

# THE CHURCH AT HOME AND ABROAD.

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## CHURCH WORK AND CHURCH GROWTH.

There are a few instances in which a particular church is the only one existing in a considerable district—say, a township. By a higher commission than any conference or council or presbytery can give—by a commission which those ecclesiastical bodies can merely authenticate—the minister of a church thus situated is the pastor of every soul living within the limits of that district. He is bound not only to have open doors at his place of preaching, welcoming all who come, and then and there faithfully declaring the counsel of God to them; but with all the assistance he can get and all the tact he can acquire, to induce that entire population to accept and profit by his pastoral care, to become, not only virtually but consciously and thankfully members of his flock—*i. e.* of the flock of Christ which Christ has sent him to tend and feed.

It may indeed be, in such a case, that some devout Christians, living on his field, may accept his ministration thankfully, support it loyally and improve it with docility and fidelity, as the best and, for the time being, the only ministry available to them, who, if a minister of some other denomination were within their reach, would prefer his ministry.

It may even be that a minister bearing alone the whole pastoral responsibility of such a field and trying to minister faithfully to all

its people, will find some of them whose antecedents have been such elsewhere, or who have such opinions or temperaments or prejudices, that he will have greater difficulty in winning them to church-attendance than a minister of some other denomination would probably have.

We can imagine a Presbyterian minister, in such circumstances, wishing with all his heart that there was a Methodist or a Baptist, or a Congregational, or an Episcopal church across the village green from his own; and vice versa.

But most frequently there is a church of another denomination—if not just across the green, at least, in a neighboring street.

Let us suppose a village in which there are three churches, of three different denominations. The village is small, containing not more people than could be comfortably seated—every man and woman and child of them—in one of those churches. But it is at the centre of a township six miles square. The people all come to that village to buy their groceries—to get their letters—to market their grain and eggs and potatoes—and to have their horses shod. Why should they not all come there to worship God and to hear his Gospel?

Their three houses of worship have not been placed so near together for any purpose of unfriendly rivalry, but because each is to

**THE NEW YEAR'S OUTLOOK IN INDIA.**

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The year opens full of omens of great approaching changes in India. Politically, the most important fact, as for some time past, is the threatening attitude of Russia on our northwest. While so late as 1880, the Russian lines were but a few miles east of the Caspian, they are now looking on the Hindu Kush near the Indian frontier. This move of the Russian army toward India, which began shortly after the check of her advance on Constantinople in the last Russo-Turkish war, is regarded in India as but a part of a vast project, the plans of which cover not years, but generations, and have now come to affect very gravely a large part of the habitable world. In the development of these plans, great wars, like the Crimean or the Russo-Turkish, are but as it were only single campaigns.

**THE RUSSIAN MENACE.**

Russia menaces India; but her real objective is not Calcutta, or Bombay, but Constantinople and the Holy Land. Twice in the present generation, during the Crimean and the Russo-Turkish War, the efforts of Russia to possess these strategic points have been thwarted by British diplomacy and British arms, but she has not relaxed her purpose, and she does not intend that England shall again be able to prevent her from attaining the goal of centuries. Hence, though since her last defeat she has been quiet in Europe, she has been steadily making immense preparations for her next supreme effort.

And when she shall judge the moment opportune for another move against Turkey, Russia will be able to say to England that if again she should interfere with the imperial plans in the eastern Mediterranean, she must do so at the risk of losing her Indian Empire.

Even if things continue as now, Russia will be prepared to reply to the next British interposition to thwart the Czar's ambition in Constantinople or Syria, by a flank movement on British India, in which doubtless she hopes to be seconded by an uprising of millions in India, ready to welcome any ally for the time who will help turn out the hated English.

In this, too, is to be found the meaning of the establishment in late years of the great naval depot at Vladivostock on the North Pacific, soon to be connected by the Trans-Siberian Railroad with St. Petersburg. Vladivostock and the Siberian Railroad are in fact, Russia's strategic answer to the Canadian Pacific Railroad, as a possible alternative route for troops to India. From this point, when the crisis comes, she will be able to menace India, not only from the northwest by land, but from the sea at such points as Calcutta and Bombay, and intercept army reinforcements coming via Canada, no less than those sent via the Suez Canal.

This too is generally recognized to be the ominous significance of the recent appearance, in defiance of treaties, of the Russian navy in the Mediterranean, and the ill-boding alliance with France, by which Russia secures Toulon as a naval station on French soil, in case of need.

In all of these movements, India is vitally concerned, for the highest naval authorities question whether even now, in event of need, England would be able to reinforce the Indian army via the Suez Canal, if France, who wants Egypt, and Russia, who wants Constantinople, chose to oppose her.

**A DISTURBED EMPIRE.**

All this is well understood here, where one therefore regards with concern the evidently increasing restlessness of the people, signalized by various bloody riots here and there during the past year, and the rancorous anti-English tone of a large part of the native press.

And, most unfortunately, just at this time, when it were desirable at all hazards to conciliate the people by lessened taxation, it becomes imperative to spend enormous sums in placing the whole north-west frontier of India in the highest state of military preparation for the shock of the expected Russian assault. This alone means heavy additional taxation; but within the past year the phenomenal depreciation of silver has made the situation far worse. A very large part of the expense of the Indian administration has to be met in London in gold payments, and

now that exchange, of which the old par was about two shillings to the rupee, has fallen to 1s. 2½d., all this enormous loss of nearly 40 per cent. on expenditure must apparently be met by still additional taxation. It is not strange that, with business paralyzed, my last daily paper described the state of feeling in Calcutta and Bombay as one of "intense anxiety."

It is no wonder that the educated classes, especially, are restless. They say, and truly, that they could administer the government on much smaller salaries than their English rulers, and regard themselves as wronged, so long as the highest places are not open to them all without restriction. They forget what the recent repeated bloody conflicts between Hindus and Mohammedans signally demonstrated, that in the present feverish state of public feeling and bitter religious animosity, only a power believed by both sides to be absolutely neutral and impartial, can be trusted by both to preserve the public peace.

#### THE RELIGIOUS UNREST.

As under analogous political conditions elsewhere, with many of the people, religious feeling deepens, and fanaticism is rife. All feel that the times are pregnant with approaching change, and each hopes that it shall be to the advantage of his own particular cult. Among the Hindus many say that the Kal Yug is about ending, and that the expected tenth Incarnation of Deity is at hand, coming on a white cloud with a two-edged sword to execute vengeance on the wicked. Many Mohammedans look for the speedy appearing of the last of the Imams, the rise of the "Dajjal" or Antichrist, and thereafter the second advent of "Hazrat 'Isa" to destroy him and save all those good Mussulmans, of whom in that day the prophet shall say *Ummati!* ("My people"). Among Hindus and Mohammedans sect rises on sect, all aiming at social, political, or religious reform, or all of these together. Many of these reforms are evidently due in part to Christian influence, even though bitterly opposing the Gospel. Others, again, as in the mischievous "Cow-Protection" societies, seek to revive the grossest forms of Hindu superstition.

Only this week there has appeared here in Dehra a Maulavi, who comes, claiming to be one of twelve apostles sent out by one Mirza Gulam Ahmad Qadir Fani, a Mohammedan reformer in the Punjab, who asserts himself to be the fulfillment of the Gospel prediction of the second advent of Christ. By this, as the Dehra apostle explained before me the other evening, he does not mean that he is himself Jesus Christ, but that, just as John the Baptist came "in the spirit and power of Elias," so this man appears "in the spirit and power" of Jesus Christ, to preach God's truth as revealed in the Law, Gospel, and Quran.

#### READINESS TO HEAR THE GOSPEL.

As the result of the whole situation, political, social and religious, we see in many places a spirit of unusual readiness to listen to any one who may profess to set forth a solution of the mysteries and remedy for the crying evils of the time. Only two or three evenings ago, taking advantage of the presence of this Mohammedan "apostle" in the city, we announced a meeting in our High School to consider the questions raised by this man in regard to the asserted death, resurrection and second advent of the Lord Jesus, and our room, holding between two and three hundred, was filled, as also all the doors and passage ways, with a crowd of Mohammedans, largely of the better class, who listened for a full hour to the Gospel, with a civility and decorum which could not have been exceeded in America; a refreshing contrast to the contentions and ribaldry one often has to meet in bazaar preaching.

Surely these are times in India, when the words of Zechariah may be fitly applied: "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain, even of the Lord that maketh lightnings; and He shall give to every one showers of rain, to every one grass in the field." (R. V.). Will not all our readers in their meetings for prayer for missions especially remember India, that threatened calamities may be averted, the counsels of the wicked brought to nought, and the Holy Ghost move on this troubled deep with life-giving power!