



*A Challenge
to Faith*

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A Challenge to Faith

YOUR faith groweth exceedingly." Are not St. Paul's glad words true in a measure in these days? If we look back twenty years we see how the tide has risen. We can test it as we test it on the sea-shore; marks that a wave would reach formerly, now and then, are the ordinary level now. "Exceedingly" may be a strong term, but "your faith groweth;" *that* is true at least.

What purpose is all this faith to serve? It is the coin of the realm of heaven and we are God's stewards. A great challenge has long lain by the Church, for the most part unmet—the solid phalanx of enmity to the Cross of Christ—the unconquered crescent of the one hundred and seventy-three millions of the Mohammedan world. There it lies: Arabia, Egypt, Persia, Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, North Africa, the greater part of the Sudan; and in India and China and other Eastern lands, there are Moslems inter-

dispersed among the idolaters, and harder to be won than they. Among all these lands, has there been yet such a work of the Holy Ghost as to cause a perceptible break in the enemy's ranks?

The glimmering light in which the Arab walks is not that of the dawn; it is a twilight settling into night. Banded together the souls wander away, only the bands are not to be numbered in units, but in scores of millions. And the Church of Christ, as a whole, has idly watched them and said, "There is no help for it, we must let them go." It is as though there were a spell on them from which they cannot break away, and oh, there has been a spell upon us, that we "the knights in the army of God" have not taken up the challenge and vindicated His glory.

First there are those who judge the matter from a purely human standpoint. They say, "Experience has proved it to be useless to meddle with Moslems; their religion is suited to their ways, it is good enough for them. They worship one God, and they have a code of morality. Let them alone." We who know the glory of the

light of Jesus do not need to argue this question of the excellence of their religion; we do not need to point to the icy coldness, the formalism, the corruption that lie underneath the fair-seeming exterior, the utter powerlessness of their creed to deliver them from sinning. They are "without Christ," that is enough. "And he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." If you could see them to-day, the grave, intelligent men, the women with their native brightness struggling through the fetters of generations of ignorance and bondage, the sweet brown-skinned, dark-eyed children, the boys and girls of every intermediate age, as lovable, as full of possibilities as our boys and girls at home, you would not say that anything short of Christ was "good enough" for them!

But on the other side (and this is the side taken by many who profess to believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life), there are those who hold that Mohammedanism is not too hopeful to be meddled with, but too hopeless! They say, "No good is ever done in these lands; it is wasting your strength to spend your-

selves upon them. They are wrapped up in self-righteousness, and paralysis, and corruption; far better go to the heathen who will hear."

This is not the way an earthly soldier would look on a vantage ground of the enemy. It is not the way to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Take it at its very worst. They are dead lands and dead souls, blind and cold and stiff in death as no heathen are; but we who love them see the possibilities of sacrifice, of endurance, of enthusiasm, of *life*, not yet effaced. Does not the Son of God who died for them see these possibilities too? Do you think He says of the Mohammedan, "There is no help for him in his God?" Has *He* not a challenge too for your faith, the challenge that rolled away the stone from the grave where Lazarus lay? "Said I not unto thee, that thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" *Then* they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid."

Let His voice sound down into our hearts till we roll away the stone of unbelief that is helping to shut down these poor souls

into their prison-house. If He is doing "no mighty work" among them, the cause may be as of old. For remember, it is not the handful who are out among them that can win the battle. If it is Satan's stronghold what is it for a few score of us to go up against it, many of us weighted down with the pressure of spirit that comes on one in lands that are steeped in the power of Satan? It is you at home in the bright, free, spiritual air, who could have power with God for victory.

Will you take up the responsibility of this thing? You may not have been definitely unbelieving, but have you been as definitely believing as the case demands? Has the dishonour to Christ's cause ever pressed upon you? Have you done all that you can do to wipe out the stain of defeat? It is not yet past retrieving: He "strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress." We may yet add this triumph to the roll of our King's victories before He returns!

A story of the wars of the first Napoleon has often come back to me. He was trying,

in a winter campaign, to cut off the march of the enemy across a frozen lake. The gunners were told to fire on the ice and break it, but the cannon balls glanced harmlessly along the surface. With one of the sudden flashes of genius he gave the word, "Fire upwards!" and the balls crashed down full weight, shattering the whole sheet into fragments, and the day was won. You can "fire upwards" in this battle, even if you are shut out from fighting it face to face. If God calls you there in bodily presence, you will never be able to pray to any purpose, or work to any purpose either, *except* there; but if He does not summon you you can as truly, as effectually, as prevailingly, do your share within the four walls of your own room. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

To "see the glory of God;" that in its crystal clearness was the aim of Jesus. Not mere pity for the dead souls, but a passion for the glory of God, is what we need to hold us through to victory. May He inspire it in us by the power of His

indwelling life; then will the very "faith of the Son of God" Himself rise up within us, and the works that He did we may do also. Oh, to measure God's resources as He did that day at Bethany; then we should give thanks beforehand at the answer received, "accounting God able."

One more story — a very homely one. "I am going to get you a winter jacket to-day," said my sister a while ago to her six-year-old daughter. The little fair face looked up with a demur on it. "I don't think you'd better, mother dear." "Why, we were talking about it the other day and you seemed to think it would be very nice." "Yes — but — mother, they cost a great deal. I don't think really you can afford it." My sister smiled. "Not afford a new jacket? I think I can manage it." The child flushed up. "Please, Mother, I don't think you can, *really*. I've looked in your purse, and there was very little in it."

Do we not deal so with our Heavenly Father? We look anxiously at the tiny coins that we can see and handle, so to speak, and yet we know as much about the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward

who believe as my little niece knew about the bank account that lay behind the purse!

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?” “Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” “*If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*”

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