

= Robert Keable =

Robert Keable (6 March 1887 ? 22 December 1927) was a British novelist , formerly a missionary and priest in the Church of England . He resigned his ministry following his experiences in the First World War and caused a scandal with his 1921 novel *Simon Called Peter* , the tale of a priest 's wartime affair with a young nurse . The book sold 600 @, @ 000 copies in the 1920s alone , was referenced in *The Great Gatsby* , and was cited in a double murder investigation . Fêted in the United States , but critically less than well @-@ received , Keable moved to Tahiti where he continued to write , producing both novels and theological works , until his death at age 40 of a kidney complaint .

Keable was raised in Bedfordshire and educated at Magdalene College , Cambridge . He entered a theological college after graduation and was ordained a priest in 1911 . He spent the next several years as a missionary in Africa , stationed on Zanzibar and in Basutoland , before returning to Europe as an army chaplain during the First World War . There , he met and fell in love with a young nurse , Grace Eileen Joly Beresford Buck , a development over which he eventually quit the Church of England and left his wife , Sybil . Returning to England after the war , Keable resigned his ministry and began to write novels : his first , 1921 's *Simon Called Peter* , became a runaway success and launched Keable into a life of literary celebrity . Increasingly disillusioned with the hypocrisies he saw in contemporary British life , he and Buck left Europe for Tahiti in 1922 . The couple lived there happily until Buck 's death in childbirth in 1924 , after which Keable 's health began to fade . He nonetheless struck up a later relationship with a Tahitian woman , Ina , with whom he had a son , and continued to publish novels until his death of a kidney condition in 1927 .

Keable 's most famous publication was his first novel , *Simon Called Peter* , but he produced a prodigious literary output , spanning theological tracts through poetry to travel guides . *Simon Called Peter* 's sequel , *Recompense* , was made into a film , and his later novels all attracted substantial attention . His writings generally met with much greater popular than critical approbation , and *Simon Called Peter* was sufficiently incendiary to be banned . The book nonetheless became a contemporary best @-@ seller .

Much of Keable 's fiction contained autobiographical elements , often centring on his attitudes toward and experience of the Christian religious establishment . As well as these fictional explorations he produced a final , non @-@ fiction work , *The Great Galilean* , outlining the religious views he developed during a lifetime 's uneasy relationship to Anglicanism and Catholicism . He came to believe that the historical Jesus bore little relationship to the Jesus of Christian tradition , and , in *The Great Galilean* , attempted to reconcile his ambivalence about the orthodoxies of the Church with his enduring belief in an all @-@ loving God . Keable 's views earned him many unfavourable reviews and the contempt of the church in which he had practised , but foreshadowed ideas of free love that became prominent later in the 20th century .

= = Early life = =

Keable was named after his father , Robert Henry Keable , a successful businessman who in 1904 , when his son was 17 , was ordained an Anglican priest and became vicar at Pavenham , Bedfordshire . Robert Keable had a younger brother , Henry , who died of typhoid c.1918. The young Keable attended Whitgift School in Croydon , Surrey , where he was nicknamed " Kibbles " and noted for his " fluent and facetious " contributions to the school paper , the *Whitgiftian* . Influenced by his father 's piety he became an active lay preacher and member of the YMCA as a teenager . Keable 's was an austere , Anglican upbringing , the effect of which , his biographer Hugh Cecil has suggested , was to leave the young man industrious , somewhat preacherly in his writing style , and with a devoutness not particularly tied to the specific faith in which he 'd been raised .

Keable went up to Magdalene College , Cambridge , in 1905 . His peers there included the future Everest explorer George Mallory and Arthur Tedder , 1st Baron Tedder . Though his contemporaries described him as a quiet , devout student who initially associated only with other " religious @-@ minded " men , he later became more sociable and rowed in the college second eight . He took a

first in the History Tripos , graduating with his BA in 1908 and receiving his MA in 1914 . At Magdalene he was a great friend of Arthur Grimble , the future commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands . Grimble 's daughter , in a biography of her father , described the undergraduate Keable as devout , " earnest , somewhat introspective " and deeply literary . She records that he spent his university vacations on missionary work . He is known also to have taught in East Africa under YMCA auspices , and to have climbed Mount Kilimanjaro .

Among the most significant acquaintances Keable made at Cambridge were two brothers among the fellowship , Arthur and Hugh Benson . The Bensons were sons of a highly accomplished academic and religious family ; their father , Edward White Benson , was Archbishop of Canterbury and their mother , Mary Sidgwick Benson , the sister of the philosopher Henry Sidgwick , had set up a lesbian household with Lucy Tait (daughter of the previous archbishop of Canterbury) after her husband 's death . In the years just before Keable came to Cambridge Hugh Benson (the inspiration for Keable 's character " Father Vassall " in *Peradventure* (1921)) had departed from the Anglicanism of his upbringing in favour of the Roman Catholic Church , being ordained a Catholic priest in 1904 . According to Keable 's contemporaries , the two met when Edouardo Ginistrelli , a neighbour on Keable 's staircase , invited them both to lunch : " Keable ... fell under the spell of Fr Benson 's winning personality , " wrote James I. James , a college acquaintance of Keable 's : " Keable 's Anglican loyalty remained , but it was a new kind of loyalty . He spoke no more of Protestantism but always of Catholicism ... in Chapel he now genuflected and crossed himself . A strange mystic element deep down in his being began to stir ... I often suspected that Fr Benson had posed to this clever mind ? for Keable was clever ? the arguments that had recently brought himself to Catholicism . " Benson was also a novelist and , under his influence , the sensory , aesthetic dimension of Keable 's own writing (and of his faith) began to develop . Benson sensed in Keable an " inclination to Rome " , but Keable elected for the Anglican priesthood , joining the theological college of Westcott House and serving as canon at Bradford after completing his studies .

= = Priesthood = =

In 1911 Keable was ordained a priest of the Church of England at Ripon . His friend Hugh Benson regretted that Keable had not turned to Catholicism , a decision Benson felt would lead Keable to ultimate disenchantment with the Church . In a letter he told Keable :

'You are the first I ever met of whom I could say ' I know that he knows Christ , and that he is turning his back on him ; and I know he knows it too.'

= = = African missions = = =

From 1912 ? 1914 Keable was sent overseas with the Universities ' Mission to Central Africa , a decision perhaps intended to " save him from Rome " . He served under Frank Weston , the Bishop of Zanzibar , a staunch Anglican with whom Keable clashed : Keable objected to Weston 's unorthodox methods for training black African priests ; Weston , a vehement supporter of these priests , saw prejudice in Keable 's views . Weston was to inspire the " Bishop of Moçambique " character in Keable 's 1921 novel *Peradventure* . In Africa , Keable wrote his first two books : 1912 's *Darkness or Light* , a history of the Universities ' Mission to Central Africa , and the manuscript for *City of the Dawn* (published in 1915) , a portrait of Zanzibar that " showed genuine religious fervour , as well as a characteristic sentimentality . "

Keable returned to the UK in 1914 as a result of illness , precipitated perhaps by the rigour of service upon which Weston insisted in Zanzibar . He was offered a church posting in Sheffield but declined , fearing " the pull of Rome " if left within reach of Catholic influences in Britain . Instead , he made two attempts to enlist for armed service during the First World War ; ill health thwarted both , so he returned to Africa for mission work , becoming rector of three parishes (including Leribe , Basutoland) , under the diocese of the Bishop of Bloemfontein . He published some ten devotional works and works on missionary practice during this time , including *The Loneliness of Christ* , and a

book of verse titled Songs of the narrow way . The damaging effects of the illness he had suffered were compounded by an assault while in the field : accounts vary , with some friends recalling that Keable received a blow to the head from a " powerful native " , and others describing a gunshot wound to the thigh , inflicted by a (probably drunk or deranged) Mosutu . Keable 's biographer Cecil has suggested that the whole incident may have been a fabrication of Keable 's .

In 1915 Keable married Sybil Armitage at Durban . The pair had met in Bradford ; Sybil was " passionately religious , with a strong social conscience and robust health ... a big , handsome (some thought beautiful) woman with auburn hair . " She was well suited to the demands of life as a missionary 's wife , and inspired the character Edith in Keable 's later novel Peradventure , but the pair were temperamentally ill @-@ matched (and described by Keable 's biographer Cecil as " sexually incompatible ") . They had no children ; Hugh Benson suspected that the marriage had been a gesture on Keable 's part to render impossible the lingering prospect that he might become a monk .

= = = First World War = = =

Keable eventually achieved his wish of going to war in 1917 , when a South African contingent was mustered for military service in France and Keable volunteered to go with them as chaplain . His experiences there were to form the basis for his first and most successful novel , Simon Called Peter . Appointed an army chaplain on 26 May 1917 , Keable travelled to the Rouen sector with a Native Labour Contingent of 21 @,@ 000 men . These men were paid £ 3 per month to unload supply ships and provide infrastructure support for military operations in Europe . As a chaplain , with the rank of captain , Keable was expected to be at the disposal of the army at large , and ministered to those seeing active infantry service as well as to labourers . Padres were formally required to remain behind the lines , but it is apparent that Keable nonetheless saw something of the realities of the frontline .

Like many padres during the First World War , Keable reassessed his approach to his congregation . The men to whom he ministered , he came to believe , cared nothing for the finer points of Anglican theological dispute : from the church they wanted only " entertainment and a barely spiritual form of practical Christianity . " Keable argued as much openly , suggesting that the Protestant chaplaincy in France should be amalgamated into the operations of the YMCA , and that only the Roman Catholic padres ? who seemed to have quite a different , more immediate relationship with their Celtic and Lancastrian companies ? should remain . His public airing of these views attracted censure from the church (and particularly from Frank Weston , who was also serving) , but reflected the openness that made him popular with the officers in France . A smoker , he was known to share whisky and sodas in the officers ' mess , and ? as does the title character in Simon Called Peter ? to have become acquainted with a devoutly religious French prostitute .

Another transformative experience of Keable 's war was his acquaintance with Grace Eileen Joly Beresford Buck , known as " Jolie " , an 18 @-@ year @-@ old nurse from a prominent British family (the daughter of William Tenant Buck and Beatrice Elinor Biddulph Beresford ; her ancestors included the Dukes of Rutland) who was driving trucks for the Canadian Lumber Corps when the two met . The pair began a lifelong affair , though Keable did not yet leave his wife . Instead , at the war 's close , he returned to Leribe . He remained until 1919 , torn by his increasing alienation from the church and his experiences during the war . There he wrote his first novel , Simon Called Peter , in an intensive 20 @-@ day spell : " I laid a parson 's life bare " , he said of his writing , " and didn 't care a damn . " At last , in 1919 , Keable resigned his ministry and left the Anglican church .

= = Literary career = =

After leaving the church Keable and Sybil moved back to England , settling at West Wrating , Cambridgeshire , where both began to explore the Roman Catholic Church . Sybil converted and became a devout Catholic , but Keable also read works in contemporary philosophy and the books of Charles Darwin , and appears briefly to have lost his faith altogether . He wrote , of the history of

Christianity , " I can see creative evolution at work . What is behind it , I don 't know . But I 'm inclined to think that I do not believe it is anything which the old concept of God really covers . "

To support the family Keable worked during 1921 as an assistant @-@ master at Dulwich College , and served the following year at Dunstable Grammar School . He continued to write : the manuscript for Simon Called Peter had found a publisher , Michael Sadleir at Constable , who liked its prospects and commissioned from Keable a second novel . He commenced The Mother of All Living , " an intense love @-@ drama set in South Africa " , which reflected his new interest in African traditional religion and featured a Bergsonian concept of " life @-@ force " as an alternative to theology .

Then Simon Called Peter was published , and met with astonishing success . The book reportedly sold over 600 @,@ 000 copies during the 1920s , reaching a 66th edition by 1922 . A largely autobiographical work , Simon Called Peter is the tale of a priest , Peter Graham , who has an affair in wartime France with a nurse named Julie . The title character almost abandons his faith for love , but experiences a direct revelation of Christ while watching a Catholic mass and is given up by his lover , who sees his sincerity . Its runaway popularity won Keable a level of celebrity : he spent a lot of time in London and took up again with Buck , who was now usually known as " Betty " (she , by her token , called Keable " Bill ") . The two met often at Gwen Otter 's salon at No. 1 Ralston Street , in Chelsea , near to where Keable had lodgings ; they made many friends , though refrained from fully overt displays of couplehood out of deference to Buck 's distressed parents and Keable 's wife . At this time , Keable appears to have become , in some measure , a proponent of open relationships and free love . He concluded that Buck had a right to pursue relationships with other men , though there is no firm evidence that she did , and " that a warm and spontaneous sexual nature , far from being in conflict with Christian love , was in fact a manifestation of it . "

Keable 's developing attitudes and relationship with " Betty " disgusted his wife , Sybil , but as a devout Catholic she refused to divorce . This left Keable unable to marry Buck , and contributed to a growing sense on his part of alienation from English society . At last , in 1922 , he managed legally to separate from his wife . He took up the suggestion of former college friend Arthur Grimble , by then a colonial administrator in the Ellice Islands , that he visit the South Pacific , a fashionable destination for 1920s Europeans . To Keable the South Seas appeared to offer escape from the hypocrisies of British society , as well as furnishing a climate better suited to his never @-@ hearty constitution . In 1922 Keable and Buck sailed aboard the Bendigo for the South Pacific via Australia , where Keable undertook a book tour , giving lectures in which he broadcast his new sexual ethics : that unmarried couples in love could have deeply moral relationships , while loveless spouses who stayed together for convention 's sake were committing acts of deep immorality . His views scandalised the contemporary press , but Frank Weston noted in correspondence that Keable as a " shipwrecked priest " made quite a useful cautionary tale for novices .

= = Tahiti = =

Keable was to remain resident in Tahiti for the rest of his life . He wrote once of his regret that the Tahitians had not succeeded in converting William Ellis , a nineteenth @-@ century Christian missionary sent there to attempt to proselytise them . " Bill and Betty " settled at first in Paul Gauguin 's former home at Punaavia . The house was quite luxurious , overlooking a bay with views of Moorea island . Buck drove a Dodge and enjoyed Tahiti 's ample supplies of cheap French wine ; Keable " brooded on Gauguin 's gesture against spiritual suffocation " , and eventually moved the household further inland , to a native @-@ style house in the wilder surrounds of Teahuahū , near Papeari . The couple made friends with the Swedish artist Paul Engdahl . Keable continued to write copiously , adding to his oeuvre the novel Recompense , a sequel to Simon Called Peter . He undertook several book tours of the United States and spent his spare time answering fanmail , swimming , and sailing .

Then , in 1924 , Buck fell pregnant . The couple agreed that she should return to England for better healthcare during the birth , and she went there to set up a home with her mother 's help . In early November 1924 she gave birth prematurely to a son , Anthony , and a few days later died of poisoning from chloroform administered against the pain of delivery . The grief @-@ stricken Keable

's own health worsened and he was advised to return to Tahiti ; the baby , too weak to travel , was left in England with Jack and Rita Elliott , friends of the couple 's since the Ralston Street salon days . The Elliotts were eventually to adopt him .

Keable remained in Tahiti , his health worsening . He suffered weight loss , diabetes , high blood pressure and fever , all stemming from a kidney illness . Nonetheless , he completed the novel Numerous Treasure , which he had begun before Buck 's death ; the bittersweet tale of a Polynesian woman who shared her name with a cocktail and a brand of cigarettes was a commercial success , and has been considered a valuable portrait of early 20th century Tahitian life . His health and spirits rallied in the years after Buck 's death : he completed a travel book , Tahiti , Isle of Dreams , and a book tour of the United States and Europe . On returning to Tahiti he struck up a relationship with a mixed 20th race islander named Ina , and made many new friends including the writers Alec Waugh (elder brother of Evelyn) , who had been inspired to visit Tahiti by Numerous Treasure , Zane Grey , and James Norman Hall . Waugh described the Keable of this period " reclined among cushions , clad only in a pareo , while his Tahitian princess , bare 20th shouldered and bare 20th footed , her black hair falling to her waist and a white flower behind her ear , glided negligently about the house " ? and yet noted that , on suggesting a cup of tea , Keable 's voice still took on " the parsonical intonation with which fifteen years earlier he had summoned the parish children to a Sunday school treat . "

1927 's Lighten Our Darkness (or Ann Decides) was his last important novel . The tale of a Catholic priest restored to faith by a woman 's love was , however , poorly received , and the follow up Madness of Monty , a " kindly , innocuous comedy " , went over worse still . Instead , helped by James Norman Hall to overcome his failing eyesight , Keable devoted his attention to The Great Galilean , a non 20th fictional account of the historical Jesus and his relationship to the Jesus of religious tradition .

Away from his writing , he and Ina conceived a child : Ina gave birth to a son , named Henry Reheatoa (meaning " glorious warrior ") , with whom Keable was delighted and to whom he bequeathed all his Tahitian properties . In November 1927 he initiated formal divorce proceedings against Sybil in an attempt to legitimise this son .

In December 1927 Keable contracted a worsened kidney infection , became septic and delirious , and , on 22 December , died at home . The New York Times obituary identified the illness that killed him as Bright 's disease ; the term was used to refer to a number of nephritic kidney conditions .

Though , according to acquaintances , many of his friends had heard nothing from him since his departure for Tahiti , his will made provision for a scholarship at Magdalene and named the college as his residuary legatee . His literary assets at death were valued at £ 5 007 . Though Keable received a Protestant burial in Papeete , some accounts suggest that in the last weeks of his life he formally converted to Catholicism . Other commentators suggest the pagan sentiments he expressed about the birth of his new son as a riposte to social convention tend to indicate otherwise . Hugh Cecil argues that , at his death , Keable most likely just became " able to reconcile his two ideals , romantic 20th erotic and religious , and could die peacefully accepting the rituals he loved . "

= = Religious views = =

The religious views Keable developed after leaving the Church of England influenced his novels ; he eventually articulated his own theology in his final book , The Great Galilean , a theological work . The unorthodoxy of his views was not always well received . A reviewer of his novel Peradventure observed " Peradventure starts as a Church of England tract , becomes what would appear to be a Roman Catholic tract , and before the end is reached the reader is in doubt as to just what sort of tract it is . "

His last book , The Great Galilean , has been characterised by one biographer as Keable 's attempt " to reconcile his love of Jesus with his failure to believe in him as a God . " The book sought to distinguish the " historical Jesus " of record from the " traditional Jesus " of church worship . The historical Jesus , Keable said , was so poorly known that there survived too little information for a

three @-@ line obituary . Instead , the figure that Christians worshipped was a " traditional Jesus " , recorded in the Gospels from an oral tradition that was not really biographical . This " traditional Jesus " became a " literary Jesus " , the central figure of the four gospels , and it is on this figure ? quite distinct from the actual , historical Jesus ? that the contemporary church centred . Keable sought to criticise the attitude in the contemporary church toward " traditional Jesus " , given how much of the rest of " traditional " religion Protestantism had discarded . However , Keable was at pains to stress that the " traditional " Jesus should not be seen as an imposture , or something to be discarded . The ahistoricity of the traditional Jesus , he said , should not be a reason to leave the church . Without this traditional Jesus , he predicted , Western civilisation would fade and fall . He was , then , critical of the specific ways in which the contemporary church construed Jesus , in its attempts to conflate the traditional Jesus with historical Jesus , which Keable considered impossible . He blamed these actions of the church for the declining numbers of worshippers , and accused it of draining Christianity of profundity by relying too heavily on rationalism and rigid structure .

Though he believed that the historical Jesus was barely known , Keable nonetheless devoted much attention in *The Last Galilean* to trying to understand the figure . He emphasised the humanity of historical Jesus , who , he wrote , had shared humanity 's ignorance ? though had also been blessed with an extraordinarily undistorted mind . He wrote of a Jesus tolerant ? even fond ? of sinners , and one who , understanding the importance of love and sex to the average man , advocated love as the most important thing , above any church rule or regulation . This Jesus was a great prophet of free love , associated and in harmony with a " spirit of all life " .

The Great Galilean was not well received . The New York Times reviewer called it hopelessly muddled , finding Keable 's claims about the unknowability of Jesus contrary to his efforts to understand and worship him : " Frankly , we do not know what to make of it . We can only suppose that street preaching at Cambridge , and even climbing Kilimanjaro , are not conducive to logic . "

= = Critical reception = =

Keable 's novels won him immense international popularity and intense controversy . His novels were equated with Mrs Humphry Ward 's *Robert Elsmere* , a similarly scandalous tale of religious doubt among the clergy published 40 years earlier : H.D.A. Major , editor of the *Modern Churchman* magazine , made this comparison with respect to Keable 's *Peradventure* , noting " It is slighter , but it has need to be . The twentieth century novel reader is intellectually and morally lighter than the nineteenth . " Reporting his death , the *Melbourne Argus* attributed the best @-@ selling popularity of Keable 's novels to the licentiousness of their contents : " they have no literary value " . His former college acquaintance James later wrote that " his friends sought to dissuade him from publication . The transition from the beautiful book on *The Loneliness of Christ* (1914) ? of his Central African period ? to *Simon Called Peter* (1921) came as a great shock to all who had known and loved him in earlier days . " Where Rosemary Grimble calls Keable 's novels " splendidly erotic " , a Birmingham News correspondent in Birmingham , Alabama , accused Keable of " fashioning abnormalities " . Other critics called his success " undeserved " and attributed it to prurience on the part of his readers . Reviewers also suggested that the contrast between Keable 's ecclesiastical background and the frank , often sexual , content of his novels attracted curiosity in itself . A Time columnist , " J.F. " , expressed the fascination of this disconnect overtly , responding to a piece titled " The censorship of thought " that Keable had contributed to a 1922 volume , *Nonsenseorship* (sic) , after *Simon Called Peter* 's publication had made him notorious . " Surely , here is a modern personality worth the study of the psychologists , " J.F. wrote , noting the romance of Keable 's unusual circumstances : " From a quiet English clergyman to the author of a sensational best @-@ seller who has taken up his permanent residence in the South Seas seems a long jump . " In person , he said , Keable was the antithesis of his novels ' striking directness :

He does not impress one as a radical gentleman . There is nothing to suggest the resigned clergyman , author of books marked by their sex frankness and melodrama . In fact , his scholarly bearing and gentleness mark him rather as the country curate , who should be acting as a character in a novel by May Sinclair and passing out crumpets to maiden ladies in a decorous drawing @-@

room instead of writing of Tahitian damsels as he has done in his new novel , Numerous Treasure .

It was for Simon Called Peter , a tale of a wartime romance between an English priest and a Red Cross nurse , that Keable acquired most of his notoriety . As well as its best @-@ selling print editions , the story was adapted as a stage play by Jules Eckert Goodman and Edward Knoblock in 1924 . The show enjoyed popular success in Chicago before moving on to New York .

A great deal of media coverage of Simon Called Peter concerned its involvement in a prominent United States court case , over the double murder in New Brunswick , New Jersey of Edward Wheeler Hall , a rector , and Elenor Mills , a married member of his congregation , with whom he had been conducting an affair . During their courtship Hall had presented Mills with copies of Simon Called Peter , which also featured a romance between a priest and a woman , and The Mother of All Living . John Sumner , the secretary of the Society for the Suppression of Vice , seized upon this fact and tried to have the books ' American publisher arrested . He claimed that Simon Called Peter could be used to corrupt and seduce the innocent : " Published with a title savouring of religion and written by a clergyman , it had an innocent look which admitted it to society where the ordinary licentious novel could not circulate . " A magistrate , declining the request to issue an arrest warrant against the publisher , nonetheless agreed that the book was " nasty " and " particularly objectionable because written by a clergyman . "

Shortly afterwards , a Boston judge deemed the book obscene , and fined a librarian (who protested that she had a long queue of patrons waiting to borrow the book) US \$ 100 for circulating it . Keable himself professed surprise at the intensity of the reaction to the book , saying that his missionary and military experiences must have " blunted [his] perceptions as to what the general public felt . " In response to the banning in Boston of another of his books , Numerous Treasure , he wrote to his editor George Putnam that he had in the past month received fanmail from a bookseller , a request for his photograph from a girls ' high school library , and " an intimation that I had been adopted as the literary patron of a class at an American university . I feel vaguely that Boston ought to be told . "

The net effect of the Simon Called Peter controversy was to make Keable a celebrity . The book became so well known that F. Scott Fitzgerald , who described the novel as " really immoral " , gave it to protagonist Nick Carraway to read in his famous novel The Great Gatsby , and had the character pronounce " Either it was terrible stuff or the whiskey distorted things , because it didn 't make sense to me . " The book 's sequel , Recompense , was optioned as a film by Warner Brothers , starring Marie Prevost and Monte Blue . Keable himself found the screenplay so altered from the original text , he wryly proposed that he write another novel based on it . His first visit to the United States , in autumn 1924 , was announced in the New York Times ; he took in a production of the Simon Called Peter stage play in New York before returning to Polynesia via New Orleans , Los Angeles , and San Francisco . On his return , the Times printed a very lengthy letter from Keable on the subject of the origins of the cocktail , headlining it " Robert Keable , in His Tahiti Retreat , Makes a Case for Englishmen , or Their " Greek and Roman Ancestors , " as the Inventors . "

The same paper had received Keable 's second novel , 1922 's The Mother of All Living , favourably ; reviewer Louise Maundell Fields called it " Not only ... better from an artistic point of view [than Simon Called Peter] ... its general outlook is both steadier and more mature . [...] the book has in it so much that is well done and worth while that one does not feel inclined to carp at its comparatively few weaknesses . " On the whole , other reviews were less favourable . The characters in both Peradventure and Recompense were criticised for lacking depth : reviewers said they served only as vehicles for conveying different theoretical points of view . A later book , 1927 's Ann Decides , was dismissed succinctly by the Chicago Daily Tribune as " tosh " .

P.W. Wilson , in a New York Times piece on contemporary religious literature two years after Keable had died , called Keable 's life " a spiritual tragedy " , and described his thinking as fundamentally contradictory :

" His mind , like rock , reveals by strata the volcanic and other experiences to which it has been subjected . "

Keable 's distinction between the historical and the traditional Jesus , Wilson argued , was ultimately muddled and internally inconsistent , his verdicts on the illiberality of the contemporary

church at odds with his own abiding conviction .

Late in the 20th century Keable received some revisionist attention . *Simon Called Peter* came back into print , with a recent edition published in 2008 . Biographer Hugh Cecil , including Keable in his 1995 anthology of neglected Great War writers , concluded :

From early in his career he had used his talents to the full and seized life with both hands . His works , though seldom read now , were no mean achievement , intellectually or artistically , even if their high quality was rarely sustained throughout a whole book ... Robert Keable was quintessentially the divided twentieth century man , yearning for self @-@ realization and for a faith , and full of guilt and self @-@ hatred . Yet as we have seen , *Simon Called Peter* is not an unhappy book ... Robert 's experience of war ... seemed to reveal the nature of real goodness , loyalty , and love .