

‘By Their Fruits Shall You Know Them’

by Hassan B. Dehqani-Tafti and Guli E. Francis-Dehqani in

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A joint venture between father and daughter is perhaps somewhat unusual in a book of tributes such as this. In the first instance we were each invited individually by the editors to produce a chapter of our own. Neither of us is an expert on the academic work of Dr Kenneth Cragg though between us we have enjoyed parts of his literary output and heard him speak on many occasions and in various contexts. We are not, therefore, professional scholars but ordained colleagues of Kenneth Cragg, fellow Christians travelling the journey of faith, who have been inspired by his love, commitment, wisdom and gentle expertise. Ultimately of course the lasting value of a scholar is judged not according to the amount of literature he or she has produced but in their effect on other people. Notwithstanding the numerous books written by Kenneth Cragg on Christianity, Islam and their relationship with one another, his greatest achievement lies in the tremendous influence he has had on others, through these publications as well as sermons, personal contacts and friendships across the world.

As co-writers of this chapter our responses to Cragg are different in a number of respects. Amongst other things, the 46 years that separate father and daughter in age represent diverse experiences of the church and the world. Also, Hassan has been a friend to Kenneth for nearly half a century whilst Guli has known him at one stage removed, as a friend of the family and one to whom her father has turned for advice and support. We have both been influenced by Kenneth as a person as well as through

the linguistic magic he weaves in written and spoken word and yet we have been influenced in differing ways and to varying degrees.

Nevertheless a chapter each did not seem appropriate to us because in two essential ways what we have to say overlaps. First, both of us write as people who have links with the Middle East, in particular Iran and the Anglican Church there. Though Hassan goes back further, representing a longer period of time and a deeper level of involvement, nevertheless, it is in connection with the church in Iran and its ongoing life that Kenneth has touched both of us and influenced our views on Muslim/Christian relations. Secondly, and perhaps more profoundly, Guli has grown up with the potency of Kenneth's significant influence always present. If not in person then through the impact he has had on the life of her father. For from a time before Guli was born, and certainly long before she came to realize it, Kenneth had helped shape much of Hassan's theology and his approach to his Muslim country folk and the study of religions generally. These have been explicitly and implicitly passed on from father to daughter. There is nothing mysterious or surprising about this. For fathers generally pass on their ideas and attitudes which, to be sure, daughters (and sons) must then try to redefine and recreate for themselves. The point is that for the purposes of this book, it seemed that in connection with the life of the Anglican Church in Iran and the way in which it has shaped us there is not sufficient diversity to justify separate chapters.

We contemplated the obvious by wondering whether one of us should take on the project whilst the other gracefully declined. In the event, however, we decided to opt for a more adventurous approach by trying to pool ideas and co-write a chapter. This is a new venture for us and has presented different joys and challenges to those of the lonelier and more usual discipline of solo writing. The fact that we have

attempted the chapter, however, is a tribute not only to the ongoing affection in which Kenneth is held but also to the way in which his influence continues across the years. The chapter is thus a symbol of the way in which the influence of Kenneth Cragg's life and work has crossed generational boundaries. And this one small symbol represents the many other ways in which he has successfully crossed boundaries, be they geographical or ideological, physical or emotional, between peoples of different races and religions. What follows in this chapter is based more on personal tributes than on academic exploration. It is not so much a scholarly essay as two members of a family reflecting on the way in which one man has influenced them and the Persian Church community that nurtured their faith. And in following this approach it seems we have the support of the inimitable Kenneth Cragg himself who assures us that, "history as one knows it in one's own person is always more compelling than that of cold analysis and documentary research."¹

Dr Cragg first visited Iran during 1957 when Hassan was priest in charge of St. Luke's Church in Isfahan.² In his capacity as Travelling Study Secretary of the then Near East Council of Churches Cragg returned several times between 1957-1966 and Hassan, as his interpreter, travelled around the country with him. The Anglican Church in Iran had come into existence through the missionary efforts of CMS during

¹ Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, London: Collins, 1985 rev. (originally published by Collins in 1956), p 181.

² For details of Hassan's early life, his conversion to Christianity and his work as a priest and later bishop in the Anglican Church in Iran, see his autobiography, *The Unfolding Design of My World: A Pilgrim in Exile*, (edited by Kenneth Cragg), Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2000.

the latter part of the 19th century.³ The small Christian community's status in Iran had throughout its short history remained fragile, depending on the vicissitudes of political events between East and West and the effect of these on the nationalist or religious feelings of ordinary Persians. Within this context CMS's approach to mission had remained resolute, maintaining a Victorian-style approach to evangelism as the backbone of a self-confident Christianity. In such an environment, during Cragg's early visits to Iran, his method of dealing with the relationship between Islam and Christianity was regarded as new and alternative. Hassan vividly recalls evangelically zealous Christians opposing Kenneth strongly, aided in their efforts by the familiar language of old clichés based on the traditional exclusive approach to the interfaith question. Yet Cragg's gentle humility in such situations and the manner in which he explained his own much more inclusive ideas fascinated Hassan from the start.

Fascination, however, did not mean that Hassan's reaction was not somewhat mixed. He had heard about dialogue with other faiths and believed that Christians should respect other religions and learn from them. Yet given the weight of the conservative Christianity he had experienced since childhood he could not help but feel the extent of Dr Cragg's generosity and understanding towards Islam was going too far. Nevertheless he was drawn towards finding out more and began reading some of Cragg's works. His seminal work, *The Call of the Minaret*, had just been published and Hassan found it expounded the teachings of Islam better than some of the Muslim

³ For more information on the early history of CMS in Iran and the founding of the Anglican Church there see Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society, 1910-1942, vol. I.* London: CMS Press Ltd, 1971, pp 380-98; and Guli Francis-Dehqani, *Religious Feminism in an Age of Empire: CMS Women Missionaries in Iran, 1869-1934*, University of Bristol, 2000, pp 44-58.

teachers he had heard. Cragg's knowledge and scope having impressed, Hassan began asking him questions. For example, did he not think he was imposing Christian meanings on to Islamic ideas? Was he not interpreting Islam according to Christian methodologies? Cragg's answer, given in the form of another question, was typical of the man and the benevolence he showed towards others. "Why should we not be hospitable towards those who are different?" If you are secure in your own home, he seemed to be saying, the more hospitality you show to your guests the better the relationship will be. Ultimately it was the depth and quality of relationships between peoples that inspired Cragg's efforts.

After years of contact with Kenneth Cragg, reading his books and enjoying many conversations with him, one comes to realize that he does not speak purely as a scholar but finds his motivation in the depths of faith. He is a deeply loving teacher who believes in the example of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the source of all relationships. From that secure ground he can be immeasurably generous and hospitable in the hope that others may come to understand the meaning of the love of God revealed in the person of Christ. Thus it was that Kenneth Cragg's nature was more apparent through his actions than his written word.

In his work as a Christian pastor in Iran Hassan had participated in many religious discussions with Muslims but he sensed these had, by and large, remained superficial. In his younger days he had accompanied more experienced Christians to Muslim homes for religious discussion, observing how the occasions had led to bitterness and hard feelings on one side or the other. Many times he had witnessed the ardent preaching of missionaries where the Muslim recipients did not even seem to be listening. But with Dr Cragg it was different. Hassan saw that whenever Kenneth spoke, those who heard were alert and attentive. On one occasion they were

welcomed into a Muslim seminary by a young seminarian who had just realized Kenneth knew Arabic. Soon the two Christians were seated amongst about 20 theological students and the Dean of the seminary who was waiting to teach them. When the Dean indicated that he was ready to begin the lecture the young man in question, who had been deep in conversation with Cragg, lifted his face towards his teacher and in a voice full of awe and respect said, “Do you realize what he is saying?” They had been discussing the cross of Christ, a topic usually of little interest to Muslims who do not believe the crucifixion took place. It was clear to Hassan, however, that on this occasion Cragg had clearly impressed and moved the young student.

On another occasion they ran into a well-known Muslim scholar whilst walking in Isfahan. For several minutes he and Cragg conversed in Arabic. When saying goodbye the scholar turned to Hassan and said in Persian, “This man’s thoughts are meaningfully beautiful”. Only rarely were opportunities for personal contact less fruitful and even then Cragg’s humility was apparent. Once he and Hassan were in a home, amongst several middle-aged mullahs and talk turned inevitably to religion. Gradually the discussion grew more contentious and Cragg was barely given an opportunity to speak. Afterwards he was not disparaging but only frustrated for not having made himself better understood.

The more Hassan listened to Kenneth and read his writings the more he found himself being released from the prison he had been living in. It was a prison whose walls had been constructed over many years of trying to understand and explain Christianity in the stock clichés of evangelical language. Then the verbal message delivered from his mouth was disconnected from his inner heart and soul. But now he was coming to know that he did not have to deny all that emanated from within him -

from his Shiah Muslim and Persian heritage - in order to accept Christ. Christ did not need to enter a vacuum, a space emptied of everything else and waiting to be filled by him. Rather he came into individuals as whole people, accepting and confirming them in all their fullness and through all their experiences. Hassan no longer needed to deny what he was. Christianity did not change him into an unrecognisable shape of his former self but transformed that self, giving new significance to all that was there. He realised that he still believed in God the merciful and great but that Christ and his cross could give new meaning to that mercy and greatness. Thus Hassan found himself released to a life of interpreting Christianity to his Muslim brothers and sisters. His preaching and teaching took on a new shape and he noticed how Muslim friends listened to his public sermons more willingly and with greater interest.

During those early days in Iran and since his exile in 1979, when his ministry has been directed towards the Persian Diaspora scattered across the world,⁴ Hassan has both consciously and subconsciously borrowed a great deal from Cragg's ideas. This has been true of his interfaith relationships as well as his sermons and publications. In *Chimes of Church Bells* (text in Persian), for example, he summarised, adapted and translated the second part of Cragg's, *The Call of the Minaret*; and in the trilogy, *Christ and Christianity Amongst the Iranians* (text in Persian), material was used from *Jesus and the Muslim*.⁵

⁴ For details of the effect of the 1979 revolution on the Church in Iran see Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, *The Hard Awakening*, London: SPCK, 1981, reprinted by Sohrab Books in 1995.

⁵ Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, *Chimes of Church Bells* (Text in Persian), Sohrab Books, 1987; and *Christ and Christianity Amongst the Iranians, Vols I-III* (Text in Persian),

As well as Cragg's works on the relationship between Christianity and Islam, many of his writings on Christian theology are inspirational. *What Decided Christianity: Events and Experiences in the New Testament*⁶ is immensely useful for any who are struggling to keep their faith alive in the world of today, and challenging for those who regard all religions as an equal remedy for the ailing hearts of men and women.

*The Education of Christian Faith: Critical and Literary Encounters with the New Testament*⁷ reveals Cragg as a theologian, philosopher and a poet, but above all as a Christian teacher and evangelist. It is an invaluable resource within contemporary western culture where so many are confused and bewildered about the meaning of Christianity and its place amongst the world's religions and ideologies. The theme of the book, learning through suffering, is based on Hebrews 5.8 which speaks of Jesus as the Son who "learned in that he suffered". This was the process by which the Christhood of Jesus was and is to be revealed. His invitation to humankind remains the same: "Come to me ... learn of me" (Matthew 11.28-30).⁸ According to Cragg the incarnation cannot be separated from suffering. A full Christology is better and earlier known in Gethsemane than in Chalcedon. In other words, the cross and suffering of Christ in obedience to his Father's call were the primary events, which only later

Sohrab Books, 1992, 1993, 1994. Kenneth Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1985.

⁶ Kenneth Cragg, *What Decided Christianity: Events and Experiences in the New Testament*, Worthing: Churchman Publishing, 1989.

⁷ Kenneth Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith: Critical and Literary Encounters with the New Testament*, Sussex Academic Press, 2000.

⁸ Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith*, pp ix.

found transformation into orthodox doctrine. The real significance is in the event, not the theologising of it.⁹

The Education of Christian Faith discusses the effect of Christianity on various (white, western, male) personalities, amongst them John Henry Newman whose mental and psychological condition is put under close scrutiny. Many of Newman's ideas are extensively and beautifully discussed by Cragg who is critical of the Cardinal's view that primacy should be given to the institution of the Church rather than the New Testament.¹⁰

In *The Education of Christian Faith* Robert Browning and Rudyard Kipling represent the world of poets and their poetry, a world in which Cragg is well versed and at home.¹¹ But perhaps the most refreshing part of the book is the extraordinary study of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Early on Cragg asks,

What 'Christ-learning' we must ask could possibly belong with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the passionate philosopher of ambiguous nihilism, famed announcer of 'death of God'? What is he doing in these pages?¹²

In drawing a comparison between Nietzsche, Browning, Newman and William Faulkner, Cragg states that

On every count, the author of *The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo* must be declared *persona non grata* among the poets, writers, novelists we have taken here as educated – and educators – into Christ. Yet those two titles – his final works before the silence of dementia in his last eleven years – are evidence of a mysterious fascination with the figure of Jesus.¹³

⁹ Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith*, pp 3-20.

¹⁰ Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith*, pp 102-20.

¹¹ Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith*, pp 121-38, 157-74.

¹² Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith*, p 175.

¹³ Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith*, p 175.

The influence of the Bible on Nietzsche, his family background, his misunderstanding of the notion of ‘meekness’ in Christianity, his idea of the ‘Super-man’ and its misuse by the fascists and Marxists, are discussed extensively. Cragg ends his chapter on Nietzsche with these words:

With a keen insight, if with no glad assent, Nietzsche wrote, ‘In order that love may be possible God must be a person.’ A single sentence comprehended the nature of the Incarnation. When he added, still dissenting: ‘The answer was to discover a religion in which it was possible to love’ he had identified the New Testament. Could there be a sounder reason for a Christian allegiance?¹⁴

When explaining Christianity Cragg’s overwhelming emphasis is always on the “suffering God”. Characteristically, therefore, he ends *The Education of Christian Faith* with one of his own poems, summarising Christianity in terms of Christ’s love bringing pardon to human-kind who learn by his “wound-prints”.¹⁵

Prolonged contact with Cragg and his work leads to a kind of seeping-in-to-the-soul of many of his ideas. Careful study of his writings and intent engagement with his spoken words can electrify the imagination, inspire the intellect and encourage faith. Yet that which remains, long after the details have been forgotten, is often a kernel of truth expressed in the simplicity of a short sentence or aphorism. These easily remembered phrases lodge themselves in the depths of one’s mind, roaming free from their original context, ready, again and again, to draw one into new and deeper meaning. “The healing is in the wound”, “we require speech in order to praise silence”, “they (ie religious fundamentalists) answer all questions by allowing none”, “the proving is only in the going”, “love binds only to liberate”, “caricatures register usefully by being falsely true”, “not to proselytise but to present, having first

¹⁴ Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith*, pp 192-3.

¹⁵ Cragg, *The Education of Christian Faith*, p 230.

possessed, to share possession”, “the power that reigns is the love that suffers”, “we become like the God we worship”. Out of context and displayed at random, these are but a few examples of the way in which Cragg manages to touch and convey the rich beauty of human experience through his insightful wisdom and the words he employs.

For many who are enthralled by Dr Cragg’s literary output, his writings remain difficult to read. Often times one struggles, wishing the structure could be simpler, the sentences shorter and the meaning more immediately accessible. But perseverance brings rich rewards indeed. Sentences which at first appear like a tightly closed bud, when fed on the sunshine of attention blossom, willingly giving up the delightful scent of meaning and displaying the exquisite colours of their full beauty.

But while many have never read a book by Cragg and might well struggle with the complex style if they did, they usually find listening to his spoken word in sermons and talks a great deal easier. The content is equally challenging but the sincerity of his faith, the passion and directness of his approach and his gentle yet commanding presence combine with not a little humour to create a compelling style that draws the listener right into the heart of the matter he is considering. He gauges the audience perfectly, sensing what the occasion requires and offers his best in any given situation.

Guli’s first memories of Kenneth, independent of her father and the church in Iran, date back to 1987 when she was an undergraduate at the University of Nottingham. She was studying music and had no formal training in theology or the interfaith discourse but, thanks to the university’s policy of encouraging students to explore other subjects through multidisciplinary modules, she had just elected to take a subsidiary course in the Theology Department entitled “Introduction to Islam”. Noticing a poster advertising a talk and discussion on Islam with Dr Kenneth Cragg

she thought the occasion might prove a useful exploration of a topic so familiar on one hand, yet on an academic level, totally new. The group that gathered to hear Cragg were a mixed bunch. Some were genuine enquirers, others had been students of Islam for some time and came to exchange views and ideas, but there were also a few sceptics from amongst the Muslim students on campus who appeared to be not only critical but a little hostile, eager to catch Kenneth out and expose his arguments as inconsequential. Guli recalls feeling nervous and even a little protective of this old family friend but she soon realized he did not need her assistance. Kenneth well understood the mood of the group and found a way of connecting with it. The detail of his talk and what he said have faded over the years but what has remained strong is the impression of his stature in the context of that small university gathering. The sense of genuine humility combined with utter confidence made it exceptional and memorable. Over the years Guli would come to recognise this potent combination as the essence of Cragg's indomitable style. The episode that took place in Nottingham represented Guli's first adult contact with a dominant force from her childhood and it was perhaps the point at which she became consciously aware of Cragg's influence and began the process of disseminating his ideas for herself.

Now looking back on the past twenty years or so it is easy to see, amongst other things, how Kenneth has remained significant in the ongoing life of the Persian Church, in particular through his commitment to the Friends of the Diocese of Iran (FDI) in England. The FDI is a charity which exists for the sole purpose of supporting the Anglican community in Iran. A twice-yearly meeting provides an opportunity for friends and supporters to gather together for worship, to hear news from Iran and pray for Christians there. In the past five years there have also been two residential conferences attended by about eighty people in each case. These have been occasions

for reminiscing about the past, trying to understand the present and best prepare for the future. During both conferences Kenneth has played a vital part through input which has been life giving and positive as well as realistic and honest.

The first conference was held in August 1998 and Kenneth preached during the final Eucharist on Sunday morning. The conference had brought together friends from England, America and Holland as well as a few from Iran. Some were missionaries who had not seen each other since working in Iran over twenty years previously. It was an emotional time for many with old friendships renewed, memories relived and lively debates on the nature of mission and evangelism in Iran. The painful experiences of the contemporary church in Iran provided a fundamental bedrock throughout the three days and questions about the past as well as hopes for the future constantly found themselves bedded in the context of present reality. The conference is memorable for many reasons but none more long lasting or potent than Kenneth's address during the final Eucharist, which with words borrowed from Psalm 107, he entitled, "Business in Great Waters".¹⁶

In his sermon on that Sunday morning Kenneth did several significant things by identifying, for the purposes of those gathered together, "four realms of meaning" within the navigational phrase "Great Waters". He acknowledged the pain and hurt of many present by naming the "Great Waters" that have broken on the Church in Iran since 1979, leaving behind a shattered community, wounded and deeply troubled. But he did not allow us to wallow in self-pity, pointing the finger at an Islam which dared to cause such devastation. Instead he immediately reminded us of the "Great Waters"

¹⁶ A written version of "Business in Great Waters" was later produced and distributed amongst FDI members. All subsequent quotes from the sermon have been taken from that leaflet.

of a “vast and storied” Persian culture as the other side of the coin. The storm of recent years needs to be navigated within “the perspective of this larger reality”.

Chanting mobs and turbulent people-power are only half the story. One has always to be pondering Islam via the exquisite beauty of the Lutfullah Mosque in the Maidan of Isfahan ... This sublime measure of things must always counter-balance the dark face of Islam in history ... and not least recent history in our context.

Straightway the challenge to see a bigger picture beyond ourselves, to recognise perspective across the “Great Waters” of a vast ocean, to be generous and even honest in the face of seething pain and so much loss. From here Kenneth captained his ship forward into the “Great Waters” that have overwhelmed not only many Iranians in their hatred and fear of the West but which are a feature of similar animosities between other peoples; hatreds which fester and embitter and die hard. He spoke of the many anti-Western resentments that brood in the life of Iran – feelings of anger and frustration that come from a sense of having been manipulated, invaded, swamped. Then, quoting Yeats, he reminded us how the Irish too “have suffered through cultivation of hatred as the one energy of their movement” and how the same could also be said of many in Israel.

Lest his listeners risk demonising Islam by assuming that it has a particular “built-in will to antagonism” he demonstrated how the Muslim mind too is aware of the evils that exist in mutual enmities, believing that these can only be repudiated from within the self. To prove his point, Kenneth quoted from Ayatollah Khomeini himself:

As long as that great Satan that is our unredeemed soul exists within us, whatsoever we do will be done in egoism. We must destroy the government of Satan within us.

Notwithstanding the problems the world encounters when egoism takes on a “collective form” via the “sanction of religion”, Kenneth challenged us to recognise

the “Great Waters” of animosity and hatred in which Christians in Iran today move and suffer and serve. Yet our mission in this situation should not be to castigate but, in understanding human shortcomings generally, to discreetly relate to Muslims in their own struggles towards greater “human rights across all borders, women’s rights in full personal equality of the sexes, and due freedom of enquiry, scholarship and tolerance”. To co-operate rather than rebuke, to enable rather than break down. This, Cragg regards, as the “inner-duty of faiths” generally, but within a Christian context it finds its most complete meaning within the final realm of these “Great Waters” which are “of God in Christ”. Moving the analogy away from “storm” Cragg guided us into the “depth” of our faith: a place that recognises the wounds of Jesus as the sign of divine power and beckons us to overcome evil through forgiveness.

Through this extraordinarily compelling sermon, still talked about by those who were present for its delivery, Cragg provided a fitting end to an emotional few days. He met people where they were at, acknowledged that which had brought them together, but unashamedly issued a robust challenge to move forward for the benefit of humanity, and in the name of Christ.

During the second FDI residential conference in the summer of 2001 Kenneth was invited to deliver a lecture which he entitled, “Lost and Found in Translation”.¹⁷ In it Kenneth demonstrated some of the risks and possibilities which are both an essential part of the process of translating the Gospel, be it across centuries in time, or across languages and different cultures. Perhaps the greatest human invention,

¹⁷ Unfortunately there was no text for this lecture but Kenneth kindly agreed to make available some notes which were then distributed amongst FDI members. Our comments here are based on our recollections of the talk as well as the contents of Cragg’s notes.

language greatly aids communication and part of the work of witness in faith will, by necessity, always be done through words. So language is a powerful tool but whilst it can be a useful vehicle, it might just as easily become a trap. It may guide or mislead, portray or perplex. Meanings can be lost or found in translation and likewise people, for we too can find or lose our true selves within the process of translating faith.

The difficulties of translating the gospel across languages and cultures are only compounded when religious boundaries are also being traversed. No one can hope to translate words and concepts from one language to another unless they are fully familiar with the “receiving” language as well as the “giving” language; to be most successful they must know it like their own.¹⁸ So too a Christian should not expect to engage effectively in interfaith dialogue unless they understand the other’s point of view. It is only possible to explain Christianity to adherents of another religion by entering and familiarising oneself with that religion, its language and its ideologies, as fully and completely as possible.

Kenneth’s talk, which made good use of humour, was littered with illustrations and examples of how words and concepts change across the boundaries of time and

¹⁸ To make his point Cragg argued that literature which relies on literal translations from one language to another is seldom successful for in the process of striving to adhere to the “letter” of the text, the translator loses sight of the “spirit” of what is being conveyed. Instead it is those who are able to capture the essence of the original language in “spirit” if not in “letter” who are the best cross-language communicators. Fitzgerald’s translation of Omar Khayam was cited as an excellent example whereby the meaning of the Persian has been successfully captured and transformed into English without the need for slavish adherence to literal precision.

culture. Aided by these he delineated some of the complexities of a faith which, in being communicated, can either help or hinder, give life or destroy.

Other than these two FDI conferences there have been other occasions in the life of the Persian Christian community in England, and that of our family personally, in which Kenneth has played a significant part. In 1999 he preached in St. Mary the Virgin, Mortlake when Guli, recently ordained priest, presided for the first time at a service of Holy Communion. And having been there in the early year's of Hassan's ministry, he was there again in 1990 at a service held in St. Dionis' Church, Parson's Green, marking his retirement as Bishop in Iran.

Perhaps most significant of all was Kenneth's encouragement to Hassan that he should write his autobiography in Persian, as posterity for his Iranian country-folk as well as for the church.¹⁹ Once this had been completed Kenneth was then instrumental in ensuring that the book was translated into English under his editorship.²⁰ This labour of love, involving considerable time and energy, was completed with a post-script written by Cragg, reflecting theologically on the life of a friend and the nature of interfaith relationships.

Kenneth Cragg has been a valued friend and wise adviser. His influence has been profound for our family as well as for many others within the Persian Church. As a daughter Guli can reflect on the life and work of her father. In human terms there is little to show for a lifetime of service. He lives in exile, having left behind a small group of people struggling to retain an identity. Yet with all its weaknesses and failures, in the courage of that ongoing community and in the way it has conducted

¹⁹ Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, *One Well with Two Sources* (Text in Persian), Sohrab Books, 1999.

²⁰ *The Unfolding Design of My World*. See footnote 2 for full bibliographical details.

itself through the turbulent years since 1979, it is possible to recognise traces of Cragg's commitment and influence. For in the crucial years of the 1950s and 1960s, as CMS's efforts in Iran were gradually being transformed from what had been a foreign missionary presence into an indigenous church, Kenneth Cragg was amongst those whose teaching and experience was influencing emerging leaders, amongst them Hassan himself. Cragg's generosity of spirit to Muslims and Islam, his open approach towards faith as something that could be probed and questioned, and ultimately his deep commitment to the love that suffers left indelible traces on the young community.

The level of Kenneth's significance can never be proven or accurately gauged. There is no doubt, however, that his ideas and his style were profoundly influential at a formative stage of the Persian Church's development, helping to shape its future growth and encouraging it to follow God's calling into the difficult years that lay ahead. By God's grace the Persian Church continues its presence in Iran as a witness to the life and death of Christ. But even God's grace requires people through whom it can work and for the Iranian Anglican community Kenneth has been one of those sent by God and used by God to help discern what it means to continue loving and hoping when all seems lost.

Hassan B. Dehqani-Tafti and Guli E. Francis-Dehqani