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Conclusion

James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) achieved recognition as a world mission leader during his lifetime and his reputation has increased ever since. Guided by a devotional approach to scripture that shaped his personal and professional life, Taylor created the China Inland Mission with the bold aim of the evangelisation of inland China. He, like many others of his time, was saturated in the Bible and used many biblical texts in order to teach about mission, holiness and consecration to God through Jesus Christ. This transcendental reality provided the motivation for many men and women to engage in Christian missions, the CIM included.

8.1 The Nineteenth Century Context

The popular biographies of Taylor, which have had the most influence in disseminating his story, mostly ignored the importance of the historical context. The historians such as David Bebbington, Brian Stanley, Alwyn Austin and to some extent Alfred Broomhall have provided this essential background, placing Taylor within the cultural forces unleashed by the Enlightenment and particularly Romanticism.

Taylor's use of scripture demonstrated something of the transformed climate for the reading of the Bible. In Chapter Three it was shown how people such as the Romantic poet and theologian Samuel Taylor Coleridge had pioneered an influential re-interpretation of biblical theology. From a theological position entirely different from that of Taylor, he was advocating an experiential reading of the Bible. Taylor would have agreed with him that the spiritual reading of the Bible was of supreme importance. For Taylor, truth was known through obedience, whilst for Coleridge it was known through personal experience of the text and imagination. This partial parallelism indicates a common cultural source and mood. Taylor and Coleridge responded to rational attacks on historic Christianity in different ways, but both insisted that the Bible must be read in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Enlightenment's rational understanding was not enough. They believed that the Spirit revealed the true authority of scripture. This illustrated the common ambience and style of Romanticism and issued in a number of important emphases in Taylor's approach to the Bible.

Firstly, Taylor's elevation of unmediated dependence on God as the essence of faith, and as the key to successful Christian living, shared some of the presuppositions of a Romanticism influenced by Friedrich Schleiermacher with his awareness of absolute dependence on God as an essential element in the definition of religion. In contrast, Taylor argued that God was the centre of theology, not human religious experience but he wanted to verify his religious experiences in the light of scripture. Whilst many Enlightenment thinkers expected that critical investigation of the Bible would build confidence in it, Taylor circumvented this approach by claiming that experience provided direct validation of biblical authority. Taylor confined the use of reason to closely argued exhortations that presented the needs and claims of China to the Christian public complete with detailed statistics and comparisons with the Christian context in the UK. He scattered these with biblical expositions that established his perspective. He expected that there would be a steady advance in Bible knowledge, prayer, personal holiness and commitment to mission. This was linked with Taylor's optimistic view of the work of the

Holy Spirit, where he appealed to the conscience and aimed to move people in their spirits rather than persuade them intellectually in gaining their commitment to China. Through this combination of personal experience and rational argument, Taylor promoted a version of Christianity that was ultimately both personally satisfying and with enough biblical foundation to be an acceptable export around the world. It was an example of Taylor using every means possible to enforce his message on the ordinary Christian public.

Secondly, there was an aspiration to re-create the supposed apostolic simplicity of biblical times. The lives of the apostles and the example of the early church, were meant to provide a template for current responses to the Bible. Part of the Christian reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment was to give prominence to immediate spiritual experience unmediated by historical factors. Cultural forces had changed the way in which truth could be received by the individual and contributed to a changed context which influenced theological thinking. This influenced all parts of the church, but especially evangelicalism, for it was a popular movement. Taylor illustrated this in his teaching on seeking for 'living water' from John 4, discussed in Chapter Six, which had very little to do with the original context of the Samaritan woman. His understanding of Christ sustained him by the application of such texts to his immediate missionary situation. Taylor understood God in intensely personal terms as Father and argued for this from the Bible, but here was another aspect of his teaching with Romantic overtones.

Thirdly, the centrality of the Bible for Taylor and his intense brand of spiritual experience combined an almost mystical, other-worldly element to his life with a pragmatism that he applied to mission. This accounts for the descriptions of Taylor as a mystic.¹ This aspect of Taylor's motivation has been neglected by most scholars, apart from the Jesuit, Reilly.² Taylor made the exercise of faith based on the Bible a major part of his life from adolescence onwards. This willingness to verify spiritual experience and to draw the necessary conclusions was typical of Taylor's desire to find workable spiritual principles from the Bible under the rubric of 'Spiritual Science'.³ Once verified, he believed that these principles only needed to be applied in personal and missionary life.

Taylor's emphasis on holiness was one outworking of this mystical element. He was embedded in holiness teaching from his Methodist heritage, and Chapter Two noted the Wesleyan openness to the Catholic mystical tradition. Like Wesley, Taylor held a deep respect for those who demonstrated holiness. He once wrote: 'Even though Thomas à Kempis knew not the truth of salvation by faith so even holy men may be ignorant of much that is true'.⁴ He was drawn to people like the Pennefathers because of their spirituality. Taylor emphasised holiness and the importance of the application of the Bible to the spiritual life. This began with conversion - something that could and normally did happen instantaneously. It was followed by learning to 'abide in Christ' and to experience the 'rest of faith'. His reading of scripture provided intense personal fellowship and union with Christ that was 'the basic form' of Christian spirituality. This was the source for his spiritual life and for his

¹ See Chapter 2 p. 39; Chapter 3 p. 50; Chapter 4 pp. 85, 89, 102; Chapter 5 pp. 104, 125.

² Michael Collins Reilly, *Spirituality for Mission: Historical, Theological, and Cultural Factors for a Present-day Missionary Spirituality* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), pp. 102-110.

³ See Chapter 4.2.1 p. 71.

⁴ China Inland Mission Archives, CIM/JHT Box 1, Letter to Amelia from Hull (May 15th 1852).

expositions of the Bible. Obedience and personal transformation were the aim. He was in the right position to contribute to the developing holiness movement and to apply his insights to missionaries and mission; The kingdom of God would only come through the action of God himself and direct dependence on God was the requirement for the Christian.

The unmediated experience of God found in Taylor's life and teaching was nothing less than an attempt to return Protestantism to its own mystical heritage. Ward's analysis of the inner religious content of early evangelicalism has exposed its mystical roots which nurtured a type of revivalism that emphasised the availability of the new birth to all.⁵ The early evangelicals were grounded in an emphasis on the centrality of the Bible that permitted the immediate communication of its meaning through the Holy Spirit to the individual. They did not need clerical help nor did they need to depend on tradition. Over time this mystical element, which influenced people like John Wesley, weakened and by the early nineteenth century evangelicalism had become more systematically rational and ordered, with everything in its place. Those who claimed a direct, divine illumination were often suspect and condemned as 'enthusiasts' just as the Methodists had been in the eighteenth century. Taylor stood in a tradition that was influenced by Anthony Groves and George Müller who emphasised direct dependence on God for their life's work. Edward Irving's apostolic model of mission and Andrew Jukes' mystical use of typology also contributed to Taylor's formation. In short, Taylor was dissatisfied with contemporary spirituality and his use of the Bible produced a form of spiritual life with marked mystical strands. His intense personal experiences of God validated this emphasis. He wanted to recapture the passion and intensity of a personal knowledge of God, firstly for himself and secondly for those who were to be witnesses in China. When his first wife Maria died, he wrote:

I scarcely knew whether she or I was the more blessed – so real, so constant, so satisfying was His presence, so deep my delight in the consciousness that his will was being done, and that that will, which was utterly crushing me, was good, was wise, was best.⁶

Although Taylor managed to harness something of the early mystical tradition of evangelical Protestantism it could never be simply a return to a notional purity. As observed above, Taylor, shaped by new cultural developments, was pioneering new expressions of spiritual experience applied to mission. However, in Taylor's case it did not lead to a more relaxed spirituality. The normal Christian life was one that expressed radical and total trust in God and accepted the sovereignty of God over all circumstances. This level of spiritual experience and attainment was available for all Christians, yet many failed for want of consecration or application of their will. For Taylor God could not fail for He is always faithful.

Many responded to Taylor's teaching on the faithfulness of God and joined or supported the CIM. As Taylor detailed China's spiritual need with his intensely personal and immediate style, God was claiming each and every individual to consider joining him in forming the mission. Furthermore, the emphasis on displays of authentic spirituality that could be found in any tradition, were a part of the

⁵ William R. Ward, 'Evangelical Identity in the Eighteenth Century', in Donald M. Lewis, *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2004), p. 12.

⁶ J.H. Taylor, *Occasional Papers*, No. 29 (April 1872), p 19.

reason for Taylor overriding denominational distinctives in beginning the CIM. There was no spiritual secret in operation in all this. The hagiographical approach frequently adopted to Taylor's life neglects the fact that his spirituality was shaped by his context and that his experiences were not unique. Others were having similar experiences and scholars such as Robert Newton Flew and Bebbington have highlighted them. Taylor in extending these experiences to the formation of the CIM gained a following and an influence that popularised and intensified a spirituality of 'dependence on God' which was shaped by Romanticism.

8.2 The Decisive Authority of the Bible

For nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries like Taylor, the Bible was central to their life and spiritual authority. Their effectiveness in mission depended on their knowledge of the Bible and their sensitivity and skill in applying its message to effect transformation amongst non-Christian peoples and stimulating a constituency to support them in their work. Taylor drew on the creedal affirmations established in the Reformation that placed the Bible in the centre.⁷ It was a document that justified itself and was not dependent on external evidence to prove it. For Taylor the words of scripture were the very words of God and any difficulties in understanding were a challenge to the reader to depend on the Holy Spirit in bringing enlightenment.

Taylor's approach to the Bible drew upon those forces that had formed evangelicalism to date. The spiritual and cultural influences on Taylor illustrated the tangled web of movements and individuals that preceded him. For all of them the Bible was prominent as the basic source for an understanding of mission but its impact was varied when it came to praxis. Sometimes the Bible was not as prominent in mission as often assumed. The Reformation re-established the role of the Bible as the final arbiter of religious practice but it did not immediately stimulate widespread Protestant mission outside the Western world. Little emphasis was given to the more overt mission texts of scripture. However, by eventually releasing the Bible into the hands of the ordinary person it created the motivating power necessary for later developments. The orthodox doctrinal emphases of the Reformation needed to be modified by Puritan and Pietistic influences that centred the Christian faith in the personal as well as in the corporate. This study has shown that the Song of Songs was an important text for illustrating this. The imagery of the book, often treated allegorically, coalesced with the more experiential spirituality of the Puritans as they sought to develop the Calvinistic theme of union with Christ. Pietism was the bedrock for many of the later revival movements. It contributed to a paradigm shift in the way the Christian life should be lived, by focusing on the plain text of scripture with the literal sense prominent. When orthodox theological approaches failed to provide what lay-believers needed to sustain their spiritual life, they sought succour in the Bible. This authentic Christian experience which highlighted practice and assurance of salvation was not viewed as opposed to doctrine. Instead it was seen as the proper outworking of doctrine. In their re-readings of scripture the Pietists reinterpreted theology in a personal and intense way that not only widened their understanding

⁷ Andrew Walls, 'The American Dimension in the Missionary Movement', in Joel Carpenter & Wilbert Shenk, *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p 17.

of Christ but also inspired groups like the Moravian Brethren under Zinzendorf to attempt mission outside of Europe. In teaching that a direct, unmediated experience of God was possible the Pietists became vital for the emergence of personal evangelism and the development of Protestant mission world-wide. Their teaching emphasised the new birth, close fellowship among bands of true believers, a practical outworking of faith and sanctification. It illustrated the capability of biblical truth to bring holy living and devotion to Christ. These continental influences for spiritual renewal led to significant developments in the spiritual formation of men like John Wesley and the awakenings in North America. Eventually these revivals produced many different church groupings that emphasised personal spiritual power based on a return to biblical faith and piety – an emphasis that Taylor continued in his ministry.

Taylor did not speculate over the Bible. As argued in Chapter Five, Taylor's views on the inspiration of scripture gave him a negative attitude to any critical thinking on the Bible which might impede his aims for the work in China. Instead his efforts were channelled into a spiritual formation based on specific readings of biblical texts. In common with many Victorians he used allegory and typology in his interpretation of Old Testament texts. This gave him opportunities to find 'types' of Christ in the OT and exemplifies how Christological considerations dominated his reading of the OT in the light of the mission texts of the New Testament. He believed in presenting the needs of the world to the people in the context of the direct appeals of Christ in the scriptures. For Taylor the life and death of Christ was the best reason for the centrality of mission in the New Testament.

Taylor's usual approach to biblical interpretation was to search for the spiritual meaning of a particular text. He often left the historical or 'reasonable' explanation behind in order to seek for the spiritual experience that lay behind the text. Knowledge of the truth could come from personal experience which was then imposed upon the interpretation of scripture. This emphasis on applying texts directly to himself and his focus on the spiritual meaning was one example of the elevation of experience over reason. He was able to read from the text those things that explained his own spiritual experience, repeatedly drawing on his pivotal spiritual experience of 1869 and other faith experiences, as seen in Chapter Four.

For Taylor a sharpened form of missionary spirituality was essential for missionary work. The survey in Chapter Four showed that Taylor drew from the Bible a spirituality which included devotion, meditation, prayer and a lifestyle that had mission at its centre. Taylor's 'theological biography' emphasised praxis and his use of the Bible in active ministry. This meant that Jesus' example in the incarnation in joining with humans to meet their basic needs was a template reproducible by the missionary. Taylor rejected intellectual approaches, emphasised the preaching of the crucified Christ and honoured self-denying service amongst the Chinese. He was prepared to demonstrate theological flexibility over some doctrinal issues if the overall strategy for China remained fixed. The common pursuit of holiness and mission were unchallenged priorities but they were the inherited assumptions of a theological approach that formed missiological parameters for Taylor's ministry.

Klaas Fiedler claimed that Taylor is 'the most important person to leave his imprint on faith missions'.⁸ His survey gives little attention to Taylor's use of the Bible but it is clear that Taylor's

⁸ Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions* (Oxford: Regnum, 1996), p. 32.

devotional use of the Bible inspired many towards personal involvement in mission, and fidelity to the Bible vied with pragmatic considerations in Taylor's actual practice of mission. Taylor's aim was the stimulation of the heart and the soul of the potential missionary, as expressed in his preaching and teaching, as seen in Chapter Six, rather than with the intricacies of mission policy or methods of work. These followed on in due time but could never become the main focus of his exhortations to the Christian public. He was facilitating the work of many individuals rather than those of a corporate body. It was those who were motivated in such a way who became members of faith missions. As a new movement they arose alongside existing denominational missions and did not replace them. Taylor himself acknowledged his debt to the 'old missions', as he called them, but the faith missions were another expression of mission with entirely differing aims, practices and theological emphases.

There are three critical observations of Taylor's use of the Bible that are important for a judicious assessment of the development of the CIM. Firstly, he failed to gather the strands of his teaching into a comprehensive theology of mission. Taylor's hermeneutic gave priority to the immediate and individual application of isolated verses to meet contemporary situations or perceived spiritual needs. It was an approach incapable of supplying an overall framework of theological principles that would guide and control policy. His teaching and advice to those within the CIM over the practice of mission were based more on personal observation and experience, some of it forged in his years with the CES. There were not enough challenges to the dominant position of the Bible, inside the CIM, for these issues to be considered and re-stated. The development of critical theology was beginning to pose a challenge but for the majority of those involved in the CIM the overriding priority of the task predominated over biblical reflection. This meant that Taylor's hermeneutic used scripture as a justification for policies driven by mostly pragmatic considerations. He did not make the determination of the authorial intent of scripture a priority, although his Christological centre and his belief in the inspiration of scripture provided some check on such an arbitrary use of the Bible.

Secondly, the highlighting of mission and personal holiness rooted in the practices of prayer and Bible study did not necessarily equip the CIM missionaries and supporters to meet the intellectual challenges to the Christian faith. It was this emphasis that accounts for the criticisms of Taylor for having diminished theological concerns in mission. Even a key theme in his teaching, for example the kenotic example of Christ, was seen as a product of an activist rather than a reflective biblical method for evangelism.⁹

Thirdly, Taylor's use of the Bible illustrates that, despite the theological turmoil of the Victorian era and the significant cultural developments, not all Christian leaders felt it necessary to re-think their theology in response to the challenges posed by evolutionary science and the growth of higher criticism. Taylor was a notable example of those who sidestepped these challenges by cultivating a piety that attempted to preserve the emphases that had ebbed and flowed from the Reformation. He placed the authority of the Bible in the spiritual realm entirely outside the sphere of rational and historical argumentation. This was both Taylor's strength and his weakness. His biblical spirituality provided an enduring template for international evangelical mission in the twentieth century

⁹ Lauen Pfister, 'Re-thinking Mission in China: James Hudson Taylor and Timothy Richard', *Currents in World Christianity*, Position Paper 68 (Cambridge: 1998), p. 32.

but it would also expose evangelicalism to a profound intellectual crisis in due course. By separating spirituality from definite theological reflection, the CIM missionaries enhanced a form of spiritual formation in their converts that lacked the tools required to advance a biblical response in the face of intense opposition to a conservative approach to scripture.

Those attracted by Taylor's message of consecration and self-denial, who had experienced the power of the holiness movements in their own lives, found the 'unworldliness' of the CIM attractive. However, this emphasis should not obscure the fact that theology too was important to them. The above motivations were seen as eminently biblical as were the practices of mission that issued from them. This is an important observation, for the activism and the focus of men like Taylor made sure that an experiential understanding of the Bible was exported around the world at a time when more critical ideas were surfacing in the West. In its example of the transfer of a 'simple faith' from one culture to another it later became one of the sources for a developing fundamentalist theology.¹⁰ Taylor's involvement with the Niagara Bible conferences in North America was important for bringing mission into this particular fold. The CIM acted as an important instrument for the defence and propagation of conservative theology in China. The missionaries had neither the time, the academic training, nor the inclination to pursue the insights of biblical criticism in the light of the perceived spiritual needs of the 'heathen'. This had far-reaching consequences, shaping Chinese Christian spiritual life in the early twentieth century and laying a template that is still influential.¹¹

8.3 The Missionary Nature of the Christian Message

Taylor believed, in a manner entirely characteristic of evangelical empiricism, that in the Bible there was reliable and easily intelligible testimony to the gospel of Christ. It dealt with the desperate condition of humanity and outlined people's spiritual need and destiny. His concentration on the perceived spiritual needs of China came directly from an assumption that the majority of non-western peoples were 'heathen' and in need of salvation through Christ. This led to a negative assessment of those elements in Chinese culture and religion that did not conform to this viewpoint. This dismissal of other religions as idolatry or superstition obscured the need to consider the value that they might have in leading to methods of contextualization of the gospel. Nevertheless such binary thinking was qualified by 'a biblical insistence upon the unity of humanity in sin and grace'.¹² The Bible testified, according to Taylor, to the possibility of conversion and regeneration, something that could not be produced through human knowledge and rational argument. Thus education and other instruments of civilisation had a limited but nevertheless important role to play. This accounted for his negative attitude to people like Timothy Richard, as seen in Chapter Six, who advocated a greater interaction with Chinese scholarship and culture.

Taylor's opinion of the deficient forms of Christianity which he found in China provided a justification for his own approach. His limited historical survey given at the 1888 London Missionary Conference criticised those who had gone before him to China for not implanting the Bible among the

¹⁰ Alwyn Austin, 'Pilgrims and Strangers: the China Inland Mission in Britain, Canada, the United States and China 1865-1901', Ph.D. thesis (York University: Ontario, 1996), pp. 11, 14.

¹¹ Pfister. 'Re-thinking Mission', p. 3.

¹² Brian Stanley (ed), *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 9.

Chinese. This included the Roman Catholics that preceded him in China. On one hand he admired their commitment and tenacity and on the other he criticised their obscuring of the cross of Christ through various accretions to the gospel. He said: 'We do not want to take the cross and so envelop it in flourishes and ornamentation that no one can see there is a cross there, as did the Jesuits'.¹³ Taylor had a different perspective on the cross which downplayed Roman Catholic mission, despite Catholicism being almost the sole Christian group in China at the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Taylor's attitude accorded with the viewpoint of most Protestants towards the work of the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century which was marked by much suspicion.

Through his willingness to repudiate the structures of Christendom, Taylor took the central evangelical principle of gospel-based mission further than any other evangelical of his day. His use of the Bible cut through conventional practice and standards in the Church to place mission to China as a high priority. He also challenged the Christians of his age to a pattern of radical discipleship that put full trust in the God of the Bible and was seen to do so. He reminded evangelicals that this principle had been axiomatic for William Carey and the pioneers of the 1790s, and thus set in motion a new impetus for world mission.

Taylor taught in a context influenced by aspects of the holiness movement. He believed that his teaching on full consecration, when properly understood, would result in an interest in mission. In his view it was an essential responsibility of any disciple to take the Gospel to 'every creature'. Mission was the obvious, outward focus of a life that was holy and consecrated to God. For Taylor, a sharpened form of missionary spirituality was essential for missionary work. Taylor's 'theological biography' emphasised praxis and his use of the Bible in ministry. The emphasis on mission and personal holiness rooted in the practices of prayer and Bible study did not lead his missionaries to consider other emphases from the Bible that might have been more in accord with the Chinese mindset. Pui-lan Kwok is surely right to highlight how this narrow focus prevented consideration of other, especially Old Testament themes, that might have been a more profitable starting point in mission.¹⁵ The common pursuit of holiness and mission were unchallenged priorities but they were the inherited assumptions of a theological approach that formed missiological parameters for Taylor's ministry.

The new approach to mission pioneered by the CIM was the culmination of all the forces that formed evangelicalism to date, applied to China on a grand scale and fuelled by a radical, unmediated use of the Bible. It was an approach that highlighted the call of God and a willingness to trust God for support rather than any particular denominational affiliation. Taylor headed his chapter on the need for a new agency with Isaiah 55:8-9. 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts, your thoughts'. This could be described as a profoundly anti-Enlightenment text that reinforced Taylor's conviction that human ways and means were inadequate to understand the divine mind. The Bible supported his strategy to seek workers through prayer and gave the material required

¹³ J.H. Taylor in Montagu Beauchamp, *Days of Blessing in Inland China* (London: Morgan and Scott 1890), p. 30.

¹⁴ Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: 1800-1914. Northern Africa and Asia*, Volume 6 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1944), p. 261.

¹⁵ Pui-lan Kwok, *Chinese Women and Christianity 1860-1927* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1992), p. 43.

for the deepening of the spiritual life of the church. The radical spirituality of Taylor challenged the ordered, measured, reasonable methods of Victorian Christianity with a new style of Bible teaching and an urgent insistence on the responsibility of mission. He believed that Jesus' promise 'I am with you always' from the Great Commission text of Matthew 28:20 was particularly with those involved in mission.

Taylor in setting up the CIM deliberately downplayed doctrinal distinctives. Chapter Seven showed the lack of a theological explanation in the first 'Principles and Practice' (1886). Taylor invited people with similar views over the inspiration of scripture to join him in the CIM, convinced that they shared the same conservative theological assumptions on the essentials of the faith. They only needed to sign the simple doctrinal statement contained in the 'Principles and Practice'. He allowed CIM members latitude in their teaching to the Chinese converts. This was not just theory. Taylor did not give directives on baptismal practice and he permitted different views over highly controversial issues, such as faith healing, to come under the conscientious convictions of members of the mission. There was to be no tight doctrinal definition hampering CIM members and Taylor remained consistent in this approach. He saw spiritual fitness for the task in China as being more important than doctrinal issues for the overall teaching of the Bible mandated mission above all else.

The aim of evangelising the Chinese and planting churches in inland China gave Taylor an opportunity to indigenize the work of the CIM and to separate it from the existing denominational structures of congregations already present in China. Despite the lofty aims of Taylor in his written statements about church planting amongst the Chinese, the formation of local churches in Chinese style by the CIM was not as successful as hoped for. Although committed to planting Chinese congregations from the beginning and providing sufficient nurture for the new believers, the task of the evangelisation of the whole country and the shortage of workers eventually impeded the planting of locally run congregations. Furthermore, Taylor's awareness of the foreign nature of Christianity spurred him to try and get as close to the Chinese as possible. Ironically, this undermined his overall aims. By allowing those of similar denominational backgrounds to congregate together the CIM made it more likely that inherited western forms of church government would prosper rather than taking the next radical step forwards and asking what a truly indigenous Chinese church would look like. The CIM, in developing no distinct ecclesiology of its own moulded by the Chinese, fitted into an international evangelical ecclesiology where fellowship was based on conversion and spiritual experience. This obscured the need for a strategy to carry through the intention of forming indigenous Chinese churches.

Taylor's relative weakness in ecclesiological thinking meant that he minimised the role of the church in sending out missionaries in the recruitment process, preferring, as seen in Chapter Seven, to rely on the individual call backed up by appropriate evidence. This neglect of passages like Acts 13:1-3 where the church becomes the sending agency into mission also had ramifications in the newly planted churches. Rather than embedding the ministry of the gospel within the church as quickly as possible, Taylor aided deficient thinking about the church by distinguishing between the pastor, hopefully Chinese, who should be supported by the church and the evangelists who were supported by the CIM. The impression given was that evangelism and mission exist as an adjunct to the church rather than

stemming from within the church. Similar criticisms have been levelled at Henry Venn in his theories of mission.¹⁶

The view that the church consisted of converted individuals rather than being the body to which the responsibility of sending out workers had been entrusted supported this deficient ecclesiology. Although the policies of the CIM in guaranteeing no salary brought some reality to the application process and sifted out some unsuitable applicants, Taylor was constantly criticised for the activities of some of his untrained and seemingly self-selected missionaries. The desire to expand quickly into unevangelised provinces was seen as one reason for the lack of quality control in recruiting and led to charges of superficiality in approaches to mission. CIM members who had given no evidence that they could act as Christian teachers, were then expected to exemplify and model Christian faith in very difficult circumstances with no recognised training and only the basics of a conservative theology to sustain them. Although admired for their dedication, some in China thought that their 'enthusiasm' had outrun their knowledge.¹⁷ Others, writing at the time, were even more damning. The members of the CIM were seen as drawn from a variety of European sects rather than churches.¹⁸ More serious was their impact upon the Chinese who did not make fine drawn distinctions in evaluating foreigners. Their behaviour in itinerating and permitting unmarried women to take part was roundly condemned. Their 'thaumaturgical' evangelistic strategy and the need for a confrontation with the gods of China backed by prayer was considered inept and one that made little impact on the religious systems of the Chinese.¹⁹ Their devotional expression which showed an easy familiarity with the Almighty and need for divine guidance was considered shocking to the 'reverentially constituted'. Their teaching which emphasised Sabbath observance had no idea of how trying this was for a Chinese convert and their failure to note any kind of patristic or ecclesiastical authority was exposed as leaving them with nothing but their own judgement, drawn from the Bible, to rely on. Furthermore they had the temerity to ignore modern biblical criticism and the widening tendencies of the modern churches in matters of doctrine. All this was because of the personal example and teaching of Taylor, who was described as one of the 'men who landed in China 30 or 40 years ago, with a complete outfit of cut and dried opinions'.²⁰ He and the CIM had been too busy to change these convictions and, by and large, they had not allowed their interaction with the Chinese to modify them. For some observers this criticism highlighted the limited distinctives that the CIM brought to mission in China.

8.4 The Development of Missionary Work

China's Millions regularly reported on the progress of the evangelisation of inland China giving details of the Protestant missionary expansion, not just that of the CIM. By 1900 it was estimated that there were over one hundred thousand converts in China.²¹ Towards the end of Taylor's life the magazine reported that the CIM had developed one hundred and ninety-nine mission stations in fifteen of the

¹⁶ Stephen C. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1964), p. 260.

¹⁷ Charles Henry Robinson, *History of Christian Missions* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915), p. 193.

¹⁸ Alexander Michie, *Missionaries in China* (London: Edward Stanford, 1891), p. 53.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²¹ *China's Millions* (July/August 1903), p. 94.

eighteen provinces in China.²² Work had also extended to the minority groups of Yunnan Province and Tibet where other languages, apart from Mandarin, had to be mastered. These reports were always put into perspective by mathematical and mapped estimations of what still remained to be done. At the end of 1905, the CIM had two hundred and five stations, six hundred and thirty-two outstations, eight hundred and forty-nine foreign missionaries aided by one thousand two hundred and eighty-two Chinese helpers (the majority paid by the CIM) and one hundred and eighty-eight schools.²³ By 1915 the CIM had eleven 'associate missions' working with them in China,²⁴ many of them stemming from Taylor's visits to the European continent.

Taylor's early experience of missionary work in China was important for moulding his convictions over the practice of mission. These included the importance of prayer for financial support and new workers as well as the commitment not to enter into any form of debt. The practice of itineration and the attempts to penetrate inland with an evangelistic strategy as a priority over other forms of mission was confirmed in his early appeals to recruit and send a specific number of missionaries to each 'unoccupied province'.

The revivals of the mid-nineteenth century contributed to a more fluid picture of Christian allegiance centred on a common task and spirituality rather than shared churchmanship in international mission. New groupings loosened denominational allegiance. The holiness movement, which developed in Taylor's era, helped to lay the ground for international co-operation in mission, and the Mildmay and Keswick conferences played an important part in promoting foreign missions, albeit with what some saw as a limited understanding of the Bible and theology.

These new alliances brought to prominence those in leadership who were not theologically trained and made the way possible for men like Taylor to take on major responsibility in Christian leadership. This deployment of lay men and women which has been generally seen as a positive development for the development of mission, also led to the more debateable idea that devotional Bible knowledge and zeal with only a minimum amount of training were sufficient for effectiveness in mission. This religious and cultural inheritance produced a new template for mission in China.

Taylor in trying to recapture a supposed apostolic simplicity based on the Bible, was determined to ensure that new and different practices of mission were implemented. In order to accomplish this there had to be strong and visionary leadership. Chapter Seven showed how Taylor led the mission for over twenty years without any formal structural assistance. His 'papal authority'²⁵ exercised from China was necessary to maintain the momentum of the new work. Suspicion of democratic government applied to mission, fitted in with Taylor's Romantic cultural framework that placed great confidence in the charisma and authority of the visionary leader. Taylor could not afford interference from England or disruption from others in China. The task was so immense that he had to take full responsibility for the running of the mission, though often aided by sympathetic colleagues. Although this brought inevitable conflict with those who had differing views and aims, it did mean that

²² *Ibid.*, (June 1904), p. 74.

²³ Marshall Broomhall, *Faith and Facts as Illustrated in the History of the CIM* (London: Morgan and Scott, CIM, 1909), p. 71.

²⁴ Marshall Broomhall, *The Jubilee Story of the China Inland Mission* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1915) pp. 357-365.

²⁵ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 334.

the focus on the inland was maintained. Taylor's sense of direction was vital for this to happen and when in 1886 new arrangements for the work became essential, Taylor still exercised overall control.

One of the results of Taylor's new approach to mission was that he inspired others to emulate him in the formation of 'Faith Missions'. The reality of a mission operating outside formal church structures, highlighted some of the dissatisfaction with the existing missionary societies. Taylor unwittingly defined the principles of faith missions. In Taylor's opinion, the reluctance of the classical missions to engage seriously with the evangelisation of inland China was regrettable. When he added to this his theological convictions over the eternal destiny of the Chinese and the eschatological belief that Christ would not return until the Gospel had been preached to all the world, it made it imperative that a quicker, more widespread mode of evangelisation should be found. Taylor's guiding principle was effective evangelism. In order for this to be achieved, he wanted to inspire and mobilise many more potential workers from a variety of theological backgrounds. This was one of the marks of a faith mission. Fiedler writes:

The term 'faith mission' was not coined by the faith missions themselves. They did not claim that other missions worked without faith, nor did they claim to have more faith than the mission who'd started their work decades earlier. It was others who took one of the faith missions innovative concepts - the 'faith principle' of financial support and referred to them under that name, actually the most important characteristic is interdenominational.²⁶

This approach enabled Taylor to broaden the mission-supporting constituency. By stimulating a new class of missionaries he tapped into their churches and associations. Many of those who were inspired by Taylor came from the lower and middle classes who consistently sent in small gifts.²⁷ This was new money for mission. Taylor needed to find like-minded Christians, for their own expression of faith was important. He built relationships with those who were already interested in Gützlaff's work in China. Taylor's own experience of China and his radical plans for the penetration of inland China met with a receptive audience. Through these contacts Taylor got to know some of the 'evangelical aristocrats' who introduced him to others in their circle. His drift from initial dependence on the Open Brethren to an approach that engaged fully with prominent and wealthy evangelical Anglicans was important for widening the acceptability of the work and the opportunity for involvement. Taylor now had a group of people to call upon in the same way that other missions drew upon their denominations; a constituency moulded by common spiritual experience. However, the CIM had fewer larger donors and those who gave were conscious that it all depended on them. This was not the same way as in the denominations. The style of dependence was different.

The constituency for mission was also enlarged as the CIM pioneered a new approach to single and married women in mission. Taylor's Wesleyan and holiness background, where women were more prominent in ministry, provided a model for the deployment of women in China. His early experience in China confirmed the necessity for women to be able to reach women in Chinese culture. His priority was the evangelistic task which overrode any theological position on women in ministry. There was no attempt to wrestle with the biblical texts and the evidence of Chapter Seven is that Taylor would not have defended it theologically for he agreed with the prevailing views of women's place in

²⁶ Fiedler, *The Story*, p. 11.

²⁷ Moira J. McKay, 'Faith and Facts in the History of the CIM 1832-1905', M.Litt thesis (Aberdeen, 1981), p. 211.

the church. Nevertheless, he had the courage to recruit and deploy women in China and showed wisdom in the practical outworking of this policy as he encouraged them inland, slowly without publicity, well away from public opinion and after much prayer. The CIM's policies on marriage and the emphasis on the importance of both partners being suitable for ministry in China were similarly born out of experience. Despite widespread criticism, Taylor managed to recruit many new people who eventually developed the qualities that enabled them to remain and do a worthwhile work in China, contributing to the overall aims of the work as outlined by Taylor.

The formation of the CIM symbolizes the loosening of the restrictions that had hampered earlier British Protestant missions. The CIM benefited from the full implications of the priesthood of all believers, a principle unleashed initially at the Reformation but only fully practised when the developments of pietism wrested the balance away from the church towards the individual. Before the CIM arrived the majority of mission societies had been denominational. Taylor was convinced that the existence of the CIM was a testimony to the reality of faith in God and proof of the value of showing dependence on Him. Here he applied to a mission organisation a radical theological principle that until the formation of the CIM had only been applied to the individual missionary. This was the direct reliance on God for money, with a corresponding emphasis on prayer for daily provision and protection. The financial policy of the CIM taught a new dimension of experience to Victorian Christians. This was noted in his obituary in the Anglican paper The Guardian which said: 'the power inherent in a simple faith without any accessories or system remains as an awe inspiring and tremendous fact'.²⁸ This characteristically Romantic principle of absolute dependence meant that the CIM was the first missionary society in the nineteenth century that managed to break free of clerical control. Even the LMS developed into a mainly denominational mission²⁹ which was still dominated by an elite of ministers and wealthy businessmen.

The CIM was different and distinctive. Its flexibility was demonstrated through being able to adapt a denominational identity when it suited it in Sichuan province. Taylor's appeals for China had an urgent, thrusting edge to them that brought home immediately to British Christians their responsibility for rectifying the situation. This was not through the prevailing model of home organisation but through prayer to God that these Christians would become supporters who would be moved to give to the work. There was no financial apparatus, no annual subscribers or associations that guaranteed income. In organising the structure in this way Taylor broke with the tradition of the sovereignty of the donor, the subscriber and the annual subscription, all of which were sources of power held by people who were not directly involved in the work. This was the commercial pattern applied to mission with influence and power being wielded by 'shareholders' in mission, who delegated their authority to elected committees who had the power to vote and make decisions that affected missionaries. Taylor repudiated all this and provided a direct link between the individual supporter and the work in China, fuelled by the reports in the monthly magazine. Here was the principle of direct dependence on God applied to mission, which explains why Taylor began the CIM with such minimal structure in Britain. Taylor located the centre of the organisation in China rather

²⁸ Howard Taylor, *In Memoriam: Rev. J. Hudson Taylor* (London: CIM, 1906), pp. 11-12.

²⁹ Brian Stanley, 'Where Have Our Mission Structures Come From?' *Transformation*, Volume 20, No. 1 (January 2003), p. 42.

than in London and developed, over time, an administrative and leadership structure that would keep decision making as close to the missionary as possible, more responsive to local conditions.

For Taylor, the primary function of the Bible was to provide a basis for personal spirituality which was the pre-requisite for any involvement in mission. Faith in God and trust in his provision executed by abiding in Christ took priority over using the Bible as a source for any particular mission practice within the CIM.