

**THE EASTERN CHURCHES, AN
ADDRESS TO THE RIGHT REV. THE
LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN,
RESPECTING THE PRESENT STATE
OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES**

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The Eastern Churches, an address to the right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, respecting the present state of the Eastern Churches by W. R. Fremantle

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W. R. FREMANTLE

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THE EASTERN CHURCHES.

AN ADDRESS

TO

THE RIGHT REV.

THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN,

RESPECTING THE PRESENT STATE OF

THE EASTERN CHURCHES

AND THE PROSPECTS OF USEFULNESS AMONG THEM.

BY THE

REV. W. R. FREMANTLE, M. A.



"Notwithstanding these errors and defects, we preserve a great charity for this distressed part of the Catholic Church, and wish, and pray heartily for their deliverance—and that in the mean while, they may see from what purity of doctrine and worship they are fallen, and may be restored to their ancient integrity and splendour. This Christian charity obliges us to do."—

PREFACE TO SMITH'S HISTORY OF THE GREEK CHURCH.

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TO THE RIGHT' REV.

THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

MY LORD,

During a journey which I have lately made in Syria and Egypt, it has been my endeavor to collect as much information as possible respecting the present state of the Christian Churches in the East. I could wish that my efforts had been more satisfactory, but probably your Lordship is aware of the difficulties which attend such an undertaking. The reserved and idle habits of the Orientals, the suspicion which they attach to every enquiry, and the necessity of communicating through an interpreter, are serious obstacles to an European traveller, unacquainted with the Arabic and modern Greek languages. Imperfect, however, as the result of my journey has been in this respect, I venture to bring the subject before the notice of your Lordship, in the hope that it may lead to further investigation.

Having made a statement once or twice to my brethren in the ministry, which has awakened an extraordinary measure of interest, I have been urged to bring the facts before the Bishop of London, and in order to do this through the proper channel, I am encouraged to address your Lordship as my Diocesan.

My object is to shew, that there is a wide field open for usefulness among the Ancient Christian Churches; and that the peculiarities of it are such as to call loudly for the interference and aid of

the Church of England—not as a Society, sending out Missionaries for the conversion of individuals, to lay the foundation of an entirely new system, but as a sister church holding out the hand of fellowship and as a faithful witness holding forth the pure light of truth, both in doctrine and discipline—so, that the hidden things of darkness may be made manifest, and the precious separated from the vile.

It is worthy of remark that in the amazing movement and development of Christian love which has manifested itself in our country, during the last fifty years, while Society after Society has been established for the spread of the Gospel in foreign parts, while the cry of the heathen from every quarter of the globe, and in almost every tongue has been considered, yet the thousands of nominal Christians in Asia, Egypt and Abyssinia have been almost overlooked.

May it not be asked, whether this cannot be traced to neglected duty in the Church of England? Has she ever yet risen to her full privileges and responsibilities as a sound part of the Catholic Church, testifying the grace of God in a benighted world. It will be generally acknowledged that the Church of England, as a Church in Convocation, should undertake the work of Missions to the Heathen; but as in the present state of political feeling there is little probability that the Church will be able thus to exercise her proper authority, the next step towards that would be to act through those Societies, which from their long Establishment and full Episcopal Patronage, concentrate most of the weight of church authority in this country. For if it is true, that God, as a God of order, would

have us to use means according to the best of our judgement, and according to the principles of that mutual charity and interest by which society is bound together,—if He approve that those who have received the truth, should “first find their own brother,” and then that the order of the dissemination of truth should be regular and enlarging, as the successive and continually encreasing circles around the bubbling fountain,—then we have a principle by which to test the subject before us. For upon the supposition that as a church we first attend to the spiritual wants of our own country and colonies, the next circle to which we should naturally extend our efforts would be to those, who have in their creeds and confessions the substance of truth,—however obscured by mysticism and superstition—who maintain a similar form of church government and discipline with ourselves, and who are equally opposed to the supremacy of the Church of Rome. By the blessing of God upon such a course, we should find a series of machinery ready to hand,—the influence of a regularly organised system, teachers, churches and schools, in one word, a recognised authority—which needs only to be raised and purified, instructed and rightly directed to produce the most beneficial effect upon more than half the globe. This, however, has not yet been taken into our consideration, for while Romish tyranny has been insulting and persecuting, and assisting the Mahomedans to oppress the fallen churches, and has even over-reached its consummate policy and intrigue in attempting to reduce the *schismatics!* to slavish subjection, the Church of England as a body, has stood aloof from the scene of Epis-

copal antiquity, and with the exception of the few devoted men employed by the Church Missionary Society, (who are literally fainting under the pressure of the work which is opening to them daily,) we see at this hour that Protestant Episcopalians are the only body of Christians who are not represented in the East — while the American Presbyterians are strengthening their Missions and taking the lead in a work which seems peculiarly to belong to us.

But it may be further asked—whether this neglect has not arisen from the real difficulty of finding men qualified for the important and arduous work of communicating with the Eastern Churches. For the principle upon which such an attempt should be made, must not be that of the Sectarians of our day, —viz: to separate and detach a few from the many, and thus commence a rival system;—but it must be that of brotherly appeal and affection, endeavoring to kindle in the breasts of the priests and bishops a love for the truth, a conviction of departure from their original articles and creeds, and a desire to reform these abuses. But this is no easy task—How few men will undertake it—How few are qualified for it! It is an affecting fact, proved by the experience of the last fifty years, that it is comparatively easy to obtain Missionaries for purely ignorant and unevangelised heathen, where the undertaking is usually attended with more immediate results and more stirring details of enterprise and hazard.* In such labours there is even that which

* The exertions of Missionary Societies at this period, ought not in general, to refer so much to the Heathens, as to those multitudes, who already profess to be Christians in various lands, but know not what Christianity means, who have heard of the Bible; but never saw the Bible. This seems to be the order of Provi-

is exciting to the flesh, as well as that which is really and intrinsically quickening to faith—while the instances are few and far between of individuals who have patiently prepared themselves for the slow and tedious prosecution of mental and argumentative and learned instruction of Eastern Christians, such as is required in Persia, Armenia, Syria, and Egypt—where the work is not carried on in the pulpit amidst crowded congregations, but in the lengthened detail of research; in the examination of manuscripts and libraries, or in the fatiguing and temper-trying argument with men of educated, but alas! bigoted and prejudiced and persecuting minds—where too there is no concealment, no hiding place for ignorance, no breathing time for reflection, but where talent and piety, zeal and consistency, are tested to the uttermost, and the victory, humanly speaking, is won or lost, by the intrinsic character of the party engaged. Many are the facts which the history of Missionary efforts in Alexandria, Jerusalem and Persia, would produce to prove this assertion.

But if we need excitement or powerful appeal to stir up our sympathy, we have only to take our stand amidst the ruins of the Eastern Churches and contemplate what remains of primitive Christianity. Here are precious fragments of the early church torn asunder and defaced by oppression, heresy and schism. Alas! how fallen! they have lost all trace of former symmetry—confusion and

dence; but it is not so agreeable to the infirmity of the human teacher; who loves a novel scene, would seek an exclusive interest in the converted, and is scarcely content, unless they be called by his own name.—*Buchanan's Col. Estab.* p. 41.