

## Part V: Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission

by Joseph & Michele C.



The story we have told of William Carey and the Serampore Trio can be seen as the tale of a painful struggle for field-governance which ended in a tragic parting of the ways. Carey and his colleagues were allowed to continue their work and to retain the college which they had built, but they lost ultimate control of the mission as a whole and of many of the institutions which they had founded. This was tragic, not because of the field-governance principle as an end in itself, but because of the damage which these events did to Carey and his colleagues personally and to their life's work in India. The case of Hudson Taylor which we will examine now is the tale of a similar struggle which ended in a "successful" resolution in which the authority of Hudson Taylor and his China Council was ultimately acknowledged. But this outcome was achieved only at the expense of tremendous amounts of time, money and emotional hurt—both in London and in China. More than once Taylor was forced to make the long ship-journey to London to deal with this, when he would have preferred to remain in China to focus on the actual mission task.

James Hudson Taylor is widely considered in evangelical missions circles to be the greatest and most influential missionary since New Testament times. The China Inland Mission (CIM) which he founded—today known as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF)—continues today to be one of the most admired and effective evangelical mission societies in the world.

In 1865, unknown and without the support of any denomination, [Taylor] was led to undertake single-handed the foundation of what for a time was the largest mission in the world (Neill, 1986: p. 282).

Ralph Winter says of the mission structure which Hudson Taylor designed,

My hope is . . . [to] provide some rationale of many new mission agencies today for the steadfast pursuit of the OMF 'Directorship' pattern, which has served for 125 years and successfully withstood pressures and criticisms from every side (Winter, 1990: p. C-1).

Popular biographies of Taylor generally tend to focus on three aspects of his vision:

- 1) the "faith" approach to financial support which he learned from Georg Müller,
- 2) the requirement that CIM missionaries wear Chinese clothing and adapt to Chinese cultural customs and mores (which we would today call "contextualization" – Taylor called it "being Chinese to the Chinese"), and
- 3) the urgent need for large numbers of missionaries to go beyond the "treaty ports" to reside in every province of inland China if "China's millions" were to be evangelized.

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However, popular thinking about Taylor has generally overlooked the fact that equally essential to Taylor's vision for the CIM was his conviction that mission structures should be governed from the field, not from the home base, if they were to be effective in the evangelistic task.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Carey, Hudson Taylor had seven years' field experience before he started his mission. His experience with the Chinese Evangelization Society—and its governance by a committee in London which was out of touch with daily realities in China—played a role in his thinking on this question. He felt that the structure of the Chinese Evangelization Society had significantly harmed its effectiveness in China.

In founding the CIM, Taylor established certain fundamental principles on which the mission would be run. Kenneth Latourette summarizes these founding principles thus:

- (1) The Mission was to be undenominational... While persons of education were preferred, those were also welcomed who were without much learning but who were otherwise qualified ... As liberal theological opinions began to make their appearance, the Mission remained conservative ...
- (2) As the years passed, the Mission became international...
- (3) ... The members of the mission had no guaranteed salary but were to trust God to supply their needs. Moreover... the Mission was never to go into debt...
- (4) No personal solicitation for funds was to be made...
- (5) Missionaries were to conform as nearly as possible to the social and living conditions of the Chinese, and until well after 1900 were for the most part to wear Chinese dress.
- (6) The direction of the Mission was to be in China and not by a board in Great Britain...
- (7) Finally, the main purpose of the Mission was... to diffuse as quickly as possible a knowledge of the Gospel throughout the Empire... (Latourette, 1973: 385-386).

Thus, out of Hudson Taylor's seven founding principles for the CIM, one (often ignored today) was the principle that, "The direction of the Mission was to be in China and not by a board in Great Britain." The second prin-

ciple named by Latourette was actually developed years later, and the fourth principle is really an exposition of the third, so that one could argue that the field-direction principle was one of just five founding principles of the CIM.

Stephen Neill summarizes Taylor's founding principles for the CIM similarly:

- (1) The mission was to be interdenominational. Conservative in its theology...
- (2) A door was opened for those of little formal education...
- (3) The direction of the mission would be in China, not in England – a change of far-reaching significance...
- (4) Missionaries would wear Chinese dress, and as far as possible identify themselves with the Chinese people.
- (5) The primary aim of the mission was always to be widespread evangelism... (Neill, 1986: 283).

Again, the field-direction principle was one of five founding principles of the CIM. However this principle did not remain uncontested in later years.

As with Carey, problems began when young, inexperienced missionaries in the process of culture shock wrote back to the home office to complain about Hudson Taylor's principles—despite their having agreed to the principles before joining the mission. One is reminded here also of the problems encountered by Matteo Ricci's Jesuits when less-experienced missionaries appealed to Rome to overrule Ricci's contextualized approach.

The first major crisis within the CIM was precipitated in 1867—two years after the Mission's founding—by a new missionary named Lewis Nicol, who attempted to appeal over Taylor's head to William Berger who was in charge of the CIM's home base in Britain. The resolution of this conflict demonstrated that the field-direction principle was still effective. Although the CIM was being sharply criticized at the time in the press in China, "Far worse than gibes in the press was the obsessive correspondence by Lewis Nicol with William Berger" (Broomhall, 1985: 65). Nicol, who had agreed to Chinese clothing and to the Chinese-to-the-Chinese principle before joining the Mission, was now fighting against it and "obsessively" attempting to influence

others. He began spreading false rumors about Taylor, and writing (untruthfully) to Berger that,

Large stores of English clothing and material for making such, brought out for the use of the mission in China, are stored away... (rather to) rot than sell them to anyone out here who would make use of them. 'Hudson Taylor had changed his mind' after reaching Shanghai, and made them all wear Chinese clothes (Ibid., p. 66).

Nicol won over one or two CIM colleagues, and succeeded in poisoning the attitudes of other organizations toward Taylor. But the overwhelming majority of CIM field personnel recognized the slander for what it was, and the attempt to appeal over Taylor's head to London was unsuccessful. Berger in London immediately passed on Nicol's comments to Taylor, and wrote to Nicol, "If you cannot [have confidence] in us [Hudson Taylor and Berger]... it will be your duty to retire from the Mission" (Ibid., p. 65). Berger wrote to Taylor,

It is still with me a grave question whether a brother who avows he has no confidence in you (or me) should continue connected with the Mission (Ibid., p. 66).

In September 1868, after extensive efforts to resolve matters with Nicol, Taylor made the decision to dismiss him because of his "falsehoods and misrepresentations... in the habitual breach and perversion of the truth." In his letter to Nicol, Taylor stated that he was,

acting after conference with and with the concurrence of all the brethren of the *Lammermuir* party [the senior field-resident members of the CIM] and as many of the other brethren of the Mission as I have had opportunity of meeting... I do not dismiss you... for your preference for the English costume; nor indeed on any other ground in whole or in part than that of habitual and deliberate falsehood (Ibid., p. 128).

Though there was as yet no structured Field Council or China Council, Taylor felt obliged to seek the concurrence of the senior missionaries on the field before acting. Berger in London completely supported Taylor's action, writing, "Your letter to Nicol... was everything the case required, and how sad was his reply to it" (Ibid.).

Another incident in 1869 demonstrated how crucial the field-direction principle was to the CIM's very existence. The primary reason why Taylor had founded the CIM was that the tiny number of missionaries in China were concentrated almost entirely in the handful of "treaty ports" on the Chinese coast, which had been dominated politically by European powers after military confrontations such as the shameful Opium Wars. The reason for the China Inland Mission's existence was to station resident missionaries *inland*—far from the treaty ports.

In 1869 the British Foreign Office and the House of Lords considered issuing regulations forbidding British subjects to reside in China outside of the treaty ports. The reasons cited for these regulations were concern for the safety of the missionaries and concern that the missionaries would undermine British commercial interests (the missionaries documented that "commercial interests" were largely a euphemism for the opium trade, which Taylor did vigorously oppose). Hudson Taylor did not have the kind of political connections that might have enabled him to influence this debate in human terms, but it is clear that if the regulations had passed, they would have destroyed the very reason for the new CIM's existence. Missionaries from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and London Missionary Society (LMS)—notably Maria Taylor's CMS brother-in-law John Burdon—took up a lobbying campaign which successfully persuaded the British government not to issue these regulations.

However the LMS London headquarters (presumably concerned for the safety of their missionaries) was not as easily persuaded as the British government. Broomhall writes,

In his comments to the LMS directors on the same issue of shackling the missionary, Griffith John was no less explicit, but even after his powerful pleading, the London-based ruling body of the LMS declined to retract their own strong restraints upon their missionaries in China. In loyalty they were reluctantly obeyed, while the CIM surged forwards (Ibid., p. 185).

In 1872 William Berger retired as director of the CIM in Britain. Taylor wrote

that, "Our fellowship together has been a source of unmixed and uninterrupted joy," but that Berger was unfortunately forced to retire because of "Mr. Berger's failing health and strength" (Ibid., p. 343). Both before and after this announcement Taylor searched in vain for a successor to Berger. Taylor returned to Britain to serve as acting home director while he pursued this search, but was not able to find the right individual "who sees things from my standpoint, and on whom I can depend" (Broomhall, 1988: 191).

Finally, after a long and fruitless search, Taylor reluctantly agreed to the suggestion made by a number of friends in Britain that he should form a "council of management" composed of several people who would assist in "home affairs." Taylor expressed his concern that the CIM should not repeat the error of the Chinese Evangelization Society in giving control of the mission to a committee in London. However, when he reached the point that he knew he must leave for China imminently and did not yet have a successor for Berger, he agreed to establish, "an advisory council to share the responsibilities *in Britain*" (Broomhall, 1985: 347; emphasis his). Taylor emphasized to the new Council the nature of their role:

The management of the Home affairs of the China Inland Mission. The Council was to deputise for him in his absence and to advise him when he was in Britain. They clearly understood how it differed from the controlling councils and committees of most other societies, and approved of his principles in this respect (Ibid., p. 348).

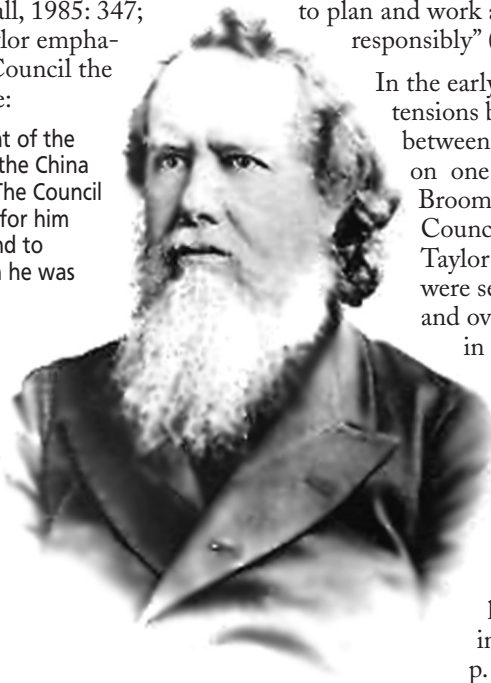
Within months, members of the Council were questioning the CIM principle of not soliciting funds (Ibid., pp. 365ff.). Taylor had to persuade Council members by letter from China to remain faithful to

the founding principles of the mission. However there were no immediate problems over the field-direction principle.

A childhood friend of Taylor's, Benjamin Broomhall, took on more and more work for the home base of the CIM during the 1870s; but despite their friendship, Taylor did not have the kind of confidence in him that he had had in William Berger (Broomhall, 1988: 191). Furthermore Benjamin Broomhall's time and attention in the 1870s were divided, since he also worked as secretary to the Anti-Slavery Association until 1879. In 1879, "The council minuted that in his representation of the CIM all over Britain, Benjamin Broomhall needed 'authentication' and in March resolved that he... should be 'associate secretary'" (Ibid., p. 190). Soon afterward the London Council designated Broomhall as "General Secretary". Around this same time period Taylor's leadership style in China is described thus: "He himself held the reins, firmly, very firmly at times when discipline was needed, but very loosely in the case of men and women whom he could trust to plan and work and use scarce funds responsibly" (Ibid., p. 211).

In the early 1880s mild tensions began to develop between Taylor (in China) on one hand, and Broomhall and the Home Council on the other. Both Taylor and Broomhall were seriously overworked and overcommitted, and in this context the quality of their letter-writing to each other suffered. Taylor complained that Broomhall and others in Britain were "disregarding him, starving him of information" (Ibid., p. 380).

More distressing was the disapproval by the council in London of his own handling of affairs in China. Restraining strong-willed men in unwise actions, and weaker men from abandoning





their principles under influences to compromise or to enter salaried employment, had been difficult enough. When 'London' listened to their complaints and sided with them, his leadership had been undermined (Broomhall, 1989: 33).

These mild tensions exploded into a crisis in the November 1886, when there was a difference of conviction over mission structure and over field policy. The CIM was growing extremely rapidly. Having consulted with the Home Council and secured their support, Taylor appointed John Stevenson as his Deputy Director in China and appointed regional superintendents for each province in China, and he established a China Council composed of these field leaders. Also with consultation and approval of the Home Council, Taylor had written a document called "Principles and Practice", which laid out the distinctive convictions on which the CIM was based. At its first meeting, in 1886, the China Council made minor wording clarifications to the "P and P", and it began work on drafting an informal "book of arrangements" that would indicate to field missionaries how Taylor applied the "Principles and Practice" in concrete, often-repeated situations. Taylor and Stevenson were to finish this draft and send it for comment to the Home Council and to those regional superintendents who had been unable to attend the China Council meetings. Taylor's biographer indicates here that,

no thought occurred to them that this logical step in the Mission's development would provoke years of disharmony and be the reef on which the CIM could have come to grief (Broomhall, 1988: 423).

That sound, efficient reorganization itself became the reef on which the CIM nearly perished. Physically remote from Hudson Taylor, the London Council had been undergoing a gradual change in its viewpoint, unknown to him. The basic principle on which the CIM had been founded, that its leadership and control must be in China, had paled in the light of contemporary practice by other missions, merchant houses and the government. All paid the piper and called the tune from the homeland in Europe or America. Complaints to the London Council against the directors in China were taken as valid, without proper verification.

In China the facts were known and understood. Men at a distance with no personal knowledge of China or of the circumstances could not adjudicate... Correspondence on these issues had worsened rather than resolved the differences between London and Hudson Taylor. Only his return to Britain held any hope of agreement... The dissident missionaries' side of the story had been given a sympathetic hearing, by the Home Director, Theodore Howard, [and] the General Secretary, Benjamin Broomhall... Benjamin's propensity had for long been to champion the underdog.... A small China Council, it was being said... had laid down arbitrary rules for over two hundred others... For London to question the composition and actions of the China Council they had supported Hudson Taylor in setting up was far more serious... [Benjamin Broomhall began in 1886 to hint at the risk of a "separation" between himself and Taylor, implying the resignation of one or both of them...] All the dealings between their supporting churches and the Mission had been with the Secretary, whom they had come to value. Discord between Hudson Taylor and the London Council, especially his boyhood friend and brother-in-law at the heart of the Mission, could be most damaging. Separation could be lethal. The issue had become constitutional. The London Council as a whole in objecting to the revision of the Principles and Practice (P and P) and the introduction of 'rule' in the Book of Arrangements were claiming a say in both (Broomhall, 1989: 36-38).

Despite pressing needs in China, Taylor returned to Britain in the winter of 1886-87 to deal with this crisis and stayed for a year and a half. Rather than precipitating a direct confrontation with the London Council, which "could have been disastrous" (Ibid., p. 50), Taylor spent substantial time meeting individually with Council members over a period of months, rebuilding trust relationships. During these months he also took many public meetings all over Britain, which had the effect of shoring up the confidence of the CIM's constituency in his leadership. This approach was effective, and an angry confrontation was prevented. By August 1887 relationships were fully cordial again. But the difference of perspective had still not been resolved.

The next occasion for this unresolved tension to flare up came in December 1887, as Taylor prepared to return to China. American Henry Frost came to England to seek to persuade Taylor to allow the opening of an American branch of the mission. Taylor's initial reaction was favorable, but then he

learned from Benjamin [Broomhall] how strongly he opposed the 'transfer of a British organisation to American soil'. American missions would not welcome it, Benjamin thought, and too much would be involved when the CIM was already doubling its size... Frost could not know that deep rifts were already threatening the structure, even the existence of the Mission. It was the wrong moment to introduce a revolutionary new development without unity of mind in the administration (Ibid., p. 56).

In the interest of keeping peace, Taylor told Frost that the answer was no. However, Frost did persuade Taylor to visit North America en route to China, and to accept a number of speaking engagements in America. A series of events during his time in North America persuaded Taylor that he and Benjamin had been mistaken, that God was clearly guiding the CIM to accept the opening of a North American branch. Unsolicited donations (some of them logistically impossible to return) and missionary candidates were pouring in from all over North America. He asked Benjamin to come to take over, but Benjamin was unable to do so.

As Taylor prepared to sail for China, he felt "duty bound to make provision of some sort" (Ibid., p. 91). He asked Alfred Sandham to handle Canadian candidates and Henry Frost to handle Americans. "He explained that permanent arrangements would follow consultation with the China and London Councils, but a tentative auxiliary council was desirable, for Sandham and Frost to consult" (Ibid.). Taylor then boarded a ship from Vancouver to China, but when the ship stopped at Yokohama "the mail awaiting him contained the first blow in an onslaught unrelenting until he sailed again for Britain six months later. But he seems to have been oblivious of the worst dangers ahead" (Ibid., p. 92).

*Perhaps their persistence despite deep hurt on both sides was the greatest evidence of the “power of Christian love.”*

The field leadership in China were enthusiastic about the new North American recruits. “During 1888 five men of the CIM had died, two had resigned, and three might have to leave, but twelve new men had come to China... They, not mission politics, settled the issue. North Americans were as much the CIM as anyone” (Ibid., p. 98). But Benjamin Broomhall and the London Council were very upset.

Hudson Taylor had formed the ‘tentative auxiliary council’ in Toronto without consulting London. He had kept them informed, but had not sought their approval. What was the status of the London Council? ... When London heard of a North American council they reacted adversely. ‘The question will be,’ wrote Theodore Howard, ‘whether it should be a branch of the Home work or work independently under the same lines and in fellowship and sympathy, but not under the same direction as the CIM.’ Either subsidiary to the London Council or quite separate? But a sibling ‘Home’ department in the same family, autonomous in relation to London but equal in status under the General Director, seems not to have occurred to ‘London’ (Ibid., p. 99).

During the winter of 1888-89 both “BB” (Benjamin Broomhall) and Taylor were under extreme strain with crises and overwork in China and in London. “Where in writing to anyone else they would have been more careful, between old friends hurried notes and ill-considered wording left wrong impressions” (Ibid., p. 100). BB wrote that, “I must ask you to accept my resignation if you have resolved to carry out this American plan” (Ibid., p. 101). Taylor interpreted this as effectively an actual resignation, and in a “strictly private” letter to all members of the mission Taylor announced this fact—a move that he soon recognized as a bad mistake.

In letters to BB and to Henry Frost, Taylor emphasized that “China and the work of God came first. Administrative niceties were subsidiary” (Ibid., p. 102). The crisis was not just causing hurt

between Taylor and BB. It was also concretely damaging the work in China. “Henry Frost had kept some prospective missionaries back from sailing, while the standing of the ‘auxiliary’ was under debate, and two men had turned to other missions” (Ibid.).

Despite various crises in China demanding Taylor’s attention, there was only one thing to do: “Hudson Taylor characteristically went to meet his opponents in person” (Ibid.). On his way to England in May 1889 he visited the retired and infirm William Berger in France. Berger rebuked Taylor—not for the principle of establishing a North American auxiliary, but for Taylor’s arrogant attitude about it and about divine guidance. Berger continued, “It takes two to make a quarrel... You are to all intents married to Mr. B and cannot be divorced.’ So [Taylor] must not think of separating, but must find that *modus vivendi*” (Ibid., p. 104). Other members of the London Council informed him that a *modus vivendi* *must* be found, for if BB resigned, they would resign as well.

Once Taylor met face-to-face with BB and the London Council, it seemed to him as though a miracle took place:

I reached England on May 21st (my birthday) and found the stone already rolled away,’ Hudson Taylor reported to John Stevenson. Strong currents were as nothing where Christian love existed. Two evenings with Benjamin and the next day with the London Council giving an account of his tour in the States and Canada, and the clouds dispersed. At last they understood. Discussion of permanent arrangements was deferred until after the annual meeting. On June 18 it all ended amicably with the London Council accepting lock, stock and barrel Hudson Taylor’s outline of the arrangements and status of the North American Council. Its duties were to be the same as the London Council’s. It was to deal directly with the directors in China, not through London. Its funds would be distinct and its missionaries on the same footing as those from Britain. And they would be directed in China, not from

America... And better still, on July 4, he could say of the disagreements over the P and P, ‘All now cordially accepted’ and being referred to the China Council for approval... ‘I do not think things have been so cordial in years.’ ... Sound lessons had been learned—the inherent dangers in correspondence; the value of face to face courtesy and prayer together; the dangers of physical and mental exhaustion when matters of moment were under debate; and the truth that ‘reckless words pierce like a sword’ but ‘love covers a multitude of sins’ (Ibid., pp. 104-105).

However, the problems turned out to be far from over. “From November 1886 tension persisted between him and London until July 1893” (Ibid., p. 172). One wonders, if this had happened 100 years later (1986-1993), whether Taylor, BB and the others concerned would have continued for so many years to work on the relationship, or whether instead they would have split the mission or resigned in bitterness. Perhaps their persistence despite deep hurt on both sides was the greatest evidence of the “power of Christian love.”

The next occasion for a constitutional crisis was created by a senior missionary who had brought a family servant to the field from Britain in violation of the “book of arrangements”, but who now was dismissing that servant and expecting the Mission to fund the servant’s voyage back to Britain. He wrote to the London Council objecting to the P and P, and to the book of arrangements. Instead of referring him back to the field leadership,

Thomas Howard and some [London] Council members took up his complaints by challenging the China Council’s action. From this small beginning the status of councils, not least of the London Council became a major issue. The seeds of a constitutional controversy had been sown, and not until five years later was peace fully restored... The controversy held many lessons for the Mission... Most remarkable, perhaps, was the maintenance of personal friendships and affection when strong words and even rudeness threatened them.

One clause in the handbook touched off a debate on the right of Hudson Taylor and the administration in China to reject probationers or dismiss serious offenders without the approval of the men who sent them. In effect, it raised the question: Was London to have the last word? The Principles and Practice and Book of Arrangements themselves then became the chief bone of contention. [Anyone familiar with the field context could see that a practical book of arrangements, summarizing the field leadership's position on various concrete questions, was obviously necessary and reasonable.] Most front-line missionaries had welcomed it, but the well-meaning men in London were too far from the scene to understand (Ibid., p. 132).

The bulk of the field missionaries in China supported Taylor's position. "The conference of CIM missionaries [in China] in May 1890 had found little in the documents to question" (Ibid., p. 173). This was further made clear on Taylor's birthday on May 21, after the conference, when

the eighty-three members of the Mission still in Shanghai presented him with an address [which] read, 'We desire to express our unshaken conviction that those principles on which you were led to found this Mission, and on which it has grown to its present extent and usefulness, are of God.' ... Criticism of the Principles and Practice and 'Arrangements' had become public knowledge, and his loyal friends wished to demonstrate their support (Ibid., p. 144).

In 1891 the constitutional crisis was inflamed by the reverse problem: this time the London Council wanted to discipline a missionary whom Taylor and the field leadership knew to be innocent:

Far more painful were letters from a member of the London Council. On the strength of hearsay and without verification, an honoured veteran was being accused and condemned at a distance for alleged indiscretions with young women. [Taylor investigated fully and confirmed the missionary's innocence. Taylor objected to the fact of] someone writing to a member of the London Council instead of to the directors in China, and of 'London' in minuting their discussion and conclusions.

Far worse, it precipitated another constitutional crisis. The London Council began to take a strong hand in 'Field' affairs. [Taylor's] reminder that the directors in China were in a better position to know and act in such a matter was curtly answered [that] the trouble lay in your wrong ideas—and your China Council's... For the London Council to intervene in administrative and disciplinary action from a distance was a very different matter... The status of the London Council and a supposed threat to it from the new China Council quickly emerged as the main issue... 'You have a Council here (in London) *nominally* [emphasis his] to advise you,' but it should be recognised as having administrative power. [One very influential member of the Council wrote that he] could wish you [Taylor] were led to leave the Mission to get on by itself while you took up more largely the expounding of Scripture and stirring up of the Churches' (Ibid., pp. 157-158).

The rift was clearly very deep. Regarding the slandered veteran, "That sorrowful persecution of a beloved servant of God' continued until Henry Frost invited him to help him in North America 'for six months or a year'. He went, in December 1891. Then other pretexts for raising the status of the London Council were found" (Ibid.).

Taylor's biographer assesses the situation thus:

Violence and even massacre have strengthened rather than weakened the China Inland Mission on many occasions in the century and a quarter of its existence. Tightening its belt at times of low income has done it good, focusing its attention on the One who provides because it is his own work. What shook the Mission to its foundations in the last decade of the nineteenth century was... the seven-year challenge to parts of the P and P and to Hudson Taylor's leadership... In Britain also the China Council was seen as a rival and, as argument developed, it became clear that the London Council saw itself as the chief council of the CIM and other councils as subordinate...

The voluminous correspondence and recollections show beyond question, far from an authoritarian Hudson Taylor forcing his 'dictates' on 'nonentities', an embattled leader was having to defend the basic prin-

ciples on which he had founded the Mission...

On January 6, 1891, [the London Council] adopted a new tone. The Council minutes referred to their discussion as being 'final'... In the autumn of 1891 feelings ran high in London on their demands for the last word in some field matters. 'The supreme question is that of final headship,' Hudson Taylor wrote to Stevenson [his field Deputy Director, who was visiting Britain], 'but great gentleness and patience will be needed to make the reasonableness of this clear to all, and it is equally clear to me that it can only be vested in China...' Hudson Taylor could see no solution other than the status quo—the foundation principle of running field affairs on the field—and the China Council agreed with him (Ibid., pp. 171-174).

Matters reached a "desperate" (Ibid., p. 174) nadir in summer 1891, when Taylor began to think it probable that the London Council would "take power by force" (they controlled the legal corporation in Britain), and that he and much of the field leadership in China would be forced to resign and perhaps form another mission. He wrote to Stevenson,

While I let you know in confidence that my mind is made up, I do not wish to bring pressure on the Home Council... Do your best to get them *individually* to see (that they cannot take power by force), but do not put our refusal of it in the form of an ultimatum. Should I and certain other members of the China Council conclude on retiring, we will endeavour to do so in such a form as shall do least harm to a work dear to us all. Those of us who retire may form another mission for the purpose of preaching the gospel... But surely God will avert the danger as He has so many others (Ibid.).

Few evangelical missionaries today, reflecting on the life of Hudson Taylor, imagine that he came to such a low point of near-despair over the field-governed principle. Writing to Theodore Howard of the London Council, Taylor pleaded,

You very clearly stated the position in your draft of your letter of February 6, 1890: 'We were never supposed or intended to have and never have had



any authority over the work in China... we have been a Council of advice and consultation, not for government... Nor would it ever have been admitted that we were in any sense a Council to which missionaries in China could appeal from any decision of the China Directors or China Council... 'Do not I beseech you for Christ's sake rend the Mission asunder by claiming what you yourself have repeatedly affirmed was never intended and would never be agreed to (Ibid., p. 174-175).

passed through" (Ibid., p. 177). In May 1892 he again sailed for Britain (via Canada) to deal with the crisis.

In mid-April [a few weeks before sailing] he was prostrate again, giddy and helpless, preparing to face the music in London, but appalled by the prospect, so imminent did complete shipwreck of the Mission appear to be. The China Council in session addressed a letter to him identifying themselves with his view of the crisis, particularly

Frost later described how he quickly saw that

The London Director and Council were strongly tending to the thought that they had and should have a pre-eminent place, as related to all the other Directors and Councils of the Mission... If the London Director and Council were supreme, then they were over us and we were under them, an arrangement to which we were not willing to agree (Ibid., p. 184).

**I**n London, however, the Council were busy drafting and adopting a letter on 'the Council's relation to missionaries on the field', which ended as an ultimatum such as Hudson Taylor had never before seen and never used.

Taylor's biographer notes that this internal crisis was going on at a time when unrest in China and hostility toward foreigners was increasing alarmingly. By the end of the 1890s this erupted in the Boxer uprising, in which many CIM missionaries and Chinese Christians were killed. Taylor, in China, was sensitive to this situation and to the need for him to give attention to it. In London, however, the Council were busy drafting and adopting a letter on 'the Council's relation to missionaries in the field', which ended as an ultimatum such as Hudson Taylor had never before seen and never used (Ibid., p. 175).

This letter, which Theodore Howard signed in October 1891, on behalf of the Home Council, was intended to establish the relationship of the London Council to the administration in China [by] challenging the existence and powers of the China Council" (Ibid., p. 176). The tone of the letter is that of a final rejection of the China Council. Howard writes,

This letter intimates as kindly but as firmly as possible the final (and I may say unanimous) decision of the Council in this matter, and we await your agreement, by wire or otherwise... (Ibid.)

In his December 1891 reply (five days after receiving the London Council's letter), Taylor said that he was "greatly distressed and perplexed", and that "I feel that we have reached perhaps the gravest crisis that the Mission has yet

as it concerned 'exclusion from the Mission' and dismissals.

We value exceedingly the services rendered by the Home Councils, and especially for so many years by members of the London Council. But we fully agree with you. It is manifestly impossible for those in the Home lands to know as fully as can be known here the character and influence, the competence or incompetence of our fellow-workers... [Ten signatures were appended.] (Ibid., p. 178).

Arriving in London in August 1892, Taylor again devoted months to rebuilding personal trust relationships with the individual members of the London Council. Gradually he discussed the "thorny subjects" with the Council, but he avoided provoking a showdown. Over a period of months he saw significant progress, but in November was still writing to Stevenson in China that, "Matters here are approaching a crisis" (Ibid., p. 181).

The turning point came in January 1893, when Henry Frost visited from America, together with two members of his North American Council, and met with the London Council.

As Henry Frost expected, his companions impressed and delighted the Council, who confided frankly in the visitors... Frost played a major role in finding a way out of the quagmire, and, where Hudson Taylor and the London Council were 'so weary of strife, jealousy (and) division', Frost's fresh mind saw light (Ibid., pp. 181-182).

This insight apparently calmed the discussion. By the end of February 1893, Taylor and the London Council had reached agreement on "the fundamental principles", with Taylor making only "unimportant concessions" (Ibid., p. 182)

A.J. Broomhall the biographer concludes:

After four more years of disagreement, Theodore Howard, William Sharp and 'Benjamin B[roomhall]', the most vocal objectors, had come to realise how great a gap existed between their understanding of conditions in China and the considerable expertise of the field leaders. Then they accepted the wisdom of the ultimate control being in the hands of those on the spot, and the status of the London Council as advisory to the Directors and representative of the Mission to the public at home. 'It brings to an end difficulties that are tearing the Mission to pieces,' Hudson Taylor continued; 'it settles the question of where the seat of power is, and with the consent of the London Council dismisses all questions of their being a seat of power' (Ibid., p. 183).

Though this sounds like a "happy ending", two points should be mentioned in closing. First, A.J. Broomhall's biography mentions as an afterthought to this crisis that, "Already it had led to the resignation of nearly thirty missionaries, unsettled by the controversy." (Ibid.). When one considers the remarkably low attrition rate which the CIM had had before this (as Taylor had

to prove repeatedly in response to false accusations on the subject), one realizes that the resignation of thirty missionaries was a huge loss both to CIM human resources in China and to the morale of those who stayed.

Second, one of the “unimportant concessions” to which Taylor agreed in February 1893 was “an administrative principle of ‘unanimity’”. This meant accepting “nothing less than ‘unanimity’ between [the China Council] and London in reaching conclusions.” This was seen then (and is still seen in the OMF today) as an opportunity to “respect one another’s views, and accept them under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore any impasse was an indication for ‘waiting upon God’” (Ibid., p. 184). While many in the OMF today (100 years later) view this principle as a spiritual strength of the organization, some other mission leaders view this unanimity-principle as OMF’s chief structural weakness, as it occasionally makes it impossible to make a major decision without the unanimous consent of numerous Councils (home and field) all over the world.

### Conclusion to the Series

In our New Testament study in the first section of this paper (see *IJFM* 18:2) we saw that the Pauline apostolic band in Scripture was a field-governed, ecclesiastically-legitimate mission structure. This structure saw itself as *accountable* to the home base, especially where financial transparency was concerned, but it did not see itself as being under the decision-making *authority* of the home base. Decision-making authority resided on the field in the mutually accountable authority structure of the missionary teams. These teams saw their purpose as being the planting of local congregations, and they drew their personnel (and occasionally finances) from local congregations, but they were not themselves a local congregation, nor were they under the authority of any local congregation. Paul related to the Antioch church as a home base to which he regularly *reported*, but the Antioch church did not mediate his missionary call, nor did it authoritatively commission him as a missionary, nor did it seek to direct his teams’ activities on the field. Indeed the local congregation at Antioch was a *product* of the missionary labors of Paul and Barnabas.

The New Testament may not contain any examples of home-governed mission structures. But if the “judaizers” who “came from James” in Galatians and the “superapostles” with their legitimating “letters of recommendation” in 2 Corinthians are examples of such home-governed mission efforts, then it is clear that the New Testament presents them as *negative* examples of what *not* to do.

In these examples from the New Testament we may see at work some of the same dynamics we see in later missions history. In the historical examples we have reviewed—Patrick and the Celtic peregrini (18:2), Ricci and the Jesuits in China (18:3), Carey and the Serampore Trio (18:3), Hudson Taylor and the CIM—we can see the same interpersonal dynamics being repeated again and again. In each of these examples we can see a common pattern at work. Not all elements of the pattern are present in every case, but the pattern as a whole can be seen. Here are some of the elements of the pattern we have seen:

- (1) The first pioneer missionaries to bring the Gospel to an unreached area are field-governed and, when challenged, insist strongly that they are not under the authority of the home base from which they have come. This does not mean that they reject all authority: rather, they establish authority structures of mutual accountability on the field. They strongly emphasize adapting to the indigenous culture of the people they evangelize.
- (2) Later, when less-experienced people come from the home base, often experiencing culture shock, some of these people are critical of the more-experienced pioneers and of their methods and cultural adaptation. This disgruntled group (usually a minority) of field personnel appeal “over the heads” of the senior field missionaries to the sending structures at the home base.
- (3) This home base then seeks to assert its authority over the field personnel.
- (4) Sometimes the first generation of leaders who direct such home-base structures are godly, field-sensitive people (Ingoli, Fuller, Berger). But it is inherent in their geographical location that their successors tend to be less field-sensitive and to have less humility about their own authority. Thus, to create a home-governance structure, even if it is

initially directed by field-sensitive individuals, is to sow the seeds of future problems.

- (5) This leads to sharp conflict between the home base and the field missionaries, which often centers on the field missionaries’ passionate insistence on cultural adaptation to the peoples among whom they live and/or on the authority to assign or dismiss field personnel. The field missionaries insist that they are not under the authority of the home structures, but rather that they are under the authority of their field-based mission structures.
- (6) The effectiveness of the mission is badly hurt by the conflict, as is the morale of its members. In some cases (Taylor, Patrick) the work is able to continue to be effective after recovering from the damage done by a painful and time-consuming struggle. In other cases (the Jesuits) the entire work is destroyed by well-intended decisions made by the home base.

Let us consider, in summary, the ways in which some of these dynamics are illustrated in the historical examples which we have considered:

Patrick’s mission in Ireland was clearly field-governed, despite repeated criticism of his person and his work from church leaders in his home country. The *Canons of St. Patrick* seem to provide evidence that he encountered problems with younger missionaries who were less sensitive than he to Irish culture, and that he insisted that the leadership in Ireland should have veto authority over missionary personnel being sent from Britain. A delegation from the British hierarchy summoned Patrick to come to Britain to answer charges being made against him, but he politely refused to come. This conflict was deeply painful to him—more painful than repeated imprisonments, murder attempts and the like.

The early Celtic peregrini were perhaps the purest example in history of a totally field-governed mission, since they cut off all ties to their home bases in Ireland, Scotland and Britain. This gave them more flexibility in cultural adaptation, so that they were effective in recruiting and training large numbers of indigenous clergy with whom they worked as equals. They established strong authority structures of mutual accountability *within* their monastic communities on the field. In the early years these Celtic peregrini



also declined to submit to the Romanized bishops who claimed nominal authority over the regions in which the missionaries worked (though the peregrini did not deny the authority of the pope, whom they saw as an ally against hypocritical bishops). This led to conflict, but gradually over the course of a few centuries the Celtic mission structures were absorbed by the Roman diocesan hierarchical structure. Along with this structural absorption the missionary vitality of the Celtic movement was also lost.

Matteo Ricci's pioneer mission in China strongly emphasized deep understanding of Chinese language, culture and thought, and it was phenomenally

in Britain had died and a successor had taken his place, this home base began to assert administrative control over the work in India, for example assigning new personnel (Pearce) to specific tasks and deciding who should share living quarters with whom. This led to a protracted and painful conflict which greatly hurt the effectiveness and the morale of the missionaries. In the end Carey's team was allowed to continue their work, but they lost ultimate control of the mission and of most of the institutions which they had founded in India.

Hudson Taylor saw field-governance as one of the central principles on which he founded the CIM. His first conflict

Church of the East and the story of the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.

The medieval "Nestorian" missions, one of the great missionary movements in history, which once spanned all of Asia from Syria to China, eventually collapsed completely, leaving behind almost no trace of surviving indigenous churches in Central or East Asia. Several factors combined together to bring about this collapse, but one of the important factors was clearly the conviction of these Syriac-speaking missionaries that the language of their homeland (a dialect of Aramaic), since it was the language Jesus himself had spoken, was the only

***H**is first conflict emerged when a minority of younger missionaries in culture shock refused to follow his rules about wearing Chinese clothing and adapting to Chinese culture.*

successful. Though the Jesuits of course acknowledged the authority of the pope, in practice the Vatican had no administrative machinery in Rome during the early years to exercise tight control of the work in China, and decisions were made through mutual accountability on the field. Some later missionaries, especially Dominicans, who did not understand the Chinese language or culture as Ricci had, were critical of his methods. They appealed over the Jesuits' heads to the newly-formed Propaganda in Rome. Even though the majority of missionaries in China (including the Franciscans and Augustinians) ultimately supported Ricci's methods, Rome ruled against them. The consequence of a century of conflict and of misguided decisions by Rome was the nearly total collapse of the Church in China in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Carey and the Serampore Trio established an effective mission, with a system of mutual accountability on the field. Later new, younger missionaries who did not have Carey's understanding of Indian languages and cultures criticized the Serampore Trio to the home base in Britain. This reinforced criticisms already being voiced in London and false accusations that Carey was enriching himself financially. Once the first-generation leader of the home-base

emerged when a minority of younger missionaries in culture shock refused to follow his rules about wearing Chinese clothing and adapting to Chinese culture. The first-generation leader in the home base in London (William Berger) supported Taylor, but Taylor came into sharp conflict with Berger's successor Benjamin Broomhall and with the London Council, which gradually asserted its authority more and more strongly. Taylor insisted on the authority of the China Council, composed of field missionaries in China, whereas the London Council insisted on their authority. Despite the best of motives on both sides, tremendous amounts of time, energy and emotional hurt were wasted by this conflict, and the mission repeatedly very close to being completely destroyed by this constitutional crisis. In the end, Hudson Taylor's diplomatic skills and Benjamin Broomhall's commitment to the relationship saved the day, and this conflict was able to be resolved more constructively than had been possible for Carey in India or the Jesuits in China.

We believe that many other examples could be cited which would illustrate this same pattern at work. As we mentioned in the *Introduction* of this paper, we hope in the future to add other examples, including sections recounting the story of the "Nestorian" missionaries of the

language in which mission work should be carried out. This inevitably caused a centralization of control of the mission by people in the West Asian homelands of the Syriac language. The churches which they established in Central and East Asia tended to be perceived by their neighbors as foreign implants.

The story of the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions also illustrates the pattern. This mission was not started by the denominational hierarchy, but was started by people on the fringes of the denominational structure. Gradually, however, over the course of 150 years, the central denominational machinery took over control of the mission, and decision-making authority was shifted from the fields to the denominational headquarters in the U.S.A. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century doctrinal confusion in many Presbyterian churches is not sufficient by itself to explain the dramatic numerical decline of this mission during the twentieth century—a period when the number of Presbyterian missionaries going to the field with interdenominational mission agencies strongly increased. The rate of decline in PCUSA denominational missionaries has been almost as rapid as the collapse of the Jesuit work in China in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There is one big difference, however, between the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Jesuits and the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Presbyterians: the

Presbyterians had translated the Bible and had trained and ordained large numbers of indigenous clergy in nations around the world. The churches thus led and thus taught are continuing to grow today.

We hope that the foregoing has shown that it is indeed true that those who do not study history are condemned to repeat it. There are important lessons to be learned from these experiences of the past. We hope that our generation will learn them. **IJFM**

### Endnote

<sup>1</sup>It was Ralph Winter who first called our attention to the importance of this issue in both William Carey's and Hudson Taylor's lives. As will be seen, we are admittedly heavily dependent also upon A.J. Broomhall's encyclopedic 7-book biography of Taylor. It should be noted that Broomhall's historiographical approach, based on impressively thorough examination of the vast record of letters and personal diaries, is to put the reader into direct contact with extensive excerpts from the primary sources, with minimal editorial comment. This leaves wide freedom to the reader to interpret the significance of the events recorded in letters and diaries. Thus, to read these seven volumes is close to being a direct review of the extensive and diverse primary literature. The objectivity of A. J. Broomhall's reporting of the tensions between China and London is all the more impressive when one considers that it was Benjamin Broomhall in London who was often on the opposite side of the debate from Taylor. In this article, the reader will need to distinguish carefully between A. J. Broomhall the 20th-century biographer and Benjamin Broomhall the 19th-century Secretary of the CIM's London Council.

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