

Articles and Sermons :: John Hyde â€“ Missionary To India by Francis McGaw

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John Hyde (1865 â€“ 1912) was born into the home of a pastor in Illinois. The father, described as a "noble man," and the "sweet-spirited" mother, brought up their family of six children around a family altar. John early felt led of God to become a pastor as his father. While his oldest brother Edmund, who was preparing to be a pastor and was a volunteer for the foreign field, was still in seminary, he died of mountain fever. John was deeply affected by Edmundâ€™s death and wondered if God might be calling him to fill the gap in foreign service left by the passing of his brother. John settled this matter on his knees before the Lord, and in 1892 he was en route with a group of missionaries to India.

To John Hyde the voyage to India was a time of heart-searching and prayer. He had received a letter from a friend of his father to which he later referred. He wrote about this:

"I received the letter a few hours out of New York harbor. He urged me to seek for the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the great qualification for mission work. When I had read the letter I crumpled it up in anger and threw it on the deck.

"Did this friend think that I had not received the baptism of the Spirit, or that I would think of going to India without this equipment? I was angry. But by and by better judgment prevailed and I picked up the letter and read it again. Possibly I did need something which I had not yet received.

"The result was that during the rest of that voyage I gave myself much to prayer that I might indeed be filled with the Spirit and know by an actual experience what Jesus meant when He said: â€“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earthâ€™ (Acts 1:8)."

These prayers on shipboard were finally answered in a marvelous way.

First Years in India

When arriving in India, John Hyde was assigned to the Punjab region. At first he was not a remarkable missionary. He was slow of speech. When a question or remark was directed to him he seemed not to hear, or if he heard, he seemed a long time in framing a reply. His hearing was slightly defective and this, it was feared, would hinder him in acquiring the language. His disposition was gentle and quiet; he seemed to be lacking in the enthusiasm and zeal which a young missionary should have.

His first assignment was the usual language study. At first he went to work on this, but later neglected it for Bible study. He was reprimanded by the committee, but he replied: "First things first." He argued that he had come to India to teach the Bible, and he needed to know it before he could teach it. And God by His Spirit wonderfully opened up the Scriptures to him. Nor did he neglect language study. He became a correct and easy speaker of Urdu, Punjabi and English; but away and above that, he learned the language of heaven, and he so learned to speak that he held audiences of hundreds of Indians spellbound while he opened to them the truths of Godâ€™s Word.

The Punjab Prayer-Union

In time there came to the Punjab a blessed moving of the Holy Spirit which is referred to as the Sialkot revival.

In revival there is a divine side and a human side. In the Welsh revival the divine element comes out prominently. There was no organization and very little preaching â€“ comparatively little of the human element. The Sialkot revival while just as certainly sent down from heaven, seems not so spontaneous. Under God there was organization; there was a certain amount of definite planning, and there were seasons of long-continued prayer.

Preceding the revival was the organization of the Punjab Prayer-Union. John Hyde was associated with this prayer union from its beginning. The principles of this union are stated in the form of questions which were signed by those becoming members:

Are you praying for quickening in your own life, in the life of your fellow workers, and in the church?

Are you longing for greater power of the Holy Spirit in your own life and work, and are you convinced that you cannot go on without this power?

Will you pray that you may not be ashamed of Jesus?

Do you believe that prayer is the great means for securing this spiritual awakening? Will you set apart one-half hour each day as soon after noon as possible to pray for this awakening, and are you willing to pray till the awakening comes?

The members of the prayer union lifted up their eyes according to Christâ€™s command and saw the fields, white to the harvest. In the Bible they read the immutable promises of God. They saw the one method of obtaining this spiritual awakening was by prayer. They set themselves deliberately, definitely, and desperately to use the means till they secured the result.

The Sialkot revival was not an accident nor an unsought breeze from heaven. Charles G. Finney says: "A revival is no more a miracle than a crop of wheat. Revival can be secured from heaven in any community when heroic souls enter the conflict determined to win or die â€™“ or if need be, to win and die! â€™“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by forceâ€™“ (Matt. 11:12)."

The Punjab Prayer-Union members felt the need for a yearly meeting for Bible study and prayer, where the spiritual life of the workers, pastors, teachers, and evangelists, both foreign and native, could be deepened. The church life in the Punjab (as indeed in all India) was far below the Bible standard; the Holy Spirit was so little honored in these ministries that few were being saved from among the Christless millions. Sialkot was the place selected for the annual meeting or conference.

Hundreds came to Sialkot and helped mightily by prayer and praise. But God honored a few men as leaders. He laid a great burden of prayer upon the hearts of John N. Hyde, R. McChenye Paterson and George Turner for this convention.

Before one of the first conventions Hyde and Paterson waited and tarried one whole month before the opening day. For thirty days and thirty nights these godly men waited before God in prayer. Do we wonder that there was power in the convention? Turner joined them after nine days.

These three men prayed and praised God for a mighty outpouring of His power! Three human hearts that beat as one, yearning, pleading, crying, and agonizing over the church of India and the myriads of lost souls. Three renewed human wills that by faith linked themselves as with hooks of steel to the omnipotent will of God. Three pairs of fire-touched lips that out of believing hearts shouted, "It shall be done!"