



HUDSON TAYLOR 1832 – 1905

In September 1853, a little three-masted clipper slipped quietly out of Liverpool harbor with Hudson Taylor, a gaunt and wild-eyed 21-year-old missionary, aboard. He was headed for a country that was just coming into the Christian West's consciousness; only a few dozen missionaries were stationed there. By the time Taylor died a half-century later, however, China was viewed as the most fertile and challenging of mission fields as thousands volunteered annually to serve there.

His ship arrived in Shanghai, one of five "treaty ports" China had opened to foreigners following its first Opium War with England. Almost immediately Taylor made a radical decision (as least for Protestant missionaries of the day): he decided to dress in Chinese clothes and grow a pigtail (as Chinese men did). His fellow Protestants were either incredulous or critical. Along with Joseph Edkins, they set off for the interior, sailing down the Huangpu River distributing Chinese Bibles and tracts.

When the Chinese Evangelization Society, which had sponsored Taylor, proved incapable of paying its missionaries in 1857, Taylor resigned and became an independent missionary; trusting God to meet his needs. The same year, he married Maria Dyer, daughter of missionaries stationed in China. He continued to pour himself into his work, and his small church in Ningpo grew to 21 members. But by 1861, he became seriously ill (probably with hepatitis) and was forced to return to England to recover.

In England, the restless Taylor continued translating the Bible into Chinese (a work he'd begun in China), studied to become a midwife, and recruited more missionaries. Troubled that people in England seemed to have little interest in China, he wrote the book *China: Its Spiritual Need and Claims*. In one passage, he scolded, "Can all the Christians in England sit still with folded arms while these multitudes [in China] are perishing — perishing for lack of knowledge — for lack of that knowledge which England possesses so richly?"

Twenty-two people accompanied Taylor back to China in 1866. His new mission, which he called the China Inland Mission (CIM), had a number of distinctive features, including this: its missionaries would have no guaranteed salaries nor could they appeal for funds; they would simply trust God to supply their needs; furthermore, its missionaries would adopt Chinese dress and then press the gospel into the China interior. Also, Taylor instituted another radical policy: he sent unmarried women into the interior, a move criticized by many veterans. But Taylor's boldness knew no bounds. By 1895 the Mission had 641 missionaries plus 462 Chinese helpers at 260 stations. During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, 56 of these missionaries were martyred and hundreds of Chinese Christians were killed. The missionary work did not slack, however, and the number of missionaries quadrupled in the coming decades.

Between his work ethic and his absolute trust in God (despite never soliciting funds, his CIM grew and prospered), he inspired thousands to forsake the comforts of the West to bring the Christian message to the vast and unknown interior of China. Though mission work in China was interrupted by the Communist takeover in 1949, the CIM continues to this day under the name Overseas Missionary Fellowship (International).