

Within the narrow limits of this chapter the story of the spread of the Moslem faith can be told only in brief outline following the great geographical areas now under its sway.

Spread of the
Faith in
Outline

Before he fell sick Mohammed had given orders for an expedition to the Syrian border. The great commission of the apostle of Islam was "to slay the polytheists wherever ye find them"—and no sooner was Abu Bekr proclaimed caliph than the faithful hastened to fulfil the command. The army of invasion which was to carry the Moslem standard into Syria was ordered to advance. The Moslem historians leave no doubt of the purpose of their errand, and of how they executed it. They say: "With the well-known cry of *Ya Mansur Umit!*—Strike, O ye conquerors!—they slew all who opposed them, and carried off the remainder into captivity. They burned the villages, the fields of standing corn, and the groves of palm, and behind them there went up, as it were, a whirlwind of fire and smoke." Abu Bekr, in his address to the people, emphasized the fact, as well he might, that the very existence of the new religion now depended on aggressive warfare. "When a people leaveth off to fight in the ways of the Lord," said he, "the Lord also casteth off that people."

Arabia and
Syria