

Intercession

By

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The China Inland Mission.

Founder: The late REV. J. HUDSON TAYLOR, M.R.C.S.

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The China Inland Mission was organized in 1865 to penetrate beyond the coast provinces and carry the Gospel into the interior of China. Having now, by the grace of God, established permanent stations in all the inland provinces, it exists to care for the churches thus established, and to extend the good news of Salvation into the still unreached parts of vast extent and heathen darkness.

The Mission is evangelical, interdenominational and international in character. It is supported by the free-will offerings of God's people, no personal solicitation and collections being authorized.

At the opening of 1914 there were in connection with the Mission, 1,076 foreign missionaries (including wives), and over 2,000 Chinese helpers (paid and unpaid). The number of communicants is over 30,000. The number baptized from the beginning amounts to about 45,000

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THE WORD

THE word "intercession" is derived from a Latin verb which means to pass between. It is one of those pictorial words which presents to us two persons, and then a third person coming in between these two. Scripturally speaking, it means God on the one hand, and man on the other hand, and between these two, the Lord Jesus Christ. Among these three, the centre one is the advocate, the intercessor. The purpose of intercession is either the bringing together of two who have been estranged, or the bringing closer together of two where an increase of fellowship is needed.

There is a deeper and larger thought than this, however, suggested by the word as it comes to us from

the Greek. There it means to chance upon or to meet a person, and hence, to have an interview with that person. Thus it comes to signify, finally, to make and keep a formal appointment with a person for the sake of mutual conference. It is not so much now the thought of reconciliation—although this is implied—as the fuller thought of communion. Intercession brings us to the place where most important interviews with God take place, in which great transactions are undertaken and performed.

THE THREE INTERCESSORS.

There are three intercessors spoken of in the Word of God. The first intercessor is Christ, who, according to Romans 8: 34 and Hebrews 7: 25, ever liveth to make intercession for us. "Christ, . . . who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost . . . seeing He ever liveth to make inter-

cession for them.” In view of these words, we behold Christ raised from the dead and at the right hand of the majesty on high, our constant advocate with the Father. And if one wants to know what He is saying there, one has only to read the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to John, for in that prayer He anticipated the time when He should be in the glory, and recorded what He should then say.

The second intercessor is the Holy Spirit, who, according to Romans 8: 26, 27, unites His intercessions with those of Christ in our behalf. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” . . . “He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” As is evident, the case now is not so much a heavenly as an earthly intercession. Christ is in the heavenly places and is the heavenly intercessor. But the Spirit, though He is in heaven, is particularly in us, and,

being in us, is the earthly intercessor. Christ intercedes before the Father. The Spirit intercedes not only for us, but also with us, helping our infirmities in our worship of God.

The third intercessor is the Christian, who, according to 1 Timothy 2: 1, 2, has it as his privilege to make intercession for all men. "That . . . intercessions . . . be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority" . . . It is evident in this case that we speak before God in behalf of the church and the world. It becomes thus our privilege to ask that God will more largely bless His people, and will more extensively save those who are not His people. In this act of intercession we are to listen through the Word for the voice of Christ and the Spirit, and to give expression to this voice before the throne of grace. Thus a true intercessor is one who seeks to be an echo, repeating what the divine voice has taught him to say

THREE STAGES OF INTERCESSION.

In addition, there are three stages through which we are to pass as we grow up into the exercise of our privilege of intercession.

First, there is the stage of *amplification*. Simple prayer would be characterized, not by the word "amplification," but by the word "concentration." Did you ever listen to a child praying? If you have, you have noticed that his prayer is almost entirely about himself. He wants something to eat and something to wear; he wants a good night's rest, and he wants a fair day on the morrow. When he has gotten as far as this he has about completed his petitions. Therefore the prayer is, in the nature of the case, egotistical. Thank God that the child knows enough to pray for these things! For such prayer is acceptable to God, and it is likely to be the beginning of better things. Also, have you ever listened to the prayer of a person who is older than a child in years, but not

in experience? If you have, you have noticed that his prayer is much like the prayer of the child. The words, instead of being those of one syllable, are those of two syllables, and the sentences, instead of being short, are long. But once more the prayer is concentrated upon the interests of the one who is praying, and again it is egotistical. Thank God if a man has gotten as far as this in the practice of praying, for this, too, is likely to be the beginning of better things.

However, note that all this is not intercession. The prayer that is intercession is something that is larger than this. Intercession is not egotistic, but altruistic. Intercession goes off from one's person first to those who are nearest and dearest, and then to those who are farther away and less closely connected with the individual life. And intercession, in the full reach of it, never stops until it has covered the wide world, and taken in all lands and people.

Hence, to the intercessor there is no such thing as geography or nationality. The intercessor is one who lives above the clouds, is equally near to all countries and peoples, and who thus claims all lands as his land and all persons as his spiritual or natural brethren.

I remember an address that the Rev. J. Hudson Taylor gave in which he spoke of his prayer life. He said in it that he once made a discovery which awakened and startled him. He had been interested in China, and he used to begin his praying for that land, and he would pray for it so long that he had little time to give to other countries. As a result he determined that he would reverse the process of praying, beginning with the forgotten lands and ending with China. On thinking the matter over he discovered that South America was the land most frequently left out of his praying, and from that time on he generally began his prayer by remembering that country. Then he added—and I well remember the

smile which came upon his face as he spoke the words—"You may be sure that I never forgot China." In other words, he had become a true intercessor in the sense of amplification. God had set him free, had given him a broad outlook, and had wrought into his soul a large sympathy.

Second, there is the stage of *specification*. Amplification is the reaching out in large measure to that which lies beyond the individual life, and it means, by necessity, a grouping of lands and peoples. Specification is making sure, as far as possible, that none of the particular parts is forgotten. It is setting the mind and heart to remember in detail special portions of vast countries and particular groups of persons among the nations. And, friends, let me say frankly that you will do well to think twice before you set your face toward this sort of intercession. For this kind of praying will take time. It will mean the giving up of prized pleasures and privileges, earlier ris-

ing, and often loss of sleep at night. It will mean, pressing the battle to the gates, until you are laying hold of Satan's strongholds and wrestling with powers in heavenly places. Such praying becomes prolonged, and is necessarily intense.

Mr. Hoste, the present General Director of the China Inland Mission, once told me, in speaking of his prayer life, that he thought he could pray for nearly every member of the Mission by locality and name, which means, that he could visit in thought over two hundred stations and mention over one thousand persons. "Oh," you say, "but he has a remarkable memory." Yes, he has, but that is not the full explanation of the matter. He has prayed so often for these missionaries and for their work that all of the circumstances of the case have become familiar to him and those names lie upon his heart. And I would frankly add, that it is nothing short of a liberal education to bend the knee beside this man

of God and to hear him pray, he goes into such details, and willingly takes such long periods of time to fulfil this ministry.

Finally, there is the stage of *identification*. Intercession amplifies and specifies, but before it has finished, it puts the life so closely into contact with God on the one hand and man on the other hand that oneness is obtained and maintained. And I assure you, if I know anything about intercession, that this experience costs more than any other. I told you a moment ago to think twice before you set your face toward a life of intercession. I would now say to think thrice about it. For if the other experience costs, this experience costs much more. I would urge you, for the sake of the church, for the sake of the world, and above all, for the sake of Christ, to become an intercessor. Nevertheless, remember that doing this will mean, not only that you will have to rejoice with those who rejoice, but also to sorrow with

those who sorrow. For identification implies that you will have to go deep into spiritual experiences, that you will have to suffer with God in His compassion for a back-slidden church and an unsaved world, and that you will have to lay your life down as a sacrifice in behalf of the sons of men. All this will mean such pain as will be nothing less than soul-travail.

As I speak, I am, in my thought, far away in China, traveling in a house-boat. There are in the boat, besides the Chinese crew, Mr. and Mrs. Hudson Taylor and I. It is night, and disturbed for some reason, I cannot sleep, but am lying awake in the darkness. In a little, I hear the striking of a match upon a box, and then I see through the thin curtain the flicker of a light. I know now what it is. Mr. Taylor, the man who is not strong in his older age and who ought to sleep rather than wake, is up and astir. Through the curtain I see him sitting, bending over the Word of God. Then, presently, I hear him pray.

Through the hour, or possibly two hours, I hear the pleading voice, the escaping sigh. This man of God is interceding amply and specifically, but, most of all, he is identifying himself with God and men, and this is the explanation of the choice of the midnight hour, the many words, and the sigh which almost amounts to a sob.

Beloved brothers and sisters, are you and I prepared for such a service of prayer? God grant that we may be! For of all the things this weary world needs to-day, it is this, for men and women who will set themselves upon their tower to see what the Lord will say to them, and who will there keep their lonely, holy watch of intercession with Him. And as surely as we intercede in this wise, so surely will Christ and the Holy Spirit intercede for us, in order that we may be more than ever blessed and used of God.

The China Inland Mission "Prayer Union"

was organized in Toronto in 1893, to secure to the Mission, and thus to China, the blessing of definite, frequent and united prayer. Christian friends, now, from all parts of the world, count it a privilege to be the Lord's remembrancers in behalf of the Mission and of China, and are enrolled as members of the Union, receiving annually the "Prayer Card" and letter from the Director. No pledge as to the time of prayer is asked for, but it is understood that petitions will be offered daily, if possible, for the following definite "objects":

For all Missionaries, Native Helpers, and Native Christians in China,

For all Missionaries, Native Helpers, and Native Christians of the China Inland Mission.

For the Millions of China, that many may be saved and sanctified.

For more Laborers in China, Native and Foreign.

Any friend desiring to join this Prayer Union is asked to give name and address to

THE SECRETARY, CHINA INLAND MISSION,
at either Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa., or 507 Church St., Toronto