

L'ISLAM ET NOUS. Par Jean Mohammed Abd-el-Jalil, O.F.M. Collection L'Eglise et le Monde, No. 1. (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars).

This booklet is the first of a series on 'L'Eglise et le Monde', and is a short, clear exposition of the main tenets and practices of Islam. It is chiefly valuable in that it throws light not only on the beliefs themselves but on their effect on Muslims' attitude to Christianity and the difficulties of securing converts among them.

The powerful emphasis on the uniqueness and unicity of Allah is the root of the chief difficulties. 'En vertu de cette conception, l'Islam officiel écarte toute possibilité—même par grace—de connaissance et de communion intimes avec Dieu.' Because of this same conception, the Christian Incarnation appears to the Muslim to be blasphemous, unthinkable.

Yet Islam has burst the rigid bounds of its own beliefs. There is a strong mystical trend in Islam known as Sufism, having its home in Persia and widespread in India; but because it has not attained official recognition it is always in danger of degeneration into a cult of the marvellous and fantastic.

Christianity has, of course, a limited recognition in Islam, for Jews and Christians are 'People of the Book' sharing a common origin with Islam. Yet it is a tainted religion in Muslim eyes and its works are vain, for Christians have not the fundamental beliefs. Muslims regard conversion to Christianity as a 'regression'; indeed they consider a cessation of all belief more reasonable than a return to an outworn and superseded religion.

A brief description of modern Islam concludes the book. The author points out that the modern ferment in Islamic countries is not simply nationalistic but has a powerful Islamic tinge. Young Islam, confronted with a decadent and dechristianised Europe, is conscious of a mission, of the need for a new Holy War. Yet modern Pan-Islamism is spiritual and cultural rather than political; it looks to Arabia not only as the cradle and centre of Islam, but as the power house from which a modernised Islam can draw its inspiration.

L. OUWERKERK.

THE TWO TREES. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Collins; 2s. 6d.)

'There is only one way of tackling human problems, great or small, with any hope of ultimate success: and that is to look at them not as though God had nothing to do with them, not apart from him, but with him, trying to see them as he sees them' (p. 26). The truth here expressed contains the secret not only of the failure of most modern attempts to deal with problems of any sort but also the secret of Fr Gerald Vann's success as a preacher and writer.

Most of us tend to try to look the other way when difficulties loom ahead and few of those who face them fairly and squarely seem to realise that God, too, looks at these things and that he has become man so that in Christ he may see them from man's point of

view and man may see them from his. In these talks, three broadcast by the B.B.C. and the fourth delivered at the Oxford University Chaplaincy, Fr Vann examines the problem of suffering as it is seen through the mind of Christ in the light of the Cross.

Gently but inexorably he makes us face the truth that all sin springs from pride and selfishness and that the explanation of the suffering which crushes the world today is to be sought in the self-centredness which in some form or other lies at the heart of the life of each one of us. 'If we put ourselves in the centre of the picture, then we make friendship impossible: other people are rivals and therefore enemies; and so we become lonely, and we fall into envy and greed and strife and all the other things that produce suffering' (p. 8). But sin recognised and suffering accepted can be turned into sorrow and sorrow into sacrifice which is the expression of that love which is so well described in the third talk. And then we are sharing in Christ's dying and therefore sharing in his healing and redeeming work since it is through his sorrow and pain that he heals and redeems. We are choosing all that is symbolised by that tree of the Cross on which Christ reversed the original act of pride and rebellion of those who ate of the seductive fruit of another tree, and which brings back life to the world because it brings back divine love.

As these talks were intended for a mixed audience the sacramental aspect is not stressed but the full richness of the theme can only be seen in terms of the Mass in which Christ's sacrifice is renewed and made present to us, and the Sacrament of penance wherein we enter into the depths of our own sinfulness and bring not only our own sins and bruises but, in a sense, those of the whole world also, to be cleansed and healed in his Precious Blood.

The prayers, liturgical in tone, which conclude each chapter are admirably adapted to express the heart's deepest feelings in the face of the sufferings and sorrows of the world today. May this little book come into the hands of the many who would find it a source of comfort and hope.

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

LA SOLUTION DU PROBLEME DE LA VIE. By F. Lelotte, S.J. (Casterman, Paris & Tournai; 110 frs.)

EGLISE ET UNITE. Various authors. (Editions Catholicité, Lille; 215 frs.)

L'EGLISE, PEUT-ELLE S'ADAPTE? Various authors. (Editions Catholicité, Lille; n.p.)

In one way or another all these books are concerned with the problem of adaptation. The first is a neat five-volume summary of Catholic doctrine, making full use of recent work in theology and adapted to the outlook of contemporary youth; the second presents a series of essays on such fundamental questions as the unity and holiness of the Church, firmly maintaining the Catholic claims but