

18. THE TEST OF LIGHT.

On the east side of Omdurman, by the Shambat bridge over the river Nile, are two large advertisements. One is for cola to drink, the other is for paint. The former is standing high on its own purpose built tower. The latter is smaller, lower, and only attached to the side of a block of apartments where people live and work. Both the advertisements want people to buy their products.

During the daytime, driving across the bridge going west, the cola advert is most easily seen. It is the first to be passed, closest to the river bank. Its blue, red and white colours make it almost unmissable. The paint advert is there too, but it has to take second place rather than first.

However, during the darkness of the night, the effectiveness of these two adverts is reversed. The colours of the paint company are bright and clearly seen. The brand name is the prominent centre of focus.

The difference between these two adverts is simple. Only one has the continuing presence of light during the darkness. The cola-daubed water tank almost disappears in the darkness. There are few, if any, lights on it or near it. Yet the paint advert becomes outstanding by the brilliant highlighting floodlights. They make it obvious against the dark sky.

I think this is a good example of a way to compare religious faiths. Some people naively think that 'all religions are the same'. That is simply not true! Other people judge a religion by outward show. They look at the dominance of buildings, the numbers of population, and appearance of visible rituals, to assess who has the truth. I think there is a much better test.

In the darkness of troubles and trials, in the black times of painful persecution, and in the mysteries of suffering and sorrow, ask from which religion does 'the light' really shine? I am not writing of electric fluorescent tubes. I am thinking about 'the light' of mental understanding and of spiritual insight. The Lord Jesus Christ himself is, 'the light of the world'. His light is the light that can be seen piercing the darkness from the lives of all genuine Christian disciples.

Whoever decides to follow Jesus, and whoever keeps on following when the difficulties of life come along, he or she will never walk in darkness, but will have 'the light of life'.