

REVIEWS

MOHAMMEDANISM, by Louis Gardet; Burns and Oates (Faith and Fact Books); 8s. 6d.

The publishers are much to be congratulated on this translation of Gardet's minor classic, *Connaître l' Islam*. For Catholics it is without comparison the best introduction to Islam, and the best short reference book on the subject. Partly a condensation of the author's *Cité Musulmane*, it shares with that work a perspicuous sense of the Islamic community—now and throughout history—and a vivid perception of the presence of truth in alien or unaccustomed surroundings. Its scope is vast—the career of the Prophet, the history of Islam to the present day, its theology of belief, its religious practices and its community life, its morals and its mystics, its historic humanism, and the facts and trends of the present day. It is hard to suppose that a better book can be written in our time that will cover the same ground in the same space anything like so brilliantly. Nor does it contain anything to shock the conservative.

The book is so much needed and so well produced that criticism seems unfair. The translation is fluent, really English, and easy to read; but I do not know why chapter ix of the original (*Islam et chrétienté*) has been omitted, and, although I know very well the difficulties of getting Arabic intelligibly and consistently transliterated by means acceptable to British printers, the absence of any indication of *'ain*, or of long, stressed vowels, makes it impossible for the reader unfamiliar with Arabic to guess the pronunciation. Gardet is not correctly described: he should have been called 'a French theologian' or 'religious'. The most serious fault is in the title. 'Islam' has been perfectly naturalized in English now. 'Mohammedanism' is offensive to Muslims by implication, and it would be comparable to call a book on the Catholic Church 'Popery', if that were not now a joke; 'Romanism' might be closer. (The publishers of Gibb's volume in the Home University Library had the excuse that they were substituting it for an existing volume.) In an explicitly Catholic series the title only gives Muslims and other non-Catholics the impression that Catholics lack good manners.

It is just because this book is so good that I mention errors of judgment in the presentation which could be corrected in a new edition.

NORMAN DANIEL

THE IDEA OF PUNISHMENT, by Lord Longford; Geoffrey Chapman; 10s. 6d.

This is a timely and important little book. The population of British prisons and borstals has more than doubled since 1939, and public opinion is sharply divided over what should be done about it. We need to think clearly about the fundamental principles on which judicial punishment is based, and no one is better qualified to give us a lead than Lord Longford (formerly Lord Pakenham). His book should be read by everyone who is concerned about our penal

policy. (Unfortunately it seems to have been hurried through the press: the 'List of works referred to' is far from complete, the proof-reading has been carelessly done, and several well-known names are mis-spelt.)

Penal reform is continually hampered by the inertia of public opinion and by a consequent shortage of money. But a more fundamental drawback is disagreement among the reformers: Christians and agnostics start from different premises and find it difficult to agree on a common policy. It is particularly to this task of reconciliation that Lord Longford addresses himself. He examines penal action as we find it in practice, with its professed aims of deterrence and reform, but concludes that these aims cannot be accomplished effectively if we ignore the principle of retribution—that is, that the penalty should be proportionate to the gravity of the offence. (This is in fact a purely pragmatic reason for maintaining a moral principle, but it may be the most persuasive argument for some people.) But retribution implies guilt, and this is where there is most difficulty in reconciling the Christian and the agnostic points of view. Will the agnostic admit that man is normally responsible for his actions? Will he admit that crime is normally a moral wrong? The division, in fact, is not between Christian and non-Christian, but between those who admit absolute moral standards and those who do not.

The great difficulty about retribution in practice, as Lord Longford sees it, is that of assessing the moral guilt of the offender, since we must try to judge him as God would. This, I think, is being excessively moral, and makes his own position unnecessarily difficult. Parents and teachers have this sort of responsibility in dealing with children. But criminal law is not concerned with the whole of a man's moral state: people can be as envious as they please, provided they do not steal. Similarly, judicial punishment, so far as it is retributive, should be based primarily on the overt offence. Lady Wootton, in a letter quoted by Lord Longford, declared, 'This balance between the injury that a man has done and the degree to which he should be restrained or otherwise interfered with seems to me to be the essence of justice'. J. D. Mabbott (in *Mind*, 1939) maintained that retribution is the penalty inevitably attached to breaking a law. Both these theories introduce a kind of retribution, but a rather mechanical kind, because both evade the moral issue: Lady Wootton prescinds from the question of the offender's responsibility, Mr Mabbott from the justice of the law. We should want to postulate both of these, and also take account of extenuating or aggravating circumstances; but with these provisos, the law and the offence are, I suggest, the criteria of the degree of guilt with which penal justice is concerned.

AUSTIN GASKELL, O.P.

THE FACES OF JUSTICE, by Sybille Bedford; Collins; 21s.

To travel and to discover a country by way of its law-courts, to catch the temper of a people in the working of its law, this is an original idea, and Mrs