremely politicised religion. “Muhammad founded a state; he did not merely launch a religion. . . . We should, perhaps, say he

launched a religion in founding a state” (p. 146). Coupled with Muslims’ total misunderstanding of the relationship between Father and Son in the Trinity, which, for them, is tantamount to polytheism, and a profanation of the divine unity and purity (cf. pp. 262, 275ff., 289), and the complete inaccessibility of Islam to everything that is implied by Christology, the obstacles thus presented to evangelisation may be imagined.

Yet Islam stands firmly within the Judaeo-Christian tradition: “Islam belongs to the Western side of any East-West division of human history” (p. 174). Christianity and Islam have a “duty to each other” (p. 167). It is one of the triumphs of Cragg’s book that his judicious, yet uncompromising, approach to mission gives us an inkling of how the barriers to understanding and conversion could, in fact, be torn down. Cragg’s long experience in Muslim countries makes him utterly realistic in this respect: given the presuppositions of Islamic society, and the cultural sanctions against those who voluntarily leave it, there will be no mass conversions; “success” will not be measured by “church growth” statistics (cf. pp. 304-305), for “. . . the progress or the contagion of the kingdom of heaven is ‘soul by soul’. We cannot institutionalise the world into God’s kingdom” (p. 246). The supreme test of the mission to Muslims is to engender mutual respect between two separate, but related, religious identities, each of which strongly resists absorption into the pop culture of our emerging global civilisation (cf. p. 194).

In envisaging a Christian *islam* or submission to God in Christ, which Muslims could understand and share (cf. p. 264), and in doing so with such exquisite sensibility – and, be it added, in an English style of a purity and scope that are seldom seen nowadays – Cragg has bequeathed a precious heritage to all missionaries. It is the actual meeting of minds and hearts, often dearly won, not the number of conversions, that counts. His parting advice is pertinent to missionaries everywhere: “Those who contemplate mission to Islam should remember to think before they start to count” (p. 313).

John D’Arcy May, The Melanesian Institute, Goroka.