

# INTERCESSORS

by John Beckett

*Four years after the formation of Intercessors For America in November, 1973, John Beckett, President of the organization, interviewed two men instrumental to the birth of IFA—Derek Prince and Ern Baxter. The following is the first of two parts of that recent interview.*

**Q** Derek, your book, *Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting*, has given hope to many Christians since it was published four years ago. Can you tell us why you wrote this book?

**A** Part of the reason I wrote the book, was first out of a specific calling of God. In the early years of my Christian experience, God showed me that history could be shaped by prayer and that many situations that we would consider almost hopeless could be altered through prayer.

Then secondly, I was prompted by the situation that I saw immediately before me in the United States at that time. I feel that as a person of British origin, educated and brought up in Europe, I see more objectively the tremendous dangers that threaten the United States, and at the same time the tremendous potential for good and for the extension of God's Kingdom in this country. God has given me a deep concern that His highest destiny for the United States should be fulfilled.

**Q** Ern, you and Derek were instrumental in the formation of Intercessors For America which also occurred four years ago. What were your concerns at that time?

**A** My concerns, I think, were generated by what I was observing in almost every area of life—a deterioration and declination and especially a lack of vision among God's people concerning their God-given and God-intended ability to alter life situations by prayer.

Although I was living in Vancouver, Canada at the time, I had a deep concern for both Canada and the U.S. I had been stirred, too, by the emergence of intercessory prayer organizations in Great Britain and Australia and felt that a similar thrust was needed here.

I happened to share this feeling with Derek on one occasion, and he made reference to some similar directions his ministry was taking. I don't recall all the details of our conversation, but we recognized a definite

and significant conjunction of guidance and direction. We took the fact that we were of one mind in this matter to be an indication that we were on the right track.

**Q** Derek, what is distinctive in the concept of intercession as contrasted with other forms of prayer?

**A** One of the great responsibilities of all Christians is to practice intercession. However, there are some who are definitely called to intercession as their main ministry. One of the great features of this ministry is that it liberates us from being self-centered and forces us to lift our eyes to God above circumstances and situations.

I believe the two highest ministries spoken of in the Scriptures are that of the king (the ruler) and the priest (the intercessor). These ministries are found first of all in Jesus Christ and then in Christians. To me they represent the most effective ministries for forwarding God's purposes and establishing His Kingdom. And I think in a certain sense they represent the climax of Christian achievement. However, I believe that God does not permit us to function as rulers until we have learned to function as intercessors.

**Q** Derek, have you seen an increased prayer emphasis in America in the last four years?

**A** In the last four years, the most remarkable changes have taken place in the outlook, activities and achievements in the Body of Christ in this nation. Today there are hundreds of thousands of Christians seriously and intelligently committed to intercede for this nation. I am personally in touch with a number of 24-hour/7-days-a-week prayer chains which make intercession for the nation one of their top priorities. Overall, I would say that total achievements are tremendous.

**Q** Ern, in the last four years, we have seen major political upheavals in Washington and we've also seen a major spiritual awakening across America. How do you interpret what is happening?



Coming from a theological background and believing in the sovereignty of God and His sovereign rule over all things, I believe that there is a conjoining of a number of factors here. I believe the intercessory prayer emphasis coincides with the increase in lawlessness in the world, and that through prayer, God is being released into world situations.

It amazes me that when our Lord gave the very intimate words in the upper room discourse recorded in John, He told us how His administration would function in this age. He said, "Up until now you have asked nothing in My name," but then He added, "In this day the order of getting things done will be that you will ask the Father in My Name and *it will be done.*"

It is my view that there is nothing accomplished for God that is not done through prayer. Somebody somewhere prays. It almost seems like God has put His power at our disposal—enabling us to release Him into specific situations. With the acceleration of prayer through Intercessors and other groups, these prayers are being answered. They're being answered not only in the

visitation we see upon God's people but in God dealing with nations, with governments and with economies.

I would like to add that one of the major assignments given to God's people is that they pray for all men, especially those in authority. This responsibility has been terribly neglected. We criticize men, we evaluate them, we categorize them, but we don't pray for them. We are becoming aware, especially with the current emphasis on the Kingdom and government of God, that God has delegated to us the authority through prayer to release Him into human affairs. Looking at it very subjectively, if we should fail to pray, we may be failing to govern well in Christ's stead. So I see that what is happening is a direct result of an increase in prayer and is part of God's sovereign purpose for the age in which we're living.

To be continued . . .

In next month's Intercessors Report, Ern and Derek answer questions on pessimism among Christians and the steps and priorities in intercessory prayer.

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