

Opening Up the Way to Life for the Peoples of India

THE year 1912 was a most important one for the peoples of India. It was impossible for anyone at that time to foresee just how important it really was. It marked the beginning of a movement in India that ultimately will spell everlasting life for many of its people.

Understanding of truth concerning Almighty God, the Creator, is essential to eternal life; but that truth has never been popular, because “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one,” Satan the Devil. As “god of this system of things,” Satan has “blinded the minds of the unbelievers, that the illumination of the glorious good news about the Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine through.” ([1 John 5:19](#); [2 Cor. 4:4](#)) So any movement that will open those blinded eyes of understanding and light up the way to eternal life is certainly an important movement. Just such a movement started in India in 1912.

That year a party of seven men made a tour of the world. It was part of a campaign sponsored by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, as it is known today. The Society was pledged to spread the message of the establishment of God’s kingdom throughout the world, in obedience to and in fulfillment of Jesus Christ’s prophetic words recorded at [Matthew 24:14](#): “And this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for the purpose of a witness to all the nations, and then the accomplished end will come.”

C. T. RUSSELL VISITS INDIA

Those seven men were men of action, men of hope. Their hope was based on the sure Word of God, which Christendom professes to believe and teach. Those men wanted to find out for themselves whether the Christian missions were in fact doing what they were supposed to be doing: that is, bearing witness to the approaching end of this old system of things and teaching people the truth about God’s kingdom and the blessings that kingdom will bring to the earth.

So these men traveled. From America they went to Hawaii, Japan, China and on through Asia to India. In India they delivered Bible lectures in Trivandrum, Kottarakara, Nagercoil, Puram, Madras, Vizagapatam, Calcutta, Benares, Lucknow and Bombay. Crowds listened. A few listened with keener interest than the others. One in particular listened with more than passing interest. He discerned truth he had never before grasped. He sought a private interview with the chairman of this committee of seven

men, Charles T. Russell. In such a busy program, Russell offered to give young Joseph, for such was his name, a half-hour interview. That interview lasted two hours and led to a permanent arrangement for the continuation of this Bible teaching in India, which today has resulted in bringing the hope of eternal life to many of India's humble people.

Back in the days of 1912, basic truths were being learned but without much in the way of theocratic organization as regards the method of preaching them. Preaching services were held every week, and study classes were organized. Some of the more zealous ones would spend time distributing tracts or talking to the public at advertised meetings, as well as privately from house to house. But it was a beginning of a movement in India that was to grow and become God's instrument for making known his will and purpose.

At first this movement was confined to southern India, particularly Travancore, as the present state of Kerala was then called. Bible study classes were organized in many places, and the members came to be known as "Bible Students," from the designation of the British branch of this world society, the International Bible Students Association. Soon afterward a representative from the American headquarters was sent to India to help forward the work. But World War I broke out in 1914, and it was soon seen to be expedient that this one return home. There was some lag in the work. Then another man was sent out from headquarters, and the work expanded; but again war conditions forced him to leave the country. There was a short period of anxiety for this youthful movement.

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