

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

## The Coming Kingdom.

BY THE REV. ROBERT KEABLE, B.A.,

*Zanzibar.*

THAT first impressions have a value all their own is a commonplace of travel, the danger being a tendency to forget that the new-comer must be content with *impressions*. It has, indeed, become a classical warning that whereas intuitive judgments are frequently right, the reasons by which we try to support them are usually wrong, and that hence suggestions for reforms based upon our early judgments ought to be reserved until some few years have passed over us. But the first impression, as an impression, is always valuable, and perhaps the more so if it be a kind of secondary "first impression." A visitor whose stay in a mission is limited to a few weeks often forms an entirely erroneous conception of the work that is being done unless he is in a position to acquire more authoritative information than is possible for most men; while most new-comers at the end of a few months would give anything but a rosy account of Missionary activity. And this is natural. The chance visitor is impressed by the mere sight of black men in church, and native Ministers in the sanctuary. The new-comer, on the contrary, has to pass through a stage of helplessness, while he, whose service was active at home, must stand by and do nothing but learn a wearisome language, and contrast foreign and home methods. He has to learn, too, that Missionaries are no better than other people, and that, on the whole, miracles are not more common abroad than they are at home. Somehow this awakening to reality, foolish as it is not to be prepared for it, is a bitter time to the young Missionary. We ought, surely, to prepare him more carefully for it.

But this is not the real "first impression." This is merely the experience which belongs to the adaptation of a man's personality to his new environment. It is the finding of the new shoes, which pinch because of the very things which made them so beautiful when first they were put on! The real "first impres-

sion," which this article is an attempt to express, is perhaps only found when, a little more attune to his surroundings, while as yet not so far removed from the old as to forget the contrast, the new-comer is able to weigh, as they cannot, the solidity of the past and the hope of the future. Men who have been many years in the field bend a little beneath the care of the Churches, and see the stars less readily. It must be so. They told themselves ten years ago that it was natural for these converts to fail, considering that they have inherited the burden of heathen centuries, and have been dragged to civilization in slave-chains ; but ten years seems long except to Him who sitteth above the water-floods, and older Missionaries may be forgiven if they lapse sometimes into the ways of arm-chair critics. Even they forget sometimes that the Church is very nearly two thousand years old ; that it took three centuries to conquer even on the shores of the Mediterranean, and that the Canons of the English Church, many years after Augustine, revealed amazing blemishes. And it is just because the other side sometimes needs emphasizing that these words are written ; because, to the writer, one kindling, glowing fact seems more true than ever it did in England ; because that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth " is here not only a dim hope grasped by faith, but a word of conquest blazoned in the heavens.

This is a Mohammedan city, and as you walk through its streets you cannot fail to realize it. There are mosques at every turn, and small green tickets, recently affixed by the Government to all mosque property, remind you that religion is richly endowed. Then, again, the very Government is outwardly Mohammedan, and such is the elasticity of the British political conscience that it can on Sunday, as Christian, declare its faith in the Life and Passion of our Lord, and on Monday, as Mohammedan, set up schools with a curriculum which embraces the teaching of the Koran, whose plain words give the Apostles' Creed the lie. But despite all this and very much more, despite all that we are told (and all that is *true*) about forward movements in Islam, nothing is more absolutely sure than the break-up of Mohammedanism as

a religion. It is already in its death throes. It has entered on a conflict not only with organized Christianity, but with that civilization which has been born of Christianity, and which is proving its origin in the face of the critics by doing the works of Christianity at every turn. Of the issue of that conflict there is no doubt. Like every other conflict it will have unexpected developments, and like every other conflict, there will be loss and blood and tears ; but already the Crescent wavers before the Cross. Some who see the wavering do not see the Cross ; but we see, and it is just this victory of faithful seeing which has ever overcome the world.

Let us look at it. It is Ramadhan here, in a Mohammedan city, and however poor a Moslem's faith may be, if he is a Moslem at all, he keeps Ramadhan. No wonder, then, that the old religious leaders of the town are troubled when one high *Mohammedan* authority declares that only 4 per cent. of the city has kept the Fast this year, and the highest authority of them all sets the figure at 2 per cent. ! It is the young men who will not keep it. If one stands on the bridge that leads from the city to the country, one can see each morning young Arabs by the hundred going out into the woods for the day to escape observation. They will come back in time to join in the ceremonies of the evening ritual, because as yet they are not prepared to break so entirely with the past ; but the spirit of Islam is no longer in them. And why ? The answer is absolutely simple. It is just that the fever of the West is in their veins, and that they know its doom is on the old order of things.

Very many are, of course, intoxicated with the liberty and licence of the West. Others are well aware that learning and progress is of the West, and, in reality, of the West alone. Others still are feeling that truth is of the West, and in their heart of hearts they know that the crudities of popular Mohammedanism, as well as the manifest absurdities of the official faith, cannot be held by instructed men.<sup>1</sup> It is the coming of learning that has done it.

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above, a young modern Arab, of his own initiative, used almost precisely these words to me.—R. K.

The young Arab of to-day not only knows the English tongue, but also reads English papers, and thinks in English terms. One such, during a recent lecture, showed entire familiarity with the decisions of the Thompson-Bannister case, and inquired of the precise obligation to Protestantism, as opposed to Catholicity, which King George inherits by reason of the Act of Settlement ! And to such men, that Mohammed split the moon, and underwent an angelical surgical operation for the removal of original sin, is precisely the rubbish that it is to us. The only trouble is that so many Moslems, here at least, know so little about their own faith ; but even that they are learning from Western sources. And they will learn. The son of a prominent Arab has recently returned from an education on Western lines in Beyrout ; he declines to attend his father's mosque. An old relation of high rank, fearful at this, vows that his grandchildren shall not learn English nor English ways—but how will he stop them ? It is all very well to speak of Eastern culture and science, but practically it is as nothing against the learning of the West. The West has power, and practical things, and money. Rightly or wrongly it is El Dorado to the young Eastern, and you cannot keep him from those riches. Personally, I believe that he is right. Argue as you will, the East has stored its treasures these many centuries, and they are of ancient things. It is the West that has been alive. The West has parcelled the world and divided its riches, and the East will only win them back with Western tools. Japan, China, and, in a great measure, India, know it well, for the former have proved it true, and the dead hand of Mohammed cannot any longer hold back the Moslem world.

The great unappreciated factor in the awakening of the East is the effect of the dominance of Western influence here in the heart of the East itself. This city, for example, is itself, to the young Arab, largely European to-day. His learning takes him into Government service, into commercial undertakings, or into the courts ; and in these days he must earn his living or starve, and in these ways he must do it. But what then ? At the head of every department stands the European, with

Western standards and methods. To get on he must know English. English judges are supreme in the courts, and already we see the beginnings of the modification of Moslem law. The Moslem marriage laws, for example, have religious sanction, are unalterably fixed by the lusts of a prophet 1,300 years dead, and regard women solely as the slaves of men's lust! How can an English judge, however much he may regard himself as fettered by his technical position as a member of a Mohammedan administration, serve laws such as these? He cannot, and he does not. He modifies them, and his modifications are an object-lesson to the young officials. With opening eyes they see still more. They see what is the relationship of the decent Englishman to his wife. They watch the Western manners at some Agency function. They attend Western plays performed by amateurs among the European colony. Their rich men buy motor-cars, drink wines, and copy our manners. The Sultan motors abroad among his subjects with his one wife and their little son as an English gentleman might do. The telephone, a typewriter, and pictures are in his study, and he is no feckless youth, but a middle-aged man, Westernized so far (for it comes to this) that he is wise enough to retain his rich and courtly Arab dress. The crowds in the palace square have the daily telegrams read out to them. The storming of Tripoli, the resignation of the Turkish Cabinet, or the doings at Delhi, leave them breathless with astonishment. The picture-shops, with gaudy cartoons of the war, are thronged every day. If Constantinople falls, or if Turkey becomes a Republic, our world will rock yet more; none can say how much. And meanwhile our young men petition for compulsory education, read the *Weekly Times*, form themselves into clubs, and keep Ramadhan in the depths of the woods!

It is when one turns to the Christian Church, even here, that the amazing reverse of the picture appears. The element which suggests itself is *stability*, and it is suggested in such an amazing number of ways. Look at the language. It is the Mission that has considered it scientifically, and prepared the grammars and "readers," so that now in this Swahili-speaking

country, the best Swahili is the Swahili of the Prayer-Book and the Bible. There is only one marriage-law, plain and rigid, in the country, and that is the Christian. There are only two imposing religious buildings, and they are the Christian Cathedrals. There is only one effort being made to train religious teachers along lines fearlessly open to modern knowledge, and that is the Christian. There is only one literature flooding even Hindi clubs, and that is the English and Christian—for even where it is not orthodoxly Christian, it is Christian in moral and ethical tone. The Christian Church itself, too, is like a rock amid these floods. Day by day the Church's Liturgy is said in Christian sanctuaries as if Mohammed had never been born. It is said by an instructed native Ministry, which one feels instinctively has come to stay. And even more manifestations of Christ's religion, so impotent and foolish to the world, so revolutionary and dynamic to the historian, and so sublime and real to the Christian, are here at work. Near this big city, in a Christian village, at this very hour, a little band of women are pledged to a life of prayer. They are no longer "of England," for their gaze, for living and for dying, is towards Africa. They are "of the Sacred Passion," linked to that incredible foolishness of Calvary which has turned the world upside down. And these will do it; it is the lesson of history, of philosophy, of faith. What has Mohammed to set against that bewildering piety of surrender, that transcendental obstinacy of faith?

Or, again, the Apostolate is here. If I were an agnostic I should fear Bishops! In England it is sometimes our custom to make light of them, but after all is said and done, did ever army achieve conquests like those of the threefold Ministry of the Catholic Church? To the Catholic mind, the Bishop is the centre of obedience and unity; linked about him go all those forces which the alchemy of Christianity has wrested somehow from the world; and this apart from his claim to be, in the Ignatian phrase, "as Jesus Christ." It is surely a remarkable thing that the Episcopate has clung to lands with a pertinacity indifferent to reformations, reactions, or suppressions. And here it is in East Africa. Behind it is the driving force of a

priesthood which has no need to be ashamed. It was planned for conquest.

It may be urged against all this that Christianity is itself divided; and that even here, among some few score white rulers professing the Christian name, you have enemies and divisions. Nor may it be denied. As we count up the white congregation, Sunday by Sunday, we sometimes fear. We are not less than in other places; indeed, we show an excellent average, but what of this? Is not historic Christianity in a bad way everywhere?

Sir H. Johnson has pointed out recently in *The East and the West* that it is good for the clergy to see service abroad, as it enlarges their outlook. It seems to me that he is entirely right. For it is here, on the fringe of things, that the amazing weakness of the opposition to orthodox Christianity seems so plain. One has only got to read the books which influence anti-Christian thought among average Englishmen to see it. One such passed into my hands the other day, which only showed with unmistakable clearness that its author was opposing a Christianity that was a chimera of his own imagination, and basing his opposition upon incredible ignorance.<sup>1</sup> He can actually write that Hinduism, Judaism, Mahommedanism, and Buddhism have been "untouched" by Christ as they have been "untouched" by one another! Christ has made no more impression on China than Buddha on Europe! In a word, the world's religions are alike, stagnant and passing. And this with India's Christianity advancing for the last thirty years at such a speed that the Empire will be Christian in 160 years; with Catholic Christianity alone strong enough to produce in China an army of native clergy big enough to outnumber either the C.M.S. or the S.P.G. clergy throughout the world<sup>2</sup>; and with Japan recognizing Christianity as one of the religions of the Empire. The very fact that men who dissent from orthodox Christianity *think* their case supported by such works as these assures our victory. Men are mostly non-religious to-day, for

<sup>1</sup> "The Hearts of Men," by H. Fielding.

<sup>2</sup> "Annual Review of the Foreign Missions of the Church," 1911, p. 44.

exactly the reason St. John alleged centuries ago—they love the world. They are dazzled by its wonder, its freedom, and its ever-increasing pleasures in this age. They give up the faith because of its restraints, and then they bolster up their disobedience by incredible ignorance. Hardly a man who declines to believe the Catholic Faith could tell you what that Catholic Faith is which he declines to believe. Those of us who listen to his talk in the smoking-rooms of ocean-going liners, or in the lounges of clubs, gather that the chief articles of Catholic Faith are that God made the world in 144 literal hours, that Eve was deceived by a creeping serpent, that Baalam's ass talked, that Jonah was swallowed by a whale, that the greater part of the world is going to hell, and that heaven is a place of white robes and harps. That is, at least, the religion at which they jeer, and whose it is, I don't know. Of the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the life everlasting, there is no talk. They are simply ignorant of orthodoxy.

Over against these trivialities and nightmares stands the Apostles' Creed. Where all our quondam friends disagree and propose weird faiths, the Catholic religion remains a reasonable whole. In any hundred men picked at random—the hundred men that congregate in these outposts of the world—no one ever has a complete religious philosophy making any attempt to agree with logical science or history to offer except the Catholic. There may be a thousand philosophies in the study, but there is only one among the negations in the street. "In dealing with religion," says Harnack, "is it not after all with the Christian religion alone that we have to do? Other religions no longer stir the depths of our hearts." And if we want a further proof it lies in this, that there is no other philosophy of God that has Missions to the heathen save the Christian. That faith alone seeks to save.

I began by saying that this was but an impression, and I wish to leave it at that. Perhaps I have been over-daring to speak of such things as I have; certainly I have neither authority nor wit to say much more. But there surges through me,

as I walk down our Eastern streets that have not yet quite lost their novelty, an assurance that I never thought to have before. We seem to be living here in a chaotic confusion of religions, policies, and societies. No man knows what to-morrow will bring—religiously, politically, or socially—among all these crowds in our streets. There is a fever abroad, and a fear. But it seems to me that, among all the mists and quicksands, there is a Rock, higher than I, which is as steadfast as ever, as unique as ever, and as pronounced as ever. There are a thousand elements of unrest abroad, there is only one of rest; there are a thousand elements of change, there is only one of stability. I look on the Moslem Faith growing vaguely fearful, and I would cry with Alfred in Mr. G. K. Chesterton's ballad:

“That though all lances split on you,  
All swords be heaved in vain,  
We have more lust again to lose  
Than you to win again!”

I look on these wavering Christians, and I am more sure than ever that there is only one source to which any soul in this city will turn when it comes to need God. And, above all, I look on this kaleidoscopic world, and I am utterly convinced that of all kingdoms there is but one that has no end.

All this is, of course, beyond argument, and I feel content that it should be so. So is the First Epistle of St. John. So was the confidence of Alban and George, the wanton dying of the child martyrs, the ecstasy of Julian and Theresa, and the extravagance of Francis and Ignatius. It is this faith which bears us, and teaches us at last to rest from our petty efforts to support it. And it is this faith which lights a vision of which there is only one thing to say:

“Mine eyes have seen—only God I glorify!  
Mine eyes have seen—Trust me! I would not lie.  
Nay, trust me not, my tidings prove and try!  
An you would see, come the same way as I—  
Way of the white fields where the sheaves we tie—  
Come!”