

# THE MOSLEM WORLD

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## EDITORIAL

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### ON TAKING HOLD OF GOD.

This number of our Quarterly points out the glory of the impossible and puts the reader face to face with the spiritual problems of the missionary task. Whether at Meshed or in the Philippine Islands, whether in Arabia or among the Chinese Moslems, the missionary faces the same call of duty—to transfer allegiance from Mohammed to Christ. Here human wisdom and strength fail. We are cast back upon God.

In spite of the tremendous changes, political, social and economic which will doubtless result from the redistribution or reconstruction of empires in the Near East, the intellectual and spiritual forces of Islam will rally and strengthen their grip on the minds and hearts of its followers. Any reliance on political prestige or racial superiority would be a costly blunder. At a time like this we are forcibly reminded of the words spoken by Jeremiah:

"Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

"For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

"For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

The rivers of God do not take their rise in the desert of diplomacy, but flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the spiritual conflict between Christianity and Islam, the true soldier of the Cross must stand in His strength alone. The arm of flesh will fail

us; we dare not trust human governments, however righteous be their policy and practice. When the capitulations have disappeared, will evangelism be helped or hindered? There may be need for outspoken testimony, but the greater need is for out-poured intercession. We must "take hold of God." No definition of prayer is so bold as that expressed in these words of Isaiah. Here we have at once the pathos of the suppliant, the strength of the martyrs' faith and the daring of Hebrew poetry. Prayer which Gladstone called "the highest exercise of the human intellect" is also the highest exercise of the affections and will. In our survey of the Moslem world; its neglected areas, its new conditions and the ripening of the harvest—where the seed of the martyrs has fallen—we will make the largest progress on our knees. The conditions in the Moslem world cannot help stirring the emotions; yet the only place where these need never be stifled or suppressed, for fear of man or the censorship, is in the prayer closet. Here we may pour out our hearts, our tears, our agony. Intercessory prayer is the test of the reality and sincerity of our compassion. When we consider the history of Islam—its conditions and progress and the neglect of the Church, the luke-warmness of our love and the feebleness of our efforts,—what unoccupied realms there are for confession and humiliation, and of passion for God's glory. He who takes hold of God for the Moslem world starts in motion divine forces. Such prayer is far-reaching and achieves as much as it costs. The Christian on his knees is a king and priest unto God in His universe and the inner chamber becomes a gymnasium for the soul. The effort to realize God's presence in His world stretches the sinews of our faith and hardens its muscles. We believe because it is impossible. Prayer invigorates the will, purifies it and confers decision on those that waver; energy on the listless, calmness to the fretful, sympathy to the selfish and largeness of heart on those who are narrow and provincial. Paul calls this part of his life "wrestling." It is a great spiritual conflict in an arena where the

weapons are never carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Why do we not go over the top?

The energies of the universe, nay, of God Himself, are at the disposal of those who pray—to the man who stirreth up himself to take hold of God. Opportunity is a great word; it challenges by its very hopefulness and sense of urgency. Yet opportunity is not the last word in missions nor the real measure of obligation. It always carries with it the temptation to opportunism and this is not good missionary policy. The open door beckons, it is true, but the closed door challenges Him who has a right to enter. He came when the doors were shut. The kingdoms and governments of this world may have frontiers which must not be crossed, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ knows no frontier. It never has been kept in bonds or within bounds; its message is expulsive and explosive. It is significant that the last name of Allah in Islam's rosary is "Al Fattah"—the Great Opener. He opens the lips of the dumb to song, the eyes of the blind to sight and bursts the prison-house of the captive. He opens the doors of utterance and entrance; graves and gates; the windows of heaven and the bars of death. Because He holds the keys to every situation we must take hold of Him. When He opens no man can shut. Paul's experience at Ephesus may be that of many workers this year in Moslem lands. "A great and effectual door has been opened unto me and there are many adversaries." God's grace made the door effectual and the adversaries made it great. The more baffling the problem seems to us, the easier it is to OMNIPOTENCE. This is the glory of the impossible. Shall we not take hold of God—and let go of man—for the Moslem world.

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