

# Uncommon Christians

By Henry W. Frost

# The China Inland Mission

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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 of persons baptized from the beginning amounts to about 45,000.

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*"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* JOHN 10: 10.

**D**R. Young, the author of the Bible Concordance, has suggested that the text which we have chosen for the theme of our meditation may be translated as follows: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it above the common." Taking it for granted that this is an allowable transla-

tion, we discover that Christ foresaw two possible results of His redemptive work, namely, the producing of disciples who should have life in a common sense, and then, of those who should have life in a sense above the common. We reasonably conclude, therefore, that Jesus foretold in these words that there should be two classes of Christians; first, common Christians, and second, uncommon Christians. As to His desire in the matter, then and now, the phraseology of the text leaves us without doubt. He came, He said, that men might have life, and also that the same men might have it more abundantly. In other words, He desires that no disciple should remain a common Christian, but rather that every disciple should become, at once and forever, an uncommon Christian.

As we look upon the lives of Christians at large,

and as we test them by the standard thus given by Christ, the outlook is disappointing and discouraging. There are, thank God! thousands and tens of thousands of those who have life; but, in all charity and yet in all honesty, we must admit that those who have the life that is more abundant are the few among the many. This, according to our text, can only mean one thing: there is a multitude of common Christians; but, comparatively, there is but a small body of uncommon Christians. So then, things are terribly wrong. And it is no light matter that this is so, since it is this living on common planes of life which makes common action possible and uncommon action impossible. For a low-living church will never produce anything else but a low-level product of experience. It is a vital question, therefore, what the Master means when He declares that He would have His

disciples to be uncommon Christians. And it is this question which we desire to face, and as far as possible, to answer. What then is an uncommon Christian?

First, I would say that the uncommon Christian is one who makes God's Word his only, his full, and his constant rule of faith and practice. Now, there are many people who say that they do this, and who would be shocked to think that they do not do this, but who are far from living out their lives on any such plan. In the first place, while they may read, they do not study God's Word. And in the second place, even when they do study the Word, they do not do this from a personal standpoint, in order to correct their lives where they are wrong, and to develop their lives where they are already right. And in the third place, they do not continually keep their souls under the

power of the Word, that its principles and commandments may be operative and effective upon the whole conduct of life. And in such a case, it is not theory but practice which counts. We may hold the theory that all of God's words are "spirit and life." But if we do not, by prayer, faith and practice, make them spirit and life, they will never become such to us. In such an event, however evangelical we may be in holding to the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture, we shall inevitably fall below the level of the Scripture and become nothing but second-rate, or common Christians. It is well for us to remember that one of Christ's beatitudes is this: "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." The uncommon Christian then, is one who not only reveres the Word, but also meditates upon it and obeys it to the full.

Second, the uncommon Christian is one who lives out his life, having no confidence in the flesh, but having all confidence in the person and power of the Holy Spirit. To such an one the Master's word: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," is full of meaning. It signifies that experimentation as to the flesh needs no repetition; that it has been found out, once for all, that the flesh is inherently and infinitely bad; and that there was just cause for the divine edict to go forth against it, pronouncing it beyond alteration or recovery. To such an one also, the words of the Holy Spirit: "Be filled with the Spirit," and, "Walk in the Spirit," are not mystical and illusive, but understandable and practical. They signify that there is a third Person of the Trinity, who is God the Holy Ghost; that He dwells in and with the believer; that He interprets the Word and Christ to the soul;



that He restrains from evil and constrains unto good; that He is able to do all things in and through the Christian which God requires to be done; and hence, that all life is to be begun, continued and ended in Him. Now, no Christian can hold and practice such truths without being lifted up and out of common living. God the Holy Ghost is heavenly in being, in thought, in word, and in action. And when such an One as this possesses the life, the immediate and continual result is an exaltation out from the common into the uncommon. And this produces an uncommon Christian.

Third, the uncommon Christian is one who, having accepted Christ as his Savior, makes Him once and forever the absolute Lord of his life. Our text suggests that Christ may occupy two possible relationships to the soul. Moreover, experience proves

that this is so. Hence, men often know Christ as their Savior and yet do not know Him as their Lord; while not a few saints make it plain that they know Him both as Savior and Lord. It is such facts that give point and application to the word of the Apostle Peter: "Sanctify in your hearts 'Christ as Lord.'" In other words, the Apostle writing to Christians, exhorted them to perfect their lives by making a sanctuary of their hearts and by enshrining and enthroning there the Christ, not simply as Savior of the life, but also as its great and glorious King. Now, there are not many Christians who have thus exalted Christ, and who have thus come to know the blessings of the lordship of Christ. Therefore, instead of their lives being Christ-managed, they are self-managed. And the result is disastrous. For any such life, in the nature of the case, must sink lower and lower down,

until all that is left is bare life, until the man himself is of the earth earthy. It is of such lives the Spirit speaks when, referring to the world beyond, He says, "Saved, yet so as by fire." But the Christian who makes Christ Lord knows no such experience, now or hereafter. Now, it is "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and hereafter it is "an abundant entrance" and "the glory that excelleth." And such an one is an uncommon Christian.

Fourth, the uncommon Christian is one who has the vision of those who walk in heavenly places, and who thus sees things from the heavenly and larger standpoint. It is impossible that there should be anything little or mean about a man who has entered into the resurrection and ascended life of Christ. Even an aviator and a balloonist learns to see and talk big. Much more is this true of the man who takes his place

above clouds and stars and moon and sun, even upon the throne of God. To such a man, earthly things look far away; and what he sees, he views in whole and in perspective. For instance, such an one no longer sees denominations and churches; he sees the Church of Christ which He purchased with His precious blood, and all its members are his brethren. For instance again, he no longer sees his country and nation; he sees that God "has made of one blood all nations of men," and that all men, so far as natural relationship and claim are concerned, are his kith and kin. And seeing big, he also feels big. The heart that was little, expands, and the life that was self-centred breaks forth into prayer and gift and service for all men everywhere. But it is a well known fact that these are not common conditions among men. Alas! they are very uncommon. Most men live in the

valleys. There are but few who dwell upon the mountain-tops. The uncommon Christian, however, does this. His life, experimentally, is hid with Christ in God. And the result of this is the uncommon experiences of the uncommon Christian.

Fifth, the uncommon Christian is one who gives his life irrevocably to God for the saving and sanctifying of the souls of men. I do not mean by this that the uncommon Christian necessarily becomes a minister, evangelist or missionary. These will always be exceptional persons amongst men. I mean rather that all such persons realize their priestly calling, and fulfil their service, in God's appointed place and way, in sacred devotedness of mind and heart. It may be that the person is a business man; but his business is not first, for God is first, and whatever wealth he may obtain is laid down at the Master's

feet for His ownership and use. Or, it may be that the person is a serving maid; but every duty is faithfully and joyfully performed as unto Christ, and the life in its humility is fragrant with the power of the Holy Spirit. In such cases, whatever the station or work, the end in view is the glory of God and the good of men, and this end is reached by prayer and service and testimony. Manifestly, such a person is detached from the earthly and attached to the heavenly; and with such an one even the common of life becomes gloriously uncommon. In short, such an one has become an uncommon Christian; and the result is, whoever he is, that he is made a blessing to the ends of the earth. I know a scrub-woman who, at last accounts, was supporting by her hard-earned and hard-saved money, several bible-women in foreign lands. She is indeed an uncommon Christian.

And lastly, the uncommon Christian is one who, in the midst of the blessings and joys of earth, however much he may be favored and used of God, never forgets that his true portion is not in earth but in heaven, and that the true hope of his soul is found in waiting for the coming of Christ. It is terribly possible to turn the blessings of God into a curse—to pray, to serve, to sacrifice, to be chosen of God as one who is to be blessed and who is to be a blessing, and finally, to become engrossed with the earthly things and to neglect the heavenly things, to become enamored with the blessings and to forget the Blessor, to fix one's heart on the work and to turn away from the Worker, to leave one's first love, and no longer look and long for Him who alone is the Bridegroom of the soul. Yes, it is terribly possible to do all this, unintentionally, gradually, almost unconsciously, but

surely, steadily, increasingly, until the last word that one would wish to hear would be, "Behold, I come quickly!" And the end of these things is death, so far as real living is concerned. For the true man of God never puts first things second, and he never ceases to remember it is only in Christ's presence that there is fulness of joy, and only at His right hand that there are pleasures forevermore. The uncommon Christian, therefore, is one who walks with head erect, with eyes lifted, and with gaze fixed. Busy as he may be, occupied intensely as he must be as a faithful steward of God, he yet waits and longs for that hour to come when he may hear the voice that is like many waters, and see the face that is like the sun shining in its strength. And so looking and longing he is made increasingly, even here and now, like the One whom he loves and serves. And this means



as he passes from glory to glory, that he is changed more and more from the common to the uncommon.

A story is told to the effect that a farmer once took an eaglet from its nest and put it with the fowls of the farm in the barnyard. There the eaglet walked to and fro, to all appearances no better than a hen or a duck. But days passed, the leaden skies of winter gave place to the blue of springtime, and the eaglet became a full grown eagle. Suddenly, one day, a beam of light from the full orb'd sun fell down upon him, stirring him with its radiant warmth. At that the eagle raised his head and looked full into the face of the sun. Then, he suddenly spread his great wings, and, beating the air with rapid stroke, he made his way higher and higher up, until he was lost to sight in the space and light of heaven. The eagle never came back to his barnyard home. He had left

common things behind him once and forever. And the application for us is not far to seek. It is found in the Master's words which we have been considering: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *above the common!*"

## 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,  
Philadelphia, Pa., or Toronto, Ont.