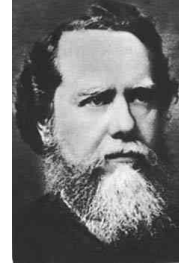


J. Hudson Taylor: Founder of China Inland Mission

Born 21 May 1832

Died 3 June 1905

Hudson Taylor's story is best begun at the end. His zeal for China and his establishment of China Inland Mission left an indelible mark on missionary efforts in that vast country and the growth of the Chinese Christian church that continues today.



Hudson founded the China Inland Mission in 1865, and by 1882 they had entered every province of China. By 1895 the CIM had more than six hundred and forty missionaries in the country. In 1900 the work of the China Inland Mission and other missionary agencies almost came to an end when an imperial decree from Peking ordered the death of all foreigners and the extermination of Christianity. One hundred and eighty-eight missionaries and children were brutally murdered—seventy-nine of these were CIM missionaries. Many other missionaries fled for their lives, leaving the areas where they had labored so hard. In spite of the hardships and violence the CIM stood firm and even flourished as people were inspired by the courage of the missionaries.

After Hudson Taylor died at the age of 73 the China Inland Mission continued to grow, and in 1914 it became the largest foreign mission organization in the world, reaching its peak in 1934 with 1,368 missionaries. When the communists took over China in 1950 the CIM and all the other mission agencies were expelled from the country. In 1964 the CIM changed its name to the Overseas Missionary Fellowship to reflect its expanding endeavors in the Orient.

The China Inland Mission was born after Hudson Taylor became frustrated with the traditional methods adopted by most of the Protestant missionaries in China. Hudson had begun his work in Shanghai, but his struggles there drove him more and more frequently into the interior to the smaller villages. Foreign missionaries were common in Shanghai and the Chinese people took little notice of them, however in the interior he was a curiosity. Hudson found that the people were more interested in his clothes and habits than his message. He felt the only solution was to become Chinese, to adopt all aspects of Chinese dress and culture. He even had his hair dyed and added false hair to his own to make a ponytail.



CIM Missionaries

Most Protestant missionaries considered this an unacceptable departure from “proper” methods. They felt that Christianity must be kept separate from the heathen Chinese culture; to them to be Chinese was to be an idolater. Hudson became an embarrassment to his fellow missionaries and they ridiculed him. He did not let this change his mind however, and his adoption of Chinese dress and culture became his trademark. He found he could

move in the interior of China more freely and that often he was not suspected of being a foreigner.

Hudson Taylor had such a burden for the Chinese people, and it grieved him that millions of Chinese people would die each year not knowing about Jesus. He wanted to get missionaries into China as fast as possible. Taylor realized that China would never be evangelized if he had to wait for highly educated ordained ministers to go. Instead he appealed to England's working classes for dedicated men and women who would depend entirely on God for their needs.



The China Inland Mission was officially established on the principle that God would supply—offerings or other direct appeals for money were strictly prohibited. Time and again Hudson would pray for workers or funds and time and time again God would provide. “Depend on it,” he declared, “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supplies.” His declaration was reflective of the scriptural promise he clung to throughout his life: *Whatever you ask in My name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* John 14:13

The early years of the CIM were difficult as problems within the team, administrative challenges, criticism of their methods, sickness, hostility toward foreigners, and financial hardship all seemed to pull the Mission toward failure. However, Hudson Taylor’s prior experience in China had taught him pray about every aspect of his life and work and to trust that God would answer his prayers.

While Hudson Taylor was preparing to be a missionary he resolved to “move man, through God, by prayer alone,” and upon first landing in China at the age of twenty-one he said of the voyage,

Thus God encouraged me, ere landing on China’s shores, to bring every variety of need to Him *in prayer*, and *to expect that He would honor the name of the Lord Jesus* and give the help which each emergency required.



What happened during the voyage that taught him this vital lesson? At one point the ship was becalmed and the current was carrying it towards treacherous reefs. The captain said that the fate of the ship seemed certain and that nothing could be done. Hudson told him, “No, there is one thing we haven’t done,” and he proceeded to tell the captain that he and three other Christians on board would go to their cabins and agree in prayer for God to send a breeze immediately. After a few minutes of earnest prayer Hudson returned to the deck confident that his prayer would be answered. Hudson told the first officer in charge to let down the corners of the mainsail. The man asked, “What would be the good

of that?" Hudson explained how he and his friends had been asking God to send a wind and that it was coming immediately. The first officer scoffed and said, "Nonsense! You can't pray up a wind." A few moments later a puff of wind began and the sailors quickly moved to adjust the sails and catch the wind. The breeze indeed came and carried them safely away from the reef.

Whatever you ask in My name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Hudson Taylor sought God's best for his life. He asked God for some work to do for Him as an outlet for the love and gratitude he felt. When he surrendered his life and desires to God the voice of the Lord said, "Who will go for Me to China?" and Hudson replied, "Here I am, send me."

The drawing of Hudson Taylor to China actually began before he was born when his parents dedicated him to God and prayed that he would be a missionary to China. Hudson did not know of this prayer until many years after he began working in China. However, he knew his father to be a man of faith and his mother diligent in prayer, and this had a great influence on his life.

Family devotions and prayer were a vital part of Hudson's upbringing, but as he lived out his teenage years for some reason he thought that he could not be saved and so he should just have his fill of worldly pleasures.

When Hudson was seventeen his mother went on an extended visit to a friend and so he had a lot of idle time. He went to his father's library to find something to read and he picked up a gospel tract. He thought, "There will be a story at the beginning and a sermon at the end. I will read the former and skip the latter."

Little did Hudson know that at the same time his mother felt an intense yearning for her son's salvation. The Holy Spirit drew her in to prayer, and she spent the afternoon pleading for Hudson to make a decision for Christ. After praying for a long period she finally felt an assurance that her prayers were answered.

As Hudson read the tract, he came upon the expression, "The finished work of Christ." He remembered that Christ had said, "It is finished," and thought, "What is finished?" He replied,

A full and perfect atonement and satisfaction for sin. The debt was paid by the Substitute. Christ died for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. If the whole work is finished and the whole debt paid, what is there left for me to do? . . . light was flashed into my soul by the Holy Spirit. . . There was nothing in the world to be done but to fall down on one's knees and, accepting this Savior and His Salvation, to praise Him forevermore. Thus while my dear mother was praising God on her knees in her chamber, I was praising Him in the old warehouse to which I had gone alone to read at my leisure this little book.

When he made his decision to follow Christ, Hudson told his sister and had her promise not to tell anyone else. When his mother returned from her trip about two weeks later he



met her at the door. Hudson said he had some good news for her. Hudson's mother reached out and hugged him and said, "I know, my boy. I have been rejoicing for a fortnight in the glad tidings you have to tell me." "Has Amelia broken her promise?" he asked in surprise. His mother assured him that no human source had told her—the Holy Spirit had given her full assurance that Hudson had given his life to Jesus.

A mother's prayer, the finished work of Christ, and the light of the Holy Spirit drew Hudson Taylor into powerful ministry in China. *Whatever you ask in My name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

References:

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J. Hudson Taylor: God's Mighty Man of Prayer, by Eugene Myers Harrison. Found at: <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biotaylor3.html>

For more information on Overseas Missionary Fellowship (formerly China Inland Mission) visit their web site at www.us.omf.org
Another good source of information about Hudson Taylor is www.sermonindex.net and from the home page you can do a search for his name.